

Pittsburg State University
Pittsburg, Kansas

DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

Faculty Recital

Susan Marchant, organ
assisted by
Paul Huybrechts, baritone

Sunday, October 27, 1996
McCray Recital Hall
3:00 p.m.

Versets on the hymn *Ave maris stella*
Plein Jeu
Fugue
Duo
Dialogue sur les Grands Jeux

Nicolas De Grigny
(1672-1703)

Toccatà Terza (Book II)
Per l'Organo da sonarsi alla levatione

Girolamo Frescobaldi
(1583-1643)

Vom Himmel hoch da komm ich her
Vater unser im Himmelreich
Christ lag in Todesbanden

Georg Böhm
(1661-1733)

* Fantasia in G major, BWV 572

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)

intermission

Chorale Prelude and Fugue on *O Traurigkeit, o Herzeleid*

Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

Prélude, Adagio et Choral Varié
sur le thème du *Veni Creator*, Op. 4

Maurice Duruflé
(1902-1986)

A few notes about this afternoon's program....

The first half of today's program focuses on music by some of the composers whose work was known to, and highly respected by, Johann Sebastian Bach. It begins with a set of versets on the Vesper Marian hymn, *Ave maris stella*, one of five such sets contained in Grigny's massive *Livre d'Orgue*. This important collection of music by the great French master of Notre Dame, Rheims, was known to Bach. Today's performance, in fact, incorporates some of the changes/corrections that Bach entered into his own copy of the score. According to ancient liturgical tradition, the versets will be performed in *alternatim* style, that is, with the plainsong melody being chanted in alternation with the organ versets.

Ave maris stella, verse one: Hail, Star of the Sea, loving mother of God, and Virgin immortal, Heaven's blissful portal!

Translation of the chanted verses (2, 4, 6):

Receiving that "Ave" from the mouth of Gabriel, reversing the name of "Eva," establishing us in peace.

Show thyself to be a mother, that, through thee, He may accept our prayers, He who, born for us, chose to be your Son.

Keep our life pure, make our journey safe, so that, seeing Jesus, we may rejoice together forever.

The music of Girolamo Frescobaldi, organist at St. Peter's in Rome, played a significant role in the evolution of Baroque keyboard genres. It won the respect of subsequent generations of German keyboardists, and J.S. Bach was among those who owned copies of Frescobaldi's *Fiori Musicali* (Musical Flowers). The third toccata from the Second Book of such pieces is specifically designated for performance on the organ, being in the style of the so-called *elevation toccata*, a work to be played at that very special moment within the Mass where the host is elevated. Modern ears are perhaps most struck by Frescobaldi's handling of expressive dissonances and unexpected harmonic progressions. Opportunities for expressive handling of rhythmic and melodic gestures abound in these pieces, and as such they stand alongside the works of Frescobaldi's student, Johann Jakob Froberger, as some of the most extraordinary keyboard contributions of the 17th century.

Georg Böhm, organist at the Johanneskirche in Lüneburg (where Bach was a chorister at the turn of the century), was a superb musician who played a vital role in importing French "graces" and other stylistic elements into the north German musical scene in the late 17th century. This interest may be most clearly heard in the setting of *Vater unser im Himmelreich*, a work in which the melody, presented in a florid setting à la Buxtehude, is further adorned with a great variety of trills and other small graces, resulting in a work of subtle elegance. The other two chorale settings portray Böhm at work in other familiar contexts as a composer working within the great Lutheran chorale tradition: the first, a very simple presentation of a Christmas chorale; the second, an extended contrapuntal elaboration of one of the most powerful hymns related to the festival of Easter.

The Fantasia in G major shows the young Bach at work, experimenting with figurative and harmonic elements that have been drawn from his early experiences. No autograph of this work exists, and it is interesting to note that, in one source, the music bears the title *Pièce d'orgue*. Indeed, one can draw parallels between the central *alla breve* section and the *plein jeu* settings drawn from the French Classical tradition. Further, the inclusion of a low "B" in the pedal line of this section has led some authors to suggest that Bach might have had some experience with a French instrument. The closing section, great rolling broken-chord figures infused with rich

non-chord (*acciaccatura*) tones, owes its allegiance to European harpsichord traditions, where such a technique is commonly found. Strange in its architecture, extraordinary in its handling of harmonic issues, the Fantasia in G major has many riches to offer both the player and the listener. Spitta's poetic description of the middle section of the work is certainly worth sharing:

With insatiable enjoyment he repeats those doubled suspensions, chords of the ninth, diminished intervals, wide-spread harmonies, melodic phrases rapturously ascending and outsoaring one another -- an entranced delight in the ocean of sound... Towards the end...the expression rises gradually to an indescribable intensity and glow, which soars away far, far above the capabilities of the organ. The pedal slowly ascends with irresistible force from D, through two octaves in whole notes...until it is interrupted by the chord of the diminished seventh, and then, like a shower of rain in sunshine, down pour the glittering pearls of sound...

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The second half of the program provides a glimpse of the Fisk organ's versatility in handling music of the 19th and 20th centuries. It begins with the hauntingly beautiful prelude and fugue on the passion hymn *O Traurigkeit, o Herzeleid* of Johannes Brahms. The program then concludes with Maurice Duruflé's large work on the Pentecost hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus*. While the score does not specify that the plainsong melody should be chanted in between the variations, it can be an effective addition to the performance. We have chosen to do so this afternoon, thereby returning to the honored tradition with which the program began.

Translation of the chanted verses (1, 2, 7):

Come, Creator Spirit, visit the souls of your devoted; with your divine grace fill the hearts which you have created.

You are called Comforter, gift of the highest God, fount of life, fire, love, and spiritual unction.

Glory be to God the Father, and to the Son, who rose from the dead, and to the Comforter, for ever and ever.