

The St. Olaf College Department of Music
presents

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STEVEN AMUNDSON, *conductor*

CHRISTOPHER ATZINGER, *piano*

JOHN FERGUSON, *organ*

CATHERINE RODLAND, *organ*

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Sunday, March 18, 2007 ~ 3:30 p.m.

Boe Chapel, Northfield, Minnesota

THE PROGRAM

Toccata Festiva, Op. 36

Samuel Barber (1910-1981)

Catherine Rodland, *organ*

Samuel Barber was a 20th century American neo-Romantic composer. He wrote *Toccata Festiva* for the dedication of the new Aeolian-Skinner pipe organ, given to the Philadelphia Orchestra by philanthropist Mary Curtis Bok Zimbalist. At the time of its construction it was the largest moveable organ in the world with 4,102 pipes, three manuals, and seventy-three stops. The Philadelphia Orchestra gave the premiere on 30 September, 1960 with Eugene Ormandy conducting and Paul Callaway, organist and choir director of the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., at the organ per the composer's request.

The *Toccata* is in one movement, comprised of alternating sections of fast finger-work and calmer passages. The opening sweep of sound treats the orchestra as a giant keyboard, leading to the initial statement of the main theme in the trumpet. With each statement the theme changes meter, providing a more organic and less rigid direction to the music. Barber's characteristic lyricism shows through as strings voice several of the theme's various iterations. Also characteristic of Barber's music is the creative treatment of a single theme. The *Toccata* derives nearly all of its material from the original trumpet theme, from the counterpoint of the middle section to the thunderous low brass statement at the end.

Some organ solo passages display the technical virtuosity of the instrument with massive florid gestures, while others are more introverted and contemplative. Most notable in the organ part is an extremely difficult pedal cadenza that Callaway was said to have played "*con fuoco*, with flying feet."

Notes by Luke Varland '08

Piano Concerto No. 4 in G major, Op. 58

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

- I. Allegro moderato*
- II. Andante como moto*
- III. Rondo (Vivace)*

Christopher Atzinger, *piano*

Ludwig van Beethoven's *Piano Concerto no. 4 in G major* of 1808 is an extraordinary work esteemed for its high level of originality, while still being firmly rooted in the tradition of Mozart and Haydn. The form is typical of the Classical concerto with several marked changes. The piano states the principal theme for five bars in an almost improvisatory manner before the standard orchestral exposition that arrives in an unexpected key. Then, a Romantic lyricism pervades the movement, which ends in a both introspective and heroic way.

The intensely brief second movement is a lyrical solo song in the unusual key of E minor. While his contemporaries tended to write operatically, Beethoven chose a dramatic classical style. Jagged melodic lines from the orchestra interrupt the moving lyrical passages of the piano as if in a sort of dialogue. Indeed, historian Owen Jander has likened this movement to the mythological Orpheus' taming of the Furies.

The dance-like rondo ending upsets the listeners' expectations by beginning in the "wrong" key of C major. The tension that has been built between the conflicting keys of G and C major won't be resolved until the end, which combines the drama and lyricism of the entire work.

Premiered alongside the Fifth and Sixth symphonies, this concerto also demonstrates Beethoven's bridging of the Classical and Romantic periods. While he maintained many of the characteristics of his predecessors, he managed to plunge forward into the future in innovative and unusual ways.

Notes by Erik Radio '09

Symphony No. 3 in C Minor ("Organ") Opus 78

Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921)

I. *Adagio – Allegro moderato – Poco adagio*
II. *Allegro Moderato – Presto – Maestoso – Allegro*

John Ferguson, *organ*

After the fall of the 2nd Republic (1870), French artists were developing their own identity that would reflect their national culture. Camille Saint-Saëns became the “moving spirit” behind the *Société Nationale de Musique*, which encouraged compositions from emerging French composers. Ironically, Saint-Saëns’ own musical style illustrates the strong influence of Austro-German composers, whose music he defended to Parisian criticism.

Saint-Saëns’ *Third Symphony* synthesizes the thematic transformation of Liszt, the agitated textures of Schumann, and the intricate counterpoint of J.S. Bach. The work is distinctive due to its addition of keyboards to the instrumentation. The piano is used for quick flourishes of color and texture, while the organ assumes a more prominent, soloistic role, hence the subtitle “Organ Symphony.”

Saint-Saëns composed his symphony in two movements, but in the composer’s own analysis of the work, “it contains, in principle, the four traditional movements, but the first, arrested in development, serves as an introduction to the Adagio, and the Scherzo is linked by the same process to the Finale.”

The symphony is an exploration of the heroic struggle of life and death. After a yearning introduction, the turbulent C minor exposition initiates the main thematic material of the symphony, based on the *Dies Irae* from the Gregorian Requiem Mass. The flowing secondary theme is derived from the introduction. Both are then developed and transformed as the orchestration thins and the tempo gradually slows. The solo organ whispers its first entrance in the Poco Adagio, serving as the backdrop for a graceful song in strings. Saint-Saëns crafts a contemplative theme built on a well-known four-note motive from a plainsong setting of the *Credo*. The tune is repeated in solo clarinet, horn and trombone, accompanied pianissimo by rich divisi strings.

In stark contrast to the serene character of the adagio, the second half of the symphony begins with a boisterous Scherzo built on a strong rhythmic motive. This section twice alternates with a sparkling Presto that bursts with syncopation. The piano flourishes are reminiscent of Saint-Saëns’ *Carnival of the Animals*, written in the same year (1886). In the reprise of the Presto, the *Credo* motive is brought back in a graceful fugue. Another relaxing of tempo leads to the finale commencing with a powerful C major chord played by solo organ. The *Credo* and the *Dies Irae* themes (this time in major mode) are juxtaposed and developed in a series of chorales and fugues. The organ adds volumes of color and force to the orchestral palette and fully participates in the exchange of harmonic twists and turns in the orchestration. In a concluding thought, the organ descends a C Major scale, which uses the lowest possible pedal-tone on the instrument. Trumpets and timpani compete with the organ as the full orchestra arrives at a life-affirming conclusion.

Notes by Tom Niemisto ‘08

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Catherine Rodland graduated cum laude with departmental distinction in organ performance from St. Olaf College in 1987. She received her MM and DMA from the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, NY where she was a student of Russell Saunders. While at Eastman she received the

prestigious Performer's Certificate and the Ann Anway award for excellence in organ performance. Rodland is a prizewinner in several competitions, including the 1994 and 1998 American Guild of Organists Young Artist Competition, the 1994 Calgary International Organ Competition, and the 1989 International Organ Competition at the University of Michigan. As a result of these competitions she has concertized extensively throughout the United States and Canada. Recent recital engagements have included appearances at the Orpheus Music Festival in Orlando, Florida (now the Belvidere Chamber Music Festival) premiering and performing new works by participating composers, and concerts in New York, New Jersey, Boston, Atlanta, and St. Paul, Minnesota. In 2002 she gave performances in Berlin and Brandenburg, Germany. Prior to joining the St. Olaf faculty, Rodland worked as Minister of Music at First Church of Christ in Glastonbury, Connecticut, where she was responsible for seven choirs. She coauthored the book *Choristers' Training Program* for the Royal School of Church Music in America, a manual for children's choir education. A specialist in working with children's choirs, Rodland has presented workshops at several church music conventions. Her advanced children's choir toured England in the summer of 2001, singing services at Ely Cathedral, Ripon Cathedral and York Minster.

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Pianist **Christopher Atzinger**, a native of Jackson, Michigan, has performed in New York City (Carnegie Hall -Weill, NYU, St. Paul's Chapel), Chicago's Dame Myra Hess Series and at the Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C. in addition to performances across the United States, including Boston, Baltimore, Austin, Little Rock, Dayton, and Ann Arbor. His artistry has also been broadcast on *Live from WFMT* – airing on Chicago's classical music station, Chicagoland Channel 25 television, *Live from FM 91* on WGTE – Toledo, and on WUCX radio - Saginaw. European performances include recitals in Toulouse and Carcassonne, France, in conjunction with Foundation La Gesse, and a concert tour of the Valencia region of Spain. In addition to orchestral appearances at the Banff International Keyboard Festival and the Brevard Music Festival, he has been soloist with the Shreveport and Jackson (MI) Symphony Orchestras. He has also given lectures and master classes in Minnesota, Massachusetts, Maryland, Ohio and Arkansas. Upcoming engagements include concert appearances in Vienna, Paris, Rome, New York City, Virginia, Iowa, and at the Chautauqua Music Festival.

Atzinger was first place winner of the 2005 National Federation of Music Clubs Artist Competition and the gold medalist of the fiftieth annual Nina Plant Wideman International Piano Competition. He has also received honors from the Frinna Awerbuch International Piano Competition, the National Society of Arts and Letters, the Music Teachers National Association Competition, the Sydney Wright Memorial Accompaniment Competition, and the Mary Graham Lasley Competition. Additionally, he has received honors from the Joyce Dutka Arts Foundation and the Presser Music Award from the Theodore Presser Foundation. Also active in competitions abroad, Mr. Atzinger won the *Premio Città di Ispica* prize with special recognition for his performance of music by Samuel Barber at the IBLA Grand Prize Competition in Ragusa-Ibla, Italy.

With interests in American music, Atzinger has given premieres of works by Gregory Fritze, Robert Pound, and Kevin McCarter. He has also received an *Encore* grant from the American Composers Forum for modern music performance. His debut recording on the MSR Classics label, scheduled for release later this year, includes Samuel Barber's Piano Sonata, Op. 26. The recorded performance received acclaim at the 8th annual International Web Concert Hall Auditions. In addition to degrees from the University of Texas at Austin and the University of Michigan, Atzinger earned the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in piano performance from the Peabody Conservatory of the Johns Hopkins University. He counts among his teachers Julian Martin, Robert

McDonald, Anton Nel, David Renner, and Carolyn Lipp. Prior to his faculty appointment at St. Olaf College, he taught at Dickinson College in Pennsylvania.

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John Ferguson is one of America's most respected church musicians, and his name is immediately associated with the words "hymn festival." Every year he designs and leads such events, both in local congregations and at gatherings of church musicians (National Association of Pastoral Musicians national conventions in Pittsburgh, Washington, D.C. and Milwaukee), organists (American Guild of Organists National convention in Denver) and choral conductors (American Choral Directors Association national convention in the Washington National Cathedral). He has designed and presented hymn festivals in Asia and Europe as well. Although he is a Lutheran, his festivals are ecumenical experiences drawing upon the greatest treasures of Christian song from many centuries, traditions and styles.

Ferguson is the Elliot and Kara Stockal Johnson Professor of Organ and Church Music and Cantor to the Student Congregation of St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota, where he also conducts the St. Olaf Cantorei, one of the major choral ensembles of the college. This is the school where the great Christiansen choral tradition began, a tradition that has influenced thousands of American church musicians. Christiansen's lifelong interest in hymns is evidenced by the many hymns included in his choral compositions as well as his contributions to hymnals of his day. Ferguson's creative hymn arrangements continue this tradition with a renewed emphasis upon congregational participation. In 2005 his setting of the hymn text, "Who Is This" for choir and viola was awarded the prestigious Raabe Prize for excellence in sacred composition.

Since joining the St. Olaf faculty, Ferguson's skills as a choral conductor and creative arranger have become more widely known. He brings a special combination of experience as choral singer (Oberlin College Choir under Robert Fountain), church musician (both part-time and full-time) and participant in the St. Olaf choral tradition to his workshops in conducting and repertoire for church choirs which are considered highlights at conventions of professional organizations.

A native of Cleveland, Ferguson's degrees are from Oberlin College, Kent State University, and the Eastman School of Music. He is respected as an expert teacher and performer and his unique skill as improviser and leader of congregational song has won national acclaim. When one attends one of his festivals, one is assured of an experience that is never dull. With Ferguson at the organ and the creative use of instrumental and choral sound, the assembly is enveloped and whisked away into a unique experience of song.