The Keyboard in Baroque Europe

CHAPTER 5

Towards a genealogy of the keyboard concerto

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In the spring of 1707 Handel performed his first oratorio in Rome, *Il trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno*, a work that is often said to contain the first 'organ concerto'. The movement concerned is actually termed 'sonata' and the organ shares its solo role with the strings and oboes; nevertheless, there is no doubt that the organ has pride of place, taking the first solo episode in a curiously orthodox ritornello movement. The prominence of the organ would also presumably have advertised the presence of the composer in the solo role, something further suggested by the organ's continued obbligato role in the ensuing aria, where most of the B section is left blank, to be realised in accordance with the marking *arpeggiando per tutto*.[1] In common with much of Handel's early writing for concerted instruments (such as in *La Resurrezione*, 1708), both diverse and like instruments have to co-ordinate with one another in fast passages of thirds and sixths – thus, the virtuosity of the performance lies almost as much in the feat of ensemble as in the technical difficulty of the individual parts. This sort of writing unequivocally presents the organ as the melodic peer of the other instruments (Example 5.1); its very lack of specifically idiomatic keyboard figuration is testimony to its new-found emancipation from traditional keyboard roles, most obviously from the chordal duty normally demanded by ensemble situations.

While *Il trionfo* marked Handel's response to his first major libretto from Cardinal Benedetto Pamphili, at almost the same juncture in May 1707 he also became associated with his most significant secular patron to date, the Marquis Francesco Maria Ruspoli. One of the first works to issue from this relationship was the *Salve regina*, the central movement of which employs a solo organ, typically concerted in dialogue and in parallel with the strings and the solo soprano. It seems as if Handel set out to make his personal mark as a keyboard player as early as possible in his association with these two important patrons.

A few months later, on 4 February 1708, many miles away from Rome in the Thuringian town of Mühlhausen, J. S. Bach performed his first cantata in honour of the annual change of town council, 'Gott ist mein König', BWV 71. This too contains a solo part for organ,

I am grateful for a great deal of advice in writing this essay and owe particular thanks to Donald Burrows, Anthony Newcomb, David Schulenberg, Alexander Silbiger and Geoffrey Webber.

[1] As Carolyn Gianturco notes, the earliest surviving sources are not in Handel's autograph and probably date from some time after the Rome performances. However, there is no reason to doubt the role of the solo organ in the first version, or the likelihood that the shorthand direction for completion of the organ part stems from Handel's own scores. Carolyn Gianturco, 'Il trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno: four case-studies in determining Italian poetic-musical genres', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 119 (1994), 43–59, esp. 57–8.

Example 5.1 Handel, *Il trionfo del tempo* (1707), Sonata, bars 25–8

Oboes 1 & 2
Violins 1 & 2 solo tutti solo tutti solo tutti
Organ

for both left and right hand, performed in 'concert' with the soprano and tenor, in the Air and chorale 'Ich bin nun achtzig Jahr' (Example 5.2); there is also a small passage for solo organ in the final movement ('Das neue Regiment', bars 30–3). Of course, by later criteria, the aria would seem less a 'concerto' for organ than Handel's, given the presence of the voice (and the relative modesty of the organ writing). But vocal pieces in this style belonged very much to the wider concept of 'concerto' as it would have been understood in Bach's time, a genre stretching back at least to the time of Andrea Gabrieli's *Concerti* of 1587. Indeed, he labelled the majority of his cantatas 'concertos', although in this case – perversely for our purposes – he used the term 'motet' (something that would normally refer to a fully choral piece in more traditional polyphonic style).

Just as in the case of Handel's *Il trionfo*, the solo organ in Cantata 71 doubtless advertises the presence of the composer, officially organist of the Blasiuskirche but performing for this special occasion in the Marienkirche.[2] The performance parts printed to celebrate the occasion, finished almost certainly after the event, contain no reference to the solo organ part (other than the left-hand line); whether intended or not, this seems to make the composer's presence that much more part of the occasion itself.[3] Indeed, Bach seems to have taken the trouble to supply extra figuring for the bass line of this movement in the printed part,[4] which was prepared directly from the left-hand line of the manuscript part. It is as if the conventional role of the organ is restored, the fuller figures almost acting as a decoy for anyone who possessed the printed parts; one would have no suspicion of the organ's obbligato role in the actual performance. Even Bach's autograph score (Berlin SBB P45/1, one of his earliest 'fair copies' and the source from which the manuscript performing parts were prepared) contains a simpler version of the opening gestures for solo organ than he wrote in the

[2] Laurence Dreyfus has convincingly argued that Bach was the intended soloist in the organ obbligatos of his Leipzig cantatas, 'The metaphorical soloist: concerted organ parts in Bach's cantatas', *Early Music*, 13 (1985), 237–47. It may well be that this was a practice he inaugurated years before in Mühlhausen. Certainly Bach's autograph organ part in his original set of parts (Berlin, Staatsbibliothek St. 377) contains considerably more performance information than the others and uniquely ends with the expression 'Laus Deo'; moreover, the violin 1 part contains the bass line, at least for the three movements it plays, suggesting that the violinist played some part in the direction of the performance.

[3] See Christine Fröde, *Kritischer Bericht* for Neue Bach Ausgabe, Series I/32, vol. I (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1992), esp. p. 52 regarding the absence of the organ solo in the print; pp. 54, 61, for evidence that the print was finished after the event.

[4] *Ibid*., pp. 52, 55, 80.

Example 5.2 Bach, *Gott ist mein König*, BWV 71 (1708), 'Ich bin nun achtzig Jahr', bars 7–16

Soprano
Tenor
Wa - rum soll dein Knecht sich mehr be - schwe - - - ren, wa-
positivo
Organo obbligato
rum, wa - rum soll dein Knecht sich mehr be - schwe - - - -
Soll ich auf die - ser Welt
ren, wa - rum, wa - rum,

autograph solo organ part. Bach was thus continually developing his 'own' role, even after other elements of the performance had become more or less fixed in the notation.

This coincidence between Bach and Handel marks only the beginning of an apparent leapfrogging between the two composers towards the cultivation of the genre of keyboard concerto. Bach's study of Italian instrumental concertos through transcriptions for organ and harpsichord begins around 1713; he formulates his first concerto with harpsichord obbligato,

shared with flute and violin, in the Fifth Brandenburg Concerto towards the end of the decade;[5] and he develops numerous sonatas in which the keyboard plays a fully composed texture, working as an equal partner with a melody instrument. Handel occasionally visits again the concept of the keyboard obbligato within a larger work (e.g. in *Rinaldo*, 1711, here for harpsichord). However, his first 'pure' organ concertos (i.e. where the keyboard part is emancipated from any partnership with other solo instruments) begin to appear around 1733–4, and Bach's concertos for solo harpsichord – largely conscientious transcriptions of instrumental concertos – appear in a manuscript of *c.* 1737–9. The likelihood is strong that these latter result from Bach's practice of developing such concertos spontaneously in performance during his time as director of the Leipzig Collegium Musicum (from 1729); indeed, he might well have done this in the Cöthen or Weimar years as well. Given that he transcribed virtually all these pieces from instrumental concertos, it seems that he – like Handel – was perfectly happy to see the keyboard instrument on absolutely equal terms with other instruments, requiring no particular motivic pleading.

If we were still to use the 'Whiggish' approach to history, in which events of the past are seen to lead relentlessly and gloriously to a more perfected present, it would be easy to account for Bach and Handel's beguilingly co-ordinated dance (of which both were undoubtedly unaware) as reflecting the geniuses' inevitable intuition of the course of music history. Indeed, it is disarmingly easy to trace a genealogy from both Bach and Handel towards the keyboard concerto in its classic phase as personified by Mozart. After all, Bach's model was taken up by both Wilhelm Friedemann and Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, handed on from the latter to Johann Christian and thence to Mozart. Johann Christian, active in London, would also have absorbed something of the Handelian keyboard concerto culture, maintained by such close followers as Thomas Arne and John Stanley. The 'genius' model for Bach and Handel receives even greater support if we consider the work of the third 'great' composer of the age, working in equal isolation from the others, Jean-Philippe Rameau, whose *Pieces de claveçin en concerts* – for obbligato harpsichord and two melody instruments – were published in 1741.

One strong reason to discard the Whiggish approach is the simple fact that the keyboard concerto as something at the forefront of compositional attention has declined considerably during the course of the twentieth century, however important it might remain in concert life today. It thus represents not so much a musical universal as a generic conception that – doubtless for a variety of changing reasons – grasped the attention of performer-composers over a specific time span. The purpose of this essay is not so much to offer a comprehensive account of the rise and fall of the keyboard concerto, but rather to try to imagine what factors of musical culture, thought and practice must have fallen into place to encourage Bach and

[5] Pieter Dirksen argues for dating this concerto back to the Weimar years, in 'The background to Bach's Fifth Brandenburg Concerto', in *The Harpsichord and its Repertoire: Proceedings of the International Harpsichord Symposium 1990*, ed. Pieter Dirksen (Utrecht: Stimu, 1992), pp. 157–85.

Handel to think along such similar lines, as if twins born into a common German tradition, but separated at birth. Another way of putting the question is to ask why the keyboard plays such a small role as a concerted instrument (as opposed to a continuo – or purely solo – instrument) *before* 1707. Given the richness of the German keyboard tradition in particular, one in which transcription and imitation of other instruments and voices is a major impetus in the development of keyboard style, the very lack of obbligato keyboard parts (ones that were notated, at least) in ensemble music seems truly astounding. My approach thus needs to take into account not only any small threads of tradition that might lead up to the early eighteenth century, but also the discontinuities – changes of practice, outlook and conception in composition and performance – that suddenly rendered the keyboard more attractive as a concerted instrument. After all, Bach and Handel could hardly have come up with the same idea if this were to have been inconceivable in the first place.

Given that the term 'concerto' and a variety of genres associated with it originates in Italy, this should perhaps be the first area of enquiry. Bach was profoundly influenced by the Italian concertos in the Vivaldian vein, and his adoption of the ritornello form perhaps reflects one of the most significant developments in his compositional thinking after the earliest years. The major impetus towards transcribing Italian concertos for keyboard seems to have come from the young Prince Johann Ernst, who probably heard the blind Dutch organist Jan Jacob de Graaf perform concertos in this manner. It might also be significant that Vivaldi himself employed the organ for small solo passages on occasion.[6] Whether or not Bach knew of these models, he certainly felt no qualms about transcribing a long violinistic cadenza from Vivaldi's *Grosso Mogul* concerto (RV 208) for organ (BWV 594). This must surely have played a part in his decision to provide an equally outrageous passage at the end of the first movement of the Fifth Brandenburg Concerto just a few years later, one that – as Pieter Dirksen has noted – seems purposely to exploit virtuoso string figuration at the expense of indigenous keyboard gestures.[7]

What Bach and Handel almost certainly could not have known at the time of their first organ obbligatos in 1707–8 was that Vivaldi composed a sonata with obbligato organ at almost precisely the same juncture (RV 779).[8] Thus, the remarkable co-ordination of Bach and Handel is shared by yet another composer, albeit one who did not develop the genre of concerted keyboard much further. Although Vivaldi wrote this sonata for four specific female musicians at the Ospedale della Pietà in Venice, his autograph found its way to Dresden (together with at least two concertos with solo organ parts), where it might ultimately have influenced Bach. Indeed, the organ cadenza to the second movement (over twenty bars long) is not unlike that which Bach transcribed from Vivaldi's *Il grosso Mogul*, RV 208. In common with virtually all the solo keyboard writing mentioned so far (with the possible

[6] Michael Talbot lists ten examples in 'A Vivaldi sonata with obbligato organ in Dresden', *Organ Yearbook*, 12 (1981), 93.
[7] Dirksen, 'The background to Bach's Fifth Brandenburg Concerto', pp. 164–8.
[8] Talbot, 'A Vivaldi sonata with obbligato organ', 81–103.

exception of Bach's Cantata 71), most of Vivaldi's here is written in a violinistic idiom that would make it virtually interchangeable with other instruments. However, as Michael Talbot observes,[9] the third movement displays much more idiomatic keyboard figuration, including arpeggios shared between the hands, that could not be transferred unproblematically to other instruments. It is almost as if it took a composer who was primarily a string player to tailor a figuration specifically for the keyboard, while Bach and Handel – keyboardists in the first instance – seem to have gone out of their way to show how the keyboard could do just about what any other instrument could do.

Handel's exposure to Italian music was, of course, much more direct than Bach's, although his experience in concerted writing was formed largely by the Corellian, rather than Vivaldian, tradition. It might seem plausible to infer that Handel's organ solo in *Il trionfo del tempo* represented his desire to display his own vaunted skill as a performer, but it might also reflect an Italian practice that has left only the faintest of traces, perhaps because not much was notated in the first place.[10] Certainly, earlier Italian models do survive, such as Gasparini's written-out harpsichord parts to some of his 1695 solo cantatas,[11] but the most striking examples in instrumental music predate Handel's and Vivaldi's by over half a century. These point to a similar equivalency (and interchangeability) between the keyboard and the other instruments.

Biagio Marini's *Sonata per l'Organo e Violino ò Cornetto* was published in his Opus 8 (1626–9);[12] as the composer's preface indicates, not only can the violin be replaced with a cornetto, but the upper organ line can also be replaced by a violin or trombone.[13] The two melodic parts make their entrances with long melodic solos of equal figuration and length, proceeding to an ever closer dialogue with one another. Frescobaldi's *Toccata per spinettina e violino* dates from exactly the same time (1628, in the open-score edition by Bartolomeo Grassi of Frescobaldi's *Il primo libro delle canzoni*). Again the solo lines are directly equivalent in their rapid dialoguing, and other instruments could be substituted. Nevertheless, Frescobaldi clearly makes more of the potential offered by the keyboard format by rendering the left-hand part – in addition to that for right hand – on absolutely equal terms with the two upper voices, effectively creating a three-part sonata texture. Although we have no other instances of concerted keyboard from Frescobaldi's oeuvre, his wider practice in instrumental ensemble is tantalisingly implied by the comments of the visiting viol virtuoso André Maugars (*Response faite à un curieux*, 1639). Frescobaldi was a harpsichordist in the Lenten performances at the Oratorio del Crocifisso in Rome and was, according to Maugars, the most prominent performer with his 'thousand sorts of inventions'.[14]

Frescobaldi omitted the ensemble toccata from his own revised edition of the *Canzoni* in 1634. Perhaps he wished to keep a certain distance from the work (one that, after all, had not been present in his own edition that appeared at the same time as Grassi's, in 1628); did it perhaps display in too fixed a form the sort of material he improvised in live performance? It may well be that this piece reflects a rare notated example of a much wider practice, one whose mean stood between relatively literal intabulation of vocal or instrumental pieces and these totally independent lines for keyboard.

While most forms of Italian keyboard accompaniment in the early seventeenth century were derived from figured or unfigured bass lines, written-out parts may have been more numerous than the surviving sources suggest. An obvious – but extremely rare – example of a written-out accompaniment for keyboard in Italy that is independent of the other voices is found in Luzzasco Luzzaschi's *Madrigali...per cantare, et sonare* (Rome, 1601).[15] Almost certainly, most performers then – as now – would not consider there to be an essential distinction between a part that was notated and one that was improvised, but, as I will continue to stress throughout this essay, the 'fact' of notation can lead to subtle inflections both in the way a piece is realised and developed and in the way it is perceived by the wider circle of users and listeners.

One factor to consider is the format in which instrumental music was most commonly printed during the seventeenth century, namely partbook in movable type. This format rendered it exceptionally awkward to present a solo line for keyboard above its ubiquitous continuo line. The Marini example is thus unusual in presenting the organ within a *partitura* score that also includes the violin part. Grassi's edition of Frescobaldi is likewise in score format, something that distinguishes it from the composer's own editions of this collection. On the whole, partbook format – as the principal way of preserving works in notation – predisposed performers and composers alike towards single-line thinking. Keyboard instruments were a breed somewhat apart, associated with solo performance and arrangements (normally by means of intabulation or score-reading) of vocal and instrumental repertory.[16] But, most obviously in an ensemble context, they performed as 'foundational' continuo instruments. In other words, while the keyboard could be a means towards understanding and realising larger textures or providing chordal support, its role as a solo melodic instrument was less obviously defined. Indeed, the habit of thinking of the keyboard as a 'foundational'

[9] *Ibid.*, 93–4.

[10] For a survey of some of the evidence for the keyboard taking over melodic lines in performance, see William S. Newman, 'Concerning the accompanied clavier sonata', *Musical Quarterly*, 33 (1947), 327–49.

[11] *Cantate da camera a voce sola* (Rome, 1695), see Kah-Ming Ng, 'Figured bass accompaniment at the harpsichord in its social and artistic context', D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford (2001), p. 139.

[12] For the issue of dating, see Thomas D. Dunn (ed.), *Biagio Marini – String Sonatas from Opus 1 and Opus 8*, Collegium Musicum: Yale University, Second Series 10 (Madison, Wis.: A-R Editions, 1981), Preface, p. viii.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. x.

[14] Frederick Hammond, 'Frescobaldi, Girolamo Alessandro', *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd edn, ed. Stanley Sadie, 29 vols. (London: Macmillan, 2001), vol. IX, p. 243.

[15] See Peter Holman, '"Evenly, Softly, and Sweetly Acchording to All": the organ accompaniment of English consort music', in *John Jenkins and His Time: Studies in English Consort Music*, ed. Andrew Ashbee and Peter Holman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 359.

[16] For evidence of organists reading from score or separate parts during the sixteenth century, see Jessie Ann Owens, *Composers at Work: The Craft of Musical Composition 1450–1600* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 48–52.

instrument seems to have endured for many years. Frescobaldi's (or Grassi's?) choice of the designation 'spinettina' for the ensemble toccata may be telling, since, as Frederick Hammond has shown, an instrument of similar name (presumably a small harpsichord) is listed as an 'ornamental' rather than 'fundamental' instrument by the theorist Agazzari in 1607.[17] This designation might thus imply that Frescobaldi recognises the exceptional nature of this part, one distanced from the 'natural' function of the keyboard within an ensemble context.

Michael Praetorius, the principal importer of Italian practice into Germany, likewise allows an improvised melodic role (ranging from diminutions to full-blown lines) to the *Ornament-Instrumenta* (or *Unico* or single-line instruments). These can include those chordal instruments that are technically *Fundament-Instrumenta* (but only in the context of very small ensembles) such as lute and harp, and unequivocal melody instruments such as violin and cornetto.[18] The keyboard instruments – the *Fundament-Instrumenta* (or *Omnivoca* – those that can play all the voices in a piece) are consequently deprived of the privilege of melody.[19] As Praetorius tellingly puts it, the main difference between the ornamentists and the fundamentists is that the former need to cultivate a good knowledge of counterpoint in order to be able to improvise (or even compose) new passages and parts.[20] While it is hardly likely that the keyboardist was the least cultivated figure in the art of counterpoint in 1619 (Praetorius is in any case addressing the two different kinds of lute and harp players at this point), there is obviously the implication that the fundamental and ornamental roles cultivate a different breed of instrumentalist. In all, then, the variability of instrumentation permitted in much Italian chamber music of the seventeenth century did not exclude the keyboard in a solo melodic role, but this was clearly not the obvious choice for most composers and performers.

The only country in which independent keyboard parts in instrumental ensembles survive in any number is England. The genre of the so-called 'fantasia-suite' with obbligato organ was first cultivated by John Coprario and was continued by William Lawes, John Jenkins and a handful of others.[21] For Coprario and Jenkins the organ often introduces the melodic material (both at the beginning and in subsequent interludes) but otherwise has a simpler texture that sometimes doubles that of the other instruments. With Lawes, the status of

[17] Frederick Hammond, *Girolamo Frescobaldi* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 197.

[18] Michael Praetorius, *Syntagma Musicum*, 3 vols. (Wolfenbüttel, 1619; reprint, Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1958), vol. III, pp. 119–22 [erroneously, pp. 139–42], 146–9. See also Gregory S. Johnston, 'Polyphonic keyboard accompaniment in the early baroque: an alternative to basso continuo', *Early Music*, 26 (1998), 51–64, esp. 58.

[19] However, at one point, p. 119 [erroneously p. 139], Praetorius does allow 'Spinetten' to act as 'ornament instruments' in larger ensembles. But this instrument is missing from the main discussion of the improvisational role of 'ornament instruments', pp. 146–9.

[20] 'Aber hierin ist der unterscheid / das uff diesen *Ornament Instrument* nötig ist / daß der *Instrumentist* vom *Contrapunct* gute wissenschafft habe / die weil man alda uber demselben Baß / newer *Passaggien, Contrapunct*; und also fast gantz newe *Parteien* oder Stimmen *Componieren* muß: Welches in den *Fundament Instrument* nicht so groß von nöten ist.' *Ibid.*, p. 146.

[21] See Christopher D. S. Field, 'Fantasia suite', *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd edn, ed. Stanley Sadie, 29 vols. (London: Macmillan, 2001), vol. VIII, pp. 558–9.

the organ is more interesting. When his autographs for more than one version survive, these suggest that he worked the organ parts from simpler textures to more detailed four-part writing, and non-autograph organ parts (transmitted separately from the other parts – because of the greater degree of professionalism required to realise them?) often show greater elaboration than the surviving autographs.[22] In other words, the organ parts seem to be in a state of continual 'progress', a practice not unlike the varied realisation of the basso continuo, but with the organ's obbligato role formalised in the notation. If Roger North's later testimony is to be believed, one of the prime reasons the organ part was written out was because 'the masters never trusted the organist with his thro-base' as if to suggest that English organists were slow to acquire the necessary skills.[23] But whatever the reason, it is clear that this contingency created some keyboard textures that would have been unlikely had the parts been notated as bass lines alone.

Lawes's practice seems to come midway between the written-out continuo part, partly doubling the other voices, and the fully independent keyboard lines of Marini and Frescobaldi. Some of the time the organ provides a chordal frame, particularly in the dance movements where it often mirrors some of the melodic lines in thirds. In the most extended movement of each suite, the opening Fantazia, the organ tends to have a much larger and varied role. In general, it is less elaborate when the melody instruments are playing, particularly when they have very prominent figuration, such as the *concitato* figuration near the beginning of Suite No. 8 in D major.[24] Perhaps the most prominent obbligato role for the organ is (as it is with Coprario and Jenkins) to set up the material at the opening of the Fantazia (and sometimes at subsequent points within the movement), providing a quasi-polyphonic web into which the other instruments are subsequently 'built in'.[25] This gives the organ a sense of dominance from the beginning, at least until the imitative material runs out or the instrumental figuration becomes more lively. It comes closest to being a truly concerted part when it enters into sporadic dialogue with the other instruments: the Fantazia of Suite No. 8 in D major[26] is particularly ambitious, containing much material in three – and sometimes four – parts, and thus going even beyond Frescobaldi's example. Suite No. 5 in D minor[27] perhaps shows the greatest variety in the use of the organ within one movement where it ranges from simple chordal support to a toccata-like solo (bars 27–30), to a dialogue with one of the violins, to silence (at least in Lawes's autograph version),[28] to more fast passage-work and, finally, back to a chordal, loosely polyphonic texture. Perhaps the very ambiguity of the organ's role stems from Lawes's experience as a lutenist, where individual voices can appear and disappear out of a malleable chordal texture. As Petèr Holman observes, composers of consort music who

[22] David Pinto (ed.), *William Lawes – Fantasia-Suites*, Musica Britannica 60 (London: Stainer and Bell, 1991), editorial notes, p. xxiii.

[23] See J. Wilson (ed.), *Roger North on Music* (London: Novello and Company, 1959), pp. 300, 351; quoted in Holman, 'Organ accompaniment of consort music', p. 354.

[24] Pinto (ed.), *Lawes*, No. 16. [25] *Ibid.*, e.g. No. 2 in G. [26] *Ibid.*, No. 8. [27] *Ibid.*, No. 13. [28] *Ibid.*, p. 82.

were specifically keyboard players tended not to write out keyboard parts, as if to suggest that they derived their accompaniments directly from the score.[29] As with Vivaldi, writing his sonata with obbligato organ many decades later, it seems to take a composer who is not a specialist keyboard player not only to document the practice but also to create some of the most interesting textures for the keyboard.

While, in our story of the invention of the keyboard concerto, the English works might seem quite progressive, it is noticeable that pieces in a fantasia-suite genre from the Restoration era (e.g. Matthew Locke's) dispense altogether with the notated solo role for the keyboard.[30] Pinto assumes that this is because the obbligato organ was linked 'with outmoded large-scale contrapuntal textures'.[31] Nevertheless, it would be strange to consider such textures entirely outmoded in an age when composers could be quite purposely archaic (e.g. Purcell's viol fantasias) and tended to treasure retrospective styles together with progressive ones. But Pinto's point clearly relates to the direct influence of Italian practice, in which, as we have seen, the keyboard is generally provided with the continuo line alone. However flamboyant the realisation of continuo lines may have been, the format of such parts for keyboard (where the bass line is generally the sole basis of the part) militates against the notion of solo episodes for keyboard, especially those with upper entries unsupported by the bass.

This brief concerted keyboard tradition in the first half of the seventeenth century would appear more archaic if we compared it with its antecedents rather than with an assumed 'goal' of the keyboard concerto in the eighteenth century. For the organ had had a somewhat similar role in the verse anthems of the Anglican liturgy (together with some canticle settings) as they developed in the later sixteenth century. These written-out accompaniments obviously have something in common with the various intabulation practices that began to accompany the polyphonic tradition throughout sixteenth-century Europe,[32] and there are plenty of sources to suggest that the organ doubles the voices in 'full' anthems. Nevertheless, the partly independent accompaniment seems a particular feature of English music, the verse-anthem tradition being a direct offshoot of the consort song (accompanied by viols). Indeed, some anthems appear in versions both for viol consort and organ (the latter presumably for stricter liturgical use). A similar approach to accompaniment, both accompanying the voices and providing introductions and interludes, becomes familiar in the genre of the English lute song. However, as Peter Holman observes, lutenists seem to have been quicker to convert to bass-line realisation (during the 1620s) than the keyboardists.[33] Thus while the Italians (and subsequently the Germans) tended either to intabulate the entire polyphonic texture or, increasingly, to reduce the accompanimental texture to shorthand notation of figured bass, the English (predominantly, if not uniquely) retained the concept of a fully worked-out,

29 Holman, 'Organ accompaniment of consort music', pp. 368–70.
30 For a brief survey of the transition to continuo parts, see *ibid.*, pp. 380–2.
31 Pinto (ed.), *Lawes*, p. xv.
32 Holman, 'Organ accompaniment of consort music', esp. pp. 354–9.
33 *Ibid.*, pp. 366–8.

and partially independent, texture. This endured until the time of stronger Italian influence after the Restoration.

Given the purposeful resurrection of the Anglican tradition after the Restoration, it is unlikely that the concept of the independent organ entirely dropped out of fashion, although composers of new works (specifically for the Chapel Royal) reworked the verse anthem with interludes for 'modern' orchestra rather than organ. Nevertheless, the use of the organ had expanded in another respect: the Commonwealth era had seen an enormous number of organs transferred from churches to private homes, inns and concert rooms, so that the instrument gradually gained a more secular identity than it did in most other areas of Europe. In this capacity it could have been used in any number of ways, accompanying, duetting and substituting for various instruments and voices. As Peter Williams notes, even the stricter Anglicans of the Restoration era attempted to proscribe the organ in church, specifically for its secular connotations.[34] Indeed, organs did not again become ubiquitous in parish churches until well into the nineteenth century. Given that those who were church organists in the early eighteenth century could not earn their entire living through service to the church (as they could in many other parts of Europe), they became accustomed to taking much additional work in the secular world and were often respected as public entertainers. Certainly this secular role of the organ must have played some part in facilitating the swift acceptance of Handel's organ concertos in concert practice; the composer would have been readily received as an organ virtuoso in the world of secular musical performance.

The German background to the keyboard obbligato tradition is perhaps the most complex and also the most problematic. Germany – particularly the Lutheran portion – provides the richest notated repertory of music for organ and harpsichord yet seemingly the slimmest evidence for the concerted role of keyboard instruments.[35] This immediately raises the question of whether the keyboard player somehow stood apart from the remainder of the musical culture – able to perform as a soloist or accompanist but not as an equal partner in vocal and instrumental pieces in concerted style.

First, within German Lutheran culture, as indeed within Catholic too, voices were privileged over instruments. Nevertheless, justifications for instruments were common, ranging from expressions of amazement that even dumb things praised God to the view that the cost of organs was analogous to the woman's 'wasteful' – yet somehow necessary – anointing of Jesus; to some, organs represented a mechanistic analogy for Creation itself.[36] Given the composition of Lutheran establishments, it was the cantor who traditionally stood at

34 Peter Williams, 'Händel und die englische Orgelmusik', *Händel-Jahrbuch*, 12 (1966), 51–76, esp. 52.
35 William S. Newman made much of Gustav Beckmann's identification of a keyboard obbligato sonata with violin, ascribed to Pachelbel ('Johann Pachelbel als Kammerkomponist', *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*, 1 (1918–19), 267–74), suggesting that it is probably the first example of the 'accompanied clavier sonata': see Newman, *The Sonata in the Baroque Era* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1959; 2nd edn 1966), p. 225. However, given the obvious galant nature of the piece, it is almost certainly of later origin, and has been silently dropped even from lists of Pachelbel's dubious works.
36 John Butt, *Music Education and the Art of Performance in the German Baroque* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 15–16.

the centre, the official director of singing and the vital link between church and school. Organists were thus slightly apart, were usually employed directly by the church rather than the school, and were generally of a lower social status. Sometimes the organist held a status as low as that of the town musicians (Stadtpfeifer, Stadtmusiker, etc.),[37] who, in addition to their town duties, were at the cantor's disposal. In Magdeburg the cantor ranked in the third social class out of nine, while the organist together with the Stadtpfeifer ranked in the seventh.[38] Perhaps this social conditioning accounts for the comparatively scant attention one of Magdeburg's sons, Georg Philipp Telemann, gave to keyboard music. His career culminated with the position of cantor in Hamburg, where the status of that office was particularly high, allowing him to dominate the wider city culture, including its opera.

This is not to say, though, that in places where the cantors were weak or extremely traditional, the organist could not take some of the initiative and build up a considerable music establishment in his own right.[39] Moreover, the organist was usually free from the jurisdiction of the academic head of the school, the rector, who was the cause of numerous disputes with the cantor, stretching right up to the time of Bach and beyond.[40] Indeed, it is possible to see the Lutheran organist as a figure who greatly enhanced the 'modernisation' of musical culture during the seventeenth century, specifically because he lay somewhat outside the establishment and had to forge his own career.[41] Buxtehude, organist of Lübeck, provides the prime example of a figure who took this opportunity for enterprise, outside the official cantorate. Not only did he acquire status by taking on a major administrative post in the church, he also arranged his own quasi-liturgical concerts with the support of the local business community. Weckmann of Hamburg was similarly enterprising, forming a Collegium Musicum in 1660.[42]

Organists of this kind thus engendered a sense of professionalised music making that was denied the cantor, who was normally bound to employ the services of school pupils.[43] In Handel's environment of Halle, the organist of the Marktkirche (or Marienkirche) was also somewhat exceptional in having control of the figural music (including the opportunity to present his own compositions), even though he did not belong to the school hierarchy. Thus, Handel's early studies with Friedrich Wilhelm Zachow (who acquired the Marktkirche post in 1684) might have cultivated in him an exaggerated sense of the organist's status. In Bach's Eisenach too, the organist of the Georgenkirche, his father's cousin Johann Christoph Bach, was unusually prominent as a composer; the particular respect which he seems to have earned

37 Arnfried Edler, 'Organ music within the social structure of North German cities in the seventeenth century', in *Church, Stage, and Studio: Music and Its Contexts in 17th-Century Germany*, ed. Paul Walker (Ann Arbor and London: UMI Research Press, 1990), pp. 23–41, p. 25.
38 Werner Braun, *Die Musik des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden, 1981), p. 27.
39 Butt, *Music Education*, p. 19. 40 *Ibid.*, pp. 24–33. 41 Edler, 'Organ music', p. 25.
42 Butt, *Music Education*, p. 22; Edler, 'Organ music', p. 30; Christoph Wolff, 'Buxtehudes freie Orgelmusik und die Idee der "imitatio violistica"', in *Dietrich Buxtehude und die europäische Musik seiner Zeit*, ed. Arnfried Edler and Friedhelm Krummacher (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1990), p. 314.
43 Edler, 'Organ music', p. 26.

from Sebastian is reflected in the archive of the Bach family's music which he compiled in his later years. Organists thus maintained an ambivalent position: traditionally they were of lower status (and, quite often, educational background) than the cantor, yet where they did predominate, they could be associated with the forefront of compositional activity (which was, incidentally, not a traditional requisite of the cantor's post). Indeed, so great was the threat to the cantor's dominance towards the end of the seventeenth century – and not all cantors were adept at composition (particularly in the modern 'Italian' styles) – that there was sometimes a feeling of shame if the organist was more advanced in this respect.[44]

If the 'average' status of the organist was somewhere between town musician and cantor, there may well indeed have been a common conception of him as a somewhat isolated, solitary figure. This sense of isolation is also reflected in the way organ books and parts were stored and maintained. Often these may have belonged to the organist himself, so that he could take them from one church to another as his career progressed. Inventories also tend to suggest that the organist's materials were kept separately from the music in the choir library, thus implying both a different function and perhaps a distinctive ownership. Stephen Rose notes that this sense of difference can also be reflected in the very format of printed music in the first half of the seventeenth century: the vocal parts might be printed in quarto while the continuo part appeared in the larger folio format.[45] Perhaps it was this very sense of separateness, sometimes reinforced by the physical remoteness of the organ itself, that enabled some of the more enterprising organists to cultivate their own musical interests.

One of the most significant differences between organists and other instrumentalists and singers lies in the notational tradition of 'new' German organ tablature, which endured well into the eighteenth century. Cleveland Johnson notes that some organists in the earlier seventeenth century transcribed entire printed collections of vocal music into tablature; many more compiled a miscellany from a variety of sources, presumably in response to the local needs for organ accompaniment.[46] Such miscellanies often show direct evidence of the organist's participation in the figural music: transpositions, realised continuo parts or the entire musical texture, and signs of heavy wear. Some manuscripts suggest that the organist could both realise figured bass and read from tablature notation, sometimes using the latter for older, more polyphonic styles;[47] others were a hybrid using both figures and letters.[48] Sometimes the tablature organ part might have substituted for choirs that had simultaneous duties in other churches or, in polychoral music, where the organ might have replaced one of the missing choirs.[49]

44 Martin Fuhrmann, *Musicalischer-Trichter* (Frankfurt an der Spree, 1706), pp. 12–13.
45 Stephen Rose, 'Music, print and authority in Leipzig during the Thirty Years' War', 2 vols., Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge (2001), vol. I, pp. 178–80.
46 Cleveland Johnson, *Vocal Compositions in German Organ Tablatures 1550–1650* (New York and London: Garland, 1989), pp. 62–3.
47 *Ibid.*, p. 70. 48 *Ibid.*, p. 131. 49 *Ibid.*, pp. 132–3.