

The Chinese University of Hong Kong



Wednesday, 17 Oct 2007, 4:30pm

二零零七年十月十七日 星期三 4:30p.m.

Rm. LG03, Hui Yeung Shing Building

許讓成樓 LG03 室

Lecture-Demonstration

Title: Rhetoric in Instrumental Music

A Talk by Dr. Han Tol (Hochschule für Künste in Bremen)

Abstract:

In the mountains of southern China, home to the ethnic Dong tribe, people communicate largely in song. The Dong has flourished in isolation since the 7th century. Without a written language, song became an essential way to safeguard their history and myths, and preserve traditions for future generations. There are specific songs that people sing while spinning and weaving or cutting down a tree for firewood or while planting rice. 30 types of melodies accompany the different stages of life. Singing plays such an important role in life that married couples are not allowed to live together until their families rule that their voices are in perfect harmony. If the voices harmonize well, it proves that the couple will get along. There is a Dong proverb: "Whoever cannot sing will never marry..." (Marie Claire April 1999, South Africa)

Quantz:" A musical performance may be compared with the delivery of a speech by an orator. Both have the same aim...to make the auditors full of passion, to transport them now to this sentiment, now to that...."

North: "And no wonder after the great Master (Corelli) made that instrument speak as it were the human voice, saying to his scholars: "Non udite lo parlare?"

Rhetoric is the art of preparing and presenting a speech and was part of the general education of the Baroque era, being one of the seven liberal arts. Under the influence of the humanists of the 16th century the expression of the text in music became very important. Polyphony was rejected because of the confusing effect of many voices saying different things at

the same time, and besides, it was a non-Italian but rather Netherlandish music. The monody, proposed by Caccini was the result of the rebirth of antique music. Monteverdi uses the terminology “dramma per musica” and “favola in musica”. Composers and players (often the same person!) use the techniques of oratory to compose and perform a piece of music with the goal of moving the audience and provide them with pleasure and food for thought.

“The passions are the only orators that always persuade; they are a natural art, the rules of which are infallible; and the simplest man with passion, is more persuasive than the most eloquent, without it...”(1678, La Rochefoucauld).

The players had the task to transfer the ideas of the composer by first analysing and studying the work, adapting their style of playing or singing to the demands of the composition and make the performance as clear and understandable as possible through perfect phrasing, colourful articulation and exciting dynamics. It is very interesting to read what Frescobaldi thinks of it: “ The manner of playing...should not be subjected to strict time. The playing of such pieces is facilitated if one takes the beat now languidly, now lively, or holding back, according to the affection of the music or the meaning of the word...” (1614)

Biography:

Han Tol represents a new generation in the tradition of the Dutch recorder school. In addition to his duty as professor at the Hochschule für Künste in Bremen, Germany, he is much sought as a teacher of master classes in Europe and the USA. He has given courses in Vienna, Geneva, Frankfurt am Main, Freiburg, Munich, Dresden, Leipzig, Copenhagen, Utrecht, Amsterdam and at the Mozarteum in Salzburg Han Tols concert life is many sided. His trio La Dada (including David Mings, bassoon and Patrick Ayrton, harpsichord) founded in 1984 has set new standards in the interpretation of Italian music of the 17th century. His recorder trio La Fontegara Amsterdam is also famous for exciting concerts of modern and old music. Both as an orchestra musician and soloist, he has worked together with such well known musicians as Leonhardt, Harnoncourt, Frans Brüggen, William Parrot, Goodman, McCreech, Holman, Hengelbrock and Koopman. Han Tol has also made extensive concert tours with the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra.