



MARCEL DUPRÉ
100TH ANNIVERSARY
ORGAN CONCERT

by

STEPHEN THARP

Concert Organist and Recording Artist

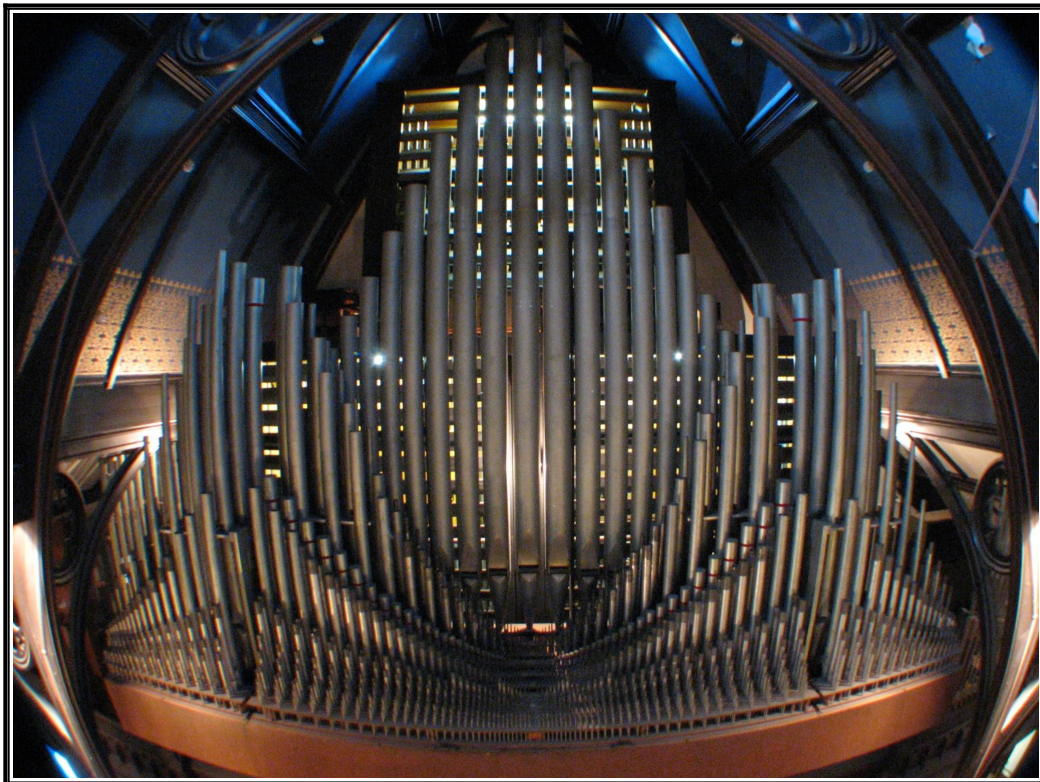
Thursday, March 7, 2024, 7:00pm

THE ORGAN

The organ at Christ's Church is, in reality, two organs, one located in the Chancel and the other in the Gallery. Both are controlled from an all-electric console near the Chapel. The Chancel organ is primarily designed for accompaniment and contained two divisions- the unenclosed Great and the Choir under expression. The Gallery organ is for congregational singing, preludes and postludes and recital playing.

The tonal design of the instrument is on neo-baroque lines, beloved of the era, but also includes sounds appropriate for a wider variety of repertoire. The organ was built in 1964 by Austin Organs of Hartford, Connecticut, and was the gift of long-time parishioners, Mr. and Mrs. John Ellis Knowles.

It replaced the 1924 Wangerin organ that Dupré played 100 years ago today, which was later moved to the parish hall balcony and heard occasionally during church events.



PROGRAM

Marcel Dupré (1886-1971)

Carillon, from "Sept Pièces," Op. 27

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Allein Gott, in der Höh' sei Ehr', BWV 662

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

Organ Sonata No. 2 in C Minor, Op. 65, No. 2

Grave-Adagio

Allegro maestoso e vivace

Fuga: Allegro moderato

Marcel Dupré

Berceuse, from "Suite Bretonne," Op. 21

Marcel Dupré

Prelude and Fugue in g minor, Op. 7, no. 3

—Intermission—

Marcel Dupré

Crucifixion, from "Symphonie Passion," Op. 23

Jeanne Demessieux

from Twelve Chorale Preludes, Op. 12

Domine Jesu

Rorate Caeli

Attende Domine

Improvisation on a submitted theme

MARCEL DUPRÉ AND THE RYE CONNECTION

Marcel Dupré: a musical legend



Marcel Dupré

Born in 1886, Dupré grew up surrounded by music: his mother was an accomplished cellist, while his father and both grandfathers were respected organists. The great organ-builder Aristide Cavallé-Coll, a family friend, had even built the instrument that graced the Duprés' home in Rouen. Recognized as a child prodigy, Dupré gave his first public performance of a Bach prelude and fugue at the age of 8 and began his first job as a church organist at 12.

After studying at the Conservatoire de Paris under Louis Vierne and Charles-Marie Widor, Dupré's career as a composer, performer and teacher quickly took off. His tours of Europe, North America and Australia in the 1920s brought international fame, and his meticulous technique and remarkable creativity earned him universal admiration. He could play all of Bach's organ works from memory and improvise entire organ symphonies: his improvisation at the Wanamaker store in Philadelphia in 1921 was later immortalized as the *Symphonie-Passion* (1924). Some of his works, such as the *Three Preludes and Fugues* (1912), were considered so challenging that, for many years, only Dupré himself dared perform them in public. Yet nowadays many of his compositions, including *Variations sur un vieux Noël* (1922), *Suite Bretonne* (1923), *Le Chemin de la Croix* (1931), *Évocation* (1941) and *Le Tombeau de Titelouze* (1942), continue to be enjoyed as part of the concert repertoire.

Turning to teaching in the 1920s, Dupré spent the next three decades training a new generation of organists at the Conservatoire de Paris and the American Conservatory in Fontainebleau, including Jean Langlais, Olivier Messiaen, Jehan and Marie-Claire Alain, Jeanne Demessieux and Pierre Cochereau. In 1934 he was chosen to succeed Widor as titular organist of St. Sulpice in Paris, retaining the position until his death on Pentecost in 1971, shortly after playing two services.

The 1924 concert

One of Dupré's greatest admirers in this country was Clarence Watters (1902–1986), who, while organist and choirmaster of Christ's Church, Rye, arranged for the Frenchman to perform here in 1924.

Watters had attended Dupré's début concert at the Wanamaker store in New York in 1921, and shortly afterwards had met and performed for him at a private gathering of organists in Brooklyn. Sitting next to Dupré on the organ bench, he played the first movement of Widor's *Organ Symphony No. 6* and said he was considering studying in France, possibly with Joseph Bonnet. Dupré eagerly endorsed the idea, but insisted he study with him.

Before he could pursue his dream, however, Watters came to Rye in 1922 and quickly set about improving the church's musical standards after the previous organist was dismissed for unsatisfactory music-making. The organ, built by Hutchings of Boston and given by the Quintard family in the 1890s, was in urgent need of repair. Faced with mounting costs, Watters worked instead with Wangerin Co. of Milwaukee to build a new instrument to his own specifications that reflected the ideals of French organ-building. For the dedicatory concert on March 7, 1924, he invited none other than the great French virtuoso Dupré, who was then on another US tour.

During the first half of the concert, Dupré performed Bach's *Tocatta, Adagio and Fugue in C major* (BWV 564), Clérambault's *Dialogue sur les grands jeux*, Franck's *Final in B flat*, Schumann's *Canon in B minor* and one of his own compositions, the "Berceuse" from his *Suite Bretonne*. After the intermission, in true Dupré style, he improvised a full organ symphony (Allegro, Andante, Scherzo and Finale) on themes submitted by six Westchester County musicians. As the *Rye Chronicle* noted, it was a "fitting initiation for the wonderfully fine organ ... which is conceded to be one of the finest in this section of the country". Dupré publicly congratulated Wangerin in a letter to *The Diapason*, writing that the "voicing is lovely and the action is perfect".

Dupré and Watters: a long postlude

In 1926 Watters finally took up Dupré's offer of lessons, studying with him for six months at Meudon, near Paris. Outside the lessons, he practiced repertoire and technique for about eight hours a day, and improvisation for two or three. He was introduced to Widor and Vierne and heard more than 50 services at Nôtre Dame, where Vierne was the organist. He also gave a private recital on the Dupré family organ in Rouen, and earned some money deputizing at the American Church in Paris.

Watters sailed home over the New Year, having heard Widor play at St. Sulpice on Christmas Eve, and resumed his duties at Christ's Church on February 1, 1927. The following year he moved to Pittsburgh and then to West Hartford, Connecticut, but these were short-lived positions lacking the support of the clergy and vestry that he had enjoyed in Rye. Having toyed with the idea of returning to France, he went on to head the music department at Trinity College, Hartford, from 1932 to 1967, where he was recognized as a leading authority on French organ music and a devoted champion of Dupré in particular, arranging several visits by Dupré for workshops and recitals at the college. He was often the first organist in America to perform or record Dupré's works – *Le Chemin de la Croix*, for example, had its first stateside performance at Trinity College chapel in 1933.

The two men remained in touch until Dupré's death, discussing their latest endeavors and exchanging personal news. Dupré was deeply touched by Watters's decision to write a biography of him in the 1960s and supplied the foreword, but the project was never completed. Watters rarely missed an opportunity to promote Dupré's music. In New York he gave concerts at St. Thomas, Fifth Avenue, and St. Mary the Virgin to mark Dupré's 80th birthday in 1966, as well as a memorial concert five years later at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. In 1973 he performed his late friend's works to more than 3,000 people at Nôtre Dame Cathedral in Paris. Dupré's granddaughter, who was there, remarked that, if she closed her eyes, it sounded as though her grandfather himself were playing.

Watters made it his life's work to promote Dupré's musical achievements. Madame Dupré even acknowledged him to be her husband's "most faithful interpreter ... a magnificent performer of his works". Today we celebrate the 100th anniversary of Dupré's visit to Rye in 1924 – the first concert by Dupré that Watters organized during their 50 years of friendship and collaboration.



Clarence Watters

STEPHEN THARP, *Concert Organist and Recording Artist*

“Stephen Tharp’s program was transcendently superior.”

-*The Diapason*

“Stephen Tharp had the riskiest billing, closing out the (2014 Boston AGO National) Convention in the only recital before the entire gathering. Tharp responded with the performance of a lifetime ... the whole thing so dazzlingly executed as to emboss itself upon the memory.”

-*Choir & Organ*

Stephen Tharp is a Grammy-nominated organist based in New York City. Having played more than 1600 concerts across 63 tours worldwide, Stephen Tharp has built one of the most well-respected international careers in the world. He is listed in *Who’s Who in America* and *Who’s Who in the World*, and is the recipient of the 2011 International Performer of the Year Award by the American Guild of Organists, considered by many to be the highest honor given to organists by a professional musicians’ guild in the United States. In 2015 he was given the Paul Creston Award which recognizes artistic excellence in church music and the performing arts.



His list of performances since 1987 includes such distinguished venues as The Royal Albert Hall, London; St. Bavo, Haarlem; the Tonhalle, Zürich and Victoria Hall, Geneva; the Duomo, Milano, Italy; the Philharmonic Halls in Berlin and Luxembourg; the cathedrals in Berlin, Frankfurt, Köln, Mainz, München, Münster, Passau and Speyer; the Elbphilharmonie, Hamburg; the Gewandhaus, Leipzig; the Frauenkirche, Dresden, Germany; Monaco Cathedral; Dvorak Hall, Prague; the Hallgrímskirkja, Reykjavik, Iceland; The Hong Kong Cultural Centre; the Opera House, Sydney, Australia; The Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center, Dallas; Walt Disney Concert Hall, Los Angeles; The Kimmel Center, Philadelphia; The Riverside Church, New York City; Rice University, Houston; and the Symphony Center, Chicago.

He has given master classes at Yale University; the Eastman School of Music; Rice University, Houston; Westminster Choir College; the Cleveland Institute of Music, Bethel University (St. Paul, MN); the Hochschulen für Musik in Trossingen and Bochum (Germany); and for chapters of the American Guild of Organists. He has also adjudicated for competitions at the Juilliard School and Northwestern University and served as a member of the jury for the 2018 Chartres International Organ Competition.

Stephen Tharp remains an important champion of new organ music and continues to commission and premiere numerous compositions for the instrument. The first such piece was Jean Guillou’s symphonic poem *Instants*, Op. 57, which Tharp premiered at King’s College, Cambridge, England in February 1998. Works dedicated to him include George Baker’s *Diptyque* (2022), *Prière Grégorienne* (2018), *Danse Diabolique* (2016) and *Variations on “Rouen”* (2010); Henry Martin’s *Prelude and Fugue in c# minor* (2011); David Briggs’ *Toccata Labyrinth* (2006); Samuel Adler’s *Sonata* (2005); Eugenio Fagiani’s *Psalm 100* (2009); Thierry Escaich’s *Trois Poèmes* (2002); Philip Moore’s *Sinfonietta* (2001); Anthony Newman’s *Tombeau d’Igor Stravinsky* (2000), *Toccata and Fuga Sinfonica on BACH* (1999) and the *Second Symphony* (1992); Martha Sullivan’s *Slingshot Shivaree for Organ and Percussion* (1999); and Morgan Simmons *Exercitatio Fantastica* (1997). Himself a composer, Tharp was commissioned by Cologne Cathedral, Germany to compose

for Easter Sunday, 2006 his *Easter Fanfares* for the inauguration of the organ's new en chamade Tuba stops, as well *Disney's Trumpets*, composed in February 2011 for the organ at the Walt Disney Concert Hall, Los Angeles, where it was premiered by the composer the following month.

In April 2008, Stephen Tharp was named the Official Organist for the NY visit of Pope Benedict XVI, playing for three major events attended by more than 60,000 people that were broadcast live worldwide. Mr. Tharp's playing has also been heard on both English and Irish national television, on Radio Prague, orgelnieuws.nl in the Netherlands, and in the U. S. on American Public Media's *Pipedreams*. In 2005, 2011 and 2015, *Pipedreams* broadcast entire programs dedicated exclusively to his career.

He is also an active chamber musician nationwide, having performed on organ, piano and harpsichord with artists such as Thomas Hampson, Itzhak Perlman, Jennifer Larmore, Rachel Barton Pine, the American Boychoir (James Litton, conductor), the St. Thomas Choir (John Scott, conductor), and at Carnegie Hall, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Alice Tully Hall and Avery Fisher Hall at Lincoln Center. His 16 solo organ recordings can be found on the labels Acis Productions, JAV Recordings, Aeolus, Naxos, Organum and Ethereal, and are available from the Organ Historical Society (www.ohscatalog.org), JAV Recordings (<https://pipe-organ-recordings.com/>) and Amazon (www.amazon.com).

His commercial release *The Complete Organ Works of Jeanne Demessieux* on Aeolus Recordings, received the 2009 *Preis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik*, Germany's premier critic's prize for recordings, as well as the French *5 Diapason* award. The release was celebrated in October 2010 with Mr. Tharp's performance of the complete Demessieux works live over three concerts at New York's Cathedral of St. John the Divine. *Stephen Tharp plays St. Bavo, Haarlem, The Netherlands* on the JAV label was called "the most beautiful CD of 2009" by *Resmusica* in France.

Stephen Tharp earned his BA degree, magna cum laude, from Illinois College, Jacksonville, IL and his MM from Northwestern University, Chicago, where he studied with Rudolf Zuiderveld and Wolfgang Rübsam, respectively. He has also worked privately with Jean Guillou in Paris. He is currently the Artist-in-Residence at St. James' Madison Avenue (Episcopal) in New York City.

For more information and booking, see [.www.stephentharp.com](http://www.stephentharp.com).





To learn more about the Music Program
at Christ's Church, please visit

www.ccrye.org/music

www.stephentharp.com

We would like to thank the following people for their help in researching the background to this concert: the Watters family, especially Clarence Watters's daughters Marjorie Pray and Nancy Pinckney; the organist and academic Dr. Mickey Terry, who was Watters's final pupil; Jane Meditz of the Irving S. Gilmore Music Library, Yale University, where the Watters papers are now held; and Christopher Houlihan, Organist and Director of Chapel Music at Trinity College, Hartford.

Christ's Church
Rye, NY
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