

SIMON PRESTON ROYAL ALBERT HALL ORGAN RESTORED

MENDELSSOHN SCHUMANN BOLCOM GERSHWIN KARG-ELERT JONGEN

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SIMON PRESTON Royal Albert Hall **Organ Restored**

| 1. | Felix Mendelssohn (arr. Best) | Overture to the Oratorio 'St. Paul', Op 36 | [7.44] |
|----------------------------------|--|--|--|
| 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. | Robert Schumann I. Langsam II. Lebhaft III. Mit sanften Stimmen IV. Mäßig, doch nicht zu langsam V. Lebhaft VI. Mäßig, nach und nach schneller | Six Fugues on B-A-C-H, Op 60 | [5.03] [5.25] [3.39] [4.21] [2.43] [6.34] |
| 7. 8. | William Bolcom | Free Fantasia on 'O Zion, Haste' and 'How Firm a Foundation' | [7.47] |
| 9. | George & Ira Gershwin (arr. Cable) | The Brothers Gershwin | [10.30] |
| 10. | Sigfrid Karg-Elert | Valse Mignonne, Op 142, No 2 | [5.17] |
| 11. | Joseph Jongen | Sonata Eroïca, Op 94 | [15.21] |
| | Total time | | [74.29] |

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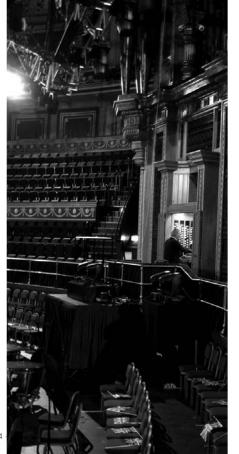
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service" The Times

SignumClassics, Signum Records Ltd., Suite 14, 21 Wadsworth Road, Perivale, Middx UB6 7JD, UK +44 (0) 20 8997 4000 E-mail: info@signumrecords.com Africa as well as North America and Canada. In 1990 Simon Preston became Artistic Director of the Calgary International Organ Festival and Competition of which he was Co-Founder. Simon Preston currently has almost fifty CDs available, including two versions of the Handel Organ Concertos with both Yehudi Menuhin and Trevor Pinnock, the complete organ works of Bach for Deutsche Grammophon as well as the 5th Brandenburg Concerto as harpsichord soloist, and many recordings with the choirs of Westminster Abbey and Christ Church, Oxford.

In 1971 Simon Preston was awarded an Edison Classique for his recordings of Messiaen's *Les Corps Glorieux* and Hindemith's Organ Sonatas. The recording of Handel's *Coronation Anthems* with the Westminster Abbey Choir conducted by Simon Preston was awarded a Grand Prix du Disque in 1983 and Copland's *Organ Symphony* with Simon Preston as soloist with the St Louis Symphony Orchestra under Leonard Slatkin was nominated for a Grammy Award in 1997. He has recorded Poulenc's *Organ Concerto* three times - with the London Symphony Orchestra and Andre Previn, the Boston Symphony and Seiji Ozawa, and the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra with Nicholas Braithwaite.

In 2004 Simon Preston appeared at The Last Night of the Proms performing Barber's *Toccata Festiva* on the Albert Hall's newly restored organ with the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Leonard Slatkin.



ARTIST NOTE

Since the Royal Albert Hall organ was inaugurated by W.T.Best, the most famous performer of his day, in the presence of Queen Victoria on the 29th March 1871, it seems appropriate to begin this programme with one of Best's own organ transcriptions: the Overture to Mendelssohn's Oratorio *St. Paul.* Mendelssohn's own performances of Bach on the organ in St. Paul's Cathedral and elsewhere during the 1830s had been wildly acclaimed by the crowds who came to hear him and Best took full advantage of the organ. After the Mendelssohn Overture it is but a short step to the symphonic nature of Schumann's *Sir Fugues* on the name B-A-C-H, to which the wide dynamic range and sonic possibilities of the Albert Hall Organ are ideally matched.

In the Bolcom Fantasia, the composer fuses a modern compositional idiom with two Southern Spirituals, breathing new life into both forms with shattering effect; in a way the same thing has happened to the Albert Hall organ, and with modern blowers for the bellows taking the place of the original steam engines of 1871, it certainly has enough wind now to cope with most contingencies - as you will hear.

In America the traditions of theatre organ playing are still kept very much alive. As a child I remember playing two very old records over and over again on a wind-up portable gramophone - the sort that had wooden needles which you had to keep sharpening. The first was George Thalben-Ball playing *The Ride of the Valkyries* on the Alexandra Palace organ, and the other - equally favourite was Quentin MacLean playing Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* on the organ in the Odeon Marble Arch. At the age of five I could not work out how Quentin MacLean did the opening glissando in *Rhapsody in Blue*, apparently he used the *Siren* stop - useful for Cops and Robbers chases in the silent movies - switched the organ on and, when the wind went into the bellows, it produced this very smooth glissando up to the top E flat!

Joseph Jongen and Siegfrid Karg-Elert were near contemporaries, and although generally regarded as organ composers, both were prolific in other forms: symphonic music, choral and chamber music and even opera. Jongen's music is most fastidiously composed and the architectural shape and grandeur of the *Sonata Eroica* is in wonderful contrast to the quite unexpected delicacy of Karg-Elert's *Valse Mignonne*, here the extremely discerning listener may pick up some unexpected sounds of the gentler percussion stops on the enclosed Solo division of the Albert Hall organ.

Simon Preston, 2006

ROYAL ALBERT HALL ORGAN RESTORED

BIOGRAPHY

Overture to 'St Paul' Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847) arr. W.T. Best (1826-1897)

When the organ of the Royal Albert Hall was completed in 1891, there was no question who would be invited to give the opening recital: it had to be W.T. Best. Best was the greatest British organist of the Victorian age, and he had recently returned from Australia, where he had inaugurated the new organ in Sydney Town Hall. He lived in Liverpool, where he was Organist of St George's Hall, and he played two recitals there every week for 40 years. His virtuosity was formidable, and his repertoire was reputed to comprise some 5000 pieces, including "everything worth playing that had ever been written for the organ, and everything in classical music that could suitably be arranged for it".

Mendelssohn was the musical idol of Victorian England, and his works provided a rich source of material for Best's transcriptions. Rarely heard these days, *St. Paul* was the first of his two big oratorios; it was first performed in Düsseldorf in 1836 and then in Birmingham in 1837. The orchestral Overture is a fantasia on the chorale *Sleepers wake* (Wachet auf), and in Best's superb arrangement it makes a thoroughly convincing organ piece. The opening verse of the hymn is followed by a fugue, and the two themes are finally superimposed in a majestic peroration – a formula that would later be developed on a much grander scale in the chorale fantasias of Max Reger.

Six Fugues on the name of B-A-C-H Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

It was during the first half of the 19th century that Bach began to assume his rightful place as a central figure in the history of European music, after years of neglect. The ongoing Bach Revival had no supporters more devoted than the three great romantic composers who were born in 1810, and who all helped to further the cause in various ways – Mendelssohn through his conducting of the choral works and his influential performances on the organ, and Schumann and Liszt through their involvement in the founding of the Bach-Gesellschaft in 1850, and their own performances and arrangements of Bach's music. Both Schumann and Liszt were also inspired to compose a tribute to the Master in the form of a work based on the musical motif derived in German from the letters of his name (in English, B flat – A – C – B natural).

"The work which, I believe, will longest outlive my others" – this was Schuman's own verdict on his Six Fugues on the name of B-A-C-H when he completed this monumental work in November 1845 after working on it for almost a year, striving to "make it worthy of the great name it bears." Schumann is generally regarded as the quintessential romantic composer, and this makes his achievement in these fugues all the more remarkable: this is a work of supreme contrapuntal mastery that recreates and redefines the discipline and structural logic of Bach's music in 19th century terms. The six pieces are very varied in style, and together they form a great fugal symphony, an epic journey through ever-changing landscapes of simplicity and complexity, darkness and light. Shortly after his London debut in March 1962, Simon Preston was appointed Sub-Organist of Westminster Abbey and later that same year appeared for the first time in the Royal Albert Hall at the Proms, performing in Saint-Saëns' *Organ Symphony* with the BBC Symphony Orchestra. During the sixties Simon Preston produced a milestone series of recordings on Westminster Abbey's famous instrument, which included Messiaen's *La Nativité* and the *Sonata on the 94th Psalm* by Reubke. He also appeared at the Royal Albert Hall in the now legendary fund-raising concert for the Royal College of Organists – "Organ in Sanity and Madness" – where he opened proceedings with Bossi's *Etude Symphonique*. During that period too he worked under the direction of many renowned conductors including Leopold Stokowski and Pierre Monteux, and in 1965 made his first tour to Canada and the USA.

By the time he left Westminster Abbey in 1967, Simon Preston was already an internationally acclaimed artist. In 1970 Simon Preston became Organist of the Cathedral and Tutor in Music at Christ Church, Oxford, where his work with the choir won great praise. He was appointed Organist and Master of the Choristers at Westminster Abbey in 1981, where his work with the choir again received great acclaim. He directed the music at the Royal Wedding of Prince Andrew and Sarah Ferguson in 1986 and was responsible for writing much of Salier's music for the film Amadeus.

After leaving Westminster Abbey in 1987, he continued to pursue an active career as a much sought-after organist and conductor, undertaking a series of tours to the Far East, Australia and South





The first two fugues together form a kind of symphonic first movement, consisting of Introduction and Allegro. The slow first fugue introduces the four-note B-A-C-H theme, and gradually builds in speed and volume from a sombre exposition to a maiestic conclusion. In the second fugue Schumann compresses the fournote theme and creates a new subject by adding some typical baroque semiguaver figures (compare the famous Toccata & Fugue in D minor, BWV 565). With propulsive dotted rhythms and exciting virtuoso writing for both hands and feet, this is the most energetic and least cerebral of the six fugues, and represents the composer in his most fiery and heroic mood.

The short third piece is a meditative slow movement "for soft stops", which serves as a prelude to the more substantial fourth fugue. Here Schumann transposes the last two notes of the theme an octave down, creating an angular fugue-subject that is strangely prophetic of Franz Liszt's B-A-C-H fugue, which was written ten years later. This fourth fugue makes extensive use of the Bachian devices of retrograde and stretto, and the intricate musical texture grows from a sober start to a grand conclusion.

In the fifth fugue the severe chromatic theme is transformed into a dancing staccato scherzo of typically Schumannesque delicacy. The final movement is a magnificent double fugue, worked out with a sense of leisurely inevitability. In the winter of 1845 Schumann was also working on his C major orchestral Symphony, and a relationship between these two very different works can clearly be heard in some of the harmonic progressions of their final pages. The fugue begins with a new exposition of the main theme. accompanied by countersubjects of rolling triplets, and this is followed by a second exposition of a new theme: in due course the two themes are combined, and the music accelerates into a final climax of aspirational and soul-stirring grandeur.

Free Fantasia on 'O Zion Haste' and 'How Firm a Foundation' William Bolcom (b. 1938)

The American composer William Bolcom has impeccable classical credentials (he studied with both Milhaud and Messiaen), but his musical sympathies extend across many of the conventional boundaries: he is an expert exponent of ragtime piano, and as accompanist to his wife, the cabaret singer Joan Morris, he has performed and recorded an encyclopaedic variety of American popular music. This Fantasia (1984) comes from a set of Gospel Preludes for organ, which explore these boundaries in music that is technically challenging, rhythmically complex, and bursting with life and colour. It falls into two clearly defined sections, of strongly contrasted musical character, suggesting a gradual progression out of the darkness into the light. The first part is dissonant in harmony and improvisatory in style, ranging through a wide spectrum of colours and dynamics, from aggressive full chords and rapid flourishes to passages of brooding mystery. At times melodic phrases clearly emerge from the surrounding chaos - these come from the hymn 'O Zion Haste'. After a while the mood begins to change, the rhythm becomes more regular, and the pedals introduce the tune of the second hymn, 'How Firm a Foundation' accompanied by bluesy gospel harmonies, it builds in an irresistible crescendo to a resounding climax.

SWELL ORGAN

SOLO AND BOMBARD ORGAN

| | | First Division (Solo) enclosed | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------|--|
| Double Open Diapason | 16 | Contra Bass | 16 | |
| Bourdon | 16 | Flûte à Pavillon | 8 | |
| Open Diapason | 8 | Viole d'Amour | 8 | |
| Viola da Gamba | 8 | Doppel Flute | 8 | |
| Salicional | 8 | Harmonic Claribel Flute | 8 | |
| Vox Angelica | C13 8 | Unda Maris IIrks | 8 | |
| Flûte à Cheminée | 8 | Wald Flute | 4 | |
| Claribel Flute | 8 | Flauto Traverso | 4 | |
| Principal | 4 | Piccolo Traverso | 2 | |
| Viola | 4 | Tremulant | | |
| Harmonic Flute | 4 | Double Bassoon | 16 | |
| Octave Quint | 2 2/3 | Corno di Bassetto | 8 | |
| Super Octave | 2 | Hautboy | 8 | |
| Harmonic Piccolo | 2 | Bassoon | 8 | |
| Mixture V | 4 | Double Horn | 16 | |
| Furniture V | 2 | French Horn | 8 | |
| Contra Oboe | 16 | Carillons | | |
| Oboe | 8 | Tubular Bells | | |
| Baryton | 16 | Octave | | |
| Vox Humana | 8 | Sub Octave | | |
| Tremulant | | Unison Off | | |
| Double Trumpet | 16 | | | |
| Trumpet | bet 8 Second Division (Bomba | | | |
| Clarion | 4 | enclosed in Solo box | | |
| Tuba | 8 | Bombardon | 16 | |
| Tuba Clarion | 4 | Tuba | 8 | |
| Octave (16, 8, 4 stops of | inlv) | Orchestral Trumpet | 8 | |
| Solo to Swell | ,, | Cornopean | 8 | |
| | | Quint Trumpet | 5 1/3 | |
| | | Orchestral Clarion | 4 | |
| | | Sesquialtera V | 2 2/3 | |
| | | Octave (16, 8, 4 stops only) | | |
| | | unenclosed: | | |
| | | Contra Tuba | 16 | |
| | | Tuba Mirabilis | 8 | |
| | | Tuba Clarion | 4 | |
| | | Tubas on Choir | · | |
| | | Bombard on Choir | | |
| | | | | |

ROYAL ALBERT HALL ORGAN STOP LIST





The Brothers Gershwin George & Ira Gershwin arr. Howard Cable (b.1920)

The Canadian conductor, composer and arranger Howard Cable has been a leading figure in musical life across the Atlantic for over 50 years, his work ranging from arrangements of Broadway musicals. and film scores for stars like Danny Kave, to regular guest conducting with all the Canadian Symphony Orchestras. This tribute to George Gershwin and his lyricist brother Ira takes the form of a medley of some of their most popular numbers: 'I got rhythm', 'Love walked in', 'Oh! Lady be good', 'Fascinating rhythm'. 'Embraceable you', 'S'Wonderful', 'The man I love' and 'Of thee I sing' - with a hint of *Rhapsodv in Blue* thrown in for good measure. It was originally conceived for organ and orchestra, and first performed by Simon Preston with the Calgary Philharmonic at a Pops Concert in Canada in 1998. Here it is played in a version for solo organ, providing an opportunity for the RAH organ to show a side of its character that is not normally displayed in more conventional repertoire...

Valse Mignonne

Sigfrid Karg-Elert (1877-1933)

Karg-Elert spent most of his life in Leipzig, where he succeeded Max Reger as Professor of Composition at the Conservatory. An "exceptionally imaginative and eccentric character", his mature harmonic language was strongly influenced by composers like Debussy and Scriabin, and his later works have aptly been described as the perfect embodiment in music of the style of art nouveau. The late Felix Aprahamian, who met the composer in London in 1930, recalled that "He cut an unusual figure... very much the imagined provincial German professor. Shortish, dumpy and moody, he might have been playing the Emil Jannings part opposite Marlene Dietrich in the film of *Der Blaue Engel.*" And the seductive ambience of The Blue Angel would provide a perfect setting for this little waltz, which was written "in a state of intoxication after a visit to a fabulous cinema organ" (artistic intoxication, we presume). "Rather sentimental," said Karg-Elert, "and in parts damnably cloying... quite exceptional and not in my true style, but astonishingly effective. May St. Cecilia forgive me my sins!"

Sonata Eroïca

Joseph Jongen (1873-1953)

Joseph Jongen was born, like César Franck, at Liège in Belgium where he began his musical career as a solo choirboy and church organist. He was a prize-winning student at the Liège Conservatoire, and in 1897 he won the Belgian Grand Prix de Rome. which enabled him to travel throughout Germany. Italy, and France, where he studied with Franck's pupil Vincent D'Indy. On his return to Belgium Jongen lived by composing and teaching until the outbreak of the First World War, when he moved to England for four years. During this period he played all over the country as pianist with the Belgian Quartet, conducted at the Proms, and gave many organ recitals: "In England", he later recalled, "I experienced the most resounding successes of my career". After the War he returned home, and was appointed Professor of Counterpoint and Fugue at the Brussels Conservatoire, where he became Director in 1925. He retired in 1939, and died at his country house near Liège in the summer of 1953. Many aspects of Jongen's music - the formal techniques, the melodic style, the sumptuous harmonies and warmth of emotion - are derived from the Franck tradition, but was also influenced by the more delicately impressionistic textures

of Debussy. He was a prolific composer, and his extensive output of orchestral, chamber and instrumental music does not deserve its current neglect; but several of his organ works have retained a place in the repertoire, particularly the *Sonata Eroica*, which is one of the great virtuoso showpieces of the late romantic period.

The Sonata was commissioned by Belgian Radio in 1930 for the inauguration of a new organ in the Concert Hall of the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels. Despite the title this is not a 'sonata' in any real sense, but rather a continuous set of symphonic variations, preceded by a grand chordal introduction for the full organ. After the tumult of the opening pages subsides, the main theme is introduced very quietly, a plaintive little tune in the modal style of a Belgian folksong. It initiates a sequence of contrasting developments and variations which exploit the full resources of the organ; they include an exquisite slow movement and a fugue, and culminate in a thunderous carillon that brings the sonata to a truly heroic conclusion.

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|----|----------------------------------|--|--------|
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| 2. | I. Langsam | | [5.03] |
| 3. | II. Lebhaft | | [5.25] |
| 4. | III. Mit sanften Stimmen | | [3.39] |
| 5. | IV. Mäßig, doch nicht zu langsam | | [4.21] |

V. Lebhaft 6.

8.

9.

7.

VI. Mäßig, nach und nach schneller William Bolcom Free Fantasia on 'O Zion, Haste' and 'How Firm a Foundation' George & Ira Gershwin (arr. Cable) The Brothers Gershwin 10. Sigfrid Karg-Elert Valse Mignonne, Op 142, No 2 11. Joseph Jongen Sonata Eroïca, Op 94

Total time

One of the truly great organists of our times performs works spanning two centuries. 19th century cornerstones of the organ repertory from Mendelssohn and Schumann are balanced with contemporary offerings featuring Jongen and George & Ira Gershwin in a broad range of music that perfectly showcases the vast palette of sonic colours of the newly restored organ of the Royal Albert Hall.

| imon Preston - organ www.signumrecords.com | | | | (Ancho) | | | | | |
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| ignum Records Ltd, Suite 14, 21 Wadsworth Road, erivale, Middx UB6 7JD, United Kingdom | signum CLASSICS | SIGCD084 | @ 2006 Signum Records © 2006 Signum Records | DIGITAL AUDIO | DDD 24 bit digital recording | 6 | Į | ļļ | ļ |

ROYAL ALBERT HALL ORGAN RESTORED - SIMON PRESTON

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[2.43]

[6.34] [7.47]

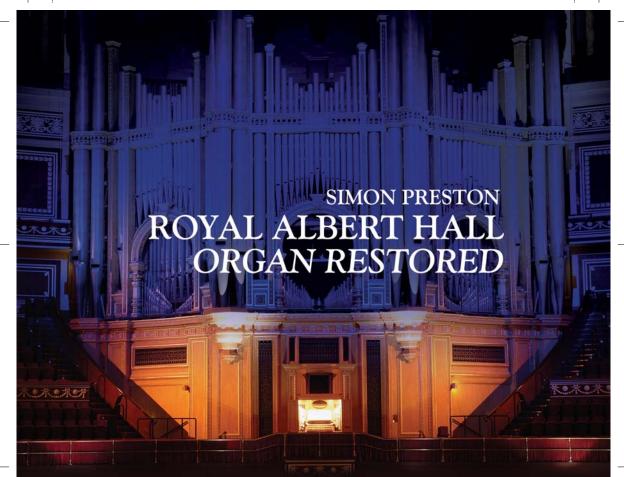
[10.30]

[5.17]

[15.21] [74.29] CTP Template: CD_INL4 Compact Disc Inside Inlay (clearcase)

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ORGAN RESTORED

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Simon Preston - organ

WHITE ON-BODY / BLACK TYPE

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