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INFORMATION ON ORGAN REGISTRATION
FROM A STUDENT OF J.S. BACH

Quentin Faulkner

II.

Sammlung einiger Nachrichten
von berühmten Orgelwerken in Deutschland,
mit vieler Mühe aufgelegt von einem Liebhaber der Musik. Breslau, verlegt Carl Gottfried Meyer.
1757. 14 Bogen in 4.

Michael Praetorius hat im zweiten Theile seines musikalischen Syntagmas, außer einer genauen Beschreibung aller in den Orten

The article falls into four sections:

I. A brief appreciation of the new publication (not really a review, since there is no detailed critical examination), on pages 486–87.

II. A classification and description of stops found in organs of the time, from page 489 to page 502.

III. Information on how to combine the stops, from page 502 to page 505. This section is of immediate relevance to organ registration, and it contains the only material evaluated in the analytical portion of this article.

IV. The stoplists, unpublished elsewhere, of six organs, from page 506 to page 518. These stoplists describe organs located in the Freiburg Petrikirche, the Halberstadt Stiftskirche, the Halle Marktkirche, the Königsberg Domkirche, the Magdeburg Johanniskirche, and the Meernke Stadtkirche (Saxony). The present English translation omits these stoplists.

Neither the Table of Contents for Part 6 nor the heading of the article indicates its author. Only the name “Agricola” at the end of the article identifies the author as Johann Friedrich Agricola (1720–74), a student of J.S. Bach from 1738 to 1741. Thereafter, Agricola moved to Berlin, becoming part of the circle of Bach’s students (including C.P.E. Bach and J.P. Kirnberger) active there. Frederick the Great, King of Prussia, eventually named him Royal Prussian Court Composer, a position that limited Agricola’s activity as an organist. Nevertheless, the article translated below reveals that Agricola remained highly knowledgeable in organ matters, as does his contribution ten years later to Jacob Adlung’s Musica mechanica organzad3 (1768). Agricola served as the final editor2 of that publication, and the notes he added to it confirm not only his understanding of organ construction and playing technique but also his acquaintance with a wide variety of organs and organ music, both throughout Germany and (as a result of his reading) in France.

* * * * * * * * *

Here follows the translated text of Agricola’s article. Original terms and phrases of special interest are italicized. The translator’s footnotes are in superscript numbers; superscript letters identify Agricola’s own footnotes, contained in parenthetical statements in smaller type immediately following the letters. Boldface numbers in curly brackets indicate the original pagination of Marpurg’s publication.


In the second part of his Syntagma Musicum Michael Praetorius has furnished, in addition to precise descriptions and designs of each of the stops [487] normally found in the organs of his day, the stoplists or specifications of 27 famous organs in Germany. Mr. von Mattheson, Secretary of Legation [Legationsrat1], has published a far more ambitious collection of stoplists in the appendix to his new and expanded edition of Niedt’s Handlagentur zur Variation des Generalbasses. Despite these efforts there were many additional instruments in Germany (where one encounters a greater number of beautiful, large organs than in any other country) that also deserved to have their descriptions published. This has prompted the author of the collection here announced to compile and publish (doubtless with great effort and expense) an additional 124 stoplists, including many very notable ones, none of which are to be found in Praetorius or in Mattheson. And although this still falls far short of describing all the good organs in Germany, yet there is no doubt that with it Mr. Meyer has once again rendered an estimable service to all those who pursue greater knowledge of the organ.

Perhaps some of my readers will not mind my taking this opportunity to provide them with a rather more precise account of organ stops or registers, since they are so various and have so many different names. [488] I will endeavor to be of service to them here. Stop names are divided in general into pipes [Pfeifenwerk] and reeds [Rohr- oder Schnaarwerk]. The distinction lies in the different structure of the pipes, principally in their mouthpieces [Mundstücks], which naturally results in a different sound. The

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mouthpiece of a reed is a short tube, usually made of tin, cut in half lengthwise. Over its open side there lies a movable sheet (Blatt), called the tongue (languette [in French]), which the wind can force up and down. Both are anchored at the top in a little block (noix [in French]), through the middle of which there is an opening. The lower part of the shallot (Mundstück) and its reed are set into a separate tube, called the boot, which constitutes the lowest section of the pipe. The block sits atop this boot. Through the block there passes a piece of steel or brass that extends about halfway down the tongue, and keeps the wind from lifting the tongue any higher than the correct pitch requires. The pipe is tuned either lower or higher by drawing this piece of steel up or down, and thus it is called the tuning wire (Stimmkürtze).

The upper part of the pipe, the part organbuilders call the resonator (Corpus), is fastened atop the opening in the block. When the reed mentioned above is set in motion, it (489) strikes the shallot and rebounds again from it, and thus causes a kind of rattling sound, somewhat similar to the reed on an oboe or a bassoon. To keep the reed from beating too violently against the shallot, leather is glued to the latter; organbuilders call this “facing” (fütern).

A flue pipe has at its mouthpiece a sheet fastened horizontally into the body of the pipe, made of the same material as the pipe itself. Above and below it there are narrow horizontal openings. The one underneath, in which the pitch is actually formed by the stream (Anstrich) of wind, is very narrow. The one on top is rather wider, encompassing either the entire width of the pipe or somewhat less, according to the character of the stop. The part of a flue pipe below the mouth is called the foot.

A flue pipe whose body above the mouth is of proportional width and cylindrical (deren Körper über dem Mundstück, bey proportionirter Weite, durchaus gleich lang ist), and is 8 feet long, produces C in the bass octave of the keyboard, in so-called Chorton or trumpet pitch. A pipe whose body is 4 feet long produces an octave higher, tenor c; a pipe of 2 feet is another octave higher, middle c, etc. If a pipe is stopped on top, it sounds twice as low as an open pipe; thus a stopped pipe four feet long produces an eight-foot C. (490) This is the source of the nomenclature by which it is customary to distinguish how high or low organ stops are. The wider a pipe is, the shorter it must be to produce a given pitch. The narrower it is, on the other hand, the longer it must be. This proportion of length to width in a pipe at a given pitch is called the scale. If a pipe tapers toward the top, or is only half open, then it must be somewhat shorter than if it were entirely open.

The proportion of reeds is different, since the greater depth of the sound does not depend so much on the upper portion of the pipe as on the shallot. Thus there are reeds whose upper portions are quite short that still produce an 8-foot pitch. The tone of a reed is all the more splendid and impressive, however, if its resonator is rather long. Thus the resonator of a 16-foot Posaura at low C must be at least 12 feet long. (491)

The various timbres that organ stops produce are thus a result of the pipes’ shape, their different lengths and widths. A wide, short pipe sounds fuller and more pompous than a long, narrow one. But the different cut-up of the lip—larger or smaller, wider or narrower—also contributes to the difference in timbre.

The material used to make organ pipes is either pure tin, pipe metal (a mixture of lead and antimony), or brass, as mentioned above, is used for reed tongues. It is as unsuitable for pipe resonators, though, as sheet iron (Blech), since it causes a far too rattling, crackling, rustling sound. Organ builders made their Regals of it, but with a poor effect. Tin sounds more brilliant (schärfer), while wood sounds softer and duller than pipe metal.

Flues are again divided into so-called principals and flutes. The principals are completely open and cylindrical (von gleicher Weite). To this category belong:

1. the Principal 32’, 16’, 8’, or 4’;
2. the Octave 8’, 4’, 2’;
3. the Superoctave or Sedeclina 2’ and 1’; the only distinction in all of these lies in their pitch (höhe und tiefe). For example, if the Principal is 16’, the Octaves are 8’ and 4’, and Superoctaves 2’ and 1’. The “Principals” proper, though, stand in the facade, so that they are visible on the exterior. The 32’ Principal belongs only in the pedal.
4. the mixture stops (Mixturwerke), which, since they produce either a fifth or a third, or both of these together, or an entire chord on one note, cannot be used alone, but only for reinforcement and in combination with larger and smaller principals and octaves (492) octaves. They are:
   1. the Quints 6’, 3’, and 1’
   2. the Terzes, mostly 1½;
   3. the Sesquialteras that consist of 2 pipes [per note], sounding the Quint and the Terz;
   4. the Mixtures, that consist of several pipes [per note], which sound the harmonic triad, i.e., either singly or doubled.

The lowest pipe is seldom lower than 2 foot. Since the higher pipes that form the triad would be much too small to extend throughout the entire keyboard, these higher pipes are rearranged into another composition one or more times in each octave; this is called “repeating.” For example, if the lowest C [of the mixture] sounds the following pitches: c’ g’ c” g” c”, tenor c would sound something like: g’ c” g” c” e” e’ e”. The number of ranks by which a Mixture is indicated are many pipes speak at each note; for example, “four ranks” when it has 6 pipes, “four ranks” when it has 4’, etc. There are several kinds of mixtures, that are distinguished not by their scales, but rather by their loudness and harmonic composition. These are: (a) the Mixture proper, (b) the Scharf, (c) the Cimbel, (d) the Rauschpfeife, which is, however, commonly the same thing as the Sesquialteras. (492) The last-named consists of larger pipes and does not repeat, (493) but commonly extends only over half the keyboard; it is seldom larger than 2’ or 4’, but is somewhat sharper; when these two stops are drawn together, they produce an undulating sound.

The so-called “flutes” are either completely open, completely stopped, or stopped with some sort of opening in the cap. Open flutes are either completely cylindrical or (494) tapered. Those of the first type are either narrow and long, such as:

1. the 16’ pedal Violon;
2. the Viola da Gambae (Some organbuilders make their Viola da Gambae somewhat tapered toward the top);
3. the Querflöte, whose resonators are commonly twice as long as their pitch requires, but very narrow;
4. the Schweizerpfeife in old organs;
5. the Vagarr or Vugara, which some build of wood in a rectangular shape, and which produces a beautiful effect;
6. the Flöte a boc;
7. the Unda maris, which is a narrow-scale 8’ principal standing next to the usual principal at this pitch, but tuned a little bit sharper; when these two stops are drawn together, they produce an undulating sound;
8. the Salicional or Saliceti; or they [i.e., the cylindrical open flutes of the second type] are wide and short, such as:
   1. the Hohlflöte 8’, 4’, and 2’ (Some organbuilders make the Hohlflöte wider in the middle and narrower at the top and bottom, which produces an excellent tone; such an 8’ Hohlflöte can be heard in the organ in the castle church at Altenburg);
   2. the Waldflöte 4’ and 2’;
   3. the Silfflöte 2’ and 1’;
   4. the Schwiegel in some old organs;
   5. the Hohlquintas 3’ and 1½, which are quints built at Hohlflöte scale.

(493) The following belong to the flutes that are tapered:

1. the Gemshorn 8’, 4’, and 2’, which is rather tapered toward the top. Some of our ancestors called this stop “Koppellöte.”
2. the Nagel 3’, which is a quint built at Gemshorn scale;
3. the Spitzflöte or Spillpfeife (incorrectly called Selfflöte) 8’, 4’, and 2’, whose mouth is somewhat wider and whose body is somewhat narrower at the top than the Gemshorn.
4. the Blockflöte 4’ and 2’, in old organs; this is a Spitzflöte that is somewhat wider at the top.
5. the Flachflöte 8’, 4’, and 2’: the Flachflöte has a narrow but wide (enges aber breites) mouth, and is not tapered as much toward the top as the Gemshorn.
The following belong to the completely stopped flutes:

1. the Gedackt 8' and 4', of various scales [Weite], and with either weaker and gentler or fuller and more pompous voicing;
2. the Bourdon 16' and 8'; this is nothing other than a wide-scale Gedackt. The pedal 32' Untersatz and the 16' Subbass are the same thing;
3. the Quintadene 16', 8', and 4' is a Gedackt that speaks its octave quint together with its fundamental, due to its low cut-up and to the sheets, called side-beards, that are fastened to both sides at the mouth;
4. the Nachthorn is a Quintadene of some size, and in naming them, as well as in how they do not sound exactly like a Viola da Gamba, etc., bear only the slightest resemblance to the sheets, called side-beards, that are fastened to both sides at the mouth;
5. the Posaune 32' and 16' in the pedal; these are mostly of tin; in the pedal 32s and 16s, the resonators are flared on top [oben mehr auswierts gelegen].

Concerning flutes in general, it is to be noted that organbuilders vary greatly in voicing and in naming them, as well as in how they build the bodies and mouths. There is no uniform spelling of the same names. Thus some call the Gedackt simply "Flöte." [497] What one might call "Flöte a bec," others call "Offene Flöte" or "Flauto amabile." Some call it also "Flute," for which reason I do not know, "Jula." [16]

It is easy to imagine from the nature of the matter itself, that many stops deriving their names from different instruments, e.g., the Viola da Gamba or some other instrument, though, does not prevent them from having their own very pleasant tone as organ stops. For example, in the organ of the castle church at Altenburg there is a 16' Querflöte. How similar could this stop be to an actual Querflöte, since it sounds only a very few pitches in common with the instrument? It is a narrow-scale, open flute of the same scale as the exceedingly beautiful 8' Viola da Gamba that is to be found in this organ. And when it is drawn together with the latter, the rapid runs and arpeggios (not slow chords, according to the inclination [Vorurtheil] of most organists) are played, [this combination] produces a very beautiful effect, and the pleasant keenness that is found in both these stops comes as close to the attack of a bowstroke on a [stringed] bass as is possible to achieve with pipes. At least, this [499] tone exceeds in beauty of that many other so-called Viola da Gambas in organs.

Reeds are either open or stopped. The resonators of open ones are of ample [voller] scale (insofar as reeds will permit), or they have very short resonators. To the first type belong:
1. the Trompete 16', 8', and 4';
2. the Hoboe 8';
3. the Waldhorn 8' or 4';
4. the Schalmey in old organs, whose resonators are flared on top [oben mehr auswierts gelegen].
5. the Fagott, mostly at 16';
6. the Posaune 32' and 16' in the pedal;
7. the Trompete 8' and 4' in the pedal; some call the latter Clarion;
8. the Zinke in old organs.

In manual reeds of this type the resonators are mostly of tin; in the pedal 32s and 16s, however, they are best made of wood.

The reeds with short resonators are:
1. the Regal 8' and 4'; some call the latter Jungfern- or Geigenregal if it is voiced rather gently (lieblich);
2. the Trichterregal, whose resonators resemble a funnel;
3. the Krumhorn, whose resonators assume various shapes;
4. the pedal Cornett 2', which should not be confused with the mixture of this name mentioned above. Its resonators are narrower and longer than those of a Regal;
5. the Vox humana; some organbuilders make its resonator [499] in one form, some in another. Most of them have the misfortune of sounding exactly the way a human being must not sing if he wants to sing well. The closest thing to them would be the voice of many an ill-trained choirboy. The type that has somewhat larger resonators and a wide bulge [Bauch] in the middle, and is only half open on top, seems to be the most pleasant, since its rattling is thereby moderated by a hollow timbre. There is one of this type at Altenburg;
6. the Chalumeau, which is a pleasant reed in some Silbernmann 17 organs.

The stopped reeds are rather on the wane in more recent organs. To these belong:
1. the Dulcian 16' and 8', which has several small holes in the side of its resonator, in the same manner that some put them into Krumhorns;
2. the Kneipp- or Apfelregal; its resonator is a round knob bored through with holes. Some call it Sringregal;
3. the Sordun 16';
4. the Rantek 16' and 8';
5. the Baar- or Bärpfife 8'.

These last 3 have smaller resonators concealed within their rather large resonators.

These are the most common stops in German organs. In general, German organbuilders seek a great deal of variety in their flute stops, the so-called Galanterie stops. It is easy to imagine that not all inventive possibilities are exhausted, and that [500] opportunities remain open for a skilled master to practice his musings and his powers of invention. For example, Mr. C.E. Friderici18 from Gera, a master who excels equally in clavichords (the best comfort we have in our old organs, contribute somewhat to this; such keys have, however, been exchanged—very wrongly—for longer ones in [our] more recent instruments. [19] As far as can be perceived from the organbooks of some French organists, these are their most common stops (matched here with their German names):20

[501] Montre — Principal
Prestant — Octave
Doublette — Superoctave
Quarte de bourdon — Superoctave
Nazard — Nasat
Fourniture — Mixture
Cymbale — Cymbel
Cornet — Cornet
Bourdon — Bourdon or Gedackt
Flöte — a kind of Flöte
Trompete — Trompete
Clairon — a smaller Clarion
Cromhorne — Krumhorn
Larigot — a little Sifflette or Wallflöte
Cornet séparé } Cornets, each of which has its own keyboard

Since we have now described the stops in organs as far as is possible, perhaps some readers would not be averse to reading something about how to use these stops and combine them with each other. Since there are countless variations in registration, it is not possible to cite them all, furthermore, an organist with a good ear will have no difficulty trying out their effects for himself. Thus some general remarks will suffice to provide someone not already experienced in the practice of organ registration the impetus for further experimentation.

[502] When one wishes to play quite loudly, one draws the full organ [das volle Werk], to which all of the principal stops described above belong. To these one may add the Trompetes 16', 8', and 4', if they are in good tune. It is indeed also possible to couple to it a second manual, on which the full organ is likewise drawn. On this [registration] one may not only play slowly, but may also play rapid pieces [Sachen], if the organ speaks promptly and one's fingers allow it. Full textures must predominate, however, in doing this. French organists do not draw the reeds in the full organ, because they [i.e., the reeds] sound much too unpleasant [widrig] when one plays full chords in the bass. It is necessary in general to refrain from playing all such chords on the organ, however, if 16' or 8' stops are drawn. The flutes are not drawn with the full organ. There is an exception to this: if the Principal is only an 8', then a 16' Gedackt, Bourdon, Quintadena, or Rohrflöte can and must be drawn with it. A 16' Bourdon greatly augments the gravity of a 16' Principal. A similar [precept] should be observed if the Principal is only a 4'; in that case, it is
necessary to draw an eight-foot flute with it, as a foundation stop.

A four-foot stop cannot be used without covering it with an eight-foot, unless one intends to play very rapid florids passages in it [man müßte denn sehr geschwindige Passagen darauf spielen]. (505) The mixtures absolutely may not be used except in company with the other principal stops. But if the latter are present, then [the mixtures] fill them out excellently, and the discords that would result from so many chords beating against each other (since the mixtures consist entirely of small pipes) are covered by [the principals] and, as it were, devoured. The mixtures should never be used with the flutes [Zum Flötenwerk gegeben] or with the pedal, for instance, with pedal reeds at 16' (and perhaps at 32' and 8').

A Quint or a Terz must always have a higher Octave or Superoctave on top of it, for example, if the Quint is 3-foot, then a 2-foot stop must be drawn together with an 8' and 4'.

It is inadvisable to omit an octave in the middle. For example, an 8- and 2-foot stop without a 4-foot would sound far too hollow [leer], especially when playing full chords. But if the melodic line on a manual, for example in a trio, then one may indeed unite a 16' and 4'. Thus, for example, a 16' Quintadene and 4' Hohl- or Waldflute produce, in this instance, a good effect. Even a 16' Bordon with a 1' Stiffel has a good effect, if fast, single-line passages are played on them. In choosing stops, a great deal depends on the material; to offer our ancestors any day merely by drawing such stops and using them together. I have heard a Lieblich Gedackt, Vugara, Quintadene, and Hohlflöte played together on a certain organ, all at 8' and without any other stop, which produced a beautiful and strange effect.

[A] Quelle article concludes with six stops list.

Although the entire article recommends itself to students of 18th-century German organs and organ music, the information Agricola provides on organ registration is of particular interest. After categorizing and discussing the stops found in organs, Agricola at the top of page 502 begins to discuss the method of combining them. He first treats das vollse Werk, the plenum, and his instructions for constituting it differ markedly from other well-known 18th-century German plenum recipes. For the sake of comparison, here are analogous passages from Johann Mattheson and Jacob Adlung that offer the most familiar of those recipes:

To the full organ (zum vollen Werke) belong the principals, the Bourdon, the Salicional or Saliceti (Weiden-Pfeifen), the Racsh-Pfeiffen, the Octaves, the Quints, the Mixtures, the Scharfs (small mixtures with three ranks of pipes), the Quintadene, the Zimbels, the Nasat, the Terziana, the Sesquialteras, the Superoctaves, and the Posaines in the pedal, not in the manual, for the Posaines are reed pipes which are excluded from the full organ in the manual. This is done because the Posaine would rattish the whole chorus, and when the chorus is playing the Posaine, it sounds splendid in the pedal because of the depth of its tone, if its shallot is leathered (as it ought to be).

(Johann Mattheson, Der volkommene Capellmeister (1739), p. 467, § 76)

Anyone who would like to know what to draw for a manual plenum (zum vollen Werke) need know only this: the required stops are those that intensify the principal, together with all the Octaves, as well as the Quints and Tenors, all serve for this purpose, but the compound stops intensify the most, such as the Terziana, Sesquialte, Mixtures, Scharp, Cimb., etc., as well as the Posaines. If one should draw the appropriate stops on the second manual and couple the manuals together, it is also necessary to have stops that produce gravity. The stopped flutes serve to do this; such as the Quintatone 16', or better yet, the Gedackt 16', Rohrfliette 16' or 8' Bordon of the same size; also the Gedackt 8', Quintatone 8', Rohrfliette 8', Gemshorn 8', etc. (according to what is available) . . .

What has been said about manual stops also holds true for the pedal: its plenum must also be loud in order to balance the manual.

One pays more attention to its gravity, although at times it has its brilliance. The Contrabass 32', Subbass 16', Gedackt 8', Principal 32' and 16', Violin 16', and Octave 8' all promote gravity. All of these may be drawn together if the organ has sufficient wind . . . Sometimes brighter stops are included in the pedal, e.g., Octave 4', 2', or 6', or even Mixtures. These may also be used . . . The Posaine 32' and 16' together with the Trompete [8'] may also be included, as well as the other reeds of the Posaine 16' is sufficient. In particular, the 16' stops are more suitable for use in playing rapid passages rather than the 32'. (Adlung, Musica mechanica organandi (1760), § 231 and 234)

Both Mattheson (1739) and Adlung (published posthumously in 1768, but written 30–40 years earlier) agree on organ registration as to the composition of the plenum: the manual plenum should consist of all the flue stops, flutes as well as principals, at all pitches from 16' to the mixtures, including all mixtures; the pedal plenum should follow the same principles as the manual, but with the addition of pedal reeds at 16' and 32', and perhaps at 32' and 8'. Agricola is not in agreement with several practices that Mattheson and Adlung suggest. First, he states that the plenum stops belong to the plenum (p. 502), and reinforces this assertion later in the paragraph by specifically excluding the flute stops (for Agricola this category also includes string stops). This practice is in continuity with 17th-century sources, such as Praetorius and Werckmeister, who note Agricola's weakness and that of his German contemporaries. On page 504, Agricola recognizes that the French practice of playing fugues on the organ may help clarify the polyphonic texture, but he does not go so far as to advocate the practice for German organists.

On the other hand, Agricola agrees with his earlier contemporary Adlung in requiring an ample 16' presence in the manual—the plenum. Together with his rejection of playing on a 4'-stop without an 8' foundation, this points to the ever-increasing appreciation for predominance, then importuned the organ tone, an ideal sought since before the time of Praetorius and fully achieved only with 18th-century developments in winding, chest design, and voicing. Agricola seems to be the unique source for suggestions for single-line registrations, such as one might employ in performing an organ trio. He rejects gapped registrations (such as 8' and 2') for playing fuller textures, but seems to allow them for playing a single melody on a given manual. His suggestions 16' + 4', or 16' + 1'—may seem strange to modern ears; they need to be understood again in light of the enthusiastic appreciation for solid 16' foundation tone prevalent during (and long after) his day. The distinction he draws between playing a full texture and playing a single melody ['In choosing stops, a great deal depends in general on whether one is playing a single line or a full texture on a manual'—pp. 503–504] is likewise unique, and adds additional support to its application to the music of J.S. Bach.

Agricola's defense of drawing multiple 8' stops on the same manual (p. 505) is in line with other mid-18th-century advice and opinion (cf. Adlung, p. 232 and 233), and in
sharp contrast to earlier authors such as Niedt/Mattheson and Werkmeister.26 The predilection for 8' sound should also be understood in terms of the evolving taste for more foundation tone in organs, in tandem with new developments in organbuilding. It is worth noting, however, that Agricola defends this practice only for what he calls “Galanterie” registrations (softer sounds involving combinations of flutes and strings) and not for the plenum.

To what degree do Agricola’s suggestions reflect J.S. Bach’s registration practices? That question must be approached with caution. If Bach had used the plenum in works such as the D-major Fugue (BWV 532) or the Gigue Fugue (BWV 577), would he invariably have drawn a 16' flue as the foundation of the plenum? Would he have insisted that any mutation stop be capped by the addition of the next higher octave-speaking stop? On the other hand, Agricola’s explicit inclusion of reeds in the plenum echoes his teacher’s fundamental for these stops. Agricola does not base any of his assertions in the article on J.S. Bach’s authority. Yet if we take into account Agricola’s contributions to Adlung’s Musica mechanica organandi—a publication that postdates the article by a decade—it is evident that Agricola maintained a strong allegiance to—perhaps one might say “reverence” for—J.S. Bach’s organ registration preferences. Agricola mentions his teacher’s name six times in his notes to Adlung’s Musica mechanica organandi; of those, three cite Bach as an authority’s in modifying or restating an opinion expressed by Adlung on organ design and registration.31

In Bach’s Obituary,32 authored by C.P.E. Bach and Agricola and published in 1754, there is passing mention of Bach’s skill at organ registration:

He not only understood the art of playing the organ, of combining the stops of that instrument in the most skillful manner, and of displaying each stop according to its character in the greatest perfection, but he also knew the construction of organs from one end to the other.33

Johann Nikolaus Forkel’s biography of J.S. Bach (Bach’s first biography, published in 1802, but written on the basis of information gathered earlier from those within the Bach circle) elaborates on the statement found in the Obituary, commenting on

... the peculiar manner in which he combined the different stops of the organ with each other, or his mode of registration. It was so uncommon that many organbuilders and organists were frightened when they saw him draw the stops. They believed that such a combination of stops could never sound well, but were much surprised when they afterwards perceived that the organ sounded best just so, and had now something peculiar and uncommon, which never could be produced by their mode of registration.34

With regard to these statements, Agricola’s words at the close of the article (p. 508) are particularly suggestive: “I have heard a Liebligh Gedackt, Vugara, Quintadene, and Hohlflöte played together on a certain organ, all at 8' and without any other stop, which produced a beautiful and strange effect.” Even given the growing preference for 8' foundation tone in Thuringian organs during the first half of the 18th century, there were only a handful of organs at that time that could have offered the player such a rich palette of 8' stops. Agricola mentions only a few organs in the course of his article; one of them is the organ in the castle church at Altenburg.25 finished in 1739 by the organbuilder Georg Stock, Agricola evidently admired this organ, and saw to it that its stoplist was printed in a special supplement following the multitude of organ specifications in Adlung’s Musica mechanica organandi (Vol. I, pp. 86-87). Consulting that stoplist, we find the following 8' stops listed for the Oberwerk division:26

- Geigenprincipal 8'
- Liebligh gedackt 8'
- Vugara (i.e., Fugara) 8'
- Quintadene 8'
- Hohlflöte 8'

The “certain organ” Agricola is speaking of is almost surely the instrument in the castle church in Altenburg.26 It is precisely this organ that Bach played upon the instrument in early September of 1739, shortly after it was finished, and that he found it highly satisfactory.27 This was the time when Agricola was studying with Bach. Was the performer Agricola had in mind perhaps Bach himself, and was Agricola thinking of that occasion (among others) when he held writing to be “falling off”? Indeed, is Forkel’s mention of Bach’s “peculiar manner” of registration perhaps a distant echo of an experience that Agricola had at Altenburg in the fall of 1739?

If the above deductions are accurate, then it appears that J.S. Bach was among the pioneers in promoting a registration consisting of multiple 8' stops. Unfortunately Agricola does not reveal what sort of music he heard on this registration (perhaps it was an improvisation). Such a registration might be suited for pieces in the style of “Jesu meine Freude” and “Vater unser im Himmelreich” from the Orgelbächen. In any event, what was considered so strikingly innovative in 1758 eventually became the norm; by the 19th century, both organs and registration practices took for granted that many 8' stops should be drawn and played together.

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NOTES
3. On p. 487 below, Agricola seems to suggest that the ‘Bach Organ’ was a composition of a six-rank mixture in which the third is the highest sounding pitch at tenor c. Furthermore, on p. 505 below, he lists the stops that the French include in the Cornet for a Tierce en taille; the highest stop in his list is a 1'3.
4. This article seems to be the only source that records this requirement.
5. The inclusion of a 16' Bourdon does not conform to fugue registration as described in any known source concerning French organ registration. If Agricola is referring to a 8' Bourdon, however, many French organbooks call for it together with the 8' or 8' and 4' Trumpeette.
8. Andreas Werkmeister, Erweiterte und verbesserte Orgel-Probe (Quedlinburg: Calvisius, 1698), p. 72; Musicae mathematicae dogmata curiosius (Frankfurt u. Leipzig: Calvisius, 1688), p. 52f. In these sources Werkmeister discourages the use of more than one stop at the same pitch.
9. See footnote 8 above.
11. Andreas Werkmeister, op. cit.
13. The original German text may be found in: Hans-Joachim Schulze, Dokumente zum Nach­wirkern Johann Sebastian Bachs, 1750-1800 (Bach­
33. Schulze, p. 86; David and Mendel, p. 223.
34. David and Mendel, p. 314.
35. Altenburg is on the eastern edge of Thuringia, south of Leipzig. The organ has survived up to the present in its original location; it was restored by the East German firm Eule of Bautzen in 1974–76.
36. Remarkably, the Hauptwerk also boasts five 8' flue stops: Principal, Spitzflöte, Rohrflöte, Viol-degambe, and Bordun.