

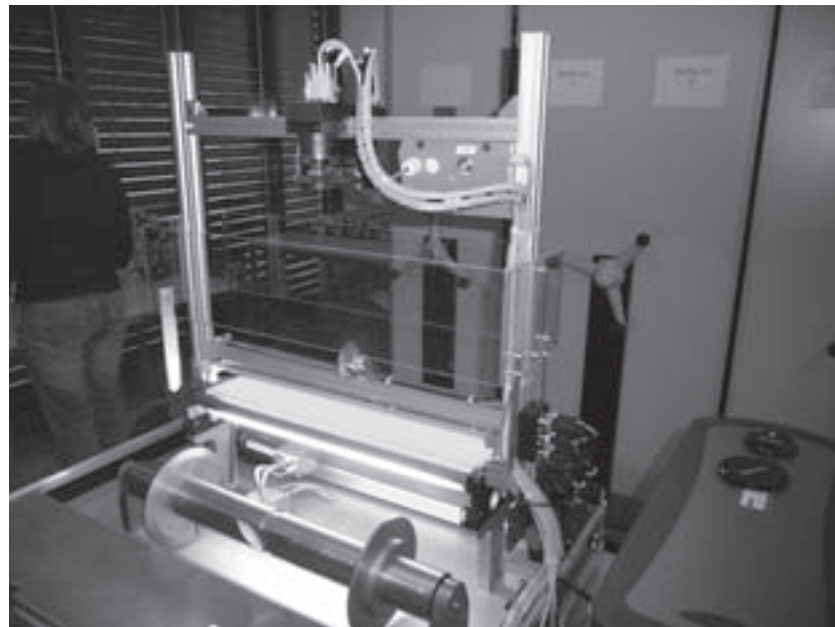
Welte's *Philharmonie* roll recordings 1910–1928: My afternoons with Eugène Gigout

David Rumsey

Dem Namen steht die Nachwelt
keine Krone, mit den Befindungen
von Hülfe-Königen und Philharmonie-
Organ hat die Welt für den reprodu-
zierbaren musikalischen Künstler
seine Gerechtigkeit volltun.
Noch spätere Geschlechter werden
die Meister unserer Zeit in ihrem
Können, ihrer gesamten Kunst-
auffassung überbieten können. Mit dem Mitleid in
Technik und Regelmäßigkeit
sind Zeit überwindend, ist der
Zugewinn eines geistigen Er-
bes für die Ewigkeit geworden.
Witten -
Heidelberg, d. 14. Aug. 1922
Karl Straube



Welte's portrait of Gigout



The Debrunner roll scanner

Posterity bestows no laurels upon mimesis. Since the invention of the Welte-Mignon piano and the Welte-Philharmonie organ, this expression has lost its validity for recording musicians. Generations far removed from ours will be able to recognize the masters of our age in their prowess and in the totality of their artistry. By means of technology, impermanence and time have been vanquished, the moment of metaphysical experience has been captured for eternity.

These prophetic words of Montgomery Rufus Karl Siegfried Straube (1873–1950) have never rung truer, although the long road, technological means, and near total loss of all that he was talking about in relation to the *Philharmonie*, could never have been foreseen—not even by a person of such eloquence, vision and culture as he obviously was. The British do have ways with words, the Germans perhaps more with music. Was it his English mother who lay behind this uncanny ability to express himself so well?

My former teacher in Sydney, Australia, Norman Johnston, used to sagely advise his students: “Always proceed from the known to the unknown.” It was well expressed and has long served as a useful life guide. Norman was a pupil of André Marchal, Marchal in his turn a pupil of Eugène Gigout. Like beauty, musical genealogy is probably mainly in the eye of the beholder, although it has been perpetuated often enough—as in Albert Schweitzer's biography. It is often associated—as there—with those who want to trace their instructional lineage back to J. S. Bach.

By this token, Gigout is my musical great-grandfather. As a student, I put him into a box labeled “romantic French”. And there he remained for a very long time. It was an accurate enough generalization, but when you spend whole afternoons with him—or his musical ghost—you soon begin to realize that he occupied a rather special place in the romantic French hierarchy. Furthermore, he does not always perform in quite the way a “romantic” tag might lead us to expect.

Until recently I had never heard Gigout play. Hardly surprising: he died 14 years before I was born and made no gramophone records. But now that I am a septuagenarian, some unexpected events have changed all that. With apologies to clairvoyants and occultists, whose hopes will now be dashed, perfectly rational explanations are offered, while Straube's prophecy is fulfilled.

The Seewen *Philharmonie*

The advice of my teacher was particularly apt over the past few years, as one of the world's few remaining full-sized Welte-*Philharmonie* organs was restored under my supervision. The instrument was originally intended for the ship *Britannic* and is now the central attraction

in the *Museum der Musikautomaten* at Seewen, Solothurn, Switzerland. Associated with it is a remarkable inventory of roll recordings, most commercially released between 1912 and 1928.

Several stages were needed in this not uncomplicated exercise, each of them representing a transition from the known to the unknown:

- restoring the organ
- dealing with the Britannic connections that were discovered during the restoration
- making the pneumatic roll-player work
- adding computer control
- tweaking the pneumatic roll player, computer and console systems to work optimally together
- scanning the rolls digitally
- developing software to electronically emulate the Welte pneumatic system
- auditioning the scanned and converted roll data played on the organ itself
- making an inventory of the roll collection, who played, what they played, how they played, and the current condition of the rolls.

With such a complex instrument, and old technologies that had slipped well behind the front line for nearly a century, we proceeded from our knowns to our unknowns with a mixture of confidence, trepidation and patience. Fortunately all went well.

But what of the rolls? We knew that playing them back over the Welte tracker bar and pneumatic player was always going to work—with the age-old reservations surrounding these machines and their many vagaries. Yet this, too, was surprisingly easy.

The Welte rolls

So the rolls could be played again pneumatically and the organ played manually—just as always with the Welte *Philharmonie* (*Philharmonie* to most of the English-speaking world). Seewen possesses, however, mostly only one roll of each recording. Even with other known collections, there are limited duplicates about in the world. Most original Welte rolls are nearly a century old now and show distinctive signs of being at “5 minutes to midnight.” Even with some potentially available copies, Seewen's collection can exist nowhere else in the world, for it mainly consists of original “second-master” rolls from which the copies were made. So the physical wear and tear, and real risk of damage, even destruction, from pneumatic machine playing are best avoided whenever possible.

With only around 250 roll titles known to exist in more than one copy at Seewen, we are clearly treading on rather delicate eggshells with all of them. Our answer has been to scan them once with people and machines that treat them kindly, digitize them, preserve the rolls

separately, then play them as often as we want from computer files.

So the next unknown became digital scanning and playback. Could we side-step the pneumatic roll-player with complete impunity? The scanning device needed its own custom-written software to produce playable files. The data was then transferred to the organ's computer, for which more arcane software programs had to be developed. The interface had to operate absolutely non-intrusively with the organ's playing action, for this was a unique and highly sensitive heritage restoration. There was a rough row to hoe here for a while, dealing with the huge multinomial equations of at least four different roll types, their age, and the weird but wonderful Welte multiplexing system, which might best be described as early 20th-century pneumatic computing. Welte's technical standards also varied from roll to roll and with the earlier and later developments of their technology.

Success began to arrive by mid-2009. The unknown was relieved by the known. From October of that year for the following six months, a team of three specially trained scanners began

the digitizing process. This required “sensitive fingers” to mount and guide the fragile rolls without damage and ensure that the best “geometry” was attained with, ideally, just one pass. By mid-2010 all 1,600 or so rolls had been scanned and digitized, and are thus now preserved in two forms: the original rolls and their digital conversions.

Still there were many unknowns: What was played? Who played? How? Phrasing? Tempo? Registration? Does this unique collection fully validate Karl Straube's statement above? A Pandora's box of questions and future research projects was suddenly opened up while myriads of fine historic performance details became available.

The latter represent the performance practices of an entire generation of organists who preceded most of those generally thought to be the first ever to make recordings. In chronologically defined terms: the rare “electrically recorded” 78s, most notably those of Harry Goss-Custard in the mid-1920s, were preceded by effectively no acoustic organ recordings. It was exactly during this period, 1912–1925, that roll-recording was in its heyday.

Scattered leaves ... from our Scrapbook

<p>○ The Schoenstein firm has carved out an enviable reputation in recent years for excellent Symphonic-style organs. This large 4-manual specimen is particularly well-equipped for its task, as it was built primarily to accompany the fine Anglo-Catholic liturgy at St. Paul's, and thus already</p>	<p>speaks with a decidedly English accent. It provides the general tonal impression of a vast cathedral organ in what is really quite a small building. Nigel Potts exploits its potential and masters its tricks with aplomb [in his new Herald CD <i>British Fantasies and Fanfares</i>].</p> <p>Peter Jewkes Sydney Organ Journal</p>
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Some rolls being prepared for digitizing

Welte in particular, among the few firms making recordings at this time, managed to capture the playing of a whole school of 19th-century-trained organists in this important time-window. While they and many other firms made rolls aimed to sell in the “popular” and “transcription” repertoire arenas, Welte stands out for their dedication to recording the great organists and original organ repertoire of their own epoch. This included Harry Goss-Custard, himself, then about 13 years younger than when he recorded his 78s.

The downside to the Welte system may well be the limitations of one organ for all organists and repertoire, and a tricky recording technology and medium, but the upsides are many. For one thing, the playability and intelligibility of most roll recordings is now far better than any disc made before the mid-1940s. Fate has decreed that Seewen is the only Welte *Philharmonie* left in the world on which we can preserve and play so many of these early roll-recordings, reproducing the original playing and registration, at the highest possible standards allowed by this system.

Playing the rolls digitally

It is late 2010 as this is being written. We are halfway through a survey of the digitized rolls, a process that should be complete by late 2011. The results are very encouraging—about 85% play well on one scan. Inevitably there are some problematic rolls, some that may never play again, some re-scans to do, an odd roll that is wound in reverse (standard practice with Welte’s cinema organ players) or other eventualities, including five marked but not perforated “first-masters”. But the overwhelming majority turned out to play well—and, considering the historical importance of it all, quite breathtakingly so.

There are many advantages to playing rolls digitally. Quick search-and-play of the stored data and no rewinding—with all of that procedure’s dire threat to aging paper—are simple and obvious benefits. Dialogue boxes giving timings or the actual registration being used are extremely useful. The Seewen organ, which knew two main manifestations—1914 and, slightly enlarged, 1920–1937—can also be switched from one form to another, enabling the rolls to be heard as they were recorded, or as Welte themselves pneumatically patched them up to play on a larger organ (specifically this one). Smaller player-organ manifestations are also available.

One of the most important facilities offered is the chance to restore the pedal to the point where the organist originally played it: due to Welte’s multiplexing system, pedal notes were often adjusted by moving them slightly earlier so the pneumatic technology could still work while roll-widths remained manageable. They had valid reasons for this, but digital editing now allows restoration of that aspect of the original performance. Others, including the correction of wrong notes and stops caused by holes or tears

from years of damage to or decay of the paper, are also possible.

The computer in the Seewen organ is wired straight to the final windchest magnets, thus playing far more accurately and precisely than passing the whole process through paper and pneumatic systems with all their vagaries and notorious technological temperaments. That includes roll slippage or sticking, and worn, underpowered motors, to say nothing of arch-enemies such as dust, air leakage or damaged, corroding lead tubing. Another big plus for digital playback is that repeated playings do not create more wear and tear on rolls. Tear can all too literally be what happens. Simply re-winding a roll can be an act of vandalism against a unique surviving historic performance—the rewind moves at some speed and shredding is a better description than tearing when it happens.

Many rolls are no longer reliably playable pneumatically, and this situation must inevitably deteriorate further with time. So it was not a moment too soon to digitize them. In fact, both rolls and digitized scans are now the targets of careful preservation under the impenetrable vaults of this impressively-built museum (was “Fort Knox” more prototype than legend?).

Restoration

We were lucky. For such a sensitive heritage restoration, it was a relief that Welte themselves had built or converted its action to electric back in early 20th century. Had this not already been done, computer playback could have been unthinkable now. The consequences would have been pneumatic playing only, maybe only 50% of the rolls functioning properly, and a destructive process repeated for each playing. Further deterioration, with time running on its legendary wings—and no effective means of correction for rolls not running perfectly true—would have been our rather anguished lot.

The happy confluence of musical and computer skills found in Daniel Debrunner not only saw to the computer control of the organ’s action, but also developed the roll-scanner and necessary software to convert the rolls into digital formats. A collaboration now exists with a number of partners in a research program called *Wie von Geisterhand*, which, in late 2010, was awarded another Swiss Federal Government grant to continue through 2011 and 2012.

The museum under Christoph Haenggi’s direction, Daniel Debrunner, and I are among the Swiss and international partners in the *Geisterhand* team. Now that all rolls are scanned, we have set about auditioning them on the organ. Sure, Gigout can be heard playing his own *Toccata*, *Communion*, and *Festival March* on the Welte formerly in Linz-am-Rhein (EMI 5CD set 7243 5 74866 2 0 CD 2); but that organ is a much smaller model than the Welte recording organ was. Seewen’s full-sized *Philharmonie* has all the stops Gigout used. Important aspects of the registration can be compromised on the smaller models where,



The restored “Britannic” Welte in Seewen’s Hall of Auditory Arts

for example, some foundation stops on one manual are typically borrowed from another, or the pedal Posaune 16’ “pneumatically patched” to a Bourdon 16’—just not the same thing. The currently available CD-recorded repertoire is in any case minuscule compared to Seewen’s holdings.

Cataloguing the Welte recordings

At present rates it will probably take until late 2011 to complete the auditioning process and finalize a comprehensive database. We are also slowly incorporating whatever further information we can glean about the total Welte organ roll production and its current whereabouts around the globe. So far we have over 3,600 entries representing over 2,600 known rolls and those mentioned in Welte catalogues. This gives over 1,600 separate titles.

Already a wonderland of historic recordings has turned up. The relatively short playing times of 78s (at best about 4½ minutes) compared poorly to over 23 minutes available from rolls. The roll performances are without surface noise, demand no interruptions to “change sides”, and are in the most perfect “hi-fi stereo”.

Actually, we could say this process goes one step further: it nudges up towards “live” performance. Those who have experienced roll recordings frequently report the feeling that the artist is present, actually playing. An anecdote relates that admirers of Busoni’s once played a Welte-Mignon recording of his at his home while his widow was in the next room. The accuracy of reproduction was so true that she burst in, eyes full of tears, calling out “Ferruccio, Ferruccio!” *Wie von Geisterhand* (“as if by the hand of a ghost”) is a most relevant project name.

The Great Playback

Our computer technology began to reach maturity in the second half of 2009. In October 2009 the systematic scanning process commenced in the Seewen Museum’s library, which was specially re-equipped for this task. Then, from November, we could launch the long program of auditioning the scanned rolls. Tweaking it all has continued through 2010. In general, we took the rolls in the sequence of their Welte catalogue numbers. This led to some observations of the firm’s “commercial logic” in its rarified market: many of the earliest *Philharmonie* rolls are recuts from orchestration or piano rolls, modified to make them play on an organ with 150 holes in its tracker bar. Many were punched by hand: most impressive at Seewen are the long operatic, orchestral, and symphonic excerpts—including entire Beethoven symphonies and lengthy Wagner or Verdi opera potpourris—mostly hand-punched, often on rolls of around 15 minutes’ duration.

The sociology of this is a study in itself, but clearly, as with the British “Town Hall Organ” culture, Welte and its organists had to “entertain”. There was great public demand to hear operatic and symphonic music, but a notable lack of orchestras around to play it, especially aboard ships.

The auditioning of the roll-scans fell into my lap almost too naturally. There was a curious life-flashback here—history sometimes repeats itself in wondrous ways and without warning. When I was about eight years old, somebody disposed of an old acoustic wind-up gramophone in our backyard. This may have been thoughtless for the precinct, but it was kind to me. A vast collection of 78s was dumped alongside this machine. In the glorious outdoors of sunny suburban Sydney, I would play these recordings over and over. My great favorite was Wagner. Hapless neighbors were serenaded with unsolicited afternoons of Valkyries, Nibelungen and Flying Dutchmen. The complaints were legion. My skin was thick.

In late 2009—some 62 years later—I found myself listening to precisely this repertoire once again, but at Seewen. At least it was indoors this time—winter in Switzerland by contrast to summer in Sydney. Nobody was seriously disturbed, and the museum staff’s love or hatred of Wagner expanded or contracted commensurately according to their predispositions to this music. A subtle, inoffensive art of opening and closing the doors on me in Seewen’s “Hall of Auditory Arts,” where the organ is located, was tactfully developed. Or is that a residual “Wagner social conscience” now returning to make me utterly paranoid?

An amazing mastery of musical expression is found in the manually punched performances. All manner of nuances were reproduced—crescendi, sforzati, tremolandi, rallentandi, rubati, “orchestral” registrations—all fully expressive and highly convincing. One would scarcely guess that so many of them were laboriously drilled out by technicians rather than played by first-rate musicians. In fact, these technicians were consummate artists themselves, sometimes trained organists in their own right. They knew their repertoire and the performance paradigms of their day exactly, and had the skills and capacity to precisely build them into these rolls. All of this was through the medium of millions upon millions of tiny holes punched into paper. Yet there was nothing particularly new in this—in another lineage from Père Engrammelle through Dom Bédos de Celles, skills had already passed on to musical barrel-makers telling them how to make “mechanical” music expressive in the 18th century. And there had then been a 19th-century-long gestation of this art, through the orchestrion’s heyday, before Michael Welte and his crew applied their skills to Wagner, Brahms and Beethoven for their *Philharmonie*.

Such transcriptions were not only a much-favored repertoire of the Welte era, but are also one of the musical genres that the *Philharmonie* was truly “born to play”. In discussions of lost Beethoven traditions around World War I, these rolls at Seewen must have their part to play: they were created by people steeped in these traditions. They also knew their Verdi and Wagner.

Cinema organ music, light classics, and even hymns were also recorded. We have German chorales played by German organists or English hymns played



Computerized playback of the digitized rolls

by Harry Goss-Custard in what must have been the Berlin or Liverpool Cathedral traditions of the time. The variety of information that is stored on these rolls is truly breathtaking.

So: what is there?

Seewen is the inheritor of the largest ship's organ ever built and the most important single collection of roll recordings by fully romantic-tradition organists. Listed here chronologically according to their birth years are just 29 of Welte's organists—about one-third of the total:

1842–1912 Carl Hofner
 1842–1929 Johann Diebold
 1844–1925 Eugène Gigout
 1851–1937 Clarence Eddy
 1853–1934 Franz Joseph Breitenbach
 1858–1944 Marie-Joseph Erb
 1861–1925 Marco Enrico Bossi
 1862–1949 Samuel Atkinson Baldwin
 1863–1933 William Faulkes
 1865–1931 William Wolstenholme
 1865–1934 Edwin Henry Lemare
 1865–1942 Alfred Hollins
 1868–1925 Paul Hindermann
 1869–1929 Herbert Elie Georges Marie Bonnet
 1871–1964 Walter Henry (Harry) Goss-Custard
 1872–1931 Walter Fischer
 1873–1916 Max Reger
 1873–1950 Karl Straube
 1877–1956 Reginald Goss-Custard
 1878–1942 Alfred Sittard
 1878–? J(ohann?) J(akob?) Nater
 1882–1938 Paul Mania
 1884–1944 Joseph Elie Georges Marie Bonnet
 1886–1971 Marcel Dupré
 1890–? Kurt Grosse
 1893–1969 Joseph Messner
 1897–1960 Karl Matthaei
 1898–1956 Günter Ramin
 fl. 20thc “Thaddä” Hofmiller

Apart from the slightly special cases of Carl Hofner and Johann Diebold, the next earliest-born of Welte's organists was French: Eugène Gigout. Born in 1844, he was educated directly in his country's great 19th-century traditions of playing, which he himself helped to create and consolidate.

Judging by evidence on the rolls, the Freiburg recordings were made at least in early 1911. But 1910 must be more likely, since a preview of the *Philharmonie* was presented to the Leipzig Spring Fair in 1911. The final development—with order books then opened—was at the Turin Exhibition of November that same year. Most rolls were then made and released 1912–26, neatly covering the period up to electrical recording, and briefly overlapping it. During World War I, there was a dramatic reduction in factory output, and after 1926 productivity again slowly tapered off as entertainment changed focus to other media—radio, 78s. Roll production later dribbled away to special wartime releases, re-releases or late releases of earlier recordings. The last recording year found so far is 1938 (Binner playing Böhm on W2244).

Surveying it all, we get an impression of several waves of players fully immersed in their own traditions, with birth dates—and thus, broadly, traditions of playing—covering a span of over 50 years. From England, the USA, Italy, France, Ger-

many, Switzerland, and Austria, these organists were considered among the best available from anywhere in the early 20th century. While the list above tells many interesting stories, it is primarily a roll-call of Welte-preferred leading organists selected from about 1910 onwards. Others may have been asked and did not record for one reason or another. Those who did record were ones that Welte saw as potentially “best-selling” artists. Let us make no mistake about it: this was a highly commercial enterprise.

Italy: Bossi

Welte's Italian connection was uniquely through Marco Enrico Bossi. He was the first organist ever to officially record for them (July 1912). Perhaps the link was made when Welte exhibited their prototype *Philharmonie* at the Turin exhibition of November 1911? Bossi's son—also a German-trained organist—had just conducted an orchestral concert there in October. The original organ works that Marco Enrico plays are Bach's *Prelude and Fugue in D Minor* (BWV 539), Dubois' *In Paradisum*, and Franck's *Cantabile*. Transcriptions include Henselt's *Ave Maria*, op. 5 (arranged by Bossi), Handel's *Organ Concerto No. 10* (second and third movements), and a Schumann *March* (arranged by Guilment). The Chopin *Funeral March*, Debussy's “Girl with the flaxen hair,” and Haydn's “Ah! vieni, Flora” (from *Quattro Stagioni/Four Seasons*) were also recorded—the arrangers are unidentified, but quite possibly Bossi.

Most importantly, he recorded four of his own pieces: *Hora mystica*, *Folk-song from Ath*, *Fatemi la grazia* and *Noël*, op. 94, no. 2. (The titles of pieces given here reflect the Welte catalogue with its sometimes quaint, often inaccurate presentation—where needed they are corrected.)

Bossi's playing is notable in many ways; for example, the detachment of pedal notes in the Handel, giving the effect of a double-bass playing spiccato. Notable also is his tendency to arpeggiate some cadential chords and detach in counterpoint—an almost constant marcato broken by rarer moments of “targeted legato” in BWV 539 (cf. Hofner and Gigout later: same generation, same idea?). He was clearly a powerful interpreter. Most notable is *Fatemi la grazia*, which has an entirely variant ending to that in his printed edition. Other organists—his contemporaries—also play works of Bossi on Seewen's rolls.

A major article by Nicola Cittadin on this topic is soon to be published in an Italian organ journal.

France: Gigout, Bonnet, Dupré, Erb

The French 19th and early 20th century school accounts for four Welte organists. Their training is an interesting chapter: Gigout was principally taught by Saint-Saëns, Bonnet by Guilment and Vierne, and Dupré by Guilment, Widor, and Vierne. The Benoist-Saint-Saëns-Gigout and Lemmens-Guilment-Widor

lineages are indeed musical genealogies of significance here.

The other, Erb, was an interesting choice. He was Alsatian; when he was in his early teens, his country became annexed to Germany. The proximity of Straßburg to Welte's base in Freiburg is noted. The repertoire he plays is interestingly mixed, although the French school is clearly important and predominates.

Ernst/Bach (G-major concerto)
 Vivaldi/Bach (*Adagio* from the A-minor concerto)

Guilment (*Invocation in B-flat Major; Funeral March & Hymn of Seraphs*, op. 17; *Melodie*, op. 45; *Grand Choeur in D Major*, op. 18; *Elevation*, op. 25)

Franck (*Pastorale*, op. 18, no. 4)

Three arrangements/transcriptions: Mendelssohn (*A Midsummer Night's Dream—Wedding March*), Debussy (*Prélude de l'enfant Prodigué*) and Wagner (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg—Walther's Preislied*).

The freedoms Erb takes are sometimes little short of astonishing by today's measure, perhaps even questionable—not least in the Franck *Pastorale*. His playing constantly fringes on what we might now define as poor, including rhythmic oddities and wrong notes. Yet, hear him through, and the lingering impression is that you have at least learned something. It is too easy to spring to quick judgements here—we are seeking a full understanding of a quite different era. Erb's playing does not conform to what is generally acceptable today, but it at least changes perspectives and questions our paradigms in this digitally edited, “technically perfect performance” era.

Dupré was later to be one of the very few of Welte's organists well-represented through gramophone recordings. His earlier roll recordings offer important supplementation and enhancements. An *Improvisation on a Theme of Schubert* (#2047) is of particular note in this connection. It seems to be a hitherto unknown recorded improvisation. Only two copies of the roll are currently known to exist. Both are in Switzerland: one is at the Barnabé Theatre Servion near Thun,

the other at Schloss Meggenhorn, near Lucerne. That from Barnabé has been digitized at Seewen and plays well. It is at any rate skilled and entertaining extemporization, well demonstrating his talents when he was around 40, a most useful and important addition to the surviving Dupré heritage.

North America: Eddy, Baldwin (Lemare, Bonnet)

The North American contingent is represented by no lesser personages than Clarence Eddy and Samuel Atkinson Baldwin, with club membership extended fully to Edwin Lemare and partially to Joseph Bonnet. Eddy recorded Clérambault and Couperin, then on through Liszt, Mendelssohn, Saint-Saëns, Bossi, Buck, and Faulkes. Also German-educated at the right time and place for it, Eddy plays the Reger *Pastorale* in a notably fine interpretation. Transcriptions of Wagner (Bridal Chorus from *Lohengrin*; Prelude to *Lohengrin*, Pilgrim's chorus from *Tannhäuser*, Isolde's *Liebeshod*) and one of his own works (“Old 100th” *Festival Prelude and Fugue*) complete the bigger picture, not to forget his inclusion of *From the Land of the Sky-Blue Water* by Charles Wakefield Cadman (catalogued confusingly as Wakefield-Gudmann *From the land of the sky-blue*).

Eddy's compatriot, Samuel Baldwin, leaves over 20 rolls, including Buck's *Concert Variations on the Star Spangled Banner*, op. 23, and Guilment's *Sonata in D Minor*, op. 42 (complete, on 2 rolls).

Eddy and Baldwin are among the most generally significant organists represented here, but Lemare naturally deserves his very special place. The full story of Lemare—luminary in the entertainment tradition—has been well-told by Nelson Barden (*The American Organist* 1986, vol. 20, nos. 1, 3, 6, 8). Barden has also made CDs of this most extraordinary organist's rolls. Seewen has almost all of the rolls, including Lemare playing his famous “Moonlight and Roses” (*Andantino in D-flat*). However, it seems that some additional rolls exist at Seewen

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that were not available to anybody until recently. They are:

- 1239°, Dubois, *Sylvine*
- 1241°, Mendelssohn, *Ruy Blas Overture*
- 1265°, Guilmant, *Funeral March & Hymn of the Seraphs*
- 1266°, Lemare, *Symphony in D Minor*, op. 50: Scherzo
- 1267°, Lemare, *Symphony in D Minor*, op. 50: Adagio Patetico
- 1269°, Wolstenholme, *Romance and Allegretto*
- 1270°, Wagner, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*—Präludium
- 1274°, Goumou, *Queen of Saba (Sheba)*: March and Cortège
- With W1286° (Guilmant, *Reverie*, op. 70), three sources give J. J. Nater as organist, only one Lemare. At present we are ascribing it to Nater.
- ° = master roll
- °° = master roll and at least one copy
- °°° = two master rolls held

The British organists: Faulkes, Wolstenholme, Hollins, Walton, Goss-Custard

The British organists of the “Town Hall Organ” era—not to forget that of the Great Exhibitions—were well-represented in the Welte catalogues: six of them. Along with Lemare, they all reacted to their era’s special need for entertaining organ music. This choice of British organists is not surprising when we consider the firm’s exports to England (Salomons’ and *Britannic* were probably their first, Harrods and many others followed). Not only are some of the most notable recitalists of the era listed, but they also recorded a proportionately large number of rolls. Harry Goss-Custard was Welte’s most prolific organ recording artist, and their catalogue of his rolls overwhelmingly swamps the lists of his disc recordings. Only one work, Lemmens’ *Storm*, appears to be duplicated on both roll and disk.

The recordings of Faulkes, Wolstenholme, Hollins, Walton, and both Goss-Custards were no doubt made partly to satisfy this British market with so many wealthy industrialists or shipping magnates. The Salomon Welte at Tunbridge Wells is preserved, recently restored, and is a sister—if not a twin—to the Seewen organ. They are the only two of their kind left in the world today on which Welte *Philharmonie* rolls can be properly played pneumatically, taking the original recording organ’s specification into account. Tunbridge Wells’ capabilities also extend to play Cottage #10 Orchestron rolls. Its action remains completely pneumatic except for the remote Echo division, which is, and always was, electric.

Germanic territory: Hofner, Diebold, Ramin, Straube, Grosse, Breitenbach, Hindermann, Hofmiller, Messner, Matthaëi

German, Austrian, and Swiss organists account for about half the performers in the above list, and more are represented in our database. Numerically they occupy the most substantial block of historic talent here—their recordings mainly reveal the highly influential Berlin school of around 1900 (Eddy studied there, too). Leipzig, Freiburg, and Rheinberger’s influence in South Germany are also well represented.

Whatever predilection Welte might have had at the outset to use English talent and make good sales to that country, the First World War put a damper on that, although the firm was sleeping with the enemy by releasing Harry Goss-Custard’s rolls well into and through the time-span of this conflict. But they mainly had to concentrate on organists on their own side of enemy lines in the 1914–18 stretch.

The earliest-born of all these seem to have been Carl Hofner (1842–1912) and Johann Diebold (1842–1929). Hofner was educated in Munich, where the Bach tradition is sometimes said to have persisted longer than anywhere else. He was active as organist and teacher around Freiburg/Breisgau from October 1868. Then, appointed as organist at Freiburg Münster, he commenced duties on January 1, 1871. One tempta-

tion is to think that Rheinberger was his teacher in Munich. It is possible. But the teacher would have been a mere three years older than the student, and Rheinberger was only appointed professor in 1867, by which time Hofner had been in Metten for some seven years.

In 1878 Hofner settled in Freiburg. There he taught the Swiss organist and pedagogue Joseph Schildknecht, who later wrote an important *Organ Method*. Hofner features in early organ roll titles: #716, #717, and #722. Of these, the Bach *Praeludium and Fugue in C Minor* (BWV 549 on #716) is an impressive performance, varying only slightly from the note-readings of modern editions, exhibiting considerable freedom mingled with strong forward drive, and mixing a predominantly detached style of playing with seemingly carefully selected moments of legato. The relationship of this playing style to Bossi’s and Gigout’s might again be noted. The miscellaneous chorale setting of *Herzlich tut mich verlangen* is on #717, and an improvisation “on a theme” on #722 (not released until 1926).

Hofner died on May 19, 1912, so it was at the very end of his life and slightly before the otherwise earliest known organ recording activity by Welte with Bossi. Thus Hofner seems to have been a kind of early “trial organist” for the company. His may well also be the closest German training we will ever have to Bach’s own era—whatever musical relevance that might or might not have in these circumstances.

Diebold is represented by only one Bach piece—*Toccatà and Fugue in D Minor* (BWV 565)—almost certainly the earliest recording we will ever possess of it. The fugue has notable differences in approach and note-readings from our practices today. Diebold’s rolls were released by Welte between 1912 and 1922. This possibly shunts him marginally later than Hofner, so perhaps he was the later to record. According to the catalogue, Seewen’s holdings and other known Welte collections, including those in the USA, Diebold played the following on Welte rolls:

Organist Johann Diebold

- Welte #753° Birn, *Weihnachts-Fantasia über Kommet, Ihr Hirten*, op. 12
- 754° Böttcher, *Festal Postlude*
- 755° Faulkes, *Lied*, op. 136, no. 2
- 756° Mendelssohn, *Sonata*, op. 65, no. 1 in F Minor
- 757° Seiffert, *Fantasia on a Motiv of Beethoven*, op. 10
- 758° Tinel, *Improvisata*
- 774° Jongen, *Pastorale in A Major*
- 778° Neuhoﬀ, *Andante in E-flat Major*
- 779° Jongen, *Pastorale in A Major*
- 780° Guilmant, *Communion in A Minor*, op. 45
- 781° Rheinberger, *Romanze*, op. 142, no. 2
- 782° Maily, *Finale aus Sonata für Orgel, D dur*
- 783° Bach, *Toccatà and Fugue in D Minor*
- ° Rolls and their scans now exist at Seewen, mostly in good playable condition.

The recordings of Ramin and Straube, the latter being the auto-prophetic author of the text quoted above, provide illuminating comparisons. The skill of the student, Ramin, at least equaled that of the master, if these rolls are any guide. Kurt Grosse is an interesting enigma—virtually unheard of today, he was one of Welte’s more prolific recording artists, with over 50 roll titles to his credit. This includes some of the epic Reger works (*Fantasia on “Wachet auf ruft uns die Stimme,”* op. 52, no. 2; *Toccatà and Fugue d/D; Fantasia and Fugue on B-A-C-H*, op. 46). The *B-A-C-H* is on a single roll and takes nearly 20 minutes to play; “Wachet auf” takes over 23 minutes (on one roll). Born and trained directly into the first generation of post-Brahms and Reger musicians, Grosse was mainstream Berlin organ school to the core. His playing—including some Brahms *Preludes* from op. 122—is a fount of challenge, example, and information.

Breitenbach was Swiss. Born in Muri/Aargau, later organist at Lucerne Cathed-

ral, he moved mainly about the southern regions of Germany near Stuttgart. Paul Hindermann was similarly placed—he recorded rolls of Bach, Brahms, Saint-Saëns, Franck, Boëllmann, Schumann, Guilmant, Salomé, and Reger. Hindermann was a student of Rheinberger, although he plays none of his master’s works on the rolls surviving at Seewen. Nor is he listed in this connection in any known global resources we have so far seen. Hofmiller is the most prolific single Rheinberger exponent in this collection—he plays five of Seewen’s 14 Rheinberger rolls. No evidence of him playing other Rheinberger rolls has yet been found.

Mention was made above of Messner, the Salzburger. He studied in Innsbruck and Munich. Unfortunately he was not a prolific recording artist—even if some more rolls currently under calligraphic examination do turn out to be his. We certainly have a “*Fugal Overture*” to “*Theophil*” Muffat’s *Suite for Organ* and two works of Reger (*Consolation*, op. 65, and *Romance in A Minor*). It is just one of the many side-steps you have to take with this former musical culture when you note Muffat’s first name is given—as he sometimes did himself—as Theophil, a direct translation of Gottlieb. In this connection, Wilhelm Friedemann Bach was still attributed in the Welte catalogues with the Vivaldi/Bach D-minor concerto transcription, now known to have been by his father.

The early days of the Organ Revival can be very well chronicled through some of these rolls. The 1920–37 additions to the *Britannic* organ also display Organ Revival influences—although it is surprising how gently voiced the two Manual II mutation stops are. Even leaving Bach (over 80 rolls) aside, there is Eddy (playing Clérambault, Couperin), Messner (Muffat), Binninger (Georg Böhm) and others, who present us at least with interesting insights. Buxtehude is played by Ramin, Bonnet (most interestingly, being the only non-German to do so, possibly under known influences of Guilmant or Tournemire), Stark, Landmann, and Straube. William Byrd is played by ten Cate, Paul Mania includes some Couperin, Dupré and Daquin, while Bonnet also plays Frescobaldi (appearing as “Trescobaldi” once in the catalogues).

The Swiss organist Karl Matthaëi was already a most remarkable pioneer of early music in the 1920s. Since then, performance of early music has taken on ever greater specialization, and seemingly also performance improvement—although anybody who wants to pass definitive public judgement on that might need to show a modicum of bravery. At any rate, it is remarkable to have Matthaëi’s work preserved here. He plays Bach, Buxtehude, Hanff, Pachelbel, Praetorius, Scheidt, and Sweelinck, forming an amazing early-music oasis in this otherwise high-romantic roll collection.

Improvisations

Some of these organists improvised, too. This is again very important musical documentation in its own right, the vast majority of it otherwise unavailable. The Seewen collection lists well over 20 improvisations, including organists Dupré (mentioned above), Grosse, Hofner, Hollins, Lemare, Mania, Ramin, and Wolstenholme. One of particular interest—by Hermann Happel—is a cinema organ improvisation: *Nachtstimmung*.

The current state of the art and technology in Seewen

There are always caveats in roll-playing technology. For instance, nobody knows the exact speed at which Welte organ rolls actually ran (or even if they all ran at a standard speed). So tempo cannot be pinpointed to three decimal places. Nevertheless, a considerable amount of research into this topic has resulted in what has yielded a reasonably objective basis for our scanning. This checks out well against subjectively-convincing musical results.

We came to a roll transport speed of 50 mm per second over the scanner’s “tracker bar”, taking into account all our



Welte’s speed control lever

knowledge of the subject and the experience of others, including authorities such as Peter Hagmann and Nelson Barden.

After we derived this figure, we did ongoing subjective checks. The resulting playback limits of “acceptably fast or slow” are all fully credible. About 40 musicians have so far had input and have delivered this consensus. Thus, the hand-punched roll of the overture to Mozart’s *Marriage of Figaro* can scarcely go faster, and Grosse’s Brahms Opus 122 *Chorale Preludes* seem about as slow as you would normally want them. The overwhelming bulk of the machine-made Beethoven and Wagner rolls are precisely at “tempo expectations”.

The only evidence we have yet seen of different settings being required to the normal position on the organ’s speed lever is confined to a few rolls, such as Lemare’s (#1217 *Stegfried-Idyll*) or the complete Boëllmann *Suite Gothique* (on one roll #752) played by Paul Hindermann. Their boxes have a sticker on them: *tempo langsam einstellen* (set the tempo to slow). No further details. One presumes that means at the left end of Welte’s speed-lever scale—which is about 20% slower than “normal”. Technological problems can result from this, whether the roll is played pneumatically or scanned. Experiments in the 1960s had the Boëllmann roll played twice at differing speeds for some surviving radio recordings—but the whole system is so sensitive that changing the speed changes the registration! The roll does not play properly at the moment, either pneumatically or digitally, slow or fast.

Subjectivity, technical limitations, and variant playing paradigms still leave questions in roll speed equations. Welte’s records are lost or only vaguely defined in their entire *Philharmonie* heritage. There are timings marked on some roll boxes, and these are generally very close to those resulting from our scan speed of 50mm per second. Whether this is totally reliable evidence remains to be seen—multiple markings on some rolls are significantly at variance with each other. The cinema organ rolls have a high proportion of timings but some just say “4 to 5 minutes”—a 25% tolerance? The timing marked on the box of #955 (Beethoven *Symphonie Pastorale IV. Satz*) at 10’10” is clearly around 7% slower than the roll-scan at 9’29”. And 7% is perceptible. So 50 mm/sec is possibly marginally too fast for this. Alternatively, the Beethoven *Egmont* overture (#956) is given as 8’30” on the box, and our scan runs at 8’37”—so 50 mm/sec is fractionally too slow?

Comparison with the few acoustic recordings of the same piece by the same artist could also be a guide, but little more. Pianist Grünfeld’s (Schumann) *Träumerei* performance on organ roll (#516), early adaptations from original piano rolls, is three seconds longer (2’40”) than his acoustic recording (2’37”). If meaningful at all, this could indicate our 50 mm/sec is again a mite too slow? Seven minutes is written on one roll lead-in which takes 9’09” to play—so here our choice is much too slow. Dominik Hennig (Basel/Lucerne), Daniel Debrunner, and I are currently spearheading further work in this arena. István Mátyás (Vienna) has also become involved.

We have some details of the timings of historic 78 recordings by Alfred Sittard. At the moment, only one looks to be directly comparable with the same

Correct at last!!
 Lemare
 March 7, 1913

Lemare's endorsement, March 7, 1913, of his *Study in Accents* recording

artist's roll recording (#1037, BWV 533, *Präludium E moll.*), and that is 3'23" (roll-scan) against 3'23" (78). But the recordings were made about a decade apart, and while they seem to give fullest endorsement, the chances of achieving such split-second timing precision could also be approaching the miraculous rather than yielding scientific plausibility. Direct comparative tests on the existing Welte organ at Meggen, however, very closely endorse our chosen scan speed of 50 mm/sec.

The most likely explanations are, firstly, that Welte could not or did not hold precisely to an exact speed even if they were clearly conscious of this problem, and secondly, that such precision of tempi was simply not seen as a problem in their era.

The organ's playing action repetition rates come into this. These are among the more objective tests available to us. In fact, these rates can be quite amazing. They are often used by Welte to give rapid orchestral tremolo effects in the big Wagner-style transcriptions (e.g., "Lohengrin selection" #642). But the firm was sometimes up to a degree of trickery here, as fast repetitions are occasionally achieved by alternating between manuals, thus doubling the limit. Even so, with hand-punched rolls they can be faster than humans can play and crisper than what seems to have been attainable from console playing. There remain obvious physical and musical limits—the diameter of holes in the paper, for one. With our current roll scanning speeds, these limits are reached but not exceeded. The geometry of rolls tugged over the tracker bar, from a take-up spool whose effective diameter increased as the music proceeded, also needs compensation from a digitizer that uses a (linear) roll-tracking pulley.

Investigations will probably be ongoing in perpetuity, but so far we seem to have achieved a convincing position. At any rate, speed adjustments and take-up spool diameter compensations in the organ's computer allow any future, possibly better-authenticated, roll-speed figures to be applied.

It is probably significant that many who worked with these organs in the later 20th century often simply shunted the Welte pneumatic motors out and replaced them with electric motors that could take the loads more reliably. We restored the Welte roll-player pneumatic motor exactly as it was—typically with its power only barely equal to its purpose—but used fully adequate electric-motor systems for the scanner.

Another caveat is that the performances themselves are not always faultless—sometimes it is the organist, sometimes the technology. This leaves a dilemma—if we don't make corrections, then they could sound poorly when judged solely by the standards that we are accustomed to. There seems to have been a degree of acceptance of wrong notes, variant tempi, inconsistent phrasing, registration errors and compromises, or other expedients—e.g., from playing 3-manual works on a 2-manual organ—that could well be beyond some current tolerances but were completely acceptable at the time.

Of further significance is the fact that these organists played from earlier editions. The editions are sometimes marked on the master-rolls. Notation has been read or misread, or mistakes in playing were more readily accepted. Yet composers were often still alive—or their culture was well recalled in living

memory—so some organists could have been playing on a kind of "original authority" not known to us.

Leaving the performances alone, even if they seem faulty to us, is paramount. Perfection tends to be approached rather than achieved in the culture of paper roll recordings—as with CDs today for that matter. Moreover, the recording musicians, and, not least, Welte's roll-editing staff, were all thoroughly entrenched in their own era's musical paradigms. So anybody wanting to glean secrets from these performances is duty-bound to sit up and listen, even if—or especially if?—their credulity is stretched by non-conformity to today's norms. Grosse, for example, five years old when Brahms died, born and trained directly into that and the Reger tradition, does not hold the lengthened notes in the op. 122 *Herzlich tut mich erfreuen* (#1859) and rather slavishly obeys—even exaggerates—the phrasing slurs. We could lose credibility if we played it like that today, and perhaps Grosse would have lost credibility then, but we emphatically desist from "corrections" of this kind to the scans.

No doubt, the relative perfection attainable from modern recordings and sheer professional competition have produced changes in standards and expectations. No doubt also, inherited traditions, after several generations of variant pedagogical opinion, have some part to play. What the rolls clearly demonstrate is that both playing standards and performance practices have changed. To make a metaphorical mixture out of it: at least some of today's guru-preachers of authentic romantic organ playing might need to get back to their bibles.

Organists then were not all attuned to today's slick playing approaches, although some, like Lemare, actually fathered them. It is also evident that varied interpretations and sometimes seemingly inaccurate, even "unrhythmic" playing were accepted. So: was it an epoch of rubato beyond that which we can now tolerate? Such freedoms are different. Or perhaps it was simply fame, justified or not, that sold roll performances, good or bad? Reger's works seem mostly to fare better when played by others than the composer himself. Gigout, Eddy, Bossi, Lemare, the Goss-Custards, Dupré, Grosse, and Ramin are among those whose playing is particularly fine, although their interpretations are often at variance with today's expectations.

One hand-punched roll (Welte #429) of Mozart's well-known "mechanical organ" work, KV 608, gives some neat surprises: it promotes brisk tempi where some modern editions have perpetuated slower suggestions in parenthesis. Some organists have followed the slower option. Perhaps these parentheses were not known when the rolls were punched? Does retention of a faster tempo date back to an earlier practice, closer to Mozart's intentions? Who put them there, why, and who follows them may be pertinent questions. The piece naturally presents itself on the Seewen organ with romantic tonal qualities, but these are overlaid with some classical performance attributes. At any rate, with apologies to myself and all good colleagues, it comes across like no organist—or two—can or would ever have played it. Thus, in performance paradigms—was this intended? At least this source is a century closer to its origins than we are now. The tempo of the opening (erstwhile "Maestoso") section is around half note = 60,



Max Reger (far left) arriving in style at Welte's

perkier than that normally heard within my earshot.

The registrations

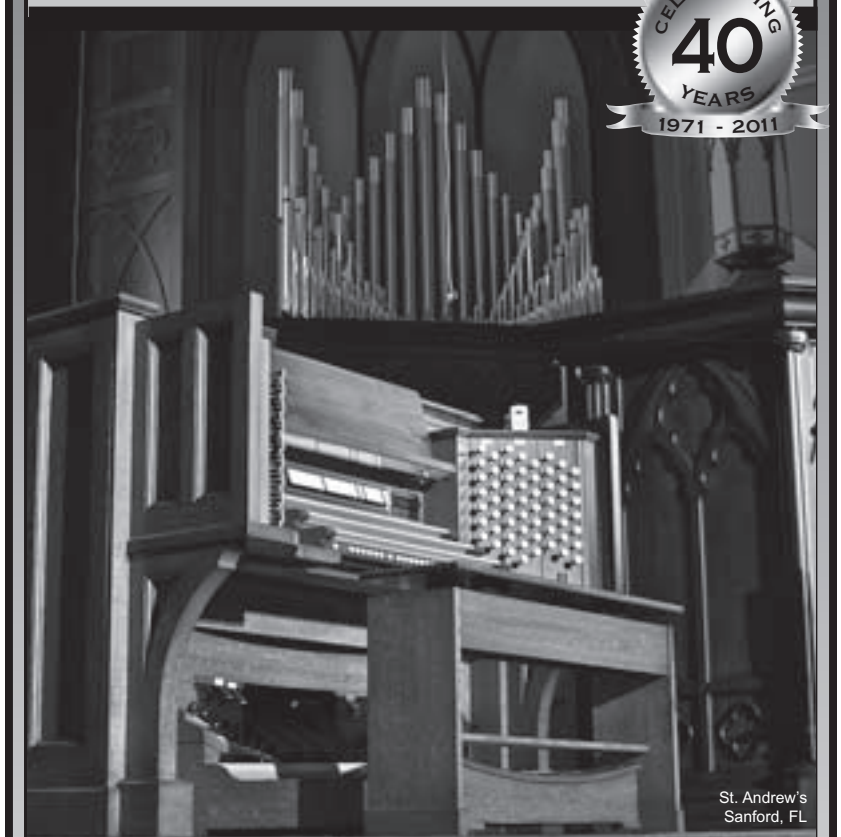
Roll-recorded registration practices can be quite clever, with often very unexpected choices or later-edited technical manipulations. Guilman's "Seraphs" *Cortège* (#770) is registered with Harfe at the end, and a trick of roll-editing allows the double-pedaling segment on two registrations to be effectively realized. Such roll-editing clearly supported the organist in registrations corrected or enhanced during the post-recording editing processes. Lemare's quick additions and subtractions of an 8' in his *Study in Accents* (op. 64, roll #1181) may have been achieved with intervention—or not, knowing Lemare. His own endorsement given to the post-production master could hint at this: "Correct at last". Equally his reputation for dexterous stop-manipulation could well be in evidence here.

The tendency of some Welte organists to draw the Vox Coelestis (on its own) and leave it on through all later combinations, including build-ups to plenums, is nowadays surprising. Reger plays the whole of the first section of his own *Benedictus* entirely on the Vox Coelestis alone—yes, without even another stop to beat with it. Moreover, he couples it to the pedals, but the rank has no sounding bottom octave, so you often hear just a vaguely-pitched Bourdon 16' humming away in that lowest pedal octave. The Vox Coelestis clarifies the bass dramatically, but only from tenor C upwards—and then beats with it. This would be unacceptable in most organ lofts today. Yet it is the same whether we play the master roll or either of the two copy rolls we possess, whether digitally or pneumatically (#1295).

Reger's idiosyncracies are legion in this roll collection. One wonders, when he turned up for his recordings, whether he did not adjourn immediately after his

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session to the local inn rather than stay on to check and edit his performances? Or maybe he had been at the inn before he made them? Quite possibly both. He had apparently not played organ for about five years when he was delivered to the studio around July 26, 1913 in that rather swank Maybach with its white-walled tires and klaxon (photo, p. 29).

Diebold, a pupil of Töpfer (1842–1929), also shares with Hofner and Gigout the honors of the first recordings and, just possibly, some residual Bach playing traditions. He held a major position in Freiburg/Breisgau and plays Mendelssohn's first sonata complete (on one roll, #756). For the slow (second) movement he uses the Vox coelestis alone for an entire section which, on account of that same missing bottom octave, omits the C "manual-pedal-point" altogether! While that looks like a clear technical fault, we cannot afford to simply switch in a stop of our own choice to correct it. Further investigation is required, and if this is the way he played it, then no corrective action can be taken by us without at least alerts being issued.

The use of what is loosely referred to as "bells"—in fact there are two sets, both on Manual I: Harfe (xylophone) G–a³ and Glocken (tubular bells) C–g⁰—is also notably far more frequent than most would normally envisage today. As children of organ reform, we would probably almost never use them even if available. Yet it was an important selling-ploy of Welte's, along with "Vox Humana", "Tutti", "Echo" and otherwise-identified rolls that captured the public's imagination while draining their purses. So there could have been pressure on organists to use these stops. Some did, some did not. Bells are heard, logically enough, in Bonnet's *Angelus du Soir* played by Bonnet himself (#1615), Massenet's *Scènes pittoresques: Angelus* played by Samuel Baldwin (#1353), Wheelton's *The Bells* played by Goss-Custard (#2015), or the Wagner Bridal Chorus from *Lohengrin* (hand-punched, #642). Surprises arrive, though, in Ramin's fine performance of Reger's op. 129 (*Prelude*, #1991) or perhaps Bossi playing Dubois' *In Paradisum* (#1011). The ocean, bad weather, and funerals seem to conjure up bells—Eddy in Schubert's *Am Meer* (#1666) as well as Goss-Custard in William Faulkes's *Barcarole in B-flat major* (#2001) or Lemmens's *Storm* by Goss-Custard (#1121). And the list continues with Lemare in Saint-Saëns' *Danse Macabre* (#1251), Erb in Guilmant's *Funeral March & Hymn of Seraphs*, op. 17 (#770), and Eddy in Bossi's *Ace Maria* (#1648).

The use of the Vox Humana also surprises at times, both with and without Tremulant—and that seems to be independent of "School". Grosse playing Brahms's chorale preludes is one notable instance. It was another Welte selling-point—proud of their rank modelled on "Silbermann", even if it had zinc resonators. Wolstenholme's use of it in Rheinberger's *Intermezzo* (*Sonate* op. 119, #1546) is typical and effective. Possibly 50% of these performances use bells and/or Vox Humana at some point or other. The Harfe stop combined with Vox Coelestis is another surprise—yet this is expressly required by Karg-Elert in the printed edition of one of his works.

There is no evidence that coercion was used to force organists to choose favored stops—their use, while sometimes surprising, usually seems appropriate. The Vox Humana is occasionally used as a kind of string stop—doubly enclosed, thus allowing each of two boxes to be opened or closed. It can emit some very charming *ppp* dynamics down around the sound-levels of an Aeolina when both boxes are closed. It also allows useful, delicate-gritty pitch-definition to be maintained in low chords that don't merely grumble. Grosse in Brahms's op. 122 (*Herzliebster Jesu*, #1858) uses this rank well in such a context. Statistically it seems to have been far more often used than it would ever be today—even if we still included it in our typical new organs. We seem to be "Vox-humana-clasts", having all but eliminated one of the few organ registers that existed continuously from Renaissance through Romantic and even

into cinema organs relatively unchanged. All of Welte's organists, and the makers of hand-punched transcriptions, had a veritable field day with it.

Some of Bonnet's interpretations are quite striking—his rubatos and/or rhythmic freedoms playing his own *Berceuse* (#1612) single him out. Equally so his use of the swell pedal, in an expressive playing style, at times notable for both speed and degree of dynamic change.

One other interesting example of organists and playing styles here is the much-beloved "crescendo fugue". Alfred Sittard, a German organist, composer and musical editor, was born April 11, 1878 in Stuttgart. He studied in Cologne, then in 1903 became organist at the Dresden Kreuzkirche. In 1912 he moved to Hamburg Michaeliskirche and, in 1925, became an organ professor in Berlin, where he died on March 31, 1942. As mentioned above, he is important in early recording contexts, making 78s in the 1928–32 era. His roll recordings for Welte are much earlier: he included J. S. Bach, Franck, Händel, Liszt, Reger, Saint-Saëns, and his own *Choralstudie: Wenn wir in höchsten Nöten sein*. A significant influence in the early days of the organ reform movement, Sittard also edited and published music by Buxtehude, Scheidemann, and Weckmann. On Welte roll #1036 he applies the crescendo-fugue approach to the Bach G-major Fugue (BWV 541ii), working through both prelude and fugue in a little over nine minutes, a steady, unrushed performance. To the fugue he applies a "crescendo-diminuendo-crescendo-plenum" scheme, occasionally soloing voices out on Manual II. There is no associated accelerando.

The afternoons with Eugène Gigout

Singling out just one performer for special attention risks the appearance of sidelining the others, but the Seewen collection is truly massive, and demarcations need to be set for an article such as this. We could as well take Wolstenholme, Lemare, Ramin, Faulkes, Straube or any one of dozens of others.

Gigout was the earliest-born of the group invited by Welte to make the first official recordings. His session began on August 6, 1912, the last of five pioneering recording organists. Bossi, Sittard, Breitenbach, and Erb had preceded him. The next group began with Bonnet on February 6, 1913. As will be clear above, Gigout is "musical family" so my curiosity reigned supreme. As it turns out, my arrogant inverted nepotism quickly led to the humility of some unexpected revelations. What comes out of this has the broadest possible implications to the music of his age, his own music, how it was played, and specifically how he and others played it.

Functioning alongside the Lemmens-Belgian derivative school in Paris, but not being part of it himself, he also kept up good friendships with Franck and Guilmant, who were. It was a somewhat unusual cross-tradition situation. Here teacher-pupil genealogies had significance and were potential minefields. Gigout seems to have transcended the traditional in-fighting and was respected by all. Even his choice of recorded repertoire shows no sign of the polarized French organ politics of this era or later—the inclusion of one Franck and four Lemmens pieces alone is testimony to that.

He was in his "mature prime"—aged 68—when he made these recordings. He died at 81. We presume that, like Reger, he was also chauffeured up in the Maybach and given the Welte "red carpet treatment", so aptly described by Nelson Barden in his articles on Lemare.

This all places Gigout in a very important light historically. In early 2010, I found myself listening to him play—effectively "live"—on what turned out to be a number of unforgettable afternoons. The repertoire that he recorded and which survives in Seewen is listed here.

- 1079° Bach, *Toccatà, F dur*
- 1587° Bach, *Largo* (*Trio Sonata V*)



Gigout recording in the Welte Freiburg studios, August 1912

- 1588° Bach, *Allegro Moderato* (*Trio Sonata I*)
- 1080° Bach, *Préludium E-flat major*
- 1585° Bach, *In dir ist Freude*
- 1586° Bach, *O Mensch, beweine dein Stinde* gross
- 1081° Boëllmann, *Marche religieuse* (op. 16)
- 1592° Boëllmann, *Sortie, C-major* (op. 30, no. 5)
- 1591° Boëllmann, *Communion B-flat-major* (op. 30, no. 5)
- 1589° Boëllmann, *Offertoire C-major* (op. 29, no. 2)
- 1590° Boëllmann, *Élévation, E-flat-major* (op. 29, no. 1)
- 1082° Boëly, *Andante con moto* (op. 45, no. 7)
- 1595° Chauvet, *Andante con moto* no. 6 (arr. Dubois)
- 1596° Chauvet, *Andantino* no. 9 (arr. Dubois)
- 1083° Franck, *Andantino G Minor*
- 1598° Gigout, *Marche religieuse*
- 1599° Gigout, *Chant* (from *Suite*) ("Lied" in catalogue)
- 1084° Gigout, *Toccatà*
- 1595° Gigout, *Communion*
- 1086° Gigout, *Grand Choeur dialogué*
- 1600° Gigout, *Marche de fête* (*Suite*)
- 1087° Gigout, *Minuetto*
- 1597° Gigout, *Marche des rogations*
- 1601° Gigout, *Fughetta*
- 1602° Gigout, *Cantilène*
- 1603° Gigout, *Allegretto Grazioso*
- 1604° Lemmens, *Scherzo* (*Symphony concertant*)
- 1606° Lemmens, *Fanfare*
- 1607° Lemmens, *Cantabile*
- 1605° Lemmens, *Prélude E-flat major*
- 1608° Lemmens, *Prière* ("Gebet" in catalogue)
- 1088/9° Mendelssohn, *Sonata*, op. 65, no. 6 complete (on 2 rolls)
- 1609° Saint-Saëns, *Sarabande*
- ° indicates master-rolls.

There are four further Welte rolls known to have been cut by Gigout, but they are neither in Seewen's possession nor in any collection we yet know of:

- 1090 Mendelssohn, *Prelude*, op. 37, no. 2
- 1191 Schumann, *Etude*, op. 56, no. 5
- 1593 listed as "Chauvet-Dubois": *Grand Choeur*, no. 1, I. livr.
- 1594 listed as "Chauvet-Dubois": *Andantino*, no. 3, I. livr.

Bach

Gigout's choice of Bach works is significant—with two big preludes and two trio sonata movements, he was not choosing an easy way out. His Bach playing may now be outmoded, but it is instructive: trio registrations, tempo, and general treatment in a "reserved romantic" style that allow the music mostly to

be heard without undue fuss. We get the impression that he is always very conscious both of the counterpoint and of the formal structures.

In the *Toccatà in F* (BWV 540—erroneously "E major" in the catalogue!—#1079), whatever questions about his registration there may now be, the organ itself, as always, was a major conditioner of choice. Foundational at the start—all manual flue 8's and the Fagot 8' (free reed) coupled—no Vox Coelestis—he makes a quick crescendo to full organ from about one minute before the end. The tempo is sprightly and the work springs to life musically, although he takes some surprising liberties in varying tempi. The ornamentation shows no modern awareness of Bach's practice, nor is it "purely romantic," for that matter. There are main-note trill executions and sometimes short, inverted mordents. The duration is 8'57".

The Trio Sonata slow movement (BWV 529ii, #1587) uses the 16' Pedal Subbass (coupled to both manuals), while Manual I (RH) consists of Vox Coelestis + Gamba, and Manual II (LH) just the Bordun 8' + Wienerfloete 8'. He could have used a reed but chose not to—which does align with some modern thought on these matters. He starts with the box tightly shut for a lengthy period of time, then there is a degree of swell pedal manipulation. Again there are some freedoms—instabilities?—in tempo. He takes 5'40" to play it (and concludes, omitting the short modulatory coda at the very end).

The Trio Sonata first movement (BWV 525i, #1588) is taken at a good "Allegro Moderato"—wherever that indication came from: Forkel 1802 through Griepenkerl to France? The emphasis with Gigout is on the moderato. Freedoms at the cadential points, and some variant note-readings to today's editions and performances are part of this item. Registration is Manual I (RH) flutes 8' and 4' (coupled to Pedal Subbass 16' and Cello 8') against Manual II Oboe 8' (LH). There is rather a lot of swell pedal used, which could explain the relatively detached playing in the pedal against the more legato manual realizations, questioning modern approaches, which would have articulation strictly identical between manuals and pedals. Duration is 4'40".

The E-flat major Prelude (BWV 552i, #1080) uses a big, reedy plenum alternating with second-manual flues and Oboe. There is again freedom in the rhythmic interpretation, but a rather noble and "grandiose" basic tempo is chosen. The trills are played as simple "upper mordents". Like many of these early 20th-century performances, the artists took their time in tempi that were often, but not always, steadier than some today. Duration is 10'51". There is no known matching roll of the fugue by Gigout.

In dir ist Freude (#1585) takes 3'38". Both manuals are coupled to the pedals—with foundations 8' (no 4' or higher) including Manual I Principal and Manual II Oboe. The swell-box is open, tempo and rhythm are markedly flexible, and there are a few small variant note-readings. The plenum is brought on in a block towards the end, and the trills are then effectively upper-note trills. The roll technology needs some intervention: the pedal advance is at times disturbing. The scan is slated for further checking and possible correction, but this is not expected to change registration, tempo, agogic accent or articulation.

With *O Mensch, beweine* (#1586) we find a slow, but non-dragging tempo. The duration is 5'40". There are many swell crescendos, the solo is on Manual I Principal + Traversfloete + Vox coelestis; this is accompanied by Manual II Wienerfloete + Aeoline, all 8's. The pedal Subbass 16' is coupled to both manuals, giving a very solid bass. This seems intended and occurs elsewhere—perhaps it was because he came from a French tradition of Principal-oriented pedal "Flûtes" where effects like this were more normal? At any rate, it is good fodder for nourishing further thought. The trills are main-note "lower-mordents"—mostly just single mordents. The *Adagissimo* is scarcely



Gigout with Marie-Louise Boëllmann, ca. 1922

observed—little more than a trace of *ralentando* (with a brief *crescendo* and *diminuendo* from the expression pedal).

These two chorale preludes from the *Orgelbüchlein* provide some fuel for discussion. Gigout was born 94 years after Bach's death. Naturally that gives him no open access to styles of playing in Saxony, or even correct editions, but his interpretations are not without distinction, and elements of them could well have some relevance. Similarities to the playing of his German contemporary, Hofner, and the Italian Bossi, have been noted above.

Boëllmann

Gigout, quite apart from being the teacher of Léon Boëllmann, had a close personal relationship with the whole family. This could give added significance to the following recordings.

In the *Marche Religieuse* (#1081, 7'42"), we have a sensitive performance with some relatively free moments, again especially around cadences. The freedoms are more frequent and crafted differently than those of his Bach: is there a small, but conscious stylistic differentiation being made here? Gigout begins on 8's, including the Vox Coelestis. He then crosses to Manual II Bordun 8' + Aeoline 8' before returning to Manual I (as it was). After the initial change, he proceeds for a time, while the pedal is left coupled to a strong Manual I (Principal, Vox Coelestis, Flutes—all 8'). This again gives unusually solid pedal notes against the Manual II registrations. It all becomes rather grandiose towards the end with a reedy plenum, after which he reduces to (reedless) 16'-2' foundations (RH on Aeoline alone). The conclusion is also notable for its highly detached articulation in the pedal.

The *Sortie* (2'43", #1592) is played strongly and with much energy. The *Communion* (2'41", #1591) is appropriately meditative. The *Offertoire* (3'48", #1589) and *Elevation* (3'55", #1590) originally gave us transposed tracks playing Manual II a semitone higher. This was simple enough to fix unobtrusively, but there remain other small problems with the rolls and consequently their scans. The timings should stand. The rest must wait until the massive logistics of this entire exercise permit.

Boëly

Andante con moto (op. 45, no. 7) is recorded on rolls by both Gigout (#1082) and Bonnet (#1203). The comparisons are instructive: Gigout registers with Vox coelestis and Traversfloete on Manual I, sometimes with Bourdon 16', and with 8' Aeoline, Viola and 4' Blockfloete (RH solo) on Manual II. The second last chord is played on Manual II, but there is no echo passage at the end, at least not as there is with Bonnet. Tone is strengthened for a time towards the middle of the piece by Gigout's addi-

tion of Principal 8' (Manual I) and the double-bass-like tones of the Violonbass 16' (Pedal). Bonnet, on the other hand, uses the Traversfloete 8' and Vox coelestis 8' on Manual I in a similar manner, but never changes it until he removes the Traversfloete for the echo at the end (leaving the Vox coelestis drawn alone—*sic!*). On the second manual he draws Viola 8' and Wienerfloete 8' and makes a more definite and lengthy closing echo passage—an entire phrase rather than just the final chord or two. No manual couplers are used by either organist and only I/Ped is drawn supplementing the Subbass 16' on the pedals. Bonnet's 3'23" contrasts with Gigout's 2'57" in a noticeable 12–13% tempo difference. Gigout's slurring is slightly more conscious and expressive.

These two performances are broadly consistent with each other, but the differences are illuminating. They are both, judged subjectively from today's vantage point, within fair limits of representing authentic "school" manifestations. What is at least equally important is that they also show how variant interpretations were just as much part of that "school" as conformity to norms ever was.

Chauvet/Dubois

The Dubois transcriptions of Chauvet are a phenomenon of their epoch, apparently rather liked by Guilman, who included them on his programs. The *Andante con moto* is played freely by Gigout (#1595, 3'31"), with some quite beautifully shaped phrases, while the *Andantino* (#1596, 3'51") is similarly endowed with a sensitive rubato, phrasing, and fine feeling for the melodic lines that characterize this piece. It is all rather clever—you quickly forget they are arrangements. Gigout plays fewer transcriptions than most of the other Welte organists relative to his recorded output.

Franck

Gigout playing Franck—lamentably only the one piece—must be a precious jewel in the entire history of recording. We have many other organists playing his music, but, frankly, none with quite this pedigree. They are barely a generation apart and co-existed in the same school, same city, on good terms with each other for decades; Gigout grew up in Franck's culture. This puts another aura of special credibility on this recording.

The *Andantino in G Minor* (#1083) plays very well. Of interest is the eternal articulate or *note-commune* (or similar) question: "precedence to counterpoint or to harmony?" Here it seems to be harmony, judged by some octave leaps in the left hand to notes that the pedal is already playing. They are not lifted and repeated.

Registration summary: accompaniment commences on Vox Coelestis (alone), solo on Manual II Wienerfloete and Vox Humana (with Man II/Man II Superoctave). Mid-section he adds the Traversfloete to Man I. Here the upper voice is soloed by playing it in octaves—he either achieves an uncanny legato control here or Welte is assisting in the editing processes. At any rate the "solo" and accompaniment on the one manual is very effectively contrived in this way. The Pedal Subbass 16' is coupled to Man I (again no point in coupling the bottom octave to the Vox Coelestis, but there it is). Next solo section is on same Man I and Pedal registration as first, but Manual II is now Oboe alone and no octave coupler. For the penultimate section he uses Man I and II coupled (giving Traversfloete + Vox Coelestis + Wienerfloete and Horn—all 8's). Then the Oboe replaces the Horn. The conclusion is just Aeoline and Vox Coelestis. There is not a lot of swell expression, but what is there is effective and the lack of it at times good contrast. This reminds us of Franck's *Third Choral* in the middle section, where at one moment he indicates no "nuances," only to make a most poignant and beautiful contrast when he does. The tremulant is not once used. Gigout takes 7'42" to play the *Andantino*.

Lemmens

Once again we have an unusual authority in these recordings—music of

this Belgian founder of the French School being played by a first-generation exponent.

In the *Scherzo* ("Scherzo Symphony concertant" in the catalogue, #1604, 4'59") he gives a masterly performance, very expressive, if unhurriedly played. Gigout's mastery is tangible. His arpeggiation of the chords begins slowly and then moves more quickly, producing a quite striking musical interpretation. A romantically imaginative treatment of the melodic line is also evident, along with freedoms and rubatos that captivate us while still leaving the lingering impression of a vestigial classically disciplined approach.

This tilting to the classical is well illustrated in the *Fanfare* (#1601 and #4513). Some might be familiar with Gigout's playing of it on the Linz-am-Rhein organ from the EMI CDs, but, while the tempo and articulation are in concordance, the registration there is not at all what Gigout heard when he recorded it. While some organists today understandably love to play Lemmens' *Fanfare*, it is interesting to compare some performances with Gigout's. He takes 3'07", giving it a stately rendition, certainly compared to some who seem to be attempting a speed record for the piece. Gigout's performance demonstrates ever so clearly how tempo is critical to successful phrasing, and how phrasing, alongside speed, is his key to playing this piece. The more constant legato (or glossed-over legato slurring) of some modern performances—partly enforced by their fast tempi—also conjures up important comparisons: Gigout's articulation is once again here what we could consider as looking back towards the 18th century. It is mostly quite distinctively detached, but he graces this with an expressive legato in special "purposeful slurring" at clearly-selected moments. His targeting and treatment of these—most notably at cadential points—stems from the music itself but his interpretation is distinctive, structured and precise, part of Gigout's general style and nowhere better heard than here.

In the *Cantabile* (#1607, 5'35") his registration is Manual I Traversfloete, Manual II Bordun and Aeoline 8' to start with (RH solos). Later the Principal 8' is added to Manual I. Pedal Subbass 16' is coupled to Manual I throughout. The end returns to the initial registration. He uses much swell expression coupled with some neatly romantic rhythmic freedoms.

For the *Prélude in E-flat major* (#1605) the registration is: Pedal Subbass 16', Cello 8', Man II 8' Viola and Aeoline, and Manual I Fagott, Prinzipal and Vox Coelestis (all 8')—Man I/Ped and Man II/I. This is another masterly and strikingly beautiful performance by Gigout. The scanned roll plays remarkably well. Gigout takes 4'42" to play it.

Prière (#1608, 3'18"): For this erstwhile "Vox Humana en Taille", his registration is Manual II (LH) Vox Humana 8' + Aeoline 8', Manual I (RH) Vox Coelestis 8' (on its own—*sic!*) with Pedal Subbass 16' coupled to both manuals. The swell box is open; all is registered without tremulant. Again he employs much expression pedal, sometimes manipulating it rather faster and more dramatically than we might expect. We are reminded here of the few early references to swell manipulation, for instance Handel as reported by J. Hess "struggling with the new device" in London. Broadly speaking, the era of 18th-century nag's head swells was followed by one of trigger and ratchet devices in the 19th century and balanced swell pedals in the 20th with all their "logarithmic" and "fine-tuning" capabilities as well as allowing the foot to be removed and the set dynamic remain. Although the Welte swell was balanced, there are hints that Gigout might still have manipulated it a little like a 19th-century French ratchet device. Sometimes in these roll recordings, other organists also play in this manner: a little more gross than subtle. It does pose the question as to whether, in an era of historic performance consciousness, we should be differentiating our swell pedal techniques according to delineated 18th, 19th, or 20th century practices. This is just one of the many

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cans of paradigmatic worms opened up by this world of roll recordings.

Mendelssohn

Sonata op. 65, no. 6 (complete sonata on two rolls #1088 and #1089). This recording was an early Welte release from 1913. As with some others of that vintage, the pedal is advanced to a point of audible discomfort. Accordingly, this is one slated for corrective treatment, after which a better impression of the original performance should be available. That aside, Gigout opens with a reedy combination; then, for the flute and pedal section, he uses his characteristic “expressive articulation”. The swell expression is again a chapter in itself—perhaps a little exaggerated by some modern standards?—but the entire performance is a useful revelation of Mendelssohn interpretation in the immediate post-Mendelssohn era. Gigout, born just three years before the much-traveled Mendelssohn died, was a first-generation inheritor of that musical world.

The arpeggiated chords section (“*Allegro molto*”) is taken at about half note = 55—slower than the 69 that might be expected from available editions today. The freedom in Gigout’s arpeggiation is again notable, and two curious appoggiaturas are also heard in this section. A few problems linger—possibly from the early development of this technology, possibly uncorrected mistakes, and, just possibly, Gigout’s actual intentions. There are some variant note-readings to today’s norms, e.g., the soprano “A” in bar 43 for example is held right over and only broken just before the last-beat “D” in bar 44; the pedaling from bar 55 is not always exactly as marked.

This was an interesting choice for early release by Welte: French-Gigout playing in the German-Mendelssohn repertoire stream. Object lessons may also be found in his adaptation of this work to an early 20th-century German organ. The chorale solo after the beginning is played on Manual I Traversfloete 8’ + Gamba 8’ + Vox coelestis 8’. It is very effective. The second movement *Fuga* following really does start “forte”—both Manual II Oboe and Manual I Fagott are included and the swell box is entirely open. At bar 64 an F-sharp instead of F-natural (alto part) is played. The final movements are registered distinctly more readily than many modern performances—partly occasioned by the organ’s resources, partly by Gigout’s free choice. A fine playing sensitivity in the last movement is well evident.

The complete sonata takes nearly 17 minutes to play. Roll one (1st and 2nd movements) is 10’37” of music, and roll two (3rd and 4th movements) 6’07”.

Was Welte in something of a hurry to get this roll out? If so, it might also explain the fairly coarse pedal advance and other compromises. Mendelssohn formed a major block in the Welte catalogue and was clearly very important there for his place in German musical culture. Erb had recorded the *Midsummer Night’s Dream* Wedding March, which was released 1912, and Köhl followed in 1913 with *Sonata in C Minor*, op. 65, no. 2. But the former was relative trivia and the latter did not represent the truly great interpreter that Gigout offered. Harry Goss-Custard, Clarence Eddy, and Edwin Lemare’s later releases of 1914–16 did much to fan the “Mendelssohn transcription” flames, but very little to represent the sonatas. So it was Gigout, the Frenchman, left to fill this breach with Mendelssohn interpretation until the post-WWI releases. Even then, the offerings mostly included transcriptions and only the odd movement, never again a complete sonata.

Saint-Saëns

Sarabande: this roll (#1609, 3’17”) also gave us a few problems on account of paper movement and distortion, the results of aging, humidity, and other factors, which caused one manual to be transposed a semitone and some small “glitches” of probably little enduring consequence. The transposition fixed, it is evident that this performance also allows interesting comparisons; for, in spite

of the classical form—and articulation patterns with 18th-century echoes?—he gives it an overriding romantic treatment endorsing our earlier assessment concerning his stylistic consciousness.

Gigout plays Gigout

Gigout playing his own music is, naturally, of paramount importance. With these rolls we are the fortunate inheritors of much unique material. In general, he seems to move his pieces well along in tempo (of relevance might also be his slightly faster tempo than Bonnet for Boëly’s *Andante con moto* mentioned above). He shows ties back to 18th-century practices, partly through the repertoire forms he uses (*Minuet*, *Fughetta*, *March*) as well as certain elements of their musical styles. It is evident that his own playing is positioned squarely between “18th-century articulate” and “19th-century legato”—not, however, a general compromise between the two, more a deliberate application of one or other at given moments.

Marche religieuse (#1598, 4’27”)

He commences on foundations with Manual I Fagott 8’ (a free reed), then crescendos to full organ: the performance fringes nicely on the grandiose and there are some tasteful rhythmic freedoms worthy of observation.

Lied (from *Suite*) (#1599, 7’39”)

This starts with Manual I 8’s, Vox Coelestis + Traversfloete; he later adds the (manual) 16’ then Principal 8’. The Aeoline 8’ on its own in Manual II accompanies for a time, after which a series of slightly varied foundational registrations follow.

The Manual I Bourdon 16’ was interestingly not available on the original 1909 recording organ, but we know this was modified and some of it reportedly changed under Lemare’s influence. Lemare seems to have first been there, however, after Gigout—although there is prima facie evidence that he might have included this stop in his registration schemes. Either Welte had already included it well before Gigout’s 1912 arrival or there is the possibility of a technical error or an intervention through which the company “re-registered” the piece themselves later. So far there is no significant evidence that the company did this, other than at the behest of the artist, although we know they were perfectly capable of all manner of editing: notes or stops, in or out.

Toccata in b minor (#1084, 2’58”)

This famous work, as played by Gigout himself, is a most interesting exposition of his intentions as well as his flexibility in creative adaption given the resources available. The registration includes Harfe on the main manual (they actually perceptibly sound through in the first section as the pedal is already coupled to Manual I but he plays on Manual II). In fact, the pedal is only used as a manual I and II “pulldown”—just 8’ pitches—until he brings on the Posaune 16’ (alone) for the final chords.

It may eventually be shown that the bells are company intervention or some technical fault that has eluded us. Their presence or absence in the Weil-am-Rhein recording may or may not be of relevance for all sorts of reasons. It has, however, been checked thoroughly by all of us involved—many times—and for the moment we can come to no other conclusion than that they are there as Gigout’s intention or at least with his blessing. Judged in relation to the rest of the collection, this would certainly be the kind of repertoire for which bells might be used. To give a further glimpse into this world of roll-recordings in direct relation to this question, there are some cryptic markings on many of our master rolls—including this one—that are yet to be fully interpreted. These enigmatic details relate to the Harfe, Vox humana, rarely Tremulant and sometimes other stops, occasionally also “Tutti” or “Echo”. They seem to be a check on important aspects of registration, organ models, and appear to endorse the use of some stops which “sold” these organs and their



The author during a television interview

rolls. It is obvious that they were reviewing them for some reason or other in the 1923–1926 era. Similar markings seem to relate to adjustments they did in the crescendos and pedal. On the box of this toccata it gives “Harfe”, on the master-roll lead-in it gives “H ung.f.V.h 23” (*Harfe ungeeignet für Vox Humana* 1923) and “Tutti”. The H is specifically underlined. Make of it all what you will, but all roads seem to lead to the Rome of bells (Harp) being used in this piece quite intentionally. As might be expected from a tradition not so noted for including bells in their specifications, this *Toccata* is probably a lone example in Gigout’s recordings (although see below *Marche des rogations*).

Communion (#1085, 4’10”)

Gigout uses the Vox coelestis combined only with the Traversfloete (rather than another string, or Principal).

Grand Choeur dialogué (#1086)

The tempo is relatively sprightly here, with a 5’20” duration for the entire piece. He takes some notable tempo freedoms and there is no shirking the double-pedaling or any other difficult technical aspects of this work. Gigout plays it as he wrote it except for one moment where the pedal is slightly changed—seemingly either a lapse on his part or editing/technology—and there are elsewhere some slightly variant note readings for whatever reason. But the work is overwhelmingly played intact and true to its published text. The Seewen organ suits it rather well with its strong Trumpet 8’ on the second manual: the manuals are coupled, the second is every bit the equal of the first. Thus the final effect tends to be an addition or subtraction mainly of Manual I foundational weight, aided and abetted by the 16’ Clarinet on Manual II (from tenor G up) when he plays on the main manual. Some subtle but perceptible sound-source shifts from side to side, reflecting the organ’s windchest placements may also be detected, promoting the “dialogué” aspects. It keeps an equality of balance while still offering distinction in tonal effect and sound location. Nevertheless he adds and removes stops, increasing the effect of “dialogué” (actually removing some before the end).

In the pedal he desists from using the Posaune 16’ at all, nor is any form of octave coupling evident (it was available). In fact the piece is dynamically slightly more restrained than it could have been, most notably leaving the main manual Trumpet and the Pedal Posaune off—in other words it is not played with the full tutti available from the organ, showing that Grand Choeur does not necessarily mean absolutely everything.

Marche de fête (from *Suite*) (#1600, 7’05”)

This is another excellently articulated and finely chiseled performance in Gigout’s more grandiose manner. The rolls account for two of the three works in this *Suite*.

Minuetto (#1087, 4’53”)

Here he plays the solo on the Clarinet 16’ at the start of the “A”-sections,

and uses a purposeful, detached articulation in the pedal along with some notable freedoms that clearly draw this to our attention. The pedal advance is noticeable and needs correction. His rubatos and rallentandos are interesting—sometimes there is a characteristic short pause-and-dwell before launching into a new phrase. Tempo borders on brisk, shattering some slower concepts of “Minuet” perhaps, but the piece moves along convincingly.

Marche des rogations (#1597, 3’51”)

This needed some correction of a transposed track, and the roll-scan is not yet ready to play with full technical certainty, but his articulate performance style is again indisputably evident. Transposed tracks and apparent paper warpage leave questions as to whether his use of bells is really correct. For the moment, however, it seems quite possible and works well since only the Glocken (C-#) is drawn, giving a 3-manual effect with Manual I bass + Manual I treble + Man II).

Fughetta (#1601, 2’34”)

This was first published in 1913, the year after he had recorded it for Welte. Another neat Gigout performance, it moves along energetically and displays his characteristic articulation-and-slurring mix using a slightly reedy registration—both Manual I Fagott 8’ and Manual II Oboe 8’ are added to strong foundations at 16’ in pedal and 8’ in manual.

Cantilène (#1602, 4’08”)

A very tasteful, expressive performance. As accompaniment Manual I Traversfloete 8’ + Vox Coelestis 8’, later adding Principal 8’, RH solo on Oboe 8’ + Wienerfloete and Bourdon 8’s. The Pedal Subbass 16’ is coupled to Manual I. He applies almost constant, but tasteful, swell expression, and there are some interesting, not entirely predictable playing freedoms.

Allegretto Grazioso (#1603, 3’34”)

The RH Solo is on the Wienerfloete, sometimes with Oboe and Horn (the latter is a remarkable large-scaled flue rank). The LH accompaniment is on the Traversfloete 8’ + Vox coelestis 8’, with Principal 8’ added for a time. Pedal registration is Bourdon 16’ coupled to Manual I (LH). The interpretation is in a similar style to that of the *Cantilène*.

Most of Welte’s organists play their music relatively “straight”—that is, without a lot of obvious interpretative freedom in tempo, articulation, rhythm, ornamentation, or rubato. With some, it is even as if they were sight-reading and had not considered the formal structures, subtleties, or even cadences, or, if they did, then they don’t appear to want to do much about them. Gigout is one of the more notable exceptions to this. Yet even he had limits that confined his interpretations mostly to relatively conservative boundaries, certainly by some of today’s more exaggerated standards. In the light of recent research, we can probably say that Gigout was not on solid ground with his 18th-century ornamentation. What

he does demonstrate, however, is a romantic tradition and a notable variety of approach to styles.

Notwithstanding the caveats, we have here clear insights into Gigout's entire musical environment and particularly just how he expected his own music and the traditions surrounding him to sound. As ever, we are free to take or leave the evidence of these rolls with impunity, but those looking for direct sources of playing paradigms for this era will welcome these recordings. Interestingly, the Swiss organist Franz Josef Breitenbach (Lucerne Cathedral) and German Thadäus Hofmiller (Augsburg Cathedral) also recorded one roll each of Gigout's music for Welte: Breitenbach the *Scherzo*, Hofmiller the *Marche funèbre*. These also have distinctive value in the larger Gigout picture available here.

Conclusion

Posterity may well bestow no laurels upon mimesis: but laurels are due to the whole sequence of events and visionary people who, by an extraordinary 20th century cultural-preservation miracle, have safely delivered this full-sized *Philharmonie* linked with the largest roll collection left in the world today as a symbiotic musical entity into the 21st century. The performances of these organists can once again be heard and studied, and Straube's "moment of metaphysical experience" is available to us in a more enduring form than ever it was. ■

The Museum at Seewen is committed to making these performances accessible. Already many public and private, national and international, visits, demonstrations, and symposiums for organists, organ societies, organ students, and teachers have taken place. More are planned as well as some CD releases—three in 2011 on the OehmsClassics label—but the volume of material means that not everything can be published, certainly not immediately.

In the meantime, scholars, organists, organ teachers and their classes are very welcome. However, the playing of these performances is not part of the museum's regular guided tours except for a few selected demonstration pieces. So, visitors hoping to hear these rolls will want to make special arrangements. From now, through 2011–12, anyone with a serious scholarly interest should make initial contact through me at <davidrumsey@bluewin.ch>.

From 2011, a major centennial exhibition commemorating the appearance of the Welte *Philharmonie* at Turin in 1911 will be mounted by the Seewen Museum. Information is posted at <http://www.bundesmuseen.ch/musik_automaten/presse/00108/00109/index.html?lang=en>.

This will include symposium-style sessions dedicated to specific organists and aspects of organ playing. Details will be posted.

You can hear examples of

- #1274, Lemare playing Gounod's *Queen of Sheba*: March and Cortege
- #1084, Gigout playing his own *Toccata in B Minor*
- #1106, Goss-Custard playing Elgar *Imperial March*, op. 32
- #717, Hofner playing the Bach Prelude on *Herzlich tut mich verlangen* (BWV 727)

at the following web-sites:
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David Rumsey studied organ in Australia, Denmark, France and Austria. He rose to a senior lectureship in the Australian university

system from 1969–1998, also pursuing an international teaching, concert and consulting career as an organist. He worked in various cross-disciplinary fields, especially linking broadcasting, drama and music, arranging a number of major presentations and seminars. In 1998, after mounting a 14-hour spectacle on the life of Bach with actors in period dress and musicians playing historic instruments, he left Australia and settled around 2000 in Basel, Switzerland, where he continues to work as an organist and consultant.

An abbreviated history of recording (with particular reference to the organ)

1870s–1900: Pioneers of acoustic recording; the cylinder

1877: American inventor Thomas A. Edison developed the "talking machine." As commercially offered, it could both record and reproduce sound using wax cylinders.

1887: Emile Berliner filed a U.S. patent for a "Gramophone" (using discs instead of cylinders.)

1888–1894: Cylinders were sold, e.g., with readings by Tennyson and Browning. Brahms recorded one of his Hungarian rhapsodies. Josef Hofmann and Hans von Bülow recorded piano music.

1890: Magnetic (wire) recording was first explored by Danish engineer Valdemar Poulsen.

1894: Charles and Émile Pathé established a recording business near Paris. They issued cylinders. By 1904 the catalogue contained ca. 12,000 titles. Berliner began manufacturing his gramophones, founding the "Victor" firm. Their recordings (many novelty items) became popular, especially from coin-in-the-slot machines.

1897: The pianola was patented by E.S. Votey—originally a limited form of *Vorsatzer*.

1900–1910: "78" era; piano roll-recordings

From 1902 a marked rise in public interest occurred, particularly with recordings of Italian tenor, Enrico Caruso. The fortunes of Victor waxed.

1904: The Welte firm perfected and marketed their *Vorsatzer*, which was integrated into the "Welte-Mignon" piano from 1905. The recording and issue of piano-roll performances now became a good commercial prospect, although more the province of the rich. Early artists included Cortot, Paderewski, Debussy, Rachmaninoff, Rubinstein, Grainger, Gershwin.

By 1910 possibly 85 percent of recorded music was classical.

1910–20: The acoustic boom Birth of organ roll recordings

With the phonograph an early mass-media phenomenon was created, no longer just the province of the rich. The "78" (78 disc revolutions per minute) recording fully replaced the earlier wax cylinders and became entrenched as standard. Originally made from shellac—later synthetic thermoplastic resins gave better results with less "surface noise"—they came in 10-inch and 12-inch sizes, the largest of which were capable of durations extending to about 4½ minutes.

by 1912: The first roll recordings of organists were made by Welte in Germany—but ownership of player organs was virtually the sole province of highly affluent individuals, institutions, or companies. Some (rare) early gramophone recordings of organists were made in England and the first complete symphonies were recorded in Germany: solo instrumentalists and opera singers followed with excerpts and potpourris.

1914–1919: Phonograph sales quintupled. Original composition also began for player piano, which sometimes attracted leading composers (Stravinsky, *Étude* for Pianola 1917). Later Hindemith (*Toccata* for mechanical piano 1926) and others, notably George Antheil (*Le Ballet mécanique*, 1926) and Conlon Nancarrow continued this genre of recorded music. Only two roll-composed works for mechanical organ are known: the experimental stage piece, *Triadischen Ballett* by Oskar Schlemmers (1888–1943) was revised by Hindemith in 1927 as *Suite für mechanische Orgel* but survives only in an early recording (available on CD) and *Studie* for mechanical organ by Ernst Toch (1887–1964) which appears to have been lost.

1917: The "Victor" label increased its sales with classical releases, especially popular from their collaboration with the Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Leopold Stokowski. All early commercial sound recording and reproduction to this point was achieved solely by acoustical means.

1920s: Electrical recording, broadcasting; roll recordings

From the early 1920s the vacuum-tube ("valve"), invented by Lee De Forest, paved the way for applications such as the amplifier and the record-cutting lathe. Microphones, earphones and loudspeakers now replaced the old needles and acoustical horns, while turntable drives shifted from the wind-up spring to the electric motor. The recording of "classical" music increased greatly but popular music and jazz also established their places. American and German scientists developed Poulsen's earlier wire recording technology and researched the potential for magnetic tape as an alternative medium to wire.

1923: An optical system of sound recording was invented by De Forest—of special relevance to sound films.

From 1925 electrical recording quickly predominates.

1926: Radio broadcasting is introduced and music becomes far more freely available to all classes of society.

1926–30: After a decade or so of more experimental organ recordings some early organ recordings appear, taking advantage of the newly available electrical technology (Alcock, Darke, Bullock, Palmer, Roper, Marchant, Thalben-Ball—the most notable in England was Harry Goss-Custard who had already recorded on Welte rolls). Edwin Lemare, another Welte player-roll recording artist, later made discs in the USA.

1928 (November): Louis Vierne made 78s at Paris, Notre Dame Cathedral.

Around 1930 in Germany, Walter Fischer made 78s of Rheiberger and Händel organ concertos in an unidentified location,

but generally thought to be the Berliner Dom. Alfred Sittard—who had recorded on Welte rolls released from 1913 onwards—made some 78 recordings between 1928–32 in Berlin (Alte Garnisonskirche) and Hamburg (Michaeliskirche). Six of Sittard's recording titles are duplicated on both roll and disk (two Bach, three Handel, one work of his own).

1930–1: Charles Tournemire made recordings at Paris, Saint Clôtilde.

From 1929 onwards the great economic depression threw the recording industry into serious decline: dance music recordings played on jukeboxes helped sustain a contracted market throughout the 1930s. The vogue of the player piano and player organ began to decline with this and the increasing popularity of the radio and phonograph, although player piano culture survived to a remarkable degree through the mid-20th century.

1945–1970: Microgroove recordings; tape

After World War II, magnetic systems were brought to full technological acceptability (the "tape recorder" era began and the use of wire declined). Similarly constant improvements in optical systems endowed motion pictures with ever higher quality sound.

1948: The "long-playing" record was first introduced (LP 33½ revolutions per minute, for a time also a 45 rpm format); discs made of "vinyl" took over and the "78" quickly disappeared from production. Available maximum playing times increased to 20–25 minutes (about the maximum capacity of some of the rolls from 30 years earlier).

1958: Provision of two separate channels of recorded information in the one groove ushered in the era of "binaural" (stereophonic) recording. This became standard.

The era of "hi-fi" particularly boosted organ disc recordings, which had suffered badly from inadequate technology hitherto. This led to a notable increase in "complete" (e.g., Walcha playing Bach) works and comprehensive anthologies of organ music and organs.

Tape also was used for video recordings.


1970s: Digital

1970s: Digital recording technology displaced analogue and took over the industry (quadrasonic and similar experiments followed but were mostly unsuccessful except in cinemas).

In the late 20th century the player-piano concept was reinvented and applied; e.g., Yamaha's "Disklavier," which offered self-recording, and selected performances by artists from Horowitz to Liberace.


1980s: Fully digital compact discs (CDs) were introduced; they dominated the market by the 1990s. Playing time increased to over an hour. Digital editing and mixing techniques also evolved to produce a highly-packaged sound quality.

By the early 21st century, DVDs had also become a factor in sound and video recording as well as mass information storage. Their playing time could now cope with almost any extended musical form, including videos of operas. Recording to computer hard drives and memory sticks recently became an option and seems set to quickly become a new standard.


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