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**THE CATHEDRAL OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE AND THE AMERICAN  
GUILD OF ORGANISTS PRESENT CECIL B. DEMILLE'S *KING OF KINGS*  
WITH LIVE ORGAN IMPROVISATION**

*Artist in Residence David Briggs to provide masterful accompaniment to silent film*

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(February **X**, 2018 – New York, NY) – **The Cathedral of St. John the Divine**, partnering with the New York City Chapter of the **American Guild of Organists**, will present a screening of legendary director Cecil B. DeMille's silent epic *The King of Kings* with live organ improvisation by Cathedral Artist in Residence David Briggs on **Saturday, February 24 at 7:30 pm** at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, 1047 Amsterdam Avenue (at 112<sup>th</sup> Street), Manhattan.

Cecil B. DeMille (1881-1959) was one of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century's most successful filmmakers. He directed hundreds of silent shorts before reaching the apex of his popularity in the 1920s with such films as *Don't Change Your Husband* (1919), *The Ten Commandments* (1923), and *The King of Kings* (1927). *The King of Kings* is a particularly apropos film for the Lenten season: the second in DeMille's Biblical trilogy, the plot follows Christ, Mary Magdalen, and the Apostles through the miraculous events leading to the Crucifixion and Resurrection.

David Briggs, appointed Artist in Residence at the Cathedral in October 2017, is a master of the pipe organ and among the most prominent exponents of the art of improvisation. Having previously accompanied such classic silent films as Lang's *Metropolis* and Hitchcock's *The Lodger*, his legendary skill has delighted audiences the world over and inspired a rising generation of future organists.

“Since the age of six, I’ve always loved to improvise music, enjoying the sense of freedom at the keyboard that comes with this. When you improvise it’s impossible to play a wrong note, and that very fact remains quite liberating!” Briggs says.

“The goal is inevitably to make the music expand on the inherent message and emotion of the movie and the two have to be very closely dovetailed. When people say ‘the music and the movie seemed to be as one and I forgot I was listening to an organ,’ then you know you have achieved a degree of success. *King of Kings* is a gift for the improviser: in a hushed, darkened church, with the movie looming large at the front and an improvised, dramatic, post-romantic score coming from a wonderful instrument – in the unique architectural environment of St. John the Divine – I hope the effect will be mesmerizing.”

Tickets are \$20. To purchase tickets and for more information on future concerts, please visit [this page](#).

### **About David Briggs**

David Briggs is an internationally renowned organist whose performances are acclaimed for their musicality, virtuosity, and ability to excite and engage audiences of all ages. Consistently ranked as one of the finest organists of his generation, David’s extensive repertoire spans five centuries. Fascinated by the art of improvisation since his childhood, David also frequently performs improvisations to silent films such as *Phantom of the Opera*, *Hunchback of Notre-Dame*, *Nosferatu*, *Jeanne d’Arc*, *Metropolis*, *King of Kings*, *The General*, as well as a variety of Charlie Chaplin films.

At the age of 17, Briggs obtained his FRCO (Fellow of the Royal College of Organists) diploma, winning all the prizes and the Silver Medal of the Worshipful Company of Musicians. From 1981–84 he was the Organ Scholar at King’s College, Cambridge University, during which time he studied organ with Jean Langlais in Paris. The first British winner of the Tournemire Prize at the St. Albans International Improvisation Competition, he also won the first prize in the International Improvisation Competition at Paisley. Briggs has held positions at Hereford, Truro and Gloucester Cathedrals. He has been Artist-in-Residence at St James Cathedral, Toronto since 2012, and will continue as consultant for the forthcoming organ restoration and play several celebrity concerts per annum. He has recorded two DVDs and 35 CDs, many of which include his own compositions and transcriptions.

### **About the American Guild of Organists**

The mission of the American Guild of Organists is to foster a thriving community of musicians who share their knowledge and inspire passion for the organ. The American Guild of Organists is the national professional association serving the organ and choral music fields. The Guild serves approximately 14,700 members in approximately 300 chapters throughout the United States and abroad. Founded in 1896 as both an educational and service organization, the Guild seeks to set and maintain high musical standards and to promote understanding and appreciation of all aspects of organ and choral music.

### **About The Cathedral**

The Cathedral of St. John the Divine is the Cathedral of the Episcopal Diocese of New York. It is chartered as a house of prayer for all people and a unifying center of

intellectual light and leadership.

People from many faiths and communities worship together in services held more than 30 times a week; the soup kitchen serves roughly 25,000 meals annually; social service outreach has an increasingly varied roster of programs; the distinguished Cathedral School prepares young students to be future leaders; Adults and Children in Trust, the renowned preschool, afterschool and summer program, offers diverse educational and nurturing experiences; the outstanding Textile Conservation Lab preserves world treasures; concerts, exhibitions, performances and civic gatherings allow conversation, celebration, reflection and remembrance—such is the joyfully busy life of this beloved and venerated Cathedral.

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