

Ein feste Burg
Wartburg College Chapel
Dobson Organ 25th Anniversary
Dr. Karen Black, Organist

Notes

Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott, BWV 720

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

This chorale prelude on the tune “A Mighty Fortress is Our God” is one of a few dozen of Bach chorale preludes that cannot be traced to a particular time or occasion. It is likely an early work, and some have doubted that it was indeed written by Bach. Although the tune is a well-known Lutheran chorale and Bach’s Cantata No. 80 on this tune is widely known and performed, this setting is the only known organ work by Bach on this tune.

Sonata for Two Manuals and Pedal

Georg Philipp Telemann (1681-1767)

Grave
Presto
Andante
Scherzando

Telemann was a prolific composer of the German Baroque. He held positions in several cities before settling in Hamburg in 1721, where he directed music for the five main churches. His compositions blend French, Italian, and German styles, and provide a link between the Baroque and Classical styles. Probably more known today for his instrumental music, he did write a number of chorale preludes and short fugues for the organ, as well as 500 chorale harmonizations. This trio sonata is unique among his compositional works for organ.

Fantasia

Johann Christian Kittel (1732-1809)

Kittel was one of the last students of Johann Sebastian Bach. Although Kittel was born and died in Erfurt, he moved to Leipzig in 1748, where he began studies with Bach until Bach’s death in 1750. He returned to Erfurt in 1756. In 1762 Kittel became organist at Predigerkirche in Erfurt where he stayed for the rest of his life. He considered himself a composer in the tradition of Bach, but also was influenced by the contemporary Classical *galant* style. He composed many chorale preludes for organ as well as free works such as this Fantasia.

Ciacona

Johann Bernhard Bach (1676-1749)

Johann Bernhard was a second cousin to Johann Sebastian Bach. He was born in Erfurt, where he took a position as organist in 1695. He later followed Johann Christoph Bach as organist in Eisenach. Very few of his compositions survive, among them two ciacona. A ciacona, or chaconne, is a popular Baroque compositional type in which variations occur on a repeated short harmonic pattern or bass line.

Fantasy on “Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott”

Pamela Decker (b. 1955)

Pamela Decker is Professor of Organ and Music Theory at the University of Arizona in Tucson, Arizona. Her compositions have been performed in at least twenty countries and been included in many regional and national conferences, including those of the American Guild of Organists. She is also a widely acclaimed performer and recording artist. She has won numerous prizes both for composition and performance. She holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from Stanford University and was a Fulbright Scholar in Germany. Most of her organ works are published by Wayne Leupold Editions.

This piece was commissioned in memory of the Rev. Henry J. Kurtz (with funding by Harold Kurtz as a tribute to his father) for the Sesquicentennial of Wartburg College in 2002. It was published by Wayne Leupold Editions (WL710011) in 2011.

Pamela Decker writes: The piece is a set of continuous variations on the choral that is known to us as “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.” An introductory statement based on the initial phrase of the tune prepares the way for a multi-voiced fugue based on the contour of a longer segment of the chorale’s melodic material. The fugue builds to a cadenza that develops into a transition, which leads to a trio-textured presentation of the tune in a style reminiscent of Distler (another homage in connection with the work). A *subito piano* transition ushers in a lyrical treatment of the tune, spotlighting string and celeste sounds. The final *toccata* section is introduced by appearances of the fugal motives from the opening, proceeding to a pedal solo and then a fanfare-toccata driven by syncopated chords above the tune, which appears in the pedal part. In all, there are five variations.

Reflection (Brightest Days)

Karen Black (b. 1960)

The Wartburg community will recognize the tune used in *Reflection* as the college Loyalty song: *College of Our Brightest Days*, and the arrangement was written especially for this Dobson Organ 25th anniversary. The tune is also known as Spanish Hymn or Madrid and is found in hymnals paired with texts such as “Come, Christians, Join to Sing” or Savior, When in Dust to Thee” as well as others.

Passacaglia and Fugue in C Minor, BWV 582 Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

The Passacaglia and Fugue is certainly one of the great pieces of Bach's large body of organ works. A passacaglia is a form in which a series of continuous variations occur above a repeated bass melody, or ostinato. The Passacaglia begins with an eight-measure ostinato in the pedal alone, followed by twenty variations. Robert Schumann remarked that these variations are "intertwined so ingeniously that one can never cease to be amazed." The Passacaglia is followed immediately with a fugue, which uses the first half of the passacaglia theme as the subject, and a transformed version of the second half as the first countersubject. A second countersubject enters immediately after the first, and the three themes are combined throughout. It is a compositional and musical masterpiece, one of the most important and influential of Bach's works.