

**Piotr Rachon**

**Final paper – Intro to Musicology – Fall Semester**

## **PLEIN JEU**

### **AS A TRADEMARK OF FRENCH CLASSICAL ORGANS**

Writing about historical tradition of the French organ music and factors which influenced its organ building is not an easy task. One must be aware the shape of the *Plein Jeu* of the Classical period was depended on many local traditions. It may be even more complicated if we realize that national identities in Middle Ages, Renaissance or Baroque period were not so strongly felt. It is obvious that Europe`s map was divided for many small duchess rather than for big countries as is today. Moreover many organ builders travelled through all the Europe and built instruments in the different styles. Flemish cultural tradition was present on the North of the France but also in Provance. Instruments built in the Flemish manner one could meet in the Northern towns but also in the South in Aix where, in the 1489, was one two – manual instrument.<sup>1</sup>

For performers who want to play an old music in the appropriate way or for scholars who want to do research on the shape of the old instruments or it`s sets as *Plein Jeu* there are two kinds of the sources which are reliable guidelines. Most important information is passed to present day musicians in music treatises or by so popular in France in the Classical period Prefaces to the organ music editions. The second but perhaps equally important “source” are instruments themselves. Unfortunately, it is extremely difficult to hear a true *Plein Jeu* similar to this which was heard by French composers of the Classical period. Most of instruments built in that time were destroyed during French Revolution or during later “improvements”<sup>2</sup>. We have only few seventeenth – century French organs which can be helpful in understanding the coloristic idea of organ sets of that time. Fortunately remaining documents let us know what was general tradition of the Classical period and how such organ sets as a *Plein Jeu* looked liked.

In this paper one can find basic information about *Plein Jeu* of the classical period: description of the organ stops of of this set, suggestions regarding registration given by composers, rules

---

<sup>1</sup> Peter Williams, *The European Organ 1450 – 1850* (London: B T Batsford Ltd, 1966), 169.

<sup>2</sup> Douglass Fenner. *The Language of the Classical French Organ: A Musical Tradition Before 1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 80.

concerning to the composition of Fourniture and Cymbale. Reader can also acquaint with the factors which influenced the crystallization of the *Plein Jeu* organ set: Middle Ages Blockwerk, or Netherland and Italian organ building tradition. In last section one can find composers advices regarding to the performance practice which could be helpful in finding an appropriate character of these pieces.

### **THE TERM “PLEIN JEU”**

It is extremely difficult to give precise and one definition of this term. One must be aware that even these two words “plein” and “jeu” can have different explanations. Meaning of these terms depends of the historical context and of the area which is taken into consideration. Even if we consider them as terms coming from the tradition of the Classical French organ period we must be aware that we cannot encounter “full chorus” or “full registration” suggested by the words “plein jeu”. The thru guide in this matter is for us maintenance that the rules regarding to the registration were commonly accepted by the musicians and numerous Prefaces to organ music publications give us full picture of tradition in this matter. Also organ builders had very strong conscience of the national style of organ building. Most of instruments in the Classical period were built in the same manner and had the similar organ specification. According to these rules such sets as *Plein Jeu*, *Grand Jeu*, *Jeu de Tierce*, *Jeu doux* and others, were distinctively different and term “plein” could never mean connecting and mixing all of them together to create full registration (PLEIN Jeu!).

- The *Plein Jeu* in the classical French organ (c 1650-1790) was a name of the set consisting of the Principals, Flutes (only selected), and Fournitures and Cymbales.<sup>3</sup> It is inevitably the trademark of the French organs because the sound of this set is recognisable as a typical organ set. It doesn't intend to pretend any other instrument as trumpets, flutes, hauptbois, pousane and many others.

---

<sup>3</sup> Nicholas Thistlethwaite and Geoffrey Webber, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to the Organ*. (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 181.

- The *Plein Jeu* is also called (specifically from the end of the Classical period) only a combination of the mixtures (without 16', 8', 4', 2' stop).<sup>4</sup> We can observe this tradition since Fourniture and Cymbale were connected together in one row as a one set closing principal chorus. Such set is described by Dom Bedos in his famous work *L'Art du Facteur d'Orgues: The richest tone in the organ, according to experts and connoisseurs of real tone, is the Plein-jeu blended with the foundation stops which support it in the correct proportion.*
- One of the most important meanings of the *Plein Jeu* is the name of the musical form which usually begins all organ sets as the Masses or Magnificats. It is based on the "*Plein Jeu*" registration and that is why this name is used as a title of these pieces.

## BLOCKWERK AS A PREDECESSOR OF THE PLEIN JEU

Although French *Plein Jeu* was influenced by different traditions two elements can be considered as most important for the development of the French organ style. Inevitably Italian *Ripieno* was closest in its conception to the *Plein Jeu* set, but theatrical style and *alternatim* manner encouraged French composers and organ builders to run away from colouristic monotony of one - manual Italian instruments. One must remember that French Classical organ style concised with great development of *tragedie lirique* and French ballet during the reign of Louis XIV.

One can consider also a Flemish, Middle Ages *Blockwerk* as a set which influenced imagination of French musicians and was the base for *Plein Jeu* set. That is true that there are several ages between *Blockwerk* tradition and *Plein Jeu* of the Classical Period but general sounding idea of both this sets are the same; they are based on the principal pipes on octaves and fifths without reed stops. We have today no exact information how *Blockwerk* looked like. We have access to several instruments which survived from that time but any of them is the instrument which is based on the undivided section which is typical and most important feature of the *Blockwerk*.<sup>5</sup> A little help gives us Henri Arnaut de Zwolle's treatise written in the 1440. Moreover, there are not iconographical documents such as illuminations or paintings which could be helpful in

---

<sup>4</sup> Georg A. Audsley, *Organ-Stops and Their Artistic Registration* (New York: Dover Publications, 2002), 212.

<sup>5</sup> Wayne Leupold, *Historical Organ Techniques and Repertoire: Late – Medieval before 1460*, ed. Kimberly Marshall (Colfax: Wayne Leupold Editions, 2000), 6 – 10.

recognizing how that instruments looked like and how they were built. Some information provides us a second volume of the Praetorius treatise *Syntagma Musicum* written in the 1619, but similarly to the Zwolle`s document, this sources regard to the instruments which were used long before this treatises were written, and perhaps are not reliable enough in this matter. We can suppose that all pipes were probably made of metal, and were opened. Supposedly the second Principal was stopped and sounding as 16`, perhaps also 32` Principal was used. The general set resembled a “great” mixture consisting of octave and fifth – sounding pipes. Zwolle`s treatise mentions also other instruments with *Cymbales* consisting tierce, and probably this kind of pipes were also used in the *Blockwerk*. In big churches organs could consist of even 80-90 ranks (Amiens) in the treble part and about 20 in the lower parts, but the variety of notes was not really big.<sup>6</sup>

This set was based mainly on the duplications, and only about 7 or 8 different notes were employed. According to the Zwolle`s treatise we can describe a *Blockwerk`s* pipes; they were supposedly wider in the treble section than in the bass part. This great number of pipes produced the most powerful sound created by man in Middle Ages, so it was associated, specifically in the Carolingian Renaissance, with the power of the Church and glory of the king. The big Flemish *Blockwerks* had also *Bourdons* or *Trompes*, sections which were operated by the simple pedal section. Such instrument was built in Paris in Notre Dame church in 1402. Moreover one could meet even instruments with *Ruckpositive* as was organs built by the V. Langhedul in St. Omer in which this second section had to provide “ab diversitate sonorum” – variety of sound.<sup>7</sup>

## **PLEIN JEU OF THE CLASSICAL PERIOD**

*Plain Jeu* is the basic organ set in the French classical organs. Although in the seventeenth century composers and organ constructors were specifically interested in the development of reed, and flute voices the *Plein Jeu* usually opened compositions based on the *Mass* order or *Livre d`orgue*.<sup>8,9</sup> Perhaps one can regard *Grand Jeu* as typical French set specifically because we do not meet the similar sets in Netherland or Italian tradition based on reeds but just *Plein Jeu* it is called by Fanner Douglas, the *sine qua non* of the French instruments of the Classical period as the descendent of the earlier *Blockwerk*. Besides it is worth mentioning that in any

---

<sup>6</sup> Williams, 170.

<sup>7</sup> Williams, 169.

<sup>8</sup> Thistlethwaite, 183.

<sup>9</sup> Douglass, 73.

culture one can find two different, opposite “pleno” sections: one based on the principal choir and another on the reeds and cornet voices.<sup>10</sup>

The traditional set consists of the principal chorus of the *Grand Orgue* (called *Grand Plein Jeu*) or the similar set on the *Positif* (*Petit Plein Jeu*). In bigger instruments the lowest compound is the 16` *Montre* or *Bourdon*. All *Plein Jeu* consists of the principal voices as: *Montre 8`*, *Prestant 4`*, *Doublette 2`*, and is closed by two sets of specifically French Mixtures: *Forniture* and *Cymbale* which should be always connected, drawn together. Below one can find a specification of *Plein Jeu* in the typical French organs of the Classical period, based (sometimes) on the 16` pipes.<sup>11</sup>

#### *Grand Plein Jeu (Plein Jeu of the Grand Orgue)*

- *Montre 16`*
- *Bourdon 16`*
- *Montre 8`*
- *Bourdon 8`*
- *Prestant 4`*
- *Doublette 2`*
- *Forniture*
- *Cymbale*

#### *Petit Plein Jeu (Plein Jeu of the Positif)*

- *Montre 8`*
- *Bourdon 8`*
- *Prestant 4`*
- *Doublette 2`*
- *Forniture*
- *Cymbale*

The specifications above regard to the big instruments. One could meet organs without 16` feet stops in the *Grand Orgue* and without *Montre 8`* in the *Positif*. In such a case the set of the mixture voices was different and detailed description one can find in the following sections of this paper. The general set of the *Plein Jeu* was similar even in the small instruments which had not even *Positif* sections. The specification of *Plein Jeu* in such a case was reduced only to *Bourdon 8`*, *Prestant 4`*, *Doublette 2`*, *Cymbale*.

During all Classical period the bourdons and flutes were part of the *Plein Jeu* section at the bottom of the set (16` and 8`). Some builders wanted also to include tierce to this section, and

---

<sup>10</sup> Alexander Silbiger, ed., *Keyborad Music before 1700* (New York: Routledge, 2004): 108.

<sup>11</sup> Silbiger, 110.

experimented with the narrow – scaled pipes made of tin. These trials were present at the beginning of the seventeenth century but later, in the Classical period, most composers rejected tierces as the ingredients of the *Plein Jeu*.<sup>12</sup>

Performers have usually problems with performing of old music. Even if they have reliable sources it is difficult to understand the spirit of the music and tradition regarding to the performance practice. This problem, fortunately, doesn't concern to the registration rules. Specifically in France, composers were very prolific in deliverance us a detailed information regarding to the organ music forms, but also to registration in the Classical period.<sup>13</sup> Most editions of the organ pieces comprise Prefaces which guide us what kind of voices were necessary to build a required sets.<sup>14</sup> One can find there information concerning to *Plein Jeu* sections which are also submitted below:

**Guillaume – Gabriel Nivers: *Premier Livre d'orgue (1665)*:** Bourdon or Montre 16` (if there is any), Montre (8`), Bourdon (8`), Prestant (4`) (or Flutte 4` if there is no Prestant), Doublette, Cymbale, Fourniture.

**Nicolas LeBegue: *Livre d'orgue II (1678)*,** (anonymous guidelines): Bourdon 16`, Montre 8`, Montre 8`, Prestant 4`, Doublette 2`, Fourniture, Cymbale

**Andre Raison: *Livre d'orgue (1688)*:** Montre or/and Bourdon 16` and 8`, Montre 4`, Doublette 2`, Cymbale, Fourniture.

**Jacques Bouvin: *Livre d'orgue (1689)*:** Montre 16`, Bourdon 16`, Montre 8`, Prestant 4`, Doublette 2`, Fourniture, Cymballe and coupled Positif section consisting of Montre 8`, Bourdon 8`, Prestant 4`, Doublette 2`, Fourniture, Cymballe.

**Gaspard Corrette: *Messe du 8e ton (1703)*:** Bourdon 16`, Montre 8`, Bourdon 8`, Prestant 4`, Doublette 2`, Fourniture, Cymballe and coupled Positif section Montre 8`, Bourdon 8`, Prestant 4`, Doublette 2`, Fourniture, Cymballe.

**Manuscript: “*Anonyme de Tours*” (1710-20):** Montre, Bourdon, Prestant, Cymballe, Pedale.

**Michel Corrette (1737): *Livre d'orgue (1737)*:** Bourdon 16`, Montre 8`, Bourdon 8`, Prestant 4`, Doublette 2`, Fourniture, Cymballe and coupled Positif section Montre 8`, Bourdon 8`, Prestant 4`, Doublette 2`, Fourniture, Cymballe.

**Anonymous Manuscript from Caen: *La Maniere tres facile pour apprendre la facture d'orgue (1746)*:** 16` (no description), Montre 8`, Bourdon 8`, Prestant 4`, Doublette 2`, Cymballe, Fourniture, and coupled Positif section Montre 8`, Bourdon 8`, Prestant 4`, Doublette 2`, Fourniture, Cymballe, Trompette and Cleron from Pedal section.

---

<sup>12</sup> Douglass, 75.

<sup>13</sup> Thistlethwaite, 181.

<sup>14</sup> Silbiger, 110.

**The Art of Organ Building: Dom Francois Bedos de Celles (1766-70):** *Montre 8`, Bourdon 8`, Prestant 4`, Doublette 2`, Fourniture, Cymballe and coupled Positif section Montre 8`, Bourdon 8`, Prestant 4`, Doublette 2`, Fourniture, Cymballe and all Trompettes and Clairons from the pedal section (which can be substituted by the flutes 16`).*<sup>15</sup>

## ORGAN STOPS OF THE FRENCH PLEIN JEU

Although there are many similarities between French *Plein Jeu*, Italian *Ripieno*, or German *Organo Pleno* these sets sound differently. The first thing which differs are the names of stops. French builders for many centuries have been using national terms which describe also the role of the stop. Differences regard also to the scaling (ratio between width and length), material used for the pipe, or voicing. The basic information about organ stops which are used for the *Plein Jeu* one can find below:

**Montre** means to watch or to show and as the name suggests that pipes of this voice are main, representative in French organs, and are show pipes. Their importance and the general view can be comparable to the English *Diapason*, Italian *Principale* or German *Principal*. One can meet different sizes of this voice starting of 32`, but generally 16`, 8` and 4` are used. The pipes of this stop are usually placed at the front of the organ prospect and the pipes often preserve a silvery brightness which gives a superb appearance with usually beautiful organ cases. The pipes of the *Montre* owe its exterior brilliance and beauty of sound to its material. This organ voice consists mainly of pure tin and in French organ is narrow in comparison to German or English tradition.<sup>16</sup>

**Bourdon** means to buzz or to bumblebee. This stop, although is from the flute family, was used in the *Plein Jeu* set but only as a *Bourdon 16`* or *Bourdon 8`*.<sup>17</sup> Because the pipes of this voice are stopped they have characteristic gentle, dark tone which enriches principal pipes of *Montre 16`* and *8`*. The pipes are made of wood or metal. Because *Bourdon* blends very well with other voices it is used for all French organ sets.

---

<sup>15</sup> Douglass, 194 – 231.

<sup>16</sup> William, Leslie Sumner, "The Organ Its Evolution, Principles of Construction and Use" (New York: St. Martins, 1962), 295.

<sup>17</sup> Douglass, 82.

**Prestant** means to stand in front, and the pipes of this organ voice form a part of the exposed pipework of the organ case. It is the French name of the *Principal 4`* which belong to the principal pipes family. It is opened and metal similarly to all principals.<sup>18</sup>

**Doublette** - It is the French name for the principal pipe sounding as 2`. It is opened and metal similar to German *Superoctave*.

**Fourniture and Cymbale** – these mixtures will be described in the next section of this work.

## FRENCH MIXTURES

The general timbre of the classical *Plein Jeu* depended of great variety of elements. Of course the quality of every part of instrument was essential but also specification and acoustic conditions of the church were important for its shape. One of the most important feature was well planed balance between fundamental voices and mixtures. Organ builders had to consider carefully what was the base of the *Plein Jeu*.<sup>19</sup> They were aware that this set built on the 16` *Montre* or 16` *Bourdon* requires stronger vertical sets of the *Prestant* and *Doublette*. Specifically important in this balance was the plan of the mixtures because these sets, based on the many repetitions, supplied brilliance and stabilized all ranges of the keyboard. According to the Dom Bedos advices the set of mixtures (*Fourniture* and *Cymbale*) gave strength to low range of *Plein Jeu* because unison pipes of the high mutations were based on the numerous repetitions. One observe it in doubling the same pitches by *Fourniture* and *Cymbale* in last two octaves of the keyboard.

Unfortunately we have very few untouched instruments which can be an evidence how exactly the French organs of the Classical style sounded and how they were built.<sup>20</sup> The great help is for us today book published by Dom Bedos *L'Art du facteur d'orgues* which contains most important information regarding to the construction of the organs. One can find there many details concerning to the general shape of the instrument but also composition of the mixtures, scaling, voicing etc.<sup>21</sup> We must be aware that Dom Bedos was a musician who was active at the end of the Classical period. But his book demonstrates general approach used by most classical French builders which were responsible for the shape of this tradition before Dom Bedos book

---

<sup>18</sup> Audsley, 213.

<sup>19</sup> Douglass, 77.

<sup>20</sup> Pierre Dubois, "The French Classical Organ." *Goldberg* 32 (2005).

<sup>21</sup> Williams, 182.

was published.<sup>22</sup> One might say that, although he was great innovator, he also gathered all developments of the previous organ builders in his book. The best evidence for this fact can be a composition of all mixtures in the Church of Saint - Sauveur du Petit – Andely, built by in 1674 by R. Ingout. These mixtures were probably base for the Dom Bedos treatise written a century later (!). Dom Bedos followed all recommendations from Ingout instrument. In Dom Bedos`s treatise one can find suggestion regarding to the plan of the mixtures. Bedos rule was that the number of ranks in each depends on size of the instrument. Below one can find detailed recommendations regarding to the mixtures gathered in the third volume of Dom Bedos`s work:

- The only ingredients of French mixtures are fifths and unisons.
- The number of ranks in *Fourniture* and *Cymbale* could be equeal, and *Cymbale* cannot have more ranks than *Fourniture*.
- Recommended number of ranks of the *Fourniture* and *Cymbale* is 5 for each in big organs based upon *Montre* 16`.
- Recommended number of ranks in smaller (“normal”) organs based on *Montre* 8` with base of *Bourdon* 16` is 4 for *Fourniture* and 3 for *Cymbale*.
- *Fourniture* starts at lower pitch than *Cymbales*.
- *Fourniture* has its repetitions at in octaves and much less frequently than *Cymbales*
- *Cymbales* has its repetitions in fifths and fourths.
- French *Cymbales* have lower pitch range than German Mixtures
- A pitch ceiling of 1/8` was not exceeded (fifth C for the 2` stop)<sup>23</sup>

One of the most important feature of the French mixtures was their breaks. Breaks and duplications were also systematized in such a way that one can encounter only one break in *Fourniture* and two in *Cymbale*. But not the number of breaks was most important but the place of breaks. In other traditions breaks starts on c – pipe, and such sample we could meet in the *Cymbale*. On the *Fournitures* French organ builders use breaks starting also on the f – sounding pipes leaving middle range about c` free of change so *Cymbale pipes* “cover” *Fourniture* breaks and breaks are not so strongly audible. The detailed plan of the range of principals, mixtures and its breaks one can trace on the table submitted below.

---

<sup>22</sup> Dom Jean F. Bedos de Celles, *The Organ-Builder (L'Art du Facteur d'Orgues)* Paris 1766-1778 (Sunbury Press, Charles Ferguseon, 1977): 176-178, 256, 266.

<sup>23</sup> Williams, 182.

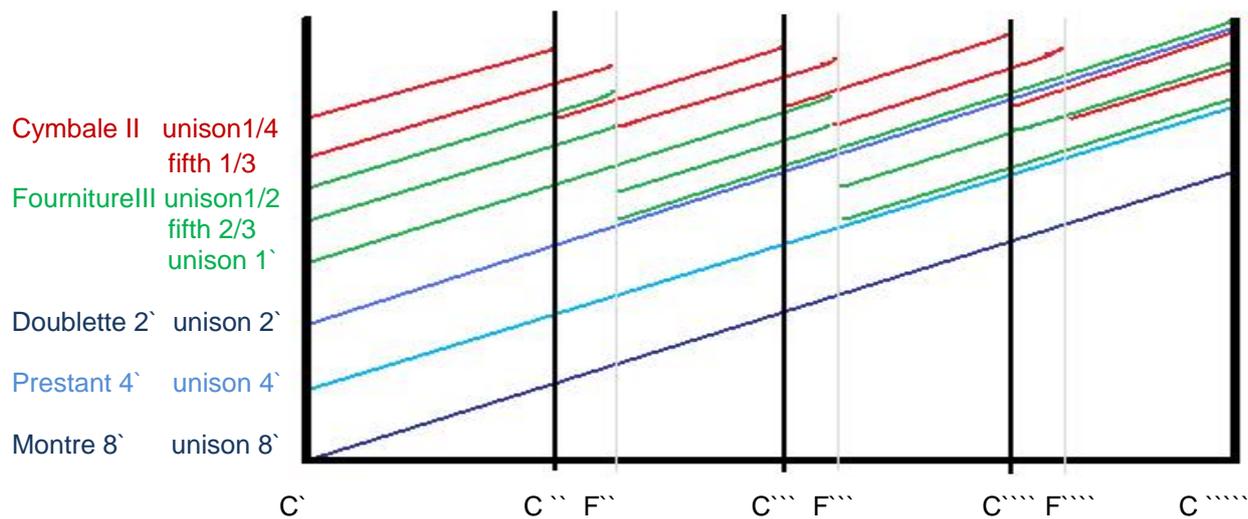


Table according to *Une Histoire du Plein – Jeu*.<sup>24</sup>

It is also worth mentioning that *Plein Jeu* at the end of the Classical period had also different meaning that organ set based on principal voices closed by mixtures.

Before In the seventeenth and eighteenth century the mixture voices; *Furniture* and *Cymbale* were placed in separate rows as a separate organ voices although they were always connected together to built a “crown” of the *Plein Jeu*. Separation of this two mixtures was helpful in keeping balanced air pressure. At the beginning of the eighteenth century organ builders started to experiment in merging *Furniture* and *Cymbale* together to create one draw stop. One can observe such settings firstly at the *Positif* section and later also on the *Grand Orgue* analyzing for example instruments build by the Francois – Henri Cliquot, and specifically organ built in the 1790 in Poitiers. This kind of instruments consists of two or more octave and fifth sounding ranks and the highest two octaves usually have sub – unison pitches. The famous musician Irwin suggested that it might be even XIV rows in such a set but analyzing specifications of instruments from that time it is difficult to find instruments with more than IX ranks. Supposedly the oldest instruments which had the *Plein Jeu* as a one connected set were these built by the Clicquot. First was built in the 1781 in St. Suplice in Paris and had *Plein Jeu* consisting of IV ranks in the *Grand Orgue* section. The next one comes from church of St. Pierre et Paul, Souvigny, Allier built in 1782. The *Plein Jeu* section was built also in the *Grand Orgue* and consisted of VI ranks. The third instrument, which had connected mixtures section was built in Cathedral in Poitiers in 1790. This set was the largest because had as much as VII rows although was placed in the *Positif* section. The detailed information regarding to the use and combination of the mixtures gives us famous treatise by Dom Bedos *L’Art du Facteur d’Orgues*:

*The Cymbale always accompanies the Furniture: these two stops are never separated, and together they are called the Plein-Jeu. In a 16' organ, the smallest possible Plein-jeu is nine ranks: the upper five ranks of the Furniture, and the upper four ranks of the Cymbale. An 8' organ requires a Plein-jeu of seven ranks: four and three, respectively. An organ with 32' open*

<sup>24</sup> Une Histoire du Plein – Jeu, <http://pagesperso-orange.fr/organ-au-logis/Pages/PJ0Menu.htm#Menu>

*and stopped ranks takes a full Fourniture and Cymbale. An 8' Positif takes a seven-rank Plein-jeu; if there be no 8' open stop, the Plein-jeu will have five ranks; the upper three from the Fourniture, and the upper two from the Cymbale. A four- or three-rank Plein-jeu is drawn from the Cymbale only; an eight- or six-rank stop is taken half from each.*

*Not all builders follow these methods and progressions exactly. Some do not begin the first rank of a nine-rank Plein-jeu with a 4' pipe, but rather with a 2-2/3'. Some do not make all the ranks of a full compass, but they omit an octave or more in the treble, so that their Plein-jeu may have nine ranks in the bass, but only seven, six, or five in the treble, etc. ... all builders agree that fifths and octaves only should be used, and never thirds. <sup>25</sup>.*

## **SCALING OF PIPES**

Many elements are responsible for the general shape of the organ music. The music pieces were inspired often by composers music imagination, but also by instruments which they were using. The general quality of the instrument depends of the quality of the different elements of organs; the kind of wood of the case and wind chests, the quality of metal and kind of metal used for the pipes etc. But one of the most important element which gives the sound a specific characteristic is the scaling and voicing of the pipes. The general ratio between width and circumference of the pipes is responsible for the tone colour and it is interesting to compare differences between the organ builders such as an Isnard and Bedos and others who are representatives of French Classical style. Generally speaking French organs of that time had narrow scaled principals (especially at the beginning of the Classical period) and were wider in the treble section; specifically wide were all mutations. Such variety gives the sound very warm but also very bright sound.<sup>26</sup> Also a rich mixtures consisting of seven or more ranks gives a brilliance and lightness.

The table below describes a width of the pipes sounding C, c' and c''. One can compare the differences of several French organ builders.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> Bedos de Celles, 176-178, 256, 266

<sup>26</sup> Thistlethwaite, 183.

<sup>27</sup> Tables according to Williams, 186,187.

### MONTRE 8`

Width of pipes in mm. for C, c`, c``

	L`Isle-sur-la-Sorgue Le Royer, a Fleming, 1648	St.Maximin-en-Var J.-E.Isnard, 1773	Souigny F.-H. Clicquout, 1782	Bedos scales 1766-78
C	145	170	155	155.7
C`	50	54	52.7	48.3
C``	17	21	19	21.4

### PRESTANT 4`

Width of pipes in mm. For C, c`, c``

	L`Isle-sur-la-Sorgue Le Royer, a Fleming, 1648	St.Maximin-en-Var J.-E.Isnard, 1773	Souigny F.-H. Clicquout, 1782	Bedos scales 1766-78
C	78	90	86	94.7
C`	27	30	29	28
C``	-	14.5	12	11.3

### DOUBLETTE 2`

Width of pipes in mm. For C, c`, c``

	L`Isle-sur-la-Sorgue Le Royer, a Fleming, 1648	St.Maximin-en-Var J.-E.Isnard, 1773	Souigny F.-H. Clicquout, 1782	Bedos scales 1766-78
C	-	48	52	57.5
C`	16	17	17.5	18.3
C``	7	10	9	8.5

## PLEIN JEU AS A MUSICAL FORM

As was mentioned at the beginning of this work *Plein Jeu* has many different meanings. It can be a way of the registration based on the principal chorus but the same term is used as a title of the musical forms.<sup>28</sup>

Title *Plein Jeu* (full chorus, full registration) with its broad rich registration as placed in the most solemn parts of the liturgy.<sup>29</sup> It was the movement which opened liturgical sets such as organ Masses or *Livre l'orgue* used for Magnificat sections. Such composers as Francois Couperin used these forms in the following places during the mass : *Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus, Agnus Dei.*

*Plein Jeu* is full of majesty and solemnity and the "full" principal registration based often on the 16` *Montre* or *Bourdon* and closed by mixture voices with numerous repetitions helps performer to find an appropriate character of these pieces. The movement opening the liturgical set often had a title *Prelude* and this name was used often synonymously with *Plein Jeu*. Usually piece of this kind had homophonic structure of 3, 4 or 5 voices enlivened by surprising dissonances such as suspensions with modest sample of imitation (Dumage). *Plein Jeu* (specifically this opening the *Kyrie, Gloria* section of the Mass or *Magnificat*) consists of several smaller parts. They differ in character and are performed by distinct kind of registration although both are based on the principal chorus. Odd parts are performed on the *Petit Plein Jeu* on the *Positif* section. These parts were based on the fast moving, improvisatory scales, with numerous ornaments. Most characteristic feature was their lightness and brilliance. Even parts should be performed on the *Grand Orgue* with the full choir of principals and *Fourniture* and *Cymbale* connected together. These sections have rather processional, not dancelike character and consists of slowly moving, long lasting chords. They are usually in the duple or quadruple meter. Composers were rather sparingly in suggesting ornaments in these sections so performers can use a great pallet of mordents, trills. It is also recommended to fill the bigger intervals with so called *coulin* or perform eight notes in a *inegaliete* manner.

Most of the liturgical, organ pieces were written to perform them in the *alternatim* manner which was based on the division of the liturgical text between choir and organ. One can find detailed information concerning to this matter in old ceremonials which advices composers and organist in which sections of the mass plainchant has to be heard very audibly. One can meet here other kind of *Plein Jue* in which manual part is based on the principal chorus and pedal part consists on long notes performed by *Trompette* connected (if available in pedal section) with *Clarion*. It is interesting because basic and most important difference between *Plein Jeu* and *Grand Jeu*

---

<sup>28</sup> Silbiger, 110.

<sup>29</sup> Thistlethwaite, 183.

regards to the rules concerning to the use of mixtures and reeds. Mixture voices were never added to the *Grand Jeu*, and reeds and cornets (which are most important elements of the *Grand Jeu*) were never mixed with *Plein Jeu*. This liturgical expectations in which plainchant had to be easy recognisable, let the composers and improvisers to create other melodic layer based on the reed registration. In such a case cantus firmus played in pedal section by reeds, replaced chant which was previously assigned for the congregation; it could be complete melody of the hymn, or the opening *Kyrie* of the *Mass*, played by long equal notes. In famous six – voiced *Plein Jeu* by Marchand, intended probably as a piece for competition with Bach, we encounter even virtuosic double pedal part.

Below one can find suggestions from the *Ceremoniale parisiense*, issued in the 1662 by the Martin Sonnet, regarding to the audibility of the plainchant.<sup>30</sup>

*Ceremoniale parisiense ad usum omnium ecclesiarum, collegiatarum parochialium et aliarum urbis et diocesis parisiensis. Paris 1662.*

*Ea in quibus pulsandae sunt motulae plani cantus*

16) *In divino autem officio ad aliquas preces seu Dei laudes, tam ad Missam, quam ad horas, pulsanda sunt organa in cantu plano, ad dirigendum celebrantem, choristas, ceteros officarios et totum chorum in sacris caeremoniarum actionibus et ad suggerendum verum organorum tonum cantoribus, ne cacophonia et vocum dissonantia huius rei defectu orientur.*

17) *Cantus planus igitur pulsatur in Missa ad primum et ultimum Kyrie eleison ad Et in terra pax, etc. suscipe deprecationem nostram. In gloria Dei Patris. Amen, ad prosas; ad primum sanctus; ad Agnus Dei; et ad Domine salvum fac regem.*

18) *In vesperis ad Responsorium, ad primum hymni versum. Ad primum etiam versum Magnificat. In statione ad Responsorium vel primum versum prosae aut alterius quod cantatur. In completorio ad primum versum hymni, ad Nunc*

21) *Organista autem, exactissime quantum poterit, omnes notulas cantus Parisiensis, sine minutione aut mutatione vel corruptione, sine falsitate, sine alteratione, sine expressione notarum alterius cantus, ad officium pulsabit : dabit etiam operam ut saepissime mutet sonum organorum. dimittis, et ad Antiphonam de Beata.*

*Those in which plain chant music [melody] should be played:*<sup>31</sup>

16) *Now in the divine service at some prayers the praises of God, both at Mass, and at the Hours, the organs should be played in plainsong [i.e., versets based on plainsong]. This is needed in order to guide the celebrating, the singers, the rest of the officials [ministers and acolytes], and the complete chorus in the acts of the sacred ceremonies and to furnish the*

<sup>30</sup> original text from: Norbert Dufourcq, *Le livre de l'orgue français* (Paris: Picard, 1982), vol. 5, pp. 47-50.

<sup>31</sup> Translation of *Ceremoniale* by Tom Schuster.

correct organ pitch to the singers-lest the disagreeable sound of dissonant voices result [from failure in this].

17) Therefore, plain chant [versets based on plainsong] is played in the Mass at the first and last Kyrie Eleison, at *Et in terra pax*, etc. *Suscipe deprecationem nostram*. In *gloria Dei Patris*. Amen, to the sequence, at the first *Sanctus*; at the *Agnus Dei*; and at the *Domine salvum fac regem*.

18) At Vespers at the *Responsory*, at the first verse of the hymn. Also at the first verse of the *Magnificat*. In the stop at the *Responsory* or the first verse of the sequence, or of another verse that is sung. At *Compline* at the first verse of the hymn, at the *Nunc Dimittis*, and at the *Antiphon De Beata* [of mary].

21) But for the service, the organist, most exactly insofar as he is able, will play all the notes of *Paris Chant*, without lessening, changing, or corrupting them. He will play at the service without falsehood, without alteration, without expressing the notes of another chant. He will also strive to frequently change the sound of the organs.

Although these *Ceremoniale* describe general rules, one must be aware that just *Plein Jeu* forms (with the pedal section providing the cantus firmus) let the composers to be “obedient” to the bishops suggestions and were broadly used by composers of the Classical period. Perhaps the best sample is the Couperin`s “first” Mass<sup>32</sup> with their compilation of *Plein Jeu* with “audible” plainchant:

- *Kyrie* ( with plainchant in the pedal played by *Trompette*)
- *Gloria* ( plainchant in bass)
- *Sanctus* ( plainchant in canon between tenor and bass)
- *Agnus Dei* ( plainchant alternately in tenor or bass)

## **PLEIN JEU AND IT'S CHARACTER**

French composers of the Classical period gave present performers detailed information regarding to the registration of the organ pieces. Some of them decided also to describe a character of these pieces. Although most of parts of organ “liturgical suits” have a character of the French court dance, and even today it is possible to guess what kind of dance was inspiration for appropriate organ piece, one should be aware that just “primary sources” – composers guidelines, are most precious and vulnerable for us. Below the reader can find a fragments of Prefaces consisting of information how *Plein Jeu* sections should be performed.

---

<sup>32</sup> Francois Couperin, *Messe a l`usage ordinaire des Paroisses, pour les Festes Solemnelles* (New York: Dover Publications, 1994).

*The Prelude and Plein Jeu should be played slowly, and the Plein Jeu du Positif lightly. (Nicolas LeBegue: Premier Livre d`orgue – 1676).*<sup>33</sup>

*A Grand Plein Jeu is played very slowly. The chorus should be quiet legato one to the other, taking pains not to raise one finger until the other has pressed down; and the last measure should be much prolonged. The Petit Plein Jeu is played lightly and fluently. (Andre Raison: Livre d`orgue – 1688).*<sup>34</sup>

*The Prelude and Plein Jeu, majestically on the Grand Orgue, and more lightly on the Positif. (Lambert Chaumont: Livre d`orgue – 1695).*<sup>35</sup>

*The Plein Jeu de Positif should be played with vitality, and with care in forming and outlining trills, and cadences. In rapid passages, the fingers must be picked up and the touch almost as light as for the harpsichord, taking special care that one hand is always in contact with the key, in order to avoid empty spots. But the Grand Plein Jeu must be played unpretentiously and with a full effect, provided that one knows how to provide a full texture for fast passages; and practically no trills, especially on 16` organs. (Gaspard Corrette: Messe du 8e ton – 1703).*<sup>36</sup>

*The Grand Plein Jeu must be treated seriously and majestically; it should be played in large harmonic sweeps, interwoven with syncopation, dissonant chords, suspensions, and striking harmonic surprises; and may all that, however, form a regular, measured, rhythmical flow. The Plein Jey de Positif should be played more lightly; in sparkling style, with rolled chords, etc. The whole thing being directed toward a consistent musical effect. (Dom Francois Bedos de Celles: The Art of the Organ Building – 1766-70.)*<sup>37</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In this paper one can find most important information regarding to *Plein Jeu* of the French Classical style. At least three explanations for this term are possible and all of them are placed in this paper.

- *Plein Jeu* as a set based on the principal choir
- set of connected mixtures
- music form which was part of liturgical, organ sets

*Plein Jeu* has also been developing through several centuries. One must be aware that crystallization of French organ building tradition depended of many factors such as a development of the early Blockwerk or Italian Ripieno which were the base for the French *Plein Jeu*. Also alternatim practice influenced liturgical forms based on the *Plein Jeu* sets because this practice expected composers to diversify each section of the Mass or Magnificat and this variety we can observe also between *Petit Plein Jeu* and *Grand Plein Jeu*. Moreover its role on

---

<sup>33</sup> Douglass, 196.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. 201.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. 208.

<sup>36</sup> Douglass, 211.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 219.

this forms (Plein Jeu was placed usually at the beginning of important sections of the Mass) affected also its character because most of forms based on the Grand Plein Jeu has processional, majestic mood. Although general rules regarding to ingredients of Plein Jeu are similar, composers had their own suggestions concerning this matter. Many of these devices for performers one can find in this paper. Present day musicians have often problems with recognizing terminology of national traditions of the manes of the organ stops. Author of this paper decided also to describe most important French, organ stops which are usually used to build typical Plein Jeu as Montre, Bourdon, Prestant, Doublette, Fourniture, Cymbale. The general sound of organ depends on quality of materials but also the way how the pipes are constructed is very important. Specifically the ratio between weight and length influence quality of sound and loudness of instrument. That is why one can find in this paper tables presenting the weight of different kinds of pipes used by organ builders at the beginning and at the end of the Classical period. It is difficult today to understand a spirit of the liturgy of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and all primary sources can be helpful in finding an appropriate way of performance practice. That is why one can find in this paper fragments of the *Ceremoniale parisiense* which is still for us a reliable guide in this matter. Specifically information regarding to the use of Pleinchant in the Plein Jeu forms can help in the finding a appropriate registration on the present day organs. Of course the best guide for us would be true instruments build in the Classical French organ period: listening them and research regarding organ construction. One must be aware that this kind of instruments are rarity today. Only case remained of the Nicolas de Grigny`s instrument in Rheim`s cathedral. Many organs were distinctively altered. The instrument used by Francois Couperin at St. Gervais in Paris built by P.Thierry was transformed by Francois – Henri Clicquot in 1768. It does not sound like Couperin`s instrument now although it is a good example of the Cliquot musical imagination. Jean de Joyeuse built interesting organs in 1694 in Auch which were destroyed by unfortunate “rebuilding” by Gonzales in 1955. Later the original, 17<sup>th</sup> century, pipes were used by Jean Francois Munro for restoring of this excellent organs in 1998.

One can find much more instruments from the eighteenth which resemble originals or were almost not altered. The true masterpieces of the organ - culture are these built in Houdan in 1734 by Louis Alexandre Cliquot, or in Saint Maximin 1774 by Isnard, or in Souvigny 1783 and in Poitiers 1791 by Francois Henri Clicquot. Helpful “Bible” of all organbuilders of the 17<sup>th</sup> century is the illustrated treatise describing the art of organ building written by monk and organ builder Dom Bedos. His *L`art du facteur d`orgues* was published between 1766 and 1778 and also fragments of this document one could find in this paper.

Piotr Rachon

## BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Apel, Willi. *The History of Keyboard Music to 1700*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972.

Audsley, Georg, A. *Organ-Stops and Their Artistic Registration*. New York: Dover Publications, 2002.

Bush, Douglas. *The Organ: An Encyclopedia*. New York: Routledge, 2005.

Couperin, Francois. *Messe a l'usage ordinaire des Paroisses, pour les Festes Solemnelles*. New York: Dover Publications, 1994.

Dufourcq, Norbert. *Le livre de l'orgue français*. Paris: Picard, 1982.

Fellot, Jean. *L'Orgue Classique Francais*: Edisud, 1991.

Higginbottom, Edward. "Organ mass." *Oxford Music Online*.

<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com:80/subscriber/article/grove/music/20438> (accessed October 23, 2008).

Leupold, Wayne. *Historical Organ Techniques and Repertoire: Late – Medieval before 1460*, ed. Kimberly Marshall. Colfax: Wayne Leupold Editions, 2000.

Pruitt, William. „A 17th – Century French Manuscript on Organ Performance.” *Early Music* 14, no. 2 (May 1986).

Ritchie, George and George, Stauffer. *Organ Technique: Modern and Early*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Silbiger, Alexander.,ed. *Keyboard Music Before 1700*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1995.

Sumner, Leslie. *The Organ Its Evolution, Principles of Construction and Use*. New York: St. Martins, 1962.

Thistlethwaite, Nicholas and Webber, Geoffrey, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to the Organ*. Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Williams, Peter. *The European Organ 1450 – 1850*. London: B.T. Batsford Ltd, 1966.

Williams, Peter and Lueders, Kurt. "Plein jeu." *Oxford Music Online*.

<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com:80/subscriber/article/grove/music/21935> (accessed October 23, 2008).