

## Recital V: 23 January 2022: Plainchant in Baroque Organ Music

In this fifth recital of this series, we continue to explore the role of Gregorian Chant and its use within the works of Baroque organ composers across Europe. The first three recitals explored the use of the organ in liturgy through the use of Organ Masses of France (Couperin), Italy (Frescobaldi) and Germany (J. S. Bach). In France and Italy, the Gregorian Chant was often used directly either partially or wholly throughout organ works, and we saw the use of the antiphonal style in the organ masses of Couperin and Frescobaldi where the organ replaced the singing of alternate verses of liturgical texts. In the German and Lutheran tradition, the direct use of plainsong is eradicated in favour of metrical hymn tunes, but their melodies often draw on the traditional chant of the Roman church, and the organ is used more commonly to provide choral preludes, which served as meditative introductions or postludes to the singing of these hymns by the choir and congregation. We saw examples of these not only in the Organ Mass of Bach in the November recital, but also in December where Gregorian melodies were used for these new metrical hymns of Advent and Christmas and we saw how a number of German organists used different styles and techniques for displaying the character of the melodies and texts in their compositions.

In this recital, we will directly contrast some of these differences in style we have heard across previous recitals in the same programme. We return to Baroque France to see once again the antiphonal style, this time through the music of Louis Marchand and the church's great hymn of praise, the *Te Deum*, where the organist plays a role in painting the words of alternate verses in the colourful textures of the high baroque French organ between the plainchant verses sung by the choir. Remaining in France, we see the same antiphonal style with a different musical treatment of Nicolas de Grigny of parts of the hymn for Corpus Christi, *Pange lingua*, where the plainchant is more clearly presented.

For the second half, we move back to Germany and to the works of Johann Pachelbel (from the south) and of Johann Sebastian Bach (from the north). These two great baroque composers show us very different stylistic treatments of Lutheran melodies based directly on Roman plainchant from the Mass, allowing us to see the direct heritage even in the reformed protestant churches of the Roman liturgy from which they broke away.

All of the primary texts of the Roman Mass, the unchanging "ordinary" (the Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, Benedictus and Agnus Dei) were, during the sixteenth-century, translated into German and set to metrical melodies (i.e. like hymn tunes, in a poetic style with regular numbers of syllables) for the singing by the choir and congregation together. The regular use of these new metrical translations and fixed melodies, often throughout the whole or parts of the church's year, provided organists with a resource from which they could compose large numbers of works based on the same small number of melodies.

In the hands of the earlier baroque composers, such as Pachelbel, the melodies are often plainly and clearly presented, often in standard styles such as fugues (where a melody is played in more than one "voice" part, one after another, whilst being accompanied by the other parts) or a *cantus firmus* style, where the melody is presented in long notes, often in the pedal, with accompaniment from the manuals. In the later period of the baroque, and particularly at the hands of the great master J. S. Bach, these treatments are often much more complex, with ornate melodies built on those simple hymn tunes but with great flourishes and ornamentation which seek to draw out the emotions of the texts on which those melodies are based.

## Louis Marchand (1669-1732)

### Te Deum from Deuxième Livre d'Orgue

Louis Marchand was a French baroque organist, harpsichordist and composer. Born into a musical family of organists, he became known as a child prodigy and while contemporary accounts praise his virtuoso skills, they also record his furious temperament and arrogant personality. He was appointed organist at Nevers cathedral in France at the age of fourteen before settling in Paris at the age of 20. He held organist positions in a number of Parisian churches and was also appointed as one of the four organists to the King in 1708, playing for the July-September quarter of the calendar. Relatively few of his works survive, though of those that do, his writings for organ are amongst the most important.

His *Te Deum*, from the second organ book, is typical of the French Baroque style where the organ is played *alternatim* with the choir, replacing each alternate verse of the text (more information on this style is in the programme notes for the September 2021 recital, available online): in this case, the Church's great hymn of praise and thanksgiving. It comprises 16 short movements each reflective of the text it replaces but without using the plainchant melody directly. The work highlights the typical uses of organ stops and the colour that they provided in baroque France with a variety of tones and styles throughout. The overall work has a sprightly and joyous flavour and the *grand jeu* (movement 15) is probably the only one which can easily be heard in recordings: this work is rarely heard, and certainly not, as today (and as it would have been performed originally), with the plainchant included in its rightful place. In the text below, the numbered verses are those where the organ replaces the singing of the text by the choir.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Te Deum laudamus  | O God, we praise you;                                       |
| 1. te Dominum confitemur.                               | O Lord, we acclaim you.                                     |
| Te æternum Patrem omnis terra veneratur.                | Eternal Father, all the earth reveres you.                  |
| 2. Tibi omnes Angeli; tibi cæli et universæ potestates. | All the angels, the heavens and the Powers of heaven,       |
| Tibi Chérubim et Séraphim incessabili voce proclamant:  | Cherubim and Seraphim cry out to you in endless praise:     |
| 3. Sanctus  | Holy  |
| Sanctus   | Holy  |
| 4. Sanctus, Dóminus Deus Sábaoth.                       | Holy Lord God of hosts,                                     |
| Pleni sunt cæli et terra majestatis glóriæ tuæ.         | heaven and earth are filled with the majesty of your glory. |
| 5. Te gloriósus Apostolorum chorus;                     | The glorious choir of Apostles sings to you,                |
| Te Prophetarum laudabilis número;                       | the noble company of prophets praises you,                  |
| 6. Te Mártyrum candidatus laudat exercitus.             | the white-robed army of martyrs glorifies you,              |
| Te per orbem terrarum sancta confitetur Ecclésia:       | Holy Church throughout the earth proclaims you,             |
| 7. Patrem immensæ majestatis;                           | Father of boundless majesty,                                |
| Venerandum tuum verum et únicum Fílium;                 | with your true and only Son, worthy of adoration,           |
| 8. Sanctum quoque Paráclitum Spíritum.                  | and the Holy Spirit, Paraclete.                             |
| Tu Rex glóriæ, Christi.                                 |   |
| 9. Tu Patris sempiternus es Fílius.                     |   |

Tu ad liberándum susceptúrus hóminem, non horruísti Vírginis úterum.

10. Tu, deviçto mortis acúleo, aperuísti credéntibus regna cælórum.

Tu ad déxteram Dei sedes, in glória Patris.

11. Judex créderis esse ventúrus.

Te ergo quæsumus, tuis fámulis súbveni, quos pretiósó sángine redemísti.

12. Ætérna fac cum sançtis tuis in glória numerári.

Salvum fac pópulum tuum, Dómine, et bédedic hæreditáti tuæ.

13. Et rege eos, et extólle illos usque in ætérnum.

Per síngulos dies benedícimus te.

14. Et laudámus nomen tuum in sáeculum, et in sáeculum sáeculi.

Dignáre, Dómine, die isto sine peccáto nos custodíre.

15. Miserére nostri, Dómine, miserére nostri.

Fiat misericórdia tua, Dómine, super nos, quemádmódum sþerávimus in te.

16. In te, Dómine, sþerávi: non confúndar in ætérnum.

You, O Christ, are the King of glory,

you are the Father's everlasting Son;

when you resolved to save the human race, you did not sþurn the Virgin's womb;

you overcame the sting of death and opened wide the Kingdom of Heaven to those who put their faith in you.

You are seated at the right hand of God in the glory of the Father.

We believe you are the Judge who is to come.

And so we beg you, help your servants, redeemed by your most precious blood.

Number them among your saints in eternal glory.

Save your people, Lord, and bless your inheritance.

Shepherd them and raise them to eternal life.

Day by day, we bless you

and praise your name for endless ages evermore.

Be gracious, Lord, on this day, and keep us from all sin.

Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy.

May your mercy be upon us, Lord, as we place our trust in you.

In you, O Lord, I rest my hope: let me never be put to shame.

### **Nicolas de Grigny (1672-1703)**

#### **Pange lingua from Premier livre d'orgue**

Nicolas de Grigny was born into a musical family in Reims where his father, grandfather and uncle were organists at the cathedral of Notre-Dame de Reims, the traditional place of the crowning of the French monarchs. He later moved to Paris where he served as organist at the great abbey church of Saint Denis where the French royal family are buried. He married whilst in Paris, but returned back to Reims where he stayed until he died at the early age of 31. His first book of organ music from which this work is taken is the only surviving music we have of his, and comprises a full organ mass as well as settings of five hymns for the principal feasts of the church's year. Pange lingua is the office hymn for the great feast of Corpus Christi, written by St Thomas Aquinas, a patron of the Institute of Christ the King. We present the final two and most famous verses of this hymn within these organ movements.

### 1. *En taille à 4*

This first movement is typical of the period with the plainchant melody presented as a *cantus firmus* in long notes in the pedal, though in the tenor of the texture (*en taille*) rather than in the bass, with a lively accompaniment on the *plein jeu* registration.

|                            |                                     |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Tantum ergo sacramentum    | Therefore, so greatly the Sacrament |
| Veneremur cernui:          | Let us venerate with heads bowed    |
| Et antiquum documentum     | And let the old practice            |
| Novo cedat ritui:          | Give way to the new rite;           |
| Præstet fides supplementum | Let faith provide a supplement      |
| Sensuum defectui.          | For the failure of the senses.      |

### 2. *Fugue à 5*

Five part fugues are relatively rare in the French baroque repertoire, and this makes an interesting use of the style with the plainsong melody used as the subject. Two parts are taken in the right hand on the *cornet* stop, and two in the left hand on the *cromorne*, with a fifth part in the feet. The relatively quick moving pedal line is very unusual in this type of repertoire, and shows how much de Grigny was pushing the musical styles of the time with his technique.

|                             |                                   |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Genitori, Genitrici         | To the Begetter and the Begotten, |
| Laus et jubilatio,          | Be praise and jubilation,         |
| Salus, honor, virtus quoque | Hail, honour, virtue also,        |
| Sit et benedictio:          | And blessing too:                 |
| Procedenti ab utroque       | To the One proceeding from Both   |
| Compar sit laudatio.        | Let there be equal praise.        |
| Amen.                       | Amen.                             |

### 3. *Récit du Chant de l'Hymne précédent*

This third movement, with gentle accompaniment of the highly decorated plainchant melody in the left hand on a *trompette* stop displays some of the distinctive character of much of de Grigny's writing.

#### **Johann Pachelbel (1653-1706)**

#### **Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr**

The text of this hymn is adapted from the Gloria in Excelsis Deo (Glory be to God on high), the great hymn of the angels and was sung in Bach's Leipzig church every Sunday, using a four-verse arrangement of the words dating from 1522. The melody is partially taken from the plainsong melody of the Gloria in Excelsis of the Missa *Lux et Origo* (Kyriale I) for Eastertide, particularly the phrases "Et in terra pax hominibus" (and on earth peace to people of goodwill), "Benedicimus te" (we bless thee), and "Adoramus te" (we adore thee). Many baroque composers set this melody in many different versions: as it was used weekly throughout (almost) the whole year, it would be wise for an organist to have numerous treatments of it.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Gloria in excelsis Deo et in terra pax hominibus<br>bonae voluntatis. Laudamus te, benedicimus te,<br>adoramus te, glorificamus te, gratias agimus | Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace<br>to people of good will. We praise you, we bless<br>you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you |
|--|--|

tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam, Domine Deus, Rex caelestis, Deus Pater omnipotens. Domine Fili unigenite, Iesu Christe, Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis; qui tollis peccata mundi, suscipe deprecationem nostram. Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris, miserere nobis. Quoniam tu solus Sanctus, tu solus Dominus, tu solus Altissimus, Iesu Christe, cum Sancto Spiritu: in gloria Dei Patris. Amen.

thanks for your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King, O God almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.

For You alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Pachelbel's version of this is typical of the southern German composers, a single work in two distinct parts: a first half with an energetic fugue on the manuals only, and a second half where the plainsong melody appears as a *cantus firmus*, in long notes in the pedals, and accompanied by a lively and vibrant manual part, the two together summing up the inherently joyful meaning of the text.

### **Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)**

#### **Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr BWV 662**

##### ***à 2 claviers et pedale, il canto fermo nel soprano***

Bach wrote many versions himself, one of which was played at the November recital from the great German Organ Mass from Clavier-Ubung III (which contains two other versions in the same set). This version is from his great "Leipzig Chorales", named after his period as Thomaskantor at the church of the same name in that city between 1723 and 1744. There are three versions of this chorale in this set, too, and the one we hear today is unusually marked *Adagio* (at a walking pace), a clear indication that this movement is not to be rushed. Tempo or speed markings are rare in Bach's organ works, so we can treat this a very deliberate instruction, and there are a number of stylistic similarities to Bach's great working of the Advent hymn Nun Komm der Heiden Heiland (BWV 659) that we heard in December's recital. The melody, like in Nun Komm, is highly decorated and singled out on a separate keyboard, though more clearly identifiable in this work than in Nun Komm. The accompaniment is filled with rich detail, and some of the flourishes in the melody are similar to those we might see in Bach's Weimar cantatas, and can be easily imagined as being written for a violin, flute or oboe.

### **Johann Pachelbel (1653-1706)**

#### **O Lamm Gottes unschuldig**

The text is Decius's metrical translation of 1542 of the Agnus Dei, the three-fold petition to the Lamb of God to have mercy on us, have mercy on us, and grant us peace, sung before the reception of Holy Communion in the Mass. In the Lutheran church, this hymn was used most commonly between the sermon and Communion on Good Friday, and also more particularly in Passiontide, though was often sung throughout the year. The melody is derived from, and clearly heard in the first line, from the Agnus Dei of the Missa *cum júbilo* (Kyriale IX), used in the Roman church for feasts of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi  
miserere nobis.  
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,  
miserere nobis.  
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,  
dona nobis pacem.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the  
world,  
have mercy on us.  
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the  
world,  
have mercy on us.  
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the  
world,  
grant us peace.

Pachelbel's treatment of this text begging for mercy is notably different than in the earlier example by the same composer. This is a rather simple and plainly treated four-voice fugue where the main melody of the hymn from the plainsong is announced at the entry of each voice. It is as if the calm and pleading nature of the text causes Pachelbel to retreat to the bare essentials required to provide music based on the melody. It is an exquisite miniature, providing an excellent example of restraint in the pursuit of musical prayer.

### **Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)**

#### **O Lamm Gottes, unschuldig BWV 656**

Like the earlier Bach chorale, this is also taken from the Leipzig chorales and displays the same level of maturity that is evident throughout this set written towards the end of the composer's life. It is in three distinct parts, echoing the three verses of the Agnus Dei on which it is based. The first two verses are written for manuals only, with the melody of the plainchant presented in the uppermost (soprano) voice in the first verse, and lower down, in the second (alto) voice in the second. In keeping with other three-fold works like this, such as the Kyrie from the Clavier-Ubung III (German Mass), the third petition places the melody as a *cantus firmus* into the pedal division, and is now accompanied by the full *plenum* of the organ.

The first two sections exude a gentleness, calmness and stillness, albeit with a subtly different character, whereas the third is a more joyful and exuberant proclamation of prayer to God which, after moving through a highly chromatic section in the middle, resolves to a grand but simple close, echoing the idea of the final petition of the Agnus Dei, to grant us His peace.