

NEWS RELEASE

Wilfrid Laurier
University



Laurier professor celebrates Bach by playing complete organ works

Composer's death marked by recitals in Cambridge, Toronto, Michigan and Germany

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WATERLOO – The year 2000 marks the 250th anniversary of renowned composer Johann Sebastian Bach's death and Wilfrid Laurier University music professor Jan Overduin is marking the occasion by performing two concert series of the composer's works. Overduin will tackle Bach's complete organ works in a series of 18 concerts in Cambridge and will perform Bach's last major composition, *The Art of Fugue*, throughout Germany, in Toronto and in Michigan.

A prolific 18th-century composer, Bach is best known for his organ music, of which Overduin is a great fan. He will perform Bach's complete organ works in a series of 18 concerts beginning in March. The concerts will be held on Sundays at 4 p.m. in St. Peters Lutheran Church in Cambridge. They will be performed using an organ built in 1973 by one of Canada's most celebrated organ builders, Helmuth Wolf, and modeled after instruments of North Germany in Bach's time.

The final concert will feature *The Art of Fugue*, Bach's last great work, which Overduin has been invited to play in its entirety throughout Germany this fall. He will perform in Celle, Bremen, Hamburg, Berlin, Stuttgart, Hannover and Dannenberg during the month of September. He will also perform at the St. James Cathedral in Toronto on March 14 and in Ann Arbor, Michigan, on June 26. In addition to the numerous concerts he will be performing throughout the year, he will also play *The Art of Fugue* during Laurier's Bach Week from March 19 to 26.

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"*The Art of Fugue* is somewhat unusual in that it's both a very intellectual and a deeply emotional work. It's an hour and half of music in one key, all based on the same theme," says Overduin. "I have always loved this piece and I've decided to dedicate the rest of my life to it. I would rather play *The Art of Fugue* than anything else."

Overduin is using a six-month sabbatical from Laurier not only to prepare Bach's organ works, but also to complete a new organ edition of *The Art of Fugue*. Only three organ editions exist, two of which are out of print. According to Overduin, the current editions take a romantic approach to the piece, using pedals to strengthen the bass line as in later music. He is taking a more authentic approach, using pedals optionally to subtly reinforce inner voices except for the 'mirror' or invertible fugues, which cannot be played with just two hands.

Supported by the Laurier Faculty of Music, the Royal Canadian College of Organists and St. Peters Church, the Cambridge concerts cost \$5 each or \$75 for the entire series. A complete list of concert dates and performance pieces is available. For more information on the Cambridge concert series, please contact Doug Brownlee of the Royal Canadian College of Organists at (519) 576-6301.