

Günter Lade

The Main Organ of the Schottenkirche

In designing the Choir Organ the liturgical requirements of church and prayer services were of primary importance whereas in designing the Main Organ very basic questions arose. Utilizing the historic three-part case clearly dictated a classical model, but still it had to be decided whether the new instrument should be a reconstruction or copy of the former Kober organ (1804) keeping the existing console or whether it should be a completely new organ unfettered by postulates from ecclesiastical organ history.

Since the only remnants of Kober's pipework were twelve 2' Quintaton pipes, a reconstruction of the Kober organ seemed hardly feasible. Moreover the prevailing consensus was that a copy of the original specification would impose far-reaching limitations on the capabilities of the organ in performing music not only of Baroque but also of Romantic and contemporary composers. Therefore the decision was made to build a new modern instrument with a romantic Swell in addition to the classical divisions Great, Rückpositiv and Pedal. Adding the Swell meant only a limited expansion of the other divisions with Romantic voices such as Flute harmonique that would not be present in a purely Baroque specification.

The existing electro-pneumatic Molzer organ (1959) was removed in the summer of 1993. Since Molzer had kept only the front of the Kober organ, the original case not only was missing most panels but all of the side and back walls that had been removed in the process of moving the two main cases closer to the west wall. After restoration of the case, of which the framework had to be remade, the main case was returned to its original location with approximately 3.6ft. tolerance to the rear. Apart from improving the overall optical impression - the sides of the case no longer protrude into the middle window - this location once again ideally projects the sounds from the Great, Swell and Pedal in addition to shortening the distance of these divisions to the Rückpositiv in the balustrade.

As is evidenced by cutouts in the beams under the flooring the new console is located in exactly the same position as Kober placed the original console now on display in the Vienna Technisches Museum (Museum of Technology). Although the original intent was to reuse the old console the plan had to be abandoned because of the increased number of stops, the greater compasses of all keyboards and the addition of a third manual. The new console, however, with its joinery and sharply inclined terraced stopjamb is adequately representative of its original archetype.

In the left side of the main organ case with the 16' Praestant in the front there are the Great and the Small Pedal and behind that, apart from the case, the 32' Untersatz with a wind chest of its own. The stops of the Large Pedal and the Swell are installed in the right side with the 16' Principal of the Pedal in the front. Just as it was in the Kober original the center tract under the window contains part of the wind supply and of the actions while the Rückpositiv with the 4' Praestant in the front is located in its usual place in the balustrade. It should be noted that the entire pipework is new and that the original twelve Kober Quintaton pipes have been carefully stored in the monastery. Hermann Mathis very successfully voiced the instrument in spite of difficult acoustics resulting from the great height of the organ gallery.

Prof. Michael Radulescu formally received the new organ on 17 December, 1995 and characterized the instrument in his testimony to Abbot Dr. Heinrich Ferenczy as Vienna's most representative organ for the performance of Romantic, symphonic and contemporary repertory as well as for the major organ works of Johann Sebastian Bach.