A Musical Meditation On Good Friday Themes March 29, 2024 at 6:30 PM Käthe Wright Kaufman, organist Glenn Memorial United Methodist Church

Pari Intervallo (1980) Arvo Pärt (b. 1935)  
  
*For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord.* -Romans 14:8

Five settings of *Jesu, meine Freude* (“Jesus, my joy”)

* + J. S. Bach (1685-1750)
  + Johann Ludwig Krebs (1713-80)
  + Hermann Finzenhagen (1825-1914)
  + Marcel Dupré (1886-1971)
  + Sarah Rimkus (b. 1990)

Vexilla Regis Jeanne Demessieux (1921 – 1968)

**Program Notes**

Several of the pieces on today’s program are meditative in nature. Feel free to allow your mind to wander and your eyes to close as you consider the themes of the *Triduum* and their relevance to you, our church, and our world today.

**Arvo Pärt’s** compositional style, called *Tintinnabuli*(from the Latin *tintinnabulum*, “a bell”) is built on the sanctity of pure sound and harmony. **Pari intervallo** was initially composed as music for four parts (without specifying the instrumentation) and was premiered at the first concert of *tintinnabuli* works by the Estonian ensemble Hortus Musicus in 1976. It was set by the composer for organ in 1980. The work was composed on the occasion of the death of Pärt’s stepfather, and he paired the music with an excerpt from Paul’s letter to the Romans. The musical material follows the meaning of the title (*pari intervallo*– in Latin “in the equal distance”) and has been built on two strictly parallel voices, whose distance from each other remains the same throughout.

The next four pieces are all based on the German hymn tune, ***Jesu, meine Freude***, the text of which was written by Johann Franck in 1650 with a melody by Johann Crüger. The words address Jesus as our joy and support, against enemies and the vanity of existence. You can follow along with the tune in our hymnals at UMH #532.

The first setting is by J. S. **Bach**, set in the context of a fantasia. Amidst Bach’s contrapuntal flurry of quickly moving sixteenth notes, you will hear the chorale tune in slow notes, passed to a different voice for each phrase. The overall mood exhibits the *Freude* (joy) mentioned in the title. However, just past the midpoint of the piece, the tempo abruptly slows, and the mood becomes serene and tender. This corresponds to the text (included in Bach’s score) “Lamb of God, my bridegroom, there shall be for me on earth nothing dearer than you” and relates the bittersweetness of Jesus’ sacrifice for us.

The second setting of the chorale is by **Krebs**, Bach’s student. The piece is in three short sections: first, a Prelude introduces the tune’s general tonality and sense of drama. Next, the chorale is presented in a solo voice above active figuration in the accompaniment. Finally, the chorale is played *alio modo* (“in another way”), this time in a more typical hymn texture. Krebs provides the tune and bass notes along with musical figures, which the organist is left to realize into a four-part texture.

The third setting of *Jesu, meine Freude* jumps ahead around a century to the German Romantic period and the music of little-known composer Carl Hermann Ludwig **Finzenhagen.** Finzenhagen worked at the Jacobikirche in Magdeburg (which no longer exists; it was destroyed in air raids in 1945). His setting is a lament; it uses suspensions, descending “sigh” motives, and poignant harmonies to show the melancholy of the tune.

The fourth piece is by composer Marcel **Dupré**, whose brief setting was published in 1931 as part of his collection of 79 Chorales for the organ. Dupré gives the chorale melody to a reed in the tenor voice, while the outer voices (in the right hand and pedals) play parallel thirds and sixths, creating surprising harmonies as they transverse the keyboards.

The final setting of the chorale is by Dr. Sarah **Rimkus**, a Michigan based composer who studied composition with Morten Lauridsen and Paul Mealor. Rimkus’s minimalist setting uses repeated melodic fragments taken from the chorale in several different ways. She writes, “The melody of the hymn and its most common harmonizations use the minor tonality in a highly declamatory and chromatic way, though the text contains both expressions of extreme joy and despair. This piece uses these repeated and sustained fragments of the tune to create Impressionist-inspired textures that start in a more soft-sounding minor mode, but the piece gradually opens up to a joyous major key.”

A student of Marcel Dupré, organist **Jeanne Demessieux** was known for her impeccable technique and artistic flair. As a composer, she wrote hugely difficult études that pushed organists to the absolute brink of their technique. She also composed the collection, *Twelve Chorale Preludes on Gregorian Chant Themes*, from which **Vexilla Regis** is taken (see the text of the first verse of the plainsong hymn, below). Just as her teacher set the earlier chorale in the tenor voice, Demessieux does similarly with the chant melody in this piece. Meanwhile, the bass line pulses slowly, perhaps as a depiction of Jesus’ footsteps as he carries the cross, while the accompanying voices rise in pitch and intensity, paralleling Christ’s ascent to Golgotha.

The Royal Banner forward goes,  
The mystic Cross refulgent glows:  
Where He, in Flesh, flesh who made,  
Upon the Tree of pain is laid.