

Habits of Teachers, Students, and Collectors of 17th Century Keyboard Music

Program Notes

As collectors of keyboard music in the 21st century, we owe a lot to the model of our predecessors. We accumulate sheet music, articles, biographies, and instruments to help us better understand how to animate the music of past generations. Our habits of analyzing the structure, counterpoint and compositional technique of the masters follow the same mold that keyboardists have adopted for centuries. This afternoon's program offers a glimpse into the many relationships at the heart of the 17th-century keyboard repertoire we have inherited and treasure.

We begin with the Düben Family and conclude with Dieterich Buxtehude – a bridge between collector and creator that generates the framework for our musings. Through his studies with Sweelinck, Andreas Düben understood the importance of preserving a model piece for future reference and instruction. Together with other students of Sweelinck, Andreas played a role in the preservation of his teacher's music by studying, copying, and collecting manuscripts. Gustav Düben, son of Andreas, continued the work of his father exponentially by importing thousands of manuscripts from Europe to the royal court in Stockholm. As a true pioneer in organizing and copying manuscripts, Gustav amassed the tremendous body of works known as the Düben Collection, now housed in Uppsala. Moreover, the collection is also the most important source preserving the bulk of Buxtehude's instrumental and vocal repertoire. Over the span of many years of correspondence and trade, Düben and Buxtehude developed a mutual admiration and friendship – a relationship that preserved a wealth of music from Buxtehude's oeuvre.

When the Parisian organist Roberday and the cosmopolitan keyboardist Froberger presumably met in 1660, they must have played for one another, exchanged ideas, and conversed about musical style. Such an encounter led to the preservation of musical information – they “collected” thematic material and adopted the stylistic habits of the other. In the preface to his *Fugues et Caprices*, Roberday celebrates his use of borrowed themes given to him by Couperin, Frescobaldi, and Froberger. Even the structure of Roberday's caprices follows the variation technique of an Italian capriccio. The connection between his eighth fugue in today's program with Froberger's recently discovered manuscripts has been discussed (see Van Asperen's article.)

From the transcription of prized manuscripts to compositional practice, such is the genesis of works preserved in both the Weimar and Neumeister collections. In the Weimar collection Bach's early intabulation of the revered chorale fantasias of Reincken and Buxtehude demonstrates the foundation of transcription as a common instructional element and as a preservation method in the Bach circle. Within the same impressionable period, Bach also composed the early chorale preludes found in the Neumeister collection, which are based on stylistic models including those of Pachelbel, Buxtehude, and Böhm. The two chorales of Pachelbel found in the Weimar collection and heard in

this program are in the hand of Bach's student, Schubart, who clearly wished not only to learn the stylistic elements of Pachelbel but to integrate them into his own playing – the very same goal the young Bach had in both of these collections.

The “blending of past and present” within the Bach Circle cultivated fertile ground for the preservation of Buxtehude's most beloved keyboard works. The expectation that a student would transcribe, copy, or emulate the teacher's model composition ensured a vast library of material upon which generations could be instructed. Johann Christian Bach's collection of keyboard works – known today as the *Andreas Bach Buch* – is the unique source for Buxtehude's Ciaccona in E minor (transposed today into D minor). Yet, J.C. Bach intentionally catalogued the piece together with the ostinato works of Buxtehude and other composers in such a way that J.S. Bach or other students could study the genre as a whole. We are surely indebted to his thorough practice of copying and preserving these works. In contrast to the singular transmission of Buxtehude's ostinato works, only a few keyboard pieces are preserved in more than one source. One of them is the brilliant Praeludium in D major, which must have been a highly regarded piece by the collectors in the Bach Circle. With only one fugue, this praeludium relishes longer free sections, harmonically daring flourishes, sequential passages, and an exuberant embellishment of the subdominant within the final section. Buxtehude's ingenuity caught the eye of collectors from Düben to J.C. Bach to J.S. Bach and inspired generations in their endeavor to preserve keyboard music of the 17th century.