

Kola Owolabi
Faculty Organ Recital
Basilica of the Sacred Heart
University of Notre Dame
Saturday October 29, 2022, 7:30pm

PROGRAM

Toccata decima (Apparatus musico-organisticus, 1690)	Georg Muffat (1653-1704)
Trio super Herr Jesu Christ, dich zu uns wend, BWV 655 Jesus Christus, unser Heiland, BWV 688	Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)
Dardanus Suite (1739/1744) Entrée majestueuse pour les guerriers Premier Rigaudon – Deuxième Rigaudon – Premier Rigaudon Ritournelle tendre Première Gavotte en Rondeau – Deuxième Gavotte – Première Gavotte Loure très grave Chaconne	Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683-1764) Arranged by Kola Owolabi
Sonata No. 1 (2004) I. Chaconne II. Lento (Homage to Leo Sowerby) III. Fugue: Allegro Moderato	Gerald Near (b. 1942)
Aspects of Light (2021) I. Lux solis II. Lumen Christi	Brenda Portman (b. 1980)
Free Fantasia on O Zion Haste and How Firm a Foundation (1984)	William Bolcom (b.1938)

Kola Owolabi

Kola Owolabi is Professor of Organ at the University of Notre Dame. There he teaches the graduate organ performance majors in the sacred music program, as well as courses in hymn playing and improvisation. He previously held faculty appointments at the University of Michigan from 2014 to 2020, and at Syracuse University from 2006 to 2014.

Dr. Owolabi has had an active career as a solo recitalist, including performances at St. Thomas Church Fifth Avenue in New York, St. James Episcopal Church in Los Angeles, The Memorial Art Gallery in Rochester, NY, St. Paul's Anglican Church in Toronto, Cornell University, Pacific Lutheran University and Yale University. International venues include Klosterneuburg Abbey, Austria; Église du Bouclier in Strasbourg, France; Franciscan Church of the Holy Trinity in Gdańsk, Poland; and the University of the West Indies in Mona, Jamaica. He was a featured performer at the American Guild of Organists National Convention in Boston in June 2014, performing three recitals at Methuen Memorial Music Hall. He also performed a concert for the Organ Historical Society Convention in Syracuse in August 2014. He has performed numerous concerts as organist and harpsichordist with the Grammy-nominated vocal ensemble Seraphic Fire and Firebird Chamber Orchestra, based in Miami, FL. He has released two solo CD recordings on the Raven label: "Sacred Expressions: Twentieth-Century Music for Organ" featuring works by Olivier Messiaen, Petr Eben and Calvin Hampton performed on the historic Holtkamp organ at Syracuse University; and Jacques Boyvin: Four Suites from the Second Livre d'Orgue (1700), performed on the 1732 Andreas Silbermann organ in Saint-Maurice Abbey, Ebersmunster, France.

Dr. Owolabi is a published composer and has received commissions from the Royal Canadian College of Organists and the Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto. His solo organ composition Dance was selected for the Royal Canadian College of Organists National Competition in August 2013, where all of the finalists performed this composition. His choral works have been performed internationally by ensembles such as the Santa Cruz Chorale, CA, Nashville Chamber Singers, Illinois Wesleyan University Choir and the Elmer Isler Singers in Toronto.

In 2002, Dr. Owolabi was awarded second prize and audience prize at the American Guild of Organists National Young Artists Competition in Organ Performance. He holds degrees in organ performance and choral conducting from McGill University, Montreal, Yale University and Eastman School of Music. His former teachers have included Bruce Wheatcroft, John Grew, Martin Jean, Thomas Murray, Hans Davidsson and William Porter.

PROGRAM NOTES

Georg Muffat (1653-1704) spent his childhood in Alsace, France, but lived in numerous cities during his lifetime, studying with Jean-Baptiste Lully in Paris and Bernardo Pasquini in Rome. Muffat was employed as organist to the Strasbourg cathedral chapter and the archbishop's court in Salzburg. He finally settled in Passau where he was *kapellmeister* at the bishop's court. His *Apparatus musico-organisticus* (1690) contains twelve toccatas, of which the first eight are ordered according to the eight medieval church modes, and the remaining four include "unusual" keys such as Bb Major and E minor. The collection concludes with a ciacona, a passacaglia and *Nova Cyclopeias Harmonica* (a set of eight variations). Muffat's toccatas are noteworthy for their perfect integration of French and Italian musical styles. *Toccata decima* opens with bold ascending scales and dotted rhythms characteristic of the French overture. The middle sections offer an opportunity to explore gentler "chamber music" registrations on the organ. In a gesture of symmetry, the concluding section features descending scales in contrapuntal imitation.

Johann Sebastian Bach's (1685-1750) setting of *Herr Jesu Christ, dich zu uns wend*, BWV 655 belongs to his collection of chorales preludes that is typically called the Leipzig Chorales. In fact, all of these pieces were composed during Bach's time as court organist and concert master in Weimar (1708-1717) but revised during his years in Leipzig (1723-1750) and copied into Bach's autograph manuscript during the last six years of his life. The text of "Herr Jesu Christ dich zu uns wend" was written by the grandfather of Bach's employer in Weimar, Duke Wilhelm Ernst. This chorale was sung each week in Weimar as a prayer immediately before the sermon. Bach's setting is cast as an elegant Italianate instrumental trio sonata movement. The main theme is derived from a decorated form of the first four notes of the chorale. The complete chorale is not heard until the end of the piece, where it appears in quarter-notes in the pedal.

Jesus Christus, unser Heiland, BWV 688 belongs to Bach's monumental *Clavierübung III*, published in 1739, contains twenty-one chorale preludes and four duets, framed by a Prelude and Fugue in Eb major. Bach chose the hymns which deal with the most central tenets of the Lutheran faith: Baptism, Communion, Penance, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer. Although it is a Communion hymn, this setting of *Jesus Christus, unser Heiland* is written as a virtuosic two-part invention, to which the choral melody is added in long notes in the tenor register (played by the pedals). The opening theme is presented throughout the piece in its original form, inversion, retrograde and retrograde-inversion.

Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683-1764) served as the official composer for the French court of King Louis XV, and is chiefly known for his prolific output of French operas written for private performance at Versailles and public performance at the *Academie royale de musique* in Paris, colloquially called The Opera. *Dardanus* was premiered in 1739 and revised extensively in 1744. My arrangement consists of five dance movements and a soprano aria that I have excerpted from the five acts of this opera. The impetus for making these arrangements was the realization that the *livre d'orgue* tradition of composing organ versets to be performed at mass or vespers in alternatim with sung plainchant is as strongly influenced by the secular music traditions of the French court as it is by liturgical prescriptions. André Raison alludes to this in his *Livre d'orgue*, 1688, when he asks performers to be aware of whether a given piece from his collection "bear any resemblance to a sarabande, gigue, gavotte, bourrée, canaries, passacaille or chaconne." In my arrangements, I have used historical registrations from the late 17th century and infused the pieces with various kinds of keyboard diminutions, most of which come from 17th century vocal practice or from the French baroque viol repertoire.

This is most evident in the “Ritournelle tendre”, a soprano aria, which I have set as a *Récit de tierce en taille*, moving the melody into the tenor register. The *tierce en taille* pieces were typically the most expressive movements of an organ suite and contained the rhetoric and emotion of a tragic aria, adapted for organ. In the two Gavottes I have used the kind of keyboard diminution found in *doubles* by Claude-Louis D’Aquin (1694-1772), whose 12 Noëls remain popular to this day as Christmas organ repertoire. Rameau competed against D’Aquin in 1727 and lost, when they both applied for the position of organist at Saint-Paul in the Marais, Paris. In his late 70s, Rameau later wrote to the organist Claude Balbastre, who also composed Noëls, “music is perishing; taste is changing every second. I wouldn’t know how to manage if I had to work as I did in the past; only D’Aquin has had the courage to resist the torrent; he has always preserved for the organ the majesty and grace it deserves.”

Gerald Near (b. 1942) has had an active career as a composer of sacred choral music. He studied composition with Leo Sowerby at the American Conservatory of Music in Chicago and holds degrees in organ performance and orchestral conducting from the University of Michigan, where he was an organ student of Robert Glasgow, and at the University of Minnesota where he was a composition student of Dominick Argento. He has been commissioned to write new pieces for conventions of the American Guild of Organists in Washington, DC in 1982 and Denver in 1998. His Organ Sonata No. 1, written in 2004, was commissioned by the Church of the Holy Faith, the oldest Episcopal parish in Sante Fe, New Mexico. The piece uses a lush neo-romantic harmonic language and exploits the color possibilities of an American classic style organ. The first movement is a Passacaglia with a three-measure theme that is based on descending fourths. The second movement, cast in ternary form, is an homage to his former teacher, Leo Sowerby. The concluding fugue makes considerable use of stretto, and builds towards a thrilling conclusion on the full organ.

Brenda Portman (b.1980) is Organist at Hyde Park Community United Methodist Church in Cincinnati Ohio. In addition to a growing number of organ compositions, she has written numerous concert settings of hymns for solo voice and piano. *Aspects of Light* was commissioned for the inauguration of the new Martin Pasi organ, Opus 28 (II/33) at St. George’s Episcopal Church in Arlington, Virginia and premiered by Kola Owolabi in February 2022. The work is inspired by the stained-glass windows at this church. The first movement, entitled “Lux solis” (Light of the sun), explores the concept of sunlight and its effect when shining through the windows. The piece opens with the organist’s fingers dancing through a kaleidoscope of the organ’s tone colors, and then gradually introduces the Gregorian chant, *Conditor alme siderum* (Creator of the stars of night). The second movement, “Lumen Christi” (Light of Christ), is based on the chant *Visionem quam vidistis*, for the Feast of the Transfiguration.

William Bolcom (b.1938) was named 2007 Composer of the Year by Musical America and was honored with multiple Grammy Awards for his groundbreaking setting of Blake’s *Songs of Innocence of Experience*. He also received the 1988 Pulitzer Prize in Music for his Twelve New Etudes for Piano. He was professor of Composition at the University of Michigan from 1973 to 2008. His four books of Gospel Preludes for organ collectively consist of twelve pieces based on American hymn tunes, which Bolcom elaborates using a wide range of avant-garde compositional techniques combined with the influence of jazz and gospel music. Free Fantasia on “O Zion, Haste” and “How Firm a Foundation” has two parts. The first part is improvisatory, based on melodic fragments of “O Zion, Haste.” Bolcom’s eclectic musical language includes quartal harmonies, polytonality, cross rhythms, and fragments of the hymn tune presented in canon. The second section, based on “How Firm a Foundation” is a jazzy arrangement in Black Gospel style, set in 5/4 meter, instead of the 4/4 meter of the original hymn tune.