

## SPRING MEETING 2011

### BREMEN

The “Spring Meeting” of the European Chapter was held from April 25<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup>. 28 participants from 3 European countries and 7 US states spent the week after Easter seeing, hearing, and playing organs in and around Bremen, Germany. The newest instrument visited was only 10 years old, the oldest was the Gothic organ from 1457 in nearby Rysum.



Romantic organs included were the Sauer organs in the Bremen concert hall “Glocke” (IV/76, 1928) and Cathedral (IV/110, 1893), and the Furtwängler & Hammer (III/54, 1916) in the Cathedral of Verden, the latter wonderfully demonstrated by the house organist Tilman Benfer with pieces by Widor. In outlying towns there are many Arp Schnitger organs to choose from. The North German baroque expert Harald Vogel himself demonstrated the instruments in Grasberg (II/21, 1694), Ganderkesee (II/22, 1699), and also the Erasmus Bielefeldt organ (II/23, 1734) in Osterholz-Scharmbeck. The Schnitger organ in Cappel (II/30, 1680), made famous

by the historic recordings by Helmut Wacha, and Norden (III/46, 1688) were demonstrated by members Elisabeth Harrison and Rhonda Edgington. These were not only exceptionally capable and talented organists,

they were also responsible for the entire organisation of the week. The itinerary, the hotel, meals, transportation, and simultaneous translations were all congenially and conveniently arranged. Even the weather was superb! The Schnitger in Lüdingworth (III/35, 1683) and the Klapmeyer (III/35, 1730) were ably demonstrated by the incumbent Ingo Duvensee. Other interesting instruments rounding out the program included the Gottfried Silbermann (I/8, 1732) in the crypt of the Bremen cathedral, a lesser Romantic Heinrich Röver (II/12, 1897) in Lilienthal, a new organ by Van der Putten (II/23, 2001) in old style with meantone tuning and sub-semitone keys, and the I/9 meantone organ by an anonymous builder of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century in Uttum. The latter was demonstrated by member Wim Riefel with appropriate music from the Susanne von Soldt Manuscript (1599) and by Sweelinck. A reading here of Sweelinck’s Chromatic Fantasie by member Barry Jordan, Cathedral Organist of Magdeburg, highlighted the consequences of meantone tuning on authentic period music. Certainly a most interesting instrument was the Ahrend & Brunzema (III/33, 1962) in the Bremen Martini church. Especially considering other instruments being built at the time (Neobaroque, “Orgelbewegung”), this organ has incredible tonal colors and truly vocal qualities. It was introduced as probably the best organ in Bremen on which one could play





Bach, which several participants proceeded to do. The a-minor Concerto, the G major Prelude and Fugue, and the g minor Fantasie and Fugue all received respectable readings. A benefit concert for the victims of the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear catastrophe in Japan was presented Thursday evening on two of the organs in the Bremen Cathedral (Wegscheider, Sauer). Music for four hands was performed by the cathedral organist Prof. Wolfgang Baumgratz and Megumi Ishida-Hahn. A very special experience was saved up for the final afternoon. The group was treated to a personal tour of the Ahrend organ building workshop in Leer-Loga. Jürgen Ahrend not only built fabulous new organs – in baroque style – he was also responsible for the restoration of almost all of the Schnitger organs we had visited, and many more which we had not. He and his wife Ruth were also very gracious hosts for lunch in Uttum including an opportunity to follow the royal wedding broadcast and welcomed the group into their home after touring the workshop. He is now semi-retired and his son Hendrik is treading in his father’s footsteps. The meeting adjourned in the picturesque “Schnoor” neighbourhood with a closing dinner and ample expressions of gratitude to those responsible for the resounding success, the aforementioned Beth and Rhonda but also Dean Judy Riefel- Lindel for contacts and coordination.

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