

**Lecture given at the ISO Symposium  
“How to win new friends for the pipe organ”  
Amsterdam 2007**

**by Niclas Fredriksson**

**Organ documentalist and organ expert  
at the Swedish National Board of Antiquities**

Translation from Swedish by Göran Grahn

*Abstract*

*Playing with the meaning of words, the organ can be understood both as a musical instrument and a tool for cultivating friendship and divine worship. The culture of organ art can also be respected as a sign of personal and common response to an interest addressed and represented by values that the Roman architect Vitruvius called firmitas (firmness), commoditas (convenience) and venustas (beauty). As an act of arts the organ is an artefactual symbol of human creativity, engagement and care. Through, with and in the culture of organs a deepened consciousness on personal and individual identity can be experienced. The antropomorphic names for parts of the pipe organ invite playful reflections on existential matters. As a long-lived instrument of unusual continuity the organ can hold a mirror to generations of humanity, thus representing a resonance of the well known statement by the philosopher Protagoras: “homo mensura” (the human as the measure of everything). The pipe organ can be considered the Instrument for dialogue regarding humanity and human existence. The fact that the artefact pipe organ has been grafted to a culture and built into church buildings where the well known exhortation of Pilatus echoes is hardly any coincidence: “Ecce homo” (“Behold the man”)! The dignity of the statement has still the same actuality. If wisely approached, used and cultivated, the pipe organ can help us discover and experience deeper qualities of humanity. The challenge of the question “How to win new Friends for the Pipe Organ” is thus – as far as I believe and consider it – a matter of seeing things and persons as they are, namely connected and related to each other through, with and in values represented in artefacts such as old or yet to be built pipe organs.*

Best friends of the pipe organ,

On the occasions I have had the privilege to listen to Professor Harald Vogel, I especially have noticed one expression frequently used: “*fabelhaft*” or “fabulous”.

The world of the pipe organ is truly fabulous!

Fully aware of the risk of being misunderstood, I will take as a departure for this lecture the first association occurring to in my mind when I, through our dear friend Kristian Wegscheider, was invited to participate here at your 50 years jubilee.

Beside all kinds of more serious associations, thoughts and questions that the theme "How to win friends for the pipe organ" invokes, I have to admit that my first association went to a TV program called "Donald Duck and his friends".

But this was not due to any misunderstanding. The association is based on *my* personal experiences. Please let me explain by giving some examples on how friends of the organ can be won as a result of many factors, such as childlike fascination, unexpected coincidences and professional intention.

With friendly and ironic care, one of my closest and most cherished colleagues at GOArt in Göteborg used to call me "the duck". We, meaning Donald Duck and me, are thought to have the same spontaneous temperament. Regardless of the situation and occasion, we alike unrestrictedly and truthfully express our personal feelings and thoughts. I would like to take the opportunity to do the same today.

The main theme for the symposium "How to win Friends for the Pipe Organ" does of course also give what could be thought to be associations of a more serious character, both practical and theoretical as well as philosophical and existential. What you first ask yourself is to what extent friends are persons who have been won and friendship something that has been achieved? One experience is that friends and friendship are gifts taken for granted to care for and develop. Where then do these gifts, friends and friendship originate? The most natural answer is perhaps from common interests. One consequence of the theme of this symposium would then be to try to explain how common interests are created or how rather they occur. The task appears analogous with explaining love or, for example, where in the pipe organ the music originates and lives. These are, however, tasks that go beyond my understanding, therefore I always try to take both friends and common interests like love and music for – as I appreciate them, namely given – gifts.

I cannot present any checklists on how these precious gifts are won. What I can do instead is to give some examples of personal experiences of how friends earlier have been won for the pipe organ. With the Apostle Peter, I could say that the examples are not "any skilfully made up stories".<sup>1</sup> They are purely personal experiences.

### *Firmitas, utilitas et venustas*

With the first example, the association with the TV cartoon by Walt Disney with Donald Duck and his friends does find its explanation.

---

<sup>1</sup> 2 Pet 1:16.

In many homes in Sweden for decades past one highlight of the Christmas celebrations is to watch the just mentioned TV programme. It just cannot be missed. The tradition of watching the cartoon “Donald Duck and his friends wish you Merry Christmas” by Walt Disney was already established when I grew up.

Part of the programme is about “Snow White and the seven dwarves”. Snow White sings, and the dwarves play various instruments. In a wonderful way it is sung, yodelled and danced so that both the domestic animals and those in the forest marvel. The dwarves form an orchestra, playing different instruments. It is a marvellous scene.

The TV cartoon is shown at the same time as the Christmas prayer usually takes place in the church.

If my family ever went to church, it was once a year early on Christmas morning. On Christmas Eve, the whole family, grandmother and grandfather gathered in front of the TV. The cosy atmosphere was almost complete, and it was then when I was only a few years of age that the organ came into the family like a fairytale, and especially into my awareness. I was already lost in the organ, or rather won by it.

The next day, on Christmas Day, a similar familiar situation occurred. I found myself in church at 7'o clock in the morning, sitting on my grandfather's safe lap. The congregation sang together with the full pipe organ. Those early impressions from the crowded, wonderful Cistercian church of Vreta Kloster, built in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, were closely related to and directly associated with the fabulous experience the day before.

Through a combination of pleasure, continuity and fascination, the ground was laid for what was going to develop into an enduring interest.

These are values well represented in the long-lived pipe organ. Values related to those of pleasure, continuity and fascination were described during the decades before the birth of Christ in the handbook *De architectura libri decem*. The Roman architect Vitruvius states with regard to official buildings that they should be built with regard to *utilitas* (utility), *firmitas* (durability) and *venustas* (beauty).<sup>2</sup> These values, also described in *Quattro libri dell'architettura* (book I chapter I) from 1570 by Andrea Palladio,<sup>3</sup> are well represented in the long lived pipe organ.

---

<sup>2</sup> Conveniens, firmness resp. beauty. Vitruvius, *Om arkitektur, tio böcker*, Byggförlaget/Stockholm 1989 p. 15. In latin according to edition in Amsterdam 1649 (ex. in Kungliga biblioteket, Stockholm): “Haec autem ita fieri debent, ut habeatur ratio firmitatis, utilitatis, venustatis.”

<sup>3</sup> Andrea Palladio, *Fyra böcker om arkitektur*, Vinga Bokförlag/Munkedal (unknown year of reprint), introduction by Bengt Källgren, reprint of first swedish edition by Wahlström och Widstrands förlag 1928 with introduction by Martin Olsson, s. 6.

### *Coincidental and institutionalised event*

With still more examples, I would like to describe how both private circumstances and professionally planned events can enhance the interest for pipe organs. It can actually happen that one's interest in organs is constituted even before one's birth.

### *Coincidence*

The year before I was born, my parents were on their honeymoon. What they did on that journey, except from the conception of the individual you right now see in front of you, was that they bought a remarkable LP record. According to the record cover, it should contain the music to Henrik Ibsen's *Per Gynt*, composed by Edward Grieg.

By, let's say, around five or six years of age, I was trusted to handle the family gramophone all on my own. With a strong interest for sailing boats and sailing, I fell for the actual record because the front of the record sleeve was decorated with a swelling sail against a clear blue sky.

The gramophone started, and I settled comfortably in a favourite armchair. As the music started it was clear that the record must have been put into the wrong cover before my parents bought it. Instead of Grieg's *Per Gynt*, the Toccata, Adagio and Fugue in C by Johann Sebastian Bach filled the same living room where earlier the dwarf-organ designed by Walt Disney had been heard. Who is playing is not mentioned on the record label. The only sparse information that can be deciphered from it is that someone plays "the Luneberg organ".

Even if it would be interesting to trace the name of the friend who unknowingly was a guest in the living room, the knowledge from the occasion is still enough. The bell-like sound of a tierce solo registration, sometimes accompanied by flutes, majestic pedal solos with reeds and full pleno parts was ravishing. The many pauses in the piece played did make the connection between the sound of the organ and the reverberation in the room clear even through the loudspeakers. Somehow it gave me the feeling that my hearing was widened and my consciousness raised.

Like the swelling sail on the record cover, the senses of the child were taken up to the blue sky. The gift of happy coincidence was a sense of living space of unimaginable width.

### *Study visit*

There was yet another crucial step on the road that would lead to today and the honour of my taking part in your celebration here in Amsterdam, and this happened, as far as I remember, when I was around 12 years old.

After I entered the 5th grade in school, a study visit was organized by representatives of the school and the church in Vreta kloster. The well educated, skilled and talented organist, named Håkan Alinder, met the school class in the church. He treated us as friends and showed us around the church.

On our way up to the organ gallery, we stopped by the big Romanesque crucifix in the main nave. We were told that the head of the Romanesque human figure had been replaced and modernized during the gothic time!

When we reached the organ gallery. Alinder demonstrated the organ. He showed us pipes with feet, body, mouth and tongue. Pipes were blown. I remember I was enchanted by the fact that the friendly organist and the organic mechanism of the instrument were breathing the same air! All the various sounds and dynamical qualities of the organ were demonstrated. As well as playing improvisations, Alinder also played the Toccata and Fugue in D minor by J S Bach: one of the pieces from the A side of the honeymoon record!

Alinder explained what could be heard in the sounds and the silence in between. Through, with and in the pipe organ, the air that we breathe is filled with a wordless dialogue between the Voix Humaines and Voix Célèstes! The pipe organ *is* truly a fabulous artefact, an *anthropomorphic* and spiritual being.

In that context, there seemed to be a close association between the organ and the 're-headed' human sculpture of the crucifix. The crucifix in Vreta represents what the Roman statesman Pilate observed slightly less than 2000 years ago: "Ecce homo",<sup>4</sup> behold the man!

What happened in Vreta made a deep impression upon me.

*"Nothing bad that doesn't also bring something good!"*

Other examples shed light on the importance of the relationships between the personification and representation of church, organ and school.

The world of the organ is fascinating and fabulous: enchanting and bewitching. Literally, it can give inspiration to a song of relief but it can also on the other hand provoke discomfort. In the fabulous organ world, even the bewitching is a reality that can make the breathing and the song stick in the throat of a body stiff with fear.

Most of us take the fabulous effect for granted.

My dear grandmother belonged to those who were bewitched. Grandmother was afraid of organs and did not come along to church. Once, though, she followed me to the music conservatory in Malmö only to *take a look* at the three-manual pipe organ in the organ room. When we stood there, we talked a little about her fear of the organ. Eventually it appeared that my grandmother as a little girl had been beaten with a ruler by a school teacher. That teacher was also the organist at the church.

*Voilà!*

---

<sup>4</sup> Joh 19:5, ses *Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem*, Stuttgart 1969/1983 p. 1692.

Thus, more than 80 years later, grandmother was reconciled with the organ! She *even* wanted to *listen to* an organ, this three-manual organ by P G Anderssen in the organ room at the conservatory.

Before grandmother died some years ago, she attended several organ concerts in the church.

My grandmother's experience of being beaten with a ruler and my own experiences during the last few decades remind me of the so-called "homo-mensura statement". It was formulated by the ancient Greek philosopher Protagoras in the third century BC: "Man is the measure of all things" (usually interpreted to mean that the individual human being, rather than a divinity or an unchanging moral law, is the ultimate source of value).

The moral of the story of my grandmother gives substance to the (Swedish) saying: "There's nothing bad that doesn't also bring something good!"

#### *Personalizing of artefactual existential values*

To walk out of the edifice of limestone that is the church of Vreta, after the 5<sup>th</sup> grade study visit, was like a second birth.<sup>5</sup> The concept of the family was widened. A network of friendly, generous and pleasant persons cared for the newly-born interest and fascination. The organ art was personified by individuals who saw, heard and took care of the young, blond, blue-eyed, and of course naive interest: an interest that was based on a rather fragmentary knowledge of and perspective on the world of pipe organs. (Otherwise, it strikes me that there is no greater difference between then and the present situation, except that my interest is three times older.)

Those who invested their time and attention in my new-born interest were generous and spontaneous in sharing their knowledge. They awakened my sensibility to both the whole object and the details. With exemplary humility they led the way to what is worth seeing, hearing and remembering. My initially shy but curious interest was eventually directed more towards pipe organs that represent and possess values that endure.

Some of the people who represent these values are also friends of many of you. One of them was my mentor, the late Carl-Gustaf Lewenhaupt. Many of you also know my predecessor Axel Unnerbäck, and organbuilder Sune Fondell, a member of your worldwide circle of friends of the pipe organ.

---

<sup>5</sup> Jfr Rom 12:4, Ef 1:23 och Kol 1:18 resp. 2:9f.

Opportunities to cooperate, to discuss opinions and knowledge with experienced mentors are an invaluable benefit. From that benefit can be derived the bonus of friendship - also highly valued and, thankfully, not yet taxed.

I would here also like to mention my former close colleagues at GOArt, especially Alf Åslund and organ builder Mats Arvidsson.

Among friends within ISO, I would especially like to mention two who have inspired me in many ways, Rimantas Gucas and Mads Kjersgaard. Our friend Göran Grahn has, among other things, undertaken the translation of this lecture as well as the more extensive web version. And last (but not least!) Kristian Wegscheider, a dear good friend to all of us.

#### *Playful meanings of the word 'organ'*

Playing with meaning of words, I think that a humorous attitude also to both the concrete and abstract meaning of the organ itself could give inspiration to how we relate to the theme of the symposium.

For myself, I take the meaning "a wind instrument with pipes" for the word 'organ' for granted.

The Greek word *organon* means a "tool" or "instrument". It has to do with 'labour' and 'work'. Playfully interpreted it also could be understood as synonymous with a tool for joining human relations and maybe even for joining human and divine.

Used with human care the "tool" in our hands truly can be called a "friendship-ing artefact". However, let us all together, with our personally different perspectives and responsibilities in the building of new and caring for already existing organs, cultivate the use of the highly valued tools in a playful way.

Organs often are considered being expensive tools but actually it is the other way around: the pipe organ is highly valued, and all those who are skilled in using this highly valued tool, either as organists and/or organ consultants, are highly privileged persons. What about *you* then, dear friends and organ builders? All the knowledge *you* have received, and now carry on for future generations of creative knowledge, is certainly something to be proud of.

The pipe organ is a "friendship-ing artefact". To put it differently: let us cultivate friendship through manufacture of organs.

#### *Highly valued pipe organs*

Pipe organs are expensive! Pipe organs are highly valued "friendship-ing" instruments. Also in the magic world of pipe organs, friends like the super-rich Scrooge McDuck are wanted.

Money is highly valued but does not have a value that endures. Creative friends can maybe be bought with money but it is different with friendly creativity! Friendship is cultivated, grown and nurtured by generosity rather than money. However, money and financing can enable rapid growth and development. At first sight, the theme for the symposium might suggest making connections and creating conditions for financing and seeking definite answers.

Another association lends word and thought from the church father and ecclesiastical author, Augustine of Hippo (354-430 AD):

*Let him also rejoice and say, What thing is this? Let him rejoice even thus! and be content rather by not discovering to discover Thee, than by discovering not to discover Thee.*<sup>6</sup>

Out of the source of friendship flows, in all its frailty, the durable value of empathy.

Externally, our empathy could be seen as limited by our imagination and ability to find ways and fora for articulation in all its forms of expression. My imagination reaches only a re-creative portraying of what I have experienced and heard but here is a list of some such fora:

- Organ committees on parish and diocesan level.
- Associations of church musicians, mostly with organists and choir conductors.
- National organisations of interest such as the Gesellschaft der Orgelfreunde and the Swedish Organ Society (Svenska Orgelsällskapet) with regional independent variants.
- ISO and national associations of organbuilders.
- Formal and informal associations of organ consultants.
- Educational institutions for clergy, church musicians, organ builders and cultural heritage experts.
- Institutions for care of churches and cultural heritage.
- Parliamentary forums on both national, European and global level.

As you can see, the pipe organ, in competition with all other artefacts and objects of daily life, already has a place in all these fora!

On which occasions is it then possible to deepen, intensify and widen this knowledge? Some examples:

- Academies and festivals.
- Excursions and study visits to cultural heritage objects of varying importance.
- 

---

<sup>6</sup> Augustinus, *Bekännelser* (Confessiones), Skellefteå 1990 s. 43 (book I, chapter VI, section 10, the last sentence); compare the edition translated by A. Källström, Stockholm 1860 p. 9: "Man må fröjda sig äfven då och låta sig väl behaga att *genom icke finnande finna Dig, heldre än att genom finnande icke finna Dig.*" Compare Augustinus 1990 p. 71 (book III, chapter II, section 3) and Augustinus/Källström 1860 p. 469.

- Project work: when valuable organ are restored or built, it is a very good opportunity for school classes to follow the different stages. The pipe organ has relevance to most issues in society concerning justice, solidarity and humanity. It is connected also with human individual, divinity, universal truth, beauty and art or faith and knowledge. Sustainable values are brought into focus in an excellent way in a highly valued situation. There, too, are also more technical and physical issues focused upon in a practical and theoretical way. If well planned, organ projects can inform most school subjects, and at most levels.
- To involve representatives of mass media in all parts of a project is always popular.

Finally, it should be the daily work on a parish level around each organ, existing or not yet built, that the foundation for all friendship around the pipe organ is laid. Some examples:

- In Hedvig Eleonora church and in Lidingö parish in Stockholm, the organists Ulf Norberg and Ingrid Darmstedt-Holmberg are creating fora for children during school holidays.<sup>7</sup> With a playful seriousness are relations between generations, organ stops and children's voices built.
- In St Lars' church in Linköping, hundreds of people gather at lunchtime every Friday to hear a recital "for stressed souls" given by the organist Staffan Holm. They are as successful as they were in in Enköping where Holm was organist earlier. The success is probably influenced by several joint generously creative factors:
  - a. A personal commitment and a captivating generosity, not least by the organist Holm, but also in the parish and their employees and volunteers
  - b. Coffee and nourishing light refreshments are served (made during the morning by volunteers), costing around 2 Euros
  - c. The music presented in a popular way
  - d. The concert includes music requested by members of the audience (people can submit their wishes in a basket in the church for forthcoming concerts)
  - e. The concert is short, around 20 minutes, and includes both requested items, transcriptions and traditional organ repertoire
- Programmes of organ recitals could be composed and varied by extending the pure organ repertoire with ensemble music with other instruments and singers.

The advantage with these examples are that they nurture friendship between all generations and types of music, maturing into the knowledge that is the fruit of all cultivated interest, in due course.

---

<sup>7</sup> See *Kyrkans Tidning*, nr 27/28, 5-18. July 2007 p. 12f.

*A Festival of "Lust und Liebe"*

The jubilee of ISO 50 years is celebrated in the same year as the anniversary of the death of another person of great importance for his contemporary *circle of friends*: Dietrich Buxtehude (1637-1707). One of Buxtehude's friends was the organist in the German Church in Stockholm, Gustav Düben. In 1641 Düben signed a tabulature book, preserved in the well-known Düben Collection in Uppsala. The book contains works by Sweelinck, Bull and Byrd, Scheidt and Scheidemann as well as by Frescobaldi. On the title page Düben added a saying written in German:

*Lust und Liebe zum Dinge macht alle Arbeit geringe.*<sup>§</sup>

Best friends of the pipe organ and ISO, together we celebrate your 50 years jubilee in a Society that with dignity represents and promotes the art of the organ. Wherever we work, we all stand together before the common challenge "How to win Friends for the Pipe Organ". To continue our cultivation of organology and friendship, I think we all need to care for especially the following values:

- practical and theoretical competence
- generous creativity
- "Lust und Liebe"

Thank you for your attention: Happy birthday, ISO!

<sup>§</sup> *Desire and love make light of all undertakings*