



(LEMS 8052)

MORE TRIO SONATAS PERFORMED ON 2 LAUTENWERCKE

Works by Bach, Telemann, Distler, Reger, and Langlais

Performed by Shawn Leopard and John Paul

NOTES ON THE MUSIC AND COMPOSERS

In the year 2000 the Lyrichord label released our recording of the Six Organ Trio Sonatas of Johann Sebastian Bach played on two Lautenwerke. The success of that recording and the satisfaction that it brought produced the urge to follow it with a further trio sonata disc. In particular we wished to record Bach's Trio Sonata from the Musical Offering and so began a search for other trio sonatas to accompany it. The Twentieth Century produced three exciting examples of the genre: the organ trio sonatas of Hugo Distler and Jean Langlais and the Six Trios Opus 37 for organ by Max Reger. We were drawn to their contrasts in style and to the fact that they were so clearly descended from the heritage of Bach's Organ Trio Sonatas. There remained a time slot for one more work and we finally settled upon the A Minor Trio Sonata from the Essercizii Musici of Telemann for the beauty of its musical language.

Telemann left 130 instrumental trios of which 12 were part of the collection entitled Essercizii Musici, published in 1740. The A minor Trio sonata is here transposed down a fifth to D Minor to accommodate the compass of the Lautenwerke and to exploit the rich

middle range of the instruments. Highly eclectic in style, it demonstrates Telemann's mastery of French and Italian manner in the Baroque and the up-and-coming Rococo. The opening Largo hints at Corelli, while the third movement (Affettuoso) has a later eighteenth-century Italian texture. The second movement (Vivace) is a lively dance complete with birdcalls, and the final Allegro is an energetic Tambourin.

Bach published the Trio Sonata for Flute, Violin, and Continuo in 1747. On May 7 of that year Bach was presented to Frederick the Great and the Prussian court in an evening of improvisations. At one point Frederick offered Bach a "royal theme" upon which the master improvised to great effect, eliciting much admiration from the king. Bach later professed himself to be dissatisfied with his presentation and announced that he would set Frederick's "exceedingly beautiful theme" to paper. Some months later it was published as the Musical Offering and contained a three-part ricercar (fugue), a six-part ricercar, ten canons and this trio sonata of four movements. The work suggests a two-fold motivation on Bach's part: first to please and flatter the king in the usual dedicatory adulation of the day, and second perhaps to admonish and poke fun at him by using the religious symbolism of numbers (a three-part fugue and ten canons), and by employing the most severe and archaic techniques of counterpoint. Frederick was emphatically non-Christian and much given to the new gallant style which comforted the listener with pleasant melody and unobtrusive accompaniment, and it seems unlikely that a work of this sort would have appealed to him. It is also interesting to speculate as to his opinion (being a flute player) concerning the exceedingly difficult flute part in the trio sonata. The Italianate opening movement is like a blending of the first choruses of the St. John and St. Matthew Passions, offering the monumental quality of the former and the intense lyricism of the latter.

The second and fourth movements are both fugues: the second presents Frederick's subject intermittently in each of the three parts, while the subject of the fourth is itself an elaboration the "royal theme." The third movement (Andante) is difficult to qualify. Here Bach uses an endless series of parallel appoggiaturas in the two treble parts in a way which might be construed as a parody of the new gallant style so popular with Frederick and indeed with his own sons. The use of a simple arched phrase given a very Italianate treatment in parallel thirds and sixths might support this notion. Yet the episodes of intense chromaticism take away any semblance of the simplicity usually implied in the gallant style. Whether or not Bach's tongue was in his cheek remains a matter of speculation.

Max Reger (1873-1916) wrote much of his organ music under the influence of the distinguished organ virtuoso Karl Straube. Straube's phenomenal technique encouraged Reger to lean toward the massive and the complex as is amply demonstrated in his huge Fantasias on Protestant Chorales. In complete contrast are the Six Trios for Organ, Opus 47, published in 1900 by Universal. Although this work shows the influence of Straube in the demands it makes on the player (what organ trios do not?), it is made up of six delicate miniatures whose beauty is often enhanced by humour, a quality not often found in Reger. As the individual titles imply, Reger's rich chromatic language is harnessed to strict baroque structures. The opening Canon is in simple binary form with a second-half inversion and could easily have been written by Robert Schumann, whose organ works

Reger knew well. The Gigue is a pert descendant of the last movement of Bach's E-Flat Trio Sonata for organ. The Canzonetta adds a fourth part hinting at that Baroque model which uses three treble instruments against a bass. Reger was, however, more likely thinking of a treble melody above two inner parts (together providing a single element of the trio) over an independent bass. The inner-voice imitation at the beginning of some phrases is curiously reminiscent of the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book. The Scherzo with its deadpan trio is like a romp in the Black Forest followed by a mock Italian Siciliano with hilarious "Home on the Range"-like overtones. The finale is an energetic and delightful fugue that made us happy that there were two players to deal with it.

The Trio Sonata Opus 18/II of Hugo Distler was published by Bärenreiter in 1939. Like all of Distler's work, it is characterized by the spirit of the Reformation juxtaposed with a personal twentieth-century harmonic language. The first movement is based entirely upon one subject that always begins with a telling first inversion triad. Within the energetic three-voice counterpoint appear a long middle-part trill and a rapidly descending cadenza leading back to a full repeat. The coda consists of conjunct, lute-like arpeggiation in the two upper parts over a long B pedal that is especially delightful on the Lautenwerke. A final flourish of E Minor triadic imitation ends abruptly with an emphatic unison. The second movement opens with another free cadenza that leads to a two-voice lullaby over long pedal notes. The lively third movement is a three-strain ritornello with two episodes and a coda. Episode one is fugal and episode two begins with a quasi Middle-Eastern melody over pounding repeated notes that suddenly resolves into elegant arpeggiation (again well expressed by the Lautenwerke). The coda begins quietly with the first episode fugue subject in the bass, and then becomes a passacaglia with upper voice carillons driving it toward a climactic close.

The Trio Sonata of Jean Langlais (1907-1991) was published by Bornemann in 1968 and dedicated to his son, Claude. Even among the notoriously demanding medium of the organ trio sonata, this work is a standout for the technical demands made on one player. As admired and popular as the organ works of Langlais are among organists, it is rare to encounter anyone who has played or heard this work. It stands apart from the rest of the Langlais organ repertoire which usually demonstrates some combination of rich polymodal harmony, Gregorian melody, spiritual mysticism, and passion. This work, by contrast, is dry, formal, academic, and highly structured. These terms are often used as pejoratives in the description of music, but are not intended that way here. The piece manages to use all of the above to its advantage and the result is beautiful, engaging, and always exciting. Given an A major key signature (the slow movement has none but starts and ends somewhat in F Major), the harmonic language of the work is essentially atonal. Tonal "gravity" is seldom evident and when it makes a fleeting appearance, it is subject to personal interpretation. The texture of the first movement is that of musical pointillism whereby the upper parts play in rapidly alternating sixteenth notes separated by rests. The manuals-only opening section is repeated over a leisurely bass line. A second manuals-only section adds rapid, often contrary-motion scale passages to the pointillism and, again, it is repeated note-for-note over another bass line. After a rhetorical pause consisting of four staccato eighth notes, Langlais takes the unexpected step of repeating an earlier passage (measures 35-68) backwards note-for-note. He writes the word

“Récurrence” into the score by which he must mean “retrograde” (a term associated with the Viennese School of Schoenberg) instead of a mere recurrence. The four-measure coda ends flippantly, especially after such a bout of intellectualism. The second movement (Largo) is brief, lyrical and poetic. The Finale is a merry gigue in binary form with glittering sextuplets over a walking bass.

-- From the instruments' builder, Anden Houben

THE LAUTENWERCKE

The Lautenwercke or lute-harpsichord differs from the harpsichord in several important respects. While historical references indicate differing approaches to design, there is general agreement that the use of gut strings is of primary importance. Harpsichords are designed to be strung in metal, and for a number of reasons, simple replacement of their strings with gut will not give satisfactory results. Generally, a gut string requires a longer scale (or length at a given pitch) than a metal string. One might assume this infers a larger instrument, but this is rarely the case. Due to a rapid foreshortening of this longer scale (as one finds on the lute), Lautenwercke are often smaller than their metal strung relatives. This reduces the tension a Lautenwercke must bear in comparison to a harpsichord. Lighter construction is made possible by reduced tension, enabling a Lautenwercke to better respond to the less energetic gut string. This is especially true of the soundboards, which can be half the thickness normally found in harpsichords.

Gut stringing has other implications for Lautenwercke design. As gut strings have more internal friction than their metal counterparts, they generally have less sustain. This allows one to dispense with dampers to a large degree. Individual instruments will dictate where dampers are needed (and how effective they need be), but one rarely finds Lautenwercke fitted with dampers on every string. Any resulting “over-ring” is likely to enhance the lute-like effect. The Lautenwercke also demands special attention concerning string layout. Thick gut strings vibrate more vigorously than thin metal ones at higher tension. This requires more space be given between adjacent strings to avoid interference. This consideration encourages the builder to keep his design simple. Two choirs of gut strings seem to be the practical maximum, though a third choir in metal is so immediately to me. It didn't take long to discover there were no surviving examples. I remember working at the drafting table trying to work out a practical instrument from the scant information available. Technical problems and lack of experience would delay construction for the next twenty years. Since the beginning my primary inspiration has been the writing of Jakob Adlung in *Musica mechanica organoedi*. His description of lute-harpsichords made by J.N. Bach, a cousin of J. S. Bach, offers more detail than other writings available. The instruments he writes about are a major departure from harpsichord building practice. The stringing is based on the actual lute. Most Lautenwercke seemed to have taken the harpsichord as a starting point, adjusting various perimeters for the use of gut strings. Adlung's literal “transcription” of the lute into a keyboard instrument results in an instrument where the string diameters, lengths of strings for a given pitch, and plucking points are very lute-like indeed. The appearance of the soundboard can be confusing until one realizes it is a logical analog of a lute's

fretboard, and the motions of a lutenist's left hand in stopping the strings against the frets. Strings get progressively shorter while ascending a scale until one arrives at the next full-length, "open string" in the lute's tuning.

The two instruments used in this recording, like the lute are primarily double strung. The first choir of strings is at eight foot pitch and is maintained for the full range of the keyboard, GG-d'''. The second choir, like that of some lutes is at four foot pitch in the bass changing to eight foot pitch between B and f#. From g' to the highest note d'', the second choir is absent as the lute is always single strung in this range. On the single manual instrument (1995) the second partial choir can be engaged selectively by means of a knee lever allowing a certain amount of dynamic and tonal control. The double manual instrument (1999) is strung in the manner above, but has five sets of jacks (one for dampers alone) and offers more variety in terms of tonal color brought about by plucking the strings at different points and using differing plectrum materials. This includes (not heard in this recording) a stop in soft leather capable of substantial dynamic control.

Both instruments use tied bridges that carry the full tension of the strings directly to the soundboard. This is perhaps the most radical departure from normal keyboard building practice where string tension is diverted to the case rim. Again, this is inspired by the lute bridge itself. It is only by following the example of low tension lute stringing that it is possible to build an instrument in this fashion which is able to withstand the pull of over ninety strings. This construction requires an overall lightness to better respond to the less energetic strings. Soundboard thickness is half that of most harpsichords and cases are constructed with lightness and resonance in mind.

TRACKS:

Hugo Distler (1908-1942)

Trio Sonata Opus 18 No. 2

1) Rasche, energische Halbe - 3:35

2) Einleitung: Sehr erregte Achtel, ...dabei frei im Zeitmass - 2:18

3) Recht geschwinde Achtel - 3:37

Max Reger (1873-1916)

6 Trios for Organ

4) Canon - 1:34

5) Gigue - 2:00

6) Canzonetta - 3:08

7) Scherzo - 2:34

8) Siciliano - 1:54

9) Fuga - 2:40

Jean Langlais (1907-1991)

Trio Sonata

10) Allegro vivo - 3:53

- 11) Largo - 2:02
- 12) Final: Allegro - 1:58

Georg Philipp Telemann (1681-1767)

Trio Sonata in A Minor

- 13) Largo - 2:09
- 14) Vivace - 2:48
- 15) Affettuoso - 2:09
- 16) Allegro - 3:23

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Trio Sonata From the Musical Offering, BWV 1079

- 17) Largo - 5:44
- 18) Allegro - 6:39
- 19) Andante - 3:45
- 20) Allegro - 3:42

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

SHAWN LEOPARD has been a specialist in early music since undergraduate study at the University of Southern Mississippi where her teachers included Dana Ragsdale and Lois Leventhal. She holds a Master's degree in musicology from Indiana University where she studied harpsichord with Elisabeth Wright. Shawn is currently based in Jackson, Mississippi, and she tours extensively in the Southeastern U.S. as a Lautenwerckist/harpsichordist with duo partner John Paul.

JOHN PAUL has been organist/choirmaster at St. Andrew's Episcopal Cathedral, Jackson, MS. since immigrating to the U.S. in 1965. During undergraduate study at the R.A.M. in London, his principal teachers were Alan Richardson, Harold Craxton, Eric H. Thiman, C. H. Trevor and Thurston Dart. He completed Doctoral studies at the University of Colorado in 1971. Touring as a solo harpsichordist since 1980, he has completed over 500 concerts and residencies in the Southeastern U.S. and since 1997 has collaborated with duo partner Shawn Leopard.

Shawn Leopard and John Paul began their collaboration as SHAWN LEOPARD AND JOHN PAUL, MUSIC FOR TWO HARPSICHORDS in 1997. They play the entire known repertoire for two harpsichords along with creative transcriptions of their own using both harpsichords strung in brass and iron and two Lautenwercke (harpsichords strung in gut). They travel with their own instruments, built by Anden Houben of Northport, Alabama, and have covered over 50,000 miles from Boston to Miami to Tulsa, presenting concerts, performances and school residencies.

CREDITS

Lautenwercke built by Anden Houben

Recorded and edited by Anden Houben

Recorded at the recital hall of the University of Alabama, March 19th and 20th, 2003

Photos by Anden Houben

Cover illustration by G.S Cram-Drach



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