

# Bach Festival Society

OF WINTER PARK

JOHN V. SINCLAIR

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR

**Clive Driskill-Smith, organ**

Friday, February 17 at 8:00pm

Knowles Memorial Chapel

## Program

Toccatina and Fugue in D minor, BWV 56	Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 – 1750)
Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Ehr, BWV 662	J.S. Bach
Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Ehr, BWV 664	J.S. Bach
Erbarm dich mein, o Herre Gott, BWV 721	J.S. Bach
Piece d'Orgue, BWV 572	J.S. Bach

## INTERMISSION

Fantasia and Fugue in G minor, BWV 542	J.S. Bach
Pastorella, BWV 590	J.S. Bach
Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Ehr, BWV 663	J.S. Bach
St Anne Fugue in Eb major, BWV 552	J.S. Bach

## **Clive Driskill-Smith, organ**

Clive Driskill-Smith MA, Mphil, FRCO, ARCM, is one of the leading organists of his generation. He has been hailed as a "star of a new generation," and critics have praised his "blazing technique" and "unbelievable virtuosity," describing his performances as "intensely moving" and "truly breathtaking."

Winner of the Royal College of Organists' *Performer of the Year* Competition in 2000 and the Calgary International Organ Competition in 2002, Clive performs throughout Europe, North America, Asia, and Australia. In the UK he has played at the BBC Proms, the Royal Festival Hall, Symphony Hall, and Bridgewater Hall, and in the US he has played at Regional and National Conventions of the American Guild of Organists. His CDs have received critical acclaim ("a master performer in a range of musical styles ... his playing is immaculate ... the technique is brilliant, the interpretation faultless ... a first class recording"), and his performances have been broadcast on radio and television worldwide.



A pupil of David Sanger and Hans Fagius, Driskill-Smith was a Music Scholar at Eton College and then Organ Scholar at Christ Church, Oxford, where he is now Sub-Organist. He plays for the daily services in the Cathedral and for the choir's many concerts, recordings, broadcasts, and tours under the direction of Stephen Darlington. Driskill-Smith teaches the organ at the Royal Academy of Music and is a Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Musicians.

*Sponsored by a Generous Gift from Dr. Blair and Diane Murphy*

## Program Notes

Mozart and Mendelssohn were child prodigies. They traveled widely, met ‘everyone’ in music, and were famous as phenomenal performers. Mozart’s first known compositions came at the age of five, and Mendelssohn wrote twelve string symphonies between the ages of twelve and fourteen. Bach’s family business was music; he studied hard to enter the business and worked religiously in a relatively small area of Germany. All are acknowledged geniuses, but Bach is not generally thought of as a prodigy.

And yet, every work on this program except the BWV 552 and probably BWV 590 was written by the time Bach was twenty-five. The earliest, BWV 721, was composed when he was eighteen. That said, Bach’s works can be notoriously difficult to date exactly, and the BWV numbers cannot be connected to dates either.

The *Toccatà and Fugue in D minor* is perhaps Bach’s most familiar work, thanks to Leopold Stokowski’s orchestral transcription for Disney’s *Fantasia* and countless horror films with deranged organists. Some specialists believe it is not the work of Bach. Others believe it may be an organ transcription of a solo work for violin or cello. Some point to compositional features that too closely resemble other composers and that appear nowhere else in Bach’s other works.

Noted Bach scholar and Festival Guest Conductor Christoph Wolff, however, does attribute some of these points to the influence of other composers, such as Pachelbel, Buxtehude, and Frescobaldi, but also to the severe limitations of the organ at Arnstadt for which Bach compensated compositionally. After all, Bach was still only twenty-three.

Bach’s early years were spent searching for an ideal position, which at that time usually meant as church organist and choirmaster. A major difference of the Lutheran service, as compared to the Catholic Mass, was congregational singing of hymns. Chorale Preludes based on these tunes were the bread and butter of the organist. Not only did Bach write these three different versions on *Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr* (To God alone on high be glory) there were even more variants. These were from 1703 when he was eighteen; they were collected in the *Eighteen Leipzig Chorale Preludes*.

The *Pièce d’Orgue* BWV 721 in G Major of 1708 is also known as a *Fantasia*. Such alternate titles were fairly common. That year Bach was encountering problems at his church in Mühlhausen with the Pietists who wanted a simpler and less ornate musical worship. It was much like Mozart’s problem with Emperor Joseph II made famous in the film *Amadeus* as “too many notes.” He started looking for another job and finally found one in Weimar.

It was there, also in 1708, that Bach wrote “The Great” *Fantasia and Fugue in G minor*, BWV 542. “The Great” distinguishes it from a smaller work in the same key. Such fantasias and toccatas were frequently improvised works later formalized and put on paper. In many churches, such extravagant improvisation was encouraged, and this example is exceptionally free in form.

The *Pastorella* BWV 590 has a sketchy history, and its date of composition is quite uncertain. It is in four sections, reflecting some of the newer compositional currents of its time, but is clearly linked to the Christmas season. The drone of the bagpipe, ‘Piffero’ style, is related to the instruments the shepherds were credited with playing for the newborn Jesus. Christoph Wolff has linked the melody of the last section to an earlier hymn tune also for the shepherds.

The *St. Anne Fugue in Eb Major* came in 1739 in Leipzig, Bach’s final home. At the ripe old age of fifty-four he was an acknowledged master of the organ and composition throughout Germany and much of Europe. He held several titles and was more free to travel.

The Fugue’s subject, that is the melody of the beginning, is based on an Anglican hymn *St. Anne* that Luther adapted as *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott* (A Mighty Fortress is our God), the veritable marching song of the Reformation. It is a triple fugue. The first fugue is followed by a more ornate one on another subject, and then the two are combined in a fabric of extraordinary complexity and brilliance.

Bach’s final illnesses brought on a long slow decline made even more tragic by a botched corneal operation. In his final months, he revised the Chorale Preludes BWV 651–668, several of which we have already heard. His last uncompleted work was also based on the chorale *Vor deinen Thron tret ich* (Before thy throne I now appear), which he had already set in the *Eighteen Leipzig Chorale Preludes*.

Bach lived longer than both Mozart and Mendelssohn by more than a quarter century. That he should return to these early works more than four decades after their creation is testament to a life of devotion to his profession, his craft, and his God.

-- Dewey Anderson