

Organ Console terms (part one)

STOP – a control that an organist activates from the console to select a particular sound (i.e., to allow air to rush through that group of pipes). It is usually a knob the organist pulls out, but it can sometimes be a slider or a push tab. (as in the phrase “pulling out all the stops”)

STOP KNOB (or slider or tab) – the thing the organist pushes or pulls to activate the group of pipes. A Stop Knob usually has two pieces of information; the name of the stop (such as Chimney Flute) and a number (such as 8, 4, or 2) which indicates the pitch level of the pipes in that group. An 8 foot stop speaks at regular pitch, 4 an octave higher, and 2 an octave above that.

RANK – a group of pipes that all have a single sound.

A STOP usually activates one rank. The STOP is what the organist considers when choosing sounds; the RANK is the group of pipes themselves that are controlled by the STOP KNOB (or slider or tab). There are, however, exceptions to this one-to-one relation, which is one reason a STOP and a RANK are not identical:

COMPOUND STOP – a knob (or slider or tab) which controls more than one rank of pipes at a time. STOPS that are compound are generally labelled with roman numerals (rather than 8, 4, or 2) telling how many ranks they control, as in a FIVE RANK MIXTURE (which would have a V under the name of the stop) thus, FURNITURE IV (which is a four rank mixture stop)

BORROWING: what an organ builder does when he or she use the same rank in more than one part of the organ. In this way, two or more STOP knobs in different places on the organ console may activate the same RANK of pipes.

MANUAL – a keyboard. Usually an organ will have from 2 to 5 MANUALS. Their names vary from country to country, but in the U.S. they are usually referred to as THE SWELL, THE GREAT, and THE CHOIR. If there are more than three MANUALS they may be called the ECHO, the SOLO, the POSITIVE, etc.

DIVISION -- a section of the organ. Usually a DIVISION is comparable to one MANUAL on the organ, as in THE SWELL DIVISION. In the pipe room, Divisions are usually grouped together. The Swell might take up the upper story of one side of the pipe room, for example, and the GREAT may be on the lower half, or on the other side of a large chamber. Each DIVISION will have several STOPS that, when pulled, sound only on a particular MANUAL; thus, you'll have several stops which are part of the SWELL division, and are playable only on the SWELL MANUAL.

FLOATING DIVISION – a group of STOPS which do not belong to any MANUAL but can be assigned to any one of them by activating a control. The Organ at THIRD CHURCH has a floating STRING division, whereby about two dozen stops can be assigned to any MANUAL(s) the organist wants to put them on at any time.

COUPLERS – ways in which an organist may combine the sounds on one manual with those of another. For instance, coupling the SWELL to the GREAT means that all the STOPS which have been activated on the SWELL will also sound when playing the GREAT. Any sounds that have been activated on the GREAT will also sound while the GREAT is being played, but will not sound on the SWELL, since this is a one-way transaction, SWELL **TO** GREAT.

REGISTRATION – The art of combining stops effectively. This includes understanding the different families of organ sound as well as their pitch levels, and familiarity with a particular instrument so that suitable balance is achieved between the MANUALS.