

Recital X: 19 June 2022:

Veni, Sancte Spiritus: Music for Pentecost

Today's recital is the last in the set of ten recitals exploring how organ music has, over the centuries, been shaped directly through the long history of the Roman Rite and its immeasurable treasure of Gregorian Chant. For those of you who have been devoted followers to the series, whether in person or online via the Dome of Home's YouTube channel, or whether this is your first visit, we thank you for supporting the work of the Institute and its near decade long £2 million restoration of this fine church, and to the Heritage Lottery Fund for making these possible.

The great feast of Pentecost, celebrated 50 days after Easter, celebrates the birthday of the Church itself, when the apostles received the gift of the Holy Ghost and were sent forth to spread the news and teachings of Jesus Christ. In today's recital we see how some of the ancient plainchant melodies and texts of the Roman Rite were used to inspire both Catholic composers in baroque France, but also the minds of the protestant reformers which in turn shaped the organ music of eighteenth-century Germany.

The organ works for today show a number of distinct styles. Firstly, that of late-seventeenth century France and the work of Nicolas de Grigny. Here we see the traditional French style of using plainchant as a direct inspiration for an organ verset, which itself then develops in a more freely composed style through a number of verses to be played between those being sung by the choir. As the repertoire moves to eighteenth-century Germany, we then see the development of the chorale preludes based on Lutheran hymnody, so often inspired directly by the plainchant from the Roman Rite, but also by its texts which were often transposed and translated into the rites of the reformed churches. And, in the hands of the master, J. S. Bach, we see how the figurative imagery of Pentecost can be painted directly into music in two of his greatest chorale preludes.

Veni Creator Spiritus

Written by the ninth century German monk, archbishop and teacher Rabanus Maurus, the hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus* has been associated with the feast of Pentecost for over a thousand years and is the office hymn for the offices of Terce and Vespers for that feast and its octave and is also commonly sung as an invocation to the Holy Ghost at ceremonies such as confirmations, ordinations of priests, consecrations of bishops and other solemn occasions. It has been translated into many different languages and still retains a place in both the modern Roman Rite and those of the reformed churches to this day.

1. Veni, creator Spiritus,
mentes tuorum visita,
imple superna gratia,
quae tu creasti, pectora.

2. Qui diceris Paraclitus,
donum Dei altissimi,
fons vivus, ignis, caritas,
et spiritalis unctio.

1. Come, Holy Ghost, Creator, come
from thy bright heav'nly throne;
come, take possession of our souls,
and make them all thine own.

2. Thou who art called the Paraclete,
best gift of God above,
the living spring, the living fire,
sweet unction and true love.

3. Tu septiformis munere,
dextrae Dei tu digitus,
tu rite promissum Patris,
sermone ditans guttura.

4. Accende lumen sensibus,
infunde amorem cordibus,
infirmi nostri corporis
virtute firmans perpeti.

5. Hostem repellas longius
pacemque dones protinus;
ductore sic te praeviso
vitemus omne noxium.

6. Per te sciamus da Patrem
noscamus atque Filium,
te utriusque Spiritum
credamus omni tempore.

7. Deo Patri sit gloria,
et Filio qui a mortuis
surrexit, ac Paraclito,
in saeculorum saecula.

Amen.

3. Thou who art sevenfold in thy grace,
finger of God's right hand;
his promise, teaching little ones
to speak and understand.

4. O guide our minds with thy blest light,
with love our hearts inflame;
and with thy strength, which ne'er decays,
confirm our mortal frame.

5. Far from us drive our deadly foe;
true peace unto us bring;
and through all perils lead us safe
beneath thy sacred wing.

6. Through thee may we the Father know,
through thee th'eternal Son,
and thee the Spirit of them both,
thrice-blessed three in One.

7. All glory to the Father be,
with his coequal Son;
the same to thee, great Paraclete,
while endless ages run.

Amen.

Nicolas de Grigny (1672-1703)

Veni creator from Premier livre d'Orgue

En taille à 5 - Fugue à 5 - Duo - Récit de Cromorne - Dialogue sur les grands jeux

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, including this Veni creator for Pentecost.

This work is in five movements, designed to be performed in the antiphonal style, as was common in 17th century France, that is with an organ verset between each of the verses of the hymn, replacing the voices. Each organ movement, or verset, uses a typical style and registration (the choices of stops and tone colour used on the organ) of the period, the first of which is clearly based on the plainchant where it appears en taille (in the tenor voice) in the pedal as a cantus firmus. The remaining movements do not use the plainchant directly, but remain faithful to the mode of the chant, and are based on freely composed motifs.

Johann Pachelbel (1653-1706)

Komm, Gott, Schöpfer, Heiliger Geist

Komm, Gott, Schöpfer, Heiliger Geist is Luther's translation of the Veni creator. The melody is based directly and clearly on that of the Gregorian plainchant, though simplified slightly to accommodate the new metrical rhythm of the German translation.

In Pachelbel's typical style, he treats the chorale melody with great simplicity, to ensure the utmost clarity of the melody despite the complex contrapuntal writing. He creates a three-voice fugue, with the lowest part in the pedals, based directly on the first line of the melody, before introducing the full chorale melody in the soprano, the highest and fourth voice in the texture, as a cantus firmus, in long, slow notes above the fugal writing.

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Komm, Gott, Schöpfer, Heiliger Geist BWV 667

in organo pleno / con pedale obligato

One of two similar versions of this chorale by J. S. Bach, a simpler and shorter version (BWV 631) being found in the Orgelbüchlein collection, this rather grander and more developed interpretation from the eighteen "Leipzig" chorales is striking for a number of reasons. Firstly, the rather startling off-beat syncopated rhythm of its opening which is not seen in any other of his organ works, sits underneath the chorale melody for this prelude's first section. Secondly, after a short interlude, the style firmly changes to a more conventional one in a second and longer section which forms almost a second verse for the hymn - multiple verse settings are rare in Bach's organ works - with the chorale melody now clearly heard in the pedals as a cantus firmus below an improvisatory-style manual accompaniment which would not be out of place in a larger-scale Pachelbel prelude.

Veni Sancte Spiritus

This short antiphon, used in the Roman Rite as an invocation to the Holy Ghost for solemn occasions, provides the basis for Luther's chorale Komm heiliger Geist, Herre Gott. Luther took the text of this Roman plainchant antiphon and used it as the first verse of Komm, heiliger Geist, and added a further two verses of his own composition, becoming the principal hymn for the first three days of Pentecost. These first three days were, in the older Roman rite, of a higher rank than the rest of the Pentecost octave that followed that main feast, showing how even small details of the traditional Roman Rite influenced the thinking and shape of the reformed liturgies of the protestant church. The melody departs from the standard Roman plainchant of both this antiphon, and of the longer sequence for Pentecost of the same name (Veni Sancte Spiritus), but is instead based on the much older chant sequence of Adeste Sancte Spiritus which was not included in the unified Roman Rite after the reforms of the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century.

*Veni Sancte Spiritus,
reple tuorum corda fidelium,
et tui amoris in eis ignem accende:
qui per diversitatem linguarum cunctarum,
gentes in unitate fidei congregasti.*

Come, Holy Spirit,
fill the hearts of Thy faithful,
and kindle within them the fire of Thy love;
who through the variety of all tongues,
didst gather the nations into the unity of the
faith.

Johann Pachelbel (1653-1706)

Komm heiliger Geist, Herre Gott

This short work of Pachelbel, just 27 bars, unusual for this composer, does not see the complete melody used in its most common way, as a cantus firmus. The departure from this style is rare in Pachelbel's works, meaning that the complete melody is never heard. Instead, a short four-part fugue, with the subject based directly on only the opening of the first line, not even that being complete, evolves simply, building up to the full four voices before thinning the texture back to two and rebuilding the texture once again until the conclusion.

Dieterich Buxtehude (1637-1707)

Komm, Heiliger Geist, Herre Gott BuxWV 199

Komm, Heiliger Geist, Herre Gott BuxWV 200

Buxtehude left us with two different treatments of this chorale prelude, though there are a number of similarities between them. Both are set in a typical manner: the accompaniment is three-part in texture, with two voices in the (left hand) manual and one in the pedal, and the decorated melody is given its own manual with a separate tone colour for clarity. Both also begin to more figuratively use the Pentecost imagery of a "rushing wind". The first, though including some more rapid semiquaver scale passages in the solo manual, instead suggests the imagery through a slower but often continuous use of falling scales in the accompaniment. The second provides this same idea through more rapidly descending scales in the solo manual, before concluding with a cadenza-style improvisatory flourish.

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

***Fantasia super* Komm, Heiliger Geist BWV 651**

in organo pleno / il canto fermo nel pedale

Standing as the first chorale in of the eighteen "Leipzig" chorales this is, in the words of the Bach scholar Peter Williams, "a huge continuous fantasia, musically and dogmatically as grand an opening as the Prelude to Clavierübung III, [and] is easy to see as a response to Pentecost:

'And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. (Acts 2:2)'

This is certainly one of the finest, and perhaps the greatest, of all of Bach's chorale preludes for organ, conceived on a grand scale and stands alone as a work which is so internally unified in its structure it would stand alone amongst the great fantasias and toccatas. It bears some resemblance in style to the Toccata in F Major (BWV 540), beginning in the same way with a long pedal note under the developing theme in the manuals but, as this is a chorale prelude, as the manual parts continue to echo the motif which is introduced at the beginning the work and continues throughout, the pedal then becomes a cantus firmus carrying the chorale melody in long notes in the bass.

The whole work has an ecstatic and supremely joyful character, and its semiquavers never cease for the entire duration of the work - a true *moto perpetuo* - running from the first phrase right until the final chord, painting vividly the rushing wind of the Holy Ghost's arrival at Pentecost.