ORGAN MUSIC SOCIETY OF SYDNEY INC

the YOUTH news

SPRING 2010 EDITION

We have two very interesting articles about Colour!

The first is the third masterclass by Elke Voelker about colours and sounds that Sigfrid wanted for his compositions

and the second is the
Schoenstein Pipe Organ
Tonal Color Wheel.
A very special thank you goes to Jack M. Bethards ~ President and Tonal Director of Schoenstein & Co. Pipe Organ Builders of California, who has given permission to include the Tonal Colour Wheel.
The next issue will describe how to use the color wheel and more.

Have you ever thought of a piece representing a certain colour.
Which of the Great Bach Preludes and Fugues would be "Yellow" or "Green" or "Blue" or "Red"?
Please do email!
Let me know what you think!
Godelieve Ghavalas

President of OMSS - godelieve@notjustnotes.com.au

Elke Voelker Masterclass III

Sigfrid Karg-Elert: Colours and Sounds

After having learnt something about the personality of the composer Sigfrid Karg-Elert, about his style of composition, his time and after some spotlights on chosen works, today it is time to think about the “right” instrument on which to play his organ compositions.

What is the perfect organ to play the music by Karg-Elert?

We can see that the list of his compositions for organ shows smaller works, like his *Choral Improvisations op.65*, and large extended fantasies or fully coloured works like the *Pastels of the Lake of Constance* or *Hommage to Handel*.

So in fact, it is actually necessary to choose the right work for each organ.
You might take this check list:

1. *Does the instrument have in general a romantic disposition?*
   This is one of the main conditions for playing this kind of repertoire, although some transcriptions of Bach or Handel by Karg-Elert could be sometimes be realized in a quite good way on baroque organs.

2. *How many manuals do you have?*
   The best would be to have at least a three manual organ. Otherwise many stop changes are necessary, and you have to be very acquainted with the music to arrange it for a two manual instrument.

3. *Is there a swell box?*
   Without a swell box most of his works would be hard to realize in the intended dynamic and expressive way.

4. *Is there a good range of different characteristic 8’ stops? Do you have nice solo voices (flute, clarinet, oboe etc.) and aliquots? Do you have a nice line up of different reed stops (German, French, English)?*
   As tone colours play an important role in Karg-Elert’s musical cosmos, try to look for an instrument with the most possible alternatives and variety.

5. *Do you have settable combination pistons?*
   Pistons will help you to gain time saving the amount of different registrations in Karg-Elert’s music. Take this in serious consideration and don’t underestimate this fact. It will provide you with the time you need for developing the sound concept of each work.

Karg-Elert himself give us a lot of advice on how to use the right colour in his music. There is a very precise forward in his Partita in E (1929).

He writes:
"Although the indicated registration is not to be regarded as strictly binding, an endeavour should be made to secure tone-colours approximating as nearly as possible to the tone of the stops which the player is directed to use... Attention should be paid throughout to the manual changes indicated, but Swell and Choir manuals are frequently interchangeable…
Nevertheless the stops for any given movement must always be chosen with a view to the unity of the whole, avoiding the use of 'interesting' combinations which would tend to obscure this… Too much charm may be monotonous!"

And there is also some useful general advice for stop combinations:

- Stops of 2-ft. Pitch on Swell or Choir may be used – to give a touch of brightness – only when they are quietly voiced, in which case they lose their primary character and simply brighten up the tone of the 8-ft.stops.
- If 8-ft. and 2-ft. stops of the right character are not available, this combination may be replaced by soft stops of 16-ft. and 4-ft. pitch, playing an octave higher (so far as the compass of the manual makes this possible, and if the double stop is lightly voiced).
- Sigfrid likes open and radiant colours – even occasionally aggressive colours *en caricature* (when a burlesque diction is called for).
- But: Avoid as far as possible the frequently repeated use of extravagant colours (e.g. 16-ft. plus 4-ft., or 8-ft. plus 2-ft.; or vox humana, or Carillon or harp effects, etc), they would become monotonous.

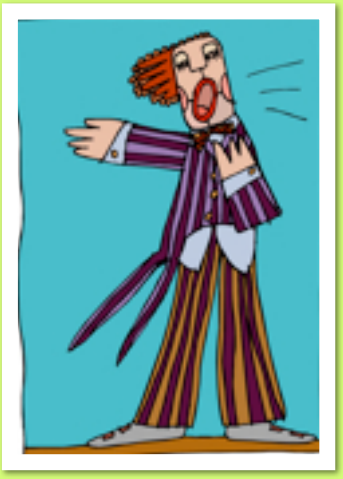
> *"steadily increasing to the pompous brilliance of the modern tutti."*
> *[Remark by SKE, to find in his Hommage to Handel].*

Karg-Elert appreciated organs with modern concepts. eg. the *Jehmlich* organ (3man.,1910) of the Philippus Church Leipzig-Lindenau (Germany). Sigfrid praises the international standard and modern style of this instrument which he knows quite well: the possibility of 30(!) combinations and that the organist is able to sequence the registrations before the concert; the range of manuals and pedal (Man. C-a3; pedal C-f1); the variety of couplers and playing accessories, the sound concept (more the 60% of the pipes are are placed in a swell box built out of stones with a wooden movable front of 5,5 cm diameter. So you also have within the *tutti,* the possibility of different levels of dynamic! Another instrument that Sigfrid mentions especially is the *Steinmeyer* organ in the Christuskirche of Mannheim (see: www.christuskirche.org/?orgel_steinmeyer) or the famous Walcker organ (1909) of St. Reinoldi Dortmund which was destroyed during the Second World War.

Crescendo of the Walcker organ of the Luther Church in Krefeld (1904).
Here you can see how a romantic crescendo was built up.

AND Sigfrid admired Theatre organs! Play his *Three new impressions, Op.42* on such an instrument. You will fall in love with the music.

Karg-Elert sometimes added instruments and voices as an apotheosis of each work with regard to timbre and content. Detailed descriptions by the composer concerning the performance of his ideas are to be found in the written notes in the music or in parts of his letters. To the reprise of the *First Canzona in E flat major* the composer notes*: "Depending on the acoustic conditions and the size of the organ, the trumpet part should be played by three or four instruments or doubled by trombones in the lower octave... The participation of one or more wind instruments at the end of the Toccata is not [!] to be made known in the concert programme. Neither should the brass be positioned uncovered!"* The character of a trumpet solo at the end of the piece is not intended, but rather it should just build up to a climax.



Concerning the *Epilogue* of the *Third Canzona* : *“I have often performed this work with eight solo female voices (whom I shut into the vox humana swell box, and used the swell pedal (!).”*

Reach out for colours in music and life!

Yours
Elke Voelker

The Karg-Elert Edition of Elke Voelker
is recorded together with the German Label AEOLUS.
All CDs are available under
http://www.aeolus-music.com/ae_en/Artists/Elke-Voelker.
Here you can also listen to many music examples.
Have a look and watch out!

Youtubes

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Aej0vQJNQA

Birds is an organ stop that simulates the voice of real birds. Its one of the special effects that were characteristic for organs build centuries ago. They were mostly used during improvisations. Beside the Birds the Lezajsk organ also has also a Cuckoo, Eagle, Tympanum (timpani) and "Horribile" (drums).

http://www.baroqueorgan.com

Flight of the Bumblebee-organ pedals-Carol Williams

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hHZvMAJUN5g&feature=related

Cameron Carpenter - Carmen, Variations on a theme, Bizet/Horowitz

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zdsY-1QCvTk&feature=related

Canzona 588 - Garrels organ Maassluis

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3LQIoT5-SbQ&feature=fvsr

Léon Berben plays Vincent Lubeck on Arp Schnitger organs

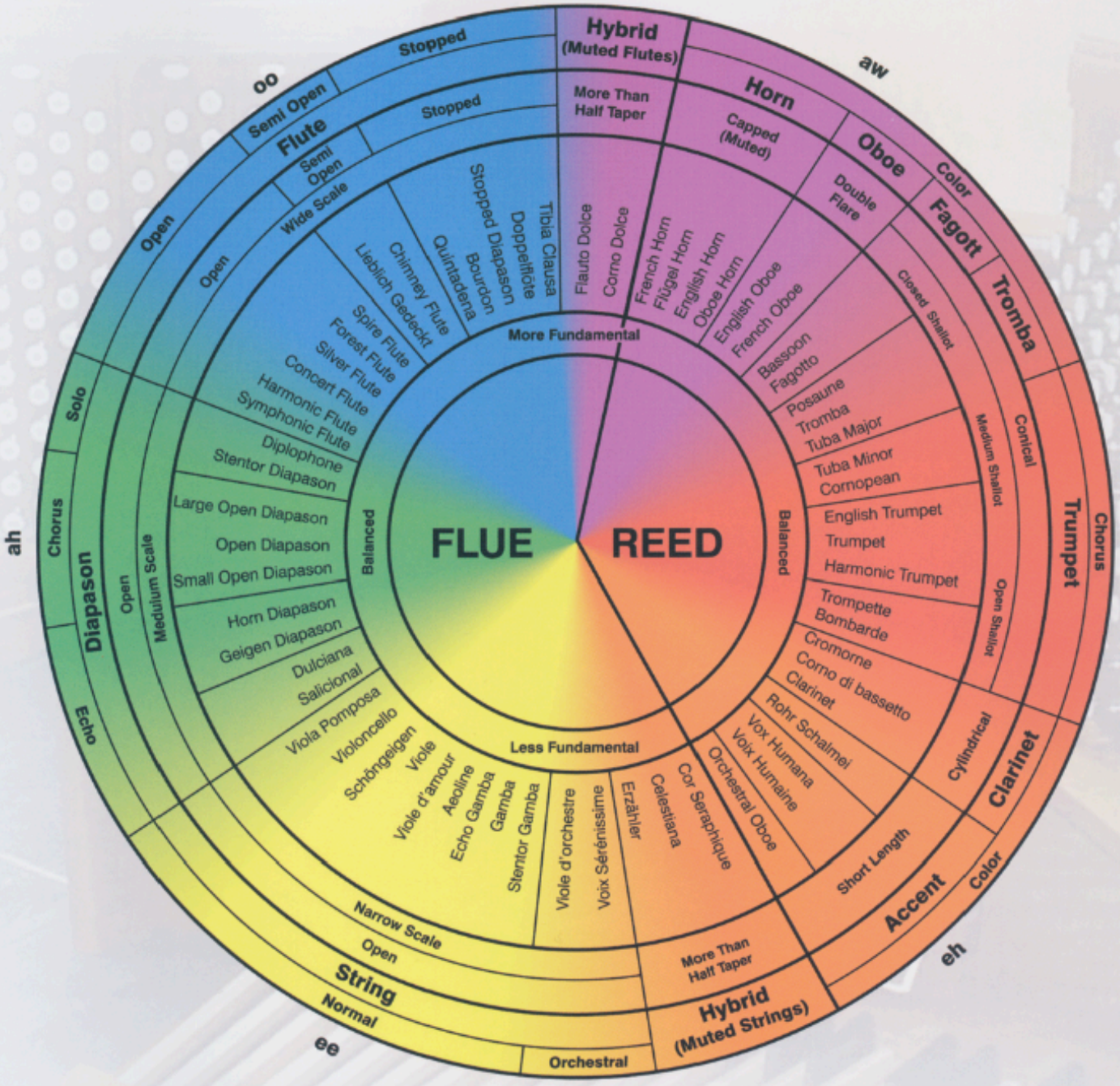
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y9TJohwbSIc&feature=related

Vernet-Meckler Organ Duet Concert Sens Mozart

(Excerpt)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lBPV92X523M&feature=related

SCHOENSTEIN
PIPE ORGAN TONAL COLOR WHEEL



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READING THE COLOR WHEEL

The color wheel is divided into four main rings, as delineated by the five bold circles. The four rings are most clearly seen just to the right of the twelve o'clock position on the wheel. In other areas of the wheel, the outer two rings are often subdivided. The following text describes the content of the wheel, starting at its perimeter and working inward toward the core.

VOWEL SOUNDS

Describing organ tone in words is difficult and often misleading. Bright, dark, rich, warm, brilliant, wooly and sweet are just a few of the common attempts to picture organ tone. Saying that a stop sounds like an oboe, for example, doesn't help much either. Is it an oboe in a French band or in an English orchestra? Six of the most basic vowel tones are shown at the outer edge of the wheel to introduce a more accurate system of description. There are dozens, if not hundreds, of minute variations in vowel sound, any of which might be employed to illustrate the kind of organ tone one is either hearing or wishes to hear. Consonants may be used as well to describe the percussive onset of some tones.

FIRST (OUTER) RING

The outer ring of the wheel indicates twelve major categories of organ tone. The number of categories could be decreased to six by reducing the reed family to chorus reeds and color reeds and by combining the two hybrid groups into one. Conversely the number of categories could be increased to seventeen, thus revealing more detail, by dividing the flute family into open, semi-open and stopped flutes; the diapason family into chorus, solo and echo diapasons; the string family into normal and orchestral strings.

SECOND RING

The second ring describes the elements of pipe construction that contribute most to the distinctive character of each group. Among flues, the most important determinant is the scale — a pipe's diameter relative to speaking length. Next in importance are the treatment of the top end of the pipe (open, semi-open, stopped) and the shape of the pipe body (parallel or tapered). Among flutes, tone quality is so greatly affected by the opening at the top that they are divided into three distinct tonal groups based on this characteristic alone. The strongly tapered (muted) flue pipes are called hybrids because they have an unusual tone that is difficult to place squarely in the flute or string category. This elusive quality is part of their charm. (Mildly tapered construction also affects tone, but this and myriad other more subtle construction features cannot be shown with clarity on the color wheel.)

In the reed family, the shape and length of the resonator, as well as the shape and opening of the shallot (the organ's equivalent of a mouthpiece) are the most important among many variables. Scale, of course, also plays an important role; however, there are great variations in scale within each reed group— not a continuum as found in flues (string to diapason to flute.)

THIRD RING

The third ring gives specific examples of 8-foot stops of various dynamic levels in each

tonal category, using nomenclature found in Schoenstein organs. Dozens, if not hundreds, of other names would serve just as well. One example is the term “principal,” which is synonymous with “diapason.” Some names are unique to Schoenstein organs, but in those cases, stops with more common names, which are in the same category, are also included for clarity—for example Viole d’orchestre, which is in the same class asVoix Sérénissime.

FOURTH RING

The essence of tone color is harmonic structure—the relative strength of a tone’s harmonic components. The most elementary description of tone color derives from the balance between a tone’s first harmonic or fundamental frequency, and all its upper harmonics or overtones, considered as a group. Tones with what we may consider a “normal” balance (between the fundamental and all upper harmonics) are capable of producing what is called “chorus tone” in the organ. These are the trumpets and diapasons at the right and left sides of the ring respectively. At the bottom of the ring are stops with less fundamental in relation to upper harmonics, with a tone often described as “bright.” At the top are stops with more fundamental in comparison to upper harmonics, sometimes called “dark.” Although it is not possible to include in this highly simplified presentation, a detailed analysis of each stop would reveal widely varying proportions between the fundamental and the various upper harmonics from one stop to the next around the wheel. Thus, some stops can be described and recognized by the prominence of certain harmonics. A keen ear can detect if a stop has, for example, a prominent third harmonic (an octave plus a perfect fifth above the fundamental). Two groups of stops—the clarinet and stopped flute families—emphasize all the odd-numbered harmonics. Note that these are roughly opposite one another on the color wheel. The two hybrid groups emphasize the fifth, sixth and seventh harmonics, giving them their mysterious quality.

FLUE AND REED

The inner core of the wheel divides all organ tone into two categories based on the method of tone production—flue or reed. Flue pipes generate tone by wind blowing across the lip of the pipe, which causes the column of air inside the pipe to vibrate. A flue pipe generates its tone very much like a simple whistle or the flute of the orchestra. Reed pipes generate tone with a thin, brass tongue (reed) vibrating against a small, open-faced, hollow tube (shallot). The resulting tone is then amplified and modified by a resonator (often conical in shape), which comprises the top portion of the pipe. A reed pipe generates its tone much like the clarinet of the orchestra.

LOUDNESS AND PITCH

Loudness and pitch affect our perception of tonal color. Extremes of either can obscure tonal color or create what appear to be variations. For example, a diapason voiced loudly can become stringy and the same pipe voiced softly can seem fluty. Many tone colors when voiced softly can take on a “gray” or nearly neutral tone, which can be very valuable, especially for accompaniment. Around the tonal color wheel, stops that are normally loudly voiced may appear next to ones that are usually soft. Relationships are based entirely on tone quality, irrespective of loudness.

Many stops lose their distinctive color as they approach the top of their pitch range; the same is true of some stops toward the bottom of the compass. The color wheel considers stops as they sound in the mid-range of the manual keyboard.

Young Organists

Wednesday 6 October
1.10 - 1.50 pm
Verbruggen Hall
Sydney Conservatorium
Students of the Organ Studies Unit

Sunday 17 October
3.00 pm
Marko Server and Anna Hortense (Sop)
St Finbars Glenbrook

La Nativité du Seigneur
Olivier Messiaen
(1908 – 1992)

Performed by the organ students of Sydney Grammar School on the Mander organ.

Kimbrian Canavan
Gabriel Gregory
Philip Jameson
Akib Karim
Kevin Lee
Phillip Mackay

Date: Monday, November 29th 2010 Time: 6.30pm
Big Schoolroom
Sydney Grammar School
Admission
by charity donation.

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www.sydneyorgan.com
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Sydney Grammar School
10.30am

Intermediate Section
Pitt Street Uniting Church
2pm

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