

Johann Gottfried Walther: The 'Frankenberger' manuscript

The so-called Frankenberger manuscript is one of the most precious items in the collection of the Netherlands Music Institute. It contains 196 organ chorale settings from the period 1650-1730, compiled and copied by the composer and organist Johann Gottfried Walther (1684-1748).

It is the aim of the NMI both to preserve its treasures and to make them available to the largest possible audience. This web presentation allows one to leaf through this manuscript and study the music, without compromising the preservation of the original.

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Composer and organist

Most of what we know about Walther's life derives from his autobiography, published by Johann Mattheson in his *Grundlage einer Ehren-Pforte* (1740), and from Walther's extant letters.¹ Walther was born in Erfurt, Thuringia, in 1684. He had lessons with two organists in his native city, Johann Bernhard Bach (a distant relative of Johann Sebastian) and Johann Andreas Kretschmar. During his infancy, between 1678 and 1690, Erfurt had been home to the great South-German organist Johann Pachelbel. Walther's first contact with the Pachelbel tradition was through Pachelbel's Erfurt pupil Johann Heinrich Buttstett. The lessons with Buttstett were a disappointment (and Walther does not mention Buttstett in his autobiography); a text-book was more profitable.² Three of these four masters are represented in the manuscript: J.B. Bach with four titles, Buttstett with seven, and Pachelbel with nineteen (not counting uncertain attributions).

In 1703 Walther embarked on his 'Wanderjahre'. Important were the contacts he established with the distinguished music theorist Andreas Werckmeister in Halberstadt. With Werckmeister he kept a "pleasant correspondence", and the theorist provided him with works by the great representative of the North-German organ tradition, Dieterich Buxtehude (the manuscript contains 21 of his compositions).³ In 1706 Walther contacted Johann Pachelbel's son, Wilhelm Hieronymus, in Nuremberg.

This life of a wandering student ended in 1707, when Walther secured the post of organist at the Stadtkirche St Petri und Pauli in Weimar, not far from Erfurt. This turned out to be the end station of his career. Besides serving the church, Walther was active as a teacher to members of the ruling house of Saxe-Weimar and other high-class pupils. In 1721 Walther joined the court chapel as *Hofmusicus*; after that he made no further advancement.

Just one year after Walther's settlement in Weimar, his cousin Johann Sebastian Bach was appointed court organist and *Cammermusicus* in the same city. The

relation between the two musicians, who were of nearly the same age, seems to have been close. Both copied each others' works. They shared at least one student, Johann Tobias Krebs (in this manuscript with one work).⁴ In 1712 Bach became godfather to Walther's second son (and third child). Of Walther's eight children, only four survived; his younger son Johann Christoph (1715–1771) followed in his father's footsteps as an organist.

The stand-still in Walther's career as a performing musician turned into a sad decline. The number of his pupils diminished, and he was passed over for vacancies such as the one created by Bach's departure in 1717 (Bach was dismissed after a month imprisonment). Since 1745 ill health made it impossible for Walther to fulfil his professional duties. Johann Christoph, called back from the university of Jena to substitute for his father, was not allowed to succeed him officially.

Of Walther's oeuvre we have incomplete knowledge. Apart from the organ works, only one vocal work survives complete. Most of his organ works are chorale settings⁵. They range over a variety of forms, from simple three-part settings to more elaborate chorale partitas, fantasias and chorale fugues. According to Mattheson, Walther was Pachelbel's most worthy successor, "rightly to be called the second, if not artistically the first Pachelbel".⁶ According to the more recent appraisal by George J. Buelow:

*Walther's chorale variations are uniformly of the highest merit, perhaps the only ones comparable to Bach's examples of the genre [...] Walther's sensitivity to the affective connotations of the melodies, his rich harmonic variety, the brilliant keyboard technique rooted in motivic counterpoint, and the strength of the contrapuntal ideas are all worthy of comparison with Bach's organ chorales.*⁷

Theorist and lexicographer

Walther was more a man of learning and of writing than a flamboyant performer. In an ambience where improvisation was very much part of the organist's routine, it is remarkable to read his confession ("*sub rosa*"), "that though I have often have given it thought, I am unable to reach this level [of improvisation], but have to content myself with the art of composition [...]".⁸ His powers of memory too were unreliable in performance, making score reading indispensable even with his own works. With failing eyesight, his duties must have become a vexation.⁹

Since in Walther's days most compositions circulated in handwritten copies, it was usual for a composer to copy his own and others' works. Max Seiffert has rightly praised the "accurate gracefulness" of Walther's handwriting.¹⁰ For a musician of Walther's stature, copying went beyond manual labour; the composer-copyist contributed his own insight and judgment. While a copy thus may be further removed from a composer's original notation, it contributes an added value as a reflection of contemporary performance practices and stylistic development. These scribal activities however were a time-consuming task that also took a physical toll. Poignant passages in his letters reveal that late in his career Walther had to scrape a living by selling his manuscript copies "at 12

pennies per full sheet, the same in parts for 6 pennies [...] but at the condition that the buyer pays the postage".¹¹

While the memory of Walther's compositions may have faded rapidly over the following generations, his activity as a scholar has been more effective in keeping his reputation alive. His *Praecepta der musicalischen Composition* (1708) remained unprinted. But in 1732 he published his *Musicalisches Lexicon*, the first encyclopedic dictionary of music to appear in the German language, containing both theoretical and biographical entries. We may be grateful that Walther actively sought to amplify his information by sending questionnaires to colleagues. Most composers represented in the Frankenberger manuscript have their entries in the *Lexicon* (the exceptions are Adam Nikolaus Strungk, Johann Peter Kellner and Johann Christian Scheidemantel).

The 'Frankenberger's' fortunes

In all, there are five Walther manuscript volumes, containing exclusively chorale settings. Besides the 'Frankenberger' in The Hague, there are three manuscripts in the Berlin Staatsbibliothek; the fifth was located in the Königsberg Universitätsbibliothek, but has been missing since 1937. It is available only in photographic reproductions. The manuscript in the collection of the NMI is traditionally known as *Frankenbergersches Autograph*. The term 'Autograph' may be considered a misnomer (most compositions being copies in Walther's hand or works by other composers); the name 'Frankenberger' derives from the first known owner of the manuscript, Heinrich Friedrich Frankenberger (1824-1885), *Hofmusicus* in Sondershausen. His signature will be found on the empty first page of the manuscript. While in possession of Frankenberger, the manuscript served as a source for Philipp Spitta's 1878 edition of Buxtehude's chorale settings, and for August Gottfried Ritter's study of the history of organ playing (*Zur Geschichte des Orgelspiels*, 1884).

Probably after Frankenberger's death the manuscript disappeared into an English private collection. In 1901 it was listed in an auction catalogue of the Berlin antiquarian music dealer Leo Liepmannssohn. The musicologist Max Seiffert, an authority on Sweelinck and the German organ tradition, was anxious to keep the manuscript on his side of the Atlantic. In a letter dated December 11, 1901 he alerted the banker, music historian and collector Daniel François Scheurleer in The Hague to the upcoming sale:

*Liepm. estimates the volume's proceeds at 400-500 marks. In relation to its historical value that is not a lot, but it exceeds my book budget. I fear therefore that this beautiful object will disappear across the water, like so many others – and we come off empty-handed. My only hope is that the manuscript's importance will arouse sufficient interest for you to intercede.*¹²

At the auction on January 20, 1902 Seiffert managed to purchase the manuscript for Scheurleer's collection at the price of 305 marks (and 15,25 mark-up), as he jubilantly reported to his correspondent:

Now I am even more happy that it will be included in your library; for it is the most comprehensive and best preserved among the 5 Walther volumes. Accept

*my warmest gratitude for your intervention! [...] The contents should provide us with an interesting musical pastime.*¹³

That it entered Scheurleer's private collection meant that it was available not just to the owner (and to Seiffert), but to a wider circle of musical researchers. As Joost van Gemert has noted,

This liberal attitude was very typical of Daniel François Scheurleer, who promoted music and culture in whatever way he could and made his collection widely accessible, not only receiving many visitors but also regularly lending out his precious possessions in good faith, as is proven by correspondence in his archive.

He continues with an anecdote that should horrify modern librarians:

*There is, for example, a very curious postcard (not dated, but probably 1914) sent by André Pirro from the front of World War I, in which Pirro reports that he had the Frankenberger autograph (which he had borrowed from Scheurleer) with him during active service as a soldier in the summer of 1914, but that both he and the Frankenberger autograph were now safe.*¹⁴

After Scheurleer's death in 1927 his collections were kept by his son, until the bankruptcy of the firm of Scheurleer & Sons in 1932 forced him to sell. The collections were then acquired by City of The Hague and accommodated in the Gemeentemuseum (Municipal Museum). Since 2000 the Scheurleer Collection is one of the core components of the collections of the Netherlands Music Institute.

Contents of the manuscript

A detailed description of the contents has been given by Hans Klotz in his editorial report for the *Neue Bach Ausgabe*, vol. IV/3 (1962).¹⁵ Klotz identifies the Frankenberger manuscript as a new version (*Neuschrift*) of the Königsberg manuscript; the Frankenberger contains 29 compositions not included in the Königsberg manuscript, while six of the compositions in the Königsberg manuscript are not in the Frankenberger.

Less than half of the volume (75 out of 196 compositions) consists of Walther's own compositions. Among the 25 other composers, Dieterich Buxtehude can be identified as the composer of 21 works, Friedrich Wilhelm Zachow of 15, Johann Pachelbel of 19, and six of the chorales settings are by Johann Sebastian Bach. Apart from the doubtful attributions, three compositions remain anonymous.

In most cases Walther has provided the full name or initials of the composers. Typical of the problems raised by these abbreviations is the case of Johann Pachelbel, also known as Bachelbel: the abbreviation *J. Bach* may refer both to him and to any of the large number of 'J. Bachs'.¹⁶ In some cases the identification does not accord with the attributions he made in other copies of the same compositions. The last written page in the manuscript provides an index, listing the chorales alphabetically with page numbers. This does not contain the composers' names.

For more than twenty compositions the 'Frankenberger' is our only source. Among these are works by Buxtehude (*Christ unser Herr zum Jordan kam, Eine feste Burg ist unser Gott, Auf meinen lieben Gott*), Telemann (*Nun freut euch, lieben Christen, g'mein*), and several by Walther himself.

Dating and condition

On the basis of the watermarks, Bach researcher Yoshitake Kobayashi has established in the 1990's that the paper used in this manuscript was produced by the paper mill of Niederlungwitz in Saxony (north-east of Zwickau).¹⁷ The corresponding monogram CV belongs to paper maker Christian Vodel, leaseholder of this mill between 1700 and 1736.¹⁸ Watermarks, handwriting, binding and documentary sources, including the correspondence of Walther and music theorist Heinrich Bokemeyer, indicate a date of around 1730. It is thus the most recent of the five known Walther manuscripts.

The volume consists of folded sheets of vat paper, bound in a sheepskin cover with four ribs. The format is oblong (227x317x45 cm). The manuscript itself consists of 367 mostly numbered pages. Most page numbers are in Walther's hand, in the same ink used for the titles and music. Missing page numbers have been added later in pencil. Fifteen pages have been left blank (36, 49, 146, 208, 215, 229-230, 240-241, 256, 309, 315-316, 331-332). Other pages contain only staves (p. 296 is only half covered), sometimes with clefs and (on pp. 241 and 331) the title of a chorale. Of the blank pages, pp. 229-230 and 240 are unnumbered. Eleven pages and their numbers are missing (pp. 37-38, 94-95, 110, 143-144, 216-217, 341-342). Presumably this is the result of mistakes in numbering. In four places a sheet is missing (between pp. 32-33, 92-93 en 213-214); this is not visible in the digital image. It is possible that these were missing before Walther numbered the pages.

The general condition of the manuscript is good; it shows few traces of use. During a restoration in the 1980's the paper was reinforced in a few places with Japanese paper. It is possible that on that occasion a few pages were trimmed. New fly leaves were also inserted during this restoration.

Editorial remarks

An attempt has been made to provide for each chorale references to the most recent literature; these are found under the tab *Page Description*. Under the heading *Literature* articles and books are listed discussing the Frankenberger or other Walther manuscripts, or containing information relevant to Walther's oeuvre. The titles are listed chronologically. *Modern editions* lists mainly editions based in some way on the Frankenberger manuscript. Titles are listed according to the modern names of the chorales, following the *Evangelisches Kirchen-Gesangbuch*.

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- 1 J.G. Walther: *Briefe*, hrsg. von K. Beckmann und H.-J. Schulze (Leipzig, 1987). Most of these are addressed to Heinrich Bokemeyer, cantor in Wolfenbüttel, and a faithful pen friend.
 - 2 O. Brodde: *Johann Gottfried Walther: Leben und Werk* (Kassel 1937), p. 5, 6
 - 3 J. Mattheson: *Grundlage einer Ehren-Pforte* (Hamburg 1740), p. 388
 - 4 J.G. Walther: *Musicalisches Lexicon* (Leipzig 1732), p. 345
 - 5 First edited by M. Seiffert in DDT, Vol. XXVI-XXVII (Leipzig 1906); new edition by K. Beckmann, *Sämtliche Orgelwerke* (Wiesbaden 1998-99).
 - 6 "[...] mit Recht der zweite, wo nicht an Kunst der erste Pachelbel". J. Mattheson: *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (Hamburg 1739), p. 476
 - 7 G.J. Buelow, article *Walther, Johann Gottfried*, in Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online, 20 Apr. 2010
 - 8 Walther: *Briefe* p. 60: "[...] weil ich mich nicht schäme (jedoch *sub rosa*) zu melden: daß diesen Punckt, ohneracht selbigem zum öfftern auch nachgedacht habe, dennoch nicht erreichen kann, sondern mich mit der Wißenschaft der *Composition*, und dem daher entstehenden Vermögen, etwas *reelles* aufzusetzen, begnügen laßen muß [...]." (6-8-1729)
 - 9 Walther, *Briefe* p. 135 (12-3-1731)
 - 10 M. Seiffert (see n. 5), p. vi. Besides overseeing the *Denkmäler Deutscher Tonkunst*, Seiffert was co-editor of the *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*; from 1935 till 1942 he was director of the Staatliches Institut für Deutsche Musikforschung.
 - 11 Walther: *Briefe* p. 224: "[...] jeden vollgeschriebenen Bogen in Partitur für 1nen guten Groschen, dergleichen in Stimmen aber ausgeschrieben für 6 Pfennige weg zu geben gesonnen bin doch so, daß der Kauffer das *porto* entrichte." (25-1-1740)
 - 12 "Liepm. schätzt den Auctionsertrag des Bandes auf 400-500 Mk. Das ist dem geschichtlichen Wert nach nicht viel, nur meinem Bücherbudget nicht angemessen. So fürchte ich, geht das schöne Ding wie manches Andere übers Wasser; wir gucken hinterdrein. Meine einzige Hoffnung ist, daß die Handschrift wegen ihrer Bedeutung Ihr Interesse erweckt und Sie zum Einschreiten veranlaßt." Letter in the Scheurleer Archive, NMI; quoted by J. van Gemert: *Early Sources for the Music of J. S. Bach in Dutch Collections*, in Tijdschrift van de Koninklijke Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis 50/1-2, 2000, p. 102
 - 13 "Jetzt freue ich mich noch mehr, daß er in Ihre Biliothek kommt; denn er ist der reichhaltigste und am besten erhaltene unter den 5 Walther bänden [sic]. Haben Sie herzlichsten Dank für Ihr Eintreten! [...] Der Inhalt soll uns einmal ein interessantes Musikstündchen verschaffen." *ib.*, p.103
 - 14 *ib.*; postcard in Scheurleer Archive, NMI. André Pirro (1869-1943) was a French organist and musicologist, professor of music history at the Sorbonne, and author of books on Bach and Buxtehude.
 - 15 NBA Vol. IV/3, *Die einzeln überlieferten Orgelchoräle. Kritischer Bericht*, p. 19-28
 - 16 E.V. Nolte et al.: article *Pachelbel*, in Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online. 21 Apr. 2010
 - 17 Copies of handwritten notes by Kobayashi, kept with the manuscript. Cf. K. Beisswenger: *Zur Chronologie der Notenhandschriften Johann Gottfried Walthers, in Acht kleine Präludien und Studien über Bach: Georg von Dadelsen zum 70. Geburtstag* (Wiesbaden 1992), pp. 11-39
 - 18 W.A. Churchill: *Watermarks in paper in Holland, England, France, etc., in the XVII and XVIII centuries and their interconnection* (Amsterdam 1935)