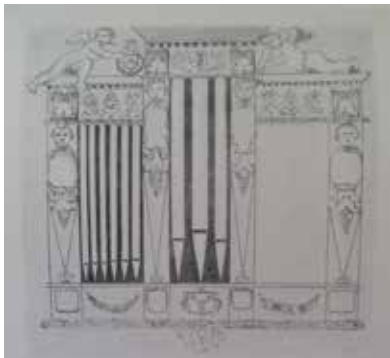


The Organs of the *Collégiale*

There is evidence that an organ existed in the *Collégiale* by 1474. City documents of this date mention that Jehan Laisné, the first known organist of the *Collégiale*, was 'responsible for playing the organ of *Notre-Dame* on certain feast days'.

The first organ for which the specification is known is an instrument of 11 stops and 45 notes built by Nicolas Barbier in 1583. It was enlarged over time with the addition of extra stops and manuals, a pedalboard and, in 1657, a Positive case containing five stops. The enlargements were carried out by François Ducastel, and the Positive casework was made by the carpenter Chambord. It was located in the north gallery, facing into the nave, in the fourth bay from the west. Three metal hooks and some marks in the stonework above the arcade arch are still visible today showing where the Positive case was attached to the wall.



Engraving of the Positive case built in 1657
Gravure du buffet de Positif construit en 1657

Collégiale. The specification and builder are unknown. In 1844, the organ and tribune were removed and a new instrument was constructed by Daublaine-Callinet on the north side of the choir at ground level. It had 22 stops over 2 manuals and Pedal. The firm of Daublaine-Callinet was bought by Ducroquet in 1845, and in 1855 Ducroquet was, in turn, bought by Merklin. It was therefore the firm of Joseph Merklin, France's second most prominent organbuilder after Cavallé-Coll, that took care of the organ from 1855.

In 1895, criticisms of the instrument's architectural aesthetic were raised and a new organ was

By the time of the Revolution the instrument had grown to 24 stops over 3 manuals and Pedal, but it was sold around 1794. According to certain sources its case was spared and was stored somewhere in the galleries where it may still have been in 1819.

By 1842, another organ existed on a wooden and plaster tribune over the main west doors of the

planned. The *Commission des Beaux-Arts* (the equivalent of today's *Commission des Monuments Historiques*) stipulated that the new organ should not be placed above the main west doors (on a new tribune) as this would mask the 'magnificent interior gable' of the west end. Merklin therefore agreed to build a new organ of 34 stops with 3 manuals and Pedal in the gallery of the north-west tower. He reused a certain amount of pipework from the Daublaine-Callinet organ, and its case provided the secondary façade which faces into the triforium gallery. The façade facing the nave was designed with oak casework by the architect Alphonse Simil. The new organ was inaugurated on 11 November 1897 in the presence of the Bishop of Versailles.

Around 1924 or 1925, Gutschenritter added an electric blower and two stops to the Pedal department (the 32' Soubasse and 8' Flûte). The original foot-pumping mechanisms were left in place.

During the Second World War, bombs which fell near the *Collégiale* blew in the windows around the organ. The instrument then suffered from the effects of the weather. It was restored by Georges Helbig in 1952 using war-damage compensation. However, alterations were made (thankfully reversible in nature) that had a deleterious effect; the organ became unusable in 1970, only 18 years after its post-war restoration.



The Merklin grand orgue

As the neo-classical movement was by then in full swing, the decision was made to build a new organ by Georges Danion rather than to restore the Merklin. With 41 stops over 3 manuals and Pedal, the Danion was constructed in 1988 on a newly built tribune over the main west doors of the *Collégiale*.

Fortunately, at this time it was decided not to destroy the Merklin or reuse its parts, leaving open the possibility of its future restoration. After many years of effort and consultation supported by Philippe Allio, a local promoter, a project was launched to restore the Merklin back to its original condition, incorporating the additions made by Gutschenritter in 1924/25. The restoration was undertaken by organbuilders Laurent Plet and Yves Fossaert and the organ advisor was Christian Lutz. The work was completed in 2013 and the instrument was inaugurated by Daniel Roth on 25 May of that year. It was listed as a *monument historique* in 2016.

During the 13 years before the construction of the Danion in 1988, the only playable organ in the *Collégiale* was a choir organ purchased second-hand by the parish and installed in 1975. Built by Jacquot-Lavergne, it had 19 stops (including extensions) over 2 manuals and Pedal, and was located in a side chapel next to the south side-entrance of the *Collégiale* with its console in the choir. It continued to be used until 2011 when it was removed ready for the construction of the new choir organ by Bernard Cogez. Some of its pipework was incorporated into the Cogez.

The Cogez was built in 2013 thanks to the patronage of Philippe Allio. It has 25 stops over 2 manuals and Pedal – a substantial size for a choir organ – and is located in the tribune above the south side-entrance with its mobile console in the choir. It is tuned to the same pitch as the Merklin (A435) allowing the two instruments to be used together.

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