

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF REGISTRATION PRACTICES IN
SELECTED ORGAN WORKS OF JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH
(1685–1750) BASED ON RECORDINGS MADE BY MARIE-CLAIRE
ALAIN AND JACQUES VAN OORTMERSSEN**

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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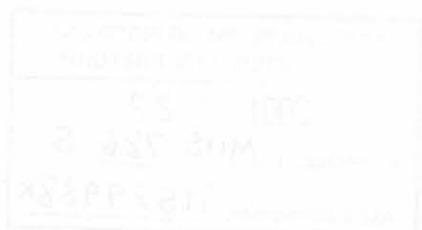
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This thesis is dedicated to Zelda.

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SUMMARY

Title: A comparative study of registration practices in selected organ works of Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) based on recordings made by Marie-Claire Alain and Jacques van Oortmerssen.

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A firm knowledge of registration is an indispensable prerequisite of historical performance practice and is an absolute necessity for the proper interpretation and understanding of the music that is performed. The recent emphasis on the study concerning registration has assisted performers such as Marie-Claire Alain and Jacques van Oortmerssen immeasurably in the appreciation of the literature in this field.

Although eighteenth-century registration practices do not always provide specific or conclusive evidence in many areas, the information that is proffered, is far from insignificant. On the contrary, these provide a generous amount of relevant and usable knowledge, as reflected in the writings of composers, theoreticians and organ builders of this era. Many of these writings are valuable in the sense that most of the authors were contemporaries of Bach. Consequently, they give us an idea of the tonal ideal, general trends and principles that were popular in terms of registration during the eighteenth-century.

This study is of a comparative nature and is based on an empirical analysis of historical

practices of registration and the implementation thereof in the organ works of Johann Sebastian Bach. Alain and Van Oortmerssen's registrations are generally based on historical guidelines and principles as prescribed or suggested by the relevant authors on the subject on a particular area of registration, and consequently they apply these registrations practically to the genre of organ music in question.

Both Alain and Van Oortmerssen's approaches to registration, although based on the principles of historical registration practices, are examples of singular creativity, exceptional personal practices and disciplined preferences. These aspects enhance the fact that no organ work will ever be performed in exactly the same manner by any number of artists in the sense of registration. The registration preferences of Alain and Van Oortmerssen testify of uninhibited approach, while still remaining subjective to the basic trends of a particular work being performed.

Keywords:

- Alain – Van Oortmerssen – recordings – Bach – registration – historical organs – Mattheson – Adlung – Agricola – *plenum*

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