

Johann
PACHELBEL

SELECTED ORGAN WORKS

VOLUME III

FOR ORGAN

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PREFACE

Johann Pachelbel's chorale compositions for organ embody an important part of the literature of the Middle and South German organ school of the period around 1700. Nurtured in the clear polyphony and strict counterpoint of Samuel Scheidt's style of composition and to no small degree influenced by the characteristic style of the South Italian school, the chorale compositions matured to rich fruitfulness amongst a large circle, thanks to their simple, completely unrestrained character. A considerable following of pupils speaks for the great importance of Pachelbel's works, in particular for the historically unique position occupied by the numerous chorale compositions used in the church service of the time, in their remarkable individual styles. In this field no less than Johann Sebastian Bach in many of his compositions followed Pachelbel, the promoter of a fluent organ style.

Pachelbel's style of composition has very little in common with the specifically baroque style, often conceived on richly ostentatious lines, of his North German contemporaries Buxtehude, Böhm, Lübeck, Weckmann and so on, even though an isolated example of the present collection (No. 1) with its elaborate treble line, might oddly enough point to the opposite. The organ chorale of the Nuremberg master is distinguished from other contemporary works by the self-contained, always clear and simple manner of writing, avoiding every extraneous emotion, which in its formal design is consciously limited to the essential, and at the same time endeavours to permit the *cantus firmus* to be heard always predominant and clear, supported by a mainly simple accompaniment in clear-cut harmony. A *cantabile* style of composition was the chief requirement above all others; therefore, the accompanying parts—even though at times certain sections of their figuration or preparatory imitation of a chorale motive categorically run contrary to the flowing rhythm—had to be completely subjugated to this supreme rule.

How important to Pachelbel also was the diversity and abundance of forms is shown by a printed work of 1693 containing "acht Chorale zum praebullieren" (eight chorales for preluding). Closer examination reveals that these include almost all the possibilities of outward design and variety of expression of the period. (Of these works, No. 5a is to be found in Vol. II and Nos. 1, 2, 7, 9, 10 and 26 in Vol. III).

Surprisingly however, the above-named collection does not contain a single piece in the so-called combination form, that far-ranging style of composition, which links an introductory prelude as a fugue on the first line of the chorale to a proper and complete *cantus-firmus* chorale. In its broadly conceived architecture it goes far beyond the limitations of traditional forms of the short "Praebullieren," and on these grounds may not have been incorporated by Pachelbel in his practical publication of 1693, selected as a model for church service. Whence, however, did this combination form originate?

The obligation to which Pachelbel had to adhere during his Erfurt appointment provided, amongst other things, that every year on St. John's Day, the organist must give an organ recital after the service, displaying the whole of the organ, in order to show "how he had improved in his office during the year."**)

Such use outside of the liturgical service explains the isolated position of the combined organ chorale movements which, thanks to their individual, large-scale, extended form and their rich contents appear to be of particularly great value in many respects for the practice of today. In this edition of Pachelbel the following appear: with the *cantus firmus* in the soprano, Nos. 4 and 10 in Vol. II, Nos. 5b, 6, 16b, 17, 19, 20b, 22, 27 and 30 in Vol. III; with the *cantus firmus* in the bass, Nos. 1, 2, 5b, 6b and 11 in Vol. II, Nos. 4b, 10 and 23 in Vol. III.

In addition to these unusual forms the smaller types also deserve short consideration. In order to avoid a lengthy assessment of value and an anticipatory description of the musical content of these valuable works, I have limited the following remarks mainly to stylistic features of compo-

sition which indicate the way, leaving it to the individual performer to spontaneously grasp and reproduce, as he experiences, the spiritual background of the various pieces.—For the benefit of the uninitiated, the remaining smaller types of pieces are specified in short in systematic order:

Two-part chorale arrangements: *Bicinium*, Vol. III, No. 7. Here we have a primitive form, less often met with, which Pachelbel adopted from Scheidt's series of variations and further cultivated in his school. We seldom find this kind in the North German school of organ writing, which is more exuberant in expression.

The three-part organ chorale is more impressive and it is not difficult to recognise how important it was to Pachelbel to let the chorale melody, in broad, grave note-values, whether in soprano, tenor or bass, be heard in pleasing clarity. The accompanimental parts, whether conceived as a lively flowing figuration around the melody, or as a more subdued background, at the same time provide in the majority of these structures opportunities for short interludes in strict counterpoint, linked with the chorale motif. (*Cantus firmus* in soprano: Vol. II, Nos. 3, 6a, 7a, 12 and 16; Vol. III, Nos. 10, 16a, 25 and 28; *Cantus firmus* in tenor: Vol. III, No. 9; *Cantus firmus* in bass: Vol. II, Nos. 5a, 7b and 8; Vol. III, Nos. 3, 11b, 13, 20a and 26). As already remarked above, No. 1 in Vol. III, with its elaborated *cantus firmus*, offers an exception.—For the sake of completeness it should be mentioned that the "Musikalischen Sterbensgedanken" (BA 1016) composed for home use, a cycle of variations for a stringed keyboard instrument dating from 1683, are mainly written in such an elaborate style.

A significant position is occupied by the four-part short prelude-fugues, in which the fugue is based on the first line of the chorale. Such an apparently simple principle of construction fulfils most easily the purpose of the short preamble: to firmly direct the churchgoer's attention to the following congregational chorale and to encourage the singing of the words. (Vol. II Nos. 9 and 14; Vol. III, Nos. 5a, 8, 11a, 14, 21, 24a and b). In certain respects the prelude-fugues III/5a, III/8 and III/21 offer exceptions, since the second line of the chorale is also occasionally to be heard in them. It would be too far-reaching to analyse these interesting types more exactly here according to the context of their chorale motives—, the observant performer will be able to take pleasure in discovering more for himself.

In the four-part continuously-composed organ chorales, the *cantus firmus* extends in quiet measured note-values in the treble. Before the entry of each line of the chorale the melody is treated imitatively in the accompanying parts of the alto, tenor and bass; if such a usage is not everywhere apparent, then at least the short introduction presents a fugal preparation to the first line of the chorale (e. g. III/18). Of such movements will be found in Vol. II, No. 15, in Vol. III, Nos. 2, 12, 15, 18, 29 and 31.—A simpler form can be recognised in the more abstract but none the less musically flowing pieces, Nos. 4a and b in Vol. III. No. 13 in Vol. II (*cantus firmus* in the bass) also takes a divergent path with its unexpected concisely conceived part-writing.

Precise instructions for fingering and registration are this time omitted, just as a commentary on performance of the trill may be left out, since the first two volumes of this practical edition deal with all these matters fairly exhaustively.

* BA 239

** Cf. Preludes to "Denkmäler deutscher Tonkunst" 2nd series (Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Bayern) 4th yearly volume, Bk. 1, introduction and editing by Max Seiffert.

Der christliche Glaube

1. Wir glauben all an einen Gott

Wir glau - ben all an ei - nen Gott, Schöp - fer Himmels und der Er - den, der sich zum Va - ter ge - ben hat, daß wir sei - ne
Kin - der wer - den. Er will uns all - zeit er - näh - ren, Leib und Seel auch wohl be - wah - ren; al - lem Un - fall will er weh - ren, kein
Leid soll uns wi - der - fah - ren. Er sor - get für uns; hüt' und wacht, es steht al - les in sei - ner Macht.
(M. Luther)

Rückpositiv
(♩ = 72-80)

Manual

Oberwerk