

Jason Biel – Biography

Jason Biel was born and raised on the family pig farm near Lacombe, AB, and began music lessons at a young age (after his parents heard him singing in relatively good tune). He spent many hours (trying to) practice piano; by high school the small-town mentality had him nearly convinced there was no future in music.

Dr. Wendy Markosky, professor at Canadian University College, introduced him to the pipe organ in 12th grade. With her encouragement he completed a BMus in Organ Performance at the university in 2014. He then studied for a (too short) year with Dr. Marnie Giesbrecht at The King's University in Edmonton, completing the Performer's Certificate, during which he also assisted Jeremy Spurgeon at All Saints' Anglican Cathedral. He was then offered admission to McGill University to study with Hans-Ola Ericsson, and graduated with a MMus in May 2017. Shortly thereafter he was awarded the Godfrey Hewitt Memorial Prize at the 2017 RCCO National Organ Playing Competition.

Much of his early performing experience had been in local festivals and Reformed church services. Since November 2015 he has worked at the French catholic parish of Très-Saint-Nom-de-Jésus as organist for Sunday masses. He's currently continuing at McGill in the diploma program, focusing on works by 20th-C French impressionist composer Eugène Reuchsel, as well as exploring French choral/church organ music of that time.

Workshop Topics

- Playing the mood; improvisation as a viable church service tool (can include ideas on hymn-playing)
- The world's [potentially] most versatile instrument; looking at recent non-classical uses of the organ and where it can go
- Programming for a crowd; ideas on attracting and keeping a wider audience (incorporating new genres)
- Presenting the organ to youth; how does it still attract new players?
- Processing/avoiding stress (as a performing musician)
- Proper practice (tips and tricks, combines well with "avoiding stress")
- Chant-based works and their annoyingly persistent relevancy; how to use them within the service

Concerts

- "A Trail Less Beaten" -impressionist works by Eugène Reuchsel (can be mixed with contextual works, e.g. Dupré)
- "Godly fantasies" - a selection of fantasia-style works including Reger, Karg-Elert, Tournemire and de Saint-Martin
- Early themed (pre/Bach)
- Variety, including non-traditional rep