

# Clicquot

Pierre Hardouin

## (1) Robert Clicquot

(*b* Reims, c1645; *d* Paris, 21 July 1719). He was introduced to organ building by his brother-in-law Etienne Enocq, who in 1654 married Jacqueline Clicquot at Reims after he had rebuilt the organ of the cathedral (1647). Robert was called to Paris by Enocq to work on the organ of the chapel at Versailles, and was appointed 'facteur d'orgues du Roy', a post held by successive members of the family. After the death of Enocq (1682) and of his protector Colbert (1683), he worked mainly in the provinces where he built or rebuilt several large organs (St Jean-des-Vignes, Soissons, 1680–82; Rouen Cathedral, 1689–92 – there he was particularly praised by Jacques Boyvin). As partner of Alexandre Thierry, who was also the godfather of his son (3) Louis-Alexandre, Clicquot built the huge organ of the collegiate church at Saint Quentin. After Thierry's death (1699) Clicquot took his place as the leading organ builder in Paris. He built the organ of Blois Cathedral (1699–1704) and with the help of Julian Tribuot he built the definitive organ in the great chapel at Versailles (1710–11); the case of this instrument is still extant. He also worked on the organs of Laon Cathedral (1714), Saint Germain-en-Laye (1715) and the Palais des Tuileries (1719). As none of his organs survives it is impossible to judge his work today; but he was reputed to be the best French organ builder between 1700 and 1720.

## (2) Jean Baptiste Clicquot

(*b* Reims, 3 Nov 1678; *d* Paris, 16 March 1746). Son of (1) Robert Clicquot. He learnt organ building first with his father, then as a partner of Alexandre Thierry. As master, he worked in the provinces (Laon, 1714), and specialized in building organ parts or pipes for other organ builders, including his brother.

## (3) Louis-Alexandre Clicquot

(*b* Paris, c1684; *d* Paris, 25 Jan 1760). Son of (1) Robert Clicquot. Like his father he was organ builder to the king. He always remained a modest workman and built small organs; those at Rozay-en-Brie (1730) and Houdan (1734), carefully restored, still exist. He undertook instruments for bigger buildings only when his son (4) François-Henri Clicquot could help him.

## (4) François-Henri Clicquot

(*b* Paris, 1732; *d* Paris, 24 May 1790). Son of (3) Louis-Alexandre Clicquot. As early as 1751 he helped his father with the maintenance or building of larger organs such as that at St Roch, Paris (ordered from his godfather, F.H. Lescloppe, and possibly planned by the French-German organ builder K.J. Riepp). This instrument, with four manuals and 35 stops, was completed by François-Henri himself; it was acknowledged as a masterpiece, and established his reputation. When his father died he soon took charge of the workshop. First he completed the organ of St Louis, Versailles, which won the praise of Louis XV. The number of instruments he maintained quickly increased. Like his father, he became accountant to the guild of instrument makers (1765). His work then consisted mainly of modernizing famous 17th-century instruments (notably Parisian organs, such as that of St Gervais), using parts of the old materials (wood pipes, cornets etc.) and building new front pipes, principals, mixtures and especially reeds. Around 1771 he used tin for all stops (St Thomas-d'Aquin; Ste-Chapelle, now in St Germain-l'Auxerrois), but later seems to have reverted in part to the use of lead. Nevertheless his descant *Flûte* and *Echo flûte* (instead of the classical *Cornet*), always of tin, are especially beautiful. His reed stops were always much praised, both the *Bombardes* and *Trompettes* and the *Hautbois*, which he said was his own invention; he often installed it free of charge. He also made use of the *Bassoon*, an innovation of his brother-in-law Adrien Lépin, though probably an import from Germany. He never removed the *pleins jeux* as did his pupil Dallery (the citation of St Nicolas-des-Champs, Paris, as an example of this procedure is a misinterpretation). The famous organ theorist Bédos de Celles praised him warmly in the preface to *L'art du facteur d'orgues* (1766–8), as did such renowned organists as Daquin, A.-L. Couperin,

Balbastre, Séjan etc. Between 1770 and his death he overshadowed other Parisian organ builders and ventured into the provinces, especially in northern France and even in Normandy, the territory of his rival J.-B.N. Lefèvre. He remorselessly examined Lefèvre's work in Evreux Cathedral, describing it as an 'ouvrage saveté', and forbade him to work further on the maintenance and repair of this organ. The greatest instrument built by François-Henri Clicquot was that at St Sulpice, Paris (1781), where three manuals of the five had a range from A' to e'''; it had 64 stops, 22 of them reeds. Many old organs contain his original stops, but the best preserved of his instruments are at St Gervais, Paris (1768), St Nicolas-des-Champs, Paris (1773–7), Souvigny (1782) and Poitiers Cathedral (1787–90), this last being the one most nearly in original condition. Clicquot used it to illustrate a projected treatise (*Théorie pratique de la facture d'orgues*, facs. ed. J. Martinod, Kassel, 1969), which was unfinished at his death, and from which only carefully engraved diagrams of the reed stops are extant.

The work of François-Henri Clicquot represents the climax of the French classical organ-building tradition, the principles of which he maintained with sobriety and technical assurance. Nevertheless, he also did research on new specifications for the *plein jeu*, differing from the tradition of Bédos de Celles. During the 19th century he was the only classical French builder whose name lived on.

### (5) Claude François Clicquot

(b Paris, 1762; d Paris, 29 March 1801). Son of (4) François-Henri Clicquot. He was apprenticed by his father to several organ builders at the end of the 18th century (Dallery, Isnard, Micot etc.); eventually he succeeded his father and completed his unfulfilled contracts, as at Poitiers Cathedral (1790). During the first part of the Revolution he rebuilt some organs removed from suppressed churches, including St Eustache and St Jacques-du-Haut-Pas, Paris, and Soissons Cathedral; he repaired many others (e.g. St Merry, Paris). Soon he abandoned organ building for the purveying of Buonaparte's armies, as did his two brothers. The family Clicquot de Mentque derived from them.

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