



The Cathedral
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the Divine

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**THE CATHEDRAL OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE PRESENTS
DAVID BRIGGS' TRANSCRIPTION OF GUSTAV MAHLER'S SYMPHONY NO. 6**

Tuesday, November 13th, 2018 at 7:30pm
Ticketed pre-concert lecture by the performer with wine and canapés at 6:30pm
The Cathedral of St. John the Divine
1047 Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. | New York, NY

Artist in Residence David Briggs kicks off second year of residency with stunning transcription of Mahler 6 – his fourth Mahler transcription to be performed at St. John the Divine



Photo courtesy David Briggs
For hi-res photo, please email Madge Nimocks, madgenimocks@gmail.com

(November 13, 2018 – New York, NY) – Artist in Residence, international concert organist and composer David Briggs will perform his transcription of Gustav Mahler's *Symphony No. 6* on **Tuesday, November 13 at 7:30 p.m. at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, 1047 Amsterdam Avenue (at**



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112th Street), Manhattan as the second concert of *Great Organ: A Recital Series*, part of the 2018–2019 season of *Great Music in a Great Space*. Mr. Briggs will be giving a ticketed pre-recital lecture with wine and canapés starting at 6:30pm. Those interested should choose the Concert+Lecture tickets.

As the first-ever organist to be named Artist in Residence, the Cathedral of St. John the Divine is thrilled to welcome David back for his second year in residency. Last season saw an impressive offering featuring the U.S. premiere of Elgar’s *First Symphony*, David’s transcription of Mahler’s *Symphony No. 5*, as well as his own transcriptions of Maurice Ravel and his improvised accompaniment to the silent film, *King of Kings*. For the 2018-19 season, in addition to David’s transcription of Mahler’s *Symphony No. 6*, concertgoers can also look forward to his transcription of Bruckner’s 7th symphony, as well as numerous appearances as both organist and composer for various cathedral events.

Gustav Mahler composed his *Symphony No. 6*, written between 1903–1904 and it was first performed in Essen in 1906, conducted by the composer himself. David Briggs, although he’s said he has “always been addicted to Mahler symphonies,” had somehow missed the sixth until 2003 when his wife Madge introduced him to the 2003 recording with the CBSO under Sir Simon Rattle early on in their courtship. He completed the organ transcription of the work just a few years later in 2006 as a 50th birthday present to his wife. November’s performance of *Symphony No. 6* will be David’s fourth Mahler transcription performed at St. John the Divine having previously premiered his transcriptions of *Symphony No. 2*, *Symphony No. 8*, and *Symphony No. 5* at the cathedral in April 2013, April 2016, and January 2018, respectively.

Mr. Briggs was partly drawn to Mahler’s sixth due to the uniquely tragic manner of its ending. He points out that while Mahler is widely felt to be a “tragic” composer, most of his symphonies end triumphantly (Nos. 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, and 8), contentedly (No. 4), or with a quiet resignation (No. 9) or radiant calm (No. 10). “The tragic, even nihilistic ending of No. 6 has in fact been seen as particularly unexpected, given that the symphony was composed at what was apparently an exceptionally happy time in Mahler’s life,” Mr. Briggs explains. “He had married Alma Schindler in 1902, and during the course of the work’s composition his second daughter was born.”

Although not Mahler’s most popular symphony among “general” listeners, it is reckoned by many to be one of his finest – both Alban Berg and Anton Webern praised it when they first heard it. Formally, the symphony is one of Mahler’s most outwardly conventional. However, the work features many complexities, changing rhythms, drastic changes in mood and tempo, soaring and lengthy Mahlerian themes – all lending beautifully to a powerful symphony and an exciting transcription for the organ.

Mr. Briggs, who devotes around a third of his career to playing transcriptions, has been at the vanguard of creating a “new” repertoire for the pipe organ, frequently performing orchestral music by composers like Mahler who wrote no music for solo organ. Of his approach to arranging and playing these works, he says, “The central and imperative crux of any transcription is that the music has to be reinvented and not just copied. My own feeling is that intrinsically great music can cross instrumental boundaries with compelling ease.

“My profound hope is that people will enjoy hearing this recasting of Mahler’s original, rather like seeing a great painting in a new art gallery, in a different frame, under completely new lighting conditions. This is highly charged, emotional music that shows Mahler’s genius for creating a highly original soundscape, which is instantly recognizable and completely inimitable.”



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The 2018-2019 season of Great Music in a Great Space continues with a broad spectrum of choral and instrumental music. There will be more organ recitals by Mr. Briggs, as well as Associate Director of Music Raymond Nagem; and, the continuing season will welcome back Rose of the Compass for an evening of Armenian choral and instrumental music, Musica Sacra offering a fall and spring concert, and will culminate with an all-French program centering on Fauré's *Requiem*.

The Cathedral's Great Organ is one of the landmark musical instruments in the United States, and is an acclaimed national treasure. Built in 1911 by Ernest M. Skinner and enlarged and rebuilt in 1954 by G. Donald Harrison of the Æolian-Skinner Organ Company, the Great Organ brings together in one instrument the very best from two of America's foremost organ-builders.

Tickets are \$25. For entry to the pre-concert lecture, be sure to select Concert+Lecture tickets for no additional charge. For more information, please visit:

<http://www.stjohndivine.org/visit/calendar/events/music/27038/great-organ-david-briggs>

Program

Gustav Mahler: Symphony No. 6 (transcribed by David Briggs)

About Great Music in a Great Space

Revived in 2011, *Great Music in a Great Space* reprises the legendary concert series first held at the Cathedral in the 1980s. The 2015–2016 season is comprised of three concert series: the Great Choir choral series, the Great Organ recital series, and our holiday concerts celebrating the Christmas season and New Year's Eve. The repertoire of the choral series encompasses a musical palette from Renaissance polyphony to contemporary compositions, and also features explorations of less familiar traditions such as Spanish Renaissance music and Eastern Orthodox hymnody. The Great Organ recital series features evening organ recitals, from both Cathedral organists and internationally acclaimed guest artists.

About David Briggs

"Mr. Briggs is one of our finest organists, and also a particularly good transcriber of orchestral works for his own instrument. "

The New York Times

David Briggs is an internationally renowned organist whose performances are acclaimed for their musicality, virtuosity, and ability to excite and engage audiences of all ages. Consistently ranked as one of the finest organists of his generation, David's extensive repertoire spans five centuries. He has also become one of the foremost organ transcribers of symphonic works, thereby giving listeners the opportunity to experience the organ in a new way. He has transcribed orchestral compositions by Schubert, Tchaikovsky, Elgar, Bruckner, Ravel, and Bach as well as Mahler's Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, and Eighth symphonies.

Described as "an intrepid improviser," by Michael Barone on National Public Radio (NPR), David also frequently performs improvisations to silent films such as *Phantom of the Opera*, *Hunchback of Notre-Dame*, *Nosferatu*, *Jeanne d'Arc*, *Metropolis*, *King of Kings*, *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, *the General*, and a variety of Charlie Chaplin films.



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At the age of 17, David obtained his FRCO (Fellow of the Royal College of Organists) diploma, winning the Silver Medal of the Worshipful Company of Musicians. From 1981-84 he was Organ Scholar at King's College, Cambridge University, during which time he studied with Jean Langlais in Paris. The first British winner of the Tournemire Prize at the St Albans International Improvisation Competition, he also won the first prize in the International Improvisation Competition at Paisley. Subsequently David held positions at Hereford, Truro and Gloucester Cathedrals.

Deeply committed to ensuring organ music remains relevant and vibrant, David enjoys giving pre-concert lectures and demonstrations that help make organ music more broadly accessible. He teaches performance at Cambridge University, frequently serves on international organ competition juries, and gives master classes at colleges and conservatories across the U.S. and Europe.

David performs more than 50 concerts a year at such venues as Maison Symphonique, Montreal; Royal Albert Hall, London; Notre Dame, St Sulpice and St Eustache, Paris; Kimmel Center, Philadelphia; Berlin Philharmonie, Germany; St James Cathedral, Toronto; International Performing Arts Center, Moscow; Valencia Cathedral, Spain; National Auditorium, Madrid; Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria (BC); Nidaros Cathedral, Trondheim, Norway; Grace Cathedral, San Francisco (CA); and Kings College, Cambridge.

David Briggs is also a prolific composer and his works range from full scale oratorios to works for solo instruments. He has recorded two DVDs, and 37 CDs, many of which include his own compositions and transcriptions.

David is currently Artist-in-Residence at the Cathedral of St John the Divine in New York City. For more information, please visit: www.david-briggs.org.

About The Cathedral

The Cathedral of St. John the Divine is the Cathedral of the Episcopal Diocese of New York. It is chartered as a house of prayer for all people and a unifying center of intellectual light and leadership.

People from many faiths and communities worship together in services held more than 30 times a week; the soup kitchen serves roughly 25,000 meals annually; social service outreach has an increasingly varied roster of programs; the distinguished Cathedral School prepares young students to be future leaders; Adults and Children in Trust, the renowned preschool, afterschool and summer program, offers diverse educational and nurturing experiences; the outstanding Textile Conservation Lab preserves world treasures; concerts, exhibitions, performances and civic gatherings allow conversation, celebration, reflection and remembrance—such is the joyfully busy life of this beloved and venerated Cathedral.

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