

Crossing the Rhine With Froberger [II]: His Programmatic Keyboard Pieces in the Light of Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics

Froberger's keyboard works are unique in the seventeenth-century repertory for their numerous programmatic rubrics. The recent discovery of two major manuscript copies and a fair-copy autograph for Froberger's music has added to the list of programmatic titles and annotations for his works. Prior to these finds, the best known programmatic pieces were the *Lamento* for Ferdinand IV, heir to the Habsburg throne, and the *Tombeau* for Charles Fleury, known as Blancrocher, whose death in 1652 was the occasion for several memorial pieces.¹ The *Lamento* is particularly famous because of its preservation in Froberger's autograph manuscript of 1656, which he dedicated to Emperor Ferdinand III. Here a visual representation of an imperial apotheosis accompanies the rising scale at the end of the *Lamento*.² This is shown in figure 1 on the fourth page of your handout; I will return to this image for further discussion a bit later.

I will be referring to the two “new” manuscript copies as the Dresden and Berlin sources, respectively. I have listed bibliographic citations for these and other sources on the first page of your handout.³ To refer to the suites, I will use the numbering in the old edition by Guido Adler,

¹ In addition to a keyboard tombeau by Louis Couperin, there exist lute memorials by Dufaut and Denis Gaultier. The latter also exists under the title *Andromède*; see Clemens Goldberg, *Stilisierung als kunstvermittelnder Prozeß* (Laaber: Laaber, 1987), 204–5.

² Facsimile in *Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Musiksammlung, Mus. Hs. 18707 (Froberger Autographs)*, edited by Robert Hill (New York and London: Garland, 1988), volume 3/2 in *17th Century Keyboard Music: Sources Central to the Keyboard Art of the Baroque* [17CKM], Alexander Silbiger, general editor. Froberger's suites will be cited by the numbers assigned them in the edition by Guido Adler in *Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Österreich*, vols. 8 (1897), 13 (1899), and 21 (1903). Individual movements will be designated A (allemande or lament), G (gigue), C (courante), or S (sarabande), followed by the number of the suite in which they fall in Adler's edition. This system remains more readily understandable than the “FbWV” numbers assigned by Siegbert Rampe in his collected edition of Froberger's keyboard works (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1993–) and in his article on Froberger in *Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 2d edn., *Personenteil*, vol. 7 (2002), cols. 172–88.

³ The autograph, which became known too late to be considered in this paper, was sold by Sotheby's in November 2006 and has subsequently dropped out of sight. On the Dresden manuscript (D), see Rudolf Rasch and Pieter Dirksen, “Eine neue Quelle zu Johann Jacob Frobergers Claviersuiten,” in *Musik in Baden-Württemberg: Jahrbuch 2001/Band 8*, ed. Georg Günther and Reiner Nägele (Stuttgart: Metzler, [2001]), 133–53; modern edition by Rasch as *Vingt et une suites pour le clavecin de Johann Jacob Froberger et d'autres auteurs* (Stuttgart: Carus, 2000). The discovery of the Berlin manuscript (B) was reported in Peter Wollny, “Allemande faite en passant le Rhin dans une barque en grand peril': Eine neue Quelle zum Leben und Schaffen von Johann Jakob Froberger (1616–1667),” in *Jahrbuch des Staatlichen Instituts für Musikforschung 2003*, 99–115; facsimile and transcription edited by Wollny and the

which remains the basis of the newer system introduced by Siegbert Rampe. Table 1 lists the pieces by Froberger in the Dresden and Berlin manuscripts; from this you will see that only four of the twenty-one suites and laments in the Berlin manuscript are without titles of some sort. Particularly notable is the extended account for the allemande of Suite 27, which takes the form of twenty-six numbered rubrics. These relate a hazardous ferry crossing of the Rhine by Froberger and several traveling companions, one of whom falls into the water and nearly drowns. Each rubric corresponds to a specified passage in the music, like the numbered entries in the caption for a mathematical diagram. Less explicit but no less intriguing are the shorter titles and other annotations attached to other pieces in both manuscripts.

As you will see from table 2, a total of nineteen movements by Froberger, including two complete four-movement suites, are provided with verbal or iconographic “programs” in at least one source. (This list does not include the autograph that was sold by Sotheby's in November 2006 and which has subsequently disappeared without having been made available for transcription or adequate study by scholars. The autograph contains a number of previously unknown works, several with programmatic or autobiographical rubrics, but these do not offer anything that would require revision of the conclusions presented here.) The Berlin manuscript contains nearly this complete repertory. Most of the annotations and images refer to events involving Froberger, his friends, and his patrons. I would like first to undertake a text-critical examination of these annotations, in order to find clues to their origin and dissemination. I will then consider how Froberger's contemporaries might have understood the nature of musical representation as it occurs in these pieces. I will conclude with some observations about how we might interpret these verbal annotations today, and on how they differ from those in later French keyboard pieces.

Only with the famous *Lamento* for Ferdinand IV, shown in figure 1, does a title appear in an autograph manuscript.⁴ Most of the pieces in the Berlin manuscript survive only in copies; among these are the first six suites in the manuscript, all of which include descriptive titles, as well as the laments for Blancrocher and Ferdinand III. Concordances for many of these pieces occur in a manuscript in the Minoriten archive in Vienna. The Minoriten manuscript also includes programmatic titles and annotations, yet these often differ considerably from those in the Berlin manuscript, as do the musical texts. Lacking autographs, we cannot determine whether the differences derive from revisions made by the composer or from alterations made by copyists. But both the Berlin manuscript and the Minoriten manuscript appear to give relatively late versions of both the musical text and the verbal entries, at least by comparison with the simpler musical readings and the less informative verbal annotations of the Dresden manuscript and other

Sing-Akademie zu Berlin as *Johann Jacob Froberger: Toccaten, Suiten, Lamenti* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2004).

⁴ In source D the title of A12 is incorporated into the decorative vignette that heads the piece, and therefore is probably not in the composer's hand although it presumably bears his authority. Rampe, (Froberger edition, 3: xxvi), assumes that the engraver Joannes Fridericus Sautter, whose name appears in the elaborate title page for part 1 of the source, was responsible for all the drawings.

sources.

For instance, in Suite 14, the Dresden source merely designates the first movement as a lament, without the additional explanation found in Berlin. The allemandes of suites 16 and 27 bear only brief titles in Dresden, and these do not match the ones in Berlin. Above all, the Dresden source lacks the detailed account for allemande 27. Indeed, no other sources contain such detailed titles or rubrics, although the iconography in the 1656 autograph perhaps served similar purposes. For Suite 11, the Dresden manuscript gives no titles at all, whereas the autograph contains emblems that correspond in a general way with titles in the Berlin manuscript. The emblems are shown in figure 2. As several commentators have noted, the eagle crowning the allemande could certainly symbolize a royal election and coronation, and the sword and scepter that illustrate the courante and sarabande continue the regal theme. Yet the titles for the courante and the sarabande in the Berlin manuscript refer to distinct if related events: the birth of a princess and the coronation of an empress.

It has also been observed that the Dresden source gives early versions of the music. Although this is not uniformly true,⁵ the Dresden manuscript certainly represents a tradition somewhat distinct from that of the Berlin and Minoriten manuscripts. Both traditions may nevertheless derive fairly directly from the composer, leaving us with several possibilities: (1) Froberger might have been inconsistent in how he labeled or annotated different autograph manuscripts of the same pieces, or in how he described them to patrons and pupils; (2) copyists might have attached their own rubrics to his music, either on the basis of oral tradition or following their own volition; and (3) titles and even the meanings of pieces might have evolved as works were revised and recopied. None of these possibilities are mutually exclusive. Unfortunately, only a few sources provide programmatic rubrics, and these sources are independent of one another. For this reason, I doubt that the philological approach will take us much farther toward understanding the origins and meanings of these annotations.

How might seventeenth-century listeners have understood this music? Most writing about music from the period is of a strictly practical nature; not until the eighteenth century did European writers systematically address issues of musical aesthetics. Yet philosophical writers do occasionally touch on issues of musical expression and representation, and writers such as Descartes left general theories of art and imagination. For Descartes, the mind constructs images corresponding to what is perceived by the senses.⁶ We might suppose that the emblems in Froberger's 1656 autograph correspond to images in this sense; they are visual equivalents of what the music was meant to engender in the mind of the listener. But most of the iconography in the autograph appears to be purely decorative. Only with Suites 11 and 12 are definite meanings suggested, and a precise coordination between image and music seems to occur only in the lament for Ferdinand IV. There, the final ascending scale is clearly a musical emblem,

⁵ In at least four suites (2, 13, 15, and 18), D1 gives texts that are in some respects more refined than those of other sources, including the Vienna autograph (B) of Suite 2.

⁶ See, e.g., H. James Jensen, *The Muses' Concord: Literature, Music, and the Visual Arts in the Baroque Age* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), 5–8.

corresponding to the visual one drawn immediately beside it in the manuscript, as in figure 1b.⁷

The association between heaven and an ascending scale may seem obvious. But it is good to have this documentary confirmation that a seventeenth-century musician would have made the connection. Other evidence for associations of this type occurs in an exchange of letters between Descartes and Mersenne. In their discussion, which concerns a musical competition between two composers, both assume that musical intervals have specific, concrete emotional meanings. For instance, half steps and minor thirds are sad, whereas fifths and major sixths are full of energy. Descending intervals represent decline, ascending ones are lively. Later writers would continue to attach meanings to intervals. Werckmeister held that the octave could represent the son of God.⁸ Bacilly, in his treatise on singing, invokes precise affects or *passions* (passions) in describing the most minute details of diction and ornamentation.⁹ Each writer in effect takes for granted a semiotics of expression and representation that relates the musical surface to specific emotions and concrete images.

It would not be surprising if Froberger shared generally held views on the emotional significance of intervals and ornaments. To be sure, the expressive profundity of his music comes not from the mechanical application of rules governing the musical surface, but rather from deeper compositional elements: the ingenious chromatic modulations, the beautifully nuanced melodic embellishment, and the varied rhythmic pacing that gives each piece a distinctive dynamic shape. Yet Froberger's music does incorporate mechanical signifiers such as chromatic intervals, or ascending and descending scales. These permit not only the naive sort of analysis offered by Mersenne and Descartes, but also the narrative programs that I will discuss shortly. From these signs and symbols, it is a relatively small step to the programmatic keyboard sonatas of Johann Kuhnau or the theory of musical expression put forth by Johann Mattheson.¹⁰

Already during his lifetime, Froberger may have been recognized for the uniquely expressive, even autobiographical character of certain compositions. In the dedication to the 1656 autograph, he tells the emperor that his works “derive from emotions that the vicissitudes of

⁷ For a well-known account of a recurring motive as “emblem,” see Ellen Rosand, “The Descending Tetrachord: An Emblem of Lament,” *Musical Quarterly* 65 (1979): 346–59.

⁸ Andreas Werckmeister, *Musicalische Paradoxal-Discourse* (Quedlinburg, 1707), 92, 100.

⁹ For instance, urging the singer to avoid a trill at a certain moment, Bacilly argues that “it would remove all the sweetness that the composer intends.” See Bénigne de Bacilly, *Remarques curieuses sur l'art de bien chanter* (Paris, 1668; translation and commentary by Austin B. Caswell as *A Commentary upon the Art of Proper Singing*, New York: Institute of Mediaeval Music, 1968), 174.

¹⁰ On Mattheson's theory of musical expression, see Peter Kivy, *Sound Sentiment: An Essay on the Musical Emotions, Including the Complete Text of The Corded Shell* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 39–43. Kivy shows that Mattheson's was not a naive “arousal” theory but rather involved the listener's “cognitive response” to musical signs such as intervals.

time have occasioned in me.”¹¹ Comparable ideas are expressed in the rubrics for other pieces in the Berlin and Minoriten manuscripts. Kuhnau would make no such autobiographical assertions in the preface to his Biblical Sonatas. But the young J. S. Bach did so implicitly in his *Capriccio sopra la lontananza de il fratro diletissimo*, whose sections bear programmatic annotations like those in Kuhnau's sonatas.

Froberger himself was personally acquainted with intellectuals such as Athanasius Kircher and Constantijn Huygens. Therefore he is likely to have been aware of ongoing philosophical debates over the nature of ideas and images, and his programmatic compositions might have been stimulated by a personal interest in emblems and the “passions.” Even if this is not the case, the rubrics attached to his works may reflect the interest of his patrons or of fellow musicians in the surrounding philosophical issues. In the Berlin manuscript, the annotations for *allemande 27* are written at the bottom of the page, as you can see from figure 3. Each annotation is keyed to the music through numerals placed in the score; table 3 gives a short version of these annotations. To my knowledge, this is a unique instance of such detailed rubrics being attached to individual passages and figures in a seventeenth-century work. Much later, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach would produce something similar in his so-called *Programm-Trio*, published in 1752. In his preface to this work for two violins and continuo, Bach described specific musical passages as representing moments in a conversation between two characters. Letters printed in the performing parts serve as a code linking each musical passage to its verbal description.

In both cases, specific musical passages are alligned with verbal annotations. Today the procedure seems straightforward, thanks to our familiarity with nineteenth-century program music. Yet it would be wrong to assume that the musical representation in these pieces takes place in the same manner as it does in, say, a tone poem by Richard Strauss. In Froberger's *allemande 27*, the verbal entries correspond with the music only sometimes, and not always in the same way. In particular, we might distinguish between correspondences of meaning and correspondences of affect, as shown in table 4. For instance, when *Monsieur Mitternacht* falls into the water, at annotation number 2, the music contains a descending arpeggio. On the other hand, at number 12, when *Mitternacht* encounters difficulty swimming, the music presents a series of rising chromatic half steps. These half steps have no obvious connection to any physical motion and must instead represent an emotional state.

Still other annotations seem to have no correspondence at all in the music. The most extensive verbal annotation, at number 9, takes up more than three lines of the densely written German text. This is much too long for the corresponding music, which constitutes less than one complete measure. My English summary in table 3 greatly simplifies the actual verbal narrative at number 9. According to the manuscript, we are supposed to believe that Froberger wakes up, hears what he thinks are the sounds of the boat sinking, and reconciles himself to drowning as he commends his soul to God—all this within the time of just three quarter notes.

Such discrepancies require an explanation. Why are there precisely twenty-six verbal rubrics, evenly divided between the two halves of the piece? Thirteen annotations are distributed over the eight measures of each half. Some annotations correspond to relatively lengthy musical

¹¹ “alcune Opere, secondate per il più dall'humore, che hà cagionato in me la Varietà degl'accidenti del tempo.”

passages, others to individual figures lasting just a beat or even less. Sometimes two identical musical figures have similar meanings, but not in every case. Clearly the annotator was careful to attach specific words to specific musical passages, but only sometimes does the effort yield precise matches. In the Dresden manuscript, no verbal account is attached, merely the one-word title *Wasserfall*. Evidently this title is explained by the account in the Berlin manuscript. But the precise narrative of events and their correlation with the music could be a later addition, not necessarily one made by the composer himself.

This is a good moment for us to hear the allemande, recorded in a performance of mine from a year ago. [\[Click here for the recording.\]](#)

The attachment of a detailed account to this particular piece is somewhat surprising because, by Froberger's standards, this allemande is not particularly vivid. Compared to the *tombeau* or even to an untitled allemande like that of Suite 7, the present allemande is rather bland, lacking remote modulations or substantial contrasts of rhythm or melody. Yet no other piece of Froberger's comes with so detailed an account. Froberger's other programmatic pieces do not seem to represent narratives, even when a short short account is attached. The *tombeau* for Blancrocher includes passages that are usually interpreted as the tolling of bells and the lutenist's fatal plunge down the stairs. Yet the order of these figures is wrong for a narrative, unless the final descending scale really signifies the burial of Blancrocher's body or, worse, the damnation of his soul. More likely, however, the *tombeau* and other laments represent only idealized images and emotional states associated with an event, not the events themselves. Most are generic laments for which the accompanying title or rubric serves as a sort of program note and is not organically connected with the music.

Alexander Silbiger has asked: how seriously were these titles taken? Certainly by the eighteenth century it was understood that programmatic titles could be understood variously. But earlier Froberger sources already contain hints that some titles and rubrics were understood as examples of wit or irony; one may even have served as political satire. The *gigue* of Suite 13 contains a cadenza-like passage which, in the Dresden and Berlin manuscripts, is to be played "slowly and with discretion, like the return of Cardinal Mazarin to Paris." The Berlin version of the passage is shown in example 1. This is one of two rubrics that play on the word "discretion"; the *Minoriten* manuscript attaches another example to the opening movement of Suite 14.

In Berlin and Dresden, the present *gigue* 13 is entitled "La rusée mazarinique," that is, "Mazarin's Deception." This seems to refer to the surreptitious way in which the first minister of the young Louis XIV re-entered France on Christmas Eve 1651, after his first exile during the Fronde.¹² In addition to the cadenza-like passage toward the end, the *gigue* is noteworthy for its unusual alternation between duple and triple notation; perhaps this shiftiness also has something to do with the title. In any case, the piece might have been a musical *mazarinade*, a political attack on the effective ruler of France. Support for this interpretation comes from the Berlin manuscript, which indicates that Froberger composed the allemande of the same suite at Paris for the Marquis de Termes. This Marquis de Termes served in the household of Gaston d'Orléans,

¹² See, e.g., Geoffrey Treasure, *Mazarin: The Crisis of Absolutism in France* (London: Routledge, 1995), 192–3. The date 1652, given by Rasch and Dirksen, "Eine neue Quelle," 142, and accepted by Wollny, preface (p. xx), seems to reflect a later event.

the king's uncle, who was allied with other princes in opposing Mazarin. If Froberger maintained his friendship with the marquis, he might later have stayed at the palace shown in figure 4 at the end of your handout. The oddly named Hôtel Salé—which now houses the Musée national Picasso, in the Marais—was built in the 1650s by Pierre Aubert, a wealthy tax farmer who lived with his wife in a sort of ménage à trois with none other than the Marquis de Termes.

But for now any biographical conclusions drawn from these titles must remain speculation. And except in the small number of pieces to which specific annotations are attached, it may be a mistake to read specific meanings into individual motivic figures. For these meanings change with the context. In Gigue 13, Mazarin returns to France with a descending scale. But the same figure is repeated on the next page of the Berlin manuscript, shown in example 2. This example is from the allemande of Suite 16, whose title indicates that it is “on the subject of a mountain path.” The same allemande concludes shortly after a *rising* scale, as shown in example 3. This scale takes precisely the same form as the one with which Ferdinand IV ascends to heaven. Even the performer's technique is the same; the slurs and the alternating downward and upward stems on the notes indicate the use of alternating hands.

In the absence of specific verbal annotations, I am reluctant to conclude anything about the precise significance of these figures. For similar reasons, I wonder whether other commentators have been right to use the annotations as sources for Froberger's biography or for dating the music. Can we assume that pieces were composed at the times of the events that they memorialize? Does the word *faite* in the titles mean “composed,” “improvised,” or merely “written down”? David Fuller, Alexander Silbiger, and others have shown that seventeenth-century instrumental pieces may often have been played from memory; some of the more puzzling variant readings in the Froberger sources might be explained if the composer carried many of his pieces in his head, writing out copies for pupils or patrons at various times, thereby producing variations not only in musical texts but in titles.

Whatever their origin and precise meaning, the annotations provide clues to how some performers and listeners understood this music. The detailed annotations for allemande 27 suggest that the copyist of the Berlin manuscript focused not on the large form but on the musical surface—sometimes on individual intervals, rarely on gestures lasting more than a beat or two. Some gestures might have been understood as connoting sighs, prayers, motion upwards and downwards, and the like. But even if not understood so concretely, the swift alternation between rushing scales, drooping tritones, straining chromatic half steps, and diverse other affective figures hints at the nature of the “discretion” called for in the headings for certain movements, especially in the Berlin manuscript.¹³

This French word *discretion* is central to Froberger interpretation. The late Howard Schott showed that it could refer to either a slow, deliberate tempo or to freedom of rhythmic

¹³ For a discussion of the meaning of *discretion* (written prior to the discovery of SA), see Howard Schott, “Parameters of Interpretation in the Music of Froberger,” in *J. J. Froberger: Musicien européen* ([Paris:] Klincksieck, 1998), 102–4.

interpretation;¹⁴ the two senses seem to merge in Froberger's pieces. The player of the toccatas and allemandes in the Berlin manuscript would have had to recognize immediately the changing affects or passions signalled by the musical surface, responding with swift yet musically coherent variations in the tempo or in the style of any added ornamentation or rhythmic alteration. The need for “discretion” in performance might have been obvious to those who had heard Froberger in person. That later players required encouragement in this regard is implied by the proliferating indications for “discretion” in later sources, especially the Berlin manuscript.

“Discretion” for a seventeenth-century keyboard player might have included the connection that a player makes between changing mental images or passions and the changing sounds produced through the instrument. In Cartesian language, the sounds of a performance would have been aural representations of whatever the player was feeling or imagining. Unlike the ineffable affects of later musical aesthetics, these images and passions were real presences in the mind of the player or listener, mediated by the equally real, physical contact of the fingers on the keys. Images and feelings described in titles and annotations were genuinely present if the player was conscious of them and responded to them musically. But a player who was unaware of the proper images or passions could not play the pieces as the composer had done. At the end of his life, Froberger was reportedly unwilling to let his best music circulate, because players who lacked the proper “discretion” would only spoil it.¹⁵ Perhaps one reason for this unwillingness was that Froberger had failed to indicate precisely, in his own manuscripts, where discretion was to be employed, or what events and feelings his various pieces were meant to memorialize. If so, the Berlin manuscript may be the product of an effort by a pupil or admirer of Froberger to clarify and preserve his tradition.

Yet by the end of the seventeenth century, the type of musical representation seen in most of Froberger's programmatic pieces was being replaced by another. Even in allemande 27, it is the pathos rather than the action that is most vividly represented, by the four “correspondences of affect” listed in table 4. Kuhnau, and even the young Bach, if they were in fact responding to something in Froberger's music, failed to catch it, since what they do in their programmatic pieces is more concrete, more programmatic in the strict sense of the term. French composers such as François Couperin, although occasionally writing pieces that are also narrative in a literal sense, are more elusive. They do not, I think, aim at representing the composer's or player's actual mental states in the way that I believe Froberger to have done. Rather they aim, when they write representationally, at representing objects, or else people considered as objects of contemplation or even as puzzles. So Couperin's portrait of the Princesse de La Conti is, to quote his subtitle, full of incomparable grace. His presumed self-portrait in La Couperin is by turns witty and phlegmatic, in a way that raises the question of whether the music really represents facets of the composer's true inner self. In neither work are we told that the music describes an event or even

¹⁴ Howard Schott, “Parameters of Interpretation in the Music of Froberger,” in *J. J. Froberger: Musicien européen* ([Paris:] Klincksieck, 1998), 102–4.

¹⁵ Or at least so Duchess Sibylla indicated to Constantijn Huygens in her famous letter of Oct. 23, 1667 (Nov. 2, 1667, new style), translated by Rasch, “The Huygens-Froberger-Sibylla Correspondence,” 242.

an emotional reaction to an event; rather we are given a title that invites us to puzzle out what the title has to do with the music. The result is an elaborate game, the music a sort of mask.

One reason Bach and other Germans of his generation wrote so few programmatic pieces may have been that they lost interest in the sort of game such pieces had come to represent. Yet the game is almost irresistible, perhaps an inevitable result of the provision of titles of any sort. That later German musicians continued to play the game is evident not only in programmatic pieces of the next generation, by Marpurg and C. P. E. Bach, but in the preservation of a few little pieces under Froberger's name in the same collection that contains the Berlin manuscript. These pieces, also once owned by the Berlin organist Johann Philipp Lehmann, include suites with titles such as the Clavier Trampler and the High-nosed Organist. The pieces are competently composed, in a style reminiscent of Kuhnau. I find little in them that relates to their titles, but at least one Berlin musician evidently regarded these pieces as programmatic. It is thanks to him that we know not only about Froberger's crossing of the Rhine, but what it may have meant to some of his admirers, if not to him.