

Music Notes for January 27th

**Prelude:** Léon Boëllmann: Entrée VII op. 30, no. 2

**Anthem:** Gabriel Fauré: *Cantique de Jean Racine*

**Offertory:** Léon Boëllmann: *Prière à Notre Dame* from *Suite Gothique*

**Postlude:** Léon Boëllmann: Sortie VII op. 30, no. 2

The centerpiece of this Sunday's music is Fauré's famous composition *Cantique de Jean Racine*. Jean Racine was an important 17th century French dramatist who also translated and paraphrased a good number of religious texts in his *Hymnes traduites du Brévière romain*, published in 1688. This paraphrased text is the Latin *Consors paterni luminis*, a prayer of St. Ambrose that has no particular seasonal connotation and is traditionally used at Matins on Tuesdays in the Roman Catholic tradition. Fauré's setting was written at the age of 19 and won him first prize upon graduation from the Niedermayer School in Paris and premiered in 1866. It exists in three versions (with organ, organ and strings, or full orchestra accompaniment) and can be sung with either mixed chorus or three-part men's chorus. The most popular version is the organ and mixed chorus version which we sing for you today. A translation of the French text follows:

Word of God the most high, our sole hope,  
eternal day of the earth and heavens  
as we break the silence of the peaceful night  
divine savior, look down upon us.

Imbue us with the fire of thy great mercy  
so that hell itself will flee at the sound of your voice  
disperse the sleep which leads our languishing souls  
to stray from the path of righteousness.

O Christ show your favor to your faithful people  
who have come together to worship you  
receive the praises that they offer up to your immortal glory  
and may they come back laden with the gift of your grace.

Léon Boëllmann was also educated at the Niedermayer School, and at the age of 19 he became one of the organists at St. Vincent du Paul in Paris. His most valuable contribution to the organ repertoire is his *Heures Mystiques* (Mystical Hours), a book of 100 shorter organ pieces for use during worship. The prelude and postlude both come from this collection, two elegant, stately works intended to be used as a pair.

His *Suite Gothique* is a piece most famous for its concluding Toccata, a work of monumental difficulty for a very large organ. The third movement of the suite, however, is the *Prière à Notre Dame* (Prayer to Our Lady), which is quiet and meditative. Whether or not he intended it for liturgical use is uncertain, but I will play it as an offertory.

Thomas Dawkins, interim organist/choir director