

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
PRINCETON, ILLINOIS

11 JULY 2007

7:00 PM

JOHN KEVIN LINKER, ORGANIST

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

Johann Sebastian BACH (1685-1750)

Two settings of *Diess sind die heil'gen zehn Gebot'* (These are the Holy Ten Commandments) from *Clavierübung*, 1739

Cantus firmus in canon on two manuals and pedal, BWV 678
Fughetta, BWV 679

Passacaglia c-moll, BWV 582

Robert SCHUMANN (1810-1856)

Canon IV in Ab Major for Pedal Piano, Op 56 – Innig (affectionate); Etwas bewegter (a bit stronger)

Canon V in B Minor for Pedal Piano, Op 56 - Nicht zu schnell (not too fast)

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)

A common thread through today's program is a connection by each of these composers to each other, and ultimately with Johann Sebastian Bach. Today we owe a great deal of credit of our knowledge of Bach to Felix Mendelssohn, who, in entertaining his own interest in Bach's work, organized and conducted a performance of *St Matthew Passion*, in March 1829, thus generating enthusiasm in Bach's music that has trickled down to our generation.

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.



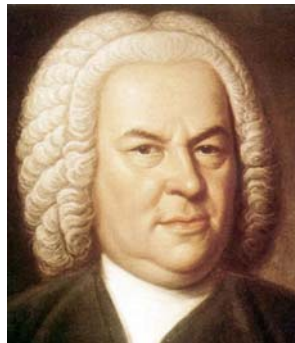
Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924)

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 resembles 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.



Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

The two settings of *Diess sind die heil'gen zehn Gebot'* represent two contrasting treatments of a chorale by the master Johann Sebastian Bach. Perhaps they represent two different commandments; perhaps they are simply representing the compositional whim of Bach on any given day. Regardless of their true meaning to Bach himself, they are both artistic marvels. The first setting can be regarded as rather sentimental. The chorale is heard in the left hand (in strict canon throughout) while the right hand and pedal play delicate figurations with frequent scalar passages as if the accompaniment were improvised. The second setting is a fughetta for manuals alone, and bounces merrily along in 12/8 meter.

One of the great master's most important and impressive works, the famous *Passacaglia* is perhaps only matched in popularity by his *Tocatta and Fugue in d-minor*. *Passacaglia* comes from the Spanish expression *passar una calle* ("walking across the street"). The dance form of *Passacaglia*, which is characterised by 3/4 time and has recurring theme of 4 or 8 bars, has been around for centuries, and musicians enjoyed writing or improvising variations on a ground bass. Upon completion of the 21 variations of the *Passacaglia*, a driving double fugue (two contrapuntal themes presented simultaneously) expands upon ideas alluded to in the first movement, and a rousing conclusion is reached only after landing on a stunning Neapolitan sixth chord.



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).

Canon No. 4 in A-flat Major begins very serenely with repeated left hand chords with the canon at the distance of three measures and at the interval of a fifth. The first section closes with a deceptive cadence to the dominant of the relative minor, trumpeting in a much more turbulent and restless dialogue of the canon, surrounded by an anxious fury of chromatic figuration. The pedal part also plays an important role in

this chromaticism, eventually heroically leading the way back to the home key of A-flat. A short coda gently lays all themes to rest.

Canon No. 5 in B Minor is perhaps the most frequently performed of the canons, and Clara Schumann once wrote that No. 5 was Mendelssohn's favorite of the canons. In contrast to the vocal quality of canon 4, No. 5 is much more like an instrumental scherzando with its staccato sixteenth notes found throughout. The canon is between the upper and middle voices at the octave, placed at the distance of one measure. Short chordal inserts announce the beginning of new phrases, while grace notes give a sense of levity that is not found in any of the other canons. It seems that Schumann refined his approach to cadential formulas in this short piece, as the second voice catches up with the first only on the last chord of the piece, solemnly resting in a B minor chord.

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.

From 1993-1996 Linker was Director of Music & Organist at St Mary's R C Church in Elgin, and from 1997-2001 was Organist & Choirmaster of St Charles' Episcopal Church in St Charles. In 2001 Linker was appointed 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. The choir maintains a rigorous rehearsal and service schedule, and sings two major concerts annually. Recent major works performed by the Choir include Maurice Duruflé, *Requiem*, Op. 9, J S Bach, *Magnificat in D*, BWV 243, and Leonard Bernstein, *Chichester Psalms*. The Choir has made two international tours under Linker's leadership, singing in Gloucester Cathedral in 2003 and in Lichfield and Durham Cathedrals in 2006. The Choir is scheduled to make appearances in New York in 2008 and Ely Cathedral (England) in 2009.

Linker is a past Dean of the Lexington Chapter of the American Guild of Organists, and currently serves in the capacity of Registrar. Other recent projects include the forming of a new professional choir in Lexington known as the Lexington Bach Choir, for which Linker serves as Assistant Artistic Director.

John lives in a small 80-year-old bungalow home just a few blocks from Good Shepherd Church on a quiet street with his piano, harpsichord, and two overweight cats Nigel and Pierre, who, when not napping, are participating in musicological research.