

# JOHN LINKER

## ORGANIST

28 JUNE 2017

1.10PM

ST MARY'S PRO-CATHEDRAL  
CHRISTCHURCH

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*This programme features music by Dutch composer Jan Nieland (1903-1963), who was a seminal figure in perpetuating the French and Belgian influences in Dutch organ music in the early twentieth century. He was a student of Brussels native Jean-Baptiste de Pauw (1852-1924) and served as organist of St Bavo RC Basilica (Haarlem), and organist of the Concertgebouw (Amsterdam). This music is a sampling of two recitals given along with a paper earlier this year as Mr Linker's final project for the degree Doctor of Musical Arts from the University of Cincinnati, College-Conservatory of Music (USA).*

### Select Organ Works of Jan Nieland (1903-1963)

**Marche Triomphale** (published by Heuwerkemeijer, Amsterdam)

- ABA form.
- Use of 'downward' motive, a frequent motive seen in Nieland's music.
- Chromaticism is another trait of Nieland's music, which is seen here.
- The only registrations indicated are 'Ped 16, 8' at the beginning of the B section, and later 'Tromp. Harm.' at the bridge to the final A section.

**Trois Morceaux pour Grand Orgue: 1. Méditation** (published by Schott Frères, Brussels)

- ABA form (B minor, B Major, B minor).
- Melancholy melody in B minor in duet with an accompanying voice in contrary motion.
- Some specific registrations are provided; others are implied.

**Toccata No. 2 pour grand orgue** (unpublished)

- This work appears to have had several revisions, including the title. *Toccata No. 2 pour grand orgue* replaces the title *Etude Concertante*.
- ABA form.
- Oscillating thirds of semiquavers provide most of the accompaniment over an austere, slow melody in the Pedal.
- The use of the pedal is much more integral in this work than in many of Nieland's other works. Like a French toccata, the melody is often in the feet.
- Several nods to contemporary French composers are evident. The texture from mm.45-53 bears a striking resemblance both in rhythm and contour to Henri Mulet's (1878-1967) *Tu es Petra*. The three-against-two rhythms from in the B section, most notably with the Pedal octave leaps, bear a resemblance to works by Charles-Marie Widor (1844-1937) and Louis Vierne (1870-1937).
- Registrations follow the French symphonic directives of *fonds et anches*, with occasional pitch specificity.

**Ciaconna e Fuga** (published by Heuwerkemeijer, Amsterdam)

- A ciaconna is a set of variations over a ground bass. Whereas the similar form of passacaglia begins on an anacrusis (upbeat), a ciaconna characteristically begins on the downbeat.
- The theme is 14 measures in length.
- Similar to Bach's Passacaglia, the variations feature increasingly faster note values.
- The fugue subject bears a resemblance to the ciaconna theme, though mainly in mode.
- After the exposition, the development takes the subject through a variety of keys including F Major, Bb Major, G minor, and a chain of fifths leading to the tonic. The ciaconna theme appears in the pedal supported by the subject in the tonic.
- The final section is the ciaconna theme supported by a reharmonised chordal accompaniment.

- The only registration given by Nieland is *Pleno* just before the final statement of the theme at the end.

#### **Intermezzo** (unpublished)

- A 56-measure character piece, all derived from the initial motive heard in the first measure.
- Specific registrations (in French) along with manual indications (I, II, III).

#### **Fantasia e Fuga sopra B-A-C-H** (published by Heuwerkemeijer, Amsterdam)

- B-A-C-H motive is B-flat, A, C, B-natural. (B-flat is known as B in Dutch and German nomenclature.) Nieland follows a long tradition of using this motive, honouring the great composer Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)
- Opening is in five-voice texture.
- Pedal is generally used for pedal points but participates fully in the fugue exposition.
- This contains perhaps the most frequent key signature changes in Nieland's oeuvre, with 24 changes of key signature throughout a work spanning 220 measures.
- Nieland gives no registrations, only dynamics and French indications of manuals.
- With frequent indications of *stringendo* and *rallentando* in Nieland's music, it is suspected that Nieland's own interpretation of his music to be free with flexible tempi.

## **JOHN LINKER**

John Linker is Director of Music at ChristChurch Transitional Cathedral (appointed 2014) where he leads the oldest musical entity in New Zealand, the ChristChurch Cathedral Choir. Concurrent to his Cathedral duties, John has the pleasure serving as Music Director for Christchurch City Choir (appointed 2016), an enthusiastic group of 70+ singers committed to the highest artistic excellence. Both the Cathedral Choir and the City Choir are integral to the religious, artistic, and musical life of the Canterbury region, and provide a sense of cultural stability in the ever changing landscape of Christchurch.

A native of Princeton, Illinois, USA, John holds music degrees from Northern Illinois University and Chicago Musical College (Roosevelt University). He is currently a candidate for the Doctor of Musical Arts degree at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. John holds memberships and has held leadership positions in the Royal School of Church Music Canterbury Branch, the New Zealand Organ Association, the American Guild of Organists, the Association of Anglican Musicians, and Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia Music Fraternity.

Prior to coming to New Zealand, John led choir programmes in Kentucky and Illinois to critical acclaim. An active organist, John has performed throughout the US, the UK, Europe, and New Zealand, and was recently a featured performer for the New Zealand Organ Association National Congress. In addition to teaching, John is passionate about chamber music and collaborative music making. His greatest joy is any adventure with his wife Molly and their daughter Lila, and family cat Raphael.

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