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Department of Organ, Sacred Music, and Historical Keyboards

presented in partial fulfillment of the Master of Music degree

from the studio of David Higgs

**Käthe Wright Kaufman, organ**

April 26, 2019, 7:00pm

St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, Rochester, N.Y.

*from* Sonata for Organ*,* Op. 86 (1960) Vincent Persichetti

III. Vivace (1915-1987)

 Fantasy on the Chorale “Wie schön Heinrich Reimann

leuchtet der Morgenstern,” (1850-1906)

Op. 25 (1895)

Toccata Chromatica (2008) Ad Wammes

(b. 1953)

Sonata for Organ in G Major, Op. 28 (1895) Edward Elgar

I. Allegro maestoso (1857-1934)

II. Allegretto

III. Andante espressivo

IV. Presto (comodo)

*My sincere thanks go to Professor David Higgs for his guidance and patience. Also, I am grateful to all my friends and colleagues for their extreme support as I prepared this program.*

Vincent Persichetti received acclaim for his virtuosity as both pianist and organist, in addition to being an accomplished composer. He was on the faculty at Combs College (1938-40), Philadelphia Conservatory (1941-47), and Julliard (from 1947; chairman of Composition Department from 1963). He was awarded three Guggenheim Fellowships, three honorary doctorates, and numerous commissions from various orchestras. As an organist, Persichetti worked at Arch Street Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, where in 1944 he famously gave twenty organ recitals, each consisting of improvisations on the 150 Psalms.

The Finale from Persichetti’s **Sonata for Organ, Op. 86** brings together various motifs from the two earlier movements of the sonata, including the ornamental figure in the opening pedal solo, the descending seventh jumps in the pedals, and the melodic third followed by the melodic sixth, heard in the right hand. The composer writes, “an amiable second theme brings the sonata’s first two measures into thematic blossom.”

David Craighead (Chair of Eastman Organ Department from 1955-1992 and Organist of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church for 48 years) performed and recorded Persichetti’s Sonata, and in a letter sent to Craighead following a 1977 performance, the composer wrote, “Your performance of my Organ Sonata is absolutely magnificent! - and should definitely be available by you on records. There is no recording of the work, but even if there were, we need the Craighead definitive version on disc. Your recording idea gets more than my approval - how about a vibrant must.”

Heinrich Reimann was a musicologist, organist and composer, originally from Rengersdorf (modern-day Poland). Soon after earning a degree in classical philology at the University of Breslau in 1875, Reimann directed his energy towards music. He promoted the works of Bach and established a Bach society in Berlin and authored a series of articles, “On the Interpretation of J.S. Bach’s Organ Compositions.” Reimann served as organist for the Berlin Philharmonic from 1888. From 1895, he worked as organist at the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirke, where Wilhelm Sauer’s largest organ to date (Opus 660) was installed. Notably, Reimann taught Karl Straube and introduced him to the music of Max Reger, whose works Straube later went on to debut and champion.

The massive **Fantasy on the Chorale “Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern,” Op. 25** almost matches the scale of a Wagnerian tone poem. Tempo-crescendos and dramatic dynamic shifts span the entire work, through to the culminating fugue. Reimann includes three verses of the chorale text “Wie schön” in the score (below), along with registration indications in the form of *Rollschweller* progressions (numbers between 1 and 12 to indicate how much of the crescendo pedal should be activated). The first iteration of the chorale melody sounds on the English Horn above a shimmering accompaniment (the first verse is indicated in the score), then again in a gentle trio (set to the third verse of the chorale text), which heavily ornaments the chorale melody. The piece ends on full organ when the fugue subject combines with the chorale tune (set to text from verse six). Max Reger wrote to Reimann about the piece in 1898: “I have obtained a copy of your Chorale Fantasy… and admire it as an extraordinary masterpiece of its kind! The use and treatment of the old church song shows the path to salvation for our organ style!” Reger went on to compose his own chorale fantasy on the same chorale tune in 1899.

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| 1. Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern Voll Gnad' und Wahrheit von dem Herrn, Die süße Wurzel Jesse! Du Sohn David zus Jakobs Stamm, Mein König und mein Bräutigam, Hast mir mein Herz besessen, Lieblich, freundli, Schön und herrlich, groß und ehrlich, Reich von Gaben, Hoch und sehr prächtig erhaben! | 1.*How beautifully shines the morning star**full of grace and truth from the Lord,**the sweet root of Jesse!**You son of David from the line of Jacob,**my king and my bridegroom,**have taken possession of my heart,**[you who are] lovely, friendly*,*beautiful and glorious, great and honorable, rich in gifts,**lofty and exalted in splendor!* |
| 3. Geuss sehr tief in mein Herz hinein, Du heller Jaspis und Rubin, Die Flamme deiner Liebe Und erfreu' mich, daß ich doch bleib' An deinem auserwählten Leib Ein' lebendige Rippe! Nach dir ist mir, Gratiosa coeli rosa, Krank und glimmet Mein Herz, durch Liebe verwundet. | 3. Pour most deeply within my heart, you clear jasper and ruby,  the flames of your love, and make me rejoice, so that I may remain in your chosen body a living rib! Because of you, gracious rose of heaven, my heart is sick and smoldering, wounded with love. |
| 6. Zwingt die Saiten in Zithara Und laßt die süße Musika Ganz freudenreich erschallen, Daß ich möge mit Jesulein, Dem wunderschönen Bräut'gam mein, In steter Liebe wallen! Singet, springet, Jubilieret, triumphieret, Dankt dem Herren! Groß ist der König der Ehren! | 6. Pluck the strings on the harp and let the sweet music resound full of joy, so that with dear Jesus, my most beautiful bridegroom, in constant love I may make my pilgrimage! Sing, leap, rejoice, triumph, thank the Lord! Great is the king of honor! |

Originally trained as a pianist, Dutch composer Ad Wammes began his career playing in a rock group and composing music for musical theatre and television, including the show *Sesame Street*. He composed **Toccata Chromatica** (subtitled “Echoes of Sweelinck”) for a very specific organ: the 1671 Pieter Backer organ in the Bonifaciuskerk in Medemblik. The piece exploits two features of the instrument: the Trumpet 8’ stop, which does not extend below Middle C, and the lack of independent pedal stops. Seventeenth-century composer Sweelinck (1562-1621) was married in the Bonifaciuskerk, inspiring Wammes to model his piece on the former’s *Fantasia Chromatica*. This manifests in the inclusion of echo effects, as well as phrasing inspired by the old fingering style (in which only the index finger, middle finger, and ring finger are used). The composer writes that he hopes the registration indications will help give the piece a “charming poppy effect.”

In his early years in Worcester, Edward Elgar performed regularly as an orchestral violinist. Additionally, Elgar took up the organ, first encountering the instrument in his teenage years, assisting his father (eventually taking over for him) as organist of St. George’s Catholic Church. Elgar would have heard many celebrity organists performing at Worcester Cathedral recitals, and during his 1880 visit to Paris, he heard Camille Saint-Saëns play at La Madeleine.

Elgar composed the **Sonata for Organ, Op. 28** in the summer of 1895 for a performance that showcased the 1874 William Hill organ at Worcester Cathedral for a visiting party of American organists. Unfortunately, Worcester Cathedral organist Hugh Blair received the difficult score only five days before the performance of the Sonata, and many labeled the premiere as a débâcle. Elgar dedicated the Sonata to Charles Swinnerton Heap, a choral conductor who promoted Elgar’s works before he was well-known as a composer.

Ambitious for its time, the Sonata met reproach from the conservative organ establishment, who claimed that Elgar did not know how to write properly for the organ. Novello refused to publish it, fearing its difficulty might deter prospective buyers. As Robert Quinney notes, the Sonata “pushed technical capabilities of the late-Victorian organ to the limit.”

The opening *Allegro maestoso* blends two themes within sonata form: one majestic and the other more expressive and melodic. Quinney comments that this movement “displays another distinctive Elgarian quality: a yearning sadness not far beneath the bravura surface.” In the development section, Elgar’s love of counterpoint shines through in his canonic writing and combination of themes (he was known to have played something from Bach’s Well-Tempered Clavier every day).

The *Allegretto*, originally conceived as a string trio movement with a cello playing the chromatic melody, leads directly into the noble and intimate *Andante espressivo*.

The energetic final movement, *Presto* *(comodo*), also in sonata form, refers back to the theme of the third movement. Music critic Michael Kennedy notes that “the organist needs to be a mental and physical athlete” to successfully play the finale. Percy Young ascribes to the coda a “Beethovenian energy of trumpets and drums.”