

Organ music

reviews

Hymnes de l'église et le Magnificat ou Cantique de la Vierge par toucher sur l'orgue par Jean Titelouze, ed. Jon Baxendale LYREBIRD ISMN 979-0-706670-54-6

Le manuscrit Caumont orgue ed. Jon Baxendale LYREBIRD ISMN 979-0-706670-18-8

Georg Muffat, *Apparatus Musico-Organisticus: Toccatas, Ciacona, Passacaglia, and Nova Cyclopeias harmonica* ed. Jon Baxendale LYREBIRD ISMN 979-0-706670-01-1

Three new publications from Lyrebird music are of sufficient significance to deserve some extended consideration. Lyrebird, run by the harpsichordist and musicologist Jon Baxendale, glances back in its name – as readers will know – to the famous L'Oiseau lyre, founded by the Australian pianist Louise Dyer in 1932 initially to publish editions of historical music. L'Oiseau lyre editions, including famously of François Couperin in 1933, and then, later, recordings, were a benchmark of scholarship. Les Éditions de l'Oiseau-lyre ceased in Europe in 2014 (the recording side had become part of Decca). But Baxendale's Lyrebird, with attractive production standards for the published music, fills in something of the gap left behind in scholarly editing.

Three fascinating contributions here: two well-known and important composers and publications in the history of music for the European organ; one, the newly named Caumont manuscript, appears for the first time in print.



Jean Titelouze – whose name is perhaps primarily known to players with more modern preferences through Marcel Dupré's *Le tombeau de Titelouze Op. 38* (1942) – was a priest, canon, and organist of Rouen Cathedral. Born in St-Omer, then in the Spanish Netherlands, perhaps in 1562 or 3, Titelouze was appointed titulaire at Rouen Cathedral in 1588 – a young man. He was well-known as a player, including in improvisation, and was an adviser on organ construction, being active not least in securing the services of Crespin Carlier (c.1560-1636) for the cathedral organ at Rouen. The result was admired. Carlier, it might be added, also worked on the St-Ouen instrument in Rouen, made so famous later by Aristide Cavaillé-Coll.

Titelouze's music here – the two volumes of *alternatim* organ

pieces published in 1623 and 1626 – belongs largely with the world of polyphonic vocal music. He was, as well as a composer, a gifted poet of intricate words and this is true, *mutatis mutandis*, of his music. The level of internal imitation is persistently rich though periodically punctuated by *bravura* passages, like sudden bursts of previously contained energy. The virtuosity, nevertheless, is more in the counterpoint – in each of the eight church tones for the Magnificat, for instance – than in the technique required to play it. The employment of *notes inégales* and of ornamentation must be left to the *bon goût* of the player as, of course, is more generally true. Titelouze leaves precious little guidance (which at least relieves the player of the challenge of working out what to do with guidance).

Titelouze also gives little

information about registration in the acclaimed *Hymnes de l'église* and the canticle. We can't be at all sure that the distinctive sound worlds of later French composers were anticipated in how he might have expected his music to have been heard. Pedals – of however basic a form – seem to have been required only minimally, though here, as elsewhere in the performing practice of this work, there is uncertainty. Assessing the evidence, from Titelouze's own statements to the layout of the pieces themselves, results in some contradictory conclusions. Sometimes, it might be, adding a 16ft (either stopped or open) to the *plein jeu* produces some satisfactory effects, filling-out the depths of the contrapuntal sound as pedals could differently achieve. But the authority of such a proposition is rather hesitant.

Titelouze seems far away from much of the subsequent development of what we would think of as Classical French organ music though not completely. His publications were the first known in French organ music, by the way, for nearly a century following the work issued by the Parisian (?) publisher Pierre Attaignant (c.1494-1551/2) in 1531. How good it would be to hear more *alternatim* organ music live with singer(s) in the UK.

Nearly another hundred years passes by ... and *Le manuscrit Caumont orgue* (1707) appears. Or rather, barely appears at all. Certainly, it is only published for the first time, again edited by Jon Baxendale, more than 300 years after it is dated. (The title is editorial.) Privately owned, by Mme Catherine Caumont, the manuscript – was its existence known about at all previously? – is written with exceptionally fine calligraphy, a few pages of which are reproduced in the introductory material and elsewhere in this new edition. It is a thought still from the Renaissance, perhaps, that elegant writing is a sign of education as much as learning. The MS's provenance

is, as I say, hardly known: rather staggeringly, it was bought from an antiques dealer in Amiens in 2008: the dealer had him/herself purchased it in an auction in Honfleur. How did it get there?

Once more, this is *alternatim* music for the French Catholic liturgy. Some is quite spare, or at least, plainly homophonic – 4. *Prelude*, for instance, 50. *Dialogue*, or 64 and 85, *Concert des flûtes* – and one can easily imagine them as versets in relation to a cantor or a group of singers. The extent to which such pieces might have been a basis for improvised additions is largely unknown. Interestingly, this music is not plain-song based or built around a mass in the manner of, say, Couperin's *Messe pour les couvents* (1690). The long sustained *cantus firmus* of the chant that characterises Titelouze's work as described above is not a building block here. There are 111 pieces in total and it is conjectured plausibly by the editor that, given that the two groups of material in the Caumont MS involve Tones V and VI only, that there were at least three other collections now missing. One hopes somebody is keeping an eye on the auction houses of Honfleur...

Unlike Titelouze in another respect, the Caumont MS does give quite detailed indication of registration and is replete with ornamentation. In terms of the former, we are most certainly in the language of French Classical tradition: the Tierce; the Vox humaine; Cromorne; Cornet; Trompette; and various requirements for Echo (indeed, some of these pieces require a large instrument, with 4 manuals – a point to which I return). There are various pieces/passages which specify the use of the pedals and it is worth bearing in mind this might well have involved 8ft rather than 16ft pitch. It is to be wished that more was known about the general ability of French organists (well, any organists) at this time with the pedals – certainly, pieces that deploy the pedalboard here need

some care but none is particularly difficult (though that naturally depends on how the pedalboard was configured and how awkward it was to play). There are a few long pieces, including 51. *Dialogue pour le tremblant a vent perdu a quatre chœurs* [the absence of accents in the text is rather peculiar to the modern reader], which is a grand and colourful movement. Number 52 is in even grander, a stately 'Offerte' – that is, music to cover the actions of the Offertory as distinct from entering a dialogue with the sung liturgy (that is, distinct from *alternatim*). What dignity and vitality this music must have brought to worship. It would have been a remarkable experience in a great building with a substantial organ – one of the most complicated pieces of machinery known at this point in Europe.

Who wrote the pieces in the Caumont manuscript? Someone (or some people) who, certainly, helped move organ music away from the polyphonic manner of Titelouze not least in dialogues, trios, and en taille pieces. But who was he/were they? Some pieces are attributed but Jon Baxendale thinks the most likely candidate for the unattributed material is a single composer: Jacques Boyvin (c.1649-1706). He had followed Titelouze several decades later as *titulaire* at the Cathedral of Rouen, where, by then, he presided over the four-manual Clicquot instrument, one of the largest in France (a piece of evidence in relation to the four-manual requirements of Caumont pieces). Boyvin is, as it happens, a named composer for some of the movements in the MS.

One of the fascinating features of this collection is the way in which it reminds one of what a fugue meant at this point in the late seventeenth/early eighteenth century in France, and allows one to chart something of the development of the *quatuor* [quartet], a form of distinctively active fugal writing, with its own peculiar sound world (including, often enough, reeds (tiece, and tremblant), perhaps

best known from De Grigny, who died four years before the Caumont MS was dated (cf. 93, Quatuor in this edition). Questions of performing practice (including ornaments) are amply discussed in the introduction, supported by contemporary writing including views from Boyvin himself. We are in a slightly better documented world than Titelouze's though, of course, as is well recognized, what might be read in a primer or an essay might have been quite different from how music was played in actual performance. We can't know. *Le bon goût* remains the guide.

The final volume of some of Lyrebird's new music considered here is a celebrated, virtuosic masterpiece: Georg Muffat's *Apparatus Musico-Organisticus: Toccatas, Ciacona, Passacaglia, and Nova Cyclopeias harmonica*, in its expanded second edition of 1690. Muffat's father André was from a Scottish family; his mother, Marguerite Orsyand, a French: he himself was baptised (and presumably born), in a commune near Mont Blanc in the Savoy

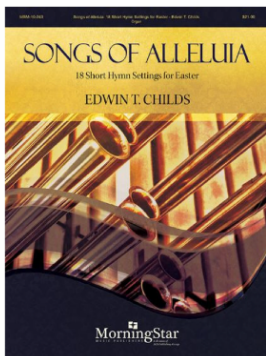
Region. National cross-overs would later help define his music – though it is worth pausing to underline the fact that such cross-overs were of sufficient importance for other musicians, all the way to Bach and Handel, of course, that it is better to think of a clear difference between a so-called 'national style' and the actual borders of a nation (mobile that those could be in the Baroque period anyway). Styles crossed borders: that is what they did. This helps give substance, perhaps counter-intuitively, to Jon Baxendale's firm statement that few recognize that 'Muffat's organ music is fundamentally German'. This is a claim about a style described by a national term though not limited to that nation. Neither addressed to the Catholic liturgy nor, primarily, the dance, such organ music turns to thematic development, chiefly in counterpoint – and that is what makes Muffat seemingly German. Counterpoint there is here, for sure, though the rapid figurations of the keyboard toccatas of Italy – Frescobaldi, no question – and Italian string music (Corelli), enrich this dazzling repertoire (which

I have been listening to most recently in the fine recording by the Italian organist, Adriano Falconi). Sometimes – the beginning of the *Toccatà septima*, for instance – the music of the French Classical period, the age of Couperin, feels at hand. Sweelinck, as in the lovely *Passacaglia*, it might be likewise.

Jon Baxendale provides some useful notes on the ornamentation in *Apparatus Musico-Organisticus*: like Boyvin, Muffat left descriptions of practice (or ideal practice, or a practice that was a starting point – who knows?) and these are worth studying as one thinks about performing this fertile music. Fine hard-back, flat-opening publications of work with exceptional historical and musical interest, these three publications form a kind of emblematic narrative of one story that might be told about early Baroque music for the organ: the changes in keyboard technique, expression, and idiom (not least seemingly national idiom) across seventeenth-century western Europe. An admirable group of publications.

Francis O'Gorman

Songs of Alleluia 18 Short Hymn Settings for Easter



Edwin T Childs, Morning Start Music Publishers MSM-10-243
Tunes: *Besançon, Christ ist*

erstanden, Duke Street, Easter Hymn, Gaudeamus partier (Ave Virgo Virginum), Gelobt sei Gott, Hymn to Joy, Lancashire, Lasst uns erfreuen, Llanfair, Mit Freuden zart, Orientis partibus, Passion Chorale, Salve festa die, Victory, Vruechten, Were you there, Wie Schöne leuchtet

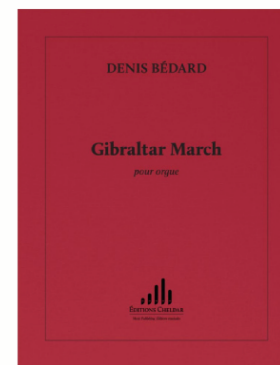
Childs has put together an album of thoughtful, approachable, and useful compositions. He obviously understands what organists require in creating these 18 pieces to be used during the Easter season as short voluntaries, introductions or brief preludes or postludes. Some are suitable as gospel fanfares. The set will appeal to organists of all abilities. There are many pieces

of note from an excellent Allegro on *Salve Festa Dies* to Childs' take on *Were you there*, that can be played contemplatively and with introspection during Holy Week or communion or as a more dramatic setting with a delicious crescendo leading to concluding sfz pedal note. *This joyful Eastertide* could be used as a short processional before the choir sings the carol. A set of well-composed effective hymn tune settings that will not disappoint. As with all Morning Star publications: fine editing, excellent clear layout and fine printing that make for excellent quality productions. A terrific addition to the Easter repertoire.

Andrew Palmer

Denis Bédard, Gibraltar March

RSCM CH67, ISBN 978-0-85402-277-9 Commissioned for the rededication of the organ at Holy Trinity Cathedral, Gibraltar in 2017, this is a triumphal march that would work well as a recital piece or as a wedding march. Lasting around 5 minutes, it is of moderate difficulty, and ideally calls for an instrument with plenty of power. It has a rondo-like form, with a jaunty and memorable principal theme above a simple accompaniment texture in the left hand and pedals. Contrasting sections in several related keys variously exploit different timbres and chromatic sequences. While firmly diatonic in its harmonic structure and direction, there's a lot of use of chromaticism to build tension and to create a few surprises along the way. Bédard's writing is idiomatic,

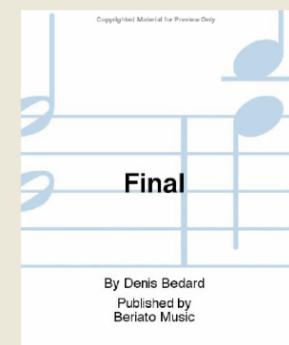


sits well under the hands and feet, and has the imagination to create an attractive piece that will likely prove popular with audiences.

Martin Clarke

Denis Bédard, Final

RSCM CH66, ISBN 978-0-85402-261-8 This is an attractive and approachable piece that showcases Bédard's flair for writing memorable melodies, his technical fluency in writing for organ, and his characteristic use of parallel harmonies within a firmly diatonic framework. Composed in 2011 to commemorate Linda van Niewerk's twenty-year anniversary as organist of First United Methodist Church, Orlando, Florida, it has a suitably celebratory character. Performance directions are limited to dynamic markings, and the piece would work well on an organ of modest tonal resource, but also affords opportunity to exploit a much larger tonal palette. There's a fair amount of nimble finger-work required, and a long pedal trill near the end, but



overall the technical demands are moderate. The main theme has a quasi-modal character that lends itself well to Bédard's harmonic explorations, and organists familiar with his work already will recognise plenty of trademark features.

Martin Clarke

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