

Of course, such phenomena appear whatever the epoch and style of the piece. But this book is not about questions of “style”, rather of getting as familiar as possible with one’s own mental abilities towards developing mobility as well as setting free energy for one’s interpretation, in which ever way one wishes it to turn out.

A. III. Alternative ways of practising the organ

The development of one’s listening and motor skills always leads to the expansion of one’s musical power of imagination and, in turn, a more animated and complex artistic interpretation. In order to achieve this, it is, however, necessary to include, in addition to the familiar practising “tools” listed above, other techniques which go into more depth, and not only concentrate on what has to be done but also the person doing it.

One often observes, for example, organists primarily asking themselves before learning a new piece, when practising a difficult passage or preparing for a recital: “What do I have to do now?” Without even considering the other question, “what would I like to hear now?”

Admittedly, in comparison to other instrumentalists or singers, an organist has to indeed “do” a great deal more external things, execute many different manoeuvres, which, due to the size of the instrument, have to be accomplished by widely separated-off parts of the body. Additionally, the question of manual-positions and registration has to be confronted with every new instrument each time anew. And then one is supposed to listen as well? But this is really the case: The quality of practising technically is closely related to one’s inner conception of acoustic as well as motor aspects. Between these factors lies a kind of “spiral of growth”: Activating one’s hearing and awakening inner conceptions determines the quality of what is going to be transformed into movement; one’s hearing has, in turn, the control over the acoustic result of the movement etc.

Practising the organ is made more difficult of course by the notes not flexible in volume which means the practising organist can only become aware of one-sided combinations of movements and unconscious reflexes by listening carefully. Those practising the piano have an easier job here because one hears immediately on a piano or clavichord when the thumb “crashes down” or weak fingers are playing too quietly.

As a matter of fact, one has to “outwit” the organ in a sense in order to track down one’s own strange habits, i. e. “unconsciously conditioned habits”, whose effects aren’t likely to go unnoticed by a critical audience. “Outwit” means here: using the possibilities of the instrument in a creative way so that one’s hearing is constantly in demand as an active control with a specific acoustic expectation. Prerequisite for this is an exact inner