

# DANIEL MOULT

C O N C E R T O R G A N I S T | O R G A N T U T O R

## ARCO Study Notes extract: from the new St Giles' International Organ School RCO Study Notes Series

Clérambault: *Récits de cromorne et de Cornet séparé en dialogue* (from *Premier Livre d'Orgue, Suite du Premier Ton*)

### 1. General style

The heading "doucement et gracieusement" ("softly and graciously") encapsulates the general style. This was refined music played on colourful instruments with suspended mechanical actions, where every note and each slight degree of a trill could be controlled with great subtlety. Choose this piece only if you love playing in the French Classical style, can perfectly synchronise trills in two hands, and can practise on a three-manual organ.

### 2. Technical and musical challenges

There are two particularly pertinent technical issues here. First, there is the subtle control of touch on each note, right down to the occasional hemidemisemiquaver. Listen for clarity and gentle attacks, with a very gentle legato where slurred. Second, be aware of even, clear parallel thirds (see section 3 opposite). A strong performance relies heavily on stylish and varied ornamentation. The basic patterns for the trills are listed in various books and anthologies (e.g. page v, *Faber Early Organ Series Volume 9*). Once learnt, consider how you might make ornaments on longer and or more important notes more shapely (by extending the time dwelt on the auxiliary note).

*Notes inégales* is an area surrounded by controversy, and you need to consider how to apply it here. Some contemporary writers state that *inégales* can be applied to semiquavers in triple time, others that it should be applied to quavers. Whatever you decide, remember three

guiding principles: normally it should be applied only on notes moving by step, it should not sound formulaic or rigid and it should be subtle. You might consider varying the dots (e.g. relaxed dots when mid-phrase, more taut dots or even over-dotted at phrase ends) as a possible response to the *inégales* traditions.

### 3. Practice tips

A sensitive mechanical action is essential for working on this repertoire effectively. In order to perfect the touch, you could practice RH on its own, focussing on just one or two phrases at a time. I would incorporate ornaments into the lines from the start of practice, so that they become natural and supple from the outset. Slow, dotted work should pay dividends when practising the parallel thirds of the final two and a half staves.

### 4. Registration

Jeu doux: Bourdon 8' (+ Flûte 4')

Cromorne: Cromorne 8' plus Bourdon 8' (on some English organs, a small trumpet or Cornopean is a reasonable compromise)

Cornet: Flutes 8' + 4' + 2 2/3' + 2' + 1 3/5'

Pedale (sic) de Flûte: a clear 8' open Flute on its own (the typical English Pedal Bass Flute 8' is rarely large or clear enough)

For background and more detailed information, consult *The Language of the French Classical Organ* Fenner Douglass (Yale 1995)

### 5. Tempo

Crotchet = about 64 seems appropriate.

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