

# Rubrics: before and beyond

Dan Locklair

The distinguished American composer contributes the latest addition to our occasional series in which we invite composers to write about their organ music

*Rubrics*, my five-movement organ work, is about to turn 30! Composed in the spring of 1988 on commission from the Organ Artists Series of Pittsburgh and premiered the following year in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, by the American organist Mary Preston. It has been exciting to see *Rubrics* become a part of the organ repertoire world-wide. Of course, in order for that to happen with any composition, it must have performers who embrace and champion the piece. Without those champions, composers and their compositions never have a chance. In the UK, the US, and elsewhere, I continue to be filled with gratitude for each and every musician who has played and/or recorded *Rubrics*. That appreciation would certainly start with American organist, Barbara Harbach, who initially performed *Rubrics* widely and was the first to record it, and to the beloved American organ virtuoso and distinguished Indiana University Chancellor's Professor of Music Emeritus, Marilyn Keiser. By introducing *Rubrics* to the UK at the 1993 Southern Cathedral Festival and, the following year in America at the 42nd National Convention of the American Guild of Organists in Dallas, Texas, Marilyn Keiser is clearly deserving of a gold medal for popularizing *Rubrics*! She has performed the piece in part or whole in hundreds of recitals, taught it to numerous students over the years, and commercially recorded it twice, with her Loft recording being the latest. ([https://www.gothiccatalog.com/The\\_Music\\_of\\_Dan\\_Locklair\\_Marilyn\\_Keiser\\_organist\\_p/lrcd-1110.htm](https://www.gothiccatalog.com/The_Music_of_Dan_Locklair_Marilyn_Keiser_organist_p/lrcd-1110.htm))

In England, first-rate performances of *Rubrics*, as well as commercial recordings, have been done by stellar organists such as Thomas Trotter, Simon

Bell and David Dunnett. To them, as well as to other champions of *Rubrics*, I convey my deepest gratitude.

Given its upcoming birthday, perhaps an article devoted solely to *Rubrics* would be in order. But, for this article, the 1988 piece serves as a springboard for reflections, both before and after *Rubrics*.

As a lover of composer biographies, it is rare to read about a composer who isn't happy about a composition that attains a certain degree of success. But that success can often have the possibility of over-shadowing other works within the composer's catalogue. Although the death of a composer can usually solve the "let's take a look at what else composer X has written" dilemma, to the living composer (who wants to remain living!) a survey while he or she is still kicking seems the better alternative! That is what I hope to do here

I should note from the start that my composition catalogue is quite large. Further, all of it is in print and includes orchestral, chamber, choral, vocal and solo instrumental works. Having a virtually uninterrupted string of commissions since 1982, I very much enjoy the variety of writing for all genres and instruments. Although a trombonist and pianist early on, the organ soon became my primary instrument and it, along with choral music, has played a significant role in my musical life.

Describing your own style as a composer is as challenging as describing your own personality. If you try to probe the depths of who you think you are as a composer, you'll probably get it wrong! So, those things are best left to others. But, perhaps, there is no harm in noting some aspired-to goals and, then, letting the listener be the judge as to whether or not they have been attained. For me, it starts with economy of means...doing the most with the least. Secondly, my aim as a composer has always been to try and say something

that is uniquely mine. Thirdly, I search not only for rhythmic excitement in my music, but for lyricism, beauty and the spiritual as well.

What follows now – on either side of the 1988 *Rubrics* – is a brief chronological look at other pieces from my organ catalogue, some of which may be unfamiliar to readers of *The Organ* and some, unlike *Rubrics*, may simply not have yet found their champions. All the pieces are published, with e.c.kerby, ltd./Ricordi (Hal Leonard, dist.) [R] and Subito [S] being my primary publishers.

**1972** – *Triptych for Manuals* [S]: Seven minutes in length and in three movements, these impromptu-like pieces were originally published by H.W. Gray. It was my first organ publication. With the reflective middle movement flanked by sprightly outer movements, this opus is somewhat neoclassical in nature. I still like it. This piece has never been commercially recorded.

**1978** – *Inventions* [R]: In many ways, this eighteen-minute, five-movement concert suite for organ could be seen as the forerunner to *Rubrics*. All five movements are titled by words that provide extra-musical stimulus to the piece and, like *Rubrics*, movements may be freely excerpted. The first movement, an energetic one, is entitled *Frustrations and Hope* and is for pedals alone. The fifth movement, *Agonies and Ecstasies*, is a driving movement with both minimalist and early dance influences. It always gains a reaction when performed and was recorded by organist Leonard Raver, in 1984 for the first all-Locklair LP recording on Orion Records. Barbara Harbach later recorded the entire suite for Gasparo. Both recordings are now out of print.

**1980** – *Constellations* (Concerto for Organ and One Percussion Player) [R]: In four movements and twenty-two minutes in length, this colourful piece looks to the



stars as it gives equal workout to organist and percussionist alike! Using quite standard percussion instruments, *Constellations* was an important piece in my development. It was one of the five finalist winners in the 1981 Kennedy Center Friedheim Awards and, in addition to a star-studded Kennedy Center performance, was broadcast world-wide by National Public Radio and Voice of America. Although Leonard Raver recorded it for Orion, George Ritchie and Albert Rometo's stellar recording of it for Titanic is now also on the Albany label. ([http://www.albanyrecords.com/mm5/merchant.mvc?Screen=PROD&Store\\_Code=AR&Product\\_Code=TROY701-2&Category\\_Code=a-Orch](http://www.albanyrecords.com/mm5/merchant.mvc?Screen=PROD&Store_Code=AR&Product_Code=TROY701-2&Category_Code=a-Orch))

**1984** – *Ayre for the Dance* [R]: Only four minutes in length, this sassy Octatonic-based piece for manuals alone makes an engaging recital encore! Essentially a dialogue throughout (that builds to full organ, only to end in a whimper), organist Ji-yoen Choi plays it brilliantly on Naxos. ([https://www.naxos.com/catalogue/item.asp?item\\_code=8.555367](https://www.naxos.com/catalogue/item.asp?item_code=8.555367))

**1979/1985** – *PHOENIX Fanfare and Processional* (for organ, brass quartet, percussion) [S]: The three-minute Fanfare was originally commissioned in 1975 by Union Theological Seminary in New York City for the re-opening of James Chapel after its reconstruction. Trying to discover what to do with the three-minute *Fanfare*, I added *Processional* in 1985. Performed widely for many years in this original version, in 2007 I accepted a commission to create an orchestral version of the piece and it is simply entitled, *PHOENIX* for orchestra [R].

After many requests from organists, in 1996 I created a solo organ version of the processional titled, *PHOENIX Processional* [R]. This solo organ version has become quite popular and, in 2011,



I created an organ/trumpet version of it [S]. The fact that the piece is split-published makes it unique to my catalogue. But all versions are easily obtainable. Marilyn Keiser's recording of the solo organ version of *PHOENIX Processional* on Loft (see above) is excellent. The first recording of the trumpet/organ version of *PHOENIX Processional* by the Illumina Duo has recently been released on Convivium

Records and is marvellous! (<https://conviviumrecords.co.uk/releases/illuminaduo/>)

**1991** – *Voyage* – fantasy for organ [R]: A commission from the American Guild of Organists for its 1992 Biennial National Convention in Atlanta, Georgia, *Voyage* launched the brilliant career of American organist Alan Morrison. It was he who presented its World Premiere



Photo: <http://www.locklair.com>

and he went on to play it far and wide, winning numerous competitions. Alan has recorded this virtuosic sixteen-minute, one-movement, four-section concert work on several occasions. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fsnqNyToJDc>)

**1994** – *A Spiritual Pair* [R]: Written for the distinguished organist and friend Marilyn Keiser, each movement of this

eight-minute piece is based on spirituals: 1. *Swing Low*; 2. *Go, Tell It!* Marilyn's wonderful recording of it is on *Pro Organo*. (<https://proorgano.com/product/spiritual-pairsaudio-cd-marilyn-keiser/>)

**1995** – “Ere long we shall see...” [S]: Commissioned for the 1996 Centennial Convention for the Centennial Celebration of the American Guild of

Organists, this ten-minute *Concerto Brevis* is in three sections. It received its World Premiere in a packed Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City. The Slovak Radio Orchestra (Kirk Trevor, conductor), with organist Gregory D’Agostino, recorded it for Albany. ([http://www.albanyrecords.com/mm5/merchant.mvc?Screen=PROD&Store\\_Code=AR&Product\\_Code=TROY517&Category\\_Code=a-Orch](http://www.albanyrecords.com/mm5/merchant.mvc?Screen=PROD&Store_Code=AR&Product_Code=TROY517&Category_Code=a-Orch))



**1996** – *Windows of Comfort* (Organbooks I and II) [R]: With each of the two organbooks containing five pieces each, it is formally obvious why these ten pieces provide the natural progression from *Rubrics*. Commissioned by the First Presbyterian Church of Topeka, Kansas, each movement is inspired by one of the ten stunning stained-glass windows by Louis Comfort Tiffany that adorn the church's sanctuary. Like *Rubrics*, the movements may be excerpted and mixed. Individual movements of *Windows of Comfort* have appeared on quite a number of commercial CDs. Marie Rubis Bauer, the organist who premiered the piece, recorded both organbooks for a CD that, unfortunately, is only available from the church and has never been commercially released. Thus, *Windows of Comfort* awaits a recording!

**1998** – *Sonata da chiesa* for flute and

organ [R]: Commissioned by Region IV of the American Guild of Organists, this four-movement work was premiered at the AGO 1999 Regional Convention in Knoxville, Tennessee, in an art gallery on a one-manual organ of three stops. Larger instruments are now usually utilized, but this is a very flexible piece. In spite of all its many performances, it has still not been commercially recorded.

– *Jubilo* [R]: Celebrating young American organists, this six-minute *Prelude for Organ* was commissioned by the AGO for its 2001 Regional Competitions for Young Organists (RCYO). It has not yet been commercially recorded.

**2000** – *Fanfare* [S]: This five-minute, one-movement piece was a commission from the Fourth Presbyterian Church of Chicago for their February 2001 Chicago International Organ Festival. Though a different expression from the often

expected one connoted by the term “fanfare”, FANFARE for organ is, nonetheless, very festive in nature. It has not been commercially recorded.

**2002** – *The Æolian Sonata* [S]: Commissioned by Duke University Chapel in Durham, North Carolina, in celebration of the 70th Anniversary of the Duke Chapel Æolian organ, this twelve-minute, three-movement sonata also pays tribute to the spirit of the American people in the aftermath of the 2001 September 11 terrorist attacks. Marilyn Keiser's Loft recording of it is outstanding. ([https://www.gothiccatalog.com/The\\_Music\\_of\\_Dan\\_Lockclair\\_Marilyn\\_Keiser\\_organist\\_p/lrcd-1110.htm](https://www.gothiccatalog.com/The_Music_of_Dan_Lockclair_Marilyn_Keiser_organist_p/lrcd-1110.htm))

**2003** – *Salem Sonata* [S]: Commissioned by Mark and Rosanne Welshimer in celebration of the 2004 restoration of the 1800 Tannenberg organ at Old

Salem Museums & Gardens in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and in honor of my wife, Paula Locklair (a Vice President of Old Salem), it was Paula's vision and dedication to this project that made Taylor & Boody's restoration of this important 18th century American pipe organ a reality. Since Old Salem is a Moravian settlement, it only made sense that this four-movement sonata utilize material associated with the Moravians. The success of *Salem Sonata*, while still not as large as *Rubrics*, has been exciting to see. Boston organist, Peter Sykes, recorded *Salem Sonata* on the Tannenberg for Raven Records ([https://ravencd.com/merchantmanager/product\\_info.php?products\\_id=31](https://ravencd.com/merchantmanager/product_info.php?products_id=31)), even as Marilyn Keiser included it on her Loft recording played on a modern Casavant. ([https://www.gothiccatalog.com/The\\_Music\\_of\\_Dan\\_Locklair\\_Marilyn\\_Keiser\\_organist\\_p/lrcd-1110.htm](https://www.gothiccatalog.com/The_Music_of_Dan_Locklair_Marilyn_Keiser_organist_p/lrcd-1110.htm))

– *Celebration* [S]: Commissioned by First Presbyterian Church in Greensboro, North Carolina, this ten-minute *Variations for Organ* is in three primary sections. Inspired by the scripture "...thanksgiving, and the voice of melody" (Isaiah 51:3), the theme is not heard until the very end. This piece remains one of my personal favorites in my organ catalogue. However, the fact that its sections are ongoing and not usually excerpt-able (although some have used the last section as a voluntary) may explain its limited performances. Marilyn Keiser's Loft recording of the piece is dazzling! ([https://www.gothiccatalog.com/The\\_Music\\_of\\_Dan\\_Locklair\\_Marilyn\\_Keiser\\_organist\\_p/lrcd-1110.htm](https://www.gothiccatalog.com/The_Music_of_Dan_Locklair_Marilyn_Keiser_organist_p/lrcd-1110.htm))

**2004** – *Dance the Joy!* [in ORGANWORKS!, United Music Publishers]: Commissioned by the outstanding British organist and teacher David Titterington, for a collection of new organ works "for teaching and recital" entitled, ORGANWORKS!, this energetic four-minute piece is not difficult, yet a crowd-pleaser. I am not quite sure why UMP's creative anthology has not become

more popular in the UK (and it is virtually unknown in the US). *Dance the Joy!* crops up on very few programs that I see. As I recall, originally David was to have recorded all of the pieces in the anthology. But I do not believe that has ever happened. *Dance the Joy!* remains unrecorded.

– *In Mystery and Wonder* [S]: Subtitled *The Casavant Diptych*, this two-movement, ten-minute work was commissioned by the distinguished Canadian organ builder, Casavant Frères, in celebration of the firm's 125th anniversary. Casavant wanted this to be a piece that could be played by organists of all levels. So, the first movement, *Aria (God moves in a mysterious way...)*, is slow, chordal and not overly challenging technically. The second movement, *Toccata (...His wonders to perform...)*, is quite a work-out and "brings the house down"! The most unusual premiere of any composition in my catalogue, Casavant provided published copies to all organists throughout the world who played Casavant organs. Then they encouraged all those organists to play either single or both movements in services and/or recitals on the very weekend of the 13 November 2004 Casavant anniversary. What a World Premiere! Marilyn Keiser's fine Loft recording of the piece remains the only one of *In Mystery and Wonder*. ([https://www.gothiccatalog.com/The\\_Music\\_of\\_Dan\\_Locklair\\_Marilyn\\_Keiser\\_organist\\_p/lrcd-1110.htm](https://www.gothiccatalog.com/The_Music_of_Dan_Locklair_Marilyn_Keiser_organist_p/lrcd-1110.htm))

**2005** – *Spreckels' Fancy* [S]: Commissioned by the Spreckels Organ Society in celebration of the 90th anniversary year of The Great Spreckels Organ in Balboa Park, San Diego, California, *Spreckels' Fancy* is six-minutes in length and consists of three primary sections. It

remains a little-known piece in my catalog and has not been commercially recorded.

**2007** – *St. John's Suite* [S]: Commissioned by St. John's Baptist Church in Charlotte, North Carolina, in celebration of the 2008 installation of the church's new Létourneau pipe organ, this piece is unique to my organ catalog since it is a setting of four chorale melodies:

*St. Theodulph, Galilee, Herzliebster Jesu, O Filii et Filiae*. The twelve-minute *St. John's Suite* is especially intended for the Seasons of Lent and Easter. The fact that it is not overly challenging should make it attractive to even the weekend organist! It has not been commercially recorded.

**2009** – *Glory and Peace* [S]: Commissioned by the Anglican Musicians Foundation for the 2009 Conference of the Association of Anglican Musicians in Los Angeles, California, this eighteen-minute "Suite of Seven Reflections" for organ was premiered by organist Thomas Murray in Disney Hall. "*Seven whole days, not one in seven, I will praise Thee*" from George Herbert's, *King of Glory, King of Peace*, is the extra-musical stimulus for *Glory and Peace*, a composition that remains unrecorded.

**2011** – *Concerto for Organ and Orchestra* [S]: This three movement, twenty-two-minute concerto was a commission for the 2011 AGO Regional Convention in Greensboro, North Carolina. The orchestration is for strings, pairs of winds, and percussion. The World Premiere was given by The Eastern Music Festival Orchestra, conducted by Gerard Schwarz, with organist Susan Bates as soloist. As with "Ere long we shall see..." and other concertos in my catalog, I have learned that a concerto takes two champions: A soloist and a

Casavant provided published copies to all organists throughout the world who played Casavant organs

conductor. Without both, follow-up performances remain elusive. While *Concerto for Organ and Orchestra* still awaits a commercial recording, an excellent recording of the World Premiere of the piece can be heard on the APM Pipedreams program, *Unlocking Locklair*. (<http://pipedreams.publicradio.org/listings/2013/1339/>)

– *Trumpets of Light* [S]: A commission from The Reformed Church of Bronxville, New York, for the autumn 2011 dedication of the church's new organ console, this four-movement suite for trumpet and organ is approximately fourteen minutes in length. Inspired by scriptures of light and the church's windows by Boston stained glass artist, Charles J. Connick, one central melodic idea binds each of the piece's movements together. Illumina Duo's superb recording of the piece for Convivium Records has only recently been released. (<https://conviviumrecords.co.uk/releases/illuminaduo/>)

**2012** – *O Festive Day* [S]: This six-minute, one-movement *Fantasia for Organ*, was a commission in honor of Mary Alice Lodico by her husband, Michael Lodico, Sr. Through a 1989 Rockefeller Foundation grant, Mrs. Lodico collected a series of traditional children's songs while teaching in France. Three of her collected melodies were incorporated in this piece, which was given its World Premiere in 2012 by the Lodico's son, organist Michael Lodico, Jr. Although *O*

*Festive Day* remains unrecorded, its World Premiere may be heard on the Pipedreams program, *Unlocking Locklair*. (<http://pipedreams.publicradio.org/listings/2013/1339/>)

– “From the rising of the sun...” [S]: This six-minute festival piece for brass quartet, percussion and organ was the result of a 2012 commission from the Peachtree Road United Methodist Church of Atlanta, Georgia, in honor of the 10th anniversary of their sanctuary and their spectacular Mander organs. The title, an inscription on one of the church's transept windows, is from Psalm 113. The piece remains unrecorded.

**2014** – *In Memory* – H.H.L. [S]: This four-minute piece is an organ transcription of my popular string orchestra composition by the same name. Created in memory of my mother, the string orchestra version can be heard on Naxos. ([https://www.naxos.com/catalogue/item.asp?item\\_code=8.559337](https://www.naxos.com/catalogue/item.asp?item_code=8.559337)). To date, the organ transcription has not been recorded.

So, even as Rubrics 30th birthday has caused me to look “Before and Beyond” it, I am humbled that my contributions to the “King of Instruments” continue!

– *Initial Memories* [S]: Subtitled *Divertimento for Organ and Wind Quintet*, this seventeen-minute, four-movement piece was a commission from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. It celebrated IUP's newly installed Ronald G. Pogorzelski and Lester D. Yankee Memorial Organ. It has yet to be recorded.

In March of 2018, Duke University organist Robert Parkins, will perform in Duke Chapel the World Premiere of my 2017 organ work, *Noel's Psalm (A Sonata for Organ)*. Approximately fourteen minutes in length, it was commissioned by Rebecca Neff in honor of the memory of her brother, Noel J. Kinnamon (1943-2012). Its four movements are inspired by one of Dr. Kinnamon's poems. It will be published by Subito immediately following its World Premiere. And, recently, I signed a contract for a commission from the Bruton Parish Church in Colonial Williamsburg (Virginia) for a new solo organ work celebrating the church's 2019 Dobson pipe organ. So, even as Rubrics 30th birthday has caused me to look “Before and Beyond” it, I am humbled that my contributions to the “King of Instruments” continue! ■

The music of Dan Locklair (b.1949) is widely performed throughout the U.S. and abroad. His catalogue includes symphonic works, a ballet, an opera, solo, chamber, vocal and choral compositions. Outstanding musicians worldwide, including the Helsinki Philharmonic, the St. Louis Orchestra, the Buffalo Philharmonic, The Louisville Orchestra, the Elmer Iseler Singers of Canada and the BBC Singers of England have performed Dr. Locklair's

music. Broadcasts of it have included National Public Radio (NPR), American Public Media (APM), Vatican Radio, Czech Radio, Finnish Radio, the BBC and the CBC. In its centennial year (1996) the American Guild of Organists honored Dan Locklair with its Composer of the Year award. Recordings of his works are commercially available on numerous CD's including Naxos, Koch, Ondine, Albany, MSR, Priory, Loft and Convivium (UK). Ricordi and

Subito are his primary publishers. Further details of recordings, as well as publication information, may be found at: <http://www.locklair.com>. A graduate of the School of Sacred Music of Union Theological Seminary (SMM) in New York City and the Eastman School of Music (DMA) in Rochester, New York, Dr. Locklair is Composer-in-Residence and Professor of Music at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, USA.