

Erik Meyer Named 2017 Raabe Prize Winner



The Association of Lutheran Church Musicians is pleased to announce that Erik Meyer is the recipient of the **2017 Raabe Prize for Excellence in Sacred Composition** for his choral submission, *St. John Passion*.

Erik Meyer is an all-around musician who likes to keep busy and get his hands dirty. From Collingswood, NJ, he earned his music degrees from the Peabody Conservatory of Music in Baltimore. He has performed over 100 organ concerts throughout the US and Europe, as well as flute & organ recitals with his wife, Anna. He is music director at the Church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Philadelphia, where he oversees a large choral and instrumental program. He plays a decent trombone in a band and a not-so-decent violin in an orchestra, and has even managed to score a couple accordion gigs. Previously he was the artistic director of the Luther Memorial Concert Series, created a Bach Festival, and taught at Mercyhurst University. He maintains a blog, fineartoflistening.com, which helps to introduce and promote art music to new audiences. He lives in Philadelphia with his wife and two children, and is hoping to learn to play the bagpipes and theremin soon.

Erik's compositions are published by Augsburg Fortress, St. James Press, and MusicSpoke, through which *St. John Passion* is available. He is the composer of the new Johns Hopkins University school song, and recently won composition awards from the Twin Cities AGO and Presbyterian Association of Musicians.

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The selection committee, headed by Dr. Zebulon Highben of Muskingum University, included the following comments regarding *St. John Passion*:

There were 78 diverse entries in this year's competition, including many works of excellent quality. The committee selected the *St. John Passion* as the winner, for reasons such as these (culled from comments by members of the committee):

- the thoughtful construction of the work, involving both choir and assembly through the incorporation of chorale stanzas as responses to the passion narrative;
- the centrality of the text to Christian witness and proclamation;
- the importance of the St. John Passion, particularly to Lutheran theology and liturgy;
- the paucity of (contemporary) passion settings that are accessible to a normal parish choir;
- a compositional style reminiscent of the passions of Heinrich Schütz.

In addition, the committee selected two works for honorable mention and included these comments:

Ryan Keebaugh's *The Suffering Servant* is a dense work, setting a theologically rich text with tone clusters and long unaccompanied lines in a style that evokes the holy minimalism of Tavener and Pärt. Though it is more difficult than the other two selections, and requires a vocal stamina that would put it beyond the reach of many choirs, it stands clearly in the "high art" stream of the Lutheran musical tradition and is worthy of inclusion as an honorable mention.

All Shall Be Amen and Alleluia, by Thomas Keesecker, is a beautiful setting of a potent text by Augustine. Although its style is lighter and sweeter than the *St. John Passion* or *Suffering Servant*, it is extremely well crafted, with "long, luxurious" vocal lines and subtly delightful text painting. The committee believes it will become a favorite of many parish choirs.



The Raabe Prize for Excellence in Sacred Composition is awarded every two years for a single musical work, published or unpublished and written within the last five years, that reflects a larger history of excellence on the part of the composer. Dr. William and Nancy Raabe of Milton, WI endowed this prize to recognize and encourage significant accomplishments in composition contributing to the body of sacred music for the church in the Lutheran heritage. Visit www.alcm.org for more information about the Raabe Prize.