

Peter Stoltzfus Berton and his Hereford Variations

Organist Peter Stoltzfus Berton will be presented in a recital at Trinity Church on the Green, corner Temple and Chapel Streets, in New Haven on Tuesday, March 31, at 7:30 pm. Mr. Berton is Organist and Music Director of the Church of St. John the Evangelist in Newport, RI. He has previously served in similar positions in churches in New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts. While a student at the Yale Institute of Sacred Music, he was Assistant Organist at Trinity Church on the Green, and upon graduation, served in a similar capacity at St. Thomas Church, Fifth Avenue, in New York.

For his recital, Mr. Berton will play his own composition, Hereford Variations, a set of fifteen organ pieces inspired by the life and works of the priest and writer Thomas Traherne (1636-1674), as commemorated in the striking stained glass windows by Tom Denny (2007) at Hereford Cathedral in England. This forty-minute meditation for Lent or Eastertide was composed in 2013-2014, inspired as well by Sir Edward Elgar's Enigma Variations, and the thrilling "Father" Willis organ of Hereford Cathedral. Four of the pieces include singing stanzas of the hymn tune "Hereford" which is a tune present in all fifteen.

The idiosyncratic dedications of Elgar's celebrated Enigma Variations, "to my friends pictured within" is a plan also followed here, for amusement and also sincere appreciation to family and friends. Each of the dedicatees of the fifteen Hereford Variations is heard in the music in some way, and also represented in one of the specific recitals on a 15-stop recital tour of which this concert is a part. Though the whole work will indeed be heard, the March 31 New Haven stop on the tour is dedicated to the variation dedicated to Trinity Church parishioner and Co-Curator of Yale Organs Joseph Dzeda. There is no admission for this concert, and the public is warmly invited to attend.

To hear previews of this music, and see photographs of the windows which inspired it, visit www.herefordvariations.org