

Two organs Mendelssohn played

From an early age Mendelssohn's hobby, wherever he travelled, was trying out different pipe organs. Usually he improvised and often committed the results to his notebooks. He played on instruments throughout Europe but had a particular affection for England, which he visited ten times. However he could play Bach and his own compositions on only the few instruments that had suitable pedal boards. With his customary tact and diplomacy he described the organ in Christ Church, Newgate St. as 'the finest he had yet played in Britain.'¹ However, despite its impressive looking pedal division, 'none of the Pedal stops had a complete compass. With the possible exception of the larger of the wooden open diapasons ... which had seventeen notes, the flue registers had only a single octave of pipes. The reeds were even more deficient: they had only five notes derived from the old manual basses GG to BB.'² Note that there is no Tuba or Voix Céleste!

1838 Hill Organ in Christ Church Greyfriars, Newgate Street

<u>Great</u> (C to f3)		<u>Swell</u> (C to f3)		<u>Choir</u> (C to f3)	
Double Open Diapason	16	Double Diapason	16	Open Diapason	8
Open Diapason I	8	Open Diapason	8	Stopped Diapason	8
Open Diapason II	8	Stopped Diapason	8	Principal	4
Stopped Diapason	8	Principal	4	Stopped Flute	4
Principal	4	Flageolet	4	Fifteenth	2
Twelfth	2 ^{2/3}	Fifteenth	2		
Fifteenth	2	Sesquialtera	V		
Sesquialtera	V	Horn	8		
Mixture	V	Trumpet	8		
Doublette	II	Oboe	8		
Double Trumpet	16	Clarion	4		
Posaune	8				
Clarion	4				
		<u>Pedal</u> (C to g ³)			
		Great Diapason (wood)	16		
		Open Diapason, small (wood)	16		
		Open Diapason (metal)	16		
		Principal	8		
		Twelfth	5 ^{1/3}		
		Fifteenth	4		
		Sesquialtera	VI		
		Mixture	V		
		Posaune	16		
		Clarion	8		

Sw./Gt; Sw./Ch; Ch./Gt; Gt./Ped; Sw./Ped; Ch./Ped.

The provision of pedal divisions was often very sketchy in Britain. Some instruments were built with an extra manual keyboard at the side for a second player to play the 16ft pipes! It was largely through the influence of Mendelssohn, his admirer Dr. Gauntlett, the organ builder William Hill and Frederick Davison that the rather insular English gradually began to adopt the 'German System' with manuals beginning at C and pedals at CC with at least two octaves in the pedals.

In his native Germany things were usually very different. Mendelssohn gave the first performance of his Sonatas, to friends, on the organ in St. Katherine's Church in Frankfurt.³ Note the absence of an enclosed division and the difference in the reeds - no Oboe, Tuba, or Full Swell! The string stops on these instruments tend to start to sound very slowly, imitating the scraping of the bow.

The mixtures often contain 1^{3/5} ranks.

The Sonatas are dedicated to *Herrn Dr. F. Schlemmer in Frankfurt am Main*.

1845 Stumm Organ - St. Katherine's Church, Frankfurt

I		II		III		Pedal	
<u>Hauptwerk</u>		<u>Positiv</u>		<u>Echwerk</u>			
Groß Bordun	16	Hohlpfeife	8	Hohlpfeife	8	Prinzival	16
Prinzival	8	Flaut travers	8	Flöte	4	Subbaß	16
Viola di Gamba	8	Salicional	8	Spitzflöte	4	Violon	8
Gedackt	8	Prinzival	4	Octav	2	Octav	8
Quintathön	8	Rohrflöte	4	Quint	1 ^{1/3}	Flötenbaß	8
Octav	4	Quint	3	Krummhorn	8	Superoctave	4
Flöte	4	Octav	2	Vox humana	8	Posaune	16
Salicional	4	Mixtur IV				Klarine	4
Quint	3	Krummhorn	8			Kornett	2
Superoctave	2	Vox humana	8				
Waldflöte	2						
Cornett V	8						
Mixtur IV	2	<i>Koppeln: II/I</i>				<i>Koppeln: I/Ped</i>	
Cimbel II	1						
Trompete	8						

It is worth quoting Mendelssohn's own preface to the Sonatas.

'Much depends, in these Sonatas, on the right choice of stops; however, as every organ with which I am acquainted has its own peculiar mode of treatment in this respect, and as the same nominal combination does not produce exactly the same effect on different instruments, I have given only a general indication of the kind of effect intended to be produced, without giving a precise list of the particular stops to be used.

By *fortissimo* I intend to designate the Full organ; by *pianissimo* I generally mean a soft 8-ft stop alone; by *forte* the Great Organ, but without some of the more powerful stops; by *piano* some of the soft 8-ft stops combined; and so forth.

In the *pedal* part I should prefer throughout, even in the *pianissimo* passages, the 8-ft and the 16-ft stops united, except when the contrary is expressly specified (see the Sonata VI).

It is therefore left to the judgement of the performer to mix the different stops appropriately to the style of the various pieces - advising him, however, to be careful that, in combining the stops belonging to two different sets of keys, the kind of tone in the one should be distinguished from that in the other, but without forming too violent a contrast between the two distinct qualities of tone.'

¹ Mendelssohn's playing: playing Mendelssohn

Johannes Geffert

RCO Journal 2009-10-10

² The making of the VICTORIAN ORGAN

Nicholas Thistlethwaite

Cambridge University Press

³ German Romantic Organ Music

Henry Fairs

Organists' Review August 2005

Sonata No. 1 in F minor

I Allegro moderato e serioso. II Adagio. III Andante. Recitativo. IV Allegro vivace assai

He that shall endure to the end

(Elijah No. 32)

Andante sostenuto

p *pp*

He that shall en - dure to the end, shall be sa - ved.

Lobegesang

No. 8

A Un poco piu animato

Chorale

Instruments

p *f*

3

Glo - ry and praise to

5

God The Fa - ther, Son, be giv - en,

8

And

10

to the Ho - ly Ghost, On

12

high en - throned in Hea - ven.

B

15

Praise to the Three - One God;

17

With pow'r - ful arm and strong,

20

He chang-eth

23

night to day;

26

p Praise Him with grate-ful song.

29