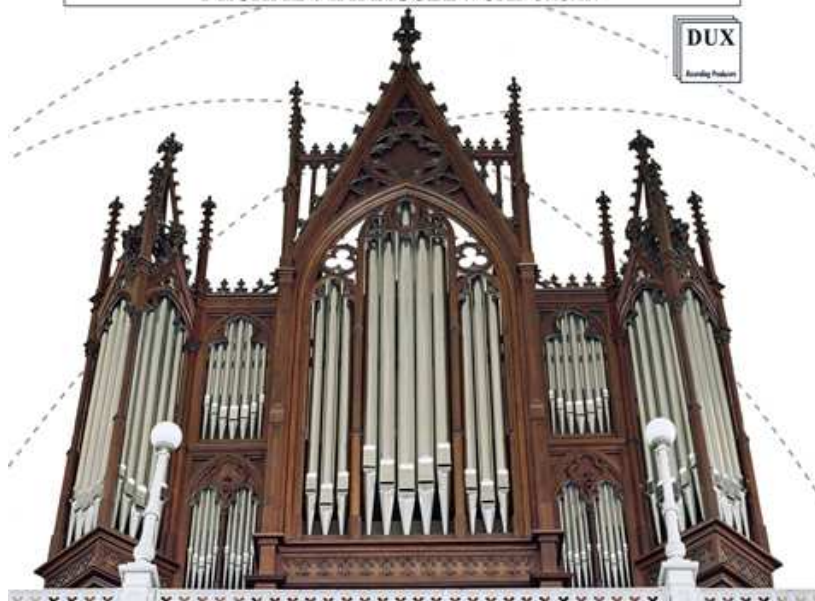


THE HISTORICAL ORGAN

OF THE REFORMED CHURCH

IN WARSAW

MICHAŁ MARKUSZEWSKI ORGAN



DUX 0707
2009

The Historic Organ of the Reformed Church in Warsaw

Michał Markuszewski – organ

Niels Wilhelm Gade (1817-1890):

Festliches Präludium über den Choral „Lobet den Herren“

Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy (1809-1847):

Präludium und Fuge für die Orgel c-moll nr 1 op. 37

Präludium und Fuge für Klavier f-moll nr 5 op. 35

(arr. Christoph Bossert)

Michał Markuszewski (*1980):

2 Improwizacje n.t. pieśni ewangelickich:

„Serca razem połączone“

„Za rękę weź mnie, Panie“

Julius Reubke (1834-1858):

Sonate for organ in C mineur „Psalm 94“

Max Reger (1873-1916)

Melodia op. 59 nr 11

Introdukcja i Passacaglia d-moll op. posth.



DUX Małgorzata Polańska & Lech Tołwinski ul. Morskie Oko 2, 02-511 Warszawa
tel./fax (48 22) 849-11-31, (48 22) 849-18-59, e-mail: dux@dux.pl, www.dux.pl

Aleksandra Kitka-Coutellier – International Relations Manager

The purpose of this CD release is to present the first recordings of performances given on the historical organ of the Evangelical Reformed Church in Warsaw. The release is the crowning event of the complicated and lengthy process of the restoration of the Warsaw instrument which, 108 years after its construction, has been restored to its original form, technical parameters and, most importantly, the original sound. This enormous organisational and financial undertaking carried out since 2004 by the Evangelical Reformed Parish in Warsaw has, after nearly 4 years of work, produced the long awaited effect, and on 5th October 2008 the restored organ was solemnly inaugurated. We had to wait long for this day, but now, after its restoration, the organ can be used not only for the Sunday service, but also for concerts, continuing the rich musical traditions of this church. At present, the organ is one of Warsaw's most valuable Romantic instruments!

The Evangelical Reformed Parish in Warsaw was founded in 1776. A year later, the first modest church building was already consecrated (presently it is the venue of Warsaw Chamber Opera). The large new church which is still used by the Warsaw congregation, built in 1866-80, was designed in neo-Gothic style by Adolf Loewe. This is the site of the historical organ, commissioned by the Parish from the then renowned company Schlag und Sohne from Świdnica (Schweidnitz), which as late as 1900 replaced the earlier inconspicuous instrument moved there from the old church. Construction costs were covered entirely (!) from parishioners donations. Unfortunately, amid the turmoil of military action the correspondence with Schlag und Sohne company was lost, and so were the design, the specifications, and the contract for the construction of the organ in Warsaw's church. Eventually, the instrument received the opus number of 552 and was consecrated on 10th June 1900. The only description of the original instrument is contained in the account of the consecration ceremony printed in "The Evangelical Messenger" ("Zwiastun Ewangelicki") Nr 6 of 1900: On the 10th of this month [VI 1900] a yearly synod was held in the Evangelical Reformed Church in Warsaw, which begun with a solemn service, during which the Superintendent, Rev. Diehl consecrated the newly installed organ. The instrument, built by Schlag und Sohne company from Schweidnitz, with 24 stops and 5 couplers, has made a very positive impression both by its exterior appearance and the sound of the particular voices. The case was made from oak wood in the pure Gothic style which perfectly matches the style of the priest's pulpit and the whole church. The voices, especially II manual (delicate), produce a very pleasant sound; on the other hand the sound of the trumpet (I manual) and trombone (pedal) is immense. The instrument was made according to all the newest innovations achieved in the art of organ building. Thanks to the use of Superoctavcoppel with Suboctavcoppel, the pipe organ has greater power and force, as if it was an instrument of more than 30 stops. The organ does not take much space, but it still ensures free access to every voice so there wouldn't be any problems in case of renovation or tuning of the pipes. This new organ confirms the deserved renown that Schlag's company has acquired. Let the sound of this instrument reverberate forever for the glory of the Almighty and the joy of the congregation. The new instrument was clearly out of luck, for soon its slow destruction began. Already in 1910 the organ had to be renovated, and then – in 1917 – the façade pipes and inner tin pipes were requisitioned for war purposes. In 1930 the company owned by Waław Biernacki reconstructed the organ and installed new facade pipes (according to the inscription discovered on the bottom board of the wind chest of the II manual: "This organ was renovated with a new front installed by Waław Biernacki's company and executed by A. Żółkowski and H. Joźwickowski in November 1930". During World War II and the Warsaw Uprising, the instrument was again destroyed and it was only in the late 1950s that attempts were made to make the damaged organ playable. However, due to insufficient funding only 16 out of the 24 ranks were activated, and it was in this diminished form that the organ was known for many years to follow. Another restoration took place in the mid-1970s and was co-financed by two parishes with which the Warsaw congregation maintained close relations: Evangelische Zinzendorf-Kirchengemeinde from West Berlin and the Evangelisch-Reformierte Kirchengemeinde from Zurich-Wiedikon. Restoration work was carried out by Kamiński Brothers company from Warsaw. Probably it was then that more changes in the organ disposition were made (19 out of the original 24 ranks were activated). For many years, the subject of the Warsaw organ restoration was not taken up again and the instrument only served the congregation during the Sunday service. In the 1980s, due to the very poor condition of the historical instrument, the Warsaw Parish received several offers of building a new organ in the old organ case (a 15-stop mechanical organ or a 43-stop with 3 manuals and electro-pneumatic action), and some of the original parts were to be used for the new instrument. Because of the Parish's financial problems, however, this reconstruction was never carried out. From our present perspective, this lack of money should be considered fortunate because, thanks to those circumstances, the original wind chests as well as many other elements coming from Schlag's workshop have survived intact until today. Notwithstanding this, in 2004 the organ was in fact no longer playable, and so the parson and members of the Church College began to discuss the possibility of a thorough, historically faithful restoration of the instrument. Other preserved instruments by Schlag's company were documented in order to obtain data for the planned restoration. In

2005, work on the instrument began. It was to be carried out in accordance with state-of-the-art knowledge concerning the protection and conservation of historical organs, and priority was given to restoring the original construction and sound concept of the Schlag instrument. The Parish would like to express its profound gratitude to the Warsaw City's Historical Monuments Conservator for the extremely valuable financial support without which the completion of such a vast and costly project by the Parish would not have been possible. The range of tasks to be performed was enormous, as nearly all of its elements required restoration. The state of the organ case necessitated complete renewing. The bearing structure of the instrument was damaged. Moreover, more than a half of the carving details were missing. The side turrets were twisted and distorted. In the organ case, the back wall was missing, and so the side walls of the prospect were not fixed, causing danger as they could collapse on the church. Also the state of the mechanisms and the pipes was disastrous. The console, pneumatics, wind chests, main bellows, the mechanism of the 2nd manual swell-shutters and all the pipes required a major renovation. Also the niche above the instrument had to be restored. The work was divided into several stages which lasted from the beginning of 2005 until October 2008. The entire wooden case of the organ was brushed, cleaned and conserved. The non-original layers of the varnish were rubbed off and the whole was painted with a new varnish. The structure of the instrument was straightened up and stabilised. 14 lateral panels were added, and all the missing carvings of the case walls were restored: fleurs-de-lys, finials, capitals, crockets, as well as doors, hinges and locks. The original pipes that formerly supplied gas to the lamps above the console were preserved, and the decorative lanterns above the console were reconstructed. Full reconstruction and conservation of the organ case was carried out by "Rescona" Company owned by Magdalena Bogdan, art conservator from Katowice. The organ-building works included: the complete restoration of the wind chests, replacement of the bellows responsible for stop action and of valve springs, disassembling of all the action tubes and purging them with compressed air in order to improve the air passage, replacement of the non-original plastic action tubes with lead tubes, and reconstruction of the missing ones. All the membrane bellows in every section and relay were replaced; the organ case, music rest and keyboard were restored; the celluloid veneer was replaced with an original one made from ivory; the company's plate was reconstructed, and so were all the china plates with the names of stops and registrational aids. New lighting was installed above the console and inside the instrument. The bellows was cleaned, a new bellows weight was installed; the completely worn-out channels linking the bellows with the wind chests were completely reconstructed. The most time-consuming task was the restoration of the pipes. All the metal pipes were reconstructed on the basis of the preserved measures from Schlag's workshop. The wooden pipes were repaired and missing ones were added. The whole was covered with a composition against wood destroying insects. The company Killinger Pfeifen from Freiberg am Neckar was commissioned to make reed pipes, whereas all the organ-building work was executed by engineer Olgierd Nowakowski from Zabrze ("Building, Conservation and Renovation of Pipe Organs").

*

The sound qualities of the Schlag und Sohne organ from Warsaw have determined the choice of compositions to be included on this CD. The most suitable and proper for this kind of a Romantic instrument is 19th-century organ music. In order to provide a coherent concept for the whole CD, I decided that the programme should concentrate on German-speaking composers. The CD opens with a piece from 1873 – a solemn Prelude on the theme of the song "Lobet den Herren" by Niels Wilhelm Gade (1817-1890), a Danish composer, violinist and organist whose career included assisting Mendelssohn as second conductor in the Leipzig Gewandhaus. This song is still sung today in the Reformed Church under the title "Praise, My Spirit". The next composition is Prelude and Fugue in C Minor by Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy (1809-1847) from the cycle of Three Preludes and Fugues op. 37 dedicated to Thomas Attwood – Mendelssohn's friend, organist of London's St Paul's Cathedral – and composed in 1836-37. These have been coupled with the Prelude and Fugue in F Minor from the piano cycle Op.35 (1835-37), transcribed for organ by Christoph Bossert. Julius Reubke (1834-1858) died at the age of 24, leaving behind two outstanding instrumental works – the Piano Sonata in B Minor and the Sonata in C Minor "Psalm 94" for organ, which is presented on this CD. First performed on the famous Ladegast organ of Merseburg Cathedral in 1857, this nearly halfan- hour-long composition – a kind of symphonic poem – betrays the influence of, and fascination with, Franz Liszt, but also distinctly points in the direction of Wagner's stage works. Virtuoso elements as well as beautiful passages, particularly in the central slow movement, allow the organist to demonstrate the vast sound possibilities of Schlag's Warsaw instrument. The CD closes with two compositions by Max Reger (1873-1916): Melody Op.59 No.11 (written in 1901) and Introduction and Passacaglia in D Minor Op.posth. Reger's musical language is very difficult and calls for a specific type of instrument with Romantic intonation, a large number of principal stops, and a wide range of sound colours and dynamics. The texture in his compositions is dense, and the music, especially in large-scale compositions, poses much technical difficulty, constituting a challenge for the performer. Reger willingly drew on Baroque models, particularly – on the works of Bach, whose music he called "the beginning and end of all music". These inspirations from Bach are already evident in the very

forms of Reger's compositions. Reger would say that his music requires a performer with sovereign technique and a spiritual depth. When his work was accused of excessive difficulty, he is said to have replied that not a single note was redundant. The CD also contains two improvised choral preludes inspired by Protestant songs sung during present-day services: "Hearts bound together" and "Lord, take me by the hand". Even though this music is contemporary, it refers in harmony and form to tradition, also allowing the organ to show its different face in each of the improvisations.

*

The fact that the Evangelical Reformed Church is situated in one of the busiest streets in the centre of the city created considerable technical difficulty during the recording. Another consideration is that, our organ being a 108-year-old historical monument, the noises made by the pneumatic actions and the air system could hardly be eliminated. We decided to keep them, as they testify to the historical quality of Schlag's organ.

Michał Markuszewski

Michał Markuszewski he was born in Warsaw in 1980. In 2004 he graduated, with honour, from the Frederic Chopin Academy of Music in Warsaw (organ class – prof. Joachim Grubich and piano class – prof. Kazimierz Gierżod). In 2007 he graduated from postgraduate studies at Universität der Künste in Berlin (organ improvisation class – prof. Wolfgang Seifen) and in 2008 Hochschule für Musik in Würzburg (organ class – prof. Christoph Bossert). His greatest achievements are: II prize in Polish Contemporary XX Century Organ Music in Legnica (1998), I prize in International Organ Music Competition in Rumia (2000), as well as honourable mention for the best performance of pieces by J.S. Bach. He also received the prize founded by president of the city of Gdańsk and III prize in International Organ Music Competition in Zurich-Wiedikon (2007). He gave many concerts at international festivals in Poland, Lithuania, Czech Republic („Organ Music Days – Vysehrad 2002”), Holland, Switzerland and Germany (over 50 cities). He took part in master classes of such famous artists like: Guy Bovet, Aleksander Fiseyski, Bernhard Haas, Rudolf Innig, Edgar Krapp, Olivier Latry, Heribert Metzger, Peter Planyawski, Martin Sander, Christopher Stenbridge, Harald Vogel, Julian Gembalski, Peter Eicher, Jerome Rosse. He cooperated with many renowned soloists, Polish chamber choir „Schola Cantorum Gedanensis”, choir „Camerata Varsovia” as well as Polish Jeunesses Musicales Orchestra with which he recorded „Cantata to St. Cecilia” by Franciszek Lessel. He made CD, radio and TV-recordings. He made first performances of contemporary Polish organ music as well as chamber organ music. He is also interested in problems of restoration of historic Polish organs. He is a member of Society of Organ Enthusiasts and Association for Researches and Conservation of Silesian Organ (VEESO). He prepared documentations of over 300 Polish historical organs. From his initiative and under his supervising there were restoration works of the organ taken in the historic organ (signed by Schalg und Sohne) in the Reformed Church in Warsaw, where he serves as the organist from 2004. In 2007 he received a scholarship from Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage.
www.michalmarkuszewski.pl