



Adding the Glockenspiel

Glockenspiels, cuckoo clocks and other automata have long been a part of European culture, especially in German speaking countries, but also in the Low Countries, where town hall towers and their bells are a matter of civic pride (one thinks of Bruges, for instance). Similarly, in The Netherlands, neighbouring towns vied with each other to build the most splendid organ – some of which, though housed in churches, are still the property of the city. Many towns in Northern Europe employ a carillonneur who climbs high up the tower at advertised times each day to give a short recital. The carillonneur is often an organist (the console frequently has a pedal board as well as a manual keyboard); it is not unusual for organists in that part of the world to be asked if they are also a carillonneur. In other towns the Glockenspiel is worked by clockwork, like an oversized musical box. Their tintinnabulation is a happy feature of the aural landscape of Dutch and Belgium towns. There is one such in the tower of Bath Abbey (owned, incidentally, by BANES), but it plays on only 10 bells, rather than the 50 or more which would be common in Flanders.

There is a venerable history of Glockenspiels installed within organs. J S Bach, no less, had access to a Glockenspiel both at Mühlhausen, where he was organist 1707-1708 and where the Glockenspiel was repaired during his tenure, and at his next appointment in Weimar, where he composed much of the *Orgelbüchlein* (a collection of short chorale preludes in different styles, arranged by liturgical season, but never completed). This may account for the large number of preludes in the *Orgelbüchlein* which seem to lend themselves to the use of a Glockenspiel in the Pedals. Possibly the most conspicuous example of a Glockenspiel on an organ is at the Benedictine Abbey of Weingarten in Oberschwaben in south Germany, where the magnificent baroque abbey church houses one of the most spectacular organs ever built (Joseph Gabler 1737-1750). This amazing instrument is built around no fewer than 6 windows, with 3 bridges of pipes between the two levels of windows, a Kronwerk in the middle above the highest window, and 2 Positiv cases on the balustrade (one containing pipes for the fourth manual, the other housing smaller pedal pipes). It may come as no surprise to learn that this sumptuous organ boasts not one Glockenspiel, but two! One is housed inside the instrument and is played from the fourth manual; the other, played by the pedals, hangs from the central bridge, disguised as 3 bunches of grapes. This is a nice play on words – Weingarten, of course, means vineyard.

Glockenspiels seem to have gone out of fashion later in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when they enjoyed a short revival, but this time in the guise of tubular bells, which produce a different ring. These later examples were more often known as "Carillon", "Bells" or "Chimes", but this is no guide for the organist as, like so many variants of stop names, the terms are interchangeable and, in any case, all the names actually mean the same thing; the only way to distinguish between the two types of stop is to try them and see. The Glockenspiel on the Abbey organ is of the 18<sup>th</sup> century type, ie brass bowl shaped bells, similar to those found in a grandfather clock (though some 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century clocks have a third type of bell, similar in shape to a coiled spring, and known as a Gong). It is housed right at the top of the organ, on the right hand pedal tower, though at the back, out of sight from the Abbey floor. The Glockenspiel, incidentally, should not be confused with a Cymbelstern: a star of bells which is blown round to produce a random jingle, like the Angel Chimes on the Christmas dinner table. The Abbey organ has sported Cymbelstern since it was built in 1997. Now, thanks to a generous gift from The Friends of Bath Abbey, it also boasts a Glockenspiel.

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