

The organ landscapes in Argentina

Dr Michał Szostak

Introduction

In June 2022, I visited South and Latin Americas for the first time in my life. During 17 days of an extensive tour, I performed ten recitals in Brazil, Argentina, Chile and Panama. These territories are not often a topic of organ matters, or the consideration from the European perspective, but I would like to change this pattern a little because there are three fundamental reasons for that. The first is a significant number of instruments imported from Europe in the second part of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century made by the most refined French, German, Italian and British organ builders. The second reason is the high level of originality of these instruments because – due to several factors – these instruments were not altered in many cases. The third reason is the local society's limited interest in organ music; consequently, organ performance and organ maintenance education possibilities are meagre and focused on the traditional (but not institutionalised) master-pupil exchange of knowledge and skills. Due to the extensive scope of organ issues in the South and Latin Americas, this article is focused only on the Argentinian organ landscape.

Historic background

The first impression after entering Buenos Aires, the capital city of Argentina, is its similarity to the big European cities like Paris, London and Madrid. The architecture of civic and sacred buildings shows the same roots and inspirations because Argentina, in the second part of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, was one of the most important countries

exporting agricultural products worldwide. Deep business connections with European economies caused, in consequence, the use of similar cultural styles of living (especially among the wealthier part of the Argentinian society, i.e. the owners of big farms) and shaping the environment (buildings, cities). Very often, the wives of the farm owners lobbied their husbands to fund different institutions, including entire churches, with their religious equipment and – most interesting for us – organs. Due to described connections with Europe and because Argentina did not have its specialists in many areas (including organ building), the primary source of these products and influences was Europe and economically and culturally rich European countries like France, Germany, Great Britain and Italy.

Most European organs arrived in Argentina during the 60-year prosperity between 1870 and 1930. The wonderful names of organ-building families can be found among the producers of these instruments: Cavaillé-Coll and Merklin from France, E.F. Walcker & Cie., Steinmeyer & Strebel, Lauckhuff from Germany, Vegezzi Bossi, Locatelli, Tonoli, Fratelli Serassi from Italy, Forster & Andrews, Bishop, Bryceson from Great Britain, as well as Gebrüder Rieger from Austria. The period before this “golden time” for organ matters is represented by earlier instruments (very few belong to the XVIII century, e.g. the Colonial Organ in the sanctuary of the Metropolitan Cathedral in Buenos Aires). Also, contemporary organs are limited to just a few examples of instruments (e.g. a big 56-stop and 4M+P Klais organ in French symphonic style at the Kirchner Cultural Center inaugurated in 2015 or a medium size 27-stop and 2M+P Southern Organ Builders organ in Iglesia Nueva

Apostolica, both in Buenos Aires).

Currently, around 200 pipe organs can be found throughout Argentina: of which one hundred are located in Buenos Aires (a metropolis with 15.3 million citizens), and the remainder are spread inside the country in cities like Cordoba, Corrientes, Jujuy, Rosario, Salta, San Juan and Santa Fe.¹

Since the 1930s, due to political reasons, Argentina slowly started to lose its wealth and the golden period for organs started to become history. Parallel to weakening the economy and education, musical matters, including organs and organ music, began to lose their importance.

It must be mentioned that the same reason that allows us today to see and touch the original treasures of the European organ-building companies leads to the poor condition of many of these instruments. That some organs are in a playable state is owed to a few individuals, organists and organ maintenance forces, who, against all obstacles, try to keep the instruments alive. However, unfortunately, a large number of organs are not in use due to many reasons: lack of care is the first; the second is the lack of qualified organ builders who could do significant work preserving the playable state of these instruments; another reason is the lack of pipes or organ parts which were lost during many years of inactivity, and of course, damaged caused by fires, water, dust, rodents and worms.

Like each complex machine, each organ must be constantly used to keep its qualities. However, unfortunately, the lack of interest and funds caused and still causes a significant degree of destruction of some of these instruments. Moreover, many people in charge of places where organs are located are often unaware of their cultural value and are not interested



Figure 1. Metropolitan Cathedral, Buenos Aires

Source: Michał Szostak

in maintaining the organ heritage. As a result, there are not more than a dozen qualified musicians in organ performance in Argentina, keeping in mind that the country has 45.6 million inhabitants and 200 instruments. Therefore, the lack of organists implies the lack of need for maintaining the organs; the lack of organs in good condition implies a lack of interest in organs at all; a never-ending story.

Organs

The Argentinian organs imported from Europe belong to broad romantic traditions² and represent different sizes. The currently largest pipe instrument is located in Basílica del Santísimo Sacramento (Mutin Cavaillé-Coll, 1912) and consists of 71 speaking stops on four manual and one pedal sections; this instrument was electrified and broadly modified in 1955, and the original console was replaced by an Italian one – the current specification can be seen on



Figure 4. The minor instruments have just a few stops on one manual with no independent pedalboard.

In one article, it is impossible to describe all the valuable organs in Argentina. The selection of the majority of described organs is based on my experience touching and playing on them in person. Thanks to this approach, I can share the whole spectrum of



Figure 2. Metropolitan Cathedral, Buenos Aires: contemporary liturgic organ. At the organ: Dr Michał Szostak

Source: Michał Szostak



Figure 3. Metropolitan Cathedral, Buenos Aires: Walcker organ

Source: Michał Szostak

| Manual I | | Positif | | Manual IV | | Solo | |
|-------------------------|-----------|--------------------------|-----|----------------------|---------|--------------------|----|
| 1. Quintaton | 16' | 13. Trompette royale | 8' | 1. Cor de nuit | 16' | 11. Tuba mirabilis | 8' |
| 2. Principal | 8' | 14. Clarinette | 8' | 2. Grosse flûte | 8' | 12. Cor d'harmonie | 4' |
| 3. Flûte harmonique | 8' | 15. Soprano harmonique | 4' | 3. Jubal | 8' | 13. Cloches | |
| 4. Cor de Nuit | 8' | Tremulant | | 4. Flûte d'orchestre | 4' | | |
| 5. Salicional | 8' | III to I | | 5. Viola | 4' | Tremulant | |
| 6. Unda maris | 8' | IV to I | | 6. Eoline | 4' | II to IV | |
| 7. Octave | 4' | Sub I | | 7. Quinte | 2 2/3' | Sub IV | |
| 8. Flûte octavante | 4' | Super I | | 8. Larigot | 2' | Super IV | |
| 9. Quinte bouchée | 2 2/3' | Sub III to I | | 9. Tierce | 1 3/5' | Sub III to IV | |
| 10. Flageolet | 2' | Sub IV to I | | 10. Septième | 1 1/7' | Super II to IV | |
| 11. Tierce | 1 3/5' | Super III to I | | | | | |
| 12. Cor anglais | 16' | Super IV to I | | | | | |
| Manual II | | Grand Orgue | | Pedal | | | |
| 1. Montre | 16' | 15. Bombarde | 16' | 1. Acoustique | 32' | 14. Trompette | 8' |
| 2. Bourdon | 16' | 16. Trompette | 8' | 2. Contrebasse fort | 16' | 15. Clairon | 4' |
| 3. Principal fort | 8' | 17. Clairon | 4' | 3. Contrebasse | 16' | 16. Cloches | |
| 4. Montre | 8' | I to II | | 4. Soubasse | 16' | | |
| 5. Flûte harmonique | 8' | III to II | | 5. Violon basse | 16' | Tremulant | |
| 6. Bourdon | 8' | IV to II | | 6. Quinte | 10 2/3' | I to Ped. | |
| 7. Violoncelle | 8' | Sub II | | 7. Basse bouchée | 8' | II to Ped. | |
| 8. Quinte | 5 1/3' | Super II | | 8. Flûte | 8' | III to Ped. | |
| 9. Prestant | 4' | Sub I to II | | 9. Bourdon | 8' | IV to Ped. | |
| 10. Nazard | 2 2/3' | Sub III to II | | 10. Violin diapason | 8' | Super I to Ped. | |
| 11. Doublette | 2' | Sub IV to II | | 11. Quinte | 5 1/3' | Super II to Ped. | |
| 12. Fourniture | V ranges | Super I to II | | 12. Flûte ouverte | 4' | Super III to Ped. | |
| 13. Cymbale | IV ranges | Super III to II | | 13. Trombone 1 | 6' | Super IV to Ped. | |
| 14. Cornet | V ranges | Super IV to II | | | | | |
| Manual III | | Récit | | | | | |
| 1. Bourdon | 16' | 11. Trompette harmonique | 8' | | | | |
| 2. Diapason | 8' | 12. Basson hautbois | 8' | | | | |
| 3. Flûte harmonique | 8' | 13. Voix humaine | 8' | | | | |
| 4. Viole de Gambe | 8' | 14. Clairon harmonique | 4' | | | | |
| 5. Voix céleste | 8' | Tremulant | | | | | |
| 6. Flûte octavante | 4' | IV to III | | | | | |
| 7. Octavin | 2' | Sub III | | | | | |
| 8. Plein jeu VII ranges | | Super III | | | | | |
| 9. Cornet V ranges | | Sub IV to III | | | | | |
| 10. Basson | 16' | Super IV to III | | | | | |

Figure 4. *Basílica del Santísimo Sacramento, Buenos Aires: organ specification (Mutin Cavallé-Coll, 1912 with alterations made on 1955)*

Source: <http://cavallecoll.flavam.com/ssndxeng.html>

expressions. The following pages contain information about eight interesting organs: five of them in Buenos Aires (Metropolitan Cathedral, Quilmes Cathedral, San Juan Bautista church,

Basílica del Sagrado Corazón de Jesús, Chiesa Italiana di Mater Misericordiae) and one in a small city Rauch (San Pedro Apostol church), located 170 miles south of Buenos Aires. I did not play another

two English-origin organs (Primera Iglesia Evangélica Metodista in Buenos Aires and All Saints Anglican Church in Quilmes), but I described them to show the full scope of represented styles.

Metropolitan Cathedral, Buenos Aires

The Buenos Aires Metropolitan Cathedral, the main Catholic church in the city and the country, is located in the city centre, overlooking the main square, Plaza de Mayo. The church's origins were in the 16th century, but it has been rebuilt several times. The present building is a mix of architectural styles, with an 18th-century nave and dome and a severe, 19th-century Neoclassical façade without towers. The façade of the building, consisting of a tall portico inspired by classical architecture, with twelve columns and a triangular pediment on top, lends the building the appearance of an ancient temple rather than a Catholic church. The Cathedral of Buenos Aires is a latin cross building with a transept and three aisles with side chapels connected by corridors. We can find precious 18th-century statues, altarpieces, and abundant neo-renaissance and neo-baroque decorations in the interior. Originally the interior was only decorated with altarpieces, but at the end of the 19th century, the walls and ceilings of the church were decorated with frescoes depicting biblical scenes painted by the Italian Francesco Paolo Parisi. In 1907, the cathedral floor was covered with Venetian-style mosaics designed by the Italian Carlo Morra. Since 1880, in one of the cathedral's chapels, one can find the mausoleum of General

José de San Martín guarded by statues representing Argentina, Peru and Chile; in this mausoleum, there are also the remains of Generals Juan Gregorio de las Heras and Tomás Guido, as well as those of the Unknown Soldier of the Independence.

The cathedral consists of three pipe organs: 1. a small colonial positive, one of the oldest organs in Argentina, located in the sanctuary (Figure 2); 2. a small contemporary liturgic organ with one manual and a short pedalboard designed and built in 2016 by Professor Enrique Rimoldi (cathedral organist) and Eng. Jorge Louis Franco, located in the sanctuary Figure 5; and 3. a large romantic organ by Walcker located on the organ loft above the main entrance to the cathedral (Figure 3).

The EF Walcker & Cia organ dates from 1871 and has Opus number 263. It has more than 3,500 pipes creating 34 stops

located on three manuals (C-f^{'''}) and a pedalboard (C-d[']) and was made in Germany with the finest materials available then. Furthermore, this organ is relatively well-conserved, with just one rebuild done in 1887 and the efforts of many cathedral organists (including the significant activities of Prof. Rimoldi); also, its intonation is preserved as close as is possible to the original. Therefore, this instrument can be recognised as one of the finest organs in Argentina.

The history of the organ reflects all issues related to the Argentinian instruments that were imported from Europe. Its purchase was made thanks to



Figure 5. Metropolitan Cathedral, Buenos Aires: Prof. Enrique Rimoldi, the organist of the cathedral, tuning the Walcker organ

Source: Michał Szostak



Figure 6. Metropolitan Cathedral, Buenos Aires: colonial positive

Source: Michał Szostak



the help of influential inhabitants of Buenos Aires, the national government and wealthy members of the community. Unfortunately, the customs issues caused a delay, and the organ waited two years in the port before it was released. After its completion at the cathedral in 1871, only one modification was undertaken by Italian-Argentinian organ builder Alberto Mateo Poggi in 1887.³ These alterations were undertaken due to insufficient air according to the number of stops and the heaviness of the key mechanism. Fortunately, the works of Poggi were successful and can be considered an added value to the Walcker company's effect. Poggi added larger bellows, the Barker lever and covered the whole instrument with a roof, adding shades to the side walls of the organ case that improved the scale of shaping the swell effect of the third manual.

The organ loft is 35 feet above the floor level, and the façade consists of playing pipes belonging to Principal 16', Montre 8' and Octava 4' of Manual I and Montre 8' of Manual II. The console – fully original till today – is situated in the centre of the organ case, and the organist sits with his face towards the main altar. The console was built as small as possible to allow the organist to see as much as possible of the liturgic action below.

From the point of view of an organist, I must mention that sitting at this instrument and performing on it, I felt like being transferred at least a century back. The quality and characteristics of the sound are significantly different from contemporary organs; the original 19th-century voicing of originally designed sets of stops allows one to move back and feel the historic atmosphere.

Manual I

| | | | |
|-------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|------|
| 1. Principal | 16' | 11. Fourniture | VI |
| 2. Montre | 8' | 11. Cornet | 8' V |
| 3. Bourdon | 8' | 12. Trompette | 8' |
| 4. Viola de Gamba | 8' | 13. Clairon | 4' |
| 5. Hohlflöte | 8' | | |
| 6. Gemshor | n 8' | Pneumatic lever for Manual I | |
| 7. Nasard | 5 1/3' (currently 2 2/3') | II to I | |
| 8. Prestant | 4' | Fortissimo I M | |
| 9. Kohrflöte | 4' | Forte I M | |
| 10. Octave | 2' | Piano I M | |

Manual II

| | | | |
|----------------|-----|-------------------------|------|
| 15. Bourdon | 16' | 21. Cymbal | 2 II |
| 16. Montre | 8' | 22. Basson y Clarinette | 8' |
| 17. Bourdon | 8' | Tremulant | |
| 18. Salicional | 8' | III to II | |
| 19. Octave | 4' | Appel des jeux du II | |
| 20. Flute | 4' | M | |

Manual III

| | | | |
|------------------|----|-------------------|----|
| 23. Principal | 8' | 27. Physharmonica | 8' |
| 24. Flûte douce | 8' | Tremulant | |
| 25. Fugara | 4' | Expression III | |
| 26. Voix humaine | 8' | M | |

Pedal

| | | | |
|-------------------|---------|-----------------------------|----|
| 28. Grand Bourdon | 16' | 35. Trompette | 8' |
| 29. Soubasse | 16' | I to P | |
| 30. Violon Basse | 16' | II to P | |
| 31. Octave basse | 8' | Forte ou Piano en pedalier | |
| 32. Violoncelle | 8' | Forte General | |
| 33. Quinte basse | 10 2/3' | Expression for Physarmonica | |
| 34. Bombarde | 16' | Crescendo | |

Figure 7. Metropolitan Cathedral, Buenos Aires: Walcker organ specification

Source: Michał Szostak



Quilmes Cathedral, Buenos Aires

In 1730 the Curato de la Magdalena was created, and the chapel changed its entity to the Parish of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross of the Quilmes. The construction of a suitable church began 50 years later. In 1864, the local Archbishopric changed the name to Parroquia de la Inmaculada Concepción de Quilmes. According to some historians, the Immaculate Conception was the image that presided over the

17th-century chapel. In 1878 the current cathedral was built, whose entrance faces Rivadavia street. The grille was installed in 1930. Its style is eclectic since the two towers on its front are colonial, but Pas-de-Calais blesses the domes. Its interior has a main nave and side galleries in a clear Italianate style. The parish church became the Cathedral of Quilmes, a western district of Buenos Aires.

The Quilmes parish church's first

organ was acquired, at the cost of \$4,000, under the consultation and advice of the music teacher Don Antonio Barrera Picart. It was inaugurated on the 8th of December 1888 by parish priest Francisco Suárez Salgado. The current organ was acquired in 1913 by Father Manuel Bruzzone, who financed it out of his own pocket through bank loans and with guarantees from his friends and neighbours of Quilmes. Bruzzone was the





Manual I

| | | | |
|-----------------|--------|--------------------------------------|----|
| 1. Principale | 16' | 9. Tromba | 8' |
| 2. Diapason | 8' | II/I | |
| 3. Viola gamba | 8' | Suboctave I | |
| 4. Bordone | 8' | Suboctave II/I | |
| 5. Dulciana | 8' | Pedal on I* | |
| 6. Principalino | 4' | | |
| 7. Ottava | 2' | * (the lowest voice played on the M1 | |
| 8. Ripieno | 4 file | uses the Pedal stops) | |

Manual II

| | | | |
|----------------------|----|----------------------|---------|
| 10. Principale soave | 8' | 15. Nazardo | 2 2/3** |
| 11. Salizionale | 8' | 16. Flautino | 2' |
| 12. Bordone | 8' | 17. Clarinette | 8' |
| 13. Vox Celeste | 8' | 18. Oboe | 8' |
| 14. Bordoncino | 4' | **added by E.Rimoldi | |

Pedal

| | | |
|-----------------|-----|------|
| 19. Subbasso | 16' | I/P |
| 20. Violoncello | 8' | II/P |
| 31. Basso forte | 8' | |

Figure 8. Quilmes Cathedral, Buenos Aires: Laukhuf organ specification

Source: Michał Szostak

Quilmes parish priest from 1910 to 1929, the year of his death (his remains lie in the atrium of the Cathedral), when there was still a small balance to settle, which Don José Sarriés, a landowner, finally paid. The organ was purchased from the German factory August Laukhuff and was installed by the Italian organ builder Francisco Mascia in 1913. It is the reason that the stop names are in Italian. Until today it has two keyboards and a



pedalboard. It has 21 registers and a total of 1,246 metal and wooden pipes. Its sonority corresponds to the romantic organs. Due to its dimensions, sound

quality and noble materials used for its construction, it is considered one of the essential organs in the province of Buenos Aires.⁴





San Juan Bautista Church, Buenos Aires

The Church of San Juan Bautista, known at the end of the 19th century as San Juan de los Francés, is a Catholic medium-size temple located on Alsina street in the Monserrat neighbourhood of Buenos Aires. The church is associated with and attended by the French community of the city. The first church at this place was built in 1654. After the collapse of one of these constructions, a wealthy neighbour, Mr Juan Bautista de San Martín, the Militia Field Master, financed the building of a new temple built in 1719. The church later

became part of the Convent of the Capuchin Clarisas Nuns, who arrived in Buenos Aires in 1747. Around 20 years later, the building was completely rebuilt in 1769 but demolished in 1778. Its current construction dates from 1797. The church has a single nave covered by a barrel vault; over the transept stands a large blind dome. The private chapel from where the Capuchin Poor Clares listened to mass is still preserved. The façade was made in 1895 by JM Belgrano and later redone by Rómulo Ayerza; on the façade, the large central arch with a

rose window and stained glass windows stands out, crowned by a frontispiece with small penile arches. It is flanked by asymmetrical towers, different in size, shape and height. The building was declared a National Historic Monument in 1942. The altarpiece of the main altar, from the 18th century, was damaged in the fires caused by riots on June 1955. In the courtyard of the parish house, called “Patio de la Reconquista”, the combatants of the English Invasions of 1806 and 1807, both Creole and English, are buried. Also, under the choir is a crypt





Figure 11. Mutin Cavaillé-Coll organ at the church of San Juan Bautista, Buenos Aires

Source: Michał Szostak

containing the tombs of two hundred and seventy Capuchin Poor Clare nuns. The Church of San Juan Bautista is currently the Provincial House of the Fathers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Betharram for Argentina and Uruguay.

The medium-size organ, built by Mutin Cavaillé-Coll, has 24 speaking stops on two manuals (C-g^{'''}) and a



pedalboard (C-f^{''}), is located above the main entrance to the church on the organ loft. Stop action is a fully mechanical and key action, also mechanical, but with Barker lever for the Grand Orgue section. Slider-type windchests held a variety of beautiful symphonic stops allowing, with typically French foot levers, to change colours and dynamics quickly and efficiently from pianissimo to fortissimo. The console stays in front of the organ case, and the organist sits with his face towards the main altar – which was the typical invention of Cavaillé-



Coll. Special considerations must be paid to the Anches section of Recit expressif. Except for characteristic 8' Hautbois and 8' Voix Humaine, three powerful reeds of 8' Trompette, 16' Basson and 4' Clairon allow performing symphonic repertoire and improvisations with charm and according to the stylistic patterns without any compromises. Not the most beautiful facade, without a top to allow seeing the whole rose window, hides a great and powerful musical instrument preserved in original form and kept in good condition.



Manual I

Grand Orgue

| | | | |
|----------------|-----|-------------|--------|
| 1. Bourdon | 16' | 6. Prestant | 4' |
| 2. Montre | 8' | 7. Nasard | 2 2/3' |
| 3. Flûte | 8' | II to I | |
| 4. Bourdon | 8' | Sub II to I | |
| 5. Violoncelle | 8' | Appel I | |

Manual II

Recit expressif

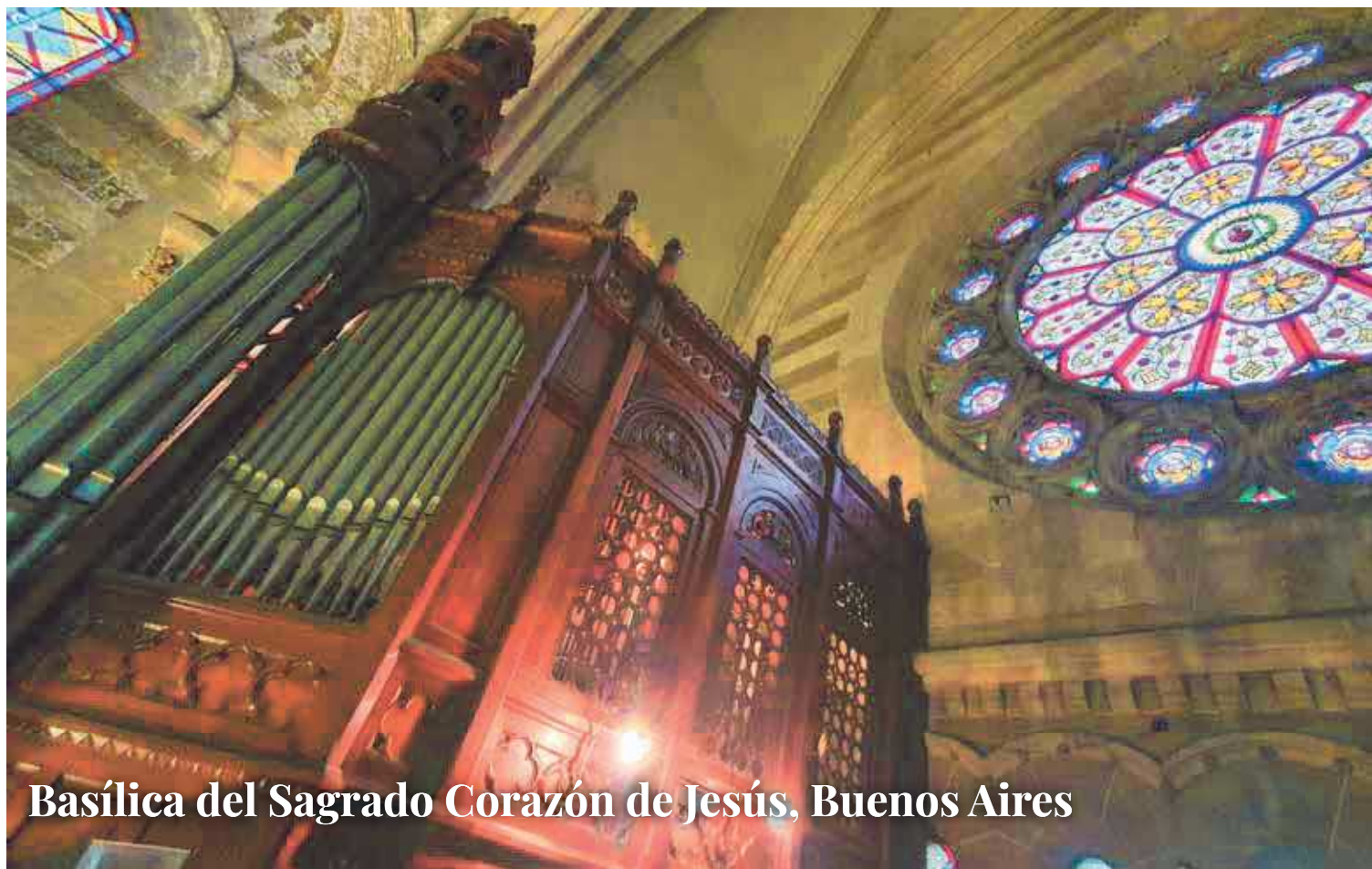
| | | | |
|--------------------------|-----|-------------------|----|
| 8. Cor de nuit | 8 | 16. Trompette | 8' |
| 9. Flûte | 8' | 17. Voix humaine | 8' |
| 10. Viole de Gambe | 8' | 18. Hautbois | 8' |
| 11. Eolina | 8' | 19. Clairon | 4' |
| 12. Flûte | 4' | | |
| 13. Octavin | 2' | Tremulant | |
| 14. Plein Jeu (3 ranges) | | Appel d'Anches II | |
| 15. Basson | 16' | Expression II M | |

Pedale

| | | | |
|-----------------|-----|-------------|----|
| 20. Contrebasse | 16' | 24. Bourdon | 8' |
| 21. Bourdon | 16' | | |
| 22. Flûte | 8' | I to Ped | |
| 23. Cello | 8' | II to Ped | |

Figure 10. Specification of the Mutin Cavaillé-Coll organ at the church of San Juan Bautista, Buenos Aires

Source: Michał Szostak



Basílica del Sagrado Corazón de Jesús, Buenos Aires

The Sacred Heart of Jesus Basilica in Barracas (currently a district of Buenos Aires) dates back to the end of the 19th century. At that time, the land west of the Barracas neighbourhood belonged to the Pereyra Iraola family. In 1904, Leonardo Pereyra's wish to build a chapel dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus began to materialise (it is worth mentioning that the same wave of religious intensification towards the Sacred Heart of Jesus was seen in France during the end of the 19th century). Unfortunately, Leonardo died without specifying it, but his widow Antonia Iraola and his six children fulfilled the dream in his memory. The foundation stone of the new church was laid down on the 10th of June, 1904. Work began immediately, including the adjacent residence, two large patios with superimposed cloisters of classical orders, and the building for the school and its dependencies. The temple's walls reach a metre wide, with massive brick buttresses.

More than 1,000 workers came to work simultaneously in some stages of the construction, whose approximate total cost at the time was 4 million pesos. The church is a monumental building that adopts the transitional Romanesque to the Gothic style consisting of an outstanding high altar with a baldachin or ciborium supported by four carved columns decorated with bas-reliefs. Most of the materials that make up the temple came from France. The Daquier company built the altars in the French city of Caen with marble from the Angulem quarries. In the oak wood of many of the 165 benches, one can still see the number assigned by the carpenter who sent them, disassembled, from France in 1908. The hand of French artists is also seen in the religious images, in the magnificent 8.50-meter diameter rose windows, and in the 34 stained glass windows with imagery illuminating the white marble altar. The main façade has a colossal rosette with stained glass windows and is crowned by

a bronze Christ. Another remarkable rosette is found on the facade that faces Iriarte street. The tower clock built by the firm Chateau Freres y Cía was also brought from France. From there are the ten polychrome images.

The temple was consecrated three years after the beginning of the construction works. The school was inaugurated that same year and was entrusted to the priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Betharan, fathers from Bayonne. Pope Pius XII declared it one of the first Minor Basilicas in Argentina on the 24th of May, 1939. After the entire complex's construction, the area began to fill little by little. Between the years 1964/68, the basilical remained closed due to significant repair and consolidation works needed to ensure stability. The church's reopening, carried out in June 1968, was followed by the transfer of the founders' remains to the crypt located under the temple's main altar, where they have rested since 1976. The Sacred Heart Basilica's buildings, such as the Parish House and the School, are built with bricks and structural iron profiles. It is the largest church in the city

Above Figure 13. Mutin Cavaillé-Coll organ at the Basílica del Sagrado Corazón de Jesús, Buenos Aires

Source: Michał Szostak



of Buenos Aires. In 2008, the National Congress declared it an asset of National Historical Artistic interest.⁵

This church is one of the few in the city with two organs. The minor, located in the sanctuary to the left of the main altar, was probably built by the Rudolph Ibach firm of Germany and installed by the master organ builder Alberto Mateo Poggi in 1907 (1M+P, pneumatic). Poggi was a representative of the Rudolph Ibach company in Buenos Aires. It was restored in December 2011.

The other is one of the great organs installed in Buenos Aires at the beginning of the 20th century. The Opus 901 was built by Mutin Cavaillé-Coll around 1906 and planned as a three-manual symphonic organ with a pedalboard; two sections (Recit and Positif) were planned to be expressif (with separate swell boxes). The manual compass is from C to G^{'''}, and the Pedal compass is from C to F^{'''}. The key and stop action are fully mechanical with the Barker lever and operate slider-type windchests.

The organ presents the peculiarity of not having been finished in its original

project. Today it is probably impossible to define precisely the real reasons that caused the people in charge of installing this organ not to finish the initial instrument. The Recit manual and Pedal registers were never assembled (only 19 speaking stops), even though the console and the Barker machine were prepared to receive the necessary handles and mechanisms to add them (missing 12 stops; 31 stops in total). Some rumours are trying to fill this knowledge gap. The first one is about the sinking of the ship transporting the organ components from France. The second one is about the anger of the temple architect against covering the rose window with the organ being built in front of it and, in consequence, the division of the organ into two sections.

The north part (the left-hand site

Grand Orgue

| | | | |
|---------------------|--------|--------------------|-----|
| 1. Montre | 8' | 9. Tuba magna | 16' |
| 2. Prestant | 4' | 10. Tuba mirabilis | 8' |
| 3. Quinte | 2 2/3' | | |
| 4. Plein jeu harm. | IV 2' | Tirasse GO | |
| 5. Bourdon | 16' | Anches GO | |
| 6. Bourdon | 8' | Unison GO (Barker) | |
| 7. Flûte harmonique | 8' | Pos/GO | |
| 8. Violoncelle | 8' | Pos/GO oct gross | |

Positif Exp

| | | | |
|---------------------|----|--------------------------|----|
| 11. Diapason | 8' | 17. Trompette harmonique | 8' |
| 12. Flûte octavante | 4' | 18. Soprano harmonique | 4' |
| 13. Octavin | 2' | 19. Basson/hautbois | 8' |
| 14. Cor de nuit | 8' | Tremulant Pos | |
| 15. Gambe | 8' | Tirasse Pos | |
| 16. Unda maris | 8' | Anches Pos | |

Pedale

| | | | |
|-------------------|-----|--|----|
| 20. Soubasse | 16' | 23. Violon | 8' |
| 21. Bourdon | 8' | All Pedale stops are transmissions from GO | |
| 22. Flûte ouverte | 8' | | |

Figure 12. Specification of the Mutin Cavaillé-Coll organ (Opus 901, circa 1906) at the *Basilica del Sagrado Corazón de Jesús*, Buenos Aires.

Source: Michał Szostak

looking from the nave) is the one that contains the organ pipes. The southern part is only a facade to keep the architectural symmetry, but there are no pipes or other components of the organ behind it. Some of the Grand-Orgue stops are also used as “separate” stops for the Pedal section, but in reality, they belong to the Grand-Orgue section – this fact determines the lack of base in the sound of the instrument because the scale of manual stops is thinner than regular pedal stops. The most important fact is that this instrument has not been modified since its construction, and its original solutions are still in use. Thanks to the quality of the materials and craft, as well as the building acoustics, this instrument can be considered one of the most beautifully-sounding organs to be heard in Buenos Aires.



Figure 15. Carlo Vegezzi Bossi organ at the church of Mater Misericordiae, Buenos Aires

Source: Michał Szostak

Chiesa Italiana di Mater Misericordiae, Buenos Aires

The church of Mater Misericordiae, also known as the church of the Italians, is a Catholic place of worship located in Calle Moreno in Buenos Aires. It is located in the central Monserrat district, a few blocks from the Plaza del Congreso and the Congress Palace.

The cult of the Madonna della Misericordia in Buenos Aires dates back to the mid-19th century when an Italian emigrant Francesco Bozzano started to propagate the cult of the Virgin, initially by supporting the church of San Domenico. Subsequently, thanks to the offers of the Ligurian community transplanted to Buenos Aires, a sum could be allocated for the construction of a church dedicated explicitly to the Madonna della Misericordia. The new

temple project, begun in 1867, was entrusted to the Italian engineer Emilio Rosetti. Three years later, the church, built in the neoclassical style, was completed and opened for worship. It has a façade preceded by a short staircase, and is formed by a high triangular tympanum broken at the base supported by two pairs of semi-columns with Ionic capitals and entablature. The interior has a single nave with six side altars, three on the right-hand side and three on the left-hand side. The high altar was built on a design by Carlo Ceppi. On the 14th of September 1875, the church was entrusted to the first ten Salesian friars sent to Argentina.

The organ holding Opus number 1290 and built by Carlo Vegezzi Bossi

from Torino in 1908 was purchased by Mrs Adriana Risso. The plate on the organ façade is dated December 1935, so the organ could serve in another place between 1908 and 1935 (Figure 14). It is a two manual with a pedalboard instrument with pneumatic action and a few stops. The church's interior serves significantly to the quality of the warm sound of this minor organ and allows it to fill the church adequately.



| Manual I | | |
|------------|---------------|--------|
| 1. | Unda maris | 8' |
| 2. | Dulciana | 8' |
| 3. | Principale | 8' |
| 4. | Ottava | 4' |
| 5. | Decima quinta | 2' |
| 6. | Ripieno | 4 file |
| 7. | Tromba | 8' |
| Tremolo MI | | |
| II/I | | |

| Manual II (swell) | | |
|-------------------|----------------|----|
| 8. | Viola gamba | 8' |
| 9. | Bordone | 8' |
| 10. | Concerto viola | 8' |
| 11. | Violoncello | 8' |
| 12. | Flauto | 4' |
| 13. | Oboe | 8' |
| Tremolo MII | | |

| Pedal | | |
|-------|------------------|-----|
| 14. | Subbasso | 16' |
| 15. | Ped. Violoncello | 8' |
| I/P | | |
| II/P | | |

Figure 15. Specification of Carlo Vegezzi Bossi organ (Op.1290) at the church of Mater Misericordiae, Buenos Aires

Source: Michał Szostak



San Pedro Apostol Church, Rauch

Rauch is a 12.5-thousand peopled town in Buenos Aires Province, located a 3.5-hour car ride south of the city of Buenos Aires, serving as the administrative headquarters for Rauch Partido. The church of San Pedro Apóstol in Rauch is a lovely and well-preserved

medium-size church located in the city's main square, which was built at the beginning of the 20th century. The characteristic feature of this three-nave church is a bell tower in the shape of a needle which can be seen from a long distance.

The pipe organ of the San Pedro Apóstol church is one of the jewels of Rauch's cultural heritage. With 1,554 pipes, located in two manuals (C-a''') and a pedalboard (C-f'), it is one of the largest in the area, and it was acquired by a subscription contributed by hundreds of



citizens in 1924 from Natale Balbiani organ company in Milan, Italy. The key and stop action are fully pneumatic, and the windchests are of the cone-valve type. In 1986, an Argentinian organ builder Alejandro Badi, who studied organ building in Europe, undertook a

complete restoration of the organ: renewal of the pneumatic action, new register knobs, and pipe repairs. In 2020 and 2021, after almost 100 years of its construction, the “San Vicente de Paul” Society decided to undertake the subsequent conservation works at this

instrument.⁶ The works, provided by Prof. Enrique Rimoldi and Alan Pianesi, were finished before 2022 when the city started celebrating its 150th anniversary of establishment in 1872.



Manual I

| | | | |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|---|----|
| Principale | 16' | Flauto | 4' |
| Principale | 8' | Tromba | 8' |
| Octava | 4' | II/I | |
| Sesquialtera | $2 \frac{2}{3}' + 1 \frac{3}{5}'$ | Super II/I | |
| Decimaquinta | 2' | Sub II/I | |
| Pleno V file | $1 \frac{1}{3}'$ | | |
| Gamba | 8' | Manual I fixed combinations: P, MF, F, Tutti | |
| Bordone | 8' | | |

Manual II

| | | | |
|----------------|------------------|--|----|
| Eufonio | 8' | Ottavino | 2' |
| Viola | 8' | Oboe | 8' |
| Celeste | 8' | Voce humana | 8' |
| Flauto amabile | 8' | Tremolo | |
| Flauto dolce | 4' | Manual II fixed combinations: P, MF, F, Tutti | |
| Nasardo | $2 \frac{2}{3}'$ | | |

Pedal

| | | |
|-------------|-----|-----------------------------|
| Contrabasso | 16' | Ottava 4' |
| Subbasso | 16' | I/PII/Pone free combination |
| Basso | 8' | |

Figure 16. Specification of Natale Balbiani organ (2M+P, 1924) at the San Pedro Apóstol church, Rauch

Source: Michał Szostak





Figure 17. Natale Balbiani organ at the San Pedro Apóstol church, Rauch

Source: Michał Szostak



Primera Iglesia Evangélica Metodista, Buenos Aires



The Methodist church is located at Corrientes Avenue, close to the central square of Buenos Aires. Despite that 99% of churches in Argentina are Catholics, due to the quickly increasing number of American, British and German immigrants who profess the Protestant faith, the government of the Argentine Confederation decided to introduce in Argentina the Church of Methodist religion in 1836. Primera Iglesia Evangélica Metodista was the first protestant temple in South America. It was initially located on Cangallo street (current Juan Domingo Perón), but the new church in neo-gothic style was located at Corrientes Street and designed by the architect Enrique Hunt. Its inauguration took place in 1874.

This organ, built by James Alderson Forster & Joseph King Andrews Company from Hull in 1882, is one of the few British instruments installed in Argentina. Its 27 speaking stops are divided

between three manual (C-a'''') and a pedal (C-f') sections and set on slider-type windchests operated by a mechanical key and stop actions. Two manual sections, Choir and Swell, are equipped with swell boxes. Unfortunately, the organ has not

been adequately maintained for many years because of limited financial resources. Fortunately, between 2008 and 2009, it was restored by volunteers led by organists Rafael Ferreyra and Enrique Rimoldi.

| Manual I | | Choir | | |
|------------|----------------------|-------|---------------------------------------|---------|
| 1. | Gamba | 8' | 4. Flautino | 2' |
| 2. | Dulciana | 8' | 5. Clarinet | 8' |
| 3. | Flauta travesera | 4' | Expression Choir | |
| Manual II | | Great | | |
| 6. | Double Open Diapason | 16' | 13. Trumpet | 8' |
| 7. | Open Diapason | 8' | Swell to Great | |
| 8. | Clarabella | 8' | Swell to Great sub | |
| 9. | Dulciana | 8' | Swell to Great super | |
| 10. | Principal | 4' | Fixed combination | |
| 11. | Harmonic Flute | 4' | Great: P, MF, F | |
| 12. | Piccolo | 2' | | |
| Manual III | | Swell | | |
| 14. | Bourdon | 16' | 22. Mixture | 3 ranks |
| 15. | Open Diapason | 8' | 23. Horn | 8' |
| 16. | Lieblich gedackt | 8' | 24. Oboe | 8' |
| 17. | Salicional | 8' | 25. Vox humana | 8' |
| 18. | Voix celeste | 8' | Tremulant | |
| 19. | Principal | 4' | Expression Swell | |
| 20. | Suabe flote | 4' | Fixed combination Swell: P, MF, F, FF | |
| 21. | Flageolet | 2' | | |
| Pedal | | | | |
| 26. | Open Diapason | 16' | Swell to Pedals | |
| 27. | Bourdon | 16' | Great to Pedals | |
| 28. | Violoncello | 8' | | |

Figure 18. Specification of Forster & Andrews organ (1882) at the Primera Iglesia Evangélica Metodista, Buenos Aires

Source: Menendez Martin Ezequiel (2006). Historic Pipe Organs in Argentina: a Hidden Treasure. Dissertation at Boston University, College of Fine Arts, p. 110.

Figure 18. Specification of Forster & Andrews organ (1882) at the Primera Iglesia Evangélica Metodista, Buenos Aires

Source: Menendez Martin Ezequiel (2006). Historic Pipe Organs in Argentina: a Hidden Treasure. Dissertation at Boston University, College of Fine Arts, p. 110.



Figure 19. Forster & Andrews organ (1882) at the Primera Iglesia Evangélica Metodista, Buenos Aires

Source: Public domain.



All Saints Anglican Church, Quilmes, Buenos Aires

This organ was initially built by Henry Bryceson (1775–1870) for the Anglican Cathedral in Buenos Aires City and was installed there in 1864. After purchasing another instrument by the Cathedral, the organ was stored till 1895 and finally purchased by All Saints Anglican Church in Quilmes. The organ builder Walter Wainwright carried out a 4-month installation of the instrument in the new place in 1896. Since then, this instrument's disposition has been altered many times, leading to the loss of many stops: the Stopped Diapason, Mixture and Oboe. I will not describe all the changes, but this example shows the consequences of so-called upgrading without respect for an instrument's historical significance. The original disposition of the organ installed in the Anglican Cathedral in Buenos Aires City before relocation to Quilmes can be seen in Figure 20.

| | | | | |
|-----|----------------------|--------------|----------------|-------------------|
| | | | | |
| | | Great | 6 Stops | |
| 1. | Open Diapason | 8' | 4. | Principal 4' |
| 2. | Dulciana | 8' | 5. | Harmonic Flute 4' |
| 3. | Röhrflöte | 8' | 6. | Trumpet 8' |
| | | Swell | 8 Stops | |
| 7. | Bourdon | 16' | 11. | Fifteenth 2' |
| 8. | Open Diapason | 8' | 12. | Mixture III ranks |
| 9. | Stopped Diapason | 8' | 13. | Cornopean 8' |
| 10. | Principal | 4' | 14. | Oboe 8' |
| | | Pedal | 1 Stop | |
| 15. | Double Open Diapason | 16' | | |

Figure 20. The original specification of Bryceson organ (1864) at All Saints Anglican Church, Quilmes, Buenos Aires

Source: Menendez Martin Ezequiel (2006). Historic Pipe Organs in Argentina: a Hidden Treasure. Dissertation at Boston University, College of Fine Arts, p. 103.

Figure 20. The original specification of Bryceson organ (1864) at All Saints Anglican Church, Quilmes, Buenos Aires

Source: Menendez Martin Ezequiel (2006). *Historic Pipe Organs in Argentina: a Hidden Treasure*. Dissertation at Boston University, College of Fine Arts, p. 103.

Conclusion

After analysis of these eight instruments of German, French, Italian and British origin, one can see the broad kaleidoscope of organ issues faced by the Argentinian organ world. On the one hand, many historical instruments could serve religious congregations and cultural purposes; on the other hand, most need significant restoration work to

reveal their true possibilities. An example from one of Mutin's catalogues may serve as a kind of summary: from three large organs consisting of a 32' stop, only one survived till this day (in Lujan Basilica); the second from Convento de San Francisco was set on fire during the riots in 1955 and the third at Santissimo Sacramento was profoundly transformed

in the same year.⁷

I hope that my sheds some welcome light on Argentina's organ landscape. Furthermore, it may also be an inspiration for deeper investigations and research and hopefully for gaining funds for necessary restoration works to preserve the Argentinian and, at the same moment, the European organ heritage.

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