



THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

MARILYN MASON,  
organ

Wednesday, May 16, 1984  
8:30 pm  
Gartner Auditorium

Music by Contemporary Composers

Variations on a Recitative,  
Op. 40 (1941)

Arnold Schoenberg  
1847-1951

Organbook II (1971)  
Night Procession  
Toccata Satanique  
Last Rites (with electronic tape)

William Albright  
1944-

Intermission

Sailing to Byzantium  
for organ and electronic tape (1973)

Alden Ashforth  
1933-

Three Gospel Preludes  
Jesus Loves Me  
Shall We Gather at the River?  
Amazing Grace

William Bolcom  
1938-

MARILYN MASON holds the Doctor of Sacred Music degree from Union Theological Seminary. She is University Organist, Professor of Music, and Chairman of the Organ Department at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. She has been a guest professor at Columbia University and at Union Theological Seminary.

As a recitalist, Marilyn Mason has been heard throughout North and South America and Europe. She was the first American woman to play in London's Westminster Abbey, the first woman organist to play in Latin America, and the first American organist to play in Egypt. In addition to annual solo recital tours, she is also heard on the harpsichord in duo recital with violinist Pierre d'Archambeau.

A strong proponent of contemporary music, Marilyn Mason has commissioned and premiered over forty organ works. She is also a well-known lecturer and has served as adjudicator for most of the world's major organ competitions. She leads regular study tours of European organs.

The McMyler Memorial Organ  
by Holtkamp, 1971

This recital is presented as a part of  
The Celebrity Recital Series. It is  
made possible by the McMyler and  
Gartner Funds, and by the Anton  
and Rose Zverina Music Fund.

The use of cameras and tape recorders  
in Gartner Auditorium is prohibited.

PROGRAM NOTES

Provided by Marilyn Mason

Schoenberg: Variations on a Recitative

Published in 1947, this unusual and interesting work consists of a recitative theme, ten variations, a cadenza, and a fugue-finale. Schoenberg seems to reaffirm the credo here that good and beautiful music can still be written within tonal limitations. The opening theme presents both harmonic and melodic ideas which are all used in the subsequent variations. The variations also contain a "reactive theme," a series of little motives totalling thirty-seven notes and incidentally including all twelve notes of the chromatic scale. This may lead to the false impression that the work is based on a twelve-tone row. Because of the chromatic nature of the music, no key signature is used, but there is a strong and repeated reference to D minor.

Marilyn Mason studied with Schoenberg and developed her own registration for this piece under his direction. It was she who played it for him for the first time on the instrument for which it was written.

Albright: Organbook II \*\*

William Albright is Professor of Music and Associate Director of the Electronic Music Studio at the University of Michigan. He writes about this music:

"The generic term 'Organbook' is an adaptation of the popular French baroque term *livre d'orgue*. Like the centuries-old model, it is a collection of several pieces, each of which explores a single idea or sonority.

"'Night Procession' primarily employs the softest sounds of the organ. Flutes, strings, and celestes color the exposition of slowly-changing four/five-note chords that form the basis of the movement. The core of the piece, in fact, is a long harmonic sequence which is characterized by constant mutations of timbre; the effect is obtained by rapidly shifting keyboard changes and continual operation of the swell shades.

By way of contrast, several series of fleeting, vaporous roulades that seldom cover a span larger than an octave are interpolated into the overall texture.

"Toccata Satanique," with its constant devil's-trill-tremolo and joyful demonry, may well be an attempt to exorcise those fiendish virtuoso toccatas of Mulet, Widor, and others that seem to haunt all organists. The tremolo acts as a point of tangency between motion and stasis in the same way as the ostinatos of some of these display pieces. In several instances, the quickly alternating pitches turn into fast-moving figurations; in other places, they become motionless chords.

"Last Rites" adds the dimension of tape to the texture. Electronic sound caps the ferocity of the previous movement while retaining a basic similarity to organ timbre. The tape is largely drawn from purely electronic sources, although there is some manipulation of recorded organ material. In contrast to the other movements, the structure is fairly simple: large, uncomplicated blocks of sound juxtaposed and overlaid. The principal material is a descending cluster glissando."

Ashforth: Sailing to Byzantium \*\*+

Alden Ashforth is on the faculty of the University of California at Los Angeles. He writes:

"Yeats' poem 'Sailing to Byzantium' expresses a desire to leave behind the transient, temporal, sensual world and to retreat into the eternal world of the spirit, of art, and of intellect: 'the artifice of eternity.' His image of this unaging realm, 'the holy city of Byzantium,' was inspired when he read that in the Byzantine emperor's palace there was a tree of singing birds entirely wrought of silver and gold. The notion of a voyage from nature to art, from the world of reality to an artificial world existing outside of real time, struck me as a provocative musical scenario.

"The piece is in four sections. The first, suggesting the temporal world of the senses, includes

such real sounds as brooks, birds, and a melody hummed by a lyric tenor (Dennis Heath). In the second section, where both organ and tape are in transition to a different sort of world, the electronic sounds are constituted of materials created by encephalo-electronic (bio-feedback) means, whereby such dimensions as pitch, attack, and vibrato were produced by controlling electronic synthesizers directly by my own brain waves (amplified up to a million times). In the third section, the organ and tape achieve a condition of melodic and harmonic balance and stasis. The organ solo of the final section, transforming the opening melody through variation techniques, is ultimately joined by 'birds' that are entirely artificially wrought.

"The subjective process of psychological and spiritual transformation is the intended essence of this aural migration."

Bolcom: Three Gospel Prelude \*\*+

William Bolcom is Professor of Composition at the University of Michigan.

- \* Commissioned by Marilyn Mason and dedicated to her
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- + First Cleveland performance