Rudolf von Beckerath

Rahlau 95, 22045 Hamburg, Germany

Founded/Born - Closed/Death	1949 - ???
Still active?	yes
Email	info@beckerath.com
Webpage	https://www.beckerath.com/

Description

Rudolf von Beckerath was born on February 19, 1907, in Munich. He came from an artistic background: his father was a painter, and his mother was a pianist. In the year of his birth, his parents moved to Hamburg, where Rudolf von Beckerath grew up, attended school, and initially decided to pursue a career as a mechanical engineer.

Under the influence of the achievements of North German organ building, especially the organ by Arp Schnitger, Beckerath abandoned his apprenticeship and decided to become an organ builder. As preparatory training, he learned artistic and cabinet making at the Landeskunstschule in Hamburg and studied the theoretical basics of organ building on his own, but also built a small house organ in the basement of his parents' house, which was played at concerts and a radio broadcast held at the Beckerath residence.

For his final training, Rudolf von Beckerath went to France on the recommendation of Hans Henny Jahnn and joined the organ building company of Victor Gonzales in Chatillon sous Bagneux near Paris in January 1929, because they were still building mechanical tracker organs there. He wrote: "They still understood something about building mechanical actions. Although the departure from this construction method was already recognizable at that time ..., the craftsmanship was still present... The old mechanical action, i.e., the rigid connection between the key and the pipe valve guided over angles and shafts, not only works without delay, it does much more than that, it allows influencing the onset of the pipe, its onset process, by means of differentiated touch."

After nearly 2 1/2 years of training, Rudolf von Beckerath worked for a year as an intonator at Frobenius & Co. in Lyngby near Copenhagen. During this time, he worked independently on the construction of the large organ in the Frauenkirche in Copenhagen. In 1931, the French company called him back to Paris, where he became a partner, and the company acquired a patent from him. He wrote:
"My tasks thus extended to the management of the operation. I contributed extensively to the development of the still relatively young company. For example, the production of labial and reed stops, which were previously sourced from external suppliers, was newly set up by me, a

locksmith's workshop was attached, and improved working methods were introduced. In addition, independent work in design and construction. As the political entanglements became increasingly clear in 1935, and a certain boycott was noticeable, especially for German companies in France or French companies with German partners, resulting in business losses, I decided, by mutual agreement, to dissolve my contractual ties to the company."

In 1936, Rudolf von Beckerath returned to Germany and initially worked as a freelance consultant for organ building in Hamburg. His activities included planning, construction, and construction supervision for new, rebuilt, and restored organ works. From November 1938, he also worked as an official expert for organ and bell affairs at the Reich Ministry for Church Affairs. Rudolf von Beckerath moved to Berlin in 1939 and was conscripted into the Wehrmacht in 1941, ending up in American captivity in 1945. He was released in May 1946 and returned to his birthplace, Munich, where his family had since settled.

During his time as a consultant in Hamburg, the construction of the organ in Hamburg-Othmarschen (Christuskirche) took place, which according to Beckerath's specifications and under his supervision, was built by the Sauer company, and Beckerath alone carried out the voicing.

After returning from captivity, Beckerath initially resumed his work as an organ consultant, participated in the planning and consulting of the new organ in the court chapel of the Munich Residence, and was commissioned by the Hanover Regional Church in 1946 to document, measure, and describe all remaining historical organs in its area.

At the same time, he made efforts to establish himself as an organ builder. He returned to Hamburg and had to retake the master examination to be able to settle down, which was not required in France, but was mandatory in Germany since the Nazis abolished commercial freedom. In 1949, he was able to establish his own company.

The first major organ for the Hamburg Musikhalle, with 59 stops, 4 manuals, slider chests, and mechanical action, was a remarkable and sensational new construction in 1951.

From the beginning, his aim was to produce as much as possible himself. So already in 1949, based on his experiences in France, the pipeworks were manufactured in-house.

With steady growth from initially 6 employees, a pipe-making workshop was established in 1956, and all principal pipes were manufactured in-house.

A geographical expansion began in 1957 with the construction of a 4-manual, purely mechanical organ for Cleveland/USA, which was an absolute novelty there. The largest instrument was built in 1960 with 78 stops and 5 manuals, also with mechanical action, in Montreal/Canada.

Today, Beckerath organs are found in many countries, including the USA (Hawaii and others); Australia (Sydney); Canada (Montreal); Croatia (Dubrovnik); South Africa (Cape Town); Japan (Kyoto, Tokyo, and others); Poland (Nova Huta); India (Bombay); Russia (Krasnodar).

Another important and interesting task is the restoration of old organs. Over the years, 26 historical instruments have been restored, including the famous Arp Schnitger organs in Steinkirchen, Cappel, and Mariana/Brazil.

The founder of the company passed away in 1976. The business was converted into a GmbH, and

part of it went to his wife Veronika von Beckerath, and the other part went to three of his closest employees, who have contributed significantly to the continuation of Rudolf von Beckerath's tradition. Through the use of the best woods and materials, the construction of sensitive actions, and not least through the highest skill in voicing, organs of the highest quality were created and are still being created. During these years, techniques were perfected that revolutionized modern organ building. The 30 employees are constantly striving to reconcile the demands of modern organ building with historical traditions.

After managing director Helmut Kleemann retired due to health reasons in 1987 and Herta Deichmann retired in 1990, former student of Rudolf von Beckerath, organ builder Timm Sckopp, took over as managing director of the company. The commercial management was taken over by employee Christel Gläsemann in 1992.

In 1995, Veronika von Beckerath decided to retire from the company due to her age.
Organ builder Timm Sckopp also wanted to pass on the leadership of the company to younger hands and, in turn, hired long-time employee Rolf Miehl to take over responsibility for organ building. Business management was entrusted to businessman Holger Redlich, who has been managing director since early 1996.

In October 2001, with the support of Dr. Whitney Reader as an investor and organ enthusiast, Holger Redlich and Rolf Miehl took over the company.

Sources

https://www.beckerath.com/

Hildesheim, St. Andreas

Andreaspl. 5, 31134 Hildesheim, Germany

Builder	R. v. Beckerath
Year	ca. 1966
Period/Style	Neo-Baroque
Stops	62
Keyboards	4+P
Keyaction	tracker/mechanical
Tuning	Equal at 440 Hz
Sampleset	Sonus Paradisi

Description

The organ of the St. Andreas church in Hildesheim was built in 1965-66 by prominent organbuilder Rudolf von Beckerath. It is one of the largest instruments of its kind in Northern Germany. And it must be said, it is one of von Beckerath's best instruments. It has 63 speaking stops with a total of 4,734 pipes on four manuals and pedal. The Swiss organ builder Beat Grenacher participated in the final voicing of the organ. (Grenacher was in later years head of the Goll organ company from Lucerne and was responsible for the rebuilding of the Beckerath organ of Marktkirche Hannover.) The construction of this organ has some unique and innovative features, such as the mechanical action made of composite materials that still functions perfectly after 60 years without the need for any repairs. The organ has two consoles: The upper gallery houses a large 4-manual console and the lower gallery, which offers space for vocal and instrumental ensembles, has a separate single-manual console controlling the Rückpositiv alone. In the decades since its installation, the von Beckerath organ in St. Andrew's Church has become famous far beyond the borders of the city of Hildesheim. Renowned organists from across the globe perform on the instrument and use it for radio and recordings. In 1963, the famous north german composer Hans Friedrich Micheelsen from Hamburg dedicated his last organ concerto "Orgelkonzert VII - Der Morgernstern" to Reinhold Brunnert, the organist of St. Andreas at that time, to be performed during the inauguration concert.

In recitals and through recordings, the sound of the Hildesheim organ has inspired an entire generation of organists. American organist Erik Simmons comments: "This organ was important to me when I was learning to play. I first heard it on the Bach CD recorded by Michael Murray when I was just graduating from college in the 1980s. The sound was so different from all the American organs I was hearing at that time. (The CD is on YouTube now; search for "Murray Bach Hildesheim".) Murray's playing is dated by today's standards; he was a student of Dupré, with legato playing and mathematical precision on things like repeated and dotted notes. But those were the Bach editions I learned from back then as well, and the sound from Hildesheim was both ear-opening and inspiring. We "know better" today, but this was the

standard at the time."

The organ has the typical features of its time: narrow reeds, smooth foundations voiced with an expressive "chiff", and a plethora of unusual aliquotes that represent the progressive element of organ design in search of new colors that one encounters in many instruments from this period. The reeds of this organ are often best paired with a foundation stop as part of the aesthetics of the time (the so-called "covering" of reeds). Their sound is generally too thin if used alone - though music written at the time this organ was built often has special registrations exploiting these sounds by themselves.

The organ has numerous mixtures and mutations, but unlike many other organs from the same period it is not voiced to "scream" or "pierce". The plenums on each manual are formidable, but balanced and beautiful. The arrangement of the five divisions follows the North German organ building tradition, the so called "Hamburger Prospekt". The organ is strictly built on the Werkprinzip design, so much so that there is no coupler between HW and Pedal. The organ does not need one, because the Pedal is a complete division by itself. A German organ expert advised: "It is particularly important to me that this excellent organ is preserved in its uniqueness. It is not a modern universal organ like Billerbeck or Görlitz, where you can add couplings, stops, etc. almost as desired. If you understand the principle of a baroque organ and its divisions, then you also understand this organ. And this is what you should convey to users: think, pause and recognize the principle of the divisions." The ten largest pipes of the Prinzipal 32' are seen in the façade, the C pipe is around 11m high. They were originally made of zinc, but those pipes were replaced by tin pipes in 1995. The sound of this organ unites remarkably well with the church acoustics. The reverberation time is almost 8 seconds! The generous acoustics of the church contribute to the power and beauty of the sound.

Stoplist/Disposition

Rückpositiv	Hauptwerk	Oberwerk	Brustwerk	Pedal
Prinzipal 8'	Prinzipal 16'	Quintadena 16'	Holzgedackt 8'	Prinzipal 32'
Rohrflöte 8'	Oktave 8'	Violprinzipal 8'	Holzprinzipal 4'	Oktave 16'
Quintadena 8'	Koppelgedackt 8'	Holzflöte 8'	Waldflöte 2'	Subbaß 16'
Oktave 4'	Oktave 4'	Oktave 4'	Gemsquinte 1 1/3'	Oktave 8'
Blockflöte 4'	Quinte 2 2/3'	Rohrflöte 4'	Schwiegel 1'	Holzflöte 8'
Quintflöte 2 2/3'	Oktave 2'	Nasat 2 2/3'	Schlagtöne 3-fach 2/5'	Hornaliquot 2-fach
Oktave 2'	Mixtur 6-fach 2'	Hohlflöte 2'	Scharfzimbel 4-fach 1/2'	Oktave 4'
Gemshorn 2'	Scharf 4-fach 2/3'	Terz 1 3/5'	Regal 8'	Rauschpfeife 3-fach 4'
Quinte 1 1/3'	Trompete 16'	Septime 1 1/7'	Schalmei 4'	Mixtur 6-fach 2 2/3'
Sesquialtera 2-fach	Trompete 8'	Sifflöte 1'		Posaune 32'
5-fach 1 1/3'	Trompete 4'	None 8/9'		Posaune 16'
Dulzian 16'	Glocken	Scharf 4-6-fach 1'		Trompete 8'
Bärpfeife 8'		Klingend Zimbel 3-fach 1/6'		Trompete 4'
		Englisch Horn 16'		
		Oboe 8'		

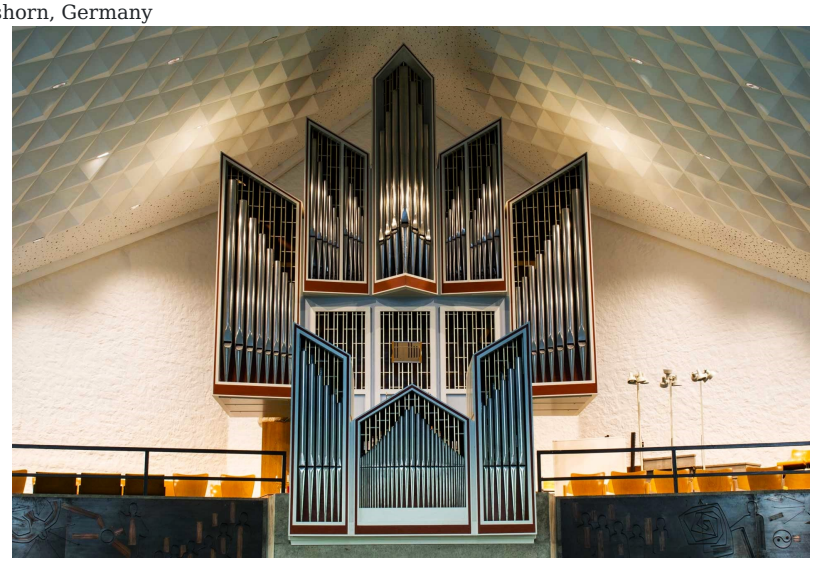
Additionals: RP/HW, OW/HW, BW/HW, RP/Ped, OW/Ped, Schweller BW, Glocken HW/Ped, Tremulant RP OW BW

Sources

https://www.sonusparadisi.cz/en/organs/germany/hildesheim-st-andreas-beckerath-1966.html
https://www.andreaskantorei.de/uebersicht/instrumente/orgel

Elmshorn, Thomaskirche

Breslauer Str. 3, 25335 Elmshorn, Germany



Builder	R. v. Beckerath
Year	ca. 1966
Period/Style	Neo-Baroque
Stops	31
Keyboards	2+P
Keyaction	tracker/mechanical
Tuning	Equal at 440 Hz

Description

The organ of the Thomaskirche Elmshorn, built by the Rudolf von Beckerath company, is an example of successful and high-quality organ building from the 1960s.

Stylistically, instruments of this period are characterized by neo-Baroque features; the return to models of the 17th and 18th centuries (positive division, baroque stop names) is combined with a particular emphasis on an overtone-rich sound and rather narrow pipe scaling.

This instrument is crafted very solidly and its sound volume is more than adequate for the church space. As a sound tool reflecting the aesthetic development of German organ building in the two decades after World War II, it is definitely worth preserving.

Stoplist/Disposition

Hauptwerk	Rückpositiv	Pedal
Quintadena 16′	Gedackt 8′	Subbass 16′
Prinzipal 8′	Quintadena 8′	Prinzipal 8′
Rohrflöte 8′	Prinzipal 4′	Hohlflöte 4′
Oktave 4′	Blockflöte 4′	Nachthorn 2′
Spielflöte 4′	Gemshorn 2′	Hintersatz 6fach
Nasat 2 2/3′	Nasat 1 1/3′	Fagott 16′
Oktave 2′	Sept 1 1/7’	Trompete 8′
Flachflöte 2’	Sifflöte 1’	Schalmei 4’
Mixtur 5fach	Sesquialtera 2fach	
Zimbel 3fach	Scharff 4fach	
Trompete 8′	Regal 16′	
	Dulzian 8′	

Additionals: RP/HW, HW/Ped, RP/Ped, Tremulant RP

Sources

https://orgellandschaft-kkrm.de/orgeln/elmshorn-thomas/