

JAMES WOODMAN

An Extravagance of Toccatas

for organ

- I. pro Organo pleno
- II. pro Organo aetherio
- III. pro Organo flagrante

for C. R.
Commissioned by Janis Milroy for Christa Rakich in celebration of her 60th birthday
11 November 1952

An Extravagance of Toccatas

duration: 12'30"

I: full principal chorus, II/I
II: smaller principal chorus
P: 16, 8, (4), I/P, II/P

I. pro Organo pleno James Woodman
(2012)

Exuberant (♩ = 66)

I: ff

with freedom, engaging the room acoustics where possible

slowing slightly **in time**

slowing slightly **in time**

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ALTE SCHULE
MUSIKVERLAG

AN EXTRAVAGANCE OF TOCCATAS

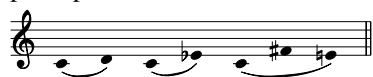
An Extravagance of Toccatas was commissioned by Janis Milroy in celebration of the 60th birthday of her wife, concert organist and recording artist Christa Rakich. The first performance was given by Christa Rakich on May 4, 2014, at Heilig-Kreuz-Kirche, Berlin.

While the word *toccata* is most frequently associated with works calling for a virtuosic display of technique, the form's long history encompasses a variety of characteristic traits. Each of the three movements in this collection looks to a distinct tradition for its inspiration. The first, *pro Organo pleno*, is in the manner of the organ *toccata* of 17th-century Protestant north Germany. In this type of *toccata*, it is the performer's *esprit* which is on display in free, quasi-improvised gestures which alternate with passages of imitative counterpoint. The second movement, *pro Organo aethereo*, looks to the Elevation *toccatas* of Girolamo Frescobaldi, mystical works distinguished by the use of numerous suspensions and dissonances. It is only with the final movement, *pro Organo flagrante*, that the idea of the *toccata* as a knuckle-busting barn-burner comes into play.

If there exists a collective noun for a group of *toccatas*, I am unaware of it; "extravagance" is of my own coinage.

All three *toccatas* are unified by use of a single motif in various transformations:

principal motif



I. *pro Organo pleno*, pedal, mm. 1-3



first fugue subject

second fugue subject



II. *pro Organo aethereo*, soprano, mm. 1-8



fugue subject



III. *pro Organo flagrante*, pedal theme



Finally, Christa Rakich's birthday falls on November 11, the Feast of St. Martin. The *Liber Usualis* informs us that the appointed hymn for the day is *Iste Confessor*, and that hymn is heard as the second theme in the final movement.

I count myself most fortunate in my history of organ teachers – George Whitney, James Litton, and William Porter among them – but certainly never more so than from 1980 to 1983 when, as a completely at-sea graduate student at New England Conservatory, Christa Rakich came to my artistic, intellectual, and emotional rescue in teaching me to hear, touch, breathe, and focus in ways I never knew existed. This work was written expressly for her with as much gratitude and affection as it is possible to put into a score.

—J.W.
Cambridge, Massachusetts
August, 2012

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I. pro Organo pleno

James Woodman
(2012)

Exuberant (♩ = 66)

I: ff

II:

slowing slightly

in time

with freedom, engaging the room acoustics where possible

II. pro Organo aethereo

I: 8' flute, 4' principal

II: voix celestes

P: 16', (8'), II/P

Adagio (♩ = 44)

II: *pp*

pp

+ very mild 8', 4'

accelerating just slightly

slowing strongly

(leave box all the way open)

I:

- II/P
+ I/P

moving forward (♩ = 54)

III. pro Organo flagrante

I: foundations 8', 4', II/I
 II: foundations, reeds, 8', 4'
 P: foundations 16', 8', I/P, II/P

Fiery (♩ = 72)

The musical score is written for three systems, each with three staves. The top two staves of each system are for the right hand (treble clef), and the bottom staff is for the left hand (bass clef). The time signature is common time (C). The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The first system begins with a dynamic marking of *ff* (fortissimo) and a tempo marking of *pp* (pianissimo) later in the system. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and articulation marks such as accents and slurs. The piece is characterized by a driving, rhythmic texture in the right hand and a more melodic, sustained line in the left hand.