

JOHN KEVIN LINKER

ORGANIST

15 MARCH 2009

5:00PM EVENSONG

6:00PM RECITAL

ST JAMES' CHURCH
HENDERSONVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

Johann Sebastian BACH (1685-1750)

Cantata No. 29: Sinfonia

Maurice DURUFLÉ (1902-1986)

Suite pour Orgue, Opus 5

Prélude

Sicilienne

Toccata

PROGRAM NOTES

CANTATA NO. 29: SINFONIA

J.S. BACH
(1685-1750)

Cantata No. 29 (which is also BWV 29, We thank thee, O God, we thank thee) is one of a number of cantatas J.S. Bach composed for the ceremonies attending the installation of new members of the Leipzig city council (other examples are cantatas Nos. 119 and 120). An important part of these ceremonies, which traditionally took place at the end of August, was the church service held at St. Nicholas'. The instrumentation is similar to a number of Bach's cantatas: chorus, soprano, alto, tenor, bass, 2 oboes, 3 trumpets, timpani, organ, and strings. Bach composed the present work for the event in 1731, the service taking place on August 27 that year. In keeping with the festive and ceremonial pomp of the occasion, Bach lavishly scored his cantata for an orchestra including three trumpets, timpani, two oboes, strings, and continuo bass, and vocal forces including the usual four-part chorus, and soprano, alto, tenor, and bass soloists. An unknown librettist provided the text glorifying the power of God and extolling him to protect "town and palaces."

The opening sinfonia, like a praeludium, essentially sets the key and mood of the choral movements that follow. The sinfonia for Cantata 29 is in the form of a remarkable arrangement of the Prelude from the Violin Partita in E major, BWV 1006. Obligato organ receives the violin part, the material largely imitated in the orchestral parts to produce a concerto-like structure. The contour of the opening motive is simple and clearly spells out D major within the first measure. Pedal points abound, first heard in the tonic, and after a brief interlude, in the subdominant. Key areas of B, E, as well as carefully placed chromaticism give the movement tension that is finally released after returning to the tonic key of D major. Exuberance and triumph best characterize the mood of this delightful short sinfonia.

SUITE POUR ORGUE, OPUS 5

PRÉLUDE
SICILIENNE
TOCCATA

MAURICE DURUFLÉ
(1902-1986)

Maurice DURUFLÉ was appointed organist of St Etienne-du-Mont (Paris) in 1930 and from 1953 shared this post with his wife Marie-Madeleine Duruflé-Chevalier. As a boy Duruflé attended Rouen Cathedral Choir School and it was no doubt during this time that his love of the organ and Gregorian chant were established. A most unfortunate auto accident in 1975 put an end to Maurice's career of performing and composition, though Marie-Madeleine was to recover sufficiently and returned as organist of St Etienne-du-Mont and enjoyed a fruitful concert career. Comparatively very few composers have invested so much time and consideration in the relatively small output of music that

Duruflé generated, but respectively there can be very few composers who have produced such high quality workmanship within a small opus list.

The Suite for Organ, published in 1934, is considered the pinnacle of Duruflé's organ works. The Prélude, set in the key of e-flat minor, is dark and brooding with its ever-present dominant of e-flat, and is a single theme presented in three successive expositions, completed by a long recitative developing the first notes of the theme. It is especially in this movement that Duruflé's influence by Gregorian chant is most evident. Even from the first few measures one can visualise a vast cathedral whose very voice is Gregorian chant resonating through the long nave, and even see the clouds of incense wafting around the magnificent stone pillars. This is certainly music influenced by a time when it was expected that church would be awesome and maybe even just a bit spooky.

The delightful Sicilienne is the most impressionistic movement of the three and uses a rather dreamy harmonic language that is akin to Debussy and Ravel (though Ravel is known to have rejected impressionism), in a most tender and graceful manner.

Duruflé was never satisfied with the Toccata, in fact after its publishing and numerous revisions he refused to ever perform for the recordings he made with his wife, lest the piece should prove to be imperfect in some way. The Toccata begins with an introduction that sets up the vigorous rhythm, which then explodes into a melody given to the pedals. A second theme is introduced in the middle, then an embellished return to the first theme, and finally a conclusion that juxtaposes both themes giving rise to a thrilling and most climactic ending in B major.

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*, and Mozart, *Requiem*, K 626. National and international tours also occupy much of the Choir's time, and under Linker's leadership the choir has honored three English Cathedral residency invitations, (Gloucester Cathedral, 2003; Lichfield Cathedral, 2006; Durham Cathedral 2006). The Choir has also made many stateside tours including Atlanta, Chicago, Washington DC, and all around Kentucky. This past summer the choir toured to New York, singing services in St Thomas Fifth Avenue and the Cathedral of St John the Divine, and this summer will be traveling to England for a residency in Ely Cathedral.

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 engaged to Lexington native Molly McCann, 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.