I, ShuHui Tsai, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts in Organ.

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A Study of the Baroque Techniques and Lutheran Liturgical Contexts in Hugo Distler's Chorale-Based Organ Works

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A Study of the Baroque Techniques and Lutheran Liturgical Contexts in Hugo Distler’s Chorale-Based Organ Works

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the musical genres, compositional devices, and Lutheran liturgical contexts used in the chorale-based organ works of Hugo Distler composed during his Lübeck years (1931–1937). He was among the first composers to write organ music combining traditional forms with modern harmonic elements intended to be performed on both modern and historic mechanical-action organs. As a Lutheran musician, Distler applied traditional Lutheran liturgical ideas into his organ works. For these two reasons, Distler’s organ works have gained a prominent place in twentieth-century organ literature. Moreover, Distler emerged as one of the central figures in the German church-music renewal movement. This document will discuss the Baroque techniques and liturgical contexts used in his chorale-based organ works from his Lübeck years: Partita on Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland, Op. 8, No.1; Partita on Wacht auf, ruft uns die Stimme, Op.8, No.2; and seven chorale preludes in Kleine Orgelchoral-Bearbeitungen, Op.8, No.3.
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* I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. *Philippians 4:13

* Soli Deo gloria! *
# Table of Contents

Abstract.................................................................................................................................i

Acknowledgements..................................................................................................................iii

List of Figures..........................................................................................................................vi

List of Musical Examples..........................................................................................................vii

Introduction...............................................................................................................................xi

Chapter 1: The German Church Music Renewal Movement and Orgelbewegung.........................1

  Martin Luther’s Theology (or Ideology) on Music.................................................................1

  Traditional Functions of the Organ Prelude in the Lutheran Liturgy......................................3

  Historical Background of Lutheran Church Music Renewal Movement..............................4

  Historical Background of Orgelbewegung.............................................................................7

Chapter 2: The Lübeck Years (1931–1937)..............................................................................9

  A brief biography of Hugo Distler.........................................................................................9

  Distler’s duty at St. Jakobi Church in Lübeck.......................................................................11

  The Jakobi’s Stellwagen organ..............................................................................................12

  Overview of Distler’s Organ Music.....................................................................................17

Chapter 3: The Lutheran Liturgical Contexts Used in Distler’s Chorale-based Organ Works.....18

  Partita on Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland, Op. 8, No.1.....................................................21

  Partita on Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme, Op.8, No.2.....................................................26

  The Kleine Orgelchoral-Bearbeitungen, Op.8, No.3.............................................................29

    Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern................................................................................31

    Das alte Jahr vergangen ist............................................................................................31

  Partita on Jesus Christus, unser Heiland, der von uns den Gottes Zorn wandt................32
Chapter 4: The Musical Genres Used in Distler’s Chorale-based Organ Works

1. Partita .................................................................................................................36
2. Toccata ...............................................................................................................38
3. Bicinium ...........................................................................................................41
4. Tricinium ..........................................................................................................43
5. Ricercar ............................................................................................................44
6. Pastorale ...........................................................................................................46
7. Chaconne ..........................................................................................................47
8. Prelude .............................................................................................................51
9. Fuge ..................................................................................................................52

Chapter 5: The Compositional Devices Used in Distler’s Chorale-based Organ Works

1. Cantus Firmus Treatments within the Partitas and Chorale Preludes ..........57
2. Imitation ...........................................................................................................62
3. Rhythm .............................................................................................................63
4. Syncopation ......................................................................................................64
5. Repetition ..........................................................................................................65
6. Chromaticism ....................................................................................................66
7. Modality ............................................................................................................68
8. Ornamentation ..................................................................................................69
9. Articulation Markings .......................................................................................70

Conclusion ............................................................................................................73

Bibliography .......................................................................................................75
List of Figures

Figure 2-1: The Disposition of the Large Organ in St. Jakobi Church in 1935....................13
Figure 2-2: The Disposition of the Small Organ in St. Jakobi Church before 1500..............15
Figure 2-3: The Disposition of the Small Organ in St. Jakobi Church in 1636/1637.............15
Figure 2-4: The Disposition of the Small Organ in St. Jakobi Church in 1935..................16
Figure 2-5: Distler’s Organ Works and the Year of Publication.................................17
Figure 3-1: Chorale used in Distler’s Organ Works.................................................19
Figure 3-2: Catalog Number of Chorales that Distler used found in 1954 and 1957 Hymnals...20
Figure 3-3: The Verses of Chorale Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland............................22
Figure 3-4: The Verses of Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme........................................26
Figure 3-5: Chorale Settings in the Kleine Orgelchoral-Bearbeitungen, Op.8, No.3........30
Figure 4-1: The Movement Settings of Distler’s Partitas...........................................38
Figure 4-2: The section plan for the Ricercar movement of Partita on Jesus Christus, unser Heiland.................................................................45
Figure 4-3: The First Verse of Chorale Christ, der du bist der helle Tag..........................47
Figure 4-4: Chaconne movement plan.........................................................................49
Figure 4-5: The Fourth Vesper at St. Jacobi, May 10, 1931..........................................51
Figure 4-6: The Fugue movement plan. Partita on Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme........54
Figure 5-1: Distler’s Favorite Rhythmic Motive.........................................................65
List of Musical Examples

Example 3-1: Chorale *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland* ................................................. 21

Example 3-2: Each phrase of the Chorale is presented twice in the different register, Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Mvt 2, Variation 1 .................................................. 23

Example 3-3: The accent markings, Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Mvt 2, Variation 3 .......................................................... 24

Example 3-4: The broken chord in triple setting, Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Mvt 2, Variation 4 .......................................................... 24

Example 3-5: The ascending passage for all part in the end. Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Mvt 2, Variation 5 .......................................................... 25

Example 3-6: The florid cantus firmus against slow moving accompaniment parts. Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Mvt 2, Variation 7 .......................................................... 25

Example 3-7: Chorale *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme* ................................................. 26

Example 3-8: The trumpet-like figure against the florid upper part, Partita on *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme*, mm. 3-5 .......................................................... 28

Example 3-9: Chorale *Wie schöne leuchtet der Morgenstern* ................................................. 31

Example 3-10: Chorale *Das alte Jahr vergangen ist* .................................................. 32

Example 3-11: Chorale *Jesus Christus, unser Heiland, der von uns den Gottes Zorn wandt* ...... 33

Example 3-12: Chorale *Christe, du Lamm Gottes* .......................................................... 33

Example 3-13: Chorale *Mit Freuden zart* .......................................................... 34

Example 3-14: Chorale *Ach wie flüchtig, ach wie nichtig* .................................................. 34

Example 3-15: Chorale *Christ, der du bist der helle Tag* .................................................. 35

Example 4-1: The work begins with a pedal solo and followed by a florid passage on the manual over a pedal point, Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Mvt 1 .................. 39

Example 4-2: The work begins with a pedal solo and followed by a florid passage on the manual over a pedal point, Praeludium in E minor, BuxWV143, mm.1-4 .................. 39

Example 4-3: The section began with a figuration developed from the upbeat rhythmic motive. Partita on *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme*, Mvt.1, mm.1-2 .................. 40
Example 4-4: The work began with a figuration developed from the upbeat rhythmic motive. Toccata in C major, mm. 1-2.................................................................40

Example 4-5: *Bicinium* from the second verse of the hymn *De Nativitate Christi* in Tabulatura Nova, Part 3, mm. 1-6.................................................................41

Example 4-6: The C.F. presented twice, Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Mvt. 2, Variation 1, m.1.................................................................42

Example 4-7: *Bicinium* from the fourth verse of chorale *Vater unser im Himmelreich* in Tabulatura Nova, mm.1-13.................................................................42

Example 4-8: The C.F. against the active melismatic accompaniment, Partita on *Jesus Christus, unser Heiland*, **Bicinium**, mm.4-6.................................................................43

Example 4-9: The figuration of the upper two voices is derived from the Chorale, Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Tricinium, m.1.................................................................44

Example 4-10: The Subjects of the ricercar, Partita on *Jesus Christus, unser Heiland*..........45

Example 4-11: The Imitative Entry against the Syncopated Rhythmic C.F., Partita on *Christ, der du bist der helle Tag*, Pastorale, mm.1-5.................................................................47

Example 4-12: The Chaconne Theme, Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*.............48

Example 4-13: An ornamented virtuoso pedal passage, the Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Chaconne, m.10.................................................................48

Example 4-14: The brilliant arpeggio-like sixteenth-note passage. Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Chaconne, m. 13.................................................................49

Example 4-15: Staccato eighth-note against sixteenth-note. Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Chaconne, m. 14.................................................................49

Example 4-16: The Chorale is divided into five phrases and used in the Fuge, Partita on *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme*.................................................................53

Example 4-17: The Fuge Subject, Partita on *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme*.................53

Example 4-18: The Fuge Subject againsts the Chorale theme, Partita on *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme*, mm.77-84.................................................................54

Example 4-19: The Last Section of the Fuge, Partita on *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme*, mm. 172-174.................................................................55

Example 5-1: The New Harmonization of the Chorale, Prelude *Ach wie flüchtig*, mm.1-6......58
Example 5-2: The C.F. in Tenor, Prelude *Das alte Jahr vergangen ist*, mm.1-2………………..58

Example 5-3: The cantus firmus is presented in Tenor, Partita on *Jesus Christus, unser Heiland*……………………………………………………………………………………………………59

Example 5-4: The C.F. in Bass, Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Mvt. 2, Variation 2……………………………………………………………………………………………………59

Example 5-5: The C.F. in canonic setting, Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Mvt. 2, Variation 6……………………………………………………………………………………………...60

Example 5-6: The C.F. in Canonic setting, Prelude *Christe, du Lamm Gottes*, mm. 8-9………………..60

Example 5-7: The C.F. in florid coloration, Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Mvt. 2, Variation 7……………………………………………………………………………………………...61

Example 5-8: The embellished C.F., Prelude *Wie schöne leuchtet der Morgenstern*, m. 11……...61

Example 5-9: The unornamented cantus firmus, Prelude *Wie schöne leuchtet der Morgenstern*.62

Example 5-10: Vorimitation, Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Mvt. 2, Variation 3…63

Example 5-11: Cross-Rhythm, Partita on *Jesus Christus, unser Heiland*, Ricercar, mm.65-71...64

Example 5-12: Complex Rhythm against slow moving chorale tune, Partita on *Jesus Christus, unser Heiland*, Bicinium, mm.11-13………………………………………………………………………...64

Example 5-13: Syncopated Rhythmic Chorale theme, Partita on *Christ, der du bist der helle Tag*, Pastorale, mm.3-7………………………………………………………………………...64

Example 5-14: The Trumpet Call, Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Chaconne, m.15.65

Example 5-15: The Ostinato Pedal Figure, Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Mvt. 2, Variation 5……………………………………………………………………………………………...66

Example 5-16: An Ostinato three descending chromatic notes and the recitation, Prelude *Christe, du Lamm Gottes*, mm.1-3………………………………………………………………………...66

Example 5-17: The Descending Chromatic Passage, Partita on *Jesus Christus, unser Heiland*, Ricercar, mm.48-52…………………………………………………………………………………………77

Example 5-18: Three Descending Chromatic Figure, Prelude *Ach wie flüchtig, ach wie nichtig*, mm.1-4…………………………………………………………………………………………77

Example 5-19: Whole-tone Scale, Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Toccata………..68
Example 5-20: Pentatonic, Partita on *Jesus Christus, under Heiland*, Ricercar, mm. 10-11…68

Example 5-21: Written out Ornamentation, Partita on *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme*, Bicinium, m.8…………………………………………………………………………………………………..69

Example 5-22: Trill Signs, Prelude *Das alte Jahr vergangenn ist*, mm.4-7……………………70

Example 5-23: Accent, Tenuto, Slur, Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Mvt 2, Variation 3…………………………………………………………………………………………….72

Example 5-24: The Slurs are used to indicated beginning or end of the phrase, Pedal Solo from Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Toccata………………………………………..72
Introduction

The document represents the research and study of the Baroque-inspired techniques and Lutheran liturgical characteristics in the chorale-based organ works of Hugo Distler (1908–1942). Distler composed all of his chorale-based organ works during his years in Lübeck, 1931–1937. These pieces were inspired by a small Baroque organ at the local St. Jakobi Church. In order to fit the proper sound and style of the organ, Distler adopted various Baroque organ music techniques in his works. Moreover, these chorale-based organ compositions, especially the works in *Kleine Orgelchoral-Bearbeitungen*, Op.8, No. 3, were meant to be used in the Lutheran liturgy. Thus, certain liturgical contexts were applied to the works as well.

Respected Distler scholars Larry Palmer¹, John Brock², and David LeRoy McKinny³ all describe Distler as among the first composers to write organ music combining traditional musical forms with modern harmonic elements intended to be performed on both modern and historic mechanical-action organs. In particular, they argue that all of his chorale-based organ works were conceived for the Baroque-style polyphonic organ. Furthermore, the above-mentioned authors mention that Distler was one of the central figures in the German church music renewal movement. These statements raise a number of questions: What kind of musical elements did he use to enable his works to be performed on both modern and historic mechanical-action organs? What were the Baroque techniques used in his chorale-based organ works? Finally, what made him one of the central figures in the German church music renewal movement?


Distler lived, studied, and composed during the period of Orgelbewegung\(^4\) and the Neo-classical movement. The rise of musicological research and interest in early music had a great influence on his compositions, and most of his organ chorale-based works were written in the neo-classical style.\(^5\) In his organ works, Distler, motivated by his study of music predating Johann Sebastian Bach, employed late Renaissance and pre-Baroque genres such as the ricercar, chaconne, and \textit{bicinium}, a genre used infrequently in organ literature since Bach.\(^6\)

Distler not only revived traditional genres, but also adapted old compositional techniques into his chorale-based organ works, such as \textit{vorimitation}, written-out ornamentation, and figuration derived from the \textit{cantus firmus}. The settings of the chorale melodies show the influence of the late Renaissance and early Baroque in their \textit{cantus firmus} style, particularly that of Scheidt. The \textit{cantus firmus} is clearly heard in each variation of his partitas. Distler’s chorale-based partitas include several types of \textit{cantus firmus} treatments: \textit{bicinium}, a two-part setting with the chorale melody as one of the parts; \textit{tricinium}, or trio, with melody in the bass; contrapuntal; and a fourth type with florid coloration of the soprano over the accompaniment. In addition, Distler utilized his own twentieth-century musical language in his chorale-based organ works which included pentatonic scales, chromaticism, cross-rhythms, and complex rhythmic units, that make his music idiosyncratic.

\(^4\) “Organ Reform movement,” see Chapter 1.


The years that Distler spent as organist and cantor at St. Jakobi Church in Lübeck, 1931–1937, had a strong influence on his career as an organist and a composer. All of his chorale-based organ works were written for the church’s small organ. This organ is located on the North wall near the altar and was originally built in the late fifteenth century. It was enlarged in 1637 by Friedrich Stellwagen; further detail is discussed in Chapter 2 of this document. The chorale-based organ works include the two organ partitas, Nun komm der Heiden Heiland, Op. 8, No.1 and Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme, Op.8, No.2, and a collection of chorale preludes and new harmonizations called Kleine Orgelchoral-Bearbeitungen, Op.8, No. 3.

During the Lübeck years, Distler dedicated himself to the composition of German church music, and he achieved considerable acclaim, as reported by the Berliner Börsenzeitung on October 17, 1935: “Hugo Distler is the great hope of German church music, the par excellence of German music.” It appears that Distler was considered one of the central figures in the German church music renewal movement. Most of his organ music was based on German Lutheran chorales and meant to be used in the church. The chorale-based works draw on other vocal techniques as well, including recitative style and melisma. Moreover, Distler provided some details of articulation and phrasing in the score, such as *tenuto* (−) and accent (>), that were borrowed from the tradition of trombone choirs in the evangelical churches of Germany.

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9 The movement aims…theology. See Kratzenstein, 57; and Joyce L. Irwin, Neither Voice nor Heart Alone: German Lutheran Theology of Music in the Age of the Baroque (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 2.

Furthermore, these articulation marks are meant to imitate various aspects of Baroque performance practice and against the nineteenth-century legato style. Thus, Distler used them as a guideline for performers in order to approach the Baroque organ sounds on an instrument. In addition, Distler’s organ output was impacted by Lutheran church-music practices related to vocal and instrumental techniques. Distler made a significant contribution by employing old musical genres and his own compositional devices in his chorale-based organ music.

Most of the articles and research on Distler’s organ works address only the general aspects of Distler’s aesthetic, for example, organ registration, general compositional style, and other performance aspects. They rarely delve into the details of how Distler adapted the old musical practices and genres, nor how he utilized his own new ideas in his compositions, especially in the treatment of a chorale theme in variation form. In order to show how Distler employed the Baroque techniques and new elements in his works, this document will discuss the Baroque techniques and Lutheran liturgical contexts used in Distler’s chorale-based organ partitas: Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Op. 8, No.1 (1933); Partita on *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme*, Op.8, No.2 (1935); and seven chorale preludes in *Kleine Orgelchoral-Bearbeitungen*, Op.8, No.3 (1938).
Chapter 1: The German Church Music Renewal Movement and Orgelbewegung

At the beginning of the twentieth century two critical movements occurred, which are Orgelbewegung (1910-1930s) and the German Church Music Renewal movement. These movements were rooted in the concept of so-called ideal Baroque organ building, or associated with Martin Luther’s theological thoughts of the Liturgy and music. Thus, establishing a historical background can help to understand how these movements influenced Hugo Distler’s chorale-based organ music. This chapter introduces and discusses the most important historical facts that affected the Distler's compositions that this study focuses on.

Martin Luther’s Theological Thought (or Ideology) on Music

During the reformation period in the sixteenth century, churches led by John Calvin (1509-1564) and Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) prohibited the organ and limited the music that was used in worship services. By contrast, Martin Luther (1483-1546) had different thoughts on the use of music in the evangelical worship service. Although very few references survive for us to fully understand instrumental music used in the liturgy during the Reformation period in German Lutheran churches, there are many references regarding Luther’s writings on music that show that he neither prohibited nor limited music.\(^{11}\) For example, Luther advised that “It would be good to keep the whole liturgy with its music, omitting only the Canon” for the introduction of the Reformation into Leipzig in 1539.\(^{12}\) His writings repeatedly address that music is the *donum*

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\(^{12}\) Leaver, 9.
Dei, which refers to the concept that music is a gift from God.\textsuperscript{13} In addition, in the Preface to Rhau’s *Symphoniae iuncundae atque adea breves quattuor vocum*, published in 1538, Luther wrote that “Next to the Word of God, music deserves the highest praise.”\textsuperscript{14} These statements provide us with Luther’s understanding of music. Therefore, music was not eliminated in the Lutheran church, but rather, Luther gave it specific functions within the liturgy: music in the Lutheran Church was used to proclaim God’s Word.

Martin Luther believed not only that “the songs have power to uplift the soul and chase away the demon of sadness,”\textsuperscript{15} but also because “the songs served as a means to effect a corporate exposition of the Gospel, to act as a type of congregational sermon,”\textsuperscript{16} chorale singing became an important part of the Lutheran worship service in the sixteenth century. The Chorale is a hymn that was sung by the congregation during the Lutheran worship service. Luther has been credited with writing thirty-six songs for the evangelical church.\textsuperscript{17} The sources of the chorale stem from liturgical chants of the Roman Catholic Church, pre-Reformation German sacred lieder, German folk songs, and newly composed melodies by Luther himself and other composers among his followers.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid, 70.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid, 89.
\textsuperscript{17} Marion Lars Hendrickson, *Musica Christi: A Lutheran Aesthetic*, (New York: Peter Lang), 14.
Traditional Functions of the Organ Used in the Lutheran Liturgy

Before the Reformation, the organ was basically used during the liturgy for intonation purposes, such as giving pitch to the choir, and played alternating verses of a liturgical chant. Despite doctrinal differences between the Lutheran church and the Roman Catholic Church, the liturgy of German Lutheran Church was rooted in Roman Catholic practice. Hence, many traditional functions of organ practices remained the same in the Lutheran Church after the Reformation. The chorale was first sung in unison and without organ accompaniment.\(^{18}\) There is a little evidence if organists regularly provided preludes or postludes during the \textit{Hauptgottesdienst}\(^{19}\) and Vespers in sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.\(^{20}\) For example, Samuel Scheidt’s (1587-1654) \textit{Tabulatura nova} (1624) contains examples of alternation practice in Magnificats and hymns. Furthermore, the organ was used to introduce the chorale tune before the congregational singing. According to musicologist John Shannon during the seventeenth century, northern German organists were expected to improvise music based on the chorale before and after the service, and later, they were expected to provide a short prelude to introduce the chorale before the congregation started singing in the Lutheran worship service.\(^{21}\) Hence, works that were based on chorales and used for intonation purpose became known as chorale preludes. Additionally, the large scale organ works, such as the prelude, toccata, and fugue, may have belonged to extra-liturgical contexts in the seventeenth century.\(^{22}\)


\(^{19}\) The main Sunday morning service with sermon and communion.

\(^{20}\) Thistlethwaite, 144.

\(^{21}\) Shannon, 190

\(^{22}\) Ibid.
Historical Background of The Lutheran Church Music Renewal Movement

At the beginning of the twentieth century several factors came together in German Lutheranism to trigger a revival in church music. German protestant theologian and musicologist Oscar Söhngen (1900-1983) identifies three developments which are theological, sociological, and musical. German theologian Otto Dibelius (1880-1967) started to emphasize the objectivity of the Church as a communal organization in order to counter the nineteenth century theology that put emphasis on individual experiences. In addition, idealism, the dominant movement of modern German philosophy, had a profound effect on Lutheran theological thought. Thus, in reaction against the nineteenth-century thinking of the Church, at the beginning of the twentieth century theologians began to emphasize the Bible as the Word of God and the foundation of the church. Moreover, musicologist Georg Feder (1927-2006) stated that German church music in the nineteenth-century had “congregational singing that dragged along laboriously; and impoverished liturgy in which music fulfilled a role of questionable value; organ music and organ playing which either cultivated a galant, pianistic style or was stiff and pompous; cantatas of slight musical value and choral music that was sentimental or bombastic.” Hence, the aims of the Lutheran Church music revival movement were to revive

24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
28 Thistlethwaite, 250.
the historical liturgical forms based on a rediscovery of Reformation theology. 29 Oscar Söhngen was a prominent leader in the renewal of liturgical music in the German Lutheran church of the twentieth century. His advocacy Wiedergeburt (rebirth) of church music in German Lutheranism 30 had great influence not only on theologians, but also on composers. For example, Söhngen wrote regarding Luther’s position on music in worship:

> Because the mature Luther is fully serious in viewing music as a creature of God, he no longer reflects on its appropriateness for worship; to him it is self-evident that we may and must put music, which is a gift from God, into the service of God in the form of unison song as well as of figural and organ music. 31

Luther’s understanding of music was reviewed and advocated. Hence, the music used in worship services was again seen as an important part within the whole liturgy rather than a mere decoration. Because of a revived interest in old music, composers and musicologists studied compositions from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, such as polyphony and chorale-based works. Thus, these works were increasingly composed in the early twentieth century. The compositions of early German Lutheran masters, such as Heinrich Schütz (1575-1682), Samuel Scheidt (1587-1654), and Dietrich Buxtehude (1637-1707) became the models for twentieth-century German Lutheran composers, such as Ernst Pepping (1901-1981), Johann Nepomuk David (1895-1977), and Distler. New compositions adopted old musical genres, for example, partita, toccata, and passacaglia, and new works were based on Lutheran chorales. Composers


30 Anthony, 130.

31 Irwin, 3.
adopted Luther’s thoughts on music and emphasized, in the words of Anthony Puff, “a kind of
legitimacy to composition of music to serve public worship.”32 As Distler wrote in 1935:

Church music is not at all capable of being a human-servant herald unless it
subordinates itself entirely to the liturgical action. But behold: precisely out of its
consciousness of its servant posture does it again attain its lost power and dignity,
as it speaks to us still today from the sacred music of long past eras.33

Therefore, the German renewal movement for church music advocated to restore and reconsider
the role of liturgical music used in worship services, in which the music used must be related to
the structure of the liturgy.34 Thus, the Lutheran composers composed their works based on
chorales in order to be truly part of the liturgy.

Because of the rise of interest in early music and research, there were other bewegung
birthed in early twentieth-century Germany, namely singbewegung.35 However, these two
bewegungen were tied into the renewal movement just mentioned above. Distler’s statement was
recorded by the Kassel music critic Dr. Fritz Stege (1896-1967) in his article that “The
Orgelbewegung must be based on the church. Its renewing can only succeed when it comes from
the Christian spirit.”36

32 Ruff, 135.

33 Ibid, 136.

34 Ibid.

35 Singing movement: In the beginning of the 1920s, young people gathered together to sing folk music and
art music during the singing week (Singwochen). Musicians and scholars began to rediscovery the old folk song and
chorale. Since then, a lot of singing groups were found at this time. The movement was a return to singing as an
activity and people were united while singing. Moreover, it was a reaction to the concert culture of the nineteenth
century.

36 Larry Palmer, Hugo Distler and His Church Music (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1967), 43-44.
**Orgelbewegung**

The term *Orgelbewegung*\(^\text{37}\) was used to describe reform trends in Organ building between the periods from around 1910 to the late 1930s in Germany. In 1906, when Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965) set forth his thoughts about the ideal organ in a pamphlet called *The Art of Organ Building and Organ Playing in Germany and France*,\(^\text{38}\) he included the points of a so-called ideal organ: “the organ, which is primarily a polyphonic instrument, should be developed for the literature to be played on it; stop names should be appropriate to function, pipe construction, or tone quality; the tonal design should be developed along the “Werk principle”; and acoustics of the room should be natural and allow for suitable reverberation.”\(^\text{39}\)

In 1922, the organists and musicologists, Karl Straube (1873-1950), Günther Ramin (1898-1956), and organ builder Hans Henny Jahnn (1894-1959) identified that the organ built by Arp Schnitger (1648-1719) at the St Jakobi church in Hamburg was a an excellent example of the best of Baroque organ building.\(^\text{40}\) In 1926, the so-called “Praetorius” organ became the center of interest for the Freiburg Organ Conference.\(^\text{41}\) The Praetorius organ was based on a disposition given by Michael Praetorius (1571-1621) in the *Syntaga Musicum, Vol. 2, De Organographia* (1619) and was built by the Walcker Company in 1921.\(^\text{42}\) It was viewed as an ideal organ to recreate Baroque sounds. In addition, during the conference, clergyman and a musicologist

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\(^{37}\) Organ Reform Movement or Organ Revival

\(^{38}\) *Französische und deutsche Orgelbaukunst und Orgelkunst*.


\(^{40}\) Ibid, 213.

\(^{41}\) Ibid, 212.

\(^{42}\) Ibid, 211.
Christhard Mahrenholz (1900-1980) emphasized the close connection of the organ reform to the music and liturgy of the church.\footnote{Ibid, 212.} His goal was to design an instrument to create Baroque sounds when preforming the North German organ repertoire.

The movement was also considered as a reaction against nineteenth-century Romantic organ music, a Distler scholar and chorale conductor, Todd Jeremy Harper addressed that the movement “attempted to create passionate music through grandeur and virtuosic spectacle that muddled the clarity and transparency of polyphonic organ music.”\footnote{Todd Jeremy Harper, “Hugo Distler and the Renewal Movement in Nazi Germany” (D.M.A. diss., University of Southern California, 2008), 21.} Thus, organists and musicologists began to look back to the instruments, compositions, and performance practices of the Baroque period. Organ designer and historian Stephen Bicknell stated that the movement was “built around the rediscovery of early instruments and the corresponding repertoire.”\footnote{Thistlethwaite, 82.} The interest in polyphonic and contrapuntal organ literature then increased. In addition, the movement influenced the construction of organs in the twentieth century, first in Europe and later in North America.
Chapter 2: The Lübeck Years (1931-1937)

A brief biography of the composer

Hugo Distler was born in Nürmberg, Germany on June 24, 1908. He was an illegitimate child of August Louis Gotthild Roth and Helene Distler. In 1912, his mother married a German-American man, Anthony Meter, and immigrated to Chicago, Illinois. Distler then went to live with his grandparents in Nürmberg, where he received his musical education at the Dupont Music School. His musical talent was recognized by his piano teacher, Carl Dupont. Distler also studied music theory with Erich Rhode, and it was here where Distler first had his compositional foundation.

Distler first planned on studying at the Nürmberg Conservatory in 1927, but he was rejected because of prejudices surrounding his complicated family background. However, Distler overcame the rejection and passed the audition with honors at the Leipzig Conservatory. During his study in Leipzig, his compositional talent was discovered by his piano and counterpoint teachers, Carl Adolf Martienssen (1881-1955) and Hermann Grabner (1886-1969). Later, Distler changed his career focus from conducting to composition and organ performance.

Distler’s teachers were distinguished within international music circles of the time and were thus very influential. Grabner, his theory and composition teacher, was a student of Max Reger (1873-1916). From the letter that Distler wrote to his friend Ingeborg Heisen (1909-1954) on February 29, 1928:

Grabner rejects the modern trend altogether—modern in the sense of the emancipation of the harmonic. He recognizes as most modern the return to the ascetic art of the pre-Bach period. One must gradually learn to understand this

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46 Bergaas, 2.

47 McKinny, 16.
oneself. My way of thinking and writing musically was also frivolous, like the
general spirit in which we grew up. To learn to understand this [old style] was
nothing difficult, although to become accustomed to the monkish earnestness of
this forgotten linear art, essentially remote from us by birth and nature, is very
difficult. I have times when I stand there perplexed and don’t work, either [with]
that which I would but may not, or that which I may but cannot. I ask you. Could
you force yourself become a little nun? So it is for me: I stand in fear of the
tonsure.48

The letter shows that the way that Grabner taught Distler had a great influence on his
thought of composition; Grabner later became Distler’s mentor and friend. Distler received
career advice from his two organ teachers, Günther Ramin (1898-1956) and Friedrich Högner
(1897-1981). Both of them were prominent in the Orgelbewegung.49

Due to financial reasons, Distler was forced to discontinue his studies and seek fulltime
employment in 1930. His composition teacher advised him to pursue a career in church music.50
In 1931, he obtained the organist position at St. Jakobi church in Lübeck. Few months later, the
church cantor, Grusnick, resigned and Distler took over his position as a church cantor. He
composed nearly all of his sacred works, including Weihnachtsgeschichte, Geistliche Chormusik,
Liturgische Sätze, and two large-scale organ partitas during this period. The following appeared
in the Berliner Börsenzeitung on October 17, 1935: “Hugo Distler is the great hope of German
church music, the par excellence of German music.”51 At the same time, Nazi control of the
music profession began with “the formal regulation of the arts.”52

48 Mark Jerome Bergaas, “Compositional Style in the Keyboard Works of Hugo Distler (1908–1942)” (PhD

49 Organ Reform movement, see Chapter 1.

50 Bergaas, 25. and McKinny, 21.

51 Larry Palmer, Hugo Distler and His Church Music (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House,

52 Ibid, 71.
apprehended the pastor of the St. Jakobi church and forced the former choirmaster to serve in the military. Thus, Distler decided to pursue another post.

In June 1937, Distler was accepted for a teaching position at the Hochschule in Stuttgart. In 1940, he joined the faculty at the Hochschule of Music in Berlin and taught choral conducting, theory, composition, and organ. The power of the Nazi regime was growing rapidly; in 1933, Distler joined the Nazi\textsuperscript{53} party in order to secure his own status in the new Reich. Unfortunately, his works were stigmatized by the Nazi Reich as ‘degenerate art’ at the music festival in Düsseldorf in 1938.\textsuperscript{54} Due to the constraints of the Nazi regime, pressured and burdened within his profession, Distler committed suicide on All Saints’ Day, November 1, 1942, at the age of 34.

**Distler’s Duty at St. Jakobi Church in Lübeck**

As an organist, Distler was not only responsible for the Sunday service playing, but also composed both organ and choral music and to play the organ for Vespers services. In total, Distler collaborated on 38 musical Vespers services with cantor Grusnick and Pastor Kühl during his time in Lübeck. Distler succeed as a church cantor after Grusnick resigned in April, 1931. As a cantor, Distler had to conduct both a volunteer choir and a boys’ choir. Distler composed most of his sacred works during this period, such as instrumental and choral works. These compositions were presented during the Vespers services or special musical events held in the

\textsuperscript{53} NSDAP: *National Sozialistische Demokratische Arbeiter Partei*, known as National Socialists or Nazi.

city of Lübeck. In short, the years (1931-1937) that Distler spent as organist and cantor at St. Jakobi Church in Lübeck, had a strong influence on his career as an organist and a composer.55

The Jakobi’s Stellwagen organ

Distler’s writing about St. Jakobi’s organs provided insightful information on the inspiration for the music composed for those instruments, as he stated:

In those old organs, there appeared to a high degree a creative, cosmic logic which was fully liberated from all that is accidentally bound to time and humanity. These old, honorable witnesses to German art are sign posts for us toward a new artistic ethos that sees its final justification and fulfillment no longer in that self-glorification, which ultimately invented the ideology of a utopian “universal art work”, but rather in the office of devout proclamation. Yet that requires courage toward a new anonymity of artistic production, an acknowledgement of knightly character in every art. And the goal: a new sacred art.56

All of Distler chorale-based organ works were written for the church’s small organ. These include the two organ partitas, Nun komm der Heiden Heiland, Op. 8, No.1 and Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme, Op.8, No.2, and a collection of chorale preludes and new harmonizations called Kleine Orgelchoral-Bearbeitungen, Op.8, No. 3.

The church had two organs in his time, and they are presently still in use for musical events and worship services. While Distler’s organ works composed during the Lübeck years were inspired and written for the small organ in the church, the large organ of the church cannot be ignored because the premier of the partita on Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme was played on this large organ. The instrument is located on the west wall, and the original 16’ principal Blockwerk was built in between 1466 and 1504. The Rückpositiv was added by the Lübeck

55 John Brock, “Registration and Articulation in the Organ Works of Hugo Distler,” The American Organist 42 (December 2008), 68.

56 Bergaas, 33.
organ maker Hans Koster in 1573. There were two renovations; one in 1673 by a Hamburg
builder, Jochim Richborn, and another in 1740 by Julius Bünting, the organ was then enlarged
and looked as it did during Distler’s time\textsuperscript{57} (See Figure 2-1).

Figure 2-1: The Disposition of the Large Organ in St. Jakobi Church in 1935.\textsuperscript{58}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hauptwerk</th>
<th>Rückpositive</th>
<th>Oberwerk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prinzipal</td>
<td>16’ Gedackt</td>
<td>8’ Quintade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bordun</td>
<td>16’ Quintade</td>
<td>8’ Prinzipal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oktave</td>
<td>8’ Prinzipal</td>
<td>4’ Rohrflote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hohlflote</td>
<td>8’ Blockflote</td>
<td>4’ Oktave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spitzflote</td>
<td>8’ Oktave</td>
<td>2’ Nachthorn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oktave</td>
<td>4’ Siffloite</td>
<td>1’ Querflote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasat</td>
<td>2-2/3 Terzian</td>
<td>II Oktave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rauschquinte</td>
<td>II Zimbel</td>
<td>III Waldflote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sesquialtera</td>
<td>II Krummhorn</td>
<td>16’ Superoktave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixtur</td>
<td>IV-V Zink</td>
<td>8’ Quinte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trompete</td>
<td>16’ Schalmei</td>
<td>4’ Scharf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trompete</td>
<td>8’</td>
<td>Vox humana</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pedal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prinzipal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subbass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oktave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bordun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oktave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gedackt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nachthorn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bauernrauschpfeife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixtur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posauna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posaune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trompete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Klarine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kornett</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\textsuperscript{58} Bergaas, 40.
The small organ is located on the North wall near the altar which was a common practice in North Germany. According to Distler researcher, Mark Jerome Bergaas, the musical elements of the liturgy almost all took place near the altar.\textsuperscript{59} Thus, the small organ was used to provide music during these moments. The original Hauptwerk and possibly a few pedal stops of this organ were built in the late fifteenth century (See Figure 2-2). The instrument was enlarged in 1636-1637 by the Lübeck organ builder Friedrich Stellwagen (d. 1659). The new Rückpositiv and Brustwerk were added, and the Pedal was enlarged during the renovation\textsuperscript{60} (See Figure 2-3). The organ survived and worked for the following three centuries without any change after this renovation. The stoplist of the small organ (1636/1637) was included in the notes of Distler’s Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland* in 1933. During Distler’s time in Lübeck, the organ was under renovation in order to enlarge the pedal division, replace the old pedal board, and reinstall a new wind chest in 1935. The renovation was conducted by the Lübeck organ builder, Karl Kemper (1880-1957). Furthermore, Distler collaborated with his brother-in-law, Eric Thienhaus, on the new specifications during the 1935 renovation (See Figure 2-4). The registration for the *Kleine Orgelchoral-Bearbeitungen*, Op.8, No. 3 is based on the disposition of the stop-list after the 1935 renovation.

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid, 34.

\textsuperscript{60} The organ specification and detail organ information are provided in Bergaas’s dissertation, see p.35 (table 2-1 and 2-2) and 36.
Figure 2-2: The Disposition of the Small Organ in St. Jakobi Church before 1500.\(^\text{61}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Hauptwerk</strong></th>
<th><strong>Rückpositive</strong></th>
<th><strong>Brustwerk</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prinzipal</td>
<td>16’</td>
<td>Gedackt 8’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oktave</td>
<td>8’</td>
<td>Quintatön 8’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spielpfeife</td>
<td>8’</td>
<td>Waldflöte 2’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oktave</td>
<td>4’</td>
<td>Zimbel II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasat</td>
<td>3’</td>
<td>Regal 8’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rauschquinte</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>Schalmei 4’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixtur</td>
<td>IV</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trommet</td>
<td>8’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Pedal</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subbass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spielpfeife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bordun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posaune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trommpet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{61}\)Bregaas, 35.

\(^{62}\)Ibid.
Figure 2-4: The Disposition of the Small Organ in St. Jokobi Church in 1935. The changes are indicated in bold characters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hauptwerk</th>
<th>Rückpositive</th>
<th>Brustwerk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prinzipal</td>
<td>16’ Gedackt</td>
<td>8’ Gedackt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oktave</td>
<td>8’ Quintatön</td>
<td>8’ Quintatön</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spielpfeife</td>
<td>8’ Prinzipal</td>
<td>4’ Waldflöte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oktave</td>
<td>4’ Hohlflöte</td>
<td>4’ Zimbel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flöte</td>
<td>4’ Ocatve</td>
<td>2’ Regal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oktave</td>
<td>2’ Scharf</td>
<td>IV Schalmei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixtur</td>
<td>IV Trichterregal</td>
<td>8’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trommet</td>
<td>8’ Krummhorn</td>
<td>8’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pedal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subbass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gedacktpommer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bordun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nachthorn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rauschpfeife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posaune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dulzian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trommpet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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63 Schoof, XIX.
Overview of Distler’s organ music

As mentioned earlier, his entire chorale-based organ works were written for the small organ at St. Jakobi Church in Lübeck, and are published as opus 8, numbers 1 through 3. The rest of his secular organ works were inspired by his 15-stop house organ built by Paul Ott in 1938 in Stuttgart. The list of Distler’s organ works is shown as Figure 2-5.

Figure 2-5: Distler’s Organ Works and the Year of Publication

Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Op.8, no. 1 (1933)
Partita on *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme*, Op.8, no. 2 (1935)
*Kleine Orgelchoral-Bearbeitungen*, Op.8, no. 3 (1938)
*30 Spielstücke für die Kleinorgel oder andere Tasteninstrumente*, Op. 18, no. 1 (1938)
*Orgelsonate*, Op. 18, no. 2 (1939)

---


65 The Little Chorale Arrangements for Organ

66 Thirty Pieces for Small Organ or other Keyboard Instruments.

67 Organ Sonata
Chapter 3: The Lutheran Liturgical Contexts Used in Distler’s Chorale-based Organ Works

Traditional German church music had a profound influence on Distler’s chorale-based organ works. As a Lutheran musician, Distler adopted Luther’s view on music that the music of the church should proclaim and instruct the congregation in the message of the Gospel.\textsuperscript{68} Most of Distler’s organ works are based on German Lutheran Chorales. Distler addressed his point of view regarding the importance of the chorale in an article stating that,

The spirit of the Lutheran chorale, which in the sixteenth century began to weld the community together into a self-conscious whole to an extent to which no secular power might have been capable, awakes to a new strong life. Thus, community and church became and become again the hidden means, the womb, out of which music will be reborn.\textsuperscript{69}

Accordingly, the chorales that Distler used in his organ works were all published during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (See Figure 3-1). Furthermore, these chorales were familiar to the congregation and were sung on certain days of the year during the worship service. The only exception is the chorale Christ, der du bist der helle Tag, which was sung during Vespers.


\textsuperscript{69} Ibid.
Figure 3-1: Chorales used in Distler’s Chorale-based Organ Works

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chorale</th>
<th>Liturgical calendar</th>
<th>Publish Year</th>
<th>Work No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland</em></td>
<td>Advent</td>
<td>1524</td>
<td>Op. 8/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme</em></td>
<td>Trinity</td>
<td>1599</td>
<td>Op. 8/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern</em></td>
<td>Epiphany</td>
<td>1599</td>
<td>Op. 8/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Das alte Jahr vergangen ist</em></td>
<td>New Year</td>
<td>1588</td>
<td>Op. 8/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Jesus Christus, unser Heiland, der von uns den Gotteszorn wandt</em></td>
<td>Passion and Holy Communion</td>
<td>1524</td>
<td>Op. 8/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Christe, du Lamm Gottes</em></td>
<td>Passion (Agnus Dei)</td>
<td>1525/1528</td>
<td>Op. 8/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Mit Freuden zart</em></td>
<td>Easter</td>
<td>1566</td>
<td>Op. 8/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ach wie flüchtig, ach wie nichtig</em></td>
<td>Sunday in Commemoration of the Dead</td>
<td>1652</td>
<td>Op. 8/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Christ, der du bist der helle Tag</em></td>
<td>Evening</td>
<td>1536</td>
<td>Op. 8/3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As for the source of the chorales, the hymnal used during Distler’s time was unavailable at the time of this present study. Furthermore, there is no source which indicates which hymnal Distler used. However, two German Lutheran Church hymnals, published after World War II in 1954\textsuperscript{70} and 1957\textsuperscript{71}, were available for this study. All of the chorales that Distler used in his chorale-based organ works are found in these two hymnals with the same catalog number (See


Thus, the chorale tunes for the musical examples of this chapter were taken from the 1954 hymnal.

Figure 3-2: Catalog Numbers of Chorales that Distler used found in 1954 and 1957 Hymnals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chorale</th>
<th>1954 Hymnal(^{72})</th>
<th>1957 Hymnal(^{73})</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland</em></td>
<td>#1</td>
<td>#1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme</em></td>
<td>#121</td>
<td>#121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern</em></td>
<td>#48</td>
<td>#48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Das alte Jahr vergangen ist</em></td>
<td>#38</td>
<td>#38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Jesus Christus, unser Heiland, der von uns den Gotteszorn wandt</em></td>
<td>#154</td>
<td>#154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Christe, du Lamm Gottes</em></td>
<td>#136</td>
<td>#136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Mit Freuden zart</em></td>
<td>#81</td>
<td>#81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ach wie flüchtig, ach wie nichtig</em></td>
<td>#327</td>
<td>#327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Christ, der du bist der helle Tag</em></td>
<td>#354</td>
<td>#354</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{72}\) *Evangelisches Kirchengesangbuch: Ausgabe für die Kurhessen-Waldeck*

\(^{73}\) *Evangelisches Kirchengesangbuch: Ausgabe für die Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche in Bayern*
Partita on *Num komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Op.8, No.1

The chorale, *Num komm, der Heiden Heiland* is Luther’s hymn appointed for the First Sunday of Advent (See Example 3-1). Luther translated the text in 1523 from the fourth-century Latin Advent hymn “Veni redemptor gentium” written by Aurelius Ambrose. The hymn contains seven verses plus a doxology (See Figure 3-3). The German text was published along with the tune in 1524 in two collections, *Enchiridion* at Erfurt and *Geystliche Gesanggk Buchleyn*, edited by Johann Walter at Wittenberg. The melody is in Dorian mode, and the chorale was commonly sung until the early eighteenth century. Distler composed the Partita on *Num komm, der Heiden Heiland* in 1932 and published it in 1933. The work contains four movements and is dedicated to Distler’s theory and composition teacher, Hermann Grabner.

Example 3-1: Chorale, *Num komm, der Heiden Heiland*

---


75 *Meinem Lehrer Hermann Grabner in Verehrung und herzlicher Dankbarkeit.*

76 *Die Evangelische Kirche in Kurhessen-Waldeck*, 1.
Figure 3-3: The Verses of *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland* 77

1. **Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland**
   der Jungfrauen Kind erkannt
daß sich wunder alle Welt
Gott solch Geburt ihm bestellt

2. **Nicht von Manns Blut noch vom Fleisch**
   allein von dem heilgen Geist
ist Gottes Wort worden ein Mensch
und blüht ein Frucht Weibesflesisch

3. **Der Jungfrauen Leib schwanger ward**
doch bleibt Keuschheit rein bewahrt
leucht herfür manch Tugend schon
Gott da war in seinem Thron.

4. **Er gieng aus der Kammer sein**
dem Königlichen Saal so rein
Gott von Art und Mensch ein Held
seinn Weg er zu lauffen eilt.

5. **Sein Lauf kam vom Vater her**
und kehrt wieder zum Vater
fuhr hinunter zu der Höll
und wieder zu Gottes Stuhl.

6. **Der du bist dem Vater gleich**
führe hinaus den Sieg im Fleisch
daß dein ewig Gottes Gewalt
in uns das kranck Fleisch enthalt.

7. **Dein Krippen glänzts hell und klar**
die Nacht gibt ein neu Licht dar
tunckel muß nicht kommen drein
der Glaub bleibt immer im Schein.

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77 Zager, 70-71.

1. **Come now, Savior of the nations,**
   Known to be the child of the Virgin,
   All the world marvels that God
   would prepare such a birth for him.

2. **Not by the flesh and blood of a man,**
   but alone by the Holy Ghost,
   God’s word is become human,
   and becomes as the fruit of a woman’s flesh.

3. **The Virgin’s body became with child,**
   but her chastity was purely preserved.
   Many beautiful signs indicated that
   God was in his throne.

4. **He left his chamber,**
   The royal hall so pure.
   God by origin, and man, a champion,
   He hurries to run his course.

5. **His course originated with the Father**
   and returned again to the Father;
   went below to hell
   and back again to God’s seat.

6. **You, who are equal to the Father,**
   take the victory in the flesh
   so that your eternal divine power
   supports the sick flesh in us.

7. **Your manger shines bright and clear;**
   The night shines forth a new light.
   Darkness must not enter therein.
   Faith always remains in the light.
Larry Palmer states that, “the earlier Partita *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland* might be considered ‘absolute’ music, insofar as it did not attempt a verse by verse portrayal of the chorale text, or for that matter, word painting in general”\(^78\) However, the statement is questionable, because the music and text have a close relationship that can be found in the second movement. The movement consists of a chorale with seven variations, which resemble the seven verses, and each variation expresses the meaning of the verse. For example, each phrase of the chorale tune is presented twice in the first variation; first in high register and following the lower register which could express the verse “Savior of Nations” who is coming from heaven to earth (See Example 3-2).

Example 3-2: Each phrase of the Chorale is presented twice in the different register, Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Mvt 2, Variation 1.\(^79\)

\(^{78}\) Larry Palmer, *Hugo Distler and His Church Music* (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1967), 84.

Three-part texture with the cantus firmus in the bass could reflect the text “Gottes Wort worden ein Mensch” (God’s word is become human) in the second variation. Distler notated accent markings to present the text “Many beautiful signs” in the third variation (See Example 3-3).

Example 3-3: The accent markings, Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Mvt 2, Variation 3.  

The broken chord in triple rhythm could reflect the verse “hurries to run” in Toccata-like variation four (See Example 3-4). The ascending passage for all voices in the end of the fifth variation which implies the verse “back again to God’s seat” (See Example 3-5).


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80 Ibid, 8.

81 Ibid, 9.
Example 3-5: The ascending passage for all parts in the end. Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Mvt 2, Variation 5.\(^{82}\)

In the sixth variation, Distler used canonic setting to present the text “You, who are equal to the Father.” The florid cantus firmus against slow moving accompanimental parts could arguably represent in the final verse “a light shines in the dark” in the fantasia-like seventh variation (See Example 3-6).

Example 3-6: The florid cantus firmus against slow moving accompaniment parts. Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Mvt 2, Variation 7.\(^{83}\)

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\(^{82}\) Ibid, 11.

\(^{83}\) Ibid, 13.
Partita on *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme*, Op.8, No.2

The chorale *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme* was sung on the Twenty-Seventh Sunday after Trinity, which is the close of the liturgical year. The tune of the chorale was published with the verse by Phillipp Nicolai in 1599 (See Example 3-7). The chorale contains three verses.

Example 3-7: Chorale *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme*\(^\text{84}\)

![Musical notation](image)

Figure 3-4: The Verses of *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme*\(^\text{85} \text{86}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>German Verse</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme der Wächter sehr hoch auf der Zinne wach auf, du Stadt Jerusalem! Mitternacht heißt diese Stunde; sie rufen uns mit hellem Munde: Wo seid ihr klugen Jungfrauen? Wohlauf, der Bräutgam kömmt, steht auf, die Lampen nehmt! Halleluja! Macht euch bereit zu der Hochzeit, ihr müsset ihm entgegengehn!</td>
<td>1. Wake up, there calls to us the voice of the watchmen high on the battlements, Wake up, O city of Jerusalem! The hour is midnight; They call to us in a clear voice: Where are you, Wise Virgins? Arise, the bridegroom comes, Get up, take your lamps! Halleluja! Get ready for the wedding, You must go out to meet him!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^\text{84}\) Evangelisches Kirchengesangbuch: Ausgabe für die Kurhessen-Waldeck, 121.


\(^\text{86}\) The English translated verse is taken from different sources; Verse one is taken from Peter Williams’s translation. Peter William, *The Organ Music of J. S. Bach*, 2d ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 323. Verses two and three is translated by Shu-Hui Tsai and Danillo Rottluff.
2. Zion hört die Wächter singen, 
das Herz tut ihr vor Freude springen, 
sie wachet und steht eilend auf. 
Ihr Freund kommt vom Himmel prächtig, 
von Gnaden stark, von Wahrheit mächtig, 
 ihr Licht wird hell, ihr Stern geht auf. 
Nun komm, du werte Kron, 
Herr Jesu, Gottes Sohn! Hosanna! 
Wir folgen all zum Freudensaal 
und halten mit das Abendmahl.

2. Zion hears the watchmen singing, 
her heart does leap for joy. 
They wake and are hurrying on. 
For her Lord comes from heaven glorious, 
The strong in grace, in powerful truth. 
Her light is bright, star is raising 
Now come, you Blessed One, 
Lord Jesus, Son of God. Hosanna! 
We all follow to the hall of joy 
and have with the Lord’s supper.

3. Gloria sei dir gesungen 
mit Menschen und mit Engelzungen, 
mit Harfen und mit Zimbeln schön. 
Von zwölf Perlen sind die Tore 
an deiner Statdt; wir stehn im Chore 
der Engel hoch um deinen Thron. 
Kein Aug hat je gespürt, 
kein Ohr hat mehr gehört solche Freude. 
Des jauchzen wir und singen dir 
das Halleluja für und für.

3. Gloria be sung to you, 
with people and with angels. 
with harps and with beautiful cymbals. 
Of twelve pearls the gates of 
your town are made; we are standing in the 
choir of angels high around your throne. 
No eye has seen, 
nor ear has heard such joy 
Of we shout and sing to thee 
Halleluja forevermore

Distler’s Partita *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme* was composed in 1934 and published in 1935. It contains three movements; Toccata, Bicinium, and Fugue. The chorale is presented competely in each movement. The work is dedicated to the Oberland’s church council, Dr. Christhard Mahrenholz (1900-1980). During the German pre-war *Orgelbewegung*, Mahrenholz was considered one of the most important organ reformers (See Chapter 1). The premiere of the work took place at the closing of Distler’s thirtieth Vespers at St. Jacobi church on November 24, 1935.

Each movement is associated with each verse of text. As mentioned earlier, Larry Palmer claims that the partita “might be viewd as a bit of program music.” Before the entrance of the

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87 Oberlandeskirchenrat Dr. Christhard Mahrenholz gewidmet.

88 Palmer, 84.
choral tune at the first movement, there is a six-measure introduction. The introduction begins with a sixteenth-note passage with the canon setting to express a word “awake”. The trumpet-like figure placed in the Pedal expresses the verse “awake” in measure three (See Example 3-8). Thus, the first movement is filled the atmosphere of alertness through these sixteenth-note passages and a motive reminiscent of possible trumpet-like figurations. Distler begins the second movement with using only one voice to express the second verse of “watchmen’s singing.” The dance-like quality of movement three expresses the joyful moods of the third verse.

Example 3-8: The trumpet-like figure against the florid upper part (figure corta), Partita on Wacht auf, ruft uns die Stimme, mm. 3-5.\textsuperscript{89}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{example3-8.png}
\end{figure}

The Kleine Orgelchoral-Bearbeitungen, Op.8, No.3

The Kleine Orgelchoral-Bearbeitungen, Op.8, No.3 was published by Bärenreiter after Distler left Lübeck in 1938. The work was dedicated to Wilhelm Gohl (1896-1958), who was superintendent of church music when Distler was employed in Stuttgart. The Kleine Orgelchoral-Bearbeitungen contains seven chorales that were used frequently in the Lutheran church during Distler’s time. Furthermore, all of them still can be found in today’s German Evangelical Lutheran Church hymnal, including *Wie schön leuchtet die Morgenstern, Das alte Jahr vergangen ist, Jesus Christus, unser Heiland, der von uns den Gotteszorn wandt, Christe, du Lamm Gottes, Mit Freuden zart, Ach wie flüchtig, ach wie nichtig, and Christ, der du bist der helle Tag.* In addition, these seven chorales were sung in specific days of the liturgical year (See Figure 3-1 above). The settings of the collection contains five chorale preludes and two partitas (See Figure 3-5 below). Each setting follows a new four-part harmonization of the chorale. In the preface of the collection Distler addressed that:

The settings for congregational chorale playing appended to the preludes are nothing more than harmonization suggestions. It goes without saying that newly harmonized, improvised chorale settings are to be preferred. . . . Individual verses of the two partitas can also be employed alone as preludes. The Ricercare from the Partitas “Jesus Christus, unser Heiland, der von uns den Gottes Zorn wandt” as well as the Pastorale from the Partita “Christ, der du bist der helle Tag” are suitable as postludes to church services.\(^90\)

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\(^90\) *Die den Vorspielen beigefügten Sätze für das Gemeindechoralspiel wollen nichts anderes sein als Vorschläge der Harmonisierung. Es braucht nicht besonders betont zu warden, daß den jeweils neu harmonisierten, imporvisierten Choralsätzen der Vorzug zu geben ist. Auf Registrierangaben der Sätze wurde verzichtet. ......... Von den beiden Partiten können auch einzelne Verse für sich zu Vorspoeelen verwendet warden. Das Ricercare aus der Partita”Jesus Christus, unser Heiland, der von uns den Gottes Zorn wandt” sowie das Pastorale aus der Partita “Christ, der du bist der helle Tag” eignen sich als Gottesdienstnachspiele,*
Thus, the new harmonization chorales found in the collection are meant for use during the congregational singing, and the preludes are used as an introduction of the chorale. Organist and music editor Armin Schoof has stated that, “those works could possibly been used as a prelude for the congregational hymn, moreover, each prelude can be played before the corresponding congregational verse – quasi as an organ meditation.”\textsuperscript{91} Hence, the collection is meant to be used during the worship service.

Figure 3-5: Chorale Settings in the \textit{Kleine Orgelchoral-Bearbeitungen}, Op. 8, No.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chorale</th>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Movement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern</td>
<td>Prelude</td>
<td>1 verse+Chorale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Das alte Jahr vergangen ist</td>
<td>Prelude</td>
<td>1 verse+Chorale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus Christus, unser Heiland, der von uns den Gotteszorn wandt</td>
<td>Partita (Chorale, Bicinium, Ricercar)</td>
<td>3 mvts+Chorale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christe, du Lamm Gottes</td>
<td>Prelude (ABA)</td>
<td>3 verses+Chorale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mit Freuden zart</td>
<td>Prelude</td>
<td>1 verse+Chorale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ach wie flüchtig, ach wie nichtig</td>
<td>Prelude</td>
<td>1 verse+Chorale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ, der du bist der helle Tag</td>
<td>Partita (Chorale, Bicinium, Pastorale)</td>
<td>3 mvts+Chorale</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{91} Ibid, XV.
Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern

Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern is listed as an Epiphany chorale in Distler’s New Edition of the Complete Organ Works II, published by Bärenreiter in 2008. However, according to Peter Williams, the chorale has been associated variously with Advent, Pentecost, Annunciation, and Sundays after Trinity. The tune was composed by Phillipp Nicolai (1556-1608) and published in Frewden-Speigel dess ewigen Leben in 1599 (See Example 3-9). The chorale contains seven stanzas. There is an acrostic formed by the first letter of each stanza in order to honor Nicolai’s friend and pupil, Wilhelm Ernst, who had died in 1598. Thus, WEGV[U]HZW stands for Wilhelm Ernst, Graft und Herr zu Waldeck (Wilhelm Ernst, Count and Lord of Waldeck).

Example 3-9: Chorale Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern

Das alte Jahr vergangen ist

Das alte Jahr vergangen ist is sung on New Year’s day. The chorale contains six verses. The first two verses were published at Erfurt by C. Stephani in 1568, the verses 3-6 were written by Johann Steurlein (1546-1613) in 1588. The melody was composed by Wolfgang Karl Briegel

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92 William, 484.

93 Evangelisches Kirchengesangbuch: Ausgabe für die Kurhessen-Waldeck, 48.
in 1687 (See Example 3-10). Distler’s setting of this chorale contains only eight measures, making it the shortest setting in the collection.

Example 3-10: Chorale *Das alte Jahr vergangen ist*\(^\text{94}\)

![Music notation]

**Partita on Jesus Christus, unser Heiland, der von uns den Gottes Zorn wandt**

*Jesus Christus, unser Heiland, der von uns den Gottes Zorn wandt* is a Lutheran communion chorale (See Example 3-11). The text is Luther’s 1524 translation of Jan Hus’s Latin hymn “*Jesus Christus, nostra salus.*”\(^\text{95}\) However, according to the scholar, Robin Leaver, the original writer of the hymn “*Jesus Christus, nostra salus*” is questioned\(^\text{96}\) because there were few sources published in the early sixteenth century that found the same heading address that “Das Lied S Johannes Hus gebessert” (The hymn of Johann Hus improved). Thus, the hymn is suspected to have been written either in the late fourteenth or early fifteenth centuries, and sung by Hus’s followers, Bohemian Brethren.\(^\text{97}\)

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\(^\text{94}\) *Evangelisches Kirchengesangbuch: Ausgabe für die Kurhessen-Waldeck*, 38.


\(^\text{96}\) Leaver, 154.

\(^\text{97}\) Ibid.
Example 3-11: Chorale, *Jesus Christus, unser Heiland, der von uns den Gotteszorn wandt*\(^{98}\)

\[\text{Musical notation for Example 3-11}\]

**Christe, du Lamm Gottes**

*Christe, du Lamm Gottes* is the traditional Lutheran chorale for Agnus Dei. The melody and text was published at *Braunschweig* in 1528 by Johannes Bugenhangen (1485-1558). The melody was composed by Martin Luther in 1528 (See Example 3-12). Dislter’s setting of the work contains three sections and is divided by double bar lines that follow the structure of the chorale. It is the only setting in the collection that presents all of the verses.

Example 3-12: Chorale *Christe, du Lamm Gottes*\(^{99}\)

\[\text{Musical notation for Example 3-12}\]

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\(^{98}\) *Evangelisches Kirchengesangbuch: Ausgabe für die Kurhessen-Waldeck*, 154.

\(^{99}\) Ibid, 136.
**Mit Freuden zart**

The chorale *Mit Freuden zart* is sung on Easter Sunday. The tune was published in Bohemian Brethren’s *Kirchengesänge* in 1566 (See Example 3-13) with Georg Vetter’s text “Mit Freuden zart su dieser Fahrt.”

Example 3-13: Chorale *Mit Freuden zart*\(^{100}\)

![Chorale Notation]

**Ach wie flüchtig, ach wie nichtig**

*Ach wie flüchtig, ach wie nichtig* is a chorale for “**Totensonntag**” (Sunday in Commemoration of the Dead). It contains eight verses and was written by Michael Franck in 1652. The melody was composed by Johann Crüger in 1661 (See Example 3-14). Two notes differ from Distler’s version. Distler’s has E instead of G for the last note in the first measure and starting second measure with G instead of A (See Example 3-14 with the mark x on the top).

Example 3-14: Chorale *Ach wie flüchtig, ach wie nichtig*\(^{101}\)

![Chorale Notation]

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\(^{100}\) Ibid, 81.

\(^{101}\) Ibid, 327.
Partita on *Christ, der du bist der helle Tag*

*Christ, der du bist der helle Tag* is a Lutheran Vesper hymn (Example 3-15). The text contains six verses and was translated by Erasmus Alberus from a Latin Lenten hymn “*Christe, qui lux es et dies.*” The melody was published with the text in 1568.\(^\text{102}\)

Example 3-15: Chorale, *Christ, der du bist der helle Tag*\(^\text{103}\)

\(^{102}\) Williams, 500.

\(^{103}\) *Evangelisches Kirchengesangbuch: Ausgabe für die Kurhessen-Waldeck*, 354.
Chapter 4: The Musical Genres used in Distler’s Chorale-Based Organ Music

Because of the Orgelbewegung\textsuperscript{104}(discussed above in chapter 1) and Neo-classicalism, the rise of musicological research and interest in early music had a great influence on Distler’s compositions. Distler employed Baroque and pre-Baroque genres such as the ricercar, chaconne, and \textit{bicinium} in his works.\textsuperscript{105} Moreover, these are genres often found in Samuel Scheidt and Dieterich Buxtehude’s works. All of the genres that used in Distler’s chorale-based organ works will be discuss in this Chapter.

Partita

The term “partita” is defined differently depending on the period. For example, it could mean a variation, a piece, a set of variations, or a suite or other multi-movement genre. However, when the term was used to represent a set of variations based on a chorale tune, it was sometimes known as chorale variations. The purpose of the chorale variations is uncertain; perhaps they were used at home, in church, as interludes between congregational verses, as models for independent chorale-preludes, or as exercises in different genres or composing by common figures.\textsuperscript{106} A chorale variation often features the following sections: a statement of the chorale, a \textit{bicinium},\textsuperscript{107} figural variations, various dance types, and a final \textit{plenum} chorale.\textsuperscript{108}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[104] Organ Reform Movement.
\item[106] Peter Williams, \textit{The Organ Music of J.S. Bach}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 499.
\item[107] A \textit{Bicinium} is an unaccompanied composition for two voices or instruments.
\item[108] Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
All of Distler’s partitas consist of multi-movements based on a single chorale tune. The Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland* contains four movements: I. Toccata, II. Choral Mit Variationen, III. Chaconne, and IV. Toccata. The work begins with an introduction-like toccata rather than the traditional chorale statement. The second movement contains a chorale statement with seven variations with the variations followed the traditional partita movement plan. For example, the movements begin with a chorale statement, a bichinium, a trichinium, and following with figural variations. The third movement contains eighteen variations based on an ostinato theme in the bass. The final movement shares the same content as the first movement. The Partita on *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme* contains three movements: I. Toccata, II. Bichinium, and III. Fuge.

Distler also composed two small-scale partitas. The partita on *Jesus Christus, unser Heiland, der von uns den Gotteszorn wandt* and Partita on *Christ, der du bist der helle Tag* are found in *Kleine Orgelchoral-Bearbeitungen*, Op.8, no. 3. Both of them contain three movements. They each begin with a chorale statement, then a bichinium followed by a figural variation. However, Distler assigned a name to each movement instead of simply using the number of the variation. For example, both of the second movements are named “bichinium”, but “ricercar” is the name for the third movement of the Partita on *Jesus Christus, unser Heiland*, and “pastorale” is the name given to the third movement of the partita on *Christ, der du bist der helle Tag* (See Figure 4-1).
Figure 4-1: The Movement Settings of Distler’s Partitas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partita</th>
<th>Movement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland</em></td>
<td>I. Toccata, II. Choral Mit Variationen,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>III. Chaconne, IV. Toccata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme</em></td>
<td>I. Toccata, II. Bicinium, III. Fuge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Jesus Christus, unser Heiland, der</em></td>
<td>I. Chorale, II. Bicinium, III. Ricercare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>von uns den Gotteszorn wandt</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Christ, der du bist der helle Tag</em></td>
<td>I. Chorale, II. Bicinium, III. Pastroale</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Toccata**

The word toccata means “to touch” in Italian. During the second half of the sixteenth century, the toccata was the most important form of keyboard music in the quasi-improvisatory style. The composition is based on harmony and figuration rather than imitative counterpoint. In general, the Baroque toccata is constructed with chordal structures alternating with figurative passage-work. Distler adopted the genre to his chorale-based organ work as well. For example, Distler assigned toccatas to the first and final movements of the Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*. The content of both movements is exactly the same. Each toccata begins with a pedal solo based on the first phrase of the chorale, followed by a florid passage on the manuals over a pedal point (See Example 4-1), which reminds us of seventeenth-century North German organ works by Buxtehude (See Example 4-2).

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109 Arnold, 28.
Example 4-1: The work begins with a pedal solo and followed by a florid passage on the manual over a pedal point, Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Mvt. 1.\(^{110}\)

Example 4-2: The work begins with a pedal solo and followed by a florid passage on the manual over a pedal point, *Praeludium in E minor*, BuxWV143, mm.1-4\(^{111}\)

The other toccata is found in the first movement of Partita on *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme*. The toccata contains three sections, each section divided by a double bar line (mm.1-20, mm. 21-40, mm. 41-51). Distler’s manual figurations reflect the early definition of toccata. For


example, Distler began each section with a figuration developed from the upbeat rhythmic motive (See Example 4-3) in imitative entry, which reminds us of the seventeenth-century toccata by Pachelbel (See Example 4-4). Moreover, the chorale is presented throughout the movement. Distler structured the toccata along with the structure of the chorale, which is in bar form (AAB).

Example 4-3: The section began with a figuration developed from the upbeat rhythmic motive. Partita on Wacht auf, ruft uns die Stimme, Mvt.1, mm.1-2.\(^{112}\)

\[
\text{Example 4-3:}\begin{array}{c}
\text{The section began with a figuration developed from the upbeat rhythmic motive. Partita on Wacht auf, ruft uns die Stimme, Mvt.1, mm.1-2.}\end{array}
\]

Example 4-4: The work began with a figuration developed from the upbeat rhythmic motive. Toccata in C major, mm. 1-2.\(^{113}\)

\[
\text{Example 4-4:}\begin{array}{c}
\text{The work began with a figuration developed from the upbeat rhythmic motive. Toccata in C major, mm. 1-2.}\end{array}
\]

\(^{112}\) Schoof, 28.

Bicinium

A Bicinium is an unaccompanied composition for two voices or instruments. As Bruce Bellingham defines, “the term was also used more specifically for the teaching pieces composed by sixteenth-century Germans, as in Rhau's Bicina gallica, latina et germanica (1545). In the 17th century, Scheidt used the term for two-part versets or variations in his organ music.”114 For example, the second verse of the hymn De Nativitate Christi in Tabulatura Nova, Part III by Samuel Schedit (See Example 4-5). The form has not been used often in organ literature since J.S. Bach.

Example 4-5: Bicinium from the second verse of the hymn De Nativitate Christi in Tabulatura Nova, Part III, mm.1-6.115

There are two examples of Bicinium type found in Distler’s works. In the first, each line of the chorale melody is presented twice. Examples are found in the first variation of the second movement of Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland (See Example 4-6) and in the second movement of

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Christ, der du bist helle Tag. The chorale tune alternates between the two voices. This type is a particular style that originated with Scheidt (See Example 4-7).

Example 4-6: The cantus firmus presented twice, Partita on Nun komm, der Heiland Heiland, Mvt 2, Variation 1, m.1.\(^{116}\)

Example 4-7: Bicinium from the fourth verse of chorale Vater unser im Himmelreich in Tabulatura Nova, mm.1-13.\(^{117}\)

\(^{116}\) Schoof, 4.

The second type of *bicinium* which is a slow moving cantus firmus voice appears against the active melismatic accompaniment. The *bicinium* in *Jesus Christus, unser Heiland* and the second movement of the Partita on *Wachet auf*, ruft uns die Stimme exemplify the form (See Example 4-8).

Example 4-8: The cantus firmus against active melismatic accompaniment, Partita on *Jesus Christus, unser Heiland*, *Bicinium*, mm. 4-6.\(^\text{118}\)

![Example 4-8](image)

### Tricinium

*Tricinium* is a three-voice composition, similar to *bicinium*, most often used in Germany in the sixteenth century.\(^\text{119}\) Distler seems to have followed Sweelinck or Scheidt in placing his *tricinium* immediately after the *bicinium* in the second variation of the second movement of *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*. Distler uses the chorale tune as a cantus firmus in the bass while the two active upper voices play elaborate figurations in canonic setting. The figuration of the upper two voices is derived from the first phrase of the chorale (See Example 4-9).

\(^{118}\) Ibid, 8.

Example 4-9: The figuration of the upper two parts is derived from the chorale, Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, *Tricinium*, m.1

![Musical notation]

**Ricercar**

The word ricercar means “to search” in Italian. Like toccata, ricercar was one of the prominent genres in Italian organ literature in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the sixteenth century, the ricercar resembled the prelude in that both genres were continuous and improvisational. Later, the ricercar developed into an imitative style with several sections; sometimes, all sections were based on the same theme.

The ricercar in the third movement of the Partita on *Jesus Christus, unser Heiland* is a three to four voice composition in imitative style. The movement contains four sections: each section is divided by a double bar with a meter change (4/4, 2/2, 3/8, and 4/4). The length of a section may vary from nine to thirty-two measures in length (See Figure 4-2).

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120 Schoof, 6.

121 Arnold, 23-28.
Figure 4-2: The section plan for the Ricercar movement. Partita on *Jesus Christus, unser Heiland*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sections</th>
<th>Meter</th>
<th>Measure No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>4/4</td>
<td>13 measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>2/2</td>
<td>29 measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>3/8</td>
<td>32 measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>4/4</td>
<td>9 measures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The subject of each section derives from the opening phrase of the chorale *Jesus Christus, unser Heiland*, but each is varied (See Example 4-10). The chorale tune is not presented completely, only the first phrase of the chorale is heard in the pedal throughout the sections. The last section, in free/toccata style, contrasts with the previous three sections.

Example 4-10: The subjects of the ricercar, Partita on *Jesus Christus, unser Heiland*  

A. The subject for the first section (mm.1-13)

B. The subject for the second section (mm. 14-43)

C. The subject for the third section (mm. 44-74)

---

Pastorale

A pastorale is commonly a type of instrumental or vocal composition, generally in 6/8 or 12/8, which suggests a rustic or bucolic subject, often by imitation of a shepherd’s pipe.¹²³ Therefore, by this symbolic reason, the pastoral was associated with music for Christmas.¹²⁴

The third movement of the Partita on Christ, der du bist der helle Tag is marked “Pastorale.” However, Distler’s pastorale does not adopt its traditional idiom. Distler’s pastorale consists of three sections with a meter change at the second section and a double bar at the third; the first and last sections are in 2/2 with the contrasting middle section in 3/4. The movement begins with imitative entries for three voices in the manual before the entrance of the cantus firmus in syncopated rhythm in the pedal (See Example 4-11). The complete chorale is presented in the pedal. Why Distler chose to title this movement as a “Pastorale” without adopting Baroque pastorale features remains a question. The text of the hymn mentions the light of Jesus (See Figure 4-3). Therefore, the Pastorale could evokes the Christmas image that Jesus is the light of the world. Thus, Distler might have used the theological meaning of the genre rather than applying specific compositional techniques of the genre.


¹²⁴ Ibid.
Example 4-11: The Imitative Entry against the Syncopated Rhythmic Cantus Firmus, Partita on Christ, der du bist der helle Tag, Pastroale, mm. 1-5

![Musical notation](image)

Figure 4-3: The first verse of Christ, der du bist der helle Tag.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Christ, der du bist der helle Tag} & \quad \text{Christ, You who are the bright day} \\
\text{vor dir die Nacht nicht bleiben mag;} & \quad \text{before You the night may not endure,} \\
\text{du leuchtest uns vom Vater her} & \quad \text{You illumine us from the Father} \\
\text{und bist des Lichtes Prediger.} & \quad \text{and are the preacher of light.}
\end{align*}
\]

Chaconne

A chaconne is a continuous variation form based on a repeated theme in the bass and sometimes in other voices. The chaconne was a popular dance in Spain during the last years of the sixteenth century. German composers adopted and developed the genre in the seventeenth century. According to a musicologist, Alexander Silbiger states that the German chaconne that “drawing on traditions of cantus firmus improvisation and ground-bass divisions, created a series of majestic ostinato compositions, and shaped by increasingly brilliant figuration.” These

\[\text{Schoof, II. 27.}\]
\[\text{Williams, 500.}\]
\[\text{Ibid.}\]
traditions were adopted by Distler. The theme of the chaconne in the Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland* is based on the eight notes of the first phrase of the chorale (See Example 4-12). There are eighteen variations within the movement, each shaped by increasingly brilliant figuration. The ostinato pedal appears unchanged from variation 1 through variation 9, when an ornamented virtuoso passage in the pedal comprises variation 10 (See Example 4-13). Later the same virtuoso passage shifts to upper voices.

Example 4-12: The Chaconne Theme, Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, m.1. ¹²⁹

Example 4-13: An Ornamented Virtuoso Pedal Passage, Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Chaconne, m. 10. ¹³⁰

In measure 13, the texture reduces to a single voice with the brilliant arpeggio-like sixteenth-note passage on the manual (See Example 4-14). At variation 14, staccato eighth notes in the interval of a fourth appear in the right hand against the same arpeggio-like sixteenth-note passage in the left hand (See Example 4-15).

¹²⁹ Schoof, I. 16.

¹³⁰ Ibid, 18.
Example 4-14: The brilliant arpeggio-like sixteenth-note passage. Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Chaconne, m. 13.\(^{131}\)

![Example 4-14](image)

Example 4-15: Staccato eighth-notes against sixteenth-notes. Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Chaconne, m. 14.\(^{132}\)

![Example 4-15](image)

After both hands play the brilliant sixteenth-note passage of variation 15, the chordal texture alternates between the hands to form variation 16. The simple ostinato pedal theme returns in variation 17 with a dotted-rhythm motive. In the final variation, Distler uses double pedal to conclude the movement. The Chaconne movement plan is shown on Figure 4-4.

Figure 4-4: Chaconne movement plan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variation</th>
<th>Chaconne Theme</th>
<th>Motivic material used against the Chaconne theme within the variation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pedal</td>
<td>The melodic passage is based on four notes: D-F-G-A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Pedal</td>
<td>The same melodic passage used in the first variation, but transpose to A-C-D-E</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{131}\) Ibid, 19.

\(^{132}\) Ibid, 20.
| 3 | Pedal |   |
| 4 | Pedal |   |
| 5 | Pedal |   |
| 6 | Pedal |   |
| 7 | Pedal |   |
| 8 | Pedal |   |
| 9 | Pedal |   |
| 10 | Oranmented Chaconne Theme in Pedal |   |
| 11 | Oranmented Chaconne Theme in Top voice |   |
| 12 | Oranmented Chaconne Theme in Pedal |   |
| 13 | Oranmented Chaconne Theme in Top voice |   |
| 14 | Oranmented Chaconne Theme in middle voice |   |
| 15 | Oranmented Chaconne Theme in Middle voice |   |
| 16 | Oranmented Chaconne Theme in upper two voices | the chordal texture alternates between the hands |
| 17 | Pedal |   |
| 18 | Chaconne Theme is set in Pedal over a pedal point |   |
Prelude

Many short compositions labeled as prelude date from the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. For example, both the Fundamentum organisandi by Conrad Paumann (1410-1473) and the Buxheimer Orgelbuch (ca. 1470) contain preludes. All of them are short in length and typically improvised. The pieces probably had the function of providing the tonality. The intonation would have the same plainchant mode as the following choral singing (See discussion in Chapter 1). The practice was still used during Distler’s time. For example, the program for the Fourth Vespers at St. Jacobi church shows the practice of chorale singing during Distler’s time there (See Figure 4-5).

Figure 4-5: The Fourth Vespers at St. Jacobi, May 10, 1931.133

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organ</th>
<th>Choralvorspiel, “Herr Christ, der einig Gotts Sohn”</th>
<th>Bach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congregation</td>
<td>Choral: “Herr Christ”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choir</td>
<td>Vers 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congregation</td>
<td>Vers 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liturgist</td>
<td>Schriftverlesung und Lutherwort</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organ</td>
<td>Präludium, Largo [sic] und Fuge</td>
<td>Bach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choir</td>
<td>“Cantate Domino canticum novum”</td>
<td>Schütz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organ</td>
<td>Choralvorspiel, “Erschienen ist der herrlich Tag”</td>
<td>Bach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congregation</td>
<td>Choral, “Erschienen ist”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choir</td>
<td>Vers 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congregation</td>
<td>Vers 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liturgist</td>
<td>Vater unser und Friedensgruss</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organ</td>
<td>Pastorale in vier Sätzen, F-dur</td>
<td>Bach</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

133 Larry Palmer, Hugo Distler and His Church Music (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1967), 166.
All of the preludes composed by Distler are found in The Kleine Orgelchoral-
Bearbeitungen, Op.8, No.3. These chorale preludes were set for one verse, except the Prelude on
Christe, du Lamm Gottes, which included three verses. The setting of the chorale tune is known
as “cantus firmus style” (the detail of the cantus firmus settings will be discussed below in
Chapter 5).

Fugue

Fugue is the German word for “fuga” (Latin, Italian, and Spanish) and “fugue” (French).
Fuga is a Latin noun whose meaning is “flight” or “fleeing”.134 Paul Mark Walker points out that
the earliest document to use the word “fugue” in a musical context is found in the Speculum
musicae by Jacobus de Liège from the early fourteenth century.135 The term was applied to the
works that associate different types of discant along with the motet, the conductus, the cantilena,
and the rodeau.136 Around 1600, the term fugue appeared in Italian keyboard music as the title of
imitative pieces with the meaning of “a theme to be treated imitatively.”137 German composers
began to use the term in the early seventeenth century. By the end of the century, the term was
used to replace ricercar, capriccio, and fantasia.

Distler applied the term fuge to the third movement of the partita on Wachet auf, ruft
uns die Stimme, Op.8, No. 2. The fugue is divided into six sections by double bar lines with four-
voice structure. In addition, the chorale tune is heard thoroughly in the fugue movement. Distler

135 Ibid.
136 Ibid.
137 Ibid, 118.
divided the chorale tune into five parts and placed them in each section (See Example 4-16).

Although the movement is named “Fugue,” only the first section adopted a fugue compositional rule. The thirteen-measure subject (See Example 4-17) of the movement is presented by soprano, alto, tenor, and bass consecutively in the first section. The answer is tonal.

Example 4-16: The chorale is divided into five parts and used in the Fuge of Partita on Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme.

![Example 4-16](image)

Example 4-17: The Fuge Subject, Partita on Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme, Fuge, mm.1-13.

![Example 4-17](image)

The second section begins with the same subject, but uses the chorale tune for the second entry instead of the subject itself (See Example 4-18). Both the first and second sections present the first half of the chorale. The third section presents the first phrase of the second half chorale. The first two measures of the fugue subject is presented as stretto throughout the section. The fast passages begin the fourth section. In this section, the second phrase of the second half chorale is introduced. The fifth section contains only two measures that present the last phrase of the chorale. The final section is labeled as a coda to conclude the movement (See figure 4-6 for the fugue movement plan).
Example 4-18: The Fuge Subject against the chorale tune, Partita on *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme*, mm. 77-84.\textsuperscript{138}

Figure 4-6: The Fugue movement plan. Partita on *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Chorale tune used in the section</th>
<th>Meter</th>
<th>Measure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
<td>3/8</td>
<td>76 measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td></td>
<td>3/8</td>
<td>33 measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td></td>
<td>3/8</td>
<td>41 measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td></td>
<td>4/4</td>
<td>19 measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td></td>
<td>6/4</td>
<td>2 measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coda</td>
<td></td>
<td>2/2</td>
<td>9 measures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{138} Schoof, I. 38.
The use of pedal point, which is often encountered in the organ works of North German Baroque predecessors, such as Buxtehude. The motive of the section is from the first two measures of the fugue subject, which includes the pitches G-C-G-A (See Example 4-19). The section begins with a canon in fifth and ends in a grand C major chord with double pedal, which provides a grand ending for the movement.

Example 4-19: The Last Section of the Fuge, Partita on Wacht auf, ruft uns die Stimme, mm. 172-174.
Chapter 5: Compositional Devices Used in Distler’s Chorale-Based Organ Music

Distler made a clear statement about his understanding of old style composition from the letter he wrote to his friend Inge Heinsen dated on February 29, 1928:

At the moment I am working on a keyboard chaconne (I am just at the fourteenth variation!) in the old style: that is, as much as possible without chromaticism and in church modes. Such as a method of composing was completely remote from me until now and first I must humble within myself over the writing…Grabner will either completely reject or highly praise the chaconne, I think. I am stubborn: I have made a resolution to write neither a chord nor a key signature and until now I have kept it…. In the voice leading—it is strictly four part—I have been extremely free; there are scales of fifths, fourths, sevenths, and seconds, and no voice concerns itself especially much with others.\(^{139}\)

During the Lübeck years, Distler not only limited the chromaticism and avoided key signatures in his works, but also adopted the German early seventeenth-century predilection for varied treatments of the cantus firmus in chorale settings such as rhythmic alteration and vorimitation. Distler stated his view on early music idea in an article:

This archaic conception of the office and mission of “holy” music was in its very essence religious; that is, music arose at one time, like all high arts and sciences, from humanity’s yearning to life itself, through music, out of the frailty of the creature to a higher and also deeper macrocosmic logic. At the same time, it yearns to document its knowledge of the workings of a mysterious universal order, and not only the knowledge of it, per se, but beyond that, the proud and joyful consciousness of participation even in the art of this divine creative power.\(^{140}\)


\(^{140}\) Ibid, 32.
Thus, Distler believed that the early Baroque idea of chorale treatments fulfilled the obligations of church music in a symbolic way. This Chapter will discuss the compositional devices that Distler used in his chorale-based organ works.

**Cantus Firmus Treatments within the Partitas and Chorale Preludes**

Distler’s settings of the chorale melodies show the influence of late Renaissance and early Baroque composers and their cantus firmus style, particularly that of Scheidt. In their music, the cantus firmus is clearly heard throughout and is distinct from the other parts. Sometimes the melody is decorated by ornamentation and figuration. Distler treated cantus firmi in his partitas in several different ways, such as in its original form, in augmentation, canon, or with florid coloration.

There are two different type of chorale settings found in Distler’s chorale-based works, in which the cantus firmus presented in its original form or the unornamented cantus firmus moves in augmented motion and be heard clearly throughout the piece. A first type of chorale treatment is when the cantus firmus is presented in its original form, in which the tune of the chorale is taken directly from the hymnal without changing its rhythm. For example, the new harmonization of chorales found in *Kleine Orgelchoralbearbeitungen*, Op.8, no.3 was illustrated in this setting of *Ach wie flüchtig* (See Example 5-1). The cantus firmus was placed in the soprano in its original form, similar to chorale settings of many German predecessors, such as Scheidt, Johann Walther, and J.S. Bach.

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141 Ibid.
Example 5-1: The New Harmonization of the Chorale on Prelude *Ach wie flüchtig*, mm.1-6.

The cantus firmus is placed in its original form not just in the soprano, but also in other voices, such as in the alto, tenor, and bass. Two examples for the cantus firmus presented in inner parts are found in the Prelude *Das alte Jahr vergangen* (See Example 5-2) and the Choral movement of the Partita *Jesus Christus, unser Heiland* (See Example 5-3). The cantus firmus is presented in the bass in the third variation of the second movement of the Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland* (See Example 5-4).

Example 5-2: The cantus firmus is presented in Alto (indicated by c.f.), Prelude *Das alte Jahr vergangen ist*, mm. 1-2.\(^{142}\)

Example 5-3: The cantus firmus is presented in Tenor (indicated by c.f.), Partita on *Jesus Christus, unser Heiland*, Chorale, mm.1-6.  

Example 5-4: The cantus firmus clearly delineates the tune in bass, Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Mvt. II, Variation 2.  

The second type of setting for the unornamented cantus firmus found in Distler’s chorale-based works is when the pitch of cantus firmus remains the same, but the rhythm is presented in augmentation. The slow-moving augmented cantus firmus is found in tenor and bass against the rhythmic active upper voices at the sixth variation on the second movement of the Partita *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland* exemplifies this setting (See Example 5-5).

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143 Ibid, 7.

Example 5-5: The cantus firmus in canonic setting, the Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Mvt. II, Variation 6.  

The cantus firmus can also be presented in counterpoint, such as in canonic setting. For example, Distler sets the cantus firmus phrase in a two-voice canon between the bass and tenor in the sixth variation on the second movement of the Partita *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland* (See Example 5-5). Another example is the second section (mm. 8-14) of Prelude *Christe, du Lamm Gottes*, in which the cantus firmus is placed in canon between the bass and tenor (See Example 5-6).

Example 5-6: The cantus firmus in canonic setting, Prelude *Christe, du Lamm Gottes*, mm.8-9.  

The final treatment of the cantus firmus is when it is presented in a florid coloration. The chorale tune is embellished with ornamentation, passing notes, and repeated patterns. Most of the chorale preludes composed by Buxtehude can be catalogued in this type of setting. For Distler, the cantus firmus is decorated with a sixteenth-note scale passage against the accompaniment in

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145 Ibid, 12.

146 Schoof, II. 17.
the seventh variation of the second movement of the Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland* (See Example 5-7). A similar style occurs in the second half of the Prelude *Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern* (See Example 5-8).

Example 5-7: The cantus firmus in florid coloration setting, Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Mvt. II, Variation 7.  

Example 5-8: The embellished cantus firmus setting, Prelude *Wie schöne leuchtet der Morgenstern*, m.11.  

Distler not only utilized a single treatment of the cantus firmus, but he also blended these treatments with each other to make his works more interesting. For example, Prelude *Wie schöne leuchtet der Morgenstern* is divided into two sections differed by his treatment of the cantus firmus. The unornamented cantus firmus is used in the first section (mm.1-9, See Example 5-9).

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147 Ibid, 16.

148 Schoof, II. 3.
An embellished form of the cantus firmus appears in the second section (See Example 5-8, mm. 10-14).

Example 5-9: The unornamented cantus firmus, Prelude *Wie schöne leuchtet der Morgenstern*, mm. 1-4.\textsuperscript{149}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{example5-9.png}
\caption{Example 5-9: The unornamented cantus firmus, Prelude *Wie schöne leuchtet der Morgenstern*, mm. 1-4.\textsuperscript{149}}
\end{figure}

**Imitation**

Imitation plays an important part in Distler’s chorale-based organ music. He used imitative entries at the beginning of numerous movements, such as the ricercar in *Jesus Christus, unser Heiland* and the pastorale of *Christ, der du bist der helle Tag*.

Vorimitation (anticipatory imitation) is a compositional technique that presents a fragment of the chorale tune before the appearance of the complete statement. This technique originated in works based on chorale melodies in seventeenth-century North-German organ music. Distler employs vorimitation as a preview before the complete cantus firmus is heard (See Example 5-10). Additionally, the vorimitation found in the chorale in the second movement of the Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland* is a direct quotation of the setting of Balthasar Resinarius (1486-1544).

\textsuperscript{149} Ibid, 2.
Example 5-10: Vorimitation, Partita on Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland, Mvt. II, variation 3.\textsuperscript{150}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{example510.png}
\end{figure}

Rhythm

Several rhythmic devices appear frequently in Distler’s chorale-based organ works, such as cross-rhythm, complex rhythms, and syncopations. Their use makes Distler’s music vigorous and energetic.

Cross-rhythm can be defined as the regular shift of some beats in a metric pattern to a point ahead or behind their normal position.\textsuperscript{151} An example of cross-rhythm is found in the ricercar of Jesus Christus, unser Heiland, with triple meter against duple meter (See Example 5-11). Distler also used complex rhythm against the slow-moving chorale tune. An example is the two-part setting of the bicinium in Partita on Jesus Christus, unser Heiland (See Example 5-12). The resulting sense of rhythmic instability is a characteristic feature of Distler’s music.

\textsuperscript{150} Schoof, I. 7.

Example 5-11: Cross-rhythm, Partita on *Jesus Christus, unser Heiland*, Ricercar, mm. 65-71.\textsuperscript{152}

![Cross-rhythm Example Image]

Example 5-12: Complex rhythm against slow moving chorale tune, Partita on *Jesus Christus, unser Heiland*, Bicinium, mm.11-13.\textsuperscript{153}

![Complex Rhythm Example Image]

**Syncopation**

Syncopation plays a major part in Distler’s music and lends it energy and drive to the music. For example, the Pedal theme in the Pastorale of the Partita on *Christ, der du bist der helle Tag* has syncopated rhythm throughout the movement (See Example 5-13).

Example 5-13: Syncopated rhythm of the chorale theme in *Christ, der du bist der helle Tag*, Pastorale, mm. 3-7.

![Syncopation Example Image]

\textsuperscript{152} Schoof, II. 13.

\textsuperscript{153} Ibid, 8.
Repetition

Distler used repeated rhythmic patterns to create tension and to sometimes imitate a trumpet call. For example, consider the trumpet call presented in the tenth variation of the Chaconne in partita *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland* (See Example 5-14). According to Larry Palmer, Distler’s favorite rhythmic motive was utilized five times as an ostinato in the pedal of Variation 5 in the Chaconne of Partita *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland* \(^{154}\) (See Figure 5-1 and Example 5-15). In addition, another example of a repeated rhythmic figure is used in the Prelude *Christe, du Lamm Gottes* (See Example 5-16) where a three-note descending chromatic ostinato (D-C#-C) is played in the pedal throughout the first and third sections of the Prelude.

Example 5-14: The trumpet call, Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Chaconne, m.15.\(^{155}\)

![Example 5-14](image)

Figure 5-1: Distler’s favorite rhythmic motive\(^{156}\)

\(^{154}\) Larry Palmer, *Hugo Distler and His Church Music* (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1967), 82-83.

\(^{155}\) Schoof, I. 19.

\(^{156}\) Palmer, 82.
Example 5-15: An ostinato in the pedal, Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Mvt. II, Variation 5. ¹⁵⁷

![Example 5-15: An ostinato in the pedal, Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Mvt. II, Variation 5.](image)

Example 5-16: An Ostinato three descending chromatic notes and the recitation, Prelude *Christe, du Lamm Gottes*, mm.1-3. ¹⁵⁸

![Example 5-16: An Ostinato three descending chromatic notes and the recitation, Prelude *Christe, du Lamm Gottes*, mm.1-3.](image)

Finally, repetition used as a device to decorate the cantus firmus seems to have derived from vocal techniques. For example, the repeated A in the Alto part of measure 3 in the Prelude *Christe, du Lamm Gottes* imitates the recitation found in vocal music (See Example 5-16 above).

**Chromaticism**

Unlike many of his contemporaries, Distler did not employ much chromaticism in his compositions. In instances where he did, he followed Renaissance and Baroque composers who employed chromatic figuration, such as *passus* and *saltus duriusculus*, as a way to express specific effects or depict a specific text. For example, Distler used it to embellish the descending passage from A to E in the Partita on *Jesus Christus, unser Heiland* (See Example 5-17). Other

¹⁵⁷ Schoof, I. 10.

¹⁵⁸ Schoof, II. 16.
examples are the three-note figure ostinato pedal D-C#-C in Prelude Christe, du Lamm Gottes (See Example 5-16) and the three-note descending figure in the Prelude on Ach wie flüchtig, ach wie nichtig (See Example 5-18).

Example 5-17: The descending chromatic passage in Partita on Jesus Christus, unser Heiland, Ricercar, mm. 48-52.\textsuperscript{159}

Example 5-18: The three descending chromatic notes figure, mm.1-4.\textsuperscript{160}

\textsuperscript{159} Schoof, II. 13.

\textsuperscript{160} Ibid, 23.
Modality

According to Distler researcher David LeRoy McKinney, Distler considered atonality to be against nature.\textsuperscript{161} Distler, in fact, was “a strong proponent of tonality, was schooled in neoclassicism, taught music theory, and wrote a textbook on functional harmony.”\textsuperscript{162} He employed pentatonic scales, whole-tone, and octatonic scales to escape the limitations of the major and minor modes. For example, in the opening pedal solo of Partita on \textit{Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland}, he uses a whole-note scale (See Example 5-19). The pentatonic scale is used frequently in the ricercar of Partita \textit{Jesus Christus, unser Heiland} (See Example 5-20).

Example 5-19: The Whole-tone scale, Partita on \textit{Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland}, Mvts I and IV, Toccata\textsuperscript{163}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{example5_19.png}
\end{figure}

Example 5-20: The Pentatonic, Partita on \textit{Jesus Christus, unser Heiland}, Ricercar, mm. 10-11.\textsuperscript{164}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{example5_20.png}
\end{figure}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{161} David LeRoy Mckinney, “Interpreting the Organ Works of Hugo Distler” (DMA diss., The University of Arizona, 2006), 79.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{162} Ibid.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{163} Schoof, I. 2.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{164} Schoof, II. 10.
\end{flushright}
The excerpt above is constructed with a pentatonic scale as follows,

![Pentatonic Scale](image)

**Ornamentation**

The notation for trill, such as t, +, and tr, are commonly found in seventeenth-century German music, in where the trill started on the written pitch and alternated with the note above it. Distler did not use many ornamentation signs in his organ works. However, he did apply trills, mordants, and wrote out little ornaments in his compositions (See Example 5-21 and Example 5-22). It was one of Distler’s students, Jan Bender (1909-1994), who pointed out that Distler’s ornamentation was adopted from the Baroque musical style in which he had been taught in the Leipzig Conservatory.165 Thus, as in Baroque musical practices, the trill in Distler’s music is meant to be played on the beat and depart from the main note.

Example 5-21: The written out ornamentation, Partita on *Wacht auf, ruft uns die Stimme*, Bicinium, m.8.166

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165 McKinny, 111.

166 Schoof, I. 34.
Example 5-22: Trill with signs, Prelude *Das alte Jahr vergangenn ist*, mm.4-7.\(^{167}\)

\[ \text{Example image} \]

**Articulation Markings**

Distler provided clear articulation and phrasing markings in his organ scores through the use of words, marks, and slurs. These articulation markings were not the elements of Baroque organ music, but Distler used them as a guideline for performers in order to approach the Baroque organ sound. Thus, these articulation marks are meant to imitate various aspects of Baroque performance practice as understood in the early twentieth century and to go against the nineteenth-century legato style. The words *marcato*, *legato*, and *non-legato* are used to indicate the general touch and articulation. The marks *tenuto* (\(-\)) and *accent* (\(>\)) are used to emphasize notes and figures, such as the trumpet call (See Example 5-14). In addition, the accent (\(>\)) in the third variation of the Chaconne in Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland* are used to emphasize the figuration (See Example 5-23). Dr. Rolf Schönstedt, Rector of the Hochschule for church music in Herford, Germany, has pointed out that the accent markings found in Distler’s organ works are adopted from a tradition of trombone choirs in the evangelical churches of

\[^{167}\text{Ibid, II. 5.}\]
Germany. However, trombones were but one of an ideal instrument that was used in ceremonial outdoor events or indoor banquets during the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Based on a research by the trombonist David Guion, the use of the trombone in worship services began to appear in the middle of the fifteenth century, and the instrument was used only on special occasions. In Germany, the trombone was used in the church service around 1500. The trombonists often performed with singers at high festivals within the liturgy. During the seventeenth century, there were at least 120 works that assigned a part for the trombone, composed by German composers such as Heinrich Schütz, Johann Hermann Schein, Michael Praetorius, and Samuel Scheidt. Especially in Luther’s translation of the Bible, the German word for trombone was used instead of the Hebrew shofar and the Greek salpigz (Posaune) instead of the word trumpet. Moreover, in the Old Testament, “many references to the shofar are associated with solemn pronouncement of the Lord, while in Revelations the salpigz heralds the Last Judgment.” Thus, the use of trombone in the Lutheran church was related to the voice of God. Because of this symbolic reason, Lutheran composers preferred to scoring or giving a part to trombone in their works. Thus, if it is, as Schönstedt stated, that Distler adopted the accent mark from the trombone choir, it was possibly due to that symbolic reason. For example, the last sentence of verse 3 in the Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland reads, “Many beautiful signs indicated


169 Daveid M. Guion, A History of Trombone (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 91.


172 Ibid.
that God was in his throne” (See Figure 3-3). Distler uses accent marks to highlight the phrase at the end of the third variation of the second movement of the Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland* (See Example 5-23).

Finally, Distler used slurs often to indicate the beginning or ending of phrases or short motives. For example, consider the slurs used in the pedal in the Toccata of *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland* (See Example 5-24). The slur also acts as an articulation marking, indicating legato playing. For example, a slur connects two notes (Bb-A) in the theme of the chaconne in *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland* (See Example 4-12). Different articulation markings can occur simultaneously. For example, the accent mark, tenuto sign, and slur used at the end of the third variation of *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland* (See Example 5-23).

Example 5-23: Accents, Tenuto and Slur, Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Mvt. II, Variation 3. ¹⁷³

Example 5-24: The Slurs are used to indicated beginning or end of the phrase, Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Mvts. I and IV, Toccata, Pedal solo¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ Schoof, I. 8.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 2.
Conclusion

Distler made a significant contribution by employing old musical genres and adapting old compositional devices while blending them with his own modern musical language into his organ works. As a Lutheran composer, he inherited and applied Luther’s theological context about music to his works. Thereby, these attributes gave him an important place in twentieth-century organ literature and turned him into one of the central figures in the twentieth-century German Church Music Renewal Movement. Although the way he ended his life made him a tragic figure, his contributions for the musical world had great influence on his students, such as Siegfried Reda (1916-1968). Reda began to study organ and composition with Distler at the Berlin Musikhochschule in January 1941. Because of the draft for the military service, Reda was forced to stop his study with Distler the following July.  

Despite a short period of study with Distler, it had a special and profound meaning for Reda. When Reda studied Distler’s Partita on *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme*, he made the following comment:

“From the strength and particular constancy, that not only had [Distler] come face to face with this influence and carried it though with success, but he also was able to amalgamate within it the spirit and the language and the formal principles of our time with the elements of the former hierarchically-austere art of old.”

Like Distler, Reda’s organ compositions were based on chorales. Examples include the *Choralkonzert I: O wie selig ihr doch, ihr Frommen* (1948), *Choralkonzert II: Gottes Sohn ist kommen* (1948), and *Choralkonzert III: Christ unser Herr zum Jordan kam* (1949). These *Choralkonzerte* are multi-movement organ works based on chorale tunes and resemble a partita.

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175 Biography information from John Paul Bernthal, John Paul Bernthal, “From Teacher to Student: Tradition and Innovation in the Chorale-based Organ Works of Distler and Reda,” *The Diapason 84* (December 1993), 12-16.

in form. The style of the *Choralkonzert* is similar to Distler’s organ works, such as the use of musical genre, treatment of the chorale cantus firmus, and motivic figure.\textsuperscript{177}

Both Distler’s and Reda’s compositions demonstrate that their musical innovation was based on previously existing theory and musical material. Not only did they adopt old musical genres and compositional devices, but also created new ways to present them. Despite his short life, the beauty and aesthetics of Distler’s music have not vanished. Distler’s musical contributions have been honored and memorialized currently in Germany, especially in the city of Lübeck. A special exhibition of Distler’s life and compositions was held at the St. Jacobi church in Lübeck in 2014.\textsuperscript{178}

At present, the English-language literature pertaining to Distler and his music is still limited. It is hoped that this study will be beneficial to those who are interested in Distler’s chorale-based organ music and will help performers discover the beauty within the works.

\textsuperscript{177} More information is discussed in the article by John Pual Bernthal. Bernthal, 12-16.

\textsuperscript{178} I visited the church and the exhibition in June, 2014.
Bibliography


