Douglas Cleveland
University of Alabama Keyboard Festival
January 22, 2016  7:30 pm

Grand Dialogue in C Major                          Louis Marchand  
                                      (1669-1732)

Homage to Francois Couperin (2014)               David P. Dahl  
                                      (b. 1937)

Tierce en taille

Prelude and Fugue in E-flat Major, BWV 552       Johann Sebastian Bach  
                                      (1685-1750)

Scherzetto                                    Joseph Jongen  
                                      (1873-1953)

Petite Prelude

Prelude on “The Lone Wild Bird” (2015)           George Baker  
                                      (b. 1951)

Four Concert Etudes (2006)                      David Briggs  
                                      (b. 1960)

  Introduction
  Etude I    Octaves
  Etude II   Accordes alternees
  Etude III  Sarabande avec double-pedal
  Etude IV   Tierces
Poets & Madmen – Last Words

Touchstones of the Stylus Fantasticus, from Sweelinck to J. S. Bach

*Praeludium* in g minor

*Dietrich Buxtehude* (1637-1707)

*Fantasia* in a Aeolian

*Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck* (1562-1621)

*Toccata* in g minor

*Girolamo Frescobaldi* (1583-1643)

*Toccata* in a minor

*Johannes Froberger* (1626-1661)

*Prelude non mesuré* in a minor

*Louis Couperin* (1626-1661)

à l’Imitation de Monsieur Froberger

*Georg Böhm* (1661-1733)

*Chorale Fantasia* in G Major on

*Dietrich Buxtehude* (1637-1707)

Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern

*Toccata* in D Major

*Johann Sebastian Bach* (1685-1750)

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Harpsichord in meantone temperament by William Dowd, after 17th-Century Italian & Flemish Examples.


Lautenwerck in meantone temperament by Anden Houben, 1994
Performance Notes

The development of the North European “fantastic style” can be seen as a logical progression from the “modern” early seventeenth century Italian keyboard toccatas of Frescobaldi combined with the influence of Jan Sweelinck’s great polyphonic keyboard fantasies of the late sixteenth century. Composers including Dietrich Buxtehude, Johannes Froberger and Georg Böhm improvised and composed dazzling music for keyboard, reflecting both the poetry and “madness” of the Stylus Fantasticus.

Dietrich Buxtehude was a major influence on no less a composer/performer than Johann Sebastian Bach; legend has it that the twenty year old Bach walked over two-hundred fifty miles to study for nearly three months with the Danish-born master holding sway in northern Germany. Bach might well have inherited Buxtehude’s music directing position at the Marienkirche of Lübeck, had not the post required also marrying Buxtehude’s eldest daughter, a not uncommon situation for aspirant organists of the day.

Buxtehude’s free keyboard works display a virtuosity unique to the North German school of composition; his great praeludia follow, sometimes closely, sometimes more loosely, a dramatic plan – exordium, narratio, propositio, confutatio, confirmatio, peroratio – influenced by formal traditions of classical oration and the Renaissance commedia dell’arte compagnie; used in the mid-sixteenth century by Shakespeare and other writers, this formal procedure would be employed at least as late as the late eighteenth century, in the first movement of Beethoven’s Opus 13, the Pathétique piano sonata.

The formal procedure provides a framework for extreme contrasts of registration and moods: A high energy exordium, reflective narratio, dramatically rhetorical propositio and chaotic confutatio, an intense confirmatio beginning with resolution and ending in cataclysm, and a flamboyant peroratio to bring the “musical play” to its end.

Beyond the generation represented by Buxtehude and his peers, the next generation’s best efforts would be exemplified in the works of Johann Sebastian Bach; in particular, his Toccata in D Major for harpsichord (BWV 912) and Prelude and Fugue in D Major for organ (BWV 532) owe their formal structure to Buxtehude’s influence in Bach’s use of the commedia formal procedure.

All roads lead from Rome…

Frescobaldi’s toccatas marked a new direction in keyboard music: Freedom of expression within highly sectional writing, dramatic contrasts of virtuosity with mystical introspection, sometimes startling musical gestures and harmonic progressions -- such are the hallmarks of Frescobaldi’s “modernity.”

One of the most widely traveled of 17th-century musicians, Johannes Froberger certainly knew the music of the northern “school” represented by Jan Sweelinck and Samuel Scheidt, while his knowledge of the Italian school came from direct study with Frescobaldi. In his travels around Europe, Froberger can be seen as a virtual musical bee, pollinating the royal courts of Paris, Vienna, and Dresden with his hybrid form of toccata, alternating free passage work with structured polyphony.

Froberger’s influence is obviously portrayed in Louis Couperin’s unmeasured prelude in the style of his friend and colleague. Speculation surrounds the “unmeasured” (without bar lines or other indications of meter or rhythm) nature of this work: In its free compositional style, it may reflect more accurately Froberger’s manner of playing than Froberger’s own, meticulously notated works.

Georg Böhm was organist for more than thirty-five years at the Johanniskirche of Lüneburg, one of the several key cities – along with Lübeck, Stade, and Hamburg – where the great North German organists developed their art. His sets of chorale variations served as examples for the young Johann Sebastian Bach; indeed, all of the composers on this afternoon’s program profoundly influenced J. S. Bach, directly – via his studies with Buxtehude and Böhm – and indirectly.

Dietrich Buxtehude was born in Denmark, and spent his most fruitful years as an artist at the Marienkirche in Lübeck, succeeding a venerable predecessor, Franz Tunder, and marrying Tunder’s daughter as part of his taking the elder musician’s post. Buxtehude’s Chorale-fantasia on O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright is sublime “abstract” music as well as an outstanding example of tone painting: The opening section places the hymn tune in the bass, where it "looks up" at the starry heavens, which we "hear" twinkling above; this section ends with a more dazzling and fiery portrayal of the Star of Bethlehem. In the second section, the Star's rays flow from heaven to earth, peacefully beautiful "liquid starlight"; the final section is an exuberant gigue, a physical celebration of shepherds and magi, ecstatic in the Light Divine.