

University of Michigan 49th Conference on Organ Music October 4–7, 2009

Marijim Thoene and Lisa Byers

The University of Michigan 49th Conference on Organ Music was dedicated to the memory of Robert Glasgow, brilliant organist and much loved professor of organ at the University of Michigan. The conference was truly a celebration of his life as a scholar, performer, and teacher. His *raison d'être* was music—organ music of soaring melodies and transcendent harmonies. He shared his passion with his students and has left a legacy that can be kept alive through generations of students who instill in their students his ideas.

During the conference, a wide variety of lectures were presented that reflected years of research, along with performances of four centuries of organ music. The conference was international in scope, with lecturers and performers from Germany, Italy, Hungary, Canada as well as the U.S. The themes of the conference focused on the influences of J. S. Bach and Mendelssohn's role in arousing public interest in Bach's music.

Sunday opening events

The initial event was an afternoon "Festival of Hymns" presented by the UM School of Music, Theatre, and Dance and the American Guild of Organists Ann Arbor chapter. Led by organist-director **Michael Burkhardt**, it featured the Eastern Michigan University Brass Ensemble, the Detroit Handbell Ensemble, and the Ann Arbor Area Chorus. Special care was taken to choose, coordinate, and connect music by Bach, Mendelssohn, and Charles Wesley. Many hymn verses and arrangement variations kept the presentation musically interesting and enjoyable. Dr. Burkhardt was masterful in his organ solos, accompaniments, improvisations, conducting, and composing. His leadership from the console was met with great enthusiasm from the appreciative, participating audience. (Review by Lisa Byers)

Sunday evening's organ recital program featured music of Spain and France performed by musicians from the University of Michigan's Historic Organ Tour 56 to Catalonia and France. **Janice Fehér** opened with an excerpt from a Soler sonata. **Gale Kramer** performed the "Allegro Vivace" from Widor's *Symphony V*, followed by **Joanne V. Clark's** rendering of the "Adagio" from Widor's *Symphony VI*. **Mary Morse** sang the versets of a Dandrieu *Magnificat* for which **Christine Chun** performed the alternate versets. **Timothy Huth** played a section from Tournemire's *In Festo Pentecostes*, and **Paul Merritt** closed the program with the Dubois *Toccata*. The various composition styles, registrations, and favorable interpretations performed excellently and sensitively on the Hill Auditorium organ were well received and greatly acknowledged by the audience. (Review by Lisa Byers)

Monday, October 5

Jason Branham, a doctoral student of Marilyn Mason, set the stage for celebrating not only Mendelssohn's two hundredth birthday but also his profound influence in bringing the forgotten music of J. S. Bach to the attention of Berlin and consequently to Western society. Branham's program was a reprise of Mendelssohn's Bach recital presented at St. Thomas-Kirche in Leipzig in 1840, performed to raise money to erect a monument to Bach in Leipzig: *Fugue in E-flat*, BWV 552; *Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele*, BWV 654; *Prelude and Fugue in A Minor*, BWV 543; *Passacaglia and Fugue in C Minor*, BWV 582; *Pastoral in F Major*, BWV 590; and *Toccata and Fugue in D Minor*, BWV 565. Branham's performance was exciting and earned him thunderous applause.

Christoph Wolff, Professor of Musicology at Harvard, eminent Bach

scholar, and author of *Johann Sebastian Bach: The Learned Musician*, gave four illuminating lectures during the conference. In his first lecture, "J. S. Bach the Organist—Recent Research," he presented arguments supporting Bach's authorship of the D-minor Toccata and Fugue, BWV 565, dated 1703. Peter Williams, who questioned Bach's authorship in the 1980s, maintained that such a piece could not have been composed by Bach before 1730. Wolff presented convincing arguments based on an analysis of both the oldest manuscripts and the music itself. He also drew a connection to the discovery in 2008 of Bach's *Wo Gott der Herr nicht bei uns hält*, BWV 1128, in the library of Halle University. The work is a large free fantasia dated ca. 1705, with compositional features shared by the *Toccata and Fugue in D Minor*. Wolff maintained that Bach, whose organ technique was formidable at an early age, composed the D-minor Toccata and Fugue to dazzle his audience with improvisatory passages borrowed from pieces like Buxtehude's D-minor Toccata. Wolff concluded that this work was written as a showpiece for Bach himself and not intended to be circulated and copied by his pupils; hence only one copy exists, in the hand of Johannes Ringk, dated 1730.

Michael Barone's handout listing Mendelssohn recordings was a testimony to his impressive knowledge of recorded organ music. Of the many Mendelssohn pieces he played, the most compelling was a 1973 recording of Mendelssohn's *Piano Concerto No. 1 in G Minor*, op. 25, played by Robert B. Pitman, piano, and George Lamphere, organ, at the Methuen Music Hall (Pipedreams CD-1002; live performance). The playing was stunning in its youthful exuberance and virtuosity.

Professor Wolff showed images of historical organs and churches connected to Bach, many of which unfortunately no longer exist, in his lecture "Silbermann and Others—The World of Bach Organs." The most riveting information regarding performance practice of the organ in Bach cantatas came from a view of the original Mülhausen balcony. The balcony was large enough to accommodate strings, woodwinds, brass, and choir; kettle drums were fixed onto the railings overlooking the audience. The



Marilyn Mason and Christoph Wolff



Hymn festival with Michael Burkhardt

choir stood below the instruments. The large organ was used—not a little *Positiv*. A performance incorporating this practice is on John Eliot Gardner's recording, *Bach Cantata Pilgrimage*, using the Altenburg organ in Cantata 146.

James Kibbie, Professor of Organ at the University of Michigan, announced

that his recordings of the complete organ works of Bach, performed on historical instruments in Germany, can be found at the website <blocknrecords.org>. The project is supported by a gift from Dr. Barbara Sloat in honor of her late husband J. Barry Sloat. Additional details are available at <www.blocknrecords.org/bach>.

What's in a logo?



The stability of an American company building pipe organs of exceptional quality since 1893.

Our ancestral motto: SCIENTIA ARTEM ADIUVAT (science aids art)

Dependability.
It's more than a promise. It's a mission.
It is AUSTIN.

www.austinorgans.com (860) 522-8293 156 Woodland Street, Hartford, Connecticut 06105



Performers from the UM Historic Organ Tour 56 to Spain and France (l-r): Tim Huth, Mary Morse, Christine Chun, Janice Feher, Joanne Vollendorf Clark, Paul Merritt, and Gale Kramer

Istvan Ruppert is Dean and Professor of Organ in the Department of Music of the Szechenyi University in Gyor, Hungary, and is also an organ professor at the Ferenc Liszt Academy of Music. His program included music by Mendelssohn, Karg-Elert, Max Reger, Liszt, and three Hungarian composers. He has formidable technique and played with great energy and abandon. It was refreshing to hear intriguing and unknown compositions by Frigyes Hidas, Zsolt Gárdonyi, and Istvan Koloss. The humor in Gárdonyi's *Mozart Changes* was appreciated. Ruppert is a real enthusiast in sharing music by Hungarian composers by graciously offering to send scores to those who wished to have them.

October 6

Prof. Wolff pointed out in his lecture "Bach's Organ Music—From 1750 to Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy" that Bach's *Clavier Übung III* offered a textbook of organ playing. Wolff lamented that Mendelssohn's inclusion of historical music by Bach, Handel, Mozart, and Haydn into the Gewandhaus concerts had unfortunate consequences in our concert programs today. While only five percent of his concerts were devoted to "historical composers," the remaining works were by contemporary composers, himself, Liszt, Schumann, and Schubert. Today our programs are mainly old music, with five percent devoted to new music.

Susanne Diederich received a PhD from Tübingen University. Her dissertation, "Original instructions of registration for French organ music in the 17th and 18th centuries: Relations between

organ building and organ music during the time of Louis XIV," represents some of the ground-breaking research on French Classical organs; it was published by Bärenreiter in 1975. In her lecture, "The Classical French Organ, Its Music and the French Influence on Bach's Organ Composition," Diederich pointed out that the French Classical organ was complete by 1665, and Guillaume Nivers' *First Organ Book* of 1665 contained the first description of all the stops. Her handout was especially informative in showing how Bach's table of ornaments in his *Klavierbüchlein für Wilhelm Friedemann* reflected his assimilation of ornament tables by Raison, 1688, Boyvin, 1689, and Couperin, 1690. **Robert Luther**, organist emeritus of Zion Lutheran Church in Anoka, Minnesota, played movements from Guilain's *Second Suite*, and **Christopher Urbiel**, doctoral student of Marilyn Mason, played movements from de Grigny's *Veni Creator*, Marchand's *Livre d'orgue Book I*, and Bach's *Fantaisie*, BWV 542, to illustrate features Bach borrowed from the French Classical repertoire.

Seth Nelson received his DMA in organ performance from the University of Michigan in 2003; he is organist at the First Baptist Church in San Antonio, Texas, and accompanist for the San Antonio Choral Society and the Trinity University Choir. His lecture/recital, "Music of the Calvinist Reformation: Introducing John Calvin's Theology of Music," included an explanation of why Calvin did not approve of the use of the organ in services. The reasons were many: the Old Testament mentioned its use, thus



Marilyn Mason, James Hammann, and Istvan Ruppert after recital in Hill Auditorium



Seth Nelson presenting "Music of the Calvinist Reformation"

it is not appropriate to use an old instrument in the new age; it is wrong to imitate the Roman Church; it is an unnecessary aid; it is too distracting; it is against Paul's teaching, "Praise should be in all one tongue." The highlight of the program was hearing Seth Nelson's spirited playing of Paul Manz's introduction to Calvin's setting of Psalm 42 and Michael Burkhardt's introduction and interlude to Calvin's setting of Psalm 134.

The evening concert featured Mendelssohn's six organ sonatas played by **James Hammann**, chair of the music department of the University of New Orleans. It was a rare treat to hear these technically demanding pieces all played at one sitting. Dr. Hammann's years of investment in this music is apparent. His recording of Mendelssohn's organ works on the 1785 Stumm organ in St. Ulrich's Church in Neckargemünd is available on the Raven label.



Seth Nelson accompanying singing

October 7

Tuesday morning began with the annually anticipated narrated photographic summary of European organs presented by **Janice and Bela Feher**. This year featured the UM Historic Organ Tour 56 to Northern Spain and France. The PowerPoint presentation included at least 600 photographs of organs in 35 religious locations and the Grenzing organ factory in Barcelona. The organs dated from 1522 to 1890 and included builders Dom Bedos, François-Henry, Louis-Alexandre, Clicquot, Cavaillé family, Cavaillé-Coll, Mouchereau, and Scherrer. The photos showed views of cases, consoles, mechanical works, stained glass windows, altar pieces, sacred art, and other enhancements. The Feheres provided a written list with detailed information for each picture. Their first book, with Marilyn Mason, is available by mail order from <Blurb.com>. (Review by Lisa Byers)

Stephen Morris is a lecturer in music at Baylor University, Waco, Texas; organist-choirmaster and director of music ministries at the Episcopal Church of the Holy Spirit in Houston, Texas; and maintains a studio as a teacher of singing, largely concentrating on early adolescent female voices. His presentation, "Acclaim, Slander, and Renaissance: An Historical Perspective on Mendelssohn," incorporated visual images and music. Among the lesser-known facts is that Mendelssohn was admired and befriended by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. They chose Mendelssohn's *March* from "A Midsummer Night's Dream" for their daughter's wedding. It became a favorite for productions of Shakespeare throughout Europe. However, due to anti-Semitism fueled by Richard Wagner, Mendelssohn's *March* was banned by Nazi Germany, and ten other composers were commissioned to replace it. Ironically, the Nazis preferred Bach above all composers, yet they never would have known about him without Mendelssohn. Morris noted that

Rodgers Instruments Corporation is honored to be the choice to supply digital voices for Parker Chapel at Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas.

The DSG Digital Sound Module provides up to 32 stops in its expanded version. Please contact Rick Anderson at 503-681-0483 for details.

Rodgers DSG Digital Sound Module

RODGERS

www.rodgersinstruments.com



Aaron Tan and Marilyn Mason



Aaron Tan

there is a great wealth of information on Mendelssohn research at <www.themendelssohnproject.org>.

Professor Wolff concluded his Bach-Mendelssohn lectures with a fascinating presentation, “The Pre-History of Mendelssohn’s Performances of the *St. Matthew Passion*.” He described Sarah Itzig Levy, Mendelssohn’s maternal great aunt and a famous harpsichordist, as the moving force who began the revival of J.S. Bach’s music. She introduced family members and friends to many of Bach’s works. She studied with W.F. Bach and commissioned C.P.E. Bach to write what turned out to be his last concerto: one for harpsichord, fortepiano, and orchestra. She regularly performed in weekly gatherings in her salon as soloist with an orchestra from 1774–1784. In 1823 Mendelssohn was given a copy of Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* by his grandmother, Bella Salomon, Sara Levy’s sister. It took Mendelssohn five years to persuade his teacher, Carl Friedrich Zelter, to have the Singakademie of Berlin perform it. The 19-year-old Mendelssohn conducted Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* to a packed audience that included the Prussian king. This performance enthralled the audience and thus began J. S. Bach’s reentry into the hearts of German people and to the world at large. Mendelssohn continued conducting performances of the *St. Matthew Passion* when he became director of the Gewandhaus in Leipzig in 1834, at the age of twenty-six. He reorchestrated it, shortened some pieces, omitted some arias, and introduced the practice of having the chorale *Wenn ich einmal soll scheiden* sung a cappella. That score and the performing parts are now in the Bodleian Library.

Eugenio Fagiani, resident organist at St. Michael the Archangel Catholic Church in Bergamo, played a recital at Hill Auditorium featuring Italian composers Filippo Capocci, Oreste Ravanello, Marco Enrico Bossi, and four of his own compositions. His playing was impeccable, and his compositions reflect the influence of one of his teachers, Naji Hakim, in style and use of exotic sounds and feisty, driving rhythms. His *Victimae Paschali Laudes*, op. 96, has a wide variety of striking timbres, ranging from a clarinet plus mutation stops to a big-band sound. His creativity as a composer was undeniable in his *Festive Prelude*, op. 99b, composed for this conference. Here the pedal occasionally sounded like

percussive drums. The work sizzled with energy and ended in a fiery toccata. Fagiani played “Joke,” another of his compositions, as an encore. The audience enjoyed his quotations from J. S. Bach and John Lennon. More can be learned about this impressive composer/organist at his website:

<www.eugeniomariafagiani.com>.

Michele Johns, Adjunct Professor of Organ at the University of Michigan, presented an interesting lecture on the changes of taste reflected in hymnals from four denominations over the past forty years. She noted that the texts have become more gender inclusive, hymns in foreign languages are included (“What a Friend We Have in Jesus” appears in four languages in the Presbyterian Hymnal), and there is greater variety in styles from “panty hose music”—one size fits all—to Taizé folk melodies; she proved her point that in today’s hymnals there is “Something Old, Something New.”

One of the most exciting recitals of the conference was played by **Aaron Tan**, a student of Marilyn Mason and a graduate student in the School of Engineering at the University of Michigan, organist/choirmaster at the First Presbyterian Church in Ypsilanti, and director of the Ypsilanti Pipe Organ Festival. His memorized recital shimmered with grace and energy: *Alleluyas* by Simon Preston; *Prelude and Fugue in G Minor*, op. 7, no. 3, by Marcel Dupré; *Sicilienne* from *Suite*, op. 5, by Maurice Duruflé; *Prelude and Fugue in A Minor*, BWV 543, by J. S. Bach; Moto ostinato from *Sunday Music* by Petr Eben; *Naiades* and Final from *Symphony No. 6* by Louis Vierne. The audience gave him a standing ovation.



Eugenio Fagiani

The concluding recital was played in Hill Auditorium in memory of Robert Glasgow by some of his former students. The program was a beautiful tribute to his life—a life devoted to the study, performance and teaching of organ music, especially the music of Franck, Mendelssohn, Vierne, Widor, Schumann, Liszt, and Brahms. The performers brought with them some of his spirit, some of his light, some of his joy in creating something that puts us in another dimension. His attention to the minutest detail of the score, his total commitment to breathing life into each phrase was mirrored in these performers:

Mark Toews, director of music, Lawrence Park Community Church, Toronto, past president, Royal Canadian College of Organists, *Variations de Concert*, op. 1 by Joseph Bonnet; **Ronald Krebs**, vice president, Reuter Organ Company, *O Welt, ich muss dich lassen*, op. 122, no. 11, *Fugue in A-flat Minor*, WoO8, by Johannes Brahms; **David Palmer**, Professor Emeritus, School of Music, University of Windsor, organist and choir director, All Saints’ Church, Windsor, Ontario, *L’Apparition du Christ ressuscité a Marie-Madeleine* by Olivier Messiaen; **Joanne Vollendorf Clark**, Chair of the Music Department, Marygrove College, Detroit, minister of music, Hartford Memorial Baptist Church, Detroit, *Pastorale*, op. 26, by Alexandre Guilmant; **Charles Miller**, minister of music and organist, National City Christian Church, Washington, D.C., *Pièce héroïque* by César Franck; **Joseph Jackson**, organist, First Presbyterian Church, Royal Oak, Michigan, “Air with Variations” from *Suite for Organ* by Leo Sowerby; and **Jeremy David Tarrant**,

organist and choirmaster, the Cathedral Church of St. Paul, Detroit, *Andantino*, op. 51, no. 2, and *Carillon de Westminster*, op. 54, no. 6, by Louis Vierne.

Professor Marilyn Mason made the 49th Conference on Organ Music at the University of Michigan a reality. She invested countless hours of planning and organizing into making it happen, because she has an insatiable thirst for learning and thinks “we all need to learn.” She has brought brilliant scholars and performers together for 49 years to teach and inspire us. The list includes such figures as Almut Rössler, Umberto Pineschi, Martin Haselböck, Todd Wilson, Janette Fishell, Madame Duruflé, Catherine Crozier, Guy Bovet, Peter Williams, Lady Susi Jeans, Wilma Jensen, Gordon Atkinson, and Marie-Claire Alain (to name only a few). We thank her for such priceless gifts. ■

Marijim Thoene received a D.M.A. in organ performance/church music from the University of Michigan in 1984. She is an active recitalist and director of music at St. John Lutheran Church in Dundee, Michigan. Her two CDs, Mystics and Spirits and Wind Song, are available from Raven Recordings. She is a frequent presenter at medieval conferences on the topic of the image of the pipe organ in medieval manuscripts.

Lisa Byers received master’s degrees in music education and organ performance from the University of Michigan, and a J.D. from the University of Toledo, Ohio. She is retired from teaching music in the Jefferson Public Schools in Monroe, Michigan, as well as from her position as organist/choir director at St. Peter’s Episcopal Church in Tecumseh, Michigan. She subs as organist in the Monroe area.

Photo credit: Bela Feher



PHOTO BY LEN LEVASSEUR; WIRSCHING (1904)

Register Now for THE ORGAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY’S 2010 NATIONAL CONVENTION *Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania*

MONDAY, JUNE 21 THROUGH FRIDAY, JUNE 25
Optional additional day ~ Saturday, June 26

The Organ Historical Society will hold its 2010 annual convention in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania from June 21 through June 25. Among the 26 organs featured will be those built by Joseph Harvey (1838), Farrand & Votey (1895), Hook & Hastings (1895 & 1928), Felgemaker (1872 and 1898), Wirsching (1904 and 1915), Austin (1905), Kimball (1907 and 1931), Aeolian (1909), Estey (1917), Aeolian-Skinner (1935/2007 and 1955), Beckerath (1962), Flentrop (1969), Möller (1970), and Holtkamp (1970). A special presentation and banquet will take place at historic Carnegie Music Hall.

For more information and online registration, visit our Web site

WWW.ORGANSOCIETY.ORG/2010