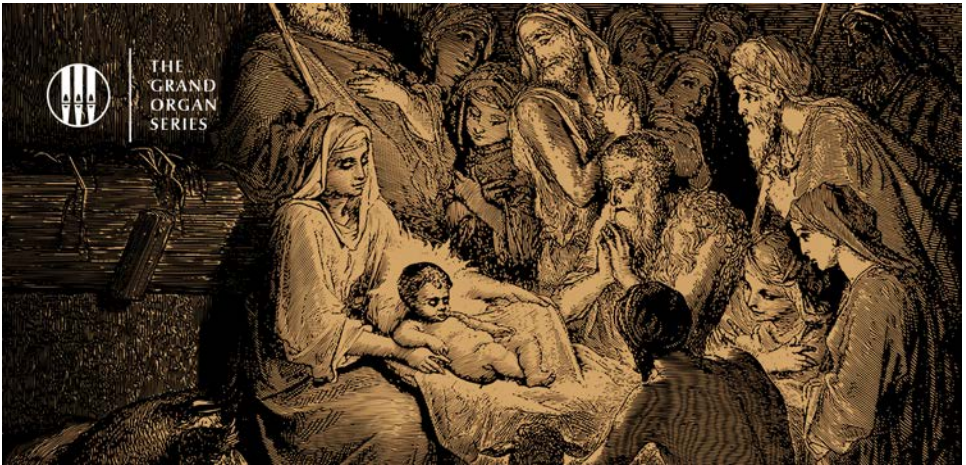


CONCERTS *at* SAINT THOMAS



MESSIAEN: LA NATIVITÉ DU SEIGNEUR

Nicolas Haigh, *Associate Organist*

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2020

3:00 P.M.

SAINT THOMAS CHURCH FIFTH AVENUE

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PROGRAM

La Nativité du Seigneur

Olivier Messiaen
(1908-1992)

I. La Vierge et l'Enfant (The Virgin and the Child)

Conceived of a virgin, unto us a child is born, for unto us a son is given. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; behold thy king cometh unto thee; he is just and lowly. (Isaiah; Zechariah)

Messiaen refers to a 'strange colour' created in this opening movement, by the use of his own modes and by unusual combinations of timbres.

II. Les Bergers (The shepherds)

Having seen the child lying in a manger, the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God. (St. Luke)

'First, the holy light about the manger. After a few notes on the flute, the shepherds withdraw, piping a kind of carol with a curious rhythm.'

III. Desseins éternels (Eternal purposes)

God, in his love, has predestinated us into the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, to the praise of the glory of his grace. (Ephesians)

'A simple phrase, full of mystery and tenderness.'

IV. Le Verbe (The Word)

The Lord has said unto me, thou art my son. In his bosom, before the dawn existed, he begat me. I am the image of the goodness of God, I am the word of life, that which was from the beginning. (Psalms; Wisdom; St. John)

'The first part of the piece concerns the eternal generation of the Word. The fortissimo pedal expresses this terrible travail. In the second section, the divine utterance is heard, the Word speaks. This is a long solo for the cornet, the form of which is allied to the sequences and graduals of plainsong, and to the Bach chorale preludes with melodic figuration.'

V. Les enfants de Dieu (The children of God)

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God. And because ye are sons, God has sent forth the spirit of his son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father. (St. John; Galatians)

'A joyous fanfare representing spiritual birth is followed by a sad but confident lull, evoking the tender call of children to their Heavenly Father.'

VI. Les Anges (The Angels)

A multitude of the heavenly host,
praising God, and saying, 'Glory to
God in the highest'.

(St. Luke)

'A kind of paradisiacal dance. The exultation of disembodied spirits. The piece is based on rhythms immediately preceded or followed by their augmentation, and increased in value by the value of a dot.'

VII. Jésus accepte la souffrance (Jesus accepts suffering)

Wherefore when he cometh into
the world he saith to his father,
sacrifice and offering thou wouldest
not, but a body hast thou prepared
me. Lo, I come.

(Hebrews)

'Three ideas are expressed: the first represents divine justice falling both on the sin and the Son; the second represents the lowly reply of the Son in his mother's womb; the third represents the sufferings of the Passion. In the last bars the acceptance of the divine victim rises to the skies.'

VIII. Les Mages (The Wise Men)

The wise men departed, and the
star went before them.

(St. Matthew)

'A night piece. The swaying of the procession of a caravan. The Wise Men peacefully approach, illuminated by grace. The rhythmic complexity and modal charm of the first and sixth movements are again in evidence. The melodic line is entrusted to the pedals on stops of four-foot pitch and mixtures.'

IX. Dieu parmi nous (God among us)

He that made me rested in my
tabernacle. And the word was made
flesh and dwelt among us. My soul
doth magnify the Lord, and my
spirit hath rejoiced in God my
savior.

(Ecclesiasticus; St. John; St. Luke)

'Three themes are briefly presented in the opening bars. The first, a formidable descent from heaven to earth. The second, a gentle expression of spiritual union with Christ. The third, the soul's exultation. Development of the second and third themes ensues. The first theme, now representing the Incarnation bursts like a clap of thunder. Treated as a basso ostinato, it engenders a kind of joyful and vigorous toccata.'

NICOLAS HAIGH, *organist*

Nicolas Haigh came to Saint Thomas Church from Christ Episcopal Church in Charlotte, NC, where he served as Assistant Director of Music and Organist. He has also held positions with the multiple Gramophone Award-winning Choir of New College, Oxford; York Minster; Trinity Cathedral in Cleveland, OH; and Myers Park United Methodist Church in Charlotte, NC. He is a recipient of the coveted Limpus Prize from the Royal College of Organists and held the Sir William McKie Organ Scholarship at Clare College, Cambridge, where he accompanied the world-famous chapel choir for numerous international tours, concerts, and broadcasts, alongside his studies at the University of Cambridge.

Active as a historical keyboardist and continuo performer, Nicolas has appeared with American Bach Soloists, Oxford Bach Soloists, and Bach Akademie Charlotte. He is also the co-founder of early music consort L'Académie du Roi Soleil. Nicolas has been privileged to perform on a number of tours to countries including the United States, Australia, France, Italy, Hong Kong, The Netherlands, and Israel. He performs regularly as a soloist and accompanist on BBC Radio 3 and BBC Radio 4, as well as numerous American classical public radio stations. Nicolas' teachers include Malcolm Archer, Clive Driskill-Smith, and James McVinnie.

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