



AUCKLAND LIVE PRESENTS

FREE ORGAN CONCERT SERIES

RISING STARS 2023

SUNDAY 12 NOVEMBER 2023, 2PM

ORGANISTS MAX TOTH, GLORIA LEE & JAIME TAYLOR

aucklandtownhallorgan.nz

Programme

Jaime Taylor

JS BACH (1685-1750)

Prelude and Fugue in B minor BWV 544

Gloria Lee

ML TAKLE (B 1942)

Carpe Deim

Flute of Grace

N COCKER (1889-1953)

Tuba Tune

Max Toth

N HAKIM (B 1955)

Three Basque Dances: Zortziko, Ezpata Dantza, Fandango

Interval

Gloria Lee

JS BACH (1685-1750)

Tocatta in D "Dorian" BWV 538

C SAINT-SAËNS (1835-1921) ARR A GUILMANT (1837-1911)

The Swan

H MULET (1878-1967)

Carillon Sortie

Jaime Taylor

JS BACH (1685-1750)

Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele BWV 654

J ALAIN (1911-1940)

Litanies

Max Toth

R VAUGHAN WILLIAMS (1872-1958)

Rhosymedre from 3 Preludes on Welsh Hymn Tunes

M LANQUETUIT (1894-1985)

Tocatta in D

By the time 47-year-old **Bach** arrived in Leipzig in 1723 he was a truly accomplished musician. The works he composed in this last period of his life are the summary of all that went before. The B Minor Mass, great passions like the St Matthew, cantatas for every Sunday, the Clavier-Übung and his six 'Great' Preludes and Fugues for organ. Among them is BWV 544, the *Prelude and Fugue in B minor*. Its mood is melancholic and thought to have been performed as a funeral ode for the wife of the Elector of Saxony. The prelude takes us on a journey of appoggiatura harmonies, anchored by the pedals' dramatic octave leaps. The fugue begins with a stately theme that moves step-wise up and down the B minor scale. The intensity gathers, culminating in the final entry of the principal theme in the pedals.

Norwegian, **Mons Leidvin Takle**, born in 1945, studied in Norway, Sweden and the USA. He is a prolific composer, and as an accomplished organist and pianist he has given many concerts in Europe and America. Many of his compositions are music of celebration with a strong rhythmic foundation, but this concert shows a rather different side of Takle. *Carpe Diem's* main theme is a simple melody, easily remembered, set over a rippling accompaniment on the organ's quiet stops as the pedals steady beat underpin the work. *Flute of Grace* is all about the flutes. Cast in 3/4 time, the theme is laid out on one keyboard while a counter melody occupies another. There are some echo episodes with hands darting from one keyboard to another as the pedals emphasise the 'waltz-time' beat.

Ever since organ builder William Hill installed his Tuba Mirabilis (originally Ophicleide) in the Birmingham Town Hall Organ in 1840, composers have been drawn to its commanding voice, the loudest in the organ. **Norman Cocker** was one such composer. He was organist at Manchester Cathedral, a cinema organist and able to play every instrument in the orchestra! Today he is best known for his *Tuba Tune* composed in 1927. The Auckland Town Hall Organ is well equipped with 'Tubas'!

Born in Beirut in 1955, **Naji Hakem** is one of today's great organist-composers. As a nine-year-old he was so intrigued by the organ that he broke into his school's organ loft, pulled out all the stops and made such a noise his brothers ran away in fright! His interest eventually took him to Paris to study under Jean Langlais at the Paris Conservatoire. He became chief organist at Église de Sainte-Trinité taking over from Oliver Messiaen, and later took up the same position at the church of Sacre Coeur. He is a prolific composer with compositions for orchestra, voice and chamber groups, and around forty for solo organ. *The Three Basque Dances* date from 2015 and was composed in homage to Pablo Sorozábal, a San Sebastian composer who died in 1988. A majestic introduction is followed by an ornamented recitativo and the work ends with *Fandango*, a toccata in perpetuum mobile based on the rhythms of the Zortziko, a popular Basque dance.

Bach's *Tocatta and Fugue 'Dorian'* BWV 538, is not to be confused with the well-known *Tocatta and Fugue in D minor*. BWV 538 has no key signature so it can't be ascribed to a key, rather it is suggestive of the ancient 'Dorian' mode. The Tocatta (which we hear in this concert) is a non-stop perpetuum mobile romp in the right hand, then the left, then the pedal, then in combination, then all together with the semiquavers punctuated by chords. The miracle of this Tocatta is that it all develops out of the single idea heard at the start. This is a great piece of musical rhetoric – Q & A all the way.

What can be said about **Saint-Saëns' *The Swan***? Not a lot really because it's all been said. Composed as part of his *Carnival of the Animals* to be played only for his friends, it was never published in his lifetime because he wanted to be known as a 'serious' composer. The sublime cello original has been arranged for many instruments. Alexandre Guilmant made one for organ.

The French organ toccata is a staple of the organ repertoire. Tocatta is from the Italian *toc'care* – to touch. French composers of the romantic period took a different approach to that of Bach's generation. The obvious example is the one Widor wrote for his fifth organ symphony. But there are many more, all dazzling, all instantly enjoyable and astonishing to observe being played.

Henri Mulet is one of the dozen or so French organist-composers who have left us one of these show pieces. Mulet's early music influence was through his father who was choirmaster at the church of *Sacre Coeur* in Paris. Later, at the conservatoire, he was taught by such luminaries as Widor and Guilmant. He often wrote damningly about the direction organ design was taking citing the cinema *Wurlitzer*. To him the organ was like a stained-glass window whose imposing tones 'embraced the cathedral in a calm flood of air'. Sadly, we don't have much of Mulet's music; during a financial crisis in 1937 he burnt most of it. His toccata named *Carillon Sortie* survives but it is hardly 'a calm flood of air,' being based on the clamour of church bells.

The Chorale Prelude is a staple of **JS Bach's** repertoire. With the new-found world of Luther's protestant Germany came hymns for the congregation to sing, just the thing for good organists to improvise on. Bach was so good, he was sometimes admonished for being 'too inventive!' Amongst his compositions are 143 Chorale Preludes. *Schmücke Dich, o liebe Seele (Deck thyself, my Soul, with Gladness)* first appeared in 1649 as a Lutheran communion hymn. Since then, it has appeared in over 100 hymnals and is still sung today. Bach's Chorale treatment fits its communion role perfectly.



Jehan Alain was the brother of the famous organist Marie-Claire Alain. He was killed during WW2 aged only 29. Jehan grew up in a musical family and won many prizes during his time at the Paris Conservatoire. His compositions, which number more than one hundred and seventy, are strongly influenced by Debussy and Messiaen. Perhaps his most famous organ work is *Litanies* written in 1937.

Ralph Vaughan Williams was born into a well to do family of Welsh and English heritage. His father was an Anglican vicar, so the church and the law were where the family's interests lay. However, music was to become Ralph's passion, and having started piano lessons at 5, he believed music should be available to everyone. He developed an interest in folk songs and music of the Tudor period which would eventually inform many of his compositions. Ralph also had an attachment to hymn tunes which was a bit strange since he became agnostic, going to church only to please his family! *Three Welsh hymn tunes* are the subject of a collection of Preludes. One is *Rhosysmedre* a tune written by the 19th century Welsh Anglican priest, John David Edwards. He named the tune after the village of Rhosysmedre in the County Borough of Wrexham, where he was the vicar.

The French organ toccata has already been mentioned; another one ends this concert and again, it is a sad story. **Marcel Langueituit** was born in Normandy where his father was a church organist. He had private lessons before being accepted for study at the Paris conservatoire under Eugène Gigout where he won first prize for organ. In 1926, Marcel made a recital tour of the United States, visiting New York, Princeton, and Philadelphia. There he played the famous Wanamaker organ. In 1938, he was appointed principal organist at Rouen Cathedral and filled in at Saint-Sulpice in Paris. He didn't write a lot of music since he preferred to improvise. What he did write was destroyed in a house fire – all except his *Toccatà in D* and a handful of minor pieces.

Programme notes by Kerry Stevens.



Organists

Max Toth



Max is currently studying a BMus degree in organ performance with Douglas Mews at Te Kōkiri New Zealand School of Music, Victoria University of Wellington. He is the recipient of the Ian Polard Organ Scholarship from the New Zealand School of Music and the Richard Prothero Organ Scholarship from the Wellington Cathedral of St Paul.

Gloria Lee



Gloria received her Trinity College Grade 8 Organ with distinction in 2018 as well as her ATCL Organ Diploma with Distinction in 2021 under her teacher Dr Kemp English. While in her hometown of Nelson she played regularly at the Nelson Centre for Musical Arts, Nelson Cathedral and All Saints Church. Now in Auckland, Gloria is studying Biomedical Science at the University of Auckland.

Jaime Taylor



Jaime is in his final year at Kings College, Auckland under a music scholarship. He has an LTCL with Distinction in piano, Grade 8 in violin and recently gained his LTCL in organ with Distinction. He is a chorister and accompanies regularly on piano and organ. Jaime hopes to combine his love of music and science at university.



The Organs of the Town Hall

2023 is the 112th anniversary of both the Auckland Town Hall and its original organ, officially opened by Lord Islington, Governor of New Zealand on 14 December 1911.

The £126,000 Town Hall was designed by Australian architects, JJ & EJ Clark. Their Italian Renaissance design was selected from among 46 proposals. The exterior of the building is clad in Oamaru stone and Melbourne blue stone and bears a striking resemblance to the Lambeth Town Hall in Brixton, London which was built at around the same time and also occupies a triangular site. The Great Hall for Auckland is modelled on the 1884 Leipzig Gewandhaus, which was one of the world's great concert halls.

To quote from the 1911 inauguration programme: "A Town Hall without an Organ would be incomplete, and as in deciding to erect the building the City Council left over for future consideration the question of providing an Organ, the opportunity was taken advantage of by Mr Henry Brett to give tangible evidence of the great interest he takes in the progress and welfare of the City, over which he presided as Mayor in 1877-8, and of his desire to improve the standard of music in our City, by offering to present an Organ for the Town Hall on condition (1) that the requisite space for the Organ as set out in the specifications should be provided, and (2) that a certain number of performances, to be hereafter agreed upon, be given to the public free every year." The City Council accepted Henry Brett's cheque for £6,500, "with feelings of exceeding great pleasure and satisfaction." The organ was designed by internationally

famous organist, Edwin Lemare and built by Norman and Beard of London and Norwich. With 3,455 pipes, it was the largest and most modern in New Zealand.

In 1970 fashions had changed, and in line with the international Organ Reform Movement, most of the Edwardian organ was discarded and replaced with a Neo-Classical instrument whose ethos was 'Back to Bach'. But this proved to be unsatisfactory for a town hall instrument. Meanwhile, the Town Hall itself had undergone many changes in the name of modernisation and was in a sorry state. In 1994, the Auckland City Council embarked on a three year, \$34 million dollar programme to bring the building up to modern earthquake protection standards and to restore it to its Edwardian grandeur.

The then city organist, Dr John Wells, led the charge to have the organ restored to its former glory, and in 2004, a Trust was formed, an international consultant engaged, and worldwide tenders called. The Auckland City Council provided \$3.5m and the Trust raised the balance of \$500,000. What is now the Town Hall's third organ was built by one of Germany's largest organ companies, Orgelbau Klais of Bonn. On 21 March 2010, a packed Town Hall heard the return of the 1911 splendour. Orgelbau Klais chief executive, Philipp Klais, says, "It's not a copy (of the original) but respecting tradition and aiming for the new century."

Acknowledgements

Photography: Hans Weichselbaum

Livestream: Auckland Live

Recorded and produced by: Adrian Hollay





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Stephen Hamilton qsm, Donald Trott ONZM

UPCOMING EVENTS

ORGAN AND CHOIR WITH AUCKLAND YOUTH CHOIR 12 May

EUGENE LAVERY (TEXAS) 7 July

TBA 1 September

ORGAN AND TRUMPET WITH MARTIN SETCHELL AND TOM EVES 17 November

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