

Quotations for discussion

William Leslie Sumner, in *The Organ* (London, MacDonald and Co., 1952):

If the organist, trying to respect the wishes of the organ composer, slavishly follows the printed directions on the score with respect to the choice of stops, the effect may be unsuitable or even ludicrous. (369)

Much organ-playing is far too loud, and a long period of loud or moderately loud playing will lead the ear to adjust itself to this as a norm. The organist is then left with few further resources either to produce climactic effects or to obtain tonal variety. (371)

Peter Hurford, in *Making Music on the Organ* (Oxford, OUP, 1988):

... as an interpretive instrument, the organ responds best to music containing as few notes as possible, in the sense that the best art employs an economy of means in which superfluous strokes—of the pen or of the brush—are ruthlessly suppressed. ‘Big is best’ only when largeness is a necessary concomitant of the art’s expressive nature; and ‘small is beautiful’ when it is the result of disciplined thought, and not simply a less glorious version of ‘big.’ (135)

If there are two paramount objects in an organ student’s education, the first is the acquisition of a sense of integrity in the combining of music, instrument, and interpretation: not to encourage narrowness of thought or purism of outlook in the musician, but in order to create a yardstick of excellence. The situation where the instrument and the music are ideally matched is of course extremely rare. (137)

Kimberly Marshall, in “A survey of historical performance practices,” *The Cambridge Companion to the Organ*, ed. Thistlethwaite and Webber (Cambridge, CUP, 1998):

Especially futile for the modern performer is the application of a performance style that is inappropriate to the organ being played, for example attempting to follow Couperin’s instructions to harpsichordists on mammoth romantic organs, or using Lemmens’s organ technique on a moderately-sized Baroque instrument or replica. (129)

Eric Thiman, in *The Beginning Organist* (London, Ascherberg, Hopwood and Crew Ltd, 1954), on the subject of playing hymns:

As a matter of fact, even the smallest organ can provide far more tonal variety, without wide dynamic changes, than is generally realized.

Here are a few possibilities (out of many) for a small two-manual organ, which will give a generous amount of tonal variety, even for a long hymn:--

- a) Gt Diap. 8, uncoupled, without Ped.
- b) Gt. 16 and 8 an octave higher, uncoupled, without Ped.
- c) Gt. Principal 4, 8ve lower, *mf* Sw. coupled, without Ped.
- d) Full Sw.
- e) ‘a’ with Sw. coupled, Ped. 16
- f) ‘b’ with soft Sw. coupled, with 16 Ped.
- g) Full Gt., and Sw., with full Ped.

It is an excellent thing to rest the Pedals sometimes; with a small organ, the continuous use of the Pedal Bourdon gets very wearisome to the ear; and it is also well worth remembering that the Swell to Great Coupler is designed to go in at times, as well as out. (2)