



# CONCERTS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

Week Commencing 6<sup>th</sup> February 2006

Friday 10 February

1.10pm

Reid Concert Hall

**JOHN KITCHEN** organ

***Buxtehude***

*Ciacona in C minor, BuxWV 159*

***L. Couperin***

*Passacaille in G minor*

*Chaconne in G minor*

***Purcell***

*A New Ground*

***Pachelbel***

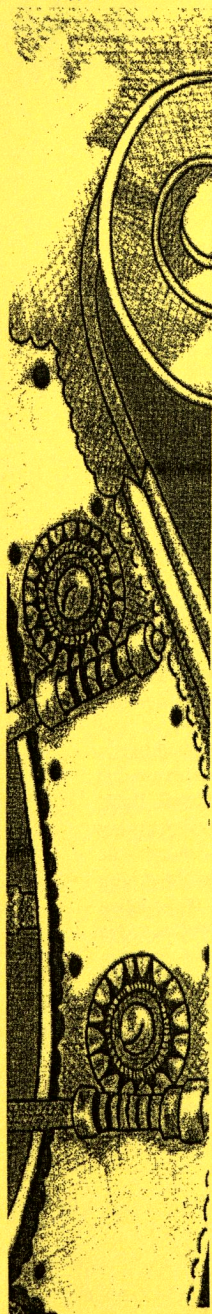
*Ciacona in D*

***Raison***

*Trio en passacaille*

***J.S. Bach***

*Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor, BWV 582*



CONCERTS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH 2005-6  
 Lunch-hour recital  
 Reid Concert Hall, Bristo Square, Teviot Place



FRIDAY 10 FEBRUARY at 1.10pm  
 (admission free)

JOHN KITCHEN *organ*

CHACONNES AND PASSACAGLIAS

Ciacona in C minor, BuxWV 159	Dieterich Buxtehude (1637-1707)
Passacaille in G minor Chaconne in G minor	Louis Couperin (1626-1661)
A New Ground ( <i>Musick's Handmaid</i> , part 2, 1689)	Henry Purcell (1659-1695)
Ciacona in D ( <i>Hexachordum Apollinis</i> , 1699)	Johann Pachelbel (1653-1706)
Trio en passacaille ( <i>Messe du deuziesme ton</i> , 1688)	André Raison (c.1640-1719)
Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor, BWV 582	Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

The idea of basing a piece of music on a repeated melody in the bass - a 'ground bass' - over which variations occur, dates from about the late 15th century and has been used in many musical contexts throughout the centuries: from Monteverdi through Purcell, Bach, Beethoven and Brahms to twelve-bar blues. (I am reliably informed that a hit by the Pet Shop Boys is thus constructed, although I have never knowingly heard it.) Any melodic idea in the bass will imply harmonies, and ingenious composers have delighted in writing ground-bass pieces where varied harmonic progressions and endlessly imaginative textures are devised to maintain interest and variety. The two Baroque dance forms, the chaconne and the passacaglia, are almost always written over ground basses, and are generally in slowish triple time. Although many attempts have been made to distinguish them, the terms are often used interchangeably. With one exception, all the pieces in today's programme are written over repeated grounds.

Surprisingly, perhaps, there are not many chaconnes or passacaglias for the organ by the great German Baroque composers. Buxtehude left two chaconnes and one passacaglia; the *Ciacona in C minor* is constructed over a four-bar ground which is generally in the

pedals, although it occasionally migrates up to the manuals. Bach may have known this piece.

Louis Couperin's two chaconnes are really harpsichord music, but they work quite well on the organ. Chaconnes were rather a speciality of his, and nearly all reflect the typically French *rondeau* structure, where a repeated refrain alternates with contrasting *couplets*. Such pieces share the same slow triple-time rhythm but are not written over a ground bass. (The ground had Italian and Spanish origins, and the French in the 17th century made a point of being different from the Italians.) The second of the two pieces by Couperin, the *Chaconne in G minor*, falls into the *rondeau/couplets* category, but the *Passacaille in G minor* is written over a classic falling Italianate ground.

A *New Ground* appears in the 1689 publication *Musick's Handmaid*, which consists largely of songs and theatre dances by Purcell (and others), arranged for keyboard. This piece is his own keyboard version of the celebrated song 'Here the deities approve' from the 1683 Ode for St Cecilia's Day *Welcome to all the pleasures*; the movement is constructed over a three-bar ground. Purcell declared that "composing upon a Ground [is] a very easie thing to do, and requires but little Judgment" - a masterly understatement.

Pachelbel's *Ciacona* in D explores inventive keyboard textures and figurations, all based on a simple progression of chords. Each variation consists of two four-bar phrases, with each section repeated. The player might justifiably introduce further variation - particularly in terms of ornamentation - on the repeats. Accomplished keyboard players of Pachelbel's day undoubtedly improvised such pieces. (Pachelbel's ubiquitous *Canon* is written over a ground bass, and so is doubly ingenious in that three strictly canonic parts are woven above the repeated bass.)

The 'Trio en passacaille' from Raison's *Messe du deuziesme ton* is the 'Christe' verset from that mass, and is a modest little movement. Unusually for French organ repertoire, however, it is written on a ground bass - and, fascinatingly, that four-bar phrase is identical to the first half of the ground on which J.S. Bach's monumental *Passacaglia* is based. It seems likely that Bach knew Raison's piece, and that it was a starting-point for his masterpiece - but we cannot be sure.

Bach used ground bass technique in various works, including cantata movements, and most memorably, in the *Goldberg Variations* for harpsichord where he outdoes all his predecessors (and successors?) in scale and sheer inventiveness. But the *Goldbergs* are a relatively late work, published in 1741. We do not know exactly when Bach wrote his *Passacaglia*, but it is now thought to date from his early 20s. As such, it is a staggering achievement; to describe it as '20 variations on the ground bass first heard in the pedals, followed by a double fugue' is accurate, but conveys nothing of the consummate control of every aspect: formal, harmonic, contrapuntal, figurative. Peter Williams asks: "Did even Mozart produce a work of such power and cohesion by the age of 22 or 23?"

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JK

*JOHN KITCHEN is a Senior Lecturer in Music and University Organist in the University of Edinburgh. He also directs the Edinburgh University Singers, is organist of Old Saint Paul's Episcopal Church and Edinburgh City Organist with duties at the Usher Hall. For many years he played with the Scottish Early Music Consort as harpsichordist, organist and fortepianist, and he plays regularly with several other ensembles, covering a wide range of musical styles. He gives many solo recitals both in the UK and further afield, and is much in demand as a continuo player, accompanist, lecturer, writer and reviewer.*

**FORTHCOMING CONCERTS:**

Tuesday 14 February – 1.10pm – St Cecilia's Hall

**REID MEMORIAL CONCERT**

**DAVID McGUINNESS (harpsichord) MARGARET PRESTON (baroque flute)**

Duphly, Paradies, Reid, Arne, Scarlatti

Friday 17 February – 1.10pm – Reid Concert Hall

**CHRISTOPHER NICKOL (organ)**

Bach, Stanley, Couperin, Sweelinck, Frescobaldi

Tuesday 21 February – 1.10pm – Reid Concert Hall

**Change to the advertised concert:**

**THOMAS HELL (piano)**

Medtner and Reger

Wednesday 22 February – 1.05pm – Glass Arcade, School of Agriculture, Kings Buildings

**IAN SMITH (classical guitar)**

Munro, Yocoh, Ponce

Friday 24 February – 1.0pm – McEwan Hall

**CHARLES WOOLER (organ)**

G. Ives, Higgins, Whitlock, Maxwell Davies, Stanford

Friday 24 February – 7.30pm – Cramond Kirk

**EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY CHAMBER CHOIR**

**ERIC von IBLER (conductor)**

Bach, Lassus and Mary Queen of Scots.

Tickets: £5.00 on the door.

Tuesday 28 February – 1.10pm – Reid Concert Hall

**SUE McKENZIE (saxophone) INGRID SAWERS (piano)**

Bedard, Fitkin, Iles, Piazzolla

Friday 3 March – 1.10pm – Reid Concert Hall

**HENRY WALLACE (organ)**

Bruhns, Bach, Böhm, Mozart, Vollenweider, Asma