

Richard D. Moe Organ Recital Series

**Justin J. Murphy-Mancini, University Organist**

*Avancez!*

Sunday, February 8, 2026 at 3pm

Lagerquist Concert Hall, Mary Baker Russell Music Center

Pacific Lutheran University  
The College of Professional Studies and School of Music, Theatre & Dance present

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Welcome to Lagerquist Concert Hall.

Please disable the audible signal on all watches and cellular phones for the duration of the concert.

Use of cameras, recording equipment, and all digital devices is not permitted in the concert hall.

### PROGRAM

**Four Biblical Settings** ..... Emma Lou Diemer (1927-2024)

*Psalm 90*

*Psalm 121*

*Isaiah 11:1 (Variations on "Jesu, meine Freude")*

*Isaiah 35:1*

**Passauer Orgelbü** ..... Ruth Zechlin (1926-2007)

*Choralvorspiel (Passauer Kreuzchoral)*

*Praeludium (Marienmusik)*

**FURHİPÄ (2025)** ..... Kat Farn

*World premiere*

### INTERMISSION

**nur ein klang (6) (2010)** ..... Eva-Maria Houben

**Paix** ..... Jeanne Demessieux (1921-1968)

*from Sept Méditations sur le Saint-Esprit, op. 6, no. 6*

**Sacred and Hallowed Fire (2013)** ..... Cecilia McDowall

## Program Notes

Every generation of organ composer has included those who sought to expand the expressive possibilities of the instrument. At one time, the works of Buxtehude, Franck, and Messiaen were in turn representative of the avant-garde in organ composition. In the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, musicians have continued to experiment with yet-untapped potential hidden within the organ's tonal and mechanical resources. This program investigates a variety of experimental styles and features the contributions of several underappreciated composers of the recent past. I am especially pleased to feature the music of living composers, as well as a world premiere. The frontier of the organ is still open!

I had the good fortune to meet **Emma Lou Diemer** at her home in Santa Barbara in 2019, when she graciously hosted and shared stories and music with me for several hours. Her death in 2024 was a great loss for contemporary organ composition. Born in Kansas City, Missouri, she grew up in Warrensburg, a small college town (now home to Quimby Pipe Organs). She earned degrees from the Yale School of Music and the Eastman School of Music, studying with Paul Hindemith and Howard Hanson, among others. Her teaching career centered on her twenty-year tenure at UC Santa Barbara, where she co-founded the electronic music studio. Diemer's work is characterized primarily by its diversity: she never settled into any stylistic "camp," working comfortably with twelve-tone techniques, electronics, and tonal harmony. The most distinctive element of her music is her use of rhythm, employing ever-shifting groups that provide a hint of a groove without ever settling into regularity.

The *Four Biblical Settings* were written in 1992 and premiered by Sandra Soderlund. Each movement is inspired by a passage in the Hebrew Bible. The first draws from Psalm 90, which is concerned with God's anger and wrath; the psalmist prays for God's compassion and inspiration. The music is repetitive and energetic, with dissonant harmonies reinforced by a predominating D-minor tonality. Diemer instructs the performer to employ the crescendo pedal, which adds or takes away stops, to create rapid swells of volume—here on the Fritts, we lack a crescendo pedal, so the changes are accomplished using the sequencer. Movement two explores the idea of the protective God of Psalm 121 ("I lift my eyes to the hills—from where will my help come?"). The musical structure forms an arch, with rising and falling gestures articulating a crescendo to a fortissimo before returning to quiet. The third movement is a very free set of "variations" on the Lutheran hymn "Jesu, meine Freude" (Jesus, my joy); these are not traditional variations, but rather a stained-glass mosaic of musical fragments. Listen for the descending minor scale that forms the tune's opening phrase. Diemer connects this melody to the opening line of Isaiah 11: "A shoot shall grow out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots." The final section of the suite is a brilliant toccata that perfectly displays Diemer's special approach to harmony and rhythm. "The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom" inspires a great flowering of ideas that span the entire keyboard and all the instrument's tonal resources.

**Ruth Zechlin** was a German composer and teacher active for over 50 years. She was educated in Leipzig, studying with Johann Nepomuk David and Karl Staube, before being appointed to the faculty of the Hanns Eisler Academy of Music in 1950. She later moved to Bavaria and eventually settled in Munich. Her large output totals over 300 works, few of which are performed today because of her willingness to use dissonant harmonies, sound clusters, and aleatoric techniques. I am grateful to Carson Cooman for sharing the music presented today with me, and I look forward to discovering more of her music in the future. The *Passauer Orgelbüchlein* (Little Organ Book of Passau) was written in 2003 and comprises four movements inspired by the church music of the titular Bavarian city. I have selected two movements from the set: first, the "Kreuzchoral," is a chorale prelude for Holy Week (*kreuz* being the German for "cross"). This slow piece employs shimmering harmonies based on fourths that accompany a highly-decorated melody full of grace notes. The second is a prelude based on a litany for the Virgin Mary, played in the pedals. This movement features clusters played by the hands, contrasted with an echo reminiscent of bells.

**Kat Farn** commented on one of my YouTube uploads asking if she could write me a piece—it was easy to say yes, because I had already heard some of her intriguing compositions. This work was completed almost a year ago, so it has waited patiently for its premiere. I hope you enjoy the fun colors and humorous ideas contained within. The following are Kat's words about the music and herself.

*furhipq* is the reconstructed Proto-Germanic term for a generic forest. The left hand (and pedal if used) in this piece take on the role of the vast network of roots found under a forest floor, while the right hand serves to ornament this network in the form of trees (larger staccato chords), and smaller plants (fragmented melodic gestures). This was the plan, but I got bored halfway through and it turned into something else.

Kat Farn (she/they) is an organist, composer, and harpsichordist from Sheffield, England. She is studying composition at Birmingham Conservatoire with Andrew Toovey and Howard Skempton and is currently director of music, composer-in-residence, and organist at St Mary's, Handsworth. Kat specializes in contemporary performance and improvisation, championing living composers, especially those of the LGBTQIA+ community. Kat has performed around the UK and France and has performed and recorded several world and UK premieres.

I first encountered **Eva-Maria Houben** and her music via my dear friend and colleague Doug Farrand. I have since maintained a deep relationship with her work, and she was kind enough to write the piece *de stille freeden* for me in 2017. Houben is a German composer, organist, and teacher long associated with the Wandelweiser collective, a loose organization of musicians inspired by the provocations of John Cage and his work. Educated at the Folkwang-Musikhochschule Essen, the Gerhard-Mercator-Universität Duisburg, and the Robert-Schumann-Hochschule Düsseldorf, Houben has composed and performed prolifically for a variety of instruments, but especially the organ. From 1993 to 2021, she lectured at Dortmund University's Institute for Music and Musical Research. *nur ein klang (6)* is the last of a set of works all with the title “only one sound.” This piece is comprised of two chords developed by manipulating the stops. The first chord is sounded and developed by drawing additional stops, sometimes only partway, adding noise or other unusual features to color the timbre. This kind of effect is possibly only on instruments like this one, where the stops are drawn mechanically rather than electrically. After a time, the second chord will be sounded, and the first will disappear. Gradually, the second chord will itself disperse into silence.

French composer and organ virtuoso **Jeanne Demessieux** was a one-time favorite of the pedagogue Marcel Dupré, and she advanced his ultra-virtuosic compositional style into new harmonic and textural domains. Her music is famously challenging and generally requires an exceptional pedal technique—her *Six Etudes* are all pedal etudes of the highest difficulty. During her career, she served La Madeleine in Paris and gave over 700 concerts, including multiple U.S. tours. She was the first person to record the entire organ works of César Franck, for which she won a Grand Prix du Disque. Sadly, her compositional and recording output was curtailed by her early death from throat cancer. The *Seven Meditations on the Holy Spirit* were written between 1945 and 1947 at the prompting of Dupré, though they seem more inspired by the mysticism of Messiaen than her mentor (Messiaen's work *Les Corps Glorieux* is concerned with similar subjects and shares some interesting musical similarities). The sixth movement, “Paix” (Peace), was one Demessieux performed regularly during her 1955 U.S. tour. It presents an unusual take on the idea of peace, featuring a relentless sequence of repeated eighth notes. Complex harmonies, coloring major harmonies with dissonant minor seconds, swirl around in the air as the texture undulates continuously. The performer is required to access the entire range of both manual and pedal keyboards, often straining to reach the extremes for which Demessieux calls. The piece ends with the lowest and some of the highest keys held, leaving an enormous gap in between—this space transforms the written C major chord into something else entirely. I leave it to the listener to find the sacred piece hidden within.

The program closes with *Sacred and Hallowed Fire* by English composer **Cecilia McDowall**. She is best-known for her choral music but has composed a significant number of organ works for liturgical and concert settings. McDowall's compositional career began when she was in her 40s after spending her early professional years as a music teacher at the Yehudi Menuhin School and Trinity College of Music. The work heard today is the second in a trilogy of pieces based on the metaphysical poetry of George Herbert (1593-1633). It was written in 2013 to honor the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Harrison and Harrison organ builders. Bold gestures (to me suggesting leaping flames) present uncompromisingly dissonant harmonies that persist even in the quietest moments. As William Fox notes in his recording of McDowall's organ music, “Even the hushed, whispered chords...seem threatening.” The God Herbert describes in his poetry is of overwhelming scope and power, and McDowall expressed awe and terror from the first cascade of pedal tones to the final flourish.

Blest Order, which in power dost so excell,  
That with th' one hand thou liftest to the sky,  
And with the other throwest down to hell  
In thy just censures; fain would I draw nigh,  
Fain put thee on, exchanging my lay-sword  
For that of th' holy word.

But thou art fire, sacred and hallow'd fire;  
And I but earth and clay: should I presume  
To wear thy habit, the severe attire  
My slender compositions might consume.  
I am both foul and brittle; much unfit  
To deal in holy Writ.

## About the Performer

**Justin J. Murphy-Mancini** is a keyboardist and composer whose artistry spans centuries of repertoire, captivating audiences where musical tradition and innovation collide. Performing regularly as an organist, harpsichordist, and collaborative pianist, Jay presents imaginative programs that juxtapose beloved masterworks with underrepresented voices, often highlighting the music of the Renaissance, 19<sup>th</sup>-century America, and 20<sup>th</sup>-century France. A committed advocate for living composers, he has premiered more than a dozen new works for organ and harpsichord since 2011 and is a noted interpreter of music by Emma Lou Diemer and Eva-Maria Houben.

Jay can be heard on recordings released by Marginal Frequency, Another Timbre, and Mayor Tacoghost. His debut solo album, *Organ Music in New England: Cultivating a Living Tradition* (Acis), surveys American organ music from the early Federal period to the present day on the historic 1834 Joseph Alley organ at the First Religious Society (Unitarian Universalist) in Newburyport, Massachusetts. Through his YouTube channel (@j\_murphy-mancini), Jay has made accessible a wide array of seldom-heard works, including several recordings of music by Florence Price and Modesta Bor, reaching listeners around the world. As a composer, Jay inhabits accessible and avant-garde domains equally, writing for both professional and amateur musicians. His works have been performed by Ensemble SurPlus, the Callithumpian Consort, members of the Mivos Quartet, and TAK. Much of his compositional inspiration arises from early medieval texts and themes, particularly from Anglo-Saxon England. Current projects include a large-scale organ work and new choral settings for the concert stage.

A dedicated pedagogue, Jay is the inaugural Paul Fritts Endowed Chair in Organ Studies and Performance at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Washington, where he also serves as University Organist and accompanist to the Choral Union. He has previously served on the faculty of the University of Southern Maine and held lectureships at the University of California, San Diego. Jay's career as a church musician spans more than two decades and includes positions in Episcopal, Methodist, United Church of Christ, and Unitarian Universalist congregations across the United States. From 2019-2024, he was Director of Church Music at the First Religious Society in Newburyport, where he directed the Candlelight Chorale and curated the Jean C. Wilson Music Series. He remains active in sacred music throughout the Puget Sound region.

At the age of four, Jay began piano studies before pursuing organ and double bass. His early mentors include Galina Gertsenzon, Cheryl Wadsworth, Lynn Lovell, Domenick Fiore, Adrienne Kim, and Nicolas Scherzinger. Jay later earned degrees in organ performance, composition, historical keyboards, and philosophy from Oberlin College and Conservatory of Music, studying with Jack Mitchener, Josh Levine, Webb Wiggins, Marie-Louise Langlais, Steven Plank, and Lisa Goode Crawford. Additionally, Jay holds a Ph.D. in composition from the University of California, San Diego, where his principal teachers were Katharina Rosenberger, Natacha Diels, and Rand Steiger, and has also undertaken post-graduate study with Christian Lane and Margaret Irwin-Brandon.

## About the Organ Builder

Since the founding of the company in 1979, Paul Fritts & Co. Organ Builders has built fifty-three instruments. The team has devoted considerable time researching and practicing the techniques developed by the finest organ builders working in the Netherlands, Germany, Spain, Mexico, France, and the United States with an emphasis on the so-called Golden Age period of organ building. Organ building during these early times reached a very high level of sophistication, particularly when we study techniques of pipe construction and voicing. Elegant speech combined with a full yet sweet and colorful tone captivates the listener. The research also includes careful observations of the acoustical properties of the rooms in which the pipes speak; a key aspect to consider as one evaluates the sound of an organ. These experiences, together with the extensive expertise found within the workshop, contribute to each new project. The primary mission is to craft instruments that today's players and audiences will love and cherish.

Recent work has reflected a desire to expand further the range of the instruments while maintaining high musical standards within a meaningful and useful style. For the most part, this involves building larger, more expansive projects with additional features that broaden the musical scope of the organs. Among their recently completed projects is a seventy-stop organ in the Basilica on the campus of The University of Notre Dame in Indiana, and a sixty-three-stop instrument for Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in New York City will be installed in 2026.

There are currently eight craftsmen working with Paul in the workshop. All design work along with the construction of the thousands of components (except for the electric blowers, electronic pre-set systems, and small hardware items) is done in-house. The establishment of the pipe shop in 1983 completed this vision for the company, enabling personalized attention to the most important parts of the organs. The workshop itself, located just ten blocks from PLU, features a beautiful timber-framed structure with sufficient height and space for even the largest organs to be assembled prior to dismantling and shipment.

**Disposition of the Gottfried and Mary Fuchs Organ**  
 Lagerquist Concert Hall, Mary Baker Russell Music Building  
 Pacific Lutheran University  
 Tacoma, WA

**Built by Paul Fritts & Co. 1998**

Great		Positive		Swell	
Praestant (Gis)	16'	Praestant (F)	8'	Quintadena	16'
Octave	8'	Gedackt	8'	Principal	8'
Rohrflöte	8'	Octave	4'	Bourdon	8'
Spielflöte	8'	Rohrflöte	4'	Viole de Gambe	8'
Salicional	8'	Octave	2'	Voix Celeste (c")	8'
Octave	4'	Waldflöte	2'	Octave	4'
Spitzflöte	4'	Nasat	1 1/3'	Koppelflöte	4'
Quinte	2 2/3'	Sesquialter	II	Nasard	2 2/3'
Octave	2'	Scharff	IV-VII	Gemshorn	2'
Cornet	V	Fagott	16'	Tierce	1 3/5'
Mixture	V-VII	Trompete	8'	Mixture	V-VII
Trompete	16'	Dulcian	8'	Trompete	8'
Trompete	8'			Hautbois	8'
Baarpfeife	8'			Voix Humaine	8'
				Schalmey	4'
Pedal					
Subbaß	32'	Praestant	16'	Posaune	32'
Subbaß	16'	Octave	8'	Posaune	16'
Gedackt	8'	Octave	4'	Trompete	8'
Nachthorn	2'	Mixture	V-VII	Trompete	4'
				Cornett	2'
<b>Couplers:</b>	Positive/Great Swell/Great Swell/Positive Great/Pedal Positive/Pedal Swell/Pedal	<b>Key Action:</b> Direct Mechanical, suspended			
		<b>Manual compass:</b> 58 notes (C-a''')			
		<b>Pedal compass:</b> 30 notes (C-f')			
		<b>Temperament:</b> Kellner			
<b>Other:</b>	Tremulants Wind Stabilizer				

For pictures of the organ, please visit the organ builder's website at [www.frittsorgan.com](http://www.frittsorgan.com). For more information about the organ, the organ program at PLU, and the Richard D. Moe Organ Series, please visit [www.plu.edu/organ](http://www.plu.edu/organ).

**2025-2026 Richard D. Moe Organ Recital Series**  
 Lagerquist Concert Hall, Mary Baker Russell Music Building  
 Pacific Lutheran University  
 Angela Kraft Cross, Sunday, September 28, 2025, 3pm  
 Julia Brown, Sunday, November 9, 2025, 3pm  
 Justin J. Murphy-Mancini, Sunday, February 8, 2026, 3pm  
 Stephen Price, Sunday, April 19, 2026, 3pm

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