

**ORGAN REFORM IN ENGLAND:
AESTHETICS AND POLEMICS, 1901–1965**

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Abstract

This thesis examines organ reform in England between 1901 and 1965, an arena of practical music-making and intellectual and ideological debates in which a number of related practices surrounding the English organ – notably its scholarship, aesthetics of design, liturgical functions, native and foreign repertoires, including J. S. Bach’s organ music – played a central role in transforming the sound, design, and appearance of the instrument. Whilst influential musicians asserted that the English organ of the first half of the twentieth century was a great work of art, and survived in what could be termed ‘splendid isolation’ from Continental models, others contended that it lacked a logical relationship with more than a home-grown repertory. However, supporters of the English organ claimed that technological and tonal improvements made it the most perfect medium for Bach performance. It was a renewed interest in historical organs and repertory that exposed the limitations of cultural centrism, pointing to the English organ’s weakness as a point of departure for understanding its European repertory. This insistence paved the way for an enthusiastic reception of other organs, which, through their construction and new tonal qualities, won the favour of musicians who had found the English organ too limited and focused on a particular culture. The thesis allows historical actors to populate the discourse, revealing the diverse practices out of which a quest for reform emerged. As such the organ provides a fascinating and preliminary rehearsal case for what in the 1970s and 80s would be termed the early music revival.

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Preface

The English organ suffered an identity crisis in the 1950s. Growing appreciation of early music and organs had shattered the image of an established national instrument, provoking a schism in the organ world. Whilst defenders of this type of instrument insisted that by the beginning of the twentieth century the notion of enlightened selectivity had created the supreme artistry of the *English organ*, critics opposed this, stating that perfection had actually been achieved 200 years before – but not in England. Those eager to reform the English organ were partly motivated by the German organ reform movement of the 1920s, the *Orgelbewegung*. This movement gathered momentum in England with the completion in 1954 of the organ at London’s Royal Festival Hall, an instrument whose controversial design was inspired by contemporary Continental practices. It was the installation of the organ by the Danish firm Frobenius in The Queen’s College, Oxford in 1965, however, that signalled the replacement of the old model with something new.

Many critics sought to invigorate a supposed decadent organ culture which had negated music itself. Thus in an article published in *The Guardian* on 30 March 1966, Geoffrey Moorhouse (1931-2009), ‘a greatly talented writer on a wide variety of subjects’,¹ could barely conceal his dissatisfaction with English organs:

The present revival began in Germany in the thirties and it was due to a rediscovery of the qualities in the old classical or baroque organ of [J. S.] Bach’s day. This, in the nineteenth century, had given way to the romantic organ on which it was possible for men like Best [organist of St George’s Hall Liverpool] to reproduce orchestral works because it has been built to reproduce specifically orchestral sounds. It had, in a sense, a much wider range than the classical organ. But whereas the classical organ produced a clear and liquid sound the romantic organ’s tone was comparatively muddy, and its volumes were built to put the fear of God into people. Vaughan Williams once called the classical organ “mere bubble and squeak”; the classicist’s reply to the romantics might be “all batter and blast”.²

¹ Anon., ‘Books obituaries, Geoffrey Moorhouse’, *The Telegraph* [website] (29 November 2009) <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/culture-obituaries/books_obituaries/6685710/Geoffrey-Moorhouse.html> accessed 17 January 2011.

² Geoffrey Moorhouse, ‘Bubble and batter’, *The Guardian* (30 March 1966), 8.

Moorhouse's captivating parlance encapsulates many of the competing views commonly held both at that time and today; he opposed such 'traditionalists' as Ralph Vaughan Williams who stated, 'I see there is a movement afoot to substitute this bubble-and-squeak type of instrument for the noble diapason and soft mixtures of our cathedral organs.'³ For some, like Moorhouse, the organ revival reformed the English instrument, actively seeking inspiration from Continental Europe (mainly the *Orgelbewegung*). It discarded an imperial English organ in favour of an instrument, the classical organ, which provided a more suitable medium for the organ's repertory, as opposed to transcriptions of instrumental and vocal repertoire. These new aesthetics sought to reproduce some of the timbres thought suitable for a broad range of music, with particular focus on early music, especially Bach's works, which were receiving increasing interest. Others, like Vaughan Williams, would have preferred the reformers to have been stopped, desiring to see the organ within a nationalist project, which stressed the need to maintain an *English* tradition of organ building, catering for specific liturgical and concert functions.

In this thesis I trace the intellectual and ideological discourses that accompany what I term 'organ reform' as seen through several of its practitioners, both organists and organ builders, during the period 1901-1965. It was an interest in creating the authentic sound world known to past composers like Bach which inspired critics to explore previous modes of organ design and reflect these practices in modern organ design. In doing so, critics had to deal with several themes centring on the organ's liturgical functions, its association as a progressive instrument, but most importantly, its strong links with one of the most important musical phenomena of the twentieth century: early music revival. By 'early music revival' I mean the desire to rediscover past repertoires restored to the original performance practices in which they were heard. Tracing these themes through the work of writers, this thesis shows how attempts to construct historically informed organs, in both their practical and theoretical manifestations, developed throughout the

³ Ralph Vaughan Williams, radio broadcast July 1950, quoted in *Hinrichsen's Musical Year Book*, 7 (London, 1952), 277.

period. The period under examination 1901-1965, therefore, is very much a dress rehearsal for some of the debates which would come to the forefront of general scholarly attention into so-called authenticity in the 1980s.

Debates on English organs make use of a host of labels. Terms such as ‘Classical Revival’, ‘Baroque Revival’ or ‘School’, ‘Organ Renaissance’, ‘English Organ Revival’, or simply ‘Organ Revival’ have all been associated with attempts to embrace a historic contingent practice of organ design. For example, Harold Darke (1888-1976), a significant organist and critic of these reform ideas, referred to them as the ‘Baroque School’, a term which he linked to one of the dictionary definitions of ‘baroque’ – grotesque. In 1953 he maintained that ‘a new school of thought has arisen which is having some influence on organ playing and organ-building. It is called the Baroque School.’⁴ David Lumsden (later knighted as Principal of the Royal Academy of Music), the instigator of the 1969 organ by Grant Degens and Bradbeer in New College, Oxford, stated: ‘We needed a new organ because the old one was inadequate to the demands created by the *renaissance* [my emphasis] in organ thinking which has taken place in England.’⁵ Ralph Downes (1904-1993), a significant participant in this arena, not least through his design for the 1954 organ in the Royal Festival Hall, referred to the concept of ‘Revival’.⁶ According to Cecil Clutton (1909-1991), an amateur musician and organ consultant, ‘classical revival would perhaps be more accurately descriptive’, and this term has been used by both participants and historians – for example, in his history of the English organ, the organ builder and historian Stephen Bicknell (1957-2007), called one of his chapters ‘The Classical Revival’.⁷

⁴ Harold Darke, ‘Of Organs and Organists (IV): In Defence of Tradition’, *Musical Times [MT]*, 94 (February 1953), 65.

⁵ David Lumsden, *The New College Record*, 1969-1970, 9. For information on the New College organ see David Lumsden, ‘The New Organ of New College, Oxford’, *Organ Yearbook*, 1 (1970), 84-86. For further examples of the use of ‘renaissance’ see Peter Hurford, ‘The English Organ: Renaissance or Face-Lift?’, *MT*, 111 (January 1970), 84-86; Hurford, ‘Renaissance’, in Peter Hurford, *Making Music on the Organ* (Oxford, 1988), 130.

⁶ Ralph Downes, ‘J. S. Bach and a vision of a British Organ Revival’, *Organists’ Review*, 70 (November 1985), 15-19. For biographical details of Downes see his autobiography, Downes, *Baroque Tricks, adventures with organ builders* (Oxford, 1983, 1999).

⁷ Stephen Bicknell, ‘The Classical Revival 1939-1980’, in *The History of the English Organ* (Cambridge, 1996), 326-351. Noel Bonavia-Hunt, an amateur musician, referred to ‘classical’ in ‘Classic and Otherwise’, *The Organ*, 30 (April 1931), 193-197.

‘Reform’ is in any case a less loaded, and hence more useful term than a ‘revival’ or a ‘renaissance’. ‘Organ Renaissance’, for example, would require a rebirth of an earlier existing organ culture, which in the present case never actually existed.⁸ Whilst ‘English (or British) Revival’ may be used to refer to an interest in English organs prior to the advent of the ‘Romantic’ organ, the very fact that the revival itself did not occur until the late 1970s renders such a term meaningless in the context of the present study.⁹ And as Clutton pointed out in 1951, ‘there is practically no such thing as a “Baroque revival” in organ building’ since reconstructions of seventeenth and eighteenth-century organs did not occur until the 1970s; the term will thus be avoided.¹⁰

The thesis will trace the debates under the general label of ‘reform’, which will refer to an ensemble of practices which attempted to build organs on historic principles of construction, predominantly from the seventeenth century. The term appears in various contexts. For example in 1969, the music journalist Basil Ramsey, in referring especially to the arrival of the new organs at The Queen’s College and New College, advanced that ‘British universities are in the vanguard of the organ reform movement.’¹¹ The term has also been used by historians. Martin Firth’s recent monograph on social aspects of the organist’s profession, conducts this study against a background of what he calls the ‘Organ Reform Movement’. William McVicker, an organ consultant, also uses the term ‘reform’ in his study of pipe scaling.¹² Both studies rely heavily on drawing parallels with the German Organ Reform Movement, the *Orgelbewegung*. Whilst this thesis uses ‘reform’, and shows the parallels with the German movement, it will acknowledge how reform in Britain

⁸ Nicholas Thistlethwaite made this point in ‘New Books’, review of *Twenty-one Years of Organ-building by Maurice Forsyth-Grant* (Oxford, 1987), in *MT*, 129 (August 1988), 431, 433.

⁹ In referring to the ‘English Revival’ I draw particular attention to the work undertaken by William Drake, and Goetze and Gwynn. Drake founded his firm at Buckfastleigh, Devon, in 1974. Goetze and Gwynn founded their firm in 1980.

¹⁰ Cecil Clutton, *The Organ*, 21 (October 1949), 91.

¹¹ Basil Ramsey, ‘New College Oxford’, *MT*, 110 (July 1969), 778-779.

¹² Martin [Firth] Freke, ‘Organists in the Church of England 1950-1999: an ethnographic and contextual study in relation to the dioceses of Bristol and Bath and Wells’, PhD Dissertation, University of Bristol, 2006. William Richard McVicker, ‘An analytical approach to open, cylindrical organ-pipe scaling from a historical perspective, with specific reference to the scaling practices of selected organ-builders’, PhD Dissertation, University of Durham, 1987.

differed fundamentally from the model of the German *Orgelbewegung* of the 1920s, in that the English trend never resulted in a comparably organized movement. The term ‘movement’ will thus be dropped. Neither is it appropriate to export a very specific German phenomenon to England and allow it to condition what we make of the English evidence.

The chronological survey of reform herein acknowledges Laurence Dreyfus’s contention that ‘chronology is [...] a fundamentally uninteresting collection of details unless it is provided with an accompanying narrative’.¹³ Therefore, this thesis traces the development of a discursive narrative which charts the shifting ethics and praxis of organ construction in relation to wider trends outside the organ loft. It thus reinforces Poul Gerhard Andersen’s belief that ‘as a cultural barometer’, the organ illuminates the discourses which have shaped the Western World.¹⁴ The years 1901-1965 witnessed significant changes which reveal as much about the individuals who participated in these historical discourses as they do about the organ. But I do not claim that reform can only be understood as part of a thick cultural context in which the narrative reflects a particular *au courant* ideological or cultural stance. The thesis illuminates the various discourses which (perhaps subconsciously) compel actors to construct the English organ as a self-perpetuating and self-fulfilling prophecy. As a matter of course the thesis highlights the embodied nature of the thought processes of contextualised historical actors as they grapple with the problem of living through discourse and practice.

¹³ Laurence Dreyfus, *Bach and the Patterns of Invention* (Cambridge MA, 1996), 209. Dreyfus’s chronology refers to the stylistic development of Bach’s work.

¹⁴ Poul Andersen, *Orgelbogen* (Copenhagen, 1956), trans., Joanne Curnutt, *Organbuilding and design* (London, 1969), 8.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Perhaps the main problem for any present-day observer attempting to assess ostensibly irreconcilable opinions on English organs, as represented by Moorhouse and Vaughan Williams, emanates from the differences in method between scholars, performers, and journalists. Moorhouse, for instance, did not discuss the subject with the subtlety which a scholar would have preferred. There is some vicious axe-grinding going on: Moorhouse is cavalier to a style of organ – the so-called romantic organ – which he dismisses as an instrument of the Inquisition, indicating just how subjective the rhetoric of the organ world can become. Of course, critics are entitled to express strong opinions: ten years later the Bach scholar, organ historian, and performer Peter Williams (born 1937) wished to dispense altogether with the term ‘classical organ’, preferring ‘just “organ”, but alas one must distinguish sense from nonsense’.¹ Masked by colourful statements, discourses on organ aesthetics feature scholars and deserve further attention.

Those drawn to debates on organ design will soon discover that the area embodies polemical drives, making the English organ an even more attractive subject for sustained study. Indeed, the controversies of the 1950s and ’60s, as exemplified by Moorhouse and Vaughan Williams, characterize organ reform. There are those who think that reform tempered the English instrument, reaffirming some old principles but, in fact, achieved very little. In 1977 Nicholas Danby (1935-1997), an organ teacher of distinction, rhetorically asked: ‘Is one of the obstacles to

¹ Peter Williams, ‘Organs Here and Now’, review of John P. Rowntree, John F. Brennan, *The Classical Organ in Britain 1955-1974*, in *MT*, 117 (February 1976), 137. Williams’s many publications on the music of Bach include *The Organ Music of J. S. Bach*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, 1980-84); *Playing the organ works of Bach: some case studies* (New York, 1987).

Bach, The Goldberg Variations (Cambridge, 2001); *The Life of Bach* (Cambridge, 2004); *J S Bach: A Life in Music* (Cambridge, 2007).

renewal, [sic] the Church of England and its supposed requirements?’² Williams provided an answer: ‘On the whole, progress is measured and moderate, since organists are reluctant to scan their instrument’s history and prefer to find comfort in assumptions that have no historical basis whatever – such as that “liturgical demands” make it necessary to have a Swellbox for Anglican chant.’³

Williams’s criticisms, stimulating and refreshing to some, irritating and frustrating to others, mark an author who has expressed reservations about English organ culture. He has written extensively on the organ, producing four substantial monographs, is editor of the *Organ Yearbook*, and was Chairman of the British Institute of Organ Studies (BIOS) between 1997 and 2007, yet his publications avoid English organs after 1250.⁴ Thirty years ago, he recalled how, in 1962, following his doctoral dissertation on Georgian organs and their repertory, there seemed ‘nothing unnatural in turning away completely from English organs and finding instead English harpsichords of infinitely greater musical potential’.⁵ In *A New History of the Organ*, Williams summed up the English organ’s past, as ‘one of more or less unbroken gloom until the last few years’.⁶ That such a distinguished scholar should flee the English organ, makes the area even more intriguing as susceptible to a deeper analysis.

² Nicholas Danby, ‘Organ Design for the English Liturgy’, *BIOS Journal [JB IOS]*, 1 (1977), 58.

³ Peter Williams, *New History of the Organ: from the Greeks to the Present Day* (London, 1980), 210. See also Peter Williams, ‘The Swell’, *BIOSR*, 24 (April 2000), 18-19. John Rowntree similarly concluded that cathedral organists have been ‘a seriously inhibiting factor’ in creating historically informed instruments. He also placed part of the blame on organ builders: ‘The establishment builders, content to rest on the laurels of their romantic past and, propped up by establishment organists cocooned in their own ecclesiastical organ world, took no initiative, unless under pressure from non-establishment figures.’ See John Rowntree, ‘The development of “classical principles” in organ building in Britain in the twentieth century’, PhD Dissertation, University of Southampton, 1984, 348, 266.

⁴ Williams’s publications on the organ include *The European Organ 1450-1850* (London, 1966); *The Organ in Western Musical Culture 750-1250* (Cambridge, 1993); *The King of Instruments or, How Do Churches Come to Have Organs?* (London, 1993); ‘English organ music and the English organ under the first four Georges’, PhD Dissertation, University of Cambridge, 1962. In addition, he has served as general editor of *Biblioteca Organologica* (1966) and as founding editor of *The Organ Yearbook* (1969).

⁵ Peter Williams, *MT*, 122 (June 1981), 415; for a review of Williams, *New History* see George Stauffer, *The Musical Quarterly*, 67 (January 1981), 118-124. See Peter Williams, ‘A Matter of Definition’, *MT*, 115 (September 1974), 783-785 for more in depth criticisms of English organ building. Williams succinctly summarised his personal views on organ design in Williams, review of Thistlethwaite, Webber, *The Cambridge Companion to the Organ* (Cambridge, 1998), in *JB IOS*, 23 (1999), 196.

⁶ Williams, *History*, 204. Williams claimed that in the 1970s the English organ began ‘to recognise what an organ actually is.’ See Williams, ‘Organs Here and Now’, 138.

The aesthetics surrounding the design of English organs remain a popular subject for debate even among those who regularly play these instruments or are involved in their construction. Some have suggested that the English organ's reluctance to traverse the path of reform and embrace historically informed principles of construction forces musicians to spurn the English instrument. In 1977, Gillian Weir, made a Dame commander of the British Empire in 1996, asked 'whether it is not perhaps time to [...give the organ] due recognition or, if its claims are really not legitimate, let us abandon altogether our half-hearted apologies for it': the organ enjoys 'a curious kind of half-existence, with a substantial and in fact growing following, but nevertheless not quite accepted by musicians generally'.⁷ Nicholas Thistlethwaite, an historian and organ consultant, suggested in 1983 that some English organs were to blame: 'whatever may be their virtues in the accompaniment of Anglican psalmody, so many English organs, new and old, are not integrated musical instruments'.⁸ Dominic Gwynn, an organ builder and historian specialising in pre-nineteenth-century English organs, seemed to concur with Thistlethwaite: 'standards and a sense of style have gradually declined in the last 40 years'.⁹ An implied nadir of organ building provoked Danby to concede that 'the Maurice Forsyth-Grant type of organ [as at New College Oxford] will be seen by history to have been a sorely needed "shot in the arm"'.¹⁰ In 1996 an article by Paul Hale advocating an eclectic approach to reforming the English organ, provoked a number of lively exchanges between himself, Stephen Bicknell, and Ian Bell.¹¹

⁷ Gillian Weir, 'The Organ – Alive and Well?', *Organists' Review*, 62 (Autumn 1977), 10. Weir's criticisms stem from her desire for organs which are based on what she deems to be a set of principles, partly derived from historic instruments, which cater for organ music. See Gillian Weir, 'I'm a Rondo Today', *The Organbuilder*, 9 (May 1991), 2-4; Gillian Weir, 'Marshmallow and Lemon Juice', *The Organbuilder*, 10 (June 1992), 2-5.

⁸ Nicholas Thistlethwaite, 'Editorial', *BIOSR*, 7 (July 1983), 3. In 1976 Thistlethwaite criticised recent trends in British organ building and suggested that builders adopt historic English practices. See Nicholas Thistlethwaite, [Letter], *Organists' Review*, 61 (Winter 1976), 38.

⁹ Dominic Gwynn, *BIOSR*, 11 (July 1987), 6.

¹⁰ John Brennan, 'A Conversation with Nicholas Danby', *JBIOS*, 20 (1996), 142.

¹¹ Hale is an organ consultant and organist of Southwell Minster. See Paul Hale, 'The British Organ – Where Next?', *The Organbuilder*, 14 (July 1996), 12-14; Stephen Bicknell, 'Is the future all-mechanical? Organs and organ-building in Britain today', *Choir & Organ*, 5 (March/April 1997), 14-15. Ian Bell, 'Where next? – Surely not there', *The Organbuilder*, 15 (November 1997), 22-23. Bell, an organ consultant, was previously an organ builder with N. P. Mander Ltd. between 1963 and 1991.

Curiously, given the sheer amount of debate about English organs, a critical account of the attempts to reform them has yet to enter the musicological arena. William Sumner's *The Organ* (1952) devotes little space to the emerging debates.¹² Cecil Clutton showed no liking of Edwardian organs and used his 1963 history to advance in a forthright manner his favour of reformed instruments. He stated that 'a typical British twentieth-century organ is of remarkably little musical use, except as an accompanimental instrument, for which purpose it is remarkably good'.¹³ By the 1970s, when reform had become a force in Britain, John Rowntree's and John Brennan's *The Classical Organ in Britain 1955-1974*, provided a useful survey.¹⁴ Apart from an introduction which explained what the authors meant by the term 'classical organ', the book presents technical details of instruments meeting what they regard as the 'classical' (first-rate) criterion. In 1979 Rowntree also produced a succinct survey in the *Journal of the British Institute of Organ Studies [JB IOS]*.¹⁵ Rowntree subsequently completed a doctoral dissertation entitled,

¹² William Sumner, *The organ: its evolution, principles of construction, and use* (London, 1952). The fourth edition of Sumner's work (London, 1973) also examined the area very succinctly. See pages 250-256. For an obituary of Sumner see Anon., 'William Leslie Sumner' [1904-1973], *MT*, 114 (October 1973), 1045.

¹³ Cecil Clutton, and Austin Niland, *The British Organ* (London, 1963), 142; a second edition was issued in 1982. Clutton's succinct historical narrative was written with a view to providing ideas for current organ design and how to register Bach's works on an English organ – of great importance in the 1960s. Both editions of the monographs were well received by reviewers, even if a number of inaccuracies were noted. See Walter Emery, *MT*, 104 (September 1963), 654; and Ann Bond, *MT*, 123, (October 1982), 719. Bicknell noted Clutton's trenchant account, see Bicknell, *History*, xix. Clutton was an influential organ consultant, leading the rebuilding of the Harrison & Harrison organ in Ely Cathedral in 1975 and St Paul's Cathedral in 1972-77. It is important to note that Clutton admired some organs built in the nineteenth century; see Cecil Clutton, 'An Early Father Willis Organ', *The Organ*, 25 (October 1945), 69-74; Cecil Clutton, 'The Grand Orgue at St Merry, Paris', *The Organ*, 28 (April 1949), 145-156, esp. 146. In 1972 he qualified remarks on British organs saying that the British organ in the first half of the [.. twentieth century] became a virtually useless instrument for playing any sort of classical music, either French or German. See Cecil Clutton, 'The Swell Organ: Whence & Whither', *Organists' Review*, 58 (April 1972), 10-11. For a short obituary of Clutton see Anon., 'Miscellany', *MT*, 132 (July 1991), 373.

¹⁴ John Rowntree and John Brennan, *The Classical Organ in Britain 1955-1974* (Oxford, 1975); further volumes were published in 1979 and 1993. Using various sources, including Williams, the authors establish a criterion for classical 'testing' which is based on mechanical action, low wind pressures, and encased pipework. Given the supposed widespread use of these features, the use of the term 'classical organ' has been deemed redundant. See David Ponsford, review of *The Classical Organ in Britain 1975-1978*, 2 (Oxford, 1978), in *Organists' Review*, 65 (1980), 22-23.

¹⁵ John Rowntree, 'Organ Reform in England – some influences', *JB IOS*, 3 (1979), 5-16. For further BIOS articles which deal with 'reform' see Danby, 'English Liturgy'; John Rowntree, 'Queen's and after...some thoughts on the Organ Revival in Britain', 7 (1983), 57-59; Peter Collins, "'Queens and after...'" from the other side of the stop knobs', 8 (1984), 96-98; John Norman, 'The influence of the Baroque Revival on the work of Hill, Norman & Beard, 1950-1974', 23 (1999), 36-50; Mark Venning, 'Harrisons' Great Adventure', 23 (1999), 128-141; Andrew McCrea, 'The British neo-classical organ and its music - time for a reappraisal?', 23 (1999), 106-126; William McVicker, 'Some thoughts on aspects of Ralph Downes's tonal philosophy', 28 (2004), 78-97; Frits Elshout and Dick Koomans, 'Voicing methods of the Neo-Baroque', 30 (2006), 152-157.

‘The development of “classical principles” in organ building in Britain in the twentieth century’, but this was mainly framed as a positivistic study dealing with the period 1965-1984.¹⁶

The lack of critical studies is striking, especially since the publication of *The Organ as a Mirror of its Times* in 2002 serves to remind us how few instruments can claim a status which enables them to be praised or mercilessly attacked as a result of storms of contention.¹⁷ With a documented history dating back at least a thousand years, the organ has caught the attention of saints, musicians, poets, journalists, theologians, and painters, and many others, inviting diverse interpretations. John Dryden’s ‘wondrous machine’ was honoured by W. A. Mozart, with the title, ‘King of Instruments’; and whatever the precise meaning of the often quoted psalm 150 ‘laudate eum in chordis et organo’, the organ’s presence in the ecclesiastical environment was given authority by members of the Church at various times.¹⁸

It is a particular feature of the organ that, more than any other instrument, it has always borne extra-musical meanings. For instance, its association with the church has led it to be considered a force for moral improvement. The seventeenth-century Jesuit scholar Athanasius Kircher used the organ’s stops as a metaphor for the six days of creation, depicting the *Harmonia nascentis mundi*, whilst Arnolt Schlick’s *Spiegel der Orgel-macher und Organisten* of 1511 (Mirror of Organ-builders and Organists) referred to the organ’s ability to sing God’s praises and refresh the human spirit.¹⁹ The organ has also been used to display a community’s wealth, as in the great 1738 Müller organ of Haarlem or, more generally, the town hall organs in nineteenth-century England: the instrument’s mechanics and engineering could display a culture’s ingenuity and carry political overtones. For example, Elizabeth I’s gift of an organ (by Thomas Dallam) to Murat III, Sultan of Turkey, in 1599 appropriated its emblematic puissance for the struggle to establish

¹⁶ Rowntree, ‘Classical principles’.

¹⁷ Kerala Snyder (ed.), *The Organ as a Mirror of its time* (Oxford, 2002).

¹⁸ Although mentioned by St Jerome (c420), St Augustine (c430) and Cassiodorus (c585), the organ’s association with the church is difficult to date with any great precision. See Williams, *The Organ in Western Culture*, esp. 1-6.

¹⁹ Arnolt Schlick, *Spiegel der Orgel-macher und Organisten* (Mainz, 1511). Facsimile edition with English translation by E. B. Barber, *Bibliotheca organologica*, 113 (Buren, 1980). For some details on Schlick see D. Bush: ‘Musicus consummatus: the Biography and Organ Music of Arnolt Schlick’, *Organ Yearbook*, 16 (1985), 24-46.

symbolical, geo-political capital (one State Paper enthused, ‘a great and curious present [is] going to the Grand Turk which no doubt wilbe [sic] much talked of, and be very scandalous among other nations specially the Germanes’).²⁰ Peter Williams also discusses how in 757 a gift from Constantine V, termed ‘organum’, was sent to the Carolingian court, perhaps to show Byzantine’s ‘cultural-technological superiority’.²¹

Yet the organ, so often elevated to such supreme status, has been at the centre of various battlefields, both metaphorical and literal. For instance, organs were associated with Rome during the English Reformations, and were to be destroyed: a Bill to silence all church organs in 1586 was defeated by just one vote.²² Despite a minor revival in the following century, the Puritan regime during the Commonwealth period 1640-9 was suspicious of the instrument, and on 9 May 1644 Parliament enacted that ‘all Organs and the Frames or Cases wherein they stand [...] shall be taken away and utterly defaced, and none hereafter set up in their places’.²³ Thus at Westminster Abbey Cromwell’s soldiers ‘pawned the pipes at several alehouses for pots of ale’; at Peterborough a regiment threw the organ to the ground, ‘where they stamped and trampled it to pieces in a strange, furious and frantic zeal’.²⁴

In the space of two and a half centuries from its almost complete destruction by the Puritans, however, the English organ had grown to be a much valued participant in British life. By the beginning of the twentieth century political, economic, technological, musical, social, cultural, and religious developments created an instrument with a very strong national identity. As the organ was frequently heard within an ecclesiastical environment, the established Church of

²⁰ Stanley Mayes, *An organ for the Sultan* (London, 1956), 19. See also Greg Bak, ‘Who built the organ for the Sultan?’ *JBios*, 25 (2001), 32-44; Andrew Freeman, ‘Thomas Dallam’s Turkish Organ’, *The Organ*, 25 (October 1945), 60-65; Ian Woodfield, ‘The Keyboard Recital in Oriental Diplomacy, 1520-1620’, *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 115 (1990), 33-62 (esp. 41-6).

²¹ Williams, *The Organ in Western Musical Culture*, 138.

²² The petition to Parliament complained of cathedral services ‘grievously abused by piping with organs, singing, and trowling of psalms from one side of the church to the other, with the squeaking of choristers disguised in white surplices’. See C. F. Abdy Williams, ‘Evolution of the Organ’, *Music & Letters*, 5 (July 1924), 260.

²³ Quoted in, George Grove, ‘Organ’, in J. A. Fuller Maitland (ed.), *Grove’s Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London, 1907), 530.

²⁴ Abdy Williams, ‘Evolution’, 261.

England, the Anglican Church, did much to give the organ an identity. This had so developed that *The Dictionary of Organs and Organists* in 1912 commented that ‘the English organ of to-day is probably all round superior – or at any rate equal to that of any other country’.²⁵

In many ways the English organ was victim of its own success amongst congregations and audiences at Victorian organ recitals. For some, the advances of the previous century had created an organ so far removed from its seventeenth-century manifestations – what was considered to be the organ’s golden age – that its putative claim to be a ‘musical instrument’ was questioned.

Geraint Jones (1917-1998), an influential teacher and ‘a brilliant organist of the younger generation’ (*The Times*), was one significant musician who came to levy heavy charges against the English organ known to him: ‘All our organs are a medley of sounds’ he stated in *The Musical Times* under the heading ‘Is the organ a musical instrument?’²⁶

Such pronouncements of resentment were rife – and not just in the 1950s: they also peppered the discourse of rank-and-file musicians. Whether or not commentators expressed nuanced opinions, many outlined the demerits of the English organ. As early as 1915, Arnold Dolmetsch, coming from a background in France, argued that the organ had been turned into a machine, quite incapable of beautiful tones. In an article appearing in *The Listener* in 1938, Martin du Pré Cooper, a music critic of high repute, asked the same question which Jones was to pose almost twenty years later: ‘Is the Organ a Musical Instrument?’²⁷

The proliferation of the debates is varied – from the ‘nonsense’ of non-classical organs – to supposed suspicion of the instrument – but what concerns us are the discourses which

²⁵ Frederick W. Thornsby, *Dictionary of Organs and Organists* (Bournemouth, 1912), 10.

²⁶ Anon., ‘The Genius Of Bach, Mr. Geraint Jones’, *The Times* (10 March 1955), 7. Geraint Jones, ‘Of Organs and Organists (II): Is the Organ a Musical Instrument?’ *MT*, 93 (December 1952), 543. As an organ designer, Jones was involved in the construction of organs at the Royal Northern College of Music, St Andrew’s University, the Royal Academy of Music (Marylebone Parish Church), and the Academy for Performing Arts in Hong Kong. For details of Jones’s training and musical career see Catherine Ennis, ‘Quietly Persuasive’, *Choir & Organ*, 6 (February 1998), 14-15; Tim Bullamore, ‘Obituary: Geraint Jones’, *The Independent* (9 June 1998).

²⁷ Arnold Dolmetsch, *The Interpretation of the Music of the XVII and XVIII Centuries* (London, 1915), Quoted in Peter Williams, ‘The idea of Bewegung in the German organ reform movement of the 1920s’, in Bryan Gilliam (ed.), *Music and performance during the Weimar Republic* (Cambridge, 1994), 139; Martin du Pré Cooper, ‘Is the Organ a Musical Instrument’, *The Listener* (7 July 1938), 49.

eventually led to calls for reform in the mid twentieth century. Long regarded as an attack and reaction against the progressive and religious trends of the nineteenth century, the subject of reform merits our attention not least because the future of the instrument continues to fascinate us today. What exactly is the critical justification for speaking in terms of ‘reform’?

Writings on reform

The lack of clear methodological approaches to surveys of organ reform results in opinions being thrown into a vacuum of critical thought. Critics and writers subscribe to several core beliefs:

1. that organ reform began in Germany in the 1920s;
2. that the movement owed its ideologies to the work of the theologian, organist, musicologist, and physician Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965);
3. that the idea of reform spread to England in the 1950s through the work of Ralph Downes, particularly via the 1954 instrument in the Royal Festival Hall; and
4. that reform (for those in favour of it), spurred on by developments in the early music revival, sought to recapture the glory of the organ before the supposed decadence of the nineteenth century.

It is not difficult to find opinions of reform which illustrate these points. For example, in 1968 Harold Gleason (1892-1980), first head of the organ department at the Eastman School of Music, New York, provided a succinct summary which supports the above criterion:

During the 17th and early 18th centuries the Baroque organ reached the height of its development and subsequently began a gradual decline to the Romantic, orchestral style of the 19th and early 20th centuries. After World War I, Albert Schweitzer, Karl Straube, Wilibald Gurlitt and others began a movement, known as the Orgelbewegung, to “recapture the glory” of the wealth of music of the Baroque period. This movement has borne fruit in all fields of music, and today many organ builders on the Continent, and in England and America are building instruments with mechanical (tracker) action and slider chests along the lines of the

best examples of the Baroque; further-more, organ recitalists are including music of the 17th century and earlier in their programs.²⁸

Such a view is commonly found. For example, in a broadcast in 1982, Gillian Weir, who has done much to promote the organ, gave a similar summary:

In the last 50/60 years there's been a tremendous renaissance in organ building stemming from Schweitzer's call to arms [...] when he pointed out that the way in which organs were going was not a good way and it led to a world-wide organ reform movement. Now we have some wonderful organs. They've gone back to the best principles that govern the organ of the Baroque period but as well they're incorporating features from the twentieth century.²⁹

The point is not that Gleason and Weir provided an oversimplified history, or that they gave a favourable view of reform, but that, in their quest to promote the organ, they rely on some notions which do not stand up to close scrutiny. For instance, Schweitzer's position in the debates is not absolutely clear.

The paucity of scholarship on 'reform' perhaps stems from an organ culture which, until quite recently, was seduced by uncritical approaches to organ scholarship. As Nicholas Thistlethwaite succinctly summarized in 1976, just before the inaugural conference of the British Institute of Organ Studies [BIOS], writers 'tended to admire without inquiring into the ground for the admiration, to accept something without asking why it is acceptable, to identify a characteristic without discovering how it is achieved'. In other words 'profound inquiry has seldom been a feature of English organ scholarship'.³⁰ Writing in 1986, Donald Wright, then chairman of BIOS, confirmed Thistlethwaite's observations: 'there were far too many examples of a very low level of what purported to be scholarly historical writing about the British organ'.³¹

²⁸ Harold Gleason, review of Williams, *European Organ*, in *The Musical Quarterly*, 54 (April 1968), 252.

²⁹ Gillian Weir, [radio interview with Michael Howard] (broadcast BBC Radio 3, 13 February 1982), BBC Archive LP 41303 in British Sound Archive 1LP0198352.

³⁰ Nicholas Thistlethwaite, 'The British Institute of Organ Studies', *MT*, 117 (September 1976), 763.

³¹ Donald Wright, 'BIOS – The first ten years', *JBIOS*, 10 (1986), 5. Donald Wright was BIOS's second chairman (1983 to 1991). Although he taught histology, he was also an organist and organ consultant. According to Thistlethwaite, Wright left 'a substantial legacy of new and restored organs for which he was in some sense responsible'. See Nicholas Thistlethwaite, 'Dr Donald Wright (1920-2005) an appreciation', *JBIOS*, 29 (2005), 198.

Whilst not all research lacked the critical perspective of an historian – one only has to think of Williams’s works – much writing failed to enter the scholarly arena.

Williams’s efforts, in fact, brought an unprecedented achievement, setting a new standard of academic research for those interested in organs. *The European Organ* (1966) was hailed by Gleason, as ‘pioneering’, setting ‘forth for the first time in English an impressive body of knowledge’.³² Even if Williams himself later admitted that personal views dictated the trajectory of the discourse – ‘with the confidence of someone in his mid-20s, I tried to give a one-man view of European organ history – something that I would not do now!’³³ – the monograph is still regarded as a significant study. Another author, Fenner Douglass (1921-2008), also unconcerned with English organs, made a valuable contribution to scholarship through his monograph on the French Classical Organ published in 1969. Williams could not have praised the work of his future colleague in more glowing terms:

It is a great pleasure to be able, without much qualification, to praise a book, its author’s intentions, subject matter, approach, execution and production [...] Douglass’s work is not going to appeal to many organ-devotees because it is too musicological (and slightly misleadingly titled) and general scholars have long learnt to shrug their shoulders at organ books. We have a new venture in organology: a book on organs and their music, original but not quirky, based on genuine research but not on mere archaeology, a marvellous subject but one not for dilettante writers. It is important to realize just what Mr Douglass has done: he has cut through the undergrowth of so much abysmal English, German, Dutch and American books on the organ to tackle a restricted subject, and manages to write about it musically, professionally, interestingly, usefully and even inspiringly [...] It may help to inaugurate a new era in organ studies, although whether the augury will be observed is another matter.³⁴

Douglass showed that the organ could be the object of a scholarly work. In 1995, when

Douglass’s work was revised, John Butt repeated Williams’s praises: ‘it has endured as the most

³² Gleason, review of Williams, *European Organ*, 253, 254.

³³ Peter Williams, quoted in Andrew McCrea, ‘A Life with J S Bach’, [interview with Williams] in *Royal College of Organists Year Book 2003-2004* (Birmingham, 2004), 47.

³⁴ Peter Williams, ‘Organs of France’, review of Fenner Douglass, *The Language of the Classical French Organ* (London, 1969), in *MT*, 111 (January 1970), 48. For another review see James Dalton, *The Galpin Society Journal*, 24 (July 1971), 120-122. Douglass taught at Oberlin College Conservatory of Music from 1949 until 1974 when he moved to Duke University as Professor of Music and University Organist. He was Chair of the Music Faculty from 1980 until his retirement in 1985.

comprehensive and reliable authority on the French classical organ in English.³⁵ Although Douglass states that ‘personal judgement has been withheld’, he cannot help warning an organist of the fate that will befall him [sic] should they dissent from the historic instruments of Couperin, Frescobaldi and Bach: ‘may his voice be forever muffled behind double swell shutters!’³⁶ Both Williams and Douglass could not abstain from allowing their personal voices to intervene at some point, reminding us that the organ sparks strong opinions from both practitioners and scholars.³⁷ But such is the quality of Douglass’s and Williams’s work that these remarks become interesting features in themselves.

Despite these works, there was a legitimate complaint to be levied against organ scholarship. Williams has been the most severe critic, frequently asserting that much scholarship failed to meet the standards reached in other areas of musicology. For example, in 1969 he warned that such writings were ‘a little too geared to the Lowest Common Multiple of knowledge and even intelligence’.³⁸ His 1971 review of Laurence Elvin’s monograph on organ blowing is an example of a scholar frustrated with the standards and topics of research:

The several [organ winding] systems – hydraulic, electric, gas, fan, etc – are the subject of chapters written at length and, frankly, with an eye on organomaniacs who love reading anecdotes and semi-technical descriptions [...] It is like peeping under a Victorian lady’s skirt, though I imagine this will not prevent many organists buying it to read during sermons.³⁹

Poor scholarship is, according to Williams, a feature of much ‘English organ writing (itself a mirror of organ building) – a kind of modesty or provincialism (hard to say which) that keeps us

³⁵ John Butt, ‘The Classical French Organ’, review of Douglass, *The Language of the Classical French Organ* (London, 1995), in *Early Music*, 24 (May 1996), 338.

³⁶ Douglass, *French Classical* (1995), xi, 2.

³⁷ David Saint, currently Acting Principal of the Birmingham Conservatoire, stated in 1994 that ‘New – and old – organs often arouse string feelings and emotions.’ He was referring to the then newly completed organ by J. W. Walker in St Chad’s Cathedral, Birmingham. See David Saint, ‘The New Organ in St Chad’s Cathedral, Birmingham’, *The Organbuilder*, 12 (October 1994), 4.

³⁸ Peter Williams ‘For Organ Crawlers’ *MT*, 110 (January 1969), 38; see also Peter Williams, ‘Organ Builders’, *MT*, 110 (February 1969), 160.

³⁹ Peter Williams, ‘Obsessed with Wind’, review of Laurence Elvin, *Organ Blowing, Its History and Development* (Lincoln 1971), in *MT*, 112 (September 1971), 864.

producing art-paper books indifferent to the more professional approaches made elsewhere'.⁴⁰

The thought that an explanation for their inferior work may be found in British organ building is another story but his assertion that British scholarship was on the whole very weak is worth pursuing.

Peppered with humorous comments, Williams's concerns rest unimpeachable: a lack of a clear critical approach results in writings which revel in the marvels of a topic or a particular organ builder. It is not uncommon to come across terms like 'traditional' being used to describe the English organ, but we must ask the question what does this mean? Williams's review of one such work, a study of the 'traditional' English builder Harrison & Harrison published in 1973, is revealing in this matter:

Mr Elvin's technique of expansive history writing – copious array of documents, opinions then and now, stop-lists with an occasional mixture specification (but few technical details of scaling etc) – is already familiar [...] From it one can pick up a great deal about the subject in hand, as well as anecdotes useful for organ society dinners. Naturally it presupposes an interest in that subject in hand; but what really worries me about such English writings on the organ is that I believe one learns very little from such phrases as: '[the organ at Whitelands] again traditionally Arthur Harrison in its style of voicing with a refined dignity that was impressive in its way'. And what is more, real knowledge and understanding is befogged by such language.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Peter Williams, 'Benn's Organs' [sic], review of Michael Sayer, *Samuel Renn: English Organ Builder* (London, 1974), in *MT*, 115 (June 1974), 479.

⁴¹ Peter Williams, 'Organ Stories', review of Laurence Elvin, *The Harrison Story* (Lincoln, 1973), in *MT*, 115 (November 1974), 950. Despite Williams's warnings, the term 'traditional' is still used and sometimes leads to confusion. In Paul Hale's recent article on the new Nicholson organ for Llandaff Cathedral (2010), he states that, in his opinion, the instrument has a 'distinct leaning towards the traditional British cathedral organ style.' To someone outside the organ loft, Hale's statement brings the reader to a dead-end; those of us with some knowledge of organ history may have a general idea of what Hale means but some crystal-ball gazing is still necessary. An antidote to the present writer's confusion with Hale's statement may be found in an article written for *The Organbuilder* in 1996. (See Hale, 'British Organ') Not only are names provided as to which builders should (and should not be included) in the 'traditional' list, but a value judgement is also made and we are told that the nineteenth-century 'traditional' English organ built by certain builders is a worthy musical entity: 'the traditional English organ [is] supremely musical in itself (I speak here of quite a broad tradition embracing Gray, Holdich, Hill, Nicholson, and early Walker, but not Willis, Harrison, Lewis or any of the Schulze-school northern builders)'. One would like further clarification on which features of these men's work allow them to come under the broad title of 'traditional' but at least the interested reader has names. However, Hale's argument breaks down when it is seen alongside the Llandaff article. The instrument's features which he describes are very loosely connected with his previously implied (very broad) definition of 'traditional'. So perhaps Hale should have either dispensed with the 'traditional' reference or pushed the analysis (much) further. See Paul Hale, 'Llandaff Cathedral', *Organists' Review*, 96 (February 2010), 35-38.

The non-specialist will in all probability have no idea what distinguishes the Whitelands organ from other contemporary models, whilst the specialist will wonder why the author groups all of Harrison's works as 'traditional'.

Williams's views are shared by organists and scholars who wish to raise the profile and appeal of the organ. Weir, for example, has frequently called for serious scholarship on the organ, lamenting in 1977 that 'the printed result has nearly always been a column or two on what shoes I wear to play the pedals, or recounting another story about the cathedral organist dropping his hymn-book from the loft onto the minor Canon'.⁴² Weir's remarks may be in a humorous vein, but they clearly aim to provoke writers to justify their publications.

Writers on the organ are more typically builders rather than trained scholars, so that criticisms of 'organ scholarship' are understandable when the writings emanate from those from whom we do not necessarily expect scholarly standards of accuracy and analysis. Organ builders have drawn on their vast experiences in the field but have sometimes failed to give a good historical account of the subject. *The Organ Today* (1966) by Herbert and John Norman, though wise not to create a self-advertisement for their organ firm *Hill, Norman and Beard* (now disbanded), makes unwarranted assumptions.⁴³

Partly because of such writings, the musicological community may be forgiven for perceiving organ scholarship (and one might even include organists) as dry and old fashioned. Although John Butt lamented this in 1989, his words might have easily appeared in the 1960s and '70s:

Organists, at their worst, are somewhat akin to train-spotters. The latter have a great interest in machinery, lists and specifications and are only concerned with travel in so far as it enables them to view and experience yet more machinery.

⁴² Weir, 'Alive and Well?', 10.

⁴³ For a review of this publication see Peter Williams, 'Organ Guide', review of H. John Norman, Herbert Norman, *The Organ Today* (London, 1966), in *MT*, 107 (November 1966), 964.

Organists likewise sometimes have a tendency to view music as a means to demonstrate their 'hardware' or their technique in operating the instrument.⁴⁴

Perhaps this explains why organists are sometimes viewed as standing apart from the rest of musicians and music scholars. But occasionally this association can lead scholars, perhaps critical of their colleagues, to a benign rejection of the organ. Ann Bond, an organ teacher and author of *A guide to the harpsichord*, states that 'no instrument suffers more misrepresentation in the musical world at large than the organ'.⁴⁵ For example, in a critical review of Butt's essays in the *Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Music*, Richard Taruskin referred to his colleague as 'John Butt, an organist and Bach scholar'.⁴⁶ Taruskin, of course, commits no sin in this sentence – Butt was organ scholar of King's College Cambridge (1979-82) and is still active as an organist – but given Taruskin's far-from-positive review, the reader may automatically perceive a connection between the writings under examination and the way Taruskin addresses his colleague.

Part of the difficulty with early writings on reform, therefore, is the background of uncritical approaches to organ scholarship. But the problem is compounded by the accounts of those historical actors who often had their own agendas. Unsurprisingly, those in favour of reform tend to present less nuanced histories of the English organ in which they are quick on the mark to condemn English practices in the period before the 1950s. For example, in 1966 Maurice Forsyth-Grant, director of the significant organ building firm, Grant, Degens & Bradbeer Ltd, which promoted reformed instruments, published an article regarding the merits of rebuilding English organs. In his article Forsyth-Grant provided a summary of Victorian and Edwardian organs in which his biased voiced may be noted:

Considered in the light of modern-day ideas, how many instruments of this period [Victorian and Edwardian] really are now considered musically satisfactory? It was

⁴⁴ John Butt, review of Ferdinand Klinda, 'Orgelregistrierung: Klanggestaltung der Orgelmusik (Wiesbaden, 1987), *Music & Letters*, 70 (August 1989), 400.

⁴⁵ Ann Bond, 'Pedal Power', review of Nicholas Thistlethwaite, Geoffrey Webber (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Organ* (Cambridge, 1996), in *MT*, 140 (Summer 1999), 77.

⁴⁶ Richard Taruskin, 'Speed Bumpos', review of Jim Samson (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Music*, in *19th-Century Music*, 29 (Autumn 2005), 187.

the period of the “churchmonium” par excellence. The chorus work was hardly ever complete, even on one manual, let alone on other manuals and pedals. The general conception of these organs was that of a “one-man” band, culminating later in the “unit orchestra” of Hope-Jones and the cinema organ. Such organs had many stops of individual beauty, particularly the reeds of Father Willis, but few if any of these Victorian organ builders ever seem to have thought of the organ in terms of its own repertoire. To them it was just a church-accompanying machine giving dramatic changes of light and shade, but almost totally incapable of playing its own music.⁴⁷

His article, whilst highlighting many features of the organs which he tackles, goes little beyond drifting around one basic theme. When Forsyth-Grant writes: ‘the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century organ was not an instrument of much musical ability’ we may assume he is probably trying to win new clients.⁴⁸

Accounts can also lead to a distorted history of the instrument since historians and musicians are eager to reform the national instrument. In 1970 Peter Hurford claimed that the organ in the early 1900s was an unpopular instrument and this boiled down to the lack of consideration for real music:

If one reason were sought for the unpopularity of the organ in the first half of this century, the answer might lie very simply in the fact that one magical word no longer held pride of place over the bed, dining-table, organ bench and drawing board of players or builders: Music! The servants of music for far too long used the organ as a vehicle for the cheap provision of easily-roused emotion. In the organist, interpretative insight was replaced by sheer virtuosity; and in the builder the sheer love of beautiful sound was often replaced by effect.⁴⁹

Hurford’s closing remarks show that he doubts the musical legacy left by those early twentieth-century organ builders and musicians:

What we do today will in 100 years be remembered only by the deeds that we leave behind us – and a principal practical exemplar of those deeds is the instruments that we build. Where is the legacy of organs or of teaching left us by our forbears of 50 years ago? Are we now the richer for their work? These are

⁴⁷ Maurice Forsyth-Grant, ‘The Rebuilding of Organs...Is it Really Worthwhile?’ *The Organ*, 45 (April 1966), 180-188.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 188. Forsyth-Grant provides an example of a builder whose views on organ building changed significantly during the period under investigation. For example, in 1956 he spoke favourably about aspects of the modern English organ: ‘One hopes that the present craze amongst a minority to perform nothing but the squeals, squeaks and trills of pre-Bach days will soon pass. [...] How completely I agree [...] that J.S.B. would surely have enjoyed a really good Tuba.’ Maurice Forsyth-Grant, [Letter], *MO*, 80 (November 1956), 117.

⁴⁹ Hurford, ‘Renaissance’, 84.

questions that we ought to ask, if only because in the year 2000 people might be asking the same question of our own time.⁵⁰

Although he warns that present-day musicians, organ builders (and we may also add historians) may also be studied (and criticised) in 100 years' time, Hurford's prose highlights the historian's difficult task of maintaining a calm stance when documenting the history of the organ in print.

Nowhere is the problem of uncritical 'reform' writing more evident than in mention of the organ's ecclesiastical environment, indicating how some organists deem the supposed requirements of the Anglican Church to stand in the way of reform. It is difficult to find a more outspoken voice than that of Cecil Clutton. In 1975, in a publication which examined the previous fifty years of organ history, Clutton showed contempt for a particular type of liturgical organ. His main assertion was that classical choruses, a tonal scheme derived from eighteenth-century and earlier practices, were not compatible with organs whose main priority was to accompany liturgical services:

In this orchestral concept of the organ there was no place for the classical choruses, and it went hand in hand with a finicky precocity of service accompaniment which was designed more to the glory of the organist than of God, and which did little or nothing to encourage a virile singing style. What the organists wanted, therefore, was a number of individual tone-colours, contrasted in power and quality, and voiced with the greatest possible 'refinement'. Classical choruses were incompatible with such a concept. If it had promoted a musically virile style of singing there would have been much to be said for it, since its liturgical function must always be the first priority in a church organ, but it did no such thing. It engendered a quality of voice production which perhaps had its final achievement in the pretty, cooing noises extracted by Boris Ord from the choirboys of King's College, Cambridge.⁵¹

In a later article he adopted a calmer but still highly critical stance:

Norman Cocker once said to me that Sir Hugh Allen was 'the first person who made an organ smoke' – but whoever it was so started that fearfully vulgar, purple-patch system of liturgical accompaniment, it took firm root, especially in the organ-loft of King's College Cambridge, from whence so many cathedral organists were supplied by direct or indirect influence. And it is still by no means dead. Arthur Harrison willingly and skilfully developed a type of pure-romantic organ that exactly met the requirements of British organists of that time and really, their approach to solo playing was simply an extension of their purple-patch accompanimental [sic] technique. They applied themselves almost as

⁵⁰ Hurford, 'Renaissance', 84.

⁵¹ Cecil Clutton, 'The British Organ 1925-1975', *The Organ Club Golden Jubilee* (London, 1976), 16-27.

assiduously to pushing buttons as to playing notes; and to flapping swell shutters as to playing the pedals.⁵²

Clutton's sustained caustic tone is simply too dismissive to carry any critical weight but it does indicate the presence of various themes which interact with one another to drive forward the mission to reform English organ culture. Like Forsyth-Grant, Clutton assigns competing values to organs and defends them with reference to a check-list, of which classical choruses are a must-have. If we look carefully, therefore, at the language used to narrate English organ history then we see various discourses – the need to decouple the organ from its supposed liturgical requirements for example – but the way they are presented highlights the practice of uncritical approaches to organ history. Understandably both sides misread each other's observations and advocacy.

Recent accounts of reform were written against a renewed approach to organ scholarship which came about in 1976 through the foundation of the British Institute of Organ studies (BIOS). The organization was set up in 1976 by a group led by Nicholas Thistlethwaite and Michael Gillingham (organ consultant), and its membership and activities have expanded widely up to the present day. The founders aimed to bring together various bodies, which professed an interest in the organ, to fill a long-recognised deficiency in the study of English organs. According to the introduction to the organization published in its first journal, BIOS aimed to: 'promote objective scholarly research into the history of the organ in Britain; make the primary and secondary sources for the history of the British Organ more easily available to scholars; and work for the preservation and faithful restoration of historic organs in Britain'.⁵³

⁵² Cecil Clutton, in Robert Judd (ed.), *Aspects of keyboard music: essays in honour of Susi Jeans on the occasion of her seventy-fifth birthday* (Oxford, 1992), 10.

⁵³ See *JBIOS*, 1 (1977), 4. In 2001 Peter Williams stressed the significance of BIOS: 'I remember BIOS's founding as promising the best development ever for the serious study of the instrument and its music in Britain. Until then, there seemed little to connect the professional musician and the non-professional, the expert on organ-technicalia and the active player, the archival scholar and the enthusiastic 'organ-crawler', the historically trained and those – all of us, perhaps – for whom the stop-lists in Sumner's *The Organ* were as evocative and arousing as the menu of a five-star restaurant. It is easy to forget, or even not to appreciate, how the founding of BIOS not only raised awareness of

A significant result of all this attention on the English organ, continuing along a specifically musicological path initiated by Williams, arrived in the form of Thistlethwaite's 1990 monograph: *The Making of the Victorian Organ* set an unprecedented standard in historical writing on the English organ. A. K. Ridley (1904-2000), writing in the *The Galpin Society Journal*, stated that the monograph was 'a major work of scholarship and an important contribution to the English language literature of the organ'.⁵⁴ Christopher Kent, then at the University of Reading, went further and claimed, in *Music & Letters*, that 'this is a masterly study, which must surely become the authoritative successor to the book by Hopkins and Rimbault'.⁵⁵ Williams himself claimed that Thistlethwaite's monograph, complete with 'all scholarly and musicological apparatus', showed the organ to have achieved full recognition as a topic for research: 'It may seem strange that it should be the Victorian organ to produce something of a standard-bearer, but it is Thistlethwaite's achievement that this now seems less strange.'⁵⁶

The recent *Cambridge Companion to the Organ* further demonstrates renewed interest in the organ. Surprisingly, the volume does not contain any essays by Williams, but those included give the reader an understanding of the way an organ works, an investigation into playing techniques, the development of the organ and the relationship between several organ schools and their repertoire.⁵⁷ As Bond proudly stated, 'Not only should it dispel much of the backlog of misunderstanding, but it will ensure that the younger generation starts out with a much better view of this vast subject.'⁵⁸ Some schools of organ playing and design receive very slight treatment

a particular national heritage as nothing else ever has, but helped raise the standards of British organology generally. See Peter Williams, 'Editorial', *BIOSR*, 25 (January 2001), 3.

⁵⁴ E. A. K. Ridley, review of Thistlethwaite, *The Making of the Victorian Organ* (Cambridge, 1990), in *The Galpin Society Journal*, 46 (March 1993), 213. Ridley was a solicitor and amateur musician. Other studies by Thistlethwaite include 'A consideration of the development of the organ in England between c. 1820 and 1870 and the factors influencing the development', PhD dissertation, University of Cambridge, 1980; *Birmingham Town Hall* (Birmingham, 1984).

⁵⁵ Christopher Kent, review of Thistlethwaite, *Victorian Organ*, in *Music & Letters*, 73 (May 1992), 299-301.

⁵⁶ Peter Williams, review of Thistlethwaite, *Victorian Organ*, in *Organ Yearbook*, 22 (1991), 174-175. See also Peter Williams, review of Thistlethwaite, *Victorian Organ*, in *Victorian Studies*, 35 (Summer 1992), 431-432.

⁵⁷ Williams has on at least two occasions shown scepticism towards *companions*. See Peter Williams, review of Butt (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Bach* (Cambridge, 1998), in *Music & Letters*, 79 (May, 1998), 277-278.

⁵⁸ Bond, 'Pedal Power', 77.

and surprisingly, given Thistlethwaite's interest in English organs, the seventeenth and eighteenth-century English organ was neglected.

Despite an increased interest in the organ, recent accounts of reform, partly due to the concept's inherent competing discourses, cause trouble for historians, leading to accounts which fail to show the complexity of the forces at play. Trouble stems from an arena of warring interpretations of the organ. For example in his 1988 New Grove article, Williams asserts that, 'Electric actions [...] satisfy only those builders whose tonal ideals, like their instruments, are virtually outside the realm of true organs.'⁵⁹ But the greatest problem is a reliance on Whig hermeneutics which risks ignoring particular aspects of the past which do not conform to the desired route of progress or evolution. In a study, like the present, tracing the growing appeal to history in organ design, this could manifest itself as a scholarly irresponsible historiographical emphasis, with the historian desperately searching for talk of reform which is amenable to being moulded into politically-charged imperatives for the present; some voices, even if they evince some sympathy with reform, would be scrupulously silenced because their testimony may not advance a present ideal.

A problem may be detected in attitudes towards music-making and organs in the early twentieth century which regard that time as dormant in terms of reform. This is particularly appropriate if the historian or casual observer wishes to show how reform developed after the Second World War, to coincide with the rapid pace of the early music movement. Writing in

⁵⁹ Although Williams's views are not inappropriate (mechanical actions afford the player a greater degree of control than any other form of transmission), a value-judgement of this sort must be approached with caution. It is not necessary to conduct a violent attack, as Paul Hale did in a review of Williams' publication ('This disturbingly unscholarly value-judgement attitude'), but such judgments should be eliminated from histories if we are to *interpret* what has been. See Paul Hale, review of Peter Williams, Barbara Owen, *The New Grove Organ*, (London, 1988), in *Organists' Review* (September 1989), 220. Williams has continued to offer similar views. For example, in his review of a publication examining famous American organs, Williams (quite correctly) notes the book's emphasis on twentieth- and later nineteenth-century organs and the exclusion of the 'masterpieces of the last 30 years', a period which fostered the classical organ. Unable to leave the matter, Williams wishes (somewhat provocatively) for better reproduced photographs, but qualifies his idea by suggesting the photographed organs 'might increase the nightmare-impression left by so many of these designs'! See Peter Williams, review of Hans Uwe Hielscher, *Berühmte Orgeln der USA* (Köln, 2002), in *Organ Yearbook*, 31 (2002), 203.

1996, Relf Clark does not mention organ reform, but he does reduce organ building in the early twentieth century to one common denominator: progress. He notes: 'it is probably fair to say that, on the whole, builders and players of 1896 had little time for [...old] instruments, regarding them as hopelessly antiquated, catering for a repertoire that was obscure and outmoded, and quite useless for the performance of modern works'.⁶⁰ Clark does not state what led him to such a conclusion, neither does he state which players held these views, but it is fair to comment that his knowledge of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century instruments, with their ingenious technical devices and majestic sounds, indirectly or directly encouraged such conclusions. But in the process the 'hopelessly antiquated' instruments are reduced to a period of unsophisticated development, which simply anticipates the 'modern' organ, which then, in turn, leads to the 'reformed' organs. Whilst he may not necessarily subscribe to this view, Clark's history sustains the venerable tradition of music historiography that views the creative trajectory of instrumental (and composer) development as a strictly linear progression from the primitive to maturity. What is missing, moreover, is an engagement with the historical actors, which far from simplifying the matter, reveals the complexities of the inherent discourses. I do not wish to wrestle with Clark but a nuanced study (as chapter two will highlight) reveals that some practitioners, like Arnold Dolmetsch, were far from satisfied with the status quo. Indeed even significant musicians who generally admired English organ building lamented the demise of some features of the old English organ.

Such reflections on historical writings allow us to grapple with the extent to which *a priori* expectations dictate what historians retrieve and discard in their archaeological surveys. Stephen Bicknell, an organ historian, organ consultant, and organ builder, aimed to give a 'reasonably

⁶⁰ Relf Clark, *BIOSR*, 20 (April 1996), 3. From 1990 to 2005 Clark was a council member of BIOS. He was also an officer of the Elgar Society between 1995 and 2007. He qualified as a solicitor and later completed a PhD on the work of Robert Hope-Jones. 'Robert Hope-Jones, M.I.E.E.: an interim account of his work in the British Isles', PhD thesis, University of Reading, 1993.

non-partisan' account of reform (what he terms 'The Classical Revival'),⁶¹ yet he betrays an inner voice which seeks to promote the events which he describes. This sort of tone is not inappropriate, especially if evidence is used critically for advocacy; the problem is that Bicknell does not show the reader what was really at stake. As Williams noted, the narrative is 'told in the usual terms, not entirely free [...] of some mild point-scoring and insular propaganda'.⁶² Despite Bicknell's (over) cautious approach in assessing Hope-Jones's work, the achievements of the instigators of reform – the Royal Festival Hall and its designer Ralph Downes – are inflated at the expense of the reform views held by other organists and builders before 1954.

It becomes very easy, in fact, to slip into a mode of thought that separates the good from the bad. One such 'bad' guy is Henry Willis III (1889-1966), grandson of 'Father' Henry Willis (1821-1901).⁶³ In telling the reform story, Bicknell acknowledges the presence of Willis's 1926 instrument for Farm Street Church, London, but does not go far beyond presenting basic details. Rowntree concluded that the organ's mutations – the first twentieth-century English instrument to have such ranks – its complete choruses, and its move away from mass foundation tone merit the descriptions 'quasi-continental' and 'truly classical'. Indeed, he goes on to say that the tonal scheme's appeal to the past was reflected in the opening recital, a concert which prominently featured early music: 'Weitz' opening recital included works by Gabrieli, Byrd, Titelouze, Scheidt, Buxtehude, Palestrina, Dandrieu, Clerambault and Bach: a revolutionary programme for the 1920s.'⁶⁴ Bicknell acknowledged the new thinking espoused at Farm Street stating that the organ 'took on something of a continental feeling',⁶⁵ thus supporting Rowntree's earlier statement. But Bicknell is quick off the mark to draw attention away from this instrument. He

⁶¹ Bicknell, *History*, xix. For biographical details of Bicknell see Anon., 'Stephen Bicknell', *The Telegraph* [website] (29 August 2007) <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/1561553/Stephen-Bicknell.html>> accessed 1 August 2011; Andrew Spark, 'Obituary Stephen Bicknell', *The Guardian* [website] (29 October 2007) <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/2007/oct/29/guardianobituaries.booksobituaries>> accessed 1 August 2011.

⁶² Peter Williams, review of Bicknell, *History*, 180.

⁶³ For biographical details see William Sumner, 'Henry Willis III', *MT*, 107 (September 1966), 801-802.

⁶⁴ Rowntree, 'Organ Reform in England', 5-16.

⁶⁵ Bicknell, *History*, 328.

challenges Willis's tonal thinking: 'Despite his claims to have introduced elements of new thinking to Britain, Willis was quite content, at the Masonic Peace Memorial in 1933, to build a three-manual organ with an alarmingly foundational Great Organ of 16. 16. 8. 8. 8. 8. 4. 4. 2. 8. – of which three were Open Diapasons.'⁶⁶

Willis's marginal position in organ histories is understandable. It cannot be denied that Willis exhibited very different views to those practitioners like Downes actively promoting a revival more closely modelled on seventeenth-century organs. High pressure reeds, electro-pneumatic actions, to mention just a few traits of Willis's style, were in total contradiction with the instruments which are described in Rowntree's quotation. It would be very difficult to argue that Willis had a significant impact on the development of the classical ideal. Indeed, in a letter in 1952 to Werner Walker, an organ builder in Germany, Willis openly stated his opposition to the principal features of seventeenth-century organs, slider soundboards and mechanical action. He suggested asking 'very high prices when experts specify something wholly undesirable – such as slider soundboards and mechanical action'.⁶⁷ In addition he openly stated his dislike for some of the historical instruments which he heard: 'what I don't like, because I wouldn't care to live with it, is a full ensemble as at Ottobeuren.'⁶⁸ It is obvious, therefore, that Willis showed no sympathy with views which promoted, to a large extent, earlier practices of organ design. He did not hesitate in condemning some historical practices as his observation of the 1766 Riepp organ in Ottobeuren indicates. As Bicknell correctly remarks, Willis gradually isolated himself by walking out of recitals given on new 'classical' organs.

The problem is not that Willis needs a defender. The problem is that accounts of Willis focus on certain biographical images – walking out of recitals – and shy away from contemporary understandings of reform in Britain. Whilst chapter three will not claim that Willis played a significant role in the later course of reform which Rowntree and Bicknell promote (Royal

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Letter from Willis to Werner Walker, 1 August 1952, Willis Archives, German Correspondence.

⁶⁸ Henry Willis to G Donald Harrison, in Charles Callahan, *The American Classic Organ* (Virginia, 1990), 132.

Festival Hall and beyond), it will show Willis to be interested in issuing a protest against the then contemporary practices of organ building and establishing some norms influenced by German practices.⁶⁹

Thus Bicknell's *History of the English Organ* undertook a much-needed survey, but suffered from a lack of interpretative vision. As Williams remarks: 'One is bound to wonder if collating secondary and even a few primary sources will amount to a "history of the English organ".'⁷⁰

Williams's strongest criticism is that the book's casual method casts doubt on the organ's worthiness to enter the musicological arena: 'In its rather casual and lacuna bibliography it does not quite conform with other work of major university presses, which might suggest that organs are not so "serious" as other topics in musicology.'⁷¹ The monograph certainly provides, as the author claims, 'pegs on which to hang the myriad details of new research',⁷² but struggles to raise English organ scholarship to a new level.

The Royal Festival Hall and the *Orgelbewegung*

No discussion of reform could proceed without taking cognizance of Peter Williams's critique of the Royal Festival Hall organ. In 1980 he stated:

Despite the thought put into it by the adviser (Ralph Downes) and builder (Harrison & Harrison), the quasi-comprehensive nature of the organ results in little more than an out-moded compromise organ characteristic of a period, still with us, in which eclecticism seems a possible and worthwhile aim. The Festival Hall's 103 stops provide German flutes, Anglo-German choruses, French reeds and other elements carefully calculated to allow many types of organ music. But the size of the organ, the sprawling, largely unencased construction and electro-pneumatic action make it impossible for either player or listener to achieve true sympathy

⁶⁹ Much of the research on Willis was made possible due to the patience and support of David Wyld, Director of Henry Willis and Sons Ltd, to whom I am most grateful. The research was carried out on 1 December 2008 and 16 January 2009. The well preserved archive is arranged according to a two-level criterion: the factory which took responsibility for the various projects (eg. London) followed by the place name of the various projects undertaken by the firm. Sadly an important file containing correspondence with Fernando Germani, an Italian organist who was known to Willis, was missing. Of great loss is the file labelled 'South Bank' which must have contained correspondence related to Ralph Downes's project at the Royal Festival Hall.

⁷⁰ Williams, review of Bicknell, *History*, 179-180.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 180.

⁷² Bicknell, *History*, xix.

with any musical style other than the town-hall transcription, of which presumably it had hoped to sound the death knell. Nor did the Festival Hall organ have much direct influence on other new organs, although English organists did suddenly become aware of what a Quintadena or a Cornet was and hastened to have one when finance made it possible to rebuild their Willis or Walker.⁷³

Perhaps the review is a little harsh. As William McVicker, organ consultant, musician, and currently the Curator for the organ, has shown, the Hall became somewhat of a 'Mecca' for organ music [my term]. Nevertheless, as Chapter six will demonstrate, Downes's scheme did not lead to a significant change in subsequent organ building projects. It did, however, contribute to the desire to alter Victorian and Edwardian organs, thus allowing some of them to lose their tonal integrity.

McVicker's study (2004) provided much contextual information on the organ in the Royal Festival Hall as well as a short analysis of Downes's role in its design and subsequent recital series.⁷⁴ McVicker acknowledges criticisms of the organ provided by Williams, but showed how the organ inspired new compositions, and was part of a growing concern for real organ music. A perceptive observation is McVicker's analysis of aspects of Downes's autobiography, *Baroque Tricks*, in which McVicker confidently shows how Downes manipulated history in order to promote his views on tonal design.⁷⁵

McVicker, however, accepts the usual story that Downes provided a link to the German *Orgelbewegung*. In his words, Downes 'proved to be the channel through which the *Orgelbewegung* arrived in England'.⁷⁶ Such a view is understandable. The installation of the organ in the Royal Festival Hall in 1954 attracted polemical responses, and the instrument has remained a popular landmark in British organ history. In 1963 Clutton stated that reform 'really took root only with

⁷³ Williams, *New History*, 204. See also Andrew McCrea, 'Fifty years of organ music at the Royal Festival Hall', in *Organ Recital Series 2003/04*, Royal Festival Hall Concert Programme (London, 2003), 27-30.

⁷⁴ William McVicker, 'Ralph Downes's tonal philosophy', 93.

⁷⁵ McVicker shows (by examining Downes's scores) how Downes's later registration schemes changed significantly. He points out that whilst Downes, in *Baroque Tricks*, was critical of Peter Hurford for using a 'skeletonised chorus'; this was, in fact, the exact registration that Downes used in the early years of the organ's existence. See McVicker, 'Ralph Downes's tonal philosophy', 82.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

the opening of the organ in the Royal Festival Hall',⁷⁷ a phrase repeated again by Williams in the *New Grove*.⁷⁸ In 1976 Thistlethwaite highlighted how the organ provoked further debates: 'it is now over twenty years since the Royal Festival Hall Organ initiated the current discussion about modern British organ design'.⁷⁹ David Lumsden commented in 1987 that 'it would be difficult to overstate the importance of this single instrument or the significance of the contribution of its progenitors, Downes and Harrison, to the history of English music'.⁸⁰ John Norman acknowledged that the organ spawned no direct successors, but claimed that the instrument 'undoubtedly legitimised the neo-classical organ in the minds of the musical public and, as such, has had a marked general effect on the design of the British organ'.⁸¹ Accordingly, Bicknell informs the readers of his *History of the English Organ* that the Royal Festival Hall 'blew a gaping hole in assumptions about style and tonal appointment, and ushered in the classical revival in Britain, albeit twenty years later than in the rest of Europe and the United States'.⁸² Furthermore, McVicker acknowledges Peter Hardwick's observation of how the organ inspired composers to write for it.⁸³

There is no doubting that the instrument was of some importance, but it is necessary to question the extent to which it conditions our understanding of British organ history. As Ian Bell has remarked, the instrument has tended to divide the twentieth century in two and, most importantly, condition how we examine the period:

The organ was so utterly different from what came before, and from what the public might have anticipated, that in spoken and written discussion it has become commonplace to group later developments in British organ building under the general classification of 'post Festival Hall', as if a great curtain had been drawn

⁷⁷ Clutton and Niland, *The British Organ*, 115.

⁷⁸ Peter Williams, 'Organ', in L. Macy (ed.), *Grove Music Online*, <<http://www.grovemusic.com>> accessed 5 March 2008.

⁷⁹ Nicholas Thistlethwaite, [Letter], *Organists' Review*, 61 (Winter 1976), 38.

⁸⁰ David Lumsden, 'The place of the organist in British Musical Life', [RCO lecture at Cambridge, July 1987] *Organists' Review*, 73 (October 1987), 294.

⁸¹ John Norman, *The Organs of Britain* (Newton Abbot, 1984), 223.

⁸² Bicknell, *History*, 340.

⁸³ William McVicker, 'Future Plans at the Royal Festival Hall', *BIOSR*, 29 (April 2004), 12. McVicker refers to Peter Hardwick, *British Organ Music of the Twentieth Century* (Maryland, 2003), ix.

aside to reveal a sunny yellow-brick road, studded with handy signposts pointing the way to an enlightened future.⁸⁴

As a result of this division, many aspects of reform are either ignored or cast to one side. It must be remembered that the instrument only really addressed aspects of tonal voicing: layout, mechanism, and wind supply were heavily indebted to earlier twentieth-century practices. As a result the organ was different to anything that came before it, but at the same time it shared visible links with the immediate past.

Seeing the Royal Festival Hall instrument as an important landmark helps create a narrative in which the *Orgelbewegung* is perceived to have arrived in England in 1954. This is understandable when Downes, as McCrea points out, referred to the instrument's conception as having 'gained ground [...] in the countries of continental Europe'.⁸⁵ There were indeed parallels between Downes's work and some Continental practices but it is a leap of faith to suggest that the *Orgelbewegung*, a specific German movement of the 1920s, arrived in England in 1954. Not only does it divide the twentieth century into two – before/after 1954 – but such beliefs assume that the German Movement was an article for export which could be distributed and accepted by British musicians. This view risks reducing English and German reform to one common denominator – that of general 'reform'.

In asserting that Downes brought the *Orgelbewegung* to England, McVicker accepted the popular assertion that this movement owed its origins to the work of Albert Schweitzer.⁸⁶ It is not difficult to find opinions which associate reform with Schweitzer. Laurence Phelps outlined Schweitzer's role in the German organ reformation already forty years ago.⁸⁷ Thistlethwaite's introduction to *The Cambridge Companion* and Bicknell's chapter on the organ case in the same

⁸⁴ Ian Bell, 'A signpost for the future?', *Organ Recital Series 2004/05* [Royal Festival Hall Concert Programme] (London 2004), 33-35.

⁸⁵ Andrew McCrea, '1954 and the RFH's 'Bach Organ'', *Organ Recital Series 2004/05* [Royal Festival Hall Concert Programme] (London 2004), 30.

⁸⁶ McVicker, 'An analytical approach to open, cylindrical organ-pipe scaling', esp. 62-68.

⁸⁷ Laurence Phelps, 'A Short History of the Organ Revival', *Church Music, biannual* (St. Louis, Missouri, Spring 1967).

companion draw similar conclusions. McVicker's doctoral dissertation devotes significant attention to demonstrating how Schweitzer initiated the world-wide reform movement.⁸⁸

Accepting Schweitzer as the father of reform is understandable given his criticisms of some nineteenth-century trends in organ design. Schweitzer was among the first major critics of early-twentieth-century German organs, which he termed 'factory organs'. For Schweitzer the organ had lost its connections with the master craftsman. In the fifty-one pages that make up his 1906 condemnation of modern organ building, *The Art of Organ Building and Organ Playing in Germany and France*, Schweitzer saw commercialism as the root of the problem.⁸⁹ In his autobiography Schweitzer made reference to a visit of a new organ and a general dissatisfaction for what he heard:

When I heard the harsh tone of the much belauded instrument and in a Bach fugue [...] perceived a chaos of sounds in which I could not distinguish the separate voices, my foreboding that the modern organ meant in that respect a step not forward but backward suddenly became a certainty.⁹⁰

It was this organ's inability to render the music of J. S. Bach which led Schweitzer to conduct his attack on the organs of his time. Schweitzer viewed these instruments, especially those built in the secular environment of the concert hall, as decadent, incapable of honouring Bach's music.

Schweitzer showed interest in historical organs, using some of these instruments for recordings, and seeing the organs of the Alsatian Andreas Silbermann (1678-1734) as an ideal medium for Bach's works.⁹¹ But his ultimate praise, surprisingly, was reserved for the French nineteenth-century instruments of Aristide Cavallé-Coll. Schweitzer openly stated that instruments by this

⁸⁸ William Richard McVicker, 'An analytical approach to open, cylindrical organ-pipe scaling from a historical perspective, with specific reference to the scaling practices of selected organ-builders', PhD Dissertation, University of Durham, 1987.

⁸⁹ Albert Schweitzer, *Deutsche und französische Orgelbaukunst*, (Leipzig, 1906), trans. William D. Turner, *Organ building and organ playing in France and Germany 1906: Epilogue: the present status of organ building 1927* (Baintree, 1984).

⁹⁰ Albert Schweitzer, *Aus meinem Leben und Denken*, trans. C. T. Campion, *Out of my life and thought: an autobiography* (New York, 1949) 8.

⁹¹ Albert Schweitzer, 'Bach Organ Society', [sound recordings] Queen's Hall, London, rec. 1937: (HMV C1532 and C1543); All Hallows, London, rec. 1937: (Columbia ROX 146-52); Sainte Aurélie, Strasbourg, rec. 1937: (33CX1249); Günsbach, rec.1952: (Columbia LP 33CX1074; Columbia LP 33CX1084; Columbia LP 33CX1081).

builder were the perfect medium for Bach's works.⁹² Schweitzer's preferences were thus far removed from the ideals promoted by the *Orgelbewegung*. Indeed in 1950 Schweitzer wrote that 'German organ builders and theorists from the middle of the '20s often wrongly suggested that I was the initiator of this organ type. Nothing could be further from the truth. But I have so far chosen not to oppose the German Organ Reform Movement openly.'⁹³

Despite Schweitzer's predilection for Cavallé-Coll's instruments, and his ambivalent position with regard to the *Orgelbewegung*, he soon came to be associated with reforms inspired by seventeenth-century instruments. In 1967 Sumner summarised the aims of the *Orgelbewegung* as a movement of return which sought musical authority from the past: 'the *Orgelbewegung* was initiated after the 1914-18 War by Albert Schweitzer, Hans Henny Jahnn [1894-1959], the anti-Nazi playwright, and [Karl] Straube [1873-1950] the organist [and Thomas-Kantor]: its aim was to recapture the glory of the late seventeenth-century German organ which had been over-whelmed in the tides of Romanticism.'⁹⁴ The German movement was, in fact, part of a series of early twentieth-century 'return' movements affecting German church music, theology, and culture: the *Singbewegung*, *Jugendbewegung*, *Volksmusikbewegung*, *Orgelbewegung*, and in academic theology, *liturgische Bewegung* (Liturgical Revival) and the 'Luther Renaissance' movements were all part of a reactionary approach to renewing German culture. Beginning in 1909 with the influential manifesto *Internationales Regulativ für den Orgelbau*, which Schweitzer helped write at the 1909 International Musical Society meeting, the *Orgelbewegung* gained renewed momentum at the 1926 Freiburg 'Conference for German Organ-art'.⁹⁵ Under such figures as Wilibald Gurlitt, Christhard Mahrenholz, and Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht, the movement gained widespread renown and appeal.

⁹² Snyder, *Organ as a Mirror of its time*, 212.

⁹³ Schweitzer, letter to the American organists J. B. Jamison and Carl Weinrich, quoted in Snyder, *Organ as a Mirror of its time*, 323.

⁹⁴ William Sumner, *Music & Letters*, 48 (April 1967), 166.

⁹⁵ Williams, *New History*, 188. The *Orgelbewegung*'s most influential instrument was the so-called Praetorius Organ, built in 1921 by Oskar Walker with reference to the Praetorius's *De Organographia* (1618). The instrument followed Praetorius's stop list and scalings but went little beyond this. The instrument inspired further organs, including the 1925/28 Furtwängler and Hammer organ in Göttingen.

But as Williams has shown in his study of the German *Orgelbewegung*, various nationalistic feelings were at play in Schweitzer's work and are especially detectable in his immediate successors. Williams notes Eggebrecht's identification of three broad concepts pertaining to this movement – a *protest* against certain musical developments of the recent past, which it hoped to remedy by *affirming the values* of earlier styles of music, and *establishing norms* according to the movement's 'credo' (something already noted by Luigi Ferdinando Tagliavini in 1968) – but challenges the movement's claims.⁹⁶ Williams shows that the movement owed very little to historical performance, scholarly editions, and the mechanism of the organ and that its historical actors rarely mention the work of other musicians, such as Arnold Dolmetsch in England, who had already offered significant criticisms of organ culture. In his concluding remarks he noted the close connection between some of the *Orgelbewegung's* promoters and the advent of National Socialism, stating that 'any positivist or uncritical account of the *Orgelbewegung's* aims does seem inadequate, missing its political character and failing to illustrate the nature of the nationalistic *Moment* of the time.' Given recent talk on Eggebrecht's complaisance in Nazi atrocities, Williams's criticism is prescient.⁹⁷ The linking of English reform with the German Movement, if taken for granted, limits understanding of reform, revealing the inherent dangers in the term *Orgelbewegung* or even 'reform'.

A study of 'organ reform', therefore, is necessary when knowledge of the subject remains shallow and is marred by misunderstandings. For example, Martin Firth's study revealed how little organists knew about what he terms the Organ Reform Movement.⁹⁸ Firth claimed that only 17.5% of organists surveyed showed any knowledge of the subject. The results are even more intriguing when the views of organ scholars (nationwide) are examined: 'nearly 40% said they had

⁹⁶ Eggebrecht was an influential voice at the 1967 Freiburg organ conference (Freiburg III), held there between 24 and 29 July 1967. Eggebrecht's paper was published as *Die Orgelbewegung* (Stuttgart, 1967). See Luigi Ferdinando Tagliavini, 'L'organo nel mondo musicale contemporaneo: note in margine ad uno scritto di Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht', *L'Organo*, 6 (1968), 221-230.

⁹⁷ Boris von Haken, 'Musicology and mass execution' [website] <<http://www.signandsight.com/service/1977.html>> accessed 24 May 2011, originally appeared in *Die Zeit*, 20 December 2009.

⁹⁸ Martin [Firth] Freke, 'Organists in the Church of England', 195-203.

heard of it, but few had any appreciation of what it meant or had achieved'.⁹⁹ Firth goes on to state that of the 43 organ scholars interviewed, 'it became clear that few interviewees had any real idea of exactly what the ORM [Organ Reform Movement] really stood for. Many were aware of some of its characteristics but without a clear understanding of what underpinned the philosophy of the movement.' Whether there was a *Movement* is debatable, but Firth's research confirms how the topic, whilst perhaps understood in broad terms by some, is not fully grasped.

The idea of reform

In tracing the development of reform much depends on the defining characteristics which one considers necessary for this phenomenon. One particularly rich starting point is a debate in the early 1950s which took place between several prominent figures who were concerned about the future of the English organ and organ playing. Geraint Jones, Ralph Downes, Harold Darke, George Dyson, and Vaughan Williams were perhaps the main players in this bitter slinging match. From their arguments we may establish that organ reform embraced an interest in:¹⁰⁰

1. the rise of early music;
2. historic organs (mainly Continental);
3. the organ's earlier repertory, in particular works of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries;
4. playing techniques; and
5. a desire to promote the organ to a wider audience.

To achieve these aims, promoters of reform were interested in:

6. decoupling the organ from its posited liturgical (especially Anglican) requirements; and
7. creating a modern instrument which exhibited a logical relationship with the organ's repertoire (and specifically the works of Bach).

⁹⁹ Ibid., 201 organists, and 43 organ scholars took part in the survey. See Freke, 'Organists in the Church of England', 118 for details of response rate.

¹⁰⁰ See esp. Jones, 'Musical Instrument?'; Darke, 'Defence'; George Dyson, 'The President's Address', *MT*, 94 (September 1953), 415; Vaughan Williams, [Letter to the Editor] *The Times* (14 January 1951); Ralph Downes, 'The Modern Organ as an Instrument of Music', *MT*, 80 (May 1939), 375-376.

Each of these is subject for contemplation today as some are by no means evident. For example, the quest to popularize the organ is somewhat deceptive as all parties emphasized the instrument's perceived low status and chapter two will establish how this discourse was already well established before the 1950s. Furthermore, interest in historical organs did not necessarily lead to copies of previous styles or even to instruments which set out to follow old practices closely. Reform was closely linked to changes in the way performers approached earlier repertoires, something which provoked polemical responses. Thus Thurston Dart in his monograph *The Interpretation of Music* noted that 'some enlightened players' like Jones were 'giving a lead' as opposed to other organists who regarded the style of their colleagues as 'quaint and irrational'.¹⁰¹ However, in order to contain the present study, a consideration of performance styles will be limited to conceptions of performance in so far they relate to organ design; the boundaries of the study will not permit a detailed examination of recordings from the period under consideration. The quest for early music inspired musicians to return to historical instruments, which in turn, drove them to question the concept of the English organ.

Reform was clearly driven by the blossoming early music revival. It is well known that the early music revival was not a mainstream movement in the period 1901-1965. There is no doubting that this phenomenon emerged in its full form only in the 1970s, producing visceral polemics in the 1980s and 90s,¹⁰² and accompanying a contemporary quest for new musicological

¹⁰¹ Thurston Dart, *The Interpretation of Music* (London, 1954), 40. Further editions were published in 1967, 1978, and 1984.

¹⁰² Following Adorno's appraisal of the early years of the movement (Theodor Adorno, 'Bach gegen seine Liebhaber verteidigt', *Merkur*, 5 (1951), trans., Samuel, and Shierry Weber, 'Bach Defended Against his Devotees', *Prisms* (London, 1967) 133-46), Laurence Dreyfus drew attention to what he implied was a conspiracy of *silence* surrounding the cultural phenomenon of Early Music; see Laurence Dreyfus, 'Early Music Defended against Its Devotees: A Theory of Historical Performance in the Twentieth Century', *The Musical Quarterly*, 69 (Summer 1983), 297-322. A Postscriptum was issued in 1997 discussing the background to the original article. See Laurence Dreyfus, *Muzyka dawna wzięta w obronę przed jej entuzjastami: teoria wykonania historycznego w XX wieku* [translation into Polish by Magdalena Nowak with author's 1997 Postscriptum] *Canor* 19 (1997), 27-39. Available at http://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/site/human/music/staff_rooms/acstaff/ldreyfus/. In another article, Dreyfus outlined the paradox of 'authentic' performances of Mozart's music, when its aesthetics of composition stemmed from the sublime and inhibited expression; see 'Mozart as Early Music: A Romantic Antidote', *Early Music*, 20 (May, 1992), 297-298, 300-303, 305-306, 308-309. A major attack on 'authenticity' came from Richard Taruskin in a collection

methods.¹⁰³ According to Laurence Dreyfus writing in 1983, the cultural phenomenon of early music is a ‘late twentieth-century ensemble of social practices’ that relate to the performance of older repertoires of European music.¹⁰⁴ Nicholas Charles Wilson supports this by demonstrating how ‘the early music labour market in the UK appeared only for the first time around the beginning of the 1970s’.¹⁰⁵ Contemporaries also noted the rise of a new ethos. John Thomson (1926-1999), the editor of the first issue of the journal *Early Music*, claimed in 1973 that ‘ten years ago a journal such as this would have been impossible: there were then no early music consorts such as those whose reputation now begins to reverberate beyond these shores [...] Now all is mysteriously changed.’¹⁰⁶ Consorts did exist prior to 1973 (the formation in 1958 of *Musica*

of essays that finally came together to form *Text and Act* of 1995; See Taruskin, *Text and Act: Essays on Music and Performance* (Oxford, 1995). The seismic consequences of such an attack made it difficult for John Butt ‘to express an opinion when the reputations of so many friends and colleagues are strewn throughout its pages in various stages of bloody dismemberment’; see Butt, ‘Acting Up a Text: The Scholarship of Performance and the Performance of Scholarship’, review of Taruskin, in *Early Music*, 24 (May 1996), 323. Other significant responses include Stephen Davies, ‘Authenticity in musical performance’, *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, 27 (1987), 39-50; James Young, ‘The concept of authentic Performance’, *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, 28 (1988), 228-238. To discredit the value of ‘authentic’ performance was to place greater value on intuitive forms of music-making. Writing in 1988, Nicholas Kenyon, for example, advocated an approach inspired by the available evidence but not constrained by it; see Kenyon, ‘Introduction: live issues and questions’, in Kenyon (ed.), *Authenticity and Early Music* (Oxford, 1988), 1-18. Through a series of case studies, Peter Le Huray, in 1990, asked performers to ask many questions in performance; see Le Huray, *Authenticity in performance: eighteenth-century case studies* (Cambridge, 1990). In 1995, Peter Kivy brought the debate to focus once more on the philosophy of performance by accusing the authenticity movement of washing their hands of fundamental issues; see Kivy, *Authenticities: Philosophical Reflections on Musical Performance* (Ithaca, 1995). Roger Scruton quickly came to Kivy’s aid by taking the aesthetics of music-making one step further, and casting scholarship in a negative light; see Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Music* (Oxford, 1999). Margaret Bent acknowledges the limitations of our ‘ears’ but places a great emphasis on understanding the grammar of previous modes of composition. Bent, ‘Authentic Listening’, *Early Music*, 25 (November 1997), 567.

¹⁰³ The scholarly investigation of ‘authenticity’ was accompanied by methodological changes in musicology which sought to restore what was referred to as a ‘humane’ element in the musicologist’s playground. In his book, *Contemplating Music* (1983), Joseph Kerman noted that whilst the 1970s had been a period of consolidation (resulting in the 1980 version of *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*), the 1980s and 1990s would become years of change and musicological motion. Change, discerns Kerman, was taking place in historical musicology, music theory and analysis, and in the ‘authenticity’ movement; authors like Kerman, Dahlhaus, Meyer and Treitler, entered the musicological arena with great perspicacity, sometimes offering polemical responses. See Joseph Kerman, ‘How We Got into Analysis, and How to Get Out’, *Critical Inquiry* 7 (1980), 311-331; Kerman, *Musicology* (London, 1985); Carl Dahlhaus, *Grundlagen der Musikgeschichte*, (Cologne, 1967), trans. J. B. Robinson, *Foundations of Music History* (Cambridge, 1983); Leonard B. Meyer, *Style and Music: Theory, History and Ideology* (Pennsylvania, 1989); Leo Treitler, *Music and the Historical Imagination* (London, 1989).

¹⁰⁴ Dreyfus, ‘Early Music’, 298.

¹⁰⁵ Nicholas Charles Wilson, ‘Explaining Labour Market Emergence’, PhD Dissertation, Kingston University, 2007, 2.

¹⁰⁶ John M. Thomson, ‘Editorial’, *Early Music*, 1 (January 1973), 1. For obituaries of Thomson see Tess Knighton, Nicholas Kenyon, Peter Campbell, Howard Schott, Peter Phillips, Neal Zaslaw, Eric Van Tassel, Anthony Rowland-Jones, Arthur Boyars, ‘Obituary’, *Early Music*, 27 (February 2000), 150-157.

Reservata by Michael Morrow and John Beckett, for example), but Thomson's observation reflects the limited international appeal of such groups.

The desire to research performance practices was a twentieth-century phenomenon, but interest in reviving earlier repertoires has a richer history. Perhaps, as Butt suggests, one could trace it back to the Restoration of 1660, for the return of Charles II was more than just a renewal of the monarchy: it re-established organ building and perhaps eventually led to the founding of the Concert of Ancient Music in 1776.¹⁰⁷ The nineteenth-century industrial revolution, however, according to Butt, had the most remarkable impact: 'Historical issues became important [...] as a consequence of technological modernization, as a consequence of the growing realization that the past was profoundly different from the present.'¹⁰⁸ Undoubtedly the Bach revival of the nineteenth century was the most important of these discoveries.¹⁰⁹ The English organ gained its pedals so that Bach's organ works could be performed,¹¹⁰ but it was not until a century later that musicians began questioning the suitability of English sounds for Bach's music.

Most importantly, it must be admitted that a renewed attitude to early music and its performance arose from the mid nineteenth century when earlier styles of music were performed on instruments which were considered obsolete. For example, in 1845 Prince Albert organized a concert at the court of Queen Victoria, which the young queen described as 'a beautiful Concert, full of curious productions of old world music. My beloved Albert has such exquisite taste and takes such pains in collecting rare and curious, as well as beautiful pieces of music.'¹¹¹ Greater

¹⁰⁷ John Butt, *Playing with history: the historical approach to musical performance* (Cambridge, 2002), 166; See also William Weber, *The rise of musical classics in eighteenth-century England: a study in canon, ritual, and ideology* (Oxford, 1996); Simon McVeigh, *Concert Life in London from Mozart to Haydn* (Cambridge, 2006); Brian Robins, *Catch and glee culture in eighteenth-century England* (Woodbridge, 2006).

¹⁰⁸ Butt, *Playing*, 39. Italics in original.

¹⁰⁹ Yo Tomita, 'The Dawn of the English Bach Awakening Manifested in Sources of The "48"', in Michael Kassler (ed.), *The English Bach Awakening: Knowledge of J. S. Bach and His Music in England, 1750-1830* (Aldershot, 2004).

¹¹⁰ See Thistlethwaite, *Victorian Organ*, esp. 163-80; Thistlethwaite, 'Bach, Mendelssohn, and the English Organist: 1810-45', *JBIOS*, 7 (1983), 34-49. Peter Williams claimed that it was precisely the desire to play Bach's organ music which was responsible for 'the wrecking of the English organ as a distinct organo-logical type'. See Peter Williams, 'Recalled to Life', review of Michael Kassler, *The English Bach Awakening: Knowledge of JS Bach and His Music in England 1750-1830*, in *MT*, 146 (Autumn 2005), 99.

¹¹¹ John R. Catch, 'Prince Albert's Early Music', *The Galpin Society*, 42 (August 1989), 3.

interest in old instruments, including their construction based on treatises or actual extant survivals and their playing techniques, came about around the turn of the twentieth century under such pioneers as Arnold Dolmetsch, Francis Galpin and Edmund Fellowes, and the next generation, Robert Donington and Marco Pallis.¹¹² Their work was made possible by a renewed interest in past works, as Butt has demonstrated: ‘in general terms the past, in part reawakened and in part still present, was an abiding factor in the repertory of concerts and operas: this was predominantly the case from as early as about 1900’.¹¹³ So it is perhaps not surprising that ever growing familiarity with a past repertoire led to some musicians questioning the methods for its interpretation, appealing to history as a form of authority.

Wherever we choose to draw the lines, this discursive activity forms an essential background to the emerging tension between the progressive and historical organs. At stake in the English debate was the value of the English organ (and organist) which musicians, who were primarily connected with the Royal College of Music (RCM) and Royal College of Organists (RCO), believed to be worthy of enriching religious events, and effectively communicating organ music and orchestral transcriptions. To perform these duties, the summit of the organ’s development was, according to such figures as Darke, repeatedly being reached in the present. The opposite imperative depicted and valorised imagined historical configurations of construction and practice, factors which condition the organ physically and in the musical imagination. Whilst Darke argued that progress in organ design allowed the organ to play Bach’s works with greater expression, an increasing interest in original performance conditions (as noted by Butt) led musicians in search of new methods of organ design, ones that were thought to be more faithful to

¹¹² For histories of the early music movement see Harry Haskell, *The Early Music Revival: a History* (London, 1988); Joel Cohen, and Herb Snitzer, *Reprise: the Extraordinary Revival of Early Music* (Boston, 1985); Nicholas Kenyon (ed.), *Authenticity and Early Music* (Oxford, 1988); see also Robert Barclay, ‘A critical analysis of actions taken upon historic musical instruments through the period of the early music revival from the beginning of the 20th century to the 1990s’, PhD Dissertation, Open University, 1999.

¹¹³ Butt, *Playing*, 23.

the old conditions known to Bach.¹¹⁴ This historicist impulse, which resounded with the work of Jones and Downes in the 1950s, was partly the result of increasing interest in earlier repertoires, their instruments and performing techniques. This prompted Peter Williams, Peter Hurford, and James Dalton to call repeatedly for a renewed interest in earlier Continental forms of the instrument in the 1960s.¹¹⁵ The various seventeenth and eighteenth-century schools of organ design found in France and in the German states provided the necessary inspiration.

Different methods of approaching earlier repertoires did much to provoke the debates, but exchanges were indicative of a tension between the organ's liturgical and repertorial functions. By placing an emphasis on organ music and earlier forms of the organ, the reformers were perceived to be eroding a vital aspect of the organ's identity: its ability to accompany canticles, anthems, and psalms in a manner which had come to be widely accepted as a vital part of organists' skills.

The decoupling of the organ from its supposed (Anglican) liturgical requirements, in fact, accounts for the most heavily debated area of organ aesthetics – that of the exact nature of the organ's role in divine worship. A central tenet is that the organ, in its ecclesiastical (and sometimes concert-hall) environment, is primarily an accompanying instrument. Not only must it provide adequate support for voices, but, most importantly, it must have registers which show sympathy with the sounds which Anglican composers like Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924)

¹¹⁴ Organ historians cannot concur on which organ tradition best represents Bach's works: Williams argues that Gottfried Silbermann's instruments have a connection with Bach, whilst Ulrich Dähnert believes the north German influence was greatly felt by Bach and that the Zacharias Hildebrandt instrument in Naumburg, with its mixture of diverse styles, best represents the 'Bach organ'. It is impossible to establish with great certainty the 'ideal' organ as imagined by Bach. For recent debates see Elaine Dykstra, *Deducing the original sounds of Bach's organ works: An historical account of the musical capabilities of the organs that Bach knew* (New York, 2007); Peter Williams, review of Dykstra, in *The Organ Yearbook*, 37 (2007), 214. Williams's earlier views on the matter may be found in some of his earlier publications: *European Organ*; 'Organs in Freiberg, Saxony', *The Organ Yearbook*, 2 (1971), 13-22; 'The Eighteenth-Century Organ: A Parting of the Ways', *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* (1965-1966), 65-77;

¹¹⁵ Ralph Downes, *Baroque Tricks: adventures with the organ builders* (Oxford, 1983; 1999); W. L. Sumner and Peter Williams, *Four lectures on Organ Design and Construction* (London, 1969); Peter Hurford, 'The Mixture as before?', *RSCM News*, 16 (October 1966), 4-5; see also Ralph Downes, 'J S Bach and a vision of a British Organ Revival'; Peter Hurford, 'Some Personal Thoughts on Musical Organs', *The Organbuilder*, 2 (May 1984), 2-3; Peter Williams, 'Considerations in the Designing of a House-Organ', *The Organbuilder*, 3 (May 1985), 2-4. Dalton aired his views through the designs of organs with which he was involved; these include Queens College, Oxford (1965), Clare College Cambridge (1971), St Mary's Church, Putney (1982), University Church, Oxford (1987).

would have encountered. John Harper has said that the concept of ‘the “accompanying” church organ and the accompaniments conceived for it belong to the period between 1880 and 1960, and are indebted to the “orchestral” organ of the secular concert hall and its repertory’.¹¹⁶ Harper’s mention of the orchestral repertory may be slightly misleading but he is likely to be referring to a predominantly nineteenth-century tonal palette which allows for fine gradations and flexibility of tone colour and volume suitable for Anglican canticle settings, anthems and psalm accompaniment.

The concept of the *liturgical organ* is, in this context, coupled to a practice of accompanying (generally Anglican) choral music in a particular manner, firmly bonded to the performance style of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Thus in 1965 Gerald Knight (1908-1979), then director of the Royal School of Church Music, responded quite forcefully to trends which he perceived as favouring the organ’s repertoire over its ecclesiastical functions. He stated: ‘Ask any ordinary churchgoer why churches have organs and you’ll be told that they’re for accompanying the singing.’ This, according to Knight, ‘is the principal reason for having them, with voluntaries and recitals occupying the second and third places in the order of priorities’.¹¹⁷ In Knight’s analysis the organ is rigorously held to be an instrument bonded to accompaniment, whether choral or congregational. Faced with an instrument which did not have these historical sounds, Knight rhetorically asked: ‘how was I to accompany Anglican chants, Stanford in A, and S. S. Wesley’s ‘Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace’? The kind of sounds that Wesley and Stanford wanted were just not available.’ The organ in question failed to have an appropriate tonal pallet, of which one can assume the ‘full swell’ effect is one. (Certainly, the full swell effect had gained sufficient authority by 1993 for Ann Bond to refer to Edwardian music and its reliance on the *Anglican full swell*.)¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ John Harper, review of Bicknell, *History*, in *Early Music*, 25 (February 1997), 133.

¹¹⁷ Gerald Knight, ‘What’s the use of an organ’, *RSCM News*, 9 (January 1965), 4.

¹¹⁸ Ann Bond, ‘A Rieger in Full Sail’, *Choir & Organ*, 1 (February 1993), 16.

So pervasive was the discourse regarding the liturgical organ that it is still encountered today. For example, in a report by David Butterworth on the recent instrument by Orgelbau Kuhn for Jesus College, Cambridge, the reader is told of the initial desire for ‘a flexible and stylistically appropriate accompanimental medium with a good range of Romantic subtlety’.¹¹⁹ On occasion the discussion can be rather forthright. In 2002 the organ builder Jack Bethards criticised the way in which recent trends in organ design had, it seems, sacrificed the accompanying qualities of the church organ. He claimed that the organ had been ‘removed from the main stage and placed in the museum of early music. Even in the church, the accompanimental and emotive qualities of the organ have often been sacrificed on the altar of limited solo repertoire.’¹²⁰ Like the views expressed by Knight, Bethards believes in a specific instrument with a specific pallet of tonal colours for accompanimental purposes. He aims to show how reform denied the church its suitable instruments.

But some are not convinced by this prevailing ‘what goes-without-saying’ attitude towards the church organ, as if God had ordained the coupling of a specific accompanimental tonal scheme to church organs. In 1966 Peter Hurford (born 1930), perhaps as a response to Knight, acknowledged that an organ can further the aims of worship, but reminded the reader that the instrument had to bear some relationship with criteria which Hurford imagined suitable for organ music:

[The organ] can be an instrument of great beauty and a tremendous boon to worship: but only if those responsible for building organs approach the problem with proper consideration, treating the organ as a musical instrument rather than simply as a necessary vehicle for accompanying hymns, psalms and other sung portions of the service.¹²¹

One of the things they were arguing over was about what constituted a ‘musical’ instrument, and of course this is an illusory, shape-shifting shadow of a word that flits through their thoughts and

¹¹⁹ David Butterworth, ‘The new organ of Jesus College Cambridge’, *The Organ*, 87 (August-October 2008), 31.

¹²⁰ Jack M. Bethards, ‘A Brief for the Symphonic Organ’, *JBIOS*, 26 (2002), 7.

¹²¹ Peter Hurford, ‘The Mixture as before?’, 8. Hurford was a significant practitioner: he was the first British organist to record the complete works of Bach and in 1963 he founded the St Alban’s International Organ Festival, an event which was to have a significant impact on organ reform, not least through its organ exhibition.

which they try to catch and subordinate to their opinions and their will. For Hurford the criterion which gives value is no longer based on the supposed requirements of the Anglican liturgy as stressed by Knight, but on what Hurford establishes are the valuable elements of an organ designed with its repertoire in mind.

Hurford's challenges reflected the growing authority of historical organs, but they were also part of a lively debate which questioned the value of some of the repertoire (new and old) which Knight associated with the concept of a liturgical organ. For example, in 1962 the musicologist Phillip Brett (1937-2002) had very little to say about contemporary church composition ('Herbert Howells's Coventry Antiphon is no more and no less than we can expect from him: a well-written and workman-like occasional piece that will fill a large building with a rich sound'¹²²). Brett inspired Nicholas Temperley (b1932), then Director of Music Studies at Clare College Cambridge, to stir up more trouble, describing much church music as 'curbing [...] individuality' and reiterating 'worn-out clichés', accusations which prompted Michael Howard (1922-2002), an organist, conductor, and composer, to take aim at English cathedral culture: 'Probably the last completely authentic canticle setting to be written in a genuinely contemporary language was Walmisley in D minor. Since then we have been showered with compositions of varying degrees of musical competence *per se* which by their lack of aptitude and integrity have one common characteristic – unutterable vulgarity.'¹²³ The attacks did not seem to irritate Lionel Dakers (1924-2003), future Director of the Royal School of Church Music (1972-1989), who became one of the chief promoters of much of the music under question, describing

¹²² Philip Brett, 'Services, Anthems, Hymns', *MT*, 103 (December 1962), 861. For similar complaints see Philip Brett, 'New Choir Music', *MT*, 103 (July 1962), 492. Brett presented an even more forceful attack in 'A New Renaissance?' *MT*, 103 (April 1962), 264. For an obituary of Brett see Martin Anderson, 'Professor Philip Brett: Outstanding musicologist and conductor', *The Independent* [website] (21 October) <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/professor-philip-brett-614577.html>> accessed 27 August 2011.

¹²³ Nicholas Temperley, 'A New Renaissance?', *MT*, 103 (August 1962), 543. See also 'A New Renaissance?' *MT*, 103 (November 1962), 772.

contemporary composition as ‘forward looking’.¹²⁴ If the repertoire was deemed insignificant then it follows that it would be difficult to justify constructing organs along the lines which Knight favoured.¹²⁵ Whilst the present thesis examines liturgical discourses, showing how the Frobenius organ at The Queen’s College challenged many of Knight’s assumptions, its scope cannot be broadened to include an examination of cathedral and church music lists.

A great deal of the discussion revolves around whether Britain had a viable organ culture at all, and if so, whether it was worth preserving in the face of increasing criticism. Some, like Vaughan Williams, argued that the future of the organ lay within a nationalist project primarily focused on its accompanimental aspects; some followed the call to preserve a distinct English School by asking for a greater interest in the historical English organ prior to the advent of the Victorian instrument (of some significance in terms of actual organ building from the 1970s under such builders as William Drake and Goetze and Gwynn but discussed from the early twentieth century); others like Ralph Downes appealed to a wider European context to cater for the organ’s repertoire. But even those who looked to the Continent found no agreement. Some supported the eclectic organ (as promoted by the 1954 Royal Festival Hall organ designed by Downes) which draws on a variety of different organ building traditions (including English),¹²⁶ whilst others have supported the construction of organs based on specific historic schools (of greater even if limited significance from the 1970s).¹²⁷ Some have called for an instrument which, though based on a set of principles which date from the eighteenth century, is the vision of a single mind living

¹²⁴ Lionel Dakers, ‘A New Renaissance?’ *MT*, 103 (April 1962), 265. For an obituary of Dakers see John Harper, ‘Lionel Dakers’, *The Guardian* [website] (14 March 2003).
<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/2003/mar/22/guardianobituaries>> accessed 2 February 2011.

¹²⁵ The value of the repertoire has been questioned in recent time. For example, in discussing the new Rieger organ in Christ Church cathedral, Oxford, Edward Higginbottom stated ‘The lack of accompanimental effects belonging to the period 1850-1950 should be seen for what it is: a deprivation of authentic accompanimental colours for the least interesting of some six centuries of Anglican choral tradition.’ Edward Higginbottom, ‘The New Organ at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford’, *JBIOS*, 4 (1980), 122.

¹²⁶ See for example, Arthur Wills’s avocation of the eclectic organ in Wills, *Organ* (London, 1984), 130-133; Wills specifically referred to the eclectic work undertaken at Ely Cathedral in 1975.

¹²⁷ One of the most significant instruments is perhaps the Ahrend organ in the Reid Concert Hall, Edinburgh (1978), built in consultation with Peter Williams and Gustav Leonhardt.

in the present day. It is this aesthetic which is found behind the design of the 1965 Frobenius organ in The Queen's College Oxford.

Dating the emergence of these ideas of reform is difficult. The early nineteenth-century rediscovery of Bach's music might be an option. But, as Williams notes, the desire to play Bach's music on English organs led to an instrument which was increasingly removed from historical practices, one that English organists claimed to be the perfect soundboard for his music.¹²⁸ Another possible starting date would be 1870. As Thistlethwaite admirably proves, 1870, marked by the death of the great organ builder William Hill (1789-1870), was a significant year as it was about then that eighteenth-century conceptions had finally disappeared, except in a few technical areas (e.g. unequal temperament in certain cathedral organs). Thistlethwaite therefore finishes his study with a brief consideration of how the work of Henry Willis around this date marked a significant departure in organ building.

Because my objective is to describe and analyse the process of what was understood as reform, my study begins by establishing what constitutes the English organ, a structure which was to come under siege as talk of reform gained momentum. The study begins in 1901 because it was around this time that many musicians noted the establishment of an English progressive organ, which had first emerged around 1870. The year 1901 is also marked by the death of both Queen Victoria and Father Henry Willis. Beginning in 1901, therefore, enables an examination of the background to reform, its contextualisation as well as an exploration of the competing debates on the organ and establish the discourses in which the organ found itself.

The present study ends in 1965, chosen as the year when the Frobenius organ in the chapel of The Queen's College, Oxford was installed, an instrument which broke with an aesthetic which had governed the construction of British organs for at least 100 years. The

¹²⁸ Williams, *New History*, 158.

instrument has been influential on organ builders. As John Norman wrote, 'it is a model stoplist for this type of organ, with inherent balance between departments, yet a clear pitch differentiation also'.¹²⁹

The paucity of literature on the subject has shaped the methodological framework of this thesis. Chapter two will explore, perhaps for the first time, competing views on the merits of the Georgian and early Victorian organs and their eclipse by the Edwardian instrument, arguing that the organ survived in 'splendid isolation' to historical and contemporary Continental models. A study of the effects of post-war modernism against a background of discourses on the organ's repertoire and interest in historical organs will form the basis of Chapter three. Chapter four will examine the 1930s, focusing on the Organ Music Society, reactions to the *Orgelbewegung*, and those organists calling for reform. Chapter five will investigate the swing towards reform in the post-war years set against an increasing defence of the English organ which sought to interlock many aspects of organ culture. Chapter six will show how the Royal Festival Hall organ spurred greater interest in reform. It will conclude with the 1965 instrument in The Queen's College and show how a radical transformation had occurred, from whose aspect we may be able to infer the presence and force of the historical discourses and practices surrounding early music, the liturgical organ, and progressive trends which the thesis will have traced.

¹²⁹ John Norman, *The Organs of Britain* (Newton Abbot, 1998), 270.

Chapter 2

Splendid Isolation, 1901-1918

In thinking anew about reform it is necessary to jettison the notion of a traditional English organ as promoted by Darke and Vaughan Williams. The English organ is, in fact, a construction of competing discourses. Those contemporary musicians like Darke who posed as defenders of the English organ – by which they meant the early twentieth-century English organ – maintained that builders had developed an instrument which kept a distance from examples on the Continent: it may be argued that, like British foreign policy under Lord Salisbury (1830-1903), these instruments existed in ‘splendid isolation’ (real or imagined).¹ Yet it is by no means clear that all musicians worshiped this instrument. In fact, a feature of the discourses was an interest in earlier English and Continental instruments which led to complaints against the modern organ, and, interestingly, the desire to incorporate old sounds in modern instruments.

Between 1907 and 1908 a public dual between Dr Charles William Pearce and Francis Burgess not only demonstrates the existence of disparate views on the merits of the modern English organ, but shows the presence of discourses surrounding the historical and modern organs. Whilst Pearce (1856-1928), a music scholar and council member of the Royal College of Organists, lamented the demise of eighteenth-century English aesthetics of design, Burgess (1879-1948), who went on to become President of the Gregorian Association from 1910 until 1948, welcomed the advances of recent years. Pearce, in addressing a meeting of the Musical Association in 1907, acted as prosecutor: ‘it is an open question if the organ is being developed at

¹ ‘Splendid isolation’ in foreign policy has been challenged. See Andrew Roberts, *Salisbury: Victorian Titan* (London, 1999) who argued that preserving Britain’s imperial interests lay not in remaining aloof in Continental affairs (see John Charmley *Splendid Isolation? Britain, the Balance of Power and the Origins of the First World War* (London, 1999)) but in non-alignment, freedom from entangling alliances, and, most importantly, the prevention of any one power dominating the Continent.

the present time upon logical and really artistic lines'.² He casts doubt on the modern organ's loudness, its uncased appearances, the loss of sweet tone, and the desire to imitate the orchestra; his close examination of the early nineteenth-century instrument challenged the popular belief that the instrument displaced a primitive instrument. Indeed he states: 'There is a popular fallacy that before the time of Henry Willis [...] all reed stops by other builders had [...] that peculiar quality of tone usually associated with the frying of sausages.'³ Pearce supports his assertion by referring to an article published in the *Musical Standard* on 15 October 1862 in which the writer described the reeds in Byfield's 1739 organ at Doncaster Parish Church 'as glorious reeds which blazed forth in beauty and brightness like the rising sun in an eastern clime – every pipe worth its weight in silver'.⁴ Pearce therefore carefully criticises modern organ design with reference to the instrument's history, showing how elements of the pre-1870 instrument were admired by its contemporaries, and were, in his opinion, preferable to the modern organ.

Given Pearce's criticisms, it is hardly surprising that one critic, Francis Burgess, should respond with a defence of the modern organ. In his address to the London section of the ISM on 9 November 1907, Burgess admitted that the eighteenth-century organ, greatly admired by Pearce, had a special character, but concluded that it was inadequate for modern purposes. In particular he claimed that the organ's small scales and low wind pressures were inappropriate for accompaniments 'as are demanded by the modern writers of church music'.⁵ There was a sense of frustration in Burgess as he used the organ in Christ Church Spitalfields, built by Richard Bridge in

² Charles Pearce, 'The English Organ of a Hundred Years Ago', *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 33 (1906-1907), 105. Pearce's publications include: *The organist's directory to the accompaniment of divine service* (London, 1908). *Notes on old London city churches, their organs, organists, and musical associations* (London, 1909); *The life and works of Edward John Hopkins* (London, 1910); *A biographical sketch of Edmund Hart Turpin* (London, 1911); *Notes on English organs of the period 1800-1810, taken chiefly from the MS. of H. Leffler* (London, 1912). For biographical details of Pearce see Anon., 'Obituary: Charles William Pearce', *MT*, 70 (January 1929), 79.

³ Pearce, 'English Organ', all at 121.

⁴ In referring to the Doncaster organ, E. J. Hopkins, an organ pedagogue, extolled 'that brilliant, clangy description of reeds which Byfield made so deservedly famous.' Edward Hopkins & Edward Rimbault, *The organ, its history and construction*, pt. 2 (London, 1870), 520.

⁵ Francis Burgess, *The Organ fifty years hence: A study of its development in the light of its past history and present tendencies* (London, 1908), all at 6; for some biographical details of Burgess see Anon., 'Obituary', *MT*, 89 (August 1948), 254.

1735 (currently being restored by William Drake) as an example of an instrument which was admired by Pearce but was hardly suitable for 1907:

I can only wish that some of our good friends who talk so enthusiastically about the beautiful organs which were built in the good old times could have an instrument like this to play upon. In face of such an instance it is, surely, not very wise of anyone to describe the modern organ as a 'music mill' as to accuse modern organ builders of methods of barbarism.

For Burgess, then, eighteenth-century instruments were no more than objects of curiosity, eclipsed by a new aesthetic of organ building which was progressive and innovative, giving English music-making a worthy instrument.⁶ Yet at the same time there was a fascination with old (English) instruments, an interest propelled by the arts and crafts movement and rising interest in earlier repertoires. Sometimes, as in Pearce's response, this led to a clear distinction between the modern and historical organs; at other times historical instruments were distilled and their worthy elements integrated into new instruments.

The making of the English organ

Interest in the modern English organ was partly the result of significant changes which had occurred in the late nineteenth century. As Pearce put it in 1907, 'perhaps no musical instrument has been subjected to greater constitutional changes during the last hundred years than has the English organ'.⁷ Pearce surprisingly neglects to mention the introduction of the pedal organ around 1840 but he refers to the change from the GG (or FF) to the C compass, the changes in the organ's sound, the adoption of equal temperament, and the technology used to control the stop movement, features which developed throughout the nineteenth century. Pearce's claim that the recent changes in organ building were more significant than those associated with other instruments was emphasised by other musicians. Frederick Kitchener, a parish-church organist, noted in 1910 how even changes to the '[...pianoforte] during Beethoven's lifetime were

⁶ See Thistlethwaite, *Victorian Organ*, 181-255.

⁷ Pearce, 'English Organ', 105.

relatively of infinitely less significance than those which have been made in the construction of the [...] organ] during the last fifty years'.⁸ We might therefore want to consider briefly the relevance of Pearce's claim that the most significant changes in organ building had occurred in the hundred years leading up to the time he was writing, and his implied comparison with the eighteenth-century organ.

That change should coincide with a particular period of English history in which, as in politics, Britain was perceived to be developing its identity merits our brief attention. One positive outcome of the insularity one finds in connection with organs and organ music was the part played by what has been called the English Musical Renaissance. This Renaissance is generally thought to have begun around the 1850s and ended in 1918 or even as late as the 1940s.⁹ Between 1945 and 1946 William Harris (1883-1973), organist of St George's Chapel, claimed that this Renaissance began about 'eighty years ago', and inaugurated a period of 'remarkable musical activity' in which successive native composers such as Parry and Stanford (who were all organists) 'poured forth a regular flow of typical English music'.¹⁰ Robert Stradling and Meirion Hughes claim that the coupling of 'English Renaissance' to Parry and Stanford dates from at least 1890 when Morton Latham, a student of Stanford at Cambridge, published a book entitled *The Renaissance of Music*, in which he equated contemporary musical events with the Renaissance of the sixteenth century.¹¹ By 1902 the concept of Renaissance had acquired sufficient authority for J. A. Fuller Maitland (1856-1936), a significant music historian and editor of *Grove's Dictionary of Music*

⁸ Frederick Kitchener, 'Modern Organs and Organ Music', *MT*, 51 (October 1910), 641.

⁹ See Sarah Fuller, 'Women composers during the British musical renaissance, 1880-1918', PhD Dissertation, Kings College University of London, 1966; Robert Stradling and Meirion Hughes, *The English Musical Renaissance 1860-1940: Construction and Deconstruction* (London, 1993); Frank Howes, *The English Musical Renaissance* (London, 1966); Meirion Hughes, 'The watchmen of music: the reception of English music in the press 1850-1914', PhD thesis, University of Wales, 1998; Hughes argues that the rise of music criticism was critical to the Renaissance.

¹⁰ William Harris, 'Distribution of Diplomas, January 1946', *MT*, 87 (February 1946), 53; Harris, 'Distribution of Diplomas', *MT*, 86 (August 1945), 247; Harris, 'Distribution of diplomas, January 1946', 53. Among other positions, Harris was Organist of New College, Oxford (1919-1929), Professor of Organ at the Royal College of Music (1921-1955), Organist of Christ Church, Oxford (1929-1933), and Director of Music, St George's Chapel, Windsor (1933-1961), and thus a musician with considerable influence. See Alwyn Surplice 'Sir William Harris', *MT*, 114 (November 1973), 1160.

¹¹ Stradling and Hughes, *Musical Renaissance*, 44-45. See also Morton Latham, *The Renaissance of Music* (Stott, 1890), esp. 175.

and Musicians, to structure his book *English Music in the XIXth Century* (London, 1902), ‘Before The Renaissance (1801-1850)’ and ‘The Renaissance (1851-1900)’.¹² Nicholas Temperley has, however, problematized the concept of ‘Renaissance’, stressing the musical continuities with earlier nineteenth-century practices, and demonstrating how not all musical endeavours bore fruit.¹³ Whatever the merits of the concept, the organ became an object of much interest and devotion during this period: add to this the increasing talk of ‘Imperialism’ and we can see the idea of a national school being concocted and provisionally defended.¹⁴

Talk of the English organ was shaped by an on-going discourse concerning the identity of the nation. Technological developments allowed the organ to be a proud artefact which demonstrated the achievements of the British Empire. A sophisticated study of the relationship between ‘Imperialism’ and organ building is beyond the scope of this study, but it is crucial to see the organ, with its loyal following, in the context of foreign policy. An expansionist policy had a marked effect on English culture: John Lucas has shown how from the 1850s ‘many of the elements which constitute what is recognisably the culture of English nationhood [...] were progressively promoted, as were the structures by means of which the promotion of such culture could be made possible’.¹⁵ The Empire, according to Patrick Dunae ‘was celebrated in art and in poetry, and extolled on the hustings and in the music halls, to a greater extent than it had ever before’.¹⁶ Perhaps these pronouncements attempted to mask Britain’s military and economic decline. Whatever their exact purpose, Imperialism had invaded many areas of life. Mangan has demonstrated the role of boys’ public schools in cultivating an imperialist ideology, something

¹² John Alexander Fuller Maitland, *English Music in the XIXth Century* (London, 1902), Fuller Maitland (ed.), *Grove’s Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London, 1904).

¹³ Nicholas Temperley (ed.), *Music in Britain: The Romantic Age 1800-1914* (Oxford, 1988).

¹⁴ See Andrew S. Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back? The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century*, (Harlow, 2005).

¹⁵ John Lucas, *England and Englishness: Ideas of Nationhood in English Poetry 1688-1900* (London, 1990), 184, quoted in Mark G. Hollingsworth, ‘Nineteenth-Century Shakespeares: Nationalism and Moralism’, DPhil thesis, University of Nottingham, 1997, 46.

¹⁶ Patrick A. Dunae, ‘British juvenile Literature in an Age of Empire, 1880-1914’, PhD thesis, University of Manchester, 1975.

which was closely supported by British juvenile literature.¹⁷ One youth organization founded in 1900, The Boys' Empire League, had as its official publication *Boys of our Empire*, which promoted the idea that British imperialism was a humanitarian crusade. A contributor stated how by 1900:

The idea of the Empire has got well fixed into a great number of heads lately, and it is working vigorously in them [...] It strikes down roots into both mind and heart, and makes claims upon the Soul too; In fact, there is no part of one's being that it does not affect in one way or another [...] the Empire [...] means the spread of the master nation. It means unselfish rule for the good of all.¹⁸

To facilitate this 'unselfish rule', meant infusing various aspects of culture with talk of Imperialism. Hollingsworth has shown how Shakespeare, for example, was being 'linked to the nation of England, and England was being promoted through an association with Shakespeare'.¹⁹

It is not difficult to imagine how the organ, which had already been promoted as a sign of a culture's wealth, as in Elizabeth's I gift (Preface), could also acquire political overtones. Organ building prospered in the period leading up to the Great War, with English firms making a number of large instruments for export. The 1888 Hill organ for Sydney Town Hall, for example, boasted a full length 64-foot reed. The English organ thus became an object with which talk of Empire could associate itself.²⁰

By the beginning of the twentieth century, then, English organists and music critics had every reason to insist that a significant change had taken place in organ design over the previous few decades. Many advanced on Pearce's remarks, stating that vicissitudes had produced a

¹⁷ James A. Mangan, 'Images of Empire in the Late Victorian Public School', *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, 12 (January 1980), 31-39. See John M. MacKenzie (ed.), *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester, 1986) for a collection of essays on the prevalence of Imperialism in society.

¹⁸ Reverend Edwin Collas Dawson, *Boys of our Empire*, 1 (3 November 1900), 40, quoted in Dunaue, 338.

¹⁹ Mark G. Hollingsworth, 'Nineteenth-Century Shakespeares', 46.

²⁰ This historical view is acknowledged today. As Piet Kee, city organist of St Bavo, Haarlem (1956-1989) and composer, stated 'go to the Royal Albert Hall, to St Paul's Cathedral, to Westminster Abbey and you hear and see an organ which reflects the power of the British Empire and the glorious industrial and technological progress of that time'. Piet Kee, 'Speech by Piet Kee to the Annual General Meeting of the International Organ Festival in February 2009', *The International Organ festival at St Albans* [website] <<http://www.organfestival.com/speeches/PietKeespeech.shtml>> accessed 8 January 2011. For information on organs exported by such builders as Hill, Gray & Davison, Lewis Forster & Andrews see Enid Noel Matthews, *Colonial Organs and Organbuilders* (Melbourne, 1970).

superior instrument beyond any criticism or reproach. In the second edition of *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (1907), Thomas Elliston commented:

Organ-building, organ playing, balance, quality, and power of tone, marvellous actions and systems of control, development of flue, string and reed tone, acoustics, compass, pitch, tuning, wind pressures and blowing machinery stand prominently out from amongst the multitude of minor subjects and their attendant problems that have called for earnest study, and have received the unremitting attention of some of the foremost men of our time, whose combined labours have resulted in an almost perfect instrument.²¹

It is not difficult to find further examples. In a paper read at a meeting of the Musical Association on 12 May 1903, for example, Alfred Madeley Richardson (1868-1949), Organist of Southwark Cathedral, and author of several books on church music, remarked that: 'As an instrument the organ surely is now perfect, having reached the point attained by architecture five hundred years ago.'²² The comparison with architecture reveals that many an English writer believed that perfection in the arts could be attained without nineteenth-century science. In 1911 *The Musical Times* claimed that the organ had 'developed during recent years from a mere collection of pipes, roughly grouped, until it promises to become really a "musical instrument." The splendid instruments built during the last thirty years give colour to this contention.'²³ The author, perhaps W.G. McNaught (1849-1918), editor of the journal (1909-18), spoke of the added expression which the organ had accrued since around 1870.²⁴ By far his greatest compliment was paid to the work of Father Willis in the area of pipe voicing, whose achievements in this area paved the way for further developments. He implied that the developments inaugurated a new school of composition: 'it may be truly said that much of our late organ music would have been unplayable on the majority of organs in existence in the middle of the last century'.

²¹ Thomas Elliston, 'Organ', J. A. Fuller Maitland (ed.), *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* [second edition] (London, 1907), 549.

²² A. Madeley Richardson, 'The Influence of the Organ in Musical History', *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 29 (1903), 170. Richards's publications include, *Choir training based on voice production* (London, 1899); *Church Music* (London, 1904); *Modern Organ Accompaniment* (London, 1907); *The organ accompaniment of the church services* (London, 1911).

²³ Anon., 'Church and Organ Music', *MT*, 52 (March 1911), all at 171.

²⁴ For an obituary see John E. Borland, 'William Gray McNaught', *MT*, 59 (December 1918), 537-541.

One does not have to look far to find similar but more nuanced opinions which stress the significant developments of the late nineteenth century. In 1901 Baynton Taylor, an organist who concerned himself with theoretical matters pertaining to the organ, commented on the new paths traversed by late nineteenth-century organ builders: 'the organ has ceased to be what it was in the days of our youth. No longer do we build all our instruments on the lines advocated by Schulze, Green, and Hopkins and Rimbault.'²⁵ The instruments mentioned by Taylor reveal a very broad aesthetic of organ design which had its roots in the eighteenth-century traditions, whether English or German. Samuel Green (1740-1796) was a well-respected eighteenth-century English builder; Edmund Schulze (1824-1878), originally from Thuringia in Germany, carried on his father's practice of building within a tradition 'broadly descended from Gottfried Silbermann' (1683-1753), from Saxony;²⁶ Hopkins and Rimbault were authors of a significant pedagogical work on organ construction, *The organ, its history and construction* (London, 1855) and were highly influenced by eighteenth-century English organs.²⁷ Whilst Hopkins and Rimbault developed their ideas significantly throughout the nineteenth century, embracing some nineteenth-century developments, it was their debt to eighteenth-century aesthetics which Taylor claims had been superseded by something new.

Taylor, however, neglected to mention that certain aspects of the aesthetic put forward by Green, Schulze, and Hopkins survived the close of the nineteenth century. One late nineteenth-century builder, Thomas Christopher Lewis (1833-1915), was profoundly influenced by Schulze.²⁸ The work of the Hill firm under the leadership of Thomas Hill also owed much to its earlier origins under William Hill, whose instruments, according to Thistlethwaite, 'retained

²⁵ Baynton Taylor, 'Organ Stops Their Classification and Description', *MO*, 24 (February 1901), 339.

²⁶ Thistlethwaite, *Victorian Organ*, 383. Schulze arrived in London in 1851 to deliver an organ for the Great Exhibition at the request of the Prince Consort.

²⁷ A second edition was published in 1870 and a third in 1877. Edward John Hopkins (1818-1901), who wrote the second part of the jointly authored book, focusing on construction, design and use of the organ, had a significant impact on organ design in the second half of the nineteenth century. So great was his influence that Thistlethwaite states that the treatise offered a 'coup d'oeil' of the Victorian organ'. See Thistlethwaite, *Victorian Organ*, 381.

²⁸ See Christopher Gray, "'The Highest Style of Art': An introduction to the life and legacy of T. C. Lewis (1833-1915)", *JBIOS*, 22 (1998), 6-26.

strong stylistic [tonal] links with the builders of the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries'.²⁹ Thomas Hill's work at the Birmingham Town Hall in 1890, showed 'continuing concern with matters which had always dominated his father's thinking about the instrument'.³⁰ Of greater importance in analyzing Taylor's argument is the fact that two major features heavily promoted by Hopkins – the use of equal temperament and the adoption of the C pedal board – had become fully standardized by 1901. Ironically, it seems that a significant feature of Hopkins' views (summarily rejected by Taylor) was actually reflected in the majority of organs. Perhaps their wide-scale adoption and acceptance made any discussion futile and this explains why Taylor does not credit the authors with having promoted two major aspects of organ building which have survived right up to the present day.

Nevertheless, writers were keen to stress that eighteenth-century aesthetics of tonal design had been superseded by something new. Writing in the year of Hopkins' death – 1901 – Taylor claims that a major transformation had occurred. He goes on to state: 'these are go ahead times, and there are many new kinds of organs. We have builders of repute inventing an almost endless variety of methods of organ construction, and giving us a multitude of new tonal developments, with new powers and new mechanical appliances.'³¹ Even if some elements of earlier practices had been preserved – namely the tonal quality of Hill's organs – tonal and mechanical innovations made it hard not to see a break with the past. Taylor certainly spoke enthusiastically about recent developments in reed and diapason tone: 'English reed stops by artistic makers are unrivalled all the world over, as are English diapasons; and I think that those of our modern builders who have followed the lead of Father Willis deserve to be warmly congratulated on their beautiful work.'³²

²⁹ Thistlethwaite, *Victorian Organ*, 417.

³⁰ Thistlethwaite, *Birmingham Town Hall* (Birmingham, 1984), 25.

³¹ Taylor, 'Organ Stops Their Classification and Description', 339.

³² Baynton Taylor, 'Modern Organ Voices', *MO* 32 (May 1909), 566.

English diapasons, in fact, became worthy features with which to promote the national organ. Not only does one encounter an increased diapason presence in organ specifications, but the increased attention to these sounds in organ literature shows how preoccupied writers had become. A copious number of metaphors emphasise the prime importance of the diapasons in an organ's tonal scheme, outlining how these sounds were required to be sonorous, giving a large quantity of opaque foundational tone at the expense of brilliance: 'Diapasons have a volume, weight, power, depth and majesty of sound', claimed Taylor.³³ It is not surprising to read Taylor further remarking on a diapason liberating 'an immense flood of pure mellow tone'; he further remarked on the 'rolling solemnity of fine diapasons'.³⁴ One does not have to look far to find similar labels. In 1902, John Matthews, a frequent writer in the organ press, and author of a pedagogical study, *A Handbook of the Organ* (1897), noted how consideration should be diverted to the organ's unison diapasons: 'The first point to observe is whether or not there exists a grand body of foundation tone upon the principal manual. A glorious body of spreading diapason tone is undoubtedly *the* finest effect an organ is capable of; all the rest may be regarded simply as so much embellishment.'³⁵

Admiration for organs of Taylor's time inevitably relied on notions of the 'primitive' nature of earlier organs. Whilst showing admiration for the organs advocated by Hopkins, Taylor stressed the tonal and mechanical imperfections of such instruments:

The instrument of Hopkins and Rimbault was perfect in many of its tones, whilst in the full organ without reeds certainly was very beautiful; but its mechanism was faulty when compared with that of to-day, and its reeds with some delightful exceptions were not a success. This organ owed much of its nobility and charm to its mixtures, which were most indispensable to it.³⁶

In another article Taylor expanded his remarks stating that 'the chief characteristics of this period are low wind pressures, beautiful diapasons, inferior reeds, [... and] sweet gedackts'. The organ

³³ Baynton Taylor, 'Orchestra and organ', *MO*, 27 (October 1903), 35.

³⁴ _____, *Modern Organ Voices*, *MO*, 32 (October 1908), 23; E. L. Edwards, 'Modern Organ Design', *MO*, 54 (January 1931), 343.

³⁵ James Matthews, 'The Ideal Organ', *MO*, 25 (February 1902), 359.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

contained ‘many mutations and mixture stops’, but had ‘poor flutes and inferior string tones, inefficient control and not much variety’. He admires the noble sound of these instruments but his criticisms of the reeds, certain flutes, and the lack of control in manipulating the stops (to make quick changes in registration), casts doubt on the general appeal of the organs’ nobility and charm.

Not only was the organ of 1901 very different to that of, say, 1801, but for the first time English organists saw an instrument which, in terms of size, volume and range of stops, could compare favourably to Continental organs. Charles Francis Abdy Williams (1855-1923), a music scholar, promoted the modern English organ by advancing the thesis that its predecessor was inferior because it could not compare favourably to Continental models. In his survey of European organ building published in *The Musical Times* in 1907, he claimed:

The difference between English and Continental instruments was not that of a few stops more or less: it was a difference in the whole conception of what an organ ought to be. Thus, while from the earliest times German organs had stops of 32-ft scale, pedals, several manuals, tremulants, drums, &c., and as early as the end of the 17th century organs of four and five manuals were not uncommon in Germany, Holland and, a little later, in France, England was content with organs of two, or at most, three manuals, and no pedals.³⁷

He concluded that ‘our organs were for centuries far behind those of the Continent in size and completeness’. Abdy Williams sets himself up against his contemporaries and predecessors who admired what he claimed to be a modest insular instrument. For example, the influential historian, Charles Burney (1726-1814), in his extensive travels to the Continent of Europe, found very little to commend in their organs: ‘All these enormous machines seem loaded with useless stops, or such as only contribute to augment noise, and to stiffen the touch.’ He summed up his experiences succinctly: ‘I must observe that most of the organs which I have met with on the Continent, seem to be inferior to ours built by Father Smith, Byfield, or Snetzler, in everything

³⁷C. F. Abdy Williams, ‘The Evolution of the Choir Organ’, *MT*, 48 (January 1907), all at 19. The assertion that the eighteenth-century English organ was of very different character to those found on the Continent was noted by later historians. Bicknell stated that: ‘English organs [...] were perhaps among the quietest organs in the world. Nor were they very large, especially compared to the four- and five-manual instruments of F. H. Clicquot in France, or the great 32’-fronted organs of northern Europe. The tonal palette was narrow, they lacked all but the most rudimentary pedals, they retained an eccentrically long compass for the keyboards, and eschewed the use of all but the most homely materials: pipe metal poor in tin, pine and oak, with mahogany for only some of the increasingly plain and understated cases. Bicknell, *History*, 213.

but size.³⁸ It is not clear what *precisely* led Burney to such conclusions, but, judging from the language throughout his reports on organs, it is probable that some features of the English organ – its swell, diapasons, action, possibly better tuning and playing condition – led him to such conclusions. Perhaps some of his predilections for the organ’s diapasons and, maybe, swell organ, prophesied their later widespread acceptance and admiration.

Critics believed that in the years which separated Burney and Abdy Williams a significant revolution in organ building had occurred, which drastically altered the English organ and its associated opinions. Some of the features of Continental organs dismissed by Burney – size, range of stops – were now admired in English organs, and most importantly, it seems, surpassed their Continental origins:

The invention of railways and steamships during the 19th century, by increasing the intercourse between England and the continent, has almost entirely done away with our insular prejudice against grandeur and variety and a healthy emotion in the art of music: and, together with the introduction of the great modern orchestras, the organs in English churches and concert rooms have been brought to a size, and completeness, and beauty of tone, that rival the finest continental examples.³⁹

Abdy Williams’ comment on the superiority of English organs may have also been a reflection on the mechanical developments which had occurred in English organ design. In an article examining the evolution of the organ, published posthumously in 1924, he referred to the ‘remarkable improvements in the organ due to English genius’ citing the inventions of pneumatic actions and concussion bellows. He proudly commented that ‘Continental builders gladly adopt them.’⁴⁰ It is not certain how extensive Abdy Williams’ knowledge of Continental organs was. Further articles by Abdy Williams in *The Musical Times* reveal that he had visited organs in Italy.⁴¹ He also played

³⁸ Charles Burney, *The Present State of Music in France and Italy: Or the Journal of a Tour through Those Countries* (London, 1773), 389.

³⁹ Abdy Williams, ‘The Evolution of the Choir Organ’, 91.

⁴⁰ _____, ‘Evolution of the Organ’, 263.

⁴¹ _____, ‘Old Italian Church Organs’, *MT*, 55 (May 1914), 312-314; *MT*, 55 (June 1914), 381-383. His articles demonstrate interest in old organs. He talked about the organ in San Giovanni in Laterano in Rome, for example. He noted its poor condition in 1914 and stated that many suggestions for its restoration have been made, but nothing short of complete removal and the substitution of an entirely new one is possible. See Abdy Williams, (June 1914), 382.

what he called modern Italian organs but noted how ‘none of them had reached the degree of development to which we are accustomed in England, Germany, France, and Belgium.’⁴²

So great was this belief of English superiority that occasionally significant musicians compared the English organ favourably to Continental models even when they had not seen or heard the latter: Alan Gray (1855-1935), organist of Trinity College Cambridge, for example, remarked in 1913 that whilst he was only acquainted with English organs, these instruments ‘are at the present moment equal or superior to those of any other country’.⁴³ In attempting to substantiate the opinion that the English organ had, by 1913, reached a great peak of development, Gray pointed towards the organ’s recent tonal and mechanical developments. Gray described and approved of many of the modern organ’s main features noting the smooth progression in a stop’s voicing; the satisfactory balance between treble and bass (which favoured the treble); the improvements in reed voicing and the variety of reed stops; the application of new voicing techniques (including leathered lips) to improve speech characteristics; and the emergence of organs with well-defined manual and pedal departments. Gray further justified his contention by commenting on his belief that the significant change in organ building was testified by the widespread attention to the organ in music journals.

At the present time there is undoubtedly a boom in the organ world. This is probably due to the tonal and mechanical developments of the last fifteen or twenty years. It is shown by the appearance in all the musical papers of an organ column, while even the daily press deigns occasionally to notice an instrument that hitherto it has conspicuously ignored.⁴⁴

Gray’s assertion that recent mechanical and tonal developments accompanied a ‘boom’ in the musical press was, perhaps, a hastily made remark. (Maybe something similar can be said of his remark regarding the merits of English organ building as opposed to that practised on the

⁴² Abdy Williams, ‘Italian Church Organs’, 312.

⁴³ Alan Gray, ‘The Modern Organ’, *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 39 (1912-1913), 103. Gray graduated from Trinity College, Cambridge in Law in 1876, and was admitted a solicitor in 1881. Two years later he became musical director of Wellington College, and in 1893 Gray succeeded Stanford as organist of Trinity College and conductor of the Cambridge University Musical Society. Gray’s obituary remarked that ‘in the latter capacity he gave many works their first performance at Cambridge, among them several Bach Cantatas hitherto unheard in England.’ See Anon., ‘Alan Gray’, *MT*, 76 (November 1935), 1038.

⁴⁴ Gray, ‘Modern Organ’, 103-104.

Continent, especially when he had not visited any of the foreign instruments.) The organ as a musical instrument was widely admired, and the musical pages of journals provided opportunities to write about the instrument. The *Musical Opinion*, a journal which began in 1877 with its critical review of Brahms's Second Symphony, became a forum for various issues pertaining to the organ.⁴⁵ *The Musical Times* became a great communicator of organ news. But a significant level of attention was devoted to the organ right from the beginning of the nineteenth century. Katharine Pardee in her examination of the reception of J. S. Bach's music in England identified various journals which showed interest in organ matters. She states: 'It is clear that the organ was in many ways at the centre of musical life in the period.'⁴⁶ For example, 'In the *English Musical Gazette*, a journal intended for educated amateurs and professionals, which ran monthly for only seven issues in 1819, there were five articles about the organ in the first issue alone.' Other journals included the *Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review* which began in 1818, and the long running *Musical World*, a journal that began in 1836, did much to support the organ. Although one cannot help thinking that Gray's 'enthusiasm and width of outlook', as noted in his obituary, was somewhat contradicted by such an analysis of journals (and Continental organ building), he was aware of the increasing body of attention devoted to the organ.

The organ promoted by Gray was considered the ideal medium for the accompaniment of church services. As Walter Alcock wrote in 1910, 'The organ owes, if not its birth, at least its early development to sacred surroundings, and is still considered a necessary adjunct to the music of the English Church.'⁴⁷ Alcock ignores the organ's early history as a secular instrument, but he makes the valid point that the organ has a long history as a church instrument. Alcock's article is more of a warning to organists of how not to accompany services, but he does provide a few suggestions of how the instrument could be used. Edwin Lemare wrote two articles in which he

⁴⁵ In 1920 a section, entitled 'Organ World', was wholly dedicated to the instrument and in 1921, *Musical Opinion* founded its sister journal, *The Organ*, a journal which continues to be published to the present day.

⁴⁶ Katharine Pardee, 'Perceptions of JS Bach and Performance of his Music in Nineteenth-Century England', DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, forthcoming.

⁴⁷ Walter Alcock, 'The Organ Accompaniment of Church Music', *MT*, 51 (February 1910), 80.

drew attention to the various colours which could be used. For example, he noted how the ‘Swell Celeste (if the beats are not too quick) with perhaps sub and super-couplers’ may be drawn in playing the ‘Amen’ of the Creed.⁴⁸ Dr Henry William Richards in *The organ Accompaniment of the Church Services* (London, 1911) similarly talked about how the organ could be used to accompany choirs.⁴⁹ Richards was President of the Royal College of Organists. In his book he showed how registrations could be used to appropriately colour the verses of a psalm and speaks of how the Tuba stop can be used to give dramatic effects to certain passages of choral accompaniments.

J. S. Bach’s ideal organ

One way in which the national and progressive organ could be promoted was by underlining the fact that it was a perfect medium for J. S. Bach’s organ works. Since the revival of parts of the St Matthew Passion in 1829, Bach’s legacy, growing from initial curiosity to eventual homage and forming the first acknowledged state of perfection (as argued by Carl Dahlhaus) in German musical thought,⁵⁰ reached England with increasing momentum.⁵¹ Perhaps it was an English interest in historicity and antiquarianism which allowed the Victorians and Edwardians to flock to Bach; maybe, as Peter Williams comments it was partly Bach’s counterpoint which resounded with the English who had ‘always harboured definite views on the didactic purpose of the arts.’⁵² Whatever the exact reasons, the organ soon came to exhibit close ties with Bach, gaining its pedals from the 1840s so that it could play his music; by the turn of the twentieth century, Bach’s music and the English innovative organ had mingled to form a powerful association. As ‘Bach’, via Harvey Grace (1874-1944), ‘exclaimed’ in 1915: ‘These pistons . . . [sic] Yes, I see; wonderful! And your Choir enclosed, and a fourth manual. What I sometimes a fifth [sic]? Send for a blower,

⁴⁸ Edwin Lemare, ‘Organ Accompaniments (Concluded)’, *MT*, 41 (April 1900), 234. See also Lemare, ‘Organ Accompaniments’, *MT*, 41 (March 1900), 161-164.

⁴⁹ For an obituary of Richards see Anon., ‘Henry William Richards’, *MT*, 97 (February 1956), 97.

⁵⁰ Carl Dahlhaus, *Foundations of Music History*, trans. J. B. Robinson (Cambridge 1983), 156-158. See also Walter Frisch, ‘Reger’s Bach and Historicist Modernism’, *19th-Century Music*, 25 (Fall/Spring 2001-02), 296-312.

⁵¹ For evidence of the increased attention to Bach’s choral repertory in the first half of the nineteenth century see Percy A. Scholes, *The Mirror of Music 1844–1944: A Century of Musical Life in Britain as reflected in the pages of the Musical Times* (London, 1947), esp. 69.

⁵² Peter Williams, ‘J. S. Bach and English Organ Music’, *Music & Letters*, 44 (1963), 140-51.

there's a good man! I'm itching to play on it.'⁵³ Encouraged by Whig hermeneutics of progress, organists claimed that the English organ, with its infinite modes of expression, allowed for performances of Bach's music of which the composer could only have dreamt.

That Bach's organ music was important to the organist's repertoire stemmed from the belief that the organ was critical to Bach's thinking. In 1899 the English were told by Phillip Spitta in the translation of his biography that 'Bach started from the organ and remained faithful to it to the last day of his life. All his productions in other departments – or, at any rate, all his sacred compositions – are merely an expansion and development of his organ music; this was to him the basis of all creation, the vivifying soul of every form he wrought out.'⁵⁴ Spitta's view was promoted by Hubert Parry (1848-1918) in his *Bach* (1909): 'Bach's musical organisation became steeped in organ effects, and the phraseology which was most appropriate to the instrument became the natural language for the expression of his musical ideas, and remained so for the rest of his life, though tempered and enlarged by the wide range of his sympathetic studies in every branch of composition.'⁵⁵ Parry's monograph contributed to an increasing interest in Bach. As Ernest Newman (1868-1959) stated in 1912: 'If a being from another planet could visit us today, and read some of the Bach literature of the last ten years or so, he would probably come to the conclusion that this Bach of whom so much was being spoken and written could have only

⁵³ Harvey Grace, 'A Post-Prandial Visitation', *MT*, 56 (April 1915), 212. Grace was a very well respected musical figure who frequently wrote in the musical press, in particular *MT*. He received his early music training at Southwark Cathedral and after various church appointments he was made organist of Chichester Cathedral in 1931, a position he held for seven years.

⁵⁴ Phillip Spitta, *Johann Sebastian Bach: his work and influence on the music of Germany, 1685-1750*, trans. Clara Bell and J. A. Fuller-Maitland (London, 1899), quoted in H. Heathcote Statham, 'The Aesthetic Treatment of Bach's Organ Music', *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 27 (1900 - 1901), 131. Early English histories of Bach and his music emphasize this connection with the organ. In Hawkins's *A General History of the Science and Practice of Music* (1776) Bach is solely referred to as a 'most famous organist'; see Ernest Newman, 'Recent Bach Literature', *MT*, 53 (January 1912), 9. Spitta's biography was influential in England. Newman stated that it 'was regarded as nearly the last word on the subject of Bach; even in the new edition of "Grove" it is spoken of as "an accurate and perfectly exhaustive treatise of all relating to the subject"'. Newman, 10.

⁵⁵ Hubert Parry, *Johann Sebastian Bach* (London, 1909), quoted in Statham, 'The Aesthetic Treatment of Bach's Organ Music', 131.

recently died.⁵⁶ So, given the Bach revival of the nineteenth century, and the close focus on the organ music, it is hardly surprising that organists came to focus on Bach.

The increasing attention to Bach led critics to ponder the ideal instrument for his works. Given the gaping hole between the supposedly primitive organs of the eighteenth century and the supreme artistry of modern English organs, it is understandable that critics linked Bach with their English organ. In 1913 Grace commented:

[...] to say that these works should not be played fast because Bach could hardly have done so (owing to the heavy organ touch of his day) is surely absurd. Who can doubt that if the old man were alive now and giving recitals amongst us, he would revel in our best organs, and would give such a performance of his more showy pieces as would leave his hearers hot and breathless? Let us reserve them for recital purposes, and make them as brilliant and exciting as possible.⁵⁷

Talk of Bach's music being given greater expression by the English organ, then, appeals to a Whiggish historiography in which the organ is seen to improve with the passing of time. Grace, therefore, does not see Bach's music as part of a tradition of organ building which inspired it in the first place. But rather, he locks himself to a mode of thought in which Bach composed for an 'ideal' organ which had not yet been invented.⁵⁸ Bach's performances were limited by the eighteenth-century organ; his innovative ideas, however, were not.

Such opinions are understandable when they are viewed alongside the nineteenth-century view of Bach the *genius*, a man who overcame the 'primitive' nature of his tools.⁵⁹ As Jacques Maquet observed: 'A genius was not learning and slowly progressing', but rather 'The social milieu, recognized as the main determinant in the ordinary lives of ordinary people, was a hindrance against which artists should rebel if they wanted to be great. Their genuineness and

⁵⁶ Newman, 9. Newman has been described as 'the most celebrated British music critic in the first half of the twentieth century'. See William Mann, 'Ernest Newman' [William Roberts], in L. Macy (ed.), *Grove Music Online*, <<http://www.grovemusic.com>> accessed 5 July 2011.

⁵⁷ Harvey Grace, 'Church and Organ Music. The Compleat Organist. I. Of Voluntaries (Continued)', *MT*, 54 (October 1913), 655.

⁵⁸ See Robert Morgan, 'Tradition, Anxiety and the Current Musical Scene', in Kenyon (ed.), *Authenticity and Early Music*, 56-81.

⁵⁹ See Anna G. Piotrowska, 'Modernist Composers and the Concept of Genius', *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music*, 38 (December 2007), 229-242.

spontaneity should not be inhibited by social constraints.’⁶⁰ Similar thoughts were applied to the works of other composers who had supposedly written works ahead of their time. For example Sir George Grove commented that ‘Beethoven’s late works had been misunderstood’.⁶¹ In the same way as a later audience could appreciate Beethoven’s ‘advanced’ music, so too did the modern organ finally unlock the secrets contained within Bach’s music. This not only favours the performer but privileges an early twentieth-century audience, as they are in a better position to hear Bach’s music.

The idea that Bach was better suited to the then contemporary organ was a ubiquitous one at the time. F. Seymour Pile commented in 1898: ‘the works of Bach should be played with infinite expression, though I very much doubt whether John Sebastian did so himself, for he had not the means at his disposal.’⁶² The commentator relies on ‘expression’ being restricted to an organ’s tonal scheme rather than through the use of touch. It does not occur to him that an eighteenth-century organ with its mechanical action could also impart expression. He therefore assumes that the English organ with its swell pedals and greater tonal palette gave the organist greater means of imparting expression to Bach’s works.

Similar thoughts were, in fact, applied to other instruments which were thought to have been improved by modern inventions. Spitta clearly believed that Bach composed his music for an instrument which had yet to be invented: ‘No instrument but one which should combine the volume of tone of the organ with the expressive quality of the clavichord, in due proportion, could be capable of reproducing the image which dwelt in the master’s imagination when he composed for the clavier. Everyone sees at once that the modern pianoforte is just such an instrument.’⁶³

⁶⁰ Jacques Maquet, *The aesthetic experience: an anthropologist looks at the visual arts* (New Haven, 1986), 172.

⁶¹ George Grove, ‘Beethoven, Ludwig van’, in Sir George Grove (ed.), *A Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London, 1879), 197. For a critique of this see Kay M. Knittel, ‘Wagner, Deafness, and the Reception of Beethoven’s Late Style’, *JAMS*, 51 (Spring 1998), 49-82.

⁶² F. Seymour J. Pile, *MO*, 21 (December 1898), 177.

⁶³ Phillip Spitta, *Johann Sebastian Bach*, 44.

Bach performance on the English organ, therefore, was a tour de force. In 1901 Heathcote Statham published a paper, ‘The Aesthetic Treatment of Bach’s Organ Music’, originally read to a meeting of the Musical Association in which he gives an account of the way the English organ’s innovative features could be used in Bach performance. Statham (1839-1924) was an amateur musician with a long list of publications including *The Organ, and Its Position in Musical Art: A Book for Musicians and Amateurs*.⁶⁴ In his paper Statham quickly acknowledges the idea that the organs of Bach’s day could not convey his music adequately: ‘The German organ of his day, which was without even that capacity for cantabile expression afforded in modern organs by the swell.’ He then proceeds to outline how the English organ gave Bach’s music greater ‘cantabile expression’. For example he notes how the closing bars of the F major Toccata BWV 540 could be brought to a greater climax through the playing of certain notes on the solo tuba stop:⁶⁵



Statham commented that ‘The effect of the tuba reed in giving a long blast on a holding note may often be exceedingly fine.’ This method of ‘soloing out’ is also advocated in the ‘Registration’ entry, using the A minor Fugue (BWV 532), in the first and second editions of Grove’s Dictionary of Music.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Statham, ‘The Aesthetic Treatment of Bach’s Organ Music’, 131-161; ‘The Function of the Organ in Accompanying Choral and Orchestral Works’, 32 (1905-1906), 101-127; ‘The Structure and Arrangement of Concert Halls’, 38 (1911-1912), 67-92.

⁶⁵ Statham, *Bach’s Organ Music*, 147.

⁶⁶ H. Heathcote Statham, in George Grove (ed.), *A dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London, 1883; 1907), 96.

Dissatisfaction with English builders

However much they helped convey Bach's message, the innovative aspects of the English organ were not admired by everyone. In November 1911 within the pages of the *Musical Opinion*, an anonymous author attacked aspects of English organ culture using the 1738 Müller organ in St Bavo, Haarlem – as a form of authority:

I think of the opinion of one eminent critic who was much impressed by the playing of an organist at the Groote kerke of Haarlem. He was playing Bach with a fine diapason tone on an old instrument; and he felt that the grandeur of the old master stood revealed. Here the organ was speaking in its natural accents; to lose this in the attempt to catch an echo of the orchestra would be a serious affair. In listening to organists on the continent I have myself felt how much there was to say through the organ as a legitimate medium that is left unsaid. To play Bach with the right colouring often demands the restraint which only an artist possesses; [...]⁶⁷

The author associates Bach's music with a historical instrument; he therefore wrestles with the view, as exemplified by Grace, that the (modern) English organ was the most perfect medium for Bach's music. Frustratingly, the writer does not name the 'eminent critic' but the article shows that the English organ provoked debate and, like the comments by Grace, further suggests that 'Bach' could be used to 'test' an organ's value. Such an article leads to a necessary examination of criticisms of the English organ, in an attempt to uncover the discourses which provoked them and the new ones which were created.

Dissatisfaction with English builders can be grouped into two very broad categories which referred to the instrument's prevailing tonal character and its mechanical structure. First, some observers were anxious about a tendency to imitate the orchestra, and the popular trend of making organs louder. Pearce noted this in 1907. Second, there was a tendency, as exemplified by Pearce's reference to the instrument's tone, to lament the demise of some of the tonal and mechanical features of the English organ prior to 1870. This applied to the loss of mechanical-action organs due to the rapid development of pneumatic actions (in which the connection

⁶⁷ Anon., 'Compilation of Organ programmes', *MO*, 34 (November 1911), 405.

between the key and the pipe's pallet is controlled by pneumatic motors).⁶⁸ Just as some lamented the demise of mechanical action, so others found favour with the sounds of old English builders.

Criticisms of contemporary organ design were by no means limited to England. Albert Schweitzer in his *Bach* (1908) described the contemporary German organ as too loud and dull, suggesting the need for greater clarity especially when playing counterpoint.⁶⁹ In an earlier publication Schweitzer stressed the importance of mechanical-action organs: 'Only through tracker action does one have a real, living relationship with an organ. With pneumatics, one communicates with his instrument by telegraph – but even a Morse instrument has a spring-loaded key.'⁷⁰ Other figures expressed interest in historical instruments with a view to informing modern organ building. Luigi Ferdinando Tagliavini has shown how Italian journals around 1900 commented on the mechanical actions and *ripieni* (the organ's principal chorus) of the old Italian organ.⁷¹ As Williams notes, later French authors such as France Félix Raugel (1881-1975) also commented on old organ cases with a view to reforming organ design.⁷²

Many of the critical writers who protest against the modern English organ cite the lack of clear logical principles behind their tonal sound. In his monograph *A protest against the modern development of unmusical tone* (1897), for instance, the organ builder Thomas Christopher Lewis asserted that 'the evil' manifested in certain principles of organ construction 'has proceeded so far that I cannot refrain any longer from raising my protest against it, well assured that I am not alone in deploring it'.⁷³ He set out his main contention in the opening chapter, arguing that many instruments were 'deficient of those elements, harmonic and constituent, which are essential to

⁶⁸ For information on pneumatics see John Norman, 'The influence of key-touch on action-design: Great Britain', *The Organ Yearbook*, 34 (2005), 143-154.

⁶⁹ Albert Schweitzer, *J. S. Bach* (Leipzig, 1908), trans., Ernest Newman, (London, 1911).

⁷⁰ Schweitzer, *Organ building*, 9.

⁷¹ Luigi Ferdinando Tagliavini, 70-86, esp. 80.

⁷² Félix Raugel, *Les anciens buffets d'orgues du Département de Seine-et-Marne* (Paris, 1928); *Les grandes orgues des églises de Paris et du Département de la Seine* (Paris, 1927).

⁷³ Thomas Christopher Lewis, *A protest against the modern development of unmusical tone* (London, 1897), 1. Lewis also commented on the unmusical nature of church bells that were being constructed.

the satisfaction of the refined musical ear'.⁷⁴ Given the rivalry between Lewis and Willis one is bound to wonder to what extent Lewis produced these comments with some commercial intent.⁷⁵ Nevertheless Lewis's extant instruments reveal that he occupied himself with providing relatively low-pressure choruses which made bold statements without the addition of reeds. This was a significant departure from the works of some British builders of the time, like Hope-Jones and even Willis.

A more significant observation, made around the same time, was the loss of mechanical-action in favour of pneumatic action, a change which critics claimed had a lamentable loss on the art of musical phrasing. Thomas Casson, an organ builder, understood mechanical action as providing the player with a direct and subtle control over the movement of the pallet: 'in good trackerwork, [...] there is [...], on the unanimous testimony of eminent organists, a subtle but very real touch'.⁷⁶ According to Casson, writing in 1894, the musical implications in terms of phrasing were clear: 'there thus obtains a beauty of phrasing and delicacy of touch which seems to me to be of great educational advantage with reference to the pianoforte [...] intermediary'. That he recognised the advantages over other forms of action is obvious from his statements. His questioning of pneumatic actions leaves the reader without any doubt as to Casson's position: 'the finger feels and poises the pallet, opening it as another is relinquished in a manner impracticable through any mechanical agency [...] Is it not then worthy of consideration whether the unnecessary resort to pneumatics or electro-pneumatics does not involve a serious and uncompensated musical loss?' In another article he commented:

Nothing can equal a well-made tracker action pure and simple – no backfalls. The organ is such an expressionless instrument that we cannot afford to lose the personal control of the pallet [...] The object of electricians and makers of pneumatic actions appears to be that of making the pallet fly open, as Mr Hope

⁷⁴ Lewis, *Protest*, 3.

⁷⁵ See Bicknell, *History*, 309.

⁷⁶ Thomas Casson, 'Pianoforte v. Organ Touch', *MT*, 35 (April 1894), all at 269.

Jones says. I should imagine, they should rather endeavour to reproduce or duplicate the movement of the fingers at the pallets.⁷⁷

The interested reader may expect to find a new departure in Casson's instruments, yet a glance at his organ specifications will lead to some disappointment. He was able to combine tracker and pneumatic actions in ingenious ways (perhaps promoting his views of tracker action) but as Bicknell demonstrates, Casson 'developed an organ building method that centred round a complex console bristling with ingenious gadgets', in which 'mechanical flexibility offered by new pneumatic actions' produced new recipes.'⁷⁸ It seems that the preoccupation for technology prevented Casson's instruments from developing the ideas stated so clearly in his article.

The lamentable loss of tracker-actions seems to occupy prominent space in debates in the early twentieth century. In 1911 *The Musical Times* reported on a lecture which had recently taken place at the Royal College of Music, at which Dr Harry Alfred Harding (1855-1930), Director of Music at Bedford School and Honorary Secretary of the Royal College of Organists, commented on recent trends in organ design.⁷⁹ The review was in agreement with Harding over the unfortunate loss of tracker action: 'we agree with him in deploring the disappearance of the old tracker action, and the loss of individuality in performance which naturally followed. There can be no doubt that in spite of many disadvantages, the older methods enabled the player to feel the pallet, and thus to obtain greater command over it.'⁸⁰ Harding, however, saw the change as necessary in order to accommodate the wealth of new colours: 'but the growth in size of organs made the change imperative, and it is to be hoped that to the many facilities offered by pneumatic action we may yet add the responsiveness of the tracker.'

⁷⁷ Thomas Elliston, *Organist and Choirmaster*, 4 (1895), 181, quoted in Bernard Edmonds, 'Notes and Queries', *BIOSR*, 17 (July 1993), 24.

⁷⁸ See Bicknell, *History*, 284.

⁷⁹ A similar (perhaps identical) lecture was delivered at Manchester on 27 May 1911. The script survives as H. A. Harding, 'Organ touch and phrasing', *Calendar of the Royal College of Organists 1911-12* (London, 1912), 239-251. According to his obituary, Harding was a friend of Pearce. For biographical details see Anon., 'Harry Alfred Harding, B. July 25, 1855, D. October 29, 1930', *MT*, 71 (December 1930), 1084-1085.

⁸⁰ Anon., 'Church and Organ Music', *MT*, 52 (August 1911), all at 524.

In the same year Walter Alcock (1861-1947), then assistant organist of Westminster Abbey and professor of organ at the Royal College of Music, emphasised that the art of organ touch is inextricably linked to mechanical-action organs.⁸¹ In a review of Eaglefield-Hull's organ primer, *Organ Playing: its Technique and Expression* (1911), Alcock, whilst showing great admiration for his colleague's pedagogical efforts, could not agree that variety of touch is possible on pneumatic organs:

It is difficult to follow Dr. Hull in his claim that so much variety of touch is feasible on the organ. On a tracker organ, where one almost "feels the pipes," greater difference of touch is no doubt possible, but the modern organ is the subject of which Dr. Hull is writing, and pneumatic or electro-pneumatic action is assumed. Surely the act by the finger of depressing a key does nothing more than admit wind to the pneumatic contrivances which eventually pull down the pallet? If this be granted, it must be admitted that the pallet is either allowing wind to enter the pipe above, or preventing it. There is no middle course, as on the pianoforte, and the result is, I think, that there are but two distinct touches, viz., legato, and detached or staccato. Of the last there may be some degrees, though a sharp staccato on the organ is not effective. Dr. Hull is undoubtedly right in making a great point of the release of the key, for there lies the secret of a good organ touch. No doubt to the player there may be several varieties, but the result to the listener is either legato or detached, or at most a blending of the two in matters of phrasing. Indeed, Dr. Hull says "one of the drawbacks of the electric action seems to be that it is so perfectly prompt that it does not give any variety at all in attack."⁸²

But despite these views, Alcock showed little commitment to mechanical-action organs.

It is difficult to find a more sophisticated response to contemporary criticisms of organ actions and tone than in Arnold Dolmetsch's 1915 publication, *The Interpretation of the Music of the XVII and XVIII Centuries*. Dolmetsch (1858-1940) identified unnatural wind pressures, the desire for the organ to imitate an orchestra, and the loss of a responsive mechanical action, as the evils confronting the pipe organ:

The [old] church organs [...] had that power based on sweetness which constitutes majesty. The change came on, and for the sake of louder tone, pressure of wind was doubled and trebled. The same pressure acting on valves which let the wind into the pipes made them too heavy for the fingers through the keys. A machine

⁸¹ For an obituary see Thomas Armstrong, 'Walter Galpin Alcock', *MT*, 88 (October 1947), 317-319.

⁸² Walter Alcock, 'Church and Organ Music. A New Book on the Organ', *MT*, 52 (November 1911), 722; A. Eaglefield Hull, *Organ Playing: its Technique and Expression* (London, 1911).

was then invented which did the work at second hand [...] Personal touch, which did so much for phrasing and expression, was destroyed.

Then fashion decreed that the organ should be an imitation of the orchestra [...] but without the life that players instil into their instruments [...] Modern compositions are intended for this machine, and all is well with them; but it is a revelation to hear Handel's or Bach's music on a well-preserved organ.⁸³

The above passage also appears in Williams's study of the *Orgelbewegung* in which he draws some firm conclusions. Dolmetsch provided a succinct survey of the perceived faults with modern English organs, but, as Williams notes, was able to see the organ in the context of other instruments. Dolmetsch's reference to the organ's mechanics is highly important as it shows an awareness of sensitive actions, and their relationship with music-making.

Such criticisms accompanied an English revival of ancient repertoires of music, promoted by Dolmetsch, which emphasized the value of old instruments. *The Times* hoped in 1893 'that a certain number of enthusiasts will be found to make the pilgrimage [to Dulwich...] for the programmes promise to be of rare interest'.⁸⁴ This interest in the past was seen in other areas, like Shakespeare. John Sherran Brewer commented in 1879 that Shakespeare lived 'in times which were favourable to poetry – and to dramatic poetry especially – when men were still inspired by the excitement of past and of passing events – when individual characterism had not yet crystallised into one dull uniformity by fixed systems of education or engrossing commercial monopoly.'⁸⁵

Dolmetsch was to have very little direct influence on organ building during the period, yet it is important to note an interesting reference to him in Burham Horner's lecture to the Royal Society of Arts in 1896. He referred to a certain W. H. Stocks (music master at Dulwich College?) who used Dolmetsch's authority to validate the preservation of the cornet stop – a stop inherited from seventeenth and eighteenth-century modes of organ building:

⁸³ Arnold Dolmetsch, *The Interpretation of the Music*, quoted in Williams, 'Idea of *bewegung*', 139.

⁸⁴ Anon., 'Mr. Dolmetsch's Concerts', *The Times*, (20 December 1893), 13.

⁸⁵ John Sherran Brewer [1810-79], 'Shakespeare', *Quarterly Review*, 131 (July 1871), 42; quoted in Hollingsworth, 152.

Mr W. H. Stocks said that he had a Mounted Cornet on his organ (Dulwich College) and he would not do away with it on any account, if only for antiquarian considerations; but it was very useful when he had to play old music. Some little time ago the organist of the Temple had said that he wished that he had the same thing there, but he had done away with it and sometimes was in a difficulty providing a substitute. Mr A Dolmetsch said that the florid music of Purcell, though exceedingly well played by Mr Horner, was heard to great disadvantage upon so unsympathetic an instrument as the one employed. The organs of Purcell's time had a very light, clear tone, and on one of them the little runs and shakes which sounded heavy and clumsy would have had a very different effect.⁸⁶

Horner is absolved from the sin of performing Purcell's music on the Temple organ, rebuilt by Norman and Beard in 1896, only through the technical skill of his playing. In other words there was a view that instruments of the past, far from being primitive, provided a better medium than contemporary organs. But this superiority has nothing to do with later talk of 'authenticity': rather the early instrument provides a medium which, in fact, allows for a more nuanced performance.

Eighteenth-century aesthetics

Sentiments expressed by Dolmetsch, Horner and Stocks raise important questions regarding what other significant musicians made of these criticisms and interest in old English instruments. To discover what was really happening, and thus enrich our understanding of 'splendid isolation', it is necessary to perform a series of case studies which will allow several historical actors, Baynton Taylor, George Edwards, Walter Parratt, and Alan Gray, to carry the narrative. Whilst it is impossible to conclude that dissatisfaction was widespread, evidence suggests that musicians, like Gray, for example, showed interest in some aspects of the old English organ and tried to integrate them into their conception of the English organ. The traditional English organ, then, was more than just the result of a creed which insisted that old organs were hopelessly antiquated.

⁸⁶ Burham Horner's lecture to Royal Society of Arts in 1896. Bernard Edmonds used reports of the lecture in *Musical Opinion* of that year and extracts of RSA's journal to summarize the discussion. See Bernard Edmonds, 'Notes and Queries', *BIOSR*, 25 (July 2001), 20.

That there was interest in old English organs beyond the Dolmetsch circle is clear. In an article published in 1905 in *The Musical Times*, for example, the anonymous author admired an organ by Samuel Green:

A DELIGHTFUL OLD ORGAN! Where is it? On the Chiltern Hills is a little village named Lacey Green. In its parish church is the said organ, and moreover practically in the same condition as when it came from the factory of Samuel Green, London, in 1792, the date recorded on the instrument. The organ could not have been built for Lacey Green church, because the ecclesiastical parish was not formed nor the church erected until the year 1824. Except the addition of pedals-which only pull down the manual keys (there are no pedal pipes) – and the placing of all the drawstops on the right-hand side of the keyboard, this Green organ has not been modernized, but stands to-day as an interesting specimen of the craftsmanship of an eminent 18th century organ-builder. Its tone is musical – not only in regard to individual stops, but in their various combinations, the blending being most satisfactory, while the full organ is by no means provocative of a headache. Can all this be said of many modern organs? The open diapason is free from assertiveness, and the stopped diapason speaks with just that touch of wheeziness which lends additional charm to its tone. After the over-blown and loudly-voiced organs of the present day it is quite refreshing to let one's fingers wander over the keys of this old instrument-one that is in perfect harmony with the quietude of that Buckinghamshire village.⁸⁷

The following specification was given as:

Open diapason	GG compass, without the lowest G sharp
Stopped diapason treble (tenor G)	
Stopped diapason bass	
Dulciana (tenor G)	
Principal treble (middle C)	
Principal bass	
Flute (middle C)	
Fifteenth	
Cornet (middle C)	
Sesquialtera (bass to cornet stop)	

It is not certain who the author was but it may be assumed that Frederick George Edwards (1853-1909), editor of *The Musical Times* (1897-1909) and an organist, was in sympathy with some of the views espoused. The article reveals more than just a passing curiosity: it was part of a culture which showed interest in three linked themes: (1) general antiquarian interest in old

⁸⁷ Anon., *MT*, 46 (May 1905), 316.

English organs; (2) the suitability of some old registers for Anglican worship; and (3) the ability to provide contrast from some of the less favourable features of modern organs.

Despite the belief that the modern organ was suitable for liturgical worship, aspects of the old English organ were also found suitable for this purpose. Baynton Taylor generally admired modern tonal design but found some of older tonal characteristics to be suitable for divine worship. Writing in 1905 he stated: 'for church use the diapasons were perfect and the mixture work was a crowning glory. Soft, sweet, strong, devotional, mysterious, pure, pervading, glorious, they had a peace and beauty all their own.'⁸⁸ Taylor's position in liturgical debates is not known but it is interesting that he should consider the diapasons and mixture work 'mysterious' and 'devotional', elements that may place him as an advocate of the Oxford Movement. (The movement fundamentally re-evaluated the Anglican liturgies by examining closely elements of the Roman Catholic faith. The results placed greater emphasis on the Eucharist, and the demand for ritual and solemnity in divine worship.) Whatever Taylor's religious convictions, it is interesting that he should admire particular features as adding an important element to liturgical celebrations, something which was to find favour with other organists.

Taylor clearly admired some aspects of earlier tonal sounds, but saw little value in preserving them as part of a complete eighteenth-century scheme: early sounds should be incorporated into modern organs. He asserted, in a rather bold manner, that 'the old English diapasons, on their 3in. wind, could not be improved.' But he quickly qualified his thoughts advancing the thesis that some sounds – the diapasons – of earlier organs should be preserved in modern organs. This would enable them to accompany the liturgy and to play old styles of music: 'I am not finding fault with modern diapasons, but rather pleading that the first named should be retained for devotional use and for the old organ music which is not well rendered by the louder voices.' Taylor called for the retention of the early diapason sound, but his thoughts on organ

⁸⁸ Baynton Taylor, 'Organ Building Systems', *MO*, 28 (April 1905), 518.

design generally place him among organists who advocated modern tonal ideals. Taylor was generally against the earlier styles of organs as his concluding remark reveals: 'these old type diapasons demanded a wealth of mutation and mixture work which is intolerable when used for modern organs but which was perfectly charming in its proper place'. Whilst he fails to expand on why the old mutations would fail to work on modern organs, it is possible that given the increased wind pressures in modern work, the mixtures, if voiced on the same wind pressures, would be too prominent.

Taylor's fondness for some aspects of the old English organ was shared by other prominent organists, even if only in small ways. An interesting commentary is provided by Edwards who, in articles examining the work of Sir Walter Parratt, shows how this master advocated the use of supposed old stops.⁸⁹ Parratt (1841-1924) was appointed organist of Her Majesty's Chapel Royal, Windsor in 1882, professor of organ at the Royal College of Music in 1883 where he trained many future cathedral organists, and became Heather Professor of Music at Oxford University in 1908. He was known as an influential teacher and, following his death in 1924, *The Musical Times* referred to the 'fine traditions of organ playing which had been established in this country, chiefly through the teaching of the late Sir Walter Parratt, whose influence had been felt by many who had never received a lesson from him'.⁹⁰

According to *The Musical Times*, (Edwards?) Parratt used stops installed by Samuel Green for accompanying 'old anthems'.⁹¹ The article explained that the stops used for this purpose 'are only on a 4-in. wind' giving 'a delicate softness.' Even if 4 in. of wind pressure is a little high by modern principles of classical voicing, it is generally accepted that stops on a lighter wind pressure yield a more natural and unforced tone, lacking the smoothness which comes through higher

⁸⁹ Edwards was a respected figure in the musical world. According to his obituary: 'Sir Walter Parratt played In Memoriam music during evensong at St. George's Chapel, Windsor, on the day of the funeral, and memorial hymns were sung on the Sunday following, in many churches and chapels.' Anon., *MT*, 51 (January 1910), 9-11.

⁹⁰ Harold Darke, 'Distribution of Diplomas, Saturday, July 26, 1941', *MT*, 82 (September 1941), 338.

⁹¹ Anon. [Edwards?], 'Church and Organ Music', *MT*, 41 (April 1900), all at 239.

pressures. Parratt is quoted as saying ‘I always use these [old] stops when accompanying the old anthems, because they correspond to those of their period.’

Not only does Edwards demonstrate that old stops were liked by organists, but he compares them favourably to some aspects of contemporary organ building. He remarked in the same article that the delicate old stops at St George’s were ‘in pleasant contrast to the over-voiced and over-blown registers that are the bane of present-day organs which are too often, alas! mere monsters of sound-producing machines.’ The observation is significant. No specific details are given but it is probable that the mention of ‘over-voiced’ registers was a reference to stops which had lost their natural speech through excessive interference on the voicer’s part – for example heavy nicking on the languid. Overblowing (using enhanced wind pressures) would have emphasised the notes’ fundamental and curtailed the pipe’s natural harmonic development. Having confirmed his use of old stops, Parratt proceeds to indirectly criticise aspects of contemporary building by rhetorically asking how the musician is to render William Russell’s specific registration directions on the modern organ: ‘how would it be possible to play one of Russell’s pieces on a modern organ with the registration “oboe solo, accompanied by great diapasons”?’ Whilst such a performance direction would have been possible on eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century organs, the increasing strength of the diapasons throughout the century would have made a dialogue with the oboe unattractive. However interesting to later historians (and possible advocates of historically informed playing), the passing comment, whilst revealing Parratt’s admiration for some old stops, does little to confirm that he always followed the registration conventions of the music which he played. For example, Russell also wrote the indication ‘Full organ’ which would have asked for the ‘great’ chorus up to mixture. As will be noted below, Parratt did not show much sympathy for mixtures so it is plausible that the required stops would have been omitted.

The implied comparison with old organs is taken further in an appreciation of Parratt's life in 1902 where the writer (Edwards?) considers aspects of Parratt's thinking on organ design. The writer remarked on criticisms of modern organs using stronger language: 'Sir Walter Parratt has a great dislike to the over-blown and over-grown church organs of the present day. He spoke very strongly on this point at the Bradford Church Congress in 1898.'⁹² The writer goes on to note Parratt's fondness of the old stopped diapason rank: 'an old, sweet-tone, stopped-diapason on the choir organ is a special favourite'. The article speaks of how such a register was most useful in rendering accompaniments to the choir's voices: 'the accompaniments throughout are of simple unobtrusiveness. Would that all organists could hear the devotional beauty of the service in St. George's Chapel, Windsor, and profit thereby.' Like Taylor's reference to the church service, it seems that Parratt and Edwards both admired the way certain old registers were necessary in accompanying anthems during a church service.

Parratt, like Taylor, however, advocated the modern organ. On a very basic level, on being appointed to St George's in 1882, he had the organ's compass altered from FF to C. But this change was widely accepted by many so it hardly constitutes a major change. Of greater importance was Parratt's dislike of mixtures (stops sounding two or more high-pitched ranks). In Harold Darke's 1941 RCO presidential address he stated that Parratt, his former teacher, 'loved single stops and uncoupled manuals – he hated mixtures and principals. "Sir," he would say, "I have no principals" – and he loathed overblown reeds.'⁹³ Evidence does indeed suggest that Parratt was fond of performing on single stops. Alfred Allen, organist of Stratford-upon-Avon Parish Church, writing in the *Times* in 1924, recounted hearing Parratt at New College Oxford play Bach's *Komm, heiliger Geist, Herr Gott*: 'he played the whole of that long work on the open diapasons of the great and pedal, and yet such was the clearness of the part-playing and the sensitiveness of

⁹² Anon. [Edwards?] 'Sir Walter Parratt, M. V. O., Master of the King's Musick', *MT*, 43 (July 1902), all at 449.

⁹³ Harold Darke, 'Royal College of Organists: Distribution of Diplomas, January 1941', *MT*, 82 (February 1941), 69.

the phrasing that there was never a dull moment, as the almost breathless attention of the crowded audience showed.’⁹⁴

Parratt’s specific views on organ design – fondness for 8ft.-tone and a general inclination against mixtures – may be found in the construction of instruments over which he had some say. A comprehensive study of Parratt’s influence on organ building at the turn of the nineteenth century remains to be done, but Hugh Macpherson’s study of the organs at Windsor Castle, where Parratt was organist, is revealing.⁹⁵ Macpherson cites letters from Father Willis to Parratt which show the latter’s somewhat reluctance to even include a two-foot fifteenth on the ‘great’ organ of St George’s Hall. Parratt also showed some resistance to install a mixture stop on the ‘great’ organ. Another instrument which Parratt designed for St. Matthew’s Church, Buckley also reveals a penchant for 8-foot stops at the expense of a developed chorus. The instrument was built by Bishop & Son and dedicated on 21 June 1905. Its specification is given below:

St. Matthew's Church, Buckley (1905)

<i>Pedal</i>		<i>Great</i>		<i>Swell</i>	
Open Diapason	16	Open diapason	8	Violin Diapason	8
Bourdon	16	Clarabella	8	Lieblich Gedact	8
		Dulciana	8	Vox Angelica	8
		Principal	4	Voex Celestes	8
		Wald Flute	4	Geigen Principal	4
		Clarinet	8	Harmonic Piccolo	2
				Oboe	8

Alan Gray is another example of an organist who grappled with the tension between historical and modern organs, ultimately favouring modern aesthetics. Indeed interest in aspects of old organs reaches a significant point around 1911 when Gray considered tuning the pipes of the organ in Trinity College, Cambridge in unequal *and* equal temperament. The matter came to

⁹⁴ Alfred Herbert Warren, ‘The Late Sir Walter Parratt’, *The Times*, (31 March 1924), 17.

⁹⁵ Hugh Macpherson, ‘The Organs of St George’s Hall and the Private Chapel, Windsor Castle’, *Organists’ Review*, 78 (1992), 303.

a wider public attention when it was raised by Francis Burgess as a response to Gray's paper, 'The Modern Organ' which he gave to the Musical Association in 1913. According to Burgess, as part of the organ's rebuild by Harrison and Harrison, there was a proposal to retain three of the stops by 'Father' Smith by placing them in a special 'positive' organ and, most significantly, tuning them in unequal temperament. Burgess stated that the proposal had been abandoned but does not offer any explanation; nor does he state whether the idea originally stemmed from Gray.

In what seems to be a *volte-face*, Burgess urged Gray to go against an accepted feature of modern organs, and adopt unequal tuning at Trinity College Cambridge:

Possibly it would be a pity to throw a complete set of stops out of use in relation to the rest of the organ, but there is a good deal of old-fashioned organ music which does really mean a great deal to us, and I wondered, if we could get back to the subtleties of key-colour, &c., which the tuning somewhat involves, whether some of that old-fashioned music might not appeal to us a little more.⁹⁶

Burgess' comments are fascinating as he was able to place his ideas in the context of attitudes to performing old music: his plea for unequal tuning at Trinity has to be seen in the light of someone who was genuinely interested in hearing old music without additional pedal parts and using a similar style of voicing and tuning to that which the original composer may have experienced. He concluded: 'would it be possible for Dr. Gray to reconsider his decision of having no unequal temperament, so as to give us an opportunity, at least temporarily, of hearing what the old music really sounded like in the old days?' Burgess's comments become even more interesting when they are viewed alongside his earlier disagreement with Pearce over the merits of the organs which contained the features which he was advocating in 1913. This could mean that Burgess had reviewed his opinions, but it is likely that he thought that elements of old organs – temperament, old ranks – could be integrated in new instruments or substantially rebuilt instruments. In many ways Burgess, and perhaps Gray, prophesies some of the dual temperament schemes practised by current-day builders. But above all Burgess promotes the idea that early music was best promoted using early sounds.

⁹⁶ Quoted in Gray, 'Modern Organ', 125.

Archival evidence suggests that Gray had some reservations about the proposed unequal temperament before the organ's reconstruction. In a letter to Arthur Harrison dated 12 August 1911, Gray noted that the arrangement of the Choir organ to include all the Smith pipework in one section 'is practically my scheme'.⁹⁷ But he showed concern that this scheme would reduce the choir organ's usefulness, as some of its stops would be unusable with stops tuned in equal temperament: 'for the purpose say of accompanying a sw solo reed we are parting practically with all the soft stops'. It seems that Charles Villiers Stanford also expressed doubts. In another letter to Harrison, Gray quoted Stanford: 'the unequal tempt. will mean that 2 [sic] of the best antiques in the organ will be often without purpose'.⁹⁸ Gray reported this to Harrison but made it clear that he wanted to go ahead with the scheme: 'have justified this and after all the thing is an experiment and can be easily undone'. Gray and Stanford were both concerned that tuning some of the ranks in unequal temperament would leave the organist with fewer registration possibilities perhaps emphasising their desire for a large accompanying instrument, containing as many different colours to be used in many combinations.

Despite experimenting with unequal temperament, Gray decided to reverse the changes.

In a reply to Burgess at the Musical Association meeting he stated:

We tried the unequal temperament. It may be want of keenness of hearing on my part, but I came to the conclusion that the difference was not sufficient to make the complication worth while. We got the "wolf" in A flat all right! I had expected more difference than there actually was. Consequently we gave up the idea. It made a sort of mild sensation. We were chaffed to a certain extent about it, so I did not allude to the matter any more, but let it drop.

The unequal tuning was not preserved, and it is questionable whether the preservation of the pipes was of more than antiquarian interest.⁹⁹ In a booklet, edited by Gray, on the new organ, the reader is told that 'the Father Smith stops, about seven in number, have been carefully preserved.

⁹⁷ Gray to Arthur Harrison, 12 August 1911, Trinity College Cambridge, Harrison & Harrison archives.

⁹⁸ Gray to Harrison, 4 October 1911, Trinity College Cambridge, Harrison & Harrison archives.

⁹⁹ There is some ambiguity about whether the organ was tuned to equal or unequal (not necessarily mean-tone) temperament prior to Gray's rebuild. Perhaps the Smith stops were already in mean-tone tuning and were tuned to equal temperament as part of the rebuild or maybe at some point before Harrison's work. Thurston Dart reported in 1954 that 'the old stops on the choir manual of the organ at Trinity College, Cambridge, remained tuned to mean-tone until about twenty or thirty years ago'. Dart, *Interpretation*, 46.

Apart from their intrinsic merit, it was a special point of interest to preserve pipes, to the tones of which so many eminent men from Newton downwards must have listened.¹⁰⁰ Whatever Gray's motivation for preserving Smith's pipework, the Cambridge experiment failed precisely because the discourses surrounding the modern organ were strong enough to displace any attempt to allow such elements as unequal temperament to rise to prominence.

This tension between historical and modern thinking is evident again in 1914 when Gray advocated the use of some historical sounds in playing Bach's music. In a lecture entitled, 'The Modern Organ: its Attractions and Dangers', delivered at Huddersfield in that year, Gray spoke of Bach calling for mixtures in his fugal writing. Gray seemed to concur with their use and supported this assertion by appealing to the authority of Albert Schweitzer:

As for Mixtures, I have for many years had an instinctive feeling that Bach calls for them, and that a fugue subject given out on 8-ft. and 4-ft. diapasons is so very dull that it is advisable to couple the Swell Mixture to the Great at the start of a fugue. I am therefore pleased to find that my ideas are confirmed by such an authority as Schweitzer, who recommends this course.¹⁰¹

It is not clear what role Schweitzer played in English reform but Gray's statement shows that Schweitzer had some influence over English organists.

But Gray simply asks for stops with the label 'mixture' to be drawn; by not making a specific reference to the make-up of such stops in Bach's time, he assumes that mixture ranks found in English organs will be suitable. This episode, together with the Cambridge experiment, reveals that Gray was not willing to undertake a fundamental review of the English organ known to him.

Gray, in fact, remained a firm believer that the English organ was a suitable medium for Bach's works, as supported in a debate with H. Heathcote Statham within the Times Literary Supplement in October 1916. Gray was forced into the debate after Statham claimed that the

¹⁰⁰ G. F. Cobb (ed.), Alan Gray, *A Brief History of the Organ in the Chapel of Trinity College, Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1913).

¹⁰¹ Alan Gray, 'The Modern Organ: its Attractions and Dangers', *Calendar of the Royal College of Organists 1914-15* (London, 1915), 197-209. The quoted passage was also given in, Harvey Grace, 'The Organ Works of Bach (Concluded)', *MT*, 62, (August 1921), 544.

English organ was not a suitable medium for Bach. In the Times statement Statham contended that a lack of balance between stops and different divisions rendered performances of Bach's Trio Sonatas difficult: 'The typical modern English organ, even in its largest and most elaborate form, gives no opportunity for the adequate realization of this severe form of organ music.'¹⁰² According to Statham, this form of organ music required 'two manuals of equal power but different timbre'. But this proved impossible on the English organ: 'unless you are content with a very quiet and rather weak effect, how are you to get that on the typical English organ?' It is hardly surprising that Statham should air these concerns. Bach's Trio Sonatas were modelled on the Italian form in which three instruments – two violins and a violoncello – participated in an instrumental form which stressed equality between all the parts. Statham concluded: 'for the adequate performance of Bach's organ music the whole of the large English organs of our day would have to be rebuilt on a different system'. From this statement it seems that Statham challenged the system of English organ building as exemplified by Gray's organ at Trinity College. He wanted an organ which based its fundamental aesthetic of construction on the principal of balance. At stake here was the traditional English organ's tonal structure, a prized possession which was at risk of being diluted with greater Continental influence.

Statham's complaint was largely levied against contemporary English organ builders. It seems that the organ's failure to provide suitable registers was the result of the builder's failure to understand the organs known to Bach. He states:

Bach wrote for an organ which practically does not exist in England, and the eminent organ-builders will never help us unless they are influenced by pressure from without; organ builders know nothing about the aesthetics of organ-playing; they only know how to voice pipes and to turn out beautiful mechanism.

He reiterated his concerns by recalling a conversation with an organ builder: 'with all your elaborate and beautiful instruments of 100 to 120 stops, you have never yet produced an organ on which Bach's organ music can be adequately represented'. It does not occur to Statham that Bach

¹⁰² H. Heathcote Statham, 'Bach & the Modern English Organ', *The Times Literary Supplement* (7 September 1916), 429.

was connected with a number of different organs during his lifetime and even today, it is not certain what his exact views on organ design were. Neither does Statham show any appreciation of the range of organs known to Bach. It is probably that Statham (and Gray) were acquainted with these instruments through the specifications which appeared in various publications.¹⁰³

Gray felt compelled to enter the debate claiming that Statham's preference for duplicated ranks – similar ranks of equal power on two or more manuals – violated the logical principles of organ design. In a response to Statham, published in the *Times Literary Supplement*, he claimed that his colleague 'seems to hanker after the 'twin great' system of German organs'. By 'twin great' Gray referred to the eighteenth-century German (and Dutch) practice of designing organs with a 'Great' (Hauptwerk) and 'Positiv'. Since Gray only knew these instruments via their specifications the discussion need only be limited to what he would have noted on paper. To Gray all manuals would have had the same characteristics – developed principal, flute, and reed chorus – and thus all divisions seemed the same to him: 'As this system requires a large amount of duplication, an unpardonable sin in organ design, it can only be justified if it be found necessary for the interpretation of a considerable amount of the finest organ music. Does any such necessity exist?'¹⁰⁴ This is peculiar since he considered retaining the unequal temperament for some of the stops in the Trinity organ, a thought that may show consideration for the original sounds known to a composer. Perhaps his fear of 'duplication', which was based on a very limited knowledge of the German instruments, was based on his knowledge of English instruments built in the 1830s and 40s.

¹⁰³ Yet Statham also based his assertions regarding the unsuitability of English organ's for Bach performance on his knowledge of an old English organ which he admired. He pointed towards the organ in a 'parish church in Northampton', as an example of the ideal instrument which he had in mind. He referred to the instrument as a 'very fine old organ with two "great organ" manuals, of equal power'. It was on 'such an instrument (the only example I ever came across) you could play Bach's organ trios [...] with real effect'. Unfortunately Statham did not refer to the parish's name but an investigation of the organs in Northampton at the turn of the century reveals that Statham may have had the Parish Church of All Saints in mind. It contained an organ, originally built By William Hill in 1844, which by 1900, had acquired a Nave division which on paper seems to be a secondary great.

¹⁰⁴ Alan Gray, 'Bach & the Modern Organ', *The Times Literary Supplement* (12 October 1916), 489.

Whatever the reasons for Gray's dislike of 'duplication', in contrast to Statham, he believed that Bach's music did not require the 'twin great' system which he observed in German organs. He based this assertion on the fact that he thought trio sonatas were to be played softly: 'the trios obviously demand soft stops'. (Statham had already noted how trio sonatas could be played softly with stops of equal balance.) Gray gives no source for this claim but seems to give it credibility by referring to Mendelssohn's preface to his own sonatas, in which the composer remarks on how some movements which called for two manuals were to be played softly: 'soft stops should be used a rule. And there can be little doubt that Mendelssohn was right.' Gray conceded that the 'Doric Prelude [sic]' may have benefited from two equally balanced sounds but states that it 'loses nothing by being played *mf*'. Gray therefore concludes that the English organ is not built on a principal of balance but that this did no harm to Bach's music.

This suggests that, despite the Cambridge experiment, Gray remained a strong advocate of the modern organ summarising his views in the *Times Literary Supplement* published on 27 June 1918. So great was Gray's opinion of a superior modern organ that he found it necessary to show how recent builders had more control over the art of pipe voicing. He recounted a story of how 'Father' Henry Willis inadvertently tricked listeners into believing that a diapason rank in the St Paul's organ, actually built by himself, was by the eighteenth-century builder 'Father' Smith:

Many people apparently think that Father Smith and the builders of the 18th century are still unrivalled, and there is a kindred belief that in some mysterious way organ pipes, like port, improve with age. A story of the late Sir John Stainer, who used to tell it with considerable humour, may not be out of place. Sir John for years had been in the habit of calling the attention of his visitors to a particular open diapason ascribed to Smith. The visitors were enthusiastic about the stop, and one well-known musician on being asked his opinion of another and newer stop said, "Yes, its very nice, but there's something about that old one." However, when the organ was dismantled it was discovered that a mistake had been made, and that the supposed Smith stop was really a new one by Willis.¹⁰⁵

The comments, although published in the *Times Literary Supplement*, do not find support anywhere and could easily stem from Gray's (or Stainer's) imagination. Yet they support the assertion that

¹⁰⁵ Alan Gray, *Times Literary Supplement*, (27 June 1918).

Gray believed that modern voicing (referring to Willis' work when he built the organ in 1872) far surpassed that undertaken by Smith between 1695 and 1697. Gray made no direct reference to Dolmetsch, but it is obvious that he showed contempt for Dolmetsch's views. Gray concluded: 'the facts are that organ builders now know far more about voicing than the old builders could possibly know, and they could if they chose (and it is to be wished that they did so more frequently) reproduce these old tones'. He admitted that some of the old ranks could be copied (presumably to provide variety of tone in a modern organ), but contested the idea that old organs were superior to new models, as espoused by Dolmetsch.

So, despite the initial enthusiasm for unequal temperament, and feeling the need to quote Schweitzer, Gray felt that the English organ was an instrument of integrity, an attribute which he defended when the organ's suitability for J. S. Bach's works was called into question. Perhaps Gray's interest in old organs and 'performance practice' was simply a matter of integrating old ranks into new instruments and playing Bach's works with stops which bore numerical resemblance to their eighteenth-century counterparts – it was quite a different approach to what Dolmetsch showed in 1915. Nevertheless, the need to mention Schweitzer and the Cambridge experiment reveals that the discourse of early music was beginning to mingle with Gray's upbringing among a family of progressive instruments. It was perhaps the sheer strength of the nationalistic themes which prevented the unequal-tempered project from being realized.

The organist as significant musician

The high estimation for the English organ, seen through the discourses on progress, the 'Bach organ', which all point to British superiority, gains a greater level of understanding when it is seen as part of a polyphony of discourses on the organist's standing in society. There was a belief that the British organist was a distinct musician who fulfilled an important education role. This did much to sustain the edifice of the English organ. As Hugh Allan (1869-1946), Organist of New

College, Oxford, stated in 1912, 'There is, probably, no profession in which more things are expected of a man, or more varied things, than that of the organist, nor any in which so much knowledge can only be gained in the actual exercise of it, and so much experience bought at the price of many a failure.'¹⁰⁶ But in defending this we immediately have to deal with a problem: many organists betray an anxiety over their instrument's perceived inferiority. Edwin Lemare, for example, admired English organ building ('England is the home and stronghold of organ-building'), but asserted in 1910 that 'if the organ is ever to become an acknowledged artistic instrument, it is for those who love the instrument and realise its possibilities to make it such'.¹⁰⁷ One of the most interesting commentaries, however, was provided by Harvey Grace, in *The Musical Times* published between 1914 and 1918 and in an address to the Musical Association in 1918. In this address, Grace stated: 'There can be no doubt that our instrument is less highly esteemed than it should be by musicians in general.'¹⁰⁸ Grace had previously claimed that J. S. Bach would have appreciated this instrument, so his comment does not point to dissatisfaction with the instrument's mechanical and tonal features, but perplexity as to why musicians failed to *recognize* and *appreciate* the organ's attributes. This perhaps explains his choice of vocabulary: 'should be'. In other words, the discourses on innovation, with nationalistic overtones – which all made the ideal organ for the 'English' Bach – created an instrument which *deserved* respect. Add to this the image of the organist as a general practitioner of music, able to administer, practise and preach the musical gospel, and a very strong edifice is created.

The organ's perceived inferiority was, according to Grace writing in 1914, due to English composers who shunned the instrument: 'the English organ composer has no tradition, nor does

¹⁰⁶ Hugh Percy Allen, 'The Scope of an Organist's Work', *Calendar of the Royal College of Organists 1912-13* (London, 1913), 265. Amongst other appointments, Allen was Heather Professor of Music at Oxford (1918-1946), and Director of the Royal College of Music (1919-1937). He was knighted in 1920.

¹⁰⁷ Edwin H. Lemare, 'The Organ as an Artistic Instrument', *MT*, 51 (September 1910), 572, 573. Lemare trained at the Royal Academy of Music from 1876 until 1879, he obtained his FRCO diploma in 1876 and, subsequently become one of the most influential recitalists of his day. See Edwin H. Lemare, *Organs I have Met: the Autobiography of Edwin H. Lemare, 1866-1934, together with Reminiscences by his Wife and Friends* (Los Angeles, 1956).

¹⁰⁸ Harvey Grace, 'Modern French Organ Music', *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 44 (1917-1918), 153; original paper delivered on 14 May 1918.

he show any signs of making one'.¹⁰⁹ The lack of a significant English school was noted by others. In 1917 W. Right Roberts, in a review of Parry's choral preludes, suggested that the esteemed composer's publication would inevitably lead organists to ask why few great contemporary composers wrote for the organ. He asserted: 'when these fine works were first announced, organists must have felt a certain melancholy mingling with their gratitude – a deepened sense of the fact that the so-called king of instruments is still neglected by the greatest modern composers'.¹¹⁰ He supports his assertion by saying that even composers who wrote for the organ gave the impression that organ composition was second-best to writing for other genres: 'Parry turns to it when already a classic in his lifetime, with a vast and varied production behind him. Elgar glanced at it once or twice in youth. Abroad, Brahms left a few pages for it – priceless ones indeed – to be printed after his death.' It seems that few composers were prepared to take the associated risk of writing for the organ. He admits that Cesar Franck and Max Reger wrote significant works for the organ but asks: 'may we not still say that genius of the first order fights shy of the organ?' Roberts concludes asking one final question: 'The eternal question, "After Bach, who?"' So whilst Roberts appears to be a little more pessimistic than Grace, both actors agree that a significant school of English composers was absent.

The organ's perceived inferiority was of such concern to Grace that, following Wright's article, Grace reiterated his concerns justifying his position with regard to the paucity of organ scholarship in general histories of music.

In Dr. Walker's [1907] 'History of Music in England' the references to the organ are so slight that the subject does not appear in the index. And if you consult the very interesting volume of lectures given a few years ago before the Worshipful Company of Musicians you will find a heap of information on English music of almost every kind but that for the organ. It seemed to be taken for granted, too, that we were eager to hear about the hydraulus or water-organ of the ancients, but

¹⁰⁹ Harvey Grace, 'Church and Organ Music. The Compleat Organist. VI. Of Arrangements and Disarrangements (Continued)', *MT*, 55 (April 1914), 242.

¹¹⁰ W. Wright Roberts, 'Sir Hubert Parry's Choral Preludes for the Organ', *MT*, 58 (June 1917), all at 257.

the splendid results of the inventiveness and industry of our native organ-builders were not thought worthy of a lecture.¹¹¹

Similarly, according to Grace, the *History of Music* by Stanford and Forsyth published in 1916 hardly gave the organ 'a fair show'.¹¹² Grace contends that the musicological neglect, itself a symptom of a general mistrust of the organ, hardly inspired composers to write for the organ: 'the neglect of it [the organ] by many modern composers is perhaps due in part to the traditional artistic disrepute of organs and organists'. Grace further claims that writers also show prejudice against significant composers who also wrote for the organ:

When they do write for the instrument this branch of their work is rarely given the serious attention it deserves. For example, I take down my "Grove," bent on learning something about Mendelssohn's organ-music. I find eight columns devoted to his compositions: the 'Songs without words' claim one of these columns, but of the organ works there is never a word! Yet who can question that the six Sonatas and the three Preludes and Fugues show the composer at his strongest and best, as surely as the pianoforte works do the reverse?¹¹³

Grace's comments are not included to demonstrate the importance of Mendelssohn's organ works over some of his piano compositions; the subjective remark would require an investigation which is beyond the scope of this work. Yet it confirms that contemporaries noted the absence of significant attention to the organ in histories of music and thought that this was connected in some way to a general suspicion of the instrument.

Perhaps historians like Stanford and Walker could be forgiven for neglecting the organ when, according to Grace, the instrument's popularity was harmed by the repertoire performed by organists. He entertains the idea that 'one cause of the trouble is [...] that [...] fine music is not so often played as it should be. Probably no other instrument suffers so much from the poor choice of works on the part of players of repute':¹¹⁴

The fact is, most English people are taught to regard the organ as a stop-gap, an accompanying machine, a contrivance for providing effective ecclesiastical

¹¹¹ Harvey Grace, 'Fair-Play for the Organ', *MT*, 58 (July 1917), 304, 305; see Ernest Walker, *A history of music in England* (Oxford, 1907).

¹¹² Charles Villiers Stanford and Cecil Forsyth, *A history of music* (London, 1916).

¹¹³ Grace, *Fair-Play*, 305.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 304.

background for such works as Handel's Largo or the Bach-Gounod Meditation, [...], as a provider of rich and rolling sounds to which the faithful, their devotions done, may step briskly again into the world, if disinclined for a chat in the nave, – in short, as anything but a noble instrument worth listening to, both on its own account and for the sake of the fine music written for it.¹¹⁵

He expands by pointing out the nature of some recitals in which transcriptions of religious compositions – presumably oratorios since they were highly popular at the time – and programmatic music (with the popular ‘storm’ pieces) of an inferior quality were frequently heard. Grace laments that ‘there are some, by no means a negligible minority, who still “tickle the ears of the groundlings” with representations of church services or concerts on lakes interrupted by various kinds of bad weather – always, however, including thunder’. He bases his conclusions on the programmes of twenty recitals taken at random and gives examples of pieces which do not merit a place in a recital.¹¹⁶

Grace’s views were shared by other critics. Writing in the *Musical Opinion* in 1909, Sydney Grew spoke of ‘the inartistic nature (as judged by ordinary canons) of the average organ-recital programme, and drew attention to the fact that this was one of the reasons why the organ recital failed to attract musicians in general’.¹¹⁷ He charges organists with the inability to draw up what he deems as musical programmes: ‘We only need to glance at the published particulars of organ concerts to see how far this form of musical performance falls away from the right path. The main characteristics of a satisfactory programme are obvious, but they are broken by organists on every hand.’ One of the features with which Grew took issue was the programming of Bach’s work (Prelude and Fugue in A minor) followed by music which he considered to be inartistic (Dudley Buck’s ‘Sunshine and Shadow’). This does not necessarily mean that all recitals were of a trivial nature as described by Grace. An examination of recital programmes during this period is beyond the scope of this work but as William McVicker shows, whilst transcriptions formed a

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 304.

¹¹⁶ See Harvey Grace, ‘The Compleat Organist I’, 654–655 for complaints on church music and comparison with Italy.

¹¹⁷ *MO*, (July 1909), 436.

major part of the organists' repertoire, there were recitalists who devoted their attention to real organ music.¹¹⁸

Grace's and Grew's charge is supported in a retrospective view by George Dyson who confirmed that organ recitals in the early twentieth century contained many transcriptions. In 1954 Dyson stated:

The music some of us played in those days was a very mixed bag indeed. The programme of my first full-scale concert recital, in 1900, included Mendelssohn's sixth sonata and Bach's Toccata, Adagio and Fugue in C major, but it also contained a long group of what we then considered to be the more modern spicy bits, by Guilmant, Lef.bure-Wely [sic], Alfred Hollins the blind organist, Lemare, and a march by William Faulkes, of which I now remember nothing whatever. One of my own show-pieces at that time was my own arrangement of the 'Tannhiuser' overture.¹¹⁹

Whilst accepting these imperatives – absence of a native school of composition, surplus of transcriptions – it is possible to exaggerate their links with the organ's perceived inferiority. For example Grace's prejudices may have prevented him from closely examining the organ within a larger musical context. Understanding these debates on the organ's inferiority raises important questions: how were musicians in general perceived and how did organ culture (composition and performance) relate to other musical endeavours in Britain? Sarah Fuller has shown how the music profession at the turn of the century was, by no means, one that carried a high social status in society. According to one of Fuller's historical actors:

Music [...] was also closely connected to the 'feminine', although not at its highest level to actual women. This, added to its association with the lower classes and foreigners, was one of the reasons why, even towards the end of the century, music was still not regarded as a pursuit that should be taken seriously by full-bloodied British gentlemen.¹²⁰

The view was echoed by a writer in *The Musical Times* of 1889 who claimed that 'Few things have contributed more effectively to perpetuate in this country the prejudice against the musical profession – a prejudice which, though waning, is not yet by any means extinct – than the

¹¹⁸ See McVicker, 'Downes', esp. 79.

¹¹⁹ George Dyson, 'Royal College of Organists: President's Address', *MT*, 95 (October 1954), 547.

¹²⁰ L. E. 'Amateurs', *The Monthly Musical Record* (April 1885), 75, quoted in Fuller, 'Women composers', 8.

impression that musicians are as a class wanting in the manlier qualities.’¹²¹ This view of an inferior profession was more than just a casual remark but was confirmed by Charles Graves who in his 1926 biography of Hubert Parry claimed that Parry raised the ‘status of the professional musician; by breaking down the last of the social barriers which excluded that calling from associating with the “governing classes” except on a semi menial footing’.¹²²

The organ’s perceived inferiority, then, is mixed with another discourse surrounding the attempt to valorise the musician in general. Given the presence of such a prominent figure – Sir Hubert Parry – in this quest, it is unlikely that Grace would have been ignorant of this social discourse. It follows that Grace’s concerns may have stemmed from this wider concern perhaps leading him to exaggerate his claims. But, most importantly, the desire to advance the musician’s status may have highlighted some of the less favourable aspects of organ culture – lack of scholarship and real organ music. At the same time it would have brought to the surface one major discourse – the organist as educator – in which the organist was perceived as a vital element to a community.

The organ had since the mid-nineteenth century weaved a significant thread in Britain’s musical fabric: transcriptions served to bring music to people; the organist had a certain degree of influence through his role as choirmaster and organist in a church, particularly in towns where he would have been the only significant musician; and some of the most significant musicians of the late nineteenth century – Parry, Stanford, Grove – were organists. For example, all directors of the Royal College of Music until 1984 were organists.¹²³

In many ways this educative aspect of organ culture, along with the building of town halls in the nineteenth century, was part of what has long been recognized as the Victorian age of

¹²¹ Quoted in Fuller, ‘Women composers’, 8.

¹²² Charles Graves, *Hubert Parry: His Life and Works* (London, 1926), v.

¹²³ Charles Grove (1883-1894), Hubert Parry (1895-1918), Hugh Allen (1919-1937), George Dyson (1938-1952), Ernest Bullock (1953-1960), Keith Falkner (1960-1974), David Willcocks (1974-84). The theme of the organist as a significant musician in the early twentieth century is acknowledged by David Lumsden. See Lumsden, ‘The place of the organist in British Musical Life’.

improvement.¹²⁴ Just as the building of places of worship could improve the peoples' religion, so music, and in particular the organist, could also be part of moral improvement. It therefore becomes probable that what Grace (and others) wanted was a privileged position for the organ, one that would make it stand apart from other musical professions and instruments.

The organ seems to inhabit a world of discourses – education, associations with musicians occupying prominent roles in society, moral improvement – which is why it can be discarded as representing misguided values, or defended for its impact on a society's education. The way the organ (and organist) are portrayed in literature, for example, suggests that the discourses of education/moral improvement were recognized by authors not connected with the organ loft. The negative images are revealing. Melvin Hughes has shown how the organ in Hardy's *Under the Greenwood Tree*, for example, is linked with the passing of a much-valued period of village life. In Dickens, organs often represent themes of decay,¹²⁵ and, in M. R. James, organists are portrayed as men of dubious character. The distinction between 'an organist and an accomplished man' in Meredith's *Sandra Belloni* does not favour the organist.¹²⁶ This may, of course, support Grace's assertion that the organ was an unpopular instrument, but of greater value to the present discussion is that it shows how the instrument could be perceived as a structure representing moral values which the Victorians were keen to promote. Just as Dickens showed distaste towards the workhouses, it is possible that he associated the organ and organist with immoral forces. The point is not that it casts the organ in a bad light (according to Dickens), but that the organist and organ can carry political and social values which merit recognition in literature. Moreover it supports the idea that the instrument occupies a different strand to other musical instruments.

¹²⁴ Thistlethwaite links the organ to what has long been accepted as the Victorian idea of 'improvement', something seen through general infirmaries, sewers, waterworks, and places of worship. See Thistlethwaite, *Victorian Organ*, 270-274.

¹²⁵ For example in *Sketches by Boz*, Dickens states 'the organ, which is hoarse and sleepy, plays in such fashion that I can hear more of the rusty working of the stops than of any music'.

¹²⁶ David Knight, 'The Victorian Organ', (BIOS meeting, Saturday 25 Feb 2006, Birmingham), *BIOSR*, 30 (April 2006), 9. Paper, entitled 'Organs and Organists in Victorian Literature', given by Melvin Hughes at the conference.

Talk of the organist as a distinct musician, charged with moral improvement, is a venerable tradition which dates back to at least the end of the nineteenth century. Dr Mackenzie, President of The College of Organists (later Royal College of Organists), claimed in 1892 that the educational role gave organists in England far greater responsibilities than those in other countries. He does not give information on organists in other countries, neither does he specify the duties of the English organist, but from his text we can infer that he referred to the organist promoting music via transcriptions, especially in towns where there was no orchestra, and generally promoting English music-making via the music chosen for worship. This could include both choral and organ music:

The responsibilities of the organist were greater in this country than in others. This was especially the case in the provinces, away from the great centres, where orchestral concerts were still like angels' visits, and where music in the theatres could hardly claim to exercise any particular ennobling influence. It was the duty of an organist to act, as it were, as the public guide in matters of musical taste, and to influence generally the minds and direct the endeavours of all who had it in their power to do something for the encouragement of art.¹²⁷

Mackenzie was a significant practitioner at the turn of the century, who, along with Stanford and Parry was responsible for much for the reinvigorated music-making in Victorian England.¹²⁸

As writers like Mackenzie appear to have held the opinion that organists were different to other musicians, it became possible to promote the organ by linking it to the various educative functions performed by the organist. Sir Hubert Parry was keen to relate the organist to the versatile musician or as a general practitioner of music. In 1899 he advanced similar thoughts to Mackenzie but went a stage further and talked about how the organist had to have a good general knowledge of all aspects of music:

Organists should be the pillars of what is good and dignified, [...] But to be able to judge between good and bad, an organist specially needs to keep in touch with everything which is outside his mere organist's routine. He should hear orchestral music, quartets, and any kind of art that keeps his sensibilities alive and prevents him becoming stodgy and mechanical. Moreover, he should keep in touch with the progress of the art and know the really best music of his time, and not judge things

¹²⁷ A. C. Mackenzie, 'The College of Organists Annual dinner May 9 1892', *MO*, 16 (1892).

¹²⁸ Hughes, 'Watchmen', esp. 31.

too much by their technical qualities. Dexterity is an inevitable part of art, but fine thoughts that are expressed without much dexterity are often of infinitely greater value, though the peculiar training of organists often leads them to think otherwise.¹²⁹

Many make reference to the use of transcriptions. One observer in 1894 noted the organist's educative role: 'in many places, the organ recital is the only means the people have of hearing good music, and it ought to be worthy of their support. There is a great influence resting with organists in forming public taste.'¹³⁰ Grace, in fact, appreciated this educative imperative in 1914 giving three justifications for the use of transcriptions: '(a) the keeping alive of good old music, (b) the making known of good new works, and (c) the deputising for the orchestra when necessary'.¹³¹ *The Musical Times* offered a similar view in 1916:

For some years past organ recitalists in the provinces have done useful pioneer work in making known orchestral music that their audiences would otherwise have little or no chance of hearing. It is true that this was sometimes done at the expense of real organ music of the best class, and it must also be admitted that the transcriptions of orchestral music have in some quarters been limited to a few works.¹³²

Dyson retrospectively observed how transcriptions played a significant role in bringing orchestral music to people who, for whatever reason, would not have heard these works:

The organist's world was then full of arrangements of all kinds, and it is both easy and natural to smile at those ingenuities now, whether they were good or bad in themselves. But we must remember that in a provincial town there was then little or no chance of hearing orchestral music at first hand. I first heard Wagner on a brass band, and the organ was the obvious instrument for imitating, as best one could, the tonal variety of an orchestra.¹³³

But it seems that since the foundation of the Gramophone company in 1897 the educative role of transcriptions had diminished: 'With the increasing use of the pianola and the gramophone, and the publication of easy pianoforte arrangements of operatic and other music, the time has come for the organ recitalist to extend his educational activities.'¹³⁴ Perhaps critics like Grace

¹²⁹ Anon., 'Sir Hubert Parry on the Duties of an Organist', *MT*, 40 (February 1899), 96.

¹³⁰ Geoffrey G. Stocks, *MO*, 18 (February 1895), 289-90.

¹³¹ Grace, 'Church and Organ Music. The Compleat Organist', 241.

¹³² Anon., 'The Organ as Educator', *MT*, 57 (November 1916), 499.

¹³³ George Dyson, 'Royal College of Organists: President's Address', (October 1954), 547.

¹³⁴ Anon., 'The Organ as Educator', 499.

understood this change in the social consumption of music and therefore this prompted some of their criticisms. One is bound to wonder to what extent the increasing popularity of wireless sets and the increasing number of orchestras prompted criticisms of recital programmes, thereby forcing organists to go back to their repertory of real organ music.

It is important to understand that as the twentieth century progressed notions complementing the English organ and its mechanical and tonal features coexisted with competing views surrounding their musical value. Some musicians like Dolmetsch, who, coming from different traditions, were active in reviving past repertoires with what they thought were period instrumental techniques, showed dissatisfaction with the organs of the time; others like Edwards and Gray showed interest in some features of old organs but seemed content with what they termed the modern organ. The English Renaissance, with its promotion of English music, and mixed with Imperial overtones, therefore, sent organists in different directions but all were concerned in preserving the distinct English organ, whether eighteenth century or twentieth century in origins.

The social discourse, in which the organist was seen as a distinct, perhaps even superior musician, further strengthened the edifice of the English organ. Even if critics lamented the lack of an English school of composition, and viewed the organ as a poorer instrument in the wider family of instruments, it did not prevent Sir Hubert Parry from concluding in 1918 that ‘organists are by right of inheritance the people who should be in the forefront of all branches of the musical profession. It is their prerogative to prove all things, and hold fast that which is good.’¹³⁵ If we accept this discourse then any possible criticisms of organ culture – lack of a significant organ school – would detract from the image of an instrument and person engaged in promoting educational values. At the same time, the high office of organist would give organists remarkable

¹³⁵ Hubert Parry, quoted in Anon., ‘The Royal College of Organists’, *MT*, 59 (April 1918), 162.

self confidence in believing that their instrument was the most appropriate medium for a composer – Bach – whose music resonated with Victorian values.

A brief consideration of tuning, as at Trinity Cambridge, would therefore be tempered by the powerful belief that the English organ played a vital part in British life. By 1918 a number of discourses had produced a national instrument which, whilst admired by many, was mixed with discourses which would lead to further criticisms in the following decade.

Chapter 3

Between the wars, 1918-1928

The persistence of features like large open diapasons and electro-pneumatic actions in the years following the First World War maintain the supremacy of the Edwardian organ, yet contemporary testimonies reveal a desire for change. Encouraged by the political, social, and cultural changes brought on by the end of the Great War, contemporaries discussed what place the organ held in the burgeoning modernist world. Whilst no radical reform groups emerged, developments in modern organ construction continued to be debated at length. Those in favour of reform appealed to the organ's repertoire and linked this with some aspects of its original performance practice. At stake was the Edwardian organ, which was thought increasingly unsuitable for playing the organ's ever important repertoire. These views found an early manifestation in the instrument built by Henry Willis III under the guidance of Guy Weitz, for Farm Street Church, London in 1926.

To enrich our understanding of reform in this rapidly changing era we must set it in the wider context of the musical world, in particular modernism. Although various definitions and dates have been suggested for this aesthetic, the end of the First World War suggests the advent of a new era. The Great War marked a paradigm shift in European culture, something which had been felt from the last decades of the nineteenth century. The killing of 800,000 British men and the resulting emphasis on the divide between new and old generations (brought about by the older generation sending a younger one to their deaths) finally brought an era to an end. Whatever the precise definition of 'modernism', in Europe musical modernism came to be associated with Hans Pfitzner, Arnold Schoenberg, Igor Stravinsky, Gustav Mahler, Jean Sibelius, Ferruccio Busoni, Claude Debussy, Richard Strauss, and Max Reger, whilst in Britain musical

culture prided itself, not without any controversies, on Edward Elgar.¹ Modernist culture brought two significant debates to the foreground: it challenged the grand narratives of ‘progress’ and gave rise to the first murmurings of what was later defined as the Early Music Movement. Both debates would affect English organ culture not least because the organ had previously been hailed as a ‘progressive’ instrument which was suitable for a wide range of music (see chapter two).

In claiming that the organ took part in musical modernism, many problems need to be addressed. On a very basic level, it is difficult to define modernism, or even defend it as a period of time embracing aesthetic debates with a common framework. J.P.E. Harper-Scott and Daniel Albright view modernism as ‘expansionist’, and see its origins in the late nineteenth century. Other recent historians caution the haste to apply easily identifiable criteria to this movement; indeed, some deny that modernism existed at all.² Others are less dogmatic in their opinions and identify modernism as manifesting itself in a plurality of themes. In his study of Elgar and modernism Charles McGuire, for example, observed how contemporaries took part in several discourses, all of which come under the umbrella term of modernism. The evidence he presents supports his summary of modernism: ‘some declared modernism to be an offshoot of Romanticism; others saw it as part of a normal historical process, with modern composers evident in every stylistic era; the most radical viewed modernism as utterly divorced from the immediate past (and therefore inherently revolutionary)’.³ So, according to McGuire’s actors, modernism

¹ Charles McGuire, ‘Edward Elgar: “Modern” or “Modernist?” Construction of an Aesthetic Identity in the British Music Press, 1895–1934’, *The Musical Quarterly*, 91 (2008), 8-38.

² The most forceful argument came from Perry Anderson, a Marxist historian, who claimed that ‘Modernism as a notion is the emptiest of all cultural categories. Unlike the terms Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, Mannerist, Romantic, or Neo-Classical, it designates no describable object in its own right: it is completely lacking in positive content.’ Perry Anderson, ‘Modernity and Revolution’, *New Left Review*, 144 (March-April 1984), 112-13, quoted in Michael H. Whitworth (ed.), *Modernism* (Oxford, 2007), 3.

³ McGuire, ‘Elgar’, 20. This plurality of meanings is a feature of recent reappraisals of modernism. It is significant that in a recent issue of *The Musical Quarterly*, which addressed various aspects of British musical modernism, none of the authors agreed on a definition of this phenomenon. Perhaps, as Bryron Adams, editor for the *MQ*, notes, this is not only an advantage of a multi-authored approach, but an indication of how modernism existed in its plural form. ‘Surely’, he states, all the authors ‘would concur that British modernism can be best understood as one of a plethora of equally valid and exciting “modernisms” that coexisted during the last century.’ Bryron Adams, ‘Forward’, *The Musical Quarterly*, 91 (2008), 6.

does not necessarily imply reference to a mainstream avant-garde; it seems that modernism can be unbounded and applicable to any thoughts which are considered to break with the immediate past.

Whilst McGuire identified three separate strands of modernism, Jenny Doctor takes this one step further and shows how competing forces – modernization versus tradition – were found within individuals and institutions. She begins her article with a most appropriate quotation from Philip Gibbs’s *England Speaks* (1935) in which the author states ‘all this modernization is, I find, very superficial. I mean, it has not yet bitten into the soul of England or poisoned its brain.’⁴ Doctor supports her thesis with a re-appraisal of the Promenade concerts in which she demonstrates how two almost competing forces – modernization and tradition – survived in harmony. For Doctor ‘this dichotomy of modernization and traditional ideals – the two worlds living side by side in 1935 [...] was an inescapable feature of England’.⁵ She concluded that ‘modernism of this period consists not just of extremes, as extolled by so many commentators of the past half-century, but also of other thoroughly modern layers of activity’.⁶ So, for Doctor, modernism was not so much a paradigm shift as the addition of another strand of aesthetics to British musical culture which allowed what she terms ‘traditional ideals’ to survive.

This dichotomy of modernization and tradition provides the background to appreciate debates concerning the future of the organ. The British organ scene in the 1920s reflects a continuation of the pre-war period. First, the organ remained faithful to many of its traditional ideals which far outweighed the innovative elements. Many features of the Victorian and Edwardian organs – electro pneumatic actions, large open diapasons, consoles complete with many gadgets – continued to be produced. This support for ‘traditional ideals’ was exemplified by the belief that J. S. Bach’s music was better suited to the contemporary English organ than that known to Bach. Second, and perhaps of greater importance, the economic crisis of the 1920s and

⁴ Jenny Doctor, ‘The Parataxis of “British Musical Modernism”’, *The Musical Quarterly*, 91 (2008), 89.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 110.

'30s offered organ builders few opportunities to expand their art.⁷ Third, no modernist composers wrote anything significant for the organ. Elgar, described as a modernist for part of his career, wrote a significant work for the organ, the *Sonata in G*, but as John Butt has shown this was deeply rooted in nineteenth-century orchestral writing and harmonic language.⁸

The absence of a significant organ building school is acknowledged by historians. In a reflection on English organ building, Ian Bell saw the 1920s as a continuation of what he defines as elements of decadence (identified by some critics in chapter two) which resulted in a complacent organ culture. He claimed that by 1880 'English organ-building had slipped into the deep rut which was to end in the cul-de-sac of the complacent 1930's Harrison, Compton and Willis III.' In *A New History of the Organ*, Peter Williams asked his readers to think about what 'went wrong during the nineteenth century and led to the absurdity of the 1920s'.⁹ I do not wish to revise these views; what follows qualifies these remarks, adding another layer which acknowledges the reform debates which were taking place.

A nuanced approach to this period reveals that 'tradition' survived alongside a quest for new aesthetics of organ design – an area which received some attention in the pre-war period. Organ reform was beginning to gain momentum in Germany through the completion of the so-called Praetorius Organ in the University of Freiburg in 1921; but apart from a minor entry in an English journal, German events were hardly reported in the English press.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the 1920s were significant for encouraging further debates on the future of the instrument. Two new journals were founded: *The Organ* in 1921 and *The Rotunda* in 1925. In referring to the former publication, the *Musical Times* claimed that '[the organ] really is an epoch-making publication in

⁷ The major firm of Hill and son was forced to merge with Norman and Beard in 1916, but the most remarkable partnership came in 1919 when Lewis and Willis came together, a communion that their founders would hardly have welcomed.

⁸ John Butt, 'Choral culture and the regeneration of the organ', in Jim Samson (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Music* (Cambridge, 2002), 522-543.

⁹ Ian Bell, 'The organ-builder as artist – opportunities and constraints', *JBIOS*, 6 (1982), 9; Williams, *New History*, 187.

¹⁰ James Matthews, 'The Praetorius Organ in the University of Freiburg-im-Breisgau', *The Organ*, 2 (October 1922), 117-118.

English musical journalism for we can say with every feeling of confidence, that no other musical quarterly issued in this country has been so welcomed so warmly or attained a circulation of such large dimensions'.¹¹ *The Rotunda*, founded by Henry Willis, and edited by Batigan Verne, was livelier than *The Organ* but ceased publication in 1934. Rather than chronicling the daily life of the Willis firm, or offering a column for organ gossip, *The Rotunda* featured articles on the aesthetics of organ design, proving to be much more provocative, perhaps catering for younger readers who might be turned against the establishment.

To show the progression of ideas pertaining to reform, from the challenges to 'progress' to the growing interest in historical organs and literature, this chapter places the relevant material in three sections: first, the obvious links with the pre-war days will be shown through the continuation of 'progressive' views of the organ; criticisms will also be acknowledged; second, organ reform will be placed against a background of responses to modernism which included the challenge to the grand narratives of progress and the growth of interest in earlier repertoires and its performance practice; and third, a case study of Henry Willis's work at Farm Street London under the guidance of Guy Weitz suggests that many of the features of musical modernism – challenges to 'progress', desire to play 'early music', a wish to render this music in a manner sympathetic to the conditions known to the earlier composers – were at play. Of course, I do not wish to claim that a drastic reversal of English organ building occurred in 1926. The electro pneumatic action, together with the reliance on many features of the previous Willis style, makes this instrument share much with a previous tradition. The case study therefore demonstrates how some historical actors were influenced by early music and tried to equip their instruments with sounds to render this music in what they deemed to be a sympathetic manner. The instigators of this reformed approach, Henry Willis III and Guy Weitz, together with the men influenced by

¹¹ Anon., *MT*, (May 1923), 766.

this instrument, William Sumner and Cecil Clutton, reveal a renewed interest to organ design and its repertoire.

The progressive organ

Views in support of the organ as a progressive instrument seemed hardly different in the inter-war years from those expressed prior to 1918. The central claim put forward by those proponents of the contemporary organ was that these instruments were rich in musical qualities, giving them a privileged position in the playing of many repertoires. Harvey Grace, like many of his generation, pointed to some weaknesses, but his comments go little beyond stating that some organs were too loud. In 1921 he made passing reference to Albert Schweitzer's call for reforms (whatever Schweitzer's true motivations as questioned by Williams), but concluded that these were largely not applicable to English organs as they contained 'stops more beautiful than any Bach ever heard, and, so far as mechanics can aid interpretation, they are likely to lead to better Bach playing than any organ Silbermann put together'.¹²

Such opinions were promoted by significant persons connected with the Royal College of Organists until at least the 1960s. In 1927, at an award ceremony of the Royal College of Organists, H. W. Richards provided a favourable commentary on opinions expressed by such men as Grace. He justified his stance, stating that the organ in general was not liked by everyone (drawing on the discourse surrounding the organ's inferiority), but this was due to the instrument's earlier history, which was handicapped by a lack of technological progress: 'I suppose no instrument can be so justly blamed for being stodgy as the organ. And the reason is not far to seek. We know its early history; how its clumsy keys had to be struck by the clenched fist, and that its action remained clumsy until, in the middle of last century, pneumatics came to

¹² Harvey Grace, 'The Organ Works of Bach (Concluded)', *MT*, 62 (August 1921), 544.

our aid.’¹³ He went on to confirm his admiration for modern organ building stating ‘amazing progress [...] has recently been made in the art of organ-building [...] we owe the organ-builder of to-day a great debt of gratitude’.

Richards’s presidential address is typical of discussions where notions of progress reign. In asserting the superior nature of new organs due to technological advances, he recalls the familiar story of how Father Willis’s efforts, particularly with regard to reed voicing, brought about the modern organ: ‘it was not until Father Willis [...] came on the scene in the middle of last century, that we knew what reeds should and could be. He laid the foundation upon which has been built the complete tonal structure, and fine reed-voicing is now more often the rule than the exception.’¹⁴ Richards searches for musical reasons to justify his contention. He provocatively claims that old organs, through their mechanisms, could not provide the performer with adequate means of expression, something which had severely handicapped the organ until recent times: ‘the old mechanism balked any attempt to give shape to the music played, and to this monotony and lack of shape is no doubt due much of that intolerance of the organ which has unfortunately yet to be lived down’.

The advances in organ technology and tonal sounds, which gave the organist greater means of expression, dwarf the apparent inferiority of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century organs. Richards suggests that Bach and his contemporaries wrote for an instrument with which they were unhappy:

The music, however, was written, and only waited for the perfected instrument. The organ upon which were first heard Bach’s D minor Toccata or the D major Fugue must have cost the player some physical exertion, and we know that Bach’s organ music is still played more slowly in Germany than in this country. This may quite possibly be a tradition formed on the clumsy action so long in vogue, and though wind-pressures were low, there must have been sufficient resistance to the finger to make playing very laborious.

¹³ Henry Richards, ‘The Dignity of the Organ’, *MT*, 68 (March 1927), all at 250.

¹⁴ George Dixon offered a similar appreciation of Willis: ‘It is really no exaggeration to say that to Willis more than to any one else we owe the renaissance of organ building, which has taken place in England during the last fifty or sixty years.’ See George Dixon, ‘The Tonal Structure of the Organ’, *The Organ*, 1 (January 1922), 131.

There is no evidence to suggest that Richards had visited German instruments. His rhetoric ('...must have been sufficient resistance') suggests he, like many of his generation (Alan Gray for example) based their opinions on the general views of these instruments. Nevertheless the most significant aspect of his speech is his implication that Bach was handicapped by the limitations of the instruments of his day. It is not difficult to come across similar views.

In addition to approving the progressive nature of the organs of his day, Richards aired some dissatisfaction with the repertoire played by organists. He was reluctant to accept orchestral transcriptions, claiming that this music was merely played to demonstrate the organist's technique at the expense of his musicianship: 'I once saw one of our finest organists play the "Danse Macabre," and though a fascinating thing to watch, it left me wondering more at the player's skill than anything else.' However he concurred that transcriptions had an educative role: 'in remote places where an orchestra is never heard, the organ arrangement may be a valuable educational force'.¹⁵ So Richards, acknowledges many of the organ's attributes noted by organists earlier in the century. Like Alan Gray, he points towards a progressive organ, one which offers an expressive medium for J. S. Bach's music, and shows contempt for orchestral transcriptions, except for their educational value in certain circumstances.

Richards's comments are no more than an ensemble of pre-war attitudes to organs and organ-playing, yet it is necessary to acknowledge that developments in organ construction continued to be controversial during this period. Some criticisms of contemporary organs could, occasionally, be rather forthright, as in an article which appeared in *The Evening Standard* on 16 June 1928 criticising the organ in the Royal Albert Hall. The anonymous author did not withhold his distaste for this instrument:

The strings and woods and brasses seem afloat on an ocean of sound, rocking and swinging to a gentle swell or pitching and rolling in tempest. If we are interested enough to wonder where this new enveloping sound comes from, all we can discern is an array of tall pipes that might have been erected by a playful plumber

¹⁵ Richards, 'Dignity', 251.

[...] A musical instrument? Rather the organ is a musical engine – an engine that can growl, whistle, sing, hum, roar, shout, coo, or swear at the will of its master in the console. He, the god of the engine, can loose anti-cyclones from the musical Azores to sweep through the upper galleries, or send such sweet zephyrs of song sighing along the outer corridors that the waitresses in the tea-room drop adulterating tears into the milk-jugs.¹⁶

The sustained caustic tone necessitates an element of caution in assessing the author's opinions. It could also be argued that the criticisms could apply to both good and bad instruments since the author does not even hint whether he likes organs in general. Nevertheless the article provides a good example of conflicting opinions on the organ for it received an almost immediate reaction from those who found the author's position intolerable. The article is, in fact, quoted from its appearance in the pages of *The Musical Times*, where the editor used it not as an example of serious criticisms of an organ, but to demonstrate his contempt for such critical opinions. He stated that 'more journalistic nonsense has been written about the organ than about most instruments, but one hardly expects to meet with examples in a leading London daily paper'. Given the Standard's provocative stance it is hardly surprising that the article should receive such a response. Perhaps space (and rage) prevented *The Musical Times* from entertaining the matter any further, but the lack of a detailed response to the criticisms indicates that they were perceived as completely unfounded. The vehemence with which *The Musical Times* responded to The Evening Standard's article demonstrates how passionate discussions of organs could become. Even if 'humane' criticism with detailed analysis is avoided, it is clear that the topic of organs was still very much alive in the 1920s. That the Royal Albert Hall organ was chosen is significant to the present discussion: Geraint Jones was to do the same thing, albeit with an extended commentary, just over twenty years later.

There were, however, more nuanced criticisms of modern organs. Dissatisfaction can be grouped into three broad categories. First, musicians were anxious with what they perceived as a fascination for mass unison (8-foot) diapason tone. In January 1922 the Revd Noel Bonavia-Hunt

¹⁶ Quoted in Anon., 'Church and Organ Music. Royal College of Organists', *MT*, 69 (July 1928), 639-640.

(1882-1965), an amateur organ builder whose name frequently appears in the organ columns of various musical journals, aired his concerns within an article which explored the ideal diapason chorus. Using the name of Hope-Jones, Bonavia Hunt attributed to him the ‘production of massive blocks of foundation tone, a veritable organic Stonehenge’.¹⁷ By September 1926 Bonavia Hunt was even more forceful: ‘This craving for fundamentalism’, he affirmed in *The Rotunda*, ‘is a kind of disease. It starts with mild enough symptoms, but quickly develops.’¹⁸ Bonavia-Hunt gives no specific examples but it is probable that he would not have approved of the 1929 Hill, Norman and Beard organ for Melbourne Town Hall which contained a 32-foot diaphone on 22 inches of wind pressure, thus representing the desire for great foundation tone.¹⁹ Second, just as some musicians lamented the desire for greater foundation tone, so some resented the increasing favour for smooth sonorous tone. An anonymous writer in the *Musical Opinion* commented on the revoicing of Father Willis’s reeds at Durham Cathedral in 1904/1905 to produce a more refined sound:

To my mind the curse of modern heavy pressure reed voicing is the use of felt weights, which smooth off the tone and kill the natural harmonics, giving that ultra-smooth, cloying effect which some people, even experts, mistake for “refinement”, so that we find magnificent examples of Willis reeds being “improved,” as at Durham Cathedral.²⁰

Third, many – but not all – negative responses to the organ can be understood as the residue of older premises, as outlined in chapter two, which lamented the demise of tonal and mechanical qualities pertaining to the old English organ. For example, in an article examining the eighteenth-century organ in St Katharine’s Church, Coleman, Andrew Freeman (1876-1947), an organist and historian, spoke enthusiastically about this instrument, implying that not all developments in organ design represented an advance on the organ under examination. Freeman represents many

¹⁷ Noel Bonavia-Hunt, ‘The True Diapason Chorus’, *The Organ* (January 1922), 140; a similar complaint is found in Dixon, ‘Tonal Structure’.

¹⁸ Noel Bonavia-Hunt, ‘Tone and the Critic’, *The Rotunda*, (September 1926), 22.

¹⁹ See W. G. Price, ‘The Organ at Melbourne Town Hall’, *MO*, 53 (October 1929), 50.

²⁰ Anon., [‘Organum’], ‘Organ Matters’, *MO*, 44 (October 1920), 44. For information on the Harrison rebuild see Richard Hird, ‘Arthur Harrison, R Meyrick-Roberts, George Dixon, and the Remodelling of the Durham Cathedral Organ in 1904/5’, *JBIOS*, 18 (1994), 48-79.

who, dissatisfied with the organ of their day, turned to older instruments. It is significant that in the first few issues of *The Organ*, for example, a number of articles examined the history of certain aspects of the organ, or of specific instruments.²¹

Challenges to 'progress', and the early music revival

These criticisms of the English organ had already been aired, but what makes these remarks particularly interesting is the way in which they have a new aesthetic background – wider challenges to notions of progress, and the increasing pace of interest in early music. It is significant that *The Dominant*, a new journal founded in 1927, should begin its first editorial with a firm challenge to the grand narrative of 'progress'. Its editor, Edwin Evans (1874-1945), a music critic, stated: 'too much use has been made of the word "progress" [...] We are not wiser men than Plato because we travel in aeroplanes. Even the young Cambridge school of criticism would hesitate to claim that Vaughan Williams necessarily represents progress as compared with William Byrd.'²² The school of thought to which Evans refers is New Criticism which was an empirical methodology which studied a text's language without recourse to its context.

Evans's opinions, which were shared by many, illumine a fundamental re-evaluation of English music, which claimed that British music survived within an insular tradition, but one which was no longer 'splendid'. Contemporary music criticism became more focused on the role of English music in the context of the European art. In the same editorial Evans claimed that British musical culture had profited from the Renaissance, with such composers as Stanford and Parry, but this now resulted in a culture of insularity, one which was no longer splendid:

²¹ Andrew Freeman, 'The Organs and organists of St-Martin-in-the-fields', (July 1921), 1-19; Ernest Adcock, 'The organ in Seville Cathedral', (July 1921), 20-22; A Eaglefield Hull, 'Couperin's Organ', (July 1921), 23-25; Sidney Harvey, 'Two unpublished records of Father Smith', Sidney Harvey, 'The Mounted Cornet', (October 1921), 121-123. For information on Freeman see Edmonds, *BIOSR*, 3 (Autumn 1979), 13-14.

²² Edwin Evans, 'Editorial', *The Dominant*, 1 (November 1927), 7. In 1938 he was elected President of the International Society for Contemporary Music. See biographical details see Anon., *MT*, 86 (April 1945), 84; Rollo S. Myers, 'Edwin Evans: September 1, 1874-March 3, 1945', *MT*, 86 (April 1945), 105-108.

But the emancipation of English musical life from alien influences has ended in a disquieting insularity. In recent years our musical life seems to have lost contact with that of the Continent, until to-day even France and Germany seem to know each other better than we know either or they us. [...] it is one which threatens to leave us in a kind of backwater, such as we occupied relatively to the European stream in the nineteenth century. It will, of course, be a more flourishing backwater, thanks to the English renaissance. But isolation, however splendid, is always befraught with danger.²³

Evans's attack on British musical culture is clear: the Renaissance was over; splendid isolation was over. It was now time for Britain to create an identity, one which could not ignore Continental developments. It is within this framework that some composers, especially Edward Elgar, came under attack. (It is equally important that some 'journals such as *The Musical Times*, *The Musical Herald*, and *The Sackbut* identified him as the leading figure of British music'.)²⁴

The challenge to notions of progress meant that increasing light was cast on past repertoires, their associated instruments, and their playing techniques. It is no accident that, in *The Dominant* in March 1928, Gerald Hayes (1889-1955) should challenge the belief that the history of music was a story of progress: 'Music has not, as the past generations of historians taught, progressed steadily upon an upward plane of improvement; it has changed in substance, form, and spirit, but in musical essentials the masterpieces of the past can consort upon equal terms with those of later times.'²⁵ In a review of Hayes's pedagogical study on old instruments, Robert Steele used Hayes's thoughts to justify the contention that past instruments are not obsolete, are in no way in need of modernization, and could thus compete on equal terms with modern ones. 'This knowledge is largely due to the realization that music must not be distorted by instruments and interpretations wholly foreign to those that inspired its composers. It must be played upon the instruments for which it was written and with the contemporary technique.'²⁶ Steele went on to say how original instruments gave music composed for them an aesthetic identity which modern instruments could not give. He quoted a passage from Hayes's book to

²³ Evans, 'Editorial', 8.

²⁴ McGuire, 'Elgar', 11.

²⁵ Gerald R. Hayes, 'Early Musical Text-Books', *The Dominant*, 1 (March 1928), 28.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 28

illustrate his point: ‘there were many of the Preludes and Fugues [...] which, I must confess, I had never heard before, since to hear them decked out by the pianoforte is not to hear them at all’.²⁷

Such views as to how the composer viewed his music intersect with the displacement of notions of musical ‘progress’ to create a very powerful association.

Talk of earlier repertoires and their performance practice paralleled the work of the Dolmetsch family. Referring to the first of a series of recitals at Queen Square, Bloomsbury, in 1925, *The Times* expressed such gratitude for ‘hearing lutes, recorders, and viols tolerably well played’ that the writer hesitated to ‘complain that the playing is not better than it is’.²⁸ Later that year the same paper reported Dolmetsch’s claim that the first concert in the Haslemere festival (24 August 1925) would contain Bach’s Concerto in D minor for harpsichord and strings, and would ‘reproduce the condition of Bach’s own performances of it’. The article concurred with Dolmetsch’s sentiments concluding that ‘it was a valuable experience to hear his music as Bach himself heard it’.²⁹ In May 1928 The Dolmetsch foundation was formed to ‘encourage the practical study of the playing and construction of early musical instruments, together with that is thereby implied in technique, interpretation, and research’.³⁰ It is not the purpose of this chapter to provide a critique of Dolmetsch’s reasoning along the lines of the authenticity debate of the 1980s; whatever the merits of Dolmetsch’s claims, it was a radically different view to those musicians (like Richards) who openly stated that Bach was handicapped by the ‘primitive’ nature of his instruments.

It would be a leap of faith to suggest that a significant number of organists were directly influenced by these views. Certainly Jack Westrup, who later became President of the Royal College of Organists and Heather Professor of Music at the University of Oxford, demonstrated

²⁷ Robert Steele, ‘Let the viols speak’, review of Hayes, *Musical Instruments and their Music, 1500-1750*, in *The Dominant*, 1 (June 1928), 34.

²⁸ Anon., ‘Recitals Of The Week. Mr. Dolmetsch And Family’, *The Times* (20 February 1925), 12.

²⁹ Anon., ‘Haslemere Music Festival. Mr. Dolmetsch’s First Concert’, *The Times* (25 August 1925), 8. See also Anon., ‘Haslemere Festival Of Chamber Music. Mr. Dolmetsch’s Programme’, *The Times* (15 July 1925), 12.

³⁰ Anon., ‘Early Instrumental Music The Dolmetsch Foundation’, *The Times* (24 August 1929), 8.

similar views to those expressed in *The Dominant*. In a 1928 letter to *The Musical Times* in which he challenged one author's sceptical views on the revival of some past repertoires, Westrup encouraged the idea of performing a very wide range of forgotten repertoire. He supported the performance of this music by challenging notions of 'progress' which resulted in earlier styles being labelled as inferior, and, more importantly, stated how performers and audiences had to approach past repertoires with a different conceptual framework. In other words, they had to abandon the idea that old music was in some ways inferior to contemporary music due to the fact that music had steadily progressed over the centuries. He stated:

Listening to the music of the past often requires concentration and a particular attitude of mind. We listen to early music with the ideas of the 20th century, and proclaim the music of the 16th and 17th centuries to be wanting. The obvious deduction is that music has progressed. No theory could be more fatuous. The truth is not that we have progressed, but that we are on a different level.³¹

So Westrup gave full support to reviving earlier styles of music. Sadly he does not comment on the use of instruments in performing this repertoire but his argument would accommodate the use of earlier instruments in performance.

Henry Willis III and Guy Weitz at Farm Street

Whatever Westrup's views on the matter, the challenges to progress and the growing enthusiasm for early music found expression in the organ built for the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Farm Street in 1926. The instrument not only displayed a change in aesthetics of tonal design, but based its tonal scheme around the supposed requirements of particular repertoires of early music. It turned away from mass unison tone, providing in its place well developed choruses. Built by Henry Willis III in consultation with the church organist, the Belgian Guy Weitz (1883-1970), the organ included two mutation ranks (stops which contain fifth- and third-sounding ranks), two mixture stops on the Great Organ, a 'Piccolo'1' on the Swell, and independent pedal

³¹ Jack A. Westrup, 'The Revival of Music', *MT*, 69 (May 1928), 441. Westrup was President of the Royal College of Organists between 1964 and 1966.

upperwork.³² Of greater importance to the present discussion, however, are the debates surrounding the organ's relationship with earlier repertoire, something which drew in such scholars of the organ as Sumner and Clutton.

The organ's tonal scheme suggests a departure from a previous style of English organ building. In a letter to Weitz, Willis suggested making several substantial modifications to the previous organ by Bishop:³³

I went very carefully over your organ the other day
New action and console essential

Tonal

Great Open 1. Should be new from Tenor C up, the old one is not good.

Swell Viole Mixture replaced by a real Mixture

Contra Hautboy at least new tubes lower octave but preferably replaced by a Waldhorn

Harmonic Horn replaced by a Trompette as the horn tone is too "thick" for an effective Swell ensemble. Swell box to be made more effective

Choir Add Nazard, Piccolo, and Tierce also enclosed Tuba in box.

The Cornet can be "duplexed" so as to be played from Swell and the Swell Trompette can be duplexed to the Choir if you deem it desirable.

Swell box to be made more effective.

Preparation at console for a Solo division of some 8 stops.

What is of great interest here is the proposed tonal scheme. The replacement of the swell mixture and trompette shows that there was interest in the organ's ensemble and in creating an effective chorus structure: the previous swell mixture which was presumably of a soft character was no longer acceptable and had to give way to something which could compete on equal terms with the foundation stops. Weitz' response supported the proposed tonal changes but placed great emphasis on the mutation ranks, Nazard and Tierce, stops that would be drawn to produce a cornet effect:

A fourth manual is out of the question being a luxury[.] I insisted on [recommendation] No 2 so as to have a practically new organ. When you see him

³² The organ was originally built by Anneesen (Belgium) but apart from the case, the bodies of a few of the large wooden pipes, and some reeds nothing survived the rebuild by Bishop and Sons in 1914. See Vivian Stuart, 'The Organs at Farm Street Church', *MT*, 62 (August 1921), 579.

³³ Willis to Weitz, 26 March 1926. Willis Archives, Farm Street, Ln F3, No 1.

[Fr. Crofton] and if I am but called in with you do please remember that above all I want that Nazard quint and Nazard and Tierce on Choir. I quite agree that Diapason No 1 is defective and also would like very much to have a bright Trompette with a Mixture (Plein jeu) on Swell but if something has to be kept waiting let it not be the Cornet!³⁴

There is no archival evidence to suggest who originally thought of the idea of incorporating mutations but one can conclude that both men saw the necessity of including these ranks – Weitz through the force of his letter, and Willis through his desire to duplex the mutation ranks on the Swell Organ. Weitz considered mutation ranks ‘not a luxury but a necessity’, writing to Willis ‘what gives me greatest pleasure is to see that you have at last given a permanent home to the Nazard, Tierce de Nazard, and Quarte de Nazard (Piccolo 2ft. And Tierce 1 $\frac{3}{5}$)’.³⁵ The emphasis on the mutation ranks, the first examples in England, suggests the importance attached to these ranks.

In achieving these aims, much pipework of the old Bishop organ was incorporated, yet Willis’s reconstruction left no material untouched. The organ was to all intents and purposes a new instrument. Indeed in a letter to Fr. Crofton dated 7 April 1927, Willis stated that additional work, not mentioned in the contract, had been carried out and asked if the church would be willing to contribute financially to this:

For the perfecting of the scheme, which has amounted to providing ‘practically a new organ’ as you know the following additional works were carried out: -
Swell Piccolo 2 turned into 1 £10
New concussion valve to choir with ‘cut off’ for use with tremolo £25
Super Octave 4 £60 [Great?]
Octave Flute 4 £60 [Great?]
Revoicing of practically the whole of the old stops to bring them into correct proportion £75
Total £230

The need for a new instrument displaying new aesthetics of design was emphasized by both men, Willis and Weitz, in greater terms within the pages of *The Rotunda*. Willis referred to

³⁴ Weitz to Willis, 31 March 1926. Willis Archives, Farm Street, Ln F3, No 1.

³⁵ Henry Willis, ‘A “Model” Organ’, *The Rotunda*, 2 (March 1929), 4.

For some further views on mutations by Weitz see, Guy Weitz, ‘On Mutations and their Use’, *The Rotunda*, 2 (March 1929), 12-16.

the organ in his article entitled 'A Model Organ' in which he set about describing the essential features of a three-manual instrument. His description is based around his thesis that an organ should play 'all true *organ* music [...] from the classical to the modern'.³⁶ He thus excluded orchestral transcriptions. Willis does not mention the specific relationship between his ideal organ and its repertoire but he does state the importance of mutations in relation to old music. He warned his readers that before they give priority to the 'indispensable' clarinet, they should note the importance of mutations for specific areas of the repertoire:

The mutations – Nazard and Tierce – were absolutely essential [...] coming before the erstwhile "indispensable" Clarinet. Before readers disagree, I want them to bear in mind that the sixteenth century writers had their Mutations and wrote for them so that their music cannot be satisfactorily rendered without them.³⁷

Presumably Willis also thought that the mutations could be used in registering Bach's music.

Willis therefore created an instrument which claimed to have some connections with the organ's repertoire through some of the specific sounds provided.

³⁶ Ibid., 3.

³⁷ Ibid., 3.

Farm Street, London (1926)

<i>Pedal</i>		<i>Choir (enclosed)</i>	
C-g1		Flute Harmonique	8
Resultant Bass	32	Viola	8
Open Bass	16 A	Saxophone	8
Open Diapason	16 B	Dulciana	8
Sub Bass	16 C	Flauto Traverso	4
Bourdon	16	Nazard	2 ² / ₃
Octave	8 B	Piccolo	2
Flute	8 C	Tierce	1 ³ / ₅
Superoctave	4 B	Clarinet	8
Octave Flute	4 C	Tremolo	
Trombone	16 D	Tuba Minor	8
Tromba	8 D		
 <i>Great</i>		 <i>Swell (enclosed)</i>	
Double Open Diapason	16	Lieblich Bourdon	16
Bourdon	16 B	Geigen Diapason	8
Open Diapason I	8	Rohr Flote	8
Open Diapason II	8	Spitz Flote	8
Clarabella	8	Echo Viole	8
Stopped Diapason	8	Voix Celeste	8
Principal	4	Octave Geigen	4
Flute Octaviant	4	Flute a Echo	4
Fifteenth	2	Piccolo	1
Mixture 17 19 22	III	Plein Jeu 15 19 22	III
Sharp Mixture 22 24 26	III	Waldhorn	16
Trompette Harmonique	8	Trumpet	8
Clarion	4	Oboe	8
		Clarion	4
		Tremolo	

Weitz was particularly keen to emphasise how the organ challenged the previous assumption that modern organs were a *de facto* improvement on previous instruments. He published some thoughts in an article entitled 'On mutations and their use' in *The Rotunda* in 1929. At the heart of Weitz's views is the belief that the passing of time did not necessarily bring about a more valid approach to organ building. He equated this with art in general:

Greatness, in art, has a meaning which seems to be lost to the modern world [...] In order to be sensational, everything must be big. We are invited to hear the biggest chorus, the largest orchestra and so on. As if beauty had anything to do

with that! [...] Is there not more greatness in a choral by Franck, a Beethoven quartet, a partita of Bach than in the 'big' works of Berlioz?³⁸

It may be a leap of faith to suggest that Weitz subscribed to the view held by some modernists that 'modernism' survived at various times throughout history, but it is clear that he was adamant that notions of 'progress' had to be challenged. His comments could quite easily be applied to the history of European organ building.

According to Weitz, challenging notions of 'progress' creates a framework in which 'we can see the defects of so many organs'. By accepting that earlier organs had worthy features, Weitz identified some problems with modern organs. These instruments were marked by several deficiencies: 'an all-too-powerful Great, a rich swell, a Pedal overloaded with 16 foot pipes, and a Choir without life in it'.

In referring to earlier instruments, Weitz stipulated that modern organs had to be based around a principle of *balance* in which various worthy features were accommodated so that all played a vital part in the overall design. He equated this concept with the instruments found in an orchestra: 'Just as an orchestra [...] requires an exact proportion of strings, brass and woodwind, so the organ should have each manual provided with a well-balanced proportion of Flutes, Diapasons, Gambas, with Mixtures and Plein Jeu, reeds of various character, and last but not least, Mutations.' This concept was incompatible with contemporary English building in which there was a desire for mass foundation tone at the expense of brilliance.

The Farm Street organ's main features – mutations, the provision of two choruses, the absence of mass unison tone on the Great and Pedal – thus saw a return to earlier practices. Unfortunately Weitz made no detailed links between the organ and earlier models but through some brief comments it is plausible that he had some historical organs in mind when he collaborated with Willis over the Farm Street instrument. Weitz's interest in eighteenth-century organs and their relevance for contemporary building becomes even more interesting when he

³⁸ Guy Weitz, 'On mutations and their use', *The Rotunda*, 2 (March 1929), all at 12.

discusses registrations for selected pieces from the organist's repertoire. In his 1929 article Weitz discussed the way in which mutations ranks were essential in the music of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French composers. He dedicated an entire article to the function of mutations. He emphasised the importance of these ranks balancing other stops required for certain styles of music. He quoted an example from Clerambault and stated 'predecessors of Bach were very keen in making the Cornet converse either with the "Cromorne" or the Trumpet'.³⁹ He gave the example of how mutations could be used in Bach's *Wenn wir in hochsten Nothen sein* and the E flat Prelude BWV 552.

Whilst mutation ranks were connected with early music, they were also perceived as modern tone colours. It is not certain where Willis received the inspiration to build these ranks, but Weitz suggests that the builder was influenced by the practices of Cavaillé-Coll even if Willis chose not to copy the ranks exactly: 'in spite of his admiration for the renowned Cavaillé-Coll, Mr Willis had chosen not to follow the French master in the construction of Mutation stops'. Instead Weitz suggests that Willis had improved upon the practices of the late master claiming that 'there is room for progress and improvement everywhere'. The construction of these ranks differed from the material used by Cavaillé-Coll and that was perceived as an advantage: 'Mr Willis [...] has proved that ever more piquancy and élan result from the Nazard and Tierce in the shape of Bourdon or closed Flutes.' The ranks were therefore voiced so that they would provide delicate colour and thus stood somewhat apart from the examples with which Weitz was familiar in France and Belgium.

But it soon emerges, however, that the mutations were far removed from anything historical. With their soft delicate voicing, mutation ranks provided an additional colour to the organ, one that would combine with various 8-foot registers to change the colour of the fundamental stop. Weitz states that the stops were voiced 'to effect a "mutation" [...] in the *timbre*

³⁹ Weitz, 'Mutations', 16.

of a Flute or a Gamba without themselves being predominant'.⁴⁰ He admitted that voicing these ranks so that they do not stand out of the texture but still colour the stops used was difficult but 'the way in which Mr Willis has resolved this difficult problem in the Farm Street organ wins the admiration of the most exacting critics'.⁴¹ Mutations were thus perceived as necessary tools – possibly even scientific – which provided the *pitch* and elements of the colour requested by certain repertoires.

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FARM STREET CHURCH (GROSVENOR SQUARE), MAYFAIR, W.1

Three Fortnightly Historical Organ Recitals
on the Organ now rebuilt and completed by Messrs. Henry Willis & Son, Ltd.
will be given by
Mr. GUY WEITZ, C.O.C.
Organist of Farm Street Church, and hon.-organist to His Eminence
Cardinal Bourne, at the grand organ, Westminster Cathedral

on FEBRUARY the 3rd, and the 17th, and MARCH the 3rd, at 6-30 p.m.

1st Recital	2nd Recital	3rd Recital
<p>1. CANZONA Gabrieli, 1510-85 PAVANE Byrd, 1538-1623 EXSULTET CÆLUM Titelouze, 1563-1633 CHORALE Scheidt, 1587-1654 CHORALE Buxtehude, 1637-1707 CHACONNE Pachelbel, 1653-1706 MUSETTE Dandrieu, 1684-1740 DIALOGUE Clérambault, 1676 * * *</p> <p>2. PASSACAGLIA AND FUGUE J. S. Bach, 1685-1750</p> <p>3. THREE CHORALE PRELUDES: a Nun Kamm der Heider Heiland b Herzlich thut mich Verlangen c Schmücke dich, O Liebe Seele J. S. Bach, " "</p> <p>4. TOCCATA AND FUGUE IN D MINOR J. S. Bach, " "</p>	<p>1. FUGUE IN E FLAT J. S. Bach 2. SONATA No. VI. Mendelssohn 3. FANTASIA AND FUGUE ON B.A.C.H. Liszt * * *</p> <p>4. PRIÈRE César Franck 5. FINALE IN B FLAT...César Franck</p>	<p>1. CHORALE, No. III. César Franck 2. FOURTH MOVEMENT FROM SYMPHONY No. VI. C. M. Widor 3. ANDANTE CANTABILE FROM SYM- PHONY No. IV. C. M. Widor 4. FIRST MOVEMENT FROM FIRST SYM- PHONY Gailmard * * *</p> <p>5. CHORAL PRELUDE ("Rhosymedre") Vaughan Williams 6. RHAPSODY Weitz 7. PRELUDE AND FINALE FROM FIFTH SYMPHONY Vierne</p>

Fig. 1 Advertisement for Guy Weitz's recitals at Farm Street Church.⁴²

Consequently, when those who were dissatisfied with the English organ searched for a new style, the Farm Street organ provided a focal point with which they could associate themselves. According to John Beaumont, organist of St Thomas's Wordsworth, the Farm Street

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *MO*, 77 (February 1927). 506.

organ marked a significant departure from current trends in organ building. He went as far as suggesting that the instrument's tonal scheme and voicing represented the beginning of a recovery from the defects of English organ building which he perceived to be present in thick diapason and reed tone:

We are now on the way to recover from a period when the organ was becoming a magnaton, a diaphone or what you please, but was almost ceasing to be recognisable as that which has always been known as an organ. The idea was, apparently, that heavy pressure reeds were having it too much their own way, and that larger and yet larger foundation tone was needed to cope with them. As if any instrument could be musical in which it was an essential of the design that one part should cope with another! The result was that we had blocks of lumbering, dead diapasons tone standing up against thick, close-toned adenoid reeds with little or nothing in between; because anything that would normally come there in an organ would have been entirely unbearable in this kind of machine. An exaggeration! It may be said. Perhaps, but not a caricature. There really have been quite a number of organs built on these lines in the last twenty-five years on which it is impossible to play adequately anything except a hymn tune.⁴³

However, the Farm Street organ, with its rejection of the features which Beaumont mentions, enabled the player to perform more than just a hymn: 'on the Farm Street organ one can play any kind of music, from pre-Bach to jazz; and though the last has not yet found a place in the recital programmes, every kind of music has'.⁴⁴ He was obviously referring to Weitz's recital programmes.

Beaumont justified the contention that the organ could render a wide range of styles with reference to the versatility provided by the mutations. He gave some stop combinations which showed how these ranks could be used in performances of modern and old music. He states that 'Tierce and viola, flute harmonique and nazard, saxophone and nazard, – the combinations are inimitable and irresistible. For Bach Chorale-Preludes and Sonatas, for French organ music (ancient and modern), these separate mutation ranks are essential to the kind of tone intended.'

The significance of the mutations in the tonal scheme combined with a renewed interest in the organ's chorus structure to produce a *classical* organ, a term which began to be thrown

⁴³ J. A. G. Beaumont, 'The Organ in Farm Street Church, Mayfair', *The Organ*, 6 (April 1927), 208-209.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, all at 209.

around in the late 1920s: ‘as a truly classical organ, it should stand as another and important signpost marking the way back to the high road of organ tradition’. Beaumont’s rhetoric suggests that ‘classical’ is used to signify a ‘first rate’ criterion of which mutations and developed choruses are an integral aspect.

Beaumont’s use of the classical label was adopted by others who connected Willis’s classical schemes with historical organs in Holland and Germany, which were now being labelled as ‘classic’. Meyrick Roberts commented in September 1927 that:

The position of Willis tonal ideals in regard to the great classical organs of the past, such as were to be found in Holland and Germany, appears to the writer to be that he regarded them as standard tonal ideals which were the true and scientific basis of tonal up-building, and in accordance with which principles the tonal structure should be created. That in his large organs his harmonic schemes were based on the classical and (almost) prescribed forms of Continental organs is perfectly manifest and clear.⁴⁵

Roberts makes it clear that the connection is limited to specifications; there is no mention of other essential aspects of design such as the transmission between the pallet and key, layout, winding, and voicing technique – features mentioned by Dolmetsch. The use of the classical label is thus restricted to Willis’s specifications – mutations and choruses – which reflected some of the practices which contemporaries found agreeable on the Continent.

The linking of Willis’s organs with classical schemes was shared by others. In 1928 Sumner adopted a similar tone. He claimed that ‘A mutation section is a signpost on the often uncertain road of successful organ design,’ providing the necessary tone colours for a wide variety of music: ‘the mutation ranks pointed backwards to the pre-Bach music of Buxtehude and a host of others, and forward, to the extreme colour demanded by modern music and transcriptions’.⁴⁶ Sumner concluded that the Farm Street instrument was ‘one of the most notable of moderate-sized instruments, and infinitely more interesting than the majority of large ones [...] This

⁴⁵ R. Meyrick Roberts, ‘French and English Tonal Ideals’, *The Rotunda*, 2 (September 1927), 16.

⁴⁶ Sumner, ‘Mutations and Mixtures’, *The Rotunda*, 2 (September 1928), 30.

instrument represents a landmark in English organ building.⁴⁷ He admitted that the organ was a modern English instrument which made some references to a previous aesthetic: 'It is essentially an English organ controlled by the most up-to-date Willis console (which is saying a good deal), and yet, the old French influence is apparent.'⁴⁸

Sumner's admiration for the organ was shared by Clutton who noted the relationship between the mutations and early and modern music. He was adamant that 'excellent examples of Mutations which can be used either as 'synthetics' or in the classical sense, are to be found at [...] Farm Street Church, Mayfair'.⁴⁹ This led him to celebrate Willis's achievements:

For broadness of outlook Mr Willis's example is not to be lightly disregarded, for perhaps he is acquainted with more foreign organs and styles of organ designs than any other living builder. If it were not for this he could not possibly have produced such a design as that for the Jesuit Church at Farm Street, and if this gem among organs had never been built how greatly would organ lovers have been the losers!⁵⁰

In his book, *The British Organ* (1963), Clutton claimed that the instrument 'showed the way to an improved classical taste'.⁵¹

Clutton's comments emanate from someone who had first-hand knowledge of this instrument. Writing in 1976 he noted the organ's impact on his future understanding of organ design, but noted especially the contribution made by Weitz's playing:

Here, for the first time, in 1927, I heard solo mutations used in a classical style and here for the first time I heard a Bach fugue played from beginning to end on full to mixtures without any change of registration. At once the accumulation of the part-writing leading up to a climax inherent in the music could be appreciated, in a way that had been impossible when the music was cluttered up with irrelevant stop changes and an equally irrelevant climax of intolerable noise. The impact on me at any rate was immense and colored [sic] all my subsequent ideas on organ tone and design and musical performance.⁵²

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 29.

⁴⁹ Cecil Clutton, 'The Eighteenth Century French and German Organ', *The Rotunda*, 4 (March 1933), 43.

⁵⁰ Cecil Clutton, 'An Introduction to The Study of Tonal Design', *The Rotunda*, 3 (September 1930), 23-26.

⁵¹ Clutton, and Niland, *British Organ*, 112.

⁵² Cecil Clutton, 'The British Organ 1925-1975', 22. When I first came to London to earn my living in 1927, Weitz's playing and the Farm Street organ were something totally new and inspiring. Here, for the first time, I heard the classical use of solo mutations and a Bach fugue (the G minor, as I well remember) played from beginning to end on Full to Mixtures, with no change of registration.

This passage vindicates his earlier assessment of the organ as a significant landmark, but the absence of any mention of Willis may indicate that Clutton had some doubts regarding whether Willis should reap all credit for this instrument. In fact, in 1980, Clutton attributed the organ's success to Weitz: 'When the organ came to be rebuilt in 1926 he [Weitz] was able to bring out the best of Willis's somewhat mixed potential, to produce what was a unique organ at the time, and which I believe will increasingly be seen as one of great historical and musical importance.'⁵³ He further remarked on how 'Great full to Mixtures is both clear and rich in sound' and 'the Swell flue chorus, by contrast, has a degree of sharpness that goes far to compensate for its enclosure [...] if critically analysed the organ is seen to be very much an English organ of the 1850s'.⁵⁴ Regardless of who should receive Clutton's praise – Willis, Weitz, or perhaps both, the instrument was perceived as marking a significant change in the aesthetics governing the English organ.

If we accept that one of the responses to modernity was a challenge to 'progress', an interest in earlier forms of repertoire and its interpretation, then some direct links may be seen with Willis's and Weitz's work at Farm Street, London. There was an emerging aesthetic that instruments had to show some sympathy with the premises of a historically contingent practice of organ building that produced works of a particular kind. It was not about producing a 'Bach' organ. Rather, it was the absorption of historical theories governing what were considered to be the basic principles of organ design that were beginning to come to the focus of attention. Thus at Farm Street we see the idea of chorus structure, mutations, and more balanced divisions emerging. That these features only paid lip service to their original models, and survived with an electro-pneumatic action, demonstrates the limits of Willis's readiness to embrace, and perhaps understand, these historical principles of construction.

⁵³ Cecil Clutton, 'Recent work on famous organs, Jesuit Church, Farm Street', *Organists' Review*, 65 (1980), 15.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 16

Chapter 4

Faltering reforms, 1928-1945

In October 1933 Archibald Farmer (1899-1964), organist, critic, and founder of the Organ Music Society, an organization which promoted performances of real organ music, published his thoughts on the burgeoning interest in early music. His article, published in *Music & Letters*, a journal which participated in the ‘institutionalization of the modernist musical discourse’,¹ comprises the following remarks:

There has been a swelling tide of re-publications, more and more faithful to the spirit of the originals; a searching of texts and books for the right tradition of performance; and (in Germany at least) a resurrection in modern terms of the pre-nineteenth century baroque organ to play it on-an instrument that is objective rather than subjective and expressive, a less boisterous creature, lighter and clearer in tone, more sparkling as well as more tender in colouring. We need all such conditions before the music of these ages can be fully appreciated.²

Farmer’s comments succinctly summarize the opinions of many of his generation. He states that the period witnessed a surge of interest in creating Urtext editions; that there was a need to discover how a work was originally performed; and that these practices were contemporary with an organ movement in Germany in the 1920s – the *Orgelbewegung* – which sought a renewed approach to organ building with reference to the extant organs of what he termed the baroque period. Encouraged by these developments in Germany, desire for change – organs with a new tonal scheme, more performances of real organ music, greater public appreciation for the organ – reached musicians with increasing momentum.

Whilst there is no doubt that political and musical developments in Germany increased momentum for reform in Britain, a close examination reveals a very broad range of views which sometimes contain contradictions and limited understanding within a broader musical context.

¹ Peter Franklin, ‘Between the wars: traditions, modernisms, and the ‘little people from the suburbs’’, in Nicholas Cook and Anthony Pople (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Music* (Cambridge, 2004), 190.

² Archibald Farmer, ‘An Introduction to Organ Music’, *Music & Letters*, 14 (October 1933), 335.

For example, Farmer's understanding of baroque organs and the German reform movement, like several other figures', was limited; there is no evidence that by 1933 he had first-hand knowledge of these reform concepts. Discussions of reform were, therefore, limited to specifications with little mention of the other important aspects of design – layout, action. Neither did everyone want to overturn the Edwardian organ with something new. In the same year as his article in *Music and Letters*, Farmer wrote sympathetically about the recently completed organ project in the Royal Albert Hall, an instrument which espoused very different aesthetics to those baroque organs mentioned in *M&L*.³ This sympathy for English instruments seems to be supported by Farmer's assertion that 'we lead the world in organ-building', and that the organ's general development over the previous fifty years was 'touching its apogee'.⁴ This all stresses the need to avoid placing organists, especially during this period when political overtones can confuse the picture, in the 'Baroque' and 'Romantic' camps.

To demonstrate the range of views, a nuanced survey of this increasingly dynamic and political period will: (1) acknowledge the advocacy of the progressive Edwardian instrument, a discourse which despite interest in the pre-1870 organ, survived throughout the period; (2) account for the establishment of the Organ Music Society in 1931; (3) acknowledge the arrival of news of the German reform movement; and (4) assess its effects upon the Organ Music Society, Susi Jeans, Willis III and other figures. The central claim is that an increasing interest in early music and by implication early English organs, and a desire to promote real organ music, led to dissatisfaction with English aesthetics of design. Yet the strength of the discourses surrounding the progressive organ, and a lack of substantial knowledge, meant that many, whilst acknowledging the supposed benefits of baroque features, thought that these could only be grafted to existing

³ Farmer stated that it was 'a fine organ, so certain and so regular in speech, so vast in range and yet so malleable, almost spoils one for enjoying other instruments.' See Archibald Farmer, 'Organ Recital Notes', *MT*, 75 (April 1934), 351.

⁴ Archibald Farmer, 'The Future of the Organ Recital', *MT*, 71 (October 1930), 923.

aesthetics of design. In terms of organ building there was little advance on Willis's project at Farm Street, but in the field of performance there was increasing desire to imitate old organs.

English supremacy

Echoes of the progressive organ together with its associated themes – the high office of organist, its suitable medium for J. S. Bach's works – continue to be at the centre of commonly aired questions about the instrument in the 1930s. Finding celebratory or defensive views of English builders is not difficult. In 1931 George Austin, sometime organist of the Empire Church, Lancaster Gate, responded quite forcefully to a suggestion that English organ builders were not the leaders in their field: 'I, for one, still have confidence in the abilities of our fine old firms of Walker, Willis, Harrison, and Hill to maintain our English supremacy.'⁵

Such views are more than occasional outbursts of national pride: they are frequently found in the musical press, particularly from significant persons connected with the Royal College of Organists. Sir Ivor Atkins (1869-1953), President of the RCO (1935-6), positively commented on the general character of English organs. In an address given at an RCO diploma day on 19 January 1935 he stated that 'English organs are a glory to this country, and the man who ceases to be thrilled by such masterpieces of tone and construction must have lost much of his power of reacting to beauty, and indeed a great deal of the zest of life.'⁶ Atkins does not mention any contemporary events so it is difficult to say whether he was reacting to contemporaneous musical happenings, but his comments continue sentiments previously expressed by Gray and Richards. This is not to say that supporters of English organ culture did not advance any reservations. In his speech, subtitled *the organist as musician*, Atkins acknowledged some of the problems associated with the organists' somewhat limited repertoire: the 'amount of first-rate organ music – that is,

⁵ George Austin, 'England Does Not Lead in Organ Building', *MT*, 72 (February 1931), 160.

⁶ Ivor Atkins, 'Distribution of Diplomas, January 1935', *MT*, 76 (March 1935), all at 236. Atkins was Organist and Choirmaster of Worcester Cathedral for over 50 years (1897-1950).

music which will take its place with the great works which have been written for the piano and other instruments, and for the orchestra – is, after all, inconsiderable'. He thus agreed with sentiments expressed by Harvey Grace in the 1920s.

The authority of the Edwardian organ becomes even stronger when the author links it to the perception of the organist as a significant figure. Despite the paucity of a large corpus of worthy works, Atkins complimented the beauty of English organs and linked this with the utilitarian aspect of the organist, echoing the thoughts of Hubert Parry: Atkins had no doubt 'that the organist of to-day can be, as he certainly has been in the past, possibly the most useful worker in the field of music in England'. It is not difficult to find examples of this discourse. Edward Bairstow (1874-1946), later knighted, stated in 1929: 'We organists are the teachers, and general practitioners of music [...] People watch us and take their cue from us. It is upon us that the responsibility for the future largely rests.'⁷

But opinions on the contemporary organ were far more complicated than Atkins's comments might lead us to believe. Some were ready to challenge English supremacy. In an article published in November 1930, Clutton complained about the contemporary organ, advancing the thesis that despite all the advances made in the nineteenth century, builders had not 'advanced on Müller's masterpiece at Haarlem'.⁸ The point is not that the future lay in copying extant historic instruments like Haarlem, but that Clutton thought that despite larger organs with ingenious technological features and vast arrays of tonal colours, very little had been achieved since Müller's time. This was a significant challenge to opinions held by figures such as Atkins. Clutton gave his criticisms further weight by expressing distaste for the way organists used English instruments to play Bach: 'It is when efforts are made by misguided people to render Bach in a "sympathetic manner" that complete disaster occurs.' He does not expand on this but his earlier comments on hearing Weitz play preludes and fugues with no changes of registration suggests that

⁷ Edward Bairstow, quoted in Anon., 'Church and Organ Music. Royal College of Organists', *MT*, 70 (February 1929), 143.

⁸ Cecil Clutton, 'The Cinema Organ', *MO*, 54 (November 1930), all at 150.

Clutton was against the playing of Bach using swell expression and other similar effects. And if these effects were not necessary for Bach's music, then they no longer were coupled to music which many musicians valued: tubas, octave couplers etc. lost some of their value.

Such a disengagement from the sentiments expressed by Atkins finds sympathy with a view in which old English organs surpassed their modern counterparts in the value they gave old repertoires. The late 1920s and early '30s witnessed continued interest in instruments which predated the nineteenth-century innovations. Some commentators used their observations to show how these sounds could be incorporated in modern instruments. Nothing as significant as Gray's proposal to oppose equal with unequal temperament occurred, but old sounds were thought worthy of inclusion in modern schemes. Others went further, perhaps in response to increasing general interest in period instruments, and considered how particular repertoire suited these old instruments.

That musicians became increasingly fascinated by these old organs is clear. Gilbert Benham, for example, an organist who wrote frequently in *The Organ*, noted the Hill organ at St Mary-at-Hill and its debt to an eighteenth-century aesthetic. In 1930 he stated: 'I was much impressed with the beautiful tone of the old diapasons, which for gentleness and sweetness I have not heard surpassed.'⁹ He attributed this to the organ's low wind pressure voicing. But his observations become far more interesting when he examines modern building:

Their musical quality might well be copied to-day, if only for one stop in a moderate size scheme. It seems quite clear that, directly we increase the power, away goes the "bloom". Thinking thus, I rarely hear a diapason on 6ins wind with a tone as musical as the same stop on 3in. or 4in. These old diapasons are most even in tone and power, with normal trebles and basses.

⁹ Gilbert Benham, 'The Old-World Organ, St Mary-at-Hill', *MO*, 54 (October 1930), all at 51.

In an article on the instrument in Christ Church, Newgate Street he commented on the superior work of old organ builders: 'considering its age and wind pressure (including action!) of only 3½ in., it is undoubtedly far above the average, surpassing much modern work'.¹⁰

But admiration for these instruments was tamed by the perception that they were unsuited to the organ's contemporary requirements: old instruments were still viewed as primitive. In an article exploring the organ in Hampton Court Palace, Benham admitted that the diapasons were too mild for modern use but 'might not these flutes be reproduced to-day? Their blending properties are unlimited: a feature not universal at the present time.'¹¹ Presumably Benham was referring to some of the organ's liturgical requirements and its requirement to play modern repertoire. So for Benham, the eighteenth-century organ could inform contemporary organ building, but was unsuitable for every-day use. He therefore locks himself to the view, along similar lines to Atkins, that organists required an organ built along modern lines.

Some comments, however, are revealing of more than simple fascination with eighteenth-century organs: old instruments had an educative function to perform. It was already noted how Pearce showed some reluctance in accepting contemporary organs. In 1928, within the pages of the *Musical Opinion*, he called for the preservation of an old organ by appealing to the educative role which it could fulfil. According to Pearce, such instruments gave students first-hand experience of past forms of organ building:

The younger organists of to-day often experience some difficulty in grasping the real meaning of obsolete terms, &c., which they constantly meet with when studying the history of English organ building. Such a difficulty could easily be surmounted were access possible to some well preserved specimen of the *ancien regime* which would demonstrate to sight, hearing, and touch, the real meaning of such old-fashioned terms as 'GG short octave range,' 'pull down' pedal board, a

¹⁰ _____, 'The Old-World Organ, Christ Church, Newgate Street', *MO*, 54 (June 1931), 805. Such views are to be found throughout the period under examination 1928-1945. For example, Laurence Elvin, in referring to an organ built by William Allen in the early 1800s for All Saints Wragby, Lincolnshire commented in 1940: 'The tone of the organ is delightfully old world; the wind pressure probably is no more than 2in. or 2.5 in., and the pipes just breathe, producing a tone which for gentleness and sweetness would be difficult to surpass [...] The tone [of the diapason] is of a bright, singing quality, and the power is slight; altogether it is a charming little stop of which one never tires.... This little chorus abounds in life and sparkle, and should certainly be preserved as an example of the tone of the period.' Laurence Elvin, 'An Old World Organ', *MO*, 63 (July 1940), 456.

¹¹ Gilbert Benham 'The Old-World Organ, Hampton Court Palace, HH Chapel Royal', *MO*, 55 (January 1932), 47.

‘fiddle G nag’s head swell,’ or even (in days to come) an organ ‘blown by hand’. How many young people would like to hear what the following old stops sounded like: cornet V ranks, a real olden-time sesquialtera or mixture, diapasons, flutes, and eighteenth century reeds all on a light wind pressure.¹²

Of more lasting importance and of more interest here was Pearce’s opinion that such an instrument invested performances of contemporary repertoire with greater value:

And how delightful it might be to hear played upon such an old organ (without pedals) music *as written* for it by such composers as Stanley, Arne, Russell, Dupuis, old Samuel Wesley, or even Handel himself! As time rolls swiftly on, it may become increasingly difficult to secure an organ of this kind for purposes of illustrative demonstration.

It is thus reasonable to suppose that for Pearce the solution to what he perceived as England’s organ problem lay in asserting the value of the design, tonal scheme, and action of old organs.

The conviction that products of a distant culture – seventeenth and eighteenth-century organs – could provide aesthetic fulfilment was shared by others; they perceived these instruments as indispensable in reviving past repertoires of music. In 1933 an anonymous article appeared in *The Times* lamenting the destruction of old organs:

If just one organ by Father Smith, Renatus Harris or the later Dallams had survived in its original state, what might have been done with it for the revival of the musical traditions of Purcell, Blow, and Croft! It never occurred to anyone installing a new cathedral organ to put the old one aside in a disused transept as a memorial of its era.¹³

The article is important for it reveals not only a desire to hear old English organs built by Bernard Smith (c1630-1708), Renatus Harris (1652?-1724), and Robert Dallam (c1602-1665) but the wish to revive neglected repertoires using these organs. Its implied comparison with modern organs perhaps hints at the author’s distaste for these instruments; its direct reference to old eighteenth-century composers makes it clear that there was growing interest in this music and that this revival was thought to be aided by old organs. To Pearce and the anonymous author, then, old instruments were more than simple objects of curiosity. Commentaries such as these amply support the idea that these instruments were not forgotten and were very much viewed as

¹² Charles Pearce, ‘An old city church organ which deserves preservation’, *MO*, 51 (March 1928), all at 617.

¹³ Anon., [Leader], *The Times* (9 June 1933), quoted in Bernard Edmonds, ‘Queries and Notes’, *BIOGR*, 25 (April 2001), 25.

having educative roles informing contemporary organ building and, most importantly, providing a suitable medium for earlier repertoires.

Organ Music Society, 1930-1931

Growing interest in old instruments and the insights they gave performances paralleled a greater interest in promoting real organ music of all periods. One of the most significant proponents in this area was Archibald Farmer, a practitioner who held a number of church appointments and 'devoted most of his life to the organ' (*The Musical Times*).¹⁴ He founded the Karg-Elert Festival of 1930, a most adventurous project, and, most importantly, created the Organ Music Society the following year.¹⁵ This society was created with the intention of providing a forum for performances of real organ music as opposed to orchestral transcriptions. It was thus born out of the concerns expressed in the pre-war period by many musicians who lamented the proliferation of what they termed inartistic organ recitals. Just as they sought a renewed interest in the organ, so too Farmer believed that the Organ Music Society would help gain a wider audience for the organ.

Despite acting as an ambassador for English organ builders, Farmer was frustrated with the fact that no major school of organ composition had emerged, and was not afraid to voice his concerns in a forthright manner. In 1930 he maintained that 'the English led the world in organ-building',¹⁶ yet lamented that they 'have never produced a great organ composer' and that the organ was still to experience a 'Golden Age'. His last claim is significant. Whilst he fails to compare the organ to any other musical instrument which had or was experiencing a 'golden age', he shows that organ building and organ composition are related in that a golden age can only result when both arts are perfected. Thus by implication, even the works of Bach, which Farmer

¹⁴ Anon., 'Archibald Farmer', *MT*, 105 (April 1964), 291.

¹⁵ The Karg-Elert Festival consisted of 10 recitals which took place in London churches.

¹⁶ Farmer, 'Future of Organ Recital', all at 923.

considered essential to the organist's repertoire (see below), do not form a golden age since the organs known to Bach were still considered primitive.

Whilst the absence of a modern school of organ composition frustrated Farmer, his main concern was the lack of artistic organ recitals. He thought that organ recitals were plagued by orchestral transcriptions, something which divorced the organ from its literature. In a review of Goss Custard's recital at the Alexandra Palace on 11 January 1931, Farmer could not hide his dissatisfaction with the music programme:

There was Handel's Largo, and the 'Unfinished' Symphony (first movement), and the 'Entrance of the Gods into Walhalla,' and the 'Ride of the Valkyries,' and 'Finlandia.' One piece of organ music – the G minor [Bach?]; two, if we count 'Chelsea Fayre.' And at the end, a promise to repeat 'The Storm' at an early date, and an announcement of 'an entire Tchaikovsky programme.'¹⁷

Farmer's impatience with the recital must be treated with caution as it is simply not true that all recitals featured music of the kind which he describes in his review. One only has to recall the recital programmes mentioned in Eaglefield-Hull's book to see that transcriptions did not form the staple diet for *all* organists.¹⁸ Nevertheless Farmer's complaints must be seen alongside those put forward by Harvey Grace over ten years previously who voiced similar concerns.

At the heart of this debate was a concern over the supposed suppression of organ music which resulted in inferior organ recitals. Farmer's only solution, 'the only eligible proof' of the organ's status, was a renewed interest in the organ recital. But once again Farmer reiterated his claim that 'the organ recital is often a matter, not for pride, but for apology'. What is significant here is that Farmer does not mention the church's role in promoting the instrument. It seems that Farmer saw the organ recital as more influential.

¹⁷ Anon., 'Organ Recital Notes', *MT*, 72 (February 1931), 141.

¹⁸ Eaglefield-Hull, *Organ playing: its technique and expression*.

It was within this framework that Farmer formed the Organ Music Society. In January 1931, Farmer announced a recital to be given by Caleb Henry Trevor (1895-1976), a distinguished organist and teacher, at which plans would be made for establishing said society:

Your readers will remember that a Society [...] has been proposed, with the object of promoting an annual series of organ recitals in London. As a step towards this, Mr. C. H. Trevor has kindly consented to give a preliminary recital at St. Peter's, Eaton Square, [...] At the close of the recital a meeting will be held in the vestry in order to form, if possible, some such organization. Both recital and meeting will be entirely open to the public; and it is hoped that everyone, whether player or listener, who has the cause of organ music at heart, will understand the urgency of attending.¹⁹

Trevor's recital on 10 February included:

<i>Passacaglia in D minor</i>	Buxtehude
<i>Trio in F</i>	Krebs
<i>Fugue in G minor</i> [sic]	Frescobaldi
<i>Claire de lune, Impromptu</i>	Vierne
Four Preludes	Boelly
<i>Prelude and fugue in C major</i>	J. S. Bach
<i>leyl, Last Journey, Hyperbole</i>	Karg-Elert
'Finale', <i>Sonata in F sharp</i>	Reinberger

The society was formed on 5 May 1931 at the church of St Mary, Aldermary, EC where Archibald Farmer gave its first recital. An early prospectus of the Organ Music Society stated that it existed 'for the single purpose of promoting organ recitals of the finest kind'.²⁰

This reassessment of the role of real organ music gave further weight to what would later become known as 'performance practice'. In a review of a concert by Trevor in February 1932, Farmer equated a particular 'gapped' registration (8+2 or 8+2²/₃), with the supposed practices of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century organists: 'Trevor had the courage to begin on an 8-ft. Diapason with the Twelfth – I leave it for the opponents and exponents of the baroque in

¹⁹ Archibald Farmer, 'The Friends of Organ Music', *MT*, 72 (January 1931), 65. Trevor's posts included organist of St Paul's Cathedral, Calcutta, sub-organist of Wells Cathedral, Director of Music at Sherborne School, Organist of St Peter's, Eaton Square; he was also professor of organ at the RAM. See Anon., 'Caleb Henry Trevor', *MT*, 117 (August 1976), 680.

²⁰ Quoted in *Organ Music Society* [pamphlet] (5 May 1931), Royal College of Organists archives, Organ Music Society.

registration to fight over.’²¹ His rhetoric suggests that he was curious about this novel registration, perhaps inviting responses from his readers. The gapped registration was linked with contemporary German practices and whilst ‘there are not many people in this country who have seen its possibilities [...] it sheds a new light on much old music that has seemed obscure’. Such sentiments reveal that knowledge of the *Orgelbewegung* was beginning to filter through and leads to a necessary examination of English reactions to recent German events.

‘This Baroque Business’, 1932-1934

The increasing attention to the organ’s repertoire, and interest in performance practice, combined with a new force, the German *Orgelbewegung*, to encourage musicians and organ builders to consider whether the English organ should adhere to previous aesthetics or embrace a more cosmopolitan view. News of the German organ reform movement appeared in English journals from the early 1930s. Farmer noted the presence of this new aesthetic in his *Music & letters* article published in 1933. Hans Steinmeyer, a significant German organ builder, published an appreciative account of the *Orgelbewegung* in 1934 within the pages of *The Rotunda*,²² but the most significant report appeared in December 1932 when Dr Bodo Ebhardt (1865-1945), an architectural historian, wrote an appreciative account of the recent musical developments in Germany. A study from a German perspective is beyond the scope of this work and as such only a summary of the movement’s features, as presented to an English audience, will be attempted.

²¹ ‘AF’ [Archibald Farmer], ‘Organ Recital Notes’, *MT*, 73 (March 1932), all at 250. Farmer’s curiosity or enthusiasm perhaps led him to a factual error. In the following issue of *MT* Trevor gave the actual registration which he used:

Great: Flutes 8.4. Twelfth.

Swell: Rohr Flote 8. Fifteenth 2.

Choir: Stopped Diapason 8. Piccolo 2.

All manuals coupled. Swell and Choir boxes open. See C. H. Trevor, ‘A Detail of Registration’, *MT*, 73 (April 1932), 355.

²² Hans Steinmeyer, ‘The Revival of the Praetorius and Bach Organ in Germany’, *The Rotunda*, 5 (September 1934), 40-44.

According to Ehardt the *Orgelbewegung* was a reaction to the decadent organ culture present in Germany until 1925:

It was precisely the progress of an organ of trivial type that brought in Germany a healthy reaction. Music-loving laymen, who in the nineteenth century were often inclined to neglect the organ, have been brought by the 'organ movement' of 1925 to realize that this instrument – properly constructed and played with imaginative feeling – offers infinite possibilities and deserves the name of 'King of Instruments.'²³

The movement drew its inspiration from eighteenth-century instruments, in particular those constructed by Arp Schnitger and Gottfried Silbermann:

This organ movement has readopted as its model the radiant beauty and strict forms of the old organs built before 1750. This organ [Jakobikirche] was highly regarded by Bach, and he would have been glad to have got the position of organist here. Since its rediscovery in 1925, and its successful restoration by Jahnn and Kemper, German organ builders have learned much from studying it. With it as a model, many new organs have been constructed in Altona, Langhorn, Hamburg, Eckernförde, East Prussia and even in Danzig: so that one may fairly term it *the* modern German organ. It is characterized by a striving for contrasted tone-colour groups, distributed among different manuals and built up on the ground tone and many different overtones.

Ehardt acknowledged that the movement reflected other cultural tendencies in Germany:

The return to the principles of the old builders, which began in 1925 (the rapidly spreading organ movement), has brought the realization that spirituality, freshness of contrasts and abstention from an expression of personal feelings constitute the very essence of the organ. The movement can perhaps be regarded as symbolic of the new spirit growing up in all strata of the German youth.

Finally Ehardt acknowledged that other countries took interest in these German developments:

Nor is Germany alone in this development. There is significance in the fact that the country has become the goal of groups of foreign youth, above all the English, who have discovered that the youth of the two lands can learn much from each other also in the field of music.

All of these claims are contestable and none (apart from the very broad facts) are self-evidently true. For example, Ehardt claims that the *Orgelbewegung* learnt much from the eighteenth-century instruments, yet he forgets to mention that mechanical-action, a vital part of these instruments, was displaced by electric action. Moreover, it is not difficult to hear some political

²³ Bodo Ehardt, 'The Organ in Germany' *MO*, 56 (December 1932), 243-244. The article also appeared in *MT*, 74 (August 1933), 729-731.

overtones in his comments, one which seems to link decadent organ culture with that of Weimar culture.

News of the German reforms encouraged debate about the English organ's within the *Musical Opinion* and *Musical Times*, but especially *The Rotunda*. Not only did commentators try to establish what was wrong with the English organ, but they tried to fix the values of a future instrument, which invariably preserved many features of the Edwardian organ, with some additional Continental features. The first cogent response came from Margaret Lewis (an organ student?) who in March 1932 – in *The Rotunda* – sought to depict contemporary English culture as decadent. In her article which began with an appreciative review of Marcel Dupré's concert at the Alexandra Palace, as rebuilt by Willis III in 1929, Lewis scorned much of contemporary English building. For her, England was beset by a 'paralysis' which she attributed 'to the influence of the "stuffy" voicing of the organs on which we English students are brought up, a stuffiness which is not only complacently tolerated, but which is even encouraged and demanded by the "Fixed Idea" brigade of professors and others'.²⁴ Even though names are (wisely) not provided, it is not difficult to guess that personalities connected with the Royal College of Organists – Richardson, Atkins – were the object of the admonition. For Lewis the future lay with re-establishing some of the principles of the so-called baroque organ. She proudly remarked on the reforms attempted: 'the nineteenth century style of organ is deservedly dying [...] in spite of the tenacious efforts of the Fixed Idea Brigade to hold it fast'. Lewis, like Sumner and Clutton, saw Willis's work as a possible answer to the English dilemma. She commented on the revival of mutations (as seen at Farm Street), pointing out that this was 'almost entirely due to the enterprise and perception of the present Mr Henry Willis'.

Lewis's critical remarks are interesting but require caution. First, it is not possible to establish who she was and whether she went on to hold any significant posts in the musical world.

²⁴ Margaret Lewis, 'The Idea Fixed (or from the Student's Viewpoint)', *The Rotunda*, 4 (March 1932), 32-35.

Second, and of greater importance, since her comments appeared in *The Rotunda*, and are heavily biased towards Willis, the historian must allow for a certain amount of collaboration between the two. Indeed one has to wonder whether the journal deliberately used a female student's name as a stick with which to beat the establishment mercilessly (it is worth remembering that this is the first article from a female student to advance such forthright opinions on organs). Regardless of the exact reliability of such comments, they become rather interesting in the way they demonstrate how politics could be found in the organ loft. The vocabulary used to convey Lewis' admiration for the German reforms may reveal more than just passing interest. She thought it a 'salutary move in the right direction, if only as a protest against the present tendency of some modern organ-builders'. Given the decade's high political tensions one is bound to wonder how far removed from this was the desire to solve the Great Depression through a new regime.

On occasions, talk of reform in England was directly linked to the rise of National Socialism. In 1933 an article, entitled 'This Baroque Business', appeared in *The Rotunda* which responded to the German renewed interest in baroque organs. No name is attached to it but one can assume that Batigan Verne and Willis were connected in some way:

Perhaps it is no mere coincidence that the organ world of Germany should at this present time be experiencing the sweep of a baroque revival in organ-building, a revival which admittedly has its dangers, but which also has a profound significance for the future of the English organ world. It is one that is already spreading in ever-widening circles. A parallel between the political and musical trend of the times seems naturally to suggest itself.²⁵

According to the writer German developments appeared to eschew a previous mode of organ building, something which offered possibilities for England as already noted by Henry Willis at Farm Street:

And so to-day it comes about that the organ in Germany at the present time is throwing out new and vigorous shoots already containing in them seeds of greater promise and possibility. English readers will recall with a due amount of pride the fact that for some years Mr. Henry Willis (well aware of the impending direction of things) had insisted on working Mutations into his Choir Organ schemes – often, alas, in opposition to the wishes of the organist who still had his eyes on the

²⁵ Anon., 'This Baroque Business', *The Rotunda*, 4 (March-April 1933), 1.

somewhat meaningless Choir Organ of Victorian times. One or two Mutations, of course, do not make a baroque organ [...] But it was evidently a step on the right road and it justified Mr Willis's artistic discernment in reading the signs of the times aright.²⁶

The writer perceived that the German developments, of which elements were to be found in Willis's thinking, deserved consideration in England, even if they were to be met with disapproval:

Shall we plod along as usual, with more and more extensions of fewer and fewer ranks than ever? Or shall we really take the future by the scruff of the neck, to so speak, and go boldly out for a new vision of the organ, for something adumbrated by our friend Mr Cecil Clutton? In our opinion the time is ripe for the new vision and for the bold stroke of enterprise. It will entail sacrifices, of course; and the rash organ-builder who attempts it must be prepared to deal with a recurring refrain of this sort: 'We don't like your noisy Mixtures. We want more roast-beef foundation tone, and we want extensions.' As appearance go in this country, so far as the organ world is concerned, it looks as though no period could be more unfavourable for the launching of any such revolutionary attack.

To sum up, the article disapproves of contemporary English organs due to their builders' complacent mode of thinking which, it seems, was sometimes divorced from artistic work:

We are, perhaps getting too comfortably settled in the dangerous grooves of laissez-faire and jobbery. We need a Hitler of organ-building to blaze the trail of progress and lead us out of the swamps of extensionist-communism. Where is he to be found?

The writer may be referring to Henry Willis to make straight the way of reform.

It is not difficult to see the rise of National Socialism, with its opposition to communism, as a metaphor for the organ reform movement. Indeed, the writer makes the connection explicitly clear and it is possible to conclude that he had some sympathies with contemporary political events. Intent on carrying the political and musical comparison further he refers to the organs under attack as a manifestation of cultural bolshevism. This label probably pointed to the practice of obtaining several stops from one rank of pipes – 'communist-extensions'. It is not entirely clear if the labelling of foundation tone as 'roast beef' has political overtones which perhaps referred to a bourgeois culture.

²⁶ Ibid., all at 2.

Given the highly politicised European atmosphere, the limitations of German reform as exposed by Williams, and some forthright comments made by English figures, the historian may be inclined to adopt political tools in assessing talk of reform in England: to what extent did competing political views determine English organ building during the period? How are these manifested in the actual organs? Nevertheless there is a danger of tracing a path of development of nationalist language which makes it end with the events of 1933 to 1945, *The Aberration*. There were certainly parallels between musical developments in Germany and those in England but the historian, intent on finding politically incorrect language, will encounter difficulties. In direct opposition to Germany, the years of economic crisis did not offer English organ builders many opportunities to build significant instruments. The examination would therefore be limited to opinions on organ reform against a background of rebuilds and some new projects, the majority of which showed continuity with a previous mode of organ building and little connection to the Continent. It is certainly not possible to speak of a distinct movement in organ building.

A discreet English *Orgelbewegung*? 1934-1945

Even without a substantial body of new organs, the period 1934-1945 witnessed developments which reveal how actors responded to the need to have historical sounds in organs. Organ Music Society Recitals provided a forum for players to experiment with simulating baroque effects on English organs. This, together with knowledge of some of the reforms happening on the Continent, stimulated the organist's appetite for more baroque sounds from an increasingly eclectic English organ.

C. H. Trevor continued to perform Bach's works using registration practices which stood outside the Victorian and Edwardian practices of employing substantial changes in registration in Bach's music. According to Farmer, Trevor's recital at St. Michael's, Paddington, on 13 December 1934, was 'appropriately given in the simplest and most economical manner, with few

changes of stops, and those of a carefully chosen nature. This suits Bach very well.²⁷ He recalled how since the early years of the century organists had reduced the number of stop changes employed in performance:

In fact, it might be said that the evolution of contemporary Bach playing from the late Victorian fashion has been a continuous process of trying to do without things. Point after point organists have been eliminating or minimising-modern tone-colours, weight or thickness of tone, big contrasts, changes of registration, even couplers and swell-peddalling; in the end one comes down to the most rudimentary stop-changes, or simply changes of manual, with strong but flexible rhythm and perfectly finished phrasing, and very often that seems enough in Bach.

Farmer noted a similar approach to Trevor's renditions of music by Christian Ritter, Thomas Arne, and Frescobaldi. Trevor was thus applauded for striking out in this new direction.

Attention to what we may now term Bach 'performance practice' in 1934 cannot be understood in isolation: it stands in a wider context of a significant shift in Bach scholarship. In fact, in his 1933 article on the organ for *Music & Letters*, quoted above, Farmer drew attention to the way in which the image of Bach as 'genius' (see Chapter two) had given way to Bach the 'modern', one that would have interesting ramifications for future scholarship and performance. 'One of the most important of recent movements,' Farmer states, 'is that which has endowed us with historical sense'.²⁸ This 'historical sense', which refers to a particular strand of modernism (identified by McGuire in Chapter three as a 'normal historical process') dictated that modernism existed in every period. Bach, according to this viewpoint, which was amplified in the organ world by Farmer, was a 'modern'. He states that:

though Bach was the culmination of an era, that era is significant apart from him. We have not always realised this. Until actually a few years ago, musicians seem to have thought of Bach's predecessors and contemporaries as rude, groping, primitive writers – the feeble stars of a night that had never seen the sun.

All this means that critics wished to base their interpretations of Bach on the sounds of seventeenth-century organs as revived by the *Orgelbewegung*, something which they tried to imitate on English organs.

²⁷ Archibald Farmer, 'Organ Recital Notes', *MT*, 75 (February 1934), all at 158.

²⁸ Farmer, 'Organ Music', all at 335.

The simpler approach to registering Bach's works, itself part of a wider shift in scholarship and performance, explains the approach of Susi Hock (1911-1993), by far the most significant promoter of early organ music from the mid-1930s. Hock, who later became Lady Susi Jeans after her marriage to Sir James Jeans in 1935, became a significant teacher, a recording artist of note, and played a significant role in promoting the sympathetic restorations of organs in Britain.²⁹ Her obituary in *The Times* noted how 'by the 1950s [she] was the acknowledged First Lady of the Organ, as well as of the pedal harpsichord, clavichord and virginals'.³⁰ She later organized a music festival, along with an annual organists' summer school.

Perhaps Susi Jeans's greatest influence was in her novel approach to registering early music on modern English organs. Farmer delighted in Jeans's recital for the Organ Music Society held at St Mary Abbot's Kensington in 1934, a recital which demonstrated a willingness to go even further than Trevor:

Miss Susi Hock, on a visit from Vienna, played for the Society in the same week. Was it really the same organ? Her predilections in organ music, which were declared by the programme, had led her to seek out with patience the core of ancient organ – tone which remains, more or less buried, in every instrument worthy of the name.³¹

Apart from introducing Jeans to the musical world, Farmer believes that every significant instrument has a body of tone – what he terms ancient tone – which bears close relationship to the sounds of old instruments. In other words, by judicious management of stops it is possible to obtain sounds which hark back to a bygone age.

Farmer noted how Jean's historical approach, somewhat handicapped by the nature of some English organs – mass diapason tone, reeds on heavy wind – nevertheless used the organ to her advantage: 'one diapason would have been sufficient for her purposes, and she would have

²⁹ Other organists, perhaps influenced by Jeans, also called for sympathetic restorations. See Gillian Weir, 'Restoring Organs', *The Times*, (27 December 1968), 9.

³⁰ Quoted in David Rycroft, 'Editorial', *The Galpin Society Journal*, 46 (March 1993), 2. For a brief biography of Jeans see Guy Oldham, 'Susi Jeans: A 70th Birthday Tribute', *MT*, 122 (January 1981), 47, 49. Obituaries of Jeans appeared in *The Independent* (14 January 1993), *The Daily Telegraph* (19 January), and in *The Times* (23 January).

³¹ Archibald Farmer, 'Organ Recital Notes', *MT*, 75 (July 1934), all at 637.

preferred a pedal complete enough to be used uncoupled. The reeds should have been on light wind.’ But Jeans showed how the organ could provide many previously unknown colours:

The upperwork, of which the organ contains more than the usual provision, she used with perfect effect, largely because it was combined with a minimum of unison tone – a paradox which I will leave you to think out for yourself – while from uncoupled manuals, stationary swell-boxes, 4-ft. and 2-ft. registers and light flutes played an octave higher, she drew forth the nearest we had to offer her in the way of baroque tone.

The organ’s resources were not only used in an ‘economic’ way (minimum unison tone, stationary swell boxes), but used in an unorthodox manner (registers played an octave higher for example). The practice of so-called ‘gapped registrations’ (8+2) was perhaps also promoted.

Interestingly, the eschewal of large forces may also be compared to neoclassicism and its tendency to similarly trim the orchestra. For example, this was first tried by Stravinsky in a significant way in *The Rite of Spring* and then in *Symphonies of Wind Instruments*. Jeans’s results, according to Farmer, provided a novel experience:

It cannot have been easy, and the results must have been novel to most of the audience. English organists know, or have heard of, quite a deal of old organ music, but they approach it from the modern point of view. Now pre-Bach music needs pre-Bach registration. This, Miss Hock tried to give us.

It is interesting to note Farmer’s appreciation of the early instruments on which this music was originally performed. There is no evidence to suggest how he acquired this information but it is plausible that contact with Jeans would have enlightened him as to the nature of baroque organs.

For Farmer this particular use of the organ emphasised clarity of texture in baroque music: ‘it was always transparent, and often delightful. It was an instructive experience to me [...] I can but hope that astonishment was leavened by appreciation.’ He provided a summary of Jeans’s programme and the registrations employed:

Pachelbel’s Prelude on ‘Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern,’ coming first, was played an octave higher on a Gedeckt, with the chorale on a soft pedal reed. Its delicate tracery, its delightful coolness, were an earnest of what was to follow. Much more elaborate was the set of variations on ‘Meinen Jesum lass ich nicht’ by J. G. Walther, who was born a year before Bach; 16-ft. and 2-ft., 2-ft. solos apparently, mixtures, clear flutes and light reeds were used in turn in characteristic ways (‘juxtaposition of sonorities!’), and the recitalist’s part-playing was

impeccable in clarity. The Prelude and Fugue in G major by Bruhns, twenty years older than Bach, seemed after this a little tedious; but it seems ungrateful to say so, when it brought phrasing that was so exact and vigorous without being overdone.

That Susi Jeans's recital was a significant landmark is testified by Farmer's insistence that such novel registrations had never been employed. He remarked: 'so far as I can say, no one but Mr. C. H. Trevor in this country has approached a style contemporary with the composers in playing old organ music, and I have not heard him use any thorough-paced baroque registration'. Farmer could not have praised the recital in greater terms. He concluded by wishing 'this remarkable artist a great development and a speedy return'.

Farmer's observations of Jeans imitating baroque organ sounds on English organs were, in fact, confirmed by *The Times* in 1948 and Susi Jeans in 1969. *The Times* retrospectively showed how some people were puzzled by these unfamiliar sounds: 'Mixture stops [...] became agitating [...] when Lady Jeans first came and, talking of the baroque organ to our mystification, produced squeaks and jangles (4ft., 2ft., III, as the cryptogram would put it).'³² In an article published in *The Musical Times*, Jeans recalled the way she sought to recreate the sounds produced by instruments by the German organ builders Arp Schnitger and Gottfried Silbermann:

I had some share in the introduction of baroque organ sound into this country. When I first came to England in 1934 and 1935 and played old German organ music I tried to reproduce the sound of Silbermann and Schnitger organs on English ones. This caused considerable interest, surprise and often criticism.³³

Of course, to the ears of 2010, this approach hardly accounts for a full appreciation of issues of performance practice of eighteenth-century music. At a very basic level, the voicing, scaling, and layout of pipes in an English organ would have been entirely foreign to the instruments which Jeans tried to imitate through her registrations. The electro- or tubular-pneumatic actions would have also compared unfavourably to the mechanical-action organs.

³² Anon., 'Music Critic', 'The Organ's Tonal Structure', *The Times*, (4 June 1948), 7.

³³ Susi Jeans, 'The "Baroquizing" of English Organs: Or J. S. Bach's Unfortunate Influence', *MT*, 110 (August 1969), 870.

Jeans's 'classical' registrations were in sympathy with the arrival of her fourteen-stop house organ in 1937, the first instrument in Britain to be built along *Orgelbewegung* lines.³⁴ The pipes were made by Fritz Abend, who directed the firm of Hermann Eule of Bautzen in Germany, and the action was made by Hill, Norman and Beard. The original specification was:

<i>Hauptwerk</i>		<i>Obermanual</i>	
Gedackt	8 (lowest 12 of copper)	Quintadena	8
Prinzipal	4	Rohrflöte	4
Spillpfeife	4	Prinzipal	2
Quinte	2 ² / ₃	Quinte	1 ¹ / ₃
Oktave	2	Oktave	1
Mixtur	III		
<i>Pedal</i>			
Subbass	16		
Holzflöte	8		
Gemshorn	4		
Nachthorn	2		

This practice of establishing some relationship between stop registrations and the sounds of eighteenth-century organs was highly regarded by some. Clutton, writing in 1934, with no reference to Jeans's activities, also spoke of the need to present Bach's music using registrations which were in sympathy with the conditions known to Bach. He stated:

[Bach] not only wrote all his biggest fugues (except a few from the 'Art of Fugue') for the organ, but played them throughout with virtually no change of registration on various strengths of full to mixtures; and it is only when they are thus played to-day on a suitable instrument that their full grandeur and breadth of outlook can fully emerge.³⁵

³⁴ In 1950 several changes were made: Hauptwerk Quinte was replaced by a Blockflöte 2; and the Oktave replaced by a (flute toned) Quinte 1¹/₃. The Obermanual Quinte and Oktave were replaced by a two-rank (breaking) Sesquialtera and a Siffelöte 1' respectively. In 1963 a Krummhorn 8' with wooden resonators was added to the Hauptwerk and later a tremulant fitted.

³⁵ Cecil Clutton, 'Fugues on the Organ', *MT*, 75 (June 1934), 538.

It is not clear what sources of information Clutton used to arrive at his conclusion. There was growing interest in historical instruments and consequently a re-evaluation of previous methods used to play old repertoire on modern instruments.

The view even found favour with those who, unlike Clutton, were primarily concerned with creating an instrument with the widest possible range of colour and dynamics for choral accompaniments. An interesting letter from Boris Ord, Organist of King's College Chapel, Cambridge to Arthur Harrison 1934 concerning the rebuilding of the chapel organ reveals this interest, but suggests that Jeans was not the only person promoting this manner of playing. Schweitzer visited Cambridge at some point during 1934 and instructed organists how mutations (first heard in England at Farm Street in 1926) were essential in playing certain repertoires of early music. Ord reported:

Almost every organist of note who has had experience of separate mutation ranks seems convinced of the many beautiful and interesting effects to be got from them, and having heard them myself, I quite agree. Continental builders have been using them for years, and now almost every organ-builder in England and America has taken to them. Schweitzer was stressing their importance in the proper interpretation of 17th and 18th century organ music at King's only the other day. I feel that ours would be incomplete without one example, and the obvious place to do it is on the Choir.³⁶

It is difficult to imagine now how Ord believed that one or two mutations could add a significant element of interest to early music. But such was the reception of Jeans's playing and the authority of Schweitzer, that organists thought that their instruments could be brought up to date with these new elements.

The growing interest in historical organs, of which Bach registrations were only one result, was also noted by an organ builder, Henry Willis III, who peppered his instruments with particular elements of Continental organ design as promoted by the *Orgelbewegung*. His visits to Germany in the 1930s, correspondence with organists, and some elements of his work evinced

³⁶ Quoted in Nicholas Thistlethwaite, 'Boris Ord and the Reconstruction of the Organ in King's College, Cambridge: 1932-4', *JBIOS*, 31 (2007), 28. Harrisons later added mutations to the reconstruction of the Westminster Abbey organ in 1937.

interest in historical organs and their repertory. Even if this showed him to be aware of worldwide developments, however, his writings went little beyond specifications and he remained a firm advocate of the organ tradition passed on to him by his grandfather. As such Willis provides a fascinating case study because he illustrates the tension between German (seventeenth-century and *Orgelbewegung*) and English aesthetics of design and the desire of many commentators to retain what they considered to be an English tradition.

The *Orgelbewegung* encouraged Willis to visit Germany. On 3 December 1931 he wrote to his colleague in Germany, the organbuilder Hans Steinmayer, stating 'I most certainly want to visit Germany next year and try some old and new "Baroque" instruments.'³⁷ Two years later he wrote Steinmayer again stating that his old apprentice Donald Harrison wanted to visit Germany and Willis hoped to accompany him. Willis spoke of the need to make 'a short trip in Germany having a look over Baroque jobs of note, Silbermann &c. &c. I hope to accompany him. We must, of course, do Auterboyen (excuse spelling) [Ottobeuren] and Weingarten.' Sadly detailed accounts of these visits do not survive and it is not possible to state clearly when these visits happened.

As well as visiting historical instruments, Willis studied modern pipes built along what he believed to be seventeenth-century lines. In 1933 he wrote to Steinmayer requesting three ranks of pipes, 'A Koppel Flote [sic] 4ft, Block Flute 4ft, and Koppel Gedackt 4ft.,' to be added to his collection of baroque stops. Later in 1938, he wrote to the same organ builder asking for a Cymbelstern 'to show clients as a matter of interest'.³⁸ Given that the first Cymbelstern to appear in Britain was in 1969 at New College, Oxford, it is interesting that Willis showed an interest in this 'toy' stop as early as 1938.

First-hand knowledge of historical organs (mainly their pipework), together with examples of *Orgelbewegung* instruments resulted in some of Willis's specifications acquiring

³⁷ Willis to Steinmayer, 3 December 1931, 23 February 1933, Willis Archives, Ln S 123.

³⁸ Willis to Steinmayer, 16 November 1933, 3 June 1938, Willis Archives, Ln S 123.

baroque features. In 1932 Willis built a large organ for Sheffield City Hall, in consultation with Edward Bairstow, which contained mutation ranks.³⁹ As part of the rebuilding of his grandfather's organ in Hereford Cathedral in 1933, Willis stated that the 'Choir Organ remains unenclosed and has been recast upon classical lines'.⁴⁰ He remarks how some old stops were revoiced to contribute to this 'classical' brief: 'The old Spitz Flute with correct conicality, was revoiced as a Choir Open Diapason. A new Gemshorn [...] replaces the old one [...] Those invaluable Mutations, the Nazard and the Tierce are new while the old Corno-di-Bassetto [...] has been replaced by a chirpy, cheeky, perky little trumpet.'

Willis's work at Hereford (as well as Farm Street) may be seen as a protest against some unfavourable developments which took place in the nineteenth century, such as the gradual removal of mutations and mixtures and the desire to increase foundation tone. He countered these developments through his affirmation of features of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century organ design which he thought worthy of inclusion in modern organs. In an article published in 1945 he retrospectively commented on how the instrument which he built for the Colston Hall in Bristol in 1937 revealed an example of a revived interest in the Cymbale (a high pitched mixture), mutations (stops which sound intervals other than the octave), and the Cornet (a stop consisting of five independent ranks sounding the octave, twelfth, super octave, fifteenth and seventeenth). The comments are worth quoting:

At the Colston Hall, Bristol, in 1937, a tonal scheme of great interest was achieved: it re-introduced the use of the cymbale or repeating mixture – utilised the cornet in its correct ranks and in the Echo 'traditional' organ embodied a complete series of mutations up to the octave of 1ft. capped by a cymbale with ranks 31, 33, 38, in an effort to reproduce the 'positif' of the Middle Ages. It is of this division that a well-known expert wrote: 'It is such stuff as dreams are made of.'⁴¹

³⁹ For details of the project see William Sumner, 'The Organ in the City Hall Sheffield', *The Organ*, 12 (January 1933), 138-144.

⁴⁰ Henry Willis, 'Hereford Cathedral Organ', *The Rotunda*, 5 (September 1933), all at 7.

⁴¹ _____, 'The Organ, Its History and Development', *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association*, 73 (1946 - 1947), 66. Willis added mutations to the Birmingham Town Hall organ in 1934

Willis does not state who the ‘well-known’ expert was but he went on to confirm the value of these features – cymbale, cornet, mutations – with reference to their role in performing music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: ‘the presence of this “traditional” section enabled those great exponents of ancient organ music, Fernando Germani and the late Joseph Bounet [Bonnet], to render the old masters in a manner and on ranks similar to those for which the compositions had been written’. Willis then quoted the titles of some of the music performed on this organ: *Pastorale* by Bernardo Pasquini (1637-1710) and a *tierce en taille* by Nicolas de Grigny (1671-1703).

Yet it is difficult to imagine how this instrument’s specification could achieve Willis’s authenticity. Certainly, alongside a well-developed Pedal, Great and Swell scheme complete to mixture, there was a department labelled ‘echo’ which contained, according to Willis, the stops required for early music:⁴²

Colston Hall, Bristol (1937)

<i>Echo</i>		
Quintade	16	
Zauber Flote	8	
Unda Maris	8	
Sylvestrina	8	
Quint	5 $\frac{1}{3}$	
Koppel Flote	4	
Nazard	2 $\frac{2}{3}$	
Silver Piccolo	2	
Terz	1 $\frac{3}{5}$	
Larigot	1 $\frac{1}{3}$	
Septieme	1 $\frac{1}{7}$	
Octavin	1	
Cymbale	III	31.33.38
Musette	16	
Post Horn	8	
Vox Mystica	8	

⁴² Source: National Pipe Organ Registrar [NPOR] [website] <http://www.npor.org.uk/cgi-bin/Rsearch.cgi?Fn=Rsearch&rec_index=N03897> accessed 15 November 2010.

The cornet would be formed by drawing stops of the following pitches: 8, 4, $2\frac{2}{3}$, 2, and $1\frac{3}{8}$. These mutation ranks were, it seems, essential for performances of early music: ‘without the ranks of pipes of the off unison series – the mutations – the old works cannot be reproduced correctly and artistically according to the composers’ intentions’.⁴³ But aside from the lack of details regarding the voicing and scaling practices, it is important to remember that such a division was considered an adjunct to the main organ which was strongly indebted to Willis practices.

The limited nature of Willis’s reforms may have stemmed from a belief that there was no market in Britain for instruments built along historical or even *Orgelbewegung* lines. In a letter to Donald Harrison in 1935, Willis stated that he was prepared to accept stronger ‘classical’ elements but a lack of financial resources and enthusiasm meant that the ideas would never mature: ‘I am more than ready to go to the ‘other extreme’ as you put it, but people won’t have ‘advanced’ specifications at any price. One of the troubles is that a ‘classical’ specification is more expensive than an ordinary one, and God knows that in these days higher costs are out of the question.’⁴⁴ It is not clear what is really meant by ‘the other extreme’, whether Willis is referring to the construction of baroque organs or instruments which combine several traditions as in the American Classic scheme. Willis is also rather enigmatic regarding his comments about costs; it is not clear *why* ‘classical specifications’ are more expensive.

Whatever the exact financial circumstances, Willis was keen to attribute the lack of ‘classical’ progress to the opinions of conservative organists. Indeed he was keen to set himself apart from what might be termed the establishment. In a letter to G Donald Harrison dated 20 December 1935, he lamented that:

The curses of Organ Builders here are the Organists, who know little about the traditions of the organ as an instrument and simply think of what happens to please their uninstructed minds [...] Even men like Marchant, Cunningham and Alcock know next to nothing of the ideals that should govern the drawing up of a specification.[...] When I say

⁴³ Henry Willis, ‘The Organ, Its History and Development’, 61.

⁴⁴ Willis to G Donald Harrison, 20 December 1935, in Charles Callahan, *The American Classic Organ* (Virginia, 1990), 152.

more upperwork and mutations, they say, “I have plenty thank you, and don’t want any more ‘squeakers’”[...] Thalben-Ball is of the old school and knows nothing about Organs really.⁴⁵

Such organists, according to Willis, had a very limited knowledge of Continental organ building:

Very few of our young fellows travel, or study. They take their opinions from the old school or else swallow “extension” with the utmost readiness. There are a few, a very few, of the younger school who try to understand, but they are swamped by the others and left crying in the wilderness.⁴⁶

Whilst this says something about the restrictions sometimes placed on builders, it also reveals how

Willis wished to develop the English organ along lines which focused on mutations and mixtures.

Given his limited reference to the features of seventeenth-century organs, one is bound to wonder whether there was such a gaping hole between Willis and the figures he criticises.

Opinionated organists (and financial circumstances?) cannot fully explain the reasons why Willis did not embrace historical principles with readiness. Willis’s position must be seen as a product of the tension between the historical and eclectic organs. For Willis eighteenth-century features had to be added to a tonal scheme that was based on nineteenth-century ideals (like the Colston Hall instrument). Willis sought a style which would allow him to combine what he considered were the best elements of past styles with modern developments in tonal design. He stated that ‘my own modern designs are only a development of the ‘Willis’ tradition as founded and handed by my grandfather. My desire is to provide instruments upon which Organ [sic] music of all periods can be played.’⁴⁷ Since his approach does not radically differ from that of his grandfather, one can assume that for Willis (III) it was simply a matter of adding some seventeenth-century features in order to extend the organ’s performance capabilities into the ‘early’ category.

Moreover Willis favoured modern organs over reproductions of historical examples. Instruments constructed according to a specific historical tradition could find favour amongst

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Willis to Jeans, 21 October 1949, Willis Archives, Ln J2.

individual enthusiasts but Willis did not think that such instruments would be suitable for public places such as places of worship where the organ had to be able to play a varied repertoire. In 1949 he wrote to Jeans stating: ‘Personally, it would give me much pleasure to design, construct and voice an Organ upon 17th. French century lines for an individual – but not for a Cathedral, Church or Concert Hall where Organ music of the post-Bach period will be played.’⁴⁸ Willis was certainly perceived as having acquired enough information on seventeenth-century principles of design to be asked to tender for a baroque organ for Susi Jeans in 1935. According to Jeans, it was her wish that the contract be awarded to Willis.⁴⁹ Whatever the merits of Willis’s work in the 1930s, his study of historical instruments was limited to general observations; there is little evidence to show that detailed study was undertaken. In many ways he can be seen as promoting some of the values of the *Orgelbewegung*, which, as Williams shows, failed to examine historical organs critically.

Historical organs, therefore, were a matter of inspiration: it was not a matter of copying ‘old masters’ – Silbermann, Schnitger – or basing modern designs on them, but of reinventing sounds through an appeal to certain aspects of history. Talk of reform, then, appealed to a higher authority in the form of the historic instruments rediscovered by the *Orgelbewegung*. But this was significantly tempered by some, like Willis, who limited their discussions to upperwork and mutations.

Others, however, focused more on historical organs and their implications for a departure in English organ building. References to these historical instruments become more common in the late ’30s. In 1936 Bonavia-Hunt, for example, remarked on what he thought was the importance of properly developed choruses, something which he observed in recordings by

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Willis to Jeans, 14 October 1957, Willis archives, Ln J2. According to the correspondence, Willis was a little apprehensive about the project asking to conduct experiments. This led Jeans to ask Willis if he would be prepared to accept pipework made and voiced by another builder. Willis refused and the contract was given to Hill Norman & Beard, and Eule. See Jeans to Willis, 16 October 1957. Willis archives, Ln J2.

Günther Ramin (1898-1956), organist of St Thomas, Leipzig: 'I must honestly confess that a Bach recital by Gunter Ramin [sic], broadcast from Leipzig, was a revelation to me, the variety of registration was to a large extent dependent upon the choice of mutation ranks, and these were all diapasons in quality.'⁵⁰ The prominent mutation ranks in Ramin's recording led Bonavia-Hunt to challenge the supremacy of diapason and reed ranks, as promoted by admirers of the Edwardian organ. He wittingly concluded: 'my mouth no longer waters at the sight on paper of twenty ranks of diapasons and reeds galore'. Sadly there are no other references to Ramin's recordings but it is probable that these unfamiliar sounds had some impact on interested musicians, perhaps encouraging them to think critically about what they heard and whether these sounds could be imported into Britain.

Some went further and based their ideal instrument more directly on historical organs, especially those by the north German builder Arp Schnitger (1648-1719). In 1936 Sumner commented:

Would not an organ of the Schnitger type, beautifully built with all modern improvements in regulation, tuning devices, tracker action and blowing plant, prove an inspiration [...] ? The music of Bach, Rheinberger, Mendelssohn, and the German and French masters of the seventeenth century takes on a new significance when played on such an instrument as this by an appreciative organist.⁵¹

The discourse surrounding the progressive organ, as outlined by Atkins for example, acts as a filter through which only the desirable features of Schnitger's organs pass: supposed obsolete features like old mechanical actions are displaced by modern improvements. The result is an instrument which should cater for a very broad repertoire, not just for those composers associated with Schnitger.

⁵⁰ Noel Bonavia-Hunt, 'Organ Design', *MO*, 59 (April 1936), 621-622. It is not clear when these recordings were broadcast. There are two anonymous recordings in the National Sound Archive at the British Library which could be the recordings to which Bonavia-Hunt refers. Anon., 'Organ by Hildebrand, Leipzig' (1934), BBC Sound Archive LP 16186 contains the 'Prelude and Fugue in D minor [BWV 554], on organ on which Bach played' and 'Prelude and Fugue in F major'. The second recording, Anon., 'Organ by Silbermann, Leipzig' (n.d.), BBC Sound Archive LP 16187 contains the E Flat Fugue (BWV 552).

⁵¹ William Sumner, 'An Interesting Schulze Organ Rebuilt' *MO*, 60 (October 1936), 56.

Whilst some concurred with Sumner that Germany offered a solution, they were not quite prepared to abandon English characteristics of design. A certain F. Webb, whose name frequently occurs in the *Musical Opinion* around this time, evinced this view. He commented on the favourable aspects of German organ building, making the bold claim that Germany's rich history of organ building made it a clear leader in this area: 'We in England seem to have made a rather fetish of the diapason foundation and powerful reeds. In this connection it should not be forgotten that Germany is the home of organ building.'⁵² It is not clear on what criteria he based his information or whether he was specifically referring to historical or modern organs. Nevertheless this knowledge perhaps led to his conclusion that 'good musical tone is best attained by using a pressure not exceeding 3½ in. for both flues and reeds'. He offered his comments in a careful way, perhaps trying not to disassociate himself completely from English organ building: 'I would not suggest the complete obliteration of national characteristics of organ tone, but if other tonal schemes produce a more musical and interesting ensemble, may they not be worth consideration and, at least, partial adoption?' Whilst he offers a more cautious approach than say, Sumner, he looks to Germany for some inspiration in thinking about the future of the English organ.

The grafting of Continental elements to an English foundation, then, seemed attractive, especially to those who were committed to what they regarded as traditional English practices. Harvey Grace was one such person. In 1939 he commented on how interest in period instruments had exposed the limitations of Edwardian organs, and pointed towards the necessity to update them with baroque sounds:

There remain to be considered some present-day musical tendencies which seem to indicate the line along which the organ must develop in order to recover some at least of its former glory. [...] the harpsichord is no longer regarded as an inefficient precursor of the piano, but as an instrument in its own right, capable of functions that the piano can fulfil only approximately [...] A natural deduction is that the organ can regain much of its prestige by going back on its tracks. First

⁵² F. Webb, *MO*, 61 (June 1938), all at 820.

steps have already been taken, chiefly in Germany and America by the construction of organs approximating to those of the Bach era – retaining, of course, modern improvements in touch and control. The fundamental character of the organ, which has been obscured by its development as an orchestral substitute and as a medium for romantic music, has thus been regained [...] Another indication of the reaction in favour of the organ of the past is the fact that some builders in this country and America have incorporated in new organs a section in itself, and based on early models, for use in playing works of the classical organ composers.⁵³

Willis's organ for the Colston Hall is just one example of the organs to which Grace refers.

Eclecticism seemed a viable option. The rebuilding of the organ by Hill, Norman and Beard in Norwich Cathedral in 1942, had a Positif which paid homage to supposed baroque practices. According to *The Musical Times*, the Positif was 'lightly voiced (2-ins. pressure) and is a purposeful imitation of an antique organ'.⁵⁴ Some seemed seduced by this idea of eclecticism. Within the pages of the *Musical Opinion*, Bonavia-Hunt explained how an organ could feature several schools of organ building. Bonavia-Hunt was hardly a significant builder, or indeed scholar, but his views are given because they testify the extremes to which eclectic thoughts, published in journals which provided a place for lively debate on organs, could go:

If I see a builder trying to incorporate the Schulze and the Father Willis ideals in one organ, I applaud him and wish him success. I am equally interested in a man's attempts to combine Schnitger and Cavaillé-Coll; but I applaud most of all him who can bring into the various manual departments such a differentiation of style and character that there is scarcely a point in common between them [...] This polythematic treatment of organ stops resulting in two or more completely different types of total effect in one instrument is the new ideal towards which I am pointing the finger of prophecy. [...] A] hypothetical three-manual organ [...] with forty speaking stops could consist of three entirely different organic ensembles, a triumvirate of organs, yet one organic, constitutional whole.⁵⁵

His most provocative statement was to suggest that such an instrument could be best achieved through several voicers:

It is very difficult for one voicer or one finisher to change his idiom: therefore, if possible, a separate artist should be entrusted with each department...It is possible to imagine Edmund Schulze and Father Willis collaborating in the building of the

⁵³ Harvey Grace, 'The Future of the Organ', *Calendar of the RCO 1938-39*, (London, 1939), 130.

⁵⁴ Anon. [S. H], 'The New Organ in Norwich Cathedral', *MT*, 83 (March 1942), 90. The Norman & Beard organ (built 1899) was destroyed in a fire on April 9, 1938.

⁵⁵ Noel Bonavia-Hunt, 'Towards a New Ideal', *MO*, 67 (February 1944), 168.

Armley organ: the effect of Schulze's great combined with Willis's swell is something quite conceivable; while a third party – William Thynne? – might have been responsible for the choir stops or alternatively the choir might have been treated on pure baroque lines. A vista of intriguing possibilities is opened up by the polythematic ideal which, whatever organ lovers may have to say, was realized centuries ago by the architects of our historic churches and cathedrals.

Perhaps Bonavia-Hunt prophesises the later work of Ralph Downes at the Royal Festival Hall, where the reeds were voiced by a different builder.

Debates on the future of English organs are more varied than those of previous years, drawing upon a broader range of issues. In some cases an increasing knowledge of what were termed 'baroque organs' is reflected in the way British organists, following Jeans's recitals, presented Bach's music. However, many comments continue the progressive views on the organ, and perhaps these opinions, together with the limited understanding of historical organs, led to the desire to base organs on an eclectic ideal, as exemplified by Willis's work. Whatever value commentators placed on historical German organs, whatever their understanding of how these instruments functioned, whatever their knowledge of the repertoire which contextualises the instruments, it becomes clear that the Edwardian organ was no longer thought suitable for England's needs.

Chapter 5

To Baroque or not to Baroque, 1945-1954

The impact of the Second World War provoked a bitter slanging match over the future of the English organ. In referring to the growing polemic, Batigan Verne noted in 1949 that ‘the upheavals in the post-war world have not been without effect on the microcosm of organ tonal design, and to-day it is true to say that no one can safely predict the tonal shape of the British organ of the future’.¹ From 1950 Jones attacked English organ culture through his recordings of Bach’s works on Arp Schnitger’s 1687 organ in Steinkirchen, a small town outside Hamburg. In the same year Downes released the specification of the Royal Festival Hall instrument, which claimed to break with the English mould of organ building. Both challenges were too much for advocates of the English organ: ‘The squeaks of a barrel organ’, ‘splintered glass’, and ‘eating sour rhubarb without sugar’ are just some of the derogatory metaphors used to denigrate the soi-disant ‘baroque organ’ championed by Jones and Downes.²

Yet increasing numbers of musicians searched beyond England’s shores and found comfort in the growing authority of historical instruments. As *The Times* noted in 1953: ‘Nowadays the music-loving world is on more intimate terms with the earlier keyboard instruments, and the record companies are not backward at coming forward with issues of baroque music played on baroque, or imitation baroque instruments.’³ The Renaissance Society, founded in 1944 by Michael Howard (1922-2002) with Carl Dolmetsch as president and A. S. Duncan Jones, C. H. Trevor, Alec Robertson and Felix Aprahamian as vice presidents, was

¹ D. Batigan Verne, [Letter], *MO*, 72 (May 1949), 447.

² The descriptions of the baroque organ by ‘three eminent musicians’ are quoted in Darke, ‘Defence’, 94, 65.

³ Anon., ‘Organ And Cembalo Old Instruments And New Records’, *The Times* (2 January 1953), 10.

indicative of growing interest in earlier repertoires.⁴ Trevor had played a part in the establishment of the Organ Music Society and Aprahamian (1914-2005) was to play an important role in this society from the 1950s onwards. *The Musical Times* noted how the Renaissance Society aimed to ‘reawaken a live interest in the glorious music of the polyphonic writers and in the plainchant by which it was inspired’.⁵ Perhaps the most significant event of the immediate post-war years was the performance of Monteverdi’s *Vespers* in 1946 which, as the *Musical Times* proudly remarked, had ‘been greeted unanimously by the press as an event of outstanding importance’.⁶ The Dolmetsch family, through its Haslemere Festivals, continued to promote early repertoires played on period instruments, an activity which was not allowed to lapse during the war. In July 1946 *The Times* noted how Arnold Dolmetsch’s ‘mantle for making old music live again on the instruments for which it was composed,’ fell on his son Carl Dolmetsch. The review noted how in a recent concert ‘there was something cool, virginal almost, about this early English music, whether the medium was a “broken consort” of recorder, lute and viols, or a “whole consort” of viols or a consort of five recorders’.⁷

The interest in early instruments and their repertoire paralleled a deeper quest to investigate original performance techniques. In *Music & Letters*, Robert Donington (1907-1990), who had studied with Dolmetsch, published an influential article on the performance of early music which quoted a number of significant theorists from the eighteenth century.⁸ The organ, meanwhile, continued to attract historians interested in documenting old instruments and their

⁴ Howard was an organist, choral conductor, and composer. His obituary commented that a ‘definitive history of the British early music movement [...] would be seriously incomplete without a proper assessment of the work of [...] Howard.’ Anon., ‘Michael Howard’, *MT*, 143 (Spring, 2002), 6, 8.

⁵ Roy Bridge, ‘The Renaissance Society’, *MT*, 92 (June 1951), 253. See also Anon., ‘The Renaissance Society’, *MT*, 87 (December 1946), 361.

⁶ Egon Wellesz, ‘Monteverdi’s *Vespers*’, *MT*, 87 (June 1946), 169-170. The revival of the *Vespers* coincided with the issue of 2 volumes of Monteverdi’s music edited by G. F. Malipiero and published, in 1940 and 1942. Hans F. Redlich commented in *Music & Letters* that these editions made it ‘possible for the first time to assess [...] Monteverdi’s] achievements as a composer of ecclesiastical music. Hans F. Redlich, ‘Monteverdi’s Religious Music’, *Music & Letters*, 27 (October 1946), 208-215.

⁷ Anon., ‘Haslemere Festival Early English Music’, *The Times* (25 July 1946), 6.

⁸ Robert Donington, ‘On Interpreting Early Music’, *Music & Letters*, 28 (July 1947), 223-241.

builders.⁹ For example, in 1950 Jeans published an article on the history of the tremulant.¹⁰ In an RCO Presidential address in September 1953 Dyson added how performers were increasingly interested in the original performance conditions of a given work:

Growing interest in the past has led to a desire to re-create it, not only by performing the actual notes of the music we have inherited, but also by trying to perform them on instruments and in a style as nearly comparable as possible with the conditions under which these historical works were first given to the world. Hardly a week now passes without a performance of some kind which claims to be a re-creation of the historic past, not only of the notes as written, but also of the actual sounds as the composer and his contemporaries heard or imagined them. The harpsichord is now used with this intent. So are some other dying or forgotten instruments. And the advocates of the Baroque organ make their claim chiefly on this ground.¹¹

The importance of these old instruments, then, parallels a quest to base a musical interpretation on some historical authority. Thus Thurston Dart states in *The interpretation of music* (1954) that ‘the primary evidence, musical notation, on which our interpretation must necessarily be based has to be examined with the greatest care’.¹² So notions of performance were separated from intuitive methods and, in some cases, placed under the authority of direct appeals to history.

Continuing support of the English organ, therefore, did little to persuade critics that this instrument had potential in the post-war world. The central tenet of this chapter is that a significant aspect of English music-making was no longer defined by a strong and confident organ culture. This would open up the possibility of change. To show how interlocutors both attacked and defended the English organ, the discussion focuses on three periods: (1) 1945-1950, when musicians, interested in preserving a distinctive English musical culture, dismissed talk of reform by defending the English organ; (2) 1950-1952, when Jones’s recordings and Downes’s Festival Hall instrument brought the organ world to argument over the merits of the baroque organ; and (3) 1952-1954, when *The Musical Times* sought to establish the parameters of the reform debate

⁹ For example: August Corbet, ‘Antoon Moors: A Flemish Organ Builder (c.1490-c.1562)’, *Music & Letters*, 28 (July 1947), 262-266.

¹⁰ Susi Jeans, ‘In Praise of Tremulants’, *MT*, 91 (March 1950), 102, 105.

¹¹ Anon., ‘The President’s Address’, *MT*, 94 (September 1953), 414-415.

¹² Dart, *Interpretation*, 13.

through a series of articles by significant musicians and critics. In entering into these colourful and sometimes vicious debates, it becomes clear how the tensions were partly caused by the aesthetic of the early music movement, but also by the perception that the reformers were eroding a vital aspect of British music-making. If the edifice of the English organ comprised more than just its physical materials, then any reform of the instrument was seen as an act of betrayal.

Defence, 1945-1950

Defence of the English organ was in part no more than a quest to valorize English musical culture. Given that Britain had just won a major war against a formidable foe, the desire to praise English achievements is understandable. In *British Music* (1947), Robert Palmer claimed that 'Britain is now leading the world in every branch of serious music-making.'¹³ These opinions were, in fact stressed even before the end of war: according to Hinrichsen's Year Book in 1944, Elgar's Enigma Variations 'inaugurate a period whose musical richness and variety, fully sustained at the present day, surpass that of any other country between 1899 and 1944';¹⁴ and as late as 1953 Alan Frank claimed that 'it is permissible to ask, without being chauvinistic, whether any other single country can claim so strong a school of native composers'.¹⁵

These comments were not only the product of a proud nation, but were part of a defensive strategy in the wake of ever increasing challenges to musical culture: not everyone in the wider context of European music-making thought the future lay in continuing the long held traditions of Western music-making. As Osmond-Smith put it: 'For the generation of young European musicians who had passed their formative years amongst the constrictions of the later 1930s and early 1940s, the imperative was now to make their own the more radical currents of

¹³ Russell Palmer, *British Music* (London, 1947), 10, quoted in Hughes & Stradling, *English Renaissance*, 285.

¹⁴ Robin Hull, 'Music of our time. I. From Elgar to Britten', in *Hinrichsen's Year Book* (London, 1944), 9.

¹⁵ Alan Frank, *British Modern Composers* (London, 1953), 8.

pre-war culture to which they had been denied access.’¹⁶ Whilst this attitude found expression in the BBC’s *Third Programme*,¹⁷ many English institutions ‘found insular security in traditional aesthetic values’.¹⁸

Given the wider musical context – the tension between radical and ‘traditional’ English cultures – it is not surprising that journals such as *The Musical Times*, *Musical Opinion*, and *The Organ* debated the future of the English organ, arguing whether its development lay in a nationalistic or Continental context. Those who chose to defend the English organ, therefore, found refuge in traditional aesthetic values which stressed the need to preserve a distinct English cultural identity in general music-making as well as in the organ world. The rebuilding of towns and cities thus paralleled attempts to reestablish the authority of valued aspects of English culture of which the English organ was only one such artifact.

In a series of presidential addresses, William Harris, President of the Royal College of Organists, effectively summarised many of the appreciative views expressed about the English organ since 1901. He supported the idea of the organist as a general practitioner of culture, asserted the progressive nature of the organ and its benefits for performance, and disdained the use of period instruments, casting doubt on Continental trends in organ building. Harris’s opinions, though they reiterate well-established themes explored in previous chapters, are worth noting because they were to provide a vital defensive strategy.

Defence of English culture was reliant on the image of an English Renaissance which characterises English music-making from the end of the nineteenth century to the Second World War. In 1946 Harris said:

What has been called the English Musical Renaissance may be said to date from about eighty years ago. Since then there has appeared a continual succession of native composers, who have poured forth a regular flow of typical English music

¹⁶ David Osmond-Smith, ‘New beginnings: the international avant-garde, 1945–62’, in Nicholas Cook and Anthony Pople (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Music* (Cambridge, 2004), 337. See also ‘Individualism and accessibility: the moderate mainstream, 1945–75’, in *Cambridge History*, 364–394.

¹⁷ The programme went on air on 29 September 1946.

¹⁸ Osmond-Smith, ‘New beginnings’, 337.

[...] while at the present time there are many composers living whose past achievement is rich in promise for the future. At no time since the Tudor period has there been so widespread an interest in music and so much general musical activity in all grades of life and society, nor has music occupied so important a place in schemes of education and in the life of the community as it has in recent years.¹⁹

Harris justified his contention that the post-war era would revitalize music-making by comparing it to the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, something which, according to him, ‘opened the golden period of Elizabethan music and literature’. This forced him to ask whether 1945 would inaugurate a similar period in which the arts would flourish:

To what extent was the wonderful musical fecundity which followed the year 1588 due, in part, to the emotional release and spiritual reaction which followed the defeat of the Spanish Armada, or, in other words, which followed the dispersion of those dark threats of political subjection and religious persecution which had hung over the people of this country for several years? Will the conditions of 1945 which resemble in so remarkable a manner those of 1588 lead to any similar result?²⁰

But the most interesting part of Harris’s speech comes when he views the defeat of both the Armada and of Nazi Germany as the victory of English values. Both conflicts, according to Harris, stemmed from the foreign wish to impose ‘upon us [...] a particular creed of religion. In 1588 this was the Roman Catholic religion with the Spanish Inquisition, its tortures and its burnings in the background. In 1945 it was the Nazi creed with the Gestapo and the concentration camp’.²¹

Although Harris’s remarks about the Catholic Church are harsh, such sentiments expressed immediately after the war are understandable and underscore the urgency with which some defended English music-making in the wake of increasing challenges. One way to defend the organ was to praise the virtues of the multifaceted role of the English organist. Like many other organists, Harris echoed Parry’s sentiments, commenting in August 1946: ‘the organist belongs to one of the oldest and most distinctive branches of the musical profession. The names of many of those who have held posts as organists still form some of the chief landmarks in the musical

¹⁹ William Harris, ‘Distribution of Diplomas, January 1946’, *MT*, 87 (February 1946), 53.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 53-54.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 53.

history of this country.’²² ‘They probably know more about orchestral and chamber music than many concert artists, solo pianists and violinists know about ecclesiastical music.’²³ So for Harris, the *organist* was not a mere church musician, itself a virtuous position requiring the musician to show proficiency in conducting, organ playing, and administration, but an especially influential leader in the wider musical community. For example, many of the Directors of the Royal College of Music and Principals of the Royal Academy of Music were organists. He concluded by giving ‘all honour’ to the organist as ‘the G.P.s [general practitioners] of music!’.

Admiration for ‘English’ music-making, of which the organist was a vital ingredient, was coupled to a long established sentiment of valorizing modern instruments. Harris expected organists to give personal readings which evaded issues of what we may now call performance practice. To add weight to his argument he appealed to the authority of his teacher, Sir Walter Parratt, stating that this master would have been sceptical of a ‘certain School which says in effect: “Play the music of Bach as Bach would have played it”’.²⁴ Harris does not name the guilty party but it is not difficult to imagine he means Arnold or Carl Dolmetsch, or Susi Jeans. As he put it:

The old question arises: should we play eighteenth-century music as we think the eighteenth century would have played it; or give free rein to our fancy which must inevitably be coloured by twentieth-century ideals of interpretation? Some there are who would say, and with some show of reason, that we are not justified in playing Bach as if it were nineteenth-century romantic music, like Chopin, for example. Then we turn to those intimate, sensitive and incomparably beautiful Chorale Preludes. If that isn’t romantic music, what is? Are we to be content to play them insensitively? It is a measure of their greatness, their sheer independence of time, place and period, that they can stand various ways of interpretation, and surely their beauty is enhanced when they are treated sensitively.²⁵

According to Harris, then, Bach’s Chorale Preludes were manifestations of the sublime in music and this required an organist to use whatever means to express every subtle nuance in the music. It was thus odd to negate the expression of sublime values when the music’s first purpose was to express this.

²² William Harris, ‘Distribution of Diplomas, July 1946’, *MT*, 87 (August 1946), 247.

²³ _____, ‘Distribution of Diplomas, January 1947’, *MT*, 88 (February 1947), 66.

²⁴ _____, ‘Distribution of Diplomas, July 1947’, *MT*, 88 (August 1947), 262.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

In the same article, moreover, it becomes clear that modern instruments enable readings of works from a past generation which exceed the limitations posed by old instruments. As such Bach's music, for example, was better suited to the then contemporary organ than a Silbermann instrument to name just one builder associated with Bach:

We do not know how Bach would have played it, but we do know the kind of instrument on which he had to play. I remember going to Arnstadt and seeing in the Museum close by the Church, the little two-manual organ on which Bach played as a young man. How such music as the big Fantasia in G, which he composed about that time, could have been inspired by such an instrument is a mystery.

Harris's defence of the English organ thus supports earlier views, like those held by Richards (Chapter three) and Atkins (Chapter four), that this instrument provided a suitable medium for all repertoires, but that progress in organ building improved possibilities for expression in Bach's music:

I think if Bach were alive today, and could address this meeting, he would say: 'My works when I wrote them were deeply felt. It is for you organists to try and reveal their secret. You are not bound by the limitations I had to accept or by the inadequacy of the instruments on which I had to perform. My Chorale Preludes contain my most intimate thoughts; try and feel the poetry of them, and to express them. You have modern resources, some of them splendid, some of them not so splendid. Choose carefully, and don't be pedantic...' And Walter Parratt, standing by, would echo his words.²⁶

Such modern instruments could do more than provide a simple rendition of the notes: they allowed the musician to engage with poetical readings.

In unlocking the secrets of Bach's works, Harris's concept of 'performance' appeals to intuitive methods which claim their authority from their ability to exceed the limitations posed by Bach's organ. To this end, Harris promoted the modern organ and showed distaste for what he understood of the reforms undertaken in Germany and other northern countries. He supported the progressive views held by some of his predecessors who held the position of President of the RCO. He briefly noted how 'during the past thirty or forty years many novel and original developments have taken place in organ building and there is an immense gap between the organs

²⁶ Harris (August 1947), 261.

of 1864 and those of 1946'.²⁷ This progressive instrument made it difficult for Harris to accept some Continental views on organ building. Harris stated: 'there is some very ugly, coarse, inferior tone in the world at present and people on the whole seem not to mind so long as there is plenty of it. Are our ears becoming less sensitive?'.²⁸ He does not specify details, but it is probable that he was criticizing the *Orgelbewegung*, whose ideas had been noted in the English press from the early 1930s. Harris's distaste for these instruments was noted in 1979 by Lionel Dakers, Assistant Organist at St George's Chapel under Harris (1950-55), who stated that: 'the word 'Baroque' was anathema to Sir William Harris. To him it meant squeaky un-organlike sounds from across the channel.'²⁹

For Harris, then, the various aspects of English organ culture – its organists, its instruments, and its playing – appear inextricably linked and support the idea of a healthy musical environment which was inaugurated by the English Renaissance. He showed no hesitation in concluding that 'there is a live tradition of British organ playing which I for one believe to be second to none in the world'.³⁰

Despite the resistance to change by significant personalities, baiting talk of reform continued to interest critics. Willis, for example, continued to engage in debates, excoriating the conservatism of some organists. In a 1949 letter to the New Jersey politician Emerson Richards, an influential voice in the American organ world, Willis complained about organists' conservatism: '99% of organists here do not want to go back beyond the period named and so hidebound are they that it is difficult to persuade them that there are some pre-1851 ideals of tonal design and apportionment that are worthy of incorporation alongside the now accepted

²⁷ William Harris, 'Distribution of Diplomas, July 1946', *MT*, 87 (August 1946), 245.

²⁸ _____, 'Distribution of Diplomas, January 1947', *MT*, 88 (February 1947), 66.

²⁹ Lionel Dakers, 'Organ Design Today' *MT*, 119 (April 1978), 351-353.

³⁰ William Harris, 'Distribution of Diplomas, July 1947', *MT*, 88 (August 1947), 262.

English tradition.³¹ Perhaps Harris could be included in Willis' list of those he deemed to be insular organists. But despite his supposed appreciation of organ history, Continental instruments, and his keenness to promote himself as something of an anti-establishment figure, Willis was reluctant to progress beyond the Farm Street aesthetic. A paper delivered to the Musical Association on 20 March 1947, reveals that Willis maintained the supremacy of the English organ, peppered with eclectic additions.³²

In his 1947 address Willis summarised many of the complaints which had already been levied against the English organ: 'Pedal organs were emasculated and reduced in instruments of otherwise normal size to two or three stops. Upper work was frowned upon by the organists of the time as 'shrieking apparatus' and an astonishing craze for huge unison tone – diapasons – developed.'³³ Willis, like some other organists, seemed to place the blame on Hope-Jones and the instrument which he built for Worcester Cathedral in 1897. There is nothing new in Willis's claims. As the previous two chapters have shown, organists had identified these developments as hindering the organ's progress since at least 1901.

Nevertheless what is interesting in Willis's paper is his attempt to follow his protest with an affirmation of the value of some features of old organs, and a quest to establish norms for modern organ construction. He seemed concerned – even obsessed – with trying to reinstitute what he deemed to be the organ's backbone, a basic structure which, according to Willis, originated in the eighteenth century:

The true basis of organ design, as formed in the 17th century in Germany, Italy and France, is not one that can be departed from without loss, and electric actions, detached consoles, adjustable pistons, availability of high wind pressures and other devices science has placed in our hands must not divert us from the correct principles governing the design of that wholly individual instrument-the organ. I must express my own strongly held opinion that progress in any art must not –

³¹ Willis to Emerson Richards, 5 December 1949, in Callahan, 318-319.

³² Willis, 'The Organ, Its History and Development'.

³³ *Ibid.*, 64.

indeed cannot – disregard and pass over the sound foundation and beauties of the past, but must build upon them.³⁴

Perhaps Willis went into further details when he first delivered the paper but sadly he fails to offer any more significant thoughts when the address was published. His published article reveals that he appealed to Whig hermeneutics of progress. In other words, whatever the merits of particular features of, say, a sixteenth-century Italian organ, they could only provide a foundation on which another structure could be constructed. So what Willis is referring to could be a simple homage to the past with reference to a particular chorus structure, but one which ignored original scaling practices.

Whilst Willis only paid a compliment to the past, some voices showed a greater desire to uncouple themselves from modern building and engage with past models of organ design. The pre- 1870 English organ continued to draw attention, leading some to investigate the works of William Hill, partly preserved by his son. An anonymous letter from an organ builder sent to Bernard Edmonds in 1948 reveals such opinions:

One of the builders about whose work we do not enthuse enough is William Hill and Son [...] I have great admiration for the solid and aristocratic style of this firm's work, and their unpretentious but classical voicing and tonal schemes [...] Certainly they did more to uphold and maintain that classical organ than did Father Willis with all his genius. He, I think, was a little overcome with his brilliant and masterly powers of creating the tone qualities, both reed and flue, which he had in mind; but if he had studied the organ as a musical instrument more, built in a more classical style, and cased his instruments with worthy cases, he would, with his immense ability, have been the greatest of all builders without question.³⁵

According to the writer, Hill's instruments demonstrated a greater balance in catering for polyphonic and homophonic music, something which was upset by later builders. Here the writer is referring to the way the organ's principal chorus is scaled and voiced so that no part of the stop's range dominates the other, thus obscuring contrapuntal clarity:

Unfortunately this country has never realised in anything like a general sense that the organ is just as much, if not more, a polyphonic and contrapuntal instrument as

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 66.

³⁵ Letter (1948) sent to B. B. Edmonds, quoted in Bernard Edmonds, 'Notes and queries', *BIOSR*, 11 (July 1987), 11. Edmonds does not name the builder concerned.

a symphonic one [...] This with the pernicious practice of high pressure voicing (only really justified in rare instances), lack of the understanding of the functions of mixtures and mutations, that dreadful blight 'extension', and you have some of the reasons why the organ has earned for itself the character of being no longer regarded as a musical instrument by musicians. [...] If organ building is to improve in the near future it has got to be shorn of a lot of its so-called 'improvements'. A radio does not make a household civilised, any more than an adjustable piston makes an organ a work of art.³⁶

Perhaps the writer was also concerned at the way Hill's instruments (or those of earlier builders) were 'improved' by the application of electric action, registration aids, new voices, and revoicing of the ranks to suit current musical tastes.³⁷

Rewriting the past: Geraint Jones at Steinkirchen

But no matter how strongly critics favoured historic organs, there was little hope of any practical consequences: influential organists like Harris were not interested; and those in some position to undertake reform, like Willis, could not betray the family name. It was left to Jones to revitalize the organ world through his Bach recordings from Steinkirchen. Given the growing enthusiasm or distaste for early music and period instruments, it is hardly surprising that these recordings – on an 'early' instrument – should attract interest. Indeed the increasingly polemical environment forced organists into a state of war when Jones's recordings were broadcast by the BBC in 1950.

Jones's visit to Steinkirchen was, in fact, the result of a British Council policy to improve relations between the two countries following the war. As Jones retrospectively stated:

In September 1949 I was dispatched to Germany by the British Council on a recital tour, one of many similar events designed to begin the process of restoring normal relations after the war. The first week of concerts ended in Hamburg, and Kenneth Bartlett, who was the British Council officer accompanying my trip, asked me what I would like to do over the weekend, there was a car available, etc... [sic] Thus began my acquaintance with the celebrated north German organ builder Arp Schnitger, as we explored the Altes Land.³⁸

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ This issue continues to prove controversial. As Thistlethwaite stated in 1980: 'We still get reports of English organ builders throwing out mechanical actions and applying electrics to old organs, when a competent builder could easily overhaul and regulate the original trackers. We still hear of megalomaniac organists wanting to destroy an intact historic instrument in order to have the self-glorification of ten more stop knobs (or perhaps, stop keys) and those nice little white buttons in the key-slip.' See Nicholas Thistlethwaite, 'Editorial', *BIOSR*, 4 (October 1980), 4.

Jones's politically-charged visits were part of a series of musical activities. For example, the Council sponsored a visit by Malcolm Sargent and Leon Goossens to the Graz Music Festival in 1945.³⁹

Paradoxically what began as a social and political project to improve relations between the two countries soon descended into controversy. But this is hardly surprising. Jones's recordings gave British ears a dose of Bach's music from an organ which seemed to violate the perceived perfection of the English organ. And this happened at a time when talk of period instruments and playing techniques was gaining increasing momentum as a subject for debate.

Jones's playing was controversial precisely because it was regarded as trying to correct the mistakes which British organists were making. As Norman states 'it took Geraint Jones' post-war recordings [...] to really stir up the argument on the correct way to interpret Bach'.⁴⁰ Norman does not problematize the concept of a 'correct interpretation' – correct according to what criteria? – but he points to the growing debate, as exemplified by Donington's article for example, on how to perform music by earlier masters. English ears were now faced with a Welsh musician who not only promoted the sounds of Arp Schnitger's organ, but used his broadcast as an 'argument' against English organs and the way English organists interpreted Bach's music.

The Steinkirchen organ was, therefore, at the centre of a maelstrom of activity and contention and thus provided many an opportunity for colourful and entertaining entries in the musical press. Following a broadcast one critic remarked: 'It is difficult to understand the enthusiasm that exists in certain quarters for the "baroque" or Continental instrument.'⁴¹ Other more senior musicians like Vaughan Williams also attacked the organ and their views will be discussed below.

³⁸ Geraint Jones, [article accompanying CD release of original LP recording] in 'Organists of the 1950s, iii, Geraint Jones – organ EMI Recordings of Schnitger's Organ in St. Martin & St. Nicolauskirche Church, Steinkirchen Germany Recorded 1950 – 1952', *Amphion Cds*, PHI CD 202.

³⁹ See Diane Jane Eastment, 'The policies and position of the British Council from the outbreak of war to 1950', PhD thesis, University of Leeds 1982, esp. 77.

⁴⁰ John Norman, 'Soundboard for the Tercentenary of the birth of J S Bach', *Organists' Review*, 69 (February/March 1985), 40.

⁴¹ John H. Berry, [Letter], *MO*, 74 (October 1950), 55.

Because of their novelty, Jones's recordings were, however, incredibly influential, making a significant contribution to organ pedagogy. Hurford, for one, the future influential Bach performer, 'was inspired in his own Bach performances by the broadcasts and recordings of Geraint Jones playing Bach on the organ at Steinkirchen in Germany built by Arp Schnitger in the 1680s'.⁴² In 2001, in a Saul Seminar, Hurford referred to these recordings, and whilst he stated that 'Jones's playing could breathe a little more', he admitted that the sound of Schnitger's organ was a 'traumatic revelation'.⁴³ Steinkirchen revealed how previous models of organbuilding, particularly from the eighteenth-century and earlier, emphasized clarity of texture, suiting contrapuntal music.

Not only were players influenced: Jones also influenced English organ builders. Norman noted: 'When the organ world was stirred to argument by the Geraint Jones recordings of the Schnitger organ [...Mark Fairhead, a voicer at Hill Norman & Beard] determined to try his hand at neo-Baroque voicing.'⁴⁴ The rebuild of the organ in Christ Church, Crouch End, London in 1951 was the first such project by Hill, Norman & Beard to have a stop (Chimney Flute) voiced with open feet and no nicks. The specification of the Choir organ which contained this novel feature was:

Christ Church, Crouch End (1951)

Diapason Cantablile	8
Chimney Flute	8
Viola da Gamba	8
Gemshorn	4
Flute Couverte	4
Blockflote	2
Quartane	II
Nazard	2 ² / ₃
Tierce	1 ³ / ₅
Clarinet	8
Tromba	8
Octave Tromba	4

⁴² Timothy Day, *A century of recorded music: listening to musical history* (London, 2000), 223.

⁴³ Peter Hurford, 'Performers using recordings', BIOS conference, 30 November 2002, British Sound Archive, 1CDR00122.

⁴⁴ Norman, 'Baroque Revival' 1.

The rebuild of the organ in ChristChurch Cathedral, Montreal, by the same firm in 1950 included a twelve-stop choir organ with a chorus structure and open-foot voicing.

Meanwhile it was not least in the language which linked Bach with Steinkirchen that influenced the future in a subtle way. Given that the first sounds of seventeenth-century instruments which many experienced were from north Germany and the repertoire was Bach, it is hardly surprising that the Schnitger organ was readily associated with Bach and the supposed baroque era. This connection is particularly seen in the views of those who were opposed to the baroque style being imported to England. Bonavia-Hunt asked organists and organbuilders interested in adopting baroque principles of voicing not 'to [...] sacrifice [...] all that has been developed since the days of Bach and Schnitger'.⁴⁵ So great was the Schnitger 'threat' in Britain, that another critic, Batigan Verne, stated that 'nobody wants to see the out-and-out Schnitger resurrected as the normal thing in our churches'.⁴⁶ Whilst he does not offer a deeper analysis, Verne implies that the liturgies used in various churches cannot be satisfied by a Schnitger organ. Bonavia-Hunt further warned organists about resorting to adopting Schnitger's practices, this time, bringing the familiar argument that Bach's music required a modern organ in order for the composer's *real* thoughts to be read:

I think it is bad reasoning to attribute perfection to a system associated with the artistic limitations imposed by the prevailing conditions of the period. Schnitger was tied down to certain limited material and did wonders with it, but if he were building organs in the present century (before 1939) does anyone seriously imagine that he would have confined himself to the materials of the seventeenth century? Of course not. And if Bach were, to-day, seated at the console of such organs as those at St Paul. [...] I know he would have played that wonderful ascending passage, which ends this [E flat fugue, BWV 552] fugue, on the pedal 8ft tuba. Of course he would have.⁴⁷

'Bach', perhaps transported from the perils of communism, then, found a haven in the Western controlled area of Hamburg. The lack of easy access to East Germany ensured that Bach's music fell under the shadow of the northern German tradition and the sounds of the restored Schnitger

⁴⁵ Noel Bonavia-Hunt, [Letter], *MO*, 74 (February 1951), 239.

⁴⁶ Verne, [Letter], *MO* (May 1951), 433.

⁴⁷ Noel Bonavia-Hunt, [Letter], *MO*, 74 (April 1951), 367-369.

organs in Steinkirchen (and later Capel) became readily associated with the baroque organ and the music of J. S. Bach.⁴⁸

Ralph Downes at the Royal Festival Hall

Divided opinions on Jones's recordings demonstrate the extent to which a schism was occurring. Just as they reveal how opinions, like those which linked Bach and Schnitger, were formed without critical thought, so too were opinions on Downes's new organ thrown around without an understanding of what was being proposed. But nuanced opinions were not required: people wanted labels. When critics defined their post-war world, using fashionable terms like 'baroque' and 'romantic', musicians like Downes and his critics like Vaughan Williams acted as leaders for the opposing armies. Some like Darke fell in the romantic camp; others like the young Hurford were educated by the baroque school, which received a beacon in the form of the Harrison & Harrison organ for the Royal Festival Hall. There is no doubting that the specification looked radically different from the firm's previous instruments, but the Royal Festival Hall organ was a far cry from anything eighteenth century. But then that was not its maker's aim. Downes aimed to create the *ideal* organ. In doing so, however, he inadvertently imposed an eclectic discourse on the English organ.

⁴⁸ Paradoxically, then, the quest for authenticity gave rise to the false but comforting belief that the instruments of northern Germany were most appropriate for J. S. Bach's music, an idea foreshadowed even before the fall of the Iron Curtain and still encountered today. As Clutton commented in 1980: 'So overwhelming is the figure of Bach that classical organs are almost always built round the north-German repertoire.' See Cecil Clutton, 'The Organ in the Church at Vevroux', *Organists' Review*, 65 (1980), 16. Timothy Day states that the 'authentic sonorities revealed facets of [Bach's...] music which had been obscured on the nineteenth- and twentieth-century English organs'. See Day, *A century of recorded music: listening to musical history*, 223. There is no doubt that Schnitger's voicing allowed contrapuntal music to be heard with greater clarity, if that was the player's and the listener's priority, than English Victorian organs, but the use of the term, 'authentic', suggests a direct connection between the music and the instrument. Day assumes that the Steinkirchen organ contains the exact tonal sonorities that Bach had in mind when he conceived his organ works. In the 2002 issue of the *BIOS* journal, Jack Bethards stated that 'a Bach trio sonata can be musically effective without a North German accent if the balance among stops is correct.' See Bethards, 'A Brief for the Symphonic Organ', 7. The assertion that the Hamburg tradition provides the authentic sonorities in Bach's music is understandable in view of the prestige given to Bach as successor to the northern composers, Buxtehude and Böhm, both connected with the north German organ. Bach's transportation to the north German tradition was aided by musicological thought that viewed the 'early masters' as precursors to Bach. As Christoph Wolff has successfully argued, this unfortunate scholarship has led to Buxtehude being seen as very much in the shadow of Bach, with his vocal works almost completely ignored by musicology. See Christoph Wolff, 'Buxtehude, Bach, and Seventeenth-Century Music in Retrospect', Christoph Wolff (ed.), *Bach, essays on his life and music* (London, 1991), 41-55.

In many ways Downes was influenced by the notion of a progressive English organ ideally suited to a broad range of music. The big difference is that the growing authority of historical organs – as seen through Jones’s projects – meant that Downes’s focus was on the sounds of organs which produced what he deemed to be a worthy repertoire. Given the organ’s prestigious environment, it is hardly surprising that Downes should seek an instrument which would capture the spirit of a number of disparate traditions of organ building and their associated repertoire. According to *The Times* on 28 September 1950: ‘Details of the specification of the organ for the Royal Festival Hall were announced by the L[ondon] C[ounty] C[ouncil] yesterday [...] whose aim has been to design a well-balanced instrument, suitable for the appropriate performance of organ music of all periods.’⁴⁹ In conceiving an instrument to play a broad repertoire, various traditions were married into one organ. Not only does one encounter French (eighteenth-century) reeds: these provocative admixtures are found combining Dutch, German and English fluework. Ralph Downes argued that through a revival of past techniques, particularly those developed in the seventeenth century, the organ could claim a more intimate relationship with its repertoire.

The presence of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century elements led some to brand it as baroque. In May 1950 *The Musical Opinion* claimed that ‘the scheme promises well and is no more than [...] a return to the traditional baroque organ’.⁵⁰ Even before the specification appeared in print some were anxious about this baroque tonal scheme. One observer of unknown profession commented: ‘If rumour is correct the organ to be installed in the Concert Hall for the 1951 Exhibition is to be a “Ralph Downes, Susi Jeans” set up, and the organ will be composed chiefly of stops of the quint and $1\frac{2}{3}$ variety, or, in other words, very un-English.’⁵¹ By bringing Susi Jeans into the picture, the writer obviously wished to connect Jeans’s baroque registrations with the organ’s tonal scheme.

⁴⁹ Anon., [Letter] *The Times* (28 September 1950), 6.

⁵⁰ Anon., *MO*, (May 1950), 10.

⁵¹ Leonard Ashby, [Letter] *MO*, 73 (August 1950), 674.

The debate took place at higher levels and whilst the term baroque was avoided, Downes's scheme tended to be viewed as biased against English aesthetics. There was concern that the organ would threaten the superiority of the English organ. In May 1950 Dr Reginald Thatcher, Principal of the Royal Academy of Music, wrote to the Clerk of the London Council stating: 'I feel that the Festival Hall is not the setting for an instrument of Continental design, so widely contrasted with the traditional type with which our fine organists are familiar, and in the building of which our craftsmen excel.'⁵²

Some, however, understood that Downes wanted an instrument which would perform a number of different functions. In a letter to the Clerk, Geraint Jones stated:

Mr R D's scheme is a long overdue attempt to provide in England an instrument [...], for example, like the Aeolian Skinner organ in Symphony Hall, Boston, which will blend perfectly with an orchestra, give an authentic flavour to classical organ music, and be equally adapted to solo recitals or accompaniment.

At the present time there is not one single instrument in the British Isles which measures up to these requirements. [...] Mr Downes' critics would have us believe these defects to be virtues. I am firmly convinced the execution of Mr Downes' scheme has only to match the integrity of its design for it to be, as far as this country is concerned, a unique achievement. Any opposition to it can be due only to those constant enemies of progress: ignorance, prejudice, or both.⁵³

It is interesting to note how Jones seems to divide the organ world in two: those like Harris who support the English organ, and those like himself who wish to combine different schools. It does not seem to occur to Jones that there may be musicians who were unsatisfied with the English organ but did not believe that the path lay in an eclectic aesthetic – perhaps the Dolmetsch family?

Whilst Jones understood what Downes wanted, his design was by no means understood in the wider musical world. Many seemed obsessed with demonstrating their antipathy towards what they labelled as baroque organs. The baroque controversy provoked an outcry from Ralph Vaughan Williams. His letter to *The Times* became one of the most famous outbursts of criticism levied against the Royal Festival Hall:

⁵² Dr Thatcher to Clerk of the Council, 8 May 1950, Royal College of Organists, Royal Festival Hall. For information on Thatcher see Harold Rutland, 'Sir Reginald Thatcher', *MT*, 98 (July 1957), 394.

⁵³ Jones to the Clerk of the Council, 8 May 1950, Royal College of Organists, Royal Festival Hall.

I admit that we have some bad organs in England, but at their worst they cannot surely make so nasty a noise as most of those on the Continent. As to [for?] the so-called 'Baroque' organ, which I presume, I have heard at its best at the hands of the most distinguished performers, I can only compare it to a barrel organ in the street.

Vaughan Williams named some authority to back up his statements and he called on the help of

J. S. Bach:

This type of instrument is said to be right for playing Bach. For myself I want nothing better than Bach as played by Dr Harold Darke on his typically English organ at St. Michael's Cornhill.⁵⁴

The vehemence with which Vaughan Williams responded to the debate on historical instruments demonstrates the force with which he believed ancient instruments had no role to play in the modern world.

But Vaughan Williams is a slightly ambivalent figure who based his assumptions with reference to a very narrow field of knowledge regarding organs. At a meeting held at the London County Council on 10 May 1952, at which significant musicians debated the merits of the proposed specification, Vaughan Williams stated: 'I have really come here on false pretences. You did me the honour to invite me, but I know very little about organs.'⁵⁵ Nevertheless he described his preference in organ design with reference to particular English instruments:

I do, however, know in my own mind, at all events, what is a nice sound and what is a nasty sound. To my mind I want to say quite definitely, the English cathedral organ tone – the diapasons and the light, beautifully soft mixtures such as we hear in St Paul's or the old Temple Church organ – is one of the most beautiful things I know, and if we lose that in our organ world we lose something very valuable.

Continental organs, as can be imagined, did not impress the composer: 'I have heard not many, but a certain amount of, Continental organs, and to my mind they make a most repulsive sound.'

In making his decision, Vaughan Williams indirectly referred to the Steinkirchen organ and

Geraint Jones:

⁵⁴ Ralph Vaughan Williams, [Letter] *The Times* (14 January 1951).

⁵⁵ For members' information only – S.O.124, Verbatim report of General Purposes (South Bank) Sub-Committee held at the County Hall on Wednesday, 10 May 1952. Members present: Sir Howard Roberts, Clerk of the Council, Mr Ralph Downes – Consultant, Mr C T L Harrison – Organ builder, Sir George Dyson, Dr Vaughan Williams, Dr G. Thalben Ball President of the RCO, Mr Arnold Greir, Mr Frank Howes Music critic of "The Times", Royal College of Organists, Royal Festival Hall.

There is one organ, which, I understand, is the ideal of the Baroque pattern of organ – its quality is very, very distinct: it is played on by a very distinguished artist in Europe and I presume we could take it as the Baroque organ at its best. I expect you know the particular organ to which I am referring. I think it makes the most unpleasant sound I have ever heard and I much prefer a barrel organ!

In Vaughan Williams's essentialism, the 'baroque' label is inappropriately applied to a number of disparate instruments from different countries.

The urgency to protect the English organ perhaps betrays an underlying anxiety and uncertainty about the instrument as a traditional British product. Moreover, it is vital to understand that as well as promoting the stability of a national organ, Vaughan Williams perhaps finds comfort in the fact that these organs, especially the 'old' Temple Church instrument, had stood the test of time. The composer wished to avoid a situation in which the English organ would be exchanged for a Continental one, thus causing the original product to lose its identity. Vaughan Williams had previously demonstrated how much English musical culture mattered to him. His *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis* (1910), for example, harked back to Tudor times and shows how he could pay reverence to past English composers in a modern manner. As Franklin has commented: Vaughan Williams demonstrated a 'persona in which modern and traditional elements were joined, in a many faceted discourse, with the politics of nationalism.'⁵⁶ But these nationalistic overtones appear somewhat diluted when one considers that although Vaughan Williams studied with Parry at the RCM, in 1907 he travelled to Paris to study with Ravel. As Byron Adams comments: 'Here was a man who declared publicly that British composers should stay true to their native roots and eschew foreign influences, and yet he sent Grace Williams, one of his most gifted pupils at the Royal College of Music, to study with Egon Wellesz in Vienna.'⁵⁷ So Vaughan Williams appears to have occupied an ambivalent position, one which was extremely volatile and prone to nationalistic overtones.

⁵⁶ Franklin, 'Between the wars', 193.

⁵⁷ Adams, 'Forward', 5.

The lack of knowledge concerning organs, therefore, is compensated by the overpowering belief that the organ should remain true to its English roots. But in the wake of increasing criticism, some musicians, unlike Vaughan Williams, were prepared to concede to some of the reformers' demands, with the proviso that Continental sounds were added to an *English* foundation. George Dyson stated that in his opinion the organ should begin with an English foundation, 'traditional timbre and the traditional wind pressures – I mean traditional here – things people are accustomed to using' to which one can 'add as much as you like.'⁵⁸ The hypothetical English foundation would thus give the organ, which was heading hastily down towards eclecticism, stability. Similarly, Arnold Grier commented 'I feel that the fault – if there is a fault – is the lack of solidity of tone, I feel, having had vast experience of this sort of thing, that it is the foundation that I look at in the specification, and I find it is what I call the real organ tone which is missing. It seems to me, if I may say so, that there is no foundation or breadth – it is all top.'⁵⁹ The music critic for *The Times*, Frank Howes, also present was a little cautious in his appraisal but still reached similar conclusions: 'There is far too much thickness in the traditional organ and there is too much unbalance in the voicing, but this is rushing to the other extreme with a vengeance.'⁶⁰

This is not to say that Downes conceded to their demands, but the discourses which conditioned Dyson's and Vaughan Williams's responses acted (perhaps subconsciously) on Downes. So whilst he sought to create an instrument which broke with an English mode of organ building, its largely unencased pipes, electropneumatic action, and 'traditional' approach to organ building (except for voicing) made it have significant ties with the immediate past.⁶¹

⁵⁸ George Dyson, quoted in 'For members' information only – S.O.124, Verbatim report of General Purposes (South Bank) Sub-Committee held at the County Hall on Wednesday, 10 May 1952', Royal College of Organists, Royal Festival Hall.

⁵⁹ Arnold Grier, quoted in 'For members' information only – S.O.124'. For biographical details see Anon., 'Arnold Greir', *MT*, 115 (September 1974), 779.

⁶⁰ Frank Howes, quoted in 'For members' information only – S.O.124'.

⁶¹ The principal instruments with which Downes was associated all had electric actions: Buckfast Abbey (1947), Brompton Oratory (1954), Paisley Abbey (1968), St Alban's Cathedral (1963), Gloucester Cathedral (1971).

Organ war, 1952-1954

The debates show that there were two broad images of the organ, and perhaps the nation, being promoted. Whilst some showed loyalty to a nationalistic creed, others looked to the Continent for inspiration mixing this with elements of English aesthetics. It was against this background that the editor of the *Musical Times*, Martin Du Pré Cooper, invited various personalities connected with the debates to reveal their agendas within the pages of this journal. Cooper had voiced significant criticisms of English organ culture in 1938, so it is perhaps not surprising that he should wish to provoke further debate on the matter. George Dyson, Felix Aprahamian, Geraint Jones, Harold Darke, and Thomas Armstrong were all asked to contribute.⁶² It is not clear whether they were asked to comment on particular areas but each chose a different aspect of organ culture with which to prosecute or defend the English organ. Their arguments summarise many of the views advanced in the immediate post-war world. Particular feature will be made of arguments given by Jones and Darke as they represent both sides of an increasing factious organ world.

That defence of the English organ was closely tied with the multifaceted function of the English *organist* is clear from Dyson's contribution: 'There is no more able and versatile branch of the musical profession. The place of the organist in musical history is remarkable. Tallis and Weelkes, John Blow and Purcell, Bach and Handel, to take typical names at random, and scores of their contemporaries in each characteristic period and place, belong to the succession.'⁶³ But Dyson was keen to draw attention to the English organists: 'The English roll is both eminent and unbroken down to our own day. [...] I once jokingly suggested a series of monographs on famous organists, to begin with Sir Arthur Sullivan, Sir Henry Wood, and Dr. Vaughan Williams, all of whom held important church appointments in London. Also in or near the organ-loft were

⁶² George Dyson, 'Of Organs and Organists', *MT*, 93 (November 1952), 491-492; Jones, 'Is the Organ a Musical Instrument?'; Felix Aprahamian, 'Of Organs and Organists (III): The Organist as Performer', *MT*, 94 (January 1953), 9-20. Darke, 'Defence'; John Redmayne, 'Of Organs and Organists (V): A 'Non-Professional' Viewpoint', *MT*, 94 (March 1953), 111-113; Thomas Armstrong, 'Of Organs and Organists (VI): The Organist in the Community', *MT*, 94 (April 1953), 163-164.

⁶³ Dyson, 'Of Organs and Organists', all at 491.

Mackenzie, Parry and Stanford, John Ireland, Herbert Howells and Malcolm Sargent.’ Dyson is keen to promote the idea that figures like Vaughan Williams, who were not primarily known as organists, were, in fact, connected with the profession in some way: ‘Some time ago an important administrative musical appointment was made, and an in-dependent observer quite truly and justly re-marked: “Of course, another organist”. Organists do in fact tend to occupy a very large proportion of the institutional and administrative posts in our musical world.’ Dyson, too, held a prominent position as Director of the Royal College of Music.

But such comments did little to persuade critics who were searching for new organs and new manners of playing them. Indeed, one wonders to what extent promoters of reform were motivated by what they considered conservative opposition to their quest for reform. Aprhanian thought that Dyson’s *organist* prevented him from seeing how the organ world was increasingly isolated from developments in the wider world, by which he referred to early music – ‘The organ now nearing completion in the Royal Festival Hall is not an isolated phenomenon, the whim of one organist among so many, the extravagance of a well-endowed municipality. It crystallizes a tendency which has been in the air for some time, although organists and organ-builders here have been the last to sense this. It is only one aspect of an increased awareness in regard to music and its performance.’⁶⁴

The most forceful response from the reformers came in an article by Jones entitled ‘Is the Organ a Musical Instrument?’, in which he laid siege to the very foundations of organ pedagogy in England. He opposed Dyson’s comments, stating that the organ was an unpopular instrument and this was largely due to: (1) contemporary organ design which had masked the true essence of an organ which, according to Jones, should be based on seventeenth-century principles, including polyphonic clarity; (2) a lack of logical bonds between the organists’ repertoire and contemporary organ design; (3) an overabundance of orchestral transcriptions at the expense of real organ

⁶⁴ Aprhanian, ‘Organist as Performer’, 19.

music; and (4) performances of J. S. Bach's works which showed no relationship with the organs known to Bach and their implications for performance. In other words, men like Dyson were to blame for the present state of affairs. Not all of Jones's points, however, can be accepted at face value. For example, it has already been shown that the Organ Music Society did much to promote real organ music, yet Jones does not acknowledge these initiatives. Neither does he acknowledge the debates which had surrounded the organ from the beginning of the century.

Jones was adamant that English organs served no musical purpose – by which he meant that they failed to have those characteristics which Jones considered necessary for organ music. He used the organ (now restored) in the Royal Albert Hall as an example of an instrument whose musical merits should be questioned:

All our organs are a medley of sounds, often excellent in themselves but never related to a specific whole with a musical purpose. The excellence of the so-called full swell or the strings, or the Tubas – all these are quite secondary. Consider just one example – the Albert Hall instrument. It boasts a number of excellent individual sounds. Yet for all its vast (and quite unnecessary) size, the disparity between the relative dynamics of its various flue choruses renders impossible an adequate performance of any major work by Bach, leaving aside entirely the question of the unsuitable colours of those choruses. Neither is there any real balance between the pedal and manual flue choruses. Indeed in view of the extraordinary variations in the dynamics of the manual choruses no pedal organ however large could hope to be adequate for this purpose. Moreover the flute mutation stops, which are the only entirely characteristic source of colour an organ possesses, however fine the quality of the reed stops, are entirely unrepresented in this mammoth instrument.⁶⁵

Jones argues about organ construction by applying competing sets of values to representatives of the various traditions – Royal Albert Hall and Steinkirchen – which he defended with reference to his criterion for the interpretation of music.

In testing an organ's value, Bach's music was perfect. This is hardly surprising since Bach's music fell into the 'early' category, was a high point of the organists' repertoire, and had

⁶⁵ Jones (December 1952), 543-544. The organ in the Royal Albert Hall was originally built by Henry Willis in 1871; it was enlarged by Harrison & Harrison between 1924 and 1933, and restored by Mander Organs between 2002 and 2004.

already caused a revolution in the 1830s when organists equipped their instruments to play his music.

Jones's mode of interpretation was based on a method which sought to read the composers' thoughts 'correctly'. Paradoxically this aesthetic had already manifested itself in the views of Richards (chapter three) and Harris who believed that Bach composed his works for some future instrument. The difference now is that Jones elevates historical instruments to a form of authority. So whilst the idea of unlocking the secrets of Bach's music remained intact, then, the thought that this was achieved by the progressive nature of the English organ was replaced by an appeal to history.

The authority claimed was based on a criterion of values pertaining to Jones's experiences at Steinkirchen. Jones valorized the organ partly because it was built by a famous builder during the so-called baroque period which produced Bach's works. Jones therefore set out to prove how what he heard in the instrument's sound was related to how he thought of Bach's organ works. Jones believed that 'Bach's style depends more on clarity of texture than on any other single factor.' And this was instantly apparent at Steinkirchen: '[Bach's] skill in writing for keyboard instruments is [...] apparent when we hear his music on the instruments for which it was written.'⁶⁶ Thus Jones established that organs had to have balanced choruses (equal in dynamics), and a voicing (and scaling practice) which allowed contrapuntal lines to be heard in a manner which he thought acceptable.

Thus modern organs fail to satisfy Jones precisely because they break with a 'primitive' tradition which produced the contrapuntal organs which, in turn, produced Bach's works. He was all too ready to provoke the other side stating that modern organ design failed due 'to the almost total ignorance which prevails concerning the basic essentials of organ design as exemplified in the instruments which have survived from the Golden Age of organ music.' Thus for Jones, non-

⁶⁶ Jones, 'Musical Instrument?', 543.

organists could be forgiven for questioning the English organ's claim to be a musical instrument: they 'never hear the movement of the parts when Bach is played on the modern organ.'⁶⁷

Because English organists lack an understanding of seventeenth and eighteenth-century organs, their performances of Bach's music, according to Jones, owe very little to performance conventions in Bach's time. With the aid of a *Gramophone* music critic, Jones advances the thesis that organists relied on many stop changes to impart interest to Bach's music, something which was unnecessary, indeed, disagreeable. The critic, referring to several recent organ recordings (without mentioning names), condemns organists who revel in registering Bach's music with the modern organ's big sonorous sounds:

Chiefly it is a case of Bach versus the modern organ. Ever since the invention of that hideous Minotaur, the great nineteenth-century organ, executants like Rheinberger and Widor, intoxicated (it would seem) by the sheer weight of sound at their command, have poured out organ music in comparison with which Tchaikovsky's finales are mere tinkling cymbals. That is all very well for those who like it, but when it comes to registering Bach in the same manner, we must protest that a serious misconception has taken place.⁶⁸

Such opinions, despite their force, say little about why particular aspects of these instruments – balanced choruses – merit our attention over other aspects of these instruments. Why, for example, does Jones fail to mention the organ's mechanical action and its function in interpreting Bach's music? The use of mechanical action had been discussed as early as 1915 by Dolmetsch and even such figures as Alcock, recognized its merits. It is perplexing why other features of the old instruments are ignored when other musicians were discussing them. So whilst Jones summarizes some of the opinions previously aired, he fails to offer a critique of seventeenth-century organs.

At a time when Jones and other musicians lambaste the English organ for its musical failures, Harold Darke (1888-1976) provides one of the strongest buttresses girding this organ, a

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 544, 543.

⁶⁸ Anon., *Gramophone* (August 1952), quoted in Jones, 'Musical Instrument?', 543-544.

structure which was increasingly under siege. A few months after Geraint's Jones's article was published, Darke, an organist of considerable repute, quickly came to the English organ's defence with a response appropriately entitled, 'In defence of tradition'.⁶⁹ For some, Harold Darke is best remembered for his setting of Christina Rossetti's Christmas carol, *In the Bleak Midwinter*, but he was a widely respected musician who, according to *The Times* in 1963, exerted 'considerable influence in more than one musical field.'⁷⁰

It is significant that Darke should begin his article by defending the position of organist – just as Dyson had done, but his aim was to challenge the authority of historical instruments as promoted by Jones. According to Darke, a performance had to communicate what the player discovered in a certain work and only a modern instrument which offered the player greater expressive means (swell box, range of stops) could offer him the means to achieve this. There is a certain frustration in Darke when he grapples with Jones's dismissal of such instruments:

How can any musician play those wonderful Chorale Preludes, or the slow movements of the [Trio] Sonatas, without a realization of their transcendent beauty? Could a violinist possibly play 'Have mercy' from the St. Matthew Passion without being moved to the depths of his soul? Could any choir sing the 'Crucifixus' or 'Qui Tollis' from the B minor Mass without any sense of tone colour, without any feeling for the beauty of the music?⁷¹

Darke touches on the player's artistic freedom to discover what the music means for himself. He justifies intuitive performance by appealing to the performer's musicianship in conveying the beauty of the music to the listener.

The use of baroque organs seemed incongruous to those who appealed to intuition and believed that the modern organ offered the performer the greatest possibilities. One senses some irritation when Darke is forced to comment on the relationship between a historical study of instruments and its implications for modern-day performances: 'Do we really want to hear Bach played as if it were a museum piece on the same kind of organ as Bach played on – or as they

⁶⁹ Darke, 'Defence', 64-65.

⁷⁰ Anon., 'Musician Who Plays The Organ, Dr. Harold Darke at Seventy-five', *The Times* (24 October 1963), 15.

⁷¹ Darke, 'In Defence of Tradition', 65.

would like us to imagine he played on? Are we to ignore all the refinements of beauty of tone which have developed in organ-building during the centuries?’⁷² Baroque organs were viewed as being a severe handicap to the expressivity that lay within Bach’s music. They could not, according to these historical actors, do justice to Bach’s works when other (modern) instruments could unlock the secrets that lay within the music.

One is drawn to the way Darke discusses music – something not present in Jones’s critique – but Darke did little more than expand on the opinions offered by Vaughan Williams; he was unable to discuss the organs in question in greater detail. There is no evidence that Darke was acquainted with seventeenth-century organs other than through Jones’s broadcasts. He was, therefore, unable to engage critically with the organs in a climate in which increasing attention was drawn to these instruments (as demonstrated by the articles which appeared in *The Organ*). Indeed in a letter to *The Musical Times*, Jack Westrup asked Darke for precise details regarding what was wrong with the instruments which he dismissed – ‘If we are to have something more constructive than pious condemnation we need to know what it is precisely that is anathema to Dr. Darke – wind-pressure, balance, voicing, or whatever it may be.’⁷³ One can therefore conclude that whilst, Jones neglected the subtle nuances between various seventeenth-century organs, Darke lacked the knowledge to offer a critical response.

A variety of critics took part in a debate about the organ, but one which also reveals the concerns that preoccupied the individuals within this musical arena. When critics, like Jones, attacked the English organ, they were perceived to be eroding a multifaceted structure, administered by a general practitioner of music – the organist – and crowned by an instrument which was an asset to English music making, the progressive organ. To defend the organ from

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Jack A. Westrup, ‘Style in Organ-Playing’, *MT*, 94 (March 1953), 124.

these attacks, musicians like Vaughan Williams and Darke stressed the organ's authority in counterpoint with other discourses like the role of *organist*.

Chapter 6

New beginnings, 1954-1965

The age of the monster organ transcription is over and few have mourned its passing.

Philip Brett (1962).¹

The Royal Festival Hall's organ had a mixed impact on organ culture. Certainly, the organ's prominent location brought it to the public's attention not least through six weekly Bach recitals at which André Marchal (who stood in for Fernando Germani), Geraint Jones, Harold Darke, Ralph Downes, John Dykes Bower, and Susi Jeans performed. The stipulation that all players had to play a trio sonata, chorale preludes, and free works, certainly displaced previous town hall programmes consisting of 'monster organ transcriptions'. Hearing works by a treasured composer on an unfamiliar organ provided a good vehicle for dispute and argumentation. W. R. Anderson, *The Musical Times's* radio critic, stated that 'debate, I see, is brisk about the new Festival Hall organ';² Susi Jeans concluded in April 1954 that 'discussions, letters and articles in the press show the English organ world, usually so peaceful, in a state of war, and split into two antagonistic camps, the "baroque" and the "anti-baroque"'.³ But the organ could hardly claim to have had an immediate radical impact on British organs. The new instrument in Coventry Cathedral (1962) and the rebuilt organs of St John's College, Cambridge (1954), and St Alban's

¹ Philip Brett, 'Organ Music: Rogers to Beethoven', *MT*, 102 (August 1962), 566.

² W. R. Anderson, 'Radio Music', *MT* (June 1954), 316.

³ Susi Jeans, 'Baroque Organ Problems in England', *MT*, 95 (April 1954), 183. An example of Jeans's observations may be found in one observer's remarks on the current state of 'war': 'Those who support the Baroque style decry the orthodox modern organ as a "bellowing and blasting" instrument, while their opposition tend to poke fun at "wheezy, spitting" pipework which has no nicks.' Arthur Priestley, [Letter], *MO*, 77 (May 1954), 497.

Cathedral (1962) were examples of instruments which retained strong connections with English aesthetics coupled with elements of new thinking, sometimes surviving in a fraught relationship.⁴

The appearance of the Frobenius organ in The Queen's College in 1965 changed all this. Because this is a study of how aesthetics and polemics shaped reform, leading to the installation of the Frobenius organ, it is not necessary to chart a full history of this decade. Indeed, the sheer number of projects (mainly rebuilds) would preclude a detailed analysis within the scope of the present work. Its main purpose is to show how conservative opinions on the organ, perhaps aided by Downes's eclectic scheme, ensured that the aesthetics governing the English organ remained much the same. Whilst Dalton's Oxford instrument never fully inaugurated a period which overturned a previous mode of organ building, in the same way as the period 1820-1870 gradually eroded eighteenth-century aesthetics of design, it nevertheless introduced a new element of thinking to Britain which proved influential. There are four distinct moments in the history of this period: the first, representing the period 1954-1960 acknowledges some of the opposition to reform which perhaps explains why some organs fell short of a complete change in direction. The second section shows how the sounds heard at the South Bank led to organists peppering instruments with baroque features; the third acknowledges some schemes which departed from previous practices. Lastly an examination of the Frobenius organ shows that whilst there were some ties with a previous tradition of English building, the arrival of this organ marked a new chapter in the history of the English organ.

Reform at the Royal Festival Hall?

The iconicity of the Harrison & Harrison organ in the Royal Festival Hall rests on its perceived breaking with a previous tradition of organ building. Indeed this image was painted not least when

⁴ Harrisons continued to build organs according to their pre-Festival Hall practices (for example Colston Hall, Bristol, 1956), but also embarked upon projects which mixed this traditional style with some of the features displayed at the Royal Festival Hall. These include All Hallows, Barking-by-the-Tower, London (1957), St Clement Danes, London (1958), Fairfield Hall, Croydon (1964), and St George's Chapel, Windsor (1965).

the organ was heard in the opening symphony concert on 24 March and recital on 27 March 1954.

In the brochure for the opening concert, Downes succinctly stated the aims of his novel design:

The Royal Festival Hall Organ is an attempt to realise an ideal conception in which as many as possible of the musically worthy features of all schools and periods of organ-building practice are combined in one instrument, and the unmusical excesses of all periods and schools are as far as possible avoided. This conception of an organ has gained ground in recent years in the countries of continental Europe, and to some extent in the United States, among groups of enterprising musicians and organ-builders, and has emerged in various characteristic forms, some very extreme, others more comprehensive, according to the philosophy underlying a particular builder's work, and according to the situation and use for which instruments were intended. The Royal Festival Hall organ is presented as the English counterpart of the second type, since it must inevitably fill a number of different roles.⁵

By emphasizing the organ's context, Downes sought to locate his design within a growing field of new organ building practices. He says nothing about previous discussions in England. Instead he is keen to portray his scheme as England's response to a world-wide organ problem. In his vision, the concept of a 'musical instrument' has shifted. It is no longer an instrument bonded to a specific culture of accompanying Anglican church music but one which seeks to establish Downes's criteria for the performance of a wide range of organ music. In achieving this, a large focus was the organ's tonal spectrum. At the same time the discourse of a progressive organ is maintained not only by the instrument's electro-pneumatic action and pistons, but by its ability to marry different elements in one instrument.

The image of a radical conception was bound to attract interest and even admiration. In the summer following the organ's completion, a symposium organized by Laurence Swinyard, editor of *The Organ* was held at the South Bank. There were criticisms of Downes's scheme – Bernard Edmonds explained he 'got really cross' during the opening recital – but the vast majority seemed satisfied.⁶ From the thoughts advanced by some of the participants – Clutton,

⁵ Ralph Downes, *Royal Festival Hall*, inaugural concert brochure, (London, 24 March 1954).

⁶ Cecil Smith, review of 'The Royal Festival Hall Organ.' *A Symposium by Laurence Swinyard, W. L. Sumner, Cecil Clutton, B. B. Edmonds, Walter Emery, Gilbert Benham and Susi Jeans, with four photographs by Gilbert Benham, and the complete specifications of the organ* (London, 1954), in *MT*, 95 (September 1954), 477. Edmonds was concerned that Downes had ignored the achievements of English organ builders prior to the Great Exhibition of 1851.

Jeans, Sumner and others – we may establish three main themes which explain their satisfaction with the instrument: (1) The organ's historical sounds allowed the music of particular composers to be heard in what was claimed to be an authentic manner; (2) the organ's comprehensive nature allowed the performance of a very wide range of music; and (3) these features made it a landmark instrument, one that could influence the future.

The themes are easily discerned in the discussion. Clutton's knowledge of Continental building ensured that he was able to penetrate the instrument's specification: 'The Festival Hall organ is not a baroque organ, but it does make it possible to play the music of Bach and other baroque composers in the way they intended.'⁷ Clutton makes it clear that that the organ could do more than just provide a suitable medium for baroque composers (something which Clutton's treasured Farm Street organ could do): according to his thoughts the performer's interpretation gained value because the organ sought its authority directly from what Clutton imagined Bach's criteria for good organs to be. We can assume that he had polyphonic clarity and sounds similar to those which Bach would have known in mind. The organ's ability to valorise music – not just 'baroque' – through its tonal palette was appreciated by Sumner in his admiration of the composite recital given by Downes, Arnold Richardson, Susi Jeans and George Thalben-Ball on 27 March 1954: 'The Festival Hall organ came triumphantly through the test of the demands of Sweelinck of the seventeenth century, Bach of the eighteenth, Reubke and Vierne of the nineteenth and Vaughan Williams of the twentieth.'⁸ The organ's ability to perform its intended function admirably was praised by Jeans: 'The new organ is an important landmark in the history of English organ-building [...] an instrument which combines the best features of past and present, a truly great organ.'⁹ All this led Cecil Smith in his review of the symposium to conclude that 'the instrument has ushered in a new era' – by far the most significant claim.¹⁰ This was

⁷ Cecil Clutton, in Smith, '*The Royal Festival Hall Organ*.', 17.

⁸ William Sumner in *Ibid.*, 12-13.

⁹ Susi Jeans in *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁰ Smith in *Ibid.*, 478.

certainly G Donald Harrison's opinion when he wrote Downes in July 1955 to express his hope that the instrument would have 'a large influence on other British builders'.¹¹

We may agree that Downes created an ingenious instrument, but should this scheme qualify as a significant benchmark? The previous chapter established how the organ had significant ties with the past. Given the organ's horizontal layout and electro-pneumatic action, one is bound to wonder why Clutton thought that such elements allowed Bach's music to be heard as he intended. Moreover, there is a leap of faith in Downes's conception and in Clutton's assessment. The organ's specification is valued over other considerations and presented as a twentieth-century vision of what mattered in specific organ schools – elements which are to be found in the discourses surrounding a progressive organ.

Despite its successful completion and critical acclaim, this instrument failed to persuade some organists that an instrument with such a tonal palette based on many different schools was worthy of consideration. One observer with an unknown profession or standing, H. H. Bowman, expressed his frustration to *The Musical Times*: 'Far better if it were [a baroque organ]; for, as it is, it is neither one thing nor the other, but a hybrid instrument possessing in any degree of loudness from forte to full organ, an intolerably coarse, harsh and strident tone.'¹² Aside from his harsh comments on the organ's tone, his opinion merits some attention. Bowman recognized that the Festival Hall organ was not a baroque instrument – but this is hardly significant as others like Clutton had already observed this and, more importantly, it was never Downes's intention to create a baroque organ. What is interesting is his desire to place organ building in specific categories and in this regard the Royal Festival Hall failed to enter the baroque or romantic pigeonhole. Bowman's comments certainly highlight the problem of periodization (a similar problem which now entertains historians interested in the 'development' of music). The baroque

¹¹ G. Donald Harrison to Downes, 11 July 1955, in *American Classic*, 400.

¹² H. H. Bowman, 'The Festival Hall and the Baroque Organ', *MT*, 95 (May, 1954), 265.

debate helped reduce organ building to two, or if we include the Royal Festival Hall, three categories. This is not necessarily a bad thing, providing we are aware of its problematic aspects.

Not only did the instrument fail to attract some to the conception of a general purpose instrument, but it did little to draw some musicians to the sounds of earlier organs – sounds which Downes had carefully integrated for earlier styles of music. The ensemble of pre-war conservative views continued. Writers frequently compared what they referred to as ‘out-moded’ approaches to ‘obsolete’ instruments. Dyson made no direct reference to the Royal Festival Hall in his RCO Presidential Address of March 1954, but there is no doubting that it was at the back of his mind: ‘the rarity or novelty value of these relics has worn thin, and I am quite unrepentant. I had rather live with diapasons than with mixtures, and I prefer the cor anglais to the oboe da caccia.’¹³ At stake in Dyson’s views was the belief that past masters worked under limiting conditions; their works, therefore, were not frozen in time, but objects which constantly sought methods to express subtle nuances in the music: ‘The composer may have to accept varying degrees of imperfection in performance, but these do not destroy his own ideals. And it is these ideals which we should try to capture and bring to life, not the limitations which were unavoidable in his place and period.’ But according to this method of interpretation, all aspects of seventeenth-century instruments were limited, and Dyson does not allow for the fact that these ‘limitations’ generated the music in the first place.

The instrument’s failure to persuade doubters like Dyson does not necessarily indicate a weakness in Downes’s ‘argument’. Indeed, the continuing opposition from significant figures in the old world, like Dyson, thwarted attempts to reform English organ building, or at least introduce a new conception. There were no end of criticisms levied against Downes’s scheme and ‘baroque’ organs. For example, one observer John Berry wrote a highly critical response:

These “Baroque” enthusiasts are letting their enthusiasm get the better of their discretion, and, personally, I have felt that some of their more recent utterances on

¹³ George Dyson, ‘The President’s Address’, *MT*, 95 (March 1954), 138-139.

this controversial subject have been very foolish. One cannot help but regard them as cranks but, unfortunately, the peculiar ideas of some of them have had effect in certain quarters, we witness the new £50,000 instrument of peculiar tone in the Royal Festival Hall.¹⁴

Berry's occupation is not known but his views were similar to those who held high positions in the organ world. Another observer wrote along similar lines but appealed to the authority of Harold Darke who had previously taken part in a radio discussion on the merits of baroque organs: 'I have listened to recitals and recordings and these instruments with their tweedley noises – often sounding very out of tune – only irritate and bore me. Dr Harold Darke's reference in the radio discussion to "nasty noises" hit the nail on the head!'¹⁵ Sadly the broadcast does not survive but it is probable that Darke expressed similar opinions as his 1953 article on the 'baroque' school.

To a certain extent, then, the Royal Festival Hall instrument was victim to its unnecessary labelling as 'baroque', a label which constantly appears. It seems that critics, like Berry and Darke, used this term to scorn any style which was in some way indebted to pre nineteenth-century practices. The widespread use of this term and its association with the Royal Festival Hall led Susi Jeans in an article entitled 'Baroque organ problems in England' to set the record straight: 'The Royal Festival Hall organ is not a baroque organ and was never intended to be one.' Instead she supported Downes's earlier statements saying that he 'set out to produce an instrument on which the music of J. S. Bach could be played as well as that of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and one which would also be suitable for accompanying choral singing. The instrument therefore possesses both baroque and romantic elements.'¹⁶

Part of the instrument's failure to persuade its critics stemmed from the natural compulsion to view this instrument as an ideal medium for Bach's works. Whether the organ was considered 'baroque', it had been associated with Bach from the beginning: Jeans makes it clear that Bach's music was in Downes's mind. Many were under the impression, therefore, that

¹⁴ John Berry, [Letter], *MO*, 77 (May 1954), 499.

¹⁵ Willie Hewison, [Letter], *MO*, 77 (May 1954), 499.

¹⁶ Jeans, 'Organ Problems', 184.

Downes had created a Bach organ. This is perfectly understandable when the brochure for the first concert contained a blurb from Frank Howes, chief music critic of *The Times* linking the instrument with the name of great authority, J. S. Bach:

The Royal Festival Hall has not the acoustics of a church round which the florid passages would roll, but it has an organ of the type (in specification and voicing) on which Bach himself played, and the opportunity of hearing an extensive selection of his large output is welcome, since to hear it in bulk, as we hear our symphonies in bulk at the Proms, is the best way of consolidating our knowledge of the repertory.¹⁷

But the organ was far removed from anything which Bach had played.

The failure to understand the organ's conception joined forces with its perception as an ideal medium for Bach's works to form a provocative object, ready to attract criticisms. In May 1954 Archibald Farmer gave one of the most extended and thought provoking critiques of the organ. It is no surprise that he should choose to comment on the organ's perceived image as an ideal medium for Bach's works. He was concerned that critics (perhaps referring to Howes) were all too ready to link the organ to Bach, all the time forgetting that they were, in fact, imposing their own prejudices on the interpretation of Bach's music:

Both before and after the event we have been subjected to a certain moral coercion, the argument being that at last we should hear Bach as he intended to be heard, and that we must accept the organ or be disloyal to Bach. Much of this has come from people who can scarcely tell a Gedeckt from a Rohrflöte, unless they read the name on the stop-knob. The musical experience of the last two centuries is in the marrow of our bones, and we cannot hear music as Bach heard it. We cannot even hear one of his organs with his ears. The successive attempts of the last thirty years to recreate the 'baroque' – and they have been many and widely differing – are simply modern organ like all others. In them a modern mind has selected certain features of organs of some past periods and presented them for modern taste. Why bring in Bach? This is our idea of an organ, not his. Do we like it? This is the only question.¹⁸

Farmer's analysis is perceptive. For this critic the instrument and its recital programmes had been set up to demonstrate what Downes's conception of an ideal Bach organ was. So the organ attracted criticism from those like Dyson who were 'anti-baroque' and those, like Farmer, who

¹⁷ Frank Howes, quoted in *Royal Festival Hall*, inaugural concert brochure, (London, 24 March 1954).

¹⁸ Archibald Farmer, 'The New Organ at the Royal Festival Hall', *MT* (May 1954), 263.

had sympathies for the sounds of earlier instruments but were provoked to criticise the scheme through its supposed associations with Bach.

Despite opposition, misunderstandings, and perhaps flawed elements in Downes's thinking, the instrument contributed to an era increasingly willing to think critically about the English organ. Perhaps this is its real legacy. Yet it is not always clear whether the instrument was the driving force, or whether elements of inter-war thinking on the organ – Schweitzer, *Orgelbewegung*, interest in the English organ – were playing a part behind the scenes. A few months after his presidential address, Dyson made some comments which favoured some of the aesthetics which governed the organ's conception – namely its appeal to history. Perhaps the debates on the Festival Hall scheme, with its references to past sounds, forced Dyson to grapple with the tension between historical instruments and their literature and the perceived benefits of modern instruments. In October 1954 he appeared to recant his previous remarks: 'Heavy and clumsy as it was by today's standards, there was something to be said for the old tracker action. You felt that you were in direct touch with the pipes, as a wind-instrument player is when he fingers his keys.' Despite the seeming ambivalence or inconsistency in Dyson's arguments, this last statement is perhaps an example of musicians reacting to a rapidly changing world of which the Royal Festival Hall (even with its electro-pneumatic action) was one product. But it is hard to know what influence the Festival Hall had on Dyson's comments. Moreover, Dyson directly appealed to the authority of Schweitzer: 'Albert Schweitzer has written about this [...] your phrasing was under more exact control than it is with a pneumatic or electric action, where you may not be quite certain at what point in the lowering or raising of a key the actual sound begins or ends. The modern mechanism comes between you and the palettes.'¹⁹ Since Downes's scheme revolved around electro-pneumatics, and Dyson specifically is concerned with tracker action as

¹⁹ Dyson, 'Royal College of Organists: President's Address', 547.

promoted by Schweitzer, it is perhaps possible that it was only the debate between old versus new stirred by the hall's instrument which provoked Dyson's comments.

Baroque additions to English organs

With the Royal Festival Hall in sight, and its polemics still resounding, organists began the difficult process of reacting to a changed environment in which early music was becoming increasingly important. The instrument did not spawn any offspring, and whatever its exact role in provoking critical thought about the future of the English instrument, it undoubtedly legitimized the need to expand the concept of the English organ. Its lasting legacy was to promote the idea, previously articulated in the 1930s and '40s, that different styles of organ design could be combined in one single instrument. Or rather it advanced the idea that English aesthetics could be mixed with some features which owed their origins to seventeenth-century organs. The organ's prestigious location perhaps legitimized the additions of baroque features to existing structures.

This does not necessarily mean that Downes intentionally sought to create an instrument which would have encouraged such enterprises. Indeed Downes did not approve of such projects. For example, in 1955 baroque features were added to an organ originally built by Father Willis in 1872/1882 for The Parish Church of St Michael and All Angels with St James, Croydon, something which did not meet with Downes's approval. The project was driven by Leslie Betteridge, organist of the church, and undertaken by Noel Mander (1912-2005), head of an organ firm which was becoming increasingly important, ready to embrace projects which departed from the normal conventions of English organ design.²⁰ The project added some new

²⁰ Mander founded the firm of N.P. Mander Ltd in 1936.

ranks, including a $5\frac{1}{3}$ Quint and Mixture in the pedal division, a 32' reed modelled on Dutch eighteenth-century practices,²¹ but most importantly, added a new positive division:

The Parish Church of St Michael and All Angels with St James, Croydon (1955)

Positive

Bourdon	16	A (one rank which gives 3 stops)
Claribel	8	
Stopped Diapason	8	A
Gemshorn	4	
Flute	4	A
Nazard	$2\frac{2}{3}$	
Blockflute	2	
Tierce	$1\frac{3}{5}$	
Larigot	$1\frac{1}{3}$	
Mixture 19 22 26	III	

Downes felt that such a positive division was not successful. Writing to Betteridge and copying the letter to Mander, Downes felt ‘a little doubt’ about the project’.²² Whilst his letter complimented the builder on some aspects of his work – electro-pneumatic action, addition of tuba and double trumpet – Downes wished to distance himself from the project: ‘I never thought that a Positive department would be in place in a Father Willis scheme; here my opinion is unchanged [...] I think that the placing and the specification of the Positive are not such as to secure the effect required of such a department; it therefore lacks both character and boldness-cum-sweetness, in this sense.’ His final comment on the positive scheme is revealing: ‘I think it would have been better to have preserved the original unenclosed Choir intact, in its original position.’ He says nothing about the one rank of pipes from which the three flute stops are derived on the Positive (indicated by the letter ‘A’ in the above specification’, but it is doubtful whether he would have endorsed such a scheme.

Despite Downes’s opposition to such a concept, the ‘early’ sounds present at the Royal Festival Hall, and perhaps its conception as a general-purpose instrument, were simply

²¹ Copper throughout. Bottom octave is quarter length, remainder is half length.

²² Downes to Leslie Betteridge, 18 December 1955, Mander Archives, Clutton 242.

irresistible. Thus at St John's Cambridge the firm of Hill, Norman and Beard continued some of its earlier attempts to graft baroque elements onto an English organ. The completed instrument was first heard at Evensong on 22 January 1956. Its Spanish trumpet, albeit on a wind pressure of 7 in., made a spectacular visual and aural effect. The opening recital's brochure stated:

In the voicing of the present instrument the aim throughout has been to provide an organ which is suitable for both Classical and Romantic music. In the music of J S Bach and his contemporaries it is essential that clarity be a cardinal principle of registration, and therefore all the Great diapasons have been made brighter and clearer and the Great reeds have been put on lower wind pressures and revoiced as light-toned chorus reeds. The Choir organ has been entirely remodelled as a Baroque Positiv organ, is unenclosed, and serves as a miniature Great organ. The solo organ consists of stops removed from other manuals and some new ranks, including a Trompeta Real, of Spanish origin, which is displayed from the eastern case. This has been voiced as a military trumpet rather than as a tuba [...] But the chief use of any chapel organ is to provide an adequate and varied accompaniment to the daily services, and this thought has always been uppermost in the minds of the present designers and builders.²³

The organ for St John's Chapel was one of the first instruments following the construction of the Royal Festival Hall to show a significant change in its tonal scheme. Contemporary reports speak of the need to construct an organ which would provide clarity of texture for J. S. Bach's music and be a suitable medium for performing romantic music – echoes of the thoughts on the Royal Festival Hall instrument. An undated brochure for Hill, Norman and Beard from the late 1950s or early 60s states that the reconstruction of the organ involved turning the 'choir organ into a low pressure Classical Positiv, and also miniature Great of unenclosed antique voices' with a wind pressure of 2½ ins. Sumner noted in *The Organ* that 'The gemshorn, nasat, blockflöte (recorder) and sifflöte have "un-nicked" pipes and each speaks with its natural characteristic at initiation.'

²³ Anon., *St John's College Cambridge, Programme of four recitals given to mark the Reopening of the Chapel Organ*, (Cambridge, 1956).

The programme performed by George Guest for the opening recital was:

<i>Ciacona in E minor</i>	Buxtehude
<i>Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor</i>	J. S. Bach
<i>Pastorale</i>	H. von Herzogenberg [1843-1900]
<i>Introduction and Passacaglia</i>	Reger
<i>Elegiac Rhapsody</i>	Rootham
'Canzona' (<i>Sonata in C minor</i>)	Whitlock
<i>Toccata alla Marcia</i>	Robin Orr

Such a department proved 'to be an admirable medium for the playing of organ music at moderate dynamic levels. Bach, his French contemporaries and their predecessors in Europe, produced an enormous quantity of first-rate music which suggests the use of such a "department" of the organ as this.'²⁴ The organ's specification was:

St John's College Cambridge, (1956)

<i>Pedal</i>		<i>Choir</i>		<i>Great</i>	
Open Wood	32	Prinzipal	8	Double Open Diapason	16
Violone	16	Quintade	8	Open Diapason	8
Bourdon	16	Glockengambe	8	Geigen Diapason	8
Dulciana	16	Oktav	8	Spitz Flute	8
Lieblich Bourdon	16	Gemshorn	4	Stopped Diapason	8
Principal	8	Nasat	2 $\frac{2}{3}$	Harmonic Flute	8
Bass Flute	8	Blockflöte	2	Octave	4
Fifteenth	4	Sifflöte	1	Spitz Principal	4
Nachthorne	4	Zimbel	III	Octave Quint	2 $\frac{2}{3}$
Sifflöte	2			Super Octave	2
Quartane	II			Quint Mixture	III
Ophicleide	16			Flute Cornet	III
Posaune	8			Trumpet	8
				Clarion	4
<i>Swell (enclosed)</i>		<i>Solo (enclosed)</i>			
Lieblich Bourdon	16	Quintaton	16		
Open Diapason	8	Hohl Flote	8		
Rohr Gedackt	8	Viola da Gamba	8		
Echo Salicional	8	Viole Celeste	8		
Vox Angelica	8	Lieblich Flute	4		
Principal	4	Harmonic Twelfth	2 $\frac{2}{3}$		
Lieblich Flute	4	Piccolo	2		
Fifteenth	2	Harmonic Tierce	1 $\frac{3}{5}$		
Larigot	1 $\frac{1}{3}$	Clarinet	8		
Mixture	IV	Trompeta Real	8		
Oboe	8	Tremulant			
Double Trumpet	16				
Cornocean	8				
Clarion	4				
Tremulant					

²⁴ William Sumner, 'The Organs of St John's College, Cambridge', *The Organ*, 36 (July 1956), 34-35.

Another organ for Marlborough College followed in 1955 with a positive division along the lines of that installed at St John's. The instrument was a rebuild of the previous 1915 instrument by Forster and Andrews. Hill. Norman and Beard's brochure stated that 'The new XVIIIth century type of classical Positiv, in the unenclosed Choir, is placed immediately behind the frontal pipes for easy unforced speech on low wind pressure.'²⁵

Marlborough College, (1955)

Choir

Quintaten	16
Open Diapason	8
Stopped Diapason	8
Principal	4
Gemshorn	4
Nazard	2 $\frac{2}{3}$
Blockflute	2
Tertian 17 19	II

The compromised nature of the St John's organ is also witnessed in a baroque instrument built by Willis for Nottingham University. With Sumner as consultant and Professor Ivor Keys, a lecturer at Nottingham, overseeing the project, Willis installed a baroque organ in 1956. In replying to Sumner's invitation to tender, Willis stated that he was 'most interested in the project for the Portland Chapel and it would be a real pleasure to co-operate with you and Ivor Keys in this most interesting venture'.²⁶ He further stated that 'this little organ will, despite the difficult chamber and poor acoustics of the Chapel, be a lovely instrument with the real 18th-century flavour'. The initial specification which Sumner sent to Willis is given below:

²⁵ Hill Norman & Beard advertisement pamphlet [no date].

²⁶ Willis to Sumner, 7 June 1955; Willis to Ivor Keys, 14 November 1956. Willis Archives, Nottingham University.

<i>Pedal</i>		<i>Great</i>		<i>Swell</i> (enclosed)	
C-f1,		C-g3		C-g3	
Quintade	16	Principal	8	Hohlflute	8
Bordun	16	Rohrflute	8	Geigen	8
Octave	8	Octave	4	Gemshorn	4
Choral Bass	4			Nazard	2 $\frac{2}{3}$
				Super Octave	2
				Tierce	1 $\frac{3}{5}$
				Krummhorn	8
				Tremolo	

Wind: 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ Mechanical action throughout except pedal which was to be tubular pneumatic.

No further information is given (scaling, layout of organ) but the specification and correspondence make it clear that the organ was not to be in any specific seventeenth-century style. Archival evidence suggests that Willis was able to build the organ using eighteenth-century (English?) pipework which he had acquired over the years, and a tracker action from a redundant organ.²⁷ The instrument's integrity thus comes close to being somewhat undermined, something seen in the final specification:

<i>Pedal</i>		<i>Great</i>		<i>Swell</i>	
Major Bass	16	Open Diapason	8	Gedact	8
Bordun	16	Rohr Flute	8	Viola da Gamba	8
Octave	8	Pianissimo	8	Gemshorn	4
Choral Bass	4	Principal	4	Flageolet	2
		Quartane 12 15	II	Sext 12 17	II
				Krummhorn	8
				Tremolo	

It is not clear what is meant by 'pianissimo' on the 'great' and the presence of a 'major bass' on the pedal suggests that there was a reluctance on the builder's or consultant's part to dispense with some pre-war aspects of English design.

By today's standards of building organs in particular historical styles, then, the Nottingham instrument is quite remote from anything produced in the seventeenth or eighteenth

²⁷ Willis to Ivor Keys, 14 November 1956, Willis Archives, Nottingham University.

centuries. It also demonstrates that whilst Willis was quite prepared to embrace elements of contemporary thought on baroque tonal design, he was not interested in building an organ more closely linked to an old model. One aspect of Willis's understanding of these old instruments does, however, deserve our attention. In commenting on the specification and ideas sent to him by Sumner, Willis demonstrates an appreciable understanding of seventeenth-century instruments. His most perceptive comment was on the voicing of eighteenth-century organs with particular reference to 'nicking', the practice of refining a pipe's sound. Contrary to the assumptions of many organ builders interested in baroque organs, Willis understood that nicking was known in the eighteenth century. Such a remark is highly significant at a time when the fashion was to create unnicked pipes. Determining the extent of nicking in baroque times is beyond the scope of this thesis but it should be noted that organ builders have now acknowledged how widespread nicking was, something recognised by Willis.²⁸ For the proposed Nottingham organ, Willis suggested nicking to remove the excessive 'chiff' from the pipes:

"Quick speaking pipework" always a Willis feature and I take it that wispy and chiffing characteristic is not desired, it was not present in 17th or 18th century English work, and only to a minor extent in Holland and Germany in the 18th century, when the older organs were all partially nicked to reduce the chiff to an acceptable point.²⁹

According to Willis he had 'the knowledge and skill to reproduce any type and period desired'. In the Nottingham scheme he advocated quick speaking pipes with a slight transient in speech. He even went as far as welcoming the idea of including a percussion stop, the Cymbalstern: 'Lovely idea – I would be delighted to provide [...] I do not know of one in this country but have seen, tried and appreciated many in Germany.' His comment about nicking is evidence of an organ builder who had obviously travelled abroad and taken an interest in their organs. Whilst the organ demonstrates the enthusiasm on the University's and builder's part for a 'baroque' organ, all parties lacked the required knowledge to build an organ in a specific or even broad seventeenth-

²⁸ See for example Elshout and Koomans, 'Voicing methods of the Neo-Baroque'.

²⁹ Willis to Sumner, 7 June 1955, Willis Archives, Nottingham University.

century manner. The presence of foreign elements – such as the tubular-pneumatic action and the ‘major bass’ suggests that eclectic thought was still a viable element when building organs in supposed historical styles.

So, evidence suggests that up until the early 1960s English aesthetics of organ design had hardly changed. The Festival Hall’s legacy, however, meant that organists were even more prepared to equip their instruments with sounds for earlier styles of music. Thus in 1963 the new organ for Coventry Cathedral by Harrison & Harrison, whilst heavily indebted to the firm’s thinking prior to their 1954 instrument, showed some elements of renewed thinking. David Lepine, the first organist of Coventry Cathedral believed that the instrument’s carefully integrated elements allowed ‘the performance of the German, French and English masters of earlier centuries, the romantic organ music of the 19th century, and the church music of a Gibbons, Wesley or Britten’.³⁰

Some departures

Nevertheless some projects in the early ’60s show organists and organ builders striking out in new directions, ever ready to experiment. There was interest in creating organs which bore some relationship to those promoted by the *Orgelbewegung*. In January 1960 Maurice Forsyth-Grant founded the firm of Degens & Rippin, and although their early instruments had electro-pneumatic actions, by 1965 they were producing instruments with independent pedal departments, complete choruses and mechanical actions.³¹ Mechanical-action organs were, in fact, beginning to make their presence felt. With Francis Jackson, organist of York Minster, as consultant, Hill

³⁰ Some hold the Coventry organ to be a compromise instrument. The cathedral’s website states: ‘The organ is therefore something of a compromise, but in a busy cathedral where many demands are placed upon it – recitals, daily services, major events with capacity congregation – it fulfils its role admirably and there are many who hold it in high regard. See ‘The Cathedral Organ’, *Coventry Cathedral* [website] <<http://www.coventrycathedral.org.uk/whats-on/music/the-cathedral-organ.php>> accessed 28 February 2011.

³¹ The name was changed to Grant, Degens and Rippon in 1965 to take into account Forsyth-Grant’s increasing involvement in the firm. It was at this time that the founder decided to ‘go all out “neo-Classic”’. See Forsyth-Grant (1987), 30. Upon the retirement of Ted Rippin in 1967, the name was again changed to Grant, Degens & Bradbeer.

Norman and Beard built a 13-stop-mechanical-action organ for Holy Trinity Cookridge in 1964.³²

The scheme was a departure from their previous designs:

Holy Trinity Cookridge, (1964)

<i>Pedal</i>		<i>Great</i>		<i>Swell</i>	
Bourdon	16	Stopped Diapason	8	Quintadena	8
Spitzflute	8	Principal	4	Salicional	8
Nachthorn	4	Quint	2 ² / ₃	Spitz Flute	4
		Fifteenth	2	Principal	2
				Larigot	1 ¹ / ₃
				Crumhorn	8
				Tremulant	

There is no doubting that such projects tested the skills of builders and consultants, as both ventured into new territory. In 1958 Mander wrote Clutton saying, ‘I am still very much feeling my way with regard to open-foot voicing, and I expect, if other folk were candid, they would say the same.’³³ In the early ’60s Mander and Clutton collaborated over an organ for the latter’s home. Clutton sought an instrument with a ‘rather “breathy” seventeenth-century tone’, though he had ‘not the faintest idea how it is arrived at; perhaps it is a matter of luck! All stops to be pretty well of equal power.’³⁴ The instrument was completed in 1964 to the following specification:³⁵

Residence of Cecil Clutton, (1964)

<i>Pedal</i>		<i>Great</i>		<i>Positive</i>	
Sub-bass	16	Gedackt	8	Spitz flute	8
Gemshorn	4	Principal	4	Chimney	4
		Quint	1 ¹ / ₃	Principal	2
		Regal	8	Mixture	II

³² ‘Focus on Design-2’, *MT*, 105 (April 1964), 293. For some information on the firm’s interest in organ reform see Thistlethwaite, ‘Hill, Norman & Beard: Full circle’, *Organists’ Review*, 85 (November 1999), 310-315.

³³ Mander to Clutton, 1 September 1958, Mander Archives, Clutton 242.

³⁴ It was founded in Hammersmith, London, in 1959 as Degens & Rippin by E.V. Rippin, John Degens and Eric Atkins.

³⁵ Clutton to Mander, 26 September 1964, Mander Archives, Clutton 242.

That Clutton wished the organ to resemble some historical organ is clear from his instructions to Mander which asked for the Quint and Principal 2-foot ranks to 'reproduce as closely as possible these ranks on any Italian organ'.³⁶ On the instrument's completion, a reception was organized at which a number of significant musicians including, Peter Hurford and Geraint Jones, were invited. Their impressions are not recorded in any correspondence in the Mander archive.

The desire to traverse new paths combined with the long-standing interest in old English organs to promote their sympathetic restoration, even if the results were far removed from what would be found acceptable today. In 1958/9 Noel Mander undertook the restoration of the organ in Adlington Hall, an instrument which was brought to his attention by Clutton, and found in an extremely bad condition.³⁷ In 1961 Mander completed an organ for St Vedast which used a number of the historic ranks of the previous organ by Harris and Byfield and, most importantly, employed mechanical action. The historic pipework is found amongst other ranks which contribute to a scheme. The specification was (and remains):

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ The organ is generally acknowledged to have been partly the work of Father Smith.

St Vedast, Foster Lane (1961)

<i>Pedal</i>		<i>Choir</i>		<i>Great</i>	
Bourdon	16	Dulciana	8*	Contra Dulciana	16
Double Dulciana	16	Stopped Diapason	8*	Open Diapason	8*
Dulciana	8	Principal	4*	Rohr Flute	8*
Flute	8	Flute	4*	Dulciana	8
Flute	4	Dulciana	4	Principal	4*
Flute	2	Twelfth	2 ² / ₃	Nason Flute	4
Trombone	16	Fifteenth	2*	Dulciana	4
Trumpet	8	Larigot	1 ¹ / ₃	Twelfth	2 ² / ₃
Clarion	4	Twenty Second	1	Fifteenth	2*
		Trumpet	8	Tierce	1 ³ / ₅
				Furniture	III*
				Trumpet	8
				Clarion	4
				Cornet	V

Swell

Salicional	8*
Chimney Flute	8*
Principal	4*
Fifteenth	2*
Mixture 19 22	II
Trumpet	8

* pipework by Harris and Byfield

Whatever the merits of such projects, the interest in creating something new jettisons the image of the liturgical organ, packed with suitable sounds for psalms, canticles and anthems. In other words, the supposed needs of the organ's repertoire – particularly early music – seem to displace the supposed requirements of a particular culture of Anglican worship. Indeed, the desire to transform the image of the organ accounts for the main reason behind Peter Hurford's foundation of the St Alban's Festival in 1963, undoubtedly the most significant achievement of the early 60s. In a talk delivered in 1979 Hurford stated:

I had a dream, twenty years ago. I loved the organ and yet saw how music lovers shunned this instrument of mine: it was tied to the church in an age of decreasing church-going; its sounds, soothing, soothing, seemed forever redolent of best hats and Sunday lunch; why, the very word 'voluntary' described anything from

the organist's status, or the generic title of any piece played after the service, to church-going itself. The situation was unhealthy and unpositive.³⁸

It is not difficult to imagine the response from such figures as Darke and Dyson. Perhaps Hurford exaggerated his claims, but, whatever the exact truth, there is no doubting that the organ's repertoire is at the forefront of Hurford's thinking – or more specifically the sounds which he considered necessary to fulfil his definition of a musical instrument.

Appropriately, the cathedral was given a new organ – or rather a substantial rebuild of the previous organ – by Harrison & Harrison under the direction of Downes. Today we may look at the organ (recently rebuilt by the same firm) and challenge the claims made by its proponents: an article in *Music Times* in 1963 reported David Lumsden saying that 'it is the first Cathedral organ in England to be tonally suited to playing organ music from all the major periods of composition with authentic registration'.³⁹ This is a bold claim and, like the Festival Hall, one wonders how such an instrument – with an electro-pneumatic action and a tonal palette which is a compromised version of the organs in Hurford's and Downes's minds – could achieve Lumsden's notion of 'authenticity'.

But whatever the merits of the term 'authenticity', the organ is far more interesting when it is seen as exhibiting the tension between two discourses: the burgeoning interest in early music, early organs, and early sounds – and the liturgical organ. A report by Harrison & Harrison on the proposed work summarises this position:

The primary function of a cathedral organ – the accompaniment of the services – has been constantly kept in mind, and the character of an English cathedral organ will be preserved. In addition, the clarity and precision demanded by the music of Bach and other great organ composers throughout the centuries will also be secured.⁴⁰

The need to create an organ with a suitable palette for liturgical music was so great that even Hurford, a man wedded to the organ's repertoire, conceded to the discourse surrounding the

³⁸ Peter Hurford, in Paul Collins, *The anatomy of a dream* (St Albans, 2004), 4.

³⁹ David Lumsden, [Letter] *MT*, 104 (October 1963), 715.

⁴⁰ Report on the organ [no date], Harrison & Harrison Archives, St Albans.

supposed requirements of Anglican worship. Nevertheless the new organ was part of a significant project which did much to promote organ playing and building (the festival consisted of an exhibition at which organ builders were encouraged to demonstrate their achievements).

Enough has been said to justify the contention that up until 1965 English builders and organists, whilst showing an appreciation of earlier forms of Continental and English instruments and a willingness to experiment, showed little commitment to the principal features of these instruments (mechanical action, low wind pressures, encasement). But it is hardly fair to criticise their views since recreating these instruments was not a priority; neither was there much interest in paying closer attention to these instruments beyond examining specifications. And there was the problem of builders entering a new area which had hitherto been relatively unexplored in Britain – at least practically. Perhaps the main problem was that aesthetics of construction were still governed by the idea that English organs, particularly those within ecclesiastical environments, had an accompanying function to fulfil, and this relied on the presence of specific sounds. Baroque features – presumably those promoted by the Royal Festival Hall – could be added to this structure, thus equipping instruments with the sounds which were now thought necessary for early music.

There was no real desire to replace the concept of the English organ with something new. Peter le Huray (1930-1992), a Fellow of St Catharine's College Cambridge, summed up the situation in 1963:

English organ builders could hardly be in a more difficult position than they are at present, for never have opinions differed so widely on tonal matters. Some organists favour the traditional approach: plenty of diapasons, a generous supply of flutes, strings and reeds, a limited quantity of upperwork to add brilliance, and appropriately high wind pressures. Others would return to classical ideals, with few foundation stops, a great variety of mixtures and mutations, low wind pressures, and open-foot voicing. Unfortunately, the builder often finds himself at the focal point of dispute and with alternative but to suggest an uneasy

compromise, a compromise that ultimately can satisfy neither romantics nor classicists.⁴¹

Le Huray put forward his own stance:

Most English organs, like Beverley [Minster], have their white elephants, occupying valuable space, costing a great deal of money to maintain, and serving little if any musical purpose. [...] But isn't it time that organists began to think of the organ as a musical instrument? Beautiful sounds are useless unless they can be synchronized!⁴²

In his views he represents a group of musicians increasingly frustrated with what had come to be known as the 'English' organ, and the efforts of some builders to reform the concept.

James Dalton and The Queen's College organ, 1960-1965

Le Huray's words of 1963 were timely: in 1962 The Queen's College, under the guidance of James Dalton, signed a contract with a Danish firm, Frobenius Orgelbyggeri, to offer a new conception of an English organ. Its academic environment meant that Dalton had to make a persuasive case to purchase a new instrument. This he did by linking his project with the early music revival. The organ's presence within a choral environment meant that Dalton would be forced to deal with liturgical considerations which had continued to concern organists. But at Queens we do not find the 'full swell'; liturgical considerations had transformed into something else. Finally, the progressive discourses ensure that whilst the new instrument was heavily indebted to historical principles, it was ultimately an organ of the twentieth century which sought to open a new chapter in British organ building.

The new organ was a reaction to the increasing momentum of the revival of early music, a force which made the college's previous three-manual organ built in 1931 by Rushworth and

⁴¹ Peter le Huray, 'Parkinson at the Console', *MT*, 104 (June 1963), 432. Le Huray's obituary commented that 'he was a musician and scholar whose remarkable range and versatility was belied by his absolute unassumingness.' See Richard Luckett, *The Independent* [website] (12 October 1992) <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/obituary-peter-le-huray-1556933.html>> accessed 10 June 2011. Le Huray was also a significant figure in the founding of BIOS.

⁴² Le Huray, *Parkinson*, 432-433.

Dreaper seem unsuitable for music-making. As Dalton put it in a report on the organ dated 5 September 1960:

The most important concept of the organ tonally should be one that permits of satisfactory performance of the music written for it. The historically important time for the organ is from 1550 to 1750, with certain notable but isolated exceptions; the present organ is in no way equipped to realise music of this period – this has resulted from late-Romantic tendencies in organ-building, and the builders of this instrument not being themselves musicians. It is therefore impossible to teach style with such an instrument and equally impossible to perform music in a stylistically objective manner.⁴³

Thus right from the beginning of the project Dalton was keen to disassociate himself from this instrument ('a fairly efficient example of an extremely uninteresting type')⁴⁴ which he saw as representing a style of instrument which had no future potential within an environment which was increasingly concerned with matters of performance practice.

Unsurprisingly, the need for a new organ was shared by some British organ builders, eager to install an organ within the university's distinguished learning environment. The firm of Walker & Sons wrote to the Bursar in 1960 expressing some reservations for the old instrument ('The tone of the instrument is [...] rather hard and does not, in our opinion, suit the acoustics of the building') but their comments went little beyond stating that the organist was at a disadvantage in hearing the organ: 'From a tonal point of view it is far from ideal as the organist cannot possibly hear the true effect of his playing, it is very difficult to balance the power of various stops one against the other, nor can he assess correctly the amount of organ necessary to accompany the choir and congregation. The position is made worse by the fact that a metal Bourdon stop has been placed above the organist's head.'⁴⁵ The firm who originally built the organ, Rushworth & Dreaper, perhaps unsurprisingly showed little commitment to offering the radical solution which Dalton wanted, preferring, it seems, to graft Continental features to the old organ: 'Our own views have changed and it is our business as responsible organ builders to

⁴³ Report on the organ by Dalton, 5 September 1960, Queens College Archive [QCA] FT401.

⁴⁴ James Dalton: 'The Queen's College Organ', *The Queen's College Record*, 6 (December 1990), 15.

⁴⁵ J. W. Walker to Bursar, 30 September 1960, QCA FB1382.

preserve the best of the past with the enlightened views of the future and assist progress by holding the balance between extreme limits on either side.⁴⁶

Just as Dalton sought to distance himself from the old Queen's organ, so Downes, brought in to support Dalton's case, was also keen to replace the organ with a new instrument. Downes wrote to the Bursar, Arthur Williams, stating that the Queen's organ was of no significant value, thus echoing Dalton's sentiments:

From my observation and experience, I would not hesitate to say that although the organ is solidly and durably made, from the purely commercial-utility standpoint, yet in point of design, construction, location, type of wind-storage and supply, soundboards, dimensions of pipes and their material, weight and treatment, the instrument is fundamentally in conflict with every tonal principle which Mr Dalton would consider to be of first importance.⁴⁷

A later missive indicated that there was a sense of urgency in giving Oxford an organ built according to a criterion:

It would please me very much to see one decent organ installed in the University – there is nothing of any distinction at present, except, with some considerable reservations, possibly that at Keble College which was a lucky fluke! I know, because it was rebuilt while I was Organ Scholar there.⁴⁸

He gave further criticisms, ever ready to use the instrument as an example of a ubiquitous organ problem in Britain: 'The total effect has something in common with a harmonium – like "squeezed" tone, instead of the clear incisive attack which is characteristic of a good organ. This defect is common to all English "trade" productions, despite the attempts of one builder to remedy matters, with uncertain success (Walker). And should make it abundantly clear that the mere attempt to modify tonally, which Rushworth & Dreaper's representative seems to regard as the panacea in this case, will barely touch the fringe of the real problem.' His final remarks gave an indication of his faith in Rushworth and Draper to provide a new worthy instrument:

⁴⁶ Rushworth & Draper to Bursar, 4 August 1960, QCA FB1382.

⁴⁷ Ralph Downes to Bursar, 18 August 1960, QCA FB1382. Dalton recalls 'We [Dalton and Downes] were always talking about one project and another, and he simply couldn't keep out of something, once he got interested. Apart from a few letters to the Bursar, which I suppose were intended to support my case, he had no official part in the project. James Dalton, 'Organ' [e-mail to Nicholas Stefano Prozzillo] (30 August 2011) accessed 31 August 2011.

⁴⁸ Ralph Downes to Bursar, 10 September 1960, QCA FB1382.

‘Distinction in a small specification is the only artistic answer: and I am morally sure that nobody at Rushworth’s has any clue to this idea.’

Whilst Dalton and Downes were in agreement that a new instrument – with a *new* outlook – was required, the two organists did not share the same opinions on what form the instrument should take. They were, however, united by their idea that no British builder could take on the project without guidance from a consultant: ‘Even taking into account the considerable differences of taste and opinion which exist (to my regret) between Mr Dalton and myself, I can still aver that there is no organ builder in this country at present capable without expert direction, [sic] of making a really satisfactory organ, considered a musical instrument.’⁴⁹

That differences of opinion existed between Downes and Dalton is perhaps surprising given their background. Both men were interested in early music; both had worked in the United States; and both had visited historic instruments on the Continent with a view to investigating past styles of building – Dalton had visited north Germany. But these experiences and love for earlier styles of music led them in different directions.

The differences between Downes and Dalton lie in their conception of what constitutes an organ for an English chapel within a university environment. As the Royal Festival Hall (and other projects) demonstrated, Downes was firmly wedded to electric actions and preferred schemes which combined various schools of design, albeit in ingenious ways. Perhaps a hypothetical ‘Downes’ scheme would include those elements which he thought suitable for the organ’s function as an accompanimental medium for psalms and canticles – a substantial swell box for example. Dalton seems to have been more influenced by historical instruments from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with mechanical actions and was after an instrument with a greater stylistic unity.⁵⁰ Thus a note to the organ committee dated 4 April 1960 asked its

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ A talk by Dalton at the 2010 BIOS conference in Oxford revealed the impact of the Schnitger organ in Steinkirchen – layout with separate pedal towers, specification, and voicing – on Dalton’s thinking. James Dalton, ‘The Frobenius at Queen’s College’, *BIOS conference*, Merton College Oxford, 16 April 2010.

members to listen to broadcasts from a 1956 instrument by Frobenius in Copenhagen; the 1680 Schnitger in Steinkirchen; the 1959 Flentrop in the Maranathakerk, Amsterdam; and the Jacobus van Hagerbeer/Frans Caspar Schnitger organ in the Laurenskerk, Alkmaar.⁵¹

The premises of the new organ were conceived along the lines which Dalton thought suitable for an Oxbridge environment which also sought to give a lead in organ affairs. In a report to the college's governing body dated 8 March 1961 Dalton outlined his reasons for a new instrument which departed from the conventions governing the construction of English organs:

I think it would be advantageous not to wait a further ten years, but to act now – for the following reasons:

1. In a University it is particularly important that music should be performed in a correct manner; and this is not possible with our present unwieldy instrument, with its thick and opaque sound.
2. As much of the music for organ comes into the field of academic study, a good instrument would help to fill a gaping void in university study.
3. The maximum sale price of the present organ (£2000) will certainly not be realisable in ten years time.
4. At present, we are not making the best use of our resources. If we act now we shall be ahead of the field, and for a time unique. An organ of the type I am suggesting would bring considerable lustre on the College and attract desirable attention. I think we are most favourably placed to go ahead with this project; but to wait ten or even five years would, to quite an extent, be wasting our opportunity.⁵²

Dalton's most interesting comment is the idea that music should be performed in 'a correct manner', thoughts which were quite common at the time – for example Clutton's idea that the Royal Festival Hall allowed Bach's music to be heard as he intended. He does not specify that the organ is to be in a specific historical style for a specific repertoire but rather that it should be suitable for a broad range of music without coupling the tonal scheme to any specific historical sounds.

The first glimpse of Dalton's specific views on organs came in the specifications received for the new organ. The organ committee had met in July 1961 to carry out the governing body's instruction of 24 May 1961 to seek tenders for the project. Invitations were duly sent to Flentrop, Harrison & Harrison, Walker, van Vulpen, Rieger, Holtkamp, and Gonzalez. Frobenius, who

⁵¹ James Dalton to organ committee [memorandum], 4 April 1960, QCA FB1382.

⁵² James Dalton to Governing Body [memorandum], 8 March 1961, QCA FB1382.

eventually received the contract, sent Dalton the following specification on 9 November 1961 in response to his invitation to tender:⁵³

<i>Pedal C-f¹</i>		<i>Hovedwaerk C-g³</i>		<i>Brystvaerk / Swell</i>	
Principal	16	Quintatøn	16	Gedakt	8
Subbas	16	Principal	8	Salicional	8
Oktav	8	Rørføjte	8	Rørføjte	4
Nathorn	4	Oktav	4	Principal	2
Mixtur	III	Spidsføjte	4	Quint	1½
Fagot	16	Flachføjte	2	Scharff	II
Skalmej	4	Terts	1¾	Krumhorn	8
		Mixtur	IV		
		Trompet	8		

This specification, whilst slightly different from its final form, was something with which Dalton sympathised. It is immediately apparent that apart from the organs in the Danish and Finnish chapels (London),⁵⁴ and to some extent the organ for Susi Jeans, nothing similar was to be found in Britain. The English swell organ usually characterised by its battery of reeds has been reduced to a simple principal chorus, capped by a lonely reed whose description ‘krumhorn’ implied that the rank was more of a solo stop than a chorus reed. Of some importance is the fact that the upper manual is enclosed – an indication that suggests how Frobenius or Dalton or both thought that an enclosed division would make the instrument more suitable for choir accompaniment. The discourse of the ‘accompanying organ’ is thus still present even if ‘the full swell’ has disappeared.

That Dalton wished for a Continental firm to build the required organ is hardly surprising. The specifications suggest that he sought an organ which would be based on low wind pressures, have a mechanical action, have a layout similar to those of the North German organ school of the seventeenth century, and have its voicing based on what people at the time perceived to be the basic principles governing baroque voicing. He was thus after something which was being practised successfully abroad, instruments which owe their origins to the

⁵³ QCA FB1382.

⁵⁴ Marcussen built a seven-stop one-manual organ for the Finnish Seaman’s Mission in 1958; Frobenius installed a five-stop one-manual organ in the Danish Chapel in 1959.

Orgelbewegung. Thus when the organ committee met on 16 January 1962 to discuss quotations received from Flentrop, Harrison & Harrison, Walker, van Vulpen, and Rieger (Holtkamp and Gonzalez refused to tender) they also had to deal with Dalton's wishes which were leading them to Scandinavian countries.⁵⁵ His original brief to the governing body must have been in the committee's minds: 'In my view, an organ from Holland or Denmark would be preferable to an English organ, as builders in these countries have tackled basic problems much more thoroughly than English builders; also, organs from these countries are cheaper than English ones, even allowing for 25% import duty.'⁵⁶ His brief to the organ committee further refined his views, favouring the firm of Frobenius:

Frobenius are a small family firm, as distinct from a fairly large commercial business (Walker), and they have considerable experience in building the type of organ which we shall have here; the principle of mechanical (tracker – not electric) key action has been an artistic concept with Frobenius for longer than with any other in this century, and although Walker's are competent to make mechanical action, they do not have this tradition and experience, nor do they have men of the musical sensitivity of Frobenius. Both firms wish to build an organ based to a large extent on 18-century principles of balance and voicing; Walker's are comparatively new to this (their first such job was at Brompton Oratory in 1953, which has electric key action), while Frobenius are among the established leaders of organ building in this style.⁵⁷

Flentrop, Rieger, and van Vulpen were eliminated for reasons of cost; Harrisons and Walker for uncertainty about their commitment to such a project and the quality of their work. So, a perception that English organ builders lacked the necessary knowledge of the type of organ Dalton was seeking led him to Continental firms. The organ committee narrowed the selection to two builders: Walker and Frobenius. Perhaps encouraged by Sumner – 'It would be grand if you could get Frobenius to do the organ.'⁵⁸ – Dalton pursued the matter with Frobenius. By April 1962

⁵⁵ Evidence in the archives of Clare College Cambridge concerning the building of its 1967 Rudolf von Beckerath organ suggests that Dalton wished for an organ by this builder. A letter dated 8 February 1967 from Nicholas Temperley to the Master of Clare College states: 'It is worth mentioning that Dalton wanted a Beckerath organ for Queen's, but because of anti-German sentiment on his Governing Body he had to settle for a Frobenius!' See Clare College Archives/8/1/11/1 (2 of 3).

⁵⁶ James Dalton to Governing Body, 8 March 1961, QCA FB1382.

⁵⁷ 'Organ Committee – Draft Report' [undated], QCA FB1382.

⁵⁸ William Sumner to James Dalton, 2 May 1962, QCA FT401.

Dalton had a specification in mind, sending the following specification to Frobenius on 15 April 1962:⁵⁹

<i>Pedal</i>		<i>Hovedvaerk</i>		<i>Brustwerk</i>	
[Principal	16]	Principal	8	Gedakt	8
Subbass	16	Quintadena	8	Rohrflute	4
Octave	8	Oktav	4	Principal	4
Flute	8	Spitzflute	4	Gemshorn	2
Nachthorne	4	Sesquialtera	II	Quintadena	2 [Blockflute]
Mixture	IV	Mixtur	IV	Quint	1½
Trombone	16	Trumpet	8	Scharff	IV
Schalmei	4			Cromhorne	8
				Tremulant	

The brief, not least Dalton's desire to influence English organ building, led the college's governing body on 30 May 1962 'to proceed with the installation of a Frobenius Organ'.⁶⁰ The sum available was £10,000. The firm certainly hoped that their organ would set an example. 'I hope this organ will have great influence on English organbuilding.'⁶¹ On 28 August 1962 Dalton wrote Frobenius with the following changed specification:

<i>Pedal</i>		<i>Great</i>		<i>Brystvaerk</i>	
Subbass	16	Quintadena or	16	Gedeckt [sic]	8
Principal	8	Gedakt	16	Principal	4
Gedackt	8	Principal	8	Blockflute or	
Octave or	4	Spitzflute or	8	Gemshorn	2
Nachthorn	4	Rohrflute	8	Quint	1½
Mixture	III or IV	Rohrflute	4	Chromorne	8
Fagot or	16	Octave	4		
Posaune	16	Octave	2		
Trumpet	8	Sesq.	II		
Schalmei	4	Mixture	IV		
		Trumpet	8		

⁵⁹ QCA FT401. The Composition of mixture stops is given below:

<i>Pedal</i>	<i>Great</i>	<i>Swell</i>
12 15 19 22	15 19 22 26 [29]	22 26 29 33
8 12 15 19 break at C	12 15 19 22 [26] break at each c	19 22 26 29 break at each G
	12 15 15 19 [22]	
	8 12 15 15 [19]	
	1 8 12 15 [15]	

⁶⁰ At a governing body meeting 'The Organ Committee was instructed to consider plans for an organ casing in consultation with Mr Dykes-Bower', GB 22 June 1963, QCA

⁶¹ Flentrop to Dalton, 13 June 1962.

By 2 March 1964 the specification had turned into:

<i>Pedal</i>		<i>Hovedvaerk</i>		<i>Brystvaerk</i>	
Subbass	16	Gedakt	16	Gedakt	8
Principal	8	Principal	8	Principal	4
Gedackt	8	Rørfløjte	8	Rørfløjte	4
Oktav	4	Oktav	4	Gemshorn	2
Mixtur	III	Oktav	2	Quint	1½
Fagot	16	Sesquialtera	II	Scharff	III
Skalmejs	4	Mixtur	IV	Krumhorn	8
		Trompet	8	Tremulant	

There was a desire to include a 16-foot manual flue stop as this stop (Gedakt) displaces a 4-foot stop included in the previous specification. The final specification, which used English names for some of the stops was (and remains):

Pedal		Great		Brustpositive	
Subbass	16	Gedeckt	16	Gedeckt	8
Principal	8	Principal	8	Principal	4
Gedeckt	8	Rohrflute	8	Rohrflute	4
Octave	4	Octave	4	Gemshorn	2
Mixture	III	Octave	2	Quint	1½
Fagot	16	Sesquialtera	II	Scharf	III
Schalmei	4	Mixture	IV	Cromorne	8
		Trumpet	8	Tremulant	

The final cost on 17 November 1965 was £12, 361.

In favouring such an instrument from a Continental firm, Dalton traversed a path which was by no means accepted by everyone. Sometimes the motives were political or economic: the organ section in the Bursar's files indicates that he was aware that a contract placed with a non-British firm would not be liked by everyone.⁶² But aside from these issues there were some reservations about the organ's tonal scheme. Downes, as has been seen, favoured a more eclectic approach. Clutton did not doubt Frobenius's ability to deliver a first-class instrument but held

⁶² The Bursar's file contains an article which appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* on 14 July 1964: 'Sir Gerald Nabarro, Conservative MP for Kidderminster, attacked the Labour-controlled London County Council yesterday for its decision to place an order for a new organ with a Dutch firm [...] Sir Gerald complained that no master organ builder in Britain had been asked to quote for the instrument, though it was now known that the specification could have been amply met at lower cost than the Dutch.'

reservations about the instrument's style. Whilst he is not mentioned in any material connected with the Queen's organ, a letter, originally in Dalton's file, from Clutton to Angus W. Acworth, a benefactor of Merton College, Oxford is revealing. Clutton's comments were made in relation to a proposal to install a similar organ in Merton Chapel, a scheme which had some input from Dalton. Clutton thought such an instrument unsuited to a broad repertoire:

Frobenius are extremely good organ builders in the Scandinavian style, but they are very expensive – 20 % higher than British prices before import duty. Assuming one wants that kind of organ there are 3 or 4 British firms that can do it almost if not quite as well; but it is so limited in musical range [...] that it can really only cope with German music up to 1750 and a very small amount of non-romantic modern music. French music of any period is almost completely ruled out. I really wonder if it is desirable to limit it in this way. I say this without bias, because it is the sort of organ I like myself: but then I only have myself to please! Virtually the same classical effect can be obtained by an organ of the same size but which has a considerably wider musical range.⁶³

In the same letter he outlined how such an instrument was unsuited to the demands of the Anglican liturgy thus continuing many of the pre-war attitudes towards the organ:

The continental builders which have been suggested make exceedingly fine organs and they are what I would choose for myself. But their instruments are intransigently "Baroque" and more or less exact copies of late seventeenth or eighteenth century instruments. This is all right, but these instruments were related to the Lutheran liturgy and in my view they are not suited to the Anglican liturgy. I am quite convinced that an organ can be designed which meets the classical requirements of the North German school, while at the same time conforming to the Anglican usage.⁶⁴

The belief that such an organ was only suited to German music up to 1750 provoked Clutton's comments, but given the strength of the liturgical organ discourse, one is bound to wonder to what extent his views were shaped more by these ideas.

The idea that these reservations were misjudged perhaps contributed to the critical acclaim which the Queen's instrument received. The *Oxford Mail* noted that the instrument was 'rich and imposing [,yet not] overpowering'.⁶⁵ A few months later the same paper noted how the

⁶³ Cecil Clutton to Angus W. Acworth, reported in a letter from Acworth to the Warden of Merton College Oxford, 12 April 1965. QCA Acworth was an alumnus of Merton and an acquaintance of Clutton.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ H. A. Fitzpatrick, 'New organ at Queen's', *Oxford Mail* (24 June 1965).

instrument was distinct from similar instruments – presumably those on the Continent: ‘for all its clarity and brilliance, it is never shrill or hard in tone, a rare quality in modern “classical”

organs’.⁶⁶ It concluded that ‘British organ builders would profit from a study of Frobenius.’ One

player, Edmund Eyre, wrote in the *Musical Opinion*:

I played the best instrument I have managed to lay my hands on [...] It was not a very large organ, and in fact consisted of only 22 speaking stops. Moreover, it had tracker action throughout, no aids to registration at all, and the stops were arranged on straight jambs upside down and the wrong way round! No, it was not a very old organ. In fact, it was all completely new – so new that a little finishing had still to be done.⁶⁷

But perhaps the most significant comment came from Mander who, like Dalton and Frobenius, hoped that this instrument would have some influence in Britain:

In closing may I repeat what I said to Mr Frobenius, I think the organ looks absolutely magnificent and from the few stops I heard I am certain that it will be a real ear-opener for both organists and organ builders in England. I really think that it is the best thing that has happened in Oxford, I only wish people would let us build organs like it. We are tied down to adjustable pistons, electric gadgets of all sorts that I think we have forgotten the true purposes of an organ⁶⁸

The organs built for St Vedast and Clutton show that Mander had some experience and enthusiasm for what we may term reformed organs. The arrival of the Frobenius perhaps indicated to him that a chapter in English organ building was opening, one that would permit him to build in this style.

The favourable opinions rest on the successful fulfilment of the project’s objectives. The organ demonstrated that an English client could: (1) purchase an organ from abroad, built along Continental lines, and that this (2) would not make the nasty baroque sound which was reported in the press. (3) The instrument could fulfil the requirements of The Queens’s College – accompanying (Anglican) liturgical services and playing organ music. (4) The instrument was not a copy of a historical organ, but rather its construction adheres to the idea of a progressive organ,

⁶⁶ Anon. ‘Rare Quality’, *Oxford Mail* (30 June 1965).

⁶⁷ Edmund Eyre, ‘Autolycus II’, *MO*, (August 1965), 685.

⁶⁸ Noel Mander to James Dalton, 25 May 1965, QCA, FB1382. James Dalton recalls a visit from Harold Darke, was connected with The Queen’s College, at which he remarked that he ‘would miss having no pistons’. Correspondence with James Dalton.

albeit a discourse which has been transformed from that surrounding, say, the Royal Albert Hall organ. (5) Just as the Royal Festival Hall placed some emphasis on Bach's music, so an early all-Bach recital at Queens was intended to show how the instrument was suited to Bach's music. *The Sunday Times* notes how 'Bach, of course, still provides the mainstay of the programmes. His organ music drew a capacity audience to the chapel of the Queen's College, where James Dalton put the newly installed Frobenius organ through its baroque paces.'⁶⁹ Above all the arrival of this organ signalled the arrival of something new, an aesthetic that had grown quite strong throughout the late '50s and early '60s. It just took an individual versed in in these principles to show the organ community what could be achieved.

There was much interest in The Queen's project. Correspondence between Dalton and musicians connected with other institutions suggests that St Catherine's and Merton Colleges at Oxford, and Clare and Trinity Colleges at Cambridge considered purchasing an instrument from Frobenius.⁷⁰ But even if these colleges signed contracts with other firms, the presence of The Queen's instrument acted as a beacon, one that encouraged many other similar projects, and still provides inspiration today.

Once the English organ had been refashioned as a progressive instrument suitable for a broad range of organ music (especially J. S. Bach's works) and the Anglican liturgy, its history was guided by the wealth of discourses which had created it around the turn of the century. Presided over by a musician who was a significant person in many different areas – not least in learned establishments like Oxford and Cambridge, the organ was part a web of political, economic, cultural, social, cultural, and religious discourses. Regardless of whether a renaissance in British

⁶⁹ Anon., [Letter], *Sunday Times* (4 July 1965).

⁷⁰ Dalton asked Frobenius to quote for a new organ within the existing case at Brasenose but such was the influence of the Chaplain, Rev. Leslie Styler, that the College settled with the Chaplain's candidate, Peter Collins. See Rowntree, 'Classical principles', 192.

musical culture actually happened, many believed the organ to be an essential ingredient of a healthy culture.

But a growing interest in the past, specifically interested in elevating historical evidence as a form of authority to unprecedented levels, allowed the English instrument to appear to be at odds with the emerging aesthetic of what we now know as the early music revival. Whilst some musicians like Dolmetsch offered comments which seemed to want to overturn the edifice of the English organ, others like Willis III, who having come from traditions which had helped create the English organ in the first place, seemed content to call for only slight modifications. What is clear, however, is that the increasing interest in early music meant that musicians were increasingly fascinated by early organs and were therefore prepared to think more critically about the national organ: the concept of the English organ had to be expanded.

The return of Ralph Downes to the UK in 1937 did much to fuel the retrospective view that he played a significant role in reform. There is no doubting that he was instrumental in many projects but it is questionable to what extent this has prevented a proper critique of his work. The polemics surrounding the Royal Festival Hall were an extension of many of the pre-war debates and the controversy surrounding Geraint's Jones's broadcasts – which gave rise to the belief that the north German organ was the 'Bach organ'. It is also important to understand that the English organ became a matter of such controversy precisely because by attacking the actual organ, critics were perceived to be eroding a structure which had received its strongest buttresses around the beginning of the twentieth century.

A closer practice related to the instruments of the seventeenth century came only with Dalton's creation at Oxford in 1965. Given its prestigious environment, one may have expected greater polemics, but it is worth asking to what extent the Royal Festival Hall bore the brunt of the first round of heavy artillery, giving Britain's musical environment time to adjust to the coming of the Frobenius organ.

Is it possible to speak of an organ reformation? It is certainly not possible to speak of a *movement* along the lines of the German *Orgelbewegung*. Just as analyses of this movement are sometimes clouded by a failure to understand its political overtones, so a positivistic account of English reform can oversimplify matters. Ending the historical survey in 1965 shows that whilst there was some agreement that the concept of the English organ of 1901 required some modifications, there was no agreement on how this was to be achieved. Whilst some like Dalton were prepared to offer radical solutions, and indeed showed musicians how such an instrument could function within an ecclesiastical environment, others, heavily influenced by the concept of an 'English' progressive instrument, were less prepared to embrace a new conception of what an organ could be. Ultimately early music and early organs forced organ culture to consider, and confront, its own progress and purpose.

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