

**Improvisation and Pedagogy
through
Heinrich Scheidemann's
Magnificat Settings**

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The general topic of this thesis concerns the purpose of musical notation in an historical period during which organists were famous predominantly for their improvisational abilities. The aim of the study is to determine how the 17th century organist in North Germany learned to improvise, and to compare this method to our method today. As a case study, Heinrich Scheidemann's Magnificat settings from the 17th-century manuscript *Ze1* have been analyzed. The verses in Scheidemann's *Magnificat* settings demonstrate a variety of improvisational techniques, and they have a clear structure that is easy to copy. It is proposed in the thesis that these verses were meant to be used pedagogically, in contrast to the two anonymous settings which lack this regular structure. The process of teaching improvisation and a musical style by means of notated compositions was common in the 17th century. Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck's keyboard compositions also are advanced in the study as possible educational materials.

Different uses of notation are considered, including the practice of a number of prominent composers to begin their creative process by departing from the notated score of another composer. The history of the Magnificat, its context and use in the early Lutheran church is also discussed. Different approaches to improvisation are described, both from a historical perspective and from the author's point of view, including her collaboration with other musicians.

The conclusion of this study is that Scheidemann's *Magnificat* settings in *Ze1* were intended as pedagogical models, which could be used to demonstrate improvisational techniques over the *Magnificat* theme as well as improvisation in general. It is also concluded that the two anonymous Magnificat settings in *Ze1*, which until now have been attributed to Scheidemann, are not written by him. The study shows several similarities and differences between the way organists in the 17th century in North Germany learned to improvise in comparison with contemporary improvisers.