

Christa Rakich
A Tribute to Yuko Hayashi
Organ by Richards-Fowkes, Opus 16
Goodson Chapel, Duke University

Prelude in f minor, BWV 534.1	J.S. Bach (1685-1750)
An Wasserflüssen Babylon, 5 voices, BWV 653b	
Fugue in f minor, BWV 534.2	
Variations on <i>Ontwaak, gij die Slaapt</i>	Klaas Bolt (1927-1990)
Prelude in e minor for Piano (1842) <i>transcribed by W.T. Best</i>	Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)
Three Chorale Preludes from Opus 70 Mache dich mein Geist bereit Nun ruhen alle Wälder Herr, ich habe mißgehandelt	Johanna Senfter (1879-1961)
Fugue in e minor for Piano <i>transcribed by W.T. Best</i>	Felix Mendelssohn
Concertino in D, Opus 107 (1902) <i>transcribed by Christa Rakich</i> <i>Wendy Rolfe, flutist</i>	Cécile Chaminade (1857-1944)
An Extravagance of Toccatas (2012) pro Organo pleno pro Organo aetherio pro Organo flagrante	James Woodman (* 1957)

A Personal Note

I have been very fortunate in my study of the organ. I was lucky to have attended Oberlin College, where I was inspired by fine teachers and brilliant fellow students. From there, thanks to a Fulbright Grant, I had the good fortune to study the works of J.S. Bach with one of the world's greatest interpreters, Anton Heiller of Vienna, Austria. After 2 years there, I came to Boston to study with Yuko Hayashi. Heiller taught me Bach, and then Yuko taught me Christa, how to get what was in my heart out into the room. She taught me how touch could shape a phrase, how variety in attack and release could make the organ "speak," how to manage wind, how to make a room seem larger and more reverberant than it really is, and a mountain of "secrets," as her students would smilingly refer to her subtle tips and techniques.

The F minor Prelude and Fugue was one of the first pieces I played for her. It was immediately apparent she adored Heiller as much as I did. Yuko had connected with him in Haarlem (the Netherlands) and at various masterclasses around the world. Making connections was a particular skill of hers. She would bring the latest hot talent from Europe or Japan to perform on the Fisk organ at Old West Church, and fully exploit the artist's presence to benefit her students at New England Conservatory. One of those artists was the genial, kind Klaas Bolt, brilliant improviser and professor at the Sweelinck Conservatory. What a treasure for him to be in residence at the NEC organ department! After a week of regular group lessons from him, many students stopped planning preludes and postludes at their various church jobs, so skilled had they become at improvising. His Variations on *Ontwaak, gij die Slaapt (Awake, all who Sleep)* is an improvisation that was recorded and later transcribed.

The fugue to Mendelssohn's Prelude and Fugue in e minor works much better on the organ than on the piano. The fugue subject, beginning with whole notes a major seventh apart, demands the sustaining power of the organ. It is followed by a descending scale in dotted rhythm. Again, it is Yuko's instruction that comes to mind: fast attack on the eighth, slow release on the dot, barely open the pallet on the sixteenth. Hearing what happens at the beginnings and ends of notes was one of her gifts to me.

Johanna Senfter, star student of Max Reger in Leipzig, left 9 symphonies, 26 orchestral works and concertos, very much chamber music, and a handful of organ works. These chorale preludes are from a collection of ten. They are little gems of counterpoint, dense, chromatic, and beautiful.

The Old West Organ Series, instituted and run by Yuko for decades, is still a staple of Boston organ life. I was privileged to play on the series several times. One of my most memorable programs there included Cécile Chaminade's *Concertino for Flute*, which featured dear friend and Oberlin classmate Wendy Rolfe.

A herd of elephants, a murder of crows, a panel of judges, a school of fish – what does one call a grouping of toccatas? An Extravagance! The Woodman piece was commissioned by my wife, Janis Milroy, in celebration of my 60th birthday. James Woodman began his NEC career as a Yuko student, but finished as one of mine. It was a special delight to "share" him, and to move with him and Yuko through the changing relationships of student – teacher – colleague – friend.

Concert and recording artist **Christa Rakich** is Artist-in-Residence at Somers Congregational Church in Somers, Connecticut, USA, where she plays Richards-Fowkes Opus 21 (2014). She has served on the faculties of Westminster Choir College, Brandeis University, New England Conservatory, and the University of Connecticut, and as Assistant University Organist at Harvard. Other Artist-in-Residencies have included the University of Pennsylvania and First Lutheran Church in Boston.

As a Fulbright Scholar, Christa Rakich studied for two years with Anton Heiller at the Hochschule für Musik in Vienna, Austria. She holds Bachelor's degrees in Organ and German from Oberlin College, where she was inducted into the Phi Beta Kappa honor society. After receipt of her Master's degree with honors from New England Conservatory, she was asked to join the faculty there, serving ultimately as department co-chair.

A prizewinner at international organ competitions (notably Bruges 1976), Rakich has received particular acclaim for her interpretations of the music of J.S. Bach. With keyboardist Peter Sykes, she performed a complete cycle of Bach's keyboard works in a series of 34 concerts aptly named *Tuesdays With Sebastian*. The concerts raised a total of \$20,000 for Boston area charities.

With keyboardist Susan Ferré, Rakich is a founding performer of the *Big Moose Bach Festival* in Berlin, New Hampshire. The festival presents cantatas, chamber music and keyboard music of J.S. Bach in rural New Hampshire each summer. As Vice-President of the Boston Clavichord Society, Rakich also pursues an active interest in the clavichord.