

Predigerkirche, Zürich, Switzerland

There are many great organs in Switzerland and it is a beautiful country to travel in and visit the numerous and attractive churches. In recent travels I found many organs of interest (see separate story about Hinterforst on page 40) , but there was one particular church that I found a little more interesting than most. It is the Predigerkirche in Zürich, and it was conveniently located just around the corner from our hotel in the “old town”.

The church is quite unusual because not all of the building is incorporated into the current church. The early choir from when the church had been part of a Dominican Convent (the higher level of the church that you can see outlined in red in the below photograph) was

walled off from the lower section (to the centre-right, behind the steeple, outlined in green) in 1541/42 and became a grain store. The lower section is the nave of the current church. The entire building was renovated in the 1960s and the Predigerkirche reopened in 1967. The choir is now part of the City of Zürich public library and has been divided into a multi-level repository for the Musikabteilung (music collections department) and a reading centre. The bell in the roof turret dates from 1451 and is the oldest church bell in Zürich at its original location.

This Neumarkt quarter is a historic part of Zürich, dating to the very earliest settlements of the area. Predigerkirche



is one of the four main churches of the old town, Fraumünster, Grossmünster and St. Peter being the others. First built in 1231 AD as a Romanesque church of the then Dominican Predigerkloster, the Basilica was converted in the first half of the 14th century. The unusually high bell tower, a relatively recent construction from 1900, makes this the highest Gothic edifice in Zürich.

The first pipe organ was installed in Predigerkirche in 1503 and 24 years later broken down in the aftermath of the Reformation struggle. This became the first early Baroque Protestant church in the southern German culture area, mentioned in 1614, so it is assumed that the organ may have been re-used. In 1879 the first new organ after the Reformation was installed, and in 1911 the organ was enlarged by Goll (Luzern) and Kuhn (Mannendorf). In 1923 this organ was replaced by a new organ. The current organ in the gallery was built by Paul Hintermann and Jakob Schmidt on behalf of Kuhn Orgelbau in 1970. It was renovated in 1995.

This church houses three organs. There is the large modern 3,320 pipe organ in the gallery, a 756 pipe English organ in the choir space at the left altar area and a small continuo organ at the right of



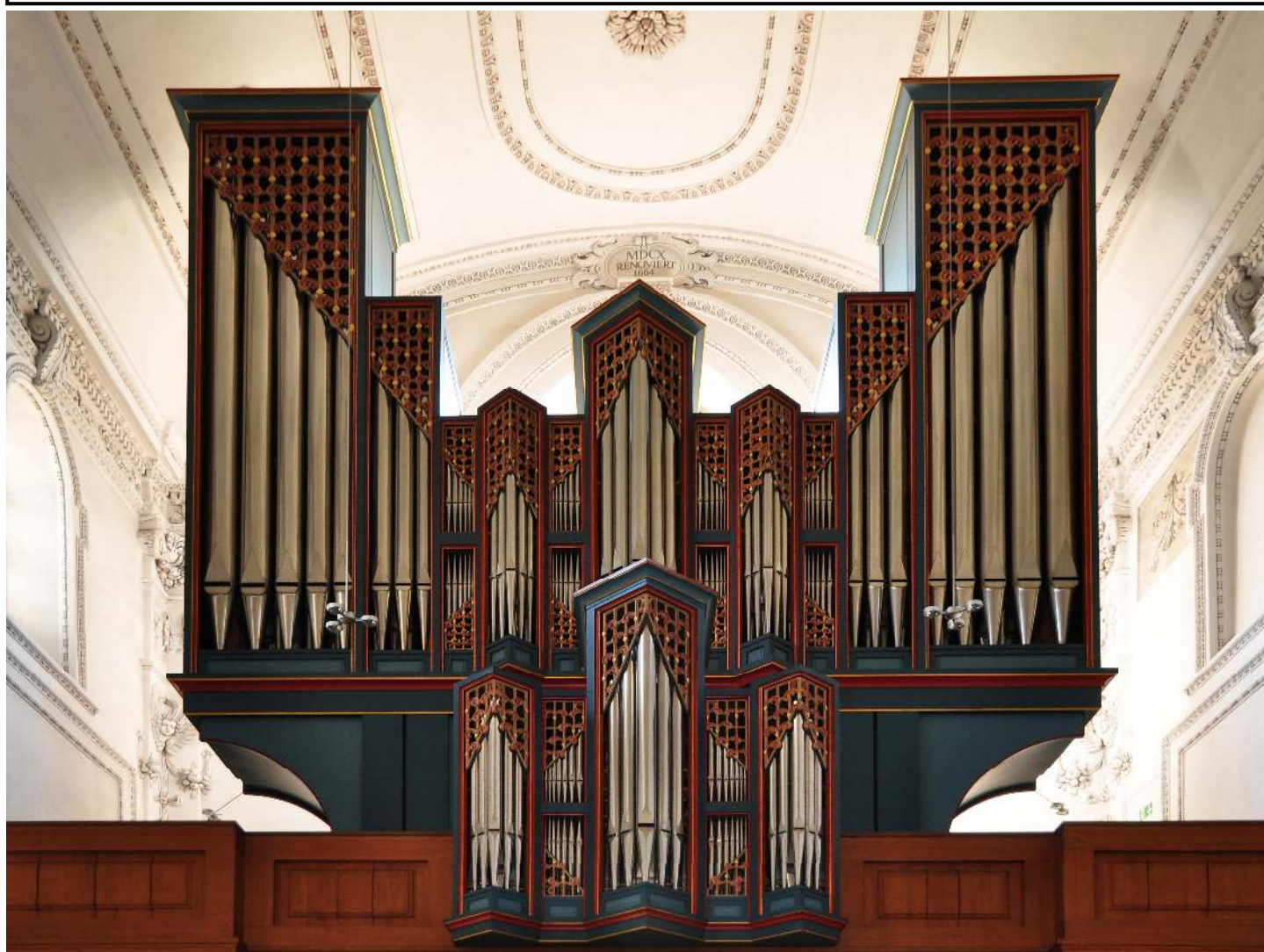
The Predigerkirche rises above the Zähringerplatz in Zürich

the altar, used for small vocal groups and orchestral works.

The large gallery organ (stoplist shown on the following page) has mechanical key action to slider chests with electro-pneumatic stop action. There are 46 registers in the four divisions of the instrument controlled from an integral three-manual console.

Console assistance comes with the normal range of couplers (III - II, I - II, III - P, II - P, I - P), six free combination pistons mounted under the Choir manual and duplicated with toe studs.

I Choir C–g ³		II Great C–g ³		III Swell C–g ³		Pedal C–f ¹	
Gedackt	8'	Pommer	16'	Holzgedackt	8'	Untersatz	32'
Quintatön	8'	Principal	8'	Salicet	8'	Principalbass	16'
Principal	4'	Suavial 1) (ab c)	8'	Schwebung (ab c)	8'	Subbass	16'
Blockflöte	4'	Koppelflöte	8'	Principal	4'	Octavbass	8'
Sesquialtera 2f. 2 ² / ₃ '		Viola di Gamba	8'	Rohrflöte	4'	Spillflöte	8'
Octave	2'	Octave	4'	Nazard	2 ² / ₃ '	Octave	4'
Quinte	1 ¹ / ₃ '	Spitzflöte	4'	Waldflöte	2'	Nachthorn	4'
Scharf 3f.	1'	Quinte	2 ² / ₃ '	Terz	1 ³ / ₅ '	Mixtur 5f.	2'
Krummhorn	8'	Superoctave	2'	Sifflöte	1'	Posaune	16'
Tremulant		Mixtur 4f.	1 ¹ / ₃ '	Mixtur 4f.	1'	Zinke	8'
		Cymbel 3f.	1 ¹ / ₂ '	Dulcian	16'	Klarine	4'
		Cornett 5f. (ab f)	8'	Schalmei	8'		
		Trompete	8'	Vox humana	8'		
				Tremulant			



The Gallery Organ Photo: Roland Fischer, Zürich

The second organ was built by James Conacher, Conacher & Co, 1886. Conacher received his organ building education in Leipzig, Germany. He worked first for Hill & Sons, then Walker & Sons and in 1854 founded his own company in Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, England. The organ was built for the Methodist Church, Ingbirchworth, North England.

The organ played for the last time in the original church on 9th September 2012 when the church population had diminished and was forced to close. The sale of the instrument went to the organ dealer Ladach Pipe Organs in Wuppertal, Germany, and so escaped the fate of destruction that otherwise comes to many no longer used instruments. The organ came to the attention of Predigerkirche as a suitable choir organ, and by 2014 it had become a community project to refurbish it to new condition.

Once completed, the Conacher organ was installed in the side aisle of the church at the left of the altar, and on Pentecost Sunday 24th May 2015 the Conacher organ sounded officially for the first time in a divine service in Zürich.

The organ has mechanical key and stop action except for the new works which have been seamlessly amalgamated into the instrument. There is a great contrast between the



two major instruments of the church: the gallery organ speaking with distinctive Germanic overtones and reflecting the shriller neo-baroque sound of its time; the choir organ easily recognisable as an English parish organ with gentler voicing and deeper tone.

GREAT		SWELL		PEDAL	
C - ggg		C - ggg		C - f	
Open Diapason	8	Violin Diapason	8	Bourdon	16
Diapason/Clarabella	8	Rohr Flute	8	Corno	8
		Salicional	8	Big Ben	
Dulciana	8	Octave	4		
Harmonic Flute	4	Oboe	8		
Harmonic Horn	8	Horn	8		
Big Ben		Big Ben			
		Ingbirchworth			
		(Tremulant)			

The original hand pumping mechanism remains intact but is prevented from being inadvertently used by a solid retaining stand.

The organ has an unusually large range of couplers for an instrument of this size, giving it a remarkable degree of flexibility:

Swell to Great
Great Octave 16
Great Octave 4
Swell Octave 16
Swell Octave 4
Swell to Great 16
Swell to Great 4
Swell to Pedal
Great to Pedal

The innovative use of a chime (Big Ben) which is available electrically on each manual emphasises the Englishness of the organ. Use of the name of the South Yorkshire town Ingbirchworth for the tremulant is a fitting tribute to the origins of this beautifully crafted and well adapted instrument.

The refurbishment of the organ was carried out by Jens Steinhoff, Orgelbau, Schworstadt, Germany. Additional stops included in the rebuild are on electric action and are the Harmonic Horn 8 / Horn 8 / Corno 8 unit rank and Big Ben (chimes H12-cis38). The Ingbirchworth was also added at the time of refurbishment.

All the additional work stands inside a new structure at the rear of the organ so that the historic integrity of the original instrument can be easily distinguished.

The third and smallest of the organs in Predigerkirche is an attractive positive instrument.

The organ has mechanical action and does not have a pedal division. Registration is mechanical and activated by sliders.

This organ was built by Christian Gfeller, organist at the Free Reformed Church of Trubschachen, a mountain town in central Switzerland.

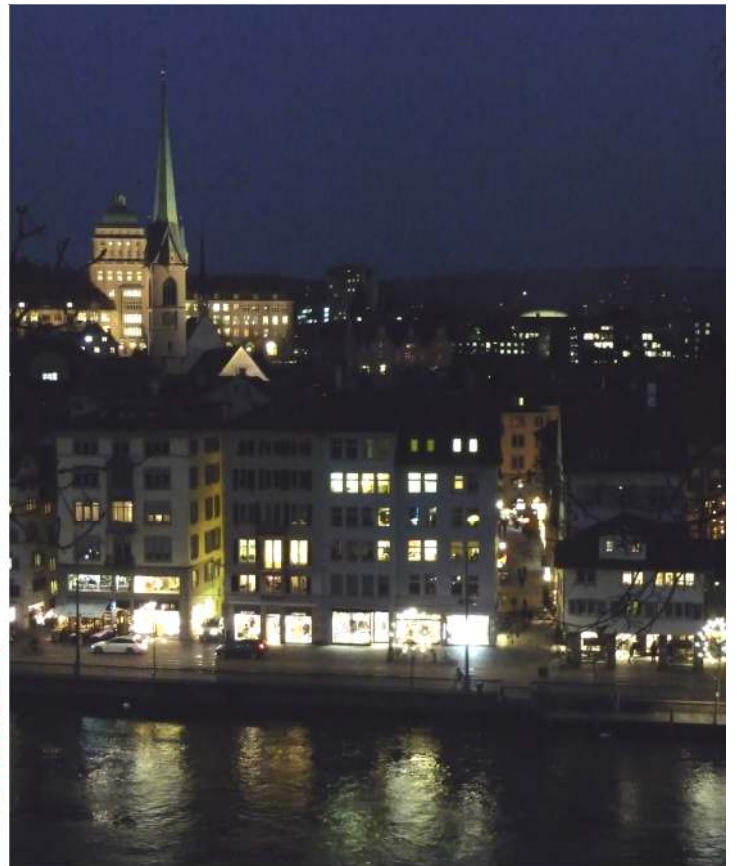
The manual has a compass C - ddd and the stoplist is:

Holzgedackt	8'
Holzflöte	4'
Prinzipal	2'
Oktave	1'





Above: Inside the refurbished Musikabteilung of the Zentralbibliothek, Prediger church choir



The Predigerkirche towers over the Limmat River in Zürich

The Predigerkirche is an exciting and interesting place to visit and I enjoyed the wonderful hospitality of one of the senior ministers of the church. Whilst the place is steeped in history it is also a live and active parish church in the hub of Zürich, presenting pastoral care to the city and providing a remarkable music programme for both spiritual and secular music events.

The three organs contribute a wonderful array of colour to a light and airy space which is at once both welcoming and reverent.

Bruce Duncan

