

# What a Time It Was: A Fond Remembrance

Ronald Cameron Bishop

At the time that I joined the Möller New York City maintenance staff in 1955, the Rev. Dr. Hugh Giles concert series at Central Presbyterian Church (Park Avenue at 64th Street) was a major factor in the city's music scene. Its centerpiece was the superb four-manual instrument (M. P. Möller opus 8000), which had been given to the church as memorial to Reginald Lindsey Sweet by his widow. Dr. Giles had worked with Möller's tonal designer Ernest White to achieve this remarkable installation. My immediate superiors, Arthur Brady and Larry Horn, had headed the installation crew when the instrument was delivered and often spoke of what was involved during the placement process.

The main body of Central's organ installation is placed in a large chamber to the right of the chancel and at gallery level. It speaks through a Möller-created grille to the chancel and quite exquisite casework that faces the south gallery. The Antiphonal divisions are located in the tower to the northwest. The acoustic of the sanctuary is ideal for organ, choral work, and even the spoken word.

Mr. Brady and I were assigned to the concert schedule at Central, which consisted of tuning, moving the console to chancel center (done in the early morning the second scheduled day and quite a project), and later on standby for the performance, and then returning the console to service position the following morning. I had the very special pleasure of covering these events, as only one service person was required. A small pew section in the west gallery was selected for my use so that I could get to both the antiphonal and main organ chambers with ease in the event of cipher problems (which did not happen during my tenure, but I surely did have a wonderful musical experience).



Ron and Emmie Bishop check out the Radio City Music Hall Grand Organ for the annual Christmas production (stage left console)



Jean Langlais

a most delicate and beautiful performance of this work followed. Although many consoles featured the automatic Sforzando cancel at that point in time, many Möllers did not. When Mr. Brady and I returned to set the console back in service position, I was provided with a bottle of red nail polish and told to coat the Sforzando toe piston with it.

## Jean Langlais

If I recall correctly, Jean Langlais next visited with opus 8000. This was my first introduction to this wonderful artist and his amazing musical works. A few years later, his then student (later wife) Marie Louise stayed with Emmie and me twice at our home in Maplewood, New Jersey, during her concert tours of the United States. Along with our two sons we enjoyed these visits with this lovely lady. Her recital at the Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Newark was a truly grand event.

After their marriage, Prof. Langlais was engaged to play a recital for Lester Berenbroick during his ministry of music in the Presbyterian Church at Madison, New Jersey. At Lester's request, I assisted my foreman in the organ's tuning. Langlais was involved in a press conference at the rear of the sanctuary. Hearing us in the chancel, he finished his comments and came to the console. He wanted to be sure to convey his thanks to Emmie and me for taking such good care of his Marie during her past visits to this country. We ended up chatting for about a half hour. As he left, I was tuning the top octave of the 8' Clarinet, just arriving at top C. The good professor shouted from the aisle "do not bother with that \*@&+ note—I do not use it in MY music."

## Hugh Giles

At this point, I believe some thoughts on Dr. Giles might be appropriate. To my knowledge, he was the first ordained Presbyterian clergyman to be appointed as full-time minister of music. He was also called as the associate pastor of Central Church at that time. Hugh had a remarkable and engaging personality, and in addition to his superb musical talent was a gifted preacher as well.

In addition to the concert series (which was second to none in talent and presentation), Dr. Giles directed a music ministry, which included professional singers. He was also responsible for the organ's care and had a wonderful working relationship with the Möller technical staff. All of us on the New York/metro crew enjoyed working with and for Hugh at Central.

The inspired creation of opus 8000 was a joint effort between Ernest White and Hugh Giles. It was the Möller showpiece in New York City for a number of years and was a major feature of that decade's AGO national convention. To Messrs. White and Giles' credit, the scal-



Flor Peeters

## Flor Peeters

Our first artist during the 1955 season was Flor Peeters. The console moving session also included our remaining for the organist's rehearsal period (at least until 5:00 pm; we started work at 8:00 am in those days). Obviously the preparation time went on through the evening hours.

Mr. Brady had gone out to lunch with a friend, and I settled down in Dr. Giles' study to consume what I had brought from home. Almost one half hour passed by, and then I heard a voice calling from the sanctuary. It was Flor Peeters. In his cadenced English he said, "Ronald you vil play zee organ for me, pleeze." Now, on a good day my skills of improvisation might just get by—maybe (just ask John Weaver). Here was this eighteen-year-old being asked by a world class artist to "play zee organ pleeze." I advised the gentleman of what he might expect, and he indicated that I was to play through his piston settings as he called them out from various locations in the church. The

writer is certain that this great man soon realized why I had entered the organ maintenance field (Mother did pay—or my godmother did pay for six years of piano, but it never did "take").

The first composition on his program was Peeters' own *Aria*. My appreciation of this work remains to this day. In preparation for our wedding in 1960, I asked my Emma Elizabeth to play it for her pleasure, and we both felt it should be the first composition to be played in the service prelude. Needless to say, Flor Peeters' recital was played to a full house that autumn evening and was very well received.

## André Marchal

The next guest on Dr. Giles' schedule was the blind organist André Marchal. Brady and I got everything ready, and I was amazed after just about a half hour with his associate as a guide, Marchal was quite familiar with the four-manual console and most every stop and coupler location. He asked us just how the capture combination system functioned and grasped what this equipment was all about in a matter of minutes, including all piston and reversible locations.

This gifted artist played an impeccable program at his evening performance—again to a packed church. I remember being so impressed with his gift for registration and keyboard ability. A number of encores were indeed in order that night, as they had been for Flor Peeters.

## Fernando Germani

The schedule continued with the very wonderful and quite charming Fernando Germani. It was a joy to be in his company. (Later I had the pleasure of hearing Germani play the complete works of Bach in a series at St. Thomas Church.) Mr. Germani's rehearsal went on without incident. He was at one with this superb Möller creation and enjoyed himself very



Fernando Germani

much during his preparation time.

During the evening's program that joy continued with a wonderful performance of Dupré's *Variations sur en Noël*. At its conclusion, a well-deserved ovation took place, which Germani turned to acknowledge, pushing the general cancel in the process, not realizing that the Sforzando did not cancel on this particular combination action system.

The next selection was one of my very favorites, Vierne's *Clair de Lune*, and you guessed it: Germani prepared his registration not giving any notice to that RED indicator light on the nameboard. I was trying to send mental signals from my seat in the gallery, but he placed his hand on the manuals with a full organ result. Of course, this most gracious man stopped at once, turning on the bench and saying to the audience, "Excusa."

With the full-organ control reversed,



**John Davis at the West Point console, where he served as chapel organist for many years. When he was employed by M. P. Möller at age 19, Ron Bishop first met Dr. Davis. One of Ron's last projects for the Schantz firm was for the First Reformed Church in Poughkeepsie, where Dr. Davis now serves as organist and choirmaster.**

ing of this instrument was perfect for that beautiful sanctuary on Park Avenue. The edifice was first built as the Park Avenue Baptist Church, but was deemed not large enough for the preaching gifts of Harry Emerson Fosdick. The gracious Riverside Church was constructed to fill this need, and the original building became Central Presbyterian.

#### Ernest White

Just a word about Ernest White. During one of my first weeks working for Möller, I was sent to work with Mr. White at the Church of St. Mary the Virgin. The company maintained the beautiful Aeolian-Skinner in the church, the choir room Möller, and the Aeolian-Skinner in the organist's study. I tuned for Ernest (he held keys) and sometimes he went into the instruments

to make adjustments himself. During lunch I would sit in the organ loft or choir room while he played Franck. What an experience. This gentleman taught me a great deal about the art of organ building. His associate, Edward Linzel, also became a good friend. I still have the recordings made by these two men at St. Mary's.

#### West Point

Theodore Gyler Speers was the senior pastor of Central Church and gave his full gracious support to his associate and the ministry of music. Dr. Speers later moved on to that glorious chapel above the plain at West Point, New York. The Möller New York/metro crew had been involved with the installation of the superb console at the Military Academy along with earlier portions of this grand



**Virgil Fox sent Ron Bishop this photo when they prepared a magazine article together and discussed a future performance at Radio City Music Hall. Fox died before the event could take place.**

instrument. In fact, Arthur Brady installed the original Möller organ and did extensive tonal regulation work for Frederick Mayer in the cadet chapel.

In 1929 Mr. Brady had continued his association with Mr. Mayer when he was called upon to install a smaller version of the West Point design (49 ranks) for the Church of the Holy Communion at South Orange, New Jersey. Here M. P. Möller built another gem, which was given to the parish by the Vanston family. During my time working with Dr. Giles, he suggested that I visit West Point, and I then had the opportunity to meet Jack Davis, the chapel organist and choirmaster. What a wonderful visit that was, and in recent years I had the pleasure to work with Dr. Davis in the design and installation of the Schantz organ at the Reformed Church in Poughkeepsie, New York, where he continues his work in a truly dedicated and loving manner as has always been this fine gentleman's custom.

resulting comedy (for lack of anything else to call it) vocal plus visual effects. I should note here that this "team" had a favorite word that contained four letters and began with the letter "F." It was always an experience to go into a church with them and hold one's breath during any initial discussions with the assembled clergy and members on hand. It was amazing how they "cleaned up their act" until out of earshot (at least we all hoped so).

Then there was one George Siska, a very kindly Hungarian gentleman who stated constantly that he was in reality a "Woycer" and did not belong on a regular pipe organ maintenance crew. Many times I was paired with George (when Mr. Brady was on a re-leathering job or whatever) as it seemed that our boss (one John Byer) thought that I was patient and understanding and would put up with Mr. Siska's constant complaining about not being assigned to the appropriate tasks befitting his talents.

There were indeed very bright lights in this group, including of course Mr. Brady, who was a mechanical wonder person and tuner, with a special ability for tonal regulation. Ernest Lucas is one of the best people ever to be in the pipe organ field, along with his brother Harold, who left our merry band to work with Aeolian-Skinner in Chicago. George Eisell had joined our group from Aeolian-Skinner and was expert in just about anything. George had recently installed the five-manual console with its some seventeen remote combination machines for Virgil Fox at the Riverside Church. George told me of his wonderful experience in working with Virgil, as did all who had the special opportunity of working for and with this great man. I know full well that Dr. Fox was well respected by all of us in the industry and that feeling was returned tenfold.

For many years M. P. Möller kept offices in a suite at the Waldorf-Astoria hotel, which included a pipe organ that was later moved to a church in Harlem. In addition, the Grand Ballroom contained a very large twin-consoled four-manual installation. (One console was of the English drawknob type and the other a theatre-style unit—both with plug-in connectors.)

As time passed, the Möller office relocated to Yonkers, New York. The Grand Ballroom instrument was placed in storage and, after a factory rebuild plus new console, sold to the State University of New Jersey for their Montclair campus. They had built a quite lovely auditorium with chambers at stage right and left, all ready for the organ's installation. The new four-manual console was placed in the orchestra pit at stage right.

Our entire group was assigned to assist that factory installation crew for this project. This led to a very interesting situation with Larry Horn (mouth listening to the right) having so-called equal "bossing" responsibility with "Wild" Bill

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#### Jeanne Demessieux

A major happening in the concert series that year (and believe me, all the performances were quite special) was the appearance of Jeanne Demessieux. Her performance was to include the *Ad Nos* along with many other audience favorites. I recall that the New York press had done a fine job of pre-recital coverage.

Knowing of my interest in the instrument and the artists who played it, Dr. Giles had arranged for a private meeting for Ms. Demessieux and myself in his study between her preparation time and the performance. We had a lovely visit, with Hugh the ever-proper host. This lady did indeed play the organ in those high-high-heels (and never missed a note). She was just a lovely person and this showed in her music. What a night—encore and after encore followed (I cannot recall how many), with a mystical silence as the audience filed out.

#### Möller New York City/metro crew

While all these wonderful happenings did so much for the New York City concert season, I must not lose sight of the many projects the M. P. Möller metro service crew was attending to. Aside from the contracted maintenance of some 600-plus Möller instruments, the eight of us were quite often called upon to assist the Hagerstown road crew installation folks.

The metro crew was a group of characters unto itself, headed by our senior members. Larry Horn spoke with the right side of his mouth lowered for a very dramatic accent (and related visual effect). Larry's partner at the directorial level was one Rudy Lung (that is right, LUNG), who spoke with the left side of his mouth lowered (also a most interesting effect when those two stood side by side on the job site). Larry and Rudy were almost always teamed together, with the



**John A. Schantz and Ronald Bishop meet in the reception room of the Schantz factory in Orrville, Ohio**

Slaughterback (loud mouth—period) of the Hagerstown group.

The university campus is set on a hillside in northern New Jersey, with a haunting view of New York City to the east. As we began our installation process, major construction was in progress all over the area. The Möller trucks arrived so our gang could unload, with everything placed in and around the large scene dock entrance for the stage complex. We got everything placed for proper installation sequence, including the large two-stage wooden-cased organ blower (original to the instrument).

Within the hour it was discovered that this large wind machine belonged two floors down. I should mention that the building sat on the gentle slope of the hillside. This is when the fun started. “Wild” Bill and Larry decided to appropriate a front end loader that was just sitting there at idle in the parking lot.

The gentlemen both decided they knew how to operate this unit, but before all hell broke loose they were “observed” by the rightful operator. Then money matters for the use of the machine ensued. This involved much loud talking (Larry trying to outdo Wild Bill to NO avail)—thank goodness for the coffee truck (where the rest of us fled) that was on site. At last the money matters were settled, and the sight of our fearless leaders riding in the bucket of the loader was a vision to behold. They got the loader up to the scene dock, and we started to shove the blower toward it (Möller did not provide dollies in those days). At last the machine fell into the bucket and began its trip to the lower-level blower room with Bill and Larry yelling at each other—I never did figure out about what—for the duration of the trip, brief as it was.

Once the auditorium installation was completed and the tonal regulation done, the university arranged to have Virgil Fox dedicate the instrument. It was always a pleasure for us to work with and for Dr. Fox, a true professional and a really nice person. Mr. Brady and I were to be on call should the organ require any last-minute attention. Well, Dr. Fox got into one of his beautiful full registrations and we soon discovered that nobody had thought to rebuild the curtain valve in the blower static air reservoir. Obviously the organ just stopped in its tracks. We soon got the problem repaired, and one beautiful recital played to another full house was the end result. I am certain that Virgil had played the organ more than once in its original location and he enjoyed very much making “friends” with it once again.

#### Further adventures

Looking back, I think that all this fun and games stuff began with the New York/metro crew itself when we did one of our first solo installations in a very conservative college up in South Lancaster, Massachusetts. It was a small three-manual in a chapel/auditorium-type setup, with chambers to the left and right of the platform area. Larry was in charge, with Rudy and his ever-available comments and “assistance.” Larry had placed the organ installation drawings on

a table in the middle of the room, laid out for all to see and work from at his direction. We started hauling parts up ladders to the chambers as ordered and soon found out that nothing, I mean nothing, fit. Larry insisted he was giving the right directions and ordered baseboards and other materials that he thought in the way, removed from the organ loft locations. Eighteen-year-old me suggested that HE look at the drawings again and was TOLD IN NO FEW WORDS TO MIND MY OWN BUSINESS AND THAT I WAS JUST A HELPER (plus a few other choice words). This all went on until it was time to go to lunch; there was a wonderful diner down the road and we all wanted to get there FAST. By this time, organ parts were all over the place, jammed into the chamber and what not. Progress was non-existent.

I made certain I was the last one out of the room to head for that diner. I had hours ago figured out that Larry had laid out the prints wrong, and he was trying to have us place the Swell organ in the Great/Choir chamber and vice versa. Mr. Bullhead would not think any other way. (Bright me reset the prints as I went out the door.)

When we all returned from lunch, Larry said, “oh, here is the problem”: THEY had laid the drawings wrong and he had figured out THEIR mistake. Once we had switched everything around (no easy job) all was now right with the world. What brain power and an ego this man had. Please remember I was just a helper. In the end the organ turned out to be a very fine little three-manual, and the client was well pleased.

Again in retrospect, maybe this is why the boss always sent Mr. Brady and me to assist Dr. Giles with the concert series needs. (Larry and Rudy had worked the crew on Opus 8000 and done an excellent installation, but Hugh did say to us one day that he recalled them as an “interesting” pair to say the very least.)

Returning to the university campus in New Jersey, the blower was, at last, put in place and we all got to work on the actual chamber(s) installation process. After some back and forth, it was decided that the factory crew would attend to the stage left chamber and we New York/metro boys could take care of the stage right location. Please remember after all the fun up in New England and the give and take on this New Jersey project and despite all the carrying on discussed above, the Möller company always did excellent work, and I very much enjoyed my time and learning experience with this fine firm.

Our combined crew soon completed the transplant of the Waldorf instrument, and Larry stayed on to assist John Schiegh, Möller’s head tonal finisher, as they spent several weeks going through the organ pipe by pipe.

#### John Schiegh and John Schantz

The two tonal finishers I worked with were both named John—the aforementioned Mr. Schiegh and for thirty-two-plus years beginning in 1973, John A. Schantz. Although our friend from Möller did not know how to play the instrument too well, he had a knack for



**John Weaver at the original console of the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, New York City. Ronald Bishop had the honor of serving as Dr. Weaver’s maintenance technician for more than three decades. Weaver often performed at Central Presbyterian Church under the late Richard Westenburg’s baton.**

getting a wonderful balance of tone. On the other hand, John Schantz was and is a superb organist and knew only too well how he could obtain exquisite musical results from the organs he designed and voiced.

Over the years, John A. Schantz has been a valued mentor, teaching me many valued lessons about the instrument we both admire so much. I can recall during a backstage visit at Radio City Music Hall in 1958, both Dr. William Barnes and Dr. Charles Courboin telling me of the great Schantz organ at the Cathedral (now Ba-

silica) of the Sacred Heart in Newark, New Jersey, and John’s wonderful work there. Little did I know that about a decade or so later Mr. Schantz would ask me to represent his firm.

#### Life after Möller

I left M. P. Möller (and sadly Mr. Brady) to attend college in the fall of 1957. Later that year, I was hired as associate organ technician for Radio City Music Hall, upon the recommendation of another Möller employee who was working the night shift there. I still hold



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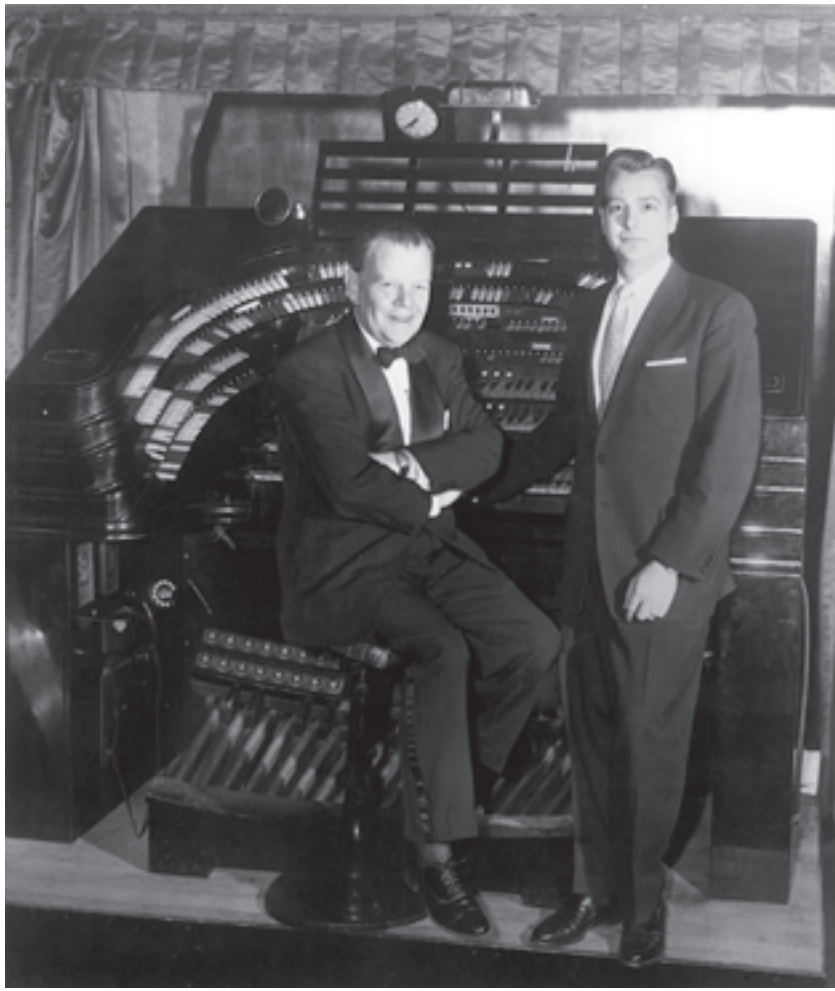
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Head organist Richard Liebert and associate organist Raymond Bohr at the stage right Radio City Music Hall console. The two played the solo parts in Raymond Paige's many organ and orchestra overtures. Ron Bishop had the pleasure of working with these gentlemen, attending to the care of the great organ with Louis Ferrara, who installed the instrument in 1932.



Ron Bishop and Robert MacDonald share a fun time shortly after Bob's appointment as director of music at the Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart, Newark, New Jersey, and the start of MacDonald's ten-year tenure at Radio City Music Hall, New York City.



The late Dr. Leon Thompson, music director of the Abyssinian Baptist Church, New York City, and Ron Bishop share a moment at the noon meal following the service of dedication of the five-manual Schantz installation. Several performances with the New York Philharmonic followed in the years to come.



Claire Coci gave Ron and Emmie this photo one evening during a dinner at her home (she cooked). Ron tuned for many of her concert dates along with maintaining the organ in her studio at "the Academy."

an Emeritus title at the theater to this day. Soon after joining the Music Hall staff, I met a beautiful young lady named Emma Stiffler, who was then a Rockette. We were married in September of 1960 and through God's blessing share a love that grows deeper as each day goes by.

About eight years after our marriage, I met up with opus 8000 once again when Richard Westenburg asked me to take charge of the instrument as it continued to play an important role in his Musica Sacra series and the ministry of music at Central Church. The late William Whitehead and the recently retired John Weaver shared the continuo work with Dick conducting the chorus, and in the course of the season Dr. Weaver played a stunning performance of the Poulenc organ concerto under Richard's baton to a well-deserved standing ovation. Opus 8000 really did its thing that evening. Around 1978, I again had the honor of hearing this work on the Schantz organ at Abyssinian Baptist Church, with the late Leon Thompson conducting members of the New York Philharmonic, of which he was an associate conductor—once again a standing ovation from a full congregation, 2,300 in this beautiful setting. I had assisted John A. Schantz in the design,

installation, and tonal finishing of this five-manual instrument, which contained some pipework from the previous installation there that preceded opus 8000 by a few years. Frederick Swann had served the congregation as consultant, and the organ's opening performance included the full New York Philharmonic, Zubin Mehta conducting, with the late Leonard Raver at the console and Leontyne Price a vocal soloist. New York City concertgoers did indeed enjoy the wonderful concert seasons.

Emmie and I became patrons of Dr. Westenburg's program at Central, which kept us in contact with our four-manual Möller friend for several more years. That series was music-making of the highest order and later moved to Avery Fisher Hall. In addition, Dick went on to become music director of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church.

#### Dan Locklair

In the summer of 1976, Emmie, our sons, and I took a summer home on Hart Lake (Pennsylvania), in the mountains just below Binghamton, New York. Dan Locklair had contracted with Schantz (with me as project director) to do extensive tonal work and additions to the



Dan Locklair

fine Link organ at First Presbyterian Church, Binghamton. My staff and I had a wonderful time working with and for Dan, and we have been dear friends ever since. Later on, Dr. Locklair composed an anthem in our honor entitled *A Christmas Carol*. Dan and his lovely wife Paula are doing wonderful things in the

Winston-Salem, North Carolina area. John A. Schantz joined me in doing the tonal finishing of the Binghamton organ. One of the major donors came to me and said it is just perfect and thank you and Mr. Schantz.

#### New York City installations

In thinking about New York City's two major concert halls, one does wonder about the lack of organs in both of them. When I first started at the Music Hall, my boss, Louis Ferrara, took me up to Carnegie Hall to see the Kilgen installation there. He would be asked to tune it from time to time, and our friend Claire Coci was organist of the Philharmonic, which resided there back then. I later serviced the instrument in Claire's home until her unfortunate passing. The late and quite wonderful George William Volkel also played the Kilgen for the *Bell Telephone Hour*, which was broadcast in its radio days from the hall. George even played a half-hour recital for the audience prior to the program going on the air "live." Although buried, that instru-



Emmie and Ron have lunch with Liberace and his producer, Ray Arnet, along with three former Rockettes. Liberace and Arnet made use of the Music Hall Grand Organ in their New York productions, selecting Robert MacDonald as organist for their sold-out performances.

ment could make itself known but was later removed for whatever reason.

At the time Avery Fisher (then Philharmonic) Hall was completed, Louis, Ray Bohr (Music Hall organist) and I were invited by the Aeolian-Skinner foreman to visit the organ installation, which had just been rough tuned. The stage crew brought that very beautiful ebony console to the stage on its elevator. Ray and Lou went out into the house and asked me to PLAY. Now we already know of my playing skills (?!), but that organ and its gorgeous sound made even me sound decent. In my opinion, it was just a sin to remove that instrument. At the time of the Abyssinian Baptist Church installation and through Dr. Leon Thompson's kindness, Zubin Mehta asked me to come to the hall and see what could be done relative to a possible new Schantz installation. During my visit, I was told by the stage manager that if the sliding steel door (à la the Kennedy Center Aeolian-Skinner installation in Washington, DC) had been installed, the original organ would still be there. The powers that be would not, however, spend the money for that installation. The organ chamber was still there, walled over, and used for storage. The "acoustical" person granted such a limited space for any replacement organ that the project was just impossible to consider. Believe me, John Schantz and I spent a great deal of time discussing the matter to no avail.

Despite this lacking, the area churches really provided some great concert venues, thinking of Dr. Giles and opus 8000 and our wonderful friends at the Abyssinian Baptist Church, who have continued to invite the New York Philharmonic to appear with their five manual instrument.

Even the Grand Organ at Radio City Music Hall has taken its concert turn under the batons of Carmine Coppola and James Levine, with Frederick Swann and Anthony Newman as guest organ soloists. Even back in the presentation days, the great Raymond Paige conducted the Music Hall Symphony Orchestra in the *Bach Festival Overture*, with Richard Leibert at the console. The superb arrangement for this presentation was made by Rayburn Wright. This format was further developed with the Richard Rodgers *Overture*, again with Mr. Leibert as featured artist. Ray Bohr played all

the regular organ intermissions on the opposite console. In later years, Robert MacDonald not only played the opening for Liberace's show, but also joined the orchestra for the second act overture to the music of J. S. Bach. Needless to say, Robert and the organ were well received by all concerned.

A few years before his death, Virgil Fox called me to discuss a magazine article we were preparing on the Music Hall Grand Organ, its various uses and upkeep. After about ten minutes' discussion of the article's material, we spent another hour going over the planning of an organ program Dr. Fox and I were working on for a proposed New York appearance at Radio City Music Hall. He wanted to do the first portion of his program on the stage right console, then move to his Allen touring organ, which would be placed stage center, making full use of the elevators and turntable equipment. The light show would have been included and at one point he would move to the stage left console for another portion of the program. The finale section and any encores (*Perpetual Motion* for certain) would be played on the touring organ, and we got to wondering if the cabling on it would allow Dr. Fox to move down stage out onto the stage-level orchestra pit elevator so that his pedal work could be spotlighted to the greatest advantage. It is indeed unfortunate that this wonderful man never got to perform this program. I am certain that he would have sold out the vast theater, and many standing ovations would have taken place that evening.

It is obvious that the instrument we all care about has been featured in concert venues by many talented people. Broadway history alone tells me that Firmin Swinnen did a pedal solo four times a day at the Rivoli Theater with his footwork spotlighted from on high as he played *The Flight of the Bumble Bee*.

It was the happenings that I have known and surely my discussion with Dr. Fox that led me and my son Richard to include plug-in connectors and traveling cable materials when we rebuilt both Music Hall consoles. They can now remain in their normal alcove settings or be placed anywhere on the stage, turntable, or orchestra pit. Dr. Fox would have loved the possibilities. When Mr. Swann, Mr. Coppola and the American



Radio City Music Hall prior to opening day, December 27, 1932. The two independent consoles that control the Grand Organ are shown. The Music Hall's conductor, Raymond Paige, made extensive use of the organ, having the *Bach Festival Overture* arranged for organ and orchestra, among many presentations.

Symphony concluded their program, with the orchestra at stage level bathed in the appropriate light and the organist and console spotlighted in white, there was of course a standing ovation and the magic had happened once again.

With the many recent concert hall organs now installed and being planned, I know that magic will happen again. In a way, Dr. Giles helped it all get started again after World War II. The music ministry at Abyssinian has helped to continue the adventure along with the late Richard Westenburg's ongoing contributions. Let us all continue to enjoy, support, and celebrate such ventures. ■

Ronald Cameron Bishop obtained a job with the New York M. P. Möller crew in the fall of 1955, after observing the Möller

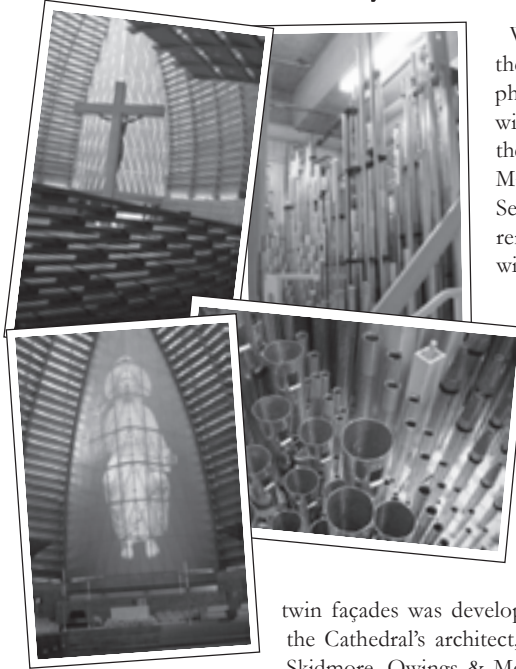
installation crew at his family's church that summer. He worked with the New York crew through the fall of 1957, when he joined the organ maintenance staff at Radio City Music Hall. At that time he also formed his own pipe organ service firm.

He married Emma Stiffler, who had been a Rockette at the Music Hall, on September 3, 1960, and they have two sons. In 1973, John A. Schantz invited Ron to become a district representative for the Schantz Organ Company, where he remained for over 32 years.

The Music Hall in-house maintenance staff was eliminated in the late 1960s. In late 1975, Raymond F. Bohr, Music Hall head organist, and John Henry Jackson, vice president and senior producer at the theater, invited Ronald Bishop to return and begin the much-needed restoration of the Grand Organ. He now serves in two emeritus positions and assists his wife in the operation of her dance studio, in addition with his organ consultation services.

## The Cathedral of Christ the Light

OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA



We are pleased to announce the completion of the first phase of our organ project with the Cathedral of Christ the Light in time for the Mass of Dedication held on September 25, 2008. The remainder of the instrument will be constructed in our

workshops over the coming six months and will be installed during the late summer of 2009. The completed instrument will feature four manuals, 75 independent stops (excluding borrows), 90 ranks and 5,335 pipes.

The design of the organ's twin façades was developed in collaboration with the Cathedral's architect, Craig Hartman of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, and will suggest a natural forest with numerous wooden pipes.

We are honoured to have been selected by the Cathedral of Christ the Light's Organ Committee to design and build this significant new pipe organ for Oakland's resonant new Cathedral. For more information, visit our website at the address below or the Cathedral's website at [www.ctlcathedral.org](http://www.ctlcathedral.org).

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