

SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL

Two new instruments by Orgelbau Goll win over **Simon Harden**. PHOTOS ORGELBAU GOLL

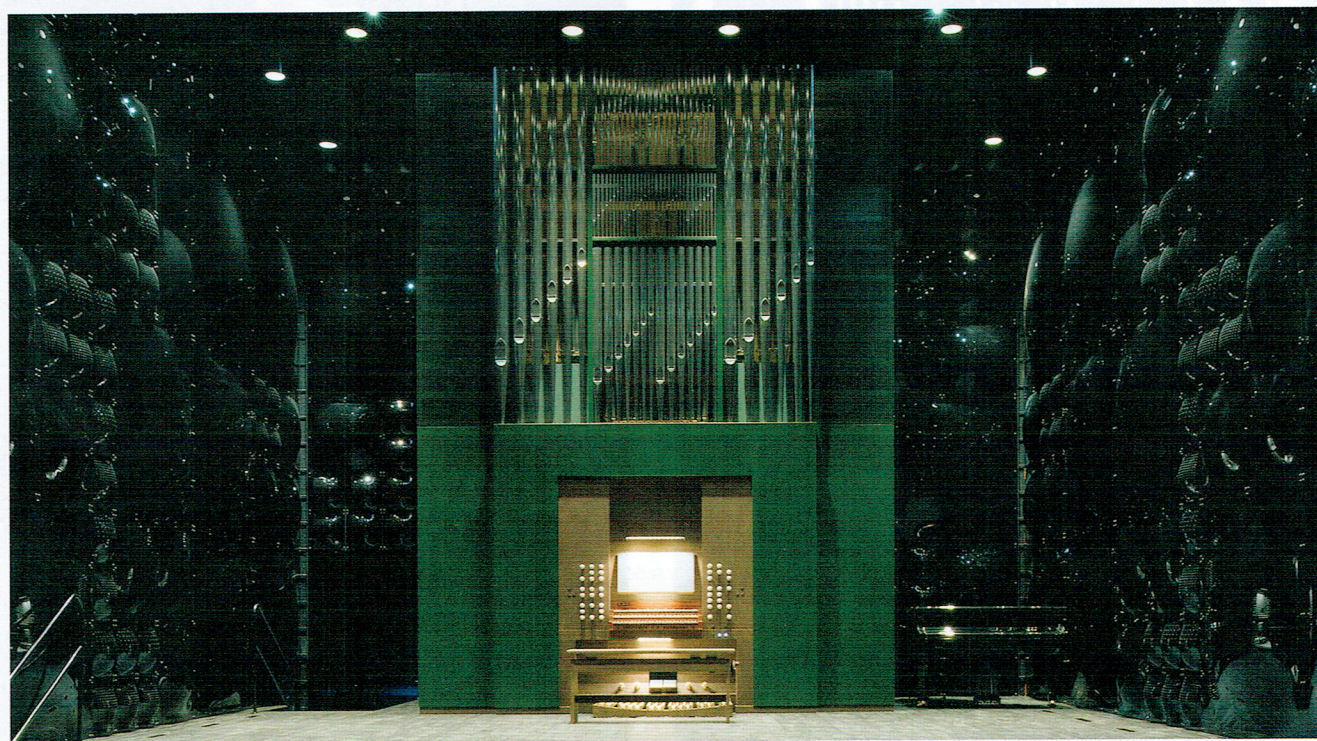
When Zurich University of the Arts put the building of a new organ out to tender, the only criterion was that the budget should not exceed 650,000 Swiss francs. Otherwise, in terms of specification and tonal design, the bidders had a blank sheet. As for the appearance of the façade and case, the architects of the recently converted University building stipulated that it should fit into their preconceived colour scheme. The industrially scaled building, formerly a creamery, provides a novel malleable space for the creation of university facilities. A small concert hall of c.1,000 sq.mtrs, perched on

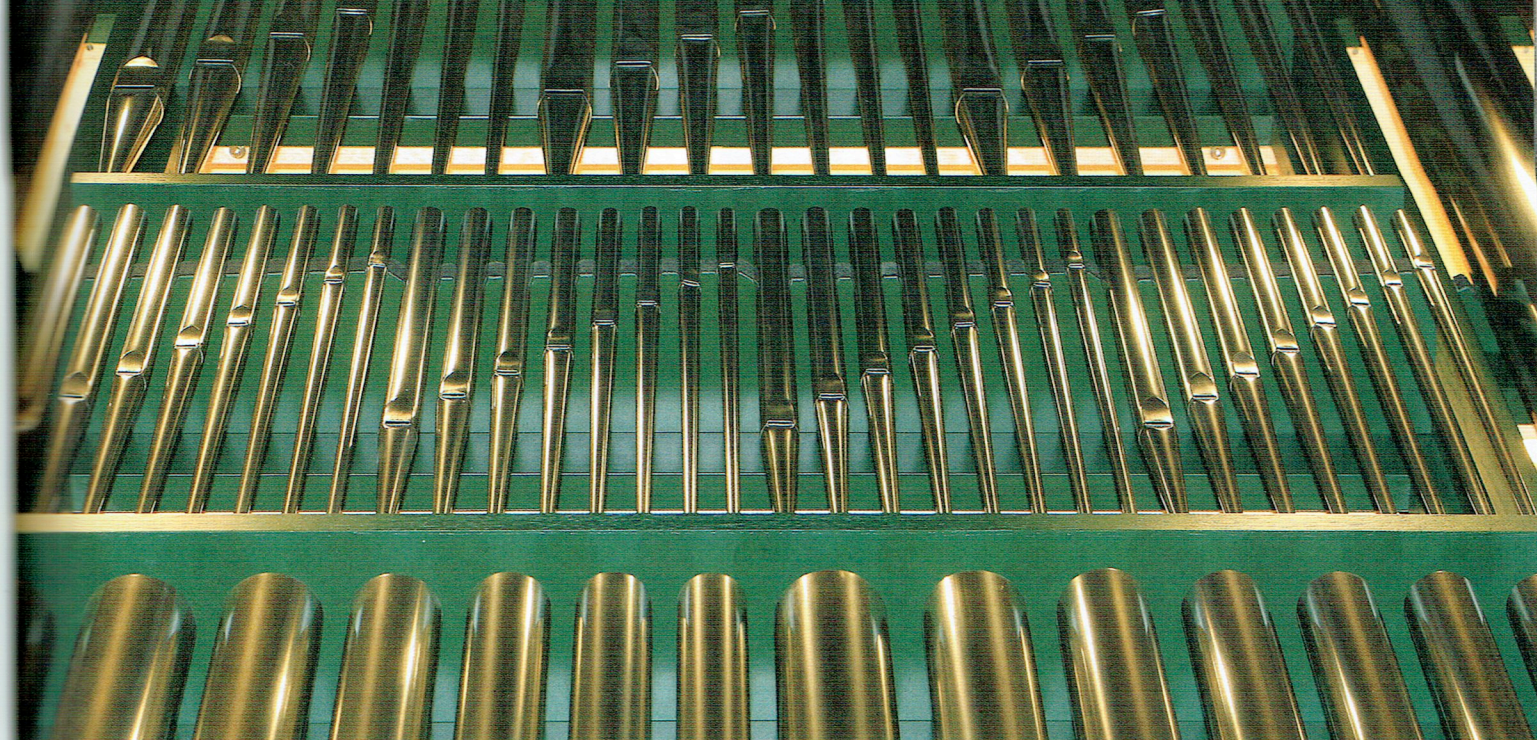
the seventh floor and with a seating capacity of just 100, was reserved for the new organ. This arrangement has the distinct advantage of being separated from the campus's main concert hall (often the favoured home for a concert organ) and ensures that the space can be used almost exclusively for the purposes of organ teaching, practising and performing. Considering the elevated position of the organ on the seventh floor, a steel structure was constructed beneath the organ to spread the considerable weight of the instrument over a large area.

The contract was awarded to Orgelbau Goll of Lucerne, a company that has

established a distinguished reputation building organs for the music academy niche, namely at Bern, Bayreuth, Stuttgart, Regensburg and Mainz. In keeping with the demands of the architect, Goll designed a striking case in green-stained oak set against the futuristic backdrop of black acoustic 'bubbles' and diffusely lit by the latest LED technology. The façade is simply arranged on two clear plains, with asymmetrical rows of pipes placed on the foremost plain. The back of the case is deliberately unobtrusive, disguising the depth of the instrument and blending it into the black background of the walls. The grey-stained oak console is

▼ The green-stained oak of the Goll organ in Zurich's Musikhochschule is set against a futuristic backdrop of black acoustic 'bubbles'





▲ The instrument has a high level of craftsmanship and hand-crafted elements throughout

slightly sunken into the foremost plain and is situated advantageously for the acoustic evaluation of registrations. The high level of craftsmanship and handcrafted elements throughout the instrument is visible at the console in the form of decorative inlays in plum and ebony wood. The action is very light – some of the horizontal trackers are made from hollow carbon rods. Typically for Goll, the black keys are particularly narrow, allowing for ease of playing even for broad-fingered organists. For reliability, and potentially for experimental repertoire, the draw-stops are mechanical. However, provision is made for an extra full solenoid-operated combination system to be added at a later date. The swell box can be operated through both a foot pedal and a draw stop.

Goll faced a particular challenge in building a three-manual organ for such a small auditorium; but they managed to include 31 stops (with some common stops for Great and Pedal divisions) that provide a wealth of colour and differentiation without becoming overpowering or unduly loud. Each of the three manual divisions is provided with three 8ft stops, and there is a total of six reed stops between manuals and pedal. The large proportion of 8ft and 4ft stops provides many subtle shades and enables great flexibility in registration. The organ is not conceived to emulate a particular historic style but rather, in keeping with its pedagogical function, it enables the interpretation of a broad spectrum of literature. This

Musikhochschule, Zurich

ORGELBAU GOLL (2014)

I. HAUPTWERK

Bourdon	16
Principal	8
Hohlflöte	8
Viola da Gamba	8
Octave	4
Octave	2
Mixtur	1 1/3
Trompete	8

II. POSITIV

Gedackt (wood)	8
Salicional	8
Doppelflöte	8
Viola	4
Rohrflöte	4
Nasard	2 2/3
Flageolet	2
Terz	1 3/5
Larigot	1 1/3
Clarinetto	8

III. SCHWELLWERK

Flûte harmonique	8
Gambe	8
Voix céleste	8
Flûte traversière	4
Octavin	2
Trompette harm.	8
Oboe	8

PEDAL

Subbass (Gt)	16
Octavbass	8
Flötbass (Gt)	8
Violoncello (Gt)	8
Fagott	16
Trompete (Gt)	8

*Couplers: II-I, III-I, III-II, I-Ped, II-Ped, III-Ped, III sub-III, III super-Ped
Tremulant for manuals 2 and 3 together*

daunting task of constructing a universal instrument with an economical yet flexible specification is, in this case, quite successful.

An adequate and convincing interpretation of repertoire from the early baroque, through the ages and up until the contemporary era, can be satisfyingly achieved. The voicing is such that the ranks each have their

own distinct character, making their individual presence known, while coalescing freely to form any number of combinations. Overall, the voicing is warm and full without ever becoming aggressive or shrill. The predominance of foundation stops and the presence of but a single mixture make extended periods of practising or

< teaching pleasant on the ear and avoid acoustic fatigue. The organ, in keeping with the nature of the hall, has a distinct chamber character, and the player can do well to consider registering accordingly. For example, on the Great, the combination of 8, 4 and 2 principals could pass as a small plenum and can be balanced against the

are very responsive to the use of the box, and the Swell ranks can be augmented through the use of a sub-coupler. The mechanism for the Swell louvres allows them to open slowly at first and then at a faster rate towards the fully open position. At a thickness of 4.5cm and with a double profile favoured by Goll, the doors in the

was adamant that an organ would not be compatible with the interior concept. It was clear that the church council's initial proposition to position a new organ to the side of the altar would present both aesthetic and functional problems. Goll's solution was to use an existing niche opposite the altar and to integrate the organ case into the line of the walls, thus boldly choosing to blend the instrument into the existing aesthetic rather than designing a separate free-standing object. The use of wood, stone and polished surfaces in the church's fabric is reflected in the organ case and façade pipes: smooth, planed elements of the case are contrasted with rough-surfaced panels of hand-split oak shingles. Similarly, the highly polished Principal 8 façade pipes are juxtaposed with the matt-finished Dulciana pipes, unusually bearing the fibre-texture of the cotton cloths used during casting on the outside rather than inside surfaces. The diagonal lines of the open triangular supports for the case match the church walls and make for a dynamic visual interaction with the vertical façade pipes.

Both manual divisions are placed on one wind-chest behind the three façade panels. This arrangement sacrifices a

The reed colours are enhanced by the Positive Clarinette – a mild and warm-sounding stop

gentle and precise Fagott 16 in the pedal. The mild mixture can, of course, be added and provides more of an enrichment of colour than any degree of shrillness.

The Swell and Positive divisions are both arranged on the same soundboard, thereby economising on space, the corollary of which sees both divisions enclosed in the same swell box. On the Positive, the Viola 4 is a very particular stop that provides an expressive string texture to the 4ft ranks; and the Cornet décomposé can be balanced well against the Trumpet in the Swell – an essential registration for French classical repertoire. The Great Trumpet is more German in character. The Swell strings

closed position are indeed shut tight! The reed colours are enhanced by the Positive Clarinette – a mild and warm-sounding stop in keeping with the overall tonal concept of the instrument.

A second recent project undertaken by Goll again saw the creation of a compact and versatile instrument, but for a very different setting: an aesthetic challenge was posed in integrating an organ into the idiosyncratic architecture of the church of St Antonius in the Swiss town of Wildegg. The low-roofed, essentially round church with gradually sloping ceiling and walls was built in 1969, and its architect

▼ In Wildegg, Goll integrated the organ into the line of the walls





▲ Goll's trademark slim black keys, and (right) the polished Principal 8 pipes contrast with the matt Dulciana pipes

possible swell box, but makes good use of the space and allows for seamless combinations of ranks in both divisions. The pedal division is placed on the side of the case, projecting into the church but removed from the player. Unlike at the University in Zurich, the organ is strongly voiced to fill the church and to provide a bold accompaniment for congregational singing. Similarities between the two instruments can be seen in the specification, with a bevy of foundation stops, a Cornet décomposé in the Positive, a Clarinette (this time voiced more like a Krummhorn) and a nimble Fagott 16 in the pedal. For an instrument with 24 stops, the relatively large number of foundation stops provides great potential for variations in colour when accompanying choirs and instrumental ensembles. Versatility can also be seen within the stops themselves: the sharp attack of the Positive Bourdon 8 disappears when playing very legato. The Great Octave 2 appears like a flute when combined with the Hohlflöte 8, but still provides brightness and clarity in a plenum. The 4ft ranks on both manuals add further versatility and differentiation when alternated in combination with other stops.

These two recently completed instruments from the Goll workshop display a confident approach in meeting aesthetic and functional demands. Without claiming

St Antonius, Wildegg			
ORGELBAU GOLL (2014)			
I. HAUPTWERK		Rohrflöte	4
Bourdon	16	Nasat	2 ² / ₃
Principal	8	Flageolet	2
Hohlflöte	8	Terz	1 ³ / ₅
Gemshorn	8	Larigot	1 ¹ / ₃
Octave	4	Clarinette	8
Traversflöte	4		
Octave	2	PEDAL	
Mixtur IV	1 ¹ / ₃	Subbass	16
Trompete	8	Principalbass	8
		Violoncello	8
II. POSITIV		Choralbass	4
Bourdon	8	Fagott	16
Gemshorn	8		
Dulciana	8	<i>Tremulant</i>	
Vox Coelestis	8	<i>Couplers II-I, I-Ped, II-Ped</i>	
Fugara	4	<i>Mechanical action</i>	

to copy a particular historical or regional style, these instruments embrace the idea of a universal instrument and achieve it with a small specification of meticulously voiced pipes. Exemplary precision and care is undertaken in all aspects of craftsmanship. Clearly, an appreciable amount of consideration is taken to produce instruments of both visual and musical excellence, the results of which stimulate both musicians and those with an eye

for aesthetics. Without compromising on quality of materials, and using many traditional building techniques, these Goll instruments represent a modern take on organs that cleverly and efficiently fulfil the expectations of the communities that they serve. ■

Born in Ireland, Simon Harden is now based in Germany and works internationally as a concert organist, choir director and teacher.