

The Organs of the Cathedral

Because the *urbarium* of 1593 makes mention of the organist of the castle church of Szombathely, it seems unquestionable that there was an organ in the Romanesque style at the old Virgin Mary church. It must have been built around the time when the chapter moved from Vasvár to Szombathely. (1578)

When the very generous patron prelate György Szécsényi rebuilt the church in baroque style in 1665, he made sure that there will be an organ along with other interior decorations and furniture. This is mentioned in the 1674 document of a visit by Tormásy (notation 11) which says: “mediocre organum” meaning a medium size organ.

Szombathely’s last bishop from Győr, Count Ferenc Zichy, went even further and after the 1744-45 renovation of the church installed another organ. Batthyany wrote about this organ in his notes during his visit. He says it was “magnum et elegans,” meaning that its size was suitable to the size of the church, and it was beautiful and elegant, and maybe decorated with carved statues, just like Zichy’s organ in Győr. However the bishop did not pay for the organ himself, but deferred the cost to the cathedral chapter and the parish. Because later an argument developed between the chapter and the parish regarding that who has the right to use the big organ it can be deduced that both the small and the big organ were in use at the time. Neither party could possibly imagine a solution to the argument where one of them is left totally without an organ.

The beautiful large organ, a valuable example of Hungarian organ building, was destroyed in 1792 when the city’s first bishop János Szily ordered the demolition of the castle church. However bishop Szily had no time to build a new organ for his new cathedral, because before the construction and the interior decoration were completed, he died in 1799. During the term of his successor Ferenc Herzan very little was done about the completion of the cathedral because of the French wars. It was only under bishop Lipót Somogy (1806-22) that the work on the cathedral was continued. At this time the building of a new organ was started. In the meantime a small organ from the Calvary church was used for worship.

In connection with the interior renovation undertaken by bishop Somogy in 1808 a new organ was ordered. The bishop gave the job to Ignac Kober, an organ builder from Vienna. Kober was not unknown in Hungary. He built the organ in the cathedral of Pécs in 1805-1806.

Kober’s plan called for a two manual 34 variation organ. The price he asked for was 13,500 Ft. He started the work, but he died in 1812. The organ at that time was less than half built. Kober’s son was 17 year old at this time. He had neither experience as an organ builder, nor did he command respect in the eye of his father’s assistants. So it is understandable that more and more complaints arrived to the bishop about their work. Finally bishop Somogyi turned to Albert Gáspár Dorner , an organ builder from Szombathely, and in 1812 made a contract with him to finish the organ.

Dorner was born in 1780 in Oberwöhr, Bavaria. He learned organ building in Vienna. He came from there to Szombathely in 1803 and became a citizen in 1807.

As soon as he took over the work he saw that Kober's assistants cut the pipes too short, causing the organ to play half a note higher than usual. Also the keys moved with difficulty. Dorner corrected all these defects and finished the work in 1814.

The disposition of the organ:

| I. Manual | II. Manual | Pedal |
|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Főmű 51 hang | Pozitiv 51 hang | 12 hang, 21 bilentyű |
| 1. Quintana (?) 16' (?) | 18. Copel 8' | 28. Principál 32' |
| 2. Principál 8' | 19. Quintadena 8' | 29. Principál 16' |
| 3. Viola di Gamba 8' | 20. Principál 4' | 30. Violoncello 16' (?) |
| 4. Salicional 8' | 21. Fugara 4' | 31. Subbass 16' |
| 5. Gemshorn 8' | 22. Doppel Flöte 4' | 32. Bordon 16' |
| 6. Waldflöte 8' | 23. Dulciana 4' | 33. Octavbass 8' |
| 7. Spitzflöte 8' (?) | 24. Octav 2' | 34. Bauernflöte 8' |
| 8. Piffero 8' | 25. Quinta 1 1/3' | 35. Quintbass 6' |
| 9. Octav 4' | 26. Mixtur 5 soros 1' | 36. Octav 4' |
| 10. Flöte 4' | 27. Fagotte et Oboe 8' | 37. Cornet 3 soros 3' |
| 11. Nachthorn 4' | | 38. Puzon 16' |
| 12. Quint 3' | | 39. Fagott 16' |
| 13. Octav 2' | | 40 Trompete 8' |
| 14. Mixtur 6 soros 4' | | |
| 15. Zimbel ? | | |
| 16. Trompete 8' | | |
| 17. Vox humana 8' | | |

The organ's timbre complies fully with the era's Central-European organ genre. The early prototypes of the string registers (Viola di gamba, Salicional) especially the essential Dulciana and Fugara make their appearance on the organs of Hungary at this time. The Vox Humana register on the great organ already represents the "regal" variation (pipes having short length resonators). This aspect basically differs from the Italian Voce Umana which Gasparini brought with him from Italy and incorporated it in his organ in Görlitz in 1703. The equivalent of the Italian Voce Umana on Kober's organ is the Piffero register. This is somewhat higher in tone than the others; therefore it produces a soft beat when used along with the other registers.

The total chromatic quality imparted to the low octave of the manual of Kolber's organ was new and modern in its time. This was not the norm then in Hungary, the low octave consisted only of diatonic notes. This was called the "short octave". Kober and Dorner adhered to the custom of having only 12 notes in the pedal, consisting of only 12 pipes. The way they subdivided the pedal keys was such that the first octave contained diatonic notes only (C D E F G A B-flat B, while the second octave contained the complete chromatic notes. In other words the same pipes were activated in the second octave as in the first, but it had a full 12 note chromatic octave. Such pedal

arrangement was the standard in Hungary until the second half of the nineteenth century, while it was discontinued in Vienna somewhat earlier.

The slider-box mechanical traction organ's mechanism, the "Werk" in German, was housed in two cabinets in Kober's organ. The "great" and "pedal" mechanisms were placed in the rear cabinets, while the "positive" mechanisms were in the fore cabinet.

In harmony with the classical style of the church, the cabinet of the organ reflects straight lines. We can find classical capitals and urns in the carvings. At the same time there is evidence of groups of baroque carvings: The harp playing king David with musician angels. The decoration of the organ cabinet was made by Lőrinc Eckhard sculpture from the Academy of Vienna.

Around 1848 Dorner made some renovations on the organ for 600 forint. He changed the six "wind pipes" (they were cut too small). In their place he built two bellows which were his original inventions. At the same time he revised some existing mistakes and corrected them. The organist of the cathedral Joseph Pozorszky praised the work of Dorner: "sie sei eminent hergestellt, sie könnte nicht besser sein".

In spite of this, within a few years a great argument developed between the cathedral chapter *succentor* Bodog Theindle and two of the cathedral's musicians, Pozorszky and Klepeisz. Theindle took the maintenance of the organ out of the hands of Dorner and gave it to Nándor Peppert, an organ builder who moved to Szombathely around that time.

Between 1864 and 1867 Peppert expanded the organ with 10 variations. The cost was 3300 forint. The variations built by him had the characteristics of the romantic era. That is when the "Aeolin 8" was put into the "positive" mechanism. On the "great" mechanism he changed the old Viola di Gamba and Salicional registers to tighter pipes. He added the "Hohlflöte" and "Rohrflöte" variations, and a variation that is no longer in use, to the "great" mechanism. In the "pedal" mechanism he added 6 variations: Bourbon 32' Contrabass 16' Bass clarinet 16' Viola 8' and Cello 4'. So Peppert changed Kober's organ in the direction of the romantic era.

This organ existed until WWII. On March 4th 1945, the cathedral was hit by bombs and the organ was totally destroyed. Only bits and pieces were recovered from the rubble. Even thinking of rebuilding the organ was impossible as it was then over 100 years old.

After the end of the war, the cathedral was reconstructed and rededicated on September 7, 1947. The next spring, in 1948, Joseph Adam, an organ builder from Szombathely, received an order for a temporary small organ. This organ had 6 variations. The organ was finished for Christmas of the same year and provided the music for the church up to this day (1977).

Disposition: Manual: C-g³ 56 notes

Pedal: C-f' 30 notes

1. Principál 8'
2. Födött 8'
3. Salicional 8'

4. Oktáv 4'
5. Mixture 3 rows 2 2/3'

6. Subass 16'

In order to make the sound of the relatively small organ would fill the huge church, the organ builder raised the wind pressure to 130mm. This gave the instrument the desired volume and loudness. Hungarians from Vas County who lived in the USA gifted an electronic Wurlitzer type organ to the cathedral in 1951.

Ref. A.: Album of the 200 year old diocese of Szombathely (1777-1977) by Dr. Ferenc Sill, Szombathely, 1977 (1,000 copies) p. 294-297
Published by the authority of the diocese of Szombathely
Printed by Vas County printing office

The new organ (1999)

During the powerful American bombing raid of 1945 the church received much damage from four chained-mine bombs. The organ was destroyed. With great sacrifice from the faithful, the cathedral was rebuilt and rededicated by Cardinal Mindszenty in 1947. The interior at that time was totally without any decoration. Major renovation on the interior started in 1990 under the direction of the bishop and supported by the city government, and was completed in 2004. The church is on the National Registry of Historical Buildings.

The story of the organ:

1999: The Aquincum Organ factory made the organ in Budapest. They used the pipes of the Sacred Heart church in Augsburg. These pipes were made by G.F. Steinmeyer and Cie (Ottingen) in 1915. The cathedral's previous organ was built by Ignaz Kober (1755-1813). He started it in 1808, but because of his death in 1813 it was finished by Gaspar Dorner. According to the plan the organ cost 13,500 forint. It had two manuals and 34 registers. Dorner finished the organ in 1814. It then had 40 registers and two manuals. The early classical style instrument was destroyed during a bombing raid in 1945. In memory of the destroyed organ, the new imposing 12 meter tall redwood organ cabinet is decorated with statues found in the rubble after the bombing. Inside the organ the pipes are arranged on 4 levels. Some of the large pipes situated in the façade are 6 meter tall.

| | | | | | |
|--------------|---------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------|----------------|----------------------------------|
| DISZPOZÍCIÓ | | Oktav | 4' | PEDAL | C-fl |
| I HAUPTWERK | C-a3 | Flauta amabile* | 4' | Untersatz k | 32' |
| Praestant | 16' | Sesquialtera 2x | 2 ² / ₃ ' | Prinzipalbass* | 16' |
| Bourdon* | 16' | Oktav | 2' | Violonbass* | 16' |
| Salice* | 16' | Quint | 1 ¹ / ₃ ' | Subbass* | 6' |
| Prinzipal | 8' | Schard 6x | 1' | Quintbass | 10 ² / ₃ ' |
| Hohlflöte* | 8' | Trompete* | | 8' Oktavbass | 8' |
| Gamba | 8' | Clarinetten* | 8' | Bassflöte | 8' |
| Oktav | 4' | Tremulant | | Choralbass | 4' |
| Rohrflöte* | 4' | II+III | | Mixtur 6x | 5 ¹ / ₃ ' |
| Rausch 2x | 2 ² / ₃ ' | | | Bombarde* | 32' |
| Kornett 3-5x | 8' | | | Posaune* | 16' |
| Mixtur 5-6x | 2' | III SCHWELLWERK | | Trompete* | 8' |
| Zimbel 4x | 1' | Rohrbourdon* | 16' | Chamade | 16' |
| Trompete | 16' | Diapason* | 8' | P+I | |
| Trompete | 8' | Flute harmonique | 8' | P+II | |
| Chamade | 8' | Vox celestas* 2x | 8' | P+III | |

| | | | |
|-------------|-----|------------------|----------------------------------|
| I+II | | Violoktav* | 4' |
| I+III | | Traversflöte | 4' |
| I+II sub | | Sept. Kornett 4x | 2- ² / ₃ ' |
| I+II super | | Flautino | 2' |
| | | Plein jeu* 5x | 2- ² / ₃ ' |
| II. POSITIV | 16' | Fagott* | |
| Quintatön* | 8' | Trompete harm* | 16' |
| Prinzipal | 8' | Oboe* | 8' |
| Bourdon* | 8' | Vox humana* | 8' |
| Salizional* | | Clarinetten* | 8' |
| | | Tremulant | 4' |

*Comment:
Old variations

Logo: "Aquincum"- above the III. Manual

Number of pipes: 4500.III/54/50, (15/14+12+14+13/10).
Organ cabinet: Was made in 1999: EPSZOV RT (Szombathely)
Designed by: Dr. Lukacs Ament OSB 1998
Façade design: Tamas Toth 1998
Literature: Kilian Szigeti: Hungarian organs, Szombathely
Music publisher: Bp. 1978. 24-32
Hungarian church music VII (1999/2000) I. Sz. 126-127
Brochure from the Aquincum Company (Ref.B)
Ref.B.: www.orgonak.hu/orgonak/szombathely.htm

The original:

Szerkezet és nagyság: csúszkaláda rendszerű, szelládák mechanikus billentyűtraktúrával, függesztett mechanikával, elektromos regisztratúrával, 128 soros elektronikus setzerkombinációval készültek.

Free Translation:

Structure and Size: made with sliding mechanism, windboxes with key structure with suspended mechanism, electronic registry, 128 row electronic setzer combination.