

Cover feature

John-Paul Buzard Pipe Organ Builders, Champaign, Illinois, Opus 38

St. Mark the Evangelist Catholic Church, San Antonio, Texas

St. Mark the Evangelist Catholic Church, San Antonio, is a vibrant Christian community of 5,000 families, located about twenty minutes north of the San Antonio International Airport in a new residential neighborhood on Thousand Oaks Drive. They have a well-deserved reputation for superior community outreach, building several Habitat for Humanity houses per year and operating a traveling meal program for the needy. Former organist and director of music and liturgy Lena Gokelman contacted me nearly twelve years ago to share ideas for a new pipe organ for the large church building then being planned. She and their consultant, Fr. James Brobst, traveled to Illinois to hear and play our instrument at Holy Family Catholic Church in Rockford, and were immediately convinced of the need to have the Buzard Sound at St. Mark's.

St. Mark's had no pipe organ in its original temporary sanctuary, and the majority of parishioners had never heard one. It was a daunting endeavor to educate the parish about the difference that a pipe organ could make in their liturgical and musical lives, and then convince them that they needed one! A long-standing parishioner was convinced, and through his anonymous generosity, made it happen.

This new organ is our 38th, and was designed to visually complement the sculpture of the Christus Rex, incised into and built out from the brick wall at the front of the assembly. The building seats about 1,000 people and is surprisingly lively in its acoustical environment. The organ itself is raised 18 feet above the floor and sounds nicely down the building's axis. Sonically it fills the entire room whether playing soft or loud. The woodwork in the façade is solid white oak, stained and finished to relate to the church's other woodworking. Pipes in the façade are made of polished tin and flamed copper.

Two sets of horizontal trumpets emphasize the aural excitement that a pipe organ can bring to a liturgical occasion. A high-pressure Tuba made of polished tin is in the organ's façade; a polished copper set of Pontifical Trumpets on lower pressure is mounted over the entry doors. Lest one think that resources were squandered on an unnecessary luxury of two chamades, they were included only after the organ's chamber space had been completely filled with the stops necessary for a full and proper classically conceived and romantically executed specification.

The choral singers are located in a "bump-out" area to the right of the building's axis. Because the choir is effectively in another room, and cannot hear the organ clearly, we built a four-stop Choral Organ to accompany their singing, housed in a small free-standing case that stands behind them. These four stops are of sufficient tonal variety and volume gradations to support the choral singing in perfect balance. Stops from the main portion of the organ may also be used to supplement the Choral Organ's sound.

The instrument contains 35 independent stops and 43 ranks of pipes across three manuals and the pedal keyboard. As in all Buzard organs, there is a wealth of tonal variety, even if the instrument is modest in size. At the hand of our tonal director Brian Davis, no two diapasons sound exactly alike; the flutes are liquid in tone and often take their cues from their orchestral counterparts; strings impart a warmth and keenness to the palette. The chorus reeds are spectacular, each stop having its own depth and degree of éclat; the plaintive German Romantic Oboe is a tremendously effective solo player, but also colors the Swell flues subtly. All metal pipes are made of



Buzard Opus 38



Choral Organ



Console

rich, high tin-content metal of generous thickness. On-site tonal finishing took a month to accomplish.

The organ's engineering was accomplished by our executive vice-president and chief engineer, Charles Eames. This instrument has the distinction of affording him one of his greatest challenges: designing a pipe organ with a 14-inch steel beam running through its center! Although chamber space was provided for a "future organ" when the church was built, neither architects nor contractors thought anything wrong about running a steel beam through its middle! Although the organ occupies a "chamber," the instrument is still housed in a free-standing case. This allows the sound to effortlessly project into the church, and for us to minimize any variables while installing on-site. This also afforded us the opportunity to build a ventilation system that brings conditioned air from the church up to the top of the organ, spilling down naturally, thereby keeping the instrument in tune.

The parish is "between organists." So, in order for the parishioners to hear what an organ could do for worship, I played for the three Sundays that I was in San Antonio voicing the organ. The first Sunday, people heard only those few stops that were finished. But by the second and third Sundays, I played the hymns, prelude, and postlude using the versatility of the entire instrument. The organ has been extremely well received by the parishioners, clergy, and the wider community. Organist David Heller will be dedicating it in a Solemn Pontifical Mass followed by a concert on Saturday, November 21.

My deepest thanks go to St. Mark's for commissioning us to build this organ, especially to Pastor Kevin Ryan, administrator "Dot" Hamlin, our contact person Lena Gokelman, music director Dolores Martinez and her assistant Courtney Guernsey, facility manager George Wetherill, and Irene Marin, who makes the best tortillas I've ever tasted!

A pipe organ is far more than the sum of its parts, or the sum of the labor-hours of the tremendously dedicated individu-



Pontifical Trumpets



Looking up



Tromba pipes

als with whom I am blessed to work. They all deserve special recognition:
 David Brown, foreman, service department and installation
 Brian K. Davis, tonal director
 Stephen Downes, metalworking, tonal assistant, installation
 Charles Eames, executive vice-president and chief engineer
 John Jordan, service technician
 C. Robert Leach, cabinetmaker façade, general woodworking, installation
 Stuart Martin, cabinetmaker façade and console cabinetry
 Shane Rhoades, cabinetmaker, winding system, installation
 Jay Salmon, office manager
 Lyoshia Svinarski, cabinetmaker and wood finishing
 Stuart Weber, service technician
 John Wiegand, service technician and installation
 Ray Wiggs, console, electrical and windchest specialist, installation
 Keith Williams, director, service department

—John-Paul Buzard

St. Mark the Evangelist Catholic Church, San Antonio, Texas
Buzard Opus 38, completed August 1, 2009: 35 stops, 43 ranks

GREAT – Manual II
Unenclosed, 4" wind pressure

- 16' Lieblich Gedeckt
- 8' Open Diapason (polished tin in façade)
- 8' Viola da Gamba
- 8' Harmonic Flute
- 8' Bourdon
- 4' Principal
- 4' Spire Flute
- 2 3/4' Twelfth
- 2' Fifteenth
- 2' Mixture V (breaks at octaves)
- Tremulant
- 8' Tromba (ext Ped 16' Tbn)
- 4' Clarion (ext 8')
- 8' Major Tuba (polished tin, horizontal)
- 8' Pontifical Trumpets (polished copper, horizontal)
- Great to Great 16', UO, 4'
- Swell to Great 16', 8', 4'
- Choral to Great 16', 8', 4'

SWELL – Manual III
Enclosed, 4" wind pressure

- 8' English Open Diapason
- 8' Stopped Diapason
- 8' Salicional
- 8' Voix Celeste (tc)
- 4' Principal
- 4' Harmonic Flute
- 2 3/4' Nazard
- 2' Recorder
- 1 1/2' Tierce
- 2 3/4' Full Mixture V
- 16' Bassoon (full length)
- 8' Trompette
- 8' Oboe
- Tremulant
- Cymbalstern
- 8' Major Tuba (Gt)
- 8' Pontifical Trumpets (Gt)
- Swell to Swell 16', UO, 4'

CHORAL – Manual I
Enclosed, 3 1/2" wind pressure

- 8' Principal (polished tin in façade)
- 8' Gemshorn
- 4' Octave
- 4' Flute
- Tremulant
- 8' Major Tuba (Gt)
- 8' Pontifical Trumpets (Gt)
- Choral to Choral 16', UO, 4'
- Swell to Choral 16', 8', 4'

PEDAL – Unenclosed

- 32' Subbass (1–12 digital, ext)
- 32' Lieblich Gedeckt (1–12 digital, ext)
- 16' Open Diapason (flamed copper and polished tin in façade)
- 16' Bourdon
- 16' Lieblich Gedeckt (Gt)
- 16' Metal Gedeckt (flamed copper in façade of Choral Organ case)
- 8' Principal (polished tin in façade)
- 8' Spire Flute
- 8' Bourdon (ext 16')
- 8' Gedeckt Flute (Gt)
- 4' Choral Bass (ext 8')
- 4' Open Flute (ext 16')
- 16' Trombone (wood)
- 16' Bassoon (Sw)
- 8' Trumpet (ext 16')
- 4' Clarion (ext 16')
- 8' Major Tuba (Gt)
- 8' Pontifical Trumpets (Gt)
- Great to Pedal 8', 4'
- Swell to Pedal 8', 4'
- Choral to Pedal 8', 4'



Trombone pipes