The Restoration of the Casavant Organ in the Gulangyu Organ Museum by Rieger Orgelbau, Austria

The organ has a long, varied and rich history. Although the principles, on which organs are based, come from antiquity, and are common to all, the artistic development of the instrument differed from location to location in Europe from medieval times to the twentieth century. This ongoing developmental trajectory has resulted in stylistic swings in organ building, and unfortunately, in fine instruments being modified to suit passing fashion. In the 20th century alone, two major stylistic swings have occurred. The first was the so-called 'organ movement' which was a move away from the 19th century Romanticism, back to the tonal ideals of the 18th century; the second was the reversal of the first, where nowadays organs with more foundation stops, greater richness and less brilliance are again sought after.

These processes had consequences for the restoration process in Gulangyu. The Chancel Organ was originally built in 1890 by G S Hutchings as a separate organ, but thirty of its stops were incorporated into the Casavant Chancel Organ in 1917. Subsequently, the 'organ movement' referred to above came and went, and resulted in changes to the instrument. The question therefore arose of whether these changes should be reversed. As there was no doubt that the Emmanuel Church organ has artistic merit, it was clear that it should be restored, rather than being 'rebuilt'; but restored to which point in time?

Ultimately, it was decided that the restoration should be based on the 1917 concept for the combined organs and that whatever differences in approach to voicing that existed between 1890, when the Chancel Organ was constructed, and 1917, should not lead to attempts to reverse changes that were made to the Chancel Organ stops incorporated into the new organ in 1917. Although different organ builders were involved, no major shifts in the way that one conceives the tonal structure occurred between the two dates. Furthermore, the combined organ had been in existence for close to a century, and as such had its own historical value that should be respected.

A second question related to the possibility of adding new technical elements, viz. an electronic system for letting the organ play-back previous performances and a 'sequencer', i.e. a system that allows the organist to preselect a set of registrations that can be recalled 'in sequence', one after the other, as a recital proceeds.

From one perspective, it was argued that visitors to the museum would expect to hear what the organ sounds like, although it is not practical to have an organist available constantly. Therefore, a system that enables the instrument to be 'played' on its own would have great advantages. Similarly, it was argued that nowadays organists expect to have sufficient playing aids, including a sequencer, at hand. From a second (technical) perspective, it is clear from the console that the

organ had playing aids (a piston combination system) from its beginning, which however, after almost 100 years, was understandably no longer operational.

Based on these perspectives, it was decided that a new Rieger computerised system should be installed to 'take over' the existing piston functions and provide the new facilities. Almost no visible changes would be required to the console because the new system would be installed out of sight with its controlling keypad positioned separately on a stand next to the console.

With these few exceptions, it was decided that the organ was to be restored to its 1917 specification, with only the changes made in the 1970s being reversed. In line with internationally recognised museum and restoration principles, the aims were to conserve the organ as far as practicable in its original state and to change it as little as possible, both physically and tonally. The stops that had been lost or replaced and some missing pipes were reconstructed according to the materials and pipe scales still in the organ, so that the complete organ is now once more playable as originally conceived.

In practical terms, this meant that all the pieces of the organ were cleaned and carefully repaired. Corroded metal parts were burnished. Where parts were missing, they were reconstructed. The engraving of the names of stop knobs was done in the script used previously, etc. Thereafter, the sections of the organ were installed in positions that reflect their original relationships as closely as possible.

With the exception of the console, windchests and a few badly damaged pipes, which were restored in the Rieger workshop in Austria, the work was done in Gulangyu so as to minimise the danger of damage by transporting the whole organ to workshops abroad and then back again to Gulangyu. Teams of Rieger specialists were sent to Gulangyu to work on the organ's pipes, bellows, woodwork, mechanisms, etc. And valuable assistance was provided by Rieger's partner in this venture, *Wakeley Pipe Organs* from Australia. All in all, in various ways, around 30 people of 12 nationalities were involved in the restoration over a period of almost 4 years, making this, without any doubt, the largest organ restoration project ever witnessed in Asia. The result is that this fine instrument is once again able to enchant and fascinate visitors and audiences, albeit at the other side of the world from where it originated.

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