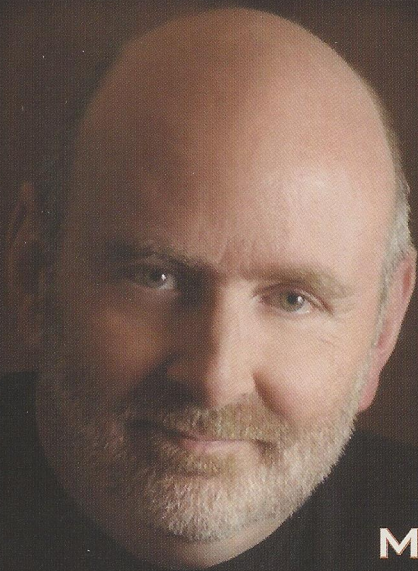


ARSIS

THOM MILES

ORGANIST



WILLIAM

BOLCOM

Four Preludes on
Jewish Melodies

PAUL

HINDEMITH

Three Sonatas for Organ

FELIX

MENDELSSOHN

Andante in D Major



Hindemith, 1923

Music for Organ

by

Paul Hindemith
Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy
William Bolcom

Thom Miles

organ

assisted by
Deborrah Cannizzaro
cantorial soloist

PAUL HINDEMITH (1895–1963)

Sonata I for Organ (1937)

- | | | |
|---|---|-------|
| 1 | I. <i>Mäßig schnell</i> (Moderately fast) | 08:02 |
| 2 | IIa. <i>Sehr langsam</i> (Very slow) | 03:23 |
| 3 | IIb. <i>Phantasie frei</i> (Fantasy free) | 02:56 |
| 4 | IIc. <i>Ruhig bewegt</i> (Quiet motion) | 04:55 |

Sonata II for Organ (1937)

- | | | |
|---|---|-------|
| 5 | I. <i>Lebhaft</i> (Lively) | 04:28 |
| 6 | II. <i>Ruhig bewegt</i> (Quiet motion) | 04:30 |
| 7 | III. <i>Fuge, Mäßig bewegt, heiter</i>
(Fugue, moderately fast, excited) | 02:47 |

Sonata III über alte Volkslieder (on old Folk Tunes) (1940)

- | | | |
|----|---|-------|
| 8 | I. <i>Ach Gott, wem soll ich's klagen</i>
(O God, to whom should I complain) | 04:52 |
| 9 | II. <i>Wach auf, mein Hort</i>
(Wake up, my treasure) | 03:57 |
| 10 | III. <i>So wünsch ich ihr</i>
(Such is my wish for you) | 02:28 |

FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY (1809–1847)

- | | | |
|----|---|-------|
| 11 | <i>Andante con variazione in D Major</i> (1844) | 05:39 |
|----|---|-------|

WILLIAM BOLCOM (b. 1938)

Four Preludes on Jewish Melodies (2006)

(Each Prelude is preceded by the vocal melody on which it is based.)

- | | | |
|----|-------------------------|-------|
| 12 | I. <i>Hinei Mah Tov</i> | 02:53 |
| 13 | II. <i>Yism'chu</i> | 04:42 |
| 14 | III. <i>Hal'lahu</i> | 02:50 |
| 15 | IV. <i>Sim Shalom</i> | 04:10 |

TOTAL CD TIME: 62:37

Paul Hindemith, speaking at a Bach festival in Hamburg in 1950, had this to say about his famous predecessor

[Bach] was indifferent to the theoretical background of his art. If he seemed to his contemporaries to be a representative of a bygone era as a composer, to us he appears, with his solid dedication to practical music-making, to have been one of the first masters who—in the most modern way—broke away from the old medieval concept of the artist as one who sought to unite strict musical science with free-wheeling fantasy.

As is the case in virtually all such grandiose statements, the author reveals more about himself than about his chosen subject. Hindemith saw (or, more accurately, sought) in Bach a kindred spirit—one whose excellence as a composer was founded not on the inaccessible secrets of the art, but on the craftsman's ingenuity, tempered by technique. It is indeed this same fascinating blend of fantasy and finesse that permeates the three sonatas recorded on this disc, marking them as unique among twentieth-century works for the organ.

Paul Hindemith was born in Frankfurt, Germany, in 1895. His musical talents were evident early on not in a dedication to composition, but in his uncanny facility in a number of musical instruments—he became quite proficient on the violin, viola, clarinet, and piano at an early age. Called up to duty in the First World War in 1917, he sought out other like-minded soldiers and soon formed his own string quartet. In the 1920s, Hindemith was part of a group of musicians who experimented with unfamiliar forms of expression, reviving long-forgotten works, as well as championing newly composed music. In 1927, Hindemith accepted a post as professor of composition at the Musik Hochschule in Berlin. His time there, however, was to be short-lived; with the ascension of Nazi power in 1930s all progressive composers came under scrutiny, and Hindemith's music in particular was branded as corrupt by none other than Jo-

seph Goebbels. (The Germans used the term “entartet,” which, like the English “degenerate,” implies something that is no longer of its own genus; even the arts were subjected to National Socialists' perceptions of purity.)

Those who are familiar with Hindemith's most famous pieces might be surprised that such seemingly harmless music might come under attack from the National Socialists, but it is often forgotten that Hindemith was, in many ways, a progressive composer who exerted a strong influence on some of the more famous musical mavericks of the century. For example, in 1930 Hindemith and fellow composer Ernst Toch mounted a concert in Berlin that featured, among other things, an early use of electronic music: nonsense syllables recorded on a phonograph as part of a musical ensemble. Among those in attendance at the concert was the young American composer John Cage who was, in many ways, to become the figure that defined the avant garde in the twentieth century. The idea of music produced from processed electronic sounds was to find solid footing from the 1940s, and Hindemith's early experiments can be said to have directly or indirectly influenced composers from John Cage and Pierre Schaeffer to Karl-Heinz Stockhausen and Terry Riley.

Forced to flee Germany, Hindemith first moved to Switzerland in 1937 (the year of the first two organ sonatas) before moving to the United States in 1940 (when the third sonata was written). After teaching composition at Yale University for many years, Hindemith returned to Switzerland in 1953, and spent the remaining decade of his life in Europe.

Though Hindemith's musical personality is unmistakable in the three organ sonatas, each sonata in fact displays a distinct character. The first sonata, with its extended forms, four movements, and overtly virtuosic third section, is arguably the most impressive of the three. The first movement's themes are clearly delineated, from the noble first theme, to the playful, jaunty second theme, to a simple, almost childlike melody that will eventually bring the movement to a close. The second movement is one of

the composer's most beautiful, taking the listener from its lilting opening to a highly chromatic and tense middle section before sinking back home to the key and mood of the opening. This gentle conclusion comes to an abrupt close ("*gleich weiter*"—"move on," the composer writes) in the ensuing section, in which a loud whirlwind of notes soon gives way to a repeated four-note motive in the pedals that will in turn generate the movement's massive closing chords. The final movement juxtaposes the simplest, perhaps even silliest of tunes with dissonant, slightly off-kilter chords that only dissipate their tension at phrase endings. Hindemith strikes a careful balance here—even the seemingly lighthearted piccolo solo in the middle of the movement stands decidedly in the harmonic shadows, and before long the piece ends not triumphantly, but shrouded in mystery, as the movement's opening theme is fragmented and eventually dissolved into dark chords.

The second sonata is particularly inventive. The first movement, for example, intersperses the opening ritornello-like theme with ever new ideas that seem to try as hard as they can to change the movement's harmonic and melodic direction, but to no avail—the opening returns unchanged to bring the movement to a close. The second movement is a suave *siciliano*, whose melodic simplicity and transparent texture provide a suitable foil to the last movement's highly chromatic, even nervous fugue. Here Hindemith makes a wry nod to the music of the Second Viennese School, and in particular to Arnold Schönberg who, like Hindemith, was to become an important teacher of composition in the United States in the years following World War II (Schönberg came to California in 1934). Schönberg had founded a style of composition based on so-called tone rows that employed all twelve pitches of the chromatic scale. Hindemith's fugue subject includes nearly all twelve chromatic pitches—only the pitch E-flat (Es, or "S" in German) is missing. Perhaps Hindemith is intentionally leaving his famous and controversial rival on the metaphorical sidelines.

Much has been made of the fact that the third sonata employs German folk tunes—

the sonata was written in 1940 and just when Hindemith was facing an extended leave from Europe. The assumption has often been that Hindemith chose to use folk songs because he was homesick. Hindemith had, however, used German folksongs in earlier works, most notably in his masterpiece *Mathis der Maler* in 1934, but also in 1935 in *Der Schwanendreher*, as well as in a number of folksong arrangements for clarinet and string quartet in 1936. The composer may well have missed his homeland, but there was nevertheless a strong interest among German-speaking composers in the heritage of German folk and popular music dating back well into the nineteenth century (Mahler's *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* settings from the 1880s come to mind). Not unlike Carl Orff's celebration of medieval German poetry in *Carmina burana* (1937), Hindemith's third sonata taps into a rich folk heritage that found rejuvenation even as German nationalism surged in the 1930s.

Though their individuality is unmistakable, these three sonatas share a refined melodic and harmonic language that, for all its angularity and dissonance, never fails to maintain a natural lilt and singability. Hindemith's harmonic language, codified at about the time these sonatas were written in his book *Unterweisung im Tonsatz* (1937–39), is highly individual, at times even quirky, but always in service to his shapely and memorable melodies, and capable of undergirding his finely crafted counterpoint. These sonatas may seem "representative of a bygone era" in style, yet they exude an originality and freshness that defy their age.

Mendelssohn as an organ composer is perhaps best known for his *Six Sonatas*, which were published in England in 1844 and 1845. The *Andante con variazione in D* dates from about the same time, and displays the same facile contrapuntal technique and simple melodic language so evident in the Sonatas' slow movements. A gentle, lilting theme is taken through five variations that show, within a short time, a broad range of standard variation techniques: melody in the left hand with obligato voice in the right hand; melody in the right hand with running obligato in the left

hand; a full-voiced texture in which the theme is alluded to, but not stated explicitly; and a final variation in which the pace is quickened, and the theme is increasingly fragmented. The variations close with a simple restatement of the theme. One imagines that this piece is an example of the sort of improvisations Mendelssohn might have performed at his solo organ concerts, imbued as it is with a reverence for time-honored variation and contrapuntal techniques, but infused with the mellifluousness of the piano parlor pieces that had become so popular by mid-century.

Composer and pianist William Bolcom is one of the most lauded living composers; his works have been widely performed and acknowledged by such awards as a Pulitzer Prize, and the composer has been honored with investiture in the American Academy of Arts and Letters, as well as honorary degrees from a number of universities. Among the orchestras that have commissioned works from him are the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the National Symphony, and the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra. *Four Preludes on Jewish Melodies* was commissioned by the Tangeman Sacred Music Center of the College-Conservatory of Music of the University of Cincinnati in conjunction with the restoration of the Koehnken & Co. organ in the Isaac Wise Temple. That historic instrument was built in 1866 and renovated by the Noack Organ Co., Inc. in 2005. Each of the four settings treats a traditional Jewish melody: *Hinei Mah Tov*, *Yism'chu*, *Hal'luhu*, and *Sim Shalom*. *Hinei Mah Tov* is a flowing lullaby that features solo reed stops. *Yism'chu* is a fantasia that first presents its serpentine melody against a chromatic obligato accompaniment, later introducing large, block-like chords before coming to rest with a pianissimo conclusion. *Hal'luhu* is a lilting setting that calls for a separate musician to play seven crotales, tuned discs that are struck by mallets, giving a clear and strong bell-like sound. *Sim Shalom* is a vigorous march, with brilliant scale passages and large chords that show off the full resources of the organ.

—Gregory Crowell

Translations of the Hebrew Songs

Hinei Mah Tov

How good it is, and how pleasant, when we dwell together in unity.

Yism'chu

Those who keep the Sabbath and call it a delight shall rejoice in Your deliverance. All who hallow the seventh day shall be gladdened by Your goodness. This day is Israel's festival of the spirit, sanctified and blessed by You, the most precious of days, a symbol of the joy of creation.

Hal'luhu

Praise God with resounding cymbals, praise God with loud-sounding cymbals. Let all that breathe praise the Lord. Halleluyah!

Sim Shalom

Peace, happiness, and blessing; grace and love and mercy; may these descend on us, on all Israel, and all the world. Bless us, our Creator, one and all, with the light of Your presence; for by that light, O God, You have revealed to us the law of life: to love kindness and justice and mercy, to seek blessing, life and peace. O bless Your people Israel and all peoples with enduring peace! Blessed are You, Lord, who blesses Your people Israel with peace.

Noack Organ, Opus 144, 2003
Lakeside Presbyterian Church, Lakeside Park, Kentucky

THOM MILES has served as Chapel Organist at Xavier University and as Assistant Organist at Christ Church Cathedral (Episcopal) in Cincinnati, Ohio. He has also taught on the adjunct faculty at the University of Cincinnati, College-Conservatory of Music. Thom is currently organist at Lakeside Presbyterian Church and Organist/Director of Music at Isaac M. Wise Temple, Cincinnati, Ohio. He played a key role in the preservation and restoration of the Koehnken & Co. organ in the Plum Street Temple in 2005. Thom recorded on this historic instrument for Arsis Audio immediately after the restoration (Arsis CD157).

Thom and his wife, Roberta Gary, are both certified Andover Educators and present workshops on the topic of Body Mapping. Both Miles and Gary made a contribution to the book *What Every Pianist Needs to Know About the Body with Supplementary Material for Organists* (GIA Publications).

Deborah Cannizzaro is the Cantorial Soloist for K. K. B'nai Yeshurun Isaac M. Wise Temple in Cincinnati, Ohio. A graduate of the University of Miami, she holds the B.M. and M.M. degrees in Vocal Performance and has performed in concert, opera and musical theater venues. She lives in Cincinnati with her husband and two children.

GREAT
Double Diapason 16'
Diapason 8'
Viola 8'
Chimney Flute 8'
Octave 4'
Harmonic Flute 4'
Twelfth 2 2/3'
Fifteenth 2'
Seventeenth 1 3/5'
Mixture IV 1 1/3'
Trumpet 8'
Clarion 4'

SWELL
Bourdon 16'
Diapason 8'
Bell Gamba 8'
Celeste 8'
Stopt Flute 8'
Octave 4'
Recorder 4'
Gemshorn 2'
Mixture IV 2'
Bassoon 16'
Cornopean 8'
Oboe 8'

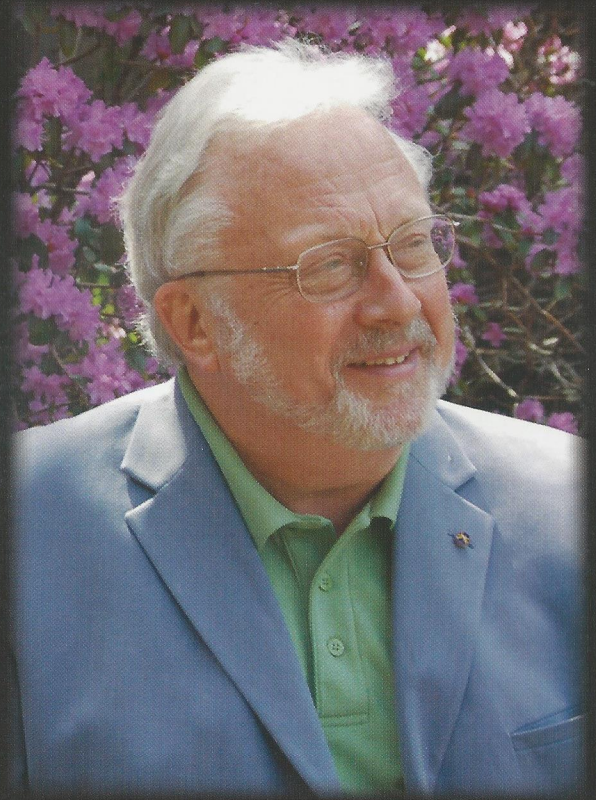
POSITIVE
Gedackt 8'
Dulciana 8'
Principal 4'
Chimney Flute 4'
Nasard 2 2/3'
Octave 2'
Quinte 1 1/3'
Cornet III (from tenor f)
Cremona 8'
Fanfare 8' (from tenor f)

PEDAL
Bourdon 32'
Open Bass 16'
Stopt Bass 16'
Violone 16'
Diapason 8'
Gedackt 8'
Octave 4'
Contra Trombone 32'
Trombone 16'
Trumpet 8'
Trumpet 4'

Three Manual and Pedal, encased organ of 45 stops (53 ranks)
Mechanical key action, electric stop action, flat pedalboard
Case of white oak, keys of cow bone and ebony
Valotti temperament



Recorded Nov. 26, 27 and 28, 2007, Lakeside Presbyterian Church, Lakeside Park, KY
Recording Engineer: Edward J. Kelly, Mobilemaster, Burtonsville, MD
Producer: Robert Schuneman, Arsis Audio, Boston, MA
Photos of Miles and Lakeside: David Ziser



Bolcom

Thom Miles at Lakeside

