

## Montgomery Rufus Karl (Carl) Siegfried Straube and his cousin, Gertrude Palmer

Selected aspects of two distinguished musical careers.

by David Rumsey

Straube was a famous German organist, music editor, author, arranger, choral conductor and pedagogue. His life spanned from the end of the nineteenth into the middle of the twentieth century. As illustrated elsewhere in this issue, his was an international European family with many close connections, one of which reached as far as Sydney. Germanic musical liaisons of this kind with Australia were not unique, as the instances of some Barossa Valley organ builders on the one hand<sup>1</sup> or F.E. Ladegast (builder of the Kiama, Christ Church organ 1914) on the other well demonstrate. The Sydney organ world was certainly not short of German organists from as early as 1850 onwards<sup>2</sup>.

Christopher S. Anderson's recent book, *Max Reger and Karl Straube: Perspectives on an Organ Performing Tradition*<sup>3</sup> is a wide-ranging, comprehensive work of excellence, containing much up-to-date and highly valuable information in the English language on Straube. The inquisitive reader is directed to that for a fuller account of the most important aspects of his life and work<sup>4</sup>. Anderson cites me in some of the detail, mainly the result of a mutual appearance at a Symposium on Reger held at the Bruckner University in Linz, Austria during 2005. The citation concerns Straube's roll recordings. The present article also up-dates that information, the result of further activity in the Swiss "Geisterhand" research program<sup>5</sup>. Much of the detail was not available at the time of the Linz conference.

Additionally, such issues as the dispersion of Straube's family, well outside the scope of Anderson's present (Straube and Reger) work, and hitherto not easily available, form the backbone of this tandem article to Peter Meyer's in the current issue.



Karl Straube

Straube was born on January 6<sup>th</sup> 1873 in Berlin, son of Johannes Straube and his wife, Sarah. His father was German, long-time organist at Berlin's Heilig-Kreuz-Kirche. His mother was a Palmer, from England. In 1888 fifteen-year-old Karl became a student of the leading Berlin pedagogue, Heinrich Reimann<sup>6</sup>.

In 1896 his Australian cousin, Gertrude Palmer, then aged about thirty, visited him in Berlin (he was aged about twenty three). Berlin has twice been one of the world's great epicentres of organ culture. First, in the eighteenth century, with the work of the great builders, Arp Schnitger, Joachim Wagner and Gottfried Silbermann and also through the presence of two of J.S. Bach's sons, Carl Philipp Emanuel and Wilhelm Friedemann. They were active around the court of Frederick the Great, where Quantz was also employed. The publishing house of Peters, known for their outstanding and comprehensive catalogue of organ music, was established in Berlin from 1800.

Throughout the nineteenth century this German capital continued to develop its own strong musical life, not least an especially noteworthy romantic organ culture. A.W. Bach<sup>7</sup> was the major luminary in the first half of that century. His pupils included Mendelssohn, who went on to become Berlin's *Generalmusikdirector* in 1842. Berlin became the home for respected musicians and musical institutions from then until World War II, forming something of a cultural triangle with Leipzig and Freiburg.

In an age when piano techniques were being transferred to the organ (the C.P.E. Bach-Mendelssohn-Liszt-Reubke-Widor-and-beyond axis) a number of renowned organists also studied piano in Berlin with masters such as C.A. Loeschhorn or Hans von Bülow. The leading musicologist and Bach-researcher Philipp Spitta became professor of music history at the University of Berlin in 1875, and was also administrative director of the Berlin Hochschule für Musik. Important early organ pedagogues included K.A. Haupt and Julius Alsleben. By late nineteenth/early twentieth century, they had been succeeded by Reimann, August Gottfried Ritter and others. This "second Berlin school" now rose to prominence with some extraordinary luminaries.

Gertrude Palmer arrived there in 1896 when the city's high-romantic musical development was in full ascendancy alongside an intense research and revival that was being applied to J.S. Bach's music. Leading German organ-builder Wilhelm Sauer had just completed his magnificent instrument at the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche (1895) when Gertrude arrived on the scene. Reimann had been newly appointed organist there and her cousin, Karl Straube, his deputy. As a pianist she must also have been overjoyed to find herself immersed in the traditions of Mendelssohn, Loeschhorn and von Bülow. The heritage of great composers associated with Berlin, although not necessarily then living there, was still well preserved and actively fostered: Brahms (†1897) was still alive, Wagner (†1883) not long deceased. It must have made an overwhelming impression on her at that time: a world centre of music, of piano culture, of organ culture, her cousin a brilliant young musician rising quickly through the ranks, a new organ of eighty stops spread over three manuals and pedals, not to mention the rediscovery of J.S. Bach's music - this was all in full swing when she arrived.

Although it must probably remain mere speculation, there is an interesting subsidiary question here: was she also aware of F. Reuleaux's presence in Sydney and Melbourne? Both German and musical connections - organ and Berlin - with this colorful character may have

left some impression on her in those formative years - aged about thirteen or fourteen<sup>8</sup>.

Gertrude therefore arrived in Berlin during the rapid ascendancy of some truly great German organ building firms, not just Sauer but Schuke, Walcker and others. They were bringing innovative new ideas and building important new organs, working on towards other, ever more monumental Berlin instruments such as that of 1908 in the Blüthner-Saal (61/III+P), 1910 at the New Synagogue (91/IV+P) or 1912 in the Philharmonie Hall (53/III+P). This especially included tonal developments: new, “romantic” stops were being introduced, such as the *Synthematophon*<sup>9</sup>. Other German organist personalities, performers and pedagogues were coming up through the ranks at the time - for instance Alfred Sittard (1878-1942) and Kurt Grosse (1890 -? probably a victim of World War II). Gertrude was very likely also there when the position of organist at Wesel Cathedral first came up. Straube probably applied for it while she was visiting. He was appointed the following year, 1897, the year that also saw the beginnings of his association with Max Reger.

Gertrude thus occupied a critical time and place in music history: Berlin and Sydney around the 1890s were both establishing solid organ and piano cultures, albeit with some mighty geographical and cultural chasms between them. The 1888 Australia centennial year somehow sits symbolically very well here, as the gradual evolution from colony to Federation was nearing its end. Such a voyage would inevitably have made strong and lasting impressions on any thirty-year-old antipodean musician of talent, intelligence and pedigree. She must have brought this inspiration back to Sydney with her in no small measure.

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In 1902, Straube had been appointed organist at the Leipzig Thomaskirche (his duties began on Jan 6<sup>th</sup> 1903). He immediately became director of the Leipzig Bachverein (Bach Society) and was also made responsible for performances of choir and orchestra in the Leipzig *Gewandhaus*. In early May of 1903 he married Johanna Josefine Christine (Hertha) Küchel of Wesel. In 1907 he was appointed organ teacher at the Leipzig Konservatorium aged 34.



Gertrude's Leipzig trinket box

Berlin was the first of only two meetings the cousins ever succeeded in arranging. The second was scheduled for 1914 when Karl Straube had been organist at the Thomaskirche in Leipzig for over a decade and there remains a degree of uncertainty whether it ever happened. World War I was just on the threshold at the time and Gertrude may well have had to beat a hasty withdrawal or cancel altogether. The evidence that she did succeed, however briefly, is mainly supported by a Leipzig souvenir box now in the possession of Stephen Palmer of Sydney<sup>10</sup>. This box belonged to Gertrude. It is difficult to see

that she could have come by it without a trip to Leipzig. If its provenance was Leipzig around 1914 as seems likely, then it has all the hallmarks of being a souvenir or even a parting gift from her host<sup>11</sup>.

By all accounts, therefore, she did succeed in visiting him on this second occasion, but her known intended arrival in Europe (England, April/May?), cancellation of her Paris appearances for Saint-Saëns, the proposed timing of her visit to Leipzig (June) and the outbreak of war (28<sup>th</sup> July) leaves a fairly clear trail of evidence as to what probably happened. The surviving trinket box is an indicator that she could well have visited Karl Straube there and saw him in action in Bach's church. The enforced suppression of German connections on her side, and British on his, leaves only this one small wooden memento. That was dangerous enough for her in Australia since it was witness to a Continental European family visit, specifically Germany. Small wonder if her visit was hastily terminated and as far as possible suppressed as public information - seemingly on both her and his sides.

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Apart from Gertrude's second visit in mid-1914, we hear little more of Straube during the First World War. His English family provenance must have been "difficult" for the duration of both wars, but we hear of no definite personal problems until the second World War<sup>12</sup>. That Gertrude's German connections apparently made no significant problems for her in Australia was fortunate at a time of rampant xenophobia<sup>13</sup>.

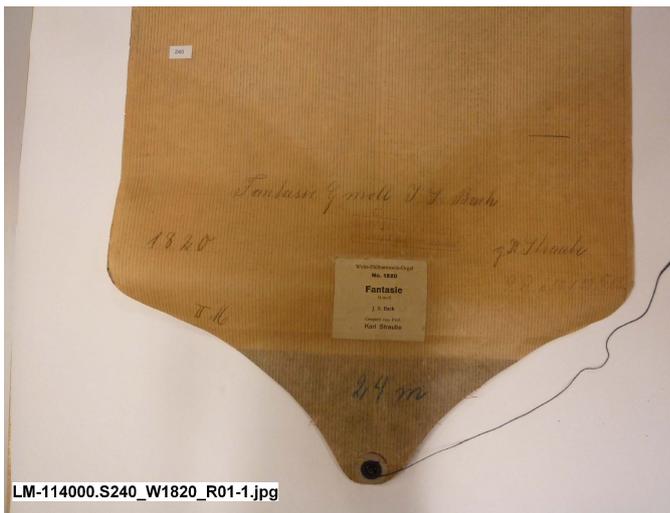
In 1918 Straube was promoted to Thomaskantor (the 11<sup>th</sup> after Johann Sebastian Bach - see appendix I). This wonderful family news must also have been very difficult for them to celebrate in Sydney owing to the lingering hostile political climate. In 1919 he initiated, then directed the *Kirchenmusikalisches Institut der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Landeskirche Sachsen* (Lutheran Institute for Church Music of the Saxon provincial Church). Here he established the system of educational development, examination and career structures which resulted in fully professional church music positions for all of Germany. With that came commensurate, mostly full-time, salary structures which are still largely in place today, at least in the major cathedrals and churches.

In 1922 Straube inaugurated the Walcker "Praetorius" organ at Freiburg, University (see appendix II). This was epoch-making in itself and symbolized a major turning point in his own life, just one consequence of Germany's early adoption of the Albert Schweitzer-initiated "Alsatian Organ Reform" movement. No doubt directly connected to that were his roll recordings for Welte: on August 14<sup>th</sup> 1922 he recorded 6 rolls in Freiburg. This is actually one of the smallest collections ever made by a single Welte organist, but, conversely, one of the more important. Until that point the firm had almost exclusively recorded romantic music (Mendelssohn, Guilmant, Brahms), some token Bach performances (romantic performance-paradigms), transcriptions (Operatic, Symphonic), occasionally contemporary works and a group of cinema organ and popular selections by some famous organists and organ entertainers of that era. Straube stands out in stark contrast to them, signposting the gathering intensity of this re-exploration of early music. It had been heralded, it is true, a decade or so before by a small handful of roll recordings, principally by Bonnet<sup>14</sup>. Whilst Bach was nothing new to Welte's repertoire, although Straube's approach came at it from a different angle, the inclusion of two major works by Buxtehude was highly significant<sup>15</sup>. Here is the complete listing of Straube's recordings as it stands on the rolls or in the catalogues:

Welte #	Composer	Title
1820	Bach	BWV 542 Fantasia in g minor
1821	Bach	BWV 599 and BWV 659 Nun komm, der heiden Heiland

- 1822 Bach 4 Christmas Chorales:  
 a) Wir sollen loben  
 b) in dulci jubilo (g-dur)  
 c) in dulci jubilo (d-dur)  
 d) Vom Himmel hoch, da kommen sie her
- 1823 Bach 4 Organ Chorales:  
 a) Wir danken dir Herr Jesus Christ  
 b) Da Jesus an dem Kreuze stund  
 c) Christe, du Lamm Gottes  
 d) Christ lag in Todesbanden
- 1824 Buxtehude Prelude and Fugue Nr. 6 in e minor (BuxWV 142)
- 1825 Buxtehude Prelude and Fugue in g minor (BuxWV 149)

Some Welte organs and rolls reached Australia, although the detail is still a little obscure.



LM-114000.S240\_W1820\_R01-1.jpg  
 Lead-in to Welte's master-roll 1820: Straube playing BWV 542

Melbourne - with the Noske family's Welte organ and its rolls - currently seems more certain than Sydney as a recipient and possibly unique<sup>16</sup>. But whether Gertrude ever heard any of her cousin's roll recordings seems exceptionally unlikely, for she died but three years after Straube made them and there is as yet no evidence that either rolls or a suitable organ ever arrived in Sydney.

The Welte organ type that he played on - very Germanic, 1913 vintage, now with some minor later tweaks but otherwise in as good as original condition - was

naturally far better-suited to Reger and Karg-Elert than it was to Buxtehude, or Bach for that matter. Obviously the firm were strongly challenged by Reform: it was the very antithesis of their own organ tonal aesthetic hitherto. Furthermore, this was all happening right there "under their noses" in Freiburg. Straube's sudden appearance at Welte's premises (not even recording one note of Reger as might have been expected), along with the conference's "declarations of Reform", put the firm on critical alarm. Yet, surprisingly perhaps, it was not Straube who persevered with them to make changes, rather Swiss organist, Karl Matthaei. In 1926, Matthaei precipitated major revisions to the Welte recording organ type, adding such registers as a Sesquialtera which swung the balance very clearly toward Reform<sup>17</sup>.

The story of German organ culture under fascism in the 1930s and 40s is only now being dealt with and worked through in Europe. It is still a sensitive issue. Versions vary as people, now some sixty or seventy years later, try and admit or deny the involvement of many icons - themselves, performers, composers, companies - in the political events of this era. Sometimes the truth is difficult to access.

So far as Straube was concerned, the most credible narrative currently seems to be the following:



Ramin playing at Nürnberg

He first joined the party in 1926, but this membership lapsed. He openly opposed Hitler in 1931. In 1933 when they came to power, the anti-church Nazis began to imperil his Leipzig Kantorship, working opportunities, and also those of his choir. He then rejoined the party, seemingly this time in order to protect his own and the *Thomaners'* interests. He managed to struggle on in this way until 1939. However his attitudes even then were still clear and open: he did not attend party meetings and continued associations with Jewish friends and colleagues.

Disliking his attitudes and even the open snubs, the Nazis made the renewal of his contract in the Thomaskirche dependent on the agreement of his designated successor, Günther Ramin, Straube's own student. Either Ramin's associations with the party were closer, or Straube simply annoyed them beyond their tolerances. A picture of Ramin playing the great Nazi-organ installation at Nürnberg, Luitpold Kongresshalle (1936: 220 stops, 5 manuals and Pedal - by O. Walcker and W. Sauer) is sometimes interpreted as leaving no doubt about his affiliations but some now see this as having no such significance. At any rate, the monumentally disagreeable situation at Leipzig Thomaskirche drove Straube to resign in 1939. Ramin stepped straight in<sup>18</sup>.

Until 1948 Straube managed to remain as a Leipzig Konservatorium organ teacher. He continued his efforts to encourage church musicians. He died on April 27<sup>th</sup> 1950 in Leipzig.

Straube was the supposedly favored interpreter of Max Reger's organ music, but this claim is not entirely without question: that friendship was known to be under strain on occasions. Judged purely from the Welte roll recordings now at Seewen<sup>19</sup>, Ramin might actually have been the better organist; moreover he played both Reger, and early music, and improvised<sup>20</sup>. But that comparison is shaky on account of Straube's few rolls and their total confinement to Bach and Buxtehude, leaving no sample here of his performance strengths in Reger, improvisation or romantic music of any kind.

It is clear that Straube was a brilliant organist, a cultured person, with deep religious convictions - broadly a Protestant humanist (if that is not coloured by traditional ecclesiastical prejudice against the word *Humanism*). He believed in a cosmic order in which sacred music held an especially elevated place and has been credited with possessing, in equal measure, both musical spontaneity and critical understanding. Gertrude, interestingly, shows many similar characteristics. An infrequently-reported innovation of Straube at the Thomaskirche was that as director of the *Thomaner*, he broke with tradition and performed Bach's music rather than compose new works for the church services. In that connection he scheduled all of the Bach cantatas during the 1930s whilst being subjected to an increasingly menacing Nazism.

Gertrude was one of the conduits through which this connection between Australia, England



Straube's gravestone in Leipzig

and Germany happened, although the extent to which this was obvious or even effective was conditioned by the fact that she never attained a major institutional teaching position or asserted her connections. She was probably rendered less effective in Sydney due to wartime and the effect this had on the attitudes of people around her. Interestingly Straube was also rendered ineffective in his own way for precisely the same reasons by the political climate in which he lived. These fascinating family and musical connections with the Palmers of Sydney are thus important cultural links in Australia's relationships with Europe, specifically England and Germany. Curiously these two musician-cousins were, each in their own time and place, victims alike of the opposing political philosophies in which they lived.

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## Appendix 1

*Thomaskantor* is the name given to the position of musical director at the Leipzig Thomaskirche. *Thomaner* is a term used to indicate a member of the St. Thomas Church's choir - traditionally boys from the choir school. Their history dates back to the year 1212. The *Thomaskantor* position has been occupied by some significant composers or organists. Duties were typically shared between the Thomaskirche, Nikolaikirche and University churches in Leipzig at the time of Bach. The University church was demolished after World War II under Communism; no remnants of either building or organ are now to be found (details of the organ are in Appendix III).

The following commentary summarizes the known progression of Kantors and certain important events until Ramin took over from Straube. Some of the more notable names are in bold for ease of reference.

### *late-medieval Catholicism*

c1295 Thidericus  
 1436-66 Johannes Steffani de Orba  
 1443-4 Thomas Ranstete  
 c1460? Peter Seehausen  
 c1470 Martin Klotzsch  
 c1472 Johannes Fabri de Forchheym  
 1471-1506 Ludwig Götze  
 1482-8 Gregor Weßnig  
 1488-90 Heinrich Höfler

c1494 Nikolaus Zölner  
c1508 Johannes Conradi  
-c1513 Johann Scharnagel

*Luther's visits and the beginnings of the Reformation in Leipzig*

1519 Jun 24-Jul 16/17 **Luther's** most important visit to Leipzig took place where he was involved in a public debate known as the "Leipziger Disputation" or "Leipziger Kirchenschlacht" (Leipzig Church Battle)

1519-20 Georg Rhaw (Rhau) (\*1488-†1548 Aug 6) also a book printer; forced to leave Leipzig in 1520 on account of his pro-Reform stance.

*Lutheranism established at the Thomaskirche - early days*

1520-5 Johannes Galliculus  
1526-30 Valerianus Hüffener  
1531-6 Johann Hermann

*Lutheranism established at the Thomaskirche - the final moment*

1539 May 25 Martin **Luther** gave the Occasional Address which finally introduced the Reformation in Leipzig at the Thomaskirche

1536-40 Wolfgang Jünger

1540-49 Ulrich Lange

1549-51 Wolfgang Figulus

1553-64 Melchior Heyer

1561- **E.N. Ammerbach** was one of the Thomaskirche organists

1564-94 Valentin Otto (\*1529-†1594 Apr)

1594-1615 **Sethus Calvisius** (Seth Kalwitz) (\*1556 Feb 21-†1615 Nov 24) music theorist, composer, chronologer, astronomer and noted late Renaissance teacher

c1610 **Andreas Düben** (German-born Swedish organist and composer) studied organ with his father who was "at the Thomaskirche"

1615-30 **J.H. Schein**

1630 a new organ was built by by **Heinrich Compenius II**

1631-57 Tobias Michael (\*1592 Jun 13-†1657 Jun 26)

1657-77 Sebastian Knüpfer (≈1653 Sep 6-†1676 Oct 10)

1670 **L. Compenius** built a harpsichord for the Thomaskirche

1677-1701 Johann Schelle (\*1648 Sep 6-†1701 Mar 10)

b1684? Thomaskirche organist, Gerhard Preisensin, possibly taught **F.W. Zachow**

1693/4 Leipzig, Nicolaikirche organ had additions by **Z. Thayßner** (member of a 17<sup>th</sup>/early 18<sup>th</sup>c German organ building family originating in Quedlinburg).

1701-22 **Johann Kuhnau**

1709 mention of the use of regals

1716 Leipzig, Universitätskirche organ built by **J.U. Scheibe**

1723-50 **Johann Sebastian Bach** (**G.P. Telemann** had been another significant applicant)

1723 Leipzig, Thomaskirche: a new (main) organ was built 35/III+P. The Pedal division was notably rich in reed stops.

1747 renovations to the organs were carried out

1750-55 Johann Gottlob Harrer (\*1703-†1755 Jul 9)

1756-89 Johann Friedrich Doles (\*1715 Apr 23-†1797 Feb 8)  
 1789-1801 Johann Adam Hiller or Hüller (\*1728 Dec 25-†1804 Jun 16)  
 1804-10 August Eberhard Müller  
 1810-23 Johann Gottfried Schicht (\*1753 Sep 29-†1823 Feb 16)  
 1823-42 Christian Theodor Weinlig (\*1780 Jul 25-†1842 Mar 7) also fl. Dresden  
 1842-68 Moritz Hauptmann (\*1792 Oct 13-†1868 Jan 3) also a composer, violinist and theorist  
 1868-79 Ernst Friedrich Richter (\*1808 Oct 24-†1879 Apr 9) also professor at Leipzig Konservatorium and musical director at Leipzig University  
 - Karl Piutti (\*1846-†1902) was for a time one of the organists  
 1880-92 **Wilhelm Rust** (\*1822 Aug 15-†1892 May 2) also a musicologist, composer, and Bach researcher, responsible in part for the continuing Bach revival  
 1889 new romantic organ in western gallery built by **Wilhelm Sauer** (63/III+P)  
 1893-1918 Gustav Schreck (\*1849 Sep 8-†1918 Jan 22)  
 1903 *Jan 6* **Straube** began duties as organist  
 1908 Sauer organ of 1889 enlarged to 88/III+P  
 1918-39 Karl Straube was promoted to Thomaskantor  
 1919 **Günther Ramin** (\*1898-†1956) appointed organist  
 1924 **Helmuth Walcha** (\*1907-†1991) made his debut as an assistant organist to Ramin  
 1939-1956 **Günther Ramin** was promoted from organist to Thomaskantor.

Refer also to <http://www.thomaskirche.org/r-organs-a-835.html> for a specifically organist-oriented listing.

## Appendix II

Freiburg, University Hall	1922-1955-2001		(D)
	27/III+P built by E.F. Walcker emulating Praetorius (early 17 <sup>th</sup> century)		
<b>Rückpositiv</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>Zum Pedal</b>	
Quintadena	8	Offener Untersatz von Holz	16
Principal	4	Posaunen Sordunen Art	16
Holflöit	4	Dolkan	8
Nachthorn	4	Bawrflöitlein	1
Octava	2	Singend Cornet	2
Klein Blockflöitlein	2	<b>Oberwerk</b>	<b>II</b>
Quinta	1 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>3</sub>	Zinnern Principal	8
Zimbel		Grob Gedacktfloite	8
Schallmey	8	Octava	4
Tremulant		Gemshorn	4
<b>Brustpositiv</b>	<b>III</b>	Gedackt Hohlflöit	4
Krumbhorn hölzern	8	Nasat	3
Quintetz anderthalb	1 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>3</sub>	Scharff Quinta	3
Doppelt Zimbel		Superoctava	2
Sufflöit	1	Mixtur	V

The 1922 organ had pneumatic action, was very briefly tuned in mean-tone tempering at about the time of its delivery, then put into equal tempering. It was destroyed as a result of bombing during WWII (November 1944) and rebuilt in 1955. Both 1922 and 1955 instruments were under the supervision of Wilibald Gurlitt, who prompted the original

concept based on the *Syntagma Musicum* of Michael Praetorius. In 2001 the instrument was again restored/rebuilt, this time with all-mechanical action, mean-tone tempering, a wind-ventil for the Oberwerk, I/II II/P I/P couplers and a manual compass of C-g<sup>3</sup> (chromatic). The re-inauguration was held on Thursday 28 Jun 2001, played by Jean-Claude Zehnder.

### Appendix III

Leipzig, Universitätskirche	1716		(D:)
54/III+P by Johann Ulrich Scheibe (after Dähnert 1980)			
<b>Hauptwerk</b>	<b>II</b>	<b>Brustwerk</b>	<b>III</b>
Großprincipal	16	Principal	8
Quintadena	16	Grobgedackt	8
Klein-Principal	8	Viola di Gamba "naturelle"	8
Gemshorn	8	Octava	4
Flute allemand	8	Rohr-Flöthe	4
Octava	4	Naßat	3
Quinta auf Principal	3	Octava	2
Quint-Naßat	3	Largo	1½
Octavina	2	Sedecima	1
Waldflöthe	2	Schweizer Pfeiffe	1
Zinck	II	Mixtur	III
Cornetti	III	Helle Cymbel	II
Groß-Mixtur	V-VI	<b>Pedal</b>	
Chalumeau	8	Groß Principal Baß	16
<b>Hinterwerk</b>	<b>I</b>	Subbaß	16
Lieblich Gedackt	8	Groß Qvintaden Baß	16
Quintadena	8	Octava	8
Flûte douce	8	Nachthorn Baß	8
Principal	4	Jubal Baß	8
Quintadecima	4	Große Hall-Quinta	6
Decima nona	3	Octava	4
Viola	2	Quinta	3
Hohlflöthe	2	Octav Baß	2
Weit-Pfeife	1	Hohl-Flöth Baß	1
Vigesima nona	1½	Mixtur	V-VI
Mixtur	IV	Mixtur	VI
Helle Cymbel	II	Posaunen Baß	16
Sertin	8	Trompeta	8

*Accessories:* Tremulant; Cymbelstern

*Tuning:* probably, as with most Leipzig organs at the time - Chorton (465 Hz). The possibility of equal tempering is high on account of Scheibe's involvement (he was an early advocate of equal tempering).

*Pipework:* The Sertin was a reed with a covered resonator; Largo is an interesting variant of Larigot. The Pedal had six stops borrowed from the Hw and thus only 9 independent stops.

*Associations:* Also known as the Leipzig Pauliner-Kirche. Scheibe won the contract against a bid by Gottfried Silbermann. He quoted only a few Florins less than Silbermann, but the size and sheer modernity of the instrument tonally and mechanically probably won

the day for him. J.S. Bach wrote a favorable report on it in 1717, although he criticized some aspects, including its heavy action, the deep key touch and an absence of 4' and 2' pedal reeds. It would have been one of the largest and most modern organs available to Bach during his tenure at the Thomaskirche 1723-†. The specification shows a most intriguing mix of traditional German organ building of the era with some striking French and Italian influences and was almost certainly known to Straube.

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1. See e.g. <http://www.ohta.org.au/resources/austr.html>
2. As reported in Peter Meyer's article, "The Contest for the Cathedral Loft in 1867" (SOJ, Summer 2012-13, page 29) where he cites Carl Gustav Schmitt (1837-1900), Augustus Gehde and George Linck as three German organists active in Sydney. Schmitt (organist at Pitt Street Congregational, eventually Professor of Music at the University of New Zealand) was in Australia and New Zealand from 1870 onwards (his brother was Georg Aloys Schmitt, pianist and director of music at the Prussian court). We can certainly add Reverend Father Henry Backhaus (1812-1882) of Paderborn, active in Sydney and Bendigo and later personalities such as Sydney's Werner Baer (1914-1992), from Berlin, to these important connections - see <http://judaica.library.usyd.edu.au/histories/music.html>
3. published by Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003
4. Anderson is currently working on a comprehensive biography of Karl Straube, which will be presented in parallel English and German versions.
5. See [www.davidrumsey.ch/geisterhand.pdf](http://www.davidrumsey.ch/geisterhand.pdf)
6. Heinrich Reimann  
\*1850 Mar 14 Rengersdorf/Schlesien (D)  
- studied with Moritz Brosig  
1886 moved to Leipzig  
1888 became organist to the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra  
1893- curator of the Royal Library  
1895 appointed organist at the Berlin, Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche  
1897 appointed as professor at the Institut für Kirchenmusik  
†1906-May 24 Berlin (D)  
Reimann was an influential figure in the Berlin organ school of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century who published numerous important editions and biographies. Noted for his

playing of Bach - with flexible dynamics (Rollschweller) and tempo changes (crescendo fugue) typical of late nineteenth century German organ styles - he influenced the playing of all German organists at this time. His own compositions include a Sonata in d, Suite, Toccata in e, a *Praeludium und Tripel Fuga* in d, Ciacona in f and a "Phantasie ..." based on *Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern* (Chorale Fantasia) which to a degree anticipated that of Max Reger. An organ method, a relatively early work in 3 Volumes, contained his *Studien für Orgel* (op. 8, Leipzig):

I: *Vorschule, enthaltend 44 Übungsstücke für den ersten Unterricht auf der Orgel, nebst Anleitung zum obligaten Pedalspiel* (For beginners, 44 preparatory pieces and basic instruction in pedal playing)

II: *Studien für vorgeschrittene Schüler* (Studies for advanced pupils)

III: *"Schule der Geläufigkeit" für das obligate Pedalspiel* (Method for attaining fluency in Pedal playing)

#### 7. August Wilhelm Bach

\*1796 Oct 4 Berlin-†1869 Apr 15. German organist, student of Zelter, teacher of Mendelssohn, active in Berlin (Marienkirche, Institut für Kirchenmusik, member of the Berlin Academy). He edited a collection of chorales and published "Der praktische Organist" and other collections of Chorale workings, Preludes, Fantasias, Fughettas, Nachspiel, Fuga, Trio. He was not related to the J.S. Bach family.

#### 8. Franz Reuleaux

\*1829 Sep 30 Eschweiler-Pumpe (D)-†1905 Aug 20 Berlin-Charlottenburg (D)

Reuleaux was a German engineer, Director of the Berlin Trade Academy and a member of the Kaiser's patent office. He was a judge at numerous world trade fairs at a time when organs had great prominence at such events: 1862 (London) and 1867 (Paris), 1873 (Wien), 1874 (Dublin) and 1876 (Philadelphia). Walcker exhibited an organ in Philadelphia. Reuleaux was there as chairman of the German jury and official representative of Germany, but he caused a scandal when he reported back that the German exhibits were "cheap and bad." He turned up later as leader of the German delegations to the Sydney International Exhibition of 1879 and the Melbourne International Exhibition of 1880-81. He thus had a number of associations with the organ. It was he who first awarded a prize to the Otto gas engine, which was to find application in late-nineteenth century organ blowing. He also had the dubious distinction of declining Walcker's patent application for their famous Kegellade (cone-chest) in 1890.

9. This was a form of Prinzipal register designed and patented by Oscar Walcker c1902-4. It had wide scaling, conical resonators (narrower at the top), and two mouths on opposite sides. The lowest octave was typically in Zinc, the rest tin alloy. It resulted from the Doppelflöte idea but was applied to Principals. In this way the strength of tone was increased substantially, said to be "from 3 to 5 times stronger" than a normal Prinzipal, amply fulfilling romantic tonal paradigms for tonal mass being striven for at the time. Apart from Berlin (New Synagogue by Walcker, Man I 8') the register was included in 1909 at Dortmund, Reinoldikirche (Walcker - Solowerk 8'), 1912 Hamburg, Michaeliskirche (Walcker: IV. Manual - Schwellwerk 8') and was also found at Namur (Belgium), Stockholm Gustav Vasa kyrka (Åkerman & Lund 1906/Setterquist 1915 - Man II 8') Hamburg, Musikhalle and some other installations.

10. See the tandem article by Peter Meyer in this issue.

11. My thanks to Frau Birgit Heise of the Grassi Museum, Leipzig who has diligently investigated this matter on my behalf. She reports that the box could well be from 1912 or later and that, in the Leipzig address registers of 1912, there is a Carl Willweber of Bayerschen Str. 129 who was registered as an “engraver and chiseler”. He is the most likely known creator of this trinket box that we can so far identify.

12. Christopher Anderson reports (e-mail of 24/7/2013) that Straube gave mixed signals of recognition regarding his family’s English provenance: “[it was] a sensitive matter for him, clearly, bent as he was on German cultural nationalism and music's role in furthering that. [He played down] the English side of his heritage, even though the mother was unquestionably his favored parent.” The pressing need to toe the political German line through two world wars might well explain this as a personal dilemma, resolved reluctantly in favour of the politics of his domicile. It could well explain the non-survival of correspondence or other acknowledgment of any visit by Gertrude - either on his or her side. On August 10<sup>th</sup> 2013 Stephen Palmer of Sydney showed me two letters written by Straube in English, both dated 1935 and addressed to family members in England. These will be dealt with more comprehensively in other forums, but they obviously represent an acute personal dilemma. They are extremely valuable documents showing on the one hand his excellent command of the English language, and on the other carrying sub-texts suggesting a fear of the Nazis. They leave no doubt that he and Gertrude both needed to be exceptionally circumspect about their family origins and connections.

13. The ruins of the old gaol in Trial Bay (South West Rocks, NSW Australia) stand as but one of many remaining witnesses to the incarceration of Germans during that era. Werner Baer’s story - see endnote 2 above - is a similar example from the second World War. This latter conflict also saw the Vienna Boys’ choir on tour become stranded in Australia.

14. Recent CD releases on the OehmsClassics label reproduce some of these - see especially “The Britannic Organ” Volumes IV (Gigout and Bonnet) and Volume VI (British Organists) - for tracklistings and other details see <http://www.davidrumsey.ch/Recordings.htm>

15. In fairness, others, such as Bonnet and Eddy, also pioneers in organ reform, had recorded some pre-Bach works, including Bonnet’s one roll of Buxtehude (“Jig” Fugue). However they mingled this with other, mainly romantic repertoire. Straube made no such mix - just Bach and Buxtehude.

16. My thanks to John Maidment for supplying information on this matter.

17. Karl Matthaei was a twentieth century Swiss organist, organ consultant, editor, author - an early leader of historic organ and harpsichord consciousness and early music revival in Switzerland and Germany with influence elsewhere including the USA.

\*1897 Apr 23 Olten (CH)

1920-23 studied with Karl Straube in Leipzig (D)

1925- Organist and Harpsichordist to the *Musikkollegium* and Director of the Music School in Winterthur (CH)

1926 He recorded on rolls for the Welte company dated 1926-7 with an almost exclusive content of early music.

1939- appointed organist at Winterthur, Stadkirche

†1960 Feb 8 Winterthur. A Winterthur street is now named after him.

His roll-recorded repertoire included 7 rolls of works by J.S. Bach, 4 of Buxtehude, 1 each of

Scheidt, Praetorius, Sweelinck and Hanff. He also recorded 2 rolls of popular Swiss songs (for these he seems to have adopted the pseudonym of Walther Sprüngli).

His fine and stylish playing - an extraordinary achievement already for the mid-1920s, especially considering the pneumatic actions and specifications he had to contend with - can be heard on the OehmsClassics "The Britannic Organ" series, Volume 2 (released 25th October 2011) and Volume 7 (released late 2013). For tracklistings see

[www.davidrumsey.ch/Recordings.htm](http://www.davidrumsey.ch/Recordings.htm)

18. Peter Meyer, who has expertise in this arena, reminds us that "The dates of Straube's joining the Nazi Party are of great importance as clues to his political attitudes: joining before the failed Munich putsch (1923) suggested idealism and anger at the consequences of the 'betrayal' of 1919 (Versailles); after 1925 it suggests opportunism; after 1933 it suggests survival" (E-mail of October 24, 2013.) The tribulations of working under fascist regimes should neither excuse nor automatically condemn in such cases as these. Being judgmental here can be as unfair as it is pointless with the passage of time. At least one musician (Alexander Negrin, an Australian organist/conductor now working in Germany) is currently involved in promoting historic recordings of Ramin's performances, convincingly defending Ramin in the process (Fidelio Records, Ramin edition.) Christopher Anderson's view is that Ramin was an "apolitical person ... concerned almost exclusively with music-making and how [to] do that optimally ... [he had] no party affiliation whatsoever and had nothing to say about politics ... [this] worried the new East German/Soviet authorities much more than it did the Nazis" (e-mail of 23<sup>rd</sup> Oct 2013). Basic human survival instincts need to be considered here. Many former Nazi organists were made to suffer after the war by having their careers effectively terminated. Otto Dunkelberg (1900-1964) is one instance: he studied in Berlin (with Reimann) became the Hildesheim Cathedral Director of Music, then organist at Hildesheim Jesuitenkirche, Choir director at the Episcopal Priest-Seminary in Passau, lecturer in organ at the Church music school in Regensburg. 1927-1945 he was Passau Cathedral organist where he was strongly influential in the design of what became the largest church organ in the world. In 1945, forced to quit his post on account of Nazi affiliations, he found menial work (for his qualifications and talents) as a student counsellor in Cologne where he later finished up as a schoolmaster. He eventually did fill some minor engagements as a choral director. Nevertheless, how Ramin managed to escape either a Dunkelberg or Straube fate remains an interesting question. A highly relevant contemporary concept, known now as "Maslow's hierarchy of needs", is found in Maslow A, 1943, 'A Theory of Human Motivation', *Psychological Review*, 50(4), 370-96.

<http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Maslow/motivation.htm>). My thanks to Dr. W.H. Jones of Wairoa for this link.

19. For listings of Seewen's roll recordings see [www.davidrumsey.ch/Seewen.php](http://www.davidrumsey.ch/Seewen.php) and scroll down to 2010 where a choice of .db, .qpw, and .xlsx formats is given, as well as a key (.pdf).

20. An interesting improvisation by Ramin on "Vom Himmel hoch" is preserved on Welte rolls - it is available on CD: OehmsClassics "Britannic Organ" series, Volume 2 *A Christmas Voyage* (Oehms Classics OC 842, Track 18)