

**Lecture given at the ISO Symposium
“How to win new friends for the pipe organ”
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The organ situation in Germany, 6000 members worldwide

I am standing here today as representative of the “Gesellschaft der Orgelfreunde”. The “Gesellschaft der Orgelfreunde” would like to congratulate the “International Society of Organ Builders” on this jubilee. We thank you for all the important work that has been done and wish you strength and inspiration to go on with this work for many years to come. The exchange of knowledge and experience in the field of organ building is of invaluable importance for maintaining quality in dealing with historical instruments. Learning from each others creativity and inspiration highly contributes to the quality and diversity of newly built instruments. The executive committee of the “Gesellschaft der Orgelfreunde” highly respects and appreciates this work of the “International Society of Organ Builders”.

The “Gesellschaft der Orgelfreunde” was founded in Ochsenhausen in 1951 by organologists who were inspired by the new fervour and euphoria of post-war Germany (I mention Walter Supper and Wolfgang Adlung). Although our roots are in Germany and our language of communication is German, we are an international society. About twenty percent of the almost 6,000 members live outside Germany and our activities do not exclusively take place in that country.

The GdO is a society for everyone who feels connected to the organ: friends of organ music, organists, organ builders, organ advisers, architects, art historians, historians, members of church councils and amateur organ builders.

In numerous publications and at conferences and symposiums the “Gesellschaft der Orgelfreunde” is involved with many different aspect of the organ culture, such as organ building, organ music, organ playing, organ history and preservation of historic organs.

The GdO does not represent one particular school in organ building, but is open to a wide range of opinions.

The membership fee we ask is only € 25.00 per year, which enables people of moderate means to join us as well. For that small amount members receive the following:

- a. The “Ars Organi” journal, which is published four times a year and has some 65 pages. It carries articles concerning the above-mentioned aspects of organ building, up-to-the-minute reports, reviews, etcetera. For those of you who do not yet know our journal an introductory copy is available, as well as a registration form for membership.

- b. Once a year the newsletter “Orgelspiegel” with information about newly built organs and further announcements.
- c. Once a year a bulky issue of the “Acta Organologica” series with scholarly contributions in the field of organology and numerous pictures and photographs.
- d. Moreover, the GdO offers a great many other publications, such as books and sheet music for the organ. New titles are added every year.

Once a year, in the first week of August, a large international organ conference (the “Orgeltagung”) takes place within or outside Germany. During this week the organ culture of one particular region in Europe is introduced by means of concerts, forum discussions and lectures. These conferences usually attract some 200 to 300 participants. Just a few weeks ago this event took place in Graz (Austria). Over the three preceding years we were introduced to the organ cultures of Hungary, of the Euregion around Maastricht, Luik (Liège) and Aken (Aachen), and of Mecklenburg. On the programme for the coming three years are the area around the Lake of Konstanz, Prague and the Münsterland area respectively.

Besides, we organise a number of smaller-scale and shorter conferences, workshops, organ study tours and interpretation courses.

Over the past few years the “Gesellschaft der Orgelfreunde” has, like other organisations in the western world, been confronted by the phenomena of individualisation and rise in the ageing population, which make people less inclined to commit themselves for a longer period of time.

The “Gesellschaft der Orgelfreunde” pursues an active policy to interest people, and especially younger people, in the instrument that we all love. Spearhead of this policy is concern for the quality of what we offer in our publications. Very important as well is our pursuit of quality in the performance of organ music. All too often people turn away from the organ just because it is associated with technically or musically inferior organ playing, which may be imprecise and not inspired. It is my conviction that good and accurate organ playing on a mediocre or bad instrument is better endured than careless and uninspired playing on a good instrument. Attractive, accurate and musically inspired playing wins people for the organ. If this is not present, they will be put off.

There is of course an even greater attraction if both the instrument and the player are top of the bill. This is why the “International Society of Organ Builders” and the “Gesellschaft der Orgelfreunde” will go on to need each other in the future. My wish to all of you is that you may be witnessing the fruit of this mutual inspiration for a long time.

I thank you.