

ORGANS AND ORGAN BUILDERS IN THE CHURCHES OF HISTORICAL LIVLAND DURING THE 18TH CENTURY

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Summary

In this article, the focus is on churches in the small cities and rural areas in the historical Livland, especially the churches where the local congregation bought or received a small positive organ as a donation, and an organist was employed there during the 18th century. The research is based mainly on documents kept in the State History Archives of Latvia under the National Archives of Latvia and in contemporary periodicals. The main purpose of the article is to find out how much the organs spread in Livland during the 18th century. This research pays attention to the Latvian part of Livland, excluding Riga and its patrimonial area, because the musical life in Riga is widely described in Zane Gailīte's monography *Par Rīgas mūziku un kumēdiņu spēli* (*About the Riga's music and the play of jesters*, published in 2003).

The article deals with two main topics. The first one concerns the organs and their role in the interior of the Lutheran churches of Livland. The second main topic is related to the people associated with organs, and they were mainly organ builders and organ buyers or donaters. Both are still little-discussed topics in Latvian cultural (especially music) history of the period from the 16th century to the beginning of the 19th century.

After the Great Northern War (1700–1721) with the Treaty of Nystad, the territory of Livland was officially incorporated in the Russian Empire. Almost half of the churches in Livland were destroyed during the war. There were only sixteen churches in the rural parishes where the pastors were able to hold the Divine Services. Some stronger congregations like Valmiera (historical Wolmar) and Rauna (Ronneburg) renewed their activities very fast and their patrons were able to donate a small positive organ already in the 1720s.

The next news about the positive organs appears only in the middle of the 18th century when more local manor owners as the patrons and the congregations were able to provide a positive organ to their church like in Alojā (Allendorf), Burtņieki (Burtneck), Dole (Dahlen), Limbaži (Lemsal), Matīši (St. Matthiae), Mālpils (Lemburg), Smiltene (Smilten), Rūjiena (Rujen) and Vestiena (Festen). Finally in the late 18th century, the congregations in Ādaži (Neuermühlen), Alūksne (Marienburg), Āraiši (Arrasch), Bērzaune (Bersohn), Cēsvaine (Sesswegen), Cēsis (Wenden), Daugavgrīva (Dünamünde), Ēvele (Wohlfahrt), Lugaži (Luhde), Nītaure (Nitau), Ogresmuiža (Ogershof), Skulte (Adiamünde), Suntaži (Sunzel) and Trikāta (Triakaten) also had small positive organs in their churches. In summary, the positive organs spread to at least a third of the whole Latvian part of Livland.

As for the positive organ, it was a small pipe organ, usually with one manual keyboard, no pedal and few stops. Regarding the characteristic features of the positive organs in the churches of Livland, they were usually with 5–8 stops. But, there were some different examples with more stops like in Valmiera (organ with fourteen stops,

two manuals, one pedal, three bellows; this instrument was built in 1780) and Rūjiena (positive with ten stops in 1754, and an organ with sixteen stops; built in 1790).

Almost no surviving information about the form and style of these organ buildings is found in the historical documents. A report written by a pastor in 1754 gives a wide description about the positive organ with ten stops in the church of Rūjiena. Short texts in Latin and several wooden figures like some angels, Saturn, Potiphar's wife and Joseph, an hourglass, a skull, a mirror and other allegorical images decorated the facade of this music instrument. One more story is related to the organs in Burtnieki church – the organ prospect (1780) was decorated with five wooden figures and coat of arms shields, painted in gold.

It is known that the organ gallery was painted in one or two colours – blue and gold – at least in the churches of Burtnieki (1780) and Aloja (1757). In addition, the organ galleries of the churches in Valmiera (1780) and Rūjiena (1754) were also adorned with a series of twelve paintings of the Saint Apostles.

Only short descriptions about the organ builders are found in the archival documents. A lot of them were mentioned mainly as an organ repairer or an organist. There are rare facts that tell about the builders of these positive organs which were located in the churches of Livland. One of the famous organ builders in the Baltic Sea region was Heinrich Andreas Contius (1708–1795), who has built organs not only in Rīga (St. Jacob church (1760–1763), the Dome Cathedral (rebuilding 1773–1776), the Reformed church (1783)), but also in Liepāja (in Kurzeme/Courland, 1773–1779) and in Valmiera (1780) and Cēsis (1787). His son-in-law, Johann Andreas Stein (1752–1821), was an organist in Ēvele where he had also established a workshop of organs and other musical keyboards. Stein built organs together with Contius for the churches in Liepāja (1773–1779), Valmiera (1780) and Cēsis (1787). Stein himself had built a positive organ for the church in Ēvele (1788) as well as for several churches in the Estonian part of Livland.

In 1792/1799, the congregation of Nītaure could be proud of the positive organ built by Theodor Tiedemann (around 1743–after 1806). He usually worked in Rīga (1778–1806), and built some positive organs in Lithuania also (1801–1804). There are some more organ builders' names in the archival documents like Friedrich Wilhelm Wander (born around 1733), Johann Gottfried Nessler/Nessel (active in 1760–1762), August Hildebrandt (active in 1792–1808), Peter Wilhelm Stein (1785) and Carl Gottfried Nack/Neck, born around 1749–1818). Unfortunately, it is still not possible to identify in which churches of Livland they built a positive organ. Some of them had repaired the organs, others had their own workshop of keyboard instruments in Valmiera and Rīga. Usually these organ builders were German by nationality. However, there was also a Latvian man among them. He was a simple peasant whose name was Miķelis Gailis (1749–1827). Through self-study, Gailis had built a small organ with few wooden pipes (in about 1782) and worked also as an organist in the church of Skulte (Adiamünde, 1782–1810).

Finally, summarizing the facts obtained during this research, there is a hint to study the city of Valmiera especially as an important centre of organ building in the Latvian part of the historical Livland.