



Photo: Susan Wilson

James Woodman was born in Portland, Maine, in 1957, and educated at Phillips Exeter Academy, Princeton University, and New England Conservatory. He was appointed the first Composer-in-Residence at the Cathedral Church of St. Paul, Boston, and currently serves as Monastery Organist for the Society of St. John the Evangelist, an Episcopal religious order in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Frequently sought as a composer of organ and choral works, his commissions have included works for both National and Regional Conventions of the AGO, the International Horn Society, the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts, the Boston Archdiocesan Choir School, the Boston Cecilia, Harvard University's Memorial Church, and concert organists and conductors Mark Brombaugh, Heinrich Christensen, Carson Cooman, John Dunn, Mark Engelhardt, Eileen Hunt, Jennifer Lester, Christa Rakich, Peter Sykes, and Donald Teeters.

His compositions have been widely programmed, including performances at Magdalen College (Oxford), La Trinité (Paris), Festival Internationale de l'Orgue Ancien (Sion, Switzerland), Domkirche (Berlin), Minato Mirae Concert Hall (Yokohama), Festival Interacional de Orgão Ibérico (Portugal), Christ Church Cathedral (Montreal), Plymouth Congregational Church (Minneapolis), United States Air Force Academy, Basilica of the National Shrine, St. Thomas Episcopal Church (New York), and national radio broadcasts of "Pipe Dreams" (American Public Media).

Eight Little Harmonies And Counterpoints: *Composer's Note*

The first "Eight Little." The "Eight Little Preludes and Fugues" (BWV 553–560) are among the first works almost all young organists encounter early in their training. They are justifiably popular with both students and teachers: modest in technical difficulty, transparent in formal organization, full of life and drama, and just plain fun to play. I admire them as a composer, and for some years I had been pondering what a more contemporary set might consist of. I was delighted, then, when I was given the chance to make my dream into a reality by a commission from the AGO's 2014 Biennial National Convention in Boston.

While I have thoroughly enjoyed the challenge, it has been a daunting one, and one which I could never have undertaken had I believed the first "Eight Little" were actually composed by J. S. Bach himself. However, I had come to accept the conclusion of a number of modern Bach scholars: whoever wrote BWV 553–560, it was almost certainly not a young J. S. Bach. In discussing the authorship of that collection, Peter Williams writes: "Rather, the combination of stylistic elements...suggests a widely read but only mildly talented composer of the 1730–50 period, even perhaps later." Now *that* would be someone with whom I might feel it reasonable to go head-to-head.

A second "Eight Little." With the merits of the first "Eight Little" as a model, the problem for me was to discern which aspects of the original to retain, and where to break new ground. The overall organization of my collection is the same as its model: eight paired works (the first of each pair built on harmonic ideas, the second on contrapuntal); modest in duration and technical demand (each pair about 4'15", pedal difficulty ranging from very easy to moderately challenging); and perhaps rather surprisingly, complete absence of any dynamics or registration. This is because I believe the notational sparseness of the first set is a real gift to both the young organist and the teacher. It is never too soon to begin the development of ear and taste in matters of registration. In the case of my own collection, experimentation isn't just healthy, it's essential. Try a piece on 8' and 4', then on a full principal chorus. Which suits the work better? Or do they both work? How does registration affect touch? Do those gradually built-up tone clusters sound better on the voix celeste or a krummhorn? I cherish the invitation to creativity that the openness of an organ score by Bach or Frescobaldi gives; I hope others will find the same opportunity in this score. (In a seeming self-contradiction, I have indicated metronome markings for all pieces. I found I am unable to resist giving the performer clear guidance on that point from the outset.)

Topics and Terms for Discussion. I view the organ lesson not so much as a lecture or a demonstration, but as a lively conversation. To facilitate that conversation I have included a list of “Topics and Terms for Discussion” at the end of the score which relate directly to each pair of pieces. The focus here is chiefly on matters of form and compositional procedure. I hope an understanding of these concepts might lead to a deeper appreciation of how music works, and in the end, a deeper enjoyment of both performing and listening.

A personal document. Finally, this collection is a personal statement, not a pedagogical or didactic one. Although I am grateful for the rigorous training I received as a composition major at Princeton in the 70’s, it was there I became a post-modernist before I even knew what the word meant. Both the aesthetics and the politics of the highly charged modernist music department seemed to me already a thing of the past. I felt no loyalty to the fiercely austere code of modernism, and still less to the music it produced. As time passed, I came at last to discover that feeling “uncool” was a very modest price to pay for making works which I found beautiful on my own terms. Eclecticism, playfulness, a deep regard for historic procedures—these are the traits which have characterized my work from the beginning.

With this score I offer four heartfelt salutes: to the American Guild of Organists for its truly admirable (and essential) outreach to the next generation, to all young organists and their teachers, to the bold young people the rest of us once were, and to the “mildly talented composer of the 1730–50 period” who gave us such a gift in the first place.

—James Woodman
Cambridge, Massachusetts
June, 2013

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Commissioned by the American Guild of Organists
for the 2014 Biennial National Convention in
Boston, Massachusetts

Eight Little Harmonies and Counterpoints

for organ

Harmony

1. Harmony and Counterpoint in C (Lydian)

James Woodman

Exuberant (♩ = 126)

The musical score is written for organ and consists of four systems of music. Each system has three staves: a grand staff (treble and bass clef) for the main melody and a single bass staff for a counterpoint. The key signature is one sharp (F#), indicating the Lydian mode. The tempo is marked 'Exuberant' with a quarter note equal to 126 beats per minute. The score includes various musical notations such as triplets, slurs, and dynamic markings. The first system is marked 'I:' and the second system is marked 'II:'. The score is numbered 7, 14, and 20 at the beginning of each system.

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Counterpoint

5

75 (♩ = 63)

with a very crisp touch

81

86

91

slowing slightly ♩ = ♩.

2. Harmony and Counterpoint in D (Dorian)

Harmony

Moving serenely, steadily forward (♩ = 72)

The musical score is written for piano in 3/4 time, D Dorian mode. It consists of three systems of staves. The first system (measures 1-6) features a treble and bass staff for the piano and a separate bass staff. The piano part has two main lines: the upper line (treble clef) and the lower line (bass clef). The lower line of the piano part is marked with '1)' and '2)'. The second system (measures 7-11) continues the piano part with the upper line marked '3)'. The third system (measures 12-15) continues the piano part with the upper line marked '4)'. The tempo is marked 'Moving serenely, steadily forward' and the tempo is 72 beats per minute (♩ = 72).

1)

2)

3)

4)

Counterpoint

11

A little faster, but still moderate (♩ = 80)

57

63

68

74

4. Harmony and Counterpoint in E (Phrygian)

Harmony

Contemplative (♩ = 72)

The musical score is written for piano in 4/4 time, with a tempo of 72 beats per minute. It is in the key of E Phrygian (E, F, G, A, B, C, D). The score is divided into four systems of staves.

System 1 (Measures 1-5): The right hand features a series of chords and dyads, with fingerings 1, 3, 2, 4, -2, and -3 indicated above the notes. The left hand provides a harmonic accompaniment with fingerings 1, 3, 2, 4, -2, -3, and -1 indicated below the notes.

System 2 (Measures 6-12): This system continues the harmonic exploration. Fingerings are indicated both above and below the notes in both hands. Above the right hand, fingerings include 1, 3, 2, 4, 5-4, 4-3, 3-2, 2-1, 5-4, 4-3, 3-2, 2-1, -1, and -3. Below the right hand, fingerings include 1, 3, 2, 4, 2-1, 3-2, 4-3, 5-4, -1, and -4. The left hand has fingerings 1, 3, 2, 4, 5, and 5 indicated below the notes.

System 3 (Measures 13-16): The right hand begins a more melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, while the left hand continues with a steady harmonic accompaniment.

System 4 (Measures 17-20): The piece concludes with a final chord in the right hand and a sustained note in the left hand. The word *lyrical* is written above the right hand in measure 17.

Counterpoint

41 **Tenderly** (♩ = 72)

Thomas Tallis: Third Mode Melody (c. 1561)

This system contains measures 41 through 45. The upper staff (treble clef) has whole rests for measures 41-44 and a half note in measure 45. The middle staff (bass clef) contains a continuous melodic line in the Third Mode (Dorian mode, one sharp). The lower staff (bass clef) has whole rests for all five measures.

This system contains measures 46 through 50. The upper staff (treble clef) features a melodic line with various intervals and a final half note. The middle staff (bass clef) provides harmonic support with chords and moving lines. The lower staff (bass clef) has whole rests for all five measures.

This system contains measures 51 through 54. The upper staff (treble clef) continues the melodic development with some grace notes. The middle staff (bass clef) has a more active line with eighth notes. The lower staff (bass clef) has whole rests for measures 51-53 and a half note in measure 54.

This system contains measures 55 through 58. The upper staff (treble clef) has a melodic line with some accidentals. The middle staff (bass clef) features a more complex texture with sixteenth notes and grace notes. The lower staff (bass clef) has a half note in measure 55 and whole rests for measures 56-58.

TOPICS AND TERMS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Harmony and Counterpoint in C (Lydian)

Harmony:

Lydian mode
 Baroque concerto form
 ripieno/concertino
 ritornello
 m. 74: metric modulation

Counterpoint:

canzona
 mm. 96–97: sesquialtera
 m. 122: augmentation (pedal)
 m. 138: deceptive cadence
 m. 142: stretto

2. Harmony and Counterpoint in D (Dorian)

Harmony:

Dorian mode
 chaconne
 quartal harmony
 retrograde harmony: cf. mm. 21–23, mm. 1–3

Counterpoint:

recercare
 m. 4: answer by inversion
 m. 78: second subject, second exposition
 m. 85: double fugue

3. Harmony and Counterpoint in E-flat (Major)

Harmony:

north German prelude: sequential type
 sequential root movement:
 mm. 8–11, V–I falling by step
 mm. 17–22, I–V rising by thirds
 mm. 23–26, I–V falling by thirds
 mm. 31–35, V–I rising by step
 mm. 49–51, III–I rising by step
 m. 63–64: metric modulation

Counterpoint:

three part canon
 pastorale
 invertible counterpoint:
 cf. mm. 91–105, mm. 64–77
 m. 107, pedal: blue note

4. Harmony and Counterpoint in E (Phrygian)

Harmony:

elevation toccata
voce umana (Italian organ stop)
 tone cluster
 mm. 18–32: parallelism, mirror harmony

Counterpoint:

south German chorale fughetta
 Phrygian Mode
 Third Mode Melody (Thomas Tallis)
 mm. 68–78: augmented cantus firmus

5. Harmony and Counterpoint in F (Minor)

Harmony:

Gregorian psalm tone (Mode I)
 written out improvisation
 Charles Tournemire

Counterpoint:

Gregorian psalm tone (Mode I)
 tactus
 syncopation
 m. 51: stretto

6. Harmony and Counterpoint in G (Mixolydian)

Harmony:

Mixolydian mode
 minimalism
 mm. 1–4: chords of the eleventh

Counterpoint:

fugal gigue
 bipartite form
 m. 74 parallel minor, inversion

7. Harmony and Counterpoint in A (Major)

Harmony:

north German prelude

Counterpoint:

Restoration England: verse form
 Purcell, Blow, and Locke
 m. 60: second subject
 free postlude

8. Harmony and Counterpoint in B (Minor)

Harmony:

passacaglia

Counterpoint:

BWV 582
 permutation fugue
 double countersubject
 mm. 81–92: episode
 mm. 92–95: codetta