Heinrich Schütz, Rembrandt in Music
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Most of Heinrich Schütz's music is now available on CD, though opportunities to hear it in concert have been fairly limited in recent years, at least in London. My impression is that interest in his music among professional groups is weaker now than it was around 1970, when Roger Norrington was giving regular 'Schütz in the Round' concerts in London with his Heinrich Schütz Choir – firing the enthusiasm of many others, including myself. Furthermore, the pieces regularly performed in England tend to be the same few favourites: one or two of the simpler polychoral psalm settings in *Psalmen Davids* (1619); 'Fili my Absalom' SWV269 for solo bass, four trombones and continuo from *Symphoniae sacrae*, vol. 1 (1626); *Die sieben Worte Jesu Christi am Kreuz* (*The Seven Last Words*) SWV478 (1645); 'Saul, Saul, was verfolgst du mich' SWV415 from *Symphoniae sacrae*, vol. 3 (1650); and of course *Historia der Geburt Jesu Christ* (*The Christmas Story*) SWV435 (1664).

The opportunity for me to explore a wider range of Schütz's music at the Suffolk Villages Festival came when Mark Bills, the energetic new director of Gainsborough's House in Sudbury, decided to put on an exhibition of etchings by Rembrandt. It is entitled *Rembrandt the Printmaker* and can be seen at Gainsborough's House until 26 October.[1] Small provincial galleries such as Gainsborough's House do not have the resources to put on an exhibition of Rembrandt's paintings, so Mark (who is an expert on prints) had the brilliant idea of concentrating instead on his wonderful etchings, borrowing a selection of them from the British Museum and the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge. They include several of his profound self-portraits, some landscapes and cityscapes of Amsterdam, and, above all, his dramatic Biblical scenes, including *Three Crosses* (1653) and the famous *Hundred Guilder Print* (*c.* 1643-9) of Jesus preaching.[2] Thanks to Gainsborough's House, we were able to feature the latter in our publicity for this year's Festival. We are developing a series of collaborations with Gainsborough's House; the next will be a concert in Sudbury on 9 November of J.C. Bach, C.F. Abel, the young Mozart and others, tied into an exhibition at Gainsborough's House about Abel and featuring Gainsborough's first portrait of him, loaned by the National Portrait Gallery.

The idea that there is a connection between Schütz and Rembrandt has long been current, and is expressed in the attractive but mistaken idea that Rembrandt's *Portrait of a Musician* (1633), now at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington DC, represents the composer.[3] Rembrandt never ventured outside the Netherlands, and although Schütz travelled widely in northern Germany and Scandinavia, so far as is known he never visited the Dutch Republic. It is more much likely that it is a portrait of the Dutch statesman, writer and amateur musician Constantijn Huygens, as has been argued by several scholars.[4] Nevertheless, the connection between painter and composer is worth pursuing. They were contemporaries working in similar milieux (though Schütz was a court musician while Rembrandt was a free-lance painter in a great city), they were both witnesses to the dramatic events of their time, centring on the Thirty Years War, and they were both prolific creative artists, ranging widely across secular and sacred subjects – including vivid treatments of a number of the same Biblical stories. Above all, they were both profound observers of the human condition.

I have planned the concert as a musical portrait of Schütz, covering thirty years of his composing career, from about 1620, when he was newly established as Kapellmeister at the Saxon court in Dresden, to 1650, when his third and last book of *Symphoniae sacrae* was published and Dresden was beginning to recover from the Thirty Years War – Swedish troops finally withdrew from the city that summer. In particular, I have taken the opportunity to explore some of his rarely performed 'concertos' (the word used at the time for concerted pieces for voices

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1 http://www.gainsborough.org/page.php?pid=453&event_id=109.
2 See *List of Etchings by Rembrandt*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_etchings_by_Rembrandt.
3 http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Heinrich_Schutz_by_Rembrandt.jpg.
4 See Barry S. Brook and Carol Oja, 'Rembrandt's Portrait of a Musician', *College Music Symposium*, 18 (1 October 1978), http://symposium.music.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=1824:rembrandts-portrait-of-a-musician&Itemid=124.

and instruments) written for special occasions such as weddings and political ceremonies. Schütz studied in Venice with Giovanni Gabrieli, and the earliest piece in the concert is a remarkable essay in Gabrieli's polychoral idiom, the *Syncharma Musicum* (*Musical Greeting*) SWV49 for three differently constituted groups of solo voices and instruments. It was written to celebrate the moment in Breslau in 1621 in which his employer, Johann Georg I of Saxony, received pledges of loyalty from the Silesian States on behalf of the Emperor Ferdinand II. A few years later, with the war at its height, the mood was not so confident. The electors of the Empire met at Mühlhausen in 1627, prompting Schütz to produce one of his memorable and original political concertos, 'Da pacem, Domine, in diebus nostris' SWV465. According to his original performance instructions the first choir, singing words from Psalm 84 ('Give us peace, Lord, in our time...'), consists of 'five *viole* with one or two voices singing quietly' – *submisse*. The second choir, consisting of four solo voices with continuo, hails the Emperor Ferdinand and the electors *fortiter* ('Vivat Moguntinus, vivat Trevirensis, vivat Coloniensis', and so on), though at the end a *ripieno* choir enters and everyone sings and plays the prayer for peace *submisse* – a wonderful effect as moving today as it must have been during the Thirty Years War.

With the Thirty Years War devastating much of Germany in the 1620s and 30s, Schütz found conditions at the Dresden court increasingly intolerable. His large and splendid ensemble was reduced to a few singers and instrumentalists, and so he began to travel outside Germany, initially to Venice in 1628-9 to meet Monteverdi and brush up on the latest Italian style – which conveniently for him had rejected the large-scale polychoral style in favour of music for a few virtuoso singers accompanied by continuo and usually a maximum of three obbligato instruments. Typical products of this period in the concert are two solo eloquent concertos for *altus* (high tenor) to be sung by Daniel Auchincloss: 'In te Domine, speravi' with violin and dulcian from *Symphoniae sacrae I* (Venice, 1629), and 'Herzlich lieb hab ich dich, o Herr' with two violins from *Symphoniae sacrae II* (1647). A rarely performed souvenir of Schütz's second Italian visit is 'Güldne Haare, gleich Aurore' SWV440, his version of Monteverdi's 'Chiome d'oro' with German words paraphrasing the Italian text. A souvenir of his second foreign trip, to Copenhagen in 1633-5, is the delightful canzonetta 'O der groβen Wundertaten' for four sopranos, two violins and continuo with *Vogelsang* (probably an organ stop) in the instrumental passages. It was sung by boys on a mobile stage hill or Throne of Venus during a masque-like entertainment at the Danish court. Unfortunately, it survives incomplete; there is a reconstruction of the missing second soprano part in the old Schütz Complete Works, and I have had a go at providing the missing violin parts.

Our concert also includes three large-scale pieces written in the later 1640s, when Schütz was rebuilding the Dresden court ensemble after the war. Two of them were printed in his *Symphoniae sacrae III* (1650) and are dramatic Biblical scenes, tackling subjects also represented by Rembrandt in his etchings. In 'Mein sohn, warum hast du uns das getan' SWV401 Mary and Joseph upbraid the twelve-year-old Jesus for preaching in the Temple without their knowledge, while in 'Siehe, es erschien der Engel' SWV403 the Angel warns Joseph in a dream of Herod's murderous intentions, setting off the Flight into Egypt – one of Rembrandt's favourite subjects. Schütz brings old and new together in these wonderful pieces: they are effectively modern concertos for solo voices, two violins and continuo, but they also have ripieno voices and instruments, giving the Dresden courtiers a taste of pre-war polychoral splendour. The final piece in the concert, 'Herr, du bist vormals genädig gewest deinem Lande' SWV461, a German version of Psalm 85, was never published at the time and is almost unknown today. Yet it is one of his greatest works, contrasting virtuosic solo passages for five solo voices, two violins and continuo with splendidly sonorous tuttis adding extra voices and instruments. Its shares its idiom with the concertos in *Symphoniae sacrae III*, suggesting a date in the late 1640s, and its text, a heartfelt prayer to God not to turn his wrath on a sinful people, would have been appropriate for a ceremony at Dresden to mark the end of the Thirty Years War.