The concert begins at 3 p.m.

AMERICAN COMPOSERS FESTIVAL 2016
Superstar Organ Virtuosos

Christopher Theofanidis (b. 1967)
Rex Tremendae Majestatis for Organ, Brass and Percussion
Paul Jacobs

Fela Sowande (1905-1987)
Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho
Craig Williams

Florence Price (1887–1953)
Adoration
Craig Williams

Carl Haywood (b. 1949)
Improvisation on “We Shall Overcome”
Craig Williams

Christoph Bull (b. 1966)
Vic 1
Christoph Bull

Well-Tempered Variations on a Bach Prelude in D Minor
Christoph Bull

Richard Keys Biggs (1886-1962)
Toccata on Deo Gratias
Christoph Bull

INTERMISSION

Searle Wright (1918-2004)
Introduction, Passacaglia and Fugue
Frederick Swann

Lou Harrison (1917-2003)
Concerto for Organ and Percussion
Allegro
Andante: Siciliana in the Form of a Double Canon
Largo
Canons and Choruses
Allegro Finale
Paul Jacobs

The 2016 American Composers Festival is supported by

The Pedals and Pipes series is generously sponsored by Valerie and Barry Hon.
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Christopher Theofanidis (b. 1967)

The music of Dallas native Christopher Theofanidis has been performed by leading orchestras around the world, including the London Symphony, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Moscow Soloists and the National, Atlanta, Baltimore, St. Louis and Detroit symphonies. During the 2006-07 season, Theofanidis was Composer of the Year for the Pittsburgh Symphony and wrote a Violin Concerto for soloist Sarah Chang.

Theofanidis studied at Yale, the Eastman School of Music and the University of Houston. In 2007 he was nominated for a Grammy for Best Composition for The Here and Now, a work for chorus and orchestra based on the poetry of Rumi. His orchestral piece Rainbow Body has been performed by over 100 orchestras, making it one of the most widely performed new orchestral pieces of the past decade.

Recent commissions include a ballet score for the American Ballet Theatre, a work for the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra as part of their New Brandenburg series, and two opera commissions for the San Francisco and Houston Grand Opera companies. His honors include the International Masterprize (London), the Rome Prize, six ASCAP Gould Prizes, as well as Guggenheim, Fulbright and Tanglewood fellowships.

Fela Sowande (1905-1987)

Olufela Obafunmilayo Sowande was a pioneer whose explorations were musical. Born in 1905 in Abokuta, Nigeria, Sowande was the son of a priest who was also a pioneer of Nigerian church music. Under the influence of his father and the composer and organist R.K. Ekundayo Phillips, Sowande developed his musical abilities and an understanding of music ranging from Bach and European classical masters to new Yoruba music.

Sowande went to London in 1934, studying European classical and popular music, and was soon engaged as soloist in a London performance of Gershwin’s Rhapsody in Blue, as well as duo-pianist with jazz great Fats Waller and as theater organist for the BBC. After earning a degree in music from the University of London, he became a Fellow of Trinity College of Music and worked as musical advisor for the Colonial Film Unit of the Ministry of Information during World War II. He spent the last years of his life in the U.S., teaching in the Department of Pan-African Studies at Kent State University—a citizen of the world with enormous musical gifts whose life experiences gave him a unique perspective on the African diaspora in America and elsewhere. His composition Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho was published in London in 1955.

Florence Price (1887-1953)

Born in Little Rock, Ark. in 1887, Florence Beatrice Price was the first African American woman to have her work performed by a major symphony orchestra. Price’s musical talent was evident from an early age, and at age 4 she performed her first piano recital. She graduated from Little Rock’s Capitol High School at age 14, already a published composer.

In her early days as a student at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, Price passed as Mexican on the advice of her mother, who was mindful of the challenges to be faced by an African American woman student. But she later formed friendships with other black composers, and four years after graduating from conservatory she was appointed chairman of the music department at Clark University.

Price eventually settled in Chicago, where her fulfillment as a composer came literally by accident: a broken foot forcibly gave her the time to compose her Symphony in E Minor, which was awarded the 1932 Wanamaker Prize and was performed by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra at the Century of Progress world’s fair.

Carl Haywood (b. 1949)

Recognized as a superb choral conductor and organist of deep musical sensitivity, Carl W. Haywood is a native of Portsmouth, Va. and has made his life and career in the Old Dominion state. He graduated with honors from Norfolk State University (NSU) and received master’s degrees in sacred music and choral conducting from Southern Methodist University (SMU). He earned his doctor of musical arts degree from the University of Southern California.

While serving as associate conductor-organist for the SMU Chapel, Haywood studied composition, arranging and conducting with Lloyd
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Pfautsch. The fruits of his studies during this period can be heard in compositions such as his Improvisation on We Shall Overcome.

Haywood has continued his commitment to the state of Virginia through his long tenure on the faculty of his alma mater, NSU, where he is director of choral activities and conductor of the NSU Concert Choir and the Spartan Chorale. He also serves as a national conductor for the 105 Voices of History, the Historically Black Colleges and Universities choir.

Christoph Bull (b. 1966)

It may be just as well that certain events forced writers to stop using the phrase “the Tiger Woods of the organ” to describe Christoph Bull. The phrase most often used to replace it, “the rock star of the organ,” conveys more of the energy and irreverence that Bull brings to the instrument. Born in Mannheim, Germany in 1966, Bull has the appearance, energy, and manic eclecticism of a 1960s rock star, attributes he has used to attract unlikely listeners to the power of the pipes as a composer and performer.

Bull improvised his first melodies on the piano at age 5, and gave his first organ recitals and rock concerts with a band at the age of 12, and later concertized with the National Youth Orchestra of Germany. After graduation from Mannheim’s Karl-Friedrich Gymnasium, he continued organ studies at the University of Church Music in Heidelberg and Musikschule in Freiburg, later earning degrees at Boston’s Berklee College of Music, USC and the American Conservatory of Music. The full range of his musical abilities, including his flair for rock performance and songwriting, can be heard in his organ playing and compositions.

Bull was chosen as soloist to inaugurate the organ at Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles.

Richard Keys Biggs (1886-1962)

Richard Keys Biggs was a distinguished American organist and composer whose humble demeanor belied his accomplishments. His career began with the 20th century and continued into the Kennedy years. Biggs studied in London with Sir Richard Runciman Terry, the English organist, choir director and musicologist noted for his revival of Tudor liturgical music—background that gave him a strong feeling for the lineage of English organ traditions. He was awarded an honorary doctorate of music from the Loyola University, Chicago.

Active as a church organist in Southern California, Biggs served as organist of the San Diego Exposition and with Episcopal congregations in San Diego and Montréal, Quebec. In the 1940s, he was director of the men’s and boy’s choirs of the Blessed Sacrament parochial school and church in Los Angeles. Biggs was typical of many hard-working organists in achieving distinction without seeking fame. He was teacher of the famed choral director Roger Wagner and of the flamboyant organist, keyboard artist and conductor Anthony Newman. Biggs’ son, the organist John Biggs, is lecturer at Kansas State Teachers College.

Searle Wright (1918-2004)

Born in Susquehanna, Penn., Searle Wright grew up in Binghamton, where he came to the organ by way of the movies—playing organ music and light classical transcriptions before weekend shows at the local movie palace to earn money. He then went to New York City to study classical organ with T. Tertius Noble, the organist and master of choristers at the musically distinguished St. Thomas Church. Though he later studied composition at Columbia University, he never earned a degree there—opting instead to develop his improvisation techniques, essential for an organist, at the Union Theological Seminary’s School of Sacred Music. He began teaching students there in 1947.

Wright served as director of chapel music at St. Paul’s Chapel, Columbia University for nearly two decades, and was president of the American Guild of Organists from 1969-1971.

Along with “Brother James’ Air” and “The Green Blade Riseth,” “Introduction, Passacaglia and Fugue” is one of Wright’s best-known organ compositions. But in addition to these works, his legacy includes a generation of organists who studied improvisation with him.

Lou Harrison (1917-2003)

The music of the innovative American composer Lou Silver Harrison is noted for its eclecticism and its embrace of the avant garde. Its influences include the 12-tone technique of Arnold Schoenberg; the polyrhythmic complexity of Charles Ives; Native American and Mexican music; Asian music, including Cantonese opera; the internationalism of Henry Cowell; and microtonality and just intonation (as contrasted with the more familiar equal temperament tuning system).

Merely listing these fascinations is exhausting—much less understanding their impact on Harrison’s music. But in the Concerto for Organ and Percussion we can hear Harrison’s delight in the sound of the gamelan and its distinctively twangy, microtonal intonation. In his own remarks on this work, Harrison noted that “Because the organ is a sustaining tonal instrument, and much of the percussion I wished to use was to be of abstract sound without a specified fixed pitch, I felt that an intermediate group of percussion instruments of fixed pitch ought to be used.” These include “a chorus of piano, glockenspiel, vibraphone, celeste and tube chimes.” Listeners including critic Alex Ross have called the result “musical merriment” that mixes “hummable song and rollicking dance.”

THANK YOU TO OUR ORGAN SERIES SPONSORS

VALERIE AND BARRY HON

Pacific Symphony would like to extend special thanks to Valerie and Barry Hon for their generous sponsorship of the organ series. Their dedication to Pacific Symphony as well as their love of the incredible William J. Gillespie Concert Organ is evidenced by their making possible three organ-specific performances. Barry formerly served as a member of the Pacific Symphony Board of Directors, and the Hons’ generosity and love for the arts can be felt throughout the community.
Frederick Swann is past president (2002-08) of the American Guild of Organists, an organization of more than 20,000 members in chapters throughout the United States and several foreign countries. He is organist emeritus of the Crystal Cathedral and of the First Congregational Church of Los Angeles, and organ artist-in-residence at St. Margaret’s Episcopal Church in Palm Desert, Calif. Swann is also university organist and artist teacher of organ at the University of Redlands.

One reviewer noted that Swann has probably presided over more ranks of pipes and stop knobs than any other organist in history. This is perhaps true given the size and prominence of the instruments with which his career has been notably associated: Riverside Church in New York City (1957-1982); The Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove (1982-1998); and First Congregational Church of Los Angeles (1998-2001).

Swann holds degrees from Northwestern University and the School of Sacred Music at Union Theological Seminary in New York. In addition to his prominent church positions, he was for 10 years chair of the organ department at the Manhattan School of Music and served on the faculties of Teacher’s College of Columbia University, and the School of Sacred Music at Union Theological Seminary in New York.

In the past few years he has presented recitals in major churches and concert halls in the United States, England, Germany, Australia, Korea and Russia. In 2004, he was selected by the Los Angeles Philharmonic to perform the inaugural solo organ recital on the spectacular new organ in Walt Disney Concert Hall. Prior to that, he played the inaugural recitals on the organs in Orchestra Hall, Chicago and Davies Hall in San Francisco.

In June of 2008, Swann performed two preview recitals on the William J. Gillespie Concert Organ in the Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall at Segerstrom Center for the Arts, and has recorded the first CD on this major new Fisk instrument (released March 2009 by Gothic Records). His most recent recording, on the Casavant organ in Memorial Chapel at the University of Redlands, was released by Gothic Records in January 2010.

Craig S. Williams is organist and choirmaster of the Cadet Chapel, United States Military Academy West Point, where he plays the world’s largest church all-pipe organ and directs the Cadet Chapel Choir. He is only the fourth organist to hold that position since the present Cadet Chapel building was erected in 1910.

At West Point, Williams oversees the music programs of five chapels, in which are given well over 400 services, concerts and various other functions annually. As director of the Cadet Chapel Choir, he has been regularly called upon to conduct the school songs in wreath laying ceremonies, performing before the president of the United States and other dignitaries. He works with two other organists and two pipe organ curators, who maintain the five pipe organs on post. Personally, Williams performs at approximately 200 of these chapel functions, including worship services, weddings, funerals, class reunion memorial services, recitals, choir concerts and VIP organ demonstrations performing for royalty, cabinet members, generals, members of Congress and many other international government and military figures.

Williams has performed on both organ and piano for over 40 years and continues to perform nationwide. His organ credits include performances at Carnegie Hall with the Orchestra of St. Luke’s, the Ocean Grove Auditorium and the Crystal Cathedral, in addition to giving numerous recitals and workshops for prominent cathedrals and churches on both coasts.

Before coming to West Point, he was the organist and music director of Calvary Baptist Church on W. 57th Street in New York and also served for many years at the ecumenical Protestant Chapel at John F. Kennedy International Airport. For four years, he was a commissioner on the New York City Presbytery, advising and participating in the music programs of their monthly meetings.

Williams has recorded a CD, released by Calcante Recordings, performing on the historic J.W. Steere organ at the Baptist Temple in Brooklyn, which is one of the best records of that organ before it was damaged in a tragic fire several years ago.

Williams is active in the American Guild of Organists, presently serving as dean of the Central Hudson Valley chapter. In the early 1990s, he served as dean of the Brooklyn Chapter.