

**Kola Owolabi**  
**Organ Recital**  
**First Presbyterian Church, Ypsilanti, MI**  
**Sunday March 10, 2019**

Sonata No. 3 in A major, Opus 65 (1845) I. Con moto maestoso	Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)
Two Chorale Preludes: Prelude on the Passion Chorale (2004)	Alan Reesor (b. 1936)
Picardy, from Six Short Preludes on English Hymn Tunes, Opus 125 (1990)	John Joubert (1927-2019)
Rhapsody, Opus 17, No. 1 (1915)	Herbert Howells (1892-1983)
Improvisation on a Lenten Hymn Tune	Kola Owolabi

**Intermission**

Suite, Opus 5 (1934) Prélude Sicilienne Toccata	Maurice Duruflé (1902-1986)
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## PROGRAM NOTES

**Felix Mendelssohn** (1809-1847) had an active career as an orchestral conductor, pianist, violinist and composer of chamber and orchestral music. In his capacity as Music Director for the *Gewandhaus* in Leipzig, Germany, he came into contact and performed with leading virtuosi and composers from all over Europe, including Robert Schumann, Franz Liszt and Frédéric Chopin. Mendelssohn travelled extensively, taking the opportunity to improvise on numerous organs in Germany, France and England. The Six Organ Sonatas resulted from a commission from the English publisher, Coventry & Hollier in 1844. Mendelssohn was asked to write a set of three voluntaries, pieces normally performed as preludes and postludes to the service. The project grew in scope as Mendelssohn wrote many short pieces and revised earlier ones, ultimately organizing them into the six sonatas. Mendelssohn's organ music became popular in England and contributed greatly to the development of the English organ which until the 1860s rarely had a pedalboard. The first movement of Sonata No. 3 uses a heroic march to frame the central section, a contrapuntal setting of the chorale "Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir" (Out of the Depths I Cry to You). The chorale tune is heard clearly in the bass.

Canadian composer **Alan Reesor** (b. 1936) worked as Organist and Choirmaster at St. Peter's Cathedral in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island from 1971-2015. He has also served as Chair of the Music Department at the University of Prince Edward Island. His *Prelude on the Passion Chorale* was commissioned by the Royal College of Canadian Organists as part of *Te Deum Laudamus*, a collection of 20 pieces by Canadian composers, published in 2004, in memory of Gerald Bales, a prominent church musician who held positions in Toronto, Ottawa and Minneapolis.

**John Joubert** (1927-2019) was born in Cape Town, South Africa, and received his early musical training there, before emigrating to England at age 19, to study at the Royal College of Music in London and Durham University. He taught at Birmingham University for over 20 years before retiring in 1986, to devote himself fully to composition. His prolific output includes 8 operas, three symphonies, oratorios, chamber music and solo organ music. Joubert wrote *Six Short Preludes on English Hymn Tunes*, Opus 125, for the inauguration of a new 5-stop chamber organ built by Kenneth Tickell and Company, for Peterborough Cathedral in England. As the instrument had no pedalboard, all six of these pieces are written for manuals only. The pieces were premiered by Nicholas Danby on July 4, 1990. The "Prelude on Picardy" is a short scherzo which makes extensive use of parallel fourths and tritones.

**Herbert Howells** (1892-1983) is chiefly known for his organ music, and the large corpus of repertoire he wrote for the Anglican church, which includes 20 settings of canticles (*Magnificat & Nunc dimittis*) for the service of Evensong. Yet, he was also a prolific composer of chamber music and orchestral music, with some noteworthy pieces such as the *Piano Quartet in A minor* and the *Concerto for Strings*. Howells' career was centered at the Royal College of Music in London where he was a professor for 59 years. He also directed the school choir and orchestra at St. Paul's Girls School in London. He travelled across England as an adjudicator for the Associated Board of the Royal School of Music, and in this capacity, he even made trips to Canada and South Africa. Howells' *Three Rhapsodies*, Opus 17 were written between 1915 and 1918. The Third Rhapsody was written in a single night, during an air raid in which German fighters bombed the city of York. One can hear in the Second and Third Rhapsodies the turbulent mood that must have pervaded Howells' mind during the final period of World War I. The First Rhapsody is much gentler and seems to evoke the vast openness of the English countryside, where Howells frequently came for respite, throughout his life. On one such trip during Howells' adolescent

years, his traveling companion, the poet and composer Ivor Gurney remarked, “unless [the countryside] influences you for the whole of your life in tune-making, it is failing in one of its chief essentials.”

**Maurice Duruflé** (1902-1986) was one of the foremost French organists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, serving as organist at St. Étienne du Mont in Paris and professor of harmony at the Paris Conservatoire. Together with his wife, Marie-Madeleine Duruflé, who was also a virtuoso organist, they toured extensively, performing joint recitals throughout Europe, North Africa, the Soviet Union, Canada and the United States. Although Duruflé received extensive musical training at the Paris Conservatoire, his early musical formation took place at the choir school of Rouen Cathedral, where as a choirboy, he sang an extensive repertoire of plainchant at Sunday high mass and vespers. His unique compositional style combines the suppleness and modal inflections of plainchant with the harmonic innovations and orchestral color of Debussy, Ravel, and Duruflé’s teacher, Paul Dukas. The Suite Opus 5 was written in 1932. Although Duruflé played the British premiere of the complete work in London in 1938, it is interesting that on his many American concert tours, he only performed the Prélude, and did not perform either the Sicilienne or the Toccata. He repeatedly expressed disdain for the Toccata, which nevertheless has become his most popular work.