

The First Steps Toward Acquiring the Grand Pipe Organ

In 1989, the Church Rectorate publicly declared: “For several years now, we have nurtured a dream we would like to see fulfilled. If it becomes possible, it will undoubtedly be a momentous event not only for our church but for our city as well.”

It then posed a bold question: “Is it reckless folly to consider a pipe organ for our church?”

And continued: “Some might ask whether such a high-caliber—and naturally costly—pipe organ is truly necessary. Couldn’t we settle for another solution?”

It responded: “That’s not how those who came before us thought—those who bequeathed to us this magnificent church that fills our eyes and stirs our hearts to seek the Invisible, God.”

It then announced a competition involving three proposals: **G. Jann** (Germany), **Kuhn** (Switzerland), and **Grenzing** (Spain).

In 1990, it was announced that none of the submitted proposals had been approved. Two further proposals were then presented: one from **Zurich (Switzerland)** and another from **Potsdam (Berlin)**.

After much reflection and consultation, the Rectorate presented its stance to the community in the following terms:

1. It is well known that the pipe organ is **the liturgical instrument par excellence**. The Popes of recent centuries and the Council have continuously reaffirmed their appreciation for it and promoted its use in the liturgy;
2. The **Church of Our Lady of Lapa** has played a unique and undeniable role—both in the past and today—in promoting sacred music and musical culture in the city of Porto. Loyalty to this tradition weighs heavily in the consideration of this initiative;
3. Our church is attended by a remarkable number and quality of people who, understanding the Church’s calling, feel a duty to serve both **the Church and the liturgy, the City and its Culture**.

This was, without a doubt, a bold and ambitious project. But in contemplating our church, we cannot help but admire the daring of those who, two hundred years ago, confidently undertook such an undertaking—a boldness that reflects a solid and creative faith, the hallmark of great souls, from whom noble ideals spring.

A **community survey** was then launched, involving the distribution of registration forms and the collection of an initial fee. A total of **1,271 forms** were submitted, and a sum of **15,691,350 escudos** (approximately **€78,000**) was deposited into a dedicated account. The process of acquiring the organ was officially underway.

The Contract

A committee was formed, composed of the esteemed:

- **Agostinho Gomes**
- **Dr. Aníbal António G. de S. Justiniano**
- **Dr. António Ferreira dos Santos** (Emeritus Rector)
- **D. Helena V. F. Pereira da Silva**
- **José António Pinto Borges**
- **Commander José de Sousa Faria** (Head of the Venerable Brotherhood of Our Lady of Lapa)
- **José Fernandes dos Santos**
- **Dr. Manuel Correia de Brito**
- **Manuel Nogueira Reis**
- **Vítor Guilherme B. P. Dias**

At **4:30 PM on May 5, 1991**, during the Solemn Vespers of the **Feast of Our Lady of Lapa**, in the presence of **His Excellency, Archbishop D. Júlio Tavares Rebimbas**, and a large congregation, the **purchase contract for the Grand Pipe Organ** was signed at the Church of Lapa between the Committee and the German firm **Georg Jann Orgelbau Meisterbetrieb**.

The contract was signed by **Commander José de Sousa Faria**, representing the Brotherhood, and **Georg Jann**, the owner of the firm.

Fundraising

On **June 26, 1991**, the first installment of the organ was paid, as per the contract: **483,000 Deutsche Marks** (~€247,000). Soon after, on **August 28, 1991**, the **Portuguese Government officially declared** the acquisition of the Grand Pipe Organ a matter of “significant cultural interest.”

A new campaign, “**Friends of the Organ**”, was launched, and some **Mass offerings** were also directed to this cause.

On **March 30, 1993**, the **second installment** of **345,000 DM** (~€176,400) was paid.

In **early February 1994**, remodeling work began in the **choir loft** to prepare for the arrival of the organ, which was scheduled for **October** of the same year.

After structural assessments by experts including **Prof. Eng. Sarmento** and architects **Mendonça and Almeida d’Eça**, the choir floor was lifted and reinforced with iron beams.

Meanwhile, the **third installment** had to be paid. The **Secretary of State for Culture** joined the project, paying the full amount of **345,000 DM** (~€176,400) on **October 17, 1994**, expressing strong support for organ-building in Portugal. (At the same time, it sponsored the **International Congress of Portuguese Organs** in **Mafra**.)

Only the **final payment** remained: **207,000 DM** (~€105,800), to be paid upon the organ's full installation, along with additional funds for the choir loft renovations and the **inaugural events**.

The **Lapa Committee and community never wavered**, continuously inventing new ways to raise funds.

In **1994**, three **auctions** and four **community sales** of donated items raised **4,176,400 escudos** (~€20,800).

In **May 1995**, an **art exhibition and sale** was organized by architect **Lanhas**, with participation from Porto artists. During the event, **three concerts** were held featuring:

- **António Saiote and Pedro Burmester**
- **Isabel Mallaguerra and Constantin Sandu**
- **The CantArte Choir (Regensburg)**, conducted by **Hubert Velten**

There was also a **lecture on Portuguese music of the 16th–18th centuries** by **Dr. Rui Néry**. The event raised **4,331,450 escudos** (~€21,600).

Organ Installation

In **February 1995**, the organ began arriving in **TIR trucks**, and installation commenced under the supervision of **Georg Jann** and his German technicians.

Technical Specifications

- Total number of pipes: **4,307**
 - Great Organ: 1,337 pipes
 - Positiv: 928 pipes
 - Swell (Expressive): 1,306 pipes
 - Trumpets: 232 pipes
 - Pedal: 504 pipes
- **Carillon**: 42 bells
- **Metal pipes**: Tin and copper
- **Wood pipes**: Mostly pine and pearwood
- **Largest pipe (wood)**: 10.12 m tall; cross-section 349 x 339 mm
- **Largest façade pipe (tin-rich alloy)**: 8.13 m tall; 255 mm in diameter
- **Smallest pipe (metal)**: 9 mm tall; 2.9 mm diameter
- **Two blowers** supplying air at ~12 mbar pressure, delivering 50 m³/min
- **Weight**: Approx. **34 tons**
- **Dimensions**: Height – 14.18 m, Width – 10.20 m, Depth – 5.10 m
- **Mounted on iron framework**

The media (press and television) widely covered the organ's arrival.

The **central stained glass window** (by **Ricardo Leone**, Lisbon, 1931), depicting the **Nativity**, had to be relocated and reintegrated into the organ's architectural ensemble. Due to its poor condition, it was sent to **Milan** in early 1995 and restored by **Lindo e Grassi**, as shown in image no. 10.

Thanks to **extraordinary discipline and tireless work (day and night)**, the organ was **completed by the end of May 1995, ahead of schedule**.

Popular Greeting to the Organ

On **July 1st**, the festivities for the **Grand Organ's inauguration** began.

Reviving a long-forgotten tradition celebrating the joy of organ builders and supporters, the **people were invited to greet the organ with the most festive element: wine.**

A **procession** was organized from **Cais da Ribeira to the Church of Lapa**, with the participation of:

- **Grupo dos Mareantes do Douro**
- **Rancho Folclórico do Porto**

They accompanied the **Port wine**, carried in **decorated ox-drawn carts**.

The **Confraternity of Port Wine**, in full ceremonial attire, also took part, officially presenting the wine to the church. The procession passed through: Rua de Mouzinho da Silveira, Largo dos Lóios, Praça da Liberdade, Avenida dos Aliados, Praça Humberto Delgado, Trindade, Rua de Camões, Rua Faria Guimarães, Rua D. João das Regras, Praça da República, Rua da Regeneração, and finally, **Largo da Lapa**, where the **12 casks of Port wine** were blessed and **hoisted up into the choir loft** of the church.

The wine, having passed through the two **largest façade pipes** of the organ, was generously served to the people in **commemorative glass goblets**, specially made by the French company **J. G. Durand & Cie – Verrerie Cristallerie d'Arques**.

Crowds flocked to the event on **July 1st, 2nd, and 3rd**, to joyfully greet the organ, fulfilling the Psalm's words:

“Omne quod spirat laudet Dominum!”

(Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!) — Psalm 150

Previous Organs

There was once a small **pipe organ** in the church, with **a single manual, seven stops, and fourteen drawknobs**, of unknown origin. It was originally placed in the **chancel**, in a floor-level cabinet on the **Gospel side**, in the space now occupied by the **first confessional**.

By **1920**, it was already in place. According to oral testimony, around **1953**, the organ was moved to the **choir loft**, installed on the **left wall**, near the door leading to the **west tower**.

In **1955**, it was stored in the **west corridor on the first floor**. When it was examined in **1990** by the German organ builder **Georg Jann**, he considered it to be of **little historical interest**. It was dismantled, and the pipes were stored and properly preserved.

As to its origins—whether it was the **only organ** before the arrival of the Grand Organ, or whether it came from a **dissolved convent** in the city—nothing is known for certain.

Given the importance of this church, and considering the **enormous interest in pipe organs** that Porto churches showed during the **18th century**, particularly between **1730 and 1830**—exactly when this church was being built—it is presumed that the original church builders **did not overlook** this essential liturgical element.

On the other hand, construction progressed slowly (for example, the **tribune for the altarpiece** was only completed in **1806**).

G. C. Leite refers to the existence of an organ in the original chapel. Was that the same organ later moved into the church? Where did it come from? Who built it?

From the **extinct Convent of St. Elói (Lóios)**, the church received a substantial amount of heritage: **two tribunes**, used by the church's administrative body and governing board, and a **statue of Our Lady of the Valley**. However, it does not appear that the organ in the church was the one built by **Miguel Hensbergh**.

At the end of the 18th or beginning of the 19th century, the English firm **Peter Conacher & Co. – Organ Builders – Huddersfield**, who built the:

- **Organ of the Church of Carmo (1881)**
- **Organ of the Chapel of the College of Our Lady of Hope (1891)**
- **Organ for the Church of Cedofeita**

...submitted a **proposal** for a Grand Pipe Organ for the Church of Lapa, which—**for reasons unknown**—was never realized.

Still, this stands as **clear evidence** of a **great aspiration** passed down to our generation.

The Hammond Organ

Concerned with the quality of liturgical music—**music that would match the character of those attending the temple**—**Father Luís Rodrigues** hired artists to enhance the church's celebrations.

From early on, he was deeply concerned about the lack of a suitable instrument:

“A harmonium is always insufficient, no matter how well played. Something was missing—something that could meet everyone’s expectations. My greatest wish was to have a **Grand Pipe Organ** for this temple. A real pipe organ.”

Nevertheless, on **April 20, 1955**, Father Luís acquired an **electronic organ** from the **Hammond company**, the best of its kind at the time. It served in the church’s liturgy until **Christmas of 1993**. It is now on display in the “**Sala dos Quadros**” (Gallery Room), adjacent to the church.

The Positif Organ

Along with the Grand Pipe Organ, a **small organ** also arrived—known as a “**positif organ**” or “**choir organ**”, as it is intended for accompanying the choir or smaller weekday assemblies.

It would have been inconsistent to install a magnificent Grand Pipe Organ and still accompany the choir or weekday Masses with an **electronic organ**.

Therefore, in the **chancel**, next to the **monument of D. Pedro IV**, a **small pipe organ** was installed, also built by **Georg Jann’s firm**.

Specification (Disposition):

I Manual – Grand Organ (C–A’’’)

Praestant 16’

Principal 8’

Flûte harmonique 8’

Copula 8’

Gambe 8’

Octave 8’

Flûte 4’

Quinte 2 2/3’

Doublette 2’

Kornett 5 Fach

Mixtura major 4 Fach

Mixtura minor 3 Fach

Trompete 16’

Trompete 8’

II/I

III/I

IV/I

II Manual – Positif (C–A’’’)

Principal 8’

Rohrflöte 8’

Salicional 8’

Octave 4’

Blockflöte 4’

Sesquialtera 2 Fach

Superoctave 2’

Flautino 2’

Piccolo 1’

Scharff 4 Fach

Dulcian 16’

Cromorne 8’

Glockenspiel

Tremulant

III/II

IV/II

III Manual – Swell / Expressive (C–A’’)

Bourdon 16’

Soloprincipal 8’

Doppelflöte 8’

Rohrpfeife 8’

Aeoline 8’

Unda maris 8’

Octave 4’

Flûte Travers. 4’

Viola 4’

Nazard 2 2/3’

Waldflöte 2’

Tierce 1 3/5’

Larigot 1 1/3’

Harmonia aetheria 4-6 Fach

Fagott 16’

Trompete harmonique 8’

Hautbois 8’

Vox humana 8’

Clairon 4’

Sub III/III

Sub III/I

Tremulant

IV Manual – Solo Division (C–A’’’)

Trombeta magna 16’

Trombeta Real 8’

Trombeta quinta 5 1/3’

Trombeta alta 4’

Pedal Division (C–G’)

Violonbass 32’

Principalbass 16’

Violonbass 16’

Subbass 16’

Octavbass 8’

Cello 8’

Bourdon 8’

Hohflöte 4’

Bauernflöte 2’

Hintersatz 5 Fach

Bombarde 32’

Posaune 16’

Trompete 8’

Zinke 4’

I/P

II/P

III/P

IV/P

Additional features:

- 256 free combinations
- Sequencer
- “Tutti” pedal