

2012 NCOI & NYACOP First-Prize Winners

Robert Nicholls, *National Competition in Organ Improvisation*

Daryl Robinson, *National Young Artists Competition in Organ Performance*

Arlington Street Church, Boston

Wednesday, June 25 & Thursday, June 26, 2014, 3:30 p.m.

ROBERT NICHOLLS

Triptych

Fanfare

Cantilena

Carillon

A Biblical Illustration

Ezekiel 37:1–15

Octo-Scherzo

Variations on a Submitted Theme

DARYL ROBINSON

Praeludium und Fuga Nr. 1 c-moll

from **Drei Praeludien und Fugen für die Orgel**, Op. 37 (1837)

Felix Mendelssohn

(1809–1847)

Lullaby (1976) from **Suite No. 2**

Calvin Hampton

(1938–1984)

Variations sur un Noël angevin from **Douze pièces pour grand orgue** (1939)

Gaston Litaize

(1909–1991)

From **Four Concert Etudes** (2006)

Sarabande avec double-pedal

Tierces

David Briggs

(b. 1962)

Organ prepared by Thad Outerbridge.

Program Notes – Robert Nicholls

Triptych:

Fanfare: festive and concise

Cantilena: lyrical ABA

Carillon: boisterous and busy!

Ezekiel 37: 1–15: An improvisation telling the story of the valley of dry bones.

The Lord sets the prophet down in the middle of a valley full of dry bones and tells him, “Prophesy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord.”

So the prophet prophesies and “suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them, but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, “Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, that they may live.” I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.”

Then he said to me, “Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.’ Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act,” says the Lord.

Octo-Scherzo: a short, “will-o’-the-wisp” on a theme submitted in advance using (mostly!) the notes of octotonic scales.

Variations on a submitted theme: Just before the concert, I have been given a new theme for this final improvisation. Some variations may have a historical influence. Others will not. Enjoy!

– Robert Nicholls

Program Notes – Daryl Robinson

From an early age, Felix Mendelssohn developed a rich appreciation for music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, particularly that of Johann Sebastian Bach. Nowhere is this more evident than in the three preludes and fugues of Op. 37, one of the few examples of the form from the early nineteenth century. The first striking chords of the prelude summon the listener on a journey, its theme characterized by an octave leap that recurs throughout the prelude. The fugue subject is in compound quadruple meter, perhaps reminiscent of a Baroque gigue. Its rhythmic and harmonic thrust produce a work of solid architecture that concludes emphatically.

Calvin Hampton is remembered for his flamboyant and highly successful Friday Night Midnight Concerts at Calvary Episcopal Church in New York, where he was organist/choirmaster from 1963 to 1984. The Lullaby from his second suite, one of the few works published during a lifetime cut tragically short by AIDS, is a reflection of his introverted side, using straightforward harmonies and varied textures to create a humble gem. Opening with a hymn-like texture in the tenor range, the undulating registration conjures an atmosphere of tranquility. In each variation, the melody is accompanied by increasing rhythmic motion before the work effortlessly reaches a dreamlike conclusion with a wandering flourish above the warm sonority of Flûte Céleste and thirty-two-foot Bourdon.

Gaston Litaize was born in Ménil-sur-Belvitte, in northeastern France. He lost his eyesight as an infant and began organ studies at age eleven, attending the Institut National des Jeunes Aveugles before studying at the Paris Conservatoire with Marcel Dupré, Henri Büsser, and Louis Vierne. A gifted performer, composer, and pedagogue, Litaize inspired organists worldwide through his brilliant improvisations and kindhearted personality. *Variations sur un Noël angevin* concludes his first published volume, *Douze pièces* (1931–1937), and is dedicated to the pastor of the church in suburban Saint-Cloud, where he served before becoming organist at Saint François-Xavier in Paris, in 1946.

Following the opening statement of the theme, six variations vividly draw out different characteristics of this charming Christmas carol.

David Briggs is artist-in-residence at St. James Cathedral in Toronto and a highly sought-after performer, composer, and improviser. A native of England, he was awarded his Fellowship of the Royal College of Organists diploma at age seventeen and served as an organ scholar at King's College, Cambridge, from 1981 to 1984. He maintains an active international recital career, frequently accompanying silent films and performing a broad repertoire that often includes his own transcriptions of orchestral works. The Four Concert Etudes were commissioned by Douglas Cleveland in 2006, and show a clear French influence. "Sarabande avec double-pedal" and "Tierces" are excellent complements: the first, a mellifluous dance, evokes the lush nature of its dance heritage; the second, a fiery showpiece, demands the full resources of both instrument and performer.

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