

# Organs in Lviv, Ukraine

Bill Halsey

Lviv, in westernmost Ukraine near the Polish border, is a city poised to become a major tourist destination. It has graceful cobblestone boulevards, with elegant 19th-century five- or six-story buildings dating from the period when it was ruled by the Austro-Hungarian empire after the last partition of Poland. The Habsburgs allowed Ukrainian culture to flourish, thus Lviv feels much more Ukrainian than Kiev or Odessa, which were ruled by Russia for almost 200 years until the modern republic of Ukraine was formed after the breakup of the Soviet Union.

The religious plurality of Lviv is surprising: the skyline is dominated by Orthodox onion domes, representing Christ's crown; St. George Greek Catholic Cathedral, where W. A. Mozart's younger son was Kapellmeister and conducted his father's *Requiem*; and Roman Catholic churches like the Latin Cathedral, near the Rynek, or Market Square. A fifteenth-century synagogue, the Golden Rose, also used to stand near the Rynek, but was demolished by the Nazis. The opera house, a fine neo-classic structure built around the turn of the last century by building a concrete foundation over the city's small river, is the focal point of the city's grandest boulevard.

Lviv hosts many conferences and themed musical events, among which is a summer organ festival called, interestingly, *Diapason*. I was initially surprised to find out Lviv has organs, since Ukraine is a former Soviet republic. The working organs aren't numerous, only four, but Lviv has an active Catholic population with a natural interest in organs and organ music. One of the animating figures of the organ festival, a 40-something dynamo named Sergei Kaliberda, speaks of a Lviv organ renaissance, and he has made the stoplists of both working and non-working organs available on his website: <[www.organy.lviv.ua](http://www.organy.lviv.ua)>.

I spent a day trying to keep up with Sergei as we visited the working organs, the biggest of which is a Rieger-Kloss at the organ hall, officially known as the Hall of Organ and Chamber Music, with the others being at St. Antoni Church and the Latin Cathedral, and a small organ in the musical instrument collection of the Museum of the History of Religion. The organ hall is a typical Soviet phenomenon. They were interested in organs, but not in churches, and so promoted the development of secular concert halls with organs. One of the biggest is in Kiev, where they appropriated the Roman Catholic Cathedral for this purpose. Soviet-era ballets often featured organ in the scores, and there is a Rieger-Kloss in the Ukrainian National Opera in Kiev, built especially for that purpose.

## Hall of Organ and Chamber Music

The Rieger-Kloss in Lviv was originally a Rieger, one of the biggest organs in Ukraine, built in 1936 for the church of St. Mary Magdalene with four manuals and 67 stops. After being rebuilt in 1968



Bernardine Church organ (non-working)



Rieger-Kloss at the Hall of Organ and Chamber Music, Lviv

for the organ hall by Rieger-Kloss, it had three manuals and 60 stops. It features electro-pneumatic action and a combination system that I had never seen before, using what looks like colored push pins.

The titular organist, Nadiya Velichka, kindly met us and we put the organ through its paces. It has a big German romantic sound; she egged me on to play the Widor *Tocatta*, which didn't really work on the organ—the reeds were not cutting enough—and she played some Bach, which worked but was not totally authentic. The Rieger-Kloss, while undeniably a good organ, suffers from the weakness of many 20th-century organs—designed to play everything, and with an enormous stoplist to allow that, it is somehow less than the sum of its parts. It would seem logical that with a big-



Rieger-Kloss console



Rieger-Kloss combination pins



Anonymous 18th-century organ at the Museum of the History of Religion

enough stoplist one could build an organ that was a collection of different organs: a French baroque organ, a German baroque organ, a Romantic organ, all in one distributed over several manuals.

## Hall of Organ and Chamber Music, Lviv Rieger-Kloss, Op. 3375, 1968

### Manual I (Hauptwerk)

- 16' Diapason
- 16' Bourdon
- 8' Principal
- 8' Hohlflöte
- 8' Gemshorn
- 8' Trichterгамbe
- 4' Oktave
- 4' Rohrflöte
- 2' Superoktave
- 2 1/2' Kornett III-V
- 1 1/2' Mixtur VI
- 16' Fagott
- 8' Trompete

### Manual II (Positiv)

- 16' Lieblichgedact
- 8' Principal
- 8' Quintadena
- 8' Gedact
- 8' Salizional
- 8' Unda maris
- 4' Trichterprinzipal
- 4' Blockflöte
- 4' Fugara
- 2 1/2' Nazard
- 2' Flagolet
- Sesquialter II
- 8' Dulzian
- 8' Rohrschalmei
- 8' Vox humana

### Manual III (Oberwerk)

- 16' Grossgedact
- 8' Hornprinzipal
- 8' Flute harmonique
- 8' Gamba
- 8' Vox coelestis
- 4' Oktave
- 4' Nachthorn
- 4' Fugara
- 2 1/2' Quinte
- 2' Waldflöte
- 1 3/4' Terz
- 1 1/2' Spitzquinte
- 1' Siffloete
- 1 1/2' Mixtur V
- Terzzimbel III
- 8' Trompete harmonique
- 8' Oboe
- 4' Clairon

### Pedal

- 16' Principal bass
- 16' Kontrabass
- 16' Subbass
- 10 1/2' Gross Quinte
- 8' Octavbass
- 8' Pommergedackt
- 4' Choralbass
- 2' Russischhorn
- 2 1/2' Pedalmixtur VI
- 16' Posaune
- 8' Dulzian
- 8' Trompete
- 4' Klarine



Vitaly Pivnov at museum organ

But that somehow never works—an organ needs a certain harmony of conception to sound its best, and even sheer numbers of pipes can be self-cancelling. Some years ago I visited St. Maximin, near Marseille, and I still remember Pierre Bardon, the organist, telling me, "There's space for more pipes in here, but then the organ wouldn't sound as strong."

## Museum of the History of Religion

Our next stop was at the Latin Cathedral, near the Rynek, and then on to St. Antoni, built, like many Franciscan churches, on the road out of town, to col-

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Console of the Slivinsky organ, Latin Cathedral



Left case of the Slivinsky organ



Right case of the Slivinsky organ



Latin Cathedral choir loft

lect alms from travelers to and from the town. On this occasion, it was not possible to hear either of these instruments. We then returned to town through the remnants of the city wall; passing through the Museum of the History of Religion, we came to a back room, where a musical instrument exhibit was being prepared. There was the largest collection of ocarinas I have ever seen, various types of vio-



Front view of the Krukowski organ at St. Antoni, Lviv

lins including an 8-string violin tuned GG DDAA EE with the duplicate strings used for *fauxbourdon*, and in the back a large wooden case containing an anonymous organ from the 18th century, taken from the church of St. Martin. Its 70-year-old rebuilder, Vitaly Pivnov, was using a reciprocating saw and sanders to put some finishing cosmetic touches on his masterwork, originally completed in 1984. He was reticent at first, but we finally persuaded him to show off the organ, which has a pretty big sound and good variety of tone colors for an essentially small instrument, with only 11 stops.

My visit with Sergei concluded with a hike up the High Hill to admire the incredible panorama of Lviv, with its multiple domes, and then after descending we had a wine tasting at the Massandra store, featuring the wonderful wines produced by Massandra, a winery near Yalta in the Crimea.

#### St. Antoni

On Sunday I came back to the Latin Cathedral and St. Antoni to hear those organs. St. Antoni was not being used that day because of a wind problem; the organist had an electronic keyboard set up in the choir loft, but when he saw me and found out why I was there he turned the organ on and demonstrated a few softer stops during a spoken part of the service. Of course, from this I could form no true idea of the organ.

#### Latin Cathedral

My visit to the Latin Cathedral was more productive. The organ is an 1888 24-stop, two-manual mechanical action organ built by Slivinsky, a pupil of Aristide Cavaillé-Coll, and is upon short acquaint-

tance my favorite Lviv organ. It is an authentic example of the French tradition, built before unwise innovations cheapened the sound of these instruments. Its layout is quite unusual for a tracker-action organ, two totally separate cases side by side and the detached console placed in front of the right case, turned at 90 degrees. The Latin Cathedral itself is a marvelous building, its Gothic interior decorated with wonderful *trompe l'oeil* that adds illusory structures to the tree-like Gothic columns of the interior.

Of the non-working organs, perhaps the most interesting is in the Bernardine Church. The façade is certainly monumental, and I hope funding will be found to restore this and other organs. At present, the organ hall's Rieger-Kloss is the workhorse of the festival. The older, more authentic instruments can give a sense of place and history that is not available from newer instruments, even if they are bigger and can offer on paper all the stops needed. The most interesting organs I saw in Lviv were the Latin Cathedral instrument and the one in the Museum of the History of Religion. ■

*Bill Halsey was born in Seattle, where he studied piano and composition from an early age, and began organ lessons in his teens. While a student at the Sorbonne, he had access to the two-manual unmodified tracker-action Cavaillé-Coll organ at Saint Bernard de la Chapelle, in a northern arrondissement of Paris. This fueled his interest in historic organs, and after spending fifteen years serving in organist positions at St. John Cantius, St. Peter Claver, Church of the Assumption, and the Basilica of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, all in Brooklyn, New York, he took a permanent leave of absence to explore historic organs, first in France, and later in Italy.*

#### Anonymous organ from St. Martin in the Museum of the History of Religion

- Manual (C2-f3)**
- 8' Montre
  - 4' Prestant
  - 4' Flute
  - 2' Doublette
  - 8' Cromhorne
  - 2 1/2' Nazard
  - Fourmiture
  - Mixture III
- Pedal (C-d1)**
- 16' Bourdon
  - 16' Soubasse
  - 8' Bombarde

#### St. Antoni, Stanislav Krukovski and Son (Potrkuv-Tribunalski), 1929

- Manual I**
- 16' Bourdon
  - 8' Principal
  - 8' Salicional
  - 8' Flet harmon.
  - 4' Flet minor
  - 4' Octave
  - Mixture II-III
- Manual II**
- 8' Dulcian
  - 8' Vox humana
  - 8' Gamba
  - 8' Flute cr.
  - 8' Oboe
  - 4' Amabilis
  - 4' Principal Violin
- Pedal**
- 16' Subbas
  - 8' Principibas
  - 8' Violinbas

#### Latin Cathedral, Slivinsky organ, 1888

- Manual I**
- 8' Principal
  - 8' Salicional
  - 8' Unda Maris
  - 8' Amabilis
  - 4' Flute travers
  - 4' Octave
  - 4' Flute minor
  - 2' Piccolo
  - Mixture IV
- Manual II**
- 8' Gamba
  - 8' Flute major
  - 8' Julla
  - 8' Celeste
  - 4' Dulce
  - 4' Octave
  - 4' Flute
- Pedal**
- 16' Subbas
  - 16' Violin Bas
  - 16' Contrabas
  - 8' Principal
  - 8' Cello
  - 8' Flute

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