

MONDAY 13 JULY

OUNDLE SCHOOL CHAPEL at 7.30pm

JACQUES VAN OORTMERSSEN Organ

Born in Rotterdam in 1950, JACQUES VAN OORTMERSSEN began his musical studies at the Rotterdam Conservatory in 1967, studying organ with Andre Verwoerd. In 1976, when he was a student of Marie-Claire Alain in Paris, he received the Prix d'excellence and in the following year was awarded his degree as a piano soloist. At the Internationale Zomeracademie voor Orgel in Haarlem he took courses with Louis Toebosch, Piet Kee, Anton Heiller and Luigi Tagliavini and in 1977 he won First Prize at the Dutch National Improvisation Competition (Bolsward) and Second Prize in the Tournemire Competition at St Albans.

Since 1979 he has been Professor of Organ at the Sweelinck Conservatory in Amsterdam, where his organ class attracts students from all over the world. In 1982 he became Organiste Titulaire of the Waalse Kerk in Amsterdam (organ built by Christian Müller in 1734), succeeding Gustav Leonhardt.

Jacques van Oortmerssen has toured extensively throughout Europe and in Brazil, teaching and giving recitals both on the organ and the harpsichord. He leads a Baroque ensemble and is a well-known instructor at International organ courses on the performance of early music. Recently he has made a series of compact discs on historical organs in Europe for the Japanese label Denon. He is also active as a composer and organ consultant.

Programme

Dietrich Buxtehude

Toccata in F (Bux WV 156)

Jan P Sweelinck

Echo Fantasia

Girolamo Frescobaldi

Toccata Quarta (second book)

J S Bach

Wir glauben all'an einen Gott Vater (BWV 740)

Fantasia and Fugue in G minor (BWV 542)

Vater unser im Himmelreich (BWV 682)

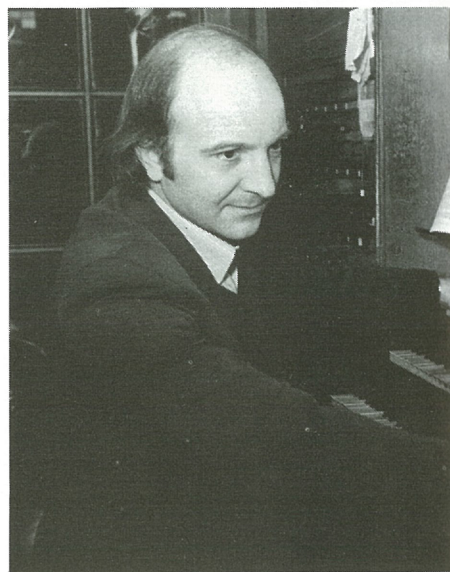
Jehan Alain

Deuxième Fantasia

Postlude pour l'office de Complies

Jacques van Oortmerssen

Rondeau Reconstructie



Jacques van Oortmerssen

This evening's recital is to be recorded by BBC Radio 3

STILUS FANTASTICUS

The works in this evening's recital on the 'loose' forms of the Fantasia and the Toccata. Both forms have always left composers a great deal of room for manoeuvre even in the Baroque period when things were much more strict than they are today!

Jacques van Oortmerssen begins with the great *Toccata in F* by BUXTEHUDE. Here, not only is the work in free form, but the title is even in dispute, sometimes being called Toccata and Fugue, sometimes plain Toccata and, at others, Prelude and Fugue. Willi Apel in his history of *Keyboard Music to 1700* has stated that the title 'Prelude and Fugue' is hardly ever applicable to the majority of Buxtehude's organ works that presently come under that name as only *this* work actually neatly falls into two parts. Generally they consist of several sections, contrasting brilliant toccata-like passages with fugal movements. It's this freedom of form that led Apel to recommend that they become known simply as 'Toccatas'. Just to confuse the issue a little more (always a good ploy for wandering minds waiting for a recital to begin!) the manuscript sources call them simply 'Praeludium'.

From the great Buxtehude, the inspirer of Bach, to the equally great composer from the Netherlands, JAN PIETERSZON SWEELINCK. He was one of the most important composers of the extraordinarily rich era of the Netherlands. It was once thought that he was the sole north European 'giant' of the period. This is not really so but he was very much the equal of his European contemporaries. As the title implies, *Echo Fantasia* makes use of contrasting sections of the organ.

FRESCOBALDI (1583-1643) was, with Sweelinck, probably the most influential composer of the first half of the 17th century. His music grew out of the late Renaissance Italian keyboard school into one of the most distinctive voices of the early Baroque.

Toccata Quarta is from the second book of Toccatas, of which Frescobaldi wrote over 50. Willi Apel has said, 'The Toccatas are Frescobaldi's most creative activity. They carry the stamp of his personality more than any of his late works . . . (and) are unmistakably informed by the spirit of the early Baroque'.

From Frescobaldi we move to the undisputed master of the late Baroque, J S BACH. First *Wir glauben all' an einen Gott Vater* (BWV 740). It is in five parts with the chorale melody in the top part and the remaining parts treated imitatively – this includes a double pedal part.

The second work is the 'Great' *Fantasia and Fugue in G minor* (BWV542). There is no surviving autograph for this work and thus scholars have spent much time arguing whether or not the Fugue was originally intended to be coupled with the Fantasia. There are 26 surviving MS sources of which only five have this coupling, the others all have a single isolated movement. One reason that this might have arisen is the complex harmonic language of the Fantasia which would not have been so readily accepted as the immediately approachable fugue which was called 'the best pedal piece'. The Fugue's famous subject is actually a Dutch folk-song famous at the time and published in an anthology in 1700. The Fantasia is full of daring dramatic gestures and must be placed alongside his chromatic Fantasia (and Fugue) for harpsichord which has a similar approach.

JEHAN ALAIN (1911-1940) was a victim of World War II. He studied composition with Dukas and Roger-Ducasse at the Paris Conservatoire and organ with Marcel Dupré winning first prize in both harmony and fugue, and organ playing. He summed up his musical philosophy as follows: 'Music is created to translate the states of the soul at some time, some moment, above all, the evolution of a soul state; thus mobility is essential. Do not try to translate an individual emotion, even an eternal emotion . . . what matters in music is perhaps less charm than mystery'.

The two *Fantasies* are dedicated to his younger brother Olivier Alain who, like him, trained as a pianist and organist. The first *Fantasia* has the following quotation after the last stave of music: 'Then I cried to heaven itself to ask how destiny could guide us across the shadows and heaven said "follow your blind instinct"'. The *Fantasia* contains what Alain's sister, the organist Marie-Claire Alain, calls his paradox: 'A very real, almost instinctive sense of despair tempered by a fierce sense of humour, able to laugh at itself'.

The second *Fantasia* was written two years after the first, in 1936. He adored the exotic sounds of the East, and woven into this *Fantasia* is a tune he heard in Morocco.

Jacques van Oortmerssen ends his recital with a work of his own, *Rondeau Reconstructie*.