IMPROVISATION

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IMPROVISATION

Musicological, musical and philosophical aspects

Orgelpark Research Report 3

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[§1] The Orgelpark is a concert venue in Amsterdam. Its aim is to integrate the organ into musical life in general. The Orgelpark initiated the Orgelpark Research Program in 2008.

[§2] The Orgelpark Research Reports are published in cooperation with the Chair Organ Studies at VU University Amsterdam.

E-books

[§3] Publications about music gain when they include sound examples and short movies. Therefore, the Orgelpark Research Reports are "electronic books": e-books, to be read online on tablets, computers and comparable devices. Reading is easy: just use any standard web browser.

[§4] The Research Reports are accessible for free at www.orgelpark.nl.

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[§5] Since full-text search is standard in e-books, the Research Reports do not contain indices. Click on the line *Click here to read this text in a window allowing full-text search* in the footer of each page (available only in the original e-book versions) to view the text in a separate window. This window allows full-text search, and selecting text parts. Also, this option may make reading on mobile phones more convenient.

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[§6] Paper copies of the Reports can be ordered per mail (info@orgelpark.nl) at additional cost. Pdf's are available on www.orgelpark.nl. Paper copies and pdf's do *not* include indices nor sound examples (see §5).

More information

[§7] For more information, please visit www.orgelpark.nl and www.vu.nl.

Orgelpark Research Report 3

Introduction

Orgelpark Research Report 3: Third Edition

[§8] This is the third edition of Orgelpark Research Report 3. During the preparation of the first edition in 2013, electronic publishing technology was still rather young. As a result, the e-book versions of the Orgelpark Research Reports had a so-called "reflowable" format. Therefore, the Reports were given paragraph numbers instead of page numbers; otherwise, referencing (identifying) text fragments would be impossible.

[§9] As soon as technology was advanced enough to give the Reports a fixed layout, the second edition of this Report was published: each page now got its own page number. This third edition is the same as the second edition. Whereas the first and second editions required sophisticated e-book readers, the third edition can be read using a standard web browser.

References

[§10] Since edition 1 of Report 3 had paragraph numbers instead of page numbers, edition 2 kept the paragraph numbers in place, as does edition 3.

[§11] It is advised to use the paragraph numbers to reference text fragments in this Report, so that users of the first edition will be able to keep track.

Improvisation

[§12] Orgelpark Research Report 3 presents a selection of the lectures given in the course of the International Organ Improvisation Project at the Orgelpark. The project took place between 2008 and 2011.

[§13] The idea of dedicating a large-scale project to organ improvisation was prompted by the international attention on improvisation in general. The universities of Mainz, Oxford and Berkeley organised extensive symposia and congresses on improvisation; McGill University (Montreal)

gained attention for its extensive project on improvisation; and the University of Guelph (Ontario) founded the journal *Critical Studies in Improvisation*. However, the topic of organ improvisation was only addressed peripherically at these initiatives.

[§14] Improvisations on organs differ in a significant way from improvisations on other instruments as organs are, by definition, custom-made. Each organ has a specific set of timbres, a specific "action" (technical linkage between keys and pipes) and hence a specific touch, as well as a specific winding system and voicing. In short: each organ presents the organist with a very particular set of possibilities.

[§15] One of the hypotheses presented in this volume is that this "simple" fact is one of the reasons organists kept improvising in the 19th and 20th century. Whereas, from the start of the 19th century onwards, their fellow musicians increasingly viewed making music without scores as a lesser art, organists were aware of the fact that each organ sounds best in music that is specifically made for that specific organ. Since virtually no organ composition meets that condition, organists kept making music without scores. Another, far more practical, reason for organists to keep improvising was, of course, the obligation to produce music during church services – i.e. music of unpredictable length.

[§16] All this implies that organ improvisation can be anything: the only requirement for an improvisation to be an organ improvisation is for it to be performed on an organ.

Emancipation

[§17] The history of the art of organ improvisation in the past hundred years is in fact a history of emancipation. In 1925 and 1937, Marcel Dupré published his *Traité d'Improvisation à l'orgue*; organists felt encouraged to improvise outside the realm of liturgy. A significant second step was the first International Organ Improvisation Competition, which took place in 1951 in the Dutch town of Haarlem. Over the years, the Haarlem initiative was followed by similar events in many other important organ cities, thus establishing a link between the 19th-century concert hall culture, typified by audiences listening attentively to music, and the art of organ improvisation, which had descended from much earlier listening cultures. This provided

a formal platform for organists to present their improvisations as being representative of a valuable art in its own right.

[§18] The third step was taken in the 21st century. Not surprisingly, it is primarily young organists who recognize and encourage the possibility of introducing the organ in less mainstream situations – for example at concert venues and festivals dedicated to contemporary music. These organists are actively pushing the boundaries of organ improvisation, referring in their music to contemporary concepts, including jazz and world music influences, and/or integrating organ improvisation in other performing arts, such as poetry, theatre and dance. One of the musicians who should be mentioned here is Jacob Lekkerkerker. Recently, he has been awarded three prestigious prizes for preciselythis sort of interdisciplinary activity.[1] At the same time, and perhaps not coincidentally, "non-organists" recognise the organ as a fascinating instrument as well, capable, for example, of being used in live electronic music. Ensembles such as Computer Aided Breathing, Shackle and ZEQAttack are pioneers in this field.[2]

Contributions

[§19] For practical reasons, this Report is divided in two parts: e-books should not become too large. The paper edition combines both parts in one book.

[§20] The contributions are written by a wide range of experts, including musicologists, philosophers and other scientists, and of course musicians. Part 1 opens with reflections on the art of improvisation by Bruce Ellis Benson, philosopher at Wheaton College (USA, Illinois). In order to have a clearer picture of the general subject of organ improvisation, Peter

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1 Jacob Lekkerkerker won respectively the Sweelinck-Muller Prijs (2009), the Jur Naessens Muziekprijs (2011), the Prix Spécial Englert-Marchal (2011) and the Schnitgers Droomprijs (2013) for his innovative ways of making music.

2 A logical consequence is that these developments ask for new perspectives in organ building: musicians and composers ask for optimal accessibility of historic sound concepts, for example by means of digital interfaces. The Orgelpark takes this aspect seriously, but that is another story – a story which, in fact, will be told in a next volume of the Orgelpark Research Reports.

Planyavsky, one of the most relevant improvising organists today, critically reviews the German, French and Dutch influences on the art of organ improvisation in the late 20th century, with particular reference to Anton Heiller. Finding ways of understanding how improvisation "works" is the aim of the contributions by Bernhard Haas, Hans Fidom and Mary Oliver who present different, yet corresponding, ways of analysing improvisations and/or improvisatory aspects of compositions. With respect to the art of improvising in historic styles, Pamela Ruiter-Feenstra, expert in this field, investigates Johann Sebastian Bach's ways of improvising at the organ. Sietze de Vries shares his thoughts about organ improvisation in historical styles as an essential craft, allowing historic organs to sound at their best.
[§21] In part 2, the history of organ improvisation is addressed by Béatrice Piertot, who offers an overview of treatises on organ improvisation since the middle ages; by Columba McCann, who gives an account of Dupré's improvisation course; and by Ronny Krippner, addressing organ improvisation in England. Personal points of view on the art of improvisation are articulated by three improvisers: Vincent Thévenaz, Gary Verkade and Jacob Lekkerkerkerker.

Terminology: 'improvisation'

[§22] In the course of the Orgelpark Improvisation Project, it became ever more obvious that the word "improvisation" is burdened by connotations of all sorts, making it almost impossible to use it at all. The most problematic of these burdens is undoubtedly the fallacy that musicians might be able to make music "out of the blue". It would be far more elegant to apply a scale, at one extreme of which would be found music-making based on scores (and absolute obedience to those scores) and, at the other, music-making that rules out any external influence. Of course, no music-making could find itself representing either of these extremes, simply because neither the intention of the musician nor the external influences can ever be "switched off". As a consequence improvisation always includes traces of previous (musical) activities, whilst the interpreting of a score always involves improvisatory actions. Yet, it has become so common to say that musicians are improvising as soon as they make music without a score, we decided not to try and use another word in this Research Report.

I

Bruce Ellis Benson - In The Beginning, There Was Improvisation

[§23] Ex nihilo nihil fit. From nothing comes nothing. That would seem to be the collective wisdom of the ancients, whether Babylonian, Greek, or Hebrew. Thus, the creation accounts found in various ancient Mesopotamian texts are always from something. It is likewise the view of the pre-Socratic philosopher Parmenides, who believes nothingness or non-being makes no sense and so one cannot even say "it is or it is not". On his account, one can only say "it is or...", since nothing makes no sense. It is not. It is no thing. Indeed, even that great songwriting team Rogers and Hammerstein remind us that "nothing comes from nothing, nothing ever could".
[§24] Early Christian theologians generally were in favor of the "from something" account and probably would have considered the "from nothing" account to be simply nonsense. Of course, as one might guess, things are somewhat more complicated than this. But one thing is sure. The German theologian Gerhard May is certainly right when he states: "Church theology wants through the proposition creatio ex nihilo to express and safeguard the omnipotence and freedom of God acting in history."[1] At issue, then, are power and freedom. The God who can create ex nihilo is simply more powerful and free than the God who merely creates from that which already exists. How we interpret the first few verses of the book of Genesis depends very much upon what kind of God we think is being depicted here. A truly powerful God has no need of existent matter.
[§25] Not surprisingly, these aspects of power and freedom are very much part of our conception of the creations wrought by human beings. It strikes

1 Gerhard May, "Creatio Ex Nihilo: The Doctrine of 'Creation out of Nothing'." *Early Christian Thought* (translation A.S. Worrall). Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994, 180.

me that our views of the genesis of art have, historically, been heavily shaped by views of the nature of divine creation. Just as we can distinguish between a "strong creator" and a "weak creator" of the cosmos, so we can distinguish between strong and weak creators of arts. In what follows, I intend to accomplish two tasks. First, I briefly consider the Christian doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* and bring those considerations to bear on how we think about the artistic creation. Second, I return to the biblical text to provide an alternative conception of artistic creation, one that moves from the idea of *creation* to that of *improvisation*. In so doing, the artist is seen in a significantly different light.

Creatio ex nihilo

[§26] The writer of Genesis chapter one opens the text by saying the following:

> In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.[2]

[§27] What exactly is God doing here? Further, what is this "beginning" [*re'sit*] and where does it begin? One can say this is a basic question regarding any kind of genesis: at what point can we say that something *begins*? It is significant that the OED defines "genesis" as "the action of building up from simple or basic elements to more complex ones." For something like that seems to be described here. The earth is described as "a formless void" and "darkness covered the face of the deep" [*tohu vabohu*, or "the depth in the dark"]. And then God creates [bara]. On this account, things are already

2 Genesis 1:1-5, NRSV (New Revised Standard Version). *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. s.v. "genesis."

"*in medias res*"—or "into the middle of affairs." That is, there is already something going on and then God enters the picture. And yet the standard Christian account of creation is the of *ex nihilo*—out of nothing.

[§28] Here I am not interested in the theological question, but a different, though very closely related, question. What would a strong *artistic account* of *bara* [creation] look like? Here it is helpful to turn to the philosopher Immanuel Kant. A phrase we can use to unpack his account is his claim that "fine art is the art of genius."[3]

[§29] But, first, a couple points of comparison on the notion of "genius." In 1746, the French theorist Charles Batteux (1713-1780) had argued that art was all about imitating nature and the "genius" is the one who is a superb *imitator*.[4] This conception of genius is easy enough to understand, for such a genius is essentially someone has learned the techniques of a given type of art form and has become a highly developed craftsman. Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) would seem to have held such a view, given his reported comment: "I worked hard. Anyone who works as hard as I did can achieve the same results."[5] Yet consider how different the following description of the genius is given by William Duff (1732-1815) in 1770:

> A man of genius is really a kind of different being from the rest of the species. The bent of his disposition, the complexion of his temper, the general turn of his character, his passions and his pursuits are for the most part very dissimilar from those of the bulk of mankind. Hence partly it happens that his manners appear ridiculous to some and disagreeable to others.[6]

3 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment* (translation Werner S. Pluhar). Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987, § 46.

4 Charles Batteux, *Les beaux arts réduits à un même principe.* Paris: Durand, 1746.

5 This is a quotation attributed to Bach.

6 William Duff, *Critical Observations on the Writings of the Most Celebrated Original Geniuses in Poetry.* London: T. Becket and P.A. de Hont, 1770. 339.

[§30] Here, in contrast, we have a portrait of the artist as rather different from you and me. The artist is some rather strange person - either "ridiculous" or "disagreeable" - who isn't like "the rest of the species." Someone like Vincent van Gogh comes to mind.
[§31] Kant's *Critique of Judgment* appeared in 1790. In that text, Kant gives us a picture of the genius that is a lot closer to Duff than to Batteux. The Kantian artist clearly counts as a "strong creator" and thus is *powerful*. According to Kant, "genius is a *talent* for producing something for which no determinate rule can be given . . . . hence the foremost property of genius must be *originality*."[7] Whereas Batteux had stressed being a good imitator, Kant goes in the radically opposite direction: being as original as possible. You might say that the "rules" don't apply to the genius, meaning that the Kantian artist is likewise *free*.[8] As Kant puts it, "on this point everyone agrees: that genius must be considered the very opposite of a *spirit of imitation*."[9] Thus, the genius's art works become examples for lesser artists (poor saps!) to imitate, while great artists somehow just come up with great ideas because, as Kant puts it, they are "nature's favorite and so must be regarded as a rare phenomenon."[10] Kant's concept of genius gets even more interesting when he claims that "if an author owes a product to his genius, he himself does not know how he came by the ideas for it."[11] This clearly separates the genius artist from the scientist, at least for Kant. Whereas the genius artist has absolutely no idea of how she came up with her ideas, says

7 *Critique of Judgment*. §46.

8 As the quotation from Kant makes clear, "genius is a talent" according to Kant. If we were to pursue this carefully defined conception of genius, then Kant's view might be less problematic. However, elsewhere Kant speaks of the genius not as a talent but as a person ("the product of a genius [...] is an example that is meant not to be imitated, but to be followed by another genius," *Critique of Judgment*, §49). Moreover, I am less interested in explicating exactly what Kant thought and more on how Kant has normally been interpreted.

9 *Critique of Judgment*. §47. I should point out that Kant often uses phrases like "on this point everyone agrees" precisely when he is putting forth ideas on which everyone doesn't agree.

10 *Critique of Judgment*. §49.

11 *Critique of Judgment*. §46.

Kant, a scientist like Newton can explain each of the steps that led him to his theory. So creating for the genius is a kind of mysterious process that even *she* does not understand, unlike Bach's view in which it can be explained by the techniques of a craftsman who's at the top of his game. To sum up Kant's account:

1. True geniuses are original
2. What they create is exemplary for everyone else
3. They are unable to explain how they created their masterpieces

[§32] Accordingly, their creations are both original and exemplary. What distinguishes the art of the genius is that it is *innovative*. Everything else - works that are derivative in one sense or another - count more as secondary texts or as commentaries on the primary texts provided by the genius. Thus, we have a conception of the artist that is remarkably like that of the God who creates *ex nihilo* - an artist who is both powerful and free.
[§33] Now, there is something *right* about Kant's idea of the genius: one somehow gets ideas. And it is not always clear where those ideas come from. The literature on creativity or innovation (and whether they are one phenomenon or two) is vast and, understandably, contradictory. For creativity is hardly easy to explain. At least as far back as Plato, in the dialogue *Ion*, there has been the question of exactly *where* artists (or, in this particular case, *poets*) get their ideas. Speaking to the poet named Ion, who has just returned from Epidaurus having just won first prize for reciting Homer, Socrates suggests that his "skill" really results from him being "out of his mind." Socrates says: "This gift you have of speaking well on Homer is not an art; it is a power divine [...] so the lyric poets are not in their senses when they make these lovely lyric poems.[12] Ion is not at all convinced that Socrates is right,[13] but this idea that poets are divinely inspired has been widely held, as has been the notion that somehow artists just get ideas in

12 *Ion* 533d-534a. In Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, eds., *Plato, The Collected Dialogues*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961.

13 *Ion*. 536d-e.

some sort of magical way. No more influential expression of this idea of creation exists than that from a famous letter attributed to none other than Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791):

> Concerning my way of composing [...] I can really say no more on this subject than the following; for I myself know no more about it, and cannot account for it. When I am, as it were, completely myself, entirely alone, and of good cheer—say, travelling in a carriage, or walking after a good meal, or during the night when I cannot sleep; it is on such occasions that my ideas flow best and most abundantly. Whence and how they come, I know not; nor can I force them [...] When I proceed to write down my ideas, I take out of the bag of my memory [...] what has previously been collected into it [...] For this reason the committing to paper is done quickly enough, for everything is, as I said before, already finished; and it rarely differs on paper from what it was in my imagination.[14]

[§34] There is something so gloriously "romantic" about this account that it is almost painful to discover that it is a pure fabrication by Friedrich Rochlitz, who was both a fan of Mozart and had been influenced by Kant's notion of the genius. Rochlitz's account of Mozart's composition process is how he *wanted* it to go. It is as if we *want* our artists to be capable of something like magical power. The contemporary philosopher of music Jerrold Levinson goes so far as to say that "the whole tradition of art assumes art is creative in the strict sense, that it is a godlike activity in which the artist brings into being what did not exist beforehand—much as a demiurge forms a world out of inchoate matter [...]. There is a special aura that envelops composers, as well as other artists, because we think of them as true creators.[15] While it is far too much to say that "the *whole* tradition of art" has held this view,

14 Quoted in Maynard Solomon. "On Beethoven's Creative Process: A Two-Part Invention." In Maynard Solomon, *Beethoven Essays*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988. 129.

15 Jerrold Levinson. "What a Musical Work Is." In Jerrold Levinson, *Music, Art, & Metaphysics: Essays in Philosophical Aesthetics*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990. 66-67.

it clearly has held sway for more or less the last couple of centuries (that is, during the "modern" or "romantic" period).

[§35] Seeing the true artist as genius has consequences, and quite problematic ones. First, the genius myth has promoted the myth of the artist as some sort of "lone creator" who neither needs nor wants the influence of or interaction with others—the artist off alone in a garret. Second, whereas artists had generally been seen as craftsmen (Bach's view of himself was largely the view held throughout western history), now they become "godlike." For instance, the Germans Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder (1773-1798) and Ludwig Tieck (1773-1853) speak of artists as "a few chosen men whom [God] has anointed as His favorites."[16] Johann Nikolaus Forkel, in his biography of Bach, suggests that some of Bach's works could be mentioned "only with a kind of holy worship." (a claim that Bach—who wrote the initials S.D.G. standing for *Soli Deo Gloria* [For God's glory alone] on his scores—could never have imagined making).[17] George Bizet (1838-1875) goes so far as to say that "Beethoven is not a human, he is a god."[18] And Carl Maria von Weber demands that the composer become "free as a god."[19] So artists become either special agents of God or else simply gods themselves.

[§36] Of course, the problem was that artists wanted it both ways in terms of being understood and appreciated. On the one hand, a lack of understanding or appreciation by the audience came to be interpreted as a sign of greatness: according to the myth which was then just starting to take shape, innovative artists were those whose genius was not sufficiently appreciated. Thus art that was immediately and universally enjoyed came

16 Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder and Ludwig Tieck, *Outpourings of an Art-Loving Friar* (translation Edward Mornin). New York: Frederick Ungar, 1975. 59.

17 Johann Nikolaus Forkel. *Über Johann Sebastian Bachs Leben, Kunst und Kunstwerke* (Walther Vetter, ed.). Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1970. 12.

18 Walter Salmen. "Social Obligations of the Emancipated Musician in the 19th Century." In *The Social Status of the Professional Musician from the Middle Ages to the 19th Century* (translation Herbert Kaufman and Barbara Reisner). New York: Pendragon, 1983. 269.

19 Quote: Salmen, cf. note 18. 270. Cf. Friedrich Blume, *Classic and Romantic Music: A Comprehensive Survey* (translation M.D. Herter Horton). New York: Norton, 1970. 91.

to be seen as somehow inferior aesthetically. Today this "myth of the unappreciated genius" has gained such a hold that we tend to assume that it was the norm for great artists not to have been sufficiently appreciated by their contemporaries, despite the fact that there is ample evidence to suggest that this was only true in certain exceptional cases.[20] We tend to assume that—almost by definition—a truly great work of art is one that initially meets with great resistance or indifference. Again, van Gogh is a prime example for that idea. In any case, such a myth—no matter how far from reality it actually was—proved an extremely useful one for artists. Those who were not popular (or at least felt that they did not receive the attention which they deserved) could always take solace in the fact that such was the lot of great geniuses and that popular arts were "selling out."

[§37] As should be clear from the account I've given so far, the rise in status of the artist was all about both *power* and *freedom*. In that respect, it strongly mirrors the conception of God as creator *ex nihilo*. Further, I realize that I am painting with a rather broad brush and that any of the points I have made could be contested. However, I think that the general contours of my argument are correct, even if one can always find exceptions.

[§38] Yet what if we were to return to the creation account and mold a very different sort of conception of artistic activity?

Creatio ex improvisatio

[§39] Theologian Catherine Keller speaks of "the mystery of the missing chaos."[21] Her goal in her book *Face of the Deep: A Theology of Becoming* is to deconstruct *ex nihilo* theology and return to that forgotten chaos. Writing as a feminist theologian, she claims that the ex nihilo account is a highly *masculine* one. As we have seen, it belongs to a discourse of power. In its place, Keller suggests a theology of *becoming* in which we rethink the very

20 For example, see Hans Lenneberg, "The Myth of the Unappreciated (Musical) Genius." *Musical Quarterly* 80 (1980): 219-231.

21 Catherine Keller, *Face of the Deep. A Theology of Becoming*. London: Routledge, 2003. Chapter 1.

notion of *beginning*. In this respect, she is indebted to Edward Said, who distinguishes between "beginning" and "origin." Whereas beginnings are "secular, humanly produced and ceaselessly re-examined," origins are "divine, mythical and privileged."[22] In effect, the problem with *ex nihilo* is that erases the deep and the past. It speaks only of a moment. And it passes over the chaos out of which creation takes place. Yet, to quote Keller, "what if we begin instead to read the Word from the vantage point of its own fecund multiplicity, its flux into flesh, its overflow?"[23]

[§40] Keller reminds us that we begin amidst the chaos and the flux. In this respect, the verb means something other than at least one definition that the OED provides for the verb "begin" - "take the first step." One never truly *begins*, for there is always a step that has already been made. Again, I am uninterested in this theological point. My concern here is what each view yields in terms of how we think about artists. So how would this view of God translate into an account of artistic creation?

[§41] On my view, we end up with *creatio ex improvisatio* [a Latin term that only rarely occurs and only after the fifteenth century]. Artistic genesis, then, always begins *somewhere*. Consider the following example. It was at a baseball game, when someone handed him a pair of binoculars, that Andrew Stanton suddenly got the idea for what the character WALL-E should look like. He spent the entire next inning looking at the binoculars backwards, twisting them this way and that to simulate various expressions of sadness and joy. Stanton, the director of the film *WALL-E*, had been thinking for years about the idea of lone robot left to clean up an uninhabitable earth, but it was only in that moment that he figured out how the animated robot should look. That idea came in an instant, but it took quite some time to realize that watching the songs "Put on Your Sunday Clothes" and "It Only Takes a Moment" from the movie version of *Hello, Dolly!* would be just the right songs teach WALL-E emotion. Figuring out the "voices" of the robot characters took even longer and it basically required working with Ben Burtt

22 Edward Said. *Beginnings: Intention and Method*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985 xii-xiii.

23 Keller, *Face of the Deep*. 19.

for a year, during which they kept trying out different sounds until they found the ones that worked. Stanton compares the process to trying out paint swatches on the wall. And those were only some of the myriad details that had to be put in place to make the film a reality.[24]

[§42] Many artists will instinctively resonate with the process that Stanton went through. Some ideas come in a moment, but many aspects have to be worked out over days, weeks, months - even years. And those ideas don't usually come by being isolated but by being connected: with other artists, the history of art, friends who inspire you, and the world of everyday life. Often what happens is that you see something - perhaps as mundane as a pair of binoculars - and you suddenly realize how it could be painted or reworked into something that's both similar and different. Or perhaps you hear something - the chirp of a bird, a musical chord, a mechanical device that has a certain rhythm - and you imagine the beginning of a piece of music. That last example was the inspiration for Dr. Seuss to write his first book *And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street!*[25] Those are just two possibilities of the multifarious ways of improvisation.

[§43] Romantic music celebrates the original innovative artist. In contrast, Baroque music does virtually the opposite. For Baroque music is much more of a community affair, something one did not alone but with others. This was true of both how composers worked and performers worked, in true improvisatory fashion. The musicologist David Fuller describes the situation as follows: "A large part of the music of the whole era was sketched rather than fully realized, and the performer had something of the responsibility of a child with a colouring book, to turn these sketches into rounded art-works." Fuller compares the "scores" of Baroque music to the

24 Most of this information comes from a fascinating interview between Stanton and Terry Gross titled "Animations from Life" on the program Fresh Air (July 10, 2008).

25 Theodore Geisel (a.k.a. Seuss) was aboard a ship sailing from France to the States and became entranced by the thrum of the boat engine. The anapestic tetrameter rhythm (two unstressed syllables followed by a stressed syllable) of the motor became the rhythm of the book.

"charts" or "fake books" one finds in jazz.[26] The composer provided some idea of how the piece was to go, but a substantial portion of the shape of musical piece as heard was up to the performer.

[§44] Yet it was not merely the performer who was improvising; it was likewise the composer. Here it is helpful to juxtapose the notion of creation with that of improvisation. By using the term "improvisation" instead of "creation," I mean to stress that artists "fabricate out of what is conveniently on hand" rather than create in the sense of "to produce where nothing was before."[27] In making art, we always *start with something*. The extreme side of such "borrowing" would today come under the rubric of "plagiarism." You probably all know that Bach was in the habit of starting with a melody appropriated from either himself or someone else. A well-known example of his creative borrowing is how the popular song "Innsbruck, ich muß dich lassen" ["Innsbruck, I must leave you"] morphed into "O Welt, ich muß dich lassen" ["Oh World, I must leave you"] that became part of his *St. Matthew Passion*. Of course, this was standard practice at the time - a time when the idea of ownership of intellectual property didn't really exist. It raises the very question of the notion of ownership and copyright - which has become truly problematic in our time and desperately needs addressing - though that is something I cannot address here. George Frederick Handel was downright prolific in his "recycling" of both his own and others' work.[28]

[§45] Such a conception of artistic creation is strikingly at odds with that of the modern/Romantic paradigm. Now, I admit that many modern artists both have been and are currently committed to "pushing the envelope." What I'm questioning is just how "original" even the most supposed

26 David Fuller. "The Performer as Composer." In Howard Mayer Brown and Stanley Sadie (ed.), *Performance Practice*, Vol. 2. Houndmills, U.K.: Macmillan, 1989. 117-18. A "fake book" provides the performer with chords and melody, with the expectation that the performer "fake" the rest.

27 See *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (Springfield, Mass: Merriam-Webster, 2003) s.v. "improvise" and *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. "create."

28 For more on Handel's composing, see John T. Winemiller. "Recontextualizing Handel's Borrowing." *Journal of Musicology* 15 (1997): 444-470.

"original" pieces of art actually are. I fully admit that, say, Pablo Picasso's painting *Les Desmoiselles d'Avignon* (1907) and the Beatles album *Sgt. Pepper* (1967) are landmark - even in ways *original* - artistic contributions. Yet it strikes me that these examples are nothing like a "complete departure" from their respective genres but instead a significant advance within them. That is to say that they are still part of a recognizable genre and not something entirely new. Which is to say that they all represent ways of reworking what already existed in semi-new ways. Thus, I am contending that the old wisdom of Ecclesiastes still holds: "there is nothing new under the sun" (Ec. 1:9). Without out doubt, there is reworking, revision, rethinking, and renewal—but there is no true revolution. Here I side with the philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer who writes: "Even where life changes violently, as in ages of revolution, far more of the old is preserved in the supposed transformation of everything than anyone knows, and it combines with the new to create a new value."[29] Rock 'n' Roll may be a new genre, but it could never have come into existence without heavy borrowing from the blues.

[§46] Gadamer's concept of "play" [*Spiel*] also goes a good way toward helping us think about how artistic improvisation takes place. Play might seem to be merely something we do as recreation, but Gadamer suggests that play gives us a clue to human activity in general. Note that the German term *Spiel* can be translated into English as either "play" or "game." If we take the latter meaning, we can say that to play is to take part in an activity that exists apart from the single player. Gadamer thinks of the making of art as beginning in the to and fro of play but ending in what he calls "*transformation into structure*".[30] At some point, what was the play of experimentation starts to become more "stable" as a structure. The beginning of a musical phrase turns into a full melody. Some lines hastily sketched on a canvas get more and more definition as other lines are drawn. A piece of stone moves from being a square block to an increasingly

29 Hans-Georg Gadamer. *Truth and Method*. 2nd rev ed., translation Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall. New York: Continuum, 1989. 281.

30 *Truth and Method*. 110.

defined shape. But how does all of this happen? Here there can be no simple answer, for pieces of art come into existence in different ways over varying lengths of time. Gustav Mahler's (1860-1911) First Symphony is interesting in this respect. While Mahler wrote the bulk of it in 1888, parts of it come from material dating back to the 1870s and he revised it more than once. The final version dates to 1906.

[§47] While it is difficult to present anything like "the" model for artistic improvisation, consider the following story. Malcolm Cowley gives us what are in effect two descriptions of the process of how Hart Crane (1899-1932) wrote his poetry that can be blended into one. According to the first description, a Sunday afternoon party at which everyone was laughing, playing croquet, and having a good time was often the backdrop for his writing. Crane would be among those laughing - and drinking - the most until he would disappear to the next room. With a Cuban rumba or torch song or Ravel's Bolero in the background, the partygoers would hear the keys of a typewriter busily banging away. Then, about an hour later, Crane would appear with a poem and have the partygoers read it. At least, that is the way in which Cowley had originally told the story. It certainly makes for an intriguing story and fits rather well with the artistic genius myth we noted earlier. Yet Cowley later realized that this story was really only part of the story. For usually Crane had actually been thinking about that poem - seemingly produced in an hour - for months or years and writing bits and pieces along the way. Then he would use the occasion of the part to try to "get inspired." But the process of writing the poem wouldn't end there. More from Cowley:

> As for the end of the story, it might be delayed for a week or a month. Painfully, perseveringly—and dead sober—Hart would revise his new poem, clarifying the images, correcting its meter and searching for the right word hour after hour. 'The seal's wide spindrift gave toward paradise', in the second of his 'Voyages', was the result of a search that lasted for several days. At first he had written, 'The seal's findrinny gaze toward paradise', but someone had objected that he was using a non-existent word. Hart and I worked in the same office that year and I remember his frantic searches through Webster's Unabridged and the big Standard, his trips to the library—on office time—and his reports of

> consultations with old sailors in South Street speakeasies. 'Findrinny' he could never find, but after paging through the dictionary again he decided that 'spindrift' was almost as good and he declaimed the new line exultantly. Even after one of his manuscripts had been sent to Poetry or the Dial and perhaps had been accepted, he would still have changes to make.[31]

[§48] It strikes me that Crane's experience in writing poetry is probably rather similar to that of the process of how many or even most artistic pieces come into existence. One gets perhaps an inchoate idea and then begins to see it take shape (by either writing some preliminary lines or putting together chords and melodic motifs or taking some pictures or trying out some dance steps). Slowly, not infrequently with painstaking decision-making and trial and error, something is transformed into a kind of structure - something that starts to have its own identity. Kay Ryan, a former US Poet Laureate, claims that she writes her poetry in one sitting, but that the ideas have been swirling around in her head for months. Of course, sometimes one simply gets the whole thing at once. That is supposedly the story of Coleridge's "Kubla Khan." But that, I am arguing, is the exception rather than the rule.
[§49] It is Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) who (in)famously insists that "life itself is *essentially* a process of appropriating [...] 'Exploitation' does not belong to a corrupted or imperfect, primitive society: it belongs to the *essence* of being alive."[32] Certainly all art making is *essentially* appropriation. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "appropriation" as "taking as one's own or to one's own use."[33] A simple example of this is that poetry and novels rely upon you "appropriating" words from some language. Since language is owned by no one in particular, you are quite free to do so. Go right ahead. But improvising art requires more than just borrowing from language.

31 Malcolm Cowley. *Exile's Return: A Literary Odyssey of the 1920s*. New York: Viking, 1951. 229-30.

32 Friedrich Nietzsche. *Beyond Good and Evil* (translation Judith Norman). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. §259.

33 The Oxford English Dictionary 2nd ed. s.v. "appropriation."

It requires appropriating from life, from the world of ideas, and from the "language" of painting or film or sculpture or music. Indeed, it is so basic to artistic improvisation that the novelist Margaret Drabble (1939-) boldly admits that "appropriation is what novelists do. Whatever we write is, knowingly or unknowingly, a borrowing. Nothing comes from nowhere."[34]
[§50] The question, then, is simply: how much does any given piece of art depend upon another? The answer is: it all depends. For appropriation and dependency represent a rather wide spectrum that has representatives all along the way. Even if one tries to come up with examples that are truly "original," one inevitably can find influences and sources for such examples. A typical example of an "original" piece of art is Igor Stravinsky's (1882-1971) *The Rite of Spring* [*La Sacre du Printemps*], which first premiered in 1913. Consider the following description of it from 1927: "Harmonic tradition collapsed; everything became permissible and it was but necessary to find one's bearings in these riches obtained by this unexpected 'license' [...] Stravinsky broke down everything at one blow."[35] The musicologist and Stravinsky scholar Richard Taruskin quotes these words and then says the following:

> Minus the rampant animus, this is more or less how The Rite of Spring is still viewed today. The usual account of the work places almost exclusive emphasis on its putative rupture with tradition; and despite all his subsequent disclaimers, that is the view the composer chose to abet, increasingly alienated as he was from the cultural milieu in which the ballet was conceived. It was, however, precisely because The Rite was so profoundly traditional, both as to cultural outlook and as to musical technique, that Stravinsky was able to find through it a voice that would serve him through the next difficult phase of his career. Precisely because The Rite was neither rupture nor upheaval but a magnificent extension, it

34 Margaret Drabble. *The Red Queen*. Orlando: Harcourt, 2004. x.

35 From L.L. Sabaneyev. *Modern Russian Composers* (trans. Judah A. Joffe). New York: International, 1927; rpt. New York: Da Capo, 1975) 78-9. Quoted in Richard Taruskin. *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions: A Biography of the Works Through Mavra*, vol. 1.Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996. 847.

> revealed to Stravinsky a path that would sustain him through a decade of unimaginable ruptures and upheavals brought on by events far beyond his control.[36]

[§51] Taruskin's point is that what sounds so new and different is actually very strongly grounded in the tradition of Russian music that Stravinsky inherits. *The Rite* is thus marked by its fusion of traditional and modern elements. And Taruskin points out that Stravinsky, although wavering back and forth, generally chose to promote the "revolutionary" interpretation of the piece, since that made *The Rite* (and thus Stravinsky himself) seem all the more remarkable. Yet this kind of rhetoric is just that: ways of talking that make pieces of art seem more extraordinary than they really are by overemphasizing the "new" aspects and downplaying the more "traditional" ones. However "innovative" a piece of art might be, it is always still very strongly dependent upon tradition. The avant-garde composer Pierre Boulez (1925-) captures this quite nicely when he says:

> The composer is exactly like you, constantly on the horns of the same dilemma, caught in the same dialectic - the great models and an unknown future. He cannot take off into the unknown. When people tell me, 'I am taking off into the unknown and ignoring the past', it is complete nonsense.[37]

Indeed, what could "taking off into the unknown" possibly look (or sound) like?
[§52] Improvisation on what is available to an artist can take many different forms. The painter and sculptor George Braque (1882-1963) began to experiment with making collages out of newspaper fragments, ticket stubs, pieces of wood, fabric, stamps, and other items. Here we have a kind of improvisation that takes the detritus of human life and makes it

36 Taruskin. *Stravinsky and the Russian Tradition*. 847.

37 Pierre Boulez. *Orientation*s (translation Martin Cooper). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986. 454.

into something artistic. In turn, film directors often look to novels for their material. There are various versions of Jane Austen novels that attempt to be as "faithful" as possible to the original. The photographer Sherrie Levine (1947-) has made a career of photographing photographs of other photographers and then presenting the results as her own. She is known for an exhibition titled "After Edward Weston" (1980) in which she presented her photographs of Walker Evans's photographs.
[§53] Or, to take another example, folk music likewise relies on borrowing and "remixing" strands from other pieces of music that can result in either something that is very close to an existing song or something quite different from anything that already exists. Folk music is so strongly "intertextual" that, if such borrowing ceased, so would the very genre. For this reason, the musicologist Charles Seeger writes: "The attempt to make sense out of copyright law reaches its limit in folk song. For here is the illustration par excellence of the Law of Plagiarism. The folk song is, by definition and, as far as we can tell, by reality, entirely a product of plagiarism."[38] As I mentioned earlier, rock music would be unthinkable without the very direct influence of the blues. It was not just that rock musicians were listening to blues musicians and getting ideas; it was that they were actually ripping them off. For example, Led Zepplin's eponymous debut album is heavily indebted to Willie Dixon's songs "You Shook Me," "I Can't Quit You Baby," and "You Need Love." Of course, once such pieces of art start to generate huge revenues, creative borrowing becomes questionable. Thus, Dixon sued Led Zepplin and the family of African composer Solomon Linda, who wrote the song "The Lion Sleeps Tonight" that was used by Disney in *The Lion King*, filed suit again Abilene Music. And Picasso and others appropriated from African art back when such borrowing seemed perfectly acceptable. More recently, Bob Dylan borrowed from the Confederate poet Henry Timrod. Dylan's "When the Deal Goes Down" has the line "more frailer than the flowers, these precious hours," whereas Timrod's "Rhapsody of a Southern Winter Night" goes: "A round of precious hours. [...] And strove, with logic frailer than the flowers."

38 Charles Seeger. "Who Owns Folklore?—A Rejoinder." *Western Folklore* 21 (1962): 97 (93-101).

[§54] Perhaps we need to be more honest and simply recognize that borrowing is what makes art *possible*. Back in 1876, Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) had already noted:

> Our debt to tradition through reading and conversation is so massive, our protest or private addition so rare and insignificant,—and this commonly on the ground of other reading or hearing,—that, in a large sense, one would say there is no pure originality. All minds quote.[39]

[§55] Of course, there has long been something like a consensus on what *kind* of borrowing is permissible. The poet John Milton (1608-1674) gives us the formula in brief: "if it be not bettered by the borrower, among good authors it is counted Plagiaré."[40] Johann Mattheson (1681-1784) expands on this idea: "Borrowing is permissible; but one must return the thing borrowed with interest, i.e. one must so construct and develop imitations that they are prettier and better than the pieces from which they are derived."[41]

[§56] It shouldn't be difficult to see that defining the role artists in terms of improvisation changes pretty much everything. If artists are indebted to one another, there can be no "lone" genius, disconnected from the community. Instead, we are all improvisers together, quoting one another, saying the same thing in different ways, and giving different perspectives on the same things. There is an ever-shifting balance between quotation and originality, between old and new, between you and me. Some of what I say is more "mine"; some is more "yours'; some is more "tradition." Getting the exact ownership right may be only possible to a certain extent.

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39 Ralph Waldo Emerson. "Quotation and Originality." In *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, Vol. 8 (Letters and Social Aims s, ed. Ronald A. Bosco, Glen M. Johnson, and Joel Myerson). Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2010. 91.

40 John Milton. *Iconoclastes*. xxiii

41 Johann Mattheson. *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (translation Ernest Charles Harris). Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1981. 298.

Abstract

In this paper, I explore two different conceptions of creation. Traditionally, there have been those who think God (whoever this might be) created the world 'out of something' and who think God created the world 'out of nothing'. Although I'm not interested in the theological question, I do think the ways in which cultures have thought about God creating has influenced the ways in which we think about human creation.

I first consider the 'out of nothing' conception of artistic creation. At issue here is the power and freedom of the artist. There is probably no better expression of these attributes than Kant's genius, who seemingly creates out of thin air—ideas simply come to her from nowhere. Such a person produces art works that are both 'original' and 'exemplary'. There is a famous letter attributed to Mozart that expresses exactly this kind of artistic creation. It is, I think, not surprising that romanticism promoted the idea that the artist is somehow 'godlike'.

After considering this first conception of the artist, I turn to what I term creatio ex improvisatio. With Edward Said's distinction between 'beginning' and 'origin' in mind, I consider the improvisatory artist who knits together ideas and is constantly borrowing and reworking. Whereas Romantic music celebrates the original innovative artist, Baroque music does virtually the opposite. I consider various artists (even ones normally thought of as geniuses) and show that their artistic creation is always a kind of borrowing. On this account, artistic creation simply is improvisation—reworking, revision, and renewal. I explain this movement by way of Hans-Georg Gadamer's notion of *Spiel*. The result is a very different conception of the artist—the artist as improviser.

Bruce Ellis Benson

Although trained in the analytic tradition while a student at Wheaton, Bruce Ellis Benson's philosophical interests have been largely formed by the continental tradition. At Leuven (where the archives of Edmund Husserl are held), he studied in the phenomenological tradition and the history of

philosophy. His studies in Germany as Fulbright Fellow at the Hegel Archives enabled him to take part in the Hegel Kolloquium at the archives, follow courses and seminars with Otto Pöggeler and Bernhard Waldenfels, and have extended visits with Hans-Georg Gadamer, whose hermeneutics greatly have influenced his work in various ways. His time as a visiting scholar at the New School and a guest lecturer in philosophy of religion at Union Theological Seminary were broadening philosophically, theologically, and politically.

II

Peter Planyavsky - Organ Improvisation in the Past Five Decades

[§57] When I was invited some six months ago to come to Amsterdam for this symposium, I understood that my talk should consist, more or less, of my personal account of the improvisation world of the last 50 years - or at least what I had seen and heard of it. With so many highly sophisticated people here on the panel, I am now a little concerned that my contribution will be too personal. On the other hand, being the first speaker, it may be appropriate to offer something of an overview which may trigger some discussions, or even objections.

Improvisation

[§58] For the sake of clarity, I would like to try and define secular improvisation. Should this encompass the big *Postludium* in Germany or the even bigger *Sortie* in France; pieces which come close to symphonic movements in scale and artistry? What about a very long meditation during communion which, once again, could quite easily serve as the second movement of a symphony? To be absolutely clear, what we are talking about here are any longer pieces of music, pieces of complex design and structure. We are not concerned, for the moment, whether the theme on which the improvisation is based is a Gregorian chant, a hymn tune from 1652 or a twelve tone row.

[§59] Looking back to the mid-20th century, the world of improvisation differed dramatically from the situation today. Believe it or not, improvisation did not play a major role in the Netherlands seventy years ago. Hans Haselböck observed:

It is true that Cor Kee was known as the nestor of improvisation in the Netherlands. In addition, Anthon van der Horst, Hendrik Andriessen and later Albert de Klerk gained justified recognition in this field; but their work was appreciated mainly within a limited circle of connoisseurs.[1]

[§60] The first breakthrough in the recognition of organ improvisation as a true form of art came with the founding of the competition in Haarlem in 1951. This is the oldest competition of its kind and its development, also in terms of themes and forms, is well documented to the extent that an accurate global overview is quite possible. Tomorrow there will be a separate presentation on "Haarlem" but as a long time observer, I might as well offer a few remarks here. In truth, it is impossible to tackle the subject without discussing Haarlem. [§61] It is safe to say that the Haarlem competition contributed much to the notion of developing specific themes and asking competitors to play in specific forms. Before Haarlem, there was the French tradition of course and there was a lot of improvising in the German speaking countries, but here other principles and ideas were important. Let's take a look, briefly, at these traditions.

The French Tradition

[§62] The French tradition is a grand one and the list of people to have improvised successfully according to its principles reads like the "who's who" of the French Organ Hall of Fame. There was Alexandre Guilmant and there was Charles Tournemire. And there was, of course, Marcel Dupré with his *Cours Complet d'Improvisation à l'Orgue*. It was very interesting for me to re-read this book after 20 years. Strictly speaking, this is a book about harmony, counterpoint and formal analysis offering a lot of valuable information and many examples. Dupré even offers the reader a detailed plan for a symphonic movement, complete with all registrations and a plan for keys and modulations. The suggested "piece" is described bar-by-bar (example 1).

1 Hans Haselböck. " '...die alte Improvisationskunst wiederzubeleben' - Vierzig Jahre Orgelwettbewerb in Haarlem". Ars Organi 39/4 (1991). 210-215.

Example 1: Marcel Dupré's plan for a symphonic movement

Forme	Détail	Mesures	Plan en Ut maj.	Plan en La min.	Disposition vocale thématique	Registration
Exposition	Thème	4	Ut maj.	La min.	au Soprano	R: Fl. 8 ou Fl. 8,4
id.	1re Comte	4	de La min. à Sol	d'Ut maj. à Mi min.	id.	id.
id.	Reprise du Thème	4	Ut maj.	La min.	à l'Alto	id.
id.	2e Comte	4 ou 8	de Fa maj. à Ut	de Ré min. à La min.	id.	id.
Pont	1re Phrase	4	de La min. à Mi min.	de Mi min. à Si min.	Voix alternées	G: Bdon 8 ou Salic. 8
id.	2e Phrase	4	de Mi min. à Ré maj.	de Si min. à Sol maj.	id.	id.
id.	3e Phrase	4	de Ré maj. à Sol maj.	de Sol maj. à Ut maj.	id.	id.
2e Tonalité (Dominante ou Relatif)	Thème	4	Sol (Courte modulation éloignée)	Ut (Courte modulation éloignée)	au Ténor	M.D,R: Fl: 8,4 Naz.
id.	Comte concluant	8	Sol	Ut	id.	M.G, G: Fonds doux 8
Développt	1re Phrase rythmique	8	Sol min.	Ut min.	Voix alternées	G.R: Fonds doux 8
id.	2e Phrase rythmique	8	Sol ♯ min.	Ut ♯ min.	id.	R. Fonds doux 8
id.	Phrase lyrique	8 à 12	La maj.	Ré maj.	Péd. en 8 pieds puis Alto puis Soprano	R. accompagnant G. Fonds *mf* 8
id.	Préparation de la Rentrée	4	Modulant	Modulant	Harmonique	R: Gambe 8 *pp*
Rentrée	Fausse Rentrée du Thème	4	Réb maj. ou Si maj.	Sib min. ou Sol ♯ min.	Péd. en Ténor ou en Alto	R. très doux Péd: Fl. 4 solo
id.	Comte (relié au Pont)	8	Ut maj.	La min.	id.	id.
Rappel du Pont	Une seule Phrase	4	Ré min. à Ut maj.	Ré min. à La maj.	Voix alternées	Gd Bdon 8 ou Salic. 8
Conclusion	Thème	4	Au ton principal présenté sur un autre degré.	La maj.	Soprano accompagné d'un contrepoint chromatique ou diatonique (ou Canon, s'il y a lieu).	R: voix célestes
id.	Comte final	8	Brève modulation éloignée et Pédale de Tonique.	Brève modulation éloignée et Pédale de Tonique.	Libre	id.

[§63] However, the real point of Dupré's instructions, namely how to keep all these rules and formulas close at hand during the process of creating a new piece, or, to put it another way, the actual difficulty of constructing the

music while performing it, is not explained. Duprè does at least touch on the problem in one sentence of the preface:

> It is by patient repetition and by the constant improvement of the same passage that the student progresses most rapidly in the study of improvisation.

[§64] What Dupré is really saying here is this: you must plan a good form, conceive a sophisticated structure of the keys you intend to use and then practise in small steps before putting it together. Of course, having a plan is a good idea. However, the plan looks no different from the plan for a written-out composition.

The German Improvisation Style

[§65] It is not my intention to criticise the earlier masters of improvisation. All I am saying is that some principles of improvisation were different before Haarlem came into existence. Let us look quickly at the principles behind the German improvisation style.

[§66] It seems strange to say so, but there were simply fewer opportunities for organists east of the Rhine to perform longer improvisations. The reason for this was, naturally, a liturgical one: one of the big differences between the French, Italian and Iberian organ cultures and that of the Germanic countries was that there was very much less congregational singing to accompany, especially when compared to the Lutheran denominations. Germany is the home of the hymn tune and these hymns were indeed sung at many points in the service, thus leaving less space for solo organ music. Gregorian chant always played an important role but was not the predominant vocal medium. The genre of the organ symphony was practically unknown. The Germanic hymn tune with its clear structure, lines and fermatas, with its symmetry and its regular rhythmic patterns leads to forms and registrations which differ from those used in the Romanic countries. Therefore, Germany is the home of the choral fantasy and the chorale partita. The ideological link between chorale tune and the baroque style is still very obvious in Germany - and this is even more surprising several decades after Distler, Pepping and David. In many places, if students are asked to improvise a partita, they will

automatically use a harmonic language that tries to be close to Baroque style; only if they are explicitly granted “freedom of style“, will they include a more liberal harmonic language.

[§67] Consequently, there was no path leading to large-scale non-liturgical forms of improvisation. In addition, and as a logical result, there was, and still is, a tendency in Germany to allow a very long time to prepare such Baroque style improvisations, especially for exams, - to the point where the player “practises” the piece until it can be played “without mistakes”.

I remember an interesting situation when I was on the jury for the remarkable Church Music Competition in Fürth in Germany. What makes this competition remarkable is the fact that each competitor must conduct a choir, play a programme of organ literature and play an improvisation on a given theme. When the jury members had gathered for the first meeting, we asked the organisers how long in advance the competitors would be given the themes. The answer was on the day prior to the competition. The Catholic jury members responded: “so early?“ and the Lutherans: “so late?“ This reveals another fundamental difference. The Lutherans tend to get the hymn tunes for next Sunday on Tuesday or Wednesday so that they can practise their improvised choral preludes and intonations. The Catholic organists get their hymns when they enter the building on Sunday morning. They are not, of course, expected to play three or four minutes worth of choral preludes. But the point is this: the Lutherans practise their improvisations until it is a piece of music which does not differ much from a choral prelude by Zachow or Walther.

[§68] The subject of this little essay is not, of course, the liturgical practice in Germany. The point is that what the Germans call “Improvisation“ is simply a piece which didn’t exist before and does not exist in written form. Actually, if one is really honest, it is a memorized piece.

[§69] Improvisation, as the etymology of the word reveals, is a form of production which includes the unforeseen; things neither seen nor heard in advance. Improvisation is a form which includes those things rather than circumventing or correcting them.

> Improvisation...
> ... ist eine Form der Musikerzeugung, die das Nicht-Vorher-Gesehene einschließt - jene Dinge, die man nicht vorher gesehen oder gehört hat - eine Form, die diese Sachen einschließt und nicht etwa überspielt oder korrigiert.

[§70] That is to say: it seems to me that improvisation is a form of production which also includes things that have happened, things that turned out to be different from the plan; to put it simply a form of production that incorporates a slip in the melody, a wrong harmony or a registration error. These elements of coincidence and accident must not merely be included but instead will automatically become ingredients of the piece whilst its construction is in progress. It is the unforeseen and the accidental which define an improvisation. A good improviser may have a quota of 85% planned and 15% unplanned elements in his piece - and if he is a really good improviser, he will make it sound as if it were 100% planned by working cleverly with the accidental elements. But, on the other hand, if you repeat your improvisation for long enough that it becomes flawless and perfect, then it is far better to call it "composing without paper".

[§71] Later during this symposium, you will have opportunity to discuss the relationship between, and the interdependence (or, more accurately, independence!) of, improvisation and composition. But for now, it is important to realize that a competition like the one in Haarlem was neither entirely in line with the French tradition, nor with improvisation as it was practiced in Germany - one of the reasons being the concept of the competition and, of course the nature of the organ in St. Bavo. On this organ, it is almost impossible to make all the registration changes yourself and one is obliged to have a precise plan about what to play where and with which combination of stops. This is where a training in France will help, of course. On the other hand, you will make fewer registration changes in general.

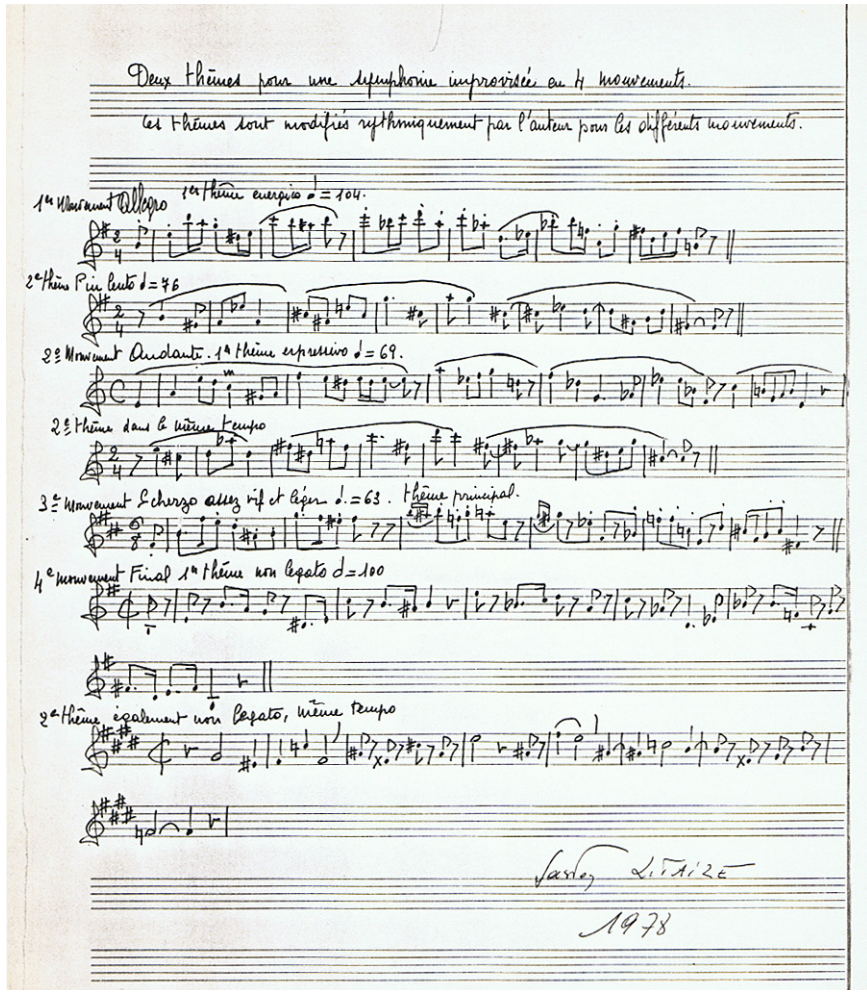
[§72] Economy of registration is something that comes from the German tradition and I will comment further on this shortly.

Differences between French and German Improvisation Traditions

[§73] There are other fundamental differences. In the French tradition, it seems,

a theme was often designed for a specific form from the very beginning: for a *Scherzo*, the theme is composed with the appropriate bouncing rhythm while a fugue subject is designed with some inherent contrapuntal potential. In your handout, you can see a plan for a whole symphony conceived by Gaston Litaize; I believe it was for the Chartres competition in 1978 (example 2).

Example 2: Gaston Litaize's plan for a symphony



[§74] Speaking of Litaize, I must tell you another jury story which occurred just before the finals of the improvisation competition in Linz in 1990 whilst we were discussing which forms and theme to prescribe. We realised that we had already heard a free fantasy on twelve tone material and in the next round the candidates had to improvise a partita on a German hymn tune. We proposed, therefore, a Gregorian chant tune with the intention of asking the competitors to improvise a sonata or symphony. But Gaston Litaize was completely against the idea; in fact, he almost became angry. He thought that it was quite silly to make a symphony on a chant tune; he said: "you could ask for a paraphrase or maybe variations or a chorale, but Gregorian chant is not appropriate for a symphonic form."

[§75] In the Austrian tradition, one of the challenges for the improviser is to transform the theme into material that fits a certain form but in France, or so it seems, there was a strong tradition of designing a theme with a certain form in mind. In addition, atmosphere and sound experiments played a large role in the French tradition. When Marcel Dupré offers a detailed account of various forms and contrapuntal techniques in his *Method of Improvisation*, he very often suggests detailed registrations and a plan for manual changes to underline the construction and the different themes. Sometimes he even tells us about the use of the swell box for certain transitions from one element to the other. Look again at the "General Plan" from Dupré's *Method* (example 1).

[§76] This is, of course, another very important point. Not only is registrational practice different in various countries (simply because the organs are different), the swell box did not play the same important role in Germanic countries - at least not until German organists rediscovered the French Romantic composers around 1980. In Austria, the first real Swell divisions were built around 1975. As a result the element of gradual dynamic change did not play the same important role as in France and this, in turn, had some influence on form and structure as well as the fact that there were many fewer organs with electric stop action and combination systems.

[§77] Listening to a historic recording of Dupré from 1961 (the first movement of a Symphony), we hear a late example of his great mastery. Bear in mind our observation of 15 minutes ago: there is a clear and precise plan (or at least that's what Dupré wanted his students to have!) but you will

hear that he depends on easy access to the resources of the organ and on the use of the organ's combination system. In addition, the emphasis is actually not primarily on complicated polyphony and counterpoint; the fascination comes from a constant movement and from the presence of certain rhythmic patterns derived from the first theme. Much also depends on the harmonic command of the master - on the ability to modulate without any difficulty, and without breaking any rules, from one key to any other. The key thing we learn from this recording is that an exceptionally gifted player like Dupré does not need to follow a detailed plan. This is a live recording of a concert in Cologne Cathedral. Bear in mind that Dupré was 75 years old at the time of this concert.

Marcel Dupré: improvised Symphony, first movement

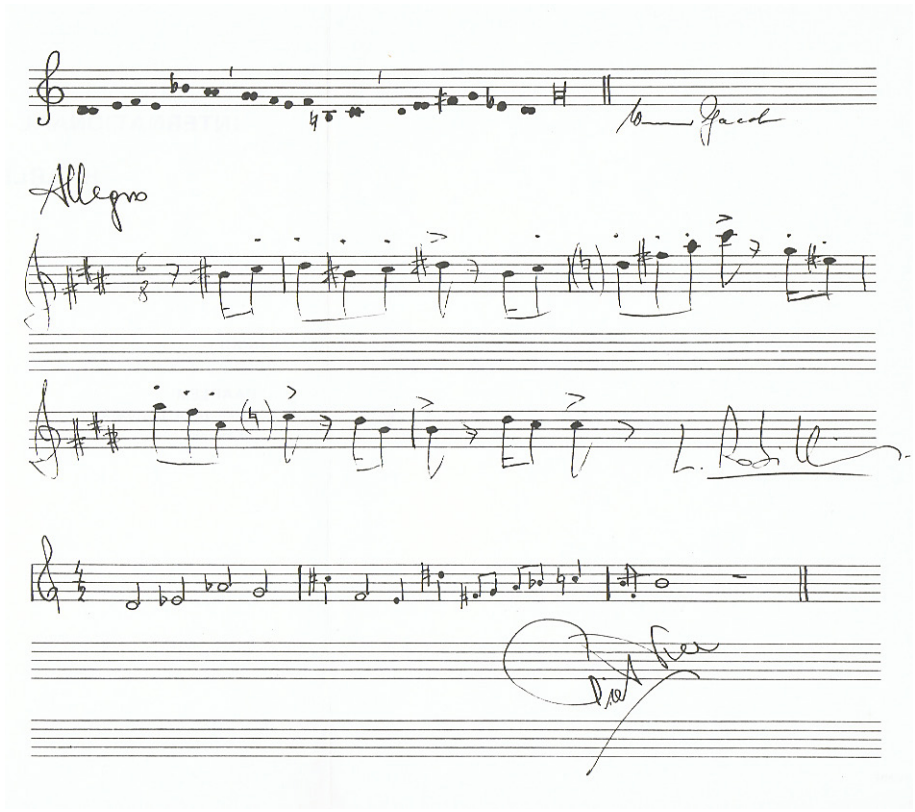
[sound file only available in the electronic version of this book]

play stop

Haarlem

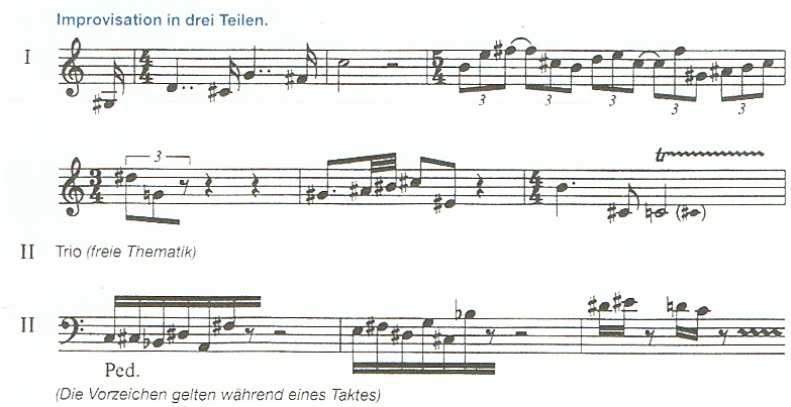
[§78] This kind of improvisation relies strongly on a conservative musical idiom and depends on a certain type of theme. But from the mid-20th century onwards, the spectrum of improvisation themes widened constantly and, of course, the range of harmonic languages developed as well. Without going into too much detail, almost everything has become possible for an improvisation theme. Let me draw your attention to some Haarlem themes here (example 3 and 4).

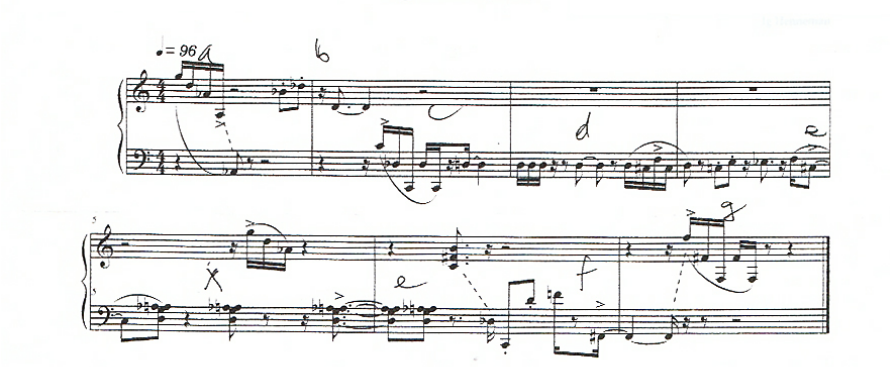
Example 3: Haarlem 1984 / Jury Concert



[§79] It is obvious that either traditional improvisation plans would have to be adapted a great deal or the themes would have to be adapted likewise. Fragmentation is the key word here; none of the three themes assigned for the first round in 1996 are true themes in the traditional sense; they could be treated like old-fashioned themes but only with great difficulty. However, such a theme is, primarily, a source of motifs. These motifs are loosely connected and part of the work of the improviser is to arrange the motifs, connect or disconnect them, combine them or just to leave them alone. The big rests between the fragments of the themes allow and provoke combination; it is entirely possible to fill the rests with other motifs.

Example 4: Haarlem 1996 / Qualifying Round





[§80] Such themes were used already during the seventies with a generally a more aphoristic and rhapsodic style as a result. The development of such themes and the gradually increasing ability of organists to handle them is, without doubt, one of the results of the Haarlem competition and, of course, of the influence of the Dutch school of improvising.

[§81] Let's look now at the themes for the jury concert in 1984. Here the development previously described suffers a little paranoia: the theme by Louis Robillard is a good old-fashioned basis for a scherzo, the first theme by Werner Jacob is an asymmetric hymn tune, written out with some rhythmic ambiguity (in truth it looks both like a Gregorian chant and a very old hymn tune even if there is a clearly profiled tonal centre). And then we have Piet Kee's theme which is a twelve tone structure with a rhythm already assigned to it.

The thin red line

[§82] There is no end to new ideas for themes, nor for forms assigned to competitors. After listening to many, many competitions, I would like to warn their artistic planners against using too much freedom and seeking the unusual too readily. One reason to be cautious is that it will become more and more difficult to objectively compare the resulting improvisations and impossible to define whether a given task has been fulfilled by the player. This, after all, is what a competition is all about; whilst it is all well and good to strive for freedom and for the ever-new, ultimately an improvisation has to be clearly defined in order to be evaluated. In passing I would also like to express my wish for themes composed with the organ in mind; the theme for the final in Haarlem in 2008 seemed to call for a drummer and would actually have sounded much better on the piano. That does not mean that it is impossible to use it for an organ improvisation but in my opinion the thin red line is in sight here; the frontier beyond which it becomes a little unrealistic to speak of a proper improvisation theme, at least as long as some vestige of the tradition is still allowed to influence what we do in the 21st century.

[§83] It seems that today we have a blend of some elements from both traditions: the feeling for interesting registrations, the heritage of large-scale symphonic forms and the sense of motoric drive came from the French tradition; the "discipline" of academic theme-development came from Germany. The meeting point of the two, in some ways, was Haarlem although one should add that this occurred with some assistance from Austria. It was Anton Heiller who was one of the first improvisers from outside Holland to gain a reputation as an improviser in this country,

soon followed by Hans Haselböck who was the first non-Dutch organist to win the Haarlem competition three times. Haselböck also taught on the improvisation course for many years. As it is now 30 years since Heiller died, let us close this little overture to our symposium with remembering one of Heiller's special improvisations, created in a concert on June 29th, 1975, in the Abbey Church of Ossiach; the organ was one of the earlier Metzler organs in Austria, built in 1971, with 18 stops and of course no combination system or Swell box. In a way, this improvisation illustrates many of the considerations I have described. There are two themes - one the old hymn tune *Ach wie nichtig*, the other a silly little motif which found its way into the basket of themes collected from the audience. You can hear the whole cantus firmus and you can also hear its fragmentation. You hear a lot of constant motion, but you also hear aphoristic sections. Anton Heiller was, in some ways, conservative but had an extraordinary sense of form and an eye for the possibilities of themes such as strettos and the potential to combine thematic elements. He was also very economical in his use of the organ.

Abstract

Looking back to the mid-20th century, the world of improvisation differed dramatically from the situation today. The first breakthrough in the recognition of organ improvisation as a true form of art came with the founding of the International Improvisation Competition in Haarlem in 1951. Before Haarlem, there was a French tradition and a German one. The master of the French tradition was Marcel Dupré, who thought it essential to have a good form, to conceive a sophisticated structure of the keys one intends to use and to practise in small steps before putting the elements of the music together. In Germany, the Lutheran liturgy stimulated different

types of improvisation: hymns require chorale preludes. A practical difference is that Catholic organists are not informed a few days in advance about the music they will have to make during mass, whereas German organists may practice for several days - which makes their music often sound as if "composed without paper" rather than improvised. Another difference is the way form and content are connected. In Germany speaking countries, one of the challenges for the improviser is to transform the theme into material that fits a certain form. In France, however, there is a strong tradition of designing a theme with a certain form in mind. In addition, atmosphere and sound experiments play a large role in the French tradition. The International Improvisation Competition in Haarlem added a new element to the development of the art of improvisation: organists were confronted ever more with themes that were in fact "sources of motives". The gradually increasing ability of organists to handle such themes is, without doubt, one of the results of the Haarlem competition. It is interesting to witness Anton Heiller including essential elements of this development in his music, for example about *Ach wie nichtig* (in Ossiach, 1971): he combines a hymn theme and a short motive, as well as constant motion and aphoristic sections.

Peter Planyavsky

Peter Planyavsky became a student of Anton Heiller at the University for Music and Drama when he was 12. He graduated with the Master's Diploma in Organ (1966) and the Diploma in Church Music (1967). In 1969, he was appointed Cathedral Organist at St. Stephan's Cathedral, Vienna. In 2004, Planyavsky decided to terminate his affiliation with the Cathedral. Since 1980, Planyavsky has also been Professor for Organ and Improvisation at the University for Music and Drama in Vienna, with the additional function as Head of the Church Music department from 1996 to 2003. Peter Planyavsky also undertakes a full schedule as an international recitalist, coach in workshops and masterclasses and as a member of juries. Planyavsky has won several prizes and awards, the latest addition being the Federal Austrian Price for Music, awarded to him for his collected compositions.

III

Peter Planyavsky - European Improvisation History: Anton Heiller

[§84] The role of Anton Heiller (1923-1979) in the development of improvisation in the second half of the 20th century is inextricably linked with the history of the Haarlem Summer Academy and Organ Improvisation Contest:

- Heiller competed twice in the Improvisation Competition
- He was a member of the jury on five occasions
- He twice composed or nominated the theme on which the competitors had to improvise
- He attended many other editions of the competition, in most instances whilst he was in Haarlem teaching his Bach course at the Summer Academy.

[§85] For several years, it was the custom to hold a session during the Summer Academy at which tapes of the competition were played and Heiller would analyze the improvisations. Of course, in order to be able to do this, he was obliged to take ample notes about what he heard during the competition. Heiller was, therefore, one of the key figures in improvisation at the time. We will investigate how this success story began as well as identifying the key ingredients which made up Heiller's improvisations.
[§86] We will look briefly at the improvisation landscape in Austria in the 1950s and analyse the different practices inherent in the Catholic and Lutheran traditions. Many of the following considerations, however, are also valid for Germany and Switzerland.

Organ Improvisation and Liturgy

[§87] In the first instance one must recognise that the themes on which the organists improvised varied markedly according to their denominational tradition. Lutherans have a treasure trove of 400 years of hymn tunes and therefore rarely improvised on Gregorian chant. Catholic organists had hymn tunes and Gregorian chant but the latter certainly played the more important role. Before the reform of the liturgy after the Second Vatican Council, different categories of Mass were clearly defined. In the High Mass,[1] hymn tunes were forbidden and therefore excluded. It was expected that the Proper would be sung to Gregorian chant although it was possible to substitute certain sections with a motet. In South Germany and Austria, there was a long tradition of music composed for choir and orchestra. This left little opportunity for the organ with the result that improvisations during High Mass were restricted to preludes introducing the following section of the Proper or short introductions to the various sections of the Ordinary. Organists played before the Introit – albeit briefly - and after the dismissal, providing the opportunity for the longest improvisation. The situation, therefore, is paradoxical; although the organ was marginalised, a strong emphasis on improvisation in the Catholic countries became common, as the organ music had to be adjustable in length.[2]

[§88] There are several circumstances which have since disappeared but which have to be considered. For example, the fact that communion was served outside High Mass in many cases, resulting in little need for the long musical meditations to which we are now accustomed in Catholic churches. In addition in those halcyon days of voluminous church attendance and well-staffed clergy, a church would offer five or six masses between early morning and noon; evening masses were just beginning to come into

1 To clarify, the term "mass" here refers, on the one hand, to a cycle of six pieces corresponding to the Ordinary but, on the other, to the service as a whole.

2 This concept, by the way, is also responsible for the form taken by Frescobaldi's toccatas which have clearly defined sections allowing one to leap, for instance, from the cadence of the third section to the first chord of the fifth.

fashion, although evening masses preceding a Sunday or a feast day did not yet exist. There was, as a result, no room for a thundering 10-minute postlude under normal circumstances. There was simply no time for anything resembling the big "sortie" of the French tradition.

[§89] In all other masses apart from High Mass, Catholics sang hymns. In this type of liturgy, the priest's contribution was limited; in fact, with the exception of the two readings, the homily and the elevation of bread and wine, the organ was played throughout the whole service. The organist provided a constant pattern of hymns and short improvisations, leading from one hymn to the next. This involved modulation and in most cases thematic modulations were expected. The priority for the Catholic organist was harmonic command and timing rather than form and structure.

[§90] Our brief survey of the circumstances in which improvisation in the Catholic churches took place reveals that there was simply no time or requirement for large forms. Of course, there was no reason to develop variations or partitas (never mind sonatas or passacaglias!), at least not for liturgical use. The principal difference between the liturgies is that Catholic liturgy was priest-centered whilst that of the reformed churches was congregation-centred. To put it another way, Catholic liturgy was rite-orientated while the protestants concentrated on word and music. This explains the predominant role of the Germanic hymn tune in the non-Catholic denominations. It also profiles the role of the Catholic organist as a provider of musical bridges from one choral piece to the next and as a filler of long hiatuses whilst the priest prayed silently. In a Lutheran or Reformed service, there are no silences to be filled; when the congregations sings, the pastor will sing along because at that moment he is part of his congregation. For Catholics, the situation today has changed; as far as hymn singing is concerned, the practice is now comparable to the refomed liturgy, at least to a certain extent.

Early Years

[§91] This background information is necessary to be able to imagine the improvisational "homeland" of Anton Heiller. Heiller surely possessed that essential gift of harmony whilst still at school. He took organ lessons from Cathedral Organist Wilhelm Mück, an archetypal Catholic "mass

organist" of the sort previously described. I heard Mück play many times as my predecessor as Cathedral Organist, and I can testify that he had a good sense of 19th-century harmony and could accompany the hymns from memory, even in different keys. However this was not something which was considered unusual in that era and the number of hymns actually in use was shockingly small compared with the situation today. As a player of organ literature, Wilhelm Mück was clearly in the second rank of Viennese organists, clearly overshadowed by the Cathedral's main organist Karl Walter. Walter, a native of Germany, was considered the leading improviser in Austria and was acclaimed as the virtual successor of Anton Bruckner.

[§92] Anton Heiller was 12 years old when he became a regular substitute organist for the 12 o'clock Sunday mass at St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna. Unofficially, this was an important mass, ranking just behind the High Mass. It was played from the West Gallery on the famous Walcker organ of 1886; the other masses with hymns sung by the congregation were accompanied on the choir organ. Heiller would hardly have been allowed to play such a prestigious service without having that remarkable gift of total command over harmony which was indispensable for liturgical playing at the time. We have reason to believe that it was Heiller's ability to improvise that led to his early enrolment in the Academy of Music. There he studied "officially" with Franz Schütz who was considered the pre-eminent concert organist, alongside the aforementioned Karl Walter. The aesthetics of the two organists were quite different however. Franz Schütz didn't improvise at all and was not involved in playing for the liturgy. Although Heiller officially studied with Franz Schütz, the latter was Director of the Academy, with the result that most of his teaching was carried out by Bruno Seidlhofer who became a leading pianist and piano professor in the fifties and sixties.

[§93] We have no recordings of early improvisations by Anton Heiller but we can assume that he soon departed from the typically mellow Catholic service style. Hans Haselböck quotes Wilhelm Mück as saying: "Heiller used to be such a fine improviser but what he does now - it's nothing."

[§94] In terms of organ concerts, there was very little going on in Austria. The only place where organ concerts took place regularly was at St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna. In addition, concerts sometimes took place in the city's two concert halls. The one fact important for us is that both Karl

Walter and Wilhelm Mück would conclude their concerts in the cathedral with an improvisation and it seems that they were the only ones to do so. Anton Heiller attended their concerts and later adopted the practice of improvising at the end of performances. Most of his recital programs from 1945 onwards include this final improvisation except when he played an all-Bach programme. For such a programme he would refrain from improvising as he considered the resulting stylistic clash unacceptable.

[§95] Heiller's improvisation from May 31, 1963 (Vienna, Dominikanerkirche), is a good example of the era which I will refer to as Heiller's Middle Period. The theme is probably the Communio for Pentecost *Factus est repente*. The melody is very similar to the Communio for *Corpus Christi, Quotiescumque*, the antiphon Heiller had used in his organ work *In festo corporis Christi* several years previously. But as this concert took place on May 31, 1963, and Pentecost was just two days later, I think it is *Factus est* - not that it makes much difference. The improvisation is typical insofar as it is uses only two motifs from the antiphon but remains very convincing, mainly as a result of rhythmic variety, good proportions and an enormous sense of harmony. Heiller creates a dense atmosphere by using most of the twelve chromatic notes whilst, nevertheless, clinging to a harmonic centre. Analysis of some of his written music reveals the same methods.

Haarlem

[§96] With no requirement to develop forms, no time for long improvisations during the liturgy, an emphasis on harmony and modulation and, in addition, no church job which would have challenged him to improvise regularly, it is easy to understand why Anton Heiller was very nervous when invited, only a few years later, to take part in the 1952 Haarlem Improvisation Competition. As is well known, the prize in those early days of the competition was the Silver Tulip and the winner was obliged to defend his trophy the following year. The first winner of the competition in 1951 had been Louis Toebosch. In addition, Heiller was up against Tage Hølby Nielsen from Norway, Piet Post from the Netherlands and Pierre Labric from France. The members of the jury were Pierre Segond from Geneva, Flor Peeters from Brussels and Albert de Klerk who was organist of the St. Josephkerk in Haarlem. The strength of Heiller's inferiority

complex can be deduced from an interesting situation which occurred a few days before the competition. Heiller went to the St. Josephkerk where Albert de Klerk used to improvise after the service. After he had heard him, Heiller decided immediately that he would cancel his participation in the competition and go back to Vienna as soon as possible. Mr. Obermayer, a most important figure in the organisation of the still-young Haarlem Festival (and an Austrian like Heiller) was present and on hearing Heiller's remark slapped him in the face! Heiller's association with Haarlem was rendered permanent by his triumph in the competition a few days later.

[§97] When Heiller returned in 1953 to defend the prize, he wrote to his wife: "This time I will have stiff competition, especially from Karl Richter [!] and Piet Kee." The competition was indeed won by Piet Kee who would go on to win twice more thus retaining the Silver Tulip for good. Heiller wrote about Piet Kee's victory:

> I have never heard such artistry in form and structure. Believe me, I will never be able to play something like that. He improvised inversions, augmentations and diminutions separately for all themes as well in combination, sometimes in stretto and on top of that, I heard that Piet Kee played without any notes on the music desk, only the printed theme in front of him. That is simply beyond my comprehension! Some of it can be explained through his continuous work in Alkmaar and through the outstanding teaching of his father, Cor Kee. But what about me - with no organ of my own, and without having improvised anything throughout the whole year?

[§98] Only a few days later, the winners of the first two competitions were to give an improvisation recital, and while Heiller was once more quite nervous, he seems to have done a good job as far as we can tell from his own recollection of his improvisation:

> The two themes by Toebosch were not intended to belong together [...]. So I played a brief introduction on the passacaglia theme, followed by the actual passacaglia, including the inversion of the theme. After a kind of imperfect cadence I started with the fugue; unfortunately, there were

a couple of registration mistakes, and in some of the fugal expositions the difficult theme was not always correct. Towards the end, I combined the two themes which sounded quite strange due to the different meters. At the end I once again presented the passacaglia theme together with its inversion. Naturally I had written down many things albeit under awkward circumstances. From 7 until 8 o'clock the carillon of St. Bavo was playing without interruption, and it was terribly loud. I had to gather my wits to continue and not to call the whole thing off.

[§99] In that same year, 1955, the Summer Academy was organised around the competition for the first time. As the art of organ improvisation had been popularised by the first few years of the competition, it was decided that improvisation courses (by Anton Heiller and Gaston Litaize) would be organised alongside repertoire classes led by Jeanne Demessieux and Friedrich Bihn (Hamburg), each covering literature from their own regions.
[§100] In 1956, Heiller was invited onto the jury for the first time. Marie-Claire Alain joined the panel in place of Gaston Litaize and taught improvisation on the Summer Academy according to the French tradition. This set-up was short-lived, however. Marie-Claire Alain convinced the other tutors and the board that it was impossible to teach only improvisation to such a large number of students of whom many lacked the required talent. The subsequent changes led to the Haarlem Summer Academy in its latter guise. This functioned for many years featuring classes on different topics. Heiller described some of the problems encountered in these classes:

Speaking of the students, I think they are quite willing to take part but they also would prefer me to demonstrate more. But I am always afraid of doing so. I hope the last days of the class go well. Tomorrow Prof. Ahrens will arrive for the whole week. I hope he won't come to my class too often as I am really embarrassed by my primitive teaching! - The students from Norway want me to show them all the basic principles of improvisation so that they can make detailed notes. They're not keen to play any more as they are well aware that they are much less able then the Dutch students. But I don't know how to do this kind of systematic lecturing at all! I hope it will not turn into a complete

disaster! Obermayr [sic] wants all teachers to submit a report about the classes we are teaching.

[§101] Heiller did indeed write such a report, but it doesn't tell us a lot, being self-evidently more of a wishlist than a record of achievement. Heiller presents a long description of structures to be covered including complex forms such as the sonata or passacaglia, plus a similar list of techniques including an ornamented cantus firmus in the alto or tenor. There is reason to assume that only a small portion of the list had actually been covered in the classes. Based on our evalution of Anton Heiller's background, it is easy to understand why he was not happy teaching; his class was labelled "German style improvisation", but as we have seen, he had actually never played partitas and fugues, let alone the neo-baroque fughettas and chorale preludes of which the Germans were so fond. Heiller could certainly do all of these things as a consequence of his strong harmonic gifts and his natural feeling for proportion and structure. What was missing was a "recipe" or a method about how to achieve these forms and, as far as we know, he never developed one. After the first two years at Haarlem, Heiller refused to teach improvisation classes for the rest of his career.

"Everything is fine as long as it is not boring"

[§102] That Heiller stuck to this policy quite strictly can be seen from correspondence with his American management. There were several customers who requested classes in improvisation or, more accurately, liturgical organ playing, but Heiller always refused the invitation. In one instance he told the Americans to study Bach's *Orgelbüchlein* instead; whatever they might need for the liturgy should be extractable from the *Orgelbüchlein*.
[§103] We also know that he was once invited to Switzerland to lead several days of improvisation and liturgical organ playing classes. When he discoverd how much time had been set aside for his classes, he panicked and complained to his wife:

Can you imagine - every day for 3 hours in the morning and again in the afternoon? I am absolutely unable to do this. I'm completely

> detached from liturgical playing. And surely they expect me to do real lectures! They will be disappointed and I will never be able to make up for it. Never before in my life have I been in such a crisis!

[§104] In the end, Heiller decided that his only option was to "cancel all appointments for this fall" and find a doctor to testify that he was ill. In short, Anton Heiller had a strong dislike for concepts and methods! Much later, Roman Summereder, Heiller's last student, pointed out that the only thing about which Heiller could ever get impatient as a teacher was hymn harmonisation, something he did teach and about which he was very strict. This, however, was applied music theory rather than improvisation. Summereder comments:

> He didn't, or couldn't, want to give recipes. He kept saying: "Everything is fine as long as it is not boring." As soon as he was forced to refer to a particular system, he quickly lost interest or became insecure. It was the same when he demonstrated improvisation; it could be brilliant on a good day. If not, he would soon lose interest and give up.

[§105] In another document Anton Heiller writes a report for the Austrian Fulbright Commission about the progress of an American student who, as he had enrolled for the church music programme, was obliged to study improvisation. Heiller describes his improvisation teaching:

> In order to develop the student's abilities in improvisation, I had him write out [!] harmonisations of hymn tunes in Bach style. The next thing he had to write [!] were two-part pieces with cantus firmus and counterpoint. Of course, this is only the beginning.

Conclusion

[§106] So, what can we conclude? Heiller was an artist who, without any doubt, was a great improviser and who influenced many to improve their own playing. But this was achieved almost exclusively by others listening to his concerts or to the many tape recordings that circulated among organists.

[§107] Quite clearly, Heiller was not a teacher of improvisation and had no teaching method. But this lack of organisation and his shortcomings in methodical teaching were far outweighed by his own convincing improvisations. This was just pure musicianship - mainly a result of his extraordinary gift for harmony and instinctive feeling for proportion and rhythm.

[§108] All of these traits can be experienced in the recording we are going to hear now to conclude this session. This is one of Heiller's best documented improvisations. We not only have a recording but also a transcription made by Monika Henking, with the help of Anders Riber of Aarhus and Wolfgang Kreuzhuber, organist of the New Cathedral of Linz where Heiller performed the improvisation during the dedication concert of the 70-stop Marcussen organ. The performers on this occasion were, in addition to Heiller, Hans Haselböck and Gaston Litaize. Virtually every organist in Austria was present among the audience of more than 3000 people.

[§109] Heiller planned a modern version of a French Suite, albeit with some obvious departures. It is interesting to observe how he treated the theme. The Solesmes tradition of singing Gregorian Chant suggests some natural points of accent and Heiller simply gave way to this rhythmical stream. The last two movements are simple triple meter versions of the theme but the accents can also be found in other variations. The principles behind this stunning piece of music are the same as those previously observed in other improvisations by Heiller.

Abstract

Anton Heiller (1923-1979) was one of the most remarkable improvisers of the 20th century. As a Catholic Austrian organist, he was trained in a musical culture that required harmonic command and timing rather than form and structure. Heiller took organ lessons from Wilhelm Mück, a fine conservative improviser. At the Academy of Music in Vienna, Heiller studied with organist Karl Walter and Bruno Seidlhofer. Although there was little going

on in Austria in terms of organ concerts, the ones that were given at Vienna Cathedral by Walter and Mück were concluded with improvisations - quite a rare phenomenon in those days. Heiller adapted this practice.
In 1952 and 1953, Heiller took part in the International Improvisation Competition in Haarlem. He was impressed by the talent of improvisers such as Albert de Klerk and Piet Kee. In 1955 and 1956, Heiller was one of the professors of the Haarlem Summer Academy, teaching improvisation. In 1956, he was invited onto the jury of the competition for the first time. Considering his own background - not being trained as a protestant organist and nevertheless having to teach "German style improvisation", including partitas and fugues, he decided not to teach improvisation anymore at all. He not only missed a method - he refused to give any recipes as well, saying "Everything is fine as long as it is not boring."
Nevertheless, many organists have learned a lot about improvisation from Anton Heiller by just listening to him or his improvisation recordings.

Peter Planyavsky

Peter Planyavsky became a student of Anton Heiller at the University for Music and Drama when he was 12. He graduated with the Master's Diploma in Organ (1966) and the Diploma in Church Music (1967). In 1969, he was appointed Cathedral Organist at St. Stephen's Cathedral, Vienna. In 2004, Planyavsky decided to terminate his affiliation with the Cathedral. Since 1980, Planyavsky has also been Professor for Organ and Improvisation at the University for Music and Drama in Vienna, with the additional function as Head of the Church Music department from 1996 to 2003. Peter Planyavsky also undertakes a full schedule as an international recitalist, coach in workshops and masterclasses and as a member of juries. Planyavsky has won several prizes and awards, the latest addition being the Federal Austrian Price for Music, awarded to him for his collected compositions.

IV

Pamela Ruiter-Feenstra - Bach and the Art of Improvisation

[§110] In most conservatories and university music departments, entering students are first taught eighteenth-century theory, with an emphasis on Johann Sebastian Bach's chorales. Yet, in much current music pedagogy (quite unlike eighteenth-century music pedagogy), theory, history, performance, and research are separated into isolated tracks. Improvisation—formerly at the core of music studies and the primary skill required in organ auditions—has become nearly extinct in musical training. In the wake of improvisation's demise, a long lineage of experiential knowledge of how improvisation was learned and taught in the eighteenth century was broken.

[§111] With that teacher to apprentice link severed, how can one now understand and even re-create Johann Sebastian Bach's improvisation pedagogy? Would it be possible to reclaim historic improvisation pedagogy as central in musical studies? These questions became the heart of my research for the past decade and a half. The research was fertilized with a multitude of pedagogical applications. The ideas were tested in classes and with colleagues in musicology and performance fields in Europe and North America. After a long gestation, the result of the investigation was the birth of *Bach and the Art of Improvisation*.[1]

1 For more detail on this article, see Pamela Ruiter-Feenstra, *Bach and the Art of Improvisation.* Ann Arbor, MI: CHI Press, Vol. I, 2011; Vol. II, 2013; www.pamelaruiterfeenstra.com. Research and pedagogical applications for *Bach and the Art of Improvisation* were launched and tested in a performance-based research project at the Göteborg Organ Art Center (GOArt), "Changing Processes in North European Organ Art, 1600–1970", 1996–2001.

[§112] As Bach never wrote a treatise on improvisation, understanding Bach's improvisation pedagogy requires probing Bach's compositions, testimonies of his students, and writings of his biographers. Some risk exists in this method: scores and treatises are open to the experience and interpretation of the reader; some biographers likely embellished their anecdotes; and examining Bach's approach to improvisation to gain facility in reading, listening to, improvising, and composing common practice music can raise tensions between current musicological and pedagogical schools of thought. Nevertheless, the combined resources create a convincing record of Bach's improvisation and pedagogy. To help convey the art of historical improvisation, I supplement material of Bach and his circle with related applications I have found effective in my teaching.

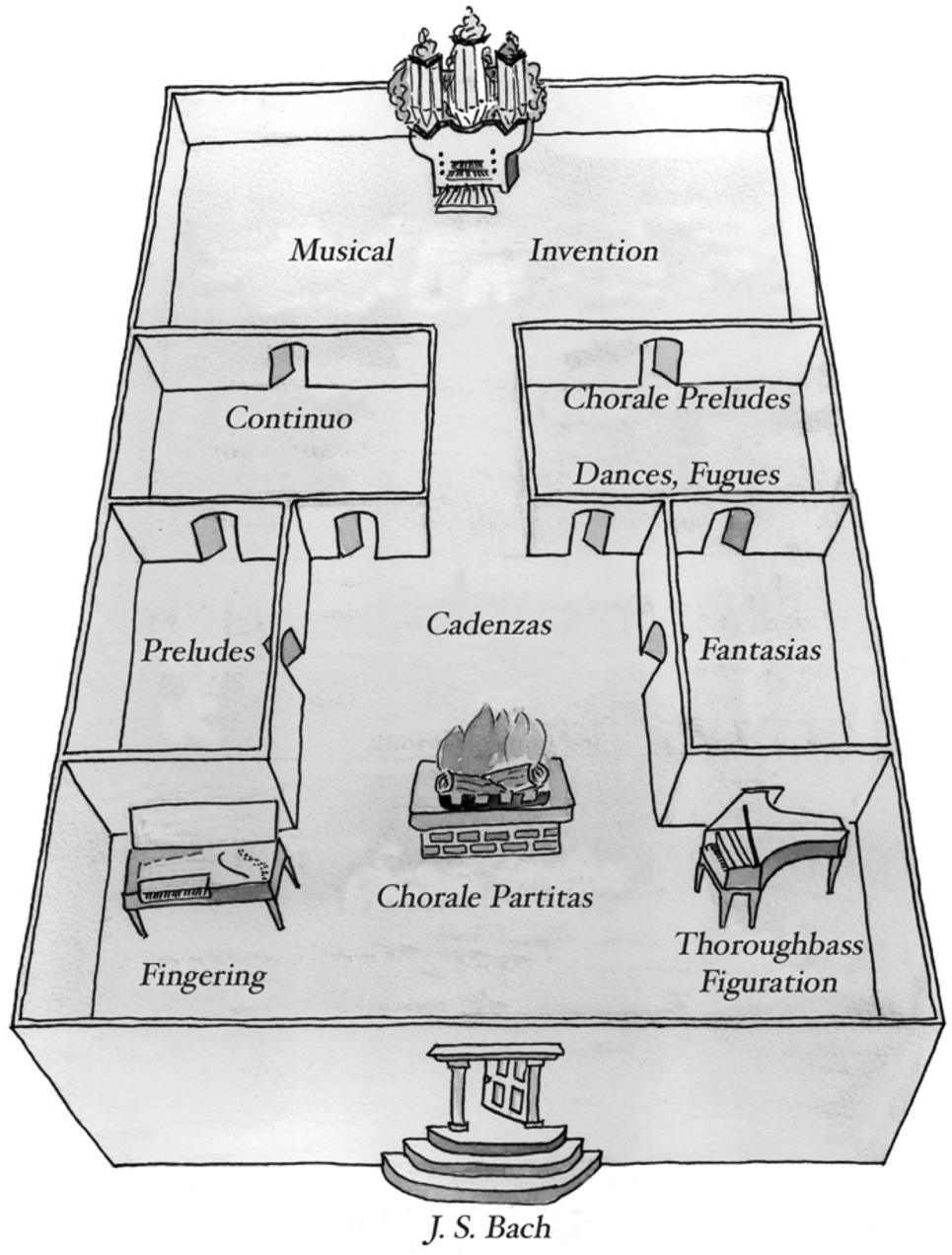
Bach and the Art of Improvisation memory castle

[§113] The approach in *Bach and the Art of Improvisation* follows Bach's definition of improvisation as extemporaneous composition, or composing a mente. Conceptual memory (rather than rote memory) plays a key role in improvisation, and is a skill that enhances repertoire learning. Early Greek memory documents advocate establishing a "place" and "image" system of memory storage and retrieval for orators. Extemporaneous composition implies that the improviser plans and prepares her improvisations, not by memorizing every note, but by practicing, storing, retrieving, transposing concepts, structures, and patterns. The improviser decorates or elaborates on the structures extemporaneously, resulting in fresh and varied improvisations at the moment.

[§114] *Bach and the Art of Improvisation* is organized pedagogically, in incremental steps that guide the reader to the next step. The steps are visualized in an improvisation memory castle in Figure 1 (drawn by Joel Speerstra; used with permission). One enters the castle of improvisation grounded in J. S. Bach's works and testaments of his teaching and improvisation beginning at the hearth with studies in fingering, thoroughbass, and figuration. After improvising chorale partitas, one is equipped to make the choice of which door to enter next.

Figure 1

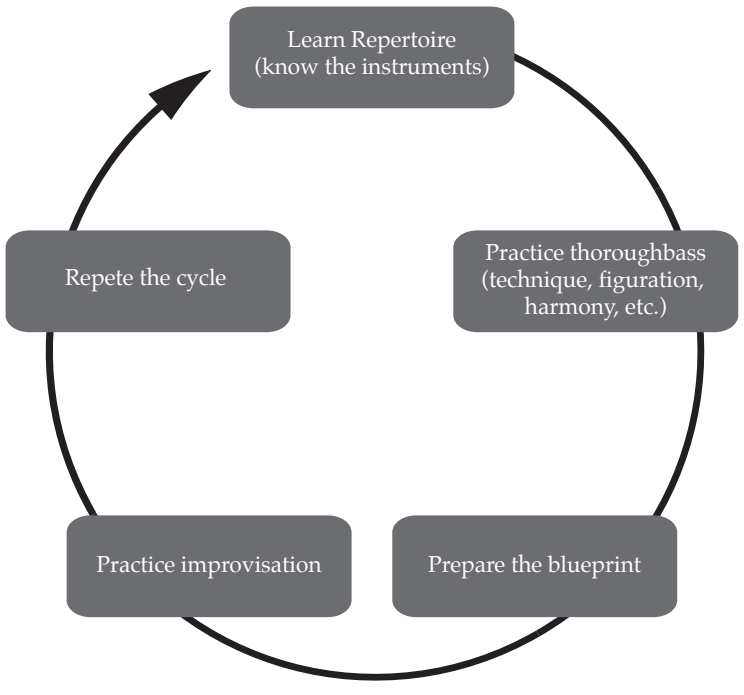
Improvisation steps memory castle



[§115] For the purposes of this article, we will assume that we've long ago entered the castle, and have already gained some mastery in the initial steps of technique, fingering, figuration, thoroughbass, harmonization, two-voice counterpoint, and chorale partitas. We are entering Volume Two of the book, where we encounter cadenzas and interludes, preludes and fantasias, continuo playing, and fugues. Here, I will demonstrate the historical musicological improvisation pedagogy with preludes. As a prelude to the preludes, I will discuss how Bach learned and how and what he taught his pupils. In both cases, the cycle can be duplicated today in what I call the Musicological–Pedagogical approach to historical improvisation (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Musicological–Pedagogical approach to historical improvisation



How did Bach learn?

[§116] Born into a household and extended family of musicians, Bach first learned by observing other musicians. Secondly, he learned by copying music. Thirdly, he learned from the instruments. And finally, Bach learned by composing and improvising.

[§117] Orphaned by the age of nine, Bach was entrusted to his elder brother Johann Christoph for care and musical training. Forkel relates a story about Bach as a young child that reveals Bach's tenacity for learning, and the fact that an important part of the pedagogy Bach used for himself was to copy music from many composers. It was by copying music that Bach learned various aspects of style, harmony, melody, rhythm, counterpoint, form, and genre.

> In the year 1695, when Johann Sebastian was not quite 10 years of age, his father died; he had lost his mother earlier. Being thus left an orphan, he was obliged to have recourse to an elder brother, Johann Christoph, who was Organist at Ordruf. From him he received the first instructions in playing on the clavier. But his inclination and talent for music must have been already very great at that time, since the pieces which his brother gave him to learn were so soon in his power that he began with much eagerness to look out for some that were more difficult. The most celebrated composers for the clavier in those days were Froberger, Fischer, Johann Casp. Kerl, Pachelbel, Buxtehude, Bruhns, Böhm, &c. He had observed that his brother had a book in which there were several pieces of the above-mentioned authors, and earnestly begged him to give it to him. But it was constantly denied him. His desire to possess the book was increased by the refusal, so that he at length sought for means to get possession of it secretly. As it was kept in a cupboard which had only a lattice-door and his hands were still small enough to pass through so that he could roll up the book, which was merely stitched in paper, and draw it out, he did not long hesitate to make use of these favorable circumstances. But, for want of a candle, he could only copy it in moonlight nights; and it took six whole months before he could finish his laborious task. At length, when he thought himself safely possessed of the treasure and intended to make good use of it in secret, his brother found it out and took from him,

without pity, the copy which had cost him so much pains; and he did not recover it till his brother's death, which took place soon after.[2]

[§118] Bach had an insatiable desire to learn, and his early learning was shaped by copying music of other composers—first, Johann Jacob Froberger, Johann Casper Ferdinand Fischer, J. C. Kerll, Johann Pachelbel, D. Buxtehude, Nicolas Bruhns, and Georg Böhm—and later, to expand his knowledge of other styles, he copied and embellished works of Antonio

2 From Johann Nikolaus Forkel's biography, *Ueber Johann Sebastian Bachs Leben, Kunst und Kunstwerke*. Leipzig, 1802; reprint Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1999. 4–5: "Im Jahr 1695. als Joh. Sebastian noch nicht volle 10 Jahre alt war, starb sein Vater. Die Mutter war schon früher gestorben. Er sah sich daher nun so verwaiset, daß er seine Zuflucht zu einem ältern Bruder, Johann Christoph, welcher Organist in Ordruff war, nehmen mußte. Von diesem bekam er den ersten Unterricht im Clavierspielen. Seine Neigung und Fähigkeit zur Musik muß aber um diese Zeit schon sehr groß gewesen seyn, denn diejenigen Handstücke, die ihm sein Bruder zum lernen gab, waren so bald in seiner Gewalt, daß er mit großer Begierde sich nach schwerern Stücken umzusehen anfing. Die berühmtesten Clavierkomponisten jener Zeit waren Froberger, Fischer, Johann Casp. Kerl, Pachelbel, Buxtehude, Bruhns, Böhm, &c. Er hatte gemerkt, daß sein Bruder ein Buch besaß, worin mehrere Stücke der genannten Meister gesammelt waren, und bat ihn herzlich, es ihm zu geben. Allein es wurde ihm stets verweigert. Die Begierde nach dem Besitz des Buchs wurde durch die Verweigerung immer größer, so daß er endlich desselben auf irgend eine Art heimlich habhaft zu werden suchte. Da es in einem bloß mit Gitterthüren verschlossenen Schranke aufbewahrt wurde, und seine Hände noch klein genug waren, um durchgreifen und das nur in Papier geheftete Buch zusammer rollen und heraus ziehen zu können, so bedachte er sich nicht lange, von so günstigen Umständen Gebrauch zu machen. Allein aus Mangel eines Lichtes konnte er nur bey Mondhellen Nächten daran schreiben, und bedurfte 6 volle Monathe, ehe er mit seiner so mühseligen Arbeit zu Ende kommen konnte. Als er endlich den Schatz sicher zu besitzen glaubte, und ihn nun heimlich recht benutzen wollte, wurde der Bruder die Sache gewahr, und nahm ihm die so schwer gewordene Abschrift ohne Gnade und Barmherzigkeit wieder ab, die er auch nicht eher als nach dem bald darauf erfolgten Tode dieses Bruders wieder erhielt." Translation in Hans T. David and Arthur Mendel, rev. and enlgd. by Christoph Wolff, *The New Bach Reader: A Life of Johann Sebastian Bach in Letters and Documents*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1998. 425–426 [NBR].

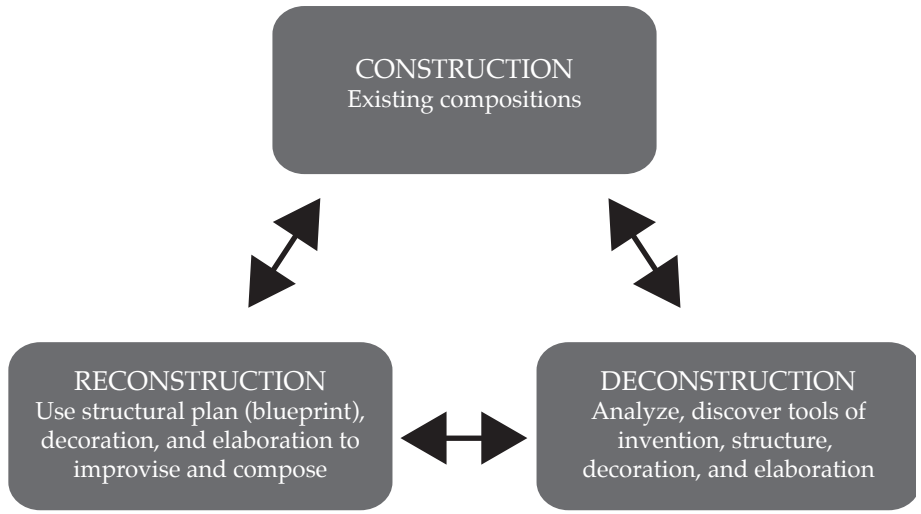
Vivaldi and Nicolas de Grigny. Bach also traveled to hear other musicians and play significant instruments and learn from them—notably from Buxtehude and his Abendmusiken on the Schnitger organ at St. Mary's Church, Lübeck.

How did Bach's pupils learn?

[§119] Like Bach, his pupils learned by copying his music; by observing Bach and participating as his registrants, choristers, and instrumentalists; from the instruments; and by composing and improvising. I describe the way Bach and his pupils learned as the Construction–Deconstruction–Reconstruction cycle—a cycle that also serves as improvisation pedagogy in my book.
In the cycle, one begins by studying existing compositions, which is the initial construction phase. Secondly, one deconstructs those compositions to determine their individual concepts of invention, structure, decoration, and elaboration. Thirdly, one reconstructs works based on the inventive tools garnered from the deconstruction. In the reconstruction phase, one frequently returns to the construction and deconstruction phases to help to refine and gain ideas for additional reconstructions. (See Figure 3.)

Figure 3

Musicological–Pedagogical approach to historical improvisation



How did Bach teach improvisation?

[§120] First, it needs to be said that Bach approached Clavier teaching differently from organ studies. Bach's Clavier teaching focused on developing proper playing technique, fingering, figuration, ornamentation, and moved into two-part inventions and then preludes and fugues from the *Well-Tempered Clavier*. Clavier or keyboard technique studies preceded organ studies. Organ studies were, in many respects, synonymous with improvisation studies.

[§121] Lacking a complete tutor or treatise in Bach's own hand, one can merely make educated guesses from his pupils' reports as to the exact ordering of Bach's pedagogy. Most pedagogues do not use an identical pedagogical ordering with each student, as each student comes with a different background and aptitude. C. P. E. and W. F. Bach reported to Forkel that their father started with technique, fingering, and ornamentation.

> The first thing he [Bach] did was to teach his scholars his peculiar mode of touching the instrument, of which we have spoken before. For this purpose, he made them practice, for months together, nothing but isolated exercises for all the fingers of both hands, with constant regard to this clear and clean touch. Under some months, none could get excused from these exercises; and according to his firm opinion, they ought to be continued, at least, for from six to twelve months.[3]

3 "Das erste, was er hierbey that, war, seine Schüler die ihm eigene Art des Unschlags, von welcher schon geredet worden ist, zu lehren. Zu diesem Behuf mußten sie mehrere Monathe hindurch nichts als einzelne Sätze für alle Finger beyder Hände, mit steter Rücksicht auf diesen deutlichen und saubern Anschlag, üben. Unter einigen Monathen konnte keener von diesen Uebungen loskommen, und seiner Ueberzeugung nach hätten sie wenigstens 6 bis 12 Monathe lang forgesetzt werden müssen." Johann Nikolaus Forkel, *Ueber Johann Sebastian Bachs Leben, Kunst und Kunstwerke.* Leipzig, 1802; facs. Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1999. 38. Transl. NBR, 453. Forkel reports that no one escapes the fingering and touch exercises. Although, he concedes that if, after several months the pupil became impatient, Bach would write brief pieces that apply the fingering and ornamentation exercises, such as the six little Preludes for Beginners and the fifteen two-part Inventions.

[§122] The ordering in the *Clavierbüchlein* presented to Bach's ten-year-old son Wilhelm Friedemann in 1720 confirms Forkel's statement. The *Clavierbüchlein* commences with J. S. Bach's own handwriting explaining clefs and French-style ornaments. Bach then promptly applies the ornaments in the first piece of music, the aptly-titled *Applicatio*, which includes fingering, the starting point for successful keyboard technique. After fingering, the *Clavierbüchlein* proceeds with brief free preludes and chorale preludes, suite movements, more complex preludes, inventions, and sinfonias.

[§123] Heinrich Nicolaus Gerber (1702–75), who studied with Bach in Leipzig (1724–7), related the ordering of Bach's pedagogy to his son, Ernst Ludwig, who documented it. Gerber's order provides at least a glimpse of Bach's clavier method.

> Bach accepted him [Heinrich Nicolaus Gerber] with particular kindness because he came from Schwarzburg, and always thereafter called him Landsmann [compatriot]. Bach promised to give him the instruction he desired and asked at once whether he had industriously played fugues. At the first lesson, Bach set his Inventions before him. When he had studied these through to Bach's satisfaction, there followed a series of suites, then the Well-Tempered Clavier…. The conclusion of the instruction was thorough bass, for which Bach chose the Albinoni violin solos. I must admit that I have never heard anything better than the style in which my father executed these basses according to Bach's fashion, particularly in the singing of the voices. This accompaniment was in itself so beautiful that no principal voice could have added to the pleasure it gave me.[4]

[§124] Ample evidence exists for Bach's rather systematic *Clavier* pedagogy, as multiple student copies exist of the Inventions and Sinfonias, the French

4 Ernst Ludwig Gerber, *Historisch-Biographisches Lexicon der Tonkünstler*. Leipzig, 1790–1792, vol. 1, cols. 490–491: "The education of Bach's pupil Heinrich Nicolaus Gerber, by Ernst Ludwig Gerber (1790). BD III, no. 950. Transl. NBR, 322.

and English Suites, and the *Well-Tempered Clavier*.[5] In contrast, no clear organ pedagogy pattern exists from student copies of Bach's organ works, as most students copied different works. In his article "J. S. Bach as Organ Pedagogue," George Stauffer states,

> While we have several detailed 18th-century descriptions of Bach's clavier instruction, we lack historical accounts of his organ teaching.[6]
>
> The search for Bach, the systematic organ pedagogue, may be an elusive quest. For organ instruction, Bach does not seem to have had a set course of study, as he did for clavier teaching. With organ instruction, his approach appears to have been more spontaneous. His students came to the instrument grounded in keyboard playing and continuo realization. A few organ works sufficed for the fundamentals. After that, Bach may have used short exercises to develop the most important skill, improvisation.[7]

Stauffer concludes his article with, "It was improvisation that won jobs, and on this count, Bach must have been an extraordinary teacher."[8]

Organ lessons = Improvisation training

[§125] For most keyboardists in the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries, improvisation was an essential part of being a musician. Most church music auditions at that time consisted primarily of improvisation. Thus, organists in particular practiced improvisation as regularly as most professional musicians now practice repertoire.

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5 See the *Neue Bach-Ausgabe Kritische Berichte*, vols. V/6 (*Well-Tempered Clavier*), V/7 (English Suites), and V/8 (French Suites).

6 George B. Stauffer, "J. S. Bach as Organ Pedagogue". Kerala J. Snyder (ed.), *The Organist as Scholar: Essays in Memory of Russell Saunders*. Stuyvesant, N. Y.: Pendragon Press, 1994. 25–46; quotation from 26. Stauffer recounts Bach's *Clavier* instruction on pages 26–30.

7 Stauffer, 43.

8 Stauffer, 44.

[§126] For example, in his *Große-GeneralBaß Übungen*, Johann Mattheson documents audition requirements in Hamburg, where organists were clearly expected to improvise.

[§127] In the year 1725, on the 24th of October, auditions were held to fill the vacated organist position at the Hamburg Cathedral. The auditionees were required:[9]

1. To improvise a prelude at the moment; nothing previously studied, which can be detected at once. This Vorspiel should begin in A Major and end in G Minor, and last for approximately two minutes.
2. To improvise no longer than six minutes on the chorale, "Herr Jesu Christ, du höchstes Gut." The improvisation should specifically use two manuals with the pedal in a pure three-voice harmony, without doubling the bass, so that the feet do not know what the hands are doing, yet that each voice sounds optimal with the other voices….
3. To improvise in a fugue setting a given subject [see Example 1] against its stepwise countersubject, thoroughly completing the fugue, which can be accomplished in four minutes, as the question is not how long but how successful the fugue is.
4. To submit, within two days, the same assignment [working out a fugue from a given subject and countersubject] in writing, as visual evidence of his composition skills.
5. To play a sung aria at sight from thoroughbass, and to accompany the aria at first viewing correctly and completely, which will take approximately four minutes. [die jedem, insbesondere, vorgelegt werden soll—perhaps each candidate played a different aria, or each candidate received the aria for the first time at the moment they were to begin playing it].
6. To conclude with a Ciacona from the given bass [see Example 1], using the full Werck (plenum), for approximately six minutes in length.

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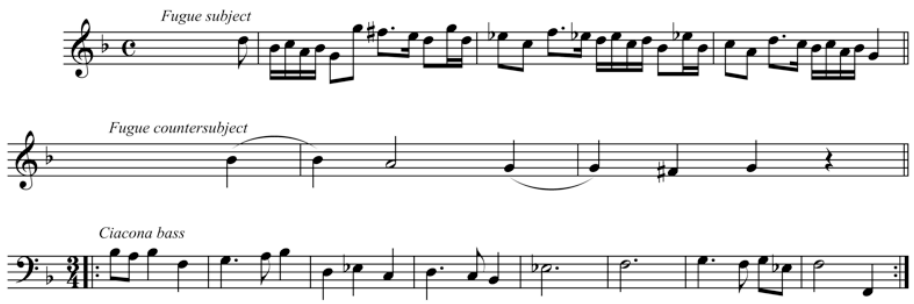
9 Johann Mattheson, *Große-GeneralBaß Übungen*. Hamburg, 1731. 34–35; facsimile reprint Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1994.

Example 1: Mattheson's audition material

The fugue subject is a variant of BWV 542



[§128] In Mattheson's account, the entire audition is comprised of improvisation, some from a given subject or thoroughbass, and some without any given material. Mattheson emphasizes that the auditionee must improvise at the moment, without using previously memorized material. The skills needed to improvise at this level certainly require regular practice.

[§129] Bach taught by example, integrating composition, improvisation, and repertoire at the moment for each pupil. Testimonies from Bach's students, as well as three contemporary documents further illuminate his pedagogy: the Wilhelm Friedemann Bach *Clavier=Büchlein* (1720), the Anna Magdalena Bach *Klavierbüchlein* (1725), and Bach's *Vorschriften und Grundsätze* (1738).[10] Bach understood his role as a pedagogue in developing his pupils' taste for and experience with quality, and he used improvisation to achieve his goal. Thoroughbass permeates Bach's improvisation lessons.

10 For modern editions and facsimile reprints, see Johann Sebastian Bach, *Klavierbüchlein für Anna Magdalena Bach*, 1725, facs. ed. Georg von Dadelsen. Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1988; *Clavier-Büchlein vor Wilhelm Friedemann Bach*, facs. ed. Ralph Kirkpatrick. New York: Da Capo Press, 1979; *Vorschriften und Grundsätze zum vierstimmigen Spielen des General-Bass oder Accompagnement für seine Scholaren in der Music*. Leipzig, 1738, transl. Pamela L. Poulin as *J. S. Bach's Precepts and Principles for Playing the Thorough-Bass or Accompanying in Four Parts*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994.

Bach's written resources

[§130] C.Ph.E. Bach describes the steps his father used in teaching thoroughbass. This description also highlights the significance of thoroughbass training for musicians.

> [Bach's] pupils had to begin their studies by learning pure four-part thorough bass. From this he went to chorales; first he added the basses to them himself, and they had to invent the alto and tenor. Then he taught them to devise the basses themselves. He particularly insisted on the writing out of the thorough bass in parts [Aussetzen der Stimmen im Generalbasse]....
>
> The realization of a thorough bass and the introduction to chorales are without doubt the best method of studying composition, as far as harmony is concerned.[11]

[§131] One of the sources in Bach's library that he obviously used extensively is Friedrich Erhardt Niedt's *Musicalische Handleitung*.[12] Niedt focused extensively on the practice of thoroughbass, which was central to Bach's improvisation lessons. J. S. Bach's *Precepts* open with a table demonstrating doublings possible for triads and seventh chords and an overview of thoroughbass principles similar to those found in the *Klavierbüchlein für Anna*

11 NBR, 399: "Den Anfang musten seine / Schüler mit der Erlernung des reinen 4stimmigen Generalbaßes machen. Hernach gieng er mit ihnen an die Choräle; setzte erstlich selbst den Baß dazu, u. den Alt u. den Tenor musten sie selbst erfinden. Alsdenn lehrte er sie selbst Bäße machen. Besonders drang er sehr starck auf das Aussetzen der Stimmen im General-Baße. Bey der Lehrart in Fugen fieng er mit ihnen die zweystimmigen an, u. s. w. Das Aussetzen des Generalbaßes u. die Anführung zu den Chorälen ist ohne Streit die beste Methode zur Erlernung der Composition, *qvoad Harmoniam*." BD III, no. 803, ad 9um (Hamburg, 13 January 1775). Forkel cites C. P. E. in his Ch. 7. See NBR, 454.

12 Niedt, *Musicalische Handleitung oder Grundliche Unterricht*, vols. I–III. Hamburg, 1710, 1721, 1717; facsimile reprint Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2003, transl. by Pamela Poulin & Irmgard Taylor as Niedt, *The Musical Guide*. Oxford, 1989.

Magdalena Bach. The second section of his *Vorschriften* consists of ten chapters of instruction on thoroughbass, the first nine of which are based on Niedt's *Musicalische Handleitung*.[13] Translator Pamela Poulin explains that the Niedt material is

> followed by sixteen additional exercises or examples worked out by a student, the last five of which are fugues. The fourth section, 'Principles for Playing in Four Parts' ('Grundsätze zum Enquatre Spielen'), consists of fourteen exercises, with instruction, for thorough-bass realization from a figured bass line. The final section consists of seventeen of 'The Most-Used Final Cadences' ('Die gebräuchlichsten Clausulas Finales'), illustrated by figured bass lines for the student to realize.[14]

[§132] Notably, Bach supplements portions of Niedt that have pedagogical significance to improvisation. In Chapter Five, "On the Harmonic Triad," Bach's first insertion is the word "extemporaneous" in the following phrase:

> …The thorough-bass is a beginning for composition and can actually be called an extemporaneous composition because of the simultaneous sounding of consonances and dissonances.[15]

As mentioned in the opening, the term extemporaneous composition is a fitting description of improvisation.

[§133] With Niedt established as a significant source for Bach's improvisation and specifically, thoroughbass pedagogy, let us look at an example of how Niedt used thoroughbass to teach improvisation. In Chapter Eleven of his Book Two, Niedt gives a thoroughbass that he states can be used to improvise a præludium, various dance movements, or a ciacona. The thoroughbass is reproduced in Example 2:[16]

13 See Niedt, *Musikalische Handleitung*.

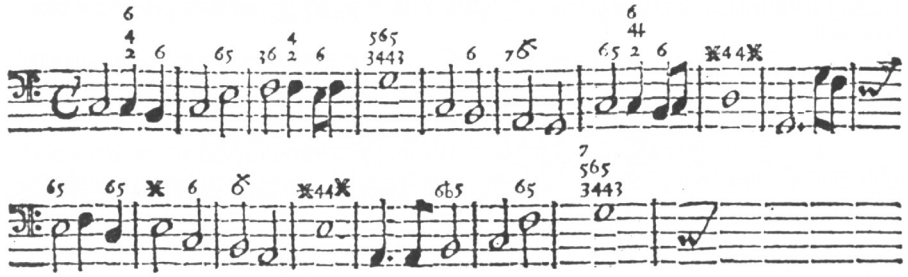
14 Poulin, xiv–xv.

15 Poulin, 13.

16 Niedt, Vol. II, 117.

Example 2

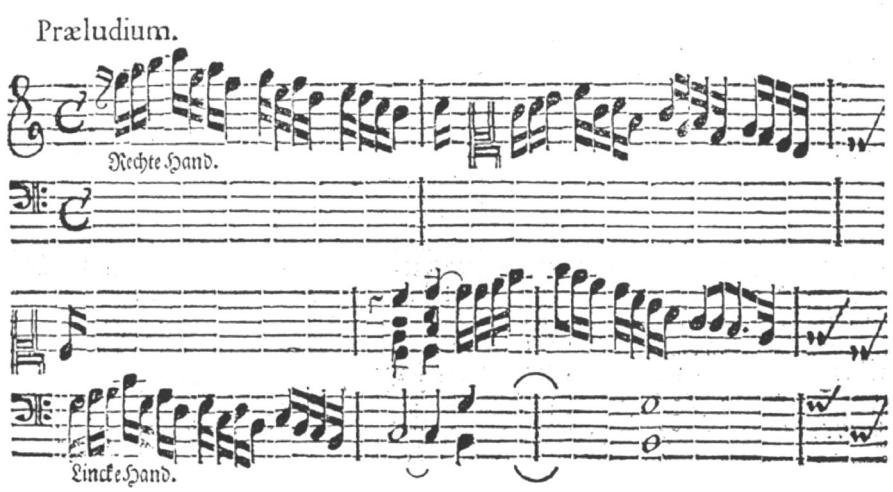
Niedt thoroughbass for præludium



[§134] Niedt then composes a præludium based on the harmonic structure of the given thoroughbass, as a demonstration of how one could compose a prelude in writing or extemporaneously as improvisation. See Example 3:[17]

Example 3

Niedt præludium derived from his thoroughbass



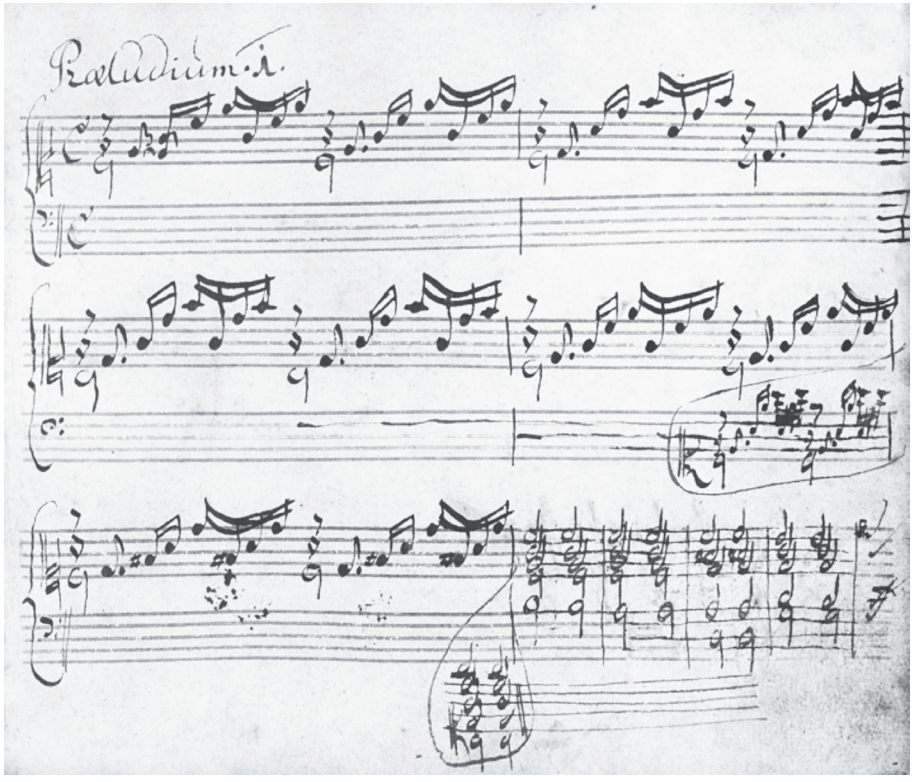
17 Niedt, Vol. II, 122.

[§135] The Prelude in C Major, BWV 846, from the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, was one of Bach's most often copied works. Wilhelm Friedemann copied this prelude in his *Clavier=Büchlein* as six measures of written out five-voice arpeggios, followed by chords that were intended to be played in the same *style brisé*. The chords are akin to a realized thoroughbass to a chorale, with the keyboardist creating a prelude based on the harmonies. If one were to take BWV 846 back one step in the Deconstruction process of learning improvisation, one could create a thoroughbass blueprint derived from BWV 846, as in Example 4:

Example 4A

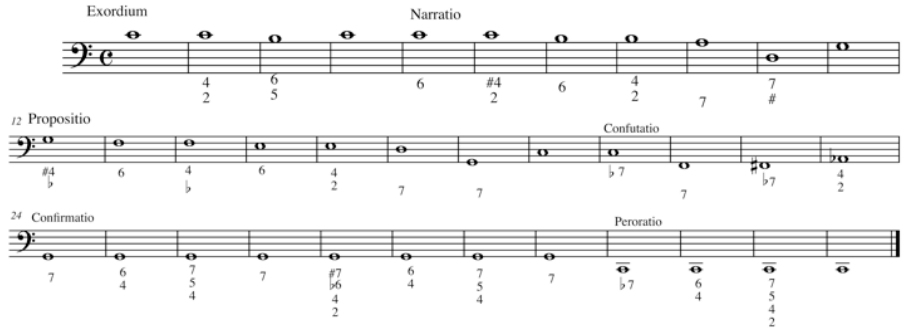
WTC I, BWV 846, from W.F. Bach's Clavier=Büchlein

Reprinted by permission of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Musikabteilung. Modern reprint, Johann Sebastian Bach, Das Wohltemperirte Clavier (Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1971)



Example 4B

Blueprint derived from BWV 846



[§136] The thoroughbass blueprint of BWV 846 in Example 4 is one potential improvisation application, in which the improviser follows the bass line, using a different figuration pattern. A composed prelude such as BWV 846 could also serve as construction tools to another blueprint, such as a chorale melody with thoroughbass—two of the staples of Bach's pedagogy.

[§137] With this application, instead of mapping its thoroughbass blueprint, we wed Bach's harmonization of the end-of-life chorale, "Herzlich lieb' hab' ich dich, O Herr," to Bach's compositional concepts used in his first WTC prelude.[18] The ascending arpeggios of BWV 846 fit beautifully with "Herzlich lieb's" textual content of angels gently carrying a person's soul up to heaven. The pedagogical steps in the application are:

1. Play BWV 846 from Ex. 9.1.
2. Play "Herzlich lieb'" from App. 9.11.
3. Fill in the alto and tenor voices to "Herzlich lieb.'"
4. Convert the four chorale voices to five voices in block chord chorale style. The options for doubling are governed by voice leading rules. The options include: triple the root, double the third (if not a leading tone or tritone member), fill in a passing tone between a third.

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18 Bach-Riemenschneider, *371 Harmonized Chorales and 69 Chorale Melodies with Figured Bass.* Milwaukee, WI: G. Schirmer/Hal Leonard, 1941.g #277.

5. Improvise a prelude using BWV 846 figuration with "Herzlich lieb.'" The bass voice will always fall on beats one and three of each measure, and the soprano voice on beats two and four. Each chord is arpeggiated twice. Bach's harmonization to "Herzlich lieb'" includes many eighth-note nonharmonic tones. This will mean that rather than repeating each arpeggiated chord verbatim, you will frequently alter the second and fourth beat chords from the first and third beats, respectively, to accommodate the rich harmonic changes at the eighth-note level in the chorale.

[§138] The thoroughbass blueprint approach can be applied to various organ, Clavier, and string preludes. With some time and practice, the blueprints can be reduced to even smaller frameworks, as Greek orators did as they practiced memorizing the structure of their speeches. From each thoroughbass blueprint, an infinite variety of prelude thematic material and figurations can be composed or improvised. The aspiring improviser might well establish a few blueprints, and then practice them with various motives and schemes, referring to Bach's manifold treatment of prelude themes, partnering certain prelude figurations with specific chorales and thoroughbasses, and eventually generating her own ideas informed by other composers.

Summary

[§139] In this article, I demonstrated a musicological–pedagogical approach to historical improvisation, following steps Bach used in his pedagogy in a Construction–Deconstruction–Reconstruction Cycle. We briefly entered a corner of the prelude room of the Bach and the Art of Improvisation memory castle. The approach here can be replicated with pattern-based compositions from various eras. As the cycles in Figures 3 and 4 illustrate, the conclusion of one improvisation is simply an invitation to engage in another. Ultimately, by resuscitating historical improvisation pedagogy, musicians can deepen their understanding of the intersections of repertoire, analysis, and musicology; heighten their potential to listen intelligently and perform communicatively; and reclaim a living, dynamic, and organic approach to music-making and music studies.

Abstract

Although Bach left no improvisation treatise, some reports of his pedagogical steps survive. In my book, Bach and the Art of Improvisation, I recount reports, probe compositions, and reconstruct some of these steps in a musicological-pedagogical approach to historical improvisation. Bach learned by observing other musicians, by copying music, from the instruments, and by composing and improvising. His students learned similarly from him in a Construction–Deconstruction–Reconstruction cycle of improvisation, which was permeated by thoroughbass. In this Orgelpark article on Bach and the Art of Improvisation, I demonstrate the close connection between thoroughbass practice and improvising præludia, as an example of how one can learn and teach historical improvisation.

Pamela Ruiter-Feenstra

Keen on astute aural perception, soul-connecting creativity, and translucent sound, Pamela Ruiter-Feenstra freelances as improviser, author, pedagogue, organist, harpsichordist, clavichordist, conductor, composer, and Fleur de Son Classics recording artist. From 1989–2008, she served as Professor of Music at Bethany College and Eastern Michigan University, and from 1996–2002 as Senior Researcher at the Göteborg (Sweden) Organ Art Center. Ruiter-Feenstra performs solo recitals throughout North America and Europe, early music concerts with Voci dell'Anima, and presents and teaches improvisation courses on historical instruments nationally and internationally. Ruiter-Feenstra master's and doctoral studies were at the University of Iowa, with Delbert Disselhorst and Delores Bruch. Her post-doctoral studies include work with Harald Vogel, Bill Porter, and much learning from and with students and colleagues.

Ruiter-Feenstra is developing a series of improvisation pedagogy books: Muse, a multi-disciplinary early childhood music curriculum (forthcoming); Improvisation Endeavors (forthcoming), an improvisation tutor for high school and early college keyboard students; and critically acclaimed Bach and the Art of Improvisation (CHI Press, 2011 and 2013), improvisation

pedagogy in a musicological and historical context, for intermediate to advanced improvisers, available at www.pamelaruiterfeenstra.com. Ruiter-Feenstra's performances have been featured on Pipedreams, The Organ Loft, the BBC, and Swedish National Radio. CDs include Tunder Organ Works (www.arkivmusic.com), Bach and Improvisation (www.gothic-catalog.com), Froberger on the 1658 De Zentis (www.fleurdeson.com), and Bach's Teacher Böhm and Improvisation (www.fleurdeson.com).

V

Sietze de Vries - The Craft of Organ Improvisation

[§140] Ideally speaking, organists should, from a technical perspective, play at a high level; their solid training and constant practise should ensure that they can expertly realise their musical ideas. A second important quality is artistic prowess: organists should be musicians with clearly defined ideas regarding performance practice and the ability to convey these to the audience in an inspiring manner. Moreover, they should take into account the vitally important role played by the instruments on which they are to perform. This is the third important quality which ideal organists should possess: being capable of making the instrument at hand sound optimally due to their knowledge and experience.

[§141] This last aspect is the theme of my essay: how to relate to the instrument? In contrast to painters, organists have no blank canvas at their disposal on which to project their ideas as if from nothing. Indeed, a painter has to deal with certain restrictions, such as the material on which to paint and the specific qualities of the paint itself, but the same is true for organists to a much greater degree. In the first instance, the sound characteristics of the organ in question dictates to a large extend what the (im)possibilities are for the player. These characteristics are determined not only by the stops but also by the tuning system of the instrument and the acoustic in which it resides. A synthesis must, therefore, be found between that which the performing musician wants to present and the possibilities offered by the instrument.

Franck on a baroque organ?

[§142] Recordings and concert programmes up to and including the 1960s and 1970s follow a certain pattern which has its roots in the 19th century. The organist profiled his ability as broadly as possible in his concerts, combining music by Bach (and sometimes earlier composers), 19th and 20th

century music and contemporary compositions. The character of the organ was of secondary importance. Bach on a 19th century Witte organ, Franck on a 18th century Garrels organ or Reger on a 20th century Marcussen organ, all were routinely possible. The website of the Dutch broadcaster NCRV, on which a selection of the hundreds of organ concerts which were recorded for radio during the second half of the 20th century are available, offers many examples.[1]

[§143] Albeit predominantly outside the Netherlands, one can observe a parallel development in organbuilding in the preference for the "universal" organ-type in which a quasi-baroque plenum is present, but also a swell box, strings and French reeds. This chapter in organbuilding history is clearly not over: large international firms such as Rieger (Austria), Seifert (Germany) and Marcussen (Denmark) are still recognised primarily for producing a largely eclectic organ type. In the case of large instruments, quite simply "everything" is present, and some builders even go so far as to depict the characteristic of the individual stop through the language on the stop knob. It is not unusual by far to have, for example, within a single instrument, a "Voix humaine", a "Voix céleste" and a "Trompette harmonique", as well as an English "Oboe" or a French "Prestant".

[§144] In the Netherlands, the so-called "historically orientated" philosophy of organbuilding has found significant favour. An organ is seen as an artistic unity upon which, preferably, just a single portion of the organ repertoire can be performed optimally.[2]

[§145] The education of the average organ student has also changed profoundly during the last decennia. Issues such as meantone tuning and the short octave as well as the Walze and pistons are not only discussed but often tried out in practice. The realisation that every time and place has its own organ type is broadly understood and the consequences of this have been integrated into the profession.

[§146] This is reflected in today's concert programmes and recordings: on a Cavaillé-Coll organ, one might hear, for example, Franck, Widor and Vierne, on a Schnitger organ, composers such as Buxtehude, Böhm and Lübeck. Playing Sweelinck on a Sauer organ would be considered every bit as remarkable as playing a waltz of Chopin on a harpsichord. Even digital and virtual organs, used for home practise, are available with different organ types and tunings, as a result of which the player can choose an appropriate sound for the piece he is studying.

Organs and improvisation

[§147] This way of treating specific organ types applies predominantly in the field of literature interpretation. In the case of improvisation, players seem in general to be inspired much less by the instrument on which they are playing. This is remarkable, because it is this art form in particular which implies an inherent link between artist and medium. Whilst improvising, the player must always react to the sound he hears and the instrument has an equal role in determining the final result. Or does it?

[§148] The history of the International Improvisation Competition in Haarlem demonstrates that this is not always the case. The competition has witnessed the development of what we might call "contemporary improvisation", in this case on the most famous organ in the Netherlands: the instrument completed by 1738 by Christian Müller in the St. Bavokerk in Haarlem. The improvisations heard in Haarlem reflect the notion that the artist should always have a new tale to tell, often following the developments which we recognise from the music of well-known contemporary composers.

[§149] The themes assigned to the Haarlem competitors show us that atonality or at least (modern) modality is, in most cases, desired or even compulsory. In the footsteps of composers such as Stockhausen, Boulez and Cage, competitors experiment with the distortion of the organ's sound. The organ lends itself to this kind of treatment exceptionally well because the player has such a large arsenal of "noises" at his disposal. Techniques such as switching off the blower, half-drawing stops and using unusual registrations deliver extraordinary aural results, especially in acoustical circumstances such as the St. Bavokerk provides.

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1 http://orgelconcerten.ncrv.nl/pip_frontpage.

2 Outside the Netherlands, historically orientated organbuilding has become gradually more prominent. Exceptionally interesting projects such as those in Gothenburg, Sweden (www.goart.gu.se/research/instruments/north-german-baroque-organ/), Rochester, USA (www.esm.rochester.edu/organ/eroi/) and Hamburg, Germany (www.stiftung-johann-sebastian.de) provide ample proof.

[§150] An example of this approach is the improvisation by organist Franz Danksagmüller and dancer Ulrich Gebauer during a service at St. Vicelin, Lübeck, accompanying a dancer (2010). The organ and the added live electronics are used a sort of "sound machine":[3]

[§151] When prominent composers returned to tonality in the final quarter of the 20th century (Reich, Pärt, Harvey), this turn was reflected in the art of improvisation. Minimalism in particular has found its followers both in improvisation and composition. In the Netherlands, the works by Jan Welmers are especially convincing.

[§152] An example of this tendency is an improvisation by Cor Ardesch, recorded in Dordrecht, 2011:[4]

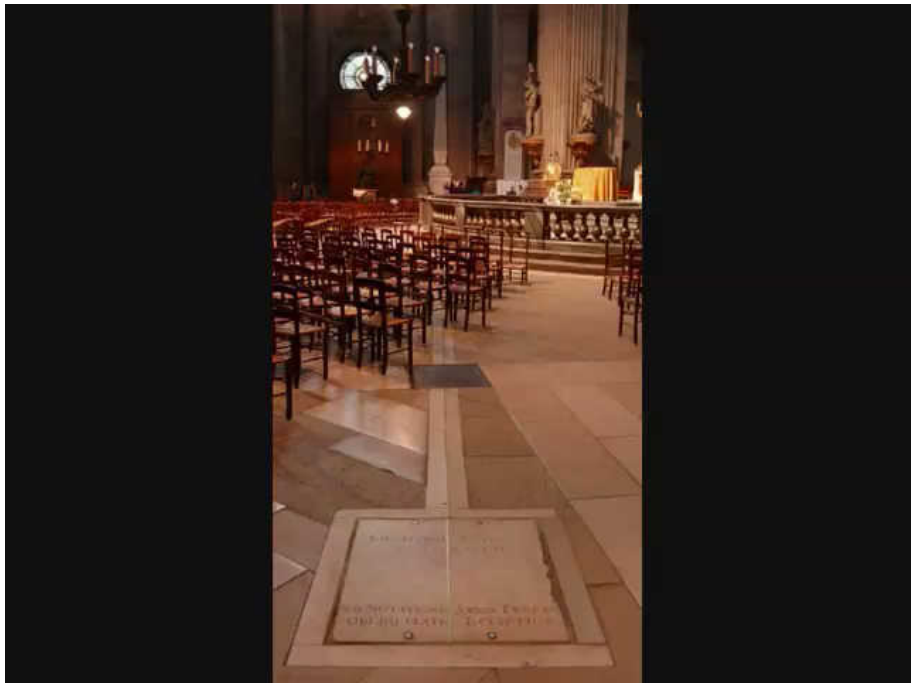
3 The movies shown here are excerpts from youtube-movies. View the full version of Danksagmüller's movie here: www.kirchenmusik-luebeck.de/vicelin/programme/pr_10_danksagmueller_gebauer.htm.

4 www.youtube.com/watch?v=FQmM1g5VURQ.

[§153] In France, the line of Franck – Widor – Vierne – Dupré – Cochereau is closely associated with the organs of Aristide Cavaillé-Coll. Among organ improvisors, Dupré and Cochereau imitators are well represented, even outside France. The popularity of French Romantic orientated organs is of course one of the main reasons. Examples of improvisation in this historic style can be found by the thousand on the internet. I will limit myself to a recording of Philippe Lefebvre, who succeeded his teacher Cochereau as organist of Notre Dame in Paris:[5]

5 www.youtube.com/watch?v=oOvOoogTFwk.

[§154] It is interesting to note that, in this sort of music, composition and improvisation seem to be growing further and further apart. The conscious choosing of chords and the mastery of sound control seem to be making way for effects and motoric "tricks". Lefebvre demonstrates this clearly in the above clip: lots of motoric movement intended as a "sound curtain" and not planned in any detail. The gesture, the effect, certainly in the case of a large instrument in a large space, seems more important than precise control. The balance between ratio and emotion, in such instances, can quickly tend towards the latter. That composition and improvisation are gradually growing apart is clearly illustrated by Marcel Dupré's legacy. The recordings of his improvisations show that these, in general, are considerably simpler (in terms of harmony, counterpoint and virtuosity) than his compositions:[6]



6 www.youtube.com/watch?v=tOnr5uhoPlE&feature=related. See as well www.youtube.com/watch?v=yzOKStTk408&feature=related.

[§155] Olivier Messiaen demonstrates a similar tendency:[7]

[§156] Nevertheless, there are always organists who provide the exception to the rule. Jan Jongepier was able, within the context of complex contemporary musical styles, to maintain complete control over the sound and always to respect the organ on which he was playing:[8]

7 www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Of1u4JBpH8&feature=related.

8 www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mf5nV6DdlZA.

[§157] Jongepier, adapting himself to the style of the organ on which he was playing, was able to improvise in many different musical languages. Partly as a result of developments in historically-orientated organbuilding, this manner of improvising, in which a link is sought between music and instrument, became more widely practiced. In this context, Klaas Bolt was a famous Dutch pioneer. What might have been played on an organ in the period of its conception and how might it have been played? Can one learn about the "hows" and "whys" of the specification and voicing of an organ by improvising in the first instance on the basis of its sound? Can organs built as "style-copies" teach us more about the background of the organ literature? These sorts of questions play an important role in this historically orientated manner of improvisation.

Improvisation: one of the main skills of organists

[§158] Because much research takes place both into the organbuilding and organ literature of historical times, an ever-clearer picture is emerging of the enormous role played by improvisation. For example, in the Northern German organ art of the Renaissance and Baroque periods, it immediately becomes crystal clear that improvisation was one of the most important skills in the organist's armoury. Looking at the challenges set to candidates when auditioning for a job, one can observe that knowledge of harmonisation, being able to play a figured bass and to improvise various chorale preludes and large-scale forms provided the key elements. The playing of literature is barely, if ever, mentioned. Organists such as Buxtehude, Reincken, Lübeck and Bach must, therefore, have improvised in the first instance. Notating of, for example, a Praeambulum "just" constituted the capturing of a good improvisation, perhaps as an example for a student.

[§159] Johann Sebastian Bach provides us with a burden of proof to justify the theory that compositions served an educative function. We know that Bach copied compositions in order to study them. During the period in which he lived with his brother in Ohrdruf (1695-1700), Bach copied, among other things, works of De Grigny. During his study years with, among others, Georg Böhm in Lüneburg (1700-1702), Bach made copies of works by Pachelbel and Reincken. The knowledge Bach gained from copying this music was put to use in his improvising "in a variety of ways just as the better Hamburg organists had formerly done during the Sunday Vespers."[9] Various compositions by Bach strengthen this assertion: the forewords to the Orgelbüchlein[10] and to the Dritter Theil der Clavierübung[11] also provide plentiful evidence.

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9 Bach improvised in 1720 for the elderly Johann Adam Reincken on the famous organ of the Katharinenkirche in Hamburg. Quote by Reincken: "...auf verschiedener Art, so wie es ehedem die braven unter den Hamburgischen Organisten in den Sonnabends Verspern gewohnt gewesen waren" (http://archive.org/stream/MusikalischeBibliothek4.band1754/MizlerMusikalischeBibliothekBd41754#page/n159/mode/2up [page 165)]).

10 BWV 599-644. Cf. www.jsba.ch/leben-und-werk/10-briefe-und-texte/49-ueberschrift-des-lorgelbuechleinr.html.

11 BWV 552 / 669-689 / 802-805 Cf. http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/1c/CU3title.jpg.

[§160] The fact that the six trio sonatas[12] were composed as study material for Wilhelm Friedemann Bach, further demonstrates that education was an important motivation for composing. *Das musikalische Opfer*[13] is another fine example of the composition and use of notated music. In 1747, Bach improvised on a theme given to him by Frederick the Great. He decided to further develop the theme on paper in order to be able to present it to the King as a composition. In addition to educational goals, therefore, a composition could also function as the final development of an idea in order to add lustre to a particular moment or important occasion. Further research would presumably clarify why some compositions were published but others not. An important conclusion remains inescapable: improvisation was an essential proficiency for an organist up to and including the 19th century.

Educating improvisation

[§161] Because we have access to such a rich variety of organs from different periods, it is extremely interesting to make music on them, not only by performing literature, but also by improvising. We can be grateful that, thanks to good training and attainment of knowledge and understanding, the present level of literature playing is very high indeed. It is my dearest wish to bring the craft of improvisation to a similarly high level. This implies, in addition to knowledge and understanding, a lot of study: the key characteristic of any craft is that one develops it (ideally from a young age).
[§162] Here, though, we encounter a problem in today's training. As the result of a completely planned curriculum, children who follow music lessons are seldom, if ever, exposed to improvisation. The training of the relationship between printed notes and how one plays them on an instrument forms the guiding principle and, as a result, personal creativity is barely, if ever developed. Because printed notation is often used from the outset, the child learns, as it were, to read before he or she can speak. The Suzuki Method[14]

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12 BWV 525-530.

13 BWV 1079.

14 www.britishsuzuki.org.uk/rpmServer/generatorSystem/asp/rpmServer_GoGenerate.asp?intSiteID=15&intPageID=5&intNavbarOpen_Level1_ID=3.

provides food for thought in this context. This method takes as its starting point the idea that a child should learn to make music in the same way that he or she learns to speak. Children start by imitating, thus learning to express themselves. Once being able to speak, they learn to read.
[§163] In order to make music, children must first become familiar with the instrument. The playing of a melody must be just as self-explanatory as singing it; there must be no barrier between brain and fingers. By working thereafter with triads (harmonies), children can learn to improvise at a young age. By combining all these skills with the process of learning to play compositions, a cross-pollination develops, fertilizing both literature playing and improvisation. It is my firm conviction that this creates a situation in which the level of improvising need not be any lower than the level of literature playing. A story told spontaneously can approach, if not exceed, the level of a written piece.
[§164] This clarifies why many organists have limited interest in improvising. They "just" have learned to play organ literature at a high artistic level. There is already more than enough good music; why bother creating something yourself? Moreover, the craft of improvising requires many years of study, if it is to be acquired afterwards. Furthermore, if improvisation and the study of literature are not entwined from a young age, the motivation to start improvising at a basic level is limited.
[§165] A comparison with a language is relevant here: it is possible to learn another language in later life but it will not happen as quickly as if you learn it as a child. The new language will never become a "mother tongue" or be spoken entirely fluently. If no necessity exists to invest significant energy into something, very little will be achieved in practice.
[§166] A number of pre-conditions which applied to 18th century organists come into play here. They are barely, if at all, still common: a self-explanatory knowledge of the church hymn and an environment in which improvisation is the rule rather than the exception. In addition, today we no longer have an obvious "mother tongue": the significant level of knowledge of music from previous centuries which has been accumulated can also act as a hindrance to exploring the music's depths. The great advantages of the craft of improvisation trump these contemporary barriers, developing the "inner ear", the understanding of a flexible approach to historic organs and

greater insights into the organ literature. More than anything else however, it frees the organist to tell his or her own story in a manner which does justice both to the player and to the instrument. So let's reposition the craft of improvisation to its rightful place!

Abstract

How to relate, as an organist, to the instrument you are playing? Modern organists are not trained in the way their 18th century colleagues were. The idea that being an improvisor is one of the main goals for organists has lost its self-evidence. Whereas composing in J.S. Bach's day may have been considered as a way of preparing and training improvisational skills, improvisation is regarded a lesser art today. Still, the historically oriented way of improvisors like Jan Jongepier show that the improvisational craft is still alive. In order to restore this craft, improvisation should be taught to organists in an early stage, so that they discover and extend their own musical language in the same natural way they learned to speak.

Sietze de Vries

Sietze de Vries received his professional training from, among others, Wim van Beek, Jan Jongepier and Jos van der Kooy. He was awarded his undergraduate degree at the Groningen Conservatoire; at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague he completed his post-graduate studies with an endorsement for improvisation. In addition, he graduated from the Alkmaar School for Church Music with the Dutch church music diploma. Between 1987 and 2002 he won fifteen prizes at various national and international competitions for both repertoire and improvisation. The pinnacle, and also the conclusion, of that period was his triumph at the International Improvisation competition in Haarlem in 2002. On two previous occasions he had been a finalist. He holds a position as "Visiting Professor" at Collegedale University (USA) and teaches at the International Summer Academy Montreal (CA).

VI

Bernhard Haas - Improvisation, C.Ph.E. Bach, César Franck and Albert Simon: some remarks on Franck's A major Fantasy

[§167] At the Amsterdam improvisation conference in 2011, Rudolf Lutz highlighted the difference between improvising and "fantasising". Fantasing refers to "moving one's fingers on the keys", whilst improvising refers to "inventing (while playing) a piece of music". C.Ph.E. Bach explains it thus: "Man muß eine Absicht auf das gantze Stück haben."[1] This could be translated as "One must intend to create a whole", but this would not be entirely correct as Bach speaks about "the whole" rather than "a whole". In other words, there exists the somewhat metaphysical idea of a pre-existing whole, or, explained less metaphysically, – according to Bach – a concept of the whole movement should exist before it actually sounds.

[§168] In my contribution, I will try to illustrate what such an abstract idea might signify musically in a concrete piece. I have chosen César Franck's *Fantaisie en la majeur* even though this piece is clearly a composition and not an improvisation. Nevertheless, Franck was famed as an improviser and

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1 Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach. *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen*, Berlin: Henning, 1753 (I) and Winter, 1762 (II); fac simile Kassel etc.: Bärenreiter, 1994. 133. Bach is actually dealing with Allegro movements featuring "2 Reprisen" (132). In such instances, can the recapitulation differ from the exposition? "Dieses muß mit keiner geringen Ueberlegung geschehen, man muß hierbey beständig auf die vorhergehenden und folgenden Gedanken sehen; man muß eine Absicht auf das gantze Stück haben, damit die gleiche Vermischung des brillanten und simplen, des feurigen und matten, des traurigen und frölichen, des sangbaren und des dem Instrument eigenen beybehalten werde." These are thoughts on musical unity and coherence by perhaps the best practitioner of his time.

there are reports that he was able to improvise at a level comparable to the music of the A major Fantasy.[2] In scholarly discussions, one encounters the view that the A major Fantasy lacks structural discipline and is encumbered with an uncontrolled profusion of melodic ideas etc. (as is also the case in some improvisations).[3] It might, therefore, be informative to investigate whether or not the piece nevertheless contains some sense, unity and coherence.

[§169] My method will be borrowed to a great extent from two music theorists used to dealing with such problems. Heinrich Schenker's theory of levels is very well-known.[4] Much less well-known is the theory of the Hungarian conductor and music theorist Albert Simon (1926-2000, pronounced "Shee-mon") whose work has focussed particularly on Béla Bartók.[5] His theory of tone-fields shows some similarity with the writings

2 Widor, certainly no particular admirer of Franck, wrote about Franck's improvisation at the inaugural recital of the Cavaillé-Coll at La Trinité at Paris on 16th March, 1869: "The themes, the developments, the execution: all were equally admirable (...); he has never composed anything better." Quote from Joël-Marie Fauquet. *César Franck*. Paris: Fayard, 1999. 388, translation by the author.

3 Compare with François Sabatier. *César Franck et l'orgue*. Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1982 (= Que sais-je?, vol. 1947). 80.

4 Heinrich Schenker. *Neue musikalische Theorien und Phantasien 3: Der freie Satz*. Vienna: Universal Edition, 1956. English publication: *Free composition*, translated and edited by Ernst Oster. New York: Longman, 1979. Two Schenker bibliographies: Benjamin McKay Ayotte. *Heinrich Schenker. A Guide to Research*. New York: Routledge, 2004; David Carson Berry. *A Topical Guide to Schenkerian Literature. An Annotated Bibliography with Indices*. Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2004.

5 Short introductions to Simon's theory: Konstantin Bodamer. "Albert Simon - ein ungarischer Autor". *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Musiktheorie* 8/2 (2011) [http://www.gmth.de/zeitschrift/artikel/639.aspx]; Bernhard Haas. *Die neue Tonalität von Schubert bis Webern. Hören und Analysieren nach Albert Simon*. Wilhelmshaven: Noetzel, 2004; Michael Polth. "Tonalität der Tonfelder". *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Musiktheorie* 3 (2006). Hildesheim: Olms, 2008. 167-178; Polth. "Bibliographie zur Tonfeld-Analyse nach Albert Simon". *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Musiktheorie* 8/2 (2011) [http://www.gmth.de/zeitschrift/artikel/648.aspx];

of Ernö Lendvai[6], Zoltán Gárdonyi[7] and, more recently, Richard Cohn[8].

[§170] I will combine Simon's theory of tone-fields with Schenker's theory of levels (background, middleground, foreground). One of Simon's ideas is that very often in music composed from around 1850 onwards, a triad is considered to be something deficient. On the other hand, unity (completeness, closeness) in music can be achieved by several triads which together form a so called "tone field".[9]

[§171] I will begin by considering the tone-field which Simon calls "Construct" ("Szerkezet" in Hungarian, "Konstrukt" in German[10]). A Construct is an augmented triad (i.e. an octave divided equally into three intervals) combined with the augmented triad one fifth higher. There are four Constructs:[11]

Johannes Schild. "...zum Raum wird hier die Zeit. Tonfelder in Wagners Parsifal". In Bernhard and Bruno Haas (eds.), *Funktionale Analyse. Musik - Malerei - antike Literatur* (Kolloquium Paris/Stuttgart 2007). Hildesheim: Olms, 2010. 313-373. To my knowledge an introduction in English does not yet exist.

6 Several publications by Ernö Lendvai deserve attention here: "Einführung in die Formen- und Harmonienwelt Bartóks". In Bence Szabolcsi (ed.), *Béla Bartók: Weg und Werk. Schriften und Briefe*. Kassel etc.: Bärenreiter and Munich: dtv, 1972 [the article was written in 1953]. 105-149; *Béla Bartók: An Analysis of His Music*. London: Kahn & Averill, 1971; "Duality and Synthesis in the music of Béla Bartók". In Todd Crow (ed.), *Bartók-Studies*. Detroit: Information Coordinators, 1976. 39-62; *Symmetrien in der Musik. Einführung in die musikalische Semantik*. Vienna:Kodály Institut und Universal Edition, 1995.

7 Zoltán Gárdonyi. "Neue Ordnungsprinzipien der Tonhöhen in Liszts Frühwerken". In Klara Hamburger (ed.), *Franz Liszt. Beiträge von ungarischen Autoren*. Budapest: Corvina Kiadó, 1978. 226–273.

8 Richard Cohn. "Maximally Smooth Cycles, Hexatonic Systems, and the Analysis of Late-Romantic Triadic Progressions". *Music Analysis* 15 (1996). 9–40; Cohn: "Introduction to Neo-Riemannian Theory: A Survey and Historical Perspective." *Journal of Music Theory* 42 (1998). 167–180.

9 A tone-field does not necessarily consist of triads.

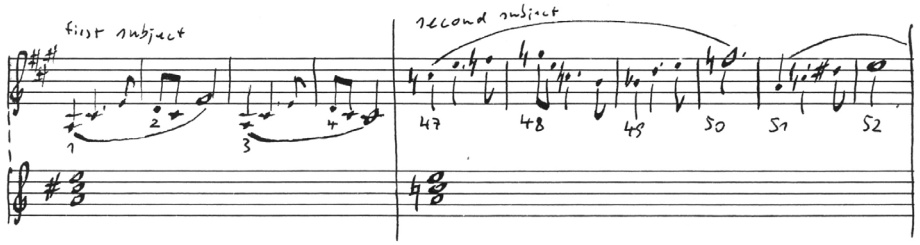
10 The Americans call this a "hexatonic pole".

11 Compare Cohn's Eastern, Western, Northern, Southern Cycle in Cohn 1996 (cf. note 8);

Ia c, c#, e, f, g#, a
Ib d, d#, f#, g, a#, b
IIa b, c, d#, e, g, g#
IIb c#, d, f, f#, a, a#

[§172] It is obvious that Ia and Ib, when combined, contain the twelve pitches as do IIa and IIb. All four Constructs are needed in order to obtain all twelve possible fifths within the twelve pitch-classes.[12]
[§173] Example 1 gives a short survey of Franck's A major Fantasy as far as the recapitulation of the original theme. The upper stave gives short quotations from the original; beneath, the dominating triad is shown.

Example 1A



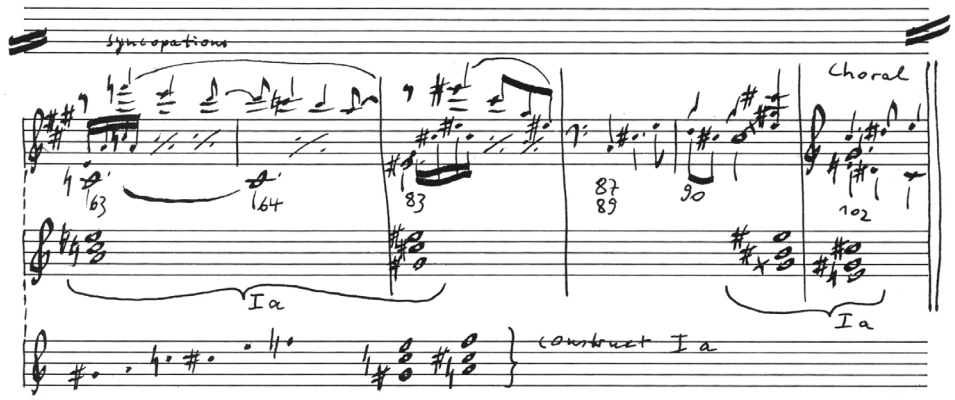
[§174] The purpose of this diagram is to illustrate what happens harmonically (globally speaking) from the beginning to the recapitulation of the piece. The entire opening, then, despite its harmonic activity (for

compare John Clough. "Flip-Flop Circles and Their Groups". In Jack Douthett, Martha M. Hyde, Charles J. Smith (ed.), *Music Theory and Mathematics. Chords, Collections, and Transformations*. Rochester USA: University of Rochester Press, 2008. 23-48.

12 See Haas 2004 (cf. note 5), 27–31. In each Construct, three fifths are found, for example in Ia: c#–g#, f–c, a–e. Consequently, four Constructs are required in order to include all possible fifths.

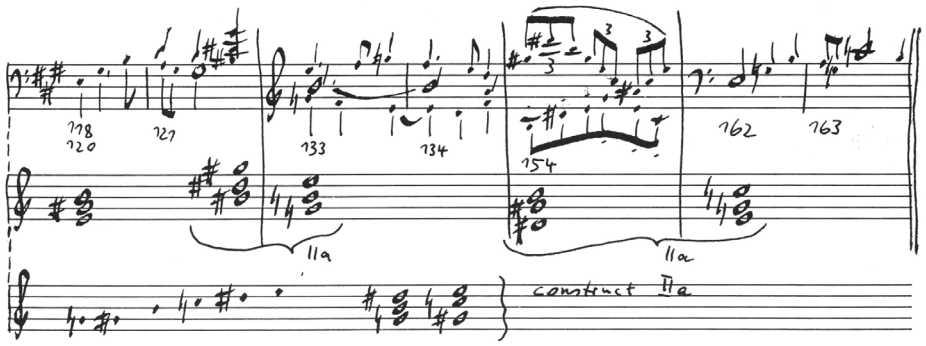
example a minor in bar 7, b major in bar 13 etc.), leaves no doubt that the Tonic of the piece is clearly A major. Therefore, I have noted this aspect only in Example 1A. The first subject (beginning in bar 1) and the second subject (beginning in bar 47) present the tonic key and its parallel minor without ambiguity. The next passage from bar 63 to 83 (87) moves from a minor to C# major (example 1B). The following passage, starting at E# major in bar 90/91, leads to a chorale-like section, from bar 102 onwards, in c# minor.

Example 1B



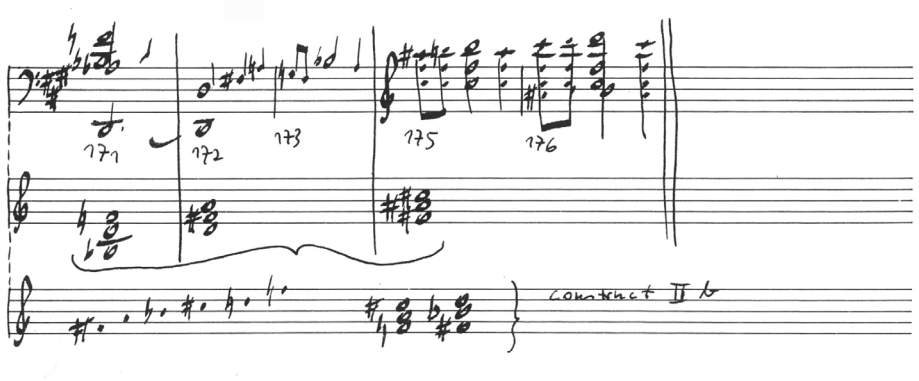
[§175] After the dramatic pause (the first pause with a fermata at bar 117), bar 118 begins with a clear Dominant: E major (example 1C). Bar 121 to 133 (G# major to e minor) correspond to bar 90 to 102. In bar 154 the character changes suddenly: there is a g# minor chord that, in a sense, is answered by the C major chord in the middle of bar 163.

Example 1C



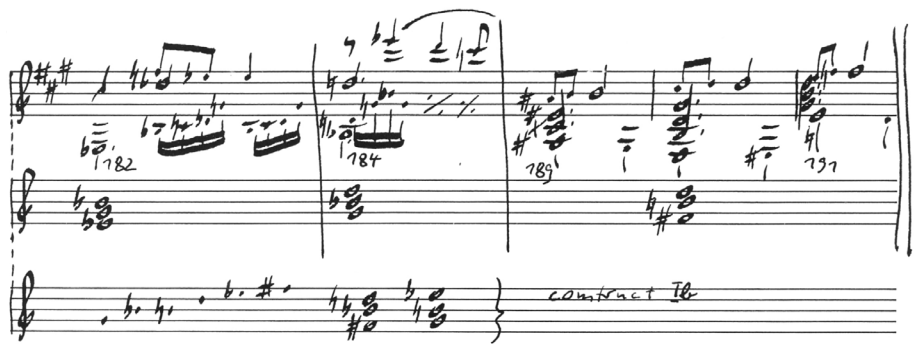
[§176] Beginning with this passage in 4/4, there is a kind of development section with much modulatory activity. B flat major, D major and F# major (bar 171 – 172 – 175; example 1D) are clearly related to each other.

Example 1D



[§177] The following passage (example 1E) is unique in the piece: apparently quiet in mood, it nevertheless gives the impression of uncertainty, as if someone has lost his way (up to this moment, the general intentions always seem clear). This uncertainty is solved in bar 190, with a b minor chord in the left hand which seems to re-establish the feeling of direction. From this moment on, the music seems to have regained its orientation: it is clearly directed towards the recapitulation in bar 198 ("Très largement").

Example 1E

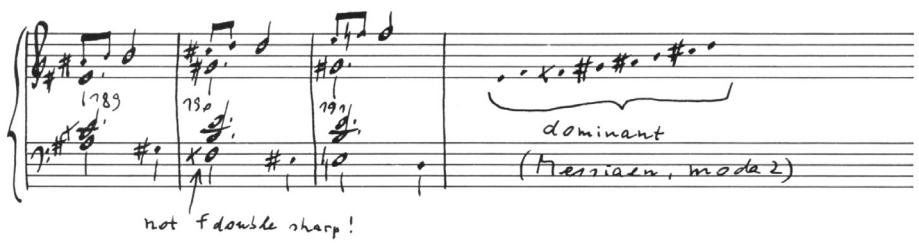


[§178] It is quite obvious that all the main harmonies shown so far can be related to Simon's Constructs in a rather systematic way. The beginning of the piece exposes Construct Ia containing A major, the piece's Tonic. After A major, a minor is paired with C# major and E# major is paired with c# minor. Each pair contains all six notes of Construct Ia. Thus, the A major chord is the only chord within Construct Ia not paired with another chord in the piece, so as to build a complete Construct. The progression A major – f minor, strikingly absent from this piece, would be the third and last pair of triads representing the complete Construct Ia. The absence of this pair of

triads accentuates the singularity of A major, the Tonic, within Construct Ia. The next Construct, IIa, is introduced immediately after Ia's last triad. (This c# minor, developed in bars 102–117, is followed by E major from bar 118 onwards). Construct IIa contains the piece's Dominant, E major. Again, all pairs of triads within Construct IIa are used excepting E major – c minor (thereby accentuating the importance of degree V of the scale, the Dominant): the others are complete: G# major – e minor, g# minor – C major. The harmonic sequence from bar 171 onwards is as follows: Construct IIb (containing the Subdominant, D major): B flat major, D major and then F# major: in other words, all three major chords within this Construct and no minor chord.

[§179] Tonic, Dominant and Subdominant have all had their respective Constructs, therefore. The Construct of the Dominant (IIa) and the Construct of the Subdominant (IIb) together form a twelve tone field, but the Construct which would complete the Tonic's Construct, Ia, as a twelve tone field is still lacking. Bars 182 to 190 present a "passage of uncertainty": Construct Ib. The character of uncertainty may have something to do with the fact that this Construct is not rooted in one of the three basic Functions (Tonic [in the traditional sense of the first degree], Dominant [in the sense of the fifth degree] or the Subdominant [fourth degree]). Nevertheless, the moment of completion of Construct Ib grants the music some sense of relief. After this there is no obstacle to the forthcoming recapitulation. Example 2 shows a hypothetical alternative version for bars 189 to 191.

Example 2



[§180] The inherent logic of this passage (up to bar 195) dictates that there should be an f double sharp in bar 190 instead of f sharp: The whole passage from bar 187 to 195 consequently contains a "Function" in Simon's terminology. A Function is a diminished seventh chord (that is an octave divided equally into four intervals) together with the diminished seventh chord one fifth higher.[13] An f double sharp in bar 190 would mean that the whole passage would completely inhabit this Dominant Function.[14] F sharp (bar 190) is the only note that does not fit into this tone-field. When the whole piece, or a large portion of it, is played with this f double sharp instead of f sharp, it can be felt that the answer b minor (bar 190) offers to E flat major (bar 182) and then to g minor (bar 184) is lacking (as there is no b minor), with the result that the recapitulation seems much less convincing than in the original. The argument for b minor with f# presented by the whole context is, therefore, stronger than the logic of the isolated passage which would suggest f double sharp.

[§181] The relationship between the two pairs of Constructs in this piece can be imagined in such a way that IIa and IIb oppose each other on the left and the right respectively, thus balancing each other out. In contrast to that, Ia can be imagined below, and heavier; its counterpart, Ib, is above. IIa and b are horizontally aligned, Ia and b are vertically aligned (in this piece).

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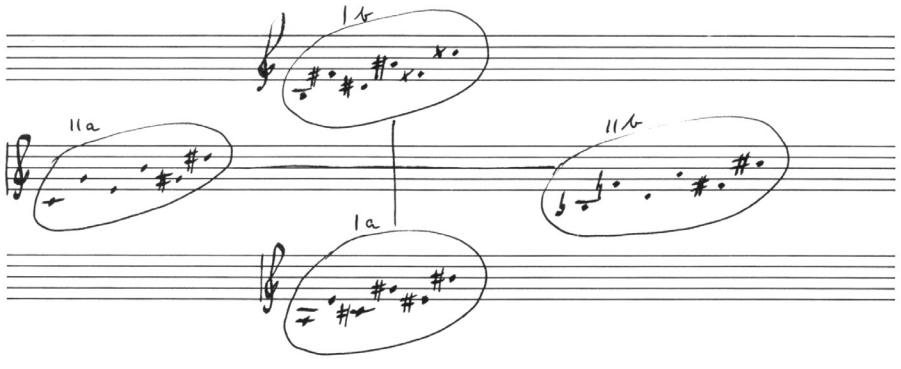
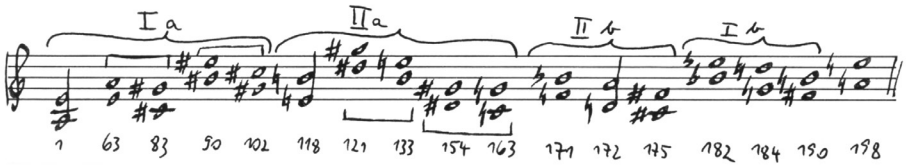
13 The Americans call this an "octatonic scale", the Russians speak of the "Rimsky-Korsakov-scale", the French of the "second mode of Messiaen". Simon observes that starting with a triad, the sequence "relative key – parallel key" engenders a circular tone-field containing the entire contents of a Function: Tonic, respectively Subdominant or Dominant. This phenomenon can as well be described by the operations P (parallel) and R (relative) in neo-Riemannian Theory.

14 According to Albert Simon, the complete Dominant in an A major piece consists of the tones contained in the triads E major, c# minor, C# major (D flat major), b flat minor, B flat major, g minor, G major, e minor, that is e, f, g, g#, a#, b, c#, d, with the proviso that c# = d flat etc.

Example 3



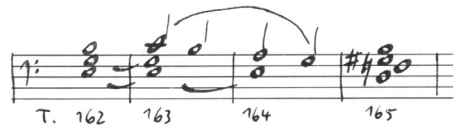
Example 4



[§182] To obtain as simple a figure as possible, example 4 notes only the root and the fifth of each chord. As a result, the logic of the whole can be seen even more immediately. Construct Ia is executed – after the establishment of the fifth e/a – by the addition of two pairs of intervals (fourths and a fifth) that together create the complete Construct (as a consequence of which, one fourth/fifth appears twice). Construct IIa is built analogously. Constructs IIb and Ib are built up of groups of three intervals so that six notes are assembled as three fourths or fifths. This explains why Construct Ib is built

in the original of three chords, not of two (E flat major and b minor suffice to express Ib, but there seems to be a tendency in this piece for the fundamental and the fifth of the respective chords to jointly form Constructs). Some of the piece's dynamic is revealed if looked at from the perspective of example 4: The intervals heard at the piece's opening are worked out as triads in root position and even as tonal regions. G sharp minor (bar 154, from Construct IIa) is the first chord of example 4, appearing in the original as a six-four chord; this chord is answered by the C major-sixth-chord in bar 163.[15] Similarly, IIb is formed of a sixth chord (bar 171; in fact a six-five chord), a triad in root position (bar 172/3), and a six-four chord (bar 175/6). The last Construct, Ib, is particularly irregular, beginning with two triads: E flat

15 It would be possible to conceive e minor from bar 162 as one of the basic triads instead of C major in bar 163, which then would be dependent on e minor. The C major in bar 163 expresses something of the dramatic situation of this passage: imagining C major as related to a basic e minor belittles the dynamic impact and the force of the passage: in such a version, e minor would repeat the e minor of bar 133 and calm the situation. Taking C major in bar 163 as the main chord from the perspective of the whole means perceiving it as the straw that breaks the camel's back. A sketch may help to explain the point musically ( ):



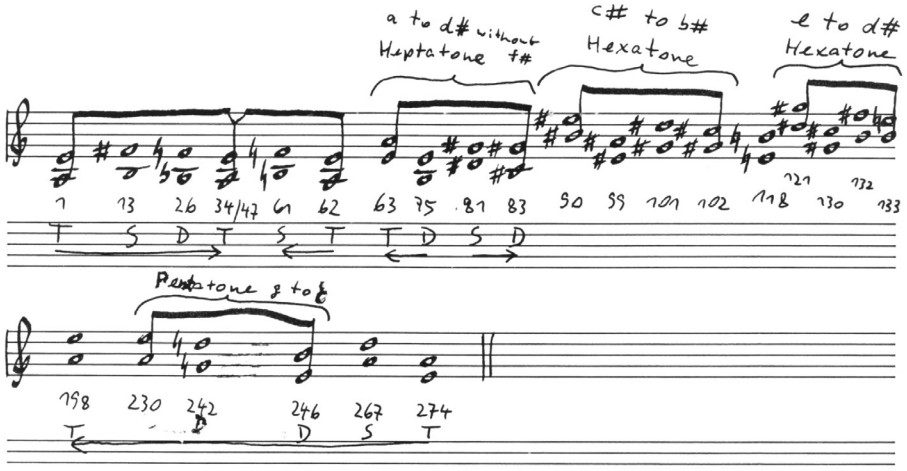
Similarly, g sharp minor in bar 154 could seem subordinate to the prevailing e minor or to the E major of bar 149. Through their respective tendency to assign a different direction to a well defined tonal space, g# minor in bar 154 and C major in bar 163 are related to one another. Taking C major or e minor as the leading chord at this moment would, therefore, have strong implications for interpretation and even for the perception of the piece. Consequently, the question here is not one of proving something, but rather of listening carefully and perceiving beauty and sense. This is an invitation to comprehend, not an essay forcing someone to think something.

major (bar 182) and g minor (bar 184) (which together are all but complete) and the very short b minor six-four chord (bar 190) already mentioned. Thus, a short chord can function on the same layer (here something as the "background" in a Schenkerian sense) as a largely worked-out tonal region. One can compare this to a theatre piece in which some small detail perceived by an actor can influence the general action as much as an extended exposition.

[§183] These two pairs of Constructs contain 12 fifths – all possible fifths within an autonomous twelve tone system. (That is the reason why two groups of twelve pitches or a pair of Constructs are necessary: the twelve pitches constituted by one pair of Constructs contain only six fifths.)

[§184] The validity of these analytical assumptions can be demonstrated, if ever it is possible to deduce reasonably the details of the music from them. This is too great a task for this essay. However, before trying to make some steps in that direction, I must introduce another category of tone fields. Apart from Constructs and Functions, there are also Fifth-fields, that is tone-fields consisting of notes separated from each other by uninterrupted perfect fifths. Thus, d, g, a, c is called a Tetratone from c to a, because these tones can be represented as c–g–d–a: four notes separated by fifths. By extension, there are also Pentatones, Hexatones (for example c, d, e, f, g, a, in other words a Hexatone from f to e), Heptatones (the diatonic collection), Octotones and Enneatones.

Example 5



[§185] Example 5 shows something as the next layer after example 1 and 4 (leaving out the passage from bar 145 to bar 197). The first fifth e/a from example 4 is composed out by a sequence of four fifths which together create a kind of perfect cadence: Tonic – Subdominant (B major – represented in the example by the fifth f# /b – being the parallel key of the relative minor key of D major) – Dominant (the fifth f/b flat belonging to the same Function as E major, compare footnote 13) – Tonic.[16] This is related to the working out of the last fifth e/a from example 4: again four fifths, this time creating together a Tetratone (e/a, b/e, d/a, a/e containing: d, a, e, b), and expressing a plagal cadence: Tonic – Dominant – Subdominant – Tonic (bar 198/230 – 246 – 267 – 274; arrow pointing left).[17]

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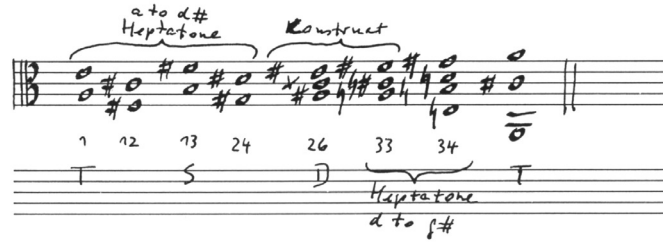
16 The arrow pointing to the right is Simons's symbol indicating that the music's direction is authentic, i.e. embodies the sequence Tonic – Subdominant – Dominant – Tonic, or parts of it. The plagal direction is embodied by the opposite sequence: Tonic – Dominant – Subdominant – Tonic etc. It is represented by an arrow pointing to the left. It is crucial to understand that the notions "Tonic", "Subdominant", "Dominant" are used here in Simon's meaning; compare notes 13 and 14.

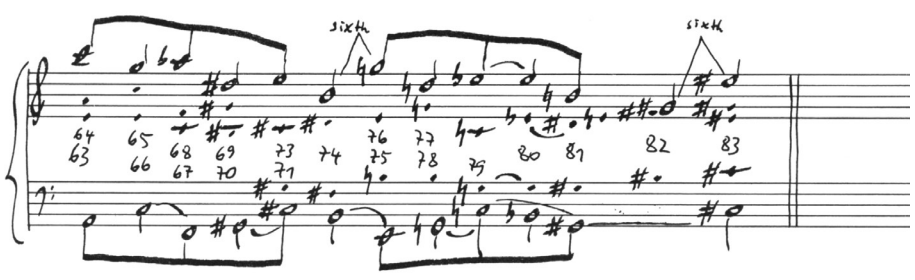
17 This example shows in a more detailed manner the beginning of the piece up to bar 34 ( ):



The second fifth of example 5 is prepared by its Dominant, the following fifth d#/g# (G# major b. 24 in the original) completes a Heptatone a to d# (from the beginning to b. 24). The fifth f/b flat of example 5 is completed by a construct and a Heptatone d to g#; the A major Heptatone. The opening of the piece up to bar 34 contains therefore – on this level – 10 tones; c and g are lacking. Interestingly enough, the chord in bar 26, the "crisis" of the beginning, is somewhat ambiguous between B flat major and A# major; the ambiguity of B flat major and A# major will reoccur in another context.

[§186] The following progressions (example 4) are specified and interpreted as fifth-fields. So e# / b# – c# / g# (example 4, bar 90 to 102) is transformed into e# / b# – a# / e# (three tones separated by fifths) and d# / g# – c# / g# (three tones separated by fifths again), both form authentic progressions (Dominant – Tonic in relation to a tonic of c# minor); the four fifths together form a Hexatone; six tones forming a sequence of uninterrupted perfect fifths (c#, g#, d#, a#, e#, b#). Similarly, a / e – g# / c# (example 4, bar 63 to 83) becomes a / e – e / b (three tones separated by fifths) and g# / d# – g# / c#. The first progression is plagal (Tonic – Dominant), the second authentic (Dominant – Tonic).[18] This is the technical basis for example 6 which shows the progression from bar 63 to bar 83.

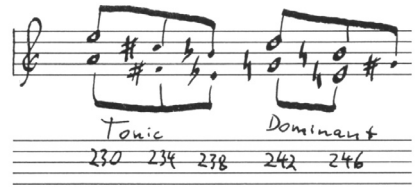
Example 6



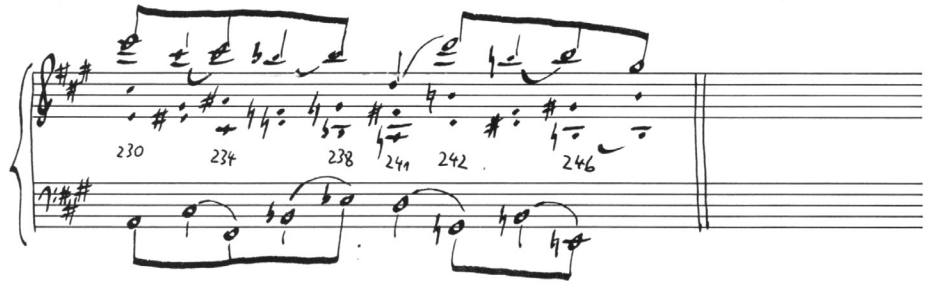
18 Compare this passage to the similar progressions from bar 230 to 261. The Pentatone g to b (example 5, bar 230–246), leads to the fifth b / e and thus assures tonal closeness. This is the counterpart to the incomplete Heptatone a to d# (bar 63 to 83). (The progression D major – G major b. 241 / 42 is analogous with B major – e minor b. 74 / 75 and not with G major – C major b. 81 / 83.)

[§187] Construct IIa (bar 75–82: e minor bar 75, c minor bar 79, g# minor bar 81) connects e / b (bar 75) to g# / d# (bar 81, see example 5). This progression of two fourths at the interval of a major third gives rise to the Construct in example 6.[19]

19 The idea of the background influencing the foreground is taken from Schenker. Compare Heinrich Schenker. *Das Meisterwerk in der Musik 3: Beethovens Dritte Sinfonie zum erstenmal in ihrem wahren Inhalt dargestellt*. München: Drei Masken Verlag, 1930; english translation: *The Masterwork in Music / A Yearbook* 3 (William Drabkin ed.; translated by Ian Bent, Alfred Clayton and Derrick Puffett). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. In this text, almost every musical detail is deduced step by step from the background, that is from a structure governing the whole movement. This again reinforces the point that the master composer or improviser must be able to conceive the whole, in other words that the music's details are executing that which the simple structures defining the whole suggest. Compare this also to Bernhard Haas and Veronica Diederen. *Die zweistimmigen Inventionen von Johann Sebastian Bach. Neue musikalische Theorien und Perspektiven*. Hildesheim: Olms, 2008, where similar deductions are shown in Bach's Two Part Inventions. In analogy to this, example 5 shows the progression d / g – b / e (bar 242 – 246) which gives rise to the following (incomplete) Functions ( ):



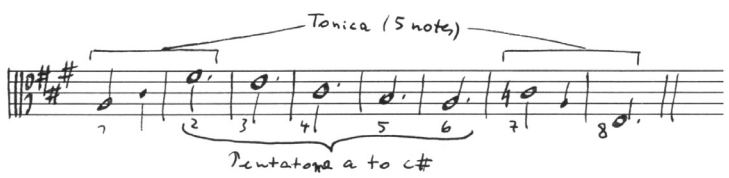
In contrast to the passage from bar 63 to 83 as represented in example 6, I perceive the soprano bar 230 to 261 as follows ( ):



The fifths between soprano and bass suggest a silent, peaceful mood beautifully contrasting with

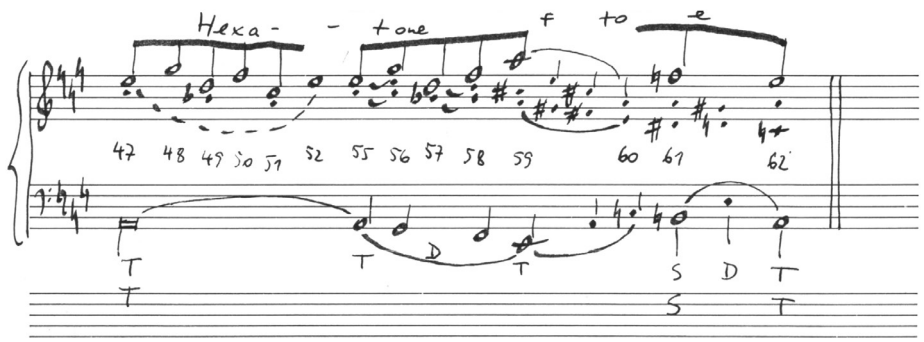
[§188] Construct Ia (bar 63–71: a minor bar 63, f minor bar 67, c# minor bar 71) is built in analogy to IIa.[20] In the original, there is an E major sixth-chord in bar 81, rather than a g# minor chord. The mysterious character of this chord is due to a rhythmic shift[21]: normally speaking, there should be a g# minor chord (see the D# major four-three chord in bar 80). The e at the beginning of bar 81 is a passing note between d# (e flat) in bar 79/80 and the f# in bar 82, which should appear on the second beat of bar 81 (with e# appearing on the third beat); instead it is replaced and displaced, appearing "too early" and producing an effect of sudden softness at this point (Franck's indication is "molto dolce"). This implies that the technical basis is, nevertheless, the elusive g# minor chord.

Example 7



[§189] Example 7 shows how the opening fifth from example 5 is worked out. Moreover, bars 35 to 42 correspond to bars 1 to 8. Example 7 is a kind of foreground or "Urlinie-Tafel" in a Schenkerian sense. The first fifth from example 5 gives rise to a Pentatone (f#, e, c#, b, a, bar 2 to 6) on the one hand while, on the other, A major is represented by its relative key, f# minor, (bar 1/2) and its parallel key of a minor (bar 7/8). From the perspective of Albert Simon, these are part of the Tonic: five of the tonic's eight notes are present.

Example 8



[§190] In the same way, example 8 demonstrates how the second subject is formed melodically from a Hexatone. Harmonically, the tonality of a minor is represented here by its relative key, C major (bar 47/48) and its parallel key, A major (bar 59; compare the f# minor of bars 1/2 and the a minor of bars 7/8. Once again, a five-note-Tonic is evident). Interestingly enough, the first subject's decisive Pentatone and the second subject's Hexatone have only two notes, or one fifth, in common: a–e. Together, therefore, they include nine notes: the fifths from f to c#. The three remaining tones are introduced within the second subject, thus helping to assemble the complete set of twelve notes within the two subjects from bar 35 to 62: b flat bar 49 and 57 and d# and g# in bars 61 and 62 respectively.[22]

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the prominent minor thirds of bar 63 etc.

20 The soprano in example 6 interprets the original: f, e, d (b. 63) are thus conceived as light preparations for an intense c (bar 64) etc.

21 The German word is "Rückung"; as used by Johann Mattheson in his *Große Generalbaßschule* (Hamburg: J. Chr. Kißner, 1731; Reprint Hildesheim: Olms, 2006), 298. See also Heinrich Schenker. *Free Composition (Der freie Satz)*, translated and edited by Ernst Oster. New York: Longman, 1979. § 294 (122/23).

22 The Dominant at the beginning of bar 62 is again the result of a rhythmic shift: it should be on

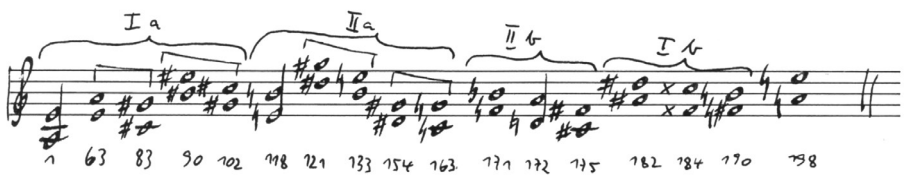
[§191] One more aspect can be discovered if the piece is viewed from the perspective of an ideally infinite row of fifths, rather than in the twelve tone area. From this perspective, e# and f are different. In example 4 and in the piece, it is evident that in bar 90, the tonality is E# major and not F major. E# major is suggested by the preceding C# major. In any case, the route to the subsequent c# minor clearly departs from E# major and not from a hypothetical F major.[23] Later on, things become more complicated. Construct IIa (beginning in bar 118) contains the succession g#/d# – g/c with a chromatic semitone step. This is clearly expressed by the modulation from bar 154 to 162/3. In any case, g/c is related to b/e of the beginning of IIa (bar 118). Similarly, Construct IIb (beginning in bar 171) is diatonically related to the fifth a/d: with the result that both other fifths, b flat/f and f#/c#, can be imagined in the same tonality as a/d (d minor/D major respectively).
[§192] The last Construct, Ib (beginning in bar 179), is the most complicated. Had F# major been present in bar 175, then b flat and d flat in bar 178ff. would be written as a# and c# etc. There is no enharmonic shift to be heard during this passage. Consequently, E flat major bar 179 to 183, in fact is D# major whilst g minor in bar 184 is f double sharp minor. This is partially

the third beat of bar 61 with the Tonic arriving at the beginning of bar 62. Trying out this "corrected" version, the original's subtlety can be suitably appreciated.

23 A different case is found in the passage from bar 63 to 71. The tonalities are a minor (bar 63) – f minor (bar 67) – c# minor (bar 71). In fact the modulation from c# minor to f minor is a transposition of the modulation from a minor to f minor. Consequently, c# minor should be written as d flat minor. However, the difference between c sharp and d flat has no significance at this point of the piece. Had it occurred at another moment of the piece an analogous difference may have been very important and have had significant consequences. See, regarding the first movement of Bruckner's Sixth Symphony: Bernhard Haas: "Analytische Fragmente zum ersten Satz von Bruckners Sechster Symphonie". In Christoph Hust (ed.), *Johannes Brahms und Anton Bruckner im Spiegel der Musiktheorie. Bericht über das Internationale Symposium St. Florian 2008*. Göttingen: Hainholz, 2011. For composers of Franck's time (compare, for example, Wagner, Bruckner or Liszt), the possibility exists to shift from the virtually infinite fifth row system to the twelve tone system and back.

confirmed by Franck who writes – after B flat major bar 187 – A# major in bar 189, once again without any noticeable enharmonic shift. In fact what happens here is a simplified notation of a complicated passage avoiding double sharps which are unpleasant for the musician to read. Nevertheless, the passage contains no enharmonic shift. In fact, the sequence consists of F# major (175) – D# major (179) – f double sharp minor (184) – A# major (187). Consequently, the b minor chord in the left hand bar 190 sounds as f#, b, c double sharp. Example 4 should therefore be corrected as in example 9:

Example 9



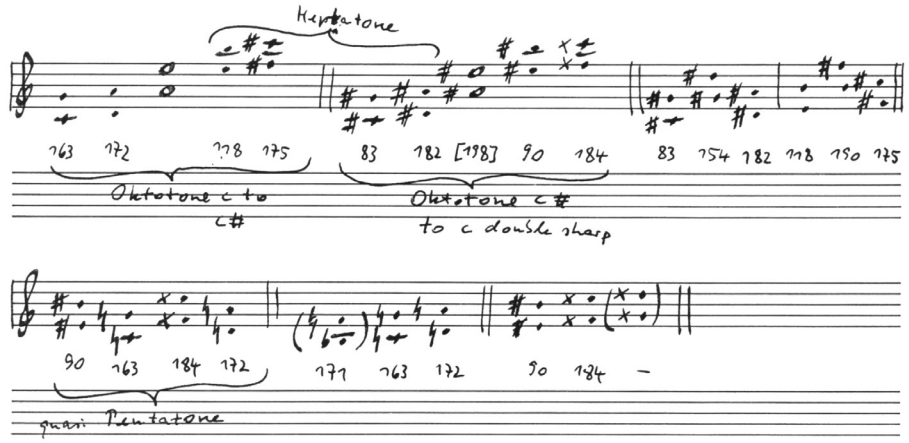
[§193] From the perspective of diatony, the fourth d#/a# (bar 179/82) is of central importance, because both other intervals of Ib are related to it: c double sharp/f double sharp as well as b/f#. This serves as an introduction to another rather strange observation. If, in the course of the whole piece, the recapitulation (beginning in bar 198) is transposed and played in A# major, the result is surprisingly convincing.[24] If, after this version (beginning, for example, in bar 172) has been heard several times, the original is played once again, the character of the recapitulation seems to become stronger. There seems to be an almost violent act suppressing A# major and forcing the music to adapt to A major, its main tonality. I call this effect the "hole".

24 The route back to the original tonality can be made in bar 240 which should be played, like bar 73, transposed a minor third higher, beginning therefore with e minor and ending with E flat major. Thus the music flows into bar 241, from which the original tonality is regained.

[§194] The hole is a precise place in a piece of music where violence occurs to "the libido of the sounds" ("das Triebleben der Klänge"). The hole serves to direct the way back to the piece's main tonality, therefore proving that the unity of tonality within a piece is not something "natural" (as is sometimes assumed) but made possible through an arbitrary act. It is absolutely crucial to understand that the hole is dependent on the whole piece, it is "the whole's hole". The question here is not whether a good improviser could find alternative solutions for almost anything in relation to which the original solution may sound differently. Rather, the key point here is that in this passage the notes are forced to do something they, in a sense, don't want to. This is in no way the composer's error; it determines to a great extent the expression and effect of the recapitulation.[25] Example 9 contains a kind of anticipation of this effect: d# / a# as the central interval of Ib easily points to a possible continuation of example 9 with e# / a# instead of e / a.
[§195] This hypothetical recapitulation in A# major also enables us to understand the logic of example 9 with respect to its accidentals.

25 In my opinion, every piece of music in the European tradition contains a hole in this sense. There seems to be a history of the hole as 19th century holes have features in common which separate them for example from early 18th century holes etc. In order to give one more example of a hole, the hole of Bach's Organ Toccata C major BWV 564 is found in the second half of bar 71: the pedal should play (without the hole): g–G–d–b–c–a–b [bar 72:] g#–b–a–b–g#–a–f#–g# –a etc., with the result that there would be an E major six-five chord in bar 72 instead of an A major six-five chord etc., the piece thus ending in G major. I am grateful to Peter Schleicher for drawing my attention to this hole.

Example 10



[§196] Example 10 shows how both central fifths, e / a and e# / a#, are accompanied analogously by four neighbouring fifths (which, in this piece, are organised as Constructs; see example 9). The fifth d# / g# belongs is an intermediate fifth between g# / c# and a# / d#, the fifth f# / b similarly belongs to b / e and c# / f#. The fifths b# / e#, g / c, c double sharp / f double sharp, a / d together would form a Pentatone, if one ignores the enharmonic shift. This is the quite abstract place of constitution of the twelve tone system out of the presupposed infinite row of fifths in this piece.

Many thanks to Chris Bragg who greatly improved my English.

Abstract

According to some improvisers, a concept of a musical movement should exist before it actually sounds. Listened to along the lines of a combination of Albert Simon's theory of tone-fields and a Schenkerian concept of levels (background, middleground, foreground), César Franck's *Fantaisie en la majeur* is a good example of what such an abstract idea might signify musically in a concrete piece. Major listening tools are the tone-fields. In their perspective, triads (for example) are deficient; in order to achieve unity, closeness of tone-fields is afforded. It is shown, how, in a global perspective, this piece is united by two twelve-tone-fields whose internal organization is likewise shown. This explanation sheds light at the same time on the completeness of the piece and on the character of certain passages, a character engendered to a great extent by the function (in relation to the whole) of their respective tone-fields. Furthermore, it is shown how details, such as the melodic shape of the first and the second subject, are founded in the basic tone-fields, and how foreground tone fields can be understood as working out middle- or background tone-fields. In the end, the creation of the twelve tone space out of a virtually infinite row of fifths in this piece is shown.

Bernard Haas

Bernhard Haas studied organ, piano, harpsichord, church music, composition and theory of music at the conservatories at Cologne, Freiburg and Vienna. He won many important competitions, such as the Bach-Competition in Wiesbaden (1983) and the Liszt Competition in Budapest (1988). He teached organ and organ improvisation at the Musikhochschule at Saarbrücken (1989-1995) and was professor at the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik und darstellende Kunst at Stuttgart (1994-2013). In 2013, Bernhard Haas succeeded Edgar Krapp at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater at Munich. Bernhard Haas is an internationally acclaimed expert on Bach, baroque music in general, and 19th century German organ music. Furthermore, he specializes in performing complex contemporary organ music.

VII

Mary Oliver - Analyzing Improvisations: The Constellation Model

[§196] As a doctoral student at UCSD in the early '90's, I was already intrigued by the process of improvisation, and how it differed from what I had been taught as a classical musician. At that time, the conventional canons of musical analysis in western music could describe traditional musical structure. But they did not address improvisation and how it works.

[§197] This is because, by its nature, improvisation is non-linear. It cannot be analyzed, or understood, using linear or hierarchical methods. An explicit ranking of events within an improvisation is antithetical to what distinguishes it from other types of musical activity. In improvisation, one follows not a score, but one's intuition in the moment. How, I wondered, could one describe, without circumscribing, this discipline?

[§198] My answer was to devise a model in which a constellation of elements, and their play and interplay, offer a multi-dimensional way in which to analyze what is essentially extemporaneous. This model also offers a way of organizing the many and varied materials which emerge during an improvisation.

[§199] As stars are made intelligible through being seen as forming a constellation, so are the conditions of an improvisation organized by intuition to form its identity. Isolated, these conditions and the aspects of intuition which guide them mean very little, but when seen in relation to one another, they make up the "sense" of an improvisation. A model of a constellation shows how the changing positions or various conditions and aspects affect intuitive decisions, thereby determining the character of individual improvisations. The constellation model does not predetermine an improvisation. Rather, it serves as an analytical method for discovering into the nature of intuitive decision-making.

Conditions

[§200] Conditions are the elements which together make up the context of an improvisation.

[§201] Touring is essential for me in order to make a living as a performer. Life on the road has brought me into contact with many different types of musicians. There are the individual styles (jazz, contemporary classical, indigenous, experimental) and training (autodidactic, didactic) that one is up against (or with). There are also conditions of the socio-environmental situations (jazz clubs, festivals, squats) and issues of culture (Dutch, Senegalese, Balinese, Ethiopian, American, etc.), sexuality, gender, race, economics, and, in the instance of a public performance, the audience. These factors contribute to the conditions of the music. Each decision or choice made finds itself in a different set of conditions – therefore in every circumstance the music has its own unique "sound". I am still playing whether in solo, duo, or up to an orchestra, but all of the conditions are different and therefore have an affect upon the outcome of a piece involving improvisation.

[§202] For the purposes of my constellation model I consolidate these various conditions into personal history, musical history, surprise, performance environment, social environment and cultural environment. These conditions not only describe the characteristics of improvisation, but improvisation's place at points in time.

[§203] Personal and musical history are actually separate conditions so each has its own subset. Conditions considered to be subsets of my personal history are the fact that I am a woman, from the US, an expat living in the Netherlands, that I have toured throughout the world, that I might remember a sound bite from a television or radio show, the sounds of building construction (particularly in Amsterdam!), of languages familiar and unfamiliar to me, of a flock of feral parrots, or the noise of the kettle,etc. The subsets for musical history consist of the artistic elements of violin/viola/hardingfele technique such as fingering patterns, bowing articulation, extended techniques, extended tunings, musical and physical gestures, along with my understanding of conventional sonic elements like timbre, counterpoint, and form. The conditions of musical history make up my sense of myself within the history and tradition of Western Art Music.

[§204] Instances when I am playing material which can be clearly attributed to another culture can be considered a subset as a combination of personal and musical history. My practical experience in playing the music outside of the various western traditions is minimal. However I have listened to quite a lot of the music of other cultures. The way that I assimilate what I hear can be attributed to my musical history – but the fact that my knowledge of this music is not obtained from practical experience makes it in part personal history.

[§205] A performance environment is determined by interactive constructs and the improvisor's sense of place, meaning both psychological and physical place. By interactive constructs I mean, whether the improvisation is solo or group, whether there are electronic treatments and if so what kind, whether there is an audience and if so who is in it, and so on. Psychological place involves present state of mind – frustration, hysteria, angst, one's euphoria, etc. Physical place is determined by the nature of performance space itself and its physical context.

[§206] The social and cultural environment also includes the performer's sense of place, but this sense is defined by socio and cultural factors, and as such is an amalgam of personal history and environment. The reason why it is a separate category is that it is not only historical (concerned with personal history), but it also involves the performer's sense of herself with that history – what it means that I am a woman, an American, an expat, playing the violin as a free-lance improvisor.

Decisions

[§207] Decisions, as to whether to stay under the influence of one particular condition, to combine conditions or to move from one to another are made variously by aspects of intuition. These aspects are memory, emotion, reason and curiosity. This complete process makes up a shifting constellation representing the provisional characteristics of an improvisation. I am referring here to intuition as the process of making these decisions as well as a state of mind affecting how I make them.

[§208] These conditions and aspects of intuition not only describe the characteristics of improvisation, but improvisation's place at points in time.

History is referential and deals with the past, environment connects the past to the present and surprise is more the present into the future.
[§209] Use of memory as an aspect of intuition is not for the purposes of repetition. Rather, it provides a link from the past to the present. Here, memory is not the memorization of a fixed set of musical gestures, rather it is a mirror reflecting my use of my history.
[§210] The decisions or choices that I make require an immediate insight through direct apprehension of the conditions at hand. An example might be taken from the playing of a very rapid phrase on one string of the violin. Imagine that, in the midst of this material, there is a decision to create a new texture by quickly dipping down onto the adjacent string for one note and returning to the former activity. Rather than remaining as an occasional or one-time contrast with the prevailing single texture, the interrupting material becomes part of a new texture through its being worked into the original texture. The decision to develop a new section out of a previous one is an intuitive decision. This point is reached however through the *faculty* of intuition, that is, it is guided by aspects of memory, emotion, reason and curiosity. A clearer way of explaining this process would be to follow the movement among various conditions.
[§211] According to this example, I am playing the violin. Let us say that it is a solo improvisation. The technique that I am using is derived from the fingering patterns of a piece performed the previous year (musical history). Now this is not a quotation, just a set of physical gestures. At some point I decide to dip down quickly to another string. I know why I want to make this gesture; I have reasons (reason as an aspect of intuition).
[§212] The result is something that I like, another texture thrown in with the previous one. My decision to stay within this texture is informed by my sense of pleasure (emotion as an aspect of intuition).
[§213] By describing an improvisation as a shifting constellation of conditions, I am able to understand how I decide intuitively on the direction taken at certain points in an improvisation. This not only helps me to understand why I make certain choices in an improvisation, but it enables me to analyze and to understand other improvisors' works as well.

The Body

[§214] Like many musical instruments, playing the violin or viola for many hours at a time can place stress in certain parts of the body. Doing this for more than 40 years can cause considerable damage to the posture if not addressed properly. It is because of this that I have for the past 20 years studied Alexander Technique with Tom Koch.
[§215] The Technique is based on the understanding that the tensional balance between the head, neck and back can either enhance or hinder the body's postural reflexes. We can learn to control this tensional balance consciously, and thereby find an easier and more coordinated way of using our bodies, both in action and at rest. This conscious control of coordination gradually comes to replace our previously acquired habits that might be restrictive or even harmful.
[§216] Frederick Matthias Alexander (1869-1955) relied on little technical jargon; a glossary of the Technique would not have more than a half-dozen terms and he refrained from using words which imply a separation of body and mind, like 'body mechanics' and mental states'. Instead, he spoke simply of 'the self' and its use and functioning. Alexander often wrote of the self as something 'in use', which 'functions' and which 'reacts.' His book *The Use of the Self*, states that the Alexander Technique is not a method of physical relaxation, or posture, or the use of the body, but of the use of the self.
[§217] The use of the self, then, is the way one reacts, with the whole of themselves, in any given situation. Alexander put it succinctly: "Talk about a man's individuality and character: it's the way he uses himself."
The self does not consist of two halves (body and mind);[1] it consists of a whole, so unified in its workings that no separate part (body, mind and spirit) can be said to exist independently of the others.
[§218] If you do accept that you are whole and indivisible, you will need to speak differently, to think differently, to practice, rehearse and perform differently, For if you are one, you work as one, and you cannot examine, change, or control one of your parts separately from the whole.

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1 Cf. Sietze de Vries's essay in this volume; especially his statement about there being no barrier between fingers, and brain.

[§219] In an Alexander lesson, the teacher helps you to become *aware* of your end-gaining in simple acts of daily life, such as sitting, standing, walking, speaking, using your arms, and so on. As you become aware of each *instance* of end-gaining, you become aware of end-gaining itself, and with time your understanding of end-gaining should encompass everything you do.
In an improvisation expectation is replaced with awareness. Through awareness the chances for opportunity are greater.
[§220] In improvisations there can however be moments of conflict between habitual movements (upper body) and conscious decisions. These can result in the most creative moments in an improvisation. I'll call them 'accidents'. For example, let us say that I am playing the rapid passage mentioned earlier. In the midst of this furious activity, one of the fingers on my left had gets caught in between two of the strings. While pulling the finger back into the pattern the finger accidentally plucks one of the strings, resulting in a pizzicato sound in the midst of the dense flurry. This is a completely unexpected occurrence – an *accident*. Suddenly I am confronted by a new texture; there has been no decision to pluck the string. This is the condition of a surprise! For a split second, I am completely in the present – aware – this is not a reconfiguration of familiar conditions or an attempt to discover new ones according to my past knowledge of the old. It is completely surprising, because it has been the result of what might be considered a failed attempt, a mistake by the traditional standards of Western Music. But in improvised activity, this "failure" might be the opening for opportunity.[2] I *work* with these accidents. Since the constellation has shifted abruptly, there is a change in emphasis from the condition of *musical history* to that of *surprise*.
[§221] There is another way that the unexpected can alter an improvisation. There can be instances in which an improviser will feel that he has no sense of memory, no sense of his surroundings. These points in the performance will often find them in a state of "suspended animation", for lack of a better phrase. It seems as though everything falls away and they are in a void; there is a sense of anticipatory calm. There may be a feeling of familiarity, as if everything has happened before (*déjà vu*); there may a feeling of intense unreality or sensations of perceptual illusion.
[§222] In the midst of an improvisation, notions of time and space have been replaced – the performer is in the sound, where it is being produced – They don't think about where they've been or what they are doing or where it will take them. Here, some of the most interesting material can be unveiled in improvisation – lasting only a moment before intuitive decisions take over. Suspended animation leaves the improviser the most vulnerable because she is not in complete control. Memory hasn't a place; therefore, time and memory are completely of the present. Memory is only present in the manner, the physicality, of holding the instrument.

Structure

[§223] How does an improviser balance known forms or their history with chaos or lack of order?
[§224] The beauty of improvisation is that it is an activity where there is a kind of balance – like nature. Balance in improvisation, like other artistic activity, is achieved through acknowledging, but not being ruled by, a history of forms and images absorbed from training in a discipline. When something unpredictable is thrown into the piece it creates tension. Here one of two things will happen; either the past is forgotten and chaos or unpredictability runs roughshod or there is a mingling of the two. In my case, these forms and images are the result of many years of playing in a highly developed tradition where forms like ABA, arch, theme and variation, through composed, etc. are fairly common occurrences (with their own history of development). The intuitive decisions I make during a performance are determined according either to this criterion or to the elements at hand – unpredictability / chaos and instantaneous, extemporaneous creativity.
[§225] This shifting and bumping of conditions by aspects of intuition make up the constellation of the moment which will shift when a new moment or section arises.
[§226] Rather than predetermine a plan for a piece to present a problem, it will more likely consist in my setting myself a problem which the improvisation will attempt to work out.

2 Cf. Peter Planyavsky's essay in this volume; he states that we correct said mistakes or accidents in improvisation by including then with equal weight.

[§227] Problems are a fundamental and complex part of improvisation. First of all, it is important that the negativity of the "problem" is dispelled. From our childhood, we are given academic problems by our teachers in hopes that we will solve them. Unfortunately, we are powerless as pupils, for we can only figure out the correct answer to a problem that we have not discovered ourselves. It is a kind of slavery for "true freedom lies in a power to decide, to constitute problems themselves".[3]

[§228] In order to invent or create a problem, we must have the intellect to substantiate it, since our intelligence is the faculty that states problems.

[§229] For the purposes of improvisation, our intellect consists of our experiences and knowledge (musical history) which tell us what might constitute a musical problem (for an improvisation). The way we perceive things is based in the memory of our personal and musical history. It is only through experience, knowledge, memory and perception that the improviser finds and posits a problem.

[§230] If there is any confusion, it is not for the existence of a problem but rather an illusion of where and how the problem exists or the *state* of the problem. The illusion is situated in the deepest part of the intelligence and cannot be dispelled: it can only be repressed. Our tendency (through illusion) is to place states in terms of more or less, that is, to see differences in *degree* where in actuality these are states which are differences in *kind*. For example, in presenting an improvised work, it is best not to treat the improvisation as a composed work, filled with the same rational as written composition and judging it with the same criteria as said composition. It is better to have the improvisation exist on its own terms. We can only react against this intellectual tendency by bringing to life, another tendency, which is critical. This second tendency can only be activated by intuition. Intuition rediscovers differences in kind beneath the differences in degree. Thus, it is through intuition that we solve problems and create improvisations.

3 Henri Bergson, as quoted in Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*. New York: Zone Books, 1988..25.

Abstract

The rather large parameters that the topic musical improvisation occupies will be focused into a discussion of its existence within a particular tradition of Western Art Music. The discussion revolves around a personal account of my current work in improvised activity.

An improvisation consists of intuitive decisions made in the course of a performance. In order to see how specific conditions and intuitive aspects interact in an improvisation, I present them using the model of a constellation. As stars are made intelligible through being seen as forming a constellation, so are the conditions of an improvisation organized by intuition to form its identity. This model of a constellation shows how the changing positions or various conditions and aspects affect intuitive decisions, thereby determining the character of individual improvisations. The constellation model does not predetermine an improvisation. Rather, it serves as an analytical method for discovering into the nature of intuitive decision-making.

Mary Oliver

Mary Oliver, violin, viola, and hardanger fiddle, is a performer whose virtuosity spans the worlds of scored and improvised music. Oliver (b. La Jolla, California) completed her studies at the University of California, San Diego where she received her Ph.D for her research in the theory and practice of improvised music. Her doctoral thesis, "Constellations in Play," identified a new kind of creative discipline, which Oliver has pursued with colleagues locally and around the world.

As a soloist, Oliver has performed in numerous international festivals and premiered works by, among others John Cage, Chaya Czernowin, Brian Ferneyhough, Lou Harrison, Joëlle Léandre, George E. Lewis, Liza Lim, and Iannis Xenakis. She has worked alongside improvising musicians such as Han Bennink, Mark Dresser, Cor Fuhler, Joëlle Leandre, Phil Minton and Alexander von Schlippenbach.

Based in Amsterdam, Oliver is a member of the Instant Composers Pool

(ICP) Orkest, and a regular collaborator with dancer/choreographer Michael Schumacher. Her current projects include two duos: Oliver & Heggen with contrabassist Rozemarie Heggen; and JOMO with cellist Johanna Varner. She teaches Performance at the Hogeschool voor de Kunsten in Utrecht.

VIII

Hans Fidom - Listening as a Musicological Tool: Real Time Analysis

[§231] "Much music," as Nicholas Cook put it, "does not exist in the form of a written text, circulating purely in the form of recordings. And even when music does exist as a written text, performers play an essential role in creating the experience that, for most people, is the music."[1] To take this one step further, whilst considering that music may often lack both texts *and* recordings, it may seem wise not to identify a musical document (texts, recordings) with the music it documents at all. Instead, as every situation in which music is listened to basically differs from any other situation, it seems far more as if every performance constitutes "a music" – as in "a work of art in its own right".[2] Using the noun "music" in this way may seem a little strange, but it chimes perfectly with Christopher Small's suggestion that making music, "musicking" as he calls it, is indeed the activity that allows music to come into existence.[3]

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1 Nicholas Cook. "What is Musicology". *BBC Music Magazine*, May 1999. 31-33. Cook was the initiator of the Research Centre for the History and Analysis of Recorded Music (CHARM). CHARM resulted in a considerable number of projects, symposia and publications in the years 2004-2008. A quote from the Welcome Text on the CHARM website http://www.charm.rhul.ac.uk) reads as follows: "The traditional musicological approach is to see music as a written text reproduced in performance. But much music does not exist in the form of a written text, circulating purely in the form of recordings. And even when music does exist as a written text, performers play an essential role in creating the experience that, for most people, is the music. CHARM was established to promote a musicology that better reflects the nature of music as experienced in the twentieth century and beyond."

2 Hans Fidom. *Music as Installation Art / Organ Musicology, New Musicology and Situationality*. Amsterdam: Orgelpark, 2012 (Orgelpark Research Reports #2.).

3 Christopher Small. *Musicking / The Meanings of Performance and Listening*. Middletown, CT, 1998.

[§232] This obliges us to re-order the steps involved in analysing music: it is not the score, nor the recording, but "that which sounds" in a given musical situation which should be taken as the point of departure. Darryl Cressman's term *attentive listening* is especially useful in this context.[4]

[§233] As the Orgelpark Improvisation Project obliged those involved to find new ways of objectifying score-less music, the opportunity was taken to investigate how such attentive listening might work as a first step in its analysis: organ improvisations are "musics" without scores but which nevertheless belong to the realm of western "classical" music, to use this awkward term just once.

[§234] This essay describes one of these new ways, called *Real Time Analysis*, as listening obviously takes place in real time. In essence, RTA aims to provide a description of the music being listened to. Key words are *improvising* (the activity of the musician), *listening* (the activity of the listener), and *systems of reference* (the backgrounds against which the activities of musician, listener and others involved in musical situations occur).

Improvising

[§235] Music is dependent on performance rather than on scores: music is a *performing art*. By extension, the custom of viewing improvisers as composers requires adjustment. Composers can slave away for months at a score; they facilitate performing art but are not performers themselves. Improvisers, on the other hand, are. Unlike composers, they cannot revise what they have produced; they must focus their attention on the activity of

4 Darryl Mark Cressman. *The Concert Hall as a Medium of Musical Culture / The Technical Mediation of Listening in the 19th Century*. Vancouver: Simon Fraser University, 2012. iv; 193-194. Even the act of reading a score in silence implies a form of listening: one may actually hear what one reads. Listening is of course dependent on training, and to train listening we need our ears. However, listening thereafter without ears is perfectly possible to the extent that it can even interfere with listening by ear. It is a common experience that the recollection of a performance of a given piece on CD, stored in one's memory, can be prompted by a live performance of that piece.

making music, i.e. on the interplay between recalling what has been played and forward-planning. Improvisers are more comparable with musicians: both make artistic decisions within short time-frames and on the basis of plans made in advance. The plan may be a score, but can also be no more than an "assignment" such as "make music in the form of a passacaglia". Therefore, a completely free improvisation does not exist; neither does a completely predetermined interpretation of a score. An improviser "just" creates music with fewer specified instructions than a musician who has a score to use as a reference.

[§236] In 2003 Bruce Ellis Benson discussed this idea in *The Improvisation of Musical Dialogue*. In 2011 he further developed his theory in the course of the Orgelpark Improvisations Project; see his contribution elsewhere in this book. To quote: "If artists are indebted to one another, there can be no 'lone' genius, disconnected from the community. Instead, we are all improvisers together, quoting one another, saying the same thing in different ways, and giving different perspectives on the same things. There is an ever-shifting balance between quotation and originality, between old and new, between you and me. Some of what I say is more 'mine'; some is more 'yours'; some is more 'tradition.' Getting the exact ownership right may be only possible to a certain extent."[5]

Listening

[§237] Against this backdrop, what is music? As music deserves a most cautious approach, a descriptive answer is preferable to a prescriptive one. The idea that music manifests itself in time, as something which sounds, should also take prominence. The most useful definition in this context thus seems to be that of composer Luciano Berio who, in a 1985 interview, said that "music is everything one listens to with the intention of listening to music".[6]

5 Bruce Ellis Benson. *The Improvisation of Musical Dialogue*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003; "In the Beginning, There was Improvisation". In Hans Fidom (ed.), *Orgelpark Research Report* 3. Amsterdam 2013, § 23-56.

6 Berio, Luciano, Rossana Dalmonte, Bálint András Varga. *Two Interviews* (translated and

[§238] The power which Berio assigns to the listener nuances mainstream literature about listening to music, whether Aaron Copland's classic *What to Listen for in Music*[7] or the entertaining *Bin ich normal, wenn ich mich im Konzert langeweile?*[8] by the German Christiane Tewinkel. Such publications are based on the idea that one may be considered a "qualified listener" should one be able to follow the intentions of the composer. The suggestion here is that the message which Beethoven wants to pass on in his symphonies is more easily attainable when one understands how sonata form works. The dissuading of listeners from overestimating this sort of knowledge can be traced as far back as the early 20th century and varies from sarcasm (such as Theodor Adorno's[9] disqualification of expert knowledge as alienating the music's artistic qualities) to phlegmatism (such as expressed by John Cage[10] who found it unnecessary to assign meaning to sound).

[§239] In 1976, Roland Barthes presented his famous classifications of listening. The second of these, preceding the act of understanding the music, is most useful in this context: "To listen is to adopt an attitude of decoding what is obscure, blurred, or mute, in order to make available to consciousness the "underside" of meaning (what is experienced, postulated, intentionalized as hidden)."[11] In 2003, Lawrence Kramer drew attention to the mutual influencing of the intentions of composer, musician and listener: "Complex communicative acts [such as making music] have a powerful tendency to change the structures that regulate them. They often do, and always may, exceed their appointed boundaries, both formal and semiotic. [...] Signifying practices always run ahead of signifying systems."[12]

Systems of Reference

[§240] Everyone active in a given musical situation has an individual "system of reference": the summation of all those aspects which determine an individual's musical background. Artistic communication is only possible when musicians and listeners share their systems of reference in such a situation. Complete concurrence of those systems will never happen, neither is it necessary: a "Westerner" cannot temporarily listen with "Eastern ears" to Indian music as an Indian can but can appreciate it nevertheless. This example demonstrates, incidentally, that morality plays an important role in listening: while listening to Eastern music, the Westerner's system of reference leaves him no other choice than to appropriate the music, obliging him to adopt a default position of respect.

[§241] That said, the problem of our subjectivity must be addressed. As Kramer states: "Subjectivity is the medium in which music works, and through which it reveals its cultural significance."[13] An inspiring example of how to approach this issue can be seen in Dutch art expert Rudi Fuchs's column "Kijken" (i.e. "Watching") in the magazine *De Groene Amsterdammer*. Each week, Fuchs discusses a work of art.[14] In most cases, he starts with a

published by David Osmond-Smith). New York: Marion Boyars, 1985.

7 New York, 1957/1985.

8 Cologne, 2011.

9 Theodor Adorno. *Philosophie der neuen Musik*. Frankfurt/Main, 1949; edition used here: 1976. In footnote 13 on page 30, Adorno writes: "Damit hat sich aber der Kenner (...) auch sich selber zur Unwahrheit entfaltet, komplementär zu der des Laien, welcher von der Musik nur noch erwartet, daß sie neben seinem Arbeitstag hinplätschere. Er ist zum Experten geworden, sein Wissen, das einzige, dass die Sache überhaupt noch erreicht, zugleich zum routiniertem Bescheidwissen, das sie tötet. Er vereint zünftlerischer Intoleranz mit sturer Naivetät in allem, was über Technik als Selbstzweck hinausgeht. Während er jeden Kontrapunkt kontrollieren kann, übersieht er schon längst nicht mehr, wozu das Ganze und ob es überhaupt noch gut sei: die spezialisierte Nähe schlägt in Verblendung, Erkenntnis in den gleichsam administrativen Rechenschaftsbericht um."

10 Internet: www.youtube.com/watch?v=pcHnL7aS64Y.

11 Roland Barthes. *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985 (original edition 1976, English translation Richard Howard). 249.

12 Lawrence Kramer. "Musicology and Meaning". *The Musical Times* 144 (No. 1883 / 2003).. 6-12 (8).

13 Cf. note 12. 7.

14 *De Groene Amsterdammer* is a weekly magazine. Rudi Fuchs is one of the most important art experts in Europe, who became well-known as the artistic director of the art exhibition

"dry" description of the painting in question – a painting by Piet Mondriaan might, for example, be described as a white surface with horizontal and vertical black lines, with three of the resulting boxes painted red, blue and yellow. Fuchs proceeds by further illustrating his observation with elements from his own system of reference. In this way, he individualises his observations and makes it possible for others to see the painting "through his eyes".

Real Time Analysis

[§242] In preparation for the Improvisation Project this book documents, an extensive collection of improvisations was assembled. Some of these improvisations were drawn from well-known archival material such as those by Marcel Dupré recorded in Cologne Cathedral in 1961. In addition a considerable group of improvisations on LP has been digitalised, including:

- 1965 / Konrad Schuba / Basilika Konstanz / MPS CRB 772
- 1969 / Jaroslav Vodraska / Prague, Cyr. & Meth. / Supraphon 1111 0661/2 G
- 1971 / Werner Jacob / Nuremberg, St.-Sebald / Christophorus LC 0612
- 1976 / Heinz Wunderlich / Hamburg, St.-Jacobi / Schnitger-Records ASR 51
- 1977 / Anton Heiller / Zwolle Grote Kerk / 6814.183
- 1977 / Josef Zimmermann / Dom Cologne / Laudate 91504
- 1981 / Peter Planyavsky / Brixen, Dom / Motette M1054
- 1982 / Albert de Klerk / Josephkerk Haarlem / Attacca Babel 8420-5
- 1985 / Klaas Bolt / Haarlem, St.-Bavokerk / Intersound 6818.511
- 1985 / Jean Langlais / Paris, Ste.-Clothilde / Cantilena MC 1820

[§243] A second source of great importance was the collection of recordings of the International Improvisation Competition held in Haarlem since 1951. The Orgelpark worked in co-operation with the NCRV, the Dutch Broadcaster responsible for the recordings, in a project to digitalise its tape recordings of 18 editions of the competition held since 1951. These included the competitions in

"Documenta 7" in Kassel (1982) and as the director of the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam (1993-2003).

1951, 1957-1963, 1965, 1968, 1971, 1975, 1977, 1983-1984, 1986, 1992 and 1998. More recently, the NCRV published a selection of Haarlem improvisation recordings on its website.[15] These included recordings from years that fell outside the scope of the Orgelpark's digitalising activities: 1953, 1966, 1970, 1976, 1980 and 2002. In total, 25 competitions are available, from a period spanning over 50 years of Haarlem improvisations from 1951 to 2002.

[§244] How should one listen to these recordings? As improvisations are listened to only once, the best way seems to be, if listening to recordings, to listen without much rewinding or fast-forwarding, thus analysing the music in "real time". Each Real Time Analysis thus documents, as a first phase, changes in volume, colour, tempo etc, and the development of aspects of form (fugue, passacaglia, sonata etc) and of content (such as the treatment of themes). The second phase is the interpretative summarising of these notes. The third phase is placing the result in a broader context in order to ascertain which systems of reference played a role.

[§245] Let us engage in a Real Time Analysis of a specific improvisation: the improvisation with which organist Jan Raas won the 1977 Haarlem International Improvisation Competition. A reading tip upfront: the first phase is published here *in extenso*, just to show what a complete collection of descriptive notes may look like. Complete reading of all notes is not imperative: jumping to phase 2 (§279) after a few musical "minutes" would not interrupt the flow of this text.

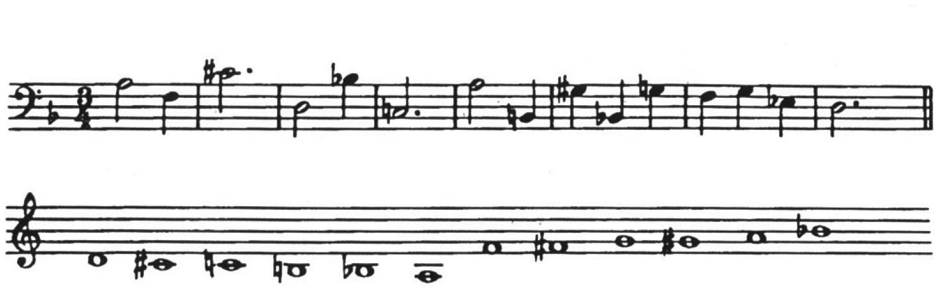
Phase 1: descriptive notes

[§246] The two themes set for the Haarlem Improvisation Competition in 1977 were composed by Anton Heiller, who himself had won the competition in 1952. The assignment was in fact to create two improvisations: a passacaglia and an improvisation on a tone row. Jan Raas, nevertheless, performed a single improvisation in four movements: after an introduction he improvised a passacaglia, a fugue and a closing section.

15 Internet: http://orgelconcerten.ncrv.nl.

Anton Heiller's themes for the 1977 competition at Haarlem

Heiller's tone row consisted of two chromatically filled-in fourths, one descending from d, the other rising from f; each containing six notes. The tone rows had b-flat and a in common; the notes d-sharp and e did not appear in either.



[§247] Jan Raas opens his improvisation (listen to fragment 1) with a solo in the form of a short, fast, rising motive played decisively on full organ:

Improvisation Jan Raas / fragment 1

[sound file only available in the electronic version of this book]

play stop

[§248] The last tone is held and becomes the first tone of the first half of Heiller's tone row. Raas then adds the next tones of the series, introducing each note slowly, one by one, some decorated with trills, resulting in a loud and active cluster. Under the cluster, Raas plays the second half of the tone row in the pedal using a dotted rhythm; the last two pedal notes are combined to form a trill with the result that the penultimate tone in the series (a) becomes the main tone. The resulting "chord" is held briefly. The end of this opening gesture is marked with a very short chord followed by a pause thus introducing the acoustic of the church as a musical means.

Improvisation Jan Raas / fragment 2

[sound file only available in the electronic version of this book]

play stop

[§249] Fragment 2: Raas repeats the opening gesture but this time introduces the pedal part when the manual cluster has only been half assembled. The tone row in the pedal is once again concluded by a trill. A short chord marks the end of this repeat, although this time played slightly short and after a short pause.

Improvisation Jan Raas / fragment 3

[sound file only available in the electronic version of this book]

play stop

[§250] Fragment 3: after a pause, Raas continues with a virtuosic passage on the same registration. Three monophonic lines follow in succession, each concluding with a short motive of two tones; this motive is, on each occasion, separated from the solo line by a short rest. The fourth line of Raas's "song" is longer, briefly becoming a duo, then pausing to make way for a concluding motive consisting of four tones and continuing more energetically before eventually culminating in a grand chord. The second half of the theme is heard once again in the pedal, ending for the third time with a trill. Three individual grand chords (the third slightly longer than the first two) mark the end of this section.

Improvisation Jan Raas / fragment 4

[sound file only available in the electronic version of this book]

play stop

[§251] Fragment 4: Jan Raas ends his introduction by continuing his solo lines and expanding the possibilities of the two tone motive which concludes each section, at the same time effecting a diminuendo. A soft cluster based on the first half of the theme is created and functions as background material for a flute solo reminiscent of the second half of the theme.

Improvisation Jan Raas / fragment 5

[sound file only available in the electronic version of this book]

play stop

[§252] Fragment 5: After a short pause, Raas plays the theme of the passacaglia on the 16′ Prestant of the pedal. This theme sounds comparatively conservative when compared with the idiosyncratic idiom of the introduction. He chooses a somewhat sedate tempo, settling finally on crochet = 55.

Improvisation Jan Raas / fragment 6

[sound file only available in the electronic version of this book]

play stop

[§253] First Variation: the pedal registration becomes slightly softer without losing its colour. On top of this, Raas builds a rising chromatic cluster on the flute stops, beginning with an a (the first note of the passacaglia theme) and growing to ten notes, finishing on f-sharp. The cluster tones appear at moments when the pedal does nothing: initially on the second beat of each bar, later "between the quavers".

Improvisation Jan Raas / fragment 7

[sound file only available in the electronic version of this book]

play stop

[§254] Second Variation: the registration remains unaltered, as does the atmosphere – the theme stays in the pedal with a cluster above. The listener's attention is now drawn to a third element: a slow, clearly profiled flute solo, played lightly staccato, beginning on c-sharp, falling via an intermediate note to d, thus summarising the ambitus of the theme. Raas chooses a classical build-up: the first phrase of the flute solo consists of five equal notes of which the last one is held for double the length; this is followed by an answer, a recapitulation of the statement and once again an answer. In the fifth phrase, Raas introduces triplets (which he had already tried in the second phrase but failed to continue due to a mistake) giving the solo more direction. The sixth phrase reverses the build-up process: just three notes followed by a series of individual notes and a short, concluding gesture. Underneath the flute solo, the cluster remains small and reasonably stationary.

Improvisation Jan Raas / fragment 8

[sound file only available in the electronic version of this book]

play stop

[§255] Third Variation: A melodious countersubject begins (once again on the "weak" second beat of the first bar) on a prestant registration above the theme in the pedal. In bar 3, this subject is followed by a slower (non-precise) imitation, beginning on the second beat, on the same registration and in the alto. In this way, Raas creates a trio in which the soprano gradually seeks ever higher regions only to return quickly to whence it came.

Improvisation Jan Raas / fragment 9

[sound file only available in the electronic version of this book]

play stop

[§256] The fourth variation continues in the vein of the third: using the same registration, a fourth voice appears. Raas chooses to keep the two inner voices homophonic. Beneath them the theme is heard in the pedal and, above them, a more freely developed soprano line than in the third variation is heard which, via triplets and rising scales, seeks the upper regions of the keyboard several times, returning time and again to the homophony of the inner voices.

Improvisation Jan Raas / fragment 10

[sound file only available in the electronic version of this book]

play stop

[§257] Fifth Varation: Raas assigns the task of playing the theme to the soprano, this time in inversion. The registration remains unaltered: Prestant 8′. The countersubject is heard in the left hand on a regaal-like reed registration. In terms of structure, this solo is strongly reminiscent of the solos in the soprano line from the previous variations; this time the bass region is explored instead of the treble.

Improvisation Jan Raas / fragment 11

[sound file only available in the electronic version of this book]

play stop

[§258] Fragment 11: the left hand now plays the theme at the normal pitch with the reed registration. At the top of the texture, Raas plays a countersubject on a clear flute registration. He begins and ends many notes with a trill on a third, or a short rising or falling figure.

Improvisation Jan Raas / fragment 12

[sound file only available in the electronic version of this book]

play stop

[§259] Variation seven is a solo played high on a flute. The notes of the theme are heard in a series of quick festoons. The variation ends with a pause.

Improvisation Jan Raas / fragment 13

[sound file only available in the electronic version of this book]

play stop

[§260] Fragment 13: the pedal resumes playing the theme, now on a 16′ Bourdon. On the second beat of bar 1, the left hand adds a two-note cluster (g-sharp-a), once again on a dark flute registration, with tremulant. In canon with the pedal, Raas plays the theme in the right hand on a registration with 8′, 4′ and 3′ flutes with tremulant, beginning when the pedal reaches bar 2 of the theme.

Improvisation Jan Raas / fragment 14

[sound file only available in the electronic version of this book]

play stop

[§261] Fragment 14: Intermezzo. A series of individual clusters is presented, built up note-by-note. They are reminiscent of the tone row which Heiller provided in addition to the passacaglia theme; the 3/4 time is abandoned. The first cluster has six notes and is heard on a soft prestant registration with tremulant. After a short rest, a second cluster of five notes is heard on the 8′ – 4′ – 3′-registration, also with tremulant and played high in the compass; a similar cluster follows but now low in the compass.

Improvisation Jan Raas / fragment 15

[sound file only available in the electronic version of this book]

play stop

[§262] In addition to a small cluster, Raas plays the key intervals from the passacaglia theme, first in the left hand "under" the cluster, then in the right hand above it. The movement slows and finally solidifies into a stationary chord.

Improvisation Jan Raas / fragment 16

[sound file only available in the electronic version of this book]

play stop

[§263] Fragment 16: return to the passacaglia theme, now heard in a clearly-defined prestant registration in the pedal. The hands add a countersubject on the second beat of the first bar, homophonically and, once again, classically presented in phrases. The first two of these phrases are each two bars long, followed by two further phrases each of a single bar – analogous with the increasingly active theme. Finally, a single concluding phrase.

Improvisation Jan Raas / fragment 17

[sound file only available in the electronic version of this book]

play stop

[§264] Again, the passacaglia theme is heard in the pedal with, above each of the four phrases, a countersubject in the soprano, now heard on a clear prestant registration (including 4′ stops). Underneath the soprano line, the alto and tenor follow its movement resulting in an active homophonic texture.

Improvisation Jan Raas / fragment 18

[sound file only available in the electronic version of this book]

play stop

[§265] A remarkable three-voice texture in the same registration: the theme is presented in the pedal and, above it, the left hand, as if in the background, plays a slowly developing small cluster. The right hand, now slightly more active than in the previous variation, plays a generally rising line made up of small, quickly changing two and three-part chords. At the end of the theme, the movement in the right hand gets even quicker. Raas maintains the division of the material in phrases.

Improvisation Jan Raas / fragment 19

[sound file only available in the electronic version of this book]

play stop

[§266] Fragment 19: a continuation of the variations using an even more sparkling prestant registration in the manuals (including a 2′ stop): above the theme, played in the pedal, the manuals play fast festoon-like soli which occasionally come together forming a two-voice texture or even small clusters.

Improvisation Jan Raas / fragment 20

[sound file only available in the electronic version of this book]

play stop

[§267] Fragment 20: using a small plenum registration (the previous sound with an added mixture), Raas plays a duo manualiter: a fast solo passage and fragmented elements of the passacaglia theme.

Improvisation Jan Raas / fragment 21

[sound file only available in the electronic version of this book]

play stop

[§268] The previous variation remains "active"; Raas adds the passacaglia theme to the texture, played on a pedal reed stop.

Improvisation Jan Raas / fragment 22

[sound file only available in the electronic version of this book]

play stop

[§269] Remaining on the "small plenum" registration, Raas continues, as it were, the previous variation but one. The music thins out to become a solo line, slows, and ends attacca on a single, slightly longer, "e".

Improvisation Jan Raas / fragment 23

[sound file only available in the electronic version of this book]

play stop

[§270] Fragment 23: following a short hiatus, Raas begins the next variation by playing a series of fast clusters which are built up in the same manner as the first chord of the improvisation: quickly, with each successive note remaining held. Once again, the variation is constructed in phrases: below the first chord, the pedal plays the first three notes of the theme in inversion, expanded via a short sequence of two "extra" notes. Below the second chord, a further statement of the entire theme is played in the pedal. The third chord is shorter, heard against just three pedal notes, and forms the beginning of a tension-filled rising gesture. After a short rest, the pedal plays the tonic note of Heiller's passacaglia theme (d); above it, homophonic developments appear with the same energy as before. The pedal line descends chromatically, in reference to Heiller's tone row, and then rises again.

Improvisation Jan Raas / fragment 24

[sound file only available in the electronic version of this book]

play stop

[§271] Raas introduces a series of complex harmonies, the soprano line of which forms the inversion of the passacaglia theme. The harmonies are introduced in phrases, the first two of which conclude with musical material in the pedal based on fragments from the tone row. The third phrase continues however, consisting of the remainder of the theme and ending with a long, static chord. The pedal likewise concludes with a pedal point (a) which provides the impetus for the manual voices to begin a loud, active solo once again, finally coming to rest above the pedal point in a dissonant "dominant" chord, as it were.

Improvisation Jan Raas / fragment 25

[sound file only available in the electronic version of this book]

play stop

[§272] Fugue: after a pause during which Raas allows the final chord of the passacaglia to die away in the acoustic, Raas begins the fugue on a clear plenum registration with no reeds. Heiller's tone row forms the basis for his fugue subject, rhythmically manipulated and lengthened through the repetition of the penultimate four notes, the last of which ends with a trill. Raas also adds a rest in the middle of the subject. The second appearance of the subject is remarkably independent to the extent that the first voice frequently ceases. As a result, the music suggests two solos dancing around each other and only occasionally forming a duo. The third entry follows suit. Only when the theme appears in the pedal does Raas change his approach: the manual voices play independent chords which are gradually combined to form sequences. Raas then returns to his exposition, without pedal, slowly obscuring the clarity through the use of some trills which get gradually lower and lower.

Improvisation Jan Raas / fragment 26

[sound file only available in the electronic version of this book]

play stop

[§273] These separated trills are heard again after a short pause, this time slightly slower and in a completely different registration: flutes 8', 4' and 3', without tremulant. The energy in the music gradually dies down. The fugue theme appears in the left hand while the right hand continues to play the separated trills and, eventually, more substantial fragments, anticipating the entrance of the theme in the soprano. The left hand then takes up the accompanimental role playing short fragments and isolated notes. Raas allows the soprano voice to vary the fugue subject freely before restating it on a small plenum registration.

Improvisation Jan Raas / fragment 27

[sound file only available in the electronic version of this book]

play stop

[§274] Fragment 27: this new appearance of the subject takes the form of a duo: firstly the left hand begins the passacaglia theme after which the right hand introduces the fugue subject on the second beat of the first bar. Only the first half of the passacaglia theme is heard; the second half is referenced in a short fantasia in which the characteristic intervals of the theme are used. This proves to be the preparation for a second appearance of the passacaglia theme, now in its inverted form with the fugue subject heard above. Once again, only the first half of the passacaglia theme is heard. Rising scales are then played on a "reed plenum", adding a new energy to the music.

Improvisation Jan Raas / fragment 28

[sound file only available in the electronic version of this book]

play stop

[§275] This energy provides the impetus for the presentation of the passacaglia theme in the pedal, also on a strong reed registration with the fugue subject played once again in the manuals. In the inner voices, a freely created countersubject is presented, resulting in complex counterpoint. The second half of the passacaglia theme is now replaced by a rising chromatic line drawn from Heiller's tone row which concludes the musical fragment in the pedal. After the pedal line stops, the manuals continue with their polyphonic material albeit with a gradual decrease in tempo.

Improvisation Jan Raas / fragment 29

[sound file only available in the electronic version of this book]

play stop

[§276] Raas now presents the fugue subject in the pedal. As soon as it appears, the movement in the manuals slows, eventually becoming a series of chords. The music stalls in a thick plenum texture in the manuals with trills in the pedal.

Improvisation Jan Raas / fragment 30

[sound file only available in the electronic version of this book]

play stop

[§277] This short impasse is immediately broken by the pedal which presents the passacaglia theme whilst the manuals play the opening of the fugue subject. The material in the manuals once again stalls however. The pedal plays a pedal point while the manuals play energetic series of chords. The pedal then ceases and the manual chords fragment into independent small groups, each of which is slightly higher than the last. The texture thins out and the registration becomes clearer and softer with the effect that the previous heavy movement seems, suddenly, to fly away.

Improvisation Jan Raas / fragment 31

[sound file only available in the electronic version of this book]

play stop

[§278] Conclusion (Recapitulation of the Introduction): at the end of his improvisation, Raas returns to his introduction. Instead of using trills to conclude each gesture, however, Raas uses his fugue theme, drawn from

Heiller's tone row, and played staccato on a pointed solo registration. When the cluster formed from the notes of Heiller's tone rows is heard for the second time, Raas adds the beginning of the passacaglia theme in the pedal once again, but this time in a slow tempo. The passacaglia theme continues in the same slow tempo but quickly accelerates. The material above varies in a complex juxtaposition of chords, clusters and fast scales. The last note of the theme is held. Above this pedal point, Raas plays quick, rising figures while the fugue subject is also heard several times. The work concludes with a massive chord.

Phase 2: summary

[§279] The structure of Jan Raas's improvisation can be summarized as follows.

00:02:50 Opening

[§280] The improvisation opens with a toccata for full organ with a clear, easily traceable structure. Raas introduces the use of short phrases, often conjoined to create four-part "verses" conforming exactly with Heiller's thematic material. The counterpoint in Raas's improvisation never has more than three voices; once extra voices are added, Raas reverts to clusters or homophonic textures. The joins between the two are not always clearly defined.

01:32:35 Transition

[§281] The transition to the passacaglia is marked by a diminuendo and the introduction of calm following the monumental opening.

02:24:60 Passacaglia

[§282] Jan Raas opts for a traditional approach to Heiller's traditionally conceived passacaglia: triple time, the theme played in the pedal at the outset. There follows a series of variations in which Rass uses clusters, monophonic lines and polyphony. In the fifth variation, the theme is played for the first time in the soprano, albeit in its inverted form. Variation seven is a solo for a high flute stop – the example provided by Bach's Passacaglia is evident. After eight variations, Jas Raas inserts an

intermezzo by assembling a cluster three times. The relationship between these clusters and the passacaglia is not entirely clear; it could be that Raas is trying to remind the listener of Heiller's tone row by means of a musical pause.

07:13:50 Return of the Passacaglia theme

[§283] Each variation is characterized by an increase of energy and by the continuous slight increase in registration: beginning with a principal sound, Raas builds up the registration in the traditional manner by first adding 4' stops, then 2' stops, then mixtures and finally the reeds; a symbol of respect for the sound structure inherent in the Haarlem Bavo organ.

[§284] Especially noteworthy is the three-part structure of the 10th variation: above the theme in the pedal, clusters are heard in the left hand whilst the right hand plays rising figures in small, quickly juxtaposed chords of either two or three voices. At the conclusion of the theme, the movement in the right hand quickens once again. Raas maintains the phrase structure of his material throughout.

09:07:50

[§285] The thematic material becomes disturbed; a sign that the Passacaglia is nearing its end? The last variation is illustrative in this regard; two reasonably complete phrases precede a third phrase which continues before finally "stalling" on a dissonant, dominant chord.

10:57:80 Fugue

[§286] Jan Raas takes Heiller's tone row as the basis for his fugue subject, although in an adapted and slightly lengthened version. After a number of extensively developed expositions, various combinations of the passacaglia theme (including its inversion) and the fugue subject appear. Gradually, the music becomes more energetic and the texture denser and more complex. Finally, instead of drawing the threads to a conclusion, Raas allows the music to dissolve in ever-quieter registrations; the remaining tension used to reprise the introduction.

14:44:60 Conclusion (Recapitulation of the Introduction)

[§287] The concluding gestures used in the introduction are changed entirely. The passacaglia theme is heard once more in the pedal. The improvisation concludes with a grand chord.

Phase 3: Systems of Reference - Level 1

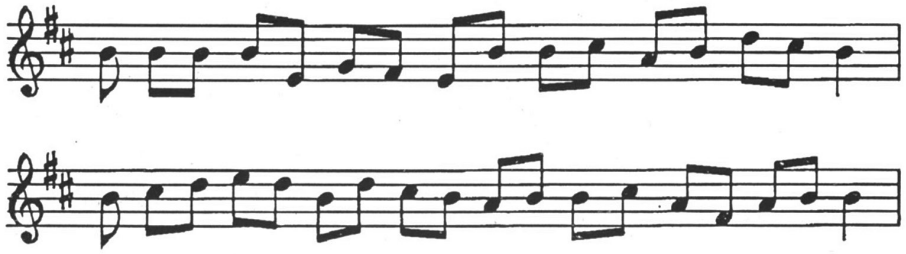
[§288] In the systems of reference most readers would apply listening to Raas's improvisation, other Haarlem improvisations would certainly function as important references. In doing the RTA outlined here, they most certainly did. Two other winning improvisations from finals of the Haarlem Improvisation Competition were especially relevant to the author's systems of references: The ones created by Jaroslav Tuma (1986) and Sietze de Vries (2002). Let us listen to the opening "movements" of their improvisations.

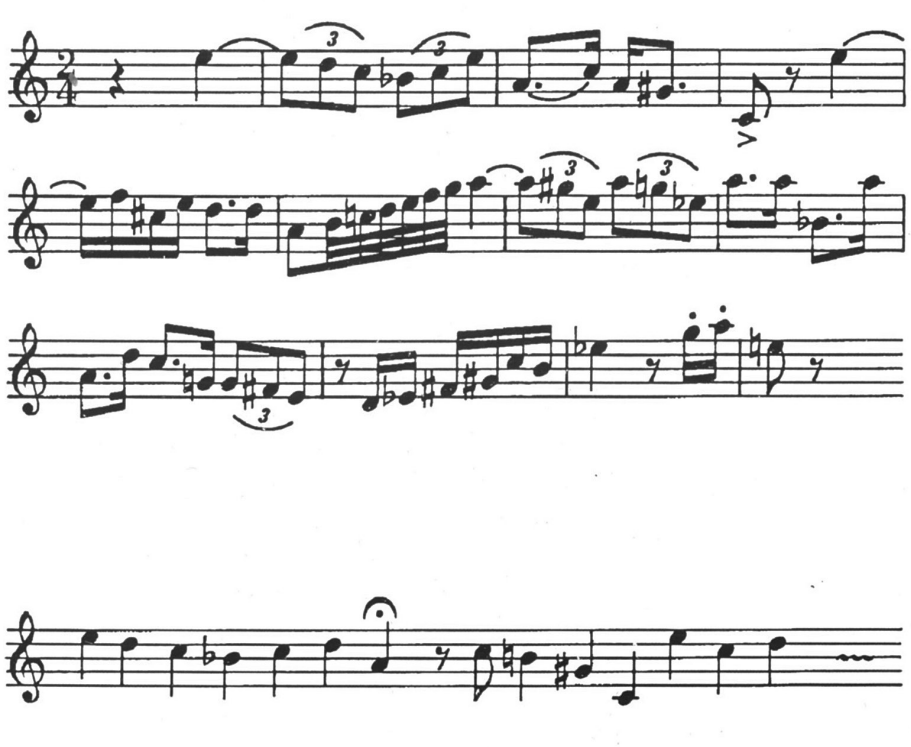
1986 Jaroslav Tuma

[§289] The theme on which Jaroslav Tuma improvised was composed by Marie-Claire Alain, who, like Heiller, was one of the frequently invited tutors at the Haarlem Summer Academy.

Marie-Claire Alain's theme for the competition at Haarlem

Marie-Claire Alain's theme for the 1986 competition is divided into three sections. The first of these is a hymn, the second a highly detailed fragment (11 bars, triplets, scales, all kinds of unusual intervals, short motives etc). The third section is a summary of the second theme, to Alain apparently so self-explanatory that she only notated its opening.





[§290] Tuma opens with a single note (f) played on an 8′ Prestant and then adds, after a little deliberation, a second note (an e). The resulting seventh immediately results in some tension which Tuma makes no attempt to resolve, releasing both notes, one after the other, first the f and then the high e. Tuma repeats the gesture but this time the higher note becomes the first note of the second theme which Tuma plays until the a in bar 2. The left hand falls from f to e forming a perfect fourth with that a (fragment 1):

Improvisation Jaroslav Tuma / fragment 1

[sound file only available in the electronic version of this book]

play stop

[§291] There follows another pause followed by the same procedure, this time with the second section of the theme continuing up to the c in bar 3:

Improvisation Jaroslav Tuma / fragment 2

[sound file only available in the electronic version of this book]

play stop

[§292] The e in the left hand has a stronger effect than this c, with the result that the g-sharp in the theme heard prior to the c suggests the tonality of E major. Tuma begins once again, this time with the left hand an octave lower, so that the suggested tonality this time remains absent. Tuma decides now to be less hesitant, adding an Octaaf 4′ to the Prestant and repeating the theme, resolutely stopping on the same c. He varies the material in bar 2 and provides a more active line in the left hand. Tuma then adds an Octaaf 2′ and introduces the first four notes of the theme as a motive for a short duo which functions as a springboard for the playing of the second part of theme, albeit still in fragmentary pieces. Tuma first plays up to the high a following the rising tone row, pauses, adds a mixture to his registration and then plays the whole second part of the theme for the first time. The left hand plays a number of long notes, pausing regularly.

Improvisation Jaroslav Tuma / fragment 3

[sound file only available in the electronic version of this book]

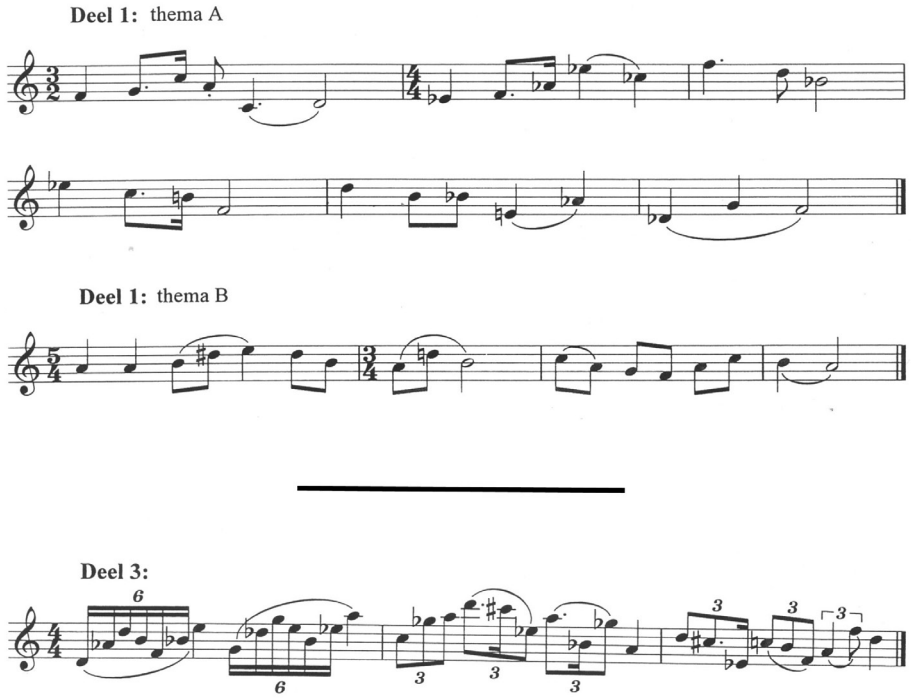
play stop

[§293] Fragment 3: only now does Tuma start to explore the theme and he does so by changing it. After playing the theme once again up to the high a, the slow moving left hand disappears and a more lively voice appears, suggesting future polyphonic music. Tuma proceeds indeed to play a short duo but this disappears from view rather quickly. Instead of polyphony, Tuma extensively repeats a short motive; later it becomes clear that minimalism forms an important building block in his improvisation.
[§294] Tuma now adds a Scherp to his plenum and plays a rising scale, clearly drawn from the scale in Alain's theme. Once again, polyphony is suggested but this time the music stalls on a high cluster. The last three notes of Alain's theme appear as a motive which is repeated more and more in various registrations and at various pitches: minimalism thwarts Tuma's repeated intentions to create polyphony. The improvisation's first climax has been reached. Tuma returns to an 8′ – 4′ – 2′ registration and introduces theme 3. Seemingly, this intermission is intended as a bridge because immediately afterwards he returns to both the registration (Prestant 8′) and atmosphere (much hesitation) of the opening of his improvisation.
[§295] In fact, the difference between Raas and Tuma is the difference between an explicit and an implicit self-confidence. Both know precisely what they are doing but, whilst Raas ensures that the listener is well aware of this, Tuma is far more ambiguous.

2002 Sietze de Vries

[§296] In 2002 theme composer Petr Eben quoted, albeit not literally, the improvisation assignments set during the first three Haarlem competitions of the 1950s: to improvise "a sonata in three movements". Eben composed two themes for part 1 and one theme for part 3; just as in 1951, '52 and '53, no theme was prescribed for the second movement. De Vries chose the Geneva melody for Psalm 124.

Petr Eben's themes for the 2002 competition at Haarlem



[§297] De Vries opens his improvisation with two low notes, presented slowly one after the other, on a Prestant stop:

Improvisation Sietze de Vries / fragment 1

[sound file only available in the electronic version of this book]

play stop

[§298] The two notes form a fifth. Above this fifth, which eventually lasts for several minutes, De Vries plays Eben's second theme in a way that has the fifth underneath each of the notes sound as well. In this way, De Vries provides a medieval context for his music: this, for example, is the manner

in which the ensemble Super Librum improvises on reconstructions of Medieval organs. De Vries strengthens this reference by adding all kinds of ornamentation to the theme in the same style. The theme is repeated four times, each time differently. The third variation, for example, is played a fifth higher (fragment 1).

Improvisation Sietze de Vries / fragment 2

[sound file only available in the electronic version of this book]

play stop

[§299] Fragment 2: after this extended introduction, De Vries disturbs the still-sounding basic fifth by playing short individual notes around it. The style becomes instantaneously contemporary as a result. Above this, De Vries now improvises a long line on a soft reed stop. De Vries uses the intervals in Eben's first theme giving special prominence to its last four notes. Once this melody has established itself in a continuous stream of semiquavers, a third element is added, namely bar 5 of the first theme. The continuous line ends with its opening motive albeit a semitone higher and therefore on the main note of theme 2.

Improvisation Sietze de Vries / fragment 3

[sound file only available in the electronic version of this book]

play stop

[§300] Fragment 3: De Vries creates a background of quick festoons and high trills on a clear flute registration. Against this backdrop, virtually the whole of theme 1 is played on a combination of pedal reed and 16' flue. The theme is divided into three "sentences", the last of which ends on another note than Eben had intended, namely a c, which immediately functions as the new tonic. The theme is heard once again, but now in an incomplete form ending on a g. Following a short bridge passage played on a solo reed, De Vries returns to his medieval opening.

Improvisation Sietze de Vries / fragment 4

[sound file only available in the electronic version of this book]

play stop

[§301] Fragment 4: this time round, the music displaces itself to the 21st century quicker, the pedal point disappears and a crescendo begins. De Vries now explores fragments from both theme 1 and theme 2 in the pedal whilst the middle voices provide a relatively transparent accompaniment. Eventually, part 1 concludes, following a number of statements of theme 2 in loud chords above a powerful pedal point.

[§302] In comparison to Raas and Tuma, De Vries certainly doesn't lack self-confidence but he appears a bit more playful. The caution which he opens his improvisation is reminiscent of Tuma, whilst the music in the final section is far more reminiscent of Raas.

Phase 3: Systems of Reference - Level 2

[§303] Including other listening experiences – RTAs – in our exploration of the way a listener's system of reference may be active during Raas's improvisation, widens our perspective on his music.

[§304] Listening to the improvisations during the Haarlem competition since 1951, for example, it is remarkable that the differences between the improvisations (leaving aside such subjective notions as self-confidence etc) can be observed largely in the players' different approaches to the instrument, the ways in which polyphony is applied, the use of improvisation models drawn from (organ-)musical history and the ways in which the players end their improvisation.

[§305] As far as approach to the instrument is concerned, Raas's playing is typified by his command of the organ which, along with the acoustic, he has completely under control using it as an instrument in the literal sense: a means of making music sound optimal. Sietze de Vries demonstrates to an equal degree of conviction his understanding of the instrument's possibilities and how to use them. Occasionally, however, De Vries seems to be approaching the assignment the other way round: his music allows

certain aspects of the organ to sound optimally to the extent that this seems to become the goal. As a Czech visitor, Jaroslav Tuma knew the organ less well and chose to limit himself to certain stops as a result. Within this limitation, however, the theme was given far more prominence than in the case of Jan Raas; instead of developing it, Tuma took his listeners "by the hand" as it were in order to explore it, carefully, together. The three improvisations under consideration demonstrate that the theme itself, music based on the theme, or indeed the instrument, could all take the primary role in the improvisation. The improvisations also document all possible degrees on the scale from restraint to vigorous energy.

[§306] In almost all Haarlem improvisations, polyphony is featured, even when not asked for in the assignment. The intermezzo from Piet Kee's winning 1953 improvisation is a good example of a convincing application of unsolicited polyphony. Kee keeps the music simple, and therefore controllable, and it is hardly co-incidental that simplicity and clarity would later become key characteristics of his compositions. A good illustration of the dangers inherent in not choosing simplicity in the first instance is the improvisation with which Klaas Bolt won the 1956 competition; his polyphony often becomes stranded in the realm of "co-incidental counterpoint" especially when he tries to improvise in three or more voices. Such counterpoint would gradually become disparagingly known as "Haarlem polyphony", hardly surprising given how omnipresent it became. The winning improvisation by Anders Bondeman in 1965 is another example: following a large number of fugal expositions, each time leading to nothing in particular, Bondeman finally starts to improvise homophonically making use of the combination of full organ, fast passagework and the acoustic: a common combination in the history of the Haarlem competition, giving the *effect* of highly complicated counterpoint.

[§307] The improvisation with which Swede Tomas Willstedt won the 1992 competition is interesting for other reasons. He paraphrases, just as Paul Éraly in the 1951 final, the opening of Marcel Dupré's Prelude in B major: busy music in the upper parts, played on full organ with material in the pedal drawn from the theme. In the same way, other Haarlem

competitors have referenced, for example, Max Reger. A fine example is Jan Jongepier's 1971 improvisation. This is typified by the way in the Regerian harmonic language is continued from the full organ conclusion of the first section into the soft chorale-like opening of the central section.

[§308] It is remarkable that few participants in the Haarlem competition pay much attention to the end of their improvisations. Almost all end on full organ on a triad with or without added tones. In addition, the common use of the tierce de picardie, in contrast to the typical mild modernity which usually precedes it, can sound rather farcical. One of the few improvisations in which the conclusion drew the listeners' attention to the extent that they became as quiet as mice, was that of John Terwal in 1998. In this improvisation, as was the case with Jan Raas in 1977, the tension of the opening is carefully controlled and the conclusion lasts almost three minutes (almost a fifth of the whole improvisation):

Improvisation John Terwal / conclusion

[sound file only available in the electronic version of this book]

play stop

[§309] Following a stormy passage on full organ, incidentally without any pretention of polyphony, Terwal introduces a series of harmonies which, through their tonal character, impart a more restful character on the music. Terwal follows this with a long diminuendo with a pedal point in the tenor. The right hand repeats and varies the same fast motive, consisting largely of a chromatic, falling major third, time and again. The pedal responds each time with a single note or notes. Rather than letting his music simply end, Terwal lets it disappear gradually.

Phase 3: Systems of Reference - Level 3

[§310] Listening to these improvisations invites one to formulate and reconsider related, active systems of reference; the example above demonstrates how this can lead to a basic method of describing musical events. Attentive listening to, and describing, improvisations can also

have repercussions for systems of reference in other ways. Listening to the improvisations collected during the Improvisation Project led, among other things, to us viewing the history of music making as a history of emancipation. Here is an example.

[§311] Since the mid-19th century, making music without scores has no longer been considered as a form of high art. During this period, every self-respecting town built a concert hall. As a result, the "delivery" of music as a "product" to "consumers" became more and more normal (to express the phenomenon in contemporary language). On the other hand, music as an integral part of the liturgy, of life at Court or even on the street became less important. The score became symbolic of the musical product and its sell-ability.[16] Understandably the way people listened also changed. Darryl Cressman sketches a fascinating picture of this in his study of the Amsterdam Concertgebouw which he interprets as "a musical technology designed to mediate attentive listening." The history of this attentive listening began, according to Cressman, in the early 19th century and constitutes "a history where there is no abrupt technical break between the era of recorded music and the era that preceded it. [...] Freed from the conceptual and methodological obligation to define every new medium of musical culture as a technological revolution, it becomes possible to identify trends that occur over long periods of time [...]."[17]

[§312] These are the developments which shaped today's musical culture. The importance of surprise and unpredictability, the key characteristics of musicking without scores, may not have been forgotten within the concert hall culture, but it is assigned a, quite literally, marginal role: it is accepted only on smaller stages within the context of specialised festivals.[18]

16 Hans Fidom. "Organ Improvisation - An Introduction". *New Music / International Magazine for Music* 32/2 (2008). 62-77.

17 Cf. note 4. iv; 193-194. This "attentive listening" of course forms the basis of the listening used in Real Time Analysis.

18 The Haarlem competition is just such a stage: the limited frequency (once every two years) and the limited duration (a few days) make it possible to present the phenomenon of improvisation as something very special to the general music culture without losing contact

[§313] Before the rise of the concert hall culture, the score had a primarily practical function: notating music makes remembering it considerably easier, making music together more practical and, not insignificantly, facilitates music education.[19] Making music was the aim: the score was no more than a means of facilitating that. It seems incorrect to call such music making a form of improvisation, as the word "improvisation" today implicitly suggests a division between score-based and score-free musicking. The key to understanding this culture is to realise that musicians were seen as story tellers who were expected to constantly have new stories to tell: the elements of surprise and unpredictability in their narrative were basic features in musical situations. This explains why Johann Sebastian Bach continued to compose new cantatas and why Haydn composed no fewer than 104 symphonies. For the same reason, organists such as Dietrich Buxtehude, Georg Böhm (and of course Bach too) doubtless would have played notated music, but far more often would have allowed new music to come into

with mainstream, score-orientated, classical music. All other "locations" in which improvisation is practiced are far more dislocated from this "classical music culture" (such as jazz and pop music, despite all attempts at "crossover" music) or simply have no connection with it at all (such as the classical music of India). For a good introduction to the history of improvised music in the Netherlands, see Emile Wennekes. "Geïmproviseerde muziek in relatie met gecomponeerde muziek". Louis Grijp (ed.), *Een muziekgeschiedenis der Nederlanden*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Pressm 2001. 791-797, from which p. 793 states the following: "Since the 1970s, people have talked about a typically Dutch kind of improvised music. Most experts agree about this." Wennekes refers here specifically to the music produced by ensembles such as the Willem Breuker Collectief, the Instant Composers Orchestra and by musicians such as Guus Janssen, Theo Loevendie and Maarten Altena. In the sense that these ensembles reference classical music, they do so through irony, light-heartedly or through perspective (to quote Wennekes); no surprise therefore that the Breuker Collectief were especially fond of the scores of Kurt Weill. The new generation of improvising musicians, represented by ensembles such as Shackle (Anne La Berge and Robert ten Heumen) make music which refers (even) less explicitly to Western musical history.

19 Education is orientated to the learning of *exempla classica*, among other things by learning to copy them.

being at the organ without a score but, nevertheless, entirely connected with the current musical styles developed in the finest details in the composed examples. It is, incidentally, good to note that each organ's inherent individuality fits in perfectly with this culture. Each organ has its strengths and weaknesses. "Score-free" music-making offers optimal conditions to demonstrate those strengths to the advantage of the music.

[§314] It is clear that this manner of music making survived in the 19th century. Not surprisingly, organists, and composers interested in the organ, played an important role in this regard. It is known, for example, that Anton Bruckner preferred to improvise at the organ but, nevertheless, to base his improvisations on existing compositions such as the Austrian National Anthem and Handel's Hallelujah Chorus. On the other hand he composed just like an improviser, although always giving in to his tendency to want to revise earlier versions of scores.[20] For Franz Liszt too, scores were far less sacred than today. A letter about Liszt written by Alexander Borodin to Cesar Cui in 1877 states: "Spielt Liszt etwas durch, so fängt er manchmal an, Eigenes hinzuzufügen, und so entsteht unter seinen Händen nicht das betreffende Stück, sondern eine Improvisation darüber – eine jener glänzende Transkriptionen, die seinen Ruhm als improvisierenden Klavierspieler in die ganze Welt getragen haben."[21] Borodin's link between improvisation and transcription immediately reminds us of another example: Karl Straube's editions of baroque organ music, published in the early 20th century, document a free attitude to original texts by adapting them to the modern German organs of the day. At the same time, Straube's editions illustrate that for him, scores were already more sacred than they had been for Liszt or Bruckner. No longer were notes added, left out or in

20 Herman Jeurissen. "Anton Bruckner, builder of symphonic cathedrals". In Hans Fidom (ed.), *Orgelpark Research Reports* 1. Amsterdam: Orgelpark, 2012, §§ 21-69; Peter Planyavsky. "Scaling the peaks of improvisation in a flat musical landscape / Anton Bruckner's organ improvisations". In Hans Fidom (ed.), *Orgelpark Research Reports* 1. Amsterdam: Orgelpark, 2012. §§ 70-128.

21 Quoted from Ernst Ferand. *Die Improvisation in der Musik*. Zürich: Rhein Verlag, 1938. 16. Cf. David Lloyd-Jones. "Borodin on Liszt". *Music and Letters* 42/2 (1961). 117-126.

other ways manipulated: Straube's only parameters for re-interpretation were those of colour, phrasing and articulation.[22]

[§315] Karl Straube's Parisian contemporary Marcel Dupré followed suit; his editions of early music, like those of Straube, depart from the original text through the addition of performance indications without changing the notes themselves. Dupré's *Traité d'Improvisation à l'orgue*, published in 1925 bears witness to another aspect of the changes with respect to the attitudes towards making music. Just like Straube and others who were gripped by the re-discovery of early music, Dupré projected his notion of genius onto 18th century scores. The result was that score-free music was compelled to meet the same standards of genius. This explains why Dupré's *Traité*, in principle no more than a contribution to the centuries-old tradition of publishing "schools" for organists,[23] is so remarkable: because the status of composition had changed so fundamentally from mere facilitator of music making, to its entire *raison d'etre*, the book reads rather like a course in genius than one in music making.[24]

[§316] In the meantime, it was primarily the average church organist who cultivated this craft in the 19th and 20th centuries, facilitated by the "splendid isolation" of the organ in the church and the role of organ music

22 Unlike Straube, transcribers today are plagued with the question of how to follow to the composer's intentions to the letter; a fascinating problem.

23 Béatrice Piertot created an overview of comparable sources: see here contribution to this book..

24 More recent publications include *Nouveau manuel complet de l'organiste* (1855) by Georges Schnmitt (1821-1900) and *l'Organiste improvisateur, Traité d'improvisation* (1878) by Paul Wachs (1851-1915). Dupré may also have known the *Systematische Anleitung zum Fantasieren auf dem Pianoforte* (1829) by Franz Liszt's teacher, Carl Czerny (1791-1857). Of course the tradition did not end with Dupré in 1925; Charles Tournemire published his *Précis d'exécution, de registration et d'improvisation à l'Orgue* in 1936 and in 1949 *La Petite méthode d'orgue*. Dupré would later publish his *Exercices Préparatoires à l'Improvisation libre* in 1937 as the first (sic) part of his *Cours Complet d'Improvisation à l'Orgue*. In 1984 the *Méthode d'orgue* by Jean Langlais and Marie-Louise Jaquet-Langlais was published, and in 2011 the *Guide pratique d'improvisation* by Naji Hakim. Cf. note 23.

in the liturgy. Improvisation is, of course, the most appropriate way to fill otherwise silent moments of unknown length. The danger that this musical craft, as a result of the church's "deadly embrace" of the organ[25], would sink into artistically worthless musical "ditties", was, eventually, effectively warded off by the Haarlem Improvisation Competition. The improvisations created at Haarlem guaranteed a visible connection with the traditions of the musical craft if only because the majestic organ in the St. Bavokerk established this link, in no uncertain terms, in the minds of the competitors.[26] A second factor was that the competition took place outside the liturgical context, allowing improvisation to be associated with the norms and values of the concert hall culture. It seems that the organists felt more attached to that culture than to the innovative improvisations of ensembles such as the famous Dutch Instant Composers Orchestra: undoubtedly their tastes had been too heavily influenced by the conservatism of the church in which they mostly earned their living.[27]

[§317] The most remarkable aspect of this development is that for the first time in musical history, the unpredictability in the musical narrative common until the 19th century had become linked to the culture of attentive listening which arose during the 19th century: ever since, improvised music within the classical music culture of the Western world has been taken seriously.[28] That the Haarlem example has, since 1951, been copied by ever more cities worldwide and on organs of comparable allure demonstrates that the emancipation of score-free music making can today be seen as a success.[29]

25 The term is borrowed from Joost Langeveld. "Zes stellingen over de toekomst van de Nederlandse orgelcultuur". *Het Orgel* 99/1 (2003). 5-7 (5).

26 This is not to say that earlier initiatives in the realm of improvisation concerts and competitions, such as those in the Netherlands, France and Austria were not of significance in this movement. The fact that Haarlem provided a durable and international platform through its becoming a continuous institution made it, nevertheless, the key factor in this development.

27 A factor which is of relevance here is that many competitors and half of the winners (up to and including 2012) as well as most of the theme composers and reviewers came from the Netherlands. Of the 49 "editions" of the competition, 24, until now, have been won by Dutch organists, including Chiel-Jan van Hofwegen (who shared the first prize in 2006 with Austrian Robert Kovács). Nine winners were Austrians (such as Zuzana Ferjencikova in 2004, the first and, until now, the only woman to win the first prize), six from France, five from Germany, three from Sweden and one from the Czech Republic. Only once, in 1973, was the prize not awarded due to the low standard of the competition.

Summary and conclusion

[§318] As music is a performance art, documenting the way it comes into existence by listening appears a relevant musicological tool: analysis of scores is should not be confused with analysis of music. In the course of the Orgelpark Improvisation Project, a concept of analysis of music based on listening was developed, called Real Time Analysis. It consists of three phases. The first one is documenting in text what the listener experiences listening to the music to be analyzed (without, in the case of listening to recorded music, much rewinding of the recording) by taking notes. The second phase is summarizing these notes in a relatively short text. The third phase relates this text to the systems of reference active during the analysis. This third phase includes several levels. The basic level refers to other pieces of music, comparable to the one under analysis. The second level may refer to the more or less specific circumstances under which these pieces of musics have come into existence. A next level might be relating these circumstances to their place in (specific sections of) the musical culture they are part of, and its history.

[§319] Real Time Analysis thus follows a very basic musicological rule: to speak about music one must begin by listening and only then activate (and potentially adjust) systems of reference.

28 This explains, incidentally, the tendency previously discussed to classify improvisers as composers.

29 Organ improvisation competitions inspired by the Haarlem example are held, among other places, in Toulouse, St Albans, Vienna, Waldsassen, Strassburg, Nuremberg, Leipzig, Chartres and Paris.

[§320] This article represents an initial exploration into RTA's possibilities. It takes one of the improvisations at the prestigious International Haarlem Organ Improvisation Competition as a point of departure, by listening attentively to Jan Raas's winning improvisation of 1977 and linking it to three ever wider circles of reference: firstly to other winning improvisations at Haarlem, secondly to the results of the improvisation competition at Haarlem at all, and thirdly to the role this competition may be ascribed with respect to the history of musicking on organs at all.
[§321] Obviously, RTA is just one of the probably many ways that may be used to take attentive listening a basic musicological tool. Suggestions to improve the concept are very welcome.[30]

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30 The idea of RTA was born at two sessions in Basel, with Rudolf Lutz, Markus Schwenkreis, Giampaolo di Rosa and Marcel Cobussen, in 2009 and 2010; all of them took part in the Orgelpark Improvisation Project. I would like to thank them for their many valuable suggestions. Mail: hansfidom@orgelpark.nl / j.fidom@vu.nl.

Abstract

As music is a performance art, documenting the way it comes into existence by listening appears a relevant musicological tool: analysis of scores is should not be confused with analysis of music. In the course of the Orgelpark Improvisation Project, a concept of analysis of music based on listening was developed, called Real Time Analysis. It consists of three phases. The first one is documenting in text what the listener experiences listening to the music to be analyzed (without, in the case of listening to recorded music, much rewinding of the recording) by taking notes. The second phase is summarizing these notes in a relatively short text. The third phase relates this text to the systems of reference active during the analysis. This third phase includes several levels. The basic level refers to other pieces of music, comparable to the one under analysis. The second level may refer to the more or less specific circumstances under which these pieces of musics have come into existence. A next level might be relating these circumstances to their place in (specific sections of) the musical culture they are part of, and its history.
Real Time Analysis thus follows a very basic musicological rule: to speak about music one must begin by listening and only then activate (and potentially adjust) his or her systems of reference.
This article represents an initial exploration into RTA's possibilities. It takes one of the improvisations at the prestigious International Haarlem Organ Improvisation Competition as a point of departure, by listening attentively to Jan Raas's winning improvisation of 1977 and linking it to three ever wider circles of reference: firstly to other winning improvisations at Haarlem, secondly to the results of the improvisation competition at Haarlem at all, and thirdly to the role this competition may be ascribed with respect to the history of musicking on organs at all.
Obviously, RTA is just one of the probably many ways that may be used to take attentive listening a basic musicological tool. Suggestions to improve the concept are very welcome.

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IX

Béatrice Piertot - Treatises about Improvisation on the Organ in France from 1900 to 2009

[§326] Several famous French organists have published treatises on improvisation in the 20th century. They are part of a long tradition: ever since the 15th century organists have theorized about the ways to make music on the organ. This essay provides an overview of these texts until the start of the 20th century and a description of the main 20th century French treatises.

Before 1630

[§327] Conrad Paumann (c. 1410-1473) was a brilliant blind organist: "His reputation was due to his virtuosity on the organ and on several other instruments, but also to his genius at improvising."[1] *Sequitur fundamentum magistri Conrad paumann Contrapuncti*[2] of 1451-1452 offers options for creating counterpoint on a plainchant bass. Improvisation is suggested in the form of diminutions for each type of interval.
[§328] Later, in *L'Arte Organica* of 1608,[3] Costanzo Antegnati (1549-1624) provided several instructions about playing the organ when he discusses the basics of its registration. He deals mainly with Italy, but France is evoked through reference to the "Canzone alla francese".
[§329] In 1609, Adriano Banchieri (1568-1634) published *Conclusioni*

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1 Georges Guillard. "Conrad Paumann". *Guide de la musique d'orgue*. Paris: Fayard, coll Les indispensables de la Musique,,1997. 629.

2 Conrad Paumann. "Sequitur fundamentum magistri Conrad paumann Contrapuncti". In Bertha Antonia Wallner (ed.), *Das Buxheimer Orgelbuch*, Kassel etc.: Bärenreiter, 1959, Part III.

3 Costanzo Antegnati. "L'Arte Organica". *L'Orgue Corse* n° 1, January 1975.

nella suono dell' organo.[4] It discusses four styles: fantasia, intavolatura, spartitura and bass. Counterpoint is the basis of improvisation; musical construction is primordial.

[§330] The French *Hymnes de l'Église pour toucher sur l'orgue*[5] (1623) by Jean Titelouze (c. 1563-1633) shows the harmonisation of 12 hymns. Each one is followed by three to four verses. Just like Paumann and Banchieri, Titelouze focuses on counterpoint; registration issues are not mentioned.

From 1630 to 1800

[§331] In his book *Orgues et organistes des églises du diocèse de Troyes*, Edmond Martinot mentions "a regulation that appeared in 1630 for the Church of Troy", informing organists in a very precise way about their function during the mass, recommending a variety of timbres and forms.[6]

[§332] Marin Mersenne (1588-1648) claims, in the sixth book of *Harmonie universelle* (1636),[7] that the value of an organist is based on the quality of his counterpoint, his virtuosity, the diversity of his ornamentation and the taste with which these are performed. Furthermore, Mersenne explains how to create diminutions. With regard to registration, he refers to the recommendations of Charles Raquet, organist at Paris' Notre-Dame. He sets out the details of frequently used registrations and proposes his own ones: "When the Cornet stop [...] is decorated with the tremulant and the Cleron, it creates a really excellent registration, which is closer to the sound of an oboe than to that of a cornet. The combination of Cromorne and Nasard perfectly mimics the accordion."[8]

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4 Adriano Banchieri, *Conclusioni nella suono dell' organo.* Bologna: Rossi, 1609. Translation: Colorado Springs: Colorado College Music Press, 1982. IV, 60.

5 Jean Titelouze, *Hymnes de l'Église pour toucher sur l'orgue*. Paris: Bornemann, 1965.

6 Martinot published this book in 1936. Nicole Gravet quoted Martinot in his master's thesis *Contribution à la connaissance de l'art organistique français des XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*. Paris: Conservatoire, 1960 (BnF, Vma.1476). This book includes a chapter on "Orgues et Organistes des Eglises du Diocèse de Troyes" 47 ff.; 50.

7 Marin Mersenne, *Harmonie universelle*. Paris: S. Cramoisy, 1636.

8 Cf. note 7: Book VI, 375. The organ of M. Mersenne is similar to the one used by J. Titelouze.

[§333] In 1665, Guillaume Gabriel Nivers (1632-1714) goes, in his *Premier Livre d'orgue,*[9] further than Mersenne in terms of the interrelation between timbre and genre: each of the forms he lists requires a specific registration. He refers to the organs by Clicquot and by Thierry which were "rich in depth, mutations and reeds."[10] Organists may play a solo on one keyboard while accompanying it on another.

[§334] In 1695, Lambert Chaumont (1630-1712) gives a "general rule for plainchant" in his *Pièces d'orgue sur les huit tons*.[11] It is reminiscent of Conrad Paumann's treatise; the difference being counterpoint that carries the mark of another era.

[§335] In the preface to his *Pièces d'orgue*,[12] Nicolas Le Bègue (1631-1702) provides some instructions on the appropriate tempo for each type of piece. He gives a list of commonly used registrations and explains the type of ornaments to employ. Tempo, ornaments and registration are inseparable. Nicolas Gigault (1627-1707) presents, in his *Livre de musique pour l'orgue*,[13] 180 pieces of different character, including a large number of fugues, one of them "following the Italian style". It also deals with the Concerto: the organist might use different keyboards in order to realize a dialogue.

[§336] In 1700, Jacques Boyvin (1653-1706) published a *Traité abrégé de l'accompagnement pour l'orgue et pour le clavecin,*[14] discussing touch, ornaments and genres, related to a specific registrations. A Plein Jeu, for example, implies vivacity, ornaments and improvised cadences.

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9 Guillaume Gabriel Nivers, Premier Livre d'orgue. Paris: Bornemann, 1963..

10 Marc Honegger. "Orgue". *Dictionnaire du musicien* (Larousse, 2002). 592.

11 Lambert Chaumont. *Pièces d'orgue sur les huit tons*. Paris: Heugel, 1970. 144.

12 Nicolas Le Bègue. *Les Pièces d'orgue composées par N. Le Bègue, organiste de St Médéric, avec les variétés, les agréments et la manière de toucher l'orgue à présent sur tous les jeux et particulièrement ceux qui sont peu en usage dans les provinces comme la tierce et le cromorne en taille: le trio à 2 dessus et autre à trois claviers avec les pédales, les dialogues et les récits*. Paris, [s.d.], BnF, Vm7/1819.

13 Nicolas Gigault. *Livre de musique pour l'orgue*. Paris (l'auteur), 1685.

14 Jacques Boyvin. *Traité abrégé de l'accompagnement pour l'orgue et pour le clavecin*. Paris:, Ballard, 1700 (2nd edition. 1705). 16 f.

[§337] Michel de Saint-Lambert wrote a *Nouveau traité de l'accompagnement du clavecin, de l'orgue, et d'autres instruments*[15] in 1707. He claims that the organist had to ornament his music in a specific way, in order to further its character. Lambert's indications suggest that many aspects of making music were codified, yet transmitted only by an oral tradition.

[§338] In 1766 Dom François Bedos de Celles' *L'Art du facteur d'orgues* appeared.[16] Form, registration, character, tempo and harmony have to be adjusted to the requirements of the mass. Dom Bedos presents numerous conventions: character leads to registration, registration leads to form, and vice-versa. The organist had to overcome the imperfections of the organ being played, making sure to only highlight the instrument's qualities. Dom Bedos mentions playing four manuals at the same time: "This style of playing the Quatuor on four keyboards is difficult to perform; one can hardly make the two upper voices sing because one is obliged to play them with only one's right hand on two different keyboards."[17] Thus the construction of the instrument, form, character and registration are directly linked. The same goes for the rules of harmony, which are the result of older conventions: "As [organists] get a taste for good harmony and [...] know the properties and the nature of the stops of their organ, they don't create new registrations that are not reasonable or pleasing. They endeavour above all to play each registration in the taste that suits its character; this requires a lot of careful analytical ability; also it isn't everyone who is able to create new ones, because it isn't easy to give them character. An organist who still hasn't reached a high degree of perfection, has to study to imitate those who have more talent, and try to conform to their taste and their registrations."[18]

[§339] The treatises so far present registrations, ornamentations and forms needed to make proper church music. The organist had to showcase the instrument and use its qualities to serve worship. At the same time, the particular aesthetic of the Louis XIV era considerably influenced the ways of making organ music as well: everything had to be beautiful.

15 Michel de Saint-Lambert, Michel. *Nouveau traité de l'accompagnement du clavecin, de l'orgue, et d'autres instruments*. Paris: Chr. Ballard, Facsimile Genève: Minkoff, 1972.

16 Dom François Bedos de Celles. L'Art du facteur d'orgues. Kassel etc.: Bärenreiter, 1977.

17 Cf. note 16. 528.

18 Cf. note 16. 534.

From 1800 to 1900

[§340] As early as 1811, E.A. Choron published his *Considérations sur la nécessité de rétablir le chant de l'Église de Rome dans toutes les églises de l'Empire français,*[19] in reaction to the autonomous movement called Gallicanism. Dom Prosper Guéranger (from Solesmes) initiated research into the interpretation of Gregorian chant and developed a new liturgy (1851). The intention was to return to the Roman rite in all French parishes. As a result of this reform, liturgical repertoire was sorted out, modifying the musical material confronting church organists. As a result, the 19th century is characterised by a profusion of manuals for accompanying plainchant. These works are of interest here as they carry some rare written instructions about improvisation.[20]

[§341] Pianist François-Joseph Naderman (1773-1835) wrote a *Dictionnaire de Transitions pour s'exercer dans l'art de Préluder et Improviser* that is presented as a table of modulations from one key to another.[21] In this dictionary, labels mark the different minor and major modulations and index the pages of options.

19 E.A. Choron. *Considérations sur la nécessité de rétablir le chant de l'Église de Rome dans toutes les églises de l'Empire français*. BnF, Vmc.3121 (1-2).

20 André-Ernest-Modeste Grétry's (1741-1813) *Méthode simple pour apprendre à préluder en peu de temps avec toutes les ressources de l'harmonie*, published in 1802, may be viewed as percursory in this field. The author wasn't an organist; his work is presented in the form of 18 lessons comprising theory and some imaginary discussions between student and master. The teacher invites the student to discover the musical literature of the day, tonalities, and proposes a loose plan for a fugue (Paris: Imprimerie de la République).

21 François-Joseph Naderman. *Dictionnaire de Transitions pour s'exercer dans l'art de Préluder et Improviser tant sur la harpe que sur le piano, et à l'usage des jeunes compositeurs de tout genre, adopté par le Conservatoire de Musique*. Paris: chez Naderman, s.d. (na 1834). Naderman was "Chevalier of the Légion d'Honneur and a lecturer at the Conservatoire".

[§342] Alexandre-Charles Fessy (1804-1856) presented his *Manuel d'orgue à l'usage des Églises Catholiques avec principes de l'accompagnement du plain-chant*[22] in 1845. He discusses the moments in the service when the organist has to intervene and gives a table of registrations with numerous "choeurs", typical of this period. Fessy finds that an organist must be a good pianist: the practice instrument of organists is no longer the harpsichord but the piano. Fessy published an eight volume *Guide de l'Organiste de chœur* as well, in the same year, containing accompaniments to the Gregorian chants of the liturgical year.[23]

[§342] In 1845, Adolphe Miné (1796-1854) published a *Nouveau livre d'orgue*, applicable to all the dioceses. The book includes plainchant, a series of song works, some offertories, Rentrées de Processions, Élévations, etc., *and* organ registrations.[24] Miné considered his work to be universal, because all the French dioceses came close to either the Roman rite, or to the Parisian one. In a "Rubric des Offices services", Miné explains the mass very precisely; the margin of freedom left to the musician is minimal.

[§343] In 1850, Joseph Régnier, published *L'orgue, sa connaissance, son administration et son jeu*.[25]. He states that registration and inspiration are closely linked; in his table of registrations, he quotes Dom Bedos. To train improvisation and interpretation, he proposes a method of improvisation; the few elements that he provides are quite sparse though.

22 Alexandre-Charles Fessy. *Manuel d'orgue à l'usage des Églises Catholiques avec principes de l'accompagnement du plain-chant*. Paris: E. Troupenas, 1845.

23 Alexandre-Charles Fessy. *Guide de l'Organiste de chœur*. Paris: S. Richault, 1845.

24 Adolphe Miné. *Nouveau Livre d'orgue, applicable à tous les Diocèses, renfermant les Rits Parisiens et Romains, le Plain-chant, une série de Morceaux de chant, des Offertoires, Rentrées de Processions, Élévations, Rubrique de la Messe et des Offices et les Mélanges des jeux de l'orgue*. Paris: Meissonnier et Heugel, 1845. Miné was an organist in Paris (Notre-Dame-de-Lorette, Saint-Étienne-du-Mont, Saint-Roch) and Chartres (Notre-Dame Cathedral).

25 Joseph Régnier. *L'orgue, sa connaissance, son administration et son jeu*. Nancy: Vagner, 1850. Régnier was organist at Notre-Dame-de-l'Assomption Cathedral and received guidance from Théophile Stern.

[§344] In 1855, J. L Battmann published a *Cours d'harmonie théorique et pratique appliqué spécialement à l'étude de l'accompagnement du plain-chant*.[26] He gives an example of an accompaniment to plainchant in which the pedal responds with a counter-chant. In 1855 as well, Georges Schmitt (1821-1900?) published a *Nouveau manuel complet de l'organiste*.[27] He observes that, in France, "large organs rarely serve to accompany plainchant, since 'choral' organs, that is organs specially designed to accompany, had been introduced pretty much everywhere".[28] Essentially the large organ is used for improvisations, while the rest of the ceremony corresponds to the accompaniment carried out on the choral organ. Schmitt: "The large organs only intone the Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus or Agnus; all the rest of the service is filled by solos when the organists can display their improvisatory talents, and there are few moments during a religious ceremony when the organist has enough time to develop a work with artistic proportions. Lots of churches that have a choir only allow two pieces during the mass to be played on the large organ - the procession and the offertory, and a prelude for the Ite missa est."[29]

[§346] In 1856, Alexandre Bruneau (1823-1898) published a method destined for the parish priest and the school teacher. Plainchant is played with the right hand.[30]

26 J.L. Battmann. *Cours d'harmonie théorique et pratique appliqué spécialement à l'étude de l'accompagnement du plain-chant*. 1855, BnF, Vm 8.38. Battmann was a teacher and organist at the ancient collegiate Saint-Thiébaut à Thann; professor of music at Belfort where was organist of the Saint-Christopher Cathedral as well. He was later organist at Saint-George of Vesoul at Dijon.

27 Georges Schmitt. *Nouveau manuel complet de l'organiste* I. Paris: Roret, 1855. Schmitt was a teacher at the Niedermeyer School, succeeded François-Xavier Wackenthalerm as master of the chapel at Saint-Germain-des- Prés. He succeeded Louis Séjan as organist of Saint-Sulpice in Paris.

28 Cf. note 27, 62.

29 Cf. note 27. 63.

30 Alexandre Bruneau. *Méthode simple et facile pour apprendre à accompagner le plain-chant avec l'orgue à clavier transpositeur, écrite en musique et en plain-chant* I. Paris 1856, BnF, VM 8r.72.

[§347] In 1858, J. M. Joseph Jouan published *L'accompagnement du plain-chant ou le système de feu J. Wackenthaler simplifié et modifié notablement.* Like Bruneau, Jouan invites to locate the theme no longer in the bass, but in the soprano. His work shows the influence of countries bordering France (Catholic Germany, Belgium, Italy).[31]

[§348] In 1861, Georges Schmitt presented a collection of pieces dedicated to A. Cavaillé-Coll, entitled *l'Art de Préluder sur l'Orgue.* Characteristic is the registrations recommended at the side of each piece. Some are unusual, such as the combination of Viola de gamba, Voix céleste, Flute 4', Salicional, Dulciana, Octavin (manuals), and 16' and 8' flutes (pedals). One has to wait for Charles Tournemire to find comparably sophisticated registrations.[32]

[§349] Henri Roubier published *L'art de préluder et de moduler dans tous les tons majeurs et mineurs* in 1862. This work is directed at pianists, organists, accompanists and singers and harks back to Naderman's 1834 method for pianists.[33]

[§350] Jacques-Nicolas Lemmens (1823-1881) discussed the techniques of organ-playing in his *École d'Orgue*[34], published in 1862 after the *Guide de la musique d'orgue*[35]. Both books are important here because two of Lemmens' students (Charles-Marie Widor and Alexandre Guilmant) became organ professors at the Paris Conservatoire. Lemmens' students had to understand counterpoint, fugue and harmony, "without which [...] improvisations would have neither depth nor form and would be littered with faults". Francois Seguin (1810-1870) suggests some interludes inspired by Gregorian modes. In his view, liturgical frameworks may imply a particular style of

31 J. M. Joseph Jouan. *L'accompagnement du plain-chant ou le système de feu J. Wackenthaler simplifié et modifié notablement*. Rennes, 1858, BnF, Vm 8.437. Jouan was teacher and organist at Caro (Morbihan).

32 Georges Schmitt. *l'Art de Préluder sur l'Orgue*. Paris: Repos, 1861,

33 Henri Roubier. *L'art de préluder et de moduler dans tous les tons majeurs et mineurs*. Paris: Richault, 1862, Roubier was a pianist and piano teacher.

34 Jacques-Nicolas Lemmens. *École d'Orgue*. Bruxelles: Schott frères, [s.d.].

35 François Sabatier. "Jacques-Nicolas Lemmens". In *Guide de la musique d'orgue*. Paris: Fayard, 1991. 510.

improvisation, but shouldn't determine its construction: "Each performer has to concern himself with drawing inspiration from the melody and the special harmonic aspects of this type of music." An interesting remark, as it emphazises the need to be original explicitly.[36]

[§351] In 1873, Félix Clément (1822-1885) wrote in the Introduction to his *Méthode d'orgue, d'harmonie et d'accompagnement*: "Everyone versed in the knowledge of the musical art knows that, in order to play the organ properly, whether it be the harmonium in salons, the chapel organ or the large organ, it is essential to know how to string together chords, how to improvise at least a few preludes, and how to create an accompaniment from a given melody." Clément's work is meant to train organists, making them capable to accompany, improvise and compose. The division of his text shows a desire to theorize four essential points: knowledge of the manufacture of the organ, instrumental technique, musical material (harmony, counterpoint, fugue) and the performance of the key works of the repertoire.[37]

[§352] In the "avant-propos" to his work L*e Plain-chant harmonisé pour le grand orgue et pour l'orgue d'accompagnement à l'usage du diocèse de Rouen*, Aloyse Klein (1824-1908) gives an indication as to the role of the organist during a mass: "One can execute a little piece in the place of the last Kyrie, the last Sanctus and the last Agnus and, in general, to take the place of all the Amens; the piece has to be in the same key as the section of the plainchant."[38]

36 F. Seguin. *L'Art d'improviser selon la Modalité Grégorienne étudié dans une suite de 56 interludes, faciles, propres aux offices de l'église (sept pour chacun des 8 premiers modes du plain-chant) écrits dans les tons les plus généralement usités au chœur avec indication des principaux jeux pour orgue ou harmonium et dédié à S.G. Monseigneur Debelay, Archévêque d'Avignon*. Avignon: typographie de Fr. Seguin Ainé, 1863. vii. Seguin was organist at Avignon.

37 Félix Clément. *Méthode d'orgue, d'harmonie et d'accompagnement*. Paris: Hachette, 1873.Clément was "maître de chapelle honoraire de la Sorbonne et du Collège Stanislas, titulaire du lycée Louis-le-Grand, commandeur de l'ordre pontifical de Saint-Grégoire-le-grand."

38 Aloyse Klein. *Le Plain-chant harmonisé pour le grand orgue et pour l'orgue d'accompagnement à l'usage du diocèse de Rouen*. Rouen: Klein, [s.d.]. BnF, Vm 1.264. Klein was a student of Camille Saint-Saëns and Charles-Marie Widor who he replaced at Saint-Sulpice.

[§353] Clément Loret (1833-1909) is the author of a four-part *Cours d'Orgue*. The first part contains exercises for fingering technique. The studies present different fugues and various pieces with imitations. The second part discusses pedal technique; the third part addresses the different elements of the organ and also its composition. The last part deals with improvisation and with accompanying plainchant. Note that instrumental technique is now present in almost all didactic texts. The fugue still occupies an important place in organ music. At the same time, the elements of the craftmanship that allow a better grasp of the registrations remain important as well.[39]
[§354] Joseph Heckmann (?-1945) writes in *L'Art d'accompagner le plain-chant à l'aigu par mouvement contraire* that it is necessary "for the preludes or interludes in the music to be in the same key as the first phrase of the piece of plainchant that one wants to perform."[40] Towards the end of the century, an awareness of mode is thus replaced by an awareness of tonality; limiting the improviser in his tonal trajectory and, consequently, in his stylistic range.
[§355] In 1878, Paul Wachs (1851-1915) published *l'Organiste improvisateur, Traité d'improvisation*. It is divided into two parts: one discusses the sonata and the fugue, the other deals with the forms that feature in a service - for the first time a theoretician was concerned teaching concert forms to organists. With regard to improvisation, Wachs writes: "The student has to start by practicing improvising very slowly, in order to not use useless notes, and to prevent himself from getting carried away in modulations that are not included within the journey that he has had to set himself before sitting down at the keyboard."[41] Wachs' sonata sketch (monothematic, a

39 Clément Loret. *Cours d'Orgue*. Paris: [chez l'auteur], 1877. Loret was a student of Nicolas Lemmens at the Brussels Conservatoire where he won first prize on the organ in 1853. He taught organ at the Niedermeyer School, succeeding Georges Schmitt.

40 J. Heckmann. *L'Art d'accompagner le plain-chant à l'aigu par mouvement contraire*. Metz, [s.d.], BnF, Vm 8.404. 22. Heckmann was a student at the Niedermeyer School in Paris and organist at Thionville and Chalon-sur-Saône.

41 Paul Wachs. *l'Organiste improvisateur, Traité d'improvisation*. Paris: Schott, 1878. 2. Wachs studied at both the Niedermeyer School and the Paris Conservatoire (with F. Benoist et C. Franck) where he obtained the organ prize in 1872. Wachs was "Officier d'Academie" (1900),.

form set by the Conservatoire[42]) is very detailed; each section is illustrated with improvisation examples. Paul Wachs' comparison of written fugues and improvised ones is very interesting: "In the written fugue, the divertissements (development section) consist of double canons, quadruple canons, imitations using contrary motion, augmentation, diminuition, etc. etc.; in the improvised fugue, there is none of this. One is limited to treating each fragment that the subject is made up of to simple imitations; these imitations are usually made up of two parts, with a simple accompaniment of one or two other independent parts. The improvised fugue can hardly be called a four-part fugue, because, in reality, it is only the exposition and the stretto that one has to try to make into a four-part fugue; all the rest of the fugue is improvised with a varied number of parts; sometimes two, sometimes three, sometimes four; that gives more variety than if one played four parts from start to finish."[43]
[§356] In the second part of his method, Wachs presents the different occasions when an organist has to improvise, whether this is during mass or during other celebrations. He insists on the character that each verse or each improvisation has to have and also on their diversity. The teaching method is that of imitating a model given by a teacher: Wachs refers to the accompaniment of plainchant as he learnt it at the Conservatoire and places his work in the context of the existing treatises on plainchant. In Wachs' opinion, the form and the tonal journey of music is important; awareness of timbre is remains unmentioned.
[§357] The 19th century shows an abundance of methods addressing the question how to harmonise plainchant. Don Guéranger initiated a movement promoting the uniformity of the rite in France, in the Roman model, and supported the return of choirs in cathedrals. His research into the Gregorian repertoire led to a number of publications that significantly influenced interpretation and improvisation. On the other

He was organist at Saint-Merry in Paris..

42 Odile Jutten. *L'enseignement de l'improvisation à la classe d'orgue du Conservatoire de Paris, 1819-1986*. Villeneuve d'Ascq.: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 2002. 367.

43 Cf. Note 41. 20.

hand, the Niedermeyer school and the Conservatoire opened their doors to train musicians of a high level. Instruction in improvisation, specifically, allowed these musicians to find a solid job. Developments in organ building stimulated musical innovations and allowed a pianist-like virtuosity. In 1878, Aristide Cavaillé-Coll built his first concert organ, at the Trocadéro. Ever more often, longer forms were discussed in the treatises. These were incompatible with the liturgical setting, because of their length and their character. The organ was henceforth considered as an instrument no longer necessarily linked to the liturgy.

[§358] The history of treatises on improvisation before the 20th century shows three major stages. The first, initiated, as it were, by Conrad Paumann and his contemporaries, is oriented towards being able to construct counterpoint. There are very few french sources of this type before 1630, but the art of making music seems to have followed the same rules in France. The second stage highlights the varied French registrations that were connected to both character and form. Each type of improvisation was linked to a specific moment – a Grand jeu, for example, did not appear by accident. On the other hand, these creations were still dependent on their place the liturgical framework. With the verse of *Judex Crederis* extracted from the *Te Deum* (as Lasceux had suggested to do in 1809), organ improvisations could take the form of several contrasting sections.[44] For the first time, the structure of an organ improvisation could be determined by a programme, thus becoming a genre in its own right, seperate from liturgy.

[§359] Although, after 1830, improvised storms occurred at organ inaugurations, there isn't a single mention of this genre in the theory books. On the contrary, they all make it a point of honour to cover up the lack of training received by organists and to describe their role at the core of the liturgy. The work of Paul Wachs (1878), is exceptional in many ways: destined solely as a learning tool for improvisation, claiming that all improvisation has a predetermined structure, he distinguishes himself from his 19th century peers, precursing, as it were, the 20th century.

44 Nicolas Gorenstein. *L'Orgue post-classique français*. Paris: Chanvrelin, 1993. 59-60.

Treatises dating from 1900 to 2009

[§360] In 1925, the first 20th century student treatise on improvisation appears. Meanwhile, it has been followed by several other texts, written by Marcel Dupré, Charles Tournemire, Jean Langlais, Alain Langrée, Naji Hakim and Francis Chapelet.

Marcel Dupré: Traité d'Improvisation à l'orgue (1925)

[§361] Marcel Dupré began his third concert series in the United States on 18 November 1924 at New York's Wanamaker Auditorium. During his return journey to Europe (from 27 February), Dupré worked on "a Cours Supérieur which had been occupying his thoughts for a long time and of which three chapters had been written in hotel bedrooms or on trains, then sent to Jeanette Baston: the *Traité d'improvisation à l'Orgue*."[45] This treatise constituted the second volume of Dupré's *Cours Complet d'Improvisation à l'Orgue*.[46] It represents a summary of Dupré's pedagogical knowledge about improvisation: "To be a good improviser, you have to not only have acquired a supple and sure technique, but also understand harmony, counterpoint, fugue and ignore neither plainchant, nor composition, nor orchestration."[47] Dupré adds in his manuscript that one has to have acquired a complete musical education and that all these disciplines have to be impeccably understood.[48]

45 Michael Murray. *Marcel Dupré*. Paris: Association des Amis de l'Art de Marcel Dupré, 2001. 94.

46 Marcel Dupré. *Cours Complet d'Improvisation à l'Orgue*. Paris: Leduc, 1937. Several manuscripts by Marcel Dupré are available at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France at Paris, such as Enseignement de l'orgue (Conservatoire de Paris, 1926-1954, Rés. Vmb. ms. 38); Exercices préparatoires à l'improvisation libre (Ms. 20676); *L'Art de l'improvisation* (Rés. Vmb. ms.80); *L'École de l'Orgue* [1926] (Vma. ms. 561); *Traité d'Improvisation* (Rés. Vma. ms. 921).

47 Marcel Dupré. *Traité d'Improvisation à l'Orgue*. Paris: Leduc, 1925. Introduction..

48 Alexandre Cellier and Henri Bachelin. *L'orgue*. Paris: Delagrave, 1933. 238: "Useless, without, to remember that the study of harmony, fugue, multiformed composition is indispensable to the train of a stylish, personal and adept improviser." Alexandre Cellier. "L'Improvisation, art français". *Le Ménestrel* 4780 and 4781, 89 (1927, 9 and 16 Decembre 1927)..

[§362] Dupré chooses to dedicate almost a third of his work to technique. It shows to what point he considered mastering the instrument an indispensable skill for the improviser. Dupré discerns seven forms: motet, song, variation, aria, trio, a form on two themes and a form on one theme. He shows what genres these forms belong to and presents improvisation as true spontaneous composition.

[§363] Dupré's *Traité d'improvisation à l'Orgue*[49] is the reflection of a conception of improvisation that puts emphasis on forms, counterpoint and orchestration. Paul Dukas wrote to Dupré: "Although you have not claimed to have written a Treatise of composition in the strictest sense, composers can learn from your work how to compose, much like the organists can learn how to improvise."[50]

Charles Tournemire: Précis d'exécution, de registration et d'improvisation à l'Orgue (1936)

[§364] Aged 65, Charles Tournemire decided to write his *Précis d'exécution, de registration et d'improvisation à l'Orgue*. He signed the final pages of his work on 26 February 1935.[51]

[§365] After having given a detailed history of the invention and evolution of the organ, Charles Tournemire presents his theory of performance. Tournemire's study path is presented in the form of theory and exercises, leading to the performance of works that are characteristic of the idea being studied. Registration is one of the most important aspects; Tournemire gives a large number of registrations, which will be "possible only on an absolutely perfect organ."[52] He had the organ of Sainte-Clotilde modified, in order to get closer to his ideal organ.

49 Marcel Dupré. *Traité d'Improvisation à l'Orgue*. Paris: Leduc, 1925.

50 Paul Dukas. *5 lettres autographe.* Paris, BnF, Vm.micr. 18.

51 Charles Tournemire. *Précis d'exécution, de registration et d'improvisation à l'Orgue.* Paris: Eschig, 1936. 117.

52 Cf. note 51. 99.

[§366] Fundamental in all musical discourse is, according to Tournemire, a well-balanced form.[53] He cites passages from his own book on César Franck to illustrate this.[54] Harmonised plainchant, fugues and free improvisations are the three main forms, which also figure in Tournemire's educational programme at the Paris Conservatoire.

[§367] To be able to improvise, a student must acquire in-depth knowledge of harmony, counterpoint, fugue and orchestration. Also, he must have a well-polished piano technique before beginning to improvise. Eventually, the improviser has to have sufficient grasp of the forms to be able to create his own music and thus to transcend scholarly ways of making music.

[§368] Tournemire doesn't make any distinction between improvising in concerts and improvising during mass in his work. He believes that his *Précis* is not sufficient in itself; the teacher's examples at the keyboard are indispensable. Jean Langlais, Gaston Litaize and many other students testify that Tournemire did indeed educate them that way. André Bourquin (quoted by Alain Hobbs) and Pierre Moreau, state that the *Précis* was none other than the teachings of their master put on paper.[55]

[§369] The *Précis* documents, like Marcel Dupré's treatise, an era in which form is most important in improvisation. Tournemire considers it as a means and not as a goal: being able to transcend pre-established forms in order to create one's own new sound world is, for him, essential to being a good improviser.

Marcel Dupré: Exercices Préparatoires à l'Improvisation libre (1937)

[§370] The first volume of Marcel Dupré's *Cours Complet d'Improvisation à l'Orgue* was published twelve years after his *Traité d'Improvisation à l'Orgue*. It

53 Cf. note 51. 104.

54 Charles Tournemire. César Franck. Paris: Delagrave, 1931.

55 The magazine *L'orgue, cahiers et mémoires* dedicated issue 41/1 (1989) to Charles Tournemire. Especially interesting are the contributions by Alain Hobbs ("L'enseignement de la technique d'orgue de Charles Tournemire"), Pierre Moreau ("Souvenirs") and Norbert Dufourcq ("A propos de Charles Tournemire").

is entitled *Exercices Préparatoires à l'Improvisation libre*.[56] Dupré's educational methods include a lot of re-reading, additional exercises and examples.
[§371] From 1926 on, Marcel Dupré taught the organ class at the Conservatoire. The theoretic works published after his appointment came about as a result of the needs of the students of this class: the *Exercices* were "conceived for the course".[57] "Ten years of teaching and of preparing for improvisation exams at the Paris Conservatoire have shown me irrefutably that improvisation functions according to the same principles and the same methods as virtuosic performance (taken in its highest sense)."[58]
[§372] Dupré's text comprises 12 lessons, organized in increasing order of difficulty. Dupré provides working material as well: 40 chants in major keys and 40 others in minor keys. All this serves to present an outline for the first movement of a symphony (as studied in the second volume). Why did Dupré choose to focus on this form in particular? There are several hypotheses possible:

- This form is the easiest for beginners to learn
- This form is the most difficult to learn, so it has to be tackled as soon as possible
- The free form taught at the Conservatoire is similar to this one
- Other forms develop from notions that are learnt and synthesised through this form

[§373] The last two hypothese seem the most relevant; Dupré's book prepares a student very well to follow the curriculum at the Conservatoire.

Jean Langlais: L'Orgue, l'Improvisation et la Composition Musicale enseignés à des élèves aveugles par un professeur aveugle (1939)
[§374] The publication of a pedagogical work was one of the essential conditions for Jean Langlais to be granted the position of professor at the

56 Marcel Dupré. *Exercices préparatoires à l'improvisation libre.* Paris: Leduc, 1937.

57 Cf. note 47. 110.

58 Exercices. II.

Institut National des Jeunes Aveugles de Paris. It was thus that, in 1939, *L'Orgue, l'Improvisation et la Composition Musicale enseignés à des élèves aveugles par un professeur aveugle* appeared. The text is unpublished and is not dedicated to anyone. The manuscript is owned by Marie-Louise Langlais.
In his introduction, Jean Langlais states that his text is written for blind students, who don't necessarily have an artistic vocation. He adds that it is not a method, but "a collection of points of departure chosen by the author to serve the construction of his teaching."[59] The book is therefore literally a "mémoire" in which the teacher's choices are exposed.
[§375] Jean Langlais places himself in relation to the Conservatoire: "We cannot recommend highly enough the use of the organ method of Marcel Dupré for its intelligent gradation, as well as for the abundance of subjects that he addresses. Let us note once again, that for gifted students, blindness presents absolutely no obstacle. A blind student prepares himself in this case using the same methods as a more favoured peer."[60] The (blind) organist reads the score with his left hand; the right hand plays the three upper notes of the chords (soprano, alto, tenor) and the pedal plays the bass. Thus it's possible to read and harmonize simultaneously. Langlais demonstration of this technique made his test at the Paris Conservatoire as memorable as that of Olivier Messiaen in 1929. Langlais: "The ability to improvise is hardly only reserved for a few rare talents – who were musicians at birth. Any individual having sufficient musical talent and whose intellectual faculties are open to development, should reap the fruits of a well devised study of improvisation."[61]
[§376] From the very start of the study of improvisation, Langlais grants students a lot of freedom: a student does not have to be a feeble imitation of another artist; he must invent a world that is all his own and be himself. The teacher is blind, the students are blind, the Institut National des Jeunes

59 Jean Langlais. *L'Orgue, l'Improvisation et la Composition Musicale enseignés à des élèves aveugles par un professeur aveugle*. 1939, manuscript owned by Marie-Louise Langlais Langlais.

60 Cf. note 59. 8.

61 Cf. note 59. 19.

Aveugles de Paris is private: these parameters make Langlais' *mémoire* a really original treatise. It can very well be applied by fully-sighted people who are seeking improvisation exercises as well.

Charles Tournemire: Petite méthode d'orgue (1949)

[§377] After his *Précis,* Charles Tournemire also wrote a *Petite Méthode d'Orgue*, published in 1949 by the same editor. We refer to it here because it contains some "Advice for the assimilation of the elements of 'elementary' Improvisation".[62]. This type of improvisation corresponds to the creation of melodic lines ressembling those of Gregorian chants; Tournemire was influenced by the research of the Monks of Solesmes considerably.

[§378] It seems that, like Marcel Dupré, Tournemire wished to open up his teaching to amateur organists who were, in number, the most significant, and that he wanted to underline his ideas on improvisation in Gregorian modes as well as on the imitations of Gregorian chants. The *Petite Méthode* includes a double translation – into English and into German, which shows that this method was meant to be accessible to organists outside France as well.

Alain Langrée: Exercices pratiques d'improvisation (1978-1980)

[§379] In 1978-1980, Alain Langrée published some *Exercices pratiques d'improvisation* in *Caecilia*. He divided his theory into 11 lessons, each lesson being between 3 and 6 pages long. The author mentions that treatises which require the student to understand everything before starting to improvise were not fit for everyone. Instead, Langrée aims at making the art of improvisation more accessible to amateur organists serving the church: "With simple techniques, without calling for a very advanced knowledge of harmony, it is possible to tackle improvisation - free or directed - with willing students."[63] Langrée's exercises offered a large number of formulae which could be applied in lots of different situations. The theory is presented

62 Charles Tournemire. *Petite Méthode d'Orgue*. Paris: Eschig, 1949. 39.

63 Alain Langrée. "Exercices pratiques d'improvisation". *Caecilia* 86-88 (1978-1980): 86/7-10, 86/11-12, 87/1-2, 87/3-4, 87/5-6, 87/7-10, 88/3-4, 88/5-6, 88/7-10, 88/11-12.

in three parts within each lesson; a definition of the notion in question, some examples, and a practical application following the formulae. The aim is to learn to improvise a variation on a given chorale, or to improvise a fugal exposition of a short phrase.

Jean Langlais / Marie-Louise Jaquet-Langlais: Méthode d'orgue (1984)

[§380] Jean Langlais dedicates one page of his *Méthode d'orgue*[64] to improvisation. In 1984, "the publishers Bornemann and Combre both hassled him to give them a *Méthode d'Orgue*. Not being able to choose which he would do the work for, Langlais resolved to 'split the difference', attributing the 'Méthode' itself to Combre and the practical exercises to Bornemann (under the name of *Eight Preludes*)."[65] With the collaboration of his wife Marie-Louise Jaquet-Langlais, he diveded the method in three parts:

- The study of the pedals [taking up 36 pages of the total 50]
- Complementary notions about the organ
- Improvisation [only one page]

[§381] The remaining pages provide translations (into German and English) of various texts. To Langlais, the essential quality for an improviser is curiosity to discover sound colors. His teaching method hasn't changed in the 45 years that separate his two texts on improvisation.

Naji Hakim: Guide pratique d'improvisation (2001)

[§382] Naji Hakim's *Guide pratique d'improvisation* was published in 2001. The book contains a CD entitled *L'Art de l'Improvisation*.[66] Naji Hakim: "It was an American student, Joseph Adam, who suggested I write up the results of about ten years of teaching this 'practice'."[67] The guide is written for any

64 Paris: Combre, 1984.

65 Marie-Louise Jaquet-Langlais. *Ombre et Lumière, Jean Langlais (1907-1991).* Paris: Combre, 1995. 287.

66 Naji Hakim. *Guide pratique d'improvisation*. Londres: United Music Publishers, 2001.

67 Naji Hakim, in mail to the author, 28 March 2003 à 19h41,

musician who wants to improvise on his own instrument, although the organ is important in the guide. Marie-Bernadette Dufourcet[68] explains, in the preface, that the guide "is suitable for beginners as well as for musicians with some experience", but that "the study of harmony, counterpoint, fugue, analysis and instrumentation will contribute to master one's art further." The demands are indicative of the capacity of the author: during his studies, Naji Hakim won seven first prizes at the Paris Conservatoire. Command of one's instrument and fusion between musical instinct and intellectual conception are two necessary prerequisites for the improviser.

[§383] Dufourcet: "Tricks with counterpoint are only a means. [...] They risk dragging the discourse down a sterile slope".[69] Thus for Hakim, the expressive force of an improvisation comes more from the harmonies than from counterpoint. Naji Hakim thinks that composition and improvisation have to reciprocally influence each other. Improvisations should have the qualities of written works; performances of compositions should not lack spontaneity. Hakim: "Improvisation, like composition, must respect three essential criteria: balance between unity and diversity; command of the rhetoric aspects; balance of proportions." In other words: the study of themes (and of their elements), of their development or variation and of the architecture of improvisations. These three criteria go from the most particular to the most general and describe the construction of a discourse. The temporal pressure linked to improvisation furthermore necessitates some "mental gymnastics" that come about through concentration, order and command of time. "Improvisation on a theme is built, in general, from melodic, rhythmic, harmonic and expressive elements taken from this theme."[70] Hakim adds that the form of the work is engendered by the evolution of the theme which makes it necessary, therefore, to analyse the theme in advance. The language that the student uses is free; the type of

68 Marie-Bernadette Dufourcet is Senior lecturer at the University of Bordeaux, organist of the Grand-Orgue Cavaillé-Coll of Notre-Dame-des-Champs Church in Paris and wife of Naji Hakim.

69 Cf. note 66. 7.

70 Cf. note 66. 23.

support (mode, scale, group of notes) refers to structural markers inherited from the past.

[§384] Extra-musical themes – such as a literary text, graphic or pictorial images – require an analysis (a statement of the elements or of the important words) and a composition of themes or of motifs. Hakim: "The main possible sections of a form are: introduction, exposition, development, digression, recapitulation (with or without variations), transition and coda."[71] The recapitulation assures the balance of the form; it can be varied and preceded by a false recapitulation which enhances it. The coda has to be proportionate to further the dimension of improvisation.

[§385] The list of themes Hakim provides contains important material; popular songs, chorales, Gregorian themes, free themes, fugal themes, passacaglias and literary texts. Texts may be derived from the Bible which has had a big influence on Naji Hakim, but can generally be of all sorts: Hakim has, for example, recorded some very short improvisations[72] on poems by Cécile Sauvage (Olivier Messiaen's mother).

[§386] Hakim's *Guide pratique d'improvisation* thus presents the various notions that one has to acquire in order to structure an improvisation and to enrich its content. Musical rhetoric is addressed in an extremely rigorous way. Music history is explored succinctly in order to help the student to gain a broader view of the different means used by composers to treat a theme. Well prepared, he can try to merge this knowledge and to forge a personal style or he can make his improvisations into stylistic exercises.

Francis Chapelet: Livre d'improvisation et d'accompagnement (2002)

[§387] The *Livre d'improvisation et d'accompagnement* by Francis Chapelet was published in 2002.[73] After having observed the issues encountered by his

71 Cf. note 66. 61.

72 Naji Hakim, Naji. *L'âme en bourgeon:* CD, Rejoyce classique, 2001.

73 Francis Chapelet. *Livre d'improvisation et d'accompagnement*. Montpon-Ménestérol: Les Presses de la Double, 2002.

students at the National Conservatoire of Bordeaux, he decided to create a beginners' course in improvisation for his organ class. This collection is at once a theory and a book of exercises in which the student can note things that he wants to learn. A directory page allows him to index his own examples and easily find them later on.

[§388] The text is meant for improvisation in the context of the liturgy. Chapelet's teaching is divided into three parts: the presentation of the idea, an exercise to practice it and the application of the idea. Chapelet recommends taking each exercise very slowly and repeating it until it becomes automatic (like Dupré).

[§389] Chapelet was one of the first to introduce Spanish organ culture at the Conservatoire.[74] Hence, the preconceived cadences in his *Livre d'Improvisation* reflect not only the classic French style[75] but the Spanish styles of the 16th century as well.

[§390] The teaching practices of Chapelet are particularly orientated towards baroque repertoire; he expects his students to be able to analyze and interprete this repertoire, which includes knowledge about registration practices. His *Livre* has the advantage of being practical, possessing a clear presentation and a large number of examples. It gives the church organist particular types of improvisation to use in different parts of the mass in a classic French style, but equally offers the possibility of forging a more personal language, for example by searching for colourful harmonies.[76]

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74 Alain Pâris. Dictionnaire des interprètes et de l'interprétation musicale au XXe siècle. Paris: Robert Laffont Bouquins, 1995 (previous editions: 1982, 1985, 1989): "Named holder of the organ loft of Saint-Séverin in Paris in 1964, in association with Jacques Marichal and Michel Chapuis, according to the formula honored in the Parisian organ lofts of the 17th and 18th centuries, he carried out extensive research into the Spanish organ, its craftsmanship and its music. The first recordings of instruments until then unknown such as Covarrubias, Salamanca (Cathedral), Ciudad Rodrigo, Trujillo… (we can count to this date a good twelve or so) have allowed a focus on the question of the Spanish organ."

75 Chapelet's teacher E. Souberbielle, to whom we owe the rediscovery of pieces of Charpentier, Rameau and Montiverdi, was certainly not a stranger to it.

76 Cf. William Dongois. *Apprendre à improviser avec la musique de la Renaissance*. Gennevilliers:

Conclusion

[§391] The history of treatises of improvisation on the organ before 1900 shows that improvisation was a musical practice that depended on "learning-by-doing" (imitating, improving). Conrad Paumann (1451-52) seems to have been one of the first to document this practice. His treatise underlines the importance of constructing counterpoint. That this was indeed taken as an important skill, is confirmed by the 17th century treatises of Banchieri and Titelouze.

[§392] A taste for timbres and registration is already present in the writings of Costanzo Antegnati (1608). Marin Mersenne is the first to mention research into organ timbres imitating those of other instruments; he maintains that virtuoso organists showcase their talent through the quality of their counterpoint. Nivers (1665) explicitly refers to the relationship between registration and form. His instructions are based on the characteristics of the French organ, which suggest using specific timbres for specific pieces of music. Dom Bedos proposes a rather complete table of such registrations.

[§393] After the Revolution, the education of organists was no longer guaranteed. A multitude of methods was published to solve this problem. Some of them presented means of modulating into all keys (Naderman, Kalkbrenner, Roubier): the tonal journey had to be rich and played an important part in improvisation on the organ. Other treatises advocated pianistic technique (Clément, Loret). In 1878, Paul Wachs published the first work solely dedicated to improvisation. He divided it into two parts: one dedicated to concert music, the other to religious music. According to his standards, improvisations had to have a very precise form, its tonal journey being determined beforehand. Awareness of timbres appeared no longer essential.

[§394] All these treatises make it a point of honour to perfect the construction of improvisation. They almost all fall into a tonal system, although some invite the student to invent his own language – tonal, modal or atonal.

Color & Talea, 2008. Cf. as well Pascale Boquet and Gérard Rebours. *50 Standards, Renaissance et Baroque*. Bressuire: Fuzeau, 2006.

The target audience of the treatises is divided into two groups; future professionals and amateurs that serve the parishes to which they belong. Consequently, two teaching styles are put forward, answering the needs of one group or the other. For the former, Marcel Dupré, Charles Tournemire, Jean Langlais and Naji Hakim provided several courses. For the latter, the education method was quite uniform from the point of view of forms, yet always reflecting the aesthetic convictions of the respective author (Langrée, Chapelet).

[§395] Considering all these methods in all their multiplicity, they offer the student different paths in response to his demands. Yet, as it seems that treatises are not often used, pehaps because musicians favor live lessons, their relevance is basically of musicological nature, as they document the development of a musical heritage.

Abstract

Several famous french organists have published treatises on improvisation in the 20th century. They are part of a long tradition. 15th and 16th century treatises, such as by Conrad Paumann, underline the importance of being able to construct counterpoint. Costanzo Antegnati (1608) thinks that a taste for registration is necessary as well, as does Marin Mersenne; Nivers (1665) explicitly refers to the relationship between registration and form. His instructions refer to the French organ. After the Revolution, the education of organists was no longer guaranteed. A multitude of methods appeared. Some of them presented means of modulating into all keys (Naderman, Kalkbrenner, Roubier). Pianistic technique was introduced as well to organists (Clément, Loret). In 1878, Paul Wachs published the first work solely dedicated to organ improvisation. According to him, improvisations had to have a very precise form; awareness of timbres appeared no longer essential. In the 20th century, two teaching styles were developed. Marcel Dupré, Charles Tournemire, Jean Langlais and Naji Hakim provided courses for concert improvisation. For church organists, education methods were quite basic.

All methods offer organists different paths to learn to improvise. Yet, as musicians favor live lessons, their relevance seems basically of musicological nature.

Béatrice Piertot

Béatrice Piertot is professor of organ and harpsichord at the Conservatory of Abbeville, professor of organ at the Conservatory of Amiens and co-titular organist at St. Lawrence Parish in Paris. She studied with famous scholars such as Laurent Cabasso, Marie-Louise Langlais, Eric Lebrun, and Francoise Levéchin; attended masterclasses with Marie-Claire Alain, James-David Christie, Pierre Hantai, Francoise Lengellé, Olivier Latry and Daniel Roth; and was prize winner at several international competitions. Béatrice Piertot studied harpsichord with Elisabeth Joyé. She is interested in contemporary music and has worked with composers such as Jean-Louis Florentz, Naji Hakim, Vincent Paulet, and Bruno Mantovani. Several composers have dedicated their works to her (Lebrun, Nemoto, Paulet, and Werner). Béatrice Piertot was the artistic adviser for the Festival of Saint-Riquier (2006-2010). Her recording of the *Prélude de l'Enfant Noir* by Jean-Louis Florentz at St. Eustache (Paris) appeared under his direction in the book-disc of Marie-Louise Langlais *Jean-Louis Florentz, l'œuvre d'orgue, témoignages croisés* on the Symétrie label. In 2012, she made the cd's *Orgue en Alsace* (volume 7) and *Jean-Jacques Werner*.

X

Columba McCann - Marcel Dupré

[§396] Marcel Dupré was born on 3rd May 1886 in Rouen[1] and died in Meudon, on the outskirts of Paris on 30th May 1971, Pentecost Sunday, a few hours after playing the organ for Mass at Saint Sulpice where he was titular organist.[2] Described by Olivier Messiaen as 'the Liszt of the organ',[3] Dupré was a hugely influential virtuoso and teacher whose pupils included such distinguished figures as André Fleury, Olivier Messiaen, Jean Langlais, Jehan Alain, Marie-Claire Alain, Gaston Litaize, Jean-Jacques Grunenwald, Jeanne Demessieux, Rolande Falcinelli, Pierre Cochereau and Jean Guillou, just to mention some of those who were French, all of them known as improvisers of the highest quality. Dupré was also a prodigious improviser, often concluding his concerts with an improvised four-movement symphony. His contrapuntal skills in improvisation were particularly noteworthy. In his final exam as a student at the Paris Conservatoire his improvisation on the given chant, *Iste Confessor*, presented the melody in a canonic treatment;[4] Bernard Gavoty records how on one occasion Dupré improvised at Saint Sulpice a *Ricercare* for

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1 Michael Murray. *Marcel Dupré: The Work of a Master Organist*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1985. 10.

2 Cf. Note 1. 222-223.

3 Olivier Messiaen. "Hommage à Marcel Dupré". *Le Courrier Musical de France* 35 (1971). 113, cited in Michael Murray, cf. note 1. 4

4 Abbé R. Delestre. *l'Oeuvre de Marcel Dupré.* Paris: Editions Musique Sacrée. 23. Claude Noisette de Crauzat. "L'Improvisation chez Marcel Dupré et Pierre Cochereau". In *Improvisation Musicale en Question: Acts du Colloque International tenue à l'Université de Rouen les 16,17 et 18 mars 1992.* Rouen: Centre d'Etude et de Diffusion des Langages Artistiques de l'Université de Rouen, 1994. 52.

six voices with a double interior canon.[5] On the basis of these facts alone the two-volume treatise of Dupré on improvisation represents a document of considerable historical interest.

The Publication of Two Volumes on Improvisation

[§397] The comprehensive and systematic work of Dupré on improvisation is his *Cours Complet d'Improvisation à l'Orgue*.[6] In this study I refer to the English translations, also published by Leduc: *Complete Course in Organ Improvisation: Volume 1 Preparatory Excercises for Free Improvisation* (English translation by Alain Hobbs in 1957) and *Complete Course in Organ Improvisation: Volume 2 Organ Improvisation* (English translation by John Fenstermaker in 1973). The second volume was in fact the first to be published, in 1925, while the first volume was published in 1937. In this study I will begin by looking at Volume One. Although the second volume was written earlier, this approach represents the order in which Dupré himself finally organised the material. Further, the size and nature of the Volume One presents an opportunity to grasp quickly much of Dupré's pedagogical approach to improvisation.

Volume One: Preparatory Exercises for Free Improvisation

[§398] The words 'free improvisation' in the title take some explaining. Contrary to first impressions, the kind of improvisation envisaged in this volume, and arrived at by the end of the exercises is, as we shall see, very tightly structured and controlled. One should also be aware that the terminology *thème libre* refers to a form of improvisation studied in the Conservatoire and used in examinations. This 'free improvisation' was introduced in the Conservatoire examinations in 1843.[7] As we will see later, the elaborated form given at the end of Volume One is in fact a version

5 Claude Noisette de Crauzat. Cf. note 4.

6 *Cours Complet d'Improvisation à l'Orgue*. Paris: Leduc, 1925, 1937.

7 Odile Jutten, *L'Enseignement de l'Improvisation à la class d'Orgue du Conservatoire de Paris, 1819-1986 d'Après la Thématique de Concours et d'Examens, Atelier National de Reproduction des Thèses*. Lille, 1999. Vol. 1, 364.

of the *thème libre*. Having examined the completed form at the end of the volume we will be in a position to look back at earlier forms used in the Conservatoire and to note the contribution that Dupré made in the evolution of this element of the teaching and examination of improvisation in the Conservatoire. Maurice Duruflé, who entered the organ class of the Paris Conservatoire in 1920 while Eugène Gigout, Dupré's predecessor, was still teaching, describes the form as follows:

> The free improvisation took a form of a monothematic sonata first movement that bore no relationship with the classical allegro. It was a hybrid form in three parts, of which the first and third had more the character of an andante. The central development was more animated.[8]

[§399] If this particular form of improvisation was, in fact, rather strictly planned and assessed in examination, one might well ask why the word 'free' is used at all. The word 'free' (*libre*) is used here to refer to approaches to form that are different from the 'strict' or 'rigourous' (*rigoureuse*). In his approach to improvisational forms, Dupré included under the heading 'free' such forms as the suite, variations and the symphony, while the term rigoureuse referred to choral forms, prelude, fugue and ricercare.[9] His own description of the form used in the exam is:

> So-called "free" improvisation in the form of an Andante movement of a sonata with center development section. The term "free" indicates the harmonic idiom is less strictly contrapuntal than for the fugue.[10]

8 "L'improvisation libre prenait une forme de premier movement de sonate à un seul theme qui n'avait aucun rapport avec l'allegro classique. C'était une forme hybride en trios parties don't la première et la troisième avaient plotôt un caractère d'andante. Le développement central était plus animé." Frédéric Blanc, ed., *Maurice Duruflé: Souvenirs et Autres Écrits*. Biarritz: Antlantica, 2005. 33.

9 Cf. note 4. 53.

10 Marcel Dupré. "On Improvisation". *The Diapason* 57/February (1965). 25.

An Outline of the Volume

[§400] Volume One comprises twelve lessons, preceded by a preface. In the preface the author refers to some of the great improvisers of the past, such as Bach, Handel, Mozart, Beethoven and others, and while acknowledging their sublime level of inspiration and imagination, asserts that improvisation is also something that can be learnt and taught in the same way as virtuosity and technique, namely through constant repetition and patient improvement of the same passage, according to a strict discipline and method. That skill in improvising is gained through hard work is borne out by Dupré's own practice as a student: he regularly practiced up to nine hours a day, of which seven were devoted to fugue.[11] Odile Pierre, who studied improvisation with Dupré in the Paris Conservatoire, outlines how improvisation fitted into her daily plan of seven hours practice: two hours on fugue (on 4 subjects), one hour on Gregorian versets (on 4 antiphons in each of the eight modes), one hour on *thème libre* (two themes) and three hours on repertoire.[12] Michael Murray, a private student of Dupré whose daily work also involved three hours of harmony and counterpoint, was advised by his teacher to spend two hours on repertoire and two hours on improvisation.[13]

[§401] Lesson One begins by tackling harmonisation, beginning with the harmonisation of major and minor scales in the soprano voice, the tenor and the bass, using only the simplest of chords.

[§402] Lesson Two develops this further with the harmonisation of eighty short melodies in the soprano, the pedal and the tenor, using only perfect chords and first inversions. It is also suggested that these exercises be transposed.

[§403] Lesson Three addresses the idea of the "antecedent and the consequent" whereby the same phrase of a theme is heard twice in succession, each time with a different ending. Sixty antecedents are then given for the student to harmonise and improvise the relevant consequents.

11 Delestre, cf. note 4. 22.

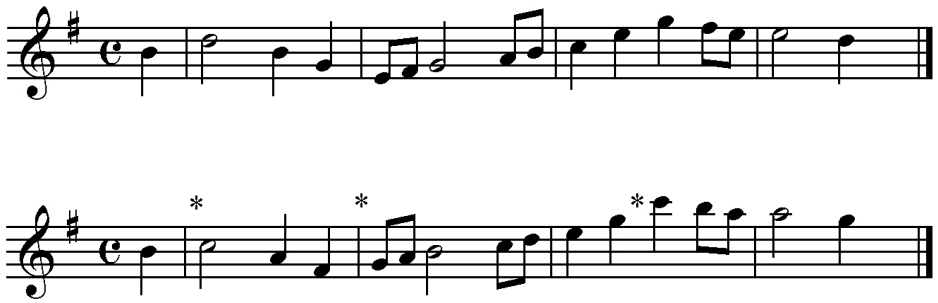
12 Odile Pierre. *Thèmes Libres et Sujets de Fugures de Marcel Dupré Recueillis par Odile Pierre en Deux Cahiers. 1er Cahier Thèmes Libres.* Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1993. Préface.

13 Murray, cf. note 1. 122

Only in this chapter does Dupré begin to allow dissonant chords and foreign notes. The progression from very limited harmonic resources in the first two lessons to a freer language is the first of many examples of a pedagogic device used by Dupré: a movement from deliberately narrow constraints towards greater freedom, to maximise technical mastery of the form and the language. Transposition of the exercises is again proposed.

[§404] Lesson Four leads the student to improvise consequents which modulate into neighbouring keys.

[§405] Lessons Five and Six introduce the student to the commentary, an answering phrase which is different from that of the theme. Dupré shows the student a way of improvising a 'deductive commentary' which is inspired by the rhythm and melodic contours of the theme. He begins by getting the student of improvise answering phrases which are simply transpositions of the theme onto another degree of the scale. He then shows that a simple change of interval at important points moves fragments of the theme into different positions, thus producing a new melody which is inspired by the theme but not identical with it. An example perhaps clarifies this better than words. With the following subject, a deductive commentary is made by changing the melodic intervals at three points, marked here by asterisks:[14]



14 *Preparatory Exercises*. 23.

[§406] Lesson Seven teaches the student how to improvise a Binary exposition:

- Theme (4 measures)
- 1st Deductive commentary (4 measures), modulating to the dominant via the relative
- Repetition of the theme (4 measures) in the tonic
- 2nd Deductive commentary (4 or 8 measures) in the sub-dominant and its relative, concluding in the tonic

[§407] It is to be noted that the schema of modulations proposed by Dupré is only an initial guide to help the beginner. This implies that a freer approach to modulation is envisaged once the student has attained a certain fluency.
In this lesson Dupré gives two examples of a fully written-out exposition, one in C major and one in A minor.[15] The example in C major shows fluently moving voice-leading in the accompanying voices while the example in A minor is both sustained and restrained in its texture, with most of the movement in melody itself.
[§408] Lesson Eight takes up the question of harmonisation again, giving the student themes to harmonise in the soprano, bass, tenor (in the left hand), tenor (in the bass) and alto (both hands on the same manual). Two additional exercises are then introduced: firstly, harmonising the theme in each of the outer parts with a stepwise contrapuntal movement (ascending or descending, diatonic or chromatic) in the other outer part and, secondly, harmonising the theme in the soprano with a short accompanying melodic formula repeated at different pitches in one of the inner voices. Thus the student acquires the ability to present the theme in a number of different ways, which will be used later when the full form is put together. Given the nature of these exercises, there is increased emphasis on the contrapuntal dimension of the presentation, with a

15 *Preparatory Exercises*. 29-20. By piecing together the various examples given throughout the book one arrives at a nearly complete version of the kind of improvisation envisaged by Dupré. In her book *Temoignages Écrits des Epreuves Improvisation Classe Dupré* (1953/54), Paris: Éditions Leduc, c. 1990), Odile Pierre gives a full reconstruction of a *thème libre* improvisation as taught in Dupré's class in the Conservatoire.

more complex texture, as shown in the written examples.[16] Thus one can see a progression in the presentation of the theme as the piece evolves: from simplicity towards complexity.
[§409] Lesson Nine trains the student in the improvisation of a modulating bridge, rather in the style of a fugal episode. The author deals with two principal issues: a modulating structure or plan which will move from the tonic to the dominant, and the question of improvising imitations which run a melodic fragment of the theme through the different voices. The modulating plan of the bridge envisages two intermediate tonalities. Thus, a bridge from C major will begin in A minor, pass through E minor, D major, and arrive in G major.[17] Dupré is concerned as to the length of the Bridge in relation to the rest of the piece, instructing the student that if the initial theme is 4 bars long, the Bridge should be no longer than 12 bars.[18] As regards imitation, Dupré studies imitations at various intervals, noting that those imitations which produce a progression of fourths in the Bass are the most useful.[19] After providing 20 melodic fragments on which the student is to practice modulating bridges, the author proposes the improvisation of modulating bridges using two fragments which may be inverted, using more distant tonalities, for example, a bridge from C Major beginning in C minor, moving to Eb minor before arriving at G major.[20] It should be noted that in the examples which Dupré gives of a complete bridge there is a certain freedom regarding the use of the imitative figures: while the general shape and rhythm of the figure is maintained most of the time, the intervals change somewhat from time to time, and some imitations are only fragmentary.[21]
[§410] Lessons Ten and Eleven look at the development, which is in three parts: development of a rhythmical figure, introduction of a lyrical fragment and preparation for the return. The rhythmical and lyrical fragments are presented in imitation in the same manner as the modulating bridge, except that each

16 *Preparatory Exercises*. 35-36.

17 *Preparatory Exercises*. 40

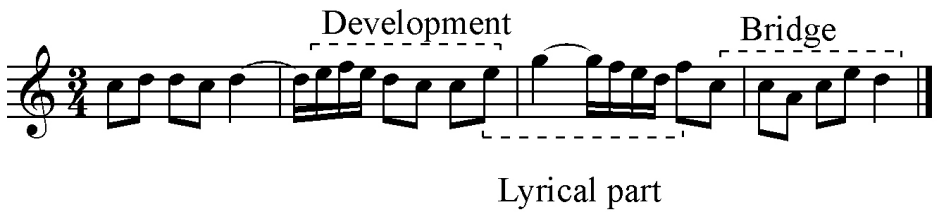
18 *Preparatory Exercises*. 39

19 *Preparatory Exercises*. 41.

20 *Preparatory Exercises*. 45.

21 *Preparatory Exercises*. 42-43.

voice develops the fragment somewhat more at length. Dupré envisages a combination of both elements: the rhythm of the first part of the development continues in two accompanying voices in the left hand, while the lyrical element dialogues in imitation between an 8' pedal voice and two parts in the right hand.[22] As regards tonalities for the development, Dupré envisages two tonalities for the rhythmic section and one or two tonalities for the lyrical section, moving either by whole tones, ascending or descending, or by semitones, ascending or descending, with a preference for major tonalities in the lyrical section. The preparation for the return is a short passage of modulating chords on the closed swell, sufficient to create an atmosphere of expectation for the return of the theme. Dupré also envisages a 'false return', whereby the theme returns via a remote key. Thus an improvisation in C major will have the theme begin in B major or Db major and conclude in the tonic key. It will be noted that Dupré's proposed treatment of the theme involves the identification of three possible melodic fragments for imitative treatment: a fragment for the bridge, a rhythmic fragment and a melodic fragment. He illustrates how these fragments can be chosen in a given theme, for example:[23]



[§411] As in the examples given for the modulating bridge, the sample development worked out by Dupré in these lessons displays a judicious freedom in the imitative counterpoint: some imitations are partial, or inverted, or are somewhat modified as to the intervals within the melodic fragment.[24]

22 *Preparatory Exercises*. 52.

23 *Preparatory Exercises*. 47.

24 *Preparatory Exercises*. 48-49, 54.

[§412] Lesson Twelve gives a general plan of the improvisation with advice about registration. This is summarised in a table which is reproduced in table 1 below.

[§413] It should be noted that the table given at the end of the work represents a narrower system than that described by the author within the chapters, at least with regard to tonality: the intermediate tonalities within the exposition and the tonalities prescribed in both the modulating bridge and the development represent only some of the possibilities envisaged by Dupré. This suggests that perhaps Dupré adopts a more restrictive approach for the student only as long as is necessary, until some fluency is attained. A more flexible approach to tonality is envisaged for those who can manage it.

Further Insight from the Evolution of the Thème Libre Form

[§414] For the sake of this study it is not necessary to trace the full story of the *thème libre* in the Paris Conservatoire. Odile Jutten gives a detailed account of this.[25] It is however interesting to see something of its evolution in the period before Dupré took over as professor of organ.

[§415] Paul Wachs, who was a student of César Franck at the Conservatoire, published a treatise on improvisation in 1878.[26] In her detailed study of the evolution of this form, Odile Jutten considers it highly probable that the sonata form which he presents in this treatise reflects the shape of the *thème libre* as he would have learnt it from Franck only 6 years previously, and reproduces the plan given by the author:[27]

1st Period: exposition of the subject, period of 4, 8 or 16 measures
2nd Period: modulation to the dominant, or bridge
3rd Period: subject in the dominant
4th Period: developments
5th Period: return of the subject in the original key

25 Jutten: cf. note 7. Vol. 1, 447-427.

26 Paul Wachs. *L'Organiste improvisateur*. Paris: Schott, 1878.

27 Jutten: cf. note 7. Vol. 1, 375.

Table 1

Form	Detail	Measures	Plan in C Major	Plan in A Minor	Placement of the theme	Registration
Exposition	Theme	4	C Major	A Minor	in the Soprano	Sw. Flute 8′ or 8′ and 4′
idem	1st Comm.	4	From A Minor to G	From C Minor to E Minor	idem	idem
idem	Repetition of Theme	4	C Major	A Minor	in the Alto	idem
idem	2nd Comm.	4 or 8	From F Major to C	From D Minor to A Minor	in the Alto	idem
Bridge	1st Phrase	4	From A Minor to E Minor	From E Minor to B Minor	Voices alternating	Gt. Bourdon 8′ or soft Diap. 8′
idem	2nd Phrase	4	From E Minor to D Major	From B Minor to G Major	idem	idem
idem	3rd Phrase	4	From D Major to G Major	From G Major to C Major	idem	idem
2nd Tonality (Dominant or Relative key)	Theme	4	(Short distant modulation) G Major	(Short distant modulation) C Major	in the Tenor	R.H. Sw. Flutes 8′, 4′, Nazard
idem	Final Comm.	8	G Major	C Major	idem	L.H. Gt. soft 8′ found. stops
Development	1st Rhythm phrase	8	G Minor	C Minor	Voices alternating	Gt. & Sw. coupled, soft 8′ stops
idem	2nd Rhythm Phrase	8	G# Minor	C# Minor	idem	Sw. soft foundation stops 8′
idem	Lyrical Phrase	8-12 bars	A Minor	D Major	Pd. On 8′ stop, then Alto, then Soprano	Sw. accompanying Gt.; foundation stops 8′
Re-Entry	False Re-Entry of the Theme	4	Db Major or B major	Bb Minor or G# Minor	Ped. Tenor or in the Alto	Sw. very soft. Ped. 4′ flute solo
idem	Comm. (Connected to Bridge)	8	C Major	A Minor	idem	idem
“Recall” of Bridge	One phrase only	4	D Minor to C Major	D Minor to A Minor	Voices alternating	Gt. Bourdon 8′ or soft Diap. 8′
Conclusion	Theme	4	Back to Principal key on another degree	A Major	Soprano accompanied by a Chromatic or Diatonic Counterpoint (or a Canon if possible)	Sw. Vox Celeste 8′
idem	Final Comm.		Short Modulation allowed on a Tonic Pedal point	Short Modulation allowed on a Tonic Pedal point	Free	idem

[§416] It is interesting to note the plural 'developments' in the 4th period. In a sample realisation of the form, Wachs develops a melodic fragment from the theme, a rhythmic fragment from the bridge, as well developing the opening idea of the theme, accompanied lightly by the rhythmic fragment.[28] Here I am using terminology from Dupré, but some of Dupré's approach to form is there already in Wachs, and mostly likely in the teaching of Franck. One might also note in passing the lightness of texture throughout, ranging from one voice to four. If we compare the number of voices throughout Wach's example compared with the examples in Dupré we find the following:[29]

1 voice: 2,7% (of total bars) [Wachs] / 3% [Dupré]
2 voices: 9% / 6%
3 voices: 34% / 12%
4 voices: 55% / 38%
5 voices: 0% / 15%

[§417] As to any formal innovations in the class of Widor, Franck's successor, Jutten gives no further details. A pedagogic innovation was however the introduction of a monthly class in which the evolution of symphonic forms was studied, with examples from the masters. This movement beyond a 'school' form to real historical examples was however short-lived.[30] For insight into Guilmant's teaching of the *thème libre* (1896-1911), Jutten refers to his article "La musique d'orgue les formes, l'exécution, l'improvisation" in *l'Encyclopédie de la musique et Dictionnaire du Conservatiore*, in which the advice as to how to improvise an andante uses clearly the same form as that outlined by Wachs.[31] Interesting details include the advice to avoid using the beginning

28 This realised sonata is reproduced by Odile Jutten: cf. note 7. Vol. 2. 816-820.

29 Percentages are rounded up. The total number of bars in Dupré is found by putting together the various segments of the improvisation as found in the different lessons. The final section is not however really worked out and is not included.

30 Louis Vierne. "Mes Souvenirs". *Cahiers et Mémoires de L'Orgue* 134 bis, III-1971. 31. Cited in Jutten, cf. note 7. Vol. 1,. 378.

31 Alexandre Guilmant. "La musique d'orgue les formes, l'exécution, l'improvisation". In

of the theme during the development (Wachs, on the other hand, does precisely this), confining modulations only to closely related keys during the development, preparation for the return of the theme with modulating passages, the possibility of more distant modulations at the end of the piece, and the perceived danger of the sub-dominant which, if over-used, destroys the tonal balance of the piece. In the absence of any direct documentation regarding the teaching of Eugene Gigout (1912-1925), Jutten has recourse to notes taken by Dupré as a jury member at examinations between 1921 and 1925.[32] Here one notes the presence of more distant modulations in the development, and some canonic presentations of the theme in the recapitulation.

[§418] A further step towards the *thème libre* as taught by Dupré in his treatise is to be seen in the teaching of Louis Vierne, who gave Dupré lessons on the *thème libre* during 1905-1906.[33] Jean Bouvard, who was a pupil of Vierne, described Vierne's approach to the *thème libre* in an article published in 1939.[34] In order to compare and contrast with the approach taken by Dupré, the form and Vierne's approach to it are summarised in table 2 below.[35]

Alexandre Lavignac and Lionel de la Laurencie, ed., *l'Encyclopédie de la musique et Dictionnaire du Conservatiore Paris, 1913-1931*, Part 2, Vol. 3. 1124-1180. Cited in Odile Jutten, cf. note 4. Vol. 1, 379

32 Jutten: cf. note 7. Vol. 1..381-384.

33 Murray, cf. note 1, p. 40.

34 Jean Bouvard. "Les Cours d'improvisation de Louis Vierne". In *In Memoriam Louis Vierne – 1870-1937. Souvenirs suivis d'un Hommage à sa Carrièrre, son Enseignement, par ses Confrères, Éleves et Amis*. Paris: Declée de Brouwer, 1939. 187-194, Given in English translation as "Louis Vierne's Improvisation Course: His Method of Harmonizing and Treating the Free Theme" in appendix G of Rollin Smith. *Louis Vierne: Organist of Notre Dame Cathedral*. Hillsdale, New York: Pendragon Press. 745-752.

35 A subject given in the treble clef, when read in the bass clef, will be automatically transposed up a third; when read in the baritone clef (3rd line =F), it will be automatically transposed to the dominant (Bouvard, cf. note 34. 750). We will see that Dupré uses this device later in volume 2, when it comes to transposition of fugal subjects.

Table 2

Form	Detail	Measures	Voices	Tonality	Comments
Exposition	Theme	4	4 voices, theme in soprano	Tonic	
idem	1st Commentary (derived)	4	idem	Passing through the relative, modulating to the dominant, its relative, or a more distant key	
idem	Return of Theme	4	idem	Tonic	A different harmonisation
idem	2nd Commentary	4 or 8	idem	Neighbouring keys, though avoiding sub-dominant	
Bridge	3 phrases	12	Varying between 1 and 4	3 transitional tonalities, leading to the dominant or the relative major	Imitative, using the least characteristic fragment of the theme
2nd Exposition	Theme	4	4 voices, theme in alto	Dominant or relative major	Transposition of theme effected by reading it in an alternative clef
idem	Derived Commentary	4	4 voices, theme in tenor		Transposition of theme effected by reading it in an alternative clef
idem	Return of the theme	4			Optional
idem	Brief conclusion	Brief		Ending with perfect cadence in key of 2nd Exposition	
Development	Rhythmic and Melodic fragments developed	24 to 32		Any logical tonal scheme acceptable, e.g., ascending tones or semitones, or thirds. 3 keys enough, maximum 4	Included inversion of elements and superimposition of elements
Preparation for the Return	First 2 bars of theme used twice	4	Soprano, in the given example	In two distant keys	Often a semitone above or below the tonic
Return of the Theme	Theme	4	Could be in any voice or disposition	Tonic	Vierne liked using a chromatic accompaniment here
idem	Commentary	4			
idem	Canon				Theme in canon at the octave, if possible
idem	Bridge		Alternating voices		Brief reference to the first bridge
idem	Inversion or Augmentation	4			Theme augmented or inverted
idem	Final commentary	4		With modulation to the sub-dominant	Over a tonic pedal
idem	Conclusion				Tonic pedal

[§419] Although Vierne's plan is slightly freer than that of Dupré, we can see in it many of the additional elements found in the latter's *thème libre*: structuring of the modulating bridge, explicit reference to rhythmic and melodic development, including superimposition of such fragments, tonal patterns for the development, preparation for the return through modulations and distant keys, chromatic accompaniment of the theme at its return, recall of the bridge in the final section, the possibility of canon, and a conclusion over the tonic pedal. The impression is that Vierne's approach is freer than that of Dupré. Indeed, before presenting Vierne's plan, Bouvard stresses the element of liberty in his teaching:

> Above all the rules, all the recipes, Vierne put "Music" first; to a development of a perfect structure, but in which no personal or human note appeared, he preferred the free course of inspiration. Nothing delighted him more than an original excursion into some distant keys. If he valued the free theme, it was above all as a scholastic form for developing the precious gifts of inspiration, an outline to guide and help the pupil, a constraint from which the maître knows how to extricate himself.[36]

[§420] In her detailed analysis of materials related to examinations in the Conservatoire, Odile Jutten shows gradually increasing level of detail in the headings of Dupré's notes taken during performances, for example:[37]

May Exam, 1926
- Exposition
- Bridge
- Dominant
- Development
- Return

36 Bouvard, cf. note 34. 746.

37 Jutten, cf. note 7. Vol. 1, 386-387.

Final Competition, 1932
- Theme
- Second entry
- Bridge
- Dominant
- Development
- Return
- Re-exposition
- Conclusion

Entrance Exam, 1934
- Harmonisation
- Commentary
- Second Exposition
- Bridge - Dominant
- Development
- Lyrical
- Return
- Conclusion

Final Competition, 1942
- Theme
- Second Exposition
- Bridge
- Dominant
- Development
- Lyrical
- Return
- Bridge
- Conclusion

[§421] We can see here that Dupré came to regard as obligatory the additional elements of design which he learnt from Vierne and incorporated into his first volume.

The Thème Libre in Dupré's Organ Class

[§422] It is one thing to examine a textbook; it is another thing to see how its author uses its principles in practice. Aside from indications already seen in the record of examinations, we can gain a fuller picture by drawing on the memories of actual students of Dupré. Of particular interest is the level of freedom given to the individual student: were they obliged to follow every detail as set down in the form outlined in the treatise, or was there some level of flexibility?

[§423] The emphasis in the answer to the above question varies according to the particular student, some emphasising rigidity, others freedom. Louise Girod indicates that the rules in the treatise were to be followed and that "Dupré used to say: 'It is only at the end, when you draw the Voix Celeste that you are really yourself.' At that point one could let go a little…"[38] Suzanne Chaisemartin remembers no other form being studied other than that found in the treatise.[39] Marie-Clarie Alain speaks of having to follow the details of the plan "to the letter", even regarding registration, though she remembers Dupré smiling when Pierre Cochereau produced a crescendo to the tutti during the development. She recalls a certain freedom regarding harmonic language.[40] Jeanne Joulain depicts a combination of strict control and personal expression: the *thème libre* was "like a kind of andante sonata, which was free only in its harmonic language, but in which the personality of each one could find free expression".[41] As to rigidity, she adds, "Some people have reproached him [Dupré] sometimes rather vehemently, for being intolerant and of demanding passive obedience. This is not accurate. He wanted above all to give us solid principles, on the basis of which the personality of each would expand."[42]

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38 "Dupré disait: 'C'est seulement à la fain, quand vous mettez la voix céleste,que vous devenez vous-même.' A ce moment, on pouvait se laisser un peu aller…" Jutten, cf. note 7. Vol. 1. 395.

39 Jutten, cf. note 7. Vol. 1, 396.

40 Jutten, cf. note 7. Vol. 1, 396.

41 "…comme une sorte d'andante de sonate, qui n'avait de libre que le langage harmonique, mais dans lequel pouvait se donner libre cours la personnalité de chacun". Jutten, cf. note 7. Vol. 1. 396.

42 "Certains lui ont reproché avec quelque vehemence, parfois, d'êtreintolérant et d'exiger une obeisance passive. Ce n'est pas exact. Il voulait surtout nous donner des principes solides, sur

[§424] While Odile Pierre, who clearly admired Dupré's teaching, speaks of minute attention to detail in the following of the plan of the *thème libre*, she also says that Dupré readily encouraged flights of lyricism in the central development.[43] Bernard Gavoty recounts an improvisation of Jehan Alain, the conclusion of which broke the rules that Dupré had given. When Alain exclaimed, 'Ah! I've gotten it wrong!" Dupré replied, 'Make that kind of mistake often!"[44] In his final exam, Jean Langlais improvised on a theme in a minor key and, contrary to the expected procedures, presented the second exposition of the theme in the dominant instead of the relative major, because he thought the effect more musical. Dupré was taken aback, and worried that the jury members, who would expect a presentation in the relative major, might vote Langlais down. Langlais' playing was so good that Dupré remained fairly confident that he might get a *premier prix*. This is in fact what happened. Thereafter Dupré instructed juries to allow a second exposition of a minor theme either in the relative major or in the dominant minor.[45] The incident highlights both the strengths and the weaknesses of the institution: there was the real danger of rigidity coming in the way of music, though in fact it was music that won the day.

[§425] As we have seen, the *thème libre* was a form developed for teaching and examination in the Conservatoire. It is significant in this context to note that Dupré made no reference to such a form in his earlier volume (now Volume 2). This suggests that, in all its details, perhaps he did not considerate it as a viable form for real music making outside the walls of the Conservatoire.

[§426] If the *thème libre* was a rather artificial form, in the hands of Dupré, the form and the exercises associated with its preparation developed a wide range of technical skills that would certainly prove useful in a range of different improvisational contexts:

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lesquels s'epanouirait la personnalité de chacun.' Jutten, cf. note 7. Vol. 1, 396.

43 Jutten, cf. note 7. Vol. 1, 397.

44 Aurélie Decourt. *Jehan Alain: Biographie, Correspondence, Dessins, Essais*. Chambéry: Éditions Comp'Act 2005. 32

45 Ann Labounsky. *Jean Langlais: The Man and his Music*. Portland, Oregon: Amadeus Press, 2000. 61.

- Harmonisation of a melody in any voice, with appropriate contrapuntal interest in accompanying voices
- Introduction to basic building blocks:
    - Antecedent and consequent
    - Deductive commentary
    - Binary exposition
- Imitative harmony
- Modulating bridge
- Development with sense of key structure, imitation, rhythmic and melodic emphasis
- Analysis of thematic elements for development in the course of a piece
- The device of the 'false return'
- Relationship between form and registration
- An overall sense of proportion regarding the length of sections within the piece
- An introduction to sonata form, albeit in slow motion

Volume Two: Organ Improvisation

[§427] An overview of Volume Two of the treatise can be obtained by examining the table of contents:

Introduction
I. Organ Technique
II. Natural Harmony
III. Theme
IV. Counterpoint and Chorale
V. The Suite
VI. Fugue
VII. The Variation
VIII. The Four Symphonic Forms
IX. Free Forms
X. Appendix[46]

46 This appendix treats the question of organ improvisation at Roman Catholic services.

[§428] As regards the overall approach indicated in this ordering of material, we can look to Dupré's own remarks on the proper path to follow, given in an article shortly after the publication of the treatise:

> At the outset one must fight against ambitious flights and trace the humblest paths, progressing slowly towards high roads. It is very important that one should take up the easiest practice first – given melodies in counterpoint, treated in the severe style of the sixteenth century masters, in two, then in three voices. Improvising in the trio form is the surest way to learn how to carry out the voices independently.
> When one is able to work out canons at different intervals, the study of the fugue may be started, in three, then in four voices or more.
> The form of the aria, the minuet and prelude should be practiced next, as a transition between the fugue and the symphonic style, such as is found in the variation [...].
> […] As for the free forms, such as the fantasy and the rhapsody, they should be tried later as a means of enriching the talent of the improviser and giving wider scope to his imagination.[47]

Chapter One: Organ Technique

[§429] Chapter One begins by stressing the importance of a good piano technique and indicates a minimum daily round of scales and arpeggios. A section on manual technique at the organ places great emphasis on the ability to maintain a perfect legato touch, giving exercises relating to glissando, the passing of fingers over and under, as well as finger substitution. A page on the basics of pedal technique follows. A further page outlines succinctly Dupré's approach to rhythm and rubato, to the length of repeated notes and other issues of articulation in the context of polyphonic playing.[48]
[§430] Four pages on registration follow, most of which is given over to a consideration of a symphonic style which adopts an orchestral approach: "one

47 Marcel Dupré. "Improvisation" from *The Rotunda*, reprinted in *The Diapason* (June 1, 1926). 23.

48 These issues are dealt with at greater length in his *Méthode d'Orgue.* Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1927. 58-71.

must, after realizing the exact value of each stop, observe laws governing orchestration and choose stops as if one were choosing instruments in writing a full score."[49] This leads into a detailed consideration as to how orchestral instruments may best be imitated at the organ. Some final considerations of organ stops in the own right conclude the chapter.

Chapter Two: Natural Harmony

[§431] The importance which Dupré attaches to the contrapuntal aspect of improvisation, already evident in Volume One, is given explicit emphasis in this chapter on harmony: "The improviser should in no case be preoccupied with harmonization which must come to him in an immediate spontaneous manner and which must be only the consequence of the contrapuntal movement of voices." This point is made with greater force later on: "Contrary to belief, the harmonic flavour is not something elaborately worked out; it must come forth spontaneously. It is vain to search for pretty harmonies." Nonetheless a harmonic awareness is vital, and so the author continues: "But to be able to identify every harmonic combination in a flash one must know how to bring back every chord to its natural source which is the immutable harmonic series given by a fundamental sound."[50] This leads to a consideration of the harmonic series and the intervals which it generates. After looking at intervals the author continues by examining 3-note chords, 4-note chords and 5-note chords built on intervals of a third, all of which, together with their inversions, are found within the harmonic series.

[§432] A second section within the chapter looks at modulation by means of two symmetrical chords: the augmented fifth chord and the diminished seventh cord which, according to Dupré, though open to abuse, offer the possibility of instant modulation to any key.

[§433] A final section within this chapter looks at 'resolutions of polytonal aggregations'.[51] Dupré proposes, with examples, that the apparent bitonality

49 *Organ Improvisation*. 12.

50 *Organ Improvisation*. 16.

51 *Organ Improvisation*. 26.

of complex chords can normally be resolved into simple tonality, either by the attracting power of a dominant extending to a note in false relation or by the modal series to which the notes belong.[52]

Chapter Three: Theme

[§434] Chapter Three is built on the understanding that a quick and methodical analysis of the theme to be improvised is essential to good results.[53] Dupré puts the matter succinctly: the improviser "must not ply the theme to a pre-decided form but on the contrary must *adapt to this theme the form it requires and no other*."[54] To further this aim, the author looks at modes, rhythms and theme analysis.

[§435] The treatment of the modes comes as something of an invitation to move beyond a purely diatonic understanding to a broader, richer modal world, including ancient Greek modes, plainchant modes, Hindu modes, gypsy and Arabian modes, as well as a variety of pentatonic modes. There is also a brief concluding reference to modes which use microtones. The importance of modal colour is seen in the author's description of the ancient diatonic modes which, using the notes of C major, he outlines as follows:

- The mode of F, the 'Supermajor', energetic and light
- The mode of C, the major mode
- The mode of G, the 'Interrogative mode'
- The mode of D, the 'Superminor', fiery yearning
- The mode of A, the minor mode without the leading note
- The mode of E, a mode of 'supplication'
- The mode of B, 'depressing and inconsistent'[55]

52 *Organ Improvisation*. 29.

53 *Organ Improvisation*. 31.

54 *Organ Improvisation*. 40.

55 *Organ Improvisation*. 33-34.

[§436] Dupré's study of rhythms begins with consideration of the rhythms of Greek poetry (pyrrhic, trochee, iamb, tribrach, spondee, dactyl, etc.[56]). He continues with a consideration of the characteristics of some of the simpler rhythms and their connections with certain forms, for example:

- Trochee (_U), tribach (UUU): three beats (minuet and waltz)
- Iamb (U_): three beats (passacaglia)
- Spondee (_ _): four beats (march)[57]

[§437] The analysis of the themes is treated according to a specific order of questions.[58] Firstly the overall nature of the theme is determined, as to whether harmony, melody or rhythm predominate. Secondly, the key of the theme should be established. Thirdly, the truest and simplest harmony is established. Fourthly, the mode (and this includes the range of the theme, the first scale step, the last scale step, the note most frequently heard, the emotional summit of the phrase and the essential scale steps on which the theme rests) is examined. Fifthly, the rhythmic figures of the theme are examined, and the order in which they might best be developed. Finally, the question of counterpoint is examined, with the possibility of a countersubject, if the theme requires it, as well as possible imitations.

Chapter Four: Counterpoint and Chorale[59]

[§438] Chapter four begins with exercises the 'severe style of the sixteenth century masters' referred to above, beginning with simple 3-part harmonisations, and progressing with 3-part counterpoint under very strict conditions.[60] Exercises in canon follow, firstly 2-part and secondly with a free voice added.

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56 *Organ Improvisation*. 37-38.

57 *Organ Improvisation*. 38

58 *Organ Improvisation*. 40-47.

59 *Organ Improvisation*. 48-65.

60 For example, no repetitions of the same note in the same voice, only one chord per bar, no melodic intervals larger than a minor sixth, aside from the octave. *Organ Improvisation*..50.

[§439] The student is then introduced to four chorale forms. In the Canonic Chorale, Dupré points out that canons are often fragmentary, with one voice having to wait occasionally for the canon to 'fit'. He also notes that such canons work best at the distance of one note, especially at the interval of the fifth or the fourth.[61]

[§440] In his treatment of the Contrapuntal Chorale, as with many other forms, Dupré not only gives advice about the form but also suggests a progressive programme of practice. He envisages imitation in the accompanying parts, either free, or based on the melody or the chorale text. He suggests that initially such imitation be practiced in a definite order of voices before progressing to something freer. He suggests beginning with 3-part treatments and then 4-part settings, and lists various dispositions of parts for hands and feet.

[§441] The Ornamented Chorale is introduced to the student in two forms. The first form follows the example of Bach, using simple ornamentation of the chorale melody, with care taken not to overload the soprano. A more modern form is then suggested, in which each phrase yields fragments which are developed to form a completely new melody, each 4-bar phrase being treated independently to yield a section of about 16 bars.

[§442] In the Fugal Chorale each line of the chorale becomes the subject of a short fugal exposition, with the chorale appearing in augmentation in the final voice each time. As with all these forms, Dupré gives certain dispositions or ordering of vocal entries as the basis of the student's practice. It is interesting to note that Dupré begins his treatment of chorale forms with the strictest kind, namely canonic, before moving to the other forms, which allow a little more room for creative flexibility. After the severe work of canonical treatment, the other forms flow rather naturally.

[§443] At the end of the chapter, three more advanced forms are described: Canonic Chorale in Five Voices (two parts in canon with three accompanying parts), Fugal Chorale in Five Voices, and a form which begins as a Contrapuntal Chorale and continues after a brief transition as a Canonic Chorale. It should be noted that in all the five main chorale forms discussed

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61 *Organ Improvisation*. 55

in this chapter, Dupré refers to examples from the writings of J.S. Bach. The chapter concludes with hymn melodies both from Catholic plainchant and Lutheran hymnody.

Chorale Improvisation on Plainchant Melodies in the Conservatoire and in Dupré's own performances

[§444] It is interesting to note in passing that the treatment of plainchant melodies in this chapter corresponds to that envisaged in the improvisation exams of the Paris Conservatoire, the first test of which was as follows: "On a prescribed Gregorian theme, improvisation of a contrapuntal chorale in the manner of the chorale preludes of Bach."[62] The freer approach to chant typical of Charles Tournemire was not envisaged here.[63]

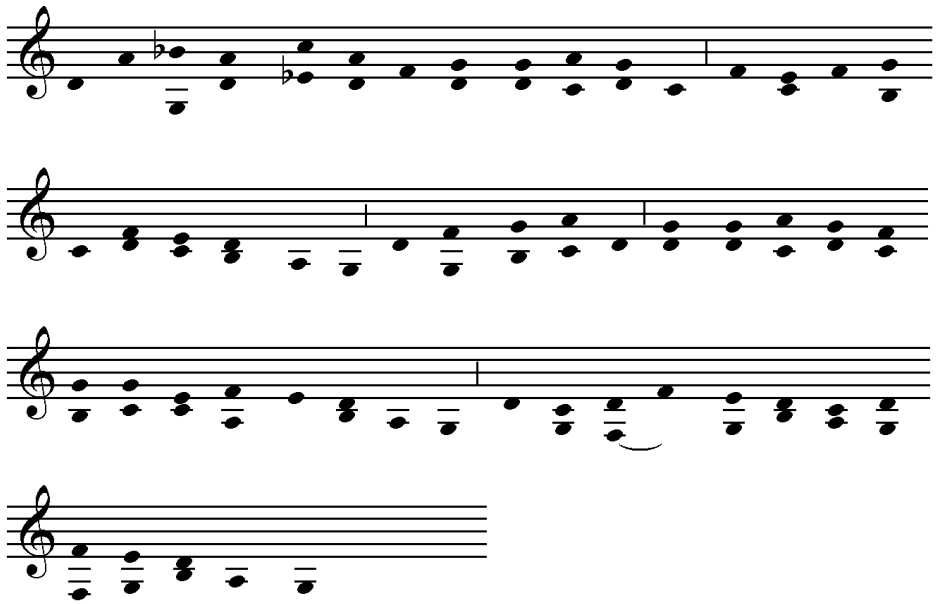
[§445] As regards Dupré's approach to the teaching of these forms in the conservatoire, Jutten's research into the examinations of that institution yield some interesting information.[64] Already before succeeding Gigout as professor of organ, Dupré was a jury member for conservatoire organ exams between 1921 and 1925. His detailed notes from the exams indicate that the favoured form for students was the contrapuntal chorale, with the theme in the pedal. Canonic chorales were rare, (only 2 out of 22 examples), while fugal chorale and ornamented chorale are totally absent. Dupré noted that in the final exam of 1921, no-one noticed the canonic possibilities of the chant, which he wrote out.[65]

62 Dupré, cf. note 10. 25.

63 Such a style is typified by his large collection of pieces based on chant, *L'Orgue Mystique* (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1930).

64 Jutten, cf. note 7. Vol. 1, 65ff.

65 Jutten, cf. note 7. Vol. 1, 196-198.



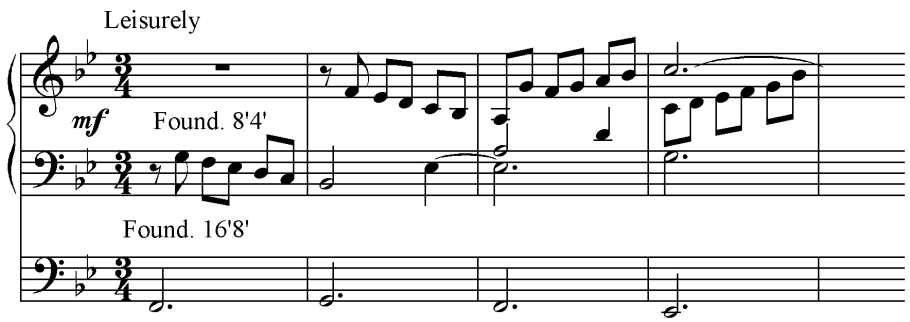
treatise: the canon is at a fifth below, beginning at a space of two beats, with rhythmic adjustments introduced where necessary.

[§447] As regards developments during Dupré's tenure as professor of organ, Jutten shows a marked increase in the standard of contrapuntal playing. In the period 1928 to 1954, canonic chorales, with vocal dispositions of 3, 4,5 and 6 voices, make up over a third of the chorale treatments presented by students in their exams. In all, 70% of chorale treatments are of one type or another that is contrapuntally demanding: canonic chorales, fugal chorales, contrapuntal chorales with a countersubject and *mélanges*.[66]

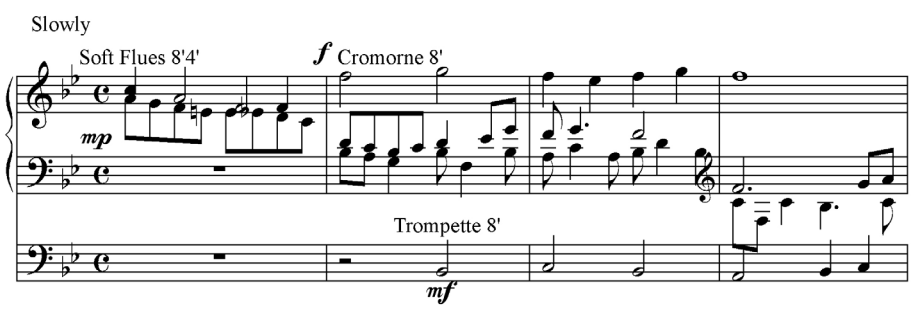
[§448] We find examples of contrapuntal and canonic chorale treatment among Dupré's own recorded improvisations in the two chorale variations

66 The term *mélange* refers to a contrapuntal treatment in which each voice uses notes of a consistent rhythmic value. Messiaen, for example, improvised for his final exam a grand mélange with the following vocal dispositions: syncopations in the soprano, crotchets in the alto, the theme in the tenor and minims in the bass. Jutten, cf. note 7. Vol. 1, 199.

which he improvised in Cologne Cathedral in 1961.[67] The first is an improvisation in four voices which presents the theme in the bass, with a simple countersubject of quavers in ascending and descending scales, which moves throughout the accompanying voices:



The second variation presents the theme with a canonic imitation at the fifth:



We can see here further examples of the necessary rhythmic alteration of the theme in order for the canon to work.[68]

67 *Marcel Dupré Improvisiert an der Orgel im Hohen Dom zu Köln*. Ditigal remastering of the original recording: Psallite CD 60011.

68 This transcription comes from Marcel Dupré. *Three Chorale Variations on Veni, Creator Spiritus*. Fenton: Birnamwood Publications, 2001. Transcriptions by David A. Stech.

Chapter Five: The Suite

[§449] Chapter Five studies the dance forms of the baroque suite, together with the Prelude and the Toccata.

[§450] The chapter begins by studying the harmonic scheme of the *Sarabande* from Bach's second *Partita*, in C minor and continues with outlining key structures in binary form for the student, using modulations only to closely related keys. The study of the Minuet follows, with a discussion about the difference between binary and ternary expositions.

[§451] Outline plans for a minuet and trio are given, referring both to thematic structure and tonal structure. As in other parts of the treatise, the structures given only represent a first step for the beginning:

> We have chosen the two preceding forms as the best ones with which the student should become familiar in implementing modulations. He will be able to take more liberty later. Also he will be able, after some time, to give twenty, twenty-four, and even thirty-two measures to the second sections of the minuets and trios, instead of sixteen.[69]

[§452] Further points which are specific to the student improviser: Dupré notes that in the final section of the Minuet and Trio form, it is quite difficult to repeat accurately the content of the opening section, and the improviser must be content with a similarity of length, tonal activity and harmonic structure.[70] Secondly, the author recommends beginning with slow themes and only gradually moving towards the more animated movements. Thirdly, he recommends practicing these forms, firstly in two voices, and later in three voices on two manuals and Pedal. This last recommendation is clearly not so much to do with an approach to form as the acquisition of a strong sense of the independence of melodic lines and a contrapuntal facility.

[§453] The section on the Prelude analyses the preludes of Bach in Eb and B minor for organ. Dupré then illustrates how a prelude might be improvised, taking as his inspiration the fugue theme of the 'little' fugue in G minor.

69 *Organ Improvisation*. 72.

70 *Organ Improvisation*. 71-72.

He uses 3 melodic fragments from the fugue subject and, transforming their rhythms into equal note values, uses them as theme, commentary and modulating material. After illustrating the structure of the exposition, in both binary and ternary forms, he outlines a full form with expositions in tonic, dominant subdominant keys, with appropriate modulating bridges. He notes that the subdominant exposition should be shorter so that the final key is heard as the true tonic and not the dominant of the second last exposition.

Dupré's treatment of the Toccata

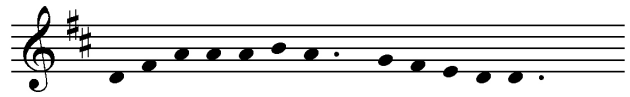
[§454] The Toccata as proposed by Dupré is similar in form to the Prelude. After brief references to the toccatas of Bach and others, and a short analysis of the structure of the toccata in Widor's *Fifth Symphony for Organ*, the author proposes an outline form which is broadly similar to that of the Prelude, though the sub-dominant exposition is absent: expositions in the tonic and dominant (or relative major) with modulating episodes between, leading to a recapitulation in the tonic, via a distant key a semitone away.[71] Dupré envisages a formula of continuous rhythm, which accompanies the theme in longer note values. He also mentions the danger of monotony and advises the improviser to look for variety of texture.

A Toccata Improvised by Dupré

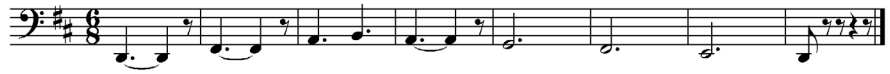
[§455] We have an example of an improvised toccata in the postlude which Dupré improvised at the end of a ceremony to dedicate the Beuchet-Debierre organ at St Louis des Invalides in Paris on 8th December 1957.[72] A melody in long note values is heard in the pedal:

71 We have already seen the device of the return to the tonic via a distant key at the end of the development of the *thème libre*.

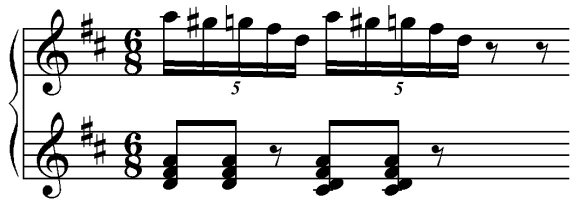
72 This was recorded and was released on a vinyl LP: Erato LDE 3082. The quotations given here are from a transcription made by David A. Stech in *Dans la Gloire des Invalides In the Glory of the Invalides: eleven Versets for Solo Organ Improvisesd at the Dedication of the Beuchet-Debierre Organ at St. Louis des Invalides, Paris December 8, 1957 by Marcel Dupré*. Colefax, North Carolina: Wayne Leupold Editions, 2004.



This bears a striking resemblance to the chant *Adoro Te*, which Dupré used as the theme of the final movement of his *Symphonie Passion*:



The piece opens with 13 bars of continuous rhythm, which will continue in the manuals when the pedal theme appears:



[§456] After 13 bars the piece modulates, not into the dominant, but into F# minor. Instead of a second exposition of the theme we find that the development has already begun, using the falling scale in the second half of the theme. After 16 bars of modulating development the piece arrives at a dominant pedal. The tonic return of the theme in the pedals occurs 4 bars later. The opening arpeggio motif is heard twice in the pedal, with an expansion of intervals the second time around. The full theme is then heard, with some final development of the descending scale providing a short coda.

[§457] We find here that Dupré has used some of the devices mentioned in the treatise while at the same time choosing to ignore or modify other principles:

- There is a continuous formula in the hands which could be said to be loosely based on the falling scale found in the pedal theme.
- There is a theme in the pedals in long note values, though its appearance at the beginning of the piece is brief.
- There is no second exposition of the theme that might contrast to the opening exposition.
- There is a central section which moves through a variety of keys
- The theme returns in the tonic key, in a slightly developed form, leading to a short coda.

[§458] One might say that Dupré has improvised here a more condensed form of toccata than that found in the treatise. This is perhaps because of the context: this is the last of eleven short pieces improvised as part of the blessing ceremony, which took the form of a dialogue alternating between Cardinal Feltin and the organ.

Chapter Six: Fugue

[§459] Chapter Six is lengthy and detailed though, according to Dupré, only dealing with those aspects of fugue which are pertinent to improvisation.[73] For a more detailed study of fugue, he recommends André Gedalge's *Traité de la Fugue*.[74] Here I will limit myself to outlining the sub-headings and observations of the more significant details. The sub-headings of the chapter are as follows.

I. Subject Analysis

[§460] In the analysis of the subject, Dupré points out that the answer is best determined by discovering the 'true stretto' which, should it exist, is normally based on the answer.

73 *Organ Improvisation*. 81-101. This is the longest chapter in the book.

74 André Gedalge. *Traité de la Fugue*. Paris: Enoch & Cie, 1901.

II. Plan of the Fugue

- The Countersubject

  Dupré envisages a countersubject which is short enough to be easily used in the course of the fugue. It does not coincide with the beginning of the subject. He also sees a progressive approach to using the countersubject: the student may well begin by improvising fugues without any countersubject, continue by introducing it in the exposition and finally use it as far as the dominant pedal.

- The Exposition

  The author outlines, in order of difficulty, a variety of dispositions for expositions of two, three and four voices. The two plans for a two-voice fugue are the same as that in Gedalge's work.[75] The first disposition for the four-voice fugue places the entries in the following order: tenor, alto, soprano, bass. This is not the first disposition given in Gadalge,[76] and corresponds to the disposition which, according to Gaston Litaize, Dupré always adopted in classes in the Conservatoire.[77]

- The Counterexposition

  Dupré calls for a counterexposition when the subject is very short or when the final entry ends in the dominant key. He proposes schemata which place the answer and the subject only in the outer voices, for the sake of clarity.

- The Episode

  Dupré is concerned as to the length of the episode: it should not be more than twice the length of the subject and should be extremely short before the counter-exposition and between the subdominant and its relative. The final episode is the longest. The author provides harmonic schemes for beginners and gives tables with the ordering of vocal entries in imitation. While this is a lot of

75 Gedalge, cf. note 74. 74.

76 Gedalge, cf. note 74. 75.

77 Sébastien Durand. *Gaston Litaize*. Paris: Bleu Nuit Éditeur 2005. 25

detail for an improviser to assimilate, it represents a simplification and standardisation, representing only one of the five options listed in Gedalge.[78]

- Subject Entrances

  In order to be able to transpose the subject correctly into any key, Dupré suggests the student re-read it in the appropriate C, F or G clefs. For those not familiar with all the C clefs this might represent a further mental burden. It was however quite normal for harmony exercises to be written in the old clefs and would have posed less difficulty than for many today.[79] As regards the order of voices in which subject entries appear, Dupré gives a detailed framework of options which the student should adopt rigidly at first, freedom coming later when a certain technique has been acquired.[80]

- Stretto

  Dupré gives detailed consideration to the use of stretto towards the end of the fugue, insisting that the first stretto and the true stretto involve entries of all voices, in the order in which they appeared during the exposition.

III Five-Voice Fugue

[§461] Dupré warns against muddiness and advises that full five-part polyphony should be limited to certain key moments, following the practice of Bach himself.

IV Fugue with Two Subjects

[§462] Dupré proposes a framework for the student's initial attempts:

- Exposition of the first subject and first episode
- Subject and answer in the relative key, and second episode
- Exposition of the second subject in the principal key, and third episode
- Combination of subjects in the sub-dominant and its relative
- Stretto of the first subject
- Stretto of the second subject[81]

[§463] This framework is very close to that given Gedalge's outline of a scholastic double fugue.[82] It is interesting to note however that, according to Delestre, Dupré's usual way of improvising double fugues himself followed a different form, the subject entries occurring as follows:

- Exposition of the first subject
- Counter-exposition in the sub-dominant
- Exposition of the second subject in the relative key
- Counter-exposition of the second subject in the relative of the sub-dominant
- Strettos [83]

The chapter ends with guidelines as to how to write a good fugue subject.

Improvised Fugue: Conservatoire and Dupre's Performances

[§464] An examination of Dupre's teaching in the conservatoire shows that he used the structures seen above in his teaching and examinations. Under Guilmant the improvised fugue followed the classic 'scholastic' form: exposition – counter-exposition – three episodes alternating with subject entries in related keys leading to stretto. Guilmant did not impose the use of the countersubject beyond the counter-exposition, but he did insist that the subject entries in the relative keys appear in inner voices. Under Gigout the standard was certainly lower than that which Dupré would later develop in his class. In his notes as a jury member from the final exam of 1921, Dupré wrote:

78 Gedalge, cf. note 74. 121-140

79 For example, Olivier Messiaen's *Vingt Leçons d'Harmonie* (Paris: Leduc, 1944) use the old vocal clefs. Michael Murray recounts Dupré insisting that he learn to read from three C clefs and one F clef, predicting that he would be 'in hell' for a few weeks. Murray, cf. note 1. 124.

80 *Organ Improvisation*. 91

81 *Organ Improvisation*. 97

82 Gedalge, cf. note 74. 254.

83 Delestre, cf. note 4. 26.

No-one made a fugal entry in an inner voice, except Duruflé in the tenor, without bass. No-one saw the stretto at one beat. No-one did more than one stretto aside from the true stretto. 2 girls did the same episode on a fragment foreign to the subject.[84]

[§465] In 1927 Dupré gave a note to the jury with the following details:

- In principle the fugue is in the tenor or the alto.
- There is a counter-exposition if the subject does not modulate at the end
- It occurs in the outer voices, beginning with the voice which exposed the subject
- The 1st stretto, distant enough, has four entries, in the same order as the exposition.
- The true stretto, generally on the dominant pedal, has four entries, in the same order as the exposition.[85]

[§466] The following plan, for the purpose of assessment of improvised fugues in 1928, shows a high level of detail:

- Countersubject
- 3rd voice
- 4th voice
- Episode
- Counter-exposition
- Response
- 2nd episode
- Relative
- Response

84 Odile Jutten. "Marcel Dupré professeur d'improvisations au Conservatoire de Paris, mise en place d'une pédagogie de la technicité". *Bulletin of the Association des Amis de l'Art de Marcel Dupré* 19 (September 2001). 43.

85 Jutten, cf. note 84. 44.

- 3rd episode
- Sub-dominant
- Response
- 4th episode
- 1st stretto
- True stretto[86]

[§467] The technical level was thus very high, and corresponds to that indicated in the treatise. Dupré himself improvised scholastic fugues, an example of which is that on a subject of Maurice Duruflé, recorded in 1949:

- After the first episode the subject is in the tenor with the countersubject in the pedal
- The answer is in the alto, with the countersubject in the soprano
- The sub-dominant statement of the subject is in the soprano, with the countersubject in the bass
- The answer is in the bass with the countersubject in the soprano
- Stretti: 1st stretto, true stretto, stretto at the octave, stretto at the 4th, stretto in contrary motion and finally stretto with augmentation in the pedal[87]

[§468] We can see here that Dupré not only followed the plan used in class and in the exams, but also went further, concluding with 7 stretti in total. [§469] We also know of improvised fugues where Dupré felt free to adapt the form. Jeanne Demessieux remarked in her diary that when Dupré improvised fugues based on chorale melodies, he often played the full chorale as the final climax after the stretti.[88] She also observed that final sections of his fugues in St Sulpice frequently exploded into toccata style, moving well beyond the form presented in the treatise or taught in class:

86 Jutten, cf. note 7. Vol. 1. 332.

87 Jutten, cf. note 7. Vol. 1.339.

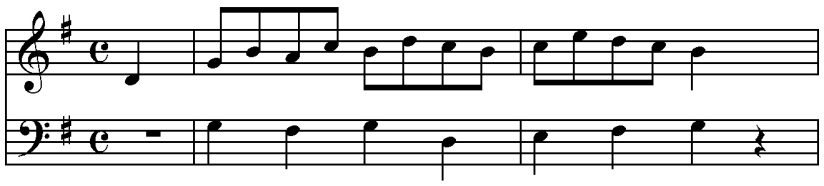
88 Diary entry for Sunday 23rd May 1942, in *Jeanne Demessieux Journal (1934-1946),* a special edition of *l'Orgue* 2009 III-IV, No. 287-288. 129.

> It is under these vaults that one had to hear Dupré improvise a five-voiced double fugue, with multiple stretti in augmentation, diminution, inversion, with continually increasing interest, bringing about an irresistible crescendo, at the summit of which would explode a toccata, the theme further enriched by rhythmic alterations.[89]

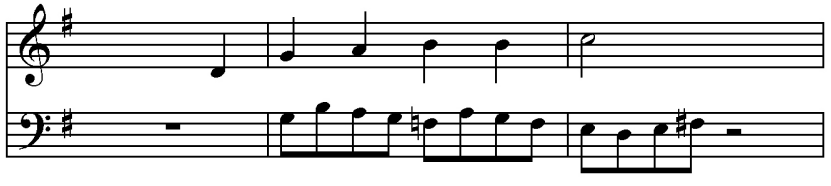
Chapter Seven: The Variation – The Tryptique[90]

[§470] In Chapter Seven, Dupré notes that variations will tend to be rhythmic, melodic, harmonic or contrapuntal, and gives musical examples from history. The chapter continues with a treatment of variation technique in order of difficulty: air with variations, passacaglia, and variations in the modern style. The air and variations, envisaged as a two-part form, follow the procedure found typically in French Noëls, along the following lines.

Melody of the theme in the right hand, with melodic variation in quavers:



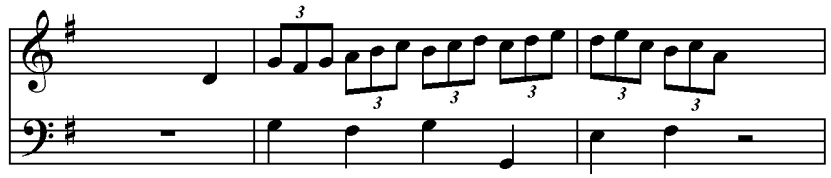
Melody of the theme in the right hand, with quaver counterpoint in the left hand:



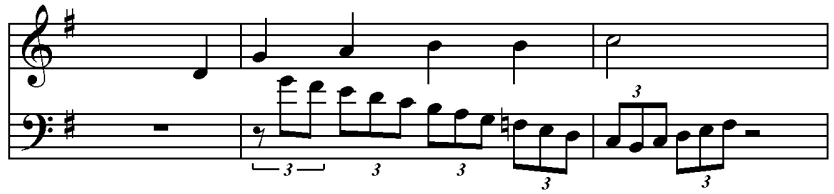
89 Jeanne Demessieux. "L'Art de Marcel Dupré". *Etudes* (April 1950), reproduced in *Bulletin of the Association des Amis de l'Art de Marcel Dupré* 18 (October 1999). 25.

90 *Organ Improvisation*. 102-117.

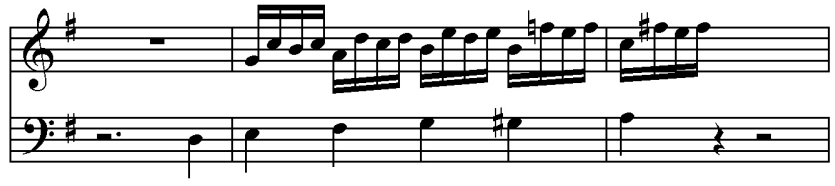
Melody of the theme in the right hand, with melodic variation in triplet quavers:



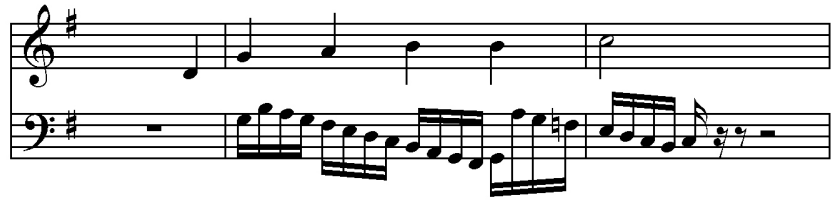
Melody of the theme in the right hand, with triplet quaver counterpoint in the left hand:



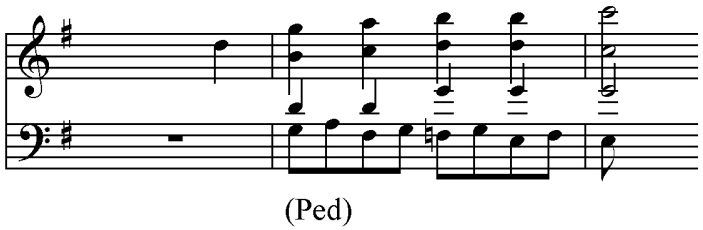
Melody of the theme in the right hand, with melodic variation in semiquavers:



Melody of the theme in the right hand, with semiquaver counterpoint in the left hand:



Theme harmonised in four voices with quaver counterpoint in the pedal:



[§471] Dupré's treatment analyses the nature of each variation of Bach's Passacaglia in C minor. He also lists the rhythms used in the piece as a model for the student, adding others. He also adverts to the possibility of canonic variation. A fairly free approach to the number and character of variations is adopted, though rhythmic and harmonic variations are to be used economically, and the presentation of the theme in other keys is not envisaged. A progression of musical interest from one variation to the next is proposed.

[§472] Dupré's treatment of 'variation in the modern style' focuses on harmonic and rhythmic variation. As a working exercise he proposes that the student improvise harmonic litanies where the same melodic fragment is presented in a variety of harmonisations, before applying harmonic variation to a whole theme. Under the heading of rhythmic variation, he proposes that the student present the same theme in a variety of rhythmic guises: chorale, march, tarantella, aria etc.

[§473] Having studied a variety of forms in the treatise, Dupré proposes the tryptique as a larger form, and provides a table and a list suggesting various ways of constructing an improvisation in three movements using some of the following: prelude, chorale, variation, fugue, toccata. His comments regarding the above show an approach we have seen elsewhere in his work:

> We would not pretend to set this table down as law: performance can make any arrangement acceptable. These are only suggestions meant as a guide in preliminary work, which can be varied infinitely. The same holds true for the following groupings. They are far from including all possible combinations, but are sufficient to open a path for the student.[91]

[§474] He proposes such a form as most suited to themes of a serious nature, for example Gregorian melodies, Lutheran chorales, passacaglia themes and fugue subjects of a melodic nature.

Chapter Eight: the Four Symphonic Forms[92]

[§475] We have seen throughout the treatise that the discussion of form occupies a central place in Dupré's considerations, though in many of the chapters this is complimented by a learning itinerary whereby the student acquires certain harmonic and contrapuntal skills, as well as a progressive insertion into the particular form. Coming late in the treatise, the treatment of the symphonic forms arrives at a moment at which the student has already become a very skilful improviser and the focus thus centres to a much larger extent on form alone.

[§476] As regards the Allegro, Dupré suggests a ternary exposition of the first theme if it be short, a binary exposition if it be longer. For the bridge to the dominant or relative major, a key structure of two neighbouring keys is proposed, and various examples are given. The entry of the second theme before its tonality is achieved is proposed as an elegant option, and a ternary form is laid down as the norm. The risk in the development, as the author sees it, is that the improviser will "wander from key to key, alternately stumbling from platitude to incoherence".[93] Accordingly, Dupré advises the adoption of a tonal plan of five or six tonalities, and lists a number of means of musical development, which would be employed in order of increasing interest: repetition, sequences in the same voice, sequences by imitation, inversion, canon, changing of intervals, inversion of notes, changing of respective values, changing of rhythm. Dupré's consideration of the recapitulation includes the classic device of transposing the bridge to the

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91 *Organ Improvisation*. 114.

92 *Organ Improvisation*. 118-137

93 *Organ Improvisation*. 120.

sub-dominant. The device of an introduction, which returns at the beginning of the development, is also mentioned, along with considerations of the coda.

[§477] Under the heading of the Andante, Dupré focuses on certain forms:

- The Song without Words, a tripartite piece in which a number of combinations of binary and ternary forms are suggested, the final (recapitulation) being rather short.
- The Andante with two Themes, which uses the allegro form in miniature.
- The Andante which presents the theme three times, with two developments between.
- Andante with variations
- Andante in the form of a simple exposition, when the pace is very slow.
- Fugal form, a somewhat reduced form of fugue

[§478] Particular reference is made in the andante section to historical models, especially the nocturnes of Chopin. While Dupré generally proposes a fairly rigorous approach to form, certain remarks regarding the central section of the Song without Words show a keen awareness of the danger of rigidity:

> We are purposely avoiding making the succession of tonalities any more precise, and we advise the student not to imprison himself in a few formulas he has fabricated himself… Symmetry must make itself felt in the fixed general order, but it must never smother spontaneity. It is unbearable when rigorously applied to detail.[94]

[§479] The Scherzo is examined firstly as to its form and, drawing on a number of historical examples, Dupré points to the minuet-and-trio form, as well as the allegro form with two themes as possible alternatives. The second element for attention is rhythm and, in particular, the interplay of binary and ternary rhythms. As in many other sections of the treatise, Dupré proposes an itinerary of practice, whereby the student chooses a particular rhythm and applies it rigorously to each section of the form being studied, be it exposition, development, modulating section etc.

[§480] The finale is examined by Dupré under the heading of the rondo form. As a plan for practice he proposes firstly the simpler form which consists of refrain and verses, with contrasting tonalities. The second, more complex, form combines the bithematic sonata form with the rondo. Here the first and third verses serve as bridge passages between the first and second themes within the sonata framework.

Chapter Nine: Free Forms[95]

[§481] Here the author briefly proposes models from the literature for the fantasia, the rhapsody and for descriptive pieces. In the latter he notes that the picturesque element will be furnished by the accompaniment. The chapter concludes with a summary of the forms studied in the treatise and how they interrelate.

Appendix: Roman Catholic Services[96]

[§482] The appendix examines the various moments of the Catholic liturgy where improvisation has a proper place, and proposes suitable forms for each. It also takes account of the sacred nature of the liturgical action, urging restraint as to rhythm and changes of registration. It also gives advice about improvising in a large stone building, where harmonies need to be clearly articulated and changes of dynamics are best taken slowly.

94 *Organ Improvisation*. 128.

95 *Organ Improvisation*. 138-143.

96 *Organ Improvisation*. 143-148

The Pedagogy of the Treatise

[§483] A global look at the treatise reveals certain key ideas, principles or procedures favoured by Dupré:

Importance of form

[§484] The question of form appears at every turn of the treatise and is a central concern. Dupré once said that he did not conceive of music without form.[97] In this respect the treatise has sometimes been compared to a work on composition.[98]

Progression from simplicity to complexity

[§485] The treatise is however more than a discussion of form; it gives the student an itinerary of study, which includes progression from simpler forms to more complex ones, for example in his treatment of fugue, variation and rondo.

Progression from rigidity to freedom

[§486] Rigid adherence to certain forms is proposed as an initial training and, though the author does not say this, it seems that the motive is to make sure that the student's technical development is complete. Rigidity in many places gives way to greater freedom once the student has made progress. We see examples of this in his treatment of the contrapuntal chorale, minuet and trio, fugal episodes and form of the tryptique. When one moves on to the fully-formed improviser, one would expect, by extrapolation, still greater freedom, and this is what we will find when we look in more detail at some of Dupré own improvisations.

97 Jeanne Demessieux: Diary entry for Friday 19th February 1943, cf. note 88. 122.

98 Paul Dukas wrote to Dupré: "Although you have not meant to write a treatise on composition properly speaking, composers will learn to compose from it as much as organists to improvise." Quoted in Michael Murray, cf. note 1. 107, citing Delestre, cf. note 4. 142. Jeanne Demessieux refers to it as "truly a work on composition", cf. note 89. 29.

Development of Contrapuntal skills

[§487] The independence of voices is cultivated from the beginning, with high levels of contrapuntal competence being the final aim. This is also reflected in the particular emphasis on contrapuntal skill which Dupré brought to the class of the Paris Conservatoire, and also reflects his own innate abilities.

A treatise rooted in the historical repertoire

[§488] While some of the formal 'recipes' given in the treatise seem somewhat abstracted from the historical repertoire, they are based on an analysis of examples from the repertoire, and the treatise is in fact replete with references to the works of particular composers. We find references to the following (the number in parentheses indicating the number of references: Bach (33), Chopin (34), Beethoven (23), Franck (12), Wagner (10), Liszt (8), Mozart (8), Schumann (7), Schubert (3), Berlioz (1), Chabrier (1), Debussy (1), Dukas (1), Fauré (1), Handel (1), Ravel (1), Saint-Saens (5), Stravinsky (1), Weber (1), Widor (1), Balakirew (1).

Variations on Adeste Fideles[99]

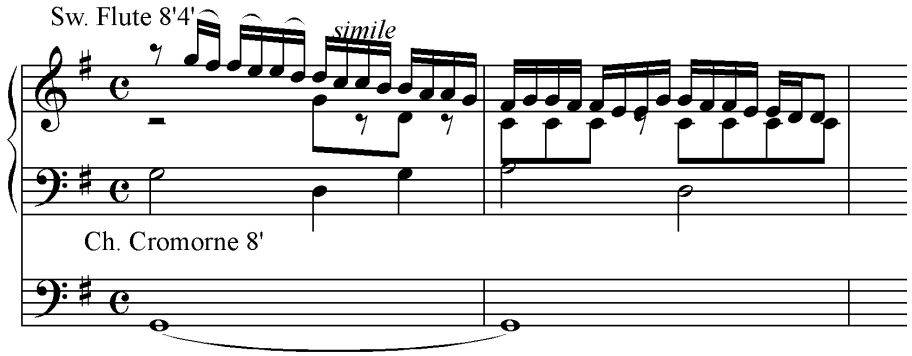
[§489] Reference has already been made to Dupré's own improvisations by way of commentary on particular sections of the treatise. It is interesting and useful have a more detailed look at some examples.

[§490] The Skinner Organ Company had a studio in New York City which possessed 3-manual organ with 76 stops and a 'player' mechanism whereby performances could be recorded on perforated rolls.[100] Dupré recorded a set of improvisations on "Adeste Fideles" on this instrument in 1929. Because the performance was recorded as perforations on the roll, it became possible to translate this into musical notation with great precision. Rollin Smith reconstructed the performance and edited a playing edition, which was published in 1974. As this improvisation dates from that period in Dupré's life when the two volumes of the treatise were written, it invites some comparison between his written theory and his own improvisational practice.

99 Marcel Dupré, Variations on "Adeste Fideles" (H.W. Gray Publications, 1974)

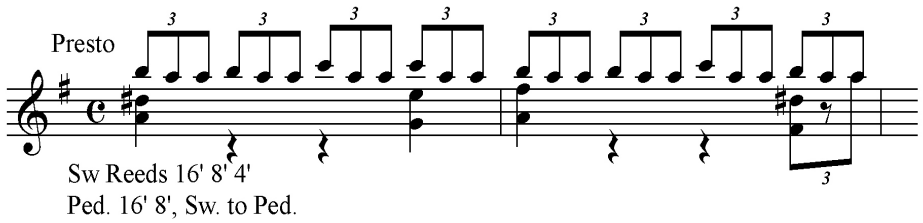
100 http://nycago.org/Organs/NYC/html/SkinnerOrganStudio.html.

[§491] The piece begins with a straightforward four-part harmonisation of the theme, mezzo-forte. The first variation has, initially, the appearance of a contrapuntal chorale, with a thematically related countersubject in the right hand:

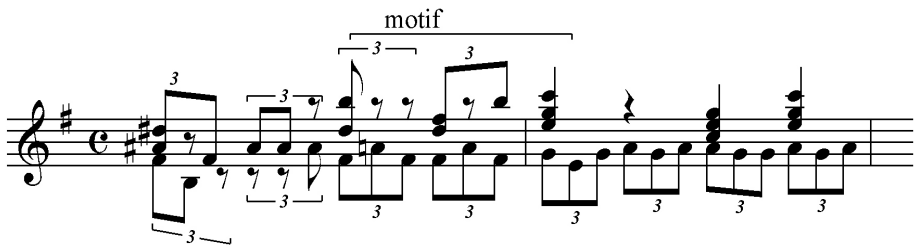


[§492] A curious change takes place however with the second phrase of the tune: instead of continuing with the exact notes of the tune, the left hand presents the notes a third higher than normal, beginning on the note 'B'. It represents a change in the tune and also results in 'consecutive fifths' between the solo and the bass and 'consecutive octaves' later between the tune and the alto voice which, in this particular context, sound out of place. After this phrase the texture changes with a brief interlude of 2 bars for both hands on the swell. One has the impression that there was here a lapse of concentration or a simple error in the presentation of the tune and that the improviser changed the texture in order to catch a moment of repose to find a new way forward. From this point onwards the parts are reversed, with the tune in the right hand and the countersubject in the left hand. The tune is no longer a presentation of the chorale itself but a free invention based on those aspects of the melody already used. While the first half of the variation moved towards the dominant chord, this second half moves through the subdominant area (A minor) and concludes in the tonic. Thus what appeared initially as a contrapuntal chorale is transformed, perhaps because of a mistake, into a 'free' binary exposition based on the opening phrases of the chorale. There is a poetic touch at the end, where the semiquaver motif of the countersubject appears briefly in the principal melody in the right hand.

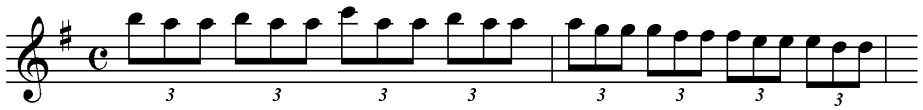
[§493] The second variation, beginning with a transition into E minor, is very free in what Dupré would call the 'modern style'. This lively variation begins and ends in E minor, moves to B minor in bar 4, and back to E minor by bar 8, with constantly shifting tonality thereafter. The motif used in the countersubject of the first variation re-appears, this time transformed into a triplet rhythm:



The first notes of the chorale also appear as a recurring motif, for example:



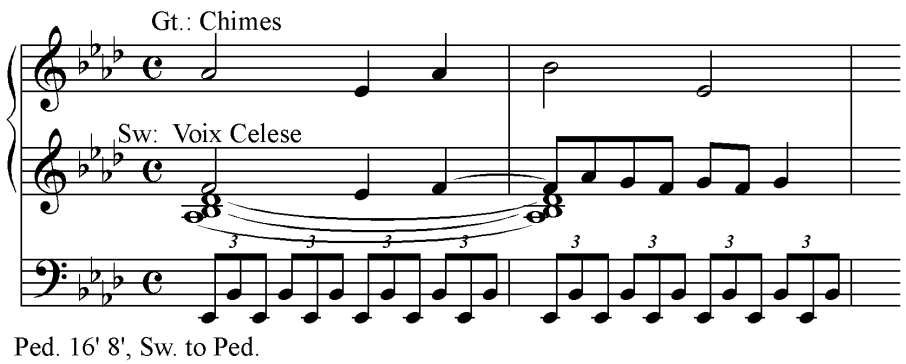
Finally, the descending scale in the last phrase of the chorale is, perhaps, the inspiration behind a number of decorated scale passages such as the following:



[§494] The generally detached quality of texture applied to the swell reeds is an instance of the principle enunciated in chapter one of the treatise, on organ technique: "Smooth polyphonic music is not good with reeds. That is why they are not used in fugues and why one should energetically release

chords played by reeds."[101] After the variation proper concludes, there are three bars of slow transitional chords on the swell Flute Celeste, leading to the next variation, which is in Ab Major.

[§495] The following extract from the third variation (bars 3 and 4) gives a feel for the style and texture:



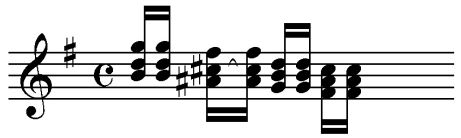
[§496] A number of effects combine here to produce a 'hazy' effect: the interplay of binary and ternary rhythm in the pedal, the combination of compound and simple rhythms between the pedal and the left hand, the use of the Voix Celeste and the Chimes, and the relatively thick texture of six voices. Most of the variation is in Ab Major, with modulation to tonalities a 3rd apart towards the middle of the piece, and frequent chromatic enrichment of the harmony. A five-bar transition of rhetorical flourishes concludes on a dominant seventh chord of B, leading into the next variation, which begins in E minor.

[§497] The fourth variation treats the opening notes of the chorale in fugal style. It begins on the Great, mezzo-forte, and concludes with a crescendo to fortissimo over a dominant pedal. The word 'fugal style' is used advisedly, as Dupré improvises here a variation which uses fugal technique very freely, with a number of departures from scholastic practice:

- The exposition is in the relative key, of E minor[102]
- There is no consistent countersubject
- The first episode uses the opening notes of the fugue in F major before arriving at its destination in A minor
- There are no strettos
- The fugue ends on a dominant seventh chord of D, which prepares for the concluding variation, which is a short toccata in G major

[§498] Since this variation is not a free-standing fugue but part of a series of variations, Dupré evidently felt free to do something relatively free, in contrast to the rather demanding approach envisaged in his chapter on fugue.

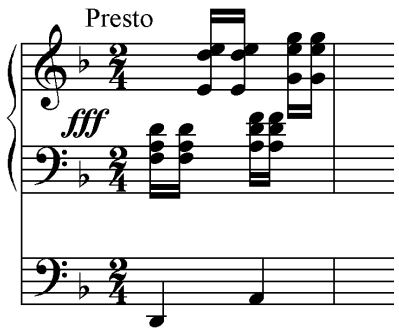
[§499] The final variation is a short toccata which, aside from some chromatic shifts towards the sub-dominant, remains in G major throughout. It begins with a traditional texture which presents the theme in long notes in the pedal, with repeated semi-quaver chords repeated in the hands:



.**101** *Organ Improvisation*. 15

102 The first three notes of the pedal entry are missing in the published edition. When written into the score, they fit perfectly with the upper voices. The texture at this point is uncomplicated and it is unlikely that Dupré made a mistake here. It is more likely that there was a problem either with the recording process or that this represents a simple error at the stage of transcription or editing.

[§500] This kind of toccata figuration was evidently a favourite of Dupré: it appears in a number of his other improvisations[103] and at the end of his *Variations sur un Noël*[104]:



[§501] The movement is a free elaboration of the opening phrase of the chorale. It remains in G major throughout. The theme appears first in the pedal (8 bars); an imitative dialogue of thematic material then occurs between the top of the right hand and the pedal (4 bars), five more bars lead to a dominant seventh chord; the theme reappears in the pedal for 5 more bars, with a slight variation in the texture of the manual toccata figure, and the piece concludes with a coda of 6 bars of emphatic chords.

[§502] With the exception of the fugal variation, these variations could be described as tending towards variation 'in the modern style' as enunciated by Dupré in his treatise:

- Increasing importance of harmonization, which tends to deform the initial theme by the repetition and amplification of each fragment
- Individualization of each variation by rhythmic transformation of the theme, more and more pronounced.[105]

103 For example, in the final movement of a symphony improvised in Cologne Cathedral in 1961 (cf. note 67) and in the final movement of a symphony improvised at his last recital in Notre Dame Cathedral, Paris on 12th October 1969 (CD *L'Art de Marcel Dupré,* Harmonia Mundi TAH 337)

104 Marcel Dupré, *Variations sur un Noël* (opus 20). Paris: Leduc, 1923.. 23.

105 *Organ Improvisation*. 110.

[§503] While one might have expected more contrapuntal devices in the fugal variation and more tonal variety in the concluding toccata, the economy shown by Dupré in these respects is perhaps an illustration of the advice he himself gives:

> However when the student later attempts a suite of variations, he should avoid giving the impression of a succession of pieces which are independent of each other. Each variation, as we have already said, must be characteristic but at the same time be an integral part of the entire piece.[106]

[§504] These two variations also illustrate Dupré's freedom in relation to form: the fugue and the toccata were not forms decided once and for all, but open to adaptation to the particular situation. Further creative freedom is seen in the variety of tonalities adopted for the variations and in the use of modulating transitions where necessary, neither of which are mentioned in the treatise. One should note also the manner in which Dupré responds to the tonal resources of the instrument, matching a variety of instrumental colours and musical forms. Later we will see that a smaller instrument inspires a different approach to theme and variations.

Seven Improvisations on the Organ of Paul Hoehn

[§505] In 2005 a series of 7 improvisations of Dupré was published by Hans Steinhaus, Felix Gubser and Alex Hug.[107] According to the foreword of the edition, these improvisations on Paul Hoehn's house organ were recorded, probably transferred onto records, transcribed and presented to Dupré for approval and correction. It seems that Dupré's corrections, whatever they may have been, were honest: in bars 47 and 54 of the first improvisation we find consecutive octaves and fifths respectively which, though of little concern in the context of a live improvisation, would probably not

106 *Organ Improvisation*. 111.

107 Marcel Dupré. S*ieben aufgezeichnete Improvisationen fur Orgel*. St.-Augustin: Dr. J. Butz, 2005.

have survived in a written piece in this fairly classical idiom.[108] Each improvisation is based on a chorale melody. The title of each improvisation includes the dates of performance: 5th February 1938 (improvisations 1,2,3), 4th October 1935 (improvisations 4,5,6) and 7th May 1930 (seventh improvisation). Compared to the Skinner Organ referred to above, the organ used was a more modest two-manual instrument with 19 stops.[109] The advantage of studying these (as well as the preceding improvisation on *Adeste Fideles*) is that they are close to the time of the treatise. It appears that Dupré's improvising style evolved: in later years, his improvisations became more restrained and more classical in tone. In 1955 André Fleury assisted Dupré at a recital at which he improvised a loud, flamboyant conclusion to his toccata on *Ave Maris Stella*, after which he exclaimed, "Ah, dear Mâitre, you bring me back twenty years!"[110] We can take it that the relationship between the written treatise and the live improvisation is well attested by examining these texts.

Improvisation 1: Der Mond is aufgegangen

[§506] The chorale in question is an evening song which flees from the vanity of the world to peace in God.[111] The improvisation consists of theme and six variations, with a coda. It will be interesting to note the very different manner in which these variations are constructed, compared to those on *Adeste Fideles*. There are no indications of registration dynamics or tempo on the score.

[§507] The theme is presented very simply in the soprano voice, with accompanying voices in left hand and pedal appearing only at cadential moments, as typified by the opening bars:[112]

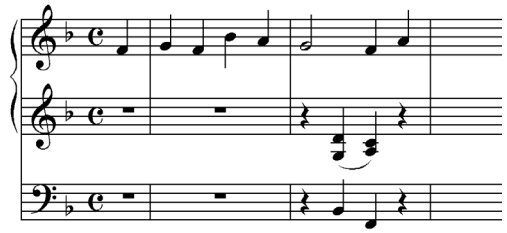
108 Dupré, cf. note 107. 11.

109 Dupré, cf. note 107. Foreword.

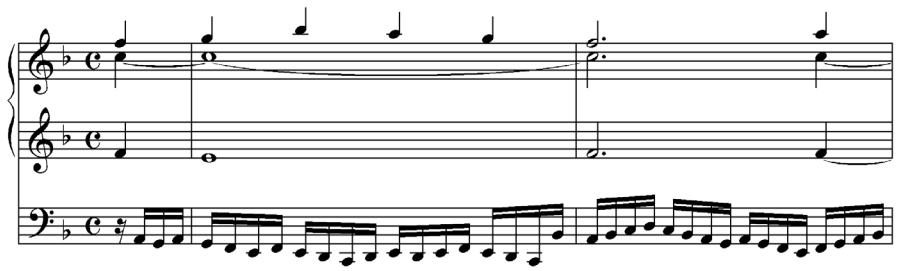
110 "Ah, mon cher mâitre, vous me rajeunissez de vingt ans!" *L'Orgue Cahiers et Mémoires* No 55 (1996/I): André Fleury (1903-1995). 29

111 Full text and translation available at http://www.recmusic.org/lieder/get_text.html?TextId=3844.

112 Dupré, cf. note 107. 8.



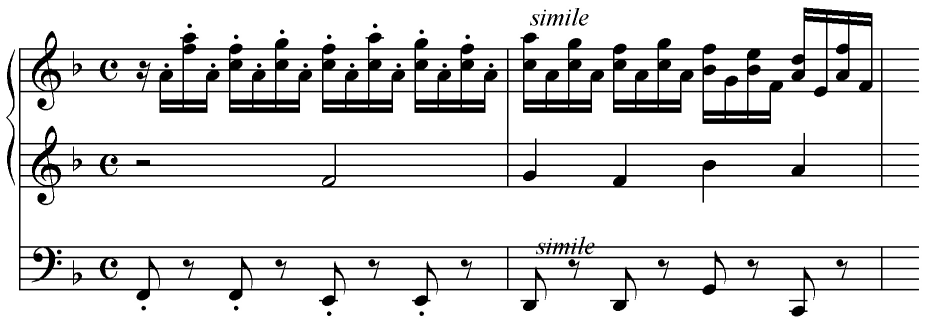
[§508] It is interesting to note in passing that a similar texture appears at the beginning of Dupré's later composition "Matines", (the first of *Trois Hymnes*, Opus 58)[113] which, though in a very different harmonic style, is also in the form of theme-and variations. The first variation is a simple bicinium with the theme in the right hand and continuous quavers in the left hand. The second variation presents the theme, again in the right hand, with semiquaver triplets predominating in two accompanying voices in the left hand. It is clear from the layout of parts that this was played on one manual. In this and succeeding variations Dupré allows himself to vary slightly some of the note values in the cantus firmus. The third variation is a four-part harmonisation of the tune, with a semiquaver countersubject in the pedals:



[§509] The semiquaver movement is occasionally taken up into one of the other accompanying voices. This variation seems to be more about the display of pedal virtuosity than any particular contrapuntal interest. The opening notes of the chorale melody are changed in the first phrases, the

113 Marcel Dupré. *Trois Hymnes* (opus 58). Paris: Bornemann, 1963.

improvisation here just following the general outline of the original tune. There is also a short coda of 4 bars. The fourth variation presents the tune in the left hand, with semiquaver figuration in the right hand, and a 'pizzicato' pedal line:

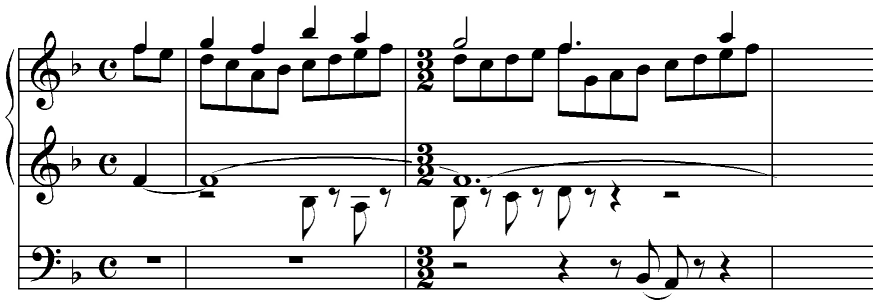


[§510] As can be seen from the opening bars, this variation is more 'orchestral' than contrapuntal. It is interesting to note that the chorale melody is in the soprano range, with the result that the accompanying right hand figuration occupies a region only slightly higher, which leads to much overlapping. It would have been helpful to know the original registration for this movement as well as the tempo. There is, as in the previous variation, a certain freedom note only as to the note values of certain notes within the tune, but also as to their pitch.

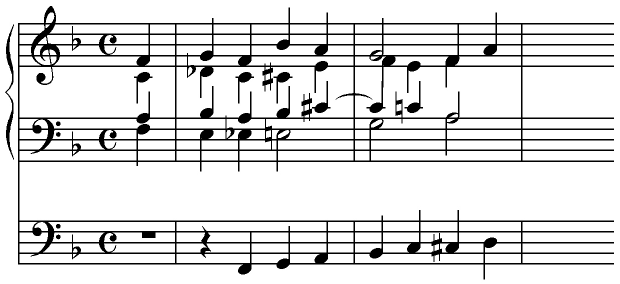
[§511] The fifth variation, though more sedate (mostly crotchet movement), is considerably freer. A binary movement that uses certain motifs from the tune:

- 6 bars: the opening notes of the tune are treated sequentially over a tonic pedal, moving to the dominant chord
- 5 bars: the opening 4 bars of the tune heard in the dominant key, with an extra bar added
- 3 bars in the sub-dominant relative with contrasting material
- 8 bars in the tonic key

[§512] The sixth variation returns to a more direct treatment of the tune, as follows:



[§513] The final section, marked 'coda' on the score, presents the theme in a four-part harmonisation, with an ascending crotchet movement in the pedals and chromatic colouring in the inner voices:



[§514] One is reminded here of the manner in which the theme is handled in the conclusion of the *thème libre*.

[§515] Looking at these variations as a whole, one notices first of all the different approach to those on *Adeste Fideles*. While there is some lively pedal work in the third movement and a more orchestral approach in the fourth movement, these are still more restrained as to harmony and texture than the *Adeste* variations: we find nothing to compare with the flamboyance of the second variation, the harmonic colour and complexity of texture of the third and the brilliance of the final toccata of *Adeste*. Unlike the *Adeste* variations, these variations remain in the tonic key. The text of the chorale itself, which Dupré may or may not have seen, is in itself a call to restraint, but we will see that nowhere in this publication are the improvisations as colourful as those on the Skinner organ. Since these Zurich improvisations date from

different years, one can safely conclude that the common denominator is the instrument itself, or perhaps the tastes of the person for whom these were originally improvised. Dupré is responding to the instrument with a more 'classical' type of improvisation.
[§516] One notices also the rhythmic progression, where the accompanying counterpoint moves from quavers (variation1) to triple quavers (variation 2) to semiquavers (variation 3). This is an application of the form envisaged in the treatise under the heading of 'Air and Variations', though with some important adjustments:

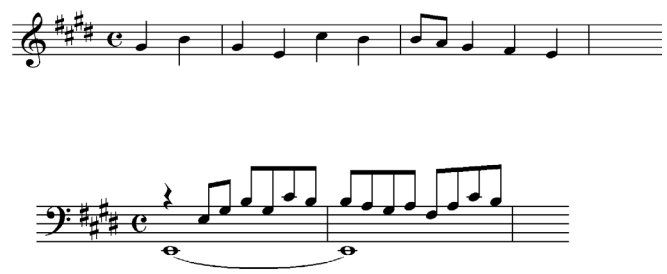
- These variations are only contrapuntal, whereas every second variation in the treatise is melodic. This means also that the faster moving rhythms (quaver, triplet, semiquaver) remain in the accompanying voices and are never heard in the top voice.
- While the treatise proposes variations for only two voices, these variations present three voices (variation 2) and four voices (variation 3).
- The semiquaver countersubject is played on the pedals instead of on the manuals.
- Instead of having melodic variations alternating with contrapuntal variations, Dupré adds three more variations and a coda.

[§517] We can see here that Dupré applies some of the formal resources given in the treatise without feeling imprisoned by them.

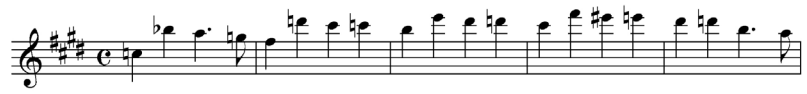
Improvisation 2: Kehre wieder, kehre wieder
[§518] Here is an summary of this improvisation.

- Eleven bars of quaver movement over a tonic pedal (E Major). Dupré takes the opening notes of the tune and, modifying them, uses them as the basis of continuous quaver movement:[114]

114 The tune is given in D major in the published edition of the transcriptions, *Sieben aufgezeichnete Improvisationen fur Orgel*. 6. I have transposed it for the sake of clarity.



- The other voices take up the theme, freely modifying it, with entries at the octave and an octave and a fourth.
- Two modulating bars, leading to a pedal in the dominant key: motif in the pedals, crotchets.
- Eight bars in B Major: a brief recurrence of the opening motif, in quavers; five bars later, this motif appears in crotchets in the soprano voice, later in the pedal.
- Five bars in A Major: sequential treatment of the opening motif, inverted, followed by the theme in crotchets.
- Five-bar Modulating passage of chromatic harmony, developing the interval of the rising 4th, moving through Bb and C, leading to a dominant pedal.
- Five bars on the dominant pedal.
- E major: Four bars of the theme, in crotchets.
- C major: three bars of the theme, note values slightly augmented.
- Six bars of chromatic modulations, developing sequentially the upward leap and downward scale of the theme:



- Two bars of dominant pedal, over which the opening motif of the theme is heard at various pitches, followed by two bars dominant 7th,with descending quaver scale passage in the pedals.
- Harmonisation of the chorale in E major: 6 bars

- Conclusion, including scale passages in the pedals, a brief reference to the second bar of the tune, and a reference to the final notes of the tune.

[§519] There is no indication of registration or tempo, thought the texture (four and five voices, with mostly quaver movement) suggests a mezzo-forte registration as a minimum, and andante con moto as a minimum speed.
[§520] How might this piece be related to ideas in the treatise? The first 42 bars show similarities with the prelude form as outlined by Dupré.[115] The form is however used rather freely by Dupré:

- The first exposition runs the motif through three voices instead of two, including intervals of entry other than the octave, and a fourth voice enters without the motif.
- The second exposition give the theme after a short pedal on the note of the dominant, and the theme occurs in crotchets instead of quavers, this time in the right hand and the pedal.
- In the third exposition the motif appears inverted, in only one voice. This corresponds to the concern in the treatise that this exposition be short, though its exact form is different.
- The fourth exposition, far from ending the piece, is very short and leads into another modulating section.
- The music that follows (modulating development of material, leading to restatement of the theme) could be viewed as incorporating a 'second development', as envisaged in the section of the treatise on the andante.[116]

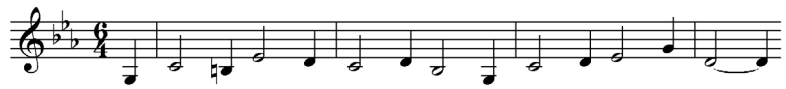
[§521] Like the other improvisations so for, we see an awareness of the usefulness of certain forms, coupled with a freedom to adapt to the particular situation and inspiration of the moment. The strict structure of the treatise has given way to something more fluid yet, at the same time, structurally sound and satisfying.

115 *Organ Improvisation*. 73ff.

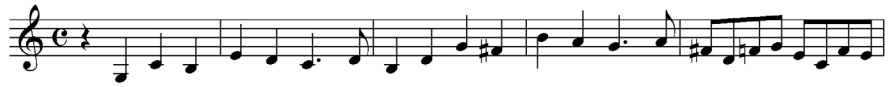
116 *Organ Improvisation*. 129.

Improvisation 3: Ad nos, ad salutarem undam

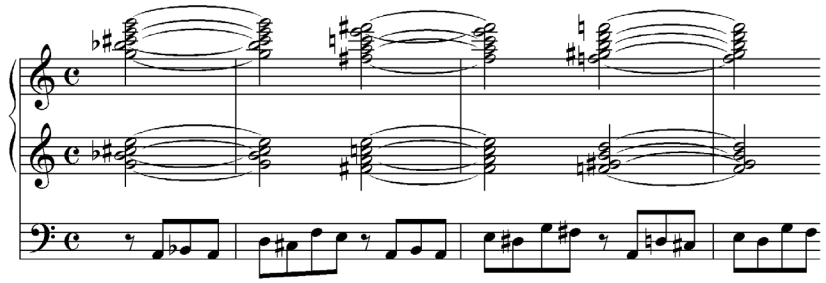
[§522] The original theme, in C minor, 6/4 time...



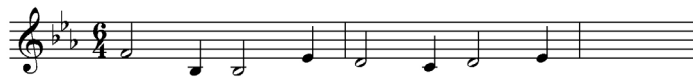
... is transformed into C major, common time...



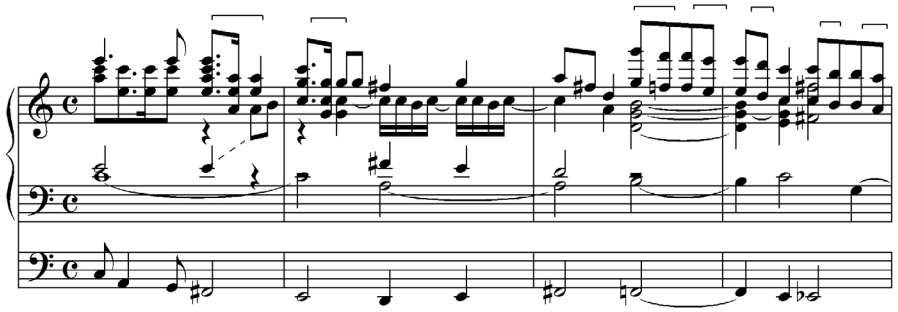
... and begins over a tonic pedal, rather in the manner of the prelude form already seen. In bar 13 the theme reappears in the dominant key, again over a pedal. In bar 21 it reappears in quavers over a 'D' pedal (dominant pedal of the dominant) and later a 'G' pedal (dominant pedal). The expected return to the tonic is delayed by dramatic sequences with thematic material in the pedal (bar 29ff):



[§523] The theme returns in the tonic in quaver values (elegantly beginning before the tonic key is re-established) in bar 32. In bar 40 new elements from the theme...

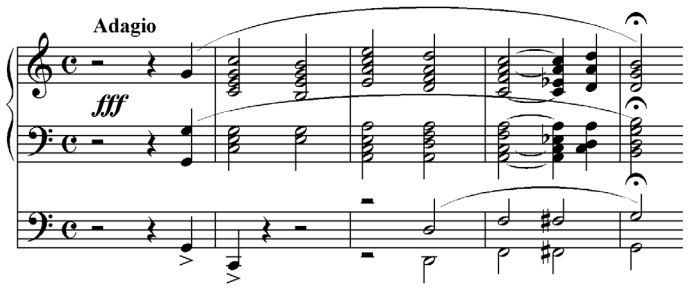


... are now introduced and developed:



[§524] The dotted rhythm here, not entirely absent before, appears more regularly from now on. At bar 46 we arrive at a dominant pedal, over which we hear the original motif, now with some dotted rhythms added. At bar 54, instead of resolving onto the tonic, the harmony moves, by a relationship of a third, to Eb. This harmonic surprise is perhaps similar to that in the last improvisation where, at a similar moment in the piece, the dominant chord, B major, instead of resolving onto E major, ushers in a new development section beginning in C major. The motif continues, with constant modulation until we arrive at another dominant pedal at bar 60.

[§525] After seven bars of dominant and related harmony, we arrive at a *fff*-statement of the theme as a majestic chorale, which moves towards E major, before finally concluding over a tonic pedal, bars 88 to 94:

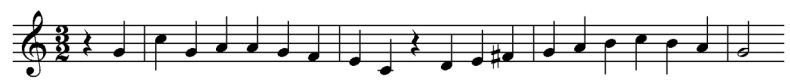


[§526] An overview of the piece suggests some relationship with the prelude form given in the treatise: sequential treatment of thematic material over 4 pedals: tonic, dominant subdominant (which moves into a short dominant

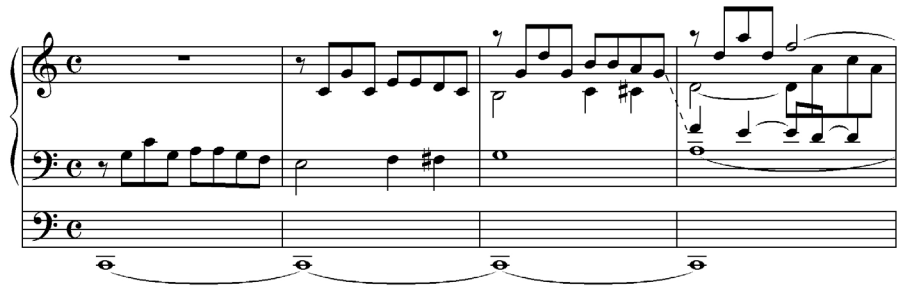
pedal, again, perhaps as an antidote to any undue shift of balance towards the sub-dominant) and tonic with, as before, a variety of rhythms. As in the last improvisation, there is a tonal surprise towards the end: in this case the fourth pedal, instead of concluding the piece, ushers in a new development of material. What is completely new here is the lengthy chorale section which concludes the work. Overall Dupré shows himself free both in relation to the original chorale tune itself and to the form of the piece. No form is written in stone.

Improvisation 4: Dir, dir, Jehova will ich singen

[§527] Following a pattern we have already seen, this improvisation opens by taking the opening notes of the chorale...



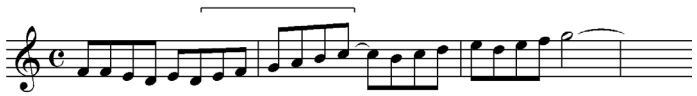
... and uses them as the basis of beginning in the manner of the 'prelude' style:



[§528] As before, we see the prelude form, but not exactly in the manner proposed in the treatise. There is also a degree of freedom in relation to the various entries of the theme: the second entry is tonal, the third entry, though beginning on the same note as the first, is a transposition of the tonal entry, and the final entry begins on neither the tonic nor the dominant note, and is only partial. The tonic pedal section continues with more imitative treatment of the motif and achieves tonal variety by chromatic incursions

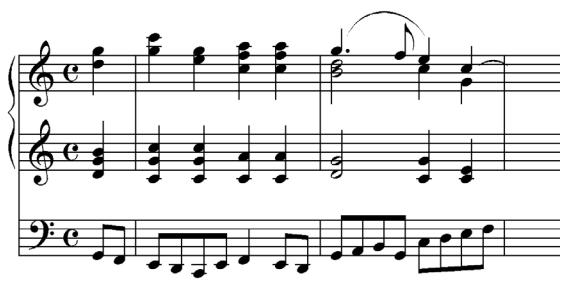
into G major, A minor and D minor. Here is a delicate tonal balance of dominant and subdominant colouring which gives a certain coherence and variety to the exposition of the theme.

[§529] The tonic pedal continues until bar 12. In bar 11 a new motif, doubtless inspired by the second phrase of the chorale, leads into a new imitative section:



[§530] There is a certain artistry in the fact that this new material appears before the end of the tonic pedal and before any new modulations take place. In bar 15 the music moves to the dominant, though there is no dominant pedal. The movement to the dominant is followed by a statement of the third line of the chorale at bar 19. An interesting detail: though this line of the tune is played at its original pitch, based on the tonic key, the inherent possibilities of a strongly subdominant emphasis are used to keep the piece tonally fresh. The overall effect is of a turn to the subdominant.

[§531] From bar 26 a modulating section begins based on chords whose roots are a fifth apart. From bar 32 the chromatic language of the piece tightens. Given the shape of the piece thus far, one might have expected a triumphant return of the tonic but instead the main theme returns in the key of A major. It returns, not in the quaver figuration of the opening, but in the shape of the first two lines of the chorale tune itself, in a contrapuntal texture. This leads, from bar 41 onwards to modulating sequential development of the opening notes of the chorale. Finally, by bar 51, we have truly arrived in the home key, with a full statement of the chorale, with running quavers in the pedals:

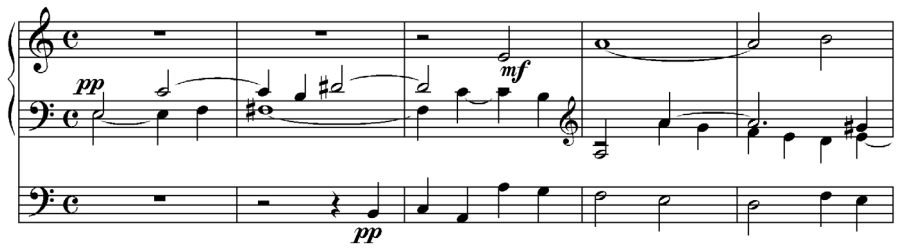


Any student who had really practiced the final variation of the 'air and variations' form[117] would be capable of this ending.

[§532] Viewing the improvisation as a whole we see a creative use of the prelude form, using sometimes a continuous quaver formula and at other times the metre of the chorale itself. The continuous formula appears in fact only at the beginning and is never heard again. We see a careful balancing of tonic, dominant and subdominant tonalities, both within the exposition over the tonic pedal and within the first 32 bars as a whole. As with the last two improvisations, at that point where a prelude form might have concluded, we see a departure into a new section with its own development, in a key a third away from the tonic (*Kehre wieder*: flattened sub-mediant; *Ad nos*: flattened mediant; Dir, dir: the major key on the sixth degree). We can see in all three pieces a certain formal similarity, but the solutions are different each time. One senses a musician who achieves the balance of having an eye to overall shape while at the same time playing quite spontaneously at any given moment.

Improvisation 5: Wer nur den lieben Gott lässt walten

[§533] This improvisation is a more straightforward chorale prelude: a right hand solo with left hand and pedal accompanying, adagio:

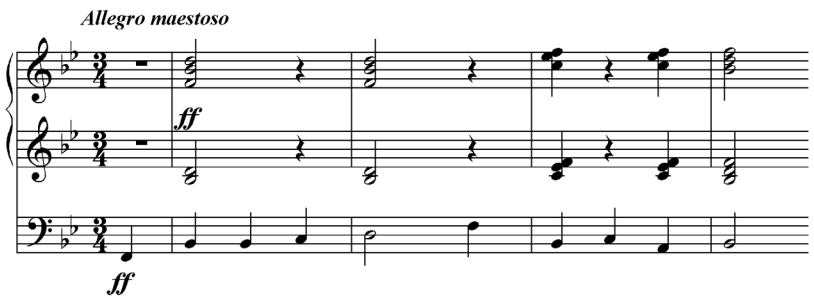


117 *Organ Improvisation*. 106.

[§534] One notices the hint of preparatory imitation in the accompanying parts at the beginning, and the slight chromaticism, as well a flexible approach to the note values of the tune, which will appear very slightly ornamented at times. The chromatic language surfaces and recedes at various moments of the piece, which has two short interludes for the accompanying parts, in the traditional manner. In the first interlude the accompanying parts anticipate not so much the notes of the next line of the chorale as its overall melodic shape. In the second interlude the ascending line of the previous part of the choral is echoed. One particularly interesting feature: while the chorale tune itself is finished by bar 34, Dupré extends the piece by restating the first line of the chorale in the subdominant, with an answering phrase and a final pedal of four bars. The last four bars of the piece recall something of the last three bars of the chorale. One sees in this improvisation a combination of harmonic rigour as to choice of chords and voice leading, combined with flexibility as to the chorale tune and the form.

Improvisation 6: Ihr Knechte des Herrn, den Meister tut kund!

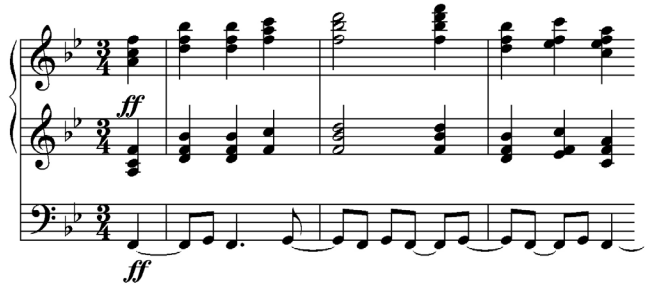
[§535] Described as "Allegro maestoso", this piece begins with an exposition based on the opening two phrases of the hymn, beginning with the theme in the pedals:



In bar 9 the theme appears in the top voice, in D major, followed by a commentary of chromatically descending harmonies. The pedals take the theme up again in Bb major at bar 21. This section concludes on a dominant 7th at bar 33.

[§536] The registration reduces to ***mf*** for the next section, which is fugal, taking the first four bars of the chorale as its subject:

- Exposition: Tenor, alto, soprano, bass, with no consistent countersubject. The opening notes of the subject receive a tonal answer.
- First episode: passages or running quavers alternate between the voices. These might be said to relate generally to the quaver lines found in the accompanying parts in the exposition, or perhaps to the melodic outline of the second line of the chorale, but there is no obvious thematic link.
- Relative key: the subject appears in the soprano voice and, after a short 2-voice interlude on the swell, ***p***, the answer appears in the pedal.
- Second Episode: a longer episode, from bar 72 to bar 94, returning to the Great at bars 75 to 77, with a crescendo at bar 87.
- Return of the theme at bar 95 in block chords over a decorated dominant pedal:

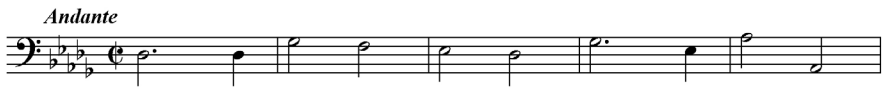


- Bars 101 to 135 remain substantially in Bb, reiterating various elements from the theme.

[§537] One might describe the improvisation as a fugue interposed between two homophonic treatments of the theme. The fugue is free and condensed: no consistent countersubject, no sub-dominant entries of the subject, no strettos. Like the other improvisations we have examined so far, this is only loosely related to anything Dupré gives in his treatise, and shows a creative adaptability as to form.

Improvisation 7: Variations sur un theme de Haydn

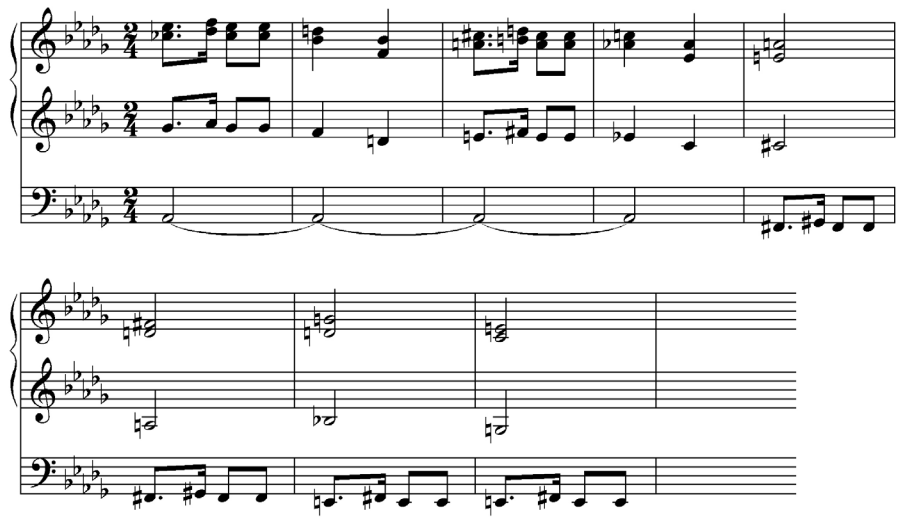
[§538] This improvisation is based on the theme and variations of the same name by Johannes Brahms (opus 56b). Improvised in Db major instead of the Bb key of the original, the improvisation is not a set of variations but a piece based on those variations, in three sections: Theme – Development – Recapitulation. First Section: Bars 1 to 54 present the theme twice. Second Section: Bar 55 begins a "ground bass", following the pattern used by Brahms at the end of his variations:



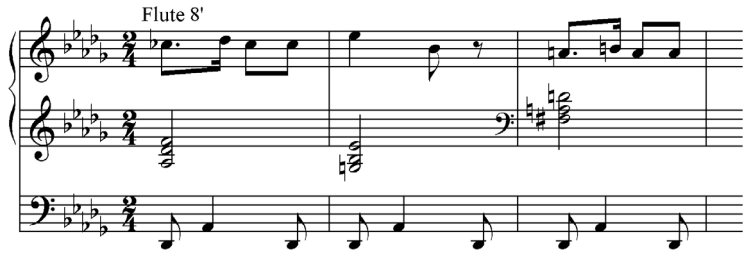
This is heard three times, with fluid counterpoint, mostly crotchets, in four upper voices.

[§539] At bar 70 this fragment begins again, though with a slightly different rhythm, but is modified after the second bar, leading to a freer development of the idea. At bar 75 it appears, in shortened form, in F minor, and at bar 82 it appears in Eb minor. From bar 87 the motif of the rising fourth is developed sequentially in the bass, with resultant modulations. The same motif is then taken up in bar 91, crescendo, in the hands with increasing chromaticism, and further tension is added by the inclusion of the dotted rhythm of the original theme in alternation with this motif.

[§540] The recapitulation begins at bar 109. Although there is no dynamic indication, the massive chords used – eight to ten notes per chord – suggest fortissimo. At bar 131, a lengthy passage of further modulations occurs, with a diminuendo, and an effective use of chromatic harmony to express a change of mood, developing the opening notes of the tune, for example at bar 142:



[§541] At bar 152 the theme is played by the left hand on Voix Celestes, with a soprano countermelody in the right hand, Flute 8'. A soft coda begins at bar 170. In this section there is, as we found in the soft variation of *Adeste Fideles*, an alternation between the root and the fifth of the tonic chord:



The piece ends ***ppp***.

[§542] The most interesting features of this improvisation are the second and third sections, the first being a fairly straightforward presentation of the theme. The idea of using the ground bass as the basis of the development is a creative move, as is the decision to break off the repetitions and move into a more fluid form of development. Equally interesting is the decision to extend the piece by a further development of the opening motif and to present the

theme yet once more, this time with quite a different mood created by the use of the diminuendo and colourful harmony. We see here a mastery of form, which is very different from an imprisonment within predetermined, fixed formulae. While the overall ternary form has some parallels with the andante discussed in the chapter on symphonic forms, we find, as with the other improvisations, a re-thinking of what is needed, based on the very particular theme which was used.

[§543] It is interesting to note that, while all these improvisations are based on choral tunes, none of them follow the forms developed in the treatise: contrapuntal chorale, canonic chorale, ornamented chorale, fugal chorale. There is a certain irony here: the chorale forms most often used in the Conservatoire's exams on plainchant improvisation used forms drawn largely from the practice of J.S. Bach, while Dupré, when faced with Lutheran chorales chooses, in this instance, not to adopt any such forms.

The Language of Dupré's Improvisations

[§544] The language, especially the harmonic language, of Dupré's improvisations is clearly more conservative than that of his compositions. It would perhaps take a much greater degree of serious study to ascertain why this is the case. Thierry Escaich, one of today's finest organ improvisers, refers to this issue in relation to his own playing:

> I came to music at a very early age by this simultaneous approach of improvisation and composition. But, the more I progressed through my childhood and teenage years, the more my personality as a composer took shape, and more a real divergence grew between my language as an improviser, who sometimes had trouble quickly integrating what the composer had elaborated for weeks and who then often took refuge in stylistic expressions from the past. It was only gradually that a certain convergence arose between these two facets of my personality.[118]

118 Notes accompanying the CD *Hommage à Cochereau* (Solstice/SOCD 252, 2009..11).

[§545] The problem of divergence between composer and improvisor, if it is a problem, is mentioned here, and the convergence which, in Dupré's case, was less apparent. Dupré admitted that, after his student days, he no longer worked at improvisation:

> I have never practised improvisation since my school days. As regards improvising a symphony or a sonata, I tried it one day and it all came naturally, but don't breathe a word![119]

[§546] Perhaps if Dupré had continued to work on his improvising skills, his improvisatory language would have kept pace with that of his compositions.

Dupré's Improvisations and his Treatise

[§547] This study has looked at a limited number of Dupré's recorded improvisations. A more exhaustive study of all available data would, no doubt, reveal certain consistent personal approaches to improvisation not expounded in the treatise. The small number of improvisations we have reviewed do, however, already show that, while on the one hand Dupré sometimes keeps strictly to the forms given in the treatise (for example, the canonic chorale and the scholastic fugue), in many other instances he adapts and develops forms in new ways. Thus the movement 'from rigidity to freedom' which we have seen in the treatise, progresses towards further freedom in Dupré the improviser, who is no longer a student and who has moved beyond the treatise.

[§548] This confirms an intuition that the treatise is not an abstract discourse on improvisation but a practical manual in which, from the very first page the user is referred to as 'the student'.[120] It is a student manual for developing technique and thus indicates, with directives, those exercises and work which are to be done in order to gain mastery in harmony, voice-leading, analysis, counterpoint, control of form and other skills.

119 Recounted in notes accompanying the CD *Récital Marcel Dupré: Improvisations Basilique Notre-Dame de Paris 12 octobre 1969* (Harmonia Mundi/TAH 337. 4).

120 *Preparatory Exercises*. 1.

As such it represents a starting point and an initial trajectory for the one who would like to develop their skills, and the rigidity adopted at several turns is not an end in itself but a means towards overcoming technical difficulties. The ultimate aim is freedom of technique. There is, to be sure, more to improvisation than technique. Jean Langlais must have sensed this when, after gaining a *premier prix* in the Conservatoire, he turned to Charles Tournemire for further lessons. Ann Labounsky says of Tournemire that he was not concerned with technique but with the poetic elements of improvisation and that his students needed to have the firm grounding in technique that a premier prix in organ from the Conservatoire assured. Contrasting his method with that of Dupré, she says, quoting Langlais:

> Above all, he insisted on poetic harmonies and sonorities, which teaching method contrasted sharply with that of Dupré: "Modulate to this key," Dupré would say, "add stops, take off stops." Tournemire, by contrast, was "a great poet, but not a technician. Tournemire had a superlative technique himself but did not teach technique.[121]

[§549] One might add that if a student of Tournemire were inspired some day in an improvisation to include a canon as a poetic element, it might take the prior training of someone like Dupré to realise the dream.

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121 Labounsky, cf. note 45. 69. Her reference for the quotation is "Langlais, 15 May 1979."

Abstract

The comprehensive and systematic work of Marcel Dupré on improvisation is his two-volume treatise *Cours Complet d'Improvisation à l'Orgue*. The first volume, published in 1937 is a tightly-organised preparation for a form known as the *Thème Libre*, used in examinations of the Paris Conservatoire,

best described as an andante in mono-thematic sonata form. Contrary to any expectations the terminology may conjure up for a modern reader, this type of improvisation is minutely planned, almost from bar to bar, as a conservatory exercise designed to build up a wide range of skills.

The second volume, published in 1925, proposes a strict itinerary of study in which the student learns to work within classical forms, beginning with the simplest exercises and moving towards more complex realisations. At the same time the student is advised to adopt rigid structures at the outset, before moving towards greater freedom as technical mastery increases.

An examination of some of Dupré's recorded improvisations reveals a formal coherence, as proposed in the treatise, combined with a judicious freedom which rises above the constraints of any purely formulaic predetermined forms.

Columba McCann

Columba McCann studied organ with Sidney Greig and Peter Sweeney at the Dublin College of Music, and graduated with a First-Class Honours Degree in Music at University College Dublin. His training and work as a priest in the archdiocese of Dublin has also included theological and liturgical studies, the latter at the Pontifical Liturgical Institute in Rome. In 1997 he won the first prize in the RTE Radio competition for composition of new liturgical music and continues to publish liturgical compositions in Ireland, England and the USA. He has studied improvisation with Ansgar Wallenhorst (Ratingen) and Frédéric Blanc (Paris) and recently released a CD of organ improvisations entitled *Canticum Domini*. He is a member of the Benedictine community at Glenstal Abbey where his work includes choral training, musical composition and performance, as well as the promotion of summer workshops in organ improvisation. Recent performance venues include the Dun Laoghaire Summer Organ Recital Series, the Dublin International Pipeworks Festival and the Abbey of Tournus in France.

XI

Gary Verkade - Teaching Free Improvisation

[§550] I would like to present some of my own personal experiences in the teaching of improvisation, more concretely so-called free improvisation.

Definition

[§551] Free improvisation for me is the spontaneous attempt to creatively utilize one's talents as a composer and player in new and unique ways. "Spontaneous" means of course without pre-performance planning. "New and unique" emphasizes qualities I am always looking for in both the performance and teaching of free improvisation, namely:

- that it looks for the new in both technique and expression
- that that technique and expression is personally connected to the player or players
- that that expression comes from the deep-seated need we all have to express our own identity

[§552] Improvising becomes richer when more than one player is involved thus requiring each player to express his or her identity while at the same time not only not hindering the possibility of the other to express his or her own identity, but also making that other expression possible in the context of expressing one's own identity. In other words respect *for one's self*, and its expression, and respect *for the other*, and its expression: the individual in society. It is democracy, not in the sense of the majority rules, to the exclusion of minority opinion, but in the sense of equal opportunity and equal time, and even the adaption of the other in order to build an edifice that would not otherwise exist.

Basic Excercises

[§553] How does one begin to teach such things? I must admit that, at the beginning, it is both surprisingly difficult and surprisingly easy - depending on the student. And in my experience it always becomes easy after the student realizes that it is not only OK to be oneself, but actually required. At first it is difficult for students who already know in advance how music in general and improvised music in particular is supposed to sound. Getting students to relinquish preconceived notions of consonance-dissonance, form and musical flow is sometimes difficult. In these situations I resort to so-called experiments. The goal is not to make music, but rather to experiment with specific exercises that foster thinking about and hearing what one is playing in new ways. However, these exercises often turn into very beautiful little pieces of music. A couple of favorite exercises of mine:

Extending horizons musically

1. Play as fast, as furiously, as wildly as possible, yet barely audible
2. Play as slowly, as calmly as possible, yet very loudly

[§554] These two simple exercises move one away from traditional thinking and perception of musical relationships. Just think about how often fast and loud are coupled together. Of course there are exceptions, perhaps many more exceptions than one realizes, but in the minds of many students, and not only students, fast and loud are connected just as slow and soft are. Another coupling is accelerando-crescendo and ritardando-diminuendo. In much Romantic music this is even part of performance practice. (Look at Reger, for example.) In order to decouple this connection, I modify the exercises just mentioned to the following:

3. Musical flow: fast and soft to slow and loud
4. Musical flow: slow and loud to fast and soft

[§555] I need to mention here that the salient musical activities to be heard here must be fast, furious, wild, soft, slow, calm and loud and not any particular organization of the notes or sounds. I do not stipulate atonal, nor tonal organization, stepwise motion or leaps, thick textures or thin. The student is free to express only the musical events stipulated.

[§556] Extending horizons technically, given, as I once had, a jazz guitarist and a rock drummer:

5. The drummer is required to play like a guitarist
6. The guitarist like a drummer

[§557] I gave them these exercises without at all knowing where they might lead. In fact, I had no specific ideas as to what concrete results might be achieved. I play neither guitar nor drums. I had only a vague hope that the two players would discover for themselves new ways of treating their instruments. And this was, indeed, what happened. The two students taught themselves to play their instruments in ways they never had before, which led them also to musical expressions they had not thought were in their respective repertoires. It also led to some real blending of sounds where it was often very difficult to determine which instrument was producing which sound. The two often played as one, at least as often as they played as two. They were both willing and capable of being totally individual and playing off each other as well as submitting their individualities to a larger purpose: meeting the other, compromising and playing together. But it never sounded like a compromise. It was more like allowing what one did to merge with what the other did in order to produce something else which was the property of neither, or equally the property of both.

Exchanging instruments

[§558] I also have done the following:

7. Have the players exchange instruments

[§559] This is no gimmick, but rather a serious attempt to gain acquaintance with “the other”; perhaps assist the other to discover his or her own instrument; and perhaps apply the experience of playing an unfamiliar instrument to one’s own instrument. How often have I, as an organist, heard from other organists that this piece of new music or that piece is unplayable or, more often, not “organistic” or, worse, not organic (whatever that means), in a word: unreasonable and thus not worthy of practice and performance.

George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950):

> The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore, all progress depends on the unreasonable man.

[§560] My own experience is that the serious composer, and very often the serious composer who is not intimate with the instrument, composes in such a way that I am forced to find new ways to play the instrument. So instead of getting angry that a particular composer has no idea what he or she is doing, I myself learn what it can mean to play the organ and I expand my expressive and technical capabilities. This is what I am after when I assign players to exchange instruments. It makes no difference if they discover something that is already known in the field. They didn't know it before experiencing it themselves during such an exercise.

Playing Together

[§561] A general exercise in playing together with others, in a group of three or more:

> 8. See to it that each player has a solo

This is not trivial. First, one must be able to hear when a player is attempting a solo and then react by taking a subordinate role. Secondly, one must be able to hear when a player is performing something which could be a solo, which you as a player in fact would like to be a solo and then take an aggressively subordinate role so that the performer playing what you wish to be a solo recognizes that fact. Thirdly, one must recognize when the other players consider it to be your turn to play a solo. Fourthly, one must occasionally usurp the role of solo for certain musically dramatic purposes. Fifthly, one must learn to develop ideas so that they can become soli and accompaniments, either gradually or suddenly.

Transitions

[§562] Another thing we practice is transitions. Music is more often than not moving from one thing to the next. These transitions from one thing to the next can have different shapes. They can be represented as straight lines: a direct path from one thing to another, taken either quickly or slowly, accelerando or ritardando. Other transitions can be represented with curved lines: the path first leads towards something else before turning to the real goal. Further transitions can be represented by jagged lines, lines turning in on themselves, lines which circle a goal and then either lead to it or not. These are the things that make for interesting listening. Mastering transitions also provides a means of understanding and reacting to musical events: whatever happens will be able to be understood in one way or another, either leading to or away from something, either as contrast or support of the music just happening, therefore never causing confusion, never leading to a situation where a player feels abandoned by what is just being played. Trust is built also for the situation in which a player begins something and doesn't know how to continue. The others always take up the slack.

[§563] This kind of thinking can also be applied to the solo player. One can divide up the hands and have them react to each other. As an organist, the feet can be treated separately also. One player becomes three - difficult, perhaps, but not at all impossible. We do it all the time in the traditional literature. A musical idea can be abandoned with impunity and be taken up - or not - later in the musical discourse. Whatever happens can always be understood as a transition of some shape leading somewhere… or not. One goal music can have is its (the goal's) absence.

Basic musicianship

[§564] Discovery on one's own and discovery of one's self, this is what teaching in general is about for me. I assist in the learning process in various ways, always searching for new ways to present situations in which the student can learn for him or herself what I believe I have to give them. This leads to a lively atmosphere in which I create exercises on the spot, reacting to what I have heard and freely admitting to my students that I might not know myself where the exercise will lead. We all become involved in the creation of whatever it is that we produce. The students learn to listen

intently and learn to recognize clichés very quickly and to steer away from them. They also grasp how to end pieces - perhaps one of the more difficult things to learn, especially when playing together with others. But it only requires intensive listening by all involved in order to recognize when a potential ending is being made. It is up to all the players to either except that ending or not. If just one player does not except it, the piece continues. Afterwards one may discuss the positive things that happened and, by default, recognize other things that one might be able to improve.
[§565] All my teaching of improvisation has as its final goal a live concert, sometimes two in the course of a semester. I have found that participants very soon become very enthusiastic about performing improvised music. I have also found that the performances always lead to other students becoming interested in attending the course. I find it a good opportunity to teach basic musicianship to participants: listening, musical expression of one's identity, cooperation with others (in the case of solo improvisation: cooperation with oneself), and the performance of clear musical ideas.

Abstract

Free improvisation is the spontaneous (i.e. without pre-performance planning) attempt to creatively utilize one's talents as a musician in new and unique ways. It can be taught by offering students exercises. The basic ones question their preconceived notions: in the minds of many students fast and loud are connected just as slow and soft are. Having them play fast and barely audible, or slowly, yet very loudly, move them away from traditional thinking and perception of musical relationships. Furthermore, it appears helpful to have students play their instrument as if it were another instrument - for example by requiring a drummer to play like a guitarist. A next step is to help students not only to know their "self" but also gain acquaintance with "the other", for example by assisting another student to discover his or her own instrument.

Later, when playing together, students have to see to it that each player has a solo. Vice versa, a student may form an ensemble by himself; for example, by dividing the hands and have them react to each other. All this is less about texture, tonality or other traditional aspects of music, but far more about transition: music is more often than not moving from one thing to the next. Intensive listening hence is a basic condition for free improvisation, as it is for any music making.

Gary Verkade

Gary Verkade studied music at Calvin College and the University of Iowa. In 1978 he received a Fulbright grant to study at the Folkwang-Hochschule in Essen, Germany. Germany was his home for 17 years. Gary Verkade has been an influential and sought after interpreter of New Music throughout Europe and the United States since his student days. He is the composer of music for organ, electronics, chamber and improvisation ensembles; he is co-founder of the Essen, Germany-based improvisation ensemble SYNTHESE. As a player of improvised music, he has worked together with dancers, photographers and painters on projects which bring the arts together in a manner in which they complement and fructify each other. Verkade's scholarly activities go beyond the usual seminars. He has published essays and articles on a variety of subjects relating to organ playing, performance practice of old music, and composition. It is his conviction that it is absolutely essential for the performing musician to give informed performances of any given music.

XII

Vincent Thévenaz - A Contemporary Improvisation on a Baroque Theme and a Romantic Organ

[§566] In 2009, Michael Grüber, director of the organ management agency Organ Promotion, asked me to participate in the second volume of the CD project consisting of improvisations based on Bach's d minor *Toccata & Fugue*. I recorded my contribution in the Abbey of Engelberg which houses the largest organ in Switzerland, built in 1876 by Goll and enlarged in 1924. The music I produced for the recording was a translation of Bach's masterpiece into a contemporary language, using the gestures, effects and affects of the original and trying to adapt them to a modern sound-world. The CD was published in May 2010. I will share with you a few thoughts in connection with this musical experience and I hope you will enjoy them.

The 19th century

[§567] During the course of the 19th century, the period in which he found his independence from patrons and princes, the musician was obliged to earn his living through concerts, teaching and publishing. Organs grew in size, power and technical precision, and their conception changed radically: in fact, the biggest structural change in organ history since the separation of the Blockwerk in the Middle-Ages took place in the 19th century. At a time when tonality began to be expanded through chromaticism, the perfect intervals of organ stops (octaves, fifths, thirds) of baroque organs were succeeded by a great variety of 8′ stops.

[§568] In the context of organ improvisation, this new situation heralded a burst of creativity, no longer limited to the domain of musical "science". Musical effects, such as storm scenes, influenced by Beethoven's *Pastoral*

Symphony, almost became a *sine qua non*. The use of clusters in this context was not only accepted, but became appreciated. They even entered organ *building*: the Italian organ builder Serassi began building "thunder pedals", or "timballi"; later, the famous French organ builder Cavaillé-Coll would give his organs a comparable "thunder" pedal.

[§569] In the programmatic fantasies that these improvisations were, the appearance of more traditional techniques (the fugue or chorale, for example) led to these being regarded as symbols of religion.

[§570] Today, the public's perception of improvisation has remained rather similar to that common in the 19th century: the improviser as an artist receiving divine inspiration and creating apocalyptical sound tornados. The cinema contributes largely to the propagation of this idea: recent films such as *Schlafes Bruder* or *Troubled Waters*, present the figure of the organist as an autodidact, separated from the world (in the mountains in *Schlafes Bruder*, in prison in *Troubled Waters*), with improvisation depicted as a catharsis of emotions.

[§571] This image of the organ in the public sphere is interesting: the main focus is the evocation and expression of feelings, whereas the organ world is much more concerned with historicism and mastering of techniques. Let us have a closer look at the latter.

Historicism in Organ Building

[§572] We build and play instruments which are specifically designed around the music of a limited period. Usually a large part of the repertoire is not playable on such organs as a result of compass, tuning system and voicing, among other things. This tendency has been a reaction to organs built "to play everything", a typical 20th century dream.

[§573] Nevertheless, an organ on which the complete Bach works cannot be performed remains a scandal for many (organ) people. The short octaves and unequal temperaments which render the music of the 17th century so effective make it impossible to play later music, whereas higher pressures and blurry foundation stops make baroque music sound less convincing. Subsequently, an organist has to be ready for many different situations, and to be creative in his choice of programmes. Imagine, however, that you are invited to play in Merseburg, with its famous Ladegast organ, built in

1855. Will you really play only Liszt or Reubke, as has been played there thousands of times before? Will you only play Widor's music at "his" organ at St. Sulpice in Paris?

[§574] Of course not. We have to choose a repertoire that fits the organ, but not only in the narrow scope of its specific designation in nationality and time. This approach often reveals nice surprises, such as when playing Mendelssohn on a baroque organ, or Couperin on a 19th century one, alerting us to historical affiliations and the continuity of history. But the most refreshing sound experience is probably when we hear a contemporary piece on a historic organ. Some pieces have even been composed for such instruments (by Berio, Foccroulle or Pesson for example). They often make it possible to allow rare and odd sounds to be heard, guided not only by beauty, but to a greater extent by expression.

[§575] Style is not determined by the instrument, but by the way it is used. The mere fact of playing a historic instrument is not a seal of "authenticity" in interpretation – although it undoubtedly helps a lot! Many other criteria also play an important role, such as articulation, agogics, ornamentation, registration, etc.

[§576] Of course, the use of old organs in contemporary repertoire may be limited: they lack registration aids and their action might be too fragile to play Ligeti's *Volumina*. Nevertheless, the point I would like to stress is that there is great potential to enlarge the scope of repertoire that can be played on historic organs or copies. The sound experience inherently possible in an instrument is larger and more contemporary than that envisaged by its maker. Just as a composer discovers new elements in his own music through different interpretations, an organ builder would often be surprised by the variety of sound that can be produced by his instrument.

Historicism in Improvisation

[§577] In our postmodern civilisation, we play and improvise in a huge variety of styles in many different contexts. The ability to improvise a chorale partita in Bach's or Böhm's style, versets of a French-style organ mass, a German Romantic fantasy or passacaglia, or a symphony in Cochereau's style is gradually becoming an important part of the improvisation curricula in many conservatories. The context contributes

of course to the choice of one or other style. The function of what the Germans call "liturgisches Orgelspiel" is for example clearly defined by the requirements of protestant church services: a contemporary language will not always be well received. Improvisation in pre-defined styles grants organists a set of tricks and models with which to develop their skills and abilities to react; to feel free when playing the organ, with the organ and with the music. The many habits, conventions and clichés that rule historical improvisation are in fact channels for musical education – just as was the case until the 18th century.

[§578] In fact, contemporary improvisations are in a way historic as well. The techniques used in them can often be identified and reproduced. Just as the style of an organ does not in itself guarantee authenticity, neither does the style of an improvisation determine its quality. In fact, the only element which is really improvised is the "interpretation" of one's own "blueprint". It is the invention, the ease and fluentness of one's musicking which creates the impression of creativity and freedom, quite removed from any consideration of musical language. This freedom is much closer to that of the interpreter and is what makes improvisation so useful for interpretation!

The Improvisation at Engelberg

[§579] French writer Georges Pérec demonstrated in the most brilliant way that the most complex and strict constraints can stimulate imagination and lead to an extremely original and convincing artistic result. Picasso in his variations on the Meninas of Velazquez, or Monet painting the cathedral in Rouen at different hours of a day, create variety in the repetition and creativity within a strict model.

[§580] At the organ, the instrument is a constraint in itself. Though the number of combinations of stops is virtually without limit, it is a real challenge to adapt and apply the musical language to each of them. Preparing the registration for an improvisation is of course akin to determining in advance the atmosphere of certain moments, or preparing recipes that have the potential to be widely adaptable to any situation. Here we come to the question of chicken and egg: does one put the instrument and its possibilities at the service of the improvisation, or does the improviser demonstrate and show off the organ? A good improviser will "deal with" (or adapt to) what

he is given, but will also tease from it its hidden possibilities. Even if we think an organ is "crap", our role is to make it sound at his best during an improvisation.

The Goll Organ at Engelberg (1876, 1926, 1993 / 137 stops)

[§581] In the improvisation I recorded in Engelberg, I had to deal with a pre-existing theme, in this case Bach's extremely well-known d minor Toccata & Fugue. I wanted to translate this music for the modern mind-set. The creation of a *pastiche* would have led to a piece which undoubtedly would have suffered in comparison with the original which is too good to be improved. Transplanting the spirit of the piece to a contemporary context gave me the opportunity to compare languages, to show relationships and differences, rather as if I had asked Xenakis and Ligeti to rewrite Bach. The marvellous instrument of Engelberg was of course an important help,

thanks to the quality of its voicing and the homogeneity of its timbres in a great acoustic. The complete battery of uneven harmonics, from the Gross Quint 10 2/3′ on the pedal to the Ninth 8/9′ on the 4th manual, and including a Dulcian-Quint 5 1/3′ and an Euphon-Terz 3 1/5′ (both reeds), provide an exotic flavour and allow unusual effects. However, most of the sounds I created were realised in a very traditional way. The improvisation made it possible to show the specific features of the instrument, as well as external elements usually considered to be problems or interferences, such as the bells of the church.

[§582] The main part of this improvisation would have been possible on a smaller organ. The acoustic is of course important in relation to the larger sound masses, and I would have probably have had to define the musical lines to a greater extent in a drier acoustic.

[§583] However, I have to say that the main difficulty was the fact that I had only two hours to master a completely unknown 137-stop organ and to record the improvisation. This time constraint obliged me to seek out a "global" way of approaching the assignment, without enjoying the luxury of listening and utilising optimally all of the organ's specific colours. In a concert, or had I been blessed with more preparation time, I would have probably played a completely different improvisation!

Vincent Thévenaz: Improvisation Toccata démolie

(the first four minutes)[1]

[sound file only available in the electronic version of this book]

play stop

1 CD: *J.S. Bach / Toccata & Fuge d-moll / Orgelimprovisationen* II. Organ Promotion OP 8007; www.organpromotion.org.

Conclusion

[§584] As a rich country, Switzerland has very few historic instruments, since every generation decided frenetically to build new organs according of the tastes of the times. The outstanding landscape of historic organs in the Netherlands is of course a dream situation for me. But the circumstances in Switzerland oblige us not to wait for the instrument to determine the style. As an organist, I have no choice but to play historic repertoire convincingly on an organ which is not conceived for the task. This is also true when playing contemporary music: the constraints of an average organ stimulate the imagination to find new resources entirely independently of all the possible "gadgets".

[§585] Many avenues remain to transform and perhaps to perfect the organ, or at least to open up new paths. But all the technical refinements in the world should not let us forget the very simple impact of the sound of an organ in an acoustic. All of the possible technological complexity should only matter for the organist and even then it must fulfil a role subordinate to that of his imagination; no more than a mere accessory.

[§586] The first task of the improviser is to stimulate the imagination. A baroque pastiche can be very original if played with wit and if it is truly inventive, just as it will be a sterile exercise if the language has not really been mastered. I can speak words in a foreign language, but they will not be idiomatic if I don't know anything of the cultural context and the habitual use of those words when spoken by a native tongue.

Abstract

In the 19th century, musicians became independent from patrons and princes; organs were almost completely reinvented, providing organists a great variety of 8′ stops. Organ improvisors seduced their audiences with musical effects, such as storm scenes; organs were extended with gadgets that helped the organist mimic thunder. In turn, the appearance of fugues and chorales became the hallmark of religion. Modern cinema proves that the basic

perception of what an organist is, has not really changed since.
Organists, on the other hand, are primarily focused on their relation to history: postmodern historicism in organ building as well as in organ music require them to be able to improvise in historic styles. In fact, even contemporary styles have become historic styles: the techniques used in them can often be identified and reproduced. Just as the style of an organ does not in itself guarantee authenticity, neither does the style of an improvisation determine its quality: the only element which is really improvised is the "interpretation" of one's own "blueprint".
In the course of the Organ Promotion CD project consisting of improvisations based on Bach's d minor Toccata & Fugue, I was asked to improvise on Bach's well-known d-minor Toccata theme, on the giant Goll organ at Engelberg, Switzerland, built in 1876 and enlarged (137 stops!) in 1924. I chose to use the uneven harmonics, such as the Gross Quint 10 2/3' on the pedal and Ninth 8/9' on the 4th manual, as well as the Dulcian-Quint 5 1/3' and the Euphon-Terz 3 1/5' (both reeds). Yet, I decided to use sounds created in a traditional way, as the music itself had to be convincing. The first task of the improviser is to stimulate the imagination - not to show the organ.

Vincent Thévenaz

Vincent Thévenaz is an eclectic musician: Professor for Organ and Improvisation at the Conservatoire of Geneva (Switzerland), organist in the biggest parish in Geneva, Chêne, he studied organ, piano, improvisation, musicology, Russian and French literature. His interpretation in 14 concerts of Bach's complete organ works in 2009-2010 raised great interest on his activities. His duet « W » with saxophonist Vincent Barras proposes spectacular transcriptions from Bach to Piazzolla, documented on a CD. Vincent Thévenaz also plays in several original chamber music combinations, such as percussion, violin or Alphorn. As a continuo player, he collaborates with the Ensemble Gli Angeli Genève. He premiered a dozen of new pieces and encourages composers' interest in organ. As an improviser, he plays as well at the organ in concerts or liturgy as at the piano in jazz, French chansons or live accompaniment of silent films. Vincent founded the Orchestre Buissonnier, a youth orchestra that he regularly conducts.

XIII

Jacob Lekkerkerker - To be a Dancer at the Organ: Creating Vibrant Music, based on Rhythmical and Bodily Impulses

[§587] This text is written from a very personal point of view. Having studied art history, philosophy and music, the perspective from which I undertake everything is that of the creator and not of the scientific observer. In my case, thinking, teaching and writing serve artistic creativity and, although I lack an explicit overview of the theory of improvisation, for the time being I am satisfied with this situation.

Dissatisfaction

[§588] Dissatisfaction, though, can be a most fruitful emotion. I remember being especially dissatisfied during the last months of 2007. I had just been appointed to the position of liturgical organist at the Oude Kerk in Amsterdam (the foundation responsible for concert activities in the Oude Kerk has a separate organist). My first CD had just been released; people were highly enthusiastic. At a symposium of organ builders I improvised together with the legendary Olivier Latry. But although things seemed to be going rather well, I didn't feel like that at all. I had ideas about how my music should sound, but felt obstructed by the difficulties of playing the large organ in the Oude Kerk (a famous instrument but challenging to play) and by my limitations as an organist. Success seemed to be based on no more than luck.
[§589] At one point during that period, I was recording a CD in the Sloterkerk, a small church in Amsterdam, together with a flauto traverso player, Marieke Schneemann. We had been working for some days, waiting for planes to pass by whilst maintaining a hotline to one of the villagers who worked in the control tower at nearby Schiphol Airport. I was somewhat

tired but we still had two more pieces to record: a solo piece for flute and an organ improvisation. Having absolutely no ideas for the improvisation, I decided to take a break. Not surprisingly, I was soon filled with inspiration and the recorded piece turned out to be a fine improvisation.

[§590] Although I was temporarily satisfied, it is exactly this kind of story that obscures the theory of, and studies about, improvisation. It all seems so easy: take a nap on the couch, free the mind, and play! In reality though, I was sitting at the organ bench like a crooked young man, nervously following his fingers and feet, even playing roughly at times on the recently restored historic instrument. Looking back, my improvisation remains a fine piece of music, but the only way I got there was by searching for inspiration at the organ bench. Some months later, I made a simple decision: if I was to continue playing the organ, it could no longer be like this. I promised myself to make a definite decision about whether I wanted to continue playing when I would reach 35 in 2010. This allowed me some three years to get things right. By that time I wanted to be in control of my ideas, in control of my body while playing and in control of my rhythmic passions.

Ewald Kooiman and Peter Kuit

[§591] During the process, several people provided significant inspiration. Firstly, my organ teacher Ewald Kooiman, who passed away in 2009. The fact that he was both a regarded Bach specialist and a body-builder intrigued me deeply. What intrigued me most, after becoming accustomed to his presence, was the fact that for Ewald, fanatical bodybuilding was a way of regulating energy. Learning from his example did not imply that I had to start body-building, but rather to learn about my own energy balance in order to understand my personal and physical energy and to regulate it or, even better, start using it, playing with it and making it a part of my musicianship.

[§592] Secondly, a deep impression was made on me by tap dancer Peter Kuit, during a performance with the David Kweksilber Big Band during the Holland Festival in June, 2008. After seeing him, I seriously considered abandoning the organ to train as a tap dancer. What intrigued me was that Peter was in total control of his body and could even make music

with it. I got in touch with him, and we talked about my struggle. He strongly advised me not to make any detours (e.g. start dancing or playing percussion), but to stick to my instrument and try to do new things with it.

Being a Dancer at the Organ

[§593] This is how my research project "Being a Dancer at the Organ" came into being, born both of ideals and of frustration. I wanted to play the organ as rhythmically and fluently as possible, but struggled with technical problems. These technical problems seemed to be rooted in the way I was behaving on the organ bench; always being busy, having a sound ideal, occasionally grasping that ideal, but not really controlling it.

[§594] So, I began indeed to make some detours. Firstly, I took some private lessons with a renowned improvisation educator and dancer, Katie Duck. In her dance courses, she makes her students very aware of the relationship between their own bodies and the space and time surrounding it. Dancers are not like organists who, in many situations, play in isolation but, instead, are obliged to develop their senses in order to connect to the situation in which they find themselves. In addition, Katie Duck made me aware of the importance of the planning process. A dancer is trained to make planned and fluent transitions; going in one direction whilst being able to change suddenly when the space demands you to do so. Space is obviously more limited than time. Therefore thinking about space and taking part in dance classes has been a fruitful experience, creating an analogy for thinking about transitions in music. The dancer needs to be fully aware of time and space and the same is true for an organist: time (timing, articulation, touch) and space (projecting and reflecting sounds).

Jackson Pollock

[§595] Another analogy: a visual artist for whom time and space seem to have been essential qualities is the American painter Jackson Pollock, a painter who can be truly classified as an improviser. He would finish off a piece in a set frame of time, without stopping, or contemplating. Contemporaries of Pollock, like the American composer Earle Brown, admired him for this drive, concentration and spontaneity. What intrigues me most about Pollock is the fact that a painting would either be finished or

destroyed. For him, the line between order and chaos was a thin one and, for some, it can be still hard to define the difference between the two in his work. It is also interesting, therefore, to look at the way he painted, a process photographed and filmed by Hans Namuth and Paul Falkenberg during the early 1950s for the film *Pollock Painting*, featuring music by Morton Feldman. We see a highly concentrated painter, walking along the canvas, rarely touching it, and creating rhythmical structures through decisive gestures. Just like a dancer, Pollock plays with gravity; a dancer at the canvas.
[§596] Being a dancer at the organ; a metaphor for designing new structures and patterns for organ improvisations... creating music that is vibrant, based on rhythmical and bodily impulses... searching out the natural links between music, dance, other art forms and even other genres of music.

Presence

[§597] Having a reasonably developed concept of my musical ideals, but only a vague idea of how to accomplish them, this simple schematic model of improvised music has, for me, been very helpful in making certain decisions. Others have written extensively on these topics, for me a simple summary sufficed:

1. I admire musicians who can produce a lot of music with limited musical material.
2. I admire musicians who can produce a lot of music with a lot of musical material.
3. I encourage musicians who produce poor music with limited musical material to learn about making music and about exploring musical material.
4. I feel most uncomfortable with musicians who make poor music with a lot of musical material.

[§598] Before I began to re-consider my improvisations, I would unhesitatingly have described myself as an improviser capable of producing a lot of music from a minimum of musical material, with a strong talent for "presence". As a former pupil of Jos van der Kooy at the Royal Conservatory in The Hague, creating "a good piece of music" had always been my

primary concern. The music must be convincing, the material is secondary. Trust your ears, trust your talent and be free as an improviser. This is a very strong and practical method for learning how to improvise; to forget all fear, to jump in. Improvising on the organ was, for me, not primarily about "which notes to play" and perhaps still isn't. It was about being able to get from one note to the next in a convincing, and seemingly completely natural, way. Dancing at the organ. Like skating on ice or surfing on perfect waves. I had a clear ideal: to be light-hearted in my improvisations, to play with a light touch. I wanted to objectify the exact nature of pressing keys, projecting them in time and space. Which notes one plays is important but more important still is to be the master of those notes.

Timing and touch

[§599] Let's assume that timing and touch were the essential qualities I was searching for in music. Although I have a talent for timing, I had only vague ideas about rhythm. Being jealous of jazz and world musicians who were so far ahead of me in both respects, I wanted to abandon the traditional rhythmic patterns and to be a more flexible percussionist at the organ. One of my ideas at the time was this: poor harmony combined with perfect timing will make better music than elaborate harmony with poor timing, inextricably tied up with my "talent" for making music from limited material. Since I wanted rhythm to be the root of my music, I took private lessons with percussionist Wim Vos, one of the Netherlands' leading percussionists. This training dealt with all sorts of rhythmic studies using Afro-Brazilian rhythms and studying Steve Reich and others. Establishing clear rhythms seems, in the first instance, to be a question of mathematical precision and secondly about playing with the maths, in other words, timing.
[§600] By this time, early in 2009, problems began to arise. I had vague notions about dance, had made serious attempts to study rhythm and was listening to all sorts of music in search of inspiration and possible new ways into improvisation. However, trying to introduce new rhythmical elements (for example) into organ improvisation, posed new musical problems. It was as if the structure of my musical behaviour had been dismantled and the element of "presence" lessened. Let me try to describe exactly how I

got lost. As I have already stated, during my improvisation studies at the Royal Conservatory, I had been trained to be an intuitive improviser. Let the ear and the hands and feet do the work, and guide them intuitively. The connection with the super-conscious in this way of training was very important. It was perhaps no surprise, therefore, that things became blurry when I started to question my material and to deconstruct it.

[§601] Rhythm, touch and timing are hard to isolate; in most music, they are connected to harmony, motives and counterpoint. It struck me that if you want to be very precise about certain musical parameters, you must be equally precise about the remainder. My questioning of rhythm, touch and timing led to my questioning of all the other musical parameters and especially harmony and counterpoint. Improvising had for me never been primarily about "which notes to play." But, suddenly, this was exactly what it was about.

[§602] This struggle brought me to one of the hardest decisions I have ever had to make. Although I had developed into a progressive musician, performing with digital samples, digitally manipulating the organ's sound, playing with experimental ensembles and with jazz musicians, percussionists and dancers, I decided to begin studying harmony, counterpoint and organ improvisation again taking my cue from the French school of organ improvisation. "The French", after all, have such a strong tradition of organ improvisation taking, as its starting point, a solid training in harmony and counterpoint. I turned, therefore, to Loïc Mallié, whom I consider to be the best organ improviser in France, as well as a renowned teacher and composer.

Studying with Mallié

[§603] Loïc Mallié, it turned out, was quite practical in his didactical approach. For him, there seem to be two key moments in improvisation as a concept. There is the moment "before" and there is the now, "presence". When working with Mallié, all the energy is spent on the development of musical language: incorporating styles, forms and writing harmonic and contrapuntal exercises. But most important in these lessons are the little noises he makes: "Sssssiiiuuuuffff. Ták! Fuít! Hahá!" These are the moments of mental shifting, of forgetting, of turning back to the natural "point zero"

(extremely difficult or even impossible, incidentally, when lost in a world of style, form, writing, and so on).

[§604] In a way, I was reminded of the notion of "the 'sans' [without] of the pure cut" in Jacques Derrida's *The Truth in Painting*.[1] As I read it, the question is whether it is possible to make a pure cut in a flower, for example a tulip, without leaving traces of the incision. Is it possible to perfectly cut the flower from its plant? Just like the sharp sounds of Loïc Mallié: "Ták!" It is as if the pure cut is an ideal moment of forgetting, as though beginning to improvise. The refining of the ear, of musical craftsmanship and of musical languages, as well as the connection of ears and hands and feet, surely represent a different momentum.

[§605] Mallié strongly advised me to study existing musical styles to improve my musical manoeuvrability. I tried to understand Bach, Franck, Debussy and, for example, Messiaen, and what they were trying to achieve. Wagner, Bartók, Stravinsky... I studied scores, wrote etudes and improvised in their styles. The goal was not to arrive rationally at a perfect understanding of what these great composers were doing, but simply to be "inside" their music, to observe what they did and to relate it to my own artistic perspectives.

[§606] For Mallié, and many other great improvisers I guess, harmonic thinking is a *sine qua non*. Their training in improvising in different styles has a strong and very long tradition. And although I felt like a schoolboy entering that arena, I started to work on those styles. Mallié wrote themes, containing just the inherent basis of a style. A Bach theme always had some potential for counterpoint and a distinct balance between the tonality and the dissonant diminished sevenths. In Franck's style: a theme that obliged one to develop chromatic motives. In a modal style, like Debussy's: some precise place in the melody for the sixth and ninth. In Messiaen's style, the goal was to develop interesting melodies from his modes whilst evoking as rich a harmonic thinking as possible. Looking back now, the choice of Bach, Franck, Debussy and Messiaen as starting points seemed to make

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1 My reading of Jacques Derrida. *The Truth in Painting*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987 (especially pages 85-89).

sense when considering the history of the organ repertoire. Counterpoint, chromaticism and modality are important pillars of organ improvisation and literature.

[§607] Improvising in these specific styles has not become a goal in itself for me, however. And although Mallié himself is able to improvise in whatever style he chooses in a given situation, I admire most his free improvisations such as that recorded at St.-Pothin, Lyon, on his CD *Affettuoso*.[2] Nevertheless, improvising in historic styles has both enriched my musical thinking and my liturgical organ playing. In church services, agility in different styles is a blessing, and not only because choral singing can be stylistically quite diverse in contemporary church practice.

[§608] Let me return to Derrida and the image of the pure cut. A pure cut separating exercise, musical study, the study of different styles and the creation of etudes on the one hand and free improvisation in one's "own" style on the other, seems a hard one to achieve. As an ideal, nevertheless, it is useful. Early in my musical training I felt that the hard study of improvisation stood in the way of feeling free and making music. Jos van der Kooy always advised me to stop working at a certain point in the process. It is better to take a walk along the beach before your final improvisation exam, he said. I am still indebted to such wonderful advice.

[§609] With this in mind I once asked Loïc Mallié how many hours he would advise me to study music in a single day. A few hours he suggested, and turned to the famous example of Chopin, who advised his students to study a maximum of three hours a day. The remainder should be spent thinking or reading, going to the museum or even the beach. Prepare the pure cut. There is studying music and there is music, and the cut between them should be made as perfectly, as sharply, as invisibly as possible. This is the hardest thing to achieve, and it takes guts. Ták!

2 Released in January 2012; label: Codaex France.

Bach, Franck, Debussy, etc.

[§610] Studying Bach's style made me aware of the necessity of creating tension between the basic chords of harmony and their dissonant challengers. At first the improviser gets used to improvising harmonic progressions. What I tried to learn from Bach is to juxtapose consonant and dissonant chords. Secondly: the rhythmical power of counterpoint. Where in the rhythmical logic of the theme does one find the potential for a countersubject? Thirdly: the logic of form. The Bach style again forced me to be very precisely aware of tonal relationships in the context of the whole musical form. When you improvise a fugue, you simply start in a certain key, move to its dominant, back to the tonic, back to the dominant, towards the parallel tonality, etc. You balance consonance and dissonance in a logical and structural way. You search for a balance between harmony and rhythm, which leads to counterpoint. Once improvising freely again, after the "cut", I felt more able to create logical harmonic structures in my own language, to develop structured harmonic progressions more freely and to fill in rhythm and counterpoint more easily.

[§611] The same goes for improvising in the style of Franck. Let's address some specific examples again. Firstly, in regard to form: clear sentences with quite basic harmonic structures can be alternated with passages consisting of chromatic "journeys". Secondly, being prepared for any harmonic shift by knowing how to turn the harmonic function of the notes you play into another harmonic function, at any point. Thirdly, always knowing where you are. Improvising in Franck's style is like driving a car in an empty city and being able at any moment to suddenly turn left or right. Again, after the cut, all this musical thinking and study can accelerate one's control of harmony in any musical language. Halfway between Bach and Franck, the cut seems harder and harder to make.

[§612] Improvising in the neo-modal style of Debussy and Ravel presents possibilities of form and demands a strong training in harmony – again. Forms become landscapes, creating melodies based on neo-modal modes, chords and their harmonic functions. It asks one to think in modal constellations, with or without diminished fifths, and to try to find a balance that seems right as well as deploying ninth chords deliberately without their tonal foundation and in all their inversions.

Transposition and modulation

[§613] In almost all improvisatory practice and certainly in the case of organ improvisation, transposition and modulation are crucial tools, especially in the context of the Franck and Bach styles. Debussy and Messiaen provide us with the gift of a different way of modulating, by steps of a minor third, diminished fifth or a major third. When thinking in terms of modern tone rows, the modes, and the consequent use of chords made up of 5 of 6 different notes, the colouring of Messiaen, provides a great example. Having been one of the last students of Olivier Messiaen, Mallié was especially keen to make me aware of the possibilities presented by Messiaen's own modes of limited transposition. The possibilities are endless, but what seems most important is that the modes themselves are so delicate. The modes are just the material; the potential colours therein, by contrast, are endless. This is a perfect training in finding one's way around chords with five or more different notes and with the correct spacing between them.

[§614] All these are examples. All this occurs before the cut... Before that moment you must try to forget it all, in one way, and forget it, at the very same moment. Forgetting gets more and more difficult. Improvise a piece in Bach's style... then another as if you were Debussy. Go back to Franck. And to finish, make a little study in the style of Messiaen. You'll go crazy. At least I did.

[§615] The next goal is making the cuts. Speak French, some English, some Russian, and some German. This can be a perfect training of your feeling for language. But as soon as you turn back to being a rapper again, use your own language. Concentrate. Make the cut, as sharply as possible, leaving no traces. Dare to take the flower. Fuít! Ták!

Coming to conclusions

[§616] "Artistically gifted, the improviser will find that the music flows easily, and will reach the true emotion by letting his mind guide his muscles and not the opposite." When first reading this remark of Jean Langlais, in his General Survey of Improvisation (in: *Méthode d'Orgue*) I had a sort of schematic view of it. The inner mind forms ideas and then starts using the muscles to perform them. I discussed this with dancer Katie Duck, who made me aware of another way in which Langlais' remark is so one-

dimensional. Why should we think of the mind as the only guide we have? Doesn't that limit the potential influence of the situation we're in, whether dancing or making music? Can't we try to be one with the space in which we find ourselves and with time itself?

[§617] Discussing my music with Katie and comparing it to dance, we found it essential that the mind guides what happens in time and space, but that it needs information from its connectors, its senses to be able to take guidance. A dancer has to use his eye and ear to control space. He has to be able to see even that which cannot be seen: what happens behind him. A breathtaking moment for me was when I myself danced in a dance group improvisation during one of Katie's workshops. The aim was to dance intuitively together and at considerable speed. Should anyone make physical contact with anyone else, the whole dance would end. The idea of having eyes on the back of your head really takes on a new meaning in such circumstances. A musician might use his ears in a comparable way: anticipating, using memory and intuition, guiding his playing, being present in time and space.

Flow, pause, and exit

[§618] There are a number of further key elements which are important to Katie's ideas on dance. Flow, pause, and exit. In music education, most emphasis traditionally lies on a musical craftsmanship which enables flow. Think of training in harmony, counterpoint and form. But "pause and exit" are essential too, in order to connect to the situation, the time and space you're in. Perhaps playing solo most of the time at a distance from our audience leads us organists naturally to an overdose of flow and a lack of pause and exit.

[§619] What are pause and exit about? Pause is about using rest and tension. Exit is about ending, about change, about the tension of suspense. Pause and exit can be executed in a thousand ways and could be trained in the same way as we train musical flow. This is a very technical approach to looking at pause, flow and exit, however. At a more existential level, they are part of awareness; of musical and bodily presence.

[§620] Let's return once again to the concept of 'presence' as a key concept in improvisation and some experiments I did with Katie as a dancer. One of the questions I asked her was this: Does the music I improvise on the organ

make any sense to you as a dancer / choreographer, as a "present" listener at a distance, since we are in a large acoustical space. So I improvised some pieces for her, over the span of a few weeks, at different organs and locations in Amsterdam. The finest moments during these sessions were when I could see her start to move slowly, from a small mirror; a moment of connection between my music and a very personal and spontaneous interpretation of my music. Later, writing in my notebook at home, I was reminded of a painting by Joan Miro, although I only know it through reproductions: *Dancer Listening to Organ in a Gothic Cathedral*. It's simple, naïve, strong, powerful, but seems to have been created with a minimum of "material". This painting is of significance to me for more than one reason, however. The organist usually improvises at a great distance from his audience. One answer to this problematic relationship can be to create a world for oneself at the organ bench, to be indifferent to what happens at the other end of the cathedral. The most important change I may have made over the last few years is to choose the opposite direction, trying to be present, trying to feel, listen and connect to the space, whether in an empty cathedral or one filled with hundreds of people. The DVD about one of the greatest French improvisers in musical history, Pierre Cochereau, is highly illustrative in this regard. In one scene, when teaching a young organist at Notre Dame, Cochereau remarks that what she had just played on the organ wouldn't have made any sense at the other end of cathedral. A striking comment. It really can be as simple as that. Presence. *To be a Dancer at the Organ*.

Abstract

Having a reasonably developed concept of my musical ideals, but only a vague idea of how to accomplish them, this simple schematic model of improvised music has, for me, been very helpful in making decisions.

1. I admire musicians who can produce a lot of music with limited musical material.
2. I admire musicians who can produce a lot of music with a lot of musical material.
3. I encourage musicians who produce poor music with limited musical material to learn about making music and about exploring musical material.
4. I feel most uncomfortable with musicians who make poor music with a lot of musical material.

With this in mind, 2007 turned out to be a year to be frank about myself. On occasion I made a lot of music with limited musical material, but on other occasions... During that period, my organ teacher at that time Ewald Kooiman showed me ways of regulating energy. Tap dancer Peter Kuit intrigued me by having total control over his body. I was taken by the film Pollock Painting, presenting the painter like a dancer, playing with gravity. Next to all that, I worked in that year with dancer and improviser Katie Duck, who showed me the importance of "flow, pause, and exit" and of musical presence. These inspirations made me decide to 'start all over again' with a project called to be a Dancer at the Organ. To be a Dancer at the Organ is a project about presence. Make music with whatever musical material. Music that is direct, with a maximum of musical presence. In this process, I questioned old skills and acquired new ones. I decided that just being "present", improvising intuitively, was not sufficient anymore. I was eager to learn about timing and touch by listening to all sorts of music, and discovered that leaving out consequent thinking on parameters like harmony obliged me to really understand what I left out by doing so. This led me to study all musical material again, studying harmony, and counterpoint and organ improvisation, taking my cue from the French school of organ improvisation, with Loïc Mallié. He convinced me to learn to improvise in the styles of Bach, Frank, Debussy, Bartok, Messiaen, to understand musical tradition and to enrich musical thinking. At first, this felt like a hopeless detour, making poor music with a lot of musical material... But I trusted Mallié. Essential were the little noises he made during our sessions: "Sssssiiiuuuuffff. Ták! Fuít! Hahá!" These moments of mental shifting, of forgetting, of turning back to the natural

"point zero". To learn to forget and be free as a musician… "To be a Dancer at the Organ".

Jacob Lekkerkerker

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XIV

Giampaolo Di Rosa - The Improvisation Process

[§621] Musical improvisation is understood here as an activity exercised by the improviser (one or more persons) within a real time creative context, with or without previous, parallel or given references, in such a way that the performance itself is a compositional activity ranging from mere reproduction to the original creation of music forms.
[§622] The theoretical complexity of this practice is due to the lack of written reference material for any kind of analysis and criticism. Therefore, the perceptive relationship formed during the performance is largely based on listening to that which is taking place in an impromptu fashion and thus in real time: improvisation as a process.
[§623] The chosen expository method concerns the gradual theoretical explanation of each practical activity involved in an informed process of improvisation, namely as regards the construction of a form, involving at least two figures: the improviser and the listener (the audience).

The Phenomenon

[§624] The subjective consideration of sound as a sensation acquires phenomenological importance in terms of "apperception", as a manifestation of a certain observed color or heard sound. "Is it not sufficient to have seen red or to have heard an A in order to know what sensing is?", writes Maurice Merleau-Ponty in his chapter on sensation, or rather on the manner in which one is stimulated, the experience of a state of oneself. This sensory experience concerns sound (color) that, by virtue of its arrangement, either delimits an object that immediately stimulates all the senses, or is received by the body, causing our experience to spill out over all the sensory registers.
[§625] The field of sound – which can be elevated to a phenomenon upon becoming inherent to a musical form – leads to phenomenological aesthetics, which constantly questions the existence of the musical composition, and

thus its aesthetic and musical object, whatever it may be. In fact, a musical composition is not merely a sonorous or acoustic object: sounds (and silences), in both their causal interaction and their interaction in space and time, are not the constitutional elements of the composition as a form of music.

[§626] The musical composition may be categorised as an ideal or intentional object that can be perceived through performance. Listeners, in their turn, are bound to relate to it just as it was conceived by the composer. Yet, the musical composition cannot be identified simply with its performance or reproduction; musical perception refers to an actualization conditioned by the performance of a composition. As a result, perceptual judgement concerns the accuracy and expediency of the performance.[1]

[§627] Insofar musical phenomenological aesthetics takes on the ideality or intentionality of the composition as an object, the correlation between musical perception and object is either a transcendent relationship (requiring perceptive adequacy) or an immanent relationship (ontological realism). The problem of perceptive adequacy and appropriateness discriminates yet further in relation to a cognitive purpose (gnosiological critique on the validity of consciousness) or an aesthetic purpose (critique on the validity of aesthetic experience).

[§628] Consideration of the musical phenomenon emphasises the way in which the composition does not exhaust itself in the overall sound, but is clearly built upon it during the moment of performance and perception.

Formativity

[§629] With his theory of "formativity", Luigi Pareyson provides a highly original way of studying the great importance of form within the aesthetic and hermeneutic field of Italian studies.[2] There are two fundamental

1 Nelson Goodman (*Languages of Art*. Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett, 1976. 127 ff.) discusses this aspect as regards the agreement between performance and notation, with the score assigned the role of identifying the corresponding work. However, this very pragmatic concept does not apply to a process of improvisation.

2 Luigi Pareyson. *Estetica. Teoria della formatività*. Milan: Bompiani, 1988; 2002[3].

reasons that lead the author to use the term "formativity": firstly, by directly avoiding the term "form", he intends to move away from the vexing matter of formalism and "contentism", to focus on form as a "living organism endowed with its own life and internal law"; by doing so, he also highlights the dynamic formal characteristic that includes and concludes a process of formation with an aesthetic result that can be interpreted and understood.

[§630] As Pareyson's theory of formativity was published in parts between 1950 and 1954, Pareyson is rightly deemed to be the key exponent of Italian aesthetic and hermeneutic thought. In fact, Pareyson's aesthetics is, according to the author, not a "metaphysics of art, but an analysis of aesthetic experience" which opens up to a general theory of interpretation and is able to explain the complex interpretability of works of art.

[§631] Starting the discussion with concepts of style, content and material, "formativity" is firstly defined in terms of activity (aesthetic experience and the aesthetics of experience) broken down into *production* and *invention*: "a type of 'doing' that, in the course of doing, invents the 'way of doing'", causing Pareyson to claim that "art is pure formativity". The significance attributed to the terms *invention* and *production* refers to the process of musical composition, which, in addition to the original moment of intuition, also encompasses the constant elaboration – according to a defined or definable formal process – of the elements that compose the musical material whose matrix is consolidated in the sonorous material. The formal process is defined as the original determination of a typical musical form (composition). However, it can also be defined even when it cannot originally be attributed to a defined model, but subsequently becomes evident through structures that refer to a certain form. Improvisation can thus be included here.

[§632] This conception of formativity has the benefit of skipping debates on the dichotomy of form and content, as artistic content is provided by actual experience, which can be directly referred to the figure of the artist (interiority, spirituality, reactivity, sentiment) who creates the work of art by forming it. The conceptual and resolutory fulcrum lies not in the question of its content (otherwise stirring up the well-known debate again) or what artistic experience really is, but how this artistic experience is constituted by forming the work.

[§633] The way in which experience elevates itself to form is the way in which the artist conceives the work in all its concreteness, and therefore the way in which the work is formed: the style, or rather the manner of formation.
[§634] Together with form, style renders the content of the work of art during its formation. In doing so, it is permissible to speak of the indifference of the content (but not indifference *to* the content), presupposing that everything can become content during the formative process. In fact, the specificity of art lies in its form, achieved by the act of forming in order to create form, with the content found in the style, i.e. the manner of formation: the elaborate expression of sentiment, and thus of content, is rendered, concretely, in the style.
[§635] Art does not contain a sentiment of which it is an expression and which, in any case, is rendered with sound. Instead, this content is acquired by the work of art during and according to the methods involved in its formation. Martin Heidegger asserts that "the much-vaunted aesthetic experience cannot get around the thingly aspect of the artwork", or rather the "sonorous in a musical composition", as "the musical composition [is] in sound". Sonorous material is linked to the concept of the formation of the work in its original definition of a formative intention: "The formative intention is defined as adoption of the material, and the choice of the material is implemented as the birth of the formative intention."[3] The formally complete work is the material formed according to the style of the artist and originated by his intention (and intuition). Hence the importance of musical instruments, which form part of the material.
[§636] Pareyson conceives success as the infallible criterion of formativity. The process "cannot be governed by a law other than its own result": formative process and result are closely connected. This makes it possible to overstep the arid distinctions – particularly widespread in the field of music – between invention and performance. In fact, the work is both the result of

3 Martin Heidegger. Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1950; 1994[7]. English translation taken from the edition of Heidegger's Basic Writings: On the Origin of the Work of Art (David Farrell Krell, ed. New York: HarperCollins, 2008. 143-212.

and the law governing its own formative process, which may be actively defined as the "coincidence of forming form and formed form".
[§637] Consciousness is also an important factor in this formative aesthetic field. To Pareyson, interpretation is subordinate to the developmental nature of the work of art, so that its definition focuses on nothing more than the current activity of interpreting: "Interpreting is that form of consciousness in which, on the one hand, receptivity and activity are indistinguishable and, on the other, the known is a form and the knower a person." All the more reason to view improvisation as essentially a process, as it consists of a one-to-one relationship between composition and interpretation.

The Process

[§638] The process of improvisation involves at least two actors: the improviser and the listener. The improviser's activity is threefold:

- Composing, while simultaneously
- Performing, while simultaneously
- Listening

[§639] This activity produces a result, which represents the musical result of the originating process. By definition, the listener listens:

- To what? The activity of the improviser, and therefore to the result
- When? During the course of the activity

[§640] The improviser is therefore carrying out the same activity as the listener: both listen. The improviser listens to himself in the practical act of the gradual formation of the process. The listener listens to the activity of the improviser in that same act. What is the purpose of listening?
[§641] The improviser listens in order to relate to the process for reasons of its gradual formation, where control plays a productive role. The listener also listens in order to relate to the process and transpose it, with control playing a receptive role, as otherwise this process would remain extraneous to him and thus remain either fully or partly incomprehensible and unknowable.

[§642] Listening leads to the two figures being assimilated, albeit for partly different purposes. The fundamental act of the improviser is therefore compositional. In short:

- The process is compositional, with the formal composition as its object.
- The means of communicating this unwritten composition is performance.
- The stylistically appreciable result is produced through listening.
- Listening is the element of assimilation between the two actors.

[§643] The result constitutes the end of the process, realised with the gradual formation of its object. On this basis, it is also apparent that the improviser and the listener are interacting, and thus subjects (the former might be defined as direct and the latter as indirect). The activity of the improviser (and of every performer by extension) can also be completely solitary, limiting the act of listening to the performer himself, as this activity is always present.[4]
[§644] The experience of the process of improvisation is deemed to be cognitive. In fact, the process implies both the improviser's potential prior knowledge, which takes shape in the improvisation itself, and the listener's non-prior knowledge. For the improviser, final knowledge of a composition corresponds to its formal completion, while prior knowledge of it is a projection; for the listener, prior knowledge is minimal: acquiring final knowledge depends on a gradual formation, in step with the process of way music comes into existence and its perception. "Mistakes" made during the process of formation by the improviser may distort the process, unless alternative paths are taken that were generated by the mistake, preferably without affecting the process so far, as this could lead to internal inconsistency. "Mistakes" made by the listener may affect his appreciation, thus adversely affecting the understanding of the process itself and its result.
[§645] Listening provides the common ground for the identification of the process of improvisation.

4 The performance of written works (whether or not they are known to the listener) obeys the same process.

Registration

[§646] Basically, musical notation includes references to sound (S), timbre (T) and note (N). Since timbre is an aspect that comes with the sound, one may write the relationship between the three as follows:

$$N = S(T)$$

With respect to organ music, the relationship is more complex, as it includes registration. The registration (R) requires selecting at least one register (r), so that

$$R = [1 + (n-1)]\ r$$

As R determines the timbre of the organ sound, N = S, which would be the organ-specific relationship, may be written as

$$N = S\ [R(T)]$$

As the registration in each case coincides with the timbric configuration of the sound spectrum produced, we may as well write R(T) = R, so that

$$N = S\ [R]$$

Organ notation is the graphic expression that coincides not with the sound produced by the instrument, but with the sound produced by the registration.

Conclusion

[§647] As a process, organ improvisation brings together the main musical activities typical of the organ tradition: composition, registration, performance, reception, analysis and critique. As the act of composition takes place real time and without any literal residue, listening appears a conditional activity, without which systematic intelligibility of musical activities is unthinkable.[5]

5 Additional bibliography: Boris Assafjew. *Die musikalische Form als Prozeß.* Berlin: Verlag Neue Musik, 1976; Gianmario Borio, Michela Garda (ed.), *L'esperienza musicale. Teoria e storia della ricezione*. Turin: E.D.T., 1989; Giampaolo Di Rosa. *Teoria da registagào do órgào. Relagào analitica entre forma e registagào na obra de Jean Guillou*. Aveiro: Universidade de Aveiro, DECA 2007 (PhD); Zofia Lissa. "Semantische Elemente der Musik". In Vladimir Karbusicky (ed.), *Sinn und Bedeutung in der Musik*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1990; Augusto Mazzoni. *La musica nell'estetica fenomenologica*. Milan: Mimesis, 2004. Maurice Merleau-Ponty. *Phénoménologie de la perception*. Paris: Gallimard, 1945 (English translation by Donald A. Landes: *Phenomenology of Perception*. Routledge, 2013).

Abstract

With his theory of "formativity", Luigi Pareyson presents, in his *Estetica: teoria della formatività* (1988), as he puts it, "not a metaphysics of art, but an analysis of aesthetic experience." How is this experience constituted by forming a work? Regarding musical improvisation, it is style, i.e. the manner of formation, that renders the content of the work of art during its formation. It is permissible to speak of the indifference of the content (but not indifference to the content), presupposing that everything can become content during the process. In fact, the specificity of art lies in its form, achieved by the act of forming in order to create form, with the content rendered by the style.
The improvisational process is thus compositional, with the formal composition as its object; the means of communicating this unwritten composition is performance; the stylistically appreciable result is produced through listening. As the act of composition takes place real time and without any literal residu, listening appears in fact a conditional activity, without which systematic intelligibility of musical activities is unthinkable.

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XV

Ronny Krippner - English organ improvisation in the 20th and 21st centuries

[§648] Improvisation – that is the simultaneous invention and performance of music – has always played an important role in organ playing as it allows the organist to respond to the liturgical flow of church services in a most flexible way. The skill of being able to create music on the organ *ex tempore* has been constantly cultivated in Europe and even led to the development of different national schools of organ improvisation: French and German organists, for instance, not only improvise regularly in concert and liturgy, but also established a firm tradition of teaching improvisation in their respective countries.

[§649] And there is a rich tradition of improvisation in England, too. We know that people were dazzled by George Frideric Handel's fiery extemporisations at St Paul's Cathedral. The blind 18th-Century organist John Stanley (1712-1786) was an outstanding improviser of voluntaries, so was the 19th-Century organist and composer Samuel Sebastian Wesley (1810-1876). Being able to improvise to a high standard was crucial if an English organist wanted to climb up the career ladder: there are reports that, at the audition for the post of organist at Durham Cathedral in 1862/3, candidates were asked to extemporize a four part fugue on a given subject – a rather daunting thought today!

[§650] However, as music became increasingly complex during the 19th Century, musicians relied more and more on printed music thus resulting in the decline of the ancient art of improvisation. Only the organ and later jazz music held improvisation in high esteem. Although organ improvisation in England did not die out as such, it is often said to be underdeveloped compared to France or Germany. This article will focus on the English school of organ improvisation during the last one hundred years and show how this compares to continental traditions.

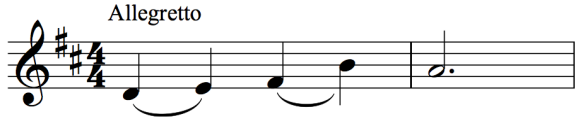
English Organ Improvisation in the early 20th century

[§651] Due to the momentary nature of improvisation, it is difficult to comment on liturgical organ improvisation at around 1900 as there are no recordings available from that period. Consequently, other sources of information need to be consulted in order to get a better understanding of what improvisations back then were like. In Edwardian England, improvisation was referred to as extemporization and was a compulsory discipline within the keyboard skills tests of the Royal College of Organists' Fellowship (FRCO) examination until 1994. The following theme is taken from the FRCO examination in July 1902 – a short, tonal phrase in D Major:

Example 1: FRCO examination theme (1902)

[sound file only available in the electronic version of this book]

play stop



How well did FRCO candidates extemporize?

[§652] Harry Alfred Harding – one of the FRCO examiners - suggests in 1907[1] that the overall standard of playing in these tests was not overwhelming. The "harmonies", he says, "are often charming […] but there has been on the whole an utter lack of design and form."

[§653] He then tells us how to improvise before the service: "For instance, an in-going voluntary should not have for its theme one of a very pronounced character, nor indeed should the theme be made unduly prominent. An

1 H.A. Harding. *Musical Form: its influence upon the art of Improvisation*. London: RCO, 1907.

atmosphere is what is needed: we have come into God's House to worship Him, and the less obtrusive the organ is the better. Reverence is the essential characteristic, not cleverness." Maybe the meaningless meandering of chords one can sometimes witness before services in England, also known as "wallpaper improvisations" or "doodling" was in those days seen as a polite thing to do? Looking across the English Channel, to Germany, we get a very similar picture: the organists there were asked "to stay in the background with their playing… Any showing-off in Preludes or Postludes… [was] not permitted."[2]

Frank Joseph Sawyer

[§654] A leading figure of organ extemporization in Edwardian England was Frank Joseph Sawyer who is still remembered today with the Sawyer prize for outstanding ARCO (Associate of the Royal College of Organists) examination candidates. His book *Extemporization* was published in 1890[3] and was still in use by organists at the beginning of the 20th Century and later. Here, Sawyer gives useful instructions on how to develop a free theme – like the FRCO theme above – and then moves on to more specific genres and styles:

- Preludes
- Postludes
- Extemporization on hymn tunes
- Andante and Intermezzo form
- March and Overture form
- Fantasias in several movements

2 "Der Organist sollte sich im Hintergrund halten und auf das Choralspiel konzentrieren. Nur auf Selbstdarstellung ziehlendes Vor- und Nachspiel sollte ganz unterbleiben." K. Voltz. *Orgelunterricht in der seminaristischen Lehrerbildung*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Verlag, 2002.

3 F. J. Sawyer. *Extemporization*. London: Novello's Music Primer's Educational Series, 1890.

Frank Joseph Sawyer (1857-1908)

[§655] Interestingly, he tends to map out the structure in quite some detail, as seen here:

Example 2: Excerpt of a performance of a written out example by Sawyer

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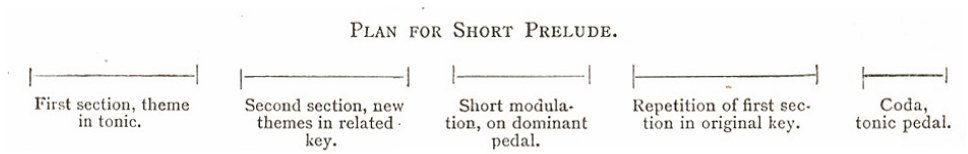

[§656] This book is remarkable in so far as it seems to be one of the first English tutors to address hymn improvisation as well as free improvisation on the organ.

[§657] Did Sawyer's book eventually help raise the standard of improvisation in England? It is difficult to say whether this publication had any major knock-on effect as there are no reports on its widespread use in organ teaching. However, its content does suggest that English organists of that period must have had a clear idea of what a "good" extemporisation entails. Also, Sawyer's tutor must have been a helpful guide for organists preparing for the FRCO examination. In fact, the examiners' reports for the FRCO are quite encouraging (whether or not this is due to Sawyer's publication is not clear): in 1923, we are told that "the standard of extemporisation is still too low, but it is pleasant to be able to record a distinct improvement under this heading." In 1926, we can even read about the "continuous artistic rise in extemporisation." And yet, this did not last for long. The report from July 1948 states very clearly: "The improvisation [test is]… the most disappointing of the tests."

[§658] So why was it not possible to consistently improve the general standard of improvisation in England? There are two possible reasons:

- The rich choral tradition in England takes priority in Anglican worship. This means there are fewer opportunities for improvising within the Anglican liturgy compared to Catholic or Lutheran services, as the choir takes the lion's share. Extemporization back then was seen as a useful keyboard skill to cover gaps in the liturgy - but not more.
- The study of improvisation has never been formalised in England. The French organist and composer Camille Saint-Saëns points us in 1910 to the root of the problem: "You have many fine organists in England, but few good improvisers. It is an art you do not sufficiently practise or study, and it requires to be practised and studied."[4]

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4 A.M. Henderson. "Memories of Some Distinguished French Organists: Saint-Saëns." *The Musical Times*. June 1937. 534-536.

[§659] As the Royal College of Organists did not offer any organ teaching in those days, young organists had to find teachers themselves with whom they would study. A common way of learning was by becoming an *Articled Pupil* "who was taught by the Cathedral Organist without payment, but in exchange worked for him and in doing so learned his trade."[5] It therefore is quite likely that these young organists also imitated the improvisation style of their masters. This would explain why "wallpaper" extemporizations not only survived for so long, but were regarded as an acceptable, albeit not ideal, practice. Listen to the following example of "wallpaper" improvisation as notated by Harvey Grace in 1920:

Example 3: Wallpaper style improvisation according to Harvey Grace

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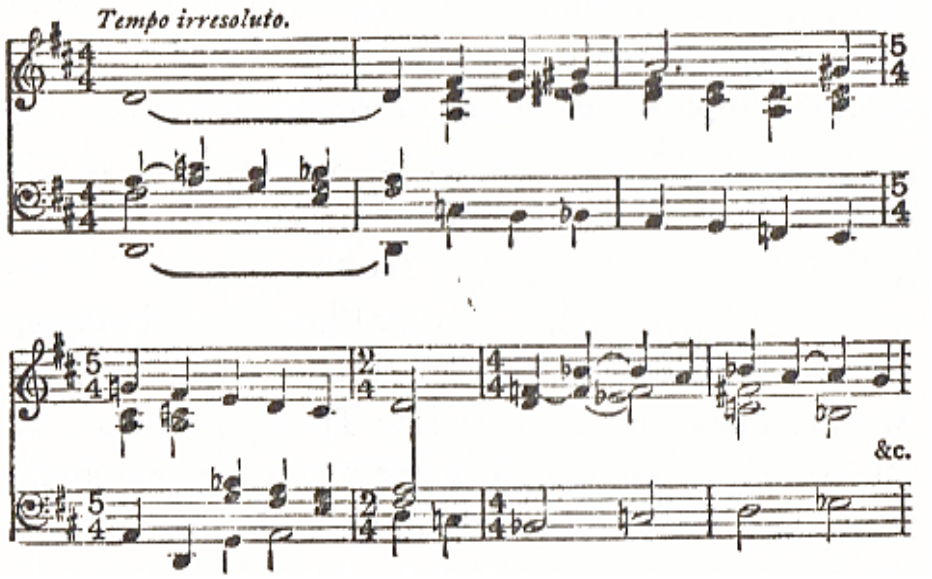

5 D. Gedge. *A Country Cathedral Organist looks back*. Darlington: Serendipity, 2005. 62.

Teaching Improvisation: England, Germany, France

[§660] The contrast between the English and continental improvisation teaching can be illustrated by comparing the curricula of the music schools in London, Paris and Leipzig. Both the Royal College of Music (RCM) and the Royal Academy of Music (RAM) in London did offer training in organ playing but there is no evidence that this also included extemporization. There is certainly no specific mention of lessons in extemporization and one must assume that learning repertoire had priority. Studying the organ at the RAM or RCM at the beginning of the 20th Century may not have had the same status as being an organ scholar at Oxford or Cambridge, which was regarded as the preferable way of starting a career in church music. At Oxbridge, however, students would focus on their academic work whilst only receiving a rather informal organ training compared to the London Schools of Music and it is unlikely that they would have been taught extemporization. Sitting the FRCO examination, the country's highest organist qualification, did not require attending a specific course at a music college (which is still true today) and was open to anyone who would meet the necessary standards. All this suggests that regular/structured lessons in organ improvisation were not available to young British organists and therefore the standard of improvisation varied hugely and was not developed on a national level.

[§661] At the Conservatoire Nationale in Paris, on the other hand, we know that in 1927[6] Marcel Dupré's organ class met three afternoons a week, of which two were dedicated to improvisation and one to repertoire. We also know that in 1909, Prof. Karl Straube had introduced lessons in "Kirchliches Orgelspiel" (liturgical organ improvisation) at the Leipzig Konservatorium, which were given twice each week in addition to regular organ lessons.

In both France and Germany, there was a certain pressure on students to improvise to a high standard in order to pass the final examinations. Not passing these examinations would have seriously jeopardised one's chances of obtaining an organist position in these countries.

6 A. Labounsky. *Jean Langlais – The man and his music*. Oregon, USA: Amadeus Press, 2000.

Organ improvisation in Anglican worship

[§662] As mentioned before, the choir takes priority in Anglican worship, thus somewhat sidelining the art of improvisation. However, Sawyer tells us in 1907 that extemporizations should be seen as "an integral portion of Divine Service"[7] and suggests the following 'slots' for improvisation within the Anglican liturgy:

- Introductory Voluntary [Organ Music] before the service
- Introductory Voluntary to the Venite or Psalms
- Introductory Voluntaries to Hymns
- Introductory Voluntary to Anthems
- Quiet Voluntary during Holy Communion
- Concluding Voluntary

Example 4: Hymn introduction to "Jesus lives"

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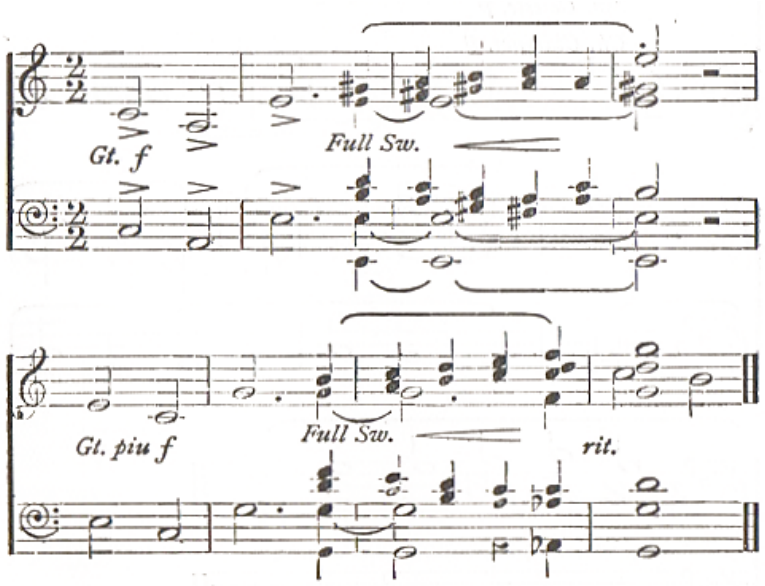

7 F.J. Sawyer. *An Organist's Voluntaries, with special reference to those that are extemporized*. London: Royal College of Organists, 1907.

[§663] It seems that, if an organist wanted to engage as a creative improviser in Edwardian England, there were plenty of opportunities for him to do so. Sawyer's statement about hymn introductions is of particular interest: "What an irritating and tedious process it often is to have to hear an eight-line tune slowly played through as a piece of music […] I presume it is 'played over' […] to give the congregation time to find the place, and to indicate the tune. That being so, why not still 'indicate the tune' by making the opening phrase the start of your prelude, but instead of monotonously playing it all over, extemporize a short artistic prelude, - a little introductory voluntary. […] within half a minute much can be achieved that will greatly add to artistic beauty […]". Listen to two of Sawyer's hymn introductions: "Jesus lives" (example 4) and "Abide with me" (example 5).

Example 5: Hymn introduction to "Abide with me"

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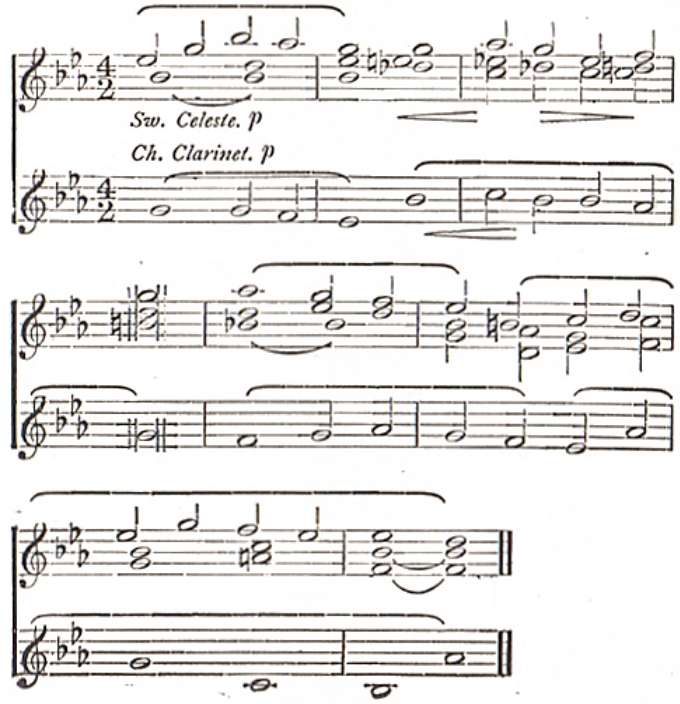

The rise of English organ improvisation from 1960 onwards

[§664] Looking at FRCO improvisation themes from the 1960s suggests that the style of these themes had not changed dramatically compared to the FRCO themes at the beginning of the 20th century and Reginald Hunt's book *Extemporization for Music Students* from 1968[8] seems strikingly similar to Sawyer's publication almost 80 years earlier. However, things were about to change. The following improvised introduction to "God rest you merry gentlemen", taken from a BBC broadcast from 1961, was played by the eminent British organist Sir George Thalben-Ball at the Temple Church in London and is a fine example of contrapuntal and structured improvising, the kind Sawyer would have approved of:

Example 6: Introduction to 'God rest you merry gentlemen'

Thalben-Ball, Temple Church London, 1961

[sound file only available in the electronic version of this book]

play stop

[§665] In 1964, the RCO replaced the term "extemporization" in its examinations with "improvisation" and, although this has no further significance, it may well mark the beginning of a new era in English organ improvisation, facilitated by the factors globalization and development of sound recording technologies.

Globalisation

[§666] In 1963, the organist of St Albans Cathedral, Peter Hurford, founded the International Organ Festival, which features every two years an international improvisation competition. Organists back then could win the highly acclaimed Tournemire Prize – the English equivalent of the Silver Tulip in Haarlem (NB: The Tournemire Prize was reintroduced in the 2013 competition). Organists in England were now able to hear different styles from different countries – the organ world had gotten smaller.

[§667] Also, travelling became more affordable. In August 1964, a young British organist, John Pryer, travelled to Paris to hear the organist of Notre Dame, Pierre Cochereau. What John heard there was a life changing moment for him: Cochereau's improvisations were full of energy and fascinating harmonies. One could even say they were wonderfully vulgar compared to the English polite and restrained style. Improvisation was clearly at the heart of the French organists' profession, not merely a keyboard skill. This experience not only influenced John Pryer's own playing, but it had a very important knock-on effect on English organ improvisation in a wider sense. During his time as Assistant organist at Birmingham Cathedral, John inspired the nine-year-old chorister David Briggs and got him hooked to organ improvisation in the French style. He lent him two Cochereau LPs and this marked David's lifelong appreciation of Cochereau's playing, culminating in a 11 year project transcribing some of Cochereau's improvisations onto paper.[9] David Briggs has become one of the most influential promoters of improvisation in England, prompting a renaissance of improvisation in the UK.

Development of sound recording technologies

[§668] Being able to record improvisations gave a new dimension to it: now, one could buy and listen to improvisations by various organists from England and abroad and become aware of different styles and even imitate them. Without any doubt: Pierre Cochereau has many disciples in England. His playing made English organists realise how inspiring structured, learned improvisation can be. As a result, improvisation was now increasingly seen as a form of art and expectations of what good adhoc playing should be had been raised.

8 R. Hunt. *Extemporization for Music Students*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968.

9 Taken from a conversation between John Pryer and the author of this article; July 2009.

[§669] What evidence do we have that present day improvisation is regarded as an art form in England?

- English organists record improvisation only CDs
- The BBC has organists on occasions given permission to improvise the voluntary at the end of Choral Evensong
- There is more training in improvisation available today
- English organists have either won or were finalists in major international organ improvisation competitions

[§670] How has the teaching of improvisation in England changed since the 1960s? There have been three major changes.
[§671] Firstly, there are now several English organists who plant the improvisation seed in Oxbridge organ scholars. One of them is Nigel Allcoat who still continues to do so today, as well as David Briggs who visits Cambridge regularly (despite his Canadian residency). With one or two lessons a term however, one cannot compare the intensity and longevity of these lessons with weekly improvisation lessons at French or German conservatoires. Yet, they are definitely a step in the right direction and have already helped raise the bar.
[§672] Secondly, a new trend has set in during the last decade or so: more and more Oxbridge organ scholars spend two years as postgraduate students at conservatoires in England. This gives English music schools a stronger position to improve the standard of improvisation through regular lessons. And things are changing: the organ department of the RCM under David Graham has recently introduced improvisation as a separate subject. The syllabus sounds very promising:

- Chorale based styles
- Modal improvisation
- Gregorian chants
- Free atonal idioms
- Practice of relevant skills, e.g. tonal harmony and counterpoint

The RAM, Birmingham Conservatoire as well as Trinity College of Music in Greenwich also now offer regular improvisation lessons and students improvise publicly in concerts and services.
[§673] And thirdly, there are now more improvisation courses available in the UK. The RCO and the Royal School of Church Music (RSCM) are doing a fantastic job in trying to raise the standard of improvisation at all levels. Also, the London Organ Improvisation Course (LOIC), founded and run by Gerard Brooks, has become a particularly popular institution in recent years.

English organ improvisation today

[§674] Having interviewed 15 English organists, the majority of them agree that the future of organ improvisation in England looks promising – one even talks of a resurgence of improvisation in England. There is more of an interest and awareness today mostly due to the work of David Briggs, Nigel Allcoat, Martin Baker and Alexander Mason. English improvisation has become more international in its flavour and it is particularly under a strong influence of the French school.
[§675] Is there a typical English school of improvisation as opposed to the French and German tradition? According to the interviewees, the answer is yes. One could divide the English school into the following categories:

- Grand Style (Elgar, Stanford, Parry) [tonal]
- Howellsian Style (pre-Evensong improvisations) [modal]
- Modern Contrapuntal Style (Leighton, Mathias)
- Hymn Improvisation (reharmonisations, extensions, fantasias)

[§676] An example of the latter is the Fantasia by Roy Massey at Hereford:

Example 7: improvised Fantasia after Sung Eucharist

Roy Massey, Hereford Cathedral, 1992

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[§677] Fostering these styles is very much in the hands of the English organists, or, as Peter Hurford puts it in 1965: "On the continent..., there now exist several schools of improvisation... Perhaps it is not too much to hope for [a] similar... [school of improvisation] in the English-speaking world within the next decade."[10]

10 P. Hurford. "Improvisation – Dead or Alive?" *Diapason* 56 (1965): 20-21.

Abstract

The earliest reports of organ improvisation mention George Frideric Handel at St Paul's Cathedral, John Stanley (1712-1786) and Samuel Sebastian Wesley (1810-1876). In Edwardian England, improvisation was a compulsory discipline within the keyboard skills tests of the Royal College of Organists' Fellowship (FRCO) examination until 1994. Frank Joseph Sawyer's *Extemporization*, published in 1890, was the first improvisation tutor in English, including instructions on how to develop a free theme. Yet, improvisation did not succeed in becoming a highly valued art in England; the rich choral tradition in England took priority in Anglican worship, and the study of improvisation was never formalised. In the 1960s a change took place. In 1963, the organist of St Albans Cathedral, Peter Hurford, founded the International Organ Festival, which features every two years an international improvisation competition. In August 1964, a young British organist, John Pryer, visited Paris and heard Pierre Cochereau improvise. His student David Briggs is today one of the world's famous improvisers. Today, the RCO and the Royal School of Church Music try to raise the standard of improvisation. A next impulse in the same direction is given by the London Organ Improvisation Course, founded and run by Gerard Brooks. Today, typical English are improvisations in "Grand Style" (referring to the music by Elgar, Stanford, Parry); "Howellsian Style" (pre-Evensong improvisations); "Contrapuntal Style"; and hymn improvisation (reharmonisations, extensions, fantasias).

Ronny Krippner

Ronny Krippner is Organist and Director of Choral Music at Croydon Minster and Whitgift School (London). He is also Specialist Lecturer for Organ Improvisation at Birmingham Conservatoire and Trinity Laban Conservatoire. Born in Bavaria, Krippner studied organ playing and improvisation with Prof. Franz-Josef Stoiber in Regensburg, Germany. After graduating, Ronny went to Exeter University to take his master's degree in "English Cathedral Music" whilst singing in the Cathedral Choir as a Choral Scholar. In 2005 Krippner became Organ Scholar at Bristol Cathedral, Organist at Clifton College and a member of staff at Bristol Grammar school. After a period working at Newport Cathedral, Wales, he moved to London where he was Organist and Teacher of Music at King's College School, Wimbledon, and Assistant Director of Music at the celebrated 'Handel church', St George's, Hanover Square (London). Being fascinated from an early age by organ improvisation, Krippner took part in several master classes on that subject, having studied with Olivier Latry, Naji Hakim, Anders Bondeman, Jos van der Kooy, Hans Haselböck, Loïc Mallié, David Briggs and Daniel Roth. Finalist in the prestigious Organ Improvisation Competition in St Albans in 2009, he won two Prizes in the International Organ Improvisation Competition in Biarritz in the same year.