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# David Briggs

Live!

in concert on the  
Muller Organ

Trinity Episcopal Cathedral  
Little Rock, Arkansas



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# David Briggs Live!

Color photographs of  
the Muller Organ: Paul T. Brown  
Photo of David Briggs:  
Provided courtesy of PVA Management Ltd  
Recording engineer: Michael Shuffield  
Mastering: Frederick Hohman  
Zarex HD Studios, South Bend, Indiana.  
Recorded Live on 18 March 2005  
at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral  
Little Rock, Arkansas

The *Prelude and Fugue in B minor* of Johann Sebastian Bach holds its place as one of the most extensive of his organ preludes and fugues. Inscribed with words indicating that one is to play the work with bold registration, *Pro Organo Pleno*, the *Prelude* is at once arresting and majestic. The broad keyboard range utilized, the cascading scalar passages, and rocking octaves in the pedal evoke an angular, mountainous musical landscape. The *Fugue* echoes these images, with countersubjects which descend against a measured scalar fugue subject. Scholars have thought this prelude and fugue to date circa 1727, during the first years after Bach's arrival in Leipzig at the *Thomaskirche*.

*Orpheus* is one of 12 symphonic tone poems composed by Franz Liszt between 1848 and 1861. *Orpheus* dates from 1853-54. Tone poems are single movement works that take some extra-musical program as its basis or inspiration, such as a literary poem, a novel, or a painting. By comparison, the symphony is a multi-movement genre which normally has no extra-musical associations. It was common to find many European composers in the late 19th century writing in both forms. The tone poem was a natural extension, or outgrowth, from the titled overtures found through the mid 19th century, such as Beethoven's *Egmont*, and Mendelssohn's *Fingal's Cave (Hebrides)* Overture. Some tone poems that we know today as the most

familiar are those composed by those who followed Liszt, and include Saint-Saëns' *Danse Macabre*, Smetana's *Die Moldau*, Debussy's *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Fawn*, and Mussorgsky's *Night on Bald Mountain*. The tone poem appears to have culminated in those of Richard Strauss through 1899. In this concert, David Briggs performs the organ transcription of Liszt's *Orpheus* penned by the contemporary French organ virtuoso Jean Guillou.

The French dramatist Jean Racine (1639-1699), created the tragedy *Athalie* in 1690-91 at the request of Madame de Maintenon. Almost two centuries later, in 1845, Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847) composed incidental music to Racine's work as his Opus 74. Within this musical work we find one of Mendelssohn's most memorable tunes, entitled *War March of the Priests*. This number has been transcribed for various ensembles, ranging from brass octet and marching band to the pipe organ. In this recital performance, David Briggs adds his own unique turns to this well worn score.

Maurice Duruflé (1902-1986) continues to be revered as one of the most important French composers of organ music from the 20th-century. This is all the more remarkable when considering he has fewer than 20 published works. In 1927, Maurice Duruflé became Louis Vierne's assistant at Notre Dame in Paris, but in 1929, he assumed the post of organist at the Parisian church of St-Etienne-du-Mont. Few today recall that it was Duruflé who gave the premiere of Louis Vierne's *Sixth Organ Symphony* (1935) and Francis Poulenc's popular *Organ Concerto* (1939). Maurice married another fine organ virtuoso, Marie-Madeleine Chevalier in 1953, and for 22 years, they led an active life touring as organists, while continuing to serve together at St-Etienne-du-Mont. While Maurice Duruflé's choral *Requiem, Opus 9* (1947) appears to be his most known work regardless of genre, in recent years, it is his *Suite, Opus 5*, in three movements and dating from 1933, which appears to be his most popular organ composition. The somber opening and violent storms of the *Prelude* could be interpreted as a musical commentary which forecasts the horrors that would befall Europe shortly



following its composition during the 1930s and 1940s. There are several elements of style in his *Prelude* that appear to have strong links to musical traits of his master, Vierne. In the second movement, *Sicilienne*, we get a sense of Duruflé's unique style as the plaintive theme is worked through several transformations, until at its end, we hear it again, but transfigured, as if the beginning statement had been destroyed, and then reconstructed in a new, more illustrative way. The *Toccata* which concludes the *Suite* is a *tour de force* for any organist. Although it is said that the composer in fact did not like his *Toccata*, and few recall his ever performing it in public, the *Toccata* remains one of his successful and most programmed organ pieces. In 1986, Maurice Duruflé composed a new ending for the *Toccata*, which now replaces the original ending in current printings of the work. This new ending is heard in this performance.

This "Live" concert recording concludes with an extended improvisation by David Briggs, where he develops two submitted themes. In this improvisation, David Briggs appears to keep both an ear and an eye on the 20th-century French tradition of organ improvisation, as in it, we can hear a progression of movements - from opening, to slow movement, to scherzo and finale - in a scheme of moods and movements similar to that as once used by the great, late French improvisateur, Pierre Cochereau.

– notes compiled by Frederick Hohman

*This audio recording has been made possible through the generosity of Richard and Marci Hixson.*

**David Briggs** studied organ with Jean Langlais in Paris. His career as a brilliant concert organist has taken him to more than 20 countries. He is known particularly for his orchestral transcriptions and his improvisations. He has transcribed several improvisations of Pierre Cochereau, the celebrated organist of Notre-Dame de Paris. He won the first prize in the International Improvisation Competition at Paisley and was the first British winner of the Tournemire Prize at the St Albans International Improvisation Competition. David gives regular masterclasses at the Royal Northern College of Music and Cambridge University and frequently serves on international competition juries.

Having held positions at Truro and Hereford Cathedrals as well as King's College, Cambridge, where he was Organ Scholar, David is Organist Emeritus at Gloucester Cathedral, where he directed the music for eight years. While at Gloucester, he oversaw the complete rebuilding of the Cathedral organ by Nicholson, and directed the Three Choirs Festivals, conducting some of the UK's finest professional orchestras, notably the Philharmonia.

David Briggs is also a prolific composer, with works ranging from full scale oratorios to works for solo instruments (including the carillon!). Recent commissions include a 110 minute setting of the St John Passion for choir, chamber orchestra and soloists; a setting of the Solemn Requiem Mass; an Organ Concerto and a Song Cycle, "Dreamworld". Orchestral transcriptions include Bruckner's Symphony No. 7, Schubert's "Unfinished Symphony," Mahler No. 5 and Ravel's *Daphnis & Chloe*. To date, David's 23 solo organ CDs have received wide critical acclaim.

In 2004-2005, David played more than 50 concerts around the world in venues including the Royal Albert Hall in London, the International Performing Center in Moscow and Severance Hall in Cleveland, Ohio. He is frequently asked to perform improvisations for silent movies including *Hunchback of Notre-Dame*, *Phantom of the Opera*, *Nosferatu* and Charlie Chaplin's *Gold Rush*. For more information about David his recordings, please visit his website: [www.david-briggs.org.uk](http://www.david-briggs.org.uk).



## The Organ of Trinity Episcopal Cathedral, Little Rock, Arkansas

<b>Great Organ</b>	8' Hautbois	<b>Solo Organ</b>
16' Montre	8' Vox Humana	(*Expressive &
8' Principal	4' Clairon	heavier pressure)
8' Montre	Tremulant	V Grand Cornet (Gt)
8' Flute Harmonique	16' Sub	16' * Bombarde
8' Bourdon	Unison Off	8' * Trompette Harmonique
4' Octave	4' Super	4' * Clairon Harmonique
4' Rohrfloete	MIDI	8' Cromorne (Ch)
2-2/3' Quinte	<b>Choir Organ</b> (Expressive)	8' Clarinet (Ch)
2' Doublette	16' Sub Gedeckt	8' Trompette en Chamade (Ant)
1-3/5' Tierce	8' Montre	Chimes (Gt)
IV Fourniture (19.22.26.29)	8' Gedeckt	16' Sub
III Cymbale (29.33.36)	8' Dulciana	Unison Off
8' Trompette	8' Unda Maris	4' Super
8' Trompette en Chamade (Ant)	4' Prestant	MIDI
Tremulant	4' Koppelfloete	<b>Antiphonal Organ</b>
Chimes	2-2/3' Nazard	(Unenclosed, at Nave Rear)
Zimbelstern	2' Principal	8' Montre
Unison Off	2' Blockfloete	8' Bourdon
MIDI	1-3/5' Tierce	4' Prestant
<b>Swell Organ</b> (Expressive)	1-1/3' Larigot	4' Flute a Cheminee
16' Bourdon	1' Siffloete	2' Doublette
8' Geigen	III Zimbel (33.36.40)	IV Fourniture (19.22.26.29)
8' Rohrfloete	16' English Horn	16' Bombarde en Chamade
8' Viole de Gambe	8' Cromorne	8' Trompette en Chamade
8' Voix Celeste	8' Cor Anglais	4' Clairon en Chamade
8' Flauto Dolce	8' Clarinet	8' Dean Higgins' Trumpet
8' Flute Celeste	4' Rohr Schalmel	Tremulant
4' Octave Geigen	8' Trompette en Chamade (Ant)	16' Sub
4' Spillfloete	Tremulant	Unison Off
2' Octavin	16' Sub	4' Super
III Plein Jeu (15.19.22)	Unison Off	MIDI
III Cymbale (26.29.33)	4' Super	<b>Antiphonal Pedal</b>
16' Basson	MIDI	16' Soubasse
8' Trompette		

<b>Pedal Organ</b>
32' Contre Basse (Digital)
32' Soubasse (Digital)
16' Contre Basse
16' Soubasse
16' Montre (Gt)
16' Bourdon (Sw)
16' Gedeckt (Ch)
8' Principal
8' Gedeckt Pommer
8' Bourdon (Sw)
4' Octave
4' Flute Harmonique
IV Fourniture (12.15.19.22)
32' Contre Bombarde
32' Contre Basson (Digital)
16' Bombarde
16' Basson (Sw)
8' Trompette
8' Basson (Sw)
4' Clairon
4' Cromorne (Ch)
MIDI

The 4-manual, 82-rank organ of Trinity Episcopal Cathedral, Little Rock, Arkansas, built by the Muller Pipe Organ Company of Toledo, Ohio, is designed in the American Classic tradition as developed by the Aeolian-Skinner Company. In great measure, it is modeled after the G. Donald Harrison instrument at All Saints Episcopal Church, Worcester, Massachusetts. James Metzler, Organist and Choirmaster at the Cathedral, sang treble as a boy in the Choir of Men and Boys at All Saints and studied with Henry Hokans on that instrument.

The organ has complete choruses in each division, with warm strings and foundations as well as fiery French-style reeds. The Great Principals are available as a Grand Cornet on the Solo manual (a petite cornet of flutes is on the Choir). The exposed Antiphonal has a complete principal chorus and flutes at 8' and 4', plus an 8' chorus reed (the one stop retained from the former organ, the venerable "Dean Higgins' Trumpet"). The Antiphonal's Trompette en Chamade has lacquered brass bells. The pedal is complete with judicious borrowings. Three of the four 32' pedal stops are digital, but the 32' Contre Bombarde is full length.

The movable console is a measured reproduction Aeolian-Skinner, and is of quarter sawn and rift cut oak. Tracker touch keyboards have bone naturals and ebony sharps. It has multiple memory level combination action, general sequencer, MIDI, transposer, and record/playback sequencer. Trinity Cathedral in Little Rock dates from 1884. A capital campaign, which included funds for the organ, took place in 1997. The organ was opened in October, 1999.