

The Western Early Keyboard Association Presents

The Road to Hamburg

Mark Brombaugh, Harpsichord

Saturday, November 12, 2016 - 2 p.m.
Reed College, Performing Arts Building, Room 320

The Hanseatic city, Hamburg, was a major center of cultural life throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and keyboard music, especially, flourished during this period. The city's five main churches housed some of the largest and most colorful pipe organs of the time, which were presided over by noted composers who could trace their musical lineage throughout western Europe. Today's program traces the convergence of musical influences from the early seventeenth century up through the generation of musicians preceding Johann Sebastian Bach, whose early schooling was in Lüneburg, about thirty miles southeast of Hamburg.

Toccata in C

Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck
(1562–1621)

Toccata Ottava (*First Book of Toccatas*, 1637)

Girolamo Frescobaldi
(1583-1643)

Suite in d
Prelude - Canaries

Louis Couperin
(1626-1661)

Suite in D
Allemande – Gigue – Courante – Sarabande

Johann Jakob Froberger
(1616-1667)

Toccata in a

Matthias Weckmann
(1616-1674)

Intermission

Fugue in a (*Clavierübung*, 1728)

Vincent Lübeck
(1654–1740)

Suite in E-flat
Allemande – Courante – Sarabande – Gigue

Georg Böhm
(1661–1733)

Praeludium in g (*BuxWV 163*)

Dieterich Buxehude
(1637-1707)

Mark Brombaugh

Mark Brombaugh is Co-Director of Music Ministries at Christ Episcopal Church, Tacoma, a position he shares with his wife, the Rev. Kathryn Nichols. From 1992-2008 he was Director of Music and Organist at the United Church on the Green, New Haven, Connecticut. Before assuming this position he was a faculty member in organ, harpsichord and church music at the University of Oregon, Westminster Choir College and the University of Illinois, and had served churches in several states. At Westminster Choir College he was also Acting Head of the Church Music Department. He holds degrees from Oberlin College, the University of Louisville, and Yale University.

Dr. Brombaugh's concert appearances as organist and harpsichordist have taken him throughout the United States. As a clinician he has led workshops and master classes for the American Guild of Organists, Presbyterian Association of Musicians and the Hymn Society of America. He served as Curator of Organs at Westminster Choir College and as consultant for numerous churches. Dr. Brombaugh is Immediate Past-Dean of the Tacoma Chapter, American Guild of Organists and past national secretary of the Organ Historical Society.

Dr. Brombaugh is the featured artist on the newly-released Raven CD, *The Organ Sings*, a collection of the organ compositions of David Dahl, recorded at Christ Church in 2013 on the John Brombaugh pipe organ.

Notes On The Program

The Road to Hamburg leads us to the music of Matthias Weckmann (1616-1674), Johann Adam Reincken (1623-1722), Dieterich Buxtehude (1637-1707), Vincent Lübeck (1654-1740) and Georg Böhm (1661-1733). Though Buxtehude worked in Lübeck, thirty-five miles northeast of Hamburg, and Böhm in Lüneburg, twenty-five miles southeast, we know both visited Hamburg and associated with musicians there. The *stile fantastico*, the “fantastic style,” reached its apogee in keyboard music in the works of these composers. Compositions in this style are characterized by their many rather short sections, wild contrasts and strong, dramatic gestures, following the rhetorical form of great dramas.

The keyboard music of the 17th century is characterized by a strongly improvisatory nature, a trait evidenced even in pieces following set forms such as dance suits. The compositions on today’s program bear witness to this stylistic common denominator while highlighting the differing responses to it by the various national schools of composition that influenced the composers around Hamburg. Though contrast exists among these works, there are yet strong links, links forged especially through the influence of the cosmopolitan **Johann Jakob Froberger**, whose travels carried him throughout the continent and to England. Meeting important musicians all along the way, he developed a personal style blending Italian counterpoint and expressive figuration with the elegant grace of the French lute style.

Toccatas offer a prime example of improvisatory style, utilizing all manner of keyboard figurations throughout the multiple sections of a piece. The pedagogical activity of **Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck** was a vital influence in northern Germany throughout the century. His students from important Hanseatic cities carried back to their homes a richly inventive style steeped in the keyboard techniques of the English virginalists.

Girolamo Frescobaldi was one of the most important early Baroque Italian keyboardists, spending most of his adult life as organist of St. Peter’s in Rome. His toccatas are more expressive and employ greater contrasts and more imitative counterpoint than those of Sweelinck. These elements, passed on to Hamburg through Froberger by way of Weckmann, will be observed in the closing Buxtehude *Praeludium in g*.

Nowhere is the element of improvisation more striking than in the unmeasured preludes of the French clavicinists, represented today by **Louis Couperin**. The performer is given only the pitches of the notes and indication through slurs of how the notes should be grouped. The actual pace and individual time values are determined by the performer.

Froberger became intimately familiar with this style while in Paris, where Couperin would have been in the circle of his acquaintances. The allemande of the Froberger *Suite in D* is a stylized unmeasured prelude, written in strict rhythmic notation, but unmistakably kin to its French models. Froberger gave this movement the subtitle, “*meditation, faist sur ma Mort future*,” (meditation on my future death). The courante and sarabande evoke the strong flavor of the French lute style, with its rich, arpeggiated harmonies and graceful movement.

The toccatas of **Matthias Weckmann** show the strong imprint of Froberger, who gave Weckmann manuscripts of his compositions while visiting the court in Dresden, where Weckmann had been a choirboy under Schütz and returned as Court Organist. He spent the last nineteen years of his life as organist at the Jakobikirche in Hamburg. Weckmann adds his unique feel for the *stile fantastico*, adding a level of drama and contrast not seen in the toccatas in the more Italianate Froberger toccatas.

Vincent Lübeck was organist of the Nicolaikirche in Hamburg from 1702 until his death in 1740, after serving as organist at St. Cosmae in Stade from 1675-1702. At the Nicolaikirche he played one of the largest organs in the world at that time, a 4-manual organ by Arp Schnitger. The *Fugue in a minor* has a subject with many repeated notes, a frequent characteristic in North German fugues of the period. (A brief passage will be played from Reincken's *Fugue in g minor*, which shows one of the most extreme examples of the repeated-note subject.) Several flourishes punctuate the fugue's progress, until it ends in a free, toccata-like section.

Georg Böhm became organist of the Johanniskirche in Lüneburg in 1698, after spending several years in Hamburg. His music, and especially the eleven keyboard suites, exhibit strong French characteristics, perhaps under the influence of the nearby court at Celle, which was noted for the strong French flavor of its artistic life. *Suite in E-flat* is much like a Froberger suite, from the allemande, a stylized unmeasured prelude in rhythmic notation, to the gigue notated in duple meter.

In the *Praeludium in g* of **Dieterich Buxtehude**, we see developed within one exuberant piece the Sweelinck-school keyboard figurations, Italian fugal technique, and French unmeasured-prelude style, all leavened by the *stile fantastico* at its best.

A closing footnote: Today's recital journeys to the area around early 18th-century Hamburg, a place known to **J. S. Bach** from his student years in Lüneburg, his visit to Lübeck in 1705, and his visit to Hamburg to audition for the position of organist at the Jakobikirche in 1720. We have strong evidence that he knew Böhm as a student, his trip to Lübeck was specifically to learn from Buxtehude, and he played for the 97-year-old Reincken during his 1720 visit to Hamburg. It is not unlikely that he would have met Vincent Lübeck on the same visit. Our road to Hamburg continues on to Leipzig!

Mark A. Brombaugh
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