FRENCH ORGAN MUSIC IN
THE REIGN OF LOUIS XIV

Presenting a fresh approach to French organ music, David Ponsford analyses the repertory from the reign of Louis XIV by genre. The colourful French organ was so consistent in design that the very titles of pieces which were constituent parts of organ masses, Magnificats and suites prescribed the registrations: plein jeu, fugue, duo, récit, trio, fond d’orgue and grand jeu. Particular examples from published livres d’orgue and important manuscript collections are analysed chronologically, so that influences from Italian as well as French sacred and secular music can be traced. This analysis reveals the dynamic development of compositional styles in which each composer developed, modified or reacted against the exemplars of his predecessors. Composers discussed include Louis Couperin, François Couperin, Raison, Clérambault and Marchand. The reader will gain an enhanced understanding of performance practices such as notes inégales, fingerings and ornamentation, and the influence of French composers on J. S. Bach.

David Ponsford is a renowned organist and harpsichordist who has been engaged in academic research and performances of French Baroque music throughout his career. He teaches at Bristol University and is Associate Lecturer at Cardiff University, where he directs courses in performance practice and conducts the University Choir and Chamber Orchestra. He has made a number of solo organ and harpsichord recordings, including Parthenia, J. S. Bach’s Clavierübung III and J. S. Bach’s complete violin sonatas with Jacqueline Ross. His edition of Biber’s Mystery Sonatas was published in 2007.
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David Ponsford
French Organ Music in the Reign of Louis XIV
FRENCH ORGAN MUSIC IN THE REIGN OF LOUIS XIV

DAVID PONSFORD
To my mother

and to the memory of my father
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of illustrations</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviations and glossary</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genre</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The conventions of notes inégales</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ornaments</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fingering</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The influence of Italian music</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plein jeu</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fugue</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duo</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Récit de dessus</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Récit en taille</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Récit de basse</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trio</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fond d’orgue</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand jeu</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epilogue</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Illustrations

1. St Etienne-du-Mont, Paris. Photograph by the author. page 2
2. St Gervais, Paris. Photograph by the author. 10
List of illustrations


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Abbreviations and glossary

ABBREVIATIONS

Textual abbreviations

B bass
b.+ ds. basse et dessus
cf. compare
c.f. cantus firmus
MS manuscript
Ped Pedal
T tenor

Bibliographic abbreviations

DTÖ Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Österreich
EM Early Music
JAMS Journal of the American Musicological Society
JM Journal of Musicology
JRMA Journal of the Royal Musical Association
MB Musica Britannica
ML Music & Letters
MT Musical Times
PRMA Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association

GLOSSARY

Figura A ‘figure’, ‘motif’ or particular note-pattern in a distinctive melodic and/or rhythmic shape. Although catalogued in

xi
German sources such as J. G. Walther’s *Praecepta der musicalischen Composition* (1708) and *Musicalisches Lexicon* (1732), some of the same *figurae* were used as generative motifs in French organ music. Some were almost genre-specific, although not exclusively so; for example, the *figura corta* in the *basse de trompette*, and the *suspirans* to open many a *plein jeu*.

*Figura corta*  
A rhythmic figure described by Walther as having two forms: dactyl (long-short-short) and anapest (short-short-long).

*Style brisé*  
Literally the ‘broken style’, derived from lute idioms and subsequently becoming an idiomatic harpsichord technique, consisting of broken chords in continuous quavers or semiquavers, such as is found in the Prelude in C major from J. S. Bach’s *Well-Tempered Clavier*, vol. 1.

*Superjectio*  
A figure in which the principal note is followed by an upper, dissonant, auxiliary which then leaps (rather than passes) to a lower principal note in a descending melodic context.

*Suspirans*  
A four-note figure beginning with a rest (hence a ‘sigh’ or ‘breathing in’) and leading to the next beat in continuous quavers or semiquavers (normally conjunct). The French *suspirans* is notated ♯ ♮ ♯ ♯ (normally with a ♭ on the second note) and played *inégal*.

**PITCH NOTATION**

Specific pitches are identified according to the Helmholtz system, in which middle C is c′; the octave above is c′′; the octaves below are c and C, descending BB, AA, etc.