

Anne Laver
Program for Organ Historical Society 2016 Convention, Philadelphia
June 28, 2016
Highway Tabernacle Church

Marche Pontificale from Sonata No. 1 in D Minor (“Pontificale”) Jacques-Nicolas Lemmens
(1823-1881)

“Träumerei” from Kinderszenen (Scenes from Childhood), op. 15 Robert Schumann
(1810-1856)
arr. Clarence Eddy

Allegretto from Sonata IV, op. 65 Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy
(1809-1847)

The Holy Night (Noël) Dudley Buck
(1839-1909)

“There were shepherds abiding in the field,
Keeping watch over their flocks by night.”

HYMN: Glorious Things of Thee are Spoken (Hymnal 1982, #522)

Concert Variations on the Austrian National Hymn, op. 16 Carl Attrup
(1848-1892)

Program Notes

One of the seminal events in late nineteenth-century American organ culture was the series of 62 organ concerts at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Designed to commemorate the 400th year anniversary of Christopher Columbus’ arrival in the New World, the “Fair,” as it was known in its day, aimed to demonstrate American progress and innovation in all areas, including music. Unfortunately, the extensive orchestral and choral series collapsed when Fair music director Theodore Thomas resigned mid-way through the event due to disappointing revenue and internal disputes. However, the organ concerts filled the void in programming and were deemed successful by performers and the music critics who followed them.

I decided to use the Chicago Fair as a way to frame today’s program because of the close proximity of its date to the installation of the Roosevelt Opus 148 in Fifth Baptist Church Philadelphia, now Highway Tabernacle (the installation preceded the Fair by nine years), and the connection the Fair’s Festival Hall instrument and the Roosevelt Organ Company. Prior to the Fair, Roosevelt had installed an important four-manual organ in Chicago Auditorium (Opus 400, 1892), and had established a special relationship with Clarence Eddy, the nation’s preeminent organ virtuoso and the person responsible for overseeing the Fair organ and concert series. Less than a year before the Fair opened, Farrand & Votey Organ Company of Detroit acquired all the exclusive patents, equipment, and craftsmen from the Roosevelt firm when Frank Roosevelt retired. The four-manual, 63-stop Farrand & Votey organ made use of all Roosevelt’s latest playing aids, including electric action, pneumatic couplers, adjustable combination pistons, a crescendo pedal, and light key action. It was given an award by the World’s Fair jury, “For remarkable quality of tone, due

to proper voicing, scaling, material of pipes, and even wind supply through patent wind chest. For rapidity and reliability of touch from electric pneumatic action. For general finish, compactness and simplicity of construction.”

Clarence Eddy played the bulk of the concerts (21) and invited many of the leading American organists to join him on the series. This was also the occasion for Alexandre Guilmant’s American debut. He performed four concerts on the series before beginning a concert tour that led him through the Midwest and Northeast. The series codified a new model for organ concerts in this country. In the decades prior to the Fair, organ concerts generally consisted of a mix of solo organ repertoire and vocal or instrumental solos. Programs at the Fair featured solo organ repertoire exclusively. After the Fair, Clarence Eddy promulgated this model in his concert programming pamphlets and multiple volume edition, *The Church and Concert Organist: A Collection of Pieces with Registration, Fingering and Pedal Marking; Adapted for Church and Concert Use*, published by Schubert and Company.

At the conclusion of the fair, editors Everett Truette of Boston and W. S. B. Matthews of Chicago extolled the series as a major event of high American culture. However, while the high-minded aesthetes were pleased with edifying nature of the some of the repertoire, an analysis of the pieces performed shows that performers tended to opt for a blend of “popular” and “artistic” repertoire in their programs. On the whole, programs included the free works of Bach, sonatas by Mendelssohn, Rheinberger, and Merkel alongside marches, pastorales, character pieces, and Christmas music. About a quarter of the total number of pieces played were transcriptions. Programs featured works by German composers most often, followed by the French at a close second, and the Americans at a distant third. Aside from Bach, the vast majority of pieces had been composed after 1840.

This morning’s program provides a sampling of some of the pieces performed at the Chicago Fair. The **March Pontificale** from Jacques-Nicolas Lemmens third organ symphony was one of 64 marches performed over the course of the series. This particular Lemmens march was performed four times. The singable themes, homophonic harmonization, clearly-defined rhythms, and repetitive rondo form characterize many of the popular marches of the period. Works like this by Lemmens, Guilmant, Dubois, de la Tombelle, and Salome were favorites among the mixed audiences at the Fair.

Everett Truette was careful to point out that 41 sonatas or sonata movements were performed at the Fair, thus pointing to representation of edifying “high art” pieces. Each of Mendelssohn’s six sonatas appeared on Fair programs. Today you will hear the lovely flowing **Allegretto from the Sonata IV in B-flat**. Although Truette downplayed this fact, performers readily included transcriptions of orchestral and piano works alongside the organ sonatas. Schumann’s “**Träumeri**,” originally belonging to the opus 15 *Kinderszenen* piano cycle was a favorite at the Fair. Theodore Thomas also liked to include this as a palette cleanser on his popular orchestral programs.

Even though the Fair took place in the spring and summer months, organists were happy to program Christmas music, possibly because the familiar carol melodies were a way to make programs more accessible. Clarence Eddy performed Dudley Buck’s “**The Holy Night (Noël)**,” a tone poem outlining the events on the night of Christ’s birth as experienced by the shepherds. The piece begins with a short, mysterious prologue before focusing in on the dozing shepherds with their flocks (to the tune of “Silent Night”). The shepherd’s lullaby is disrupted by the angel Gabriel’s entrance, represented by diminished chords on the Swell. The solo reed serves as the angel’s message to the shepherds (“Fear not!”), followed by the heavenly host singing together in full organ and thick chords. After the angels leave, the shepherds are left with their quiet Silent Night lullaby before deciding to march to Bethlehem to see the baby boy (the raucous “Adeste Fidelis”). Buck’s music was a favorite

among Fair organists. His pieces were performed 23 times, which was not surprising, given that a number of the performers either studied with him or one of his students.

Variation sets were another favorite at the Fair, possibly because they offered an opportunity to demonstrate the organ's tonal capacity and because they often used familiar tunes. A good example of the late nineteenth-century variation set is Norwegian Carl Attrup's **Concert Variations on the Austrian National Hymn**, which was performed by Clarence Eddy at the Fair. The work opens with a short fantasy, followed by a presentation of the theme and five variations. Eddy was known for his formidable pedal technique and this piece would have allowed him a chance to demonstrate it. At this point in time, the Hadyn's 1797 melody would have been familiar to audiences as the Austrian National Hymn ("Gott erhalte Franz der Kaiser"), as well as the melody for various nineteenth century hymn texts. The hymn "Glorious things of thee are spoken," first appeared as a text and tune paring in 1889. Germany's Hoffmann von Fallersleben also adopted the melody in the 1841 for his text, "Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles," which would later become the country's its National anthem in 1922.

With the exception of the Mendelssohn, all of the music performed today exists in editions prepared by Clarence Eddy. Therefore, I have attempted to follow Eddy's registration and performance practice indications as closely as possible to show how these pieces might have been performed at the end of the nineteenth century.

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