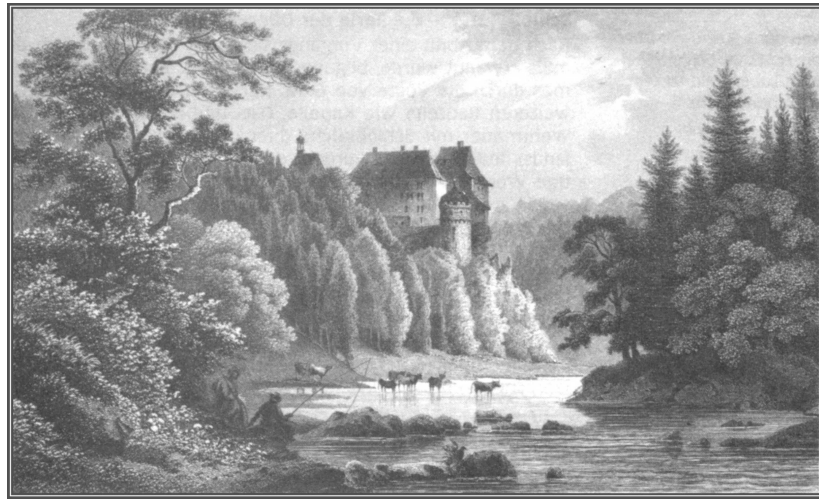


BACH 735 - Bach's Organ Music played on Silbermann Organs: Volume 4

Burgk Castle Chapel Organ - 1743 and Nassau Village Church Organ - 1748

The state of Saxony in southeast Germany, boasts no fewer than thirty-one Baroque instruments by one of the Baroque period's most famous organ-builders - Gottfried Silbermann, most of them in near-original condition. Gottfried Silbermann (1683-1753) and Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) were contemporaries and are known to have worked together as colleagues and friends. They worked together on matters of organ design and acoustics, as well as on the design of the escapement mechanisms for the world's first fortepianos. It was on a Silbermann fortepiano that Bach performed part of the Musical Offering before King Frederick the Great in Potsdam. Silbermann was also Godfather to Wilhelm Friedemann Bach. It is therefore appropriate that Bach's great organ works should be performed on Silbermann organs.



Burgk Castle overlooking the Saale River in a 19th Century print.

NASSAU Village Organ

There is little record of the Organ in Nassau village church prior to 1745, save that it was "*a very bad organ, with many pipes stolen, practically ruined*". Thus the congregation determined to provide their church with a new organ of two manuals and pedal, 19 stops, built by Gottfried Silbermann of nearby Freiberg, this being a "standard" Silbermann village organ specification. It was indeed Silbermann's policy to standardize as much as possible, thus reducing costs which allowed him to provide the very best materials and workmanship, for which he became renowned.

A contract was signed in 1745 in which the Nassau congregation committed themselves to an expense of 800 Taler, with 200 Taler in the church funds and little idea as to where they would find the rest. There was worse to come. Prussia invaded Saxony in what would be known as the Second Silesian War. The region found itself bearing the burden of some 2,000 Prussian soldiers, all of whom expected to be quartered and fed by the occupied inhabitants, incurring a final debt to the region estimated at some 3,000 Talers. Work finally began on the Organ in the middle of April 1748, with completion and testing on August 4th of that same year. Precisely how the impoverished congregation was able to meet the payment is not recorded, save that the Over-Consistory in Dresden apparently came to the rescue. Even then the congregation's troubles were not over, for it is recorded that just a month after its completion, the Organ was damaged "*by a wicked hand*" – or as we might call it today, vandalism.

Little – fortunately – was done to the Organ over the years, apart from routine maintenance and tuning. In 1917 the congregation was called upon to sacrifice the organ pipes, as the tin was required for the war effort. However to save their precious instrument, they managed to collect enough scrap tin to satisfy the authorities. In the 1920s the church was provided with electric light, and the organ with an electric pump - the original hand-pumping mechanism remains intact.

It cannot go unsaid however, that during the latter years of the Socialist East German DDR regime, churches and their contents were subject to rampant neglect and decay, being almost totally deprived of funding. Many of the church roofs were in a shocking state, to which the wooden ceilings inside bore witness with huge stains from water leakage. Naturally this affected the contents including the organs.

With the "Fall of the Wall" in 1989 a massive program of restoration took place throughout the former East Germany, of which the churches were major beneficiaries. The little church in Nassau stands today beautifully restored, its interior and exterior cleaned and painted, the building structure sound and renewed as necessary.

From January to June 1998, the 250th anniversary year of the Organ's installation, a complete restoration was undertaken by the Dresden firm of Jehmlich Orgelbau, an old established company with long experience of and involvement in Silbermann's instruments. Thus the Organ can be seen and heard today much as it would have sounded and appeared when Gottfried Silbermann and his team completed the work in 1748.

NASSAU VILLAGE CHURCH ORGAN

HAUPTWERK:	HINTERWERK:
Prinzipal 8'	Gedackt 8'
Quintadena 8'	Rohr-Flöthe 4'
Rohr-Flöthe 8'	Nasat 3'
Octava 4'	Octave 2'
Spitz-Flöthe 4'	Quinta 1 1/2'
Quinta 3'	Sufflet 1'
Octava 2'	Sesquialtera
Mixtur 4-ranks	Cimbel 2-ranks
Cornett	

PEDAL:

Sliding-manual coupler	Sub Bass 16'
Manual-pedal coupler	Posaunenbass 16'

BURGK CASTLE ORGAN

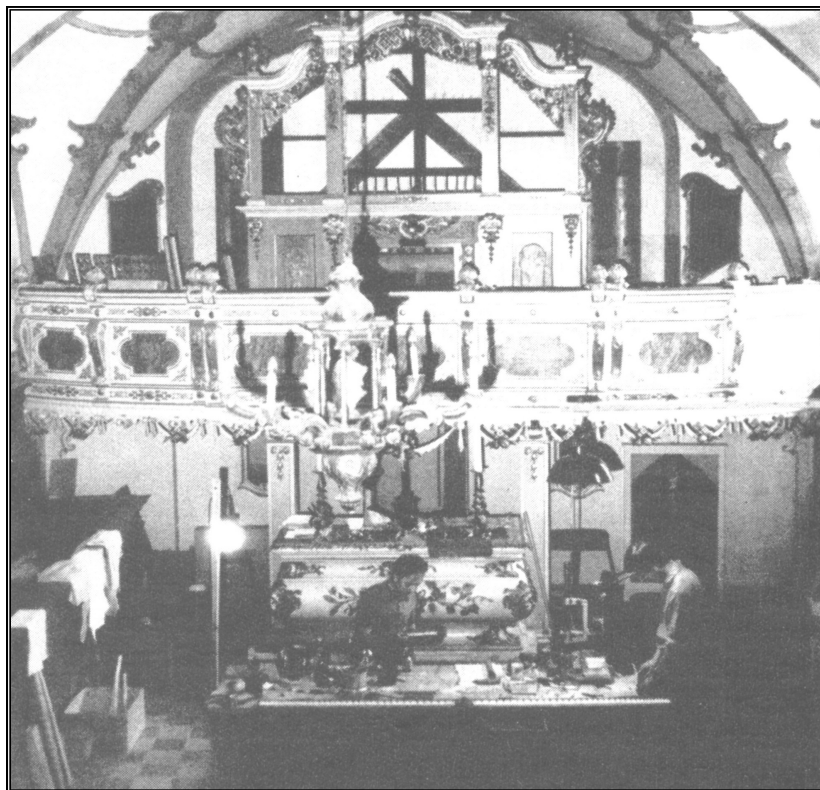
MANUAL:

Principal 8'
 Gedackt 8'
 Quintaden 8'
 Octava 4'
 Rohr-Flöthe 4'
 Nasat 3'
 Octava 2'
 Quinta 1 1/2'
 Sufflet 1'
 Sesquialtera
 Mixtur 3-ranks

PEDAL: Sub-Bass 16'

BURGK Castle Organ

Negotiations for the new Organ in Burgk Castle were simpler, for here Silbermann was dealing with Heinrich III of the noble House of Reuss, who was well able to finance the new instrument. Indeed Silbermann had already built a church organ (no longer extant) for nearby Greiz which was also administered by the Reuss dynasty. Following a visit to Burgk by Silbermann in June of 1739, designs were presented which formed the basis of a contract. The Organ is set into an alcove, which was created when a wall was demolished to make more space in the gallery. A major restoration was undertaken in 1982 by Silbermann-specialists Eule of Bautzen (photo). Our print in the notes shows the Castle in its romantic 19th century setting on a hill overlooking the River Saale, a scene which has little changed to the present day.



A major restoration of the Burgk Castle Organ was undertaken in 1982 by Eule of Bautzen