

SPRING MEETING 2008

MALLORCA

The annual Easter week organ tour put on by the European Chapter of the American Guild of Organists took place from Monday, March 24th to Friday, March 28th on the magnificent Mediterranean island of Mallorca, Spain. 21 participants, organists and non-organists, from across the globe (Belgium, Canada, England, Germany, Japan, The Netherlands, Spain, The United States) met to share a week of fellowship and music making. American organist Matthew Provost served as tour leader and docent.

The opening gathering and supper took place at the Hotel Isla de Mallorca in the heart of Mallorca's capital city, Palma. As old friends and new acquaintances gathered, laughed, and ate in anticipation of the tour to come, it was quickly apparent that a truly amicable, harmonious group dynamic was ensured. On Tuesday morning the group headed west from Palma, winding its way along the mountainous roads that lead to the treacherous cliffs, azure sea vistas, and picturesque mountainside villages of the western coast. In the peaceful pendant village of **Banyalbufar**, the group visited the Church of the Nativity and the oldest organ of the tour. Although not irrefutably established, the Banyalbufar organ is believed to date from the mid-17th century, likely the work of Fra Vicenç Pizà. The organ stood originally in the Rosary Chapel of the monastery of Sant Domingo in Palma. Following the senseless destruction in 1837 of the Sant Domingo, the ¼-comma mean-tone organ (I/9) was relocated to Banyalbufar in 1847. Lovingly restored in 1971 by German organbuilder Gerhard Grenzing, the organ of Banyalbufar served beautifully to wet the group's appetite for the many flavorful musical dishes to follow. Following the coast northwards, the tour took lunch at the sunny seaside in **Port de Sóller**. By way of the *Túnel Major* which passes clear through the western mountains connecting Palma and Sóller, the group saved hours of backtracking through the mountains to arrive at **Santa Maria del Camí** to visit the last organ (1737, I/8) for Mallorca by the Valencian builder Lluís Navarro. Joining the group in Santa Maria was Mallorcan organologist Antoni Mulet who spoke about the history of the Santa Maria organ. Mulet also accompanied the group north to **Pollença** to see the first of Navarro's organs for the island (1732, I/10) in the convent church of Santo Domingo. Mulet informed the group that the father of Valencia's most famous musical son, Juan Cabanillas (1677-1712), was born in Pollença, and it is thus fitting that there should be a Valencian organ there. Special attention was paid in Pollença to the delightful, snarling *Regalies* stop, a horizontal regal with turned wooden resonators.

Contrasting the Valencian flavor of the previous day, the Wednesday tour was dedicated to the Mallorcan organs of the inland plains beginning with the Mateu Bosch organ (1746, I/13) in **Sencelles**. Three generations of Boschs (pronounced BAWSK) would dominate organ building on Mallorca throughout the 18th century. Continuing northward up the central highway, the group heard next the Gabriel Thomàs organ (1816-22, 1827-32, II/19) in the leather-goods-city of **Inca**. Here the group would see for the first time three distinctive features of Mallorcan organs: the *cadireta*, or *Rückpositiv* division; the integration of older, original (in this instance, late Gothic) case work into 18th- & 19th-century cases; and the *trompeteria* or fullblown battery of horizontal reeds (16, 8, 4, 2). The group would also hear the first of the week's many *Batallas* or battle pieces which rely on the remarkable brilliance and penetration of the horizontal trumpets for the full effect to be realized. In **Sa Pobla** the group was introduced to the work of the dominant family of Mallorcan organbuilders from the 17th century, the Caymari family. Probably executed in 1717 by Jaume Caymari, the Sa Pobla organ (II/20) reveals the features which distinguish the Caymari tradition. Most prominent among them are: the wide, single field, flat façades; the small field of dummy pipes set into the pipe shades; and the spiral chiseling of the case pipes. Further enhancing the aesthetic experience of visiting Sa Pobla is the virtual museum of religious regalia laid out in the many upper chapels and chambers of the church. While meandering through the upper passages and listening to the noble sounds of the organ, one is transported through the religious history of that place via the innumerable paintings, reliquaries, vestments, and statues on display. The final stop on Wednesday included two organs in the town of **Muro**: first, in the splendid Gothic parochial church (one of only two Gothic churches outside of the capital city of Palma), the beautiful Josep Bosch organ (II/19) from 1761; and in the convent church of Sant Francesc de Paula, a rare treat in the form of the

only preserved processional organ on Mallorca, by Jordi Bosch (? , 1/4). In Muro the group met up with another of Mallorca's leading organ personalities, Arnau Reynés, organ professor at the University of the Balearic Islands and organist of the *Basílica de Sant Francesc* in Palma. To the clashing sounds of thunder and torrential down-pouring rain, the day ended with a tempestuous ride back to Palma.

On Thursday, the tour headed to the southeastern shore. The first stop was the southern plains town of **Campos**. In the Convent of Sant Francesc de Paula the group visited another organ by Gabriel Thomàs (1820, II/15). The delicate convent church was amply filled with sound, as even in such a small setting the organ's disposition includes a full principal plenum and two horizontal trumpets. Most organ tours have at least one instrument of global significance that reigns supreme over the entirety of the organ landscape visited. On the paradise island of Mallorca it is the superlative masterpiece by Jordi Bosch (1762, II/21) in Santanyí. Like the organ in Banyalbufar, the Santanyí organ was originally constructed for the Convent of Sant Domingo in Palma. Unique in all Mallorca, this magnificent instrument is based on a 16' principal and includes a 25 (!) rank mixture. The great division, or *orgue major*, also includes a hauntingly lyrical *corneta magna*, a sort of gargantuan Über-cornet stop for solo lines. In the *cadireta* more surprises await the listener. The 8' reed stop, called *Saboyana*, is a throaty, half-length hybrid between the French classical *Cromorne* and the central German *Krummhorn*. The dizzying, whistle-like quality of the 2/3' *Siurell*, another right-hand solo stop, adds to the array of unique colors available. The horizontal *trompeteria* (16, 8, 8, 8, 4, 2) is counted among the finest in the world. With its crisp speech, massive volume, and aweinspiring visual impact, the *trompeteria* of Santanyí makes the inimitable fiery fanfare of Iberian organ music spring to life.

The final day was devoted entirely to the organs of the capital city of Palma. After a morning of free time to explore the sultry narrow streets, sparkling parks, quaint shops, and Palma's massive Gothic cathedral, the group met in the afternoon to visit three more instruments. Beginning in the *Monestir de Sant Jeroni*, the group was allowed to enter the quiet solitude of a functioning abbey. Only four participants were allowed to ascend to the organ gallery as access was only possible by passing through the living quarters of the abbey. The remainder of the participants sat quietly in the church proper as the sweet tones of Mateu Bosch's best preserved organ were heard (1746, I/11). In the Convent del Socors, the group visited another organ by the Caymari clan. Built in 1702 (III/29) by Damià and Sebastià Caymari, the organ of El Socors is a rare original example of a three-manual Mallorcan organ, the third manual being the *orgues d'eco*. With good timing on its side, the group visited the only modern instrument included in the tour, the three-manual and pedal, 53-rank Grenzing organ for the breath-taking *Basílica de Sant Francesc*. Not yet dedicated, the brand-new, eclectic-style mechanical action instrument was made available and demonstrated by Arnau Reynés. The new organ was installed behind an exquisite 18th-century case and incorporated the original *trompeteria* of Jordi Bosch (1771). With the arrival of this new instrument, new pathways into the greater breadth of organ repertoire are made available on Mallorca for the first time. The French *récit*, full 32' pedal division, manual sub-couplers, and solid-state combination action are features not available in any other organ on Mallorca, making the *Basílica de Sant Francesc* the new Mallorcan center for the study and presentation of an international, eclectic palette of organ repertoire.

The final event of the American Guild of Organists, European Chapter Spring Meeting/Organ Tour of Mallorca, was a festive supper hosted by the American Consular Agent of the United States in Palma de Mallorca, Amy Christiansen. Her warm welcome, alacrity, and honest appreciation for the efforts of the American Guild of Organists made for a most enjoyable finale of a most enjoyable journey. Most especially, the success of this year's Spring Meeting was, like all previous AGO European Chapter tours, due entirely to the collegial, amicable spirit of guild members. By listening to each other play magnificent organs, by seeing each other's expressions of surprise and wonderment as we hear the sounds of the past and new sounds as yet unheard, and by sharing in the centuries-old heritage that is the pipe organ, we enrich our own communal cultural experience as well as that of humanity.

Matthew Provost