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**THE CATHEDRAL OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE PRESENTS
DAVID BRIGGS' TRANSCRIPTION OF GUSTAV MAHLER'S SYMPHONY NO. 5**



Photo courtesy David Briggs

(January xx, 2018 – New York, NY) – International concert organist and composer David Briggs will perform his transcription of Gustav Mahler's *Symphony No. 5* on **Tuesday, January 16 at 7:30 p.m. at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, 1047 Amsterdam Avenue (at 112th Street), Manhattan** as the second concert of *Great Organ: A Recital Series*, part of the 2017–2018 season of *Great Music in a Great Space*.

The Cathedral of St. John the Divine is pleased to have recently appointed Mr. Briggs, known worldwide as an outstanding and innovative musician, as the first-ever organist to be named Artist in Residence. Following November's U.S. premiere of Elgar's *First Symphony* and January's performance of Mahler's *Symphony No. 5*, further concerts by Mr. Briggs will include transcriptions of Maurice Ravel on February 11, and his improvised accompaniment to a silent film, *King of Kings*, on February 24.



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Gustav Mahler's *Symphony No. 5*, written between 1901–2 and published in 1904, captivated Mr. Briggs from an early age. As a 14-year-old violist in the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain, he became "immediately addicted to the unique harmonic language, the larger-than-life orchestration, and, above all, the intense emotional impact of this music. I learnt it from within," he says, "and it affected me so deeply I couldn't sleep." Mr. Briggs immersed himself in Mahler's musical world, poring over the orchestral score and the composer's original sketches.

In 1998, he transcribed the symphony for organ, premiered his transcription at the renowned Three Choirs Festival in Gloucester, and recorded the piece on a critically acclaimed CD. January's performance will be the third Mahler work that Mr. Briggs has performed at St. John the Divine; he previously premiered his transcriptions of *Symphony No. 2* and *Symphony No. 8* at the cathedral in April 2013 and April 2016, respectively.

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."

The 2017-2018 season of Great Music in a Great Space continues with a broad spectrum of choral and instrumental music in the Cathedral's grand and inspiring Gothic interior. Adding to a full season of choral and organ performances, *Great Organ: A Recital Series* continue in 2018, featuring recitals by Kent Tritle, Director of Cathedral Music and Organist, and Raymond Nagem, Associate Director of Music.

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 more information, please visit this website.

Program

Gustav Mahler: *Symphony No. 5* (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



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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

David Briggs is an internationally celebrated organist whose performances are acclaimed for their musicality, virtuosity, and ability to excite and engage audiences of all ages. Master of an extensive repertoire spanning five centuries, he is known across the globe for his brilliant organ transcriptions of symphonic music by composers such as Mahler, Schubert, Tchaikovsky, Elgar, Bruckner, Ravel, and Bach. Briggs has been fascinated by the art of improvisation since childhood, and frequently performs improvisations to silent films such as *Phantom of the Opera*, *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* and *Nosferatu*, as well as a variety of Charlie Chaplin films.

At the age of 17, Briggs obtained his FRCO (Fellow of the Royal College of Organists) diploma, winning all the prizes and the Silver Medal of the Worshipful Company of Musicians. From 1981–84 he was the Organ Scholar at King’s College, Cambridge University, during which time he studied organ 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. Briggs has held positions at Hereford, Truro and Gloucester Cathedrals. He has been Artist-in-Residence at St James Cathedral, Toronto since 2012, and will continue as consultant for the forthcoming organ restoration and play several celebrity concerts per annum. He has recorded two DVDs and 35 CDs, many of which include his own compositions and transcriptions.

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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