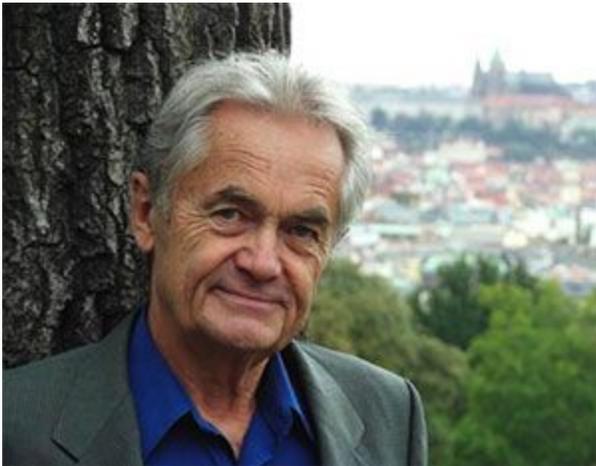


Paukert plans *Ars Organi* to celebrate music program at St. Paul's, Cleveland Hts.

by Daniel Hathaway



Both during his tenure as curator of musical arts at the Cleveland Museum of Art (1974-2004), and since 1979 as organist at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Cleveland Heights, Karel Paukert has combined unerring musical taste with an uncanny ability to acquire splendid keyboard instruments. The three organs and harpsichord owned by St. Paul's will be the subject of *Ars Organi*, a seven-event festival beginning on September 15 that matches the instruments with the particular

interests of some of Paukert's colleagues, friends, and students.

"I don't want to say this is my swan song," Paukert said in a telephone conversation, "but I want to pay homage to St. Paul's Church and its generous donors with this festival. They have maintained this music program all the way back to Walter Blodgett, who was kind of a legend here."



St. Paul's Church moved to the Heights from 40th and Euclid in 1928, but the Great Depression and World War II delayed its building plans beyond the construction of a parish hall until 1952. Blodgett, who was also Paukert's predecessor at the Museum, was in charge of the music at St. Paul's when the organ by Walter Holtkamp, Sr. was installed in the recently-completed nave. The other three instruments to be featured during the Festival were purchased

under Paukert's watch, and each comes with its own story.



Paukert first met Austrian organ builder Gerhard Hradetzky while teaching at Washington University in St. Louis. “We struck up a tremendous friendship, and I like what he stands for,” Paukert said. “He tried to separate himself from the industrial organs his father was building. It was his dream to build a South German type of instrument.”

The two came together again in the early 1980s at an organ class in Pistoia, Italy, when Hradetzky had become interested in historical Italian instruments. “I was already at St. Paul's, and there was a vacant balcony where I envisioned a small organ,” Paukert said.

At the time, Paukert was giving occasional lessons to a parishioner who told him that she and her husband would like to support one of his dreams. “Sure, I have dreams, but they're expensive — like an organ in the gallery,” he told her. At a Saturday lesson, she asked how much such an instrument would cost. On the following Tuesday, she rang up to say, “Call your friend in Austria and tell him my husband and I will buy the organ.”

The positif organ by Czech builder Vladimír Šlajch came about through a happy confluence of events. “Jaroslav Tůma told me about this Czech organ builder who was desperate for a job at that point,” Paukert said. “That coincided with a sizeable memorial gift to St. Paul's, and Šlajch was very happy to build the instrument for that price.”

The church's Italian harpsichord followed the acquisition of a similar instrument for the Art Museum. “I had asked Gustav Leonhardt who would be the best builder to approach for CMA,” Paukert recalled. The German builder Matthias Griewisch was one of the three Leonhardt suggested, but his waiting list was five years long, so the Museum settled on another maker instead. “Some years later, thanks to a memorial



gift, I got permission to sell the domestic harpsichord St. Paul's already owned and order one from Griewisch," Paukert said.



At the opening Ars Organi concert on Friday, September 15 at 7:30 pm, the audience will have the opportunity to hear all four instruments in a recital by Prague organist Jaroslav Tůma. Paukert first met him while serving as juror at an improvisation contest Tůma had entered in Nuremberg. "He's one of my best friends in Prague," Paukert said, "a great artist, and very inspirational." Tůma will play J.S. Bach on the positif organ, François Couperin on the harpsichord, hymns by Adam Vaclav Michna interleaved with Tůma's own compositions on the Italian organ, and works by J.S. Bach and Petr Eben on the main organ.

Tůma will be back on the bench of the Holtkamp organ on Saturday afternoon, September 16 at 4:00 pm for what Paukert describes as the organist's "parody" of Bedřich Smetana's *Má Vlast*. "It's kind of a postmodern take on Smetana which has evolved into a great paraphrase of all six tone poems. I heard him play it three months ago in Smetana's birthplace, where he received an ovation from over 700 people."

The third event, on Tuesday, September 19 at 7:30 pm, will present Oberlin organ professor James David Christie and members of the Collegium Musicum Oberliniense, directed by Steven Plank, in "Splendors of the Baroque," featuring the Hradetzky organ. A 6:50 pm lecture will precede the performance, and before the recital, St. Paul's Rector, the Rev. Jeanne Leinbach, will rededicate the instrument.



On the second weekend, two events focusing on the music of French composer Jehan Alain will feature James Higdon, Professor of Organ at the University of Kansas and Paukert's former student at Northwestern University. On Saturday, September 16 at 2:00 pm, Higdon, who also studied with the composer's sister, Marie-Claire Alain, will give a lecture and master class entitled "Jehan Ariste Alain: the visionary French Composer." Higdon will follow that with an all-Alain recital on the Holtkamp organ on Sunday,

September 17 at 4:00 pm. “James has recorded all of Alain’s organ works,” Paukert said, “and was invited to play the very special house organ Alain’s father built for the family home in Saint-Germain-en-Laye outside Paris.”

On Friday, September 29, Paukert will host another old friend, Richard Webster, who served as his assistant at St. Luke’s in Evanston, and is now music director of Trinity Church, Copley Square in Boston. “The program, a Hymn Festival for the Church Year, will include Richard’s wonderful hymn arrangements for brass, percussion, organ, choirs, and congregation,” Paukert said. Organist Todd Wilson will assist.



Paukert himself will wrap up “Ars Organi” on Sunday, October 1 at 4:00 pm with a recital of works by J.S. Bach, Ligeti, and Alain, including the revisiting of Frank Wiley’s *Labyrinths*, a work for three organs with vocal and instrumental ensembles that was premiered in January at St. Paul’s.

Paukert said he’s enjoyed putting this festival together. “I’ve missed all the activities and programs I used to have at the Museum,” he said. “And thanks to support from the Ingalls Foundation and the Charles H. Teare and Clifford K. Kern Music fund at the Cleveland Foundation, it’s free to the public and won’t cost the church anything.”

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