

The Court Chapel of Gottorp Palace

The history of Gottorp Palace goes back to the middle ages: already in the 12th century a castle had been built on this island at the far end of the Schlei, which is an inlet of the Baltic Sea. In 1268 this castle was handed over to the dukes of Schleswig.

In 1523, Duke Frederic I. of Schleswig was elected also King of Denmark: he changed the castle into a renaissance palace: he let built the west wing, called the “New House” as a representative building in the new renaissance style, the first one north of the river Elbe. Gottorf remained his preferred residence, even when he was King of Denmark and Norway. His son, King Christian III., was born at Gottorp Palace in 1503. He became an enthusiastic adherent and supporter of the Reformation and when he became king in 1534, the new movement of the reformation spread out in the whole of Northern Europe.

It was the king’s youngest brother, Adolf , who was the founder of the gottorp line and the first Duke of Schleswig-Holstein Gottorf. In 1544, when Adolf was of full age, King Christian III. of Denmark decided to share his rule over Schleswig and Holstein with his younger brothers. Adolf chose Gottorf as his main residence.



He let the castle altered to a representative residence - these alterations are largely what we see today. In the 1580s he let rebuilt the north wing with the new Court Chapel, which was completed in 1590 (this date is written on the central column near the entry).



The chapel is one of the eldest Lutheran Court Chapels in Northern Europe and it never ceased to be used as a church (not even in the 19th century, when Gottorf palace had been turned into military barracks). Therefore it is well preserved. With the exception of the former Altarpiece, it has still its complete original furnishings, as there are the organ, the pulpit or the gallery with a cycle of 28 paintings, depicting scenes of the life of Christ. This cycle, though it is theologically spoken not the core of a Lutheran chapel, is a crucial element of the chapel's endowment. It was painted by Marten von Achten, his models were dutch engravings, for example by Hendrick Goltzius or Marten de Vos.

The cycle begins with the Annunciation and ends with the Ascension of Jesus Christ – before the erection of the Oratory the cycle started and ended at the north wall and referred to the original Altar.

The German legends of the paintings were taken from Martin Luther's translation of the bible – which was important and influential: Theologically we can speak of a presence of the divine logos, in his own word – the bible. Thus we can speak of a multimedia annunciation of the gospel in the paintings, the words of the New Testament, the sermon and also in the court music.

But before I will tell you something about the Gottorp Court music, let's talk about the Ducal oratory, which is dominating the first impression of the chapel. Its interior is decorated with fine intarsias and fantastic ornamental wood carvings and shows the atmosphere of an intimate and cosy parlour.

It was Adolfs successor, duke Johann Adolf, who let erected this heatable prayer room in 1610-13, in place of the former gothic altarpiece. The nowadays altar was made in 1667. The representative wood carved façade of the oratory bears the coat of arms of the duke as well as the royal Danish coat of arms of his wife Augusta.



The figures of the swan and the lion with a heart in his paws also refer to the two coats of arms; the lion is the heraldic animal of Danmark and also of Schleswig - the swan is the heraldic animal for Storman; they are similar to gargoyles. Below these animal figures, the pilasters between the windows show allegories of virtues with the inscriptions: Spes, Fides, Temperatia (also with a jug as her attribute) and Patientia.

Two further personifications of Virtues can be seen as crest of the columns at the side: on your right hand Caritas, which can be identified by the children; on your left hand the female figure has no attribute neither an inscription; so we cannot say if it shows sapientia, fortitudo or justitia (which are still missing). In consideration of the gesture it is difficult to decide everything; also the two female figures pointing to the coat of arms bear no attributes, neither any inscriptions.

In its whole this façade with its complex iconographic system which symbolizes the dual ducal rule as highest secular and highest clerical representative. Duke Johann Adolf was the first Lutheran prince-bishop of Lübeck (1586–1607) und also prince-bishop of Bremen und Hamburg. Especially with the splendor of its representative façade, this oratory was influential in the north: for example in Eutin Palace, the later residence of the princebishops of Lübeck, we can find a similar solution) - but I don't know any earlier example of such a prominent architectonic form of ducal representation around 1600 - in lieu of the former alterpiece.

The organ case is even elder than the chapel: it dates from 1567, the date can be found in the carvings on its right side. The instrument is a completely new reconstruction, designed and executed by Mads Kjersgaard (of Uppsala) in the years 1998-2003. The new organ is orientated towards the early 17th century, reflecting the period when the young Franz Tunder was appointed court organist (he was later to be the famous organist of St.

Mary's at Lübeck). The present pitch is modern standard $a = 440\text{-}442$ Hz, the temperament is meantone with 7 pure thirds (d-sharp/e-flat compromised).



Nowadays we present in our Chapel the annual Festival of “Gottorp Court Music”, featuring the original music played in this chapel in the seventeenth century. The sacred music of Gottorp court composers as Johann Theile, who wrote the first Matthew’s Passion in 1673 or Georg Österreich and Johann Philipp Förtsch were milestones in music history. Especially the compositions of Johann Philipp Förtsch had an important influence, for example to the music of Johann Sebastian Bach, as our partner in research Prof. Konrad Küster, a music historian, could show.

Thanks to the written records we know the original court music: One of the most important collections of more than 1800 manuscripts from the 17th century – the collection Bokemeyer – had been founded by the Gottorp Court composer Georg Österreich. This collection is an exceptionally

important source for music history of the 17th century in the whole Roman Empire. In combination with the originally preserved chapel this historical tradition is almost unique for the time of the 17th century:

Here this music can be listened to in its original historical location, with the original acoustical surroundings, which have never been changed since that time. Thus the music is one facet of former court life, which can be revived – whereas the treasures of this court, the famous library, the art chamber and the ducal collections are nowadays in Copenhagen.