

Fantasia for Brass Band and Organ

Fantasia for Brass Band and Organ explores the interplay of tone colours between an organ and a brass band. It is not a concerto or concertante piece for organ with brass band accompaniment, indeed that is why it is entitled “for Brass Band and Organ” rather than “for Organ and Brass Band”. Therefore, conductors, performers and listeners should have no preconceptions. The organ part is obligato, which is to say that it is *necessary*, but in a complementary role that sometimes leads and sometimes supports the band often by enhancing and extending the bass end, that is to say the four tubas, two euphoniums, bass trombone and timpani.

The word “Fantasia” appears in the title because this is a flexible and lyrical piece rather than a symphonic work based on thematic development. There is some musical and structural development, but that is not the core of this piece. It is therefore a fantasy: letting ideas go freely where they will. Thus, Fantasia for Brass Band and Organ shows a range and variety of form; the music is not constrained by, or forced to fit into, a predefined formal structure, so the form follows the music rather than the music following the form. This demonstrates one particular compositional style in the portfolio of compositions. As the title suggests, Fantasia for Brass Band and Organ is in free form, allowing the composer to have freedom to develop, or not, ideas as and when he feels they work best.

Originally, the work was planned to be in two movements, with the organ playing a background role until the final section. However, through the evolution of the piece, the organ played a more predominant role in each revision, and the two-movement structure then failed to work.

The percussion section plays only a supportive role; its use has been kept to a minimum; for example, the *fortissimo* section that starts at bar 142 has only one clashed cymbals note at its commencement. This is in contrast to such works as Arthur Wills’s The Fenlands (first performed in 1981) and in Arthur Butterworth’s Organ Concerto (1978) where their over use often dominates the texture detracting from the organ.

The work is written to be played in a church rather than in a concert hall. Aiming for a church performance allows the ambience of the location to be taken into account with the work, and increases the likelihood of performance. On the other hand, the band parts are difficult, and it would therefore be unlikely that any band of less than Championship Section would be able to play the work.

There are practical problems writing for an organ with a brass band. Attachment 1 has the details of a survey carried out in February and March 2006 into organs and their locations. The results of this survey were used in the work to ensure that the piece would not be prevented from performance because it makes an unreasonable demand on the expectations of the organ in many potential concert venues. For example, the relative positions and distance of the organ from the band will vary from venue to venue. Furthermore, church organs are often only in tune with themselves. Some larger organs have modern electronic devices attached that can alter the tuning of the organ to help, however that is not true of most organs.

The sound of an organ, and indeed of the band, will echo for some tangible time in a church. Periods of silence, for example bar 12, and phrase marks, for example bar 100, create a space during which the echo will reverberate around the church.

Furthermore, writing a complex counterpoint on an arpeggio from a reduced scale will create a smearing effect as each note builds upon echoes of previous notes in the arpeggio. The picture that should be in the imaginary eye of the conductor, and which he or she will need to convey to the performers, is of a shimmer of light. The first time this happens is in the cornets at bar 46 (Figure 1), where the score is explicitly marked “shimmer.” Cornets are used since the effect of the shimmer is better in that instrument because their tessitura lies higher – in a range associated with the mental image created by the word “shimmer”.

The image shows a musical score for Figure 1, covering bars 46 to 50. The score is for a brass band and includes parts for Solo Cornet 1, Solo Cornet 2, Solo Cornet 3, Solo Cornet 4, Repiano Cornet, 2nd Cornet 1, 2nd Cornet 2, 3rd Cornet 1, and 3rd Cornet 2. The music is in 4/4 time and features complex counterpoint and arpeggios. A 'shimmer' effect is indicated by the word 'shimmer' above the first staff. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings like *mp*.

Figure 1. Cornets bars 46 – 50

As noted above, the piece is demanding for brass, for example the cornet players each have a separate part; there are two reasons for this. First, there will be many concurrent echoes to create a better shimmer at bar 46. Second, it allows for easier dovetailing writing during extended passages where stamina could otherwise become a problem, such as the section starting at bar 142 (Figure 2).

The image shows a musical score for Figure 2, covering bars 142 to 144. The score is for a brass band and includes parts for Solo Cornet 1, Solo Cornet 2, Solo Cornet 3, Solo Cornet 4, and Repiano Cornet. The music is in 4/4 time and features complex counterpoint and arpeggios. A 'shimmer' effect is indicated by the word 'shimmer' above the first staff. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings like *ff*.

Figure 2. Solo cornets and repiano cornet bars 142-144

A three-note motif of a major second and a perfect fifth or fourth, sometimes presented as a minor second with a perfect fifth or fourth (Figures 3a, 3b, 3c, 3d), forms much of the material for Fantasia for Brass Band and Organ.



Figure 3a. Three-note motif, form 1



Figure 3b. Three-note motif, form 2



Figure 3c. Three-note motif, form 3



Figure 3d Three-note motif, form 4

The introduction is a build up of sound introducing the three-note motif in its second form transposed to be the notes G, Ab, D. The following passage, *tranquillo*, acts as a second introduction contrasting with the opening section in scale as much as possible; the size of the contrast is large to hint at the large scale of the work.

The *tranquillo* introduction leads into the first section of the work, from bar 46, marked *poco più mosso*, where the cornet section is marked “shimmer” (Figure 1). This effect in the cornet section is created by:

- Each player performing an individual part;
- The independence of rhythm, with each part playing an arpeggio from all or part of the 6-note scale F, A, Ab, Bb, E, G;
- Most of the arpeggios speeding up will;
- The echo in the church or concert hall.

The marking of the score indicates the intention of the music to the conductor, and the request that the conductor direct the players to a style that will create this effect. The flugel and euphonium provide the rhythm of this section (Figure 4); the organ adding a supporting tone colour with sustained notes from the 6-tone scale.

Figure 4. Flugel and euphonium bars 49-50

A shortened repetition up a tone at bar 59, a figure using fast arpeggios to capture the feeling of bar 46 at pitch, and the three-note motif in the first form in the solo

cornets at bar 73 move the music forward into the first organ interlude at bar 75. This interlude develops from the motif in the first form into a free-formed development using new material.

The interlude finishes on a section, starting in bar 105 (Figure 5), that includes previous material, bar 113 being the motif first introduced in the euphonium in bar 39.

Figure 5. Organ bars 105-113

The interlude is followed, at bar 118, by a bridge passage in the band. The euphonium starts with an inversion of the organ motif from bar 105 (Figure 6), while the cornets and trombone introduce a motif that can be developed later.

Figure 6. Euphonium and 2nd baritone bars 118-121

At bar 142, letter C, the full ensemble plays the material of bar 126 with embellishments. Use of tutti forces here contrasts with the previous section since this is the first section that the full ensemble and organ play together *fortissimo*. The forces provide a contrast to the previous section that was for organ only, and the development of the material from section 126 enhances this climax. There are six individual lines during this passage:

- Soprano and third cornets - bar 143 (Figure 7) using the motif from bar 117 (Figure 8) at half tempo;
- Solo cornets, repiano and second cornets - these parts are dovetailed to avoid stamina difficulties of a long section of semi- and demisemiquavers at *fortissimo* (Figure 2);
- Flugel, horns and second baritone - minims and semibreves to add weight (Figure 9);
- Trombones - this is the principal line – the score is marked *solli* to bring the performers' and conductor's attention to the need for this line to balance correctly (Figure 10);
- Basses and organ pedals (Figure 11); and
- Organ manuals (Figure 12).

Figure 7. Soprano bars 143-145



Figure 8. Soprano bars 117-118



Figure 9. Flugel, horns, 2nd baritone bars 142-145



Figure 10. Trombones bars 142-143

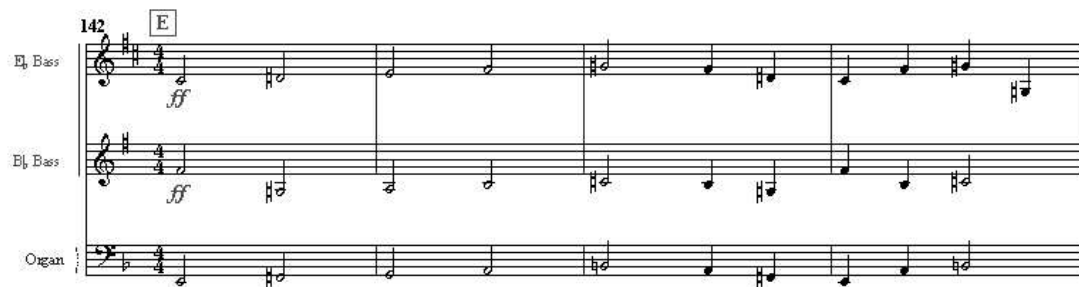


Figure 11. Bases and organ pedals bars 142-145

142 E

Organ *Full ff*

Figure 12. Organ manuals bars 142-143

Bar 160 (Figure 13), and following, is reminiscent of the section from bar 46 (Figure 1). Two ideas produce this effect. First, the rhythm in the euphonium and E^b bass (Figure 14), whilst different from that of the euphonium and flugel at bar 49, serves a similar purpose to, and is reminiscent of, that of bar 49 (Figure 4). Second, the “free-time” in the cornets, which is based on the three-note motif in the third form (Figure 3c) but with a major second, recalls and recreates the earlier shimmer effect. This “free-time” section forms a prelude to the trombone recitative at bar 169.

160

Soprano Cornet *free time - play the three pitches in random order; starting slowly and gradually speeding up mp cresc. poco a poco*

Solo Cornet 1 *cresc. poco a poco*

Solo Cornet 2 *free time - play the three pitches in random order; starting slowly and gradually speeding up*

Solo Cornet 3 *cresc. poco a poco*

Solo Cornet 4 *free time - play the three pitches in random order; starting slowly and gradually speeding up*

Repiano Cornet *cresc. poco a poco*

2nd Cornet 1 *p cresc. poco a poco*

2nd Cornet 2 *p cresc. poco a poco*

3rd Cornet 1 *p cresc. poco a poco*

3rd Cornet 2 *p cresc. poco a poco*

Figure 13. Cornets bars 160-164

162

mf cresc. poco a poco

Figure 14. 1st baritone bars 162-163

At bar 186 the horns and flugel (Figure 15) play the melody first introduced in the organ at bar 105 (Figure 4). Against this, the lower brass and pedals play a countermelody. This melody is then reiterated by the full band *poco più mosso* at

191, but instead of the lower brass playing the countermelody it plays the same line that the right hand and pedal did at bar 105.

The image shows a musical score for three brass instruments: Flugel, Solo Horn, and 1st Horn. The score covers bars 186 to 190. The Flugel part is in the top staff, the Solo Horn in the middle, and the 1st Horn in the bottom. All parts are in 4/4 time. The Flugel part starts with a melodic line in bar 186, followed by a triplet of eighth notes in bar 188. The Solo Horn and 1st Horn parts play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, also featuring a triplet in bar 188. The Solo Horn part has a slur over the first two bars of the triplet, and the 1st Horn part has a slur over the first two bars of the triplet. The Flugel part has a slur over the first two bars of the triplet. The Solo Horn and 1st Horn parts have a slur over the first two bars of the triplet. The Flugel part has a slur over the first two bars of the triplet.

Figure 15. Flugel, solo and 1st horns bars 186-190

By reintroducing and developing existing ideas without the introduction of new ones, the listener receives a signal that the music has entered its latter stages. Hence, the *misterioso* that follows at bar 200, where the pedals lead a free development based on the fourth version of the three-note motif (G^b , A^b , C^b), and an inversion of the bass melody from bar 186 is the start of the build-up of the last section.

From bar 209 the cornets and trombones use the trombone figure from bar 158 for a different effect; at 158 it is a rhythmic pulse, whereas here it forms a rhythmic interlude. Then at bar 214, marked “slower”, first the cornets recollect the shimmer effect from bar 46, then the muted horns and baritones do the same at bar 220. The use of (straight) mutes will create a sense of distance, especially in a church.

After a short interlude in the organ, the middle and upper brass and organ at bar 232 (Figure 16), *grandioso*, play the material derived from bar 25 onwards. The counterpoint provided by the organ following the band by two beats provides the dramatic climax to the work, which will be released at figure K. A fortissimo note in the tam-tam accentuates the organ’s delay.

232 Grandioso

Soprano Cornet

Solo Cornet 1

Solo Cornet 2

Solo Cornet 3

Solo Cornet 4

Repiano Cornet

2nd Cornet 1

2nd Cornet 2

3rd Cornet 1

3rd Cornet 2

Figure 16. Cornets bars 232-237

After a bridge passage, the coda starts at bar 242. The upper brass and percussion play the rhythm from the euphonium line at bar 49 at double speed, against three cornets and the trombones that play, in canon, the bass line from bar 186, also at double speed. This section then repeats with an added figure of the solo horn and soprano playing, in canon, the euphonium line from bar 118. This leads via the fourth version of the three-note motif in the back row cornets and lower ensemble to the closing bars of the work.

The use of both feet in the last chord may seem to add little because of the organ's stops and overtones, however listening to an organ in a church with one foot versus two feet, the latter was found to have a richer and fuller sound which gives emphasis to the final chord.

Attachment 1 – A Survey of Organs in Churches and Halls

Before starting Fantasia for Brass Band and Organ, it was decided that it would be useful to know if a substantial work for brass band and organ could and would be performed, what pitfalls may exist and, if it would not be performed, why not. The aim of this survey is, therefore, to determine any factors that could limit the opportunities for performances of the work. These factors include tuning difficulties, limited number of manuals in the organ, and lack of a suitable location if it is found that churches either do not stage concerts, or if the concerts are solely organ recitals or for chamber forces.

This survey was carried out during February and March 2006. The questionnaire was sent to various Internet mailing lists and forums on the Internet as well as some potential locations determined by a random search of church and some concert hall websites.

There are 64 locations in the results. Not all respondents replied to all of the questions, and some replies covered more than one location.

Questions 1, 2 and 4 were used to identify the recipient; the answers are not reproduced here.

1. Your name

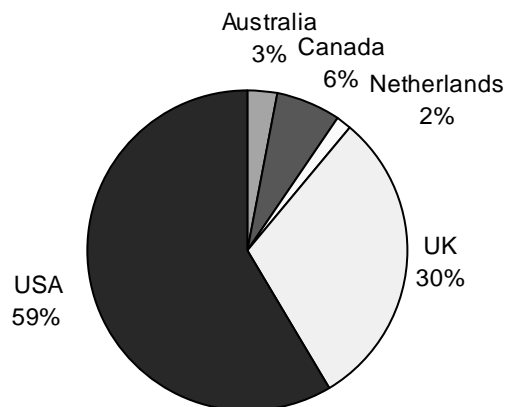
Results not published.

2. Your email address

Results not published.

3. Your town, county/state/province, and country (if outside the UK)

Only the countries have been published.

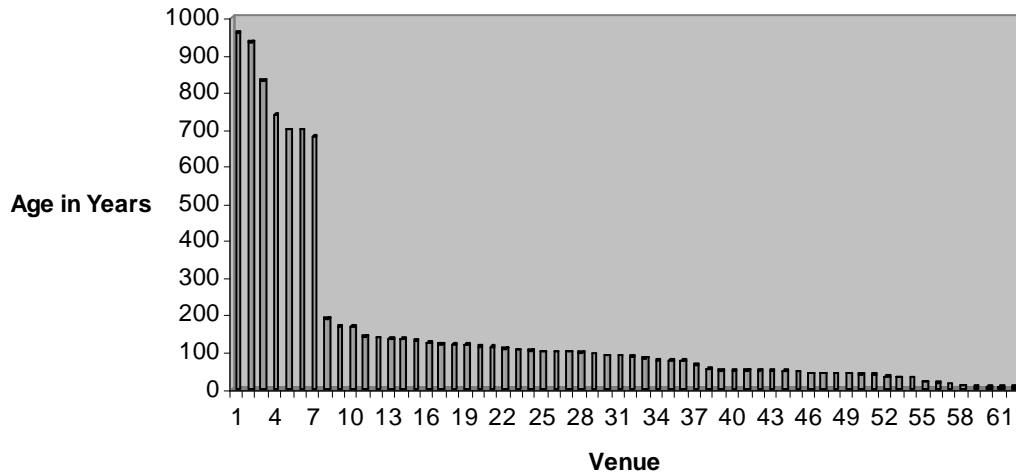


4. The name of your church/concert hall

Results not published.

5. The age of the church/concert hall

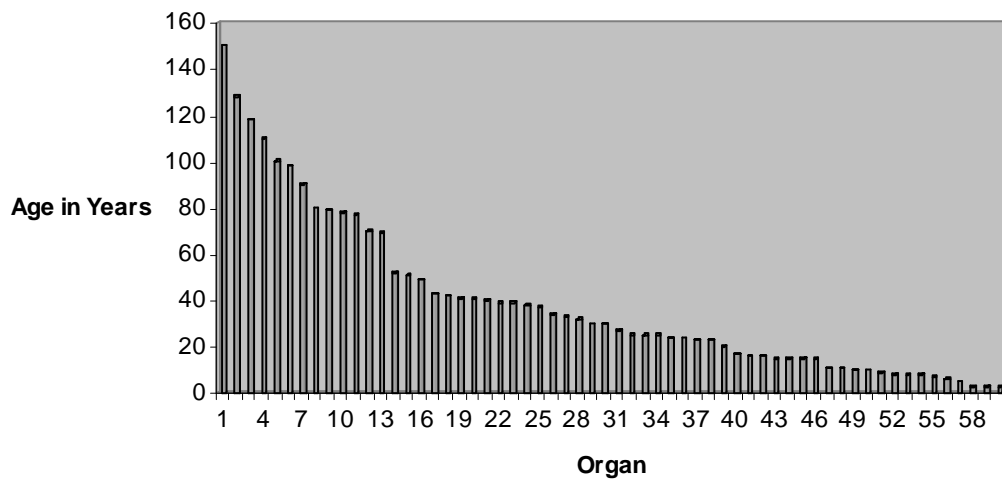
The chart's results are in years; if the respondent stated that their building has been added to or restored over the years then the date of the most recent addition or restoration is mentioned.



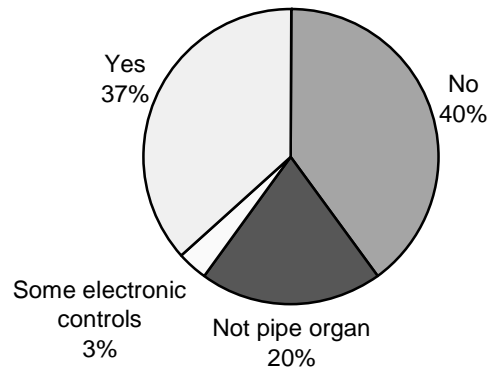
6. The age of the organ

The chart's results are in years; if the respondent stated that their organ has been added to or restored over the years then the date of the most recent addition or restoration is mentioned.

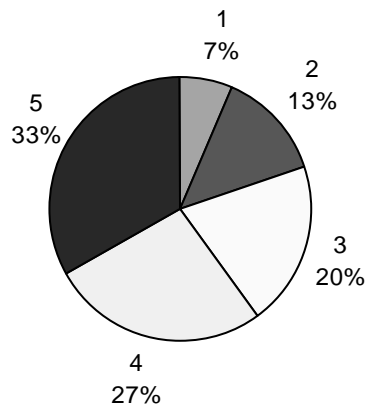
One respondent replied “unknown”.



7. Is the organ electronic (by which I don't mean is it a modern synthetic organ; I mean does it have electronic tuning and control)? If your church does not have a pipe organ, please state "not pipe organ"



8. How many manuals does it have?



9. If you have three manuals, are they Great, Swell and Choir? If not, what are they?

All apart from three responded "yes". The exceptions were:

Great, Rückpositiv, Swell;

Great, Swell, Positiv;

Continue, Great, Swell.

10. If you have four manuals, are they Great, Swell, Choir and Solo? If not, what are they?

All apart from four responded “yes”. The exceptions were:

Accompaniment, Great, Solo, Orchestral;

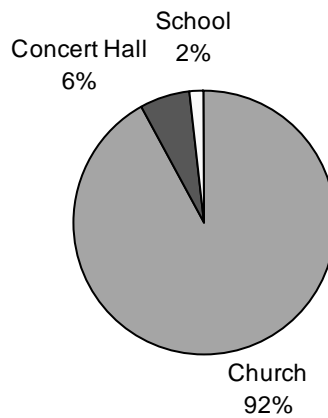
Great, Swell, Positive, Grand Choir;

Positive, Great, Swell, Llamarada;

Great, swell, choir, solo, Bombarde (five manuals).

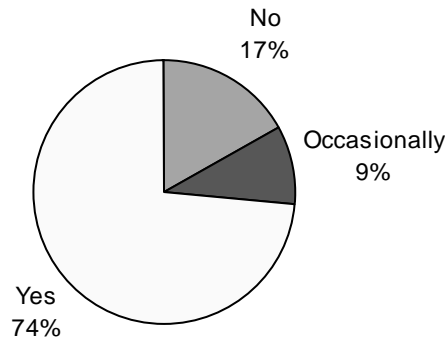
11. What is the denomination of your church? If it is a concert hall please answer "concert hall"

The denominations have not been published here, since it was not felt relevant, a better question would have been “Is your organ in a church, concert hall, or other?”



12. Do you put on concerts?

Many answered “occasionally” so that has been given a separate alternative. A better question would have been “Do you put on concerts that involve the organ and other instruments and/or voices (yes/no/occasionally (i.e. fewer than three per year))?”



13. If you do put on concerts, do they include other ensembles, are they for the organ alone, or do you vary? Feel free to elaborate as much, or as little, as you want; the more information you give (for example the type of musical group you perform with), the better help it will be.

The answers reproduced are mostly verbatim, but some have been paraphrased for the sake of clarity. Where the same answer has been given by more than one respondent, the number of responses appears in parentheses after the answer.

Vocal/choir and instrumental/brass band

Varies (2)

Four or five per year, some with orchestra and choir

Various including solo organ and piano as well as ensemble

Not usually with the organ

Choirs, brass band

Most are without the organ

Choir, organ recitals, and brass quintet

Varied ensembles and solo performers

Brass band and choral, but sometimes other instrumental groups

A few, but none involve the organ

Chamber music

Brass quartet

Organ and choir

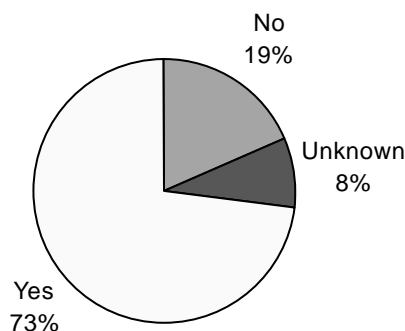
Chamber ensembles and duos (5)

Choirs, brass quintets, concert bands, jazz bands
Variable up to large orchestral and choral forces
Yes, of many different types including brass and wind bands, orchestral and choral
A wide variety of choral and instrumental
Yes, but none have included the organ
Organ recitals, small choral and chamber music
Various mainly choral or orchestral
Organ recitals, orchestral concerts and oratorios with organ and orchestra
Usually organ recitals
Mostly organ recitals and solo instrument with organ
Small orchestra
Solo organ recitals
A wide variety of small ensembles
Organ with instruments, voice and orchestra
Organ recitals, chamber ensembles and large orchestral
Symphony orchestra; brass and string ensembles
We give concerts of many types. The organ is used in our annual Bach festival each summer comprising concerts of period music (keyboard, choral, instrumental)
There are concerts with and without the organ and organ recitals
Primarily organ, but also some for organ with a soloist
Organ with small choral and instrumental ensembles. A brass band may overwhelm the organ
Orchestral concerts and choral concerts. An organ concerto has been performed with an orchestra. The acoustics are not good
Organ recital and various ensembles
Organ, instrumental and choral
Organs, brass bands, choirs, soloists and ensembles
We have a concert series that includes organ, vocals, choral, orchestras and piano. Each year our choir sings major works with an orchestra.
A variety of concerts. Mostly solo organ, but also organ and orchestra.
We offer a concert series for a variety of genres, including choirs, soloists, orchestras and organ recitals
Usually organ with one soloist
Organ only
Occasional recitals and concerts including brass, choir and organ
Occasional recitals or with a solo instrument
I have hosted vocal and choral, but never instrumental

14. Is the organ in tune (i.e. does middle A produce 440Hz)? If not, is it flat or sharp?

Many who answered added the comment that the organ's pitch is affected by temperature, some respondents replied with an exact pitch. With one exception, all of those who said their organ is out of tune, replied that it is flat.

Percussion instruments are now often sold at 442Hz, which shows a sharpening trend of the tuning standard that has been 440Hz since 1939, and since 1955 has been ISO standard 16 (reaffirmed in 1975). Before 1939, lower pitches were used, often as low as 435Hz. This may explain the flatness of many organs, a phenomenon that is likely to worsen if the standard is raised to 442Hz.



15. Any comments? If you wish to add anything, such as anecdotes of successes or problems when mounting a joint concert involving the organ and other instrumentalists, for example difficulty seeing the conductor from the organist's seat, or limitations such as "no 32' pedal" please do so here.

The answers reproduced are mostly verbatim, but some have been paraphrased for the sake of clarity.

We've had great success. Biggest problem is removing pews and chancel furniture.

Detached console with good view. A Handel Concerto has been successfully performed.

We've not experienced particular problems with organ and instruments together, though the acoustics of the room require getting used to (listen for the sound direct from the organ – not for the organ bounce off the far wall).

Our Allen works pretty well with other instruments. The sounds are not as pure as a pipe, but it's very flexible and always in tune. (My wife and I personally bought and dismantled a discarded pipe organ for this church as the church was being built, but the builders deliberately made it impossible for it to be installed, but that's another story entirely!)

You may be interested in knowing that the organ here is a Moller (American organ manufacturer, based in Hagerstown, MD).

Good line of vision.

Difficult seeing a conductor has not been a problem because the console is moveable. There are only acoustic 32's. We have had no trouble combining organ and brass. The organ is in good balance with brass, though I imagine with a brass band there could be problems. The organ is 30 ranks, it has five 16ft stops.

The console is located in the centre of the Chancel. I have three cameras located high up in the chamber that allows me to see the service, the brides, the conductor and the choir director on a video screen.

Organist sees with the help of a television monitor.

One major problem is the location of the organ console. I frequently will conduct from the organ, however, because of the placement in the room, the musicians' backs are always to the organ console. Even if another conductor is used, it is impossible for the organist to see the conductor, despite a complicated mirror arrangement.

Because of the location of the console, a closed-circuit television is required for the organist to see the conductor.

Organ recitals are held only if the organist gives Christian testimony. This changes with whoever is in charge.

The organ is a small tracker with no electric console controls; there is no 32' stop.

Organ console is movable.

The console is fixed in place; with choirs, the console is behind the singers, but a camera and TV monitor allows the organist to see the conductor.

Organ consoles and chambers are at the front of the church to the side of the orchestra. There is a CCTV system.

It is tuned once a year. There are no 32' stops – though the organ may be expanded. When combining brass with organ, the brass can easily outplay the organ.

Our organ is on an elevator on a lift behind a moveable wall that is removed for a concert so that the organ can be rolled out to a prominent position.

Our organ is brand new; we have not had too many difficulties. The case console has a mirror to allow good vision and there is a mobile console that allows for a lot of flexibility.

The pipe organ has only been used for solo recitals – we cannot use it with other instruments because of tuning problems.

The organ is insufficient for anything other than small-scale work.

It is a very small church.

Our instrument is a very modest instrument; it just barely supports congregational hymn singing.

Our events are limited in number because it's a small building.

The biggest problem is convincing the new minister that concerts of classical music are worthwhile.

Conclusion

Whilst the author predicted a more negative outcome to the survey, in particular: smaller organs, smaller halls and fewer churches willing to stage secular concerts, the results, in fact, give an encouraging picture that Fantasia for Brass Band and Organ can be performed in many locations, and that many locations could be willing to perform the work. The replies were from a wide variety of potential venues, and the results were consistent across this spectrum. Most (57%) of the organs have at least four manuals, which means that they would be suitable to perform the work. Tuning will be a problem at some locations.

This survey has provided evidence that Fantasia for Brass Band and Organ could be an asset to the repertoire for brass bands and can provide a useful work for concert series that involve organs and instrumental groups.

Bibliography

International Standards Organization 1975; *ISO 16:1975 Acoustics – Standard Tuning Frequency*.