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Tuesday 20th July

Lunchtime Organ Recital David Higgs

1.15pm
Peterborough Cathedral

The Programme

Pièce Héroïque César Franck (1822-1890)

Cesar Franck is credited as the creator of the French symphonic organ style. It was inspired by the brilliant organ-building ideas of Aristide Cavaillé-Coll, whose instruments allowed the performer much greater control over registration, and introduced sound possibilities which gave the organ a more orchestral tone. *Pièce Héroïque* was one of three pieces written by Franck in 1878 for the inauguration of the new Cavaillé-Coll organ at the Trocadéro, and has remained popular with performers and audiences ever since. The sounds of the orchestra are evident throughout: the repeated notes of the opening section are evocative of the strings, the entrance of a later theme in large chords is reminiscent of the brass section, and the pedal is frequently used to imitate the timpani. The climactic ending is a classic orchestral tutti, boldly restating all of the themes presented in the piece.

Soliloquy

David Conte (b 1955)

David Conte, a professor of composition at the San Francisco Conservatory since 1985, has received several commissions for organ music. Conte describes the pensive *Soliloquy* as being 'in a simple ABA form. The principal idea is an angular, lyrical melody, at once both proud and shy, first stated in the solo flute and accompanied by a gently pulsating ostinato. The central section becomes more animated and rises to a declamatory climax. The character of the opening music returns in the final section.'

*Free Fantasia on
O Zion, Haste and
How Firm a Foundation*

William Bolcom (b 1938)

William Bolcom, a Pulitzer Prizewinner in music, is one of the most successful composers to combine elements of ragtime, popular and gospel styles with twentieth century classical techniques. His twelve Gospel Preludes show his interest in the gospel style, skilfully transplanting the rhythms and harmonies of this idiom into music for the pipe organ. In the mysterious and unpredictable first half of the piece, while the melody never appears in its entirety, phrases appear here and there on different stops and in different settings in a tour de force of organ registration and virtuosity. Out of this chaos comes quietly and unexpectedly the familiar *How Firm a Foundation*, set in an unfamiliar meter, but with gospel flair. The gradual crescendo never fails to have audiences tapping their feet and dancing in the aisles.

Two Preludes:
VII in E flat Major
VIII in E flat minor

J C Kittel (1732-1809)

Johan Christian Kittel was one of the last and youngest students of the ageing J S Bach. He became widely known as a teacher and virtuoso performer, and is responsible for

the survival of much of Bach's organ music. His preludes are unique in their incorporation of the eighteenth century gallant style into the rigorously contrapuntal textures associated with Bach.

*Suite pour Orgue, Op 5
Prelude; Sicilienne; Toccata*

Maurice Duruflé
(1902-1986)

Maurice Duruflé's very small output for the organ reflects the care with which he composed his music. His harmonies and melodies often remind listeners of Ravel or Fauré, and his orchestral approach to the organ is a direct outgrowth of the French symphonic school begun by Franck. The *Suite*, published in 1934, is recognised as one of the landmark compositions for organ this century. The *Prelude* begins darkly, developing a chant-like melody through a gradual crescendo to a stunning climax at the middle of the movement. A lyrical section is interjected before the movement ends, as mysteriously and quietly as it began. The rocking *Sicilienne* shows Duruflé's skill at melodic writing; it is in this movement that Ravel's influence is most evident. The *Toccata* is famous for its extreme demands on the performer's technique and remains one of the most virtuosic pieces written for the organ. The colours, melodies and technical demands of this suite have made it one of the most captivating contributions to the French organ school.

The Performer

One of America's leading organists, David Higgs is a member of the faculty at the Eastman School of Music in New York State. A frequent performer, teacher and adjudicator, he has recently appeared at the Calgary International Organ Festival and comes to Oundle from St Albans, where he appeared as a jury member at last week's competitions.

David Higgs held his first position as church organist at age ten. As a teenager he toured with several rock/gospel/soul-music groups as keyboard player and singer. He now takes the stage as an organist, lecturer and ensemble player, appearing regularly with the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra.



Oundle, Festival and Summer School alike, is delighted to welcome him back.

The new Festival Club is open today 10am to midnight
Bar hours: 6.30pm to 11pm