

# *University Organ Series*

UNIVERSITY ORGAN SERIES

**ROBERT CLARK**

**ORGAN**

*ORGAN WORKS OF JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH*

ORGAN HALL

Sunday, January 21, 2001 • 3:30 p.m.

**ASU** FineArts  
ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

School of Music  
[www.asu.edu/cfa/music](http://www.asu.edu/cfa/music)

## ROBERT CLARK

Robert Clark is widely acclaimed as an organ recitalist and teacher. Formerly Professor of Organ at the University of Michigan, he directed the program of organ instruction at Arizona State University from 1981 until his retirement in 1998.

In 1982 Clark served on the international jury for the Grand Prix de Chartres. He has performed as a concert organist throughout the United States and is a frequent presenter at conventions. He is, with John David Peterson, co-editor of the Concordia edition of the Bach Orgelbüchlein. His students have won or placed in several major competitions including Fort Wayne, St. Alban's, Flint and regional competitions of the American Guild of organists. In 1990 he was a featured teacher at the National Pedagogy Conference of the American Guild of Organists in Worcester, Massachusetts.

Clark has recorded on the Gryphone and Calcante labels. One of his Calcante recordings was nominated as a Critics Choice for 1999 in the American Record Guide as well as his joint recording of the Bach Orgelbüchlein.

In January 1992 Clark, in cooperation with the Westfield Center for Early Keyboard Studies and the American Organ Academy, was instrumental in directing a Symposium, The Historical Organ in America, at Arizona State University. Registrants and presenters included 350 organists, organbuilders and scholars from North America, Japan and Europe.

Clark serves frequently as organ consultant for churches. In Mesa, Arizona, he served as consultant for Victory Lutheran Church which has one of the largest tracker action organs in the Southwest. During various study trips to Europe he has played and examined many historic organs in Northern Europe and Middle Germany. Clark's interests and performing repertory cover all styles and nationalities. Of special interest for him are the music and performance practice of organ music of the 17th and 18th centuries in Germany and France. He has also performed and premiered a number of important contemporary compositions for the organ.

PROGRAM

**Komm heiliger Geist, BWV 652**

**Concerto in D Minor after Vivaldi, BWV 596**

Allegro-Grave-Fuga  
Largo e spiccato  
Allegro

**Partita on Sei gegrüsset, Jesu gütig (11 variations), BWV 768**

**Trio Sonata No.6 in G Major, BWV 530**

Vivace  
Lento  
Allegro

**Prelude and Fugue in E Minor, BWV 548**

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In respect for the performers and those audience members around you,  
please turn all beepers, cell phones, watches to their silent mode. Thank you.



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**School of Music**

Main Campus, P.O. Box 870405  
Tempe, AZ 85287-0405

## PROGRAM NOTES

Since initial plans for today's recital were announced, several changes have taken place. My visit to Naumburg, Germany in December, 2000, to attend the rededication of the Hildebrandt Organ in the St. Wenzel Church is one of the reasons. Another is my plan to play a recital and to make a CD recording on that organ in June, 2001. Today's recital includes part of the music that will be heard on the recital and the recording. For me these projects are a fulfillment of a hope resulting from my first visit to Naumburg in 1978. At that time the organ had been subjected to many changes reflecting the tastes and preferences of the 19th and 20th centuries, and was in marginal playing condition. The great organ in Naumburg languished until the reunification of Germany after which many cultural monuments in the former GDR were restored, or are now being restored.

It is especially fitting that the recording in Naumburg will be devoted to music of J.S. Bach. In September, 1746 Bach and the renowned organ builder, Gottfried Silbermann, were called upon to inspect and report on the newly completed Hildebrandt organ at the St. Wenzel Church. Not only did Bach and Silbermann approve the organ, but other experts such as Adlung and Agricola spoke of its unique beauty. The intent of the recent restoration has been to bring the organ back, as nearly as is possible, to its original state of 1746 -- certainly one of the most significant events of the Bach 2000 observance.

Recent research points to the strong likelihood that Bach and the builder, Zacharias Hildebrandt, worked together closely in the design of the Naumburg organ. It is my opinion that the Hildebrandt organ in Naumburg reflects, more than any surviving instrument of its time, the tastes and preferences of Bach himself. Indeed the experience of playing on the same keys and hearing the same sounds as did Bach is nothing short of overwhelming. It also serves as a reminder of how much we still have to learn about the performance of the great organ works of Bach.

Today's program begins with Bach's setting of the Pentecost hymn, "Komm, heiliger geist" ("Come, Holy Spirit"). Many years ago I enrolled in a course on Christian theology, addressed to interests of non-theologians who were preparing to serve as church musicians. When discussing the theology of the Holy Spirit, the professor proclaimed that Bach, more than any scholar or theologian, demonstrated the greatest understanding of the theology of the Holy Spirit through his music. One might think of the "Cum sancto spiritu" from the B Minor Mass. Just as vivid and dynamic is Bach's organ setting of "Komm heiliger geist". One can imagine the tongues of flame and the mighty rush of wind as described in this organ setting. This will be the first work on my Naumburg recital as well as the recording, which occur providentially during the weekend of Pentecost, 2001.

While Bach served as the court musician in Weimar from 1708-1717, Italian music was very much in vogue. Both Bach, and his colleague, Johann Gottfried Walther, transcribed a number of Italian orchestral works for the organ. The contrasting manual divisions of an organ were a natural venue for representing the solo and tutti passages of the concerto grosso. Bach's D Minor Concerto is a direct transcription of Antonio Vivaldi's Concerto No. 11 in D Minor from *L'estro armonico*, Op. 3. In recreating Vivaldi's concerto, Bach's use of the organ is most unusual, as noted by original indications of what stops were to be used in the opening movement.

Following the tradition of such composers as Scheidt, Buxtehude, Walther and Böhm, Bach composed variation sets, called *partitas*, on popular chorale melodies. The outstanding masterpiece within this genre is Bach's Partita on "Sei gegrüßet Jesu gütig". There seems to persist an outdated notion that the major *Affekt* in "Sei gegrüßet" should be Gloom, even though these variations contain many rhythms associated with Baroque dance, as well as sumptuous melodic writing. Most noteworthy is the penultimate variation which combines a soaring aria in dialogue with the chorale melody in long notes -- all of this within the rhythmic framework of a sarabande. The

informed listener today is aware that Bach composed religious music using the complete musical language of his day -- not in a "pious" style reserved for gloomy occasions!

Bach's Six Trio Sonatas were composed during his years in Leipzig. Bach's first biographer, Forkel, suggests that they were composed for Bach's gifted son, Wilhelm Friedemann, to further his education as an organist. The musical fascination with the trio sonatas is their resemblance to instrumental chamber music of the period. The outer movements of the sixth sonata remind us of the music of Corelli. The Lento, in binary form, contains many characteristics of the siciliano, an Italian dance in compound meter.

In his recent biography of Bach Christoph Wolff suggests that the late preludes and fugues of Bach, composed in Leipzig, may have been performed at academic convocations at the University Church near the St. Thomas Church in Leipzig. This strengthens my belief that the Leipzig praeludia had strong theological connotations and were related to particular events of the church year. The key of E Minor, as well as the tragic/majestic *Affekt* of the E Minor Prelude and Fugue, are reminiscent of the opening movement of the St. Matthew Passion, which serves as a prologue to the account of the Passion in the Gospel of Matthew. The use of cross-related musical figures in the fugue suggests the portrayal of the celebration and majesty of Palm Sunday combined with the impending sorrow and suffering. Even the shape of the fugue subject, with its harmonic implication of two voices and subsequent return to the opening note, E, visually suggests the shape of the Cross. The key signature itself, containing one sharp, possibly is symbolic of the Cross both in the opening of the St. Matthew and in the E Minor prelude and fugue. The German word for sharp is *Kreuz*, which is also the word for cross. A musical figure of the Cross, derived from the opening phrase of the chorale, "*Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr*" was used systematically by Bach a number of times in other works, and appears at one auspicious moment in the Fugue.

The study of sign and symbol in Bach is by nature speculative. I hasten to mention that regardless of possible use of symbolic figures, the E Minor Prelude and Fugue is a magnificent work bearing many purely musical rewards for the listener. The fugue is unique in that it combines the *da capo* structure of an aria with the contrapuntal texture of the fugue. The final 59 measures of the fugue are an exact repetition of the opening section.

If you are considering interesting places to visit this summer, please join us in Naumburg on June 2, 2001!

Robert Clark