

CATHEDRAL OF SAINT PAUL  
NATIONAL SHRINE OF  
THE APOSTLE PAUL

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
January 21, 2014

CONCERT:  
Simon Johnson, organ  
Cathedral of Saint Paul  
St. Paul, Minnesota

Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> February, 2014  
7:30 p.m.

Freewill offering



(Saint Paul, MN) **Simon Johnson**, organist and assistant director of music at the renowned St. Paul's Cathedral in London, will lead off the *Inaugural Year of Organ Concerts* at the Cathedral of Saint Paul in Minnesota, **Tuesday, February 25 at 7:30 p.m.** The public is invited, and a freewill offering will be taken to fund an endowment for organ maintenance. Simon will be the first of five organists to perform in 2014 to mark the completion of the newly-refurbished and enhanced Great Cathedral Pipe Organs. The Cathedral of Saint Paul is located at 239 Selby Avenue, at the corner of Summit Avenue, in Saint Paul, Minn. Free parking is widely available on neighborhood streets as well as in the Cathedral parking lot.

Simon's program will include, *Allegro, Chorale and Fugue in D*, Mendelssohn; *Herzlich tut mich verlangen*, Brahms; *Prelude and Fugue in C major* (BWV 547), J.S. Bach; and *Symphony No 6*, Widor. In London, Simon presides over the five-manual Willis/Mander organ, considered to be one of the finest musical instruments in the world.

In addition to the daily round of services at St Paul's, Simon also plays for all the important national services and events that take place there, most recently at the funeral service of Baroness Thatcher. Last year he played for the national service of thanksgiving to celebrate the diamond jubilee of Her Majesty the Queen, for which he also arranged some of the music. He directed the music at the national service commemorating the withdrawal of British armed forces from Iraq, and also performed when the Dalai Lama received the Templeton Prize at St Paul's.

"A brilliant and sensitive musician...achieving greatness through his calm demeanor" (Gramophone), Simon's work as a soloist, accompanist, improviser, choir director, composer, editor and arranger makes him one of the most versatile church musicians working today and this has led to a series of appointments. He held organ scholarships at Rochester, Norwich and St Paul's Cathedrals, before becoming Director of Music at All Saints' Church, Northampton and then Assistant

Master of Music and Director of the Abbey Girls' Choir at St Albans Cathedral. He took up his present position in 2008.

Simon has worked as soloist and continuo player with the London Symphony Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, London Mozart Players, City of London Sinfonia, London Baroque and The Cardinal's Musick. In 2008 he gave a performance of Messiaen's *La Nativité* as part of the composer's centenary celebrations by the Southbank Centre. Earlier this year he conducted Bach's *St John Passion* at St Paul's with the London Mozart Players and the Cathedral Choir.

Ever eager to bring his enthusiasm for the organ to wider audience, Simon's yearly extravaganzas for the Lord Mayor's Show in London have seen the premiere of Guy Bovet's *Dick Whittington* in 2008, collaborations with Jo Brand (in Simon's own arrangement of Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*, 2010) and Brian Blessed (*Farrington Animal Parade*, 2011).

Simon has made a DVD about the St Paul's Organ, in which one can "appreciate Johnson's musical sensitivity, and deceptively easy fluency in even the most hair-raising of repertoire" (Choir and Organ); "a remarkable demonstration of what is achievable on a DVD recording of an organ concert. "The playing sparkles throughout" (International Record Review), "spine-tinglingly sublime" (Gramophone). An excerpt is available to view on YouTube <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OrgE64yX0lc>

The last year has seen the release of the Cathedral Choir's new Mozart CD, on which Simon is featured as soloist, and a solo recording of his transcription Franck's *Symphony in D minor* (both on Hyperion), a tour of the Western United States, recitals in Holland and at the International Festivals of Mallorca, Montserrat and Edinburgh, Fagerborg (Oslo) and at Frankfurt, Fredrikstad, Salisbury, Durham, St Albans and Wells Cathedrals, Westminster Abbey (Summer Organ Festival) and Huddersfield Town Hall. In July he reopened the landmark Willis organ in the Union Chapel, Islington and inaugurated the Nicholson organ in St George's, Whyke, Chichester (improvising an accompaniment to the film *Metropolis*). He has recently premiered a new piece for organ by Sir Peter Maxwell Davies as part of the City of London Festival.



These concerts are made possible by generous financial assistance from the Cathedral Heritage Foundation, a community-based 501(c)(3) organization. The Foundation is a non-profit, non-sectarian, historic preservation, cultural and arts organization established to meet the objectives of restoring and preserving the national historic treasure

of the Cathedral of Saint Paul for generations to come. The volunteer community board provides leadership in developing educational programs to showcase the cultural, historic, and artistic influence of the Cathedral on people throughout the world. [www.cathedralheritagefoundation.org](http://www.cathedralheritagefoundation.org).