

## Program Notes

Perhaps the most renowned organist of his time, **Marcel Dupré's** greatest contribution is as one of the most important and prolific composers for the organ of the twentieth century. He began composing at an early age and won the Grand Prix de Rome in 1914. During the summer between his first two attempts for the coveted prize, Dupré turned his attention to the composition of the *Trois Préludes et Fugues, Opus 7*. These pieces have become a favorite with audiences and marked a new level of stylistic development in writing for the organ. The *Prelude and Fugue in B major* is the first of the set and bears the inscription "to René Vierne who died for France". The Prelude is a toccata based on an angular theme first stated in the pedals, then in various regions of the keyboard. The Fugue seems to show the influence of ragtime and early jazz, with its jagged rhythms, rich harmonic language and improvisatory character. The close of the Fugue recalls the toccata-like nature of the Prelude.

**Mark Fax** spent his early years in Baltimore, Maryland, working as a church and theater organist while still in high school. He held degrees from Syracuse University and the Eastman School (as a Rosenwald Fellow) and taught at Paine College, Augusta, Georgia, and at Black Mountain College, in North Carolina. At Howard University he was Professor of Composition, Head of the Music Department and Assistant to the Dean of the college of Fine Arts, exerting influence on a generation of Black musicians for 27 years. As Minister of Music at Asbury United Methodist Church, Washington, DC, for 25 years, he created a substantial amount of choral music for use there. The first two of the *Three Pieces for Organ* were composed ;in August of 1963, the last in 1965, with final revisions completed in 1965. The composer describes the music: "These pieces cannot be played without the aid of the performer's imagination. Number one is elemental -- but not quite primitive -- in nature. Number two is the quintessence of refinement. Number three is big city organ music."

**Robert Greenlee** is Chair of the Music Department of Bowdoin College and Director of Music at Trinity Episcopal Church in Portland, Maine. His *Three Spirituals for Palm Sunday* won first prize in the 1995 Holtkamp-AGO Composition Competition and were premiered at the 1996 AGO Centennial National Convention by Marvin Mills. The composer writes: "Stylistically the *Three Spirituals for Palm Sunday* are a synthesis of the African-American spiritual, traditional jazz, and French organ music of the first half of this century. All three styles have an inherent common bond in the pentatonic scale. The melodic pentatonicism of the spirituals is compatible with the blues scale of jazz and the extended tertian structure of early Messiaen. Each of the pieces relates to a specific Palm Sunday reading. *Ride On, King Jesus* has the most obvious connection, that being with Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Its block chord, in combination with syncopated rhythms, are an attempt to suggest both a regal, stately procession and a more humble flexibility. *Were You There?* refers to the text of the Passion readings. A pentatonic introduction gives way to the triadic, embellished melody, which is accompanied by seventh chords, pentatonic harmonies, and a pedal part suggestive of the string bass. The tune occurs a second time in a new, slightly lilting compound meter--an under-current of Brahmsian optimism--and then falls back to the duple, pentatonic material of the introduction. The concluding toccata on *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot* has its scriptural basis in Jesus' words to the crucified thief: "Today thou shalt be with me in Paradise." It is a celebration of the sonorous power of the organ, the virtuosic four-limbed capabilities of the organist, and the flavorful sounds of blues notes and tall tertian chords. A pentatonic introduction, spiced with some chromaticism, looks back to the end of *Were You There?* and prepares the way for the entry of the tune in the pedal, at times embellished with blues notes on the flatted third and seventh degrees. The melody of the verse, sung in the original by a soloist, then appears in French toccata style in the manuals, alternating with a pedal line that represents the choral response. The ensuing development leads to a dancing canon between the pedals and manuals, and the recapitulation brings the opening refrain back in a similar canon, influenced by the recapitulation in the prelude from Marcel Dupré's *Prelude and Fugue in B Major*."

**William Banfield**, a native of Detroit, joined the St. Thomas faculty last fall and is currently on leave from Indiana University, where he served on the faculty of the Afro-American Studies Department as resident composer of the Afro-American Arts Institute and director of the Popular Arts Ensemble. His works have been commissioned, premiered and performed by the Atlanta, Indianapolis, Sacramento, Akron, Richmond, Detroit and Savannah symphonies. Three CDs of his work were recently released, and he is the author of *Landscapes in Color: Conversations With Black American Composers*, which is scheduled for release in the spring by Scarecrow Press. Banfield received a doctor of musical arts degree in 1992 at the University of Michigan. He also holds a master's in