Richard Purvis
Born, San Francisco, August 25, 1913
Studied at Curtis Institute of Music, Philadelphia, 1936-1940
Served in the Army during WW2, 1941-1945
Organist and Master of the Choristers, Grace Cathedral, 1947-1971
Died, San Francisco, December 25, 1994

Richard Purvis, Organist of Grace, by James Welch
Available at www.welchorganist.com ($19.95), and at Amazon.com

Richard Purvis--organist, choirmaster, and composer at historic Grace Cathedral--became a San Francisco legend and (along with Alexander Schreiner, E. Power Biggs, and Virgil Fox) a national celebrity who made mid-20th century American organ music popular with the masses through records, recitals, and the press. The only book of its kind, James Welch’s Richard Purvis, Organist of Grace is a major contribution to our understanding of the music, culture, and church politics of an era marked as much by social change as by a revolution in musical taste, technology, and compositional technique.

Uniquely among his colleagues, Purvis was first and foremost a writer and performer of original music for the organ, thrilling church and concert audiences everywhere with daring harmony, colorful registration, and evocative emotion of compositions that won him instant acclaim. Hollywood noticed, but Purvis turned down offers to leave Grace to write for the movies. Ed Stout, curator of instruments at the cathedral, famously remarked that Purvis wrote “film music for the Episcopal church.” Child prodigy, conservatory virtuoso, prisoner of war--Purvis’s life before Grace reads like a movie. Following his epic rise and fall at Grace, he continued to concertize, compose, and teach a new generation of organists in his own image: equally adept at playing church and theatre organs, unafraid to experiment--even with electronic organs--and trained to trust their ears, not just the page.

Richard Purvis, Organist of Grace, 508 pages, is lavishly illustrated with never-before seen photos and a wealth of documents and interviews. It chronicles Purvis’s early life in the Bay Area, his years at The Curtis Institute, his military service in World War II, and his tempestuous tenure at Grace Cathedral, where he made the stones sing and crowds cheer. The book includes detailed chapters about Purvis as composer, recitalist, and teacher; complete lists of his published (and unpublished) organ and choral works; the story of his secret love for the theatre organ; and colorful anecdotes and reminiscences from those who knew him as a friend, teacher, and colleague. His legend continues—clarified, corrected, and completed—in this essential resource for organists, historians, and lovers of music that speaks to the heart.
PUBLISHED ORGAN WORKS OF RICHARD PURVIS

All Glory, Laud and Honor          Leeds, 1943
An American Organ Mass            Flammer, 1953
   Prélude Solennel, Introit, Offertory, Interlude, Elevation, Communion, Carillon
Andante Cantabile
Chartres                            Sprague-Coleman, 1946
Dialogue Monastique, for 2 organs  Apogee Press, 1971
Eleven Pieces for the Church Organist
   Greensleeves, Spiritual, Chartres (Noël Varié), Gwalshmai, Kyrie Eleison, Vexilla Regis, Dies Irae,
   Romanza, Carol Rhapsody, Divinum Mysterium, Communion
Five Baroquisms                     Gentry, 1972
   Air for Flute Stops, Andante Sostenuto, Les Fifres, Musette en Rondeau, Siciliano
Five Classical Airs for Organ      Word Music Company, 1966
   Rigaudon, Aria, Trumpet Tune, Arioso, Psalm XIX
   Trumpet Voluntary, Larghetto, Sketch in D Flat, Psalm XVIII, Trumpet Voluntary
   Trumpet Tune, Largo, Noel, Sicilienne, Caprice
Five Folk Hymn Orisons for Organ  Sacred Songs, 1966
   A Prayer of Aspiration, A Prayer for Guidance, A Prayer of Confidence, A Prayer of Consecration,
   A Prayer of Patriotism
Five Pieces on Gregorian Themes    Leeds, 1942-43
   Vexilla Regis, Dies Irae, Divinum Mysterium, Kyrie Eleison, Communion
Four Carol Preludes                Leeds, 1944
   Greensleeves, Spiritual, Chartres, Gwalshmai
Four Dubious Conceits              Flammer, 1952
   Cantilena, Les Petites Cloches, Nocturne (Night in Monterey), Marche Grotesque
Four Prayers in Tone               M. Witmark & Sons, 1951
   Repentance, Adoration, Supplication, Thanksgiving
Gentle Moods (originally "A Cheerful Earfull")  Gentry, 1971
   Autumn Soliloquy, Lilliburlero, Plaintive Blue, An Erin Lilt, Melody in Mauve
Greensleeves                      Leeds, 1944
Idyl (for Gaylord Carter)          Oliver Ditson, 1943
In Retrospect                     Sonos 1984
   A Joyous Procession, Rimembranza, Roundelay
Introspection                     Sacred Music Press, 1994
Leeds' Organ Selections by Richard Purvis,
   (same as Eleven Pieces for the Church Organist, MCA, 1957)
Lyra Davidica                     Leeds, 1943
Meditation on "Rockingham"        Fred Bock Music Company, 1985
Mixture IV                         Flammer, 1970
   Sarabande for a Day of Solemnity, Passapied for a Joyous Festival
Novelette                         Lorenz, 2008
Novelette III                     Lorenz, 2005
Organ Music from Grace Cathedral  The Sacred Music Press, 1969
   Cortège, Three Novelettes, Undulato, Toccata Marina, A Retrospection
   O Sacred Head, Now Wounded, Gwalshmai, Greensleeves, Carol Rhapsody, Lilliburlero
   Romanza, Wedding March, Communion, Melody in Mauve, An Erin Lilt
Partita on the Easter Chorale "Christ ist Erstanden"  M. Witmark & Sons, 1952
Prelude, Canzone, Capriccio, Lento, Toccata

Romanza (for Roland Diggle)  Sprague-Coleman, 1943

St. Francis Suite  J. Fischer & Bro., 1964
  Ascription, Hymn to the Moon, Earth Carol, Canticle of the Sun

Seven Chorale Preludes  Carl Fischer, 1949
  Fantasia (Ton-y-botel), Pastorale, Canzona, Grand Choeur, Contemplation, Poème Mystique,
  Toccata Festiva

Seven Folktone Poems for the Organ  Sacred Songs, 1968
  Of Moor and Fen, Brigg Fayre, Of Sea and Skye, A Highland Ayre, Of Banks and Braes, A Sussex
  Lament, From the Hebrides

Solemn Music, A  H. W. Gray, 1971

Suite for a Musical Clock (Handel, arr. Purvis)  Flammer, 1952

Sylvan Idyle, A, (for Gaylord Carter)  Gentry, 1973

Three Carol Preludes  Gentry, 1985
  Contemplation, Poème Mystique, Caravan of the Three Kings

*Three Christmas Preludes  Fred Bock, 2006
  Contemplation, Poème Mystique, Caravan of the Three Kings

Three Fanciful Concepts  Flammer, 1967
  Fête joyeuse, A Lamentation of Jeremiah, Rondo (for pedals alone)

Three Pieces for Organ  J. Fischer, 1954
  Prayer for Peace, Elegy, Capriccio (On the Notes of the Cuckoo)

A Trio of Contrasts  Flammer, 1965
  Pax vobiscum, Eklog, Fanfare

Two Liturgical Dances  Flammer, 1970
  Sarabande for a Day of Solemnity, Passepied for a Joyous Festival

Undulato  Lorenz

* currently in print

PUBLISHED WORKS FOR ORGAN AND OTHER INSTRUMENTS

Larghetto Cantabile, for classical guitar and organ  Apogee Press, 1971

Lyra Davidica, for brass, tympani and organ  Leeds, 1943

Petit Concert Champêtre, organ/harp/harpsichord  World Library, 1972

Suite for Piano and Organ: From the Sierra  Gentry Publications, 1970
  Bell Prelude, Pastorale d’Été, Capriccio Espagnole, Harmonies du Soir, Scherzo

UNPUBLISHED MANUSCRIPTS FOR ORGAN (AND MULTIPLE ORGANS)

Deliusness [n.d.]  Hommage à Frederic Delius, Fantasy for Organ and Harpsichord
Kalevala Mist, 1984

Melita Suite, 1978
  Introduction and Theme, Maestoso Bravura, Scherzetto, Cantabile, Finale

Soliloquy, 1991

Symphonic Suite for Three Organs (1991)
  Fêtes Joyeux, Rushing Rivulet, Cancion Catalan, Tarantella-Valsante
PUBLISHED RECORDINGS

1. **Aeolian-Skinner Presents The King of Instruments, 1953**
   Volume V--The Music of Richard Purvis; Grace Cathedral, San Francisco, California
   Partita on Christ ist Erstanden; Pastorale, Forest Green; Adoration; Divinum Mysterium;
   Capriccio on the Notes of the Cuckoo; Introit; Elevation

   High Fidelity Recordings, Inc., R-703
   Trumpet Tune (Purcell); Arioso (J. S. Bach); Greensleeves (Purvis); Processional (Shaw);
   Supplication (Purvis); Pavanne [sic] (Elmore; Capriccio [sic] on the Notes of the Cuckoo
   (Purvis); Toccata (5th Symphony, Widor)

   High Fidelity Recordings, Inc., R-704
   Marche Grotesque (Purvis); Sheep May Safely Graze (J. S. Bach); Pièce Héroïque (Franck);
   Cortège et Litanie (Dupré); Nocturne (Purvis); Les Petites Cloches (Purvis);
   Adagissimo (Dupré); Toccata Festiva (Purvis)

4. **Music For Christmas: Richard Purvis at the Organ in Grace Cathedral,**
   High Fidelity Recordings, Inc., R-705, 1959
   Adeste Fideles; Lo, How a Rose; It Came Upon the Midnight Clear; In Dulci Jubilo [sic] (Dupre
   (Dupré); Joy to the World; O Little Town of Bethlehem (Purvis arr.); O Little Town of
   Bethlehem (Redner orig.); Cortège et Litanie (Dupré); Christmas Cradle Song (Purvis); The
   First Noel; Carol Rhapsody (Purvis)

5. **Richard Purvis at the Grace Cathedral Organ, 1969**
   Word Records, Waco, Texas, WST-9033-LP
   Fanfare; Brigg Fayre; Les Petites Cloches; Greensleeves; Thanksgiving; Nocturne; Supplication;
   Of Moor and Fen; The Cuckoo

6. **The Organ Plays Golden Favorites**
   The Readers Digest Association, Inc., 1972
   Aeolian-Skinner Organ, Symphony Hall, Boston
   Serenade from "The Student Prince" (Romberg); March of the Toys (Herbert); Love Sends a
   Little Gift of Roses (Openshaw-Cooke); Musetta's Waltz, from "La Bohème" (Puccini); My Heart
   at Thy Sweet Voice, from "Samson and Delilah (Saint-Saëns); Grand March, from "Aïda" (Verdi)

   Alexander Memorial Organ, Grace Cathedral, San Francisco
   Overture to Act III, from "Lohengrin" (Wagner); Clair de lune (Debussy); In a Monastery
   Garden (Ketèlbey); Bridal Chorus, from "Lohengrin" (Wagner); Prize Song, from "Die
   Meistersinger" (Wagner); Goin' Home (Dvorak-Fisher)