

On Teaching

by Gavin Black



Buxtehude BuxWV 141—Part 4: Free writing and *trillo longo*—mm. 51–59

This month's column is about just a little bit of music—the third overall section of the Praeludium, nine measures long, mm. 51–59. I will provide some analysis of the passage, and offer some thoughts and suggestions about fingering and pedaling.

Example 1

The Praeludium that we are studying is, as I discussed in the column from June 2010, a one-movement work in several sections. There is both contrast and continuity amongst the sections. Sources of contrast are clear. Some sections are contrapuntal, some are not; some are regular in pulse and rhythm, some are free or essentially unmeasured; some use striking dissonance, some avoid it. Sources of continuity can be more elusive, but can include the use of similar motivic material, or recurring rhythms or harmonies. This is the classic form of the toccata or prelude as practiced by Frescobaldi and Froberger, among others, and adopted and adapted by Buxtehude as the form of his organ prelude. It was also used by Bach for organ and harpsichord pieces that we know or believe to come from early in his career: most of the harpsichord toccatas, the famous D-minor organ toccata, BWV 565, and some of the preludes and fugues such as BWV 551.

The section that we are looking at here is essentially non-contrapuntal, in that the writing is not in a set number of voices, although, as we will see, there are recurrent motives. There are fairly quick changes of texture, from one voice in m. 51 and elsewhere to four and five later. Chords are built up out of passagework. There are abrupt changes in the prevailing note values, as in m. 52, which starts with 32nd notes and then somewhat surprisingly sits on the third

quarter-note beat with no motion. The lowest notes make up a true pedal part (always a question with Buxtehude, since the sources don't make it clear, and also since the relationship between the sources and Buxtehude's original intentions is not always known), since there are stretches that cannot be executed by two hands alone.

Four-note motive

In the following example, some of the notes have been highlighted with either rectangular or oval outlines (see Example 1). The rectangular outlines indicate either an exact form—nine instances, including inversions—or a plausible variant—six instances—of the four-note motive that begins the entire prelude (see Example 2). This motive is found in crucial spots throughout the prelude, sometimes as a marker of transitions or important moments, sometimes as part of “officially” motivic material, such as the second half of the fugue subject of the final section of the piece. The section that we are looking at here is clearly chock full of this short motive—it is present almost exactly half the time. This is one of the sources of continuity between this section and the rest of the prelude.

It could well be argued that this motive is too simple, too ordinary, to count as a real, identifiable motive, or to serve as a source of continuity or unity within a piece. After all, every piece has plenty of

Example 2

Example 3

short scale passages, and this one in particular is introduced in the most casual possible way. However, it seems to me that if the composer had not intended it to be heard, perhaps subliminally, as a significant motive, then we would not be able to find it quite so consistently through the whole piece. In any case, we do find it, and each teacher and each student—having initially noticed it—can muse about how significant it really is, and decide for him- or herself.

Connections

The second element of this short section that ties it to the rest of the piece is the cluster of notes in the first half of m. 57, highlighted with an oval box. This is a foreshadowing of the fugue subject of the last section of the prelude (see Example 3), especially as that subject appears when it is in parallel with itself.

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Example 4



Example 5



This happens in several places, such as m. 104, for example (see Example 4).

This section is also clearly related to the rest of the piece by its similarities to the transitional passage that constitutes the end of the second overall section of the piece and that therefore comes just before this section. This transition occupies mm. 47–50. It arises out of the fugue that precedes it without break or interruption. The fugal texture just gives way to non-contrapuntal writing with passagework and built-up quasi-arpeggio chords. This texture resembles that of mm. 51–59, although it has the feeling of both a cadence and coda to the long fugue that has preceded it. The flourish that ends the transitional passage and the pedal solo that begins the third section are more or less versions of each other (see Examples 5 and 6).

(A similar way of linking the end of one section to the beginning of the next was employed by Bach in, for example, the *Tocatta in C Major*, at the transition between the opening manual solo and the ensuing pedal solo, where the first four pedal notes seem to answer the last four manual notes [see Example 7], and in the *F-major Tocatta and Fugue*,

Example 6



Example 7



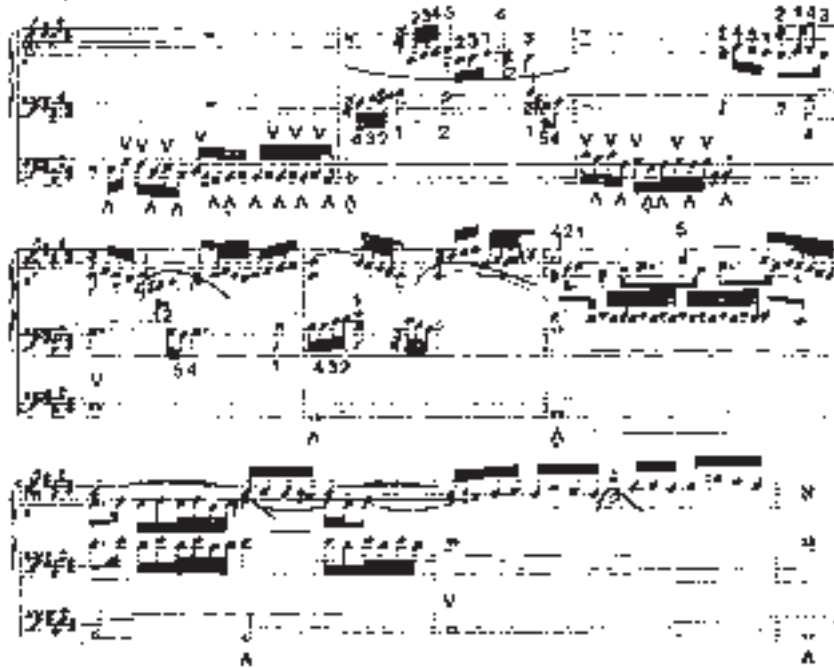
where the very last notes of the toccata are echoed in the mordent that begins the fugue subject.)

Trillo lungo

One interesting feature of this passage is the use of the term *trillo lungo*, placed over two spots in the pedal part, as seen in Example 1. Of course it seems obvious, on one level, what this term means: long trill. And in both instances it is written above notes that are in the shape of a trill, one that begins on the lower of its two notes. One surprising discovery about this term—*trillo lungo*—is that there is no evidence that it was ever in common use as a technical musical term or as a piece of accepted musical jargon. A bit of research reveals that it is not listed as a musical term in any music dictionary or encyclopedia, and there are no papers or articles that discuss it as a term or that mention any piece in the entire history of music that uses it as a term, other than this piece. (A Google search on the term “trillo lungo” returns seven results, one of them about a piece that does not in fact use the term, and all of the other six about this passage. Included in these search results is one prior column in this series.)

So if this term was not in particularly common use—even if its basic mean-

Example 8



ing is clear—why did Buxtehude (or his copyist: we can't be sure) use it here? Was he simply observing that the printed notes constitute a “long trill”? Or was he instructing the player to execute a long trill beyond what the notes indicate? If so, is this to be accomplished by adding notes and time, or by adding notes and making them faster? Does the designation of a group of 32nd notes as a “long trill” suggest that they can or should be played freely, or given some particular grouping or shape? (For example, the 16th-note B that falls on “the ‘and’ of three” in m. 51 could be thought of as the beginning of a trill, and the 16th-note/32nd-note rhythm rendered freely, as the gradual beginning of the trill.) Or was he just reminding the player to resist the temptation to shorten or omit or simplify the trill due to its being in the pedal, and therefore tricky to execute? Here's another possibility: perhaps Buxtehude wanted to employ some Italian language at this point to signify that the trills in question were Italian-style trills, that is, trills beginning on the main note.

I don't know the answers to these questions, or whether any of these thoughts really apply. I throw them out there for the student—or teacher—to muse about. Meanwhile, the “long trill” continues to be important as the section goes along, especially as manifested by the (very long) trill in one of the inner voices in m. 56. In this spot, unlike in mm. 51, 53, 55, and 57, the trill is accompanied throughout by motion in other voices. This is also the measure in this passage that is in five voices—and five notes are actually sounding throughout the measure—therefore it is literally the loudest measure within this section. It has the largest number of total notes played of any measure at 32. (The following measure is second at 29.) All of this suggests that this measure might be the rhetorical climax or high point of the section. The major interpretive or performance issue in this measure concerns the trill. Should the notes that follow the pattern of a trill on E and D-sharp be played “as written,” that is, as more or less measured 32nd notes, or should they be untethered from that timing and played as a fairly free trill? The latter is, to put it plainly, harder. It requires that the trill pattern be learned and practiced so well that the fingers can execute it while the mind of the player is, in a sense, ignoring it. The player must let those notes go their own way rhythmically and concentrate on playing the other—right hand—notes in the desired rhythm, regardless of how those notes do or don't line up with the notes of the trill. In any case, the student or player should

initially practice the notes of this trill in the “as written” rhythm, learning them more and more securely while thinking about whether to try to set them free from the printed rhythm.

Pedaling

Pedalings in this passage are mostly straightforward. That is, there are easy pedaling solutions involving toes—mostly alternate toes—as would have been the norm in Buxtehude's time. A possible pedaling—along with some fingering—is suggested in Example 8. The pedal notes marked with asterisks are (some of?) those that could very easily be played with heel if a player is so inclined, either because that happens to be more comfortable for the particular player or to avoid a disjunct articulation at those spots. (Just for the record, I believe that I have usually used the left heel on the asterisked note in m. 51, where my particular posture makes it extremely comfortable and natural to do so, but not on the one in m. 53.) The transaction that takes place between the second and third pedal notes of m. 51 (G# and F#) is interesting. The articulation created by simply using the right toe for both notes, as I have indicated it, is natural and “musical” in that it precedes a note that is on a beat, and confers a slight accent on that note.

However, if in a particular player's conception of the passage that articulation seems jarring, then it is difficult (but probably not impossible) to figure out a way to avoid it that works. Players with very wide feet can play the G# with the extreme outside of the right toe and rotate the foot in order to play the F# with the inside of the foot—the big toe. Some players might be comfortable initially catching the F# with the left toe and quickly substituting the right toe, in order to free the left toe up to aim for the following note. It is hard to picture getting the heel involved since we are dealing with black notes. It is very possible to turn the logic of this around and say that since it is so much more natural to use a pedaling here that creates an articulation, perhaps that is how the passage was meant to be played.

Fingering

As always, the first step in creating a fingering is to figure out, where there is any possible doubt, which notes belong in which hand. I have indicated some “handing” choices in the example above, using curved lines. There are several other options. For example, it would be possible to take the 16th notes on the second beat of m. 52 in the left hand, or the B# and C# in the second beat of m.



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54 in the right hand. In the third beat of m. 57, I have suggested taking the G# in the left hand. This is because I would find it extremely awkward to play the remaining upper-voice notes of that measure while holding the G#, all in the right hand. However, reaching the E/G# dyad with the left hand is indeed also tricky. It certainly involves a break immediately before those notes, and must be practiced carefully to avoid making that break sound jarring or abrupt.

I have included only a few fingerings as examples. Any of them can also be done a number of other ways. For example, changing the numerals printed above the upper staff in m. 52 from 2-3-4-5-4 to 2-3-1-4-5 would result in an also very good fingering (leaving the other fingers the same). In the right hand in m. 53 the fingering could be (instead of 4-3-1-2-1-4-3) 5-4-3-2-3-4-3 or 4-3-1-3-4-5-2 or a number of other possibilities. For that matter either or both D#s could be taken in the left hand. Comfortable hand position is the main guiding principle, and this is something that varies from player to player, based on posture and the size and shape of the hands.

Notice, however, that in all of these (m. 53) examples I am carefully preserving the use of a different finger to repeat the D# from the one that is already holding it. The suggested fingering for the right hand in m. 56 is also designed to use different fingers on repeated notes. By and large, it is a good idea to keep the thumb off of black keys. In fact, the most physiologically comfortable use of the thumb at the keyboard is for playing white notes just before or just after another finger has played a black note. Much of my approach to fingering a passage like this—in a heavily “black note” key—is derived from this concept of the use of the thumb. This can be seen in essentially all of the fingerings that I have written in here.

The student and teacher can try some of my fingerings, but should primarily work fingerings out from scratch, bearing in mind the ideas discussed above. Then, of course, the next step is what it always is: careful and patient practice, starting with separate hands and feet—doing as much of that as turns out to be needed, better too much than too little—then putting things together at a comfortably slow tempo, speeding up gradually, keeping the hands and feet relaxed.

Next month we will return to Boëllmann, looking at the charismatic and popular *Menuet Gothique*.

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Music for voices and organ

by James McCray

Epiphany music: Star, manifestation, and baptism

But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answered and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ.

Mark 8:29

To paraphrase the English Bard, Epiphany is much ado about something, usually the star. Although there are three primary stories associated with this season—the transition from Christmas to Lent—it is the visit by the Magi who followed a star that seems to garner the most attention, especially in music. That story is the easiest to portray, and each year new choral music that celebrates this event is published.

It should be noted, however, that the oldest feast associated with Epiphany dates from about the third century—the manifestation of God in Christ, revealing Jesus as the Christ. This, of course, is easily personified through the Kings and the Star. Other Epiphany themes are Christ's baptism and Jesus's first miracle at Cana.

Yet Epiphany does not really get the attention it deserves. By far, Christmas settings are among the best selling items,

and the number of works in that category is probably triple the combined music for Advent and Epiphany, which serve as bookends for the holiday season. Furthermore, Epiphany is often just lumped in. For example, an examination of the 2010 *Choral Music for Fall and Christmas* catalogue from Hope Publishing Co. identifies 13 categories of new music. They include Advent, Christmas, Communion, General Worship, etc., but there is no section for Epiphany. Even All Saints is represented with three new offerings. The one setting suitable for Epiphany is placed under Christmas. In the church, Christmas lingers until Epiphany (January 6), even though in the secular world decorations have been reduced and the sales of Christmas merchandise in stores increased.

Historically, much has been written about the phenomenon of a bright star that appeared at about this time in the ancient calendar. Through the tracking ability of modern computers that reverse paths of stars, scientists have acknowledged some kind of marvelous occurrence in the skies. Some church leaders have suggested this as a sign or proof.

Once again, January 6 (Epiphany) is in the middle of the week, which complicates its celebration, and Ash Wednesday is not until March 9, so Epiphany lasts for over two months this year. Perhaps this is the year to musically expand the winter repertoire to in-

clude other themes associated with the season, although none of the new music found for review includes the Cana story, so directors may have to search their church libraries. The music reviewed is appropriate for the nine weeks of Epiphany in 2010, so start your second decade of the 21st century off with wizened visage. Follow YOUR star.

Reges de Saba (Kings Come from Sheba), Florian Leopold Gassmann (1729–1774), ed. Jane Hettrick. SATB unaccompanied or with organ, GIA Publications G-6579, \$1.60 (M).

This contrapuntal Epiphany motet has both Latin and English texts for performance. The three musical sections each begin with the choir entering in staggered imitative lines; the final section is a rhythmic alleluia. The organ part merely doubles the choral parts. The vocal ranges are comfortable and diatonic. This scholarly edition does not include dynamics and presents what was found in the original manuscript.

Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern (How Fair the Morning Star Doth Glow), Wilhelm Friedemann Bach (1710–1784). SATB, SA soli, and chamber string orchestra with organ, Belwin-Mills Publishing Co., BC 4, \$4.00 (choral score) (M+).



W. F. Bach, the eldest son of J. S. Bach, had only a moderately success-

ful musical career, and many would say he was very unsuccessful. This cantata, in Rococo style, has five movements, with the choir singing in three of them; the other two movements are for the soloists (S and A). The first and last movements are the same—a simple setting of the famous chorale on which the cantata is based. After that, the movements have elaborate rhythms, extensive ornamentation, with the keystone choral movement a challenging one with wide vocal ranges, especially for the sopranos. The orchestra score and parts are available from the publisher.

From a Far-Off Land (De Tierra Lejana Venimos), Sondra K. Tucker. SATB and keyboard with optional flute, guitar, and percussion, MorningStar Music Publishing, MSM-50-1427, \$2.25 (M+).

The choral score contains all the instrumental parts, but they also are available separately as 50-1427A. Both texts are for performance in this Puerto Rican carol. The instrumental parts are very busy with interesting rhythms, especially in the introduction. The choral music is on two staves, with the opening material in unison. The first section is repeated, then followed by a lengthy coda, which is actually longer than the main section. The text tells of the star and the visit of the Kings.


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