

Saint Maximin – Registration Tips

by Patrick Larbant

Saint-Maximin sampleset allow to play a vast amount of repertory. But it is above all the ideal organ to play French classical music, ie from the 17th and 18th century (Couperin, Clérambault, Grigny, Dandrieu, etc.). Using a classical French organ for the first time may be a surprising, and also rewarding experience because these instruments are highly idiomatic. So, if you like, you can find here a few tips to help your first approach of the sampleset .

Original or extended ?

It may be easier to begin with the extended version. You will probably feel more at home on it : it allows to draw pedal stops without using the unusual Raisonance keyboard, it has more couplers and some stops duplications that make the registrations easier to apply. When familiar with the extended version, it will be easier to fully appreciate the complete authenticity of the original version.

Where to find the music ?

On IMSLP on-line music library, you can find a great deal of French classical organ in the edition made by Guilment (Les Archives des maîtres de l'orgue). A century later, it remains one of the best editions for this music. But be careful not to use the registrations indicated which use symphonic stops such as flute harmonique, salicional and so on. Guilment perfectly knew what were the true classical registrations, but symphonic organs of his period had not the adequate stops to play this music. So, he tried to propose ersatz as acceptable as possible.

For a first approach, you can try for instance Clerambault, Couperin, Guilain, or some Noëls by Lebegue. Grigny is very beautiful but perhaps more difficult.

How to find the right kind of registration to use ?

The french organ of 17^{ème} -18^{ème} centuries had fairly standardized stop lists and the French organ music had also standardized and highly codified registrations. Most of the time, it is the title of the piece itself (plein jeu, tierce en taille, basse de trompette, duo sur les tierces and so on) which tells you what kind of

registration to adopt. Some of these most usual standard registrations are detailed there after with possible ways to apply them to Saint-Maximin extended and examples of music to try them.

Some usual French classical registrations

All the composers of the classical period did not recommend exactly the same registrations and the evolution of the tastes between the late 17th and the late 18th centuries was far from negligible. But most of the stuff can be considered as a sort of common law, with some variants which remain rather minor and do not call the spirit of the common law in question. The registrations indicated here come from the prefaces written by some classical French composers, from Dom Bedos and from the books listed in the section "To read further". Possible variants are sometimes indicated below between () with the indication + (you add the stop to the basic recipe)..

Some suggestions of rather straightforward pieces are given which may be used to try these registrations. Page numbers refer to the Guilmant édition as you can find it on IMSLP (first number : the page of the pdf file ; second number : the page number as printed on the scanned score).

Some common principles

Organists did not use any registration such as our modern *Tutti*. Loud registrations were either the Plein Jeu (principals and mixtures, without manual reeds or cornets), either the Grand Jeu (prestant, reeds and cornets, without mixtures and almost without foundation stops).

16' reeds, rather unusual before the end of the 18th century, are to use with caution.

One thing may seem surprising nowadays : until roughly the mid-18th, on most French organs, the pedal had almost never 16 feet stops, but only something like Flute 8, flute 4 and trompette 8. The 16 feet was on the Great and the pedal could sound 16' only if coupled to the Great. So, it may be not completely by the book to play a *récit de tierce* ou cromorne, for instance, accompanied by 8 feet only on the GT and 16 feet on PED. But "not by the book" does not mean "unpleasant or unmusical" If you choose 16' on the GT, it may be useful to add the flute 16 on the PED.

"En taille" means in tenor register.

If you read something like "tierce en taille" or "récit de tierce", the tierce stop is not to be used alone, but always with bourdon 8, flûte 4, quarte 2, nasard 2 2/3 and eventually larigot 1 1/3

Thereafter, I is the Positif, II is the Great, III is the Raisonance, IV is the Echo

Plein jeu

I	montre 8, bourdon 8, prestant 4, doublette 2, fourniture, cymbale	Coupled to I
II	montre 16, bourdon 16, montre 8, bourdon 8, prestant 4, grande fourniture, petite fourniture, cymbale	
Ped	trompette 8 n°1 and 2 (+clairon)	Uncoupled to manuals, to use to play the plain-chant notes in long values if there is plain-chant en taille

To try it : Last verse from Kyrie of the Messe des Paroisses from Couperin (pdf p8, score p11). Here, there is plain chant en taille (the notes of the gregorian Kyrie transcribed in long values) which is to be played on Ped with trompette. In the pleins jeux of Clérambault, for instance, there is not plain chant and if one wants to use the pedal, juste couple II/Ped without pedal stop.

Grand jeu

I	(+bourdon), prestant, (-dessus de cornet, trompette, clairon), cromorne	I/II
II	(+bourdon 8),prestant, dessus de cornet, trompette, clairon (+ dessus de trompette)	
III	both trompettes 8, clairon, (+dessus de trompette)	III/II
IV	cornet	For echo effects
Ped		Coupled to II

The score generally indicates keyboard changes as « Grand clavier » et « Petit clavier » or “Grand jeu” et “Petit jeu”

To try it : Grand Dialogue en ut from Louis Marchand (stunning with the dessus de trompette en chamade added)(pdf p 51, score p 54) ; Caprice sur les grands jeux from Clerambault.(pdf p.32, score p.124)

Tierce en taille

I	Bourdon 8, flûte 4, quarte de nasard, nasard, tierce, larigot	
II	(bourdon 16), bourdon 8, montre 8	French montre is soft and fits for accompaniment purpose
Ped	Flute 16 if bourdon 16 used on II, flute 8	II/Ped

To try it : Tierce en taille form Couperin Messe des Couvents (pdf p 82, score p79).

Cromorne en taille ou Récit de cromorne

Same as tierce en taille, but :

I	cromorne, prestant	
II	(bourdon 16), bourdon 8, montre 8	
Ped	Flute 16 if bourdon 16 used on II, flute 8	II/Ped

To try it : cromorne en taille from Guilain (pdf p33, score p147).

Basse de trompette

I	Bourdon, montre, (+prestant), (+doublette), (+larigot)	To adapt to the intensity of the registration chosen on II
II	(+bourdon 8), prestant, trompette, (+2ème trompette), (+clairon)	

To try it : Basse et dessus de trompette of Livre d'orgue from Clérambault (pdf p.13, score p.105). For this piece, the solo part can also be played on IV cornet for the episodes where it is written in the treble.

Duo sur les tierces

I	Bourdon 8, flûte 4, quarte de nasard, nasard, tierce, larigot	Right hand
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II	Bourdon 16, bourdon 8, prestant, grande tierce 3 1/5, (+ gros nasard 5 1/3)	Left hand I/II because II has not nasard 2 2/3 nor tierce 1 3/5
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To try it : duo from Clerambault (pdf P.22, score p.114)

Fond d'orgue

I	bourdon 8, montre, prestant, (flute 8)	I/II
II	Bourdon 16, bourdon 8, montre, prestant	
Ped	Flute 16, flute 8	II/Ped

To try it : Fond d'orgue from Louis Marchand (pdf p32, score p 34)

Récit de cornet

I or II	bourdon 8, montre 8,	
IV	cornet	

To try it : Récit de cornet by Couperin Messe des Couvents (pdf p81, score p78)

For the fugues

Never, never the mixtures, but things like :

I	bourdon 8, prestant, cromorne, (+trompette), (+clairon)	
II	Bourdon 8, prestant, trompette, (+clairon)	

A useful registration for some duos

I	Cromorne, (+prestant)	Left hand
IV	Cornet	Right hand

To try it : Noel n°10 from Daquin (with also episodes on the Grand-Jeu)

and much more....

To read further

There are (at least) 4 very useful books on the subject :

- The language of the classical French organ by Fenner Douglas (Yale University Press);
- The registration of baroque organ music by Barbara Owen (Indiana University Press);
- L'orgue et l'art de la registration en France du 16ème au début du 19ème siècle, by Nicole Gravet (rather difficult to find).
- Tables de registration pour la musique d'orgue française du 16ème au 19ème siècles by Roland Lopes. Thanks to Francois Ratte, it is downloadable at : http://www.hauptwerkconsultant.com/pages/download/registration_French.pdf