

Appendix E:

An annotated transcript of a score used for improvising Choral Variations on the theme *Jesu, meine Seelen Wolle* (see [Video 4](#))

Each of the musical excerpts below are taken from a score used for improvising a Chorale Partita or Variations. In principle I planned this improvisation by drawing on my knowledge of other models of Baroque chorale variations; especially ideas found in J. S. Bach's variations on the chorale *Sei gegrusset, Jesu gütig* (BWV 768). Bach's model not only offers inventive solutions for different variations but also provides a general plan in which the variations, from simple beginnings, become increasingly dense and chromatic, finishing with a grand *tutti* statement of the theme. I also borrowed ideas from other composers such as Sweelinck (1562-1621), Buxtehude (1637-1707) and Pachelbel (1653-1706)

Theme



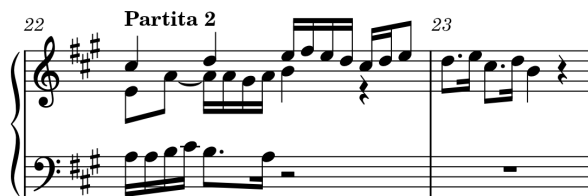
The chorale theme, presented few technical problems and was prepared using Fux's (1725/1971) voice-leading principles for improvising first a bass line, and then the inner voices. I practised many different harmonisations of this theme which provided me with a range of options in the recital. As I harmonised this theme in the recital, several events occurred which influenced my harmonic decisions for the remaining variations. (i) the repeat (of the first four bars) was made with alterations of voicing, but no changes of harmony; (ii) the central phrase occurring after the double bar (bars 5 & 6) modulated to B minor, while the subsequent phrase served to link back to the tonic key (I was particularly pleased with the interrupted cadence in bar 8!).

Variation 1



In the first variation I started with a left hand solo using a reed stop to give the effect of a bassoon (the theme in the right hand is also coloured with a solo stop so that the effect is of a duet). The distinctive semiquaver motif in the left hand provided the main material for the variation in a similar way to the Bach model mentioned above: thus the motif was generally used in a descending sequence (without modulating) as a preparation for the theme which was lightly decorated. Between each phrase of the theme, the bassoon solo returned and once again prepared the next phrase. The principal difficulty was in aiming the semiquaver motif towards the next phrase so that it linked smoothly; for example, to keep to the modulatory plan established in the theme, I also had to plan a modulation to B minor using the bassoon semiquaver pattern.

Variation 2



In this variation I aimed for a feeling of ease and relief in the texture (after the tension of the previous two-voiced duet) which I had admired in Sweelinck's Chorale Variations. The structural approach was to improvise a Trio of three independent voices, each taking it in turns to embellish their line with semiquaver diminutions. To achieve this I had to construct a mental representation of both the harmonic and the contrapuntal elements in a particular way: if I thought only in terms of independent lines then the task became too complicated; therefore I practised constructing these lines through harmonic points. It was as if I was harmonising the

theme once again, but also exploring each ‘chord’ in terms of diminutions, sequencing these between the voices. Note, that the written notes were not used in the performance, which demonstrates how the conceptual principles (of a Trio texture and semiquaver diminutions) can be realised in many different ways.

Variation 3



For this variation, the idea was so simple I only needed to jot down the first two beats of music as a reminder. The concept behind the variation was a duet between two voices (hands), each taking it in turn to make a jump of two semiquavers. This effect was greatly enhanced by the colour of the registrations which give a ‘life-like’ quality to the melodic lines. To improvise this I only needed to recall the opening harmonisation which I then realised as a duet.

Variation 4



In this variation there was a feeling of tutti: as if the ensemble, after playing a duet with two members, gathered together again for a group version of the theme. This approach was something I learnt from the models which are characteristically simple in opening variations. If I had stuck with the implications of the written example it would have imitated the style of Pachelbel: in which only the bass line was rhythmically embellished, while the right hand played the theme in block chords. However, it was perhaps this simplicity which generated

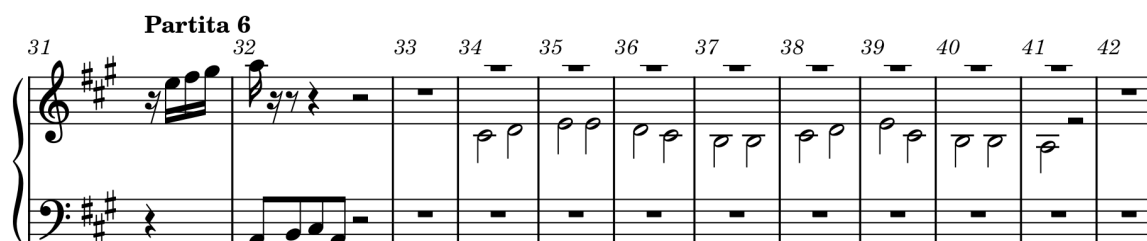
more embellishments than I had previously intended: the variation became surprisingly contrapuntal as the bass line embellishments spread upwards in imitation (particularly during the repeat of the first phrase); while the execution of the bass line in the pedals made this quite a technically demanding moment in the performance.

Variation 5



One of the nicest and most rewarding variations to perform, the texture used a toccata approach, based on the motifs written above. In contrast to the preceding variation (in which I almost lost control over the contrapuntal elements) the physical movements felt comfortable, and tended to assist me in generating musical solutions, i.e. the linking passages between melodic phrases are a good example of unplanned freedom in this recording.

Variation 6



This was by far the most challenging variation in the recital in spite of the simplicity of conception. The conceptual principles of construction were: (i) to play the theme as a cantus firmus, on long notes in the pedals, using a 2' foot to place this voice in the treble register; (ii) a 'walking' bass accompaniment played in the L.H; (iii) a decorative line of semiquaver embellishments played in the R.H. Another way of performing this texture might have been to play the 'walking' bass line in the pedals and leave the other two voices to the hands, however, I

decided on the former approach. The main difficulty was coordinating all three lines together as each line presented a number of independent constraints forcing me to think more contrapuntally than I wanted to do. Thus, it was difficult to conceive of this variation through the harmonic plan of the theme as I had done in previous variations (allowing the details and decoration to be executed more automatically). If the left- and right-hand parts had been less varied and more predictable, this would have been possible - therefore I practised many combinations in the hands, in order to build up a repertoire of patterns I could execute without attention - however, on the day it felt extremely difficult to juggle the three lines through the entire scheme of the harmonic plan. At one moment I lost coordination and made some errors in the theme (pedals) which nearly caused me to stop!

Variation 7

Partita 7

The image shows a musical score for Variation 7, Partita 7, spanning measures 63 to 79. The score is written for a grand piano with three staves. The key signature is G major (one sharp) and the time signature is 3/4. The bass line (bottom staff) contains a rhythmic semiquaver motif that serves as a harmonic guide. The upper two staves (treble clef) contain a duet of rhythmic semiquaver motifs that embellish the harmonic motion. The score is divided into measures 63 through 79, with measure numbers indicated above the staff.

This variation copied an idea in Bach's model (BWV 768) already mentioned, and knowing the model variation quite well it was only necessary to jot down the theme in the bass line as a guide for improvising. The idea was to play the theme in the minor key in the bass line (using the pedals), on top of which a duet was played using both hands. The upper two lines took it in turns to play a rhythmic semiquaver motif embellishing each harmonic motion triggered by the theme. To learn this style of variation involved practising many harmonisations of chorale themes in the bass until I understood not only the sequence of chords involved but also the voice-leading principles linking these chords. Understanding the harmonic texture in this way helped to construct the duet lines in real time as they function through decorating the underlying harmonic structure.

Variation 8

Partita 8

87 88

The image shows two staves of musical notation for Variation 8. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. Both are in a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 6/8 time signature. Measure 87 shows a melodic line in the treble staff starting with a quarter note G4, followed by eighth notes A4, B4, and C5. Measure 88 continues the melodic line with eighth notes D5, E5, and F#5, followed by a quarter note G5. The bass staff contains rests in both measures.

In principle quite a simple variation which returns to the minor and adapts the theme to a compound time signature with a distinctive *Siciliano* rhythmic motif. In the recital, I preferred to keep the original major key as the preceding variation had been in the minor. The texture was in four parts and follows closely the harmonisation of the original theme.

Variation 9

Partita 9

89 90 91 92 93

The image shows five staves of musical notation for Variation 9. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. Both are in a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a 3/4 time signature. Measures 89-93 show a melodic line in the treble staff and a supporting line in the bass staff. Measure 89 starts with a quarter rest in the treble and a quarter note G4 in the bass. Measure 90 has a quarter note A4 in the treble and a quarter note A4 in the bass. Measure 91 has a quarter note B4 in the treble and a quarter note B4 in the bass. Measure 92 has a quarter note C5 in the treble and a quarter note C5 in the bass. Measure 93 has a quarter note D5 in the treble and a quarter note D5 in the bass.

A feeling of ‘grand finale’ to this variation which I modelled on the penultimate variation in Bach’s model (BWV 768). In the opening bars I aimed to establish a rich-voiced stately chorus which would serve as a *ritornello* section linking each phrase of the chorale melody as it appeared in a solo cantus firmus in the treble. Similarly to other variations which establish new linking material it’s necessary to manage the tonality so that the accompaniment always prepares the way for the theme. Thus, the opening phrase quickly heads to the dominant chord (bar 92) which allows the first note of the theme to appear in bar 93 on the tonic harmony. Another challenge of this style of variation is that the 3/4 slow time signature means creating two extra harmonic motions to each step of the theme. As preparation then, I often

practice simple harmonic exercises in which two, three and four harmonic steps are made to each note of the chorale theme.