

## Sound-related Challenges of the Steinmeyer Organ

by Gunter Böhme

During my first visit in Trondheim I was very impressed by the architecture of the cathedral and by the size of the organ - even though with 107 stops the organ was smaller than now. The task of restoring this instrument and rebalancing the relations of the divisions and the stops properly was rather awe-inspiring.

A huge space does not necessarily need a huge organ...

While studying the original specification various questions regarding the initial sound concept surfaced. We had to find scales and decide on construction details for the missing stops. We were able to find solutions to many of these problems also thanks to the help of Paul Steinmeyer, the son of the original builder of the instrument.

After the technical installation of the organ, due to the new arrangement of the divisions and the windchests, there were completely new acoustical conditions to deal with. Also because there were now many more low stops from 32' up to 8' an adjustment of the tonal concept was required.

The biggest challenge during the voicing were the many stops that had been re-voiced in the sixties. Corresponding to the fashion of the time one had tried to achieve a neo-baroque sound with much brighter tone colours. This resulted in a loss of quality and diminished the ability of many stops to blend with others or to carry a melody. At the same time the stop list was reduced. Many of the large stops were removed. Luckily they were put in storage and we were able to reuse them after extensive restoration.

Another challenge was understanding the original specification from 1930 - how the various stops were supposed to relate to each other. In the organ in Trondheim we often see a doubling of stops, especially with diapasons and reed stops. At first glance there seems to be an obvious reason for this: if you need a louder orchestra you add musicians... But the situation in the Steinmeyer organ is more complex than that. Here the doubled stops also have different timbres: the bright trumpet is joined by a rounder one, the loud diapason is coupled with a brighter and slimmer one. This results in an incredibly rich pallet of sounds - the possibilities for stop combinations are almost endless.

The initial doubts whether this organ would be able to fill the huge space of the cathedral were completely dispelled as more and more stops were installed.

A particular challenge here in Trondheim was the seemingly endless amount of work involved. After one month of voicing we were just able to start work on the first 8' stops.



There is just one figure I would like to mention: the organ has 28 reed stops - many complete instrument has much fewer stops!

We have tried our best to restore the original sound of the Steinmeyer organ to the initial situation of 1930.

We hope that this instrument will bring joy to the musicians and to the church-goers and that many, many different shades of sound will be discovered.

I would like to thank the parish for giving us the possibility to work with focus for such a long time, and all the members of Orgelbau Kuhn who were involved with this instrument. A very special thank you goes to Per Fritdtjov Bonsaksen who supported us daily and helped us so many times - without him the organ would not be finished yet!

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