

The Barony Hall Organ and its wider context

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Arriving at the Barony Hall on a crisp, sunny February morning one can't help but be impressed by its situation. This former church sits on the east side of the large University of Strathclyde campus opposite the Royal Infirmary, the magnificent Gothic St Mungo's cathedral and overlooked by the memorial stones of the imposing Glasgow necropolis.

Without doubt, something of the bold vision which created these and other architectural gems is reflected in the Schnitger-inspired organ which graces the side gallery of the Barony Hall. This instrument, the Maurice Taylor Organ, completed in 2009, is one of the most important new organs to have been built in the UK in recent times and the university authorities, the panel of experts who arrived at its design and the organ builders, the Austrian firm of Koegler Organ Builders, are all to be congratulated on their remarkable achievement.

As an educational tool the Barony organ is of particular significance and usefulness. Glasgow has two universities, both with music departments, and an international music conservatoire, the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama. For students and teachers lucky enough to be able to use it, the Barony organ is one of the few UK organs which attempts to replicate the experience of playing an original north German instrument. In addition to providing a tool to explore old playing techniques and sounds, playing the Barony organ is an excellent preparation for field trips to hear and

play the many surviving and well restored Baroque organs on the continent.

Although the hall is in almost continuous use either for examinations, university ceremonies such as graduations or as a popular venue for business events, weddings and other private functions, space has been found to stage a series of concerts to allow the organ to be heard following its installation and an RCO study day was held earlier this year. The driving forces behind the organ were Professor Andrew Hamnett, until recently University principal; Alan Taverner, University Director of Music; the late David Sanger as organ consultant and Professor John Butt of the University of Glasgow, a leading Bach scholar and performer. The University organist, David Hamilton, is responsible for the instrument and for playing at graduation ceremonies. He is tutor in organ at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama and his extensive knowledge of Northern European organs make him an ideal advocate for this type of instrument.

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significant organs in the region and supplements the small but distinguished number of historically inspired organs in Scotland. Glasgow boasts a number of important historic organs: sacred and secular. These include the Lewis organs in the Kelvingrove Art Gallery (from 1901, see the front of this magazine for details of its daily lunch-time organ recitals) and the Bute Hall, University of Glasgow (1904). Slightly further afield Paisley Abbey (Cavaillé-Coll 1872 and others) and the Coats Memorial Church, Paisley (Hill, 1890). The recent 'historical' organs in Aberdeen (Aubertin), Dumblane (Flentrop) and Edinburgh (Ahrend) complete this picture of a rich and diverse organ culture.

The new Barony organ is a bold essay in the reconstruction of Baroque organ sound. Its principal features are the werkprinzip layout, the historical design and proportion of its manual and pedal keyboards, its rich number and variety of chorus and solo stops, and the extension of the typical Schnitger compass to accommodate the music of J.S. Bach and later.

The case is indeed very fine and the spatial distance between each division is strikingly conveyed when listening from the hall. The clarity of the positiv is matched by the immediacy of the pedal division (also projecting from the gallery rail) while the hauptwerk





gains greater depth from its larger acoustical space above and behind the other divisions. The brustwerk speaks well into the building and the mixture, though uncomfortably strident at the console, is satisfyingly bright and clear from a distance. The richness of contrasted sounds and dynamics is perhaps one of the most successful elements of the werkprinzip design and an essential vehicle to convey the drama and rhetoric of earlier Baroque organ music.

The construction principles and execution of the Barony organ are of a very high order, including all-wood joints and no screws in the casework, and an excellent finish throughout. The physical arrangement of the keyboards and pedalboard, with the latter projecting underneath the player, requires a predominantly toes-only pedal technique, and a direct and 'clean' finger control. Also

noteworthy are the typical position of the rückpositiv stops which project from the rear of the rückpositiv case, that is, behind the player.

A brief analysis of the stop list reveals the essentials of the Schnitger tonal scheme. The principal chorus or pfeifenwerk of each division is based on the height of its case: 16' for the pedal, 8' for the hauptwerk, 4' for the rückpositiv and 2' for the brustwerk. The mixtures have many ranks (including sub-unisons on the hauptwerk) and are fundamental to the rich and complex plenum sound. The flutes offer greater variety of construction and tonal colour, from the narrow open Viola da Gamba through the wide Waldflöte and Siffelöte to the stopped Gedackt, Rohrflöte and characteristic Quintadena. The potential for colourful solo sounds is increased through the combination of different

itches and with mutations, Nasard, Terz and Sesquialtera. The reeds or Schnarrwerk are a vital ingredient, a feature of Schnitger organs much praised by Bach (according to Agricola), yet a class of stop singularly lacking in the manuals of many Saxon instruments in Bach's time (Silbermann, for example). Koegler's reeds are made of metal with oak boots and give a good fundamental, especially in the bass. The Trompete and Posaune have long resonators while the Fagott, Dulzian and Vox Humana are shorter. The pedal Cornett 2', which should not be confused with the multi rank solo stop of the same name, is both typical and very useful as a solo and chorus voice.

To my ears, the temperament (after Neidhart) was disappointing in seventeenth-century music although the brilliance of the chorus sounds made ▶

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up for this to some extent. This temperament has near equal tempered intervals and was chosen to allow the organ to be used at standard concert pitch with modern orchestras and in modern solo repertoire. The absence of a pedal coupler has been noted by some reviewers, although I certainly didn't miss it. The *hauptwerk* to *rückpositiv* manual coupler was certainly unexpected and, musically speaking, surprisingly useful, although I am unsure of its historical justification. For the energetic, a human powered bellows sits behind the main case to provide an 'authentic' winding alternative to electric blowers.

Assessing the Barony Hall organ in a broader context we see that the British Isles is, with some notable exceptions, somewhat behind the rest of the world in embracing a historically informed organ building and playing culture. It is not surprising to find the two guiding principles of the Kögler organ – the Schnitger workshop and the performance of J.S. Bach's music – also dominating recent organ reconstructions beyond the UK. The GOArt reconstruction of an archetypal North German organ for the Örgryte nya kyrka in Göteborg, Sweden (2000) and the Taylor and Booday organ after the Lüdingworth organ but without the pedal towers for the Marquand Chapel at Yale University, New Haven, CT, USA (2007) are two examples of historically informed reconstruction. The Swedish GOArt organ takes its case design from the destroyed organ of Lübeck Dom with pipework painstakingly reconstructed from surviving examples by Arp Schnitger, Fritsche and Scherer and, like the Yale University instrument, uses meantone tuning with subsemitones (additional accidental keys to provide, for example, both D sharp and E flat). The not so recent but supremely musical Ahrend organ in San Simpliciano, Milan, Italy (1991) amply demonstrates how lessons learnt during the restoration of original instruments can be creatively applied to produce a 'North German' instrument also well suited to Bach.



The classic Schnitger organ disposes its sounds within the spatial architecture of a *werkprinzip* design. In such an organ the manual divisions are arranged vertically in the case with the *positiv* in 'rück' position, i.e. behind the players back on the gallery rail and closest to the church floor, and with the pedal stops divided into two towers also speaking forward, on or near to the front of the gallery rail. This orientation can be found in the majority of the larger organs, such as the famous surviving 3-manual organ for St Cosmae, Stade or the massive 4-manual Katharinekirche organ in Hamburg (1693) which was destroyed, along with the church, in allied bombing in 1943.

Many connections can be made between Schnitger organs and significant players and repertoires. The organist at Stade, Vincent Lübeck, for example, was appointed on completion of Arp Schnitger's rebuild in 1688. The Katharinekirche organ has assumed a special importance for J. S. Bach's organ music. Bach visited Hamburg in 1720 to audition for the post of organist at *Jacobikirche* and spoke of the Katharinekirche organ admiringly to his pupil Agricola. This report lies behind the modern assertion that Bach's 'dream' organ would have been of the North German type. In fact Bach's remarks praised only specific aspects of the Katharinekirche organ (the 'beauty and quality' of the reeds in particular and also the evenness of the 32' principal and *posaune*.) While the *Jacobikirche* has survived and has been 'copied' several times, only part of the Katharinekirche specification is known. The Hamburg Stiftung Johann

Sebastian began a project to reconstruct the Katharinekirche organ in the restored church in 2004 and the first part, the 13-stop *rückpositiv*, was completed by Flentrop in 2008.

The Schnitger workshop also built organs for smaller venues and spaces. These often require the manual divisions to be positioned closer to the gallery floor level and contrast with the more typical vertical *werkprinzip*. Such horizontal layouts were common in Saxony

at the time of Bach and reflect a move away from the tonal and architectural norms of the Northern style. Schnitger built several organs in the Magdeburg and Berlin areas of Germany which reflect this newer aesthetic. Unfortunately, with the exception of the organ case in Clausthal-Zellerfeld, none of these organs for the Eastern cities survive. Apart from a different case layout, the organs Schnitger built for this region exhibit a greater provision of colour stops. These included string stops such as the *Viola da Gamba* at 4' as well as 8' pitches, wooden flute stops including the double-mouthed *Floite Dues* and special reed stops such as *Oboe 8'*.

Of the 'non-standard' Schnitger organs, the instrument for the *Eosanderkapelle* in Charlottenburg Castle in Berlin (1706) has recently been singled out for special scrutiny and two modern reconstructions have resulted from this later Schnitger style: one for the KNUA Hall, Korean University of Arts, Seoul, Korea built by GOArt, Göteborg University, Sweden (2006) and the other for the Anabel Taylor Chapel, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, USA, a collaboration between GOArt, Cornell University and two New York firms, Parsons Pipe Organ Builders of Canandaigua, NY and Christopher Lowe of Freeville, NY (2010). The Charlottenburg organ was well documented in the early 20th century before its destruction in WWII and a sound recording was made in 1938 by Fritz Heitmann, a pupil of Karl Sraube, playing excerpts from J.S. Bach's *Clavierübung III* (matx LP Teldec Telefunken-Decca - AJ6.41977). The Charlottenburg organ avoided the *werkprinzip* architecture of



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necessity. The organ was placed on a balcony within a narrow, low archway with the rückpositiv case occupying the front of the gallery and hiding the hauptwerk and pedal placed behind it.

Saxon-style instruments have also been attempted. Zacharias Hildebrandt is the favoured model for the proposed Taylor & Boody organ for the Constellation Center, Cambridge, MA, USA, while the organ in Christ Church, Rochester, NY, USA (2007) in collaboration with the Eastman School is modelled on the Casparini (1776) in Vilnius, Lithuania. The Frenchman, Bernard Aubertin, builds organs along historical lines but very much reflecting his own artistry. His 2004 organ for Eglise Saint Louis-en-l'Île, Paris, France, has been singled out as a players' 'Bach' organ and his 2008 organ for St John's College, Oxford, an 'eclectic' organ drawing design aspects from many historical periods not just the

Baroque, is a fine instrument for the French Classical school. Historically uninformed approaches have, inevitably, resulted in some aberrations of which the new organ at the Frauenkirche Dresden might serve as a lesson.

The Barony Hall organ has been designed to provide the sounds appropriate to the study and performance of north German music of the late 17th century and a compass suitable for the music of Bach and beyond. This remit has required compromises of compass, temperament and touch. The large variety of plenum sounds which a good player can register from the organ is remarkable and this was wonderfully demonstrated to me by David Hamilton. Beautiful sounds, too, can be made with single stops (the flutes and quintadena especially, but also the principals alone, always the test of an organ's musicality). Bach's Trio sonatas are a delight to play

on 4' stops in one manual against 8' in another. The spatial separation of the rückpositiv and hauptwerk case lends great clarity to these pieces, although it must be admitted that the provision of a rückpositiv was a very low priority in the new Saxon organs built during Bach's later life. The ample provision of 16' manual tone extend the palette of sonority and the pedal reeds, Quintbass 10 2/3' and manual Gross Sesquialtera lend appropriate 'gravität'.

The Barony Hall organ is a very fine musical instrument and I would recommend readers to hear it for themselves. It sets a high benchmark in terms of the technical accomplishment necessary to play it while at the same time inspiring listener and player alike to rediscover the core repertoire with a greater respect for historical performance styles.

Specification

Barony Hall, Strathclyde University, Glasgow

Pipe Organ built by Orgelbau Koegler (Linz, Austria), 2009

41 stops, 3 manuals and 1 pedal. Mechanical key and stop action.

Hauptwerk – II. Manual, C-c^{'''}

1. Quintadena metal	16'
2. Principal Prospect tin	8'
3. Viola da Gamba metal	8'
4. Rohrflöte metal	8'
5. Octave metal	4'
6. Gemshorn metal	4'
7. Quinte metal	3'
8. Superoctave metal	2'
9. Großsesquialter III metal	
10. Mixtur VI -VIII	
11. Trompete metal with oak boots	8'

Rückpositiv I. Manual, C-c^{'''}

12. Gedackt metal	8'
13. Quintadena metal	8'
14. Principal prospect, tin	4'
15. Spitzflöte metal	4'
16. Nasard metal	3'
17. Octave metal	2'
18. Terz metal	13/5'
19. Siffelöte metal	11/3'
20. Scharf V-VI	
21. Fagott metal with oak boots	16'
22. Dulcian metal with oak boots	8'

Brustwerk III. Manual, C-c^{'''}

23. Holzgedackt oak	8'
24. Blockflöte oak	4'
25. Octave metal	2'
26. Waldflöte metal	2'
27. Quinte metal	11/3'
28. Sesquialtera II metal	
29. Cimbel IV-V	
30. Vox Humana metal with oak boots	8'

Pedalwerk, C-d'

31. Principal prospect, tin	16'
32. Subbass C-H oak, from c metal	16'
33. Quintbass metal	10 ² / ₃ '
34. Octavbass 8' metal	8'
35. Flötbass oak	8'
36. Octave metal	4'
37. Rauschpfeife III	
38. Mixtur VI	
39. Posaune full length, C-H oak, at c metal with oak boots	16'
40. Trompete metal with oak boots	8'
41. Cornet metal with oak boots	2'

Couplers: HW to RP & HW to BW

- 1 Tremulant
- 1 Cimbelstern
- 1 Vogelgeschrei
- 1 Kalcantenzug
- 4 Sperrventile
- 1 Windlasser

Temperament: Neidhard

Wind pressure: 97mm



References

Quotations from Agricola are printed in Wilhelm Marpurg's *Historisch-Kritische Beytriige zur Aufnahme der Musik* (Historical and Critical Contributions to the Reception of Music), Volume 3, Part 6 (Berlin: Gottlieb August Lange, 1758), pages 486 to 518. They are part translated in Quentin Faulkner, 'Information on Organ Registration from a Student of J.S. Bach', *The American Organist*, (June, 1993), pp. 58–63.

Webpages

- www.strath.ac.uk/music/thebaronyorgan
- www.orgelbau-koegler.at
- <http://music.cornell.edu/about-us/facilities-and-instruments/organs-and-keyboards/organs/anabel-taylor>
- www.arpschnitger.nl/sberlineo.html
- www.constellationcenter.org/intro/intro_unique_features.htm
- www.esm.rochester.edu/eroi/c-s.php

Stephen Bicknell's thought-provoking introduction to the Saxon organ tradition is available online at:

- www.organfocus.com/features/scholarly_works/bicknell.php3.