

MorningStar Music Publishers announces the release of new organ music: *Aria (Homage to Flor Peeters and Paul Manz)* by Michael Burkhardt (10-170, \$7.00); *O Love, How Deep: Three Hymn Settings for Organ* by Craig Phillips (10-240, \$12.00); *Six General Hymn Improvisations, Set 3*, by Michael Burkhardt (10-539, \$14.00); *Introductions, Interludes & Codas on Traditional Hymn Tunes, Set 4*, by Donald Rotermund (10-544, \$20); *Four Postludes in Classic Style* (Bach, Handel, Haydn), transcriptions and settings by Charles Callahan (10-608, \$9.00); *Two Festive Pieces for Organ* by Neil Harmon (10-612, \$11.00); *Contemplations on Four English Hymn Tunes* by James Biery (10621, \$10.00); *La Croix* by David Evan Thomas (10-631, \$8.00); *Five Liturgical Pieces for Organ* by Lynn Trapp (10-641, \$11.00); *Toccata on A Mighty Fortress* by Austin Lovelace (10-795, \$8.00). For information: 800/647-2117; <www.morningstarmusic.com>.

The spring issue of *The Organbuilder*, newsletter of **Dobson Pipe Organ Builders, Ltd.**, includes Lynn Dobson's discussion of the company's 35th anniversary, the website exhibition of his organ design drawings, the new organ for the University of Tampa, updates on projects for Independent Presbyterian Church, Birmingham, Alabama, St. Thomas Church, New York, and Bruton Parish Church, Williamsburg, as well as restoration projects; a profile of woodworker Kent Brown; recently completed instruments and works in progress; and news of performances on Dobson organs. For information: 712/464-8065; <www.dobsonorgan.com>.

Work was scaled back, but is going once again at **Wicks Organ Co.** In February many craftsmen and office staff were temporarily laid off and the shop was idled. But with new contracts and approved drawings from existing contracts, the firm called its staff back to work. A week after the shutdown, call-backs began. Component parts currently being made are for a job that was approved on February 24. President Mark H. Wick said, "We have over 6,400 customers worldwide, and we have survived for over 104 years. We are confident to continue that tradition of serving our customers unless our government makes it too difficult to continue."

Current projects include the sanctuary and chapel organs for St. James Cathedral, Orlando, Florida, and a new organ for All Saint Catholic Church, Manassas, Virginia. Wicks has recently signed a contract for a new pipe organ at King Moravian Church, King, North Carolina. For information: <www.WicksOrgan.com>.

Installed just in time for Easter, a **Rodgers Masterpiece organ** will serve the congregation at San Francisco's Grace Cathedral during refurbishment of its Aeolian-Skinner pipe organ. Grace Cathedral's organ dates to 1934, when it was donated by Harriet Crocker Alexander, sister of the principal donor



Grace Cathedral, San Francisco

of the cathedral site. According to the cathedral's website, although it is listed as Opus 910A of Ernest M. Skinner, the Alexander organ was in fact largely designed by G. Donald Harrison. When built, the Grace Cathedral organ had five divisions—Choir, Great, Swell, Solo, and Pedal—and 6,077 pipes. It has since grown to 7,466 pipes.

The cathedral launched its "Organ/Acoustics Project" in response to impending failure of roofs over the two organ chambers. The work will include an overhaul of the organ's wind system, re-leathering and various pipe replacements and installations. The organ restoration work will be done by the Schoenstein Co. of San Francisco.

The Rodgers organ chosen to serve the cathedral is a three-manual drawknob console with the equivalent of 120 pipe ranks. Using Rodgers' patented Parallel Digital Imaging® technology, it generates sound in the same way as a pipe organ, with each pipe speaking from its own aural position. The organ was tonally finished by John Green and Richard Anderson of Rodgers Instruments Corporation, in partnership with the cathedral's interim assistant organist Robert Gurney. For information: <www.rodgersinstruments.com>.

Schmidt Piano & Organ Service of Kitchener, Ontario, announces debut concerts to introduce the Physis Unico Church Organs by Viscount International in eastern Canada. The organ uses pipe modeling technology developed by Viscount International engineering over the last ten years. These consoles blend with windblown pipes or Schmidt Classique Organ Sound Systems.

Schmidt will sponsor a Unico 400 Custom Console and custom-built Schmidt Classique Organ sound systems for most of the following concerts. Concerts are presented by "Stiching One Day," which supports private Christian education as well as various missions. Various choirs and instrumentalists will be heard, including Martin Maans and Andre Knevel.

July 9, Compass Point Bible Church, Burlington, Ontario, 8 pm;

July 10, Centennial Hall, London, Ontario, 7:30 pm;

July 13, St. George's Anglican Church, Guelph, Ontario, 8 pm;

July 14, Cathedral of St. Catherine of Alexandria, St. Catharines, Ontario, 8 pm

July 15, Hamilton Place, Hamilton, Ontario, 8 pm;

July 16, Roy Thomson Hall, Toronto, Ontario, 8 pm;

July 17, Redeemer College, Ancaster, Ontario, 7:30 pm. For information:

<www.canadachoir.ca>;

<www.schmidtpianoandorgan.com>.

Looking Back

10 years ago in the July 2000 issue of THE DIAPASON

Cover: Martin Ott Pipe Organ Company, Mount Angel Abbey, St. Benedict, OR

Colin Andrews appointed visiting lecturer in organ and church music, East Carolina University, Greenville, NC

Jeremy David Tarrant appointed organist/choirmaster, Cathedral Church of St. Paul, Detroit, MI

Elizabeth and Raymond Chenault celebrate 25 years as organists/choirmasters at All Saints Church, Atlanta, GA

William Ferris died May 16 at age 63
Lester H. Groom, age 71, died March 28

"OHS Convention 2000," by Jerry D. Morton

"An Interview with John Scott," by Marcia Van Oyen

"Ernest M. Skinner Opus 327, St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Evanston, Illinois," by Richard Webster

New organs: Bedient, Gabriel Kney, Lewis & Hitchcock

25 years ago, July 1985

Cover: C. B. Fisk, Inc., Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, MA

Jonathan A. Wright appointed assistant organist-choirmaster, Cathedral of St. Philip, Atlanta, GA

Thomas Wikman appointed to preside over Wilhelm organ, Chicago Theological Seminary, Chicago, IL

Roger Sessions died at the age of 88 on March 16

"Bach's Canonic Variations on *Vom Himmel hoch*, Text and Context—Part 1," by Gwen E. Adams

"A Survey of Viennese Organs and Organbuilders, 1300–1800," by Kit Stout

New organs: John-Paul Buzard, Jude, Prairie Organ Company, Schudi Organ Company, Karl Wilhelm

50 years ago, July 1960

People: M. Albert Bichsel, Edgar Parke Billups, Virgil Fox, Philip Gehring, Theodore Herzl, John Hamilton, Clarence Ledbetter, William Whitlock Lemonds, George Markey, Donald McDonald, Margaret McElwain, Walter Piston, Leo Sowerby, Halsey Stevens, Gordon Wilson

Obituaries: Ruth Krehbiel Jacobs, Raymond J. Smith, Marie Briel Humphries, Harry McGaw

"Ford Museum Has Valuable Early Organ," by Wendling Hastings

Organs: Aeolian-Skinner, Austin, Brattel, Casavant, Hunter and Kirtledge, Jardine, Möller, Pels, Reuter, Schantz, Wicks

75 years ago, July 1935

Austin Organ Company to go out of business

Alexander McCurdy appointed head of organ department at Curtis Institute of Music, Philadelphia

Porter Heaps named winner of the H. W. Gray anthem prize

Harvey Gaul celebrates 25th anniversary at Calvary Church, Pittsburgh

Franklin S. Palmer died June 5 in Seattle, WA

New York AGO convention is largest on record

Leon Verres wins THE DIAPASON Prize "Significant Aspects of Bach's Genius Noted; Study of His Rhythm," by Oscar E. Schminke

Aeolian-Skinner organ for East Liberty Presbyterian Church, Pittsburgh

Möller organ built for Tudor Chapel at Langley Field (Air Force)

Kimball dedicated at Ruggles Street Baptist Church, Roxbury, MA

Three-manual Austin installed at First Presbyterian Church, Marquette, MI

John McDonald Lyon appointed to St. James Cathedral, Seattle, WA

Organs by Aeolian-Skinner, Casavant, Estey, Frazee, Kimball, Reuter

In the wind . . .

by John Bishop



The hands of an artist

Wendy and I are just back from a vacation in Greece. Our daughter Meg has lived in Athens for three years, and we've visited several times. With her help, we've had a wonderful introduction to Greek history and culture. There are plenty of difficulties associated with living in Greece—the current economic crisis there is fueling labor strikes and deadly protests, and plenty of that was going on during our visit, just a few blocks from Meg's apartment. But the deep history of the country is fascinating and moving. As you walk or drive around Athens you constantly rediscover the Parthenon perched high on the Acropolis. It seems there are hundreds of tiny streets that provide distant views of the majestic temple, and you can easily identify which rooftop terraces provide those views.

As you walk, you stumble across countless archeological sites hidden in quiet neighborhoods away from the bustle of the Acropolis. The city's streets are lined with orange and lemon trees—sounds romantic and smells wonderful, until the fruit ripens and the sidewalks are littered with rotting lemons and oranges.

Greece is not a pipe organ country. There is a large organ by Klais in the Friends of Music Hall in Athens, but

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Hilltop cathedrals on Serifos, Catholic cathedral on the left



The organ at the Catholic cathedral in Serifos



Serifos Catholic priests

1601. (This has been easy to maintain as there have been only five organists there since 1863.)¹ The plaque honoring clergy in the Cathedral of Serifos goes back to 343 AD. No kidding!

The island of Aegina is a touristy place near Athens, a good stopping point for boats traveling to the more distant Cycladics. It's a major producer of pistachio nuts (we brought home a couple kilos) and home to some extraordinary archeological sites. The museum in Aegina Town includes decorated pottery from 2500 BC and shows a model of a bronze

casting facility from about 1000 BC that was discovered nearby. I was captivated by the idea that such sophisticated techniques were developed so long ago (4500-year-old pottery kilns?), and as the Cycladic islands are volcanic, including a couple that are still active, I wondered what role volcanoes might have had in

the development of crafts that depend on intense heat.

One of the most gifted Greek sculptors was Praxiteles. He lived from 400–330 BC, not all that old. But his work was far ahead of his time. As far as we know, he was the first to sculpt life-size female nudes from marble. There's a

the dominance of the Greek Orthodox Church, which does not use musical instruments, means that there are very few organs there. Our vacation was a tour of the Cycladic Islands in the Aegean Sea, which form a political state whose capital is Spathi on the island of Serifos. The population of Greece is about eleven million—ten thousand are Roman Catholics, and most of them live on Serifos. There are dueling cathedrals (Orthodox and Catholic) on hilltops above the city, and sure enough, there's a small pipe organ in the Catholic cathedral. We climbed hundreds of stairs from the port to the hilltop, and unbelievably we were not able to get into the organ loft.

It's common in American churches to see a plaque honoring the succession of pastors. A few congregations around us in New England trace that history to the seventeenth century. Organists revere the plaque in the organ loft of the Church of St. Sulpice in Paris where organists are traced back to Nicolas Pescheur in

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Praxiteles: Aphrodite of Credos

legend that he had a romantic relationship with his primary model, Phryne, who came from Thespiae (origin of the term *thespian*) and was known as one of the most beautiful women of her time. She was the model for Praxiteles' famous *Aphrodite of Credos*. Their relationship was explored by Camille Saint-Saëns in his comic opera *Phryne*. (How did he ever stumble on that subject?)

Praxiteles worked in Athens. His model came from Thespiae, about 150 kilometers away. He worked with marble from the Cycladic Island of Paros, more than 200 kilometers away by water. Think of the logistics of transporting a six-foot block of marble from Paros to Athens just to carve a statue of a pretty woman. It would be difficult enough now with power equipment and hydraulics. Praxiteles produced artworks of staggering beauty and unprecedented liveliness. I suppose his love for the beautiful Phryne brought out the best in him.

Too many cooks

I wonder if there was anyone looking over Praxiteles' shoulder saying, "Take a little more off the top," or, "You've got the left earlobe too fat."

We know that happened to Michelangelo as he released *David* from a huge block of Carrara marble. He was commissioned by the Overseers of the Office of Works of the Cathedral in Florence, and was in fact the third artist to receive the commission. The overseers were very concerned that the huge and wildly expensive block of marble (already named *David*) was neglected for twenty-five years, lying on its side exposed to the elements. The committee got its act back together, had the stone set upright so artists could see its potential, and went looking for someone to realize the project after the first two attempts failed. Leonardo da Vinci was interviewed, but the twenty-six-year-old Michelangelo got the gig.

Not only was he hired by a committee to produce the piece, but another committee including Leonardo and his colleague/competitor Botticelli was formed to choose the location. There is record of disagreement among the members of

the committee before the site by the entrance to the Palazzo Vecchio on Piazza della Signoria was chosen. Apparently Leonardo didn't get his way.²

So much for the image of the artist toiling in his studio, free to express his deepest emotions through an unlikely medium that he understands better than anyone. It's a romantic image to be sure, but especially when there's a lot of money involved and the artwork is for a public place, there are likely to be a lot of spoons in the soup.

I know that guy

Each month I receive several journals with photos of pipe organs on the front cover and I always try to guess the builder before I look inside. I'm often wrong, but there are a half-dozen North American organbuilders whose styles are so clearly recognizable to me that I get them right every time. As most organs are commissioned by committee, I admire those builders who can create and maintain recognizable styles.

I like to think of a pipe organ as an expression of the sensibilities of the builder. I love the process of organ design, when the concept of an instrument gets put on paper. When several companies are invited to submit proposals to a church for a new instrument, it's interesting to see the various drawings—how each firm would meet the particular challenges of the building. And sometimes we get to see several different concepts by a single builder for a particular instrument.

Organbuilder Lynn Dobson has produced many wonderful pipe organ designs, and as his firm celebrates its thirty-fifth anniversary they have created an online exhibition of many of his drawings, including designs of many organs that were never built. When you scroll through this rich display, you can see projects in various stages of design, from simple back-of-a-napkin pencil sketches to elaborate scale models. Take a look at the designs for the important organ they built for the Kimmel Center in Philadelphia (Opus 76) and you'll see a drawing and a model (two different designs) that are radically different from the organ that was actually built. You can find this exhibit at <http://www.dobsonorgan.com/dwg/home.html>.

Dobson's exhibition reflects his exceptional talent for design, and it implies thousands of hours of committee work as each design was presented, discussed, criticized, and altered. From first-hand experience I know well the feelings that accompany the rejection of a design by a committee member. One such meeting was held in a newly decorated church parlor, and I wondered if anyone who was speaking up against my design had been involved in creating the cacophony of clash and kitsch, which was that room.

Maybe I flatter Lynn by mentioning him in the same breath with Michelangelo, and to be honest I think Michelangelo is the larger talent, but the idea that a great artwork can be both the expression of its creator and of those who pay for and "consume" it, is one of the most interesting facets of the organbuilder's trade. And that a personal style can tran-



Dobson organ, St. Peter Claver, West Hartford, Connecticut (photo: courtesy Dobson Pipe Organ Builders, Ltd.)

scend the whims and pressures of dozens of committees reflects both artistic integrity and conviction.

Stop, look, and listen

Visual design is only part of the job. A pipe organ is both an architectural element and a musical instrument. Ideally, there's some relationship between an organ's appearance and its musical content—but sometimes a building's architecture doesn't allow it. It's easy to picture the stark contemporary building owned by a congregation that would be best served by an organ of classic style. Sometimes an ornate classic case looks good in such building—it's possible to make a case for the organ to serve as the only beautiful thing in the place! But organbuilders often place organs with classic influence in contemporary buildings.

As we're talking about Dobson, take a look at their instrument for the Church of St. Peter Claver in West Hartford, Connecticut: http://www.dobsonorgan.com/html/instruments/op85_westhartford.html. The stoplist is classical, even predictable, but the case is pure contemporary. And by the way, in this design Dobson has dealt with one of the most common problems. Pipe organs are about height, and contemporary American church buildings often have low ceilings. The organ in West Hartford implies a struggle between the organ and the ceiling.

We often hear of a pipe organ that was designed by the local organist, a source of pride for a congregation. This usually means that the organist wrote up the stoplist, likely subject to discussion with the builder. If an organbuilder has a recognizable visual style, he would certainly have a signature tonal style. So how does it work if the Request for Proposal from a church includes a stoplist? What if the organbuilder doesn't agree with the concept implied by that stoplist?

One good reason for including a stoplist in an RFP is to solicit proposals that are easy to compare. Once several proposals are studied and a builder is chosen, then it's time to work on final specifications. So it's back to the committee. I know of one large organ built several years ago whose stoplist was the product of many hours of conversation in a small bar across the street from the church.

Who brought the camel?

So what good comes from artworks designed by committee? You know the old saying, "A camel is a horse that was designed by a committee." If too many people, especially those who know little or nothing about organs, are involved in planning an organ, whose art is it? Or is it even art? An organbuilder can withdraw a proposal if he's not happy with the concept the client insists on, but you can't eat a withdrawn proposal. How many of us have produced projects we disagree with? If you have a story, send me a message at john@organclearinghouse.com.

Our current project was greatly influenced by the church's organist, whose insight into what an organ console can be was an education for me. Adding a half-dozen clever and unusual controls increased the organ's flexibility exponentially. The time we spent together planning the project before any screws were turned or leather was cut was a collegial creative process that I think enlightened us both.

We often think of the artist as independent. Of course, art of a personal scale is usually the purview of the artist. But I wonder if the celebrated portrait artist John Singer Sargent was ever told, "Just don't make me look fat." I bet he was, and more than once.

Monumental art, including pipe organs, is almost always a community effort. There is usually a central creative force, but when there is a committee involved to raise and spend money responsibly, they usually insist on a role in the planning. If organbuilders are competing for a project, they must decide how much they want the job and how much they are willing to compromise their vision of the ideal instrument.

It's rare for a builder to be given a blank check and a free hand. It would be a special opportunity for a creative person—but also what a huge responsibility. Organbuilders, if this ever happens to you, make sure you build something the church can use. ■

Notes

1. <http://www.stsulpice.com/Docs/history.html>

2. I recall this story from a college art history class. I've refreshed my memory by reading the article about Michelangelo's *David* in the on-line encyclopedia Wikipedia.

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