

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Wilfrid Mellers (1980: 307) states that authenticity in all its aspects is a complex ideal. It has two related aspects: one that has to do with what is known of historical evidence, while the other respects a given sequence of musical events. The two aspects may coincide, but need not. When they don't, it must be music that makes history, not the other way round.

Bach in his music offers the greatest challenge precisely because his art is least rigidly tied to a specific epoch. His position in European music history is regarded as crucial because, while firmly rooted in the Baroque, he took from a remote medieval past and consequently anticipated a future which is typical nineteenth-century Romanticism. (Mellers 1980: 307.)

Registration in itself is as old as the earliest known organ music and relates to the handling of a specific instrument and in particular to the organ in relation to a specific stylistic era. Style is therefore the hall-mark of a good performance and in terms of registration is the manner of expression characteristic to an organ of a specific period.

In each of the fifteen works discussed, analysed and compared both organists' performances tend to be a definite revelation. They perform Bach's music using the resources available and are not afraid to make adaptations in terms of registration.

Their existing and growing knowledge of historical performance practices have contributed immensely to the writer's personal understanding of Bach and his music. In

his closing statements Mellers (1980: 307) states: “Without historical knowledge sensitivity may mislead; but without sensitivity historical knowledge is impotent.”

Alain and Van Oortmerssen’ registrations are clearly based on a thorough knowledge and following the guidelines supplied by composers, theoreticians and organ builders as discussed in this thesis. They both implement fundamental principals of registrations in its entirety and more specific in relation to the contemporary suggestions and advice of Bach and his contemporaries.

In some instances Van Oortmerssen tends to be too dogmatic and rigid in his approach to registration as advised and suggested by theoreticians and composers such as Adlung and Kauffmann. Alain is more flexible and tends to let the music and most importantly, the instrument guide and decide for her. She shows greater respect for the instruments in this way and sometimes astonishes us with the results, however unorthodox it may seem theoretically. Forkel (Faulkner 1997: 233) tells us of Bach’s unorthodox registrations saying “Such observations [on acoustics] could and naturally did lead him to attempt to produce, by the unusual combination of different stops of the organ, effects unknown before and after him.”

In her unrelenting desire to learn and grow in the understanding and implementing of historical performance practices, Alain shows to be more experienced in her selection of registers. In the light of Alain’s vision of a performer, it is understandable why she believes that each performance is a creative work in its own right (Alain 1996:98). Considering her previous complete recordings of Bach’s organ works of 1960 and 1978, she has obviously put in much work and devotion over the years in an act of recovery and rediscovery.

Van Oortmerssen has the gift to bring out and clarify , with thoroughly researched registration, the complexity of texture and polyphony in the organ music of Bach. This is especially evident in the free works. He possesses an outstanding metrical precision completed with gracious and sometimes delicate registration to bring about the desired

affekt. His registration also amplifies a collaboration of vertical density with horizontal independence.

APPENDIX A

It is an arguable fact that both Marie-Claire Alain and Jacques van Oortmerssen approach the music of Bach with a romantically passionate humanity. Both organists have a streak of genius as far beyond intelligence as Bach's art is beyond his superlative craft.

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