

A Congratulatory Canon for Kerala Snyder

Michael Dodds

Canons in commemorative albums offer fascinating glimpses into the social relations of early modern musicians. Just as a poet might pen an aphorism in a guest book, or an artist sketch a miniature, composers of the German Baroque often paid tribute to friends with canons inscribed in a friendship album, or *liber amicorum*.¹ As musical miniatures, canons were easily jotted down, without recourse to staff paper or even a *rastrum*, whether in staff notation or organ tablature. Emblems of the composer's craft, canons in friendship albums attested the skill of their authors while honoring the erudition of their recipients. If often redolent with religious or metaphysical symbolism, canons could also epitomize fraternal unity and conviviality.²

1 As Michael Maul has detailed, Salomon Franck, J. S. Bach's Weimar librettist, penned such an aphorism in a friendship album belonging to Weimar town clerk Johann Christoph Gebhard; on a later page, dated 1713, Bach's senior colleague in Weimar, Capellmeister Johann Samuel Drese, entered a two-measure, four-voice riddle canon. In the same album, later cut out and sold as a collector's item, the young court organist himself inscribed his canon BWV 1073. Most of Bach's half-dozen other commemorative canons date from the Leipzig years. See Michael Maul, "A Weimar Commemorative Album and Bach's Canon BWV 1073," trans. Mary Greer, *Bach* 46, no. 1 (2015): 49–73. For a musical analysis, see Denis Collins, "Bach's Occasional Canon BWV 1073 and 'Stacked' Canonic Procedure in the Eighteenth Century," *Bach* 33, no. 2 (2002): 15–34. A notable nineteenth-century instance is detailed in Klaus Reinhardt, "Der Brahms-Kanon 'Wenn die Klänge nah'n und fliehen' op. 113, 7 und seine Urfassung (Albumblatt aus dem Nachlaß des Cellisten Karl Theodor Piening)," *Die Musikforschung* 43, no. 2 (April–June, 1990): 142–45.

2 These two meanings – canon as emblem of the composer's craft and as symbol of fraternal unity – are united in a 1674 portrait by Johannes Voorhout commissioned by the Hamburg organist Johann Adam Reincken to memorialize his friendship with Buxtehude. Entitled *Musizierende Gesellschaft* and displayed in the Museum für Hamburgische Geschichte, the portrait has been explored in depth by Kerala Snyder in *Dieterich Buxtehude: Organist in Lübeck*, rev. ed. (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2007), 109–12. See also Christoph Wolff, "Das Hamburger Buxtehude-Bild," in *800 Jahre Musik in Lübeck*, ed. Antjekathrin Grassmann and Werner Neugebauer (Lübeck: Senat der Hansestadt Lübeck, Amt für Kultur, 1982–1983), 1: 64–79. In the center foreground of Voorhout's painting floats a sheet of paper on which is inscribed a perpetual canon for eight voices at the unison on the text *Ecce quam bonum* "from Psalm 133 – 'Behold, how good and how pleas-

None other than Dieterich Buxtehude composed two such canons: BuxWV 124, on the drinking text *Divertissons nous aujourd'hui*, in the album of his young friend Meno Hannekin in 1670, and BuxWV 123, a more devout duplex augmentation canon from 1674 in the album of fellow composer Johann Valentin Meder. In an article in *Journal of the American Musicological Society* and in her classic biography of Buxtehude, Kerala Snyder places these canons within the larger context of Buxtehude's studies in learned counterpoint and the north German contrapuntal school.³ Drawing on her work, I myself have elsewhere considered Buxtehude's organ works in light of Andreas Werckmeister's teachings on contrapuntal improvisation in his 1702 treatise *Harmonologia musica*, to which his "good friend" Buxtehude contributed two congratulatory poems.⁴

In light of our respective publications on learned counterpoint and the affinity of musicological *Festschriften* with Baroque-era friendship albums, it seemed fitting that my celebratory offering for Kerry should be a canon for eight voices – one voice per decade of her life thus far. The challenge with any canon is to craft an interesting melody that also harmonizes with itself in pleasing ways. But as voices multiply in number, the gradually intensifying challenge is to avoid monotony, whether from harmonic stasis or excessive reliance on an underlying sequential pattern. Moreover, introducing dissonances, including cadential syncopes, presents acute problems when working with many voices. My solution in this case was to fashion a duplex canon – six voices generated from one *dux* (leading voice), and two from another, with the two-voice canon supplying enriching dissonances and the terminal cadential syncope. The contrapuntal style is a tribute to that of the seventeenth-century *stile antico* – as if from the pen of a north German enamored of the sacred music of Monteverdi – with a higher value

ant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!' – followed by the inscription 'In hon: dit: Buxtehude: et Joh: Adam Reink: frat[um]' (Snyder, *Buxtehude*, 110). Canons, especially when at the unison, serve well to symbolize unity because from one notated line come many voices in counterpoint. In this case, the painting's canon further memorializes the interest in learned counterpoint shared by the group of composers in Hamburg that included Reincken and Buxtehude as well as Johann Theile, Christoph Bernhard, Matthias Weckmann, and Johann Philipp Förtsch.

3 Kerala Snyder, "Dieterich Buxtehude's Studies in Learned Counterpoint," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 33 (1980): 548, and Snyder, *Dieterich Buxtehude*.

4 Michael Dodds, "Columbus's Egg: Andreas Werckmeister's Teachings on Contrapuntal Improvisation in *Harmonologia musica* (1702)," *Journal of Seventeenth-Century Music* 12, no. 1 (2006), <http://www.sscm-jscm.org/v12/no1/dodds.html>.

placed on musicality than adherence to the strict style *per se*. From long acquaintance with her, I am confident this hierarchy of values reflects Kerry's own.

Most sincere thanks are due to my collaborators in this musical offering: the members of the Yale Voxtet under the direction of Jimmy Taylor, and recording engineer Sachin Ramabhadran. For making time in their intensely busy schedules to bring this music to life, I am deeply grateful. Although this little musical offering is not of the vastly combinatorial type championed by the likes of Romano Micheli in *primo Seicento* Rome and some decades later by Johann Theile in Hamburg, for the sake of musical enjoyment the accompanying video presents three possible solutions of the canon, for three, five, and all eight voices, respectively.

She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue.
(Proverbs 31:26)

For Kerry Snyder, *Doktormutter*, with enduring love and gratitude.

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at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts.*

A Festschrift for Kerala J. Snyder

Os suum aperuit sapientiae, et lex clementiae in lingua eius.

She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue. Prov. 31:26

Duplex canon à 8 in celebration of Kerala Snyder
on the occasion of her 80th birthday

§ § § § §

Dux I

Os su - um ap - pe ru - it sa - pi - en - ti - ae, et lex cle -
men - ti - ae in lin - gua e - ius, in lin - gua e - ius.

§

Dux II

Os su - um ap - pe ru - it sa - pi - en - ti - ae, et lex cle -
men - ti - ae in lin - gua e - ius, in lin - gua e - ius.

Dux I: Bassus 2, Tenor 2 in *diapason*, Cantus 2 in *diapason*, Bassus 1 in *diatesseron*, Altus 1 in *diatesseron*, Cantus 1 in *diatesseron*

Dux II: Tenor 1, Altus 2 in *diatesseron*

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Resolutio

Cantus 1
Os su - um ap - pe ru - it sa - pi - en - ti - ae,

Cantus 2
Os su - um ap - pe ru - it sa - pi - en - ti - ae, et lex cle - men -

Altus 1
Os su - um ap - pe ru - it sa - pi - en - ti - ae, et

Altus 2
Os su - um ap - pe ru - it sa - pi - en - ti - ae, et lex cle -

Tenor 1
Os su - um ap - pe ru - it sa - pi - en - ti - ae, et lex cle - men - ti - ae in

Tenor 2
Os su - um ap - pe ru - it sa - pi - en - ti - ae, et lex cle - men -

Bassus 1
Os su - um ap - pe ru - it sa - pi - en - ti - ae, et lex cle -

Bassus 2
Os su - um ap - pe ru - it sa - pi - en - ti - ae, et lex cle - men - ti -

2
S 1
et lex cle - men - ti - ae in lin - gua e - ius, in lin - gua e - (ius)

S 2
- ti - ae in lin - gua e - ius, in lin - gua e - ius.

A 1
lex cle - men - ti - ae in lin - gua e - ius, in lin - gua e - (ius)

A 2
men - ti - ae in lin - gua e - ius, in lin - gua e - (ius)

T 1
lin - gua e - ius, in lin - gua e - ius.

T 2
- ti - ae in lin - gua e - ius, in lin - gua e - ius.

B 1
men - ti - ae in lin - gua e - ius, in lin - gua e - (ius)

B 2
ae in lin - gua e - ius, in lin - gua e - ius.

Please follow this link for a recording of the music: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pydoiVdcFG8>

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