

Francis Linley: A Practical Introduction to the Organ in five parts

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PART FIRST.

A Concise Description of the Organ

As it is seldom we find two Organs built exactly on the same construction, it would be almost impracticable to give a precise description of them all. I shall therefore confine myself to the grand plan, on which Organs are generally built, as all others are deduced therefrom, according to the judgment of the maker, or the request of the purchaser.

A compleat Organ consists of three sets of keys: the middle of which is called the Great Organ, the lowest the Choir Organ, and the upper the Swell, which seldom extends lower than G or F below middle C.

The Great Organ consists of the Two Diapasons, Principal, Twelfth, Fifteenth, Sesquialtra, Mixture, Trumpet, Clarion, and Cornet.

The Choir Organ comprises the Stop Diapason, Dulciana, Principal, Flute, Fifteenth, Cremona, Vox Humane and Bassoon. – And

The Swell, the two Diapasons, Principal, Cornet, Trumpet, and Hautboy, which is termed the full Swell.

GREAT ORGAN

THE STOP DIAPASON. – The pipes of which are made of wood, and stopped at the tops with square plugs; which by being drawn up, flatten their tones, or pressed down, sharpen them. They are sometimes made of metal, in which case they are tuned by ears or shades, placed on each side of the mouths.

THE OPEN DIAPASON. – So called from the pipes being open at the tops. They are composed of metal, and are double the length of those which comprise the Stop Diapason. They are tuned by a Cone, exactly unison with the former, (as are all other open metal pipes). This Stop is commonly placed in the front of large Organs, and the larger pipes are tuned by opening or closing an aperture in the backs of them. It is perhaps necessary in this place to remark, that the Diapasons are the grand foundation of the instrument, and consequently must never be omitted; as without them, no other stop (excepting the Flute,) can have a proper effect.

THE PRINCIPAL is likewise of metallic construction, and is composed of open pipes. It is an octave higher than the Diapasons. This stop is always tuned first, it being a medium between the Diapasons and the upper and more acute parts of the Organ; from whence it derives its name, as all other stops are tuned therefrom.

THE TWELFTH. – So termed from its being twelve notes higher than the Diapasons. It is tuned a perfect Fifth above the Principal, and is of open pipes.

THE FIFTEENTH is tuned an octave above the Principal, and is composed likewise of open pipes.

THE SESQUIALTRA is a compound stop, consisting of three ranks of pipes. They are tuned in 3rds, 5ths and 8ths, and consequently every key sounds a distinct common chord. Their distances from the Diapasons are, the 17th, 19th and 22d. The pipes towards the top are so excessively shrill, that it is common to make several breaks in the order of compose, by transposing them seven notes lower.

THE MIXTURE seldom consists of more than two ranks of pipes, and is generally made as follows: From the top, to C on the second space, the pipes are unison with the Principal and Fifteenth. The preceding octave is again and again repeated throughout the instrument, so that double G is unison with all the G's up to G in alt; and so of the rest.

THE TRUMPET is a reed Stop. It is unison with the Diapasons, and consequently (when it is not too powerful for the voices,) renders the chorus more full and brilliant; as it strengthens the fundamental, and meliorates the predominance of the Sesquialtra and Mixture. The pipes consist of a conical tube, fixed in a block of lead; in which also is the tongue, reed, and wire. It is tuned by the elevation, or compression of the wire, (as are all other reed stops). which flattens or sharpens its tones at pleasure.

THE CLARION is also a reed Stop, and is tuned an octave higher than the trumpet. When the voices are sufficiently powerful for the addition of this Stop it strengthens the chorus comparatively, as the Principal does the Diapasons.

THE CORNET consists of three, four, or five ranks of pipes. Its tones are extremely harsh and loud. It is only an half Stop, never running lower than the middle C, and must never be us[e]d in the full Organ. It is only proper to be used in conjunction with the Diapasons, in giving out psalm tunes, voluntaries, symphonies of anthems, &c.

THE CHOIR ORGAN

Consisting of the Stop Diapason, Dulciana, Principal, Flute, Fifteenth, Cremona, Vox Humane, and Bassoon. The Stop Diapason, Principal, and Fifteenth, having already been described, I shall therefore proceed to

THE DULCIANA. – Which is, in fact, an open Diapason, but voiced much softer and sweeter, the pipes being on a smaller scale.

THE FLUTE. – The pipes of which are wood, and are on the same construction as the Stop Diapason. They are tuned unison with the Principal, but are much softer.

THE CREMONA, VOX HUMANE, and BASSOON, are reed stops, and are all tuned unison with the Diapasons. The reed work of these stops, is co-similar with that of the Trumpet, but the tubes are different. The trumpet tubes are conical, whereas those of the Cremona are parallel. Those of the Vox Humane are the same as the Cremona, with this difference, that there are blocks placed in the tubes, and the sound issues through holes bored in those blocks, which occasions its peculiarity of tone. The lowest pipes in the Vox Humane are not more than twelve or fourteen inches long; for if they were double that length, they would produce the same effect. The Bassoon tubes spring up a little conical, and suddenly spread out wide at the top like a bell. They are seldom used but as fancy stops in voluntaries, their Basses, particularly the Cremona and Vox Humane being extremely rough and unpleasant.

THE SWELL

Consists of the two Diapasons, Principal, Cor[net], Trumpet, and Hautboy; the latter of which is of the same construction as those of the Bassoon, and is unison with the Diapasons. As they have already been treated on, under the preceding heads, it is only necessary to add, that the Trumpet is more delicately voiced than that in the Great Organ; and the Hautboy is as comparatively soft, when put in competition with the Trumpet, as the Dulciana is to the open Diapason.

The Swell is a distinct part of itself, and is enclosed in a box, placed in a remote part of the Organ. This box is gradually opened by the pressure of the foot on the pedal, and the sounds as gradually issue from it, as from

a distance, swelling from very soft to loud; and by a contrary motion of the foot, the box is closed, and the sounds diminished. This is one of the best improvements that have been made on the Organ, and, when properly managed, cannot fail to have a very pleasing effect. – Thus having, in as summary a manner as possible, described the several parts of the Organ, I shall next endeavour to give the inexperienced performer, a few necessary hints concerning

THE BLENDING OF THE STOPS

As the blending of the Stops is an object of the first consideration, it may not be improper to subjoin a few remarks on that head. No instrument has been so grossly abused as the Organ, on account of the improper mixture of the Stops together; and as all of them are (in a measure) the representatives of particular instruments, consequently the stile of playing them should be correspondently adapted. For the Diapasons, the stile ought always to be grave, gliding the notes and chords into each other, with holding notes in some one or more of the parts. The Swell may be introduced at intervals, as it produces an agreeable and happy effect.

When the Principal is added to the Diapasons, the stile may be more lively, and the execution a degree more brilliant. It is also proper to keep the hands lower, as the bass is rendered more distinct. The Twelfth and Fifteenth, (being calculated for full pieces only), are never used singly; their tones being too shrill, unless qualified by the Diapasons and Principal. For the Trumpet, the stile should be majestically grave and martial; taking care to keep as nearly as possible within the compass of the real Trumpet; and as it is impracticable to execute rapid and chromatic passages on it, they must consequently be improper on its representative. Double notes, in the manner of two Trumpets, produce a good effect, if not improperly and too frequently made use of. The Diapasons, in the Great Organ, should always be drawn with it, and its bass may be played on the Stop Diapason and Dulciana in the Choir Organ. It may very properly be relieved by a movement on the Diapasons, and to conclude with the subject on the full Organ, has a truly grand and sublime effect. When the Stops are changed, the hands should not be abruptly taken off, but the last bass note held on till the Organ is prepared for the proceeding movement – N. B. The Trumpet bass should be but seldom, if ever used, excepting in the full Organ. The Clarion is never made use of, but in full pieces. The Cornet requires lively and brilliant music, without double notes or chords, on account of its harshness; and is frequently accompanied by a moving bass on the Stop Diapason and Dulciana in the Choir Organ. The bass may be played on the same set of keys, provided it is kept below middle C. It is perhaps unnecessary to remind the reader, to keep the Diapasons drawn, where the Cornet is made use of; but as Cornet pieces are generally of too light and trivial a nature, to suit the solemnity of public worship, I think it should be but sparingly used, and never without an Adagio conclusion on the Diapasons. Where there is no Cornet, the Sesquialtra may be used as a substitute. For the Dulciana alone, a tender soothing stile is proper, as rapid execution is by no means adapted to the sweetness and delicacy peculiar to this stop. The Stop Diapason being too powerful, the Flute may be added to it; and a pianissimo accompaniment, on the Diapasons in the Swell, produces a softness and delicacy in the effect; perhaps not to be rivalled throughout the Organ. For the Flute airy Music is proper, and if accompanied on the Swell. It produces a sweet and pleasant effect; but when played on the same Stop, in imitation of the instrumental Flute, I conceive the bass should be touched in Staccato notes, which renders the imitation more striking. I would advise the reader, again to look over the remark at the end of my observations on the Cornet. The Cremona, Vox Humane, and Bassoon, ought to be used in the cantabile style, and the bass on the Diapasons. Double notes may sometimes be used on the Vox Humane, in imitation of two voices: but as all reed Stops are frequently out of order, they ought to be particularly regarded. When the swell is used in a voluntary, the Crescendos and Diminuendos should be as gradual as possible; and as nothing can be better calculated to shew the taste and abilities of a performer, than the proper management of the swell; so, on the other hand, nothing can be more displeasing and disgusting than to hear so fine a part of the Organ abused, by see-sawing the pedal without either taste or expression. When a Trumpet-piece is played, on the Great Organ, its proper echo on the Swell is the Diapasons and Trumpet: as also the Cornet, in the Great Organ, should be echoed by the Swell Diapasons and Cornet; but by no

means in whole passages, as it can but produce a mean and hackneyed effect, but merely in a few notes or bars that may conclude the half or whole closes. To the above mixture of Stops, may be added the Hautboy at pleasure, but never the Principal without both the reeds, as the predominance of the Octaves destroys the effect, particularly in Sostenuato passages. Indeed, I conceive, the finest mixture that can possibly be made on the Swell, is that of the two Diapasons, Trumpet, and Hautboy, whether as an echo, or an introduction and contrast in voluntaries; the other only being added when the full Swell is required, which is seldom, but to accompany the voices. I shall be more prolix on this subject before I conclude this little treatise. For the Great or Full Organ, Largos, Adagios, and Fuges are proper; with the harmony full, close, and combined. The performer may occasionally exhibit his abilities in execution, provided he does not touch the instrument in too light and superficial a manner. This is a fault but too often to be met with, where the performer rather plays as he would on a Harpsichord, or Piano Forte, than with that grandeur, sublimity, and solemnity so peculiar to the organ. – It may not be improper to observe here, that there have been pedals introduced, which extend as far as an octave below double C or G on the Stop Diapason: this produces a very, awful and sublime effect, when introduced at intervals; but continually to grovel on these low notes, is by no means either elegant or proper.

Thus having just glanced over the different mixtures of the Stops, and the stile in which they ought to be played, I shall now endeavour to subjoin a few remarks on

THE ACCOMPANYMENT OF THE VOICES

There may be said to be three species of psalms or hymns, viz. Prayer, Meditation, and Praise. Those of Prayer, I conceive, ought to have tunes adapted to them in the minor key, such as Burford, Crowle, Windsor, &c. or if the supplication is of a more lively nature, a plaintive major may be made use of, such as Cary's, Kent, &c. – To Psalms, or Hymns of Meditation, tunes in the Maestoso stile may be properly applied, viz. The old hundredth, Bedford, &c. In either of the above, I conceive it very improper to have the Organ by any means predominant over the voices: to the former, I would recommend the Diapasons, Principal, Twelfth and Fifteenth, as a proper accompaniment: or, if the choir is powerful, the Sesquialtra may be added. In Piano parts, the Diapasons and Principal may be made use of; but I would by no means advise too much variety, as it is incompatible with the subject of supplication.

For those of Meditation, variety may be more aptly applied, and consequently the Swell may with more propriety be introduced. I would advise the Organist always to have the words before him, and express and enforce them in his accompaniment, as his judgement dictates.

For psalms of Praise, tunes of the more lively cast I would recommend, and the Organ may with more propriety be powerful and predominant, if not too much so. It may not be improper, in this place, to remark, that there are three different modes of giving out psalm tunes, viz. On the Stop Diapason and Flute, which is proper for all minor and plaintive airs: on the Cornet, which is more generally used for lively tunes; and on the Cornet and Swell alternately, which I conceive to be the most elegant, as the contrast is admirably calculated to attract the attention of the congregation. I would advise the performer to give them out with as few embellishments as possible; and if he is disposed to shew his taste and abilities, he may do it with more propriety on the Cadenza note of the last line, than (as is too often the case) by overwhelming it with graces and cantabiles in all parts indiscriminately. Respecting the interludes, nothing can be more proper than the last line of the tune; and if it consists of three, four, or more verses, he may play a variation, or animadversion, on the last line, or something as near the stile of it as possible. The reason I would assign for this plainness is, that too much variety is apt to draw away the attention of the congregation, from the substance to the shadow.

I would by no means wish the young organist to sit down satisfied with the above observations. If he wishes to acquire proficiency, I would advise him to hear often, and to have recourse to professors of established

reputation, and to practice the works of Handel, Arne, Keeble, &c. Handel's chorusses, adapted by Calcutt and others, are admirably calculated for full organ pieces, as also two sets of Correlli's sonatas adapted by Dr. Miller, and many others.

If this work meets with the public approbation and encouragement, it will, in all probability, give birth to a second; which I flatter myself, will be found a proper sequel to this, consisting of a selection from the works of the most eminent authors, properly arranged for the church, on the plan mentioned in the introduction.

Thus having finished the first part, I most willingly submit it to professional criticism and public candour.

END OF THE FIRST PART.

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