

# HE SERVES AS AN EXAMINER OF A NEW ORGAN AT HALLE

HIS ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE CHURCH BOARD'S INVITATION

MOST NOBLE, MOST HIGHLY HONORED SIR!

For the quite exceptional and most gracious confidence of your noble self and of all your noble *Collegium*, am most deeply obliged; and as it is always my greatest *plaisir* to offer to Your Honor my most obedient service, I shall now be all the more zealous in waiting upon Your Honor at the appointed [time] and then to give satisfaction, so far as in me lies, in the desired examination. I beg you accordingly, without giving yourself too much trouble, to communicate this my decision to the Honorable *Collegium*, and at the same time to convey to them my most obedient regards, and to assure them of my sense of respectful obligation for their very special confidence.

Since moreover Your Honor has been good enough to take great pains in my behalf not only in the present instance but heretofore as well, I acknowledge this with obedient thanks, and assure you that it shall ever be my greatest pleasure to call myself

Your Honor's and My Most Especially Highly Honored Sir's

Most obedient servant

JOH. SEB. BACH

*Concertmeister*

Weimar, April 22, 1716

*Judgment of the Organ of the Church of Our Lady at Halle*

Whereas it has pleased the Most Honorable *Collegium Marianum* of the Town of Halle to request the undersigned, in writing, to appear on the 29th of April last, the day before yesterday, and to scrutinize and examine in all its parts the large new organ in the Church of Our Lady, constructed by the Grace of God and to His Glory by the organ builder Mr. Christoff Cuncius, and to note down whatever we should find of good or bad therein, and in general make known our judgment thereupon; accordingly, in most dutiful response to this gracious request and the trusting confidence expressed in our experience and skill, we made our appearance here on the appointed day and, after having had the high summons repeated to us orally, undertook in God's Name the examination of the new organ in the said Church.

Wherein:

(1) We have found the bellows chamber large enough for the bellows, and well protected against bad weather; but have also noted that since the window faces west the bellows must be exposed to excessive heat from the sun, and accordingly a curtain or some other protection against the sun will be needed for the time when the organ is not in use.

(2) As for the bellows themselves, which are 10 in number (although the builder promised only 9 in the contract, perhaps because he thought *quod superflua non noceant* [there would be no harm in abundance], and that the even number was preferable to the odd for the sake of the arrangement of the bellows, which are set opposite each other), they might still demonstrate the required capacity and the industry of the builder, but the wind would not drive the liquid in the wind gauge we applied to the 35th or 40th degree otherwise required in organs of such size and found in other organs having a good wind supply, but only to the 32nd or 33rd. Accordingly, when the Great Organ was played a certain faltering in the bellows was to be noted. Now this might be endured if only the *Ober Werck*, on the middle manual, did not falter—for this is counted among the serious defects.

(3) Next, however, as concerns the wind chests we found no visible defect, and they also withstood the test of having the keys of both manual and pedal keyboards pressed down at the same time without our noticing any leakage except a little in the middle manual; which, however, is caused by the fact that the upper boards (*Stöcke*) are not screwed in too firmly, and can easily be corrected. And under the ventils there have been placed not double or triple springs, such as poor builders often use to prevent squealing, but single ones throughout. This fact should make the clavier rather easy to play. Nevertheless it will be necessary for the touch to be made even a little lighter, and yet the quick rebound of the keyboards [i.e., keys] must not be

<sup>17</sup> Kuhnau was Cantor of the Thomas-Kirche in Leipzig; Rolle was organist in Quedlinburg. According to Adlung, the organ had no less than 47 stops for the three manuals and 18 stops for the pedal.

hindered, still less any squealing be brought about. Which, then, the builder has agreed to bring to this state.

(4) As far as the housing of the organ is concerned, greater space for it would indeed have been desirable, so that everything would not have had to be placed so close together, and everything could have been gotten at more conveniently.

(5) For the rest, all the stops specified in the contract are present, and they are made of the materials there mentioned, except that instead of the specified metal 16-foot *Gemshorn Bass* a wooden 32-foot *Untersatz* or Sub-Bass has been provided, the size of the pipes of which should make up for the absence of the metal.

Furthermore, the following finished and usable stops have been provided over and above the contract:

<i>Spitzflöte</i>	2 foot	} of metal <sup>18</sup>
<i>Quinta</i>	3 foot	
<i>Octava</i>	2 foot	
<i>Nachthorn</i>	4 foot	
<i>Quinta open</i>	6 foot	

On the other hand, the following have been omitted:

The <i>Fagott Bass</i> , of tin	8 foot
<i>Gedackt</i> , metal	4 foot
<i>Waldflöte</i> , ditto	2 foot
<i>Rohrflöte</i> , ditto	12 foot

Likewise, he has provided two 3-rank Cymbals instead of the two 2-rank ones called for.

(6) And while it shall not be discussed in what proportions the metals were alloyed, it is altogether easy to see that (as is commonly done) for the stops that do not meet the eye there has been more saving of tin than of lead; also in this organ the metal of the pipes could or should have been somewhat heavier.

The pipes that form the façade of the organ ought to shine with a bright light, and presumably the best part of the good tin was used for them; the fact that they do not shine thus must not be blamed on the builder, but on the soot that has fallen upon them. On the other hand, it is his fault if the sound especially of the big pipes cannot be heard clearly, since there are shortcomings as regards the good voicing that should obtain; which defect has shown in various such pipes, among others in the 32-foot Sub-Bass and Trombone Bass, as well as in other reed stops. Now Mr. Cuncius has not only promised, as he will have to tune the pipes more exactly here and there, since we have found them fairly out of tune in all three keyboards, to adopt the system of passably good temperament he upon occasion showed us, but also, as concerns better voicing of some pipes desired, to attend to the correction of that matter. Although it would have been better if this had been attended to before the examination; and if we could have inspected the parts that are

<sup>18</sup> The word metal in this connection meant, according to Adlung, a mixture of tin and lead.

still missing—namely, the coupler; two tremulants; two stars; a movable sun in the Upper Positive; and the bird song.

This, then, is what we, the undersigned, in obedience to our duty and in the interest of truth must report concerning this organ. We may add that we hope it may always be heard with pleasure, and last steadily for many years; to the Glory of the Most High and the especial renown of our Most Noble Patrons, as well as of the whole worthy town, in peace and tranquillity, to the encouragement of divine worship.

Halle, Philippi Jacobi Day [May 1], 1716

(L.S.) JOHANN KUHNAU (L.S.) CHRISTIAN FRIEDRICH ROLLE

(L.S.) JOH. SEBAST. BACH

“MENU OF THE DINNER OF THE MOST WORSHIPFUL  
COUNCIL OF THE CHURCHES ON THE OCCASION OF THE  
DEDICATION OF THE NEW ORGAN”

[*Sunday, May 3, 1716*]

1 piece of *BäffalleMOTE* (*Bœuf à la mode*)

Pike with a sardelle *beu*<sup>19</sup>

1 smoked ham

1 dish of peas (*Aschette mit Erbsissen*)

1 dish of potatoes (*Aschette mit Erteffen*)

2 dishes of spinach and chicory [?] (2 *Aschetten mit Spenadt und Zerzigen*)

1 roast quarter of mutton

Warm asparagus salad

Boiled pumpkin (*Kerbisse*)

Lettuce

Fritters

Radishes

Preserved lemon rind

Fresh butter

Preserved cherries

Roast veal