n° 71
QUARTERLY
DECEMBER 2025
22€

Orgues NOUVELLES

THE MAGAZINE FOR ORGAN AND MUSIC ENTHUSIASTS

THE PISTOIA SCHOOL

SICILIAN MULTI-CONSOLE ORGANS

THE *ROUTE ROYALE DES ORGUES*

THE ORGANS OF THE BASILICA DI SAN PETRONIO IN BOLOGNA

THEATRE ORGANS

MARCO ENRICO BOSSI

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Orgues NOUVELLES ISSUE 71

4 **SPECIAL REPORT**
- The organ in Italy
  File compiled by Rodolfo Bellatti

15 **LITERATURE**
- Italian keyboard music
  Luca Scandali

18 - Organ music in Italy in the 19th century – Marco Ruggeri

20 - Marco Enrico Bossi – Nicola Cittadin

22 **CONVERSATION**
- Jean Langlais and Italy
  Marie-Louise Langlais

23 **FEEDBACK**
- Stefano Bonilauri – Pascale Rouet

24 **THE ORGAN**
- Romain Legros – Andrea Macinanti

26 **CONVERSATION**

28 - Domenico Severin – Viviane Loriaut
- Marta Gliozzi – Viviane Loriaut

29 **Music booklet**
- Italian music from the 16th to the 19th century

45 **FEEDBACK**
- Mandolin clubs in Italy
  Camilla Finardi

46 **EDUCATION**
- Music education in Italy
  Viviane Loriaut and Pascale Rouet

48 - L.F. Tagliavini – Viviane Loriaut

49 - Playing Frescobaldi… – Paolo Crivellaro

50 **THE ORGAN**

52 - The Pistoia School – Umberto Pineschi
- The organs of the Basilica di San Petronio in Bologna – Matteo Bonfiglioli

54 - Sicilian multi-console organs
  Diego Cannizzaro

56 - Theatre organs in Italy
  Federico Lorenzani

58 **FEEDBACK**
- The protection of historic organs in Italy – Umberto Forni

60 - The 'route royale des orgues' – Xavier Sant

62 – SWELL BOX

66 – NEWS ON DISPLAY

Between breath and light



VIVIANE LORIAUT

Rosehip in Tuscany.

Cut the mistletoe! Cut the holly!
It's Christmas, let your hair down…

No mistletoe or holly for this issue, we're afraid, but a beautiful rosehip that takes us to the heart of our journey: Baroque Italy, a land of contrasts and clarity, where the organ has found one of its most unique and fascinating homes.

From the tribunes of Rome to the Ligurian valleys, via Pistoia and Bologna, Viviane and Jean-Louis Loriaut invite us to discover a world of sound where each note is a breathtaking landscape, where each registration transports the mind to a sublime scene, a breathtaking piece of architecture, or a soothing sliver of the sky

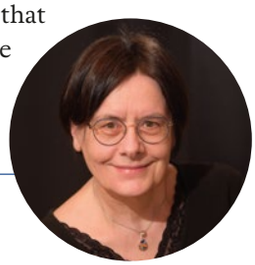
If, as Paolo Crivellaro points out, 'the 16th century was the golden age of the organ in Italy,' we then discover a diverse range of instruments throughout these pages, from small positive organs (some very old) to monumental organs. But always, regardless of its size, the Italian organ remains an instrument of light, rhythm and breath, an instrument that makes its *Principali*, its *Flauti*, its *Voci Umane* sing without heaviness or emphasis. And what a treat it is to hear the tinkling of the *Campanelli*, the trumpeting fanfare of the tin reeds, the inimitable military evocation of the *Banda Militare*, or the chirping of the *Uccelliera*, reminding us, if we needed reminding, that Italy is indeed the home of opera.

To interpret Frescobaldi, Pasquini, Zipoli or Bossi is to leaf through the pages of the past, of course, but also to rediscover an art of the time: that of a readily rhetorical, inventive, sometimes improvised discourse, often underpinned by the volubility so characteristic of the local language, which immediately transports us to horizons with mythical accents. For this is something that each of us has undoubtedly already experienced: one need only open an Italian score for the golden light of the transalpine Baroque churches to begin to shine over them…

This issue invites you to immerse yourself in this flamboyant universe: only a few personal encounters, we're afraid (may our great Italian organists, Lorenzo Ghielmi, Andrea Marcon, Roberto Antonello and so many others who would have been perfectly at home here, forgive us, it's only a matter of time…), but instead you can find splendid instruments and a breathtaking repertoire.

Christmas is coming! Beyond the organs, this above all is a spirit that we want to celebrate in these particularly troubled times: that spirit of music, whether it comes from Italy or elsewhere… Music that brings people together, uplifts and relaxes us, just like the feast of the Nativity itself.

Cut the mistletoe! Cut the holly!
And a wonderful end to the year to you all.



PASCALE ROUET
Managing Editor

Mandolin clubs in Italy[1]

At the end of the 19th century, brass bands, choirs, philharmonic orchestras, amateur theatre troupes, mandolin clubs, and sports and recreational clubs reflected a change in the social hierarchy, embodying citizens' participation in public life through social, health, economic, cultural and philanthropic associations.

The main places of entertainment and cultural leisure for the working classes were choral associations, brass bands, and mandolin clubs. Towards the end of the 19th century, all Italian cities – with the exception of the former Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, where mandolin clubs sprang up sporadically but were short-lived – had a mandolin club in addition to a brass band. The link between these two groups was close.

Brass bands and mandolins

What do brass bands and mandolin clubs have in common? Several things: the need to be able to sight-read music; a similar (often identical) repertoire; the publication of specialised magazines; the practice of public competitions and gatherings; the relatively modest cost of the instruments; a public activity regulated by a statute approved by the authorities; an obvious socialising function.

However, a major difference between brass bands and mandolin clubs lies in the social background of their members: brass bands bring together workers from all walks of life, from those in very demanding manual trades to those in lighter occupations. Daily occupation determines the distribution of instrumental roles: the lowest-pitched, heaviest and least manoeuvrable instruments are assigned to musicians mainly from the working class, while the high-pitched, agile and virtuoso instruments are mainly played by people with great manual dexterity.

In mandolin circles, on the other hand, the membership consists mainly of representatives of the liberal professions or light crafts, as playing plucked string instruments requires fine dexterity in both hands, a quality associated with higher social status[2]. During the 20th century, there was a degree of permeability between the two groups: it was common for percussionists in brass bands to also participate in mandolin circle performances, or for the most skilled brass band instrumentalists to also try their hand at plucked string instruments (and vice versa...).

Bridges and teaching...

In municipal music schools, it was possible to begin studying a wind instrument, but not a plucked string instrument – there was no officially recognised curriculum for the mandolin and guitar. For this reason, many mandolinists and guitarists devoted themselves to studying wind instruments in order to obtain a musical qualification.

Agostino Pisani, in his *Manuale del mandolinista*[3] (Mandolinist's Manual), mentions 300 workshops where mandolins were made in Catania between 1880 and 1920: a growing demand for instruments obviously linked to increasingly important activities. It should be noted that music publishing also experienced strong growth during this period.

Played by both the elite – notably the *Regina Margherita* mandolin clubs in Florence and Ferrara; the sovereign herself was a lutenist, guitarist and mandolinist – and by different social strata, the mandolin thus became an instrument for the masses, synonymous for some with the desire to break down social barriers ●

Camilla Finardi

1. Although there are many mandolin ensembles in Italy, this is not, of course, unique to that country: they can also be found elsewhere, particularly in France and Belgium.

2. With the dissolution of free associations by the fascist regime and the obligation to continue activities within factories with the Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro, brass bands survived this sad political experience, albeit with difficulty, while the activities of mandolin circles were severely compromised, as most of them were not made up of industrial workers. Indeed, among the first members of the *Circolo Mandolinisti e Mandoliniste di Cremona* (Cremona Mandolinists' Circle) were engineer Giovanni Francesco Poli, magistrate Luigi Gaetani and lawyer Guido Manara.

3. Milan, Ed. Hoepli, 1898.



Camilla Finardi.

Clubs

The practice of '*cercles*' is closely related to the unifying social custom of clubs, as they were called in England, where they originated and spread. Scott Joplin dedicated his famous ragtime *The Entertainer* (published in 1902; almost a self-dedication, since it was his own nickname) '*to James Brown and his Mandolin Club*'.

CAMILLA FINARDI

Born in 1986, Camilla Finardi has a degree in musicology and master's degrees in mandolin from Milan and guitar from Reggio Emilia. A mandolin teacher at the Niccolò Piccinni Conservatoire in Bari since 2025, she collaborates with various theatres and orchestras, plays period instruments and has recorded for prestigious labels.