



Restoring harmony

Sixty-five years ago the city of Kaliningrad was devastated by war, and the population continued to suffer during the ensuing Soviet occupation.

Benjamin Saunders was invited to give a recital of reconciliation on the new Schuke organ in the rebuilt cathedral.

PHOTOS COURTESY BENJAMIN SAUNDERS

Towards the end of 2008 I received a phone call from Gerfried Horst, a former lawyer for Deutsche Grammophon: would I give two concerts in the newly rebuilt cathedral in Kaliningrad? Horst had already organised recitals by Olivier Latry and Andreas Sieling; they would like me to play in a concert of reconciliation in 2009. Reconciliation? What for?

Kaliningrad is a Russian exclave sandwiched between Poland and Lithuania. Until 1946 it was known as Königsberg and was the capital of East Prussia, Germany. The cathedral sits at what was once the centre of a medieval city, famed for its learning and one of the oldest universities in Europe – notable sons include the philosopher Immanuel Kant, whose grave lies near the cathedral.

On 29 and 30 August 1944 Royal Air Force napalm bombs destroyed the city, and the following year most of the survivors fled with the approach of the Red Army. Of those who stayed, some died under occupation and the rest were expelled by Stalin during the following three years. The region was then repopulated entirely by Russian immigrants.

In 1992 Igor Odintsov, a builder by profession and former colonel in the Soviet army, was charged with the herculean task of supervising the cathedral's restoration – the 14th-century Gothic building had lain in ruins since the bombing, without vaults or roof. For 15 years experienced craftsmen from Russia and Germany worked painstakingly to reconstruct the building, and on its completion a decision was made to provide two new organs suitable for the

cathedral's new role as a concert hall. The funding was a result of President Putin's promise to spend 142.3 million roubles (around £2.7 million) of State money for the city's new landmark. The organs, both by Matthias Schuke from the family firm of Alexander Schuke of Potsdam, were completed in January 2008 and the west-end instrument claims to be the largest in Russia.

The cathedral is now the best-known musical venue in the city and hosts regular organ recitals. During the Soviet regime the old German churches and organs fell into ruin, so there are now only three venues with organs in the whole region: Kaliningrad Philharmonic Orchestra Hall (a former RC church) houses a Rieger-Kloss; a 1995 Mayer instrument is in the Organ Hall at the seaside resort of Svetlogorsk-Rauschen (also a former RC church, and subsequently used as a private cinema by the KGB); and the two new Schuke instruments in the cathedral. A full-time resident organist in each venue gives recitals for visitors throughout the week, sometimes twice as day; but though these posts carry prestige, remuneration is less than a tenth of an average full-time salary in the UK.

My first concert in Kaliningrad, which was broadcast on Russian State television, fell on the 65th anniversary of the destruction of the city on 29 August 1944 and marked the reconciliation between the peoples of Germany, Russia and Britain. This was symbolised musically by my sharing the concert with a German and a Russian organist: Susanne Rohn (cantor of the Erlöserkirche, Bad Homburg) and Artjom Khatchaturov (Kaliningrad Cathedral's resident organist). I had been asked to play classical English music in sympathy with the solemnity of the occasion, remembering the victims of the bombing, particularly the children. In Russia the organ is comparatively rare, so much standard repertoire is unknown. I opened with a 'beefed-up' version of Stanley's *Trumpet Voluntary*, with pedals, to show off the full power of the west-end organ and the chamade trumpets. I followed this with Howells's *Master Tallis's Testament*, because it was written during the second world war. There was a lot of smooth, Romantic 8ft tone to choose from, and the

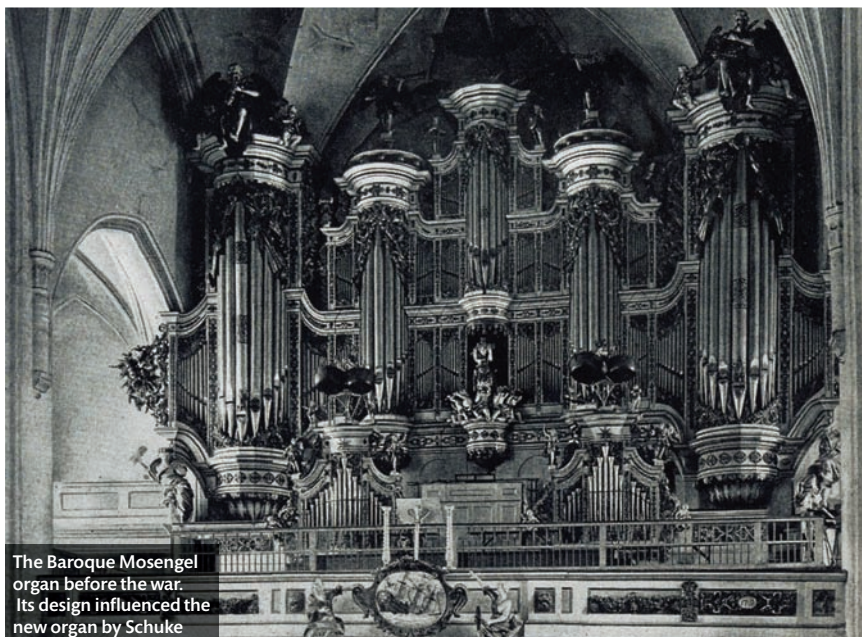
blend and poise of the ensemble was such that I could add and subtract stops in the manner of an English cathedral instrument without any sudden changes in dynamic. I wanted to end with something to evoke a childlike simplicity, so played my own transcription of the 'Playful Pizzicato' from Britten's *Simple Symphony*. Susanne Rohn played J.S. Bach's Fantasia & Fugue in G minor (BWV542) and duetted with me in the Rondo from J.C. Bach's Sonata in F. The evening included Mendelssohn, sung by Annegret Kleindopf (curator of Stade's historic Huss-Schnitger organ), and archive footage of Königsberg before and after its destruction. Artjom Khatchaturov concluded the concert with an extremely fine Passacaglia & Fugue by Kushnariov. As the only English person, I was moved by the warm reception I was given by former German citizens of Königsberg who had been there during the war, and Russian inhabitants of today's Kaliningrad.

My solo recital three days later gave me the chance to explore the organ in greater detail. The Romantic voicing, complemented by the generous acoustic, was perfect for Vierne's *Cathédrales*. The French reeds of the Schwellwerk with the box tightly closed gave me the impression of trying to drive a very powerful sports car at 10mph – it simply wanted to roar and go faster. On adding the full power of the Hauptwerk and Pedal in the climax of the piece, the blend was colourful but never oppressively loud; rather,

it was completely balanced with no single stop dominating or obtruding. Bach's *Sei gegrüßet Variations* – his longest work for organ – gave scope to show off the instrument's classical colours and I was tempted by the many possible light and dark plenum combinations, cornets and solo stops, aided by a sequencer system (the only registration aid). The music that seemed to touch the audience most, however, was Philip Glass's *Mad Rush*. Ten-and-a-half minutes of F major minimalism is always a risk, but the acoustic warmly embraced the sparse material, and the option of electrical assistance to the mechanical action coupling was welcome in the long semiquaver passages. ▸



From the second world war Kaliningrad Cathedral lay in ruins until a £2.7 million State grant facilitated its reconstruction (above)



The Baroque Mosengel organ before the war. Its design influenced the new organ by Schuke

◁ One useful feature in exploring the organ is that the main organ on the west gallery and the organ in the south choir have identical consoles, so it is possible to hear the west end organ by playing in the choir. I noticed that some Oberwerk stops were stronger than their equivalents on the Hauptwerk when heard from the nave; would this division benefit from enclosure on such a Romantically inclined instrument?

The materials and construction are all of the highest order of German organ building: Schuke clearly had a budget and brief with this instrument to take no short cuts. The main organ has four manuals and pedal, and 90 speaking stops with 6,269 pipes; the choir organ has two manuals and pedal, with 32 registers and 2,234 pipes. The main organ case, designed by Kaliningrad craftsmen, is clearly influ- ▷

Main Organ, Kaliningrad Cathedral

A. SCHUKE (2009)

I. RÜCKPOSITIV

C–a'''	
Principal	8
Gedackt	8
Quintadena	8
Octave	4
Rohrflöte	4
Hohlflöte	4
Quinte	2 ² / ₃
Octave	2
Waldflöte	2
Terz	1 ³ / ₅
Quinte	1 ¹ / ₃
Scharff	IV
Cymbel	III
Vox Humana	8
Cromorne	8
Cymbelstern	

II. HAUPTWERK

C–a'''	
Prinzipal	16
Bordun	16
Octave	8
Viola di Gamba	8
Rohrflöte	8
Doppelgedackt	8
Quinte	5 ¹ / ₃
Octave	4

Spitzflöte	4
Gedackt	4
Quinte	2 ² / ₃
Octave	2
Cornett	V
Mixtur	V
Scharff	III–IV
Trompete	16
Trompete	8
Trompete	4

III. SCHWELLWERK

C–a'''	
Zartgedackt	16
Principal	8
Salicional	8
Vox celestes	8
Flötenschwebung	8
Gedackt	8
Octave	4
Fugara	4
Nachthorn	4
Nassat	2 ² / ₃
Piccolo	2
Hohlflöte	2
Terz	1 ³ / ₅
Sifflöte	1
Mixtur	IV
Bombarde	16

Trompet harmonique	8
Oboe	8
Klarine	4
<i>Tremulant</i>	

IV. OBERWERK

C–a'''	
Gedackt	16
Principal	8
Hohlflöte	8
Gedackt	8
Flüte harmonique	8
Fugara	8
Schwebung für Fugara	8
Octave	4
Traversflöte	4
Holzflöte	4
Nassat	2 ² / ₃
Octave	2
Gemshorn	2
Echocornett	III
Mixtur	IV
Fagott	16
Trompete	8
Clarinetten	8
<i>Tremulant</i>	

Couplers: I–II, III–II, IV–II, IV–III, I–IV, I–P, II–P, III–P, IV–P
Combination setting system

PEDAL

C–g'	
Untersatz	32
Principal	16
Violon	16
Kontrabaß	16
Subbaß	16
Quinte	10 ² / ₃
Octave	8
Gedackt	8
Cello	8
Nassat	5 ¹ / ₃
Octave	4
Bauernflöte	2
Mixtur	IV–V
Posaune	32
Posaune	16
Trompete	8
Clairon	4

SCHAMADEN

C–a'''	
Trompete	16
Trompete	8
Trompete	4

The chamades are playable on both consoles and pedal



The clean lines of Schuke's choir organ contrast well with the ornate main instrument. The two organs have identical consoles, but the choir organ also has a discrete set of stops

Choir Organ, Kaliningrad Cathedral

A. SCHUKE (2009)

II. HAUPTWERK

		Octave	4
C-a'''		Traversflöte	4
Bordun	16	Sesquialtera	II
Prinzipal	8	Piccolo	2
Bordun	8	Progress harm.	IV
Octave	4	Dulcian	16
Hohlflöte	4	Cromorne	8
Nassat	2 ² / ₃	Tremulant	
Octave	2		
Cornett	III		
Scharff	III-IV		
Fagott	8		
Clairon	4		

PEDAL

III. SCHWELLWERK

		C-g'	
		Subbaß	16
		Principal	8
		Gambe	8
		Gedackt	8
C-a'''		Octave	4
Prästant	8	Rauschpfeife	III
Portunalflöte	8	Fagott	16
Gambe	8	Trompete	8
Gedackt	8		
Traversflöte	8		
Flaut douce	8		

Couplers: II-III, II-P, III-P

◁ ended by the historic façade of the destroyed Mosengel organ of 1721; but it is not to my personal taste, with an absence of subtlety in the carving, and rather kitsch cherubic decoration. However, I couldn't resist setting the cherubs in motion – at the touch of a switch on the console, these plump, pink babies beat their drums and blow their trumpets with ferocious delight!

English visitors to East Prussia are extremely rare, so it was a great honour to be the first to play on this important new instrument. Signing the visiting recitalist book as I left the cathedral for the last time, I commented that although Königsberg-Kaliningrad has had one of the most tragic histories of any city in the last century, it is notable that reconciliation between the

British, Russians and Germans was considered best to be expressed by music making on the organ. ■

Further details of the music played at the Kaliningrad concerts can be found at www.directorofmusic.org. Information about Kaliningrad Cathedral and its organ can be found at www.sobor-kaliningrad.ru

History of the organs of Kaliningrad Cathedral

There are references to organs from 1333 for the inauguration of the Cathedral, and later in 1587.

No details of the instruments seem to have survived. A third organ of considerable size is mentioned from 1587 to 1721: an Oberwerk with 16 stops, a Rückpositiv with 18 stops, a Brustpositiv with 7 stops, and Pedal with 18 stops. Between 1718 and 1721 a new organ was built by Johann Joshua Mosengel (1663–1731), which became famous due to the beautiful images painted on its façade. It had three manuals – the Hauptwerk

with 17 registers, an Oberpositiv with 14 registers, a Brustpositiv with 7 registers – and Pedal with 20 registers. This large organ of Mosengel took the entire width of the nave's gallery, and the organ front contained massive carved wooden figurines. Over the decades there were at least five rebuildings and substantial alterations made to the organ.

In 1928–29 Furtwängler & Hammer built a completely new instrument behind Mosengel's Baroque façade. This organ had three manuals and Pedal, with pneumatic action and a total of 64 stops.

