



**James David Christie** has been internationally acclaimed as one of the finest organists of his generation. He has performed around the world with symphony orchestras and period instrument ensembles as well as in solo recitals. He has served as organist of the Boston Symphony Orchestra since 1978 and has performed and recorded under many noted conductors. He is the Distinguished Artist in Residence and College Organist at College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, Massachusetts, and Chair and Professor of Organ at Oberlin Conservatory of Music, Oberlin, Ohio. He also holds positions at both Wellesley College and Harvard University.

James David Christie received his degrees from the Oberlin Conservatory and the New England Conservatory, including the coveted Artist Diploma. He has studied with David Boe, Yuko Hayashi, Bernard Lagacé, Harald Vogel and Marie-Claire Alain. He has premiered works by Daniel Pinkham, Ellen Taafe Zwilich, Ned Rorem, Anton Heiller, Jean Langlais, Thea Musgrave, George Crumb, P. D. Q. Bach and many others. James David Christie is Music Director of Ensemble Abendmusik, a Boston-based period instrument orchestra and chorus specializing in sacred music of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

# James David Christie

## Organ Dedicatory Concerts

Sunday, April 18, 2010  
3:00 p.m. & 7:00 p.m.

Praeludium in C	Georg Böhm (1661-1733)
Ciaconna in B-flat Major	Johann Bernhard Bach (1676-1749)
La Béatitude	Charles Piroye (fl early 18 <sup>th</sup> century)
Fugue in E minor	Johann Heinrich Buttstett (1666-1727)
Toccatà and Fugue in D minor (BWV 565)	Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)



Welcome, Introductions and Prayer	The Rev'd Jerry D. Godwin, Rector
Hymn: <i>O Praise Ye The Lord!</i>	The Hymnal 1982, 432
<i>Please sing harmony on stanzas 2 &amp; 3 of this hymn</i>	



Six pièces (1896/1901) III. <i>Sortie</i>	J. Guy Ropartz (1864-1955)
Aria on a Chaconne (1992)	Joel Martinson (b. 1960)
Incantation pour un jour saint (1949)	Jean Langlais (1907-1991)
Élégie (2007) (in memoriam: Jean Langlais)	James David Christie (b. 1952)
Cinq Improvisations (1931) IV. <i>Choral improvisé sur le Victimae paschali</i> (reconstructed in 1958 by Maurice Duruflé (1902-1986))	Charles Tournemire (1870-1939)



## Program Notes

**Georg Böhm** was the organist at the Church of St. John in Lüneburg, Germany, which housed one of the great organs of the North German Baroque. Johann Sebastian Bach studied with Böhm when he was a young teenage student at the school of St. Michael in the same city. Böhm's *Praeludium in C Major* is a typical example of a work written in the "fantasia style," or *stylus phantasticus*, of the North German organ tradition. The work opens with a large pedal solo and breaks into a dramatic improvisatory exposition. There is a joyous fugue and a short coda, which brings the work to a festive conclusion. This is one of the most exciting and compact examples of the north German organ prelude in the repertoire.

**Johann Bernhard Bach** lived in Erfurt (Thuringia) and was a cousin and close friend of Johann Sebastian Bach. J. B. Bach was chosen to be the godfather for several of J. S. Bach's children. Very few of his compositions survive: four orchestral overtures and a handful of keyboard works. The *Ciaccona in B-flat Major* is a charming set of variations on an eight-measure repeating harmony. This work is a marvelous vehicle for showing the colors of an instrument and the talents of the organist for improvisation. There are 22 variations and each is repeated, thus allowing the organist to ornament the second time through.

There is very little information available on the life of **Charles Piroye**. He is thought to have been born in Paris between 1668 and 1672 and to have died in the same city between 1717 and 1730. He had been a student of the great Jean-Baptiste Lully in Paris and this is evident when one hears *La Béatitude*. This work is from his only published volume of organ works called *Pièces Choisies*, published in 1712. It is a unique collection of works for its time, as the pieces have descriptive theatrical titles and are not for the liturgy of the church. The titles include *La Paix*, *La Royale*, *L'Allegresse*, etc. *La Béatitude* is in rondo form and is a bold, solemn work using the very full reed and cornet registration of the organ called the *Grands Jeux*.

**Johann Heinrich Buttstett** was a student of Johann Pachelbel and succeeded his teacher as organist of the famous Predigerkirche in Erfurt. Buttstett was also a famous organ teacher and counted among his students J.S. Bach's cousin, the lexicographer, organist-composer, Johann Gottfried Walther. He wrote many chorale preludes and published one volume of keyboard music called *Musicalische Clavier-Kunst*. In this collection, there are many fugues with repeated notes as their subject; the *Fugue in E minor* is one of Buttstett's finest and most delightful examples.

It is very amusing to imagine that the most famous work of **Johann Sebastian Bach** may not have been written by Bach! The great Bach scholar, Peter Williams, and several other musicologists feel the work may be the work of another hand. There is no surviving Bach autograph and there are many copies dating from the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century through the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The work is unique and there is nothing in the entire authenticated Bach repertoire like it. Many feel that an unknown 18<sup>th</sup> century composer was trying to imitate the late 17<sup>th</sup> century style. Some feel it is perhaps a transcription for organ of a lost violin work (many arrangements have been made in recent years for a solo string instrument). It is a brilliant, exciting piece. Who might the composer be, if not Bach? Would it be the most well-known work in the organ repertoire today if it had not been attributed to Bach? These are very interesting questions to ponder!

**Guy Ropartz** is best remembered today for his symphonic writing. He was one of the very last organ students of César Franck at the Paris Conservatory and wrote many works for organ. However, he abandoned organ composition altogether around 1920. The *Sortie in B-flat Major* is from Ropartz's collection of organ works, *Six Pièces*. 'Sortie' is the French word for 'postlude' or 'recessional.' Ropartz's *Sortie* was written for the great symphonic Cavaillé-Coll organ at the Cathedral of St. Brieuc and is dedicated to the Cathedral's organist. It is quite developed and must have been written for a very special pontifical event at the Cathedral. One can see the influence of the form found in Franck's monumental *Choral III in A minor*, as well as the influence of one of his other major organ works, the *Pièce Héroïque*, from Franck's *Trois Pièces*.



From **Joel Martinson**: "Aria on a Chaconne was inspired by the French-style Bedient Organ at Saint Rita Catholic Community in Dallas where I served as Director of Music and Organist from 1988 through June 2004. I remember having the idea for the piece one evening as I sat down at the organ at the end of a long day, after Gene Bedient had finished his voicing work. Improvising a repeated pattern on the luscious strings, I soloed out a melody high on the two beautiful flutes on the other manual. Taking my notes home, I wrote the piece a few days later during the afternoon of September 11, 1992, and had it ready to present it to David Reece on his 39<sup>th</sup> birthday four days later. James David Christie was slated to play the dedication of the Bedient on All Saints' Day, and, as we discussed his program, he asked if I had anything lyrical to display the flutes of the organ. I faxed him the music for this piece, and he phoned back immediately that it would work well with the rest of the program. The composition received an unofficial premiere by Jim at Boston Symphony Hall and was later played on the recital on the recital at Saint Rita. The "aria" is the soaring flute line (which really is a "duet" at times when a second voice is added) over a repeated harmonic pattern ("chaconne"). The most recorded of my compositions, it has been played on nearly every continent of the world, and is the only work I have transcribed for another medium – symphonic wind ensemble."

**Jean Langlais** was born blind in a small village near the Mont Saint-Michel in Brittany, France. He was a prolific composer and wrote over 250 works during his lifetime. He was very highly regarded in the United States and performed over 300 concerts on his many U.S. and Canadian tours. Many Americans flocked to Paris to study both repertoire and improvisation with him from the 1950s to 1990. Langlais composed his *Incantation for a holy day* to serve as a postlude for the Holy Saturday liturgy (the "holy day" in the title). The very beginning of the work is based on the chants heard in the opening rite of the Easter Vigil, the procession of light. One first hears the opening theme *Lumen Christi* ("Light of Christ") strongly declaimed in the manuals and the response *Deo gratias* ("Thanks be to God") played in the pedals; this is done three times, each time a half step higher, as in the opening rite of the introductory part of the service of light. This is then followed by Langlais' use of Gregorian themes from the "Liturgy of the Saints." The work then uses both the opening

and litany themes with Langlais' typical modal, rather neo-medieval harmonies; the conclusion features elements of the French toccata and Langlais' typical dissonances as well.

**James David Christie** was commissioned to write his *Élégie* by the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in La Crosse, Wisconsin, for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their beautiful Motherhouse chapel built in a quasi-Italian renaissance style; the chapel is called *Maria Angelorum* ("Mary of the Angels"). The work was premiered on Friday, January 13, 2006. It is a tribute to two of James David Christie's teachers: Jean Langlais, with whom he studied improvisation in Paris, France, and Sister Dolorette Recla, FSPA, his piano teacher throughout his high school years in his native La Crosse. The work was specifically dedicated to Langlais to mark the centenary of his birth in 2007. It is very much inspired by the harmonic language and style of Langlais as well as that of Francis Poulenc and Maurice Duruflé. There are two Gregorian chants used in the work: *In Paradisum* ("May the angels lead you into Paradise" – the song of farewell from the Requiem Mass), and a very short phrase from the opening of the solemn *Te Deum laudamus* ("We praise thee, O God; we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord"). The work is actually a passacaglia as it uses the name of *Dolorette Recla* set to notes throughout. Her name (Do-lo-re-tte Re-c-la), in music symbols, is given the following musical letters:

**Do (C) – la (A) – re (D) – te (B-flat) – Re (D) – C (C) – la (A)**

These seven notes are heard from the very beginning to the very end of the work.

**Maurice Duruflé** was an organ student and very close friend of the great organist-composer, **Charles Tournemire**. Tournemire was the organist at the Basilica of Ste. Clotilde in Paris, the former church of César Franck. He had a love of Gregorian chant and composed much organ music for use in both church and concert hall. However, he was especially known for his brilliant skills as an improviser. Near the end of his life, Tournemire made a recording of five improvisations. Duruflé studied the recordings tirelessly and then painstakingly transcribed them. In 1958, he published his own transcriptions of the five improvisations with the consent of Tournemire's widow, Alice Tournemire-Espir. *Victimae paschali* is the Sequence for Easter Sunday ("Christians, give praise to the Pascal victim") and the best-known Gregorian chant associated with the Easter season. It was this Gregorian chant that, following the Reformation, the Lutherans changed into the great Easter chorales: "Christ ist erstanden" and "Christ lag in Todesbanden." *Victimae paschali* is the most performed of Tournemire's works; Duruflé felt the five Tournemire improvisations represented his finest work in his realm of improvisation.

– James David Christie



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