Of course, such phenomena appear whatever the epoch and style of the piece. But this book is not about questions of "style", rather of getting as familiar as possible with one's own mental abilities towards developing mobility as well as setting free energy for one's interpretation, in which ever way one wishes it to turn out.

A. III. Alternative ways of practising the organ

The development of one's listening and motor skills always leads to the expansion of one's musical power of imagination and, in turn, a more animated and complex artistic interpretation. In order to achieve this, it is, however, necessary to include, in addition to the familiar practising "tools" listed above, other techniques which go into more depth, and not only concentrate on what has to be done but also the person doing it.

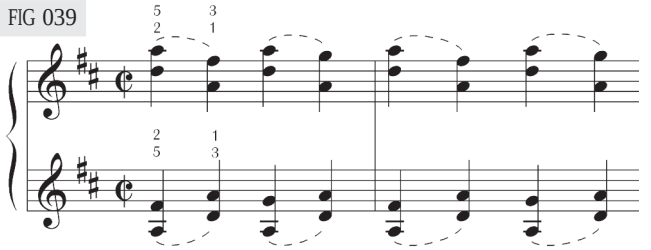
One often observes, for example, organists primarily asking themselves before learning a new piece, when practising a difficult passage or preparing for a recital: "What do I have to do now?" Without even considering the other question, "what would I like to hear now?"

Admittedly, in comparison to other instrumentalists or singers, an organist has to indeed "do" a great deal more external things, execute many different manoeuvres, which, due to the size of the instrument, have to be accomplished by widely separated-off parts of the body. Additionally, the question of manual-positions and registration has to be confronted with every new instrument each time anew. And then one is supposed to listen as well? But this is really the case: The quality of practising technically is closely related to one's inner conception of acoustic as well as motor aspects. Between these factors lies a kind of "spiral of growth": Activating one's hearing and awakening inner conceptions determines the quality of what is going to be transformed into movement; one's hearing has, in turn, the control over the acoustic result of the movement etc.

Practising the organ is made more difficult of course by the notes not flexible in volume which means the practising organist can only become aware of one-sided combinations of movements and unconscious reflexes by listening carefully. Those practising the piano have an easier job here because one hears immediately on a piano or clavichord when the thumb "crashes down" or weak fingers are playing too quietly.

As a matter of fact, one has to "outwit" the organ in a sense in order to track down one's own strange habits, i. e. "unconsciously conditioned habits", whose effects aren't likely to go unnoticed by a critical audience. "Outwit" means here: using the possibilities of the instrument in a creative way so that one's hearing is constantly in demand as an active control with a specific acoustic expectation. Prerequisite for this is an exact inner

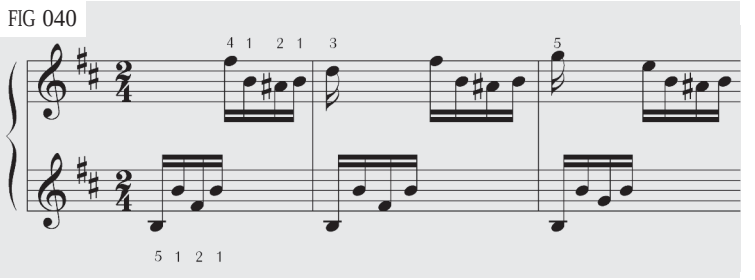
FIG 039



L. Vierne, 1st Symphony, Final, bars 1–2, R.H. / L.H. simultaneously

In the following piece, the motor part in bars 1–72 is a little bit more complex due to an extra note (the first semiquaver in each bar respectively):

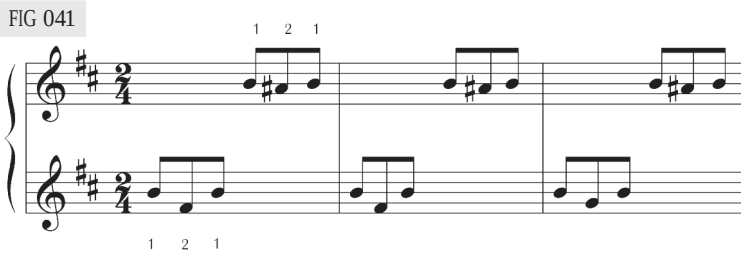
FIG 040



E. Gigout, Toccata in B minor, bars 1–3, original form

It is therefore recommendable to practise the inner hands which are compatible in a motor sense (with the weight on the outer hand), very carefully paying special attention to each thumb taking over from the other:

FIG 041



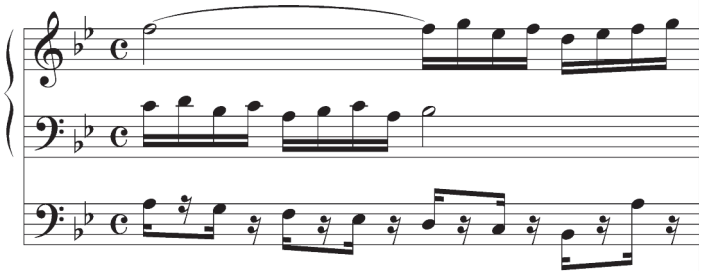
E. Gigout, Toccata in B minor, bars 1–3, R.H. / L.H. only inner hand (1st / 2nd finger) as continuous sequence of triplets

If this doesn't cause any more problems, integrate "the rest" simultaneously in order to keep the pauses out of one's mind and movements. The wrist can also support the figure here with a slight sweeping motion:

Of course, other ways of making the minims rhythmical are possible.

Here follow some further variations of exercises in a similar style as described in previous chapters to aid practising exact co-ordination and at the same time encourage independent playing: leaving out the non-accentuated semiquavers in the pedal, i. e. only the left foot is playing.

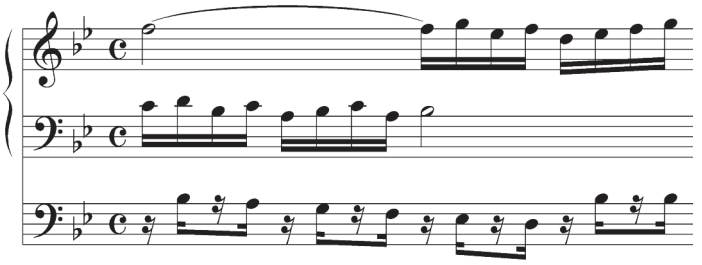
FIG 091



J. S. Bach, Fugue in G minor, bar 33, hands as in original, pedal left foot only

The same applies to playing non-accentuated semiquavers, i.e. only the right foot is playing:

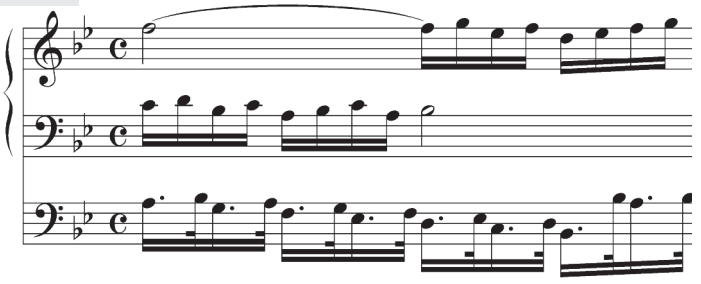
FIG 092



J. S. Bach, Fugue in G minor, bar 33, hands as in original, pedal right foot only

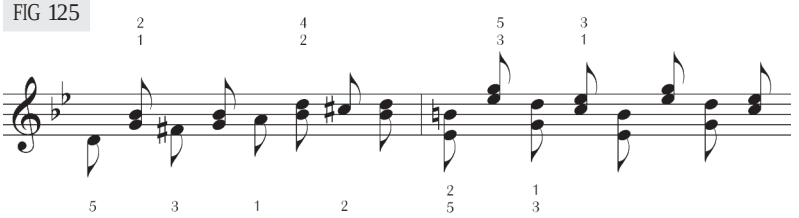
One single part played in dotted rhythm:

FIG 093



J. S. Bach, Fugue in G minor, bar 33, hands as in original, pedal rhythm long / short

FIG 125

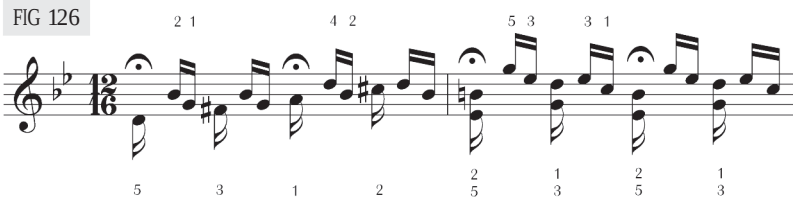


M. Dupré, Prelude in G minor, bars 1–2, R.H. simultaneous, L.H. as in original

One can also perform the exercise with fermata-relaxation throughout.

The fermatas here are positioned above (instead of in front of or behind) each corresponding semiquaver, as the linearity of the converging lines of movement from the left and the right is maintained better in this way; the important thing is that one mentally pictures the finger movement for the advancing five notes on the fermata which hasn't been determined in terms of time beforehand. During the fermatas one should relax completely (exhale, sink shoulders, loosen jaw).

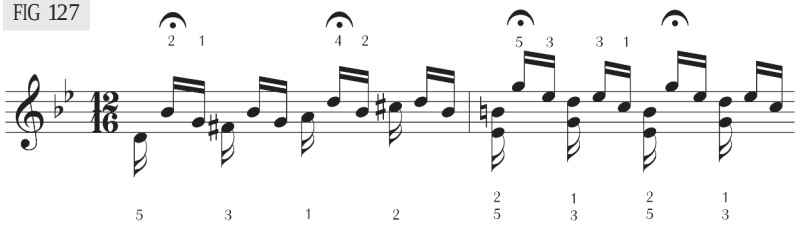
FIG 126



M. Dupré, Prelude in G minor, bars 1–2, relaxing-fermatas on 1st and 7th semiquaver

The fermatas should lie on a different beat each time around:

FIG 127



M. Dupré, Prelude in G minor, bars 1–2, relaxing-fermata on 2nd and 8th semiquaver

The augmentation of a whole beat is very effective as, despite the motor familiarity of playing continually through, the metric placing of the fingers has to be consciously controlled over and over again: