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known in German as the “Zirkel”, which means, amongst other things, “pair of compasses”. This circular garden originated in the plans drawn up by the then court gardener, Johann Ludwig Petri, in 1753, which put a decisive end to the discussion regarding the architectural development of the whole palace complex that had been going on since Prince Elector Carl Theodor started his reign in 1742. Petri played a decisive part in adding to the quarter-circle pavilion in the north, which was already in existence and in use as an orangery, by erecting a second quarter-circle pavilion to the south (14), in symmetry with the first one. The full circle, of impressive dimensions, was then completed by creating two “berceaux de treillage” (34), or quarter-circle arbour walks with arched timber latticework. The part of the gardens occupying this circle is known as the “parterre”. It is the only three-dimensional creation of its kind anywhere in the world to have been created by garden designers during the baroque period. It is possible to interpret its shape and size as symbolising utopian modernity. The internal intersection of the axes in the parterre is a prolongation of the spatial concept adopted for the town of Schwetzingen and lays down a system of basic coordinates for the configuration of the gardens as a whole, and not just for the parterre. Whereas Schwetzingen’s market square, created in 1748, put the finishing

Northern quarter-circle pavilion



touch to the town’s existing basic baroque structure, the gardens’ circular parterre marked its true crowning glory.

The auditorium in the rococo theatre

The quarter-circle pavilions and the rococo theatre

The two single-storey, quarter-circle pavilions have large, round-arched French windows, and each one is divided into five internal rooms. The rooms in the northern quarter-circle building (17) were designed by Alessandro Galli da Bibiena between 1748 and 1750, and decoration was kept to a minimum. Those in the southern quarter-circle building (14), by contrast, were designed between 1752 and 1754 by Franz Wilhelm Rabaliatti, with two halls as central locations for the court’s entertainment being decorated with richly plastered ceilings.

The rococo theatre (19), which was built by Nicolas de Pigage in 1752-53, is located behind the northern quarter-circle pavilion and accessed through it. The auditorium comprises a horse-shoe-shaped timber construction with seating in two overhanging balconies as well as in stalls, which slope gently towards the stage. Today, the interior is decorated in the classical way it would have been around 1770.



One of the four vases illustrating the ages of world history by Peter Anton von Verschaffelt

The court theatre is the oldest surviving theatre with stalls anywhere in the world and, as an acoustic space, represents an ideal for its type. It is one of the earliest court theatre buildings corresponding to the progressive French theory of architecture to have been preserved – and also the last.

With the building of the rococo theatre and the construction of the new orangery (23), the northern quarter-circle pavilion lost its original function. As of then, its rooms were used as a foyer, a lobby and, in part, as storage space for theatrical scenery. Today, the room at the palace end of the southern quarter-circle pavilion houses an instructive exhibition about the history of Schwetzingen palace gardens.

It is clear that the old orangery was quite evidently already an important gathering place in Schwetzingen even in the gardens of Prince Elector Carl Philipp. A number of the “Delft tiles”, which used to vaunt this distinguished function as decoration of the central room of that orangery, have survived until the present and decorate the walls of the porcelain house in front of the bathhouse. Two other items from that same epoch have also survived in the form of golden statues to the right and left of the palace in front of the thick hedges. These are both representations of Atalanta, a female



Atalanta, the huntress, by Heinrich Charasky

hunter from Greek mythology, created by Heinrich Charasky (1656-1710). These sculptures proclaim the palace’s function as a hunting lodge and summer residence.

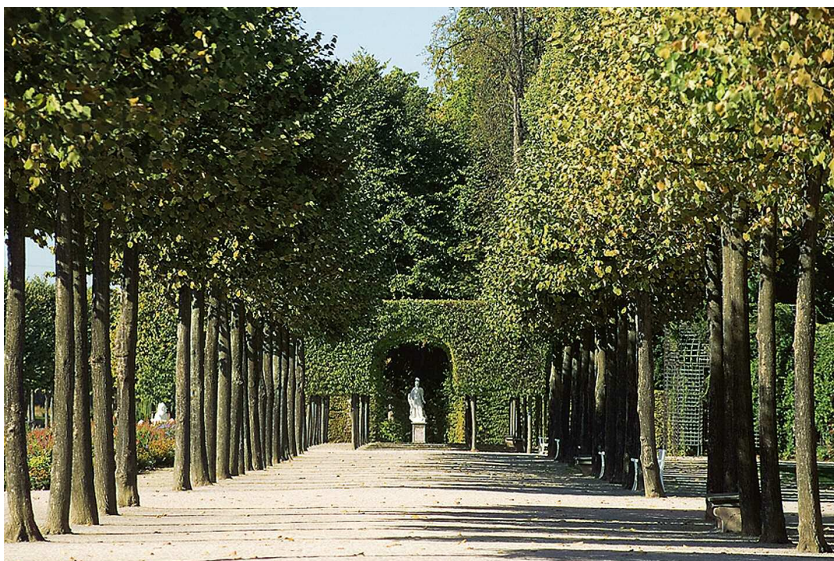
It appears that the motif of the “Golden Age” must have characterised the earlier garden too; the evidence for this is in the impressive number of Italian plants. This mythical idea comes to the fore in the garden programme and is transposed to the Prince and his territory. In a general sense, the practice of tending plants in orangeries, which has kept going ever since it was introduced during the renaissance, embodies the utopia of an ideal belonging to a time gone by. Four vases illustrating the four ages of world history (28) (Peter Anton von Verschaffelt, 1762-66) on the terrace in front of the steps going down to the parterre underscore the theme of the return of the Golden Age under Prince Elector Carl Theodor as the gardens’ central motto. These vases bear emblems of gardening, farming, hunting and warfare, symbolising the golden, silver, bronze and iron ages of ancient mythology.

The Arion fountain

The central point of the circular parterre is occupied by the Arion fountain (30). This produces a 15-metre-high jet of water, which was an astonishing feat for the day and age in which it

Arion on a dolphin: sculpture in the Arion fountain





Avenue of lime trees in the circular parterre

was created. It is surrounded by the smaller fountains of four groups of putti (cherubs). The element of water, particularly in moving form, was considered to be the living soul of the gardens. Fountains epitomised this idea more than anything else, but needed considerable quantities of water at an adequate pressure. It is even more remarkable that the capacity of the two waterworks (13, 27) in Schwetzingen was adequate to have all the gardens' water features active at the same time. The only other record of such an achievement is in St Petersburg. The fountain's composition of figures centres on the Greek singer and poet, Arion, who, according to mythology, was saved from drowning by a dolphin belonging to Apollo. This group of figures was inherited from Stanisław Leszczyński, the exiled King of Poland and Duke of Lorraine, who died in 1766. He had them created in the first half of the eighteenth century by the sculptor Barthélemy Guibal (1699-1757) for his summer residence in Lunéville. Four marble vases by Francesco Carabelli from the first half of the eighteenth century stand in the broderie beds (31) around the Arion fountain glorifying the arts.

Collection of plants and garden design

However much the gardens are brought to life and accentuated by moving water and sculptures, their dominant design element – especially in the baroque period – is vegetation.



Parterres à l'angloise in the central parterre

The gardens' main axis has two lime-tree avenues running along the sides of it, and these have been tapered towards the west to underline the perspective effect. A third avenue accompanies the path that cuts through the circular parterre at right angles to the main axis. The rows of trees serve to guide the eyes of the garden visitor and optically separate the individual sections of the parterre from one another. The avenue trees are pruned to keep them in the natural shape they have when they are young. In the late-baroque period, with its concern for "naturalness", this form of pruning replaced the strict box shape that had been usual up until then.

The way the opening into the parterre has been designed, as a small curved slope of lawn ("talus de gazon"), and also the adjacent "parterres à l'angloise" (29), with the now preferred use of lawn as a design element, show a changed relationship with nature compared with the baroque one. It reflects the maxim of the time that it is art that ought to yield to nature. Within the large circle, Johann Ludwig Petri made use of different forms of parterre. The rectangular "parterres à l'angloise" (29) are comprised of patches of lawn framed by flower beds and separated by ornamental paths. The centrepiece of each of them, however, is an oval pool with putti riding on water-spouting swans or sea monsters. On the narrow sides, the bordering beds terminate in volutes, snail-



View over the large pond towards the palace

mans had fought a battle on that site (52). The other monument (51), with its Latin inscription praises Carl Theodor's creation of the gardens: "You marvel, oh traveller! She herself marvels too, she who had failed to achieve the like – that Great Mother of things – Nature. Carl Theodor has created this for Him and His to recover from His toils in His hours of leisure. He erected this memorial in 1771".

The avenues and the large pond

The whole bosquet zone is hemmed in by an "allée en terrasse" (36), an elevated tree-lined promenade. From there, noble society was able to observe the hive of activity in the bosquets. Work on the avenue commenced in 1764 and



The Danube river god



The new orangery with the orangery garden

continued simultaneously with work on the bosquets. The horse-chestnut trees chosen to line this avenue were originally indigenous to the Balkans. The species came via France to Germany, where in the eighteenth century it became a truly fashionable baroque tree.

The large pond (79), which follows on from the bosquet zone was originally laid out as a formal rectangular pool. Construction work lasted until 1775 on the walls around the pool and on the plinths for the statues of the river gods "Rhine" and "Danube" (80) on the edge of it. It was not until 1823/24 that Johann Michael Zeyher changed the pool into a pond with curved banks and removed the avenue that had surrounded it.

The new orangery

It was only a few years after the two quarter-circle pavilions had been completed as places for storing potted plants in winter that Prince Elector Carl Theodor commissioned Nicolas de Pigage to build yet another orangery in 1761. This new orangery (23) was constructed to the northwest of the circular parterre with a large orangery garden in front of it (55).

The symmetrical building is 171 metres long and faces south. Its plastered surfaces are painted in fresco technique with a decor imitating masonry. The south-facing façade contains large windows topped with flat segmented arches,



Cast-iron stove in the orangery

giving a foretaste of the impressive ceiling height awaiting the visitor inside the building. The large area of glazing in the windows makes it possible for the plants stored there through the winter to benefit from the sun's rays.

Originally, the orangery was heated in winter by 14 cast-iron stoves. One of these has survived, and the initials "CT" (= Carl Theodor) on it indicates that it was part of the original inventory when the building was erected. Two large sandstone troughs, one in each of the east and west wings, have also survived from when the orangery was built. Water used to be scooped out of them and poured onto the plants. The glasshouse that was added to the eastern end of the Orangery in 1770 had an enormous total glass surface area by comparison with the usual situation at that time. The original compacted clay floor, which used to cover the whole length of the building, is still visible here. Thanks to the angled position of the windows, the interior of the building used to heat up particularly quickly and was thus ideal for growing plants.

The eastern part of the orangery is still used today for storing potted plants throughout the winter. In the central section of the building, there is a highly commendable exhibition about orangeries. The west wing houses a lapidari-

The lapidarium in the new orangery



Lapidarium

Virtually the whole original inventory of sculptures (i.e. around 300 exhibits) has survived since the time when the Schwetzingen palace gardens were created. Between 1965 and 1995, nearly all of the original sculptures were removed from the gardens and replaced with replicas. The most important originals were put on display in the lapidarium, inside the orangery, once the painstaking restoration work on it had been completed. This collection is open to the public.

Just as if the stony "inhabitants" of the palace gardens had agreed on a ren-

dezvous all in the same room, visitors to the orangery are treated to an exciting, fascinating collection. It would be very difficult to imagine a more ideal location for studying eighteenth-century sculpture. The collection includes sculptures of real animals, along with fabled creatures and characters from mythology. It is an excellent place for both close-up and comparative study of the proportions and materials as well as the artistic and restoration techniques used by each of the individual artists.

um, with the originals of sculptures that have been replaced by replicas outdoors in the palace gardens.

Just like in Carl Theodor's times, the orangery garden is still used at present for displaying the costly potted plants. The garden abides by the same symmetry as the orangery

Temple of Apollo and open-air theatre





building itself and has been laid out like an island surrounded by a canal. It is eminently suitable as a place for displaying plants from more southerly climes; it is lower than the surrounding land, and the hedges act as wind-breaks. The canal around the garden provides the water that is needed for potted plants, which tend to dry out quickly.

The open-air theatre and the Temple of Apollo

Just to the west of the orangery garden lies a complex comprised of the open-air theatre (58), the Temple of Apollo (61) and the bathhouse with its annexes (which is still out of sight from the orangery and its garden). This zone constitutes a complex microcosm interlinked with paths and lines of vision.

The open-air theatre (58) by Nicolas de Pigage (1762) is one of only very few garden theatres to have survived at all. This feature had been totally neglected since the nineteenth century, but has been regenerated with great care more recently. Some parts of the original two prosceniums made of timber trellising can be viewed today in the Museum of historical gardening implements. Six sphinxes (59) guard the



Relief of the sun on the balcony railing behind the Temple of Apollo