

# CHRISTOPHER HERRICK - INTERNATIONAL CONCERT ORGANIST

## SWEELINCK

Yes, I did record Sweelinck's organ works in Sweden as promised back in August 2002! It proved to be just as wonderful an experience as I had hoped, using old fingering, relishing the characteristics of the keyboard and pedals, wallowing in the special sound of the organ and being delighted by the way the mean tone temperament helped to bring Sweelinck's music to life! It is now available as CDA67421/2.

Here are two reviews of the Sweelinck CDs:

### Classics Today.com

There are too few recordings of keyboard music by Sweelinck for it to sound momentous in claiming that this is the finest of them, but if you have even the slightest interest in the history of the North European school that led straight to J.S. Bach, or if you simply enjoy delightfully varied and inventive organ music, then add this set to your shopping list.

Christopher Herrick has located a marvelous Swedish instrument with a long and colorful history that has been restored (more or less) to its original mid-17th century condition, and it suits this music perfectly. Sweelinck was one of those "notey" composers, not in the sense of over-writing or empty note-spinning, but rather in that something interesting is always happening and the music gives an impression of inexhaustible onward development. For each type of work (formally speaking) Herrick finds a distinctive color that maximizes the timbral variety and character of Sweelinck's omnivorous musical inspiration.

Sweelinck's keyboard music falls into three large categories. First, there are the large "abstract" free-form pieces, like Disc 1's opening *Fantasia Chromatica*, the *Fantasia* (a-Phrygian), the *Toccatà* (Ionian), the *Echo Fantasia* (Ionian), and final *Ricercar* (Aeolian). Here Herrick uses the full resources of his instrument, and while you will not find the same level of fireworks that characterizes the output of later masters, the sustained level of intensity and "Gothic grandeur" that became a hallmark of the North German organ school is very much present. Next come variations sets based on sacred melodies, the largest being *Erbarne dich mein*, o

*Herre Gott*, which lasts more than 12 minutes, and *Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ*. Whether in these solemn pieces or in the more jubilant *Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr*, Herrick emphasizes some wonderful reed stops, making Sweelinck's polyphony immaculately clear and imparting a feeling of devotional austerity even when the composer seems carried away with the sheer fun of turning his fingers loose all over the keyboard.

Finally, there are the variations sets on secular songs and popular dance tunes, including Sweelinck's most famous keyboard work: *Mein junges Leben had ein End'*. Compared to the "sacred" pieces, these tunes are certainly catchier even if the compositional technique remains essentially the same. Herrick cloaks these numbers in colors either bright or (as in the work just mentioned) smoothly luminous, and in *Onder een linde groen* he even resorts to the organ's delightfully hoarse "birdsong" stop (no, your vacuum cleaner is not possessed by an evil spirit).

It remains a source of wonder that this music (to say nothing of Sweelinck's epic setting of the complete Psalms, which remain largely unrecorded to this day) isn't better known, but this lively and inexhaustibly ebullient production should at least give Sweelinck some well-earned public exposure.

Hyperion's engineering is beyond praise: a perfect acoustic space captures the instrument with ideal warmth and clarity, and with the absolute minimum of mechanical noise. Glorious!

David Hurwitz

### Cathedral Music Review

Christopher Herrick's two CD set of 25 pieces evokes Sweelinck's era from the outset with the majestic '*Fantasia Chromatica*', aided by the salty tang of meantone temperament and sharp pitch (A=467). The excellent CD booklet has essays on Sweelinck and his

music in addition to the organ's specification and, most usefully, a list of the registrations used in the recording - a model of clarity.

The instrument inspires Christopher Herrick to give some sparkling accounts of a balanced programme. The

performances are informed by control of rhythm and phrasing, clear textures and imaginative registrations. Variety in expression ranges from robust treatment of the Fantasias to the exquisite shaping of such items as the 'Puer nobis' Christmas variations and the melancholy Dowland/Sweelinck 'Pavana Lachrimae'.

As one listens to these authoritative performances of this wonderful music one can well understand why the burghers of the rising maritime city took honoured

guests to the Oude Kerk to hear their own 'Orpheus of Amsterdam' play and improvise on the organs and harpsichord which they maintained in the church.

The Hyperion/Herrick collaboration has born much fruit over the past twenty years and this Sweelinck set will give further pleasure to Christopher Herrick's many admirers.

Alan Spedding

Here are some of the booklet notes.

## SWEELINCK'S KEYBOARD MUSIC

Played on the organ of Norrfjärden Church, Piteå, Sweden  
1997 reconstruction of the 1609-1684 organ in the German Church, Stockholm

Recorded 15-17 August 2002

Producer: Paul Spicer  
Recording engineer: Simon Eadon  
Recording assistant and registrant: Will Brown

Thanks are due to Professor Hans-Ola Ericsson and the School of Music in Piteå for encouraging and facilitating this recording, and to Andreas Grönlund of Grönlunds orgelbyggeri in Gammelstad, Luleå, for preparing the instrument. Much helpful advice on registration was given by the church organist Lars Palo.

Norrfjärden organ specification

Hauptwerck 8' Principal	Oberwerck 8' Quintadena	Rückpositief 8' Flött	Pedahl 16' Under bass
16' Quintadena	4' Zap: flöite	4' Principal 4' Flött	8' Gedackter bass
8' Grosse spiel flöte	Nassat	2' Super octave	4' Octava bass
8' Gedackt flött	2' Octava	2' Walt flött	16' Posaunen bass
4' Octava	Spitzquinten	II Rank Sexquealtra	8' Trommeten bass
4' Spitz flött		III Rank Cimball	
Quinta		16' Dulcian	
2' Super octava		8' Krumb horn	
IV Rank Mixtur	II Rank Zimball	4' Geigen regall	8' Dulsian bass
16' Dussanen			
8' Trommeten	8' Schallmeijen		4' Corneten bass
Brustwerk			
8' Regal			

Tremulandt 1 and 2

Vogelgesang

Stern

Oberwerck to Hauptwerck; Hauptwerck to Pedahl; Rückpositief to Pedahl

A' = 467 Hz

Temperament: Meantone, 1/4 comma

Manual compass: C c'''

Pedal compass: C d

'Short Octave' in the bass: E sounds C, F sharp sounds D, G sharp sounds E. F sharp and G sharp can be played on the raised back half of manual split keys.

On all manuals and pedals, at every octave, sub-semitones can be played, E flats sounding on the front half and D sharps on the raised back half of split keys.

## CD1

1. Fantasia Chromatica
2. Onder een linde groen
3. Ons is gheboren een kindekijn
4. More palatino
5. Onse Vader in hemelrijck
6. Ballo del granduca
7. Erbarm dich mein, o Herre Gott
8. Est-ce Mars
9. Christe qui lux est et dies
10. Ick voer al over Rhijn
11. Malle Sijmen
12. Psalm 116 - Ik heb den Heer lief
13. Poolsche dans

## CD2

1. Fantasia (A Phrygian)
2. Engelsche Fortuyn
3. Mein junges Leben hat ein End'
4. Pavana Philippi
5. Toccata (Ionian)
6. Pavana Lachrimae
7. Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr
8. Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ
9. Pavana hispanica

10. Nun freut euch, lieben Christen gemein
11. Echo Fantasia (Ionian)
12. Ricercar (Aolian)

## **The organ of the German Church in Stockholm**

During the sixteenth- and seventeenth-centuries, through the agency of the Hanseatic League, Germans emigrated in significant numbers to the main Baltic ports. In Stockholm by 1607, the German congregation of St Gertrud's, established in the 1550s, had gained sole rights to the building at the heart of the city, which was to become known as the German Church.

In 1609 Paulus Müller, an organ builder from Spandau, was commissioned by the parish council to build a twenty one-stop organ, with two manuals and pedals.

In 1625 the German musician, Andreas Düben, who had studied with Sweelinck in Amsterdam, was appointed organist. Contemporary testimony indicates that the musical life of the German Church was very rich and that Düben himself was a brilliant organist. He also became a major force in the musical life of the city: from 1650 onwards he occupied the three most important musical posts in Stockholm - director of music to the court, organist of the German Church and cathedral organist.

From 1638 to 1641 the German Church underwent major reconstruction and enlargement, bringing it to its present dimensions. Between 1647 and 1651 George Herman, organ builder from Rostock, expanded the organ into a magnificent thirty five-stop instrument with three manuals and pedals.

Mårten Redtmer, Stockholm's leading woodcarver, was commissioned to decorate the organ. Redtmer had also been responsible for the extensive and elaborate decoration of the royal warship Wasa, which can now be viewed in Stockholm, having been recovered from the bottom of the harbour where it sank on its maiden voyage.

Andreas Düben died in 1662. His son Gustav succeeded him as director of music to the court and organist of the German Church. For about thirty years church music flourished. The organ was in good condition and was regularly serviced.

After Gustav Düben's death in 1690 interest in the organ declined, as did interest in music in court circles in Stockholm generally. The organ in the German Church had begun to be old-fashioned. There were attempts to maintain it, principally by repairing the wind trunks and bellows, but in 1748 the organ builder Olof Hedlund refused to undertake necessary repairs since he 'did not wish to cause the parish great expense for repairs that would ruin his own reputation'.

In 1777 the organ was taken down and two years later sold to the parish of Övertorneå on the Finnish border through the good offices of the curate, Nils Wiklund, who had been accused of spreading heresy and was therefore fortuitously in Stockholm seeking a reprieve from the king.

The organ was carried on barges to the north of Sweden and in 1780 the Hauptwerck and Oberwerck were erected in Övertorneå Church by the organ builder Matthias Swahlberg. This work cost the parish almost three times as much as the actual purchase of the instrument. Swahlberg was asked to construct from the old organ, with its mean-tone temperament and sub-semitones (D sharp / E flat), an instrument that was suitable for accompanying hymn singing. The change to a full chromatic compass and near equal temperament was a problem that Swahlberg solved by redistributing the pipework through the organ like a well-shuffled pack of cards. Swahlberg also built a new case to accommodate the lower ceiling in Övertorneå.

The Rückpositiv became an organ in its own right in the chapel of the neighbouring parish of Hietaniemi where it was later rebuilt several times. The pedal seems to have disappeared entirely.

The Övertorneå organ was taken out of commission in 1934. A new organ was constructed behind the old façade but in 1969-71 it was removed and the old organ was put back into working order, this time by Grönlunds orgelbyggeri. The latest restoration of 1997-9 returns it, not to its original seventeenth-century condition, but to its state when it was erected in the church in 1780, with the exception of the pedal, which has been constructed in accordance with new research.

### **The organ in Norrfjärden Church**

The reconstructed organ in Norrfjärden Church, near Piteå on Sweden's far northeast coast, is the result of a major research project into the organs at Övertorneå and Hietaniemi undertaken in conjunction with the University College of Music in Piteå under the direction of Professor Hans-Ola Ericsson.

There were three parts to the project:

1. Documentation of the existing organs in Övertorneå and Hietaniemi.
2. Reconstruction of the 1684 German Church organ. The organ, which belongs to the School of Music in Piteå, was erected in Norrfjärden Church where it is used liturgically, for teaching, for recitals and for recording.
3. Restoration of the organ in Övertorneå.

#### Authenticity

With the discovery of this superb copy of an organ so closely connected with one of Sweelinck's pupils, Christopher Herrick was able to fulfil a long cherished dream to record Sweelinck's keyboard music on a really suitable instrument. He has had the two Fantasias on this disc, as well as the Ricercar and most of the secular variations in his repertoire for decades. If they haven't featured very often in his concerts it is because modern equal temperament tends not to do justice to these pieces!

Students at Piteå's School of Music have the opportunity and advantage at the outset of their musical careers to learn older repertoire with the right sounds in their ears. As well as the challenge posed by the sub-semitones and the short octave in the bass, Christopher Herrick, in common with these students, also had to face the issue of authentic fingering! Not only does the style of the keyboard demand an adjustment from so called 'Czerny technique', which is based on a rounded hand with the thumb passing smoothly under the other fingers, but, perhaps more importantly, Sweelinck's music itself cries out for an older finger technique to bring renewed life to its stylish phrases.

To summarise old fingering as simply as possible, the wrist is held low, the thumb is employed rarely (particularly in the right hand), longer fingers pass over shorter ones, groups of thirds are played with repeated second and fourth fingers, and similarly groups of sixths with repeated second and fifth fingers. After much work and pain living with these unaccustomed techniques, Christopher Herrick can report that he found the effort was fully repaid. By embracing old fingering, many of the perceived difficulties in Sweelinck's music were resolved naturally, while the music itself seemed to spring to life with greater and greater ease.

The recording of this much used organ had to take place when the students were away on vacation and therefore, in the absence of 'manpower', we had to forego the possibility of having the organ blown by hand. However, an experiment made on an earlier visit, comparing a hand blown performance with one where the bellows were controlled by electric power, revealed no perceivable difference.