



EVOCATIONS

Contemporary
Organ Music

BLOHN

BRANDMÜLLER

ESCAICH

JORDAN

PÄRT

Christian von
Blohn, Organ



Evocations

Contemporary Organ Music

Barry Jordan was born in 1957 in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, and has been organist and director of music at Magdeburg Cathedral for many years. He wrote *Praise Song* in 1999 as a commission for the South African Music Rights Organisation Endowment for the National Arts (SAMRO-ENA). Among other things, 'praise song' references modern worship songs as distinct from hymns, and, not least, the 'singer of praise' who is still an essential part of an African tribal chief's retinue, performing improvised odes that celebrate the chief's deeds and virtues at all manner of ceremonies and festivities. Parts of this virtuosic work are therefore inspired by African drumming rhythms. This is the first recording of this latest version of the piece.

Theo Brandmüller (1948–2012) was, for many years, professor of composition at the Hochschule für Musik Saar (HfM Saar). His style is characterised by interplay between humour and a mythico-religious plane. The organ was central to Brandmüller's extensive output. *Sternenklänge* ('Music of the Stars') is his final work, taken from his large *Kosmogonia* cycle and slightly modified to create a standalone piece. This is its premiere recording.

Arvo Pärt was born in 1935 in Paide, Estonia. After making a thorough study of medieval music, he developed his own characteristic mystical style, which achieves great intensity with the simplest of means, such as triadic formations and rhythmic structures based on ancient poetic metres. *Annum per annum* was written in 1980 for the celebrations marking the 950th anniversary of the foundation stone of Speyer Cathedral being laid. The letters K – G – C – S – A represent the parts of the Ordinary of the Mass.

Christian von Blohn (b. 1963) sees his piece *Dialogue vers les étoiles* as a posthumous musical dialogue with his teacher Theo Brandmüller. He creates 'earthly' and 'cosmic' tonal layers that filter through each other in a mutual dialogue. This too is a world premiere recording.

Born 1965 in Nogent-sur-Marne, France, Thierry Escaich has been equally successful as an organist and as a composer. Since 1997 he has held the prestigious post of organist at Saint-Étienne-du-Mont in Paris, and he also pursues a successful international concert career. His compositions have garnered numerous awards.

In *Évocation II* the sounds of a variety of very different worlds arise and take shape over a persistent, unremitting bass reminiscent of African dance rhythms: short litany-style antiphons with Gregorian contours, reminders of classic ancient polytonal polyphony over a sustained organ pedal, a psalm setting by Claude Goudimel. You feel as though you are in a cathedral with stained glass windows bathing the interior in a kaleidoscope of increasingly vibrant colours. Towards the end, the electrifying pulse is interrupted by short episodes where the sudden loss of the pedal foundation makes you feel as though the ground is giving way beneath your feet, only for you to immediately resume your progress towards the light, where the musical *tour de force* soon surges to an abrupt conclusion in a blaze of C major.

Christian von Blohn

English translation: Susan Baxter

Evocations

Zeitgenössische Orgelwerke

Der 1957 in Port Elizabeth (Südafrika) geborene und seit vielen Jahren am Magdeburger Dom als Organist und Musikdirektor wirkende Barry Jordan komponierte „Praise Song“ 1999 im Auftrag der „South African Music Rights Organisation Endowment for the National Arts“ (SAMRO-ENA). Der Begriff „Praise Song“ bezieht sich unter anderem im Gegensatz zu „Hymn“ auf Kirchenlieder im moderneren Stil und nicht zuletzt auf den „Lobsinger“, in Afrika noch ein unverzichtbares Mitglied der Gefolgschaft eines Stammes-Chefs, der in improvisierten Oden bei Feierlichkeiten unterschiedlichster Art von den Tugenden und Taten des Häuptlings erzählt. Teile des recht virtuosen Werkes sind daher von afrikanischen Trommel-rhythmen inspiriert. Bei dieser aktuellen Fassung des Stückes handelt es sich um dessen Ersteinspielung.

Theo Brandmüller (1948–2012) wirkte viele Jahre als Professor für Komposition an der Hochschule für Musik Saar. Sein Stil zeichnet sich vor allem durch das Wechselspiel zwischen humorvollem Charakter und einer mythisch-religiösen Ebene aus. In seinem umfangreichen Oeuvre nimmt die Orgel eine zentrale Stellung ein. „Sternenklänge“ ist sein letztes Werk, das er aus seinem längeren Zyklus „Kosmogonia“ herausgelöst und leicht modifiziert hat. Die Uraufführung fand am 15. Juni 2008 in Notre Dame/Paris durch den Komponisten statt. Bei dieser Aufnahme handelt es sich um die Ersteinspielung des Werkes.

Der 1935 in Paide (Estland) geborene Arvo Pärt fand nach einer eingehenden Beschäftigung mit der Musik des Mittelalters zu einem von Mystik geprägten Personalstil, der mit geringsten Mitteln wie Dreiklangsbildungen und rhythmischen Strukturen nach dem Vorbild antiker Versmaße ein hohes Maß an Intensität erreicht. „Annum per annum“ wurde 1980 zur 950-Jahr-Feier des Domes zu Speyer geschrieben; die Buchstaben K – G – C – S – A symbolisieren die Teile des Messordinariums.

Christian von Blohn (geb. 1963) betrachtet sein Stück „Dialogue vers les étoiles“ als ein posthumes musikalisches Zwiegespräch mit seinem Lehrer Theo Brandmüller. Dabei schafft er eine „irdische“ und „kosmische“ Klangebene, die sich in gegenseitigem Dialog durchdringen. Auch bei dieser Aufnahme handelt es sich um eine Ersteinspielung.

Thierry Escaich (geb. 1965 in Nogent-sur-Marne) ist als Organist und Komponist gleichermaßen erfolgreich. Seit 1997 hat er das ehrenvolle Organistenamt von St. Étienne du Mont in Paris inne und wirkt daneben als international erfolgreicher Konzertorganist. Seine Kompositionen wurden mit zahlreichen Preisen ausgezeichnet.

In „Évocation II“ formieren sich permanent anschwellend auf einem an Rhythmen afrikanischer Tänze gemahnenden hartnäckigen und unerbittlichen Bass die Klänge sehr unterschiedlicher Welten: kurze Litanei-artige Antiphonen mit gregorianischen Konturen, Reminiszenzen an altklassische Polyphonie in Polytonalität zum persistenten Orgelpedal, ein Psalmlied von Claude Goudimel. Man wähnt sich in einer Kathedrale, in welcher Buntglasfenster das Innere kaleidoskopartig in immer heller leuchtende Farben tauchen. Der atemberaubende Puls wird gegen Ende durch kurze Episoden unterbrochen, in denen man plötzlich ohne das Fundament des Pedales den Boden unter den Füßen zu verlieren glaubt, um dann gleich darauf wieder den Weg zum Licht einzuschlagen, worauf die musikalische „tour de force“ kurz danach in gleißendem C-Dur eruptiv und abrupt zu Ende geführt wird.

Christian von Blohn

The Great Organ (West Organ) of Magdeburg Cathedral

www.domorgel-magdeburg.de/westorgan.html

The plan for the new instruments at the cathedral envisaged a large symphonic instrument in an eclectic style for the cathedral, and a smallish (about 22 stop) organ in a style which, while ideal for Bach, would allow the convincing performance of a certain amount of repertoire for the Remter, which has the more appropriate acoustic for most Baroque music. Not only would these two organs complement each other; they would also greatly enrich the Orgellandschaft of the town, which once had more instruments by Arp Schnitger than any other city after Hamburg but which was not blessed with good instruments at the time.

The first step in the realisation of the plan was the commissioning of the main organ. The contract for this was awarded to Schuke Orgelbau (Werder an der Havel); the project took several years to realise, and the organ was completed in May 2008 and dedicated on Trinity Sunday, 18 May. During the festival week the instrument was able to convince its hearers with its warm, colourful sound and its ability to dominate the very large room without ever being vulgar or overly loud. Voicer Hartmut Rönnecke and his team deserve enormous praise for their achievement, especially as the organ is in a style which represented a new departure for the Schuke firm (though they have enormous experience in the restoration of Romantic instruments). The organ comprises 92 stops (and 1 transmission) on 4 manuals and pedals. The tonal backbone is a generous principal chorus owing much to Friedrich Ladegast, but the multifarious beautiful flute stops and the gentle but often keen strings have won much praise from visiting organists from many traditions.

The exterior design of the instrument is simple but striking; the facade is turned through many dimensions which makes for an interesting and plastic appearance. That only large pipes have found a place in the case (beginning with FF# of the 32' Principal) works to the organ's advantage when viewed from the cathedral, especially as the organ gallery floor is at a height of approximately 16 metres.

Essentially, the instrument has mechanical action; there are Kowalyshyn machines to the first and second manuals, and all normal manual couplers run through these.

The octave and suboctave couplers are electric, as are two of the pedal couplers; the tuba, the Chamade and some pedal stops are on auxiliary electric chests. The pedal, as can be clearly seen from the photo, is located to the sides of the organ; in the centre are the Hauptwerk, with the expressive Positiv behind it; on the upper level are the Solo, with the Swell behind that. The Chamade, while playable from the second manual, is located on the roof of the Swell. The case structure itself has no roof (the roof of the Solo division was removed during the voicing as this was found to be enormously beneficial).

The Specification of the organ was developed by Barry Jordan with Matthias Schuke, Hans Scheffler, and the other consultants involved in the project, Reinhard Menger, Reiner Schuhenn, Silvius von Kessel and Christoph Schulz. Scales were developed by the Schuke team; Michael Blighton of Mander Organ Builders was responsible for the tuba. The Solo clarinette originally supplied was replaced in 2011 by an historical English stop from a Brindley and Foster organ of 1914.

I Great C–c⁴

Prinzipal	16'
Bourdon	16'
Oktave	8'
Diapason	8'
Gedackt	8'
Doppelflöte	8'
Gambe	8'
Nassat	5 $\frac{1}{3}$ '
Oktave	4'
Hohlflöte	4'
Spitzflöte	4'
Tertia	3 $\frac{1}{5}$ '
Quinte	2 $\frac{2}{3}$ '
Oktave	2'
Cornet V (ab g ⁰)	8'
Mixtur major V	2'
Mixtur minor IV	1'
Trombone	16'
Trompete	8'
Clairon	4'

II Positiv C–c⁴ (in Swell Box)

Salicional	16'
Quintatön	16'
Prinzipal	8'
Rohrflöte	8'
Cor de nuit	8'
Viola	8'
Fugara	8'
Vox coelestis	8'
Oktave	4'
Traversflöte	4'
Fugara	4'
Nassat	2 $\frac{2}{3}$ '
Oktave	2'
Piccolo	2'
Echocornett III (ab g ⁰)	2'
Harmonia aetheria III	2'
Englisch Horn	16'

Chamade	8'
Trompete	8'
Klarinette [A. 1]	8'
Cromorne	8'
<i>Tremulant</i>	

III Swell C–c⁴

Bordun	16'
Prinzipal	8'
Voce umana	8'
Flûte traversière	8'
Bordun	8'
Viola di Gamba	8'
Voix céleste	8'
Oktave	4'
Flûte octaviante	4'
Flöte	4'
Viola	4'
Nazard	2 $\frac{2}{3}$ '
Quarte de Nazard	2'
Tierce	1 $\frac{3}{5}$ '
Larigot	1 $\frac{1}{3}$ '
Septième	1 $\frac{1}{7}$ '
Progressio III–V	2'
Bombarde	16'
Aeoline	16'
Trompete	8'
Hautbois	8'
Voix humaine	8'
Clairon	4'
<i>Tremulant</i>	

IV Solo C–c⁴

Doppelprinzipal	8'
Flûte harmonique	8'
Seraphon (ab g ⁰)	8'
Cornett VI (ab g ⁰)	16'
Tuba mirabilis	8'
Clarinette [A. 2]	8'

Pedal C–g¹

Principal	32' [A. 3]
Untersatz	32'
Oktave	16'
Violon	16'
Subbass	16'
Kontrabass	16'
Zartbass (= Nr. 42)	16'
Quinte	10 $\frac{2}{3}$ '
Oktave	8'
Flöte	8'
Gedackt	8'
Cello	8'
Cello piano	8'
Terz	6 $\frac{2}{5}$ '
Nassat	5 $\frac{1}{3}$ '
Oktave	4'
Flöte	4'
Flöte	2'
Contrabombarde	32'
Bombarde	16'
Fagott	16'
Trompete	8'
Clairon	4'

Couplers: IV/I; III/I; III/I sub; II/I; III/II;
III/II sub; III/III super; I/P; II/P; III/P;
IV/P

Swell Steps for Positiv and Swell:
10,000 Setting Combinations

Notes:

[A. 1] Striking Reed Pipes

[A. 2] Free Reed Pipes

[A. 3] C-F Wood

Christian von Blohn

Born in Homburg, Saarland in 1963, Christian von Blohn graduated from the Hochschule für Musik Saarbrücken in 1987 with a Master's in church music (having studied chorus direction and orchestral conducting with Volker Hempfling and Dieter Loskant) and a teaching diploma with organ as his main subject. He also studied piano with Kurt Schmitt, piano chamber music with Walter Blankenheim and Jean Micault, harpsichord with Martin Galling, and modern composition and improvisation with Theo Brandmüller. He subsequently continued his training as a musician by attending André Luy's masterclass at the Lausanne Conservatory in Switzerland, gaining both a Premier Prix de Virtuosité (soloist's diploma) and the Alumni Association's prize in 1991. Further studies with Daniel Chorzempa at the Academy of Music in Basel and the Salzburg Mozarteum and with Peter Hurford and Julian Smith under the auspices of Britain's Royal School of Church Music followed.

Since 1993 Christian von Blohn has been one of the diocese of Speyer's deanery organists and choirmasters and is currently responsible for the music at the churches of Sankt Hildegard and Sankt Josef in the town of Sankt Ingbert. He also looks after the branch of the Episcopal Institute of Church Music that is based there. He has performed a wide variety of different types and styles of sacred music with Collegium Vocale Blieskastel, which he founded, for over 30 years. He also taught at the Universities of Karlsruhe, Trossingen and Mannheim, and a few years ago joined the staff of the Hochschule für Musik Saarbrücken. A busy concert schedule takes him across Europe, and he has made numerous radio, TV and disc recordings. Naxos has released a number of other albums featuring Christian von Blohn, namely Vols. 3–5 of the complete edition of Widor's *Organ Symphonies* (Vol. 3: 8.574206, Vol. 4: 8.574207, Vol. 5: 8.574279). He also features on *Splendid Silbermann* (Oehms Classics OC1705).

www.v-blohn.de





Magdeburg Cathedral

This album of contemporary organ repertoire features fascinating works that display a wide array of influences. Barry Jordan's *Praise Song*, heard here its 2018 revision, draws on modern worship songs and African drumming rhythms, an element that also suffuses part of Thierry Escaich's *Évocation II*, a work of electrifying intensity and vibrant colour. Arvo Pärt's starkly beautiful *Annum per annum* is featured alongside Theo Brandmüller's last work *Sternenklänge*. *Dialogue vers les étoiles* by Christian von Blohn – a student of Brandmüller – acts as a moving posthumous dialogue with his teacher.

EVOCATIONS

Contemporary Organ Music

Barry Jordan (b. 1957)	
1 Praise Song (1999) (revised version, 2018)*	14:07
Theo Brandmüller (1948–2012)	
2 Sternenklänge (2008)*	9:10
Arvo Pärt (b. 1935)	
3 Annum per annum (1980)	11:44
Einleitung – K – G – C – S – A – Coda	
Christian von Blohn (b. 1963)	
4 Dialogue vers les étoiles (2021)*	17:09
Thierry Escaich (b. 1965)	
5 Évocation II (1996)	6:00

*WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING

Christian von Blohn

on the Great Organ (West Organ) of Magdeburg Cathedral

Recorded: 16 and 18 May 2021 at Magdeburg Cathedral, Germany
Producer, engineer and editor: Thomas Becher • Organ console assistant: Bettina Schindler
Booklet notes: Christian von Blohn • Publishers: Composer's manuscript **1** **2** **4**,
Universal Edition, Wien **3**, Éditions Musicales Alphonse Leduc **5**
Many thanks to cathedral organist Barry Jordan for his kind support during the recording.
Cover: The Great Organ of Magdeburg Cathedral
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