



Bach and the South German Tradition Vol. II

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This is the second disc from organist Martin Neu illustrating the stylistic connections between the organ works of JS Bach and German composers of the preceding generations. The first one (Audite 92.547) explored Bach's links to masters of the North German school like Georg Böhm (1661–1733) and Dietrich Buxtehude (c1637–1707). This one looks at the influence of South German organist-composers like Georg Muffat (1653–1704), Johann Pachelbel (1653–1706), and the even earlier generation of Johann Caspar Kerll (1627–93) and Johann Jakob Froberger (1616–67).

If Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck was the dominant influence on the North German school, his southern counterpart was Girolamo Frescobaldi. As young men in the service of the court of Vienna, both Froberger and Kerll were granted financial support to study with Frescobaldi in Rome. In the early 1680s, Muffat studied in Rome with Bernardo Pasquini, who was much influenced by his close study of Frescobaldi's works. Pachelbel meanwhile absorbed the influence of Frescobaldi through his studies with Kerll. Bach was familiar with the works of these composers and Frescobaldi himself, and this was an important source of the Italian influence found in his own organ works.

The program opens with Bach's Toccata in F, so notable for its canonic writing over a sustained pedal—common in Pachelbel's toccatas. The double fugue in F that is usually linked with Bach's toccata was probably composed independently. It concludes the program. Muffat is represented by one of the toccatas in his important publication *Apparatus Musico-Organisticus* (1690). These consist of a sequence of short sections that vary in texture and tempo.

Pachelbel's fugues on the Magnificat were intended to be performed in alternation with the singing of verses from the canticle. A complete suite would consist of six fugues, but Pachelbel's autograph is lost, and surviving manuscript copies do not contain complete suites. For this performance a suite has been compiled from fugues in a Berlin manuscript copy; and for the final fugue in the Doxology, JS Bach's Fugue on the Magnificat (S 733) is used, though it is based on the *Tonus Peregrinus* rather than the First Tone. For this performance the intervening verses are sung by tenor Wilfried Rombach. Kerll's toccata, like those of Muffat, consists of several contrasted sections, while Froberger's Capriccio in F displays the unmistakable character of the Italian canzona.

The greater part of the program is played on the 2005 Metzler organ at St Francis Church, Stuttgart-Obertürkheim. It is an instrument of two manuals and pedal

with 25 stops. In a brief essay, Andreas Metzler explains that the organ is essentially baroque, but with no attempt to copy a particular historical instrument or style. "Instead, we attempted to realize a baroque idea in a new and personal manner." The result is extraordinarily attractive as heard on this recording. The full plenum is brilliant but not strident—a major achievement for any builder. Neu plays the Bach Fugue in F on full organ with the 16- foot Bourdon of the Hauptwerk and chorus reeds. On many organs—including some historical ones—this would produce a chaotic jumble of sound, but here Bach's intricate contrapuntal argumentation is distinctly audible from start to finish. The quieter registers are also very attractive. On hearing the opening movement of Bach's Trio Sonata in C, I thought the music might sound more cheerful with a lighter and more delicate registration. Neu's detailed registrations are not printed in the booklet, but they can be obtained in PDF format on the Audite website. On consulting that, I am not sure he could have found a better combination for the movement.

The earlier pieces by Kerll and Froberger are played on the historic organ at St John's Church, Laufenburg, Switzerland. It is a singlemanual instrument with eight stops built in 1776 by Blasius Bernauer. As one might expect, its tone does not have the heft of the Metzler, but it too is attractive and well suited to the music.

Martin Neu's performances are a delight. It is refreshing to hear early organ music treated as music, not just so many historical artifacts subjected to brittle and dispassionate playing in the name of historical performance practice. Neu is never anachronistically self-indulgent, but he displays great sensitivity to the flow and phrasing of the music and chooses registrations that suit its character, especially in the multi-sectional toccatas. In each of Pachelbel's Magnificat fugues, the registrations capture the character of the verses represented.