

THE TROST ORGAN IN ALTENBURG

Felix Friedrich

One of the more stately and beautiful Baroque organs of the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) is the instrument at the Schlosskirche in Altenburg. This organ, built by court organbuilder Tobias Heinrich Gottfried Trost between 1735 and 1739, will be 250 years old in October 1989. It holds a high place among the historic organs of Europe, not only because of its tonal and visual beauty, but also because of its musical strengths, which have fascinated musicians and artists since its inauguration. As early as the 18th century, its title, "Ducal Court Organ," put it at the center of social and musical life.

With this work, Heinrich Gottfried Trost (1673-1759), the most famous Thuringian organbuilder at the time of Johann Sebastian Bach—often called the "Thuringian Silbermann"—built one of his more tonally elaborate and artistically mature instruments. The case front, equal in width and length, reflects an aesthetic ideal of symmetry and beauty in the Age of Enlightenment.

In 1733, plans for the reconstruction of the old castle organ began. On June 13, 1735, a contract was concluded with Trost, and on October 22, 1739, the completed 37-stop instrument equipped with 2,223 pipes was examined by the court conductor, Gottfried Heinrich Stölzel, and the court organist, Johann Gottfried Golde from Gotha, and they judged it to be successful. The four-year construction period seemed too long to the court authorities; therefore, in 1737, Gottfried Silbermann, Trost's Saxon colleague who was installing an organ at Ponitz close to Altenburg at the time, was asked for an opinion and he gave a favorable judgment on the instrument in progress. At the beginning of September 1739, Bach, who had traveled to Altenburg with Hamburg conductor Johann Adolph Scheibe to inspect the instrument, verified this judgment after having played on it before its inauguration. With its varied yet dignified sound in most keys, Bach characterized the organ as a suitable medium for the interpretation of his organ music. The instrument is one of the few still preserved which Bach is known to have played.

Even by the second half of the 18th century a Bach tradition was nurtured on the Trost organ. Between 1756 and 1780, Johann Ludwig Krebs (1713-80), one of Bach's best students, was court organist at Altenburg. He was considered a master organist in his day, and some of his compositions were written for this organ.

In the 19th century, the Trost organ was associated with great musicians and musical events. Concert life in Altenburg, organized by court organists Johann Christian Barthel and Wilhelm Stade, included several music festivals of the Allgemeiner Deutscher Musik Verein, in which the Trost organ played an important role. Carl Maria von Weber, in 1813, and Franz Liszt, in 1867 and 1876, came to Altenburg to hear and play the instrument. Liszt's *Hosannah* had its premiere on the Trost organ. Historians of the 19th

century also reported a redesign of the organ: changes were made in 1881-82 to adhere to the stylistic principles of Friedrich Ladegast. It is assumed that Liszt's influence was at work here.

A complete restoration and reconstruction of the Trost organ was carried out by VEB

Eule-Orgelbau of Bautzen from 1974 to 1976. With this restoration, for the first time in the country, an organ was preserved in an uncompromised manner by principles universally recognized as valid in the preservation of historic monuments.



SPECIFICATIONS

HAUPTWERK (I) (C-c''')	
16	Gross-Quintadena
16	Flaute traverse
8	Principal
8	Bordun
8	Spitzflöte
8	Viol di Gamba
8	Rohrflöte
4	Octave
4	Kleingedackt
3	Quinte
2	Super Octave
2	Blockflöte
	Sesquialtera II
	Mixtur VIII-IX
8	Trompete
	Glockenspiel (c'-c''')
	Tremulant
	Oberwerk to Hauptwerk

OBERWERK (II) (C-c''')	
8	Geigenprincipal
8	Lieblich Gedackt
8	Vugara
8	Quintadena
8	Hohlflöte
4	Gemshorn
4	Flaute douce II
3	Nasat
2	Octave
2	Waldflöte
1	Superoctava
	Cornet V
	Mixtur IV-V
8	Vox humana
	Tremulant

PEDAL (C-c')	
16	Principalbass
16	Violonbass
16	Subbass
8	Octavenbass
32	Posaunenbass
16	Posaunenbass
8	Trompetenbass
Transmissions from Hauptwerk:	
16	Gross-Quintadena
16	Flaute traverse
8	Bordun
4	Octave
	Mixtur VIII-IX
	Hauptwerk to Pedal

Temperament: Neidhardt I
Pitch: Chorton (a'=468)
Six bellows
Wind pressures:
manuals: 70 mm
pedal: 68 mm

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