

Sacred Music at Notre Dame Presents

The Butterfly
A Master's Organ Recital
JJ Mitchell



Sunday, March 3, 2019 8:00PM
Basilica of the Sacred Heart, Notre Dame, Indiana

Sacred Music at Notre Dame

Presents

JJ Mitchell, *organ*

Program

Please hold applause until the conclusion of the recital

Mein Junges Leben Hat Ein End

Jan Pieterzoon Sweelinck
(1562-1621)

Cinquième Symphonie, Op. 47

Louis Vierne
(1870-1937)

Grave

Allegro

Scherzo

Adagio

Final

Sunday, March 3, 2019, 8PM

Basilica of the Sacred Heart

JJ Mitchell is a student of Craig Cramer.

This recital is in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Sacred Music.

Program Notes

The butterfly is a symbol of hope in many cultures. This insect begins its life as a small caterpillar, envelopes itself in a cocoon for several days, and emerges exalted with colorful wings; this cycle is called metamorphosis. The butterfly's dramatic transformation is comparable to resurrection and endurance of the human spirit through turmoil. For this reason, butterflies are often portrayed during times of grief as well as during times of great joy, such as at Easter.

The music in tonight's program demonstrates a kind of emotional gravity. For instance, the opening piece by Jan Pieterzoon Sweelinck, "Mein Junges Leben Hat Ein End," is about a dying young man who accepts his fate with fear and melancholy. The Symphonie V by Louis Vierne is considered one of his most lacrimose compositions. However, Vierne concludes this dark work with a brilliant, joyful carillon, perhaps as a sign of hope amid the obvious despair of the earlier movements. In comparing these pieces to the metamorphosis of a butterfly, this program explores transformation.

Referred to in his day as "The Orpheus of Amsterdam" and "The Maker of Hamburg Organists," Sweelinck was an influential organist and pedagogue. Living in Calvinist Netherlands, he was employed by the city of Amsterdam, and his organist duties included playing organ concerts around the schedule of the Amsterdam stock exchange. The vast majority of his music - a mixture of sacred and secular works - was improvised, and few of his written compositions exist today. His famous pupils included Jacob Praetorius, Samuel Scheidt, and Peter Hasse, all of whom contributed substantially to the great North German Organ School. The greatest master to compose in this style was Dieterich Buxtehude, and it was through Buxtehude and his contemporaries that the young Johann Sebastian Bach was educated in this style.

"Mein Junges Leben Hat Ein End" ("My Young Life Has An End") was a secular tune that Dutch citizens would have known well. The text tells of a young man who repents of his sins while dying, hoping that God will protect his wife and child once he passes away. Sweelinck sets the tune in a series of ingenious variations that make full use of brilliant keyboard figuration that perhaps originated in the English Virginalist School.

One of the greatest organists in twentieth-century French School, Louis Vierne studied keyboard music in his youth and went on to win first prizes at the Paris Conservatoire under the tutelage of Cesar Franck and Charles Marie Widor. Later, he was appointed *Organiste Titulaire* at the Cathédrale Notre Dame de Paris, winning the post over fifty other candidates. Vierne was a noted virtuoso, and he played concerts throughout Europe and the United States. His compositions, especially his organ works, were well received in his lifetime and are considered to be part of the mainstream literature composed for the organ.

Though he generally experienced great professional success, Vierne's personal life was marked by tragedy: he was born blind; he endured several failed eye operations and eventually had to sit in a dark room for six months; he experienced two failed marriages; and he was passed over for the prestigious of Professor of Organ at the Paris Conservatoire, a post that instead was awarded to Marcel Dupré

Opus 47 is laid out in five movements, as are most of Vierne's symphonies. The first movement is a *Grave* in which Vierne immediately introduces two cyclical themes (see Exhibit A in the program). The first theme, which is eight measures long, makes its first appearance in the pedals. The second theme spans only two measures and is first heard in the soprano voice. In the *Grave*, Vierne plays with these two themes, accompanying them with chromatic passages and augmented harmonies that hardly ever resolve into minor or major chords. He relies mostly on foundation stops adding the Hautbois only once late in the movement. The piece ends with a pianissimo A minor chord.

The agonizing character of the opening movement immediately gives way to the opening motive of the *Allegro*, which can be recognized immediately as the retrograde inversion of the first cyclical theme from the first movement. Vierne cast this movement in sonata form. Throughout this movement, Vierne intersperses and varies the two cyclical themes, often employing the circle of fifths and chromatic scales in extended passages of dense, chromatic writing. Through use of retrograde, inversion, condensation, and chromatic alteration of the themes, Vierne creates a movement that seems to express brilliant outbursts of emotion that contrast with the somber nature of the first movement.

The third movement, *Scherzo*, again makes use of both cyclical themes, although here in reverse order from the preceding movement. This movement features a dialogue between manuals and pedal. In the B section, the first cyclical theme appears in the pedal played on a trumpet stop, accompanied by the scherzo motif in the upper voice on a cornet and sixteenth note trills in the left hand. One of the most dramatic parts of this movement occurs in the setting of the two themes against each other near the conclusion of the movement. Here the right hand plays a variation of the first cyclical theme, and the left hand moves chromatically under an inverted pedal point. Typically a scherzo is a sprightly intermezzo that lightens the mood of the overall symphony. In the case of this work, the effect of the Scherzo is devilish and mysterious.

The *Adagio* likewise makes use of both cyclical theme, here fragmented and inverted in their initial statements. Perhaps Vierne emulated the Wagnerian ideal of a long-breathed melody over unstable chromatic harmonies that hardly ever come to a full cadence. The dark and brooding character of the symphony once again prevails; the concluding section of the piece is reminiscent of Debussy, an admirer of Vierne's work.

The *Final* is cast in ABABA form. The work opens with an arpeggiating carillon motif in the right hand while the left hand ushers in the first cyclical theme in A Major - the first time this theme has been heard in a major key. At first it appears as though the dreariness and dense chromaticism of the first four movements has vanished as Vierne writes a joyous carillon using the first cyclical theme in major. However, by the second iteration of the theme, dense chromaticism appears in the alto and bass voices. The result is a cascading sequence, cadencing on a French augmented-sixth chord. In the next beat, the alto voice plays the first cyclical theme, augmented and fragmented, and is soon accompanied by the second cyclical theme in

the upper voices. Vierne uses chromaticism to continue this sequence, fragmenting and augmenting both themes relentlessly until the beginning of the B section.

The B sections in the *Final* are identified as meno mosso. Various manipulations of the second cyclical theme lead in the end to a brilliant, virtuosic restatement of the carillon theme, here in the pedals on full organ. Perhaps the blaze of sound, the major key, and the effect of pealing bells in the style of a carillon piece suggest hope, as in the great choral finale in the Second Symphony by Mahler.

Vierne establishes transformation by creatively varying thematic material. Beginning with the solemn introduction of two themes in the *Grave*, he manipulates these compositional ideas over and over before introducing their ultimate, glorious form at the conclusion of the *Final*. This music is reminiscent of Beethoven, and later, the post-Wagnerian symphonists. In the program presented tonight, the butterfly is a representation of the music. The caterpillar undergoes much transformation in metamorphosis before culminating as a majestic winged creature.

“Life is a transition from one form to another.
The life of this world is the material for a new form.”
- Leo Tolstoy

EXHIBIT A

Themes in Vierne's Symphony No. 5 Op. 47

First theme



Second theme



Acknowledgements

Dori and John Mitchell

Craig Cramer

Margot Fassler

Myles Hayden

Janet Rudasics

Carl Sporleder

Bob Swinehart

Christine Trail

Paul Walker

SACRED MUSIC at NOTRE DAME SPRING 2019 EVENTS

SMND CONDUCTING RECITAL - Joshua Boggs
4:00PM - Sunday, February 3
136 O'Neill Hall – LaBar Performance Hall

UNSUNG: The Exploration of the Sounds of Black Folk
7:00PM - Friday, February 8
DPAC – Leighton Concert Hall

NDCC GALA
7:00PM - Saturday, February 9
Foley's in O'Neill Hall (4th Floor)

Guest Organist Chris Marks
2:00PM - CONCERT: Sunday, February 10
DPAC – Reyes Organ & Choral Hall

O'Neill Hall Spring Rollout Weekend
Friday & Saturday, February 22 & 23
7:00PM (Friday) and 10:00AM-2:00PM (Saturday)
120 O'Neill Hall – LaBar Recital Hall

SMND CONDUCTING RECITAL - Katrina Keats
4:00PM - Sunday, February 24
St. Joseph Catholic Parish, 225 S Mill St, Mishawaka

SMND ORGAN RECITAL: Gregory Santa Croce
8:00PM - Sunday, February 24
Basilica of the Sacred Heart

Guests Anthony Dean Griffey, tenor and Warren Jones, pianist
7:00PM - CONCERT: Friday, March 1
120 O'Neill Hall – LaBar Recital Hall.

SMND ORGAN RECITAL: Heejin Kim
8:00PM - Saturday, March 2
Basilica of the Sacred Heart

SMND ORGAN RECITAL: Carina Sturdy
4:00PM - Sunday, March 3
DPAC – Reyes Organ & Choral Hall

SMND ORGAN RECITAL: JJ Mitchell
8:00PM - Sunday, March 3
Basilica of the Sacred Heart

NDCC Winter Concert
7:00PM - Friday, March 8
St Monica Catholic Church, 222 W Mishawaka Ave,
Mishawaka

NDCC & the South Bend Youth Symphony Orchestra Concert
4:00PM - Sunday March 17
DPAC – Leighton Concert Hall

SMND VOICE RECITAL: Fatima Anyekema & Mark Laseter
4:00PM - Saturday, March 23
136 O'Neill Hall – LaBar Performance Hall

SMND ORGAN RECITAL: Leah Martin
4:00PM - Sunday, March 24
DPAC – Reyes Organ and Choral Hall

SMND VOICE RECITAL: Emily Bird & Jared Swope
7:00PM - Sunday, March 24
120 O'Neill Hall – LaBar Recital Hall

SMND CONCERT: Fortepiano Liederabend with Laure Colladant and the Graduate Voice Studio
8:00PM - Wednesday, March 27
120 O'Neill Hall - LaBar Recital Hall

SMND CONDUCTING RECITAL
James Goldrick, Joshua Wang, Erin Wendt
4:00PM - Sunday, March 31
DPAC – Reyes Organ & Choral Hall

SMND ORGAN RECITAL: Daniel Schwandt
8:00PM - Sunday, March 31
Basilica of the Sacred Heart

SMND ORGAN RECITAL: Audrey Thomas
7:00PM - Friday, April 5
DPAC – Reyes Organ & Choral Hall

SMND VOICE RECITAL: Emily Swope
2:00PM - Saturday, April 6
120 O'Neill Hall - LaBar Recital Hall

SMND VOICE RECITAL: Alyse Jamieson
5:00PM - Saturday, April 6
136 O'Neill Hall - LaBar Performance Hall

SMND VOICE RECITAL: Constantine Novotny
3:00PM - Sunday, April 7
136 O'Neill Hall - LaBar Performance Hall

SMND VOICE RECITAL: Nolan Carter
6:00PM - Sunday, April 7
136 O'Neill Hall – LaBar Performance Hall

SMND ORGAN RECITAL: Myles Hayden
8:00PM - Sunday, April 7
Basilica of the Sacred Heart

SMND CONDUCTING RECITAL - Zen Kuriyama
4:00PM - Sunday, April 14
St Monica Catholic Church, 222 W Mishawaka Ave,
Mishawaka

Opera ND
Thursday-Saturday, April 25- April 28
7:30PM (Thursday/Friday/Saturday) and 2:30PM (Sunday)
DeBartolo Performing Arts Center - Decio Theater

NDCC Hymn Festival and Concert
3:00PM - Saturday, May 4
First United Methodist Church, 333 N Main St, South Bend

Note that the schedule is subject to change.
To confirm the program schedule, please call, email or check our website.
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