

The Wellington Organists' Association presents:

# Guest Organist - Sarah Kim

St Peters on Willis, 7:30pm Wednesday 8th June

## Programme

### **Naji Haim (b. 1955) – Hommage to Igor Stravinsky : Final**

Although of Lebanese origin, Naji Hakim has been living and working in Paris for most of his life. He studied the organ with the famous blind French organist, Jean Langlais, and later continued his studies at the Paris Conservatoire, where he excelled in harmony, counterpoint, fugue, organ, improvisation, analysis, instrumentation and orchestration.

Naji Hakim gives homage to Igor Stravinsky in this spectacular triptyque (Prélude - Danse - Final) by effectively adapting the rhythmically energy and colourful orchestration of Stravinsky's music to the organ. The opening motif of the 'Final' serves as the basis to the different sections of this fiery movement, in which Hakim manages to brilliantly fuse his personal style with that of Stravinsky in a French manner.

### **Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy (1809-1847) - Serious Variations, Op. 54 (transcription by Reitze Smits)**

Mendelssohn was an active and prominent musician of the romantic era. After his early success in Germany, he travelled throughout Europe as a highly renowned conductor, composer, teacher and performer. He was greatly influenced by the works of J.S. Bach and successfully revived interest in many of his works forgotten during his time, including the St Matthew Passion, which he conducted in Berlin at the age of 20.

In his 'Serious Variations', Mendelssohn presents a melancholic, chorale-like theme with 17 variations. He named his variations 'serious' to show that they were different from the flashy, brilliant variation sets popular during his time. It was composed in a campaign to raise funds for a statue of Beethoven to be erected in his hometown, Bonn. This transcription by Reitze Smits gives the perfect opportunity for organists to show off the various colours of the organ, thus enhancing the character of the variations.

### **Maurice Duruflé (1902-1986) – Méditation**

Maurice Duruflé was a talented organist-composer who was unfortunately highly self-critical and published little during his lifetime. Duruflé developed a passion for Gregorian Chant at an early age as a chorister at the Cathedral School in Rouen and he manages to combine the modal and free nature of plainchant with the impressionistic harmonies, well developed by composers such as Debussy and Ravel. This charming piece in Rondo form was composed in 1964 and only recently published in 2002. The main theme can also be found in the Agnus Dei of the *Cum Jubilo* mass.

### **J.S. Bach/Vivaldi – Concerto in A Minor, BWV 593**

Just as Mendelssohn was influenced by the works of Bach, Bach also drew inspiration from other composers. He studied the works of his French and Italian contemporaries, including those of the great Italian violinist and composer, Antonio Vivaldi. Bach's admiration for Vivaldi's concertos particularly influenced his compositional writing from 1713-14 and inspired him to make at least 10 transcriptions for keyboard (including at least 4 for organ).

The Concerto in A Minor, originally written for string orchestra and 2 solo violins, is full of sequential modulations and melodic figurations typical of Vivaldi's style. In transcribing this work for organ, Bach manages to preserve the contrasting character of solo and tutti sections most effectively by clever changes of manual on the organ. The movement is in the popular Italian concerto form – Allegro – Adagio – Allegro (fast-slow-fast).

### **Saint-Saens (1835-1921) - Danse Macabre transcription**

The Danse Macabre (Dance of Death) has been the subject of numerous artworks. Saint-Saëns composed this popular orchestral work while he was organist at 'La Madeleine' in Paris, where he impressed listeners with his imaginative improvisations.

Transcribed for organ by Edwin Lemare, the Danse Macabre is based on a tone poem whereby 'Death' appears every year at Halloween (also Naji Hakim's birthday) at midnight - hence the 12 chiming notes on 'D' at the opening of the piece. The dissonant interval which follows on the violin, considered diabolic in medieval times, begins the dance of the skeletons and the dead, until the rooster crows and everyone returns to their graves awaiting the next year.

### **Jehan Alain (1911-1940) - 2 Danses à Agni Yavishta**

Jehan Alain unfortunately died in war at the age of 29 during the height of his artistic development. This year marks the anniversary of his birth and many concerts have been organised throughout the world to celebrate the life of this talented composer, whose numerous sketches and letters depict his immense creativity, humour and personality.

Similar to Messiaen, Alain studied organ with Dupré at the Paris Conservatoire, where he won several first prizes in harmony, composition, counterpoint and fugue. His whimsical 2 dances dedicated to Agni Yavishta, the Hindu god of fire, are colourful in registrations and almost caricatural. They were composed not long after the composer had attended an exhibition in 1931 of music, philosophies and dances of the Orient.

### **Louis Vierne (1870-1937) - Scherzo & Final (from 'Symphony No. 6', Op. 59)**

Louis Vierne was the famous French blind organist of Notre-Dame Cathedral. He died at the organ console of the Cathedral while giving a concert in his later years. Inspired by the symphonic qualities of the revolutionary French organ-builder, Aristolde Cavallé-Coll, Vierne wrote 6 organ symphonies that stand at the pinnacle of the French romantic organ school.

He was an extremely sensitive person and experienced rather unfortunate events in his life, including the death of his brother and son at war, separation from his wife, health problems, etc. His music can be quite poignant and chromatic, yet in the Scherzo and Final of his sixth symphony, we see a more positive and exuberant side to the man.

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### **Sarah Kim (Organist)**

Young virtuoso Sarah Kim amazed and entranced NZ audiences in 2007 when she played on the old Auckland Town Hall organ, impressing even accomplished musicians with her sensitive and skilful musicality. This stunning performer's career has taken her from top venues in New Zealand and Australia to Europe.

Sarah Kim began her musical career in Sydney and has been prize-winner of several competitions, including the 2007 International Paris Competition. Since last visiting New Zealand, Sarah entered the prestigious "Cycle de Perfectionnement" at the Paris Conservatoire, graduating with First Prize and High Distinction. She is currently organist at Notre-Dame-des-Vertus in Paris and is studying early music at the renowned Schola Cantorum Basiliensis.

The Wellington Organist's Association would like to thank Dianne Halliday Director of Music and the wardens and vestry of St Peters, the Gaynor family and the South Island Organ Company for their generous support in making this concert possible.



Wellington Organists' Association Inc.