



Andre Knevel



John Van Der Laan



Martin Mans

Schmidt Piano and Organ Service of Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, sponsored a three-manual Viscount Unico 400 and custom-built Schmidt Classique organ sound system for the Stichting Foundation Canada OneDay Choir Festival. This organization raises funds for private Christian education and missionary work.

Performers included Martin Mans and Arie Van Der Vlist of Holland, as well as Andre Knevel, John Van Der Laan, and James Van den Brick of Canada. Concerts took place July 9–17 with the Viscount Unico at Compass Point Bible Church, Burlington; Hamilton Place, Hamilton; Centennial Hall, London; and St. Catherine's Cathedral, St. Catharines.

There were also concerts at Redeemer

College, Ancaster, and Roy Thompson Hall in Toronto. A festive concert for Andre Knevel's 40th anniversary was held at St. Catherine's Cathedral July 14. At this occasion, organ duets were played on the Létourneau tracker organ in the gallery and the Viscount Unico 400 organ in the chancel. For information:

<www.schmidtpianoandorgan.com>;
<www.canadachoir.com>;
<www.one-day.ca>;
<www.martinmans.nl>;
<www.andreknevel.com>.



Allen Elite™ Opus VI, Falls Church Presbyterian Church, Virginia

Allen Organ Company has installed an Allen Elite™ Opus VI at Falls Church Presbyterian Church, Virginia. The inaugural recital featured Jeremy Filsell, artist-in-residence at the Washington National Cathedral. Allen Elite Opus VI is a four-manual digital instrument of 82 stops with a 48-channel audio system and separate Antiphonal

division. The English cathedral tonal design is adapted for a contemporary American church setting. Additional recitals will present Neil Weston, David Lang, Giles Brightwell, and Aram Basmadjian; the last concert in the series will feature Falls Church Presbyterian's Chancel Choir. For information: <www.allenorgan.com>.

In the wind . . .

by John Bishop



Sailmaker's bag



Don't blame the tools

The carpenter is finishing a house. He's carefully measuring and mitering baseboards, windowsills, and doorjambs. He's distracted by a mosquito, and his hammer glances the nail creating a *carpenter's rosette*. The first thing he does is look at the head of the hammer—must be some glue on it or something.

The same carpenter needs to make one quick cut. He draws a square line on the board and picks up his handsaw. The saw veers to starboard. The first thing he does is look at the saw. Must be dull.

Or he measures a piece with a folding wooden ruler. He makes his mark and cuts his piece, but he didn't unfold the ruler all the way—the inch markings skip from 13 to 26 and the piece is a foot too short. The first guy to come up with a wood-lengthener or wood-widener is going to make a fortune.

Organbuilders typically have many more tools than most tradesmen because our trade comprises so many facets. Of course, we have lots of wood-working tools, but we also have tools for leather, soft metal, hard metal, electrical work, and some ingenious rigs specific to pipe organs such as pallet spring pliers, tuning cones, toe cones and toe-hole reamers, and a wide assortment of nasty-looking little spades and prickers

for voicing organ pipes.

When I'm working on a job site installing, tuning, or repairing organs, I carry a canvas sailmaker's tool bag that measures about 8 by 16 inches and 12 inches high when fully loaded. It's got 24 pockets on its sides and ends that surround a big central cavity. I like this format because you don't need extra space to open it. Carry a steel toolbox up onto an organ walkboard and you need twice the space for the open lid. I keep it organized so that each tool has a pocket (some pockets have a half-dozen tools in them), and when I'm squeezed in a dark corner in an organ I can put my hands on many of my tools without looking at the bag. When co-workers borrow tools from me, I ask them to leave them on the floor next to the bag so my system doesn't get messed up.

This morning I unloaded my car after a weeklong trip to one of our job sites, and all my toolboxes are on the long workbench in my shop. I wonder as I write just what's in the favorite sailmaker's bag, so I'll take everything out and count. My everyday tool kit includes:

- 15 screwdrivers (no two alike, including ratchets, stubbies, offsets, straight, Phillips, or Robertson drive—I hope there's never a screw I can't reach)
- 2 wire cutters (fine for circuit boards, heavy for larger wires)
- 2 pairs long-nosed pliers (small and large)
- Flat-billed pliers
- Round-nosed pliers (for bending circles and hooks in wire)
- Double-acting linesman pliers (strong enough to let me bend bar steel in my hands, though the last pair broke in half when I did that)
- 1 pair slip-joint pliers
- 2 pairs vise-grips (one small, one long-nosed)
- Sears *Robo-grip* pliers (inherited from my father-in-law's kit)
- 6" adjustable wrench
- 2 sets Allen keys (English and metric)
- 2 pairs of scissors (one specially sharp, one general use)
- 6" awl

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John's tools

- Tapered reamer
- 3 hemostats (two curved, one straight, for gripping tiny wires)
- Wire stripper (American Wire Gauge 16 through 26)
- 2 flashlights (large and small with spare batteries)
- 2 saws (one reversible back saw, one "harp" hack saw with replacement blades)
- 2 cheap chisels (3/4" and 1")
- 35-watt soldering iron and solder (for wiring)
- Electric test light
- 6 alligator clip leads
- Small hammer (my maul-wielding colleagues call it my "Geppetto" hammer)
- 2 rulers (one 35' tape measure, one 72" folding rule)
- 2 utility knives (light and heavy)
- 10 files (flat, half-round, round, big-medium-tiny)
- 3 tuning irons
- Pallet spring pliers
- 2.5-millimeter hex-nut driver (for Hues nuts)
- Wind pressure gauge
- 2 rolls black vinyl tape
- Sharpies, ballpoint pens, pencils
- Sharpened putty knife
- Spool of galvanized steel wire (for quick repairs)
- Bottle of Titebond glue
- Tubes of epoxy
- 5 small brushes

And there's a canvas tool-roller with 35 little pokers, prickers, burnishers, spades, spoons, a bunch of little rods for raising languids, wire twisters, magnets, special keyboard tools, and an A=440 tuning fork.

I often ship this bag on airplanes, wrapping it in a blanket and stuffing it in a duffel bag—checked baggage, of course—and I dread losing it. It would take weeks to reconstruct this tool kit.

In the back of the car I carry three other larger toolboxes, with cordless drills, bit and driver sets, and heavier hammers, multimeter, etc., etc., etc. There's a big plastic box with 40 dividers for wiring supplies, and another full of "organy" odds-'n'-ends like leather nuts and Hues nuts, felt and paper keyboard punchings, a few spare chest magnets, and some old piano ivories. And finally, a cardboard box full of pieces of leather and felt of almost any description—any large scrap from a workbench project goes into that box.

And I'm always missing something.

Organ transplants

Now that you know what my tool bag looks like, here's a story that makes me wonder. I got a Saturday call from one of my clients, a large Roman Catholic church with a big organ in the rear gallery. The organ wouldn't start and there were two Masses that afternoon. I knocked on

the door of the rectory to get the key for the organ loft and was greeted by a teenage girl who was volunteering to answer the parish phones on the weekend. She called a priest's extension and said, "The organ guy is here."

The priest was a tall, dignified, elderly man, who came down the stairs, invited me into a parlor, and offered me a seat. I carried my tool bag with me and set it on the floor next to my chair. He asked two or three questions before I realized he thought I had something to do with a human organ donation program. I set him straight as politely as I could, asking for the keys to the organ loft while wondering what in the world he thought I was going to do with those tools!

Tool renewal

When I was first running around the countryside tuning organs, the "land line" was our only means of communication. You had to get all your service visits arranged in advance, and if a day's plan changed because a sexton forgot to turn on the heat, I'd look for a pay phone at a gas station. Now of course we all have phones in our pockets. I usually have mine with me in an organ, not because I intend to interrupt my work taking calls, but because it has a notepad and a voice-memo system that allow me to keep notes while on the job. If I realize I'm missing a tool, I'm out of glue, or I don't have any fresh batteries along, I make a note, and every couple weeks I spend an hour with my tools, replenishing supplies, sharpening blades, and keeping things in order.

Tool envy

There are many clever people working in tool design—every time I go into a hardware store I notice some neat little innovation: the cordless drill-screwdriver with a little headlight that lights when you pull the trigger; the 4-in-1, then 8-in-1, then 10-in-1 screwdriver (I carry one of those in my briefcase); the little rubber octagonal washer that goes on the end of the flashlight to keep it from rolling. And boy, are they tempting. I buy a ten-dollar hand tool because it's cool and stuff it in my tool bag. Every now and then there has to be a culling. I guess it's good news that tools break and wear out. It gives me an excuse to buy new ones.

When I was a hotshot apprentice in Ohio, I bought a fancy set of chisels by mail order. These were the Marples beauties, with maple handles, iron ferrules, and Sheffield steel blades. I paid about a hundred dollars for the set of nine—a huge amount of money for me in 1978. (Those were the years when good new large organs cost \$5000 per stop!) I was enough of a beginner that my mentor teased me, saying all I needed now was some wood. But I still have those chisels, and I still have the racks I made to hang them on the wall over my bench. They're the only workshop chisels I've ever owned, and while some of them are a little shorter than they used to be, they sharpen just as easily as when they were new. The iron ferrules mean you can hit the handle pretty hard with a mallet without damaging the tool. They are old friends.

By the way, also hanging on the wall over my bench in that shop was a display of my mistakes, hung there by my mentor to keep me humble. I think they're still there.

When I started the Bishop Organ Company in 1987, I bought a Rockwell-Delta 10" table saw—it's known as a "Uni-Saw" and it must be one of the most popular table saw models ever made. The blade can be tilted to make angled cuts, and there's a crosscut miter gauge that allows me to cut angled ends of boards. Over more than 20 years, I've cut miles of wood with it, and only last month I had the first trouble with it. The arbor bear-

ings had finally worn out, and I found a local industrial supply company that was able to replace the bearings quickly. It was such a pleasure to use my saw again with the new bearings that I treated it to a new Freud carbide-tipped blade.

A reflection of attitude

The organbuilding firm of E. & G.G. Hook was most active in Boston in the second half of the nineteenth century. There's a legend handed down through generations of workers there that in order to be hired to work in the factory an applicant had to present his toolbox for inspection. In the days before Sears, Home Depot, Woodworker's Warehouse, Woodcraft Supply, Duluth Trading Company, McMaster-Carr, and Grainger, a woodworker built himself a box to store and transport his tools. Remaining examples show infinite attention to detail, with special drawers and cubbies designed for each specific tool, fancy dovetail joints, and hidden compartments. The worker that could produce such a masterpiece could build anything required in an organ shop.

Recently I noticed that Lowe's was featuring a new line of mechanics' toolboxes. These were not the little boxes you'd carry around, but monumental affairs with dozens of steel drawers on ball-bearing slides and heavy-duty casters. Some were five and six feet wide and just as tall. Fully loaded they'd weigh a ton or more. I've seen things like these for years in mechanics' service bays and I have a more modest version in my shop, but I'd never seen a toolbox with a built-in refrigerator! Not a bad idea, though.

You may have seen the traveling salesmen who peddle tools to mechanics. The companies are Snap-On, Cornwell, and Matco, among others. A heavy mobile tool showroom pulls up to a service station and the mechanics all come out to shop. The driver is a franchise owner who travels a regular route of customers. He extends credit to his customers, allowing them to make cash payments each week so the wives never learn how much money the guys are spending on tools. And the Snap-On driver is likely to be armed. He's carrying hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of tools that every mechanic would love to own.

A tool for every purpose

I take a lot of pleasure in my tools. I know, I know—it's a guy thing, as my wife often mentions (though her weaving habit depends on an in-house service department!). But maintaining a comprehensive and effective tool kit is essential to good organbuilding. We say don't blame the tools, but we cannot work without them. It's a simple pleasure to draw a sharp knife along a straight edge to cut a neat piece of leather. I enjoy the sound and sight of plane shavings curling off my workpiece onto my hands and wrists, littering the workbench and floor with aromatic twists. It brings to mind the cute little Christmas dolls made from plane shavings in places like Switzerland—Saint Nicolas with a curly beard of cedar shavings. Moving the languid of an organ pipe to achieve good musical speech, soldering wires to a row of pins that wind up looking like a row of jewels, gluing goat-skin gussets to the corners of a reservoir are all motions repeated countless times that I don't take for granted and can't repeat without my tools. When I use someone else's tools they feel funny in my hands.

Sometimes I'm asked how we can maintain patience to complete a project that might take a year or more. Easy—every day you take satisfaction in each little thing you make. A finished organ comprises thousands of those little projects blended into a unified whole. Listening to an instrument brings back the memories of each satisfying cut, each problem solved, and of course each mistake. My tools are my companions and my helpers. They've been with me to almost every American state and as far abroad as Madagascar. Right now they're all spread out on my workbench for a photo shoot, but they'll be back at work on Monday morning. ■

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