

Imagination, Form, Movement and Sound

Studies in Musical Improvisation

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Studies in Musical Improvisation

Svein Erik Tandberg

Academy of Music and Drama, Faculty of Fine, Applied and Performing Arts,
University of Gothenburg

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Musical Performance and Interpretation at the Academy of Music and Drama, Faculty of Fine, Applied and Performing Arts, University of Gotheburg

ArtMonitor is a publication series from the Board for Artistic Research (NKU), Faculty of Fine, Applied and Performing Arts, University of Gotheburg

Publisher: Johan Öberg

Address: ArtMonitor

University of Gothenburg

Konstnärliga fakultetskansliet

Box 141

405 30 Göteborg

www.konst.gu.se

Recording and digital editing: Kai Schüler

Translation: Richard Morgan

Design: Sara Lund

Cover: Detail from Eila Hiltunen's Sibelius-Monument, "Passio Musicae" 1967.

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CD Covers: *A 19th Century Christmas Service*: Detail from the organ façade in Haga Church, Gothenburg. Photo: Jost Pappmehl. Reproduced by kind permission of Haga Church Council; *Contrasts on an historic ground*: from the Oseberg Ship.

Photo: Mekonnen Wolday. Reproduced by kind permission of Vestfold County Museum; *Missa sacra et profana* CD I and II: The altar piece in Eik Church, Tønsberg, by the artist Per-Odd Aarrestad. Photograph by Svein Carlsen. Reproduced with kind permission of the artist and Slagen Church Council

Layout: Anna Frisk

Printed by: Intellecta Docusys, Gothenburg 2008

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ISBN: 978-91-975-911-8-8

Dedicated to my organ teacher Franz Lehrndorfer

Abstract

Title: Imagination, Form, Movement and Sound: Studies in Musical Improvisation

Language: English

Keywords: Aesthetic, artistic research, chronology versus phenomenology, cognitive models, cross-modality, imitation, improvisation, motor programmes, organ, organ textbooks, procedural knowledge, Protestant practices, Roman Catholic practices, schemas, style, Johann Sebastian Bach, Anton Bruckner, Marcel Dupré, Rolande Falcinelli, César Franck, Johann Georg Herzog, Hermann Keller, Olivier Latry, Conrad Paumann, Max Reger, Heinz Wunderlich, Ruth Zechlin

ISBN: 978-91-975-911-8-8

How does one improvise? How can one learn the art of improvisation? By considering these two questions this thesis aspires to make a contribution towards a greater understanding of what the production of improvised music actually involves. The organ has long traditions as an instrument on which music is improvised, and this study aims to focus primarily on organ improvisation. It is assumed that spontaneous impulses, rational thought and an extensive array of physical movements have their origins in the emotional, intellectual and physical aspects of a person. These different facets of a person, which continually interact with and influence each other, form a complex series of behaviour patterns.

It can be useful to experience the interactive energy between these facets in order to approach an understanding of improvisation. This hypothesis is based on an assumption that improvised music is created by an interaction between large numbers of internalised concepts of musical sound, along with a corresponding array of precise physical movements. The sounds are expressed through the actions of the improviser. Ideally these actions will have their origins in more or less well-defined aesthetic concepts. Thus the hypothesis of this research is that it is in the light of the improviser's different perceptions of the words "imagination" and "form" that the musical train of events is set in motion.

This study should be regarded as artistic research. The term "artistic" defines a research position that is related to an actual artistic practice. The work incorporates elements which can be described as creative research. This means that researches do not only form a subject for discussion, but have actually resulted in the creation of three different recording projects presented on four CDs. These musical manifestations are intended to serve both as demonstrations of working methods whilst also functioning as reference points. Since art both consists of deeds and thoughts the aim here is to probe the links between practical and theoretical aspects of improvisation. The recordings should thus be regarded as a medium to emphasise and give added weight to the arguments.

The study is divided into two main sections. The first part focuses on the art of organ improvisation as practised during different periods of history, whilst the second part considers the aesthetical and practical aspects involved. The question as to how differing forms of an improvisatory "vocabulary" can be acquired, assimilated and developed will occupy a prominent position in this latter section.

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CONTENTS OF THE CDS

Three Recording projects

1. Historically inspired organ improvisations in Haga Church, Gothenburg

A 19th Century Christmas Service

Bell ringing (from St. Mary's Church in Lübeck) (track 1)

Prelude over the chorale melody *Lobt Gott ihr Christen alle gleich*: Concerto brevis in "Style Antiquo" (track 2)

Opening hymn: *Lobt Gott ihr Christen alle gleich*¹ (Text: Nikolaus Hermann. Melody: Nikolaus Hermann 1560) Verse 1 (track 3) – Interlude (track 4) – Verse 2 (track 5) – Interlude (track 6) – Verse 3 (track 7) – Interlude (track 8) – Verse 4 (track 9) – Interlude (track 10) – Verse 5 (track 11) – Interlude (track 12) – Verse 6 (track 13) – Interlude (track 14) – Verse 7 (track 15) – Interlude (track 16) – Verse 8 (track 17) – Epilogue and modulation to Introit (track 18)

Introit: *Uns ist ein Kind geboren*² (track 19)

The German Gloria Patri: *Ehr sei dem Vater* (track 20)

Confession (track 21)

The German Kyrie: *Kyrie eleison, Herr erbarme Dich* (track 22)

Absolution (track 23)

The German Gloria in excelsis: *Ehre sei Gott in der Höhe* (track 24)

Collect with salutation (track 25)

Bible reading (track 26)

The Apostolic Creed (track 27)

Gradual Hymn: *Gelobet seyst du, Jesu Christ*³ (Text: Martin Luther. Melody: Old German 1524) Chorale prelude (track 28) – Verse 1 (track 29) – Interlude (track

¹ Hymn tune in *Gesangbuch für die evangelisch-lutherische Kirche in Bayern. Kraft des der allgemeinen Pfarrwittwen=Kasse zustehenden Verlagsrecht dormalen im Verlag bei U. E. Seibald, Buchdruckereibesitzer in Nürnberg* 1855, no. 61.

² This recorded Christmas Service reflects the traditions and practices of the 1860's and 1870's Evangelical Lutheran liturgical playing in Germany (Bavaria). The greater part of the organ music (chorale preludes and harmonisations, intermissions, epilogues and the concluding postlude) was often improvised by professional church musicians. The regular liturgical items (such as Introit, Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus, etc) were played according to the settings in *Musikalische Anhang zu dem Agenden-Kern und zu der ihm vorangestellten Gottesdienstordnung für die evangelisch-lutherische Kirche in Bayern. Zum Gebrauch für Organisten und Cantoren*, Nürnberg 1856. This accords to the descriptions below of an organ-master's duties and habits.

³ Hymn tune in *Gesangbuch für die evangelisch-lutherische Kirche in Bayern*, 1855, no. 57.

THREE RECORDING PROJECTS

30) – Verse 2 (track 31) – Interlude (track 32) – Verse 3 (track 33) – Interlude (track 34) – Verse 4 (track 35) – Interlude (track 36) – Verse 5 (track 37) – Interlude (track 38) – Verse 6 (track 39) – Interlude (track 40) – Verse 7 (track 41).

Bible reading (The sermon) (track 42)

Hymn: *Wunderbarer Gnadenthron*⁴ (Text: Joh. Olearius (1611-1684). Old Church Melody: 1544) Chorale prelude (track 43) – Verse 1 (track 44) – Interlude (track 45) – Verse 2 (track 46) – Interlude (track 47) – Verse 3 (track 48).

Prayer: *Das allgemeine Kirchengebet* (track 49)

Lord's Prayer: *Vater unser* (track 50)

Hymn verse before Communion: *Schaffe in mir Gott*⁵ Prelude (track 51) – Verse (track 52) – Epilogue and modulation to Preface (track 53)

Preface and the German Sanctus: *Heilig, Heilig, Heilig* (track 54)

Eucharistic Prayer (track 55)

Lord's Prayer: *Vater unser* (sung by the celebrant) (track 56)

The German Agnus Dei: *Christe, du Lamm Gottes* (track 57)

Words of institution (sung by the celebrant) (track 58)

Distribution (sharing of the sacred elements) (track 59)

Communion hymn: *Vom Himmel hoch*⁶ (Text: Martin Luther. Melody: 1540) Chorale prelude (track 60) – Verse 1 (track 61) – Interlude (track 62) – Verse 2 (track 63) – Interlude (track 64) – Verse 3 (track 65) – Interlude (track 66) – Verse 4 (track 67) – Interlude (track 68) – Verse 5 (track 69) – Interlude (track 70) – Verse 6 (track 71) – Interlude (track 72) – Verse 7 (track 73) – Interlude (track 74) – Verse 8 (track 75) – Interlude (track 76) – Verse 9 (track 77) – Interlude (track 78) – Verse 10 (track 79) – Interlude (track 80) – Verse 11 (track 81) – Interlude (track 82) – Verse 12 (track 83) – Interlude (track 84) – Verse 13 (track 85) – Interlude (track 86) – Verse 14 (track 87) – Interlude (track 88) – Verse 15 (track 89).

Collect (track 90)

Blessing-Dismissal (track 91)

Postlude: Choral-Fugue over *Vom Himmel Hoch* (track 92)

Bell ringing (from St. Mary's Church in Lübeck) (track 93)

Participants

Choir (Congregation): **Guldhedskyrkans Kammarkör**, Gothenburg

Conductor: **Ulrike Heider**

Celebrant (liturgical song): **Jan H. Börjesson**

Celebrant (liturgical reading): **Jobst Ruediger Puchert**

Organ and artistic concept: **Svein Erik Tandberg**

⁴ Ibid., no. 67.

⁵ Ibid., no. 188. Harmonised in *Musikalische Anhang zum Agenden-Kern*, 1856.

⁶ Hymn tune in *Gesangbuch für die evangelisch-lutherische Kirche in Bayern*, 1855, no. 58.

Appendix

From *Lochamer Liederbuch* (1452) – Conrad Paumann (1410-1473): *Benedicte almechtiger got* (track 94)

Svein Erik Tandberg at the organ of Eik Church, Tønsberg

Recording and digital mastering: Kai Schüler

Total playing time: 78:09

2. Improvisations at the organs in Slagen and Eik churches, Tønsberg

Contrasts on an historic ground

Intrada over the chorale melody: *Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern*⁷ (Melody: Philipp Nicolai 1599) (track 1)

Four studies in choral improvisation over: *Wer nur den lieben Gott lässt walten*⁸ (Melody: Georg Neumark 1657)

1) *Hommage à Buxtehude* (prelude, two fugati and toccatina over the four phrases of the melody) (track 2)

2) *Trio ostinato* (track 3)

3) *Suite*

I Improvisata (track 4)

II Andante tranquillo (hommage à Brahms) (track 5)

III Pedalexercitium (track 6)

IV Duo-rubato (track 7)

V Scherzino (track 8)

VI Intermezzo-recitativo (track 9)

VII Fugue and Chorale (track 10)

4) *Free tonal sketch* (track 11)

Following a good old-fashioned recipe: **Eleven simple and naïve tone-pictures based on the German Christmas melody: *Ich steh an deiner Krippe hier***⁹ (Melody: Wittenberg 1529)

I *Introduction* (chorale verse) (track 12)

II *Minuet for angels* (track 13)

III *Figurations on a shepherd's flute* (track 14)

IV *A little seraphic trumpet-dialogue* (track 15)

V *Elevation* (modulation upwards) (track 16)

VI *Pastorella* (Shepherd's idyllic stillness) (track 17)

⁷ Hymn tune in *Norsk Salmebok [The Norwegian Hymnal]*, Oslo 1985, no. 89. Cf. *Den Svenska Psalmboken [The Swedish Hymnal]* 4th ed., Stockholm 1992, no. 119 (another version: no. 319). Also *Evangelisches Gesangbuch: Ausgabe für die Nordelbische Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche*, 2nd ed., Hamburg 1995, no. 70. Also *Gotteslob: katholisches Gebet- und Gesangbuch*, München 2003, no. 554.

⁸ Hymn tune in *Norsk Salmebok*, 1985, no. 459. Cf. *Den Svenska Psalmboken*, 1992, no. 270. Also *Evangelisches Gesangbuch*, 1995, no. 369. Also *Gotteslob*, 2003, no. 296.

⁹ Hymn tune in *Norsk Salmebok*, 1985, no. 431. Cf. *Gotteslob*, 2003, no. 141. Also *Den Svenska Psalmboken*, 1992, no. 35. Also *Evangelisches Gesangbuch*, 1995, no. 122.

THREE RECORDING PROJECTS

- VII *Risoluto* (purposeful Wise Men on a wandering hymn) (track 18)
- VIII *The Shepherds and the Wise men dance in turn* (track 19)
- IX *Heavenly harp-idioms on an earthy regal* (track 20)
- X *Simple contrapuntal song of joy* (fore-imitation) (track 21)
- XI *Conclusio festivo* (chorale verse) (track 22)

A tone develops (movements around one tone) (Organ in Eik Church) (track 23)

Fantasia over a Norwegian saga poem: “*Det var en gang en dronning...*”

(“*Once there was a queen...*”) (track 24) (Poem by Erling Dittmann)

Meditation: *Ave, Maris Stella*¹⁰ (Melody from the 11th or 12th century) (track 25)

Toccata and Chorale: *En vänlig grönskas rika dräkt*¹¹ (Melody: Waldemar Åhlén 1933) (track 26)

Organ: Svein Erik Tandberg

Recording and digital mastering: Kai Schüller

Total playing time: 66:23

3. Ensemble-improvisation in Vasa Church, Gothenburg

A Concert Mass – *Missa sacra et profana*¹²

CD I

Antiphon: *Vidi aquam* (track 1)

Introit: *Resurrexi* (track 2)

Improvisation over *Resurrexi* (track 3)

Kyrie (track 4)

Improvisation over *Kyrie* (track 5)

Gloria (track 6)

Improvisation over *Gloria* (track 7)

Gradual: *Haec dies* (track 8)

Improvisation over *Haec dies* (track 9)

Alleluia (track 10)

Improvisation over *Alleluia* (track 11)

Sequence: *Victimae paschali laudes* (track 12)

Improvisation over *Victimae paschali laudes* (track 13)

Credo (track 14)

Total playing time CD I: 76:14

¹⁰ Plainchant melody in *Liber Usualis Missae et Officii pro Dominicis et Festis cum Cantu Gregoriano*, Paris 1946.

¹¹ Hymn tune in *Den Svenska Psalmboken*, 1992, no. 201.

¹² This concept is based on plainchant melodies in *Liber Usualis Missae et Officii pro Dominicis et Festis cum Cantu Gregoriano*, Paris 1946.

CD II

Offertory: *Terra tremuit* (track 1)

Sanctus (Track 2)

Improvisation over *Sanctus* (track 3)

Agnus Dei (track 4)

Improvisation over *Agnus Dei* (track 5)

Communion: *Pascha nostrum* (track 6)

Improvisation over *Pascha nostrum* (track 7)

Postlude (track 8)

Antiphon: *Vidi aquam* (track 9)

Participants

Schola Gothia

Ulrike Heider (leader)

Yvonne Carlsson

Kristina Lund

Helene Stensgård Larsson

Musicians:

Lindha Kallerdahl – vocal

Andreas Hall – woodwinds, electronic

Emma Nordlund – cello

Henrik Wartel – percussion, electronic

Martin Öhman – percussion, electronic

Harald Stenström – electrified double bass (leader)

Svein Erik Tandberg – organ and artistic concept

Recording and digital mastering: Kai Schüler

Total playing time CD II: 30:33

Acknowledgements

Many years of academic studies have produced this thesis. Somewhat to my surprise these studies developed into a compelling process of personal creative exploration which became much more than a mere academic exercise. The transformation may be said to have begun in 1996 whilst I was studying at the Institute for Music and Theatre, Oslo University. I approached Dr. Franz Lehrndorfer, cathedral organist in Munich and professor emeritus at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater in the same city. My request was: Could he and would he accept me as a student of organ improvisation? Since he agreed my chosen path has been strewn with subjective impressions, but academic research must aim at ensuring that such impressions are treated objectively. This cannot be accomplished single-handed. I would therefore like to begin by offering my sincerest thanks to the many individuals and institutions which have in their own ways helped me along my chosen path.

In terms of practical performing I owe a great deal to Franz Lehrndorfer and regard myself as extremely fortunate in having been able to study with him. Under his perceptive and inspiring guidance many facets of organ improvisation have been revealed to me. A corresponding vote of thanks must also go to my principal mentor at the University of Gothenburg, Dr. Johannes Landgren. In times of crisis Professor Landgren has always been readily available. His remarkable ability to make suggestions and help me find solutions – even when not in complete agreement with me – has been invaluable. I do not hesitate to say that without Johannes Landgren this project would never have reached fruition.

I have been fortunate enough to enjoy the services of two further mentors. The critical eyes of Dr. Sverker Jullander, professor at Luleå University of Technology, have helped me to organise and collate my material. Dr. Rolf Inge Godøy, professor at Oslo University has shown me some more recent understandings of music as a procedural phenomenon. Grateful thanks are also due to the previous Dean and director of researches at the Faculty of Fine, Applied and Performing Arts at the University of Gotheburg, Professor Dr. Bengt Olsson. Also Professor Dr. Magnus Eldénius, who was responsible for the establishment of studies based on musical performance and interpretation at Gothenburg. Not forgetting the indefatigable efforts on behalf of all doctoral candidates by the Coordinator of Research Education at Gothenburg, Anna Frisk.

For the recordings I am indebted to sound engineer and producer Kai Schüler from Lübeck. Together we have recorded improvised music in the acoustics of four different churches with four very different organs. These recordings feature a number of differing singers and instrumentalists in both solo and ensemble con-

texts. Watching Kai Schüler's endeavours to realise the best possible sounds from these combinations has been something of a revelation in itself. During the actual recording sessions his criticism and advice was a valuable source of inspiration. I would also like to thank the Gothenburg vocal ensembles Schola Gothia and Guldhedskyrkans Kammarkör, both most capably led by Ulrike Heider, for the real sense of involvement and cooperation which they brought to these projects. Further thanks to other musical colleagues from Gothenburg: Jan. H. Börjesson, Lindha Kallerdahl, Andreas Hall, Emma Nordlund, Henrik Wartel, Martin Öhman and Harald Stenström. The last-named is also my good friend and fellow doctoral candidate. Grateful thanks to all the church authorities concerned for allowing me to use their instruments and buildings for these recordings.

My Norwegian text has been translated into English by Richard Morgan. In the process he has drawn some further literary sources to my attention for which I am very grateful. Among the many others who have been kind enough to discuss and answer my questions I would particularly thank: Dr. Hermann Busch, professor at the University of Siegen, Tore Frost, assistant professor at Oslo University, Professor Dr. Naji Hakim, Organist at L'Église de la Trinité, Paris; Dr. Hans Haselböck, professor emeritus at Vienna; Dr. Hanns Kerner, professor at the Gottesdienst-Institut, Nuremberg; Dr. Konrad Klek, professor at the Institut für Kirchenmusik, Friedrich-Alexander University, Erlangen; Dr. Franz Krautwurst, professor emeritus at Erlangen; Dr. Jan Ling, professor emeritus at Gothenburg; Einar Nielsen, professor at the University of Gothenburg; Gunno Palmquist, professor at the University of Gothenburg; Dr. Anders Wiklund, professor at the University of Gothenburg; Dr. Odile Jutten, professor at the University of Saint-Etienne.

I should also acknowledge my fellow doctoral researchers at Gothenburg: Sven Kristersson and Anders Tykesson. Special thanks to my colleagues and friends in Tønsberg: the Chaplain Jan Terje Christoffersen, hospital Chaplain Arne H. Paulsen, the Roman Catholic Reverend, Father Paul Y. Pham, the Reverend Odd Rønneberg and Reverend Liselotte Wettby, fellow church musicians Magne Orvik and Pål Weidemann, and journalist Henrik Myklegård. Not forgetting my employer, Tønsberg Church Council and church administrator Øivind Grimseth who kindly ensured that my duties were planned in order to accommodate my doctoral studies.

Much of my work has taken place in various libraries, and I would particularly like to thank the following for their help in my search for source material: Dr. Sabine Kurth of the Musikabteilung der Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich, Professor Dr. Susanne Popp and Dr. Jürgen Schaarwächter, at the Max-Reger-Institut, Karlsruhe, Elisabeth Navratil-Wagner at the Musikabteilung der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek, Vienna; Gothenburg University librarian Pia Shekhter; Oslo University librarian Øyvind Norheim at the Norwegian Music Collection, National Library.

Reinhold Meiser, the director of Evangelical Lutheran church music at Ingolstadt, has most kindly placed his organ and church at my disposal whenever I needed to practice during my various stays in Bavaria. My field research trips have been financed by the Adlerbertska Foundation and Gothenburg University Jubilee Found. My needs for refreshment and rest have been well catered for by the generous hospitality of the staff at Hotel zum Anker in Ingolstadt and the equally wonderful staff at Blå Huset Bed & Breakfast in Gothenburg.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Last but by no means least I owe a great debt of gratitude to my family past and present. My now deceased parents Ella and Leif Tandberg gave me continuous encouragement and support during my formative years, my student days and in my working life as organist, teacher and music journalist. My relations by marriage, my cousin Jan and his wife Bjørg have always shown a great interest in my work. My children Cato, Filip and Selma have patiently suffered my preoccupations, while simultaneously offering help and encouragement. Finally heartfelt thanks to my wife Sigrid for her forbearance during all these years of research. Sigrid's own linguistic abilities have been an additional bonus – they have on more than one occasion helped guide me through some of the verbal labyrinths.

Gothenburg, June 2008
Svein Erik Tandberg

Preliminaries

Und um das Unsichtbare zu erföhlen und zu erkennen, muss zuerst das Sichtbare erforscht werden.¹³

[And in order to become aware of and understand the invisible, the visible must first be researched.]

(German musicologist Gotthold Frotscher, 1934.)

¹³ See Preface in Gotthold Frotscher, *Geschichte des Orgelspiels und der Orgelkomposition*, 2nd ed., Volume I, Berlin 1959.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Western art music has long been dominated by written notation, music theory and analysis. However, in recent years new approaches to music and musical creativity have shifted the emphasis towards music's aural aspects. Here the actual phenomenon of sound assumes greater importance. Attention is focused on the biological and psychological ways in which we create, perceive and respond to musical sounds. Within this context improvisation assumes a paramount role, and during the course of the last 20 years or so this activity has increasingly attracted the attentions of music researchers. Several dissertations have already appeared which investigate the fields of jazz with its expressive colourful flights of fancy or the many diverse forms of 20th century avant-garde experimental music. Other musical genres such as popular music and ethnic music are also represented.

In many parts of the world music is made without the benefit of written notation or composers in the traditional Western sense. In these cultures music is for the most part created by improvising musicians.¹⁴ We can say that it is primarily in the Western European tradition that formally composed art music occupies a dominant position. Yet it must be pointed out that within this tradition improvisation has played an extensive and vital role. Writers on musical subjects have tended to overlook this fact.

In the field of organ improvisation, a fairly limited amount of research has been published. This consists mostly of articles in specialist journals, and contributions to other organ-related publications. This does not seem entirely reasonable, since documentary evidence shows that organ improvisation is a musical practice that has been around for many centuries. The organ itself is one of the earliest musical instruments, and by the end of the 10th century was beginning to find its way into monasteries and churches. In *The King of Instruments – How churches came to have organs* Peter Williams observes:

Although Western technology was then beginning to develop... nevertheless a large organ with bellows, keys and pipes was among the most complicated and difficult pieces of equipment made anywhere in the world at the time. A great monastic church with an organ in it for the people to see and hear was wittingly or unwittingly saluting the Maker of All Things with the world's most advanced apparatus. In some cases this must have been its prime function, for monastic

¹⁴ Cf. Anders Bondeman, Lars Hernqvist and Mats Åberg, *Orgel improvisation*, Stockholm 1977, p. 5.

churches were public exhibition spaces as nothing else at the time was... They alone could bring wonders mechanical or spiritual to the attention of the people, and in this respect organs had something in common with the relics of saints ceremoniously deposited in the same great churches and performing miracles for the pilgrims visiting them. Mechanical wonders cannot have seemed entirely distinct from spiritual, for sound itself is intangible, numinous and mysterious, linking the listener with the life immaterial.¹⁵

This impression is confirmed by a text for a 12th century sequence which mentions the organ and its music not only as a useful aid to singing, but also as an independent work of art in its own right, with a remarkable ability to become an expression for humanity, the Christian Church and the entire Creation.¹⁶ This text, which predated the development of music notation systems, gives us a fascinating glimpse into the world of early improvised music. A further description of the initial impression that organ music made on its hearers comes from Hamar Cathedral in Norway:

Item naar som det var blidt oc stille ver, da kunde mand høre lang vei til land, oc de som reede omkring Hammers kircke eller kiøbstad, da maatte mand høre, naar som at presten oc degnene siunge i kiercken, oc orgeverkernis lyd hørdis, at den som icke haffde steenhierte maatte græde aff glæde for Guds v-sigelige naade oc miskund imod mennisken.¹⁷

[When the weather was calm and still, one could hear sound a long way off, and those who travelled around Hammer (*sic*) Church or town, they had to hear, when the priest and deacons sung in the church, and the sound of the organ was heard, so that all who did not have hearts of stone had to weep with joy for God's blessed mercy and kindness to all men.]

The significance of the organ in the development of Western Music is suggested by Peter Williams:

It could be that one reason why Western Music differs from other musics in various fundamentals, particularly in its 'bass line' serving as the 'root for harmony', is that it alone developed the organ and the organ keyboard... Western definition of keys (major/minor tonality)... depend on the true perfect cadence and this cadence only exists when there is a bass line... Such a bass line will result quite naturally from a keyboard of several octaves... on which both a *bass* line and a *soprano melody* could be played... once (this) sound-spectrum was seen by music's practitioners (organ-makers and players) as a sequence of octaves... the scene was set for the development of Western music.¹⁸

Certainly the polyphonic possibilities of the organ make it an instrument that is particularly suited to improvisation. There is no doubt that many musicians throughout history have explored and exploited the organ's possibilities for spontaneous composition using several voices simultaneously. Many first-rank composers were particularly noted for their improvising skills at the organ: Johann

¹⁵ See Peter Williams, *The King of Instruments – How churches came to have organs*, London 1993, pp. 4-5.

¹⁶ See Odilo Lechner, "Ducantor ad orationem – Führt auch das Orgelspiel zum Gebet?", in *Dux et comes: Festschrift für Franz Lehrndorfer zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Hans D. Hoffert and Klemens Schnorr, Regensburg 1998, pp. 121-122: The author refers to a sequence which originated from the Benedictine monastery at Engelberg in Switzerland.

¹⁷ "Hamarkrøniken", a Norwegian account of life in the medieval period, quoted in Stein Johannes Kolnes, *Norsk Orgelkultur*, Oslo 1987, p. 16.

¹⁸ See Williams 1993, pp. 10-14.

Sebastian Bach (1685-1750), George Friedrich Handel (1685-1759), Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791), Anton Bruckner (1824-1896), César Franck (1822-1890), Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921) and Max Reger¹⁹ (1873-1916), just to mention a few. Over the years a relatively large number of textbooks dealing with improvisation at the organ and other keyboard instruments have been written. The task of collating and comparing this information into a single coherent study has to the best of my knowledge not been attempted by previous researchers.

Previous researches into organ improvisation

Among the more recent *musicological* researches into organ improvisation there are – as far as I can see – three dissertations that distinguish themselves. These are Odile Jutten's work *L'enseignement de l'improvisation à la classe d'orgue du Conservatoire de Paris 1819-1986 d'après la thématique de concours et d'examen*,²⁰ Johannes Landgren's *Music – Moment – Message. Interpretive, Improvisational and Ideological Aspects of Petr Eben's Organ Works*,²¹ and Egidius Doll's work *Quellen zum Improvisationsunterricht auf Tasteninstrumenten von 1600 bis 1900*.²² Each author emphasises different aspects of this remarkable creative performing art.

Odile Jutten

As can be deduced from her title, Odile Jutten writes from a historic/pedagogic point of view. She aims to give a history of French organ improvisation teaching as practised at the Paris Conservatoire in the years 1819-1986. She opens with an account of the organisation of the Paris Conservatoire and its different locations in the French capital. Special reference is made to the localities used by the organ class, and the organs that were used for teaching purposes. Their specifications and available playing aids are described, since these obviously had a considerable influence on the way in which organ improvisation could be taught.

The main focus of the thesis is the musical character of improvisation as it was transmitted through a total of seven organ masters.²³ The forms of improvisation that were used are considered in some detail, and it can be seen that they are of a relatively unified type throughout the greater part of the period covered by Jutten's research. In other words, tradition was a powerful influence. Jutten gives music examples to indicate how these forms were presumably applied to spontaneous music making. A detailed chronological presentation of themes that have been used for auditions, examinations, and competitions forms a major part of the work. Jutten also uses a statistically inspired method to analyse the structural characteristics of these themes. As a whole, Odile Jutten's work can thus be described as the product of extensive research into archives coupled with analysis.

¹⁹ See Appendices of this thesis

²⁰ Université de Paris – Sorbonne 1999.

²¹ University of Gothenburg 1997.

²² Julius-Maximilians-Universität zu Würzburg 1988.

²³ These being: François Benoist, César Franck, Charles-Marie Widor, Alexandre Guilmant, Eugène Gigout, Marcel Dupré and Rolande Falcinelli.

Johannes Landgren

Johannes Landgren's study features the Czech composer Petr Eben (1929-2007), who enjoyed international renown as a brilliant improviser. Landgren emphasises that improvisation always played a vital role in Eben's musical life, and that his improvisations were shaped, formed and inspired by what we can describe as both internal and external factors. These included architecture, Biblical texts and his own religious feelings. All these are vital aspects of Eben's musical universe. The repressive Communist regime which dominated Czechoslovakian politics from 1948-1989 also figures prominently in Eben's musical development. Most of his organ works assumed their final written form after he had played them as improvisations – in some cases over periods of several years. In his thesis Landgren follows this process as musical ideas are conceived, shaped and refined through different improvisations before finally assuming their written form.

The organ cycle *Job* was developed over a period of some 20 years. Landgren has been able to follow something of this process with the aid of recordings made on three different occasions when Eben improvised this work in public concerts.²⁴ By making a comparative study of these recordings and the final score Landgren has been able to analyse how the real essence of a musical work is maintained as it progresses through the mill of different improvised versions. This contributes to an understanding of improvisation as an actual means of composing music. Landgren also points out that improvisation is an independent form of musical expression with long traditions of its own. It is not infrequent that musical creation takes place in the dialectic relationship between improvisation and composition. An examination of this relationship forms the aesthetic basis of Johannes Landgren's three CD recordings of Petr Eben's organ and choral works, which also form a part of his dissertation.²⁵

Egidius Doll

In his thesis Egidius Doll examines keyboard improvisation from a methodical and didactic viewpoint, using material from the 17th to 20th centuries as sources. He presents the views of a large number of teachers from different periods of music history, though the work as a whole suffers from some lack of comments by its author. Connections between the quoted texts and current teaching practices are not always straightforward, since it is not always certain how 18th century teaching instructions should be interpreted in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. On the other hand Doll's work in collecting and collating such a huge amount of historic material in the form of verbal instructions and musical examples is very useful. Amongst other things these music examples illustrate a large number of figuration and diminution techniques. These form a central element in the Western traditional teaching of improvisation on the organ and other keyboard instruments.

²⁴ The first fragments of this piece were improvised for a Prague audience in 1969. Later Eben presented this material in two large-scale improvised versions at concerts in St. Petri-Dom, Schleswig, 1985, and in Christ Church, Oxford, 1987.

²⁵ See Landgren 1997, pp. 35ff.

Karin Johansson – pedagogic approaches to organ improvisation

The *pedagogic* aspects of organ improvisation are considered in a recently published thesis by Karin Johansson: *Organ improvisation – activity, action and rhetorical practice*.²⁶ This study aims to explain how organists use their own production of improvised music to acquire, perceive, and define their improvisatory skills. Ms Johansson's work starts from the theory that improvisation is a practice of our own time which takes place against certain specific social and cultural backgrounds. It is considered as a musical phenomenon which has different areas of application. For the purposes of this thesis liturgical and concert practices are specifically considered. Thus Johansson considers the relationship between communication in specific contexts and more individual forms of expression. Current practices in the Lutheran churches of Scandinavia and a Roman Catholic Church in England are used to illustrate the liturgical aspects of organ improvisation.

Several teachers of organ improvisation at various music conservatories and universities are interviewed. Nine of these musicians work in the Protestant churches of Scandinavia, and one in the Roman Catholic Church in London. A gender balance is ensured in a group which consists of five men and five women. On the accompanying CD recording Karin Johansson discusses identical sets of carefully structured questions with her subjects. They demonstrate practically some aspects of their differing approaches to the process of creating improvised music. Assumed names are used. Johansson concludes that there are many different ways in which advanced skills in organ improvisation can be acquired.

Ernst Ferand – pioneering researcher

The Hungarian-German musicologist Ernst Ferand (1887-1972) made an important contribution to the study of improvisation with two publications: *Die Improvisation in Beispielen aus neun Jahrhunderten abendländischer Musik*²⁷ and *Die Improvisation in der Musik – eine entwicklungsgeschichtliche und psychologische Untersuchung*.²⁸ The latter book in particular is a pioneering study and can probably still be regarded as the most comprehensive single work dealing with musical improvisation, which is approached as a multi-faceted practice. Ferand considers this multi-faceted quality as a combination of spontaneous display, which is simultaneously linked to the forms and techniques of the past. Organ improvisation is extensively treated in Ferand's thesis, with special emphasis on sources from the 15th to the 17th centuries. Ferand's work must be regarded as a useful expansion of the field of research. In his introduction he writes:

Eine systematische Untersuchung der Improvisationspraxis in der Musik hätte sich etwa auf folgenden Fragen zu erstrecken: Allgemeine und musikpsychologische Voraussetzungen. Musikalische Elemente und Formen der Improvisation. Phylogenetische und ontogenetische Entwicklungsreihen. Soziologie der Improvisationspraxis. Musikpädagogische Bedeutung der Improvisation. Psychologie und Ästhetik der Improvisation. Die Improvisation in der produktiven und in

²⁶ Lund University 2008.

²⁷ Ernst Ferand, *Die Improvisation in Beispielen aus neun Jahrhunderten abendländischer Musik*, Köln 1956.

²⁸ Ernst Ferand, *Die Improvisation in der Musik – eine entwicklungsgeschichtliche und psychologische Untersuchung*, Zürich 1938.

der reproduktiven Kunstübung. Improvisatorische Typen, die improvisatorische Persönlichkeit.²⁹

[A systematic study of the practice of musical improvisation must cover the following points: General and musical-psychological presuppositions. Musical elements and forms of improvisation. Phylogenetic³⁰ and ontogenetic³¹ lines of development. Sociology of improvisation. The musical-pedagogic meaning of improvisation. The psychology and aesthetics of improvisation. Improvisation in the productive and reproductive practice of art. The improvising personality.]

Ferand thus assumes that there are several ways in which musical improvisation can be studied scientifically. He mentions theoretical aspects such as formal analysis, aesthetic, sociological discourse, teaching practice, genealogy³² and above all an understanding of psychological issues. He discusses improvisation in the light of these presuppositions. His work is naturally influenced by the accepted scientific wisdom that held sway during the 1930's. Advances made particularly in the field of psychology since then have rendered some of these notions rather out-dated. However, Ferand's pluralistic approach to this field of research is still relevant – not only as a general study of musical improvisation, but also for the illumination it gives to the creative and performing aspects of organ improvisation.

Artistic research

This current thesis on the subject of organ improvisation should be regarded as *artistic* research, which aims to investigate the discipline of an actual musical formation. The Faculty of Fine, Applied and Performing Arts at the University of Gothenburg began its research education in this area in the spring semester 2001. The expression “artistic” indicates that the research is related to an artistic practice. In other words research into the phenomenon of musical creation itself forms an important dimension. Thus this dissertation is not only intended to form a basis for discussion, but also aims towards a form of artistic creation. These musical acts of creation are intended to demonstrate some methods of work and help me towards my conclusions. This study attempts to explore the links between the practical and theoretical aspects of improvisation, with the aim of presenting and discussing theories which will contribute to a greater knowledge and understanding of the practical problems faced by an improvising musician.

I will attempt to do this by considering how improvised music is built up from pre-determined conditions. Frequently these are intentional actions which are themselves the result of an intentional learning process. My further aim is to point to what I choose to call the *understanding* and *explanatory*³³ possibilities in the formation of music itself. The aim is to illustrate the relationship between musical conception and presentation on the one hand and on the other: the actual resultant sounds in the form of music. I will explore this by showing that there exists a sub-

²⁹ See Ibid., p. 2.

³⁰ Phylogenetic – development of a particular feature of an organism.

³¹ Ontogenetic – relates to the development of an individual organism.

³² Genealogy – here implying ideas of evolution and diffusion.

³³ The distinction and dialectic in relation to the expressions “understanding” and “explaining” play an important part in my work. See under for a presentation of the problems, goals of knowledge and meta-theoretical foundations for a closer interpretation of these two expressions and the use of them in this study.

jective knowledge in human actions and in inner reflection. There also exists a great potential for knowledge which can be presented by external sources, for example in assimilating theoretical knowledge and in an assumption of the more or less commonly accepted ideas within a specific artistic discipline – moments that will also be the object of subjective experiences.³⁴

An essential concern for the research arises from my own intentions to study the art of improvisation in an ontological perspective. This means that the musical creation is a means which gives a living coherence to the work³⁵ because art can be regarded as consisting of both action and thought. The way in which a textbook on improvisation, musical form or whatever will be comprehended by an experienced improvising musician will in all probability differ from the way in which a person without this experience will understand the same passage. Hence the formation and performance of music can lead us to thoughts we would not otherwise have thought. Such are the different possibilities that research offers.

This thesis attempts through differing approaches to show how a working knowledge of and skills in the art of improvisation are acquired, and how the improvising organist can form a personal musical identity. I have reflected over the traditional musical “vocabulary” and other means of expression used in improvised music, and applied some of these empirical formulae to create my own improvisations. By using theories and empirical rules it is not necessary to start completely from scratch. Before attending to my researches, I will first consider some issues that can be linked with the more general meaning of the term improvisation.

³⁴ Cf. Hermann Grabner, *Der lineare Satz. Ein neues Lehrbuch des Kontrapunktes*, Stuttgart 1930, p. 11: Here the German composer and musicologist Hermann Grabner writes that a useful study of counterpoint should aim to produce an awareness of the creative possibilities of linear polyphony. According to Grabner, this involves more than simply understanding the linear movement, but requires that it should be *experienced* in order to provide a productive route to expression. In many cases this aim cannot be achieved by theoretical speculation alone. Grabner points out that one can achieve far more in this field with practical music making than with one-sided theoretical approaches.

³⁵ Cf. Albert Keller, *Allgemeine Erkenntnistheorie*, Stuttgart 1982, pp. 40-41: A major criteria in research is the systemisation and adaption of the differing forms that are to be processed. Therefore, according to Keller, scientific knowledge as such can be regarded as trustworthy when it can be shown to be in accord with its principal aim: to clearly define an area of study. It should also account for limitations and areas which no longer have any validity. In light of this science serves from the specific intention of creating an orderly overview of the conventions in a specified field of research.

CHAPTER 2

Approaches to the term “improvisation”

A similarity between music and theatre is their dependency on cooperation between two different personalities: those of the composer/author and the performer/actor. In each case it is the latter that will always have the last word in the realisation of a piece. However the ability to read a play and recreate it in the imagination is more common among the general public than the ability to experience music by simply reading the score. Therefore the dependence of composers on their interpreters is greater than that of dramatists. In improvisation this element of mutual dependability is removed since the composer and performer here become one and the same person.

Improvisation and composition – two classical archetypes

In the “Überlegungen zur Orgelimitation” the Austrian organist, improviser, teacher, composer and musicologist Hans Haselböck asserts that musical improvisation can be regarded in the light of two opposite human characteristics. On the one hand we have the intuitive, spontaneous, even the fantastic, whilst on the other the carefully reflected, rational and well-ordered. Here we glimpse the shadows of the two classical archetypes which illustrate these polarities: the two Greek gods Dionysus and Apollo.

Dionysus, the god of wine, is the originator of the fruitful Life Force. As a god he reveals himself in celebrations of autumn and orgiastic Bacchanalian rites. Symbolically the Dionysian music represents the immediate. It is impulsive, spontaneous and intuitive, and can exert a powerful influence on the human psyche. We speak here of an intense power that can produce states of boundless ecstasy which are tantamount to another type of reality. The content is frequently subjective, dynamic and emotional. Dionysian music can be experienced as an expression of the sub-conscious and the unconscious. Many of its daring flights of fancy are reflected in parts of the Romantic musical heritage.

Apollonian ideals are the hallmark of a good upbringing. Spiritual issues dominated the gymnastic feasts of ancient Greece which were dedicated to the god Apollo. Music was harnessed to serve as a stabilising, moral force. Apollonian music is formal, refined and aims towards a perfect realisation. Disciplined objectivity and architectural clarity are its hallmarks, and these are achieved by constantly employing the critical faculties. This type of music is full of concentration, symmetry and control. A perfect internal balance is accomplished. Apollonian music is an aural realisation of classical forms. An important factor in this is the ra-

tional element that permeates the tonal language: composition. Whereas Dionysian music deals with music as a form of expression. It is Romantic in the widest sense of the term and intuitive: in other words, improvisation.³⁶

Artefacts and idioms

The foundations of an improvising musician will as a rule be built on what I will call a personal degree of competence – the sum of his or her own experience and knowledge. Musical *artefacts* and *idioms*³⁷ form an important part of this. The word “artefact” is descended from the Latin “arte factum” and can be defined as “a product of human art and craftsmanship”. In musical terms artefacts³⁸ should be regarded as examples, experiments, guiding principles, and other parts of the creative processes. One builds up something living from the given qualities one has chosen to employ. Also within music terminology it is not infrequent to describe idioms as “the more or less characteristic of music from different styles and eras”. The content can be linked, both to larger forms and to elements of form that perform on a more detailed level.

In his book on orchestration the Russian composer Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908) employs the term “idiom” to express the means of producing the best sounds from either a specific solo instrument or an instrumental combination.³⁹ At least as far as improvisation is concerned it is important to be aware that there is a distinction between ergonomic and idiomatic considerations. In other words: the differences between musical structures that are formed to allow an instrument to sound at its best – and those relating to pure physical and ergonomic considerations of playing comfort. There will, however, often be a close connection between these two points. Musical idioms can also be regarded as sounding structures that one instrument has passed on to another. In Johann Sebastian Bach’s most famous *Tocatta and Fugue in D minor* (BWV 565) the repeated note figurations of the fugue subject are very reminiscent of violin playing. Many musical figures which have similar origins can be found in *Das Wohltemperiertes Klavier*.

³⁶ See Hans Haselböck, “Überlegungen zur Orgel improvisation”, in *Von der Orgel und der Musica Sacra. Historisch-kritische Beiträge zu Fragen von Orgelbau, Orgelkomposition und neuer Kirchenmusik*, Wien 1988, p. 62.

³⁷ See Chitra Fernando, *Idioms and Idiomaticity*, Oxford 1996: The word “idiom” comes from the Greek and originally meant a peculiarity. It represents an important entirety that differs in meaning from a strict definition of the term. In human consciousness idioms are understood as entities. Idioms exist in all languages and are a daily feature of human intercourse, literature and advertising. In the study of foreign languages idioms often present problems since they have to be learnt as independent entities.

In verbal language many idioms originated as metaphors. As lexicology developed, some of them became idiomatic expressions which no longer had any direct connection with a visual language. Idioms which in grammatical sense consist of one word which consists of more than one word are known as compositional idioms. Those idioms which grammatically form a group of words are known as group idioms, whilst idioms that comprise a sentence are known as sentence idioms.

³⁸ While the word “artefact” is usually applied to a concrete object such as an archeological relic, the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* does extend the definition to include “something observed that is not naturally present but originates in the preparative or investigative procedure.” This allows the use of this term to include the musical elements listed above.

³⁹ Cf. Nikolai A. Rimskij-Korsakov, *Principles of Orchestration*, New York 1964.

Idiomatic improvisation

“Tradition” is therefore a keyword in understanding of musical compositions and idioms, and with the expression “idiomatic improvisation” I refer not only to the music-making process which concerns itself with historic forms, but also to more modern methods of expression which have in the course of time acquired their own peculiar forms. Recognition of musical form in relation to specified traditions can be described as a central element in making such a definition. In practice this involves the creation of a musical vocabulary for improvisation. This will contain central musical parameters such as melodic movement, ornamentation, rhythm, harmony and counterpoint which can be related to certain historic examples. From these predeterminations the musician creates and performs his or her music “on the spot”. The difference between the improviser and the composer is that the former creates and performs instantaneously – spontaneously and without long preparation, and mostly without any thought that it should be written down later.

The similarity with the composer is that the improviser follows compositional rules. This is not about free and unstructured musical flights of fancy, but on more or less clearly defined concepts. These concepts can be modelled on examples from differing historical periods. This creates the idiomatic element. In this way improvisation will incorporate an element of composition: to compose – from the Latin: “com-ponere” – to bring or set together. The connection between the elements can here be random. Another expression associated with the creation of music is in the Latin language “generare” – to create in the sense of develop. In this context the connection between the elements is to a greater extent decided by rules and regulations. As a consequence of that creativity in some ways needs to be rationalised. It implies that the process of musical creation also have to be confined to formalities.

Links with other art forms

Hans Haselböck asserts that improvisation can be linked to other artistic disciplines and diverse types of human creativity. He refers to Johann Peter Eckermann's (1792-1854) book *Gespräche mit Goethe in den letzten Jahren seines Leben* [*Conversations with Goethe in the last years of his life*] which quotes the German author Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) on the subject of improvisation: “Über einen Gegenstand, der zu Aufgabe gestellt ist, unvermittelt produktiv zu werden”. [To be immediately and without prior preparation productive with a task one is required to do.] In light of this Haselböck gives some examples from the world of theatre, rhetoric, dance, architecture and music.

In some stage works there are occasions when the manuscript gives some room for spontaneity, such as the Italian *Commedia dell'arte* or the Austrian *Wiener Volksschauspiel*. In the art of speech-making new formulations may be introduced into a well-rehearsed speech, or one may simply choose to speak “off the cuff”. It is frequently impossible for every step of a dance to be planned exactly. Therefore it is common practice for dancers to improvise movements according to patterns based on specified types of dance. Architects have not always finalised the full decorative details of a building at the outset. During the late Renaissance and early Baroque the practice of developing the decorative details as construction progressed was standard.

Yet Hans Haselböck regards the word improvisation as having its clearest associations with music. He suggests that “Einer gültigen Definition zufolge versteht man unter musikalischer Improvisation das gleichzeitige Erfinden und Ausführen von Musik”⁴⁰ [a valid definition along the lines of what one understands by musical improvisation is the simultaneous invention and realisation of music].

Two definitions

Improvisation is frequently understood as an immediate form of musical expression and communication, which is not necessarily connected to any specific musical notation. In a narrow definition improvisation can mean simultaneous musical invention and realisation as sound. We might say “on the spur of the moment” – meaning something we have not thought out beforehand. In practice improvisation is often a spontaneous musical reaction to specific ideas. These are realised as sound within a framework, thus following certain predetermined qualities of length, proportion, etc. I will now present two definitions of the phenomenon improvisation. Ernst Ferand has given the following very exhaustive definition:

In formaler Hinsicht können unterschieden werden zwischen absoluter und relativer, zwischen freier und gebundener, dem Umfange nach zwischen totaler und partieller Improvisation. Als absolute Improvisation wäre zu bezeichnen die unmittelbare, spontane Erfindung durchwegs neuer musikalischer Gebilde, wogegen es sich bei der relativen um eine mehr oder weniger wesentliche – beabsichtigte oder ungewollte – Veränderung der im geringeren oder stärkeren Masse feststehenden, fest umrissenden Formen – Gesänge oder Instrumentalstücke – im Augenblick ihrer Wiedergabe handelt... Im Gegensatz zur freier („formlosen“) Improvisation, dem eigentlichen Phantasieren, in dem der Spieler (weniger der Sänger) seinen musikalischen Eingebungen ohne Einschränkungen folgt, steht die gebundene oder „durchgeformte“ Improvisation, sei es über ein gegebenes Motiv oder Thema, sei es in einer bestimmten Form, wie dies bereits in den Organistenproben des 16. Jhs. gefordert wird. Als „Rahmenimprovisation“ könnte jener Spezialfall bezeichnet werden, in dem der Spieler an ein gewisses unveränderliches melodisch-formales Schema gebunden ist, wie in den verschiedenen Basso-Ostinato-Formen, aber auch bei den Diskantvariationen der Fall ist. Diese Art Improvisation gehört, wie die absolute, und zum Teil auch noch die relative, dem Gebiete der totalen an, gegenüber der partiellen Improvisation, der sich, wie etwa in der Diminutionspraxis und im vokalen und instrumentalen Kadenzwesen, nur auf einzelne mehr oder weniger ausgedehnte Abschnitte der im übrigen schriftlich in allen Einzelheiten festgelegten Komposition erstreckt.⁴¹

[It is possible to distinguish between absolute and relative improvisation, between free and limited improvisation, and between total and partial improvisation. The immediate, normally called spontaneous invention of new musical structures, can be regarded as absolute improvisation. In contrast to this – the relative improvisation deals with the more or less – either deliberate or involuntary – variation of a more or less predetermined course, fast outlines of forms – songs or instrumental pieces – that are created spontaneously... and in contrast to the free (“shapeless”) improvisation, fantasising in the true sense of the word, where the player (and to a lesser degree the singer) follows his/her own musical instincts without hindrance. The opposite of these types of improvisation is the limited or worked-out improvisation – which can be over a given theme and in a specific form, such as was common practice when organists were appointed in the 16th century. All cases when the player is limited by formal melodies, or for that matter bass-ostinato

⁴⁰ See Haselböck 1988, p. 54.

⁴¹ See Ferand 1938, pp. 9-10.

forms can be described as “fixed improvisations”. This type of improvisation belongs alongside the absolute, but also relative, home within the total improvisation, in contrast to the partial improvisation, which, in common with practice of diminution and in instrumental and vocal cadenzas, simply manifests itself in shorter or longer parts of a composition whose details are otherwise precisely specified.]

In *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* Imogene Horsley gives a wider definition of musical improvisation. All the same, we see the outlines of the art of improvisation as a many-sided process:

(Improvisation is) the creation of a musical work, or the final form of a musical work, as it is being performed. It may involve the work’s immediate composition by its performers, or the elaboration or adjustment of an existing framework, or anything in between.⁴²

If our objective is to understand or define the art of improvisation from a complete overview, we can see that in the light of the two given citations such a task is far from simple. Most probably it will suffice to examine just a few aspects, such as those dealing with the genealogy and historic origins of the art of improvisation. From this we can deduce that in the course of the years musical improvisation has been a creative and performing practice within a broad spectrum of styles and genres. It is therefore reasonable to suppose that the term “improvisation”, seen over the course of the years, cannot be represented by any one single idea. What were the attitudes and expectations of improvising musicians and their audiences in the past, and what are these today? From this perspective it is impossible to regard improvisation as anything other than a term which covers many different types of musical practices that are closely linked to geographical, religious, cultural and other individual factors.

It is therefore not my intention to give an unconditional support to any of these two ideas, or to attempt a closer formal analysis of them. However I would like to point out one omission from both of these definitions: Neither of them discusses on a deeper level improvisation as a *procedural* phenomenon. In other words the central questions as to what one does as an improvising musician, and what it characterises these activities.

It is not least the similarities and differences between Ernst Ferand’s and Imogene Horsley’s formalised definitions that suggest that it could be fruitful to examine aspects of organ improvisation. There is here a polarisation between a more detailed understanding of the differing genres which is opposed by a more all-embracing approach. It is this dialectic tension which forms the starting point for this dissertation, which I hope will contribute to a deeper understanding of the term “improvisation”. In the first place this applies to the term as it is experienced in differing contexts – or has been experienced in the past – by improvising organists.

⁴² See Imogene Horsley, “Improvisation”, in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Volume 9, London 1980.

CHAPTER 3

Theoretical perspectives

*How does one improvise? And: How can one learn the art of improvisation?*⁴³ This dissertation aims to study organ improvisation in the light of these two questions. In other words: What is the nature of the forces that may be said to be unleashed in a musical improvisation, and how can one acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to be able to practice this art? The research aims in this way to illuminate what the role of organ improviser involves and how one can prepare to assume this role. Other relevant manifestations of the improviser's art will be considered. The aim is thus also to reach towards a more general understanding of the processes by which music is created.

A condition for this work is the assumption that all emotional, intellectual and physical forces which can result in spontaneous interjections, rational thought and an extensive range of actions make up the differing sides of human nature. These sides are objects of continual mutual influence that forms part of a complex interaction. It is also presupposed that the relation between these factors can be experienced as an interactive force which can lead to an understanding⁴⁴ of musical improvisation. At the same time it can be asserted that human behaviour is governed by general characteristics which are independent of historical, cultural, religious or aesthetic considerations.

The hypothesis of this dissertation is the presumption that improvised music results from an interaction which encompasses a large number of mental images of musical sound, and a comparable arsenal of finely tuned corporeal movements. Aural images and expressions in sound are realised by the actions of the improviser. These aural images and expressions in sound are products of movements and actions and can thus be regarded as an extension of the musician's body. At the same time these actions have their origin in more or less well-defined systems⁴⁵ which

⁴³ Cf. Jeff Pressing, "Improvisation: methods and models", in *Generative Processes in Music: The Psychology of Performance, Improvisation, and Composition*, ed. John A. Sloboda, Oxford 1988, p. 129.

⁴⁴ See below for comments on the use of the word "understanding".

⁴⁵ Cf. Keller 1982, pp. 40-41: What we should understand by "system" is initially decided by the superior conception of quantity. This can refer to single quantities and parts of a quantity, or individuals and classes which can again be real or fictitious. Also properties, relationship, name, signs, sentences and numbers can be part of a quantity. These can be restricted, or if there is a continuous development, they can also be open. When the individual elements of a quantity are assembled according to a specified rulebook or legality, then we are dealing with an organised quantity. When these elements are counted as an entity on account of an inclusive structure, this can be regarded as a system.

determine musical aesthetic identity. An improviser will of necessity have an artistic ideal in his or her musical practice. Therefore the hypothesis of this research is that it is in the light of the improviser's differing perceptions of the meanings contained in the words "imagination" and "form" that the musical actions originate.

Imagination was defined in the 15th century as "the faculty of fanciful thought" and by the 16th century this definition has extended to encompass "the creative faculty of the mind; the ability to form new and striking concepts".⁴⁶ A further definition would be "the mental faculty which forms images or concepts of external objects not present to the senses".⁴⁷ It is not unusual for imagination to be rooted in past experience, but "...as imagination bodies forth the forms of things unknown"⁴⁸ it also points to the future. Imagination can in fact be described as a hypothetical or utopian instrument since it can exist simultaneously in the past (where it is formed) and in the future (to which it points). By this it is implied that when we speak of what has been, it is not infrequent that we also mention what is to come.

Like any physical force, the free creative force of imagination often needs to be channelled and directed. Form is the element which can control artistic imagination, and in this context it should be characterised as essential if the work of art produced by imagination is to have any real meaning. It can be said that order is established within the chaos of the endless possibilities by specific organisation.⁴⁹ It seems reasonable to presume that improvised actions – especially starting from broad definitions of "imagination" and "form" – can be understood as formative elements in a musical practice. However this practice does not readily lend itself to conventional scientific methods of research.

A basic theoretical approach

In my attempt to set this work in a specific philosophical context, the reflections of the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005) in his collection of essays *Du texte à l'action [From Text to Action]*⁵⁰ make a useful contribution. His philosophy would appear to suggest that knowledge can be approached by other means than simply maintaining an exclusively critical distance to the subject under consideration. Ricoeur opens the way for a subjective experience which forms an important part of the research process. In this way Ricoeur's scientific theories reflect my attempts to approach the chosen field of research as an organic unity. Possibly such an attempt can be described as utopian. All the same I will characterise the many factors that can be linked to the art of improvisation as differing angles of approach. One method will involve the examination of these individual elements as parts of a mosaic, whilst keeping the focus on their place in a larger context. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The aim is to come to the greatest possible unified approach, so as to see how the differing parts interact.

⁴⁶ See *New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford 1993.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Quotation from William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

⁴⁹ If music is defined as sound which is experienced it will in many cases be a mixture of order and chaos.

⁵⁰ Paul Ricoeur, *Du texte à l'action*, Seuil, Paris 1986. Swedish translation: *Från text til handling: En antologi om hermeneutik*, ed. Peter Kemp and Bengt Kristensson, Stockholm 1993.

Thus Ricoeur points out that in an epistemological context it will be useful to make a distinction between a dimension of explanation and a dimension of understanding in order to regard these dimensions from a dialectic point of view. From a theoretical point Ricoeur does not hint that there are two methods: one for explanation and one for understanding. To him it is strictly the explanation that is methodical. The understanding is rather the non-methodological moment what in the interpret sciences coincide with the explanation's methodical moment. That moment – also: the understanding – goes first, follows, concludes and frames the explanation. In return the explanation develops the understanding analytically. This is not the choice between dualism and monism. To an extent understanding can be given a specific component. This can be either the comprehension of signs in a text, or intentions and motives in a theory of action, or the strength of an ability to follow a story in light of a theory of history. According to Ricoeur, it is thus possible to bridge the gap between these areas of knowledge.⁵¹

The following descriptions of the terms “explanation” and “understanding” form a background to this study: By “explanation” I refer to the accumulation of knowledge as to how differing aspects of the art of improvisation are perceived and examined in terms of cause and effect. To critically investigate from the outside is a central element of this. By “understanding” I point to an absorption in cultural discourses through interpretation, suggestion and translation of meaning in human experiences and actions.

Theoretical application

Improvising musicians can be said to have a large number of internal and external experiences. These will include the assimilated patterns of movement that form the basis of technique, ideas of style and differing musical forms, together with representations regarding details and entities which can be linked to differing musical textures. In addition there are the many variable emotional factors. Many of these are produced by inner preconceptions. For a great part these concern internal ideas, which are reflected in the improviser's personality and patterns of behaviour. Such internal profiles will affect how the improviser uses music history as part of his/her creative processes. As an external defining influence music history will function as both an example and a resource. Here there will be an interplaying between the internal and external moments. In this interaction there are both explainable elements and additional elements of emotional intensity. The main thrust of arguments in such a model of knowledge should be understood as dynamic. There is an epistemological tension which ranges from the intuitive guesswork to a rational explanation. On this scale both understanding and explanation will be counted as integral elements.

In this connection it can be profitable to introduce the expressions “unique” and “generality” to describe the range between the strictly individual and the collective legality in connection with musical improvisation. For the more that improvisation is perceived as a unique personal expression, the more it requires understanding and involvement. The opposite also applies: If an improvisation seems to be the result of simply following rules and regulations, it should be explicable. This starting point enables us to write textbooks on the subject of improvisation which

⁵¹ See *ibid.*, pp. 39-43.

bears some useful meaning. In this context Ricoeur's text is used to establish a meta-theoretical basis⁵² to illuminate the dialectic tensions between explanation and understanding which appear to be decisive in examining an actual musical practice. Art and research have often gone hand in hand in expanding the horizons of our knowledge of human creativity. Such understanding⁵³ and knowledge will probably contribute to artistic achievement and the development of an artistic identity.

Paul Ricoeur's ideas of approaches to history

The art of improvisation has clear origins in history, especially considering the fact that artefacts and idioms from the past frequently both serve as sources of inspiration and provide formal models for the improvising musicians of today. Under these circumstances, Paul Ricoeur's essay "The reality of the historic past" from *Le Temps raconté* can supply a perspective to the consideration of improvisation's nature as position somewhere between re-creativity and originality. Accordingly to Ricoeur, the constructions of historians represent different attempts at recreating history. As a rule this takes place from documentary evidence. In this way a historic approach will be dominated by events that have taken place, or what Ricoeur refers to as traces of the past.

These traces remain, through which we try to interpret the past in the present. In this way the past does not enter our consciousness as a performance, but is represented by remaining traces. Ricoeur describes this as "the historic discussion's absent past place". He further speaks of the pathway as a replacement which recognises the indirect reference – a reference that only applies to the recognition one can find by following the traces. Thus Ricoeur means it is possible to distinguish references to the past from other references. A consequence of Ricoeur's thoughts will be that we understand the temporal nature of the past in the double sense that it is no more and still continues, which would indicate that we can only approach this representation by indirect and dialectic means. Especially he places the idea on the temporal nature of the past within a framework of three categories: *the same*, *the other* and *the analogue*.

With the expression "the same" Ricoeur refers to previous philosophical attempts to re-establish the past in the present. In regard to method such a viewpoint is compatible with historical imagination, because the aim is to rethink rather than experience something which has at one time been thought or done. In other words the past is something that can be rethought and recreated. An identity is established between the first and the second occurrence of the same thought. In a corresponding way one avoids the implied distance of time which is concealed behind the "re" in the words "re-thinking" and "re-creating". By the expression "the other" Ricoeur shows these differing variants in a negative sense and points out that whatever has at one time occurred or been thought represents something completely

⁵² The expression "meta-theoretical basis" refers to an all-embracing theoretical understanding which contributes towards giving the principles on which the research is based.

⁵³ A problem in this context is what is actually possible to formulate on the subject of sounding artefacts. In other words what can be said about musical works which are improvised. That is to say what verbal and analytic access is possible to musical artefacts in the context of the practice of improvisation.

different in relation to our perception today. As an object it has disintegrated and is therefore inaccessible to us.⁵⁴

Ricoeur's third suggestion is that the past's past can be categorised as "the analogue" in the sense of conformity without repetition. By this he means that in a dialectic sense it is possible to illuminate the historian's wish that historic constructions shall become reconstructions. That implies paying one's respect to something which no longer exists, but at one time did exist. Ricoeur does not suggest that the temporal nature of the past is thus a final or completed stage, but rather that our respects create an opportunity for constructive discussion. The historian's task is thus to create an impression – in a similar manner to that used by a painter in creating an impression from his or her motifs.⁵⁵

Ricoeur's historical theory in relation to the research field

There are two pitfalls that lurk for us when we study history. We can view it through rose-coloured glasses and long for previous golden ages. Or we can criticise the past for its errors, misjudgements and the many limitations that faced our ancestors. Oscar Wilde (1854-1900) observed that "The one duty we owe to history is to re-write it. That is not the least of tasks for the critical spirit".⁵⁶ When I attempt in my text and formation of this thesis "to quote"⁵⁷ certain items of music history again, the intention is not to repeat something that has been done or written previously, but rather to illustrate what I regard as some key aspects they demonstrate. A number of musical techniques from differing eras are frequently used in improvisation and composition. In the final analysis these concern human beings, whose behaviour in differing geographic locations and historical is remarkably similar. In order to understand how musical artefacts and practices from the past are incorporated into today's improvisations, it can be useful to make a study of the art of improvisation as practised by previous generations of organists and keyboard players. Thus we can hope to obtain some impression of how they thought and played, and how they themselves taught their pupils.

In this way we can see how the art of organ improvisation has developed and changed down the centuries.⁵⁸ In this context Paul Ricoeur's theories of history can supply the horizons of understanding to music history as a contributing factor to improvised actions, whilst also providing a key to interpreting them. Above all these reflect periods of musical history when the art of improvisation was highly

⁵⁴ Paul Ricoeur, *Eksistens og hermeneutikk*, translated with a concluding chapter by Hallvard H. Ystad, Oslo 1999, "Den fortalte tid" [Le temps raconté], originally published in *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* (France) 4 1984.

⁵⁵ See Ricoeur 1999, pp. 173-174.

⁵⁶ See Oscar Wilde, "The Critic as Artist", in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*, New York 1966, p. 1023.

⁵⁷ See Ricoeur 1999, pp. 173-174.

⁵⁸ Cf. Ricoeur 1993, pp. 55: One of the aims of hermeneutic studies is to reduce cultural distances. One can understand this endeavour in chronological terms as a struggle against the distance of the centuries – or in a more hermeneutic intellect, as a struggle against the distance to the meaning itself and the values implied in a text. Above all this applies to an emphasis of the interpretation's "real" character which can be characterised as a dedication. By this Ricoeur implies that the interpretation of a text is completed in the subject's perception of itself – for example in one's own understanding or involvement of material thread from the past.

prized. These eras were richly populated with musicians who could learn from each other and from the practices of the past. Therefore our own practice of improvisation can repay something of our debt to the past. We do this by creating or forming something meaningful from the conditions we have inherited – and from the supposition that the unconditional does not exist.

Methodological considerations

Literally speaking differing methods of research can be compared to differing types of lenses and filters that are used in the study of objects. If we follow this metaphor then we note that while lenses are normally used for enlargement purposes, filters may be said to have a selective function. The conclusions that a researcher is likely to reach are to a large extent dependant on the means by which the research is conducted. The method of research defines topics that we choose to examine closely and those to which less attention will be paid. On this basis the chosen topics of research establish both the conditions of research and go some way towards determining the final results. All science aspires to increase our knowledge of reality. Such searching is based on a number of assumptions. These assumptions can be the invisible which makes the visible possible. If we change these assumptions then reality can also change its form. All research work needs to discuss the assumptions and preconditions on which it will be based, since these are unavoidable.

Art can create a new reality, but must frequently adapt its methods according to its perception of reality. Scientific approaches to artistic activities must therefore discuss the differing aspects linked to creative and performing actions. All the same there exists no single access to the innermost creative resources of human beings – processes by which ideas are shaped. This leads to the employment of expressions which cannot be precisely defined. For example, in improvisation, what do we mean with such words as “aesthetic”, “creativity”, “knowledge”, “practice”, “proficiency”, “style”, “technique”, “tradition”, and so on? Perhaps we will be better equipped to understand such a complex problem if we envisage a theoretical distinction between four possible methods of research:

1. Scientific research by scientific methods.
2. Scientific research by artistic methods.
3. Artistic research by scientific methods.
4. Artistic research by artistic methods.

It should be immediately apparent that options 1 and 4 offer a most consistent approach, while points 2 and 3 are contradictory hybrids – or incompatible mixtures. As far as I can see there is no single clear indication of how useful any of these approaches will be for the purposes of a research discussion. To form an adequate opinion it will be necessary to relate the named research positions to examples where it is clear as to what type of recognition and knowledge we are seeking. In the context of the formative process it would appear to be profitable to establish a dialogue concerning processes and products and allow others to take over the experiences and framework of understanding on account of their own formative procedures. The expression “hybrid” can thus be replaced by the word “synthesis”, since if we can find the right points of contact it may be possible to arrive at new concepts and ideas.

This suggests that we should regard the open approach as a type of practical common sense which admits that there are other approaches. This can also be regarded as a method of research, and there are grounds to wonder what we will lose if we abandon the practical elements in the quest for artistic knowledge. It is important to ask what we expect such knowledge to contribute. What can practical knowledge contribute to theoretical understanding? Also vice versa: How does theoretical knowledge illuminate formative actions and processes?⁵⁹ In the research processes it is a well-established practice that information is collected and arranged in a logical manner. However, art can have its own logic. Intuitive forces do not necessarily admit rational explanations. We do not always know how we do something, but all the same we can on some occasions experience our endeavours as meaningful and rewarding.

Furthermore language is an essential tool in the examination of art and artistic deeds. For example in the teaching of artistic subjects it is essential that the language employed exhibits some resemblance to the artistic practice concerned. Such a language will have to be both analytical and metaphorical. There should be some reflection regarding what can be said about the field concerned, which seeks after suitable criteria. At the same time some of these criteria will be defined as a product of the process. The language itself functions as an indicator here, as the interview, the narrative, the metaphor and the aesthetic reflections will contribute as much to the sum total of information as formal analytic and psychological explanations. Such linguistic approaches can be made by many contributors. The fact that this thesis is written by a musician will naturally colour the choosing of and focusing on the subject matter. This applies to the practical music-making and the theoretical reflection. This creates the terms for both my thoughts and actions – in other words what I do as a professional performing musician and as apprentice in the field of improvisation, alongside my subjective understanding of these actions.

Study in two main parts

To write is to see. To read is to come nearer the picture, look with the text and in this way approach the subject. In my research project the intention is to explore aurally and visually the sounds and thoughts of a traditional European musical practice: the art of organ improvisation. During the work this has developed within a framework of two parts which encompass:

1. historic-phenomenological and
2. style-related, aesthetic and procedural aspects of organ improvisation.

By examining these I intend to produce a panoramic view of improvisation which will cover the historic, stylistic, aesthetic and cognitive-procedural aspects. Included in this panorama are three different aural realisations in the form three

⁵⁹ Cf. Tore Frost (ed.), "Platons 7. brev" [Plato's 7th letter], in *Platons samlede verker [The Complete Works of Plato]*, Oslo 2008: A classical Greek understanding of knowledge – as defined by Plato – is divided in this way: *Episteme*: scientific knowledge, also thought as separated from action. *Techne*: practical and creative knowledge. *Fronesis*: practical understanding. *Aisthesis*: an emotional means of relating to something, also in relation to understanding of the beautiful in art. *Gnosis*: a type of spiritual relation to knowledge as implied by fascination or a "magic" drawing power. *Doxa*: perception or understanding in the meaning of common sense. *Endoxa*: consistent perception in the sense of permanent recognition.

recording projects. One of these projects is connected to the first part of the thesis and the other two to the second.

First part of thesis: Chronology versus phenomenology

Here the focus is on chronology versus phenomenology which attempts in this way to present information drawn from differing historic sources regarding the practice of improvisation on the organ and other keyboard instruments in the past. I will do this by a chronological presentation, in the course of which we will come across some so-called “lesser important” musical personalities from differing eras. We shall focus not only on their works, but also on their working methods as documented in some of the textbooks they have produced.⁶⁰ Thus a large number of artefacts and idioms that have been produced in the past by various methods, also can be perceived as “aural illustrations” of the eras that produced them. Some of these may not be connected with any specific masterwork or be directly associated with major composers.

The question that applies in this context is which improvisation-related genres the historic material represents, and what notation in early sources has to say about its practice – along with the question of how the improvising musicians perceived themselves and their work. Finally: In what contexts was their music used? The art of improvisation is therefore examined in its historical context. The logic behind this is that our cultural inheritance provides a foundation for the practice of improvisation today. This is often based on the making of stylistic copies from differing periods and traditions.

Therefore this part of the thesis will take a closer look at both differing forms of improvisation used in the past. We will also consider the approaches to teaching bearing in mind that these still contribute to the living continuity of music making. On the strength of such a historic approach⁶¹ both my musical creations and my linguistic presentation can be described as a type of “memory bank” which contributes to the preservation of an artistic practice for posterity. It is also the intention that these materials should be instrumental in cultivating a deeper understanding of the term improvisation, because it reflects major aspects of this art form seen through the ages.

Second part of thesis: style, aesthetic and procedures

The second part of my thesis at first focuses on the phenomena of musical style. This should be regarded as consisting of many different elements. These are the large number of formal references and sounding characteristics which improvising organists – and other improvising musicians – need to consider. The stylistic roots of the music can be perceived as a multidimensional phenomenon. Seen in the light of different traditions style and musical content can thus be experienced as related quantities. In this way questions that are linked to improvisation’s stylistic content and context can also be regarded as central to discussion of the aesthetic

⁶⁰ The dichotomy between the “canonised” masterworks and what may be described as less important music is an extensive field that can be traced throughout history.

⁶¹ For improvising organists “history” and “tradition” are two central expressions because they represent an extensive inherited tradition of diverse musical forms which in various ways have been incorporated into the practice of improvisation.

values on which the practice of improvisation is based.⁶² It is above all from such a perspective that we pass aesthetic judgements over the artistic qualities that are realised by fashioning improvised music from traditionally-related examples – i.e. musical performances that belong on the rather blurred boundary between imitation and re-creation. In other words: What aesthetic meaning does a so-called stylistic copy have in the context of improvisation?

This part of the thesis will also deal with the question as to what can be said about the processes by which musical style is perceived and recognised. For example: How it is possible to identify a musical stylistic speciality simply by listening to fragments of larger forms? In its way this leads to questions concerning what type of analytical access can be gained to improvisation by allowing smaller musical entities to become “building blocks” for larger and more extensive pieces. A precondition here is that a combination of short musical events can be combined into a satisfactory whole which gives a feeling of musical coherence.

In this part of the work I am also aiming to portray improvisatory actions in a process perspective. This is with regard to both what is actually played during the performance of improvised music, and how improvisation can be said to be learned from previously learned processes. Here the focus is on what can be understood regarding the relationship between common qualities and original creative powers. Also the connection between what we assimilate when we learn to improvise according to given stylistic elements. In association with that our understanding of *schemas* and *motor programmes* in the context of improvisation, together with the relationship between prescribed rules as opposed to associative systems. In other words what role consciousness plays when we fashion improvised music, and when we learn to improvise.

The term “embodied cognition”⁶³ is a central theme here. Theories regarding the body’s motor systems are under constant revision as research progresses. Our senses appear to adapt well to the many differing situations we meet during the course of our lives. Above all we humans are well-equipped to perceive. The expression “embodied cognition” refers that human thinking has its origins in ecological conditions, our inborn strategies by which we can master our surroundings. This can be regarded as a more recent approach to the study of a traditional musical practice and opens the possibility of understanding this in the light of procedural models of explanation.

Creative and performing actions that take place in conjunction with musical improvisation are phenomena that can be linked to human mental and corporeal functions. These functions have “always been there” but recent theories of cognition and sound-producing actions offer greater insights into the operations of such processes. Such an approach can also illuminate the historic, stylistic and aesthetic

⁶² Here we enter a discussion on what constitutes a satisfactory or less satisfactory improvisation. There are undoubtedly many approaches to this problem. As a reader I prefer authors and commentators who do not claim a monopoly of truth in this context. Art and artistic creations constitute for me a mysterious world full of enigmas and paradoxes. Thus I cannot approve of single-minded and dogmatic answers. Some sense of wonder, an ability to respond to flights of imagination and an awareness of nuances and contradictions, are vital ingredients here. This should not be taken to imply weakness and formlessness, because in the act of marvelling there are inherent possibilities to focus and make distinctions.

⁶³ The expression “embodied cognition” can be regarded as “corporeal thinking” implying that the body itself plays a vital role in our thought processes.

aspects of improvisation. It allows us to see the accounts, working methods, artefacts and idioms thus produced in a different or new light.⁶⁴

Musical formation as a method of investigation

The idea behind the three recording projects associated with this thesis has been to use my own formation of improvised music as a means of illustrating what I regard as the core of this research – namely the dilemmas connected to a dialectic tension between inherited and commonly prescribed formulae on the one hand, and individuality in the context of music improvisation on the other. This dilemma is reflected and worked on in actual musical pieces and highlights what many will experience as recognizable elements within the music. These are placed alongside the improviser's own musical strategies⁶⁵ and more personal "collection" of musical expressions.

It can be said that all three recording projects reflect stylistic, aesthetic and procedural aspects of organ improvisation. All the same it is the first of the three that has the most concrete historical orientation, which places it most naturally as an extension to the first part of the thesis. The other two recording projects are more clearly focused on stylistic and procedural aspects as illuminated by the practice of improvisation in our own time. It therefore is most logical and illustrative that these are linked to the second part of the work.

1. Recording project: Historic "rethinking" attempted through improvisation

In some periods of music history the evidence of creativity is extraordinarily apparent. One such example in the context of church music is the era which gave rise to plainchant and kept it alive through use in daily offices in monastic communities throughout Europe. Another is the Reformation, when German church songs fused sacred and secular elements into new forms of verbal and musical expression. During the Baroque era and the subsequent Age of Enlightenment with the accompanying growth of rationalism, many of these songs were either rewritten in line with contemporary musical aesthetic thoughts, or simply lost their relevance in the wake of these changes. However by the middle of the 19th century reforming movements in the German Evangelical Lutheran Church were seeking to recapture something of the beliefs, theology and spirit of the Reformation. During this process the strength and vitality of Lutheran chorales and hymns once again became apparent. As a result of this revelation, considerable efforts were made to restore these to their original forms. This was no academic exercise – the objective was to encourage their regular use in worship.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Possibly such a theoretical foundation can contribute to a demystification of the aura of secrecy which sometimes seems to surround improvised actions. Here referring to what many regard as inaccessible or indecisive elements of improvisation. Over the years a number of anecdotes and legends that attempt to explain the feats of improvising artists have arisen.

⁶⁵ By "own musical strategies" I refer to how the fundamental plans to make improvised music are closely connected with the musician's original ability to express himself.

⁶⁶ In the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the German Freistaat Bayern new forms of worship and congregational singing made their appearance in the middle of the 19th century. The impact of these was felt throughout the Lutheran Church until well into the 20th century. These Revivalist endeavours, with their deep historical roots, gave important guidelines for the formation and use of music in worship. Of particular interest here are the ideas on the place of both improvised and composed organ music in worship.

Thus music aesthetics of the 19th century aimed to establish points of contact with the thoughts and deeds of previous centuries. In other words to develop artistic knowledge and skills based on material from the past, while simultaneously aiming for contemporary performances of renewed vitality. Such ideas were typical of that period's understanding of and relation to history. The 19th century's liturgical revivalism and its perceptions of the chorales contributed therefore to the application of differing aesthetics to the art of organ playing. Foremost here was a perception of what could be regarded as a genuine church musical style with clear links to the past, and the practical issue of how such stylistic ideals could best be realised by the church musicians of that era.⁶⁷

We have noted that the first of the three recording projects is linked to the first part of the thesis. Here I have attempted to follow historic models of improvisation. To be more specific, I have used a textbook which was originally addressed to Lutheran church music students in the last part of the 19th century.⁶⁸ Following examples from this I set about the process of "recreating" or "rethinking" a German Christmas day service from this era. The 1861 German-Danish early romantic organ in Haga Church, Gothenburg, and a vocal group were used to supply the music. The liturgical elements were provided by two celebrants and the liturgy itself was based on the richly elaborate Protestant rites.⁶⁹ It is useful to be able to assess the content and profile of a musical art form by such considerations of its origins. By finding examples from a historic organ textbook we can also gain a better understanding of how this art form was practiced: giving a fascinating glimpse into the daily work of church musicians from this period. In other words from the major textbook in church organ playing, a hymnal from the period⁷⁰ and the Church's liturgical rites from the period it has been possible to realise in aural terms the practice of this musical art form. The focus of this recording is therefore the improvising organist as a liturgical musician, seen in a historical context.

2. recording project: *Improvisation in different "styles"*

The next recording is the *Contrasts on an historic ground*⁷¹ which is linked to the second part of the thesis. Also here choral improvisation is at the centre with

⁶⁷ Similar discussions also took place in the Roman Catholic Church. There were strong differences of opinion regarding the question as to whether it was stylistically correct to use the organ to accompany plainchant. Or should the purity of these melodies be preserved with a practice of "a cappella" performances? It is probable that practical reasons led to an increasing use of organ accompaniment to plainchant, or at least parts of it. Then the question arose as to what type of accompaniments and how they should be performed. Naturally enough there were many opinions here. During the latter part of the 19th century new schools of thought regarding harmonisation of plainchant appeared in Belgium, France, Luxemburg, Germany and Austria. Initially these were products of music conservatoires and other church music schools. During the course of time the same methods were incorporated in organ textbooks. One can also note that the first researches into the plainchant tradition began at the Benedictine monastery Solesmes in France in 1830, though it was to be more than 50 years before these researches saw the light of day in published form.

⁶⁸ Johann Georg Herzog, *Orgelschule. Eine theoretisch-praktische Anleitung zur gründlichen Erlernung des kirchlichen Orgelspiels*, op. 41, Erlangen 1867, 2nd ed. Erlangen 1871.

⁶⁹ *Agenden=Kern für die evangelisch-lutherische Kirche in Bayern. Mit vorangestellter Ordnung und Form des Hauptgottesdienstes an Sonn- und Festtagen. Im Verlage der allgemeinen protestantischen Pfarrwitwenkasse, Nürnberg 1856.*

⁷⁰ *Gesangbuch für die evangelisch-lutherische Kirche in Bayern*, 1855.

⁷¹ Cf. CD-booklet to Svein Erik Tandberg, *Contrasts on an historic ground*, Stavanger 2004.

thought that chorale and hymn melodies are often regarded as “raw material” from which organ improvisations are formed. This applies to these spontaneously created organ pieces of differing lengths, complexity and character. They are based on historical models without necessarily aiming to realise any form of authentic structural or stylistic accuracy. The musical strategy can rather be regarded as a free creative game with forms and sound concepts from differing eras. Variation can be described as the key word here. The thematic material is woven into a stream of new surroundings both in regard to sound and structure. The recording contains stylistic examples based on works from the Baroque era to the present day. I have also been inspired by the myths connected to the *Osebergskipet* – the largest grave uncovered from Viking times – in a symphonic-styled improvisation based on Erling Dittmann's poem: *Det var én gang en droning...*⁷² (*Once there was a queen...*).

With one exception all these improvisations were recorded in Slagen Church, Tønsberg in Norway. While the organ in this church may be described as classically inspired, it is to all intents and purposes an “all-purpose” modern compromise instrument. This gives many possibilities in terms of playing aids, yet some limitations concerning authentic performance of some styles. This recording also aims to illustrate the dilemma which arises when improvisation forms of today follow methods of expression which belong to the past. To what degree is this possible, desirable or useful? These questions are discussed in greater detail in the second part of the thesis.

3. recording project: *Improvised music produced by associations and “free” creativity*

This project – the double CD *Missa sacra et profana* – was made using the large German-Swedish romantic organ in Vasa Church, Gothenburg. Here the music can rather be experienced as a result of associations and free creative procedures where the organ is part of an ensemble. Instead of constant critical checks and controls to ensure that a creative performance fulfils relevant criteria in relation to specified examples and rules, here the way lies open for musical exploration and experimentation. This approach is exemplified by the way in which unintentional musical actions, otherwise known simply as “wrong notes”, are elevated in importance so that they can be regarded as offering creative possibilities. A considerable change from the normal process of music making where considerable mental and physical energy is used to avoid “wrong notes” at all costs. If we examine Western art music from a historic point of view, we cannot help but notice that for much of the time strict artistic standards have been applied in this way, particularly in teaching contexts. With regard to free methods of improvisation, the expression “risk”⁷³ assumes a central position, and words such as “chance”, “unpredictable” or “non-conformist” are regarded with respect and even deference. The opposite applies to such terms as “mechanical formula”, “ cliché-dominated”, “stylistic copy”, “pastiche” and so on. Many of these can be downright derogatory when used to

⁷² The *Osebergskipet* was discovered in 1904. The improvisation over “*Det var én gang en droning...*” was used in 2004 as music to a ballet marking the centenary of this discovery. Slagen Church lies in close proximity to the site of the Oseberg excavations.

⁷³ There can be an element of risk in improvisation as new possibilities are explored – also the improviser can attempt to change himself by a constant search for alternative solutions and expressions.

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evaluate improvised music. All the same: What do we free ourselves from, and what elements can be said to come to fruition as a result of acquired skills and knowledge? Furthermore: Can a musical aesthetic which starts from given forms and formal elements contribute to musical improvisation as an explorative process? These questions will also be further examined and discussed in the second part of the thesis.

PART 1:

The art of organ improvisation as perceived by different sources through the ages

Chronology versus phenomenology

Everything that composers inherit from the past is a part of themselves, a retro-active present, so to speak. The separation between today and yesterday is no reality for people of my guild.⁷⁴

(Argentinian-German composer Mauricio Kagel, 1989.)

⁷⁴ See Ulrich Dibelius, "Positions-Reactions-Confusions," in *New Developments in Contemporary German Music* (*Contemporary Music Review* 12, no. 11), London 1995, pp. 21-22.

CHAPTER 4

Historical contexts

Some historic periods appear to have been dominated by movements of revolution and change – where the struggle between the old and new has clearly made its presence felt. Such movements also occur in the history of culture, where they can result in the establishment of new directions and formally define new frontiers. However there are often few defining moments since on closer study it readily becomes apparent that so-called “new” movements are the products of gradual evolution. The German-American musicologist Christoph Wolff noted in 1968 that the outlines for organ and keyboard playing were established in the 15th century, from which time they can be traced through Johann Sebastian Bach right down to the present.⁷⁵ For much of this time the art of organ playing has developed within an area bounded by creative freedom on the one hand and strict stylistic concepts on the other.

The object of this part of the thesis is to look closer at these lines of development and illuminate similarities and differences in teaching and performing practices across chronological and geographical frontiers. At the same time we must recognise the probability that musical historic material which is based on literary sources, interviews and differing written accounts of idioms and artefacts will have some blind spots in the form of areas to which access is no longer possible. In the first place this depends on how the available material can communicate something of the essence of improvised music as an aural phenomenon. How it was actually realised at the time of its performance will of necessity also be a question of speculation and intelligent guesswork. However, it is not only the sounding music that is lost. It is not improbable that at least some of the mental techniques used by improvising musicians in the past no longer form a part of our collective consciousness today.

Historic sources appear to suggest the outlines of musical procedures which are defined by differing criteria. Thus the historic material – ranging from the 15th to the 21st century – gives some grounds which lead towards an understanding of the art of musical improvisation as a stylistic, aesthetic and procedural phenomenon.

⁷⁵ See Christoph Wolff, “Conrad Paumanns Fundamentum Organisandi und seine verschiedene Fassungen”, in *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* (Germany) 25 1968, p. 197.

The vertical and the horizontal dimension

In music theory we often differentiate between the so-called “vertical” and “horizontal” elements of musical structure. In other words, whether the patterns of sound are formed by simultaneously sounded tones or techniques of linear movement. We can however frequently observe that these two parameters are complementary and mutually dependant. With regard to composed and written out music one can examine systematically how these two forming principles are employed by specified composers or in specific works. In his theory of harmony the German/Austrian composer and musicologist Diether de la Motte discusses harmonic structures exclusively as they appear in composed⁷⁶ music. With regard to improvisation, Hans Haselböck⁷⁷ comments that organ students are normally familiar with the idea that theoretical studies are divided into the two disciplines of harmony and counterpoint. He suggests that in the teaching of improvisation it is preferable to aim for a fusion or a unity between these two disciplines. This part of the thesis, which examines the art of improvisation as practised through history, also considers to what degree improvising musicians of the past linked harmonic and contrapuntal terms to their playing. For this reason it will be useful to examine the implications of these two terms.

Harmony

In practical terms the word “harmony” covers all aspects of simultaneous sounds in Western polyphonic tradition. Thus it includes all differing chords that have been employed in different eras, their construction and functions in modal, tonal, free tonal, atonal and serial contexts. This can be perceived from the progressions – sometimes known as sequences – of simultaneous sounds which may be regarded as a means of identifying different musical styles. These progressions can also have the opposite function, when they clearly distinguish themselves from norms usually employed in a specified concept or style. The theory of harmony is the part of the teaching of musical composition which accounts for the vertical or homophonic aspects of music. Normally this deals especially with the study of chords, principles of voice-leading, and modulation. Chord progressions frequently dictate the rules of voice-leading, or in other words the overall structure of the music.

Counterpoint

In 1930 Hermann Grabner presented the following definition of “counterpoint” as a means of expression:

„Kontrapunktisch“ ist ein Satz, in dem zwei oder mehrere Linienzüge zu gleichzeitigem Erklingen gebracht werden.⁷⁸

[A movement is “contrapuntal” when two or more open lines sound simultaneously.]

He extends this by pointing out that contrapuntal principles are frequently regarded as counterbalancing the harmonic aspects of the music. Within the field of counterpoint melodic aspects are playing the leading role and harmonic considera-

⁷⁶ See Diether de la Motte, *Harmonielehre*, Kassel 1997, pp. 7-10.

⁷⁷ See Haselböck 1988, p. 60.

⁷⁸ See Grabner 1930, p. 9.

tions the second. The reverse is true in when considering harmonic principles. According to Grabner, this approach is misleading, because melody has always been the prime force, which will continue into the future – a point also reinforced by Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992):

Melody is the point of departure. May it reign supreme! And whatever complexities there may be in our rhythms or harmonies, they shall not dominate it, but... be subject to it like faithful servants.⁷⁹

Accordingly to Hermann Grabner, this is clearly demonstrated in plainchant and Protestant chorales, in the motets and masses of Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (1525-1594) and Orlando di Lasso (1530-1594), in the works of Heinrich Schütz (1585-1672), Johann Sebastian Bach and George Friedrich Handel, in musical works of the Classic and Romantic periods. As a homophonic form melody can either be presented without any form of accompaniment – as for example in plainchant – or it can be accompanied monophonically by simple chords. Polyphony arises either when extra voices are added at different points in time⁸⁰ or when it is accompanied by other melodies which sound simultaneously.⁸¹ According to Grabner, contrapuntal voices can function in differing ways. He distinguishes between harmonic and linear counterpoint, where in the first example the polyphony is clearly shaped by harmonic considerations. In the latter example the polyphony is determined by the lineal elements in the music. Simultaneous sounds arise as a result of the melodic outlines of the voices and the relationships that arise as a result of their movement.⁸²

This part of the thesis will thus also focus on harmonic and contrapuntal issues as these have been expressed down the centuries, both by foremost improvisers themselves and as found in differing types of teaching materials. The work is arranged chronologically as follows:

1. Early sources from the 15th and 16th centuries.
2. 17th and 18th centuries – improvisation in the Baroque era.
3. An examination of 19th century improvisation practices.
4. A description of performing and pedagogic practices from the 20th century.

⁷⁹ Olivier Messiaen, *Technique de mon langage musical*, 1944 Chapter 1. Quoted in Robert Sherlaw Johnson, *Messiaen*, revised ed., London 1989.

⁸⁰ This implies that the melody is imitated, for example in the form of a canon.

⁸¹ Here the melody is accompanied by counter-melodies or contrapuntal voices, as for example in a fugue.

⁸² See Grabner 1930, pp. 9-10.

CHAPTER 5

Earliest sources

In the first part of the 20th century the German musicologist Leo Schrade began to question the imbalance between extant instrumental and extant vocal music from the 13th to 16th centuries.⁸³ While a large amount of vocal music, some of it written in extremely beautiful volumes, is preserved from these years, written instrumental music from this time is comparatively scarce. Ernst Ferand explained this imbalance by pointing out that the greater part of early instrumental music was improvised, and for a long period of time music was transmitted aurally and by imitation. Our knowledge of early instrumental music comes at least as much from literature and paintings as from musical sources. From the 16th century written instrumental music begins to make its appearance, initially in the form of tablature notation.⁸⁴ In the light of these sources the Middle Age and the dawning Renaissance are seen to have supported a great deal of instrumental music activity in many diverse forms. This contrasts with the prevalent idea at the beginning of the 20th century which hardly admitted the existence of independent instrumental music.⁸⁵

We can surmise that organ music prior to the 14th century was primarily improvised. The first written music for keyboard instruments dates from somewhere round about 1350. A century later pieces were being written in tablature notation for different types of chord instruments such as the lute, organ and clavichord. It is not until the 16th century that compositions exclusively intended for performance at the organ begin to make their appearance, and there are quite a number of these. The theory that much early organ music was improvised is supported by the fact that some of the important organists of this time were blind. An example here is the Italian Francesco Landino (ca. 1325-1397) who was organist at San Lorenzo Church in Florence. He acquired a reputation for his “*musicae artis instrumenti, quae nunquam videbit*” [musical instrumental skills, which nobody had seen before]. Famous organists such as Conrad Paumann (ca. 1410-1473) and Arnhold Schlick (active around the year 1500) in Germany and Antonio de Cabezon (1510-1566) in Spain were also blind.⁸⁶ Surviving written organ music from musically authoritative sources appears to have some features that suggest elements of improvisation. These imply the use of two different patterns.

⁸³ Cf. Leo Schrade, *Die handschriftliche Überlieferung der ältesten Instrumentalmusik*, Lahr 1931.

⁸⁴ See Ferand 1938, p. 288.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 278-279.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 298.

Ornamentation, Voice-leading and Contrapuntal techniques

The first of these techniques for improvisation focuses on the horizontal, or linear aspects in a musical piece. This involves variation of a cantus with the help of decorations, fragmentations and extensions. From this lineal practice of improvisation arose the practice of writing out ornamentation. In this area organists began to literally set the tone which other instrumentalists soon began to imitate. In *Musica instrumentalis deutsch*⁸⁷ Martin Agricola (1486-1556) writes:

Die Orglische Art imitier im Pfeiffen Geigen Lautenschlan –⁸⁸

[The art of the Organist is imitated when one plays upon the flute, string and lute –]

Michael Prätorius (1571-1621) also notes that:

durch die Orgeln unser figurali Musica erfunden worden.⁸⁹

[from the organ came the practice of musical figuration.]

In other words, the spontaneous music-making of which the organ was capable seems to have had considerable impact on the development of instrumental music.⁹⁰

The second technique added one or more voices to a melodic line, following the same contrapuntal rules as applied to vocal music. The practice of improvising a second voice over a cantus firmus, which could be either sacred or secular, had been known and applied to vocal music since the early 12th century. This practice now began to be applied to organ music. Sebastian Virdung (b. 1465 – year of death uncertain) wrote in his theoretical treatise *Musica getutsch*⁹¹ that his teaching aims were to guide his pupils to “das Contrapunct zu lernen und ad placitum⁹² spielen” [to learn Counterpoint and play ad placitum]. In other words, by the 16th century it was expected that an organist could play contrapuntal music on the spur of the moment.

As far as we can see we now find ourselves in a central arena of early instrumental teaching. Although the greater part of music-making at the time was spontaneous, we can see from the historic material I shall now present that in the practice of improvisation in the 15th and 16th the roots of a pedagogic tradition began to develop. In this tradition we find that the written methods gradually take the form of stylised examples which, together with more or less clearly defined recipes and models, indicate how a piece of music should actually be formed. At the same time there are descriptions of musical personalities from this period whose exuberant instrumental playing offers evidence of fantastic flights of creative fantasy. We can thus assume that is in the polarisation between the opposites of creative freedom and regulated stylistic concepts that the art of organ playing developed.

⁸⁷ Martin Agricola, *Musica instrumentalis deutsch*, Wittenberg 1545.

⁸⁸ See Ferand 1938, p. 302.

⁸⁹ See Haselböck 1988, p. 55.

⁹⁰ See Ferand 1938, pp. 302-303.

⁹¹ See Sebastian Virdung, “Musica getutsch” 1511, in Robert Eitner, *Publikationen älterer praktischer und theoretischer Musik-Werke*, Volume 11, Leipzig 1882.

⁹² Here – to improvise.

Early textbooks for keyboard musicians

The so-called *Fundament Buch*⁹³ from the 15th and 16th centuries are textbooks that offer evidence for early forms of improvised music. These hand-written manuscripts provide vital information about the development of instrumental music during the late Middle Ages and Renaissance. Here we gain some insights into the formal training of organists and keyboard musicians, especially regarding those formal aspects of studying which were dictated by rules and regulations. For improvisation was not a question of playing anything, but finding the best possible form as defined by the musical aesthetic conventions of the day.⁹⁴ Teaching methods differed from those used by contemporary composers of vocal music, who had to exhaustively account for their work with the aid of learned tracts. These had their origins in *Ars musica* – the music theory of the time which also included many commonly-held beliefs within the worlds of science and art. The artistic and scientific theories of the 15th and 16th centuries prescribed rules for the creation of music. This involved producing stylistic figures which became “building blocks” that were set together to produce a piece of music.⁹⁵ Music for the organ and other chord instruments also followed this practice. Teaching of organ playing and composition was based on practical demonstrations, after which the student was given examples to practise. These functioned as musical guides as to how stylistic figurations could be realised at the instrument.

It would appear that training of organists and keyboard players in the 15th century differed from the vocal studies. For keyboard players there was a much closer relationship between instrumental technique and the study of composition. The *fundament* books⁹⁶ supply fragmentary evidence of this practice. They contain two and three part examples to show keyboard players the use of diminution and figuration techniques to embellish a given melody or cantus firmus. The examples in the books are realised in accordance with given musical formula which were intended for instrumental application. In this way the *fundament* books came to supply systematically organised material to meet the study requirements of future instrumentalists. By writing down the techniques used for organ playing as music examples, these books began to supplement the aural traditions that had previously been the dominant teaching method. The *fundament* books thus mark the dawn of a new era in music teaching. The Czech composer Petr Eben comments:

Die Improvisation ist eine uralte Kunst – sie stand schon an der Wiege der Musik. Noch ehe eine ungelenke Hand die erste Note gemalt hat, hat schon der Hirte irgendwo in einer Steppe einen Ton um den andern gesetzt auf seiner Flöte und seine Melodie gesucht. Noch lange bevor irgend etwas von den Gesetzen der Harmonie und der Formenlehre bekannt war, klagten die Frauen in

⁹³ Derived from the Latin “fundare” [to lay a base for], or “fundus” [foundation]. In German these are known as *Fundament* or *Fundament Buch* and represent some of the earliest sources for instrumental music. This type of music pedagogic genre seems to have had its origins in Germany, or at least it was here during the 15th century that it became most widespread. There would appear to be no corresponding works in England or Italy where respectively the *Robertsbridge Codex* from ca. 1320 and the *Faenza Codex* from ca. 1420 are the earliest sources of organ and keyboard music. From the 14th century several such “fundamenta” are preserved, and these are written in tablature notation.

⁹⁴ See Wolff 1968, p. 197.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 196.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

improvisierten Trauergesängen um ihre Toten und der griechische Kyttharroid schlug die Saiten seines Instrumentes, wenn er bei den Agonen sein Epos vortrug. Aber alle Kunst strebt nach Vollkommenheit und sie bemüht sich, alles Zufällige zu verlassen und ihre definitive Form zu finden. So lange wird sie die verschiedenen Versionen ein und desselben Gegenstandes bearbeiten, bis sie die beste, die wahrhafteste, die überzeugendste entdeckt; sehr oft wird es wohl auch die kürzeste sein. Aber die muss schon fixiert werden, sie wird niedergeschrieben. Und so tritt in die Kunstgeschichte ein neues Element ein; neben unablässigen Veränderungen – plötzlich die kristallene Form, neben freier Improvisation – die kodifizierte Komposition. Für immer schon werden diese zwei Prinzipien nebeneinander stehen und um sie wird die ganze Entwicklung der Kunst oszillieren.⁹⁷

[Improvisation is a primal art – which originated simultaneously with music. Long before a free hand had drawn the first symbols of notation, there was a shepherd on some mountain side or another who played some consecutive tones on a flute and thus the first attempts to create melody began. Long before rules and theories of Harmony and Form had taken shape, women mourned their dead in improvised lamentations, and the Greek Kitharas played the strings of his instrument while the Agnomen performed his epics. However all Art seeks to perfect itself and therefore strives to leave the workings of Chance and find its definite form. So art will work with different versions until it arrives at the best, the most definite and convincing form which may well also be the shortest. Afterwards begins the process of writing down. And so a new element enters the picture; alongside the constant changes – suddenly the crystallised Form, alongside the free Improvisation – the encoded Composition. These two principles will always stand together and the development of Art will oscillate between them.]

Thus we see how formal principles begin to be applied to instrumental teaching. The instrumental musician was required to master stereotypes and conventions within specific types of style, and the realisation of the material in the *fundament* books was dedicated to this end. Idioms became a vital part of the teaching procedures that keyboard musicians and organists progressed through. If we look at the music practice presented by the *fundament* books from a sociological angle, we find that the material is linked to the major institutions of the day: the Church and the governing classes. The following employment opportunities were open for a professional musician who played the organ or clavichord:

1. Within the Church – independent duties connected with liturgical and ceremonial rituals.
2. Within the courts and palaces – music of an appropriate nature for differing occasions to be supplied as required.

These musical duties had to be assimilated through specified learning procedures – in the context of church work it was especially important to be able to *intavolere* the sacred vocal music of the day into an instrumental form. The first extensive *fundament* book is Conrad Paumann's *Fundamentum organisandi*. These exercises give us a glimpse of how the art of improvisation was practiced in the late Middle Age.

In the next section I will examine that lives and works of two German musicians who lived and worked in the 15th and 16th centuries respectively: Conrad

⁹⁷ Petr Eben, Prague in March 1997. Quoted in Landgren 1997, p. 37.

Paumann and Johannes (Hans) Buchner. Their technical competence in instrumental playing and ability as extemporisers gave them a contemporary reputation that would enable them to be classed as celebrities in today's journalistic terminology. They would also both appear to have had a considerable circle of pupils. For us they are primarily of interest because their lives and work coincide with the period during which music for the organ, clavichord and lute first began to assume a written form. They were master craftsmen in the art of music and their *fundament* books give us an impression⁹⁸ of the stylistic and formal conventions of their era. We shall also consider a Spanish published work on the subject of keyboard technique – the *Libro llamado arte de tañer fantasia* from 1565 by Tomás de Sancta Maria.

⁹⁸ Latin – to transfer or transcribe.

CHAPTER 6

Three masters of the late Gothic and Renaissance**Conrad Paumann**

One can guess that Conrad Paumann was born in the year 1410. His birthplace – Nuremberg – was at that time a free city state in the Holy Roman Empire. He was descended from a widely dispersed family of artisans who had gained citizenship of the town in 1363, where at that time organ building, organ playing, instrumental music and vocal composition were all flourishing activities. Conrad Paumann died in Munich in 1473. His epigraph, which is now situated under the organ gallery at Munich Cathedral, bears witness to the fact that he must have been blind from birth. He is depicted playing the lute, recorder, harp, fiddle, and portative organ and described as “der kunstreichest aller instrument vnd der Musica Maister” [the foremost artist on all types of instruments and Master of Music]. We know very little about Paumann’s own musical education and training, but in all probability he was apprenticed to several of Nuremberg’s organists and organ builders, lute players and other instrument makers.

When Paumann became engaged in December 1446 to Margarethe Weisser, and again when he was formally entitled *Stadtorganist* in the following year, he was required to promise that he would not leave Nuremberg without the knowledge and consent of the town council. He was already recognised as one of Germany’s most influential organists and within his time he was not only regarded as “optimus organista” [the best organist], but also “in omnibus tamen musicalibus artibus expertissimus et famocissimus... nulluque sui temporis sibi secundus in organis, lutina, cythara, ac fistula, tibiis ac buccina... et in omnibus instrumentis musicalibus” [the most competent and well-known expert in all aspects of the art of music... and second to none in playing the organ, lute, guitar, violin, flute and horn... and on all musical instruments]. Much of the growth of the German organ school during the 15th century can be linked to the name Conrad Paumann.⁹⁹

Paumann: Fundamentum organisandi

We have noted that the first extensive textbooks dealing with formal principles for improvisation at the organ and other keyboard instruments originated with Conrad Paumann and his pupils in Nuremberg and Munich. The examples are written by three differing hands, all of which date from the time when Paumann

⁹⁹ See Franz Krautwurst, “Paumann, Conrad”, in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Volume 10, Kassel 1962.

was alive. In the following table of contents, which is arranged chronologically, the first letter refers to the actual source as identified by the handwriting used in the manuscript:¹⁰⁰

- E: *ffundamentum bonum trium notarum magistri Conradi In Nurenberg*
Ms. 554 (olim 729) der Universitätsbibl. Erlangen, fol. 129v-133v
- L: *Fundamentum organisandi Magisteri Conradi Paumanns Ceci de Nürenberga*
anno 1452
Mus. Ms. 40 613 der Staatsbibl. Der Stiftung Preuss. Kulturbesitz, Berlin-Dahlem (olim Wernigerode, Kod. Zb. 14), pp. 46-68
- B 1: *Incipit Fundamentum m. C. P. C.*
Cim. 352 (olim Ms. Mus. 3725) der Bayerischen Staatsbibl. München,
Nr. 189, fol. 97r-106r
- B 2: *Sequitur aliud fundamentum*
Ebenda, Nr. 231, fol. 124v-142v
- B 3: (without title) Ebenda, Nr. 231, fol. 124v-142v
- B 4: *Sequitur fundamentum magistri Conradi Pauman Contrapuncti*
Ebenda, Nr. 236, fol. 142v-157v

Source E: This hand-written source is part of the collection in the University library at Erlangen. This source of early improvisation material has long been under-rated and undervalued and has therefore not received a great deal of attention from music historians. It was originally found in the manuscript collection of the Cistercian monastery at Heilsbronn. The *Fundamentum* forms part of a codex which not only deals with music theory, but also covers theology, medicine and other subjects. The handwriting dates from sometime around the middle of the 15th century.

Source L: This is known as the *Lochamer Liederbuch*. Here Paumann's teaching material is written down as part of a collection of melodies which in the main part consist of German songs and instrumental arrangements of these. Afterwards there are some organ pieces: a setting of verses from the Magnificat, preambula, and some compositions based on the tenors of songs such as Wolkenstein's *Wach Auf*. Paumann's teaching instructions can be found on pages 46-68. There is no doubt regarding the dating of the *Lochamer Liederbuch* since this is given on the title page as the year 1452.

Source B: This is better known as the *Buxheimer Orgelbuch*. Here Paumann's musical formulae are given in four self-contained parts. With its total of 256 items drawn from the German, English, Burgundian and Italian repertoire the *Buxheimer Orgelbuch* is both the largest and most important source of keyboard music from the 15th century. The hand-writing originates from South Germany, most probably from the Munich area, but perhaps also from the areas around Nuremberg.

It is not easy to give an exact date for the entire contents of the *Buxheimer Orgelbuch*, or the four individual *fundamenta* of which it is comprised. The most probable dating of these is the period 1460-1470. From the style of the handwrit-

¹⁰⁰ See Wolff 1968, p. 198.

ing we can deduce that B 1 and 2 must have been copied by a different person than B 3 and 4. With regard to the actual authorship of these four parts of the *Buxheimer Orgelbuch*, we note that Paumann is named in the titles of B 1 and 4. B 1: C[onradi]. P[aumann]. C[aeci]. – or C[ontrapuncti]. With regard to B 2 and 3, the teaching materials here have many similarities with the corresponding materials in the E and L sources. There are differences of opinion among scholars as to whether Paumann is the sole author of all 4 volumes of the entire *Buxheimer Orgelbuch* collection.¹⁰¹

Paumann's teaching materials

From the contents and the manner in which the teaching exercises are presented in the books that are definitely associated with Conrad Paumann we gain an outline of the disciplines involved. These are very similar in the different sources, which emphasises the connections between them. The differing hand-written manuscripts give the following exercises in contrapuntal techniques:¹⁰²

1. Ascensus and Descensus (in: E, L, B 1.2.3.4)

(“Diskantieren” – here: to develop a counter-melody to a cantus firmus that moves up and down in seconds, thirds, fourths, etc.)

2. Redeuntes (in: L, B 1.3.4)

(“Diskantieren” – here: to develop a counter-melody to a cantus firmus that returns to its starting-tone after some suspensions.)

Redeuntes (in: E, L, B 1.2.3.4)

(“Diskantieren” – here: to develop a counter-melody to a cantus firmus that consists of a repeating tone or a pedal-point [in German: “Orgelpunkt”].)

3. Pausae (in: L, B 2)

(“Diskantieren” – here: to develop a counter-melody to a cantus firmus that has a short rest.)

4. Clausulae (in: L, B 2)

(“Diskantieren” – here: to develop a counter-melody to a cantus firmus that has a cadence or leads towards a conclusion. “Clausulae” – that is to say a conclusion or cadence – is also described as “fundamentum breve” [in L] or as “fundamentalis punctus” [in B 1].)

5. Concordanciae (in: B 1. 4)

(“Diskantieren” – here: to develop a counter-melody to a cantus firmus in consonant homophonic movement. That is to say note against note.)

The expression “fundamentum organisandi” can in all probability be understood in two ways. 1. The Latin verb “organisare” primarily means to play the organ or another chord instrument. 2. Thus, as a further interpretation of this meaning, “organisare” can refer to techniques associated with playing around a given melody. Paumann is an experienced teacher who does not present a complex series of rules and regulations, but presents a string of practical examples. Gotthold

¹⁰¹ Ibid., pp. 199-200.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 201.

Frotscher¹⁰³ suggests that Paumann's specimen exercises can to a degree be compared to Johann Sebastian Bach's 2 and 3 part inventions in spite of the gap of almost three centuries that separates them.

Frotscher mentions Bach's three different stated aims for his pieces. Initially they are intended to provide instruction in the instrumental techniques required for playing in 2 and 3 parts. Thereafter to teach keyboard musicians, not only to have good inventions but to develop them well. The sound musical foundations thus produced are further intended to aid students to obtain a foretaste of composition. Paumann's examples also function as a unity where instrumental instruction is linked to contrapuntal studies. This material can therefore be regarded as providing illustrations of ideas that can be used in a number of different practical situations. An example of this is provided by contrapuntal figurations which can be realised in a number of different ways in differing melodic contexts.

Learning from examples

Without actually prescribing explicit rules Paumann uses two-part examples to show how a melody line can be extended and how one can make proper and effective combinations of tones.¹⁰⁴ The extension of a melody is referred to "voce frangere" [to refract the voices], the combining of tones is referred to as "diskantieren" or "organisare": in other words to develop contrapuntal voices.¹⁰⁵ All the voices in Paumann's music examples are given as parts of a fixed metric system. The contours of the parts are regulated according to fast patterns. The breve forms the basis of the rhythmic measure. The upper voice *discantus* is written in notation down to the *fusa* values of duration. The lower voice is notated using letters. The rhythms are indicated under the note and letters. It is seldom that Paumann's music examples consist of more than two parts. Where a third part is apparent it only functions in reality to "fill in the gaps" between the outer voices rather than being a fully independent third voice. Paumann's treatment of the differing musical parameters can sometimes appear to be based on rather mechanical formula. Ferand describes this:¹⁰⁶

Dass mit Paumanns „Fundamentum organisandi“ – der ersten „Improvisationslehre“ für die Orgel! – der Rationalisierungsprozess weitgehend einsetzt, bezeichnenderweise also wieder im Norden früher und in stärkerem Masse als in Süden, indem die bis dahin improvisiert gehandhabte Ausschmückung nunmehr aufgezeichnet, in bestimmte feststehende Formen gegossen wird, beweist im Grunde genommen bereits ein Nachlassen der lebendigen, schöpferischen Musizierfreudigkeit, wie dies – früh genug – in der sterilen Periode der „Koloristen“ deutlich in Erscheinung tritt, wo der ursprüngliche produktive Zier- und Spieltrieb zu einer rein mechanischen, formalistischen Fertigkeit herabsinkt.

[With Paumann's "Fundamentum Organisandi" – the first "Improvisation textbook" for the Organ! – began a rationalisation of musical practice. This was

¹⁰³ See Frotscher 1959, p. 73.

¹⁰⁴ Most probably Paumann's teaching materials are intended for future church musicians as well as amateurs with a good working knowledge of Latin. Furthermore we can guess that the clavichord was the principal practice instrument for working through these exercises.

¹⁰⁵ See Haselböck 1988, p. 55.

¹⁰⁶ See Ferand 1938, pp. 301-302.

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taken to far greater lengths in Northern European countries than in the South. What had previously been an improvised coloratura gradually assumed a fast written-out form in fixed shapes. This represented something of a retrograde step as lively and inventive methods of playing music were replaced by sterile formulae as dictated by the (so-called) “Coloraturists”. Under these conditions the art of expressive decoration which had so embellished the art of music making was reduced to the purely mechanical application of prescribed formulae.]

In other words, performers who had followed such studies found themselves open to criticism. “The Coloraturists” or “the German Coloraturists” as they were also known – acquired a reputation for their rather pedantic and predictable style of playing. Their performances were generally characterised by a lack of warmth and spontaneity, although within fairly narrow prescribed limits there were some possibilities for free and imaginative spontaneous playing. We can assume from Paumann’s material that the craftsmanship side of extemporisation was emphasised to a much greater degree than actual written composition.¹⁰⁷

The first music example comes from Konrad Ameln’s facsimile edition of *Lochamer Liederbuch*.¹⁰⁸ It shows a contrapuntal voice added to a melody which ascends in seconds:

¹⁰⁷ See Wolf 1968, p. 200.

¹⁰⁸ See Konrad Ameln, *Lochamer-Liederbuch und das Fundamentum organisandi von Conrad Paumann*, Basel 1972.



1. Music example. Ameln 1972.

The following four music examples have been transcribed to modern notation by Willy Apel. They are all taken from the same textbook, where Paumann shows how counter melodies are created to melodic lines which ascend and descend in seconds

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and thirds. These are described in Latin respectively as “ascensus/descensus simplex” and “ascensus/descensus per terciasso”.¹⁰⁹

The musical score consists of eight systems of two staves each. The first system is titled "ascensus simplex" and includes the instruction "E: f 1)". The second system is titled "descensus". The third system is titled "Sequitur ascensus per terciasso". The fourth system includes the instruction "E: omitted". The fifth system is titled "descensus per terciasso" and includes "E: a". The sixth system includes "E: a". The seventh system includes "E: a". The eighth system includes "E: a".

2. Music example. Apel 1963.

The essence of the instrumental art practised by Conrad Paumann and his immediate circle of colleagues and pupils in Nuremberg and Munich was the addition of coloratura passages to a cantus firmus. Such decorations were based on imaginative diminution of the cantus firmus itself. The teaching materials used by Paumann and other 15th century master players are usually described as a systematic presentation of musical patterns. Technical instrumental matters such as the placing of notes and phrasing are not covered here. The following example is an ex-

¹⁰⁹ See Willy Apel, *Corpus of Early Keyboard Music of the Fourteenth & Fifteenth Centuries*, Neuhäusen 1963, pp. 32-33.

cerpt from a Tenor-Lied in tablature notation from Konrad Ameln's facsimile edition of the *Lochamer Liederbuch*:¹¹⁰

3. Music example. Ameln 1972.

Afterwards we see the same improvisation model in complete form as a transcription to modern notation.¹¹¹ The title of this melody is *Benedicite almechtiger got*:¹¹²

¹¹⁰ See Ameln 1972.

¹¹¹ See Apel 1963, pp. 45-46.

¹¹² This Tenor-Lied is performed as a sounding example in the appendix to Recording project 1.

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Sequitur tenor Benedicite almechtiger got

The musical score is written for tenor voice and piano. It consists of 12 systems of music. Each system has a vocal line on a treble clef staff and a piano accompaniment on a bass clef staff. The music is in a minor key and features complex rhythmic patterns, including sixteenth and thirty-second notes. There are several trills and ornaments marked with 'Mz.' and 'x'. A 'Repetitio' section is indicated in the eighth system. The score ends with a final cadence in the twelfth system.

4. Music example. Apel 1963.

After the year 1500 a steadily increasing number of *Anfangsgründen* and written instructions concerning music theory make their appearance. These were primarily aimed at instrumentalists, especially practising organists and keyboard players. Mostly they consist of comprehensive sets of rules which are written out in Latin or German. These books have their origins in the teaching methods used by the famed masters of the day. Amongst them the *Fundamentbuch* written by Hans Buchner from Konstanz occupies a special place.¹¹³

Johannes (Hans) Buchner

Paul Hofhaimer (1459-1537) was a dominant musical personality of his day, who could reportedly improvise for hours on end without repeating himself. He so impressed Archduke Sigismund of Tyrol that he was given a lifetime appointment as court organist at Innsbruck. He also served at other courts and was given the title “First Organist to the Emperor” by Maximilian I in 1515. He also acquired a formidable reputation as a teacher, and two years after his death the historian Stomius commented: “If the art of organ playing today is flourishing everywhere, it is primarily as a result of Hofhaimer’s teaching.” Several of his pupils were appointed to important organist positions in Germany and Austria.¹¹⁴

Among them we find Johannes (Hans) Buchner who was born at Ravensburg in 1483 and died at Konstanz in 1538. He came from a family which had close ties with organ building and playing traditions. For approximately three years he served an apprenticeship with Hofhaimer while living in the latter’s house.¹¹⁵ After completing this apprenticeship it is probable that Hans Buchner was appointed to the Imperial Court in Passau. (It seems reasonably certain that this is the same time that Paul Hofhaimer was active in Passau.) Buchner was also appointed as Cathedral Organist in Konstanz, apparently on the recommendation of the Emperor Maximilian. This was a lifetime appointment which Buchner held until his death, even though events of the Reformation compelled him to follow his bishop to Marburg.

Hans Buchner was greatly esteemed as organist, organ builder and teacher. His most important contribution to posterity was his *Fundament Buch* that he would appear to have compiled sometime round about 1520. This summarises his own teaching methods and performance practices. The historic value of this collection is somewhat enhanced by its status as the first complete known collection of liturgical composition for the organ. Buchner can be regarded as a master of the late Gothic style. His work aims to translate into instrumental terms and techniques the aesthetic ideals of such late Renaissance vocal masters as Heinrich Isaac (ca. 1450-1517) and Josquin des Prez (ca. 1450-1521) This *Fundamentbuch* serves to illustrate improvisation and composition techniques for the organ.

¹¹³ See Wolff 1968, p. 197.

¹¹⁴ See Hans Joachim Moser, “Hofhaimer, Paul”, in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Volume 6, Kassel 1957.

¹¹⁵ See Hans Klotz, “Buchner, Hans”, in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Volume 2, Kassel 1952.

Buchner: *Fundamentum*

Hans Buchner bases his work around a teaching method which he calls the “Anfangsgründen”: a foundation course for studying music in the form of an “Ars organistarum”. This defines the entire art of organ playing in three main sections:

1. “Via ludendi”. [Introduction to organ and clavichord playing.]
2. “Ratio transferendi compositas cantiones in formam organistarum, quam tabulaturam vocant”. [A method for transcribing polyphonic vocal music to tablature notation.]
3. “Ratio quemvis cantum planorum redigendi ad iustas duarum, trium aut plurium vocum diversearum symphonias, quam rationem uno nomine fundamentum dicunt”. [A method for arranging plainchant melodies to a composition with two, three or more parts in such a way that the notes sounding simultaneously form the correct sounds.]

The introductory theoretical part begins with a discussion of techniques of organ playing: “Ars ludendi”, and explains how the keyboard is formed, correct use of the fingers, types of scale and differing note-values. This is followed by an “ars transferendi”, which explains the techniques involved in transcribing vocal compositions for the organ.

A method described in detail

The third part of Hans Buchner's *Fundamentbuch* is of special interest because it contains western music's first extensive written guide as to how a contrapuntal techniques can be applied to a cantus firmus instrumentally. Buchner explains the rules in detail and presents a number of music examples. On a theoretical basis he explains the meaning of the notation and how mensural notation is transcribed to tablature notation. The greater number of the examples are three and four-part movements with such titles as “fugat in quarta” or “fugat in tenore cum discantu in octava”. All of them are based on a relatively simple cantus firmus.

The following three examples from Buchner's *Fundamentum* have also been transcribed to modern notation by Willy Apel. They show how Buchner creates counter-melodies to melodic lines that move in seconds and fourths (i.e. in three-part movements):¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ See Willy Apel, *Early European Keyboard Music*, Stuttgart 1989, pp. 92-93.

The image shows two musical examples. The first example consists of two staves. The top staff is labeled 'Tenor in descensu' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Bassus in ascensu'. Both staves contain musical notation with a treble clef on the top staff and a bass clef on the bottom staff. The second example is a single staff labeled 'Fuga, descensus ad quartam' and contains musical notation with a treble clef.

5. Music example. Apel 1989.

This is followed by a collection of 50 organ pieces intended for liturgical use in the Mass and Vesper services at the major church festivals.¹¹⁷ It contains 10 introits, a melody from the Gradual of the Mass, two responsorials, four sequences, nine hymns, a Magnificat and music for all the main sections of the Mass, with the exception of the Creed. Buchner uses a form of tablature notation with the upper voice written on a five-line system. The remaining voices are written under this system and note with letter names and a suggestion of the metric pattern. The organ pieces in Hans Buchner's *Fundamentbuch* exemplify the following types of form:¹¹⁸

1. Contrapuntal, that is to say that one voice forms the cantus firmus, whilst the others form contrapuntal parts, such as the chorale arrangement *Quem terra pontus* (compare the music example):¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Another version of Hans Buchner's *Fundamentbuch* – in a handwritten copy from Basel – contains a supplement, which consists of an extra 30 liturgical items.

¹¹⁸ See Klotz 1952.

¹¹⁹ See Johannes Buchner, *Orgelwerke*, 1520, ed. Jost Harro Schmidt, Frankfurt 1974.

Quem terra pontus

Choral in disc. m. JB. *

The first system of musical notation consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and contains a melodic line with various rhythmic values and fingerings (2, 3, 2, 3, 2, 3, 2, 3, 4, 3, 4, 3, 2, 3, 2, 4, 3, 4, 3, 2, 3, 3, 3). The lower staff is in bass clef and contains a bass line with fingerings (2, 2, 3, 4, 2, 4, 1, 2, 3, 2, 3). The system concludes with a double bar line.

The second system of musical notation consists of two staves. The upper staff continues the melodic line with fingerings (3, 2, 5, 4, 3, 2, 3, 3, 2, 2, 3, 2, 3, 2, 3, 2, 3, 2, 3). The lower staff continues the bass line with fingerings (5, 3, 2, 3, 1, 3, 2, 3, 5, 1, 5, 3, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3, 2, 3, 5, 4, 2, 2, 4, 3). The system concludes with a double bar line.

The third system of musical notation consists of two staves. The upper staff continues the melodic line with fingerings (4, 1, 2, 4, 3, 2, 3, 2, 3, 2, 3, 2, 3, 2, 3, 3, 4, 3, 2, 3, 2, 3). The lower staff continues the bass line with fingerings (5, 3, 2, 3, 2, 3, 4, 2, 4, 4, 3, 2, 4, 1, 2, 5, 5, 2, 4, 2, 5, 2, 4). The system concludes with a double bar line.

The fourth system of musical notation consists of two staves. The upper staff continues the melodic line with fingerings (4, 2, 2, 3, 2, 3, 2, 3, 2, 2, 3, 3, 3, 2, 3, 3, 3, 2, 3, 2, 3). The lower staff continues the bass line with fingerings (2, 3, 2, 4, 5, 5, 5, 1, 1, 3, 2, 3, 2, 5, 5, 3, 2, 3). The system concludes with a double bar line.

6. Music example. Schmidt 1974.

2. In the form of a dialogue, that is to say that the cantus firmus alternates between the differing voices.
3. In fugato form, that is to say that the individual phrases of a cantus are imitated and developed in all the voices of a movement.

We can guess that Buchner practised both ostinato playing (also known as “trio”) and manual changing. On account of the wide intervals between the individual voices we can conclude that in his contrapuntal movements the soprano voice was played on its own manual. The alto and tenor voices would be played by the left hand, also on their own manual, and the bass part on the pedals. Thus Buchner’s *Fundamentbuch* introduces what was then a new and revolutionary principle: that of playing on two manuals and pedal irrespective of whether the cantus firmus followed the soprano, tenor or bass voice. In the dialogue forms that Buchner writes manual changes are clearly required. It is also clear that several of the pieces are intended for both manuals and pedals. Some of the fugato pieces seem to have

been intended for one manual and pedal, while others would appear to indicate manual changes. There are also examples of passages where the soprano voice is to be soloed – presumably on a separate manual. In this way Hans Buchner anticipates forms and techniques that in the fullness of time assumed a central role in the art of organ playing.¹²⁰

Tomas de Sancta Maria: *Libro llamado arte de tañer fantasia*

In the Renaissance improvisation formed a central component of instrumental studies – specially in the teaching of keyboard and other chord instruments. The aim was that pupils should be capable of creating improvised music based on strict formal designs. The first textbook on this subject comes from Spain: the *Libro llamado arte de tañer fantasia* written by Brother Tomas¹²¹ at the Dominican monastery Sancta Maria de Atocha in Madrid. This work is in two sections, of which the first part deals with technical matters such as hand positioning, touch, fingering, and rules for execution of ornaments. In short, instructions as to how one can perform music in a pleasing and tasteful manner.

The second deals with technical questions of musical construction: for example the correct use of intervals, principles for building up chords and differing chord progressions, rules for voice-leading in two, three and four parts, imitation, cadences, etc. Tomas de Sancta Maria distinguishes between “fantasia” [improvisation] and “res facta” [composition]. The latter he also describes as “obras” [work]. The second part of the *Libro llamado arte de tañer fantasia* displays a practical grounding in harmony and counterpoint with one stated aim: namely that the pupil should be capable of spontaneously creating a fantasia in accordance with strict compositional rules. An observation in the first part of the work confirms Tomas de Sancta Maria’s pedagogic concept: The aim of this work is to enable the student to develop the ability to improvise. He explains that it is only by thorough and regular practice that the pupil will make progress as an improviser. The title of the book also indicates an intention to pass on such knowledge of musical skills as is required to become proficient in the art of improvisation.¹²²

Learning by imitation

A well-crafted musical composition can serve as a model for an improvisation. Therefore it is necessary first to master the technical basics of written compositions. It is equally important to have a thorough grasp of the structure of the music. One can note the contours of the voices and how they sound together. Attention should also be focused on the functions of different themes and all types of cadence that occur in the actual piece. The aim here is to enable the student to produce similar effects in his own improvisations. Tomas de Sancta Maria points out that the ornamentation should be applied consistently throughout an improvisation. This is particularly important in passages where direct imitation is employed: The or-

¹²⁰ See Klotz 1952.

¹²¹ See Tomas de Sancta Maria, *Libro llamado arte de tañer fantasia*, Valladolid 1565. Facsimile reprint, ed. Dennis Stevens, who also wrote an introduction, Gregg International Publishers Limited 1972: Very little is known of Tomas de Sancta Maria’s life and musical background. Most probably he was born in Madrid sometime around 1515, and died at the monastery of San Pablo, Valladolid in 1570.

¹²² See Ferand 1938, pp. 315-317.

namentation must be developed consistently in all the voices. At an early stage in the book exercises are presented to assist in developing the necessary transposition skills.

In the final part of his teaching manual instructions are given as to how a fantasy should be formed.¹²³ Practice of extemporisation begins as soon as one has acquired the necessary instrumental techniques and theoretical knowledge. Then one can take a motive or theme from a freely-chosen masterpiece and use it as a theme in the soprano voice whilst the remaining voices are extemporised. The procedure is repeated while the same motive is employed in the alto, tenor and bass voices. According to Tomas de Sancta Maria, real improvisation skills are only achieved when one has learned step by step how to form a tasteful countermelody to a cantus firmus. This needs to be practised at the keyboard rather than a writing-desk. In the second part of the book he also gives examples showing how an accompaniment to a liturgical melody should be formed and how the cantus firmus can be used in each of the four voices.¹²⁴

The contents of *Libro llamado arte de tãner fantasia* show that mid-16th century organ and keyboard teaching did not require its students to master a repertoire of written-out music. Rather the aim of good teaching was to lay the foundations for improvisation skills. These were based on an extensive and strict set of regulations which the pupil was expected to assimilate through a well planned course of studies. The precondition for improvisatory music-making was that one mastered the instrument and possessed a clear understanding of the processes involved in musical composition.¹²⁵ In all probability we can see here something of an exchange between written-out music and improvisation. The *fantasias* which became more common during the 16th century frequently display advanced polyphonic features. It is difficult to decide whether these are freely composed works or simply written-out versions of improvisations as they were practised at the time. Or perhaps converse applies: 16th century improvisations should be regarded as a reflection of written compositions?¹²⁶

¹²³ Cf. William Porter, "Observations Concerning Contrapuntal improvisation", in *GOArt Research Reports*, Volume 3, ed. Sverker Jullander, Göteborg 2003, pp. 135-147.

¹²⁴ See Ferand 1938, p. 317: Tomas de Sancta Maria here shows clear similarities to the practice of cantus firmus used in vocal polyphony – whereby diminution techniques are used to create a counter-melody to a main melodic course.

¹²⁵ See *Ibid.*, p. 317: From the strict idiomatic practice of improvisation such forms as the Spanish *tiento*, and the Italian *ricercare*. The *ricercare* later developed into fugal forms which reached their zenith in the late German Baroque era. Improvisation in a less-structured form can be described as the antecedent for such forms as *Präludium* and *Toccata*.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

CHAPTER 7

General features of Baroque improvisation and its teaching in Germany**Improvisation – a central element in organist-trials**

We can presume that competence in improvisation was highly prized in the Baroque era. Evidence of this comes from contemporary accounts of the *Organistenproben* [organist-trials], the process by which candidates were auditioned for organist appointments. That in the 17th century improvisation was the central musical discipline for prospective candidates can be seen from Matthias Weckmann's (1621-1674) application for the post at St. Jacob's Church, Hamburg in 1654.¹²⁷ According to Johann Mattheson (1681-1764), Weckmann was firstly required to play:

Ein verkehrtes Thema primi et tertii Toni¹²⁸

[an inverted theme in the first and third tonalities].

Next he was required to perform:

eine Motette aus dem blossen Generalbass auf Zwei Klavieren durchführen¹²⁹

[a motet on two manuals from single figured bass notation]

and finally an arrangement of the chorale melody *An Wasserflüssen Babylons*. This was firstly to be played using

nach prätorianische, ernsthafter Art, die andern aber fugenweise durch alle Töne und halber Töne samt vielerlei Veränderungen durchführte.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ See Michael R. Dodds, "Columbus's Egg: Andreas Werckmeister's Teaching on Contrapuntal Improvisation in *Harmonologia Musica* 1702", paper presented at The Göteborg International Organ Academy, August 1998: Improvisation in polyphonic forms, especially the art of improvising fugues, has often been regarded as the summit of organ playing achievement. In the course of time many anecdotes have accumulated on the improvising abilities of such famous organists as Johann Jacob Froberger (1616-1667), Johann Kaspar Kerll (1627-1693), Heinrich Scheidemann (1596-1663), Matthias Weckmann, Adam Reinken (1623-1722), Johann Pachelbel (1653-1706), Dietrich Buxtehude (ca. 1637-1707), Johann Sebastian Bach and George Friedrich Handel. Also Hans Davidsson, *Matthias Weckmann: The interpretation of his organ music*, Göteborg 1991.

¹²⁸ Johann Mattheson, *Grundlage einer Ehren-Pforte*, 1740. Facsimile of 1st ed., Basel 1959. See Martin Fischer, *Studie über die organistische Improvisation im 17. Jahrhundert*, Kassel 1929, p. 68. Also Haselböck 1988, p. 57.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

[the solemn style of Prätorius as an example, afterwards as a fugue following the strict contrapuntal rules and modulating through many tonalities exploiting chromatic possibilities and simultaneously introducing a number of variations].

In other words, to demonstrate that one could master contemporary polyphonic techniques in organ playing and improvisation. An informative presentation of the requirements for such occasions is given by Mattheson in his *Grosse Generalbass-Schule*.¹³¹ Here is a description of the tasks facing candidates for the cathedral appointment at Hamburg:

1. Aus freiem Sinn kurz zu präledieren; doch nichts Studiertes, welches man gleich hören wird. Es soll dieses Vorspiel in A-Dur anfangen und in G-Moll geendigt werden, so dass es nur zwei Minuten währen mag... Massen die Präledien vornehmlich dazu dienen, dass man mittels derselben die Zeit genau einteilen und mit guter Art aus einem Ton in den andern kommen mag.

2. Den Choral „Herr Jesu Christ du höchstes Gut“ auf das Beweglichste, doch nicht über 6 Minuten lang zu traktieren: absonderlich... in einer reinen dreistimmigen Harmonie.

3. Gegenwärtiges Fugenthema aus dem Stehgreif wohl durch- und auszuführen; auch dabei folgenden Gegensatz zugleich einzuführen, zu versetzen und füglich anzubringen: Solches kann gar wohl in 4 Minuten verrichtet werden, weil hier die Frage ist, wie gut, nicht aber wie lang die Fuge ist. Endlich zum Ausgang mit einer kurz gefassten Ciacona über folgenden Grundsatz zu schliessen und das volle Werk dazu zu gebrauchen, etwa 6 Minuten lang.¹³²

[1. To improvise a free prelude, that is not to have been previously learned, since this would be audible. To begin in the key of A major and end in G minor, and not last longer than two minutes... the given framework of the prelude should show a precise division of time and demonstrate effective modulation from one tonality to another.

2. To arrange the chorale melody used for the text “Herr Jesu Christ du höchstes Gut” in strict three-part harmony on 2 manuals with independent pedal for 6 minutes.

3. To spontaneously build up a well-developed fugue from a given theme. Countersubject should be introduced in the correct manner. The work can be about 4 minutes, but a good – not a long – fugue is required. The work can be concluded with a Chaconne played on full organ, and should conclude within a time-span of 6 minutes.]

Many organist-trials from the 17th century bear witness to similar extensive requirements for thorough grounding and competence in improvisation. Mattheson further notes that the candidates who took part in these competitions were expected to provide a written version of their improvisation two days after the audition had taken place.¹³³ Good organists were apparently expected to be able to memorise and

¹³⁰ See Max Seiffert, “Matthias Weckmann und das Collegium musicum in Hamburg”, in *S. J. M. G. (Germany)* 2 1901, p. 88. Also Fischer 1929, p. 68.

¹³¹ Johann Mattheson, *Grosse Generalbass-Schule*, Hamburg 1734. See Fischer 1929, pp. 68.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Mattheson 1734. See Fischer, 1929, pp. 68-69. Cf. the Australian cognitive scientist Jeff Pressing’s account of expertise and expert memory in the second part of this thesis, where the German organist-trials of the 17th and 18th centuries are discussed.

write down their extemporized works, a skill that would have been a natural result of extensive studies with their master teacher. One was not entitled to call oneself a real master until one had proved the ability to handle these strict contrapuntal rules of improvisation.

In all probability this reflects a tradition where improvisation, composition and interpretation all formed different sides of the practice of organ playing. We can thus assume that they were regarded as complimentary and closely linked forms of musical creative practice. A number of the High Baroque organ pieces might also in this way have circulated as models for improvisation, within which the performer had the opportunity to further develop the ideas. Music was written out so that it could be passed on to other organists, and with the intention of training new church musicians. It is not uncommon to find that some works were published in different keys in order to facilitate their performance on organs with different tunings and temperaments.

The late baroque and Johann Sebastian Bach

From the sources I have cited we can gain a picture of the late Baroque as a golden age of organ improvisation, yet we should realise that by about 1700 the practise of ensemble improvisation was rapidly dying out. We have noted the comprehensive improvisation skills organists were expected to possess, yet contemporary sources suggest that such skills were becoming less and less commonplace.¹³⁴ When Adam Reinken had heard Johann Sebastian Bach improvise in the Katharinenkirche in Hamburg, he uttered the following exclamation:

Ich dachte, diese Kunst wäre ausgestorben, ich sehe aber, dass sie in Ihnen noch lebt.¹³⁵

[I thought that this art was dead, but now I see that it lives on in you.]

Johann Nikolaus Forkel was extremely enthusiastic about the organ compositions of the Leipzig master, but even more impressed of what he was told about Bach's improvisations. They were:

voll von Ausdruck der Andacht, Feyerlichkeit und Würde; aber sein Orgelspiel, wobey durch Niederschreiben nicht verloren ging, sondern alles unmittelbar aus der Fantasie ins Leben kam, soll noch andächtiger, feyerlicher, würdiger und erhabener gewesen sein.¹³⁶

[where none of the features that one knows so well from the compositions is lost, but where everything is brought imaginatively to life... as a result the spirituality is even deeper... as well as celebratory, worthy and uplifting.]

It is probable that Johan Sebastian Bach's improvisational skills were exceptional. In the dawning age of enlightenment,¹³⁷ improvisation based on complex contrapuntal rules was no longer common, or held in great esteem by a majority. For much of his life Bach was active in the field of secular music, and enjoyed a succes-

¹³⁴ See Haselböck 1988, p. 58.

¹³⁵ See Johann Nikolaus Forkel, *Über J. Seb. Bachs Leben, Kunst und Kunstwerke*, Leipzig 1802. Reprint Augsburg 1925, p. 25. Also Haselböck 1988, p. 58.

¹³⁶ See Forkel 1925, p. 36. Also Ferand 1938, p. 20.

¹³⁷ See Haselböck 1988, p. 58.

sion of *Kapellmeister* appointments to various dukes and other royalty in addition to his church appointments. Ensemble music written at that time was not always based on the old through-bass tradition, and therefore much of the basis of keyboard instrument improvisation no longer applied. In earlier baroque music the coloration of the cantus firmus had been entrusted to the player's discretion, but as the written notation itself became more detailed this practice gradually changed. Not least of all Bach's own music exemplified the practice of writing ornamentation out in great detail, which Johann Adolph Scheibe (1708-1776) complained about in the periodical *Der christliche Musicus*:

Alle Manieren, alle kleinen Auszierungen, und alles, was man unter der Methode zu spielen versteht, drückt er mit eigentlichen Noten aus, und das entzieht seinen Stücken nicht nur die Schönheit der Harmonie, sondern er machet auch den Gesang durchaus unvernünftig.¹³⁸

[He writes out as notes all the trills and decorations which can be found within the playing method. This not only removes the beauties of the harmony but also renders perception of the melody impossible.]

The full extent of variation which Johann Sebastian Bach was capable in his improvisations was described by Forkel as follows:

Wenn J. S. B. ausser den gottesdienstlichen Versammlungen sich an die Orgel setzte, so wählte er sich irgendein Thema und führte es in allen Formen von Orgelstücken aus... Zuerst gebrauchte er dieses Thema zu einem Vorspiel und einer Fuge mit vollem Werk. Sodann erschien seine Kunst des Registrierens für ein Trio, ein Quatuor usw. immer über dasselbe Thema. Ferner folgte ein Choral, um dessen Melodie wiederum das erste Thema in drei verschiedenen Stimmen auf mannigfaltigste Art herumspielte. Endlich wurde der Beschluss mit dem vollen Werke durch eine Fuge gemacht, worin entweder nur eine andere Bearbeitung des ersten Themas herrschte, oder nach Beschaffenheit desselben ein oder zwei andere beigemischt wurden.¹³⁹

[When J. S. Bach seated himself at the organ outside services he would chose some theme or other and worked it in all the forms used for organ music... First he made use of the theme in a Prelude and Fugue, with Full Organ; then there appeared his art of registration in the form of a trio, quartet etc, still on the same theme. Then a chorale followed, around whose melody the first theme played in 3 or 4 parts in the most diverse way. Finally the conclusion on full organ was made with a fugue, in which either another working of the first theme predominated, or yet another or even two others were mixed together.]

It is probable that improvisations of this type have found their place within the realm of art music, since Bach afterwards wrote them down, perhaps without any immediate practical aim, but with the intention of realising them in their best possible form and thus completing them. We can thus presume that Bach's chorale prelude with double pedal on the chorale melody *An Wasserflüssen Babylon*¹⁴⁰ might have been a result of his trip to Hamburg where he performed for Adam Reinken.¹⁴¹ Forkel also notes the connection between Bach's improvisations and his

¹³⁸ Adolph Scheibe, *Der christliche Musicus*, Leipzig 1745. See Haselböck 1988, p. 58.

¹³⁹ See Forkel 1925, p. 35. Also Fischer 1929, p. 69.

¹⁴⁰ Probably BWV 653.

¹⁴¹ See Forkel 1925, p. 25. Also Fischer 1929, p. 69.

compositions. Here he compares the advanced elements reportedly used in Bach's improvisations with the latter's Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue.¹⁴²

Wenn er phantasierte, waren alle 24 Tonarten sein; er machte mit ihnen, was er wollte. Er verband die entferntesten so leicht und so natürlich miteinander wie die nächsten; man glaubte, er habe nur im inneren Kreise einer einzigen Tonart moduliert. Von Härten in der Modulation wusste er nichts; seine Chromatik sogar war in der Übergängen so sanft und fließend, als wenn er bloss im diatonischen Tongeschlecht geblieben wäre. Seine nun schon gestochene chromatische Phantasie kann beweisen, was ich hier sage. Alle seine freien Phantasien sollen ähnlicher Art, häufig noch weit freier, glänzender und ausdrucksvoller geworden sein.¹⁴³

[When he improvised, he was Lord and Master over all the 24 tonalities, and he could do with them as he pleased. He could link the most remote tonalities in such an easy and natural way as if they were closely related. One could almost believe that he was simply moving near a single tonality. Crass changes were not part of his modulations. His playing of chromatic movements was as subtle and fluent in the transitions as if he simply found himself in a diatonic relationship with the tonalities. His Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue that is now published bears witness to all of this. All his Fantasias are of a similar character, but always even more fluent, clear and sparkling, and very expressive.]

The American musicologist Michael I. Dodds also notes that the Baroque era is frequently regarded as a golden age in the history of organ improvisation. Our knowledge of Baroque organ improvisation is based on contemporary eye- and ear-witness accounts. The descriptions of the 17th century organist trials and the contemporary thesis on the theory and practice of music provide us with some further clues. Yet such material also presents problems for the purpose of studying improvisation, since Baroque thesis primarily concern themselves with such matters as through bass and counterpoint. None of them deals with improvisation at keyboard instruments with the same thoroughness as Tomas de Sancta Maria displays in his Renaissance teaching manual: *Libro llamado arte de tãner fantasia*. It therefore appears to be difficult to trace the historic lines back to the personalities of the foremost organists and composers in such a way that can adequately illuminate their work as improvisers.¹⁴⁴

Sources from the Baroque era give a very inadequate account as to how the practical teaching of organ improvisation actually occurred. In other words, how new concepts and ideas were systematised and presented to students or apprentices. They give us some account of how the actual improvised music was experienced by those who had the good fortune to have actually heard these masters perform. Sources also give some ideas as to how organ improvisation was incorporated into the church services and festivities of the 17th and 18th centuries.

For me it thus seems reasonable to assume that at least some elements of Baroque teaching methods were passed on to later generations of organists and teachers. It therefore follows that in spite of stylistic changes these inherited ideas found a place into organ textbooks published during the 19th century.

¹⁴² Probably BWV 903.

¹⁴³ See Forkel 1925, p. 35. Also Fischer 1929, p. 69.

¹⁴⁴ See Dodds 1998.

CHAPTER 8

A 19th century view of improvisation and organ playing**Between the creative and interpretive aspects**

To what extent can musical improvisation be regarded as a genuine art form in its own right? Over the ages many opinions have been expressed on this subject. During the 19th century, the dividing line between creative and interpretive art became more pronounced. In Germany one of the 19th century's most influential composers and music critics, Robert Schumann (1810-1856), had a high opinion of the organ. He was particularly attracted to the large number of sounds it offered, and therefore considered it a most useful instrument for teaching purposes. He venerated the art of organ playing, yet was sceptical about improvisation, and even warns his beloved future wife, Clara Wieck (1819-1896), against over-indulgence in this practice:

Eines möchte ich Dir raten, nicht zu viel zu phantasieren, es strömt da zuviel ungenützt ab, was man besser anwenden könnte. Nimm Dir immer vor, alles gleich auf das Papier zu bringen. So sammeln und konzentrieren die Gedanken sich mehr und mehr.¹⁴⁵

[One more piece of advice to you, do not fantasise (i.e. improvise) too much. So much can pour forth that is really not useful. It is preferable to ensure that everything is written down on paper, because this encourages you to collect and concentrate your thoughts much better.]

In *Musikalische Haus- und Lebensregeln* Schumann returns to this theme and states categorically:

Die Beherrschung der Form, die Kraft klarer Gestaltung gewinnst du nur durch das feste Zeichen der Schrift. Schreibe also mehr, als du phantasier.¹⁴⁶

[Mastery and domination over form, the power to state ideas clearly, can only be attained when they are fixed in written form. Therefore write more than you fantasise.]

¹⁴⁵ Robert Schumann's letter to Clara Wieck dated December 3 1838, in *Briefe einer Liebe*, ed. Hans Joseph Ortheil, Königstein 1982. See Ferand 1938, p. 29.

¹⁴⁶ Robert Schumann, *Musikalische Haus- und Lebensregeln*, Kassel 1964. See Ferand 1938, p. 29.

These two quotations can be said to reflect a belief in inspiration, a type of divine creative spark that was given to the chosen artisans, which was widely accepted in the 19th century. To create a musical work of art involved more than simply allowing the imagination to run riot. On the contrary musical ideas and inspiration should be fused into the moulds of musical form, and allowed to mature, a process that required time. In accordance with the views of Schumann and others, some discussion took place in Germany as to whether the art of improvisation could in fact be learnt. This led to the counter-question as to whether one could learn the art of musical composition and the ultimate question as to whether artistic creativity was in fact a subject one could learn.¹⁴⁷ There were a variety of answers, and Schumann's way of thinking was not shared by all.

The German organist, composer, teacher, theoretician and Roman Catholic priest "Abbé" Georg Joseph Vogler (1749-1814) travelled extensively around Europe and attracted considerable attention for his daring improvisations. On one famous occasion Vogler and Ludwig van Beethoven improvised for each other. The latter's opinion of the art of improvisation was rather more positive than Schumann's:

Eigentlich improvisiert man nur, wenn man nicht acht gibt auf das, was man spielt. Das ist auch die beste und echte Art, in der Öffentlichkeit zu improvisieren.¹⁴⁸

[In fact one only improvises when one does not really care for what one is playing. It is also the best and most genuine form of art when one improvises in public.]

In 1823 Beethoven was present at the young Franz Liszt's (1811-1886) debut in Vienna and was reportedly most impressed by the young pianist. While Liszt's prime reputation was to be as a pianist and later a composer, he was also capable of improvising at the organ and his audiences reportedly never forgot their impressions.¹⁴⁹ It was a common practice, dating back to Mozart, that pianists would improvise the cadenzas in piano concertos. There are several textbooks in fantasy playing for keyboard instruments. The most popular of these is probably that written by Beethoven's pupil Carl Czerny's (1791-1857) under the title *Systematische Anleitung zum Fantasieren auf dem Pianoforte*.¹⁵⁰

The organ: A church or concert instrument?

Eduard Hanslick (1825-1904) was an influential Viennese critic and writer on music in the 19th century. In the following account he discusses concert performances of organ music and refers to two notable Viennese organists, Anton Bruckner and Joseph Labor (1842-1924):

An den beiden rühmlich anerkannten Orgelvirtuosen Bruckner und Labor liegt es sicher nicht, sondern vermuthlich an einem Mangel in meiner musikalischen

¹⁴⁷ See Haselböck 1988, p. 59.

¹⁴⁸ Georg Kinsky, *Katalog des musikhistorischen Museums von Wilhelm Heyer in Köln*, nr. 215, Köln 1916. See Haselböck 1988, p. 59.

¹⁴⁹ See Bondeman, Hernqvist and Åberg 1977, p. 5.

¹⁵⁰ Carl Czerny, *Systematische Anleitung zum Fantasieren auf dem Pianoforte op. 200*. Facsimile of the original edition, Wien 1829, with an introduction by the editor Ulrich Mahler, Wiesbaden 1993.

schen Natur, dass ich längeren Solovorträgen auf der Orgel nicht stand zu halten vermag. Für mich bleibt die Orgel das musikalische Organ der Kirche, des Gottesdienstes, und auch hier ein Instrument des Präludierens und Begleitens, das als selbständig auftretendes Concert-Instrument mich bald verwirrt und betäubt... Die erhabene „Königin der Instrumente“ bleibt doch, rein musikalisch gesehen, ein lebloses Instrument.¹⁵¹

[It is certainly not the fault of the widely recognised organ virtuosi Bruckner and Labor, but rather a failing of my own musical nature, that renders me incapable of tolerating long solo performances on the Organ. For me the Organ is the musical instrument of the Church and Divine Worship. Here it can preambulate and accompany, rather than confuse and overwhelm me when it attempts to become an independent concert instrument... (Here) the elevated “Queen of Instruments” simply becomes musically a lifeless instrument.]

Hanslick's opinion should be seen in the light of contemporary services in the Austrian Catholic Church. Here the prime function of organ playing is to link the different sections of the service together. It is therefore probable that organ music generally, and improvisation in particular came to be regarded by many as a rather anonymous form of liturgical – in modern terms “muzak” – an incomplete art form that could not offer the same high aesthetic standards as contemporary musical compositions specifically written for church use. Examples of this were the many orchestral masses written during the 18th and 19th centuries, or choral works from the golden age of vocal polyphony. Yet in spite of this organ playing and improvisation assumed a steadily more important place at the newly established music conservatoires of Europe during the 19th century.

Three major 19th century improvisers:

César Franck, Anton Bruckner and Johann Georg Herzog

In France César Franck, organist of Sainte-Clotilde Church, Paris, contributed to the development of a new school of organ playing. This was largely influenced by the contrapuntal teachings Franck had received as a young man from Ludwig van Beethoven's pupil and friend Antonin Reicha (1770-1836). Franck was in charge of the organ class at the Paris Conservatoire from 1872 until his death in 1890. During his tenure this class developed a tendency to function as an “unofficial” composition class since as much of the teaching dealt with composition which was practiced as organ improvisation.¹⁵²

Anton Bruckner was highly esteemed by many Austrians for his improvisations at the monastic church of St. Florian and later Linz Cathedral, to which he was appointed in 1855. He was one of the celebrated organists who were invited to play at the opening of the Royal Albert Hall organ in London in 1871. He also played at Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. We can guess that several of Bruckner's orchestral

¹⁵¹ Eduard Hanslick, in *Neue Freie Presse*, Wien, 28 March 1882. See Erwin Horn, “Zwischen Interpretation und Improvisation, Anton Bruckner als Organist”, in *Bruckner-Symposion. Zum Schaffensprozess in den Künsten im Rahmen des Internationalen Brucknerfestes Linz 20. – 24. September 1995. Bericht*, Linz 1997, p. 118.

¹⁵² See Hermann Busch, “Von César Franck zu Jean Langlais. Die Orgeltradition der Kirche Ste. Clotilde in Paris”, in *Musica Sacra* 107 (Germany/Austria) no. 3 1987, p. 181. Also Orpha Ochse, *Organists and Organ Playing in Nineteenth-Century France and Belgium*, Bloomington 1994, p. 151.

symphonies were initially conceived as organ improvisations. The reverse was also true – Bruckner frequently improvised on themes from his own symphonies.

In Germany Johann Georg Herzog (1822-1909) was regarded as a leading organist and improviser of the 19th century. He belonged to the Evangelical Lutheran Church and considered himself as an heir to and exponent of the Bach tradition. Through his work as a performing musician, conservatoire teacher and university professor, he sought to continue the Bach tradition. He regarded this tradition both as an invaluable part of musical creation and also as a yardstick for judging artistic quality. Many regarded Herzog as the foremost church musician in the Evangelical Lutheran Church. He was offered the post as Kantor at St. Thomas' Church in Leipzig,¹⁵³ but chooses instead to remain as Director of Music at the University of Erlangen. As an organist and improviser he can be regarded as a Protestant¹⁵⁴ counterweight to the Catholic church musicians Anton Bruckner and César Franck. Herzog is best known to posterity for his textbook on the subject of liturgical organ playing. For a long time this volume dominated organ teaching in many German musical institutions.

¹⁵³ The church to that J. S. Bach was appointed Kantor in 1723.

¹⁵⁴ See Carl Franz, "Einige Betrachtungen über den Orgelbau und die musikalischen Zustände in Paris", in *Die Orgelbauzeitung* (Germany) 2 1880, pp. 145ff., here: pp. 147-148. Also Busch 1987, pp. 180-181: In the 19th century there were differences between the Roman Catholic and the Evangelical Lutheran traditions of organ improvisation. For Protestant church musicians improvisation was often synonymous with extensive use of strict contrapuntal forms. Improvisation over a Lutheran chorale melody was expected to be in a suitable sacral style that was worthy for church useage. For many Catholic organists Lutheran chorales and the many Baroque arrangements of them were virtually an unknown quantity.

CHAPTER 9

French traditions of organ improvisation**César Franck and Aristide Cavaillé-Coll**

One of organ music's golden ages emerged in Paris during the 19th century with two great men: organ builder Aristide Cavaillé-Coll (1811-1899) and organist, composer and improviser César Franck. Cavaillé-Coll created the French symphonic or orchestral style of organ, and Franck was among the first to realise its potential in his improvisations and compositions. Thus both men contributed to the development of the art of organ playing. Within the French Baroque tradition there has been a close connection between organ building and organ music, whereby the title or subtitle of a work indicated both the required registration and the character of the piece.¹⁵⁵ History repeated itself in the Romantic period as the improviser and composer created their music specifically for the new type of organ that was becoming available.¹⁵⁶ Cavaillé-Coll's organs offered completely different possibilities for quasi-orchestral colouration combined with orchestral dynamics. This allowed for a style of improvisation and composition that was much closer to the aesthetic ideals of the Romanticism.¹⁵⁷ Before turning our attentions to Franck's influence as Professor of Organ at the French Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse de Paris, I will briefly consider the liturgical organ playing practices prevalent in France during the first half of the 19th century – the traditions within which César Franck himself grew up.

Liturgical organ playing in the mid-19th century

In a church with two organs *l'organiste titulaire* [the titular or main organist], would play on the church's main (liturgically western) organ – *le grand orgue*. In addition an *l'organiste accompagnateur* would accompany the choir at *l'orgue de chœur* [choir organ (positioned behind the high altar)]. The *maître de chapelle* [master of the choristers] or *maître de musique* [master of music] was responsible for directing the choral singing in the church. This threefold division of responsibility between the *titulaire*, *accompagnateur* and *maître de chapelle* became increasingly common in the larger churches in the middle of the 19th century. Such an

¹⁵⁵ Such examples from the French Baroque include: *Tierce en taille*, *Plein Jeu*, *Trio à 2 dessus de Cromhorne et la basse de tierce*, *Basse de Trompette*, etc.

¹⁵⁶ See Svein Erik Tandberg, "Louis Vierne og hans orgelkunst" [Louis Vierne and his Organ Art], in *Norsk Kirkemusikk* (Norway) 6 1984, pp. 196-198.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

arrangement was not always problem-free. Churches with good choral forces would only use *le grand orgue* during the Mass for the entry procession and at the offertory. There was also the Postlude which came after the dismissal: “Ite missa est” [the mass is ended, go in peace]. Under these conditions it was not entirely unknown for relations between the *maître de chapelle* and the *titulaire*¹⁵⁸ to be soured by competition and petty jealousy.

On the other hand, when the *titulaire* and the *organiste accompagnateur* were both gifted improvisers, a dialogue between the two across the huge spaces of the church could considerably enhance the qualities of music at Divine worship. An example of this could be found at the beginning of the 1870’s in the Saint-Sulpice Church in Paris. Here the lucky congregation could hear Charles-Marie Widor (1844-1937) seated at the *grand orgue* and Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924) at the *orgue de choer* exchanging challenging themes with each other. Their musical responses took the form of a friendly competition in improvisation.¹⁵⁹

Different methods of accompanying plainchant

In the Catholic Church the practice of alternatim had developed, whereby the verses of the liturgical text were presented alternately by voices and organ versets, or improvisations over the chant. Changes to the liturgy that occurred round about the middle of the 19th century led to the gradual disappearance of this practice. Instead the organist, and particularly the *organiste accompagnateur* was given the task of accompanying plainchant melodies whose role within the Roman Catholic liturgy underwent something of a revival. This led to questions as to how these melodies should be sung, and how (if at all) their organ accompaniments should be formed. Many thesis were published on this question, but their conclusions and advice were frequently contradictory.

The so-called “modal” method was developed of Louis Niedermeyer (1802-1861). This offers a radical departure from the most common tonal examples. Niedermeyer systemised his thoughts in the treatise *Traite théorique et pratique de l’accompagnement du plain chant*. The rules it contains can be summarised in the following six points:

- 1) L’emploi exclusif dans chaque mode, des sons del’échelle.
- 2) L’emploi fréquent dans chaque mode, des accords déterminés par la finale et la dominante. La première des règles à pour objet la tonalité. La seconde à pour objet la modalité.
- 3) L’emploi exclusif des formules harmoniques qui conviennent aux cadences chaque mode.
- 4) Tout accord, autre que l’accord parfait et son premier derive, devra être exclu de l’accompagnement du plain-chant.
- 5) Les lois régissant la mélodie du plain-chant doivent être observées dans chacune des parties don’t se compose son accompagnement.

¹⁵⁸ See Georges Schmitt, *Nouveau Manuell complet de l’organiste*, Volume 1, Paris 1855, pp. 62-63. Also Ochse 1994, pp. 132-133.

¹⁵⁹ See René Dumesnil, *Portraits de musiciens français*, Paris 1938, p. 198. Also Ochse 1994, p. 134.

6) Le plain-chant, étant essentiellement mélodique, doit toujours être placé à la partie supérieure.¹⁶⁰

[1) Exclusive use of the scale tones that belong within each modal tonality.

2) Frequent use within each mode of the chords that determine the tonic and dominant. The first of these rules applies to the tonic, and the second applies to the modal.

3) Exclusive use of the harmonic forms that match the cadences of each mode.

4) All chords, with the exception of consonant tonic and its derivatives, should be excluded from plainchant accompaniments.

5) The rules governing formation of plainchant melodies should also be observed in each of the voices that form the accompaniment.

6) The plainchant, being an essential element of the melody, must always be placed in the highest voice.]

Niedermeyer allowed the use of B flat to avoid the tritonus interval. Diminished chords are only allowed in their first inversion, and all the musical examples he gives are in strict 4-part note-against-note harmony. Niedermeyer's views were widely supported. He established his *École de musique classique et religieuse* in 1853 where the teaching was influenced strongly by his theories, and in the course of time many of his students attained important positions. Although there were others who postulated various theories as to how plainchant should be accompanied,¹⁶¹ none of them attained the same widespread recognition as Niedermeyer's modal method.¹⁶²

Liturgical playing emphasises improvisation

Collections of organ pieces primarily intended for liturgical use began to appear in steadily increasing numbers after 1850. For the most part these were simple and short pieces intended to fill the gaps during the Mass and Vespers. We have two such volumes from the pen of César Franck that were in fact published posthumously in 1892 under the title *L'organiste*. As with other collections of this nature, they are written on two staves and intended for *orgue ou harmonium*. Most of them have relatively few similarities with Franck's 12 major organ works. Among other collections of this nature we find *L'organiste catholique* by Renaud de Vilbac (1829-1884), *L'organiste pratique* and *L'organiste liturgiste* by Alexandre Guilmant (1837-1911) and *Heures mystiques* by Leon Boëllmann (1862-1897). However much of the music played at services, both by Franck and his contemporaries in the other Parisian churches, was in all probability improvised.

¹⁶⁰ Louis Niedermeyer and Louis d'Ortigue, *Traité théorique et pratique de l'accompagnement du plain-chant*, Paris 1855. Revided and translated to English by Wallace Goodrich with the title *Gregorian Accompaniment*, London 1905. See Jutten 1999, p. 183.

¹⁶¹ Among those who attempted to develop other approaches to the accompaniment of plainchant the names Théodore Nisard (1812-1888) and François Joseph Fétis (1784-1871) should be noted.

¹⁶² See Ochse 1994, pp. 134-135.

A brief but informative glimpse of the organ world in Paris during César Franck's time comes from Carl Franz, organist of Berlin Cathedral. He visited Paris between the 13th and 21st May 1880 to give a concert on the large 66-stop Cavaillé-Coll organ at the Palais du Trocadéro. He took the opportunity to visit Aristide Cavaillé-Coll's workshops, as well as the organs of Notre-Dame Cathedral and Sainte-Clotilde. In addition he paid a brief visit to Franck's organ class at the Paris Conservatoire.¹⁶³ He offers some thoughts on the liturgical use of the organ in the French capital, which have the additional interest of being written against his own experience as a Lutheran church musician.

Der grosse Werth, welcher beim Heranbilden auf das Improvisieren gelegt wird, ist, so wichtig dieser Theil der Kunst des Orgelspiels auch überall ist, dort noch ganz besonders geboten, wo der erste Organist mit der Begleitung von Gemeinde und Chor meist nicht zu tun hat. Während diese von der kleinen Chororgel aus besorgt werden, ruht auf ihm nur die Aufgabe, durch freie Zwischenspiele und Offertorien den Gottesdienst künstlerisch zu beleben. Grosse Gewandtheit durch verschiedene Zusammenstellungen von Klangfarben und durch einschmeichelnde, prägnant rhythmisierte Melodie zu wirken, habe ich bei solchen Gelegenheiten bewundert, wenn auch in unserer evangelische Kirche manches davon als nicht in den Rahmen passend abgelehnt werden müsste.¹⁶⁴

[The great value and emphasis which is given to improvisation during training proves to be essential here, where this aspect of the art of organ playing is at all times central. Here the first organist has no duties in connection with the accompaniment of the congregation and choir. All these tasks are entrusted to the smaller Choir organ. The provision of free interludes and offertory music to enrich the Divine service is the artistic responsibility of the first organist. These musical decorations with their diverse juxtapositions of sounding colours and ingratiating, rhythmically meaningful melody caused me to admire them greatly. This is not least because such musical practise would not be tolerated within the framework for divine worship in our Evangelical Lutheran Church tradition.]

This description can be considered to reflect the clear differences between organ improvisation practices in the French Catholic and German Protestant churches at that time. In reality the question was what could be regarded as a suitable ecclesiastical style of organ playing and improvisation. On the one hand demands for a historically accurate, devotional rendition of church music and on the other the subjective and emotional world of romanticism.

Training conditions, auditions and the discipline of music competitions

For a young French organist who wished to become a church musician in the 19th century there was no standard form of study or apprenticeship. This was particularly the case during the early decades of the century. Sometime the young musician would receive tuition at the hands of an older relative, to whose appointment he would eventually succeed. An alternative path was to be chosen as successor by one's teacher, or another older organist. This would imply that the young man would later be named as "organiste titulaire" when the incumbent organist retired, resigned or simply died. During the waiting period the young organist would be able to serve as assistant or deputy organist.

¹⁶³ See Busch 1987, pp. 179-180.

¹⁶⁴ See Franz 1880, pp. 145ff., and pp. 147ff. Also Busch 1987, pp. 180-181.

Such an arrangement gave the student organist a certain amount of security and also guaranteed a certain amount of continuity for the church concerned. If, however, no successor was apparent when the position became vacant, then an open competition could be announced. This practice gained favour during the latter part of the 19th century.¹⁶⁵ Around about 1860 these competitions required the candidates to perform standard compositions from the organ repertoire, improvise pieces and accompany. This last point implied the harmonising *ex tempore*¹⁶⁶ – for plainchant melodies.¹⁶⁷

Improvisation competitions

One of the requirements for competitions in the late 19th century for prestigious *titulaire* positions was the playing of major works from memory. In 1886 Charles-Marie Widor was musical adviser to the competition for the vacant post at Saint-Denis Church in Paris. Four specific tasks were set for the candidates. They had to accompany a plainchant melody, improvise a fugue, improvise a piece in symphonic form, and perform a Bach organ work from memory. Eight applications were received, but only four of them proved themselves capable of fulfilling the requirements.¹⁶⁸

Even more extensive demands were presented by the 1900 competition for the *titulaire* position at Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris. In addition to accompanying a plainchant melody, improvising a fugue and improvising upon a free theme, a major work from the organ repertoire had to be played from memory. This was chosen from a list of five such pieces that the candidate presented beforehand to the jury. Although many showed an interest in this prestigious competition, in reality only five candidates were able to compete. The jury unanimously declared Louis Vierne (1870-1937) the clear winner.¹⁶⁹ The disciplines required for such auditions gradually found their place in the syllabus for organ students at the leading French institute of music training – the Paris Conservatoire.

Features of a conservatoire tradition

The Conservatoire nationale supérieur de musique – the French national conservatoire – was officially founded in 1795. From its central position in Paris it quickly proved to be an enrichment of French musical life. New methods of teaching were developed which set national standards for the study of music and an extensive music library was built up. At the same time it quickly became apparent that the conservatoire could not completely replace the traditional choir schools, known as the *maîtrises*. In addition to maintaining the choral traditions in the cathedrals and other major churches, these choir schools had taken a leading role in music education in towns and cities throughout France. Many of them ceased to exist as a result of the anti-clerical feelings that surfaced during the years of the French Revolution. Young musical talents were now encouraged to study at the conservatoire in Paris.

¹⁶⁵ See Ochse 1994, pp. 124-125.

¹⁶⁶ The term "ex tempore" implies on the spur of the moment, in other words without the aid of written-out parts.

¹⁶⁷ See Ochse 1994, p. 125.

¹⁶⁸ See Ochse 1994, p. 125.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

Provision was made in the newly organised conservatoire for a Professor of Organ. The first occupant of this chair was the 50-year old Nicolas Séjan (1745-1819). At that time he was most probably the leading organist in Paris. Prior to the Revolution he had held prestigious appointments at Notre-Dame Cathedral, Saint-Sulpice and the Chapelle Royale. As churches were closed as a consequence of the Revolution, there were very few career opportunities for the young musical talents who wished to be organists. Séjan's engagement at the conservatoire was therefore ended in 1802. Little is otherwise known of Séjan's work at the institution.¹⁷⁰

François Benoist

In 1817 the decision was made by the authorities at the Conservatoire Nationale Supérieur de Musique to reinstate the professorship in organ playing, with the stipulation that the post should go to an "excellent Pianiste, Organiste, Bon Harmoniste et bon Compositeur"¹⁷¹ [excellent pianist, organist, competent harmonist and good composer]. François Benoist¹⁷² (1794-1878) was appointed and held the position for the next 53 years. Many important and influential composers, organists and pianists passed through his hand during this time. Among the better-known names we find Camille Saint-Saëns, Georges Bizet, Léo Delibes, Jules Massenet, Charles-Valentin Alkan, Félix Danjou, Louis-James-Alfred Lefébure-Wély, Théodore Dubois and César Franck.¹⁷³

The first student who achieved the distinction of winning a first prize in one of the competitions at the conservatoire was the 22-year old Alexandre Fessy in 1826. From the year 1833 all the way through the 19th century the organ class was always represented in the competition for the conservatoire's prizes.¹⁷⁴ These were always regarded as an important part of life at the Paris Conservatoire since they were to a great extent the focus of its teaching. The students' successes or failures were a major concern for the administration, since these could be used to determine the quality of the teaching provided by the various departments. The personal prestige of the differing professors was also at stake. For the students themselves a *Premier Prix* could have a major impact on their future artistic careers.

Organ playing competitions at the conservatoire

Records exist which give details of the requirements for all organ playing competitions since 1834. In that year candidates had to develop a four-part accompaniment to a plainchant chorale and improvise a four-part fugue. The melody and theme were both specified by the jury.¹⁷⁵ The same requirements were applied when César

¹⁷⁰ See Ochse 1994, pp. 147-148.

¹⁷¹ Quoted in Norbert Dufourcq, "Autor des orgues du Conservatoire national et de la chapelle des Tuileries", in *L'Orgue* (France) 61 1951, p. 115. Also Ochse 1994, p. 148.

¹⁷² Benoist had begun his own studies at the Paris Conservatoire in 1811. That same year he was awarded first prize in harmony. Three years later he won the first prize in piano playing and the *Prix de Rome* composition prize in 1815. He was appointed organist at the Chapelle Royale in 1819. In 1840 he was awarded the title "premier chef de chant" at the Opera.

¹⁷³ Ochse 1994, p. 148.

¹⁷⁴ See Constant Pierre, *Le Conservatoire national de musique et de déclamation: documents historique et administratifs*, Paris 1900, pp. 882-884. Also Ochse 1994, p. 149.

¹⁷⁵ See Ochse 1994, p. 149.

Franck¹⁷⁶ won second prize for organ playing in 1841.¹⁷⁷ An additional requirement that competitors should also improvise a piece over a so-called “*thème libre*” [free theme] was introduced in 1843.

The task of chorale harmonisation was changed in 1851 with the requirement that the chorale melody should now be developed successively in the bass and thereafter as the upper voice. Another important change came in 1852 with the requirement that a composed fugue that used the pedals should be played from memory. This was the first recognition at the Paris Conservatoire that composed music should also form a part of an organist’s training. During the remainder of Benoist’s tenure there were only relatively small changes made to the rules of the competition. In 1867 came the requirement that the theme used for the *thème libre* improvisation should be modern. The fugue that was to be played from memory was to be one of Johann Sebastian Bach’s. The students could choose their own pieces, but their choice had to receive professorial approval. In 1868 the choice of fugue was actually made by the professor.¹⁷⁸

The examinations that were held each term had the same requirements as the competitions, but students at a lower level were not expected to attempt all the tasks. A first-year student may well only be expected to harmonise a Gregorian melody, and the improvisation of a fugue was not to be attempted before sufficient proficiency in this task was judged to have been attained. A mark of this would be the ability to play a Bach fugue with pedals from memory. Beginner students would start with the task of playing a fugue from Bach’s *Das wohltemperierte Clavier* on manuals only.¹⁷⁹

Organ class emphasises Improvisation

In the earlier years of the organ class the overwhelming emphasis was on improvisation. Since improvisation was a key element of the organist’s work in churches during the first half of the 19th century this was perfectly natural. The revival of the music of Bach may well have contributed to a steadily increasing interest in composed music among younger players. The requirements for the playing of Bach fugues at end of term examinations and competitions should be understood in this light. All the same, the main emphasis was on developing the necessary skills for the practice of improvisation.¹⁸⁰ This was made clear in 1848 when a commission considered the organisation of the different departments of the Paris Conservatoire. It concluded by arranging these under seven different categories. While piano and harp playing was regarded as part of a self-contained department, organ studies were closely linked to the theoretical section that included the disciplines of harmony, counterpoint, fugue and composition. Amongst other things the commission’s report made the following note about the organ:

¹⁷⁶ See Leon Vallas, *César Franck*, English translation Hubert Foss, New York 1951, p. 32: Vallas reprints the following comments from a member of the jury: “M. Franck, eighteen and a half years of age; choral – bass honourable, upper voices capital; fugue – some good parts in the opening, but lacking in the further development.” Also Ochse 1994, p. 149.

¹⁷⁷ The theme for this fugue was supplied by Luigi Cherubini (1760-1842).

¹⁷⁸ See Ochse 1994, pp. 149-150.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ See Pierre 1900, p. 358. Also Ochse 1994, p. 151.

PART 1

L'étude de cet instrument, destiné principalement à l'improvisation, se rattache essentiellement à celles de l'harmonie et de la composition, indispensables à l'organiste.¹⁸¹

[The study of this instrument, which in the first place is primarily intended for improvisation, essentially attaches itself to the studies of harmony and composition, indispensable for an organist.]

The commission's conclusions were followed. In the general rules and conditions for study at the Paris Conservatoire, dated 22nd November 1850 organ studies were formally linked to these disciplines. Once established, this practice was to continue for the remainder of the 19th century.¹⁸²

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² See Pierre 1900, p. 256. Also Ochse 1994, p. 151.

CHAPTER 10

César Franck – interpreter, improviser and teacher

César Franck succeeded Benoist as professor of organ playing at the Conservatoire nationale supérieur de musique on the 1st February 1872. In the course of the three decades that had passed since his own student days at the conservatoire many aspects of organ playing had changed, and the idea of the organ as a concert instrument in its own right had begun to emerge. An increasing interest in the repertoire of music composed specifically for the organ provides evidence for this. A new generation of organists was making its presence felt in several Paris churches, as exemplified by Charles-Marie Widor at Saint-Sulpice and Alexandre Guilmant at La Trinité. It was of course still possible to hear the old guard of first-class improvisers who had studied with Benoist: Camille Saint-Saëns at La Madeleine and Franck himself at Sainte-Clotilde.¹⁸³

When César Franck played at the inauguration of new organs, or performed at other concerts in Paris, his performances were described respectfully rather than enthusiastically. Some 30 of Franck's official concert appearances are described in various journals. These reviews cover a number of prestigious inaugurations and solo concerts¹⁸⁴ that took place in Paris between the years 1854 and 1890.¹⁸⁵ The French organ virtuoso and improviser Marcel Dupré (1886-1971) recalled César Franck's organ playing as follows:

À l'orgue, il était aussi génial comme improvisateur que comme compositeur. Mais, en tant que virtuose de l'orgue, il jouait... comme on jouait en France à son époque : legato approximatif, observance approximative des durées.¹⁸⁶

[As regards the organ, he was a genius both as an improviser and composer. But as an organ virtuoso, he played... as they played in France at that time, with approximate legato and approximate observance of length values.]

If Franck's performances revealed only a mediocre ability as a virtuoso organist, his improvisations tell a very different story. We have already noted the connection between César Franck and the Aristide Cavaillé-Coll, who built the organ at the

¹⁸³ See Ochse 1994, p. 155.

¹⁸⁴ In all probability César Franck's position as organ professor at the Paris Conservatoire from 1872 until his death in 1890 would have made him an obligatory choice for such prestigious concerts.

¹⁸⁵ See Ochse 1994, pp. 57-58.

¹⁸⁶ See Marcel Dupré, *Oeuvre complètes pour Orgue de César Franck revues, annotées et doigtées par Marcel Dupré*, Paris 1955, Preface on page V.

Basilique Sainte-Clotilde in Paris. Franck was appointed organist here in 1858 and remained at this position until his death. Vincent d'Indy (1851-1931)¹⁸⁷ gives us this vivid description of the composer and improviser in these surroundings:

Here, in the dusk of this organ loft... (Franck) spent the best part of his life. Here he came every Sunday and feast-day – and towards the end of his life every Friday morning too – fanning the fire of his genius by pouring out his spirit in wonderful improvisations...

Ah! We know it well, we who were his pupils, the way up to that thrice-blessed organ loft – a way as steep and difficult as that which the Gospels tell us leads to Paradise. First, having climbed the dark, spiral staircase, lit by an occasional loophole, we came suddenly face to face with a kind of antediluvian monster, a complicated bony structure, breathing heavily and irregularly, which on closer examination proved to be the vital portion of the organ worked by a vigorous pair of bellows. Next we had to descend a few narrow steps in pitch darkness, a fatal ordeal to high hats, and the cause of many a slip to the uninitiated. Opening the narrow *jauna caeli*, we found ourselves suspended as it were midway between the pavement and the vaulted roof of the church and the next moment all was forgotten in contemplation of that rapt profile, and the intellectual brow, from which seemed to flow without any effort a stream of inspired melody and subtle, exquisite harmonies, which lingered a moment among the pillars of the nave before they ascended and died away in the vaulted heights of the roof.

For César Franck had, or rather was, the genius of improvisation, and no other modern organist, not excepting the most renowned executants, would bear the most distant comparison with him in this respect. (I recollect a certain offertory based on the initial theme of Beethoven's 7th Quartet which nearly equalled in beauty the work of the Bonn master himself).¹⁸⁸

Undoubtedly these improvisations during the Mass and Vespers impressed and inspired many other pupils. The experience of hearing such accomplishment in the art of improvisation at Sainte-Clotilde was not easily forgotten. César Franck the improviser had a constant ability to find new ideas, and it is this that made his playing far more memorable than the technical failings that marred his interpretations of the works of other composers. Jean-Guy Ropartz (1864-1955), Charles Tournemire (1870-1939) and Louis Vierne have also given accounts and like Vincent d'Indy, they all speak admiringly and almost reverently of their master.¹⁸⁹ Among the writings of Tournemire we find the following description:¹⁹⁰

La *grande fantaisie* était souvent adoptée; l'Allegro de Sonate, le Lied, se trouvaient à l'honneur. Les thèmes traités (à cette époque, le chant grégorien se trouvait être lettre morte) étaient extraits d'airs populaires, d'oeuvres classiques; il arrivait aussi que l'improvisation était basée sur une donnée originale. Il fallait surtout écouter Franck dans un élément du premier ordre. Beethoven le lui fournissait souvent : c'était alors magnifique et *quelquefois aussi beau* que le modèle. Le *sublime contant* est humainement impossible ! Aucun génie n'a connu, en quelque domaine que ce soit, cette grâce : égalité dans la conception. Franck devait subir la loi commune ! Faut-il se hâter d'ajouter que, chez lui, la substance musicale était toujours très riche. Dans les moments de relative obs-

¹⁸⁷ Vincent d'Indy owed much of his success as a musician to Franck, who inspired in him high artistic ideals that led him to establish the Schola Cantorum in 1894.

¹⁸⁸ See Vincent d'Indy, *César Franck. A translation from the French of Vincent d'Indy with an introduction by Rosa Newmarch*, London 1910, pp. 42-43.

¹⁸⁹ See Busch 1987, pp. 179-180.

¹⁹⁰ See Charles Tournemire, *Précis d'exécution, de registration et d'improvisation à l'orgue*, Paris 1936, pp. 103-104.

curité où l'artiste « cherchait », nous prenions patience, attendant que le souffle divin avive la pensée !

Attente rarement... Oh ! les joies ressenties alors que l'art se manifestait sous de multiples manières : caresses mystiques, élans impétueux vers un idéal très haut, repliement intérieur. C'était tout cela, dans les grands jours. La pensée, lorsqu'il s'agissait de la développer longuement, était rarement exposées en son intégralité. Un long prélude d'apparence peu précise – mais se sustentant lui-même de l'idée – se déroulait sobrement. Quelquefois même, de vagues dessins chevauchaient d'un clavier à l'autre. Ces inconsistants fragments finissaient toujours par se raccorder; c'est alors que nous assistions à la construction progressive s'un ensemble polyphonique du plus haut intérêt, sorte parvis du temple... Avec quelle émotion n'attendions-nous pas « le point culminant » de la structure sonore édifiée si vite ? Soudain, il éclatait et c'était véritablement adorable d'en subir le rayonnement... Sur l'orgue ancien de Sainte Clotilde... Franckregistrait *sombre*, et de manière décorative. Volontiers, il se plaisait à jouer sur IIe clavier accouplé au IIIe, en se servant des Fonds, des Anches du III, boîte fermée. Il n'abusait pas du *fff*. Bien souvent, il concluait un office en teinte douce.¹⁹¹

[“La grande fantasia” and Allegro sonata forms were frequently employed, but also “Lied” ideas found a place. Exraits from popular melodies and classical works supplid the themes. (Remember that in this era plainchant was regarded as something of an archaism.)¹⁹² It was by no means entirely unknown for his improvisations to be based on original ideas... Above all one simply had to hear Franck at his best. Themes of Beethoven were not infrequently used as sources. Such examples were always magnificent and *sometimes every bit as good* as the original. But that which is sublime cannot be maintained by a mere mortal! No genius in any field has ever been blessed with the grace of constant inspiration. Franck was also subjected to this general rule! It was necessary for him to quickly appraise the rich veins of musical substance that he always found. We accepted patiently the moments of relative obscurity as the artist appeared to be seeking and waiting for that divine breath that would bring the musical material to life!

Eager anticipation... Oh! What a joy as the playing eventually began to reveal a multitude of different styles: mystical caresses, impetuous leaps that bounded in pursuit of the noblest ideals before turning back. All these ingredients were present and could be found in abundance on his best days. When he chose to develop an idea at some length, it was seldom initially exposed in its entirety.

A long prelude of a somewhat vague character – which would sustain itself using the self-same idea – *sombrely* unfolded.¹⁹³ Sometimes vague outlines would ride from one manual to another. Apparently inconsistent fragments would always eventually come together; it was then that we were actually present at the construction of a fascinating polyphonic structure, somewhat like a temple forecourt... Did we not eagerly await the rapid culmination of this sonorous structure? Suddenly, it burst forth like a brilliant ray of sunlight... On the original organ at Sainte-Clotilde... Franck registered *sombrely*, yet decoratively. He especially enjoyed playing on the Choir coupled to the Swell, using foundation stops and the swell reeds whilst keeping the box shut. He never abused the power of a full organ *tutti*. In fact he would frequently bathe the conclusion of Divine Office in gentle hues.]

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Plainchant was extensively used by Tournemire in his own works. Presumably he therefore feels compelled to explain what he may well have regarded as something of an omission on the part of his master Franck.

¹⁹³ See d'Indy 1910, p. 201, and compare Franck's own words to Vincent d'Indy about the E-major Chorale nr.1: ...“for you see, the real chorale is not the chorale; it is something that grows out of the work”. This can probably be a description of such a process.

César Franck as professor of organ playing at the Paris Conservatoire

In the course of Franck's 18-year tenure of the post, just one change was made to the disciplines that featured in the annual competitions. This small but important change involved dropping the requirement for a complete Bach fugue to be played from memory. Instead the students were required to perform a "classical" piece of organ music – but it was still necessary to do so from memory.¹⁹⁴ This change came at the beginning of Franck's tenure of the post in 1872, and it would therefore seem very possible that it was Franck himself who was responsible for its introduction.¹⁹⁵ The other competition requirements remained unchanged: accompaniment of a chorale melody in soprano and bass voices, improvisation of a fugue and an improvisation on a *thème libre*.

In spite of the increasing interest in the organ repertoire, improvisation still usually accounted for the greater part – if not actually all – of the music played for church services. It was therefore essential for organ students to accomplish full mastery of this art. Throughout Franck's eighteen years as organ professor at the conservatoire teaching of improvisation was a central focus of the organ class. This was completely in accordance with the official attitude of the Conservatoire authorities towards organ studies that we have already noted. It was also in accordance with the practice Franck had known from his own student days – and perhaps also reflected his own personal views as how organ students should approach their studies.¹⁹⁶ In his report from Paris¹⁹⁷ Carl Franz also gave an account of how students at the Paris Conservatoire approached the requirements of the differing competitive disciplines in César Franck's organ class:

Was die Behandlung der Orgel seitens der französischen Organisten anlangt, habe ich auch mannichfache Gelegenheit gehabt, Beobachtungen anzustellen, sowie auch besonders dem Orgelunterricht im Grand Conservatoire durch Herrn Frank¹⁹⁸ beizuwohnen. Die dortige Orgel, gleichfalls ein Werk Cavallé-Colls, ist zwar klein, aber nichtsdestoweniger mit mannichfachen Hilfszügen ausgestattet, so dass die Studierenden von vorneherein an deren Gebrauch gewöhnt werden. Niemand kommt in die Orgelklasse, der nicht in Harmonielehre und Contrapunkt genügend vorgebildet ist.

Drei Schüler wurden in meinem unvorhergesehenen Beisein unterrichtet. Zwei von ihnen spielten mir Werke von Sebastian Bach vor, „c-moll-Präludium und Fuge“, „F-Dur-Toccatà“. Einer musste zu einer gegebenen Chormelodie, einmal in den Bass, dann in den Discant gelegt, vierstimmig figurirt improvisieren, ein vorgeschrittener zu einem gegebenen Fugenthema ein Fuge improvisieren. Alle Leistungen zeigten, dass sie Schülerleistungen waren, aber sie zeigten auch, dass ernstes Streben nach höchsten Zielen diese Lehranstalt be-

¹⁹⁴ See Gérard Pinsart, "Aspects de l'enseignement musical à Bruxelles sous le régime hollandaise 1815-1830", in *Revue belge de musicology* (Belgium) 34-35 1980/1981, pp. 164-197. Also Ochse 1994, p. 155.

¹⁹⁵ The works of Johann Sebastian Bach retained a leading position in the lists of pieces played by Franck's students in exams and competitions. The repertoire was extended so that in addition to the fugues the preludes, fantasies, toccatas and organ chorales also found a place. In the archives of the Conservatoire the names of other 19th century composers such as Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy (1809-1847), César Franck, Jacques-Nicolas Lemmens (1823-1881) and Robert Schumann make their appearance after 1872.

¹⁹⁶ See Ochse 1994, pp. 155-156.

¹⁹⁷ See Franz 1880, pp. 147ff. Also Busch 1987, p. 180.

¹⁹⁸ Franck's name is misspelt in the original.

seelt und eine schon gewonnene Herrschaft über die Mittel, welche zu schönen Hoffnungen für die Zukunft der jungen Leute berechtigt.¹⁹⁹

[I have had several opportunities to observe how French organists handle their instruments, not least when I was allowed to attend the organ class at the “Grande Conservatoire” under the leadership of Mr. Franck. The organ here, also built by Cavallé-Coll, is small to be sure, but it is equipped with a number of playing aids, so that students can familiarise themselves with these already during their training. No student is admitted to the Organ Class without having a sufficient prior knowledge of Harmony and Counterpoint.

Three students were already working at the time of my unannounced visit. Two of them played works of Sebastian Bach, the Prelude and Fugue in C minor and the F major Toccata. One of them had to improvise over a given Chorale melody, firstly in the bass and then in the soprano, using 4-part figured improvisation. Another student was given a theme to improvise a Fugue on. All these performances were obviously at student level, but they also showed evidence of an aspiration towards the highest attainable goals and a beautiful accomplishment of the means to them that showed promise for these young persons.]

Carl Franz’s account confirms Charles Tournemire’s description of the essential musical disciplines studied in Franck’s organ classes: 1) Harmonisation of plainchant chorales and development of a four-part contrapuntal harmonisation of these melodies placing the cantus firmus in the bass and then in the soprano. 2) Improvisation of a fugue over a given theme. 3) Improvisation upon a free theme (in sonata form).²⁰⁰ Other descriptions of Franck’s teaching would appear to indicate that the greater part of the six hours teaching each week were dedicated to improvisation and that comparatively little time was given over to studying works from the organ repertoire. Franck insisted that the students he accepted into his class had necessary technique to enable them to prepare the repertoire pieces specified for the examinations and competitions.²⁰¹ Louis Vierne explained some of the consequences of this:

Considering the rare lessons devoted to performance, we were in clover, we blind, who in our school [*Institution nationale des jeunes aveugles*] had committed to memory a great amount of organ music. The others necessarily had a more limited repertoire. In the course of the year they scarcely prepared more than the pieces intended for the examinations in January, in June and for the competition. There was no need to worry about manipulation; Franck drew the stops, worked the pedal combinations, managed the swell box. Everything was simplified, reduced merely to the playing on the keyboards and the observance of style. All of which explains why, except for Dallier, Marty, Mahaut and Letocart, none of the first-prize winners of Franck’s class ever had any fame as an instrumental virtuoso.²⁰²

All the same it was not true that repertoire playing was completely ignored. In addition to the pieces that each individual student had to prepare for the examinations and competitions of the institution, they had the opportunity to become acquainted with the pieces that their fellow students were preparing, thus giving each

¹⁹⁹ See Franz 1880, pp. 147ff. Also Buch 1987, pp. 180-181.

²⁰⁰ See Tournemire 1936, p. 104. Also Buch 1987, p. 181.

²⁰¹ See Ochse 1994, pp. 155-156.

²⁰² See Louis Vierne, “Memoirs of Louis Vierne; His Life and Contacts with Famous Men”, transl. Ester E. Jones, in *The Diapason* (U.S.) 11 1939, p. 12.

individual considerable possibility for extending his or her knowledge of the organ repertoire.²⁰³

“Pater Seraphicus”

As soon as the subject turned to improvisation Franck continually pointed out the possible ways of exploring and treating a musical theme, or suggested further developments for a musical form. He encouraged students to leave the well-worn traditional paths and take the chances offered by different harmonic progressions and exploration of more remote tonal relationships. Albert Mahaut, who became an organ class student in 1888, later wrote that

When we wished to improvise, Franck’s enthusiasm knew no bounds. He would pour his own imaginative and generous spirit over us. In the good passages he would simply say: “I like that” and nod again “I like that”. This was sometimes all that he would say, but the differing ways in which he uttered these words could give us some very good insights into the way that his mind was working. At the same time he could rouse our own ideas and force us to leave our own sorrowful limitations behind.²⁰⁴

Henri Busser joined the organ-class in 1889. He observed that when a student ran into difficulties with an improvisation, Franck would gently move him from the keys along the organ bench, “et alors, sous ses doigts, tout devenait clair, merveilleux, c’était un véritable enchantement qui éveillait notre enthousiasme”²⁰⁵ [and so, under his fingers everything became clear and marvellous. Such real enchantments would really arouse our enthusiasm].

Louis Vierne²⁰⁶ spoke of Franck’s “miraculous” ways of teaching improvisation and composition. Vierne’s *Memoirs* offer a detailed description of the way in which chorale harmonisation was taught, together with accounts of Franck’s presentation of the two other musical disciplines required for examination and competition purposes – the fugue and the *thème libre*:

Existing since the foundation of the class in organ [the plainchant accompaniment test] consisted in the note-for-note accompaniment of a liturgical chant in the upper part; then the chant became the bass in whole notes, not transposed, accompanied by three upper parts in a sort of classical florid counterpoint; the whole notes then passed into the top part, transposed a fourth higher, and received in their turn the classical florid accompaniment. Nothing was closer to formula than this counterpoint, strict without being exactly so, crammed with retarded fifths, with seventh chords prolonged with the fifth, with sequences – in a word, with all that is forbidden in written counterpoint. It was the “tradition”, and Franck could not change it.

The examination program made it necessary for Franck to limit his field to the cultivation of two narrow forms – the classical fugue and the free improvisation on a single theme. Not one of the members of the jury would have tolerated a fugal entry in a distant key; not one would have accepted in the free test an exposition of a second theme in the dominant. So in this straitjacket we had to evolve,

²⁰³ See Ochse 1994, p. 156.

²⁰⁴ See Albert Mahaut, “César Franck, Professor of Organ”, transl. Beverly Scheibert, in *The American Organist* (U.S.) 16/10 1982, p. 54. Original title: “La Classe d’orgue du Conservatoire de Paris”, in *Le Monde musical* (France) 41 1930, pp. 141-142. Also Ochse 1994, p. 156.

²⁰⁵ See Henri Busser, “La Classe d’orgue de César Franck en 1889-1890”, in *L’orgue* (France) 102 1962, pp. 33-34. Also Ochse 1994, p. 156.

²⁰⁶ See appendix to this work for Louis Vierne’s own example of a *thème libre* improvisation as reconstructed by his pupil Jean Bouvard.

and the difficulty, far from disheartening our *maitre*, excited his imaginative faculties to give themselves full play in the care of the details. In fugue he was particularly interested in the construction of the episodes, in which he combined, as far as possible, the progression of an ingenious tonal plan with the elegant writing of a counterpoint with imitations in closer and closer stretto. Every now and then he would sit down at the keyboard and give us an example. And what an example! While we poor victims had difficulty working out one correct counter-subject, he, in the same time, had found five or six: "See, you can do this... or else this... or again..." Then, in most natural tone: "Come now, choose one and make me a good fugue!" I leave you to imagine the confusion of the student who often – very often – made a lamentable mess of it. Then – finally one would manage to get out of it somehow.

For the free subject he found a way of stretching the strict form, either by subtly introducing a new element at the moment of transition to the dominant, an element which could serve later in the development, or by the intensive cultivation in the development of a new theme suggested by a fragment of the given theme. Then there were inversion, cultivated vigorously, and change of rhythm; or an obstinate pattern used with a definite intention and taken from a fragment of the theme; or variety and subtlety of harmonization, etc, etc. All of them were artifices which the *maitre* could handle with disconcerting ease. He used few material effects of registration, nor were they really possible on our miserable class instrument. The music itself had to supply everything.²⁰⁷

"Unofficial" composition class

Complaints that Franck was in the process of making the organ class into an unofficial composition class were heard from time to time.²⁰⁸ It was not the fact that the actual content of his teaching that was perceived as a threat to his colleagues at the conservatoire. According to the conservatoire's statutes, the organ class was to be regarded as a branch of composition studies. As organ professor Franck was officially entrusted with such duties. The main butt of the criticism was the fact that Franck gave private lessons in composition and therefore could be regarded as a competitor to the teaching offered in this subject by the conservatoire.

Vincent d'Indy wrote that Franck's class "was for a long time the true centre for the study of composition at the conservatoire".²⁰⁹ The gifted student Guy Ropartz preferred to study privately with Franck even when he found out that this disqualified him from competing for the prestigious *Prix de Rome* composition prize offered by the conservatoire. Franck gained a formidable reputation as a teacher who really understood the processes involved in the creation and treatment of differing musical forms. Vincent d'Indy noted:

It is not astonishing, therefore, that César Franck's lofty teaching, based upon Bach and Beethoven, but admitting all new and generous impulses and aspirations, should have attracted all the young spirits endowed with noble ideas and really enamoured of their art.²¹⁰

Charles Tournemire noticed that a large number of guests or listeners, who he amusingly characterised as "refugées" from the official classes in harmony, fugue and composition led to some rather overcrowded classes. He noted that the private

²⁰⁷ See Vierne 1938/1939, p. 12. Also Ochse 1994, p. 157.

²⁰⁸ See Vallas 1951, pp. 256-258. Also Ochse 1994, pp. 158-159.

²⁰⁹ See d'Indy 1910, p. 244.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

lessons in Franck's home were sometime attended by about 30 listeners in addition to the six students who participated actively. It is therefore not entirely surprising that this caused some concern to the other composition teachers at the conservatoire.

For there can be no doubt that the "refugées" found Franck's teaching differed radically from that which was offered in the "official" composition classes. Tournemire described it as a technical and artistic presentation which glowed "comme la rosace septentrionale de la Cathédrale de Paris... 'leçons' ailées, libérées des lourdes chaînes des formules..."²¹¹ [like the rose window at the Cathedral of Paris... private lessons, freed from the dead weights of mechanical formulae]. John Hinton was a private pupil of Franck in the years 1865 and 1867. He was also a guest student in the organ class in 1873. According to him Franck had an unique ability to inspire his students to serious and mature work, and this was the cause of his popularity among them. He quotes some of Franck's advice:

Don't try to do a great deal, but rather seek to do *well*; no matter if only a little can be produced; bring me the results of *many* trials, which you can honestly say represent the very best you can do; don't think that you will learn from my correction of faults of *which* you *are aware*, unless you have strained every effort yourself to amend them.²¹²

Louis Vierne added:

What hours! What memories! To recall them all would require an entire volume, and, besides, it would be futile, for no words could give any idea of the sensations felt, of the moods aroused by that apostle's word, by those inspired examples intended not only to make us technicians, but to breathe into us an ardent love of our art. I experienced them forty-five years ago, and they seem like yesterday!²¹³

According to the archives of the Paris Conservatoire, some 67 students passed through Franck's organ class.²¹⁴ Paul Wachs,²¹⁵ Louis Benoist and Samuel Rousseau were among the first students that Franck inherited from François Benoist. Some of Franck's best-known pupils were Auguste Chapuis, Henri Dallier, Vincent d'Indy, Albert Mahaut, Adolphe Marty, Ernest Chausson, Gabriel Pierné and Augusta Holmès. Among those who studied with both Franck and his successor at the Conservatoire Charles-Marie Widor we find the names Charles Tournemire,²¹⁶ Henri Libert, Henri Busser and Louis Vierne.²¹⁷ Vincent d'Indy writes of this "Artistic Family":

²¹¹ See *Le Monde musical* (France) 41 1930, p. 141. Also Ochse 1994, p. 159.

²¹² Hinton, John, *César Franck. Some Personal Reminiscences*, London 1912. See Ochse 1994, p. 159.

²¹³ See Vierne 1939, pp. 12-13. Also Ochse 1994, p. 159.

²¹⁴ See Ochse 1994, pp. 157-158.

²¹⁵ See Jutten 1999, pp. 770-773, and 816-820; Paul Wachs (1851-1915) published his treatise *L'Organiste improvisateur, traité d'improvisation* in Paris 1878. See below for music examples from this volume dealing with fugue and *theme libre*, pp. 26-29, and pp. 10-14.

²¹⁶ As we have seen also Charles Tournemire published a treatise: *Précis d'exécution, de registration et d'improvisation à l'orgue*, 1936. See below for music example from this volume that deals with accompaniment of a plainchant melody in the spirit of César Franck, p. 105.

²¹⁷ Andrew H. Barlow, *French Organ Music 1770-1850*. Master of Philosophy thesis, Nottingham 1980. See Ochse 1994, p. 160.

The spirit of Franck also reacted on some of his colleagues... Alexandre Guilmant, Emmanuel Chabrier who was deeply attached to him, Paul Dukas, and Gabriel Fauré himself... (and) other executive artists such as Paul Braud, Armand Parent and the great violinist Ysaye... These knew the master intimately and were able to assimilate his innermost thoughts... César Franck's lessons... actually were a community of effort on the part of the master and pupil directed to one identical aim – Art... They will never forget as long as life lasts the spiritual influence of their lamented master.²¹⁸

FUGUE

CONSTRUITE AVEC LES EXEMPLES DONNÉS CI-DESSUS.

Exposition

Divertissement

²¹⁸ See d'Indy 1910, p. 251.

PART 1

The first system of musical notation consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). The music features a melodic line in the right hand with eighth and sixteenth notes, and a more rhythmic accompaniment in the left hand.

Contre-Exposition.

The second system of musical notation, labeled "Contre-Exposition.", consists of two staves. It continues the melodic and harmonic development from the first system. A "Ped." (pedal) marking is placed below the bass staff, indicating a sustained pedal point.

The third system of musical notation consists of two staves, continuing the musical piece. The right hand features a melodic line with some rests, while the left hand provides a steady accompaniment.

The fourth system of musical notation consists of two staves, continuing the musical piece. The right hand has a melodic line with eighth notes, and the left hand has a rhythmic accompaniment.

Relatif mineur.

The fifth system of musical notation, labeled "Relatif mineur.", consists of two staves. This system marks a change in mood or key, as indicated by the label. The melodic line in the right hand is more active, with many sixteenth notes.

The sixth system of musical notation consists of two staves, continuing the musical piece. The right hand features a complex melodic line with many sixteenth notes, and the left hand has a rhythmic accompaniment.

Divertissement

The first system of music consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower in bass clef. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). The music features a melodic line in the right hand with eighth and sixteenth notes, and a more rhythmic accompaniment in the left hand.

The second system continues the piece with similar melodic and accompaniment patterns. The right hand has a more active melodic line with some grace notes, while the left hand provides a steady accompaniment.

RÉ majeur

The third system is labeled 'RÉ majeur'. The key signature changes to one sharp (F#). The melody in the right hand is more expansive, with some notes beamed together. The left hand continues with a simple accompaniment.

Si mineur Divertissement

The fourth system is labeled 'Si mineur' and 'Divertissement'. The key signature changes to two sharps (F# and C#). The melody in the right hand is more rhythmic and features some slurs. The left hand has a simple accompaniment.

The fifth system continues the piece with similar melodic and accompaniment patterns. The right hand has a more active melodic line with some grace notes, while the left hand provides a steady accompaniment.

Strette

The sixth system is labeled 'Strette'. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). The music is more rhythmic and features some slurs. The left hand has a simple accompaniment.

PART 1

The image displays six systems of musical notation for a piano accompaniment. Each system consists of a grand staff with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 4/4. The notation includes various rhythmic values such as quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes, as well as rests and slurs. Pedal markings, indicated by the word "Ped" with a horizontal line underneath, are present in the second and fifth systems. The first system shows a melodic line in the treble and a bass line in the bass. The second system features a more complex texture with chords in the treble and a bass line. The third system continues with a melodic line in the treble and a bass line. The fourth system shows a melodic line in the treble and a bass line. The fifth system features a complex texture with chords in the treble and a bass line. The sixth system shows a melodic line in the treble and a bass line.

7. Music example. Paul Wachs: Fugue. Reproduced by kind permission of Odile Jutten.

SONATE
CONSTITUÉE AVEC LES EXEMPLES DONNÉS CI-DESSUS

Andantino.

The first system of musical notation consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The tempo is marked 'Andantino'. The music begins with a series of eighth notes in the right hand and a simple bass line in the left hand.

The second system continues the piece. The right hand features a more complex melodic line with some slurs and ties. The left hand provides a steady accompaniment with eighth notes and chords.

The third system shows further development of the musical themes. The right hand has a melodic line with some grace notes and slurs. The left hand continues with a consistent accompaniment pattern.

The fourth system includes a triplet in the bass line. The right hand continues with its melodic line, and the left hand has a more active accompaniment with some triplets and slurs.

The fifth system features a triplet in the right hand. The right hand has a melodic line with some slurs and ties. The left hand continues with its accompaniment.

The sixth system concludes the piece. The right hand has a melodic line with a triplet. The left hand has a final accompaniment pattern with a triplet.

PART 1

First system of musical notation, featuring a treble and bass staff with a key signature of three flats and a 3/4 time signature. The music consists of a melodic line in the treble and a harmonic accompaniment in the bass.

Second system of musical notation, continuing the piece with similar melodic and harmonic textures.

Third system of musical notation, including the instruction "Ped." (pedal) below the bass staff.

Fourth system of musical notation, showing more complex melodic passages and accompaniment.

Fifth system of musical notation, featuring a more active bass line with eighth-note patterns.

Sixth system of musical notation, concluding the piece with a final melodic flourish in the treble and a descending bass line.

PART 1

First system of musical notation, featuring a treble and bass clef. The treble staff contains a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes in the second measure and another triplet in the fourth measure. The bass staff provides a simple accompaniment.

Second system of musical notation. The treble staff continues the melodic line with eighth notes and quarter notes. The bass staff features a long, sweeping slur across several measures, indicating a sustained accompaniment.

Third system of musical notation. The treble staff begins with a piano (*p.*) dynamic marking. It includes a triplet of eighth notes in the third measure. The bass staff continues with a melodic accompaniment.

Fourth system of musical notation. The treble staff features a triplet of eighth notes in the third measure. The bass staff has a long slur, similar to the second system, providing a continuous accompaniment.

Fifth system of musical notation. The treble staff contains a triplet of eighth notes in the first measure and a slur over the following notes. The bass staff has a triplet of eighth notes in the third measure.

Sixth system of musical notation. The treble staff features a triplet of eighth notes in the first measure and another triplet in the third measure. The bass staff continues with a melodic accompaniment.

PART 1

First system of musical notation, consisting of a grand staff with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The music features a melodic line in the treble and a bass line with triplets in the bass.

Second system of musical notation, continuing the piece. It features a melodic line in the treble and a bass line with triplets in the bass.

Third system of musical notation, continuing the piece. It features a melodic line in the treble and a bass line with triplets in the bass.

Fourth system of musical notation, continuing the piece. It features a melodic line in the treble and a bass line with triplets in the bass.

Ped.

Fifth system of musical notation, continuing the piece. It features a melodic line in the treble and a bass line with triplets in the bass.

Sixth system of musical notation, continuing the piece. It features a melodic line in the treble and a bass line with triplets in the bass.

8. Music example. Paul Wachs: Sonate (thème libre). Reproduced by kind permission of Odile Jutten.

9. Music example. Tournemire: 1936.

CHAPTER 11

Catholic traditions of liturgical organ improvisation in 19th century Austria and Germany

We shall now turn our attention to the tasks required of Catholic church organists in Austria and Germany during the 19th century. It is not easy to give a uniform picture of organ playing for Catholic services in these countries since musical practices varied considerably from one place to another. Nevertheless, one can generalise and say that this was a time in which church music was infused with the idea of regaining something from the former glories of its past inheritance. This exerted its influence on decisions regarding what should actually be defined as sacred music. Against this background organ improvisation took place – somewhere on the boundary between the old and new musical styles. By the latter the predominant Romantic aesthetic of the day is implied.

Roman Catholic practices outlined

Generally speaking the prime function of organ music in the Austrian and German Catholic Church during the 19th century was to create a “mystic aura” to accompany the liturgy for Mass and Vespers. According to Hans Haselböck,²¹⁹ music – both played and sung – and lighted altar candles formed an essential backdrop to liturgical celebrations, as well as marking the fact that they were in progress. The conclusion of the Mass could be marked with the end of the music. In village churches the music was silenced as soon as the priest had left the choir. An organist who aimed to meet the requirement that the length of music should always match the length of the service depended on his ability to create music spontaneously. This music functioned as a continuous and for the most part discrete sounding adornment to the course of liturgical events. As organ music was such an essential part of divine worship this led to a tendency to regard organ music played outside the services as an unwarranted intrusion into the sacred silence of the church.

Haselböck indicates that the practice was to “fill all the gaps” in the liturgy, and that the music should only be silenced at the solemn moment in the Communion service where the elements were transubstantiated (consecrated). He characterises this as a type of “Horror vacui”²²⁰ where even the slightest spaces of a service had to be compensated by short interludes from the church’s organ. It must be pointed out

²¹⁹ See Hans Haselböck, “...die Andacht zu befördern’: Zum Orgelspiel im katholischen Gottesdienst des 19. Jahrhunderts,” in *Zur deutschen Orgelmusik des 19. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Hermann J. Busch and Michael Heinemann, Sinzig 1998, p. 52.

²²⁰ “Horror vacui” – fear of empty rooms.

that there was no official rubric that specified that this practice was mandatory. However, throughout the 19th century traditions developed which included such continuous and complementary styles of improvisation. Thus it is probable that an initial occasional practice developed into a regular custom.

Sung Mass – one of the main forms of worship

Two of the most common forms of service are the so-called “Said (Low) Mass” and the “Sung Mass”.²²¹ At the former the celebrant simply said the texts and prayers in Latin. As a rule this service would take place without any music being sung or played. The Sung Mass was different, where songs with several versets, and songs that paraphrased over the differing sections of the service: Gloria, Credo etc were sung while the priest performed the liturgical portion of the service silently.²²² The organist’s duty was to supply introductions to the individual songs and thereafter to lead and accompany them. Here it was important that musical items should end in such a way that the intonation for the next item could follow naturally. A thorough working knowledge of tonal relationships and modulation was therefore a necessity since the tonalities used varied considerably from one melody to the next.

It was also expected that the interludes and introductions²²³ should reflect both the character of the melody and the meaning of the text, so that there was for example a differentiation between the Gloria in excelsis and the Agnus Dei. Musical flexibility was in many ways the alpha and omega of service playing.²²⁴ One could not expect to be able to know the length of each individual section of the service beforehand, since this could depend on such variable factors as the celebrant’s temperament, the length of a procession, or the number of communicants. As a rule music that in any way obtruded or hindered the flow of the liturgical continuity was frowned on, yet at the same time it was the organist’s responsibility to ensure that the ceremony was not marred in any way by a sudden acoustic vacuum.

It is therefore reasonable to suppose the obvious: that the improvisation skills of the organist determined how well these requirements could be fulfilled. On the other hand church musicians who worked in larger towns were able to improvise a longer piece or play a longer composition as a conclusion to the ceremonies. Such a postlude could last for some while after the conclusion of the service.²²⁵

The duties of the organist at High Mass

At the so-called “High Mass” – known in Latin as the *Missa Solemnis* or the *Missa Cantata*²²⁶ – the duties of the organist were as follows:

²²¹ German – “Stille Messe” and “Singmesse” respectively.

²²² See Haselböck 1998, pp. 52-53.

²²³ Interludes between verses should not be confused with interludes between each line of a verse. The latter was a common practice both in Catholic and Evangelical Lutheran churches during the 18th and 19th centuries. In this manner the interludes in the chorale sung in Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte* opera (1790) as Pamina and Tamino prepare for their ordeal, and those in the opening chorale of Wagner’s *Die Meistersinger* (sketched 1845 and completed 1868) can probably also be regarded as surviving examples that reflect this practice.

²²⁴ See Haselböck 1998, p. 53.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Here implied the High Mass.

1. Alternatim playing against the church's plainchant *schola* or mixed voice choir. This practice can be dated back to the year 1600, and is described in the *Caermoniale episcoporum*, and was practised throughout much of the 19th century.²²⁷
2. Figured Bass: Continuo playing was necessary in performance of church music from both the Classical and pre-Classical eras.
3. As an instrument the organ was still used in some of the so-called "orchestral Masses". As the number of instruments used in the orchestra increased during the late Classical and Romantic eras the continuo functions of the organ were no longer necessary. All the same, many composers employed the organ in their orchestration in order to emphasise the sacral nature and identity of the music.
4. As the organ grew in size and acquired various playing aids it became both possible and practical to use it as an orchestral substitute. The Masses of Franz Liszt and Josef Gabriel Rheinberger (1839-1901) are examples of this practice. Among the catalogue of large-scale masses intended for full orchestra there are many that are also transcribed for accompaniment by organ alone. The works could thus easily be performed when the resources of a large orchestra were unavailable.
5. Solo tasks: If we discount composed works which incorporated solo passages for organ – this applied specially to the Benedictus, and less frequently the complete Ordinary of the mass – the organist had to create all introductions and intonations, interludes and codas. In the Catholic Mass these tasks were almost exclusively improvised.²²⁸ It was always possible to play a longer piece of composed music at the end of the service.²²⁹

The choir, or the church's choral scholars, performed in this way the Ordinary of the Mass: Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus-Benedictus and Agnus Dei. The same applied to the Proper of the Mass: Introits, Graduale, Offertory and Communion. In the course of time the practice of singing the alternative leads of the mass became less common, and by the end of the 19th century it was normally only the Offertory that was given such a musical form.²³⁰

A German church organ textbook details the duties of Catholic organists

Heinrich Oberhoffer's textbook *Die Schule des katholischen Organisten* opens with a discussion as to whether it is strictly necessary for an organ textbook to have a confessional basis – the question as to whether organ playing requirements of the Catholic Church differ radically from those of other denominations. He admits

²²⁷ See *Musica sacra* (Germany/Austria) 27 no. 5 1894, p. 58. Also Haselböck 1998, p. 45.

²²⁸ This should be regarded as a major reason as to why improvisation was at this time seen as a necessary prerequisite for serving as organist in the Catholic Church. Therefore continuo playing, plainchant accompaniment and improvisation of verses and interludes were essential skills for organists to acquire during their training. However organists frequently employed similar types of style in improvisation to those used in formerly composed music. The dividing-line between composition and improvisation was not very pronounced either in practical or aesthetical terms.

²²⁹ See Haselböck 1998, p. 45.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 45-46.

that this is probably not the case, but propagates the view that the Roman Catholic rituals do make some specific demands on the organist. Oberhoffer notes that a high level of technical proficiency is not necessarily required – although he does not imply that it is disadvantageous. He points out that a Catholic organist seldom has the opportunity to perform larger organ works, and that these cannot be regarded as an integral part of Catholic worship.²³¹ All the same Oberhoffer emphasises that the organist must build up a sound knowledge of plainchant and a solid experience of accompanying it. He suggests that Catholic organists can be far more flexible in the discharge of their liturgical duties if they content themselves with working from the melody only while producing the harmonising voices on the spur of the moment:

...allein das wird Niemand bestreiten können, dass der Eigenthümlichkeit des katholischen Gottesdienstes halber besondere Anforderungen an den kath. Organisten gefordert, dass er die in den Kirchentönen gesetzten liturgischen Choralgesänge regelrecht und selbständig begleiten könne. Denn was können ihm die verschiedenen im Drucke erschienen Choralbegleitungen nützen? Nur wenig oder wenigstens nicht viel; erstens hat fast jede Diözese, ja nicht selten jede Stadt oder jedes Dorf Choralbücher, die in der Lesart der Melodien oft sehrweit von einander abweichen; zweitens steht diese Orgel hoch, jene Tief im Tone; drittens singt es sich selbst bei einer höheren Tonlage in dieser Kirche leicht, in jener aber schon bei einer mittleren Tonlage schwer, welchen Umständen der Organist stets Rechnung tragen muss. Was kann nun dem Organisten seine gedruckte Orgelbegleitung in solchen Fällen helfen, selbst wenn die Choralbücher alle übereinstimmen? – „Er muss die Fertigkeit besitzen, die gedruckte Orgelbegleitung nach Bedürfnis höher oder tiefer zu transponieren“, wird man wahrscheinlich antworten. Das aber ist keine so ganz leichte Sache. Viel leichter aber ist es, den Choral in jeder beliebigen Tonhöhe zu begleiten, wenn der Organist nur die Melodie vor sich hat, und er sich die Fähigkeit erworben hat, denselben in der verschiedenartigsten Weise zu harmonisieren, wozu natürlich eine gründliche Kenntniss des Chorals und der alten Kirchentönen erforderlich ist.²³²

[...all the same no-one can deny that the special characteristics of the Catholic service require the organist to be able to lead the liturgical plainchant melodies in the different church tonalities. Can one not use the accompaniments that are printed? Only to a limited degree. In the first place almost every diocese, in fact every town or village has its own chorale books with melodies that differ greatly from each other. In the second place one organ is at a high pitch whilst another is at a low pitch. And again, in one church it is easy to sing in a higher key, whilst in another even a medium key is difficult. Organists constantly have to deal with these circumstances. How can one printed plainchant accompaniment help, even if all the chorale books agree? “He (the organist) must be capable of transposing the accompaniment up or down” is the probable answer – but that is no easy matter. In the meantime it is much easier to accompany a

²³¹ See Heinrich Oberhoffer, *Die Schule des katholischen Organisten. Theoretisch- praktische Orgelschule Op. 39. Zweite gänzlich umgearbeitete und vermehrte Auflage* (2nd ed.), Trier 1874: In the introduction Oberhoffer refers to a type of composition that is to be practiced at the instrument in accordance with specified rules and stylistic examples. Here we can note the parallels to the 15th and 16th century *fundament* books and Tomas de Sancta Maria's *Libro llamado arte de tãner fantasia*. Oberhoffer's emphasis on improvisation has also many similarities with César Franck's organ classes at the Paris Conservatoire where this formed a major element. Truly Oberhoffer's work reflects a more general central European custom and method used in the teaching of Catholic organists during the 19th century.

²³² See Oberhoffer 1894 – Introduction.

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(Gregorian) chant when one simply has the melody on the music desk and has acquired the necessary competence to harmonise it in many differing ways. Naturally enough this demands a thorough knowledge of the plainchant melodies and old church modes.]

Apart from competence in the harmonisation of Gregorian chants Oberhoffer emphasises solid proficiency in the art of improvisation. Here the organist should be capable of creating small interludes and rapid modulation from one key to another, even between keys whose relationship is very remote. Oberhoffer regards skills like that as decisive factors as to whether one can fulfil the duties required of a Catholic organist:

...aber er muss ausser der genannten Fertigkeit in der Choralbegleitung auch noch die Fertigkeit besitzen, rasch und auf dem kürzesten Wege in die entferntesten Tonarten ausweichen zu können, und kleine Vor- und Zwischenspiele, deren er in Masse bedarf, zu extemporieren: sonst taugt er zu einem katholischen Organisten nicht.²³³

[...but in addition to the specified competence in plainchant accompaniment one needs to have the competence to quickly modulate to the most remote tonalities and extemporize small introductions and conclusions – many of these will be needed. A player who cannot manage this cannot cope with the duties required of a Catholic organist.]

The first edition of Heinrich Oberhoffer's work was published in 1869, fourteen years after Louis Niedermeyer and Louis d'Ortigue had published their work on plainchant accompaniment. In his introduction Oberhoffer states that his textbook is based on his own twelve years teaching at the training college in Luxemburg.²³⁴ Oberhoffer presents his own ideas as to how plainchant accompaniments should be formed, and these differ in several ways from those propagated by Niedermeyer and d'Ortigue. He summarises his approach:

Nach meiner Ansicht muss für den Choral ein Begleitungssystem gefunden werden, das 1) dem Wesen seiner Tonarten entspricht, 2) auch von den mittelmässig gebildeten Organisten leicht gehandhabt werden kann, und das 3) seinen Hauptzweck erfüllt, der doch kein anderer sein kann, als die Melodie in ein helleres Licht zu setzen, dem Bilde einen hübschen Rahmen zu geben, und den Sängern das Treffen der Intervalle zu erleichtern.

Mein System ist Folgendes:

1) Es sollen in der Begleitung der Hauptsache nach nur leitereigene Dreiklänge der Kirchentonarten und nur ausnahmsweise, um all zu grosse Härten und Schroffheiten in der Harmonie zu vermeiden, hie und da leiterfremde Dreiklänge angewandt werden; denn die Anwendung zu vieler Chromatik in der Harmonisierung des Chorals muss als ein Widerspruch mit dem Wesen dieser Gesangart angesehen werden...

2) Es sollen bei der Begleitung die Dreiklänge vorzugsweise in ihrer Grundform und als Sextakkorde angewandt, der Quartsextakkord aber nur ganz ausnahmsweise bei stufenweise fortschreitendem oder liegenbleibendem Basstone gebraucht werden.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Ibid.

3) Der sanft dissonierende Hauptseptimenakkord ist nicht gänzlich ausgeschlossen, doch muss seine Anwendung eine äusserst beschränkte sein, und wird ihm der Sextakkord des verminderten Dreiklanges vorgezogen.

4) Bei syllabischen Gesängen, d. h. bei solchen, wo auf jede Sylbe nur eine oder zwei Noten kommen, erhält jede Note ihren eigenen Akkord oder wenigstens eine neue Bassnote; bei solchen Gesängen aber, wo mehrere Noten auf eine Sylbe kommen, wird, um die Begleitung nicht steif und schwerfällig zu machen, mit Diskretion Anwendung von den durchgehenden Melodienoten gemacht, wie etwa in folgendem Beispiel:

10. Music example. Oberhoffer 1874, p. 83.

5) Um die Tonalität der betreffenden Kirchentonart deutlicher auszuprägen, sollen in der Begleitung der tonische und der Dominantdreiklang der Zahl vorherrschen.

[In my opinion one has to arrive at a system of plainchant accompaniment which 1) relates to the tonality's nature and character, 2) can also easily be used by an organist of average rather than specialist academic background, and that 3) achieves its main purpose which can be described as clearly illuminating the melody, as if giving a picture a beautiful frame, and thus facilitates the singers' task of find the correct intervals.²³⁵

My system is as follows:

1) Only chords that can be formed from the scales of the church modes used should be employed in the accompaniment. From time to time it is also permissible to use some chords that are foreign to the scale in order to avoid a harmony that is too stiff and rigid. However, too much use of chromatic tones will destroy the special characteristics of this type of song.

2) Chords should be preferably employed in root and first inversion positions. As an exception the second inversion (6-4) chord can be used in passing or over a pedal bass note.

3) The mildly dissonant dominant seventh chord should not be excluded, but its use should be limited and preferably confined to being a diminished first inversion chord.

²³⁵ See Oberhoffer 1874, pp. 83-84.

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4) In syllabic²³⁶ song, where each syllable has only one or two notes, each note should have its own chord or at least a new bass note. When there are several notes to one syllable, passing notes can be used with discretion in the melody voice, to avoid a heavy and ponderous accompaniment, as demonstrated by the following example:]

5) Tonic and dominant chords should dominate the accompaniment in order to clearly that the tonality is defined.]

Oberhoffer maintains that, in addition to these general rules, the pupil should bear in mind these specific points: A) When a note is repeated in the melody, either the harmony must change or the bass should move with the repetition. (See example a). B) When a phrase is immediately repeated, a different harmonisation should be employed for the repetition. (See example b). C) In order to assist the singers in the correct pitching of intervals, one can vary the positioning of thirds, fourths and fifths in order to avoid changing the actual chord itself. (See example c). Alternatively one can ensure that a chord is chosen which actually contains both the first and second tone of an interval. (See example d). D) When a melody rises by an interval of a fifth or sixth, it has to move from a close positioned to a more spread layout. It should remain in this position until the melody again returns its original level. In this way the remaining harmonies can remain in close position – thus avoiding any leaps in the middle voices. (See example e). E) All vagrant chords should be avoided, especially when a tritone effect arises between the outer voices. Apart from the negative influence on the sound, there is the danger that singers can be misled into sharpening or flattening chromatic intervals. For example when an F natural in the bass immediately precedes the melodic requirement for the singers to sing the tone B (H in German; si in French) then it is easy for the bass F to lead to the singing of a B flat instead of a B natural. (See example f). Oberhoffer also notes that use of tonal relations is desirable. In order to prevent undesirable parallel fifths and octaves, it is suggested that the bass should move in contrary motion to the melody, or else a simple pedal point should be used.

The image shows two staves of musical notation, treble and bass clef. The first staff contains examples a), b), and c). Example a) shows a melody with repeated notes and changing chords. Example b) shows a phrase repeated with different harmonization. Example c) is labeled 'Terz, Quart, Quint' and shows intervals with different chord positions. The second staff contains examples d), e), and f). Example d) shows a melody with a box labeled 'weite Lage' (wide position) over a chord. Example e) shows a melody with a box labeled 'weite Lage' over a chord. Example f) shows a melody with a box labeled 'besser oder sehr schlecht' (better or very bad) over a chord, illustrating a tritone effect.

11. Music example. Oberhoffer 1874, p. 84.

²³⁶ The term "syllabic song" refers to songs with one syllable per note. This is in contrast to melismatic singing where each syllable has several notes.

After having explained these principle aspects of his system, Oberhoffer presents a considerable number of examples showing how these should be practised in the differing modes. In each church mode he clarifies this by first presenting the harmonisation of a scale. The course of the harmony is here dictated by the chords formed from the different steps of the scale. Subsequently he presents certain templates that apply to that specific tonality. He expects the pupil to memorise these and be capable of applying them to other tonalities. Finally he gives a number of demonstration examples which show how plainchant melodies should be harmonised in their entirety. Again the pupil is expected to master the art of transposing them.

The following examples show: 12) A scale in the 6th mode where the bass voice is given, and the pupil should complete the middle voices. 13) Templates without passing melody tones. 14) Templates complete with passing melody tones. 15) A demonstration example – *Ave verum corpus* – which the pupil should learn to complete in two differing tonal registers. Here again the task involves completion of the alto and tenor voices. As we can see the author supplies the first two chords.²³⁷

VI. Modus, (14. Modus).

Nachstehende Begleitung der Tonleiter kann als Basis für die Begleitung stufenweiser Tonfolgen angesehen werden.

(Der Schüler füge die Mittelstimmen bei, und lerne das Beispiel auswendig).

(Um einen ganzen Ton höher gesetzt).

12. Music example. Oberhoffer 1874, p. 85.

Schablonen.

a) Ohne durchgehende Melodienoten.

1. 2. 3. 4. 5*).

(Einen Ton höher).

6.*) 7. 8.

*) Kehrt vor einem Ruhepunkte auf der Tonika diese mehrmals wieder (wie in No. 5 und 6), so muss, wie hier geschehen, der Ganzschluss zuerst vermieden und durch einen Trugschluss mittelst des Dreiklanges

²³⁷ See Oberhoffer 1874, pp. 84-87.

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Musical score for Part 1, measures 9-15. The score is written for three staves: Treble, Bass, and Bass. Measures 9, 10, 11, and 12 are shown in the first system. Measures 13, 14, and 15 are shown in the second system. Measure 15 is labeled "Tendenzschluss." Fingerings (6) are indicated above notes in measures 9, 10, 11, 13, and 14.

13. Music example. Oberhoffer 1874, p. 85-86.

b) Mit durchgehenden Melodienoten.

Musical score for Part 1, measures 1-6. The score is written for three staves: Treble, Bass, and Bass. Measures 1, 2, and 3 are shown in the first system. Measures 4, 5, and 6 are shown in the second system. Fingerings (6) are indicated above notes in measures 4 and 5.

14. Music example. Oberhoffer 1874, p. 86.

Musterbeispiele zum Auswendiglernen der Begleitung.

No. 1.

A - ve, ve - rum cor - pus na - tum ex Ma - ri - a vir - gi - ne.

Einen ganzen Ton höher.

Cu - jus la - tus per fo - ra - tum ve - ro flu - xit san - gui - ne.

weite Lage enge Lage

O cle - mens! O dul - cis Je - su Fi - li Ma - ri - ae!

weite Lage enge Lage

15. Music example. Oberhoffer 1874, p. 87.

As we have seen a central element in Oberhoffer's method is the modal basis of chords that is primarily intended to function as note against note in relation to the melody. At the same time the system allows for exceptions, which are intended to ensure a more flexible approach to voice leading. An example of this is shown by the way in which Oberhoffer permits the use of passing notes or chord changes when tones are repeated in the plainchant melody. He also permits the use of chords that lie outside the realm of diatonic harmony in order to produce a milder effect. Oberhoffer also presents formulae for allowing several melody tones be accompanied by one and the same chord. Thus we can say that Oberhoffer's method represents a more liberal approach than the strict note against note practices outlined by Niedermeyer and d'Ortigue.²³⁸

²³⁸ See the above presentation of Niedermeyer's method.

CHAPTER 12

Anton Bruckner: composer and legendary organ improviser

There are undoubtedly many striking similarities between two of the 19th century's leading organist-composers: the Austrian Anton Bruckner and the Belgian-born/French César Franck. Their dates of their lives and work (1824-1896 and 1822-1890) are very close. Their symphonic works and chamber music lie outside the immediate sphere of their work as church musicians, yet their reputations rest securely on these acknowledged masterpieces. As organists both Franck²³⁹ and Bruckner²⁴⁰ had a relatively limited repertoire. Contemporary accounts suggest that neither of them possessed a virtuoso technique and as players of standard repertoire pieces both men exhibited some deficiencies. In spite of these limitations, it was their undoubted skills as improvising musicians that brought them wide renown as real artists of the organ.

The main arena in which Franck and Bruckner used their skills were the Catholic Mass and Vesper as celebrated in both the French and Austro-German traditions from the middle of the 19th century. We have already referred to descriptions of how César Franck's improvisations took form at the Basilique Sainte-Clotilde in Paris. We have also seen the framework for church organists in the Catholic churches of Austria and Germany and can note that this involved a much greater participation in liturgical playing than was normal for a French *titulaire* organist. Against this background we shall now consider Bruckner's work as an organist and improviser.

The German organist, composer and musicologist Erwin Horn notes that we have a number of paintings, sketches and photographs of Bruckner. His symphonies and vocal compositions are readily accessible to us through published scores and recordings. Performances of his works are not infrequent occurrences. Horn points out that it is much more difficult for us to form an adequate impression of Bruckner as an organist. As a player his concert repertoire would appear to have consisted of three major works: Johann Sebastian Bach's *Toccatà in F major* (BWV 540) and the *Toccatà and Fugue in D minor* (BWV 565), along with Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy's *Sonata nr. 1 in F minor*. We only have a very small number of organ compositions from his pen; the greater part of his output consisted of improvisations. Some regarded him as the greatest at this art; a real emperor of the

²³⁹ See Ochse 1994, pp. 57-58. Also Dupré 1955 – Introduction on page V.

²⁴⁰ See Horn, "Zwischen Interpretation und Improvisation" 1997, pp. 112-116.

organ, even characterised by some as “the Franz Liszt of the organ”. Other sceptics remarked that it was impossible to regard him as an organist – not even a bad one. Against the background of these contradictory accounts Bruckner the organist remains something of an enigma to us.²⁴¹

Bruckner as a church musician

Anton Bruckner was the son of a village schoolmaster and organist. On the death of his father in 1837 he was sent to the monastery school of St. Florian, where he also studied organ, violin and music theory. He initially followed in his father’s footsteps as a schoolmaster at the village school of Kronstorf near Enns in Upper Austria, but made a slow and steady progression towards the world of professional music. In 1845 he was appointed assistant teacher at St. Florian, and followed his former organ teacher Anton Kattinger (1798-1852) by becoming the organist, though he was never formally given the title position as monastery organist.²⁴² The monastery’s 51-stop organ built in the years 1770-1774 by Franz Xaver Chrismann²⁴³ came to exercise a great influence on Bruckner as a musician and artist. He would practice the piano for 2 hours each morning, and at the main organ for a further two hours in the afternoon. In the school holidays he could work for up to 10 hours a day with both practice and music theory. Throughout his life Bruckner frequently returned to St. Florian, where he played some memorable concerts that consisted of organ improvisations. In accordance with his own wishes his mortal remains were buried beneath the organ in this church.

In 1855 he entered as a candidate for the auditions for the organist position at Linz Cathedral. Here the candidates were examined exclusively in liturgical playing – in other words liturgical improvisation. Bruckner’s biographer August Göllerich reports the jury’s verdict on Bruckner: He displayed “technischen Ausbildung als für diesen Beruf durchwegs vollkommen gewachsen und würdig erkannt werden kann”²⁴⁴ [technical training to such a level that he can be regarded as fully mature and worthy of this appointment].

Bruckner later understood that to achieve an advancement it was necessary for him to resign his post as cathedral organist at Linz in order to concentrate on establishing himself in the more cosmopolitan atmosphere of the imperial capital and musical metropolis that was Vienna.²⁴⁵ After much thought he made the decision to move in 1868, when he succeeded his teacher Simon Sechter²⁴⁶ as professor in harmony and counterpoint at the Conservatorium des Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde. Later he also taught organ playing. From 1870 to 1874 he also taught music theory, piano and organ at St. Anna – a ladies teacher training college.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² See Andrea Harrant, “Musical life in Upper Austria in the mid-nineteenth century”, in *The Cambridge Companion to Bruckner*, ed. John Williamson, Cambridge 2004, p. 18.

²⁴³ Prior to 1886 this was the largest organ in the Hapsburg Monarchy.

²⁴⁴ Quoted in Erwin Horn, “Anton Bruckner – Genie an der Orgel”, in the *Bruckner-Jahrbuch 1994/95/96*, Linz 1997, p. 215.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Simon Sechter (1788-1867) was a Bohemian-born music theorist, composer, and organist who composed some 5000 fugues, in addition to masses and oratorios. He was known as a very strict teacher who also forbade Anton Bruckner to write any original compositions during the period when Bruckner was his pupil.

In his endeavours to climb the ladder to higher social and artistic recognition he applied for the post of organist to the Royal Imperial Court, but it was not until ten years after his arrival in Vienna that he was given his genuine status as a member of the Royal Imperial Court Chapel in 1878. As Court Organist Bruckner was not alone – the title was shared between him and two other organists Rudolf Bibl (1832-1902) and Pius Richter (1818-1893).²⁴⁷

Court organist

Anton Bruckner's visiting card from his time in Vienna introduced him as the "K. K. Hoforganist" [organist to the Royal Imperial Court]. After his name the card presented him as "Lector an der k. k. Universität" [lecturer at the Royal Imperial University] and "Professor am Conservatorium" [professor at the conservatoire]. The Royal Imperial title was intended to emphasise Bruckner's standing as a person with a considerable degree of musical authority. However, Bruckner did not find it easy to satisfy the requirements for the services in the Hofburgkapelle²⁴⁸ easy to follow. His lack of sight-reading skills led to difficulties in following²⁴⁹ the organ parts of orchestral masses. He could not always manage to adapt himself to the ensemble as a whole, which resulted in organ entries that were frequently too early or too late.

Accompaniment of vocal soloists and congregational singing posed similar problems. Rather sorrowfully Bruckner had to accept that his services were no longer valued as he was gradually manoeuvred out of his position at the Imperial Chapel.²⁵⁰ Towards the end of his tenure he was only allowed to play for the simple *Segensandachten* [services of Eucharistic Adoration (which were held in the afternoon)] since here he could do no real damage. It should be remembered that services in the monastic church of St. Florian and Linz Cathedral would have accustomed Bruckner to a style of solo playing which gave him far greater licence to follow his own spontaneous ideas.²⁵¹ Also the 18 stops organ at the Hofburgkapelle could never hope to satisfy Bruckner's artistic tastes and musical aspirations.

Bruckner's organ improvisation

Erwin Horn points out that there are many contemporary accounts of Anton Bruckner's legendary organ improvisations. He considers that in spite of many words, these descriptions fall short of being able to communicate "das Wesentliche" [the essence].²⁵² Horn goes further and wonders if such an operation would or could be possible. Can mere verbal language give a satisfactory sketch of music

²⁴⁷ See Horn, "Anton Bruckner – Genie an der Orgel" 1997, p. 215.

²⁴⁸ The chapel of the Imperial Palace in Vienna – the Hofburg.

²⁴⁹ See Horn, "Zwischen Interpretation und Improvisation" 1997, p. 121: It was not only at the Imperial Chapel that there was considerable dissatisfaction with Bruckner as accompanist or ensemble player. For example Franz Liszt was not at all happy when he heard Bruckner playing the organ part of his oratorio *Christus* in the Grosser Musikvereinssaal, Vienna.

²⁵⁰ See Horn, "Anton Bruckner – Genie an der Orgel" 1997, p. 215. Also Horn, "Zwischen Interpretation und Improvisation" 1997, pp. 118-121.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² By the expression "das Wesentliche" Erwin Horn probably refers to a more comprehensive account of Bruckner's art of improvisation that can be related to musical forms and harmonisations.

that is created and presented spontaneously – patterns of sound that merely brush the ear before melting away leaving not a trace behind?²⁵³ The study *Von der Orgel-Improvisation zur Symphonie* by German musicologist Karl Schütz²⁵⁴ refers to some general features of Bruckner's large-scale improvisations, which are based on the experiences of contemporary witnesses:

Er begann gewöhnlich mit den zartesten Stimmen auf dem vierten Manual zu phantasieren, ähnlich wie auch bei den Anfängen der Symphonien, worauf das eigentliche Thema mit plastischer Farbgebung eingeführt wurde. Die Verarbeitung war eine höchst mannigfaltige und lies alle Künste des Kontrapunktes spielen. Dabei werden nach und nach immer neue Stimmen herangezogen. Vor dem Plenospiel trat gewöhnlich eine kurze Pause ein. Häufig wählte der Meister für das volle Werk auch ein eigenes, hierfür passendes Thema, das manchmal in freier Fuge durchgeführt wurde.²⁵⁵

[Usually he began by fantasising with some of the delicate stops on the fourth manual, in a similar way to that in which he opens his symphonies. The real theme was then introduced with subtle tone- colours. He developed this in a multitude of ways using all his contrapuntal techniques. In this context he steadily added new stops. Before playing on full organ there was usually a short general pause. The master chose a suitable theme for the *Tutti* section, and this was usually developed as a fugue in free style.]

We can note some parallels to César Franck's improvisations in *Sainte-Clotilde* as described by Charles Tournemire. Franck often commenced his organ improvisations by playing himself towards a musical theme, frequently employed sonata (symphonic) form, and usually concluded with a fantastic polyphonic structure.²⁵⁶

Contrapuntal techniques

The German musicologist Rainer Boss²⁵⁷ maintains that an analysis of Bruckner's complete works shows how these incorporate fugal elements as a vital component of their form and structure. He suggests that researchers have paid comparatively little attention to this aspect of Bruckner's personal style.²⁵⁸ Boss illustrates the meaning of fugue for Bruckner as a creative musician, and cites the composer's request, dated at the 14th October 1867, to be appointed as organist or deputy *Kapellmeister* at the Royal Imperial Chapel in Vienna. Bruckner here refers to some main points in the course of his life up to this point:²⁵⁹

Der erfurchtsvollst Gefertige ist anno 1824 zu Ansfelden in Oberösterreich geboren, war bis 1855 Lehrer und Stiftsorganist von St. Florian, ist seither Domorganist in Linz. Seit seiner Jugend widmetet er sich mit allem Eifer den contrapunctischen Studien; seit dem Jahre 1855 war er Schüler des sel[igen] Hoforganisten und Professor Sechter, und verwendete all sein Ersparniss und alle freie Zeit, ja die Nächte für seine Ausbildung bis Juli 1863. Die Resultate der Studien weisen

²⁵³ See Horn, "Zwischen Interpretation und Improvisation" 1997, p. 122.

²⁵⁴ See Karl Schütz, "Von der Orgel-Improvisation zur Symphonie. Ein Beitrag zur Klangvorstellung Anton Bruckners," in *Bruckner-Studien*, ed. Othmar Wessely, Wien 1975, p. 279.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Cf. Tournemire 1936, p. 103.

²⁵⁷ See Rainer Boss, "Die Fuge bei Anton Bruckner. Ein bedeutendes Kriterium seines Personalstils", in the *Bruckner-Jahrbuch 1994/95/96*, Linz 1997, pp. 135-156.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 135.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 137.

die wahrhaft glänzenden Zeugnisse vor, und erhielt er zuletzt die Befähigung als Lehrer der Composition an Konservatorien.²⁶⁰

[This most deferential writer was born in 1824 at Ansfelden in Upper Austria, until 1855 was teacher and monastic organist at St. Florian, and since then has been cathedral organist at Linz. Since his youth he has devoted himself with great enthusiasm to the study of counterpoint. From 1855 he was a pupil of the blessed court organist and professor Sechter, and devoted all his life's savings and free time, including nights to his education until July 1863. The result of these studies is shown by magnificent testimonials, and in the end he achieved such competence so that he could become a conservatory lecturer in composition.]

Boss points out the striking manner in which Bruckner emphasises his lifetime study of contrapuntal techniques, which he appears to do at the expense of other musical disciplines such as orchestration. In other words, advanced skills in harmonisation and counterpoint were highly valued by the composer, and Boss points out that these techniques are frequently evident in Bruckner's symphonies. He shows how the fragments of themes constantly take over from each other, through such contrapuntal means as imitation, inversion, strett, etc. This is simultaneously linked to some work with motives that normally is associated with sonata form. Bruckner frequently leaves no stone unturned in the way in which the smallest thematic fragment can be incorporated in such developments.

The Austrian musicologist Alfred Orel describes Bruckner as a master of counterpoint, but notes that the contrapuntal work in Bruckner's music has its origins in a homophonic style that has its origins in the Classical tradition.²⁶¹ Orel notes how the themes in Bruckner's orchestral movements are followed by independent obligato parts. In this way they do not simply function as accompaniments to the leading voice. Orel suggests that it is possible to regard these instances as types of Brucknerian double themes for which parallels can be found in Beethoven's symphonies. The Munich music critic Rudolf Louis regarded chords as primal and basic elements of Bruckner's counterpoint.²⁶² Independent voices are led into each other and different themes are combined – all within the framework supplied by chords. As we shall see below, similar structural characteristics were noted of those who heard Bruckner's organ improvisations.

An improvisation outlined

Horn²⁶³ refers to one surviving item of documentary evidence from Bruckner's own hand that at least gives some idea as to how the composer created his large-scale improvisations. This is the so-called *Ischler-Improvisationsskizze* – written in connection with the marriage of the Emperor's daughter, Archduchess Marie Valerie.²⁶⁴ As Court Organist, Bruckner was to play for this wedding that took place on 30th June 1890 in the Austrian town Ischl. Bruckner was required to submit his

²⁶⁰ Also Manfred Wagner, *Bruckner. Leben – Werk – Dokumente*, Mainz 1983, p. 258.

²⁶¹ See Alfred Orel, *Anton Bruckner. Das Werk – Der Künstler – Die Zeit*, Wien 1925, pp. 54ff. Also Boss 1997, pp. 146-147.

²⁶² See Rudolf Louis, *Anton Bruckner*, 3rd ed., München 1918, p. 269. Also Boss 1997, pp. 146-147.

²⁶³ See Horn, "Zwischen Interpretation und Improvisation" 1997, pp. 132-137.

²⁶⁴ See Anton Bruckner, *Ischler-Improvisationsskizze*, 1890. Manuscript (Suppl. Mus. No. 6020) in the Musikabteilung der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek, Wien.

choice of music for approval by the Lord Chamberlain, which took the form of the above-named sketch that hinted at how he intended to play the processional and recessional music.





16. Music example. Anton Bruckner: Ischler-Improvisationsskizze. Reproduced by kind permission of the Austrian National Library, Vienna.

Bruckner wished to introduce the ceremony with a prelude based on the main theme from the finale of his first symphony, and to conclude with the second subject of the same movement. The sketch also includes two other themes that Bruckner frequently improvised on: the *Hallelujah* chorus from Handel's *Messiah* oratorio and the *Kaiserlied*.²⁶⁵ Bruckner's intention was to link these to themes to each other. The Court Kapellmeister Joseph Helmberger was consulted, and he rejected the use of Bruckner's own themes as unsuitable. At the wedding Bruckner therefore only improvised over Handel's *Hallelujah* chorus and the *Kaiserlied*. The original improvisation sketch can be found in the collection of the Austrian National Library in Vienna.

Horn explains that Bruckner's wish to use themes from his first symphony was no coincidence. At that time he was in the process of revising this work, and it was his common practice to improvise publicly on the organ over themes from the symphonies he happened to be working on at the same time. This reveals two aspects of his musical creativity: When he realised one and the same idea – both with the sounds of the organ and the orchestra – this took place against a background of improvisatory imagination and a systematic formalisation on the written page.²⁶⁶ In Bruckner's sketches the time signatures are barely visible, but they are also important. As soon as he had fixed his ideas on paper they were already under strict for-

²⁶⁵ The *Kaiserlied* refers to Joseph Haydn's well-known melody to the words: "Gott, erhalte Franz, den Kaiser...".

²⁶⁶ Cf. with the presentation below of the Dionysian and Apollonian characteristics of musical creativity.

mal control, for even in improvisation the internal proportions of the music had to be correct.²⁶⁷

It is within such a framework that the *Ischler-Improvisationsskizze* shows how Bruckner's concluding voluntary – *Post Festum*²⁶⁸ – intended first to make a triumphant fanfare from Handel's *Hallelujah* chorus – motif as the bride and groom began their exit procession down the aisle. This fanfare linked to a fugato over the “and He shall reign for ever and ever” motive which Bruckner intended to transform smoothly into the second subject from the finale of his first symphony. The idea being to play relatively slowly and pompously, so that the music's rhythmic after-beat in quavers acquired a march feeling that would lead the bridal party out of the church in even steps. And at a given sign – presumably when the Emperor stood up – Bruckner intended to repeat the “and He shall reign for ever and ever” while simultaneously thundering out the *Kaiserlied* in the pedals.

Horn remarks that the entire sketch has an amazing harmonic and contrapuntal rigidity. All the same we can see that Bruckner allows for alternative solutions that make it clear that the sketch really reflects an improvisatory concept. This applies to such factors as modulation, possibilities for different combinations of motives and themes, harmonic turns, chord progressions and so forth. The fugato parts of the sketch show that Bruckner tried out differing stretto possibilities, and that it was also necessary for him to change some intervals in order to maintain correct harmonisations. It is reasonable to suppose that Bruckner followed a similar mental preparation for other improvisations, not least in attempting to establish the differing motives, harmonic and contrapuntal possibilities. Thus he would have a point of reference, or referent²⁶⁹ to maintain contact with during the improvisation.

Some common recollections

The *Ischler-Improvisationsskizze* leaves us some clues that enable us to understand Bruckner's art of organ improvisation, although it is too fragmentary to give a complete impression. Nor do any other sources manage to give us such a picture, since they are largely based on subjective experiences, and are affected by a rather uncertain use of terminology. All the same Horn is reasonably certain that the differing sources have a sufficient number of features in common to enable a general outline to be traced. He sums this up in the following points:²⁷⁰

1. Bruckner's inspirations for his improvisations came from themes from his own orchestral works and various themes from Richard Wagner's (1813-1883) operas. Special favourites included those from *Götterdämmerung* (especially the orchestral interlude *Siegfried's Tod* with the *Wälsungen* and *Siegfried*-themes) and *Parsifal* (*Verheissungsspruch* = *Dresdner Amen* and the *Belief*-motive).
2. Bruckner usually developed contrapuntal parts using a plenum-registration and obligatory four-part harmony. He frequently incorpo-

²⁶⁷ See Horn, “Zwischen Interpretation und Improvisation” 1997, pp. 132-137.

²⁶⁸ Cf. *Ischler-Improvisationsskizze*, pp. 2-3.

²⁶⁹ Regarding the referent – see below for the presentation of the functions of the referent in the procedural part of this thesis.

²⁷⁰ See Horn, “Zwischen Interpretation und Improvisation” 1997, pp. 137-138.

rated such passages as parts of a larger symphonic form. Sources do not give any information as to what extent Bruckner improvised in a contrapuntal trio style: i.e. in the form of a three-part obligato.

3. In improvisations with a symphonic and chordal character the number of voices could be varied. The melody part was ideally played on a solo register.
4. Bruckner had an extremely well developed pedal technique that he often displayed in his improvisations. We can read about pedal trills, virtuoso figurations and double pedal playing. This last point does not mean simply playing octaves in the pedal, but real obligato two-part playing, which attracted admiration from his audiences.
5. As regards the tempo – Bruckner’s improvisations tended to resemble the outer and adagio movements in his symphonies – which could be regarded as moderato in character. Bruckner’s improvisations did not allow for scherzo-like tempi; such techniques will have required a much greater technical preparation. In all probability he therefore avoided improvisations of this type.
6. Bruckner knew how to use the possibilities for registration in large organs. Above all this applies to his ability to use a well-nuanced and varied range of sounds, a sense of contrasts, for large crescendo effects and dynamic climaxes. In order to realise these concepts a number of manual changes were necessary, and during the playing constant manipulation of stops was necessary, as long as he had a free hand available. In order to concentrate more on the playing itself Bruckner preferred to use registrants, who were normally provided with some outline instructions beforehand, but were also required to follow spontaneous commands to make the necessary changes underway.
7. In his choice of themes Bruckner was happy to receive suggestions and requests from the audience. In such contexts he improvised first and foremost over the *Kaiserlied*, with the *Hallelujah* chorus from Handel’s *Messiah* taking second place.
8. When it came to combining different themes together, Bruckner normally used to choose simple structures that could easily combine with each other.
9. Once Bruckner had first grasped the possibilities for developing a theme, the various harmonisation techniques and details that he could apply, studied and practised it, then his improvisation could assume some routine characteristics. In other words there were some recurring moments in Bruckner’s improvisations. When comparable fixed points of structural change also exist in Bruckner’s symphonies it would seem reasonable to guess that they also could be found in his organ improvisations. This was a particular “trade-mark” of those improvisations that employed strict forms. Contemporary accounts bear witness to the fact that the music had an element of well-assimilated formulae, which is a legitimate practice in improvisation. Several of these “fixed” improvisations were given their own name, such as “die Kaiser-Fuge”, “die Kaiser-Variation”, “die Ring-Fuge”, and so forth.
10. An organ improvisation by Bruckner usually lasted for 25 to 30 minutes.

11. Bruckner's improvisations made a great impression on his listeners. Many were so charmed as to say that they had never heard more beautiful organ playing.

In light of these eleven points Horn considers that in addition to the subjective impression of listeners there were some specific themes. Furthermore they perceived some common characteristics in the way he built up his improvisations, and that Bruckner's approach was often recognisable in many different improvisations. Horn describes a type of collective perception of Bruckner's improvisations:

So und ähnlich „adäquat“ werden Bruckners Improvisationen im allgemeinen beschrieben: Je nach subjektivem Hören wird ein bestimmtes Thema wahrgenommen, ein markantes Moment der Verarbeitung erfasst (eventuell beides im Plural), die emotionale Erschütterung wird eingestanden – aber was wirklich geschehen ist, kann nicht vermittelt werden... Auch ein zweites ist gesichert: Er improvisierte in zwei deutlich separierten Arten – im „strengen, klassischen“ Stil oder im „freiem, symphonischen“ Stil. Ein Mittleres wäre im Variationenspiel zu sehen (mit Vorliebe angewendet auf das *Kaiserlied*).²⁷¹

[In such an “adequate” way Bruckner's improvisations are usually described in general terms: Besides a subjective impression of sound one could notice a specific theme. One could perceive notable moment(s) in the development(s)... the emotional strengths of the music – but it was almost impossible to communicate what had actually happened. One thing is certain: Bruckner never worked with mere effects... only with musical substance. He had two distinct styles of improvisation – the “strict, classical style” or the “free symphonic style”. Something in between these could be perceived in his variations (such as in the “*Kaiserlied*”).]

The route to improvisation

The Austrian musicologist Elisabeth Maier²⁷² notes how Anton Bruckner's musical apprenticeship extended over a period of 37 years from his first childhood lessons until he reached his mature peak as an artist. In other words, more than half of his life span of 72 years was devoted to constant study and a self-critical quest for perfection. As the son of an Austrian schoolmaster Bruckner benefited from the musical surroundings of his early years. His mother sang in the church choir and his father, Anton Bruckner senior, taught him violin and keyboard playing. His older cousin Johann Baptist Weiss, who was a prominent musical personality in Upper Austria also taught him. During his study of the organ and through bass playing he diligently studied compositions of Johann Sebastian Bach, George Friedrich Handel, Joseph and Michael Haydn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Johann Georg Albrechtsberger.

As we have seen: After his father's death in 1837 Bruckner became a chorister at St. Florian, and also a pupil at the school. A new world seemed to open for him. Maier points out that repertoire at the services of that time consisted mainly of Austrian church music as represented by such composers as Albrechtsberger, Aumann, Bixi, Caldara, Diabelli, Eybler, Joseph and Michael Haydn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Preindl, Reutter, Schiedermays, Schubert, Vanhal, and so on. Plainchant melodies were also represented, as far as one can tell employing a

²⁷¹ See Horn, “Zwischen Interpretation und Improvisation” 1997, p. 122.

²⁷² See Elisabeth Maier, “Originalgenie oder Epigone? Zum Problem der künstlerischen Beeinflussung bei Bruckner”, in *Bruckner-Jahrbuch 1994/95/96*, Linz 1997, p. 92.

chord-based²⁷³ note-against-note accompaniment in the customary 19th century manner.

The next stage in his musical development took place at the Linzer Präparandie,²⁷⁴ where Bruckner studied harmony, counterpoint and organ playing with Johann August Dürrnberger. His training here was orientated towards the closely connected duties of schoolteacher and church organist – a common practice at this time. Music teaching aimed to qualify students to be church organists, which included direction of choirs and small instrumental groups to play at Mass and Vespers.²⁷⁵ When Bruckner was appointed schoolmaster in Windhaag, he continued to study alone using Dürrnberger's *Elementar-Lehrbuch der Harmonie- und Generalbasslehre*, which the latter had written while Bruckner was one of his students.

Bruckner then took up a teaching position in Kronstorf. This gave him the opportunity to study with one of the foremost musicians in Upper Austria: Leopold von Zenetti (1805-1892) organist at Enns, near Kronstorf. According to Maier, these extremely thorough studies were concerned with the duties of an organist. These included written exercises in harmony and composition, and were in no small way concerned with principles of form and harmonisation that could be incorporated into liturgical improvisations. Bruckner's thirst for learning was so great that he would visit Zenetti for lessons up to three times a week. Sometimes when Bruckner was given a task on Sunday morning he would complete it in the course of the day, so that he "noch desselben Abends wieder in Enns erschien, um stürmisch das Urteil seines verehrten Unterweisers einzuholen" [that same evening would once again be found storming into Enns in order to receive the judgement of his most worthy teacher].

Two determining influences

An important influence on Bruckner's creativity was exercised by two very different musical personalities – Johann Sebastian Bach and Richard Wagner. As we have seen this was clearly expressed in his large-scale symphonic organ improvisations. During his work as a teacher at St. Florian Bruckner worked several hours each day with Bach's fugal compositions. In the first instance this study involved using Bach's polyphonic music as a source of harmonic and contrapuntal techniques.²⁷⁶ Contrapuntal disciplines also formed a major part of the studies that Bruckner began in Vienna in 1855 with one of the leading music theoreticians, Simon Sechter. This resulted in the exam he took in 1861 for a commission from the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde*.²⁷⁷

The jury members quickly reached agreement that they would not question Bruckner on theoretical matters, preferring to consider his abilities as a performing artist. The meeting took place in the Piaristerkirche in Vienna's Josefstadt. Here Bruckner was given a fugal theme to improvise on. Karl Schütz records that Bruckner initially "hesitated a moment, but began after a while to introduce and

²⁷³ Cf. the presentation above regarding Oberhoffer's textbook for Catholic organists.

²⁷⁴ Präparanden-Anstalt or Präparanden-Schule were teaching institutions in Germany and Austria that prepared students for entry to a Seminar – i.e. a teacher-training college.

²⁷⁵ See Maier 1997, p. 92.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

²⁷⁷ See Harrant 2004, pp. 18-19.

thereafter develop a fugue so ingeniously that the members of the jury were utterly astonished and lost in admiration.”²⁷⁸

After he completed his studies with Sechter Bruckner studied form and orchestration with Otto Kitzler.²⁷⁹ His first Study Symphony (nr.0) was written at this time, though Kitzler did not rate this work highly.²⁸⁰ In 1863 Kitzler directed a performance of Wagner’s opera *Tannhäuser* in Linz, which made a profound impression on Bruckner, who became fascinated with the boldness of Wagnerian harmonies and sonorities. From this time onwards these made their regular appearances in Bruckner’s organ improvisations.

Chromatic harmonies inspired by Richard Wagner are an unmistakable feature of Anton Bruckner’s mature style. They are clearly evident in this short prelude in B-flat major, which is to be found in Bruckner’s own *Präludienbuch*.²⁸¹ This collection of short organ pieces, which includes works by other contemporary composers, was apparently used by Bruckner for his liturgical musical tasks. It also offers an indication as to the nature of contemporary improvising practices. Organ music primarily served to ensure that the smooth course of services was not disturbed by inappropriate silences.

Moderato
mf
Ant. Bruckner
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Man.
Ped.

17. Music example. Dité 1958.

²⁷⁸ See Schütz 1975, p. 279. Also Boss 1997, p. 144.

²⁷⁹ Otto Kitzler (1834-1915) was a cellist and conductor. At the time of Bruckner’s studies, he was Kapellmeister at the Linz theatre. He remained friends with Bruckner until the latter’s death.

²⁸⁰ See Harrandt 2004, p. 21.

²⁸¹ See Louis Dité, *Vademecum für Organisten: Eine Sammlung von Orgelstücken (leicht ausführbare Kadenzen, Vor und Nachspiele) der bedeutendsten Meister von Bach bis Bruckner*, Wien 1958, pp. 102-103.

CHAPTER 13

Protestant traditions of organ playing and chorale improvisation**Hymnological and liturgical background**

During the first part of the 19th century the question as to which styles of music were acceptable in worship was much discussed. Then, as now, there was little general consensus regarding the aesthetic criteria that should actually be applied to church music. In the then German kingdom of Bavaria a group of Protestant musicologists,²⁸² theologians and church musicians arrived at a fairly strict definition of genuine church music. They shared a belief that the Church's identity was closely linked to its own special types of song and musical tradition. Central figures in this movement were the lawyer and musicologist Christoph Carl Gottlieb Freiherr von Tucher von Simmelsdorf (1798-1877), theologian Johann Wilhelm Friedrich Höfling (1802-1853), theologian, hymnologist, teacher trainer and musician Johannes Christoph Andreas Zahn (1817-1895), together with the organ virtuoso, improviser, church musician and church music professor Johann Georg Herzog.

Their reasoning was as follows: The magnificent artistic achievements that the Lutheran services had once spawned were lost in the wake of the Age of Enlightenment and Reason.²⁸³ Gone were the rich musical traditions associated with services in previous centuries. As a consequence the musical traditions in many German "Landeskirchen"²⁸⁴ had virtually stagnated and appeared to have lost any real sense of purpose. As the revival movement based on Evangelical and Reformist principles gathered strength, a desire for radical liturgical changes came in its wake.²⁸⁵ This came to have wide consequences for congregational and choral singing as well

²⁸² Within a 19th century context such expressions as "musicologist" and "music scientist" was virtually synonymous with "music historian". Music research was essentially related to historic questions, the aim being to use analytical and biographical information to increase knowledge about the music and the musicians of the past.

²⁸³ Ernst Schmidt, "Zum 100. Geburtstag Dr. Johann Georg Herzogs geb. am 5. August 1822 zu Hummendorf, gest. am 3. Februar zu München", in *Kirchenmusikalische Blätter* (Germany) 15/16 1922, pp. 162-169. See Konrad Klek, *150 Jahre Institut für Kirchenmusik in Erlangen im Spiegel vom Dokumenten und Zeugnissen zum Wirken der Institulleiter*, Erlangen 2004, p. 12.

²⁸⁴ The description "Landeskirchen" refers to the organisation of the German Protestant churches into independent units that were linked to the different provinces of the then German Empire. In this type of established state church the German "Landeskirchen" was a part of the regional administration.

²⁸⁵ Cf. Hans Kressel, *Die Liturgie der Erlanger Theologie. Ihre Geschichte und Grundsätze*, Göttingen 1948. Also Hans Kressel, *Die Liturgie der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche in Bayern rechts des Rheins. Geschichte und Kritik ihrer Entwicklung im 19. Jahrhundert*, München 1953.

as church organ playing.²⁸⁶ The intention was that a greater awareness of a genuine and specific ecclesiastical style in the field of religious music would help congregations to reaffirm their profession of faith.

One example of this was the treatment of the chorales. The 16th and 17th century method of rhythmically differentiated singing had given way in the course of time to a very slow, ponderous isorhythmic²⁸⁷ approach. By returning to the original rhythmic patterns the aim was to give congregational singing a bolder and fresher character. This was more in character with the deepest meaning of an Evangelical service than the rather overbearing formality which congregational singing had come to represent. The aim was also to prevent contemporary musical trends such as the deep emotional Romanticism taking root in divine worship. It was considered essential that sacred music should be cultivated, and study of the church music from earlier epochs was considered an essential part of this. In this way it was hoped that congregations would discover a renewed appetite for genuine church music.

In accordance with the Reformation ideals the Evangelical Lutheran Church needed to reassert its identity. This requirement extended beyond essential Confessional details to an awareness of the historic roots and traditions of the Faith. From the church musician's point of view this resulted in efforts to restore traditional ideals – primarily in terms of hymnology, but also in general terms of art music. In other words new musical creativity should always show a clear relationship to the Church's own musical traditions. Aesthetic preferences guided by the stylistic characteristics of the past were expected to play a decisive part in for music intended for church use. This attitude can also be regarded as a consequence of the 19th century's Romantic fascination with artistic expressions of the past.

Three musicologists and their contribution

Christoph Carl Gottlieb Sigmund Freiherr von Tucher von Simmelsdorf

A central position in this work was occupied by Christoph Carl Gottlieb Sigmund Freiherr von Tucher von Simmelsdorf whose research endeavours contributed to an increased awareness of a genuine church music inheritance and style. He was a key figure in the efforts to give the Protestant liturgical reforms in Bavaria a clear musical identity. Tucher had studied law at the universities of Erlangen, Heidelberg and Berlin.²⁸⁸ In addition to his legal work Tucher was fascinated by the origins of early church music traditions. He published his first collection of Pal-

²⁸⁶ We can assume that these liturgical and church musical endeavours to restore church music that originated in Bavaria have had a rather permanent effect on Lutheran church services all over the world. The effects of these have extended well into the 20th century. The so-called "church style" of liturgical organ playing and improvisation practiced particularly in Germany and Scandinavia has probably its roots in these reforms. After Vatican II a large number of Lutheran chorale melodies in their restored form have found an important place in Catholic services in Germany. In its way this has also influenced the stylistic framework for the training of Catholic organists in liturgical playing and improvisation. (Also cf. Appendices regarding the function of the organ in 19th century Evangelical Lutheran services.)

²⁸⁷ "Isorhythmic" – in metric terms a rhythmically flattened-out or equalised pattern.

²⁸⁸ Tucher passed his Staatsexamen in 1824 and subsequently worked as a lawyer in the official judiciary at several places in Bavaria. His last post was at the tribunal of the Oberappellationsgericht in Munich, which he held until his retirement in 1867. This was the kingdom's highest legal authority.

estrina's vocal music in 1827 in two volumes. The first volume was dedicated to Ludwig van Beethoven while the second was dedicated to the German musicologist Geheimrat Thibaut (1772-1840). During the 1830's Tucher turned his attentions to the Evangelical chorale and hymn traditions and wrote the thesis *Schatz des evangelischen Kirchengesangs in ersten Jahrhundert der Reformation* that established him as an authority on this subject. He contributed to the preparation of the hymnbook *Gesangbuch für die evangelisch-lutherische Kirche in Bayern*, which was published in Nuremberg in 1855.²⁸⁹

Carl Georg August Vivigens von Winterfeld

Carl Georg August Vivigens von Winterfeld (1784-1852) was regarded as a pioneer of music history research. Like his colleague Tucher he was trained as a lawyer.²⁹⁰ Winterfeld was in all probability the first music historian who pointed out the considerable Italian influences on German music history. This is especially apparent in the compositional forms and techniques employed by Heinrich Schütz. He also wrote at length about the history of church music in the Evangelical Lutheran Church from the time of the Reformation to Johann Sebastian Bach. According to Winterfeld, church music was inseparable from congregational singing and service music; the Evangelical chorales formed the main focus of his researches. He sought after those all-important links between text, harmonisation and form. Works that were not directly linked to chorales, such as some of Johann Sebastian Bach's church cantatas were regarded by Winterfeld as spiritual music rather than church music. These should therefore only be performed in the Church's "front garden" (i.e. church concerts rather than church services). This strict point of view was not shared by all – amongst others Philipp Spitta (1841-1894), best known today for his Bach scholarship, disagreed strongly.²⁹¹

Johannes Christoph Andreas Zahn

Johannes Christoph Andreas Zahn followed the researches of Winterfeld and Tucher. These two latter figures pointed towards musical history as a foundation for the revitalisation of services in the Evangelical Lutheran Church. In this context Zahn, who was one of the 19th century's foremost hymnologists, came to play an important role in putting these ideas into practice in congregational life. Zahn began his theological studies at the University of Erlangen in 1837 and completed them in 1841. During the winter semester 1839-1840 he studied at the University of Berlin where he made the acquaintance of Winterfeld. In 1847 Zahn took up a position as lecturer at the Royal Teacher Training College in Altdorf near Nuremberg, where he became principal in 1854. As a result of his own comprehensive music studies Zahn was a competent organist and pianist. He ensured that his students were given a solid musical foundation – as far as this was possible. In the course of his 40-year tenure at the college not less than one thousand students were

²⁸⁹ See Theodor Wohnhaas, "Tucher, Christoph Carl Gottlieb Sigmund Freiherr von Tucher von Simmelsdorf", in *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexicon*, Volume 12, 1997, www.bautz.de/bbkl

²⁹⁰ Winterfeld received his legal training at the University in Halle, and he concluded his legal career at the highest Court of Appeal – the Obertribunalrat in Berlin.

²⁹¹ See Ruth Engelhardt, "Winterfeld, Carl Georg August Vivigens von", in *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexicon*, Volume 13, 1998, www.bautz.de/bbkl

trained as schoolteachers, singing leaders and organists. He published his own textbook *Handbüchlein für angehende Cantoren und Organisten* that gives an insight into the syllabus followed by his students.

Zahn's work as a teacher and principal of a training college does not primarily concern us here. His work as a musicologist, hymnologist and church musician was of greater significance in his own lifetime. He was inspired of Tucher and Winterfeld to interest himself in the traditions and forms linked to Evangelical congregational singing, especially the Lutheran chorale melodies.²⁹² Zahn's researches were of an essentially practical musical nature and aimed to ensure that the revival of classic Lutheran church songs was built on solid historical foundations. Several chorale books were published to which he contributed, where the melodies are reproduced in their "ursprünglichen Tönen und Rhythmen" [original tonalities and rhythms].²⁹³

Church music linked to practical theological studies

These attempts to reform and revitalise the liturgy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria led church leaders to the realisation that music had an important function in the training of theology students. If the singing traditions of the Reformation were to play their part in arresting the Church's stagnation and decline, future ministers would need a good working knowledge covering all aspects of Evangelical chorales. It was also apparent that future celebrants would require a thorough practical and theoretical foundation in the art of liturgical singing. Such studies could be regarded as professional training involving cross-over between theology, liturgy and church music. They were therefore intended to form an integrated part of the student's practical theological training. Thus the aim was to give a broad insight into Lutheran church music. In the first place this applied to church music from past and present that were to be used in the context of Divine worship. Organ studies were offered to theology students in order to establish a connection between theory and practice. These studies would focus on the church organist's fundamental tasks: the playing of chorales, choral preludes, and the accompaniment of liturgical melodies.

Johann Wilhelm Friedrich Höfling

At the University of Erlangen such a course of study had long been planned. Johann Wilhelm Friedrich Höfling, who had held the chair of practical theology since 1833, was something of a driving force. With his appointment the Lutheran confessional principles had received a boost at the university's Faculty of Theology. Together with Adolf von Harless (1806-1879)²⁹⁴ who had taken the Chair of New

²⁹² Zahn's hymnological studies resulted in the publication of six volumes entitled *Die Melodien der deutschen Kirchenlieder aus den Quellen geschöpft und mitgeteilt von Johannes Zahn*. Five of these volumes were issued in the years 1889-1893. The 6th and final volume gives a chronological oversight of all the material presented, along with a list of printed and handwritten sources.

²⁹³ See Ruth Engelhardt, "Zahn, Johannes Christoph Andreas", in *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexicon*, Volume 14, 1998, www.bautz.de/bbkl

²⁹⁴ As a founder of a confessional Lutheran theology Adolf von Harless was a key figure within the "Erlangen-school" – in German: "Erlanger Schule". As a result of this he also became a leading figure in contemporary Lutheran circles in Germany. King Maximilian II of Bavaria appointed him president to the Oberkonsistorium in Munich – the supreme authority of the Bavarian Evangelical Lutheran "Landeskirche".

Testament Theology a short time before, Höfling became an important figure in the foundation of the so-called “Erlangen-Schule”.²⁹⁵ He researched carefully into the historic sources of the liturgical traditions. His work therefore laid the foundations for subsequent liturgical research that originated from Erlangen’s theological traditions.²⁹⁶ These were aimed at preserving the heritage of the Lutheran Reformation. The resultant cooperation between worship theologians and those concerned with musical aesthetics led to the establishment of a Department of Church Music Studies at the University of Erlangen. In this the Bavarian church leaders were following the example of the Prussian universities at Breslau and Königsberg. These had resulted from the Prussian Protestant Church’s introduction of a new Lutheran liturgy earlier in the 19th century. In connection with this the local universities had introduced new courses to enable theology students to face the musical challenges associated with the new orders of service.

In Erlangen the new Institut für Kirchenmusik was an independent department that was administered by the Theological Faculty. At its official opening in 1854, it was the only department of its kind in the contemporary Greater German Empire. The church authorities wanted a “gründlich durchgebildeten Gesang- und Musiklehrer” [thoroughly educated singer and music teacher] to lead this department. His task would be to give “die Theologie-Studierenden in den für ihren künftigen Beruf notwendigen und wünschenswerten musikalischen Kenntnissen zu unterrichten” [theology students that musical knowledge which is necessary and desirable for their future profession]. There was agreement between the Church and the university authorities that such a post was “eine unabdingbare Notwendigkeit” [essential] because “eine neue Ordnung des Gottesdienstes, deren Ausführung Übung im Gesang erfordert” [the new Order of Service required training in singing].²⁹⁷

It was therefore no coincidence that one of the foremost Evangelical church musicians of the day – Johann Georg Herzog – was appointed professor and first director of the Institut für Kirchenmusik at the then Royal University of Erlangen. As organist and kantor at Munich’s first Protestant Hof- und Stadtpfarrkirche St. Matthäus and professor in organ studies at the Music Conservatoire his credentials for the task were impeccable.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁵ Höfling devoted part of his theological researches to teachings about the Church’s sacraments and liturgy – and the other part to the question regarding a Lutheran understanding of church authority. He also worked for the journal *Zeitschrift für Protestantismus und Kirche* that was edited by Harless. This journal aimed to clarify Protestant identity, and came at a time when Lutherans were concerned that Protestantism had to some extent lost its vital sense of the confessional. When Harless became president of the Evangelical Lutheran Church’s Oberkonsistorium in Munich in 1852, he appointed Höfling to the board of this synod. From this position Höfling was able to establish a church music faculty at the Protestant University of Erlangen in Bavaria.

²⁹⁶ See Friedrich Wilhelm Bautz, “Höfling, Johann Wilhelm Friedrich”, in *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexicon*, Volume 2, 1990, www.bautz.de/bbkl

²⁹⁷ See Oskar Stollberg, *Johann Georg Herzog. Kirchenmusiker, Liturgiker, und Erlanger Universitätslehrer in seinen Briefen an Max Herold: 1865 – 1908*, München 1978, pp. 39-40.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 14

A leading organist, improviser and teacher

After eleven years in Munich as a church musician Johann Georg Herzog took up his appointment at Erlangen in 1854. He was regarded by many of his contemporaries as the best organist in Bavaria and South-Germany. According to the German musicologist Franz Krautwurst, Herzog had learned the entire corpus of Johann Sebastian Bach's organ works and usually played them from memory.²⁹⁹ Accordingly to Krautwurst, Herzog also enjoyed considerable reputation as an improvising organist. He could play free fantasias, different forms of chorale improvisation and complicated contrapuntal structures such as double and triple fugues. Very few organists in Europe could offer such accomplishment. As an improviser he was on the same level as Anton Bruckner in Austria and César Franck in France. Krautwurst suggests that in all probability it was only Bruckner who could surpass Herzog in the art of organ improvisation.³⁰⁰

In 1848 Herzog became the first official organ teacher at the *Königliches Conservatorium für Musik* in Munich that had been founded two years previously. Doubtless his artistic skills, combined with a recommendation from the *Hofkapellmeister* Franz Paul Lachner (1803-1890)³⁰¹ secured him this post, which later became a professorship. In the course of time many of his pupils here became important musical personalities in their own right.³⁰² The best known was undoubtedly the Catholic organist, composer and teacher Josef Gabriel Rheinberger.

²⁹⁹ See Franz Krautwurst, "Johann Georg Herzog. Zur 50. Wiederkehr seines Todestages", in *Gottesdienst und Kirchenmusik*, (Germany) 3 1959, p. 81. Also Franz Krautwurst, "Herzog, Johann Georg, Orgelvirtuose, evang. Kirchenmusiker, Universitätsmusiklehrer und Professor in Erlangen, 1822-1909", in *Lebenslaufe aus Franken. Herausgegeben im Auftrag der Gesellschaft für fränkische Geschichte von Sigmund Freiherr von Pölnitz, Sechster Band*, Würzburg 1960, p. 257.

³⁰⁰ See Krautwurst 1959, p. 81. Also Krautwurst 1960, p. 257.

³⁰¹ Franz Paul Lachner made his mark as composer, conductor and teacher. He was a close friend of Franz Schubert in his youth and could also boast the acquaintance of Ludwig van Beethoven. Lachner was in charge of the Royal Opera, Munich from 1836, and was also responsible for concerts at the *Musikalische Akademie* and the music at the Royal Chapel. In 1852 he was officially named as *Generalmusikdirektor*. Although not in full sympathy with the music and ideals of Richard Wagner he made some conscientious attempts at performing the Master's early works. However Wagner was not prepared to entrust *Tristan and Isolde* to him. Lachner was therefore manoeuvred out of his post at the Munich theatre in 1864 to allow Hans von Bülow to take over.

³⁰² See Hermann Busch, "Von der zartesten Klangfarbe bis zur vollen Stärke. Johann Georg Herzog, Josef Rheinberger und Max Reger an Walcker-Organen", in *Organ* (Germany) 6 2003, pp. 10-14: Here the German musicologist Hermann Busch describes Herzog as one of the

In 1859 Rheinberger himself was appointed to the teaching staff at what had now become the Königliche Musikschule in Munich. He became professor of organ and counterpoint in 1867 and held this appointment until his death. In 1877 he was also appointed *Hofkapellmeister* and it was in this capacity that he was later asked to approve an application by Herzog to retire from his teaching position at the University of Erlangen due to the latter's failing health. In a letter³⁰³ dated 25th April 1888 Rheinberger gives his support to Herzog's application and pays tribute to his former master:

Der Unterzeichnete (welcher in den Jahren 1852-54 das Glück hatte, Schüler des Herrn Professor J. G. Herzog zu sein) ist nach neuer eigener Beobachtung vollkommen mit dem beiliegenden Zeugnis des Herrn Dr. Iwan Müller einverstanden und kann sich nicht versagen, bei dieser Gelegenheit die *hohen Verdienste*, welche Professor Herzog in Hebung des Orgelspiels wie kein Zweiter in Süddeutschland sich erworben, rühmendst in Erinnerung zu bringen.

[This writer, (who in the years 1852-54 had the good fortune to study with Professor J. G. Herzog) is, on account of all that I have seen, completely in agreement with the attached testimonial from Dr. Iwan Müller. In this connection I cannot omit to mention Professor Herzog's *distinguished services* to the cause raising standards of organ playing – a service which cannot be matched by anyone else in South Germany.]

In a letter³⁰⁴ from Herzog to Rheinberger we gain a brief glimpse of the contents of Herzog's teaching at the Munich conservatoire:

Von Deinem persönlichen Befinden höre ich stets Gutes, was mich freut. Deine Wirksamkeit, sowohl als Komponist wie als Lehrer, schätze ich sehr hoch. Ich denke oft daran, wie du als 14-jähriger Junge auf der Orgel gesessen – und kleine Fughetten fantasiertest. War eine schöne Zeit!³⁰⁵

[I am delighted to hear so many positive things about you. I greatly value your work, both as composer and teacher. I remember so well how you as a 14-year old boy sat at the organ and improvised small fugues. What splendid times!]

Here is evidence that improvisation in polyphonic form was a vital ingredient of the teaching at the Munich conservatoire. We have already noted a similar practice at the Conservatoire nationale supérieur de musique in Paris. This is an indication of the close links between organ playing and the study of harmony and counterpoint – an heritage from the Baroque era which were further developed by European music conservatoires during the 19th century.

most important German organ teachers from the mid-19th century. In his article Busch compares two organs built by Friedrich Walcker that were well-known to Herzog – the firm's opus 100 built for the Munich conservatorium in 1851 and the organ in Erlangens Neustädter Kirche from 1855. This last instrument was used of Herzog for services and concerts for over 33 years. Busch points out that the specification of this organ closely resembles Herzog's conception of the ideal organ as described in his textbook.

³⁰³ Josef Rheinberger's recommendation that Herzog's application for early retirement should be granted can be found in the personal correspondence of J. G. Herzog in the Friedrich-Alexander-University at Erlangen-Nuremberg.

³⁰⁴ See Harald Wagner and Hans-Joseph Irmen, *Josef Gabriel Rheinberger. Briefe und Dokumente seines Lebens*, Volume V, Vaduz 1984, pp. 146-147: Undated letter 1881 from Herzog to Rheinberger. Also Konrad Klek, *150 Jahre Institut für Kirchenmusik in Erlangen im Spiegel von Dokumenten und Zeugnissen zum Wirken der Institutleiter*, Erlangen 2004, pp. 21-22.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

Another prominent pupil was Karl Greith³⁰⁶ (1828-1887) who in 1861 succeeded his father as organist and choirmaster at the Catholic Cathedral church of St. Gallen in Switzerland. In 1870 he established the first branch of the Caecilian Movement³⁰⁷ in Switzerland. He moved to Munich in 1877 to take up the position as *Domkapellmeister* at the Frauenkirche, a post he held until his death in 1887. He was also a central figure in the Caecilian Movement in Germany. Greith's views as to which musical styles were acceptable for worship may be described as moderate. While he was rooted in the vocal traditions of Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina and Orlando di Lasso he was also willing to allow some place alongside these to Romantic ideas.

Samuel Riegel (1825-1907) was another pupil of Herzog who belonged to the Evangelical Lutheran Church. He succeeded his master as Organist and Kantor at the Matthäus-Kirche in Munich and later became a Professor at the Königliche Musikschule, Munich. To him we owe the three-volume work *Schatz des liturgischen Chor- und Gemeindegesangs* which he published with the aid of Ludwig Schoeberlin between 1865 and 1872.

Characteristics of Herzog's liturgical organ playing

Friedrich Spitta (1852-1924), the brother of Bach scholar Philipp Spitta, studied at the theological faculty of Erlangen University in the years 1872-1874. He took up the appointment as professor of theology at Strasbourg University in 1887. Together with Julius Smend (1857-1930) he founded the publication *Monatschrift für Gottesdienst und kirchliche Kunst* in 1896. He was in the vanguard of the traditional liturgical movement, and between the years 1909-1910 published a series of articles entitled "Liturgischer Rückblick auf die Erlebnisse eines halbes Jahrhunderts" where he also describes some of the impressions he received whilst a student in Erlangen. As a regular member of the congregation at Erlangen's Neustädter Kirche he frequently heard Johann Georg Herzog's liturgical playing. He describes the experience as follows:³⁰⁸

Eine gewisse Entschädigung³⁰⁹ gewährte es, dass Professor J. G. Herzog den man heute mit grösserem Rechte als damals den „alten Herzog“ nennen könnte, auf den Orgelbank sass und von da aus ein starkes Element künstlerischen Empfindens in den Kultus einführte. Es zeigte sich das charakteristischerweise weniger im Verlauf der gottesdienstlichen Handlung, wo das stilvolle Masshal-

³⁰⁶ At the Munich conservatoire Karl Greith studied harmony and organ with Johann Georg Herzog. He established himself as a composer with two oratorios *Der heilige Gallus* (1848) and *Judith* (1849). He also composed masses, melodramas, choral works, "Singspiel" and "Lieder".

³⁰⁷ The Caecilian movement for the reform of Roman Catholic Church music was founded primarily by the efforts of Carl Proske (1794-1861). Its principles were basically that Gregorian chant is the true music of the Catholic Church and that modern music composed for church use should respect the traditions and spirit of the ages of faith. It may be regarded as a Catholic counterpoint of the Protestant 19th century movements that sought to revitalise Lutheran chorales.

³⁰⁸ See Friedrich Spitta, "Liturgischer Rückblick auf die Erlebnisse eines halbes Jahrhunderts", in *Monatschrift für Gottesdienst und kirchliche Kunst*, ed. Julius Smend and Friedrich Spitta, (Germany) 14 1909, pp. 76ff. Also Klek 2004, p. 32.

³⁰⁹ Friedrich Spitta has just explained that he never heard any choral items (i.e. for choir a cappella or for choir and organ) during the services at Erlangen's Neustädter Kirche. By the expression "Entschädigung" Spitta is implying that Herzog's organ playing to some degree compensated for the defects of the liturgical ceremonies.

ten im Umfang der selbständigen Orgelsätze und die zum Volksgesang passende schlichte Harmonisierung der Melodien den echten Künstler erkennen liess.

[An extenuating circumstance was that Professor J. G. Herzog, who one can now with more justification refer to as “old Herzog”, seated himself at the organ. From there he injected a strong element of artistic invention into the service, but only to a limited degree during the act of worship itself. The indication that we were in the presence of a genuine artistic personality came from the stylish independent organ harmonisations, along with the simple harmonisation of melodies that were suitable for congregational singing.]

Christian Geyer (1862-1929) was a theology student in Erlangen during the time that Herzog was the academic singing teacher. From 1902 Geyer was the parish minister³¹⁰ at St. Sebald Church in Nuremberg. Within the Evangelical Lutheran circles in Bavaria he was known as an active theologian and counsellor. He attributed his own musical achievements and knowledge to the example of Herzog, whose inspiring teaching he praised enthusiastically. After he completed his studies in Erlangen he continued to nurture his friendship with Herzog. In 1902 he penned an 80th birthday tribute to his former teacher in *Monatschrift für Gottesdienst und kirchliche Kunst*, which gives his impressions of the latter’s organ playing at the services in Erlangen’s Neustädter Kirche and his teaching of the university’s theological students:

In den Hauptgottesdiensten gab er hier Sonntag für Sonntag eine unübertreffliche Musterlektion für kirchliches Orgelspiel. Er war durchaus nicht nur Orgelvirtuos, sondern zugleich ein vorbildlicher Meister des kirchlichen Spieles, der alle Kunstgriffe kannte und mit ganzem Herzen bei der Sache war. Wenn er spielte, konnte der Prediger jede, auch die unbekannteste Melodie singen lassen. Er brachte sie im Präludium, liess sie während des Gemeindegangs, ohne zu Mixturstimmen seine Zuflucht zu nehmen, in der höheren Oktave mit erklingen und behielt immer die Leitung des Gesanges in seiner Hand, ohne ihn jemals zu übertönen... In den Nebengottesdiensten liess er seine vorgeschrittene Schülern spielen, wobei er aber jedesmal mit einer alle Studenten beschämenden Pünktlichkeit zur Stelle war. Indem er gelegentlich die Transponierung eines Chorales oder Improvisation eines Vorspiel verlangte, erzog er sie zu grosser Selbständigkeit, ohne irgend welche Schlendrian aufkommen zu lassen; denn in seiner Kritik war er ziemlich scharf.³¹¹

[At the church’s main services Sunday after Sunday he gave an unsurpassable demonstration in church organ playing. He was not only a virtuoso organist, but also a complete master of church playing who knew all the artistic techniques, and completely committed in everything he did. When he was playing, the minister could let the most unknown melodies be sung. He incorporated them into a Prelude, and allowed them to sound in a higher octave without recursion to the Mixtures and maintained command of the singing without overwhelming it... For the subordinate services he would allow his more advanced pupils to play, but was always present himself with a punctuality that could shame the students. When he from time to time demanded that they should transpose a chorale or improvise a prelude, he would not tolerate playing that was slack or routine. He could be rather damning in his criticism of such.]

From Herzog’s own pen we have an extensive collection of letters, teaching notes, practice drills and musical examples. There are also a number of music composi-

³¹⁰ In German – “Hauptprediger”.

³¹¹ Christian Geyer, “Johann Georg Herzog”, in *Monatschrift für Gottesdienst und kirchliche Kunst*, ed. Julius Smend and Friedrich Spitta, (Germany) 7 1902, pp. 267-271. See Klek 2004, p. 35.

tions in smaller and larger formats, which offer us some evidence of his skills as organist and pedagogue. It is therefore reasonable to suppose that his many practical publications intended for use in the contemporary Evangelical Lutheran services will shed some light on his improvisation in this context. Here Herzog's *Orgelschule* [organ textbook] from 1867 is a valuable document.

The stated aim of this theoretical and practical textbook is to give students the necessary techniques to become effective organists and church musicians. Few other 19th century sources offer such extensive description of the stylistic criteria that should be applied to church organ playing and improvisation, coupled with methods for their assimilation.³¹² Rhythmic restoration of chorales and modal harmonisation are among the issues discussed in its pages. Traditions inherited from the Baroque era form a central ingredient in Herzog's writings. Thus we gain from its pages some idea as to how the Bach heritage was adapted for use in churches during the latter part of the 19th century.

The Bach-succession

Franz Krautwurst³¹³ notes that Herzog occupies a special place within the 19th century Bach-movement. With some pride Herzog declared himself an "Urenkel-schüler" of the great Leipzig master. He was able to trace his part in the succession of Johann Sebastian Bach pupils that ran through Johann Christian Kittel (1732-1809), Johann Christian Heinrich Rinck (1770-1846), Salomon Heinrich Bodenschatz (1807-1859) before arriving at Johann Georg Herzog himself. Like many of his contemporary German musical colleagues, Herzog believed that at this succession gave him a special access to the musical world of Johann Sebastian Bach. He expresses this by employing Bach's forms and compositional techniques for his own music.³¹⁴

By this means Johann Georg Herzog could also emphasise his position as a church musician as opposed to his colleagues who followed the subjective and emotional aesthetics of contemporary Romantic thought. Prime examples of these were Franz Liszt, and the organ improviser Georg Joseph (Abbé) Vogler, known for frequent use of what many regarded as rather superficial sound effects. Another name was Justin Heinrich Knecht (1752-1817), whose organ textbook³¹⁵ reflects the contemporary gallant style. However Herzog did not regard these aesthetic ideals as forming a suitable basis for church music.

Herzog does incorporate a number of features of Bach into his work, though according to the German musicologist Friedhelm Brusniak³¹⁶ Herzog did not

³¹² More concrete information about the actual teaching materials and methods used by César Franck and Anton Bruckner is rather limited. As far as I can see, Herzog paints a far more comprehensive picture of 19th century organ teaching methods – not least in his organ textbook.

³¹³ See Krautwurst 1959, pp. 82-83.

³¹⁴ In this connection Franz Krautwurst points out that Herzog's artistic belief that his music should lead to the Great Bach artistic identity marks him as a child of his time.

³¹⁵ Justin Heinrich Knecht, *Vollständige Orgelschule I-III*, Leipzig 1796.

³¹⁶ Friedhelm Brusniak, "Hinzuführen zu Bach". Die Choralbearbeitungen Johann Georg Herzogs", in *Johann Sebastian Bach und der süddeutsche Raum. Aspekte der Wirkungsgeschichte Bachs. Symposion des 65. Bachfestes der Neuen Bachgesellschaft München 1990 mit Ansprachen zur Eröffnung des Bachfestes*, ed. Hans-Joachim Schulze and Christoph Wolff, Regensburg 1991, pp. 85-89.

completely understand the personal and unique qualities of Bach's works as exemplified by their rhetorical and symbolic qualities. Both Krautwurst³¹⁷ and Brusniak³¹⁸ consider that it is first and foremost Herzog's use of Johann Sebastian Bach's formal elements in his own creative work that secures his position within the Bach tradition. Brusniak also makes another point – one which can give us a picture of Herzog as an improvising organist – that several of the Bach-inspired pieces in the *Praktisches Handbuch für Organisten*³¹⁹ might in fact have been improvisations, which were subsequently written down.³²⁰

The music scholar Johann Georg Herzog

In correspondence with his friend Max Herold Herzog offers no direct insights into his own methods of scholarly research. The letters do contain many references that suggest that as a practising church musician Herzog kept himself abreast of developments as reported in contemporary journals and other sources. He continuously reminds his students and colleagues of the importance of both theoretical and practical work. The constant dichotomy between theory and practice can sharpen the critical faculties to a far greater extent than is possible with straightforward academic study.³²¹ In a letter to his friend Max Herold³²² he writes:

... jetzt wird nur geschrieben um des blossen Lesens willen und vielleicht kaum um das, und die besten Sammlungen, wenn sie auch von wenigen anerkannt und freudig begrüsst werden, wandern doch nur in die Bibliotheken, um da auszuruhen.

[... today many write for the mere purpose of being read, and perhaps not even that. The best collections finish up only by occupying places on the shelves of libraries – unless they have been recognised and positively received by a few.]

Herzog here expresses his own thoughts about the emergence of musical research that specialised in historic issues. He reflects over the problem which can simply be summarised by the question: What is the ultimate purpose of musical research? He clearly recognises that a detailed examination of the musical practices from the past can yield deeper insights and a greater understanding of its music. Here he refers to both the details of a musical work as well as a consideration of its entirety. Historical research has in itself little real value if the result cannot be realised as an actual musical performance. Practical examination and testing out of ideas should therefore form an integrated part of the research. In this way Herzog believed it was possible to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the past, on which basis a platform for further creative development can be formed.

In the light of this research one can set premises for creative and performing musicians by giving them either a new or alternative/corrected means of directing their artistic endeavours. Music historical research can thus function both as a

³¹⁷ See Krautwurst 1959, pp. 82-83.

³¹⁸ See Brusniak 1991, pp. 87-88.

³¹⁹ Johann Georg Herzog, *Praktisches Handbuch für Organisten* (op. 33), Erlangen 1857.

³²⁰ See Brusniak 1991, p. 88.

³²¹ See Stollberg 1978, pp. 83-84.

³²² Max Herold (1840-1921) was a Lutheran minister and a leading figure in the Bavarian Liturgical reform movement.

source of energy and inspiration. In the same way as Herzog could not imagine organ studies and an introduction to liturgical singing without first researching the implied theoretical background (by this I mean mainly the historical details) the opposite also applied: It would be unimaginable for Herzog to consider the study of music history without examples of living music.

It was no coincidence, therefore, that when he began his historic lectures in 1861 he simultaneously commenced a series of historic concerts in Erlangen. A point here is that music history for Herzog did not simply refer to music written in the past, but also to the works of contemporary composers who had studied the works of the past. In his opinion the techniques thus learned were being used to create something new. This enables one to understand music history as a self-contained entity.³²³ We can conclude that Johann Georg Herzog occupied himself – more or less consciously – with musical scholarship that was orientated towards creation and performance of music. He had an extensive knowledge of hymnology and art music from the remote and nearer past. Alongside this his reflections about the formation of musical theories and contemporary compositions were all intended to further the cause of creative and performing arts.³²⁴ This applies to both his own works and those of other composers.

Herzog's own musical preferences

Regarding the issue of whether a piece of music should be regarded as suitable for church use, Herzog's first consideration was that the harmony should be formed in accordance with earlier models. This was also his underlying principle to either qualify or disqualify creative musicians as genuine church composers. In the course of time Herzog had assimilated a stylistic criteria – amongst other things by studying music historical literature and editions by Tucher and Winterfeld. He was also inspired by the work of the contemporary composer Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy whose church and organ music he believed to be well grounded in the aesthetics of the past. As such it could prepare the pathway for a genuine classically inspired foundation for a church music style.³²⁵

All the same Herzog's ideas may not always seem as completely consistent to us. He expresses his thoughts on questions of musical aesthetics, theories, and teaching principles in many different ways. As a creative composer, church musician, and organ teacher his views cover a very wide range of topics. He was a firm advocate of the new tonality: That is to say the major and minor tonal system and its main advocates such as Johann Sebastian Bach and George Friederich Handel, as well as the Viennese Classical school. He did not regard it as necessary or desirable to return to older harmonisation principles and archaic chord progressions. Yet at the same time he makes a plea for the reintroduction of older church harmonisations:

³²³ See Stollberg 1978, p. 83.

³²⁴ Perhaps Herzog's views on the interplay between theory and practice can be regarded as a useful idea from the past that can help us define such terms as "artistic research" and the investigations into the formation of music. Stollberg notes that Herzog is always fascinated by a combination of theory and practice, which in his eyes were complimentary qualities. According to these thoughts, research aims to secure an understanding or interpretation of ideas from the past that should form a starting-point for music studies and artistic expression.

³²⁵ See Stollberg 1978, p. 95.

Das System der neuen Tonarten und die damit zusammenhängende Kunst der Harmonie sind in so hohem Grade ausgebildet, sind so reich an Mitteln des musikalischen Ausdrucks und lassen bei aller Gesetzmässigkeit, ohne welche es keine wahre Kunst gibt, der freien Entwicklung so grossen Spielraum, dass in Bezug auf Komposition im allgemeinen ein Zurückgehen auf das ältere System der „Kirchentonarten“ weder notwendig noch wünschenswert erscheint... Aber das ... schliesst nicht aus, dass auch jetzt noch eine alte Tonart benützt werden könne... Für den Organisten ist das Studium der Kirchentonarten... notwendig zum Verständnis der altklassischen Musik überhaupt und insbesondere zum Verständnis der älteren Choräle und alliturgischen Gesänge. Solange ihm die Kenntnis dieser Tonarten abgeht, kann von der ihm so notwendigen Fähigkeit, einen älteren Choral zweckmässig zu harmonisieren oder denselben durch Vorspiel passend einzuleiten, wohl kaum Rede sein.³²⁶

[The system of new tonalities and the corresponding art of harmonisation is so highly developed and so rich in possibilities for musical expression which allows for so many boundaries, without which no true art can exist, the free development of such great spaces to play with, that it seems neither necessary nor desirable to return to the old system represented by the “church modes”... But this... does not prevent the use of old church modes... the study of which is necessary for the organist... to be able to understand older Classical music, especially considering older chorales and liturgical songs. As long as an organist lacks such an insight into these tonalities it would appear that he does not have the necessary competence to harmonise an old chorale in a suitable way, or clothe it suitably as a prelude.]

Oskar Stollberg notes that as a creative musician Herzog made no efforts to move away from his own self-imposed limits.³²⁷ Robert Schumann had praised his abilities as a composer for the organ and encouraged him to try his hand at other musical genres, but to no avail.³²⁸ On the other hand Herzog regarded it as important to develop connections between old and new forms:

Aber ich glaube, wir sollten das Heil nicht allein im alten Stil suchen. So gut unsere Pfarrer nicht mehr in der alten Sprache predigen, ebenso gut hat auch die Musik späterer Zeit ihr Recht und wird von der Gemeinde gewiss weit eher begriffen als so manches ganz Alte. Das Rechte liegt gewiss auch hier in der Mitte.³²⁹

[But I do not believe that we solely shall seek fortune in the old style. In the same way as our ministers do not preach in old-fashioned language. Music from our own time needs its rightful place and will doubtless be much better understood by congregations than most of the really old music. The correct approach lies somewhere between these points.]

This passage comes from a letter to Max Herold. The gist of Herzog’s meaning seems clear: Church music should not only attempt to model itself on ancient styles. In the same way as ministers no longer use out-dated modes of language. Thus new or contemporary 19th century music does indeed have a rightful place in worship. It is apparent that Johann Georg Herzog greatly concerned himself with

³²⁶ See Johann Georg Herzog, *Orgelschule*, Erlangen 1867 – introduction to section on church modes on page 10. Also Stollberg 1978, pp. 80 and 156: In footnote nr. 317 Stollberg notes that Herzog makes a clear distinction between a system of functional harmony and modal systems as applied to both chorale harmonisation and the improvisation of chorale preludes.

³²⁷ See Stollberg 1978, p. 70.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp 104-105.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 70-72.

the problem of finding a correct pathway upon which a balance between old and new elements in church music can be maintained.

CHAPTER 15

An important textbook in church organ playing**Johann Georg Herzog's *Orgelschule***

Johann Georg Herzog's *Orgelschule* occupies a central position not only within the German traditions for organ studies, but also in general 19th century organ-teaching literature. It is probably no exaggeration to describe it as one of the most important textbook for church organ playing in Protestant and Evangelical Lutheran circles. In the course of time its use also became widespread in Catholic churches, especially in Germany. The full title for the work as shown on the title page is as follows: *Orgelschule. Eine theoretisch-praktische Anleitung zur gründlichen Erlernung des kirchlichen Orgelspiels. Zum Gebrauch in Musikschulen,³³⁰ Seminarien, Präparanden-Anstalten, sowie zum Selbstunterricht bearbeitet und herausgegeben von Dr. J. G. Herzog, k. Professor der Musik in Erlangen. Op. 41. Erlangen, 1867. Verlag von Andreas Deichert.*³³¹

In Herzog's lifetime the work went through eight reprints. After 1910 it was revised by H. Schmidt and A. König for two new editions. In 1949 the first revised version was reissued, incorporating a new introduction to the section entitled "Über das Instrument und seine Behandlung" [about the instrument and its treatment].³³² There was also an appendix dealing with plainchant that was written by the Catholic organist and teacher Arthur Piechler (1896-1974).³³³

On the occasion of Herzog's 80th birthday Christian Geyer described the work as "die mustergültige Orgelschule, wohl die beste, die überhaupt existiert"³³⁴ [the exemplary organ textbook, certainly in general the best that there is]. Since these words come from a devoted pupil and friend they can be interpreted as a personal tribute from an acquaintance. All the same they do give us some impression of the

³³⁰ The German word "Musikschule" was in the middle of the 19th century synonymous with the words "music conservatoire".

³³¹ A translation of the title page: "Textbook for Organ. A practical-theoretical instruction in all the fundamentals of church organ playing. For use in conservatoires, teacher-training colleges, preparatory institutions and self-study arranged and published by Dr. J. G. Herzog, (Royal) music professor in Erlangen. Op. 41. Erlangen, 1867. Andreas Deicherts publishers."

³³² See Stollberg 1978, p. 120 (annotation 17).

³³³ Arthur Piechler was principal at the music conservatoire in Augsburg. Piechler was regarded as one of the foremost organists in Bavaria – both as interpreter and improviser. He also made a mark as a composer. Cf. Stollberg 1978, pp. 120-121 (annotation nr. 17).

³³⁴ Geyer 1902. See Klek 2004, p. 36.

work's high status in German church music circles. Its reputation even spread across the Atlantic Ocean to the New World.

Herzog's *Orgelschule* gives an interesting picture of how church music was practiced in the last half of the 19th century. It also shows something of how church music history was perceived. An organist's duties are described in the context of the 19th century liturgical reforms and restoration that had taken place in Bavaria. The work provides guidelines as to which musical styles were then regarded as acceptable for use in Evangelical Lutheran services. Instructions are given on the melodic structure and harmonisation of chorales, the function and formal construction of chorale preludes, and organ accompaniment of liturgical recitatives³³⁵ and plainchant. An extensive range of studies and exercises is provided. Herzog also writes at some considerable length about the aesthetic considerations that should provide necessary guidelines for church organ playing.

Herzog endeavoured first and foremost to instil an ideal of good church musical taste into the theology students he taught at the University of Erlangen. It was especially important to understand the Lutheran chorale and how it could be best employed to inspire the congregation. He states his aims in the following words:

Wer meine Orgelschule kennt, die sich hauptsächlich die Erlernung und Förderung des kirchlichen Orgelspiels, die zweckmässige Begleitung des Gemeindeganges zur Aufgabe gesetzt, wird daraus entnehmen können, in welcher Art ich meine Unterricht erteilt habe. Es handelte sich dabei weniger um technische Fertigkeit, als um Veredelung des Kirchlichen Geschmacks.³³⁶

[My organ textbook is mainly concerned to instruct and guide in the ways of church organ playing with the particular aim of ensuring a suitable accompaniment to congregational singing. Those who know this work will have some idea as to my approach to teaching which is less concerned with providing a technique than developing a sense of what is right and proper for church use.]

It is reasonable to assume that Herzog applied more rigorous artistic standards to the training of professional organists – the church musicians of the future. His thoughts should be understood against a background of the trend in music conservatoires to concentrate on training professional organists primarily as virtuoso players, in spite of the fact that the main component of organ studies was intended to be church organ playing.³³⁷ In the presentation that follows we shall see how Herzog approaches what he regards as the core of church organ playing. There are three main areas:

1. Chorale playing.
2. Introductions, interludes and conclusions.
3. Accompaniments of liturgical melodies.

³³⁵ In German: "Altargesang".

³³⁶ Johann Georg Herzog, "Über die kirchenmusikalische Ausbildung der Theologie-Studierenden von Professor Dr. J. G. Herzog (München)", in *Correspondenzblatt des Evangelischen Kirchengesangsvereins für Deutschland* (Germany) 4 1902, pp. 49-53. See Klek 2004, p. 29.

³³⁷ The emphasis on virtuosity seems to have arisen in spite of the new statutes from 1876 for the Königliche Musikschule in Munich which place church organ playing skills before training in concert presentation.

1. Principles for chorale-playing

Herzog introduces his presentation of chorale playing by emphasising that this should be regarded as the organist's most important task in Evangelical Lutheran worship. He notes a general improvement in the technical standards of organ playing, but considers there is still a great deal that needs to be done to improve congregational singing. He particularly singles out the playing of rhythmical chorale melodies:

Es kann nicht geläugnet werden, dass in den letzten Jahren sich im Orgelspiel ein bedeutender Umschwung zum Bessern geltend gemacht hat, aber was den eigentlichen Gemeindegesang betrifft, so bleibt wohl an den meisten Orten noch viel zu wünschen übrig. Hier thut vor Allem noth, dass an die Stelle des schleppenden, monotonen Gesangs wieder eine belebtere, mehr accentuirte Weise tritt, und dass endlich einmal mit Entschiedenheit dem Unfug der Zwischenspiele, die eigentlich nur bei einem ganz langsamen, zusammenhangslosen Gesang ihre Stelle finden können, überall ein Ende gemacht werde.³³⁸

[One cannot deny that in the course of recent years there have been changes for the better in the field of organ playing – but in the area of congregational singing there is still much work to be done in most places. Here there is a need everywhere to replace the dragging, monotonous singing with a livelier and more rhythmic approach and resolutely bring an end to the playing of interludes which really only belong in slow, formless song...]

Congregational singing can and will be improved by a good and appropriate accompaniment. Essential elements in achieving this are a thorough working knowledge of harmony and associated practical skills in applying it. Herzog begins by classifying chorale melodies into two main categories according to their historic origins. These are:

1. Chorales with accentuated rhythms, and equally divided metre. To this group belong those with even note-values.
2. Chorales with a quantified rhythm. That is to say a three or compound pulse, by which he understands melodies with differing note values.

These can again be divided into three sub-categories:

- A) Melodies with three beats in a bar such as *Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr.*³³⁹
- B) Melodies consisting of differing note values and bar lengths, such as *Befiehl du deine Wege.* See the following example:

³³⁸ See Herzog 1871, p. 74.

³³⁹ Example – see below.

Be - fehl du dei - ne We - ge uud was dein Her - ze
kränkt, der al - ler-treu - sten Pfe - ge, dess der den Him - mel
lenkt; der Wolken, Lauf und Winden gibt Wege, Lauf und Bahn, der
wird auch We - ge fin - den, da dein Fuss ge - hen kann.

18. Music example. Herzog 1867, p. 9.

C) Melodies with differing note values, but equal bar lengths such as *Herzliebster Jesu*.³⁴⁰

Herzog also points out that chorales with note values of equal length must also be regarded as rhythmic because it is impossible to separate melody and rhythm. It would therefore be mistaken to only regard the chorales belonging to the second group as rhythmic. The reasoning behind the idea that the melodies in the first group can also be regarded as rhythmic is the fact that the individual melodic lines bear a constant relationship to each other in the form of a uniform pulse.

From his teaching experience Herzog understood that the rhythmic aspects of chorale playing present considerable challenges to aspirant organists. Organ playing requires good coordination of hands and feet. The beginner who has not yet developed the necessary skills will tend towards a style of playing that can best be described as arrhythmic. It is essential that the pupil is made aware of these problems at an early stage so that remedial action can be taken. In order to create a fluent rhythmic pulse one has to be particularly attentive to the final tones of each melodic phrase. Here the rhythmic movement can easily be disturbed of arrhythmic playing or misplaced fermatas. All the same there will be occasions where it is necessary to specify points of repose, as for example when one part of a chorale ends with a crotchet, only for the next to begin with another crotchet. Herzog emphasises that such exceptions must always follow the overall rhythmic structure of the melody.³⁴¹ Regarding the choice of tempo, he notes:

Das rechte Tempo findet sich am Leichtesten, wenn der Organist die Gemeinde gewönnt, eine längere Zeile so zu singen, dass sie nur einmal und zwar meist in der Mitte neuen Athem zu nehmen braucht...³⁴²

[The correct tempo is easiest to find when the organist accustoms the congregation to sing a longer choral stanza so that they only need to take a one breath – generally in the middle of the stanza...]

³⁴⁰ Example – see below.

³⁴¹ See Herzog 1871, p. 75.

³⁴² Ibid.

PART 1

A perceptive organist will consider the texts of the hymns and the special characteristics of the melody when determining the style and tempo of his playing. The numerical strength of the congregation and the size of the church itself are also determining factors. Herzog also points out that excessively fast tempi are as much of a disruption to congregational singing as those that drag sluggishly. One can make the final chord of a verse a little longer, or make a longer fermata. It is also permissible to allow an interlude to lead over to the next verse. He presents exercises that aim to familiarise the student with some classical Lutheran chorales in what he describes as their original form. The aim of this exercise is to accustom the pupil to specified time signatures and rhythms, and thus equip him or her to support and lead the congregational singing appropriately.

Exercises in different harmonisations

The first exercises concerning chorale playing are four-part arrangements with the melody in the tenor register. Here it can either be played with an 8' register on a separate manual or a 4' register in the pedals – as in the three examples that follow:

2. Wer nur den lieben Gott lässt walten – J. G. B.
Godacht und Salicional 8'

C. F.
Clarinet und Fagott 8' Godacht 8'

Subb. 16' Violone, 8' (Violonb. 16')

3. Straf mich nicht in deinem Zorn – (Melodie als Tenor im Pedal.)
Godacht und Flöte 8' Flöte 4' Oberwerk.

Bordun 16' Gambe 8' Hauptwerk.

C. F. Clarino und Flötenb. 4'

**) Oder Oberwerk, Godacht und Salic. 8' für Sopr. Alt und Bass. Ped: Flötenb. 4' und Oktave 4', letztere mittelst der Pedalsappet aus dem Hauptm.*

4. Nun komm der Heiden Heiland – (Melodie als Oberstimme im Pedal.)
Liebl. Flöte und Godacht 8' Salic. oder Flöte 4')*

C. F. Flötenb. und Oktave 4'

**) Oder im Oberm. Salicional 8' - im Pedal Flötenb. 4' allein.*

19. Music example. Herzog 1871, p. 76.

Even at this early stage the aim is to familiarize the pupil with the traditional principle of chorale playing and chorale improvisation whereby the melody can be placed in different voices – also in the bass – rather than exclusively in the soprano part. Undoubtedly these techniques are intended to be practised by using a large number of different melodies. Herzog presents some rules as to how these practices should be applied: The tones which follow each other in a middle voice, such as the alto part of the following chorale, can be tied if this does not hinder the rhythmic movement. It is important that all the notes of a final chord are released

simultaneously – one must be aware that it is always disturbing if an upper or middle voice hangs on alone. See example:

20. Music example. Herzog 1871, p. 75.

When introducing difficult or unknown melodies to a congregation Herzog shows the technique of doubling the melody in octaves. This method is particularly useful where the organ has only one manual and pedal. Here the concluding note in simple parts of the melody is omitted at the lower octave before the congregation leave the melody. Herzog demonstrates that such a method always gives good results, though it is unnecessary for playing well-known melodies. Examples show how this type of playing can be applied to two classic chorales. The competent player will have no difficulty in completing the accompaniment with a more extensive left hand part that will play three voices, thus expanding the setting to five free parts.³⁴³

See the following two examples:

21. Music example. Herzog 1871, p. 79.

Herzog emphasises strongly that the practice of tying notes to produce a legato effect is in accordance with the natural characteristics of the organ. As a rule chorales should be played legato, but it is important not to be a single-minded here. The organist does well to remember that there are exceptions to every rule. When many are singing, there will often be a tendency for the tempo to drag, a tendency which needs to be checked in order to avoid a sluggishness which can induce drowsiness. There is little hope that this problem can be overcome by simply at-

³⁴³ Ibid., pp. 78-79.

tempting to play louder and faster. What is needed to bring vitality back to the singing is some degree of rhythmic accentuation that can be achieved by shortening (but not “skipping over”) some single chords. The following short examples are not intended to explain the points discussed above – these do not need to be attainable – but are merely intended to draw attention to the subject discussed here – which is unfortunately not infrequently a neglected point. Compare the following four examples:



22. Music example. Herzog 1871, p. 80.

According to Herzog, a conductor makes his intentions clear with the most discrete signals and movements, which often go unnoticed by the audience. The organist should not hesitate to use similar discrete techniques that he has acquired to stimulate the congregational singing. This should be coupled with a sensitive response to the congregation, the acoustics of the church, etc. Insight that is combined with experience and judgement is of much greater value for the congregation than all manifestations of virtuosity. This is especially true if the virtuosity is not capable of fulfilling the most elementary requirements of church playing in a worthwhile manner.³⁴⁴

Registrations for chorale playing

The following instructions are given with regards to registration:

Bei Begleitung des Gemeindeganges richtet sich die Stärke der Orgel nach der Anzahl der Gemeindeglieder, nach der Gangbarkeit der Melodien und nach dem Charakter der gottesdienstlichen Feier. Der Gemeindegang soll durch das Orgelspiel getragen und erhoben werden; zu schwache, wie umgekehrt zu starke Registrierung, welche letztere den Gemeindegang übertönt, ist zu tadeln. Doch können auch hierin Ausnahmefälle vorkommen, wie z. B. bei besonderen festlichen Gelegenheiten, die ein kräftiges Orgelspiel wünschenswert erscheinen lassen, auch wenn die Anzahl der Gemeindeglieder nicht immer in gleichem Verhältniss damit steht, wie dieses z. E. bei der Geburts- und Namensfeier des Regenten der Fall sein dürfte. – In Allgemeinen können die Mittelstimmen: Gedacht, Gambe, Flöte, Gemshorn 8' mit Flöte 4' als die Grundlage der Choralbegleitung angesehen werden; die Verstärkung geschieht nach Umständen durch Prinzipal 8', Oktave 4', Bordun 16', Oktave 2', welche Registrierung durch Hinzuziehung der Trompete und Quinte und schliesslich durch die Mixturen zum vollen Werke anwächst.³⁴⁵

³⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 78-79.

³⁴⁵ See Herzog 1867, p. 7.

[When accompanying congregational singing, the dynamic level of organ playing should reflect the size of the gathering, the manner in which the melody is to be sung and the actual character of the celebrations. The organ should support and elevate the singing, and playing that is too weak will not achieve this. The same remarks apply to playing that is too loud. All the same there are exceptions in the form of special festivals when the sound of full organ will be desirable even if the numbers of the congregation are relatively few. This applies on such occasions as royal birthdays and name days. Generally *mezzo forte* registers such as stopped diapason, Gamba, Flute, Gemshorn 8' and Flute 4' can be regarded as a basis for accompanying congregational singing. These can be reinforced by Principal 8', Octave 4', stopped diapason 16', Octave 2' as required. This registration can be increased to full organ by drawing Trumpet 8', Quint and Mixtures.]

The aim of these instructions is the development of skills of aural illumination. If judiciously applied these can help the congregation to understand the sentiments and meanings expressed by the words that are being sung.

2. Choral preludes and pieces of a free character

In the chapters dealing with these subjects it is clear that Herzog has a very high regard for the stylistic ideals of the past. At the same time he points to the role that independent organ playing occupies in Evangelical Lutheran history, and writes:

Das Orgelspiel nimmt im evangelischen Gottesdienst eine doppelte Stellung ein: eine mehr sekundäre in der Begleitung und Führung des Chorals und eine selbständige im Vor- und Nachspiel. In letzterer Beziehung vertritt der Organist im wahren Sinn des Worts die Kunst. Aber diese Kunst soll stets eine würdige, der gottesdienstlichen Feier angemessen sein.³⁴⁶

[In the Evangelical services the organ playing serves a dual function: the leading and accompaniment of the chorales and the secondary independent role for preludes and postludes. In this last-named role the organist is an artistic representative. But this art must be completely suitable and worthy for Divine Worship.]

The music played at the start of a service is intended to awake a mood of concentrated, receptive devotion in the congregation. The initial organ prelude should anticipate the character and mood of the first hymn. Organ music should ensure smooth transition between the different sections of the service. Chorale preludes are not only intended to introduce the melody, but also to establish the character and mood of the text that is about to be sung. The culture of the Evangelical Church gives much scope for the organist to perform this important task, but at the same time places on his shoulders the burden of choosing music that is appropriate for the congregation's edification.

Herzog classifies chorale preludes under two categories – those in a more free style and those that are strictly constructed. The first-named are those based on freely chosen motives that do not necessarily have a formal relationship to the chorale. See example:

³⁴⁶ See Herzog 1871, p. 96.

d. Choräle mit Vor- und Zwischenspielen:
Mit accentuirendem Rhythmus.

11. Vorspiel.
Andante. Sanfte Stimmen. J.G.H.

23. Music example. Herzog 1871, p. 81.

The second category takes the chorale melody, either in its entirety or in part, and builds it into an entity. Sometimes only a fragment of the melody is used, such as just the opening phrase. See the following examples with two choral preludes and a harmonisation of the choral *Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr* with short interludes:

Choräle mit quantitirendem Rhythmus.

14. Vorspiel. Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr – (Soli deo gloria) J.G.H.
Kräftig.

Vorspiel. Volles Werk. J.G.H.

24. Music example. Herzog 1871, pp. 85-86.

On the subject of a chorale prelude's musical substance, he regarded as the most vital ingredients a clear and expressive presentation of the melody, along with a noble and firm harmony of a genuine sacral character. Without these no form can be said to have any real value.

Und fragen wir nach dem Styl, welcher der Orgel am meisten entspricht, so muss gerade in jetziger Zeit, wo die Neigung zur Sentimentalität, zu überraschender Modulation, zu blossen Klangeffecten so vielfach zu finden ist, und das Ringen nach Originalität so häufig nur auf Irrwege zu führen scheint, mit allem Nachdruck auf den polyphonen Styl hingewiesen werden, in welchem Männer wie Bach, Händel, Krebs, Froberger, Muffat, Pachelbel u.s.w. uns so herrliche Muster hintergelassen haben.³⁴⁷

[We can ask what style is most suitable for the organ, in our time when we are overwhelmed by mere sentimentality, or surprising modulations, or by nothing more than pure sound-effects. When the desperate endeavours for originality so often seem to lead us in the wrong direction then all impressions can lead us to the polyphonic style, in which such men as Bach, Handel, Krebs, Froberger, Muffat, Pachelbel and others have left us such wonderful examples.]

To reach the level of an accurate and tasteful performance Herzog explains that the organist must strive to understand both the formal perspective and the content of a piece. It is important that at an early stage in their studies organ students learn to analyse music. Hopefully this prevents performances of organ music which he describes as “Aborgeln”. In other words a style of playing that does not engage its listeners and at best renders them rather apathetic to the organ as a musical instrument. Herzog naturally enough considered the organ as “das Herrlichste aller Instrumente” [the most glorious of all instruments].³⁴⁸

³⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 104

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

Nicht nur von der Idee eines Stückes, auch durch die Form, in welcher sich diese Idee ausspricht muss der Spieler sich auf bewusste Weise, frei von aller Künsterei, zu seiner Vortragsart bestimmen lassen. Die Sonderung und Abhebung der rhythmischen Gruppen eines liedförmigen Stückes, der klare, betonte und doch zu einem einheitsvollen Ganzen zusammengefasste Vortrag des durch Imitierung eines Motivs gebildeten Satzes, die Hervorhebung einer Hauptmelodie, eines *Cantus firmus*, der gesangmässige und in Bezug auf Takt und Betonung mehr oder weniger dem Gefühl überlassene Vortrag eines arienmässige verzierten *Cantus firmus* – endlich bei fugenartigen Sätzen die energische, gleichsam chormässige Zusammenhaltung aller Stimmen bei möglichst freier Entwicklung derselben, die Sonderung der Hauptsätze von den Zwischensätzen, ohne dass dadurch dem Ganzen der Charakter der Zerstückung aufgedrückt wird, sind für den Spieler wichtige Punkte, auf die der strebsame Kunstjünger sein ganzes Augenmerk richten muss. In dem Masse er sich bestrebt, dem toten Mechanismus der Orgel Geist und Leben einzuhauchen, wird auch das Interesse der Zuhörer zunehmen. Dass auch die Registrierung damit in nahem Zusammenhang steht, versteht sich wohl von selbst.³⁴⁹

[Not only regarding the idea for a piece, but also with consideration to the form that enables the idea to come to fruition, the player must allow his performance to be directed by a conscious style of playing which is free from mannerisms. The separation and withdrawal of the rhythmic groups in a melodically formed piece, the clear, accentuated and yet uniform character in the presentation of a movement built on the imitation of a motive, the emphasising of the principal melody in a *Cantus Firmus*, the devotional character where rhythm and accent are more or less abandoned to an emotional “aria” treatment of a ornamented *Cantus Firmus* – and finally a fugal movement where the energetic yet choral construction of all the voices, yet with the greatest freedom in the development of the same voices, separation of the main movement from the interludes, without giving the entirety an expression of being divided – all these points must be focused on by the conscientious art student. The listener’s interest will increase as the organist endeavours to breathe life into the dead mechanism of the organ. It is obvious that registration is closely connected with this.]

How long should the organ preludes be? According to Herzog, the order and character of the service should provide a yardstick for a perceptive and sensitive organist. The prelude that precedes the introduction to the service can be longer and should have a sacral character. The focal point of the service is the Gradual hymn and the sermon. Here a shorter prelude that strictly follows the character of the hymn is required. This is the right place for a strict chorale prelude. During the part of the service which follows the sermon it is best to employ shorter preludes or even just some simple cadences.

The concluding voluntary (postlude) allows the organist much more scope than the introductory prelude. The introductory prelude aims to create a suitable atmosphere of devotion and reverence for the congregation as it assembles in the church, an atmosphere that should free its members from worldly cares and troubles so they can give their full attention to the worship in which they are about to partake. The intention of the postlude is to provide a worthy conclusion to the preceding service. This does not necessarily involve simply making a loud noise as the congregation leaves the church. The concluding voluntary should agree with the preaching and the concluding section of the service. It should be seen as a kind of musical answer which provides an impression on the congregation’s members

³⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 104-105.

as they leave the church. Organists should ensure that these points are borne in mind when they select the music. For such purposes Herzog suggest a fugue. The following Bach-inspired fugue in A minor can probably be regarded as both a technical study and a model for composition/improvisation:

30. Fuge.
Moderato. *Volle Orgel.* J.G.H.

PART 1

The first system of the musical score consists of three systems of staves. Each system has a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The music is written in a complex, rhythmic style with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. The first system contains 12 measures of music.

The second system of the musical score consists of three systems of staves. Each system has a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The music continues from the first system with similar complex rhythmic patterns. The second system contains 12 measures of music.

25. Music example. Herzog 1871, pp. 184-188.

Johann Georg Herzog on the subject of improvisation in Lutheran services

Regarding improvisation, Herzog's organ textbook makes stringent demands on the church musician. He clearly distinguishes between a master of organ playing – that is to say a professional organist with a thorough musical training – and the many schoolteacher organists whose musical trainings were fairly limited. He considers it better that the majority of those in the latter category should abstain from spontaneous music making; especially if they are likely to employ musical styles that are not suited to church usage. At the same time he is of the opinion that all church organists should possess a minimum degree of competence as improvisers.³⁵⁰

In Bezug auf das Improvisieren, das leider zu einer gar üblen Gewohnheit so vieler Organisten geworden ist, muss noch gesagt werden, dass man wohl mit Fug und Recht von einem Meister im Orgelspiel Gewandtheit im freien Präلودiren, in der Durchführung eines Chorals, einer Fuge, erwarten kann, dass es aber allen Organisten, welchen der Beruf hiezu fehlt, eine ernste Pflicht sei, das sogenannte Fantasieren gänzlich zu unterlassen, und sich lieber an tüchtige Stücke bewährter Componisten zu halten. Man beherzige allen Ernstes, was Mendelssohn, dieser reichbegabte und hochgebildete Mann, in seinen Reisebriefen sagt: „Ich habe mich recht in meiner Meinung bestärkt, dass es ein Unsinn sei, öffentlich zu phantasieren. Ich werde es nicht wieder thun; es ist ein Missbrauch und ein Unsinn zugleich.“³⁵¹ – Eine Ausweichung, eine Cadenz, ein

³⁵⁰ In Herzog's opinion some aspects of chorale accompaniment – such as the ability to vary the harmonisations, or create interludes and modulate, should be mastered within the framework of improvisation.

³⁵¹ The German word "Fantasieren" indicates a practice inspired by pianistic considerations that originated in the 19th century. Often the form was rather unclear, which led to the fact that this type of playing was deemed unacceptable for church use.

kurzes Zwischen-Präludium modulatorisch und harmonisch richtig machen zu können, ist dagegen eine Anforderung, die billig an alle Organisten sollte gestellt werden können. –

[Regarding improvisation, a field that has unfortunately become a habit for so many organists, it can still be emphasised that from a master organ player one can expect skills to include creation of preludes in free style, or the development of a chorale or a fugue. However, organists who lack the ability or do not have a call for this work have a duty to themselves and others to abstain from so-called “Fantasising” and content themselves with playing good music composed by others. One should recall the words of the wonderfully talented and cultivated Mendelssohn, who in one of his letters wrote: “My opinion that it is meaningless to fantasise in public has been confirmed. I will not indulge in the exercise again. It is a misuse of time and at the same time madness.” On the other hand to round a tonal corner, or perform a cadence, or a brief interlude with correct modulation and harmony is an accomplishment that can reasonably be expected from all organists. –]

Herzog’s first concern was that church organ playing should meet the above-mentioned stylistic requirements. Whether the music played was improvised by the organist or composed by others was very much a secondary consideration. We can compare this with the Norwegian *Koralbog* published in 1877, where the Introduction contains the views of the editor; the composer, organist, improviser and musicologist Ludvig Mathias Lindeman (1812-1887):

Da Melodiernes Harmonisering kan ske paa mange Maader, saa følger det av sig selv, at Organisten, naar han er i Besiddelse af den nødvendige musikalske og harmoniske Indsigt og Dyktighed, kan ved de forskjellige Forhold og Tilfælde som og til større Afveksling – endog til hvert Vers – benytte forandret Harmoni. Hvor derimod saadan Dyktighed ikke kan forudsættes, maa det fordres, at den foreskrevne Harmoni nøiaktig følges.³⁵²

[The Melodies can be harmonised in so many ways, so it is obvious that the Organist who possesses the necessary musical and insights and competence in the use of Harmony can – with different circumstances and conditions – employ a considerable degree of variation – even down to changing (the harmonies) for each verse. If such competence is not available, then the player should be encouraged to exactly follow the written harmonies.]

As far as I can see Lindeman is pointing to a contemporary convention which was the product of a long tradition: A well-trained church musician did harmonise the chorales “off the cuff” in accordance with the text and character of the chorale. Remarks in several of the 19th century textbooks suggest that this was common practice that corresponded to and was partially descended from the figured-bass tradition. This approach to harmonisation had over the centuries given rise to a number of improvisation techniques on the organ and other keyboard instruments. In all probability many front-ranking organists used these techniques until well into the 19th century. Those organists who did not possess the necessary level of musical

³⁵² See Preface in Ludvig Mathias Lindeman, *Koralbog indeholdende de i Landstads Salmebogs forekommende Melodier ordnede og harmoniserede av Ludv. M. Lindeman. Med et anhang af Melodier harmoniserede af komponister fra det 16de Aarhundrede. Ved Kongelig Resolution af 15de December 1877 autoriseret til Brug ved Gudstjenesten i Rigets kirker. Sjette Oplag. [Chorale book containing the Melodies of Landstad's collection edited and harmonised by L. M. Lindeman with an appendix of melodies harmonised by composers of the 16th century. By Royal decree of 15th December 1877 authorised for use in Divine Worship in the Churches of the Realm. 6th edition.] Kristiania 1877.*

craftsmanship were instructed by Lindeman to stick to the chorale-book harmonisations. For professional musicians the chorale book harmonisations were to be regarded as a stylistic guide. The organist was otherwise permitted to use his formal knowledge and creativity, probably also when performing preludes, interludes, epilogues and postludes.

3. Liturgical accompaniment

Competence in providing special accompaniments for liturgical melodies and intonations is also an important skill that the organist must acquire. Herzog devotes considerable space to this theme in his *Orgelschule*. He introduces this by giving a more precise definition of the word chorale – both against a background of the Roman Catholic Church's plainsong traditions and the Evangelical Lutheran Church's liturgical melodies. A common feature for all these melodies is the free recitative type of singing that is directed by accentuation of words, melodic lines and figurations.

Das Wort Choral ist ursprünglich eine Bezeichnung für die lateinischen Ritualgesänge der römischen Kirche, welche nach den Regeln Gregors des Grossen in freier Recitation vorgetragen werden. Aehnlich dieser Gesangsweise in Bezug auf Vortrag sind die liturgischen Gesänge (Introitus, Kyrie, Collekete u.s.w.) der evangelischen Kirche. Während bei den Melodien zu den Liedern des Gesangbuches der streng abgemessene Takt Gesetz ist, werden diese ihrem Wesen nach eigentlichen Choralgesänge in Beziehung auf Länge und Kürze der Töne mehr willkürlich, nach dem Sinn des Textes, der Betonung der Worte und Sylben gesungen.³⁵³

[The word Chorale is originally a description for the Roman Church's Latin ritual singing, which according to Pope Gregory the Great, should be sung in the style of a free recitative. The method of performance is similar to the Evangelical Church's liturgical songs (Introit, Kyrie, Collect etc). While the melodies in the hymnal book are dominated by a rigid pulse, the nature of these idiosyncratic chorale songs is that they are sung in an arbitrary manner where the note-lengths are dominated by the text, accentuation of words and syllables.]

The notational foundation for these types of liturgical melodies can be limited to three types of note-length, though none of them gives an exact indication of how long or short the individual notes should actually be. Herzog presents a system of notation with long and short note-values, and in addition a note-value somewhere in between. He gives further examples as to how these three note-values can be visually noted, first in neume notation which is then transcribed to modern notation.³⁵⁴ See example:

Töne, welche in der Mitte von beiden stehen, drei Zeichen, nämlich: ■ ◆ ■. Eine absolute Geltung oder Dauer dieser drei Arten von Noten kann nicht angegeben werden. In moderne Schrift übertragen könnte die Bezeichnung dafür sein: ♫ ● ○.

26. Music example. Herzog 1871, p. 98.

He specifies that this not only should be sung by the liturgist, but also by the congregation. The organist should therefore accompany in such a way that the recitative character is maintained even when many are singing. He reasons that if an antiphon is sung with an even rhythm, the result is musically intolerable. Yet he

³⁵³ See Herzog 1871, p. 98.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

also points out that the congregation does need to breathe, and such breathing pauses should correspond to the textual requirements.

Although there is an old rule that the celebrant's singing at the altar should be unaccompanied, Herzog reminds his readers that in many places it is normal for the celebrant to be accompanied while singing the words of consecration during Communion. Such an accompaniment should consist of simple and strictly church style chords that are to be played without using the pedals. To avoid undue heaviness and allow the celebrant to be able to hear his own voice³⁵⁵ it is also advisable not to play full chords in the accompaniment. From time to time the organist can merely suggest the harmonies with one or two voices. These can be registered using delicate but clear labial registers such as Lieblichflöte 8' or Salicional 8'.³⁵⁶

The liturgical melodies for the services – *Agenden-Kern* – used by the Evangelical-Lutheran church in Bavaria are harmonised by Herzog in the collection *Musikalischer Anhang zu dem Agenden-Kern*.³⁵⁷ In the preface to this he explains that all the arrangements are based on old tonalities and techniques, since these harmonisations are regarded as best suited to clothe the old church melody forms.³⁵⁸ In accordance with that, one can further read in the Introduction that:

Besonders nachdrücklich ist dem Organisten zu empfehlen, dass er sich streng an die vorgezeichneten Harmonien halt und all willkürlichen Veränderungen, Künsteleien u. dgl bei Seite lasse. Nur bei Stellen, wo zu einer und derselben Note mehrere Sylben und Wörter gesungen werden müssen, wie dies bei den Introiten, der Versikeln meist der Fall ist, kann unter Umständen ein leichter Wechsel mit einfachen Akkorden gestattet werden".³⁵⁹

[It is strictly recommended that the organist rigorously follows the given harmonisations, and avoids all random variations and artificial trivialities. Only in places where one and the same note is used for several notes and syllables, something that mostly applies to melodies used for introits and versicles, can some changes using simple chords be permitted.]

This would appear to indicate that the music used for the regular sections of the service, such as the Kyrie, Gloria, salutations, congregational responses and so forth should have a fixed harmonic form. This should be standardised for all churches. See the accompaniment of "Vater unser" [Lord's Prayer]:

³⁵⁵ The German can be directly translated as "to be able to hear himself through that".

³⁵⁶ See Herzog 1871, p. 98.

³⁵⁷ *Musikalische Anhang zu dem Agenden-Kern*, 1856.

³⁵⁸ Cf. Stollberg 1978, p. 135 (annotation 132). Also *ibid.*, pp. 121-122 (annotation 25): The author refers to the directions of employment given to the Kantor in Schwabach from 1929. These specify that only the harmonisations printed in the service books for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria by Johann Georg Herzog are to be used for liturgical accompaniments. These melodies and arrangements were regarded as the fixed traditional points in the services.

³⁵⁹ See *Musikalischer Anhang zum Agenden-Kern*, 1856, p. IX.

Das Vater unser.

LITURG.

Lass uns be - ten: Va - ter un - ser, der du bist im Himmel, ge - hei - ligt werd dein Na - - me, zu - komm dein Reich;

dein Will gesche - he als im Himmel, auch auf Er - den, un - ser täglich Brod gib uns heut, und vergib uns unsre Schulden,

als wir ver - ge - hen un - sern Schul - digern, und führ uns nicht in Versu - chung, sondern er - lös uns vom Le - bel.

A - - men.

p.

27. Music example. Herzog 1871, p. 102.

CHAPTER 16

Recording project 1: A 19th Century Christmas Service**A creative understanding of music history**

As I described in the chapter devoted to theoretical and methodical aspects, in this part of my work I am attempting to approach the phenomenon of organ improvisation in the light of differing eras. I do this by presenting source materials along an axis of time that stretches from the middle of the 15th century to the closing years of the 20th. I have collected information about major lines of development, traditions, musical forms, musicians and teachers who have been associated with this practice. Inevitably such a wide range of material reveals that there are naturally many possible approaches to performance. It has therefore been necessary to restrict the historically orientated creative part of this work to a specified era and type of improvisation.

While the other two creative-performing parts of this study are more directly focused on the art of improvisation in the aesthetic and procedural perspectives of our present time, I have thus found it relevant to attempt to place myself into a more specific situation where the hymnological, liturgical and pedagogic information from the second part of the 19th century can be combined. Here there is a rich historic inheritance which is associated with contemporary Protestant practices of liturgical organ playing. By re-establishing a link to these musical aesthetics the creation of music for worship can take place on the dividing-line between old and new practices. I found inspiration in Herzog's own thoughts that historical musical research is most productive when it actually combines theory and practice.

The creative part of a historical research process will thus contribute an understanding in the form of an aural result. At the same time Herzog was of the opinion that such a living example should be formed from a background of an analytical study of sources and theoretical insights. Theory and practice are two complementary approaches that have a dialectic relationship to each other. He calls his *Orgelschule* a "theoretical-practical organ textbook", which is similar to the description given to many other organ textbooks from the 19th century. The theoretical elements are intended to impart the necessary understanding to be able to perform actions to be learned and realised at the instrument. In all probability this was a standard practice for mid 19th century organ teaching.

History as a creator of musical conditions

The result of this historic “recreation” here is a CD recording whose intention is to illustrate the improvising organist’s service playing in the light of 19th century practices. The main source is the teaching examples in the first and second edition of Johann Georg Herzog’s *Orgelschule* (1867/1871). The emphasis is on the different approaches to chorale playing and harmonisations, differing types of preludes, interludes and epilogues, together with the accompaniment of liturgical melodies. In the presentation above we have examined Herzog’s understanding of these disciplines, and it is these that I have attempted to illustrate in a combination of theoretical and practical approaches. By taking Herzog’s textbook as my starting-point it can be said that I am making myself a pupil of a long-dead master teacher where the transmission of the actual skills takes place in the form of a monologue through the written instructions and printed music examples. In this way I have experienced certain impressions of history through my own involvement, and I try to approach the question as to what influence the experience has had on me as organ improviser and church musician.

In the context of language we frequently employ sentence constructions and word formations that are directly inherited from the past. The process is similar in music where we also employ a large number of products in the form of chord progressions, melodic constructions etc that are also inherited. In accordance with that, it can be said that history makes its mark on me as an improvising musician, which leads to the way I orientate myself towards a certain musical world. I referred above to one of Herzog’s few statements about his *Orgelschule* where he speaks of the task of learning and promotion of church organ playing, and his organ teaching to the theology students at the University of Erlangen where his aim was to distil in them a sense of church taste. In forming this work – with its starting-point in Herzog’s *Orgelschule* – I have allowed myself to assimilate the musical tastes of a specified era. In this way history has supplied the aesthetic preferences and framework for this part of the study’s process of creation and performance.

An item of music history seen through my own interpretative “filter”

The first step in this part of my performing researches has therefore been to reach the greatest possible understanding of Herzog’s aesthetic and pedagogic approaches. Thereafter to allow the ideas to be realised through my own interpretative “filter” in the form of a practical-performing “test”.³⁶⁰ I have previously noted

³⁶⁰ Cf. Ricoeur 1999, pp. 152-153: Here my own approach – with reference to Paul Ricoeur’s text theory – can be described as having taken place within a framework of mutual connection between the expressions “explanation” and “understanding”. According to Ricoeur, there are two ways in which we can read: 1) By reading one can extend and reinforce the indecisive element that frames the text’s references to the surrounding world and speaking subjects. For Ricoeur this is an analytic or critical investigative approach to the text. 2) However it is also possible to remove such uncertainties by completing the text as a living speech. It is the latter approach that is the real decisiveness of the reading, for it is this that unmasks the core of the uncertainty that apprehends the text’s drift towards a meaning – or in my thesis: towards an artistic realisation.

When reading is possible, it is because the text is not closed about itself, but opens itself towards something else. To read therefore becomes a discursive link between the text – or in my dissertation: the musical symbols on manuscript paper. (Reading music will of necessity deal with an approach that moves between analytic investigation and musical experience.) Interpretation and understanding are the concrete results of this coupling and repetition. Ap-

Herzog's main intention to provide students with the right means to serve as church organists. It is these means that I have now taken into my own hands in order to research them from a specified aesthetic and historic context. Such a performance procedure, where the challenge is to develop improvised organ music from the background of specified sources, using a church organ dating from the period under consideration, can perhaps contribute a type of musical aesthetic information which cannot otherwise be obtained from simple reading and analysis. The information is formed from a specific relationship as student. At the same time it can be said to be an adequate pedagogic aim in a creative context not to simply imitate a master teacher, but to build further on the impulses that have been received in as a result of an actual learning situation. Given musical experimental performances and guiding principles will be developed from an interpretative, learned and active subject.

The attempt to study a musical culture and practice of improvisation from the past by "re-doing" or "re-thinking" is not about efforts to restore a so-called "authentic" form of expression. Such an approach rather implies a search for traces of knowledge, principles of form and performing skills that the musicians of the past have bequeathed to us. It will naturally be difficult to obtain a complete picture. There will always be room for alternative interpretations of musical writings and works, especially considering how these make their impact on improvising musicians. The theologians Friedrich Spitta and Christian Geyer have given us their impressions of Johann Georg Herzog's organ playing in services. They give us a picture of a musician whose technical armoury enabled him to really master the art of church organ playing. We can assume it is these techniques he imparts in his *Orgelschule*, and it is these that I attempt to give an aural illustration in the accompanying recording project based on an order of service, a hymnbook and the organ textbook from the middle of the 19th century.

Historically inspired organ improvisations in Haga Church, Gothenburg

Bell ringing (from St. Mary's Church in Lübeck) (track 1)

Prelude over the chorale melody *Lobt Gott ihr Christen alle gleich*: Concerto brevis in "Style Antiquo" (track 2)

Opening hymn: *Lobt Gott ihr Christen alle gleich*³⁶¹ (Text: Nikolaus Hermann. Melody: Nikolaus Hermann 1560) Verse 1 (track 3) – Interlude (track 4) – Verse 2 (track 5) – Interlude (track 6) – Verse 3 (track 7) – Interlude (track 8) – Verse 4 (track 9) – Interlude (track 10) – Verse 5 (track 11) – Interlude (track 12) – Verse 6 (track 13) – Interlude (track 14) – Verse 7 (track 15) – Interlude (track 16) – Verse 8 (track 17) – Epilogue and modulation to Introit (track 18)

appropriation here means that the interpretation of a text is realised in the subject's own interpretation, a subject that thereafter understands himself better, understands himself differently or begins to understand himself. Against the background of this approach in this thesis we are speaking of my understanding of my own improvisatory actions against certain external sources that I choose to follow. It is exactly these inherited external influences in the form of improvisatory concepts and techniques that I have attempted to acquire in order to illuminate them by means of my own interpretative processes.

³⁶¹ Hymn tune in *Gesangbuch für die evangelisch-lutherische Kirche in Bayern*, 1855, no. 61.

Introit: *Uns ist ein Kind geboren* (track 19)

The German Gloria Patri: *Ehr sei dem Vater* (track 20)

Confession (track 21)

The German Kyrie: *Kyrie eleison, Herr erbarme Dich* (track 22)

Absolution (track 23)

The German Gloria in excelsis: *Ehre sei Gott in der Höhe* (track 24)

Collect with salutation (track 25)

Bible reading (track 26)

The Apostolic Creed (track 27)

Gradual Hymn: *Gelobet seyst du, Jesu Christ*³⁶² (Text: Martin Luther. Melody: Old German 1524) Chorale prelude (track 28) – Verse 1 (track 29) – Interlude (track 30) – Verse 2 (track 31) – Interlude (track 32) – Verse 3 (track 33) – Interlude (track 34) – Verse 4 (track 35) – Interlude (track 36) – Verse 5 (track 37) – Interlude (track 38) – Verse 6 (track 39) – Interlude (track 40) – Verse 7 (track 41).

Bible reading (The sermon) (track 42)

Hymn: *Wunderbarer Gnadenthron*³⁶³ (Text: Joh. Olearius (1611-1684). Old Church Melody: 1544) Chorale prelude (track 43) – Verse 1 (track 44) – Interlude (track 45) – Verse 2 (track 46) – Interlude (track 47) – Verse 3 (track 48).

Prayer: *Das allgemeine Kirchengebet* (track 49)

Lord's Prayer: *Vater unser* (track 50)

Hymn verse before Communion: *Schaffe in mir Gott*³⁶⁴ Prelude (track 51) – Verse (track 52) – Epilogue and modulation to Preface (track 53)

Preface and the German Sanctus: *Heilig, Heilig, Heilig* (track 54)

Eucharistic Prayer (track 55)

Lord's Prayer: *Vater unser* (sung by the celebrant) (track 56)

The German Agnus Dei: *Christe, du Lamm Gottes* (track 57)

Words of institution (sung by the celebrant) (track 58)

Distribution (sharing of the sacred elements) (track 59)

Communion hymn: *Vom Himmel hoch*³⁶⁵ (Text: Martin Luther. Melody: 1540) Chorale prelude (track 60) – Verse 1 (track 61) – Interlude (track 62) – Verse 2 (track 63) – Interlude (track 64) – Verse 3 (track 65) – Interlude (track 66) – Verse 4 (track 67) – Interlude (track 68) – Verse 5 (track 69) – Interlude (track 70) – Verse 6 (track 71) – Interlude (track 72) – Verse 7 (track 73) – Interlude (track 74) – Verse 8 (track 75) – Interlude (track 76) – Verse 9 (track 77) – Interlude (track 78) – Verse 10 (track 79) – Interlude (track 80) – Verse 11 (track 81) – Interlude (track 82) – Verse 12 (track 83) – Interlude (track 84) – Verse 13 (track 85) – Interlude (track 86) – Verse 14 (track 87) – Interlude (track 88) – Verse 15 (track 89).

³⁶² Hymn tune in *Gesangbuch für die evangelisch-lutherische Kirche in Bayern*, 1855, no. 57.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*, no. 67.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 188. Harmonised in *Musikalische Anhang zum Agenden-Kern*, 1856.

³⁶⁵ Hymn tune in *Gesangbuch für die evangelisch-lutherische Kirche in Bayern*, 1855, no. 58.

PART 1

Collect (track 90)

Blessing-Dismissal (track 91)

Postlude: Choral-Fugue over *Vom Himmel Hoch* (track 92)

Bell ringing (from St. Mary's Church in Lübeck) (track 93)

Participants

Choir (Congregation): **Guldhedskyrkans Kammarkör**, Gothenburg

Conductor: **Ulrike Heider**

Celebrant (liturgical song): **Jan H. Börjesson**

Celebrant (liturgical reading): **Jobst Ruediger Puchert**

Organ and artistic concept: **Svein Erik Tandberg**

Appendix

From *Lochamer Liederbuch* (1452) – Conrad Paumann (1410-1473): *Benedicte almechtiger got* (track 94)

Svein Erik Tandberg at the organ of Eik Church, Tønsberg

Recording and digital mastering: **Kai Schüler**

Total playing time: 78:09

CHAPTER 17

A collection of examples for improvisation

During his time at the Munich conservatoire – and probably also after that period – Herzog taught both Catholic and Protestant organ students.³⁶⁶ One of his Catholic students was the church musician, composer and training-college lecturer August Wolter (1834-1881).³⁶⁷ Wolter dedicated a collection of cadences and short preludes or “character pieces” to his organ teacher. These miniatures cover all the tonalities and cover a great number of organ styles and techniques from the 19th century. Only one of these pieces seems to be based on a Lutheran chorale,³⁶⁸ which suggests that these examples were intended for the Roman Catholic liturgy. In this connection it is a little unclear as to whether they should be regarded as compositions or models for improvisation. We can presume that they are both.

As far as one can tell Wolter’s collection does reveal an important aspect of contemporary organ teaching, namely the close connection between harmonisation and instrumental playing techniques. In other words: to practice composition directly on the keyboard, as these pieces probably demonstrate in written form. This collection is today found in the form of a manuscript in the library of the Institut für Kirchenmusik at the Friedrich-Alexander-Universität in Erlangen and is catalogued as “Manuscript 14”.³⁶⁹ The full title is: *Cadenzen und Praeludien in allen Tonarten für die Orgel komponiert und seinem verehrten Lehrer, dem wohlgebornen Herrn J. G. Herzog, Professor der Musik an der Hochschule zu Erlangen, in*

³⁶⁶ In the 19th century Munich was a mainly Catholic area, and the Protestant community in the capital of Bavaria was a small enclave.

³⁶⁷ See Walter Kirsch (ed.), *Palestrina und die Kirchenmusik im 19. Jahrhundert*, Volume 2, *Das Palestrina-Bild und die Idee der „wahren Kirchenmusik“ im Schrifttum von ca. 1750 bis um 1900*, Kassel 1999, p. 271: A brief biographical note mentions that Wolter was born in Kaltensondheim in Unterfranken and died in Würzburg. He worked as organist in Bamberg and later as training college lecturer in Würzburg. His creative output consists mainly of masses and songs for male voice choir. It is not clear exactly when he studied with Herzog. He might have been a private pupil at Erlangen, but it is also possible that he studied organ with Herzog in Munich. When Herzog moved to Erlangen August Wolter was already 20 years old, so it is not entirely beyond the bounds of probability that he was one of Herzog’s students at the Munich Conservatoire.

³⁶⁸ Here the thematic motive would appear to quote the first line of the Lutheran melody *Jesu meine Freude*.

³⁶⁹ On the title page a pencil mark: “man 14”.

PART 1

*Dankbarkeit und Liebe gewidmet von August Wolter.*³⁷⁰ See the following two examples from this work:

The image shows a handwritten musical score for two pieces: 'Cadenze' and 'Prelude'. The 'Cadenze' section is marked 'D-dur' and 'Cadenze.' and features a melodic line with various ornaments and rests. The 'Prelude' section is marked 'Allegro' and 'Prelude' and features a more rhythmic, repetitive pattern. The score is written on multiple staves, including a grand staff with treble and bass clefs, and a separate staff for the right hand. The handwriting is in black ink on aged paper.

This image shows a continuation of the handwritten musical score from the previous block. It contains several staves of music, including a grand staff and a separate staff for the right hand. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and ornaments, consistent with the style of the first image. The handwriting is in black ink on aged paper.

28. Music example. Wolter: *Cadenze and Prelude (Allegro) in D major.*

³⁷⁰ The title can be translated as: "Cadences and preludes in all tonalities composed for organ by August Wolter and dedicated to his honourable teacher, the distinguished Mr. J. G. Herzog, professor of music at the Erlangen High School, in gratitude and devotion".

29. Music example. Wolter: *Cadence and Prelude (Moderato) in A major*.

In a manner which is similar to the procedures employed in the 15th century by Conrad Paumann these two short pieces are based on specific intervals. The D major prelude has a pedal part that consists of an ascending and descending scale (described by Paumann as “*ascensus/descensus simplex*”). The bass part of the A major prelude consists mainly of ascending and descending thirds (described by Paumann as “*ascensus/descensus per terciatio*”). Wolter presents his musical material in the two initial cadences.

Musical craftsmanship – a common denominator for 19th century musicians

According to the German musicologist Friedrich Blume, 19th century musicians did not tend to regard themselves as members of exclusive circles that offered various different stylistic approaches such as Romantic or Nationalistic pro-

gramme manifestos. He cites the German composer and novelist Ernst Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann (1776-1822), who considered that the Romantic music aesthetic is primarily emotional. If emotion was present in a piece of music, then it could be defined as “Romantic” irrespective of its style and period. On this basis, Hoffman regarded Ludwig van Beethoven, Joseph Haydn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Christoph Willibald Gluck as Romantic composers. He also placed Johann Sebastian Bach and – with some reservations – George Friedrich Handel in this category.

Er beweist damit, dass für ihn, der ja selbst Musiker war und das musikalische Handwerk von Grund aus verstand, das Romantische nicht so sehr eine Sache des Stils oder der Formen als vielmehr des Gehalts und eines den musikalischen Formen mehr oder minder supponierten Gefühls war.³⁷¹

[He makes this clear, for he was a musician himself, and had a fundamental understanding of musical craftsmanship, that the Romantic ideal did not so much encompass styles and forms, but rather a feeling that was more or less subjected to the music’s content and forms.]

During the 19th century the subject of musical aesthetics developed in many directions. Despite these divergences Blume makes the point that books dealing with subjects related to musical craftsmanship formed the common background for the majority of the 19th century’s creative musicians.³⁷² Teachings on the subjects of music theory and composition were fairly universal, with ideas and practices which held sway until well into the 20th century. In the teaching of this craftsmanship Classicism and Romanticism formed a unit that was practically independent of musical aesthetic and national considerations:

Ob Früh- oder Neuromantiker, ob Wagnerianer oder Brahmsianer, ob Deutscher, Tscheche oder Schwede: die Handwerkslehre galt für alle gleich.³⁷³

[If one was an early or late Romantic, whether one swore by Wagner or Brahms, whether one was German, Czech or Swedish: musical craftsmanship applied equally to all.]

Many 19th century organ textbooks emphasise the craftsmanship aspects of organ playing. In addition to providing exercises for the development of instrumental techniques they also contain chapters that emphasise the theoretical³⁷⁴ aspects of organ composition and improvisation. Examples of this can be found in the works

³⁷¹ See Friedrich Blume, “Romantik”, in *Epochen der Musikgeschichte in Einzeldarstellungen*, Kassel 1974, pp. 314-315.

³⁷² Blume mentions a considerable number of major works on subjects related to music theory and composition: H. Christian Koch *Versuch einer Anleitung zur Komposition* (1782-1893), Jérôme-Joseph de Momignys *Cours complet d’harmonie et de composition* (1803-1806), Antonin Reicha *Philosophisch-practische Anmerkungen* (ca. 1803) and *Cours de composition musicale* (1816), Johann Gottfried Weber *Versuch eine geordneten Theorie der Tonsetzkunst* (1817-1821), Johann Bernhard Logiers *System der Musikwissenschaft und der praktischen Komposition* (1827), Adolf Bernhard Marx *Lehre von der musikalischen Komposition* (1837-1847) – a volume later revised by Hugo Riemann –, Johann Christian Lobes *Lehrbuch der musikalischen Composition* (1850-1867) and Simon Sechters *Grundsätze der musikalischen Composition* (1853-1854). Anton Bruckner also studied from the three volumes of this work.

³⁷³ See Blume 1974, p. 315.

³⁷⁴ “Theoretical aspects” here covers the study of harmony and counterpoint.

of Knecht (1795/1796), Kittel (1801),³⁷⁵ Grétry (1803),³⁷⁶ Werner (1824),³⁷⁷ Rinck (1839),³⁷⁸ Lemmens (1862),³⁷⁹ Herzog (1867/1871), Oberhoffer (1874) and Geissler [sine anno].³⁸⁰ The teaching process involves giving a number of structural parameters and demonstrating their application at the keyboard. Such a teaching approach does not differ radically from the textbooks of the 15th and 16th centuries.³⁸¹ These 19th century organ textbooks give some indication as to what instrumental and harmonic techniques that were required by organists. Musicians, whether they improvised or composed, were expected to display a solid mastery of musical techniques. These formed a common denominator for all forms of musical expression.

³⁷⁵ Johann Christian Leberecht Kittel, *Der angehende praktische Organist oder Anweisung zum zweckmässigen Gebrauch der Orgel bei Gottesverehrungen in Beispielen*, Erfurt 1801. Facsimile ed. Frits Knuf, Buren 1981.

³⁷⁶ André Modeste Grétry, *Méthode simple pour apprendre à préluder*, Paris 1803. Facsimile ed. Broude Brothers, New York 1968.

³⁷⁷ Johann Gottlob Werner, *Anleitung zum Orgelspielen und zur richtigen Kenntnis und Behandlung des Orgelwerks*, Mainz 1824.

³⁷⁸ Christian Heinrich Rinck, *Theoretisch-Practische Anleitung zum Orgelspielen. Op. 124*. Volumes I-III, Darmstadt 1839.

³⁷⁹ Nicolas-Jaques Lemmens, *l'Ecole d'orgue*, Bruxelles 1862.

³⁸⁰ Carl Geissler, *Neue praktische Orgelschule für den ersten Anfänger bis zum vollendeten Orgelspieler*, Meissen [sine anno].

³⁸¹ Cf. Wolf 1968, p. 197: Wolf hints here that it is in fact possible to trace a line of teaching approaches for organ playing and improvisation – from the 15th century *fundament* books right down to the present day.

CHAPTER 18

20th century tradition bearers

In the next section four front-ranking 20th century musicians sketch something of the process by which they first learned and later practised or thought the art of organ improvisation. Two of the contributors studied in the German tradition, whilst the other two have their origins in the French tradition.

Heinz Wunderlich

Many distinguished musicians have studied and taught at the Leipzig Music Conservatorium³⁸² since its foundation by Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy in 1843. The legendary Karl Straube (1873-1950),³⁸³ who became organist at the Thomaskirche, Leipzig in 1902 was appointed organ teacher at the conservatoire in 1907. He was formally granted the title Royal Professor in 1908. As a young man Straube became acquainted with Max Reger, who wrote many of his organ works with Straube's playing in mind. In 1918 Straube was appointed Kantor at the Thomas Church, and also conducted the Bach Society and the Gewandhaus-Chor. His teaching continued until 1948. One of Straube's foremost organ students was the organist, teacher, composer and conductor Heinz Wunderlich, who was born in Leipzig in 1919. He studied Evangelical church music at the Leipzig conservatoire from 1935-1941, where in addition to his studies with Straube he also had lessons in composition and conducting with Johann Nepomuk David (1895-1977).

Amongst other appointments Wunderlich taught at the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik in Halle from 1947-1958 and was *Kirchenmusikdirektor* at the St. Jacobi-Kirche in Hamburg from 1958 until 1982. Here he played a major role in the first restoration of the church's famous Arp Schnitger organ. In 1974 he was appointed to teach solo organ playing, improvisation and liturgical playing at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater in Hamburg. His reputation as a performer rests solidly on his playing of the organ works of Johann Sebastian Bach and Max Reger. His academic reputation has brought him students from all over the world. I had the good fortune to interview Wunderlich who recalled the teaching of im-

³⁸² The Leipzig Conservatoire was during the inter-war years known as the Landeskonservatorium der Musik zu Leipzig.

³⁸³ Cf. Johannes Wolgast, *Karl Straube Eine Würdigung seiner Musikerpersönlichkeit anlässlich seiner 25jährigen Tätigkeit in Leipzig*, Leipzig 1928.

provisation and liturgical playing as it was practiced during his student days at the conservatoire's Kirchenmusikalisches Institut.³⁸⁴

In the course of the conversation Wunderlich also recollected hearing Karl Straube improvise fluently. Straube himself did not teach improvisation, which has led to speculation about his improvisational skills. Wunderlich wished to scotch these rumours and believed that Straube's own self-critical faculties were the main cause of his reluctance to teach improvisation. In all probability Straube did not wish to present himself in public with any musical activity at which he did not completely excel. He extended this advice to his students, pointing out that improvising publicly in concerts was only for the chosen few who could really create something of genuine originality and interest. For the remainder of his students he suggested that this was a practice that was best avoided.

Wunderlich was taught improvisation by three other teachers; Karl Hoyer,³⁸⁵ Walter Zöllner³⁸⁶ and Heinrich Fleischer.³⁸⁷ The initial lessons with Hoyer involved playing chorales from written harmonisations. Next was the task of adding ornamentation to the chorale melodies, still using written harmonisations. This ensured that students did not need to devote their attention to following strict rules of voice leading in the chord progressions. These initial exercises employed passing notes to ornament three against one, or quaver triplets against crotchets. So the exercise was repeated with two against one, and afterwards with four against one – in other words quavers and semiquavers against crotchets.

Then the process of harmonising the chorales directly at the keyboard from a single melody line began. When reasonable competence was achieved here the two procedures were combined: harmonising a melody while simultaneously adding ornamentation. The students no longer required printed or hand-written copies of the harmonisation.

Practical counterpoint and studies in harmony and modulation

The next step in the process was two-part contrapuntal exercises requiring the improvisation of a counter-melody to a given melody – a practice known as *bicinium*. The *cantus firmus* was here played in both the right and left hand. Later came the contrapuntal exercises involving short chorale fugatos, but usually only using the first part of the chorale melody. Harmonic studies involved extended cadences that were to lead to different keys. The tonal range of such modulating cadences was gradually extended to more remote keys.

³⁸⁴ The interview took place on the 23rd January 2003 at Heinz Wunderlich's home in Grosshansdorf just outside Hamburg. The conversation was recorded on tape and later transferred to CD.

³⁸⁵ Karl Hoyer (1891-1936) studied in Karl Straube's organ class at the Königliches Konservatorium der musikk zu Leipzig from 1908 to 1911. From 1912 to 1923 he was organist at the St. Jacobi-Kirche in Chemnitz, and from 1926 to 1936 at the Nikolaikirche in Leipzig. He also taught theory and organ playing at the conservatoire in Leipzig.

³⁸⁶ Walter Zöllner (1910-1942?) became organist in Leipzig's Nikolaikirche after Karl Hoyer's death in 1936. Zöllner held this post until 1942 whilst also teaching part time at the Leipzig conservatoire.

³⁸⁷ Heinrich Fleischer (1912-2006) studied with Karl Straube and taught later at the conservatoire in Leipzig. He fought in World War 2, suffering damage to his left hand which fortunately did not prevent him from continuing to play. He moved to the United States, where he served as organist at the Universities of Chicago and Minnesota.

At the same time, other aspects of modulating techniques were developed. Initially these were based on a harmonic approach; later techniques involving use of motifs were employed. From the skills they had now acquired in the areas of keyboard harmonisation of chorales, melodic ornamentation, modulation, bicinnium and simple three-part fugato forms, they began to develop the musical ideas for chorale preludes. Here the different lines of the melody did not follow immediately after each other, but were separated by short improvised interludes.

Chorale-improvisation with cantus firmus in different voices

According to Heinz Wunderlich, all three of his improvisation teachers emphasised the importance of a thorough practical grounding in keyboard harmonisation and counterpoint as being an essential starting point for liturgical improvisation. Wunderlich himself described such exercises as tasks for the beginner. When the student really masters these tasks then the time is ripe to begin a deeper study of chorale improvisation, following examples from organ literature. Wunderlich refers to four main types of organ chorales that he and his fellow students were expected to assimilate:

1. The cantus firmus is played in the soprano register of the chorale prelude.
2. The chorale melody is played in the bass voice. While the pedal plays the cantus firmus the hands create a contrapuntal accompaniment.
3. Now the chorale theme is played in the tenor register; two voices are played by the right hand, a bass line in the pedals while the cantus firmus is played in the tenor register by the left hand.
4. Finally the cantus firmus is played by a 4' pedal stop. The bass voice is then played by the left hand, while the alto and tenor voices are played using the right hand.

Wunderlich notes that the 3rd and 4th methods frequently cause confusion to many organ students because they compel them to form the harmonies in a way which is completely different from the most usually method of playing. He also notes that these methods are difficult in the context of improvisation since they compel a rearrangement or reinterpretation of deeply ingrained musical responses.

A further step involves adding a preparatory interlude in between each stanza of the melody – using motives. The melody does not move further immediately, but waits a contrapuntal imitation in each voice beforehand. Finally the students were given the task of improvising a partita in order to summarize all the differing forms they had worked with in chorale improvisation.

Improvisation in concert-style forms

The next stage admitted the student to improvisations in larger concert-style forms. The gifted students, and not least those who could demonstrate sufficient musical imagination, now attempted such forms as toccatas, preludes and fugues. In fugal improvisation it was essential to work out the exposition quickly. The improviser needed a good sense of direction so that it was a real fugue, not a formless and seemingly eternal rambling. Students were challenged to have a clear opinion of how long the fugue's episodes should be, the form to be used for the central section, etc. If in the course of time the improviser became very competent, there should perhaps also be a stretto section. Students who were skilled at theoretical

counterpoint tended to find it easier to improvise in larger forms. Others often found it rather more difficult.

Wunderlich recalled that all improvisation practice was initially in a so-called “historic style”, though an important aim of the studies was for students to be able to create improvised music that reflected something of their own personality. Based on his own experiences at the Leipzig conservatoire, Wunderlich sees clear parallels between the study of composition and the learning of improvisation.³⁸⁸ Therefore organ improvisation is not a simple process of learning to imitate the style of Bach or Buxtehude, but of learning in the course of time to create something of one’s own. It is essential for students to begin by conscientiously assimilating exercises and other material. Afterwards they can free themselves from the given models and patterns. In this light Wunderlich sums up some of his personal impressions from his studies in organ improvisation with Karl Hoyer, Walter Zöllner and Heinrich Fleischer.

An Approach which retains its validity

As already noted Heinz Wunderlich can recall an extensive life’s work as church musician and organ teacher. For many years he was principle teacher in solo organ playing and improvisation at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater in Hamburg. I asked him what relevance his own training as a church musician in Leipzig had in relation to his own teaching methods. Wunderlich replied that the processes he himself had undergone were the only ways in which one could attain competence in organ improvisation. He could therefore see no reason for attempting to introduce other elements into his own teaching. A major precondition for being able to create improvisation that bears a personal stamp is that one must first acquire a necessary storage of techniques. These can best be assimilated by systematically studying major works from the organ literature. As far as Wunderlich can see, this is still the only possible way to mastery of improvisation.

Ruth Zechlin

Ruth Zechlin was born at Freiberg in 1926 and began piano studies at the age of five. She made her first attempt at composition at the age of seven. She studied church music, composition and music theory at the Leipzig conservatoire from 1943 to 1945, and afterwards from 1946 to 1949. After taking her finals in 1949, she taught at this institution while she also deputised at the organ of the Nikolai-kirche in Leipzig. In 1950 she was asked to take a teaching post at the Music High School Hanns Eisler in Berlin. Here she taught harpsichord, harmony and counterpoint, form, orchestration and composition. In 1969 she was appointed professor in composition at the same institution, and in 1970 voted into the prestigious Akademie der Künste in the former East German Republic. After retiring in 1986, she had several guest professorships. From 1990 to 1993 Zechlin was vice president in the Akademie der Künste von Berlin, and in 1998 she became an honorary member of the Deutsches Musikrat. As composer she has composed several music

³⁸⁸ A well-known pedagogic approach to the acquisition of knowledge and skills in musical composition has been the principle that students “write themselves” into specific styles and musical forms. The thought being that the techniques thus assimilated shall in the fullness of time function as tools with which one can compose music that bears the stamp of one’s individual personality.

dramas in addition to many other music forms. Zechlin is also known for her choral and organ music. She died in Munich on 4th August 2007 while I was in the closing stages of writing this thesis.

In the years immediately after World War 2 Ruth Zechlin was one of Karl Straube's last solo organ students at the Mendelssohn-Bartholdy-Akademie in Leipzig.³⁸⁹ From 1947 to 1948 she also followed Günther Ramin's (1898-1956) course in improvisation and liturgical organ playing at the same institution.³⁹⁰ The author of this thesis interviewed Ruth Zechlin, who here describes Ramin as an improvising musician and his teaching of organ improvisation.³⁹¹

Zechlin describes Ramin's own improvisations as dramatic, sometimes extremely so. When he gave his concert improvisations it was almost as if entire scenes from oratorios were taking place. It would therefore seem that one could imagine that some of the same musical temperament could be in evidence in his teaching of improvisation – a type of wildness that also was reflected in his stormy performances of Max Reger's organ works. This was not the case. In respect of method, Ramin's improvisation instruction was some of the most carefully thought through and logical teaching that Zechlin experienced during her musical studies at Leipzig. This was rather a paradox since this way of teaching was led by such a dynamic and temperamental artist.

Ruth Zechlin recalls Günther Ramin as an extremely learned musician who had a thorough analytic knowledge of music history and musical forms. As a teacher his starting point was a strict approach that focused on the characteristics associated with different stylistic eras. She never experienced one-to-one lessons with Ramin; there were always three students in the lessons. This gave her the opportunity to see how Ramin guided other students.

Cadence practice and working according to specific examples

Ramin began his lessons in organ improvisation by giving the students four-part cadences. Immediately afterwards came the task of dividing the voices between two manuals and three manuals with pedals, naturally enough without a score. It frequently became obvious that even quite competent players could not cope with these apparently simple exercises when they did not have them on the music desk in written out form. The next stage in the process involved playing the soprano part of the cadences on the pedals using a 2' or 4' register, while the alto, tenor and bass voices were registered on two or three different manuals using 8' and 16' registers. Many students could not manage these tasks and therefore had to work very thoroughly in order to master these first steps. Thus began improvisation studies with Günther Ramin and for a long time these lessons had little connection with spontaneous music making. The first steps followed this very strict regime.

Zechlin herself did not have any major problems in satisfying Ramin's requirements for cadences and did find these exercises useful. At a very young age she

³⁸⁹ When this institution was reopened in 1946 after World War 2, it took this name until 1972.

³⁹⁰ Günther Ramin devoted his entire life to the Thomas Church in Leipzig. After his organ studies with Karl Straube he was formerly appointed organist to the Thomas Church in 1918 and becoming Kantor in 1940.

³⁹¹ The interview with Ruth Zechlin took place on the 17th February 2002 at her home in Pfaffenhofen in the German state Bavaria. The interview was tape-recorded and later transferred to a CD.

had mastered cadences in all tonalities. Her fellow students were amazed and impressed by the apparently effortless way in which they saw her quickly absorb these techniques. She had in fact acquired much of the necessary knowledge to master these skills during her childhood years, and in that sense may have been something of a childhood prodigy.³⁹²

So began the real lessons in improvisation. Ramin would show his students a melody from the chorale book that he would first play in as a single voice. Then he would treat it as a chorale prelude using one of Samuel Scheidt's (1587-1654) examples in this form. Most of his lessons were spent with him playing and demonstrating examples. In this way liturgical organ and improvisation classes with Ramin had the added attraction that he always gave students an orientation based on actual living musical examples. Ramin placed great emphasis on ensuring that the music was based on the stylistic idioms found in Scheidt's chorale preludes. After this stage was mastered, Ramin moved onto some chorales from the hand of Dietrich Buxtehude. Many of Buxtehude's chorale preludes are constructed from small polyphonic and concluding unities – which are developed before the chorale melody itself puts in an appearance. The students would then be given the task of creating an organ chorale based on this example – interestingly enough using the same chorale theme that they had previously used in the improvisations that were based on Scheidt's chorale prelude.

Next came an extensive study of the many basic forms used in Johann Sebastian Bach's chorale-based organ music: examples with the cantus firmus in the bass part in the pedals and canonic imitation in the manuals. All these examples were to be produced as improvisations and Zechlin quotes them as yet another example of a strict yet fascinating method of teaching. Doubtless some students were very critical of Ramin's insistence that what seemed to be endless and even rather pointless cadence exercises should be mastered. Yet when they reached the study of Bach much of the reasoning became clear. Fundamental cadences form the "building blocks" in all of Bach's chorale arrangements – this applies throughout a piece irrespective of whether or not the cantus firmus is actually playing. It applies to all types of Bach's music, whether choral, or based on polyphonic models, developed polyphony, contrapuntal, or instrumental. So the students considered all these basic forms. All the time they used the same single voice chorale melody as a theme without any given harmonies. This took a while, for Bach uses so many different styles in his chorale preludes and many of them had to be imitated in improvisations.

Next Ramin showed that there were three specific forms used by Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) in his chorale preludes that differ slightly from each other. Students were then expected to use these as models for chorale improvisations in the style of Brahms. Again the same melody was used as previously. The final stage was to create chorale-based music in the style of Max Reger. Zechlin commented that for her as a composer a large amount of these exercises were easier than for other students, since she already had an understanding of the harmonic progres-

³⁹² Zechlin did not consider that her accomplishments were due to any special gifts. She referred to her own exploratory games at the piano in childhood; games which involved finding concordant harmonies. Thus she discovered for herself the function of cadences to create contexts for the chords, and gradually learned cadences in all major and minor tonalities.

sions that these composers employed. All that she therefore felt necessary to do was to put the right harmonies into context and all the “pieces of the jigsaw” fell into place. The complete improvisation course was directed towards chorale preludes, and the actual examples of the chosen composers were always consulted as demonstration examples. In the course of time they also improvised chorale preludes over a number of other melodies.

Analogy with pictorial art

Ruth Zechlin describes this strict approach to the study of improvisation as fascinating, but points out that there are completely different ways to learn this art. One can start on a free level, as often happens with harpsichord and piano. Here the teacher will choose a motive or theme which the student is asked to extend, or develop in a specified direction, whether in fugato-style or by means of less-structured approach.

At the same time she did not hesitate to describe as very rewarding the strict chorale-prelude style of improvisation she learned with Günther Ramin. Here examples from Scheidt, Buxtehude, Bach in his many differing forms, Brahms and Reger served as models from which stylistic copies were made. In the realms of pictorial art such a practice is not unknown; artists and sculptors frequently endeavour to produce “correct duplicates” of masterpieces.³⁹³ In this context Zechlin often considered that had she been an art student she may well have been shown a picture by Rembrandt or Pelzin, and expected to attempt to copy it in order to discover its secrets.

Rolande Falcinelli

Rolande Falcinelli (1920-2006)³⁹⁴ commenced her studies at the Paris Conservatoire at the age of 12. She took first prizes in harmony, counterpoint, fugue, organ playing and improvisation and won the prestigious *Prix de Rome* composition prize in 1942. She was appointed organist at the Basilique du Sacré-Coeur de Montmartre in 1946 and professor at the Conservatoire Américain in Fontainebleau in 1948. She deputised for Marcel Dupré, both in his organ classes at the Conservatoire nationale supérieur and at L'Église de Saint-Sulpice. In 1955 she took over Dupré's organ classes at the conservatoire.

In an interview with Jean Galard³⁹⁵ she expressed the opinion that an organist should be capable of developing all types of improvisation, whether in a classical style using forms inherited from the great composers, or a free approach using

³⁹³ Composers have also used this approach. An example of this was the English composer Edward Elgar (1857-1934), who was to all intents and purposes completely self-taught. In a magazine interview in 1904 he recalled how as a young man he learned from the discipline of Mozart: “I ruled a score for the same instruments and with the same number of bars as Mozart's G minor symphony, and in that framework I wrote a symphony, following as far as possible the same outline in the themes and the same modulation. I did this on my own initiative, as I was groping in the dark after light, but looking back after thirty years I don't know any discipline from which I learned so much”. Quoted in Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life*, Oxford 1987, p. 80.

³⁹⁴ See Felix Raugel, “Falcinelli, Rolande”, in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Volume 3, Kassel 1954.

³⁹⁵ See Jean Galard, “L'improvisateur”, interview with Rolande Falcinelli in *Cahiers et mémoires de l'orgue* (France) 26 1981, pp. 23-27.

contemporary harmony and perhaps inspired by literary texts or abstract ideas from pictorial art.

Although the art of improvisation takes place at the keyboard, it requires an approach that is just as disciplined as the study of written harmony and counterpoint. From her own experience Falcinelli believes that with thorough training one can learn to improvise absolutely correctly in three-part counterpoint. However it is not possible to take care of the same strict attention to detail in a four-part contrapuntal improvisation. For Falcinelli improvisation of a fugue relies on the assimilation of a polyphonic technique in the hands, fingers and brain. Whether it is founded on modern or classical tonal language is not the essence; the importance is that the technique enables one to meet all musical situations. The strict training in counterpoint and fugue will always form a foundation for improvisation.

In response to the question of what occurs in her consciousness when she receives a theme and whether she immediately can picture a musical form or specified harmonies, Falcinelli answers that these things happen too quickly to analyse. One activates assimilated techniques because there is frequently so little time available. She generally finds that the character of a piece suggests itself immediately, and the harmonic style is dependent on that character. The consciousness intuitively perceives the inherent expressive potential of a theme, and the form usually follows from the structure and aesthetic of the theme. This orientation, which is the result of much study and practice, takes place very quickly. Some themes can go right to the heart – while others leave one cold. Irrespective of this it is a case of musical craftsmanship that is needed to make the connection. Thus she hints at the distinction between art and craftsmanship.³⁹⁶ Among other matters Galard asks her:

JG: -Croyez-vous à l'inspiration ? Résulte-t-elle uniquement de la science ou bien vient-elle d'ailleurs ?

RF: -En composition, l'on est parfois complètement « sec », ou comme disait Marcel Dupré, « l'on a le nez devant un mur », et sans raison, tout est arrêté. Mais un autre jour, tout court avec facilité. En improvisation, certains jours, cela ne « marche » pas, à cause du thème, de l'atmosphère du concert ou simplement de son état d'esprit personnel : le métier joue son rôle, mais le public sent alors que quelque chose n'est pas passé.

JG: -Pour vous la musique, expression de l'individu, dépasse alors la musique, construction sonore.

RF: -Surtout, construction purement abstraite et intellectuelle, non pas que je regarde cela comme méprisable, car l'intellect et l'intuition doivent toujours s'équilibrer dans toute œuvre d'art. Je me souviens toujours d'un mot de mon professeur de fugue, Madame Simone Plé-Caussade : « a la raison doit contrôler l'instinct doit intervenir dans la raison ». L'improvisation exprime sans ambage et avec une vérité absolue l'état psychique et émotionnel de l'être, et cela même dans une fugue.³⁹⁷

[JG: -Do you believe in inspiration? Does it only result from science or does it come from something else?

³⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 23.

³⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 24.

RF: -In composition one can sometimes “dry up”, or as Marcel Dupré remarked, “one’s nose meets a wall” and without any apparent reason everything comes to a full stop. But on another day everything is easy. In improvisation, on some days nothing seems to work, perhaps on account of the theme, the atmosphere of the concert or simply one’s own state of mind: The occupation/professional aspect plays its part, but the audience senses that something was not quite right.

JG: -For you music as an individual form of expression is more important than the idea of music as a construction in sound.

RF: -Over everything as a simply purely abstract and intellectual construction – no I do not completely look down on this, because intellect and intuition must always find a balance in all areas of art. I often think of the wise words of my professor in fugal studies, Madame Simone Plé-Caussade: “Reason must control instinct which must in its turn control reason”. Improvisation expresses with an absolute truth one’s emotional and psychological condition, and so even in a fugue.]

Rolande Falcinelli does not see any real difference between improvisation and composition, and in response to a question on this replied that these two ways of creating music were like two branches of the same tree. She recognised this early in life when she studied organ improvisation and composition at the same time. Her progress in composition was reflected in her improvisations, and vice versa: Spontaneous ideas that came whilst improvising gave ideas for composition.

Prior to the 1972 reforms at the Conservatoire national supérieur de musique all candidates for first prize had to improvise, but according to Falcinelli, some of these winners of the prize were not really improvisers. It was only as a result of hard work that they managed to complete the required fugue and the small *thème libre* improvisation. During her 25-year tenure as professor Falcinelli trained some 50 winners of the first prize, of whom some 35-40 were genuine as improvising musicians.³⁹⁸ She sums up her advice to young music students regarding extemporisation as follows:

RF: -Je les encouragerais à pratiquer cet art merveilleux, mais à condition de posséder un acquis d’écriture impeccable. Sauf rare exception – car il y en a –, on ne peut improviser correctement si l’on n’est pas d’abord un bon écrivain. Contrepoint, fugue, composition, orchestration me paraissent nécessaires, même sans être compositeur. Enfin, j’insisterais sur un dernier point : on improvise très souvent plus difficile que ce que l’on est capable de jouer; je veux dire par là que si l’on avait à étudier comme un morceau le texte exact de ce que l’on vient d’improviser, cela demanderait des mois d’étude. Aussi, pour se sentir tout à fait libre dans ses improvisations, doit-on travailler énormément sa technique de jeu. Les progrès apparaissent immédiatement.

JG: -En résumé, l’improvisation, ce n’est pas fini?

RF: -Bien que nous soyons toujours en face d’une matière extrêmement malléable et plastique (c’est son danger, c’est aussi son charme, celui de l’« improbabilité »), ce ne sera jamais fini, mais toujours l’expression intime et immédiate de l’individu, celle qui ne peut pas mentir.³⁹⁹

[RF: -I will encourage them to practice this marvellous art, but on condition that they are capable of writing impeccably. With very rare exceptions – there

³⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 24-26.

³⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 27.

will always be some – one cannot improvise if one is not fluent in writing. Counterpoint, fugue, composition and orchestration are necessities even if one is not a composer. Finally, I would insist on this point: One often improvises more difficult (pieces) than one is capable of playing; by which I want to say that if one had to practice an extract of what one has come to improvise it would demand months of practice. Also in order to be completely free in one's improvisations one must work hard continuously with one's playing technique. Progress is immediately obvious.

JG: -To sum up, improvisation has not reached the end?

R.F: -Well – we will always be faced with an extremely malleable and plastic medium (that is the danger, it is also the charm, which is the “improbable”), which will never be ended, but will always be an intimate and immediate form of expression, one which cannot lie.

Rolande Falcinelli here focuses on questions of musical form and instrumental technique. She emphasises the importance of a strict control of the improvised work. This control covers two complimentary moments:

1. Use of written disciplines to encourage awareness of the inherent expressive possibilities in musical forms.
2. Playing techniques need to be constantly honed so that one can actually play what one improvises.

Olivier Latry

Olivier Latry (b. 1962) studied organ playing and improvisation with Gaston Litaize (1909-1991) at the Conservatoire de St. Maur-des-Fossés. From 1981 to 1985 he was the *titulaire* organist at the Cathédrale Saint-Étienne de Meaux. He taught for twelve years at the music conservatoire in St. Maur-des-Fossés, where he succeeded Gaston Litaize. French organ music of the 19th and 20th century forms the cornerstone of his repertoire. At the age of 23 he succeeded Pierre Cochereau (1924-1884) to become one of the four *titulaire* organists of Notre-Dame de Paris. In 1995 he succeeded Michel Chapuis (b. 1930) as Professor of Organ at the Conservatoire de Paris. He is regarded both at home and abroad as one of the foremost organists of his generation. As an improviser he especially identifies himself with the lineage of 20th century French improvisation tradition that runs from Charles Tournemire to Pierre Cochereau.

In the summer of 1992 Latry was a guest at the Vestfold Festsplilene (Vestfold International Festival) in Norway where he held a master class for organists and played for a festival concert in Slagen Church in Tønsberg. In my capacity as music critic and writer for the Norwegian regional paper *Tønsbergs Blad* I interviewed Latry and asked him to explain some of his pedagogical approaches to improvisation and his perception of what happens when one performs improvised music.⁴⁰⁰

The German town Ingolstadt has for several years played host to an international course in organ improvisation. Normally there are two teachers on these courses: one performer and teacher from the French tradition and a corresponding musician and pedagogue from Austria, Germany, Holland or Sweden.⁴⁰¹ Latry has

⁴⁰⁰ See Svein Erik Tandberg, "Notre-Dame-organisten til Vestfold Festsplilene", interview with Olivier Latry in *Tønsbergs Blad* 27 June 1992.

⁴⁰¹ On several occasions I have taken part in improvisation courses under the auspices of the Ingolstädter Orgeltage.

frequently taken part in these Ingolstädter Orgeltage both as teacher and performer. He responded to questions as to what actually happens in an improvisation and how one can learn to improvise from Angela Haeseler of the German regional paper *Donau-Kurier*.⁴⁰²

Improvisation according to examples

In response to my question as to which elements he regarded as most important in the learning of improvisation, Latry mentioned a feeling for and understanding of tradition. For himself this was the French tradition as exemplified by the music of Louis Vierne, Marcel Dupré, Olivier Messiaen and Pierre Cochereau's improvisations. He aims to create musical forms using a similar language to these composers.⁴⁰³ Seen in this light it is possible to improvise from starting points in many different styles. Latry considers that attempting to improvise in a specific musical style is a productive way of acquainting oneself with the style. One will use the same harmonies, the same voice leading, colours and means of expression. Good results can often be obtained by choosing a composer, studying the "language" of that composer's form in detail, and trying to understand it before setting out from a starting point in the same supply of expressions, something that is very similar and closely resembles the example.

First one has to approach by copying, but the aim is to find one's own personal style. Within the framework of improvisation studies one can absorb the main musical characteristics of – as for example – Franck, Dupré or Messiaen. Afterwards one should try to "forget" all of these and attempt to create one's own music. A good working knowledge of harmony and counterpoint will also be necessary, so that the music one improvises exhibits some recognisable form. Extemporisations should ideally offer their listeners some of the qualities one would expect from fully composed music. Here the player's own technique reveals itself, and Latry points out the importance of really being able to master the instrument. Such a technique can primarily be acquired through study of the repertoire, since many of the techniques one use in improvisation can be found in the field of composed music. During our interview he also emphasised the relation between the improviser and the organ that he or she has available. The instrument itself is an important partner in supplying the colours of the musical palette that is used for improvisation: as such its contribution is not to be under-estimated.

-Det er meget viktig å lytte til orgelet, og orgelet vil fortelle deg hva du kan gjøre... Det vi snakker om her, er selvsagt like viktig når det gjelder interpretasjon av skrevne verker. Men som improvisator er man dertil uhyre fri, fordi man kan tilrettelegge musikken slik at orgelet hele tiden klinger på sitt beste.⁴⁰⁴

[-It is very important to listen to the organ, and the organ will tell you what you can do... What we actually are talking about here is also equally important in the interpretation of composed works. However as improviser one has an extraordinary freedom, because one is able to present the music in a way such that the organ can always sound at its best.]

⁴⁰² See Angela Haeseler, "Mit ganz wenigen Mitteln kreativ", interview with organ improvisers Anders Bondeman and Olivier Latry in *Donau-Kurier* 11 September 1997.

⁴⁰³ In this connection Latry uses the metaphor: "to digest the music" of the composers one is using as examples.

⁴⁰⁴ See Tandberg 1992.

Formality versus spontaneity

I questioned Olivier Latry about his methods of teaching improvisation. His answers suggested methods that alternate between strict chorale-based forms as frequently practiced in Germany and a style of development offering greater freedom modelled on more recent French ideals:

OL: -Her arbeider vi på to måter: først etter tysk metode med variasjoner over protestantiske koralmelodier. Samtidig prøver vi å skape noe på helt fritt grunnlag – og da selsagt etter fransk mønster. Hos tyskerne møter vi en gjennomgående respekt for formen, som i utgangspunktet ikke tøyer friheten. Et heller komplisert ”regelverk” setter grenser, ja, kort sagt begrenser den musikalske bevegelsesfriheten. Mye er gitt på forhånd innenfor disse formtypene. Når det gjelder fransk musikk, fortøner dette seg annerledes. Man improviserer mer på egne impulser og etter egen fantasi. De feil man gjør ”retter man opp etterpå”, for å si det slik.

SET: -I César Francks dager som orgellærer ved Nasjonalkonservatoriet i Paris var improvisasjon langt på vei selve hovedfaget ved organistutdannelsen

OL: -Det var situasjonen i forrige århundre det. Det vi kaller ”thème libre” improvisasjon er en heller begrenset form. Det ble skapt store ting innenfor denne stilen i romantikkens dager. Men vi kan ikke fortsette i det samme sporet i dag.⁴⁰⁵

[OL: -We use two methods here – firstly the German method with variations over Protestant chorale melodies. At the same time we try to make something on a completely free basis – naturally enough after the French methods. With the Germans we meet an all-embracing respect for form, which at its starting-point does not stretch freedom. A rather complicated “rulebook” sets the limitations, or limits the freedom of musical movement. Much is pre-decided in these types of form. With regard to French music, things are expressed differently. One improvises using ones own impulses and imagination. The mistakes one makes are “tidied up afterwards”.

SET: -In the days when César Franck was organ teacher at the National Conservatoire in Paris improvisation was almost the main subject in that organists were trained?

OL: -Yes, that was the situation in the 19th century. What we call “thème libre” improvisation is a rather limited form. Great things were achieved with this style during the Romantic era. However we cannot simply continue on the same pathway today.

Improvisation – a continuous learning process

For the interview in *Donau-Kurier* Olivier Latry was asked what happens in an improvisation, and how one can learn to improvise at the organ. Here is his reply:

„Ich weiss nicht, wie das geht“, antwortet Olivier Latry mit wissendem Lächeln, „ich bin immer noch auf dem Weg und noch lange nicht am Ziel angekommen. Ich habe viel gelernt, indem ich in Paris immer in verschiedene Sonntagsgottesdienste gegangen bin und bei den Organisten zugehört habe. Ausserdem habe ich viele CD-Aufnahmen gehört. Wenn eine Harmonie kam, habe ich das Anhören unterbrochen und die Stelle auf dem Klavier ausprobiert und dann transponiert, um sicherzustellen, dass ich das Prinzip verstehe. Es gibt nie den Punkt, an dem man sagen kann, das kann ich. Improvisation ist so persönlich, dass man Improvisieren nicht lernen kann wie eine Sprache“.⁴⁰⁶

[“I don’t know how it happens”, answers Olivier Latry with a knowing smile, “I am always on the path yet it is still a long way to the goal. I can learn a great

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁶ See Haeseler 1997.

deal from hearing a fellow organist in Paris playing for a Sunday service. I listen to many CD recordings. When a special harmony crops up, I interrupt my listening and head for keyboard and try it out, also in transposed versions to help me understand it better. There is no point at which one can reach where one can claim 'I can do (everything)'. Improvisation is so personal that one simply cannot learn it in the same way as a language".]

According to Latry, the principles that apply to composition and improvisation are in a state of constant flux. In these two interviews Latry presents methodical approaches that develop with these changes. For that reason his teaching programme is a very flexible one that brings the students into constant contact with current aesthetic thinking. At the same time Latry emphasises the importance of preserving the traditions and ideals on which the art of improvisation is based.

European organ improvisation traditions illustrated by two 20th century textbooks

In the major central European denominations improvisation forms an important component of liturgical playing. Most European music academies and conservatoires therefore regard it as an essential discipline for church music students. German and Austrian music institutions intend their students to be capable of playing for a service exclusively from the melodies as printed in hymnal books and other liturgical collections.⁴⁰⁷ It is regarded as the norm that chorale harmonisation, preludes, interludes, epilogues, and other music of a more free character should be conceived and performed immediately within any given liturgical situation. The music can ideally be based on given historic examples. This requirement is found in the syllabuses that are followed by both Catholic and Protestant church music students.

The German organist and musicologist Hermann Keller (1885-1967) studied organ with Karl Straube and composition with Max Reger. Amongst his writings there are a number of publications dealing with the keyboard music of Bach. His *Schule der Choral-Improvisation*⁴⁰⁸ has supplied the backbone for many courses in improvisation in German-speaking countries. Keller focuses on the improvisation techniques that can be applied to Protestant chorale melodies, using works by German organist-composers from the 17th and 18th centuries as models. The dominant musical aesthetic ideas implied in the teaching material reflect the endeavours in Evangelical Lutheran circles in mid-19th century to restore a genuine church style.⁴⁰⁹ Keller's instruction for improvisation is largely based on these ideals, and as a whole the textbook aims to develop improvisation skills which can be linked to Lutheran hymns and church music traditions from the Baroque era.

Other teaching manuals dealing with chorale improvisation were published in Austria and Germany during the second half of the 20th century. In some ways these take a different pedagogical approach than Keller in their use of different types of chorale-based material. However, much of the teaching approach is similar to Keller's: musical examples and suggested workings are given in order to enable the student to develop practical skills in the improvisation of chorale-based organ

⁴⁰⁷ With regard to service playing, it is generally only the single melodies of chorales and liturgical texts that can be found on the music-desk of the organ.

⁴⁰⁸ Hermann Keller, *Schule der Choral-Improvisation für Orgel*, Frankfurt 1939.

⁴⁰⁹ See below for a description of the Bavarian liturgical movement in the 19th century.

music. These improvisation textbooks reflect a vital component of Austro-German church music traditions: The chorale melody is used as a foundation for the creative processes of improvisation and composition.

A French improvisation method based on mid-19th century practice

We have already noted the practice in large French Catholic churches whereby the church's large west-end organ was the domain of *l'organiste titulaire du grande orgue* whose duties did not include accompanying the sung part of the services. This latter task was entrusted to *l'organiste du chœur*. The *titulaire* has responsibility for a more independent contribution to worship – for example the playing of music during the Offertory and Communion and the playing of larger-scale works in order to accompany processions and recessions. This practice has held sway in France since the middle of the 19th century.

As we also have seen a new style of organ improvisation emerged during this era. It made its appearance as an examination subject at the conservatoire in Paris and was known as improvisation over a free theme. This type of improvisation is close to a Classical sonata form. It may be regarded as the counterpart of improvisation over chorale-based themes or fugal improvisations. A major French work on organ improvisation is the 2-volume *Cours Complet d'Improvisation à l'Orgue*,⁴¹⁰ by Marcel Dupré.⁴¹¹ In the first volume Dupré presents a number of different playing and harmonic techniques that form the basis of *thème libre* style of improvisation. The student is gradually led towards the mastery of these. The progression ends with a detailed model showing how a *thème libre* improvisation can be developed.

In the second volume of the course Dupré attempts to reveal a number of different formal secrets of the improviser's art. He examines a number of traditional musical forms as used in the organ repertoire and presents an extensive series of exercises to develop improvisation techniques along these lines. The majority of these examples are taken from examples of French and German music traditions. In many ways Dupré's course of organ improvisation extends beyond its brief. In effect, it is also a handbook in idiomatic composition and musical forms, and even includes a chapter on orchestration. As a whole, these two volumes are written on an extremely high intellectual level.

Between them the improvisation courses of Hermann Keller and Marcel Dupré give us certain insights into the ideas that have formed a basis of organ improvisation in Europe in the 20th century. They give a large number of forms for system-related improvisations from differing forms of chorale prelude to more complex structures such as variations, fantasia, preludes, toccatas, fugue, sonata and organ symphonies. Keller and Dupré both base their work on their own teaching experiences within academic institutions. Both authors are steeped in their own native musical traditions in their capacity as concert organists, church musicians, improvisers, composers, teachers, musicologists, music editors and writers. Amongst

⁴¹⁰ Marcel Dupré, *Cours complet d'improvisation à l'orgue*, in English translation: *Complete Course in Organ Improvisation*, Paris 1962.

⁴¹¹ Marcel Dupré's performing skills were legendary – he performed the complete corpus of Johann Sebastian Bach's organ music from memory in 1920. His improvisation skills were also exceptional, and he attained these as a result of extensive study and practise. Even in his old age he worked with different forms of improvisation for several hours every day.

PART 1

other appointments, Hermann Keller was main teacher in organ studies, improvisation and liturgical organ playing at the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik in Stuttgart. Marcel Dupré was for many years director of the American conservatoire in Fontainebleau, as well as professor and later director of the French national conservatoire. He was also *titulaire* of the great Cavallé-Coll organ at Saint-Sulpice in Paris.

PART 2:

The art of improvisation as a stylistic, aesthetic and procedural phenomenon

Jeg har ikke noe fasttømret kunstsyn som sier meg i hvilken leir jeg hører hjemme. Gjør det som passer i hver enkelt situasjon. Tenker ikke på om det er moderne eller ikke.⁴¹²

[I have no definite artistic creed which tells me what school I belong to. I simply do whatever seems right in each individual case. Don't worry about whether it is modern or not.]

(Norwegian drawer and sculptor Nils Aas, 1972.)

Jeg tror på kunstens utvikling, dens stadige kamp med det ukjente. Det er kunstnerens forpliktelse og privilegium i verdensordenen at han skal gå foran.⁴¹³

[I believe in the development of art, its constant struggle with the unknown. In the natural order of things it is the artist's duty and privilege to take his place among the vanguard.]

(Norwegian sculptor Arnold Haukeland, 1959.)

⁴¹² See Ellen Wilhelmsen, "Går på med hue først" [Jump in head first], interview with Nils Aas in the Norwegian paper *Dagbladet* 12 August 1972.

⁴¹³ See Erik Egeland, "Et samfunn får den kunst det fortjener: De unge må underordne seg publikums og juryens konvensjonelle kunstsyn" [A society gets the art it deserves: aspiring artists are compelled to follow the conventional views of public taste and selection panels], interview with Arnhold Haukeland in the Norwegian paper *Morgenbladet* 8 September 1959.

CHAPTER 19

Style and aesthetic

Improvisation – craftsmanship, art or kitsch?

Music gives us room for adventure and exploration. We listen, and are possibly fascinated by a hint of something we can recall having heard previously. We seek to identify and recollect its origins. Expressions such as “identification” and “origins” are sometimes interchangeable with the words “style” and “tradition”. It is natural for an improvising musician to consider what the actual qualities are that are able to create such impressions of tradition and style. There is probably no simple answer here, but if we accept that proposition that music can be compared to language, as a type of speech in tones, then the hallmark of a stylistic improvisation lies in its realisation within the framework of a relatively unified vocabulary. The player takes one type of musical “grammar” and “vocabulary” as a starting-point, and follows it with varying degrees of consistency to give the listeners at least an impression that certain conventions of history and form have been respected. Thus a form of musical coherence and logic can be created.

Stylistic improvisation is not an easy subject to discuss. In some ways it resembles imitative, mass-produced art, commonly disparaged as “kitsch”. A kitsch producer unashamedly exploits traditional and often exceedingly well-worn techniques to create an immediate effect. This is in contrast to an original and creative artist whose works exhibit qualities of beauty that sometimes only allow themselves to be gradually and subtly revealed. We can see that an improviser also aims “to create an immediate effect” using a comprehensive array of stylistic strategies and techniques. These must be thoroughly practised so that they are ready at the fingertips for instant application.⁴¹⁴

To the uninitiated it may seem strange that spontaneous improvisation has to be practised, but practising is an essential side of the improvising musician’s development. Composed music and musical forms from different eras provide both inspiration and “raw material”. A successful improvisation is often built on solid foundations provided by thorough studies of harmony, counterpoint, form and analysis. All the same one can ask what criteria should be applied here. In other words: How far is it necessary to move into a specific composer’s tonal world? Also: How much constructive interest can be created by this process. Initially these questions can be linked with our understanding of the creative and performing

⁴¹⁴ See Tandberg 2004.

practices employed by the musicians of the past. This depends on what access we have to their creative strategies and in what manner it is actually relevant to use these for improvising today. In its way this provides a reason to consider the extent to which so-called historical practices should dictate the manner in which we improvise. Is this approach fruitful in the long run, or should we seek other approaches?

Two main directions

Improvised music can be exciting and unpredictable, both for the player and listener. Obviously the art of improvisation has its own attraction to many people, a fascination linked to the experience of a spontaneous event – the awareness of something that is taking place here and now. The study of the organ repertoire and the practice of imitating it by making stylistic copies can lay the foundations for the improvising organist's subsequent development. This implies that musical idioms can play a vital role in the creation of improvised music. In this way can the research project's fundamental style-related question be summarized: Is improvisation simply a matter of routine and habit or does it in fact involve genuine creativity and originality? In other words: Is it really possible to create art music spontaneously or not?

Are improvising musicians overwhelmingly driven by external factors of the cultural influences that they have acquired in one way or another? They may even be able to explain some of them. Language is a collective phenomenon to which many have contributed. In the same way there are collective elements in the majority of musical cultures that affect the structure and expression of the music. Or should improvisation be regarded as the result of subconscious procedures, which may be so deeply personal that the improviser can only hint at?

If we wish to place the art of improvisation with its aesthetic and stylistic roots under the microscope, it is natural for us first to specify the terms we shall employ. A large proportion of artistic movements have in recent years been classified under the general term "modernism". If we go back some years we see this word used to describe artistic production that seeks to free itself from the bonds of tradition.⁴¹⁵ What actually is modern today and what was actually modern yesterday is not so very important in this context. These subtleties are a hopeless basis for discussion, considering how often and how rapidly new artistic trends appear, change and disappear only to reappear again – sometimes under a new name. All the same, in order to clarify the position, I will presume that contemporary forms of musical expression can be divided into two main directions.

One is based on the idea of creating imitations, not with the idea of mere plagiarism, but in order to master specific conceptual techniques. This school represents a continuation of an artistic tradition with roots that have their origins back in the

⁴¹⁵ In western art music we can cite composers such as Arnold Schönberg (1874-1951) and Béla Bartók (1881-1945) as examples of modernism in the 20th century. Their compositional procedures originated from what they probably perceived as a material crisis in music, especially in regard to functional harmony that had long held sway as the dominating force. In Schönberg's serial world functional harmony's tonal centres are replaced by a focus on the idea of a sound centre. Bartók also explored music's differing parameters in his experiments with form and its various elements. In this way both these composers contributed to the development of new methods of musical expression that set trends for their successors. In many cases this created a radical break with the musical traditions of the past.

mists of time. In spite of all the changes this art seeks to identify with historic antecedents. As far as one can call this a tradition, so this direction of thought will find in the expression “traditional”. According to this, I mean that something has been preserved in order to continue its existence in the form of a new artistic creation.⁴¹⁶ The other school declares that art can be created by other means than imitation. The observant reader will point out that this division is far too rigid. He or she can point out a number of cases where these ideas have fused together, and with a reasonable degree of accuracy claim that most of the leading movements of the 20th century have been a fusion of imitation and reorientation. This is reasonable considering that modernism has grown out of traditional art, a process that has taken its time.

1. Imitation as a method and strategy

Most people will understand that when one creates a work of art, such as a piece of music, there is an element of craftsmanship involved. There are the elements known as balance, harmony and clarity.⁴¹⁷ It is also difficult to separate the aesthetic quality from how perfect the imitation is. Here the question of the imitation’s quality is a central issue. For this art does not only reflect the artist’s own temperament, but also ideals and problems of the epoch he inhabits. When I use the word “imitation” in this account I am fully aware that this word can have negative connotations in light of contemporary music aesthetic ideals. The problem is the difficulty of finding another better word, but in context it should be understood that I am referring to something more than a simple counterfeit.

To understand this one must realise that throughout most of the history of music there have been commonly accepted conventions as to how things should sound. One can almost speak in terms of formal prototypes that provide the composer or, in improvisation, the composer-performer with a starting-point. Throughout history these prototypes have been influenced and altered by contemporary developments in the field of art. They are not necessarily creative elements in themselves, since they have exceeded from other artefacts and idioms. The quality of the imitation is not to be found in the music’s superficial likeness with one or another style. Rather it comes from a resembling of the specific content in the musical structure we are working with.

“The artist is the creator of beautiful things”, wrote Oscar Wilde (1854-1900),⁴¹⁸ but “beautiful” is both a simple and vague expression to which all art forms are related. Words such as “balance”, “expression”, “harmony” and “clarity” are to all intents and purposes common items of artistic vocabulary. The medium through which ideas are expressed is of course different. In music the medium is the aural experience that originates from the sound structure we perceive. How the

⁴¹⁶ Cf. Sam. Ledsaak (translation from Greek to Norwegian with introduction and notes), *Aristoteles: Om diktekunsten [Aristotle: On Poetry]*, Oslo 1961: The classical Greek thought as exemplified by Aristotle regarded art as imitative, and represented such a mimic expression that embraced all art forms. Cf. also Enzo Forsblom, *Mimesis. På spaning efter affektuttryck i Bachs orgelverk [Mimesis. Searching for expressions of affect in Bach's organ works]*, Helsingfors 1985.

⁴¹⁷ Without doubt there are many examples in music history where experience related to the music’s form and structure give deep aesthetic and intellectual joys. Many will cite the music of Johan Sebastian Bach as an example of this.

⁴¹⁸ Cf. Oscar Wilde, Preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, New York 1891.

music actually manifests itself will depend on the improviser or composer, the epoch she or he inhabits, whatever conscious or subconscious ideals influence him or her, and the images or ideas that the music intends to communicate.

2. Orientation towards the unheard and unknown

As a counterbalance to the aesthetic of imitation, one can state that no form of cultural expression has a right to exist if it cannot renew itself. Tradition must be experienced as a dynamic force. Many would agree that it is the artist's privilege and duty to be seditious. He or she must be willing to move boundaries in the quest to widen the boundaries for all and illuminate deeper truths that are concealed under superficialities. Here we also require art to be a channel of expression for the non-conformist, an art that offers the chance of experiences that lie outside the well-worn and over-exploited paths of mass culture. Art needs to be daring in its nature and its means of communication. It is frequently a fear of the unknown that causes people to have their reservations regarding newly created and very different forms of expression. Improvising musicians and composers with an interest for unexplored avenues of sound have produced sounds from instruments that their makers would scarcely have believed possible. Stringed instruments have been scraped, banged, had their bows pulled over and under the bridge and much else. Wind instruments have also been beaten, blown, sung and shouted through. With the fullness of time the instruments of electro-acoustic music, sometimes simply known as electronic music, have become integrated in orchestras and traditional ensembles. As a result of this, 20th century composers began to develop alternative approaches to orchestration.

Music can be our antenna towards the unknown and unheard. A specific musical expression can only be experienced as a reflection of its own epoch, and cannot offer any other direct connection with the past. Historically speaking music has been conditioned to rely on inherited tradition and convention. Yet in our time art's "raison d'être" can be found in the cultivation of its own expression and the formal play that characterises this. Here again the critical faculties need to be constantly alerted so that we do not fall into the "laissez-faire"-approach. Talk of freedom can also imply an inherent freedom of responsibility. Perhaps the clearest expression of this is displayed in postmodernism's application of history. Here many seem to make their aesthetic choices on arbitrary grounds that are separated from their original contexts. Working with art is not the same as shopping in a supermarket. We must aim for a much more coherent approach. Those who work with thoughts that have been thought, or simply repeat that which is already created can contribute to a form of contemporary cultural isolation if they fail to relate their work to the process of artistic development. From this point of view it is fraudulent to simply indulge in historic practices. In this light: How can we maintain any expression of quality? Or: How can one evaluate quality?

Differing art forms operate from different standards. Here we touch on concepts of a type of canon which to a greater or lesser extent can stamp its impression on a specified form of art. However, in the process of evaluating quality it is somewhat uncertain that such a canon can accurately serve as a reference point. Is there anything resembling an objective criteria to judge the quality of a musical improvisation to be found within such a canon? On a more positive note: Would not a canon save us the problem of building a completely new system? It is always

important to learn from the experience of others – not only with regard to theoretical understanding, but also even more in finding out how we can develop our capabilities as improvising musicians.

Two newspaper reviews

On 20th September 1995 Olivier Latry, organist of Notre-Dame, Paris, inaugurated the new organ at Garnisons Church in Copenhagen. One music critic evaluated the conclusion of this concert in the following terms:

TIL SIDST et surt opstød: Latry havde ”ladet sig overtale” til at slutte med det som organister kalder en ”improvisation” over et opgivet tema. For andre er det en ørkenvandring gennem smagløst og nedslidt tonefyld – en klam spand vand, når en intelligent og følsom musiker efter et fint program afslører sig som en selvsmagende floskelkanon.⁴¹⁹

[FINALLY a bitter pill: Latry had “been persuaded” to conclude with what organists call an “improvisation over a given theme”. To other people this is a tedious ramble through a tasteless desert of clichés – a real anticlimax, when an intelligent and sensitive musician concludes a fine programme by demonstrating himself to be a purveyor of empty rhetoric.]

Some would claim that as an art form improvisation offers limited possibilities for exploration of musical depths. It contents itself with reproducing the superficial features of a style. Improvised music frequently serves an immediate and practical purpose which by its very nature restricts the possibilities for the satisfactory arrangement and completion of a musical form. This suggests that the improviser initially focuses on superficial sound effects rather than intimate profiles of motives and structures, and is preoccupied with the entirety rather than the details of the piece. A further implication is that the music is produced by means of techniques intended to enable continuous production. The resulting tonal language can easily become stilted and conventional. The improviser may thus be described as a conjuror with a bag of well-used tricks rather than being a truly original creative musician.

A counterbalance to such negative value judgements can be perceived in a review of another concert given by the same Olivier Latry. The occasion was some two years later in Germany, at Liebfrauenmünster, Ingolstadt, on the 10th September 1997:

Oliver Latry beendete seinen begeisternden Exkurs durch drei Jahrhunderte französische Orgelmusik auf der dafür natürlich ideal disponierten Klais-Orgel im Ingolstädter Münster mit einer Improvisation über ein Thema, das sein Dozentenkollege Anders Bondeman gestellt hatte. Die klare Periodik und die strenge Gliederung der Themavorgabe inspirierten Latry zu einer adäquaten Verarbeitung, die in ihrer dreiteiligen Anlage, der rhythmisch-harmonischen Folgerichtigkeit und der nie unterbrochenen Verbindung zur Vorlage erneut bewies, wie überlegen Latry als Interpret wie als Improvisator zu Werke geht und wie imponierend sicher ihm dabei die Gratwanderung zwischen spontaner Emotion und kühler Kalkulation gelingt.⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁹ See Peter Woetmann, “Orgelndivelse i Garnisons Kirke”, concert review in the Danish paper *Politiken* 25 September 1995.

⁴²⁰ See Heinz Zettel, “Der spontane Reiz der kleinen Formen”, concert review in *Donau-Kurier*, 13/14 September 1997.

[Olivier Latry gave us a compelling tour through three centuries of French organ music on the Klais organ in Münster in Ingolstadt, whose specification ideally suited the programme. This concluded with an improvisation over a theme submitted by Anders Bondeman, his teacher colleague on this year's improvisation course. The theme's clear sections and strict graduation inspired Latry to create a satisfactory arrangement. In its three parts composition, its logical and consequent use of rhythms and harmonies and its continuous contact with the theme the performance highlighted Latry's genius both as an interpreter and improviser. He expresses himself in the boundary zone between spontaneous emotionalism and cool logicality most impressively.]

Which aesthetic ground can possibly be attributed to current organ improvisation practices in the light of these two contradictory notices? In these lights the question as to how we should improvise can seem to be rather puzzling though necessary. Which artistic trend should we adopt: art as an imitation, or art as a "spearhead" and provocation. Should the art of improvisation become another expression for what is commonly known as musical crossover? A form that breaks down the limitations of differing musical genres by sidestepping their inherited conventions? In which case then improvisation can be a radical phenomenon where we operate on musical frontiers, exert ourselves to bring together structural principles from differing genres, and add new dimensions to things we both like and dislike. At least we can see that an improviser at the organ often proceeds to these two approaches for his or her musical practice: 1. Firstly he or she will consider improvisation related to formal principles from music historic epochs such as the Baroque, Classical, Romantic, and so forth. 2. Another approach is to take contemporary musical techniques as a starting point.

The idea is that these two approaches will supplement and enrich each other, or become incorporated in new sound syntheses. The reflections that follow will possibly contribute to a better understanding of musical creative activity seen in the light of conditions that determine our contemporary cultural scene.

20th century culture – a powerful catalyst

The changes that have characterised Western civilization in the 20th century have left deep impressions in the cultural arena. Cultural changes are a natural consequence of modernism. A study of Western culture can take place on several levels and on many different lines. From an anthropological and sociological perspective we can see radical changes in the living conditions of human beings. The industrial and technological revolution has led to higher material standards of living. Consequences of this include new challenges at the workplace and the diverse effects of centralisation, urbanisation, globalisation etc. Sweeping changes in society lead people to seek stories, myths and artistic forms of expression that can confirm the new life, while perhaps giving an impression or experience of some type of historic identity. In the wake of the radical avant-garde culture that dominated the first half of the 20th century, which can be described as a fruit of the modernistic movement, musicians and music researchers have sought out new approaches to performing and understanding music from earlier times.

At the same time it should be pointed out that the term "modern music" has many meanings. To some composers or improvisers this involves breaking down inherited conventions and refraining from producing music in traditional ways. To others it is important to learn from colleagues of the near and remote past, coming

to understand and master the techniques they used. The question of authenticity, for example in relation to music from the Baroque, Classical and Romantic eras, became steadily more insistent in the last half of the 20th century. At the same time we have good reason to believe differing cultures steadily influence each other, which indubitably affects all musical activity. Thomas Hylland Eriksen, a Norwegian social anthropologist, explains:

To revolusjoner kjennetegner tiden vi lever i: Den elektroniske og den multietniske. For å forstå sin samtid, er det ikke nødvendig å like noen av dem, men man har ikke noe annet valg enn å vedgå at de er en del av luften vi puster i – så får man eventuelt motarbeide dem med det som utgangspunkt. Dessuten er de to sider av samme sak. Den elektroniske revolusjonen og den multietniske kultur er speilbilder av hverandre. Begge fører til at personlig identitet blir koblet løs fra tradisjon og røtter, altså store, sammenhengende fortellinger. Den kulturelle mosaikken som kjennetegner det multietniske samfunn, med alle sine blandingsformer, paradokser, konflikter og spenninger, har sin parallell i den oppstykkede, fargerike, forvirrende og usammenhengende informasjonsflommen som er typisk blant annet for flerkanaltelevsion og webben. Begge tendensene skaper flyt, bevegelse og utydelige grenser. De løsriver kulturen fra sted, menneskene fra ferdige historier om hvem de er og hva de kan bli, arbeidet fra arbeidsplassen, forbruket fra de gode gamle merkevarerne, utdannelsen fra ferdige maler, kunnskapen fra standardmodeller om hva som er kunnskap... Fortid, helhet, sammenheng: alt dette er truede størrelser.⁴²¹

[Two revolutions are the hallmark of our age: the electronic and the multiethnic. To understand one's own era it is not necessary to enjoy either of them. However if one wishes to counteract them one must start from the admission that they are as much a part of our existence as the air we breathe. They are essentially two sides of the same coin. The electronic revolution and multi-ethnic culture are mirror images of each other. Both are instrumental in distancing personal identity from its traditions and the roots, or collective and comprehensive stories. The cultural mosaic that is the hallmark of the multi-ethnic society, with all its mixtures, paradoxes, conflicts and tensions, has its parallel in the fragmented, colourful, confusing and disjointed flood of information that is typical of multi-channel TV and the Web. Movements in the wake of these trends create uncertain boundaries. They distance culture from place, humans from the accepted notions as to who they are and what they can be, work from the workplace, consumption from good old brand loyalty, education from fixed goals, knowledge from standard definitions as to what is knowledge... History, integrity, connection: All of these are to some extent under attack.]

Here Hylland Eriksen points out that human culture is inescapably a part of this age of global communication and internationalism. Information and experiences bombard us on a scale previously unknown. It is reasonable to assume that this also applies in the world of music. Previously music-making was much more of a local, regional and national affair. Musical personalities were also largely rooted in local, regional and national traditions with their own identities. Many artists nowadays take their stylistic models from a plethora of sources. They visit new places and contribute to extensive cultural contact across national frontiers. In many respects this new world of music can be regarded as international. Questions as what is technically right and wrong lose some of their meaning like traditional answers that are outdated. It is probable that many of today's musicians experience a more

⁴²¹ See Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Øyeblikkets tyranni: Rask og langsom tid i informasjonssamfunnet*, Oslo 2001, p. 46.

pressing problem as they try to wrestle these multitudes of styles into new forms of expression.

Another cultural phenomenon of the 20th century is the so-called “early music movement”.⁴²² Some of the earliest manifestations of this began in the organ world with a pamphlet published by Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965) in his book *Deutsche und französische Orgelbaukunst und Orgelkunst* [*German and French organbuilding and organ art*].⁴²³ This is generally regarded as the start of the *Orgelbewegung* [Organ Reform movement] that rediscovered and propagated the qualities presumed lost in the 19th century industrialization of organ building. An increasing awareness dawned on musicians and scholars that many other modern instruments differed – in some cases radically – from the instruments for which music of earlier periods had been written. The question began to arise as to whether or not essential elements were lost when Baroque music was played on instruments manufactured to be audible in the large concert-halls and opera houses of the 19th century. This led to extensive research into Baroque instruments to rediscover the playing techniques originally used. From these came new clues regarding interpretation of early music.

The use of authentic instruments revealed subtle and forgotten nuances in early music. Research into old theoretical and practical treatises provided insights as to the vocal and instrumental techniques used, along with the musical and aesthetic ideas on which contemporary performances were based. This research aims towards an assessment of what can be gained by using authentic instruments and researching into past performing practices. Particularly in the field of organ music issues such as historic instruments versus pragmatic all-purpose instruments have formed the basis of much research and aesthetic discussion during the last sixty years.

Artistry versus practicality

An improvising organist with practical experience may well consider “aesthetic” and “aesthetic roots” to be rather cumbersome expressions in today’s artistic climate. Moreover, aesthetic matters are frequently discussed in so many contexts that even professionals can misunderstand such issues. The popular expressions “awful” and “pretty” or “beautiful” and “ugly” are well known, but in using them we often end up with the simple contention that questions of taste cannot be discussed. In our present world of church music aesthetic guidelines are almost conspicuous by their absence. Indeed, in the field of liturgical music a post-modern ethic would appear to rule the roost, where the differing forms of musical expression are considered on a relative and partially pragmatic basis.

The expressions “pretty” or “awful” and “beautiful” or “ugly” can naturally be discussed on an exclusively theoretical basis. Without some evaluation of aesthetic values it would be difficult for teaching at conservatoires and music schools to function satisfactorily. Professionals usually avoid the above expressions. In musi-

⁴²² See below: In the 19th century the German church musician, organ virtuoso and teacher Johann Georg Herzog – among others – can be said to have contributed to an historic related understanding of musical performance.

⁴²³ Cf. Albert Schweitzer, *Deutsche und französische Orgelbaukunst und Orgelkunst*, Leipzig 1906. Also William Leslie Summer, *The Organ – Its Evolution, Principles of Construction and Use*, London 1973.

cal context it is easier to use “right” or “wrong” and “good” or “bad” – which are ideally based on professional standards of craftsmanship. Without some professional knowledge such expressions can appear meaningless, complicated or incomprehensible, perhaps even provocative. It is important to remember that not everything has to be beautiful. The opposite of beauty is not always ugliness. Universal aesthetic rules do not apply to all types of improvised music but are dependent on the function of the music since this gives the music its *raison d'être*.

It is here that the expressions “pretty” and “awful” or “beautiful” and “ugly” are of no real use, whilst “right” or “wrong” and “good” or “bad” can probably – subject to certain conditions – give a better evaluation of the result. The challenge is: How to make the best music under the circumstances, what ideas do I use and how do I proceed technically? For most improvising musicians is that a demanding process, involving intensive work, thought and experimentation. This also involves breaking down traditional ideas and then reassembling them, aiming for a result that they reappear in new colours, sparkling with renewed brilliance.

In this way church musicians and organists have in the course of their work developed a considerable array of skills to cope with differing musical functions. Therefore organ improvisation, in all from the simplest forms to complex musical structures rooted in differing traditions, may be regarded as the organist’s response to the current pluralistic trends and the many differing situations that arise in church services or concerts. The prime concern of most improvising organists is not the recreation of a specific style but rather spontaneous communication which will fit the requirements of a given situation in the church. The requirement for standards of artistic quality can also dictate that the player should seek to maximise stylistic integrity.

Improvisation – the aesthetic of the moment

The art of improvisation frequently involves the process of choosing styles from a considerable number of differing concepts. When writing about improvisation as a musical phenomenon and how it is practiced today, some points will need clarification, not least the historic fact that organ improvisation has for centuries occupied a central place in the church musician’s work. The improvised music is primarily intended to function within a liturgical framework and as such has a servile role. This practice is very much alive today. Organ improvisation is normally based on traditional melodic themes that are associated with the Church, though ideas can sometimes be inspired of literary quotations or visual images. We can regard these as the church musician’s “raw material”. This implies some dilemmas.

In the “Nachschöpferische Freiheit. Ein musikalisch-theologisches Plädoyer⁴²⁴ für die Orgelimprovisation” Gustav-Adolf Krieg⁴²⁵ discusses these questions. According to Krieg, organ improvisation should be regarded as a musical creation that occurs within the institutionalized church, i.e. during its services and concerts.

⁴²⁴ The German word “Plädoyer” comes from the French “plaidoyer” meaning a plea – as in a court of law. In this context “reasoning” is probably the best translation.

⁴²⁵ Gustav-Adolf Krieg (b. 1948) teaches organ playing, improvisation, music history and hymnology at the “Robert Schumann Hochschule” in Düsseldorf. He has also written a textbook in organ improvisation: *Cantus-Firmus-Improvisationen auf der Orgel, System-Methode-Modelle*, Köln 2001. (The publishers won the German music publisher prize for this book under the category “didactic music book” in 2002.)

It is pertinent to ask if all forms of church music are subordinate to the church authority and take place within one or another form of church music tradition. The institutionalized church has always been guardian to traditions as regards texts, visual art forms and music. Without roots in the authorised texts and other forms of expression church services would lack a Christian dimension and therefore become meaningless.⁴²⁶

Krieg shows that it was not infrequent for earlier generations of theologians to interpret liturgical traditions as being directly influenced by the workings of the Holy Spirit. He considers that this way of thinking has long ceased to dominate the consciousness of today's churches. In particular the idea that church traditions are directly descended from the actions of the Holy Spirit no longer commands wide acceptance. In fact the Church's history is seen in some quarters as a burden, and the church's survival more as an archaism. Krieg refers here to the manner in which many theologians and congregations deal with the forms of worship surviving from the Reformation. Traditions are maintained, but often without any real meaning. Krieg suggests that for church musicians the picture may be different:

Die Kirchenmusik scheint auf den ersten Blick von diesen Fragen ausgenommen zu sein. Immerhin dürften Kirchenmusiker noch eher dazu neigen, an die Präsenz der Gesichte im gegenwärtigem Bewusstsein zu Glauben, als etwa Theologen: Ein geistliches Konzert von Schütz ist ja in der Tat immer noch bekannter als etwa eine Predigt von Luther (allein schon als kulturelles Erbe). Dennoch empfindet auch der Kirchenmusiker die Gesichte nicht selten als Last: Die Frage ist schon, wie man etwa mit der ständig wachsenden Fülle neuerer barocker oder romantischer Kirchenmusik umgehen kann. Und welche Bedeutung haben diese Traditionen? Ist etwa die Bedeutung barocker Kirchenmusik in der aus der von der kirchenmusikalischen Erneuerung zwischen den Weltkriegen her überkommenen Interpretationsweise besser „verstanden“ oder im Sinne der „historischen“ Aufführungspraxis? Nicht mehr ausgemacht ist auch, welchen „Sinn“ etwa das „klassische“ evangelische Kirchenlied hat. Kann Scheidt etwa Vorbild sein, wenn er es in seiner ursprünglichen Gestalt weitgehend belässt? Oder bedarf es der „zeitgenössischen“ Rezeption wie bei Bach, gar der motivischen Zergliederung wie in den Choralbearbeitungen von Karg-Elert? Ja, sind nicht – im Blick auf neueste Choralvorspiele – die Spannungen etwa zwischen den Kirchenliedmelodien des 17. Jahrhunderts und den Kompositionstechniken des 20. Jahrhunderts bisweilen schon unerträglich?⁴²⁷

[At first glance the church music would appear to be exempted from these problems. It would seem that the church musician tends to believe that history is found in the present, and in a very different way than perceived by theologians: A Sacred Concert by Schütz is in reality better known than one of Luther's sermons (at least as an item of cultural heritage). Church musicians can also sometimes experience the confining elements of history. Here one only has to mention the endless stream of newly revised editions of church music from Baroque to Romantic. What is the meaning behind these traditions? Would it be easiest to "understand" the meaning⁴²⁸ of Baroque church music in the light of interpretation based on performance practices of the inter-war years of church music renewal or in light of "historical" performance practices? This dilemma

⁴²⁶ Gustav-Adolf Krieg, "Nachschöpferische Freiheit. Ein musikalisch-theologisches Plädoyer für die Orgel improvisation", in *Musik und Kirche* (Germany) 63 1993, pp. 204-210.

⁴²⁷ See Krieg 1993, p. 207.

⁴²⁸ Krieg presumably refers here to an understanding of Baroque music's differing influences on church music today.

is no easier if we consider the “classical” Evangelical chorales. Perhaps Scheidt can serve as a model when we consider such melodies in their original form? Or the more “contemporary” versions such as Bach, or the fragmented divisions of the motives such as are found in Karg-Elert’s chorale arrangements. Perhaps – looking at some more recent chorale preludes – the tensions between 17th century chorale melodies and the composition techniques of the 20th century are greater than we can endure?]

Krieg continues his argument by suggesting that organ improvisation, which is to some extent related to the history of church music, can place the problem in another light. He points out that organ improvisation is frequently linked to specific musical structures and forms that are inherited from tradition. Yet in improvisation these are treated with greater freedom. Even if many improvising organists were only concerned with fulfilling correct stylistic criteria, Krieg notes the essential point that improvised music is not primarily created from written texts. By this he seems to mean that the improviser does not perform with the aid of printed music, or with emphasis on strict ideals of interpretation.

Regarding interpretation of the organ repertoire, it is relevant to consider how for example the composers of the late Baroque era *have* composed – and along with the question of how they considered that their music was to be performed. In improvisation it is probably more relevant to ask how they also *might have* composed. Such a position can therefore also be regarded as historical imagination⁴²⁹ because we dealing with picturing the musical past, not attempting to reconstruct it. If one chooses to go along these lines and regard the craftsmanship aspects of church music history as serious work, where one deals with given themes and their associated technical problems, so can improvised work bring us back the little musical smile of gratitude. Krieg continues:

Die Tradition ist eben keine sakrosankte Grösse mehr, die es in ihren vorhandenen (liturgischen) Gestalten zu wiederholen gilt, im ängstlichen Blick darauf, ob diese Wiederholung womöglich allen quellenmässig abgesicherten Aufführungskriterien genügt. Im Gegenteil, sie wird gerade nicht mehr nur interpretierend nach vollzogen, sondern als „Inspirationsquelle“ verstanden und so dann real nach geschaffen und damit in noch umfassenderer Weise vergegenwärtigt, als es durch ein blosses interpretierendes Wiederaufführen bereits vorhandener Musik zu geschehen vermöchte. Und damit wird sie am Ende in ihrer eigenen Bedeutung nicht nur verwandelt, sondern auch ein Stück weit zerbrochen, wiederum: mit einem Lachen.⁴³⁰

[Tradition is no longer a sacrosanct⁴³¹ quantity that should be repeated in a fixed (liturgical) form, and with an anxious glance to check if that repetition perhaps does not fulfil all the performance criteria indicated by its origins. The opposite: Tradition not only serves as a guide for interpretation, but can also be understood as a “source of inspiration”. Thus there can be something new in the force of tradition. With that tradition becomes more important in our time, seen in relation to actions that are simply connected to the realisation of music that already exists. In this way tradition is not simply changed in relation to its own meaning, but is to a large extent broken, and yet again: with a smile.]

⁴²⁹ Cf. Ricoeur 1999, p. 172.

⁴³⁰ See Krieg 1993, p. 208.

⁴³¹ “Sacrosanct” – that is to say “sacred and inviolable”.

Personally I interpret Gustav-Adolf Krieg in this way: An improvisation can often be regarded as a genuine reflection of the performer's musical personality, something which makes this such an exciting form, even within a taut liturgical framework. Thus, in my opinion, the audience's experience of the player's spontaneous display combined with the architecture of the music is the hallmark of the art of improvisation. It opens for the positive experience of presence and generosity. In this way some services can become wonderful all-round artistic experiences where the architecture of the church, pictures, music and liturgy fuse together. In such a situation it can be postulated that stylistic boundaries are opened.

Here the church musician has to engage in an open dialogue with the thematic material, the tonal resources of the organ and the actual situation. Here the present can effectively fuse with the past. Effectively the improvising organist invites the audience or congregation to accompany him or her into this melting pot. Here they can freely explore new musical expressions as they are produced "hot from the press". The ideal for the improviser at this stage is to listen – not only to the sounds but also to the entire surrounding atmosphere. All this can be summarised as the aesthetic of the moment where the improvised game forms a vital component. The game is however a tightly regulated one since liturgical organ music will always be determined by practical considerations of time.

Musical symbolism

As we have noted, a major part of an organist's spontaneous music making is practised within the framework of the Church's liturgy. The different denominations have their own musical cultures and traditions that form different starting points for improvisation. The Roman Catholic Church has its rich heritage of plainchant, which includes the melodies to the Ordinary and the Proper of the Mass,⁴³² antiphons, hymns, sequences, psalms and the New Testament canticles. The Lutheran Church possesses a unique treasure of chorales and religious folksong. All this reflects an extensive range of melodies that can be arranged to function as religious *Gebrauchsmusik*.⁴³³ The name Johann Sebastian Bach stands at the forefront of the many composers who have elevated such music into the framework of art music and thus created timeless masterpieces.

The bulk of these works originated for practical reasons: for use in for services in the church where the composer carried out his duties as church musician. Like any craftsman the composer masters a number of musical formula that are applied in order to create musical structures either in the form of written compositions or improvisations, made using similar formula. Does not much of Bach's greatness lie in the supreme craftsmanship with which he handles the forms he had inherited from earlier composers – as opposed to being a personality or poet in the Romantic sense of the term? Naturally enough Bach's music bears all the hallmarks of genius, but all of his musical creations were very practical artefacts that sprung from the deep roots of tradition. The Swedish author Göran Tunström sheds some light on this process in his novel *Juloratoriet [The Christmas Oratorio]*:

⁴³² The Ordinary of the Mass being the part of the liturgy that is obligatory every time Mass is said or sung. The Proper of the Mass is that part which varies according to the occasion being celebrated.

⁴³³ Defined by *The Oxford English Dictionary* as "music for use".

-Såna här verk, skall ni veta, skrevs till varje söndag. Måndag, tisdag skrevs stämmorna ut. Hela familjen Bach jobbade tillsammans, det går inte att skilja Johann Sebastians handstil från hans frus, ära väre hennes minne, onsdag, torsdag skrevs kopior, fredag, lördag repeterade man, så var hela loppet kört och man kunde dricka sitt kaffe i ro. Fem, sex fulla årgingar finns det, men kom ihåg, det fanns en emblematik. Den här skapelsesprocessen som vi lägger så stor vikt vid i våra dagar, var bara färgläggningen av altsammans. Den afekt som skulle framkallas gav sig mer eller mindre i och med dessa emblem. De här formlerna är allmångods. Som en möbel. En stol. En stol skal ha vissa egenskaper, ha ben, rygg, en sits. Men så har vi van Goghs stol. Vi har Picassos stolar – såna man minns!⁴³⁴

[Such works, you should understand, were written for every single Sunday. On Monday and Tuesday the parts were written out. The entire Bach family together, one cannot see any difference between the handwriting of Johann Sebastian Bach and that of his wife, all honour to her memory. Copies were written on Wednesday and Thursday. Friday and Saturday were devoted to rehearsal, and so everything was done and one could contentedly enjoy one's coffee in peace. There existed five to six whole years worth of such works, but remember there were many formula in use then; there was a symbolism, a fixed system. The creative process that we now place so much emphasis on was in reality just the colouration of it. These formulae were available to all. Like a piece of furniture. A chair. A chair has certain features – legs, seat, back etc. But we have van Gogh's chair. And we have Picasso's chairs – these are what one remembers!]

In a large number of churches throughout the world today improvisation based on classical symbols is still practised. Throughout history new musical systems have steadily evolved. A knowledge of musical style, or perhaps more accurately familiarity with codes of musical grammar, is therefore an essential part condition of the improvising organist's armoury. Differing books on the subject of improvisation attempt to explain this, in a manner similar to that in which compositional studies present different compositional techniques. In other words there is an aspect of craftsmanship to be mastered as a vital stepping-stone towards the art of improvisation.

On the other side improvised playing is the art of the moment. The music only exists at the time it is played.⁴³⁵ In that moment there are naturally different ways in which it can be perceived as a stylistically related phenomenon. It is in the inherent nature of sounding musical works that they sooner or later become silent, which clearly demonstrates the temporary nature of the improvised music.⁴³⁶ On the other

⁴³⁴ See Göran Tunström, *Juloratoriet*, Stockholm 1983, pp. 12-13.

⁴³⁵ It is of course true that there are some notable recordings of spontaneous music making by famous European musicians. We might mention some Parisian organists such as Charles Tournemire at Sainte-Clotilde, Marcel Dupré at Saint-Sulpice, Pierre Cochereau in Notre-Dame or Munich cathedral organist Franz Lehrndorfer (b. 1928), but normally improvised music vanishes at the conclusion of the playing.

⁴³⁶ See cover notes for the DVD recording Cochereau "un phénomène sans équivalent dans l'histoire de l'orgue contemporain" (Marcel Dupré), Paris 2004, p. 12: Jean-Marc Cochereau, son of the legendary French organist Pierre Cochereau and himself a musician, writes somewhat ironically that he "admires those who have undertaken these types of acrobatic tricks" by transcribing his dead father's recorded improvisations to a readable form. In his opinion this is a rather naive attempt to record the magic moments of spontaneous music making, since these types of transcriptions are unable to accurately express the actual impression of the sound. Such details such as Cochereau's impulsive creativity and his own style of playing, Notre-Dame's monumental organ, Notre-Dame's own special acoustics and architecture, and

hand, the methods by which the skills are taught remain. The art of improvisation can probably best be explained from a teaching point of view, where explanation of its many differing aspects is most straightforward. Such access to the subject of improvisation can be found in a large number of treatises from different eras, and not least in the teaching situations as practiced in institutions of higher musical education, and at seminars that are devoted to organ improvisation.

The expression “style” as a subject to be studied

Clemenz Ganz has worked as a teacher in organ interpretation and improvisation at the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik in Cologne. He has also been cathedral organist at the Hohe Dom zu Köln. In “Die Orgelimitation im Unterricht”⁴³⁷ he considers the inner compulsion to create improvised music exhibited by new beginners. He notes the problems encountered here are similar to those that arise when attempting a conversation with a stranger that is inhibited by language barriers. Ganz thus points out the importance of seeking out and learning a suitable musical “vocabulary”. In practice this means studying specified musical parameters such as melodic movement, harmony, rhythm, counterpoint etc and then learning how to link them. Since a large amount of organ improvisation is connected with church music, this involves working with a musical palette that is familiar to the listeners. Many of these sound structures will be familiar part of the student’s aural memory from previous musical experiences. In this way the musical material strikes a familiar chord because it has been heard before.

We all have uses for them – idioms and common expressions. Idioms can be regarded as well-trodden paths in both language and music, and we have to use them to find our way reasonably effectively. It is a well-known fact that we cease to notice the things we constantly use, see and hear. We encounter this problem from time to time when we use idioms. Another problem occurs when idioms cause us to lose our way, and with their language indicate a path where no path has ever existed. This can cause the language user to almost ignore all who have travelled the path before. Language is often a symbol for something, in some cases even a symptom for something. Random use of figurative language without considering what the expressions actually illustrate can easily be understood as a sloppy relation to language and thought.

Organ improvisation can easily become an invitation to an unrestrained game with the tonal resources of the instrument, in which it is possible to reap tonal fruits that are far from the established sound idioms. On the other hand we can become so fascinated by this free game that ideas, thoughts and form are totally obliterated. If we wish to express ourselves musically with conventional idioms

even the listeners themselves, cannot be expressed in notation. Even though it is possible for other organists to reproduce the notes in these transcriptions, when they are played on another organ then the character of the music will be fully altered. A recorded improvisation cannot be compared with an actual composition. What the hands and feet create at the time of improvisation is determined by the situation there and then. When a composer moulds a piece of music, he will “polish” so it sounds good and appears well written. According to Jean-Marc Cocherneau, the improviser at work is not concerned with the consideration that his music is to be preserved for posterity in order to be interpreted by others. Therefore is transcribing something that happened during a “rush of adrenalin”, or in an “abnormal state”, really a rather absurd idea.

⁴³⁷ See Clemenz Ganz, “Die Orgelimitation im Unterricht”, in *Musica Sacra* (Germany/Austria) 107/4 1987, p. 286.

and works, it will undeniably be worthwhile for someone to help us to use them in a suitable manner. One or another principle of form can be replaced by something else, and this can be an indication of the imaginative ability to create something new. We should not ignore this, but the same symptoms of imagination can manifest themselves in a chaotic shambles that conveys very little.

Without a shadow of doubt it is decisive that we communicate with our listeners in a way that they can understand, whether this occurs within a liturgical context or in a concert. This applies to something as immediately practical as improvising an accompaniment to a congregational hymn, a harmonisation of a plainchant melody, or introducing the hymns by means of an improvised chorale prelude. Musical formula will to a large extent be vital elements in both liturgical and concert organ improvisation. In the essay – “Må man kunne grammatikk for å være en god språkbruker?” [Must one know grammar to be a good linguist?] – the Norwegian composer Ståle Kleiberg considers the relationship between musical structure and musical content. He discusses the dilemmas that can arise:

All kommunikasjon har som sin forutsetning at det finnes visse prinsipper for ordningen av det språklige materialet, enten det nå dreier seg om verbalspråk, billedspråk eller musikkpråk. Disse prinsippene, eller språklige konvensjonene om man vil, må så vel budskapets avsender som budskapets mottager være inneforstått med...

... Strukturen – de prinsippene som ligger til grunn for ordningen av det språklige, billedlige eller musikalske materialet, er nemlig ikke tilfeldig valgt. For at et uttrykk skal kunne bli meningsbærende, må det som sagt struktureres etter normer som er kjent for så vel mottager som avsender. Disse normene er kulturspesifikke, og de forandrer seg ettersom kulturen forandrer seg. Hvis vår felleskulturelle forestilling om et fenomen endres, får dette gjerne konsekvenser for vår måte å omtale fenomenet på.⁴³⁸

[All communication requires defined principles for organisation of the linguistic material, whether the language is verbal, visual or musical. These principles, or linguistic conventions if you like, have to be understood by both the sender and recipient of the communication...

... Structure – the founding principles for organization of verbal, visual or musical material is not chosen at random. For a message to carry a meaning, it must be constructed after conventions with which both sender and receiver are familiar. These conventions are specified by cultural norms and can be altered by changing cultural patterns. If our common perception of a phenomenon changes, this will have consequences for the way in which we describe the phenomenon.]

There is in music a close connection between structure and content. To some extent all activities are dictated by rules, but most of our actions are governed by more complex factors. The nature of musical rules is such that they need to be demonstrated. In the same way as a linguistic essay is governed by rules of grammar and syntax, an improvisation is also to be guided by similar rules which the student must assimilate. Thus it becomes possible to experience an interplaying between creative freedom and formal insight in many types of improvisation. The Norwegian saxophonist Jan Garbarek is well known for his improvising skills, which he described in an interview with me:

⁴³⁸ See Ståle Kleiberg, “Må man kunne grammatikk for å være en god språkbruker?”, in *Musikklidenskapelig – Tretten essays – Musikkvitenskapelig Institutt 1962-87*, ed. Ola Kai Ledang, Trondheim 1987, p. 48.

SET: -Hva er spontant og hva er forberedt når du står på podiet og lager improvisert musikk, Jan Garbarek?

JG: -Det er som språket. Det består av ord. Men det er først når vi behersker ordene at vi kan videreformidle tankespinnets vårt på en forståelig måte. I et slikt tankespinn kan hele tiden stemningen og innholdet skifte. Men ingen vil kunne oppfatte tankespinnets vårt hvis vi ikke gjør bruk av forståelige og gjennjennelige vendinger. Så også med improvisasjon som overhodet ikke betyr å overlate det meste til tilfeldighetene. Da blir det bare babbel og kaos. Den musikalske grunnstrukturen og ”grammatikken” må være der. Da er vi fri til å gå på vingene slik at tilhørerne kan følge med på den klingende ferden.

SET: -Kilden til musikken din?

JG: -Summen av alt jeg har hørt. Det er dette maksimum av musikalske inntrykk jeg kjører gjennom mitt eget prisme.⁴³⁹

[SET: -What is spontaneous and what is prepared when you stand improvising on the stage, Jan Garbarek?

JG: -It is like language. It consists of words. But it is when we first are in command of words that we can begin to arrange our train of thoughts in an understandable way. In such a train of thought the mood and the content can continuously be changing. However, no one will manage to follow our train of thought if we do not use understandable and recognisable turns. So also is improvisation, which absolutely does not mean leaving things to chance. That simply creates chaotic and confusing babbling. The foundations of a musical structure and its associated “grammar” have to be present. Then we are free to take flight in such a way that our audience can follow the resultant aural trip.

SET: -The source of your music?

JG: -The total of everything I have heard. Like light through a prism, it is the sum total of the musical impressions that have passed through me.]

Jan Garbarek presupposes in this way that a successful improvisation has to be linked to elements from a recognisable source, also to be regarded as a common channel of musical communication. Such an extensive repertoire of expression has to be thoroughly assimilated by the improviser in order to place it in new contexts according to his or her own personal creative instincts.

On the use of classical or modern stylistic principles

Different styles are important in the context of teaching. The improvising organist who studies the core repertoire can find a useful and extensive supply of idiomatic ideas. Regarding the question as to what style improvisation teaching should be based on, Hans Haselböck writes that differing principles of form are clearest in strictly classical movements. However, he does suggest that the objective for improvisation teaching is not style imitation, but that the improviser familiarises himself with more recent musical methods of expression, although the degree of modernity does not necessarily have any bearing on the quality of a piece of improvised music. Haselböck continues:

Das ausschliessliche Stegreifspiel im historisierenden Gewand ist gelegentlich ganz reizvoll, wirkt auf Dauer gesehen aber unglaubwürdig und ist der Idee der Improvisation eher abträglich.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁹ See Svein Erik Tandberg, “Tilstedeværelsens estetikk” [The aesthetic of the moment], interview with saxophonist and improviser Jan Garbarek in *Tønsbergs Blad* 5 July 1997.

⁴⁴⁰ See Haselböck 1988, p. 60.

[Sometimes it can be tempting to simply link one's spontaneous music making to historic models, but in the long run this is not very credible and is rather damaging for the fundamental ideas of improvisation.]

Gustav-Adolf Krieg points out that in a teaching context the actual starting point is not so critical. It can take the form of spontaneous imitations, or against a background of scientific musical analysis of actual stylistic characteristics and techniques. Although these approaches should not be separated from each other, it is possible to speak of differing types of improvising musicians. Some improvisation students have scruples, because they fear that their music does not live up to a given ideal of style. On the other hand there are students who produce a conglomerate of differing styles, but all the same do so with great musical panache.⁴⁴¹

The aim of improvisation teaching is to fuse these two prototypes to some type of unity.⁴⁴² It is less important to consider questions of stylistic and technical preferences that can vary from renaissance music to our own era's gospel-pop. It is important to focus on the creative impulse, because that is what decides how given tonal material is treated. Krieg suggests there must be a certain type of subconscious desire to create imitations, so that work with historic forms does not simply involve copying history.⁴⁴³ It is decisive that there is a personal element that attempts to make something out of music history. Although this method can appear to involve excessive dependence on a specific musical style, the first priority is to produce something concrete that has not yet been realised within the same style.

Krieg points out that the best results are produced when we do not slavishly follow historical factors. To some extent organ improvisation aims to realise a sound sequence that has not been realised previously. This implies that the improviser needs the courage to take musical chances. Krieg implies that such courage can ensure that the final result does not sound like a mere plagiarism of an existing piece. In the final analysis the music stands as a form of a specific stylistic ideal – along the lines that a Neo-Gothic church can be regarded as much a self-standing piece of architecture as a Gothic church. According to Krieg, improvisation studies should aim to enable the student to produce inspired craftsmanship.⁴⁴⁴

A plan for the study of organ improvisation

I will summarize by considering some of the elements that should be included in a course of improvisation studies. The course developed by Hans Haselböck during his teaching at the Vienna State Academy for Music and Applied Art contains the following points:

1. Einfache harmonische Übungen, ausgehend von den Kadenzen (ohne und mit Pedal, auf mehrere Manuale verteilt). Angereicherte, ausgezierte Kadenzen, in fester Taktart, vier- und achttaktige Perioden. – Zweistimmiger Kontrapunkt, c. f. in der rechten Hand (Kontrapunktierung in grösseren Notenwerten, in kürzeren Notenwerten, in gemischter Form).

⁴⁴¹ See Krieg 1993, p. 206.

⁴⁴² See below: Olivier Latry asserts that one can study a specified style or composer in order to assimilate the musical substance. Afterwards, however, it is necessary to “forget” this and create one's own music.

⁴⁴³ See Krieg 1993, p. 206.

⁴⁴⁴ See Krieg 1993, p. 206. Also *ibid.*, p. 205.

2. Erweiterung der Kadenz. – C. f. in der linken Hand, wie unter 1.
 3. Einbeziehung aller Nebenstufen der Kadenz. Perioden mit Durchgangs- und Wechselnoten (immer strenge Rhythmen). – Zweistimmige Übungen, bei denen der c. f. als 4¹ im Pedal liegt.
 4. Modulationen werden in die 8- oder 16-taktigen Kleinformen bewusst einbezogen. – Erste dreistimmige Übungen, c. f. zuerst im Sopran, dann in der Unterstimme, zuletzt in der Mittelstimme.
 5. Bewusste Heranziehung der Nebenseptakkorde, Versuche der Auflösung und Weiterspinnung. Improvisation in alten Formen (Sätze der deutschen Suite etwa), aber mit zeitnahen Satz- und Stilmitteln.
 6. Als ständige Übungen: Sequenzen, ausgehend von strenger Diatonik bis zu bitonalen und polytonalen Strukturen.
 7. Übungen zur Ornamentation und Diminution.
 8. Einfache Formen der Imitation. Versetten, Fughetten, Invention.
 9. Choralbearbeitungen mit ausgeziertem c. f.
 10. Ostinato-Formen (Basso ostinato, Chaconne, Passacaglia).
 11. Fuge.
 12. Freie Formen – Präludium, Fantasie, Toccata.⁴⁴⁵
- [1. Simple harmonisation practices using classical cadences as a starting-point, with and without pedal and using different manuals. Cadences played in differing rhythms – always with emphasis on the rhythmic pulse. Two part counterpoint, cantus firmus in R.H. and countermelody in L.H. Counterpoint in long note-values, short note-values and combination of these.
2. C.f. in tenor register played with L.H. – otherwise similar to point 1.
 3. Development of the cadence with help of related tonalities. Two part practice where the c.f. is played on a 4¹-pedal register.
 4. Modulation exercises in small forms of 8 and 16 bars. First three part practices – first with c.f. in the soprano, then in the bass, finally in the middle voice.
 5. Conscious approach to the secondary dominant, attempts at resolution and development. Improvisation according to older forms. Work with differing forms from the classical German suite, using both historic and contemporary techniques of harmonisation and musical style.
 6. Daily exercises: sequences ranging from the strictly diatonic towards bi- and poly-tonal structures.
 7. Practice in ornamentation and diminution.
 8. Simple forms of imitation. Verses, Fugetta and Inventions.
 9. Chorale treatment by coloratura applied to cantus firmus.
 10. Ostinato-Forms (Basso ostinato, Chaconne, Passacaglia).
 11. Fugue.
 12. Free Forms – Prelude, Fantasy, Toccata.]

⁴⁴⁵ See Haselböck 1988, p. 61.

From Haselböck's outlines we can see that the terms "style" and "aesthetic" with all their implications occupy a central place in teaching. This aim of this teaching is not a mere stimulation to free musical fantasising at the keyboard. At the same time the outlines reflect well-known textbook musical disciplines of harmony, form and counterpoint. Haselböck recognises that the aim in itself is not the mere completion of formal exercises using stylistic formulae, but also to consider to which extent it will be fruitful to follow such formulae. During its long history the art of music-making has developed a veritable arsenal of techniques. These are not simply preserved for posterity, but are intended for practical use. Improvisation studies are also studies in composition, but focused on the areas of compositional techniques that can be incorporated into spontaneous and creative playing.⁴⁴⁶

According to this, I consider that organ improvisation – or in fact improvisation in general – involves the art of adapting oneself to fixed musical situations. Here one's actions are incorporated in an aesthetic whole. If we again see an analogy in the world of speech, then we may note the qualities that impress in a good speaker. He or she will be a person who can give the impression of being well read and well orientated about life in general. Such knowledge and experience involuntarily becomes part of that person's utterances. A good speaker is also selective in what material he or she uses, so that it always fits to each actual situation that arises – promptly on cue. By this I mean that there are underlying moments that create a sense of belonging and recognition. This can be the framework many creative artists in one way or another relate to, either in a positive or negative sense. Sometimes it is legitimate for one to set oneself against given cultural conventions. Even that can be experienced as a fruitful creative resource seen in relation to the term "style".

Surely it is preferable that competence in improvisation should be the fruits of personal development. This process requires a wide-ranging multitude of musical antecedents. There are constant interactions between the player's own ideas and the differing cultural-determining influences that contribute to the music's form and structure. These are preferable instead of to merely give an impression of another's expression. In this case it is less important that the improvised patterns are classified as Modern, Romantic, Classical or Baroque, and if the improviser's spontaneous expression is evaluated as kitsch, art or craft. Probably it is most important that listeners are not indifferent to the music, but that they are touched and captivated.⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁷ Cf. Tandberg 2004.

CHAPTER 20

Understanding the processes

*L'art, au sens propre, est une manière de faire des oeuvres selon certaines méthodes obtenues soit par apprentissage, soit par invention. Et les méthodes sont les voies strictes et déterminées qui assurent la rectitude de notre opération.*⁴⁴⁸

[Art really involves creating works using certain methods that one either teaches oneself or invents. And these methods are the precisely determined ways that ensure we work correctly.]

(Russian-French composer Igor Strawinsky, 1942.)

*Nachdem ich mir das notwendige Material geistig zusammengestellt hatte, begann ich.*⁴⁴⁹

[After I had assembled the necessary materials in my thoughts, I started.]

(Austrian composer and organ improviser Anton Bruckner, 1861.)

⁴⁴⁸ See Igor Strawinsky, *Poétique musicale sous forme de six leçons*, Cambridge 1942, p. 17.

⁴⁴⁹ See Horn, "Zwischen Interpretation und Improvisation" 1997, p. 139.

Early 19th century and early 21st century thoughts on improvisation

Carl Czerny

The Austrian composer, teacher and pianist Carl Czerny was one of Beethoven's pupils and gained a reputation as one of the finest interpreters of the latter's music. He was a prolific composer with a great deal of church music to his credit, as well as symphonies, chamber music and music for the stage. Over one thousand of his works were published in his lifetime, but today his fame rests mainly on his many volumes of studies and piano exercises. In the Preface to his *Systematische Anleitung zum Fantasieren auf dem Pianoforte* he gives a brief description of what is required to play according to the imagination:

Zum Fantasieren gehört, wie zur Composition:

1tens Natürliche anlage, die sich meistens schon in früher Jugend offenbart, und in Erfindungsgabe, lebhafter Einbildungskraft, grossem musikalischen Gedächtniss, raschen Gedankenflug, glücklich organisirten Fingern, &: besteht.

2tens gründliche Ausbildung in allen Theilen der Harmonielehre, damit dem Spieler die Gewandheit im richtigem Modulieren bereits zur Natur geworden sey.

3tens endlich ein vollkommen ausgebildetes Spiel (:Virtuosität), also die grösste Geübtheit der Finger in allen Schwierigkeiten, in allen Tonarten, so wie in allem, was zum schönen, gemüthlichen und graziösen Vortrag gehört. Denn vergebens giebt die Einbildungskraft die besten Ideen, wenn die Finger sie sich mit aller künstlerischen Leichtigkeit und Sicherheit auszuführen nicht im Stande sind.⁴⁵⁰

[To fantasise is similar to compose:

In the first place; natural ability which for the most part manifests itself at an early age, a degree of inventiveness, a lively imagination, a large musical memory, quick thinking, well-organised fingers and so on.

In the second place: a thorough training in all aspects of harmony, so that competence in correct modulation procedures becomes second nature.

The third and final point: a well developed (virtuoso) technique, with the best training of the fingers in all types of difficulties, all tonalities, in everything connected with a beautiful, comfortable and gracious presentation. Even the best ideas of a fantasy will be completely useless if the fingers cannot easily and securely play them with some degree of artistry.]

Czerny probably writes according to the generally accepted ideas which held sway in the 19th century. He begins by mentioning exclusively personal qualities of natural talents,⁴⁵¹ and proceeds to draw parallels with composition. It is the rules of composition that should be followed when improvising music. The musician should also have well-developed technical facilities. Czerny makes his own view clear: Improvised music results from a combination of creative fantasy, a clear

⁴⁵⁰ See Czerny 1993, pp. 3-4.

⁴⁵¹ Cf. Francis Galton, *Hereditary Genius: An Inquiry into its Laws and Consequences*, London 1869. Reprint London 1979.

awareness of formal aspects and musical techniques, along with motor capabilities in the form of a highly developed instrumental virtuosity. It would appear that he regarded the inner formal creative or mental processes as decisive.

Brad Mehldau

The pianist and composer Brad Mehldau (b. 1970) belongs to the younger generation of important American musicians. His first recording was released in 1994 and since then he has issued eleven others, both solo albums and with The Brad Mehldau Trio. His repertoire is a mixture of own compositions, jazz standards and songs by The Beatles, Radiohead and Nick Drake. He is also a composer, whose song cycle *Love Sublime* was commissioned by the Carnegie Hall in New York at the behest of soprano Renée Fleming. In recent years Mehldau has acquired an international reputation as an improvising solo pianist.

Mehldau also points to a combination of factors such as imagination, form and movement in the improvising process, which he describes in an interview with the Norwegian music reporter Terje Mosnes. The article begins with Mosnes' own first impressions of a concert given by Mehldau:

Noen øyeblikks dyp konsentrasjon, og de første tonene lister seg ut i det mektige kirkerommet, tar det i besittelse. Så blir tonestrømmen tettere, striere, virvler seg inn i improviserte stryk og framkaller enda en gang undringen: Spiller musikken musikeren? Hva foregår i Brad Mehldaus hode akkurat nå? Fører han en intens dialog med seg selv? Er han styrt av én stemme? Spiller han, eller spiller han for noen? Oss? Seg selv? I de neste 90 minuttene dukker spørsmålet opp om og om igjen.⁴⁵²

[Some moments of deep concentration, and then the first notes gently wend their way forth and take possession of the church's vast space. So the cascade of notes tightens, becomes more aggressive, whirls itself together into an improvised piece and once more the questions arise: Does the music play the musician? What is going on in Brad Mehldau's head right now? Is he having an intense discussion with himself? Or is he led by some internal voice? Is he simply playing for himself, or for someone else? Us? During the course of the next 90 minutes these questions repeat themselves over and over again.]

The article continues with an interview in which Mehldau reflected in these terms about his art of piano improvisation:

BM: -Jeg antar at den er en balanse mellom noe som er veldig intellektuelt og noe som er veldig ikke-intellektuelt, sier han. – Det intellektuelle aspektet, som jeg forsøker å ikke overta for mye, har å gjøre med musikkens form, ideene for oppbyggingen av stykker og forløp, utviklingen av temaene og slike ting. På den andre siden har vi det rent fysiske ved det å spille piano, og når dette aspektet overtar, er det som om hjernen min kopler ut.

TM: -Hvor nøye planlagt er solokonsertene dine?

BM: -Jeg går til dem uten helt å vite hva det er som skal skje, og akkurat det er ganske nytt for meg. Det hender at jeg virkelig overrasker meg selv ved at musikken tar helt andre vendinger enn jeg hadde ventet meg.⁴⁵³

⁴⁵² See Terje Mosnes, "I hodet på en solo-pianist" [Inside a solo pianist's head], interview with Brad Mehldau in the Norwegian paper *Dagbladet* 17 July 2005.

⁴⁵³ Ibid.

[BM: -I guess it's a balance between something that is kind of very intellectual and something that is kind of very non-intellectual. The intellectual aspect, which I try to prevent from gaining the upper hand, concerns itself with the form of the music, the ideas for the development of the piece and its course, thematic development and all such things. On the other side there is the purely physical aspect of piano playing, and when that takes over it is like my brain disengages.

TM: -How carefully are your solo concerts planned?

BM: -I usually go along without really knowing what is going to happen. That is the new element for me. Sometimes I can really surprise myself when the music moves in a completely different direction from the one that I had anticipated.]

The main difference between Carl Czerny's and Brad Mehldau's approaches to improvisation seems to be that the latter places different emphasis on such moments as imagination, form and especially movement. Mehldau considers that it is the immediate contact with the source of sound which guides the form and expression of an improvised piece of music. This applies especially to the aspects that are linked with motor movement and the physical aspects of piano playing. Mehldau frequently experiences the sensation that the development of his improvisation is guided by his own pianistic senses. His own subconscious motor movements and other unpredictabilities can provide a stronger motive force than conscious choices which result from projections of imaginary performances and formal categorisation of ideas.

Conceptual consciousness versus bodily impulsiveness, as expressed in differing ways by Czerny and Mehldau, can be regarded as two key expressions, which have a dialectic relation to each other, and can go some way towards explaining musical improvisation. To this picture is also the tensions that exist between two spheres of experience – on the one hand: an inward controlled generative consciousness and on the other side: a bodily-related process linked to movements.

A process based on dilemmas

What kind of mechanism is it that enables an improviser to spontaneously develop a series of variations, or improvise a fugue? This type of question deals with issues that are covered by researches into human creativity and learning. In recent years attention has been focused on the motor actions for improvisation. The research focuses on what actually happens when a supply of musical structures, which the improviser has "stored" or "coded" in his/her body, meet new sounding impulses that arise as these musical structures receive new information. The question also arises as to how this "ensemble" is affected by the actions of oneself or others. Theories have been propounded for the creation of explanatory models for musical improvisation. The idea of these being an aim to understand what actually happens physically in the head and body during improvisation, and thus to reach some understanding as to how one can develop the necessary skills required to improvise.

To begin with it can be said that there are both external and internal processes. By "external processes" one primarily refers to processes as perceived by others aurally and/or visually. For example it is possible to see that a musician moves his playing equipment at the instrument, but above all we can hear sounds and rhythms as a consequence of these movements. We may for example recognise the formal

characteristics of the resulting music. As listeners and observers we do not have the same access to what goes on internally in the improvising musician's head. However, the human brain, central nervous system and body combine to form an extremely complex organism, which can be described as an "intelligent body" with a considerable array of internal strategies which guide and direct its actions.

A person's facial and body language will sometimes serve to reveal something of their internal thoughts and emotions. Instrumental musicians and singers can exhibit something of these as they perform. There are also strictly hidden processes at work. At the same time it is difficult to make a clear dividing line because life's internal and external forces are at constant interaction with each other. The personality of an improviser, his or hers own qualities as a creative being, are also important factors. Here we should be aware that in many music cultures conventions and points of reference are important factors in the music's possibility to establish a channel of communication between performer and listener.

Four points

Bearing in mind these issues and those raised by Czerny and Mehlau in the introduction of this chapter, we shall examine more closely four different points concerning musical improvisation. These are written by musicians, music teachers, musicologists and cognitive scientists. The aim is to present an account of what my own practice⁴⁵⁴ as an improviser suggests are useful approaches.

1. Musical improvisation can be regarded as a realisation of rule-controlled procedures. Thus competence in improvisation can be attained as a result of study and practice that follows these rules. Furthermore it can be possible to understand improvisatory actions in the light of a cognitive interpretation of the words "expertise" and "references".
2. Improvisation can be regarded as a form of musical expression, which is studied and practiced in the areas that can be found between intuition and rationality. In this picture the improviser's own musical personality plays an important part.
3. Theories concerning cross-modality are built on the thought that there is a continuous interaction between human perceptions, an interplay, which is a vital element in all kinds of musical cognition.

⁴⁵⁴ Cf. Pressing 1988, pp. 142-144: The approaches in the literature to musical improvisation can also be broadly grouped as follows: 1) There is a perspective overwhelmingly found in historical Western texts that improvisation is real-time composition and that no fundamental distinction need be drawn between improvisation and composition. 2) The next approach, which historically took over as the first one waned, sets out patterns, models, and procedures specific to the improvisational situation, which, if followed by those possessing a solid enough level of musicianship, will produce stylistically appropriate music. In this category fall the many figured bass and melodic embellishment texts of the seventh and eighteenth centuries. 3) Another technique is the setting of a spectrum of improvisational problems or constraints. The philosophy behind this technique shows a clear contrast with the second approach above. This knowledge grows through interactive exercises with a teacher, whose function is not to present models for imitation, but to pose problems intended to provoke personal responses. 4) A further approach is the presentation of multiple versions of important musical entities by the teacher, leaving the student to infer completely on his or her own ways in which improvisation or variation may occur by an appreciation of the intrinsic "fuzziness" of the musical concept – as a kind of imitative self-discovery. 5) The fifth approach is allied to the self-realization ideas of humanistic psychology. It is based on concepts of creativity and expressive individuality. Improvisation performance is realised by developing the students' powers of sensation, imagination and memory.

4. The field of organ improvisation has long traditions of creating musical replicas. These are often learnt in an interactive learning situation between teacher and pupil.

1. Musical improvisation as an activity based on rules and systems

Marcel Dupré's and Hermann Keller's improvisation textbooks

The teaching ideas contained in the improvisation textbooks of Marcel Dupré and Hermann Keller were widely accepted during the 20th century. Qualities of inspiration, intuition, musical imagination and creativity are discussed, along with matters of technique combined with a thorough knowledge of musical forms and structures. Both authors regard the former qualities as impossible to teach, whereas the latter qualities can be assimilated through the teaching process. In the introduction to his *Cours Complet d'Improvisation à l'Orgue* Dupré differentiates between these moments:

But independently from inspiration and imagination, there is in improvisation a distinct profession to be learned, and a sense of strict discipline to be impressed upon students who are future organists. After ten years of teaching improvisation and preparing examinations for the classes in improvisation at the Paris Conservatory, I have found it an undeniable truth that improvisation must be taught and must be learned according to the same principles and methods that are used in teaching virtuosity and technique (taken in the strongest sense).⁴⁵⁵

In his *Schule der Choral-Improvisation* Keller makes some very similar points:

Improvisation ist Eingebung, sie entspringt der schöpferischen Phantasie, und die ist nicht erlernbar. Lehrbar und erlernbar aber sind die technischen Formen der Improvisation: erst Phantasie und Technik zusammen schaffen die Vorbedingungen für diese höchste und freieste Art des Musizierens! Der Weg dahin führt über Schulregeln, Verbote, selbst auferlegte Einschränkungen, so wie der Weg zur Beherrschung der Harmonik über die Gesetze und Regeln der Harmonielehre, der zur Melodik über die strenge Schule des Kontrapunktes führt. „Lerne gehorchen!“⁴⁵⁶

[Improvisation is a spontaneous action with its origins in creative imagination, and that cannot be learnt, but it is possible to teach and to learn the technical forms that are associated with improvisation. In the first place there is a combination of fantasy and technique, which form the background for this most elevated and free way of music making. The way to this goes via regulations, prohibitions, self-imposed limitations, just as the way to mastery of harmony involves mastering the rules that apply to harmony, and the way to melody goes via the strict school of Counterpoint. “Learn by obedience!”]

Dupré and Keller both consider that there are rules, which can be mastered to give some competence in improvisation, though other aspects of competence in improvisation skills depend on the personal qualities of the improviser. One can also catch a glimpse of an idea that fantasy and intuition have to be first learnt with the aid of traditional techniques. Traditional techniques which actually can be learned will, when mastered in the fullness of time, lead to a real sense of spontaneity.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁵ See Dupré 1962, p. iii.

⁴⁵⁶ See Keller 1939 – Introduction, page not numbered.

⁴⁵⁷ In this way we can also see a relationship with the theories presented under point 2.

Techniques connected with given qualities

In “Nachschöpferische Freiheit. Ein musikalisch-theologisches Plädoyer für die Orgelimprovisation” Gustav-Adolf Krieg also explains the reasons why church music students study formula and traditional techniques in the study of improvisation. He maintains that organ improvisation, in a similar way to musical interpretation and composition, is not primarily dependant on natural talents. Improvisation is rather in reality a question of a craftsmanship:

Am Anfang steht die nüchterne, technische Kenntnis des Instrumentes Orgel, der mehr oder minder bewusste Umgang mit dem motorischen Nervensystem, die (intellektuell vermittelte und praktisch „eingeübte“) Kenntnis der musikalischen „Formeln“ – sei es barocker Fugen-Thematik, einer achttaktigen Periode, einer Spielfigur im Sinne „französischer“ Toccaten-Technik, eines Clusters.⁴⁵⁸

[(One can) start from a matter of fact technical knowledge of the organ as an instrument, a more or less conscious awareness of the motor nervous system, an (intellectually adjusted and practically “absorbed”) knowledge of musical forms – which can be a fugue theme from the Baroque, an 8-bar phrase, a figuration in the style of a “French” toccata technique, or a cluster.]

The author refers here to a pedagogic practice whereby the study of improvisation is based on well-defined concepts. These are readily available in the form of teaching examples and normally comprise a number of arrangements from the world of organ music, but also examples of form from general music history. According to Krieg, this work with given qualities is not only aimed at teaching organ improvisation, but is a valid approach to all forms of musical formation. (The early works of many composers show how long the road to a completely developed personal style can actually be.) Krieg admits that the danger of this approach is that organists will merely learn how to produce organ-clichés or stylistic cribs. However, not even working with newer forms of musical expression can free an improviser from the need to work with set quantities:

Von dieser Notwendigkeit, das „Vorhandene“ zu beherrschen, kann auch kein Sprung in eine musikalische „Avantgarde“ bewahren; im Gegenteil: pluralistisch und in sich differenziert, wie die neuzeitliche Umgang mit dem Tonmaterial ist, wird die Antwort auf die Frage um so schwieriger – da wiederum individueller und differenzierter –, welche improvisatorische Technik der jeweils intendierten musikalischen Aussage angemessen ist.⁴⁵⁹

[To try and flee towards the musical “avant-garde” does not absolve one from the necessary requirement to master set techniques. On the contrary – the answer as to which type of improvisation technique should be chosen – then becomes much more difficult, and more individual – since there are now so many different ways in which tones can be treated.]

An awareness of the characteristics of the musical material one chooses to use plays, according to Krieg, a decisive part in the teaching of organ improvisation. Even in work with today’s multitudes of musical expressions the starting point remains to find the basic features of a tonal language and follow them logically.

⁴⁵⁸ See Krieg 1993, p. 205.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 205-206.

Improvisation based on contemporary examples and techniques

In “Olivier Messiaens Harmonik aus der Sicht der Orgelimitation”⁴⁶⁰ Zolt Gárdonyi⁴⁶¹ points out that a major element in the teaching of organ improvisation involves working with examples that demonstrate different styles. By studying these improvising organists can acquire a palette of musical expressions in the form of harmonic and structural techniques:

Für die Unterweisung und Praxis der Orgelimitation spielt die Einsicht in überlieferte Satztechniken seit jener Zeit eine besondere Rolle. Auch heute gilt, was Johann Christian Kittel⁴⁶² seinerzeit als eines der „Mittel zur Bildung eines brauchbaren Organisten“ bezeichnet hatte: „Schau gute Muster an. Sie sind erfahrene und gefällige Führer, die die Schwierigkeiten des steilen Pfades vor unseren Augen bekämpfen und besiegen und uns treulich die Hand reichen... Nur ist hierbey darauf zu sehen, dass wir uns nach unsern Kräften und Absichten zuvor den Weg vorzeichnen, den wir verfolgen wollen...“
 ... Die heutige Organistenbildung wird auch im Bereich der Improvisation sicherlich nicht nur den Umgang mit der dur-moll-tonalen Harmonik pflegen, sondern auch den Weg zur Beherrschung stiltypischer Idiome in der jüngeren musikalischen Vergangenheit ebnen wollen.⁴⁶³

[For teaching and performance of improvisation an insight into the surviving techniques from the past plays a special function. In his time Johann Christian Kittel talked of “the way to train a useful organist” as: “Look at good examples. These are guides that are willing to help us. They struggle with the obstacles we meet on the steep paths and overcome them right in front of our eyes. Faithfully they reach out a helping hand... All that we have to do is strive with all our might to plot the course we wish to follow...”

... In training today’s organists in the art of improvisation it is no longer sufficient merely to deal with tonal major and minor harmony. It is also important to prepare for the study and mastery of styles from the more recent musical past.]

By “preparation for the study and mastery of styles from the more recent musical past” Gardonyi means that these should be explained in analytical and descriptive terms. After the introduction quoted above Gardonyi’s article gives a detailed account of Messiaen’s use of harmony.⁴⁶⁴ He does this with the intention that it should be used as a harmonic basis for improvised organ music. The aim is to create something which resembles Messiaen’s aural colours.

A distinction between composition and improvisation

From the orators of ancient Greece came the notion that the use of certain modes of rhetoric could influence the emotions, or affections of their listeners. Baroque musicians attributed similar powers to music, and a rather clearly defined palette of musical effects was available to touch and move the hearts and minds of men. A

⁴⁶⁰ Zolt Gárdonyi, “Olivier Messiaens Harmonik aus der Sicht der Orgelimitation”, in *Musik und Kirche* (Germany) 63/4 1993, pp. 197-204.

⁴⁶¹ Zolt Gárdonyi (b. 1946) is a composer and organist, who teaches music theory at the Hochschule für Musik in Würzburg.

⁴⁶² See Kittel 1981, pp. VII-VIII.

⁴⁶³ See Gárdonyi 1993, pp. 197-198.

⁴⁶⁴ Messiaen himself does this in the Preface – “Note de l’Auteur” – to the organ cycle *La Nativité du Seigneur*. See the first volume of *La Nativité du Seigneur. Neuf Méditations pour Orgue*, Paris 1936. (Introduction on unnumbered pages.)

German treatise, which deals with the contemporary Affektenlehre is *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*⁴⁶⁵ by Johann Mattheson (1681-1764). Here music is referred to as “Klangrede” [sound speech]. Mattheson uses illustrations from ancient Greece to describe musical argumentation as different sides of a rhetoric subject⁴⁶⁶ – otherwise an understanding of how rhetoric arguments are developed within a formal framework. Mattheson classifies the formal phases of a speech as follows:

1. *Inventio*. To begin with it is necessary to find the musical arguments⁴⁶⁷ equivalents of the proposition in speech making, factors such as thematic material, rhythmic character, tempo, tonality etc.
2. *Disposito*. This are concerned with fashioning some order from the musical arguments and thus make suitable choices based on given preconditions.
3. *Elaboratio*. Here the challenge is to develop the musical arguments in accordance with contemporary compositional procedures.
4. *Decoratio*. The next step in the process consists of decorating⁴⁶⁸ the musical arguments.
5. *Executio*. The final stage of the process involves the actual performance of the musical arguments.

The conditions under which music is created today differ in many ways from the German aesthetics under which Johann Mattheson worked in the first part of the 18th century. Yet Mattheson does appear to make some useful points about the relationship between ideas and their development in a piece of music. His understanding of the continuity between the different stages of musical creation, and perhaps specially his perception of creative actions as procedures for completing a number of criteria, can contribute to a definition of the dividing line between improvisation and composition.

In the case of composition there is probably little hindrance in a composer’s use of time during the various stages of the work. There are many examples throughout history of musical works, which are the product of long and intensive shaping of ideas, forms and means. Improvising musicians must also consider their medium in the awareness of their means, their internal knowledge, which can assist in the making of choices. Both composing and improvising are processes, which deal with the making of aesthetic and practical choices – that decide the expression and form of the music being produced.

If we ignore the fact that composed music, as opposed to improvised music, is normally preserved for posterity by a non-sounding method,⁴⁶⁹ it will be reasonable to suppose that there are certain characteristics of the approach used by the

⁴⁶⁵ Johann Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*, Hamburg 1739. Facsimile of 1st ed., Kassel 1954, p. 122.

⁴⁶⁶ “Rhetorical subject” in this connection means an expression of the order of different phases, or stages, in the development of a speech, which is to be given.

⁴⁶⁷ “Arguments” – ideas or sketches that can be linked to creative musical actions.

⁴⁶⁸ “Figurenlehre” – the Baroque practice of using specific musical figures to illustrate textual ideas, and based on the practice of the Ancient Greek orators of decorating their speech with rhetorical language.

⁴⁶⁹ Within the majority of Western musical traditions this is done with written notation, chord symbols or other types of graphic notation.

improviser and composer, which are indicative of the differences⁴⁷⁰ between these two types of creative⁴⁷¹ and generative⁴⁷² processes. The aspect of time is here the most obvious one. In the process of composition there are legions of possibilities to think forwards and backwards within a musical course. The composer can refer back from the climax of the piece to the opening bars. It is also possible for a composer to decide the form of the music right at the start, and then later to “fill the shell” with a specific content. Creative actions, which begin in this way are not dependent upon a defined order of events. Throughout the process there is the possibility of rearranging and improving the musical material prior to its aural realisation.

Improvisation is also, similar to composition, dependant on formal frameworks, which are suited to transmit differing musical ideas and approaches. Unlike composition these frameworks and means are so thoroughly assimilated by the improviser that they can be activated immediately. During the formation of improvised music a process of performing creativity is taking place. Within this process no “editing” is possible once a sound has been played, but this does not prevent the improvising musician from having internal conceptions as to how the music will sound. In the course of an improvisation there is also the possibility that one can take an alternative route, which will lead the music in new and perhaps surprising directions.

Cognitive and motor models for explaining improvised actions

In “The Physicality and Corporality of Improvisation”⁴⁷³ the Australian cognitive scientist, composer, musician and teacher Jeff Pressing explains musical improvisation as a realisation of specified behaviour patterns and chain reactions with sound and rhythm as a medium. He continues by noting that a significant feature of improvisation is the constant and uninterrupted flow of inward and outward impulses, or information. Inward-bound impulses are primarily transmitted aurally, but there is also room for visual elements here, for example in the perception of gestures or sight-reading of written music. The outward-bound impulses are also primarily auditory, but these can only be produced with the help of motor impulses. By this it is meant that the improviser produces sound by using his or her body to manipulate sound producing objects. The many aspects of motor impulses and the regulation of the body’s motor systems is a very complex affair, and there are a large number of controlling functions within the brain and central nervous system, functions that simultaneously compete and cooperate.⁴⁷⁴

In order to be able to understand improvisation we should realise that here we are dealing with automatic reflex actions of which we are not normally consciously aware. There are also control and guiding principles, which are linked to cognition

⁴⁷⁰ One difference between improvisation and composition is evident in performances where it is not necessary for the composer and player to be one and the same person.

⁴⁷¹ “Creative” in this context implies original creativity.

⁴⁷² Here “generative” implies developing or further development.

⁴⁷³ Jeff Pressing, “The Physicality and Corporeality of Improvisation”, in *Sounds Australian* (Australia) 59 2002, pp. 22-24.

⁴⁷⁴ To these also belong *the motor cortex, the supplementary motor cortex and the motor sensory cortex*, in addition to the underlying – *subcortical* – structure such as *basal ganglia and cerebellum*.

that give internal representation of actions to which it is both possible and impossible to have conscious access to these.⁴⁷⁵ They are dependent on to what extent the improviser has assimilated automatic response with practice. Such reflex-dominated factors play a vital role in the development of skills,⁴⁷⁶ and they are rooted in *generalised motor programmes*,⁴⁷⁷ or *schemas*.⁴⁷⁸

General motor programmes

In two studies (1975/1976) the cognitive scientist R. A. Schmidt presents theories about motor schemas, based on experiences of recall and recollect.⁴⁷⁹ Schmidt considers that a schema contains important *general* characteristics, which are linked to a *certain movement*,⁴⁸⁰ and that have to be organised in many situations in order to fulfil specific requirements when people deal with their surroundings. Diverse contexts will lead to the production of a series of motor commands that will bring about a spatial-temporal pattern of muscular movements. Schemas are not to be confused with specific instructions for movement, since they only concern general motor programmes. Schmidt's theory therefore shows *how something new occurs within certain frameworks* – at least on a general basis. According to Schmidt, the possibilities for developing new actions correspond with the degree of variety contained in the assumption of the skills. This decides how practical or useful a schema will be in the meeting of new situations.⁴⁸¹

Accordingly to Pressing, the so-called “novelty phenomenon” closely matches what actually occurs during an improvisation, and there are theories about the existence of a memory dedicated to actions. This is called the “motor memory”. An improviser's subjective impression, but also impressions from other performers provides a reason to assume that there are dedicated interactive systems, which are

⁴⁷⁵ This expression can appear to be self-contradictory. It would appear that Pressing considers that some reflex-related movements often occur without needing us to register them in any inward-going manner. At the same time the body's reflexes will to some extent be open for some attentiveness. In all probability Pressing is suggesting that while we can pay careful attention to reflex types of actions, when we do this it is at the expense of attention to other cognitive processes – due to limited capacity of mental strength. These processes therefore have to be automatized in order to work in complex contexts, which require a high cognitive activity in other ways.

⁴⁷⁶ See Pressing 2002, p. 22.

⁴⁷⁷ Cf. S. W. Keele, A. Cohen and R. Ivry, “Motor Programs: Concepts and Issues”, in *Attention and Performance, XIII: Motor Representation and Control*, ed. M. Jeannerod, Hillsdale, N.J. 1986, pp. 77-110.

⁴⁷⁸ Cf. F. C. Bartlett, “The Measurement of Human Skill”, in *British Medical Journal (U.K.)* 1 (1947), pp. 835, 877.

⁴⁷⁹ Cf. R. A. Schmidt, “On the underlying response structure of well-learned motor responses: a discussion of Namikas and Schneider and Fisk”, in *Memory and Control of Action*, ed. R. A. Magill, Amsterdam 1983. See Pressing 1988, p. 133.

⁴⁸⁰ For improvising musicians – in my opinion – such a movement can for example be a diatonic ascending or descending scale movement, a sequence motive moving in thirds or sixths, a rhythmic pattern, a melodic line, a chord progression, etc. Such examples are found in a large number of improvisation textbooks for organ or piano. The aim is that the student should absorb these in order to be able to use them as “building blocks” in improvised music. This principle recurs in many textbooks from the 15th century right down to the present day. See also below in the present chapter for a note on Ivar Hagendoorn's understanding of improvisation techniques.

⁴⁸¹ Cf. Schmidt 1983. See Pressing 1988, p. 133.

linked to the motor, symbolic and aural memories.⁴⁸² Pressing points out that these theories share a common belief that previous experience and learning has equipped the body with an advanced and finely tuned system of controls, which enable it to achieve specified targets. This means control systems that are flexible enough to deal with the challenges posed by differing situations. These systems are deeply rooted in our genetic inheritance. In his presentation Pressing uses the term “schema”⁴⁸³.

By schema Pressing understands *independent*, but simultaneously *adaptable* motor programmes. He also describes them as *action plans*, which are activated when their specific conditions for input of information are triggered. A schema with independent or isolated qualities is known by Pressing as a *prototype*.⁴⁸⁴ Schemas have certain characteristics. They can be created, adapted and combined in different ways. They can be generated or destroyed. It is their adaptability that decides both the qualitative and the quantitative behaviour of the motor system.⁴⁸⁵

How schemas function in improvisation

Pressing maintains that there are theories concerning schema, which can give a movement-orientated explanation model for musical improvisation in the meaning of rule-governed procedures and chain reactions. In the light of this there is a multitude of internalised⁴⁸⁶ schemas, which forms the foundation for the improviser’s course of action by supporting the changes that constantly occur in a performing context. In addition to being an extensive store of information the schema function as a safety net with regard to the inevitable element of risk resulting from

⁴⁸² See Pressing 1988, p. 133.

⁴⁸³ See Pressing 2002, p. 22.

⁴⁸⁴ Pressing’s distinction between schema and prototype in improvisation is probably made in the light of how general or specific they are as musical components. The expression “prototype” implies the original from which a copy, imitation, or derivative is made. By “schema” can also be understood a theoretical construction, a draft, a synopsis, a design.

⁴⁸⁵ See Pressing 2002, pp. 22-23. Cf. Bob Snyder, *Music and Memory. An Introduction*, Cambridge 2000, pp. 95-102: Here schemas are regarded as organised sets of memories about sequences of events or physical scenes and their temporal and spatial characteristics, which are built up as we notice regularities in the environment. Schemas are further large patterns of generalized associations in memory that determine how whole situations are processed. Schemas are thus based on what *similar situations have in common*; because no two situations are exactly like, schemas must be somewhat flexible: Their elements, that is, the categories of objects, single events, actions within a scene or event, are variable within certain limits.

In music schemas generate expectations about the kinds and order of musical events, and thus they function as frameworks for memory. There is also a kind of reciprocal relation between schemas and some kinds of musical experience. While schemas are derived from musical experiences, it is also possible to construct musical experiences so that they will be easier to schematize. On a high level, this will include many kinds of relatively stable musical forms and genres, such as symphony, raga, jazz improvisation on chord changes, and variations. In this way the classical European form known as “variations” can be an almost perfect model of how a schema works: Basic musical material is introduced in the first section, then varied in different ways in subsequent sections, usually retaining some recognizable relation to the original, prototype section. On a lower level, systematic and categorical aspects of music that relate to details of the music within particular pieces, can also be considered as schemas. One also develops expectations within a particular piece, based on previous events in that piece. This will have to do with the nature of the actual patterns encountered in that piece.

⁴⁸⁶ By “internalised” it should be understood thoroughly assimilated in the sense that the schema form a natural part of a person’s patterns of behaviour.

decisions that are taken very rapidly in real time. A first-class improviser has a multi-faceted, well-developed and personal armoury of schemas.

A special feature of the schema, which is used in improvisation, is that they are thoroughly assimilated, or automatized.⁴⁸⁷ They will otherwise not be sufficiently detailed, or accessible to be spontaneously used. Motor schemas of this type are as a rule linked to clearly defined, sometimes known as “mainstream aesthetics”. When they are activated instantly, they can give a musical experience in the sense of something authentic. The improvised music will thus have a recognisable structure on account of certain stylistic features or other fixed characteristics,⁴⁸⁸ which are audible. According to Pressing, it is not easy to evaluate the authenticity of an improvisatory style without some fixed point of reference. Here there are no criteria for motor movement, since the improvised actions are not clearly directed towards a specified goal. It is therefore difficult to assess whether the movements made are successfully.

An understanding of system-based control can thus contribute to distinguishing between reference-based or system-related improvisation on the one hand and free or experimental improvisation on the other. System-related improvisation has well established, but not always straightforward traditions regarding what type of action should be realised, and how it can be assessed. That is to say the extent to which the improviser is aware of the musical examples and stylistic ideals on which the improvisation is based, along with the basis on which the aesthetic, structural and performing aspects are evaluated. In other words what points of reference the improviser chooses to employ.

According to Pressing, free and experimental improvisation does not refer to any systems.⁴⁸⁹ Here schemas will behave in a similar manner to that, which occurs at an early stage of a process of learning. Motor control will then be both irregular and incomplete. This is in accord with a form of aesthetic that emphasises spontaneity, whose ideal result should be both inconsistent and difficult to repeat. When the musical idea is barely defined it can produce the sensation of a lack of motor control. By “barely defined” it is inferred that criteria for success are difficult to discover, that there are no evident methods for further development of musical ideas, or information is understood to be incomplete, or the requirement set out is obviously contradictory.⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁷ Cf. Pressing 1988, p. 139: The change from controlled processing to automatic motor processing as a result of extensive skill rehearsal is an idea of long standing, and it undoubtedly improves movement quality and integration. A feeling of automation – a phenomenon that there are some metaphysical speculations about regarding experience of the art of improvisation – can be regarded as a consequence of thorough practice. This enables one to move away from conscious control of the body's motor programmes. It would then almost appear that the hands (and feet) live their own life and are controlled by the musical situation, or in other words the music is playing the musician rather than the other way round. All the same there is nothing so very mysterious about such experiences: In all probability we are just dealing with more advanced versions of the automatic motor programmes, which enable us to walk, run, dance or cycle etc.

⁴⁸⁸ Fixed characteristics in the soundscape can also be regarded as idioms.

⁴⁸⁹ See Pressing 2002, p. 23.

⁴⁹⁰ In system related improvisation the musician's skills will to a large extent be dependent on the many ideas, which can be linked to thorough study of specified patterns of movement. When these are realised instrumentally they often produce impressions of certain styles. Within the genre of so-called “free” or “experimental” improvisation is more likely to be a kinetic and tac-

Feedback and Feedforward

A large number of inborn mechanisms can also be regarded as schema. Two such mechanisms in the human organism are known as *feedback* and *feedforward*. “Feedback” is the term used to describe the signals the body receives from differing types of observation, both of itself and its relation to its surroundings. This enables behaviour to be controlled and guided in the desired direction. During performance of music it is not only the sounds made by our selves or other that reach our ears. Other senses are tuned to receive important information: such as the sense of touching the instrument, or aural⁴⁹¹ and visual impressions. This interplaying of the senses operates to give the body’s control systems as many nuances as possible.

The term “feedforward” refers to information that humans, but also other kinds with organisms,⁴⁹² have in advance, in relation to both themselves and their surroundings. Feedforward is used to prepare actions. The *motor cortex*⁴⁹³ sends nerve impulses to the lips or fingers, but also alerts the other sensory parts of the brain such as the auditory and somatic sensory cortices⁴⁹⁴ so that they are aware of what sorts of sounds are about to come. Generally speaking, feedforward introduces a *predictive* element into our dealings with our surroundings. This is important for all types of performers, but in the context of improvisation feedforward is an essential element, since it compensates for the inherent delay incurred when using feedback to prepare and initiate responses to new situations.

Furtherly we tend to respond to the actions of others according to our own pre-conceptions as to what we anticipate they will do. Sometimes this is at the expense of what they actually do. An understanding of the feedforward process can explain the rare sensitivity in ensemble playing exhibited by some improvising musicians. Not infrequently this result from compatible models of ensemble playing, which they have created, and to a large extent these models are realised as we listen to a so-called “natural” ensemble playing. Musicians, who regularly play together, will construct their own internal models of the each other’s qualities, which will assist them in predicting how they will act. All the same, such examples of feedforward are no substitute for the “real thing” as it actually happens, and the performer’s ability to respond spontaneously here and now cannot exclusively depend on them. All evidence suggests that feedforward is rather a function that supports and contributes to the processes involved in improvisation.⁴⁹⁵

tile exploration of the instrument that will result in more random patterns of sound. These are coincidences that can resemble a process of trial and error – in other words: a process that also resembles an early stage in the learning process.

⁴⁹¹ Such aural impressions arise in the inner ear’s *apparatus* or *vestibule*, and originate from *3-D accelerations* in the head.

⁴⁹² According to Pressing, “organism” here refers to human organisms. In the context of psychology organism can refer to a person or a group of people – such as a music ensemble – or an organisation, or the more usual application to the body of a live animal. Essential in this context are the internal and external interaction models, and an organism’s ability to function with itself and its surroundings.

⁴⁹³ The part of the brain in which originate the nerve impulses that initiate voluntary muscular activity.

⁴⁹⁴ The part of the brain that deals with aural and tactile impressions.

⁴⁹⁵ See Pressing 2002, p. 23.

The function of the body in musical cognition

Accordingly to Pressing, it is overwhelmingly probably that foundations of cognition can be traced in what he calls the “body’s purposeful actions”,⁴⁹⁶ and that this is the real purpose of cognition. He considers that the body is solidly rooted in a large number of chains of action, which help refine and develop perceptions. Therefore it is the body in its full complex unity that also evaluates the complexity of cohesions that are represented by its surroundings. It is then the body that responds with specific movements and reactions in accordance with how all connections have been perceived and interpreted.

Pressing maintains that today there are many reasons to assume that mental processes, body and surroundings should not be regarded as distinct entities, but as parts of an extensive interactive and dynamic system.⁴⁹⁷ Many researchers are currently striving to develop new models of control. Several of these attempts approach to come near a genuine personal approach. It is not improbable that the unique elements of a musical expression are largely related to personal factors.⁴⁹⁸

Improvisation in the light of specialised skills

In “Psychological Constraints on Improvisational Expertise and Communication”⁴⁹⁹ Jeff Pressing, considers that improvisation can be linked to the expression “expertise”. By this he understands that improvisation has its own musical methods of expression that require some considerable input of specialised skills. From this viewpoint he attempts to show how improvising musicians adapt their work to differing cultural and psychological conditions, and this is what contributes a natural flow and context to improvised music. This is above all a necessity if music is to communicate. Pressing begins his study of expertise, as a creative force in improvisation, by explaining some general aspects of the term. He is of the opinion that this should be done in light of a psychologically specific interpretation of the word, because the more common and straightforward use of the term has its origins in a number of assumptions, which cannot be empirically supported. According to Pressing, improvisation skills have many features in common with a general psychological understanding of the word “expertise”.

In this picture we see that people with expert competence frequently have special abilities to *encode* their memory. Such abilities are as a rule related to specific areas. To encode or programme the memory involves linking small and simple elements in the memory into larger groups.⁵⁰⁰ An example of this can be seen in master chess players who can remember the positions of pieces with an accuracy and rapidity far greater than the inexperienced player. However, this only applies when the pieces are placed logically in accordance with the rules of chess. The ex-

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid., pp. 23-24.

⁴⁹⁷ Cf. Rolf Inge Godøy’s theory below on the subject of *cross-modality* that describes an extensive interplay between human sense modes.

⁴⁹⁸ See Pressing 2002, pp. 23-24.

⁴⁹⁹ Jeff Pressing, “Psychological Constraints on Improvisational Expertise and Communication”, in *In the Course of Performance: Studies in the World of Musical Improvisation*, ed. Bruno Nettl with Melinda Russell, Chicago 1998, pp. 47-67.

⁵⁰⁰ Cf. W. G. Chase and K. A. Ericsson, “Skill and Working Memory”, in *The Psychology of Learning and Motivation*, ed. G. H. Bower, New York 1982, pp. 1-58. See Pressing 1998, p. 47. Also *ibid.*, p. 54.

pert memory is a great deal weaker if the pieces are randomly placed.⁵⁰¹ Specialised training has shown itself capable of giving remarkable results, which casts a different light over what have previously been regarded as the general limitations of the capacity of human memory.⁵⁰²

Practically speaking all cases of abnormal memories deal with specialised areas of competence. Normally this involves retaining sequences of action and rules governing smaller entities. Those who have unusual memories are possibly in possession of a greater tendency to generalise than others. This is most probably linked with the time it takes to form a memory-structure in a number of different areas. Several studies have shown that so-called “memory-experts” can have problems in such operations as the programming of a mobile telephone. This also applies to other operations outside their own area of expertise.

Organisation of information will often be discovered analytically. Or if it is not possible to undertake analyses, the musician can assemble information from a schema, which he or she finds relevant. In other words: in the light of a repertoire that consists of references to specified forms. This would suggest that specialised learning and practice dramatically are able to develop the musical memory, which can give good results in connection with improvisation. An ability to recall a musical course down to the smallest detail after having only listened to it once or twice, then to repeat it on an instrument, should be regarded as a rare quality.⁵⁰³

Anecdotes

There are a number of anecdotes, which indicate that such abilities do exist. That is especially in the stories of childhood prodigies, such as the young Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. There are also several studies, which indicate that so-called “idiot-savants” can have such abilities.⁵⁰⁴ Studies further suggest that these abilities can be independent of other musical skills. The accounts of organist-trials from the Renaissance and Baroque periods note that candidates were not only expected to improvise over a given theme, but also afterwards supply a written-out version of their performance.⁵⁰⁵ From our knowledge of the skills displayed by improvising musicians in our own time, and seen in relation to many other ways of listening, these historic requirements bear witness to prodigious feats of memory.

Although these accounts may be characterised as anecdotes, by which it is meant that the skills referred to are not supported by the standards today’s requirements for psychological examinations, it is still possible that organists and keyboard players of the Renaissance and Baroque periods did actually possess these abilities. The existence of the formal framework for the organist-trials, which were fully accepted by the leading musicians of the day, should be evidence enough of this.

⁵⁰¹ Cf. W. G. Chase and H. A. Simon, “The Mind’s Eye in Chess”, in *Visual Information Processing*, ed. W. G. Chase, New York 1973, pp. 215-281. See Pressing 1998, p. 54.

⁵⁰² See the presentation below in the following chapter for a more detailed description of chunking in improvisation.

⁵⁰³ See Pressing 1998, p. 55.

⁵⁰⁴ Cf. J. A. Sloboda, B. J. Hermelin and N. O’Connor, “An Exceptional Musical Memory”, in *Music Perception (U.S.)* 3 1985, pp. 155-170.

⁵⁰⁵ Cf. Mattheson 1734. See Fischer 1929, p. 62.

This tradition was obviously valued, and musicians presumably received a formal training aimed at acquiring these skills.⁵⁰⁶

Basis of knowledge

Pressing also points out the existence of another means by which one can create fluency and coherence in improvised music. It enables one to establish, develop and refine an extensive array of creative associations. The understanding that such a many-sided and refined collection of internal structures makes it easier to distinguish between what we call “experts” and “non-experts”. In a study Chase and Simon⁵⁰⁷ show that conditions, which give immediate access to specified skills can be regarded as decisive factors in distinguishing between experts, advanced students and those with less experience. In the first place it is the immediate access that results in better solutions, enables one to make quick decisions, which therefore has a clear relation to musical improvisation. An essential aspect of practising improvisation thus involves transferring the motor movements one has learnt to master to a conceptual plan,⁵⁰⁸ which implies that one has a “bird’s eye view” over the internal conceptions, which are transformed to motor programmes.⁵⁰⁹

About referents

Pressing points out that with the exception of totally free and experimental improvisation,⁵¹⁰ a *referent* is an important aid in the forming of improvised music. By the term “referent” he understands a set of cognitive, perceptual or emotional structures, which can *help* and *guide* the improvisator in the producing of coherent musical material. A referent applies for the entire process of improvisation, and plays an important part in enabling the improviser to create his or her music in accordance with an overall plan, or stylistic concept. In organ improvisation a chorale melody, which is immediately associated with certain harmonic progressions can function as a referent, as can a contrapuntal technique, a larger formal schema, etc. (In the field of jazz the referent may be the melody and/or chords of a song form.) In Pressing’s opinion referents make different contributions to the performance of improvised music, which he sums up in these five points:⁵¹¹

⁵⁰⁶ See Pressing 1998, p. 55.

⁵⁰⁷ Cf. Chase and Simon 1973. See Pressing 1998, p. 53.

⁵⁰⁸ See above in part 1: Here Anton Bruckner’s legendary, but anecdotal improvisation skills are linked to his thorough studies of harmony, counterpoint, theoretical studies and composition. For Bruckner this apprenticeship began at the teacher-training academy at Linz, where he acquired his skills in thorough-bass. Throughout his adult life he aimed for perfection in his studies of harmony, counterpoint and form. These were backed and transferred into sound up by daily practice at the famous organ at the monastic church of St. Florian. See also the appendices: Max Reger’s first biographer Adalbert Lindner emphasises that the young Reger’s eminent mastery of free style organ playing resulted from a thorough study in harmony – by which Reger already “had everything in his head and fingers” (Adalbert Lindner, *Max Reger: Ein Bild seines Jugendlebens und künstlerischen Werdens*, Stuttgart 1923, p. 41). In the case of both Bruckner and Reger we can say that they transformed their conceptual mastery of theoretical knowledge into motoric skills.

⁵⁰⁹ See Pressing 1998, p. 53.

⁵¹⁰ Cf. with the presentation regarding the difference between system-based and free or experimental improvisation.

⁵¹¹ See Pressing 1998, pp. 52-53.

1. A referent consists of material that is extensive enough to create variation. This frees the improviser from devoting time to the selection of material. The referent is available before the performance begins, and the performer can thus make a preliminary analysis in order to give the music the best possible structure. Such analysis normally takes place in the light of the referent chosen by the improviser.
2. A referent is normally available well before a performance, allowing its qualities to be thoroughly assimilated, or even over-learned.⁵¹² In this way a rich palette of possibilities for creating variation can be formed. Correspondingly they represent an extensive possibility for making many alternative arrangements of a musical theme. This makes it easier for the musician to make the necessary decisions instantaneously.
3. The improviser can use his or her own assimilated skills to think through and practice different means of making variation beforehand. This will mean that there will be a reduction in the number of contributions involving completely new and lesser-known types of motor control. A referent contributes towards a clarification of the musical logic in the improviser's choices. This is especially important on account of the formal limitations that crop up from time to time in performing improvised music. A referent can be a useful fallback, when the supply of musical ideas begins to run dry. This can also help calm performance nerves.
4. Ensemble musicians will normally share a referent. This allows the members of an ensemble to predict the outlines of each other's playing without having to constantly keep track of all the musical details. A limited set of cues – or codes – will suffice for them to follow each other's tracks.
5. The referent can determine time relations in an ordinal, absolute or relative manner, thus providing some extent of medium to long-range order. This leaves the musicians free to concentrate on other aspects of the music. Such routine following of a common goal can open the possibility for an ensemble to achieve a synergetic serendipity, whereby they can spur each other to greater heights of inspiration.⁵¹³

The extent to which referent use will enable the processing factors of improvisation to be simplified is dependent on what type of information is contained in the referents and how much the performer has assimilated them. There is also the question of how much scope for musical development is inherently contained in the referent. Most probably the referent's major function is that it frees mental processing capacity for musicians to use in *perception*, *control* and *interaction*. This can only improve the quality of the improvised music.⁵¹⁴

⁵¹² Cf. such a thorough assimilation with Pressing's descriptions above of schema that are linked to motor control.

⁵¹³ See Pressing 1998, p. 52.

⁵¹⁴ Ibid.

Emotional factors

However, the referent does not only increase the efficiency of mental processing. Its material can also provide emotional elements that have the strength to engage performer and listener alike. Emotional foundations can give a piece a clearer identity in both a single performance and in different performances. Much of the anticipation, which not infrequently influences people's attitude to the art of improvisation, comes in this way.⁵¹⁵

A number of studies, such as Meyer (1956),⁵¹⁶ Meyer (1973),⁵¹⁷ Dowling and Harwood (1986),⁵¹⁸ Armour (1977)⁵¹⁹ and Jackendoff (1991)⁵²⁰ confirm the predominant cognitive theory that emotions in a musical context originate from the creation and selective elimination of material, leading to selective frustration, delay or confirmation of expectancies. This would suggest that referent interaction is also an important element in communicating emotion through improvisation. The spontaneous nature of improvisation and its controlling mechanisms strengthen this impression. Thus emotion should be regarded as an essential force for both creation and experience of improvised music.⁵²¹

Conscious systemisation of the elements of knowledge

With regard to improvisation, it is reasonable to assume that a large number of internal and external processes are at work. These can be recognised by the close connections, which arise between what we call the *declarative* ("knowing that") and *procedural* ("knowing how") elements of knowledge that are played on an inner and outer level. The expression "declarative knowledge" reflects an understanding of facts – a range of explainable qualities, which are linked to differing musical parameters. Such knowledge plays an important part for an improviser to develop adequate motor programmes in the sense of vocal or instrumental techniques.⁵²² Furthermore an improviser usually has a passive range of knowledge and skills.

Pressing describes this as a reason originating in specified music cultures, and as a result of social conditioning.⁵²³ He continues by pointing out that improvising performers also have specialised knowledge and skills that they have gathered from musical disciplines not directly linked to improvisation. These could be such

⁵¹⁵ Cf. M. A. Schmuckler, "The Performance of Global Expectations", in *Psychomusicology* (U.S.) 9/2 1990, pp. 122-147.

⁵¹⁶ L. Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music*, Chicago 1956.

⁵¹⁷ L. Meyer, *Explaining Music*, Berkeley 1973.

⁵¹⁸ W. J. Dowling and D. L. Harwood, *Music Cognition*, New York 1986.

⁵¹⁹ E. Narmour, *Beyond Schenkerianism*, Chicago 1977.

⁵²⁰ Ray Jackendoff, "Musical Parsing and Musical Affect", in *Music Perception*, Winter 1991, pp. 199-230.

⁵²¹ See Pressing 1998, 52-53.

⁵²² Cf. Keele, Cohen and Ivry 1986. See Pressing 1998, 53.

⁵²³ Improvised music will thus be influenced by the cultural background of the improviser, almost irrespectively of what level of development he or she has attained. According to Pressing an organ improviser thus will need to relate to the music traditions as they appear in composed music. Such considerations as musical styles, repertoire knowledge and preferences, possibilities to expand, type of instrument, and in what way the music is part of religious and social rituals, etc. All these conditions will have some bearing on the musician's competence as an improviser.

activities as sight-reading, performing composed music or by one's own activity as a composer. An improviser will also have acquired a large and extensive treasure trove of knowledge, which has been accumulated through practising improvisation, selective listening and analytical studies.⁵²⁴ Such knowledge is comprised of elements that can be either declarative or procedural, and not infrequently both. It can therefore also consist of silent knowledge.

Such an accumulation of knowledge and skills will have a highly differentiated content, which is built up from a number of inner and outer conditions. There can for example be different qualities of musical substance, either entities or fragments, for example the improviser's core repertoire, not least in the sense of stylistic and aesthetic preferences. Finally the underlying level of competence, perception, mental approach to problems, the hierarchy of the memory, routine patterns, general motor programmes, and much more. The total of all these factors therefore can be described as a complex presentation of differing moments. These are collected together, and stored in a highly refined way in order to give the improvised expression the best possible conditions.⁵²⁵

An aspect of teaching

Accordingly to Pressing, the task in a teaching situation is to *systematize* these elements, though such a systemisation can never hope to be complete.⁵²⁶ The many individual differences of differing improvising musicians need to be considered; these are dictated by their skills and personal creativity. Pressing points out that teaching programmes for improvisation require a large amount of individual planning. He continues by explaining that it is important not only to focus on a musical substance in a one-sided artificial manner in order to make the study of it as effective as possible, thus causing the musical expression to be marked by the greatest possible standardisation of forms and techniques.

Pressing suggests that there should be room for creative input, which is based on the student's own preferences, which will contribute to a development of the improviser's personal musicianship. In other words: These two approaches deal with choice of information and the actual resources that are necessary to perform improvised music within a framework of real time. In Pressing's view this occurs in two ways, which mutually complement each other: The one aims to make the actions as effective as possible, whereas the other aims to create the most satisfactory artistic expression.⁵²⁷

Thus – in my opinion – a central aspect of the teaching of organ improvisation can be said to be realised by explanatory plans. The student has to acquire the necessary techniques of structural analysis which should be linked to a wide range of playing techniques. This makes it possible to create an organ fugue in accordance with the principles of the golden age of the Baroque, or to cope with the musical tensions between first and second subject in a sonata movement, or decorate a can-

⁵²⁴ Cf. Rolf Inge Godøy's theory below on the subject of *cross-modality* that describes an extensive interplay between human sense modes.

⁵²⁵ See Pressing 1998, p. 53-54.

⁵²⁶ Cf. Olivier Latry's remark cited above: There is no point at which one can reach where one can claim: "I can do everything". Alternative solutions are always possible.

⁵²⁷ See Pressing 1998, p. 53-54.

tus firmus along the lines used in the chorale preludes of Johann Sebastian Bach. Further possibilities would include the harmonisation of a melody along the lines of Max Reger's lineal and chromatic tonal architecture, "recreate" a polyphonic structure similar to Paul Hindemith's *Ludus tonalis*, or develop an awareness of musical form within the world of Olivier Messiaen's modes of limited transposition.

In other words, such a pedagogic approach aims to give the student the key to a large number of concepts. Competence in system-related improvisation will thus be based on an accumulated material of internalised actions elements. These have their origin in a more or less clearly defined aesthetic, which can often be linked to certain schemas and techniques.

2. Improvisation as an interplay between intuitive and logical-analytical factors

Intuition and calculation

In "Principles of Improvisation" the Lebanese-French composer, organist and improviser Naji Hakim makes the following comments:

Artistic activity consists of both intuition and calculation. The artist should aim for a certain balance between these two; for a reflection nourished by experience and instinct, the fruit of grace, "When reason is silent instinct will answer you" (Lamartine). Improvisation offers ground for such a balance.⁵²⁸

Accordingly to Naji Hakim, both intuition and calculation are central elements of improvisation and cannot readily be separated from each other. Hakim points out that there should be a balance between these two qualities in improvised music, but hints that there are internal routes that can tap into the creative resources. This implies that sudden inspirations or instinctive reactions can be regarded as creative resources that can take over in the absence of rational thoughts.⁵²⁹

Two angles of approach

Clemenz Ganz sums up his experiences of teaching organ improvisation in these four points:

1. Neben dem strengen Üben ... das Improvisieren „aus dem dumpfen Drang“ nicht verschmähen, um die Spontanität nicht zu verlieren. Beides ist wichtig und wird bei dauernder Bemühung mit der Zeit zur Einheit.
2. Viel prima vista spielen (nicht nur auf der Orgel), sozusagen als eigene Disziplin zum besseren Erfassen grosser Zusammenhänge und überhaupt zum Kennenlernen mannigfaltiger Musik. Nicht Quantität und Qualität gegeneinander ausspielen! Das eine bleibt auf das andere angewiesen.

⁵²⁸ See Naji Hakim, "Principles of Improvisation", in *Church Music Quarterly* (U.K.) (Royal School of Church Music magazine), July 2001, p. 2.

⁵²⁹ Cf. Landgren 1997, p. 37, where the author refers to Petr Eben's views on the teaching of improvisation. Eben mentions three essential qualities required by improvising musicians: 1) a feeling for harmony, 2) technical accomplishment and 3) the ability to develop a theme. Eben refers to his own teaching experience and notes that the two latter points are easier to explain to students than the first point. One could follow Eben to conclude that a feeling for harmony can be regarded as an intuitive and more personal aspect of creativity than the rational craftsmanship disciplines of instrumental technique and musical forms.

3. Viel auswendig spielen – „par cœur“ – wie es im Französischen treffender heisst, um sich die Musik als inneren Besitz anzueignen, nicht aus Angeberei. Die Nähe zum Vorgang des Improvisierens ist hier am grössten: Denn was ich „inwendig“ an bereits komponierter Musik besitze, wende ich reproduzierend klanglich nach aussen, mit dem einzigen Unterschied, dass ich vorher das Was in meinem Inneren selbst herstellen muss.

4. Stets eingedenk sein: „Es ist des Lernens kein Ende“, nicht im Leben, nicht in der musik.⁵³⁰

[1. Along with strict practice of exercises ... do not let the opportunity to improvise “from pure primitive need” pass by so that you do not lose spontaneity. Both elements are important and become a unity after a long period of striving.

2. To play much from sight (not only at the organ), as a discipline in its own right where one needs to see music in context, and thus be enabled to come to know and learn many different types of music. Do not worry about quantity or quality! The one supports the other.

3. To play from memory – “par cœur” – as it is known in French, allows us to assimilate the music internally, rather than something that is dictated (from the printed pages). Thus one comes much nearer to what actually occurs during the course of an improvisation: What I have taken “inwards” in the form of prepared music will now be reproduced outwards with the only difference being that (for an improvisation) I myself have created the material in my inner being.

4. Remember the whole time that “there is no end to the learning process”, either in life or in music.]

Here Ganz is suggesting that teaching of organ improvisation needs to find a way between strictly rule-based forms on the one hand, and spontaneity on the other. During the learning process the student’s own musical temperament and emotional disposition must also be given space to assert themselves.

Bill Dobbins – the dynamic qualities of tones

In *A Creative Approach to Jazz Piano Harmony* the American pianist, improviser, composer and music teacher Bill Dobbins remarks:

There are two general approaches to composing and improvising music. One approach is to impose an intellectually conceived system on the tones. The system may vary from something as specific as serialization to something as general as “automatic writing”. Although these methods can teach us much about the particular system involved, or about the content of the subconscious mind, they often reveal little about the most unique and mysterious aspect of music: the dynamic quality of the tones themselves! The other approach to writing or improvising music is to listen to where the tones want to go. Through careful and patient listening to the tones themselves, an awareness of general dynamic tendencies and an understanding of musical law can develop in a natural and organic manner... How easy it is for some pianists to rush through a dizzying tirade of block chords or arpeggios, while never having really listened to hear where even one of them wanted to go.⁵³¹

⁵³⁰ See Ganz 1987, p. 287.

⁵³¹ See Bill Dobbins, *A Creative Approach to Jazz Piano Harmony*, Rothenburg (U.S.) 1994, p. 31. (This textbook was a recipient of the German Music Publishers Award 1995.)

Dobbins appears here to distinguish between the intellectual and the intuitive approach. He also uses the anthropomorphic⁵³² expression “where the tones want to go”. By this he emphasises the importance of careful listening during such creative activities as composing and improvising. It is apparent that he regards intuition as also playing an important role here.

Keith Swanwick – about the formation of musical expressions

In *Musical Knowledge – Intuition, analysis and musical education* the English music educator Keith Swanwick makes a distinction between intuitive and logical-analytical knowledge:

Intuitive knowledge is not a form of daydreaming but an active way of constructing the world. It makes possible all other ways of knowing. It is present in mathematical and scientific knowledge as well as in the arts. We cannot know anything without an intuitive leap into personal meaning.

He continues:

Aesthetic knowledge can stand alone but conceptual knowledge depends upon a basis of intuitive knowledge. For example, if we are trying to address a problem ‘scientifically’, how do we know in the first place what the problem is and whether or not it is worth the effort? The answer is: by intuitive scanning.⁵³³

Intuitive knowledge is, according to Swanwick, the most important knowledge on music. Without it there is no foundation upon which logical musical knowledge can be developed. In other words logical analytic knowledge depends upon intuition, and that we have with our senses perceived music as a sounding phenomenon. In the same way as it is not possible to have intuitive knowledge without fundamental conditions,⁵³⁴ which apply to all sensual impressions, namely the boundary area between the human organism and its surrounding world takes over. However, intuition should not merely be regarded as the initial stage of logical thought, a quality that can be forgotten as one is moving to more advanced stages of thought. In other words: not a relationship between contradictory functions, rather an interplaying between early and later stages of the development of knowledge.⁵³⁵

Swanwick’s theory sets the limits for an analytic understanding of improvisation

I agree with Swanwick’s assertion that repeated experiences with music, and musical forms, will enable humans to develop musical ideas or concepts. To know a musical concept does not necessarily involve knowing all the different theoretical and analytical aspects of that concept. We do not necessarily need to know these in order to be able to improvise. We will preferably experience intuitively, which forms of musical structure can serve to create a desired entity, without being necessary to relate this to theoretical knowledge. We understand how, but cannot always give a formal explanation of what actually happens, though this does not make logical analytic knowledge worthless. Knowledge of real use and value comes

⁵³² In figurative language Bill Dobbins here gives human characteristics to that which is not human: Tones become subjects with their own aspirations.

⁵³³ See Keith Swanwick, *Musical Knowledge – Intuition, Analysis and Musical Education*, London 1994, p. 28. Cf. M. Polanyi and H. Prosch, *Meaning*, Chicago 1975.

⁵³⁴ Cf. B. Croce, *Aesthetic: As Science of Expression and General Linguistic*, London 1972.

⁵³⁵ See Swanwick 1994, p. 29.

about when intuitive and logical analytical elements are combined.⁵³⁶ These conclusions are similar to those reached by Keith Swanwick's theoretical presentation.

Against the background of the two fundamental questions of my thesis – How does one improvise? And: How can one learn the art of improvisation? – I will choose to interpret the lines between intuition and rationality as follows: Human senses are manifold and can be extremely finely tuned. A smell or taste, an image or a sound can bring back memories of an experience from the distant past. Correspondingly sometimes one only needs to hear a couple of bars of a piece of music before one is in no doubt as to whether one has heard the same sounds previously. Such wonderful experiences cannot easily be described. Music opens many such possible experiences. We listen, and are suddenly hooked. Perhaps the music resembles something we already know. The meeting with form and expression starts an extensive process in the minds of those who listen, and they will often search for something familiar in the aural landscape.

Here choices are set before us, and how we make our choice is in all probability depends on our own identity and background. History and the worlds of experience meet, and sometimes they coincide more well than at other times. We are presented with differing frameworks of understanding and experience, some of which we can adapt to our own while other parts are rejected. As far as one can judge our aesthetic choices are controlled by extremely complex processes. Within the context of improvisation such choices have to take place in the course of a very short time span. Emotions and intuition play a decisive part in our acceptance or rejection of what we are hearing. The aesthetic value-judgement therefore often operates on a foundation of internal or hidden concerns.

3. Creative actions in the light of cross-modal experiences

Creative and generative processes within music can be said to have their origins in many sources of inspiration and ideas. Diether de la Motte writes that many people correctly perceive that creative approaches are linked to immortal melodies and unforgettable musical “building blocks” in the form of motives. Diether de la Motte himself chooses to regard musical approaches in an even more reductive perspective, which involves deconstructing right down to a single movement, tone, sound or rhythmic figure. This can contain inherent possibilities of differing approaches, which will open doors for the creative musician him or her self to eagerly anticipate a continuation.⁵³⁷

Thus it is possible for people to experience important parts of their actions as something rather remote and outside their own selves. This rather mysterious phenomenon can be experienced as an unannounced input that simply appears. It is not infrequent that the artist is surprised of his or her own approach and the solution adapted. There are many accounts of how artists in the course of time have

⁵³⁶ Cf. Ingrid Marie Hanken and Geir Johansen, *Musikkundervisningens didaktikk*, Oslo 1998, p. 182.

⁵³⁷ See Diether de la Motte, “Was ist – und wohin fällt und wann – ein Einfall?“, in *Bruckner-Symposion. Zum Schaffensprozess in den Künsten im Rahmen des Internationalen Brucknerfestes Linz 1995 20. – 24. September 1995. Bericht*, Linz 1997, pp. 61-65.

arrived at solutions in dreams, or in states of semi-consciousness or through bodily feelings.⁵³⁸ For example Igor Strawinsky noted:

Ich war nur das Ventil, durch das Le Sacre hindurchkam.⁵³⁹

[I was simply the valve that the *Rite of Spring* came through.]

Ludwig van Beethoven accounted to Schlosser:

Sie werden mich fragen, woher ich meine Ideen nehme? Das vermag ich mit Zuverlässigkeit nicht zu sagen; sie kommen ungerufen, mittelbar, unmittelbar, ich könnte sie mit Händen greifen, in der freien Natur, im Walde, auf Spaziergängen, in der Stille der Nacht, am frühen Morgen, angeregt durch Stimmungen, die sich beim Dichter in Worten, bei mir in Tönen umsetzen, klingen, brausen, stürmen bis sie endlich in Noten vor mir stehen.⁵⁴⁰

[You ask from where I take my ideas? I cannot give a definite answer. They come unexpected, little by little, immediately. I can almost take them in my hands, out in the free nature, in the forest, in the still of the night, early in the morning, woken by voices, those which poets put into words, I make these into tones, which sound, effervesce and storm round until I finally see them before me in notes.]

A characteristic for the stage with ideas and approaches is that the artist can feel him or her self-freed from inhibition and the normal blocking associated with rational control. Creative ideas can also be experienced as if they arise by themselves. In an attempt to describe this condition the Swiss neurologist Eugéne Bleuler (1857-1940) coined the term “autistic” thought as opposed to “rational” thought.⁵⁴¹ There are also accounts on physical experiences that activate and liberate musical creativity. In these contexts such feelings can act as a release of creative powers. An example of this is the experience of Richard Wagner who laboured for many years on the beginnings of the *Ring* cycle before the inspiration came:

Be it a daemon or a genius that often rules us in hours of crisis – enough: stretched sleepless in a hotel in Spezia there came to me the prompting for the music for my *Rheingold*.⁵⁴²

He describes a trance-like state in which he suddenly felt as though he were sinking into a mighty flood of water:

The rush and roar soon took musical shape within my brain as the chord of E flat major, surging incessantly in broken chords; these declared themselves as melodic figurations of increasing motion, yet the pure triad of E flat major never changed, but seemed by its steady persistence to impart infinite significance to the element in which I was sinking. I awoke from my half-sleep in ter-

⁵³⁸ See Erich Vanecek, “Merkmale des Kreativen. Die psychologischen Grundlagen des künstlerischen Schaffensprozess”, in *Bruckner-Symposion. Zum Schaffensprozess in den Künsten im Rahmen des Internationalen Brucknerfestes Linz 1995 29. – 24. September. Bericht*, Linz 1997, p. 18.

⁵³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 18. Quote from Harold Taylor, *Das pianistische Talent*, Wien 1996.

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 18. Quote from Hubert Rohrer, *Einführung in die Psychologie*, Wien 1971.

⁵⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 18. Also Svein Haugsgjerd, *Grunnlaget for en ny psykiatri*, Oslo 1986, p. 48: As one of the founders of modern descriptive psychiatry, Bleuler is probably best known for the new term he gave to the condition known as “dementia praecox”, a condition that he likened to schizophrenia.

⁵⁴² Quoted in Ernest Newman “The Life of Richard Wagner”, Volume 2, Cambridge 1933, p. 390.

ror, feeling as though the waves were now rushing high above my head. I at once recognised that the orchestral prelude to *Das Rheingold*, which for a long time I must have carried about within me, yet had never been able to fix definitely, had at last come to being in me: and I quickly understood the very essence of my own nature: the stream of life was not to flow to me from without, but from within.⁵⁴³

From this came the image of the Rhine and a completely new musical idea for this epoch – an orchestral piece of some 136 bars that moves around only one solitary chord.

An aspect of learning

The Swedish organist and improviser Tomas Willstedt points out in his textbook *Orgelimprovisation*⁵⁴⁴ that instead of moving along “a ballet-dancer’s bar” with its many rules⁵⁴⁵ we can attempt to go the opposite way.

I denna första del skall vi, steg för steg, lära oss några ”byggstenar” inom orgel-improvisationen. Vi skall anamma et musikalisk ordförråd som skall nötas in på samma sätt som barnet, genom joller, lär sig att behärska ett språk. Eftersom vi i musikundervisningen ofta fått börja ”i fel ände” måste vi nu *lära* oss att jollra!

Meningen med att börja på ”jollerstadiet” när man vill syssla med skapande verksamhet är att man då skaffar sig ett rikhaltigt material att arbeta med. Utan material kan ingenting skapas. Det är fel att eftersträva högstående konstnärliga alster för tidigt. Arbeta istället länge med att finna ett material som du trivs med och som *talar* till dig (precis som en skulptör måste göra). Bara då kan konsten så småningom komma av sig själv. Möjlighet att komma längst när det gäller orgelimprovisation har den som inte har en förutfattad mening om hur orgelmusik bör låta!⁵⁴⁶

[In the first part we shall, step by step, learn some “building blocks” of organ improvisation. We shall imbibe a musical vocabulary, which shall be absorbed in the same way as a child, through babbling, learns to master a language. Seeing that we in music teaching often begin “at the wrong end” we must learn to babble!

The meaning with beginning at the “babbling stage” when one deals with creative elements is that one can thus find an abundance of material to work with. Without material nothing can be created. It is wrong to aim for the highest artistic standards too early. Work instead to find a material that you enjoy and that communicates to you (exactly as a sculptor has to work). Only then can the artistry gradually come in its own way. The possibility to come furthest within organ improvisation has nothing to do with preconceived ideas on how organ music should sound!]

In this way the student commences by playing randomly chosen chords to a melody. After a while the chords will gradually become more refined and Willstedt compares the study of improvisation to a child’s development of language: first babble, which leads to language and finally, to genuine poetry.⁵⁴⁷ Willstedt’s book also deals with many varying aspects of idiomatic improvisation, but his pedagogic starting point is experience of an association between movements and musical sounds.

⁵⁴³ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁴ Tomas Willstedt, *Orgelimprovisation*, 5 vols., Trelleborg 1996.

⁵⁴⁵ Cf. Ganz 1987, pp. 283-287.

⁵⁴⁶ See Willstedt 1996, Volume 1, p. 1.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 1-3.

Cross-modal theory

Humans perceive reality through their different senses, known in terms of perceptive psychology as the “modes of senses”. Cross-modal theories note that there is a continuous interplaying between these different input channels. In perception of music, the interaction between hearing, sight and motor senses plays a vital function. By that it is implied that humans form visual images of music as a consequence of sound-producing activities. This can give another dimension to the expression “experienced sound” because the experience of sound is linked to visual impressions and bodily movements.

The Norwegian musicologist Rolf Inge Godøy⁵⁴⁸ writes that music is normally regarded as a sounding form of art. As such it differs notably from visual forms of art. Many will be in agreement that music does not only appeal to the sense of hearing. There are many examples of music’s ability to give extra-musical associations in the form of colours, body movements, experiences, affects, etc. This is often expressed in visual language by such words as “light”, “dark”, “thin”, “fat”, “transparent”, “solid”, “sharp”, “high”, or “low”. We can for example speak about dark or light sounds, transparent scores, sharp accents, a high or low tonality, etc.

If we make a theoretical distinction between on the one hand: a pure or simple sound experience, like an acoustic signal in analogue or digital form – and on the other hand: the impure or compound perception of sound as a complex and multifaceted phenomenon – it is obviously the latter that applies to the overwhelming majority of situations when we listen. Godøy therefore argues that the compound experience is preferably to the simple perception of sound. By this he understands the interplaying between the senses, which is activated in all types of human perception and cognition.

Within the field of cognitive science it is now regarded as overwhelmingly probable, not only in the field of human aural perception⁵⁴⁹ but also in a more general sense,⁵⁵⁰ that such a sensory coordination of the senses is not a simple by-product of pure sound stimulation, which has been the dominant viewpoint on perception and cognition for the last two centuries or so. Godøy maintains that there are now good reasons to believe that sound-producing activities such as touching, pressing, hitting, beating, stroking, blowing, etc will come to play a steadily more important role in our experience and understanding of music. Against that background he launches a theory concerning motor-mimic performances meaning the mental simulation of actions as central factors in musical cognition.⁵⁵¹

An ecological approach

In Western culture creative musicians have for a long time used extra-musical techniques to guide formation of music. Visual qualities, mathematical and geometrical principles have frequently been employed in music in a similar way as they for example are employed in architecture. The contrapuntal techniques used in

⁵⁴⁸ Rolf Inge Godøy, “Motor-Mimetic Music Cognition”, in *Leonardo* (France) 36/4 2003, pp. 317-319.

⁵⁴⁹ Cf. A. S. Bregman, *Auditory Scene Analysis*, Cambridge 1990.

⁵⁵⁰ Cf. B. E. Stein and M. A. Meredith, *The Merging of the Senses*, Cambridge 1993.

⁵⁵¹ See Godøy 2003, p. 317.

canon are examples of this. A theme may be presented and then imitated by another voice that may give out the melody in notes of longer or shorter rhythmic value (canon by augmentation or diminution). Or the imitating voice can give out the melody backwards (retrograde canon or crab canon). The intervals may be changed so that ascending intervals of the first voice become descending intervals in the second voice and vice versa (inverted canon). These last two ideas may be combined to form a mirror canon or a canon in retrograde inversion. Here the second voice will play the melody backwards with inverted intervals. In this way it is possible to construct differing permutations based on the same melodic line.

Symmetries in visual arts are relatively easy to discover, but sounding music exists in time and is dependent on the course of time. This can make perception of these structural symmetries much more difficult. It is therefore not infrequent that one or another means of illustrating symmetrical relationships is necessary, such as that offered by music notation. Composers and music theoreticians have also used other hidden relations. A problem with such hidden principles is that they frequently conflict with the idea that music is an art form that exists within a framework of time. They also break down the notion that music should primarily be experienced aurally by applying complex formula and techniques.

According to Godøy, the transfer of structural or numerical elements from one area to another can lead to more or less unfortunate mixtures of modalities. By this Godøy is referring to mixtures of structural factors from greatly differing areas.⁵⁵² Instead of transferring a chosen structural area from one mode of sense to another, Godøy presents the foundation of a theory that allows for the understanding of music as a cross-modal phenomenon. He shows that there is an interplay between the senses, which has its origins in *ecological* conditions. This alludes to the expression “cross-modality” regarding the interaction between the differing sense modes.

By the word “ecological” Godøy is referring to the way in which human perceptions have been developed over a very long period in accordance with our surroundings. This enables us to orientate ourselves so that we are capable of survival. He points to a considerable circle of mutual dependences that apply to human perception and cognition. This becomes very clear if we compare human perception to that, which can be achieved by computers. A number of studies linked to aural perception have shown that computers which obtain information solely from audio signals have great difficulties in recognition and orientation.⁵⁵³ The reason for this is that computers, which have no previous knowledge, or are based on a multitude of previously established schemas, simply cannot master the many complex aural landscapes that humans meet in the real world, such as in so-called “cocktail-party”-situations.

If one attempts to give an opinion as to what was actually said in the course of a conversational “buzz”, it is frequently necessary to divert attention from the cues and fragmentary meanings one has initially perceived. Having done this, guesswork may be required to reconstruct or deduce what actually happened in one’s own immediate surroundings. It is also well documented that information that

⁵⁵² Cf. Rolf Inge Godøy, *Formalization and Epistemology*, Oslo 1997.

⁵⁵³ See Godøy 2003, pp. 317-318. Cf. D. F. Rosenthal and H. G. Okuno, *Computational Auditory Scene Analysis*, Mahwah, N.J. 1998.

passes from one sense mode to another can be neutralized in the process. An example of this can be demonstrated by the study of people who watch a video recording. When the visual image of a person on the recording gives the impression that the sound produced differs from what is actually heard, those who watch the recording can be led to believe that they have heard something which actually differs from the actual recorded acoustic signals.⁵⁵⁴

Triangular model

The area of cross-modality is a field of research, which is continually developing,⁵⁵⁵ and there is still much in this area that requires explanation. However Rolf Inge Godøy has from previous work introduced a simple, but as far as one can tell, well-suited model that describes cross-modality. It reflects the inescapable connection between *action*, *vision* and *sound* in musical perception and cognition. He describes this as a “triangular model”.⁵⁵⁶

He bases the model on the following hypothesis: *Any sound can be understood as included in an action-trajectory*. Such a representation concerning that the creation of sound contains both visual and motor elements in addition to the pure element of sound. Godøy also would suggest that representations of sound-producing activities take the roll as a mediator in the relation between the sounding and visual elements. This implies that actions can be transferred from the sounding to the visual – and vice versa: from the visual to the sounding.

Excitation and resonance

In this light an ecological understanding can be useful to distinguish between two factors that apply when one is involved in the production of sounds. According to Godøy, these factors can be combined. Sound production involves both a moment of action – which can be described as *excitation* – and a *reaction* to the stimulus. The latter can be described as *resonance (sound)*. To differentiate between excitation and resonance does not only involve seeing the difference between representation of *what we do* as different from the representation of *the effects of what we do*, but also distinguishing ecological knowledge of actions from our knowledge on the material qualities of objects in the world that surround and influence us. By *ecological knowledge of actions* in this context Godøy is referring to *motor* and *kinetic* experiences. These are deeply rooted in humanity’s common inherited orientation and form an essential part of our survival strategies.

If for example we hear the sound of a drum, such a differentiation involves distinguishing between representations of the action itself – the drumstick striking the drumhead – from the representation that the drumhead begins to vibrate as a consequence of that action. The sound of the drum will at the same time give us some idea of the shape and size of the drum and what type of material it is constructed from, etc. A comparable phenomenon occurs when we listen to a trumpet

⁵⁵⁴ Cf. H. McGurk and J. MacDonald, “Hearing Lips and Seeing Voices”, in *Nature* 264 1976, pp. 746-748.

⁵⁵⁵ Cf. G. A. Calvert et al., “Crossmodal Identification”, in *Trends in Cognitive Science (U.S.)* 2/7 1998, pp. 247-253.

⁵⁵⁶ Cf. Rolf Inge Godøy, “Knowledge in Music Theory by Shapes of Musical Objects and Sound-Producing Actions”, in *Music, Gestalt and Computing*, ed. M. Lehman, Berlin 1997, pp. 106-110.

fanfare. It is also possible to distinguish between the tone of the trumpet and a representation of blowing, and furthermore from our own image of the instrument's mouthpiece, conic form and valve mechanism. To distinguish between elements such as excitation and resonance can serve many purposes, as in the traditional disciplines such as instrumentation and analysis.⁵⁵⁷

Musical memory linked to representation of motor

Most of all a differentiation between excitation and resonance can give us some insight into the processes by which music is memorised, recognized and effectively re-coded. This enables us better to see how dynamic and flexible human musical representation abilities are.⁵⁵⁸ Regarding musical memory, the probability is that representation of motor plays an important part, because human relation to sound has its basis in a large battery of ecological knowledge linked to movement and activity. This battery would appear to be assimilated by an extensive range of learning processes, which begin at or even before birth. In the first place it enables us to cope with the challenges of daily life,⁵⁵⁹ but the same techniques would appear relevant to specific musical situations.⁵⁶⁰

One consequence of separating excitation and resonance in this context is that we will be more clearly able to experience the mediating role of action. Godøy here maintains that actions are translated between the senses, something that also has been observed earlier by various artists and scientists, and seems to be well documented in recent neurological research.⁵⁶¹ In this way the cognitive scientist Alain Berthoz refers to the famous quotation from Goethe's *Faust*, "In the beginning was movement", thus expressing the close connection between movement and perception. According to Berthoz, perception is not the same as representation, but a *simulated* action that *refers* to the surrounding world.⁵⁶²

Actions

There are many types of actions, which can be associated with music, such as dancing or marching. However, we shall look more closely at those actions that are normally associated with producing musical sounds. These can be sub-divided into two main groups, which Godøy describes as "ballistic" and "sustained". The word "ballistic" can be used to describe a concentrated phase of energy, which is followed by a phase of relaxation. This describes the action of hitting or kicking, and can be applied to the playing of percussion instruments and to some extent keyboard instruments. Ballistic production of sound involves the moment of striking followed by a longer period of vibrations. The strength of the sound diminishes while the vibrations are taking place. On the other side enduring sound-producing actions require a continuous exertion of effort. This occurs when one blows, bows or

⁵⁵⁷ See Godøy 2003, p. 318.

⁵⁵⁸ Cf. Rolf Inge Godøy and Harald Jørgensen (ed.), *Musical Imagery*, Lisse 2001.

⁵⁵⁹ Cf. S. Handel, "Timbre Perception and Auditory Objects Identification", in *Hearing*, ed. B. C. Moore, San Diego 1995, pp. 425-461.

⁵⁶⁰ Cf. D. J. Freed, "Auditory Correlates of Perceived Mallet Hardness for a Set of Recorded Percussive Sound Events", in *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America* (U.S.) 87 1990, pp. 311-322.

⁵⁶¹ Cf. Alain Berthoz, *Les sens du mouvement*, Odile Jacob, Paris 1997.

⁵⁶² See Godøy 2003, p. 318. Cf. Berthoz 1997, p. 147.

sings. It is also possible here for the strength of the sound to be gradually reduced, but there is also the possibility of making a crescendo since the transmission of energy is continuous.

Sound-producing actions will thus occur either as single activities, which is the case when one strikes a drum, or blows a long flute tone. Simultaneously ballistic and enduring actions can be linked together into more complex patterns of activity. An example of that is a drum-roll that consists of even and quick strokes, or some sustained tones in a longer melodic line. It is especially noteworthy that such chains of single actions can be reformed to *hierarchies*.

As we have seen above in Schmidt's and Pressing's motor theories previous experience and learning have equipped the body with control systems, which are flexible enough to deal with the challenges posed by different situations, and as such they can also be regarded as hierarchical. According to this, Godøy maintains that we meet hierarchies of this type in a large number of daily situations. Single finger and hand movements continuously combine as ingredients to enable us to lift a glass of water, write at the computer keyboard, turn the pages of a book, etc. The potential is practically unlimited. Accordingly to Godøy, a motor program can be regarded as a representation, otherwise as a written expression – in modern language usage as an “instruction manual” – of what has to be done against the background of the questions as to *what*, *how* and *when*. A manual can thus be a description of how one plays a simple tone on the cello, a melodic phrase on the flute, or an entire Beethoven piano sonata. All these are examples of programmes linked to actions and motor movements.⁵⁶³

Representations of motor programmes

Motor programmes are also closely connected with representations of such daily tasks as operating a light-switch, or going up and down a staircase. These actions are nothing other than motor programmes, which are flexible and can be carried out in differing tempi. They can be detailed, or else follow a more general plan of direction. This can be illustrated in the following manner: Imagine we shall take a stroll from a specified starting-point to the park. We can have a detailed description of our route where we visualize all the steps we are going to take. However, a description of the same stroll can also take the simpler form of an outline sketch that only covers certain basic points, such as places where we change direction.⁵⁶⁴ This would consist of a simple description of the landmarks we use to take our bearings.⁵⁶⁵

⁵⁶³ See Godøy 2003, p. 318.

⁵⁶⁴ The printed music examples in my thesis can also serve as illustrations of different kinds of motor programmes, or schemas. Thus the *Ischler-Improvisationsskizze* of Anton Bruckner is somewhat like a map indicating just some directions Bruckner was going to take, when improvising in the wedding ceremony of the Emperor's daughter. On the contrary: The exercises in Conrad Paumann's teaching manuals can be regarded as short, but detailed descriptions of movements, which the improviser has to perform.

⁵⁶⁵ Here I consider that certain tones, rhythmic structures or chords will naturally tend to be more “prominent” than others in the process of creating a soundscape. They will thus play a more “prominent” role in the process by which a listener will orientate him or her self within that music. Also within the field of musical logic there are a number of “decisive factors” for determining the form and content of a piece.

An understanding of how movements and actions can be represented has many similarities with motor theory on perception. The theory was first developed in the context of language, as some researchers began to recognise that explanations of language, which were exclusively based on pure aural signals were not tenable. They considered it more prudent to consider that possibility that people who listened to sound signals also formed ideas about how the sounds originated.⁵⁶⁶ According to Godøy, these theories have been controversial, but current neurological research suggests that it is reasonable to assume that the brain and the central motor elements of the nervous system are involved in most types of perception and cognition. In accordance with this Berthoz⁵⁶⁷ suggests that the expression “representation” can be replaced by “simulation” as a better means of describing what actually happens in the human brain and central nervous system. By “simulation” Berthoz implies that there is a continuous stream of new decisions takes place in the brain and central nervous system, which provides us with a basis on which we form our inner conceptions as to the reasons behind what we perceive and on the actions that lead to what we perceive.⁵⁶⁸

Motor-mimic element

Godøy interprets this as a *motor-mimic* element that is active in the perception of music. This leads to the conclusion that we internally simulate sound-producing actions when we listen attentively to music. On this level he reasons that we actively follow or draw outlines of the music, as we perceive it.⁵⁶⁹ Although there are several unexplored phenomenon here, Godøy believes that there is sufficient empirical evidence to suggest that motor-mimic theory can be regarded as a promising model for explaining the cross-modal effects of music. He sums up his theory as follows:

Motor-mimesis translates from musical sound to visual images by a simulation of sound-producing actions, both of singular sounds and of more complex musical phrases and textures, forming motor programs that re-code and help store musical sound in our minds.

In some cases and for some people the reverse can apply. This occurs when the simulation of the motor translates visual representations into musical sound by experiencing specified visual impressions as sound-producing activities. In this way it is the visual representations that are transformed into sounds. All such internal or mental ways of following musical sound can be regarded in the light of motor-mimic theories. This theoretical foundation can enable us to relate the experience of musical sounds to other forms of art.

Music not only appeals to the auditory senses, but also has clear relationships to the other senses. Such non-aural impressions are often an integral part of a musical experience. Representations of movements are in particular an ingrained element

⁵⁶⁶ Cf. A. H. Libermann and I. G. Mattingly, "The Motor Theory of Speech Perception Revised", in *Cognition* (U.S.) 21 1985, pp. 1-36.

⁵⁶⁷ Cf. Berthoz 1997.

⁵⁶⁸ See Godøy 2003, p. 318.

⁵⁶⁹ That is also what a conductor does in a very visible manner. There is no sound in either the baton or the arm movements. In spite of that it is both possible and necessary for the musicians to register a close connection between the conductor's movements and the actual course of the music.

in musical perception and cognition. Assumedly explanatory models, which take inner representations of musical movements as their starting point, will give a wider and deeper understanding of music as a phenomenon.⁵⁷⁰ Thus cross-modal theory can contribute to an understanding of the relationship between perceived sound, sound-producing actions and the human body's other channels of senses.⁵⁷¹ All these elements are involved in improvisation, so I am therefore assuming that this interplaying of the senses will represent a major creative and performing access to the world of improvisation.

4. Skills which originate from imitation and study with a master

In "The Case for Motor Involvement in Perceiving Conspecific"⁵⁷² the cognitive scientists Margaret Wilson and Günther Knoblich note that we meet a huge number of differing stimuli every day in the form of trees, buildings, animals, household objects, food, printed papers etc. Among these there are stimuli which affect us physically. In the first place this refers to other people and the movements they make with arms, legs, facial muscles, and their vocal chords. These stimuli can be imitated, and it is most probable that the ability to imitate in relation to a stimulus has important cognitive and neurological implications.⁵⁷³ We can register that there is increasing evidence that sensing of other people's body movements activates *motor-imitative* representations in the brain. These are representations of how our own body will execute the same movements.

Furthermore a number of recently published scientific articles maintain that hidden representations occur in the brain in order to understand the actions of others. This occurs in order to simplify a visible imitation, or to practice specified tasks in the working memory.⁵⁷⁴ Wilson and Knoblich examine that relation from an alternative approach, specifically by supposing that motor activity contributes to a perception of what they describe as the "behavior of conspecifics". More specifically that hidden behaviour here functions as an *emulator*,⁵⁷⁵ and follows conspecific behaviour in real time in order to develop predictable models for perception.⁵⁷⁶ Body attitudes and actions, which are linked to conspecific perception have two certain qualities. In the first place they attract visual attention that automatically sets one's own procedural resources in action.⁵⁷⁷ Thereafter are they structured in such a way that they can be represented in a hidden way in the strengths of the observer's own body representations.

⁵⁷⁰ "Phenomenon" – here also as something one does in a meaning of human actions.

⁵⁷¹ See Godøy 2003, pp. 318-319.

⁵⁷² Margaret Wilson and Günther Knoblich, "The Case for Motor Involvement in Perceiving Conspecific", in *Psychological Bulletin* (U.S.) 131/ 3 2005, pp. 460-473.

⁵⁷³ Cf. Margaret Wilson, "Perceiving imitable stimuli: Consequences of isomorphism between input and output", in *Psychological Bulletin* (U.S.) 127 2001, pp. 543-553.

⁵⁷⁴ For a description of the the working or short term memory – see below.

⁵⁷⁵ The word "emulator" is borrowed from computer terminology and describes a type of programme, which describes a software that resembles hardware, so that one can use programmes, which were initially not intended for use on other computer systems.

⁵⁷⁶ See Wilson and Knoblich 2005, p. 460.

⁵⁷⁷ Cf. P. E. Downing, D. Bray, J. Rogers and C. Childs, "Bodies capture attention when nothing is expected", in *Cognition* (U.S.) 93 2004. Also T. Ro, C. Russell and N. Lavie, "Changing faces: A detection advantage in the flicker paradigm," in *Psychological Science* (U.S.) 12 2001, pp. 94-99.

According to Wilson and Knoblich, the probability is overwhelming that such stimuli are in reality objects for routine and automatically concealed imitation. This emerges from many journals dealing with research into the various branches of social, cognitive and developmental psychology. One of the clearest indications of imitation is the sub-conscious tendency to imitate the behaviour of others, which is known as the *chameleon effect*,⁵⁷⁸ or in connection with emotionally related behaviour such as *emotional contagion*.⁵⁷⁹ For example humans are flexible in the imitation of each other's facial expressions.⁵⁸⁰ This applies to such matters as gesture, body posture and body language⁵⁸¹ – or a person's vocal sound, manner of speaking and breathing.⁵⁸²

Primus inter pares

From my interpretation of Wilson and Knoblich⁵⁸³ I would conclude that a number of aspects of musical improvisation originate from interplay arising between following musical rules and a personal creative impulse. In the pedagogic arena this involves imitation, but it is not only a given musical material which is imitated. The teacher can also serve as an example that one strives to imitate.⁵⁸⁴ In order to make progress, and perhaps in the course of time achieve great skills, it is often profitable to study with several teachers. Such a teacher-pupil relationship is to some extent modelled on the principles in practical crafts whereby a student serves an apprenticeship with a master craftsman.

In the course of such an apprenticeship the master has a central place in the pupil's consciousness. This can be regarded as an old method of learning, whereby the teaching takes place in the relationship between two people. As we have seen, a number of recent studies point towards the fact that people can consciously and sub-consciously imitate the actions of others. There is a considerable potential for learning actions and motor movements from imitating the example of experienced practitioners. This applies to many areas of life, and appears to play a vital role in the transmission of musical skills.⁵⁸⁵

In this picture the master naturally stands as the *primus inter pares*.⁵⁸⁶ The creation of worthwhile music does not simply come about by the simple accumulation of knowledge and skills. In other words progress cannot really be measured pre-

⁵⁷⁸ Cf. T. L. Chartrand and J. A. Bargh, "The chameleon effect: The perception-behavior link and social interaction", in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (U.S.) 76 1991, pp. 893-910.

⁵⁷⁹ Cf. E. Hatfield, J. T. Cacioppo and R. L. Rapson, *Emotional Contagion*, New York 1994.

⁵⁸⁰ Cf. J. B. Bavelas, A. Black, C. R. Lemery and J. Mullett, "I show how you feel: Motor mimicry as a communicative act", in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (U.S.) 50 1986, pp. 322-329.

⁵⁸¹ Cf. S. M. Boker and J. L. Rotondo, "Symmetry building and symmetry breaking in synchronized movement", in *Mirror neurons and the evolution of brain and language*, ed. M. I. Stamenov and V. Gallese, Philadelphia 2002, pp. 163-171.

⁵⁸² Cf. D. H. MC Farland, "Respiratory markers of conversational interaction", in *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research* (U.S.) 44 2001, pp. 128-143.

⁵⁸³ Wilson and Knoblich 2005.

⁵⁸⁴ "Example" is used here to mean a "living example" in the form of a person who really masters the artistic discipline concerned, in the meaning of given models and examples.

⁵⁸⁵ Cf. Bengt Molander, *Kunskap i handling [Knowledge in action]*, Göteborg 1996.

⁵⁸⁶ Latin – the "first among equals".

cisely by movement along such steps as used in the metaphor *Gradus ad Parnassum*⁵⁸⁷ – the steps to Mount Parnassus (home of Apollo and the Muses). Musical mastery involves more than a simple mathematical progression towards a goal. An apprenticeship aims to transfer the master's skills in their entirety to the student, thus giving an understanding of music in its entirety. In this way the apprentice assumes the competence of the master.

What actually occurs pedagogically as we assume the competence of a teacher and example? Not two people are completely alike. We move and express ourselves differently, and have differing temperaments, all of which are anchored in our experiences, as they are stored in our body, brain and central nervous system. These inner labyrinths differ from person to person, but within them there are strengths that can metaphorically move mountains, which enable us to conquer new ground in previously unknown territory. Two personalities working together from a common artistic starting point can introduce a process in the creative space between master and pupil, where both of them are finding a pathway.

The master knows the many dimensions of his or her subject. In the strength of the master's knowledge and the pupil's own history they strive together through the challenges that are a continuous part of the learning process. A vital point in an apprenticeship is that the examples and experiences, which the master shares with the pupil become a part of the pupil's internal memory. By these I mean that the apprenticeship or learning becomes a process that also continues when the master is not present – during the pupil's practice for example. This functions as a breathing space during which the student allows himself to assimilate and digest the material. One moves from the position where an idea is simply grasped to the full comprehension of the concept involved. This creates the conditions where something, in the form of a conception or technique, can loosen and wakes. Improvised music thus results from imitative actions, which can be seen in a very wide perceptual perspective.

Procedural goals of knowledge

During the previous four sections I have attempted to illustrate and explain the procedures used by improvising musicians to acquire and develop the necessary skills required by this discipline. We can see certain resemblances between an improviser and a stand-up comedian. Both answer directly and immediately to communicative situations as they arise. The stand-up comedian acquires a considerable range of verbalised thought patterns, which can be strung together in a virtual limitless number of combinations, enabling one to produce a whole arsenal of new constructions of words and sentences. An improvising musician has a corresponding store of musical structures that can contribute to the creation of new sounds. A common element of presentation for the stand-up comedian and the improvising musician is the fact that these internalised concepts are expressed through finely tuned body actions, such as the movements of vocal chords, tongue, hands, fingers

⁵⁸⁷ This was the title of a treatise in counterpoint written by Johann Joseph Fux (1660-1741). The book came out in 1725 and a new edition appeared in Vienna in 1974. Muzio Clementi (1752-1832) did use the same title for a collection of piano studies published in 1817. Again by Claude Debussy (1862-1918) in the first piece of his collection *Children's Corner* from 1906.

and feet. Another similarity is the spontaneous context within which the music or speech is presented.

In this way improvisation can also be described as something rather confidential: I am in a context that is coloured by what I have done, what I am doing, and what I am about to do.⁵⁸⁸ As an improviser one plays and continuously makes decisions. These decisions are assumed to take place point by point. This is to say that coherence is pressed together to a large number of points, but in the process the internal coherence is steadily interrupted.⁵⁸⁹ The question will be how one can be part of a continuous stream that stops at such points. This can be illustrated by the following example: How do I know when I am in the middle of a verbal sentence what the completion of my formulation will be?

Possibly this happens because such a consciousness is expressed in extremely short moments, and the process can be regarded as a large number of internal points or landmarks, which continuously fuse with new ones. Correspondingly an experience of music often takes place point by point. For example we do need to hear a certain part of a musical piece in order to be able to identify its stylistic roots, but we often accomplish this after hearing a very brief extract. In this light: Tasks we undertake as improvising musicians can be described as directed towards the future. In other words: We know what we are about to do in the immediate future, and we simultaneously think in motor images.

Spontaneous reactions to music often occur in the form of body perceptions, from which we can deduce that there is a connection between gesture and music. To create sound differing types of energy transfer are required. These creative actions in music will involve physical actions, with corresponding physical limitations. For example, singers and players of wind instruments need to breathe, string players need to change the stroke of the bow and keyboard musicians have to move arms, hands and fingers. Organ players in addition need to make the necessary movements to play the pedals, so that practically speaking the whole body is involved in improvisatory activities. Naturally enough such an involvement will also apply to the interpretation of composed music, but improvisation involves more since the body's motor systems play an important part in the creative process.

In the next section I will try and sketch the processes by which an improvising organist approaches a given musical material in the light of cognitive learning theories and models for movement. In conclusion I will link this to some of my own experiences.

⁵⁸⁸ Such experiences can be said to consist of three components: 1) Memorising of previous actions. 2) Perception of the impression from the present. 3) Anticipations as to what will come.

⁵⁸⁹ Cf. Edmund Husserl, *The Phenomenology of Internal Time Consciousness*, ed. Martin Heidegger/transl. J. S. Churchill, Bloomington 1964.

CHAPTER 21

A model for learning

Developing a “vocabulary” for improvisation linked to movements

In the initial stages of the process of learning improvisation we do not always have a clear idea of our ultimate aims. This differs from our approach to an actual piece from the repertoire of composed music. Here we will usually know the piece we are working on, and thus have some ideas as to the type of actual musical result that forms our goal. A well-written piece of music in itself can of course stimulate in us the desire for further exploration of its secrets. In the case of improvisation the initial stages are sometimes comparable to the process of groping in the dark. One can practice different exercises, without finding any specific direction. We can easily feel that we lack an overall idea which can give our work a sense of purpose. Exercises to which the student of improvisation is referred can sometimes appear to have a rather obscure purpose.

The process involved in the acquisition of improvisation skills from scratch can therefore be compared to the process of navigating oneself round a large town. If our knowledge of the actual terrain is limited or non-existent, this latter process is far from simple. To be able to navigate effectively it is essential to find some geographical points of reference, and probably there is a considerable variation from person to person as to how quick and effective this process will be.

In order to make a closer examination as to what takes place when one works with a “vocabulary” for improvising, I will sketch some stages of such a process. These are considered in the light of cognitive theories of learning and performance, with a starting-point is the *three-stage-model* that illuminates *information-processing*. This model, which was introduced by George Miller in 1956,⁵⁹⁰ describes how all information leading to human senses is followed by cognitive perception. This in turn is succeeded by selective treatment of the information, and finally results in some form of skills or actions. Briefly, the three-stage-model can be described as follows:⁵⁹¹

⁵⁹⁰ See George A. Miller, “The Magic Number Seven Plus or Minus Two: Some Limits on Our Capacity for Processing Information”, in *Psychological Review* (U. S.) 63 1956, pp. 81-97.

⁵⁹¹ Ibid. Also H. C. Ellis and R. R. Hunt, *Fundamentals of Human Memory and Cognition*, Iowa 1989, pp. 80ff.

1. Sensory register

External stimuli are first transmitted to a *sensory register*. Here all sensory impressions are registered, without being consciously interpreted. For example visual stimuli will produce the equivalent of a photographic image, which will only last for a fraction of a second. In a comparable way auditory stimuli will give an aural impression that one can afterwards hear internally. Since these impressions are only registered and not interpreted, they do not have any conscious meaning for the recipient at this stage.⁵⁹²

The American musicologist Bob Snyder maintains that there at an early processing stage also is a kind of memory, which is called *echoic memory*. This is the persistence of a large amount of information for a very short time, usually on the order of 250 msec, and probably no longer than several seconds. Such information is believed to persist in a continuous form which is not encoded into any kind of discrete categories. The concept of echoic memory reflects the fact that for example incoming auditory information persists long enough to allow further treatment. This processing of the information which persists as an echoic memory is called *feature extraction*. An important aspect of this type of processing is the basic organisation of the auditory information concerned.⁵⁹³

2. Short-term memory

The impressions in the sense register are rapidly transformed into a form which can be stored in the memory system. The first level is known as the *short-term memory*. Registered information is stored here for a short time, estimated to be somewhere between 15 and 30 sec, since capacity here is limited. Miller claimed that human memory is able to retain approximately seven single and independent units – known as *chunks*⁵⁹⁴ – at one time. Some people can only manage five, whereas others can manage as many as nine. This is the background for the well-known numerical expression “seven plus or minus two”. If there are many figures in a number, we group them into two and three figure units. This theory is known as *chunking*.⁵⁹⁵ While some people can apparently manage greater feats of memory, this is most probably due to some prior knowledge of the material. Alternatively they are so well versed in the techniques involved that they are able to group information into greater units and can thus process greater quantities. When the total amount of information in the short-term memory exceeds these seven units then other information is usually manoeuvred out. At this stage it will be necessary to wait until there is more space in the short-term memory.⁵⁹⁶

Snyder maintains that short-term memory also can be considered as a type of memory process. The existence of more than one short-term memory therefore seems probable. Short-term memory processes may exist for language, visual object recognition, spatial relations, non-linguistic sounds, physical movements and so forth. Short-term memory is often referred to as unitary because all of these

⁵⁹² Ibid.

⁵⁹³ See Snyder 2000, p. 19.

⁵⁹⁴ *Chunk* – see below for a description of *chunking*.

⁵⁹⁵ *Chunking* is a process whereby small units of information are linked together to form larger units, and a *chunk* is the basic unit in memory processes.

⁵⁹⁶ Miller 1956. See Ellis and Hunt 1989, pp. 80ff.

modalities have been shown to have roughly the same time and information capacity limitations. Events in short-term memory persist in a serial order. Thus the short-term memory is essential for the integration of events into a sequence of time. It forms our primary way of comprehending the time sequences of events we have experienced. Information that comes to the focus of conscious awareness and short-term memory has at least two aspects: perception and long-term memory.

Vivid current perceptual information persists after early processing and is overlaid with activated conceptual information from long-term memory. Thus Snyder maintains that the central focus of conscious awareness should be regarded as the most highly activated part of short-time memory. All of this activity together is often referred to as *working memory*. The contents of working memory form an important part of our experience. Working memory is distinguished from short-term memory in that it consists of processes of various levels of activation, including the focus on conscious awareness, not just short-term storage.⁵⁹⁷

3. Long-term memory

The next level is known as the *long-term memory*. Information which has actually reached this state can be regarded as permanent. Many studies show that we cannot forget something that is firmly embedded at this level of memory. Since the long-term memory capacity is also apparently infinite it follows that there is no actual constraint as to how much information we can store.⁵⁹⁸

In this context Snyder considers that patterns and relationship between events on a time scale larger than that of short-time memory, must be handled by long-term memory. It means that the relationship between events separated by more than an average of 3-5 sec is not immediately perceived, but must be recalled. For example in listening to a whole piece of music, it is only by retrieving events from the long-term memory that we are able to consciously understand the relationship between the different sections of the piece. The long-term memory occupies the subconscious. This is necessitated by the obvious fact that if it occupied the conscious there would be no space here for the present.

Long-term memories are thought to be formed when repeated stimulation changes the strength of connections between simultaneously activated neurons. When a group of neurons is originally activated to process an experience the strength of the connections between them will be changed by that process. This makes it likely that when a similar experience is encountered later, some of the same neurons will again be involved in the process. The connections between groups of simultaneous activated neurons is called *associations* and these exist on many levels of long-term memory. Association is a process whereby events that either occur close together in time or bear resemblances to each other form memories that are linked. This is also the basic mechanism by which a chunk is formed. In this way the long-term memory can be regarded as a series of associations that are connected together.⁵⁹⁹

⁵⁹⁷ See Snyder 2000, pp. 47-48.

⁵⁹⁸ Miller 1956. See Ellis and Hunt 1989, pp. 80ff.

⁵⁹⁹ See Snyder 2000, pp. 69-71.

Summary

I will briefly summarize the three-stage-model as follows: From the sensory register the interpreted stimulus is sent to the central working unit known as the short-term or working memory. As we have seen, this is not a permanent storage place, but rather a “clearing house” which possesses knowledge as to how the information should be handled. This central working unit is linked to the conscious, although we are not always aware of the continuous flow of information that takes place here. In other words our conscious is not reached by everything in our sensory register. What remains here in the form of permanent learning depends on factors that are linked to different processes. In this way learning is not a simple question of storing information. It is equally important that the information can be retrieved from the memory when we need to use it.

A model for learning of movements

The learning of movements can also be regarded as a process that occurs by passing through different stages. This process is supplemented by the theory of *feedback* – by which one refers to the internal systems that give various types of corrective information in the form of auditory, visual or tactile feedback. In this model for learning, *feedforward* also plays an important part in supporting the processes.⁶⁰⁰ Three stages in the process by which we acquire motor skills have been documented by Fitts.⁶⁰¹ These are described as the *cognitive* stage, the *associative* stage and the *autonomous* stage.

1. The first stage in the learning of a new skill is the *cognitive stage*. Here it is necessary to acquire an understanding of the skill and how it can be practiced. A considerable degree of cognitive activity is required here. The most important improvements that occur at this stage can mainly be attributed to cognitive perception. Here it is important to work attentively and thoroughly – often slowly – as a large proportion of the skill is learnt here.
2. When we come to the second stage, we have already some opinion of what movements are required for this new skill. At this *associative* stage attention focuses on how the different movements are carried out. This stage is therefore also known as the *motor stage*. The learning curve is a more gradual one, not as steep as that experienced in the first stage. After a while movements become more even and start to become *automatic*. Feedback on the qualities of the performance is especially important in the associative or motor stage.
3. The third and final stage, the *autonomous*, is characterised by quick and fluent movements. The entire skill has now been so automatized so that it can be carried out with little conscious intervention. Attention can therefore be given to other factors without interfering with the automatic processes. Thus the working memory does not become overloaded.

⁶⁰⁰ On *feedback* and *feedforward* – compare Pressing's discussion above.

⁶⁰¹ P. M. Fitts, “Perceptual-motor skill learning”, in *Categories of human learning*, ed. A. W. Melton, New York 1964. See D. A. Rosenbaum, *Human Motor Control*, San Diego 1990, p. 97.

This three-stage-model can explain a number of strategies, which can be employed when practising improvisation. Information stored in the short-term memory can easily be subjected to interference. As this short-term memory has its limitations it is rather pointless overloading it with too much information during a short period of time. Thus the importance of taking breaks and varying the tasks becomes clear. Under these conditions the work in hand can proceed with a maximum of awareness and concentration.⁶⁰²

A model for the control of movements

Furthermore we can assume that control of movements takes place in two different ways. We call these *closed-loop-control* and *open-loop-control*. Knowledge about these systems is fundamental for an understanding of movements and motor control, so I will briefly describe these. A closed-loop system consists of reference mechanisms where the representation of the *ideal* performance is stored. Feedback will be evaluated from such a reference. Errors will be shown and corrected before the actual performance continues. A closed-loop system is therefore based on feedback. The system needs approximately 150-200 msec to respond to the incoming feedback and send messages to correct errors. Movements which are quicker cannot be controlled by a closed-loop-system.⁶⁰³

It is therefore possible to assume that there is also an open-loop-system, which can contribute pre-programmed instructions as required. The open-loop-system does not employ feedback-information or feedback-processes to demonstrate error. When a movement has first begun, its course cannot be altered even if the movement is unsuitable. We can sum this up in a simplified manner by saying that open-loop control is used for movements, which are so thoroughly learnt that they have become automatic, while closed-loop control applies to motor control, which has not been automatized. Frequently these control systems alternate in one and the same behaviour form. One can imagine the closed-loop-control serving to bind together short automatized sequences of action, which in their turn are controlled by an open-loop-system.⁶⁰⁴ Improvisation is a clear example of an action where both open-loop and closed-loop control are employed.

We can also imagine that feedback operates from differing aspects of time. The short-term working memory controls the movements, which are actually taking place at the moment, while the long-term memory takes care of such basic aspects as representations of style, or an overall plan for the improvisation. Such a representation in the long-term memory can decide whether an improviser keeps to the form or ideas that he or she originally intended to use, thus creating conditions by which the course will continue in accordance with this plan.⁶⁰⁵ The novice at improvisation has a great deal to think about merely in order to “keep the wheels turning”. If we listen carefully to the music we may find some details interesting, but frequently it is difficult to grasp an overall sense of purpose. A more experi-

⁶⁰² Ibid.

⁶⁰³ See R. A. Schmidt, *Motor Control and Learning. A Behavioural Emphasis*, Illinois 1988, p. 164. Also Pål Weidemann, *Mental øving. En presentasjon av fenomenet og en vurdering av empiri og forklaringsmodeller [Mental practice: A presentation of the phenomenon and consideration of empirical and explanatory models]*, Master thesis in musicology, Oslo 1992, p. 72.

⁶⁰⁴ See Schmidt 1988, pp. 188-189. Also Weidemann 1992, pp. 73-74.

⁶⁰⁵ See Pressing 1988, p. 134.

enced improviser will also naturally be occupied with “keeping the wheels turning”, but usually has a deeper understanding of what is required to create an aesthetic entity from his or her actions.

About chunking in improvisation

After an extensive period of work the improviser will have an extensive range of melodic, rhythmic, harmonic and contrapuntal associations and techniques stored in the long-term memory, from which it can be extracted in a fraction of a second. By linking new information to that which has already been stored, we gradually increase our knowledge and skills. The difference⁶⁰⁶ between the novice improviser and the person with more experience is the ability to incorporate musical information into larger aesthetic units. The inexperienced player will be mainly concerned with musical superficialities, which will tend to hinder anything more than a partial comprehension of some elements in a musical event. The experienced player will exhibit a much greater ability to perceive ideas in their contexts, even when regarding only a small portion of a musical event. Although the short-term memory is limited to a small number of information chunks, this says nothing about how much information will be contained within each individual chunk. When these individual chunks contain a larger amount of information the effective utilisation of the short-term memory can be considerably increased.⁶⁰⁷

The gearshift analogy

The so-called “gearshift analogy” can shed some illumination on how different programmes of motor movements are linked, or coupled together to form larger programme units. Compare the process of learning how to change gears whilst driving a car. Initially this is perceived by many as a rather complicated procedure that involves seven separate operations: release accelerator – depress the clutch – move the gearlever forwards – move the gearlever to the right – release the clutch – and depress the accelerator. Each operation involves its own motor programme. With practice these individual operations are linked together to make a larger automatic operation. The operations of releasing the accelerator and depressing the clutch pedal are fused into a single unit. The same occurs with the following three stages, and then the final stage also becomes a unity. At this point we have reached what can be described as the intermediate stage of the learning process. With further practice the whole operation of gear changing eventually becomes a completely automatic process. This becomes a single action, or a *motor chunk*, whereby it

⁶⁰⁶ Cf. Pressing 1998, p. 53: Improvisers with less experience will be able to cope with relatively straightforward techniques, but it is very likely that details of these will be sketchy. Coherence will most probably be limited, and operation restricted to a small number of contexts. For example an inexperienced improviser is likely to be limited to developing a figuration in a limited range of tonalities. The connection between techniques and the overall form will be somewhat lacking. There will be limited ability to transfer ideas into other musical situations. An experienced improviser on the other hand will possess of a veritable array of techniques, which will be known down to the smallest detail. This knowledge will enable one to link countless single elements, because there will be an awareness of the many differing connections between them that are an inherent part of the musical material's hierarchical structure.

⁶⁰⁷ Cf. Stein Helge Solstad, *Jazz Improvisation as Information Processing*. Master thesis in musicology, Trondheim 1991, pp. 61ff.

ceases to be necessary to think of the differing movements involved in gear changing.⁶⁰⁸

I would wish to point out that chunking in improvisation refers to the process whereby we look back over the course of events whilst simultaneously looking forwards. Thus the music we are playing, or imagining at a moment, remains a part of what has gone before. What we are in the process of doing takes place in relation to what has just occurred as well as that which is coming later – either in the course of the immediate next move, or with more “long distance” thoughts as to how we are intend to realise the next stage as related to the larger parts of a formal schema. These processes take place at both a micro and a macro level. For example attention can be focused on the intricate details of an improvisation if required, or towards the form of the piece as an entirety. In the latter case the actions of the moment will most likely take place as a part of an automatized operation.⁶⁰⁹

How much is conscious and how much is unconscious when we improvise? It is difficult to give a simple answer to this question, as the performer will often change his or her focus in the course of the music. Some of the simpler elements will require very little conscious attention, whilst other more complex parts will require full attention for the entire duration. We are dealing with the ability to control movements and receive feedback from differing perspectives of time. New information has to be repeated or practiced within the short-term memory before it is permanently retained in the long-term memory. Each time we meet a new situation a stream of information passes between the short- and long-term memories. That which occurs at any given moment has to be linked to what previously occurred in order to determine the strategy for the next stage.

Historic instructions for learning improvisation’s “vocabulary”

We have seen that organ improvisation is frequently linked to specified musical concepts. It follows that these must be studied to gain new relevant musical ideas and information. In *Die Schule des katholischen Organisten* Heinrich Oberhoffer discusses theoretical and practical matters for aspiring Catholic organists. He instructs his readers as follows:

Die nachfolgenden kleinen Sätze in den verschiedenen Dur- und Molltonarten soll der Schüler nicht bloß fertig spielen, sondern auch nach und nach auswendig lernen. Es ist dies ein vortreffliches Mittel, um den Schüler zu befähigen, aus sich selbst kleinere Präludien erfinden zu lernen. Wenn er den grössern Theil derselben auch wieder vergisst, so hat das nichts zu sagen; es bleiben immerhin einzelne musikalische Phrasen und Gedanken in seinem Kopfe hängen, wodurch er zu Composition und zur Erfindung eigener Gedanken nach und nach befähigt wird.⁶¹⁰

[The following short pieces in different major and minor tonalities should not only be played, but also learned by heart. This is a most useful preparation which enables the pupil to learn how small preludes can be created. If most of these pieces are subsequently forgotten, it does not really matter very much. Some simple musical phrases and thoughts will remain in the mind, which will

⁶⁰⁸ See Schmidt 1988, p. 477. Also Weidemann 1992, p. 80.

⁶⁰⁹ Cf. Husserl 1964.

⁶¹⁰ See Oberhoffer 1874, p. 9.

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give the pupil sufficient confidence to be able to compose and discover his own musical thoughts.]

The image displays five numbered musical examples for organ, arranged vertically. Each example consists of two staves (treble and bass clef) with musical notation. Example 1 is titled 'I. C Dur.' and attributed to 'C. S. Meister'. Example 2 is titled 'No. 2.' and attributed to 'H. Oberhoffer'. Example 3 is titled 'No. 3. Andante.' and attributed to 'W. Wedemann'. Example 4 is titled '4. Moderato.' and attributed to 'B. Braehmig'. Example 5 is titled '5.' and attributed to 'F. W. Blügel'. The notation includes various note values, rests, and dynamic markings such as 'r. Hd.' (right hand).

30. Music example. Oberhoffer 1874, p. 9.

Here Oberhoffer points out that a major component of improvisation teaching involves creating techniques for harmonisation and counterpoint which also can be applied to the actual playing of the instrument. In addition to studying a number of short organ pieces in different forms and tonalities, the pupil should assimilate these so that they can be played from memory. This requires more from the pupil than simply playing direct from the music, since in order to memorise the music greater attention must be paid to the structure. In this way the music is learned in what I venture to call a “multi-dimensional way”. The improviser assimilates the connection between musical form and movements involved in the actual technical playing. This means that the material becomes the object for a process of automation that – in recent cognitive terms – becomes a part of an open-loop control system.

In other words: When we learn music by emphasising structures, which are formed by certain strict rules, the process will frequently involve more than assimilating mere mechanical procedures. The *specialised* motor programmes that are linked to a specified composition are developed, at the same time as one lays the foundations for a number of *generalised* motor programmes.⁶¹¹ In this way we can

⁶¹¹ Cf. Schmidt 1983. See Pressing 1988, p. 133.

find the material needed for improvisation in composed music or repertoire pieces.⁶¹² This concept that can be traced right back from the 15th century *Fundamentbuch* down to our own time.⁶¹³ The acquisition of instrumental techniques and structural principles of form thus become two sides of the same coin. This leads to the concept that individual components of different styles can gradually be linked together to larger musical entities. Oberhoffer's suggestions for the use of his material conform with a more recent understanding of cognitive procedures. Thus he probably expresses a truism that music teachers "have always known".

Generally speaking, other 19th century textbooks which give theoretical and practical instruction in church organ playing also seems to share this pedagogic approach. Naturally enough each textbook reflects its author's own stylistic preferences, the different applications for which the music is intended and not least of all the music traditions belonging to the denomination concerned.⁶¹⁴ However, the teaching methods are in essence very similar involving as they do the study of certain rule-based musical patterns that also function as exercises for the development of playing technique. As far as one can judge it is this double function that is emphasised by the "theoretical-practical" title – a reminder that the process of learning to play the church organ requires an understanding of the structures that provide a musical "vocabulary". In its turn this "vocabulary" forms the background for studying instrumental technique. Thus the mutual dependence between interpretation and improvisation becomes clear.

How is a technique for improvisation created?

What actually enables us to define an improvisation technique as an actual technique? Purely mathematically an infinite number of abstract concepts exist, and in a similar way we can define an infinite number of movements that the human body can execute. If this is rather difficult to imagine, we can try to imagine all the movements that a robot arm, which is programmed with just one type of freedom, can perform. Thus the possibility exists for all types of movements. If we can understand this, then it will be easier to describe a technique as a type of sub-class of all imaginable movements, which belong to a more specified schema of movements.

Against this background we can also ask: What is the definition of an improvised technique? The answer is that it is a recipe for, or description of, *a certain class of movements*. It can also be an *economical* way of describing a particular class of movements. In other words, if we know the technique and its fundamental basis,

⁶¹² A similar pedagogic approach can be found in a large number of modern textbooks that deal with jazz improvisation for pianists; namely the practicing of a number of formulae in different jazz-styles. These are not intended simply to be played through, but should be learned. In other words: They are intended to be internalised as generalised motor programmes. As such they can form "building blocks" of new musical discourses. For this reason textbooks emphasise the importance of transposing the formulae to a number of other tonalities so that their usage can be even more widespread. Compare the interview above with Notre-Dame organist Olivier Latry, where he maintains that transposition of a given musical example can lead to a deeper understanding of the principles involved in its construction.

⁶¹³ Cf. Wolff 1968, p. 197.

⁶¹⁴ These differences include the formulae for accompanying plainchant that Oberhoffer's textbook presents as contrasted with Herzog's presentation of chorale harmonisations presented by Herzog. These are just two examples. Naturally a considerable number of harmonisation and compositional concepts linked to different musical styles are represented in other books.

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the movements will follow naturally. We do not need to remember each single movement. In this example Kittel's organ tutor uses the opening line of the chorale *Jesu meine Freude* as "the basic movement" to demonstrate seven different approaches to the harmonisation of a melody:

Arm an Veränderung der Harmonie. Harmoniereicher. Gut.

Kein, und doch gezwungen chromatisch. Besser chromatisch. Noch besser.

Reich an Harmonie.

31. Music example. Kittel 1801, p. 12.

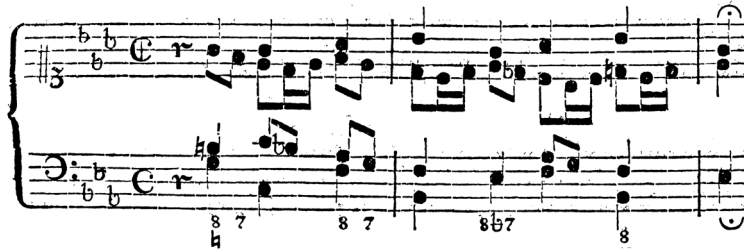
The following three examples from Kittel's organ tutor show a simple method by which contrapuntal voices can be added to a chorale melody in two, three and four parts. It can be observed that almost the same contrapuntal techniques are employed in all cases.⁶¹⁵

32. Music example. Kittel 1803, p. 27.

Man.

33. Music example. Kittel 1803, p. 27.

⁶¹⁵ Cf. Pressing 1988, p. 141: Less formalised self-discovery techniques are characteristic of much learning in the arts, but structural prescription is also a vital part of skill learning. For all but very simple skills, instructions seem particularly effective when kept simple, and when focusing on goals and general action principles rather than kinetic details. This certainly holds for improvisation. Probably too much intellectual detail both interferes with the fluid organization of action sequences and strains attention resources.



34. Music example. Kittel 1803, p. 28.

In conclusion we could say that if we discover *regularity* between certain forms of movements we can classify them under one technique. From here we can consider which other movements can also be executed against a background of the same technique.⁶¹⁶ Many teaching books for church organ playing demonstrate similarities of approach to the method of acquiring skills. In the initial stages a fundamental repertoire of movements is collected.

The three examples that follows are taken from Carl Geissler's organ tutor. They are primarily intended to function as technical studies, but they also serve to demonstrate how counter melodies to ascending and descending scale passages – also regarded as “the basic movement” – can be formed in short movements with two and three voices:



35. Music example. Geissler [sine anno], p. 10.



* *Sämtlich auch als Präludien zu benutzen.*

36. Music example. Geissler [sine anno], p. 26.

⁶¹⁶ See Ivar Hagendoorn, *What is a Technique?* <http://ivarhagendoorn.com/faq/qstn3.html> 2004.



37. Music example. Geissler [sine anno], p. 27.

A summary

In this way an ability is developed which enables one to make the basic perceptual distinctions which will be needed to receive and use feedback. In the intermediate stages such individual processes are collated into large actions. These are constructed from the existing repertoire of movements, which are linked together by the development of a cognitive framework. These units of action will later facilitate the development of open-loop response. The ability to perceive small nuances develops and matures to a considerable extent. At the same time inner representations for actions and the correction of error are developed, which forms a basis for using feedforward. Fluency increases dramatically, and in the fullness of time an advanced level of expertise is attained.⁶¹⁷ The musician has now adapted to a very high degree of perceptual information, and is within reach of a range of finely adjusted and adaptable motor programmes.⁶¹⁸

These develop effective musical qualities such as freedom and ease of movement, flexibility and expressiveness. The overwhelming majority of functions dealing with the organisation of motor programmes are fully automatized. This state allows the performer to concentrate exclusively on higher issues such as controlling the music's expression and overall structure. In this scenario I think it highly probable that the development of new forms of improvisatory expression is guided and determined by an associative process. This subjects all that has gone before to a process of continual evaluation. Factors as earlier practice, referents, memory functionality and emotional states are continuously at work here. Above all these, however, it is surely the solid accumulation of musical knowledge and skills that provides the most decisive factor.

⁶¹⁷ Regarding the definition of expertise – see above.

⁶¹⁸ Regarding "perceptual information" and "motor programmes" – see the presentation above.

CHAPTER 22

Studying harmony and counterpoint in improvisation

In the introduction to the section *Chronology versus phenomenology* I have suggested that skills in organ improvisation to a certain extent can be learned from a study of the two musical parameters *harmony* and *counterpoint*. That is to say, from an awareness of the music's vertical and horizontal aspects, and in my thesis I have presented a number of examples how these two parameters are treated in teaching manuals from different traditions and epochs. Furthermore I have discussed these examples in the light of current theories regarding cognitive processes and motor programmes. We have noted that these examples in many ways represent a tradition, a historic line of musical instruction that has been given to improvisers from one generation to another. Here disciplines of harmony and counterpoint can be understood as differing, yet similar aspects of movements intended to be performed at the instrument. Earlier stages of learning largely deal with classifying these patterns of movement. Afterwards comes the process of deciding which other movements are possible against the background of one of these categories of movement.⁶¹⁹ From my own studies and experience I will now give some ideas on how improvisation can actually be practised. The aim is that the playing should be realised as a living synthesis of harmonic and instrumental techniques.

Harmonic awareness

In working with the formation of harmonic structures it is important not to play so quickly that one cannot actually "feel the weight of the chords".⁶²⁰ It can be useful to listen to one and the same part over and over again, even when the range of chords employed is limited. It is also necessary to refine and evaluate continuously so that subtleties of voice leading and other refinements can be discovered and developed. I will summarize my own findings in the following four points:

1. Most of my improvisation techniques that involve rapid figurations have initially required practice at a very slow tempo. A high level of cognitive activity taking place at this stage and therefore it can be useful to practice extremely slowly.
2. In playing rapidly, I normally employ a more limited range of chords.

⁶¹⁹ Compare with the metaphor of the robot arm.

⁶²⁰ Cf. Dobbins 1994, p. 31.

3. I can compel myself to play very slowly following strict principles of voice-leading, such as constantly playing two voices in the right hand, one in the left hand and one in the pedals – or on the manuals only with two voices in each hand. This is not intended to make the task needlessly complicated, but rather ensures that later work is simplified.
4. The ear is our judge. We should actually enjoy what we are hearing, so that we do not lose our appetite for work. It is thus important to accommodate our own musical preferences.

I would venture to suggest that if we can endorse these ideas and forms of work we will have established a profitable pathway towards the goal of effectively learning improvisation. This is important since the material we use must in the fullness of time become an integral part of ourselves. By carefully thinking out and experimenting slowly with ideas I wish to realise I find that I have gathered some idea as to how this takes place. Analytical work with form-giving principles also plays its part. Using this approach the teaching material can become something more than simple forms and conventions. Even at an early stage it is important to search for some form of expression in the musical structures.

Furthermore I have found a method of working with harmony, whereby I play a randomly chosen chord with my left hand, for example. Then I play all the tones of the chord in the right hand and afterwards in the pedals, but without playing any tones, which do not actually belong to the chord itself. Next I create rhythmic figures from the tones of the chord, alternating between manual and pedal. Much of this cognitive and motor work is involved in figured forms of improvisation based on harmonies. Another exercise I have also used is to play a subdominant chord in the right hand, simultaneously with a dominant chord in the left hand – again with a corresponding rhythmic figuration of the tones of the chord. So-called “advanced” harmonic work is not as complex as we might imagine, and can therefore be introduced at an early stage in the learning process.

Learning contrapuntal techniques

My theory teacher at The Norwegian State Academy of Music, Conrad Baden,⁶²¹ once remarked during a lesson that he often attempted to solve contrapuntal exercises in the style of Palestrina whilst travelling by train. He was of the opinion that this intellectual pursuit resembled “all types of foolish crossword puzzles”, since it involved working out a correct solution in accordance with pre-determined rules. It is certainly true that in a crossword puzzle the result is predetermined: The person who is to solve the puzzle must place the letters correctly so that the across and down lines form the intended words. Creating a fugue, which is a contrapuntal musical form governed by strict rules, does appear to involve similar mental processes. Again the aim is to find a system that solves a problem, though in contrast to the crossword puzzle several adequate solutions can usually be found that will produce the required contrapuntal textures. In the musical puzzle there will however be aesthetical and logical considerations which will impose some limitations on the choice of an ultimate solution.

⁶²¹ Conrad Baden (1908-1989) – Norwegian composer, teacher, and music critic who is best known for his church and orchestral music. Assistant professor in music theory at The Norwegian State Academy of Music from 1973 to 1979.

To deal with these issues in written form requires extensive insights and practical experience in solving contrapuntal problems. The artistic aspect must also be considered. We are not simply reproducing musical patterns, but aiming to develop music that has a personal signature. For this to occur spontaneously, a precondition must be that the player has acquired techniques of declamation and procedures. In my own work I attempt to analyse a theme quickly in order to give myself some idea of its inherent musical possibilities. Then comes the question of how these possibilities can be grasped and transformed into movement. I would sum this process up in the following five points:

1. The theme should be sufficiently committed to memory to allow me to play and develop it in any tonality that I may care to choose at random.
2. When the theme is to be played in the dominant key, I aim to move there by creating a natural transition. In terms of functional harmony this involves frequent use of leading notes.
3. I develop sequences from the theme or smaller sections of it.
4. Sequential techniques can be employed to gain competence in placing the theme in the chosen key. Virtually limitless access to possibilities for modulation can be gained by changing key signatures.
5. If we can manage to master the contrapuntal techniques instantaneously, this opens the possibility of developing the theme in a stretto. However, I would emphasise the importance of avoiding techniques which are so complex⁶²² that they cannot be kept under control in context of spontaneous invention.

When the task is to write a fugue in accordance with the classical rules or counterpoint these points can be described as traditional. Fugal improvisation differs from written composition in that the contrapuntal techniques required have to be accessed and activated in the course of an extremely short space of time. Some sequences of thought and action can indeed be compared with solving crossword puzzles, but for an improviser these responses need to be completely automatized. In order to achieve this contrapuntal techniques must be assiduously studied and practiced.

⁶²² Cf. Appenices: Reger on the subject of fugal improvisation.

CHAPTER 23
Two Recording projects

*En organist är ständigt omgiven av flera ”språk” genom sitt repertoarspel m. m. Musikaliska språk lär man sig också genom att lyssna på musik. Detta gäller även genier. Bach tog sig til Lübeck!*⁶²³

[An organist is constantly surrounded by several “languages” through his or her performance of repertoire pieces etc. A musical language can also be learned from listening to music. This applies even to geniuses. Bach himself travelled all the way to Lübeck!]

(Swedish organist and improviser Tomas Willstedt, 1996.)

*Man må først være menneske. All sann kunst vokser ut av det menneskelige.*⁶²⁴

[One must first be a human being. All true art grows out of that which is distinctively human.]

(Norwegian composer Edvard Grieg, 1892.)

⁶²³ See Willstedt 1996, Volume V, p. 73.

⁶²⁴ See Finn Benestad and Dag Schjelderup-Ebbe, *Edvard Grieg: Mennesket og Kunstneren [Edvard Grieg: The Man and the Artist]*, Oslo 1990, p. 1.

Recording project 2: Contrasts on an historic ground

Henri Bergson – a philosophical inspiration for the recording

Within the history of philosophy there are strong traditions in which scientific rationality and subjective intuition are perceived as two polemic positions. The French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859-1941) developed a new approach within European philosophical traditions. In *L'Évolution créatrice*⁶²⁵ he criticises the strictly determinist approach and developed a scientific approach, which was to characterise his thinking. It can be summarised as follows: Human intellect is only capable of recognising that which takes the form of spatial expressions, but such a deterministic view of reality does not actually contribute to an understanding of creative processes. This applies especially to the field of artistic and spiritual phenomena. These can only really be understood by intuitive thinking, experience and deep consideration. Mobility is the only reality according to Bergson. The world is formed by and filled with movements. Stillness and rest are mere illusions. Consciousness is continuously actively absorbing new impressions. Thus a continuous flow of processes takes place that change and preserve the conditions for our own growth. Universal experiences merge with each other and form the contexts for new experiences. The growth of an impression takes places as part of an accumulative process, which is guided by continuity and change. In this way there is a link between internal and external impressions.

This is the basis for Bergson's understanding of all life and existence. He claims that all processes and tendencies exert continuous influence on each other. The so-called "permanent state" is in fact both stable and changeable. He views the world as a type of linked unit where all phenomena are closely related to each other. According to Bergson, a genuine access to these phenomena can be obtained through human intuition. Intuition is not a form of recognition, but a form of existence and against that background should be understood in an ontological perspective. Intuition is an internal knowledge that dwells within mobility. Intuition can therefore allow my own movements to coincide with movements that are external to myself.⁶²⁶

Relating Bergson's ideas to the world of musical expressions

In my opinion Bergson's thinking can here be related to the world of musical expressions, especially considering the creative and generative processes. One example of this is the way in which we react to single notes in a musical progression because they are part of an entity. This implies that they represent a qualitative organisation. The length of music is a movement, which preserves itself by maintaining the past in the present. Music arouses memories, and as such can serve to inspire. Music fulfils expectations and contributes towards the eager anticipation of an activity. Rhythm and movement comprise natural elements in our make-up. From our own movements an appeal goes out to others to follow these movements.

⁶²⁵ Henri Bergson, *L'Évolution créatrice*, Paris 1907. Swedish translation by Algot Ruhe: *Den skapande utvecklingen: Om livets betydelse*, Stockholm 1928.

⁶²⁶ Ibid.

Simultaneously these movements can function to open the doors to our own depths. Ahead of all musical systems there is ideally a simple thought, or an immediate intuitive force. Thus there is an intuitive core in all music, which precedes its formation.⁶²⁷

Accordingly the creative musician seeks a fundamental idea that he or she attempts to capture. Musical intuition develops this and in the process can extract more from such an idea than it actually originally contained. The meeting in space is therefore a precondition for the intuition to be able to develop itself. Correspondingly it can be argued that a musical gesture anticipates the individual notes of a musical event. The music addresses itself to a listener and evokes an experience. The listener thus becomes a creative person, because he or she can in turn invent further associations from the musical content that is being performed. In this way new fundamentals are built on old ones.⁶²⁸

Kaleidoscopic organ sounds

The title of the recording *Contrasts on an historic ground* reflects three points:

1. The improvised organ pieces are all inspired by musical artefacts from different eras. Predominantly these reflect stylistic examples that I have experienced in the course of my own study and performance of the organ repertoire. They have thus come to form a library of idioms and artefacts which have become an integral part of my musical memory.
2. A famous drama from Norwegian history forms the subject of a poem which inspired one of the improvisations.
3. With one exception⁶²⁹ all the recordings were made in Slagen Church in the Norwegian town Tønsberg.

The description “historic ground” certainly applies to the site of this church. Here there are traditions which can be dated all the way back to Old Norse times.⁶³⁰ Furtherly a major part of the musical material aims to illuminate chorale improvisation as a *stylistic multidimensional phenomenon*. The idea is to create pieces in which the listener will be able to recognise certain stylistic features from differing eras of organ literature. At the same time they are intended to bear my own individual imprint as an improvising musician. In other words: The form is intended to conjure up associations while it is also to be regarded as being a personal collection of forms and techniques. As a kaleidoscope of organ sounds; structurally confident, while simultaneously individual and perhaps a little surprising. Metaphori-

⁶²⁷ Cf. Pressing 1988, pp. 147-148.

⁶²⁸ See above: In a pedagogic context this can be interpreted through the pupil's links with the teacher's inner sources. To a greater or lesser extent these touch on the pupil's own intuitive forces. Bergson's thinking can therefore also give some understanding of musical apprenticeship in relation to specified traditions. Such an understanding can also contribute some insights into the development of improvisation based on traditional forms. This frequently involves enriching existing forms with new generative principles. Alternatively there can be the intention to further develop stylistic perspectives.

⁶²⁹ This recording – *A tone develops (movements around one tone)* – was made in Eik Church in Tønsberg.

⁶³⁰ It was here that the Oseberg Viking ship was excavated in 1904. For a more detailed description of this: see the presentation below.

cally speaking it can be compared with “saying something we already know”, but perhaps in a different and slightly newer manner. Or we can say that it is an interpretation based on Henri Bergson’s thoughts of building “new fundamentals on old ones”.

In accordance with this, it is not infrequent for an organ improviser to start from the thought that music history is a dynamic and accumulative process, which offers a steadily increasing range of possibilities because history in itself is a working process of continuous construction. During the course of history differing forms of expression and artistic creeds have been developed. These are available for use in the creation and enrichment of our own musical life. Today’s improvisation practice can be regarded as the fruit of historic processes because our style-related forms of expression can frequently be linked to a genealogy. During some historic eras improvisatory forms have been more or less continuously interchangeable with written compositions, and with music aesthetic ideals, which can be described as “trend setters” for the different eras. We frequently employ these types of form today, where they supply a framework for our practical improvisation. It is not unusual for music to quote the forms of the past. At the same time we take parts of the old types of forms to make something new by using them in new contexts.⁶³¹

On this CD this is primarily demonstrated by a number of different improvisations⁶³² based on the old Lutheran chorale melody: *Wer nur den lieben Gott lässt walten*. Two other well-known traditional chorales are also quarried to provide thematic material: the Christmas hymns *Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern* and *Ich steh an deiner Krippe hier*. Further sources are the 12th century plainchant hymn *Ave Maris Stella* and the melody of the Swedish summer hymn *En vänlig grönskas rika dräkt*.

In terms of the procedures that are used, I would use the words of the Dutch organist and improviser Cor Kee (1900-1997), who describes organ improvisation as “composing at the console”.⁶³³ He maintains that in this process one actually creates a composition using the keyboards and pedals as aids. The work produced is not actually written it down on paper, and can therefore be easily repeated and improved upon. Frequently the improvement comes with each subsequent repetition. Such a process provides essential exercise and training for the musical memory, which is a decisive tool for the task of relating to a given theme that is later to be developed following certain structural patterns. Naturally the element of spontaneity is essential, since when properly prepared this can breathe life into forms which otherwise can easily display a tendency to become mechanical and lifeless.

⁶³¹ See also Tandberg 2004.

⁶³² See above: Ruth Zechlin recalled how Günther Ramin in his improvisation teaching used the same chorale melody over a long period of time, using it as the starting point for a large number of different styles of approach. This method can also be noted in the definition of improvised techniques above: what extensions of possible movements can be made from one single movement. The chorale melody here fulfils the function of the “original movement” itself.

⁶³³ See Bondeman, Hernqvist and Åberg 1977, p. 5.

Improvisations at the organs in Slagen and Eik churches, Tønsberg

Intrada over the chorale melody: *Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern*⁶³⁴ (Melody: Philipp Nicolai 1599) (track 1)

Four studies in choral improvisation over: *Wer nur den lieben Gott lässt walten*⁶³⁵ (Melody: Georg Neumark 1657)

- 1) *Hommage à Buxtehude* (prelude, two fugati and toccatina over the four phrases of the melody) (track 2)
- 2) *Trio ostinato* (track 3)
- 3) *Suite*
 - I Improvisata (track 4)
 - II Andante tranquillo (hommage à Brahms) (track 5)
 - III Pedalexercitium (track 6)
 - IV Duo-rubato (track 7)
 - V Scherzino (track 8)
 - VI Intermezzo-recitativo (track 9)
 - VII Fugue and Chorale (track 10)

4) *Free tonal sketch* (track 11)

Following a good old-fashioned recipe: **Eleven simple and naive tone-pictures based on the German Christmas melody: *Ich steh an deiner Krippe hier***⁶³⁶ (Melody: Wittenberg 1529)

- I *Introduction* (chorale verse) (track 12)
- II *Minuet for angels* (track 13)
- III *Figurations on a shepherd's flute* (track 14)
- IV *A little seraphic trumpet-dialogue* (track 15)
- V *Elevation* (modulation upwards) (track 16)
- VI *Pastorella* (Shepherd's idyllic stillness) (track 17)
- VII *Risoluto* (purposeful Wise Men on a wandering hymn) (track 18)
- VIII *The Shepherds and the Wise men dance in turn* (track 19)
- IX *Heavenly harp-idioms on an earthy regal* (track 20)
- X *Simple contrapuntal song of joy* (fore-imitation) (track 21)
- XI *Conclusio festivo* (chorale verse) (track 22)

A tone develops (movements around one tone) (Organ in Eik Church) (track 23)

Fantasia over a Norwegian saga poem: "Det var en gang en dronning..." ("Once there was a queen...") (track 24) (Poem by Erling Dittmann)

⁶³⁴ Hymn tune in *Norsk Salmebok*, 1985, no. 89. Cf. *Den Svenska Psalmboken*, 1992, no. 119 (another version: no. 319). Also *Evangelisches Gesangbuch*, 1995, no. 70. Also *Gotteslob*, 2003, no. 554.

⁶³⁵ Hymn tune in *Norsk Salmebok*, 1985, no. 459. Cf. *Den Svenska Psalmboken*, 1992, no. 270. Also *Evangelisches Gesangbuch*, 1995, no. 369. Also *Gotteslob*, 2003, no. 296.

⁶³⁶ Hymn tune in *Norsk Salmebok*, 1985, no. 431. Cf. *Gotteslob*, 2003, no. 141. Also *Den Svenska Psalmboken*, 1992, no. 35. Also *Evangelisches Gesangbuch*, 1995, no. 122.

Meditation: *Ave, Maris Stella*⁶³⁷ (Melody from the 11th or 12th century) (track 25)

Toccata and Chorale: *En vänlig grönskas rika dräkt*⁶³⁸ (Melody: Waldemar Åhlén 1933) (track 26)

Organ: Svein Erik Tandberg

Recording and digital mastering: Kai Schöler

Total playing time: 66:23

“Det var en gang en dronning...”

(“Once there was a queen...”)

Poem by Erling Dittmann

”Det var en gang en dronning...”

Hører du sagaens lyre
leker i luften
rundt haug-eventyret

”Det var en gang en dronning...”

Rik var hun
mektig
kan hende vakker
der hun
årtusen tilbake
vandret
i Osebergs bakker

En dag lukket hun sine øyne
slik vi alle lukker våre
så rustet de skipet
og smykket hennes bære
dansen rundt haugen
i blods og dødsekstasen
vinket farvel
for den siste seilassen

“Once there was a queen...”

Can you hear the saga-lyre sound
playing in the air
singing the tale of the mound

“Once there was a queen...”

Rich she was
mighty
beautiful and full of will
where she wandered
a thousand years back
in the Oseberg hill

One day she closed her eyes
like we all close ours
her ship equipped
her bier adorned with flowers
dancing around the grave
in the ecstasy of blood and death
left there to wave
in sorrow and wail
the ship bound for the final sail

⁶³⁷ Plainchant hymn in *Liber Usualis Missae et Officii pro Dominicis et Festis cum Cantu Gregoriano*, 1946.

⁶³⁸ Hymn tune in *Den Svenska Psalmboken*, 1992, no. 201.

PART 2

Mens seklene skiftet og slektene svant tok jorden og tiden sitt bytte i pant inntil den dagen for hundre år siden da graven ble åpnet og menneskets viden med kunnskaps-våpnet forløste gåten gjenreiste båten og sa hvem hun var	Centuries changed generations passed time and earth claimed their prey at last until the day a century ago the grave was laid bare and man's mind unravelled the rare riddle rebuilt the ship putting a name on our lip
--	--

Åsa

Åsa

Vi hvisker et navn
men hvisker vi rett

We whisper a name
but do we whisper right

Ditt støv og ditt skip
er i havn
men ingen har sett
og ingen skal noen gang se
ditt skip der *du* seiler
din evighets
døds-odyssé

Your dust and your ship
out of sight
have harboured
but no one has ever seen
and no one shall ever see
your ship wherever you may be
on your eternal
death-odyssey

Commentary on the Recording

Intrada *Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern*: This improvisation consists of two short chorale verses. The first contains some elements of a late English Baroque Trumpet Voluntary. Its decorated chorale theme, which is based on an isometric version of Phillip Nicolai's melody, occurs alternately in the soprano and tenor voices. In the last line of the verse the solo part divides into in two parts and for a brief moment the arrangement is in five-part harmony. To some extent the harmonisation is inspired by J. S. Bach. In the second verse a rhythmically restored version of the chorale is used. Again the movement is based on the complementary rhythms of the Baroque, but the harmonisation is treated with greater freedom.

Four studies in chorale improvisation over *Wer nur den lieben Gott lässt walten*

Hommage à Buxtehude: Dietrich Buxtehude's Praeludia (preludes) incorporate single sections which bear such titles as "Toccata" or "Praelambulum". None of them is formally entitled "prelude and fugue". They usually consist of one, two or three fugues and employ a considerable range of techniques using different contra-

puntal approaches.⁶³⁹ In *Hommage à Dietrich Buxtehude* I have attempted to play what I might choose to describe as a game using some idiomatic features of his works. I have not aimed for any formal degree of historic accuracy either in terms of performance or “compositional” practices. Rather the finished product should be regarded as an unpretentious examination of certain figurations and structures that are used by Buxtehude. With regard to phrasing and articulation the playing occupies a position somewhere between legato and portato – in other words a non-historic style. This aims to emphasise the contrasts between the lineal curves and the repeated notes in the German chorale *Wer nur den lieben Gott lässt walten*. The introductory prelude is based on the first two lines of the chorale. A fugato section based on the third line of the melody follows it. The fourth line serves as the basis of another fugato à la gigue. In the concluding toccatina we again hear the first line of the chorale, while the pedal solo takes its melodic motives from the fourth and final line of the chorale.

Trio ostinato: The left hand and pedal figurations here are inspired by one of the chorale preludes from Johann Sebastian Bach’s *Orgelbüchlein*: *Ich ruf zu Dir, Herr Jesu Christ* (BWV 639).

Suite: These seven movements are intended as an approach to the Romantic organ style. The harmonic structures employed resemble those used by 19th century German composers. At the same time I have taken the liberty of adding some slightly archaic touches that are reminiscent of previous eras. The classical melodic styles as used by Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy are here combined with harmonic elements of Johannes Brahms and Max Reger. The term “suite” is used here to describe a form of free variation. This differs from the classical German or French use of the term, where a series of stylised dances is usually implied.

The four-part fugal movement of the Suite follows this scheme: Exposition in soprano- (G minor), alto- (D minor), tenor- (G minor) and bass (D minor). An interlude employing sequences. Development of the theme in the soprano using the relative major tonality of B flat. Interlude. Development of the theme in the tenor (C minor). Interlude. Stretto: theme developed in the bass (G minor) simultaneously with the inversion of the theme in the soprano. A pedal point in the shape of a timpani-like movement in the bass leads to the concluding theme in the soprano (G minor). Modulatory chords with chromatic movements create the transition to the closing chorale of the suite.

Free tonal sketch: The harmony in this improvisation is treated very freely. The idea for the rhythmic figuration of the melody comes from the second part of Olivier Messiaen’s organ piece *La Vierge et l’Enfant*.⁶⁴⁰ The melody and rhythm are treated with a degree of freedom, which increases as the piece progresses.

Following a good old-fashioned recipe: Eleven simple and naive tone pictures based on the German Christmas song: *Ich steh an deiner Krippe hier*. The ideas

⁶³⁹ See Kerala J. Snyder, *Dietrich Buxtehude. Organist in Lübeck*, New York 1987, pp. 238ff.

⁶⁴⁰ Olivier Messiaen, Volume II of the organ cycle *La Nativité du Seigneur* 1936.

here has been to improvise music which inclines towards the minimalistic, with a narrative simplicity and a programme content. Simple ostinato movements and intervals of a fourth are employed in a manner which reflects the work of German church composers Helmut Bornefeldt (1906-1990) and Hugo Diestler (1908-1942). Both of these composers were among the trend-setting vanguard of new Lutheran church music which emerged during the 1950's and 1960's. These improvisations are also inspired by my interview with the organist Heinz Wunderlich and his description of how one can collect the different improvisation techniques one has acquired into a partita, or a set of variations. As is indicated by the title of the melody, this music is intended for the Christmas festivities, with a number of rather naive tone pictures based on the colourful collection of personalities in the Christmas story. Perhaps the somewhat naive associations with the expression "kitsch" can be described as a guiding principle for these improvisations.

A tone develops itself (movements around a single tone): This little piece, recorded on the organ in Eik Church, is a free game with rhythmic and harmonic structures that are developed around a solitary sustained tone.

Fantasia on a Norse saga poem: "Det var én gang en dronning..." ("Once there was a Queen..."): The year 1904 was very significant for Norwegian archaeology, with the discovery and excavation of the Oseberg grave next to Slagen Church in Tønsberg, Scandinavia's oldest town. Among the many treasures of the grave there were found a beautiful long boat some 21.5 metres in length, the Oseberg chariots, five beautifully carved bed-posts shaped like animal heads, four sledges, beds, chests, diverse household utensils and many other artefacts. It is in fact the largest single find from Viking times. Modern techniques have dated it to the year 843AD, which thus predates King Harald Hårfagre's initial unification of Norway sometime around the year 900AD. For a long time the grave was believed to be that of Harald Hårfagre's grandmother, Queen Åsa. More recent theories suggest that it was in fact Queen Alvhild, who was King Guderød's previous wife.

The objects found in the Oseberg ship would appear to indicate that the main person in the burial chamber occupied an important part in cultic worship. Possibly she was a *hovgydje* – a high priestess of a Nordic cult – or she may have been regarded as an earthly incarnation and representative of fertility goddess Frøya. In Nordic times these pagan beliefs were deeply rooted at Slagen on the western side of Oslo Fjord. There were many struggles before the final victory of Christianity. This established the principle which is described in the Sagas of Håkon the Good: Everyone should be baptised and believe in the One God, Christ the Son of Mary, and refrain from all sacrifices to heathen gods. Each seventh day shall be kept holy by refraining from work and fasting.

My improvisation on the saga poem "Det var en gang en dronning..." aims at an aural depiction of the interment of the Oseberg Queen. This famous cultic drama at Slagendalen in Tønsberg all those years ago took place a mere stone's throw from the site occupied by Slagen Church since the 13th century.⁶⁴¹ The poem by Erling

⁶⁴¹ In all probability the site was used for religious rites in pre-Christian times. The first Christian church, dated from the medieval era, but was destroyed by fire in 1898. The characteristic

Dittmann provided a springboard for this piece. I placed the text of the poem on the music desk of the organ. The author sat on a pew in Slagen Church whilst the musical associations and ideas simply poured forth.

The improvisation bears some hallmarks of symphonic organ music and aims to interpret Erling Dittmann's poetry with fabulous, dramatic and elegiac sounds. The music starts with an ethereal sound formed from tritone intervals that perhaps can give a suggestion of the Oseberg ship coming into view bearing its secrets. This is followed by a crescendo in which images of the Oseberg Queen as a proud, haughty and perhaps exceptionally beautiful woman are suggested. The movement is built up in this way, with long and intense chords, clusters, ostinato-movements leading to a dramatic climax when the grave appears to open fully – but only for a short while – then the drama is subdued and the secrets of the grave are hidden once again.⁶⁴²

Meditation: *Ave, Maris Stella* was improvised with a minimum of effects. The plainchant melody to the Marian hymn *Hail thou Brightest Star of the Ocean* is first hinted at in a free but simple style with a delicate and ethereal sound. This is followed by a section where the melody is played on a 4' pedal reed and the musical development takes the form of a 2 part canon.

Tocatta and chorale: *En vänlig grönskas rika dräkt* is based on the folk-like melody of a Swedish hymn which praises the beautiful but tragically short Scandinavian summers. Its shape bears some resemblances to neo-baroque forms. The theme is initially suggested over shifting chord patterns, after which the melody is played in the pedals one line at a time. Each line is followed by a short interlude consisting of fragments from the melody. The concluding chorale is recognised by progressive movements and pedal tones in the accompanying harmonies.

Recording project 3: A Concert Mass – *Missa sacra et profana*

Dietrich Bonhoeffer – a theological inspiration for a recording project

The sacred will not be undermined by the profane. The profane is rather a way of understanding God's approach to humanity, because humans are a part of the world and thus a part of life's many paradoxes. Human life exists against the background of a worldly perception of existence. In the closing stages of the Second World War the German Lutheran theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) sketched his understanding of the Christian faith. Here he suggested that it was neither necessary nor desirable for humanity to surrender to the ancient dream images of religion. Nor should it seek refuge in inherited beliefs, which have lost their signifi-

twin towers of Slagen Church took their place on the same site in 1901 when the present church was completed.

⁶⁴² Cf. Kjell Mørk Mørk Karlsen, "Oseberg-mystikk i orgelsymfonisk 'gjendiktning'", review of Svein Erik Tandberg's CD *Contrast on an historic ground: Improvisations at the organs of Slagen and Eik churches*, in *Tønsbergs Blad* 2 November 2004.

cance. In Bonhoeffer's view the lack of a meaningful religious universe and a religious basis on which life could be understood creates recurring problems for 20th century "modern" humans who seek to probe the deeper questions of existence. Bonhoeffer did not expect God to simply sort out the world in a display of religious majesty. Thus the Christian belief should not be seen as a struggle with secular forces. The reason for this is clear: When God dies, divine love is the real face of God and a struggle against the world linked to religious might will be meaningless. God came into the world by the Incarnation, and choose to die as a human.

A characteristic of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's theology is the view of Christ as the broken God, the Church being formed round the Cross. God's strength is revealed in Christ's weakness. To believe is to see ourselves as we really are. In the exhaustion of life we can find our way back to God. Humanity's greatest joy is that God allows Himself to be revealed in degradation. To believe involves stepping into a world of contradictions and paradoxes. Humanity's inner image of Christ on the cross creates joy because it is in this motive that we can recognise our own weaknesses and failings. The struggle between deepest joys and deepest sorrows is central in this context. Within such a reality God allows Himself to be seen in fragments – which humanity must attempt to recognize and interpret. There is a clear element of "not yet" in Bonhoeffer's theology, which leads to an approach whereby The Church can also grants space to incomplete forms of life and belief; the aim of this approach being to serve and to reconcile. As a theologian Bonhoeffer was shaped in the mould of modernism, which had made a large impact on European intellectual life during the first half of the 20th century. For Bonhoeffer it was important that such a modern perspective should be placed in close proximity to the Christian belief. From this we can accept the possibility for humanity to simultaneously have both a sacred and secular outlook.

In a dialectic sense this means that secularism can only be comprehended against a background of religious belief. Secularisation was therefore no problem to Bonhoeffer. In letters written from prison in the months before his execution, Bonhoeffer acknowledges that human life should be lived *etsi Deus non daretur* [as if God cannot be found]. Faith reveals itself for the secular world. Faith must also recognise this world because God himself was crucified and died for it. This being the paradox of belief: that God suffered and died for a world, which lives as if God did not exist. Bonhoeffer believed that recognising the secular world is not an abdication in favour of atheism, but in reality the complete opposite.⁶⁴³ Thus the understanding of the world with all of its inner conflicts becomes a key motive in the Christian belief.⁶⁴⁴

⁶⁴³ See Bengt Häggglund, *Teologins Historia: En dogmhistorisk översikt*, Lund 1971, pp. 395-396. Also Trygve Wyller, "Sekulære liv i en veldig religiøs tid", in the Norwegian paper *Morgenbladet*, 3. – 9. March 2006.

⁶⁴⁴ Cf. Finn Benestad, *Musikk og tanke. Hovedretninger i musikkestetikkens historie fra antikken til vår egen tid*, 2nd ed., Oslo 1977, pp. 335-338: In many 20th century forms of art the experience of a reality is represented by fragments and disconnected quantities as a recurrent theme. A notable example of this is the Spanish painter Pablo Picasso (1881-1973). Many of his pictures can be perceived as a conflict between strongly contrasted elements. The foreground and background are fused together, motives are torn apart from each other, in fact as a whole serving almost as a direct reflection of an artistic crisis, on which the basis of a new understanding of reality is formed. Collage-techniques become symbolic of the fragmented and disconnected. A comparative aesthetic contribution as applied to musical creativity in the 20th century can be seen from developments of improvisation and new random compositional

In accordance with Bonhoeffer's beliefs of a universe riddled with contrasts, entry to a church, or participation in a service, can be comparable to entering a fragmentary world whose premises are specified by differing aspects of Biblical language. Each liturgical agenda can therefore be perceived as an arrangement of fragments of an underlying Biblical substance. Frequently there are widely differing biblical genres that function as sources for the presentations that fashion the contents and linguistic forms of the prayers, hymns and preaching in a service. Within many Christian denominations Old Testament psalms are sung as though they were intended to be sung in our time. Extracts from the New Testament gospels and epistles are read as though they were addressed directly to us today.⁶⁴⁵ All this can be described as dealing with fragments of a Biblical reality, which must be recognised and above all else, *interpreted* before they can become our own.

The fragmentary and paradoxical as an esthetical idea

The musical ideas for this improvised Concert Mass are based on the plainchant used in the Roman Catholic Easter Mass *Missa lux et origo*⁶⁴⁶ [Mass for light and origins]. The artistic idea for the recording has its basis in what I will choose to characterise as a "struggle" between different musical worlds.⁶⁴⁷ The idea has been to establish a laboratory for sound-producing processes that take a fundamental church melodic idea as its starting-point. As the title of the work – *Missa sacra et profana* – implies the music unfolds itself symbolically on the border between the "sacred" and "profane". In the historic section of this dissertation we have noted Hans Haselböck's observation that many 19th century settings of the Mass for choir, soloists and orchestra incorporate the organ in the orchestration as a type of guarantee for the music's sacral integrity. It is therefore intended that by association the sound of the organ will give a sacred or ecclesiastical dimension to this work.

The concept for the improvised *Missa sacra et profana* was developed by a plainchant schola consisting of four women's voices, a female jazz-singer, and six instrumentalists. These consisted of one woodwind player who played Bb-clarinet, bass clarinet and tenor saxophone, one cellist, two percussionists, one electric double bass and one organist. The idea behind this being that the organ should

techniques. A major figure in these developments was the American composer John Cage (1912-1993) with his indeterminate musical techniques linked to aleatoric elements. "Alea" comes from the Latin word for "dice" – and the metaphor refers to chance or random composition.

⁶⁴⁵ See Gordon Lathrop, *Holy Things. A Liturgical Theology*, Minneapolis 1998, p. 15.

⁶⁴⁶ The concept is based on plainchant melodies in *Liber Usualis Missae et Officii pro Dominicis et Festis cum Canto Gregoriano*, 1946.

⁶⁴⁷ A production which aims to create a liturgically inspired soundscape which consists mainly of contrasts and freely improvised playing – in other words with an emphasis on fragmentation and lack of cohesion – is basically opposed to the mid-19th century endeavours of the "Erlangen school" to restore an ecclesiastical style to church music. The aesthetic criterion here was that sacred music should be formed in accordance with the highest ideals of beauty as practised by earlier church musicians, especially those of the Reformation and Baroque eras. Many 19th century church musicians managed to achieve something of this through a conscientious and selective application of musical techniques. Their aim was to create music with a greatest stylistic unity that was worthy of inclusion in services – using a tonal language, which aimed to distance itself from profane and worldly feelings. As we have seen, such an aesthetic forms the basis for the first of this dissertation's three recording projects.

make its ecclesiastical presence felt in this unusual aural landscape. One of the ways in which this is achieved is by its use to accompany the Ordinary⁶⁴⁸ of the *Missa lux et origo*.

The organ also provides a freely improvised accompaniment to the Proper of the Mass,⁶⁴⁹ the Offertory *Terra tremuit, et quievit, deum resurget in iudicio Deus, alleluia* [Earth trembled, and was still, when God has risen to judgement, alleluia], and free interludes between the individual lines of the plainchant melody. Here the song can be compared to an underlying base of sacral ideas – an ecclesiastical substance that can be recognised and interpreted – in an analogy with the theological and aesthetic considerations above. Within this image the organ also assumes a central role in the struggle between church “tradition” on the one hand and the rather less traditional presence of other instruments – or again the “sacred” and “profane” sounds.

Experimental “orchestral” mass

It was considered that the improvisations originating from such an ensemble should be a wide-angled display of sound with room for close flights of fantasy in contrast to huge build-ups of tension: as a reflective image of an existential drama, a seething mass of humanity living in the world and searching for its own clues. How is it possible to say that this recording project takes place on the frontier between the sacred and the profane? One can attempt to answer this question by pointing out that the Biblical account of the Easter drama also largely describes a gallery of profane persons. They form a chorus of worldly voices that struggle with each other in different ways, yet most definitely do not conclude with any form of external harmony or consensus. As an artistic motive this can perhaps be regarded as a paradoxical aesthetic – an aural expression that attempts to allow for both religious and secular reflections. Or after the principles expressed by Bonhoeffer: to recognise and interpret a fragmented world of sound, which is improvised against the background of a human need for spontaneous expression and musical games. In this way I consider that religious narrative also requires empathy and emotional involvement, and that spontaneous interpretive feelings play a vital role in the meeting-place of the human and the divine.

For me personally this recording project also offered a chance to fulfil a wish to filter my own identity as an improvising organist, both in relation to a thematic range of ideas deeply rooted in Catholic piety and liturgical practice, and in the meeting with my fellow musicians’ empiricism from other musical genres. Not the least of this was my own experience of an emotionally charged “cross-modal” ensemble, in a current of differing aural impressions, which formed the driving improvisatory force during the recordings as they took place in Vasa Church, Gothenburg. By this I am referring to both the struggles and types of stylistic directional changes which originated from me, as well as the occasions when I followed the

⁶⁴⁸ The Ordinary of the Roman Catholic Mass consists of the fixed points: Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus and Agnus Dei.

⁶⁴⁹ The Proper of the Mass refers to those sections, which vary according to the different celebrations. In the Easter Mass these include the following: Introit: Resurrexit, Gradual: Haec dies, Alleluja, Sequence: Victimae paschali laudes, Offertory: Terra tremuit, and the Communion: Pascha nostrum. The Antiphon *Vidi aquam* introduces the Easter Mass, which I here also have chosen to use at the conclusion of this recording.

inputs from the other musicians. Here it was to some extent these inputs that controlled my own body responses and thought processes through motor programmes. An especially important side of this process was “translating” these impressions with adequate patterns of movement originating from the organ’s tonal resources. The recording situation also gave a number of experiences of the body’s ability to recognise and interpret its aural surroundings, even when these arise very rhapsodically and immediately.

In the first place the working method of approach involved allowing the imagination free reign as a spontaneous creative element. Questions of form and style were treated in a very loose manner. A large part of the practice involved investigating the special characteristics of ensemble improvisation, and the rich variety of possibilities offered by the “polyphonic” treasures thus offered. As a practitioner on the “sounding machine” – the organ – and as a liturgical musician with many years’ experience, this process offered of new and creative inputs which required a very different response from my normal practices. At times the energy from the other musicians’ performances seemed to be a greater driving force than my own background as a church organist – though at other time the reverse seemed to be the case.

A starting-point for this “orchestral mass” can be described as the concept of sounding contrasts: interpreting ideas of one of the Roman Catholic Church’s central plainchant Masses following the inspiration of a prolific Protestant theologian. This took place in the creative tensions between the sound of a plainchant Schola, input from six musicians using free forms and an improvising organist. The latter became a strong focal point in the struggle to move crossover between differing aural worlds. In this way I personally (as a “spontaneous composing” organ player) also found my inspiration in the following words from the Swedish-Canadian musicologist, broadcaster, organist, pedagogue and composer Bengt Hambræus⁶⁵⁰ (1928-2000):

Att komponera för orgel är inte i första hand att skriva fugor och koralbearbetningar utan att leva sig in i orgelns klangliga och dynamiska resurser och på basis av detta gestalta formerna för en nyare och djärvare orgelkonst än vad vi har varit vana vid. (...) Man förnyar inte konsten genom att yttra sig spirituellt om de wienklassiska mästarna – och man förnyar inte heller gudstjänstmusiken genom att låta den löpa i preludiepastischernas hjulspår.⁶⁵¹

[To compose for the organ does not firstly imply writing fugues and choral arrangements without experiencing the organ’s many timbres and its dynamic resources. With this (experience) as a basis one can shape the forms for a newer and bolder organ art than we have been accustomed to. (...) One does not renew art by talking spiritually about the Vienna Classicist masters – and neither does one renew sacral music by letting it continue according to the paths of prelude pastiches.]

⁶⁵⁰ See Per F. Broman, “Abstract”, in *“Back to the Future”. Towards an Aesthetic Theory of Bengt Hambræus*, University of Gothenburg 1999: In his writings from the 1960’s onward Hambræus contributed to an all-encompassing understanding of music aesthetics. This included aesthetic crossovers between art music, world music, and to a lesser extent, popular music.

⁶⁵¹ See Bengt Hambræus, “Att komponera för orgel”, in *Organum* 1, No. 5 1962, p. 14. Also Broman 1999, p. 13.

Ensemble-improvisation in Vasa Church, Gothenburg

CD I

Antiphon: *Vidi aquam* (track 1)

Introit: *Resurrexi* (track 2)

Improvisation over *Resurrexi* (track 3)

Kyrie (track 4)

Improvisation over *Kyrie* (track 5)

Gloria (Track 6)

Improvisation over *Gloria* (track 7)

Gradual: *Haec dies* (track 8)

Improvisation over *Haec dies* (track 9)

Alleluia (track 10)

Improvisation over *Alleluia* (track 11)

Sequence: *Victimae paschali laudes* (track 12)

Improvisation over *Victimae paschali laudes* (track 13)

Credo (track 14)

Total playing time CD I: 76:14

CD II

Offertory: *Terra tremuit* (track 1)

Sanctus (Track 2)

Improvisation over *Sanctus* (track 3)

Agnus Dei (track 4)

Improvisation over *Agnus Dei* (track 5)

Communion: *Pascha nostrum* (track 6)

Improvisation over *Pascha nostrum* (track 7)

Postlude (track 8)

Antiphon: *Vidi aquam* (track 9)

Participants

Schola Gothia

Ulrike Heider (leader)

Yvonne Carlsson

Kristina Lund

Helene Stensgård Larsson

Musicians:

Lindha Kallerdahl – vocal

Andreas Hall – woodwinds, electronic

Emma Nordlund – cello

Henrik Wartel – percussion, electronic

Martin Öhman – percussion, electronic

Harald Stenström – electrified double bass (leader)

Svein Erik Tandberg – organ and artistic concept

Recording and digital mastering: Kai Schüler

Total playing time CD II: 30:33

The Roman Catholic Mass for Easter day

Vidi áquam egrediéntem de témplo, a látere déxtro, allelúia: et ómnes, ad quos pervénit áqua ísta, sálvifácti sunt, et dícant, allelúia, allelúia. Confitémini Dómino quóniam bonus: quóniam in saéculum misericórdia éjus. Glória Pátri, et Fílio, et Spirítui Sáncto. Sicut érat in princípío, et núnc, et sémpér, et in saécula saeculórum. Amen

Resurrexi, et adhuc técum sum, allelúia: posuísti super me mánum túam, allelúia: mirábilis fácta est sciéntia túa, allelúia, allelúia. Dómine probásti me, et cognovísti me: tu cognovísti sessiónem méam, et resurrectionem méam. Glória Pátri.

Kýrie eléison. Chríste eléison. Kýrie eléison.

Glória in excélsis Déo. Et in térra pax homínibus bónae voluntátis. Laudámus te. Benedícimus te. Adorámus te. Glorificámus te. Grátias ágimus tibi propter mágnam glóriam túam. Dómine Déus, Rex caeléstis, Déus Páter omnípotens. Dómine Fíli unigénite Jésu Chríste. Dómine Déus, Agnus Déi, Fílius Pátris. Qui tóllis peccáta mún-di, miserére nóbis. Qui tóllis peccáta mún-di, súscipe deprecationem nóstram. Qui sédes ad dexteram Pátris, miserére nóbis. Quóniam tu sólus sánctus. Tu sólus Dóminus. Tu sólus Altíssimus, Jésu Chríste. Cum Sáncto Spirítu, in glória Déi Pátris. Amen.

Haec díes, quam fécit Dóminus: exultémus, et laetémur in éa. Confitémini Dómino, quóniam bonus: quóniam in saéculum misericórdia éjus.

Allelúia. Páscha nóstrum immolátus est Chrístus.

I saw water flowing from the right side of the temple, alleluia. It brought God's life and his salvation, and the people sang in joyful praise: alleluia, alleluia. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

I have risen: I am with you once more, alleluia; you placed your hand on me to keep me safe. How great is the depth of your wisdom, alleluia. Lord, you proved me, and you know me. You know my seat and my resurrection. Glory be to the Father.

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth. Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory. Lord Jesus Christ, only son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us; you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer. For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

This day was made by the Lord; we rejoice and are glad. Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, for his love has no end.

Alleluia, alleluia! Christ our passover, has been sacrificed, let us celebrate the feast then, in the Lord.

Victimae paschali laudes immolent
 Christiáni. Agnus redémit oves: Christus
 innocens Pátri reconciliávit peccatóres.
 Mors et víta duéllo confluxére mirándo,
 dux vítae mórtuus, régnat vívus. Dic nóbis
 María, quid vidísti in vía? Sepúlcrum
 Christi vivéntis, et glóriam vídi
 resurgéntis: Angélicos téstes, sudárium, et
 véstes. Surréxit Christus spes méa:
 praecedet súos in Galilaéam. Scimus
 Christum surrexisse a mórtuis vere: tu
 nóbis, víctor Rex, miserére. Amen.
 Allelúia.

Crédo in unum Déum, Pátrém
 omnipoténtem, factórem caéli et térrae,
 visibílium ómnium, et invisibílium. Et in
 unum Dóminum Jésum Christum, Fílium
 Déi unigénitum. Et ex Pátre nátum ante
 ómnia saécula. Déum de Déo, lúmen de
 lúmine, Déum vérum de Déo véro.
 Génitum, non fáctum, consubstantiálem
 Pátri: per quem ómnia fácta sunt. Qui
 propter nos hómines, et propter nóstram
 salútem descendit de caélis. Et incarnátus
 est de Spírítu Sáncto ex María Vírgine: Et
 hómo fáctus est. Crucifixus étiam pro
 nóbis: sub Póntio Piláto pássus, et sepúltus
 est. Et resurréxit tértia díe, secúndum
 Scriptúras. Et ascéndit in caelum: sédet ad
 dexteram Pátris. Et íterum ventúrus est
 cum glória, judicáre vivos et mórtuos:
 cújus régni non érit fínis. Et in Spírítum
 Sánctum Dóminum, et vivificántem: qui ex
 Pátre Filióque procedit. Qui cum Pátre et
 Fílio simul adorátur, et conglorificátur: qui
 locútus est per Prophéas. Et únám sánctam
 cathólicam et apostólicam Ecclésiám.
 Confíteor unum baptísma in remissionem
 peccatórum. Et expécto resurrectionem
 mortuórum. Et vítam ventúri saéculi.
 Amen.

Christians, to the Paschal Victim offer
 sacrifice and praise. The sheep are
 ransomed by the Lamb; and Christ, the
 undefiled, hath sinners to his Father
 reconciled. Death with life contended:
 combat strangely ended! Life's own
 Champion, slain, yet lives to reign. Tell us,
 Mary: say what thou didst see upon the
 way. The tomb the Living did enclose; I
 saw Christ's glory as he rose! The angels
 there attending; shroud with grave-clothes
 resting. Christ, my hope, has risen: he goes
 before you into Galilee. That Christ is truly
 risen from the dead we know. Victorious
 King, thy mercy show. Amen. Alleluia.

We believe in one God, the Father, the
 Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of
 All that is, seen and unseen. We believe in
 one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only son of
 God, eternally begotten of the Father, God
 from God, Light from Light, true God from
 true God, begotten, not made, of one Being
 with the Father. Through him all things
 were made. For us men and for our
 salvation he came down from heaven: by
 the power of the Holy Spirit he became
 incarnate of the virgin Mary, and was
 made man. For our sake he was crucified
 under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and
 was buried. On the third day he rose again
 in accordance with the Scriptures: he
 ascended into heaven and is seated at the
 right hand of the Father. He will come
 again in glory to judge the living and the
 dead, and his kingdom will have no end.
 We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the
 giver of life, who proceeds from the Father
 and the Son. With the Father and the Son
 he is worshipped and glorified. He has
 spoken through the Prophets. We believe
 in one holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.
 We acknowledge one baptism for the
 forgiveness of sins. We look for the
 resurrection of the dead, and the life of the
 world to come.
 Amen.

Terra trémuit, et quiévit, dum resúrgeret
in iudício Déus, allelúia.

Sánctus, Sánctus, Sánctus Dóminus Déus
Sábaoth. Pléni sunt caéli et térra glória túa.
Hosánna in excélsis. Benedíctus qui vénit
in nómine Dómini. Hosánna in excélsis.

Agnus Déi, qui tóllis peccáta mún-di:
miserére nóbis. Agnus Déi, qui tóllis
peccáta mún-di: miserére nóbis. Agnus Déi,
qui tóllis peccáta mún-di: dóna nóbis
pácem.

Pascha nóstrum: immolátus est Chrístus,
allelúia: itaque que epulémur in ázymis
sinceritátis et veritátis, allelúia, allelúia,
allelúia.

Earth trembled, and was still, when
God has risen to judgement, alleluia.

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and
might, heaven and earth are full of your
glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is
he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of
the world: have mercy on us. Lamb of
God, you take away the sins of the world:
have mercy on us. Lamb of God, you take
away the sins of the world: grant us peace.

Christ has become our paschal sacrifice;
let us feast with the unleavened bread of
sincerity and truth, alleluia.

Postlude

Sketches for a conclusion – a possible approach to further creative improvisation research

*The Organ plays a decorative part, and in each piece it must be like the great stained-glass window in a cathedral, of which one appears red, the other blue, another violet, even though they are, in reality, multicoloured. It is from this wonderful simplicity in richness that the improviser must draw his inspiration.*⁶⁵²

(French organist and improviser Marcel Dupré, 1962.)

⁶⁵² See Dupré 1962, 2nd volume, p. 148.

CHAPTER 24

Summary reflections

How does one improvise? And: How can one learn the art of improvisation? From these two basic research questions this dissertation can be regarded as perhaps just a little pretentious. At a deepest level I have attempted nothing less than a scientific investigation into some aspects of the fantastic stream of energy that is human creativity. As this study has concerned itself with musical improvisation, the spotlight has naturally focused on the spontaneous manifestations of the creative processes involved in artistic thinking. I have sought to achieve this by considering what I choose to describe as *internal* and *external* factors. These comprise an array of qualities which play a decisive part in the formation of improvised music. These internal and external factors are of both a declarative and a procedurally related silent type, and can all be linked to such terms as “imagination”, “form”, “movement” and “sound”. All these moments occupy a central place in my work. They are illustrated by three different recording projects which are all based on different concepts.⁶⁵³ Thus I venture to regard this as a multidimensional theoretical basis.

The differing components of this theoretical basis do not replace each other. They cannot be described as true or false, but are better evaluated as more or less applicable in specific situations. The recordings enable the different matters that have been discussed to be experienced aurally. We can therefore say that these make a contribution to a more comprehensive understanding of how improvised music comes into being. An improvising musician is surrounded by a whole world of possibilities, backed up by an array of knowledge. It is of vital importance that one can approach these possibilities with an open mind. In the context of improvisation we have inherited these possibilities from the musical materials employed in works and idioms that we know. In one way these may be said to form a part of our musical personality, though this does not prevent us enjoying them in other ways. In other words a world that we can both involve ourselves with and loose ourselves in, but also a world that does determine the criteria by which we make our artistic choices. The essence here is that within one and the same form of art there are so many variants of expression in the form of different perceptions. It is not improbable that it is within the strength of this recognition that we develop our-

⁶⁵³ We have seen above that the formation of this has been accomplished in three differing ways: 1) By “re-thinking” an historic service following examples from a 19th century textbook for church organ playing. 2) By focusing on the art of organ improvisation as a multi-faceted stylistic phenomenon. 3) By developing improvisatory expressions of a rather less structured nature from musical cross-over activities.

selves as improvising musicians. I will now suggest two mutually complimentary forms of gestation.

Complimentary approaches

1. A creative practice of organ improvisation which is based on different types of musical imitation, will frequently produce results in the form of actions which have their origins in our own perspectives and conceptions. These can also be regarded as a collective aesthetic substance.⁶⁵⁴ This can be associated with the actual type of musical moments the improviser is able to create for the listener, and what the latter is actually able to perceive in the music. For both parties this implies an element of confidentiality in the communication process that the music represents. The improviser takes certain preconditions as a starting point in order to fulfil certain expectations. In this approach much is pre-determined; thus it can be pointed out that a great deal of the actual aesthetic framework is always present in the “flesh and blood” of the artistic medium. It is self-evident to the point of triviality to point out that many of the world’s musical cultures are based on an array of collective common factors. Neither western art music nor even the specialised field of organ music are exempt from this truth.

However the history of music contains many examples which clearly demonstrate that creativity is in no way inhibited when the starting point is taken from specified forms and formal designs. The creative possibilities are legion since such a large amount of the musical past is available for our use. In the performance situation it is important to make a choice based on one specific example or another and then keep ourselves relatively consequently to this choice, whether it originates from our own era or has been retrieved from an earlier age.

2. A counterbalance to such conceptual forms of improvisation in the sense that the music builds on different stylistic models can, at least on an immediate experience, be perceived as the musician’s ability to loosen and sometimes erase formal frameworks, while simultaneously giving greater space for spontaneity and completely free approaches. In reality the picture will be far more complex, as the improvising musician usually brings an inner ballast of previous experience and learning. Thus musical strategies and techniques from both the near and remote past are consciously or sub-consciously arranged and filtered by the improviser’s personal attributes. They can therefore be regarded as contributors to the final sounding result.

If we imagine that we do something subconsciously, how can we possibly know the origins of such impulses? In the final instance is it not the improviser’s own training that is revealed in so many ways here? Something new, which has not previously been expressed, is created as a consequence of our many experiences, acquired knowledge and skills. Therefore the experience of the apparent unconscious, a spontaneous experience that is not necessarily revealed in the moment of improvisation, builds on earlier conscious choices and learning approaches.

⁶⁵⁴ Chorale harmonisation, creation of introductions, intonations, interludes and so on can be classified as liturgical “Gebrauchsmusik”. Much liturgical organ improvisation goes under this heading, but in order for the music to serve its purpose within the allotted framework it can be fruitful to consider different aspects that are involved in collective musical communication.

Understanding in the light of my own music making

In the three recording projects linked to the thesis I have attempted to *understand* these questions in the light of my own music making. In these recordings I have performed as a solo player, accompanied two vocal ensembles, and performed with other instrumentalists as an improvising ensemble musician. Tentatively I have employed these different approaches to improvisation in order to explore my hypothesis that they actually represent different processes. The recordings thus reflect musical frameworks of understanding and experiences that are presented on the frontiers between being more or less consciously dominated by will, between maintaining total control and deliberately relinquishing control, between the intended and the coincidental, between rationality and intuition, between imitation and attempted originality.

I acknowledge that in these recordings it is not always possible to speak in terms of absolutes, because there are many moments of musical crossover where styles are mixed and other alternative solutions are possible. This brings me back to Brad Mehldau's view of the improvisation process, "I guess it's a balance between something that is kind of very intellectual and something that is perhaps rather non-intellectual".⁶⁵⁵ In other words: There are two strategies which can mutually illuminate each other – or two complementary approaches which are placed at the beginning and end of a sliding scale where the points of balance frequently appear to change their position.

Aspects of Teaching

In considering the aims of teaching it is important to remember that the pedagogic process should form an integrated unity. Some of the less obvious aspects of human creative ability also need to be considered. This summary concentrates on what actually takes place in a teaching situation, within the framework of an active interplay between teacher and pupil. Both the text and recordings of this work are intended to produce an illumination of these pedagogic aspects.

I hope the reader will forgive me for pointing out the very obvious fact that the artistic aspects of music teaching need special consideration. In other words, strict rule-based systems should be applied with a considerable degree of artistic licence. A truly personal style of teaching is important, and a good teacher can intuitively discover his or hers⁶⁵⁶ own approach. Such a teacher is well-versed in his subject, and can bring his or her own experiences and intuition to the work. For at least some of the time he will allow the student to try and find his own way. At the same time the student needs to be able to discover his or her own path. The student also needs to face up to his or her own errors since from doing so the learning process can be greatly assisted. The teacher needs to be accessible when the pupil is really needs help and is open to receive such guidance as may be needed. However this does not exonerate the student from his own responsibility: the fact is that situations will arise from which only the student can extricate himself.⁶⁵⁷

⁶⁵⁵ Mosnes 2005.

⁶⁵⁶ Throughout this section the gender pronoun is of course interchangeable.

⁶⁵⁷ See the section "The art of improvisation through different eras". Here the following quotation from César Franck to his students: "Don't think that you will learn anything from my correction of faults of which you are aware, unless you have strained every effort yourself to amend them." (Hinton 1912).

Furthermore a teacher should attempt to be a complete human being in his meeting with the student. There is not necessarily a contradiction between being a complete human and the ability to teach in a professional manner. Thoughts of such a contradiction can affect the content of what the teacher actually teaches the student. If one focuses exclusively on the strict rules of the art of improvisation, then a teacher has to be rather “colourless” if the transmission of knowledge is not to be disturbed. However “transmission” in the widest sense of the word – something we have seen in the differing procedurally related frameworks of understanding – is a continuous part of the process. One does not therefore need to be afraid of being colourful. The student will probably come to know his or her own musical personality better by discovering the value of these transmissions. The interplay between intuition and convention can therefore be said to provide a stimulus for developing improvisations whose music can be captivating, no matter what the formal framework.

Such an approach is of necessity also of a personal character, but it will possibly be even more difficult for a student – within a creative discipline such as improvisation – to develop his or her own musicianship without a common sounding board with the teacher. Creative impulses can easily be shut out in a decisive attempt to maintain order, or by focusing primarily on formal frameworks. Naturally enough we have to learn to cope with formal aspects by consciously working with so-called “obligatory exercises”.⁶⁵⁸ The pedagogic input should all the same be closely linked with what the student *expresses* at the console. In a teaching context this might be regarded as an atmosphere between two evaluating personalities. One personality does not dare to make an effort if there is not another personality there, but the functions as teacher and pupil are not threatened by a mutual engagement on part of both parties.

If we consider written music from different epochs and traditions, an improviser can be said to function as a display of musical possibilities. In my own studies I have frequently visited music history to find examples. With the aid of printed music, and by listening analytically I have studied musical works and forms from different eras. The object has not been to plagiarize, but to form music in differing and perhaps new ways. The possibilities are limitless, but they must first be discovered and understood before they can be assimilated. This is a clear indication of the function of comprehension in creative processes.

Aspects for further investigation

Our knowledge of motor movements and their links to actions is steadily increasing. Much of the current research would appear to be moving towards a procedural paradigm of knowledge. By “procedural knowledge” I refer to knowledge about our actions, and the expression “procedural paradigm of knowledge” implies that a degree of investigation into corporeal involvement. Our internal cognitive life is largely controlled by the physical body. Both sensing and cognition deal with corporeal involvement, which means that what we actually do has much of its origins in biological factors. The important thing in this context is that procedural factors are frequently perceived as silent qualities. Therefore one should aim to “attack” the silent knowledge and make it something more declarative. In a given research

⁶⁵⁸ Regarding “obligatory exercises” – see Ganz 1987, p. 287.

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discussion this basically means taking *subjective moments* and making them more easily measurable – aiming to say something on the entire course: from idea to experience.

Does artistic research into the art of organ improvisation necessarily lead to a better practice of this art? That is not necessarily the case. This does not give any reason to suppose that investigation into music formations and procedures will not give a different and perhaps a better understanding of improvisation. As far as I can see there are many exciting possibilities for investigating the connection between musical works on the one hand and on the other hand verbal and analytic approaches. Hopefully these can help give a number of useful issues for research, also considering other types of improvisation. There will also frequently be a close connection between such expressions as “knowledge” and “creative accomplishment”.

Appendices

The function of the organ in 19th century Evangelical Lutheran services

The following description of the role of the organ in the Evangelical Lutheran services comes from Ernst Schmidt (1864-1936) – director of the Church Music Faculty at the University of Erlangen from 1917 to 1933:

Die Orgel ist ein wichtiger Faktor mit individueller Bedeutung für die evangelische Kirchenmusik geworden. Auch auf diesem Gebiete war um die Mitte des vorigen Jahrhunderts eine Reorganisation veranlasst. Die Aufgabe der Orgel im Gottesdienst bestand in früheren Jahrhunderten darin, die gottesdienstliche Feier einzuleiten, zu verbinden, zu vermitteln den Zusammenhang einzelner liturgischer Teile, präambulieren, präludivieren, auch postludieren, schliesslich sich auch mit den übrigen musikalischen Faktoren zu vereinigen in einer Gesamtwirkung. Die Orgel hat aber bald auch die Aufgabe erhalten, den Gemeindegesang zu begleiten. Damit verlor sie allerdings etwas an ihrer Selbständigkeit, aber nichts von ihrer Bedeutung als wichtiger Faktor zur Hebung des Gemeindegesangs, und damit des ganzen gottesdienstlichen Lebenspage da der evangelische Gottesdienst Gemeindefeier ist und der musikalische Ausdruck der Gemeinde in der Feier der Choral, das herrliche evangelische, gewaltige, innige, tiefe, volksmässige, kirchliche Lied der Quell alles kirchenmusikalischen Lebens ist und bleiben muss, da in der evangelischen Kirche kein Ton, keine musikalische Empfindung, kein musikalisch hoher und kunstmässig gestalteter Ausdruck geduldet werden soll, der nicht seine Legitimation aus der singenden, gläubigen Gemeinde her beweisen kann, so erwachsen hieraus vor allem auch für das einleitende Orgelspiel (zum Eingangs- und Predigtliede) klare Forderungen, die ihre Erfüllung finden, wenn Vorspiel und Gemeindechoral in engstem organischen Zusammenhang stehen – also die Form einer Choralfuge, Choralfigurationen oder Choralbearbeitung mit durchgeführtem Cantus firmus zur Anwendung kommt. Schwere Sünden wurden im Laufe des vorigen Jahrhunderts nach dieser Richtung von den Organisten und Komponisten begangen. Eine gründliche Tempelreinigung war notwendig geworden. Der erschrecklichen Geschmacklosigkeit und Stillosigkeit konnte nur begegnet werden durch Darreichung von Besserem, Stilvollerem, Gesundem, Kirchlich-Würdigem. Die Zahlreiche Orgelkompositionen Herzogs, die in einer grossen Menge von Editionen vorliegen, haben unendlich viel zur Veredlung des Geschmacks unserer Organisten beigetragen, das kirchliche Stilgefühl wieder in gesunde Bahnen gelenkt. Sie sind zum grössten Teil gehalt- und weihvoll, edel in Form, frei von Triviale, geeignet hinzuführen zu dem grössten Meister deutsch-evangelischer Orgelkunst, zu Joh. Seb. Bach. Das war auch sein Wunsch, der ihn bei seinem Schaffen auf diesem Gebiete beseelte. „Wenn meine Orgelsachen zum grossen Bach hinführen, und meine Gesänge die Gemeinde erbauen und der Ehre Gottes dienen – so ist mir dieses genug“.⁶⁵⁹

⁶⁵⁹ Quoted in Schmidt 1922- See Klek 2004, p. 18.

[Within Evangelical Church music the organ has played its own vital role. It has acquired its own significance, although within this area a reassessment took place in the middle of the previous century. In previous centuries the organ's role in a service was to introduce the ceremony, to coordinate the different liturgical sections into a unity, to preludise, create introductions and conclusions, and to bind the single liturgical elements into a unity. However the organ then assumed the role of leading the congregational singing. Truly enough it thus lost its independent function, but nothing was lost with respect to the being a major factor in promoting the congregational singing, and thus the lifeblood of worship. The essence of Evangelical worship is the congregation's own celebration, and when the congregation expresses itself in the chorale, the magnificent, Evangelical, mighty, folksong-like congregational song, which is and will continue to be the fountain of all living church music. This is for the reason that within the Evangelical Church no tones, musical ideas, moods or expression can be accepted which cannot find a place in relation to the singing and believing congregation. This requirement must over everything be fulfilled in connection with the introductory organ prelude (to the opening hymn and before the sermon) so that the prelude and the chorale are almost an organic entity. In other words: by using chorale fugues, chorale figurations or chorale arrangements with a consistent cantus firmus. In the previous century there have been many sins and errors in this matter, after some examples from composers and organists. A full-scale cleaning of the temple was necessary. Such an appalling lack of taste can only be accept by offering something better and more stylish – something healthier and more worthy of the Church. Herzog's many organ works which exist in a large number of editions, have to a great extent contributed to edifying the tastes of our organists. These have led the feelings towards healthier pathways. For the most part this refers to compositions which are ceremonial, noble in form, free from trivialities, and suited to pave the way towards the great master of Evangelical German organ arts – to Johan Sebastian Bach. That was his (Herzog's) greatest wish, a wish which gave a soul to his creative work within this area. "If my organ trifles lead to the great Bach and my songs serve for the edification of the congregation and the glory of God – then let that suffice for me."]

A description of Louis Vierne's improvisations and teaching

The first decade of the 20th century was an eventful one within the field of French organ improvisation. Among the great names of this period we find that of the organist at Notre-Dame, Paris – Louis Vierne. His organ works are regarded by many as a high point in the French renaissance of organ music which began with Aristide Cavaillé-Coll and César Franck in the 1860's. One of Vierne's pupils was the organist Jean Bouvard (1905-1996) from Lyon, who has described the impressions he received from standing beside his master at the console in Notre-Dame Cathedral and hearing him unfold his wings as an improviser. Furthermore he offers us a reconstruction of Vierne's model for *thème libre* improvisation.

Lorsque Vierne improvisait à Notre-Dame de Paris, on ressentait le frémissement de la vie, un monde empreint de poésie et de rêverie. Les fresques sonores emplissaient la cathédrale que le soleil inondait à travers les vitraux et les rosaces, s'harmonisant avec « ces torrents de joyaux multicolores que déverseent, sur nous, les verrières, dans un éclaboussement de pourpre et de miracle »... (Paul Claudel: préface aux *Vitraux de France*. Plon 1951).

Lors des obsèques du maréchal Foch, j'eus le privilège de monter près de mon Maître, à la tribune de Notre-Dame. Je revois encore l'émotion du grand organiste Joseph Bonnet au moment où éclata l'entrée funèbre. Ce fut inoubliable...

La Première Communion, une des fêtes préférées de l'organiste de Notre-Dame, lui inspirait une poésie tout autre, car Vierne, à qui la vie n'épargna ni les souffrances, ni les deuils, tirait de son âme vibrante, de son cœur douloureux, des accents d'une humaine et profonde résonance.⁶⁶⁰

[When Vierne improvised in Notre-Dame-cathedral in Paris, one resented the shudder of life (into) a world impressed with poetry and dreams. The sonorous frescoes filled the cathedral, which the sun inundated through the stained-glass and rose-windows, harmonizing with "the torrents of the joyous multitude of colours which sloped towards us, the glass-makers, in a spatter (splash) of crimson and of a miracle." (Paul Claudel).

During the funeral of Field-Marshal Foch, I was privileged to be allowed to stand at the side of my teacher on the tribune of Notre-Dame. I can still see the emotion of the great organist Joseph Bonnet at the moment when the funeral entry burst out. It was unforgettable....

The first Communion, one of the Notre-Dame organist's favourite festivals of, inspired him with a completely different type of lyricism, for Vierne, whose life had been spared from neither sufferings nor bereavements, could here draw from his

⁶⁶⁰ See Jean Bouvard, "Les cours d'improvisation de Louis Vierne. Sa façon d'harmoniser et de traiter le thème libre", in *Cahiers et mémoires de l'orgue* (France) 32 1984, p. 4.

vibrant soul, as from his aching heart, the accents of deep and profound human resonance.

Improvisation taught by Louis Vierne – his approach to harmonisation and development of a *thème libre*

Jean Bouvard further described Louis Vierne's pedagogic concepts regarding *thème libre* improvisation:

A quarante-cinq ans d'intervalle, mon ami Norbert Dufourcq m'invite à traiter, de nouveau, de l'improvisation du thème libre, d'après l'enseignement de mon cher Maître Louis Vierne.

En 1939, les « Amis de l'Orgue » de Paris avaient publié *In Memoriam* de Louis Vierne, ouvrage dans lequel se trouvent les « Cours d'Improvisation » du Maître, sa façon d'harmoniser et de traiter le thème libre suivis de cinquante thèmes libres de Vierne, que j'avais recueillis durant mes études d'orgue et d'improvisation à la Schola Cantorum de Paris.

Aujourd'hui, je reprends le même sujet, en y ajoutant plus de cent thèmes libres, recueillis notamment auprès de Widor, d'Indy, Tournemire, Vierne, Dupré, etc., s'échelonnant sur cent ans, de 1881 à 1981. (Les deux premiers thèmes sont d'Eugène Gigout, que j'avais connus à Paris, quand j'avais quinze ans; nous avions parlé de l'improvisation...).

Ces thèmes présentent divers aspects : a/ expressifs, certains empreints de chromatisme, b/ assez vifs, prenant la forme d'une pastorale, c/ de caractère folklorique, d/ comme un motif grégorien.

Pour illustrer cette étude, j'ai choisi un thème caractéristique de Vierne; il reste bien entendu, que ce n'est qu'une proposition à l'adresse des jeunes étudiants en cette matière; comme l'a écrit Charles-Marie Widor, dans son *Initiation musicale* (Hachette, 1923, page 91) à propos de l'improvisation de la fugue : « Tel est plan le plan classique, que personne, d'ailleurs, ne vous force d'adopter. Quand on le propose aux étudiants, c'est pour leur épargner la peine d'en chercher un autre et de perdre leur temps dans cette recherche ».

Beaucoup d'autres eussent été plus qualifiés que moi pour traiter ce sujet. Je n'ai pu résister à l'invitation qui m'en était faite, les heures passées au contact de mon cher Maître étant parmi les plus belles, les plus émouvantes de ma vie d'organiste. Au-dessus de toutes les règles, de toutes les recettes, Vierne mettait d'abord la « Musique », comme Albert Roussel, déclarant : « je ne veux rien d'autre que faire seulement de la Musique » ! A un développement d'une structure parfaite, mais, dans lequel aucune note personnelle ou humaine n'apparaissait, il préférait le libre cours de l'inspiration. Rien ne le ravissait autant qu'une fuite originale en des tonalités éloignées. S'il estimait le thème libre, c'était surtout comme une forme scolaire, pour développer les dons précieux de l'inspiration, un cadre pour guider et aider l'élève, cadre dont le Maître saurait se libérer. Voici le plan qu'il en donnait :

Voici le plan qu'il donnait :

- a) Première exposition : thème, commentaire, thème, conclusion.
 - b) Trois phrases modulantes, construites sur une mesure du thème.
 - c) Seconde exposition à la dominante, commentaire, conclusion.
 - d) Développement sur un élément mélodique ou rythmique du thème.
 - e) Préparation de la rentrée : deux fois deux mesures sur la tête du thème.
 - f) Rentrée du thème : thème, commentaire, thème renversé, conclusion.
- (Pour les tonalités, canons, voir l'improvisation que je propose aux jeunes étudiants).⁶⁶¹

⁶⁶¹ Ibid., p. 3.

[After an interval of 45 years, I was invited by my good friend Norbert Dufourcq to again improvise upon a free theme, as taught by my dear master Louis Vierne. *In Memoriam de Louis Vierne* was published in 1939 by “Les Amis de l’Orgue” in Paris. In the covers of this volume one finds the Master’s own “Cours d’Improvisation” with his method of harmonising and treating a free theme, followed by fifty of Vierne’s own themes, which I had gathered during my study of the organ and improvisation at the Schola Cantorum in Paris.

Today I resume the same subject and add a further hundred free themes, collected especially from Widor, d’Indy, Tournemire, Vierne, Dupré, etc, collected from an entire century, from 1881 to 1981. (The first two themes are from Eugène Gigout who I came to know in Paris when I was 15 years old; we had a conversation about improvisation...).

These themes present differing aspects: a/ expressive, with a certain impression of chromaticism, b/ almost quick, taking the form of a pastorale c/ of a folk-like character, d/ with a Gregorian chant character.

In order to illustrate this study, I have one of Vierne’s characteristic themes; which of course remains a proposition addressed to the young students of this subject; as Charles-Marie Widor wrote in his *Initiation musicale* (Hachette, 1923, page 91) regarding fugal improvisation: “Such is the classical plan, that no-one, anywhere, will compel you to follow. When one suggests this to students, it is to save them the trouble of searching for another and thus losing their time in that pursuit.”

Many others will be better qualified than me to deal with this subject. I cannot resist the invitation that was made to me, because the hours spent in contact with my dear Master are among the finest and most moving of my life as an organist.

Above all regulations and “recipes” Vierne placed “Music” itself at the head, like Albert Roussel, declaring “I do not want to anything other than make ‘Music’!” Rather than develop a perfect structure, within which no human and personal note appears, he preferred to follow the free course of inspiration. Nothing could please him more than an original modulatory swerve towards a remote tonality. He esteemed the free theme as above all a scholastic form for developing the precious gifts of inspiration, a framework to guide and help the pupil, a framework with which the Master will free himself from.

Here is the plan that he gave:

- a) First exposition: theme, comment, theme, conclusion.
 - b) Three modulatory phrases, constructed from a bar of the theme.
 - c) Second exposition in the dominant key, comment and conclusion.
 - d) Development of a melodic or rhythmic element of the theme.
 - e) Preparation for the re-entry of the theme: two bars played twice from the head of the theme.
 - f) Re-entry of the theme: theme, comment, theme in retrograde, conclusion.
- (For the tonalities, canons, see the improvisations which I suggest to young students.)]

I

COMPOSITION EN SIX PARTIES

(HARMONISATION A LA MANIERE DE VIERNE)

PAR JEAN BOUVARD.

A) 1^{ère} EXPOSITION (1)

Thème libre de Louis Vierne.

Andantino $\text{♩} = 69$

(1) Pour les détails du plan proposé, les divers exemples se présentent séparés ; mais, après l'analyse, on peut enchaîner l'ensemble.

B) PONT

au mouvt

C) 2^{de} EXPOSITION

D) DEVELOPPEMENT.

The musical score consists of six systems of piano music. Each system has a treble and bass staff. The key signature is D major (two sharps). The time signature is 2/4. The music features various rhythmic patterns, including triplets and sixteenth notes. There are several accidentals (sharps and flats) throughout the piece. The notation includes slurs, ties, and dynamic markings like 'p' (piano). The piece concludes with the instruction 'Au mouv.' (Allegro).

cédez

Au mouv.

a) Canon à l'octave.

cédez

E) PRÉPARATION
ET
F) RENTRÉE DU THÈME.

un peu retenu

cédez

L'enchaînement des mesures 2 et 4 peut suffire pour cette prépa-
ration.

au mouvt

2)

pp

retenu

Lyon, août 1983.

2) Si, comme dans le cas présent, on a placé un ou deux canons dans le développement, le commentaire final peut se réduire à quelques mesures.

3) Ce signe $\overline{\square}$ imaginé par Pierre de Bréville (1861-1949) indique un point d'orgue ou d'arrêt de courte durée.

Adalbert Lindner describes Reger's art of improvisation in his youth in Weiden

Adalbert Lindner taught the young Max Reger (1873-1916) piano and later organ from 1884-1889 at Weiden in the Bavaria state. He later wrote the first biography of Reger, in which he describes the young Reger's organ playing and talent for improvisation as follows:

Die Betätigung Regers als Organist seiner Heimatkirche dauerte drei Jahre, von 1886 bis 1889. In der Regel spielte er an den Sonn- und Festtagen im vormittägigen Hauptgottesdienst und in der Vesper. An den Wochentagen kam er seltener auf den Chor. Doch stand ich auch während der Sonn- und Feiertagsgottesdienste immer neben der Orgel und half ihm an kritischen Stellen mit registrieren, da die alte Orgel eine ziemlich schwerspielige Traktur und lange, schwer zu ziehende Registerhebel besass.

Das man besonders in den letzten beiden Jahren am Spiele Regers vor allem bewundern musste, war nicht bloss seine ungeheure Gewandtheit im Primavista-Spiel (er nahm wohl niemals eine Messe zum Durchspielen nach Hause), sondern vor allem sein wunderbares Ingenium in bezug auf die Harmonik. Wenn er da an hohen Festtagen bei Beginn und am Schlusse des Gottesdienstes mit vollen Werke seiner unerschöpflichen Phantasie freien Lauf liess, konnte man Akkorde und Akkordverbindungen von solcher unerhörter Kühnheit vernehmen, dass es wohl vergeblich gewesen wäre, solche in einem der damals gebräuchlichen Lehrbücher für Harmonielehre zu entdecken.

Den Gipfel aber erreichte diese harmonische Rigorosität, nachdem sich mein Organist auch tief in die Tonwelt Richard Wagners versenkt hatte. Seine Improvisationen wurden da immer chromatischer, dissonanzengespickter und oft dermassen tonreich und vollgriffig, dass mein armer alter Balgtreter trotz grösster Anstrengung mittels der vier grossen, teilweise schon defekten Schöpfbälge nicht mehr das nötige Windquantum herbeizubringen vermochte und manchmal nicht übel Luft zeigte, inmitten dieser grausamen Siphphusarbeit auf und davon zu laufen.

War die Betätigung Regers auf der Orgel seiner Heimatkirche auch nur von erhältnismässig kurzer Dauer, heute sehen wir klar, dass im Hinblick auf sein späteres Schaffen für das königliche Instrument doch von immens grundlegender Bedeutung gewesen.

Diese eminente Beherrschung der Orgel im freien Spiel war mit dem Resultat gründlicher Studien in der Harmonielehre. Schon vor Eintritt in die Präparandenschule hatte ihn der Vater, der an der Anstalt Unterricht in Klavier, Orgel, Violine und Harmonielehre, wie auch in der deutschen Sprache und den Realien erteilte, in der Harmonielehre unterrichtet mit dem schönen Erfolge, dass das normale Pensum der Anstalt vor dem Eintritt in sie bereits erledigt war.

Reger der Ältere hatte da wunderleichtes Spiel: der Junge hatte ja alles schon in unglaublicher Weise in Kopf und Fingern.⁶⁶²

[Reger worked as organist in the church of his home town for three years, from 1886 to 1889. As a rule he played for the main service and Vespers on Sundays and holy days. On weekdays he seldom came to the organ gallery. All the same I stood beside the organ on Sundays and holy days to help him with registration at critical moments, because the old organ had a very heavy action and stop handles which were very difficult to pull.

During these two years what one had to admire Reger for was not only his fantastic sight-reading abilities (he never took the music for a mass home to practice), but his amazingly imaginative use of harmony. When festival services were introduced he allowed his boundless imagination run riot using full organ, and one can mention the bold chords and daring progressions such as one had never heard before, which one sought after in vain in the common harmony textbooks of that time.

This harmonic vigour reached its high point after he had studied Wagnerian sounds. The improvisations then became steadily more chromatic, full of dissonance and rich with full-blooded chords, so that despite his best efforts the poor organ blower simply could not produce sufficient volume of air from the worn-out bellows. Although Reger only used the organ in his home-town for a relatively short space of time we can clearly see what a decisive and fundamental effect it had on his future creative output for this regal instrument.

This striking mastery of free-style of organ playing was the result of thorough studies in the theory of harmony. Before he started "Präparandenschule" (preparatory school) he had studied with his father, who taught piano, organ and theory of harmony in addition to German and technical studies. As a result of these studies he had covered the school's normal syllabus before he even started to study. Reger senior thus had an unusually straightforward task, for the young man had unbelievably assimilated everything mentally and with his fingers.]

Reger's improvisation at concerts in Kolberg

Max Reger and his family often spent their summer holidays in Kolberg at the side of the Baltic Sea. In the summer of 1907 he was invited by the cathedral organist Max Springer to give a recital and conclude with an improvisation. *Hofkapellmeister* Walther Eichberger, who at that time directed the orchestra at the spa hotel, gives his impressions of Reger's improvisation as follows:

Meine Frau, die in Kolberg sehr gern gehört wurde, war wieder (wie jeden Sommer), vom Kirchenmusikdirektor Springer zur Mitwirkung in einem seiner Kirchenkonzerte eingeladen worden; daher fragte ich Reger gelegentlich bei unserem fast täglichem Zusammensein beim Seebaden; ob er nicht etwas „Geistliches“ geschrieben habe, was meine Frau singen könne. „Mal sehen“ sagte er. Am selben Nachmittags, als ich gerade das Konzert beginnen wollte, kam der „Grosse Max“ auf das Konzertpodium zugelaufen mit einem Notenblatt in der erhobenen Hand und rief mir zu: „Halt einen Augenblick – „vorsicht – die Tinte noch nass“ – damit überreichte er mir das Manuskript des soeben komponierten Liedes: „Ich sehe Dich in tausend Bildern, o Maria“.

Nach dem Nachmittagskonzert gingen wir, Reger mit Gattin, Musikdirektor Springer, meine Frau und ich nach dem Marien-Dom, wo Reger seine neueste Komposition an der Orgel mit meiner Frau durchspielte und dann ins Präludieren kam, wodurch wir Zuhörer geradezu berauscht wurden. Der alte Organist Springer, sonst ein sehr ruhiger Herr, wurde ganz aufgeregt und slüsterte

⁶⁶² See Lindner 1923, pp. 39-41.

mir zu: „Nun bin ich hier bald 30 Jahre Organist und höre heute Töne von meiner Orgel, die ich bis jetzt noch nie vernommen habe“. An der Orgel war Reger in seinem ureigensten Element, er hatte während seines Spieles uns Zuhörer vollständig vergessen. Er fantasierte mindestens eine halbe Stunde lang. Als wir ihm sagten, wie wundervoll er gespielt habe, meinte er: „Ich hab sehr lang nit an der Orgel gesessen, daher hat’s mir halt Spass gemacht; schon als Bub hab ich oft meinen Vater, der Lehrer und Organist in Brand bei Bayreuth war, an der Orgel vertreten“. Reger begleitete dann auch meine Frau in dem Kirchenkonzert; sein neuestes oben angeführtes, wundervolles Opus hinterliess allseitig einen tiefen Eindruck; auch heute noch gehört es zu seinen schönsten Liedern.⁶⁶³

[The Kolberg audiences greatly appreciated my wife’s singing, and she was once again (as every summer) invited by church music director Springer to participate in one of his church concerts. I therefore asked Max Reger – by a lucky chance wince we bathed together in the sea almost every day – if he didn’t have a suitable spiritual composition that my wife could sing. “We’ll see about that” he said. That very same afternoon, just before I was about to begin the concert “the great Max” came rushing to the podium with a sheet of manuscript in his hand and exclaimed “Careful now – the ink hasn’t dried yet” and gave me the manuscript to the freshly-composed song “I see you in a thousand pictures, O Maria”.

When the afternoon concert was over, Reger and his wife, musical director Springer, my wife and I proceeded to the cathedral where Reger played his new composition with my wife. Afterwards ha began to “fantasise” in a way which almost took our breath away. Old organist Springer – normally a very calm and sober man – was very excited and whispered to me “I have been organist here for nearly 30 years yet today I can hear sounds from this organ that I have never come across before”. At the organ Reger was in his natural element. He completely forgot his listeners and improvised for at least half an hour. When we complemented him on his fantastic playing he replied “It’s been a long time since I sat at an organ and therefore it was a wonderful treat. As a young boy I used to deputise for my father who was organist and music teacher at Brand near Bayreuth”. Reger accompanied my wife during the concert. The new work, which I have already mentioned, made a deep impression. Today we can count it as one of his most beautiful songs.]

The organist Georg Sbach, from St. Johannes Church in Magdeburg, also gives his account of the same concert in Kolberg Cathedral (Mariendom):

Als letzte Nummer stand auf dem Programm: Improvisation von Max Reger. Ich war ausserordentlich gespannt darauf und konnte den Augenblick kaum erwarten, bis er sich an die Orgel setzte. Auf einem winzigen Zettel hatte er sich das Thema einer Passacaglia notiert. Er begann zunächst mit einer Introduction. Gewaltige, prachtvolle Akkorde von ungeahnter Herrlichkeit wechselten mit gänzen den Manual- und Pedalpassagen ab. Melodien durchzogen den Raum, wie ich sie so ergreifend nie zuvor gehört habe. Und nun setzte im äussersten Pianissimo das Thema der Passacaglia ein. Wie Reger das Thema bearbeitete, steigerte, es auf immer neue Weise auslegte, und begann mit machtvollen Akkorden zu schliessen – das alles war unbeschreiblich grossartig und erschütternd. Als der Meister geendet hatte, beherrscht noch lange atemlose Stille in dem weiten Raum des Domes, und erst ganz allmählich erhob sich das Publikum von seinen Plätzen. Ich stand wie gebannt neben der Orgel und habe nie einen grösseren Augenblick erlebt als diese unmittelbare Offenbarung eines gewaltigen musikalischen Genius. Nach dem Konzert sagte mir jemand:

⁶⁶³ See Walther Eichberger, “Erinnerung an Max Reger zur Feier seines 60. Geburtstages am 13. März”, in *Anhalter Anzeiger* 11 March 1933.

„Max Reger“ hat das grösste musikalischen Gehirn der Jetztzeit“. Ein anderer wollte es nicht glauben, dass der Meister wirklich improvisiert hätte, und behauptete, er müsste auswendig gespielt haben. Ich kannte aber alle seine bis dahin erschienen Orgelwerke genau und wusste, dass in seinem auch nur ähnliche Stellen enthalten waren.⁶⁶⁴

[On the programme one could read the final item: Improvisation by Max Reger. I was thrilled at the thought and eagerly anticipated the moment when he would take his place at the organ. On a small sheet of paper he had noted a theme for a passacaglia. He began with an introduction. Magnificent, powerful and beautiful chords alternated with extensive manual and pedal passages. In the nave the melodies were almost more captivating than anything I had heard before. Then in the stillness came the passacaglia theme – pianissimo. How Reger treated the theme, developed it and interpreted it in a constant stream of new ways, and then led into the conclusion with majestic chords – it was indescribably fantastic and moving. When the master had ended, a breathless silence hung in the long nave, and it was a while before the audience gradually began to leave their places. I stood riveted by the side of the organ and have never experienced a greater moment than this spontaneous revelation of musical genius of unbelievable magnitude. After the concert someone said to me “Max Reger surely posses one of the greatest musical minds of our age.” Another listener refused to believe that we had just heard an improvisation and maintained that he must have played from memory. I knew all the organ works he had composed until that time, and knew that among these there were only some passages which were merely similar.]

Reger on the subject of fugal improvisation

In 1914 Reger stayed at a health resort in Meran and subsequently took a holiday in Berchtesgarden. During this time he met the conductor and music critic Fritz Stein (1879-1961). Amongst other matters Reger discussed fugal improvisation, and Stein's *Tagebuch* records some of his thoughts on this subject:

Am Abend sagt Reger es sei völlig ausgeschlossen, dass jemand eine richtige komplette Fuge improvisierte, das hätte sicher nicht einmal Bach gekonnt: „Man kann wohl einige Durchführungen regelrecht machen, aber eine ganze Fuge mit Engführungen, Umkehrungen etc. ist unmöglich. Die Finger können da nicht mehr mit, selbst wenn der Kopf die Fuge improvisierte. Wer behauptet, solche Fuge improvisieren zu können, der schwindelt. Ich kann wirklich polyphon denken, aber das könnte ich nie.“⁶⁶⁵

[In the evening Reger said that it was totally impossible to improvise a complete fugue in its entirety. Even Bach himself could not have accomplished this. “One can manage a regular exposition, but an entire fugue with stretti, thematic inversion etc is impossible. The fingers cannot keep up, even though it is the brain that improvises the fugue. Anyone who claims they can improvise a fugue is an impostor, a charlatan. I really do have the ability to think polyphonically, but I could never manage that.]

⁶⁶⁴ See Georg Sbach, “Max Reger im Kolberger Dom” in *Mitteilungen der Max Reger-Gesellschaft* (Germany) 3 1923, pp. 8-9.

⁶⁶⁵ See Fritz Stein, *Tagebuch* 1914 (manuscript), Max-Regel-Institut/Elsa-Regel-Stiftung, Karlsruhe, p. 35.

Some facts about the Performers on the Recording projects

Ulrike Heider studied musicology at Erlangen University, Germany, for one year in 1981. She continued her studies in Holland and graduated from Arnhem after studying church music and organ with Bert Matter and Hans van Nieuwkoop. Subsequently she also studied choral and orchestral conducting with Jos Leussink and Tilo Lehmann in Zwolle, and early ensemble singing with Rebecca Stewart in Tilburg.

Both before and after her emigration to Sweden in 1996 she has been active as a conductor, church musician and organist. She has taught and performed at various festivals and academies, and for her work as a choir conductor she has received several awards. She is currently organist at the Haga Church, Gothenburg. Here she leads and conducts two chamber choirs: Guldhedskyrkans Kammarkör and Haga Motettkör.

Guldhedskyrkans Kammarkör is a mixed voice choir of approximately 50 voices. Their repertoire spans from medieval music to the present. The primary focus is on choral masterpieces and Swedish lyrical choir music. Recent performances include Johannes Brahms' *Ein Deutsches Requiem* in 2006 and Johann Sebastian Bach's *Mass in B minor* in 2008.

Ulrike Heider is also the founder of **Schola Gothia**, a professional women's vocal quartet. Their repertoire includes Gregorian chant and early polyphonic music from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. They study and perform all of their music from historical notation. In accordance with the medieval practice, the group share one large music stand. The techniques involved with doing this are a great asset since the unison music makes great demands on vocal cooperation and tuning. It also facilitates the task of achieving uniform phrasing within the group. This makes it easier to cope with the harsh dissonances and open intervals that are a regular feature of polyphonic music. Schola Gothia also comprises these performers:

Yvonne Carlsson who studied the Church Music Programme at the Academy of Music and Drama, Gothenburg, and now works as a church musician in Lerum parish. **Kristina Lund** is a high school teacher of Swedish, History and Civic Studies. **Helene Stensgård Larsson** graduated from the Church Music Programme at the Academy of Music and Drama, Gothenburg, and has later augmented her studies with a Choir Pedagogue exam. Helene is an organist in Torslanda parish, Gothenburg.

Since their foundation 1999 Schola Gothia have performed many concerts in Sweden and also toured throughout Europe. In August, 2005, the group participated in the Seventh World Symposium on Choral Music in Kyoto, Japan. In November 2006 they took part in the Sixth International Festival Enlace Choral06 in Guatemala City, Guatemala. Schola Gothia has recorded three other CDs: *Gaudete in Domino. An English Lady Mass by Thomas Packe (fl. 1487-1499)* (Gothia), *Rubens rosa* (Rosarium) and *Gaude Birgitta* (Proprius). For this last recording the group received a Grammy nomination in 2003.

Lindha Kallerdahl has developed a personal style of singing, which is rooted in jazz traditions. She uses this as a basis to explore the expressive potential of the voice. She has also issued a solo album which features both her singing and her piano improvisations.

Emma Nordlund is trained as a classical cello player at the Academy of Music and Drama, Gothenburg. Since then she has increasingly specialised in the art of improvisation. She has taken part in an improvisation project in which composers and performers have cooperated with the aim of illuminating the borderline between improvisation and composition.

Jan H. Börjesson studied in the organ class at the University of Gothenburg from 1987 to 1991. At present he is the organist of St. Pauli Church in Gothenburg where his duties extend to training a number of choirs. As a recitalist he has given concerts in the Nordic and Baltic countries and The Netherlands. He has recorded three CDs on Swedish Romantic organs with more about to be released. He is also a bass singer for the professional and highly acclaimed group, Göteborg Baroque. He is also very sort after as an organ consultant in Sweden and other Nordic countries.

Andreas Hall studied at the Academy of Music and Drama, Gothenburg, where he followed the course that offered individual performance specialisation studies. Now he works as a freelance musician and teacher. He leads the Andreas Hall Quartet and PROTO, and also works with other leading Swedish jazz musicians.

Harald Stenström lectures in music theory at the Academy of Music and Drama, Gothenburg. His principle instrument is the electrified double bass. Stenström has considerable experience of working with free musical forms. He has worked as artistic leader for diverse vocal and instrumental groups in Gothenburg.

Henrik Wärtel is a self-taught musician. He has played percussion professionally since 1978. He has worked extensively with the Swedish jazz trombonist Eje Thelin and other leading Swedish jazz musicians in Stockholm circles. He has a number of CD and radio recordings to his credit.

Martin Öhman studied at the Academy of Music and Drama, Gothenburg, where he followed the course that specialises in improvisation. Subsequently he took his diploma examination in this subject. He is currently leader for a septet whose members come from Stockholm and Gothenburg. Öhman also has a number of compositions to his credit.

Svein Erik Tandberg received his formal education at The Norwegian State Academy of Music where he took the church music exam in 1976 and his diploma exam in 1978. In the same year, he gave his official debut concert in the Oslo Cathedral. He also has studied pedagogy at The Norwegian State Academy of Music. In the spring of 2000 he became "Cand Philol" at the Oslo University with musicology as his main subject. For several years Tandberg has studied organ improvi-

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sation with Professor Franz Lehrndorfer in Munich. He has held the post of organist at Slagen parish in Tønsberg, Norway, since 1979. Over the years, he has given a large number of concerts in Norway, Denmark, Finland and Sweden, Italy, Switzerland and Germany. Tandberg has taught organ improvisation at the Academy of Music and Drama in Gothenburg, and he also has a great number of radio recordings to his credit.

Organs used for the Recording projects

The Organ in Haga Church, Gothenburg was built in 1861 by the Danish firm Marcussen & Sohn, Aabenraa. Its original specification was 37 registers. In 1912 it was rebuilt and repositioned by Anders Magnusson, Gothenburg, using the original pipework. With the passage of time the organ came to be regarded as outdated, and in 1944 a new electric console was provided. This functioned until 2002, when the Swedish firm Åkerman & Lund AB, Knivsta undertook extensive reconstruction and restoration work. With the exception of a 4-rank Mixture on the Hovedverk the organ now stands as originally built.⁶⁶⁶

Hovedverk I	Svellverk II	Oververk III
Principal 16'	(enclosed)	Salicional 8'
Borduna 16'	Gedackt 16'	Fugara 8'
Principal 8'	Principal 8'	Gedackt 8'
Flöte major 8'	Corno di bassetti 8'	Flöte amabile 8'
Viola di gamba 8'	Doppelflöte 8'	Vox angelica 4'
Octav 4'	Octav 4'	Flöte dolce 4'
Gemshorn 4'	Rohrflöte 4'	
Quinte 2 2/3'	Superoctave 2'	
Superoctave 2'	Trompete 8'	
Cornett III	Dulcian 8'	
Mixtur IV		
Trompete 16'	Couplers: Manual I + II,	
Trompete 8'	Manual II + III,	
	Pedal + Manual I,	
	Pedal + Manual II,	
Pedal	Combination pedals:	
Untersatz 32'	I Manual Forte +,	
Principal 16'	I Manual Forte -,	
Subbas 16'	Pedal Forte +,	
Bordunquinte 10 2/3'	Pedal Forte -,	
Principal 8'	Barker-lever for Manual I & II	
Violoncello 8'	Barker-lever for Manual I can	
Gedackt 8'	be coupled out. Mechanical	
Octava 4'	cone-chests	
Posaune 16'		
Posaune 8'		

⁶⁶⁶ See Richard Morgan "Rich Discoveries", in *Choir & Organ Magazine* (U.K.) 13/1 2005, p. 11, for photographs of this organ and a fuller account of its history.

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The Organ in Slagen Church, Tønsberg was built in 1973 by J. H. Jørgensen's Orgelfabrikk A/S, Oslo. The pipes were scaled by Herwin Troje from Magnusson's orgelbyggeri, Gothenburg, Sweden. The instrument was revoiced by Paul Ott, Göttingen, Germany in 1978. Further rebuilding and revoicing work was carried out by Ryde & Berg Orgelbyggeri A/S, Fredrikstad, Norway in 1988, when the console was replaced.

Ryggpositiv I	Hovedverk II	Svellverk III
Gedackt 8'	Bordun 16'	Rørfløyte 8'
Rørfløyte 4'	Principal 8'	Gamba 8'
Principal 2'	Gedackt 8'	Principal 4'
Sesquialtera II	Oktav 4'	Gedacktfløyte 4'
Scharff II	Spissfløyte 4'	Blockfløyte 2'
Krumhorn 8'	Kvint 2 2/3'	Nasat 1 1/3'
Tremolo	Oktav 2'	Kornett III
Pedal	Mixtur IV	Mixtur III
Subbass 16'	Trompet (en chamade) 8'	Dulcian 16'
Principal 8'		Oboe 8'
Gedackt 8'	Couplers: RP/HV, SV/HV,	Tremolo
Oktav 4'	HV/P, SV/P, RP/P	
Nachthorn 2'	Mechanical playing action,	
Fagott 16'	electrical registration.	
Schalmey 4'	3 free combinations.	
	Tutti	
	Cancel pistons for manual	
	16' stops, reeds and	
	mixtures.	
	Extra keyboard for the	
	Ryggpositiv.	

The organ in Eik Church, Tønsberg was built in 1991 by Ryde & Berg Orgelbyggeri A/S, Fredrikstad, Norway.

Manual	(B/D = divided registers
Gedacktbass 8' B	bass/descant)
Blockfløyte 8' D	Mechanical action and
Vox Candida 8' D	registration.
Principal 4' B/D	Tremolo
Rørfløyte 4' B/D	Swell
Oktav 2' B/D	Coupler: Manual – Pedal
Kvint 1 1/3' B – 2 2/3' D	
Sedecima 1' B/D	
Pedal	
Subbass 16'	

The organ in Vasa Church, Gothenburg was built in 1909 by the local builder Eskil Lundén. During his apprenticeship he worked at Wilhelm Sauer's organ builders in Frankfurt. He developed a style which can be described as a synthesis of the Swedish and German Romantic Organ. The instrument originally had 40 stops spread over 3 manuals. In 1943, the organ builder Olof Hammarberg provided a new console and increased its size to 46 stops. A Rückpositiv section was added in 1952. The Swedish firm Grönlunds restored the instrument in 2001-2002. The original specification was restored and missing pipes were reconstructed. Although the Rückpositiv did not have a part in Eskil Lundén's original concept it was decided that it should be retained and revoiced.⁶⁶⁷

Manual I	Manual II (enclosed)	Manual III (enclosed)
Principal 16'	Gedackt 16'	Dulciana 16'
Borduna 16'	Violinprincipal 8'	Basetthorn 8'
Principal 8'	Violin 8'	Konsertflöjt 8'
Fugara 8'	Gemshorn 8'	Salicional 8'
Gamba 8'	Rörflöjt 8'	Voix céleste 8'
Flûte harmonique 8'	Octava 4'	Gedackt 8'
Octava 4'	Flûte octaviante 4'	Qvintatön 8'
Rörflöjt 4'	Flageolette 2'	Violin 4'
Qvinta 3'	Rauschqvint 2ch	Ekoflöjt 4'
Octava 2'	Trumpet 8'	Waldflöjt 2'
Cornett 4ch	Klarinett 8'	Harmonia aetherea 3ch
Mixtur 3-4ch 2''		Oboe 8'
Trumpet 16'	Couplers:	Euphon 8'
Trumpet 8'	1/P, II/P, III/P, IV/P	
	II/I, III/I, IV/I, III/II, IV/II,	Manual IV (Rückpositiv)
	IV/III	Gedackt 8'
Pedal	4'-I, 4'-II, 16'-III, 4'-P	Principal 4'
Untersatz 32'	Crescendo pedal	Rörflöjt 4'
Violon 16'	Electronic combination	Nasard 2 2/3'
Subbas 16'	system	Gemshorn 2'
Ekobas 16'		Ters 1 3/5'
Qvinta 12'		Regal 8'
Principal 8'		
Violoncell 8'		
Gedackt 8'		
Octava 4'		
Basun 16'		
Trumpet 8'		

⁶⁶⁷ See Richard Morgan, "Finding the unexpected", in *Choir & Organ Magazine* (U.K.) 13/3 2005, p. 14, for a photograph of this organ and a fuller account of its history.

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ArtMonitor is a publication series from the Board of Artistic Research (NKU) of the Faculty of Fine, Applied and Performing Arts, University of Gotheburg.

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Art Monitor, Göteborg, 2008

ISSN: 1653-9958

ISBN: 978-91-975911-4-0