



12th Annual L. Felix and Helen Miller  
**Ranlett Organ Recital**  
*with Janette Fishell*  
**Sunday, October 2, 2011**

**Janette Fishell**

In recital in Hosmer Hall, SUNY Potsdam

Fantasia and Fugue in G Minor, BWV 542	Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)
An Wasserflüssen Babylon, a 5 parti con 2 tastiere e pedale doppio, BWV 653b	J.S. Bach
From <i>Pièces de fantaisie</i>	Louis Vierne (1870-1937)
Carillon de Westminster, Op. 54 No. 6	
Clair de lune, Op. 53. No. 5	
From <i>Nedelni Hudba</i> ("Sunday Music")	Petr Eben (1929-2007)
III. Moto Ostinato	
Intermission	
From <i>Five Dances for Organ</i>	Calvin Hampton (1938-1984)
I. The Primitives	
II. At the Ballet	
III. Those Americans	
IV. Exulted Ritual	
V. Everyone Dance	
Fantasmagorie	Jehan Alain (1911-1940)
Postlude pour l'office de Complies	Jehan Alain
Prelude and Fugue on B-A-C-H	Franz Liszt (1811-1886)

*Janette Fishell concertizes under the auspices of Karen McFarlane Artists, Inc.*

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..... **Pre-concert Lecturer**  
Nelly Case earned a Bachelor of Music degree in piano from Ohio State University, a Master of Music in piano from Yale University, and a Doctorate in Musicology from Boston University, where she studied organ with Max Miller. Currently she is a professor at the Crane School of Music, where she teaches courses in music history, literature, and women in music.  
She is also the organist and handbell choir director at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Canton, New York.

## Janette Fishell

A graduate of Indiana University and Northwestern University, **Janette Fishell** is a recitalist and teacher of international standing. She has performed in many of the world's greatest concert venues including Suntory Hall, Tokyo; King's College, Cambridge; Berlin's *Schauspielhaus*; the Liszt Academy, Budapest; the Prague Spring Festival and has been a featured recitalist and lecturer at five national conventions and six regional conventions of the American Guild of Organists. Her solo recitals for the 2006 national convention of the AGO in Chicago were critically acclaimed as "flawless" and a convention highlight. The author of numerous articles and a book on service playing published by Abingdon Press, she is widely recognized as a leading authority on the organ music of Czech composer Petr Eben. Her critically acclaimed compact disc recordings include performances as a soloist, accompanist, and choral conductor and her performances have been recorded and nationally broadcast by the BBC, Pipedreams, and NHK (Japan).

She is Professor of Music and Chair of the Organ Department at the Jacobs School of Music, Indiana University and Artist-in-Residence at Christ Church [Episcopal] Cathedral, Indianapolis. Previous to her 2008 appointment as Professor of Music and Chair of the Organ Department at the Jacobs School of Music, Indiana University, she headed Organ and Sacred Music Studies at East Carolina University and served Saint Paul's Episcopal Church, Greenville, NC, where she remains Director of Music/Organist Emerita.

In addition to a full schedule of eclectic programs, Dr. Fishell has embarked upon a twenty-one-concert project "The Seasons of Sebastian," in which she is performing the complete organ works of J.S. Bach for the first time at Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music and the Bloomington community. Music critic Peter Jacobi hailed her "consummate artistry" and wrote of the opening recital in the series: "Fishell's mastery of all the material was breathtaking. The harmonic statements, the complex ornamentations, the fugal developments, the gentle interludes, the powerful climaxes, the passionate exhortations, the technical challenges to fingers and feet, the artistic spirit and spiritual aura: all were convincingly present at this opening recital."

Recent and upcoming engagements include concert tours of Asia, Australia, New Zealand, Europe, and recitals and master classes in the US for regional and national conventions of the AGO, Presbyterian Association of Musicians, and numerous churches, universities and concert halls.

### Program Notes

Bach's marriages and resulting numerous progeny are often viewed with a degree of humor. Yet the tragic, premature death of his first wife, Maria Barbara, no doubt left Bach a devastated single parent of four children. It has been speculated that the great Fantasia in G Minor, and the fugue partnered with it, may have had their genesis during the period after her death. The Fantasia is a work marked by daring harmonic exploration that pushes the listener to the very brink of an emotional precipice. One can liken the dramatic opening to a rhetorical cry against the darkness; it alternates with a quieter contrapuntal theme, calmer and seeking solace. The ensuing fiery fugue was likely not paired with the Fantasia originally and may stem from an improvisation Bach made in Hamburg whilst "auditioning" for a position at the Jakobikirche. Based on a Dutch folk tune, its secular roots and perpetual motion provide an aptly life-affirming conclusion to one of the organ's greatest masterpieces.

It is followed by an extraordinary chorale prelude based on a metrical version of Psalm 137, one of the most beloved and poignant of texts in the Old Testament:

By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion.

There on the poplars we hung our harps, for there our captors asked us for songs,  
our tormentors demanded songs of joy; they said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"

How can we sing the songs of the LORD while in a foreign land?

(Psalm 137, verses 1-4)

This is one (The earliest? The latest? Or an arrangement by Bach's distant cousin and Weimar compatriot Walther? The jury is still out on these questions!) of three extant settings of this chorale of lament, the only one to incorporate double pedaling. Although somewhat awkward in construction (and in realization, as any organist can attest), the double pedal is interesting, nonetheless, as it functions on a dual plane: the left foot generally provides the bass line and the right foot sings more lyrically in motifs drawn from the melody.

As beautiful as the music is, the legend growing around it has proven as loved and durable: it is believed to be inspired by Bach's improvisation in front of the aged master Johann Adam Reincken at St. Catherine's, Hamburg in 1720 (perhaps the same trip in which BWV 542.2 was first improvised?). Reincken's own setting of the same chorale has now been proven to be the oldest known manuscript in J.S. Bach's hand, and so perhaps it was with equal parts respect and bravado that the young Bach chose his theme upon which to improvise ". . . for almost half an hour . . ." (Bach Obituary). At the conclusion of the improvisation, it is reported that Reincken said, "I thought that this art was dead, but I see that in you it still lives."

Louis Vierne entered the organ class of Maître César Franck only months before the elder composer's death. Consequently, most of his tuition was under the direction of Charles-Marie Widor, who, with formidable tenacity, began a revolution in the instruction of organists at the Paris *Conservatoire*, demanding excellence not only in improvisation but in technique. Vierne was Widor's assistant at St. Sulpice until the time when he accepted the exalted position of *Organiste Titulaire* of the Cathedral of Notre Dame, Paris.

Renowned for his improvisatory skills, Vierne was also a prolific composer, leaving four suites of *Pièces de Fantaisie*, six organ symphonies and other works that have formed a central core of repertoire for generations of organists throughout the world. Many of the Fantasy Pieces were composed for Vierne's concert tours played, in part, to raise funds for the upkeep and restoration of the ailing Cavallé-Coll organ at Notre Dame. The stunningly beautiful "Clair de lune" evokes a moonlit stroll by the Seine, past Notre Dame, with its soaring arches and guardian gargoyles keeping watch through the night. It is preceded by his Gallic tribute to Big Ben's familiar "Westminster Chime," a work Vierne dedicated to the famous organ builder Henry Willis. It was so popular the first time Vierne played it at Notre Dame that the clergy uncharacteristically waited for the organist to descend from the Tribune at the close of the service in order to pay their compliments.

Native to Bohemia but a "Praguer" by adoption, the late Petr Eben always had a soft spot in his heart for the organ. In his own words, the instrument ". . . was always pure joy . . . the dearest instrument to me, full of festivity." A self-proclaimed Romantic, Eben never failed to place his prodigious compositional technique at the service of the music. In discussing his artistic aesthetic he once said, "I strongly felt music to be a message to the listener and a composition was, for me, always more than a problem to solve in a musical way." Those who know his music recognize that the frequent message is that Good will triumph over Evil, despite the follies of humankind. This battle is one the composer knew well: with his family he was interned in Buchenwald (his father was Jewish) and later he suffered many hardships as a Christian living and working in a Communist state.

The battle is certainly evident in Eben's most famous work, "Moto Ostinato," a work inspired by the story of Christ's encounter with the possessed man who answers, "My name is legion, for we are many." *Mark 5:9*. The hypnotic opening theme heard from the opening measures grows increasingly powerful until it engulfs the entire texture by its force. The stereophonic effects of the final page are achieved by rapid manual changes.

The sights and sounds of New York City seem to have inspired the **Five Dances** by innovative American organist/composer Calvin Hampton, whose music continues to delight long after his untimely death. It

is possible to hear these delightful dances as an aural “walking tour” of the Big Apple, beginning with an electrifying performance of “Rite of Spring” (Mvt. I), moving to the New York City Ballet (Mvt. II), to a Broadway musical (Mvt. III), past a great church (Mvt. IV) and finally to a circus in Madison Square Garden, complete with dancing bears and tightrope walkers (Mvt. V). Throughout, it is apparent that the composer understood how to successfully leash the organ’s ability to project both musical line and rhythmic incisiveness.

Jehan Alain’s complex sound world is often defined by extremes: hypnotic and frenzied one moment; rapturously static the next. Tonight we hear such contrasts in the quirky *Fantasmagorie* which precedes the contemplative *Postlude*. Both invite us to join the dance of life, which Alain seems to be saying is at once both fantastical and reverent.

Lothario, Minor Cleric, Visionary—Franz Liszt was the ultimate Romantic era icon in that he embodied all of these personas. He, like Mendelssohn, Brahms, and Schumann, was an ardent admirer, if not worshipper, of Sebastian Bach, yet Liszt was squarely in another “camp,” the avant-garde school of Weimar that was considered the “opposition” by Schumann and Brahms, and his experiments in musical form and harmony would anticipate Impressionism and chart new courses for composers such as Richard Wagner. Like the aforementioned “Classical Romantics,” Liszt paid homage to Bach throughout his life in many musical compositions but never as powerfully or dramatically as in this Prelude and Fugue on BACH, so named because it takes as its theme the musical “signature” that is made possible by the German musical alphabet in which B represents B-flat and H stands for B natural. It is an audacious and iconoclastic *hommage* that may be seen as something of a nineteenth century incarnation of the seventeenth century *Stylus Phantasticus*. While the fugue is anything but a strict essay in counterpoint, Liszt’s approach to harmony is revolutionary; one imagines Bach cheering from the Heavens at Liszt’s sheer bravado.

Notes © Janette Fishell

## The L. Felix and Helen Miller Ranlett Organ Recital Series

### The Organists

2000 Jonathan Biggers	Binghamton University, SUNY
2001 Gerre & Judith Hancock	St. Thomas Church, New York
2002 Kim Kasling ‘63	St. John’s University, Colleeville, MN
2003 Thomas Murray	Yale University
2004 Paul Jacobs	The Juilliard School of Music
2005 Carol Williams	San Diego Civic Organist
2006 Paul Jacobs	The Juilliard School of Music
2007 Frederick Swann	National President of the American Guild of Organists
2008 Andrew Unsworth	Mormon Tabernacle
2009 Jonathan Moyer & Kaori Hongo	The Church of the Covenant, Cleveland, OH
2010 Scott Dettra	National Cathedral, Washington, DC
2011 Janette Fishell	Jacobs School of Music, Indiana University

Reception for Janette Fishell immediately following  
the concert in the lobby of the Sara M. Snell Theater.