Prélude, Op. 29, no. 1 Gabriel Pierné (1863-1937)

Attende Domine, from *Twelve Choral Preludes on Gregorian Chant Themes, Op. 8*

Jeanne Demessieux (1921-1968)

Sonata III, from Op. 65 Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)  
 I. Con moto maestoso  
 II. Andante tranquillo

Lacrimae Andrew Carter (b. 1939)

Trois Pièces  Joséphine Boulay (1869-1925)

   I. Prélude

    II. Andante

    III. Fugue

Chant de Paix, from *Neuf Pièces*, Op. 40, no. 3 Jean Langlais (1907-1991)

Prelude and Fugue in F minor, BWV 534 J. S. Bach (1685-1750)

Known primarily as a conductor during his life, French organist and composer **Gabriel Pierné** conducted many premieres by fellow Frenchmen such as Ravel and Debussy, and he conducted the world premiere of Stravinsky's *Firebird* with the Ballet Russes in 1910. His **Prélude** was published as the first in a set of *Trois Pièces* at the end of the 19th century. Its perpetual arpeggiations and dark harmonies create a foreboding, somber mood.

A student of Marcel Dupré and one of the most talented organists of her time, **Jeanne Demessieux** was known for her impeccable technique and artistic flair. Also a skilled composer, she wrote hugely difficult études that pushed organists to the absolute brink of their technique. **Attende Domine** comes from Demessieux’s collection of *Twelve Chorale Preludes on Gregorian Chant Themes*. The piece is based on what is known as the Lent Prose, a 10th century Mozarabic hymn. Demessieux places the melody of the plainchant in the soprano voice and accompanies it with solemn chord progressions. The English translation of the hymn begins thus:

Hear us, O Lord, have mercy upon us: for we have sinned against thee.  
To thee, Redeemer, on thy throne of glory:  
lift we our weeping eyes in holy pleadings:  
listen, O Jesu, to our supplications.

**Felix Mendelssohn** was one of the first to revive J.S. Bach's works from the previous century (he directed the St. Matthew Passion in 1829-- the first performance in one hundred years), so it is no surprise that he employs Bachian counterpoint in his **Sonata in A major**. After a triumphant opening, which was originally composed as a Wedding March for Mendelssohn’s sister Fanny, Mendelssohn introduces a sinister fugue subject. You will hear the Lenten chorale *Aus tiefer Not Schrei ich zu Dir* (“Out of the deep I cry to thee”, a setting of Psalm 130) in the pedals. The fugue gains momentum in both speed and volume as the original subject becomes more and more frenzied, until it reaches a mighty climax, leading into another statement of the grandiose opening theme. The second movement, *Andante tranquillo*, gently and gracefully concludes the Sonata.

**Lacrimae**, meaning “tears” in Latin, is a relatively recent composition by the English composer **Andrew Carter**, who penned the piece in 2015 when he heard of the sudden death of John Scott, the towering figure in the world of Anglican church music who worked at St. Paul’s Cathedral, London, and most recently as Director of Music at Saint Thomas Church, Fifth Avenue, NYC. In the composer’s words: “With its chromatically inflected melody and lilting accompaniment, the opening material of this piece establishes an atmosphere of prayerful yet haunting stillness. A contrasting section then explores the anguish of grief more overtly before once again subsiding into tranquil resignation for an ending that fades away into silence.”

Born in Paris and blind from the age of three, **Jos****éphine** **Boulay** studied organ under César Franck at the prestigious Conservatoire de Paris, becoming the first woman to win a first prize in organ in 1888. After winning this prize, French newspaper *Le Ménestrel* proclaimed, “A very rare thing has just occurred at the conservatory, which proves sufficiently that women are as able as men to assimilate the precepts of the highest musical culture.” While continuing to study music at the Conservatoire (composition, harmony, and counterpoint) with the likes of Gabriel Fauré and Jules Massenet, Boulay also began her thirty-seven year teaching career at the National Institute for the Blind, mentoring young students in composition, piano, and organ. Her **Trois Pièces** comprise a Franck-like Prélude, a gentle Andante duet between trumpet and flute sounds, and a chromatic and intricate Fugue.

The third of **Jean Langlais**' collection *Neuf Pièces*, Op. 40, the **Chant de Paix** (Song of Peace) is very calm and features the shimmering sounds of the strings and celeste stops. You will hear the melody played in the pedals and echoed in the manuals. The piece is dedicated to Langlais' former pupil, Claire Boussac, about whom Langlais wrote: "Her personality was so calm and serene that I wrote this piece for her".

The **Prelude and Fugue in F minor, BWV 534** is attributed to **J. S. Bach**, although its authorship has been questioned in recent years. It certainly imitates Bach’s style and mastery in counterpoint and harmony. The prelude employs quick moving arpeggios and musical filigree, and the fugue’s strong subject, with its fall of a diminished seventh, provides many opportunities for satisfying chromaticism between different voices. Both movements feature surprising harmonies and sequences that weave in and around the tonic and dominant keys.