

MUSIC AT  ST. PHILIP

2026 SUMMER ORGAN SERIES



PRESENTING PETR EBEN'S

"Labyrinth of the World and Paradise of the Heart"

Bryan Anderson, Organist

Dr. Louis Markos, Narrator

Sunday | **August 16, 2026** | 3:00 pm

2:30 pm | Pre-Concert Lecture

PROGRAM

Opening audience chorale: "Von Gott will ich nicht lassen"



1 From God shall naught di - vide me, For He is true for aye,
2 For when the world is pass - ing With all its pomp and pride,
3 For such His will who made us; The Fa - ther seeks our good;



And on my path will guide me, Who else should of - ten stray;
All we were here a - mass - ing No long - er may a - bide;
The Son hath grace to aid us, And save us by His blood;



His ev - er boun - teous hand By night and day is heed - ful,
But in our earth - ly bed, Where soft - ly we are sleep - ing,
His Spi - rit rules our ways, By faith in us a - bid - ing,



And gives me what is need - ful, Wher - e'er I go or stand.
God hath us in His keep - ing, To wake us from the dead.
To heaven our foot - steps guid - ing; To Him be thanks and praise.

- I. Prologue (Organ)
- II. View of the World
- III. Masks
- IV. The Arrows of Death
- V. The Sweet Chains of Love
- VI. The Ceremony of the Academy
- VII. The Ignorance of the Learned
- VIII. The Wheel of Fortune
- IX. The Crimes of Humanity

Audience chorale: "Es spricht der unweisen Mund"



1 The mouth of fools doth God con - fess, But while their lips draw nigh Him,
2 The Lord looked from His heaven - ly throne On all man - kind be - low Him,
3 But none there was who walked with God For all a - side had slid - den,



Their heart is full of wick - ed - ness, And all their deeds de - ny Him,
To see if there were a - ny one Who tru - ly sought to know Him,
De - lu - sive paths of fol - ly trod, And fol - lowed lusts for - bid - den;



Cor - rupt are they, and ev - 'ry one A - bom - i - na - ble
And all his un - der - stand - ing bent To search His ho - ly
Not one there was who prac - ticed good, Though ma - ny deemed, in



works hath done; There is not one well - do - er.
Word, in - tent To do His will in ear - nest.
haught - y mood, Their deeds to God were pleas - ing.

X. False Promise of a Golden Age

XI. Vanity of Vanities

XII. Horror and Swooning

XIII. The Return to God

XIV. Epilogue (Organ)

PROGRAM NOTE

Petr Eben engaged with the "Labyrinth" text throughout his life, first composing a string quartet with the same title in 1981, and later performing a series of organ improvisations on excerpts of the text, which he ultimately worked out as the composition heard today, published in 2002. In considering Comenius' text alongside his biography and that of Eben, one common theme is that of productive work during exile. We can think of Comenius, publishing a Czech hymnal and many other works during exile caused by religious conflicts; and we can think of Eben, writing sacred music for decades at the expense of his career under communist authorities. Eben himself writes: "What I find most moving about Comenius' attitude is his tireless work to improve this world. In this he can serve as an example even for our present society: to preserve one's own critical view of, and

separation from, this world, but to devote all one's powers to improving it." Here there is an echo of Jeremiah 29:7: "...seek the welfare of the city [Babylon] where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare." Eben's work always shows him to be not a retreating pietist but a Christian optimist, convinced of the reality of a serene and grateful inner life even in the constant presence of societal rots and falsehoods.

Most of the musical thematic material Eben uses in this cycle is drawn from Lutheran and Bohemian chorales, chosen for the associations of their texts. Since we may be less familiar with their texts, we will sing two of them as "audience chorales" at the junctures of their appearances. The first is "Von Gott will ich nicht lassen," which we will sing before the Prologue. This chorale appears in increasingly fragmented and distorted iterations through the first four movements. Towards the end of the fifth, "The Sweet Chains of Love," a new major theme is stated, which is a tune that seems to have been composed by Jan Comenius for his 1659 *Kancional for the Unitas Fratrum* (later the Moravian Church) of which he was bishop. *This theme does not appear to be in much modern use, but the Czech title translates to "The love of God and the life of love."* Similar to the first example, Eben works this theme across multiple subsequent movements, introducing rhythmic and intervallic distortions until, by the ninth movement, the chorale melody has disappeared.

Then, before the tenth movement, "False Promise of a Golden Age," we will sing the 1524 Johann Walter chorale which sets Martin Luther's paraphrase of Psalm 14, "Es spricht der unweisen Mund wohl." This is the third main melodic theme of the cycle, explored in the tenth and eleventh movements. Following these, in the twelfth movement, "Horror and Swooning," a different theme is hinted at, and finally stated plainly in "The Return to God." This theme is "O Lamm Gottes, unschuldig," the German version of the Agnus Dei: "O Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us." Finally, in the short "Epilogue" which closes the cycle, one final melody appears, "Du höchstes Licht," a chorale of the Bohemian Brethren in Comenius' tradition. The text reads: "Thou highest light, day without end, thou God and my most faithful Lord, from thee the light of grace goes forth and brightly shines for all the earth. He is the light of all the world, in whom men clearly may behold the bright and beauteous light of day that brings them blessing and all joy."



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