

## **Great Organ of the Church of Our Lady of Conception**

The role of music as an expression of God's praise is a pillar of the life of the Church, and this has always been tangible since the early years of the community life of the Church of Our Lady of Conception, which at the end of the 19th century celebrated 71 years of existence and 51 years of dedication of its parish church, for which this instrument was conceived.

Matos Soares, the parish priest during the church's construction, certainly felt that the new temple would be incomplete without a good instrument and a capable musician. To this end, it was decided to acquire a Hammond rodophonic organ, with the purchase by our community being reported in the Hammond advertising magazine at the time. A competent musician, Professor César de Morais, was appointed as the organist and choir conductor for the Immaculate Conception Choir.

During Dr. Marcelino da Cunha Ferreira's tenure as parish priest (1976-94), a major push was made to ensure the vigor of the community was also transmitted through music in the liturgy. Many people prepared for liturgical service, whether through parish-led initiatives or more demanding efforts in the so-called "Torre da Marca Course", which later became the current Diocesan School of Liturgical Ministries.

Following these efforts, an important event occurred: the purchase of the Great Pipe Organ of the Sé Cathedral in 1985. Taking advantage of organ builder Georg Jann's presence in the city for the installation of the organ, the parish priest requested a study and estimate for the purchase of a pipe organ that could serve the liturgy. However, he passed the baton to the next parish priest, reminding them that the church deserved a grand organ.

### **The Proposal for a New Organ**

In October 1994, during the first parish assembly convened to kick off the pastoral year, Parish Priest Dr. Carlos Azevedo prompted the assembly by asking the three hundred members how the 70th anniversary of the parish's foundation and the 50th anniversary of the dedication of the parish church should be marked.

This set the stage for José Luís Carrapa, conductor of the Parish Choir, to suggest the installation of a large organ in the choir loft that could not only serve the liturgy but also be capable of performing organ literature.

After several fruitful discussions to clarify and define intentions, in February 1995, the parish priest, together with José Luís Carrapa and Adriano Brito, decided to proceed with this project.

## **Musical Consultation and Contacts with Organ Builders**

To define what type of instrument should be built, three competent musicians, recently arrived from Germany where they had spent several years training at Conservatories, especially in performing sacred music, were enlisted for their collaboration: Eugénio Amorim, former conductor of the Sé Cathedral Choir of Porto, and organists Rosa Amorim and Paulo Alvim.

Their experience helped define the basic concepts of the instrument.

In March 1995, eight organ builders were contacted:

- Hans J. Füglistner, from Sion, Switzerland
- Alfred Kern & Fils, from Strasbourg, France
- Jean Renaud, from Nantes, France
- Mühleisen, from Strasbourg, France
- Georges Heitz, from Schiltach, Germany
- J.L. van den Heuvel, from Dordrecht, Netherlands
- Gerald Woehl, from Marburg, Germany

The firm Riegner & Friederich from Hohenpeißenberg, Germany, was also contacted but was unable to respond to the request.

Upon contacting these firms, all of them promptly responded, either by sending projects or, as in the case of Georges Heitz, who, two days after being contacted, sent architect Burkhardt Goethe (the designer of the organ's façade) to assess the space and propose a well-founded project. Gerald Woehl also visited the church and proposed an idea: the organ should imitate the design of the high altar throne.

## **Committees and Fundraising Campaign**

Simultaneously, the Executive Committee was formed, tasked with finding strategies and means to raise the necessary funds, establish contacts, and move forward with the other tasks, along with the Honorary Committee.

The Executive Committee was composed, in addition to the Parish Priest, of José Luís Carrapa, Adriano Brito, José Fernando Oliveira, José Pacheco Aranha, Anelím Feijó Vieira (a member of the Church's Fabrica), Joaquim Claro da Costa, António Manuel Ferreira, and António Manuel Lessa Ferreira.

For the Honorary Committee, the following were invited: Canon Dr. António Ferreira dos Santos, Director of the National Liturgical Secretariat and Diocesan Liturgical Secretariat; Dr. Fernando Aguiar-Branco, President of the Eng. António de Almeida Foundation; Dr. Manuela de Melo, Councillor for Culture of the Porto City Hall; Dr. Joaquim Azevedo, President of the Manuel Leão Foundation; and Dr. Florinda Marques Gomes.

A major campaign was launched to fund the construction of the organ, which was called "Let's Finish the Church". It was decided that the first Sunday in May would be the ideal time to publicly launch the project and gather a committed group of friends who would support the project financially on a monthly basis. Soon, three hundred supporters were found, contributing monthly amounts ranging from 100\$00 (0.5 €) to 20,000\$00 (100€).

### **Study Trip and Selection of the Organ Builder**

To carefully select the organ builder for this project, a study trip to France and Germany was organized to visit the organs of the contacted organ builders and make an informed decision.

Over fifteen days, thousands of kilometers were traveled to evaluate 18 organs and the workshops of the firms Jean Renaud, Georges Heintz, and Alfred Kern & Fils. José Luís Carrapa accompanied Eugénio Amorim, Rosa Amorim, and Paulo Alvim, who were able to ask the organ builders questions, propose alternative solutions, and define the reasons for choosing the firm Georges Heintz from Schiltach.

Eugénio Amorim wrote a report highlighting that “The organ should last at least one hundred years! (...) To achieve this, a highly mechanical organ is a key factor. The history of the organ provides clear evidence in this regard. These are the organs that have lasted the longest.”

The report also addresses the sound quality, emphasizing that “other unpredictable factors include the acoustics and sound amplification that the space in which the organ will be placed will confer on the instrument, its design, conception, and execution (...).”

The versatility of the instrument was another factor influencing the choice. Thus, the “organ with characteristics primarily oriented towards the performance of romantic music, especially French music (...), should still allow the performance of music from other significant periods (...), especially the music of J.S. Bach.”

Regarding the sound, it was emphasized that the harmonization of the instrument should be done on-site in the church.

It was decided: Georges Heintz would be the organ builder for the future organ of the Church of Our Lady of Conception, with Professor Franz Stoiber, organist of the Regensburg Cathedral, kindly agreeing to be the representative for various matters arising from the project of a romantic organ.

## **Installation**

As planned, the organ, valued at 961,268 German marks (491,500 €), arrived in Porto on August 18, 1998. On August 19, a team of four Germans and six community members unloaded much of the organ, which had been transported in two containers. By August 20, all support structures for the assembly work were completed, and the installation of the first pieces began.

The church was transformed into a large construction site, requiring the Eucharistic celebrations to be held in the crypt of the church. Only on the weekend of August 29 and 30 could the community once again enjoy the church and appreciate the beauty of the grand organ already taking shape.

It is worth noting that the organ has a total of 2,660 pipes, with 266 made of wood and 2,394 made of metal. The largest metal pipe is 6.10 meters long and weighs 75 kg, while the largest wooden pipe is 5.50 meters long and weighs 120 kg. The smallest pipe measures just 15 mm.

For the construction of the organ, 25 m<sup>3</sup> of wood were required, with the organ standing 11 meters tall, 6.60 meters wide, 2.70 meters deep, and weighing 12 tons.

On September 2, the last truck with most of the pipes, made from different metal alloys, was unloaded. A second team of two people arrived on September 8 to begin the intonation and tuning of the instrument.

This was a slower phase of work, lasting five weeks, as each stop placed in its place was tuned immediately.

Throughout these stages, the church received numerous visits from organists, people responsible for the musical life of the city, the media, and many friends who eagerly documented in photographs and films the various phases of the assembly.

On October 11, the Great Pipe Organ was blessed at the beginning of the 12:00 celebration, with Professor Franz Stoiber as the organist.

## Specification

### Résonance

- 1 Tremblant Résonance
- 2 Tierce 1 3/5'
- 3 Flûte douce 4'
- 4 Cor de nuit 8'
- 5 Bourdon 16'
- 6 Principal 8'
- 7 Octave 4'
- 8 Nazard 2 2/3'
- 9 Quarte de Nazard 2'
- 10 Fourniture 4-5 Rgs
- 11 Basson 16'
- 12 Trompette grosse 8'
- 13 Clarinette 8'

### Grand'Orgue

- 4 Cornet 5 Rgs
- 15 Bourdon 8'
- 16 Flûte harmonique 8'
- 17 Montre 16'
- 18 Montre 8'
- 19 Prestant 4'
- 20 Quinte 2 2/3'
- 21 Doublette 2'
- 22 Plein jeu 5 Rgs
- 23 Trompette 8'

**Récit**

- 24 Tremblant Récit
- 25 Voix Céleste'
- 26 Gamba 8'
- 27 Gedecket 16'
- 28 Flûte Transversière 8'
- 29 Flûte Octaviane 4'
- 30 Octavin 2'
- 31 Carillon 3 Rgs
- 32 Basson-Hautbois 8'
- 33 Trompette harmonique 8'
- 34 Clarion 4'

**Pédale**

- 35 Grand Bourdon 32'
- 36 Contrebasse 16'
- 37 Soubasse 16'
- 38 Flûte 8'
- 39 Metallflöte 4'
- 40 Bombarde 16'
- 41 Trompette 8'
- 42 MiF An/Ab
- 43 Mixtures An/Ab
- 44 Anches An/Ab

**Accouplements:** I/II, II/III, III/II

**Tirasses:** I/P, II/P, II 4'/P, III/P

**Combinaisons:** Jeux de fonds, Jeux de mutation, Anches