

TASO

THE AUGUST
SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA

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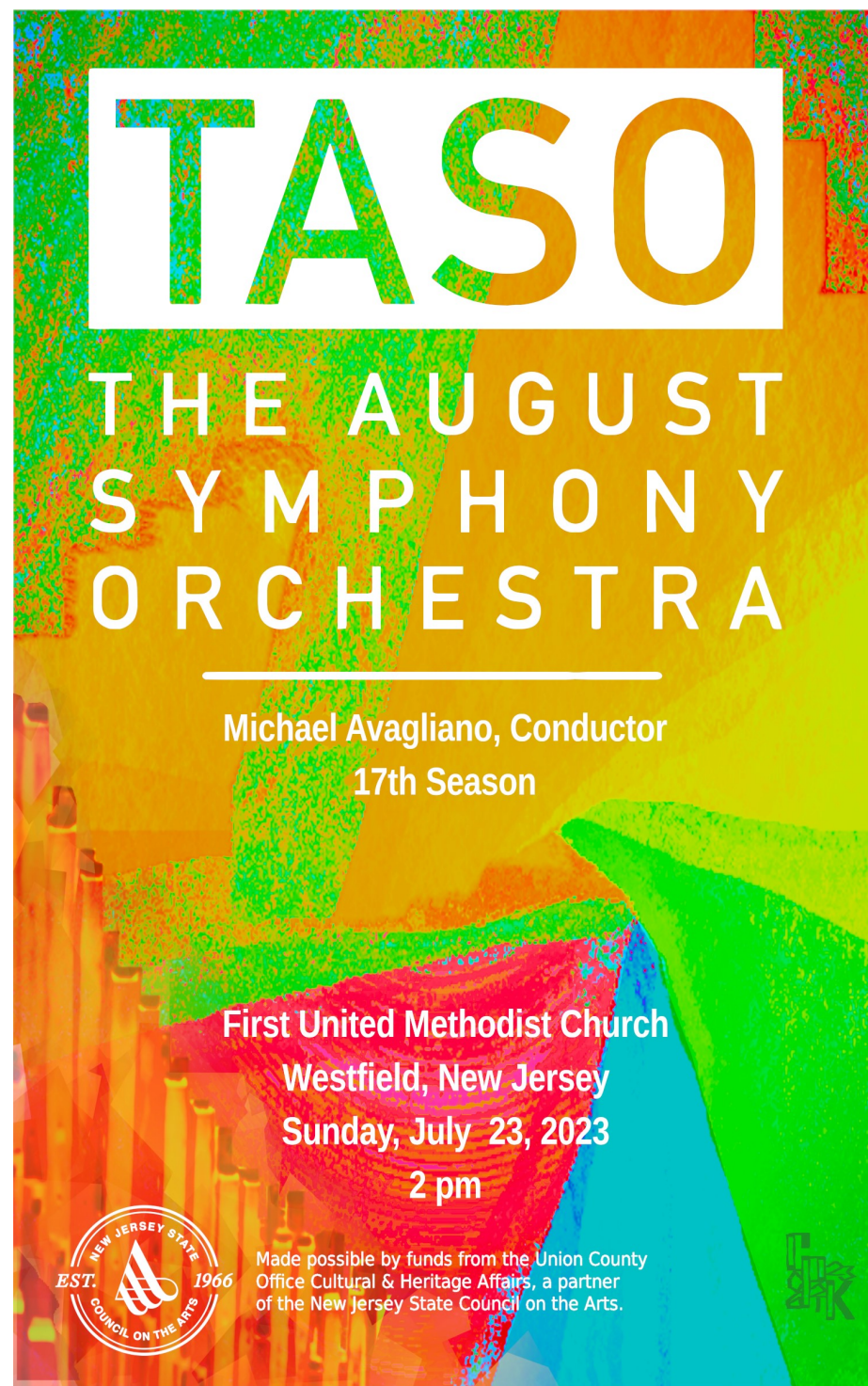
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TASO

THE AUGUST
SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA

Michael Avagliano, Conductor
17th Season

First United Methodist Church
Westfield, New Jersey
Sunday, July 23, 2023
2 pm

EST. 1966
NEW JERSEY STATE
COUNCIL ON THE ARTS

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The August Symphony Orchestra

Michael Avagliano, Conductor
Trent Johnson, Organ

Sunday, July 23, 2023
Celebrating our Seventeenth Season

Program:

Le Chasseur Maudit
(The Cursed Hunter) by César Franck

Elegy for Chernobyl—Trent Johnson

Organ Concerto HWV 292 in F Major,
Opus 4 No. 4.— G.F. Handel

Intermission

Symphony No. 3 in C Minor,
Op. 78 “Organ” — Saint-Saëns

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Michael Avagliano
Conductor/Music Director
The August Symphony



Special thanks to all those who made
this concert possible —

Michael Avagliano
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First United Methodist Church

The TASO Board, Janet Poland,
Theresa Hartmann and Emily Thomsen,
Martha Whiteley (PR and Outreach),
Cynthia Killian, Poster Design
and the over 60 dedicated musicians
who put in the long rehearsal times to
make this concert possible.

Music Director of The August Symphony since 2016, Michael Avagliano is obsessed with redefining what's possible for an orchestra. His focus on ambitious local collaborations and active community involvement has led to significant audience growth for the Somerset Symphony and the Summit Symphony Orchestra, both of which he also serves as music director. Largely inspired to become a conductor after a chance meeting with Leonard Bernstein, Avagliano continues to draw inspiration from the legendary maestro's legacies of exuberant musicianship and a devotion to broadening classical music audiences.

Towards those ends, Avagliano has maintained focus on musical excellence: during his tenure, the Somerset Symphony has twice been named runner-up for the annual American Prize in Orchestral Performance. He is additionally sought after as a guest conductor and has led over 15 orchestras across the United States and Europe, including the Bohuslav Martinu Philharmonic (Czech Republic), Pleven Philharmonic (Bulgaria), Scuola Popolare di Testaccio (Italy), Plainfield Symphony (NJ), and University of Oregon Symphony. In a March 2020 performance, Avagliano was praised for an "effective, powerful performance" (New York Classical Review) in leading the Bachanalia Chamber Orchestra at New York City's Merkin Hall.

When not leading orchestras, Mr. Avagliano turns his attention to mentoring the next generation of young conductors, imparting skills needed both on the podium and off. To train musicianship, he founded the annual International Conducting Masterclass in Stony Point, NY. Conversely, his online workshop Conducting the Interview focuses on career-building, teaching conductors significant skills in applying for positions as conductor and music director. One of the most comprehensive workshops of its kind, participants held mock interviews with a panel of industry professionals led by Henry Fogel, former president of the League of American Orchestras. Hoping to build upon the success of these initiatives and construct further ones, Avagliano co-founded the Performers Learning Alliance in 2020, a nonprofit organization dedicated to creating educational and performance opportunities for emerging artists.



Essex
County
Summer
Players
Orchestra

Nate White conducts
Bernstein's "Fancy Free" and other works

Sunday, Aug 6 @ 3:00

Livingston High School
30 Robert Harp Drive, Livingston



Program Notes
By Dr. Joseph Orchard

The works on today's program were all written not by composers who play or played organ, but by organists who compose or composed with great skill. For each of these four musicians, their skills at the organ preceded their achievements as composers. The king of instruments impacts their music in different ways. The instrument is central in all but one of the works and will leave a lasting impression.

The composer, teacher, and organist **César Franck** was born in a French part of Belgium, so he can be identified as a French composer. In addition, there is a heavy Germanic background on his mother's side, echoed to a lesser extent by his father. In his youth, Franck suffered from being musically gifted, resulting in some degree of exploitation. His career as a composer almost ended when none of his early works won awards, but it was reignited by the unexpected interest of some important composers.

Today's piece dates from long after all of that, being composed in 1882. Its title, *The Wild Horseman*, refers to a general trope in Germanic arts: a hunter who is being driven by demons. Goethe's *Faust* and Wagner's *Flying Dutchman* (and perhaps J.R.R. Tolkien's wraiths in *The Lord of the Rings*) are manifestations of this figure. The title also refers to a specific poem by the German 18th-century poet Gottfried August Bürger entitled *Der wilde Jäger*. The story related by Franck's work concerns a hunter who, in disdain for the communal Sunday morning worship, goes hunting. He soon finds himself being guided by two voices, one good, one evil. The evil urges him on to a point of no return. He becomes the hunted and is ultimately lost. Formally, Franck breaks the piece into four continuous sections: *Peaceful Sunday Landscape*, *The Hunt*, *The Curse*, and *The Demons' Chase*. Some of the orchestral effects are quite literal, including the reverence of the opening (suggesting inspiring songs), the discordant fanfares (suggesting a corrupted hunt), and the powerful driving rhythms (suggesting a possessed gallop).

The Orchestra

Michael Avagliano, Conductor

Violin 1

Evelyn Estava, ◦ *Bound Brook*
Barbara Bivin, *Rutherford*
Austin Candiddato, *Brooklyn, NY*
Valerie Cianciosi, *Verona*
Warren Hansen, *Mendham*
Dana Kerker, *South Orange*
Lillian Kessler, *Chatham*
Nadine Kuhl, *Garwood*
Naomi Shapiro, *Piscataway*
Len Tobias, *Monroe Twp*

Violin 2

Betsy Maliszewski, * *Chatham*
Christopher Basso, *Linden*
Katherine Egerton, *Fanwood*
Gene Ehrlich, *Westfield*
Joan Gillman, *Teaneck*
Mithil Mishra, *Edison*
Mary Moore, *Madison*
Ray Ocello, *Somerset*
Luba Schnable –Ungar, *Fanwood*
Michael Schneider, *Summit*
Angelina Silvester, *Westfield*
Ilona Wanner, *South Orange*
Christine Yin, *East Hanover*

Viola

Marty Gelfond, * *Manalapan*
Cynthia Killian, *Mendham*
Katherine Kolibas, *Belvidere*
Janet Poland, *Springfield*
Cindy Retotar, *Gillette*
Peggy Reynolds, *Jersey City*
Bri Vazquez Smith, *Morristown*

Cello

James Celestino, * *Basking Ridge*
Esther Chang, *Edison*
Colleen Helmacy, *Hop Bottom, PA*
Helen Kong, *Ocean*
Bjorn Oddens, *Westfield*
Joseph Orchard, *Union*
Leslie Sprout, *Morristown*
Carol Wooldredge, *Chatham*

Bass

Margaret Blewett, * *Lincoln Park*
Bill Beecher, *Morristown*
Marnix Godschalk, *Westfield*
Vince Maiolo, *Hillsborough*
Gennaro Marchese, *Sayreville*
Robert Whiteley, *Upper Montclair*

Flute

Emily Thomsen, * *Montville (on leave)*
Daniel Rath, * *Maplewood*
Cristabella Fortna, *Scotch Plains*

Piccolo

Alicia Delgado, *North Plainfield*

Oboe/English Horn

Megan Jadro, * *Leonardo*
Christian Carrillo, * *Somerville (on leave)*
Lynn Grice, *Maplewood*
Alan Kiss, *Lincoln Park (English Horn)*

Clarinet

Martha Boughner, * *West Caldwell*
Theresa Hartmann, *Lincoln Park*

Bass Clarinet

Alexis Silverman, *Clifton*

Bassoon

Karen Kelland, * *West Caldwell*
Samhita Tatavarty, *Basking Ridge*

Bassoon/Contrabassoon

Jeff La Marca, *Basking Ridge*

French Horn

Dana Bassett, *Hackettstown*
Connie Beneroff, *Morristown*
Rick Ober, *Morris Plains*
Libby Schwartz, *West Orange*

Trumpet

Rich Barrires, * *Stockholm*
Darrell Frydlewicz, *Rahway*
Tom McGee, *West Orange*
Justin Rothstein, *Newton*

Trombone

Eric Ruddick-Ferrat, *Newark*
Tobie Baldwin, *Bridgewater*
William Newrock, *West Orange*

Tuba

Bill Briggs, *Mine Hill*

Timpani

Evan Chertok, *Kinnelon*

Percussion

Helene Kaplan, *Basking Ridge*

Piano

Evan Sshwartzman, *Atlantic Highlands*
Mark Yolleck, *Montclair*

Short History of the Organs at FUMC Westfield

The Chancel Organ of the First United Methodist Church of Westfield was completed in 1959 by the Aeolian-Skinner Organ Company of Boston, MA. This instrument, which contains about 3500 pipes and 56 ranks is a sterling example of the "American Classic" style of the post-World-War-Two period. The large metal display pipes of the original 1910 Odell organ were refurbished and revoiced as the Pedal Contrabass 16' in the present instrument. The Hautbois 16' on the Swell and the lowest octave of the Rohrbass 16' were also retained. The chimes, purchased in 1955 by the Sanctuary Choir, were included in the organ. The manuals are voiced on a wind pressure of three inches while the pedal is voiced on a wind pressure of four inches. The specifications of the main organ were prepared by Joseph Whiteford, president of Aeolian-Skinner, and John Tyrrell, vice-president, in consultation with Wilma Jensen, the church organist at the time. Tonal finishing was under the direction of Arthur Birchall. Mrs. Jensen gave the dedication recital on Sunday, April 19, 1959.

Stops added in later years were the Pedal Bourdon 32', Pedal Bombarde 32' Pedal Bourdon 16', Festival Trompette Harmonique 8' voiced on 6" wind pressure and Open Wood 16', which compliments the principal Contrabass 16'. The Chancel organ contains 5 divisions including the Swell, Great, Choir, Pedal and Antiphonal along with 17 couplers, 12 General Pistons, separate manuals pistons, 6 Pedal Toe studs and 150 levels of solid state memory.

After 64 years of faithful service and modifications from electro-pneumatic to solid state logic control in 2007, the Chancel Organ, in an effort to return the instrument to its original sound and majesty, is currently undergoing several levels of restoration, division by division. This work is being made possible by donations and personal gifts from within and outside of FUMC Westfield.

The Isabelle Cherry Memorial Antiphonal organ by M. P. Möller, located in the sanctuary balcony, is made up of 12 ranks and 674 pipes and was installed in 1974. It can be played from both its own console and from the chancel organ console.

The Elegy for Chernobyl, written by **Trent Johnson**, scored for organ and strings, was commissioned by and written for an annual memorial concert that takes place in Kyiv, Ukraine. It was premiered at St. Nicholas Cathedral in Kyiv, also known as the National House of Organ and Chamber Music, and is dedicated to Ukrainian organist, Volodymyr Koshuba, who is the organist of the cathedral. The music was written in memory of those who perished in the nuclear accident that occurred in Chernobyl, Ukraine in 1986. The music is lyrical, emotional, and expresses positive hope and optimism for the future.

George Frideric Handel is easily the most senior composer represented today, with the greatest name recognition, as well. He was a man of the world, having spent a good deal of time in Germany, Italy, and England, soaking up musical styles wherever he went, and injecting those influences into his music.

Perusing through a biography of Handel, the term "organ concerto" appears frequently. Most often he would play such works between the acts of his major oratorios. They were typically a tour de force for the soloist, which was himself. In fact, in the concerto in F major, the soloist almost never stops playing. The purpose of these concertos was not merely that of showing off how well Handel could play, the genre, "organ concerto" was actually his invention--no one had written such music before. Another historical point: the work seems to owe little to the many concertos of maestro Antonio Vivaldi, because the solo is much more pervasive than in the Italian's. The more integrated texture of the last movement of this concerto displays the composer's skills as a brilliant fugal contrapuntist. It is also here that the orchestra has opportunities to shine.

The opus 4 organ concertos were collected and published by the composer's main publisher John Walsh in 1738. This particular concerto appeared in a performance of a revised version of the oratorio Esther three years earlier.

Camille Saint-Saëns, born in Paris the same year Franck's family moved there, was much more precocious. He made his debut at the age of 10, playing two major piano concertos from memory, while excelling in all his academic studies. At the age of 13, he began studies in organ and composition, capturing major prizes in both within four years. From thence, he remained a prolific composer and frequent performer, and did much to enrich French concert life. For one, he founded the Société Nationale de Musique in 1871 with the sole intention of performing "Ars gallica" (French works). Still, his musically conservative tendencies sometimes led 1871 with the sole intention of performing "Ars gallica" (French works). Still, his musically conservative tendencies sometimes led him to fall out of favor with his countrymen.

Also in 1871, the composer fled strife-torn Paris, to go to London. He struggled financially, but his skills and connections slowly helped him build a following. It was not long before he became quite popular, and he returned to England often. Fifteen years later, the Philharmonic Society commissioned his Symphony no. 3 in C minor, op. 78. He conducted the premiere in London, May 1886, to great acclaim.

The symphony is written in four movements, but there is only one real break, which occurs between the second and third movements. In constructing the thematic material, Saint-Saëns borrowed a strategy from Franz Liszt, who was an admirer of the French composer while also forward thinking (the work is dedicated to the memory of Liszt, who died in July, 1886). The prominent themes in each movement are transformations of material heard in the very opening bars. Much of Saint-Saëns's treatment of this material, such as his skillful application of counterpoint technique, broadcasts tradition, but it is this masterful blending of tradition and progressivism that makes the symphony so satisfying to both scholars and amateurs alike. Saint-Saëns's orchestral writing, with the judicious use of the different instruments, is capped by his integration of non-traditional instruments, including the piano and the organ.

Saint-Saëns has long been regarded as the greatest French symphonist. Though only one of his five symphonies is played with any regularity today, there are other works, such as concertos for violin, for violoncello, and for piano that are frequently performed, not to mention his comic Carnival of the Animals.



Trent Johnson is an organist, composer, pianist and conductor. He is the Organist and Assistant Director of Music of the Unitarian Church of All Souls in New York City and is the Music Director of the Oratorio Singers of Westfield, New Jersey. The Oratorio Singers perform the great choral masterworks with professional soloists and with members of the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra.

Mr. Johnson is a graduate of the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University and The Juilliard School, NYC. His organ instructors have included John Weaver, Donald Sutherland, Peggy Haas-Howell, and Glenn Carow. In addition he has studied piano with Walter Hautzig, Glenn Carow and Edgar Cosimi. Major conducting influences have come from his work with Frederik Prausnitz, Dr. David A. Weadon and Norman Scribner of the Choral Arts Society of Washington DC. Mr. Johnson was formerly the Assistant Organist of the Brick Presbyterian Church in NYC. He is an organist at Radio City Music Hall in NYC, where he plays the "Mighty Wurlitzer" organ for the Christmas Spectacular Show.

As a composer, Mr. Johnson has written numerous works for various soloists, ensembles and musical organizations. Among them are chamber music, choral works, art songs, works for organ and piano, cantatas, concertos, orchestral works and an opera. Some recent compositions include his bass trombone concerto entitled "Across Continents" (2021), written for bass trombonist Darrin C. Milling, his 10 pieces for organ (2021), written during the Covid pandemic, his opera *Kenyatta* (2017), commissioned by Trilogy: An Opera Company and his oratorio *Wittenberg - The Story of Martin Luther* (2018), written for narrator, soloists, chorus and orchestra. This work tells of the German religious reformer and highlights his famous trial in the city of Worms.

A more complete biography and list of works can be found on Trent Johnson's website: www.trentxjohnson.com