

The University of Michigan 51st Conference on Organ Music

Marijim Thoene & Alan Knight

With unflagging dedication, enthusiasm, and vision, Marilyn Mason planned and organized the 51st Organ Conference at the University of Michigan. European guest artists included Jaroslav Tůma, interpreter of Czech music; Almut Rössler, artist, scholar, and teacher of Olivier Messiaen; and Helga Schauerte, interpreter and scholar of Jehan Alain. It was exhilarating to hear these three artists perform, as well to hear them instruct students and lecture. Many other outstanding performers and scholars participated in the conference, which featured the music of Franz Liszt, Olivier Messiaen, Jehan Alain, Alan Hovhaness, and others. The overarching theme of the conference was celebration—of the bicentennial anniversary of Liszt's birth and the centennial anniversary of the births of Jehan Alain and Alan Hovhaness.

Sunday, October 2, Hill Auditorium

The opening concerts were played in Hill Auditorium on the Frieze Memorial Organ. **Joseph Balistreri**, student of James Kibbie, opened the conference, with a memorized master's degree recital that featured Bach's *Fantasia et Fuga in g-moll*, BWV 542, Alain's *Aria*, Duruflé's *Prélude et fugue sur le nom d'Alain*, and Widor's *Symphonie Romane*. His playing reflected an impressive technique and a bristling enthusiasm for each work, especially the *Symphonie Romane*, which he introduced by singing the chant, *Haec dies* (after the first reading on Easter Sunday), upon which the work is based.

The evening recital was played by **Timothy Tikker**, a doctoral student of Marilyn Mason. His all-Liszt program included *Präludium und Fuge über B-A-C-H*, S. 260 (1885/1870), two meditative pieces from *Consolations*, S. 172 (Adagio IV, transcribed by Liszt, and Adagio V, transcribed by A.W. Gottschlag), *Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen*, S. 180, and *Fantasia und Fuge über den Choral 'Ad nos, ad salutarem undam'*, S. 259 (1850), Liszt's first organ piece. Tikker's careful preparation of these pieces was apparent, as was his emotional investment. His thoughtful comments described Liszt's stages of grief in *Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen*, S. 180, his anger and final resignation and acceptance of God's will expressed in the Bach chorale, *Whatever God Ordains Is Right*. Tikker noted that the breakdown in western tonality began with Liszt's *Weinen, Klagen*.



Joseph Balistreri



Timothy Tikker

Monday, October 3, Blanche Anderson Moore Hall

The day began with Czech organist **Jaroslav Tůma**, who presented a predominantly Czech program, along with Bach's *Prelude and Fugue in A Minor*, BWV 543, and *O Mensch, bewein' dein' Sünde gross*, BWV 622. It was a special gift to be introduced to the repertoire of Bohuslav Matej Cernohorsky, Josef Ferdinand Norbert Seger, Jan Křtitel Kuchař, Jan Vojtech Maxant, and Anonymous from Moravia by such an exuberant artist who made us want to dance. Tůma exploited every possible color on the Fisk organ. His pungent registrations and light touch were especially enjoyed in the eleven movements of *Suite of Dances* from the Region of Haná by an eighteenth-century anonymous Moravian composer. The reeds, cornet, and flutes shimmered in excited dialogues. Tůma ended his recital with *Suite for*



Jaroslav Tůma and Karel Paukert



Susanne Diederich

Clavier (Organ, Harpsichord or Clavichord) by Maxant—a piece of irrepressible circus joy, filled with foot-tapping waltzes and calliopes.

1:30 pm First Congregational Church

German musicologist and organist **Susanne Diederich**, who has examined over 150 French Classical organs *in situ*, lectured on "The Classical French Organ and its Music 1660–1719." Her handout included a succinct summary of the specifications of an R. and J. Clicquot organ dated 1690/1794 as well as a cabinet organ dated 1671 by Etienne Enocq; tables listing the composition of mixtures for a small and large instrument; a table listing families of stops, the combination of ranks involved, and corresponding French title of the composition; and D'Anglebert's table of ornaments, which J. S. Bach copied.

Registration and ornamentation of the French Classical School were demonstrated on the Karl Wilhelm organ by **Kipp Cortez**, a first-year organ student of Marilyn Mason, and **Christopher Urbiel**, D.M.A., former Mason student and music minister at St. Sebastian Catholic Church in Dearborn Heights, Michigan. Both performers played with conviction and energy. Cortez played *Plein jeu Continuu du 7e ton* by Jacques Boyvin, *Kyrie* from *Messe du 2me Ton* by G.G. Nivers, and *Récit tendre* from *Messe du 8me ton* by Gaspard Corrette. Urbiel played *Fugue* from *Veni Creator* by de Grigny, *Tierce en Taille* by Boyvin, and *Dialogue* in D Minor by Marchand.

3:15 pm Hill Auditorium

Jaroslav Tůma, with **Karel Paukert** acting as translator and general bon vivant, offered a masterclass in improvisation. Performers included **Marcia Heirman** (former student of Marilyn Mason), **Joseph Balistreri**, and **Colin Knapp** (students of James Kibbie). Tůma suggested experimenting with these techniques in developing a theme: repetition, retrograde, interval expansion, keeping the direction the same; strong rhythmic underpinning; meter change; ABA form; pedal ostinato; skeletal harmony for accompaniment or a regular scale; drone.

4:15 pm Hill Auditorium

A recital of the music of Jehan Alain was played masterfully by students of **James Kibbie**. Professor Kibbie made



Kipp Cortez



Christopher Urbiel



Almut Rössler

this music especially poignant by prefacing each piece with an explanation of the piece, or reading from Alain's diary. Each student clearly felt great empathy with Alain's music. The recitalists and works included: **Andrew Lang**, *Première Fantaisie*; **John Woolsey**, *Variations sur un theme de Clément Jannequin*; **Benjamin Woolsey**, *Fantasmagorie*; **Joseph Balistreri**, *Aria*; **Colin Knapp**, *Deux danses à Agni Yavishta*; **Monte Thomas**, *Choral dorien*; **Matthew Kim**, *Variations sur Lucis Creator*; **Richard Newman**, *Deuils* from *Trois danses*; **Daniel Mikat** (organist) and **Sara B. Mikat** (soprano), *Vocalise dorientale/Ave Maria*. A recording of Alain's music by Prof. Kibbie's students is available on the U of M website, <www.music.umich.edu/departments/organ/alain/index.htm>.

8 pm Hill Auditorium

It is a great privilege to hear **Almut Rössler** play an all-Messiaen recital. Her connection to Ann Arbor began in 1974, when both she and Marilyn Mason met as judges at the Chartres Organ Competition. In a very quiet voice, Prof. Rössler spoke about the evolution of Messiaen's style, saying that he considered the *Ascension Suite* to be in his "old style" and that his true style did not begin until his *Nativity Suite*. He began his Easter cycle, *Les Corps Glorieux*, immediately be-

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Students of James Kibbie and soprano Sara Mikat

fore World War II. In it is the enigmatic vision of what Prof. Rössler calls “the resurrection of the successors of Christ.” She gave a brief analysis of each of the seven movements. Her assistant, **Nancy Poland**, a D.M.A. graduate of Michigan and former student of Marilyn Mason, read the text accompanying each work. Included here is the text that accompanies the seven movements of *Les Corps Glorieux* (1939), and a brief synopsis of Prof. Rössler’s analysis:

1. *The Subtlety of Glorified Bodies*. “It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body” (I Cor. 15:44). “For they are as angels of God in heaven” (Matt. 22:30).

A.R.: “The music is totally unaccompanied monody. It is played in alternation on three different cornet stops of varying volume.”

2. *The Waters of Grace*. “For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water” (Rev. 7:17).

A.R.: “The strangely ‘fluid’ character of the music is achieved in two ways—by polymodality and registration.”

3. *The Angel of Incense*. “And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel’s hand” (Rev. 8:4).

A.R.: “A monodic main theme in the style of certain Hindu ragas played on clarinet and nazard.”

4. *The Battle between Death and Life*. “Death and life have been engaged in one stultifying battle; the Author of life after being dead lives and reigns. He has said: ‘My Father, I am revived, and I am again with you’” (Missal, Sequence and Introit of Easter).

A.R.: “Two armies clash in battle, represented by big chords, the theme of death begins . . .”

5. *The Power and Agility of Glorified Bodies*. “It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power” (I Cor. 15: 43).

A.R.: “The ability to pass through walls and traverse space with the speed of lightning is conveyed in music of powerful vitality. Vehement and robust are the resurrected, agile and strong. This section is monodic.”

6. *The Joy and Radiance of Glorified Bodies*. “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Matt. 13:43).

A.R.: “Radiance or splendor is the first attribute of glorified bodies, each of which is the source of its own light and its own individual luster, which St. Paul explains in a symbolical way when he says: ‘For one star differeth from another star in glory.’ These differences in degrees of radiance are mirrored in the shifting tone-colors.”

7. *The Mystery of the Holy Trinity*. “Almighty God, who with the only-begotten Son and with the Holy Ghost art one God not in the unity of one person but in three persons of one substance” (Preface for Trinity Sunday).

A.R.: “This entire section is devoted to the number 3. It is three-voiced, its form is tripartite, each of the three main subdivisions being in itself in three parts. The middle voice (the Son) has the



Helga Schauerte

straightforward tonal color of the 8’ flute; the other two (the Father and the Holy Ghost) mix the 16’ and 32’ with the 2’, in other words the very lowest with the very highest. The whole piece is in a remote, blurred *pp*, against which the middle voice stands out: by his incarnation the Son alone came visibly close to us.”

Also included in the program were *Chants d’Oiseaux* (IV, *Livre d’orgue*, 1951), and VI from *Méditations sur le Mystère de la Sainte Trinité* (1969), the Offertory for Epiphany, based on the text, “In the word was life and the life was the light” (John 1:4). It was a rare privilege to hear Almut Rössler, who has devoted her life to this music, present a profound expression of Messiaen’s sacred beliefs.

Tuesday, October 4, Hill Auditorium

At 9:30 am, **Helga Schauerte’s** lecture, “Jehan Alain: A Life in Three Dances,” reflected her life’s commitment to the study of Alain’s organ music. She was drawn to his music the first time she heard it—she had never heard anything so free. In 1983 Ms. Schauerte wrote the first English and German biographies of Alain. In 1990 Motette released her 1989 recordings of Alain’s complete organ works. The 1990 CDs were reissued in 2004 and include the addition of newly discovered recordings of Jehan Alain playing at the Temple in the Rue Notre Dame de Nazareth in Paris. Schauerte’s years of research, which led her to discover unknown manuscripts, and rugged determination culminated this year in Bärenreiter’s publication of her edition of Alain’s organ work in three volumes.

Schauerte observed that Alain’s life was mirrored in his masterwork, *Trois Danses—Joies* (Joy), *Deuils* (Mourning), and *Luttes* (Struggles). His youth was reflected in *Joies*; his grief on the death of his 23-year-old sister, Odile, who died in a mountain-climbing accident while protecting her younger brother Olivier, in *Deuils*; and his life in World War II



Marilyn Mason and Almut Rössler

as a soldier volunteering for risky missions in *Luttes*. Schauerte said Alain had a premonition of his tragic death, this “coincidencia” he expressed in his music, drawing, and poetry, and he, like Mozart and Schubert, crystallized his whole life’s work within a short period of time. She illustrated biographical details of his life with photographs of Alain’s parents; his childhood home; himself as a child, music student, mountain climber, and soldier; his siblings; his wife and three children; and the place where he was killed in action in Saumur. These were powerful images, filled with the beauty and exuberance of a life ended too soon. Schauerte also showed some of Alain’s whimsical drawings and read from his poetry and diary, offering intimate glimpses into his personality. She said he could be lively and wild one minute and contemplative the next.

Schauerte stated that among her discoveries are findings from 14 autographed copies of Alain’s work owned by Lola Bluhm and Alain’s daughter, and they are included in the new edition. She noted that the only pieces with Alain’s own metronome markings are the *Intermezzo* and *Suite*.

11:00 am Hill Auditorium

In **Almut Rössler’s** masterclass, **Joshua Boyd**, a freshman student of Marilyn Mason, played *The Celestial Banquet*. Prof. Rössler pointed out that these were early sounds for Messiaen—drops of the blood of Christ. In abbreviated form, I include her comments, which are invaluable to anyone playing Messiaen:

The sound of water drops is achieved not by legato playing, but by movement of the leg straight down into the pedal with a sharp release. In the second edition he uses in the pedal registration 4, 2%, 2, 1%, a kind of cornet without a fundamental. Messiaen can be played on a North German Baroque organ, English and American organs; one must know what is adequate, what is the character, atmosphere, and emotional expression of the work. One must know the inner idea and how to achieve it. The second edition, 1960, is the most important one. Pay attention to slurs; some end at the end of the line, others go to the next line. Always follow the slurs. Also pay attention to thumb glissandos.

1:30 pm Hill Auditorium

With her characteristic light touch **Marilyn Mason**, “the maker of organists” for over a half a century, shared

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Jerry Bilik and Andrew Meagher

her good luck “secret” with us. She said after one of her recitals at Riverside a woman congratulated her, saying that she was envious of her being so lucky to play so well. Prof. Mason replied, “Yes, and the more I practice, the luckier I get.” She continued, saying, “I always tell my students when they feel like giving up, that’s the time they need to really practice. Never give up.” She then introduced four of her former students who had received the D.M.A. and who proceeded to demonstrate that she’s right! Each of them played with dazzling technique, assurance, and passion. The performers, dates of their degrees, and their pieces follow: **Shin-Ae Chun** (2006), *Prelude and Fugue on the name of A.L.A.I.N.*, Duruflé; **Joseph Galema** (1982), *Allegro deciso* from *Evocation*,

op. 37, Dupré; **Seth Nelson** (2006), *Troisième Choral en la mineur*, Franck; and **Andrew Meagher** (2010), *Prelude and Fugue*, Jerry Bilik (b. 1933). This was the premiere performance of Bilik’s work, which was commissioned by and dedicated to Marilyn Mason. It features the Michigan fight song, *Hail to the Victors* (!)—the composer’s grin was as big as ours.

3 pm Hill Auditorium

Peggy Kelley Reinburg, recitalist and Alain scholar, presented an informative lecture, “The Liturgical Potential in Selected Organ and Piano Compositions of Jehan Ariste Alain.” She demonstrated how Alain was influenced by the colors of the French Classical School by playing Clérambault’s *Suite du Deuxième Ton*.



Peggy Kelley Reinburg

Her description of her visit to the Abbey where Alain played and composed his *Postlude pour les Complies* allowed us to absorb its stillness and peace. She quoted from his letter, “The abbey organ (Abbaye de Valloires) was beautiful especially after 9 pm,” and commented that this was his first composition written for organ. She suggested that the following pieces be used in a liturgical setting: (organ) *Postlude pour les Complies*, *Choral Dorien*, *Ballade en mode Phrygien*, *Berceuse sur deux notes qui cornent*, *Le jardin suspendu*; (piano) *Choral—Seigneur, donne-nous la paix éternelle*, *Romance*, *Nocturne*, *Suite Facile—Comme une barcarolle*, and *Suite Monodique*. Reinburg’s elegant performance of these meditative and serene pieces offered convincing support for her argument.

8 pm Hill Auditorium

Helga Schauerte’s years of researching Alain’s life and music were abundantly apparent in her recital. Not only was she at one with his music, breathing into it a deeply personal interpretation, but by playing two of Langlais’ pieces—one written in his memory and one dedicated to him—presented Alain the man, the self-sacrificing citizen. Included in her recital was Langlais’ *Chant héroïque*, op. 40, no. 4, inscribed, “To the memory of Jehan Alain, fallen for France as a hero in the Defense of Saumur, June 1940,” and his *Resurrection*, op. 250, no. 4, inscribed, “dedicated to Jehan Alain.” Of all the Alain repertoire in the recital, which included *Fantaisies* nos. 1 and 2, *Variations sur un thème de Clément Jannequin*, *Deux Danses à Agni Yavishita*, *Fantasmagorie*, *Litanies*, and *Trois Danses*, for me it was in the *Trois Danses* that Alain’s spirit seemed to dance and leap. One of Alain’s daughters has thanked Schauerte for bringing his music to life, saying that her father lived on because of her. We all say thank you, Helga Schauerte!

Marijim Thoene received a D.M.A. in organ performance/church music from the University of Michigan in 1984. She is an active

recitalist and director of music at St. John Lutheran Church in Dundee, Michigan. Her two CDs, Mystics and Spirits and Wind Song are available through Raven Recordings. She is a frequent presenter at medieval conferences on the topic of the image of the pipe organ in medieval manuscripts.

Wednesday, October 5, 2011

9:30 am Hill Auditorium Mezzanine

Damin Spritzer shared her extensive research on René Louis Becker, a compilation of many published works as well as original manuscripts. As an Alsatian-born and educated musician and organist, Becker seems to have fit well into the early 20th-century American scene, first joining the faculty of his brothers’ music conservatory in St. Louis, Missouri, and then in a series of church positions in Illinois and Michigan, including his appointment as first organist of the Cathedral of the Most Blessed Sacrament in Detroit, Michigan. Spritzer is interested in studying the various organs of Becker’s experience, both in America and in Alsace, as a factor in shaping his organ compositions. It is not always possible to acquire information on these organs. Spritzer suggests his three organ sonatas, which are extended works, as a starting point to appreciate René Becker’s music.

There are several choral works of Becker’s as well. Well-respected by his contemporaries such as Alexander Schreiner, Albert Riemenschneider, and others, Becker was one of the major organ figures of his day in America, though now largely forgotten and left to the past, even in the churches where he had ministered. However, renewed interest is beginning to flower with new recordings and publications. Becker’s works are not completely catalogued, partly due to discrepancies in opus numbers of works published in his lifetime and those in original manuscripts. Spritzer related that the selection of René Becker for research was suggested by Michael Barone. In this mammoth research task, the descendants of René Becker have lent their assistance. They were present for the lecture.

10:30 am Hill Auditorium

Almut Rössler resumed the masterclass begun the day before on the stage of Hill Auditorium. With **Nancy Deacon** (*Les Bergers*) and **Kipp Cortez** (*Le Verbe*), she stressed counting the subdivisions of the beat to make the longer notes precise and the rhythmic texture secure as written. “Espressif” does not mean “free” was one of her comments. Also noteworthy was not breathing and lifting between phrases if there are no phrase marks (slurs) indicated. Always play a perfect legato with “old-fashioned” finger substitutions (from the methods of Dupré and Gleason) as well as the thumb glissando. All-important is locating the musical symbols and depictions and playing them according to their own nature, both by the manner of playing and in the registration. One must understand the titles and subtitles to execute the meaning and color of the piece, which is almost always objective.

No matter who is on the bench in a Rössler masterclass, it is always a rewarding experience to receive her teaching, benefit from her inspiring musicianship, and to upgrade one’s awareness of Olivier Messiaen’s music, owing to her 20 years of close association and study with him.

12:15 pm School of Public Health, Community Lounge

Brandon D. Spence performed for the audience of the Community Lounge, where those on Central Campus can enjoy an organ recital in the “Brown Bag” lunch recital series at the School of Public Health on the Létourneau organ. Included on his memorized program were *Liebster Jesu, wir sind hier*, BWV 731, Bach; *Two Meditations*, Ulysses Kay; *Fuga C-Dur*, BuxWV 174, and *Praeludium und Fuga g-moll*, BuxWV 149, Buxtehude. Spence gave helpful comments on each piece before playing.

1:30 pm Hill Auditorium

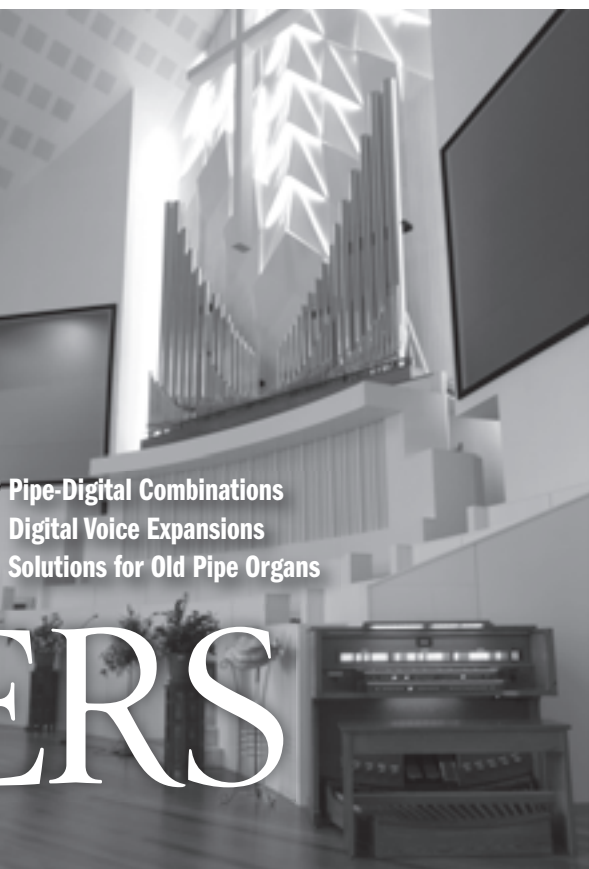
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Almut Rössler, Marilyn Mason, and Philip Burgess



Marijim Thoene (photo by Jess Thoene)

Alan Hovhaness's eight organ works, indicating which are unpublished, as well as the published works (C. F. Peters and Fujihara Music Co., Seattle, Washington). Hovhaness is perhaps known more for his orchestral (*Mysterious Mountain*) and choral (*Magnificat*) music more than for his organ works. Discouraged by the criticisms of Leonard Bernstein and Aaron Copland of his Symphony in 1943, Hovhaness took the advice of the Greek psychic and mystic painter Hermon di Giovanni, who persuaded him to study the music of his Armenian ancestors. Hovhaness then became organist for St. James Armenian Church in Waretown, Massachusetts. There he studied his Armenian musical heritage, which was not passed down to him through his family. Thoene noted his "turn toward the East" in musical language and played a recording of the beginning of the Divine (Armenian) Liturgy as well as a few notes on the *sho* instrument, a handheld, Japanese pipe organ of ancient Chinese origin. Hovhaness strove to incorporate the musical idiom of Eastern peoples into his compositional style and make their modalities his own.

Thoene performed *Organ Sonata No. 2, Invisible Sun*, op. 385, Ms.; three pieces from *Sanahin Partita for Organ*, op. 69: 2. Estampie, 4. First Whirling, and 7. Apparition in the Sky; *Hermit Thrush (Sonata No. 3*, op. 424); and her own commission, *Habakkuk*, op. 434 (1995), which is Hovhaness's last organ work (1995). In this piece, Hovhaness was asked to reflect on Habakkuk 3:17–19:

Even though the fig trees are all destroyed, and there is neither blossom nor fruit; and though the olive crops all fail, and the fields lie barren; even if the flocks die in the fields and the cattle barns are empty. Yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will be happy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, and He will give me the speed of a deer and bring me safely over the mountains.

Thoene performed this stirring work in an exultant manner. Hovhaness created a new harmonic language in this last organ piece to express both the despair of the prophet and of the triumph of his enduring faith. Thanks to Thoene, this piece exists.

2:30 pm Hill Auditorium Mezzanine
Michael Barone celebrated other composers with anniversaries aside from those featured on the conference. Play-



Michael Barone, host of *Pipedreams* since 1982

ing recordings of at least two examples each as well as some other discs of interest, Barone offered a very humorous journey from names such as Georg Boehm, Louis Couperin, William Boyer, Jan Koetsier, Nino Rota, Jean-Jacques Grunenwald, Enrico Bossi, Gustav Mahler, Gian Carlo Menotti, and Carrie Jacobs-Bond. In addition, the radio exponent of the pipe organ made a case for Franz Liszt's influence on music in general and organ music being more extensive than commonly thought. Liszt envisioned the organ beyond a church instrument, giving an influential "push" for the organ in the music world. As inventor of the tone poem, he took the organ (as well as the piano) into the expression of emotional extremes. Several examples of Liszt's smaller, meditative works intended for private reflection were played, showing that his output of organ music goes well beyond the "big pieces."

8:00 pm Hill Auditorium

Gregory Hand completed the conference, sharing his project of recording the entire corpus of William Bolcom's *Gospel Preludes*. He performed Preludes 1–6 (Books I and II) with intermission, followed by Preludes 7–12 (Books III and IV) in Hill Auditorium. Adding to the delight of this performance was the presence of the composer.

This conference was a mind-stretcher in organ literature. Each of the composers—Liszt, Alain, and Hovhaness—created a special musical language of their own. Additionally, their spirituality was wedded with their musicality, often taking on a very personal expression. Thus, a huge panorama of literature, much of it from our time, was offered to the conference participants for possible exploration. At the same time, the conference was a huge dose of spiritual music of a theological bent, from the *Gospel Preludes* of William Bolcom to the piano pieces of Jehan Alain to Messiaen's *Les Corps Glorieux* to Langlais' *Resurrection* to Hovhaness's *Habakkuk* and many others—attendees took in much inspiration and food for thought. Thanks to Marilyn Mason, the presenters, and the attend-



Fisk organ, Blanche Anderson Moore Hall

ees for another dynamic educational event for organ music at the University of Michigan.

Alan Knight has been music director of Ss. Simon and Jude Church in Westland, Michigan, for the past 11 years, during which time he earned the D.M.A. in organ performance at the University of Michigan under James Kibbie. There, he did research into Renaissance methods of organ improvisation and

performed contemporary works of Rorem, Messiaen, Schroeder, and Kenton Coe. He has served as sub-dean of the Ann Arbor Chapter of the American Guild of Organists, organized new music festivals, and contributed to this year's successful POE. He coaches and writes reviews freelance and has recently written a memorial acclamation for the new English liturgical texts.

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