

Alice Tully Hall

Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts

Wednesday Evening, May 27, 1981 at 5:30

THE NEW YORK CITY CHAPTER AMERICAN GUILD OF ORGANISTS

*International Performer of the Year Award
Recital and Presentation*

GILLIAN WEIR

Organist

- | | |
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| JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH
(1685-1750) | Prelude and Fugue in E-flat major,
BWV 552 |
| | Trio Sonata V in C major, BWV 529
Allegro—Largo—Allegro |
| CÉSAR FRANCK
(1822-1890) | Choral II in B minor |
| LOUIS VIERNE
(1870-1937) | Scherzo from Symphony No. 6 in B major,
Op. 59 |
| PETR EBEN
(b. 1929) | Moto ostinato
Finale |

*Immediately following the recital, the International Performer of the Year Award
will be presented to Miss Weir by Frederick Grimes, Dean of the Chapter.*

Organ by Theodore Kuhn, Männedorf, Switzerland

In consideration of the performing artists and members of the audience, those who must leave before the end of the performance are asked to do so between numbers, not during the performance. The taking of photographs and the use of recording equipment are not allowed in this building.

The Chapter gratefully acknowledges financial support for the International Performer of the Year Award from the following:

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Notes on the Program

by GILLIAN WEIR

Prelude and Fugue in E-flat major,

BWV 552

J.S. BACH
(1685-1750)

These are the opening and closing pieces of the third part of the *Clavierübung*, published in 1739; although separated there by some twenty-five chorale-preludes and *duetti*, they have been played together for over a century. Mendelssohn, for instance, wrote to his mother in 1837: "Ask Fanny what she says to my intention of playing Bach's Prelude in E-flat major and the Fugue at the end of the same book. . . . I have an idea that this prelude will be particularly acceptable to the English."

The date of the composition of the Prelude has long been a subject of debate: Harvey Grace and Walter Emery consider the music "inferior in inspiration and workmanship," and so favor an early date; both are surprised by Bach's stepping beyond the pale of convention by approaching his final *ritornello* in the "wrong" key; though whether this is careless or inspired is arguable. It would have been strange for Bach to preface his first published collection of organ music with an inferior piece, and the listener may well be impressed by the nobility of this Prelude, the vigor of the themes, the richness of the harmonies, and the grand *élan* which animates the whole.

The Fugue is known in England and America as the "St. Anne," owing to the similarity of the subject to that hymn-tune, though it is unlikely that Bach knew any English hymns of the time. The subject was used by both Frescobaldi and Buxtehude,

whence Bach may, consciously or unconsciously, have derived it. Another nickname is the "Trinity" Fugue, from its three sections: the first a lively *alla breve*, the second introducing a more lively, running figure, which is later combined with the main theme; while the last introduces yet another theme, against which the first is again heard, culminating in two majestic pedal entries.

Trio Sonata V in C major, BWV 529

J.S. BACH

Bach's six trio sonatas were completed in 1730, although individual movements may have been in existence up to ten years earlier. They were almost certainly intended as practicing material for Bach's eldest son, Wilhelm Friedemann. All are in the Italian concerto form, with two *allegros* separated by a slow movement. Perfect chamber music, they are reminiscent of the trios for two flutes and continuo.

Choral II in B minor

CÉSAR FRANCK

(1822-1890)

The Belgian-born César Franck was organist of St. Clotilde, Paris, for over thirty years and, from 1872 onwards, Professor of Organ at the Conservatoire. His works for the instrument form a much more important and distinctive contribution to its repertoire than their number might suggest. The three Chorals, written at the end of his life, are completely characteristic of his harmonic style, and of a structural freedom which reflects his gift for improvisation. Franck

uses the term "Choral" not in the German sense (meaning a Lutheran hymn-melody), but to designate an original theme harmonized in choral fashion, which is then subjected to very free variation. This, the second of the three, is dominated by a passacaglia-like recurring theme which broods like the fateful tolling of a great bell over the work as it moves from its sombre genesis to an overwhelming avalanche of emotion and sound.

Scherzo from Symphony No. 6 in

B major, Op. 59

LOUIS VIERNE

(1870-1937)

Born near-blind, in Poitiers, Louis Vierne came to embody the spirit of Romanticism in his life, music and even in the manner of his death. He studied successively with Franck, Widor and Guilmant, inheriting something from each. In 1900 he was elected organist of Notre-Dame, Paris, where he remained for the rest of his life. His personal life was marked by a succession of tragedies, and although he enjoyed fame abroad as a composer and recitalist, his poverty at the end of his life was such that he qualified for a grant from the City of Paris, made to needy artists. He died at the console of his beloved Cavaillé-Coll organ, during the last recital which was

to be allowed there by the Notre-Dame authorities; having given out the plainsong theme handed to him for improvisation, he collapsed and fell dead.

His music reveals an original musical mind and a markedly chromatic harmonic technique, which increases in complexity throughout his six Symphonies. The second was acclaimed by none other than Debussy, who wrote of his "remarkable musicality." The demonic Scherzo comes from the Sixth Symphony, which was published in 1931 and prefaced by an inscription to the memory of Lynnwood Farnam.

Moto ostinato

Finale

PETR EBEN

(b. 1929)

The Czech composer Petr Eben is emerging as a major figure in contemporary organ music. A prolific composer, he has written for choir, orchestra and solo voice, as well as piano and organ. He was born in 1929 and spent his childhood in Krumlov, South Bohemia, where he studied piano, organ and cello. At fifteen he was imprisoned by the Germans. After the war he studied piano and composition at Prague's Academy of Music, and since 1955 has taught at Charles University in Prague.



Gillian Weir's standing as one of the world's leading concert organists is recognized universally. Certainly she is the most widely traveled of today's concert organists, as she crisscrosses the international air routes each season to appear as recitalist, to perform as

soloist with major orchestras, to record and to conduct workshops and lecture in dozens of countries. This year's trips to the United States alone will total four. In addition to her annual coast-to-coast concert tour, Miss Weir will appear as featured guest artist at three AGO Regional Conventions. Miss Weir's distinguished international career began in 1964 while she was still a scholarship student at The Royal College of Music in London. She decided to enter the International Organ Competition at Saint Alban's (England) and not only won first place, but created a genuine sensation. Within a year she became the youngest performer ever to be presented in debut recital at the Royal Festival Hall in London and was featured as soloist on the opening night of London's famed Proms concerts at the Royal Albert Hall. By 1970 she had performed on every continent, having made her North American

debut as a featured artist at the International Congress of Organists held in Montreal in 1967.

Ms. Gillian Weir has numerous commercial recordings to her credit, most of them on the Argo label. She is also a noted musical scholar and has written four articles for the new edition of *Grove's Dictionary*. These days Miss Weir sits on the juror's side of the screen at Europe's major organ competitions, and has frequently been invited to return to the Saint Alban's Competition as judge. Gillian Weir has performed with many of the world's great orchestras and has collected a voluminous array of critical praise.

The International Performer of the Year Award was established to encourage and recognize excellence in organ performance and to increase public awareness of the organ and its performers. International in scope, the award is designed to honor performers who have distinguished themselves by professional accomplishment and a broad contribution to the art of the organ. Previous honorees have been Robert Noehren (1978) and Catharine Crozier (1979).

The New York City Chapter is one of 310 local units of the **American Guild of Organists**, the national professional association of organists and choral conductors chartered in 1896 by the University of the State of New York.