

The Nashville Chapter
AMERICAN GUILD OF ORGANISTS

presents

MARILYN MASON

Monday, November 7, 1988, 7:30 p.m.
First Baptist Church
Nashville, Tennessee

Music Commissioned by Marilyn Mason and dedicated to her.

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| Michael McCabe (b. 1941) | Flourish and Chorale (1987)* |
| Edmund Haines (1914-1974) | Suite for Organ (1947)
I. Promenade
II. Air
III. Toccata |
| William Albright (b. 1944) | Organbook II (1971)
I. Night Procession
II. Toccata Satanique
III. Last Rites (<i>with electronic tape</i>) |

INTERMISSION

- | | |
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| Alec Wyton (b. 1921) | Dithyramb (1960) |
| William Bolcom (b. 1938) | Gospel Preludes, Book IV (1984) *
I. Sometimes I Feel Like a
Motherless Child
II. Sweet Hour of Prayer
III. Fantasy on "O Zion, Haste" and
"How Firm a Foundation" |

**Nashville Premiere*

All the above have been premiered by Marilyn Mason.

Schantz Organ, 1970
59 Ranks

Flowers by Mistletoe Florists, Division Street, Nashville.

MARILYN MASON

Marilyn Mason is University Organist and Chairman of the Organ Department of The University of Michigan. Her extensive career as concert organist, lecturer, adjudicator and teacher has carried her throughout the Western world. She was the first American woman to play in Westminster Abbey, the first woman organist to play in Latin America, and the first American organist to play in Egypt. During one single year, invitations took her to five different continents. She has served as adjudicator at almost every major competition in the world. Marilyn Mason's dedication to contemporary music is evidenced in the 40 organ works which she has commissioned and premiered. Currently she is pursuing her commitment to stylistic integrity through scholarly research into the construction and tonal design of historic European instruments. Recently sixteen research tours have focused on historic organs in France, North Germany, Saxony, and Spain.

In 1987 she was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Music degree by The University of Nebraska, where she had served as consultant for the Casavant mechanical action organ. Recently, she was chosen Performer of the Year by the New York Chapter of the American Guild of Organists.

Her discography includes music of Bach, Handel, Mondonville, and contemporary composers on Columbia and Musical Heritage labels.

Program Notes by Marilyn Mason

As a fledgling teacher at The University of Michigan in 1946, I realized that there was a dearth of contemporary concert music for the organ. I decided to encourage composers through commissions. Consequently, during four decades I have commissioned some sixty organ works both personally and through the Marilyn Mason Commissioning fund.

For my award concert in New York City, it was not an easy task to choose music from my list which includes Cowell, Krenek, Hambraeus, Castigioni and many others. The five works represent various aspects of composition for the organ. The Haines was the very first work commissioned, and the Bolcom one of the most recent.

Flourish and Chorale (1987*)

Michael McCabe (*b. 1941*)

The composer is organist and choirmaster at St. Barnabas Episcopal Church in Omaha, Nebraska. He was previously associated with Leo Sowerby and one of the last students to work with him. The composer describes the work:

"The music was written in A B A form and provides a splash of sound for the Fanfare Trumpet. The piece is most successful when there are antiphonal reeds which can be used in contrast."

Suite for Organ (1947)

Edmund Haines (*1914-1974*)

Promenade

Air

Toccata

The composer was Professor of Music and teacher of composition at The University of Michigan from 1941 to 1947. He joined the faculty of Sarah Lawrence College in 1948 and taught there until his death. This Suite won the American Guild of Organists Composition Award in 1948 and was the first work which I commissioned. The composer described the Suite to me with a smile: "An anachronism: -- A young lad walks down Fifth Avenue in a hoop skirt. The Air is the song which she sings when sad. The Toccata, a bright and happy ending . . ."

•• Intermission ••

Dithyramb (1960)

Alec Wyton (*b. 1921*)

Alec Wyton has had an illustrious and multi-faceted career as church musician, educator, composer, performer and administrator. He served St. John the Divine as Organist and Master of the Choirs, and was President of the American Guild of Organists. I commissioned this work for the occasion of my concert at St. John the Divine. The composer writes:

"The Dithyramb was a Greek choral lyric originating in the song and dance with which, from very early times, the Greeks celebrated important occasions. The chief features in the later history of the Dithyramb were greater metrical freedom and an elaboration of the music which began to assume a tumultuous character."

Organ Book II (1971)

William Albright (b. 1944)

Night Procession
Toccata Satanique
Last Rites

William Albright, who was born in Gary, Indiana, has performed as concert organist and pianist throughout the United States and Europe. As composer, he has produced works for almost every medium, including electronic, visual and theatrical, but he is best known for his keyboard music. William Albright is Professor of Music at The University of Michigan where he earned the D.M.A. in Music as a student of Ross Lee Finney and the Bachelor's and Master's of Music as a student of Marilyn Mason. Other composition teachers have included Olivier Messiaen, George Rochberg and Aaron Copland.

The composer writes about this work:

"The generic title Organbook is an adaptation of the popular French Baroque term "livre d'orgue" and, like the centuries-old model, 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- to five-note chords that form the basis of the movement. The core of the piece, in fact, is a long harmonic sequence characterized by constant mutations of timbre; the effect is obtained by rapidly shifting keyboard changes and continual operation of the swell shades. Interpolated in this overall texture by way of contrast are several series of fleeting, vaporous roudades that seldom cover a span larger than an octave.

"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, *et al.*, that seem to haunt all organists. In the same way that the ostinatos of some of these display pieces are used, the tremolo acts as a point of tangency between motion and stasis. In several instances, the quickly alternating pitches turn into fast-moving figurations; at 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.

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"

The composer is Professor of Music at The University of Michigan. He is a prolific and eclectic composer whose works embrace many compositional styles. He has received numerous awards and recognitions, most recently the 1988 Pulitzer Prize in Music.

Book IV is the second book of Gospel Preludes which I have commissioned. About Book IV, the composer writes:

"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."

*First performance in New York.