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MONODIC ORGAN CHORALE IN THE ŒUVRE
OF JAN PIETERSZOOM SWEELINCK'S PUPILS

Girolamo Frescobaldi in Rome was to Southern Europe what the great Amsterdam organist and harpsichordist Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck was to the North. He was regarded at the beginning of the 17th century as the most famous *organist maker* in Northern Europe. Many young German organists made pilgrimage to Amsterdam to receive instruction from Sweelinck in organ playing and in the art of composition. Heinrich Scheidemann and Jacob Praetorius from Hamburg, Samuel Scheidt from Halle, Andreas Düben from Leipzig (who later went on to Stockholm), and also Paul Siefert from Gdańsk, Melchior Schildt from Hannover, and probably Petrus Hasse (later organist at St. Mary's church, Lübeck) were among these young musicians.

But what were they expecting to find in Amsterdam? The town had become Calvinistic about 25 years before, and church music life especially had changed notably since then. Instrumental music was no longer allowed in church services, and for this reason Sweelinck also lost his position as an organist within the service. Henceforth he was engaged by the town of Amsterdam, the owner of the organs of the Oude Kerk, that Sweelinck now had to play twice a day (normally in the morning and in the evening or, on Sundays, before and after services). Sweelinck earned an impressive salary that ultimately reached the amount of 360 florins a year. But this was not his only income; indeed the students, who came to study with him, normally had to pay around 200 florins a year, including boarding and lodging in the house of the master.

The extraordinary art of Sweelinck's organ playing, especially his improvisations, could have been the primary reason for German organists coming to Amsterdam. Sweelinck's keyboard compositions were used as *exempla* to play these instruments (*ex improvviso*). His lessons in Amsterdam were obviously based on an extract from the *Istitutioni harmoniche* (Venice 1558/73) by Gioseffo Zarlino. Passed down to his students, they have been preserved as 'Sweelinck's Kompositionsregeln' in the estates of Jan Adam Reincken and Matthias Weckmann. Apart from Zarlino, Sweelinck had also been influenced by the keyboard music of the English virginalists; the use of keyboard figuration in his works and the structure of his fantasias clearly derive from the English virginal music.

Yet what was it exactly that the German students wanted to learn from Sweelinck? Mattheson writes that Jacob Praetorius (Schultz) «nahm des Sweelincks Sitten und Geberden an sich, die überaus angenehm und ehrbar waren; hielt den Leib ohne sonderliche Bewegung, und gab seinem Spielen ein Ansehen, als ob es gar keine Arbeit wäre» [Praetorius adopted Sweelinck's personal conventions that were extremely convenient

and respectable; he hardly moved his body, and seemed to play without any labour].¹ In fact today we do not know much about the manner in which Sweelinck's students played the organ, but we do indeed have some examples of their compositional work that give us in part an idea of what they probably had learnt from their master, and also what they then went on to add.

I am now going to focus on a special kind of chorale treatment that appears to have been a new invention of Sweelinck's students: the reception and adaptation of the Italian 'monodic style'. Sweelinck himself wrote several chorale variations that contain single verses with discant colorations. These pieces, however, are influenced more by English virginal music than by Italian ideas. However, it was Heinrich Scheidemann, a pupil of Sweelinck who was the first to create a new texture: the 'monodic organ chorale', as it is called by Werner Breig.² In this genre, the textural shape of the Sweelinck chorale is heightened by a new expressive dimension.

To compare the old and the new style, let us briefly look at two treatments of the same chorale, one written by Sweelinck and one by Scheidemann.³ Sweelinck chose a polyphonic three-voice-variation with a leading (soprano) voice which is highly ornamented. The lower voices are set in a simple chordal manner. In the coloration of the upper voice, we find several motives that are strung together in sequences before moving on to a new motif. The melody might be played on a separate manual even though it is not indicated.

Example 1. Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck, *Erbarm dich mein, o Herre Gott, Sexta variatio* (beginning) In *Opera Omnia*, 7 vols., I: *The Instrumental Works*, II fasc., eds. Gustav Leonhardt - Alfons Annegarn - Frits Noske, Amsterdam, Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis, 1974 (second revised edition), p. 31

¹ JOHANN MATTHESON, *Grundlage einer Ehren-Pforte*, Hamburg, in Verlegung des Verfassers, 1740, p. 328.

² The term has been introduced by WERNER BREIG, *Die Orgelwerke von Heinrich Scheidemann*, Wiesbaden, Steiner, 1967, p. 32.

³ Werner Breig already discussed the works many years ago. *Ibidem*.

Scheidemann, however, treats the chorale melody in a different way by starting slowly with long notes. The ornamentation grows little by little, revealing at the same time a highly expressive potential.

Example 2. Heinrich Scheidemann, *Erbarm dich mein, o Herre Gott, Secundus versus* (beginning) In *Orgelwerke*, 3 vols., I: *Choralbearbeitungen*, ed. Gustav Fochs, Kassel, Bärenreiter, 1966, p. 22

The musical score is presented in four systems, each with three staves (treble, middle, and bass clefs). The first system begins at bar 8 and is marked 'Rp'. The melody in the upper voice starts with a long note (half note) and gradually becomes more rhythmic. The accompaniment in the lower voices consists of chords and moving lines. The second system (bars 13-17) shows the melody becoming more active with eighth notes. The third system (bars 18-21) features a more rhythmic melody with sixteenth notes. The fourth system (bars 22-25) shows the melody continuing with sixteenth notes and some ornamentation. The accompaniment in the lower voices consists of chords and moving lines.

Scheidemann's variation is clearly intended to be played on two separate manuals (cf. bar 21f., where the upper voice crosses the accompaniment), presenting the ornamented melody on the *Rückpositiv* in the foreground, and the lower voices on *Werk* and *Pedal* with smaller registrations. The chorale melody is treated here in a very expressive way

and so manifests a new quality that can be regarded as the beginning of a new era of chorale treatment, reaching its culmination in the organ chorales by Johann Sebastian Bach.

Werner Breig recognised the high quality of Scheidemann's coloured organ chorales and interpreted them as a «basically new type» («grundsätzlich neuen Typ») of chorale treatment.⁴ Yet what about the other pupils of Sweelinck? Did they also adopt Italian ideas of monody when treating and presenting chorale melodies? We will learn about different strategies of ornamentation by looking at some of their compositions.

In order to do so, let us look at a very interesting source that sheds some light on the question what Sweelinck's students may have learned in Amsterdam. In the Lübbenau tablature *Lynar B1*⁵ we find an impressive example of teamwork, obviously carried out by Sweelinck himself and some of his students. Altogether it contains a set of 20 variations [of which the first 17 are numbered] of the chorale *Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr*. The first four of these organ pieces are indicated as «M. I. P.» which probably means «Meester/Magister Jan Pieterszoon».⁶ The following 16 pieces are connected with the names of other students of Sweelinck: Andreas Düben (d. Ä.), M. (Martin?) Düben, Petrus Hasse, G. S. (Gottfried Scheidt?), and in the last three variations S. S. (Samuel Scheidt?) and W. (Wilhelm) Karges.

Considering the first four variations as compositions by Sweelinck, we have to ask what could have been the background for the rest of the cycle? Max Seiffert suggested that it might have been a joint venture by the master and his pupils. This hypothesis was later questioned by Margarete Reimann and Lydia Schierning, who considered it a compilation by an unknown scribe. Pieter Dirksen, having resumed the musicological 'story' told above, argued that the four variations can be without a doubt attributed to Sweelinck on the basis of their compositional quality.⁷

Furthermore, he claims that the cycle has a didactic background, and suggests that the following variations might have been works by the students fulfilling their exercises to work out variations in the style of their master. Compared to the four Sweelinck verses, the other variations in the cycle show a notable difference in quality – this might not be surprising if we consider them as works written by students who were learning by imitating their teacher. So Dirksen concludes that «Sweelinck's little cycle does indeed appear to have been written with a didactic purpose in mind, and, what is more, obviously specifically for his German pupils».⁸

How the different students worked out the exercise in detail is shown by their music. The younger and still inexperienced musicians mostly copy the style of their master, handling the texture rather clumsily and in a somewhat chaste manner. Regarding later works by these students

⁴ BREIG, *Die Orgelwerke*, p. 32.

⁵ Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin - Preußischer Kulturbesitz (hereinafter D-B), Mus. ms. Lynar B1.

⁶ It is not very likely that this means, as Hans Joachim Moser suggested (HANS JOACHIM MOSER, *Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr: 20 Choralvariationen der deutschen Sweelinck-Schule*, Kassel, Bärenreiter, 1953, compositions 1-4), «Magister Jacob Praetorius», not only for stylistic reasons, but also, as in this source exclusively Sweelinck is called «meester». Cf. PETER DIRKSEN, *The Keyboard Music of Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck*, Utrecht, Koninklijke Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis, 1997, p. 184.

⁷ DIRKSEN, *The Keyboard Music*, p. 186; he points out that they do «not only [...] exhaust all three possibilities of voice numbers used normally by Sweelinck, but the outer, 4-part variations are designed as each other's complement».

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 190.

of Sweelinck, we find most of them later following their own style of composition. Some of them not only found new ways in composing music but they also developed new genres, and they certainly did not learn all of this from Sweelinck. One example is the coloration of vocal motets by Scheidemann and Siefert, a genre that Sweelinck obviously did not use.⁹

Let us look in detail now at Sweelinck's first variation and Petrus Hasse's first treatment of *Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr* from the above-mentioned variation set in the Lübbenau tablature *Lynar BI*. The Sweelinck variation is a four-voice movement in almost homophonic texture, adding some passing notes in all voices. Hasse, however, treats the melody in his first variation in the middle voice, using some transitions, but no other ornamentation, while the upper and lower counterpoint voices show a little variation with sequenced and repeated motives.

Petrus (Peter) Hasse was organist at St. Mary's church in Lübeck. Finding his name in the setting of *Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr* makes it likely that he also could have been a student of Sweelinck, even if there are no other confirmations of this suggestion.¹⁰

Example 3a. Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck, *Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr, Prima variatio*
In *Opera Omnia*, 7 vols., I: *The Instrumental Works*, II fasc., eds. Gustav Leonhardt - Alfons Annegarn - Frits Noske, Amsterdam, Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis, 1974 (second revised edition), p. 1

⁹ Cf. MATTHIAS SCHNEIDER, *Lassos Benedicam Dominum in omni tempore - koloriert von Siefert?*, in *Musica Baltica. Danzig und die Musikkultur Europas*, ed. Danuta Popinigis, Gdańsk, Wydawnictwo Akademii Muzycznej w Gdańsku, 2000, pp. 130-144.

¹⁰ Cf. DIRKSEN, *The Keyboard Music*, p. 184, note 6.

Example 3b. Petrus Hasse, *Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr, Primus versus*
 In *Orgelmusik der Familie Hasse*, ed. Michael Belotti, Stuttgart, Carus, 2009, p. 18

Choral in Tenore 3 vocum

A similar technique with a slightly ornamented melody, now in the discant voice, is found in the first of the chorale variations *Puer natus in Bethlehem* composed by Paul Siefert, another of Sweelinck's students. This work, a conventional polyphonic setting with some flourishes of ornamentation, actually also appears in the manuscript *Lynar B 1*.

Siefert was born in Gdańsk in 1586 and visited Sweelinck in 1607, supported by a grant of his home town, to study for about three years with the famous Dutch master.¹¹ After returning to Gdańsk he worked at first as an assistant to Cajus Schmiedtlein, who was the organist of St. Mary's church. When Schmiedtlein died in 1611, Siefert did not receive his post. Furthermore, he had to wait for this for about 12 years, working in between in Königsberg and as an organist at the Polish Court of Warsaw, where at that time Italian musicians like Asprilio Pacelli, Giovanni Valentini and Tarquinio Merula were also employed.

In the final variation of the same variation set, the chorale melody is treated with many more diminutions, recalling the technique of the English virginalists. This composition is not of the same high quality as Sweelinck's treatment of the melody, but parallels nevertheless cannot be overlooked. The variation begins by stringing small motives of quavers together. In the second half of the piece the movement slows down, showing here also sequences and mechanical repetitions of the same motives.

¹¹ Cf. MATTHIAS SCHNEIDER, *Paul Siefert*, in *MGG², Personenteil*, XV (2006), coll. 757-759.

Example 4. Paul Siefert, *Puer natus in Bethlehem, Prima variatio*, D-B, Mus. ms. Lynar B1, c. 6

Example 5. Paul Siefert, *Puer natus in Bethlehem, Octava variatio*, D-B, Mus. ms. Lynar B1, c. 8

Extensive and rich ornamentations of the chorale melodies that are of a higher quality can also be found in some of the organ chorales by Melchior Schildt, who studied under Sweelinck from 1609 to 1612. His treatment of the chorale *Herzlich lieb hab ich dich, o Herr* is a chorale fantasy. Schildt treats the single lines of the melody several times, using different techniques, including fragmentations and echoes. At the beginning the piece has a clearly trinomial structure, presenting the melody in the upper voice on the *Rückpositiv*, the middle voices on the *Oberwerk*, and the bass-line on the pedals. The lower voices form a simple chordal accompaniment, while the melody is ornamented in a highly virtuosic way. The motives are repeated in sequences and then replaced by new ones – in this respect the works by Schildt and Sweelinck are similar.

Example 6. Melchior Schildt, *Herzlich lieb hab ich dich, o Herr*
In *Sämtliche Orgelwerke*, ed. Klaus Beckmann, Mainz, Schott, 2003, p. 19

Ad manuale duplex
Rückpositiv
Orgel
Pedal

The image shows a musical score for an organ piece. It is divided into three systems, each with three staves: Rückpositiv (top), Orgel (middle), and Pedal (bottom). The first system starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody in the Rückpositiv staff is highly ornamented with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. The Orgel staff provides a simple chordal accompaniment with sustained notes. The Pedal staff has a simple bass line. The second system begins at measure 6 and continues the melodic and accompaniment patterns. The third system begins at measure 9 and shows further development of the melodic line. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

Nicolaus Hasse belongs to the following generation, although his exact position within the genealogical tree of the Hasse family has not yet been discovered. Hasse's rare organ

compositions are to be found in the addenda of the *Pelplin Tablature*, a manuscript from the Cistercian monastery in Pelplin.¹² The manuscript is one of the most comprehensive sources for European polyphony in the late Renaissance and early Baroque period.¹³ Although the collection had been compiled in the 1620s, the organ music was not added until the second half of the 17th century.

Nicolaus Hasse was probably the son of the above mentioned Petrus Hasse. In any case, Nicolaus studied with Jacob Praetorius and/or Heinrich Scheidemann in Hamburg and as such was a 'student of a student' of Sweelinck.¹⁴ In his organ treatment of *Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr* he follows the Scheidemann manner in figuring the chorale melody, although he does this with less expressive force. In his treatment, each line of the chorale melody is presented several times, alternating not only between soprano (on *Rückpositiv* or *Brustwerk*) and basso (on the *Pedal*) but also changing the mode, from *F* to *B-flat* major. The figuration is set in a more virtuosic, but also more mechanical manner. Although this does not reach the high level of his (probable) teacher Heinrich Scheidemann, it doubtlessly reflects the new ideas of highly expressive treatments of melodies in the style of Italian monody.

Example 7. Nicolaus Hasse, *Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr*

In *Sämtliche Orgelwerke*, ed. Klaus Beckmann, Wiesbaden, Breitkopf & Härtel, 1974, p. 6

¹² Pelplin, Biblioteka Diecezjalna, ms. 305 (Tabulatura organowa, vol. II), ed. in: *The Pelplin Tablature. Facsimile*, eds. Adam Sutkowski - Alina Osostowicz-Sutkowska, Graz - Warsaw, Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt - Polskie Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1964-1965 (Antiquitates Musicae in Polonia, 1-7).

¹³ Cf. MICHAEL BELOTTI, *Zur Orgelmusik des Rostocker Marienorganisten Nicolaus Hasse*, in *Orgelbau, Orgelmusik und Organisten des Ostseeraums im 17. und 19. Jahrhundert*, eds. Matthias Schneider - Walter Werbeck, Frankfurt am Main, Lang, 2006 (Greifswalder Beiträge zur Musikwissenschaft, 14), p. 46.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 42.



The intricate presentation of the chorale melody that makes alternate use of two manuals and the pedals can be found in two other compositions by organists from the same generation. Both are linked to the Eastern part of the Baltic region and worked in Gdańsk.

Let us first look at Andreas Neunhaber's variations on *Ich ruff zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ* from the Lübbenau tablature *Lynar B 8*.¹⁵ Neunhaber was not only a member of the younger generation, but also, like Nicolaus Hasse, a 'student of a student' of Sweelinck. Born in Gdańsk in 1603, he studied with Paul Siefert, Matthias Läder (or Matthaeus Leder, also a student of Sweelinck), and Tarquinio Merula, who worked from 1622 to 1625 as *organista di chiesa, e di camera* at the Polish Court in Warsaw.¹⁶ Later, he worked as an organist at St. Katharina's church in Gdańsk until his death in 1663.¹⁷

In the second verse of *Ich ruff zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ* the chorale melody is presented in the upper voice on two alternating manuals and in the lower voice on the pedals, as in Nicolaus Hasse's treatment of *Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr*.

The coloration of this melody varies, starting calmly with long notes and gradually accelerating to reach continuous lines of semiquavers. Despite the wide spectrum of figures there is a remarkable difference with the coloration technique of Sweelinck. On the other hand, it does not reach the high level of Scheidemann's expressive chorale treatment.

There is another composition that makes use of the same technique, composed by another Gdańsk organist and also preserved in the *Pelplin Tablature*: the organ chorale *Allein zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ* by Ewald Hintz.

Hintz was born in 1613 and was a pupil of the Vienna court organist Johann Jacob Froberger.¹⁸ From 1643 to 1654 he worked as an organist at the great organ of St. Johannis, Gdańsk. After the death of Paul Siefert in 1666, Hintz became organist at St. Mary's church at the great Friese organ (built in the 1580s).

In his organ chorale *Allein zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ*, Hintz presents the chorale melody in the discant on two alternating manuals, and in the bass voice, played on the pedals, ornamenting the discant-citations in a very expressive and virtuosic way. With

¹⁵ D-B, Mus. ms. Lynar B8.

¹⁶ This phrase he uses in the title of his *Madrigaletti* (1624), cf. JOACHIM STEINHEUER, *Tarquinio Merula*, in MGG², *Personenteil*, XII (2004), col. 44; HERMANN RAUSCHNING, *Geschichte der Musik und Musikpflege in Danzig*, Danzig, Kommissionsverlag der Danziger Verlags-Gesellschaft, 1931, p. 178.

¹⁷ RAUSCHNING, *Geschichte*, p. 244.

¹⁸ MATTHESON, *Grundlage*, p. 74.

regard to its structure it resembles the above-mentioned Neunhaber and Nicolaus Hasse compositions.

Example 8. Andreas Neunhaber, *Ich ruff zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ*

In *Choralbearbeitungen des norddeutschen Barocks*, ed. Klaus Beckmann, Wiesbaden, Breitkopf & Härtel, 1988, p. 20

[Secundus versus] - Alio modo. Auf 2 und 3 Clavier

1

7

12 II

16 II

Example 9. Ewald Hintz, *Allein zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ*
 In *Choralbearbeitungen des norddeutschen Barocks*, ed. Klaus Beckmann, Wiesbaden, Breitkopf
 & Härtel, 1988, p. 26

The image displays a musical score for the chorale 'Allein zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ' by Ewald Hintz. The score is arranged in four systems, each with three staves: a vocal line (treble clef), an organ line (grand staff), and a bass line (bass clef). The time signature is common time (C). The score includes several registrations: 'Rückpositiv' at the beginning, 'Organo' in the first system, and 'Brustwerk' at the start of the fourth system. Measure numbers 6, 12, and 16 are indicated at the beginning of their respective systems. The organ part features various textures, including block chords, arpeggiated figures, and rapid sixteenth-note passages. The vocal line consists of a single melodic line with lyrics written below it. The bass line provides a steady accompaniment with block chords and moving lines.

In conclusion, besides from the question of quality, two different strategies in ornamenting and in the coloration of the chorale melody can be found in the organ chorales: on the one hand the old-fashioned diminution-technique that Sweelinck had adopted from the English virginalists and which can be seen in his own work and also in the music of his students Paul Siefert and Melchior Schildt.

The younger generation on the other hand, Nicolaus Hasse, Andreas Neunhaber and Ewald Hintz, treats the melodies in a freer and at the same time more expressive way. In doing so, they seem to follow Heinrich Scheidemann and the ideas of monody that came from Italy. We still do not know where Scheidemann got his ideas from, but in the Hanseatic town of Hamburg he probably was well connected.

Nevertheless, the influence of Scheidemann does not seem to be the only possible one. All three organists of the younger generation had been engaged in Gdańsk or at the Polish Court of Warsaw, and had had direct contact with Italian music and musicians there. So it would seem that the direct influence of Italian music on the organists working in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth – either in Gdańsk or in Warsaw – was much more important for their works than has so far been recognized.

ABSTRACT

In the organ music of Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck and of his pupils, a chorale treatment can be found that shows the influence of the Italian monody. Most of the chorale melody is treated on a separate manual. Asides all the questions of quality, there are two different strategies in ornamenting and coloring the chorale melody: on the one hand, the old-fashioned diminution-technique that Sweelinck had adopted from the English virginalists and that is to be seen in his own work and also in the music of his students Paul Siefert and Melchior Schildt. On the other hand, Nicolaus Hasse, Andreas Neunhaber and Ewald Hintz, who belong to the younger generation, treat the melodies in a freer and at the same time more expressive way. In doing so, they seem to follow Heinrich Scheidemann and the ideas of monody that came from Italy. However, the influence of Scheidemann obviously is not the only possibility. Indeed, all three organists of the younger generation were engaged in Gdańsk or at the Polish Court of Warsaw and had direct contact there with Italian music and its musicians. Therefore, it seems to me that the direct influence of Italian music on the organists working in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth – either in Gdańsk or in Warsaw – was much more important for their works than has so far been recognized.

Nella musica per organo di Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck e dei suoi allievi si può rilevare un trattamento polifonico che mostra l'influenza della monodia italiana. La melodia del corale è collocata per lo più in un manuale separato. Al di là di tutte le questioni di qualità, si rilevano due diverse strategie di ornamentazione e coloratura della melodia corale: da un lato l'antica tecnica di diminuzione, che Sweelinck aveva ereditato dai virginalisti inglesi e che compare nei suoi lavori e nella musica dei suoi allievi Paul Siefert e Melchior Schildt; dall'altro Nicolaus Hasse, Andreas Neunhaber e Ewald Hintz, che appartengono alla generazione più giovane, trattano le melodie in una maniera più libera e nello stesso tempo più espressiva. In questo modo, essi sembrano seguire Heinrich Scheidemann e le idee sulla monodia provenienti dall'Italia. Ma l'influenza di Scheidemann ovviamente non è l'unica che si possa ipotizzare. I tre organisti della nuova generazione, infatti, furono tutti impiegati a Danzica o presso la corte polacca di Varsavia, dove entrarono direttamente in contatto con la musica italiana e con musicisti provenienti dalla Penisola. Per questa ragione ritengo che l'influenza diretta della musica italiana sugli organisti attivi nella Confederazione polacco-lituana – sia a Danzica, sia a Varsavia – fu molto più importante per le loro opere di quanto non sia stato riconosciuto fino ad ora.