

Programme:

- I. J.S. Bach – Fantasia and Fugue in g minor BWV 542
- II. A.E. Floyd – (i) Interlude No 2 in A-flat (ii) Church Prelude No 2 in E (iii) Sketch in F
- III. P. Hindemith – Sonate I, second movement (Sehr langsam – Phantasie, frei – Ruhigbewegt)
- I. O. Messiaen – Apparition de l'église éternelle
- II. Flemming Christian Hansen – Interlude to the memory of David Sanger
- III. C. Franck – Choral III

Phillip Gearing organ

No man is an island, wrote John Donne (1572-1631). This programme, *Hommage*, explores this concept through music which pays homage in some way either directly or indirectly to a person, a place, a time, a concept ... It also contains personal aspects through which I, in recognition of all that has made me who I am, offer my own homage.

Evidence suggests that Johann Sebastian Bach (1695-1750) completed and revised the *Fantasia and Fugue in g, BWV 542* as an audition piece for an organist position in Hamburg in 1720. The fantasia and the fugue are thought to have been composed separately: the fugue is assigned Bach's Weimar years (1708-1717) and the fantasia to his time in Cöthen (1717-1723).

The fantasia is a piece of considerable drama, cast in five balanced sections which correspond to rhetorical structure – the *propositio* (bars 1-9, recitative), *confutatio* (bars 9-14, quieter, contrapuntal, more measured), *confirmatio* (bars 14-25, fantastic and modulatory), *confutatio* (bars 25-31), *confirmatio* (bars 31-38, steady chordal movement over descending scalar passages, building in intensity), and *peroratio* (bars 38-end, tonally unstable, drawing together elements of the *propositio* and *confirmatio*).

The lively fugue subject bears a close resemblance to an old Dutch dance tune; it is thought by some that Bach planned this in deference to Johann Adam Reinken, a German organist of Dutch birth who was on the panel for the Hamburg audition.

Paul Hindemith (1895-1963) was a neoclassical composer; his music therefore pays conscious homage to the structures and craftsmanship of older classical ideals, in a twentieth-century guise. His three organ sonatas were composed in 1937 and 1940. The first sonata comprises two movements: the first is in a clear sonata form, but the second (the one heard in this programme) is unusually cast in three discrete segments – two gentler outer sections frame a wild fantasia. The movement commences *sehr langsam* (very slow) in a trio texture that reminds one of Bach; the *Phantasie* opens with a firm motive in the pedal which then breaks into the musical proceedings more and more frequently until it assumes a dominant but underpinning role as this section draws to its close; the concluding section (*ruhig bewegt*, gently moving) has elements of rondo structure so that its opening melodic material becomes a unifying feature among the contrasting episodes. The movement ends very still and quiet.

Alfred Ernest Floyd (1877-1974) was an Englishman who came in 1915 to Melbourne to take up the role of Director of Music at St Paul's Cathedral. He gave many public appearances in recitals, concerts, and radio broadcasts. Of the 1907 Norman & Beard organ at St Luke's in Toowoomba (where I was Director of Music 2007-2012) he is reputed to have said "This is the finest two-manual instrument on which I have ever laid my hands".

To recognise these connections, I have selected three of Floyd's original works in keys to represent his initials – A.E.F. Of the 1907 Norman & Beard organ at St Luke's in Toowoomba (where I was Director of Music 2007-2012) he is reputed to have said "This is the finest two-manual instrument on which I have ever laid my hands". To recognise these connections, I have selected three of Floyd's original works in keys to represent his initials – A.E.F.

Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992) was a giant in twentieth century music, and is arguably the most profound organ composer after J.S. Bach. His many large-scale organ works often unashamedly represent and portray core Christian (Roman Catholic) theological doctrines in a highly personal musical idiom. In this twentieth anniversary year since Messiaen's death, I offer the *Apparition of the eternal Church* to honour him and to proclaim with him the eternal Christian hope. This is an early work, composed in 1932: "an immense hypnotic crescendo calling upon the characteristic piling tier upon tier of sound ... followed by a long decrescendo in mirror image. One perpetual and unchanging rhythm, linking an iambus to two long notes, sustains the entire structure of the work."

Flemming Christian Hansen is a Danish organist (Sakskøbing Kirke in Nysted) who graduated in 1995 from the Royal Danish Conservatorium of Music. This piece was composed immediately after the death of renowned English organ recitalist and educator David Sanger (1947-2010) with whom I was privileged to study during 1985.

With only twelve important organ compositions, César Franck (1822-1890) singlehandedly raised the standard of French organ music from the doldrums, and exerted a prevailing influence over an entire generation of French organists which is still tangible today. The three *Chorals* were written in 1890 and are Franck's final compositions. Their title stems from the appearance in each of a simple hymn-like melody that becomes integrally woven into the fabric of the piece. These original "hymn tunes" were written in a mistaken understanding of the time that J.S. Bach composed his own hymns, or chorales; we now recognise that these were mostly Bach's harmonisations of existing melodies. In this way, the chorales represent a late-nineteenth century recognition of Bach's genius and importance. In the third *Choral*, an opening toccata-like figure (another nod in Bach's direction?) gives way to the chorale melody. These are juxtaposed until the appearance in the tonic major key of a warm singing melody on the trumpet stop which is the main feature of the central section of the piece. The tonality darkens once more as the chorale theme re-emerges, succeeded in turn by a return of the toccata figure; these are combined in an unfolding musical drama that finally resolves into a triumphant climactic ending.

Biography

Phillip Gearing.

The winner of several prizes and competitions in Australia and Britain, Phillip Gearing is one of Australia's most accomplished organ recitalists, and has given concerts throughout Australia as well as in Britain and in Scandinavia where one of his organ recitals was broadcast on radio. Currently Phillip is a Senior Lecturer in Music at the University of Southern Queensland in Toowoomba and a director of the Organ Historical Trust of Australia. He is the continuo harpsichordist with the Cameraata of St John's, one of Australia's leading chamber orchestras, and also enjoys performing as a pianist in chamber music and lieder. From 2007 until early in 2012 Phillip was Director of Music at St Luke's Anglican Church. In 2007 he released *Celebrate*, the first recording of the 1907 Norman & Beard organ at St Luke's Church, to mark its centenary.

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* NB. Recital time: 6.30pm — 7.45pm

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Phillip Gearing

Australia, UK

Organist, St Luke's Toowoomba

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