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Organ Music by James Woodman

Erik Simmons, organist

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- 1 **Harmony and Counterpoint in C (Lydian)** (2013) [04:08]
- 2 **Little Partita for Advent (“Veni, veni, Emmanuel”)** (1991) [06:09]
Meditative — Broadly flowing — Steadily — Freely, surging
- 3 **Little Partita for Christmas (“Est ist ein Ros”)** (1993) [05:10]
Mildly — Gracefully and lightly — Very tenderly — Jubilant
- 4 **Little Partita for Epiphany (“Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern”)** (1992) [05:22]
Moderately — Lightly, dancing — Singing — Lively, sparkling
- 5 **Harmony and Counterpoint in E (Phrygian)** (2013) [04:48]
- 6 **Little Partita for Lent (“Aus der Tiefe rufe ich”)** (1993) [05:12]
Quiet, somber — Moderate chorale tempo — Arioso — Very broad
- 7 **Little Partita for Easter (“Salzburg”)** (1994) [05:43]
Gently and freely — Moderate chorale tempo — Adagio — Vivace
- 8 **Little Partita for Pentecost (“Veni Creator Spiritus”)** (1994) [05:06]
Moderate chant tempo — Flowing gently —
Perfectly tranquil; suspended — Fleet and sweeping
- 9 **Harmony and Counterpoint in G (Mixolydian)** (2013) [05:06]
Te es Petrus (1996, rev. 2004) [13:16]
- 10 Prelude and Fugue (*Tu es Petrus*) [03:59]
- 11 Chaconne [03:03]
- 12 Elegy [03:13]
- 13 Brilliant, but awkward [03:01]

Total duration [59:51]

The Music of James Woodman: An Appreciation

by Carson Cooman

James Woodman writes music that speaks with a personal voice, technical assurance, and a conviction that truth and beauty can be heard through the most direct expression possible. There is never a wasted note in a Woodman piece—every moment is in service of a musical idea, clearly presented.

Born in Portland, Maine in 1957, educated at Philips Exeter Academy, Princeton University, and New England Conservatory, and a resident of Cambridge, Massachusetts since 1979, Woodman is a lifelong New Englander. He has said that his identity as an American composer is important to him, and that he intends his music to speak with an American voice. The clean lines and clear textures of his style thus owe as much to New England as they do to Renaissance and Baroque Europe.

Yankee practicality informs not only Woodman’s compositional style, but also his choice of genres. Although he has written numerous secular and concert works, his output is devoted entirely to combinations and forces that can be found in the church: the organ and the voice (solo and choral). In addition to concert works, practical music for the church—hymns, canticles, responses, anthems—can be found in abundance: commissions from numerous religious organizations or written in response to his years as Composer-in-Residence at the Episcopal Cathedral Church of St. Paul in Boston.

To do what he does in piece after piece—writing music that is so fresh and yet so direct—is both difficult and impressive. There are treasures in his catalog that display a wide range of expressive modes: the ecstatic *The Midwife’s Tale* (1996)—a work for chorus and string quintet setting a Christmas vision from the Arundel manuscript, the three useful chamber sonatas for a solo instrument (English horn, horn, and trumpet) with organ, the deliciously amusing *Four Mirthless Songs* for soprano and organ, the extended mythological cantata *Narcissus*. The list is long with works that are as much a pleasure to play and sing as they are to hear.

This disc is devoted to a small sampling of pieces drawn from the largest section of Woodman’s compositional output: the music for solo organ. The works here include his popular *Six Little Partitas* alongside three selections from one of his most recent organ works: *Eight Little Harmonies and Counterpoints*. The disc concludes with his magnificent suite *Tu es Petrus*, a deeply expressive piece with the classic Woodman blend of past and contemporary.

Though Woodman has composed organ works for large instruments (for example, the weighty *Sinfonia* (1989), written for the enormous instrument of Woolsey Hall at Yale University), a number of his organ works have been very explicitly designed for the resources of a small organ. From 1982 until 1992 (and then taking up the post again in 2007), Woodman served as Monastery Organist for the Society of St. John the Evangelist in Cambridge, Massachusetts (an Episcopal religious order). The small, one manual instrument there (a 1975 instrument of the Philip A. Baudry Co.) was a very specific inspiration for the composition of the *Six Little Partitas* (1991–94).

Each partita is based on a familiar hymn for that particular season. The composer writes: “In each *Partita*, variations I, II, and III together may be regarded as a single prelude, and variation IV as a postlude. The *Partitas* were composed with the intention of adding to the repertoire for single-manual or other small instruments. Registration should remain simple and clear, even when more extended resources are available.”

In keeping with Woodman’s Boston/Cambridge base, the partitas were all premiered by area friends and colleagues of the composer in various venues:

- Advent: Jennifer Lester at Church of St. Ignatius, Rome Italy
- Christmas: Leo Abbott at Cathedral of the Holy Cross, Boston
- Epiphany: the composer at The Cathedral Church of St. Paul, Boston
- Lent: Victoria Wagner at Church of the Advent, Boston
- Easter: William Porter at Church of St. John the Evangelist, Boston
- Pentecost: Nancy Granert at The Memorial Church, Harvard University, Cambridge

Eight Harmonies and Counterpoints (2013) was composed in response to a commission from the American Guild of Organists for its 2014 Biennial National Convention (in Boston). The composer wrote a work which was intended as a contemporary answer to the *Eight Little Preludes and Fugues* (BWV 553–560). Modern scholarship has shown us that while those works were long attributed to Bach, they were almost certainly not composed by him. Woodman writes:

“While I have thoroughly enjoyed the challenge, it has been a daunting one, and one which I could never have undertaken if I believed the first ‘Eight Little’ were actually composed by J. S. Bach himself. However, I have come to accept the conclusion of a number of Bach scholars: whoever wrote BWV 553–560, it was certainly not a young J. S. Bach. In discussing the authorship of the collection, Peter Williams writes: ‘Rather the combination of stylistic elements...suggests a

widely read but only mildly talented composer of the 1730–50 period, even perhaps later.’ Now *that* would be someone with whom I might feel it reasonable to go head-to-head.”

The eight pieces in Woodman’s collection follow the basic model of the original set: the first part of each concerned with harmonic ideas and the second with contrapuntal textures. Across his set, Woodman has chosen a wide variety of approaches in both parts: alluding to historical styles and models while employing his contemporary voice.

Three of the eight are presented on this recording. The first, in C (Lydian), begins with a bright movement in Baroque concerto style. The following counterpoint is an instrumental canzona in the late-Renaissance/early-Baroque cast. The second, in E (Phrygian), begins with an elevation toccata (along the lines of Frescobaldi). The counterpoint is a south German-baroque style chorale fughetta based on the beloved Third Mode Melody of Thomas Tallis. The third, in G (Mixolydian), begins with an airy harmony inspired by gentle minimalist pieces. The counterpoint is a fugal gigue in two halves.

The composer provides the following commentary on the suite *Tu es Petrus*:

“This suite for organ was commissioned by Lee Riccardi in memory of Peter J. Daley III (1961–1995). The score was completed in 1996, and revised (and expanded) in 2004.

While unnecessary for enjoyment of the music itself, it is worthwhile to know that three devices have been employed to honor affectionately the memory of the dedicatee:

- 1) A motive created by a musical encoding of the name ‘Peter’ (the pitches of scale degrees I-IV-V-IV-III). This motive appears twice in the *Prelude*: first in the soprano notes of the accompanimental chords, and then in the form of a brief chorale. In the *Chaconne* it serves as an ostinato which is both melodically and rhythmically palindromic (PETERETEP). And finally in *Brilliant, but awkward*, it is heard throughout as the ‘head’ of the fugue subject.
- 2) The Offertory (Mode 1) for the Feast of St. Peter, *Tu es Petrus*. A fragment of this chant serves as the fugue subject in the *Prelude and Fugue*.
- 3) A setting—not intended to be sung, but rather as a meditation for the performer—of the poem ‘The Work of Art Is Like an Ax’, written by Lee Riccardi upon the occasion of Peter’s death.”



James Woodman was born in Portland, Maine, in 1957, and educated at Phillips Exeter Academy, Princeton University, and New England Conservatory. He was appointed the first Composer-in-Residence at the Cathedral Church of St. Paul, Boston, and currently serves as Monastery Organist for the Society of St. John the Evangelist. Frequently sought as a composer of organ and choral works, his commissions have included works for both National and Regional Conventions of the American Guild of Organists, the International Horn Society, the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts, the Boston Archdiocesan Choir School, the Boston Cecilia, Harvard University's Memorial Church, and concert organists and conductors Mark Brombaugh, Heinrich

Christensen, Carson Cooman, John Dunn, Mark Engelhardt, Eileen Hunt, Jennifer Lester, Christa Rakich, Peter Sykes, and Donald Teeters. His compositions are performed frequently in the USA and Europe, and have been heard on national radio broadcasts of "Pipedreams" (American Public Media).

Erik Simmons started playing the organ at age 10 when he was a chorister at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Glendale, California. His primary organ teacher was Richard Slater. Erik has furthered his studies by working with Lanny Collins, Barbara Baird, and Lee Garrett, and through master classes with various clinicians, including Harald Vogel. Erik works at Intel Corporation, where he is involved in new product development and coaches teams in systems and engineering, Agile & Lean product development, and related areas. Erik holds a BA in applied mathematics and MS in mathematical modeling from Humboldt State University. As an organist, he has recorded several CDs of music, including "Magnifique: Selections for a French Organ," "Nous Dites Marie: A French Romantic Christmas," "Reflection and Praise," "Leo Belgicus", "Silesian Splendor", and four CDs of the music of American composer Carson Cooman.



Main Organ of Laurenskerk, Rotterdam, Netherlands

Marcussen & Son, 1973

Model by Jiří Žůrek (Institute for Classical Studies, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Prague), 2012

The gothic building Grote of Sint-Laurenskerk was completed in 1525. During a German bombardment in May 1940, the entire interior was lost to fire. Restoration of the church was undertaken following the war in the years 1947–68. The first church building had a large Goltfuss organ from 1644, which was replaced with another instrument in 1790 (enlarged by Bätz in 1845). The destruction of this instrument was total, and so a new main organ was supplied by the Danish firm Marcussen & Son in 1973. (Two other smaller Marcussen instruments can be found in the church as well.) It is a large neo-baroque instrument that is completely mechanical in all respects. It is the largest entirely mechanical action instrument in Europe. The organ consists of six divisions and contains 85 speaking stops. One unusual feature of the instrument's design are its multi-rank principal stops. Most all of the principals and octaves (16', 8', 4') of all divisions are comprised of more than one unison rank.

<u>Rugwerk (Man. I)</u>	<u>Hoofdwerk (Man. II)</u>	Viola di Gamba	Octaaf 2'	<u>Pedaal</u>
Quintadeen 16'	Prestant 16'	(beating) 8'	Gedekte fluit 2'	Prestant 32'
Prestant 8'	Octaaf 8'	Octaaf 4'	Octaaf 1'	Octaaf 16'
Holpijp 8'	Open fluit 8'	Open fluit 4'	Tertiaan 2 st.	Open Subbas 16'
Quintadeen 8'	Quint 5 ½'	Terts 3 ½'	Scherp 4–5 st.	Gedekte Quint 10 ⅔'
Octaaf 4'	Octaaf 4'	Roerquint 2 ⅔'	Regaal 16'	Octaaf 8'
Roerfluit 4'	Spitsfluit 4'	Nachthoorn 2'	Kromhoorn 8'	Gemshoorn 8'
Quint 2 ⅔'	Octaaf 2'	Terts 1 3/5'	Regaal 8'	Roerquint 5 ½'
Octaaf 2'	Ruispijp 3–4 st.	Mixtuur 5–7 st.	Tremulant	Octaaf 4'
Woudfluit 2'	Mixtuur 8–10 st.	Cimbel 3 st.		Koppelfluit 4'
Sifflet 1 ½'	Scherp 6–8 st.	Bombarde 16'	<u>Chamadewerk (III)</u>	Nachthoorn 2'
Sesquialter 2–4 st.	Trompet 16'	Trompette 8'	Trompeta magna 16'	Dwarsfluit 1'
Mixtuur 6–8 st.	Trompet 8'	Voix humaine 8'	(desc.)	Ruispijp 5 st.
Scherp 4–6 st.	Cornet 5 st.	Clairon 4'	Trompeta brillante 8'	Cornet 3 st.
Dulciaan 16'		Tremulant	(bas/desc.)	Mixtuur 10 st.
Trompet 8'	<u>Bovenwerk (Man. III)</u>		Trompeta de batalla 8'	Bazuin 32'
Kromhoorn 8'	Gedekt 16'	<u>Borstwerk (Man. IV)</u>	(bas/desc.)	Bazuin 16'
Tremulant	Prestant 8'	Gedekt 8'	Clarin fuerte 4'	Fagot 16'
	Baarpijp 8'	Prestant 4'	(bas/desc.)	Trompet 8'
	Roerfluit 8'	Blokfluit 4'	Clarin 2' (bas)	Trompet 4'
	Viola di Gamba 8'	Nasard 2 ⅔'	Orlos 8' (bas/desc.)	Zink 2'

Couplers: I–II; III–II; IV–II; I–Ped; II–Ped; III–Ped.