

**LISZT FERENC ACADEMY OF MUSIC  
BUDAPEST**

**LÁSZLÓ GESZTESI-TÓTH**

**The Harmony of God, Man and Nature  
in Baroque Organ Building -  
Organ Toy Stops**

**A Dissertation Submitted to the Doctoral School  
for the Degree of Doctor of Liberal Arts**

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## ABSTRACT

In my doctoral dissertation I have examined the organ as a cultural and cultic object, and have strived to grasp an understanding of it beyond mere pieces of music, practical tasks in liturgy and the finesse of organ construction; to find out what the organ really signifies and how it has become the distinguished instrument of Latin Christianity. To answer these questions I have chosen a path that might at first glance seem unusual: I have given an account of the organ's toy stops – smiled at and looked down upon today (“the queen of all instruments’ court jesters”) – by revealing their historical background and their role in presenting the organ as a symbol of the Cosmos and Music.

The first part of the dissertation deals with the various historical transformations of the instrument. Along this line we may observe how the *Hydraulis* of the inventive Ctesibius of Alexandria in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. had by the 17<sup>th</sup> century A.D. become the queen of instruments. The organ was an accompanying instrument at Roman feasts and circus spectacles, an indispensable prop at ceremonies of Byzantine rulers, a miraculous sound instrument in the big monasteries at the turn of the millennium, and finally the embellishment of Christian liturgy, replacing the choir and symbolically incorporating the entire resounding world into hymns praising God; what is more, it even made the non-resounding elements of the universe visible and audible. This is how the Baroque organ, the instrument of instruments, unites the harmony of God, Man and Nature, with the help of exceptional expressive means: the toy stops. Besides the historical examination of organ construction I have sought to outline the main intellectual trends in the speculative music theories of Ancient Greece, late Antiquity, the Middle Ages and the Baroque and, based on these, to interpret the organ and each of its toy stops in a symbolic way.

In the second half of the dissertation, apart from the classification and detailed description of toy stops, I have presented two outstanding examples of German Baroque organ construction: the instruments at the Marienkirche in Stralsund and at the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul in Görlitz. The system of symbols of the age is vividly displayed by the rich ornamentation and numerous toy stops of both organs.

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