

THE SOLO ORGAN WORKS OF JON LAUKVIK

By

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Yoomi Chang

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## ABSTRACT

The Solo Organ Works of Jon Laukvik:

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Jon Laukvik (b. 1952) has an international reputation as a performer, teacher, juror, editor, and author. He is perhaps most well known for his three-volume organ literature textbook entitled *Historical Performance Practice in Organ Playing*. The first volume has become a standard text throughout Europe and Asia and is widely used in the United States as well. In recent years, he has also emerged as a composer. Compositions involving organ include the following: eleven organ solo works, three pieces for organ four-hand, ten works for organ and solo instrument, and three works for organ and voice or choir.

Laukvik developed a unique sound that is influenced by Renaissance and Baroque music, the works of later French composers, and jazz idioms. In addition to the contributions coming from these sources, he further employed techniques such as bitonality and chromatic alterations as central features of his style.

There is a very limited body of scholarly writing about his music. He accepted a request to be interviewed for this study, which proved to be invaluable. Together with this interview, an intensive study of his works, and a comparison between his

compositions and the works of other composers have served as primary sources for this lecture-recital.

The purpose of this study is to illuminate these stylistic features of his organ music in the hope that this might bring further attention to a composer whose voice deserves to be heard in the contemporary organ world.

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# The Solo Organ Works of Jon Laukvik

## Introduction

From his first composition for organ in 1977, the native Norwegian composer Jon Laukvik has developed a unique compositional style employing musical languages from different cultures. His talent as a composer became widely known when he was commissioned to write the *Aria, Fugue, & Final* for the St. Albans International Organ Competition in 2013. Since Laukvik is primarily an organist, he focuses on organ compositions, which include: eleven organ solo works, three pieces for organ four-hand, ten works for organ and solo instrument, and three works for organ and voice or choir. Currently, he is working on a concerto for organ and string orchestra commissioned by the Norwegian Composers' Fund, and a piece for organ and percussion commissioned by the Arts Council of Norway.<sup>1</sup>

This study aims to introduce the listener to Laukvik's work as a composer and his unique musical style. In the preface to his *Aria, Fugue, & Final*, Laukvik described his music as, “a reflection and contemplation of certain aspects of our Western musical history.”<sup>2</sup> Laukvik's compositions explore stylistic aspects from different periods and styles, including twentieth-century French music, jazz, polychords/ tone clusters, and influences from Renaissance and Baroque organ music. He is inspired by musicians such as Frederic Chopin, Louis Vierne, Olivier Messiaen, Jehan Alain, Oscar Peterson, and George Shearing.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jon Laukvik, electronic message to author, April 21, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Jon Laukvik, preface to *Aria, Fugue & Final* (Copenhagen: Edition Svitzer, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

## I. Biography and Background

Jon Laukvik was born in Oslo, Norway in 1952. He started his musical training as a pianist. His schoolteacher was a local organist who gave him a chance to play the organ at church at the age of twelve; however, he did not receive formal organ training until later in his life. Eventually, Laukvik substituted for his teacher in 1972-1973, who had suffered a heart attack.

As a young man, Laukvik regularly listened to LP records that he borrowed from the Goethe Institute, including music by Richard Strauss, Maurice Ravel, Claude Debussy, and many other composers. This experience had a profound influence on his musical growth and development. In addition to his exposure to recorded music, Laukvik had the opportunity to hear live music by contemporary Polish composers Witold Lutoslawski (1913-1994) and Krzysztof Penderecki (b. 1933) as well as neoclassical works by Norwegian composers Knut Nystedt (b. 1915) and Egil Hovland (b. 1924).<sup>4</sup> Laukvik knew both Nystedt and Hovland personally; nonetheless, his music was not heavily influenced by neoclassicism.

In 1883 Ludvig Mathias Lindeman, a collector of folk music and a noted church musician,<sup>5</sup> collaborated with his son Peter Brynie Lindeman to found a school for organists in Christiania, the city that is known today as Oslo. Soon thereafter the school was officially named the Lindeman Music Conservatory.<sup>6</sup> From 1972-1974 Laukvik took piano and organ lessons at the Conservatory. In 1974 Laukvik also attended the Haarlem Summer Academy in the Netherlands. This experience had a strong influence on Laukvik's organ playing. Later in his life, he returned regularly as one of the instructors at this famous academy.

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<sup>4</sup> Nils Grinde, *A History of Norwegian Music*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. 1991), 346.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, 161.

<sup>6</sup> [http://lindemanslegat.no/?page\\_id=2063](http://lindemanslegat.no/?page_id=2063) (Accessed on 14 July 12, 2015).

After his studies at the Lindeman Music Conservatory, Laukvik entered the Norwegian Academy of Music (Norges Musikkhøgskole) in Oslo in 1974, which had just been founded in the previous year. His teachers included Olav Buverud (organ), John Lammetun (organ), Einar Solbu (organ), and Hans Solum (piano).

Laukvik moved to Cologne in 1975 to continue his education at the Cologne University of Music, where he studied organ with Michael Schneider, and harpsichord with Hugo Ruf. At the same time, Laukvik commuted between Cologne and Paris to have private lessons with Marie-Claire Alain. Laukvik studied all the organ works by Madame Alain's brother, Jehan Alain. Laukvik had lessons and practiced on a small organ in Marie-Claire Alain's house. On that small instrument he played numerous organ works by J. S. Bach, Franck, Louis Vierne, and other composers in the French organ school. Laukvik notes that, "the lessons with Marie-Claire Alain at her private house in L'Etang-la-Ville were of the greatest importance to me. Her approach to the music I played opened the door for me."<sup>7</sup> In another place he states,

My organ lessons with Michael Schneider [a pupil of Karl Straube] in Cologne and with Marie-Claire Alain in Paris in the 1970s were of the greatest importance to me. But also the Summer Academy in Haarlem, Holland, in 1974 changed the direction of my organ playing, as did my harpsichord lessons with Hugo Ruf in Cologne. He was one of the pioneers of the Historical Performance Practise and taught me all the fundamental rules of harpsichord [and organ] playing.<sup>8</sup>

Meeting Werner Jacob (1938-2006) was also a significant event in Laukvik's career. Jacob was the cantor and titular organist at St. Sebald in Nuremberg. He was also the artistic director of the International Organ Week in Nuremberg and professor at the University of Music and Performing Arts in Stuttgart.<sup>9</sup> In 1975, Jacob invited Laukvik to participate in the Nuremberg International Organ competition. At this initial competition Laukvik did not win

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<sup>7</sup> Jon Laukvik, electronic message to author, June 11, 2015.

<sup>8</sup> Jon Laukvik, electronic message to author, April 21, 2015.

<sup>9</sup> <http://wernerjacob.net/biografie.html> (Accessed on July 1, 2015).



any prizes, but two years later he was awarded First Prize and the Bach Prize. In 1977 he also won the International Organ Competition in the German Evangelical Kirchentag in Berlin. Jacob persuaded Laukvik to accept a position as professor at the University of Music and Performing Arts in Stuttgart in 1980, a post that Laukvik has held for more than thirty-five years.

At Jacob's suggestion, he collaborated with Laukvik on an edition of Handel's *Organ Concerti Op. 7* in 1990. This gave the two organists the opportunity to meet the executives at the Stuttgart-based publishing house Carus-Verlag. The senior director of Carus-Verlag, Gunter Graulich, later suggested the project of editing the complete organ works of Louis Vierne. As a result, Laukvik and David Sanger (1947-2010), who was a professor and president of the Royal Academy of Music in the United Kingdom, published a new complete edition of Vierne's organ works in thirteen volumes in 2008.

In addition, Laukvik published the three-volume study, *Orgelschule zur historischen Aufführungspraxis (Historical Performance Practice in Organ Playing)* with Carus-Verlag. In the first two volumes, *Orgel und Orgelspiel im Barock und in der Klassik (An Introduction Based on Selected Organ Works of the 16th-18th Century, 1996)* and *Orgel und Orgelspiel in der Romantik von Mendelssohn bis Reger und Widor (Organ and Organ Playing in the Romantic Period from Mendelssohn to Reger and Widor, 2010)*, Laukvik wrote about organ repertoire and organ playing ranging from technical issues to matters of musical expression. The first volume has become the standard organ literature textbook for repertoire of those centuries throughout Europe and Asia, and is widely used in the USA. In the third volume, entitled *Die Moderne*, Laukvik compiled and edited articles by Guy Bovet, Hans-Ola Ericsson, Hans Fagius, Bernhard Haas, Jeremy Filsell, and Armin Schoof. By publishing this monumental work Laukvik has achieved fame as a scholar throughout the organ world.

Laukvik debuted as a composer in 1977. In 1979, his work *Via Crucis* won a prize in a Norwegian composition competition. Table 1 is the list of compositions that Laukvik has completed in chronological order.

Table 1. List of Composition by Jon Laukvik, 1977-2015

<i>Fünf Präludien</i> in <i>Norsk Orgelbok</i>	1977	Musikk-huset, Oslo	Organ Solo
<i>Tre slSoloet, Oslo</i> composition by Jon Laukv	1978	Norsk Musikkinformasjon, Oslo	Transcription/ Organ Solo
Ostinato	1978 /1987	Unpublished	Cembalo Solo
<i>Via Crucis</i>	1979	Norsk Musikforlag, Oslo	Organ Solo
<i>Zwei Tersteegen-Lieder</i>	1979/1985	Unpublished	Mezzo/ Alto and Organ
<i>Magnificat</i>	1980	Vest-Norsk Musikkforlag, Bergen	Organ Solo
<i>Triptychon</i>	1980	Norsk Musikforlag, Oslo	Organ Solo
Psalm 121	1974 / 1981 /1982	Unpublished	Organ and Choir
« Lever du jour » from <i>Daphnis et Chloé</i> by Maurice Ravel	1982	Unpublished	Transcription/ Organ Four Hands
<i>Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland</i>	1983	Unpublished	Organ Solo
<i>Stille Nacht</i>	1984	Vest-Norsk Musikkforlag, Bergen	Organ Solo
<i>Zwei Lieder</i> (Text by G. Tersteegen)	1979 /1985	Unpublished	Mezzo Soprano or Baritone
<i>Nur du allein...; kleine „Walzerfolge</i>	1985	Unpublished	Salon Orchestra
Polka	1985	Unpublished	Salon Orchestra
<i>Contre-Danse</i>	1985-1986	Unpublished	Orchestra
Suite	1986	Norsk Musikforlag, Oslo	Organ Solo
<i>Dommayer-Polka</i>	1987	Unpublished	Salon Orchestra
<i>Euphonie I</i>	1986/1987	Edition Svitzer, Copenhagen	5 Percussionists and Organ
<i>Euphonie II</i>	1986/ 2014	Edition Svitzer, Copenhagen	5 Percussionists and Piano

<i>Euphonie III</i>	1988/1989	Unpublished	Cello and Organ
<i>Luftgespinste</i> (Text by Matthias Claudius)	1990-1991	Unpublished	Cantata
“Three Blues” in <i>Ludus Organisticus</i>	1994/1995	Strube Verlag, München	Organ Solo
Sonata	1994-1995	Unpublished	Organ and Horn
Sonata	1995	Edition Svitzer, Copenhagen	Organ and Piano
Duo	1997	Norsk Musikkinformasjon, Oslo	Organ Four Hands
<i>Anrufung</i>	1982 / 2002	Unpublished	Two Organs, Brass and Tape
<i>... 4 mains</i>	2003	Universal Edition, Wien	Organ Four Hands
Monody with Variations in OrganWorks!	2004	United Music Publishers, London	Organ Solo
Chaconne	2005	Unpublished	Organ Solo
Fanfare	2009	Unpublished	Organ Solo
<i>Jesu meine Freude</i>	2010	Unpublished	Organ Solo
<i>Arabeske</i>	2010	Unpublished	Trombone and Organ
Passacaglia	2012	Edition Svitzer, Copenhagen	Organ Solo
Variations on a Relation	2012	Edition Svitzer, Copenhagen	Marimba and Piano
<i>Lamento</i>	2013	Edition Svitzer, Copenhagen	Trumpet and Organ
Aria, Fugue, & Final	2013	Edition Svitzer, Copenhagen	Organ Solo
Three Poems	2013	Edition Svitzer, Copenhagen	Choir and Organ
Variations on a Relation	2012/2014	Edition Svitzer, Copenhagen	Two Pianos
<i>Ach Herr, mich armen Sünder</i>	2014	Unpublished, (“Orgelbüchlein Project”)	Organ Solo
Sonata	2015	Edition Svitzer, Copenhagen	Organ and Piano

## II. Laukvik's Solo Organ Compositions

To date, Laukvik has written fifteen solo organ works, including four unpublished pieces. His organ compositions are unique, contemporary, and often humorous. Laukvik explores various musical styles; four influences stand out in his compositions: twentieth-century French music, jazz, polychords/tone clusters, and influences from other composers.

### Twentieth- Century French Music

Although Laukvik studied in Paris for only two years, French music is one overarching influence that is apparent in many of his compositions. Laukvik notes,

French music has always fascinated me, especially the works of Maurice Ravel. When I was 12 years old, I heard "Lever du jour" from the ballet, 'Daphnis et Chloé on the Norwegian radio. It made an enormous impression on me. Debussy was also important to me.<sup>10</sup>

Example 1 shows an excerpt from Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé*. Example 2 shows a transcription that Laukvik made of the same music.

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<sup>10</sup> Jon Laukvik, electronic message to author, June 11, 2015.

155 Lent  $\text{♩} = 50$

155 Lent  $\text{♩} = 50$

Aucun bruit que le murmure des ruisselets amassés par la rosée qui coule des roches

Example 1. Maurice Ravel, *Daphnis et Chloé*, m. 155.

Lent  $\text{♩} = 50$

8va

12 12 12 12

Rec.  $\text{pp}$

Rec.  $\text{pp}$

16.8

3

8va

Lever du jour  
(Daphnis et Chloé)

M. Ravel  
(Transcr. Jon Laukvik)

Example 2. Laukvik, transcription for organ four hand, "Lever du jour" from *Daphnis et Chloé* by Maurice Ravel, m.1.

In Laukvik's early published works, such as *Via Crucis*, *Magnificat* and *Triptychon*, he showed his unique melodic and rhythmic language while borrowing compositional techniques from twentieth-century French organ composers. For example, the second movement of *Triptychon*, entitled "Meditation," features an ambiguous and asymmetrical solo line that flows freely over a supporting foundation in the left hand and pedal. Another instance is shown in Example 3. This free-flowing rhythmic style, as well as the use of tied notes and dotted rhythms with an offbeat pedal line, is associated with Debussy's style.

Debussy states:

Rhythms cannot be contained within bars. It is nonsense to speak of "simple" or "compound" time. There should be an interminable flow of them both without seeking to bury the rhythmic patterns.<sup>11</sup>

Laukvik uses additive rhythm, one of Olivier Messiaen's favorite devices. Additive rhythms involve the addition of a short note value, often a sixteenth note, tied to a longer note value like a quarter note. See example 3. Also, it is important to understand that there is neither a time signature nor a regular bar-line division in the piece. In fact, most of Laukvik's earlier pieces have no meter. They were often based on improvisation, while his later works were somewhat more structured.

Example 3. Laukvik, *Triptychon*, "Meditation," m. 1.

<sup>11</sup> Claude Debussy, quoted in Lockspeiser, *Debussy: His Life and Mind Vol. I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 206.

Another feature of twentieth-century French organ music is a quasi-improvisational style. Laukvik never improvises in his recitals; nonetheless, improvisation has been an important part of his compositional process. According to Laukvik, "improvisation has for me always, also today, been an important source of ideas."<sup>12</sup> On occasion, Laukvik's improvisatory style interacts with an ostinato figure. The first movement of *Triptychon*, "Improvisation," begins with a short but intense motive played over an E<sup>b</sup><sup>13</sup> block chord in the left hand. In m. 10, the rhythmic ostinato starts with only the note B. Laukvik took this ostinato from an African rhythmic pattern. It occurs again at the last note in m. 15 and builds in sonority by gradually adding voices until m. 36, when there are a total of eleven voices.<sup>13</sup> See example 4.

The image displays three systems of musical notation for the piece "Improvisation" from *Triptychon*. The first system shows measures 9 and 10, with a tempo marking of ♩ = 104. The right hand is mostly silent, while the left hand plays a block chord in E-flat. The second system shows measures 15 and 16, featuring a rhythmic ostinato in the left hand that begins with the note B. The right hand has a melodic line. The third system shows measure 36, where the left hand has a complex texture of eleven voices, indicated by the marking "acc." (accent).

Example 4. Laukvik, *Triptychon*, "Improvisation," mm. 9-10, 15-16, 36.

<sup>12</sup> Jon Laukvik, electronic message to author, April 21, 2015.

<sup>13</sup> 20, 21, 22 preludes from *Norsk Orgelbok* (Oslo: Musikk-huset.1977), third and sixth movements from *Via Crucis* (Oslo: Norsk Musikforlag A/S: 1979), duo from *Suite* (Oslo: Norsk Musikforlag A/S. 1986).

One example of Laukvik's improvisational style is taken from the third movement of the *Triptychon*, entitled "Toccata." See example 5. Here the motive starts with a single note played successively in three octaves, with one additional voice superimposed onto the original part at the interval of a second. After a four-measure introduction, the pattern begins with a one-measure unit involving a repeating tone cluster accompaniment and eventually builds up in both the pedal and the manuals, finally ending with a free passage featuring rich sonorities. This is among the most improvisatory passages in Laukvik's organ music.

The musical score for Example 5, Laukvik's *Triptychon*, "Toccata," mm. 1-5, is presented in three systems. The first system consists of three staves labeled III, II, and I, with a forte (*f*) dynamic marking. The second system shows a piano introduction with a *sempre simile* instruction. The third system shows a *come primo* section with *non legato furioso* and *stacc.* markings.

Example 5. Laukvik, *Triptychon*, "Toccata," mm. 1-5, 49, 52.



In the 1979 Norwegian composition competition, Laukvik won a prize for *Via Crucis*, which is based on the theme of the crucifixion of Jesus. It is a set of character pieces. Rather than trying to provide a visual image of the biblical story, they attempt to capture the emotional impact of the subject matter. Its impressionistic style reflects the influence of Debussy, Ravel, and other twentieth-century French composers. Laukvik explains:

*Via Crucis* is not program music in the true sense of the term. No significant actions formed the basis for these eight meditations, it being rather my wish to illuminate certain emotional experiences felt by the people who witnessed Jesus's suffering and death.<sup>14</sup>

The second movement is based on Luke 23: 26, which is about Simon of Cyrene who helps Jesus carry the cross. Marcel Dupré also references this scene in his *Le Chemin de la croix* for organ (1931). There are notable similarities in the depiction of the image between the settings of Dupré and Laukvik. In the fifth station of Dupré's work, the figuration in the left hand shows the walking steps of Simon of Cyrene. In Laukvik's *Via Crucis*, the extensive use of strong dissonant parallel motion perhaps illustrates Simon of Cyrene's compassionate journey with Jesus on this fateful walk. See examples 6 and 7.



Example 6. Marcel Dupré, *Le Chemin de la croix* for organ, "Station V," mm. 1-2.



Example 7. Laukvik, *Via Crucis*, "II," mm. 1-2.

<sup>14</sup> Jon Laukvik, Preface to *Via Crucis* (Oslo: Norsk Musikforlag A/S, 1979).

The last movement of *Via Crucis* is based on 1 Peter 1:3: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."<sup>15</sup> The opening of the piece starts with a succession of altered dominant chords ( $V^{7\#5}$ ) whose roots descend in semitones. In m. 5, the polychord of G flat Major and C Major creates suspense in the music leading to a powerful and dissonant toccata section, in which each sonority is built from bitonal chords. See example 8.



Example 8. Laukvik, *Via Crucis*, "VIII," mm. 5-6.

In *Dieu Parmi Nous*, Messiaen repeats a chromatic descending motive in the pedal to represent God's descent to the earth as a human being. At the conclusion of this same piece he employed the twentieth-century keyboard toccata technique involving alternating chords in left and right hands until he reaches the final cadence. Like *Dieu Parmi Nous*, the very last measure of Laukvik's *Via Crucis* has chords on the manuals that contrast with the parallel fourth movements in the pedal line. Like both Messiaen and Debussy, Laukvik, often uses planing in his harmonic language; in his case the parallel fourth is a commonly heard sonority.<sup>16</sup> In this musical style, tonality is often obscured, but the harmonic motion creates both ambiguity and context. See examples 9 and 10.

<sup>15</sup> *The Korean-English Study Bible* (NIV) (Word of Life Press: Seoul, 2006).

<sup>16</sup> Siglind Bruhn, *Image and Ideas in Modern French Piano Music: The Extra-Musical Subtext in Piano Works by Ravel, Debussy, and Messiaen* (Stuyvesant: Pendragon Press, 1997), 162.

rall. - - - - - molto - - - - - Lent

fff

Example 9. Olivier Messiaen, *La Nativite du Siegneur*, "Dieu Parmi Nous,"  
mm. 101-102.

Da capo al segno e poi fff lunga

"Lovet være Gud, vår Herre Jesu Kristi Far!  
I sin store miskunnhet har han født oss på  
ny, så vi eier et levende håp ved Jesu Kristi  
oppstandelse fra de døde".  
(1.Peter 1.3)

Example 10. Laukvik, *Via Crucis*, "VIII," m. 21.

Jehan Alain was one of the most important influences on Laukvik's early compositions. The use of the irregular rhythmic patterns with simple pedal motion in Alain's second *Fantasia* is echoed in Laukvik's *Passacaglia*. See examples 11 and 12.



Example 11. Jehan Alain: *2<sup>e</sup> Fantaisie*, mm. 75-77.



Example 12. Laukvik: *Passacaglia*, mm. 29-30.

## Jazz

Although Laukvik's early pieces were strongly inspired by the music of Messiaen and Alain, in his later work, the elements of jazz became more prominent in Laukvik's rhythmic and harmonic language. Laukvik explores diverse jazz styles. The jazz musicians that have had a strong impact on him include George Shearing (1919-2011), Oscar Peterson (1925-2007), Art Tatum (1925-1957), and Gonzalo Rubalcaba (b. 1963). Laukvik states,

I think George Shearing, the great lyricist, was my greatest jazz inspiration. But also Gonzalo Rubalcaba -My *Euphonie* for organ and five percussionists owes a lot to him-, Oscar Peterson (who I heard play live once), and Art Tatum, the two fantastic virtuosos, have made great impressions on me.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Jon Laukvik, electronic message to author, April 21, 2015.

In his monumental *Suite* (1986), Laukvik has applied many compositional devices and reflected a wide range of musical styles that capture the fancy of many organists. It is also the piece that defines him as an established organ composer. The “Suite” combines diverse jazz styles with the form of a French Classic suite.

According to Laukvik the four opening notes of the *Plein Jeu* are an obvious reference to Nicolas de Grigny's *Veni Creator*. In m.1, Laukvik writes three chords (B<sup>b</sup>m<sup>7</sup>, D<sup>7</sup>, E<sup>b7</sup>) set under a long E in the soprano voice. The tight voicing and extensive use of seventh chords with chromatic bass line makes the jazz-like sonority. See examples 13 and 14.

This musical score shows the first four measures of the beginning of 'Veni Creator' by Nicolas de Grigny. It is written for organ in G minor (one flat) and 3/4 time. The piece begins with a long E note in the soprano voice. The bass line features a chromatic descent: E4, D4, C4, B3, A3, G3, F3, E3. The chords are B<sup>b</sup>m<sup>7</sup>, D<sup>7</sup>, and E<sup>b7</sup>.

Example 13. Nicolas de Grigny, *Veni Creator*, mm. 1-4.

This musical score shows the first 16 measures of 'Plein Jeu' by Laukvik. It is written for organ in G minor (one flat) and 3/4 time. The piece begins with a long E note in the soprano voice. The bass line features a chromatic descent: E4, D4, C4, B3, A3, G3, F3, E3. The chords are B<sup>b</sup>m<sup>7</sup>, D<sup>7</sup>, and E<sup>b7</sup>. The score includes a 'Circle of Fifth' annotation and a 'Use of Extended Harmony' annotation. The harmonic analysis is as follows:

- Measures 1-4: B<sup>b</sup>m<sup>7</sup>, D<sup>7</sup>, E<sup>b7</sup>
- Measure 5: F<sup>7</sup>M: I, E<sup>b</sup>M: ii m<sup>7</sup>
- Measure 9: V<sup>7</sup>alt, I Maj<sup>7#5</sup>
- Measure 13: FM: ii dim, V<sup>7b9</sup>, I Maj<sup>7</sup>, IV<sup>9#11</sup>, CM: ii m<sup>7b5</sup>, V<sup>7b9</sup>
- Measures 14-16: I Maj<sup>7</sup>, B<sup>b</sup>M: ii<sup>7</sup>, V<sup>9</sup>, I<sup>7</sup>

Example 14. Laukvik, *Suite*, "Plein Jeu," mm. 1-16.

Another jazz influence in Laukvik's music is the extensive use of extended harmonies. In jazz, rich tertian harmonies are a consistent feature of the style, especially on tonic chords. The FM<sup>7</sup> chord in m.4 has a seventh on the tonic before moving to Fm<sup>7</sup>. Another important jazz feature is the use of root progressions by perfect 5th. For example, in mm 9-10, the progression is gm- C<sup>7</sup>- FM<sup>7</sup>-B<sup>b</sup>M<sup>7</sup>. Also note the frequent use of iim7-V7-I to establish temporary key centers. This progression is seen in mm. 4-5, mm. 9-10, mm.12-13 and mm. 14-15.

In m 1 of Laukvik's *Plein Jeu*, the three dominant<sup>7th</sup> chords move by half-step motion, which can be seen as planing, or in jazz parlance, "block chord technique." The right hand plays a four-note chord inversion in which the melodic note is the highest note in the voicing. The other three notes of the chord are voiced as closely as possible below the melody note.<sup>18</sup> Shearing developed and refined block chord technique. The "Shearing sound," which is also known as "locked hands style," is a melody harmonized with a three-note chord in the right hand, the left hand doubling the melody an octave below.<sup>19</sup> Though Laukvik does not double the alto voice in his work, he does employ seventh chords in chromatic parallel motion.

Rhythm is an essential aspect to help identify the jazz influence in Laukvik's *Suite*. The dotted rhythm of the "Plein Jeu," which comes historically from *notes inégales*, in this piece also suggests the "swing" rhythm so prevalent in slow jazz settings. Another jazz rhythm that Laukvik employed features recurring bass patterns in the third movement, "Duo." The repeating combination of eighth note and quarter notes, coupled with the presentation of four

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<sup>18</sup> Baerman, Noah. *The Big Book of Jazz Piano Improvisation* (Miami: Alfred Publishing, 2004), 94–5.

<sup>19</sup> Bill Dobbins. "Shearing, George." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed August 1, 2015, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.www2.lib.ku.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/41306>.

eighth notes in 5/4 time resembles the style of Paul Desmond's *Take Five*, made famous by the Dave Brubeck Quartet. See examples 15 and 16.



Example 15. "Take Five" by The Dave Brubeck Quartet, mm. 9-10.



Example 16. Laukvik, *Suite*, Duo, m. 2-4.

In the fugue of the second movement from *Aria, Fugue & Final* (2013), Laukvik points out that, in addition to virtuosic passagework and restless rhythm, “rhythmic accuracy” was one of Oscar Peterson's stylistic traits. According to Laukvik, “A little jazz exercise” from Oscar Peterson’s solo piano recording called “Tracks” has always fascinated him.<sup>20</sup> Also, Laukvik displays Art Tatum's use of complex devices including syncopated rhythm in the bass, complicated melodic passages, and equal facility in both hands.<sup>21</sup> See examples 17 and 18.



Example 17. Art Tatum, “All the Things You Are,” mm. 133-134.

<sup>20</sup> Jon Laukvik, e-mail message to author, July 28, 2015.

<sup>21</sup> Billy Taylor, *Jazz Piano: A Jazz History*. (Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Company, 1983), 104.



Example 18. Laukvik, *Aria, Fugue & Final*, "Fugue," mm. 13-15.

There is an anecdote about Arthur Rubinstein, the great classical pianist, sitting in a jazz club in Manhattan listening to Art Tatum. Somebody recognized Rubinstein, went over to him and asked: "Mr. Rubinstein, what are you doing here?". Rubinstein answered: "I am listening to the best pianist in the world".<sup>22,23</sup>

Laukvik's organ pieces contain other idiomatic jazz pianistic techniques as well. In the "Récit" from the *Suite*, Laukvik adopted the style of a jazz ballad solo. The use of syncopation, reverse dotted rhythm, and slow triple rhythm is also found in his "Three Blues" from *Ludus Organisticus*. See examples 19 and 20.

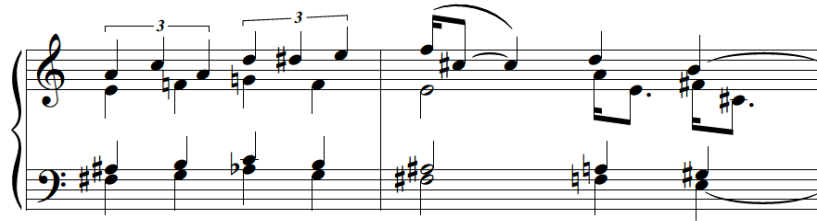


Example 19. Laukvik, *Suite*, "Récit," mm. 3-4.

<sup>22</sup> Jon Laukvik, e-mail message to author, July 28, 2015.

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.counterpunch.org/2011/01/14/the-greatest-piano-player-ever/> (Accessed on August 29, 2015).





Example 20. Laukvik, III “Blues”, *Ludus Organisticus*, mm. 9-10.

### Dissonance Treatment

Laukvik's music is based on triads and seventh chords, but his harmonic language serves as a function of timbre. Polychords with an augmented octave are commonly seen in Laukvik's harmonic language. In Laukvik's *Stille Nacht*, he applied interesting harmonies that change the mood of this famous Christmas tune. See example 21. in m. 6 of *Stille Nacht*, C sharp and C on the dotted eighth note form an A major chord over a d minor<sup>7</sup>. This practice sometimes got Laukvik in trouble. He explains:

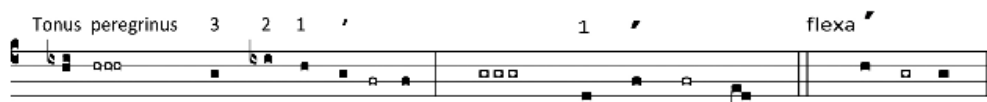
At that period, I often replaced the organist at the Stuttgart Stiftskirche on holy days for one of the services. I needed pieces for the service. A scandal aroused when I played 'Stille Nacht' as a service prelude. After the last chord one of the congregation in the packed church cried "Impertinence!" And I got an angry letter from the clegyman afterwards. That was my last Christmas service in the Stiftskirche...<sup>24</sup>



Example 21. Laukvik, *Stille Nacht*, mm. 1-7.

<sup>24</sup> Jon Laukvik, e-mail message to author, May 13, 2015.

Harsh, dissonant harmonies often occur in his early compositions. The *Magnificat* is the most avant-garde sounding piece composed by Laukvik. The tune comes from the *tonus peregrinus* in Gregorian chant, which has two reciting tones. Laukvik harnessed this special feature of the chant and created a unique sound on the organ. This piece is intensely expressive, blending polychords, improvisation, and toccata elements. See examples 22 and 23.



Example 22. *Tonus peregrines*<sup>25</sup>



Example 23. Laukvik, *Magnificat*, mm.16-17.

<sup>25</sup> [http://gregorien.info/psalm/all\\_tones/en](http://gregorien.info/psalm/all_tones/en)

#### IV. Influences from Other Composers

Laukvik has integrated various forms and musical gestures used by both modern and earlier composers, referencing works by J. S. Bach, Vierne, and Chopin.

Laukvik composed *Ach Herr, mich armen Sünder* (commonly known as *Herzlich tut mich verlangen*) as a contribution to the "Orgelbüchlein Project," a twenty-first century homage to Bach. This project began in 2007 as a collaborative exercise between the organ and composition departments at Trinity College of Music, England.

The manuscript of Orgelbüchlein has 118 missing pieces, ghostly gaps with only the title penned by Bach. Each of these gaps will be filled by a new composition based on Bach's intended melody. The new pieces, written by the most interesting composers at work today, will survey a range of modern styles.<sup>26</sup>

The "Orgelbüchlein Project" is an international project commissioned by Cambridge University, Oxford University, the Dutch Embassy in the UK, the Austrian Cultural Forum, the Lithuanian Composers Union, the Latvian Embassy of the UK, the Czech Centre, the Association Toulouse les Orgues, and Harrison and Harrison Organ Builders. Composers involved in the project include renowned organists such as Thierry Escaich, Lionel Rogg, Guy Bovet, and Jon Laukvik.

*Ach Herr, mich armen Sünder* (BWV 135) is a church cantata by Johann Sebastian Bach based on a chorale by Cyriakus Schneegass. Laukvik's *Ach Herr, mich armen Sünder* was composed in 2014 for the Merton College Passiontide Festival. The composer describes it as follows:

My idea was that my prelude would - at first glance - look like a piece by Bach. The harmonization would on the other side be like by Bach *redivivus*, sounding as if Bach would have been moved into the 20th century (not the 21st century!) provided with the compositional knowledge of all epochs after him, including jazz harmonization.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> <http://www.orgelbuechlein.co.uk/> (Accessed on June 29, 2015).

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.laukvik.de/>

Interestingly, Laukvik directed the performer to play the piece legato. For early organ music, including Bach, non-legato playing is considered a fundamental feature of performance practice. According to his own book, *Historical Performance Practice in Organ Playing*, "The refined non-legato has to be seen as the normal method of playing in the baroque and classical period...it becomes the primary and 'objective' too in organ playing."<sup>28</sup> The statement creates an interesting contradiction to the indication to perform legato found at the start of his setting of *Ach Herr, mich armen Sünder*. See example 24.



Example 24. Laukvik, *Ach Herr, mich armen Sünder*, mm. 1-4.

In his directions for the organ registration, he also suggests a new sound for a modern organ chorale prelude;

If J.S. Bach had travelled not only North, but also South, he would have come into contact with both the Swell division and undulating stops... On a modern or romantic instrument, the registration should be: all foundation stops 8' and *Voix céleste*: a grand and warm sound. On a historical instrument I suggest to draw some well blending 8' stops and couple the manuals.<sup>29</sup>

The combination of 8' stops and *Voix céleste* is a French romantic organ registration. For his own music, Laukvik is not limited by the standard sound of Bach's music, but he is

<sup>28</sup> Laukvik, Jon. *An Introduction Based on Selected Organ Works of the 16th-18th Centuries*, vol. 1 of *Historical Performance Practice in Organ Playing* (Stuttgart: Carus, 1996), 33.

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.laukvik.de/> (Accessed on April 25, 2015).

willing to experiment with various possibilities in terms of registration, harmony, and rhythm.

Much of Laukvik's music displays humor and a connection between established tradition and contemporary ideas. This a principal focus of Laukvik's latest pieces. The *Passacaglia*, published in 2012, exemplifies Laukvik's humorous and novel ideas. He wrote the variations above a descending chromatic ground bass. Though the genre itself originated in the early Baroque period, his use of the chromatic scale and polychords demonstrates his mastery of Romantic and twentieth- century idioms. Often he avoided establishing a firm tonal center.

The theme is in F minor, but it includes all twelve chromatic pitches. This theme is harmonized by polychords built from triads or seventh chords in both hands. The chords themselves create interesting harmonic relationships between themselves as well as with the ground bass. See example 25.

The musical score for Example 25, Laukvik's *Passacaglia*, mm. 1-8, is presented in three staves. The top two staves are for the right hand, and the bottom staff is for the left hand. The key signature is F minor (three flats) and the time signature is 3/4. The tempo is marked 'Andante, tempo giusto'. The right hand part is characterized by dense polychordal textures, with a dynamic marking of *fff* and the instruction 'sempre pesante'. The left hand part features a descending chromatic ground bass, also marked *fff*, with a 'Ped. legato' instruction. The score shows the first eight measures of the piece.

Example 25. Laukvik, *Passacaglia*, mm. 1-8.

In the eleventh variation Laukvik uses parallel motion, in the same way that Romantic French composers like Vienne write passages with similar textures. See Examples 26 and 27.



Example 26. Louis Vierne, *Symphonie III*, “Scherzo,” mm. 41-45.

Example 27. Laukvik, *Passacaglia*, mm. 83-86.

This creates a dissonant sound between the thirds and sevenths on the right hand and the sixths in the left hand, in addition to the additional note added on top of the ground bass in the pedal. The resultant harmony leaves the impression of a harsher sound than was the case with passacaglias dating from earlier periods. After the sixteenth variation mm. 138, the piece concludes with the ground bass alone, which is not common in historic passacaglias. See example 28.

Example 28. Laukvik, *Passacaglia*, mm. 124-146.

Laukvik says,

In this passacaglia, Baroque, Romantic and Modern composition techniques are used side-by-side. This creates a sort of musical “patchwork” – very appropriate for our time – held together by the theme only.<sup>30</sup>

In 2013, Laukvik was commissioned to compose an organ piece for the St. Albans International Organ Competition. This background helps explain the structure and the demand for technical difficulty found in the *Aria, Fugue & Final*. The piece consists of three

<sup>30</sup> Jon Laukvik, Preface to *Passacaglia* (Copenhagen: Edition Svitzer, 2012).

independent movements that all make great technical demands on the performer. As mentioned above, the "Fugue" employs jazz piano techniques.

The Aria is an homage to the second movement of Vienne's *Symphonie VI*.<sup>31</sup> This music appears to have a clear song form similar to Vienne's Aria, which is in ternary form with coda. Laukvik's harmony and rhythm, however, exhibit jazz influences, rather than Vienne's late tonal and post-tonal musical language. See examples 29 and 30.

The image shows two systems of musical notation for Example 29. The first system consists of a grand staff with a treble clef and a bass clef, both in 3/4 time. The right hand has a melody starting with a piano (p) dynamic, featuring a triplet of eighth notes. The left hand provides harmonic support with chords and moving lines. A 'cresc.' marking is present. The second system continues the piece, starting with a 'dim.' marking in the left hand and a 'p' marking in the right hand. It includes a 'G.' marking in the left hand and a 'cresc.' marking in the right hand. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and dynamic markings.

Example 29. Vienne, *Symphonie VI*, "Aria", mm. 1-9.

<sup>31</sup> Jon Laukvik, electronic message to author, April 21, 2015.

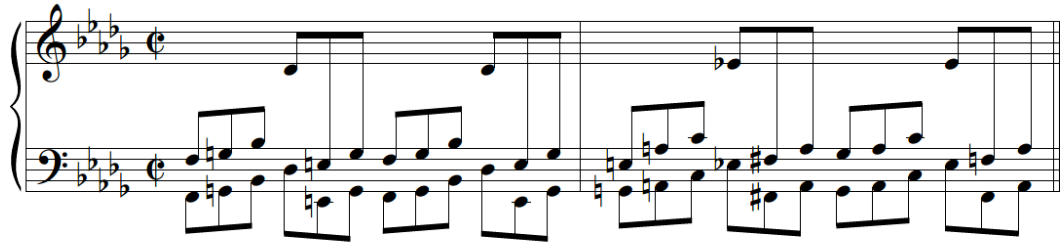


Example 30. Laukvik, *Aria, Fugue & Final*, "Aria," mm 1-7.

In mm 1-2 of Laukvik's "Aria," the lower two notes move by a semitone with a regular quarter-note rhythm. In m. 7, the flat seventh tone in the soprano voice of the d minor chord works together with the bass motion to create a progression that resembles a ii-V-I progression. The solo voice demonstrates a relatively free rhythm with occasional syncopations. The texture and groove resembles the sound of a vocal jazz piece.

The "Final" can be considered the organ version of the last movement of Chopin's Sonata in B<sup>b</sup>.<sup>32</sup> The basic texture of the movement is derived from Chopin's perpetual eighth-note movement. In Laukvik's interpretation of Chopin's work, however, he exchanged the position of the two triplet figures. See examples 31 and 32.

<sup>32</sup> Jon Laukvik electronic message to author, April 23, 2015.



Example 31. Chopin, *Sonata in B flat minor*, mm. 1-2.



Example 32. Laukvik, "Final" from *Aria, Fugue & Final*, mm. 77-80.

## Conclusion

Laukvik's organ compositions incorporate diverse musical characteristics based on his profound understanding of traditional organ music and organ playing technique coupled with his vision of new possibilities and approaches to composing for the instrument. Through the course of his career he gradually changes from early improvisatory techniques to a more well-developed musical architecture inspired by French romantic music and jazz. He establishes his own harmonic language by using a rich musical texture with dense harmony, which is often chromatically driven. Laukvik intended to create jazz-inspired sounds by employing extended harmony and characteristic jazz rhythms.

Laukvik's references to music written by earlier composers shows his interest in creating new sounds using materials drawn from the Renaissance, Baroque, and Romantic eras.

Influences from twentieth century French composers such as Debussy, Messiaen, Alain, and Vierne can also be heard in Laukvik's music.

Laukvik's organ music displays his ingenuity and creativity. These works are significant additions to the contemporary organ repertoire that deserve to be more widely performed and known by the organ community.

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