ALCM Seattle "God's People Sing"
Workshop: The French Connection: French Classical Performance Practice
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Typical minimally complete organ of the period

- 1st manual: **Positif de dos** (at your back), 5 octaves C – c'''
  Bourdon 8'
  Prestant 4'
  Flûte 4'
  Nazard 2 2/3'
  Doublette 2' (sometimes called Quarte de Nazard)
  Tierce 1 3/5'
  Larigot 1 1/3'
  Plein jeu (mixture, perhaps III ranks)
  Cromorne 8'
- 2nd manual: **Grand Orgue**, 5 octaves C – c'''
  Bourdon 16'
  Montre 8'
  Bourdon 8'
  Prestant 4'
  Flûte 4'
  Grosse tierce 3 1/5'
  Nazard 2 2/3'
  Doublette 2'
  Tierce 1 3/5'
  Fourniture (mixture, low pitch)
  Cymbale (mixture, high pitch)
  (Voix humaine 8')
  Trompette 8'
  Clairon 4'
  Grand Cornet V (*séparé*)
- 3rd manual: **Récit**, 3 octaves, c' – c''', unenclosed and positioned in the case above the G.O.
  Cornet V (*séparé*)
  (Trompette or Hautbois 8')
- 4th manual: **Echo** (optional), permanently enclosed in a box behind the music rack, either 4 or 3 octaves, c – c''' or c' – c'''
  Cornet V
  (Voix humaine 8')
- **Pédale**: C – c' or up to f', sometimes extended downward below C to AA or FF, reed stops only, known as the *Ravalement*
  Flûte 8'
  Trompette 8'
  (Clairon 4')
- Couplers: Usually Positif to Grand Orgue. Not all instruments had a G.O to Pédale and the Récit and Echo did not couple to the G.O.

- Key action is tracker of the suspended type (*action suspendu*) where the key is hinged at the back and the tracker is attached at the front. This action is generally quite sensitive and allows for the agile performance of ornaments. On large instruments, however, this can still be rather heavy.
- Temperament: Generally a modified meantone where the thirds are pure in keys with few flats or sharps.
- Tremulants: *Tremblant fort,* a beating tremulant similar to a modern tremulant and a *Tremblant doux,* a mechanism in the wind duct that beats faster and deeper the more keys that are depressed simultaneously. Tremulants affect the entire organ.

Registration

Titles of pieces often indicate the registration to be used. Some common ones are

- **Fond d'orgue**: Bourdon 16', Bd. 8', Principal (Montre) 8', Octave 4'
- **Jeu doux** (soft stops): Bd. 8' + Flute 8' or Montre 8' or Bd. 8' + Fl. 4'
- **Plein jeu**: Principal chorus of the Grand Orgue, Bd. 16', Bd. 8', Montre 8', Octave 4', Doublette 2' (Nb. This is not a 2' flute), Mixture (Fourniture) + Cymbale (high pitched mixture) if available.
- **Petit plein jeu**: Principal chorus of the Positif (same as above without 16').
- **Grand plein jeu**: Plein jeu of the Positif coupled to the Plein jeu of the G.O. Nb. When the title says Plein jeu, the organist may choose Petit plein jeu or Grand plein jeu and perform accordingly.
- **Grand jeu**: Reeds supported by Bd. 8' and Octave 4' with perhaps the Cornet to strengthen the treble. This may depend upon whether or not there is a Clairon 4'. Normally this is manuals coupled: G.O. Trompette 8', Clairon 4', Cornet V or *séparé* (Bd. 8', Fl. 4', Nazard 2 2/3', Doublette 2', Tierce 1 3/5') + Positif Cromorne 8' , Bd. 8', Fl. 4' and cornet combinations. Nb. There are no mixtures or use of the Principal 8' in this combination. In 18th century works a Bd. 16' or even Bombarde 16' could be added to the Grand jeu depending upon style and texture. This would be a post-Dom Bedos addition.
- **Tierce en taille** (Tierce in the tenor): Positif: Bd. 8', Fl. 4', Nazard 2 2/3', (2'), Tierce 1 3/5' + Larigot 1 1/3' if available. G.O. Fond d'orgue or Jeu doux, coupled to the Pédale + plus the Pédale Fl. 8' if there is a pedal part. Nb. If there isn't a manual to pedal coupler, use Bd. 16' and Fl. 8' of the Pédale. If there is no 16' on the manual then there should be no 16' in the pedal.
- **Cromorne en taille**: Cromorne (which was rather prominent). If there isn't a Cromorne a Schalmei or small Trompette is a better substitute than a soft Oboe. The Cromorne may be helped out with Bd. 8', Fl. 4' or both. G.O. Fond d'orgue or Jeu doux. Pédale same as for a Tierce en taille.
- **Fugue sur le Trompette (Cromorne)**: Add to the reed stops a helping stop such as Bd. 8' and/or Fl. 4'. If there is a Clairon 4' that can also be added.
- **Basse de Trompette (Cromorne)**: Add to the reed stop a helping stop, Bd. 8' and/or Fl. 4'. Accompaniment is Jeu doux.
- **Récit de Nazard**: Bd. 8', Fl. 4', Nazard 2 2/3'. Accompaniment Jeu doux.
- **Duo**: typically three options. 1) LH on G.O. (Bd. 16'), Bd. 8', (Grosse Tierce 3 1/5 – must have 16' beneath it), Fl. 4', Nazard 2 2/3', Doublette or Fl. 2',

Tierce 1 3/5', RH on Récit, Cornet V or Positif, also cornet combination, 2) RH cornet and LH Cromorne or 3) RH Cromorne, LH Jeu de tierce.

- **Trio**: Same combinations as above, but the RH plays two voices. Trios are two-manual pieces. If there is a trio for two manuals and pedal, the pedal stop is Fl. 8'
- **Flûtes**: G.O. Bd. 8', (Fl. 4'), with Positif coupled Bd. 8' (Fl. 4'). This would be a place where the *Tremblant doux* would be used.
- **Dialogue sur le voix humaine**: Voix humaine 8' + helping stops Bd. 8', (Fl. 4') and the *Tremblant doux*. Accompaniment Jeu doux. Nb. If no Voix humaine, substitute a short resonator reed, perhaps at 16' pitch, played 8va.

Performance Practice

- ***Notes inégales*** (unequal notes, not shown in the score)

Use inequality in these instances:

- Groups of stepwise notes having shorter time value than the lower figure of the time signature
- Notes that fall naturally into pairs
- Melodies that become more elegant when played unequally
- Original slur over pairs of notes
- A pick-up note before a group is played unequally

Do not use inequality in these instances:

- Passages with skips and leaps
- Triplets, syncopations or already dotted notes or pieces where dotted figures are prevalent
- Tempo extremes
- Passages with a mixture of notes and rests
- Original slur over more than two notes
- Staccatos

Also, Marie-Claire Alain suggests not using *notes inégales* in Noëls because the tunes are so well-known. She also says not to use it with anything based on a "foreign tune," i.e. Noël Suisse.

- **Dotted rhythms**: Generally performed "over dotted," especially at cadences.
- **Ornaments**: Trills (*tremblant)* are generally added on the third of a final chord, creating a 4-3 suspension. Mordants (*pínce*) may be added to the last note of a piece where there is no third in the chord. *Ports de voix* is an appoggiatura from below followed by a mordant. *Tierce coulee* is a passing note, short and played before the beat. *Appoggiatura,* whether from above or below the note, will have different values depending upon the value of the note on which it takes effect. It means "dwelling."

Most important source in English

- Douglass, Fenner. The Language of the French Classical Organ: A Musical Tradition Before 1800, New and Expanded Edition. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1969/1995.