

## ***'Le Cornet de Flandres'* – The development of the Cornet, and of divided stops in the Southern Netherlands until c1800.**

### **(Summary)**

The Cornet stop, an imitation of the zinc, appears in organ specifications from the 16th century onwards. The characteristic sound colour is the result of the combination of several ranks of pipes including a tierce  $1\frac{3}{5}$ '. In most cases the cornet is 'mounted' higher than the remainder of the windchest, and placed directly behind the facade pipes. Initially, various different names appear for the stop, including, among others, Cornetz de nuit, Nachthoorn and Cornet à Boucquin (see table on p. 6). Southern Netherlands organ builders played a key role in the development and spreading of the stop throughout virtually all of western Europe. Initially, 'progressive' Cornets also appeared, growing in strength towards the treble as the number of ranks increased (see table on p.8), although the type with a constant number of ranks throughout its compass is the one which has remained common to this day. The Cornet was used both as a solo stop as well as in combination with the reeds and/or flues. The sources regarding its use are far from consistent and even contradict each other in certain instances.

During the second half of the 16th century we encounter frequent reports of divided stops such as the Cornet in various regions of Europe. Such divided stops allowed the expansion of an organ's tonal possibilities, and offered the potential for solos and echoes, especially on organs with just a single manual. In the Southern Netherlands, not all stops were routinely divided. Those that were divided were usually the reeds and some mutations. During the 16th and 17th centuries, the division of stops was far from consistent and some considerable variation was found (see table on p. 12, 13).

In the second half of the 16th century, close cultural ties were established between Spain and the Southern Netherlands. The first compositions of the type known as 'medio registro' seem to originate in Seville in connection with the organ built by the Antwerp organbuilder 'Maese Jorge' in the Cathedral. A key figure in this regard was the organist and composer Francisco Peraza. The 'medio registro' genre was further established by, among others, Sebastian Aguilera de Heredia and, especially, Francisco Correa de Arauxo. The visits paid to the Spanish court by Philips, Bull and Cornet (court organists in Brussels) also contributed to the spreading of the use of divided stops in the Southern Netherlands. Gillis Brebos, who built the organs for Escorial Palace brought with him the Flemish 'Nachthoren' in combination with a chorus of reeds of the trumpet family (at 16', 8' and 4' pitch).

In the 18th century, the application of the Cornet became more standardised in the Southern Netherlands. In most instances the keyboard was divided at c or c#. In larger instruments, 6-rank Cornets were installed, and echo divisions became more frequent. This often consisted of a half-compass manual, its corresponding windchest and pipework located in the lower part of the organ case.

A number of sources indicate that the Cornet was not always manipulated by a

drawstop, but sometimes, for example, by means of a foot-operated lever. This had the advantage that the Cornet could be quickly added or cancelled by the player, as indicated in a number of specific examples in the organ literature.

The use of the Cornet in the organ literature can be illustrated by examples from various manuscripts originating from the Southern Netherlands.

In the Liber Fratrum Cruciferorum Leodiensium (1617) we find one of the earliest examples of a solo passage for left or right hand. These are indicated in the score, by means of different coloured inks, or, for example an arch, rather like a musical slur (see illustrations 7 and 8).

In a number of anonymously transmitted versets from the Christ Church (Oxford) Music MS 89, one finds interesting examples of the evocation of specific texts. The verse 'tu solus altissimus' for example is played on the Cornet stop. In addition, all the compositions by Peeter Cornet in this manuscript are intended to be played on a divided keyboard.

The collector of London, British Library, MS 29486 is also unknown. A number of different intonations feature a performance instructions indicating the use of a divided stop such as a Cornet. One specific Fantasia, (wrongly?) attributed to Peter Philips is conceived for a solo in the right hand.

The Messaus-Bull codex includes a fantasia by John Bull intended to feature a solo for the right hand, although the composer does not take into account the division of the keyboard, or the compass of the Cornet stop.

The Novello-manuscript includes sheet music from various composers. In this context, a number of compositions for divided keyboard are especially interesting. Two of the Fantasias feature solos in the left hand whose ambitus crosses into that of the accompanying voices. Perhaps these compositions were intended for two keyboards?

The Cocquiel-manuscript is the most important source for the organ music Abraham van den Kerckhoven. A number of fantasias are intended as solos for the Cornet stop. With the exception of MMB 133, these compositions are performable on an organ with a single divided keyboard. The evoking of a specific text can be found in MMB 135; the melody is based on the Christmas Carol 'een kindeken is ons gheboren'.

This article brings together details from a considerable number of sources. On the basis of a comparative investigation, it became possible both to strengthen the case for, or to correct, previously published hypotheses. An important element of this article is the comparison of technical information pertaining to organbuilding with details about the practise of composing for, and performing on, the organ.

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