



PLAYING YOUR WERSI AS A CLASSICAL PIPE ORGAN by Jeff Ormerod

Part Three

The Couplers

All pipe organs provide a variety of *Couplers* on the Swell, Great and Pedal. These greatly enhance the registration capabilities of the instrument by enabling an expanded set of stops to be played together. Some common couplers are listed below.

The Swell Organ

Swell Octave

This adds in the octave above of all the notes from all the stops being played on the manual to provide a considerable brightening of the tonal quality.

Swell Sub-Octave

This adds in the octave below of all the notes from all the stops being played on the manual. This coupler needs to be used with caution, particularly with ensemble playing, as this will result in too much bass being added and the sound therefore being rendered indistinct. It can be quite effective however for solo playing.

The Great Organ

Swell to Great

This adds in all the stops currently selected on the Swell to those being played on the Great. This is a very useful coupler as the stops on the Swell will be different in character to those on the Great and if selected correctly can complement each other very effectively. Also since the volume of the stops on the Swell is controlled by the Swell Pedal, a suitable balance between the two sets of stops can be achieved, with the added capability of an otherwise unobtainable crescendo or diminuendo on the Great.

Octave couplers are not usually provided on the Great due to the preponderance of stops with higher octave pitches.

The Pedal Organ

Swell to Pedal

This adds in all the stops selected on the Swell to the pedal note(s) being played. This again is a very useful coupler as it provides a quick way of achieving the compatibility between the volume and tonal quality of manuals and pedals previously discussed. We would typically employ this coupler when playing on the Swell, although in many instances it can be left activated when playing on the Great if the selected Swell registration is compatible with that on the Great.

Great to Pedal

This adds in all the stops selected on the Great to the pedal note(s) being played. This is very useful in achieving a more substantial and powerful pedal sound particularly when louder registrations are being employed. It would normally be de-activated when playing on the Swell as the stops on the Great tend to be louder and thus would produce an overpowering pedal part.

Limitations of the Wersi

The Wersi Layering system is limited to a maximum of 4 layers on the upper manual, three on the lower and two on the pedal. This is adequate for solo and accompaniment work but cannot support the more complex registrations and the coupler functions. An effective solution would be to deploy the Sound Factory expansion package. This enables up to 10 sounds to be combined on one layer so would be more than sufficient to achieve complete compatibility with even the largest of pipe organs.

Pistons and Presets

Pipe organs typically provide a set of thumb pistons between the two manuals. Some instruments also have feet pistons located on the pedalboard. These pistons are programmable by the player and enable a series of complete registrations to be defined for all the stops on the instrument. In this respect they perform exactly the same function as the Wersi total presets. Although the player has complete freedom to specify any combination of stops for any piston, convention dictates that the leftmost piston defines the quietest registration on the organ with successive pistons defining progressively louder combinations until we arrive at full organ in the rightmost piston.

On the pipe organ the number of pistons is fairly limited, four to eight being typical, so constructing a set of presets to support a wide range of music and playing styles presents quite a challenge. On the Wersi however there are no such restrictions so we have the choice of three approaches. We can emulate the pipe organ structure by seeking to devise a small number of optimum presets, or we can produce a wider range of presets to cover all requirements, or we can individually customise presets for each piece of music. The Sound Factory will be useful in all three approaches, but will be particularly beneficial in implementing the latter. In this instance it would enable us to construct a library of common combinations that could be mixed and matched on the layers to provide the required total registration. With Wersi the possibilities are endless !!

In the next part, Jeff covers some sample Registrations with a suggested Wersi equivalent for each, taken from the Sacral Sounds Package. On the website there will also be audio downloads of each Registration, annotated in the text by track number.

Each of Jeff's Registrations will also be demonstrated in the Sound Factory Master Class Number 3 as a single sound in each case.