

CONCERTS

AT THE UNIVERSITY

SPRING—SUMMER 2015

Friday 27 February 2015

1.10pm

Reid Concert Hall

Michael Bawtree · organ

Programme of works by J.S. BACH, NIELSEN,
BUXTEHUDE, VOGLER, BINGHAM, BERG and
MARCHAND.



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
Edinburgh College of Art

Prelude and Fugue in F minor, BWV 534

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 -1750)

Five short preludes, Op.51

Carl Nielsen (1865-1931)

Ciacona in C minor, BuxWV 159

Dieterich Buxtehude (c.1637-1707)

Jesu Leiden Pein und Not

Johann Caspar Vogler (1696-1763)

The Gift

Judith Bingham (b.1952)

Cornet Voluntary in G minor

George Berg (c.1730-1775)

Grand Dialogue (from *Troisième Livre d'Orgue*)

Louis Marchand (1669-1732)

Today's programme reflects the beginning of the penitential season of Lent alongside the 150th anniversary of the birth of the great Danish composer, Carl Nielsen. Nielsen wrote twenty-nine very short preludes in 1929, possibly as studies for his last major work, *Commotio*. Each little piece invites colourful registration, and many look back to the works of Nielsen's compatriot, Dietrich Buxtehude. Buxtehude's own *Ciacona in C minor* is one of three substantial works he composed over a ground bass. In this instance, a simple four-bar theme in the pedals is treated to elaborate decoration in the manuals. On occasion, the theme leaves the pedal line and appears at the top of the texture. Johann Sebastian Bach, along with many other composers in the late seventeenth century, travelled many miles to study with Buxtehude in Lübeck, and the influence of the older composer is to be found in Bach's own *Prelude and Fugue in F minor*, probably written around 1710. The two sections of this dark-hued work are linked by similar final cadential patterns; the broad, angular nature of the fugue subject contrasts with the busy textures of the prelude, which reveal the influence of Pachelbel's toccatas. Johann Caspar Vogler was ten years Bach's junior and studied with him in Arnstadt. Vogler's highly ornamented choral prelude *Jesu Leiden Pein und Not* (Jesus suffering pain and distress) is based upon a choral melody which appears in Bach's *St John Passion*, and is reminiscent in tonality and temperament of Bach's own choral *O mensch, bewein* BWV 622. Judith Bingham has a large output of organ music to her name, including the concerto *Jacob's Ladder*. *The Gift* from 1996 is an arrangement from a group of piano pieces entitled *Christmas Past, Christmas Present*. Bingham writes: "The clarity of the organ's quietest stops lends each piece a charming radiance, and the free nature of *The Gift* was, in its piano version, intended to sound like an organ improvisation". George Berg was an English composer and organist of German origin. (He may also have been a chemist who experimented in musical glassmaking.) Very little of his music survives, although as nineteen of his contemporaries in the London area subscribed to a publication of his organ works, Berg was also clearly popular in the organ world and may have already held a church appointment. Louis Marchand was one of the most famous French keyboard virtuosi of his day. Fifteen years Bach's senior, he spent most of his professional life in Paris. Perhaps the most famous anecdote about Marchand is the account of the competition he was supposed to have with J S Bach in Dresden in September 1717. According to reports, the two composers were to have a contest in harpsichord performance, and Marchand fled before Bach's arrival, apparently out of fear of being defeated. His grandest work for organ is the *Grand Dialogue*, the multiple sections of which presumably reflect the flamboyant improvisational style for which he was famed.

British conductor and organist Michael Bawtree enjoys a wide-ranging international career that includes recent performances across Europe, the United States and Asia. He maintains regular commitments with the Edinburgh Royal Choral Union, the Glasgow Chamber Choir and the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. He regularly conducts the Royal Scottish National Orchestra – most recently at the Usher Hall's gala centenary concert and a Hogmanay performance at Glasgow Royal Concert Hall – and has also directed the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and many performances with Scottish Ballet across the British Isles. Bawtree makes his debut at London's Royal Albert Hall in June, conducting Mozart's *Requiem* with the London Philharmonic Choir.

Aside from his varied conducting career, Michael Bawtree pursues a busy schedule of organ playing commitments. Solo organ recital engagements have taken him to most British cathedrals, as well as Bermuda, California, Sweden and Denmark. Recent engagements include recitals at Washington National Cathedral, Usher Hall, St Paul's Cathedral, Notre-Dame de Paris and in the Faroe Islands. As an accompanist and continuo player, Bawtree has worked with many conductors and performed with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, City of London Sinfonia, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra. With the RSNO he has appeared at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, at the Royal Albert Hall and at Kelvingrove Museum in Glasgow for performances of Saint-Saens' *Organ Symphony*. For five years Michael Bawtree was Assistant Director of Music at St Edmundsbury Cathedral in Suffolk and now serves as Director of Music at St Margaret's Episcopal Church in Glasgow.

Michael Bawtree is a visiting Lecturer and Vocal Coach at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. A keen advocate of contemporary music, he has conducted world premieres of operatic, symphonic and choral works by Judith Bingham, Paul Mealor and Rory Boyle; he works regularly with Scotland's foremost composers including Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, James MacMillan, Eddie McGuire and Sally Beamish. Last summer Bawtree spent two months living in Mumbai, directing a choral project with 250 children from all walks of life: slum children sang alongside the most privileged on the stage of the National Centre for the Performing Arts. He returns to India's largest city next season for performances of Benjamin Britten's children's opera *Noye's Fludde*. For six summer seasons, he was assistant musical director of the Lyrique-en-Mer opera festival in Brittany, France. Bawtree has worked with many groups at Edinburgh University, variously conducting projects with the University Singers, Chamber Choir, Chamber Orchestra, String Orchestra and four productions with Edinburgh Studio Opera.

Michael Bawtree studied music and the organ at Christ's College, Cambridge University. He is a prize-winning Fellow of the Royal College of Organists and holds a Masters degree in orchestral conducting from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

Follow him on Twitter @michaeljbawtree