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# The Magnificat Fugues of Johann Pachelbel: Alternation or Intonation?\*

BY EWALD V. NOLTE

THE MAGNIFICAT FUGUES of Johann Pachelbel (1653-1706) probably represent the largest body of keyboard music composed by one man for use in conjunction with a single liturgical chant.<sup>1</sup> A great deal of effort was put forth by Sandberger to align these Magnificat fugues with the tradition of the alternation practice.<sup>2</sup> However, when he proceeded to superimpose the principles of alternation on the liturgical situation as it prevailed at the St. Sebalduskirche in Nürnberg during Pachelbel's time of service as organist, Sandberger encountered difficulties that prompt one to re-examine the problem.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, the question that arises when one scrutinizes these 95 pieces is this: Are these fugues a real contribution to the tradition of the alternation practice; or do they represent the tradition of the intonation? Attempts at a clarification of this problem will be made through two avenues of approach: the one, in terms of the internal evidences to be found in the structural aspects of the music itself; and the other, in terms of the local liturgical situation that prevailed at the time they were composed.

\* This paper was read at Roosevelt University, Chicago, Ill., on November 18, 1955, at the fall meeting of the Midwestern Chapter.

<sup>1</sup> *DTÖ*, Jahrg. VIII<sup>2</sup>. The practicing musician will find many in Kistner and Siegel's *Organum*, Fourth Series, No. 14.

<sup>2</sup> The Preface to *DTB*, Jahrg. II<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Max Seiffert in his brief preface in the *Organum* series gives his support to Sandberger's views.

## I

The alternation practice by its nature imposed certain disciplines upon the composer, the first of which was of a numerical nature. Under ordinary circumstances there would be need for six verses to render the Magnificat in a liturgical situation. However, two early examples by Girolamo Cavazzoni (born ca. 1520) consist of but five verses each, as given by Torchi.<sup>4</sup> Their use for alternation is nevertheless substantiated by the titles *Magnificat*, *Quia respexit*, *Deposuit*, *Suscepit*, and *Gloria Patri*.<sup>5</sup>

Antonio Cabezón's *Obras de música*, which was published posthumously in 1578, contains 53 *versillos* organized according to the eight psalm tones and entitled *Salmodie para el Magnificat*.<sup>6</sup> Though they are not specifically labeled with Latin texts, there can be little doubt about their use in the alternation practice, for each psalm tone has six or seven verses to satisfy the numerical requirements.

The organ Magnificats of Jean Titelouze (1563-1633) are clearly indicated for alternation, for the composer employs the titles of the odd-numbered verses.<sup>7</sup> In each instance, however, there is a seventh

<sup>4</sup> *L'arte musicale in Italia*, Vol. III, pp. 35ff.

<sup>5</sup> No explanation for the absence of the verse, *Et misericordia ejus*, is available.

<sup>6</sup> Pedrell, *Hispaniae schola musica*, Vol. IV.

<sup>7</sup> Guillemant, *Archives des maîtres de l'orgue*, Vol. I.

verse, designated as an alternate setting of *Deposuit potentes*. From the introduction to these works it becomes clear that this extra verse makes it possible to employ these sets in the rendition of the Song of Zacharias, *Benedictus Dominus Deus Israel*, which requires one more instrumental verse than the Magnificat.

In the third part of Samuel Scheidt's *Tabulatura nova* of 1624 there are nine complete sets of Magnificat verses, including one in the *tonus peregrinus*.<sup>8</sup> In general each set consists of six verses, though occasionally, as in the sets for the third and the eighth tones, the composer included alternate settings of the *Sicut locutus*. In contrast to the tradition represented by Cavazzoni and Titelouze, the verses in Scheidt's sets are superscribed with the Latin texts of the even-numbered verses: *Et exultavit, Quia fecit, Fecit potentiam, Esurientes, Sicut locutus, and Sicut erat*.

When one endeavors to assign the 95 Magnificat fugues of Pachelbel to the category of Magnificat verses as developed for alternation, one is confronted with this problem of numerical control. The composers who wrote their verses for alternation composed them in sets of a specific number that is inherent in the nature of the practice. Ordinarily a set would consist of six verses, though occasionally an additional verse might appear. Local tradition would dictate the use of the Latin titles of either the even-numbered or the odd-numbered verses. In some instances, however, the verses were merely referred to by number, so that the settings could be adapted to any local situation.

An examination of Seiffert's compilation of Pachelbel's 95 Magnificat

<sup>8</sup> *DDT*, Band I.

fugues fails to reveal any indication of this numerical control. The number of compositions in each psalm tone makes this observation quite clear: Tone I—23; Tone II—10; Tone III—11; Tone IV—8; Tone V—12; Tone VI—10; Tone VII—8; and Tone VIII—13. It should also be noted that these works bear neither the numerical nor the textual designations that seem to be inherent features of the alternation practice.

Before leaving this problem of numerical control, mention should be made of the fact that one of the primary sources of these fugues, Berlin Ms. 471, is given by Sandberger as evidence of their use in the alternation practice.<sup>9</sup> This manuscript contains two series of fugues, each having a total of 32 compositions, four in each psalm tone. This provides eight fugues in each tone, which is still at variance with alternation as it applied to the Magnificat. Furthermore, the location of the two series in the manuscript hardly substantiates their use in the alternation practice. Seiffert assures us that the precise order of this manuscript can be seen in Commer's *Musica sacra*, Vol. I.<sup>10</sup> Here we find four fugues in the first tone, bearing the numbers 56 to 59. To find the other series of four in the same tone, one must seek out numbers 89 to 92. Such an arrangement is hardly a reflection of the practical needs of an organist, who would require the use of at least six fugues for the alternation practice.<sup>11</sup>

It is quite unlikely that the eight fugues in each psalm tone were regarded as belonging to the same set of verses as would be required for the

<sup>9</sup> *DTB*, Jahrg. II<sup>1</sup>, p. xxx.

<sup>10</sup> *DTÖ*, Jahrg. VIII<sup>1</sup>, p. 103.

<sup>11</sup> Reasons for the arrangement of four fugues in one group are lacking at the present time.

alternation practice. Evidence for this can be noted in the two series of fugues in the eighth tone. In the first four, which bear the numbers 85 to 88 in Commer's edition, the tonality of G is recognized through its association with the Mixolydian mode, and therefore no key signature is indicated. The second group of four fugues, numbered 118 to 121, likewise express the tonality of G; but in this case it is established through the use of one sharp in accordance with the modern concept of G major. One is not inclined to accept the fact that a composer would use both the old and the new systems of indicating the same tonality in a set of eight fugues to be used in a single rendition of the Magnificat.

A second difficulty in classifying Pachelbel's Magnificat fugues as verses for alternation has to do with thematic construction. In the traditional Magnificat verses that were composed for alternation, one notes that the thematic basis of each verse is closely allied to the particular psalm tone of a set. This thematic bond is undoubtedly one of the chief requisites of the practice, not only on artistic but also on liturgical grounds, where vocal and instrumental renditions of the verses alternate.

An examination of the themes of Pachelbel's Magnificat fugues fails to demonstrate the high degree of thematic integration one expects to find in sets of verses intended for the alternation practice. Even though one makes generous allowances for melodic ornamentation, it will be found that the majority of the themes are unrelated to the chant. Sandberger concedes that this is the case; but if it were true, according to him, that because of two different liturgical situations, some of the

fugues were intended as free intonations and others were thematically related, the problem would still be unresolved. For if this assumption were correct, one should expect to find both related and free themes in each psalm tone. This, however, cannot be demonstrated conclusively. An analysis of the 64 themes given by Commer will disclose, for example, that in the fourth and eighth tones not one of the themes bears a recognizable relationship to the chant.

In an effort to establish the categorical designation of Pachelbel's Magnificat fugues, our attention for the moment will be directed to particular phases of the development of the organ intonation as they were found in Nürnberg, where Pachelbel wrote and used these compositions. It is of more than passing interest that Conrad Paumann was one of Pachelbel's own illustrious predecessors at St. Sebalduskirche. When in the middle of the 15th century he wrote his *Fundamentum organisandi*, he incorporated a *Magnificat Sexti toni*.<sup>12</sup> Upon the basis of its structural aspects, this work of fifteen measures in triple meter cannot be safely regarded as a representation of the alternation practice. As it stands it can, however, be accepted as a work that might function as an intonation to the vocal rendition of the chant; and as such it represents a category outside the sphere of the Magnificat verses. Furthermore, the *Fundamentum organisandi* was intended as a book of instruction. If Paumann had wished to demonstrate the use of the organ in the alternation practice, he would have been obliged to incorporate at least one complete example.

<sup>12</sup> *Jahrbücher für musikalische Wissenschaft* II (1867), p. 201.

It is possible that Paumann's *Magnificat Sexti toni* takes on a deeper significance because of its strategic position in the *Fundamentum organisandi*. One notes that this book of instruction falls into two grand divisions; the first portion, which deals with the elementary problems of compositional technique, concludes with the expression *Et sic est finis*, and the second part presents more advanced compositions of various kinds. The *Magnificat Sexti toni* is placed at the head of this latter section, where it functions not only as a demonstration of a setting of this chant, but, perhaps more significantly, assumes the function of a devout superscription or intonation to the entire concluding portion of Paumann's work.

It is of considerable significance for the resolution of our problem that the two traditions of alternation and of intonation are to be found within a single volume by Erasmus Kindermann (1616-55), who was organist at the St. Aegidienkirche in Nürnberg. In 1645 he published his *Harmonia organica*, which contains two compositions of particular interest; the one is entitled *Magnificat Octavi toni*, and the other bears the significant superscription, *Intonatio, Magnificat 4. toni*. The former, consisting of six verses, was written under the influence of the alternation practice. The *Intonatio*, however, is a single composition of 40 measures in 4/4 meter, which reveals a kinship with Paumann's *Magnificat Sexti toni* by virtue of the fact that it presents the melody of the psalm tone in the lower voice. However, its harmonic and contrapuntal textures are of that lucidity and transparency which, a half century later, became such significant elements of style in Pachelbel's *Magnificat* fugues. If one

accepts these two compositions in Kindermann's *Harmonia organica* as being definitive of the two methods whereby the organ enhanced the *Magnificat* in the Nürnberg churches, then one will find that the *Magnificat* fugues of Pachelbel fail to establish any categorical affinity with Kindermann's *Magnificat* verses but unerringly gravitate toward the stylistic features of that composer's *Intonatio, Magnificat 4. toni*.

## II

A valuable aid in reconstructing the liturgical situation in which Pachelbel's *Magnificat* fugues functioned is Max Herold's *Alt-Nürnberg in seinen Gottesdiensten*.<sup>13</sup> Herold's information concerning the ritual in the churches of Nürnberg during the second half of the 17th century is derived from two documents. The first of these, the *Officium sacrum* of 1664, which outlines the ritualistic procedures for St. Sebalduskirche and St. Lorenzkirche, coincides with Pachelbel's youth in Nürnberg. The other, *Agenda diaconorum Ecclesiae Sebaldinae*, was issued in 1697, a few years after Pachelbel assumed his position as organist there. No doubt the regulations given by Herold were in effect until Pachelbel's death in 1706.

According to these sources, Herold presents the rubrics for the Saturday Vespers.<sup>14</sup> Throughout the greater portion of the ecclesiastical year a German hymn was sung after the conclusion of the prayers; but on the Saturdays in Advent and Eastertide the rubrics specified that the hymn be supplanted by a festive rendition of the Latin responsory

<sup>13</sup> Herold, *Alt-Nürnberg in seinen Gottesdiensten* (Gütersloh, 1890). Microfilm copy in the possession of Henry Woodward.

<sup>14</sup> Herold, pp. 122ff.

and the Magnificat. The procedure, given by Herold, was the following:

1. Organ playing.
2. The chanting of a versicle from the Responsoy (see under the section: The Church Year).<sup>15</sup>
3. Organ playing.
4. The chanting of the Gloria Patri.
5. The boy sopranos proceed to the altar and kneel while singing the versicle proper for the time of the church year.
6. The deacon for the week intones a portion of the antiphon.
7. The Magnificat (Mary's song of praise, Luke 1:46-55). The organist plays on the Magnificat.<sup>16</sup> The organ is played for one verse, and the other is sung by the choir. (The organ playing undoubtedly signifies the act of accompanying the singing of the congregation, as was pointed out earlier.)

Sandberger interpreted the rubrics under No. 7 to mean that the organ, instead of the boy sopranos, intoned the beginning of the Magnificat and the choir continued by chanting *Anima mea*. The second verse, *Et exultavit*, was played by the organ; then the choir sang the third verse; etc. Accordingly, the organ presented the even-numbered verses, and the choir sang the odd-numbered verses. Sandberger concludes his remarks on this point by observing that this represents alternation between the organ and the choir, a custom well established in the Catholic Church.<sup>17</sup> This interpretation would clearly preclude active participation by the assembled worshippers.

Unfortunately Sandberger failed to take Herold's significant paren-

<sup>15</sup> This parenthetical remark by Herold refers to a section of his book where the responsories proper for the church year are given. All parentheses in this table of rubrics are taken from Herold.

<sup>16</sup> According to Herold, the Latin rubric read *Organista modulatur super Magnificat*.

<sup>17</sup> *DTB*, Jahrg. II<sup>1</sup>, p. xxi.

thetical remark under No. 7 into account, for there it is specifically stated that the organ playing was not an independent feature but that it accompanied the singing of the congregation in accordance with Herold's earlier discussion of this problem. Previously Herold had observed that when the playing of the organ alternated with the choral chant, it was understood that the singing congregation joined with the playing of the organ.<sup>18</sup> Somewhat later he maintained that the choir sang its part without organ accompaniment *a cappella*, for it was stationed at the music desk before the altar; during the 16th and 17th centuries the congregation sang its songs together with the choir, likewise without accompaniment; however, beginning about 1660 the organist accompanied the unison song of the congregation.<sup>19</sup>

In the light of these evidences, rubric No. 7 above would not imply, as Sandberger maintained, that the organist displaced the singing of the word *Magnificat*, but rather that the organist was responsible for an instrumental introduction to prepare the congregation for the singing of the opening verse of the canticle with the support of the organ. The second verse, we can assume, was sung by the choir without accompaniment. This interchange continued to the end of the chant.

<sup>18</sup> Herold, pp. 116-117: ". . . wo Orgelspiel mit Chorgesang wechseln soll (alternis vocibus), die Meinung die sein wird, dass sich die Gemeinde an das Orgelspiel singend anschliessen möge."

<sup>19</sup> Herold, p. 118: "Der Chor singt seinen Theil ohne Orgelbegleitung *a capella*, wie er denn seinen Standort am Musikkulte vor den Altar hat; auch die Gemeinde singt, wie anzunehmen, im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert ihre Lieder ohne Begleitung, meist im Anschluss an den Chor, während etwa von 1660 an der Organist den einstimmigen Gemeindegessang begleitet."

The procedure just described was, consequently, not an alternation between the organ and the choir in accordance with a tradition that had its roots in the Roman Rite of pre-Reformation times, but it was an alternation between the congregation and the choir in a tradition rooted in the philosophies of the Lutheran Reformation, which fostered lay participation in the ritual. The organist played an intonation or prelude to the chant, and thereafter he identified himself with the congregation by supporting it as it sang its assigned verses. In such a setting there was no room for soloistic verses performed on the organ.

Several additional considerations lend support to the position developed thus far in this discussion. In his role as one of the greatest teachers of his time, Pachelbel gathered about himself a significant array of pupils at Nürnberg. If the alternation between organ and choir in the rendition of the Magnificat had been a current practice, he would have demonstrated the same to his pupils. In the light of present knowledge, however, not one of Pachelbel's many students has left us an example of a set of organ Magnificat verses. On the basis of the two Magnificat compositions in Kindermann's *Harmonia organica* of 1645 we find that traces of the old alternation practice were still extant in the Nürnberg Lutheran churches during the first half of the 17th century; but when Pachelbel came to the St. Sebalduskirche 50 years later, the use of a single organ intonation before the Magnificat was the established custom.<sup>20</sup>

After one has familiarized himself

with all of the categories in which Pachelbel composed, one is inclined to regard his Magnificat fugues as the continuation of a category which, earlier in the composer's career, held the center of his attention for twelve years as organist at the Predigerkirche in Erfurt. There his contract required that he provide thematic preludes for the congregational hymns. The form that he perfected for that purpose was the *Vorspielfuge* (a prelude fugue), and he fully appreciated the success of this monothematic type as an intonation. Later, when he came to the St. Sebalduskirche in Nürnberg, he applied this form, which he had so thoroughly mastered, to the intonations he was required to provide for the singing of the Magnificat.

In our re-examination of the categorical classification of Pachelbel's Magnificat fugues, efforts have been made to demonstrate that these works, in terms of the requirements of the alternation practice between choir and organ, cannot be defined as sets of Magnificat verses. Furthermore, a restudy of the rubrics for Vespers at the St. Sebalduskirche reveals that it was customary for the Magnificat verses to be rendered alternately by the congregation and the choir with the organist supporting the former. Such an arrangement precluded the soloistic role of the organ after the chant was under way. The rubrics, however, did specify the use of an intonation for the Magnificat. Therefore it is concluded that the Magnificat fugues of Pachelbel should be referred to, in a categorical sense, as intonations.

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<sup>20</sup> The probability that these fugues of Pachelbel may have been used at No. 1 and No. 3 in the rubrics given by Herold has not

been examined sufficiently to arrive at any conclusions.