

THE ORGAN OF TRANSITION IN FRANCE (1785-1835)

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FOREWORD

It may seem odd to limit this article to a short period of 50 years and to one country only. Therefore, the author wishes to mention that France has always stood apart, whether it be politically, socially, artistically or musically. It is, then, quite justified to consider France as an entity, away from its European context.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

It is clear that the French Classic organ retained stereotyped features as to specifications, registrational practice, composing style and use in the Roman Catholic liturgy throughout the period from 1630 to 1750. This stagnancy led to decadence, and by the time of the Revolution of 1789, no changes within the framework of the French Classic organ were possible. The last attempt to codify rules was made by Dom Bédos in his treatise on organbuilding published c. 1770.¹ These rules were exemplified in the works of his contemporary, the organbuilder François-Henri Clicquot (d. 1790). Tendencies were toward a richer and thicker plenum, a sophistication of solo stops, a simplification of the fouritures and cymbales, and an increase in the number of stops and in the possible combinations of stops.

From the mid-18th century until the early 19th century, France was going through a politically troubled period, which witnessed frequent revolts, the Napoleonic wars and constant changes of regime. Social and intellectual revolutions were taking place too, putting emphasis on the individual and changing the relationship between artist and public. The court rapidly lost its dominance as the center and source of fashion.² The bourgeoisie rose to a prominent place, bringing a change in taste toward worldly and social pleasures rather than refinement and elegance; in music, it was toward opera and *musique mondaine* (worldly music). Church music was touched by this because the goal was now to satisfy the congregation's taste rather than its spiritual needs.³

ORGANBUILDING OF THE PERIOD

Prominent organbuilders of the period were:

—the Callinet brothers, Joseph and Claude-Ignace; their organ type remained very close to the French Classic ideal as to the case; the disposition and specification; the suspended, direct, mechanical action; the voicing with pipes *coupés au ton* (that is, cut so as not to need tuning slots), and bourdons with soldered caps. The number of ranks of the *plein jeu* (fourniture and cymbale), however, was reduced. The tierce was likely to be omitted. In their place, the salicional and the viola were introduced, which shows a tendency to imitate the sound of the string orchestra, a development similar to that of the German organ of the time.⁴

—Dominique and Aristide Cavallé-Coll, who built organs in Southern France and in Paris. Their organs—before Saint-Denis—closely followed French Classic techniques, but their Spanish origin is clearly heard in their reeds.

—Also worth mentioning are Louis Callinet (associated first with Jean Somer, and then with Daublaine), Pierre-François and Louis-Paul Dallery, John Abbey, Prosper Moitessier, Antoine-Louis Suret, François-Joseph Carlier and Nicolas-Antoine Lété.

The trends of the period of transition, already apparent in the works of Dom Bédos and F.-H. Clicquot, were toward an increased loudness, a thicker sound and a demand for greater expression. The organ was following the evolution of the orchestra, without necessarily imitating it. In Germany, the organ was moving toward greater assimilation of sound at a time when the orchestra of the Mannheim school was ad-

mired for its dynamic range from the softest pianissimo to the loudest fortissimo.⁵

Artistically, France was divided between Voltaire, symbolizing the late reign of Louis XIV, and Rousseau, representing the new political, philosophical and literary ideas. The post-Revolutionary regime wanted to bring back political stability. The government, now owner of the Church and its organs, ordered immediate restorations. Therefore, the time was not propitious for new developments. An organ of 1830, then, had about the same specifications as one of 1785. For instance, those of the organ of the cathedral in Bayeux were as follows:

Positif (first manual): Montre 8, Bourdon 8, Prestant, Doublette, Fourniture, Cymbale, Trompette, Nazard, Larigot, Cromorne

Grand-orgue (second manual): Montre 16, Montre 8, Bourdon, Flûte, Prestant, Doublette, Nazard, Quarte de Nazard, Tierce, Fourniture, Cymbale, Grand Cornet, Grosse Trompette, Petite Trompette, Clairon

Récit (third manual): Trompette, Cornet

Echo (fourth manual): Bourdon, Flûte, Voix humaine, Cornet

Pedal: Bourdon 8, Flûte 4, Bombarde, Trompette, Clairon.⁶

This is quite classical in terms of Dom Bédos or Clicquot. In Paris, the transitory aspect of the period is more obvious. The Dallerys and Jean Somer were busy repairing organs, sometimes modifying them, sometimes moving them from one church to another. For instance, Somer repaired and increased the organ of the Invalides (1806-1807), and moved the organ of the Abbey Saint-Victor to Saint-Germain-des-Prés (1805-10). The Dallerys repaired the organs of Saint-Thomas d'Aquin (1802), Saint-Roch (1805), Saint-Paul, and moved the old organ of Saint-Germain to Saint-Eustache.

At Saint-Gervais (1812), Pierre-François Dallery replaced the mixtures with a second trumpet and a basson-clarinette; he also added tuning slides to the Positif Bourdon 8'. At Saint-Nicolas-des-Champs, his son Louis-Paul proposed suppressing the Echo division (Clicquot's); building a Swell division with a clarabella, salicional, cor anglais, and euphone; replacing the hautbois with a clarinette; and adding to the pedal a gambe, an euphone and a grand-basson.

The Bayeux organ above was to be modified by John Abbey as late as 1843, but he only added a gambe, and a trumpet and clarion to the Positif, and suppressed the mutation stops.

The organs built or modified by Lété typically did not have any tierce, although they still had nazards, fourniture and cymbale, and cornets. He usually included strings (gambes), and his récits had euphone, flute octaviante (harmonic flute), clarinette and the like.

Finally, the organ built around 1830 by Cavallé-Coll for the first Lutheran congregation in Paris, Les Billettes Church, did not have mixtures, but had a nazard, harmonic flutes and a large proportion of reed stops. This instrument was exhibited at the Exposition Universelle in Paris (1826); according to the judges, it included the first harmonic flutes built by Aristide Cavallé-Coll and a wind supply system entirely new. The ensemble sounded clear and more or less polyphonic, not at all like what we usually expect.

Organbuilders were searching for improvement and change, as well as expression and power. Therefore, the wind supply had to be improved—by Cummins's system, first installed by Abbey at the choir organ of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette in Paris. The action had to be eased—by the Barker lever. As to expression, the use of swell shades began to develop.

Along with this, it became common to nick the pipes, to soften the attack and eliminate overtones. Reuter's tuning

slot, below the upper edge of the pipe, allowed a more massive and rounded sound. Harmonic flutes were used to increase the intensity of the whole. Some overtones of the string pipes were forced to make their tone resemble the orchestral string tone as much as possible.

Some organbuilders, namely Grenier and Alexandre, systematized the use of free reed stops. By a greater or lesser wind supply, the pipes would speak more or less loudly. Free reed stops were used for a while because they were one more means of expression possible on the organ. Cavallé-Coll had even planned a *voix humaine* and a *hautbois expressif* for Notre-Dame-de-Lorette (1834), which were to be fed by a special bellows having variable wind pressure.

Reed stops were always in great proportion in these organs, including new solo stops such as clarinette, basson-hautbois, cor anglais, *voix humaine* in the récit and the like. Fourniture and cymbale as well as tierce tended to be replaced by salicionals, gambes and other strings.⁷

THE ORGANISTS' POINT OF VIEW

Organists were strongly influenced by other artistic currents. The author Chateaubriand wrote, in 1802, that music must be an imitation of nature, and that the musician must know how to depict the trees, the waters and so on.⁸ Emotion was fashionable, as was superficiality.

The decline was noticed and recorded by Sebastien Mercier⁹ and Charles Burney. Both give account of the kinds of pieces played in church: minuets, romances, various dances, pieces with harpsichord-style figurations and so on. As to the form, this was not so new: French Classic récits were adaptations of opera arias; grand-jeux were French overtures; duos and trios directly originated from dances. But the content had differed, and it had become program music—that is, music associated with poetry, descriptive and narrative matters.

Thunder was one of the favorite effects. Michel Corrette's indication (1786) is to place a board on top of the lower pedal notes, to put one's foot on that board and to press it down at will! Toward the end, the effect should be reinforced by the elbow in the top range of the manual to imitate the lightning! Also, the organ celebrated the "God of power and might" through fanfares, marches, the noise of the canon and the drum roll. Fashionable, too, was the storm piece depicting first a pastoral atmosphere, then the rain, thunder and lightning, and back to a peaceful atmosphere. But the "Judex crederis" from the hymn *Te Deum* was the main source of inspiration. Charpentier's comment was that the organ must depict the disorder of nature at the time of the last judgment! It seems that all organists were highly concerned with improvising on this theme, and their means required more imagination and elbow strikes than studies in counterpoint. The Boyer brothers, in Troyes, went even as far as exploding a firecracker during one of those so-called improvisations.¹⁰

The organ was also used outside the church, at first during the concerts *spirituels* at the Tuileries where an instrument had been installed (Balbastre played transcriptions of opera arias, opera overtures and the like); then, after the Revolution, during state ceremonies and on state holidays, in solo or to accompany national hymns. Of course, the organists had been prepared to depict the contemporary events with their imitations of thunder, war and storm which they had improvised in the liturgy.

These currents were in favor with the public and many critics, all of whom rejected music intended for the musicians. In other words, a fugue is out of place anywhere, whether it be at the opera house or in church. The motto of the day could have been "music for entertainment." Even Burney had written in his *General History of Music* (1776) that "music is an innocent luxury, unnecessary to our existence."

Beside these "wonders," the traditional currents were still alive. Especially after the restoration of Louis XVIII (1814), there was a trend to return to the old times. To be sure, the classical forms had not entirely died out, and some kind of

adherence to string counterpoint still existed as exemplified in the works of Nicolas Séjan, François Benoist and Anton Reicha.

In 1819 the Paris Conservatoire was reorganized. The professor of organ, François Benoist, advocated a genuine church music style. Félix Danjou published a *Répertoire complet de l'organiste* containing works by the old masters. The Niedermeyer School was founded in 1835 for the purpose of teaching and studying the old masters. Adolphe Hesse from Germany and Jacques Lemmens from Belgium played and taught the works of Bach in Paris, while Joseph d'Ortigue published *La Maîtrise*, collections containing sacred music written in the traditional style. He wrote that "if church music still exists [in France], it is just as though it did not."¹¹ In their writings, critics such as Blanchard and Régnier constantly took issue with Lefébure-Wély, Batiste and other organists for whom "waltz and opera overture seem to be the summum bonum for the Introit (Prelude) and the Offertory."¹²

Treatises such as Fessy's and Régnier's are very similar to older ones as to their content, especially when it comes to registrational practice. Martini's organ method,¹³ which, however, was not conservative, even defined the Cornet as a reed stop combined with the Cornet V, which is what some believe to have been the Cornet à boucquin of the pre-Classic period.

THE MUSIC

We have mentioned what the organists improvised. Their compositions were in the same style. Some bear suggestive titles ("The Stars," "Evenings in Florence," "The Enchanted Lovers," "The Battle of Jericho," "The Downpours of March"); others try to adapt popular music; and the rest are written in a poor style, far from Louis Couperin or de Grigny. All of it seems to have been inspired by ideas definitely unrelated to what was happening in the sanctuary.¹⁴

Music which tries to follow tradition is rather decadent. Benoist's and Séjan's fugues are dry—mere scholastic works. Even most of Alexandre Boëly's music is out of date and old-fashioned. He was, though, a classicist turned toward the past, one of the only polyphonists and liturgical organists of his time in France, fired from his church because he dared play "protestant" music instead of the fashionable "cancan" music. A pianist and an organist, he cultivated the study of the old masters and knew the music of Bach, Couperin, Clérambault and Frescobaldi. It is striking how his music is written in the old style, exactly following the old forms of the French Classic school in his *versets* for organ intended to alternate with choral singing: the plain chant is in the pedal (tenor) in the *plein-jeu* pieces; the first Kyrie and the *Et in terra pax* are *plein-jeux*; the second Kyrie is a fugue (on reed stops?); and there are duos, récits and the like. Boëly also used the German style of combining the melody, usually in the upper voice, with a freely invented motif, a style which Jean-François Dandrieu had been the only one to use in France in his *Offertoire sur O filii, o filiae*. Boëly's style shows contrapuntal influences from Frescobaldi's *ricercari* and *toccatas*. During Dallery's work on the organ of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois (1833-44), Boëly requested that a German pedalboard be added. On the whole, his music is clear in construction and well planned, and might have been inspired by Beethoven, whose music he knew through his piano teacher Ignace Ladurner.

CONCLUSION: CAVAILLÉ-COLL'S ORGAN AT SAINT-DENIS

As Alexis de Tocqueville explained in his *Mémoires* (1893) about the political situation, the new was built on the old: this was also true for the organ.

Cavallé-Coll's organ at Saint-Denis (1835) was, at least on paper, a carbon copy of the late French Classic organ as to specifications and disposition: the pedal had been enlarged, the whole taken down to the 32' range, and complemented by string and harmonic stops.¹⁵ But this instrument was intrinsi-

cally different from the old French Classic organ. The scaling was much wider; wind pressure, and hence voicing, was much stronger. The character of the sound was massive, with emphasis on the fundamental. The overblowing flutes contributed to the thickness of the ensemble, as did the wide-scale bourdons. String tone was obtained by forcing overtones.

Thus, this instrument appeared as the organ of the future, because of its sumptuousness and power, its easy handling thanks to the Barker lever, the double laye (ventil) and other combinations, and its swell box. Organists and musicians wanted the easy touch of the piano, the expression of the string instruments and the power of the brass: they had them all there, for this organ possessed all those qualities. This was, then, the first step toward the symphonic organ and the neo-Classical organ.

With the Saint-Denis instrument, the organ recaptured the music world.

NOTES

1. Dom [François] Bédos de Celles, *L'Art du facteur d'orgues* (Paris: 1766-78; reprinted Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1963-66).
2. For an entertaining account of the life at the court of Louis XIV, see Nancy Mitford, *The Sun King* (New York: Harper and Row, n.d.).
3. About these changes, read Joseph d'Ortigue, *Dictionnaire liturgique, historique et théorique de plain-chant et de musique d'église* (Paris: L. Potier, 1854; reprinted New York: Da Capo Press, 1971), "Préface."

4. About this evolution, see Thomas F. Harmon, *The Registrations of J.S. Bach's Organ Works: A Study of German Organ-Building and Registration Practices of the Late Baroque Era* (St. Louis, Mo., 1971).
5. Donald Jay Grout, *A History of Western Music*, revised ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1973).
6. Quoted in Claude Noisette de Crauzat, "L'orgue romantique," *La Revue Musicale*, 295-296, p. 84-85.
7. See also René Delosme, "L'orgue français de transition, première moitié du XIXème siècle," *La Revue Musicale*, 295-296, p. 97.
8. As quoted in André Pirro, "L'art des organistes," *Encyclopédie de la musique* (Paris: C. Delagrave, 1913-31), II, p. 1365.
9. Quoted in André Pirro, op. cit., p. 1362.
10. Norbert Dufourcq, *La musique d'orgue de Jehan Titelouze à Jehan Alain* (Paris: Librairie Fleury, 1941), p. 121-23. Also André Pirro, op. cit., p. 1363.
11. Joseph d'Ortigue, *ibid.*
12. Joseph Régner, *L'orgue* (1850), as quoted in Norbert Dufourcq, op. cit., p. 131.
13. J.P.E. Martini, *L'École d'orgue* ([n.p.], 1805).
14. See André Pirro, op. cit., p. 1362 et seq.; and Norbert Dufourcq, op. cit., p. 118 et seq.
15. See specifications in Claude Noisette de Crauzat, op. cit., p. 86-87.

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THE ROLE OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH MUSICIAN

John Bertalot

The following is a pre-dinner talk given to the AGO Region IV Convention in Charlotte, N.C., on July 16, 1985. It is presented here in the author's original conception, mixing prose with poetry.

As I look at you all sitting here hoping I'm not going to talk too long before dinner is served, I'm reminded of a story of the Bishop of Manchester who was conducting a service in his cathedral shortly after the new prayer book was published. He was having trouble making himself heard over the loudspeaker system and said, *mezzo forte*, "There's something wrong with this microphone." To which his congregation dutifully responded, "And also with you!"

The title of this talk could imply two things:

- (I) that there are Christian musicians who are not church musicians; and
- (II) that there are church musicians who aren't Christians!

When I was senior lecturer at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester, before I came to Princeton in 1983, I used to attend the annual degree ceremony in the college concert hall which was presided over by our president, the Duchess of Kent. Every year she presented honorary degrees to half a dozen distinguished musicians of international reputation before she gave degrees to the students.

This particular year she included England's outstanding mezzo-soprano, to whom fell the task of making a speech of thanks to the Duchess on behalf of her colleagues. Her presence and her speech were as gracious as her lovely singing voice. She said that as her voice and musicianship were a gift from God she could claim no credit for them. What she could claim credit for was using that gift.

Her Christian witness in those secular surroundings made a deep and lasting impression. Jesus' parable of the talents came readily to mind:

"Well done, thou good and faithful servant . . ."

By the way, the term "Christian" has a precise meaning, rather than the English term "gentleman" had an exact meaning. Both have become generalized in the public mind to mean someone who is a good citizen. Being a Christian means far more than that.

Our position as church musicians is often opposite that which Victorian parents sought of their children, for, as we are often stuck behind curtains or hidden in organ lofts, we are heard but not seen.

This geographic position in the building may sometimes influence our standing in the church itself.

When I was organist of St. Matthew's Church, Northampton, England,

(the church for which Britten wrote "Rejoice in the Lamb" where Alec Wyton began his career, as well as Michael Nicholas and Stephen Cleobury)

I had to sit at a console which was halfway between choir and congregation;

the organist belonged to neither—it was a lonely position.

It would, in some ways, be easier

not to be a Christian in a church music program, for a Christian must allow himself to become involved in the things

that the church stands for and which the church does, and thus he allows himself to be hurt.

A church musician who keeps his home life separate from his church life

seems to be setting up a contradiction and a conflict within himself

which must, surely, result in damage to himself.

(Jesus said, "A kingdom divided against itself must fall")

When this does happen there'll be no one around to bind up his wounds.

But there are two sorts of wounds:

one, which is intended to kill and the other which is intended to heal.

One comes from the sword of the enemy and the other from the knife of the surgeon—but both spill blood.

Last year we lost a wonderful choir family from Trinity Church, Princeton, when the father, whom I shall call Jim, was appointed to a university post in California. He and his two children, a girl and a boy, sang in our choirs, and his wife was active in many of our choir programs.

Jim told me that, some months after they arrived in their new home, he took the children to Choral Evensong in their nearby cathedral. When the choir began to sing Stanford's Magnificat in C (which we often sang at Princeton), both children burst into tears.

Their wound was a spiritual one—

they remembered what it was like to worship God

"with heart and voice."

As the hymn says:

"My soul [the caring, feeling part of me] bear thou thy part, Triumph in God above,