

Recital VIII: 24th April 2022

Resurrexit sicut dixit: Music for Easter

In the eighth 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 as well as seeing how chant evolved into hymn melodies in the reformed churches of northern Europe. Earlier recitals have demonstrated 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 see the use of numerous variations on a melody in baroque France through the grand Offertoire sur le jour de Pâques of Jean François Dandrieu and we continue to explore how ancient Roman plainsong became adopted by the reformed Lutheran churches for their own new metrical hymnody through the great Easter sequence Victimae paschali laudes as well as the development of the chorale prelude through treatments of the same melodies by different composers.

Jean-François Dandrieu (1682-1738)

Offertoire pour le jour de Pâques O Filii et Filiae from Premier livre de Pièces d'Orgue

The Easter hymn O filii et filiae (O sons and daughters) has been in common use for Easter since its composition (both words and melody) by the French Franciscan friar Jean Tisserand (d. 1497). Originally comprising nine verses though as many as twelve appear in various versions across the centuries. J. M. Neale's translation into English (printed below) brought the hymn to popularity in English-speaking countries in the nineteenth century, though its spiritual home is very much in France where it was commonly sung in parishes at the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament on Easter Sunday. J. M. Neale describes the hymn: "It is scarcely possible for any one, not acquainted with the melody, to imagine the jubilant effect of the triumphant Alleluia attached to apparently less important circumstances of the Resurrection. It seems to speak of the majesty of that event, the smallest portions of which are worthy to be so chronicled."

Consisting of the theme and 16 variations, Dandrieu's Offertoire (to be played during the offertory of the Mass) is highly typical both of the French baroque style and also of the composer. The registration is based on the full and rich sounds of the grands jeux, collectively a highly distinctive combination of stops only used in France. There are three fundamental tone colours: firstly, of the cornet de composee of the recit, the upper manual, whose distinctive tone is created through the use of flutes at five different pitches; secondly the cromorne from the positif, the lower manual, a full-throated and characterful stop of a clarinet-style quality; and thirdly the grands jeux of the main manual which uses all foundation stops, reeds (trumpets) and mutations to create a full, rich and vibrant sonority.

In many ways, musically this is a simple work based on a simple melodic theme. The variations take place in the figuration of the parts in the hands (the pedal is little used in this period in France except for cantus firmus melodies) and the contrasting colours of the different divisions of the organ. Dandrieu weaves these things to great effect with rich ornamentation and some thrilling rapid passages throughout the work.

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

1. O filii et filiae,
Rex caelestis, Rex gloriae
morte surrexit hodie.

2. Ex mane prima Sabbati
ad ostium monumenti
accesserunt discipuli.

3. Et Maria Magdalene,
et Iacobi, et Salome
Venerunt corpus ungerere.

4. In albis sedens angelus

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

1. Ye sons and daughters of the Lord,
the King of glory, King adored,
this day Himself from death restored.

2. All in the early morning gray
went holy women on their way,
to see the tomb where Jesus lay.

3. Of spices pure a precious store
in their pure hands these women bore,
to anoint the sacred Body o'er.

4. The straightaway one in white they see,

praedixit mulieribus:
In Galilaea est Dominus.

5. Et Ioannes apostolus
cucurrit Petro citius,
monumento venit prius.

6. Discipulis astantibus,
in medio stetit Christus,
dicens: Pax vobis omnibus.

7. Ut intellexit Didymus
quia surrexerat Iesus,
remansit fere dubius.

8. Vide Thoma, vide latus,
vide pedes, vide manus,
noli esse incredulus.

9. Quando Thomas vidit Christum,
pedes, manus, latus suum,
dixit: Tu es Deus meus.

10. Beati qui non viderunt
et firmiter crediderunt;
vitam aeternam habebunt.

11. In hoc festo sanctissimo
sit laus et iubilatio:
benedicamus Domino.

12. Ex quibus nos humillimas
devotas atque debitas
Deo dicamus gratias.

who saith, "seek the Lord: but He
is risen and gone to Galilee."

5. This told they Peter, told John;
who forthwith to the tomb are gone,
but Peter is by John outrun.

6. That self-same night, while out of fear
the doors where shut, their Lord most dear
to His Apostles did appear.

7. But Thomas, when of this he heard,
was doubtful of his brethren's word;
wherefore again there comes the Lord.

8. "Thomas, behold my side," saith He;
"My hands, My feet, My body see,
and doubt not, but believe in Me."

9. When Thomas saw that wounded side,
the truth no longer he denied;
"Thou art my Lord and God!" he cried.

10. Oh, blest are they who have not seen
their Lord and yet believe in Him!
eternal life awaiteth them.

11. Now let us praise the Lord most high,
and strive His name to magnify
on this great day, through earth and sky:

12. Whose mercy ever runneth o'er;
Whom men and Angel hosts adore;
to Him be glory evermore.

The text of one of Luther's great Easter hymns, Jesus Christus, unser Heiland, der den Tod überwand, was first published in 1524 with the text of the first verse as given here:

Jesus Christ, our Saviour, who overcame death, is risen, he has captured sin. Lord have mercy.

It has been associated with at least three different melodies over the centuries though the melody set by composers in the following three works first appeared with this text in 1529, though there are versions with a different "Lord, have mercy" setting that date from closer to the original text in 1529.

The following three works, each short and all based on the same text and melody, show the changing style of composition of chorale preludes across three key baroque composers.

Johann Pachelbel (1653-1706)

Jesus Christus, unser Heiland, der den Tod überwand

This first example by Pachelbel is highly typical of his period and place. Earlier in the baroque period than the Buxtehude and Bach which follow, and from southern Germany where cleanness and simplicity of the musical lines and the utmost clarity of the chorale melody are considered most important (each of which was developed in the Italian keyboard school of Frescobaldi).

The work is in three-parts overall but, in reality, it is a piece of two-part counterpoint based upon the opening section of the chorale melody with the third voice (in the soprano, the highest part) taking the form of a cantus firmus, presenting the full chorale melody in longer notes. The work is manuals only, i.e. no pedal part, and forms a delightful and simple miniature.

Dieterich Buxtehude (1637-1707)

Jesus Christus, unser Heiland, der den Tod überwand BuxWV 198

Buxtehude's version of the same melody also sees the main hymn tune delivered as a cantus firmus in the soprano voice, but here the accompaniment has a more north-German flavour with a more developed and motif-filled texture where the accompanying two parts exchange themes between themselves. There are also some rather more striking chromatic harmonies in the second half of the work.

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Jesus Christus, unser Heiland, der den Tod überwand BWV 626

Bach's treatment of this same tune and text is noticeably more developed than either of the previous versions. Written in a 6/8 time, it employs a syncopated rhythm which has been interpreted by writers as representing the rising over death. The accompaniment, this time with pedal, employs a number of interesting harmonic touches as it develops through this short but interesting work.

Dieterich Buxtehude (1637-1707)

Erschienen ist der herrliche Tag BuxWV 224

The text of this Easter hymn, written by N. Herman, was published rather later than others in 1560:

The day of splendour has come, at which none can rejoice enough:
Christ, our Lord, triumphs today, he leads captive all his enemies. Alleluia.

The melody was published with the text at the same time, though is likely to be based on sources much older, perhaps an Easter antiphon *Ad monumentum venimus gementes* which may date from the 11th century.

The nature of the melody, with a striking and clear opening interval and a limited harmonic range lends itself to imitation across different voices on the organ and this first example by Buxtehude, though simple, shows this as you the opening phrase of the melody in all three of the accompanimental parts (two in the hands and one in the feet) before the true chorale melody is introduced on a separate manual with a distinctive tone colour.

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Erschienen ist der herrliche Tag BWV 629

à 2 Clav. & Ped. in Canone

With perhaps little surprise, Bach takes a greater step into complexity and utilises the simplicity of the melody to create a true canon between the right hand and the pedal. The canon, where the same melody is heard at different but overlapping times (like rounds) is handled deftly with an optimistic and more energetic accompaniment and the rising melodies sing loudly of the resurrection.

Victimae paschali laudes is the sequence for Mass on Easter Sunday. It has been attributed to the 11th-century Wipo of Burgundy, chaplain to Holy Roman Emperor Conrad II; to Notker Balbulus, Robert II of France; and to Adam of St. Victor, but its longevity in the Roman Rite is significant. It is one of only four mediaeval sequences (they are sung immediately before the proclamation of the Gospel, after the alleluia) to have been preserved in the Tridentine Roman Missal promulgated in 1570 after the Council of Trent (the three others are *Veni sancte spiritus* for Pentecost, *Lauda Sion* for Corpus Christi, and *Dies irae* for masses for the dead.

*Victimae paschali laudes
immolent Christiani.*

Let Christians offer sacrificial
praises to the passover victim.

*Agnus redemit oves:
Christus innocens Patri
reconciliavit peccatores.*

The lamb has redeemed the sheep:
The Innocent Christ has reconciled
the sinners to the Father.

*Mors et vita duello
confluxere mirando:
dux vitae mortuus,
regnat vivus.*

Death and life contended
in a spectacular battle:
the dead leader of life
reigns alive.

*Dic nobis Maria,
quid vidisti in via?*

Tell us, Mary, what did
you see on the way?

*Sepulcrum Christi viventis,
et gloriam vidi resurgentis*

"I saw the tomb of the living Christ
and the glory of his rising,

Angelicos testes,

The angelic witnesses, the

sudarium, et vestes.

Surrexit Christus spes mea:
praecedet vos in Galilaeam.

Scimus Christum surrexisse a mortuis vere:
tu nobis, victor Rex, miserere.
Amen. Alleluia.

shroud, and the clothes."

"Christ my hope is arisen;
he will go before you into Galilee."

We know Christ is truly risen from the dead!
On us, you conqueror, King, have mercy!
Amen. Alleluia.

The text of *Victimae paschali laudes* becomes the foundation for *Christ lag in Todesbanden*, one of Luther's two Easter hymns which became the principal hymn of Easter. The first of seven verses reads:

Christ lay in the bonds of death given up for our sins, he is risen again and has brought us lift. Therefore we should be joyful, praising God and being thankful, and singing Alleluia, Alleluia.

Johann Pachelbel (1653-1706)

Christ lag in Todesbanden

In common with much of Pachelbel's organ chorale preludes, this work is formed in two primary sections. The first announces the melody with great clarity in a three-voice fugue which then develops with the melody as a *cantus firmus* (in long notes) in the highest part. The work then moves into a more florid second section where the manuals provide a brilliant and stylistic accompaniment to the melody which moves into the pedal.

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Christ lag in Todesbanden BWV 718

à 2 claviers et pédale

This treatment of Bach's of the same melody is wildly different in style from Pachelbel's and also from much of the rest of Bach's organ works and chorale preludes, including two others on the same text. It has been regarded as Bach's only true chorale-fantasia as it formed into a number of clear sections and utilises echo passages. The work is written for two manuals and pedal, though the latter is used only in the final seven bars. The piece begins in two parts, each on its own keyboard, an accompaniment and the chorale melody with both highly decorated with much ornamentation. The accompaniment moves from being just one part to two, and then the right hand also gains a second part before the work moves to a faster section. The prelude gains greater momentum as it moves into a triplet rhythm before a change of registration heralds the point in the melody of the alleluias. This brings a string of echoes between two manuals which use the melody of the alleluias as their basis. Finally the work moves back to its original registration for a concluding section with the melody in long notes in the left hand, then the right hand, and then the pedal before a decorated conclusion.

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Christ ist erstanden BWV 627

The words and melody of this Easter carol were already several centuries old when they were first published in 1529. It became customary in Lutheran churches to sing on all the days of Easter and the Ascension.

Christ is risen from all the torment; therefore we should be joyful, Christ will be our consolation. Lord have mercy.

If he had not risen the world would be lost; since He has risen, we praise the Father of Jesus Christ. Lord have mercy.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia! Therefore we should all be joyful; Christ will be our consolation. Lord have mercy.

Bach's treatment of this chorale, setting all three verses, is rare, and unique in the *Orgelbüchlein*, the volume in which this chorale prelude appears. Each of the three verses develops its own motif and is individual, reflecting the fact that each of the verses has a slightly different metre. The opening phrase of the melody bears some resemblance to *Christ lag in Todesbanden*, and therefore also to *Victimae paschali laudes*, though the connection is less obvious in this work. There is some elegant treatment of rhythmic phrases that exist in both the manual and pedal parts beneath the melody which is heard as a *cantus firmus* in the uppermost voice in the first two verses. The overall texture, which begins with shorter phrases but becomes more fluid as the work progresses, and especially into the final verse. In this last section the pedal becomes both a melodic and rhythmic device in its own right with some shorter, four-note phrases that sing from the text the great Easter alleluia.