

The Peoria Chapter
THE AMERICAN GUILD OF ORGANISTS



DR. JOHN ORFE

7:30 PM | Wednesday | August 23, 2023

American Guild of Organists
PO Box 1072 Peoria IL 61653
agopeoria.org

Westminster Church
1420 W Moss Avenue Peoria IL
61606

Wednesdays at Westminster
a series of organ recitals presented by
AMERICAN GUILD OF ORGANISTS, PEORIA CHAPTER

23 August 2023

7:30 PM

DR. JOHN ORFE

Prelude and Fugue in A minor, BWV 543

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)

Tango Toccata on a Theme by Melchior Vulpus (2010)

Pamela Decker

Prelude and Fugue in B minor, BWV 544

Johann Sebastian Bach

**Chorale Prelude on *Werde Munter*, from *6 Hymn-Preludes*,
*Book 2***

Percy Whitlock
(1903-1946)

**Finale from *Symphony for Organ no. 6*
V. Vivace**

Charles-Marie Widor
(1844-1937)

All are invited for refreshments in the parlor following concert.

about the artist ...

As composer and pianist, Dr. John Orfe has earned critical acclaim and fulfilled many commissions from choirs, orchestras, soloists, and chamber ensembles. His music has been performed by the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, the Mannes American Contemporary Ensemble, the Minnesota Orchestra, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Bowling Green New Music Ensemble, the Altgeld Chamber Players, Aspen Contemporary Ensemble, Choral Arts Ensemble, Two Rivers Chorale, and many more. His awards include the Heckscher Prize in Chamber Music Composition from Ithaca College, the Morton Gould Award from ASCAP, and a Charles Ives Scholarship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. He holds a Bachelor of Music degree from the Eastman School of Music and a Bachelor of Arts in Religion from the University of Rochester, as well as Master of Music, Master of Musical Arts, and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees from the Yale School of Music. He has taught at Dickinson College, Bradley University, and Illinois Wesleyan University.

Orfe is the core pianist and a founding member of the new music ensemble Alarm Will Sound, which has been active nationally and internationally for twenty-three years and recorded fourteen albums. Most recently, AWS premiered Orfe's *Gran Toque*, an arrangement of Tania Leon's mixed septet *Toque*, at the Mizzou International Composers Festival for which AWS has been the resident ensemble for thirteen years. Since 2019 he has also performed regularly as a pianist for Present Music, based in Milwaukee. Orfe edited and premiered the organ part of Raven Chacon's *Voiceless Mass*, written especially for the organ at the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist and which won the 2022 Pulitzer Prize in Music.

John Orfe currently serves as Organist for First United Methodist Church – Peoria. He has regularly given recitals for the Peoria Bach Festival and the Gretchen R. Iben Concert Series at Westminster Presbyterian Church. The Peoria Symphony Orchestra

appointed him Composer-in-Residence in 2010-2012. Recent premieres include *Song Without Words*, commissioned by the Peoria chapter of the AGO and performed by the composer March 31, 2023; and *To Follow Him*, for soprano solo, choir, piano, organ, electric bass, drumset, and brass sextet, premiered June 10, 2023 by combined choirs in the Illinois Great Rivers Conference (IGRC) of the United Methodist Church held at the Peoria Civic Center. Music by Dr. Orfe appears on the Delos, Cantaloupe, and Centaur labels.

program notes ...

Johann Sebastian Bach's earliest professional position, at age 17, was in Weimar at the court of Duke Johann Ernst III. Court records literally refer to him as a "lackey," as low-ranking musicians were apparently also expected to perform more menial work. No surprise then that Bach left Weimar after only six months to take a much more attractive position in Arnstadt, where he worked from 1703-07. After serving in a second organ position in Mühlhausen (1707-08), he was lured back to Weimar by its soon-to-retire court organist, Johann Effler, who had finished extensive renovations to the organ in the Duke's chapel. Knowing Bach's growing reputation as an organ virtuoso and as an expert on organ construction, Effler invited Bach to Weimar to inspect the instrument and play an inaugural recital for the Duke in June of 1708. Bach was immediately offered the position of court organist. By July 1708, Bach was in Weimar, where he would remain until 1717, eventually serving as *Konzertmeister* (music director), lackey no more.

In his early years at Weimar, Bach concentrated primarily on keyboard works: many of the 48 preludes and fugues later published as *The Well-Tempered Clavier* were written there, as were all but three of the 46 Lutheran chorale preludes published in his *Orgelbüchlein*. The Prelude and Fugue in A minor, BWV 543, comes from this productive period and reveals the influence of

Dietrich Buxtehude. The Prelude in 4/4 has an improvisatory character throughout, beginning with chromatic broken chords descending in the manuals. A long tonic pedal point serves as anchor while crochet phrases emerge from sextuplet chains. A half cadence of epic proportion cues the pedals to take over the chromatic descending chord idea, this time starting from the dominant. Pedals and manuals combine in shorter trade-offs of the arpeggiated figures all the way through to a dramatic conclusion. The Fugue is set in 6/8 but often plays with the sense of 9/8. Its subject outlines scale degrees of $\hat{1}$ - $\hat{2}$ - $\hat{3}$ placed on the dotted-quarter beats before jumping higher to an arpeggiated descending circle-of-fifths sequence with three segments. This is a virtuosic four-voice fugue with many false entries – incomplete statements of the subject – and successions of sequences, as though Bach is trolling the listener. The middle of the fugue features extensive passagework for manuals alone. When the pedals return, re-establishing the tonic, the grandeur and dramatic character do not let up until the very end. The polyphony in the manuals coalesces to punctuated chords against showy sixteenths in the pedals, all setting up a powerful cadential 6/4. A cadenza-like cascade of brilliant 32nds in the manuals bring the work to its exciting conclusion.

Pamela Decker's *Tango Toccata* was commissioned by the San Diego Chapter of the American Guild of Organists for the Region IX Convention in 2001 and premiered by Charles Rus. It is based on Hymn 343, written in 1609, and published in the *Evangelisches Kirchen Gesangbuch*. This particular hymn appears in the "Morning" category of the hymns and begins with a verse thanking God that mankind stands before Him when the sun rises and the morning light dawns. Decker sets an introduction, four variations, and a coda to this modal melody. The third variation most vividly evokes the tango and flamenco idioms referred to in the title. The composer's own recording is a marvel, aptly communicating the sinuous chromaticism, boldness, and percussive drive she heard as latently present in Vulpius' tune. Pamela Decker is

Professor of Organ and Music Theory at the University of Arizona in Tuscon as well as Organist of Grace St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Tuscon.

Bach's Prelude and Fugue in B minor, BWV 544, is similarly dramatic, as though a setting in notes of one of the more anguished writings in the Book of Psalms. Despite the melancholic *Affekt* implied by the dissonant harmonies (to say nothing of the choice of B minor as a particularly appropriate key for such expressions!), this is not a morose or lugubrious work. Rather, the 6/8 meter of the Prelude, suggesting a Sicilienne, includes elaborate ornamentation and omnipresent 32nd-note flourishes, demanding a virtuosic approach to performance. The complex ritornello structure of the Prelude invites a two-manual approach. The Fugue, set in 4/4, presents a monorhythmic subject of walking eighth notes against a variety of more interesting countersubjects. Many have attempted to prove it was composed for the 1727 funeral music for the monarch Christiane Eberhardine of Brandenburg-Bayreuth, Electress of Saxony and the Queen of Poland but this has not been conclusively established. We do know that Bach wrote "funeral music in Italian style" for the occasion and opened with a prelude and ended with a fugue he played on the organ. His cantata *Laß Fürstin, laß noch einen Strahl*, ("Let, Princess, let one more glance"), BWV 198, was performed as part of the funeral ceremony. Most likely BWV 544 was written in Leipzig in 1727-1731 owing to its manuscript having the same watermark and handwriting as other pieces of that period.

Percy Whitlock (1903-1946) studied composition under Charles Villiers Stanford and Ralph Vaughan Williams. From 1921-1930, he was assistant organist at Rochester Cathedral in Kent. He was organist at Bournemouth Pavilion in the 1930s, where he used to entertain the tourists at weekends, and he also served at St Stephen's, Bournemouth, in the early 1930s. Like a surprisingly large number of organists, he was an avid railway enthusiast, also being keen on clocks and other mechanical devices. Whitlock's chorale prelude on the German hymn *Werde Munter* is from Book 2

of a set of *Six Hymn Preludes*, written towards the end of Whitlock's short life, in 1944. Many will recognize this melody as "Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring" and immediately identify it with J. S. Bach's glorious setting in 9/8 meter. The hymn tune itself, however, was originally written by the violinist-composer Johann Schop (1590-1667).

Charles-Marie Widor composed a massive catalog catalogue of music for a variety of forces, including ten symphonies for solo organ. He held the post of Organist at Saint-Sulpice for nearly a half-century beginning in 1870, where he made full use of its mighty Cavaillé-Coll organ. His Sixth Symphony in G minor belongs to the group of four such works published as Op. 42 and displays a wonderful balance among its five movements, meriting the title of symphony as opposed to that of symphonic suite. It reflects the chromaticism and dramatic spirit of Richard Wagner – and we know that Widor wrote this work after he visited Bayreuth in 1876, when he would have heard Wagner's operatic tetralogy *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. The finale of Widor's Sixth is majestic, joyous, triumphant, and on par with its more famous counterpart.

WELCOME TO WESTMINSTER CHURCH and this recital series "Majestic Sounds, Celebrating the Sounds of the Pipe Organ", sponsored by the Peoria Chapter of the American Guild of Organists. The Guild is an association of organists, both professionals and avocational, who promote the organ and its literature across North America. The Guild was formed in the early twentieth century and chartered by the Board of Regents of the State of New York, and as such is able to grant academic degrees to those who wish study beyond the University level, or simply wish to concentrate on the organ and omit formal academic study. The Guild grants Fellowship degrees (FAGO) as well as Associate degrees (AAGO) and a Service Playing certificate. The Guild also promotes performance of great literature on the organ and recitals such as this series here in Peoria. In our local Chapter, Walter Stout is the Dean of the Chapter. We hope you have enjoyed this series of recitals and hope you will return for other Guild events open to the public.

Thank you for joining us this evening. If you would like to stay informed of other events like this, please fill out a connection card with any information you feel comfortable sharing, and place it in the basket in the Narthex when you leave.

**UPCOMING EVENTS
GRETCHEN R IBEN ARTS SERIES
FALL 2023**

4 PM | Sunday | September 17
Classical Guitar
Guido Sanchez-Portuguez

4PM | Sunday | October 15
Echoing Air, Inc.
A vocal ensemble with Baroque instruments.

4 PM | Sunday | December 10
Festival of Nine Lessons & Carols
Westminster Chancel Choir

New 2023 Fall Season brochures are available in the Narthex.

ORGAN SPECIFICATIONS

Hauptwerk	Schwellwerk	Positiv	Pedal
Quintaton 16'	Salicional 8'	Gedeckt 8'	Prinzipal
Prinzipal 8'	Celeste 8'	Flöte 4'	Subbass
Rohrflöte 8'	Gedeckt 8'	Prinzipal 2'	Oktav
Oktav 4'	Prinzipal 4'	Quinte 1 1/3'	Gedeckt
Nachthorn 4'	Blockflöte 4'	Kleinmixture III	Choralbass
Waldflöte 2'	Nasat 2 2/3'	Krummhorn 8'	Fagott
Sesquialtera II	Oktav 2'	Tremulant	Trompette
Mixture IV (1 1/3')	Scharff IV (1')		Schalmey
Trompet 8'	Dulcian		
Tremulant	Trompette 8'		
	Tremulant	Visser-Roland, Houston, Texas, 1989	