

Organ Summer – Gail Archer from New York Proves her Worth in Free Climbing Darmstadt

The Grammy-nominated, internationally active concert-organist Gail Archer was the first US-American to record the entire organ works of Olivier Messiaen. For this, she received a Grammy-Award nomination. Furthermore she organized the concerts in the historical Central-Synagogue in New York. Greeted by the friendly applause of the more than 100 audience members that she received in the Paulus church, Archer began her Organ lessons with Dietrich Buxtehude's Prelude g-Moll.

A colorful and differentiated choice of ledgers provided clear structure of the fugue like parts and the more imaginative, free passages. Likewise Johann Sebastian Bach's choral prelude "An Wasserflüssen Babylons" (BWV 653) profited from a vivid as well as a well-arranged portrayal. The Choral tune was – the tenor had the typical nasal registers – clearly set apart from the counterpointed treble flutes and the sonorous Pedal groundwork. In the remaining works of her unconventional and original program, Archer's preference for a compact, strong unity arose: the organist renounced a longer investigation of the multifaceted colors of the ledgers that exists in the Paulus church organ, and relied completely on the elementary force of the full Organ. The overpowering Fortissimo passages provoked, admittedly a certain dullness and tiredness. As a commissioned work from New York, Gail Archer brought the composition "ascent" of her colleague Joan Tower, who counts as one of the most famous in her field in the USA: a powerful tonal ascent, in which chromatic pedal measures are interrupted by shimmering fireworks of descant notes, before the staggering figures climb into extreme realms, where they lose their mountain air with their last blow.

Archer's energetic musical spirit culminated in the final piece of the evening, Max Reger's Fantasy over the Choral "Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott." The organist went about the gruff sounds of the thick stratifications and technically involved virtuoso passages, powerfully, robustly and very masterfully and escalated them into powerful, voluminous sound visions: One felt very small amongst the intoxication of Reger's majestic, gigantic organ universe.