

A Brief Glimpse of Organs and Churches in Warsaw, Białystok, Białowieża, and Kraków

By Marijijm Thoene

If Józef Kotowicz asks you if you would like to play in his recital series in Białystok, Poland, say “YES!” I did say “Yes” and in July of 2012 had an experience of a lifetime; but I confess I had some sleepless nights wondering what was in store for me, especially knowing that the large organ in the Basilica Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption was an early 20th-century tubular pneumatic with three general pistons. Having played weekly on a cumbersome and psychotic 1923 tubular-pneumatic Möller with three undependable general pistons and a cipher that habitually showed up unannounced and unstoppable, I feared the worst. However, my fears were allayed when I heard Józef Kotowicz’s CD of the organ in the basilica. And who would not want to play in Białowieża’s St. Teresa Church on the edge of the oldest primeval forest in Europe and in Białystok’s St. Casimir Church, where the sound of the organ, also heard on Kotowicz’s CD, was kaleidoscopic in color and bloomed in the huge sacred space?

I write about my experience in hopes that readers will take heart in knowing that there are cities, e.g., Warsaw, Białystok, Białowieża, and Kraków, where people fill the churches to worship and listen to organ music; they are as passionate to listen as we are to play. From my bird’s eye view, I saw a reverence for organ music that was both inspiring and humbling. I also wish to not only describe the richness and beauty of the instruments I saw and heard, but also to describe a kind of miraculous phenomenon, much like the rebirth of the phoenix, in the city of Białystok.

The following is a brief account of organs experienced during my journey. After settling in our dorm room at the University of Warsaw, my husband Jess and I walked out of the front gate, turned left on Krakowskie Przedmieście, and discovered the **Warsaw Pro-cathedral Seminar Church**, where there would be an organ recital that night, July 10, at 7 pm. By happy chance we were about to hear the second recital of the International Bach Organ Festival. When we arrived at 7:05 all the programs were gone and the church was packed. People listened in rapt attention, caught up in

an interior world. We heard organist **Jan Brögger** from Germany.

The next morning we exited the front door of the dormitory and turned right on Krakowskie Przedmieście and found **St. Anne’s Church** just outside the Castle Square. In front of the church was a poster advertising the upcoming recitals, one of which was by **Józef Kotowicz** (see photo 1). How like my host, not to have told me he would be playing here. I was beginning to see evidence of his whirlwind schedule as a recitalist. He later told me he plays between 12 to 15 concerts between May and September, throughout Poland, Italy, Finland, Sweden, and Norway. As I stood in the entrance of the church I was touched at witnessing people kissing the feet of the statue of the crucified Christ as they left the church. Here I began to see part of the history unfold of a country of which I knew very little. St. Anne’s Church was built in the 15th century but was destroyed in the 1650s by Swedish and German troops. It was rebuilt between 1740–60 and the present Neoclassical façade was built in 1788. During World War II the roof was destroyed by the Nazis. The organ was built by Pflüger Orgelbau in 1992. The organ case (see photo 2) and the interior of the church are in Baroque style.

The rich colors of this organ are apparent on YouTube: Diane Bish performs the *Sortie* by Denis Bédard (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8KGB3BZItKU>). Here is the specification of the organ:

St. Anne’s Church, Warsaw Pflüger Orgelbau, 1992

Manual I (Hauptwerk) C–a'''

- 16' Gedackt
- 8' Principal
- 8' Gamba
- 8' Voce umana
- 8' Spitzflöte
- 4' Octav
- 4' Flöte
- 2½' Quint
- 2' Superoctav
- 1½' Mixture IV
- 8' Cornett V
- 8' Trompette

Manual II (Positive) C–a'''

- 8' Gemshorn
- 8' Holzgedackt

- 4' Principal
- 4' Rohrflöte
- 2½' Sesquialter II
- 2' Principal
- 2' Blockflöte
- 1½' Quint
- 1' Scharff III
- 8' Krummhorn
- Glockenspiel
- Tremulant

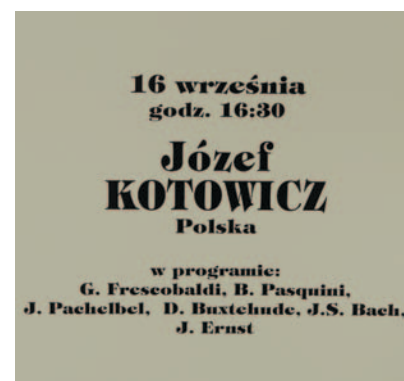
Pedal C–f

- 16' Principalbass
- 16' Subbass
- 8' Octavbass
- 8' Gedacktbass
- 4' Choralbass
- 2½' Mixture IV
- 16' Posaune
- 8' Trompete

Couplers
II/I I/P II/P

On July 11, Józef—who had just played two recitals in southeastern Poland at the Cathedral in Lubaczow and a church in Krasnobrod—and his lovely wife Ewa picked us up and drove us to Białystok. In the old city square the towering spires of the **Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary** dominate the skyline; to the left, connected to the Cathedral Basilica, is a small Baroque chapel, bearing the same name, with an intriguing history (see photo 3). The history of these two buildings reflects the remarkable determination, ingenuity, and spiritual commitment of the people of Białystok. Construction of the chapel was begun in 1611; it was consecrated in 1626 and later rebuilt in 1751. In the 19th century the congregation wished to expand the church. Since at that time the land was part of Russia, the people had to get permission from the Czar to rebuild the church. After many years of saying “No,” the Czar relented only on the condition that no new church would be built; only the present one could be enlarged. The neo-Gothic Cathedral Basilica was built as an addition to the chapel. Its construction lasted up to World War I. Unlike most of the city of Białystok, the buildings were not destroyed by the bombings in World War II.

The earliest document that mentions the existence of an organ in the Baroque chapel of the Assumption of the Blessed



1. Józef Kotowicz recital announcement

Virgin dates from 1671. The present organ was built between 1751–1752, and includes some elements from the older organ.

I was able to meet **Richard Onopa**, who has been organist of the Baroque **Chapel of the Assumption** for 57 years (see photo 4). His playing demonstrated the beauty and clarity of the flute stops and the power of the full organ—an elegant sound for a royal space, where many of the kings of Poland worshipped, including the last king of Poland, Stanislaw II August, who ruled from 1764–1795. The pedalboard consists of an octave (see photo 5) and the stops are literally projecting from the wall above the keyboard.

Chapel of the Assumption, Białystok

Manual

- 8' Pryncypal
- 16' Bourdon
- 8' Major flet
- 8' Amabilis
- 4' Spielflet
- 2' Oktawa
- 8' Gedackt
- 4' Oktawa
- 4' Minor flet
- 2' Piccolo
- 3½' Tercja
- 2½' Kwinta
- V Mixture
- III Cymbel

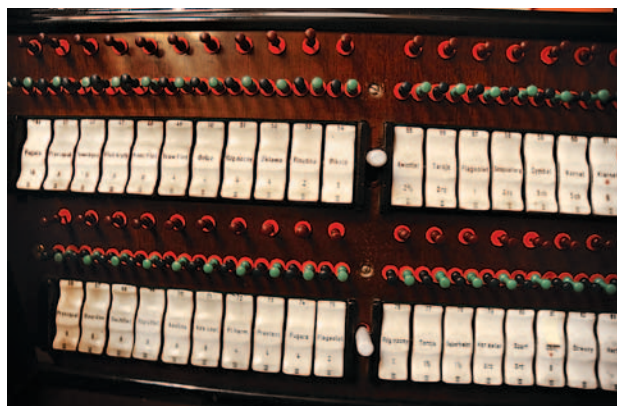
Pedal coupler F–f

Upon entering the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption of Our Lady, one feels transported in time by the soaring, graceful arches and the large sober faces of the church patriarchs in the stained-glass windows. Here I first encountered the image of the Polish saint and mystic, Saint Faustina (d. 1938), and the painting of Christ that she inspired.

The construction of the organ was begun in 1903 by Józef Rudowicz and completed in 1908 by Antoni Szymanowski of Warsaw. The stoplist reflects the romantic style of early twentieth-century instruments.



2. Organ case, St. Anne’s Church, Warsaw



6. Console of organ, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption of St. Mary, Białystok



3. Baroque Chapel, Cathedral, Białystok



7. Music rack at Church of St. Theresa in Białowieża

Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption of Our Lady, Białystok

Rudowicz and Szymanski, 1903–08

I Manual

- 16' Pryncypal
- 16' Bourdon
- 8' Pryncypal
- 8' Gamba
- 8' Gemshorn
- 8' Salicet
- 8' Holfflet
- 8' Kwintaton
- 8' Gedekt
- 4' Rurfflet
- 4' Flet kryty
- 4' Wiolina
- 4' Oktawa
- 1½' Kwinta
- 2' Oktawa
- 2½' Nasard
- 1' Superokt
- Mixtura II–IV
- 8' Trompet

II Manual

- 16' Fugara
- 8' Pryncypal
- 8' Sylwestryna
- 8' Flet kryty
- 8' Koncert flet
- 8' Traw. Flet
- 8' Dolce
- 4' Róg nocny
- 4' Oktawa
- 2' Flautino
- 1' Pikolo
- 2½' Kint flet
- Tercja II
- 1' Flageolet
- Sesquialt. II
- Cymbel III
- Kornet V
- 8' Klamet

III Manual

- 8' Pryncypal
- 8' Bourdon
- 8' Bachflet
- 8' Szpicflet
- 8' Aeolina
- 8' Vox coel.
- 4' Flet harm.
- 4' Prestant
- 4' Fugara
- 2' Flageolet
- 1' Róg nocny
- 1½' Tercja
- 1½' Superkwint
- Harm. Aeter. III
- Scharf III
- 8' Obój

Pedal

- 16' Kontrabas
- 16' Pryncypbas
- 16' Wiolonbas
- 16' Subbas
- 8' Oktawbas
- 8' Wiolina
- 8' Fletbas
- 4' Oktawa
- 5½' Kwinta
- 4' Flet
- 16' Mikstura IV
- 16' Puzonbas



4. Richard Onopa, organist in Baroque Chapel, Assumption of St. Mary, Białystok

The pedalboard is straight and flat. Three general pistons are set by pushing in a red, blue, or green button and pulling out red, blue, or green toggles (see photo 6). Fortunately for me, there was an “organ master” or “organ maintenance” person there the whole time I practiced and was helpful when I had questions. The organ has a commanding and dramatic presence as well as a rich palette of delicate, subtle colors. Organists know a cipher can happen, and try to believe that when it does, it isn't the end of the world. It did happen on the first piece on the first chord of Bach's St. Anne Prelude. I played the entire prelude and fugue with the cipher roaring right along, following Marilyn Mason's mantra, “Keep going, no matter what!” Not one, but four “organ masters” came to my rescue, taking off the back of the organ console while I played. The head “organ master” said, “I beg of you, do not play on the Great.” I followed his advice and there were no more mechanical problems. (I was later told that this was the first time a cipher had occurred since the concert series began in 1996. It was Friday the 13th!) At the end I ran down the spiral staircase and thanked an appreciative audience. Later that evening we were treated to a delicious dinner by the rector, **Henryk Zukowski**.

The “village” church of St. Theresa in Białowieża, built in 1927, is on the edge of one of the oldest primeval forests of Europe. The church is decorated with branches and horns, reminders of the forest outside. Here I discovered another Polish saint, Maximilian Kolbe, whose photograph was hanging on the wall. A Polish Franciscan friar, remembered for volunteering to die in place of a stranger in the Auschwitz concentration camp during World War II, he was canonized in 1982 by Pope John Paul II, who described him as the “Patron saint of our difficult century.”

When I arrived on Saturday night to practice, I found the music rack holding all the material for the Mass in the morning (see photo 7). I watched the parishioners arrive on foot and on bicycles, and leave their faithful dogs outside. Many of the parishioners stayed for my noon-time recital. The two-manual, 17-rank Walcker tracker well suited this church.



5. Pedalboard of organ in Baroque Chapel, Assumption of St. Mary, Białystok

Every stop of the organ, from flute to trumpet, spoke with great clarity and brightness. The specification:

Espanordica by Stefan Lindblad. The specifications:

Church of St. Theresa, Białowieża
Walcker

Hauptwerk (II Manual C–g^{'''})

- 8' Prinzpal
- 8' Gemshorn
- 4' Oktave
- 2' Schwiegel
- 1½' Mixtur IV–VI
- 8' Trompete

Rückpositiv (I Manual C–g^{'''})

- 8' Holzgedackt
- 4' Nachthorn
- 2' Prinzpal
- Sesquialtera II
- 1½' Quinte
- 1' Scharff

Pedal (C–f^{'''})

- 16' Subbas
- 8' Oktavbass
- 4' Pommer
- 16' Posaune

Couplers: II/I, I/P, II/P

The church was near not only an ancient forest, but also the Czar of Russia's private railroad and hunting lodge. The latter has been converted to a gourmet restaurant. The priest of St. Theresa, **Fr. Bogdan Poplawski**, took us to lunch here—what an amazing place of genteel elegance steeped in history.

St. Casimir (Kazimierz) Church, close to Białystok's central business district, is a relatively new church, built in 1981. Its namesake is St. Casimir Jagiellon (1458–1484), the patron saint of Poland, whose feast day is March 4. It is modern in design, with high ceilings, and flooded with light. By the altar are contemporary luminous paintings in the style of medieval Byzantine art. The five-manual German organ was built by the Wolfgang Scherpf Company in 1965–77 for the cathedral in Speyer and was moved to St. Casimir Church in 2009. It is the seventh largest pipe organ in Poland. Józef Kotowicz's performance on YouTube offers a great opportunity to see the interior of the church and hear the organ: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ljSPCnAfeKg>. Kotowicz performs *Letanias z cyklu*

Hauptwerk (C–g3) I. Manual

- 16' Principal
- 16' Quintade
- 8' Principal
- 8' Holzprincipal
- 8' Weitgedackt
- 4' Principal 4'
- 4' Oktave
- 4' Gedackt
- 5½' Quinte
- 3½' Terz
- 2½' Quinte
- 2' Oktave
- 1½' Mixture VI–VIII
- ½' Zimbel IV
- 8' Kornett V
- 8' Horizontalbombarde
- 16' Horizontalbombarde
- 4' Horizontalclarine

Bombardwerk (C–g3)

IV. Manual

- 16' Bourdon
- 8' Principal
- 8' Flöte harmonique
- 8' Salicional
- 4' Oktave
- 4' Spillpfeife
- 4' Fugara
- 2½' Nasat
- 2' Flageolet
- 1½' Terz
- 1½' Septime
- ¾' None
- 2½' Mixtur VI
- 16' Bombarde
- 8' Trompete
- 4' Clairon
- Röhrglocken (A–e1)
- Tremulant

Positivwerk (C–g3) II. Manual

- 8' Principal
- 8' Quintade
- 8' Spitzgedackt
- 4' Singend Oktav
- 4' Rohrflöte
- 2' Kleinprincipal
- 2' Blockflöte
- 1' Kleinoktave
- 4' Echokornett IV
- 1' Scharf V–VI
- 16' Dulzian
- 8' Trompete
- 8' Krumhorn
- Tremulant

Oberwerk (C–g3) V. Manual

- 8' Rohrquintade
- 8' Lieblich Gedackt
- 4' Principal
- 4' Koppelflöte
- 2' Oktave

*A Precious Gift
from the Past
for the Present
and the Future*

Supremely beautiful and blendable
tonal color – a Gift from the Venetian
School of organbuilding, a monumental part of our
great heritage. The result: a versatile and flexible
palette to make possible your finest work.

Intriguing? Let us build your dream.

Fratelli Ruffatti

Builders of Fine Pipe Organs to the World

www.ruffatti.com

Via Facciolati, 166 • Padova, Italy 35127 • organs@ruffatti.com • In the U.S. 330-867-4370

Organs in Poland



8. Organ case, St. Roch Church, Białystok

- 1¼' Siffłote
- 1' Oktävlein
- ⅓' (Terz-)Quintzibel III
- 8' Müsette
- 4' Singend Regal
- Tremulant

Schwellwerk (C–g3) III. Manual

- 16' Pommer
- 8' Principal
- 8' Flötgedackt
- 8' Salicional
- 8' Schwebung
- 8' Weidenpfeife
- 4' Oktave
- 4' Rohrpfef
- 2¾' Sesquialter II
- 2' Hohlflöte
- 2' Mixtur VI
- ½' Terzzibel III
- 16' Fagott
- 8' Oboe
- 4' Schalmey
- Tremulant

Pedalwerk (C–f1)

- 32' Contra-Principal
- 16' Principalbass
- 16' Untersatz
- 16' Rohrflötenbass
- 8' Groboktave
- 8' Offenflöte
- 4' Choralbass
- 4' Hohlpfef
- 2' Waldflöte
- 1' Blockflöte
- 5½' Bassquint
- 4' Hintersatz IV–VII
- 32' Contra-Posaune
- 16' Posaune
- 8' Trompete
- 4' Clarine
- 2' Zinkenbass

The suspended tracker action made the touch light and sensitive, and infinite levels of memory made it a joy to play. Fr. Wojciech Lazewski, the rector of the parish, spoke to the audience and introduced each organ piece, and after the recital we were invited to an elegant dinner in the rectory.

What a heart-warming experience to play three recitals in Poland in churches filled with people who appreciate organ music, who gave me such a warm welcome, and who thanked me, in English(!), for playing for them. I could only say hello (*dzien dobry*) and thank you (*dziękuję*) in Polish. It was gratifying to have the priest at each church talk to the audience and describe the music before I played, and as if it weren't enough to have the privilege to play, to be invited to a feast afterwards. Józef arranged for our food, lodgings, and transportation, and provided me with one of his students, Rafal Pluszczewicz, who explained the vagaries of setting the general pistons and turned pages for me.

After playing the recitals, I had the luxury of being a tourist in Białystok, and Józef showed us some of the most interesting organs in the city. First on the tour was the organ at the massive **St. Roch Church**. The architecture is avant-garde even by today's standards, even though it was built between 1927–46. It is now undergoing restoration. It used to be one of the largest parishes in Białystok, with 40,000 people attending Mass each weekend. Józef was organist there for two years, beginning in 1991, and played eleven Masses on the



9. Professor Andrzej Chorosinski at the console in the new Opera House, Białystok



10. Detail of organ console in new Opera House

weekend, as well as Masses in the evening throughout the week. The parish borders have since been changed and the congregation is smaller.

The organ and pipes were discovered at the end of World War II in 1945 in an abandoned boxcar in the train station in Białystok. The legend is that the workers from the train station asked the priest if he wanted an organ and so for a couple of cases of beer it was delivered to the church. The plate on the organ reads "Schlag und Sohn, 1945." The general pistons are set by a toggle system similar to the one in the cathedral. The organ case creates the illusion that all the pipes are of equal length (see photo 8, organ case, St. Roch Church). The organ has a great presence in this cavernous space.

We were privileged to have a tour of the stunning new **Opera House** in Białystok scheduled to open this fall. We were fortunate to get to hear the new 64-rank organ, built by the Polish builder Zych Zakłady Company, played by **Professor Andrzej Chorosinski** of the Chopin Conservatory in Warsaw, who was there to inspect the organ and rehearse for his inaugural recital (see photo 9). The specification of the organ:

Opera House, Białystok Zych Zakłady Organowe, 2012

Manual I

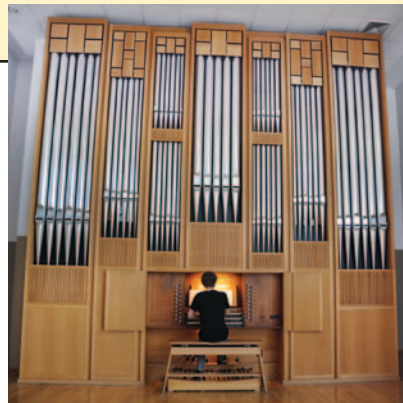
- 16' Gedackt
- 8' Pryncypal
- 8' Bourdon
- 8' Flute harm.
- 8' V da Gamba
- 8' Kwintadena
- 4' Oktawa
- 4' Flet
- 4' Traversflet
- 2¾' Kwinta
- 2' Superoktawa
- Kornet V
- Mixtura IV–V
- 8' Trompeta magna
- 8' Trompet
- 4' Clairon

Manual II

- 8' Pryncypal
- 8' Salicet
- 8' Flet rurkowy
- 8' Gemshorn
- 4' Fugara
- 4' Pryncypal
- 2¾' Násard
- 2' Oktawa
- 1½' Tercja
- Cymbel III
- 8' Trompeta magna
- 8' Klamet

Manual III

- 16' Gedackt
- 8' Pryncypal skrzyp
- 8' Flet podwójny
- 8' Fugara
- 8' Aeolina
- 8' Vox coelestis



11. Organ in recital hall in the Academy of Music, Kraków

- 4' Prestant
- 4' Flet rurkowy
- 2' Piccolo
- Sesquialtera II
- Mixtura IV–VI
- 16' Fagot
- 8' Obój
- 8' Vox humana
- 8' Trompeta magna

Manual IV

- 8' Flet otwarty
- 8' Gedackt
- 8' Salicional
- 4' Szpicflet
- 4' Pryncypal
- 2' Oktawa
- 1½' Kwinta
- 8' Regal

Pedal

- 32' Violonbas
- 16' Pryncypal
- 16' Subbas
- 16' Violon
- 8' Bourdon
- 8' Oktawbas
- 8' Cello
- 4' Choralbas
- Mixtura IV
- 16' Puzon
- 16' Fagot
- 8' Trompet harm.
- 8' Trompeta magna

The organ console is red and green, truly one of the most exuberant organ consoles I've ever seen (see photo 10).

We also toured **I. J. Paderewski School of Music**, where Józef has been on the faculty for twenty years. He recently acquired a beautiful tracker for the recital hall; built in 1976 in Denmark by Troels Krohn, it is reminiscent of the typical North German Baroque organ. The specifications:

Paderewski School of Music, Białystok Troels Krohn, 1976

Positive

- 8' Salicional
- 8' Gedacht
- 4' Principal
- 2¾' Quint
- 2' Octave
- 1½' Terts

Swell

- 8' Gemshorn
- 8' Quitaton
- 4' Rohrflute
- 2' Panfloyte
- 8' Oboe

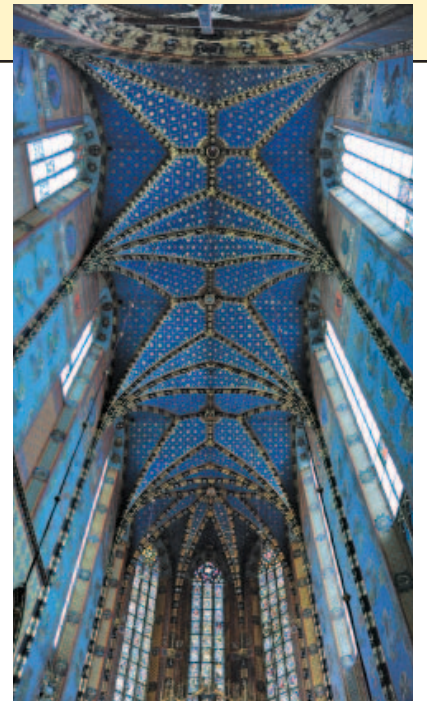
Pedal

- 16' Subbas
- Manual to Pedal couplers

Last on the tour was **Santa Ecclesia**, which has a 39-rank, three-manual German tracker built by Friedrich Weisenborn, again mirroring the disposition of the North German Baroque instrument. The sound of organ is lush as well as brilliant; however, the key action is very heavy.

In the **Church of St. Jadwiga** in Białystok there is a 57-rank organ from the Philharmonic concert hall in Salzburg. The organ was built by E. F. Walcker & Co. in 1970. The church had no organ before acquiring this one.

Tragic epochs in Poland, including the loss of independence in the 19th



12. Ceiling of stars in the Cathedral of the Assumption of the Virgin in Kraków

century, World War II, and the 50-year Communist regime, had a devastating effect on the rich musical tradition of the church and on organ building. A tradition, whose beginning is apparent in the early organ tablatures of Kraków ca. 1548, the Gdąnsk tablature of 1591, and the tablature of Johannes of Lublin, was silenced. I could not fail to see the reminders of the struggle for life itself in Białystok when I saw the single railway car beside the Museum of the Polish Army, a grim reminder that one million Poles were transported to Russia (Siberia and Kazakhstan). Many of them died during the journey. Most of them did not return to Poland at all. I learned that organ building in Poland came to a halt during the Communist regime, and that many churches had no organs because there was no money. During these years the rich musical tradition of the church was silent, but during this bleak time their faith grew stronger and their love of organ music did not die.

Since the fall of Communism in 1989, churches started looking for organs they could afford and found they could purchase instruments from Germany, where many churches were closing. Currently Poland has a growing economy in Europe and they are building new churches—big churches. It has been Józef's mission to help churches find organs and to make organ music accessible. He began by creating a concert series in the cathedral in 1996, which has grown to include other venues. This summer he organized 19 recitals in five different churches in Hajnowka, Białystok, and Białowieza, and invited 12 organists from Poland, Norway, and America.

Józef pointed out that crucial to the rebuilding of the rich musical tradition of the church has been the attitude of the clergy toward music and having church music classes in the schools. When Józef finished his studies in 1991 he was the first organist in the diocese; now there are thirteen. Now there are two outstanding organ builders in Poland: Zych Zakłady Organbilders: organy@zych.com, and Andrzej Kaminski Organbilders: kaminski@kaminski-organy.pl.

On July 17 we bid our farewells to Józef and Ewa in Białystok and took the train to Kraków, where Józef had arranged for us to stay in the Academy of Music. The medieval city of Kraków keeps its history alive by the daily performance of trumpet music played from one of the windows of the tallest tower of the Gothic Cathedral of St. Mary. During the 13th and 14th-centuries a trumpeter played at dawn and at dusk to signal the



15. Organ in rear gallery, Cathedral of the Assumption, Kraków



13. Organ to the left of the altar, Cathedral of the Assumption of the Virgin, Kraków



14. Fresco to the left of the altar, Cathedral of the Assumption of the Virgin, Kraków

- 8' Gedackt
- 4' Octava
- 4' Rohrfloete
- 2' Superoctava
- 2' Mixtura IV
- 8' Trompette

II. Manual Positiv C–a3

- 8' Flûte harmonique
- 4' Flûte octavante
- 2 2/3' Nasard
- 2' Flûte traversière
- 1 1/2' Terz
- 1 1/2' Larigot
- 8' Cromorne
- Tremulant

III. Manual Schwellwerk C–a3

- 8' Rohrfloete
- 8' Gambe
- 8' Vox coelestis
- 4' Fugara
- 2' Flächfloete
- 2 2/3' Mixtura III
- 8' Trompette harmonique
- 8' Oboe
- Tremulant

Pedal C–f

- 16' Subbass
- 8' Principalbass
- 8' Floetenbass
- 4' Choralbass
- 16' Posaune
- 8' Trompette

opening of the city gates. He also kept watch for fires or enemy invaders and would sound the alarm with a bugle call. Today a short bugle call is played on the hour beginning at 8 AM and ending at 11 PM from one of the towers of the cathedral. The plaintive bugle call is a melody that ends abruptly. This live performance is an hourly remembrance and commemoration of a heroic trumpeter who warned the city of invading Tatars in 1240 and who died from the enemy's arrow while sounding the alarm.

The Old Town of Kraków is filled with sounds, from horse-drawn carriages circling around the historic market place, to a band of accordion players playing Bach's *Toccata in D Minor* on the steps of the cathedral. Equally prominent are reminders of the pipe organ, which showed itself to be part of the fabric of life, past and present. These findings—whether in a fresco, a Book of Hours, a sculpture, a choir loft, or a recital hall—were dazzling to the eye and imagination and underscore its importance in providing music that provides solace and lifts the human spirit. I found these images in diverse places, ranging from the National Museum to Wawel Cathedral, from the Jagiellonian University Library to the Academy of Music.

From my bird's eye view, organ music appears to be alive and well in Kraków. I heard a new organ student practicing in the recital hall in the **Academy of Music** (see photo 11). This three-manual tracker organ was built by the Karl Schuke company of Berlin. The disposition:

Academy of Music, Kraków Karl Schuke

I. Manual Hauptwerk C–a3

- 16' Bordun
- 8' Principal



16. 17th-century portative organ, National Museum of Kraków



17. Portative organ in a French 16th-century Book of Hours, Jagiellonian Library, Kraków



18. Wood carving of portative organ, Wawel Cathedral, Kraków



eum in chordis et organo (Praise him with strings and organ) (see photo 13).

To the right of the altarpiece is a fresco of an angel playing the organetto accompanied by the text, *Super omnes speciosa* (Lovely beyond all others), one of the lines from the Marian hymn, *Ave Regina Caelorum* (see photo 14.) A positive organ (not pictured) contains seven stops and was 1898 built by Tomasz Falla. The big organ in the rear gallery (see photo 15) dates back to 1908 and has been rebuilt many times. The last general rebuilding took place in 1987–1989 by organbuilder Włodzimierz Truszczyński. Now the organ has mechanical action and 56 stops. For specifications of the three organs, see http://organy.pingwin.waw.pl/index.php?f=kr_mariacki.htm.

On the second floor of the **National Museum of Kraków** is a 17th-century portative organ (see photo 16). This portative organ has one manual of three octaves and two bellows. The pipes are made of lead and beech, and the keys are made of birch. It is from the Parish Church at Stary Sacz and was given to the museum by Stanisław Tomkowicz in 1934.

In the **Jagiellonian Library** I found one image of a portative organ in a French 16th-century Book of Hours (see photo 17). Here, along with other musicians, an angel organist celebrates the coronation of the Virgin. It is ironic that the pipes of the organetto are all the same length, and that several of the organ cases mentioned earlier give the illusion that all the pipes are the same length. Here and in the last image shown, the portative organ is played by an angel in the macrocosm of heaven.

The last organ shown is from **Wawel Cathedral**, the Archcathedral of Saints Stanislaus and Wenceslaus, which is, according to Frommer's guide book, the "most grandiose church in Poland, and a necropolis of Polish kings, rulers, most outstanding poets and Kraków's

bishops." The carved image of a portative is in the Swietokryjska Chapel near the front entrance of the cathedral (see photo 18). Here an angel organist accompanies the crucifixion in a scene that allows the viewer to step into another dimension of time and space.

Conclusion

The organs and images of organs I saw in Warsaw, Białystok, Białowieża, and Kraków represent only a tiny amount of what exists in Poland. I am grateful I had the opportunity to savor the sounds and sights of these instruments, experience such kindness, and witness the appreciation and love for organ music on many faces. I have great admiration for the composers, performers, and audiences who have survived one of the darkest times in history and are dedicated to preserving and building upon their rich tradition of organ music. Exciting new organ repertoire has been composed by contemporary Polish composers, such as Marian Sawa (1937–2005), Tadeusz Paciorkiewicz (1916–1998), Romuald Twardowski (b. 1930), Henryk Mikolaj Górecki (1933–2010), and Wojciech Kilar (b. 1932). Beautiful new organs are once again being built by Polish builders, including Zych Zakłady, Andrzej Kaminski, and others. The organ music filling the churches and the people who listen signify that in Poland, and especially in Białystok, "the music cannot be stopped"—in fact, like the phoenix, it is soaring. ■

Marijim Thoene received a D.M.A. in organ performance/church music from the University of Michigan in 1984. She is an active recitalist and director of music at St. John Lutheran Church in Dundee, Michigan. Her two CDs, Mystics and Spirits and Wind Song are available through Raven Recordings. She is a frequent presenter at medieval conferences on the topic of the image of the pipe organ in medieval manuscripts.

Photo credit: Marijim Thoene