

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 and presented a concert of commissioned works at the Riverside Church, New York City.

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

Arcadia Presbyterian Church

Organ Concert

with

Marilyn Mason

November 12, 1989

7:00 p.m.

Dr. Tom Miyake, Director

Tabitha Henken, Organist

Marilyn Mason

"Performer of the Year" — American Guild of Organists
Music of BACH and Living American Composers

PROGRAM

Flourish and Chorale (1987)*# Michael McCabe
(b. 1941)

Tocatta, Adagio and Fugue, BWV 564 J. S. Bach
(1685-1750)

Organ Book II (1971) *# William Albright
(b. 1944)

Night Procession

Tocatta Satanique

Last Rites

Tocatta and Fugue in d minor, BWV 565 J. S. Bach

Gospel Preludes, Book IV (1984)^{+#} William Bolcom
(b. 1944)

I. Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child

II. Sweet Hour of Prayer

III. Fantasy on "O Zion, Haste" and
"How Firm a Foundation"

*Commissioned by Marilyn Mason and dedicated to her

⁺ Commissioned by the Marilyn Mason Commissioning fund

[#] First performance on the West Coast

PROGRAM NOTES

by Marilyn Mason

We hear four composers this evening: Bach, and three living Americans. As a fledgling teacher at 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, since that time I have commissioned some sixty organ works both personally and through the Marilyn Mason Commissioning Fund, established in 1976 by former students and friends.

The American music heard this evening is from the concert I presented in New York in 1988 when I received the Performer of the Year award from the American Guild of Organists. It was not an easy task to select just one program of music from my list of commissioned works (which includes Cowell, Krenek, Hambraeus, Castiglioni, Bassett and others). The works heard tonight represent various aspects of composition for the organ.

Flourish and Chorale (1987)

Michael McCabe (b. 1941)

The composer is organist/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, written in ABA form, provides a splash of sound for the Solo Trumpet."

Toccatà C-dur, B.W.V. 564 (Toccatà, Adagio, and Fugue)

J. S. Bach (1685-1750)

Among Bach's 28 large preludes and fugues for the organ, B.W.V. 564 is unique, for it is the only work in three movements. It exhibits Italianate characteristics: a toccata with opening solo lines first in the manuals, then in the pedals, and a middle section which dialogues between different divisions of the organ. The slow middle movement is one of the most beautiful melodies from the pen of Bach. The concluding fugue is full of verve and brilliance.

Organ Book II (1971)

William Albright (b. 1944)

Night Procession

Toccatà Satanique

Last Rites (with electronic tape)

William Albright is Professor of Music at The University of Michigan. He has performed as concert organist and pianist throughout the United States and Europe. As composer, he has received many recognitions. He has produced works for almost every major medium including electronic, visual, and theatrical. Dr. Albright's extensive experience as an organist is evidenced in his compositions for the organ. I am pleased to have been one of his teachers and now to share his music with you.

The composer writes about this work:

"'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 into this overall texture by way of contrast are several series of fleeting, vaporous roulades that seldom cover a span larger than an octave.

"'Toccatà 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 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."

Toccatà d-moll, B.W.V. 565
(Toccatà and Fugue in D minor)

J. S. Bach

In this work, Bach has created one of the magnificent keyboard works of the Baroque period. Written in his early years, this music is a veritable catalog of rhetorical gestures: scalar passages, arpeggios, octaves, dialogues, echos, long trills, and cadenzas for hands and pedals. The Toccatà is a fantasy which introduces musical ideas, repeats them, and then moves on to others. The genius of the composer is displayed; his craftsmanship is reflected in the variety of motives he uses, and his secure control of compositional techniques. The theme of the Fugue is found in the opening grand gestures of the Toccatà. Though more strict in design, the Fugue possesses long echo sections and closes with a seventeen measure toccatà reminiscent of the first movement.

Gospel Preludes, Book IV (1984)
Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child
Sweet Hour of Prayer

William Bolcom (b. 1938)

Fantasy on "O Zion Haste" and "How Firm a Foundation"

The composer is Professor of Music at The University of Michigan. He is a prolific composer whose works embrace many compositional styles. He has received numerous awards, most recently the 1988 Pulitzer Prize in Music. Book IV is the second book of Preludes from William Bolcom 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* 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."