

PROGRAM NOTES

Fantasie over het Lutherlied: Een Vaste Burg is onze God

The organ music of Jan Zwart, though not well-known in this country, holds an important place in the past century of Dutch organ culture. Though not universally fashionable today, Zwart's style - unabashedly expressive to the point of sentimentality - remains alive largely through the performances and recordings of his sons. Most of Zwart's organ works are based upon chorale melodies or metrical psalm tunes. The *Sombere Muziek* is founded upon the 1539 Genevan Psalter melody for psalm 103. The eighth verse bleakly compares man's life with the grass, but then goes on to assert the everlasting nature and steadfastness of God's love for those who fear him and keep his commandments. Accordingly it expresses anxiety and agitation; but finally hope, even triumph. A reflective and expressive statement of the psalter melody comprises the final section of this work. *Een Vaste Burg* begins with an introduction and fugue which more than hint at the first phrase of the well-known chorale melody for Luther's paraphrase of Psalm 46. The principal musical idea of this section recurs later in the piece as an interlude and again as a final coda. In the course of the piece are three distinctly different variations on the well-known chorale. The first is light and charming with the melody in the top voice; the second is lush and expressive with the melody in the tenor; and the third is strong and commanding with the melody returned to the soprano voice.

Praeludium in G

Nicolaus Bruhns was born at Schwabstedt. Having received his early training from his father, a pupil of Franz Tunder and organist in Husum, he went to Lübeck in 1681 to study with Tunder's successor at the Marienkirche, Dieterich Buxtehude. During his short life, Bruhns established for himself the reputations of a virtuoso of both keyboard and stringed instruments. He is said to have been skilled in playing trios with two voices on the violin and the third on the pedals of the organ. This Praeludium, one of four, is a paradigm of German baroque organ toccata writing. It is an especially bright piece which features a unique six-voice, double-pedal fugue. The improvisational quality, multi-sectional structure, and contrasts of texture all contribute to the strength and freshness of the musical statement it makes.

Choralpartita

Georg Böhm, the son of Johann Balthasar Böhm who was organist at the Hohenkirche in Ohrdruf, is primarily identified with the position of organist of the Johanniskirche in Lüneburg which he held from 1698 until his death. His keyboard works include several preludes and partitas based upon choral melodies. A student of Reinken, Böhm is certain to have crossed paths with the young Sebastian Bach during the latter's stay in Lüneberg. The partita *Freu dich sehr, O meine Seele* is a set of twelve variations built upon the melody for Psalm 42 from the 1551 Genevan Psalter. The tune has been attributed to both the Louis Bourgeois and to Claude Goudimel in various sources. By the time Böhm wrote his partita, the melody had been harmonized in many ways, adopted by the Germans, put into equal note values, and paired with various different texts.