

## ADAPTING BAROQUE ORGAN MUSIC TO MODEST ELECTRONIC ORGANS

Presented by Dr. Douglas E. Bush  
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During the 17<sup>th</sup> century there were drastic changes in organs according to region—no organ standardization.

Werkprinzip – every division had a complete chorus

3' = 2 2/3'

1 1/2' = 1 1/3'

Quint – principal family

Nasard – flute family

In organs from the 18<sup>th</sup> century and before, the tremulant affected the entire organ.

Schnitger organs – a particular size of organ consistently reflected the same set of stops

In Northern Germany the werkprinzip extended to the pedal division. In other regions of Germany and in other countries, during the Baroque, what pedals there were, were “pull-downs” from the manuals.

The swell box came into being between 1850 and 1855. Thus before that time, all divisions of organs were unenclosed, with the exception of smaller organs with folding doors that could be closed in front of particular divisions.

Expression in old organs was achieved solely with registration or agogic (accents produced with duration, either the lengthening of silence before or after a note or lengthening the note itself) accents.

All stops are independent and the emphasis during the Baroque period was on color, not on subtle shadings of multiple stops of the same pitch level.

Modern players tend to think orchestrally. Early players reveled in the beautiful of individual stops. For Baroque music, do not borrow from other divisions.

The Oberwerk was not a softer manual on the older organs; it was a contrasting manual. Mutation color was much sought after in the old organs.

The smaller organs with several mutations stayed in tune better than those including reeds since the pitch of all flues in an organ change pitch together with temperature changes. Reeds maintain their pitch regardless of temperature changes, thus it is easier to retune two or three ranks of reeds rather than a dozen or more flue stops. Mutations give the effect of a reed but because they are flue pipes, with a change of temperature, they shift pitch with the rest of the flues.

North German Mixtures were contained 5ths; Central German Mixtures included the Tierce (1- 3/5').

Strings in Baroque organs are narrow-scaled principals—more gentle. Gambas, the most typical Baroque string rank would appear infrequently in large organ but almost never on small instruments.

All old instruments (1500 to 1780) are tuned in unequal temperaments. Composers avoided keys in three or more flats and two or more sharps. The white keys were typically a quarter- to a third-inch shorter in length, and black keys were usually half the length we see today.

When deciding how to register a Baroque piece on today's electronic organs:

- Enjoy the color of individual stops – registration in the Baroque period was all about color
- Use registration common to the Baroque era
  1. vertical registration (8, 4, 2, Mixture – *Organo pleno*)
  2. the warm sound of pyramid registration does not work well for contrapuntal music
  3. gap registration; i.e., 8's and 2's, 8's and mutations
  4. flutes were distinctly different in timbre on Baroque organs
  5. on electronic organs, you can use the Swell pedal to get the effect of another stop
  6. lines needs to be well balanced
  7. use non-legato touch (1727 treatise said “a true legato is to play a scale using one finger as quickly as you can move it”)
  8. get used to early fingerings (no thumbs under)

(Notes taken by Carol Dean)