

Mel Butler is Canon Musician of Saint Mark's Episcopal Cathedral, Seattle, and has taught organ improvisation and church music at the University of Washington. Also a professional violist, he performs regularly with the Onyx Chamber Players in Seattle. Prior to arriving in Seattle in 1991, he was for many years Organist/Choirmaster of the Downtown Presbyterian Church in Rochester, NY. During that time he was also Associate Professor of Church Music at the Eastman School of Music, a violist with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, and Music Director and Conductor of the Rochester Bach Festival Chorus. During the Viet Nam War, he served his country as violist in the U.S. Navy String Quartet.

Mel Butler has performed in major concert halls, churches, and cathedrals in the U.S., the U.K. and Japan. He often presents master classes and lectures on various aspects of church music, choral conducting, hymn playing, and improvisation, and has appeared as a lecturer and recitalist for conventions of the American Guild of Organists, the Organ Historical Society, and the Association of Anglican Musicians. His organ CD's, on the Loft and ReZound labels include French on the Flentrop, Out of This World (with the Boston Brass), all recorded on the Saint Mark's Cathedral Flentrop; The Marion Camp Oliver Organ, recorded on the Fritts organ at Saint Mark's; and Tournemire in Oberlin recorded on the C. B. Fisk organ at Oberlin College. His choral recordings with the Saint Mark's Cathedral Choir appear on the Loft and Gothic labels.

Originally from Burlington, NC, Mel received the Bachelor of Music degree from the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, studying organ with Garth Peacock, and the Master of Music and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees from the Eastman School of Music, studying with David Craighead.



Facts about this Recording

Producer and Engineer: John M. Proffitt

Recorded 1985 at the Downtown Presbyterian Church, Rochester NY

Original 2-track 15ips Master Tape used for this recording



Veni Creator Spiritus

Organ Music

from the
DOWNTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

C.B. FISK ORGAN — MEL BUTLER, organist

Chorale Variations by the
Men's Chorus of Downtown Presbyterian Church Rochester, N.Y.



Mastered in DSD256

Veni Creator Spiritus

Organ Music From The Downtown Presbyterian Church

C.B. FISK ORGAN — MEL BUTLER, organist.

1. **Nicholas DeGrigny**-Hymnus, Veni creator spiritus
2. **Johann Sebastian Bach**- Chorale and Chorale Prelude, Komm, Gott, Schöpfer, heiliger Geist, S. 667
3. **Johann Pachelbel**- Komm, Gott, Schöpfer, heiliger Geist
4. **Samuel Scheidt**- Hymnus, Veni creator spiritus
5. **Helmut Walcha**- Chorale Prelude, Komm, Gott, Schöpfer, heiliger Geist
6. **Maurice Duruflé**- Prélude, Adagio et Choral varié sur le thème du "Veni creator", Op. 4
Plainsong interpolations between verses of the Chorale Variations by the Men's Chorus of Downtown Presbyterian Church, Rochester, N.Y.
7. **Augustinus Franz Kropfreiter**-Triplum super Veni creator spiritus

Please Note: In the interest of preserving the superb sound quality of these historic recordings, they have been preserved in their original, pristine state for maximum fidelity. Transferred from commercially released, analog reel-to-reel tapes (some of which are more than 50 years old), the recordings themselves can be subject to certain "artifacts" which are an inseparable part of the original analog recording process, such as tape "hiss" or other defects, and these may be audible on certain music tracks.

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Each work on this album is based in some way on the ancient chant *Veni creator spiritus* ("Come, creator spirit"), which is found in the liturgy of the early church for Pentecost. The first written references appear in the tenth-century manuscripts of the Roman rite. The text has been attributed to various sources, including St. Gregory, St. Ambrose, and the Holy Roman Emperor Charlemagne. The distinctive melody appears to have been used prior to this time and appears with different texts in the Ambrosian and Sarum rites.

Nicholas DeGrigny (1672-1703) came from a family of French organists, including both his father and grandfather, and held important organist positions in Paris and his native Reims. Although he lived to be only 31, his place in music history is guaranteed by one work, his *Première Livre d'orgue* of 1697. This opus comprises an organ Mass and five Hymns for various occasions within the church year. Each Hymn consists of chant melody followed by a set of variants, each of which emphasizes rich ornamentation in the French Baroque style and displays the characteristic colors of the classic French organ.

The works of Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) form the core of the organ literature. One secret of Bach's universality in this medium is the consistency of inspiration and approach, with the smaller, more intimate pieces showing the same attention to detail and spirit as the larger, more famous "show" pieces. Bach had talent unique in the history of music for distilling whole theologies and professions of faith into a two or three minute prelude for organ, while, at the same time, remaining accessible and familiar to the church congregation. Such a set was the *Orgelbüchlein* or Little Organ Book collection of chorale preludes for which he wrote his setting of the melody *Veni creator spiritus*, or, in German, *Komm, Gott, Schöpfer, heiliger Geist*. The version heard in this recording is a later elaboration of this work, which was gathered into the collection known as the *Eighteen Chorales of Various Kinds*.

Johann Pachelbel (1653-1706) was a prominent German organist and prolific composer of church music whose works served as one of Bach's early inspirations. His setting of *Komm, Gott, Schöpfer* is used to demonstrate one of the most charming stops of the Fisk organ, the piquant *Trechterregal* or Funnel Regal.

Samuel Scheidt (1587-1654), another celebrated organist-predecessor of Bach's, was one of the three great German "S" composers of seventh century, the others being Heinrich Schutz and Johann

Schein. His importance rests with his then-revolutionary treatment of the chorale as the basis of an independent, artistically distinct work for use in the Lutheran service. His Hymnus setting of the *Veni creator spiritus* is in three verses.

Helmut Walcha (1907-1991), blind from the age of sixteen, became one of Germany's leading teachers of the organ in the post-World War II era. His students have included some of the present day's most prominent and influential performers. Over the course of his career, Walcha gained fame as an interpreter of the music of Bach. In collaboration with Deutsche Grammophon Gesellschaft, he was the first to record the complete organ music of Bach in the early 1950's. His preference for performing Bach on "authentic" instruments was a major force in the popularization of the Organ Reform Movement. As a composer, he produced his *25-Chorale Preludes*, from which the work heard on this recording is taken, in 1945.

Maurice Duruflé (1902-1986) occupied a position similar to that of Walcha's in French music history. Along with Marcel Dupré, he was a leading teacher and scholar, as well as a widely-respected composer. His organ teachers included such luminaries as Vieme and Toumemire; his teacher in composition was Paul Dukas, with whom he shared the tendency to write little, but that little being of the highest quality. His two acknowledged masterpieces include the choral/orchestral *Requiem*, Op. 9, and the work heard on this album. To give the listener a chance to hear the derivation of the work, the various verses of the *Veni creator spiritus* chant are sung by the men's chorus before each section of the chorale variations.

Augustinus Franz Kropfreiter (1936-2003) is the organist of the *Stiftskirche St. Florian* in Upper Austria and a member of the Roman Catholic Church's teaching order of St. Augustine. His position as *Stiftsorganist* at St. Florian places him in direct succession to Anton Bruckner. Like Bruckner, Kropfreiter was born and raised in the neighborhood of Linz and received his early musical training as a choirboy at St. Florian. His frequent performances on the world-famous Bruckner Organ at St. Florian, as well as tours throughout Europe and the Americas, has established him as one of Austria's leading organists. A prolific composer in all media, Kropfreiter has gained special notice with his virtuosic organ compositions.

Notes by John M. Proffitt