

Graeme Shields celebrates composer Robert Ashley

The Diapason // 13 February 2020

Graeme Shields will present a program marking the 90th birthday of composer **Robert Ashley**, “Drones, Weights, & Ashley’s Date,” March 28, at **First Congregational Church**, Ann Arbor, Michigan. The program will feature Ashley’s only work for organ, *The Entrance*, along with music by composers with ties to Michigan and Ashley.

Born in Ann Arbor, Robert Ashley studied at the University of Michigan with Ross Lee Finney and forged a reputation built on his multi-disciplinary projects, use of electronics, and extended techniques. In the 1960s, Ashley co-founded the ONCE Festival in Ann Arbor alongside other local composers and artists, featuring new music and art. It was during this time that he wrote *The Entrance*.

Graeme Shields is organ scholar for Calvary Episcopal Church, Cincinnati, Ohio. He has performed contemporary organ concerts across the American Midwest and is a founding member of Vital Organ Project (VOP), a composer-organist duo that facilitates the creation and performance of new music featuring the pipe organ. VOP has been the catalyst for more than 15 world premieres and over 20 concert events since its inception in 2017, including an 8-hour performance of John Cage’s *Organ2/ASLSP*.

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Organist To Perform 4-Page Piece By John Cage Over 8 Hours

by Cara Lieurance // WMUK // 26 July 2019

[Graeme Shields](#), co-founder of the [Vital Organ Project](#), will offer a free public performance of *Organ2/ASLAP* (As Slow As Possible) at First Congregational Church of Kalamazoo on Saturday, Jul 27, beginning at 1 pm. (The public is free to come and go at will during the performance.) Shields has trained himself to stretch out the four-page piece into an 8-hour performance, which, he tells Cara Lieurance, isn’t the longest performance that has been attempted. There is an on-going performance in Halberstadt, Germany at St. Burchardi Church that began in 2001, and is expected to last 639 years.

Shields talks about John Cage’s groundbreaking, visionary works which changed our perception of music, and about how he has learned to hold the sonorities of *As Slow As Possible* for durations of 15 and 20 minutes before changing to the following notes. When changes happen that far apart, they become extremely potent. He suggests that people drop in as they can, and listen for at least one sonority change to see what it’s like.

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Graeme Shields Tours New Music And A Build-It-Yourself Organ

by Cara Lieurance // WMUK // 27 September 2018

[Graeme Shields](#), a composer and organist who recently completed a master's degree in composition at the Western Michigan University School of Music, tells Cara Lieurance about his upcoming solo recital at [Milwood United Methodist Church](#), at 3 pm on Sunday, Sep 30.

It's a showcase for two of his current passions: new music written for organ, including the premiere of his work "...And music shall untune the sky", and a recently-developed "kid's organ."

The [Orgelkids](#) instrument is a build-it-yourself organ that allows children and anyone to gain an understanding of how the "king of instruments" really works.

Shields will feature the Orgelkids instrument in his Milwood recital and on Friday, Oct 5, in an Art Hop event at [Sarkozy Bakery](#).

From the radio interview:

"To push the [organ] forward and to push the repertoire forward, it takes someone who both loves the instrument and who loves new music, and I guess you're uniquely qualified."

-Cara Lieurance WMUK

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Two 20-somethings hope to popularize pipe organ in Colorado Springs

by Jennifer Mulson // The Gazette // 5 July 2018

https://gazette.com/two--somethings-hope-to-popularize-pipe-organ-in-colorado/article_d667a096-7b20-11e8-9b2b-878425cea104.html

What comes to mind when you read the words "pipe organ"?

Perhaps a Sunday morning in church where the musician is a lady in her 70s with a tidy white bun and glasses perched on the tip of her nose. You wouldn't be wrong. That image exists for a reason. But there's a whole other genre of younger musicians and composers hoping to surf the rising popularity of pipe organs.

Graeme Shields and Tyler Jameson Pimm are two. More than a year ago, the 20-somethings founded Vital Organ Project as a way to revitalize the instrument's reputation. Shields will bring the project to First Congregational Church on Sunday for a free performance.

"What my concern and Tyler's is, is that the organ has this stereotype that it's only applicable to one type of music and one type of audience, and if a concert will be all liturgical music," Shields said. "In fact, a lot of the organ's repertoire is not religious music."

The pipe organ is much more impressive than any layperson might realize. Shields praises it as the original synthesizer with a wide range of choices in composition.

"Organists have more control over how a piece is played than other performers do, like a violinist or pianist, which is part of what drew me to the organ at a young age and as a composer," he said.

All of Sunday's featured works will be by living composers, including Shields, Jameson Pimm, Naji Hakim and Samuel Adler.

"A lot of people think of organ music and European men, which is a huge part of the organ's repertoire, but music is still being written today," Shields said.

While Shields knows a pipe organ concert rarely will draw large crowds, he hopes the future is bright.

"Both Tyler and I are members of the American Guild of Organists, and they have quite a thriving population of young organists as opposed to what their attendance was in the past," he said. "A number of young organists are up-and-coming hard workers and passionate about what they do."

by Jennifer Mulson
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Organ Project to kick off with Reformation celebration

Holland Sentinel // 13 October 2017

The inaugural performance of a touring organ project will premiere at 7 p.m. Friday, Oct. 20, at Peace Lutheran Church in South Haven.

Pieces by Bach, Handel, Praetorius and Brahms anchor an evening celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. They will be interspersed with modern works, one of which uses electronic sounds to accompany the organ.

"The goal is to expose audiences to a broader variety," said Graeme Shields, the music director at Peace and co-founder of the Vital Organ Project. "Many people think of organ music as something that came from old, dead, white men. Actually, the organ is a very versatile instrument — and could have a prominent role in the modern music world."

The Vital Organ Project hopes to reform and reshape that perception with performances at churches in Illinois, Minnesota and Wisconsin.

The recital begins and ends with "A Mighty Fortress is Our God," the signal sound of Martin Luther, the German monk credited with starting the Reformation.

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Summer musicale at Cambridge Lutheran

Isanti County News // 12 June 2015

https://www.hometownsource.com/isanti_county_news/news/local/summer-musicale-at-cambridge-lutheran/article_ea4739ca-0482-5746-8f80-8515a18b507d.html

Cambridge Lutheran Church, 621 Old North Main St., presents a unique opportunity to hear some fine organ and piano music, as well as vocal and instrumental solo pieces, performed by a variety of very talented musicians.

Pairing some remarkable young, new talent with veteran performers, well known on the Cambridge music scene, these concerts present an array of wonderful music, enjoyable to everyone. These concerts will feature especially, the musical compositions of Graeme Shields, talented Cambridge Lutheran organist, who has organized the performances. The concerts are free and open to the public, with a good will donation option. Plan now to attend these four very exciting weekend concerts.

Of special note, the July 17 and July 18 concerts will feature some world premieres: a trumpet and organ piece by Graeme Shields, and a Norwegian piano sonata, by Ryan Johnson, who will be in attendance. Additionally, we will hear a “sneak peek” of a major suite for piano by Shields, as the composer plays one or two of its movements.

July 17, 7 p.m.: “Organ Plus” Concert with Mary Kay O’Neill, Tyler Pimm, and Michael Williams, trumpet, and Graeme Shields.

July 18, 7 p.m.: “Piano Plus” Concert with Courtney Ellian, Luke Renter on Saxophone, and Graeme Shields.

July 25, 2 p.m.: “Local Talent” Concert with Mike Williams, Marlys Olson, Arne Everson, Mary Kay O’Neill, Graeme Shields and others.

July 26, 2 p.m.: “Excerpts” Concert with Signe Reistad, mezzo soprano, and Graeme Shields, piano, performing movements of large-scale works from operas, musicals, and song cycles. Reistad is a recent graduate of St. Olaf College. Shields is a recent graduate of the University of Minnesota, Duluth.

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