

**Matthias Havinga**

Friday, September 7, 2018 at 8:00 pm  
Anabel Taylor Chapel,  
Cornell University

### *About the program*

Sweelinck's Chromatic Fantasy was so popular throughout Europe that copies of it were found all over the continent. Its exciting chromatic theme and dramatic development makes this piece stand out even among Sweelinck's excellent oeuvre.

Jacques van Oortmerssen's many activities included composition. The selection played in this program includes some of his – in my view - best pieces. In Psalms 72 and 77, Van Oortmerssen's admiration for the French 20th century organ school is evident. With their modal setup, the Genevan psalm melodies – the major hymn repertoire in the Dutch protestant church for centuries – are very suited for this kind of treatment. Psalm 72 is in its harmonic language reminiscent of both Duruflé and Alain, composers held in high regard by Van Oortmerssen. Psalm 77's theme could remind one of Alain's famous Litanies, but the theme is a lot closer to Marcel Dupré's Litanie from 'Cortège et Litanie'. In fact, its rhythm is exactly the same as the second half of Dupré's Litanie theme. Both in this piece and 'Nun ruhen alle Wälder', Van Oortmerssen's predilection for tonal, minimal music-like structures is evident. The consequent texture and soothing harmonies of the evening hymn 'Nun ruhen alle Wälder' make this piece a favorite of many audiences.

The theme of this festival – the Organ in the Global Baroque – is of course reflected at best in the works of Johann Sebastian Bach, who so convincingly forged influences from Italy, France and Germany into his own unique style. The idea to create organ transcriptions of Italian concertos came to Bach via his employer, the Duke of Sachsen-Weimar, who in his turn picked up the idea in Amsterdam. Jan Jacob de Graaf, organist of the Nieuwe Kerk there, used to play the newest Italian concertos by heart – they were printed in Amsterdam, not in Italy – on the great organ of the Nieuwe Kerk. The young duke was very impressed by what he heard and asked Bach to create similar pieces, resulting in among others this wonderful transcription of a Concerto in d by Antonio Vivaldi. With the Concerto as an 'Italian' part of this program, the other two pieces represent a lot of French influences in Bach's work. The very moving Allein Gott-setting is full of French ornaments, whereas the famous E-flat major Prelude unites elements from French, Italian and German music known to Bach.

All three Bach pieces in this program were close to the heart of Jacques van Oortmerssen, whose performance of especially the Allein Gott-choral in his Complete Bach CD-series is a monument to his musicality.