

THE LITTLEFIELD ORGAN SERIES

presents a Guest Artist Recital:

NAOMI SHIGA & JONATHAN WOHLERS, *organ*

April 29, 2012

3:00 PM

Walker-Ames Room

PROGRAM

TOCCATA SEPTIMA..... GEORG MUFFAT (1653-1704)

RICERCAR IN G, FBWV 408 JOHANN JACOB FROBERGER (1616-1667)

INTRODUCTION AND FUGUE, OP. 9 CHRISTIAN GOTTLOB HÖPNER (1799-1859)

ANDANTE WITH VARIATIONS, K.V. 501..... WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756-1791)

FUGUE IN G MINOR, K.V. 401 (375E)..... W. A. MOZART

MEIN JESU, DER DU MICH, OP. POSTH. 122, NO. 1
O WELT, ICH MUß DICH LASSEN, OP. POSTH. 122, NO. 3
O GOTT, DU FROMMER GOTT, OP. POSTH. 122, NO. 7
} JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)

SONATA IN D MINOR FOR ORGAN, FOUR HANDS, OP. 30..... GUSTAV MERKEL (1827-1885)

Allegro moderato

Adagio

Allegro con fuoco—Fuga

CLASSICAL

Today a curiosity, playing the organ with four hands (and four feet) was widely practiced at the end of the eighteenth and through the nineteenth century, particularly in German speaking lands. Four-hand writing was especially favored by composers from Saxony and Vienna, and because the genre was well suited for counterpoint, many examples of both classical and romantic fugues survive. This afternoon's program features works from this body of repertoire as well as solo pieces with South German and Austrian origins.

Stylistic absorption and re-interpretation of foreign influence was a hallmark of German music in the baroque period. The so-called "mixed taste" identified by the eighteenth-century treatise author Johann Joachim Quantz was central to the development of South German keyboard music. The toccatas of **Georg Muffat** represent the most elegant and complete "mixed taste" synthesis of Italian, French, and German styles found in the seventeenth century. Muffat was influenced and formed as a musician by his studies in Alsace, Paris, and Rome, by his life and work in the Hapsburg Empire, as well as by his contact with the leading musical personalities of his time, including Jean-Baptiste Lully, Bernardo Pasquini, and Arcangelo Corelli. His greatest contribution to the organ's repertoire is his 1682 publication, *Apparatus Musico-Organisticus*. It contains twelve large-scale toccatas and a number of variation pieces. The toccatas are multi-sectional with extreme contrasts and varieties of figurations. Both Lullian and Corellian elements are apparent, as are continuo, orchestral, and chamber idioms. Italian elements in the toccatas include "grip" notation (upper stave for the right hand, lower stave for the left), the use of only one keyboard at a time, the use of the pedal only as a harmonic reinforcement of the bass, and the inclusion of *adasio* episodes as well as sections of the Italian *stile di durezza e ligature*, a style characterized by slow tempos, and abundant suspensions and dissonances. French elements include ornamentation, *notes inégalité*, and employment of forms such as the French overture and the *fugue grave*.

In his own lifetime and beyond, **Johann Jacob Froberger** was esteemed as a master of keyboard composition. Froberger's influence on succeeding generations was significant, a fact that stands in direct contrast with his modern reception. Froberger traveled widely, often on diplomatic missions, visiting cities across Europe, including Dresden, Cologne, Düsseldorf, Regensburg, Brussels, Antwerp, London, and Paris. Froberger's cosmopolitan life began from a young age when he was exposed to the most current musical trends from throughout the continent. His father was Kapellmeister at the Stuttgart court chapel where musicians from Italy, France, and England were employed. Around 1634 Froberger moved to Vienna where he was employed as an organist in the imperial chapel. Having studied on two sojourns to Rome with both Girolamo Frescobaldi and Althanasius Kircher, Froberger was especially revered as a master of counterpoint, his ricercars and other contrapuntal works serving as models for study by such later composers as J. S. Bach, W. A. Mozart, and Beethoven.

The most extensive romantic works for organ duo are Gustav Merkel's Sonata in d minor, op. 30, and Adolf Friedrich Hesse's Fantasies in c minor, op. 35, and D Minor, op. 87. Although smaller in scope, a handful of fugues survive from a number of German speaking composers, including Franz Schubert, Franz Lachner, Gottfried Preyer, David H. Engel, Ernst F. Gaebler, and the Dresden organist, **Christian Gottlob Höpner**. Largely self-trained, Höpner served as organist at the Kreuzkirche from 1837–1859. His published organ works for two players include several chorale settings, and from 1835 the Introduction and Fugue, op. 9. Because pedal couplers and/or large pedal divisions were relatively rare, early nineteenth-century duo composers conceived of the pedal part as a reinforcement of the manual bass. Common practice therefore was for the secondo player to double the manual bass line in the pedal (no couplers). According to Kurt Leuders, the compass and position of Höpner's pedalboard encouraged high-range pedal writing. To accommodate the part for performance on a more standard pedalboard, such as the one on the beautiful Paul Fritts & Co. op. 9 in Kane Hall, we will divide the pedal part between the secondo and primo parts.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart held the organ in high regard. He famously is reported to have stated, "...in my eyes and ears the organ will ever be the king of instruments." In spite of his praise for the instrument, he along with most other classical-era composers seem to have written hardly any music for the organ. As with Beethoven and Haydn, most of Mozart's organ compositions are for *Flötenubr*, a flute-

playing musical clock. The construction of mechanical organs, instruments whose pipes are activated by pinned cylinders, has a long history. In the late eighteenth century a fashion arose among wealthy music lovers in Vienna for cabinet clocks combined with a small mechanical organ. The four-hand Andante with Variations, K.V. 501 from 1786, while written for the fortepiano, is especially delightful on the organ. Mozart may have in fact had the organ in mind when writing for four hands: because the *Flötenuhr* Fantasies K.V. 594 and K.V. 608 are notated on four staves, a duo performance is practical and is today a common part of his keyboard (both piano and organ) repertoire. With its wide spacing between the voices the Fugue in G Minor, K.V. 401 (375e) is also suitable for four hands. Composed in Vienna in 1782, the first edition contains the heading “*Fugha per il Clavicembalo o Organo*,” making it one of the few examples of a work by Mozart specified for performance on the organ.

In his entire oeuvre, **Johannes Brahms** wrote only fifteen works for the organ. Four of these—Prelude and Fugue in a minor, Prelude and Fugue in g minor, Fugue in a[#] minor, and Chorale Prelude and Fugue on *O Traurigkeit, O Herzeleid*—belong to an early experimental phase between 1854 and 1856 when Brahms undertook a study of the organ as well as a weekly exchange of contrapuntal exercises with Joseph Joachim. After briefly entertaining thoughts of becoming a concert organist, he abandoned the instrument for the next forty years, turning the lessons he learned from the organ and its repertoire to use in compositions in the orchestral and instrumental medium. Only in 1897 in the final year of his life did Brahms return to the organ. Upon his death a set of chorale preludes for the organ were found in his apartment in Vienna. Believed by many to have been written in response to the death of Clara Schumann as well as to his own failing health, Brahms chose chorale melodies for these pieces with texts on topics of reconciliation with death, and acceptance and hopefulness for the world to come. The writing in the Eleven Chorale Preludes, op. posth. 122 is spare, linear, contrapuntal, and uses classic forms, revealing Brahms’ deep respect for and study of early music, and in every way exhibit a marked contrast to the lush romanticism of contemporary organ composers such as Reger, Rheinberger, and Liszt.

Gustav Merkel, who succeeded Höpner as organist (later becoming *Hoforganist*) at the Kreuzkirche in Dresden, came to initial fame by winning first prize in a competition for writing Sonata in d minor for Organ, Four Hands, op. 30. In 1857 the musical periodical *Urania* carried an announcement by the “*Deutsche Tonhalle*” for the opening of a composition contest: “The Association hereby offers a prize of 20 ducats for a four-hand organ sonata—consisting of three movements of which the last is a fugue—for two-manual organ with full pedalboard. The pedal part is to be given over to both players *obligato*, in such a way that each player takes care of his respective half of the pedalboard....” Merkel, a Lutheran by faith, expanded upon the plan providing a motto for each movement based on the Book of Psalms: *Allegro moderato*, Psalm 42:6–8, 10 (5–7, 9); *Adagio*, Psalm 23:1–4; *Allegro con fuoco*, Psalm 42:12 (11). After the winning the competition he went on to enjoy fame both as an organist and organ composer, and his works were especially popular in Germany in the latter half of the nineteenth century. A generation later though his music fell out of favor, and it is only recently that organists are again playing his compositions. Today he is probably best known for his four-hand sonata, certainly one of the most challenging romantic organ works for two players.

Jonathan Wohlers
Tacoma, 2012