

The
Johann
Sebastian
Bach
1989

Michigan
Bach
Festival

1989 Michigan Bach Festival

GROSSE ILE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

7925 Horsemill

Grosse Ile

Sunday, March 19, 1989

7:00 PM

MUSIC OF J. S. BACH

Dr. Marilyn Mason

Fantasia and Fugue, g moll, B. W. V. 546

Partita, "O Gott du Frommer Gott," B. W. V. 767

Toccat, Adagio und Fugue, C dur, B. W. V. 564

Trio Sonata I, B. W. V. 525

Allegro

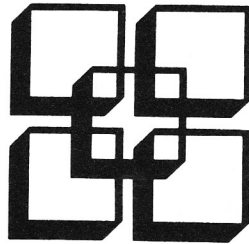
Adagio

Allegro

Toccat und Fugue, d moll, B. W. V. 565

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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 German, 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 and will present a concert of commissioned works on May 10, 1988, at the Riverside Church, New York City.

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



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Bach and His Music

Throughout his Career Bach was at different times a choir boy, a violinist, a conductor, an organist and a composer. Composition always occupied him: his total oeuvre is contained in 40 volumes of the Bach Gesellschaft; of those only five volumes are organ music. Yet it was with compositions for organ that he began his creative career; his last work, dictated on his deathbed, was a chorale prelude for the organ. Johann Sebastian Bach was the most creative member of a distinguished family of musicians. This Bach family was comprised of composers, teachers, and performers.

Bach's genius is especially displayed in his incredible variety of organ music: which is remarkably crafted. It is dramatic yet personal, rhetorical yet intimate.

It was my opportunity to perform the complete organ works at The University of Michigan and at The University of Texas in 1985 during the Bach tercentenary celebration.

The opening work of our Bach concert is the Fantasia and Fugue in G Minor, BWV 546. It is one of the "greats" of the master's 28 Preludes and Fugues. Probably the two movements do not belong together. The opening movement is massive and deliberate. The Fugue is on a Dutch dance melody: Bach composes an intricate and irresistible work upon this charming theme.

Bach's youthful years saw the creation of four partitas. A "partita" is a set of variations on a melody. In the C Minor Partita the melody "O God, Thou Faithful God" is heard in a straightforward hymn setting. Then follows eight variations on this melody.

From the Weimar period we heard the magnificent Toccata, Adagio, and Fugue. It was the English historian Terry who wrote about Bach: "His Weimar period revealed him as an organist of unrivalled technique, a composer for his instrument of the most inventive genius, an architect of contrapuntal form whose like had not and has not appeared."

Bach's final years were spent in the great city of Leipzig. From this period come his Six Trio Sonatas. We hear the first of the Six today. As the title tells, these are "trios." One part is for the right hand, one for the left, and one for the pedals. These three movements display Bach's musical mastery. They are what one calls pure trios: each voice including the pedals has the main theme at different moments. The opening movement captivates in its rhythmic precision; the Adagio's melismatic theme is inverted in its second section; the final Allegro is in bi-partite form and is sparkling and vivacious.

The magnificent Toccata and Fugue in D Minor concludes the concert. This is music of great dimension and ambience. The genius of the composer is displayed with every gesture. His craftsmanship is reflected in his differentiation of ideas and motifs, and his secure control of musical materials. Even the notes of the theme of the Fugue are found in the opening grand gesture of the Toccata.

Genius presides and we gratefully receive and joyfully celebrate!

-Notes by Marilyn Mason