

O R G A N M U S I C S O C I E T Y  
O F S Y D N E Y

# *the* YOUTH *news*

MARCH 2010 EDITION



## *Organo Pleno? Passacaglia*

*Jacques van Oortmerssen*



## *Rameau's Opera? Organ and Percussion*



## *Elke Voelker Masterclass By the way, who is Sigfrid Karg-Elert?*



## *What's On*

I would like to thank Jacques van Oortmerssen, Professor of Organ, Sweelinck Conservatory, Amsterdam, for parting with his expertise in the field of baroque practices. I am sure that the classes have been beneficial and interesting! I have included one more of his studies on Baroque fingering/pedalling practices to bring his masterclasses to a close.

**Thank you Jacques!**

**Elke Voelker**, Organist of Speyer Cathedral in Germany will be our special guest for the next four masterclasses. Her specialty is Sigfrid Karg-Elert. You might me ask why? I heard Elke perform a recital of works by the composer: Symphonic Chorale Opus 87 No 1, Passacaglia (55 Variations) and Fugue as well as two transcriptions - Die Meistersinger by Richard Wagner and Adagio from Suite No 3 in D by JS Bach. The recital was on the Wicks (1949) 4 manual/82 stop organ at the Basilica of St Mary in Minneapolis during the 2008 AGO Convention. I thoroughly enjoyed this concert and wondered why more people don't play his works. So here we are, and I heartily welcome Elke on board the Youth News.

**Godelieve**

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## BACH'S PASSACAGLIA IN 'ORGANO PLENO'?

The answer to this question is a simple yes. This might be shocking for those who are used to performing the piece with a few, or maybe even many registration changes.

How can we be so sure about this and where can we find the information about how this wonderful masterpiece was performed in the 18th century?

The first place to look is obviously the autograph manuscript. Unfortunately it disappeared in the 19th century. F.K.Griepenkerl, the editor of the Peters edition of 1840/45, claims that his text is based on the autograph. The title of piece must have been according to several sources: 'Passacaglio con Pedale pro Organo Pleno'. This is a very important indication of the composer himself which we should consider seriously.

In fact during the first half of the 19th century the registration habits changed dramatically. Mendelssohn was one of the first innovators of the registration tradition. There is no doubt that Mendelssohn was educated in the 18th century tradition. At a very young age, in 1823, he wrote himself a Passacaglia in c minor 'for Full Organ'. It is very likely that he also performed Bach's Passacaglia in Organo Pleno. The programme of his famous Bach recital in 1840, to raise money for a Bach monument near the Thomaskirche in Leipzig, is preserved and mentions: Passacaille (21 variations for the Full Organ).

Mendelssohn and his contemporaries developed the idea to change stops during a piece which was until that moment very unusual. His third Sonata in A major is a nice example of this new approach. It is also documented that Mendelssohn changed stops in a piece when he performed music by Bach. Franz Liszt however was the first suggesting to start Bach's Passacaglia with a soft 8' flute and adding stops every variation, ending with full organ.

You might be interested to hear more about the registration traditions and specifically about the variation forms like Chaconne and Passacaglia.

In the 16th, 17th and 18th century the Fantasias, Preludes, Toccata's and polyphonic compositions like the Fuge were usually played in a Pleno sound. This tradition goes back to the early days of the organ when the instrument did not have stops at all. This so-called 'Blockwerk' was one big mixture and this pleno sound could not be changed.

“Blockwerk was one (very) big mixture and could not be changed.”

Manual changes were quite rare and therefore always carefully notated as we can learn particularly from the works of Bach. In this context I mention the Concertos, the Dorian Toccata and the E flat major Prelude. It is important to understand that a change in the musical structure was no reason to change the registration. Another important aspect is the function of the free works. They were mainly played before or after the service and most registration sources are very clear how this should be done: 'mit dem vollen Wercke' (with the full organ) Friedrich Niedt (1706), Johann Adolph Scheibe (1739) and Johann Mattheson (1739) published important information about the 18th century registration practice.

Mattheson particularly mentions the Chaconne/Passacaglia as a form to be played entirely in Organo Pleno. The essence of the form is the variation in the musical structure above the repeating bass line theme. In fact changing the sound weakens the effect of the changing musical structure.

### What can we learn from our historical instruments?

Organists who had the privilege to work with historical organs know that these instruments do have a better sound and more character than modern organs. Obviously we have to accept that old instruments do have limitations. On modern organs one can play usually much faster and a combination system with sequencer gives unlimited possibilities to change the sound during the performance. In my view the advantages surpass the disadvantages. When playing the Toccata from the 5th Symphonie by Widor on a big Cavaillé-Coll organ, experienced people know that it is not possible to play faster than Widor suggests (mm 100). The organ refuses to cooperate. But is this a disadvantage? When playing at the Schnitger organ in Alkmaar experienced people know that it is very hard to change the sound during the performance. The stops are far away and you need a lot of power to add or take away stops. But is this a disadvantage? Absolutely not! Albert Schweitzer wrote in 1906: 'modern organs are stronger but not as beautiful as the old ones'.

It is very clear that modern organs made it possible to change many performance practice conventions. Light touches allow much faster tempi and combination systems give unlimited registration possibilities. I believe that it is time to reconsider important parameters like tempo and registration. Changing the sound does not necessarily improve our performance.

Be aware of the fact that violin players or harpsichordists cannot change the sound of their instrument either. Try to improve your performance by investing in all the necessary parameters influencing the expression. Let the old organs be your guide!

Best wishes from Amsterdam.

Jacques van Oortmerssen



EXERCISE 54 from Guide to Duo and Trio playing - Studies in historical fingering and pedalling for the organ

The first system of musical notation for Exercise 54, measures 1-2. It consists of three staves: Treble, Alto, and Bass. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#) and the time signature is common time (C). Measure 1: Treble staff has a quarter note G4 (finger 1), followed by eighth notes A4 (finger 3), B4 (finger 3), and C5 (finger 2). Alto staff has a half note G4 (finger 4), followed by a half note F#4 (finger 4). Bass staff has a half note G3 (finger 1), followed by a half note F#3 (finger 1). Measure 2: Treble staff has eighth notes D5 (finger 3), E5 (finger 3), F#5 (finger 3), G5 (finger 3), A5 (finger 3), B5 (finger 3), and C6 (finger 3). Alto staff has a half note G4 (finger 4), followed by a half note F#4 (finger 4). Bass staff has a half note G3 (finger 1), followed by a half note F#3 (finger 1). Pedal marks (wedge) are placed under the G3 and F#3 notes in the Bass staff.

The second system of musical notation for Exercise 54, measures 3-4. It consists of three staves: Treble, Alto, and Bass. Measure 3: Treble staff has a quarter note G4 (finger 1), followed by eighth notes A4 (finger 2), B4 (finger 2), and C5 (finger 2). Alto staff has a half note G4 (finger 2), followed by a half note F#4 (finger 2). Bass staff has a half note G3 (finger 1), followed by a half note F#3 (finger 1). Pedal marks (wedge) are placed under the G3 and F#3 notes in the Bass staff. Measure 4: Treble staff has eighth notes D5 (finger 2), E5 (finger 2), F#5 (finger 2), G5 (finger 2), A5 (finger 2), B5 (finger 2), and C6 (finger 2). Alto staff has a half note G4 (finger 2), followed by a half note F#4 (finger 2). Bass staff has a half note G3 (finger 1), followed by a half note F#3 (finger 1). Pedal marks (wedge) are placed under the G3 and F#3 notes in the Bass staff.

The third system of musical notation for Exercise 54, measures 5-6. It consists of three staves: Treble, Alto, and Bass. Measure 5: Treble staff has a quarter note G4 (finger 1), followed by eighth notes A4 (finger 2), B4 (finger 2), and C5 (finger 2). Alto staff has a half note G4 (finger 2), followed by a half note F#4 (finger 2). Bass staff has a half note G3 (finger 1), followed by a half note F#3 (finger 1). Pedal marks (wedge) are placed under the G3 and F#3 notes in the Bass staff. Measure 6: Treble staff has eighth notes D5 (finger 2), E5 (finger 2), F#5 (finger 2), G5 (finger 2), A5 (finger 2), B5 (finger 2), and C6 (finger 2). Alto staff has a half note G4 (finger 2), followed by a half note F#4 (finger 2). Bass staff has a half note G3 (finger 1), followed by a half note F#3 (finger 1). Pedal marks (wedge) are placed under the G3 and F#3 notes in the Bass staff.

# THIS IS WOW and boy is it FRENCH!!

Livre d'orgue - Jean-Philippe Rameau

Rameau was an organist but never wrote any works for organ.  
Yves Rechsteiner has adapted excerpts from his operas for organ.

In the 18thC, Balbastre, an organist at Notre Dame,  
transcribed some of Rameau's works for organ  
and regularly played these at recitals  
in the large hall of the Concert Spirituel.

These excerpts for organ (and percussion) could bring some  
exciting new repertoire to Sydney Recitals.

**Perhaps you'll be the first!**

Yves suggest that you form French suites from the 60 transcribed  
pieces lasting 5, 10 or 15 minutes  
depending on the needs and desires of the audience.

Pierre Canthelou has recorded the pieces  
on the organ of Cintegabelle,  
and to heighten a bit of rhythmic colour  
to some of Rameau's liveliest dances,  
percussion has been added.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=53YRRzgoCz4>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OJMunzwtyUk>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B3Q1FvnS2IE>



## *By the way: Who is Sigfrid Karg-Elert?*

Dear Friends,

I feel very privileged to give you an introduction to the organ works of the composer Sigfrid Karg-Elert (1877-1933). He is one of the most colourful personalities among the turn-of-the-century German composers and had in his lifetime an immense popularity in the Anglo-Saxon world – and also mainly in south-east Australia, where he had friends and supporters of his music!

But in Germany he had big problems with an overwhelming Max Reger cult and couldn't find in the end real appreciation for his compositions. Many times he felt extremely angry about this fact. And after his death in 1933 a long period of silence concerning his person and opus began.

Let's take up a banner for him and explore his music!



Karg-Elert has composed an amount of orchestral and chamber music, but it is for his organ (more than 250 pieces) and harmonium works (100 pieces) that he is well known today. His musical language vary from short expressive sketches, stylistic studies, impressionistic landscape paintings to musical expressionism, building a bridge to modern music of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In his last works he even reaches the frontier to atonality!

I remember my very first contact with his music about 20 years ago. My teacher showed me the score of his 2<sup>nd</sup> *Symphonic Choral "Jesu my Joy"*, op.87, 2 (1911) and suddenly I felt in love with the drive of this gigantic music unchaining Dantes inferno in the first part up to a sunny, joyful C-major choral apotheosis at the last bars of its third movement, after 18 minutes of an exciting development. I will give you a short analysis and some playing tips for the 2<sup>nd</sup> *Symphonic Choral* in the fourth issue of this series.

Sigfrid is a composer of the German "Jugendstil" (*Art Nouveau*) and his musical lines are individual in every voice, depending on polyphonic thinking. We see a fully decorated score. If you have a look at paintings or decors or architectural elements of this time period, you will recognise serpentine and wavy outlines everywhere. This could be a nice symbol for the sinuous music lines and coloured harmonies in Karg-Elerts compositions.



Look at the second movement of “Jesu my Joy”. A marvelous poetical Canzona on the 4th strophe of the choral:

For your first steps into the music cosmos of Sigfrid choose some of his *Chorale Improvisations*, op. 65 .

You will find six volumes on 66 Evangelical church hymns according to the liturgical year, so that you can use them easily during church service. This opus 65 was Sigfrid's first organ work composed between 1908 to 1910. He has dedicated the collection to Alexandre Guilmant (1837-1911), the French master of the organ and the harmonium.

Sigfrid explains to us: “In these pieces you will find the true BACH spirit in a modern language... Except for a few, each number is treated in a different technique”.

So you have a lot of pieces in different style to analyse and work on. The level ranges from easy up to difficult. The most popular is the Marche Triomphale “Now thank we all our God” op.65, no.59:



Karg-Elert standing in front of St. Lawrence Jewry, London, during the KE Festival in May 1930.



The x points out the tune of Now thank we all our God.

While playing, think of a procession of clergy marching in a pomposo style out of the cathedral. Imagine the sound spreading in a sublime way all over the huge nave. With the upbeat flourishes (bars 16, 23, 46, 54), be very natural - (accelerando, ritardando).

Now choose a quiet and expressive piece (e.g. no. 2 or no. 65), put on your diving suit and enter into the sphere of lines and harmonies. Explore! Keep singing the music!

If you like, take also a look at my Karg-Elert Edition (Label  
By listening to the music, you will find out easily, what I mean by  
into the music".

AEOLUS).  
"Diving



Have fun. We'll keep in touch!

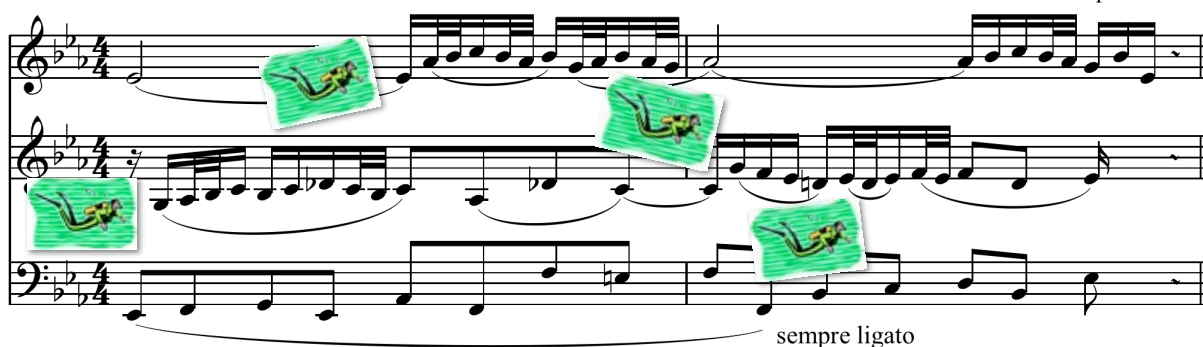
Yours

Elke Voelker  
International Concert Organist

***This does NOT mean fall asleep!***

Andante sostenuto  
Ruhig, ohne Zu schleppen

Ach bleib mit deiner Gnade  
Abide among us with Thy grace  
Opus 65 No 2





## YOUNG ORGANISTS

**21 March Sunday**  
**Wesley Uniting Church,**  
**ACT**

**Frank Tamsitt**  
Bach BWV 541, 530, 593 . . .

**21 March Sunday 2pm**  
**St Pat's Gundagai**  
**Marko Sever**  
**Concert of Sacred**  
**Music**

**25 March Thursday**  
**7pm**  
**St Pat's Church Hill**  
**Miles Katay**  
**Micahel Butterfield**  
**Stacey Yang**  
**Edith Yam**  
**in masterclass**  
**with Elke Voelker**

**11 April Sunday 3pm**  
**St Stephen's Anglican**  
**Church, Willoughby**  
**David Tagg**

**22 April Thursday**  
**1.10pm**  
**St Andrew's Cathedral**  
**David Tagg**

**28 April Wednesday**  
**1.15pm**  
**St James' King Street,**  
**Sydney**  
**Frank Tamsitt**

**6 May Thursday**  
**1.10pm**  
**St Andrew's Cathedral**  
**Edwin Taylor**

## Concerts

It is not fair to highlight some and not  
others . . .

*Please see [www.sydneyorgan.com](http://www.sydneyorgan.com) to  
download the latest complete concert  
schedule . . . and details of the  
following events.*

- 21/3 Amy Johansen  
Great Hall, Syd.Uni 3.30pm
- 23/3 Thomas Heywood  
Sydney Grammar 6.30pm
- 25/3 Elke Voelker Masterclass  
St Pat's Sydney 7pm
- 5/4 Easter Monday Ramble with  
OHTA/OMSS in Sydney
- 10/4 Andrew Grahame presents  
Colours of the King on 2MBS FM  
5pm
- 11/4 Lecture Recital by Frances  
Nobert highlighting works by ladies  
Pitt Street Uniting Church 2pm
- 11/4 Robert Ampt with Brass  
St Philip's, Caringbar 2pm
- 8/5 Stabat Mater by Rossini  
Syd. Uni Choir, Great Hall 8pm \$\$
- 16/5 Amy Johansen CCSL 2pm
- 30/5 Amy Johansen  
Great Hall 3.30pm
- Christopher Wrench, Peter Jewkes,  
Neil Cameron, John Aitchison, Brett  
McKern, Peter Guy, Heather Moen-  
Boyd, Jim Abrahams, Ross Cobb,  
Peter Ellis, Michael Deasey, Kurt  
Ison . . .
- Monteverdi Vespers, St Mark's  
Passion, Stainer's Crucifixion,  
Couperin's Tenebres . . .

## Join In!

If you have a concert or  
event that you'd like to  
advertise, or have an idea  
for an interesting article,  
please let us know.



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Competition

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