

## *Fantasia* and *fantasy*: Some Notes on Two Homonymic Genres of German Chorale-Based Organ Music

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During the last 500 years, the title of *fantasia* or *fantasy* (German: *Fantasie*) has been given to musical compositions of very different kinds, in most cases the title referring to a single-movement instrumental work for one (keyboard) player.<sup>1</sup> Most fantasias are “free works,” but the term has sometimes been used for organ compositions based on Lutheran chorales.

The scope of the present text is limited to chorale-based organ works by German composers that have been given the title of *fantasia* or *Fantasie*, either by the composer or by later generations.<sup>2</sup> The emphasis is twofold: the use of the term for baroque pieces, including the history of the label “chorale fantasia” for compositions of the North German baroque, and the emergence of the modern (“romantic”) chorale fantasy around the middle of the nineteenth century. The (im)possibility of a relationship between these two types of chorale-based works is also discussed.

### *The seventeenth-century “chorale fantasia”*

The word *fantasia* was commonly used in the titles of keyboard pieces in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but it is debatable whether it can be seen as a distinct genre; a piece named “fantasia” in one source could appear in another under another title, for instance “ricercar.”<sup>3</sup> Typical of the early fantasia was the prominence of imitative texture, but its distinguishing mark was supposed to be the element of improvisatory spontaneity in its creation, springing “solely from the fantasy and skill of the author who

1 Early fantasias were also composed for plucked stringed instruments such as the vihuela and the lute. See Grove Music Online, s.v. “Fantasia,” by Christopher D. S. Field, E. Eugene Helm, and William Drabkin, accessed 9 April, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.40048>.

2 In the following, the form “fantasia” is used for works composed before 1800, “fantasy” (German: *Fantasie*) for later works.

3 Field et al. Grove Music Online, “Fantasia.”

created it."<sup>4</sup> *Fantasia* as a concept was also closely related to improvisation; notated fantasias could be looked upon as written-down improvisations and may have been intended as models for improvisation. Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck (1562–1621) was a prolific composer of fantasias for organ and/or other keyboard instruments. His fourteen preserved fantasias<sup>5</sup> were invariably based on themes of the composer's invention or on scales (diatonic hexachord or chromatic tetrachord).

Sweelinck's pupil Samuel Scheidt (1587–1654) included four fantasias in his monumental three-volume collection *Tabulatura nova* of 1624. Two of these fantasias follow Sweelinck's example as to the choice of theme: one based on a hexachord ("Ut, re, mi, fa sol, la," I:4), and the other on a theme by Scheidt himself (II:6). As material for the remaining two fantasias, Scheidt used a secular tune ("Io son ferito lasso," I:2) and a Lutheran chorale ("Ich ruffe zu dir," I:13). Especially the use of a chorale melody for a work in this genre was a daring innovation, since it broke with the principle, adhered to in earlier chorale settings (and in the eight other settings of German-language chorales<sup>6</sup> in *Tabulatura nova* as well), of leaving the chorale melody intact, as a *cantus firmus*, combining it with various kinds of figurations in the accompanying two to four voices in a set of discrete variations on the entire melody. "Ich ruffe zu dir" can thus be regarded as an experiment and it remained an exception in his oeuvre.<sup>7</sup>

Some traits in Scheidt's "Ich ruffe zu dir," such as its lengthy treatment of each chorale phrase in (more or less) separate sections, including

4 Luis de Milán, *El maestro* (1535–36), quoted in Field et al. Grove Music Online, "Fantasia." For a discussion of the concept of fantasia and its philosophical roots, see Arnfried Edler, "Fantasie and Choralfantasie: On the problematic nature of a genre of seventeenth-century organ music," *The Organ Yearbook* 19 (1988): 53–66.

5 Gustav Leonhardt has suggested that the known fantasias and toccatas "may only represent a minor part of what Sweelinck actually produced in these forms." See "Introduction to the present fascicle," in: G. Leonhardt, ed., *Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck, Opera omnia*, vol. I, fascicle 1, *Keyboard Works: Fantasias and Toccatas.*, 2nd ed. (Amsterdam: Vereniging voor nederlandse muziekgeschiedenis, 1974), xi.

6 Five of these are entitled "Cantio sacra," three "Psalmus."

7 Edler ("Fantasie," 53) points out that Scheidt's "Ich ruffe zu dir" fantasia is one [of several] "exceptional cases," but gives no example of any other such case. Wolfram Syré, on the other hand, sees Scheidt's work as an *unicum* in the entire seventeenth-century North German organ repertoire ("Die norddeutsche Choralfantasie – ein gattungsgeschichtliches Phantom?," *Musik und Kirche* 65 [1995]: 84–87). However, only a few years after *Tabulatura nova*, Johann Ulrich Steigleder published his famous set of forty variations on the chorale *Vater unser*, in which the first three movements are entitled 'Fantasia, oder Fugem Manier. 4 Vocum.'

the use of sequences on fragments of the phrases, are further developed in extended chorale settings by North German organ composers, using the full resources of the large organs of that tradition. Composers of such works include Heinrich Scheidemann (1596–1663), Franz Tunder (1614–1667), Johann Adam Reincken (1643–1722; “An Wasserflüssen Babylon”), Dieterich Buxtehude (1637–1707), and Nicolaus Bruhns (1665–1697; “Nun komm der Heiden Heiland”). Despite their often very large dimensions (the duration of Reincken’s “An Wasserflüssen Babylon,” for instance, is close to 20 minutes), these works, just like “Ich ruffe zu dir,” treat only a single verse of the chorale, phrase by phrase, and are thus clearly distinguishable from the genre of chorale variations or, later, chorale partita. A special “hybrid” case is Matthias Weckmann’s (1616–1674) gigantic cycle of variations on “Es ist das Heil uns kommen her,” where, for example, the 238-bar “Sextus versus” shows certain similarities to the above-mentioned works.

These seventeenth-century North German chorale-based compositions are nowadays commonly known as “chorale fantasias.” However, as has been observed by several scholars,<sup>8</sup> there is no evidence that the word “fantasia” was ever used by the composers or their contemporaries to distinguish them from organ chorales or chorale preludes of more humble dimensions.

### *J. S. Bach and the chorale fantasia*

The first composer of stature after Scheidt to include the word “fantasia” in the title of a chorale-based organ work was not any of the North German masters mentioned above, but Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750), who, in a few of his chorale settings (BWV 651, 695, 713 and 735), used the words “Fantasia super” to precede the title of the chorale.<sup>9</sup> However, none of these “fantasias” show the varied treatment of the chorale typical of the North German “chorale fantasia.” Common to all four settings, which otherwise differ considerably from each other, is the use of imitative texture in the beginning, prior to the statement of the first chorale phrase; in BWV 735 using the chorale phrase itself (pre-imitation), in BWV 695 an ornamented and rhythmically altered version of the chorale phrase, in

8 Including Edler (“*Fantasia*”) and Syré (“*Die norddeutsche Choralfantasia*”).

9 Only in the case of BWV 651, however, can this title with certainty be attributed to the composer; see Peter Williams, *The Organ Music of J. S. Bach*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 342.

BWV 651 a motif derived from the chorale phrase, and in BWV 713 a motif unrelated to the chorale. However, it remains unclear why precisely these compositions are called fantasias, and not others beginning with imitation (such as BWV 659, 669–671, 717, etc.). Perhaps the term “fantasia,” as used here, refers more generally to “fanciful” deviations from the expected course of a regular chorale prelude, such as the change to 3/8 meter combined with the disappearance of the *cantus firmus* in the middle of BWV 713, the deviations from the strict pre-imitation scheme in the later parts of BWV 735, or the addition of a free “coda” in BWV 695.

Two early chorale settings by Bach can be regarded as Buxtehude-inspired specimens of the North German “chorale fantasia,” though on a relatively small scale: “Christ lag in Todesbanden” (BWV 718) and “Ein feste Burg” (BWV 720). None of these works carry the designation “Fantasia.”

So far, the example of Bach seems to strengthen the assumption that there is no connection in the Baroque era between those (few) chorale-based organ works that were actually given the title of “fantasia” and the North German “chorale fantasia” as the term is now used. The above-mentioned characteristics that Scheidt’s “Ich ruffe zu dir” shares with the later North German works are hardly sufficient for establishing such a link.

However, the situation is complicated by the discovery in 2008 of a nineteenth-century copy of a “Fantasia sopra il Chorale Wo Gott der Herr nicht bei uns hält” by J. S. Bach and the following identification of this composition – listed by Schmieder as a doubtful work, with the number BWV Anh. 71<sup>10</sup> – as an authentic Bach work.<sup>11</sup> Until 2008, this composition was believed to be lost, apart from the incipit (the first five bars) given by Schmieder, who does not indicate his source.<sup>12</sup> It is clearly a “chorale fantasia” in the North German style, and as such it may be the only known example of a chorale-based organ work of this kind where the original title includes the word “fantasia.” The conclusions to be drawn from this de-

10 Wolfgang Schmieder, *Thematisch-systematisches Verzeichnis der Werke Joh. Seb. Bachs*, 6th ed. (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1977), 623.

11 Hans-Joachim Schulze, “Vorwort,” in *Johann Sebastian Bach, Choralfantasie für Orgel über Wo Gott der Herr nicht bei uns hält, BWV 1128*, ed. Stephan Blaut and Michael Pacholke (Beeskow: Ortus, 2008), III–IV.

12 The work was mentioned in the 1881 biography of J. S. Bach by Karl Hermann Bitter, who had been informed of its existence by Wilhelm Rust (“*Wo Gott der Herr nicht bei uns hält, BWV 1128*,” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wo\\_Gott\\_der\\_Herr\\_nicht\\_bei\\_uns\\_hält,\\_BWV\\_1128](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wo_Gott_der_Herr_nicht_bei_uns_hält,_BWV_1128), accessed 2 March 2019).

pend, of course, on the reliability of the copy, which was made in 1877 by Wilhelm Rust (1822–1892), editor of the Bach-Gesellschaft edition, allegedly from a manuscript owned by J. S. Bach's eldest son Wilhelm Friedemann (1710–1784); it seems unclear whether the manuscript was an autograph or written by a copyist. The manuscript was known to several Bach scholars but never published, and it is now lost. The title page of Rust's copy reads:

“Fantasia sopra il Chorale  
Wo Gott der Herr nicht bey uns hält,  
pro Organo à 2 Clav. e Pedale  
dal Sig. J. S. Bach.”

Nach einer sehr correcten alten Handschrift  
auf der Kgl. Bibliothek zu Königsberg  
sig. No 5.<sup>13</sup>

Rust's quotation marks encompassing the title are presumably intended to signal that the wording and spelling are identical to the original, and there is no reason to doubt that this is really the case. However, the expression “dal Sig. J. S. Bach” suggests that the manuscript is not an autograph but in turn a copy (made by Wilhelm Friedemann?).<sup>14</sup>

The significance of the word “Fantasia” in the title of this work, so different from previous baroque organ pieces entitled “fantasias,” is not discussed by the scholars involved.<sup>15</sup> The presence of the word in this single instance does not, however, allow the conclusion that “[chorale] fantasia” would have been commonly used to designate compositions of this kind.

Another piece by a composer of Bach's generation should be mentioned in this context: “Fantasia super Meine Seele, laß es gehen” by Wilhelm Hieronymus Pachelbel (1686–1764), son of the famous Johann

13 The title page is reproduced in the 2008 edition (see footnote 8) on page XII.

14 In preserved title pages of organ works by Bach (*Orgelbüchlein*, autograph; the “Schübler” chorales, print; *Clavierübung III*, print), the composer's name is given in full (apart from the abbreviation of “Sebastian”), with no preceding “Sig.” or similar expression but followed by the composer's title[s].

15 “Sensationsfund in Halle: Orgelkomposition von Bach entdeckt,” Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Sachsen-Anhalt, accessed March 2, 2019, [https://bibliothek.uni-halle.de/info/news\\_2008/news\\_2008\\_bach/](https://bibliothek.uni-halle.de/info/news_2008/news_2008_bach/) (accessed 2 March 2019).

Pachelbel and also his father's successor (though not immediate) as organist of St. Sebald's Church, Nuremberg.<sup>16</sup> Pachelbel Jr. was thus not part of the North German tradition, and his "fantasia" does not have much in common with either Scheidt's "Ich ruffe zu dir" or the North German "chorale fantasias." The piece, of modest size, consists of two contrasting sections, connected by a pedal point. While the first section is based on the first phrase of the melody, in free imitation, somewhat similar to the "old style" fantasia, the second is a toccata-like combination of rapid scale movement, free figurations and arpeggiated chords, with no trace of the chorale.<sup>17</sup>

In the following generations, the term "fantasia" for a chorale-based work, which, as we have seen, was never very frequent,<sup>18</sup> seems to have fallen out of use almost altogether.<sup>19</sup> An exception is Bach's most faithful pupil, Johann Ludwig Krebs (1713–1780), who, in five of the 35 chorale settings that can be safely ascribed to him, begins the title with the words "Fantasia super."<sup>20</sup> All of these settings, except "Herr Jesu Christ, dich zu uns wend" (see below), are rather conventional organ chorales, not exceptionally long but with relatively extended interludes between the phrases, in no case based on motifs from the chorale melody. In "Freu dich sehr, o meine Seele," the ornamented *cantus firmus* is assigned to a separate manual. "Herr Jesu Christ, dich zu uns wend" is a trio, based on the initial rising triad of the chorale, with the *cantus firmus* entering only towards the end of the piece, in the bass; the piece is very similar to J. S. Bach's setting of the same chorale, BWV 655. Also the three remaining "fantasias" are trios;

16 John Henderson, *A Directory of Composers for the Organ*. 3rd ed. (Swindon: John Henderson, 2005), 553.

17 The piece is included in the collection *Spielbuch für Kleinorgel oder andere Tasteninstrumente (Orgel, Cembalo, Klavier): Alte Meister II*, ed. Wolfgang Auler (Frankfurt/M.: Peters, n.d.), 59–61.

18 As Edler ("*Fantasia*," 61) points out, the term "fantasia" was on the decline already in the first half of the seventeenth century. Seen in this light, Bach's use of the term may be a conscious reference to early masters such as Scheidt.

19 This observation is based on the information given in the chapter "Deutschland" in Klaus Beckmann's *Repertorium Orgelmusik 1150–2000*, vol. I, *Orgel solo*, 3rd ed. (Mainz: Schott, 2001), in which compositions are listed chronologically, according to the birth year of the composer.

20 In Johann Ludwig Krebs, *Sämtliche Orgelwerke*, vol. 3, ed. Gerhard Weinberger, these five "fantasias" have the numbers 3, 8, 15, 27 and 30. The setting of "Herr Jesu Christ, du höchstes Gut," mentioned below, has number 9.

in “Jesus, meine Zuversicht” and “Warum sollt ich mich denn grämen” the unornamented *cantus firmus* is in the upper voice, in “Wer nur den lieben Gott lässt walten” in the bass (pedal). There are thus certain internal similarities between Krebs’s chorale-based “fantasias,” but these similarities do not suffice to explain why precisely these pieces were given this label. It is, for instance, hard to understand why “Jesus, meine Zuversicht” merits the designation “fantasia” while the very similarly constructed “Herr Jesu Christ, du höchstes Gut” does not.

*The emergence of the concept of the “North German chorale fantasia”*

Before Philip Spitta’s (1841–1894) pioneering edition of Buxtehude’s organ works (1875–1876), the North German “chorale fantasias,” as well as other organ works of this school, would have been little known to most organists, simply because very few of these works were available in print. In 1856, an anonymous writer in a German music journal wrote: “The name of Buxtehude is as well-known by all musicians, especially organists, as his music is unknown by them, a few fragments (*Bruchstücke*) excepted.”<sup>21</sup> But from this year the situation changed, at least to some degree. The quoted passage is from a review of an edition (the very first?) of fourteen organ chorales by Buxtehude, which included “Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern,” BuxWV 223, nowadays usually listed among the “chorale fantasias.”<sup>22</sup> Interestingly, the reviewer describes the work as “a complete organ fantasy.”

In the Spitta edition, the larger chorale settings form a separate, though untitled, category.<sup>23</sup> The famous organist, pedagogue and musicologist A. G. Ritter (1811–1885), in his history of organ playing, fol-

21 *Süddeutsche Musik-Zeitung* 5, no. 50 (1856): 197.

22 The title of the edition, by the music librarian Siegfried Wilhelm Dehn (1799–1858), is given in the review as *XIV Choralbearbeitungen für die Orgel von Dietrich Buxtehude*.

23 It can be noted that Spitta had a low opinion of the chorale settings of Buxtehude and the North German school in general; “the north [German composers], with Dietrich Buxtehude at the head, had developed their own kind of chorale treatment, which, however, was far behind that of the central Germans in terms of versatility and depth” (Philipp Spitta, *Johann Sebastian Bach: Eine Biographie in zwei Banden*, vol. 1 (facs. ed. Hamburg: Severus, 2014 [orig. ed. 1873], 108). On Buxtehude specifically, as a composer of chorale-based organ works, Spitta commented: “however interesting and brilliant his chorale settings are, he cannot stand a comparison with Pachelbel and his school in this area” (*ibid.*, 260).

lowing Spitta's categorization, describes Buxtehude's larger "chorale preludes" as "very broadly conceived, independent in themselves and transcending by far the limits of church practice."<sup>24</sup> Spitta's division of Buxtehude's chorale settings into two categories is retained in Max Seifert's revised edition (1904). A few years later, Albert Schweitzer introduces the term "chorale fantasia" in discussing Buxtehude's chorale settings. He does not, however, see "chorale fantasia" as a separate category but uses the term as a general characterization of all of the composer's chorale-based works, "from the simplest to the most sophisticated (*zur kunstvollsten*)."<sup>25</sup> Unfortunately, Schweitzer does not give any example of these "'most sophisticated" chorales. A few years later, André Pirro singles out three "extensively developed chorales" (BuxWV 188, 194 and 210), characterized by "variations of the melody, repercussions of the theme or the persistence of certain motifs," but does not use the term "fantasia" in this context.<sup>26</sup>

The first author to use the term "chorale fantasia" in its now established sense seems to be Fritz Dietrich, who introduced it, without emphasizing its novelty, in the article "J. S. Bachs Orgelchoral und seine geschichtlichen Wurzeln," published in *Bach-Jahrbuch* 1929<sup>27</sup> and also used it in his *Geschichte des deutschen Orgelchorals im 17. Jahrhundert* of 1932.<sup>28</sup> Hermann Keller, in the second volume (*Choralbearbeitungen*) of his 1939 edition of "selected organ works" by Buxtehude, based on the Spitta/Seifert edition,<sup>29</sup> does not make any distinction between different types of chorale settings. The first – and to date the only – edition of Buxtehude's organ works in which "chorale fantasia" is explicitly used as a category dis-

24 A[ugust] G[ottfried] Ritter, *Zur Geschichte des Orgelspiels, vornehmlich des deutschen, im 14. bis zum Anfange des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig: Max Hesse, 1884), 178.

25 Albert Schweitzer, *Johann Sebastian Bach*, 10th ed. (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1979 [1st ed. 1908]), 40. Syré ("Die norddeutsche Choralfantasia," 85) seems to take a similar stand: "what is here [in the modern literature on the topic] called "chorale fantasia" [is not] to be regarded as a form of composition; rather ... a compositional technique for chorale settings." However, unlike Schweitzer, Syré refers not only to Buxtehude but to several North German composers, and his observation concerns works with several verses.

26 André Pirro, *Dietrich Buxtehude* (Paris: Librairie Fischbacher, 1913), 470.

27 Edler, "Fantasie," 54 and 65.

28 Edler, "Fantasie," 54 and 65; Syré, "Die norddeutsche Choralfantasia," 83.

29 Kerala J. Snyder, "Buxtehude's organ music: Drama without words," *The Musical Times* 120 (1979): 517, 519, 521; 519.



tinct from “organ chorale” is that of Josef Hedar (1952), the third volume of which contains “chorale variations” and “chorale fantasias,” whereas the fourth is devoted to “organ chorales.”<sup>30</sup>

### *The beginnings of the chorale fantasy in the nineteenth century*

The modern German use of the term *Fantasia* in the title of a large-scale chorale-based organ work seems to have originated in the 1840s,<sup>31</sup> several years before the first editions of chorale-based organ works by Buxtehude, ca. 30 years before the Spitta edition and, as we have seen, ca. 85 years before the use of this term for works of the North German baroque was established. Inspiration from these works, either for the term or for the music itself, can therefore be safely excluded. The conditions for the performance of such large-scale works were also quite different. The inclusion of extended organ compositions or improvisations in the Lutheran liturgy, while still possible to a limited extent in Buxtehude’s time,<sup>32</sup> would have been unthinkable in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. A large chorale-based work, therefore, would therefore have had to be conceived for concerts or other extra-liturgical contexts.

Because of the difficulty in many cases of establishing the exact year

30 The Breitkopf edition (by Klaus Beckmann, 2nd ed. 1994–1997), probably the most used today, abandoned the grouping of the chorale settings used since Spitta, in favour of strict alphabetical order. Beckmann’s example is followed in this respect in two recent editions, by Christoph Albrecht (Bärenreiter) and Michael Belotti (Broude). This does not mean, however, that the term “chorale fantasia” has been abandoned by Buxtehude scholars.

31 This preliminary conclusion is based on a thorough reading of the chapter “Deutschland” in Beckmann’s *Repertorium*, in which the composers are ordered according to year of birth. There are earlier examples of similar works, though under different titles, among them *Variationen über “Auf meinen lieben Gott” nebst Einleitung und Schlussfuge*, op. 3 by Traugott Immanuel Pachaly (1797–1853), organist in Schmiedeberg (now Kowary) in Silesia (Beckmann, *Repertorium*, 176). (The work is mentioned in *Schlesisches Tonkünstler-Lexikon* of 1846; the low opus number makes it probable that it was composed much earlier.) Another example is Adolph Hesse’s *Variierter Choral: Sei Lob und Ehr, mit einer Fuge im Bach’schen Style*, op. 54, mentioned in *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 37 (1835): 687.

32 Edler, “Fantasia,” 62; Kerala J. Snyder, *Dieterich Buxtehude, Organist in Lübeck*, rev. ed. (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2007), 100. Snyder mentions the close of the Saturday Vespers service as the only opportunity for independent organ music allowed in the 1703 service order in Lübeck. Hans Musch (“Die Choralfantasia im 19. Jahrhundert,” in *Zur Orgelmusik im 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. Walter Salmen [Innsbruck: Helming, 1983], 50) sees the place of the seventeenth-century North German “chorale fantasia” as the Vespers service, and ascribes the decline of this genre to the reduction of the Vespers liturgy in the early eighteenth century.

of composition, and even of publication, there are several candidates for the first nineteenth-century “chorale fantasy.”

In August 1845, Emmanuel Schönfelder (1810–1875), organist and music professor in Breslau (now Wrocław) submitted, under the title of *Zwei Orgelphantasien*, settings of two chorale melodies, “Wer nur den lieben Gott lässt walten” and “Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr,” to the “Prize Institute” of the Thuringian Organ Society. The compositions were awarded a second prize by the Society and were published in the same year by Körner in Erfurt.<sup>33</sup>

A couple of months later, on October 18, 1845, Hermann Schellenberg (1816–1862) performed his fantasy on “Ein feste Burg” at a concert in the Nicolaikirche, Leipzig. Schellenberg, at the time organist in another Leipzig church, St. Georgen, later became organist at the Nicolaikirche. The work was published in 1848 as his opus 3.<sup>34</sup> After a very short introduction where the first two phrases are presented, the work is dominated by the first phrase, at first treated extensively in a quasi-fugal manner, then more freely. Later on, the entire chorale appears in full chords in the manuals accompanied by rapid movement in the pedal. The piece ends with an extended coda unrelated to the chorale.

Friedrich Wilhelm Markull (1816–1887), organist, conductor, pianist, violinist, teacher, versatile composer and music critic in Danzig (now Gdansk), published an *Orgelfantasie* on “Christus der ist mein Leben” as his op. 23. No date of composition or publication has been available for this piece, the first of his published organ works, but since the composer’s op. 56 was published in 1855 it is probable that op. 23 is of a considerably earlier date, possibly already in the 1840s (he had been appointed organist of the Marienkirche, the main church of Danzig, already in 1836). The *Orgelfantasie* is in three sections: an introduction based on a motif from

33 *Jahrbuch für Musik, vollständiges Verzeichniss der im Jahre 1845 erschienenen Musikalien, musikalischen Schriften und Abbildungen, nach den verschiedenen Klassen sorgfältig geordnet, mit Angabe der Verleger, der Preise, der Tonarten und der Texte bei Gesangskompositionen* (Leipzig: Expedition der Signale, 1846), 58; *Schlesisches Tonkünstler-Lexikon, enthaltend die Biographien aller Schlesischen Tonkünstler, Componisten, Cantoren, Organisten, Tongelehrten, Textdichter, Orgelbauer, Instrumentenmacher &c. &c.* (Breslau: Eduard Trewendt, 1846), 81. Unfortunately, I have not been able to find the score of Schönfelder’s composition.

34 The concert was reviewed in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* (47, no. 45, 24 November, 805–806). According to the anonymous reviewer, the three works of his own composition that Schellenberg performed showed “solid musical skill and a thorough knowledge of the organ.”

the first phrase is followed by a trio on the entire chorale melody and a concluding double fugue, where the first theme is derived from the first chorale phrase.<sup>35</sup> This piece, rather than that of Schellenberg, can be seen as an embryonic example of the chorale fantasy as it would develop later in the century: the tripartite form, including an introduction, a setting of the complete chorale melody,<sup>36</sup> and a concluding fugue.<sup>37</sup>

The most distinguished among the candidates for the title of pioneer of the nineteenth-century chorale fantasy is perhaps Moritz Brosig (1815–1887), cathedral organist of Breslau (now Wrocław) from 1843 and *Capellmeister* of the cathedral from 1853. Brosig was a well-known music theorist, published several books on music-theoretical topics and taught music theory and organ at the University of Breslau. Although a Roman Catholic, he composed a considerable number of preludes on Lutheran chorales, in addition to a chorale fantasy.<sup>38</sup> In the *Schlesisches Tonkünstler-Lexikon* of 1846, this fantasy, on “Christ ist erstanden,” is not listed among the printed works of Brosig, but the entry also mentions compositions that are still in manuscript. Among the latter is listed a “Fantasy on Easter morning.” It is highly probable that this work is identical to the chorale fantasy, published as op. 6.<sup>39</sup>

Brosig is of special interest in this context; among his pupils was Heinrich Reimann (1850–1906), whose chorale fantasy on “Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern,” op. 25 (1895) was identified as the direct inspiration for Reger’s chorale fantasies already by Reger’s first biographer (and first teach-

35 Henderson, *Directory*, 482; Michael Heinemann, “Ein ‘Danziger’ Musiker: Friedrich Wilhelm Markull,” in *Zur deutschen Orgelmusik des 19. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Hermann J. Busch and Michael Heinemann, 4th ed. (Bonn: Dr. J. Butz: 2012), 143–146; Jolanta Wozniak, “Friedrich Wilhelm Markull (1816–1887): Organist an St. Marien zu Danzig,” in *Orgelbau, Orgelmusik und Organisten des Ostseeraums im 17. und 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. Matthias Schneider and Walter Werbeck, Greifswalder Beiträge zur Musikwissenschaft vol. 14 (Frankfurt/M.: Peter Lang, 2006), 203–208.

36 The late-nineteenth-century chorale fantasy normally (in Reger always) included several variations on the chorale.

37 In the late-nineteenth-century chorale fantasy, a concluding fugue, though common, is not a strict rule. Three of Reger’s seven chorale fantasies do not end with a fugue.

38 The biographical information on Brosig is taken from Thomas Andrews, “The Organ Works of Moritz Brosig: Contributions of a German Catholic Composer in the Romantic Era,” DMA diss. (University of Kansas, 2018).

39 *Schlesisches Tonkünstler-Lexikon*, 22. Andrews (“Organ Works,” 37) gives the year of composition (or of publication?) as 1864, which may be a misprint for 1846.

er) Adalbert Lindner.<sup>40</sup> Could Reimann in turn have been inspired by Brosig to compose his chorale fantasy?

It is hardly surprising that Brosig's and Reimann's fantasies differ considerably in terms of style. This is due not only to the span of at least 50 years between their respective dates of composition, but also to the fact that Brosig when composing his op. 6 was influenced by the Caecilian movement (from which he later distanced himself) and thus prone to compose in a more archaic style than in later works.<sup>41</sup> This influence is particularly evident in the first part of the fantasy, a *ricercar* in *stile antico*, where each chorale phrase is treated successively in imitation, except for the chordal setting of the concluding "Kyrieleis." The whole is reminiscent of Scheidt's "Ich ruffe zu dir" fantasia of 1624, though stricter in its form. Then follows, surprisingly, a regular *Spielfuge* in quasi-Bach style, with no apparent connection to the chorale. A simple chordal setting of the chorale comes next, presumably representing the second of the three verses. The concluding part, in "Poco animato" and, like the first part, to be played "Volles Werk," opens with imitation on a lively motif based on the first phrase of the chorale (the third verse, which differs melodically from the first two). After a few bars, the chorale enters majestically in minims, played throughout in octaves in the right hand. There are hardly any interludes between the chorale phrases, but the initial motif forms the main material of the accompanying voices. The piece concludes with the final "Kyrieleis" in powerful chords.

The similarities between this piece and the Reimann fantasy are limited but clearly perceptible. Both works are made up of contrasting sections, where verses of the chorale (in Brosig all three verses of the hymn; in Reimann a selection of lines from four of the six verses,<sup>42</sup> with lines from the first two verses interfoliated) are embedded in a musical context also comprising other elements. In both works the hymn text is rendered in the score (in Brosig only the text of the third verse appears in the score proper, but the text of the complete hymn is given at the head of the first page). Both works contain

40 Martin Weyer, *Die Orgelwerke Max Regers* (Wilhelmshafen: Florian Netzel, 1992), 242–245; cf. also Joachim Dorf Müller, "Vorwort," in Heinrich Reimann, *Phantasie für die Orgel über den Choral "Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern,"* ed. Joachim Dorf Müller (Bonn-Bad Godesberg: Rob. Forberg, 1976).

41 Andrews, "Organ Works," 9.

42 Nos. 1, 2, 3, and 6.

an extended section where the chorale is absent: in Brosig the 65-bar fugue between the first and second verses; in Reimann the 40-bar introduction. The setting of the final verse shows several similarities, but the motivic web in Brosig is extended to a fugue in Reimann, and whereas in Brosig the chorale melody (always in the upper voices) is set in octaves in the right hand, it is rendered in full chords in both hands in Reimann. The general impression is that Reimann's work, in comparison with Brosig's, represents an enhanced expressivity and an expanded treatment of the chorale.

While it cannot be excluded that Reimann may have received some impulses from Brosig for composing chorale-based music in a large-scale form with several verses, the similarities described above do not, of course, prove this to have been the case.<sup>43</sup> Other sources of inspiration were available to Reimann, since larger chorale-based organ works (besides fantasias also sonatas)<sup>44</sup> became increasingly common in Germany in the second half of the nineteenth century (see table below). A particularly important figure in the development of this type of composition was Johann Gottlob Töpfer (better known as a theorist of organ building), who in 1859 composed three large chorale fantasias, which were first published in 1879 by his pupil Alexander Wilhelm Gottschalg.<sup>45</sup> Recently, Töpfer has been credited – understandably but, as we have seen, not quite correctly – as “the founder of the romantic chorale fantasy” (thereby “dethroning” Reimann).<sup>46</sup> However, a thorough investigation of the development of this genre from the 1840s onward, would probably prove more fruitful than attempts to establish who “invented” it. Such an inquiry still remains to be done.<sup>47</sup>

43 Op. 25 stands in a certain isolation in Reimann's output; his only published chorale-based work apart from the “Wie schön” fantasy is the chorale prelude that constitutes the first movement of his organ sonata, op. 10 (Henderson, Directory, p. 610).

44 For an account of nineteenth-century “chorale sonatas,” see Martin Weyer, *Die deutsche Orgelsonate von Mendelssohn bis Reger* (Regensburg: Gustav Bosse, 1969), 167–180.

45 “Mache dich mein Geist bereit,” “Jesu meine Freude,” and “Was mein Gott will, das g'escheh' allzeit.” Wolfram Syré, “Vorwort,” in *Johann Gottlob Töpfer (1791–1870), Grosse Concert-Fantasia über die Choralmelodie Was mein Gott will, das g'escheh' allzeit* (n.p. [Berlin]: Rob. Forberg, 1979). Reimann's dependence on Töpfer is emphasized in Vera Gitschmann, *Epigonalität in der deutschen Orgelmusik des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Sinzig: Studio, 2009), 217.

46 Hans-Peter Bähr, “Im Schatten Liszts: Johann Gottlob Töpfer,” in *Zur deutschen Orgelmusik des 19. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Hermann J. Busch and Michael Heinemann, 4th ed. (Bonn: Dr. J. Butz, 2012), 217–224; 221.

47 The earliest chorale fantasies do not seem to have been taken into account in publications on this topic. For instance, the chronological list of (German) nineteenth-century

**Large-scale chorale-based organ works between 1846 and 1895,  
with the word "Fantasie" or "Fantasia" in their title**

Composer	Chorale	Opus	Date
Moritz Brosig	"Christ ist erstanden"	op. 6	1846
Gustav Barth	"Jesu meine Zuversicht"	-	after 1847
Friedrich Lux	"O du fröhliche"	op. 29	1840s–50s?
	"Ein feste Burg"	op. 53	publ. 1877
Gustav Klauer	"Wer nur den lieben Gott lässt walten"	-	before 1855
Wold von Bock	"Lobet den Herren"	-	publ. 1855
J. G. Töpfer	"Mache dich mein Geist bereit"	-	1859
	"Jesu meine Freude"	-	1859
	"Was mein Gott will, das g'escheh' allzeit"	-	1859
Christian Fink	"Ein feste Burg"	op. 23	1860s
A. G. Ritter	"Jesu meine Zuversicht"	op. 52	1860s?
Julius Voigtmann	"Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern"	op. 2	ca. 1870?
	"Nun danket alle Gott"	-	1872
Gustav Flügel	"Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern"	op. 77, no. 1	1870s?
	"Wachet auf"	op. 77, no. 2	1870s?
	"Sollt ich meinem Gott nicht singen"	op. 82	publ. 1880
Selmar Müller	"Komm heiliger Geist, Herre Gott"	-	publ. 1881
Bernhard Zorn	"Befiehl du deine Wege"	op. 5	publ. 1882
Heinrich von Herzogenberg	"Nun komm der Heiden Heiland"	op. 39	publ. 1883
	"Nun danket alle Gott"	op. 46	publ. 1885
Theophil Forchhammer	"Aus tiefer Not"	op. 12	publ. 1887
Heinrich Reimann	"Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern"	op. 25	1895

For many of the works in the list, it has not been possible to ascertain the exact year of composition or publication. The approximate dates given in the table are based on the opus number in relation to works by the same composer for which the date is known, or on biographical or other information on the composer.

### *Conclusion*

We have seen that the term “fantasia,” though common in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, was rarely used for chorale-based organ pieces, and, in all probability, was not used for those organ compositions of the North German school now known as “chorale fantasias.” In terms of genre characteristics, these works had nothing to do with the fantasia but can be seen as extended organ chorales, treating the melodic material of each phrase extensively and imaginatively, but still within the frame of a unified piece including only one verse of the melody, in contrast to the common genre of chorale variations, cultivated by Sweelinck and his pupils and followers in North Germany. The late-baroque “fantasias” on chorales by a few composers in central Germany, including J. S. Bach and J. L. Krebs, do not differ substantially from “ordinary” organ chorales, and it is not clear what motivated the composers to use the title of “fantasia” for these works (and not for other similar compositions).

Some years before the middle of the nineteenth century, the title *Fantasia* (in German) for chorale-based organ music appears, now, however, used for works that are widely different from both the North German “chorale fantasia” and the chorale settings labelled “fantasia” by Bach and Krebs. If we are to seek the historical origin of the “new” chorale fantasias in a baroque genre, it would rather be the chorale variations or chorale partita; but the nineteenth-century pieces, though varying considerably with regard to overall form and the role of the chorale melody, often included an introduction (free, or using material from the chorale), some kind of transition between the variations (or some of them) and a concluding fugue, usually containing material from the chorale.

It is thus not possible to establish any kind of connection between the “chorale fantasia” of the North German baroque and the nineteenth-century “chorale fantasy” either in terms of continuous development or of influence or “inspiration,” simply because these baroque works were probably unknown to the mid-nineteenth-century composers of chorale fantasies. This does not mean, however, that it is impossible to find similarities between the two genres, though these apply less to details of compositional technique than to more general characteristics, especially the combination

chorale fantasies up to and including Reger in Musch, “Die Choralfantasia,” 55, begins with Töpfer’s three works of 1859 and, before Reimann, only mentions Fink’s “Ein feste Burg” and the two fantasies by von Herzogenberg (cf. footnote 45).

of exceptional size with a single-movement (though sectionalized) form, in which the chorale serves as a unifying element.

While for Buxtehude and his contemporaries, such pieces (or improvisations of a similar kind) could still find room within the liturgy, this was no longer possible for his nineteenth-century colleagues. The emerging chorale fantasy was thus, together with similar forms such as the chorale sonata, one of the signs of the expansion of the realm of the chorale to secular contexts, even outside organ music, where it came to serve new functions, not necessarily related to, or depending on, an actual hymn text (an early example of this is the “chorale” that opens Felix Mendelssohn’s fifth organ sonata).<sup>48</sup> A telling example of how the idea of the textless, purely instrumental “chorale” spread even across confessional borders is César Franck’s *Trois chorals* of 1890, large-scale fantasies in which the “chorale,” identified solely through its rhythmic and textural characteristics, has become a more general symbol of spirituality.

On the other hand, the German chorale fantasies and similar works for organ retained in most cases a close connection to the hymn, emphasized by the appearance of the text in the score, as exemplified by the fantasies by Reimann and Reger and the symphonic chorales of Sigfrid Karg-Elert. Finally, it may be remarked that the chorale fantasy did not by any means end with Reger; not only did several works of this kind see the light in the early decades of the twentieth century, but the genre is alive even today. For example, a fantasy on “Ein feste Burg” (the most frequent chorale used in nineteenth-century chorale fantasies) by Johannes Matthias Michel (b. 1962) was published in 2012, in which, despite obvious stylistic differences, we can still recognize several features typical of the “romantic” chorale fantasy.

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48 For an analysis of possible reasons for the popularity of the chorale sonata see Weyer, *Die deutsche Orgelsonate*, 167–168. Numerous examples of the use of chorales in secular contexts are given in Harald Herresthal, “Aspects of liturgical organ playing and the relationship between chorales and Concert music in the 19th century,” in *Proceedings of the Göteborg International Organ Academy 1994*, ed. Hans Davidsson and Sverker Jullander (Göteborg: Göteborg University, 1995), 285–324.



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