ORGAN RECITAL PROGRAM NOTES

An abstract submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of Master of Music
in Performance

By
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ABSTRACT

OBSESSED:

A GRADUATE ORGAN RECITAL

By

Eunsung Yun

Master of Music in Performance

This abstract provides historical and analytical information about the pieces I performed in my Graduate recital at California State University in Northridge on May 4, 2013. The three Pieces are Prelude and Fugue in D major by Johann Sebastian Bach, Grande Piece Symphonique by Cesar Franck and Symphony No.6 (selected movements) by Charles Marie Widor. Historical information is based on research in applicable resources, and analytical information is based on both published commentaries and my own experience with the repertoire.

_Prelude and Fugue in D major, BWV 532_ Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

The cheerful and lively piece, Prelude and Fugue in D major BWV 532, was written while Bach was living in Weimar (1708-1717). Johann Sebastian Bach’s most brilliant activity as an organist and composer was accomplished during this period. ¹ As Philipp Spitta said, this piece is, “One of the most dazzlingly beautiful of all the master’s

organ works.”

The prelude begins with a pedal of an ascending D major scale and broken tonic chords. This is followed by a six measures of sixteenth note arpeggios and tremolos over an F# pedal point. According to Peter Williams, “The style of the opening scales and broken chords - all on a tonic pedal point - is close to Bruhns.”

The next section is an alla breve lasting eighty measures. This section is composed of multiple sequences and echo effects between the right and left hands. The main theme appears in measures 20-22. It starts with the right hand playing A-B-D-G-B-A-C#-F#-A-G-B-E-G-F#-D. The pedal imitates the main theme by playing down a third exactly one measure behind. It starts F#-G-B-E-G-F#-A-D-F#-E-G-C#-E-D-B. According to Spitta, “…alla breve is written over it, but this direction is not to be understood of the pace, but rather indicates only the style, which is strictly sustained, ornamented with many syncopations, and throughout displays full brilliancy of harmony.”

A series of sequences start in measures 23-31. Use of these sequences is a foundational basso continuo technique. On measure 99, a cadence in E minor interrupts the prelude.

The final part of the prelude abruptly shifts to a serious style. Chromatic chords,

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including diminished seventh and Neapolitan harmonies, predominate in this section. These chords are interspersed with short and quick scale passages. Bach composed the Adagio section like a free-recitative, uniting double pedals and harmonic progressions to end the prelude.

The fugue subject is a highly repetitive pattern, D, E, F#, in sixteenth notes. The exposition has two real answers in measures one to 29. The episode that follows is an especially bright sound, which leads to the final subject on the pedals, where it reaches the highest point.

The fugue proceeds with repeated notes, held for 29 measures, during which the left hand plays the D, E, F# and E figure, with the upper voice answering up a fifth. The pedal imitates the first subject, down a fourth in the measure 20. The next part shows the notes D, E, F#, E figure again in measures 30-53, followed by a move to the dominant. The next section repeats the first measure and then becomes a free episode in measures 53- 64. The main body of the piece is measures 64-76. An interesting feature here is the answer and counter-subject rhythm in F# minor. The final section begins with a dominant and tonic in measures 96-126. The last part ends with arpeggiated chords in what amounts to a 12 measure codetta, and finishes with more virtuoso pedal playing. From a performer’s standpoint, this is one of the most difficult sections for the hands and the pedal to fit together, since the right hand goes up to the high “A” note, while the pedal responds with a low D in sixteenth notes, requiring the organist to reach to opposite extremities on the console. The fugue finishes with a solo pedal based on the fugue’s main subject.
This prelude and fugue was written in happy inspiration. According to Spitta, “It cannot be doubted that the work was composed for a particular occasion, possibly for one of his musical tours.”

Johann Sebastian Bach acquired many compositional techniques; figuration, motifs, sequences, etc., throughout his life that would become widely used in his music. The music of Bach has been nothing short of absolutely interesting. Bach approached all of his compositions with the same great detail and respect. This appreciation Bach had for his music can be heard with every recital of his work.

*Grande Piece Symphonique*  
*Cesar Franck (1822-1890)*

César Franck devoted himself completely to the advancement of organ composition and technique. His musical life concentrated upon the organ, and he composed distinguished organ works through his time. His orchestration is similar to registration of stops on the organ. Franck used many compositional techniques to accomplish this. His creative work for the organ is characterized by his heavy use of chromaticism and cyclic form. Donald J. Grout describes cyclic form as themes which, “…recur identically or become transformed in two or more movements.” Franck is known for his melodies, which are used several times throughout a large-scale work: this is known as the cyclic compositional method.

Franck composed *Grande Pièce Symphonique* in 1863. Leon Plantinga states,

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“These are large-scale works, usually in several movements, that range from Bachian fugal exercises to serious Liszt-like attempts to simulate the orchestra at the organ (the second composition of the set is *Grande Pièce Symphonique*, Op.17).”\(^7\) According to Leon Vallas, “The secret of Franck’s orchestration is that he played on the orchestra as if it were a three-manual organ.”\(^8\) Thus, large scale works for the organ have been labeled “organ symphonies.” César Franck was the organist at several Paris churches, St Jean-St Francois in the Marais, Paris du Trocadero, and St. Clotilde, all Cavaille-Coll organs. These instruments profoundly influenced Franck’s “symphonic” writing style.

The *Grande Pièce Symphonique* opens in F sharp minor, in which the themes are dark and severe. The Andante contains a sweet melody. According to Laurence Davies, “A delicate balance between major and minor contributes greatly to the charm of this movement.”\(^9\) Franck used triplets in the middle of the Andante. However, Franck masterfully transforms the concluding triplets into the introduction to a new melody, accompanied by a differing pedal scheme.

The Allegro, set in B Major, begins with charming sounds. According to Norman Demuth, “A reference to the Andante which precedes the Scherzo brings to the Finale. This has an introduction which ties up all the preceding themes and after a flourish or two the movement proper begins with a theme based on that of the first

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movement.” Franck utilized the Andante as a transitional tool, but still brings clear distinctions between the movements.

The Finale is built on the main ideas which appeared earlier-Franck’s cyclic form at work. According to Leon Vallas, “It is a vast monument of song, cyclopean in an architectural design, and yet decorated with the most delicately carved friezes; a huge cathedral standing before us serene and strong, a scene for humane action and for triumph.” Franck’s melodies seem particularly suited to his extensive use of chromaticism, which is the use of notes outside the currently diatonic tonality.

César Franck’s compositional skill—chromaticism and cyclical form—appeal to French musicians. According to Leon Vallas, “Franckism…It did much to change the whole course of musical life and thought in France by restoring to them the ideals of the great non-theatrical composers-the ideals of the symphony, that noblest and most independent of all expressive forms.” César Franck’s influence remains a historical fact of major importance to music. Grout states, “He has a very great influence upon modern French music. He shaped and developed his themes…he worked out his ideas logically and pointedly avoided extremes of expression.”

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Franck was the founder of modern French music. Franck’s music is built on tonal structure and use of the chromatic scale. A performer plays in several tonalities and is confronted by multiple accidentals while playing his music. According to Rollin Smith, “In his later years, Franck would pre-select key progressions and patterns, then compose a piece according to the ‘harmonic puzzle.’ Franck is also regarded for his compelling melodies, which are typically short and woven into the fabric of the piece time and time again in a wide variety of ways, thus the cyclic compositional method.”

Franck created a new idea rather than taking old technique in past. Norman Demuth states, “What Berlioz did for the orchestra and Wagner for the theatre, so did Franck for symphonic music. Franck may be called the founder of modern music.” The significance of César Franck’s organ music is that it elevated the organ from the instrument for Sunday service to a virtuoso machine.

*Symphony No.6  Charles Marie Widor (1844-1937)*

Charles Marie Widor composed many compositions in such genres as chamber, piano works and five orchestral symphonies. According to Karen Schineider, “In 1880 his first stage work, a ballet that debuted at the Paris Opera… He became a music critic and conductor of a choral society specializing in oratorios. In 1890 succeeded César Franck as professor at Paris Conservatory.” According to Samuel A. Baldwin, “…With Schweitzer he edited five volumes of the organ works of Bach, and he wrote a

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16 Karen Schineider, Program Notes (Ball State University).

Despite his other compositions, Widor is best remembered as an organ composer, having composed ten organ symphonies. These compositions demonstrated an extraordinary musical maturity, and showed a mastery of symphonic form. The sixth symphony is one of the greatest of the ten symphonies.

The sixth symphony is referred by organists as the organ repertoire. It consists of five movements. For reasons of length the third and fourth were not included in this recital.

One of the most striking features of the sixth symphony is Widor’s new approach to organization, where he seems to have intentionally avoided the traditional sonata form. The first movement begins in the dense manner. The first movement is introduced very loudly (fff) in G minor. This introduction shows a theme which is presented through the first movement. The main idea is presented in measure 1-16. Widor’s melody includes in the first 16 measures is full of large intervals and many leaps, despite which the melody remains very linear. After the main melody is stated, the second section is played freely in a recitative style. Widor creates a magnificent effect with his free use of accent signs in the music. According to John R. Near, “The first movement of this symphony, a highly developed Chorale, first exposed by the full organ, is of an imposing effect.”

The second section (measures 32-44) begins with a recitative style that imitates the narrative

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17 Samuel A. Baldwin, Public Organ Recital (The College of the City of New York, 1910, 5, 25.)

in opera. Despite its free nature, is expresses a sense of agitation. The third section (measures 45-56) again presents the first theme, this time with double-pedaling. For The final episode (measures 231-254) Widor indicates staccato articulation in the right hand, against the left hand’s legato playing.

The second movement presents a great contrast to the first movement. This movement is a delicate harmonic sound in Adagio tempo. It expresses very slow tempo quietly with rich sound. It is attractive to listen to. The Finale proceeds very quickly (Vivace) in G major. This section is one of the most difficult sections in the entire symphony for both hands and the pedal to fit together in measures 118-137 because Widor’s unusual pedal part includes an extended passage of large intervals—an octave up to a tenth. This movement is filled with multiple variations of the texture. It feels musically modern when the cadenza arrives with its triple rhythms in measures 223-226 and 244-245. Widor created brilliant and exciting musical expression that leads to a triumphant ending.

Charles-Marie Widor’s sixth symphony abandons the traditional organ piece established by such composers as Bach and his successors. Unlike Bach’s disciplined contrapuntal and fugal style, Widor’s sixth symphony expanded into complex polyphonic forms with musically independent sections. This transition perhaps relates to the modern development of the organ. According to Samuel A. Baldwin, “This change was made possible by the revolution in organ construction effected by Cavaillé Coll, of Paris, which gave rise to a demand for a class of composition calculated to develop the resources of
the instrument in a more diversified manner.”\textsuperscript{19} By taking advantage of the convenient controls provided on the modern organ, Widor could compose symphonies that demanded far more of the organist and the instrument. In addition, he used all of the tonal possibilities of the organ at his disposal. With these compositional techniques, Widor created an amazing array of musical literature. The Symphony No.6 reflects Widor’s experience as a virtuoso organist and master composer.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid, 162.
Bibliography


Program

California State University, Northridge
Mike Curb College of Arts, Media, and Communication
Department of Music

present

Eunsung Yun
Organist

A student of Timothy Howard

Saturday, May 4, 2013, 4:30 P.M.
Nordhoff Hall 107.

In partial fulfillment of the Master of Music degree
In Organ Performance
Program

Preludes & Fugues.........................J. S. Bach  BWV 532.

Grande Piece Symphonique Op.17.......Cesar Franck

Intermission

Symphony No. 6 in G minor Op. 42......Charles-Marie Widor

Allegro( I: First Movement )
Adagio( II: Second Movement
Vivace ( V: Finale)