

### CHAPTER III GERMAN ORGANS

The country of Argentina has always had a special respect for and interest in organs built in Germany. According to the *Censo y Estudio de los Órganos de la República Argentina*, there are one hundred and one instruments imported from Germany.<sup>20</sup> These organs account for almost forty percent of the total of organs found in this vast territory. The reasons for such close business ties between both countries are unknown, but one could speculate that the abundance of German organs in Argentina stems from a number of factors. First, Germany has a rich legacy of organ music, especially Bach's organ compositions, so it can be assumed that Argentinean organists considered this and would have thought it logical to purchase organs from Germany. Second, most of these organs were built during the first forty years of the twentieth century, a time when German organ builders held a great portion of the world's market. Although many of the German organs found in Argentina are not of high musical value, there is a small collection of organs that are of superb artistic quality and are treasures worthy of careful preservation. The most important instrument within this group is the E. F. Walcker organ at the *Catedral Metropolitana de Buenos Aires*, which is the earliest instrument built by Walcker for Argentina.

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* 8.

## E. F. WALCKER

The E. F. Walcker company was founded in the year 1782 by Johann Eberhard Walcker, who was a successful organ builder especially remembered for his organs in the Garrison Church of Ludwigsburg (1782) and in the City Church of Cannstatt (1794). His son, Eberhard Friedrich Walcker (1794 -1872), took over the business begun by his father and in 1820 settled in Ludwigsburg. It is believed that the organ in Buenos Aires, Opus 263, was one of the last instruments built before his passing in 1872. The company, which is still in business today, published the following excerpt regarding E. F. Walcker:

Eberhard Friedrich Walcker achieved great recognition upon completion of an organ for St. Paul's Church in Frankfurt (1833-74 registers). The organ incorporated several features which were unique at that time, including an elaborate series of mutation stops constructed according to principles developed by Abbe Vogler, and an open 32-foot register in the pedal, which was highly praised. A great demand for instruments built by Walcker followed this success, as evidenced by several notable international installations: St. Peter's Church, St. Petersburg, Russia (1839- 65 registers); Ulm Minster (1856 - 100 registers); and Boston, USA (1863 - 89 registers). Further recognition was achieved by E. F. Walcker as result of technical innovations, such as his discovery in 1840 of the cone-valve that ushered in the age of the stop-channel chest. He sought improvements which would result in a better and more stable wind supply. And he was the first builder to construct a large assembly room at his workshop in order to assemble the entire organ during construction.<sup>21</sup>

In seeing the extensive resume of E. F. Walcker's renowned work throughout Europe, one can understand why the *Catedral Metropolitana de Buenos Aires* would have purchased an organ from his prestigious company.

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<sup>21</sup> Found at <http://www.walckerorgel.de/gewalcker.de/english/english.htm>. March 6, 2006.

### **THE WALCKER ORGAN AT THE CATEDRAL METROPOLITANA DE BUENOS AIRES**

Documents of the time now housed at the national archives show that the organ was acquired in July of 1871 for the price of 400,000 pesos (Argentinean monetary unit). Catholicism was the official religion of Argentina during this developmental period of the country. Therefore it is not surprising that the organ for the cathedral was purchased with the help of the national government and with the commitment of Dr. Félix Frías, an enthusiastic, and influential inhabitant of Buenos Aires, who convinced many wealthy members of the community to donate funds for a new organ. Even though the government was involved in the purchase of the organ, the instrument was detained at customs (probably due to the formalities and red tape of the Argentinean government at that time) in the port of Buenos Aires for two years before it was released at the request of the president of the country, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento. Finally, it was installed and then dedicated in 1873.

The grand organ, a Romantic sounding instrument, is one of the few Walckers of the era that have survived to modern times without major renovations. Its glorious façade (see figure 17) blends perfectly with the architecture of the building. When installed, it was the largest organ in the country, containing three manuals, pedals of twenty seven notes, and thirty five stops. On this instrument Walcker used his invention of the cone-valve chest. Except for modifications made by Alberto Mateo Poggi in the year 1887, the organ at the cathedral is in its original condition.<sup>22</sup> After studying Walcker's ledger and

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<sup>22</sup> See Chapter II for information on Alberto Mateo Poggi.

inspecting the instrument, Professor Thomas Murray of Yale University gives the following description:

Walcker's ledger with specifications is written on pages 176-182 (176-180 for the speaking stops; 181 and 182 for mechanical registers). The date entered on page 176 on the ledger is November, 1871. Nomenclature in the ledger is generally in German: nomenclature on the porcelain Knob-Faces is generally in French. The names of pipe makers (voicers?), Entenmann, Reinhard and Hildenbrand, appear beside the flue stops. The name Hart is written beside the reeds. In addition to these names, dates in April, May and June are written for the various registers. The Physharmonica is activated by the "Crescendo Physharmonica" balanced, spring-loaded pedal, which is identical to the balance expression pedal. The only other free-reed stop is the Basson-Clarinet. In Manual III, both the Principal 8' and the Flute Douce 8' go down in the pipes to the 8-foot C inside the swell box. The Flute Douce is said to be of Doppelflote type. Tierce sounding ranks in the mixture are said to be tapered in treble. Porcelain labels for Manual III = blue; Manual II = pink; Manual I = white; Pedal = green. Manual Compass is 54 notes; pedal 27 notes.<sup>23</sup>

### **SPECIAL FEATURES OF OPUS 263**

There are in this instrument two special features worth mentioning. First is the Rollschweller, a wheel located on the right side of the pedal board (see Figure 19) that the organist can spin to make crescendos and decrescendos. The wheel is connected through a special mechanism to the different stops and by turning it new stops are engaged or disengaged. The Rollschweller is predecessor of the modern crescendo pedal. Second, in Opus 263 there is a free-reed stop called the Physharmonica. It is played from Manual III and is only engaged by a foot vent; there is no stop knob for this stop. Once the stop is engaged, it is also necessary to press the crescendo physharmonica pedal, located to the right of the expression pedal (see figure 19).

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<sup>23</sup> Thomas Murray. Unpublished document, 1993.

**Specifications**

**E. F. Walcker Opus 263**  
**Catedral Metropolitana de Buenos Aires**  
**Year of construction: 1871**

**Manual I**

|                                 |                   |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| Principal                       | 16'               |
| Montre                          | 8'                |
| Bourdon                         | 8'                |
| Hohlflute                       | 8'                |
| Viola di Gamba                  | 8'                |
| Gemshorn                        | 8'                |
| Praestant                       | 4'                |
| Rohrflute                       | 4'                |
| Nasard                          | 2 $\frac{2}{3}$ ' |
| Octave                          | 2'                |
| Fourniture VI rangs <i>Sic.</i> | 2 $\frac{2}{3}$ ' |
| Cornet V rangs                  | 8'                |
| Trompette                       | 8'                |
| Clairon                         | 4'                |

**Manual III**

|               |    |
|---------------|----|
| Principal     | 8' |
| Flûte douce   | 8' |
| Fugara        | 4' |
| Oboe          | 8' |
| Physharmonica | 8' |

**Manual II**

|                     |     |
|---------------------|-----|
| Bourdon             | 16' |
| Montre              | 8'  |
| Bourdon             | 8'  |
| Salicional          | 8'  |
| Octave              | 4'  |
| Flûte               | 4'  |
| Cymbal              | 2'  |
| Basson & Clarinette | 8'  |

**Pedal**

|               |                    |
|---------------|--------------------|
| Grand Bourdon | 16'                |
| Soubasse      | 16'                |
| Violon basse  | 16'                |
| Quinte basse  | 10 $\frac{2}{3}$ ' |
| Octave basse  | 8'                 |
| Violoncelle   | 8'                 |
| Bombarde      | 16'                |
| Trompette     | 8'                 |

**Mechanicals on knobs**

- Man III to II
- Man II to I
- Tremulant (affects Man II and Man III)

Manual compass: C to f'''

Pedal compass: C to d'

**Mechanicals on the Pedals** (copied as written on porcelain above Manual III, left to right)

Forte ou Piano au Pédalier  
 Appel des jeux du III<sup>ème</sup> Man  
 Forte général  
 Fortissimo 1<sup>er</sup> Man  
 Piano 1<sup>er</sup> Man  
 Pedalier au 2<sup>ème</sup> Man  
 Pedalier au 1<sup>er</sup> Man  
 Crescendo Physharmonica  
 Expression du III Man

Rollschweller (at far right)

**Mixtures Compositions****Manual I Mixture**

|      |                 |                 |                 |                 |               |               |
|------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|---------------|
| C    | 2 $\frac{2}{3}$ | 2               | 1 $\frac{3}{5}$ | 1 $\frac{1}{3}$ | 1             |               |
| C    | 2               | 1 $\frac{1}{3}$ | 1 $\frac{4}{5}$ | $\frac{2}{3}$   | $\frac{1}{2}$ |               |
| C'   | 1               | $\frac{2}{3}$   | $\frac{1}{2}$   | $\frac{2}{5}$   | $\frac{1}{3}$ | $\frac{1}{4}$ |
| C''  | 1               | $\frac{1}{2}$   | $\frac{1}{3}$   | $\frac{1}{3}$   | $\frac{1}{4}$ | $\frac{1}{5}$ |
| C''' | $\frac{1}{2}$   | $\frac{1}{4}$   | $\frac{1}{6}$   | $\frac{1}{6}$   | $\frac{1}{8}$ | $\frac{1}{5}$ |

**Manual II Cymbal**

|      |                 |                 |                 |               |
|------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|
| C    | 2 $\frac{2}{3}$ | 2               | 1 $\frac{3}{5}$ | 1             |
| C    | 2               | 1 $\frac{1}{3}$ | 1               | $\frac{4}{5}$ |
| C'   | 1               | $\frac{2}{3}$   | $\frac{1}{2}$   | $\frac{2}{5}$ |
| C''  | $\frac{1}{2}$   | $\frac{1}{3}$   | $\frac{1}{4}$   | $\frac{1}{5}$ |
| C''' | $\frac{1}{4}$   | $\frac{1}{6}$   | $\frac{1}{8}$   | $\frac{1}{5}$ |

The Cornet on Manual I is:

8      4      2  $\frac{2}{3}$       2      1  $\frac{3}{5}$  throughout

**MODIFICATIONS OF 1887**

In the year 1887 Italian-Argentinean organ builder Alberto Mateo Poggi took on the task of making important improvements to the Walcker organ at the cathedral. The instrument was only fifteen years old, but according to writings of the time, it was almost unplayable. Letters written by a group of organists who examined the instrument after the modifications explain that the organ had fallen into disrepair. There was insufficient air to accommodate the number of stops, dust had accumulated in the pipes, and the key mechanism was very heavy.

Alberto Poggi took the job very seriously and, as a result, the modifications were very successful. The modifications made at the time included the addition of a Barker Lever, large bellows, and a roof over the entire organ. Even though by the year 1887 the Barker lever had been used in many major organs in Europe, it was still a new development in organ building. As amazing as it was that Poggi, living in Argentina, had knowledge of the existence of such a device, it is unbelievable that he was able to build it and achieve successful results. In addition to adding a roof to the entire organ, Poggi also added shades to the side walls which could be operated from the console with a lever, giving the organist a very important tool for dynamics. It is important to bear in mind that Manual III was already enclosed in a Swell box and thus, with these two sets of shades, the range of dynamics became much wider. The success of Poggi's renovation was recognized at that time by the committee in charge of the examination of the organ.

Published in the local newspaper, *La Prensa* on April 5, 1887, a letter described their impressions:<sup>24</sup>

*Sr. D. Jaime Xarau,*  
Cathedral organist

The organists and professors that were present for the examination of the organ at the cathedral on April 3 have the pleasure to let you know of our satisfaction regarding the work done to the organ by *Sr. Poggi*. In examining the organ very meticulously and observing the work we came to the conclusion that this instrument has not only come back to its original state but has in fact been improved. It should be noted that the mechanism known as the pneumatic lever has made the key action lighter. With respect to the tuning we can only say that it is perfect. The results obtained by *Sr. Poggi* have surpassed our expectations. Therefore we want to congratulate you. Your colleagues:

Juan E. Espinosa- Organist from Santo Domingo  
Bartolomé Blanch, ex- maestro from the monastery of Montserrat in Catuluña  
R. Parborell  
Rufino Rodriguez, organist from San Francisco  
Estanislao Grigera, organist form the Conception  
Lorenzo Espinosa, organist from Montserrat  
Antonio E. Rodriguez, organist from Cathedral of Sud  
Ireneo Carranza, organist from Socorro  
José María Palazuelos, organist from Saint Nicholas of Bari  
Federico J. Rásore  
Juan Capisano, Organist from Saint Miguel  
Modesto Borrell, ex-organist from Saint Lucia in Santiago of *Cuba*  
Clodomiro Mora  
Zenón Rolón  
Lorenzo Segret  
Andrés Iturralde  
Joe Pugi  
Martin Vila

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<sup>24</sup> Letter published in *La Prensa*. April 5, 1887. Courtesy of Miguel P. Juárez.



### MAESTROS AT THE CATHEDRAL

Since colonial times, the Cathedral of Buenos Aires has been the center of religious and community events. The music at the cathedral has always been very important because the Mother Church is not only used for liturgies, but also for civic events. It is still a custom for the president and his cabinet to attend the *Te Deum*, a service of joy and thanksgiving, at the cathedral for the anniversary of Argentinean Independence Day and other national holidays. Organ music always plays a key role in these services, as well as orchestral and choral interpretations, which are always present for significant feasts.

The Walcker organ was first played by maestro Jaime Xarau, who was highly respected not only by his musical colleagues but also by the community of Buenos Aires. Many great maestros have held this prestigious organist position: Juan Vizcaino de Aquero (1629-1637), Juan de Caceres (1675), Domemico Zipoli (1716-1717), Francisco Vandemer (1756), Antonio Beles (1775-1790), Mario Cabral (1785), Antonio Aranaz (1790), Antonio Picassarri (1795), Juan Bautista Goibusu (1784-1813), Mateo Caro (1803), Fray Juan Moreno (1810), Cayetano Lino Loforte (1811), Jaime Xarau (1873), Candido Aguayo y Alonso (1876), Jaime Xarau (1873-1913), Escolastico Vicuña (1920), Julio Enrique Buelens (1950), Adriana Fontana (1965-1987), Enrique Rimoldi (1987-present), and José Luis Bella (1999-present). Because of the magnitude and quality of the music expected at the cathedral, it has always been blessed with all of these great maestros, who were not only gifted organists, but also talented composers and conductors.



Figure No 17: **Walcker organ at Buenos Aires Cathedral.**

Front view.

Picture: Ezequiel Menéndez, August 8, 2005.

The organ is installed in the West Gallery. The choir loft is very high above the floor (35 feet). The façade pipes belong to the following stops: Principal 16', Montre 8', and Octava 4' of Manual I, as well as Montre 8' of Manual II. The console is situated in the center and next to the case. The organist, while playing, faces the main altar. The added Barker Lever is installed behind the console (inside the case).

The console remains as it was the day the organ was built. No major changes have been made to this outstanding example of nineteenth century “state of the art” equipment. The console is elegant and comfortable to play.



Figure No 18: **Console of Walcker Opus 263**

Side view

Photo: David Merello, March 12, 2000

Walcker took many details into consideration in order to make an outstanding console for Opus 263. These details include its low height that allows the organist a perfect view of the sanctuary, the placement of the stop knobs, and the ergonomics of the expression pedal.



Figure No.19: **Walcker organ Opus 263**  
 Right side pedal board.  
 Photo: Ezequiel Menéndez, August 8, 2005

In figure 19, we can observe two expression pedals; the one on the left is the III Manual's expression pedal, while the one on the right activates the Physharmonica stop. The wheel for the crescendo or Rollschweller can be observed in the far right. Either the organist or an assistant can turn the wheel to add or subtract stops depending on the direction of the turn. The crescendo wheel is a predecessor of the modern crescendo pedal. The reader should bear in mind that this organ is mechanical action and therefore all the movements, the engaging and disengaging of stops through the wheel, are also mechanical.



Figures 20 & 21: **Organ console of the Walcker organ Opus 263**

Views of left and right sides

Photos: Ezequiel Menéndez, August 17, 2005

As seen in figures 20 and 21, Walcker used different colors to identify the stops of each division of the organ. The knobs with blue porcelain indicate the stops of Manual III, pink Manual II, white Manual I, and green for the Pedal.





Figures 22 & 23: Original Wind Mechanism  
Photo: Ezequiel Menéndez, August 17, 2005

These pictures show the original manual wind mechanism, viewed from above. Ropes would be strung through the pulleys in figure 23 through the six holes at the bottom of the picture. Three men would pull these ropes to create air pressure to fill the bellows.

The Walcker organ at the Cathedral of Buenos Aires is an exceptional instrument which is an excellent example of the Romantic period in the history of organ building. Each stop has a special character and the combinations of these stops create a unique listening experience. In addition to being excellent for enhancing the liturgy, the cathedral organ is also outstanding for the interpretation of the organ works of Liszt, Rheinberger, and Mendelssohn.

#### **OTHER IMPORTANT GERMAN ORGANS IN ARGENTINA**

The organ at the Cathedral is probably the most important for its size and history, but there are three other organs in Buenos Aires worth mentioning:

*Iglesia Santa Felicitas*

E. F. Walcker and Cía, 1873

*Parroquia Nuestra Señora de Magdalena*

Walcker and Cía, 1888

*Basílica Nuestra Señora de la Merced*

Walcker and Cía, 1897

Although the first two organs listed are very small, the quality of their sound and construction is of the highest artistic value. These two instruments are also in original condition, more so than the organ at the Cathedral of Buenos Aires. The organ at the *Basílica Nuestra Señora de la Merced* is very important not only due to its quality, but also because it is an instrument made in a transitional time in the history of organ building and because it is still in original condition. This organ still maintains its original pneumatic action. Pneumatic action was only used for a short period of time in organ

building. During the first years of the twentieth century this kind of action was abandoned, because organ builders preferred either tracker action or the newly invented electro-pneumatic action. This instrument is also very important historically because it was the organ on which Camille Saint-Saëns performed during his visit to Argentina in 1904.

### Specifications

**E.F. Walker & Co., 1873**  
*Iglesia Santa Felicitas, Buenos Aires*  
*Year of construction: 1873*

| <b>Manual I</b> |                           | <b>Manual II</b>  |     |
|-----------------|---------------------------|-------------------|-----|
| Principal       | 8'                        | Principal         | 8'  |
| Gedeckt         | 8'                        | Liebllich gedeckt | 8'  |
| Flöte           | 8'                        | Salicional        | 8'  |
| Viola de gamba  | 8'                        | Flauta dulce      | 4'  |
| Octav           | 4'                        |                   |     |
| Rohrflöte       | 4'                        |                   |     |
| Mixtur          | 2 $\frac{2}{3}$ ' 3 ranks | <b>Pedal</b>      |     |
| II a I          |                           | Subbass           | 16' |
| Forte a I       |                           | Octav bass        | 8'  |
|                 |                           | Violoncello       | 8'  |
|                 |                           | I a Ped           |     |

### Specifications

**Walcker & Cie.**  
*Parroquia Nuestra Señora de Magdalena, Magdalena*  
*Year of construction: 1888*

| <b>Manual I</b> |                           | <b>Manual II</b> |     |
|-----------------|---------------------------|------------------|-----|
| Principal       | 8'                        | Salicional       | 8'  |
| Bourdon         | 8'                        | Flauto Dolce     | 4'  |
| Oktav           | 4'                        |                  |     |
| Mixtur          | 2 $\frac{2}{3}$ ' 3 ranks | <b>Pedal</b>     |     |
| Trompette       | 8'                        | Subbass          | 16' |
| II a I          |                           | I a Ped          |     |



**Specifications****Walcker & Cie.*****Basílica Nuestra Señora de la Merced, Buenos Aires*****Year of construction: 1897****Manual I**

|                       |                   |         |
|-----------------------|-------------------|---------|
| Bordón ( <i>Sic</i> ) | 16'               |         |
| Principal             | 8'                |         |
| Gedackt               | 8'                |         |
| Doppelflöte           | 8'                | 2 ranks |
| Viola de Gamba        | 8'                |         |
| Dulciana              | 8'                |         |
| Gemshorn              | 8'                |         |
| Octava                | 4'                |         |
| Flauta de punta       | 4'                |         |
| Quinta                | 2 $\frac{2}{3}$ ' |         |
| Octava                | 2'                |         |
| Mixtura               | 2'                | 5 ranks |
| Cornett               | 8'                | 5 ranks |
| Trompeta              | 8'                |         |

II a I

**Manual II**

|                  |     |         |
|------------------|-----|---------|
| Liebl.gedackt    | 16' |         |
| Geigen principal | 8'  |         |
| Flauta amable    | 8'  |         |
| Hohlflöte        | 8'  |         |
| Aeoline          | 8'  |         |
| Salicional       | 8'  |         |
| Principal        | 4'  |         |
| Rohrflöte        | 4'  |         |
| Címbala          | 2'  | 3 ranks |
| Clarinete        | 8'  |         |
| Voz Humana       | 8'  |         |

III a II

Tremolo for Voz Humana

Expression for Voz Humana

**Manual III**

|                         |    |
|-------------------------|----|
| Flauta travesera        | 8' |
| Fugara                  | 8' |
| Dolce                   | 8' |
| Voz celeste             | 8' |
| Flauta amable           | 4' |
| Flageolet               | 2' |
| Oboe                    | 8' |
| Expresión para el III M |    |

**Pedal**

|                  |     |
|------------------|-----|
| Bajo de octava   | 16' |
| Subbajo          | 16' |
| Bajo violoncello | 16' |
| Bajo de octava   | 8'  |
| Violoncello      | 8'  |
| Bombarda         | 16' |
| Trompeta         | 8'  |
| Clairon          | 4'  |

I a Ped

II a Ped

III a Ped

**General Accessories:**

T  
F  
MF  
P  
Crescendo

The next chapter will address the organs from France. Argentina and its people have always looked at that country as a model for its own art and culture, and therefore it is not surprising that there was a significant French influence not only in instruments, but also in the style of composition of great Argentinean composers like Alberto Ginastera.