

Performance Matters

A commentary by **Daniel Tappe**, artist for Pipe Works, 24 August 2010

"IS IT possible to play organ music of different styles on one instrument?"

I discovered the organ and its music when I was eleven years old. Since I was raised catholic, my parents insisted on going to church every Sunday. After the service I was always allowed to go up to the organ and watch the organist play the final piece. Fascinated by the different sounds I heard, I decided to become an organist myself. The first organ I played was the instrument at our church. It was a beautiful organ for improvisation. For repertoire, however, it was a different situation. There was an English *plenum*, German reeds and strings, and French flutes, all controlled by electro-pneumatic action. Of course I wanted to study music from different composers representing different national styles, so from a very early age on I learned how to make music of different styles work on an instrument that was not necessarily suited for any sort of repertoire.



POITAIT OF A MAESTRO: Daniel Tappe. Photo | Daniel Tappe

Later on, as a student at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, I experienced the opposite scenario. There was a Dutch-North German organ for the music of Bach and Buxtehude – an organ with mean-tone temperament for the music of composers such as Sweelinck and Frescobaldi, and an organ for the French masters like Vierne and Widor. So for much of the organ repertoire, students had a suitable organ on which to play. In addition, I studied historical performance and learned how to play pieces by various composers from the middle-ages up to the present time.

Today I often face the challenge of playing music on an instrument that is not really suited for it. This means that I have to make certain adjustments for my performance. For example, a Baroque North German *plenum* would consist of Prinzipales 8', 4', 3', (2'), and Mixture. This combination sounds beautiful on an organ like the Stellwagen organ in Lübeck. However, on a

Message from the Dean

"The aim and final end of all music should be none other than the glory of God and the refreshment of the soul." – Johann Sebastian Bach, (1685 – 1750)



JOHANN Sebastian Bach the musical giant is hailed as one of the greatest composers in recorded history. As a composer, music director and organist, he explored numerous musical resources and looked on each new experience with wonder. With faith as his anchor, and knowledge and experience as his tools, he forged tirelessly, crafting hundreds of works of a musical and spiritual richness that few can match, thus permanently changing the face of Western music.

What might the 21st century organist learn from his legacy? First and foremost was the way in which he infused his convictions with his art (many compositions were influenced by his Lutheran beliefs). He also took challenges in his stride, and strove to absorb and redefine the craft of his peers and predecessors. He wrote in cosmopolitan styles, though he never ventured outside Germany. Bach worked with every vocal and instrumental form of the time, except opera, and redefined the standard musical genres such as the Fugue, Chorale Prelude, and Concerto. These are but a few examples in the life and work of one of the greatest musical geniuses of all time. What might one learn from this great musician? Perhaps it is his indomitable spirit, deep faith, an insatiable hunger for knowledge.

German Romantic organ, this combination does not sound great at all. I have had to add more stops in order to get a sound that is more rich and at the same time, clearer.

In addition, the mechanical action on a Baroque organ responds very quickly, so when I play Baroque music on a Romantic organ with pneumatic action, I have to play in a more legato manner in order to draw more sound out of the instrument. Otherwise, the pipes do not have enough time to speak.

In short, it is necessary to know the sound of historic organs, the different national styles, the treatises and rules given by the composers. This information has to be taken in consideration when we play our modern instruments, and we realise what is possible and what is not. This challenge does not only concern organists. Would a pianist with a programme consisting of works by Scarlatti, Bach, Beethoven, and Chopin really require four different pianos for his concert?

Daniel Tappe (1978) studied the organ, historic keyboard instruments, and music history at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music in Oberlin/ Ohio/ USA. He graduated in 2007, earning a Bachelor of Music and a Master of Music in Historical Performance. In addition, he was awarded the Selby Harlan Houston Prize for exemplary scholarship in music theory and organ.

Visiting *Stiftkirche St. Peter*, Salzburg

Musician **Vivien Goh** talks about her experience whilst attending a concert in Salzburg, Austria.



PIPE ORGAN: Organ at the *Stiftkirche St. Peter* in Salzburg, Austria. Photo | Vivien Goh

MY VISIT to Salzburg in May coincided with an annual festival in some Austrian cities called *Die Lange Nacht der Kirchen*. From 6pm to midnight on the 28th of May, some 120 events were simultaneously going on in churches in Salzburg. There were concerts, lectures, guided tours (for example in the cathedral museum, crypt and bell tower), and the evening began and ended with services. I chose to attend an choral/ orchestral concert in *Stiftkirche St. Peter*, where I heard Vivaldi's *Gloria* and Bach's *Magnificat*. Both orchestra and chorus were small in numbers, but the sound was crystal clear without the need for amplification. Unfortunately the organ was not used at this concert.

Heinrich Walther – Ornamentation class and final *PIPES@Victoria* concert

Francis Nyan tells Pipe Echoes why he enjoyed both the ornamentation class and concert by distinguished organist Heinrich Walther.

ON 22 and 23 February the Chapter hosted two evenings dedicated to the works of J.S. Bach, led by Heinrich Walther, organist at St. Matthieu in Colmar, France. On 22 February Walther conducted a workshop on ornamentation in Bach's music. He began by examining ornamentation in the French classical tradition which influenced Bach, using examples from Couperin. Walther demonstrated how ornamentation was used for effect, how it should be executed, and how articulation and fingering prepare the way for ornaments. During the second part of the workshop, Chapter members Kevin Ardianto, Ong Su Ling and Toh Zi Ken played selected Bach works. Walther showed how ornamentation lent beauty to the musical line and served to underline the text of the chorales. He also gave valuable advice on points of technique.



HAPPY FAMILY: Members of the Singapore Chapter of the AGO with organist Mr. Heinrich Walther. Photo | Ong Te-Min

On 23 February, Walther presented an all-Bach recital programme at the Victoria Concert Hall. This was also the last organ recital before the planned renovations to the hall. The pre-concert talk was ably facilitated by Yeo Huan, the Chapter's sub-dean and programme director. *Inter alia*, Walther explained to the audience the architecture of the *Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor* (BWV 582). This no doubt added to the enjoyment of the pieces for those less familiar with organ repertoire. Walther's performance was a display of effortless athleticism, notably in the *Prelude and Fugue in D Major* (BWV 532) and the *Trio Sonata in C major* (BWV 529). His performance was greeted by enthusiastic applause from the 150-strong audience, who were rewarded with two encores.

Francis Nyan is a banker during the day and a weekend organist at the Church of St. Ignatius.

My first visit to a historical German Romantic Pipe Organ

Ong Su Ling files this report on her experience with a historical German Romantic Pipe Organ after visiting Germany.

I THANK God that after learning the organ for one to one-and-a-half years, I was given the opportunity to play on a historical German Romantic organ. I visited this church in Haar at the outskirts of Munich named *Maria Sieben Schmerzen* (The Seven Wounds of Mary). It was constructed in 1902 but the church organ was built in 1922 by Siemann, a pupil of Marz. The organ is in its original state which is rare as most of the organs in the cities of Germany were destroyed during World War II. Thankfully this one was preserved as it is situated at the outskirts.



INSTRUCTION: Hr Elmar Jahn giving an introduction to the organ as Su Ling tries out the organ. The titular organist of the church (in full Bavarian costume) looks on. Photo | Isaac Lean



FACES OF HAPPINESS: Group picture taken after the short lesson and introduction. Photo | Isaac Lean

This organ is considered small for a romantic organ with 2 manuals and 25 stops. The pipes are made of zinc and each has a *Rollbart* which helps the air to form the tone of the pipe. The tracker is turbular pneumatic.

Every organ of this type has stops identified by colours. The first manual is the *forte* manual. The second manual is for soft playing. The pink stops are for the first manual, the blue for the second manual and yellow for the pedals. The couplers have a combination of blue and yellow colours or blue and pink colours.

There are actually four 8-foot stops, one 4-foot stop but no 2-foot stop for the first manual. The Principal 8 stop sounded strong while the Dolce 8 stop is gentler. For the second manual the Harmonic Flute 8 sounds lovely and the trumpet is bright. The pedal action is quite light and you can play without any force.

There are also fixed combination stops for dynamics ranging from *p*, *mf*, *f*, *ff* and *tutti*. This is a contrast to the French Romantic organ by Cavaille-Coll where you can vary your dynamics.

I had a lot of much fun playing Reger's *Herr Jesu Christ, dich zu uns wend* and Josef Gabriel Rheinberger's Trios op. 49 no. 1. I even had an assistant to help me with my *crescendos* and *diminuendos*. How nice!

Su Ling is currently organist at Calvary Pandan Bible-Presbyterian Church.

Josef Gabriel Rheinberger was born on the 17th March 1839 in Vaduz and showed exceptional musicality at a very early age. He was already involved in organ duties from the age of 7 in his hometown and entered the Conservatory of Music in Munich at age 12. Despite his young age, he very quickly overtook his peers at the conservatory. It was therefore not surprising that the conservatory offered him a position to teach the piano and later organ and composition, a post which he held almost till his death on 25th November 1901 in Munich.

Rheinberger was one of those composers of the 2nd half of the 19th century who were characterised by their tendency to move back to and focus on historical practice and research. He composed a total of 197 works which spanned the genres of piano music, organ music, sacred and secular choral music, solo *Lieder*, symphonies, operas etc.

For more on Rheinberger, please visit this website: <http://www.rheinberger.li/Index.htm> (in German).

(Translated and adapted from German by Isaac Lean)

Benediktinerabtei Ettal

A Benedictine Monastery founded by a Bavarian Emperor

Pipe Echoes is proud to present a pictorial on one of Germany's most famous Benedictine monasteries – the Kloster Ettal. The town of Ettal is situated near the Alps of Bavaria and Austria. Besides brewing one of the best beers, Kloster Ettal is also known for its musical offerings. Ettal is a stone's throw away from the famous village of Oberammergau, where the renowned Passion Plays are staged once every decade.

Ong Su Ling and **Evelyn Lim** had the privilege of visiting Kloster Ettal on separate trips this past Summer.



KLOSTER ETTAL: A view of the monastery from the gardens.
Photo | Evelyn Lim



BAROQUE ORGAN FROM AFAR: A view of the organ taken from the sanctuary. Photo | Evelyn Lim



PIPES AND ART: Organ facade with ornate ceiling. Photo | Evelyn Lim

“*Sire, I report with utmost respect that I have not seen, in any church, such a majestic and powerful organ...”

Eduard von Schenkl, trusted councillor of King Ludwig the first, in a report detailing his itinerary through the mountains in Ettal (report filed in 1829).

*Original version in German: Eduard v. Schenkl, Vertrauensmann des Königs Ludwig 1., berichtet 1829 dem König, was er auf seiner Gebirgsreise in Ettal gesehen: "Ich bemerke nur noch ehrerbietigst, daß ich in keiner Kirche die ganze Macht der Orgel so gefühlt wie in dieser, die überhaupt zu den erhabensten Kirchen Bayerns gehört."

Source: <http://www.abtei-ettal.de/orgel.html> (in German)

Taiwan – Food & Organs

Ong Te-Min gives us a commentary on the various organ and food offerings to be found in Taiwan while on a recent trip to the land of the legendary 臭豆腐 (smelly tofu).

MENTION Taiwan and the first things that come to mind are food and night markets. Consequently I was more than a little surprised to find out that there are roughly 30+ organs in the country. The largest currently being the Flentrop in the National Concert Hall followed by the Pels & Van Leeuwen organ in the chapel of Aletheia University (真理大学) in Danshui.



PELS AND VAN LEEUWEN ORGAN: Organ in the chapel of Aletheia University. Photo | Ong Te-Min

Being there on a working trip I was limited to just two weekends to explore. The first weekend was spent on an excursion to Jiufen (九份). This involved taking a train to Rueifang followed by a bus ride along steep (and jammed) roads. The train was packed but Jiufen was worse; the hordes there could put the crowds at IT fairs in Suntec City to shame. A better experience was to be had at Taroko Gorge (太鲁阁) far from the maddening crowds.

The second weekend was spent on a trip to Jinguashi (金瓜石) just further up the road from Jiufen. There were several mines in the mountains around the area but they are all no longer operational. One or two mine shafts are now open as tourist attractions but the interiors are damp from water seeping through the ceiling (not a pleasant experience). A gorgeous view of the Pacific Ocean can be seen from the top of Teapot Mountain so named because of the resemblance of the rock formation at the summit to a handle-less teapot.

An AGO chapter is in the process of being registered in Taiwan. I had the opportunity to meet with their Dean, Dr. Melody Chen, who graciously arranged a visit to the Kleuker organ in Suang-Lien Presbyterian Church in Taipei. I also corresponded via email with another member Prof. Tony Liu from the Tainan Theological College and Seminary (台南神学院). The kind folks at Bang Kah Presbyterian Church allowed console time for me after the service; they have a 2 manual Klais organ (built in 2003).

I can recommend that you give the Japanese restaurant 一味屋 a try if you are in Taipei; their address is 台北市大安区延吉街160巷2号1楼. Their sushi and raw beef dishes are just about the best that is available.



ORGAN AT BANG KAH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH: 2 manual Klais organ at the church. Photo | Ong Te-Min



TEAPOT MOUNTAIN: View of the mountain. Photo | Ong Te-Min



OISHI: Sushi at the Japanese Restaurant. Photo | Ong Te-Min

Ong Te-Min is the Hon. Secretary of the Singapore AGO. He is still primarily busy with code tracing and bug fixing. He occasionally takes time off to serve as organist at Trinity Methodist Church and Telok Ayer Chinese Methodist Church.

AGO National Convention

by Chong Ten Yeen

From July 4th to 8th, the AGO 50th National Convention took place in Washington D.C.. Chong Ten Yeen and Mandy Wong represented the Singapore Chapter with their participation. Here is a short write-up of the event, which included numerous concerts, workshops and worship events at notable churches and performances venues.

Together with more than 2 000 other organists, Singapore Chapter members Mandy Wong and Chong Ten Yeen were in Washington D.C. during the week of 4th of July, the American national day. The AGO National Convention, which ran from 4th to 8th July, featured very long and busy days filled with an average of 6 events per day for each participant. Recitals, concerts, hymn festivals, worship services, workshops, and competition performances at churches located throughout the city – these were not only feasts for the musician's ears, but also opportunities to visit important historic landmarks in the nation's capital, and to learn to navigate the city's streets and subway system really well.



BASILICA: The closing ceremony held at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception Photo | Mandy Wong

Convention highlights included performances by Scott Dettra (Washington National Cathedral), Paul Jacobs (St. Ann Roman Catholic Church), David Higgs (US Naval Academy Chapel, Annapolis), and Jean-Baptiste Robin (St. John's Church, Lafayette Square). In addition, David Briggs improvised a solo-organ *Symphony in Four Movements* at the closing concert, and Matthew Glandorf improvised a liturgically-based recital with an ensemble of six singers at the Franciscan Monastery's sumptuously-built chapel. St. Paul's Lutheran Church hosted a Bach *Vespers* service, re-created by church-music scholar Robin A. Leaver and performed by the Washington Bach Consort.

Ten Yeen is currently pursuing graduate music studies at the University of Alabama-Tuscaloosa, USA.

What's ON 2010

Organ recital
Gedymin Grubba (Poland)
October 19th, 2010 (Venue to be confirmed)

Abendmusiken series: Bach 2010
Programme of Bach's music, with strings, harpsichord and organ
Kampong Kapor Methodist Church,
Nov 12th, 2010

Bach
2010

The Singapore Chapter of the AGO is
celebrating 2010 as Bach year!



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