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A GRADUATE RECITAL IN ORGAN

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Master of Music

Peter Matthew Frost

Pittsburg State University

Pittsburg, Kansas

December 2019

A GRADUATE RECITAL IN ORGAN

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A GRADUATE RECITAL IN ORGAN

An Abstract of the Thesis by
Peter Matthew Frost

This thesis consists of a Graduate Recital in Organ and accompanying notes. The notes include composer biographical information, basic analysis of each piece to be performed, performance considerations, and relevant historical context. The recital took place in the Sharon Kay Dean Recital Hall at Pittsburg State University on Monday, December 9, 2019. An audio recording of the performance is included.

Graduate Recital

Peter Frost, Organ

Monday, December 9, 2019
Sharon Kay Dean Recital Hall
7:30 pm

Program

Magnificat Primi Toni, BuxWV 203 Dieterich Buxtehude
(1637 – 1707)

Suite du Premier Ton Louis-Nicolas Clérambault
I. Grand Plein Jeu (1676-1749)

III. Duo

IV. Trio

V. Basse et Dessus de Trompette

VI. Récits de Cromorne et de Cornet séparé, en Dialogue

VII. Dialogue sur les Grands Jeux

Prelude and Fugue in E-flat Major, BWV 552 J. S. Bach
(1685-1750)

–Brief Pause–

Pastorale César Franck
(1822-1890)

Psalm Prelude, Set 1, No. 1, Op 32 Herbert Howells
(1892-1983)

Alleluyas Simon Preston
(b.1938)

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CHAPTER I

Magnificat Primi Toni, BuxWV 203

Dietrich Buxtehude held the prestigious post of Organist at St. Mary's, Lübeck, where his predecessor was Franz Tunder, from 1668 until his death in 1707. Lübeck was the center of the "North German School" which was greatly influenced by Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck and included such composers as Heinrich Scheidemann, Samuel Scheidt, Franz Tunder, Georg Böhm, Vincent Lübeck, and Nicolaus Bruhns. The most recognizable genre from the North German School is the Praeludium, a form perfected by Buxtehude.

The career of Buxtehude is not unlike that of J. S. Bach. Buxtehude's post at St. Mary's required the production of a seemingly endless supply of cantatas for weekly services, feasts, and other special occasions. Of his nearly 90 extant organ compositions, about half are free works (praeludia, canzoni, toccatas) and half are chorale-based. There are three pieces that, though they were given chorale titles, "would be difficult to distinguish from the praeludia" (Snyder 264). "Two works entitled Magnificat primi toni (BuxWV 203, 204) and the Te Deum laudamus (BuxWV 218) are not composed on chorale melodies at all and might better be called chant fantasias" (Snyder 260-261) and will therefore be discussed as a part of the broader praeludium category. The chant may be unrecognizable to a listener who is unfamiliar with the tune, but can be found, with

careful examination, in the score. The following examples show how the *Magnificat* tone is presented in BuxWV 203.



Figure 1.1 The First Psalm Tone



Figure 1.2 The intonation in BuxWV 203 ms. 2-3



Figure 1.3 The termination in BuxWV 203 ms. 50-51



Figure 1.4 Termination in BuxWV 203 ms. 138-141

It had been the tradition in other regions to perform the *Magnificat* and other chants in alternation between the organ and a soloist or choir. There is no reason to believe the tradition was present in Lübeck at the time.

The Buxtehude Praeludium

Buxtehude expert Kerala Snyder describes the praeludia:

The essence of Buxtehude's praeludia lies in the juxtaposition of sections in a free, improvisatory, and idiomatic keyboard style with sections in a structured, fugal style. As is the case with his vocal concertos, no two praeludia are alike. They may contain one, two, or three fugues, using a wide variety of styles and contrapuntal devices – or lack of them. The free sections, which invariably open them and which normally appear later in the piece, are composed in a dazzling array of textures and styles, from lengthy pedal points to fleeting sixteenth- and even thirty-second-note scales and arpeggios, from pure chordal homophony through various stages of its decoration to imitative counterpoint and fugato subsections, from tonal stability to daring harmonic excursions (239).

The Praeludium is a sum of its parts, which are dependent on each other, unlike the Prelude and Fugue pair found in the Middle German School, which consists of two independent movements. The sections of the Praeludia are often quite short with inconclusive endings; therefore, very few of these sections can successfully be played in isolation.

The North German Praeludia contain several characteristic features. The virtuosic pedal solo (fig. 1.5), mechanical rhythmic patterns (fig. 1.6), simple and short fugues (fig. 1.7), dialogue passages between manuals and pedal, double pedal passages (fig. 1.8), echo effects, use of dissonance, transitional sections (fig. 1.9), and the dramatic use of silence. Other common characteristics of Buxtehude’s praeludia are “the ascending scale or arpeggiated passage dropping to a single pedal note of unusual harmonic import” and written out trills (fig. 1.10) (Shannon 229).



Figure 1.5 Virtuoso pedal solo in Böhm Praeludium in C ms. 1-4



Figure 1.6 Mechanical rhythmic figuration in BuxWV 203 ms. 95-96



Figure 1.7 Gigue fugue in BuxWV ms. 76-80

Figure 1.8 Double pedal passage in Bruhns Praeludium in G ms. 57-63



Figure 1.9 Transitional passage in BuxWV 203 ms. 48-49



Figure 1.10 Notated trill in BuxWV 138 ms. 16

The fugues in this period were generally modest in length and did not make use of stretto, diminution, augmentation, or other fugal techniques that would later be used to great extent by composers such as J. S. Bach. Buxtehude seems to have preferred to alternate between fugal and free or figurative sections. Many of his preludia follow a five-section form beginning and ending with free sections. The *Magnificat Primi Toni* is, of course, an exception. The work is laid out in ten sections; a figurative free section with dialogue between the pedal and manuals, a fugue in 3/4, a fugue in 4/4, a transitional section followed by another fugue in 4/4 where the pedal plays the subject, a grand chordal section in 4/4, a quick gigue fugue in 12/8, a simple figurative section in 3/2, a

fugue in 4/4, a sixteenth-note based fugue in 4/4, and finally a figurative coda with pedal points.

Performance Considerations

Playing the organ works of Buxtehude requires an articulation that is normally very clear. If legato were desired as a special effect, it was carefully notated. This sort of detached articulation can be achieved by the use of “standard piano fingerings”, but is made easier by the use of many smaller groupings of fingers, creating space, such as 3-4 3-4 instead of 2-3-4-5, or 1-2-3-4 1-2-3-4 instead of the usual 1-2-3-1-2-3-4-5. The articulation of the pedals should also be detached, utilizing the alternating toes technique and avoiding heel-toe, which more naturally produces a legato articulation.

The registration of Buxtehude’s organ works affords great freedom to the organist, as rarely is any suggestion given in the manuscripts. “The manuscripts of Buxtehude’s organ works offer some information concerning changes of manuals, but none whatever with regard to the stops to be drawn in the divisions governed by them” (Shannon 394). It is generally agreed that the less severe sections be registered more lightly, and the heavier sections registered with a more robust sound. Typically, one would play the “fugues with lighter registration and free sections with a fuller/plenum registration” (Shannon 396), a practice followed in this performance.

CHAPTER II

Suite du Premier Ton

Parisian organist and composer Louis-Nicolas Clérambault (1676-1749) was a student of André Raison. Clérambault succeeded Guillaume-Gabriel Nivers as Organist Titulaire at Saint-Sulpice in 1715. His compositional output includes motets, hymns, secular cantatas, sonatas, dance pieces for harpsichord, and a book of two suites for organ.

The French Classical School

The French Classical Organ School is unlike any other tradition in the organ repertoire. Interesting registrations, sets of short pieces, and widely applied conventions concerning performance practice unique to the style make the music of the French Classical School instantly recognizable.

The organ music of the French Classical period is generally presented in the form of a suite of several short pieces. “Most of these pieces are rather short because of the brief time allocated for organ playing between various sections of the Mass” (Arnold 129). The organ was, in the seventeenth century, still being used in alternation with the choir for sections of the Mass Ordinary, and as a solo instrument, “was allowed to play at the offertory, at the elevation, and for the postlude” (Arnold 129). In addition to pieces

based on the *Kyrie, Agnus Dei*, etc., the organ composers also crafted pieces based on popular hymns, such as *Veni Creator*.

Playing the organ music of the French Classical period requires the knowledge of a unique set of registration and performance guidelines. *Notes Inégales* is a common practice of systematically elongating and shortening written note values to produce a rhythmic inequality similar to “swinging” eighth notes in jazz. For example, in figure 2.1, the written eighth note rhythm would be played more unevenly sounding like pairs of long-short figures.



Figure 2.1



Figure 2.2

The question then arises; “what does one play when a dotted eighth-sixteenth is actually written?” The answer to this question is unclear, but one position that makes the most sense to this organist is that the dotted rhythm calls for a sharper articulation and shorter short note. The result of applying this conclusion is a double dotted rhythm like that shown in figure 2.2. The *Notes Inégales* system is applied only to the first level of subdivision when the line is moving in a mostly stepwise motion. For example, in Clérambault’s *Basse et Dessus de Trompette*, the inequality is applied only to the sixteenth notes (fig. 2.3), but when the line moves from stepwise motion to arpeggiation, this type of inequality should be suspended and should instead transition to a different approach, stressing the lower notes of the arpeggio as shown in figure 2.4.



Figure 2.3 Notes Inégales applied to *Basse et Dessus de Trompette*



Figure 2.4 Differences in rhythmic inequality based on motion of line

from registration of French Classical repertoire. Often, the title of the piece is itself the registration instruction. The composers within this tradition used very similar combinations. In *Suite du Premier Ton*, Clérambault gives us seven such combinations: *Grand Plein Jeu*, *Fugue*, *Duo*, *Trio*, *Basse et Dessus de Trompette*, *Récits de Cromorne et de Cornet séparé*, and *Dialogue sur les Grands Jeux*. The vast majority of the suites from this period begin with a *Plein Jeu*, which is the entire principal chorus. *Petite Plein Jeu* was also used, meaning the same combination, but on the secondary manual. If the set contains a *Fugue* it is normally found after the opening *Plein Jeu*, and often played on reed stops. The *Duo* offers a simple two-voice texture played on two manuals. These movements are generally played on specific flute mutations, the Cornet in this case, one on the Récit and the other on the Positive. The Cornet is a bright combination of flutes 8', 4', 2 2/3', 2', and 1 3/5'. The *Trio* is much like the *Duo*, with a third voice. The lengthy title, *Basse et Dessus de Trompette ou de Cornet séparé, en Dialogue*, calls for

jeux doux, or a small combination of soft stops on one keyboard to accompany a dialogue between a Trompette bass line and a Cornet treble line. The *Ensemble* marking for the last phrases instructs the organist to play the two solo lines together. Another dialogue with *jeu doux* accompaniment, *Récits de Cromorne et de Cornet séparé, en Dialogue* features the classic treble solo (Récit) sounds, the Cromorne, a Clarinet-like reed stop, and the Cornet. For the first time in *Suite du Premier Ton*, the pedal is asked to play an accompanying third voice under the Cornet and Cromorne at the end of the *Récit*. The final movement of the suite is an exciting *Dialogue sur les Grands Jeux*. While *Plein Jeu* indicates the use of the principal chorus, *Grands Jeux* employs all appropriate reeds and flutes. On the Fisk Op. 106 organ, I will use the Cornet on the Récit and the Cromorne and Flutes 8' and 4' on the Positive in conversation with the full Grand Jeu including the Trompette on the Great.

CHAPTER III

Prelude and Fugue in E-flat Major, BWV 552

Among the works of Johann Sebastian Bach published during his lifetime, the Clavier-Übung (Keyboard Practice) series is certainly the most substantial. The “Keyboard Study” title given to the collection is not unique to Bach. For example, his predecessor at Leipzig, Johann Kuhnau also published a collection by the same name. Clavier-Übung I, II, and IV represent a large body of harpsichord repertoire: six Partitas, the Italian Concerto and French Overture, and the famous Goldberg Variations, respectively. Clavier-Übung Part III was published in 1739 during J. S. Bach’s employment in Leipzig, where his primary concentration was in the creation of a steady supply of church cantatas. By this time in his career, Bach had already written the vast majority of his organ works. Relatively few of these works had been published, however. The third part of Bach’s Clavier-Übung is a massive collection of twenty-one chorale preludes and four duets, flanked by the two movements of the Prelude and Fugue in E-flat major, BWV 552.

The Prelude

The Prelude in E-flat major is one of J.S. Bach’s longest, at 205 measures. This prelude is particularly interesting among Bach’s free works in that it exhibits the style of

a French Overture. The abundant dotted rhythms as seen in figure 3.1, many short scale runs, and appoggiatura chords (figure 3.2) are identifiable and essential characteristics of the French overture style. Bach was no stranger to national styles outside of his own region. He is known to have owned copies of scores by composers such as Nicolas De Grigny, Girolamo Frescobaldi, and others. While the Prelude in E-flat is written in the style of a French overture, the structure is that of an Italian concerto. Ritornello form, with many returns to the main thematic material, and vastly different sections, is an essential characteristic of the Italian concerto. These two national traditions are “...most often treated as polar opposites” (Horn 268).



Fig. 3.1 Dotted rhythms in BWV 552 ms. 5-6



Fig. 3.2 Scale runs and appoggiatura chords ms. 19-20

The Prelude in E-flat can be divided into three basic sections; A) main thematic material in the style of a French overture, B) vertical echo passage followed by a more active and linear section, C) active sixteenth-note fugal writing. “The three sections share the same written pulse but their styles are different...” (Williams 185). Below is a basic diagram of the three described sections.

- A m.1-32
- B m.32-50
- A m.57-71 (first part of A)
- C m.71-98
- A m.98-111 (second part of A)
- B m.111-129
- C m.130-174
- A m.174-205

The pedal serves a different function in each of the three sections. In the first section the pedal acts as an instrumental bass part along the lines of a bass instrument in an orchestral overture. The pedal is less involved in the second section, with staccato notes that are confined to cadences. In the third section the pedal fulfills its typical “old style” role with an active pedal line continuing the thematic material to the low extremes. Passages such as these are perfect for the implementation of alternate toe technique in which, instead of smoothing things out with the use of heels, the organist uses alternating toes to produce the appropriate articulation. Missing from this prelude is the use of pedal-point, which is common in organ works of the period.

Another interesting part of the Prelude in E-flat is the inclusion of dynamic markings. Dynamic markings in organ music of this period refer to a change of manual. Only one other free organ work of Bach, the “Dorian” Toccata in d, BWV 538, includes “authentic registration or manual changes [that] are related to the structure” (Williams 88). In the second section of the prelude, the markings “piano” and “forte” are provided, indicating that an echo-like effect is desired, and instructs the organist to move to a secondary keyboard (*p*) and return to the main keyboard (*f*).

The blending of national styles and use of various techniques in the BWV 552 prelude create a movement that is amazing for both the player and the listener. “In the... Prelude, Bach accomplished the seemingly impossible feat of uniting two diametrically opposed genres, the French Overture and the Italian Concerto” (Stauffer 152).

The Fugue

The Fugue in E-flat is as unique among the organ works of J.S. Bach as is the prelude. While Bach had previously pushed the boundaries by combining the subjects of double fugues, in this work “... he took an additional daring step, creating a triple fugue of diverse idioms” (Stauffer 151). The three fugues, though making up one large piece, are different in texture, fugue style, and meter.

The first fugue, “with its white-note theme, five-part texture, dense concentration of material, horizontally oriented lines, and suspension-filled episodes, is a true ‘stile antico’ piece” (Stauffer 151). The subject of this “old style” fugue is incredibly similar to first phrase of the well-known “St. Anne” hymn tune (1708) by English composer William Croft, associated with the text “O God, our help in ages past”. Though both

composers were alive at the same time, there is no evidence that they knew each other or that they were aware of the other's tune.

“The second fugue, with its winding black-note theme, motor rhythm, four-part texture, and sequential episodes, seems to be a type of *manualiter* [fugue]” (Stauffer 135). Many performers choose to migrate to a secondary manual for the second fugue, though there is no indication that this was Bach's intention. A case can be made for remaining on the primary manual, since the texture is already thinner with the absence of pedal, and because the echo passages are clearly marked in the Prelude and there are no markings in the fugue. However, I find playing the second fugue on a secondary manual provides added interest, as well as some relief from the wall of plenum sound heard in the surrounding sections, enhancing the “concerto principle”: loud, soft, loud.

“The third fugue, with its incisive downbeat theme, gigue meter and rhythms, sequential episodes, and periodic construction, is a dance fugue” (Stauffer 138). Dance fugues have an instrumental quality and are often in compound meter. Just as in the first fugue, the final fugue has a five-voice texture, creating a sense of textural balance throughout the movement.

“...The combining of the ‘Stile antico’ subject with the themes of the two other fugues makes the entire Fugue in E-flat... an art fugue” (Stauffer 152), the purpose of which is to display contrapuntal ability. “In an art fugue, it is not the immediate effect of the theme that counts but the way the theme fulfills its potential for contrapuntal manipulation”, the Fugue in C major, BWV 547/2 being a perfect example (Stauffer 148).

Bach is known to have been an intensely religious person, and many of his pieces have been proposed to have Trinitarian symbolism, which can be sensed in the three-part Fugue. The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, separate but one, describes both the Holy Trinity and the Fugue in E-flat. In the “St. Anne”, the majestic and serious first fugue could be perceived as the Father, the second as the Son, and the third as the Holy Ghost.

It is scarcely an exaggeration to see the Prelude and Fugue as together summing up many, even most of the resources of organ preludia which were superseded, current or anticipated during the lifetime of J. S. Bach, assembling styles and techniques known from the period of Palestrina to that of Haydn and beyond (Stauffer 191).

Overall, the brilliant Fugue in E-flat represents J. S. Bach’s lifelong perfection of the fugue.

CHAPTER IV

Six Pièces: Pastorale

César Franck (1822-1890) is well known for his works in many musical genres, but nowhere does he enjoy such special prominence as among organists.

Unlike the composers previously discussed, Franck did not mature as a composer until he was into his fifties. Franck had, however, received musical training from a young age. In 1834, he won a prize for piano from Liège Conservatoire. Having moved to Paris, Franck, now fourteen, was admitted to the national conservatory. “As an organist he had played, since his thirties, in the inaugural recital of practically every important organ in the French capital”, particularly known for his outstanding improvisations, but had not yet established himself as an “A-list” composer (Smith 11). After having been employed by various churches, Franck began what would be his permanent position as organist at Saint-Clotilde in Paris, where in December, 1859, Franck played, alongside Lefébure-Wély, for the dedication of the new Grande-Orgue built by Aristide Cavallé-Coll. He played two of his own pieces and the famous E-minor prelude and fugue of J. S. Bach (the “wedge”), further solidifying his place among the best organists in France. A few years later, in 1862, Franck played for another Cavallé-Coll dedication, the one-hundred stop instrument at Saint-Sulpice, with Camille Saint-Saëns and the young Alexandre Guilmant. Franck maintained a friendly relationship

with Cavallé-Coll, dedicating his *Pastorale*, Op. 19 to him. Interestingly, it would be Cavallé-Coll who years later would recommend Charles-Marie Widor, over Franck, for the vacant Saint-Sulpice *organist titulaire* (Smith 14).

The Organ

It is Franck's organ at Saint-Clotilde for which his unique and influential organ works were written.

An authentic interpretation of the organ music of César Franck is dependent upon an understanding of the mechanical and tonal characteristics of the French organs of the second half of the nineteenth century, particularly those instruments built by Aristide Cavallé-Coll, and specifically the three manual, forty-six-stop organ in the Basilica of Sainte-Clotilde over which, as has been stated, Franck presided as *titulaire* from 1859 until his death in 1890 (Smith 53).

The particular registrations given by Franck are designed specifically for his instrument at Sainte-Clotilde. The organ was modest in size for a large church, certainly when compared to the enormous five-manual instruments at Sainte-Sulpice and Notre Dame. Many four-manual instruments were positioned around the area as well as many modest three-manual instruments. Of the instruments in Paris, Franck's own instrument was neither large nor prominent. The specifications for the instrument were drawn up four years prior to Franck's arrival at Sainte-Clotilde, but he was able to add eight stops to the specification; in the pedal a 32' Quintaton and 16' Basson, on the Positif a 16' Bourdon, 8' Flute, 8' Gambe, and 4' Clairon, and on the Récit (swell) an 8' Voix-celeste, and 4' Clairon.

The Récit on the Sainte-Clotilde organ was noted for its responsiveness, capable of producing impressive and effective crescendos and decrescendos. Twentieth-century organist “André Marchal praised that ‘...the Récit on Franck’s instrument was very small, sounding very well when the box was open, but when closed the reeds would disappear behind the foundation stops of the other manuals’” (Smith 74). In much of the previous organ literature the oboe stop, whatever it was named, was generally used as a solo sound. Franck, however, preferred the Trompette as the solo sound, and added the ‘Hautbois’ to the trio of eight-foot foundational stops, Bourdon, Gambe, and Flute, to brighten the sound and increase the overall effectiveness of opening and closing the swell. In the *Pastorale*, the calm introductory theme is presented with a similar sound, using 8’ Flute and Hautbois and 4’ Flute, allowing for dramatic changes in volume by utilization of the swell. The swell, unlike that which is found in modern instruments, controlled by a smoothly pivoting foot pedal, was in Cavallé-Coll’s time controlled by a foot operated hooking lever. This configuration often produced somewhat rigid changes in dynamics.

Performance Considerations

The music of César Franck requires an extremely legato articulation. Many scholars reference Franck’s prescribed pedaling for pedal scales, where heel-toe technique was used to achieve maximum smoothness, as evidence that a legato articulation was desired. An essential element in the effective performance of Franck’s organ music is a sense of ebb-and-flow. Unwritten tenutos are needed in basically every

measure to create a sense of give-and-take. The opening statement of the *Pastorale* serves as a good example. The upper notes of the leaps in the right hand are served well



Fig. 4.1 Unwritten tenutos

by tenutos as shown in figure 4.1. Along with unwritten tenutos come implied ritardandos. The ends of phrases are often longing for a slight ritard setting up the fermatas. In addition to articulation and timing, dynamics play a large role in the success of Franck's pieces. In the *Pastorale* the introductory section is played on the Récit with a closed swell box, migrating to the Positif and opening the box to create a crescendo, and then returning to the Récit and a closed swell. This pattern is repeated several times creating a very lyrical melodic line within a structured formal context. Think of the quieter beginning measures on the Récit as a small ensemble with instruments being added to facilitate the louder and grander Positif sections.

César Franck's music often requires well-planned fingerings. Franck had very large hands and his music at times includes wide intervals requiring uncomfortable hand positions or the deletion of notes. Measure 152 (fig. 4.2) in the *Pastorale* is an excellent example, requiring interesting fingering and sharing of voices between hands to accomplish the smooth, flowing lines.



Fig. 4.2 Large intervals in *Pastorale*

The *Pastorale* unfolds simply in three sections; a soft and calm first section, a lively developmental section, and a return to the calm material from the first section. In the middle staccato section of the *Pastorale*, a quick pattern of repeated staccato chords on a quiet but full-sounding Récit, now with the 8' Trumpet added to the combination of Flutes and Hautbois, creates a sense of motion. A legato melody line is easily heard through the staccato accompaniment. This developmental section grows in both volume and harmonic tension, eventually returning to the closed swell with Flutes and Hautbois combination for the return to the calm opening material. This middle section is often “executed at a dizzying speed which completely destroys the balance of the work” (Smith 83). The final section shows off the Récit’s ability to disappear behind the foundational sound of the Positif with a soaring solo line above a moving accompaniment.

César Franck and the instruments of Aristide Cavaillé-Coll essentially began a new era of organ repertoire. The symphonic organ writing of Franck and the sounds made possible on the organs of Cavaillé-Coll went hand in hand, leading to the French

Romantic genre, and greatly influencing Franck's well-known students, Louis Vierne and Charles Tournemire, as well as prolific younger contemporary Charles-Marie Widor.

CHAPTER V

Psalm Prelude Set One: Number One

Herbert Howells was born in Gloucestershire on October 17, 1892. His father being the organist at a local Baptist church, Howells learned piano and some organ from a young age. His serious organ study began with Herbert Brewer, organist at Gloucester Cathedral. In 1912, Howells was admitted into the Royal College of Music where his teachers included Sir Charles Villers Stanford, Sir Charles Hubert Hastings Parry, Sir Walter Parratt, and Charles Wood. Walter Parratt was organist at St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle, principal organ professor at the Royal College of Music, and professor of music at Oxford University. Parratt was the teacher of many well-known composers including Harold Darke, Walford Davies, John Ireland, and Ralph Vaughan Williams, and would be the dedicatee of Howells' Psalm Prelude, Set 1, No. 1. In 1917, Howells served for a brief time as organist at Salisbury Cathedral. By 1920, Howells was teaching at the Royal College of Music, where he would remain for fifty-nine years. In addition to his duties at the Royal College of Music, Howells also enjoyed posts as Director of Music at St. Paul's Girls School as well as Professor of Music at the University of London.

Howells drew much inspiration from the Three Choirs Festivals. These festivals, which began in 1709, were a series of choral performances rotating between Worcester,

Hereford, and Gloucester cathedrals. Howells would have been able to experience a large variety of music at these programs, which would eventually include performances of his own works. A particular source of inspiration for Howells was prolific English composer Ralph Vaughan Williams. Like Vaughan Williams and Edward Elgar, Herbert Howells would develop a highly personal musical style that would be easily identifiable.

The harmonic language of Herbert Howells is quite recognizable and unique, chromatic and flowing with abundant dissonance and many meter changes. Rhythmically he employs a lot of syncopation, without being disorienting, with climaxes often being delayed by dramatic silence on the strong beat. Most of Howells' organ works are rhapsodic in construction, a form that was popular at the time as the English were turning away from the old German models with their strict forms and more traditional counterpoint. The Oxford Companion to Music describes rhapsody as an "instrumental piece in one movement, which may be passionate, nostalgic, or improvisatory" (587). These works are built on one theme that is developed over the course of the whole piece.

Howells utilized arch forms in many of his rhapsody-based organ works, possibly to establish a particular mood and then reinforce that mood with the arch form's framing structure. Typically such works begin quietly, build to a powerful climax near the latter half of the piece, and then draw to a quiet close, often fading to virtually nothing in the final measures (Schemanske). This arch form concept applies not only to dynamic level, but also to tempo and texture. As the dynamics increase toward the climax of the piece the tempo quickens and gains momentum and the texture thickens. After the peak, the increases are all undone; the tempo gradually slows, the texture thins, and the dynamics decrease toward a quiet end. In a few of Howells' organ works, Rhapsody No. 1 for

example, the arching form is inverted, beginning and ending loudly with a quiet middle section. The melody in Howells' organ works often follows the arch shape as well (fig. 5.1).



Fig 5.1 Psalm Prelude Set 1, No. 1 ms. 1-5

Along with rhapsodic construction, Howells' organ works are distinguished by his unique harmonic language. "His music shows the influences of Gregorian chant and the pentatonic scale. It tends to lie somewhere between a mode and a key, which may be more aptly identified by a tonal center rather than a key. Howells often clarifies his harmonic direction by the use of pedal points" (McMillan). Howells' music uses many false relations, also called cross relations, where conflicting accidentals are found back to back or simultaneously, which can be found in the music of a long line of English renaissance composers.

Six of the organ works of Herbert Howells are given a text association, Psalm Preludes set one and two. Psalm Prelude, Set 1, No. 1 is based on this text from Psalm 34, verse 6: "I called in my affliction and the Lord heard me and saved me from all my troubles" (Book of Common Prayer).

A somber mood is established right away by the initial tempo and registration of a single string stop. The theme in this prelude is made up of syncopated falling seconds, creating a sense of pleading that suits the text. The theme is repeated a third higher with the addition of a flute stop to repeat the plea. Some scholars suggest the dialogue

between the left hand on the Great and the right hand on the Swell represents a dialogue between man and God (Cooke). This suggested dialogue continues, growing more intense with increased tempo and dynamics. The climax of the piece seems to indicate the pleas have been heard, leading to a sense of peace and acceptance for the progression to the closing bars, where a D major chord brings the piece to a quiet, peaceful end.

The English Organ

The organ in England in the 1900s was quite unlike those in other parts of the world during the same time. A characteristic “English” sound was present and could be described as romantic, symphonic, or perhaps orchestral in nature. These instruments by well-known builders such as “Father” Willis favored fundamental sounds over upperwork. Wide-scaled, sometimes “tubby” Principals (called Diapasons in this tradition) provided a solid base. To these were added many eight-foot ranks for a variety of color at the same pitch level as opposed to the typical choruses of 8, 4, 2, mixture, and so on. Upperwork was still present, of course, but mutations and ranks above two feet were scarce. The mixtures found in this type of organ were much more softly voiced and tamer, blending in with the chours rather than piercing through like those in other traditions of organ building. Just as important as the organ itself was the generous acoustic of the enormous cathedrals for which the music was composed. In drier rooms with much less reverberation than the cathedrals, these pieces may need to be played at faster tempos to compensate, and with a super legato articulation. Howells’ organ works do not have prescribed registrations, but just dynamic markings. It is, therefore, up to the

organists to interpret for themselves, based on a knowledge of the instruments of the time.

With the work of Herbert Howells, twentieth-century English organ music came of age. Howells gave to the organ a sizeable body of literature of beauty and power; he successfully reconciled his inner musical requirements as a composer with the idiosyncratic possibilities and limitations of the orchestral organ, transforming it into an instrument to be reckoned with by any musical standards (Wells).

CHAPTER VI

Alleluyas

Simon Preston is one of the most highly regarded organists of recent times. “During a singularly distinguished career, he has established himself as one of the most illustrious musicians in the history of English cathedral music” (Buxton). Preston was accepted as a chorister at King’s College, Cambridge at age 11, fairly old as choristers are concerned. He was a chorister for three years under the direction of organist and director of music Boris Ord. Having taken many years of piano lessons, Preston was able to arrange organ lessons with organ scholar Hugh McLean who insisted from the beginning on the need for absolutely meticulous preparation of the music.

Following his time as a chorister, Preston attended Canford School, continuing his studies with Anthony Brown. After Canford, Preston attended the Royal Academy of Music with a scholarship for organ, having not been chosen for the organ scholarship at St. John’s College, Cambridge. At the Royal Academy of Music Preston studied with C.H. Trevor, who is known now for his editing of many compilations of organ music.

Preston returned to King’s College, Cambridge as organ scholar in 1958, serving under Sir David Willcocks. Preston made his recording debut on an album of Orlando Gibbons music at King’s College. A short time later he recorded his first solo album,

also at King's College, playing music of César Franck and Olivier Messiaen. Simon Preston is highly acclaimed for his recordings of Messiaen's organ works.

In 1962, Preston became a substitute organist at Westminster Abbey where he recorded music of Max Reger and Julius Reubke. In 1965, during his time at Westminster, he embarked on his first tour to the United States. In 1970, Preston accepted the position of Organist and Master of Choristers at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, as well as an appointment as lecturer at the university, posts he held for 11 years. During his tenure at Christ Church, Preston directed recordings of choral music of Purcell, Dvorák, Lassus, Byrd, Haydn, Händel, Vivaldi, Palestrina, and Allegri.

In 1981, having amassed a reputation as organist and conductor, Preston became principal Organist and Master of Choristers at Westminster Abbey. Many acclaimed recordings of the Westminster Abbey choir were made during Preston's seven years at the helm. In 1986, Preston directed the music for the royal wedding of Prince Andrew at Westminster Abbey. Having enjoyed a career as a church musician, Preston left Westminster to pursue a freelance career as a solo recitalist and conductor in which capacity he has toured the United States, East Asia, Europe, Australia, and South Africa. The Arts Council of England and the BBC called on Preston for musical advice, and he composed much of the music played by "Salieri" in the movie *Amadeus*.

Among his long list of accomplishments, Preston recorded the complete works of J.S. Bach, the Handel concertos twice, Saint-Saëns *Symphony No. 3* ("Organ") with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, the Copland *Organ Symphony* with the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, and the Poulenc *Organ Concerto* with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. His conducting engagements have included Bach's *St. John Passion* with the

San Francisco Symphony Orchestra and various works with the Philadelphia Strings.

Preston has also been on the jury of several international organ competitions and in 2009 was elevated to Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE).

Alleluyas is the best known of a handful of organ works by Simon Preston.

King's College, Cambridge choral director and organist Stephen Cleobury describes the piece as having an "...extrovert style reflect[ing] something of the composer's character and razor-sharp wit" (Cleobury). The piece clearly resembles Olivier Messiaen's *Les Anges* from *La Nativité du Seigneur*. Preston is renowned for his masterful interpretation of Messiaen's organ works, so it is hardly surprising that his own pieces share a number of characteristics with those of the French master including the absence of a time signature and bar lines being used only to mark phrases. Both *Les Anges* and *Alleluyas* benefit from a bright registration and incorporate many passages of ascending scales which could represent angels.

Alleluyas draws on the full resources of the instrument. The work is sectional in construction providing many opportunities for changes in registration. *Alleluyas* alternates between two main sources of material. Beginning with a fortissimo declaration, the piece quickly moves to a quieter solo and accompaniment arrangement before returning to the opening material and registration. A soft, meditative section follows using the strings of the organ with interjections of the second theme on a solo flute stop. The solo and accompaniment section returns followed by a particularly Messiaen-like two-voice passage with many ascending runs. This leads to an grand expanded return of the opening declaration ending with a definitive trumpet solo.

Alleluyas showcases Simon Preston's understanding of different styles, blending older chant-like motive with a modern harmonic language.

Like Herbert Howell's *Psalm Preludes*, Preston's *Alleluyas* was given a text association. Messiaen was also known to have prefaced many of his pieces with bits of scripture. *Alleluyas* is given the following poetry from the ancient Liturgy of St. James:

At his feet the six-winged Seraph;
Cherubim with sleepless eye,
Veil their faces to the presence,
As with ceaseless voice they cry,
Alleluya, Alleluya, Alleluya, Lord most high.

A crowd-pleasing piece, *Alleluyas* has been one of the most programmed English organ works of the twentieth century.

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