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The Organ as a Mirror of Its Time: North European Reflections, 1610–2000.
Edited by Kerala J. Snyder (New York, Oxford University Press, 2002)
374 pp. \$74.00 cloth \$39.95

The Organ as a Mirror of Its Time is directed at two primary audiences—organists (due to the jargon and detailed organ specifications) and historians of music, religion, intellectual trends, and technology. The pipe organ is an inherently interdisciplinary topic, since one must confront the physical (mechanical, architectural) and cultural (musical, religious) as-

pects of its creation and use. As Snyder states, “It is the central thesis of this book that organs have stories to tell about the times in which they were built that go far beyond the music that was played on them” (1).

The book is well designed, permitting selective reading on various musical, religious, and intellectual milieus throughout the past four centuries. Mirroring the forms typical of organ compositions, each of the four parts of the book begins with an *exordium*, with an *interludium* between each part. Snyder provides a *praeludium* and *postludium* to open and end the book. Her opening chapter outlines the major themes upon which the book’s contributors reflect: organs in time and space (geography and history, the sacred and secular, and art and music), patronage, the organ and the physics of sound (with a brief, somewhat technical, overview of musical terminology), and the organ as aesthetic mirror (tuning systems, compositional philosophy, and composers). Elsewhere, Snyder provided a useful reference to chapters of interest based on the topics of “the organs themselves ... discussions of music played on the instruments ... performance practice ... [and] the history of ideas” (iv). Furthermore, connections and cross-references throughout the chapters make selective reading all the better.

Parts II, III and IV and the *Postludium* each look in-depth at a single organ. Part I examines two organs, one secular (Frederiksborg Castle; Hillerød, Denmark; 1610) and another sacred (St. Jacobi Church, Hamburg; 1693). The *Exordium* for Part I gives an overview of the provenance of the two organs, broaches the issues that come up in ensuing chapters, and provides organ specifications (lengths and types of stops) and selected literature and recordings. Chapter 3 is a historical overview of the Hanseatic cities circa the Thirty Years’ War. Chapter 4 is definitely for organists: It has detailed technical information about the genesis of the secular organ with relations to the theories and descriptions of seventeenth-century music and organs by Michael Praetorius. The tone of Chapter 4 incorporates authors’ own experiences, whereas Chapter 3 provides a stolid presentation of the War. This contrast is representative of the diversity of contributors in the volume. Performers, teachers, museum curators, librarians, and government officials, as well as academics (musicologists and historians), comprise the approximately equal numbers of North Americans and North Europeans.

Chapter 5 focuses on the distinctive theological views of the Orthodox and Pietist Lutherans and has a notable musicological discussion of the role of the organ and organist in the liturgy. Finally, Chapter 6 provides the most interesting portion of the entire volume—a discussion of the seventeenth-century cosmology of the organ. Hans Davidsson clarifies the connections between the work of Johannes Kepler, Athanasus Kircher, and contemporary organ design as they related to the clockwork universe (the macrocosm) and the human world (the microcosm). Another insightful topic is the allegory of the organ: “The intention during this period was not to showcase the organist as a performer but to create the illusion that the organ was playing itself. The organist

was hidden ... completing the illusion that the instrument spoke in the allegorical voice of the Creator himself" (84).

Part II addresses the organ in the small factory town of Leufsta Bruk, Sweden (1728), covering the architectural, social, and economic history of the town as well as the history of the organ, its builder, and its renovations over the centuries. The subject of Part III is a French-designed organ in Copenhagen (1890). The authors discuss international connections and patronage as well as technological changes in nineteenth-century organ construction. Part IV addresses the twentieth-century interest in the performance practice of previous periods, specifically the organ revival as it relates to an organ in Stockholm (1949). This final section discusses musical styles that depart radically from the techniques of previous eras, most notably through the composer (and contributor) Bengt Hambraeus' *Rjessioni* (2000). That composition is on the compact disk provided with the book, along with other music performed on each of the six instruments. Guides to parsing the compositions, like those on pages 271/72 and 190, illuminate the musical compositions and the character of the organs as discussed in the text. The inclusion of the disk makes for a uniquely engaging experience.

Two of the *interludia*, the *Primum* and *Secundum*, are notable studies. The first is a historiographical study that takes on sweeping narratives about the "golden age" of organs. The latter provides an excellent interdisciplinary conspectus of musical life in eighteenth-century Germany, emphasizing the importance of residential cities and their princely courts along with the development of the middle class and universities.

Snyder's *Postludium* provides a brief look at a sixth organ—the recently built organ in Göteborg (2000). It exemplifies her message of recognizing change in history, since the instrument came about through the collective work of historians and organists in order to recreate aspects of earlier organs. This chapter brings out an apparent paradox: Because this organ was built at the dawn of the twenty-first century to play music of the seventeenth century, it would not seem to reflect its own time, but it does. The aesthetic of our time recognizes that no one instrument can play the entire organ repertory.

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