

Solo Programme

“At the pleasure of the player”

Michelangelo Rossi (ca. 1601 – 1656) – Toccata VII in D

Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck (1562 – 16 October 1621) – Fantasia

Chromatica

Georg Böhm (1661 – 1733) – Präludium Fuge und Postludium in g moll

J.S. Bach – from the Partita No IV in D major

Overture

Allemande

Gigue

Louis Couperin – Suite en Ré

Prelude non mesure

Allemande

Courante

Sarabande

Canaries

Volte

La Pastourelle

Chaconne

Notes to the programme by Peter Hagen

Well known musicians of the last 100 years or so have shown that they need to or want to have another look at repertoire as evidenced by the recordings of the Goldberg variations recorded by Gustav Leonhardt in 1953, 1965, 1978 and 1987. Wanda Landowska also recorded them twice in her career. It is in this vein that I revisit some much loved repertoire.

The toccatas of **Rossi** were cited as published in 1657 but scholars deem it more likely they were really published in the 1630's. The seventh toccata is well known for its wildly chromatic characteristics which make for much dramatic tension in the music especially when performed on a mean tone tuned instrument. Rossi influenced Frescobaldi and vice

versa and therefore the foreword to the Frescobaldi toccatas (1615) is relevant. Frescobaldi writes to the reader: *“In the Toccatas when you find some trills, or affettuoso passages play them slowly and in the eighths following the parts together to make them somewhat allegro and in the trills let them be taken more adagio slowing the beat although **the toccatas must be played at the pleasure of the player according to his taste**. First: that this manner of playing [toccatas] must not remain subject to a beat, as we see practiced in modern Madrigals, which although difficult are facilitated by means of the beat taking it now slowly, now rapidly, and even suspending it in the air, according to their affetti, or meaning of the words” (1616).*

Born in Deventer, **Sweelinck** represents the highest development of the Dutch keyboard school through the contrapuntal complexity and refinement of his works. The richness, complexity and spatial sense of Andrea and Giovanni Gabrieli, and the ornamentation and intimate forms of the English virginalists culminate in his works. Sweelinck's music appears in the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book, which otherwise only contains the work of English composers. In addition, his pupils included the core of what was to become the north German organ school: Jacob Praetorius, Heinrich Scheidemann, Paul Siefert, Melchior Schildt and Samuel and Gottfried Scheidt. Buxtehude and J.S. Bach can be said to form the final links in this tradition. Sweelinck was known in Germany as the "maker of organists" and his students were thus seen as musicians against whom other organists were measured.

Georg Böhm is also part of the line of musicians stretching from Sweelinck to Buxtehude and J.S. Bach. Böhm may have taught Bach at some stage and if not they at least knew each other well, as in 1727 Bach named none other than Böhm as his northern agent for the sale of keyboard partitas nos. 2 and 3. The work presented today is similar to many of Buxtehude's preludes and fugues being in clear sections that follow on from each other in a somewhat improvisatory style.

J.S. Bach has been a huge figure in music for over 200 years due to the sheer quality and quantity of his music. Strangely enough, his son C.P.E. Bach was more famous than his father in the latter half of the 18th

century. A gifted performer Bach could play not just keyboard, but other orchestral instruments as well. Curious about all things musical (and theological) throughout his life he included Italian, French and other styles into his music.

The partitas were the last keyboard suites Bach composed. In comparison with the two earlier sets of suites, the Partitas are by far the most free-ranging in terms of structure. The Partitas feature a number of different opening styles including an ornamental Overture and a Toccata. Although each Partita was published separately under the name Clavier-Übung (Keyboard Practice), they were subsequently collected into a single volume in 1731 with the same name, which Bach himself chose to label his Opus 1

In the mid-17th century new ways of musical composition emerged. **Louis Couperin** flourished in this highly experimental stage of the early baroque which gave him full license to compose in highly idiosyncratic ways. One feature of the French keyboardists and lutenists was the unmeasured preludes which produced notation without rhythmic indications being written as a series of semi-breves. The speed and rhythm was up to the performer. The D minor suite has a tri-partite prelude which has a measured section in the middle which is a fugue.

Today's programme has been selected with great difficulty having to leave out many works from composers dear to me such as D'Anglebert, Scarlatti, C.P.E. Bach (an especial favourite), early Haydn, F. Couperin, Forqueray, Frescobaldi, Buxtehude, Reincken, Muffat to name but a few! Perhaps another retrospective glance at my musical life in the form of three or four more similar concerts would be in order! And yet, there is still so much more really good music for me to learn!

Peter Hagen

More information about me on www.peterhagen.com.au If I update my website(!).

Peter Hagen - harpsichord

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A 1624 portrait of Sweelinck, engraved by Jan Harmensz. Muller.

Sunday 19 November 4.00pm - Broadford Salon
Sunday 10 December 2.00pm - Sally Greenaway's studio Canberra