



University
of Victoria

School of
Music

DEGREE RECITAL

Amiel Elfert, Organ

Saturday 5 April, 2025, at 16:00

The Cathedral Church of Christ in Victoria

Free admission

PROGRAM

Praeludium und Fuga C-dur BWV 547	J.S. Bach (1685-1750)
Ut, Re, Mi, Fa, Sol, La [F/C Final]	William Byrd (1540-1623)
Rhapsody No. 1 in Db Major, Op. 17	Herbert Howells (1892-1983)
Livre du Saint Sacrement <i>III. Le Dieu Caché</i>	Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992)
Le Jardin Suspendu	Jehan Alain (1911-1940)
Prélude et Fugue sur le nom d'Alain, Op. 7	Maurice Duruflé (1902-1986)

Amiel Elfert is from the class of Dr. Mark McDonald.

*This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Bachelor of Music (Performanc)e program.*

Please silence all electronic devices.

Program Notes

J.S. Bach's **Prelude and Fugue in C** is a testament to Bach's fugal genius- something he was known for in his lifetime. Following the joyful prelude, the magnificent five-voice fugue is a masterclass in counterpoint, with each section being based on one of the contrapuntal derivations: first, the theme; then in retrograde (backwards), inversion (upside-down), and retrograde-inversion (upside-down and backwards), before the entry of the pedal at half the speed of the other voices.

William Byrd's wrote three hexachord fantasias entitled **Ut, Re, Mi, Fa, Sol, La**, with the third (on this program) being entirely distinct from the other two. While the other settings are conventional renaissance fantasias founded on a rising and falling scale, this piece is the only one to present the scale in its entirety, directly. Unusually, it requires a second player to play the cantus firmus (as English organs of the day lacked pedalboards), and contains two English folk songs, "The Woods so Wild" and "The Shaking of the Sheets."

Perhaps no composer has every had a greater attachment to text than Olivier Messiaen. Despite his minimal output of vocal music (limited to some songs, one opera, and one motet), almost all his works bear short textual inscriptions on which to meditate. Messiaen's final work for organ, the *Livre du Saint-Sacrament*, is a summation of his compositional techniques and musical ideas in the form of an extended meditation on the Eucharist. Comprising eighteen movements, a complete performance lasts about two and a half hours. **Le Dieu Caché**, the first fully developed movement of the cycle, contains all of Messiaen's signature compositional tools: Plainsong (*Alleluia* from the Mass for Corpus Christi), Monody, birdsong (in this case the Eastern olivaceous warbler and Tristram's starling, the songs of which he collected on a trip to the holy land), the modes of limited transposition, and a distinctive approach to timbre. The inscriptions for this movement are short excerpts from St Thomas Aquinas and Thomas a Kempis' *The Imitation of Christ*. Though, like all of Messiaen's organ works, the piece is clearly conceived for the organ of La Trinité in Paris, the work had its premiere at the 1986 convention of the American Guild of Organists in Detroit, Michigan, for which it was commissioned.

One of the most distinctive and inspired compositions voices of the early twentieth century, Jehan Alain, had an enormous musical output despite his short life. Born into a musical family (his father was a composer and organ builder, his sister one of the great organ virtuosos of the twentieth century), he was colleague of Messiaen and Duruflé at the Paris conservatoire. His most famous piece, *Litanies*, was written following the death of his sister, immediately after he left the Paris conservatoire. His **Jardin Suspendu** (1934) depicts an artistic spiritual oasis, "untouchable and inviolable". Alain was killed in 1940 while working as a motorcycle messenger for the French army. While on reconnaissance, he encountered a group of German soldiers, and, taking refuge in a vineyard, he killed eleven of them before being shot himself.

Maurice Duruflé's tribute to Alain, the **Prélude et Fugue sur le nom d'Alain**, takes its musical material from assigning pitches to each letter of Alain's name, which spells out a d minor triad. Ironically, Duruflé used the German musical cypher (which includes H) to translate Alain's name- the same musical cypher used by composers including Bach, Schumann, Reger, Liszt, and Ravel. The entire piece could be interpreted as semi-narrative or semi-biographical- it seems to depict key scenes from Alain's life (including his grief over the loss of his sister- the theme from *Litanies* is directly quoted). The Magnificent second fugue is certainly a depiction of Alain's heroic final battle, building towards a climax and suddenly bursting into an unstoppable toccata texture towards the end.