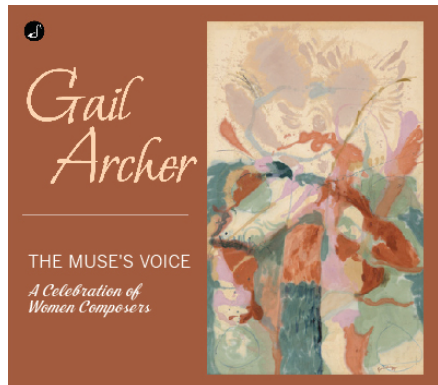


## Organist Gail Archer Releases New Album “The Muse’s Voice: A Celebration of Women Composers”



**Release Date:** 2.18.14 (Meyer Media)

**Performer:** Gail Archer (organ)

**TRT:** 76:37:50

**Tracks:** *Prelude, Petit Canon & Improvisation* (Nadia Boulanger), *Te Deum* (Jeanne Demessieux), *Ceremonies Suite* (Jennifer Higdon), *The Everlasting Crown* (Judith Bingham)

**New York, NY (FOR RELEASE 1.14.14)** --- Internationally renowned concert organist and recording artist **Gail Archer** releases her seventh solo album with *The Muse’s Voice: A Celebration of Women Composers* performed on the Gabe M. Wiener Organ (Casavant, 2002) at New York City’s Central Synagogue. Featuring works by today’s leading female composer Jennifer Higdon as well as organists Nadia Boulanger, Jeanne Demessieux and Judith Bingham, *The Muse’s Voice* enralls listeners with Archer’s ability to leap seamlessly from baroque to late romantic and modern eras.

As one of the few female organists in a male-dominated field, Archer serves as an advocate for female organists and composers. “I’m on a mission to celebrate women organists and composers in liturgical music,” says Archer. “With the advent of this recording, I hope to share this captivating and important catalog of music to a much broader audience.” Archer has been promoting female artists by: programming and performing works by women such as Joan Tower and Alla Borzova at some of the world’s finest religious institutions; creating and curating MusForum.org (a website dedicated to women organists); and most recently, recording *The Muse’s Voice*.

Archer, the chair of the music department at Barnard, director of artist and young organ artist recitals at Central Synagogue, and concert organist at Vassar, has released such albums as *J. S. Bach — The Transcendent Genius*, *Mendelssohn in the Romantic Century*, *A Mystic in the Making — Olivier Messiaen*, and *Franz Liszt — A Hungarian Rhapsody*.

Known for her musicality and sensitivity and for giving her interpretations a visceral quality, Archer is hailed for maximizing the organ’s colors and capabilities. According to the New York Times, she plays with “a sense of vulnerability and awe.”

Opening the album are works by two influential French organist/composers: **Nadia Boulanger** (1887-1979) and **Jeanne Demessieux** (1921-1968). *Prelude, Petit Canon, and Improvisation* (1911) are the only three published compositions for organ written by Boulanger. Composed for inclusion in an anthology of modern French compositions, they achieve great variety of expression in spite of their apparent simplicity. Boulanger studied organ at the Paris Conservatoire yet never held a regular position as organist. She is remembered foremost as one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's most discerning and remarkable teachers. The album's second piece, *Te Deum* (1965), is one of eight solo organ works composed by Demessieux. Unlike many organ compositions based on chant, this plainsong melody is not an improvisatory fantasia. Allegedly, it was inspired by the sound of the State Trumpeters at St. John the Divine in New York. Demessieux had a brilliant international career as a virtuoso and was the first female organist to perform at Westminster Abbey.

The CD's dose of American contemporary classical music comes from Pulitzer Prize and GRAMMY winner **Jennifer Higdon** (b. 1962) - one of the most performed living American composers working today. Her *Ceremonies Suite* (2001) is excerpted from an earlier seven-movement work entitled *Ceremonies* for organ and brass. "The title refers to the various ways in which we celebrate the many aspects of life through religious and secular ceremonies...from solemn and contemplative to joyous and dancing," explains Higdon.

The album culminates with the epic seven-movement, 35-minute work *The Everlasting Crown* (2011) by the British composer **Judith Bingham** (b. 1952). Premiered at London's Royal Albert Hall during the 2011 BBC Proms, *The Everlasting Crown* is based on a fictitious crown made up (in)famous gem stones. The work evokes seven of these each representing aspects of monarchy and power and demonstrated through several different styles of organ playing. This ambitious cycle calls on Archer to grasp an unusually grandiose arrangement and to deploy the full depth and range of the organ.

### **About Gail Archer**

Gail Archer is a GRAMMY-nominated, international concert organist, recording artist, choral conductor and lecturer. In spring 2010, she celebrated the 325th anniversary of the birth of Johann Sebastian Bach with six concerts around New York City, concluding with the Art of Fugue at Central Synagogue.

*Lucid Culture* proclaimed, "Like the composers she chooses, Archer's playing spans the range of human emotions—with Bach, there's always plenty to communicate, but this time out it was mostly an irresistibly celebratory vibe."

In 2009, her spring series, *Mendelssohn in the Romantic Century* was inspired by Mendelssohn's extraordinary versatility as composer, conductor, performer and scholar and included the organ music of his sister, Fanny Mendelssohn and Clara Schumann. The series was recorded live and is available on-line at Meyer-Media. Archer was the first American woman to play the complete works of Olivier Messiaen for the centennial of the composer's birth in 2008. *Time-Out New York* recognized the Messiaen cycle as "Best of 2008" in Classical music and opera.

Archer's recordings span the seventeenth to the twenty-first centuries, a festive discography that highlights her musical mastery on grand Romantic instruments as well as Baroque tracker organs. Her most recent compact disc, *Bach, the Transcendent Genius*, celebrates the brilliant improvisations on Lutheran hymn tunes of the "Great 18" chorale preludes (MM1013). The release on Meyer-Media, is the first recording on the Paul Fritts tracker organ at Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, New York. *An American Idyll*, released by Meyer Media in August, 2008 (MM08011), and recorded on the E. M. Skinner/Randall Dyer organ at Rollins College, Winter Park, Florida, features American organ music from 1900 to the present, including music by Joan Tower and a work commissioned by Archer, *Praeludium super Pange Lingua* by David Noon. Her centennial concerts in honor of Olivier Messiaen also produced *A Mystic In the Making* (MM07007), recorded on the Aeolian-Skinner organ at Columbia University, which includes two complete cycles, *L'Ascension*, and *Les Corps Glorieux*. Her solo debut CD *The Orpheus of Amsterdam: Sweelinck and his Pupils* (CACD 88043), recorded on the Fisk organ at Wellesley College, was released in 2006 by London's CALA Records. Archer recorded works of Bach along with narration read by Robert Thurman as part of a project for the Tennessee Players and the Albert Schweitzer Fellowship, *Words of Albert Schweitzer and the Music of Bach*. A live concert recording made at the Organalia Festival in Turin, Italy was released in 2005.

During the 2012-2013 season, Archer promoted her new recording *Franz Liszt, A Hungarian Rhapsody*; highlights included recitals at The Cathedral of All Saints, Milwaukee, WI, Cathedral of St. Joseph the Workman, La Crosse, WI, Gethsemani Abbey, Trappist, KY, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY, Community of Christ Temple, Independence, MO, to name a few. In summer 2013, she was featured by the Philharmonic Societies in Irkutsk, Krasnoyarsk, Tomsk and Perm, Russia, and played in festivals in Alessandria, Grondona and Scopello, Italy, Tubingen and Hamburg, Germany, and Copenhagen, Denmark. Archer is college organist at Vassar College, and director of the music program at Barnard College, Columbia University where she conducts the Barnard-Columbia Chorus. She serves as director of the artist and young organ artist recitals at historic Central Synagogue, New York City.

**Gail Archer - *The Muse's Voice: A Celebration of Women Composers***

**2014 CD Release Concert Tour:**

Feb 19 @ Central Synagogue, NYC  
Feb 23 @ Orchard Park Presbyterian Church, Orchard Park, NY  
Mar 2 @ St. Gabriel the Archangel, Saddle River, NJ  
Mar 16 @ St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Savannah, GA  
Mar 23 @ The National Cathedral, Washington, DC  
Mar 30 @ Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY  
Apr 5 @ Bruton Parish Church, Williamsburg, VA  
Apr 6 @ Armenian Presbyterian Church, Paramus, NJ  
Apr 27 @ King's Way United Methodist Church, Springfield, MO  
May 4 @ Frist Presbyterian Church, Trenton, NJ  
May 11 @ Broad Street Presbyterian Church, Columbus, OH  
May 21 @ St. Paul's Chapel, NYC

For more information on **Gail Archer**, please visit: [gailarcher.com](http://gailarcher.com)

For more information on **Meyer Media**, please visit: [meyermmedia.com](http://meyermmedia.com)

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For media only, listen to the entire album online:

<https://soundcloud.com/amtpublicrelations/sets/the-muses-voice-a-celebration/s-1ypWF>.

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