

## PROGRAM

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- “Darwall’s 148th” .....Percy Whitlock (1903–1946)  
from *Six Hymn-Preludes*
- “Rhosymedre” .....Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)  
from *Three Preludes Founded on Welsh Hymn Tunes*
- Præambulum in E Major, LübWV 7 ..... Vincent Lübeck (1654–1740)
- Sonata IV in E Minor, BWV 528 .....Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)  
Adagio–vivace  
Andante  
Un poc’ allegro
- Prélude, Fugue et Variation, op. 18 ..... César Franck (1822–1890)
- “Acclamations” .....Jean Langlais (1907–1991)  
from *Suite Médiévale en Forme de Messe Basse*

## NOTES

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British composer and organist **Percy Whitlock** was born in Chatham, in the southeast of England, and educated at the Royal College of Music, where he studied composition with Charles Villiers Stanford and Ralph Vaughan Williams. He served as assistant organist at Rochester Cathedral in Kent and later moved to Bournemouth to become director of music at St. Stephen’s Church. From 1932 until his death in 1946, he was organist at the Bournemouth Municipal Pavilion and performed regularly as a recitalist and broadcaster.

A hymn-prelude is a short organ composition based on the tune of a hymn and can employ various musical forms and techniques. In this piece, Whitlock uses a familiar tune written by English clergyman John Darwall (1731–1789) and first published as a musical setting for Psalm 148. Each of the four phrases of the hymn tune, with some rhythmic variation, is heard successively in the top-most voice using the organ’s solo tuba stop. The phrases are introduced and separated by sections that elaborate on, imitate, and re-harmonize melodic fragments excerpted from the hymn tune, particularly the ascending leap-wise melodic motif of the opening phrase.

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Early in his career, **Ralph Vaughan Williams** set out to collect and write down traditional folk songs from the English countryside and also served as musical editor of the hymns included in the *English Hymnal* of 1906. His involvement with these tunes had a lasting influence on the development of his musical style, and he often incorporated the melodies, textures, and

contours of these songs in his own compositions. His “Prelude on Rhosymedre,” one of few pieces he wrote for organ, reflects this inspiration. Composed in 1920, the prelude is based on a hymn tune written by Anglican priest John David Edwards (1805–1885) and named for a village in Wales. The hymn tune is heard in long notes twice throughout the piece, first in the tenor range and then in the soprano voice. Vaughan Williams intertwines the hymn tune with a lyrical countermelody of his own, heard alone at the beginning and end, and sometimes overshadowing the hymn tune throughout. The masterful combination of the folk-like melody with a tranquil but more rhythmically complex accompaniment transforms the simple hymn into a piece characterized by its evocative beauty. “Rhosymedre” is also well known in its orchestrated version.

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Though little known today, during his life **Vincent Lübeck** enjoyed a reputation throughout northern Germany as an outstanding organist and performer, composer, teacher, and organ consultant. From 1674 to 1702 he was organist at the Church of Saints Cosmas and Damian in Stade, and in 1702 he was appointed organist at St. Nicolas Church, the principal church in Hamburg, where he remained until his death. At both these churches, he presided over organs built by Arp Schnitger, the leading organ builder in northern Europe in the Baroque era. The four-manual instrument in Hamburg was considered the best in a prosperous city and the largest organ in the world at the time.

The *Præambulum* in E Major is one of the few surviving works by Lübeck. As is typical of the north German style of the period, the piece consists of clearly defined sections that juxtapose contrasting sounds, textures, and musical effects. The first section is a free, improvisatory prelude in which fast, toccata-like passages alternate with slow, sustained chords. The dialogue between manuals and pedal, heard in the opening bars and throughout this section, is a distinctive characteristic of north German organ music: North German organs were the only instruments of the seventeenth century to have a fully developed pedal division, and composers exploited this feature by writing virtuosic pedal solos comparable to the manual parts. The second section is a four-voice fugue for manuals and pedal—a compositional form in which each voice part states the theme in succession, adding layers to the polyphonic texture. A short, imitative section in continuous sixteenth notes serves as an interlude leading to the final section, a two-subject fugue in triple meter played on full organ.

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**J. S. Bach** compiled his set of six sonatas in the late 1720s, shortly after his appointment as cantor of St. Thomas School and music director in Leipzig. According to Bach’s first biographer, Johann Nikolaus Forkel, the sonatas were intended as instructional pieces to perfect the technique of his eldest son, Wilhelm Friedemann. It is likely the sonatas were played on a two-manual harpsichord or clavichord fitted with a pedal board, as well as on organ.

Much like a Baroque trio sonata, each organ sonata has three movements of differing rhythms, tempos, and tonal colors, and each movement consists of three independent melodic lines. In an instrumental trio, the parts are typically scored for two treble instruments and continuo, but on organ each hand plays a part on a separate keyboard, and the feet plays the

bass line. The opening movement of the Sonata IV in E minor is in fact a transcription of an earlier work Bach wrote for oboe d'amore, viola da gamba, and continuo. The two upper voices in the manuals engage in a contrapuntal musical dialogue, exchanging and imitating melodic motifs and constantly interweaving, while the pedal part provides harmonic support. The second Andante movement in B minor continues the imitation and interplay between the two upper voices. The final movement, in a triple-meter dance rhythm, adds the lower part from the pedal into the musical dialogue, with periodic statements of the main melodic motif against the upper voices.

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**César Franck** was born in Liège, in what is now Belgium, and received early training at the Liège Conservatoire and in Paris. As an adult he moved to Paris permanently and embarked on a career as a teacher, composer, pianist, and organist. He became one of the leading figures of French musical life in the second half of the nineteenth century and, through his teaching, had a profound effect on the next generation of French composers.

In 1858 he was appointed organist at the Church of Sainte-Clotilde in Paris. There he inaugurated a new organ built by Aristide Cavaillé-Coll, whose orchestral-style instruments and technical innovations largely influenced the emerging symphonic organ music of nineteenth-century France. The organ at Sainte-Clotilde served as the inspiration for Franck's *Six Pieces*, completed in 1862. The *Prelude, Fugue et Variation* is the third piece of this collection.

The prelude opens with three statements of a gentle five-bar cantabile melody over a spare accompaniment. A short interlude leads to a short four-part fugue, with a straightforward contrapuntal development of a new "cantando" theme. The concluding variation returns to the melody of the prelude but with an active, arpeggiated accompaniment in the middle voice.

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Born in the Brittany region of France and blind from an early age, **Jean Langlais** was educated at the Institut National des Jeunes Aveugles in Paris, where he later served as a professor for forty years. He went on to study with Charles Tournemire, Marcel Dupré, and Paul Dukas at the Paris Conservatory, obtaining a first prize in organ in 1930 and second prize in composition in 1934. In 1945 he was appointed organist at Sainte-Clotilde in Paris (the same church where Franck played) and remained there until 1988. He was also active internationally as a performer and teacher, traveling frequently to the United States for recital tours.

Langlais composed his *Suite Médiévale* in 1947. Like many of his compositions, the piece draws inspiration from Gregorian chant melodies and the Catholic liturgy. The form of the *Suite* is a low mass, with the five movements corresponding to the entrance, offertory, elevation, communion, and postlude, respectively. "Acclamations" is the jubilant final movement based on a medieval chant known as the "Laudes regiae." These litany-like acclamations originated in the eighth century during the reign of the Carolingian kings and were intended to praise the triumphant Christ, along with His royal and ecclesiastical representatives on earth. Langlais transforms the refrain of the acclamations, "Christus vincit, Christus regnat, Christus imperat," into a rhythmic ostinato and combines it with passages in duple meter based on the invocation "Exaudi Christe," borrowing the open harmonies common to medieval music.