

# Swedish impressions of Eastman's EROI Festival 2008

Jerker Sjöqvist, translated by Fredrik Tobin

The Swedish Organ Society (Svenska Orgelsällskapet) came to the United States October 16–22 to attend concert highlights of the Eastman-Rochester Organ Initiative, which focused on the new Craighead-Saunders Organ built by GOArt of Sweden. They then traveled to New York and Philadelphia for an additional taste of American organbuilding.

In March 1771, Adam Gottlob Casparini (1715–1788) delivered a magnificent organ to the Polish Dominican Holy Ghost Church in Vilnius, Lithuania. The organ, the only surviving example of this productive Prussian organbuilder's larger instruments, has miraculously been preserved intact in a world of war and political conflict. World War II and the political situation during the Soviet era undoubtedly played a part in the organ's preservation from major renovations during the 20th century.

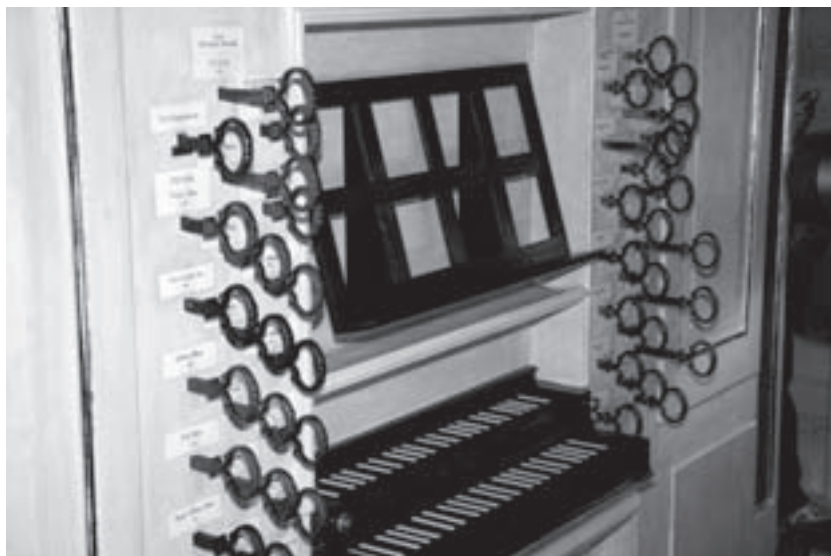
In 1992, Swedish organist Göran Grahn (well-known organ consultant and Secretary of the International Society of Organbuilders, ISO) made this major discovery during one of his many journeys in the Baltic countries. He came into contact with a local organ expert, Rimantas Gucas, who had been taking care of the organ, which by that point was a more or less unusable treasure. Money was in short supply, and there were many bureaucratic obstacles that slowed the progress of the restoration project. After being tipped off about the instrument, Göteborg Organ Art Center (GOArt), Sweden, became involved and made a deal with the Lithuanian Department of Culture in 1999 to document the organ. This technical documentation during the next three years was done by Niclas Fredriksson of the Swedish National Heritage Board, in cooperation with local scholars and organbuilders.

The project thereafter ran on two distinct tracks. One track was the restoration of the original organ by Lithuanian conservators, but to date they have only restored the organ case, with the rebuilding of the bellows, windchests, and action to be done under the supervision of Janis Kalnins. There is still insufficient money to restore the pipework, but many are hard at work to realize the goal of a completely restored organ.

The second track is based on the new documentation more recently done by a team of American organbuilders and the Eastman School of Music, whose Hans Davidsson, professor of organ, was a driving force behind this project. The school runs an ambitious program called the Eastman-Rochester Organ Initiative (EROI), which with GOArt has built a full-scale reconstruction of the Casparini organ, in Christ Church (Episcopal), Rochester. The reconstruction includes a second tremulant, and a Dulcian 16' has been added to the second manual. The instrument was also equipped with a pedal coupler, and the upper range in both manuals and pedal has been extended with two keys. The glockenspiel and zimbelstern were made by Whitechapel Bell Foundry in England, and the original wood carvings were documented and



Hans Davidsson and Harald Vogel in front of the façade



The console makes clear that this organ's origin is from the Lithuanian region of mines and smithies.



Swedish visitors together with Hans Davidsson at the console

reproduced by the American firm New Energy Works, also responsible for the reconstructed balcony.

On Thursday, October 16, 2008, EROI began with the inauguration of the Craighead-Saunders organ. The event featured music and speeches from many people, including the president of the University of Rochester, the Lithuanian ambassador, and the director of GOArt, Johan Norrback. Harald Vogel, who served as the official inspector, played Bach's *Prelude in C Major* (BWV 545) with his usual authority and a sublime plenum.

The three organ professors of Eastman also reinforced the organ's aural success in playing Stephen Kennedy's new composition 3-3-33 (three players, three move-

ments, 33 stops). William Porter showcased a wide variety of registrations and ended with Bach's *Allein Gott in der Höh* (BWV 662). David Higgs played an impressive performance of Mendelssohn's *Sonata in F Minor*, op. 65, no. 1. Hans Davidsson presented a fresh and brilliant rendition of Bach's *Toccatto, Adagio and Fugue in C Major* (BWV 564), accompanied with dancing by the Rochester City Ballet in the choir.

The inaugural concert concluded with the sinfonia and chorus from Bach's cantata *Wir danken dir, Gott* (BWV 29), which was performed with a beautiful blend of organ, voices and orchestra. The impression was, however, that the visiting Boston Early Music Festival Chamber Players have some things to



Hans Davidsson showing the reconstructed console in Rochester

learn from baroque performance practice in the old world, an impression also reinforced during Friday's gala concert.

A group of 18 traveling enthusiasts from the Swedish Organ Society (Svenska Orgelsällskapet) were joined by an equally large group from the Friends of the Organ Art (an association with a special connection to GOArt), who together with other visiting Swedes created a noticeable Swedish presence. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the newly built reconstruction of what may be the largest well-preserved instrument in northern Europe. It was a wonder to behold and during the many recitals provided an unforgettably splendid aural experience.

The Craighead-Saunders Organ  
Christ Church Episcopal, Rochester, NY  
Modeled after the 1776 Adam Gottlob Casparini Organ, Holy Ghost Church, Vilnius, Lithuania

#### Claviatura Prima

Principal á 8  
Porduna á 16  
Hohlflaut á 8  
Flaut Travers á 4  
Octava Principal á 4  
Qvinta á 3  
Super Octava á 2  
Flasch Flöt á 2  
Tertia á 1½  
Mixtura á 5 Choris  
Trompet á 8

#### Claviatura Secunda

Principal á 4  
Iula á 8  
Principal Amalel á 8  
Unda Maris á 8  
Flaut Major á 8  
Flaut Minor á 4  
Octava á 2  
Wald Flöt á 2  
Mixtura á 4 Choris  
Vox Humana á 8  
Dulciana á 16

#### Pedall

Principal Bass á 16  
Violon Bass á 6  
Octava Bass á 8  
Flaut & Quint Bass á 4  
Posaun Bass á 16  
Trompet Bass á 8  
Accessories

Tremulant  
Pedal to Manual Coupler  
Gwiazdy (Cymbelstern)  
Vox Campanorum (Glockenspiel)  
Bebny (drum stop)  
Calcant

Born in 1940, Jerker Sjöqvist is a former teacher, organist and choirmaster, cello and recorder player. He visited the UK for the first time in 1977, and started his own Evensong group, which appeared some 200 times in Sweden, Italy, Austria, Germany, and the UK. He brought about 300 Swedish choirmasters to Cambridge in the 1980s for choir training, and arranged tours in Sweden and Norway for St. John's College Choir, Cambridge. He has written reviews on organ and choral music, and has arranged tours across Europe, including three organ tours with American organist Matthew Provost to Ostfriesland and Bach organs in Sachsen (Germany) and Alsace, a Dutch organ tour with Jacques van Oortmerssen, a 2007 tour to Paris, and last fall a USA tour in cooperation with the late Joel Kuznik. He was a member of the board and treasurer of the Swedish Union of Organists 1985–2005, and since 2004 has been treasurer of the Swedish Society of Organ Friends.

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