"Fantasia & Echo" Jacob van Eyck's Ultimate Mastery

by Thiemo Wind transl. Maria van der Heijde-Zomerdijk

Thiemo Wind studied musicology at Utrecht University with Marius Flothuis and Willem Elders, and recorder at Hilversum Conservatory. He is the author of many articles on early woodwinds, and specializes in Dutch 17th-century solo music for recorder (Jacob van Eyck and others), on which he is writing a dissertation. He has served as musicological advisor to Frans Brüggen and the Orchestra of the 18th Century. For the 2nd edition of the New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, he wrote on several topics, including Van Eyck.

Wind's publications include a complete edition of Van Eyck's Der Fluyten Lust-hof (the New Vellekoop Edition published by XYZ, replacing the out-of-print one by Gerrit Vellekoop) and an anthology of all-solo recorder pieces by Van Eyck's colleagues, The Gods' Flute-Heaven (Earlham Press). His facsimile edition of Der Goden Fluthemel was published by the Dutch Foundation for Historical Performance Practice, STIMU.

In 1993 he was the instigator of the International Recorder Symposium organized by STIMU during the Holland Festival of Early Music in Utrecht.

Wind is music editor of the leading Dutch newspaper De Telegraaf, and lives in Houten, a village six miles south of Utrecht. Born blind, and a nobleman, Jacob van Eyck (c.1590-1657) was widely known as a carillonneur and as a leading expert in the field of bell casting and tuning. A letter from René Descartes, who lived for some years in Utrecht, to the French music theorist Marin Mersenne describes how Van Eyck was able to use resonance to isolate different partials without touching the bell, by whistling.

Employed in Utrecht at the Dom (cathedral) and other churches, Van Eyck played carillon, an ancient instrument found especially in The Netherlands and Belgium, but also now in the U.S. and U.K. It is played by a skilled performer from a manual and pedals similar to those of an organ, and consists of up to 70 bells nowadays.

Van Eyck was also an avid recorder player, performing on the Janskerkhof (St. John's Churchyard) on summer evenings. Because of the popularity of these performances, Van Eyck was urged to have his music written down for a printed edition. His pieces were published beginning in 1644, and became popular among amateur musicians in a growing middle class. This work, "Der Fluyten Lust-hof" ("The Flute's Pleasure Garden"), comprises sets of variations (or divisions) for the soprano recorder on psalms and then-popular French, British, Italian, Dutch and German songs.

For more information on Van Eyck, as well as other articles by the author of this article, see <www.jacobvaneyck.info>.

In this article, a superscript numeral indicates on which beat of the measure a musical section begins or ends.

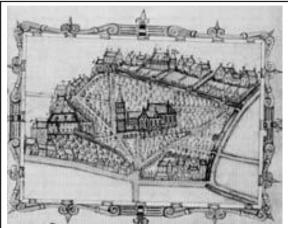
Tacob van Eyck is known mainly as a composer of variation works. In the two volumes of his *Der Fluyten Lust-hof*, 96% of the approximately 150 solo compositions can be categorized in this genre. Hidden among them can be found a few works that are not associated with preexisting materials: two small preludes (New Vellekoop Edition nos. 1, 89) and three works referred to as fantasias (NVE 16, 90, 145).

Of these, "Fantasia & Echo" (NVE 16) is by far the most interesting. This article takes a closer look at this composition.

The development of the fantasia genre was closely related to the emancipation of instrumental music from vocal forms. In the 17th century, the term stood for various types of compositions. The Greek word *fantasia* refers to thought, internal image. An instrumental fantasia was based on the individual imagination, and was not tied to existing models or textual sources of inspiration. This freedom is one of its basic characteristics.

In his *Tratado de glosas*, published in Rome in 1553, Diego Ortiz said he could not give an example of a fantasia, "because everyone plays them in their own style."

The freedom offered by the fantasia makes it an ideal medium for improvisation, for "fantasizing." "Et lors que le musicien prend la liberté d'y employer tout ce qui luy vient dans l'esprit sans y exprimer la passion d'aucune parole, cette composition est appellee Fantaisie,







ou Recherche," Marin Mersenne wrote in his Harmonie universelle of 1636. ("And when the musician takes the liberty of using everything that springs to mind, without expressing the passion of any word, this composition is called fantaisie, or recherche.") "Recherche" is the French equivalent of "ricercar(e)" or "ricercata," a contrapuntal form developing in Italy at the same time.

Mersenne's remarks seem to apply perfectly to the other two fantasias by Jacob van Eyck, but not to the "Fantasia & Echo," which shows a distinct relationship to the keyboard fantasia.

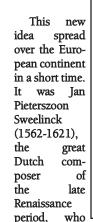
Keyboardists wanting to demonstrate their skills preferred to use their highest ideal: imitative counterpoint. The keyboard fantasia in southern European countries was a matter of polyphonically oriented *improvisation*, while in Northern Europe this type of fantasia developed as the highest form of keyboard *composition*. William Byrd initiated this development. In 1597 in A Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Music, Thomas Morley gave the first comprehensive description of this new type of composition:

The most principall and chiefest kind of musicke which is made without a dittie is the Fantasie, that is, when a musician taketh a point at his pleasure, and wresteth and turneth it as he list, making either much or little of it according as shall seem best in his own conceit. In this may more art be showne than in any other musicke, because the composer is tide to nothing but that he may adde, diminish, and alter at his pleasure. And this kind will beare any allowances whatsoever tolerable in other musick, except changing the air & leaving the key, which in fantasias may never be suffered. Other things you may use at your

pleasure, as bindings with discords,

discords,
quicke motions, slow
motions, proportions, and
what you list.
Likewise, this
kind of music
is, with them
who practice
instruments
of parts in
greatest use,
but for voices
it is but sil-

dome used.



put the new insights into practice in Amsterdam.

EXAMPLE 1

a. Van Eyck, "Fantasia & Echo," opening

b. Sweelinck, "Fantasia C2," opening

c. Sweelinck, "Fantasia d4," opening

The designation "Fantasia & Echo" calls forth associations with works of Sweelinck, who composed various echo fantasias for keyboard. There is common ground with respect to the content, as well: Van Eyck's solo composition shows specific conceptual approaches that can also be found in Sweelinck's oeuvre.

Because no keyboard works by Sweelinck's Dutch pupils have survived, it is difficult to verify the scope of certain basic compositional principles. The echo principle in itself was, at the time, internationally popular and had a strong Arcadian connotation, hinting at a world of shepherds and shepherdesses, caves and mountains.

Without any doubt, Van Eyck was familiar with the Sweelinck school. Alewijn de Vois worked from 1626 to 1635 as the organist at the Dom (Cathedral) in Utrecht. His father, Pieter de Vois, a blind organist and carillonneur from The Hague, had been one of Sweelinck's most important pupils. Van Eyck was also friends with Lucas van Lenninck from Deventer, who had been a student of Sweelinck as well.

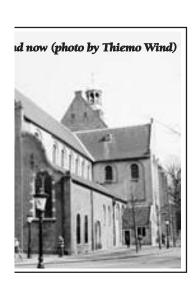
In Sweelinck's handling of the fantasia, two types can be distinguished: the monothematic and the echo. The latter type is a relatively small group. As Pieter Dirksen indicates (see *References* at end of this article, which include the source in which Dirksen lists his classification num-

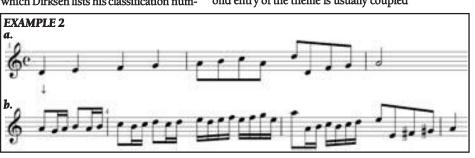
bers for Sweelinck's works), echo fantasia is an unfortunate choice of term, since the echo principle is often only a very modest part of a given work. Echo is mentioned explicitly in the title in just three of the eight works by Sweelinck belonging to this group ("Fantasia auf die Manier eines Echo," etc.).

Sweelinck's echo fantasias begin with an *exordium* (opening section), usually in canonic form. However, in his "Fantasia d4," the introduction is fugal, while most of the composition is defined by echoes. Van Eyck's composition shows marked resemblances to this work in particular.

The "Fantasia & Echo" begins with a quasi-polyphonic section that spans 14-1/2 measures. The opening theme of the *exordium* is an ascending pentachord, of which the fifth note is embellished with eighth notes (see ex. 1a). The melodic passage d'-e'-f'-g'-a'-b'-c"-a' also characterizes the opening of Sweelinck's aforementioned "Fantasia d4" (see ex. 1c). Rhythmically, Van Eyck's opening phrase is identical to that of another echo fantasia: Sweelinck's "Fantasia C2" (see ex. 1b).

After the statement of the opening theme, the theme follows again—but adorned, a fifth higher, "in keyboard manner" (see ex. 2a-b). Here, as one might expect, the variation composer asserts himself. Compared with keyboard composers, Van Eyck's range of possibilities was extremely limited, since he wrote for only a single voice. In a keyboard work, the second entry of the theme is usually coupled



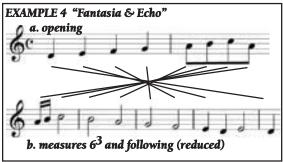




with a counter-subject: "something different" happens. Melodic embellishment was, for Van Eyck, the only way to combine the thematic idea with the realization of "something different."

He was not alone in his efforts to translate polyphony into monody. In Italy, at the end of the 16th century, Aurelio Virgiliano did the same in one of his solo ricercares from Il dolcimelo (see ex. 3).

After the theme has been established at the upper fifth, Van Eyck makes an addi-



tion in the second part of measure 5 (e'-f#-g#-a') to cadence in A minor.

There is no third entry of this particular theme, which, because of the limited range of the recorder, should come as no surprise. But the imitative introduction is not over yet. In the middle of measure 6, the composer introduces new thematic material—with a descending line, unlike

the first theme. The note values ensure continuity, although there are never more than two sixteenth notes in a row. When we reduce this second theme to its main notes, an augmented retrograde version (the notes of the theme in reverse and in longer note values—but not strict) of the beginning of the first theme can be recognized (see ex. 4).

This second theme goes from A minor (or perhaps F major) through a sequence back to D minor. Now, again, a transposed and embellished repetition follows, this time a sixth higher and making an extended cadence before the entire repetition is completed. The character of this fourth phrase of the exordium firmly establishes the key. The section is in D minor, until a picardy third turns it into major (m.13).

A summary of the exordium in main notes is shown in example 5. As a whole, this cleverly constructed introduction completely fits Morley's description of the fantasia.

Now the real echo work begins. A total of five echo sections can be distinguished. After the second, an imitative segment without a strict echo interrupts. The last three measures of the piece also do not follow the echo principle. Therefore, eight sections can be distinguished in this piece. Table I shows a formal outline.

If there were only echoes after the exordium, the title "Fantasia & Echo" could have been explained as "fantasia followed by an echo." From the interruption (section iv) and the final measures (viii), however, it is obvious that the en-

tire work—not just the *exordium*—should be considered a fantasia. This is a "fantasia in the manner of an echo," like the comparable works by Sweelinck.

In Sweelinck's "Fantasia d4," the first echo originates directly from the exordium, because the last entry of the introductory theme also forms the



first echo motive. Van Eyck did not make such a fluid transition, but he does dovetail the first echo section with the *exordium*, in part through the way he begins the echo motive: with a linear ascending upbeat in two sixteenth notes, followed by an eighth. A similar entry had already happened in measures 6 and 10. We have seen other rhythmic and melodic elements from the echo motive in the *exordium* as well (see ex. 6).

In Van Eyck's variation works, there is usually only room for echo motives lasting one or two quarter notes. In the "Fantasia & Echo," most of the motives are longer, so the echo function becomes more important.

Sweelinck's "Fantasia d4" contains echo motives that last several measures: for some musicologists, this was reason enough to doubt the authorship of the piece. Pieter Dirksen points out, however, that the echo technique in this fantasia has not been embedded in a larger structure: echoes form the very essence of the piece. For the composer, this might have been the reason to opt for longer motives.

Van Eyck begins both echo blocks (sections ii-iii, v-vii) with the longest echo motive, a logical choice. These long motives sound most clearly like a statement. A melody like "Malle Symen" in the Lust-hof

Table I: Formal outline of the "Fantasia & Echo"			
Section	Measure	Description	Details
i	1-15 ²	Exordium	Imitative (between alto and soprano)
ii	15^3 - 20^2	Echo 1	Echo motive 5 , descending sequence
iii	20 ³ -23	Echo 2	Echo motive 2 , ascending sequence
iv	24-29 ²	Imitative section	Measures 24^{1} - 26^{3} (in A minor) = 26^{3} - 29^{2} (in D minor)
v	29 ³ -40	Echo 3	Echo motive 5, var. on Echo 1, descending "sequence," from 34 ³ , motive is transformed to 4, and descending sequence without echo
vi	41-43	Echo 4	Echo motive 2 , tripla; descending "sequence"
vii	44-47	Echo 5	Echo motive 4 , tripla; descending "sequence"
viii	48-50	Coda	"Summary":

(see NVE 5 & 113), in which the echo function is part of the melody, also starts out with the longest motive: the first lasts two measures, the second and third just one.

Van Eyck confines himself without exception to the octave echo principle. He clearly draws attention to the echo with the markings *forte* (strong) and *piano* (soft): *forte* for the high "source," *piano* for the lower-sounding echo. The relative strength of the registers on a recorder

um (reduced)

takes care of the dynamic contrast by itself. Thus, the markings seem to clarify primarily what is happening here, more than to urge performers to play loud and soft. (Although octave echoes occur in many pieces by Van Eyck, this is the only work in which they have such markings!)

It is unusual that the duration of the first echo spans *five* quarter notes. Typically, a linear echo is played out in regular periods, spanning a quarter note, a half or whole measure, or a multiple number of measures. One can easily guess the result of this irregular periodization: the echo

starts in a different part of the measure from its "source."

The "Fantasia & Echo" is a composition with a clear and balanced structure, making it likely that it was an established piece in Van Eyck's own performance repertoire at the time he dictated it in 1644. Suddenly it had to be forced into the notational straitjacket.

Since Van Eyck repeats the first echo pair one step lower, there are four entries, all starting in a different part of the meas-

ure (see ex. 7). This causes an intriguing episode of tension. A spark of genius? The conclusion is premature, as a common-sense explanation is also possible.

Characteristic of this signal-like echo motive is the way it seems to evade a strict time signature. In fact, every quarter note can be played as if it were the first beat. If we really want to attach a time signature, the motive by itself would fit in triple time as well as in common time. The observed irregularity does not become apparent until the chain of repetitions each time causes a metrical displacement

(shown with dotted lines in ex. 7).

The question arises as to whether Van Eyck played this chain of motives strictly in time, as the section lends itself to free use of time; a *fermata* over the final quarter note of the echo motive would have been a nice touch. The performer can raise the tension by creatively playing with the timing of the echo's start. In this manner it becomes a free and unmeasured, quasi-improvised fantasia section.

The notation might also be in error. As a blind composer, Van Eyck was not used to thinking in written note values. In

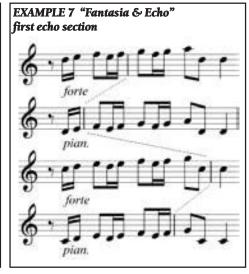
As a blind composer, Van Eyck was not used to thinking in written note values.

Der Fluyten Lust-hof, we can identify several places where he "shifted into the wrong gear" and dictated note values at half the right value. This section of the "Fantasia & Echo" is the sort of place where such a thing could have happened. The motive is dominated by eighths and sixteenths, with a quarter note at the end. Suppose that Van Eyck really had wanted to end the motive with a half note. It is very possible that he mistakenly dictated a quarter note, which, after all the eighths and sixteenths, is long. Ending with a half note, the motive would have been one and a half measures long, and the periodization would have been considerably more regular (indeed, a half-measure shift had already occurred in the exordium).

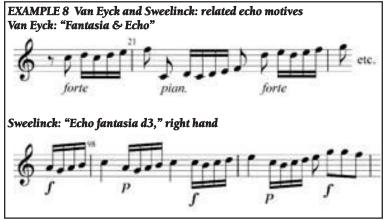
My reconstructions of various pieces suggest that the manuscript of Der Fluyten Lust-hof used by the printer had very few bar lines, if any-at least far fewer than the printed sources. The typesetter in the print shop apparently kept placing bar lines in equal periods from the beginning, until the moment he started to realize that something was not quite right. If the section in question was not notated the way Van Eyck intended it, there was not much that looked suspicious. After all, four times five quarter notes makes five complete measures. Consequently, the second echo section starts in the right place in the measure.

The motive in this second echo section has a duration of two quarter notes and is,

EXAMPLE 6 "Fantasia & Echo": rhythmic and melodic correlations between the first echo motive and the exordium



in comparison with the first, of a fleeting nature. Sweelinck used similar motives (see ex. 8). The octave echo is subjected to an ascending and tensionbuilding sequence, hints at A minor, then finally lands without interruption



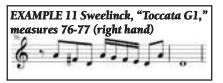
The thirty-second notes provide "fire in the battle."

at the middle section (iv), facilitated by a bridge derived from the echo motive (measure 23, second half; see ex. 9).

As mentioned before, like the exordium, this middle section

has an imitative character. Occasionally Sweelinck, too, punctuated his echo sections with an echoless insert. The phrase of measures 24-26³ (A minor), essentially not more than an embellished cadence, repeats itself a fourth higher (D minor) in 26³-29² (see ex. 9). However, the closing scale passage ascends the first time and descends the second. In this imitative middle section, we notice again the polarity between A minor and D minor.

The introduction of the second echo block (section v) reflects the beginning of the first (section ii): the opening motive is though this time slightly transformed: a more melodic passage replaces the *tremolo* (compare ex. 10b-c). This type of transformation occurs regularly in Sweelinck's echo fantasias (a striking example would be "Echo fantasia C1," measures 104 and following). Van Eyck's motives recall an inverted (low-high) echo motive from Sweelinck's "Toccata G1," measures 75-79 (see ex. 11).

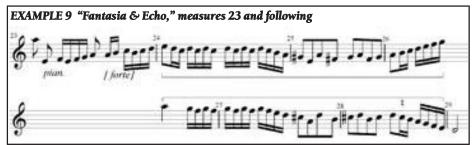


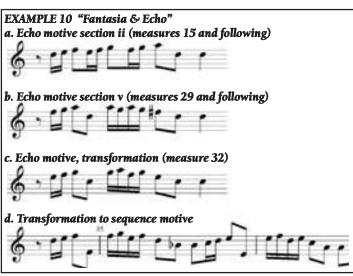
The transformed motive is then, again, itself transformed. Reduced to a regular four-quarter-note period, it is no longer used as an echo, but to form a descending sequence (see ex. 10d). Van Eyck finishes off this sequence with a virtuoso cadence in F major, which incorporates a cadence figure called a *groppo* in Italian. This trill embellishment, however, begins at the wrong place in the measure: on the fourth beat, rather than an accented part of the measure. Something is wrong with the hierarchy of beats in the measure, and the previous sequence shows an equally strange hierarchy.

If the bar lines are moved to the left by one quarter note, everything falls into place (see ex. 12). After the final quarternote rest in measure 40 is eliminated, the transition to measure 41 (section vi) becomes considerably more exciting. The thirty-second notes provide "fire in the battle." Similar types of virtuoso thirty-second-note interjections can be found in Sweelinck's fantasias as well.

The second echo block, like the first, continues with a section having a twoquarter-note echo motive (section vi). This time, however, it is not so short-winded, since it does not include an upbeat. It begins on the first beat and is made up of *tripla* (triplets) for a change: a sextuplet or a double triplet in sixteenth notes (in the sources, indicated with one "3" per six notes), followed by an eighth-note triplet.

There are no fast *tripla* echo motives in Sweelinck's echo fantasias; in these pieces, the Amsterdam master restricted himself to binary divisions. Sixteenth-note *tripla* do occur regularly in his other fantasias, though, especially towards the end. (Examples are the "Fantasia d1 'Cromatica," "Fantasia a1," "Fantasia F1," and "Fantasia g2.")





unmistakably derived from the motive at the beginning of the first block (compare ex. 10a-b). The duration is again five quarter notes. The new motive is less melodic, and based more on harmony than the first. Disregarding passing and changing notes, it begins with a broken inverted D minor chord (f"-a"-d"), followed by an arpeggiated D major chord (a"-f#"-d"). The brief note repetition (a"-g"-a"-g") re-

calls the tremolos of the

preceding imitative section and creates a tight structure.

As in the first echo section (ii), the echo pair is repeated one step lower, al-

Van Eyck proves to be inventive once more, because his *tripla* motive is a free variation of the five-quarter motive from the previous section, with a descending third at the end (see ex. 13). Again we have unity in variety. It is worth noting that the groups of sixteenths marked with a small number "3" have been composed melodically in such a way that they can be performed metrically as three times two (sextuplet) as well as two times three (double triplet). In the latter case, an anti-metric tension is created between the faster notes and the slower eighth-note triplet that follows.

Again, the echo pair is repeated a step lower in a slightly modified form. The most important change occurs in the sixteenth-note *tripla*, which are mirrored horizontally and vertically (see ex. 14).

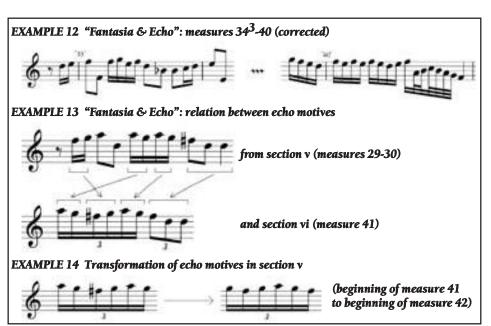
The second echo is not realized completely: where an eighth-note triplet should occur, the sixteenth-note *tripla* continue and finish the section.

In the last echo section (vii), for the first time the motives have a duration of four quarter notes. Because of the regular periodization, combined with the length of the motive, this section has more stability than any of the previous echo passages.

Just as in the preceding section, Van Eyck was guided by a previous five-quarter-note motive—this time not from the second echo block, but from the first (section ii), finishing with a descending fifth (compare ex. 15a-b). The echo pair is repeated a step lower, in a slightly modified form, which can also be interpreted as a variant of the motive from section ii (compare ex. 15c-d). The sixteenth-note *tripla* are shaped melodically in such a way that the groups of six now look like double triplets rather than sextuplets.

Three measures without echo conclude the work (see ex. 16a). In measure 48, Van Eyck combines *tripla* and *dupla*, as if summarizing the composition. This shows a similarity to the final cadence of Sweelinck's "Fantasia d1 'Cromatica'" (see ex. 16b). As a separate section, the three-measure conclusion is very short, and it might be better interpreted as a coda. In combination with the preceding balanced echo section, it provides the weight for a concise ending.

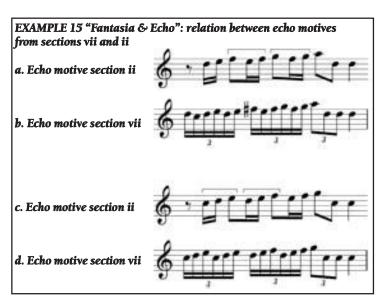
To sum up, with his variation works, Jacob Van Eyck straddles the border between commonplace diminution technique and art. In "Fantasia & Echo," however, he emerges as a real composer who

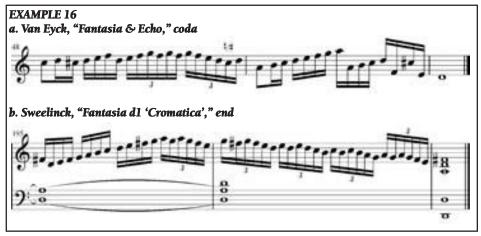


has mastered the "free" form. The work has a clear and symmetrical plan: an *exordium* and a closing section, two echo blocks related in motives and periodization, separated by a central imitative section. Although the first block includes two sections and the second block three, there is a balance between the lengths of the *exordium* and the first echo block (a combined duration of 22-1/2 measures occurring early in the piece) with the second echo block and the coda (21-1/2 measures, later in the piece). The imitative section (iv), which provides a calming interlude, thus has a central position.

The work can be considered a translation from a polyphonic keyboard practice into the monophonic vernacular of the recorder—but, at the same time, it is more than that. In the *exordium* as well as in the

The "Fantasia & Echo" is a composition with a clear and balanced structure, making it likely that it was an established piece in Van Eyck's own performance repertoire at the time he dictated it in 1644.





echo motives, Van Eyck has enthusiastically borrowed, associated and transformed, and made the most of limited material. To paraphrase Morley's words: he "alters at his pleasure."

While many of his variation works give the impression of "frozen" improvisations, here Van Eyck shows his most constructive side. Within a tight structure, there is a balance between unity and diversity. The transformations of the echo motives go beyond the strict diminution practice to which Van Eyck confines himself for his regular variations. This explains why the "Fantasia & Echo" sounds like the solid work of an imaginative composer, who felt the pleasure and freedom to

loosen his boundaries while working in a different instrumental form.

References

Jacob van Eyck, Der Fluyten Lust-hof, New Vellekoop Edition, ed. Thiemo Wind (Naarden-Huizen: XYZ, 1986-1988), 3 vols. (abbreviated in this article as NVE)

Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck, Opera Omnia, Vol. I – Fascicle I: Keyboard Works (Fantasias and Toccatas), ed. Gustav Leonhardt (Amsterdam: Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis [VNM], 1968).

This reference may be difficult to find, but might be ordered by an early music shop or

bookseller, or found in music libraries. Within the text of this article, the several pieces mentioned correspond to specific pieces in this volume; see below for a list showing correlation with Dirksen's classifications.

Pieter Dirksen, The Keyboard Music of Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck. Its Style, Significance and Influence (Utrecht: Koninklijke Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis, 1997).

The classification numbers used in this article were taken from this source, and correspond to the following pieces in the Opera Omnia (OO):

Echo fantasia C1: OO #13 Fantasia a1: OO #4 Fantasia C2: OO #14

Fantasia d1 "Cromatica": OO #1

Fantasia d3: OO #11 Fantasia d4: OO #34* Fantasia F1: OO #5 Fantasia g2: OO #8 Toccata G1: OO #18

Thiemo Wind, "Some Mistakes or Errors...." Recorder Magazine, vol. 11, no. 3 (1991), pp. 82-86.

This article contains more information on the metric errors made by the scribe in notating Der Fluyten Lust-hof.

