



# Sacred Music at Notre Dame

**Kola Owolabi**  
**Faculty Organ Recital**  
**Basilica of the Sacred Heart**  
**University of Notre Dame**  
**Sunday September 8, 2024, 8pm**

## **PROGRAM**

### ***Sonic Splendour***

Batalha de sexto ton (1695)

António Correa Braga  
(17<sup>th</sup> century)

Tiento 27, de medio registro de tiple de septimo tono (1626)

Francisco Correa de Arauxo  
(1584-1654)

Symphony No. 38 in D major, K. 504 "Prague" (1787)  
I. Adagio – Allegro

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart  
(1756-1791)  
Arranged by Kola Owolabi

Passacaglia, Opus 17 (2009)

John Scott Whiteley  
(b. 1950)

Symphony No. 2 in E minor, Opus 20 (1903)  
Allegro  
Chorale  
Scherzo  
Cantabile  
Final

Louis Vierne  
(1870-1937)

## 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, Holy Trinity Church in Gdańsk, Poland, Église du Bouclier in Strasbourg, France and the University of the West Indies in Mona, Jamaica. He has performed at the American Guild of Organists National Conventions in Boston in June 2014 and Seattle in July 2022. 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. His most recent solo recording, released by Acis Productions, features Georg Muffat's *Apparatus musico-organisticus*, performed on the C. B. Fisk and Richard, Fowkes & Company organs at Christ Church Cathedral in Cincinnati. He also has 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

Two years ago, one of my graduate students, David Stultz, played a *tiento* by Francisco Correa de Arauxo as part of his master's degree recital program. The excitement in the audience was palpable as he brought a relatively simple piece of music to life by showcasing and contrasting the many vibrant reed stops available on Paul Fritts' organ at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart. That evening I had the idea to someday perform a recital on this organ that features 3 or 4 pieces in different historical and musical styles, each of which was profoundly shaped by the composer's attempts to make use of the particular regional features and soundscape of the organs that were familiar to them. With our Paul Fritts instrument being his largest organ, representing his latest eclectic style of organ building, this concert would put to test how well Fritts' organ handles these specific musical styles. It would also be a test of my own ability to make the subtle compromises needed in using the instrument at hand to render each piece without too strong of a foreign accent!

The program opens with music by the 17<sup>th</sup> century Portuguese composer **Antonio Correa Braga**, about whom almost nothing is known. Braga's only known piece, the *Batalha de 6<sup>o</sup> tom*, appears in a collection of 67 pieces for organ published in 1695. All except for ten of the pieces are by anonymous composers. Braga's *batalha* would have been written to exploit the invention of horizontal trumpet stops called *Clarines*, which was the most significant development to the Iberian baroque organ during the second half of the seventeenth century. The organ builder Joseph de Echevarría claimed to have built the first of these stops in 1659 for his organ at San Diego de Alcalá de Henares (near Madrid), and gives the following description: "This stop will lend great brilliance and by its excellence will seem a great novelty. These pipes will be placed in the main cornice like cannons, which will beautify all the façade of the organ." While a performance on a 17<sup>th</sup> century Iberian organ might contrast these horizontal reed stops with the older, vertical trumpet stops in the main organ case, tonight I will make use of an even wider array of reed stops in different styles.

**Francisco Correa de Arauxo** (1584-1654) was ordained as a Roman Catholic priest and held various clerical and musical appointments at churches in Seville, was organist at the cathedral in Jaen for 4 years, and ended his career in Segovia, where he held an administrative appointment at the cathedral. His major publication was *Facultad organica* (1626), a collection of 69 pieces for organ. Almost all of these pieces were *tientos*, written in a conservative polyphonic style strongly influenced by the Renaissance motet. *Facultad organica* was written for pedagogical purposes, and Correa provides an extensive preface in which he discusses the modes, rhythm, ornamentation, fingering, and other aspects of performance. Tiento 27 features an ornate treble solo in imitation of Italian cornetto repertoire, adding an element of early 17<sup>th</sup> century rhetorical expression to the underlying polyphonic accompaniment in the lower three voices.

**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart** (1756-1791) spent most of his short career performing in Europe's major cities, including Milan, Paris and Vienna, with the hope of obtaining a prestigious position as court composer or music director. Mozart's freelance activities as a keyboard player involved performances of his piano sonata and concertos. Recent biographies by Piero Melograni and Maynard Solomon contain very few references to Mozart's activities as an organist, despite a brief formal appointment as court organist to Prince-Archbishop Hieronymus Joseph Franz von Colloredo in Salzburg from 1779 to 1780. He wrote only a handful of organ works for the self-playing organ at Count Joseph Dehm's wax museum in Vienna.

Yet the 18<sup>th</sup> century was a period of great experimentation in organ building in Austria and Southern Germany, from the instrument built in 1706 by Johann Christoph Egedacher which Mozart knew at Salzburg Cathedral, to the Johann Nepomuk Holzhey organ in Neresheim Abbey, in Bavaria, built in 1797. These instruments feature numerous colorful flute and strings stops at 8 and 4 foot pitch, with a smaller number of reed stops. Although the written repertoire for these organs is slight, consisting mostly of easy pieces similar to the mechanical clock works of Haydn and Beethoven, a recent YouTube video in which Cristoph Bossert demonstrates the Neresheim Abbey organ, shows how effectively a more skilled church organist might have improvised in classical style, at various points of the liturgy.

It is with this background that I have made my own arrangement of the first movement of Mozart's *Symphony No. 38 in D major*, K.504, premiered in Prague in 1787. Mozart begins his Prague Symphony with a brooding slow introduction followed by a nimble-footed *allegro* which is characterized by a greater intensity in the development of musical themes than in earlier symphonies. The development section contains sophisticated contrapuntal imitation, and there are numerous subtle details, such as the way Mozart concludes the bridge section in the exposition with a short four-note motive which immediately becomes the main motive of the secondary theme group.

**John Scott Whiteley** (b. 1950) served as organist at York Minster in England from 1975 until 2010, when he retired to pursue a career as a freelance organist, composer and musicologist. He studied at the Royal College of Music in London, and with Flor Peeters in Malines, Belgium and Fernando Germani in Siena, Italy. He has made numerous solo recordings, including the complete organ works of Joseph Jongen. He also appears as accompanist on more than 20 recordings. He is a prolific composer of organ works and sacred choral compositions. The *Passacaglia*, Opus 17 (2009) was composed in memory of Diana, Princess of Wales. The first two notes, D – A, spell the first and last letters of her name. Whiteley marks very specific registrations in the score which, with a number of modifications, can be quite effectively on Paul Fritts' instrument.

Blind from birth, **Louis Vierne** (1870-1937) followed the path taken by many other blind French musicians of his day, beginning his musical training at the National Institute for the Blind in Paris, before perfecting his skills at the Paris Conservatoire. Vierne was appointed organist at Notre-Dame Cathedral in 1900 and held this post until his death in 1937. His six organ symphonies continue the symphonic tradition established by his teachers César Franck and Charles-Marie Widor, in exploring the rich tonal palette of the instruments of the Parisian organ builder, Aristide Cavallé-Coll. In his memoirs, Vierne talks about his experience as a student in Widor's organ class, in which they analyzed symphonies from the German symphonic tradition, including Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven and Schubert, as models for improvisation.

Vierne's *Symphony No. 2 in E minor*, Opus 20, was composed between 1901 and 1903. Vierne dedicated the work to Charles Mutin, who became director of the Cavallé-Coll firm after the death of its founder in 1899. Claude Debussy attended a partial premiere of two movements of the symphony, performed by Vierne (featuring the Choral and Scherzo) at the Schola Cantorum in Paris and remarked, "Old J. S. Bach, the father of us all, would have been very pleased with Monsieur Vierne."

Symphony No. 2 is the first of Vierne's symphonies to employ cyclical principles, in which the two main themes of the first movement reappear in various guises in the remaining movements of the work. The first movement is cast in sonata-allegro form and opens with a stoic theme featuring dotted rhythms.

#### Theme A



It is contrasted with a lyrical secondary theme featuring the foundation stops of the Grand Orgue and Positif with the power of the full Récit often buried behind a closed swell box.

#### Theme B



The second movement reflects the late 19<sup>th</sup> century interest of French organists in the German Lutheran chorale tradition and the choral-based organ works of J. S. Bach. The main theme (Theme C) is a "chorale" but very much in French romantic style, with precedents such as the 3 Chorals of Vierne's mentor, César Franck. It is based on a rhythmic transformation of Theme B.

#### Theme C



The form is basically a five-part rondo with elements of development and recapitulation. Theme C is contrasted with an "agitato" theme which ultimately builds to full organ, at which point Theme C returns in augmentation in the highest voice.

The third movement is arguably Vierne's most cheerful and lighthearted scherzo, reminiscent of similar movements in Mendelssohn's string quartets and chamber music. It is also in rondo form, with the first theme being new, and the second theme (Theme D) only loosely based on Theme A, largely in its use of whole or half steps.

### Theme D



However, Theme D later reappears as the main theme of the fifth movement (Theme F), which is also cast in sonata-allegro form.

### Theme F



The fourth movement, Cantabile, is cast in large ternary form and features a lyrical solo for the clarinet or cromorne. Its main theme (Theme E) retains only a slight connection to Theme A in its use of dotted rhythms and a characteristic descending half-step.

### Theme E



However, it is preceded by a four-measure introduction, which in the central development is the only theme that is featured. Theme E does not reappear until the recapitulation.

The final theme to be introduced in Vierne's symphony is Theme G, which is the secondary theme of the final movement. It is a transformation of Theme A.

### Theme G



With the intricate structure of this symphony, Vierne achieves a work which is truly a concert piece, in contrast to his first symphony, written four years earlier, which still feels close to a suite with baroque elements (it opens with a prelude and fugue). Nevertheless, in the second symphony, the serious character of Movements 1, 2 and 5, the registrations Vierne specifies in those three movements, and the evocative use of a chorale in the second movement still give this piece the ethos of church music, while the Scherzo and Cantabile reflect 19<sup>th</sup> century chamber music traditions.

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