

JOHN KEVIN LINKER

ORGANIST

20 OCTOBER 2009

12:10PM RECITAL

HUGHES AUDITORIUM
ASBURY COLLEGE
WILMORE, KENTUCKY

Felix MENDELSSOHN (1804-1847)

Sonata III, Op 65, No 3 (1844)
I. Con moto maestoso
II. Andante tranquillo

Charles Villiers STANFORD (1852-1924)

Six Short Preludes and Postludes, Set 2, Op 105 (1908)
III. Lento
VI. Allegro

Robert SCHUMANN (1810-1856)

Fugue I on the Name BACH, Op 60 – Langsam (slow); Nach und nach schneller und starker (little by little faster and stronger)

PROGRAM NOTES



Felix Mendelssohn (1804-1847)

Mendelssohn was born in Germany but was most admired, in fact revered, as an organist and conductor in his adopted home of England. He would often perform very long recitals, and there is a popular story of a performance at St Paul's Cathedral that went so long the verger ordered the organ pumper to leave the bellows, causing a confusing and abrupt conclusion to the recital. A particular London publisher was aware of Mendelssohn's great following and commissioned him to write some organ works. Within a year's time Mendelssohn produced his Six Sonatas, opus 65.

Mendelssohn's Six Sonatas for Organ appeared in print in London, Leipzig, Milan, and Paris in September 1845. Following a most noble processional march, Mendelssohn weaves the sombre tune of Martin Luther's great chorale *Aus tiefer Not* (a paraphrase of Psalm 130: From deepest woe I cry to thee) into the inner fugal sections of the first movement of **Sonata 3**. The march returns triumphantly in response. The ensuing movement bespeaks a quiet calm with Mendelssohn's trademark luscious harmonies.



Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924)

The only child of John James Stanford, one of Dublin's most eminent lawyers, and his second wife, Mary (née Henn), who also originated from a distinguished Irish legal family, Stanford grew up in a highly stimulating cultural and intellectual environment made up of his father's friends, most of whom emanated from the ecclesiastical, medical or judicial professions. His

home, at 2 Herbert Street, was the meeting-place of numerous amateur and professional musicians – his father, a capable singer and cellist, among them – and on various occasions celebrities came to the house.

Stanford came to England in 1870 to study in Cambridge, and quickly made his mark as composer of instrumental and choral music. In 1874 he was appointed organist of Trinity College, Cambridge, and appointed professor of music in 1887 at the age of 35.

The two movements from the Six Short Preludes and Postludes heard today closely resemble Mendelssohn's third Sonata. **Lento** sets a mood of calm serenity prior to any worship service, much like Mendelssohn's *Andante tranquillo*. **Allegro** is in effect a large ABA form, and Stanford could well have used Mendelssohn's *Con moto maestoso* as a model. While Stanford's music may not have the text book contrapuntal intricacy of Bach, he uses harmonic and formal language akin to Mendelssohn, but with a decidedly English (or perhaps Irish) accent.



Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

Like so many eccentric artists, German composer Robert Schumann spent much of his life questioning his own sanity. Indeed his life was filled with melodrama. The emotional high points were periods in which he was most compositionally productive, and the times of depression saw very little flowing from his compositional pen.

During the winter of 1845 Schumann was able break one particular bout of depression by delving into the study of counterpoint, and together with his wife Clara began contrapuntal composition exercises. Schumann had a fixation on works of J S Bach, and possibly suffered an “anxiety of influence” of sorts with Bach, a similar relationship that symphonic composers after Beethoven had with their master on a pedestal. Considering Schumann's admiration for Bach, is only fitting that his only pieces he composed for the organ are six fugues on the name B-A-C-H. In the German musical alphabet, B-flat is called “B”; A-natural is common to our “A”, as is C-natural. B-natural, however, is called “H”. Countless composers have written pieces (fugues in particular) based on this motive of B-flat, A, C, B-natural, or “B-A-C-H”, of course in reverence to the great master Johann Sebastian Bach.

Prior to composing the Six Fugues, however, Schumann rented a pedal piano to attach to his grand piano so that he may practice the pedals and become more acquainted with organ technique. The popularity of the pedal piano was fleeting, as it was primarily a home practice instrument for organists, and very little literature was specifically written for the instrument. Schumann was intrigued enough with the instrument to compose his Studies, opus 56 and

Sketches, opus 58 for this instrument, and it is apparent that Schumann hoped the pedal piano would enjoy a longer period of popularity than it did. The advent of automatic winding for church organs soon outlined the demise of the pedal piano.

All of the Studies are canons, meaning a second voice follows the first voice verbatim, usually at the octave or at the fifth. Some of the pieces employ a technique that is idiomatic to the organ, while others more closely resemble piano music (the Studies and the Sketches were, after all, intended for performance on the pedal piano).

The Sechs Fugen über den Namen BACH, opus 60, are in homage to J S Bach, and mark the pinnacle of Schumann's contrapuntal writing. The two fugues performed today are very different, though based on the same subject. **Fugue I** is marked by a slow tempo, and the given the chromatic nature of the subject (clearly audible from the first measure) invites luscious harmonic development. Schumann creatively achieves a natural crescendo throughout by elevation of pitch register. Schumann was daring to include octave pedalling in anticipation of the stunning deceptive cadence into the five-bar coda. A tonic pedal point provides gravitational stability through the final chromatic moments of the coda.

JOHN KEVIN LINKER

A native of Princeton, Illinois, John received a Bachelor of Music degree from Northern Illinois University (DeKalb) in 1997 where he studied organ with Robert Reeves and Richard Hoskins, and a Master of Music degree from the Chicago Musical College (Roosevelt University) in 2003, an organ and harpsichord student of David Schrader. He is currently pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts degree at the University of Cincinnati (College-Conservatory of Music) where he is an organ student of Roberta Gary. At CCM Linker has served as staff accompanist for the University Men's Chorus, and has performed with the CCM Chorale, CCM Chamber Singers, and as organ soloist with the CCM Philharmonic. Linker was first place winner in the annual Strader Organ Competition at CCM in 2004.

Since 2001 Linker has been Organist/Choirmaster of the Church of the Good Shepherd (Episcopal) in Lexington, Kentucky, where he leads a vibrant choir program of professional and volunteer singers of trebles and adults. In addition to the usual rigorous rehearsal and service schedule, the Choir has performed in concert numerous masterworks, including Maurice Duruflé, *Requiem*, Op. 9, J S Bach, *Magnificat in D*, BWV 243, Leonard Bernstein, *Chichester Psalms*, Mozart, *Requiem*, K 626, and recently Benjamin Britten, *Rejoice in the Lamb*. National and international tours also occupy much of the Choir's time, and under Linker's leadership the choir has honored four English Cathedral residency invitations, (Gloucester Cathedral, 2003; Lichfield Cathedral, 2006; Durham Cathedral 2006; Ely Cathedral 2009). The Choir has also made many stateside tours including Atlanta, Chicago, Washington DC, New York, and all around Kentucky.

In addition to church work, Linker is increasingly busy as a recitalist and chamber musician, making numerous tours in the United States and abroad. He is an active member of the Association of Anglican Musicians, the American Guild of Organists (former Dean of the Lexington Chapter), and Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia music fraternity.

Linker is married to Lexington native Molly McCann Linker, and both are proud guardians to two lively felines, Nigel and Pierre.

For a full listing of John's professional appearances and Good Shepherd Choir's activities, please visit: www.johnlinker.com.