

Electronic and Organ¹⁾

In the objective opinion, the classical western instrument, the organ, might definitely be called precursor of the latest innovative musical technology. The word “organ” comes from the Greek “organon”= tool, instrument. There is a purely linguistic connection to the electronic workstation. The organ has tonal colours = registers laid out on not less than two manuals, and the feet = pedals are included. In the last 300 years, the organ has been developed from a classical baroque organ to the romantic symphonic organ, and further to the universal organ which should imitate an orchestra and so all existing instruments synthetically. Around the year 1900, the development reached its peak (e.g. the organ of Breslauer Jahrhunderthalle; M. Reger might be cited). Nothing substantially new has ever been added since. The organ was subjected to a comprehensive movement for restoration, the “Orgelbewegung”, which aimed to bring fully to the fore the classical principles.

Today, nearly all the styles of organ built over the past centuries are perfectly imitated in quasi authentic replicas. This shows that indeed here nothing new can be added. New organs are built today and especially electronic organs –an imitation of the imitation - which have an interesting and astonishing addition: MIDI in – out. Thus the connection to the new musical technology is made. Human voice or a natural musical instrument can hardly correspond to electronic instruments. The pipe organ or the electronic organ, controlled by keys, can easily make such a connection and broadens itself by similar means. Also in the newest musical technology the circle has closed today: the latest software instruments refer almost without exception to a concept of sound generation, which has existed for more than 30 years¹⁰⁾.

Almost nothing has changed in the combination of the available modules, no more than the keyboards / claviature (claves= key). In the same way, imitations of baroque organs were built, and imitations e.g. of French symphonic organs, “imitiations” of classical analogue electronic instruments have been programmed at the software level.

I’m sure it would be enormously satisfying for a composer like Bach to play nowadays a new instrument with an old technique. Just the same, an electronic musician coming from tactile and comprehensible hardware like e.g. Jupiter 8 or AKS, can today, using the software (e.g. Arturia, Rehberg), produce exactly the same once again as was new at that time.

The circles have closed. It is reassuring to observe that nature provides only limited possibilities, at least for humans, and that therefore e.g. the musician in the latest software, and the organist on the imitating baroque organ encounter again and again what is well known and existing.

Organ and musical technology have the aspect of mechanical, synthetic, abstract sound generation in common which advances, independent from human production, in extended areas of nature and therefore of the possible.

1) Klaus Weinhold, “Klingende Steinhalle”, Emmendingen 2007

10) refers to the year 1996