

Madison Symphony Orchestra Program Notes
Overture Concert Organ Series No.4
May 20, 2022
J. Michael Allsen

This final program features Madison Symphony Orchestra organist Greg Zelek, timpanist John Jutsum, and the Diapason Brass: John Aley and Matthew Onstad, trumpets, Linda Kimball, horn, Mark Hetzler, trombone, and Joshua Biere, tuba. This wide-ranging program includes solo showpieces for organ by John Weaver and Arthur Sullivan, and a work for brass quintet by Anthony DiLorenzo. But most of this concert is devoted to works composed or adapted for various combination of organ, brass, and timpani: music in diverse styles by Eugène Gigout, Robin Dinda, Sergei Rachmaninoff, Edward Elgar, J.S. Bach, and Alexandre Guilmant.

Eugène Gigout (1844-1925)
***Grand chœur dialogue*, arr. John Kuzma**

The French organist and composer Eugène Gigout was born in Nancy, but moved to Paris at age 13 to study at the Ecole Niedermeyer—a conservatory devoted largely to the training of church musicians. While there, Gigout studied with Camille Saint-Saëns, and eventually taught at the school. In 1863, at age 19, he was appointed organist at the Parisian church of Saint-Augustin, a position he would hold for some 62 years until his death in 1925. In 1885, Gigout founded his own highly successful school of organ playing and improvisation, and in 1911, he succeeded Alexandre Guilmant as organ professor at the Paris Conservatory. Gigout published hundreds of works during the course of his long career, most of them concert and service music for organ. Like his teacher Saint-Saëns, Gigout maintained a rather conservative style throughout his life, with a Classical approach to musical form and harmony. One of his finest works is the 1881 *Grand chœur dialogué*, written as a showpiece for the fine instrument at Saint-Augustin, which was installed by the English builder Charles Barker. The title refers to the “dialogue” of timbres between various manuals and stops possible with a large organ. It is heard here in an arrangement by John Kuzma that replaces the alternation between organ timbres with alternation between organ and brass. It opens with a bold and strident fanfare before moving to lighter music introduced on the organ manuals. This is intensified by the full ensemble, eventually working its way to a reprise of the opening fanfare, and a wonderfully “over the top” conclusion.

Robin Dinda (b.1959)***Nocturne for Brass Quintet and Organ***

Robin Dinda was born in Kansas, and grew up in Virginia and Florida. Though he had piano lessons from his grandmother as a child, he was largely self-taught on organ—and by age 16, he was playing solo organ recitals in Europe. Since 1989, he has served on the faculty of Fitchburg State University in Massachusetts. He has long had a career as a soloist, often in duo recitals with his wife, organist Renea Waligora. (Dinda has written organ duos—four hands and four feet at a single instrument—for their recitals, which have since become standard repertoire.) His quiet *Nocturne for Brass Quintet and Organ* was composed in 1996. It begins with a serene introduction from the brass (the music is marked *Ethereal; Freely*) which is decorated by the organ. A lovely flowing theme is laid out by trumpet, horn, trombone and tuba in turn, and played finally by the full ensemble. The organ then expands on the theme before a hushed conclusion.

John Weaver (1937-2021)***Toccata***

Born in Pennsylvania, organist John Weaver trained at Philadelphia's Curtis Institute and at the Union Theological Seminary. He later taught organ at Curtis (1972-2003), and also served as head of the organ department at New York's Juilliard School (1987-2004). In 1970 he was appointed organist at the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York City, a position he held until his retirement in 2005. Weaver continued an active career as an organ soloist into his early 80s. He wrote his short and exciting *Toccata* in 1968—a brilliant virtuoso showpiece for both the organist and the organ. It begins with a burst of triplets, answered by the pedals. There is a brief moment of repose in the middle, as one hand introduces a new, slightly more relaxed idea, though the triplet figure continues unbroken in the other hand. It ends with an aggressive reprise of the opening material.

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)***Vocalise, Op.34, No.14***

Rachmaninoff was known in his time as one of the world's great pianists, and then and now as a great composer of music for his instrument and for orchestra. Much less well-known today is his vocal music: several exceptionally fine Russian Orthodox choral works and over 80 art songs. The great exception to this, however, is his *Vocalise*, the last of his Op.34 *Fourteen Songs* (1912), one of

Rachmaninoff's most familiar works, and one which is known in many versions. As anyone who has ever taken a voice lesson will tell you, a "vocalise" is a wordless piece or etude that is designed to work on a specific aspect of range or technique, or which allows the student to focus on creating a beautiful sound without the need to worry about enunciating a text. Rachmaninoff's *Vocalise* is no mere exercise: in the original, it frees the singer (and the listener) to focus on the work's gorgeous melody as it spins out from the opening bars. It was an immediate favorite of singers, and Rachmaninoff returned to the piece in 1915, revising it slightly, and creating a series of instrumental arrangements—solo piano, violin and piano, violin and orchestra, and in 1919, for orchestra. The *Vocalise* proved to be enduringly popular and exists in hundreds more arrangements for everything from choir and orchestra, to saxophone quartet and solo accordion. Here it is heard in a version combining the beautiful sound of Linda Kimball's horn playing with organ accompaniment.

Edward Elgar (1857-1934)

Pomp and Circumstance March No.1 in D Major, Op. 39, No.1, arr. Hans Zellner and Charles Warren

In 1901, when he was riding high on the success of his *Enigma Variations* and the oratorio *The Dream of Gerontius*, Elgar turned to one of the most popular instrumental forms of the day, the march, producing the first two numbers of a series of five *Pomp and Circumstance* marches that would appear sporadically over the next 30 years. The title—a reference to a warlike passage from Shakespeare's *Othello*—would seem to indicate a certain amount of seriousness and pretention, but Elgar had simply set out to write a good old rousing march. After he completed *Pomp and Circumstance March No.1* in 1901, he bragged to a friend that "I've got a tune that will knock 'em flat." And it did: two days after their premiere in Liverpool, both marches were played at one of the famous Promenade concerts in London, and the audience demanded *two* encores of *March No.1*—the only double encore in the long history of the "Proms." When he was engaged later that year to write a choral ode for the coronation of King Edward VII, Elgar reused the march's trio section to set the final section, *Land of Hope and Glory*, which remains a popular British patriotic song today. Its inseparable connection with American graduation ceremonies dates from 1905, when Elgar was invited to receive an honorary doctorate at Yale University. In honor of the composer, *March No.1* was used as a recessional, and within a few years, colleges and high schools across the United States had adopted it as a graduation march. After a brief opening flourish, Elgar introduces the primary march, a pair of jaunty and rhythmically active tunes paired with blazing countermelodies. The tempo

suddenly slows for the trio, as the *Hope and Glory* theme is laid out with increasing grandeur above a solemnly plodding bassline. There is a recapitulation of the march, and then the trio reappears in full glory, before a short and lively coda.

Anthony DiLorenzo (b. 1967)

Fire Dance

Trumpet-player and composer Anthony DiLorenzo trained at Philadelphia's Curtis Institute, and later worked with Leonard Bernstein at the Tanglewood Center. As a performer, he has appeared as a trumpet soloist with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Boston Pops, and New York Philharmonic, and has held positions with the Philadelphia Orchestra, New World Symphony, Santa Fe Opera, and Utah Symphony. Also active in chamber music, DiLorenzo had a long tenure with the City Center Brass Quintet, one of America's leading brass ensembles. As a composer, he has extensive television and film credits, and has won an Emmy award for his television work. His concert music has been performed by several major orchestras and chamber ensembles across the country. DiLorenzo composed the short and intense *Fire Dance* in 2004, for the City Center Brass Quintet. The piece blazes through several short ideas in the course of under four minutes: a rhythmically complex opening, a lyrical theme introduced by the tuba, and increasing frantic music leading to an exhilarating ending.

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

***Tocatta and Fugue in D minor, BWV 565*, version inspired by Randall Max**

Bach was known in his day primarily as one of Germany's great organists—as a keyboard composer and a powerful improviser. It is ironic then, that there is some doubt that *the* organ work by Bach that nearly everyone knows—the famous *Tocatta and Fugue in D minor* heard here—is in fact by Bach. A little background... There is no original copy of the work in Bach's handwriting, and the earliest surviving version was copied by another organist, probably after Bach's death. This in itself is hardly unusual—most of Bach's keyboard music survives in copies by his sons or other musicians. Most biographers have assumed that this *bravura* work was one the showy pieces a very young Bach wrote for his first important professional position, as church organist in Arnstadt, 1703-06. However, since the 1980s others have challenged the attribution of the work to Bach, noting that there are some technical crudities and other details that are inconsistent with Bach's undisputedly authentic works—even suggesting that this later copy was an organ arrangement of a violin work. Biographers such as Christoph Wolff have

countered that some of the unusual features in the work may in fact have been ingenious adaptations to the limitations of the organ Bach used at Arnstadt. All musicology aside, however, this work is now inextricably tied to Bach! There is a long tradition of adapting this work for soloists and ensembles, beginning with Leopold Stokowski's famous orchestral transcription of 1927. It is heard it here in the original organ version, but with the addition of a prominent timpani part. The work begins with a free-form toccata—an improvisatory-style piece used as prelude. After a grand conclusion, the fugue begins with a complex and spiky subject. This is developed in intense counterpoint until the end, where there is a dramatic return to the texture of the toccata.

Arthur Sullivan (1842-1900)

***The Lost Chord*, arr. Alexander Schreiner**

Though he is best known today for the enduringly popular series of operettas he wrote with W.S. Gilbert, Arthur Sullivan was among the most successful composers of Victorian England, composing in many genres. He wrote serious operas, popular orchestral works, large sacred and dramatic cantatas, hymns (including the well-known *Onward, Christian Soldiers*), and dozens of art songs and popular “parlor songs”—sentimental songs written for the enormous popular market, primarily sung at home. By far his most popular song was *The Lost Chord*, written in 1877, a composition that came out of personal tragedy. Sullivan had first tried to set this poem to music in 1872 at the time of his father's death, but in 1877 he composed *The Lost Chord* while sitting at the bedside of his brother Fred, completing it just a few days before Fred died. The poem, by popular Victorian poet Adelaide Ann Proctor, had been published in 1858 in *The English Woman's Journal*. It tells of an organist—usually assumed to be a woman, though that is never really specified—distracted by some personal tragedy, whose “fingers wandered idly, over the noisy keys.” Suddenly the organist stumbles upon a chord “like the sound of a great Amen,” seemingly sent from heaven. The next verses describe the chord's effect, flooding the room and the organist with a sense of peace, love, and fulfillment, before it finally fades away. In the end, the organist seeks in vain to rediscover the chord, concluding that “It may be that only in Heav'n I shall hear that grand Amen.” Sullivan's setting, originally for piano and solo voice, is really a kind of miniature romantic tone poem, beginning with a quiet recitative that culminates in the discovery of the “great Amen.” The middle section conveys a sense of awe as the chord fills the room and the organist's spirit. There is a brief moment of turbulence near the end to represent the search for the “lost chord divine,” but it ends in an ecstatic mood, contemplating heaven. *The Lost Chord* was a tremendous hit, quickly introduced in concerts by leading singers of

the day, and its sheet music went through several editions. It was quickly picked up by instrumentalists as well. The first recording of the song—and, in fact, one of the earliest surviving sound recordings of music of *any* kind—was a performance by cornet and piano captured on an Edison phonograph in 1888. *The Lost Chord* became particularly popular as a choral piece, and was a staple of British and American church choirs and choral societies well into the 20th century.

Alexandre Guilmant (1837-1911)

Final from Symphony No.1 for Organ and Orchestra, Op.42, arr. Craig Garner

Guilmant was one of the great French organists of the “golden age” of French organ music, a contemporary and colleague of Franck, Saint-Saëns, Vierne, and Widor. He was born in the provincial town of Boulogne-sur-Mer, and after initial studies with his father—also an organist—and at the Brussels Conservatory, Guilmant settled in Paris, eventually serving as organist at the prestigious new parish church La Trinité. Throughout his career he was associated with the organ-building firm of Aristide Cavallé-Coll, and was often brought in to perform inaugural concerts on its instruments. He toured widely as recitalist in Europe and America, and in 1896, he joined the faculty of the Paris Conservatory as organ professor. Guilmant’s musical interests were broad: he was well aware of the latest developments of the French *avant garde*, but was also passionately interested in the music of Couperin, Handel, Bach and earlier composers, editing hundreds of pieces from the 17th and 18th centuries for publication. He composed a sprinkling of vocal pieces and a few small instrumental works, but the vast majority of his works are for organ. He published over 50 collections of music with titles like *The Practical Organist* and *The Liturgical Organist*—music still very much in use by church organists today. He composed several small works for organ and orchestra—mostly for his popular concerts at Paris’s Palais du Trocadero, a concert hall that was built around a magnificent Cavallé-Coll instrument. Guilmant’s most ambitious works for organ are a series of eight multi-movement sonatas, written between 1874 and 1906. He later orchestrated two of the sonatas as symphonies for organ and orchestra. The first sonata was transformed into the *Symphony No.1*, and Guilmant played its premiere at the Trocadero on August 22, 1878. It is heard here in arrangement by Craig Garner for organ with brass and timpani. Its third movement, *Final*, is the symphony’s exciting conclusion. It opens with a bold toccata-style statement by organ punctuated by the brass. This gives way eventually to a broad chorale played first by organ and then by brass. The two ideas are mixed in a short development section, before a full-throated reprise of the toccata and a grandiose version of the chorale. Trumpet fanfares lead into a splendid coda. [program notes ©2022 by J. Michael Allsen]