



Reflection

Music at 6th Socratic Lectures: Organ Concert of Roberta Schmid

Prelovšek A¹, Kralj-Iglič V^{1,*}

^{1.} University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Health Sciences, Laboratory of Clinical Biophysics, Ljubljana, Slovenia

* Correspondence: Veronika Kralj-Iglic: veronika.kralj-iglic@fe.uni-lj.si

Abstract: Description of the social event accompanying 6th Socratic Lectures is presented. This event consisted of a concert by organist Roberta Schmid from Naples, Italy in the Church of the Assumption of Mary, Ljubljana at the evening of the day of symposium. The connection of the concert to the Socratic Lectures, the biography of the artist, the description of the organ with the list of the stops, the program of the concert and the critics of the concert are presented.

Keywords: Organ music; JS Bach Choral Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ BWV 639; JS Bach Toccata and Fugue in D minor BWV 565; J Pachelbel Ciacona in F minor; PA Yon Toccata for flute; E Gigout Toccata in B minor; JG Rheinberger Passacaglia; L Boellmann Suite Gothique op.25

Citation: Prelovšek A, Kralj-Iglič V.

Music at 6th Socratic Lectures: organ concert of Roberta Schmid. Proceedings of Socratic Lectures. 2021; 6: 195-201.

<https://doi.org/10.55295/PSL.2021.D.025>

Publisher's Note: UL ZF stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



Copyright: © 2021 by the authors.

Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).



1. Social event at 6th Socratic Lectures

Traditionally, an important part of Socratic Lectures is the accompanying social event that features also art, in any kind connected to science. Roberta Schmid collaborated with the members of the project Ves4us already at a concert that took place in Naples, Italy in 2019 (Prelovšek, 2020). Then, it was planned that this collaboration will continue within the social events of the Socratic Lectures in Ljubljana. Due to pandemic, in 2020 and in April 2021, 4th and 5th Socratic Lectures took place online. There were no social events in person, but music was nevertheless included by performances online, yet an organ concert was considered to be performed in the church, in particular in the Church of the Assumption of Mary, therefore it was postponed for later. The situation in December 2021 indicated a possibility to have concert in person at the church, however with restrictions that minimized the risk for possible transmission of COVID-19. Organized by the Franciscan p. Vid Lisjak, the concert of Roberta Schmid from Naples, Italy, took place at the evening of the symposium, 11.12.2021.

2. The organist Roberta Schmid

Roberta Schmid was born in Naples in 1964. She took her diploma in Organ and Organ Composition at the Musical Conservatoire "S. Pietro a Maiella" in Naples with the mentorship of prof. A.M.Robilotta and then improved her technique with maestros of international standing such as L. Ghielmi, E. Kooiman, M. Radulescu, D. Roth, K. Schnorr, L. F. Tagliavini, M. Torrent, P. Westerbrinck, W. Zerer, specializing her executive practice in different organ repertoires. After getting through a national examination she attended a three year course in Professional training as an Organist at the Musical Academy in Pistoia and took a diploma in "Italian and German Organ Music Interpretation". She attended a three year course in Gregorian Chant at the International Study Centre of Gregorian Chant in Cremona. She also took diplomas in Piano and in Musical Didactics, and, lately, the second level degree specializing in Organ interpretation and composition, recently introduced in Italian Music Conservatoires. She has a very busy professional life performing at concerts as a soloist and in chamber formations. As a soloist, she has been invited to take part in numerous international organ festivals - in Europe and in Mexico - and she has always been highly acclaimed by public and critics alike. She also performs for: Quarto Festival Internacional de Organo de Zamora Michoacán (Mexico), Primer Ciclo Internacional de Conciertos en el Organo Barroco de la Parroquia de Santiago de Querétaro (Mexico), International Organ Summer Festival in Rome, XXVIII Festival Internazionale di Noale, Rassegna Antichi organi di Piacenza, Associazione Alessandro Scarlatti di Napoli, Associazione Studi Mezzogiorno, Associazione Ricercare, Accademia Organistica Campana, Rassegna organistica internazionale di Avezzano, Rassegna organistica di Pescara, Settembre Organistico Fabrianese, Rassegna organistica veneta "Musica nell'Agordino", Rassegna "Musicalia" in Pavia, Festival Organistico Internazionale Città di Senigallia, Rassegna Organistica di Fiemme (Trento), Rassegna organistica della Svizzera italiana and for the International festivals performed at Notre Dame de Compassion in Paris, Merano Cathedral, Amalfi Cathedral, S. Vitale's Basilica in Ravenna, S. Ambrogio's Basilica in Milan and in Mexico City. She has recorded a Cd of Bach and pre-Bach music sponsored by the Goethe-Institut Italien. She is Artistic Director of the Festival "Musica intorno all'organo" at the St. Maria della Rotonda Church in Naples with the contralto Daniela Del Monaco. She was Artistic Director of the Concorso Organistico Nazionale Città di Napoli "11 Fiori del Melarancio". She taught "Organ and Organ composition" at F. Vittadini Civic Institute in Pavia and Organ at High School Alfano I in Salerno and at High School Palizzi in Naples. She is the official organist of Mascioni mechanical organ at St. Maria della Rotonda Church and at Santa Chiara's Basilica in Naples.

3. The organ

The organ in the Church of the Assumption (**Figure 1**) was built by Franc Goršič in 1870. The organ had originally two manuals and 32 stops. However, the Franciscans, in particular p. Hugolin Sattner (1851 – 1934) wished a more powerful instrument. Therefore, the organ was upgraded by an Austrian masters Mauracher in 1902 to add another manual and 12 more stops (Župnija Marijino oznanjenje – frančiškani, 2021). The list of present stops is given in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Stops of the organ at the Church of the Assumption of Mary, Ljubljana.

Manual I		Manual II		Manual III		Pedal	
I.71	Principal 8	II.31	Bells	III.51	Tremolo Bourdon 16	P.11	Violon 16
I.72	Vox Humana 8	II.32	Gamba 8	III.52	Salicional 8	P.12	Subbass 16
I.73	Octave 4	II.33	Tubular flute 8	III.53	Vox Coelestis 8	P.13	Covered bass 8
I.74	Quint 2 2/3	II.34	Conical flute 4	III.54	Violin Principal 8	P.14	Cello 8
I.75	Superoctave 2	II.35	Cornet V8	III.55	Octave 4	P.15	Nachthorn 2
I.76	Tierce 1 3/5	II.36	Trumpet 16	III.56	Viole 4	P.16	Contra bombarde 32
I.77	Cimbel 2/3 IV-V	II.37	Trumpet 8	III.57	Nasat 2 2/3	P.17	Bombarde 16
I.78	Connection III-I	II.38	Clairon 4	III.58	Tierce 1 3/5	P.18	Trombone 8
I.81	Tremolo	II.41	Principal 16	III.59	Mixture 2 IV-VI	P.19	Schalmei 4
I.82	Copula 8	II.42	Principal 8	III.61	Soft Bourdon 16	P.21	Contrabourdon 32
I.83	Woudfluit 4	II.43	Octave 4	III.62	Bourdon 8	P.22	Principalbass 16
I.84	Blockflute 2	II.44	Quint 2 2/3	III.63	Harmonic flute 4	P.23	Octavbass 8
I.85	Larigot 1 1/3	II.45	Super Octave 2	III.64	Small flute 2	P.24	Coralbass 4
I.86	Dulcian 16	II.46	Mixture Minor 1 1/3	III.65	Piccolo 1	P.25	Mixture 2 2/3 IV
I.87	Bent horn 8	II.47	Mixture Major 2	III.66	Fagotto 16	P.26	III-P
		II.48	Connection III-II	III.67	Harmonic trumpet 8	P.27	II-P
		II.49	Connection I-II	III.68	Oboe 8	P.28	I-P
				III.69	Vox Humana 8		



Figure 1. The organ in the Church of the Assumption of Mary, Ljubljana.



4. The program

JS Bach: Choral Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ BWV 639

JS Bach: Toccata and Fugue in D minor BWV 565

J Pachelbel: Ciacona in F minor

PA Yon: Toccatina for flute

E Gigout: Toccata in B minor

JG Rheinberger: Passacaglia

L Boellmann: Suite Gothique op.25

The program opened with a Choral by J.S. Bach (1685 – 1750) taken from *Orgelbuchlein* "Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ" BWV 639 (Bach, 17--), conceived in F minor, the key, according to Mattheson (1958) as passionate:

"F minor is felt to be mild and relaxed, yet at the same time profound and heavy with despair and fatal anxiety. It is very moving in its beautiful expression of black, helpless melancholy which occasionally causes the listener to shudder."

The choral is included in a collection of 46 choral preludes for organ written during the 1708-1717 period, while Bach was a court organist in Weimar. The collection is defined by Bach himself as 'Orgel-Büchlein, Worinne einem anfahenden Organisten Anleitung gegeben wird, auff allerhand Arth einen Choral durchzuführen...' (Little organ book, in which an organist is taught to arrange a chorale in all sorts of ways). The text of the choral (in German language) reads:

Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ

1. Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ, ich bitt, erhör mein Klagen; verlei mir Gnad zu dieser Frist, lass mich doch nicht verzagen.
2. Den rechten Glauben, Herr, ich mein, den wollest du mir geben, dir zu leben, meim Nächsten nüt zu sein, dein Wort zu halten eben.
3. Ich bitt noch mehr, o Herre Gott – du kannst es mir wohl geben –, dass ich nicht wieder werd zu Spott; die Hoffnung gib daneben; voraus, wenn ich muss hier davon, dass ich dir mög vertrauen und nicht bauen auf all mein eigen Tun, sonst wird's mich ewig reuen.
4. Verleih, dass ich aus Herzensgrund den Feinden mög vergeben; verzeih mir auch zu dieser Stund, schaff mir ein neues Leben; dein Wort mein Speis lass allweg sein, damit mein Seel zu nähren, mich zu wehren, wenn Unglück schlägt herein, das mich bald möcht verkehren.
5. Lass mich kein Lust noch Furcht von dir in dieser Welt abwenden; beständig sein ans End gib mir, du hast's allein in Händen; und wem du's gibst, der hat's umsonst, es mag niemand erwerben noch ererben durch Werke deine Gunst, die uns errett' vom Sterben.
6. Ich lieg im Streit und widerstreb, hilf, o Herr Christ, dem Schwachen; an deiner Gnad allein ich kleb, du kannst mich stärker machen. Kommt nun Anfechtung her, so wehr, dass sie mich nicht umstoße du kannst machen, dass mir's nicht bringt Gefähr.
7. Ich weiß, du wirst's nicht lassen.

It can be seen that the first two parts address the faith and the hope that are also the subject of the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans (Corynthians). However, it stands there that (Corynthians):

13 And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and can understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have faith, that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing."

According to Schmid, the three values (faith, hope and love) are symbolically represented by a three-part writing throughout the *Orgelbuchlein*. She considered this particularly important due to a dark time that our world is going through. She wished to open with a message that became crucial in pandemic: Without faith, hope and love, and without even the concrete possibility of expressing it we remain separated and sad, deprived of



the greatest values, the ones that truly makes us "human". Yet, the music has the power to warm everyone's heart.

To contrast the intimacy and sweetness of the first piece, Toccata and Fugue in D minor BWV 565 by J.S. Bach presents extraordinary rhythmic incisiveness and the impressive effectiveness of the sound which should affirm the strength, determination and also the joy that must never abandon us. Despite its dubious authenticity, the Toccata and Fugue BWV 565 remains among the most celebrated compositions of J.S. Bach. The Toccata, characterized by a virtuosic writing far from the rigid contrapuntal style and rather much closer to the art of improvisation, is followed by the famous Fugue, which also includes a toccatistic section (bars 59-85) and a concluding section in highly effective recitative style.

With the third piece - J. Pachelbel's (1653 – 1706) Chaconne - we return to the initial key, F minor, the same "passionate" key of Bach's Choral BWV 639. The cantability of the melodic line reveals the influence of the Italian school. Great is the poetry of this page, also intimate and intense, built on a theme and 22 variations, the last of which is an integral repetition of the theme itself. The ostinato bass (that is the short melodic line enunciated by the bass and which, repeated continuously in the form of variations) occasionally undergoes changes and interruptions throughout the piece. A similar form can be perceived in the famous and monumental Passacaglia BWV 582 by J.S. Bach.

The Chaconne - a form that originates in the Baroque period - is in fact a musical form very similar to that of the Passacaglia, also built on an ostinato bass and therefore on a series of rhythmic-melodic variations. It is no coincidence that the seventh piece proposed within the program was a Passacaglia, the Passacaglia in B minor taken from the eighth Sonata op. 132 for Organ by J. Rheinberger (1839 – 1901), and considered one of the best Passacaglie written in the nineteenth century for its masterful use of counterpoint pervaded by a profound romantic spirit. The theme, in 8 bars, as always is enunciated by the pedal, and immediately reveals the intense and sometimes poignant character of this wonderful piece.

On the other hand, the piece that preceded the performance of Rheinberger's Passacaglia was also an intense and touching piece: "The Old Castle", taken from "Pictures at the exhibition", a famous composition for piano by M. Mussorgsky (1839 – 1881), later also orchestrated by M. Ravel. Here the proposed piece was a beautiful transcription for organ by J. Gillou. It is known that M. Mussorgsky's original composition is a suite with a subject inspired by drawings and watercolors produced by V. Hartmann to which the composer had been linked by deep friendship. After Hartmann's sudden death, an exhibition was dedicated to the famous painter at the Academy of Fine Arts in St. Petersburg in which 400 of his works were exhibited. Mussorgsky's Piano Suite includes 15 pieces inspired by some of the paintings present at the exhibition and 5 "promenades" that represent the movement of the observer from one canvas to another. That of the Old Castle is a scene that takes place in France where a troubadour sings his touching love song in front of the walls of a medieval castle. Mussorgsky's music is also intimate and touching.

Table 2. Registrations applied in some of the pieces of the program

Composition	Registration
JS Bach: Choral Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ BWV 639	P.12,P.28/II.33/III.57,III.62,III.63/I.82
J Pachelbel: Ciacona in F minor	P.28/II.42/III.62,III.64/I.82,I.83
PA Yon: Toccatina for flute	P.12,P.14/II.33,II.49/I.83
M. Mussorgsky: Old castle (from Pictures at an exhibition – transcription of J. Guillou)	P.12,P.14/II.33,II.42,II.49/III.52,III.62,III.63,III.68/I.82
L Boellmann: Suite Gothique op.25; Priere a Notre Dame	P.12,P.28/II.48,II.49/III.53,III.62,III.63/I.82



Among the many intense, intimate, sometimes poignant contents, moments of lightness and lively energy could not be missing, such as a very delicate Toccata for flute by P.A. Yon (1886 – 1943), the brilliant and virtuosic Toccata in B minor by E. Gigout (1844 – 1925) (fourth and fifth piece of the program, respectively) and the final piece of the entire concert, the Suite Gothique by L. Boellmann (1862 – 1897). Composed in 1895 - two years before the death of its author. The Suite is divided into 4 parts, within different tonalities and with different characteristics (Introduction, Menuet, Prière à Notre Dame, Toccata). All the parts are evocative and exciting, but certainly the most engaging, for virtuosity and sound impact, is the final Toccata.

The registration of the selected parts of the pieces chosen by Schmid for the concert at the Church of the Assumption in Ljubljana is given in Table 2.

5. The performance

Schmid performed all registration by herself. She used the advantage of pre-programming the combinations of stops which she chose at rehearsals the previous two days. She sought for the timbric colors to represent the character of the respective pieces in the best possible way.

The serene introduction by Bach's Choral Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ BWV 639 was delivered as a message of faith, hope and love, which supports the spirit of Socratic Lectures. The choral as well as its interpretation up-graded by Schmid's message was clearly presented by the choice of the pace and registration. The acoustic properties of the church imposed an echo that blended the notes to some extent, but allowed for their resolution.

The tempo of the Bach's Toccata was taken fast from the beginning, with rather short pauses between the phrases, which created rich energy flow. The diminished 7 chord in bar 2 initiated by the pedal exhibited the power of the instrument to extend over its acoustic possibility within the church body. It gave an impression of an eagle spreading over the sky. The pedal solo in bars 28-30 caused no hesitation to proceed with the fugue which was pursuing forward with equilibrated pace and un-ceased energy, and culminated in technical complexity in the 3 voice sequence within bars 87-95. This piece which can be considered representative for organ potentials was performed with precision and elegance.

Pachelbell's Chaconne was played after the Bach's pieces although it was created before them, supposedly giving the advantage to the Bach's message indicated by the composition as well as the performance. This was the first piece of the program built on the variations, the variations being used also in Rheinberger's Passacaglia. Registration was markedly different from the one used for the previous piece (Bach's fugue), together with the melancholic and contemplative theme contrasting the joyful character of the former.

Following were two pieces similarly structured as to accompaniment of the melody: Yon: Toccata for flute and E Gigout: Toccata in B minor. The author of the first one was of the most recent lifespan of all authors that were presented in the concert, therefore the composition takes more liberty in melody as well as rhythm. Schmid took full advantage of this liberty with sudden stops. The presentation was joyful. The latter technically very demanding piece of E. Gigout was attacked from the beginning and building up in volume while retaining the pace to end in a victorious B major. Schmid presented a strong interpretation of this piece that has often been chosen by her for concerts.

The 6/8 rhythm of Musorgsky's Old castle presented a pleasant change with respect to previously played Toccata and Toccata, as well as registration that exposed the melody in a soft mode, accompanied by a pedal that created a basso continuo effect. The choice of registration was excellent and presented the diverse acoustic effects of manuals as well as allowed for clear recognition of the pedal continuo



To proceed, Schmid was able to transcend the ostinato of the Rheinberger's Passacaglia from the Sonata VII, OP 132 into a forward developing masterpiece. She employed the ingenious counterpoint and the potential of the registration of the organ to create a developing spiral rather than variations, that presented the ostinato as newly emerging phrases. In that, she exposed in certain time intervals besides the main theme also the other voices which were equivocally revealed as a choice of the interpretation. However, she retained a firm backbone of the piece by the continuous simple and clear rhythm. In this, she led the composition in graded intensity to reach the magnificence of the acoustic possibilities of the space.

In Maestoso of the Introduction-Choral of the Boellmann's Suite Gothique Schmid's energy has reached the point from which she flew like an eagle and interpreted almost effortless. The closing Toccata outlined again the elements that connected it with the Yon's Toccata, Gigout's Toccata and Rheinsberger's Passacaglia in a majestic finale that rocked the Church of assumption for moments even after the organ ceased to cause vibration of sound. The audience thanked the artist with appreciation and accompanied her 35 stairs descend with a warm applause.

References

1. Bach JS, Deutsche Staatsbibliothek. (n.d.). Orgel-Büchlein worinne einem anfahenden Organisten Anleitung gegeben wird, auff allerhand Arth einen choral durchzuführen, an bey auch sich im Pedalstudio zu habitiren, indem in solchen darinne befindlichen Chorale das Pedal ganz obligat tractirt wird. Dem Höchsten Gott allein' zu Ehren, dem Nechsten, draus sich zu belehren. 17--.. Schmeider, BWV 599-644.
2. **Corinthians 1;13:1** – Bible Gateway. www.biblegateway.com.
3. Mattheson J, Lenneberg H. Johann Mattheson on Affect and Rhetoric in Music. *J Music Theor* 1958; 2:: 47-84.
4. Prelovšek A, Musical programme accompanying the Naples symposium and 2020 Socrates Lectures. Proceedings of the 3.rd International Symposium Socratic Lectures, Ljubljana, April 2020, pp 143–172. <https://www.zf.uni-lj.si/si/predstavitev/zalozba/sokraska-predavanja-2020>
5. The Holy Bible, New King James Version. *Nashville: Nelson*. 1982.
6. Župnija Marijino oznanjenje - frančiškani. Accessed 27.12.2021. Available from: <http://www.marijino-oznanjenje.si/index.php/content/display/83/20/20>