

THE ENGLISHNESS OF THE ENGLISH ORGAN

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The lecture examines the evolution of the English organ between 1530 and 1850. The speaker describes the organ's distinctive characteristics and explains these with reference to the particular functions of the organ in both the ecclesiastical and secular spheres.

The English Reformation led to widespread destruction of organs. Despite hostility from Protestant Calvinists ('Puritans') organs continued in use in many cathedrals and college chapels where choirs of boys and men were maintained to sing daily services. In the early seventeenth century, and under royal patronage, a more ceremonial style of worship was adopted in many of these establishments. This led to a new demand for organs designed to accompany the choirs, and Thomas and Robert Dallam supplied them. They were transposing organs (key C = note F) without mixtures or reeds and seldom had more than 12 stops, but the cases were often elaborate and richly coloured. Nearly all were destroyed when Parliament defeated the King in the Civil Wars (1640's) and ordered the removal of organs from churches.

When the monarchy was restored (1660) organs were reintroduced. Organ-building was dominated by Bernard ('Father') Smith, a German who had worked also in Holland, and Renatus Harris, a descendant of the Dallams whose family had worked in Brittany in the 1640's and 1650's. Smith introduced registers from north-western Europe, whilst Harris showed French influence in his extensive use of reeds and mutations. English organs did not have pedals and the keyboard compass usually began at GG.

During the eighteenth century many parish churches bought organs. Often they had splendid cases which proclaimed the affluence of the parishoners. They were used to accompany the singing of metrical psalms and to play short solo pieces ('voluntaries') during the service. Pedals and pedal pipes slowly made an appearance from around 1790.

Domestic and secular organs were also important. England was becoming wealthy and both the aristocracy and affluent middle-classes could afford chamber organs with handsome cases. Organs were also used for public entertainment in the London pleasure gardens and theatres. Handel's organ concertos helped to popularise the secular organ. Orchestral imitations were admired, and the invention of the Swell Organ (introduced by Abraham Jordan in 1712) was a matter of national pride.

Change came about in the early-nineteenth century through a number of factors. The introduction of contemporary hymns in both Anglican and nonconformist services necessitated the building of organs powerful enough to accompany large congregations. The building of public halls in which oratorio performances might take place led to the construction of organs capable of supporting hundreds of singers. Birmingham Town Hall (1834) was the first and most famous.

William Hill (1789-1870) was the leading builder of the period. He and others experimented with tonal and mechanical innovations. When the use of duplication, increased scales, sub-unison registers and longer keyboard compasses failed to increase the power of the organs, Dr Henry Gauntlett persuaded Hill and other builders to adopt more radical measures inspired by foreign organs. From 1840 Hill started building organs with C-compasses, more chorus work, German-style Pedal Organs, and a plethora of novel flutes, strings and reeds. This brought about the demise of the earlier type of English organ.

Englishness in organ-building consisted in modesty of scale, a certain restraint, avoidance of extremes, refinement of voicing and a taste for melodic registers. The organ's *raison d'être* was the accompaniment of a relatively small group of singers in the cathedral service.

WORCESTER CATHEDRAL: Thomas Dallam, 1613

Great Organ (C=F - ?)

Two open diapasons of mettall [8']
 Two principals of mettall [4']
 Two smal principals or 15th of mettall [2']
 One twelfth of mettall
 One recorder of mettall, a stopt pipe [4'']

Chaire Organ

One principal of mettall [4']
 One diapason [stopt?] of wood [8']
 One flute of wood [4']
 One smal principal or fifteenth [2']
 One two and twentieth of mettall [1']

UNIVERSITY ORGAN, CAMBRIDGE: Bernard Smith, 1697

Great Organ (GG - d3)

Open Diapason	8
Stopped Diapason (wood)	8
Principal	4
Flute (wood)	4
Twelfth	2 2/3
Fifteenth	2
Sesquialtera	III
Trumpet	8
Cornet (c1)	IV

Chair Organ (GG - d3)

Stopped Diapason (wood)	8
Principal	4
Nason (wood)	4
Fifteenth	2

ST MARY, ROTHERHITHE: John Byfield, 1764

Great Organ (GG - e3)

Open Diapason	8
Stop Diapason	8
Principal	4
Nason	4
Twelfth	2 2/3
Fifteenth	2
Sesquialtera	IV
Trumpet	8
Clarion	4
Cornet (c1)	V

Choir Organ (GG - e3)

Stop Diapason	8
Principal	4
Flute	4
Fifteenth	2
Vox Humana	8

Swell (g - e3)

Open Diapason	8
Stop Diapason	8
Principal	4
Cornet	III
Trumpet	8
Hautboy	8

ST MARY-AT-HILL, LONDON: William Hill, 1848

Great Organ (C - f3)

Double Open Diapason	16
Open Diapason	8
Stopt Diapason	8
Viol di Gamba	8
Quint	5 1/3
Octave	4
Wald Flute	4
Octave Quint	2 2/3
Super Octave	2
Piccolo	2
Sesquialtra	III
Mixture	III
Posaune	8
Clarion	4
Krum Horn	8

Swell Organ (C - f3)

Double Diapason	16
Open Diapason	8
Stopt Diapason	8
Hohl Flute	8
Octave	4
Suabe Flute	4
Octave Quint	2 2/3
Super Octave	2
Sesquialtra	III
Cornocean	8
Hautboy	8
Clarion	4

Pedal Organ (C - e1)

Open Diapason	16
Principal	8
Posaune	16
3 couplers	
3 composition pedals	