

INTERPRETING THE ORGAN WORKS OF HUGO DISTLER

by

David LeRoy McKinney

A Document Submitted to the Faculty of the

SCHOOL OF MUSIC

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS

In the Graduate College

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

2006

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
GRADUATE COLLEGE

As members of the Document Committee, we certify that we have read the document prepared by DAVID LEROY MCKINNEY entitled INTERPRETING THE ORGAN WORKS OF HUGO DISTLER and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the document requirement for the Degree of DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS.

Pamela Decker Date: March 10, 2006

Rex Woods Date: March 10, 2006

John Brobeck Date: March 10, 2006

Final approval and acceptance of this document is contingent upon the candidate's submission of the final copies of the document to the Graduate College.

I hereby certify that I have read this document prepared under my direction and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the document requirement.

Document Director: Pamela Decker Date: March 10, 2006

STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

This document has been submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for an advanced degree at the University of Arizona and is deposited in the University Library to be made available to borrowers under rules of the Library.

Brief quotations from this document are allowable without special permission, provided that accurate acknowledgment of source is made. Requests for permission for extended quotation from or reproduction of this manuscript in whole or in part may be granted by the head of the major department or the Dean of the Graduate College when in his or her judgment the proposed use of the material is in the interests of scholarship. In all other instances, however, permission must be obtained from the author.

SIGNED: David LeRoy McKinney

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I gratefully acknowledge and express deep appreciation to the many wonderful people along the way who have made this project possible:

--to my family, whose support and encouragement in earlier years enabled me to embark upon this path. Thank you, Mom, for driving me to all those piano lessons, band rehearsals, concerts, and competitions. Thank you, Dad, for providing my Christmas, Easter, birthday, and every other holiday gift all at once—I still use the piano.

--to my colleagues and friends, whose conversations, sharing, and contributions helped me to enjoy my time as a student.

--to my many teachers, professors, and mentors throughout the years, whose patience, teachings, homework assignments, lessons, and knowledge provided the necessary prerequisites for this achievement.

--to Matt Lynn, who accompanied me in life through the first two years of my doctoral studies.

--to the Fulbright Commission, whose funding helped support me overseas in Germany for an entire year while I gathered the sources necessary to complete this document.

--to Arndt Schnoor, who patiently answered all of my questions, allowed me to peruse and study Distler's manuscripts, and made my stay in the Hugo Distler Archives productive.

--to Rolf Schönstedt, my mentor in Germany during my Fulbright studies, who provided me with all the tools I needed to understand and perform Distler's organ music.

--to Pamela Decker, who is so much more than just a terrific academic mentor. Thank you for your love, support, encouragement, and advice in all matters.

--most of all, to my amazing husband, Wolfgang Sigmund, who saw to it that I finally finished!

DEDICATION

For Wolfi, who's everything I've ever wanted in a guy.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	8
LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES.....	9
ABSTRACT.....	10
INTRODUCTION	12
CHAPTER ONE: BIOGRAPHY.....	14
Nürnberg (1908-1927).....	15
Leipzig Education (1927-1931).....	18
Lübeck (1931-1937).....	22
Stuttgart (1937-1940).....	30
Berlin (1940-1942).....	35
CHAPTER TWO: INFLUENCES.....	43
German Church Music Traditions	43
<i>Die Orgelbewegung</i> and Baroque Music.....	49
Teachers	51
Organs.....	53
CHAPTER THREE: COMPOSITIONS AND ANALYSES	64
Explanation of Analytical Notation and Techniques	64
Distler's Compositional Process.....	67
General Overview of Distler's Organ Compositions.....	75
Distler's Compositional Style in the Context of the Organ Works	79

TABLE OF CONTENTS — Continued

Opus 8/I: <i>Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland</i>	84
<i>Mvts. I and IV—Toccata</i>	85
Opus 18/I: <i>Thirty Pieces</i>	87
<i>Nr. I—Intonation</i>	88
CHAPTER FOUR: PERFORMANCE ASPECTS.....	91
Reviews of Distler’s Playing	91
Distler’s Own Words	94
Distler’s Own Performances.....	99
Registration Instructions	104
Articulation Instructions	108
Tempi, Ornaments, <i>et cetera</i>	110
CONCLUSIONS.....	112
REFERENCES	114

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: Compositional and professional output, sacred versus secular	26
Figure 2.1: Composers represented in 38 St. Jakobi Vesper programs from February 15, 1931 to December 27, 1936.....	45
Figure 2.2: Ranking of compositional forms found in organ works.....	50
Figure 2.3: Disposition of the <i>kleine Orgel</i> in St. Jakobi before 1935	56
Figure 2.4: Disposition of the <i>kleine Orgel</i> in St. Jakobi after 1935 renovations by Karl Kemper.....	57
Figure 2.5: Disposition of the <i>kleine Orgel</i> in St. Jakobi since 1978	58
Figure 2.6: Planned disposition of Distler's house organ.....	61
Figure 2.7: Disposition of Distler's house organ.....	62
Figure 3.1: Octave designations.....	64
Figure 3.2: Sample chord qualities	65
Figure 3.3: Sample sonority labels.....	65
Figure 3.4: Nondiatonic chord functions	66
Figure 3.5: Organ specification discrepancies between published BA6443 and Distler's black bound archival manuscript	69
Figure 3.6: Music discrepancies between published BA6443 and Distler's black bound archival manuscript.....	71
Figure 3.7: List of organ works, dates completed, premiere information.....	76
Figure 4.1: Disposition and description of the organ in Kiedrich.....	100

LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES

Musical Example 2.1: Recitation in vocal music, “Das ist je gewißlich wahr,” mm. 1-3	46
Musical Example 2.2: Recitation and chromaticism in organ music, <i>Chorale Prelude</i> <i>on</i> “Ach wie flüchtig, ach wie nichtig,” mm. 1-4	46
Musical Example 2.3: Melisma in vocal music on “Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme,” Mvt. III, mm. 35-38	47
Musical Example 2.4: Melisma in organ music, <i>Chorale Prelude on</i> “Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern,” m. 11	47
Musical Example 2.5: Typical articulation markings for brass found in organ music, excerpts from <i>Organ Partita on</i> “Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland,” Mvts. I and IV—Toccatà	48
Musical Example 3.1: Reduction of Distler’s <i>Organ Partita on</i> “Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland,” Mvt. II, Variation 4	80
Musical Example 3.2: Lack of barlines, quartal harmony, and whole-tone scale in organ music, excerpts from <i>Organ Partita on</i> “Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland,” Mvts. I and IV—Toccatà	82
Musical Example 3.3: Ostinato in organ music, <i>Thirty Pieces</i> , Nr. 12— <i>Frisch auf,</i> <i>gut Gsell, laß rummer gahn</i> , Theme, mm. 17-34.....	82
Musical Example 3.4: Tone substitution/changing tones in organ music, <i>Orgelsonate</i> , Mvt. III., mm. 81-96.....	83
Musical Example 3.5: Alternating CM triad.....	89
Musical Example 3.6: Organ point G with ostinato scale fragment below	89
Musical Example 3.7: Descending CM arpeggio with embellishments	90
Musical Example 3.8: P5 sonority envelope.....	90
Musical Example 3.9: Embellished P4	90

ABSTRACT

The document examines Hugo Distler's organ solo works within the context of performance. Chapter One contains relevant biographical information primarily based on the work of Ursula Herrmann. Chapter Two discusses the cultural, academic, and career influences on Distler's compositional output. Chapter Three has analyses of select organ works and a discussion as to how these relate to performance. Chapter Four provides information about the playing and physical execution of Distler's music at the organ console, with much of the information coming from primary sources written by Distler himself.

Distler was born out of wedlock in Nürnberg. His early childhood was fraught with bad experiences. Under the guardianship of his maternal grandparents, he attended a *Gymnasium* and a music academy. When he was later unable to complete his studies at the Leipzig Conservatory, his teachers provided him with excellent recommendations, and Distler became the new organist at St. Jakobi in Lübeck in 1931. In this new environment, he became famous as a church musician, organist, conductor, and composer—the *par excellence* of German music. His other positions were in academia in Stuttgart and Berlin, and he eventually became a full professor. Due to the repression by the Nazi party, constantly being overworked, and the impact of his early childhood upon his psyche, Distler committed suicide on All Saints Day, November 1, 1942.

Distler became the first person to compose music for the organ in a modern style that was suited for the sound of the Baroque organ. His organ music is based on vocal

techniques, experiments with rhythm, uses a variety of scales and modes, and is generally pentatonic.

The ideology of clarity in Distler's works is of utmost importance. It should be apparent that this dictates the performer's choices regarding how to interpret them.

Registration, tempi, and articulation are servants to the composition. Performers of his music need to remain cognizant of this.

INTRODUCTION

“A heart ablaze, which in giving of itself, burns out.”¹

“I want to break away from contemporary confinements and venture into the realm of the supreme.”² “I feel an indescribable loneliness, a sense of being separated from everyone and everything.”³ The first statement by Hugo Distler (1908-1942) expresses the typical dream of youth to change the world. The latter echoes the sentiments of someone aged who failed to achieve anything. This was the world of Hugo Distler: one of failure, he ultimately thought, yet really one full of astonishing successes despite the many defeats.

This document attempts to enhance our understanding of Distler by placing his life, accomplishments, and failures within a broader socio-historical context. Further, it seeks to describe some of the influences upon his compositions, specifically his organ works, as well as certain performance aspects of said pieces. In so doing, the novelty of his compositional style and the importance of his contribution to organ literature thus

¹ “Ein lodernd Herz, das schenkend sich versprüht.“ This is the title of a poem penned by Paul Brockhaus, one of Distler’s friends, in memory of Distler. Quoted in Ursula Herrmann, “Hugo Distler: Leben und Wirken,” in *Komponisten in Bayern: Hugo Distler*, Vol. 20, ed. Alexander L. Suder (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1990), 13. Unless otherwise stated, all biographical information is taken from said source. All translations of German quotes are solely the work of this author.

² “Aus der Gebundenheit des bloß Zeitgemäßen wider vorstoßen in das Reich des Endgültigen.“ Quoted in Herrmann, 14. The last word is a difficult one to translate. It has connotations meaning finite, supreme, or ultimate. Therefore, one must then ask what Distler means by the Kingdom of the Supreme. I interpret this phrase as meaning Distler wanted to make his mark on society, thus becoming immortal. In a conversation with University of Florida Art History Professor Robin Poyner, he suggested a possible link with Russian Suprematism. This author has found neither supporting documents nor disproving evidence that Distler was familiar with the art of Kasemir Malevich (1878-1935) et al.

³ “Weißt Du, in mir hockt dauernd jene nicht zu beschreibende Einsamkeit, das Gefühl, von allem und jedem getrennt zu sein.“ Wolfgang Jennrich, *Hugo Distler* (Berlin: Union Verlag, 1970), 3.

become evident. This study asks the following three questions concerning Distler's life and works: (i) How were Distler's personal losses and feelings of rejection reflected in his compositions, if at all? (ii) How did politics affect his compositional output? (iii) And, what is Distler's significance as a composer of organ music?

CHAPTER ONE: BIOGRAPHY

The life of Hugo Distler was marked by an unbelievable energy, a driven desire. Hugo Distler, at the young age of 23, began his career as a church musician in Lübeck. He blossomed artistically during the first two years, forging his own unique style. The main contribution of Distler in the area of composition was his development of new musical ideas that successfully melded elements and requirements of composition in his time with the old compositional practices and forms. He said he wanted to escape from contemporary confinements, make his mark on society, and thus become immortal. “His entire output is marked with an indispensable truth, clarity, and sincerity of expression. It is a cry of warning from an honest heart; it is the dictum of deeply private experience; it is issued dutifully by one who is called.”⁴

⁴ “Sein gesamtes Schaffen ist geprägt von einer unabdingbaren Wahrhaftigkeit, Klarheit und Aufrichtigkeit der Aussage. Es ist eine Mahnung aus lauterm Herzen und Ausdruck tiefsten inneren Empfindens, getragen von dem Wissen um die verantwortungsvolle Aufgabe eines Berufenen.“ Ibid., 3.

Nürnberg (1908-1927)

Distler's short life can be divided into different periods according to the cities in which he lived. The first period fills the years from 1908 to 1927 and takes place in Nürnberg. Hugo Distler was born in Nürnberg on June 24, 1908, as the illegitimate son of Helen Distler (1881-1969) and August Louis Gotthilf Roth (1883-1958). His mother, of Frankish heritage and a descendant of farmers and laborers, worked as a milliner (maker of women's hats) and dressmaker. His father, of Swabian heritage and a descendant of academics and musicians, worked as a mechanical engineer and later as a manufacturer.

Due to unfortunate familial circumstances, Hugo Distler lived a chaotic, somewhat traumatic childhood. In 1912, his mother married a German-American, Anthony Meter, and moved with him to Chicago. As she had actually never wanted Hugo, she left him behind with her parents. This abandonment at an early age left Distler with the message that he was an undesired encumbrance who had only himself.⁵

He then went to stay with his maternal grandparents in Nürnberg. They owned and operated a successful butcher shop; their social circle consisted of the most influential people within large-animal commerce. Thus, they could afford him a first-rate education. He attended the Nürnberg Gymnasium,⁶ and he also received a formal, early musical education at the Dupont Music School.

⁵ Jennrich, *ibid.*, 5.

⁶ College preparatory school within German education system.

In 1919, his widowed mother returned to Germany with Hugo's half-brother, Anton Meter (1913-1941), but Distler's plight did not improve. Despite his grandparents' care and provision for him, he did not have a happy home life. Thus, he turned to activities of the mind for comfort. He devoted himself intensely to his studies. He furthered his intellectual and educational development by beginning an intensive reading program. When the financial situation at home worsened, he gave tutorial sessions, thereby earning his own money with which to buy his beloved books.

His musical development also provided somewhat of a solace for him. Carl Dupon admitted the talented Hugo Distler as a student in his piano studio, and Distler also studied music theory with author Erich Rhode, giving his composition attempts an early foundation. In the beginning, he was drawn to the world of sound of the Romantics, and especially that of Richard Wagner.

Distler wanted nothing more than to attend the Nürnberg Conservatory. It was therefore quite difficult for him, when, after three attempts for admission, they denied him admittance, claiming that he lacked talent. Despite his conviction that the real reason was his unusual home situation, this rejection nonetheless strongly impacted the hard-working, sensitive, and youthful Distler. It reinforced his feelings of being unwanted and unworthy that he had felt since his birth and mother's abandonment. Jennrich maintains that Distler was denied admittance due to the lowliness of his heritage (illegitimate son of a dressmaker and butcher family). Apparently, the conservatory considered such familial backgrounds incapable of providing for regular and timely completion of courses of

study.⁷ However, Distler overcame this rejection also. After graduating from the Gymnasium in 1927, he passed the audition at the Leipzig Conservatory with honors and moved north to begin a program of higher education.

⁷ Jennrich, *ibid.*, 5-6.

Leipzig Education (1927-1931)

From 1927 to 1931, Distler was a student at the world-famous Leipzig Conservatory. His studies in Leipzig brought him many advantages. The city, internationally famous for its educational opportunities, provided Distler a variety of enrichment activities. The best artists and pedagogues worked in Leipzig; and opportunities to attend concerts at the Thomaskirche, the Gewandhaus, and the famous Leipzig Opera House were plentiful, enhancing his artistic development. Leipzig also proved to be financially beneficial for Distler; he received room and board from his mother's only sister, Aunt Anna Dittrich, for whom he had always had a strong affection and to whom he felt close.

In the beginning, Distler felt he wanted to study conducting and become a *Kapellmeister*, an interest he held his entire life. Dr. Max Hochkofler was his major professor. He chose piano as his secondary area of study (minor), studying with Carl Adolf Martienssen. However, it was not long before his teachers, Martienssen (piano) and Dr. Hermann Grabner (counterpoint), discovered his unusual gift for composition. Upon their advice, he changed career directions and studied composition and organ, whereupon he was admitted into the studio of Günther Ramin (organ). At first, conducting still interested Distler greatly, and his initial career goal was to become a theory and composition teacher at a music school (he later published a functional harmony theoretical textbook). The thought of working as a church musician had not yet surfaced.

Distler's teachers were all highly prominent men within international music circles at the time. Each had studied with other prominent men. Hermann Grabner, student of Max Reger, was especially influential on the young, hard-working Distler. Grabner was an excellent pedagogue who enabled his student to progress rapidly in his art. Perhaps more importantly, he also cared for the insecure young man in a very loving and fatherly way. He became a life-long mentor and friend to Distler, and he placed a lot of worth in Grabner's judgment and advice.

Distler also received career direction from his two organ teachers, Günther Ramin and Friedrich Högner, both leading figures in the *Orgelbewegung*.⁸ Ramin, successor to Karl Straube as organist at the Thomaskirche, was a virtuoso organist, harpsichordist, and improviser who taught organ literature at the conservatory. Unlike his teacher, Ramin was interested in early North-German, Baroque organs and music by the old masters. Friedrich Högner, also a major figure in the *Orgelbewegung* (but whose focus was the South-German Silbermann organs), taught service playing.

Distler dedicated himself to his studies and permitted very few distractions. He did socialize with his colleagues at parties, where he could be unbelievably funny and wild, and he celebrated festive occasions with his teachers, Grabner and Ramin. On the whole, however, he did not waste time and kept mostly to himself.

⁸ Known in English as the "organ reform," this movement began in Europe and was a reaction to the Romantic concept of the orchestral organ. In the 1920's, renewed admiration for the music of Bach and the sounds of historic organs by Arp Schnitger in northern Germany and by Silbermann in southern Germany spurred a movement toward more classical forms of organ composition as well as more historically oriented mechanical and tonal concepts of newly built organs.

Due to his enormous aptitude for learning and his intense desire for education, he was interested in all the musical happenings in Leipzig. He was enthused about the Friday motets of the Thomaner; works by Hindemith; Honegger's oratorio, *King David*; Kurt Weill's opera, *The Czar Has His Photograph Taken*; Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*; and Krenek's *Johnny spielt auf*. He was fascinated by the many performances of Bach at the Thomaskirche (thanks to Karl Straube). His years of study in Leipzig indeed afforded him a well-rounded musical foundation.

During these years, Distler matured so much compositionally that his Concert Sonata for Two Pianos, Op. 1 and double choir motet on "Herzlich lieb habe ich dich, o Herr," Op. 2 were published by Breitkopf & Härtel Verlag in 1930 at the suggestion of Karl Straube.

Another unfortunate event occurred that same year when Distler's step-grandfather died in Nürnberg at the end of August, 1930. Johann Herz, second husband of his grandmother, had been financing Distler's education. He lived very frugally thereafter, earning money on the side with such jobs as taking notes for friends or conducting the youth singing club.⁹ This meager income did not begin to pay for his entire education, though. Therefore, he saw no way to continue his studies, thus fulfilling the previous, unspoken prophecy of the Nürnberg Conservatory admittance committee. He planned to come back later and finish.

⁹ The youth in Germany were very active socially at this time in history. In addition to the infamous Hitler Jugend, there were also youth singing groups, sport clubs, music groups, etc.

At the advice of Günther Ramin, Hugo Distler applied for the post of organist at the St. Jakobi-Kirche in Lübeck. Though his teachers provided excellent recommendations, and though he was clearly the best candidate at the audition, there was much debate amongst the church leadership over two applicants. In the end, a lot was cast—it fell to Distler! This occurrence became a deciding factor not only in Distler's personal work and creation, but also for the entire development of German church music in general.

Lübeck (1931-1937)

The famous Hansestadt Lübeck and its Mariners' church St. Jakobi, where Dietrich Buxtehude once worked, became Hugo Distler's home from 1931 to 1937. At first, he found circumstances agreeable. The young pastor, Axel Werner Kühl, a Brother of Michael and an active member within the Berneuchen Circle,¹⁰ practiced a modern, progressive theology and liturgy. Furthermore, he was an organ expert, an enthusiastic choir member, and a great supporter of musical activity within the parish. Distler found a great friend and mentor in Bruno Grusnick, the cantor at St. Jakobi. Also a Brother of Michael, he founded the Lübeck *Sing- und Spielkreis*,¹¹ a group that premiered nearly all of Distler's choral compositions. This arrangement proved quite advantageous, and it enabled Distler to become well known as a composer very early in life. Finally, the two historical organs within St. Jakobi's walls, and especially the smaller organ by Stellwagen, provided Distler with the inspiration for his organ compositions of Opus 8. Good organs were also to be found in the Marienkirche and in Lübeck's cathedral.

Distler moved into a small apartment at Jakobikirchhof 3, and the church welcomed him into his post with a celebratory mass on January 11, 1931. He brought neither work experience nor mature personal independence to his new position, but he possessed a rich foundation of musical abilities in many areas, and a passionate fire to succeed burned within him. That which began as a simple, half-time church music post

¹⁰ Brother of Michael—one of various divisions of brotherhood philosophies within the Evangelical Church, much like the differing orders of priests within Catholicism. Berneuchen Movement—a movement within the Evangelical Church in Germany which is based on a theology of love for the church of the triune God.

¹¹ A community organization of musicians, both instrumental and vocal.

soon became the ideal combination of rich possibilities, both creative and practical; and so, St. Jakobi became a viable contributor to the renewal of German church music.

One of Distler's assignments as the new organist was to plan and provide music for a regular concert series, or Vespers. He led the Vesper series with a great sense of personal duty and brought back its previous status, a reputation it had not enjoyed since Buxtehude worked in Lübeck. After just four months he took over the cantor position at St. Jakobi as well, beginning his steep climb to worldwide fame as a choral conductor. He thus grew, happily working together with Pastor Kühl and Bruno Grusnick.

At St. Jakobi, Distler was spurred to a rich compositional output due to the excellent liturgical singing, the collaboration with Bruno Grusnick and his choir, and the possibilities afforded by the two historical organs. This rich musical environment proved quite beneficial for Distler. The living sounds of Heinrich Schütz and Leonhard Lechner, performed by the Lübeck *Sing- und Spielkreis*, provided a stimulating atmosphere on one hand; on the other, this group also gave Distler a career boost by bringing his choral compositions to immediate performance.

Hugo Distler's artistic output, however, was primarily influenced by keyboard instruments. As a child and youth, he was always successful as a performer on the piano. Since his studies at Leipzig, he was now, more than ever, interested in the organ and its color possibilities. Already hailed by Ramin in his recommendation letter to St. Jakobi from November 2, 1930 as an "artistically independent, sensitive musician" whose "achievements in lessons bear the mark of a special one," he fast became a sought-after

organ interpreter.¹² Organ concerts in many German cities (Lübeck, Lüneburg, Ratzeburg, Mühlheim/Ruhr, Berlin, and Nürnberg) brought him the highest esteem as an organ virtuoso of great style.

He tended to prefer performing concerts with an all-Bach or all-Distler theme; only so, he felt, could a listener put him/herself entirely into the world of the composer. In such concerts, his interpretations were always praised as having clarity, musical impact, color, and passion. Above all, his registrations were highly varied, always appropriate for each piece, and laboriously worked out beforehand in great detail.

Fred Hamel critiqued Distler's Bach playing in the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* on May 5, 1940 as follows:

How Distler frees these inner powers, how he seizes the polyphonic logic, the energy of movement, the rhythmical tension and the phrasing: this is a unique and likewise a conquering art...In this relentless, considerable, concentrated, fanatic, and shaping power, even the most famous of Bach's organ works become new.¹³

Professor Walter Kraft expressed his excitement over Distler's performance of his own organ works with these words:

[Distler's] composition and playing were here fully 'in uno.' Since then, I have never heard such a oneness of interpretation of Distler's works; his playing was appropriate for his works. They were of kindred spirits—which is not always the case with composers.¹⁴

¹² “[K]ünstlerisch selbständig empfindender Musiker.“ and “Leistungen im Unterricht stets den Stempel des Besonderen.“ Quoted in Herrmann, 19.

¹³ “Wie Distler diese inneren Kräfte entbindet, wie er die polyphone Logik, die Bewegungsenergie, die rhythmische Spannung und den Phrasierungsatem erfaßt: das ist eine ebenso einzigartige wie bezwingende Kunst...In dieser unerbittlich auf das Wesentliche gerichteten, fanatischen Gestaltungskraft werden gerade die berühmtesten der Bachschen Orgelwerke zu neuen, bezwingenden Offenbarungen.“ Quoted in Herrmann, 19.

¹⁴ “Komposition und Spiel waren hier völlig “in uno”. Niemals habe ich später eine solche Einheit bei einer Interpretation von Distler-Werken wieder vernommen; sein Spiel war – was bei Komponisten

The high improvisational level of Distler is also mentioned with special emphasis. His idea-rich, light-hearted, and easy-going organ improvisations impacted listeners, and they became a determining factor later on for his choral sound. He strived for the same clarity and transparency in them as well.

Hugo Distler dedicated himself in Lübeck, above all, to the composition of church music. Here, he created almost all his entire life's output: "Deutsche Choralmesse," "Choralpassion," "Weihnachtsgeschichte," "Der Jahrkreis," "Geistliche Chormusik," "Liturgische Sätze," and two organ partitas. Gradually, he also moved towards secular creations, including the "Lied von der Glocke," the numerous choral settings in the "Neue Chorliederbuch," two harpsichord concertos, and instrumental chamber music (see Figure 1.1). Therewith, he advanced to the top tier of contemporary composers. The following appeared in the *Berliner Börsenzeitung* from October 17, 1935: "Hugo Distler is the great hope of German church music, the par excellence of German music..."¹⁵ Thereafter, his name surfaced more frequently in publications, and radio broadcasts increasingly took notice of the promising young composer.

durchaus nicht immer der Fall ist – seinem Werk adäquat, kongenial." Letter to Herrmann from September 6, 1968. Quoted in Herrmann, 19-20.

¹⁵ "Hugo Distler ist die große Hoffnung der deutschen Kirchenmusik, der deutschen Musik schlechthin." Quoted in Herrmann, 21.

Figure 1.1: Compositional/professional output, sacred versus secular¹⁶

	Leipzig	Lübeck	Stuttgart	Berlin	Unknown
Secular	4	21	5	8	5
Sacred	5	34	4	3	9

Distler's relationships with his contemporaries were generally positive. A personal acquaintance with Paul Hindemith, Distler's idol, was of special importance for him. Distler once played his barely finished organ partita, *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, on the small St. Jakobi organ for Hindemith, to which Hindemith reacted very excitedly, showing great interest. This encounter later inspired Hindemith to write music for the organ.

Distler was most fortunate in that nearly all of his compositions were performed soon after he finished writing them. Bruno Grusnick and his Lübeck *Sing- und Spielkreis* gave immediate performances of Distler's choir works. Later, he was able to premiere many of his compositions himself, as he oversaw a number of different choirs. His organ works became known through his authoritative playing, although these works struck many as incomprehensible and were, in part, found as "an unreasonable demand on the musicality of the listener."¹⁷ Also, his collaboration with the publishing house Breitkopf & Härtel in Leipzig, and later with Bärenreiter Verlag in Kassel, quickly brought his

¹⁶ Numbers include all known compositions, theoretical writings, and fragments of compositions, published and unpublished. They are included under the city in which Distler lived upon the work's completion, not the premiere or publication date.

¹⁷ "[E]ine Zumutung an die Musikalität der Hörer." Fritz Stege, *Zeitschrift für Musik*, 1939, 273. Quoted in Herrmann, 21.

works into print, which enabled frequent performances in many different cities of Germany.

Despite the opportunities for performances of his works there in Lübeck, Distler decided to look for another post in 1932. Due to financial hardship, much of his time was spent on a variety of side engagements. The organ position, merely half-time, paid only RM70 monthly, and after other side jobs, he came out with a meager RM110.¹⁸ So, he busied himself with all possible musical endeavors, including giving instrument lessons, conducting the German Trade Help Union Chorus, and leading the Lübeck Chamber Orchestra. He applied as Cantor of the City Church of Wittenberg, a position which was also coupled with the organ post at the court church; he was denied for being too young. So, he gladly took an offer from Gerhard Schwarz to teach at the church music school in Berlin-Spandau. In September, 1933 he traveled two days to Berlin every other week to give 20 hours of lessons in functional harmony, counterpoint, and composition. Shortly thereafter, the Lübeck State Conservatory was founded, and he assumed direction of the church music department. Also, the organist position at St. Jakobi was upgraded to a full-time position.

Furthermore, as Distler became influenced by the ideas of music within the youth movement, he happily contributed to it compositionally. Through his contact with Bärenreiter-Verlag in Kassel, which he had established in 1932, he was immediately accepted as an active, fellow worker in the *Arbeitskreis für Hausmusik*. This group prompted the premier of the Kassel Music Festival in 1933. In subsequent festivals,

¹⁸ RM stands for *Reichsmark*, RM4 = US\$1, RM1 = 1/2790 kg fine gold.

Distler was always active as harpsichordist, organist, and composer. His excellent choral skills rapidly allowed him to become the honored choir director at several singing events.

Another event that same year proved beneficial for Distler: his marriage to Waltraut Thienhaus. On October 14, 1933, he gained a very understanding and helping partner. Her great patience and loving readiness to carry every difficulty gave him a fountain of strength. He saw the birth of his daughter, Barbara (December 3, 1934), as a special gift, and he became a happy and loving father. The young family found acceptance in the roomy Villa Thienhaus, thereby solving the apartment/living situation. The family grew with the additions of Andreas (1936) and Brigitte (1941).

Unfortunately, after briefly enjoying a much deserved change in fortune, Distler experienced catastrophe yet again. His restless life, his ambition, his drive to bring about great accomplishments, his will to succeed at everything that he set his mind to doing, and his fanaticism of putting his whole being into all things brought about total psychological and physical exhaustion; in 1934 he experienced a total nervous breakdown.

His life and works also became overshadowed by the ruling Hitler regime at this time. Despite his joining the NSDAP¹⁹ in May of 1933²⁰ (more as a tactful political maneuver than for philosophical purposes), things did not improve for Distler. In 1934, the state decreed that new church music must serve the German (and thereby Nazi) cause. They forbade performances of Jewish artists and of works by Jewish composers. They

¹⁹ *National Sozialistische Demokratische Arbeiter Partei*, also known as NSDAP, National Socialists, NS, or Nazis.

²⁰ Hans-Dieter Grünefeld, <http://www.nmz.de/nmz/nmz1998/nmz05/rezensionen/distler.shtml>

accused Distler's 2nd harpsichord concerto of being Bolshevistic (akin to placing it on the degenerate art and music list).²¹ Moreover, the Nazis and Hitler Youth limited Distler's own performances. All this became extremely difficult for him to endure.

Then, with Lübeck at the forefront of the *Kirchenkampf* in 1936-37, nine pastors of the city were placed under house arrest. The ultra-sensitive St. Jakobi-organist felt unprotected; he saw no way to escape the brutality of the National Socialists in Lübeck. He was completely heartbroken and saw only one option: he must leave Lübeck and begin anew in another city.

At this point, he was able to choose between two career directions. The State Conservatory for Music Education and Church Music in Berlin-Charlottenburg offered him a main post as Professor of Composition. At the same time, he was asked to take over the music theory subjects and direct the Conservatory Cantors at Württemberg Conservatory for Music in Stuttgart. Distler opted for Stuttgart, mainly because he would be able to work with a choir there.

For Distler, the separation from Lübeck brought mixed emotions. It entailed a separation from his friends who meant so much to him, specifically Pastor Kühl and Bruno Grusnick. Secondly, there was the loss of the beneficial companionship with the Lübeck *Sing- und Spielkreis*. Finally, he was forced to part with his beloved Stellwagen organ. On the other hand, however, the chance to start a whole new career gave him a new hope, and he again bloomed compositionally.

²¹ Friedrich Wilhelm Bautz, http://www.bautz.de/bbkl/d/distler_h.shtml

Stuttgart (1937-1940)

The Stuttgart years, 1937 to 1940, were, in general, happy ones for Distler. When things were going well, he enjoyed reciting funny stories and cheerful anecdotes in friendly gatherings. He often told jokes and even pulled pranks. He also knew how to laugh at his own weaknesses. For example, he didn't make a secret of his failings at sport, laughing with friends about his failed attempts over the years to learn how to swim.

His humor and amicable personality enabled him to rapidly develop a circle of friends in Stuttgart. Moreover, he took advantage of all the cultural possibilities the city had to offer. For the first time in his life, he was able to passionately take pleasure in the arts, and he developed a simple appreciation for beauty. It became possible for him to enjoy a work of sculpture, a painting, or a poem such that he could enter into a state of ebullience.

In a supporting environment, Distler's professional career grew substantially. A most fascinating choir director, he assumed direction of the Esslingen Singakademie, taught choral conducting courses, participated in various *Singwochen* and *Musiktagen*, and advanced his own active concert career. In addition, he dedicated himself once again to the composition of sacred works.

He threw himself into all his new duties with much energy and passion, and with great support from his colleagues. As Distler began his teaching responsibilities at the Stuttgart Musikhochschule, no less than 30 teaching hours awaited him in the areas of music theory, form and analysis, and choral directing. He was given charge of the

Conservatory Choir and Conservatory Cantors. As before, his connection to the church and the furthering of his own church music were dear to his heart.

Distler had an abundance of planned compositional projects. Due to his heavy work load, though, many did not see completion and only came to sketches. Only during vacation periods was he able to compose. During these times of rest and peaceful relaxation, he meticulously devoted himself to one piece at a time, continually changing, correcting, and improving upon it. He was known for making changes later, even during readings and rehearsals of his choir pieces.

The short periods when he was able to concentrate on composition rewarded him with great prestige. His fame as a composer became so entrenched that many of his works were given successful performances during October of 1937 in Berlin at the *Fest der deutschen Kirchenmusik*.

Unfortunately, he also soon experienced opposition here from the National Socialists' student group, *Die Fachschaft*. Attacks were directed against Distler's church ties and his clear intentions to foster church music. Feeling as if he had been pushed to the periphery, Distler entered into a state of depression. The state repressed him more and more and forced him into the background, and his works narrowly escaped being placed on the list of degenerate art. Distler fortunately found much support and help from the administration and his colleagues at the conservatory and elsewhere. They advised him to concentrate on writing secular compositions, which he did with much success. Thus, Distler was able to withstand these attacks, dedicate himself to his new tasks, and regain his vigor for life.

In 1938, Distler moved with his family into a small house situated amongst meadows and fields, near a forest, and complete with a garden and garage. In this oasis, removed from the hustle and bustle of the big city and all the institutions, he again found the necessary energy to continue. Also, it was here that he realized his dream of having his own organ. He commissioned a house organ from Paul Ott, who built it in the style of Distler's nostalgically longed-for Stellwagen organ. This provided the impetus for new, secular organ works.

Distler also composed his famous *Mörike-Chorliederbuch* this year. His fondness for poetry led him to an intense study of the literary works of different eras. While in a phase of "compositional depression,"²² he was suddenly stricken so much by the vivid and clear language of the Swabian poet, Eduard Mörike, that he planned to write this substantial work. He busied himself with the project for six months. At the *Fest der deutschen Chormusik* in June of 1938 in Graz, Distler premiered 15 of the movements with his Stuttgart Conservatory Choir. They met with universal approval. Waldemar Klink, in a letter to Ursula Hermann, stated that this was the beginning of a new era in choral music. However, it was not only the new choral style that fascinated listeners in Graz, but also Distler's tight, minimalist conducting style. Through rigorous work on details during the rehearsal process, he achieved the utmost precision in performance. At the same time, though, he managed to obtain a performance full of vitality. This success

²² "[K]ompositorischer Depression." Letter to Oskar Söhngen from January 27, 1938. Quoted in Herrmann, 25.

brought Distler a host of professional invitations, and above all, the Berlin Musikhochschule seemed to be very interested in Distler from this time forward.

Alas, the overall political situation soon ruined Distler's good fortune. The violent overtaking of Austria and the occupation of the German lands with troops in 1938 indicated an imminent European war. Then, in May of 1939, the state bestowed the title *Professor* upon Distler. This significant event, considering he never even completed a four-year degree, made Distler feel known and appreciated. It was not only recognition of his pedagogic, artistic, and compositional achievements, but also a significant step forwards in his career. Furthermore, it simultaneously provided a sure protection against other hostilities.

The looming war broke out on September 1, 1939. Distler then awaited events with fury and deep angst. Under the increasingly difficult living conditions, his inner motivation to work dissipated at an alarming rate.²³ Despite his fluctuations between "confidence and a deep melancholy,"²⁴ he managed to somehow find the strength to continue. He then busied himself with a new sort of creative endeavor: the writing of his *Funktionelle Harmonielehre*, which stemmed from his teaching experience. Despite the war-caused difficulties, the textbook soon appeared in print. Moreover, desirous to maintain cultural standards and not let the war destroy every small enjoyment, he seized every opportunity to concertize. One particularly important experience for him during this time was a highly acclaimed concert on the large organ in the St. Lorenz-Kirche in

²³ For example, the conservatory temporarily closed, Distler's family experienced contingent evacuation, he received news reports of fallen students, and the SS requested that he register to go to Poland.

²⁴ "Getrostheit und einer tiefen Niedergeschlagenheit." Herrmann, 26.

Nürnberg. Finally, he proved his exceptional artistic qualities to the town that had left him embittered as a youth.

As previously noted, the state-supported academic Conservatory for Music in Berlin-Charlottenburg had shown interest in Distler after his choral directing and compositional success in Graz. The necessary steps toward making Distler successor to Professor Kurt Thomas at the Berlin Conservatory were finally completed, and he received an official invitation in the summer of 1940 to teach Choral Conducting, Counterpoint, Composition, and Organ Performance starting on October 1.

Distler mentioned many times that the Stuttgart years were the most beautiful for him. Yet, his final relocation was made easier because of an administration change at the Stuttgart Conservatory. The new director, who previously held the choral directing position before Distler, now wanted to take over all choral directing duties himself. Nonetheless, Distler found it very painful to give up his lovely domicile in Vaihingen.

Berlin (1940-1942)

The final chapter of Distler's life in the capitol city of Berlin, spanning the years from 1940 to 1942, brought not only an advance in his career, but also the comforting awareness that friends awaited him. The Consultant on Church Music, Dr. Oskar Söhngen (the Oberkirchenrat), his former composition teacher, Professor Hermann Grabner, and his former piano teacher, Professor Carl Adolf Martienssen, all stood by him and were readily at his disposal. He was instated as full professor in Berlin, one of only a few, and he began his service on October 1, 1940.

The living situation resolved itself nicely. He found a very roomy country house to rent in the suburb of Strausberg, with a large yard and beautiful surroundings, which made it possible to install his house organ. The distance to Berlin's center and the bad train connections (due to the war) forced him, however, to also rent a room downtown near the Charlottenburg main train station.

Distler fast became acclimated to his new job, and he pursued his passion for choral conducting with vehemence. In addition to his duties with the Conservatory Cantors, he also oversaw the large Conservatory Choir. The choral specialists noticed his abilities in this area, as he gave many public choral concerts. It is noteworthy to mention that Distler still had self-doubts and personal insecurities. Despite all his successes, he was not yet satisfied with his ability. He, therefore, took it upon himself to take voice lessons with his old friend, Paul Gümmer, in October, 1940, to learn all the possible vocal problems and methods of fixing them.

Reviews of Distler's concerts were usually favorable. The first project he undertook was the performance of Bach's St. John's Passion with his large Conservatory Choir. Distler put so much passion into his interpretations that after choir and organ concerts, he was totally exhausted. His unusual life experiences enabled him to identify himself with the contents of every work. In the performance of St. John's Passion, it appeared as if Distler "had to endure the pain and death of the Savior himself. His rendering of this work was completely convincing."²⁵

Distler was a person who took his responsibilities seriously. Therefore, he also fulfilled his pedagogical duties with the greatest diligence and scrupulousness. He taught in a strict and systematic manner, much like his conducting techniques, but with the utmost patience for his students' abilities. He was especially dedicated to the teaching of music theory, which he viewed as the basis for all other musical studies. He taught from the background of Grabner's theory of functionality, which was relatively unknown at the time. His own *Funktionelle Harmonielehre* became the stepping stone of Harmony as a precursor to Counterpoint.

After a basis of music theory was established, entry into composition studies was allowed. Distler spent a long time on the creation of a one-voice melody. For him, the development of a real feel for melody was of the utmost importance. The next step was then to compose movements of songs, biciniums, organ preludes, fuguetas, and variations. The goal, finally, was the composition of motets and sacred concerted works.

²⁵ "[A]ls ob er das Leiden und Sterben unseres Heiland selbst hätte erdulden müssen, so vollkommen überwältigt hatte ihn die Wiedergabe dieses Werkes." Meta Radig, Ansprache zum 10. Todestag von Hugo Distler am 4. November 1952. Quoted in Herrmann, 28.

Jan Bender and Siegfried Reda, Distler's two most notable composition students, both agree that they learned not only the handiwork of composition from Distler, but also that they came to know a new world of sound, which was quite influential for their later output.

As an organ teacher, Distler insisted upon a good foundation in piano technique. After this was laid, his organ lessons focused mostly on works in the accepted repertoire: those by Bach, Buxtehude, Pachelbel, Bruhns, Böhm, Sweelinck, Frescobaldi, and Scheidt. Of the contemporary works, he favored those by Kaminski. He gave but few, very concentrated explanations; exact analyses of phrasing and registration were always discussed. Often, then, Distler would play the piece under study with such animation and persuasion that it greatly inspired the student.

Compositionally, he concentrated once again on sacred works, despite a commission to write theater music for Ludwig Tieck's *Ritter Blaubart*. He picked up his idea for an *a cappella* passion, finished the two Rahmenchöre, *Fürwahr, er trug unsere Krankheit* and *Das ist je gewißlich wahr*, which he later used in his *Geistliche Chormusik*. Then, in the midst of preoccupation for his beloved sacred music, at the advice of a trusted friend who had concerns about the political climate, he stopped performing Bach's St. John's Passion and abandoned his plans for writing bigger sacred works.

On April 1, 1942, even though Distler's energies were already overtaxed due to the duties at the Conservatory, he succeeded Professor Alfred Sittard and accepted the position of Director of the Berlin State and Cathedral Choir, a position he had always

viewed as the highest goal in life. This new post enabled him, yet again, to engage himself with church music and to renew his vigor.

Alas, the ruling political faction disapproved of Distler's renewed connection with the church, causing him much mental anguish and anger. Despite his membership in the NSDAP and his status as professor, the strong resistance by the Hitler-Jugend, their claim that the State and Cathedral Choir was an instrument of propaganda of the church, the threat of his personal freedom from the current administration of the NSDAP, and the constant dread of being drafted into the war left Distler with an ever-growing feeling of repression. Also particularly upsetting was the fact that he did not get to compose due to the enormous demands of his career.

Separated from his family in Strausberg due to the bomb attacks, he missed the comfort of his little servant quarters in Bauhofstrasse 7. In a fit of unshakable depression, he wrote the following words to his wife 14 days before his suicide: he felt "an indescribable loneliness, a sense of being separated from everyone and everything."²⁶ Life for him became a burden which could no longer be borne. His entire life had been spent fleeing from city to city in order to escape troubling situations. His deep world angst, continual inner unrest, ongoing feelings of worthlessness and rejection since childhood, and feelings of being overworked proved to be too much in the end. And so, in a state of total spiritual and physical exhaustion, he planned his last escape with the meticulous detail for which he was famous.

²⁶ "[N]icht zu beschreibenden Einsamkeit, von allem und jedem getrennt zu sein." Letter to Waltraut Distler from October, 1942. Quoted in Herrmann, 31.

He began by spending some time among his loved ones. He invited his Leipzig relatives to the Reformation Festival in Strausberg. On the evening of Reformation Day, he took leave of his family, playing Bach's setting of the chorale, *Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Ehr*, on his house organ, and he arrived the next morning at the cathedral with his relatives to direct his beloved choir. Afterwards, he left his relatives at the front entrance, said he had to attend to some things left, and that he would travel back to Strausberg alone. In actuality, he returned to his living quarters in the city, lay down in the dark kitchen, and opened the gas valve. His family found him gripping a picture of his wife and children in one hand and a crucifix in the other. Beside him lay a goodbye letter to his wife:

November 1, 1942

My dearly beloved Waltraut,

I've only one request in the world: that you are not angry with me; who knows more than you, what fears have resided in me since I've been alive; everything that I ever created stood under this sign, even my latest plans for an oratorio.

Let the children think kindly of me: the time will come, and it's not far away, when they, too, will understand my last step, as they today do not. My dearly beloved children, ah, if you only knew what pain I am in.

Pray for me. I die a poor, sinful man and hope for the mercy of God...

I want to be brought to rest in a small circle; let my mother and her relations know only after the fact.

I leave to you everything I own and possess.

Yours,

Hugo²⁷

Thus, Hugo Distler prematurely ended his life on All Saints Day, Sunday, November 1, 1942. Hugo Distler was laid to rest in the forest cemetery in Stahnsdorf. A favorite New Testament quote of Distler, one he used in a motet and that likewise stands

²⁷ "1.11.42 Meine liebste, best Waltraut, *ich habe nur noch eine Bitte in der Welt: daß Du mir nicht zürnst; wer weiß wie Du, welche Lebensangst in mir gesessen hat, seit ich lebe; alles was ich schaffte, stand unter diesem Zeichen, noch zuletzt mein geplantes Oratorium. *Laß die Kinder gut von mir denken: es kommt die Zeit, und sie ist nicht fern, wo auch die meinen letzten Schritt verstehen, die es heute nicht tun. Meine lieben, lieben Kinder. Ach, wenn Du wüßtest, was an Schmerzen in mir umgeht. *Betet für mich. Ich sterbe als ein armer sündiger Mensch und hoffe auf die Barmherzigkeit Gottes... *Ich will im kleinen Kreis zur Ruhe gebracht sein; meiner Mutter, ebenso Deinen Verwandten erst nachträglich Mitteilung geben. *Ich vermache Dir alles, was ich habe und an Einkünften besitze. *Dein *Hugo." Letter to Waltraut Distler from November 1, 1942. Quoted in Herrmann, 31-32.

as the motto for his life and death, was engraved upon the wooden cross: “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”²⁸

Although news of Distler’s suicide and its political causes were silenced at the time, his works found growing recognition and acceptance shortly after the end of the war. In 1951/52, Distler was posthumously awarded the Buxtehude Prize of Lübeck, and he was honored with the Culture Prize of his home city, Nürnberg. The establishment of the Hugo Distler Archive in Lübeck and the Hugo Distler Prize in 1989, awarded by the Lion’s Club and the St. Jakobi Parish, are important witnesses of the world-wide remembrance of Distler.

Distler was neither Jewish, nor did he die fighting on the battlefields like Jehan Alain, yet the early self-termination of his life and artistic output can be considered one of the many tragedies associated with Hitler, Nazism, and World War II. Toby Laird, Ph.D.,²⁹ suggests that Distler’s depression was not simply due to an ultra-sensitive, artistic spirit, but that his persistent anxiety, extreme world angst, and unfounded fear for his life coupled with an extremely prolific, artistic output are indicative of Bipolar II Disorder.³⁰ In light of this suspicion, it is probable that Distler’s suicide may have been

²⁸ St. John, chapter 16, verse 33, King James Version.

²⁹ I had the pleasure of working with Laird, a doctoral candidate in psychology at the University of Arizona, during one of my final semesters of study. And, despite my cross-country relocation, communication has been maintained via e-mail. His insights from a medical perspective on Distler’s mental status and explanation of treatments available today were enlightening.

³⁰ According to the official US definition as outlined in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* published by the American Psychiatric Association, Bipolar II Disorder is "characterized by one or more Major Depressive Episodes accompanied by at least one Hypomanic Episode." The key difference between Bipolar I and Bipolar II is that Bipolar II has hypomanic but not manic episodes. Also, while those with Bipolar I disorder may experience additional psychotic symptoms such as delusions and hallucinations, Bipolar II by definition cannot have psychotic features.
http://bipolar.about.com/cs/faqs/f/faq_bp2.htm

circumvented, had the psychological knowledge at the time been what it is today. To date, there are no references to medical records in any sources concerning Distler's life. A thorough examination of Distler's psychological state by an expert would probably yield interesting results.

CHAPTER TWO: INFLUENCES

German Church Music Traditions

In contrast to the first chapter, which highlighted the negative environmental and socio-economic factors affecting Distler as a person, performer, teacher, and composer, Chapter Two examines the circumstances which had a positive influence on Distler as a composer, especially those influencing his organ works.

For an in-depth discussion on Distler's relationship with the church and its influences on his music, one should consult Larry Palmer's book, *Hugo Distler and His Church Music*,³¹ which can still be found in and purchased from specialty bookstores today. Whereas Herrmann's biography of Distler gives details of his life in a traditional, historical manner using letters, anecdotes, interviews of Distler's colleagues and family, et cetera, Palmer relates Distler's biography mainly in the context of his duties as a church musician. Of particular interest is the list of Vesper Service programs located in Appendix A of Palmer's book. As mentioned in chapter one, one of Distler's duties at St. Jakobi was to provide music for Vesper services. He accomplished this task with great success, giving the services a reputation not enjoyed since the time when Buxtehude worked in Lübeck. Upon compilation of the programs, Distler's fascination with music by the old masters, especially Buxtehude, Schütz, Bach, and Pachelbel, is strikingly obvious (see figure 2.1). One also notices that the modern pieces included on the

³¹ Larry Palmer, *Hugo Distler and His Church Music* (Saint Louis, London: Concordia Publishing House, 1967).

programs were written by teachers, colleagues, friends, or students of Distler; in other words, they all belonged to the neoclassical movement and *Orgelbewegung*.

Figure 2.1: Composers represented in 38 St. Jakobi Vesper programs from February 15, 1931 to December 27, 1936

Composer	# of Programs Featured ³²	# of Programs Dedicated ³³
J.S. Bach	21	3
E. Barthe	1	
Jan Bender	1	
Böhm	1	
A. vor Bruck	1	
Bruhns	3	
Buxtehude	14	3
Caldara	1	
Carriere	1	
H. Distler	16	5
Bened. Ducis	1	
A. Gabrielli	1	
Hanff	1	
Karl Hasse	1	
Hassler	4	
A. Kniller	1	
Walter Kraft	3	
P. Krieger	1	
Lechner	2	
Lübeck	3	
Osiander	1	
K. Othmayr	4	
Pepping	1	
M. Praetorius	4	
Pachelbel	11	1
G. Ramin	1	
Resinarius	1	
Scheidt	4	
Schröter	2	
Schütz	16	2
Sweelinck	3	
Kurt Thomas	2	
J. de Vente	1	
Vulpius	1	
Walther	3	
J. Weinman	1	
Zachow	1	

³² Number of programs consisting of at least one work by this composer.

³³ Number of programs consisting solely of or mostly of this composer's pieces.

The concert tradition thus proved to be influential on Distler's compositional style. Other church music traditions impacting Distler's organ output included the choral tradition and the trombone choir tradition. In addition to being based on chorale tunes, Distler's organ works rely on vocal technique. Examples of declamation, or recitation, and melismas abound (see musical examples 2.1 through 2.4).

Musical Example 2.1: Recitation in vocal music, "Das ist je gewißlich wahr," mm. 1-3³⁴



Reprinted by kind permission of the Bärenreiter-Verlags, Kassel.³⁵

Musical Example 2.2: Recitation and chromaticism in organ music, *Chorale Prelude on "Ach wie flüchtig, ach wie nichtig,"* mm. 1-4³⁶

Langsame ♩

Hauptwerk: Spielpfeife 8'; Tremulant (ad lib.)
legato

c.f.

Rückpositiv: Krummhorn 8'; Hohlflöte 4'

poco portato

Nachthorn 2'
Pedal: Gedacktponner 8'
Subbaß 16'

Reprinted by kind permission of the Bärenreiter-Verlags, Kassel.

³⁴ Example same as in Winfried Lüdemann, *Hugo Distler: eine musikalische Biographie* (Augsburg: Wißner-Verlag, 2002), 350.

³⁵ Copyright permission secured for all musical examples in April, 2006 in the form of e-mail. Instructions given by publisher regarding use of examples in this document have been followed.

³⁶ Hugo Distler, *Kleine Orgelchoral-bearbeitungen* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1950), 25.

Musical Example 2.3: Melisma in vocal music, “Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme,” Mvt. III, mm. 35-38³⁷



Reprinted by kind permission of the Bärenreiter-Verlags, Kassel.

Musical Example 2.4: Melisma in organ music, *Chorale Prelude on “Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern,”* m. 11³⁸

Reprinted by kind permission of the Bärenreiter-Verlags, Kassel.

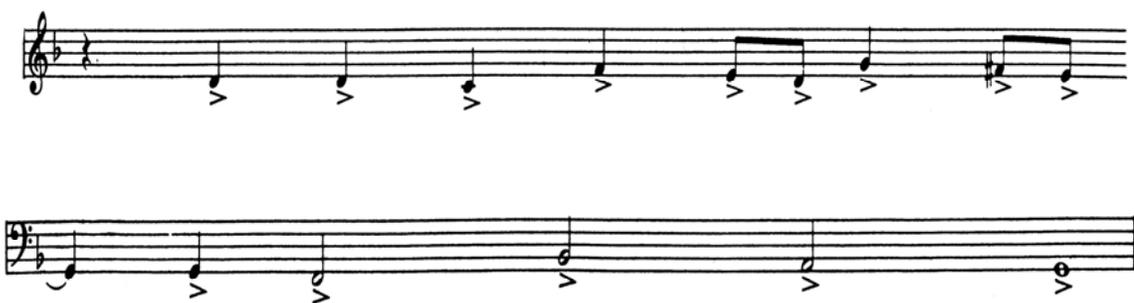
Furthermore, a heretofore unwritten observation concerning the articulation markings within Distler’s organ works was pointed out by Herr Professor Dr. Rolf Schönstedt, Rector of the Hochschule für Kirchenmusik in Herford, Germany. During the author’s Fulbright research in 2003 and 2004, Schönstedt remarked that Distler’s organ works make use of markings typically found in brass music, such as the accent

³⁷ Winfried Lüdemann, *Hugo Distler*, 373.

³⁸ Hugo Distler, *Kleine Orgelchoral-bearbeitungen*, 5.

carrot (see musical example 2.5). This is a remnant of a tradition of trombone choirs in the evangelical churches of Germany, one very much alive still today in Westfalen.

Musical Example 2.5: Typical articulation markings for brass found in organ music, excerpts from *Organ Partita on "Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland,"* Mvts. I and IV—
Toccatà



Reprinted by kind permission of the Bärenreiter-Verlags, Kassel.

Die Orgelbewegung and Baroque Music

Distler lived, studied, and composed during a time when neoclassicism and the philosophy of returning to the past were encouraged. Hermann Grabner discusses Distler's fascination with the music of the Baroque in a relatively newly released document from the Hugo Distler Archive in Lübeck. Even as a pupil, it seems that Distler had already formed his philosophy of composition: music should come from the spirit of the Baroque. This was to be his compositional stamp. This is easily observed in the strictness and acidity of his organ compositions, and also that the ideal sound for these works is on a magnificent Baroque organ. Distler believed this wholeheartedly. In fact, in the calligraphic manuscript of the partita *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, which he dedicated to Grabner, he wrote in the specifications of his beloved Jakobi organ.³⁹

The compositional forms for Distler's organ works, as expected, stem from the early Baroque. Nearly all the works are identified with a chorale, and the cantus firmus based works take shape as biciniums, ricercare, toccatas, chaconnes, variations, fugues, et cetera (see figure 2.2). Distler revives these old forms, making them speak in a new language. And, with no less than four partitas, he also gave a meaningful contribution to the domain of multi-movement forms.

³⁹ Hermann Grabner, "Erinnerungen an Hugo Distler," in Alexander L. Suder, ed., *Komponisten in Bayern: Dokument musikalischen Schaffens im 20. Jahrhundert*, vol. 20: *Hugo Distler* (Tutzing: Verlegt bei Hans Schneider, 1990), 36.

Figure 2.2: Ranking of compositional forms found in organ works⁴⁰

1	Chorale and Chorale Prelude	22
2	Tocata	12
3	Bicinium	10
4	Contrapuntal ⁴¹	6
5	Canon	4
6	Chaconne	3
6	Pastorale	3
8	Concertino	2

1	Partita	4
2	Sonatina	1
2	Toccata and Fugue	1
2	Trio Sonata	1

⁴⁰ Numbers represent how many individual pieces are influenced by that form. Some pieces, naturally, fall under more than one category; e.g., mvt. three of the *Sonata* falls under trio sonata, toccata, and chaconne.

⁴¹ Fugue, Ricercare, Fugato, Canzona, etc.

Teachers

Distler's teachers, who all had an affinity for things of the Baroque, naturally influenced his compositional style as well. Armin Schoof, now retired organist of St. Jakobi in Lübeck, emphasizes the importance of these highly prominent men in his treatise on the registration of Distler's organ works.⁴² Ursula Herrmann, moreover, states that Distler had the great fortune of studying with the leading men of the *Orgelbewegung*.⁴³

Hermann Grabner instructed Distler in theory, counterpoint, and composition. A proponent of neoclassicism, he influenced Distler to look to the past for his inspiration and compositional style. In a letter to Ingeborg Heinsen, a childhood friend, Distler wrote that Grabner dismissed anything modern and that he considered the most modern to be a return to ascetic art of the time before Bach.⁴⁴

Like Helmut Walcha, Distler was a pupil of Günther Ramin, Karl Straube's successor as organist at the Thomaskirche in Leipzig. Ramin was one of the first men to extol the virtues of the historical north German organ, bringing it back into popularity. In fact, according to Distler, Ramin was a key figure in the *Orgelbewegung*. As early as 1925, he gave a concert on the Stellwagen organ in St. Jakobi, renewing interest in the venerable instruments and music of the past among organ enthusiasts.⁴⁵

⁴² Armin Schoof, "Hugo Distlers Registrierungspraxis: Beobachtungen an seinen Orgelwerken," in *Aspekte der Orgelbewegung*, im Auftrag der Gesellschaft der Orgelfreunde, ed. Alfred Reichling (Berlin: Merseburger) 1995.

⁴³ Ursula Herrmann, *Hugo Distler, Rufer und Mahner* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1972), 21.

⁴⁴ Letter from Distler to Heinsen from February 29, 1928. Quoted in Lüdemann, *Hugo Distler*, 34 and Herrmann, *Rufer und Mahner*, 14.

⁴⁵ Hugo Distler, "Vor dem Orgelweihfest in St. Jakobi," *Lübecker Volksbote* (October 22, 1935): insert.

Friedrich Högner, Distler's organ improvisation teacher, had perhaps just as strong an influence as Ramin on Distler. In fact, it was Högner who first introduced Distler to the sound of the Silbermann organs of southern Germany. Also, Högner confided in a letter to Ursula Herrmann that the results of one of his lessons with Distler on chorale preludes are especially evident in the organ partita, *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ From letters to Ursula Herrmann from Professor Högner on May 26 and 29, 1968. Quoted in Herrmann, *Rufer und Mahner*, 20-21.

Organs

While such eminent proponents of the *Orgelbewegung* as Ramin and Högner had a profound influence on Distler, and while the spirit of compositions of the early Baroque called to him as they did Grabner, it is apparent that none of these had such an immense impact upon Distler's organ music as the instruments themselves. This section will focus most specifically on the organs that influenced Distler, those in St. Jakobi in Lübeck, where Distler had his first job, and his own house organ, built by Paul Ott.

Armin Schoof claims Distler's fascination with the historical organ was made most intense because of his job at St. Jakobi in Lübeck, where he presided over the so-called *kleine Orgel*. Although being instantly taken by the sound of this organ, Distler was dissatisfied because of its limitations with the organ literature of Bach and later composers. In a report on the renovation of the St. Jakobi organs from 1935, Distler describes it as such:

[B]y looking at the disposition, a characteristic sound of each manual, is very strongly heard. Above all stands the *Hauptwerk*, with its Renaissance-like, strict principal chorus. The noble Mixture and the (unfortunately dampened) Trommet unite to a plenum of celebratory, unapproachable splendor. The *Rückpositiv* has a powerful principal chorus of steely clarity, and it can also be used as a solo manual with its inimitably beautiful flute voices and the silky, tender Krummhorn. A Scharf and a clarinet-like Trechterregal provide the necessary, complementary, equalizing force to the *Hauptwerk*. Lastly, the *Brustwerk* possesses a plenum with an almost bawling ferocity—a deadly scream. Its elementary allure, first obvious to one only after he has freed himself from any ideal of sound, landed here in bacchanal self-sufficiency at the turn of the century.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ “Wie schon ein Blick auf das Dispositionsbild im wesentlichen zeigt, erscheint der Werkcharakter, d.h. die klangliche Ausprägung der einzelnen Klaviere in sich und im Vergleich zu den übrigen, außerordentlich stark betont. Es stehen sich gegenüber ein Hauptwerk, in dem sich sowohl der noch renaissancehaft strenge Prinzipalchor wie die edle Mixtur und die (leider verstümmelte) Trommet zu einem Pleno von feierlich-unnahbarer Pracht vereinigen; ein Rückpositiv, das ebensowohl als Solowerk—durch

Due to these limitations, he made a thorough study of music by early Baroque composers, was especially fascinated with the keyboard works of Samuel Scheidt and Dietrich Buxtehude, and he began to write his own organ pieces with modern harmonies, but which were fitting for this historical instrument. Thus, it was this organ which inspired him to write his first large-scale organ composition, the partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Op. 8/I.⁴⁸ It was published just one year after Distler accepted the position of organist at St. Jakobi in 1931. He dedicated it to his composition teacher, Hermann Grabner.

In a foreword to Opus 8/I, Distler pays tribute to the *kleine Orgel* in St. Jakobi. He says that the partita's genesis, rules and principles of design, and existence are due to his memorable years of experience with the organ. He also states that performers should strive to replicate the "old sound" when playing his works on modern instruments. Distler then gives the disposition of the *kleine Orgel* in the publication of his first partita, complete with dynamic listings of all stops. While registrations of his performance of this work on the *kleine Orgel* are published in the partita, Distler maintains in the foreword that they should not be made into the standard, as the Jakobi organ was "far

seine unnachahmlich schönen Flötenstimmen und das seidige, zarte Krummhorn—zu gebrauchen ist, wie es kraft der stahlharten Klarheit seiner Prinzipale wie des Scharf und des fast klarinetenhaft schmetternden Trecterregals den notwendig ergänzenden, ausgleichenden Gegensatz zum Hauptwerk bildet; zuletzt ein Brustwerk von geradezu plärrender Heftigkeit im Pleno, ein tödliches "Schreiwerk," dessen elementarer Reiz sich erst dem ganz offenbart, der sich von einem Klangideal freigemacht hat, das gegen die Jahrhundertwende in schwelgerischer Selbstgenügsamkeit gelandet war." Hugo Distler and Erich Thienhaus, *Die beiden Orgeln in St. Jakobi zu Lübeck: Bericht über den Umbau 1935*, Lübeck 1935, 17-18.

⁴⁸ Armin Schoof, "Hugo Distlers Registrierungspraxis: Beobachtungen an seinen Orgelwerken," in *Aspekte der Orgelbewegung*, im Auftrag der Gesellschaft der Orgelfreunde, ed. Alfred Reichling (Berlin: Merseburger) 1995, 455.

from being balanced in its specifications. Most of all, the weak pedal disallow[ed] a suitable registration.”⁴⁹ In his second partita, *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme*, Op. 8/II, he only gives general descriptions of the type of sound he wants. However, after the renovations made to the organ in 1935, he once again gives detailed stop lists and registrations for everything in his *Kleine Orgelchoral-Bearbeitungen*, Op. 8/III, reflecting the changes made to his beloved organ. These changes are noticeable in the comparison of the printed organ specifications (see figures 2.3 and 2.4). Note how detailed Distler was in his original listing of the specifications—he even gave dynamics of each stop—so desirous was he to emphasize the type of sound he envisioned for this particular piece.

⁴⁹ “Die vorgeschlagene Registrierung ist die auf der St. Jakobiorgel praktisch bewährte; sie erhebt nicht Anspruch, Maßstab zu sein, da die durchaus nicht vollkommen ausgewogene Disposition der Orgel, vor allem des zu schwachen Pedals, von vornherein eine vollkommen gemäße Registrierung ausschloß.“ Hugo Distler, Organ Partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, (Kassel: Bärenreiter Ausgabe 637, 1933), Vorwort.

Figure 2.3: Disposition of the *kleine Orgel* in St. Jakobi before 1935⁵⁰

The *Hauptwerk* and *Pedal* are partly from the 15th century; the *Brustwerk* and *Rückpositiv* originated around 1630. The prospect of the *Haupt-* and *Pedalwerk* is high Gothic; that of the *Brustwerk* and *Rückpositiv* is early Baroque.

<i>Hauptwerk</i>	<i>Rückpositiv</i>	<i>Brustwerk</i>
Prinzipal 16' (f)	Gedackt 8' (p)	Gedackt 8' (p-pp)
Oktave 8' (f)	Quintatön 8' (p-mf)	Quintatön 4' (p-pp)
Oktave 4' (f)	Hohlflöte 4' (p)	Waldflöte 2' (p-pp)
Oktave 2' (f)	Prinzipal 4' (mf)	Zimbel (mf-p)
Spielfeife 8' (mf)	Oktave 2' (p-mf)	Schalmei 8' (p-pp)
Flöte 8' (p)	Scharf (mf-f)	Regal 8' (p-pp)
Trommet 8' (f)	Trechterregal 8' (mf-p)	
Mixtur (f)	Krummhorn 8' (p)	
<i>Pedal</i>	<i>Brustwerk</i> enclosed	
Subbaß 16' (p)	Tremulant equipped on all manuals	
Spielfeifenbaß 8' (p)	2 ventils	
Spielfeifenbaß 4' (p)	Keyboard range C—c''' (short octave in bass)	
Posaune 16' (mf)	Pedal range C—d' (short octave in bass)	
Trommet 8' (mf-f)	Slider chest	
Trommet 4' (mf-p)	Mechanical action	

⁵⁰ Hugo Distler, *Organ Partita Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, (Kassel: Bärenreiter Ausgabe 637, 1933), "Disposition der alten St. Jakobiorgel zu Lübeck."

Figure 2.4: Disposition of the *kleine Orgel* in St. Jakobi after 1935 renovations by Karl Kemper⁵¹

Casing: *Hauptwerk* Gothic, *Brustwerk* Renaissance, *Rückpositiv* early Baroque.

<i>Hauptwerk</i>	<i>Rückpositiv</i>	<i>Brustwerk</i>
Prinzipal 16'	Gedackt 8'	Gedackt 8'
Oktave 8'	Quintatön 8'	Quintatön 4'
Spielpfeife 8'	Prinzipal 4'	Waldflöte 2'
Oktave 4'	Hohlflöte 4'	Zimbel 2fach
Flöte 4'	Oktave 2'	Regal 8'
Octave 2'	Scharf 4fach	Schalmei 4'
Mixtur 4fach	Trechterregal 8'	
Trommet 8'	Krummhorn 8'	
<i>Pedal</i>		
Subbaß 16'		
Gedacktpommer 8'		
Bordun 4'		
Nachthorn 2'	Tremulant	
Rauschpfeife 4fach	Keyboard range C, F—c ³	
Posaune 16'	Pedal range C—d ¹	
Dulzian 8'	Slider chest	
Trommet 4'	Mechanical action and stops	
Regal 2'	Coupling: <i>Rückpositiv</i> to <i>Hauptwerk</i>	

Though spellbound by the sound of the *kleine Orgel*, Distler was still dissatisfied, even after the changes in 1935. In his report, he says the following: “The majority is finished, that is, what is warranted to keep the organ in usable condition. Much still remains to be done.”⁵² The newest specifications reflect changes made to Distler’s beloved organ in 1978 (see figure 2.5). This restoration of the organ is meant to fully

⁵¹ Distler and Thienhaus, *Die beiden Orgeln*, 21.

⁵² “Das Wesentliche ist getan, um die Erhaltung des Werkes in einem würdigen Zustand zu gewähren. Manches bleibt noch zu tun.“ Ibid., 17.

reflect its original spirit of the early Baroque, just as Distler dreamed.⁵³ It is, today, the only remaining organ in Lübeck from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; it is one of the oldest playable historical instruments altogether.⁵⁴

Figure 2.5: Disposition of the *kleine Orgel* in St. Jakobi since 1978⁵⁵

<i>Hauptwerk</i>	<i>Rückpositiv</i>	<i>Brustwerk</i>
Prinzipal 16'	Gedackt 8'	Gedackt 8'
Oktave 8'	Quintadena 8'	Quintadena 4'
Spielpfeife 8'	Prinzipal 4'	Waldflöte 2'
Oktave 4'	Hohlflöte 4'	Zimbel 2fach
Nasat 3'	Sesquialtera 2fach	Regal 8'
Rauschpfeife 2fach	Scharf 3-4fach	Schalmei 4'
Mixtur 4fach	Trechterregal 8'	
Trompete 8'	Krummhorn 8'	
<i>Pedal</i>		
Subbaß 16'		
Prinzipal 8'		
Spielpfeife 8'		
Octave 4'		
Gedackt 4'		
Flöte 2'		
Rauschpfeife 4fach	3 Tremulants	
Posaune 16'	Coupling: RP/HW, BW/HW, HW/Ped	
Trompete 8'	All pipes are made of metal again (lead)	
Trompete 4'	Pedal range C—d ¹	
Regal 2'	Keyboard range C, D, E, F, G, A—c ³	

Tuning: Whole tone higher than current standard using Werckmeister's First Temperament (Christoph Kaltschmidt had retuned the organ with equal temperament in 1786).

⁵³ Ibid., 17. Later on the same page, Distler expresses his wish that the tremendous undertaking of restoring the organ to its original design would some day soon be realized.

⁵⁴ Dietrich Wölfel, *Die Wunderbare Welt der Orgeln: Lübeck als Orgelstadt*, (Lübeck: Verlag Schmidt-Römhild, 1980), 61.

⁵⁵ Armin Schoof, liner notes to *Das Orgelwerk I: Hugo Distler*, Thorofon CTH 2293, Germany, 1995, CD.

One specific organ, the *kleine Orgel* (or Stellwagen organ) in St. Jakobi, inspired Distler to compose the three works of Op. 8; and one specific organ, the house organ built by Paul Ott in 1938 (or rather the idea of it, to be exact), inspired him to compose the two major works of Op. 18. As outlined in correspondence between Bornefeld and Distler, the collection of *30 Pieces* was originally conceived with the idea that they could be played on a small positive organ. Bornefeld offered to write the preface, and Distler was very much excited about the possibilities. For reasons unknown, this original plan was never realized, and the information published in the collection contrasts with this inside information. Furthermore, as the organ was not actually completed and delivered until after the publication of *30 Pieces*, it could only have been the idea of the house organ, rather than the actual instrument itself, which provided inspiration.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, Distler's organ works of Op. 18 were written to be performed on small organs that call to mind an ideal, early Baroque sound.

The events leading up to the contracting of the house organ are related in Chapter One: Distler accepted an instructor post at the Stuttgart Musikhochschule in 1937; ever increasing political difficulties forced Distler to shift his focus of composition from sacred to secular music;⁵⁷ nevertheless, he greatly missed his precious instrument of St. Jakobi.

Thus, he began to make plans for a house organ. He enlisted the help of Helmut Bornefeld, designer of the case, and Erich Thienhaus, brother-in-law, friend, and previous

⁵⁶ Lüdemann, *Distler Biographie*, 247.

⁵⁷ Armin Schoof, liner notes to *Das Orgelwerk II: Hugo Distler*, Thorofon CTH 2294, Germany, 1996, CD. Arno Schönstedt, liner notes to *Hugo Distler: Sämtliche Orgelwerke*, Cantate C 57613, Kassel, 1994-95, CD.

acoustical consultant to the St. Jakobi organ renovation projects. Together with Distler, they developed the specifications and scalings (see figure 2.6). They contracted with the organ builder Paul Ott of Göttingen. In order to help finance the construction costs (a sum of 8,000 Marks),⁵⁸ Distler sold his harpsichord.⁵⁹

Paul Ott, a pioneer in the field of Baroque organ construction principles and the first organ builder to assiduously work according to the precepts of the *Orgelbewegung*, absolved his examination of Master in Organ Building and Cabinet Making in 1937, and he delivered Distler's organ in September, 1938. Despite Thienhaus's careful calculations, the instrument displayed flaws upon arrival. The low wind pressure and low placed mouths of the pipes caused uneven voicing, and the pedal reeds were thin. However, all in all, the instrument was a successful union of Distler's style with Ott's concept of sound,⁶⁰ as well as a successful realization of Distler's vision of the purpose of a small house organ.

In a report on the building of the commissioned organ by Erich Thienhaus, he wrote that the house organ should serve as a practice instrument for preparing music for concerts. Yet, it must allow adequate flexibility for registration of many different types of music, and it should sound especially good for large Bach works. The two manuals should be independent of one another; however, they must be flexible enough to be

⁵⁸ "Einzigartig: Distlers Hausorgel," Z Ano 81d, Hugo Distler Archives, Stadtsbibliothek Lübeck, Lübeck. The renovation costs from 1992/93 were around 70,000 Marks.

⁵⁹ Dietrich Wölfel, "Ein Kleinod jüngerer Orgelbaugeschichte," in *Lübeckische Blätter*, 1993/3, 35.

⁶⁰ Schönstedt, liner notes.

combined into a grand chorus. Despite the limitations of the acoustics in a house, the sound should still mimic that of a church organ.⁶¹

Figure 2.6: Planned disposition of Distler's house organ⁶²

<i>Hauptwerk</i>	<i>Oberwerk</i>	<i>Pedal</i>
Liebl. Gedackt 8'	Holzregal 8'	Trichterdulzian 16'
Prinzival 4'	Gedacktflöte 4'	Gedackt 8'
Nasat 2 2/3'	Prinzival 2'	Rohrflöte 4'
Waldflöte 2'	Quinte 1 1/3'	Rauschpfeife 2 2/3', 2'
Zimbel 2-3fach	Oktave 1'	
	Terz 1fach	
<i>Oberwerk</i> tremulant	Slider chests	
OW/HW, OW/P, HW/P	Mechanical key and stop action	
Manual compass C-d''''	Electric wind supply, 45 mm wind pressure	
Pedal compass C-f'		

The new organ and its design and success excited Thienhaus. He claims that he had seldom heard Bach's *Prelude and Fugue in E-flat Major* sound as impressive and convincing as on Distler's house organ.⁶³

In addition to the superfluous remainder of the organ's description (all 51 pipes of the Prinzival 4' used as facade, pedal divided into C and C-sharp sides, et cetera), Thienhaus mentions one other oddity about the house organ which is important for the performance of Distler's organ works of Opus 18. The width of the keys was smaller than normal. Each octave was only 161 mm. Thienhaus claims that this width, 3 mm

⁶¹ Erich Thienhaus, "Eine neue Hausorgel," in *Musik und Kirche* 11 (1939): 50-51.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 51.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 51.

narrower than usual, may at first seem insignificant. It does, nevertheless, make a meaningful difference: it eases phrasing, namely making it cleaner.⁶⁴ This fact is worth emphasizing because it relates to Distler's overall compositional philosophy: transparency.

As aforementioned, the organ displayed certain problems even upon arrival in Distler's home in Vaihingen. Distler obviously must have ordered some alterations to be made. In his epilogue to the *Thirty Pieces*, the specifications listed differ from those of Thienhaus (see figure 2.7).

Figure 2.7: Disposition of Distler's house organ⁶⁵

<i>Unterwerk</i>	<i>Oberwerk</i>	<i>Pedal</i>
Liebl. Gedackt 8'	Regal 8'	Dulzian 16'
Prinzipal 4'	Gedacktflöte 4'	Pommer 8'
Nasat 2 2/3'	Prinzipal 2'	Rohrgedackt 4'
Waldflöte 2'	Quinte 1 1/3'	Rauschpfeife 2 2/3', 2'
Zimbel 2-3fach	Sifflöte 1'	
	Terz 1 3/5'	
Tremulant	Slider chests	
OW/UW, OW/P, UW/P	Mechanical key and stop action	
Manual compass C-d''''	Electric wind supply, 45 mm wind pressure	
Pedal compass C-f'	Dulzian and <i>Oberwerk</i> under expression	

The new house organ's influence, as well as that of the Nazi regime, upon Distler is evident in his statements within the epilogue to his *Thirty Pieces*. The compositions

⁶⁴ Ibid., 51.

⁶⁵ Hugo Distler, *Dreissig Spielstücke für die Kleinorgel oder andere Tasteninstrumente*, (Kassel: Bärenreiter Ausgabe 1288, 1938), "Nachwort."

composed during the Stuttgart period were not written for a sacred purpose. The collection, *Thirty Pieces*, for the small organ or other small keyboard instruments was composed to “encourage the re-institution of the organ as a household instrument....They are intended neither for the concert hall nor for church performance, but rather to inspire joyful music-making at home.”⁶⁶

However, Distler’s religious ties and biases are still more than present in other comments. For instance, he says the organ is particularly suited to helping make home music-making more “holy.” Also, despite the fact that the collection consists mainly of untitled works or of variations on secular tunes, Distler ends the collection with variations based on the chorale, “Wo Gott zu Haus nit gibt sein Gunst,” which he had previously included in his choral collection, *Der Jahrkreis*, Op 5.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ “Sie gehören weder in den Konzertsaal noch in die Kirche, sondern wollen der Freude am häuslichen Musizieren dienen und auf ihre bescheidene Weise dazu beitragen, daß auch die Hausorgel und Kleinorgel wieder zu einem Träger unserer Bemühungen um eine im Volkhaften, im Kreis häuslichen Musizierens und in Spiel und Feier verwurzelten Musik werde.“ Ibid.

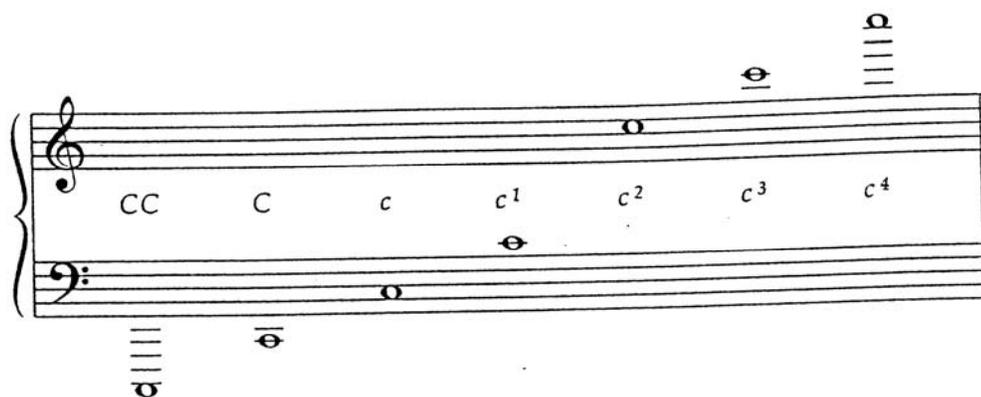
⁶⁷ Though not mentioned in any literature, this author suggests that Distler included this final chorale in his secular organ collection as a political statement against the SS. The text of the chorale is as follows: *Wo Gott zu Haus nit gibt sein Gunst, da arbeit't jedermann umsonst. Wo Gott die Stadt nit selbst bewacht, da ist umsonst der Wächter Macht.* “The house whereupon God does not bestow his grace, there everyone works for nothing. The city o’er which God does not watch, there is the watchman’s guard no good.” These words are characteristic of a prophet’s vociferations of doom to a sinful nation.

CHAPTER THREE: COMPOSITIONS AND ANALYSES

Explanation of Analytical Notation and Techniques

Specific pitches are referred to in italicized type according to the octave designation system (see figure 3.1). Non-italicized upper-case letters designate pitch class without reference to a specific octave. Major keys are designated with upper-case letters followed by an upper-case “M,” and minor keys by lower-case letters followed by a lower-case “m.” Both major and minor key indications are then followed by a colon (e.g., GM: = G Major; f#m: = F# Minor).

Figure 3.1: Octave designations



Chord sonorities are designated in a manner that shows their quality and position (see figures 3.2 and 3.3).

Figure 3.2: Sample chord qualities

GM.....	G major triad	Gm.....	G minor triad
GMm7.....	G major triad with m7	Gmm.....	G minor triad with m7
G+.....	G augmented triad	G ^o	G diminished triad
GMM7.....	G major triad with M7	G ^o 7.....	G diminished triad with m7
GMmM.....	G major triad, m7, M9	G ^o 7.....	G diminished triad with d7

Figure 3.3: Sample sonority labels

The figure shows a musical staff with ten chords. Below each chord is a label: CM, Cm, CMM⁷, CMm⁷, CMmM⁹, C(M)mMPM¹³₁₁, Cmm⁷, Edmm⁹, and CMm⁶₅. The C(M)mMPM¹³₁₁ label has a '9' and '7' written vertically below it.

Intervals are designated in a manner similar to chords. Perfect, major, and augmented intervals are indicated by upper-case letters and are then followed by Arabic numbers (e.g., P4, M7, A2). Minor and diminished intervals are indicated by lower-case letters and are then followed by Arabic numbers (m3, d5).

Harmonic functions are designated by Roman numerals, with upper-case indicating major and augmented triads (e.g., V7, III+), and lower-case indicating minor and diminished triads (vi, ii^o). Arabic figures indicate inversions. Additional nondiatonic chord functions are illustrated in figure 3.4.

Figure 3.4: Nondiatonic chord functions

V7/V	=	Secondary dominant seventh chord (Mm chord on supertonic)
vii ^o 7/V	=	Secondary leading tone seventh chord (^o 7 chord on raised subdominant)
N	=	Neapolitan triad (major triad on lowered supertonic)
It6	=	Italian sixth (Mm sonority)
Gr6	=	German sixth (Mm sonority)
Fr6	=	French sixth (half-diminished supertonic seventh chord with raised third, second inversion)
NF	=	Non-functional sonority
-3-	=	Third-related sonorities

Measure or bar numbers are designated by an “m” followed by an Arabic number (e.g., m3 indicates measure 3, or mm21-98 indicates measures 21 through 98). Beat numbers follow bar numbers and are preceded by a period (e.g., m5.4 indicates the fourth beat of measure 5). Subdivisions of the beat are indicated by an additional period and number (e.g., m68.2.3 indicates the third subdivision of the second beat of measure 68).

Distler's Compositional Process

To truly immerse oneself in the spirit of the music as a performer, an understanding of the composer's creative process is helpful. The records in the Hugo Distler Archive in the Stadtbibliothek in Lübeck afford a glimpse at Distler's compositional steps. In addition, these archives house the remaining manuscripts of his organ works (several were lost or destroyed in the war). Included among them are the manuscripts of Distler's organ partita on *Jesus Christus, unser Heiland*. It was never published, and the manuscript is missing the first eight pages. There is also an improvisation on the chorale *Erhalt uns Herr*. This was written for the first St. Jakobi Vesper Concert on November 15, 1931, and it appeared as a facsimile in *The American Organist*, vol. 6, no. 4, April 1982.⁶⁸ It contains registration markings and phrase markings in pencil.⁶⁹ Lastly, there is a one-page harmonization of the chorale *Wie schön leuchtet uns der Morgenstern*. This was published in the 1995 *Choralvorspiele zum Evangelischen Gesangbuch*, Bd. I.⁷⁰ It appears as if it could have been used to accompany congregational singing. It is possible that it was meant to serve as the

⁶⁸ Courtesy of Mark Bergaas.

⁶⁹ I examined this improvisation, contained in the Distler archives, during my Fulbright study in Germany as well. Not appearing in the published facsimile reproduction, according to my research notes, are also pedal markings. This is highly important, because it shows that Distler used his heel on two occasions. This contrasts with Bender's statements concerning Distler's use of toe. He states that Distler used primarily toe, toe, toe patterns in his pedal technique. This statement and Distler's own handwriting in his manuscript taken together, thus, imply that though Distler used primarily toe, toe, toe, he did not forbid the occasional use of the heels.

⁷⁰ Courtesy of Juergen Bonn.

accompanying chorale setting to the chorale prelude on the same tune, which Günther Ramin already published in 1931.⁷¹

Of the larger organ works Distler composed, the archives house a publishing template of his partita on *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme*, dated June 2, 1935.⁷² Corrections are written in pencil, as are Distler's metronome markings. All these corrections, as well as others not shown on the template, made it to the published copy.

More interesting to posterity, however, are the completely intact documents which reveal Distler's compositional process for his first major organ work, *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Op. 8/I. First, Distler began with sketches. The archives contain 28 pages of the initial draft in pencil in a very neat handwriting.⁷³ The end is labeled as Op. 8/1. An occasional accent mark or slur mark indicates phrases and desired articulation. The parts found on the last few pages are quite sketchy and not as neatly laid out as are the parts in the middle of the collection. For example, one passage, labeled "passacaglia," begins on page 28 and continues on page 27. Naturally, discrepancies as to the ordering of the movements exist between the sketches and the final published version. For example, variation 4 on page 7 later is later published as variation 5. Also, not all the variations are labeled.

Distler next bound the manuscript. This complete version of *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland* is bound with black covering. Taped to the inside cover is the program

⁷¹ Interestingly, it is written on {K.U.V. Beethoven Papier Nr. 8, (14 Linien)}, and the print is ink. All other manuscripts are on >>Sünova<<. The writing is in ink. It is not signed or dated.

⁷² The final number is no longer legible, but it must be a five, as 1935 is the date of actual publishing. Number Rev. 95620/1a.

⁷³ Unless otherwise mentioned, all pieces are written on >>Sünova<< Nr. 5 ½ with 14 staves per page.

to the 17th Vesper Concert at St. Jakobi in Lübeck from Monday, December 26, 1932, 6 PM. The title page contains a dedication to Hermann Grabner: “Meinem hochverehrten Lehrer Hermann Grabner in dankbarer Verehrung.” On the next page is a drawing of the *kleine Orgel* in St. Jakobi by Hans Peters, and its disposition is given (see figure 3.5 for discrepancies between the listed organ specifications in this manuscript and those in the final published version by Bärenreiter).

Figure 3.5: Organ specification discrepancies between published BA6443 and Distler’s black bound archival manuscript

	<i>Hauptwerk</i>	
BA Flöte 8’		D Rohrflöte 8’
BA Trommet 8’		D Trompete 8’
BA Mixtur		D Mixtür 4. fach
	<i>Rückpositiv</i>	
BA Scharf		D Scharf 4. fach
	<i>Brustwerk</i>	
BA Zimbel		D Cymbel 2. fach
	<i>Pedal</i>	
BA Trommet 8’		D Trompete 8’
BA Trommet 4’		D Trompete 4’

BA: 2 *Sperrventile*, gives *Manualumfang* and *Pedalumfang*, *Schleifladen*, and *mechanische Traktur*

D: *Sperrventile zum Hauptwerk* and *Rückpositiv*, *koppel Rückpositiv zu Hauptwerk*

No indications regarding tempo, registrations, manual changes, touch/articulation, slurs, *et cetera* are given. There are merely the notes and rests. The beginnings and

endings of the chorale and each variation are clearly printed. The writing is very legible and is almost as good as a typeset copy. On page 20, in the chaconne, measure 10, there is a noticeable erasure. It appears Distler inadvertently began writing on the wrong staff, as the notes are erased out of the second line and placed back in the top line, where the pattern has been all along (see figure 3.6 for differences regarding notes between this manuscript copy and the final published version).

Figure 3.6: Music discrepancies between published BA6443 and Distler's black bound archival manuscript

- Chorale Satz: manuscript lacks a dotted crotchet g^1 in the soprano voice, right at the end of the movement (found under the word *zögern* in the published copy). Also, there are no ornaments as in the published version.
- Variation 1: manuscript has an a^1 -flat in the *Rückpositiv* line, second note, as the third entrance of the flourishes comes in with the right hand switching back to the *cantus firmus* a third time, published has an a^1 -natural. Furthermore, Distler adds the pedal with a *G* at the end cadence. This is not in the published version.
- Variation 2: manuscript has no accidental, published has a b^3 -natural on the third line after the f^2 -sharp.
- Variation 3: manuscript variation 3 is published variation 4, exact copy.
- Variation 4: manuscript variation 4 is published variation 5, exact copy.
- Variation 5: manuscript variation 5 is published variation 3, manuscript contains an extra b^1 -natural in *Rückpositiv* at the cadence.
- Variation 6: manuscript has a d^2 -natural in soprano voice at the transition to the key of AbM. In the published version, one find the note in question on the first line, close to end. A few beats later, however, Distler writes a d^2 -natural, which suggests he merely forgot the accidental sign on the first line. In addition, manuscript has three a^2 -naturals where the published has three a^2 -flats. The area in question is found in the published version on the second line, lower voice.
- Variation 7: manuscript has no descent to a *G* in the pedals at the end.
- Chaconne:
- m4.10.2 and m4.12.2: manuscript has *d* and *e* together in the left hand, published has only the *e*.
 - m4.9.2: manuscript has added e^2 in right hand not contained in published version.
 - m7.1 and m7.3: manuscript has left out the bottom d^2 in the right hand intervallic M6-P4-M6-P5 pattern found in the published version.
 - m9.1.2: manuscript has interval of M2 with d^2 and e^2 in right hand rather than the M3 interval with c^2 and e^2 given in published version. This is marked out in pencil with an X.
 - m9.4.2: manuscript omits c^2 -sharp in right hand, thus lacking the P4 interval written in the published version.
 - m9.16: manuscript omits left hand c^1 of the M6 interval given in published version.
 - m11.12.2: manuscript omits accidental sign for the pedal *e*-flat.
- Toccata: exact copy.

The third manuscript copy in the series is dated Lübeck, December 12, 1932 at the end. Again, the cover page contains the dedication: “Meinem Lehrer Professor Dr. Hermann Grabner in hoher, dankbarer Verehrung.” It contains directions for registrations, manual changes, and where to broaden. Registration is written in red ink, but the tempo indications are in the same black ink as the notes. Most everything is the same as in the published version, including the Stellwagen organ’s disposition. The *Vorwort* is also written out. Distler uses the term *Schranktüren* and BA6443 the term *Jalousie*. Furthermore, all published performance notes, indicated by *, **, and *** are given. This manuscript, however, still lacks metronome indications, and there are still no phrasing or articulation indications given. The only remaining discrepancy between notes in this manuscript copy and the final published version is the one related in the first variation above (see figure 3.6).

Sundry variants of registration and tempo indications between this manuscript copy and the final published version exist. These include omissions of manual changes in the manuscript, qualitative verbal descriptions of tempi in the manuscript versus quantitative descriptions of tempi finally published, and mistaken registration indications in the manuscript. Only one difference regarding registration could be of importance. In the fourth movement, Distler lists the following registration change from the previous movement in the manuscript: R.P. – Hohlflöte 4’ + Scharf + Trechterregal 8’. The published copy states this: R.P. – Hohlflöte 4’ – Oktave 2’ + Scharf.

Lastly, the archives also house a publishing template, dated April 22, 1933 (stamp on left hand upper corner), number Rev. 93832/1b (this is written in pencil on right hand

side, upper corner). Distler's corrections are written in red ink. Now, all tempo markings and articulation indications are given, and everything looks as it does in the published version, fonts included. Distler's corrections in ink include changing the first two left hand quavers of the first variation into semiquavers. This did not make it to press, and the mistake is still published. Two registration differences between the template and the final copy are still present, including the one regarding the Trechterregal 8' in the final toccata as aforementioned.

Questions still remain concerning his compositional process and his pieces going to print, possibly due to missing manuscripts or printing templates. Where is the manuscript that has all the extra tempo markings and phrasings before it went to Bärenreiter and came back as a publishing template? Why is it that the published version's first variation is still incorrect? Why did certain markings not make it to template and then to publication? Did Distler take these out in another step between the manuscript and the template? How did other things, like registrations, get changed from the template to the published copy? Did Distler provide yet another copy with additional corrections? If so, where is that?

The available manuscripts and templates, nevertheless, afford one a unique view into Distler's compositional process. He began with sketches. Then, he wrote manuscripts containing only the notes, adding registrations in red and some tempo markings later. One assumes there was more than one manuscript phase before going to press for templating, and finally, he sent a final manuscript to the publisher. Afterwards,

he corrects the templates at least a couple of times before the final product is finished and published.

It seems Distler took an active role in getting his compositions published. He was very particular about every breath mark; he wrote in metronome markings; he provided all the instructions as to articulation and registration; he even took an interest in the fonts (italicized or plain) that the directions were written in, what was underlined, what was not, et cetera. If he was this involved in the steps of all his published pieces, posterity is assured that the final, published versions are accurate and what Distler intended.

General Overview of Distler's Organ Compositions

Thus far, all of Distler's organ compositions have been discussed or briefly mentioned. For in-depth discussion on details of Distler's organ works, the English-speaking reader is hereby referred to two scholarly sources. Larry Palmer's book, *Hugo Distler and His Church Music*, gives general elements of compositional style of each piece and establishes them in the context of their use in the church. Mark Bergaas's dissertation, *Compositional Style in the Keyboard Works of Hugo Distler*, mentions very specific items: on which type of paper Distler wrote, proposed dates of composition, dates of first performances, and the overall compositional style in Distler's keyboard works (see figure 3.7 for a listing of important details). Furthermore, he includes an entire chapter covering theoretical analyses of the canon (#4) in *Thirty Pieces* and of the organ chorale prelude, *Ach wie flüchtig, ach wie nichtig*. Here, only a general overview of Distler's organ compositions is in order.

Figure 3.7: List of organ works, dates completed, premiere information

Opus 8

- I. Partita on *Nun komm' der Heiden Heiland*; November 12, 1932; December 26, 1932 at 17th Vesper Concert in St. Jakobi
- II. Partita on *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme*; May 1935; October 13, 1935 at Kassel Music Festival
- III. *Kleine Orgel-Choralbearbeitungen*
 - Das alte Jahr vergangen ist*; unknown; unknown
 - Ach wie flüchtig, ach wie nichtig*; unknown; October 13, 1935 at Kassel Music Festival
 - Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern*; unknown; February 16, 1936 at 33rd Vesper Concert in St. Jakobi
 - Christe, du Lamm Gottes*; unknown; May 8, 1936 at Hamburg Church Music Festival
 - Mit Freuden zart*; unknown; May 8, 1936 at Hamburg Church Music Festival
 - Christ, der du bist der helle Tag*; unknown; May 8, 1936 at Hamburg Church Music Festival
 - Jesus Christus, unser Heiland*; unknown; October 10, 1937 at Berlin Church Music Festival by Friedrich Höpner

Opus 18

- I. *Dreißig Spielstücke für die Kleinorgel oder andere Tasteninstrumente*; April 1938; unknown.
- II. *Orgelsonate*; September 1938; June 21, 1939 at the Stuttgart Conservatory

The first three works stem from the time Distler worked at St. Jakobi in Lübeck, and they are meant for use in the church. The chorale based pieces are all published under the ordering of opus 8, numbers 1 through 3. The first composition for organ, Opus 8/I, was his partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*.⁷⁴ Distler dedicated it to his composition teacher, Hermann Grabner. It is divided into four sections: a toccata, the chorale statement followed by seven variations (some modeled on pieces by Samuel

⁷⁴ Martin Luther's version of *Veni redemptor gentium*, a famous advent hymn.

Scheidt), a chaconne with 18 variations, and a reiteration of the opening toccata. It is known that Distler often played only select variations in church services, and he performed the chaconne as an independent work in concerts. The second major sacred work, Opus 8/II, is a three movement partita based on the chorale *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme*, which is sung in the last season of the church year, Ordinary Time. It consists of an opening toccata, a bicinium, and a fugue. The number of movements is linked to the number of chorale verses, and each setting relates to the text of the verse with which it corresponds.⁷⁵ Also included in Opus 8 is a collection of smaller organ chorale preludes. Following Bach's *Orgelbüchlein* example, Distler organizes these according to the church calendar. Composed over a two year period, only one work from the collection cannot be dated: *Das alte Jahr vergangen ist*. An interesting bit of information relates to the small partita on *Jesus Christus, unser Heiland*. Distler premiered nearly all of his own organ works. This one, however, was first performed by Distler's service playing teacher, Friedrich Högner (see figure 3.7).

The remaining significant organ works of Distler were written during his time in Stuttgart. They fall under the designation of Opus 18, number one being the *Thirty Pieces* and number two being the *Organ Sonata*. Both works are intimate and chamber-like in atmosphere, written to be performed on a small house organ or other keyboard

⁷⁵ Mario Stein, "Studien zu den Orgelwerken Hugo Distlers, Schriftliche Hausarbeit" (vorgelegt im Rahmen der Ersten Staatsprüfung fuer das Lehramt fuer die Sekundarstufe II in Musik, Duesseldorf, 02. Nov 1998), Hugo-Distler-Archiv, Bibliothek der Hansestadt Lübeck, Lübeck.

instrument, and are secular in nature (see figure 1.1 for statistics regarding Distler's output).

The works in *Thirty Pieces* are characterized by their brevity and playful nature. Each movement is but one or two pages long. Some are grouped together as variation cycles, and others are free-standing works which can be grouped together or played separately. The opening four pieces of this opus resemble a sonatina, consisting of an opening toccata-like intonation, a concertino, a chaconne, and a canon.

Distler's final organ work, Opus 18/II, the *Orgelsonate*, is a direct tribute to the trio sonatas of J.S. Bach. It, too, consists of three movements, each having three voices. Also, the arrangement of movements and the tempi further remind one of the trio sonatas of Bach. However, in contrast to Bach's paradigmatic masterpieces, Distler's is interspersed with toccata-like passages, and the lower voices in the third movement's trio are merely accompanimental. Furthermore, this movement ends with a small chaconne having six variations.

Distler's Compositional Style in the Context of the Organ Works

In order to fully portray the spirit of Distler's compositions in performance, one must first have a thorough understanding of their compositional style. Distler believed a composer should be able to justify every note theoretically.⁷⁶ It then follows, a performer should be able to explain every note of Distler's theoretically.

Distler's main contribution to the area of composition was his development of new musical ideas which successfully melded all the elements and requirements of composition in his time with the old compositional practices and forms.⁷⁷ This is why Distler's compositions are so important to the organ repertoire: he was the first to write pieces with modern harmonic idioms which could be performed on early Baroque instruments.

For the record, Distler was a strong proponent of tonality. He was schooled in neoclassicism, taught music theory, and wrote a textbook on functional harmony. He considered atonality to be against nature.⁷⁸ This being understood as a given, clarity of line was of top priority to Distler, as substantiated by comments from Distler's composition students.⁷⁹ Furthermore, using Schenkerian methods of analysis, Distler's organ works can be reduced to show clear use of counterpoint in the foreground, middle ground, and background, albeit most backgrounds do not exemplify any of Schenker's acceptable *Urlinie* (see musical example 3.1).

⁷⁶ William Bates, "Hugo Distler and His Organ Music: An Interview With Jan Bender By William Bates," *The American Organist* 16, (December 1982): 42-43.

⁷⁷ Herrmann, "Leben und Wirken," 14.

⁷⁸ Lüdemann, *Hugo Distler*, 328.

⁷⁹ Bates.

Musical Example 3.1: Reduction of Distler's *Organ Partita on "Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland,"* Mvt. II, Variation 4⁸⁰

Secondly, the compositional forms for organ used by Distler, as mentioned earlier, stem from the early Baroque. Nearly all the works are identified with a chorale, and the cantus-firmus based works take shape as biciniums, ricercars, toccatas, chaconnes, variations, fugues, etc. Distler revives these old forms, making them speak in a new language. With no less than four partitas, he also gave a meaningful contribution to the domain of multi-movement forms (see figure 2.2 for a ranking of the compositional forms that influenced Distler).

As previously mentioned, his compositional style is heavily influenced by vocal technique. Examples of declamation (or recitation) and melismas abound (see musical examples 2.1 through 2.4). Winfried Lüdemann's essay on the vocal principles in

⁸⁰ Hugo Distler, *Organ Partita on Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Op. 8/1 (Boca Raton, FL: Masters Music Publications, Inc., 1992), 11-12.

Distler's instrumental music comprehensively examines all of Distler's organ works from this perspective.⁸¹

In addition, the playful character of Distler's pieces cannot be ignored. The improvisatory nature of pieces like the opening of *Thirty Pieces*, the fascinating experiments with rhythm and lack of barlines, and other traits like ostinato and tone substitution, or changing tones, all make Distler's style easily identifiable (see musical examples 3.2 through 3.4).

Distler's harmonies blend a quartal harmonic language with pillars of tonality, such as dominant-tonic relationships and Romantic-influenced third relations. He employs octatonic, modal, chromatic, and whole-tone scales to escape the limitations of major and minor tonality yet stay within the confines of tonality (see musical examples 3.2 and 2.2).

⁸¹ Winfried Lüdemann, "Vokale Gestaltungsprinzipien in Hugo Distlers Instrumentalstil," *Musik und Kirche* 61 (1991): 137-149

Musical Example 3.2: Lack of barlines, quartal harmony, and whole-tone scale in organ music, excerpts from *Organ Partita on "Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland,"* Mvts. I and IV—Toccat⁸²

Reprinted by kind permission of the Bärenreiter-Verlags, Kassel.

Musical Example 3.3: Ostinato in organ music, *Thirty Pieces*, Nr. 12—*Frisch auf, gut Gsell, laß rummer gahn*, Theme, mm. 17-34⁸³

Reprinted by kind permission of the Bärenreiter-Verlags, Kassel.

⁸² Hugo Distler, *Organ Partita on Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Op. 8/I (Boca Raton, FL: Masters Music Publications, Inc., 1992), 24-25.

⁸³ Winfried Lüdemann, *Hugo Distler*, 347.

Musical Example 3.4: Tone substitution/changing tones in organ music, *Orgelsonate*,
Mvt. III., mm. 81-96⁸⁴

Zeitmaß nur wenig ruhiger

*) Siehe Bemerkung zu Takt 11

**) Oder manualiter mit der Linken zusammen zu spielen

Reprinted by kind permission of the Bärenreiter-Verlags, Kassel.

Distler died at a very early age. This being the case, he did not have different compositional style periods throughout his life as many other twentieth-century composers. Thus, the original, thorough analyses of the following organ works will provide a representative sample of Distler's output. This author has chosen to include two contrasting selections from compositions representing both his liturgical and worldly styles: "Toccata" from Op. 8/I, *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, the first sacred organ work composed in Lübeck, and Op. 18/I: #1, the opening piece of *Thirty Pieces*, the first secular organ work composed in Stuttgart. The structural principles, forms, aspects of melody, harmonic language, and rhythms found in these two pieces are applicable to Distler's entire organ compositional output.

⁸⁴ Hugo Distler, *Orgelsonate*, Op. 18/II, (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1988), 17.

Opus 8/I: *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*

Distler finished his first major organ composition on November 12, 1932 and premiered it on December 26, 1932 at the seventeenth Vesper concert at St. Jakobi. Later, he would often perform the variations or the chaconne as individual pieces for use in church or other concerts. When performing the chaconne, he usually listed it as *Chaconne in G*, without particular reference to the chorale on which it is based. As aforementioned, the influence of the early Baroque upon Distler's compositions cannot be emphasized enough. According to notes in Distler's sketches, the keyboard works of Scheidt are particularly important to this piece.⁸⁵ Furthermore, variations two and three in the organ partita show similarities to Distler's choral settings of this chorale in verses V and VI of his *Kleine Adventsmusik*.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Lüdemann, *Hugo Distler*, 82.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 54.

Mvts. I and IV—Toccata

Throughout the partita (movements I, II, and IV—a repeat of I), Distler experiments with rhythm by avoiding the use of barlines. In the third movement, the barlines are used merely to show the repetition of the chaconne's theme. The use of intervals of a P4 pervades the entire composition, an idea Distler dwells upon in the toccata. Distler takes this interval from the head of the chorale tune itself. Already in the middle of the toccata's first line, Distler fixes the P4 in the listeners' ears. Upper and lower strata ascend up the whole-tone scale one octave, a P4 apart. In the second line, Distler then plays with F and Bb, which started in the lower register, in both registers, filling in the descending P4. Again, the P4 becomes an important feature at the end of line two and in line three (Distler hints at the whole-tone scale here too) with the leaps of F to Bb, G to C, and A to D. The pitches d^1 and d here become dominant tonal pillars (a P5/P4 from the tonality gm:). The first provides the melodic highpoint of the entire pedal solo, and the second becomes an organ point against which Distler sets the opening motive and another descending P4. In line four, Distler descends the pedalboard using the Dorian gm: scale with filled-in intervals of a third. Immediately before the manual figurations enter, Distler once more reminds the listeners of the P4 from F to Bb.

The manual figurations are merely stacked fourths (filled in with a M2 at the bottom), sequenced up the whole-tone scale. The opening chorale motive is stated in the left hand a P5 higher than at the beginning. The octave ascension by P4s on the whole-tone scale is repeated here. The final two lines feature the manuals a P4 apart. Here,

Distler toys with the octatonic scale.⁸⁷ Notice, in the top stratum, the following descent and ascent: Bb, A, G, F, Ab, Bb. Here, the P4 between F and Bb is disguised by the intervening Ab and the consequent P2 at the upper part of the P4. This arrangement is opposite that of the beginning manual figurations, where the M2 appeared in the lower part of the P4. All the while, the pedal part sustains a G organ point. In the last line, when the pedal restates the chorale head, the manuals, still a P4 apart, make g^2 into a broken organ point.

This movement exemplifies Distler's varying compositional techniques. The opening pedal solo, with its numerous P4 intervals and whole-tone scales, is structured around a P5. Rhythmic freedom, agogic accents, and varying articulations can all help the performer portray the complexly disguised, fundamental tonic-dominant relationship to an audience. Moreover, one notices Distler's use of no less than three different scales in this short movement: octatonic, whole-tone, and Dorian.

⁸⁷ The octatonic scale is a collection of pitches arranged in a pattern of alternating whole tones and semitones.

Opus 18/I: Thirty Pieces

The composer indicates in his notes for Opus 18/I that the pieces are meant for neither church nor concert performance. Instead, they were composed with much the same thing in mind as Schubert intended with his *Lieder*: to contribute to music-making at home and in social gatherings. Distler believed the organ could play a special and important role in this task. Atypically, he avoids any use of registration prescriptions, as this “could lead to a misunderstanding of the purpose of this collection which is only intended for contemplation.”⁸⁸ However, in his notes, he says that a registration based on 4’ instead of 8’ tone is appropriate, and that characteristic solo stops should preferably be used, or anything that is typical of historic *Positiv* registration.

⁸⁸ Distler, Hugo. “Nachwort.“ *Dreissig Spielstücke für die Kleinorgel oder andere Tasteninstrumente*. Kassel: Bärenreiter-Verlag Karl Vötterle GmbH & Co. KG, 1938. “Obwohl nun in der vorliegenden Sammlung bewußt auf irgendwelche stiltechnischen Bezeichnungen, etwa in der Gestalt von Überschriften, verzichtet wird, da sie zu einer falschen Auffassung vom Zweck dieser nur der lebendigen Anschauung dienenden Sammlung verleiten könnten.“

Nr. I—Intonation

In this collection, one can often easily recognize the traditional compositional forms that served as models for Distler's "contemplations." A toccata-like intonation opens the entire collection. It belongs in a mini-collection with the first four pieces, which form a sort of sonatina.

Compositionally, this movement is quite minimalistic. Harmonically non-adventurous, it serves its purpose as an opening intonation well. The key of CM: is firmly established beginning with alternating repetitions of CM triad portions (see musical example 3.5). Note Distler's preference of sound here. In a piece that is based on nothing more than a CM triad, the choice of beginning sonority is an open P5. Next, an organ point of G is used in the top voice to further anchor the tonic with an ostinato scale fragment occurring underneath (see musical example 3.6). The left hand then begins a descending CM arpeggio with embellishments of the second and sixth scale degrees (see musical example 3.7). After this is twice repeated, an organ point of C in the bass joins the organ point of G in the soprano, thus forming a P5 envelope of sound in which the other voices move (see musical example 3.8). This once again echoes Distler's preference for quartal and quintal harmonies. The undulating scale fragment continues in the right hand while a new *ostinato* begins in the left, an alternation between the tonic and dominant scale degrees embellished by the sixth, an embellished P4 (see musical example 3.9).

Typical of Distler, these simple harmonic devices—arpeggios, scales, and organ points—are set in contrast to his complex rhythmic ostinato combinations in his organ

works. Void of any measure delineations, the intonation is full of syncopated rhythms. Furthermore, Distler's usual combination of varying textures is here quite evident.

In relation to style of performance, while holding an organ point in the soprano and bass voices, the alto voice is to be played *legatissimo*, and the tenor line should be brought out with a clean, sharp articulation bordering on *staccato*.

Musical Example 3.5: Alternating CM triad



Reprinted by kind permission of the Bärenreiter-Verlags, Kassel.

Musical Example 3.6: Organ point G with ostinato scale fragment below



Reprinted by kind permission of the Bärenreiter-Verlags, Kassel.

Musical Example 3.7: Descending CM arpeggio with embellishments



Reprinted by kind permission of the Bärenreiter-Verlags, Kassel.

Musical Example 3.8: P5 sonority envelope



Reprinted by kind permission of the Bärenreiter-Verlags, Kassel.

Musical Example 3.9: Embellished P4



Reprinted by kind permission of the Bärenreiter-Verlags, Kassel.

Many traits of Distler's organ music are present even in miniature forms such as this one, including a penchant for quartal/quintal harmony, varying textures of lines, and interesting rhythms.

CHAPTER FOUR: PERFORMANCE ASPECTS

Reviews of Distler's Playing

Achieving a historically accurate interpretation of Distler's organ works does not end at merely understanding his compositional style. One method of gaining access to understanding the spirit of performing Distler's works is to consult reviews of Distler's own playing. Reviewers commented upon the concert abilities of Distler, an avid recitalist throughout Germany. As will be shown, Distler not only played his works, he brought them to life with a completeness that few accomplish.

Professor Walter Kraft expressed his excitement over Distler's performance of his own organ works with these words:

[Distler's] composition and playing were here fully 'in uno.' Since then, I have never heard such a oneness of interpretation of Distler's works; his playing was appropriate for his works. They were of kindred spirits—which is not always the case with composers.⁸⁹

The high improvisational level of Distler is also mentioned with special emphasis. His idea-rich, light-hearted, and easy-going organ improvisations, which unforgettably impacted every listener, were also a determining factor later on for his choral sound. He strove for the same clarity and transparency in them as well.

Fred Hamel critiqued Distler's Bach playing in the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* on May 5, 1940 as follows:

How Distler frees these inner powers, how he seizes the polyphonic logic, the energy of movement, the rhythmical tension and the phrasing: this is a unique

⁸⁹ "Komposition und Spiel waren hier völlig "in uno". Niemals habe ich später eine solche Einheit bei einer Interpretation von Distler-Werken wieder vernommen; sein Spiel war – was bei Komponisten durchaus nicht immer der Fall ist – seinem Werk adäquat, kongenial." Letter to Herrmann from September 6, 1968. Quoted in Herrmann, 19-20.

and likewise a conquering art...In this relentless, considerable, concentrated, fanatic, and shaping power, even the most famous of Bach's organ works become new.⁹⁰

Two different reviewers commented on the important concert Distler gave in Nürnberg on May 23, 1940. The following was written in a review by Erich Rhode:

Of Distler's own works, we experienced the partita on *Jesus Christus, unser Heiland*—the liveliness of the filigree technique in its interesting "Bicinium" won a special cachet—and the trio sonata, whose melodic sprightliness is unmistakable...Distler's technical ability on both the positive organ and the main organ elevated his congenial composer-personality. He showed his amazing ability equally on both...Prof. Distler is a virtuoso of passionate temperament and a Bach specialist of the highest caliber.⁹¹

In another review of the same concert, published in the *Fränkischer Kurier*, the author comments upon Distler's use of old compositional forms, writing that the spirit of the high Renaissance and early Baroque resides in Distler. Furthermore, the author mentions Distler's articulation and unique registrations, pointing out the aspect of clarity within his compositions. He is described as thoroughly modern in all ways (the picturesque language, the harmonic diversity between movements, the concentration of

⁹⁰ "Wie Distler diese inneren Kräfte entbindet, wie er die polyphone Logik, die Bewegungsenergie, die rhythmische Spannung und den Phrasierungsatem erfaßt: das ist eine ebenso einzigartige wie bezwingende Kunst...In dieser unerbittlich auf das Wesentliche gerichteten, fanatischen Gestaltungskraft werden gerade die berühmtesten der Bachschen Orgelwerke zu neuen, bezwingenden Offenbarungen." Quoted in Herrmann, 19.

⁹¹ "Von seinen eigenen Werken erlebten wir die Partita über "Jesus Christus, unser Heiland", mit dem eigenartigen "Bicinium", in dem die Lebhaftigkeit der Figuraltechnik besonders beispielhafte Geltung gewinnt, ferner die Triosonate—gekennzeichnet durch den Schwung ihrer melodischen Bewegungsformen...Die sympathische Komponistenpersönlichkeit Prof. Distlers wird durch ein orgeltechnisches Können gehoben, das er sowohl vom Spieltisch aus...als auch vor allem von dem Hauptwerk aus schlagkräftig belegte.... Ein Orgelvirtuose von leidenschaftlichem Temperament und ein Bachkenner großen Stils präsentierte sich in der Person Hugo Distlers." Erich Rhode, "Orgelkonzert Hugo Distlers in der Lorenzkirche," *Nürnberger Zeitung*, Abschrift, Konzert Hugo Distler am 23.Mai 1940, Document Z: Rho 1a, Hugo Distler Archive, Stadtbibliothek Lübeck, Lübeck, Germany.

lines/voices). Lastly, the article describes Distler as a rare embodiment of his own compositions and an equally profound interpreter of J.S. Bach's works.⁹²

From these reviews, the following is obvious: in order to play Distler's works in a historically informed manner, one must be as intimately familiar with the music of the Baroque, especially Bach's, as Distler was. The very essence of his works flows from the music of the Baroque masters. Like Distler, a performer should strive not only to play the works of Distler and Bach, but also to embody Distler and Bach. The following philosophy of Distler is important to highlight: the technically demanding performances of pieces by Bach and himself should not serve to show off one's virtuosic technical capacity, as is the case with pieces by Reger *et alia*s. Rather, one's playing should strive to portray the spirit of the compositions, indeed, even the personalities of the composers. These things interested Distler, and he conveyed them in performances: precision, control, musicality, the spirit of the Baroque, clarity, and transparency.

⁹² *Fränkischer Kurier*, Abschrift, Konzert Hugo Distler am 23.Mai 1940, Document Z: Ano36a, Hugo Distler Archive, Stadtsbibliothek Lübeck, Lübeck, Germany.

Distler's Own Words⁹³

In an essay over the Dorian Toccata and Fugue, Distler begins by describing his knowledge of the Medieval and Baroque architectural ideals and the fascination with numerology that existed at that time. He says that this particular Bach fugue is comparable in many ways to the elaborate and complex dimensions of any of the great buildings, and proves this with a structural analysis, which he claims speaks volumes about how the piece should be registered. In general, the registration should begin with a principal plenum, gradually broadening, with an avoidance of specific colors. Neutrality in character of sound is desired in this fugue; rather, interest is to be held by emphasizing the structure of the form with dynamic contrasts, achieved by manual changes and couplings (each of which is given in detail).

Phrasing is to be achieved by dividing between the phrases, but being careful not to destroy the overall flow of the work. Divisions within sequences are especially

⁹³ Though Distler's technical mastery of varying degrees of articulation cannot be overstated, and though one may already be familiar with the Baroque style of playing as is taught today, this is not enough to properly play Distler's works. Rather, one must also be informed in the style which Distler played music of the early Baroque, his thoughts on registration, and his articulation of Bach and other old masters. Interestingly, Distler's ideas are more closely related to our current understanding of Baroque playing than those of the Bach scholars in France during his time.

The style of playing Bach and other Baroque music changed drastically over the last century. Currently, a historically informed performance is much more separated and articulated than the style advocated by Widor and Schweizer earlier in the twentieth century. Compare any of the publications of Bach edited by Widor and Schweizer with those from the Bachgesellschaft. Also, note any of the performance indications given by Widor and Schweizer in the forewords to their publications. The differences of ideas on how Bach's music should be performed between these earlier Bach scholars and the early organ music scholars of today (e.g., Sondra Soderlund) are drastic.

In addition, as ornaments are plentiful in Baroque music, and therefore in Distler's, one must also know the "in vogue" method of performing Baroque ornaments as taught to Distler at the Leipzig conservatory. Fortunately for posterity, Distler not only composed music, but he also wrote musicological and theoretical treatises on early music, especially with regard to his performance thoughts on Bach's organ music. Furthermore, Distler made one recording of his playing works by the old masters; a lot of information can be gathered by listening to this.

important to mark. The articulation is to be *martellato*, not *legato*, just as it is to be in all the old music. He says that the organ legato is an invention of the 19th century.

Agogic accents should be used sparingly. There are to be no apparent mannerisms, but rather the series of eighth-notes in the middle voice should be rhythmically maintained and steady. During cadences, transitions, and important entries of themes, one may employ a little more freedom. Above all, one is to avoid a large *ritardando* at the end of the work. It should simply play itself out, the last section being made a little broader, but not noticeably.

Trills and mordents are to be integrated into the rhythm. Pedal trills are to be in a strict continuance of the previous eighth-notes, each entry pointing to a structurally significance place within the piece.

He says, referring to articulation of the toccata, that one should avoid a mannered rhythm of the oft recurring theme. The movement is to have evenness within thematic and technical material, necessitating a touch between *martellato* and *leggiero*.

After comments on the technical aspects of the music, he goes on to explain his philosophies on the spirit of the music. He talks about the fascination with looking to the past for inspiration in art and architecture, and how it has been continually done throughout the centuries, citing examples even by Bach. He also advocates playing in a style consistent with the past, so long as the right instruments are available and the knowledge is there.

As to the Bach organ, Distler is quick to point out that there were a variety of organs in different styles available when Bach was alive: the north German organ of

Buxtehude and the Silbermann organs in the south, for example. Thus, it is impossible to speak of a “Bach organ” and what sound is ideal for Bach. The problem one is faced with in modern times is how to adapt Bach to the orchestral organ.⁹⁴

Another essay is dedicated solely to the problem of registration practices of early organ music, especially that of J.S. Bach. Distler writes that it is not so hard to register Renaissance or early Baroque music on modern organs. These pieces are characterized by colorful solo voices within their many contrasting sections. This effect can easily be achieved even on the modern, orchestral organs. One must only bear in mind the construction of the composition and try to imitate the same character of the piece as was intended. Everything considered, there is more freedom of interpretation and play in pre-Bach compositions. The organ works of Bach prove more difficult.

The problem lies in the type of sound one finds in the plenum on organs of different eras. The plenum of the Renaissance is characteristically a united sound. That of the high Baroque is completely incomprehensible. Many stops on a Baroque organ lend the plenum a unique, penetrating brilliance.

Furthermore, Bach, himself a knowledgeable expert on organ building, did nothing to further the development a standard, idealistic organ sound. He wrote his music, and he understood and accepted the choices available, wherever he was.

An ideal, typical sound for large Bach works (the large preludes and fugues of volume two in the Peter's editions, the *Klavierübung* organ works, the *C-Minor*

⁹⁴ Hugo Distler, “Johann Sebastian Bachs Dorische Toccata und Fuge: Gedanken zu einer Registeranalyse,” *Musik und Kirche* 12 (1940): 49-57.

Passacaglia, the *F-Major Fugue*, and the *Dorian Toccata*) is not one of a ceremonial, Baroque monument. Rather, it should be an immanence of calm, cool, collected, composed greatness, with a strong pull towards a pure choir sound. Registration wise, this means it should have neutrality and purity, or unity.

This knowledge, in the context of transcribing to modern organs, means to avoid monumentality in the sense of a huge ball of sound, and also with excessive or exaggerated differentiation of single stops. Above all, the plenum should be, in each manual, a strong and full sound of selected voices; coupling of the manuals with one another should generally be avoided.

Special difficulties arise with regard to works that have an obvious development curve, and that flow without interruption from beginning to end. The easier of these have cadences and sections within the overall line, which call for a step-wise gradation of registration, or manual changes. Distler hypothesizes about those works which begin with a *mezza voce* (the middle dynamic, which supposedly was the beginning point for works of this sort) and end with a mighty *tutti*. The question here is whether or not Bach was already aware of the *Orgelwalze*. Distler is of the opinion, as was told to him by an unnamed master Bach interpreter of the time, that Bach was able to achieve the organ crescendo by adding stops with his hands, all without interrupting the flow of the lines. Distler believes this was a technique Bach used while playing selected works of his, and he says that it is possible.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Hugo Distler, "Gedanken zum Problem der Registrierung alter, speziell bachscher Orgelmusik," *Musik und Kirche* 11 (1939): 101-106.

Thus, the main themes one gleans from Distler's two essays again center on clarity and allowing the spirit of the music to dictate at all times. Technique must serve the music, not vice versa. All in all, Distler's pieces are more akin to the early Baroque pieces he mentions in passing. Colorful solo voices and contrasting sections of Buxtehude's works make transcribed performances on modern orchestral instruments easy. His own pieces, one can then presume, can do the same, as they are multi-sectional, full of manual and registration changes. Distler understood articulation of Baroque music to be *martellato* to *leggiero*. He marks the same throughout his own works. In contrast to the works of Bach, Distler often requests breaths every few notes (giving a mannered effect by grouping), and he usually writes *zögern* (broadening) at the end of his pieces. This gives his pieces more rhythmic freedom than Bach's, as in the *stilus fantasticus*⁹⁶ manner of Buxtehude or Scheidt.

⁹⁶ This style, made popular in the north German organ literature, used extravagant harmonic and technical drama in an unrestrained and free way of composing.

Distler's Own Performances

Lastly, the recording of Hugo Distler playing works by Praetorius, Frescobaldi, and Pachelbel on the historic organ in Kiedrich, Germany, which is slightly southeast of Cologne, provides an important primary record for understanding Distler's performance praxis. The *Arbeitskreis für Hausmusik*, situated in Kassel, Germany, organized a sacred music festival in Kiedrich on May 11-12, 1935. The director of the *Arbeitskreis*, August Wenzinger from Kassel, invited Distler to play. The aforementioned works, recorded on May 10, 1935, were later made into records (LP's) by Reichssender, Frankfurt and then by Deutsche Rundfunkarchiv. While no written records of exact registrations exist for what Distler used, a disposition of the organ is available (see figure 4.1), and this author will describe what kind of sound Distler chose, suggesting possible registrations along with comments on Distler's playing style of each piece. The intimate relationship of Distler's works to those of the old masters whom he frequently performed will be further established in so doing.

Figure 4.1: Disposition and description of the organ in Kiedrich

<i>Hauptwerk</i>		<i>Positiv</i>		<i>Pedal</i>	
Großgedackt	16'	Gedackt	8'	Subbaß	16'
Prinzipal	8'	Oktav	4'	Prinzipal	8'
Oktav	4'	Flöte	4'	Doppelquint	6'
Flötgedackt	4'	Waldflöte	2'	Oktav	4'
Quint	3'	Quint	1 1/3'	Quint	3'
Superoktav	2'	Oktav	1'	Superoktav	2'
Mixtur 4fach	2'			Violon	16'
Zimbel 2fach	1/2'				

This meaningful and interesting instrument was built around 1500. Since then, it has undergone many changes. The original instrument was a one-manual organ, but a *Rückpositiv* was added in the 17th century; in the 18th century, the pedal division was extended to two Baroque pedal towers. In 1860, these changes were then reversed to return the organ to its original Gothic design; the *Rückpositiv* was newly encased and installed in the tower, and the pedal division was also rebuilt in the same place....

The pipe materials are non-homogenous. The oldest pipes, dating from the 16th centuries, make up about 57% of the manuals. 18% of the manual pipes are from the Baroque and have round labia, and the rest of the pipes are either from the 1860 restoration or cannot be dated.⁹⁷

Thus, it was on a restored Gothic organ that Distler played works from the Renaissance and early Baroque. The first selection is an organ chorale by Michael Praetorius (1571-1621) on the hymn “O lux beator trinitas.” Distler uses a neutral

⁹⁷ “Dieses in vielerlei Hinsicht bedeutsame und interessante Instrument wurde um 1500 erbaut, allerdings in späterer Zeit mehrfach verändert. Die ursprünglich einmanualige Orgel wurde im 17. Jahrhundert um ein Rückpositiv erweitert und im 18. Jahrhundert um zwei barocke Pedaltürme ergänzt. 1860 wurden diese Veränderungen rückgängig gemacht, um die ursprüngliche Gestalt des gotischen Gehäuses wieder voll zur Wirkung zu bringen. Das Rückpositiv wurde mit einer neuen Lade in den Turm verlegt, das Pedalwerk wurde an gleicher Stelle neu erbaut....

Das Pfeifenmaterial ist sehr inhomogen. Pfeifen mit parallel gerissenem Oberlabium, mit Spitzlabium oder Rundlabium sind in mehreren Registern gleichzeitig vertreten. Die alten Pfeifen, die dem 16. Jahrhundert zugeordnet werden können, machen insgesamt 57% des Pfeifenmaterials der Manualwerke aus. Die barocken Pfeifen mit Rundlabium bilden 18% des Materials der Manualwerke. Die übrigen Pfeifen stammen von 1860 oder sind nicht datierbar.“ Uwe Pape, liner notes to *Hugo Distler: an der Orgel in Kiedrich*, contained in *Hugo Distler: Sämtliche Orgelwerke*, Artist: Arno Schönstedt, TELDEC Schallplatten GmbH, Hamburg, Pape Verlag, Berlin, 1978, LP.

plenum registration for the cantus firmus in the pedals with a rather plain, but distinct and clear registration in the manuals for the figurations in the hands. His tempo is conservative at around 72-75 beats per minute (bpm), broadening ever so slightly at the end. His articulation is *leggiero*. The interpretation clearly intends for the listener to be able to hear all lines cleanly and evenly, as it is quite simple, straightforward, and without agogic emphasis or exaggerated mannerisms. A registration of Subbaß 16', Prinzipal 8', and Oktav 4' in the *Pedalwerk* with the Gedackt 8', Oktav 4', and Waldflöte 2' on the *Positiv* might possibly be the sound heard here. The sound heard in this recording is in keeping with the style of the registration instructed for the initial chorale statement (based on that by Baltasar Resinarius) in his *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*. Each line is to be fairly neutral in color, the cantus firmus taking precedence, yet with the other lines being transparent and obvious as well.

The second piece is one of Girolamo Frescobaldi's (1583-1643) many canzonas for the organ; this one has three distinct sections. The opening is rather slow and stately (65 bpm) with a similar plenum sound now in the manuals. The second, having more of a fugal texture, has 3 distinct and equal registrations, much like a trio sonata, and it is noticeably sprightlier (80 bpm). This section suddenly slows and segues into the final part, which again uses the plenum registration, but it is now larger, fuller, broader (75 bpm). He does not broaden at the end, and the final note has no fermata; thus, it is rather abrupt sounding upon ending. The counterpoint in all the voices is clear, cleanly articulated, and distinctly transparent. Once again, Distler wishes to convey clarity of line to the listener. A probable registration for this piece follows: a) Prinzipal 8', Oktav

4', and Superoktav 2' on the *Hauptwerk* for the first section. b) Prinzipal 8', Flötgedackt 4', Quint 3', and Superoktav 2' on the *Hauptwerk*; Gedackt 8', Oktav 4', Waldflöte 2', Quint 1 1/3' on the *Positiv*; and Prinzipal 8', Oktav 4', Quint 3', and Superoktav 2' on the *Pedal* for the second section. c) Großgedackt 16', Prinzipal 8', Oktav 4', Superoktav 2', and Mixture 4fach 2' on the *Hauptwerk*, and Violon 16', Prinzipal 8', Oktav 4', Superoktav 2' on the *Pedal* for the final section. Similarities to the registration indications in Distler's partita *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme* are easy to see. In it, he calls for a plenum registration on the *Hauptwerk*, and he says the other voices are to be as independent and as contrasting as possible.⁹⁸

The third piece on the recording is the *Fantasie in G-dur* for organ by Johann Pachelbel (1653-1706). The sound of this piece is rather thick and woolly underneath, with a brilliant and clear sound above. Distler performs this piece with more freedom of rhythm and tempo than the other two, taking time at cadences, and emphasizing key structural moments. For this texture, which is similar to the opening toccata of his *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, he probably used the following stops: everything in the *Hauptwerk* except the Quint 3', and everything in the pedals except the Doppelquint 6' and Quint 3'.⁹⁹

Thus, it is most apparent that in Distler's compositions, one must strive for absolute clarity of line above all else; for, this is what Distler brings to the early Baroque

⁹⁸ Distler, *Wachet auf*.

⁹⁹ Hugo Distler, *Hugo Distler: an der Orgel in Kiedrich*, contained in *Hugo Distler: Sämtliche Orgelwerke*, Artist: Arno Schönstedt, TELDEC Schallplatten GmbH, Hamburg, Pape Verlag, Berlin, May 10, 1935, LP.

organ music. His understanding of form, line, counterpoint, articulation, tempo, and registration of Baroque music is exactly the same as required by his organ works.

Registration Instructions

The clarity and transparency of Distler's works are also present in his registration technique. Distler details exactly which stops he uses in Op. 8/I and III, the partita on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland* and the collection of short organ chorale preludes. These instructions regarding registration are based upon Distler's time and experience with the *kleine Orgel* at St. Jakobi.¹⁰⁰

Armin Schoof claims that Distler's works are not playable on every organ because they are meant to be performed on a Baroque style organ.¹⁰¹ The general character of his given registration selections is, indeed, best realized on an organ either from the early Baroque or before, or on a new one modeled after such organs. However, even Distler said that pre-Bach music adapts easily enough to a modern orchestral organ, as these pieces are characterized by colorful solo voices within their many contrasting sections. He maintains that this effect can easily be achieved even on the modern, orchestral organs, if one bears in mind the construction of the composition and tries to imitate the same character of the piece as was intended.¹⁰² Furthermore, because Distler's works are based on models of the Baroque masters, it then follows that Distler's own compositions should easily be adaptable to a modern orchestral organ as well. Distler even says that the given registrations in *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland* should not be made into the standard, as the specifications of the St. Jakobi Stellwagen organ had a weak pedal

¹⁰⁰ Refer to the publications of Distler's works for exact registration indications.

¹⁰¹ Schoof, *Registrierungspraxis*, 456.

¹⁰² Hugo Distler, "Gedanken zum Problem der Registrierung alter, speziell bachscher Orgelmusik," *Musik und Kirche* 11 (1939): 101-106.

disposition at the time.¹⁰³ Thus, it is obvious: Distler may have prescribed a certain registration, yet posterity need only adhere to the spirit of the listed specifications.

Op. 8/II, the partita on *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme*, contains no specific registration guidelines. At the time when Distler composed this piece, the *kleine Stellwagen* organ was undergoing reconstruction. Thus, Distler writes only general guidelines to follow. In following these guidelines, however, one must keep in mind Distler's thoughts on the registration techniques of Bach's works. As in Bach's music, Distler prefers the plenum to be strong and full, the individual manuals to sound as contrasting as possible, and usually they should be independent and uncoupled. The manual changes and compositional structure within the piece provide the necessary variety to hold the interest of the listener. Distler taught this school of thought in his essay on Bach's *Dorian Toccata and Fugue*.

Deciding upon an appropriate registration for the works in Distler's Op. 18/I and II proves more problematic for organists in the United States today. Modern organists generally do not have contact with exemplars of small positive organs, which Distler had in mind when he wrote these pieces. Furthermore, the organ is now rarely used for home use or in chamber works. These pieces were neither intended for the concert halls, nor to be played in church. In the United States, however, there are seldom other options except in churches or concert halls. Thus, if Distler's chamber works are to continue being performed in the United States, a compromise has to be made.

¹⁰³ Distler, *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Vorwort.

Helpful comments regarding registration on the compositions in Op. 18/I and II, *Thirty Pieces* and the *Orgelsonate*, are found in the epilogue to *Thirty Pieces* and in the performance notes to the *Orgelsonate*. These guidelines assist in preserving the spirit of Distler's intimate pieces, enabling them to still be performed in the United States' available venues.

As these pieces are akin to Baroque forms, and because they are to be performed on a small house instrument, the registration should be based on 4' instead of 8' tones, few voices (yet characteristic ones) should be employed, old positive style registrations combined with mutations can be used in movements with arpeggios and unison writing, and reed stops should be used sparingly as solo voices or in the full chorus. Concerning the pedals, if they are available, they are to be used *ad libitum*.¹⁰⁴

Above all else, when registering Distler's organ works, recall that Distler strove for clarity and transparency. This should dictate one's choice of registration in all his pieces, on all organs, and in all settings. The following summary by Armin Schoof further emphasizes this point:

One idea unites all of Distler's compositions, his endeavor for clarity. This is made apparent even in his manuscripts, which are written in a thin, sensitive, and clear hand. This is all the more appropriate because, as a composer, he did not allow for foggy emotions. He composed in a style of "elective affinity for generations and centuries past:" strictly motivic, thematic, and contrapuntal.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Distler, *Thirty Pieces*.

¹⁰⁵ "Ein Prinzip, das Distlers ganzes schöpferisches Wollen durchdringt, ist das Streben nach Klarheit. Dieses läßt sich schon erkennen an seiner schlanken, sensiblen, aber von klarem Willen zeugenden Hand- und Notenschrift. Dazu paßt, daß er für sich als Komponist nichts nebelhaft Gefühliges durchegehen läßt. Er komponiert in einer Art "Wahlverwandtschaft über Generationen und Jahrhunderte hinweg": streng motivisch, thematisch, kontrapunktisch." Schoof, *Registrierungspraxis*, 461.

By following these guidelines, a performer may still in good conscience perform the smaller, intimate organ works of Distler in the venues available today. Distler strove to embody the spirit of the pieces by himself and Bach in performances. He did not refuse to perform Baroque works on orchestral instruments simply because of registration problems. Rather, he chose from available stops and made the piece fit to the room.

Articulation Instructions

The touch Distler used in his organ works is the same as that which he employed when playing works by Buxtehude, Scheidt, Bach, and others. In his essay on playing Bach's *Dorian Toccata and Fugue*, he says that articulation is to be *martellato*, not *legato*. Distler, unlike Dupré and other French contemporaries, knew that the organ *legato* was an invention of the nineteenth century. All old music should be separated.

In many instances throughout Distler's pieces, he writes in the desired articulation. Often, he requests varying articulations simultaneously. The bicinium of variation one in *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland* is a prime example. In certain instances, three different articulations must be played together, e.g. variation five of *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*. Here, the right hand on the *Hauptwerk* uses a *leggiero* touch, Distler suggests a *legato* touch with the slurs and phrase markings of the left hand on the *Brustwerk*, and the pedal is clearly separated by a sharp *marcato* (notated by markings typically found in brass music) to set apart the ascending quartal harmonies. Rolf Schönstedt maintains that Distler is the first composer since Bach to require this technically demanding aspect in the organ literature.¹⁰⁶

Distler, furthermore, clearly states in the *Spielanweisung* to Op. 18/II, the *Orgelsonate*, that the desired articulation is an easy-going *non legato* to *martellato*, excepting the *ben legato* of the peaceful middle movement. Thus, one should assume at

¹⁰⁶ Schönstedt, private lesson comments during the author's Fulbright study in Herford, Germany, 2003-2004.

least a clear *leggiero* in all of Distler's works, unless designated otherwise by Distler himself.

Tempi, Ornaments, *et cetera*

Distler gives specific metronome markings in each piece from Op. 8/I and II, and general tempo descriptions in the remaining organ works. One should realize, however, that Distler's metronome markings were determined while he composed at home. Jan Bender¹⁰⁷ says Distler always performed his pieces slower than the metronome marking specified when in church because of the acoustics. He states that Distler strove for clarity, above all, which meant modifying tempi, registration, and articulation according to the requirements of the room.

Regarding ornamentation in the organ works of Distler, Bender maintains that Distler adopted the "Baroque manner" of executing ornaments as taught at the Leipzig Conservatory. They were played on the beat, excepting certain grace notes which required a pre-beat interpretation because of the musical context. The mordant was played main note, lower auxiliary, main note, and the *praller* was executed in the opposite manner. Trills usually began on the principal note rather than on the upper auxiliary, which is opposite from the current understanding of Baroque trill execution.

Bender, furthermore, gives certain, miscellaneous details regarding the performance of Distler's organ works. For example, Distler played pedals almost exclusively with his toes, often crossing his feet. Also, Distler never played the second statement of the toccata from *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland* when performing the entire work, and he forbade his students to do so as well. He even regretted that it was so

¹⁰⁷ Jan Bender, probably the most famous student of Distler, relates invaluable information regarding certain performance aspects of his organ works in his interview with William Bates.

published. Furthermore, as has already been established, Distler did not consider his registration suggestions immutable. They merely served his ideal: clarity of line. In the toccata of *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, Distler removed the 16' Posaune at the end of the pedal solo, even though this is not indicated in the score, in order to make the manual figurations more distinctly heard.

CONCLUSIONS

The historical study of composers' biographies helps provide a degree of humanity to otherwise untouchable musical geniuses and their creations. At times, this study can be intriguing and perplexing. At other times, it is nothing more than routine and mundane. In the case of Hugo Distler, it is inspiring and disturbing, aweing and disheartening, exciting and depressing. In studying Distler's life, one discovers the life of a genius filled with a multitude of the lowest lows and the highest highs—a roller coaster of emotion and experiences.

While Distler's life experiences, dealings with the Nazi party, and death were dramatic, his musical accomplishments were no less noticeable. He successfully melded all the neoclassical elements of composition with old compositional practices and forms. During his short life, he achieved fame as a church musician, conductor, and virtuoso performer of Bach's works and of his own compositions. His contributions to the organ repertoire were the very first to use modern harmonies and alternative scales while being best suited for the unique sound of Baroque organs. His works, though seldom performed due to their technical difficulty, remain staples in modern organ repertoire, a mark of their significance.

The ideology of clarity in Distler's works is of utmost importance. It should be apparent that this dictates the performer's choices regarding how to interpret them. Registration, tempi, and articulation are servants to the composition, which strives for transparency of line and clarity of expression. In his closing statements, Bender

emphasizes this aspect of clarity with the following advice for aspiring composers of organ music:

write music that is absolutely clear and transparent, music in which every note can be explained theoretically... “There is no such thing as music that is beautiful or ugly, just music that is correct or incorrect.”¹⁰⁸

Performers of Distler’s music need to remain cognizant of this. If what one does is not clear, it is probably incorrect. However, if one realizes the spirit of Distler’s works and makes choices guided by the simple principle of clarity, even on modern organs, then it is likely that Distler would approve.

It is my observation that Distler remains more popular in Germany and Europe than in the United States even today. I imagine this is due to the unwillingness of Americans to perform neoclassical works on modern instruments. It is my hope that this study and the insights gained will hereafter encourage and enable more American performers to program Distler’s organ works in more varied venues.

¹⁰⁸ Bates.

REFERENCES

- Bates, William. "Hugo Distler and His Organ Music: An Interview with Jan Bender." *The American Organist* 16 (1982): 42-43.
- Bender, Jan. "Bruno Grusnick, Hugo Distler und ich." In *Festschrift für Bruno Grusnick zum 80. Geburtstag*, ed. Rolf Saltzwedel and Klaus D. Koch, 23-25. Neuhausen-Stuttgart: Hänslers Verlag, 1981.
- Bergaas, Mark Jerome. "Compositional Style in the Keyboard Works of Hugo Distler." Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1978.
- _____. "Hugo Distler and Church Music in the United States." In *Festschrift für Bruno Grusnick zum 80. Geburtstag*, ed. Rolf Saltzwedel and Klaus D. Koch, 25-34. Neuhausen-Stuttgart: Hänslers Verlag, 1981.
- _____. "Hugo Distler 1908-1942." *The American Organist*, 16 (1982): 174-177.
- _____. "Hugo Distler's First Vespers at St. Jakobi in Lübeck." *The American Organist* 16 (1982): 175-177.
- Bieske, Werner. "Die Orgelwerke Hugo Distlers." *Musik und Kirche* 22 (1952): 177-183.
- Bornefeld, Helmut. "Hugo Distler — Weg und Werk." *Neue Schau* 9 (1947): 57-58.
- Distler, Hugo. *Die beiden Orgeln in St. Jakobi zu Lübeck. Bericht über den Umbau 1935 von Hugo Distler und Dr. Erich Theinhaus*. [Lübeck: 1935].
- _____. "Die Orgel unserer Zeit: Das Postulat eines neuen musikalischen Lebens- Und Gestaltungsprinzips." *Der Wagen* (1933): 77-84.
- _____. *Dreissig Spielstücke für Kleinorgel oder andere Tasteninstrumente, Op. 18/I*. Kassel: Bärenreiter Verlag, 1938.
- _____. "Gedanken zum Problem der Registrierung alter, speziell bachscher Orgelmusik." *Musik und Kirche* 11 (1939): 101-106.
- _____. *Hugo Distler: an der Orgel in Kiedrich*. In *Arno Schönstedt: Sämtliche Orgelwerke*. TELDEC Schallplatten GmbH, Hamburg. Pape Verlag, Berlin: May 10, 1935, re-released in 1978. LP.

- _____. "Hugo Distler über seine ‚Spielstücke für Positiv.‘" *Zeitschrift für Hausmusik* 16 (1952): 159-161.
- _____. "Johann Sebastian Bachs dorische Toccata und Fugue: Gedanken zu einer Registrieranalyse." *Musik und Kirche* 12 (1940): 49-57.
- _____. *Kleine Orgelchoral-Bearbeitungen, Op. 8/III*. Kassel: Bärenreiter Verlag, 1938.
- _____. *Organ partita "Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland," Op. 8/I*. Boca Raton: Masters Music Publications, 1992.
- _____. *Organ partita "Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme," Op. 8/II*. Boca Raton: Masters Music Publications, 1992.
- _____. *Orgelpartita "Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland," Op. 8/I*. Kassel: Bärenreiter Verlag, 1933.
- _____. *Orgelpartita "Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme," Op. 8/II*. Kassel: Bärenreiter Verlag, 1935.
- _____. *Orgelsonate, Op. 18/II*. Kassel: Bärenreiter Verlag, 1939.
- _____. "Vom Geiste der neuen Evangelischen Kirchenmusik." *Zeitschrift für Musik* 102 (1935): 1325-1329.
- _____. "Vor dem Orgelweihfest in St. Jakobi." *Lübecker Volksbote* (October 22, 1935): supplemental insert.
- _____. "Warum neue Musik für historische Instrumente?" *Zeitschrift für Hausmusik* 8 (1939): 187-189.
- _____. "Zur Weihefeier der St. Jakobi-Orgeln." *Lübeckische Blätter* 77 (1935): insert between 816-817.
- "Einzigartig: Distlers Hausorgel." Z Ano 81d. Hugo Distler Archives, Stadtsbibliothek Lübeck, Lübeck.
- Fränkischer Kurier*. Abschrift, Konzert Hugo Distler am 23. Mai 1940. Document Z: Ano36a. Hugo Distler Archive, Stadtsbibliothek Lübeck, Lübeck, Germany.

- Grabner, Hermann. "Erinnerungen an Hugo Distler." In *Komponisten in Bayern: Dokument musikalischen Schaffens im 20. Jahrhundert*, vol. 20: *Hugo Distler*, ed. Alexander L. Suder, 35-37. Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1990.
- Grusnick, Bruno. "Wie Hugo Distler Jakobiorganist in Lübeck wurde." *Musik und Kirche* 28 (1958): 97-107.
- Hanheide, Stefan, ed. *Hugo Distler im Dritten Reich: Vorträge des Symposions in der Stadtbibliothek Lübeck am 29.9.1995*. Osnabrück: Universitätsverlag Rasch, 1997.
- Herrmann, Ursula. "Hugo Distler: Leben und Wirken." In *Komponisten in Bayern: Dokument musikalischen Schaffens im 20. Jahrhundert*, vol. 20: *Hugo Distler*, ed. Alexander L. Suder, 13-33. Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1990.
- _____. *Hugo Distler, Rufer und Mahner*. Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1972.
- Jennrich, Wolfgang. *Hugo Distler*. Berlin: Union Verlag, 1970.
- Kaufmann, Michael Gerhard. *Orgel und Nationalsozialismus: die ideologische Vereinnahmung des Instrumentes im "Dritten Reich."* Publications of the Walcker-Stiftung für orgelwissenschaftliche Forschung, ed. Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht, no. 5. Kleinblittersdorf: Musikwissenschaftliche Verlags-Gesellschaft MBH, 1997.
- Lüdemann, Winfried. *Hugo Distler: Eine musikalische Biographie*. Collectanea Musicologica, ed. Franz Krautwurst, no. 10. Augsburg: Wißner Verlag, 2002.
- _____. "Vokale Gestaltungsprinzipien in Hugo Distlers Instrumentalstil." *Musik und Kirche* 61 (1991): 1-15 and 137-149.
- Palmer, Larry. *Hugo Distler and His Church Music*. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1967.
- Pape, Uwe. Liner notes to *Hugo Distler: an der Orgel in Kiedrich*. In *Sämtliche Orgelwerke*, performed by Arno Schönstedt. TELDEC Schallplatten GmbH, Hamburg. Pape Verlag, 1978. LP.
- Rhode, Erich. "Orgelkonzert Hugo Distlers in der Lorenzkirche." *Nürnberger Zeitung*, Abschrift, Konzert Hugo Distler am 23.Mai 1940. Document Z: Rho1a. Hugo Distler Archive, Stadtbibliothek Lübeck, Lübeck, Germany.

- Schönstedt, Arno. "Hugo Distler: Seine Bedeutung für die deutsche Kirchenmusik 1982 (?)." Original typewritten and handwritten manuscript. Personal holdings, gift from Rolf Schönstedt.
- Schönstedt, Arno. *Hugo Distler: Sämtliche Orgelwerke*. Cantate C 57613, 1995. CD.
- Schoof, Armin. *Hugo Distler: Das Orgelwerk (1)*. Thorofon CTH 2293, 1995. CD.
- _____. *Hugo Distler: Das Orgelwerk (2)*. Thorofon CTH 2294, 1995. CD.
- _____. "Hugo Distlers Registrierungspraxis: Beobachtungen an seinen Orgelwerken." In *Aspekte der Orgelbewegung, im Auftrag der Gesellschaft der Orgelfreunde*, ed. Alfred Reichling, 455-461. Berlin: Merseburger, 1995.
- Schwinger, Wolfram. "Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme. Hugo Distler: ein kurzes aber lebendiges Kapitel deutscher Musikgeschichte." In *Kirchenmusik heute. Gedanken über Aufgaben und Probleme der Musica Sacra*, ed. Hans Bohm, 42-52. Berlin, 1959.
- Söhngen, Oskar. "Erinnerungen an Hugo Distler." In *Festschrift für Bruno Grusnick zum 80. Geburtstag*, ed. Rolf Saltzwedel and Klaus D. Koch, 142-145. Neuhausen-Stuttgart: Hänslers Verlag, 1981.
- Steiger, Friedrich. "Stilkritische Untersuchungen am Werk Hugo Distlers." Diplomarbeit, Würzburg, 1984.
- Thienhaus, Erich. "Eine neue Hausorgel." *Musik und Kirche* (1939): 49-52.
- Wölfel, Dietrich. *Die Wunderbare Welt der Orgeln: Lübeck als Orgelstadt*. Lübeck: Lübeck: Verlag Schmidt-Römhild, 1980.
- _____. "Ein Kleinod jüngerer Orgelbaugeschichte." *Lübeckische Blätter* (1993/3): 35-37.