

National Convention  
AMERICAN GUILD OF ORGANISTS  
July 3, 1986

MARILYN MASON  
UNIVERSITY ORGANIST  
THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Introduction (Fanfare), Variations and . . . . . Sir David Willcocks  
Fughetta on the Hymn Tune Jena (Breslau) (1986) (b. 1919)

*World Premiere*

Commissioned by the Detroit Chapter,  
American Guild of Organists

In the introduction to the *Variations upon Breslau*, each line of the hymn tune is announced in octaves on the pedals and developed in fanfare-like figures.

Four *Variations* follow. The work concludes with a *Fughetta* on a subject which is itself derived from the first four notes of the hymn melody.

- David Willcocks

Chasm (1986) . . . . . William Albright  
(b. 1944)

*World Premiere*

Commissioned by the Ann Arbor Chapter,  
American Guild of Organists,  
in conjunction with the Detroit Chapter.

As implied by the title, the sounds of the piece evoke vast spaces--such as Gothic cathedrals or canyons--through slow moving harmonic rhythm (while the tempo is fast) and a variety of echo effects. The score even calls for a distantly placed "echo instrument," chosen by the performer, that removes the music from its ordinary speaking position for two brief moments.

The tonal plan is simple: an opening in D modal-minor that unfolds slowly, and a closing in D major. Both of these areas are soft (pp); they are cleft through by a primitive loud section in C minor. The piece ends on a repeated low D-flat, figuratively filling in the gap between D and C.

- William Albright

Gospel Preludes, Book IV (1984) . . . . . William Bolcom  
(b. 1938)

Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child  
Sweet Hour of Prayer  
Fantasy on "O Zion Haste" and "The Church's One Foundation"

*World Premiere*

Commissioned by the Marilyn Mason Commissioning Fund  
with funds provided by Lorraine Ray  
Dedicated to Marilyn Mason

This is the last collection of Gospel Preludes, bringing the total to twelve. *Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child* was a reaction to the brutal end of Marvin Gaye, whose Motown career went beyond the more or less usual stereotype and whose personal life led to his murder. *Sweet Hour of Prayer* always has had a febrile intensity for me, and I set it with that mood in mind. The finale is a combined fantasy on *O Zion, Haste* and a gospel-influenced 5/4 setting of *How Firm a Foundation*, which caps the whole series.

- William Bolcom

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Sir David Willcocks is Organist-Choirmaster Emeritus of King's College, Cambridge, England.

William Albright is Professor of Composition at The University of Michigan.

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

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*Presented in celebration of forty years of teaching at  
The University of Michigan*

1946-1986

Aeolian-Skinner Organ

## CONVENTION EVENT—Thursday, July 3, 10:30 A.M.

Marilyn Mason, Organist  
Hill Auditorium, University of Michigan  
825 North University Street, Ann Arbor

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Introduction (Fanfare), Variations and Fughetta  
on the Hymn Tune Jena (Breslau) (1986)  
(world premiere)

Sir David Willcocks  
(b. 1919)

The hymn tune Breslau has been widely used in Christian worship. It is frequently sung to the hymns "Take up thy cross," the Saviour said" (C.W. Everest), "We sing the praise of Him who died" (T. Kelly) and "O God, in this thine hour of grace" (C.H. Boutflower). It is most familiar in the arrangement by Mendelssohn based on the melody from Christian Gall's *As hymnodus sacer* (Leipzig, 1625). But the original form of the melody, in triple measure, as found in *Geistliche Gesänge* (Leipzig, 1625), has an austere beauty, the three insistent repeated notes with which the tune starts being reiterated in the final phrase.

In the introduction to the *Variations upon Breslau* each line of the hymn tune is announced in octaves on the pedals and developed in fanfare-like figures.

*Variation I* is a two-part invention for manuals only involving bitonality.

In *Variation II* the melody is accompanied gently by flowing 6/4 chords, beneath which the pedal provides a syncopated bass.

In *Variation III* the melody is heard above rapid arpeggio figures and a descending staccato pedal bass.

The work concludes with a *Fughetta* on a subject which is itself derived from the first four notes of the hymn melody. A feature of the writing is the use of false relations (the simultaneous sounding of, or close juxtaposition of, major and minor thirds). After the exposition, various possibilities of stretti are briefly explored, after which an entry of the subject in augmentation in the pedals heralds a pedal cadenza. In the coda, in which the full organ is deployed, the hymn melody is combined with the fugue subject, bringing the work to a triumphant conclusion.

—David Willcocks

Commissioned by the Detroit Chapter,  
American Guild of Organists

Chasm (1986) (world premiere)

William Albright  
(b. 1944)

Commissioned by the Ann Arbor Chapter,  
American Guild of Organists,  
in conjunction with the Detroit Chapter,  
with support from Petty-Madden Organbuilders  
and the Michigan Council for the Arts

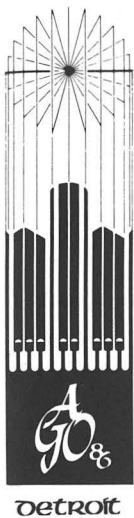


**Michigan Council  
for the Arts**

Gospel Preludes, Book IV (1984) (world premiere)

William Bolcom  
(b. 1938)

Commissioned by the Marilyn Mason Commissioning Fund  
with funds provided by Lorraine Ray  
Dedicated to Marilyn Mason  
(See article on Commissioning New Music, page 101.)





Marilyn Mason

with

Sir David Willcox

The AGO National Convention

1986

A.A.

Hill Auditorium

following the Mason concert.

She premiered her commission  
of Sir David's piece

# FORTY YEARS COMMISSIONING ORGAN MUSIC

Marilyn Mason

In 1946, as a fledgling teacher, it seemed to me that there was a dearth of contemporary music for my instrument. My teacher, Palmer Christian, had introduced the music of Messiaen to me in 1945. (The writer was later to play one of the first American performances of Messiaen's *La Nativité du Seigneur* in 1952, at the Church of the Holy Trinity, Brooklyn). I wanted to interest and encourage Americans to write for this great instrument, while aiming for diversity among composers and works.

I usually invited those who have not written at all for the organ or those who have written only a small amount of music. Two exceptions have been Jean Langlais and Leo Sowerby. I particularly invited Langlais to write a work which would be suitable for American organs.

I had been a friend of Sowerby's for many years and asked him to write for me. When he told me the work was finished, I visited him in Camp Wa-Li-Ro to see it. The particular work he had written was untitled; he did have the tempo marking of "Bright, Blithe and Brisk." I said, "I really like that for a title." He said, "Use it."

A commission may be born of one's interaction with a composer. For many summers, while studying toward a doctoral degree at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, I taught at Columbia University, where Henry Cowell was my colleague. A chance remark of mine, "How about an organ piece?" resulted in the *Chorale and Fuguing Tune* (1953).

A magical fall day in 1947 created the right atmosphere for a first commission. I was walking across the "Diag" of the Michigan campus after practicing at Hill Auditorium (best times: 4:30 A.M. till 9 A.M.). I met my composer-colleague Edmund Haines and said, "How about a work for the organ?" His reply, "I know nothing about the organ so I have never written organ music." "How about listening to some organ music?" I returned to Hill with the composer in tow: He listened to the *Fantasia in G Minor* of Bach. He smiled and said, "I am interested." As a result of that day, my very first commission, the *Suite for Organ* was born. It won the AGO composition award in 1948. It was later republished by H.W. Gray and titled *Three Pieces for Organ*.

The composer's verbal program note: "The Prelude is the opening scene: I imagine a young lady walking down Fifth Avenue in a hoopskirt. The Aria is the song she sings; the Toccata is a fine ending."

The only solo organ work of Ernst Krenek's was his *Sonata*. I felt this was not enough, so I invited him to write the



Ernst Krenek and Marilyn Mason on the occasion of concert honoring his 85th birthday

*Orga-Nastro* (1971), which I premiered at the University of Michigan. Another work I commissioned from him was the *Vier-Winde Suite*, which I premiered in Düsseldorf. Along with those commissions, came a splendid work from his wife, Gladys Nordenstrom, *Signals from Nowhere* (1973), which I premiered at Pomona College. After I played a concert in October 1985 honoring Krenek's 85th birthday, he wrote: "Marilyn Mason has commissioned two works from me and has also played them many times in my presence. I admired particularly the precise coordination of her playing with the electronic tape in my *Orga-Nastro* which obtained just recently a special success in Palm Desert."

Often composers have said to me that because they do not understand or know the organ, they feel that they cannot write for the instrument. It is the organist's responsibility to introduce the composer to the instrument, defining its possibilities and colors, and such basic items as the actual range of pedal and keyboard. Differences between mechanical-action and electropneumatic instruments should also be discussed.

Some commissions lead to others: When I invited Paul Creston to write, I made a special trip to the Actor's Chapel (St. Malachy's Church) in New York. After mass was over, I visited with him. There the idea of a multi-movement work was born and eventually the *Suite* (1957). On the basis of that, the Cleveland Chapter of the AGO commissioned the *Fantasia for Organ*.

Two spin-offs have resulted from my interest in commissions:

1. The Marilyn Mason Commissioning Fund was established in 1976 by friends and former students to honor my 30 years of teaching at the University of Michigan.
2. The International Organ Competition. Every year a work is commissioned by the Michigan organ faculty. Funds come from the Marilyn Mason Commissioning Fund. The work becomes a required piece in the final round of the competition.

My initial goal was to commission one work each year; sometimes there have been more than one. As a result of 40 years' association with the University of Michigan, I have to date commissioned 41 works for organ and have premiered almost all of them. (The Marilyn Mason Contemporary Series was published by H.W. Gray. Some of these compositions are in that series.)

## Organ Music Commissioned By Marilyn Mason

- Edmund Haines, *Suite for Organ* (1947); Glen Rock, N.J.: J. Fischer, 1948. (premiered, University of Michigan, 1947)
- Henry Cowell, *Chorale and Fuguing Tune* (1953); manuscript. (premiered, Columbia University, 1953)
- Raphael Valerio, *Toccata* (1954); manuscript. (premiered, Rollins College, 1959)
- Normand Lockwood, *Quiet Piece* (1954); manuscript. (premiered, Columbia University, 1954)
- Ben Weber, *Closing Piece*, Op. 36 (1954); New York: New Music Edition, Oct. 1954. (premiered, Columbia University, 1954)

Ross Lee Finney, *Fantasy* (1957); manuscript. (premiered, New York, 1957)  
 Florian Mueller, *Arioso and Toccata* (1957); manuscript. (premiered, University of Michigan, 1957)  
 Ulysses Kay, *Suite for Organ* (1958); manuscript. (premiered, New York, 1958)  
 Burrill Phillips, *Sinfonia Brevis* (1958); manuscript. (premiered, Columbia University, 1958)  
 Paul Creston, *Suite for Organ* (1957); New York: Ricordi, 1958. (premiered, University of Michigan, 1957)  
 Jean Langlais, *Miniature* (1958); New York: H.W. Gray, 1959. (premiered, University of Michigan, 1958)  
 Alec Wyton, *Dithyramb* (1958); New York: H.W. Gray, 1960. (premiered, New York, 1959)  
 John Cook, *Flourish and Fugue* (1959); New York: H.W. Gray, 1962. (premiered, New York, 1959)  
 Henry Woodward, *Chorale Prelude on "Leoni"* (1959); manuscript. (premiered, Rollins College, 1959)  
 John Beck, *Suite for Organ* (1964); manuscript. (premiered, AGO National Convention, Philadelphia, 1964)  
 Kevin Norris, *Concert Music for Organ and Strings* (1964); manuscript. (premiered, AGO National Convention, Philadelphia, 1964)  
 John Cook, *Toccata for Organ and Brass* (1965); manuscript. (premiered, University of Michigan, 1965)  
 Gerald Near, *Concertino for Two Organs* (1965); manuscript. (premiered, AGO Regional Convention, Denver, 1965)  
 Gerald Near, *Suite for Organ* (1965); New York: H.W. Gray, 1966. (premiered, AGO Regional Convention, Ann Arbor, 1965)  
 Iain Hamilton, *Threnos* (1966); New York: Associated Music Publishers, 1968. (premiered, Westminster Abbey, 1966)  
 Leo Sowerby, *Bright, Blithe and Brisk* (1966); New York: H.W. Gray, 1967. (premiered, University of Michigan, 1966)  
 Niccolo Castiglioni, *April is the Cruellest Month* (1968); manuscript.  
 William Albright, *Pneuma* (1966); Bryn Mawr, Pa.: Elkan-Vogel, 1969. (premiered, University of Michigan, 1969)  
 William Albright, *Organ Book II* (1971); Paris: Jobert, 1973. (premiered, University of Michigan, 1971)  
 Ernst Krenek, *Orga-Nastro* (1971); manuscript. (premiered, University of Michigan, 1971)  
 Gladys Krenek, *Signals from Nowhere for Organ and Electronic Tape* (1973); manuscript. (premiered, Pomona College, 1975)  
 Alden Ashforth, *Sailing to Byzantium for Organ and Electronic Tape* (1973); manuscript. (premiered, Kennedy Center, Washington, D.C., AGO Regional Convention, 1973)  
 Thomas Janson, *Celestial Autumn* (1973); Melville, N.Y.: Belwin-Mills. (premiered, University of Michigan, 1973)  
 Thomas Janson, *Sparkler* (1975); manuscript.  
 Ernst Krenek, *Four-Wind Suite, Op. 233* (1975); manuscript. (premiered, Johannerkirche, Düsseldorf, 1977)  
 Bengt Hambraeus, *Advent for Organ, Brass and Percussion* (1975); manuscript. (premiered, Association of Anglican Musicians, Christ Church, Grosse Pointe, Mich., 1977)



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Wallace Berry, *Variations on a "Martyrs" Tune* (1976); manuscript. (premiered, National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Washington, D.C., 1976)  
 Lawrence Schreiber, *Variations on Black American Themes* (1977); manuscript.  
 Normand Lockwood, *Concerto II for Organ and Brass* (1977); manuscript. (premiered, Colorado Women's College, 1978)  
 David Johnson, *Variations on William Billings's "Chester"* (1977); manuscript.  
 Vincent Persichetti, *Dryden Variations* (1979); manuscript. (premiered, AGO National Convention, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minn., 1980)

Nicholas Jackson, *Suite on the Magnificat* (1981). (premiered, St. David's Cathedral, Wales)  
 Ernst Leitner, *Four Dances for Pedals* (1982).  
 Edith Borroff, *Variations on Two American Tunes* (1982). (premiered, University of Michigan, 1982)  
 Edith Borroff, *An American Olio: Duet* (1983). (premiered, First Conference on Women in Music, University of Michigan, 1983)  
 William Albright, *De Spiritum* (1980). (premiered, Denver, Colo., 1986)

THURSDAY