

Joseph Gabler

Founded/Born

1700 - 1771

Closed/Death

Still active?

no

Description

Joseph Gabler (born July 6, 1700, in Ochsenhausen; died November 8, 1771, in Bregenz) was one of the most significant organ builders in southern Germany during the Baroque period. Gabler was trained as a carpenter in the workshop of Ochsenhausen Abbey. Following tradition, he traveled as a journeyman, working for several years in Mainz starting in 1719, though little is known about this period. After completing his journeyman years, he found employment with an organ builder in Mainz. Potential mentors include Johann Jakob Dahm and Anton Ignaz Will, but not Johann Peter Geissel, as sometimes mentioned erroneously. There's no evidence Gabler worked with Anton Ziegenhorn or his son Johann Eberhard Ziegenhorn, whose widow Gabler married in 1729. Gabler first appears in records as an organ builder in 1727 when he unsuccessfully applied for the maintenance of the Mainz Cathedral organs.

From 1729 to 1733, Gabler was back in Ochsenhausen, receiving a commission from Abbot Cölestin Frener to build a new organ for St. George's Abbey Church. He briefly returned to Mainz in 1733/1734 before settling in Weingarten near Ravensburg from 1736 or 1737 until at least 1750, where he built the Great Organ on the west gallery of the Weingarten Basilica. He lived in Ravensburg from 1763 to 1768, working again in Ochsenhausen, where he modeled his work after the Weingarten organ with a free-standing console, a design increasingly popular among southern German organ builders. Gabler's other known activities include building the choir organ for the Zwiefalten Abbey from 1753 to 1755 and expanding the choir organ in Maria Steinbach from 1756 to 1759. He worked on various projects in Ravensburg until his final years in Bregenz, where he died while working on the city's parish church organ. Gabler's surviving organs are located in Ochsenhausen, Weingarten, and Maria Steinbach, with the Weingarten organ remaining nearly entirely original. His legacy includes the innovative free-standing console and a lasting impact on southern German organ building. Legends about his work, such as the Vox Humana myth and the secret lever in the Weingarten organ, reflect the lasting fascination with his contributions.

Sources

https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Gabler

Weingarten, Basilika St. Martin

Basilika St. Martin, Kirchplatz 1, 88250 Weingarten, Germany



Builder	J. Gabler
Year	ca. 1750
Period/Style	Baroque
Stops	65
Keyboards	4+P
Keyaction	tracker/mechanical
Tuning	Modified Unequal Temperament

Description

The organ was constructed by Joseph Gabler in the years 1736-1750. Originally, an earlier organ was constructed by Martin Rück for the basilica in 1532, but it was destroyed in war in 1632. Several modifications were made to the organ in the 19th and 20th centuries. A few notable renovations include an overhaul by Maucher of Konstanz in 1811, a repair by Braun of Spaichingen in 1826, and a major renovation by Weigle, who also added Barker levers in 1878. In 1861, Weigle became responsible for the organ's maintenance.

Between 1908-1910, an electric blower was installed, a major renovation by Weigle. In 1912, the range of tones was expanded and a Hochdruckwerk (High-Pressure-Division) was erected on the side gallery according to Weigle's patented system.

Later, the Kronpositiv was connected with electric traction. In 1954, a general overhaul was carried out by Steinmeyer, where they modified the wind supply and extended the pedal range. The high-pressure work was replaced by a swellable accessory work with 7 registers, constructed by Reiser and Späth. In 1983, further restoration was done, and the additional work was removed.

The Great Organ in Weingarten carries with it numerous legends, such as the Vox Humana legend, rooted in the question of whether it's possible to imitate the human voice using an organ register (despite the name, Vox Humana registers in organs rarely achieve this). Legend has it that despite his efforts with special metal alloys, Gabler was unsuccessful until Satan whispered to him one night, offering assistance in exchange for his soul.

On a stormy night, Gabler allegedly sneaked out of the monastery and made his way to Laurastein

to meet the Devil, who appeared to him as a hunter. Gabler supposedly signed away his soul with his blood as ink, and in return, received a metal for pipe casting. After casting the pipes with the metal provided by the Devil, the Vox Humana register allegedly sounded like a human voice, albeit producing secular music instead of sacred hymns, leading many monks to abandon their cells for worldly pleasures. Gabler was then apprehended by the Abbot and confessed to the "dark deed." He was then put on trial and was to be burnt in the monastery courtyard along with the mysterious register. However, he managed to create a replacement for the diabolical register, earning clemency.

Gabler, allegedly unpaid by the monks, requested the keys to the organ years after its completion under the pretext of making a minor adjustment. Inside the instrument, he flipped a single lever, causing the organ to emit only a faint moan. Alarmed, the Abbot and the convent gathered, and Gabler promised immediate relief if his overdue wages were paid. Upon payment, Gabler restored the organ to its former glory with a single movement. There was also an incident involving the lever in 1905, when the organ was suddenly unplayable. In 1912, during a renovation by organ builder Weigle, the hidden lever was reportedly discovered and removed, serving as a kind of throttle valve to control the wind supply. During the restoration of the organ by the Swiss organ-building firm Orgelbau Th. Kuhn AG in 1981-83, they followed the tradition by incorporating a similar secret lever, the whereabouts of which remain a mystery.

Stoplist/Disposition

I Hauptwerk	II Oberwerk/Kronpositiv	III Echowerk	IV Brustpositiv	Pedal
Praestant 16'	Borduen II-III 16'	Borduen 16'	Principal doux 8'	Contrabaß II 32'+16'
Principal 8'	Principal Tutti 8'	Principal 8'	Flaut douce 8'	Subbaß 32'
Rohrflaut 8'	Violoncell I-III 8'	Flauten 8'	Quintatön 8'	Octavbaß 16'
Octav I-II 4'	Coppel 8'	Quintatön 8'	Violoncell 8'	Violonbaß II 16'+8'
Superoctav II 2'+1'	Hohlflaut 8'	Viola douce 8'	Rohrflaut 4'	Mixturbaß V-VIII 8'
Hohlflaut 2'	Unda maris 8'	Octav 4'	Querflaut 4'	Posaunenbaß 16'
Mixtur IX-X 2'	Solicinale 8'	Hohlflaut I-II 4'	Flaut travers II 4'	Bombard 16'
Cimbalum XII 1'	Mixtur IX-XII 4'	Piffaro doux II 4'	Flageolet 2'	La force XLIX 4'
Sesquialter VIII-IX 2'	Octav douce 4'	Superoctav 2'	Cornet VIII-XI 2'	Carillon ped. 2'
Piffaro V-VII 8'	Viola II 4'+2'	Mixtur V-VI 2'	Vox humana 8'	Quintatönbaß 16'
Trombetten 8'	Cimbali II 2'+1'	Cornet V-VI 1'	Hautbois 4'	Superoctavbaß 8'
	Nasat 2'	Hautbois 8'	Carillon 2'	Flaut douce 8'
				Violoncellbaß 8'
				Hohlflautbaß 4'
				Cornetbass X-XI 4'
				Sesquialter VI-VII 3'
				Trombetbaß 8'
				Fagottbaß 8'

Additional: original: IV-III, IV-I, III-II, II-I, additionally: I-P, II-P, IV-P, Brustpedal an, Effect registers: Cuculus (cuckoo: four wooden pipes with wind drive), Rossignol (nightingale: three pipes in a water basin), Tympan (drum: three wooden pipes (16') tuned to the note G), Cymbala (three small bells with wind drive (together with Cuculus)), Tremulant IV

Sources

[https://organindex.de/index.php?title=Weingarten_\(W%C3%BCrtemberg\),_Basilika_St._Martin](https://organindex.de/index.php?title=Weingarten_(W%C3%BCrtemberg),_Basilika_St._Martin)