



INSPIRATIONS. Katelyn Emerson, organist. III/79 Andover organ (Opus 114, 2007) of Christ Lutheran Church, Baltimore, Md. Pro Organo CD7288. ProOrgano.com. This is another top-drawer recording from one of our brightest rising stars. Indeed, “rising star” may no longer apply: Katelyn Emerson is already well above the horizon, shining brilliantly. One trusts that a long and unclouded day stretches before her. *Inspirations* is a joy to

listen to, as well as a wonderful study in programming, interpretation, and registration. Artist, instrument, repertoire, and production come together in one 76-minute-long triumph.

Emerson knows how to grab your attention at the very first moment of a piece. Not every organist grasps the importance of this all-important, Zen-like instant when the silence is broken, a choice is made, the first “let there be light” is spoken. With every track on this CD, one knows, immediately, that Emerson has something to say, and knows how to say it, and why.

The program opens with a recent work by Rachel Laurin, one of the most important organ composers on the current scene (see p. 20 in this issue). *Finale*, Op. 78, was commissioned by the Washington, D.C., AGO Foundation and premiered in 2017. (The title alludes to the cessation of the foundation—this commission was its swan song.)¹

Emerson opens the work—and the CD—with an arresting, thrilling plunge directly into this piece. The rush of positive energy is exhilarating. Here, as elsewhere in the program, Emerson presents us with the music itself. There are no gimmicks, no conceptual agendas to deal with. There is just the music, running joyously.

From Laurin we go to Horatio Parker,

with the third movement (*Allegretto*) of his Organ Sonata in E-flat, Op. 65. We hear the same complete technical mastery and clean musical fidelity that we did before. This is also true of the next four tracks, which give us Rheinberger’s Eighth Sonata in E Minor, Op. 132. Again, we are instantly engaged by the opening moment: here, a roaring pedal reed.

From there, we turn to Buxtehude and de Grigny, then wrap up with 20th-century French. Just after the Buxtehude, though, we get another bit of Romanticism, the *Meditation* of Edward Bairstow. The CD ends with Duruflé’s Opus 7—a well-traveled virtuoso’s calling card, to which Emerson does full justice. All of the stylistic turns in the program do their part to retain our interest as well. A great job all around.

Congratulations to Pro Organo for another fine recording and to Katelyn Emerson, to whose growing stature this recording so amply attests.

1. Information on *Finale* taken from the composer’s notes, reproduced in the booklet accompanying the CD.