

Going Greene

In a March communication, “Harpichord News” follower Thomas Orr (Columbus, Georgia) suggested several recent publications that he thought might be of interest to our readers. The most monumental of these, Bruce Gustafson’s 2014 edition of the complete 17th-century Bauyn Manuscript in modern notation, comprises four hefty paperbound volumes. The first presents 127 compositions by Chambonnières; the second, 123 pieces by Louis Couperin; volume three, nearly a hundred items by various composers, including Froberger, Gaultier, Richard, Frescobaldi, and Dumont, among many others. Perusing these volumes, fortuitously already held in the collections of Southern Methodist University’s Hamon Arts Library, I came across a miniature jewel: an especially appealing 26-measure *Passacaille Del Seigr Louigi* (by the Roman composer Luigi Rossi)—a piece I plan to program in next year’s “Limited Editions” house concert series. The fourth volume comprises 199 pages of detailed historical background, source listings, critical commentaries, and bibliography. A wonderful compendium, both scholarly and practical, this new offering by the Broude Trust, New York (*Art of the Keyboard*, Vol. 10), is truly a bargain at \$150.

As an addendum to our suggestions of Christmas music suited to the harpsichord (THE DIAPASON, October 2014, page 12) Mr. Orr recommends *Christmas Ayres and Dances* (18 Easy to Moderate Carols for Organ, Chamber Organ, Harpsichord, or Piano) by J. William Greene (Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, 2011, \$30). Basing his neo-baroque pieces on familiar carols, Dr. Greene offers charming settings in the style of German “house music,” citing as one of his models Dieterich Buxtehude’s small partita of dances based on the Lutheran chorale AUF MEINEN LIEBEN GOTT. From Greene’s *Bicinium on Adeste fideles*, through an especially lovely “Mendelssohn” *Hornpipe and March*—perfectly suitable for a Christmastide [or other-tide] wedding—to the final *Wie schön leuchtet Bourrée*, these eminently playable selections are presented alphabetically by title. Finding a specific favorite is made even easier through two further, helpful indices of both carol titles and tune names. In this publication, a grateful keyboardist encounters a panoramic compendium of baroque genres including tambourin, pastorale, ouverture, organum, toccata, chaconne, canzona, invention, minuet and gigue, quodlibet, and harpeggio.

Concordia’s printing is clear and of comfortable size, suggestions for registrations and possible articulations are apt and useful, and the positioning of page turns has been considered carefully, with a majority of the pieces situated on



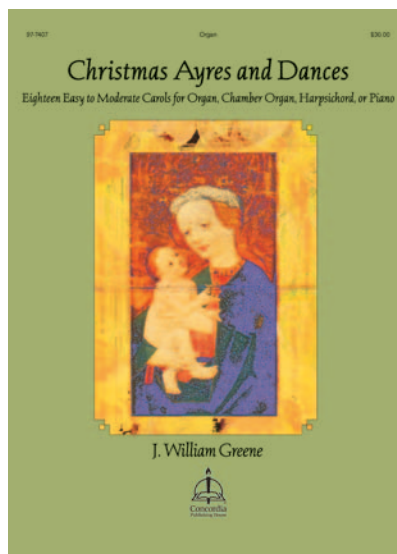
J. William Greene at the harpsichord

side-by-side pages. Among several multipaged works, I found none for which turns caused any problems—a laudable achievement in publishing! I am pleased to second this recommendation from correspondent Orr: “Really quite enjoyable to play and sheer worthwhile fun.”

According to the composer Greene, “the collection came about because I wanted incidental music for a series of madrigal dinners at my church. I played [them] originally on our continuo organ while the audience ate . . . I wanted pieces on tunes that people knew, but that sounded old.” [March 14, 2015]

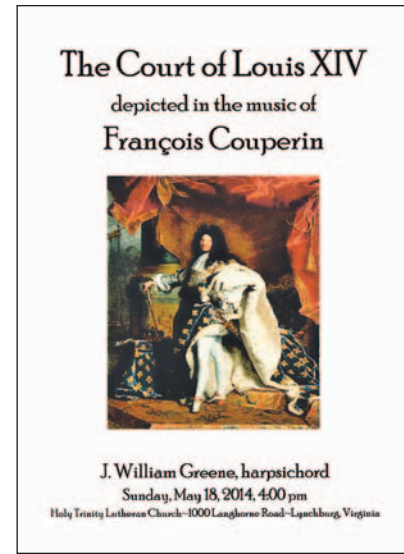
Included with the review copy of *Christmas Ayres* was the program for a May 18, 2014, harpsichord recital at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Lynchburg, Virginia, where Dr. Greene serves as organist-choirmaster. For this program titled “The Court of Louis XIV depicted in the music of François Couperin” (program cover reproduced above), Greene selected 21 movements from 13 of Couperin’s 27 *Ordres* (Suites), a rich and varied selection from all four volumes of the French composer’s harpsichord music, performed on his own Hubbard double-manual instrument “that saw at least some time in the Keith Hill Harpsichord Workshop.” Additionally Greene’s church houses a French 17th-century single-manual harpsichord by Peter Fisk as a complement to its several organs: a two-manual, 19-stop gallery instrument by Taylor and Boody and a Klop continuo organ.

A graduate of the Eastman School of Music in Rochester (DMA and performer’s certificate in organ as a student of Russell Saunders), J. William Greene had the additional privilege of a year’s harpsichord study in the Netherlands with Gustav Leonhardt under the auspices of an ITT International Fellowship. Now an active composer with more than 150 compositions in print, ASCAP member Greene wrote



Greene’s *Christmas Ayres and Dances* (courtesy Concordia Publishing House)

in a recent letter, “I worry a little bit about writing ‘new Baroque music’ . . . On the other hand, I decided that I had spent so much time with this literature that I probably didn’t need to ‘reinvent the wheel,’ but could use a few of the ideas that I have lived with for so long!” [March 31, 2015]. The expert training he received from Leonhardt, as well as the continuing inspiration of the French classic composers “from Chambonnières to Duphly [who] are the heart of the harpsichord literature, with François Couperin [at] the center . . . Their music seems to emanate from the sound of the harpsichord rather than from compositional technique” [March 31, 2015] explains the skill and sensitivity to the requirements for successful music-making at the



“The Court of Louis XIV” program cover

harpichord and tracker-action organs that permeate Dr. Greene’s accessible and enjoyable pieces.

Might we dare, then, to claim that we have traversed a full circle in these brief paragraphs with his concluding words of homage to Chambonnières and his music (as preserved in the Bauyn Manuscript)? Surely the glorious past represented by French harpsichord music points toward a bright future of forthcoming new-old works by composer J. William Greene. “Go Greene,” keep practicing, and stay tuned!

Comments and news items are welcome. Please send them to Dr. Larry Palmer, 10125 Cromwell Drive, Dallas, Texas 75229 or via e-mail to lpalmer@smu.edu.

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