

# ABOUT THE *Mechanical Theatre*

But the crowning glory of the water-driven works of wonder is the Mechanical Theatre, which to this imposing size and accurately detailed construction could hardly be suspected in this hidden part of the park. Built only between 1748 and 1752 under Archbishop Andreas Jakob Graf Dietrichstein (1747-1753), the Mechanical Theatre is the most recent element in the mechanical water treasures at Hellbrunn. It was constructed to replace a water-driven forge with many figures, which came to a stop in 1741. The miner Lorenz Rosenegger von Dürrnberg offered to redesign the grotto on 12 July 1748. Only renewal of the forge was originally considered, but the first plan grew to become the large automatic theatre that was completed on 28 October 1752 and is preserved to this day.

A tower-like palace is depicted in which court life of the 18th century is shown by means of water-driven marionettes. This palace is surrounded by a by a three-storey building in a semicircle, partly giving a view into its interior. Industrious activity rules in and around this building: a total of 141 mobile and 52 immobile little figures demonstrate all manner of professions and trades of the period. One will never tire of observing other little dolls in their typical activities. Whether it is the building work-party, the daily workers who bring building materials to the foreman, who drinks, or the butchers slaughtering an ox, or the barber who shaves a man beneath his guild sign.

Busy activity takes place on the street: a dancing bear performs, guards march past the Residence, a farmer pushes an old woman in a wheelbarrow over the road. Figures from the Commedia dell'arte are also to be seen, and if one so wishes, one can discern the social status of the figures involved. The most noble move less and more slowly than the workers. One can repeatedly discover new details and find amusement at the droll scene.

Great horologic care and skill in water technology enliven with apparent ease this amusing genre scene. That the entire technology with waterwheels, copper wiring and cogwheels is hidden behind the theatre is betrayed only by the deafening noise when the works are set in motion. Certainly to subdue the noise, Rosenegger was also commissioned to construct an "organ works" after the pattern of the "Salzburg Steer" on the Hohensalzburg Fortress, which was to be exclusively driven by water.

In June 1753 the organ, which at that time had 35 pipes, was first tuned by the court music director Johann Ernst Eberlin and the organ builder Rochus Egedacher.

Originally one could choose between three pieces of music, all of which were from Eberlin's pen, today the three rows of pins on the mighty wooden roller can play the following pieces: a choral by J. E. Eberlin, the "Reich mir die Hand, mein Leben" duet by W. A. Mozart and the "Ohne Rast, angepackt" tradesman's song by D. F. Auber.

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*Article: A Pleasure for the Archbishop. The trick fountains machinery at the Summer Palace at Hellbrunn, Katharina Müller-Uri.*