

A NEW BAROQUE REVIVAL: Breaking through the Final Taboo

PICTURE THIS, IF YOU WILL...

You are at a concert of your favorite early music group; the lights are low, candelabras adorn the stage, and magnificent and grandiose architecture surrounds you. Soon you are transported by the sounds of sparkling harpsichord in concert with other beautiful period instruments; together they produce layer upon layer of intertwining Baroque splendor.

Glancing down at your program notes, you see the work is by yet another Baroque composer of whom you've never heard. You mutter, "There are just so many of them; who can keep track these days?" When the music concludes, the audience erupts into applause, and as the sound begins to die away you see the conductor rise and invite the composer to come to the stage to take his bow! Have you unknowingly entered a parallel universe? Has the entire production been enveloped in some type of time machine?

Fantasy, you say? No, you have just experienced a new and growing movement in the early music scene, the revival of period composition. And scenes like this are beginning to play out in concert halls worldwide. In fact in Montreal,

Matthias Maute, recorder virtuoso and artistic director of Ensemble Caprice, and harpsichordist and conductor Hendrik Bouman, formerly of the early music group Musica Antiqua Köln, have been putting on concerts and premiering newly written Baroque works of their own in scenarios much like the one described above. Bouman inaugurated his Montreal concert series, "Baroque SaMuse," in December 2006. His innovative programming features new Baroque and Classical compositions written in the styles prevalent in 17th- and 18th-century Germany, France, Italy, England, and Spain *ex tempore* period improvisations, and transcriptions of the historical repertoire of the masters, all performed by Bouman, his colleagues, and guest soloists.

BY GRANT COLBURN



MATTHIAS MAUTE

COMPOSITION

Readers of this magazine are well aware there has been a strong interest for some time in historically informed performance, including performance on period instruments. There has also been a renewed interest in building new historically accurate instruments. But what about the music itself? Surely most performers and artists have had the assignment at university to write a short invention or fugue for a theory class. But how many have continued to pursue writing, playing, and performing new music in the early styles? Surprisingly, more than you may think.

Matthias Maute explains, "I look at it as writing a piece of music that has not yet been composed by our colleagues of the 17th or 18th century.

Therefore I mostly compose music that has simply been ‘forgotten’ by the masters of the past.”

Hendrik Bouman elaborates: “It was completely natural for musicians of the 17th and 18th centuries to compose, to improvise and create variations *ad infinitum*, as well as to perform. Would you not agree, therefore, that we may also honor the heritage of the great masters – its inherent sublimity, the semantics of its symbolism, the clarity of its sonorities, the wealth of its spontaneous ornamentation, the swaying rhythms of its dances, and the evocative gestures of its pantomimes – by composing anew in the idioms they held dear? To embrace again this wonderful integrality, which in our time is still current in most musical genres the world over, represents for me a logical and necessary evolution in the authenticity movement in early music, to which I have contributed throughout my career as soloist, accompanist, conductor, educator, and, for over a decade, as improviser and composer of Baroque and Classical music.”

As one who began writing my first Baroque compositions at age 14, I thought I was alone in my somewhat odd preoccupation. With the advent of



HENDRIK BOUMAN

the Internet, I found a small though growing number of people like myself who were creating new works emulating the masters of the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries. I also found out firsthand that there is an almost vitriolic disdain from some in the music world regarding a composer wishing to write music in a historical style.

Many a young composer exploring Baroque music has perhaps been in a similar situation as Ton Koopman, founder of The Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra and Choir, who recounts his own experience as a conservatory student. “I wanted to study composition as well, but I always composed in 17th or 18th century style. The teacher at the conservatory felt that I should change, that I should write in a modern style. I said to him, ‘But I’m not interested in doing that,’ and he replied, ‘then I’m not interested in teaching you.’”

But why would this be so? Some possible explanations for this response can perhaps best be seen in the following observation by Glenn Gould. In his article “The Prospects of Recording” (*High Fidelity*, April 1966, p. 46-63), Gould imagines the case of a modern composer who writes a sonata that perfectly imitates the style of Haydn. If the work was an accomplished forgery and was thought to be an actual lost sonata by Haydn, it would be welcomed with appreciation and respect. However if this same piece of music were passed off as an early sonata by Mendelssohn, it would probably be considered a relatively unimportant trifle from Mendelssohn’s youth. And if this same piece of music were claimed to be a piece by a composer such as Vivaldi, it would be regarded as an amazing accomplishment foreshadowing by 50 or more years the coming Classical style. Gould called the shifting of aesthetic judgment due to factors outside of the

work itself “the van Meegeren syndrome” after the renowned forger Han van Meegeren (1889-1947), whose painting *The Disciples at Emmaus* was regarded by many as Vermeer’s greatest work before it was later exposed as a forgery.

To quote his article, “And all of this would come to pass for no other reason than that we have never really become equipped to adjudicate music per se. Our sense of history is captive of an analytical method that seeks out isolated moments of stylistic upheaval – pivot



GRANT COLBURN

points of idiomatic evolution – and our value judgments are largely based upon the degree to which we can assure ourselves that a particular artist participated in or, better yet, anticipated the nearest upheaval. Confusing evolution with accomplishment, we become blind to those values not explicit in an analogy with stylistic metamorphosis.”

So where does this leave us when we consider those who wish to write new music in a past style? Composer Joseph Dillon Ford, founder of the Delian Society, a community of composers and performers dedicated to the revitalization of tonal traditions in art music, puts it this way: “Since we don’t accept the conventional dichotomies of ‘old’ and ‘new,’ ‘present’ and ‘past,’ ‘modern’ and ‘archaic,’ we feel truly liberated from the ‘anxiety of influence’ that drove so many 20th-

RÉJOUISSANCE

from: Ouverture & Suite for Strings in G major

Hendrik Bouman (1951)

♩ = 100

Violin I *solo*

Violin II *solo*

Viola *solo*

Violoncello & Contrabasso *solo senza c.basso*

tutti

6

tutti

tutti

tutti con cb.

13

solo

t. s.

t. s.

"Réjouissance" from Hendrik Bouman's Ouverture and Suite for Strings in G Major
 Sound file: www.voxsaeculorum.org/membermusic/boumanrejouissance.mp3

century composers to manneristic extremes. For us the cult of hyper-individualism holds little attraction. Our focus is not on trying to stand out like a sore thumb, but on conveying with open arms something that resonates meaningfully with our listeners." In addition to founding and maintaining the Delian Society, Ford has himself been active in writing new Baroque music, including a recently completed three movement harpsichord concerto. He says, however, that he writes "in more than a dozen different styles, many but not all of them closely linked to particular historical periods. Like a good actor, I don't want to get typecast, so I enjoy exploring many different roles, speaking in a variety of dialects, and wearing whatever masks or costumes seem most appropriate. And, like a good playwright, I don't limit myself to the here and now but take the liberty of evoking through my work many different times and places."

ADAPTATION

As one can imagine, the people involved in writing new period music are a very diverse group. Many of them have found a home in Vox Sæculorum, a new Internet group/guild open to composers interested in writing Baroque music. Says its founder, composer Mark



JOSEPH
DILLON FORD

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– Joseph Dillon Ford**

Moya, "Vox Sæculorum offers composers of the contemporary Baroque Revival a forum to showcase their work and offer criticism to other like-minded artists. It is intended as a guild to

maintain the integrity of a unique, living tradition and to ensure its development and sustenance. Our members share a common passion for writing music according to the aesthetic precepts of the Baroque era. As an organizational entity, Vox Sæculorum maintains its neutrality in the ongoing conflicts between the various currents of contemporary Western art music

and does not assert the superiority of one type of music over another. There is plenty of room in the air for musical variety, and it is hoped that, through the establishment of this society, the Baroque Revival takes its rightful place as a legitimate artistic movement."

Moya's story is similar to those of many who are a part of Vox Sæculorum. "I'd been interested in classical music for as long as I could remember and dabbled in 'writing' music since I took up the violin at seven. Around that time, I saw a PBS broadcast of Harnoncourt directing a performance of the Brandenburgs, and I think that's what sold me on Baroque music specifically. I decided I wanted to make music that sounded like that. At first I listened to a lot of Baroque music

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75

Hpschd.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

mf

mf

mf

mf

"Allegro moderato" from Joseph Dillon Ford's Concerto for Harpsichord
 Sound file: www.newmusicclassics.com/Ford_Concerto_i.mp3

and tried to parrot what I'd heard. I'd sit at the piano, bang out Baroque-sounding melodies, and scribble them on pieces of music stock. Then I discovered computerized notation, and that made life easier. I can't really play a keyboard instrument, so being able to write the music out and have something play it back for me really helped. Shortly thereafter, the Internet came along, and I found Michael Starke and Giorgio Pacchioni. They'd listen to pieces I'd written, critique them, and send back MIDI files that would illustrate various aspects of counterpoint, harmony, and phrasing. Since this was being applied to music I'd written rather than some textbook exercise, the techniques and concepts they were trying to convey became very clear to me."

Starke and Pacchioni, mentioned by Moya above, are also founding members

of Vox and can be considered among the earliest advocates of the Baroque composition revival. The Italian Giorgio Pacchioni teaches *canto figurato* and historical counterpoint at Antiqua Musica, organized by the musical cultural center Nicola Vicentino, and is one of the leading figures among researchers on the composer Francesco Antonio Vallotti (1697-1780). Pacchioni's vast output of pieces easily reaches into the hundreds, consisting of canons, fugues, motets, cantatas, and instrumental sonatas and concerti. Michael Starke has also been a presence on the period composition scene for some time. His first efforts in writing period music came about due to a lack of new music for the recorder ensemble he was a part of in high school. From there his interest grew into taking theory and composi-

tion classes at college even as he learned the finer points of recorder playing from a local street musician. According to Starke, "after a long musical dry spell while in the military, things really accelerated after I bought my first computer in 1994. I started feeding my compositions and arrangements into a notation program and distributing the MIDI files on the Usenet. People soon picked them up there and began putting them on web pages."

EMULATION

But what is it about composing new Baroque or period music that makes people pursue it with little or no support from the musical world? The answer is pretty much unanimous.

Says Bouman, "Reason one, to fully treasure my favorite kind of music; I see

it as a language – with its idiom and its grammar, its vocabulary, its regional accents, its expressions and expressiveness – in which I have learned to express myself over the years while performing. Reason two, to enjoy performing music that I compose, the natural twin aspects of musicianship. Reason three, because this is the next logical and unavoidable step in early music's pursuit for historical authenticity – to do as they did."

Composer Miguel Robaina of Sweden agrees, saying, "It's my musical language. I love it, and it's so much more fun to write my own music than play someone else's! I'm writing because I feel good when creating something that I'm satisfied with. And of course it's even better when audiences like my works, which they do, really." Robaina is the founder of the Baroque ensembles Baroque Compagniet and Les Musiciens l'îlot Royal, which, in addition to the standard repertoire, regularly feature live performances of his original music. Robaina also oversees publication of the Scharffeneck Collection, an Internet assemblage of contemporary music convincingly written in ancient idioms by a variety of composers. In addition, Robaina is a church musician; along with Les Musiciens, he recently performed his full-scale Baroque Christmas Oratorio, "Ett barn är födt på thenna dagh," in Swedish.

Another member of Les Musiciens l'îlot Royal is David Jansson, a Baroque violinist and period composer who holds a masters degree in historically informed violin performance from the Royal Conservatory of Music in Stockholm. Jansson, too, has had his share of negativity when discussing his interest in period composition. "My experience is that the learned people (my professors at the RCM or the musicologists I know, for instance) in general respect my compositions as exercises in style. However, if I



GIORGIO PACCHIONI

claim that my compositions are written to express something more profound, they think of them as cute attempts, at most." But again when asked why he does it, "Simply for the sake of my own satisfaction and to learn the styles from a theoretical horizon. It's very valuable knowledge when you work with historical interpretation."

Maute has had similar experiences. "Some early musicians think of it as an exciting idea, but the majority of early music experts usually try to find the notes or chords or patterns in such a 'period' piece that are not 100% conforming to the laws of the past. According to my experience, this attitude of 'I will find you out' is hard to avoid, and one is almost tempted to compose and dedicate a 'Schulmeister-Kantate' to these experts!"

RECEPTION

Bruce Haynes, Canadian musicologist, contributor to *The New Grove Dictionary of Music*, and author of the recently released book *The End of Early Music: A Period Performer's History of Music for the Twenty-first Century* (Oxford, 2007), writes, "This dilemma faces the Period musician who composes. The only way his pieces are likely to be accepted at face value by audiences is if he identifies them as the work of some musician of the appropriate period – one preferably not too famous. But if, on the other hand, he uses his own name, it inspires an automatic uncertainty. One Period composer told me that going through an unmasking routine (disguising a newly composed piece as an antique in order to get it taken seriously and later confessing

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IV. Giga

Vivace

The musical score is presented in four staves. The first two staves are in treble clef, and the last two are in bass clef. The time signature is 8/8. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The score is divided into three systems. The first system contains measures 1 through 16. The second system contains measures 17 through 32. The third system contains measures 33 through 48. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Copyright 2003 by Miguel Robaina
www.myspace.com/miguelrobaina

"Giga" from Miguel Robaina's Sonata á 4 in D minor
Sound file: www.voxsaeculorum.org/membermusic/RobainaGiga.mp3

the deception) annoys many people, and he has stopped doing it.”

This has been the experience of another founding member of Vox Sæculorum, painter and composer Roman Turovsky. Born in the Ukraine but now living in the United States, Turovsky studied lute with Patrick O'Brien and actually caused a bit of a stir in lutenist circles by originally distributing his works under the family name Sautscheck. Turovsky explains: “The momentous decision, as always, came to me in the shower, so in the mid-1990s I wrote out some pieces in a nice Baroque hand, signed them in German transliteration of the second half of my surname, and sent them to some lutenists without a return address or explanation. The music was in Baroque style but not really in character, being grim and morose

as would have befitted an entirely different era. It included about two dozen *tombeaux*. Then I lost track of all this for some five years. Eventually the rumors of mysterious and interesting lute music trickled back to me, so (now armed with a PC and the Internet) I produced some hypermusicological mythology, explaining the range of styles from 1680 to 1840 with four generations of purported composers, all from the same family. My ego was immensely flattered to be sure, but at the same time I was surprised at the uncritical ears, oblivious to uncharacteristic elements or even occasional weak spots.”

After his unmasking, Turovsky says,

“It’s my musical language. I love it, and it’s so much more fun to write my own music than play someone else’s! I’m writing because I feel good when creating something that I’m satisfied with. And of course it’s even better when audiences like my works, which they do, really.”
– Miguel Robaina

“detractors zeroed in on my alleged immorality, ignoring quality altogether. But after many flame-wars (some accusers were oblivious of the quotations from Beethoven, Reger, or Giazzotto that I’d used...), I’ve earned some great friends for whom music’s quality is paramount to its pedigree. Not least of these is Luca Pianca (the founder of Il Giardino Armonico), who generously included a few of my pieces in his concerts. The most realistic summary, though, was voiced by a famous lutenist friend who

was in on the entire affair. Initially apprehensive, he warmed up to my efforts, saying that while I was certainly no J.S. Bach, I had managed to produce some ‘first-rate second-rate music!’”

Turovsky shares with many others in the period composition movement an ability to take

the musical dialect or language of the Baroque and use it in new and interesting ways. This has meant applying the “Empfindsamkeit” style of composers like C.P.E. Bach to Baroque lute, an application that has little or no historical precedent. Turovsky calls it “maximum freedom within the Single Affekt Principle. Baroque and avant-garde in one, if you will.”

Maute, on the other side of the spectrum, says, “The commissions I get are usually made for contemporary pieces. However, musicians who order a piece know that my craftsmanship stems from research into the creating of music in period styles. Therefore some Baroque

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Baroque Instrumental Programme Faculty

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**"I don't see the need for
'liberating old sensibilities.'**

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highly developed then as
compared to now."**
– Michael Starke



**MICHAEL
STARKE**

influence can always be found, even in my electronic music."

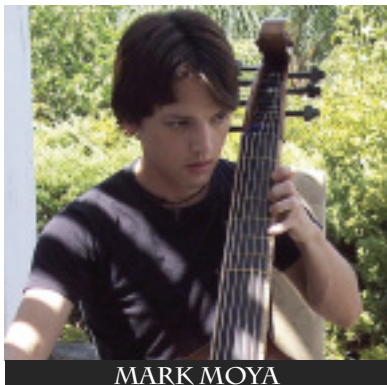
Others, like Mark Moya, have also found ways to develop new ideas while still keeping within the older forms. As Michael Starke muses, "I recently got on Mark's case a bit for his opening a concerto in D minor but having the concertino enter in D major. I'm starting to feel like the crotchety old dude in the rocking chair on my porch. You young whippersnappers and your new fangled ideas!"

As award winning composer Glen Shannon, also a member of Vox as well as a figure known among some of

EMAg's readership for his work with the East Bay Recorder Society, says, "A straight rehashing of old styles wouldn't be as interesting as taking those old sensibilities and 'liberating' them."

All the players within the period composition movement do not agree, however. "I guess I just don't see the need for 'liberating old sensibilities,'" says Starke. "That implies a sort of musical Darwinism that I have spoken against for years. The notion that new sensibilities are better than old ones is a false one. We have made no progress in the field of artistic expression over the centuries. The emotions we write about

Roman Turovsky's lute piece "Tombeau, sur la Mort de J.J. Froberger"
Sound file: www.voxsaeculorum.org/turovskymusic/tom-frob.mp3



MARK MOYA

have not changed, either. Things just change, mostly by force of fashion. In fact, I would venture to say that the musical sensibilities of the Baroque were more highly developed then as compared to now." Starke clarifies, however, that he has "nothing against experimentation, I just believe so strongly in the

**"Fortune is definitely out,
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world out there!"
– Glen Shannon**

power of Baroque expression that I am wary of additions from other eras that may dilute or weaken it."

ASPIRATION

So what do modern period composers hope to achieve in writing new old music? And what is it that is missing in 21st-century composition that draws them to the Baroque period?

Shannon's answer? "Well, fortune is definitely out, so a little fame would be nice, but it's a quill-eat-quill world out there! Mostly, I want my players and audiences to have a great time with the music. It's fun to do, and I can play it. I enjoy working within the constraints of

Continued on page 54

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"Allegro" movement from Glen Shannon's Trio Sonata No. 1 in D Minor for 2 Recorders and Continuo
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the genre and still creating music that the players and audience can respond to. What's missing in modern music is an intimacy with the listeners. An unadulterated sound. So much of today's music is processed and artificial." Composer Roberto Jose Bancalari, a performing and recording artist in his own right, as well as the newest member of Vox, concurs. "What's missing in most modern classical music is counterpoint and improvisation. But my friends think I'm a freak for writing music like that. They just don't get it, but it's in my head and it has to get out. I guess that's the only way I can explain it."

Miguel Robaina adds, "There is a place for everything these days, but I think early music has a lot in common with the jazz/pop/dance music of today. It's catchy. This kind of music, it's not as complicated as the contemporary classical music. Early music still works on a commercial level."

Maute agrees. "Early music, supported by a comparatively simple harmonic structure and rather obvious rhetorical gestures, seems to be able to indicate directions that we are often looking for in vain in our present time. Early music as fairy tale therefore seems to be something like a shelter and at the same time a

challenge to our own modern period. If one goes for the shelter, one will refuse the idea of composing in period style since it deprives one of the illusion of dealing with distant masters. Those who are looking at it as challenge will enjoy the attempt to be sincere, even while using the language of a world that is far away."

So what does the future hold for this new music of the past? In addition to the release of his new book, Bruce Haynes will be chairing a round table discussion on period composition at this year's Montreal Baroque Festival called, "Heaven or Hell, An End of Early Music!" Also scheduled to appear at the

Period Composition Links

VOX SAECULORUM www.voxsaeculorum.org

HENDRIK BOUMAN www.hendrikbouman.com

MATTHIAS MAUTE www.matthiasmaute.com

GRANT COLBURN www.angelfire.com/music7/renaissance/index.html

THE SCHARFFENECK COLLECTION
www.freewebs.com/scharffeneck

THE DELIAN SOCIETY
www.newmusicclassics.com/delian_society_roster.html

June event are Hendrik Bouman and Matthias Maute, who will be playing some of their own compositions.

In addition to the discussion, Bouman has plans in the

coming months to premier several compositions for a variety of formations: a duetto for recorders, a sonata for oboe, a



ROBERTO JOSE BANCALARI

sonata for flute and continuo, a partita for flute solo, a French character piece for gamba and continuo, and several harpsichord and fortepiano pieces. Other upcoming events in the period music movement will be the premiere in Osaka, Japan, of Michael Starke's Concerto in G Major for Guitar and Chamber Orchestra, performed by guitarist Yoshio Matsumoto. Also Miguel Robaina and David Jansson, with Les Musiciens l'ilot Royal, will be performing some of their Baroque works at an upcoming concert at Skarpnäck Church, Stockholm.

New works are also on the horizon, as Mark Moya has been commissioned by Suzanne Ferguson, president of the Viola da Gamba Society of America, to write a new work for viol consort. And Bruce Haynes recently commissioned a period solo sonata and suite for hautboy

(three-keyed oboe) and continuo from Matthias Maute. In the fall of 2007, Glen Shannon will submit a new work for the Chicago Recorder Society's biennial contest. As

Shannon humorously observes, "My pieces always contain a fugue, which seems to immediately identify the 'anony-

mous' submission as mine!"

So, with all this in mind, remember: the next time you find yourself attending your favorite early music concert, before you complain to the person next to you about the length of the Adagio movement, there's a chance that the composer may be sitting within earshot!

Grant Colburn has been drawn to the harpsichord and Baroque music since hearing a recording of Igor Kipnis while still in grade school. He began composing Baroque pieces for harpsichord when he was 14 and has written and self-published three complete books of Baroque harpsichord music and a fourth book of Renaissance instrumental pieces. He has been an active participant in the organization and promotion of Vox Sæculorum, a guild of modern Baroque composers, and lives in Green Bay, WI, where, in addition to being a composer, he is a church musician, performer, and accompanist.

HARMONIA



color by Roberta Weir

Casting new light on the music of the distant past

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