

Thesis of DLA Doctoral Dissertation

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THE DEVELOPMENT HISTORY OF BAROQUE STRING STOPS

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I. The background of the research

Comprehensive and detailed literature on European organs can mostly be read in German (See: II. Sources). Since interest in baroque organ building already took off in the 20th century with *Orgelbewegung* or the Organ Revival Movement – reaching its culmination in the neo-baroque style – it is a particular task to separate the ideology within the sources of the movement from the genuine results of historically accurate, objective undertakings with a modern perspective. The difficulty of this was primarily that while many publications made early scientific breakthroughs in terms of historical credibility, even after the decline of the neo-baroque style, there were still treatises that were conceived as an after-effect of the ‘baroque’ as defined by the organ movement.

Thanks to the study of organs that have survived intact throughout Europe and in Hungary in particular, a great deal of research and publications has been published in the last 50 years, which provide us with a picture of the organ-building tradition of individual builders and nations, but no comprehensive study of the 17th- and 18th-century string stop family, or one that looks specifically at period gut-stringed instruments, has yet been produced.

II. Sources

In order to understand what the experience of organ stops was that quoted the sound of the *viola da gamba* in the minds of the people of the time, we can draw on the treatises written about the instrument in its own time (Christopher Simpson: *The Division Viol.* London: William Godbid, 1659) and their publications in the literature (*Journal of the Viola da Gamba Society of America*, various issues; Hubert Le Blanc: *Verteidigung der Viola da gamba gegen die Angriffe der Violine und die Anmassung des Violoncells.* Trans. by Dr. Albert Erhard, Kassel/Basel: Bärenreiter, 1951), as well as the most comprehensive literature on the viol to date (Bettina Hoffmann: *The Viola da Gamba.* Trans. by Paul Ferguson. New York: Routledge, 2008).

From the point of view of baroque organ stops, the written records and treatises that describe the construction of the pipe organs of the period and try to capture their sound in words are crucial. The second volume of Michael Praetorius's *Syntagma Musicum (De organographia)*, Wolfenbüttel: Elias Holwein, 1619) and Jakob Adlung's comprehensive work on organ building, *Musica mechanica organoedi* (Berlin: Friedrich Wilhelm Birnstiel, 1768), are considered to be the basic primary sources on the subject. From the collections of specifications recorded over the centuries, and from reports of organ inaugurations or condition surveys, further relevant information may

be found on regional stylistic features, the habits of the instrument's builder, or even the timbre of a particular stop.

One of the most valuable contributions to the literature on the subject are documents and publications presenting the life's work of individual organ builders and detailed summaries of historically authentic organ restorations of recent decades:

- Felix Friedrich: *Der Orgelbauer Tobias Heinrich Gottfried Trost. Leben – Werk – Leistung.* Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1989.
- Josef Hopfenzitz: *Die Baumeister-Organ von 1737 in der Klosterkirche Maihingen. Erbauer, Werk und Restaurierung (1899/90).* Nördlingen: Druckerei & Verlag Steinmeier, 1991.
- Johannes Mayr: *Joseph Gabler. Orgelmacher.* Ochsenhausen: Biberacher Verlagsdruckerei, 2000.

I have been helped in understanding and exploring the historical interactions and stylistic characteristics of the regions and builders by Werner Renkewitz–Jan Janca: *Geschichte der Orgelbaukunst in Ost- und Westpreussen von 1333 bis 1944* (Würzburg: Weidlich, 1984), the *Acta Organologica* edited by Alfred Reichling and the issues of the journal *Ars Organi*.

III. Method

Throughout the dissertation I have used primary sources and secondary literature in parallel. First of all, I thought it important to describe the timbre of the viol and the tonal characteristics of the instrument resulting from the way it is played. The following chapter, based on the second volume of Praetorius' *Syntagma Musicum*, gives a brief insight into the development of the sound of organs before the 17th century, highlighting the appearance of the late Renaissance *Schweitzerpfeiffe*, which was the first significant milestone in the birth of later string stops.

I have studied the intonation and function of Baroque string stops on the basis of 17th-18th century descriptions, contemporary and modern organ-building textbooks, as well as through workshop visits and consultations with organ builders. I have also tested the practical application of examples of string stops on historical instruments, selected from the registration suggestions recorded in the Baroque period.

The most extensive part of the dissertation consists of chapter exploring the spread of string stops. This chapter discusses the organ builders and factors that have been important drivers for the development of the register family and its establishment in different regions. In cases that have been documented or can be explored, the presentation also covers construction solutions and innovations specific to individual nations and masters. In some cases, the subsections on

different centuries and regions include organ builders who showed some deviation in string stops from the regional conventions around them.

IV. Results

During my years at the Béla Bartók Conservatory, when I was introduced to viol, my interest gradually turned to early music. In addition to my studies at the Liszt Academy, I attended masterclasses in *basso continuo* and baroque chamber music, and later in viol. The personal contact with the stringed instrument gave me an experience that developed in me a more lively and orchestral way of playing the historical keyboard instruments' repertoire.

Another important impetus for the choice of the dissertation topic was the field trips to the organ department of the Liszt Academy, as well as further visits of particular organs, during which I was able to have a close look at a number of instruments, both Hungarian and foreign, preserved or restored in their original condition.

My dissertation represents a new aspect in the research of the last decades, in that it focuses on the Baroque string stops rather than on a global study of the various organ traditions of the 17th and 18th centuries, and approaches their intonation, sound and the possibilities of playing them from the perspective of the baroque bowed string instruments, especially the *viola da gamba*.

V. Documentation of professional undertakings related to the thesis

Educational activities:

- „The 18th century organs of Thuringia.” (lecture at the Solti György Music School, 2024.04.11.)
- Field trip and workshop day with the Bach-organ of Cegléd, Hungary, with the organ department of Solti György Music School. (2024.04.13.)
- „Questions of interpretation in French Baroque organ music in the light of Marin Marais' viol compositions and 17th-18th-century French instrumental practice.” (thematic day at the Solti György Music School (2024.10.17.)
- „The organ as ensemble – the baroque organ's imitation of instruments.” (lecture at the Miszla Baroque Early Music Academy, 2024.08.15.)

Performances:

- Concerts of the Doctoral Candidates (2023., 2024.)
 - J. S. Bach: Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor (BWV 582)
 - Bach–Vivaldi: Concerto in D minor (BWV 596)
- Intavolation after Giovanni Picci's Canzon Decima nona a doi chori (1625).
- Transcription of Antoine Forqueray's suites for viol (1747) for organ and viol, and making a CD recording.