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contemporary with the builders. Her frequent analyses of nineteenth-century commentaries not only assist in defining the instruments, but shed light on performance practices and on the general musical outlook. Thus, this book holds great interest for a person having general interest in the subject, even though the organ historian may appear to be the primary subject of address.

The Organ in New England is one of the most significant writings to appear in the history of American organ building and is the most important in its specific area. It is highly recommended to all individuals and institutions who wish to have the benefit of the most authoritative work in the field.

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Peter Williams. *A New History of the Organ, from the Greeks to the Present Day*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980. 233 pp.; 51 black-and-white plates. \$27.50.

Peter Williams is one of the foremost organ historians of today, as well as a lucid writer who has the ability to condense a formidable amount of material into a readable account. While it is not strictly true, as Williams states, that no writer has attempted to present in a single volume the complex history of the organ since Hopkins and Rimbault (1855; rev. eds., 1870 and 1877), there is no question that much has been learned since the first publication of his compatriot William Leslie Sumner's *The Organ* in 1952, and even since then, as Williams points out, scholarly attitudes toward the organ have changed considerably.

The *New History* is plainly intended for both scholar and novice, and this approach has both its strengths and its weaknesses. Obvious strengths lie in its value as a concise reference work and the generally up-to-date nature of its sources. A weakness is its occasional sketchiness; questions are often left without answers, opinions without apparent documentation. Granted there are excellent bibliographical references by means of which the determined scholar might fill in most of the lacunae, but the novice may well be left puzzling over

portions which presuppose prior knowledge, such as the not infrequent quotation of stoplists of all periods by pitches only. Where stoplists are given, however, the source is always cited, so that the curious reader may look up additional information on a given organ, if desired. Still, it is sometimes amazing how much background material Williams does manage to squeeze into relatively few pages: maps, a guide to pitch designations, useful bits of knowledge such as how wind pressures are measured, etc. If there is any inconsistency in this book, it is that in one place considerable detail will be given, while in another a subject will be quickly skimmed over, as though the writer feels he has run out of space and must rush on to the next chapter.

In the brief first chapter Williams indulges an obviously lively interest in etymology with an excursion into the origins of the word "organ." Chapters 2, 3, and, to a large extent, 4 are essentially a digest of Jean Perrot's *L'orgue de ses origines hellénistiques à la fin du XIIIe siècle*. This should by no means be construed as a criticism, for although Perrot's rather exhaustive work is now available in English, it tends to be turgid and repetitious. Williams strips it to its essentials, which turn out to be fascinating if spare.

In Chapter 4 Williams analyzes several medieval treatises on pipe scaling, but cites no actual examples. The modern history of the organ essentially begins with Chapter 5, in which Williams raises some thoughtful questions on the use and location of church organs in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. He also offers his own knowledgeable interpretation of the Gothic organ of Halberstadt, as described by Praetorius in his *Syntagma musicum*. But can he really believe that, considering the apparent clumsiness of the whole mechanism, the organist played Manual III with his knees?

In Chapter 6 Williams gives us some extremely lucid definitions of the differences between portative and positive, complete with a good diagram of the "pin" type of action which was typical of all of the former and many of the latter. Another important treatise, that of Henri Arnaut de Zwolle, is briefly and informatively analyzed in Chapter 7. The discussion of fifteenth-century organs is continued in Chapter 8, and in Chapter 9 another early source, Schlick's sixteenth-century *Spiegel der Orgelmacher*, is treated. Williams's analysis of the technical aspects is excellent, but some of his conclusions regard-

ing performance practice are questionable. Early examples by Bull, Santa Maria, and others effectively deny the myth of totally “thumbless” fingering, and the presumed three- and four-part “pedal” passages are just as likely to be *terza mano* passages such as are occasionally found in French and Italian sources.

With the tenth chapter we begin to come onto more familiar ground as far as extant organs and accessible musical sources are concerned. Williams’s observations on sixteenth-century registrational practices, particularly with regard to the prevalence of “spare” registrations, are worthy of careful study by performers. Likewise instructive are the mechanical descriptions and excellent diagrams of Chapter 11. Chapter 12 discusses the development of the so-called *Werkprinzip* (a modern term), which determined both the physical shape and tonal disposition of the seventeenth-century organ. An error not caught in the text (although it is corrected in the caption of a picture later on) is the attribution to Dirk Hoyer of the organ in Stade completed by Schnitger; it was actually begun by Schnitger’s mentor, Barend Huss.

Continuing with the seventeenth century and beyond, Chapter 13 discusses the French classic organ. Williams perhaps places too much trust in Mersenne as a source (although admitting that he may have been influenced by Praetorius), and his statement about early pedal 16’ ranks is ambiguous, since these early French examples (*trompes* or *bourdons*) were hardly independent stops but rather downward extensions of the 8’ Principal, played by pedals for the sake of convenience. In discussing French reeds, Williams notes their distinction from Spanish reeds (often overlooked by modern builders), their important function in the chorus, and their role in determining wind pressure. With regard to the latter, Poitiers Cathedral is probably not the most reliable example, as the entire wind supply of this organ dates from the nineteenth century.

Williams begins Chapter 14 (on Bach’s organs) with the extremely important observation that Bach was exposed to very different types of organs during the course of his long productive career—a fact which should be taken very seriously by every interpreter of Bach’s organ works. In his discussion of Silbermann’s organs, Williams makes an intriguing reference to the possibility that Silbermann may have worked in Schnitger’s Berlin workshop before building his Frei-

berg (Saxony) Cathedral organ in 1710. The Freiberg organ seems to be remarkably free of Schnitger influences, however. Its layout is more French than Hamburgian, its reeds are of the French double-block construction, its covered flutes (similar to French ones in scale) have moveable caps, and its Principals, with their slightly overhung upper lips, are typical of South/Central German work. There is no *Rückpositiv*, and the Pedal is rather spare. On the other hand, if Silbermann did indeed work for Schnitger in Berlin, it might explain some of the un-Schnitger-like inconsistencies of the Schloss Charlottenburg organ of 1706. Certainly it is hoped that Williams will pursue this research further.

Chapters 15 and 16 (Iberian and Italian Baroque) are essentially condensations of the chapters on the same subjects in Williams's *The European Organ*, and this might be a good place to suggest that this earlier and more detailed work should be regarded as an almost indispensable companion to the *New History* on one's bookshelf.

Chapter 17, on the early English organ, commences with some deprecating comments with which this reviewer cannot completely concur. Because of the dearth of records we cannot know whether the English organ before the sixteenth century had any influence on the Continent or not (English musicians certainly did). Williams notes that many early English builders appear to have been Flemish or French, but overlooks the fact that English and Scottish builders are recorded in France in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Expatriate English builders were found in France in the seventeenth century also, and the eighteenth-century English organ had a crucial influence on early American organ building, even altering the practices of Germanic builders here.

Williams begins Chapter 18 with the observation that after 1500 the historian must deal with two distinct types of organ: the "average" and the "really large," which is always something of an exception (and usually had secular as well as churchly functions). Several such instruments are briefly analyzed. One must question Williams's citation of "unsteady wind" as part of the specification of the great Stellwagen organ at Stralsund, which might mislead the reader into thinking that Stellwagen intentionally made the wind supply less steady than the norm for his day, which is certainly not the case.

Comments on the wind supply of this organ are at any rate moot, since it has been altered. Williams concludes the chapter with the statement that by 1800 the Baroque organ had been pushed to its tonal and technical limit and the time was ripe for new philosophies.

Chapter 19 charts some of the background of the nineteenth-century organ as reflected in new concepts such as the orchestral theory (i.e., the concept that the organ was, tonally, more of a substitute for an orchestra, or for orchestral instruments, than an idiomatic instrument in its own right). Curiously, there is no mention of changes in tuning procedures, especially the shift from mean-tone-based systems to equal or "well-tempered" ones, which would explain the disappearance of tierce mixtures that seems to puzzle Williams. Considering that the subject of nineteenth-century organ technology could easily occupy a whole book, Chapter 20, while covering many high points, is so fast-paced as to leave one almost breathless. Unfortunately, it also dumps a lot of unanswered questions on the reader. By "Hodges of Bristol" does Williams mean the organist Dr. Edward Hodges, or some obscure builder? A few additional words could have clarified references such as this.

This reviewer must take issue with some of the statements on free reeds. Certainly they were used in Germany after 1850, and occasionally in the United States and England as late as the 1880s. They hardly led to the reed organ, but probably derived *from* it, at least in the form used. The free reeds of Callinet and other Alsations, often used as a pedal 16' in the mid-nineteenth century, possibly have a closer link with Grenié's individual-resonator reed organ of 1810 than with German examples. Also unfortunate are the probably unintentional suggestion that detached consoles were a nineteenth-century development and the presumed misprint on page 166 that substitutes "rollerboards" for "rollerbeards."

Important nineteenth-century organs are discussed in Chapter 21, and because of the wide variations among nineteenth-century tonal designs, specifications given only in pitches are particularly annoying here. A few misconceptions concerning American organ history appear in Chapters 20 and 21. It is hardly true that the German builder Walcker enjoyed a "boom" in America in the nineteenth century. Outside of the well-known large organ for Boston Music Hall,

Walcker's exports consisted of only one church organ and a few house organs. And the statement about the use of "general swells" by the American firm of E. & G. G. Hook is frankly puzzling; the term usually refers to all divisions of an organ being placed in a common swellbox. This was rarely done in the United States before 1900, and never by Hook. Single-manual organs were of course often enclosed, but this practice was hardly limited to any builder or country in the nineteenth century.

A good point is made concerning the growing distinction between church and concert-hall organs and the fact that technical and tonal innovations often made their first appearance in the latter. But the comment on the "reactionary" *Rückpositiv* of the Merseberg Cathedral organ is misleading, since the casework dates from an earlier organ, and the *Rückpositiv* is in any event furnished with its own keydesk to function as an independent small organ when required.

The twentieth century is entered (with a trace of distaste on Williams's part) in Chapter 22. It's a bit of a pity that he seems unable to enjoy a cinema organ, but he should be pleased to know that the Diaphone, which he feels would be more effective as a foghorn, was used in the United States for many years for that very purpose.

The final four chapters deal with a subject obviously closer to Williams's heart than cinema organs: the organ reform movement. Tracing it from its earliest beginnings in Germany during the 1920s and 1930s, he charts its progress through Europe to England and the United States. He does not gloss over its early failings and misconceptions, although one wishes he were a bit more severe with some of the misbegotten "restorations" of the early days that often radically altered historic organs and eradicated some of their authentic features. It is doubtful, too, whether the conscious attempt in some quarters to combine German and French elements was in any way related to the unconscious synthesis of these styles by eighteenth-century builders such as Riepp.

Well-earned recognition is given to some of the recent "purist" restorations and to the fact that present-day builders are learning much from old organs which affects their new work. The large organ at Muri is perhaps not the best such "restoration" that can be cited, since it contains so much new work that it is at best an excellent

Metzler organ containing old pipework. But the smaller organs at Muri certainly exemplify this new restoration ideal, as do the two Groningen restorations, still in progress, which Williams praises. More "old-new" organs might have been mentioned, although the Garnier instrument in Strasbourg that is cited is surely one of the finest. Williams does not explain why he finds this organ "not faultless"; the only fault this writer could observe was in the failure of its "new-old" wind system to function as planned, and this is now being corrected.

In his closing chapter Williams (probably wisely) makes no sweeping predictions, but concludes on an optimistic note which is shared by this reviewer. His final quotation is particularly apt, for, however reluctantly, portions of the musical world are again beginning to perceive the organ as simply a "large wind instrument," with all that is implied musically and aesthetically by this idea.

At the end of the book is a useful glossary of terms, an extensive index, and a fairly good selection of plates. "Fairly," because it seems slightly lopsided in some respects. Why is no large seventeenth- or eighteenth-century English case shown? Or any nineteenth-century German or large new American one? Why is the professional photographer Jim Lewis of California not given credit for the use of his fine photographs (nos. 39, 40, 42, and 47)? And was it a cruel fate that ordained that the caption of no. 39—the organ in this reviewer's own church—should be in error? For the record, this organ was extensively rebuilt in 1889 and 1957 (not 1975) and has always had mechanical key action.

Should one apologize for what may be an overly long review? Not, perhaps, when a book is as comprehensive and important in its field as this one, or written by such a distinguished scholar. It belongs in every college and civic library and should be owned by every serious student or admirer of the organ. Peter Williams has added to the literature on keyboard instruments an indispensable reference work which will not soon be outmoded.

BARBARA OWEN