

rich but, above all, complement the historical facts presented in the monograph, being at the same time their “tangible” and “material” evidence. It is also worth emphasizing that the graphic design and the solidity of the publication deserve recognition.

We should therefore welcome the monograph by Grzegorz Poźniak, who through his research presented a wide view of the life and works of the Berschdorf family, at the same time bringing back to memory characters who were, in a sense, forgotten or not known, which should be especially appreciated. This book is not only very desirable in the music and church environment, organ studies and musicology but also makes a valuable contribution to the history of the Silesian region. It is also the third monograph of this author, devoted to the history and activity of the *Berschdorf* organ-building company from Nysa, and due to its innovative nature, it presents an important supplement to the state of research on the traditions of organ building in Silesia and Central and Eastern Europe.

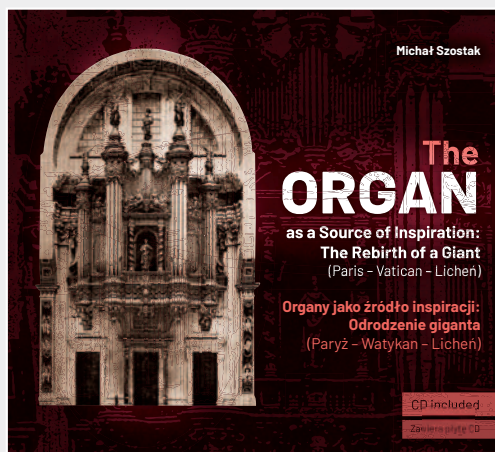
Ewelina Szendzielorz

## REVIEW

MICHAŁ SZOSTAK, *The Organ as a Source of Inspiration: The Rebirth of a Giant (Paris – Vatican – Licheń) / Organy jako źródło inspiracji: odrodzenie giganta (Paryż – Watykan – Licheń)*. Series: Opoliensis Musica Ecclesiastica 9. Opole: SINDRUK-DIMK 2021, pp. 583. ISBN 978-83-959719-4-5.

The nineteenth century is a period of rapid transformation in organ building. The emerging symphonic organs became an inspiration for the composers active during this period. Dr Michał Szostak's latest publication is devoted to the topic of inspiration and the study of its role in the creative process. The author focussed mainly on issues around inspiration through the sound of Aristide Cavallé-Coll's symphonic organs and the organ in the basilica of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Licheń located in Licheń Stary. The study presented here is an original approach to this subject matter.

The core of the reviewed publication is constituted by the author's doctoral thesis entitled *The Organ as a Source of Inspiration in the Art of Improvisation and Performance Practice* written under the supervision of Professor Andrzej Chorościński and defended in 2019 at the Fryderyk Chopin University of Music in Warsaw. The contents of the dissertation was supplemented with more than a dozen articles



published by Dr Szostak in several English-language journals, i.e. the British journal „The Organ”, the Canadian journal „Organ Canada”, and the American journals „The Diapason” and „The Vox Humana”.

A CD constitutes an integral part of the book. It contains five tracks (*Sortie Grand-Chœur* Op. 122, no. 8 by Louis James Alfred Lefébure-Wély; *Prière et Berceuse* Op. 27 by Alexandre Guilmant; *Marche Pontificale* from the *1st Sonata* in D minor by Jacques-Nicolas Lemmens; *3rd Chorale in A minor* Op. 40 by César Franck; and a cycle of improvisations in the form of a five-part *Organ Symphony*) played by Michał Szostak on the organ of the Licheń basilica. The pieces recorded on the CD belong to the classics of French organ literature of the second half of the nineteenth century and correlate appropriately with the issues treated in the book. The choice of the instrument was not made by chance, since the author fulfilled the functions of the main organist in Licheń for many years and had the opportunity to become familiar with every detail of the local instrument.

The book comprises seven chapters. The first chapter is a kind of introduction. It contains a description of the socio-cultural context that characterized the nineteenth century. It serves as a background for the presentation of the development of the ideas of romanticism and the currents in music connected with it, with particular focus on the changes in the sphere of European organ construction. This is followed by a presentation of the figure of Aristide Cavaillé-Coll as the key figure of symphonic organ construction in France, which is at the same time an introduction to the description of the characteristics, the features and the evolution of symphonic organs on the basis of some selected works by this organ builder. It is these features as well as the variability of those features over time that constitute the basic field on which Dr Szostak considers the notion of inspiration flowing from the instrument at the disposal of the performer in the further course of his work.

In the second chapter the author describes the unrealized project of a Cavaillé-Coll instrument for the Basilica of St. Peter in the Vatican. It became an inspiration for the organ project in the Licheń basilica. For this reason the contents of chapter II, which contains only a few pages, might have been incorporated into chapter III, in which the Licheń organ is described in every detail and a comparative analysis of this instrument with the afore-mentioned project by Cavaillé-Coll is provided.

The research area of the largest organs naturally leads to the issue of comparing them in terms of size. Chapter IV is devoted to this issue, in which a classification of the largest organs in Poland, Europe and the world is carried out and, on this basis, the instrumentarium in the Licheń basilica is placed among them. Dr Michał Szostak applied his own method of comparing organs here (it would be advisable to avoid the term „methodology” in this context), a method known from his prior publications about the Licheń organ (*Licheńskie organy na tle największych instrumentów Polski, Europy i świata*, Licheń Stary 2017). The criterion of classification is “the number of ranks of pipes and auxiliary devices operated from one console”.

The fifth chapter is devoted to the phenomenon of inspiration in general, its definition and the analysis of its sources. The author describes the features of the organ as a musical instrument that can inspire an organist. He then discusses the phenomenon of style improvisation and the art of interpreting organ literature, characterizing the performance style of the composers whose works are presented on the CD.

In the sixth chapter a formal analysis of the pieces recorded on the CD is carried out in terms of the character and dynamics of sound achieved through a registration compromise between the sound ideal that is more or less precisely defined by composers, and the author's own inspirations coming from the Licheń organ (which is particularly notable with regard to the author's own improvisations).

The seventh chapter deals with the question of the perception of organ music, with particular emphasis on the multi-spectral phenomenon of inspiration. This chapter, which comprises a mere seven pages, could appear as a subpoint to the fifth chapter where the phenomenon of inspiration and its sources are discussed.

Summarizing this book review, it should first be stressed that it is the first study in Poland treating the role of the instrument as a source of inspiration for the organist in such a comprehensive way, both with regard to the art of style improvisation and to the historically oriented practice of performing symphonic organ music from the French cultural area of the second half of the nineteenth century. What is worth noting is that the author managed to take a closer look at the problem of the phenomenon of inspiration which may, according to the chosen context and perspective, address multiple dimensions of musical reality – from the organist's vision of a specific instrument over the trends in organ construction and the cross-fertilization of the art of organ playing and artistic creation in the field of organ music, to the internal characteristics of the musician-performer or the circumstances of a specific performance. Recognition should be given to the rich bibliographical notes taking into account the international literature on the subject, which is rarely, if ever, used in the Polish academic world.

Worthy of special mention is the graphical and editorial design of the publication (numerous illustrations, tables and drawings in the text). A valuable asset of the book is the author's decision to publish it in a bilingual form, i.e. in Polish and English, thus disseminating the results of the author's research and analyses beyond the borders of Poland.

Andrzej Prasał

## REVIEW

*Organy na Śląsku VI*, J. Gembalski (ed.), Vol. 6, Katowice: The Karol Szymanowski Academy of Music in Katowice 2019, pp. ISBN 978-83-955787-1-7.

### *Summary of the VI volume of the series "Organs in Silesia"*

At the end of 2019, the sixth volume of the "Organs in Silesia" series was published, containing scientific studies by six people associated with the Department of Church Organ and Music and the Museum of Silesian Organs at the Karol Szymanowski Academy of Music in Katowice. The publication is a response to the need to share the results of scientific research related to the history of Silesian organ building. Academy of Music in Katowice with Prof. Julian Gembalski is the oldest research center in this field in Upper Silesia. Therefore, Prof. J. Gembalski is the author of the introduction to the published volume of authorial studies