

# Westfield

E-NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTFIELD CENTER, VOLUME XXI, No. 5

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*A National Resource for the Advancement of Keyboard music, serving Professionals and the Public since 1979*

## SEPTEMBER 2009

We bring you warm greetings for the arrival of Fall and the start of the 2009-2010 academic year. This promises to be a busy year for the Westfield Center, beginning with our co-sponsoring of this year's EROI festival focusing on Felix Mendelssohn (October 29-November 1), and culminating with our own conference in Eugene, Oregon, celebrating Hendrik Niehoff, the Netherlandish tradition and its North American legacy, and featuring the instruments of John Brombaugh (April 8-11, 2010). In addition, we look forward to the concert tour of the 2009-10 Westfield Concert Scholar, Erin Helyard, and to the publication next month of the 2009 Westfield Yearbook, *Keyboard Perspectives II*.

Read on for new information on Westfield events and publications, and for general announcements of keyboard-related interest. We are especially excited to be able to include as the main feature of this issue an essay by long-time Westfield member Thomas Spacht: "*Winds of Change: From Ordinary Touch to Style Lié*." Please let the editors know if YOU would like to submit announcements, critical essays, reviews or other keyboard-related material for inclusion in future issues.

## Eastman Rochester Organ Initiative Festival 2009

October 29-November 1

The Eastman School of Music announces the eighth annual Eastman Rochester Organ Initiative (EROI) Festival: *Mendelssohn and the Contrapuntal Tradition*, October 29 — November 1, 2009. This year's event, co-sponsored by the Organ Historical Society and the Westfield Center, will pay tribute to Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy on the 200th anniversary of the composer's birth.

Last year we celebrated the inauguration of three new organs in Rochester: the new 24-stop two-manual organ by Taylor and Boody for the First Presbyterian Church of Pittsford, the large new organ by Paul Fritts and Company of three manuals and 53 stops for Sacred Heart Cathedral (Roman Catholic), and finally the long-awaited debut and inauguration of the Craighead-Saunders Organ in Christ Church. The Craighead-Saunders Organ, built by the Göteborg Organ Art Center (GOArt) at the University of Göteborg in Sweden, is a two-manual,

33-stop organ, named for David Craighead and Russell Saunders, two venerable professors of organ at the Eastman School of Music. The result of a six-year interdisciplinary research project on the processes of eighteenth-century organ building, the organ is a scientific reconstruction of an organ from 1776 built by Adam Gottlob Casparini (1715-1788) for the Holy Ghost Church in Vilnius, Lithuania. Adam Gottlob Casparini learned organ building in central Germany and worked as a journeyman with Tobias Heinrich Gottfried Trost (1680-1759), and participated in the building of the famous organ in the Altenburg Castle Church (1736-39), an organ that both Johann Sebastian Bach and Gottfried Silbermann played and praised.

At the inaugural recital of the Craighead-Saunders Organ many people were surprised and delighted with how well the music of Mendelssohn sounded on the new organ. In fact, we discovered something new, that the organ gives us a new perspective on 19th-century German organ music. Although we knew that Mendelssohn had a close affinity to the Silbermann organs in Rötha, and to the organs in central Germany, we had not yet had the opportunity in this country to hear his music on an organ that in all respects represents the central German style. The well-known organ scholar and editor of the Novello Mendelssohn edition, William A. Little, who



The console of the Craighead-Saunders Organ at Eastman. Photo by Matt DeTurck

was in the audience at the inauguration, mentioned that he was about to finish his new book “Mendelssohn and the Organ” and reminded us that in 2009 Mendelssohn’s anniversary would be celebrated world-wide. We asked whether he would be willing to serve as advisor for an EROI Festival devoted to Mendelssohn, and he graciously offered to serve in this capacity. In 1996, William Little visited Eastman as replacement faculty for Kerala J. Snyder, and we are pleased to welcome him back to Eastman for the EROI festival. It seemed logical and important to us to offer everyone the opportunity to hear all of Mendelssohn’s organ works on the new Craighead-Saunders organ, to hear leading Mendelssohn scholars talk about his organ music, its culture and context, the contrapuntal tradition, and to discuss performance practice issues. We are grateful to all presenters and performers at this year’s festival for their willingness to join us and celebrate Mendelssohn’s anniversary in this way.

At the end of the festival, Sunday, November 1, we offer you the opportunity to hear some of the significant organs in our city played and demonstrated by our students, and to hear results from the ongoing studies on mechanical keyboard actions, their possible influence on the organ sounds, and our perception of organ touch. The new organ has become a focal point for research on key touch characteristics and the presentations will present preliminary results from this new research field. We hope you will take this opportunity to join us in Rochester for what will surely be an exciting event.

*~David Higgs, Hans Davidsson, William Porter*

**To view the complete schedule and register online, visit [www.esm.rochester.edu/eroi](http://www.esm.rochester.edu/eroi)**

## *Keyboard Perspectives II*

The second volume of the Westfield Yearbook, *Keyboard Perspectives II* (2009) will be out soon! This issue focuses on Improvisation from a variety of angles, with essays full of information, ideas, thoughts and opinions, as well as a profile of Belgian organist Jean Ferrard, a review essay on recent Haydn recordings, and an accompanying CD with some actual improvisations on it (as well as other things too...). Exciting stuff, which we hope Westfield members will enjoy. Don't miss it!

**The book is due out in early October, and copies will be sent directly to all current Westfield members. If you're not yet a Westfield Center member, it's not too late to join for this year and to receive your copy of the yearbook. And if you're a Westfield member who may not be up to date on this year's dues, please do let us know so that we can check your status. The mailing list for this issue will be completed in the next week or so, so please don't wait!**

~Annette Richards

### *Keyboard Perspectives II*

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#### Profile:

Jean Ferrard, Belgian organist, scholar and teacher, talks to *David Yearsley*

# Keyboard News

## **Southeastern Historical Keyboard Society**

Call for Papers and Mini-recitals for the Midwestern and Southeastern Historical Keyboard Societies Meeting, May 26-29, 2010 at Beloit College, Wisconsin, USA

- J.S. Bach Studies, Mendelssohn Tribute, Other Topics
- Guest Scholar: Peter Wollny, Bach Archive, Leipzig, Germany

Papers and performances of 22 minutes duration, related to J.S. Bach, Mendelssohn, and other historical keyboard topics. Send proposals and a short bio, including a 250 abstract or recent recording of a performance, by February 15, 2010 to:

Max H. Yount  
745 Church Street  
Beloit, WI 53511 USA

Or: [maxyount@gmail.com](mailto:maxyount@gmail.com)

<http://www.mhks.org/CALL%20FOR%20PAPERS%20&%20MINI%20f-1.%20MEMF.htm>

## **IX Congresso Internazionale Sul Clavicordo September 16-19, 2009**

The year 2009 is the occasion to celebrate the 200th anniversary of Josef Haydn's death. We know his clavichord, an instrument by Johann Bohak (Vienna, 1794), now in the Museum of the Royal College of Music in London. As Haydn's relation with the clavichord has not been put in evidence until now, this symposium will explore the interpretation of his works on the most expressive of the keyboard instruments.

<http://www.musiqueancienne.org/index.php?module=News&func=display&sid=174>

## **Western Early Keyboard Association (WEKA)**

A conference of special interest to organists, harpsichordists and fortepianists will be held September 19-20, 2009, in Tacoma, WA. It is sponsored by the Western Early Keyboard Association in association with Christ Episcopal Church and Pacific Lutheran University.

<http://www.musiqueancienne.org/index.php?module=News&func=display&sid=177>

# *WINDS OF CHANGE: FROM ORDINARY TOUCH TO STYLE LIÉ*

Thomas Spacht

As a result of research and teaching during the past forty years, the term “ordinary touch” has become familiar to most well-informed organists. Today many performers approach music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with historically informed performance practices, one of which is the application of the articulate legato understood to be appropriate to keyboard music of that time. Yet by the end of the eighteenth century the ordinary touch was already being modified, and by the beginning of the nineteenth century new ideas, strongly influenced by techniques of the developing piano, were destined to supplant earlier practices.

Touch itself is a topic that needs to be considered within a larger context, one that includes the changing influence of rhetoric and rhetorical figures, the accompaniment of chorale singing in church, and the newer emphasis in the eighteenth century on melodic invention apart from contrapuntal context.<sup>1</sup> In particular the use of the organ during all of the 17<sup>th</sup> and most of the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, both in North Germany and in the Netherlands, was an evolving one in which the accompaniment of congregational singing played a central, indeed, a nearly exclusive role, while in other countries, notably France, its function was quite different. As the sources clearly indicate the manner of playing the organ was related to other instruments, the clavichord and the harpsichord. Later, the use of the organ in combination with other instruments reflected changes in musical style and also changing liturgies both in Germany and in the Netherlands. Together with changing ideas about playing keyboard instruments, different approaches to legato, especially in nineteenth century France, followed. The purpose of this essay is to trace important aspects of the evolving concepts of keyboard touch with the goal of gaining a clearer understanding of the influences shaping these changes. Much information on ‘ordinary touch’ is available. In his *Grundlage einer Ehrenpforte* (Hamburg, 1740), Johann Mattheson, for example, hints at a particular type of touch developed by Sweelinck and passed on to his pupils:

It was the famous Joh. Pet. Sweelinck, or Schweling, with whom he [Jacob Praetorius] studied, and from whom he learned, among other things, a very special type of finger movement which, though unusual, was very good...Praetorius adopted Sweelinck’s habits and gestures, which were exceedingly pleasing and admirable; he eschewed excessive body movement and made his playing appear effortless. The impression was aided, in no small measure, by his natural seriousness and unassuming character. It was a joy not only to listen to his playing but also to see him sitting at the organ.

[Es war [der] berühmte Joh. Pet. Swelink oder Schweling, zu dem er [Jacob Praetorius] sich in die Lehre begab, und von ihm, unter andern, eine gantz eigne Fingerführung die sonst ungewöhnlich, aber sehr gut war.... Praetorius nahm des Swelinks Sitten und Geberden an sich, die überaus angenehm und ehrbar waren; hielt den Leib ohne sonderliche Bewegung, und gab seinem Spielen ein Ansehen, also ob es gar keine Arbeit ware. Hierzu halff ihm sein natürlich- ernsthafttes, ordentliches und bescheidenes Wesen

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<sup>1</sup> This is described by Johann Mattheson and many others. See Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Kapellmeister*, Hamburg, 1739.

nicht wenig. Es war eine Lust ihm nicht nur zu hören; sondern auch zu sehen, wenn er an der Orgel sass.]<sup>2</sup>

The following quote gives particular instruction regarding the non-legato “ordinary touch” usually considered essential to the technique of J. S. Bach:

Opposed to the legato as well as the staccato is the ordinary procedure, in which one releases the finger from the previous key an instant before one plays the note following. This ordinary procedure, since it is always assumed, is never indicated.

Sowohl dem Schleifen als Abstossen ist das ordentliche Fortgehen entgegen gesetzt, welches darinen besteht, dass man ganz hurtig kurz vorher, ehe man die folgenden Note berühret, den Finger von der vorgerehenden Taste aufhebet. Dieses ordentliche Fortgehen wird, weil es allezeit vorausgesetzt wird, niemahls angezeigt.<sup>3</sup>

Sandra Soderlund’s ground-breaking work, *Organ Technique: An Historical Approach* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Hinshaw, 1986) contains a wealth of information pertaining not only to the matter of ordinary touch, but also to fingering and pedaling systems from many sources in Italy, Spain, England, France and Germany during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Other studies dealing with performance practices related to ordinary touch include *J. S. Bach’s Keyboard Technique: A Historical Introduction* by Quentin Faulkner (Concordia, 1984); *Organ Technique: Modern and Early* by George Ritchie and George Stauffer (Prentice-Hall, 1992); *Organ Technique* by Jacques van Oortmerssen (GoArt, 2002, although one must be aware of some questionable passages in the translation from Dutch to English text); and *Introduction to Organ Playing in 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Century Style* by John Brock (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Wayne Leupold Editions, Inc., 2002). Most recently, Soderlund has expanded, and in a sense, completed her earlier work with the publication in 2006 of *How Did They Play? How Did They Teach?* (Hinshaw Music, Chapel Hill).

By the middle of the eighteenth century new musical aesthetics were emerging throughout Germany. Initially intertwined with Luther’s writings on music’s *affekt*, the change in thinking was molded by the *natura* emphasis of the Enlightenment, plus continued exposure to both Italian and French music. In turn, these factors affected both playing style and methods of expression. The importance of musical figures, designed and named after patterns established in rhetoric, had emerged as key elements of musical thought early in the century. Mattheson’s *Der vollkommene Kapellmeister*, mentioned above, had far-reaching implications for German musicians of the later eighteenth century, for it was Mattheson who most fully integrated *figurae* into musical rhetoric.<sup>4</sup> Because of the new emphasis, the quality of touch before and after a particular figure became important for keyboard players. Thus, in addition to the ordinary touch as a general practice, attention to the articulation of musical figures assumed a principal role in

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I am grateful to Antonius Bittman, Department of Music, Mason Gross School of the Arts, Rutgers University, for help with the German translations for this essay.

<sup>2</sup> Johann Mattheson, *Grundlage einer Ehrenpforte* (Hamburg, 1740; reprint Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1969) 328, in Oortmerssen, *Organ Technique* (Göteborg: GoArt, 2002), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurg, *Anleitung zum Clavierspielen*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Berlin: Haude und Spener, 1765), 29. Quoted in Quentin Faulkner, *J. S. Bach’s Keyboard Technique: A Historical Introduction* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1984), 39.

<sup>44</sup> Dietrich Bartel, *Musica Poetica*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 140.

keyboard technique.<sup>5</sup> Toward the end of the century, the increased use of slurs, associated with the popular *galant* style, further altered the performance of figures and ornaments. Formerly the articulations had been indicated either by beamed notes or by the positioning of units on strong or “good” beats; but the new importance of melodic figures created a need both for legato and for articulation in setting them apart.

At the same time that the application of rhetorical figures was taking a new direction, use of the organ to accompany the singing of psalms and chorales had become standard practice. This somewhat new phenomenon, often replacing the former alternating practice, produced novel ideas about the use of legato. Toward the end of the eighteenth century and beyond, several sources mention the need for legato in the “serious” church style, *viz.*, during the accompaniment of chorales.<sup>6</sup> Wayne Leupold notes that

As early as the mid-eighteenth century there began a long tradition of true legato playing by some organists. It first appeared in chorale playing. Wiedeburg (1765) and Laag (1774) both recommended that all notes common to successive chords should be tied when playing chorales, and Guthmann (1805) and F. Schneider (1830) advocated the use of double finger substitution to achieve a more legato style.<sup>7</sup>

It is important to understand that this kind of legato was later interpreted as the normative touch for playing the organ, especially in the works of J.S. Bach. In France the term *style lié* that was applied to legato touch during the early nineteenth century took on a new meaning after the time of Lemmens (1823-1881). It is interesting to note that the French term *lié* also refers to smooth textures, sometimes even in reference to special sauces used in cooking. Thus, a visual image of the legato concept could be created.

The use of finger substitution, already begun to a limited degree in playing chorale accompaniments, gained further acceptance as methods for legato playing on the piano were developed and were transferred to the organ. An excellent discussion of the initial change from the older concept of legato to the new *style lié* proposed by Lemmens and taught by his pupils Widor and Guilmant may be found in the preface to Volume I of the complete works of César Franck, edited by Wayne Leupold (© Wayne Leupold Editions, 2002.) Because the extent of that discussion goes beyond the scope of this essay, the reader is referred to that source for detailed information.

The transition to the new legato style continued over the greater part of the nineteenth century, especially in France. In the early part of the century the ordinary touch continued as the norm along with a variety of other touches, sometimes with modifications to accommodate the new melody-oriented piano style with which most organists were familiar. The remarkable claim of François-Joseph Fétis (1784-1871) and his protégé Jacques-Nicolas Lemmens (1823-1881) that an absolute legato was the “true” style of organ playing, especially in the works of J. S. Bach, profoundly changed technique by the end of the century.<sup>8</sup> The use of glissandi, finger and

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<sup>5</sup> A thorough discussion of articulation in the works of J. S. Bach may be found in John Butt, *Bach Interpretation: Articulation Marks in Primary Sources of J. S. Bach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

<sup>6</sup> See for example Daniel Gottlob Türk, trans. & ed. Margot Woolard, *On The Role Of The Organist In Worship (1787)* (Lanham, MD & London: Scarecrow Press, 2000) 62, 68.

<sup>7</sup> Wayne Leupold, “Organ,” in *Performance Practice: Music after 1600 (The Norton/Grove Handbooks in Music)*, (New York & London: Norton, 1989), 375.

<sup>8</sup> For a complete discussion of Lemmens and his influence, see William J. Peterson’s article on Lemmens in *French Organ Music from the Revolution to Franck and Widor* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, rev. second printing, 1997).

pedal substitution, tying of “common tones” and other devices, coupled with the perception of more “serious” and “grand” sounds of the organs of Cavallé-Coll and others, created an entirely new basis for understanding both touch and articulation. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the influence of Widor, Guilmant, and others was particularly strong and culminated in the teaching and performance of Marcel Dupré (1886-1971). The establishment of the “French legato” was complete.

Excerpts from organ tutors and other sources give us a clear picture of the new ideas. These concepts affected thinking in Germany as well as in France. As early as 1845 Félix Danjoy, director of the French organ building firm Daublaine-Callinet, wrote:

In Germany, not a step has been taken since Seb. Bach: the compositions of Adolphe Hesse and of Rinck always belong to the legato fugal style which Bach used exclusively in his works. Without doubt there is more freedom, less constraint, from the standpoint of the use of the legato style, in the compositions of Seb. Bach than is to be seen in the works of modern German composers.<sup>9</sup>

It is important to read this passage carefully, however, as it does not discuss the actual playing of Hesse and Rinck, but only the presumed *style* of their compositions. Apparently Danjoy accepted the assumption first made by Fétis that the absolute legato style was used by Bach. Interestingly enough, in his organ method as well as from reports of his playing, Lemmens himself, also credited with advocating the absolute legato style, used a variety of touches that included the ordinary touch as essential. Markings in the scores of that period call for absolute legato only in particular places, assuming the ordinary touch still to be the basis for organ playing. But for playing Bach, the absolute legato style appeared to be the point of departure.

Thus we come to the most problematic question about the “why” of change from ordinary touch to something approximating an absolute legato. As is often the case, the answer lies not in a single influence, but rather in the convergence of several factors that at first modified and then eventually changed the principal organ touch from “ordinary” to “legato.” In order to gain a broader perspective it is necessary to look back to the time when chorales and psalms began to be accompanied by the organ. Several sources offer insights that may clarify the manner in which such accompaniment was performed.

Although the music used in the Dutch Reformed services differed in certain respects from that used in Lutheran services in Germany – the two liturgical contexts where organ accompaniment of congregational singing really began – the techniques with regard to organ accompaniment were remarkably similar. The location of the organs above the people in Dutch and German churches suggested a scheme that would clearly project the tune of the psalm or chorale. Since both the Dutch psalter and the chorale books used in Germany contained only text this need for melodic clarity was all the more necessary. Only unison singing obtained both in Holland and in Germany, thus the configuration of the harmony beneath the chorale or psalm tune could be more fluid and certainly not like the “four-part writing” students in modern conservatories are taught, emulating the so-called “Bach style.”

The late Klaas Bolt has given us a good example of the kind of accompaniment that was used in Holland around 1680. By this time the large “monumental” organs in such places as Alkmaar (Grote or St. Laurens Church) and Haarlem (St. Bavo) exhibited all the features needed both for accompaniment of congregational singing and for solo performances in concerts. For the

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<sup>9</sup> Graham Barber, “German organ music after 1800” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Organ*, ed. Nicolas Thistlethwaite & Geoffrey Webber (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 250.

famous Christian Müller organ at the Bavo in Haarlem, the builder included a widely scaled and powerfully voiced *Cornet* in the *Rugpositief* directly behind the façade pipes, made doubled trebles in the principals and mixtures, and included a large number of trumpets and a heavy pedal division with *Principaal* 32', reeds 32' and 16', and Quint basses at 12' and 6' pitches.<sup>10</sup> The surviving accompaniment books from the period show how the organist played the psalm melody with the right hand, while the left hand “realized” the harmony, the bass line itself played in the lower octave of the pedal board. For registration, the organist might have used full *Rugpositief* for the melody, the left hand accompanying with a 16' plenum on the *Hoofdwark* while the *Pedaal* doubled the bass line. In the case of familiar psalms, some decoration of the tune would have been usual, especially as the organist was expected to display his skills. A fragment of a “solution” for such an accompaniment to Psalm 98 is given below.<sup>11</sup>

Figure 1



The same approach to chorale accompaniment appears to have been commonplace in Germany as well, although registration practices were different. (It must be remembered that the large organs in Holland were altered in the late seventeenth century in order to accommodate the large masses of people singing, thus the description of the Bavo at Haarlem, above.) Johann Christian Kittel (1732-1809), Bach’s last pupil, was commissioned to write a chorale book for the Schleswig-Holstein churches in 1803. In the preface Kittel observes that in most chorale settings the melody (soprano) is played in the right hand, the alto and tenor voices in the left hand (unless the alto is too far from the tenor to be reached), and the bass in the pedal.<sup>12</sup> By implication, we may assume the chorale melody often was played on a separate manual using appropriate solo registration, thus paralleling the practices in The Netherlands.

Over time changes occurred in the style of organ accompaniment. In part this was the result of changes in musical style generally, the popularity of the *galant* style in the late eighteenth century, and the move toward a melody/accompaniment keyboard style appropriate to the fortepiano. C. P. E. Bach and others wrote about the *cantabile* style from which later writers inferred absolute legato. Yet, such a legato style would have been difficult on the late eighteenth-century unfretted clavichords. Another word employed both by C. P. E. Bach and by Daniel Gottlob Türk (*Von den wichtigsten Pflichten eines Organisten*, 1787) is *gebundene*. Writing on the topic of creating improvised preludes for certain hymns, Türk describes how “little by little, the beginner will thus become accustomed to a legato [*gebundene*], noble style of playing and

<sup>10</sup> Klaas Bolt, “Character and Function of the Dutch Organ,” in Charles Brenton Fisk, *Organ Builder* 2 vols., (Easthampton, MA: The Westfield Center, 1986), I:10.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>12</sup> Sandra Soderlund, *How Did They Play? How Did They Teach? A History of Keyboard Technique*, (Chapel Hill: Hinshaw Music, 2006), 510.

finally, by persistent practice – talent presumed – will succeed on his own in creating a good prelude.”<sup>13</sup> Later, in the same work, Türk remarks that “...the organist can still demonstrate his ability with a legato, serious style of playing befitting the content of the hymn.”

To extrapolate from such statements the notion that chorales or preludes to chorales were played with absolute legato as we now understand that, is probably a mistake. Whatever the exact interpretation of *gebundene* ought to be with reference to chorale or hymn accompaniment, it seems clear that Fétis and others understood this Germanic term as a kind of absolute legato appropriate to the works of Bach, but in particular the most contrapuntal works. Thus, phrases such as “the serious, fugal style” became building blocks for early nineteenth-century organ technique in France.

From the French tradition of organ playing that ended with the Revolution and the long hiatus that followed, there was another precedent for the legato style. It can be found in the *plein jeu* that were an important part of the French Classic *Livres d’Orgue*. Organists who have studied French Classic music are familiar with the traditions associated with its performance such as the *notes inégales*, and also the legato style of the *plein jeu* movements. Once again, the precise meaning of “legato” in the context of the time period and of organ designs, including issues with the winding, becomes somewhat problematic. Still, it is clear that the French composers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries distinguished between legato and other touches, always requiring legato for the *plein jeu* movements. The following, from André Raison in 1688 is typical: “A Grand Plein Jeu is played very slowly. The chords should be quite legato one to the other, taking pains not to raise one finger until the other has pressed down; and the last measure should be much prolonged.”<sup>14</sup>

While the old style of music and of playing may have been largely forgotten following the post-revolutionary period, the increasingly important requirement of accompanying the plainchant presented new problems. Since in the early part of the century the chant melodies were accompanied with a chord for each note, the issue of chord connection became paramount. How does one support the chant melody appropriately? Clearly, tied notes, finger substitution, and other techniques needed for a perfect legato must be put to use. This was especially important when one realizes the style of singing, weighed down by a cumbersome accompaniment, was far removed from the later method developed by the monks of Solesmes.

By the mid-nineteenth century French organists, influenced by Fétis and Lemmens, began to learn new ideas about legato. These ideas, also based on German organ methods written early in the century, suited the needs of the contemporary French organist. Since the German method books on which Fétis relied for justifying his approach to organ playing (Kittel and Rinck) were clear about the need for legato, it was but a short step to presume that these followers of Bach were continuing the tradition of organ playing established by the master.

Additional problems and developments further influenced the establishment of absolute legato among French organists. The complete story is complex and too detailed to include here.<sup>15</sup> The most important influence on church music between the early and mid-nineteenth century in France involved the work on Gregorian Chant by the Benedictine monks of Solesmes, and in terms of the liturgy, the movement away from the Parisian rite to the Roman Rite in Parisian churches. Niedermeyer’s highly influential *Traité théorique et pratique de l’accompagnement du plain-chant* (Paris, 1855) proposed a modal accompaniment style for chant compatible with the

<sup>13</sup> Woolard, *Daniel Gottlob Türk*, 62.

<sup>14</sup> Fenner Douglass, *The Language of the Classical French Organ, A Musical Tradition Before 1800* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 201.

<sup>15</sup> For a much fuller picture, see Orpha Ochse, *Organists and Organ Playing in Nineteenth-Century France and Belgium* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).

method of the Solesmes monks and departing sharply from the older chord-by-chord approach that relied on traditional harmonies. The period also witnessed the gradual disappearance of the small *schola* accompanied by a serpent and/or double bass. By 1855 Georges Schmitt could write that choir organs had been introduced almost everywhere.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the French system of the *grand orgue* and the *orgue de chœur* became the established norm, and the playing of versets during the Ordinary of the Mass died out (Parisian Rite).

During this period of liturgical change organ methods appeared, beginning with “imported” materials from Germany, but eventually including the work of Lemmens and later of other Frenchmen (Clement Loré, Félix Clement). In all cases, the methods advocated the use of legato (Loré uses the term *style lié*). As if to reinforce these ideas, the German organ methods also concentrated on a legato approach to organ playing. The following passages are typical of German organ methods of the later period.

Gustav Merkel, *Orgelschule* (n.d.):

What characterizes touch on the piano is that it requires fingers to strike elastically from above the keys; in contrast, organ playing involves an elastic pressure on the keys and a less high finger stroke that, though gentle, must be quick and with determination. Every kind of pushing, hitting or thrusting motion is to be avoided. When leaving the keys the player should release the fingers resolutely and at the right moment, without hurriedly shooting them up. Rather, at least when the tempo is slow, he should feel his fingers touching the keys until they have been released completely.

[Das Charakteristische des Klavieranschlags ist bei hoch gehobenem Finger der elastische Schlag auf die Taste, dagegen beim Orgelspiel bei minder hochgehaltenem Finger der elastische Druck desselben auf die Taste, der aber, obwohl weich, doch rasch und mit Bestimmtheit erfolgen muss. Alles stossen, Schlagen and Poltern ist beim Orgelspiel zu meiden. Beim verlassen der Taste soll der Spieler die Finger bestimmt und zu rechter Zeit abheben, aber nicht hastig in die Höhe schnellen; er soll vielmehr, wenigstens beim ruhigen, langsamen Spiele, die Tasten so lange unter den Fingern fühlen, bis erstere ihren Höhepunkt wieder erreicht haben.]<sup>17</sup>

Kegel, *Orgelschule* (1830):

One could assume that the manner in which the keys are struck does not affect the organ sound; it may seem that when the keys are depressed and the pallets are opened the sound will be the same regardless of how the key was struck. But that is not the case. And those who have compared even very good organists [with each other] will agree.

[Man sollte glauben, dem Orgeltone sey es gleichgültig, wie die Tasten angeschlagen würden; es scheint, wenn sie niedergegrückt und die Ventile aufgezogen würden, so wäre der Ton derselbe, der Anschlag möchte seyn, wie er wolle. Dem ist aber nicht so. Und jeder, wer sogar sehr gute Orgelspieler mit einander verglichen hat, wird hierin beipflichten.]<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ochse, *Organists and Organ Playing*, 132-133.

<sup>17</sup> Gustav Merkel, *Orgelschule*, Op. 177 (Leipzig, n.d.), in Oortmerssen, *Organ Technique*, 19.

<sup>18</sup> Kegel, *Orgelschule*, (Leipzig, 1830), 13, in Oortmerssen, *Organ Technique*, 20.

Reinhard, *Studium für Harmonium* (1901):

Where there is no method prescribed, one has to consistently play legato...

[Wo überhaupt keine Spielart vorgeschrieben ist, had man durchweg legato zu spielen...]<sup>19</sup>

Kocher et al., *Orgelspielbuch* (1851):

The best fingering is that which most beautifully and convincingly expresses the piece. It is unimportant whether one substitutes fingers on the keys or slides from one key to the next with a single finger to create the most perfect legato, so long as one achieves the goal.

[Die Wichtigkeit eines guten Fingersatzes kann genug eingeschärft werden, ja, man darf wohl sagen, daß ein solcher zur Hälfte gespielt ist, indem nur durch ihn ein fertiges, fließendes und ausdrucksvolles Spiel möglich wird.]<sup>20</sup>

Thus, it is possible to see that not only in France, but also in Germany and, by implication, the remainder of Europe, the new style of organ playing gradually took hold and remained until well into the twentieth century when research into the organ music of Bach and his predecessors produced a renewed interest in earlier fingering and pedaling systems, as well as articulation and touch. The impact of the developing symphony orchestra, operatic singing techniques, and most importantly the piano, resulted in far-reaching changes in organ building and organ technique. Despite his insistence on the notion that the “true” organ style of Bach was based on an absolute legato, Lemmens must be given credit for urging French organ builders to enlarge both the manual and the pedal compass in order to make possible the performance of Bach’s organ works, as well as to add mixtures and other stops appropriate to the Bach literature. Indeed, one can say that through the influence of Lemmens and his pupils, the importance of the Bach literature became one of the principal elements of the so-called French organ school.

It is also useful to recall that it was Dupré who played all of the organ works of Bach from memory in a series of twenty-some recitals in the early part of the twentieth century. But by this time the absolute legato style had become the starting point for Bach interpretation not only in France, but also in the United States, largely through the influence of Americans who had studied in France in the early to mid-twentieth century. Today a renewed understanding of performance history gives us insight into the ways in which organ touch and articulation were thought about in different style periods. While we can never know for certain the details of how performers of earlier times played – even the nineteenth century sources leave many questions unanswered – we may at least grasp some of the basic ideas that shaped their approach to organ music. At the end of the day, our interpretations, while historically informed, will be those created from the perspective of our own time.

~Thomas Spacht

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<sup>19</sup> A. Reinhard, *Studien für Harmonium*, Opus 74 (Amsterdam: Hinrichshofen, 1901) in Oortmerssen, *Organ Technique*, 40.

<sup>20</sup> Kocher et al., *Orgelspielbuch* (n.p., 1851), 32, in Oortmerssen, *Organ Technique*, 25.

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