



Mathis Orgelbau AG CH-8752 Näfels

Fiecht/Austria, St. Georgenberg, Abbey Church



Josef Aigner (1809-1887) was likely the most important Tyrolean organ builder of the 19th century. Among others he built organs for the Franciscan Church in Schwaz (1843) and



Reutte (1847/48) as well as for the parish churches in Brixen (1858) and Meran (1867). In 1865/66 he built his largest organ with three manuals and 32 stops for the Marienberg Benedictine Abbey. His second largest, 1870/71, was the Fiecht organ with 31 stops, which is today the second largest existing historic slider chest organ of Tyrol.



As was typical for Aigner the Principal plenum in the Great with a 16' quintatön is richly equipped. The Cornet is not a solo stop, rather, according to southern German custom, a colorful and voluminous plenum stop. The same is true to a lesser extent for the Positiv. An amply supplied 8' group ensures a rich and dynamic differentiation in both manuals and by itself enables a wide array of radiant registrations. The Fugara in the Great as a third 4' stop adds more variation in color. The Flötenquint, used by Aigner exclusively in the Greats of large organs, is unique. The only surviving example is in Fiecht. The harmonica 8' with free reeds is played from the Positiv manual. It stands on its own special chest in the lower case, has its own action and is switched on and off by a check valve. The pedal compass is typical for Aigner: 18 keys in chromatic order, whereby only the first 12 keys are provided with pipes. The key sequence repeats at c°, the couplers continue to f°. In 1880 Aigner himself added a free-standing console.



Plans for a new organ or for rebuilding the old one by the organ builders Anton Behman (before 1900) and the Brothers Mayer (1910) from Vorarlberg/Austria were never carried out. Instead, Carl Schäfer, manager and voicer of the Mayer company, added three new stops in the course of an overhaul in 1910. In 1949 Schäfer repaired the damage to the pipes and trackers inflicted by vandalistic occupation soldiers and made small changes to the specification.

Both the general condition of the organ and the alterations over time made a complete restoration in keeping with principles of historic preservation necessary. This renovation was entrusted to Mathis Orgelbau in Näfels. The objective of the extensive restoration was to restore the Aigner specification as it was in 1880.

Alfred Reichling. Organ History of the St. Josef Collegiate Church, in. 250 Years of the Collegiate Church. St. Georgenberg-Fiecht Benedictine Abbey, Tyrol, Passau 2000. Photos: Günter Lade