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"J. S. Bach as Organist: His Instruments, Music and Performance Practices" George Stauffer and Ernest May, eds.

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J. S. Bach as Organist: His Instruments, Music, and Performance Practices, George Stauffer and Ernest May eds. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986.

The Bach tricentennial served as a catalyst for many scholarly conferences and publications, and the present collection of essays is no exception. As its editors state in their preface, "this volume is the fruit of seeds sown at symposia on Bach's organ music held in recent years at Columbia University, Harvard University, the University of Nebraska (Lincoln), and the House of Hope Presbyterian Church in St. Paul, Minnesota." It is significant that three of these venues contain instruments by leading American builders — Harvard and House of Hope possess Fisk organs and there is an organ by Gebe Bedient on the campus of the University of Nebraska. Fine instruments always stimulate interest in organ music, and a careful channelling of this interest sometimes leads to major collaborations by scholars and performers of world renown. Stauffer and May are to be congratulated on the distinguished authors assembled in their volume, including established Bach scholars such as Christoph Wolff, Robert Marshall, Werner Breig, and Peter Williams, and musicians of the calibre of Marie-Claire Alain, Luigi Tagliavini, and Harald Vogel. Several of the articles had previously appeared in scholarly journals such as the *Bach Jahrbuch* and various *Festschriften*; nevertheless, the English translations facilitate access to this material by musicians lacking *Deutschverständnis*, and most of the reprints were revised or emended by their respective authors for inclusion in this publication. Thus, in addition to providing the convenience of collecting these essays inside one cover, *J. S. Bach as Organist* contains important new scholarly material not included in the articles as originally published.

The book's subtitle indicates the three main areas of inquiry: Bach's instruments, his music, and issues concerning performance practice. Despite these clear divisions, there is much overlap and cross-referencing between the articles, which helps to create a coherent picture of Bach and the organ. A broader context for the information in the individual essays is also provided by a "calendar of events in Bach's life as organist" at the end of the collection.

Articles by Ulrich Dähnert and Hartmut Haupt give interesting documentary information about the instruments that Bach played. Dähnert is known for his *Historische Orgeln in Sachsen*, a detailed compendium of over 250 organs in Saxony, and Haupt is currently

compiling a similar index of Thuringian organs. Few precise links can be made between the specifications of particular instruments and the performance of Bach's organ music. Haupt's outline of Bach's recommendations for organs, however, suggests the qualities of organ sound most valued by the composer.

Although it provides a useful summary of the specifications and tuning systems of north-German organs, Harald Vogel's contribution is only tangentially related to Bach. Still, it is good to see in print some of Vogel's insights into north-German organ music, stemming from his practical knowledge of historic instruments. Especially interesting are the distinctions he draws between north-German organs based on the *Werkprinzip* and the more homogenous designs of Thuringian instruments. He also urges the reader to consider the transition from mean-tone to a well-tempered tuning in central Germany, suggesting that north-German organ works were transmitted by central-German copyists in "modernized" transpositions outside of the mean-tone system. An annoying aspect of Vogel's article is the lack of references to the sources from which he culled information; of a scant eight notes for the article, only two provide bibliographical citations. It is thus difficult to use his research as a point of departure for further investigation. For example, it would be interesting to know the context of Vogel's reference to the use of Aliquots (mutations) along the Rhine around 1500, as well as his documentation for Buxtehude's complaints about the tuning of the Marienkirche organ, which Kerala Snyder has since supplied in her excellent monograph on Buxtehude.¹

Marie-Claire Alain's article, "Why an Acquaintance with Early Organs is Essential for Playing Bach," has been criticized for including "some very subjective statements . . . which do not accord well with the scholarly character of the rest of the essays."² Alain's perspective can nevertheless have a very beneficial effect on the performance of Bach's organ music. One is grateful for her contribution, although a more focused subject — such as how the experience of playing historic organs changed her approach to performing Bach during the fifteen years between her two *oeuvre intégrale* recordings for Erato — would doubtless have yielded a more insightful article. A small error that slipped past the editors: Alain's reference to "neue inventiones" on the Mühlhausen organ is misleading, since the context of her quote implies that Bach was

1. Kerala Snyder, *Dieterich Buxtehude: Organist in Lübeck* (New York and London, 1987), 84-86.

2. Scott Paterson, "Review of J. S. Bach as Organist," *Music Magazine* 10, no. 3 (September, October 1987), 29.

advocating stops such as the Unda Maris and the Cornet. Dähnert's article (a mere 50 pages earlier) makes it clear that Bach was describing the possibilities afforded by a Fagott 16'.

John Brombaugh describes Bach's influence on twentieth-century American organbuilding in an article that displays an acute sensitivity to organ sound and its effect on musical performance. He echoes Vogel's concern that the north-German *plenum* tradition is unsuitable for the musical needs of Bach. But his assertion that "there is no evidence that *wohl-temperiert* implied modern equal temperament" seems a bit bold to this reviewer, especially with no acknowledgement of Rudolph Rasch's work in this field.³

Of course, such omissions and inaccuracies are very minor when compared to the ambitious scope of *J. S. Bach as Organist*. But they do undermine the reader's confidence in some significant material related to historic instruments. The articles on Bach's organ music and performance practice are relatively free of such problems; several of these had already appeared in scholarly journals such as the *Bach Jahrbuch*, the *Michael Schneider Festschrift*, and the *Georg von Dadelsen Festschrift*. Exceptions include the editors' contributions: Ernest May provides a diagram for the evolution of the Baroque organ chorale which he uses to classify Bach's organ chorales into different types, and George Stauffer discusses the four main fugal types in Bach's free organ works, thereby complementing his fine book on the organ preludes.

Another article concerning Bach's organ music is Laurence Dreyfus's discussion of the concerted organ parts in Bach's cantatas, which appeared in the Bach tercentenary issue of *Early Music* (May, 1985). His study of the autograph scores for these works reveals that Bach appears to be "the most likely soloist" for their performance and that the organ soloist sometimes realized the continuo. In the case of Cantata 29, the continuo was played simultaneously by the organ and harpsichord. The second half of Dreyfus's article is devoted to aspects of style--the organ's imitation of other instruments and the manipulation of ritornello form--in the solos. Krummacher and Horn also deal with the style of Bach's organ works, describing influences from the *stylus phantasticus* and French music, respectively. Both authors address the impact of these influences on the performance of the music, although it is difficult to make precise recommendations. Statements such as "the player must

3. Rudolph Rasch, "Does well-tempered mean equal-tempered?" *Bach, Handel, Scarlatti Tercentenary Essays*, ed. Peter Williams (Cambridge, 1985), 293-310.

make clear that the closed structure results from the relationship of its individual parts" are too vague to be of practical use to organists.

The most successful articles in *J. S. Bach as Organist* are the source studies that shed light on performance practice. Stauffer's reconsideration of Bach's organ registration draws important conclusions about the use of *organum plenum* and manual changes from indications in the autograph and printed sources of Bach's organ music. His findings rest on the assumption that the terms *organum plenum* and *volles Werk* are synonymous, which may indeed be the case, although he presents no hard and fast evidence in support of this view. Robert Marshall presents a brilliant study of primary sources to defend his claim that the six Toccatas, BWV 910-916, were originally composed for the organ. Peter Williams' article on the "snares and delusions of notation" raises intriguing questions about the performance of Bach's early organ works. Williams demonstrates his exemplary knowledge of Bach sources with numerous musical examples which illustrate his points about the effects of notation on sectional breaks, articulation, and the use of the pedal. Luigi Ferdinando Tagliavini compares Bach's transcriptions of Vivaldi's C-major Concerto, BWV 594, with Vivaldi's original and with Bach's other concerto arrangements. From this, he concludes that "each movement of the Concerto in C requires a 4' fundament on the Rückpositiv." Tagliavini also shows correspondences between Bach's organ transcription and another instrumental version of the concerto preserved in the Wissenschaftliche Allgemeinbibliothek in Schwerin, and inquires about the possibility of its being Bach's original model.

These four essays prove that a scholarly synthesis of musicology, organology, and performance practice is not only possible, but instructive. Although the scholar/performer synthesis is not without its pitfalls, the articles by Stauffer, Williams, Marshall, and Tagliavini in *J. S. Bach as Organist* provide shining examples of interdisciplinary research that is of real consequence to musical performance. It is to be hoped that such efforts will serve as models for future scholarship.

Kimberly Marshall