

## **Birk & Hoke Duo**

**Eric Birk and Bernadette Hoke, organists**

**Sunday April 19, 2026 at 4:00 p.m.**

**at Westmont Presbyterian Church, Johnstown, Penn.**

### **Concerto in C Major (BWV 595)**

**Prince Johann Ernst of Saxe-Weimar (1696-1715)**

**transcribed by J.S. Bach (1685-1750)**

**arr. Maurizio Machella (b. 1960)**

While in service to Johann Ernst III, Duke of Saxe-Weimar, as court organist in Weimar, Bach became acquainted with the concertos composed by the duke's son, Prince Johann Ernst. The prince studied composition with Bach's cousin, Johann Gottfried Walther, who, like Bach, also transcribe concertos for keyboard. The original score for this C major concerto for orchestra is lost, but all three movements are preserved in the transcription for harpsichord, numbered BWV 984. Today's performance of the first movement uses the arrangement for two players by the Italian musician and organist, Maurizio Machella.

### **Fantasy in C minor, op. 35**

**Adolph Friederich Hesse (1809-1863)**

Adagio – Andante grazioso – Allegretto

Adolf Hesse was born and died in Breslau, Germany (now Wroclaw, Poland) where he was the principal organist of the Bernhardinerkirche. One of his most well-known students was Jacques-Nicolas Lemmens, who taught the organists and composers Alexandre Guilmant and Charles-Marie Widor. One of his teachers, Christian Heinrich Rinck, was a student of Johann Christian Kittel, who was a pupil of J. S. Bach.

### **Denbora (para dos organistas)**

**Marie-Bernadette Dufourcet (b. 1956)**

Denbora, which means "time" in Basque, is a rhythmic fantasy for two organists that plays with time division. The piece is inspired by the music of the Basque country, the native region of the composer, in particular by the txalaparta playing, a traditional percussion instrument. Towards the middle of the piece, a more nostalgic passage appears, quoting a Basque hymn to the Virgin Mary.

### **Skyscape for piano and organ**

**Joe Utterback (b. 1944)**

Dr. Utterback is a free-lance jazz pianist, recitalist, composer, recording artist, conductor, university professor, and church musician based in Connecticut who has received ASCAP awards annually since 1991 for his jazz-influenced compositions for piano, organ, chorus, voice, and instrumental ensembles. Joe's compositions are largely based on his improvisations, taking root in lead sheet format. They reflect the color and energy of his highly sophisticated treatments of blues, ballads, Broadway songs, and traditional jazz. Dedicated to the memory of the late Dr. M. Louise Miller, a founding member of the Greater Bridgeport Chapter of the American Guild of Organists, "Skyscape" is awash with lush harmonies that paint a sound picture of a sophisticated urban setting whose beauty is in both the bustle and the peace of a large city at rest.

**Duet Suite for piano and organ****Denis Bédard (b. 1950)**

Introduction – Fughetta – Minuetto – Romance - Final

Denis Bédard, was born in Quebec City in 1950 and first studied music at the Quebec Conservatory of Music, graduating with first class honors in organ (in the class of Claude Lavoie), harpsichord, chamber music, counterpoint and fugue. He continued his studies in Paris with Laurence Boulay, in Montreal with Mireille and Bernard Lagacé, and in Amsterdam with Gustav Leonhardt. He served as organist and music director of Holy Rosary Cathedral in Vancouver, B.C. from 2001 until his retirement in 2021. Denis Bédard's compositions include more than twenty chamber music works as well as orchestral and vocal music and many works for organ, over ninety compositions in all.

**Prelude and Dance (organ duet)****Charles Callahan (1951-2023)**

Commissioned by the Chenault Organ Duo (Raymond and Elizabeth Chenault), this two-movement piece starts with a pastoral prelude utilizing the Irish hymn tune, "St. Columba and concludes with a festive and colorful English court "dance."

**Variations on an Easter Theme (O Filii et Filiae)****John Rutter (b.1945)**

Also commissioned by the Chenaults, this piece is a set of nine variations, based on the theme "O Filii et Filiae," a traditional 15th-century melody usually associated with the Easter text, "O Sons and Daughters of the King." The faster variations use a toccata-like figuration, and the more peaceful ones make use of 'bluesy' harmonies.

**The Birk and Hoke Duo** performs in a variety of venues playing four-hand piano, four-hand organ, and piano and organ repertoire. The duo of Bernadette Hoke and Eric Birk has appeared in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Pennsylvania and Texas. As winners of the Artist International Competition, they were presented in a debut recital at Weill Hall at Carnegie Hall and an additional performance at Merkin Concert Hall in New York City. The *New York Concert Review* wrote of their debut performance, "The husband and wife duo played with precision that never impinged on fluid ease." In the autumn of 2008, they were the featured pianists on a concert at the Jewish Museum entitled, "Bernstein: A Jewish Legacy." This concert was part of the New York City celebration of the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Leonard Bernstein: *The Best of All Possible Worlds.* The duo has also performed as guest artists at the Baylor University Mid-Winter Organ Conference and at St. Paul's Chapel, the Brick Presbyterian Church, and the Church of St. Mary the Virgin in NYC.