



**THE ORGAN OF ST MARY'S CHURCH
IN HANOVER-NORDSTADT**

The organ of St Mary's Church in Hanover (Lower Saxony, Germany)

The current organ in the Catholic parish church of St Mary in Hanover's Nordstadt district has undergone several drastic changes over the years. The instrument, which was inaugurated in 1901, originally stood in Brunswick Cathedral. At the time of its construction, it was considered one of the largest church organs in Germany and was one of the largest organs ever built by the renowned workshop Furtwängler & Hammer (Hanover). Its late Romantic specification comprised 82 stops on pneumatic cone chests. A special feature was the electro-pneumatically controlled IV. manual division. It was located as a remote organ division in the south transept. The ornamented case of the old predecessor organ from 1846 (modified in 1882) was reused in the new organ and had a three-part façade in neo-Romanesque-Byzantine style (image page 3).

During the National Socialist era, the cathedral was misappropriated by the state as a pagan cult hall and remodelled in line with NS-ideology. In the course of this, the historicising organ case was replaced by an unstructured, simple open pipe façade (image page 4). At the same time, the company Gebr. Dutkowski (Brunswick) rebuilt the organ in 1937-39, in which the specification was supposedly changed in a baroque style inspired by the organ movement of the time. Christhard Mahrenholz, one of the main protagonists



The organ in Brunswick Cathedral around 1908. The historicising case of the previous organ was reused for the new organ built by Furtwängler & Hammer in 1901.



The Brunswick Cathedral organ with free-standing pipe array rebuilt by the Dutkowski company in 1940 during the National Socialist occupation of the sacred building.

of the German *Orgelbewegung*, drew up a corresponding plan in 1935. The actions were converted to electropneumatics and the romanticised remote division (IV. manual) was removed.

After the Second World War and the resumption of Christian worship, further changes were made to the organ, which had remained playable, by the Dutkowski company in several construction phases between 1946 and 1958. The specification was modified in even more classic style, the wind pressure was reduced and a new electric 3-manual console was installed.

In 1960, as part of the remodelling of the cathedral interior, the church community decided to acquire a completely new organ and sell the Furtwängler & Hammer organ. It was purchased by the Catholic parish of St Mary in Hanover-Nordstadt for the material value of DM 14,000. The large parish church was built in 1890 as a neo-Gothic hall church and was destroyed during the war along with its organ (1890, II/30), which was also built by Furtwängler & Hammer, apart from the tower and parts of the outer walls. By 1954, a new, three-aisled church in the modern style had been built on the same site, which called for an organ to fill the space with an appropriate number of stops and found one in the former Brunswick Cathedral organ.

The relocation from Brunswick to Hanover and the associated rebuilding of the organ was carried out by the workshop of Hermann Hillebrand (Altwarmbüchen). In order to support the organ's weight, it was necessary to statically reinforce the gallery and anchor the instrument in the tower wall using steel girders. The windchests, the bellows, the console and the electropneumatic

actions were retained after an overhaul. The façade, on the other hand, was newly created according to a design by Heinz Wolff. The organ underwent further changes to the specification before its inauguration in 1965. These included the addition of vacant reed stops, modifications to the mixtures and the production of new façade pipes. The Hillebrand company renovated the instrument in 1984-85 and extended the swell box so that the two windchests of the third manual (Swell and Brustwerk) are now enclosed together.

Today, the instrument has 72 stops on three manuals with pedal and is still one of the largest organs in northern Germany. Original pipework from 1901 has survived in 33 stops. However, the high quality of the preserved substance of the pipes and windchests from Furtwängler & Hammer can no longer hide the increasing signs of age-related wear with functional problems in the electropneumatic system and inhomogeneities in the nevertheless impressive sound resulting from the subsequent tonal changes.

At present (spring 2024), the parish of St Mary's is planning a comprehensive technical and tonal restoration of the listed organ, whereby the existing condition is to be retained and the specification only modified partially. The extraordinary history of the instrument, its size and significance in terms of organ building and the considerable amount of valuable historical pipework make this organ an important monument of sound, for which a revitalisation is desirable. Apart from the musical benefits for the liturgical tasks, concert events and the use by students of the local music



The former Brunswick Cathedral organ since 1965 with new case in the church of St Mary, Hanover-Nordstadt.

academy, the future appeal of the renovated instrument for organ enthusiasts should extend far beyond the borders of Hanover region.

Specification

(information status 2023)

I. Hauptwerk C-g'''		II. Oberwerk C-g'''	
1. Prinzipal	16' Hi	20. Quintade	16' F&H
2. Bordun	16' F&H	21. Prinzipal	8' Hi
3. Prinzipal	8' F&H	22. Rohrflöte	8' F&H
4. Gedackt	8' F&H	23. Gemshorn	8' F&H
5. Gamba	8' F&H	24. Dolce	8' F&H
(celeste)		(celeste)	
6. Oktave	4' Du	25. Prinzipal	4' F&H
7. Gemshorn	4' F&H	26. Querflöte	4' F&H
8. Rohrflöte	4' F&H	27. Quintade	4' F&H
9. Quinte	2 ² / ₃ ' F&H	28. Nasard	2 ² / ₃ ' F&H
10. Oktave	2' F&H	29. Oktave	2' F&H
11. Spitzflöte	2' Du	30. Nachthorn	2' Du
12. Cornett 4f.	4' Hi	31. Quinte	1 ¹ / ₃ ' Du
13. Großmixtur 5-7f.	2 ² / ₃ ' Du	32. Terz	1 ³ / ₅ ' Du
14. Mixtur 3-5f.	1 ¹ / ₃ ' Du	33. Schweizerpfeife	1' F&H
15. Helle Zimbel 3f.	² / ₃ ' Du	34. Scharf 3-4f.	1 ¹ / ₃ ' Du
16. Trompete	16' Du	35. Dulcian	16' Hi
17. Trompete	8' Du	36. Schalmay	8' Hi
18. Vox humana	8' Hi	37. Krummhorn	8' Hi
19. Clarine	4' Du	Tremulant	

F&H = stop contains original pipework by Furtwängler & Hammer 1901

Du = Dutkowski 1937-1958

Hi = Hillebrand 1965

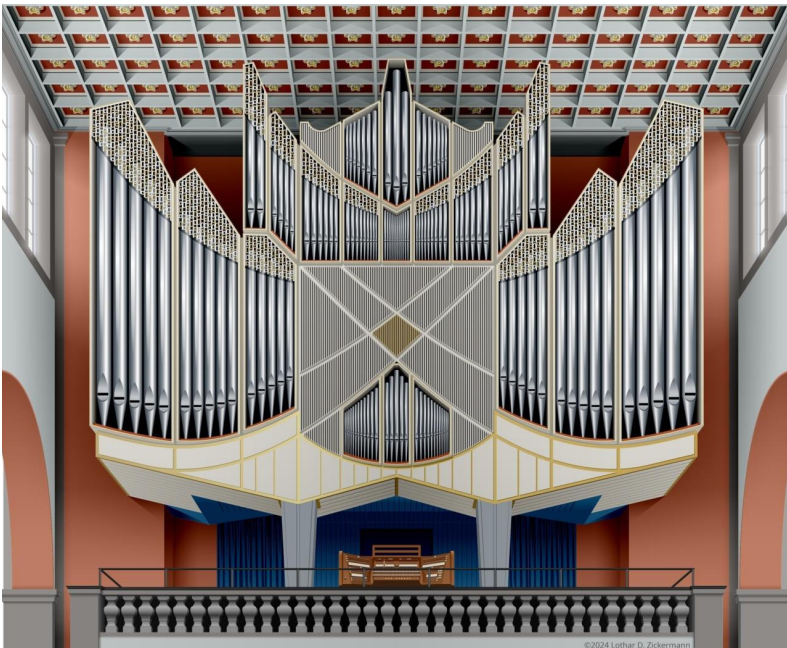
electropneumatic cone chests

III. Schwellwerk C-g'''		Pedal C-f	
38. Liebl. Gedackt	16' F&H	56. Prinzipal	16' Hi
39. Holzflöte	8' F&H	57. Violonbass	16' F&H
40. Salicional	8' F&H	58. Subbass	16' F&H
41. Gemshorn	4' F&H	Gedacktbass	16' Du
42. Salicional	4' F&H	(borrowed from SW)	
43. Quinte	1 ¹ / ₃ ' Du	59. Oktavbass	8' Du
44. Rauschwerk 4f.	1' Hi	60. Bassflöte	8' F&H
45. Bombarde	16' Hi	61. Oktave	4' Du
46. Helle Trompete	8' Hi	62. Quintade	4' F&H
III. Brustwerk (in SW) C-g'''		63. Bassflöte	4' F&H
47. Gedackt	8' F&H	64. Holzflöte	2' Du
48. Quintade	8' F&H	65. Sesquialtera 2f.	Hi
49. Prinzipal	4' Hi	66. Pedalmixtur 4f.	2 ² / ₃ ' Du
50. Flöte	4' F&H	67. Bombarde	32' Hi
51. Prinzipal	2' Du	68. Posaune	16' Du
52. Blockflöte	2' F&H	69. Fagott	16' Hi
53. Sesquialtera 2f.	2 ² / ₃ ' Du	70. Trompete	8' Du
54. Zimbel 3f.	¹ / ₂ ' Hi	71. Clarine	4' Du
55. Oboe	8' F&H	72. Clarine	2' Du
Tremulant		Tremulant Kleinpedal	

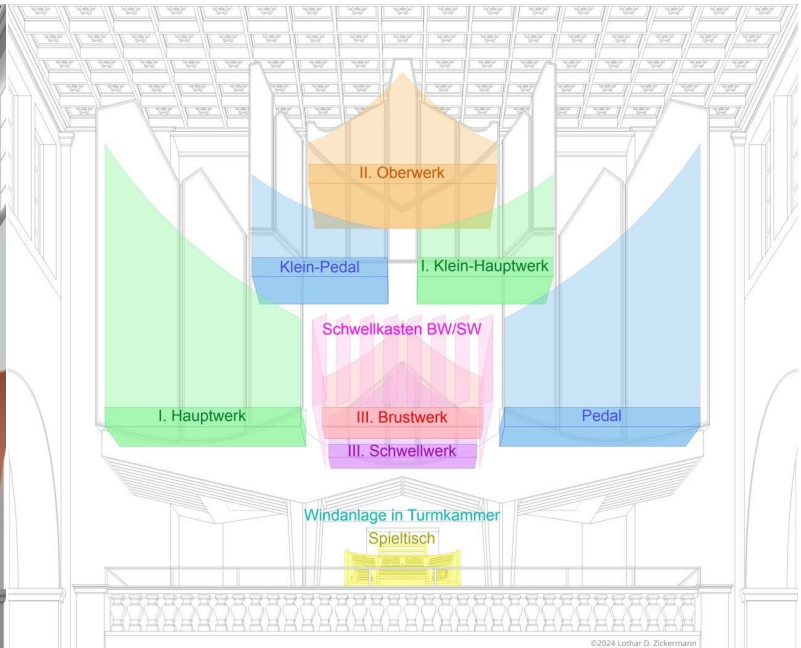
couplers: I-P, II-P, III-P, II-I, III-I, III-II.

3 adjustable combinations, 2 additional pedal combinations, full organ,

Crescendo roller, Cresc. off, Cresc. couplers off, 16' off, reeds off, individual cancellers for reeds.



graphic rendering of the organ prospectus



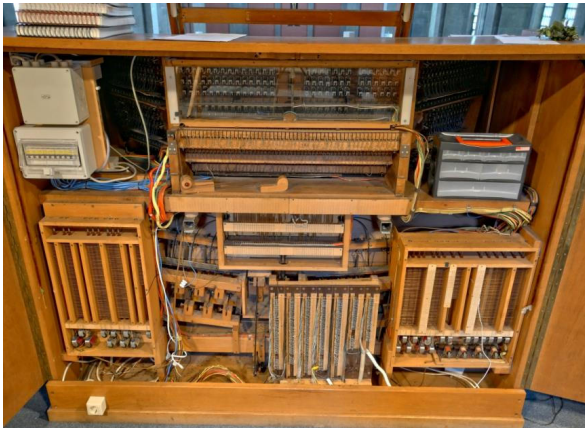
schematic view of the division layout with position of the windchests



Tour of the organ: The electric console in the gallery dates from the 1950s.



Wind supply in the tower room behind the organ with new blower...



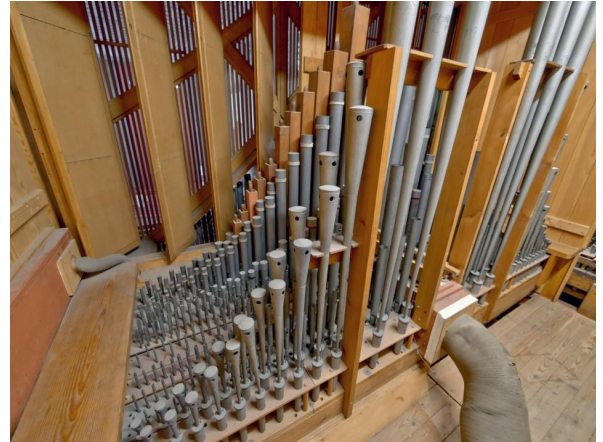
View of the open back side of the console.



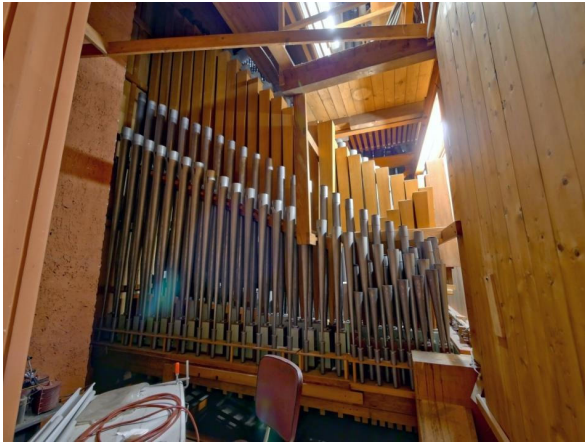
...and old reservoir bellow.



lower organ level on the left: large windchest of the Hauptwerk



lower level centre front: windchest of the Brustwerk in the swell box



lower organ level on the right: windchest of the grand pedal division



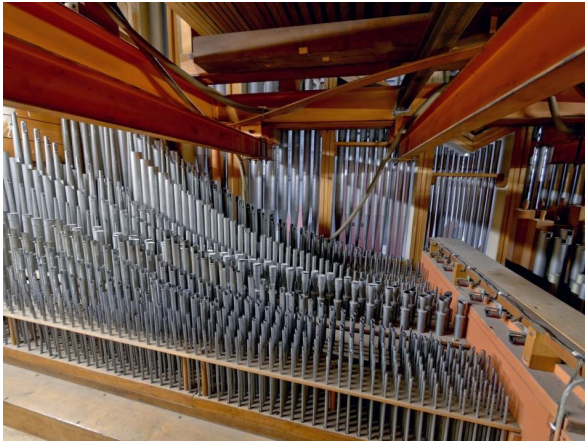
lower level centre back: windchest of the swell division



centre level on the left: windchest of the small pedal division



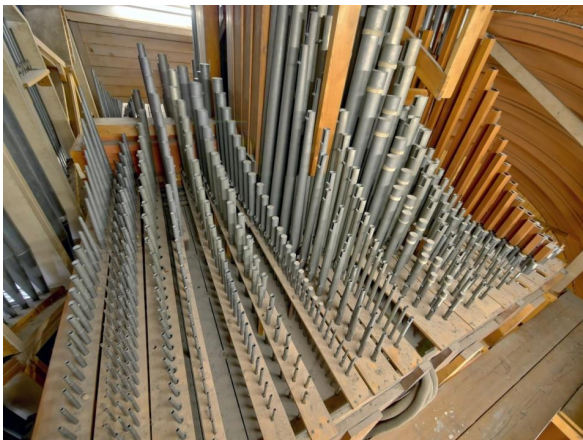
centre level: small windchests of HW and pedal (Oberwerk above)



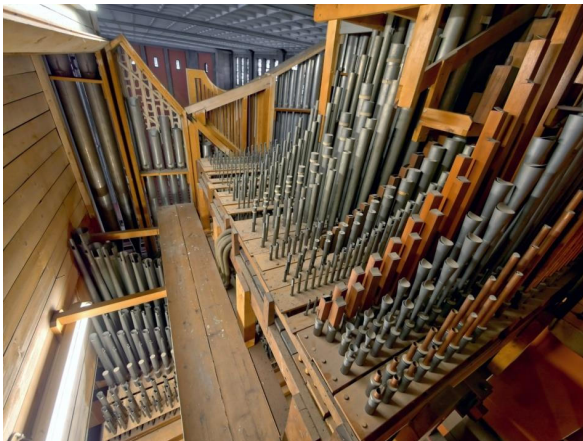
centre level on the right: small windchest of the Hauptwerk



rear centre level: additional reservoir bellow. (On the left: Oberwerk)



upper level: Oberwerk



OW, back of the façade (partly dummy pipes) and small HW lower left

Further information

About the history of Brunswick Cathedral organs see Uwe Pape: *Orgeln und Orgelbauer in Braunschweig*, 1966/2016, Pape Verlag Berlin as well as the commemorative documentation *Die neue Chororgel im Braunschweiger Dom*, published 2023 by Orgelbauverein am Braunschweiger Dom.

About the history of the organs in Hanover, St Mary, see the commemorative publication on the 100th anniversary of the church, published in 1990 by the parish of St Mary.

Picture credits for historical photos:

page 3: Ev.-Luth. Landeskirchenamt Wolfenbüttel, Archiv des Baureferats, from: Jahreskalender der Buchdruckerei Julius Krampe, Braunschweig, 1909.

page 4: Archiv Niedersächsisches Landesamt für Denkmalpflege.

text, colour photos (2023) and organ graphics:

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cover picture: view of the organ façade

back cover: interior view of St Mary's Church towards the altar cross

