

In The Pipeline

A detailed photograph of a large, ornate pipe organ facade. The organ features numerous tall, silver-colored metal pipes arranged in several ranks. The facade is heavily decorated with intricate gold leaf carvings, including scrolls, leaves, and cherubs. Two cherubs are visible: one on the left side of the upper section and another on the right side, perched on a decorative ledge. The organ is set against a dark wooden background, and the ceiling above is made of light-colored wood panels.

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St Laurenz Stadtkirche Winterthur



I have often pondered when it is that you know you have tasted your finest food, or drunk your finest wine. Surely it is a bit like romance, and there are numerous factors that come in to play, not the least being your state of mind, state of health, the climate, who you are with, the time of the day, and so on.

So it must also be when you come to declaring that you have found the perfect organ. However, I am confident enough to say that under any circumstance I would have to rate the richly appointed and eloquently voiced romantic organ in the Stadtkirche of Winterthur, Switzerland, as the most wonderfully complete and fulfilling pipe organ I have ever encountered.

Winterthur is a city in the canton of Zürich in northern Switzerland at an elevation of 439 metres, relatively low-lying in Swiss terms. It has the country's sixth-largest population,

estimated at over 108,000 people. Today Winterthur is a farming, university, service and high-tech industry centre, but many people make use of its proximity to Zürich, which lies approximately 20 kilometres to the southwest, and only 20 minutes by train, for both business and semi-rural residential convenience.

The town was first established by the Roman Empire in the 1st century AD and by the 3rd century had become a fortified city. There were various changes of power as empires waxed and waned, and the counts of Winterthur built Kyburg castle there in the 10th century. In 1263, control of Winterthur passed to the House of Habsburg and was ruled by the Austrian Empire. In 1467, the Habsburgs needed cash and sold Winterthur to the city of Zürich.

On 27 May 1799, it was the site of the Battle of Winterthur between elements of the French Army of the Danube and the elements of the Habsburg army



Kyburg Castle, Winterthur, Switzerland

during the War of the Second Coalition in the French Revolutionary Wars. Because Winterthur lies near Zürich and at the junction of seven cross-roads, the army that held the town held the access to most of Switzerland and points crossing the Rhine into southern Germany. Although the forces involved were small, the ability of the Austrians to sustain an 11-hour assault against the French line, on the plateau north of Zürich, resulted in the consolidation of three Austrian forces. This led to the defeat of the French a few days later.

It was in the 19th Century that Winterthur became an industrial town, for many years being one of the major sites for the Swiss National railway industry. In 1998 Switzerland's largest bank, and one of the world's largest banks, Union Bank of Switzerland, UBS AG, was founded in Winterthur. So it is not overly surprising that, with all this pedigree, Winterthur also has a mighty church at its heart. The Evangelical Reformed parish of Winterthur-Stadt today has 7,000 members, and the Stadtkirche St Laurenz is their parish church.

The history of the town church (Stadtkirche) of Winterthur dates back to the 7th/8th century, when a simple wooden hall building was built on the square which the town church now occupies. It was replaced by a massive building in the 9th century. In the early Middle Ages, the church fell victim to city fires several times and had to be

rebuilt. The oldest part, which still exists today, is the Romanesque-early Gothic choir of 1244. The nave was built between 1508 and 1538, and the windows in the nave were replaced by the neo-Gothic windows of Max Aumüller in 1853 – 1856. A cemetery belonging to, and adjacent to, the church was abolished in 1826.

The nave originally contained a rich interior, which was removed during the Reformation together with the organ of the time. In 1644 the pulpit, originally in the centre of the rood screen, was moved to the south column. Today's pulpit comes from Ferdinand Stadler and was produced in 1854 by a sculptor named Egger from Konstanz. One of the oldest relics in the church is the baptismal font of Hans Conrad Frei from the year 1656. The 1712 wooden ceiling decorated with flat carvings was replaced by a castelated ceiling in 1913. The splendid Romanesque polychrome interior painting of the Church was created by Paul Zehnder in the years 1923 to 1930 and is considered to be the most important series of ecclesiastical paintings of the twentieth century in Switzerland.



A bit of potted history is necessary to understand how the present organ came to be in the Stadtkirche. The orders for demolition of the Stadtkirche organ and most of its decor came about in 1482 during the Reformation. There is no record now of what that organ consisted of or by whom it was built. Nevertheless, after the Reformation, this church was the first in the Canton of Zurich to acquire an organ - the Liebfrauenorgel (Choir organ) built in 1766-68 by Karl Joseph Riepp (a Swiss-born French-trained organ builder) for the former magnificent Gothic Cistercian abbey at the Salem Monastery, located in Germany about 16 kilometres north of Konstanz. This organ had become available on the secularisation of that institution and in 1808 the Winterthur City Council purchased it. This was a large three-manual instrument with 42 stops, part of the complex of organs that had been in the Salem Monastery church. In its original configuration, the instrument comprised 134 stops and 7,680 pipes which could be sounded together in four separate but co-joined organs - the Trinity Organ in the west gallery, the Notre-Dame Organ in the south gallery, the Tabernacle Organ in the north gallery and the Choir Organ in the north gallery. The magnificent cases of three large organs were the work of



Photo: Bill Van Pelt

Joseph Anton Feuchtmayer, Johann Georg Dirr and Johann Georg Wieland. After removal of the Choir organ much of the rest of the instrument was broken up and what was left of the Riepp organ was modified and rebuilt by Aloys Mooser and Friedrich Haas in 1836-43.

In 1888, E. F. Walcker of Ludwigsburg, Germany, built a new organ of 56 stops in the old case, using some ranks from the former organs by Riepp, Mooser, and Haas. The case of the Trinity Organ remains in the Salem Monastery today, concealing a much more modern

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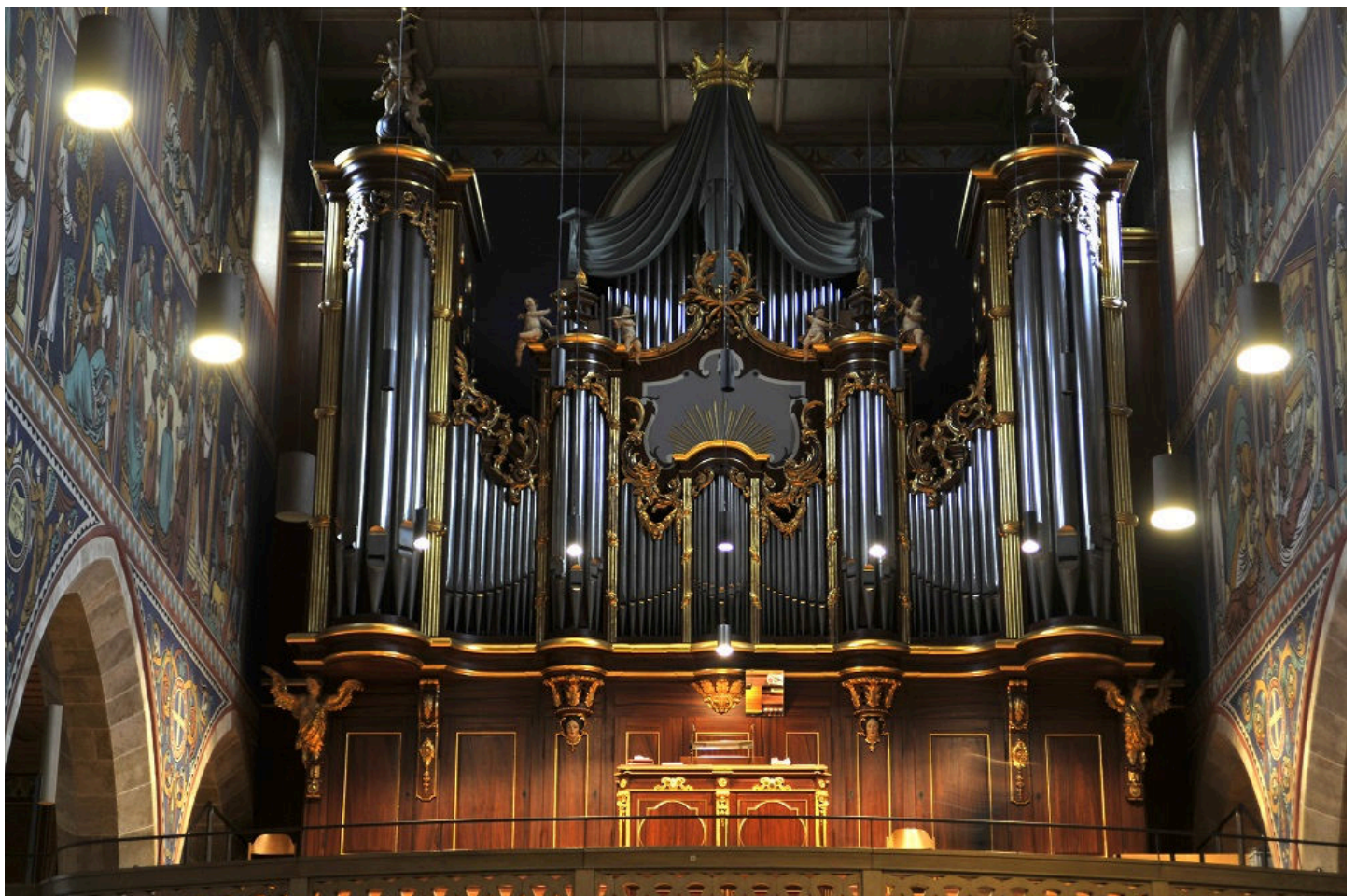
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romantic organ from 1901.

Coming back to the story of the organ in Winterthur, in the spring of 1809 Konstanz organ builder Gottfried Maucher was engaged to erect the Liebfrauenorgel on the rood screen which was still in the church at the time. The organ had to be reduced in size, due to lack of space, to two divisions and probably little or no pedal. At some point the Rückpositiv was transferred to the gallery parapet because there were problems with wind supply from the original bellows system. In 1836, the then most famous organ builder in Switzerland, Aloys Mooser (1770-1839) of Fribourg, was commissioned to repair the deficiencies caused by the inadequate transplant of the instrument. At the same time, the

organ in the lower Gallery was transferred to the West - it seems that two superimposed galleries on the west wall had been built. Mooser died during the renovation, and his sons were not able to complete the work to the satisfaction of the contracting authority. Therefore, in 1843 they summoned Friedrich Haas (1811-1886) from Laufenburg in Baden-Württemberg, Germany, who had worked on the organ in its previous home, to complete the organ which had now grown to 44 registers.

There were very high expectations for this scope of work, especially considering the change of tastes prevalent at the time, which required changes in pipe ranks and materials. New stops were added to the existing



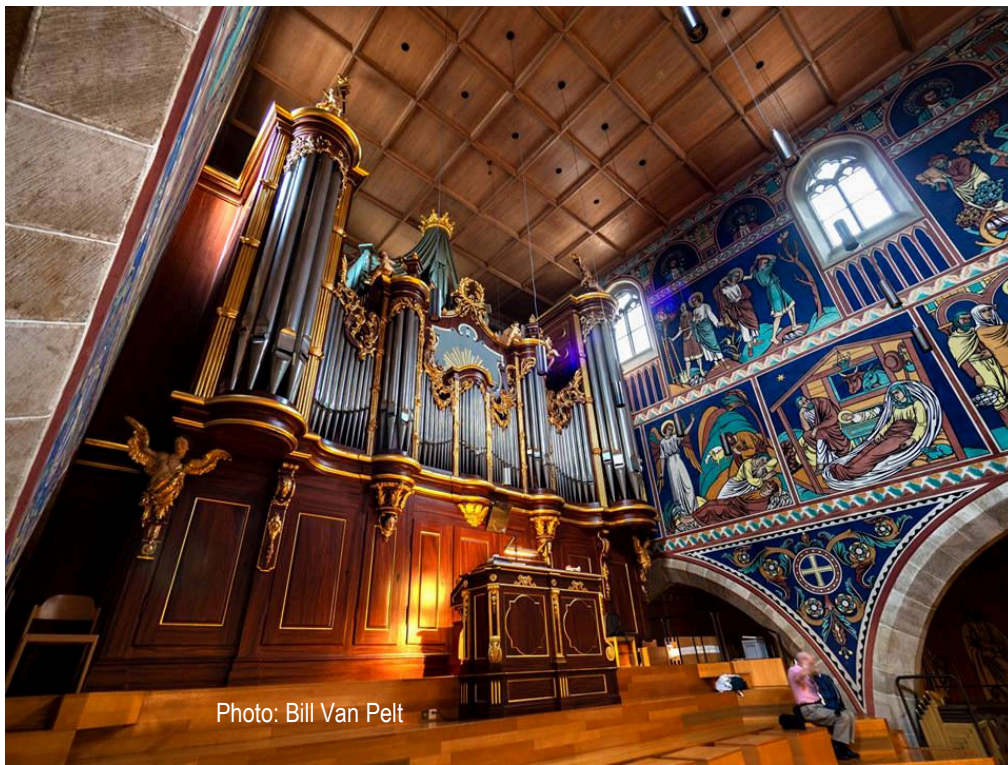


Photo: Bill Van Pelt

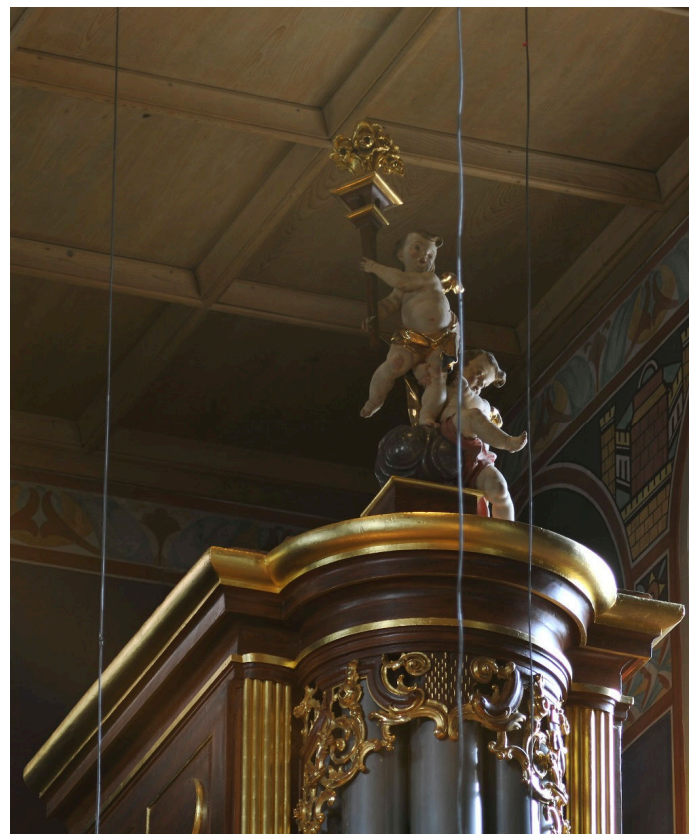
led to the reduction of the instrument to the three manual 56 register organ that had existed in 1932. This has given rise to the preservation of one of the last great late romantic organ works of the German cultural influence in Switzerland and, arguably, resulted in the finest of all the German Romantic organs still in existence.

pipework of Rahim, Mooser and Haas.

Renewed reconstruction in 1888 by the leading organ-building firm E. F. Walcker included newly developed cone valve chests. This led to the completion of an essentially new organ of 52 stops sitting behind the old facade from Salem. A reconstruction in 1922/24 brought in playing aids in the form of Barker levers, and in 1934 was a tonal adjustment under the influence of the organ reform movement. This brought the organ to a total of 61 stops and, at the same time, electric action was installed.

The decision to put an end to the heterogeneous condition of the organ, resulting from the many and sometimes contradicting interventions, led in the years 1980 to 1984 for the recovering of the Walcker essence of the organ present in their rebuild of 1888. This work was undertaken by firm of Kuhn Orgelbau, Männedorf, Switzerland, and

Riepp built his organs in the French tradition, which can be seen in the facade with the five slender towers. There is the exception of the slightly slipped segmental arch over the small central tower with horizontal cornices surmounted and joined by four flat fields, all slightly concave. The task of the Feichtmayers was obviously



limited to the ornamentation of the case, but the quality carvings show the fine art familiar to the Rococo decoration of the Louis XVI period. Also used in the façade is the casework from the no longer existing positive that had been on the Gallery parapet. Carefully composed and framed by a yoke drapery carved in wood and the fabric curtain ruffled by a crown over the centre, behind the large swell box, this section comes from the Walcker conversion in 1888. The overall result is a beautifully symmetrical and balanced casework that begins to tell the majesty and magnificence of the organ before even the first note is heard.

In 1983 a two-manual Choir organ built by Metzler AG, Dietikon, Switzerland, was installed on the East wall of the



choir, directly on the axis of the church and speaking into the choir and nave. This organ in Baroque tradition of 16 registers over two manual divisions and pedal supplements the musical programme of the church and is a particularly useful aid to smaller service requirements and choral works.

This church is warm and alive, a place where worship has been effective for over a thousand years and is still



Organ Recital

Catherine Weinman

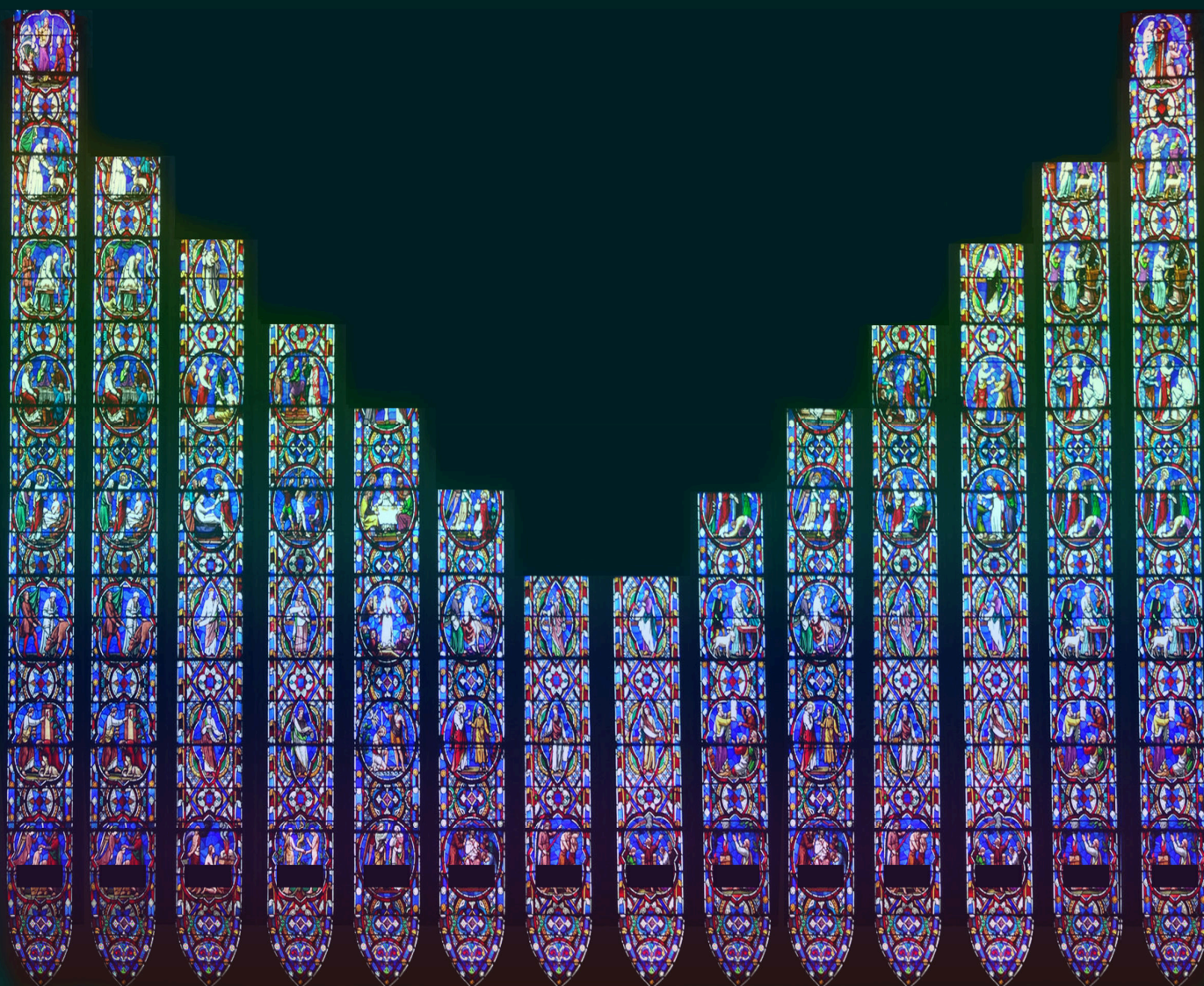
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Stoplist of the 1888 E. F. Walcker organ, Stadtkirche, Winterthur

I. HAUPTWERK C-g3	II. POSITIV C-g3	III. SCHWELLWERK C-g3	PEDAL C-f1
Principal 16'	Bourdon 16'	Lieblich Gedeckt 16'	Principal-Bass 32'
Bourdon 16'	Principal 8'	Principal 8'	Principal-Bass 16'
Principal 8'	Bourdon 8'	Viola 8'	Violon-Bass 16'
Bourdon 8'	Doppelflöte 8'	Lieblich Gedeckt 8'	Subbass 16'
Viola di Gamba 8'	Salicional 8'	Spitzflöte 8'	Gedeckt-Bass 16'
Hohlfloete 8'	Aeoline 8'	Harmonika 8'	Floeten-Bass 8'
Dolce 8'	Voix céleste 8'	Fugara 4'	Violoncello 8'
Quinte 5 1/3'	Principal 4'	Dolceflöte 4'	Octav 4'
Octav 4'	Traversflöte 4'	Harmonia aetherea IV 4'	Posaune 16'
Rohrflöte 4'	Flute d'amour 4'	Trompette harmonique 8'	Trompette 8'
Gemshorn 4'	Waldflöte 2'	Basson-hautbois 8'	Clairon 4'
Quinte IV 2 2/3'	Mixtur IV 2 2/3'	Clairon 4'	
Octave 2'	Clarinetten 8'		
Mixtur V 2 2/3'	Trompette 8'		
Cornet III-V 8'			
Trompette 8'			
		III. ECHOWERK	COUPLERS
		(Under Expression)	
Cone valve chests		Bourdon d'écho 8'	Pos/HW
Mechanical action with Barker Lever Machines on the manuals		Vox humana 8'	SW/HW
Pneumatic registry and 7 fixed combinations		Tremolo	SW/Pos
Other reconstruction based on the comparable 1878 Walcker organ in the Votive Church, Vienna			HW/Ped
			Pos/Ped
			SW/Ped

relevant in today's world. There is nothing I can say to describe the sheer presence and power of the mighty instrument in the western gallery of this church - which is the best example of its type in the world; it must be seen and touched and played and heard to ever get a true appreciation of it. It has been my great privilege to have experienced it as part of the Historical Organ Study Tour (HOST) I attended in August and September 2018. If you would like to see more of the organs I had the joy to visit, please view the albums on my Facebook page which you can visit at

<https://www.facebook.com/bruce.duncan.35380>

If you would like to know more about the HOST event for 2019, which I believe is scheduled for Bavaria, Germany, I will be pleased to send information on to you. Please email me and I will contact you when the details are released.



Bruce Duncan

At left: Crest of the City of Winterthur

Information from St Laurenz Stadtkirche, the Winterthur Office of Tourism and Wikipedia websites.

Photos by Bruce Duncan unless shown otherwise.

Stoplist of the 1984 Metzler choir organ, Stadtkirche, Winterthur

I. HAUPTWERK C-f3

Bourdon	16'
Principal	8'
Hohlflöte	8'
Octav	4'
Quinte	2 2/3'
Superoctave	2'
Mixtur	III 1 1/3'
Cornet	III 2 2/3'
Dulcian	8'

II. BRUSTWERK C-f3

Gedackt	8'
Rohrflöte	4'
Principal	2'
Sesquialtera	II
2 2/3' + 1 3/5'	
Sifflöte	1 1/3'
Vox humana	8'
Tremulant affecting whole organ	

I. PEDAL C-d1

Subbass	16' (HW)
Octave	8' (HW)
Bourdon	8'
Trompete	8'

COUPLERS

BW/HW
HW/Ped
BW/Ped



Above: Metzler choir organ, Max Aumüller window

Photos: Bruce Duncan

Right and below: Details of the Walcker organ console

Photos: Bill Van Pelt

