

# From Renaissance 'Fuga' to Baroque Fugue: The Role of the "Sweelinck Theory Manuscripts"

by

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Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck has long been recognized as one of the most important teachers in the history of music. During the first half of the seventeenth century, Sweelinck's German organ students held many of the best positions in north and central Germany, and the keyboard music that they composed during that period is rivaled in importance only by the works of the Roman organist Girolamo Frescobaldi. Although Sweelinck's most famous pupil, Samuel Scheidt, worked in central Germany, it was in north Germany, particularly the city of Hamburg, that Sweelinck's influence was most enduring. Johann Mattheson, in the biographical article on Sweelinck for the *Grundlage einer Ehrenpforte*, called him the "hamburgischer Organistenmacher";<sup>1</sup> and in fact Sweelinck's Hamburg students Heinrich Scheidemann and Jacob Praetorius and their students Johann Adam Reincken and Matthias Weckmann played key roles in the musical life of one of the leading musical cities in seventeenth-century Europe. Finally, Johann Sebastian Bach paid homage to Sweelinck's legacy when as a student in nearby Lüneburg he journeyed to Hamburg to hear the aging Reincken play.

Mattheson also stated that Sweelinck studied with Zarlino in Venice and that he taught from his own translation of Zarlino's *Istitutioni*. No archival evidence has ever surfaced to support the claim of a Venetian sojourn, and most scholars now agree that Sweelinck almost certainly did not study directly with Zarlino. He did, however, teach from *Le institutioni*, as three manuscripts that we will call the "Sweelinck theory manuscripts" make clear. These manuscripts were first described by Robert Eitner in 1871<sup>2</sup> and further discussed in 1891 in separate articles by Max Seiffert<sup>3</sup> and Hermann Gehrman.<sup>4</sup> In 1901 Gehrman edited them for vol. 10 of the Sweelinck Complete Works,<sup>5</sup> but since that time no thorough reconsideration of the material has been undertaken, despite important new information that has come to light.

Although the two most important manuscripts, both in Hamburg, were lost in World War II,<sup>6</sup> Gehrman's edition enables us to reconstruct their contents almost completely.<sup>7</sup> The largest,

1 Johann Mattheson, *Grundlage einer Ehrenpforte* (Hamburg: the author, 1740), pp. 331-333.

2 Robert Eitner, *Über die acht, respektive zwölf Tonarten und über den Gebrauch der Versetzungszeichen im XVI. und XVII. Jahrhunderte nach Joh. Peter Sweelinck*, in: *MfM* 3 (1871), pp. 133-151.

3 Max Seiffert, *J. P. Sweelinck und seine direkten deutschen Schüler*, in: *VfMw* 7 (1891), pp. 178-186.

4 Hermann Gehrman, *Johann Gottfried Walther als Theoretiker*, in: *VfMw* 7 (1891), pp. 483-493.

5 Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck, *Werken*, vol. 10: *Composition Regeln Herrn M. Johan Peterssen Sweling*, ed. H. Gehrman, Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1901; reprint ed., Farnborough, England: Gregg International Publishers, 1968).

6 On the fate of the Hamburg library at the end of World War II, see Hans Joachim Marx, *Johann Matthesons Nachlaß: Zum Schicksal der Musiksammlung der alten Stadtbibliothek Hamburg*, in: *AMl* 55 (1983), pp. 109-113 & 116. Marx reports that some of the library's holdings have since turned up and are now to be found in the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek, Berlin (DDR). My inquiry concerning the two Hamburg theory manuscripts, however, elicited a negative response from Dr. Ursula Winter of the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek's Handschriftenabteilung in a letter dated 12 August 1985.

7 See especially Gehrman's introduction to the edition, pp. i-iii, from which much of the following summary is taken.