

PRO ORGANO

Programme Notes

Alexander Straus-Fausto
Sunday, October 19, 2025

Prelude and Fugue in D Major, BWV 532

J. S. Bach (1685–1750)

The exuberant Prelude unfolds in three grand sections, functioning almost like an introduction, exposition, and coda. The Fugue's subject is deceptively simple, but grows into an expansive, architecturally intricate masterpiece, weaving surface charm into deep structural sophistication.

Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland, BWV 660

J. S. Bach

This gentle G-minor chorale prelude, based on the Advent hymn O come, Redeemer of the heathen (traditionally attributed to St. Ambrose), is cast in a three-part texture reminiscent of 17th-century trio sonatas. The chorale melody sings above flowing accompaniment lines, evoking quiet anticipation.

Un Gai Berger

Sperindio Bertoldo (c. 1530–1570)

Bertoldo, a native of Modena, served for most of his career as organist of the Cathedral in Padua and left only a small body of works. This lively chanson, “The Merry Shepherd,” is a charming character piece telling a pastoral love story between a shepherd and shepherdess, full of rustic colour and courtly grace.

Prière

César Franck (1822–1890)

The Prière (“Prayer”), the fifth in Franck’s 1862 collection of Six Pièces, is among his most inward-looking organ works. It opens with a serene, five-voice texture in C-sharp minor before moving into flowing contrapuntal exchanges between manuals and pedals. A lyrical middle section in triplets blooms into a radiant climax in the major mode, before subsiding into a reflective recitative. The work closes with a spirit of quiet submission, as though the prayer has been answered in peace.

Cinq Versets sur le Victimae Paschali Laudes

Thierry Escaich (b. 1965)

- I. Allegro
- II. Adagio ma non troppo
- III. Allegretto
- IV. Adagio ma non troppo
- V. Allegro molto ritmico

Thierry Escaich, recently appointed co-titular organist of Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris, previously served in the same role at Saint-Étienne-du-Mont and teaches improvisation at

the Paris Conservatoire. This work, based on the Gregorian chant *Victimae paschali laudes*, unfolds in five contrasting movements, each a variation or meditation on the Easter sequence.

Organ Suite

Florence Price (1887–1953)

III. Air

A trailblazing African American composer, Florence Price integrated elements of spirituals, folk melodies, and late-Romantic style into her works. Though best known for her orchestral music, she wrote several organ pieces. Air, the reflective third movement of her Organ Suite, offers a quietly contemplative atmosphere.

Organ Mass “L’Homme armé”

Margaret Sandresky (b. 1921)

III. Gloria

IV. Credo

North Carolina composer Margaret Sandresky draws inspiration from the 15th-century French secular tune *L’Homme armé*, a melody famously used by Renaissance masters such as Dufay, Josquin, and Palestrina. In this Organ Mass, the Gloria and Credo feature strikingly varied registrations and contrasting moods, evoking the grandeur and colour of historical Mass settings.

Epilogue, Op. 50

Rachel Laurin (1961–2023)

Canadian organist-composer Rachel Laurin, a native of Ottawa, served as organist of Saint-Clément Parish and at Notre-Dame Cathedral in Ottawa. Epilogue, which won the Marilyn Mason New Music Competition in 2009, is a dramatic and lyrical concert work, blending virtuosity with emotional depth, a fitting tribute to Laurin’s artistry and legacy.