GRADUATE ORGAN RECITAL

By

WILLIAM SHAWN THOMAS

SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE:

LAURA ELLIS, CHAIR
MARGARET BUTLER, MEMBER
KEVIN ORR, MEMBER

A PERFORMANCE IN LIEU OF THESIS PRESENTED TO THE COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MUSIC

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

2013
Summary of Performance in Lieu of Thesis
Presented to the College of Fine Arts of the University of Florida
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Music

GRADUATE ORGAN RECITAL

By

W. Shawn Thomas

May 2013

Chair: Laura Ellis
Major: Music

Featuring music from the three major periods of organ literature, the pieces on this
program are also of three different nationalities. Each piece was picked independently of the others.
The Prelude and Fugue in B minor (BWV 544), as well as the Chorale in E major each represent
major aspects of graduate organ study. While most of Bach’s Preludes and Fugues were composed
during his time in Weimar and Cöthen, the Prelude and Fugue in B minor is one of only five
composed while in employed in Leipzig at St. Thomas Church.

The Chorale in E Major is one of the earliest pieces composed for the symphonic organ.
Organ builder Aristide Cavaillé-Coll, who constructed the organ at St. Clotilde, created sounds that
imitated instruments typically found in an orchestra. The organ in the University Auditorium is
capable of replicating similar orchestral sounds through stops such as the Hautbois, and Viole de
gamba.

Since Dance no. 4 was originally performed as a five-movement multimedia collaboration
between choreographer Lucinda Childs, visual artist Sol LeWitt, and composer Philip Glass, I
preserved the multimedia aspect by creating a slide show of LeWitt’s artwork and still-shots of
DANCE. These slides were found in the ARTstor database accessible through the University. I chose
two exhibits that were created around the time LeWitt began collaborating with Glass: “Bands of Color in Four Directions and all Combinations” and “Six Geometric Figures, Superimposed in Pairs.” A projection screen was placed directly between the organ console and the audience, encouraging audience members to focus on the music and the art, and not the performer. This recital was held on Saturday, October 13, 2012 at three o’clock in the afternoon in the University Auditorium.
Johann Sebastian Bach composed the Prelude and Fugue in B minor during his Leipzig period, when he was in residence at St. Thomas church. The prelude is in 6/8 meter, and reflects Vivaldi’s influence through the use of ritornello and episodes. The fugue consists of a stepwise passage of the b minor scale, and is of a completely different character than the prelude. The development of the fugue consists of an extended section for manuals alone. Similar to the exposition, the recapitulation begins in the alto voice. Instead of one final entry, Bach leads listeners on a seven-measure sequence of final entries in the pedal voice before closing the piece with one last false-entry in the soprano.

According to new research by Bach biographer Christoph Wolff, the Prelude and Fugue in B minor was likely composed for the memorial service for the Saxon Electress Christine Ebhardine on October 17, 1727. If this were the case, it would have been used as the prelude for Bach’s secular cantata *Laß, Fürstin, laß noch einen Strahl* (BWV 198).

After great success with his opera *Einstein on the Beach*, composer Philip Glass desired to compose for solo organ. Dance no. 4 is one of only two pieces he composed for the instrument (the other being Dance no. 2). Both pieces originated in a multimedia project titled *DANCE*. This set of dances, numbered 1-5, was a collaboration between Glass, postmodern dancer and choreographer Lucinda Childs (b. 1940), and artist Sol LeWitt (1928-2007). LeWitt created a black and white film that served as a
backdrop to the live dancers. This film included both video and still images. It premiered in Amsterdam on November 29, 1979.

Though a Belgian by birth, César Franck spent his adult life in Paris as organist, pianist, teacher, and composer. He was appointed premier organiste of Sainte-Clotilde in December 1857. The next year, the parish installed an instrument installed by Aristide Cavaillé-Coll. Cavaillé-Coll’s organs were revolutionary, as he transformed the pipe organ into a symphonic organ where stops imitated instruments such the clarinet and English horn. According to his student, Louis Vierne, all of Franck’s organ music was written for this particular instrument.

The E major chorale is the first of a set of Trois Chorales. It was completed on August 7, 1890 (only three months before the composer’s death), and published one year later. Franck said of the E major: “I have written a long organ piece that I have entitled simply Choral. A chorale it is, indeed, but with plenty of fantasy.” This piece begins with a sixty-four bar theme in six voices, and blossoms into a full set of symphonic variations. Charles Tournemire called the first “The most richly harmonized of the three.” Several sounds unique to Cavaillé-Coll’s organs are used in the variations, such as the Hautbois (oboe), Trompette (Trumpet), and the Voix Humana (human voice). As was typical of the Romantics, Franck travels through many different key areas before ending the piece with the theme in canon, using the full-organ sound.
W. Shawn Thomas (b. 1988) is a second year student at the University of Florida pursuing a Master of Music degree in Organ Performance. In May 2011, Shawn received a BA in History, and a BM in Organ Performance from the University of West Florida, in Pensacola. His organ professor at UWF was Dr. Lynne A. Lauderdale. While at UWF, Shawn participated in the UWF Singers, Madrigals, and Symphonic Band. In 2008 and 2010, Shawn performed on piano and harpsichord with the UWF Chamber Music Ensemble in monthly recitals at Pensacola's historic Old Christ Church. He has performed two solo recitals at the First Baptist Church of Pensacola in November 2009 and April 2011. He has participated in masterclasses with Marilyn Keiser and Jonathan Dimmock. In 2012, Shawn was named a finalist in the University of Alabama Organ Scholarship Competition.

A life-long resident of the Florida Panhandle, Shawn was very active in the Pensacola chapter of the American Guild of Organists (AGO), and served on the executive committee from 2009-2011. Thomas performed in recital with several colleagues celebrating the "International Year of the Organ" at Pensacola's First United Methodist Church in October 2008. From January 2008 to July 2011, Mr. Thomas was employed as organist and church musician at Gulf Breeze Presbyterian Church in Gulf Breeze, Florida. Shawn is the organ studio graduate assistant, and associate organist at First Presbyterian Church of Gainesville, where he plays weekly on the C.B. Fisk, op. 119 organ. He also serves as sub-dean of the Gainesville Chapter of the AGO. Upon graduation from the University of Florida, Shawn will pursue the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in organ performance.