

## *Órgano de San Jerónimo Tlacoahuaya.*

**Vol. I: Guy Bovet; Vol. IV:Luigi Ferdinando Tagliavini. Instituto de Órganos Históricos de Oaxaca,**

These two recordings were made at live concerts given on the restored organ of San Jeronimo, Tlacoahuaya, in the province of Oaxaca, Mexico. (See “Eighth International Organ and Early Music Festival, Oaxaca, Mexico, October 21–27, 2010,” by Cicely Winter, *The Diapason*, May 2011, pp. 20–23.)

The church dates from 1558, with much later work incorporated as prosperity increased. The small one-manual organ underwent major modifications in 1735; its date of original construction, however, remains unknown. It probably ceased to function during the Mexican Revolution, when pipes may well have been removed to be melted down for munitions, but in 1990–91 it was rebuilt by Susan Tattershall. Since 2000 the Instituto de Organos Historicos de Oaxaca has supervised its maintenance.

This instrument is based on 4' pitch, with a 45-note compass from C–c3, with a short octave in the bass and divided registers at middle C/C#. The bass registers include a Bardon 8', Flautado Mayor 4' (in the facade), Octava 2', Quincena 1', Diez y novena 2/3', Veintidocena .', Quincena 1' (which breaks back), and Bajoncillo, an interior reed of 4'. The treble registers consist of a Bardon 8', two Flautado Mayors, two Octavas, a Docena 11/3'–22/3' (which, like its bass equivalent, breaks back), and a horizontal reed, Trompeta en batalla 8'. There is also a toy stop labeled *Pajaritos*, which imitates the sound of little birds. The flues are bright and clearly voiced, their tonal quality being more than adequate to fill the church. The two reeds are brilliant and full bodied, perhaps a little more strident than those on many Spanish organs but in no way raucous or coarse. It is unusual for the Iberian organ not to have a full compass 8' Trumpet (usually as an interior reed), but a 4' reed in the bass was quite common. The highly ornate case is an example of Colonial craftsmanship, and the instrument is tuned to A=392Hz in quarter-comma meantone.

Guy Bovet played a Spanish program centered around the three “Cs”— Cabezon, Correa, and Cabanilles— opening with four pieces from the *Obras de Musica*, compiled and published by Hernando de Cabezon in 1578. The first piece comprises the four verses of the *Fabordones* on the 1st tone, in which the chant is decorated in different voices in turn. This is followed by Hernando Cabezon's setting of the chanson *Doulce memoire*, possibly intended as a tribute to his father; it is played quietly here. The *Diferencias sobre la Gallarda Milanesa* follows, taken at a stately pace that works well, and the final work is the shorter of the two *Tientos del quinto tono*, the flue chorus allowing the counterpoint and the fluent passagework to be heard with great clarity. This piece is listed on the CD cover and in the booklet as being by Correa, an error that really ought to have been corrected! Of the two pieces taken from the *Facultad Orgánica* published in 1626 by the mercurial Correa de Arauxo, we hear the Trompeta to great effect in the *Tiento de dos triples del segundo tono*, which was written for five voices (three in the bass and two in the treble). The wonderfully interweaving treble voices carry over the supporting bass chorus, and the restless rhythmic changes offer a glimpse of this Sevillian's skills, although Correa's own notes on how to play triplet groups are ignored. The second piece is a *Tiento del cuarto tono* for the full compass, played quietly, with the dissonant harmonies and suspensions not coming through quite as clearly at this lower volume. The two pieces by Cabanilles include the *Tocata de má izquierda*, in which we can hear the 4' reed in the left hand rasping out the solo beneath a high-pitched righthand accompaniment, after which the five-voice *Passacalles* on the 1st tone is played with changing flue registrations as the variations develop. The final piece by a Spanish composer is the *Fandango de España* attributed to José Blasco de Nebra. Played here on the highest pitches available, which do take some straining to hear well, this piece is little more than a short improvisation on two chords of the popular dance, complete with rhythmic sound effects some way through! Bovet's recital concludes with an almost 10-minute improvisation on Oaxacan melodies, taking up 20% of the CD; this shows just why he is regarded as such a fine improviser, the charming folk melodies being treated to a complete range of variety in tempo and registration; particularly effective are the triplet and upbeat chordal passages on the reeds. The CD is certainly on the short side, and it would be good to have heard pieces by some other Spanish composers, perhaps from the 18th century, to show the development and changes in styles over the centuries. The added ornamentation is most tastefully played in good style.

The pieces played on Vol. IV by the renowned Italian performer Luigi Ferdinando Tagliavini are mostly by Italian composers, with two pieces by Pablo Bruna, the blind composer from Daroca, in northeast Spain. The CD opens with three pieces from the *Selva di varie compositioni* of 1664 by Bernardo Storace. The clarity of the flue chorus illuminates the improvisatory nature of the first part of the *Toccata e Canzona en sol*. A quiet opening, gradual building, and then returning to the quieter flues are used in the *Partite sopra la Spagnoletta*, after which the reeds are used to great effect in the incisive and lively *Ballo della battaglia*. The flue chorus is again used to show off the rhapsodic nature of the short *Toccata avanti la Messa della Madonna* from Frescobaldi's *Fiori Musicali* of 1635, from which the *Capriccio sopra la Girolmeta* is also taken. Here the upperwork shimmers in the triple-time section. The two pieces by Pablo Bruna include the *Tiento sobre la Letanía de la Virgen*, a set of variations for two treble stops, played with a changing variety of flues throughout, and the *Tiento de medio registro de quinto Tono* (not sexto tono as on the CD cover) in which the bass solo is also given to the flue chorus throughout the rhythmically changing sections, including the typical Iberian interplay between 3/2 and 6/4. We then hear seven pieces by Bernardo Pasquini, starting with the *Toccata en re menor*; the improvisatory opening shows the influence of Frescobaldi before the chorus is reduced for a fugal central section that concludes with a triple time variation; the short closing section with figuration against quarter-note chords is played on the full chorus. The *Pastorale* that follows is again in several sections; in the opening section the phrases are played first on the Trompeta and then echoed on the flues; for the last few bars we hear the Pajaritos. Three very short arias follow, the second being a dotted-rhythm gigue, and the Pajaritos are used throughout the final one. The variations on the well-known *Folia de España* build in intensity, the final variations being taken from a different setting of the piece by Pasquini. The last piece by the Roman is a short sonata published originally circa 1697 in an anthology by Giulio Arrestiti; the short opening of right-hand figuration over a long-held pedalpoint is playable by both hands without using the pedals. The following loosely fugal section is full of Corellian writing. Two sonatas by Scarlatti follow. The quirky K77 in D minor is in two movements, each of which consists of only treble and bass, and may have been written originally for a violin and accompaniment; the repeats in the first movement are not observed here and the left-hand quarter notes do sound louder than the treble in this recording in places, but the second movement, a minuet in 3/8, is better balanced. K328, an andante in 6/8 in G, has original indications for stop changes, which are well effected here; again the repeats are not observed. The concert concludes with three one-movement sonatas by the much-traveled Domenico Cimarosa, better known today for his operas, but who did leave some 90 keyboard pieces in manuscripts. They are played on various flue combinations, the G-minor and C-minor being more reflective, the sonata in G making a fittingly joyful end to this selection of Italian music, which shows that much of the Italian repertoire sounds well on even the smaller Iberian-style organs.

The booklet (which is basically identical in both discs) contains an account of the organ culture in the province of Oaxaca, a detailed account of this instrument and its registers, some splendid color photos of the church's paintings and decorations and of the organ, and a biography of the performers. However, there is no commentary at all on the music played, which, given the errors on the cover and booklet listing, is a most disappointing omission—very few players have a working knowledge of the Spanish repertoire, and some of the Italian composers whose pieces are played on Vol. IV will certainly not be household names. That notwithstanding, the CDs are well produced, and even though they are both on the short side they are most definitely worth buying at the bargain prices.

They enable us to hear an example of one of the large number of organs from Mexico that have survived the ravages of time and been lovingly restored to their former glory. It is especially instructive to hear this music in a meantone tuning, which would have been used at the time of its composition. These CDs show that in the hands of such skilled performers, the small number of registers and tone colors need in no way be considered a disadvantage, but can be utilized in a positive way (although in most cases assistants would have been necessary to add or subtract the stops).

—John Collins, Sussex, England