



IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
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PRESENTS

Tunes on a Sunday Afternoon

October 8, 2023

St. Joseph Church

Clay Corso, Organist

*A concert featuring St. Joseph Church's
historic 1892 Hutchings pipe organ*

CONTENTS

Program — page 2

Program Notes — pages 3-4

Tunes on a Sunday Afternoon
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Prelude, Fugue and Chacone in C Major, BuxWV 137 Dieterich Buxtehude
1637-1707

Prelude and Fugue in G Major, BWV 541 Johan Sebastian Bach
1685-1750

10 Minute Break

Jerusalem, My Happy Home Sam Batt Owens
1928-1998

Be Thou My Vision Hal Hopson
b. 1933

How Firm a Foundation Charles Callahan
b. 1951

Cortège et Litanie, Op. 19, No. 2 Marcel Dupré
1886-1971

Carillon de Westminster, Op. 54, No. 6 Louis Vierne
1870-1937

Dieterich Buxtehude (1637-1707)

Prelude, Fugue, and Chaconne in C Major, BuxWV 137

This piece features three different sections, each based on a common musical form of the Baroque era. The prelude features a robust solo in the organ foot pedals at the beginning, which is followed by a musical “joke”. The fugue features a bouncy, dance-like theme that is juggled between the hands and feet. During the fugue, however, is a dramatic, free section that interrupts the listener, taking the piece to a minor key. The chaconne, which is based on a repeated bass figure, brings the piece to an emphatic ending in the original major key.

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Prelude and Fugue in G Major, BWV 541

Greatly influenced by Buxtehude, Bach expands on the musical forms heard in the "Prelude, Fugue, and Chaconne". This particular prelude also demonstrates influence from Italian composer Antonio Vivaldi, whose work Bach would have been very well aware of. The passage at the very start of the piece can be compared to a Vivaldi concerto for violin, with fast single-note lines covering a very wide range of the instrument in a short time. Much like the Buxtehude fugue, the Bach fugue features a buoyant theme that is heard repeatedly in different parts of the instrument. A dramatic, dissonant chord interrupts Bach's train of thought near the end of the fugue, only to be followed by several overlapping statements of the fugue theme to end the piece.

The following three pieces are based on American folk hymns. These selections utilize some of the wonderful textures that the ICSJ organ can create, while letting the “tune” shine.

Sam Batt Owens (1928-1998)

Jerusalem, My Happy Home

Hal Hopson (b. 1933)

Be Thou My Vision

Charles Callahan (b. 1951)

How Firm a Foundation

Marcel Dupré (1886-1971)

Cortège et Litanie, Op. 19, No. 2

Dupré was one of the most virtuosic organists of the 20th century, performing over 2,000 concerts throughout his lifetime. In 1920 and 1921, he performed J.S. Bach's entire organ catalogue (several hundred pieces!), completely from memory. This piece, *Cortège et Litanie*, originated as a piano piece, which was then rearranged for an orchestra, and eventually arranged for pipe organ. The opening "Cortège" is a beautiful slow funeral march in the key of E major. It is followed by the "Litanie", which is a repeated chant-like pattern. Near the end of the piece, the march and chant are heard simultaneously. Dupré ties together the two seemingly different themes beautifully. ICSJ's wonderful organ and reverberant acoustics are perfectly suited to this piece, which demands an organ that inspires awe at both its softest and loudest volumes!

Louis Vierne (1870-1937)

Carillon de Westminster, Op. 54 No. 6

Vierne was a prolific French organist and composer, known for his massive organ symphonies and creative improvisations. He served as the organist at the cathedral of Notre Dame for over thirty-five years, and taught at the Paris Conservatory for nineteen years. This piece is in an improvisatory style and is based on a familiar theme – the chime melody from the Palace of Westminster. The theme is stated clearly at the beginning of the piece, but shifts into new keys and moods as the piece evolves. French organists of this time period would often use well-known musical themes as the basis for their improvising, so the well-known "Westminster Quarters" serves as a wonderful vehicle to convey the French style.