

Bournemouth & District Association of Organists



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BAO News

TALES FROM THE VIENNA WALDFLOTEN

AUGUST 2015

A report of this year's overseas trip, to Vienna, by Sue Rawlinson & Peter Lattimer.

Having sampled the delights of Paris, Toulouse, Amsterdam, and Leipzig in preceding years, we decided this time to see what Vienna had to offer. And we were not disappointed!



The day of travel began at silly 'o'clock from Bournemouth via minibus to Heathrow. But no sooner was our group of 17 through Viennese customs, transferred from airport to city, and registered in our comfortable and inexpensive hotel near the Westbahnhof than we set out for the first church, the Lazaristenkirche on foot. The warm welcome and kindly approach of organist Mr Kreuzpointner was a wonderful start to the trip. The organ was an electro-pneumatic 4 manual instrument (Mauracher 1899). The fourth manual was a "Fernwerk" (a separate department at a distance) which spoke through a distant aperture in the ceiling.

All too soon we had to tear ourselves away and take the first of many trips on Vienna's splendid metro system to find our next church, Franziskanerkirche, where Professor Ebenbauer met us and led us behind the main altar of the church to probably the most important historic instrument in Austria. Built by Johann Wöckherl in 1642 and restored by Kuhn in 2010, it had 2 manuals and pedals and 20 stops. This was the first historic Austrian pedalboard that we had come across – and were defeated. The Professor gave immaculate performances of seventeenth century voluntaries and made it clear that he was not interested in the 2 manual Rieger instrument (1980) at the other end of the church.



Lazarisenkirche



Although by this time we were beginning to feel hungry and a little weary, there was another delight awaiting us at the wonderful Dom, the church of St Stephen in the heart of the city. Mr Reitner, the titular organist who was our guide, had already played for three masses as it was the Feast of Corpus Christi, but he willingly demonstrated the superb sound of the 4 manual transept organ (Rieger 1991) which is used for all services and was a delight to play. We looked up to the enormous unused gallery organ (Kauffman 1960) with its 125 stops and 3 separate Positiv units. Another mass was approaching which prevented us exploring the third instrument in the church – a 2 manual chancel organ (Rieger 2009).

Friday saw a refreshed group make its way to the very beautiful Jesuitenkirche which is also the University Church. Pater Sperringer gave us free rein on the 3 manual French Romantic instrument (Freiburger/Späth 2004), built in the Cavallé-Coll tradition after a close study of the instrument in Lyon. We found its warm tone absolutely lovely.



Jesuitenkirche

Peterskirche was to have been a highlight but our host was unfortunately not there to meet us. So we fended for ourselves for a short while until the afternoon recitalist came in early to rehearse. We were not excited by the 3 manuals and 31 stops of this organ (restored Swoboda 1903) finding the stop tabs difficult to understand and the pedalboard uncomfortable.

After a spell of wonderful free time, during which we crammed in just a few of the many delights the city has to offer, we were hugely impressed with both the instruments and the organist at Augustinerkirche. Wolfgang Capek stunned us all by his impeccable memorised performance of Mozart's Fantasia in F minor on the "Bach" Choir organ (Rieger 2 manuals and 25 stops). We then ascended to the 4 manual Gallery organ (Rieger 1976) and were completely dazzled by the Professor's playing of his own arrangement of Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony (3rd movement) – from memory of course! Such was his brilliance that there was an unusual reluctance to take over the bench!

Day three, Saturday, took us first to Mariahilfkirche, where we were welcomed and then left to our own devices with the very pleasant 2 manual instrument by Kauffmann (1894 and restored by the same firm 3 times).

In the evening we made our way to Michaelerkirche, where we were allowed to play after a public recital by Mr Schuen. The organ (Sieber 1714 and unchanged) was divided on two sides of the gallery with the console between. Many of the group found the pedal board quite impossible!

We were spoiled for choice for orchestral Masses on the Sunday and the group split up to sample as many as possible. The majority elected to return to Augustinerkirche, where we were treated to a beautiful and liturgically choreographed service, to the music of Gounod's St Cecilia Mass.

The heat was now almost intolerable so we willingly followed Gerhard to a café for a welcome eiskaffee and the inevitable sachertorte.

Revived, we pressed on to Breitenfeld, where Mr Lugger greeted us with trumpet voluntaries by Purcell and Jeremiah Clarke. The organ (Kraus 2002) has four manuals and 66 stops. The fourth manual is a "Fernwerk" with a separate console at the east end. It had come from Switzerland and was rebuilt. We found it unsatisfactory probably because we failed to understand the stop controls.

One cannot visit Vienna without experiencing some music other than organ music. Having been charmingly enticed by one of the many young men in Mozartian costume selling tickets for concerts in palaces, we agreed to a fine deal where not only were the tickets hugely reduced for our group, but also the price included a glass of fizz each and a free CD. It was such huge fun, and both performers and audience had a whale of a time. The programme comprised dancing, singing, orchestral items and audience participation, which had us all singing and clapping along to traditional Viennese melodies.

And so to the final day! There was still so much to do and see, but the final church awaited. At Votivkirche, Florian Meierl was a charming and knowledgeable host and the organ (3 manuals and 61 stops – built by Walcker in 1878 and restored by Klais in 1996) proved to be one of the best. We were even allowed to wander inside to see the unusual and complex tracker action. We were reluctant to leave, but BA flight 705 would not wait.

We had certainly seen and played some superb instruments in a captivating and delightful city. As one of our number commented when we waved goodbye to the city of dreams, 'I've fallen in love with Vienna!'