

JACQUES VAN OORTMERSSEN Organ

Sweelinck to Stanley

This evening's concert celebrates a dazzling period in the history of organ music, and the programme demonstrates some of the variety to be found in the music written in the years between the birth of Sweelinck (1562) and the death of Mozart in 1791.

Sweelinck is regarded as being one of the most important organist/composers of his time, and one of the most influential teachers as well. He was the last and most important composer of the musically rich golden era of the Netherlands. He perfected forms of keyboard music derived from, amongst others, the English virginalists, and transmitted them through his pupils to North Germany. The variations on "Mein Junges Leben" is one of his best-known works.

Abraham Kerckhorm was a Flemish composer and organist who lived between 1618 and 1701, mostly in Brussels. He became organist in the domestic music of Archduke Wilhelm of Austria. Many of Kerckhorm's works (all of which are for organ) are based on the Ricercare technique inherited from the keyboard composers of the early 17th Century.

Matthias Weckmann lived between 1619 and 1674, and was a German composer and organist who, at an early age, came under the musical charge of Heinrich Schütz at the Dresden Court Chapel where Weckmann was a choirboy. In 1633 he was sent to Hamburg to study under Praetorius who had studied with Sweelinck. In 1655 Weckmann moved to Hamburg (having been organist of the Dresden Chapel after Schütz) where he remained until his death as organist of the Jacobkirche.

There will be no interval at tonight's concert and members of the audience are encouraged to return to Oundle to the Festival Club to meet the artists involved in the Week and to have a drink. The Festival Club is open from 8.45.



Jacques Van Oortmerssen

In the search for links between Schütz and Bach, Weckmann seems to be a likely candidate as a favoured pupil of Schütz who carried the tradition to Denmark and Hamburg, where at least indirect contact with Buxtehude appears possible.

Georg Böhm was born in Germany in 1661 and died in 1733, and is particularly important for his influence on the young Bach. From 1698 he was organist of the Johanniskirche at Lüneburg, the town where Bach went to school between 1700 and 1703. CPE Bach wrote to Forkel in 1775 that his father "loved and studied the works of the Lüneburg organist Georg Böhm" and there is no doubt that Böhm exerted a strong influence on Bach's chorale writing.

The chorale partita "Frei dich sehr, O meine Seele" has twelve variations on the chorale melody "Frei dich sehr", which is itself a 16th Century adaptation of a 13th Century secular tune.

The Prelude, Fugue and Postlude in G minor was found in a manuscript collection of 17th Century keyboard pieces compiled in 1754 by Bach's nephew, Johann Andreas Bach. The whole composition is characterised by contrasts in both mood and style: between the choral Prelude and Postlude sections, Böhm develops a sombre fugue.

Mozart's Andante K.616 is another of his pieces for a mechanical organ written in the last year of his life (1791) in response to a commission from Count Josef Deym, a Viennese nobleman who possessed instruments of this type. The most famous of these pieces, the F minor Fantasia, was heard in Kimberly Marshall's recital yesterday. As Alfred Einstein points out, "This is really a piece for a magic music-box – the accompaniment for the dance of a tiny fairy princess."

John Stanley lived between 1712 and 1786, and was blind from the age of 2 (the result of a domestic accident). He was taught by Maurice Greene at St. Paul's Cathedral and became organist of All Hallows, Broad Street; St. Andrew's, Holborn; and finally organist to the Honourable Society of the Inner Temple where, according to the famous musical historian Dr. Burney, Stanley's playing of voluntaries used to attract musicians, including Handel, from all over London.

Stanley is chiefly remembered for his three published sets of organ voluntaries. They are in the two-movement form established by his teachers Reading and Greene, consisting of an Adagio for Diapasons and a quick movement which features some solo stop such as the Cornet or Trumpet.

Handel's Organ Concerto in F Op.4 No.5 was written in 1735 and first performed by Handel himself at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, in London. It is the fifth of 6 Concertos which were published in 1738. It seems that a manuscript copy of at least some of them had got out and been published by another publisher. John Walsh, by now Handel's "official" publisher, was furious and he put an advertisement in the "London Daily Post" of 25 September 1738:

"To all lovers of Musick.

Whereas there is a spurious and incorrect Edition of Six Concertos of Mr. Handel's for the Harpsichord and Organ, published without the knowledge or consent of the Author, This is to give notice (That the Publick may not be imposed on with a mangled edition) that there are now printing from Mr. Handel's original Manuscript, and corrected by himself, the same Six Concertos, which will be published in a few days."

Handel adapted the concerto from his Sonata Op.1 No.11. The recorder and continuo parts, which make up this sonata, have simply become the right and left hands of the organ part and a few brief orchestral ritornellos were added.