

## In the wind...

### Facebooking the music

Fifty years ago when television was a fledgling technology, it was touted as a great educational tool. That has proven true to some extent, but I wonder how many of us think that education is the primary function of television. If you took away all the sports, movies, crime dramas, sitcoms, reality shows, and talk shows, you'd be left with the Home Shopping Network and children's television. Children's television, carefully filtered, is not far from the only programming that's specifically intended as educational. Even PBS nature programming has evolved into "blood and guts" television. What used to be beautifully photographed documentaries about tree frogs has become action-terror shows about sharks, crocodiles, and volcanoes with that macho-tension-danger tone of narration. What if some future interstellar traveler used a week of television programming to sum up modern American civilization? He would miss the pipe organ altogether.

The origins of Facebook are pretty fuzzy, especially because there are ongoing disputes about who actually came up with the idea and who stole what from whom. But it's clear enough that one of the early iterations called Facesmash included a trick where photos of two Harvard students showed on your screen and you would vote for which was more attractive. I think I read that Facesmash founder Mark Zuckerberg set this up because he was annoyed when a girl jilted him. This did not fly well at politically correct Harvard University and Zuckerberg was called up in front of the disciplinary board.

All this implies that Facebook wasn't founded on high moral principles, but it sure is a medium that is missing its potential by a wide margin. When Facebook started getting popular, I was aware that members of my family were making posts about having the sniffles, or changing brands of toothpaste, and I was easily able to stay clear. But once while I was out of town sharing a nice dinner with a colleague, he talked at some length about how much he enjoyed keeping in touch with what's going on in the organ business by "Facebooking" with his friends. He showed me how friends were sharing ideas, posting photos of organ installations, and generally carrying on the kind of trade chatter that I love.

I joined. I made it clear to family members that I intended to keep my presence on Facebook professional, and now I have about eight hundred friends, most of whom are organ professionals. Even so, you'll not be surprised to hear that plenty of my professional friends make unprofessional posts. One guy who posts frequently seems to have nothing to say other than, "Good morning. Got my coffee." Another friend posts photos of his cats virtually every day. Nice cats, but I get it already. And really, friends, photos of fancy cocktails and beautiful restaurant meals have a way of looking alike. I wonder how long it will take Internet engineers to develop the ability to transmit smells?

Here's a little lecture, for what it's worth. When you post something on Facebook, remember that anyone can read it. So choir directors, never post yourself whining about volunteer choir members. Your success as a church musician depends on your ability to recruit, nurture, and maintain volunteer singers. Imagine how dear Mabel, who sings so loud and so flat, is going to feel if she reads you complaining about having to work with her. You're being paid to do that work. She is giving of her



Taylor & Boody blower

discretionary time for the privilege of singing under your direction as part of her worship experience. Accept that as flattery and work it out.

And organbuilders, never post yourself whining about your clients. If you care at all about your professional future, remind yourself how precious is the client that chooses a pipe organ when so many alternatives are available. We used to take them granted—there would always be organs to build. That's not the case anymore, and we must recruit, nurture, and maintain our clients. If you feel you have to complain, do it in private.

### Why are we doing this, anyway?

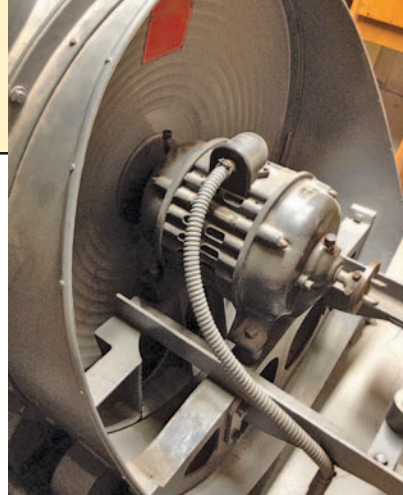
Several of my (Facebook) friends stand out because their posts are so constructive, informative, and celebratory. Neal Campbell is director of music and organist at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Darien, Connecticut, and is editor of the newsletter of the New York City Chapter of the American Guild of Organists. He is a wonderful historian, especially regarding church music in New York. He posts frequently on Facebook, sharing photos and information about those organists whose names we all know, and about whom we know nothing. He also sets a standard for how to post about a volunteer choir—sharing his pleasure with the choristers he works with. Neal's posts are thoughtful, charming, informative, and encouraging. If I were a parishioner at St. Luke's, Neal's tone on Facebook might just inspire me to join the choir. It's obviously the place to be.

Walden Moore is another Connecticut Episcopal organist who uses Facebook wonderfully. He has served Trinity Church on the Green in New Haven for nearly thirty years. He has a long history of mentoring distinguished assistant organists and organ scholars (I suppose I would too if my neighbor were the Yale Institute of Sacred Music—quite a talent pool!), and he leads three wonderful choirs in a beautiful building with a marvelous organ. Walden is a regular on my Facebook page, and his posts reflect the joy of playing the organ, working with choirs, and working with a raft of brilliant musicians. Plenty of the photos he posts show restaurant tables, but it's not primarily about the food. What stands out is that everyone in each photo is smiling or laughing. Now that's church music!

Yesterday I saw this post from the mother of boys who sing under Walden's direction:

'Believe in yourself. Believe in yourself as much as I believe in you.'—Mr. Moore to his choirboys at rehearsal tonight as they wrestled with a rhythmically thorny passage in a Distler piece. This is why my boys sing in choirs; would that every child could have this opportunity.

You go, Walden. More of that kind of thinking, and choir practice will take precedence over soccer. If everyone used it. And what about "I Got Rhythm?" All time greatest? How are we defining a



Spencer Orgblo

### It's not just any wind

Recently, Walden posted photos of the two organ blowers in Marquand Chapel at Yale—one for the Skinner organ, the other for Taylor & Boody. Here's what he said to accompany those photos:

Looking forward to the first class meeting of Liturgical Keyboard Skills tomorrow. Here are two almost never-seen views of the blowers for Marquand's two equally fine and beautiful organs, built by Ernest M. Skinner and Taylor & Boody. The two blowers pictured, just like the organs, are as different as they could be, but the difference in the wind provided is not reflected by the impact of the two organs in the chapel space. Both lead in the way in which they were designed, and each is a fine representation of the builder's art.

A tidbit like this is food for thought. Look at these two photos and note the differences between the two machines. One is modern, sleek, and compact, and ironically enough, provides the wind for a new organ based on ancient principles. The other is a "Spencer Orgblo," the workhorse of the twentieth-century electro-pneumatic organ. You can easily find the specifications of the two organs online. They are similar in size, at least in number of stops. The Taylor & Boody organ has more pipes, but I bet the Skinner weighs more!

One organ has sub-semitones on all three keyboards. One has two separate expression enclosures. One has lots of pistons, one has three big wedge-shaped reservoirs that can be pumped by foot power. One is in a chamber with curtains and a discreet façade, the other is in a free-standing case built of hardwood, opulently decorated with carvings and gold leaf. In tonal structure, philosophy, intent, and mechanical systems, the two instruments could hardly be more different, but they are both pipe organs, and they share the same air space. And that same air runs through the two blowers into the wildly different mechanical entities, producing as wide a variety of tone colors as you'll ever hear on six keyboards. (Curt Mangel and Peter Conte, you stay out of it!)

I love wind. I've written about it frequently in these pages. I chose the title of this column because of the organ's dependency on wind, and because, as Bob Dylan told us in his 1962 song, "The answer is blowing in the wind" is an enigmatic phrase that means either the answer is so obvious that you're a fool if you don't get it, or it's as free-flowing and omni-directional as the wind. "In the wind" is the equivalent of "the grapevine"—a vehicle for the exchange of ideas and/or the proliferation of gossip.

By the way, "Blowin' in the Wind" is number 14, and "Heard It through the Grapevine" is number 80 in *Rolling Stone* magazine's list of 500 Greatest Songs of All Time. Funny, I looked up the list and didn't find a single one of Schubert's 600. Surely "Der Erlkönig" should have made it. And what about "I Got Rhythm?" All time greatest? How are we defining a



Taylor & Boody drawknobs



Taylor & Boody casework

song? Dylan gets all the way through his song singing only eight different notes. And I could name that tune in one note.

I think of wind in two different ways. There is the wind I know I cannot control, and the wind I think I can control. We live on a tidal shore and the "sea breeze" is a favorite of mine. This is not just a wind that blows by the sea. It's a specific phenomenon caused by the warm afternoon sun heating up the land mass faster than the ocean's surface. The warm air rises off the land, and the cooler air rushes in off the ocean to take its place. It blows up the river and right through our house, and it's the most refreshing atmosphere ever. The only way I can control that wind is by opening and closing certain doors, causing it to turn at the end of the back hall and blow into the garage, which is my workshop. Wonderful.

In that workshop, I do all kinds of things that make me think I can control wind. I build windlines, releather windchests, and replace gaskets. I releather reservoirs—those ingenious devices that receive and store air pressure generated by the organ blower, regulate it to a specific intentional level of pressure, and then distribute it to the organ's pipes as the player demands air by playing notes that open valves. I can claim to be in control of that wind, but it's pretty crafty, always trying to escape and rejoin the rest of its free-spinning family. We call that "wind leaks."

Here's a tiny organ blower that's been on a shelf in my workshop for several years. In the trade, we call this a "pancake" blower because of its horizontal orientation. It's what you might find in a portable continuo organ, and it would be adequate for a gentle Positiv organ of six stops or less. But it would not provide enough pressure and volume of air for even one Skinner Diapason.

And here is the huge blowing plant for the mighty organ at Woolsey Hall at Yale University, training ground for all those organ scholars at Trinity Church on the Green. These beautiful specialized machines provide all the wind pressure for nearly two hundred ranks of heavy-duty Skinner pipes, including a fleet of thirty-twos. These two machines are redundant—if one quits, the other takes up the charge. They are each 20-horsepower motors that run on 440 volts of direct current. They have two pressure outputs regulated to 12 inches and 27





Woolsey Hall blowers



Pancake blower

inches of wind pressure. Joe Dzeda, one of the curators of this wonderful organ, tells me that they run at 900 rpm, were built in 1915 and 1916, and are among the oldest electric motors in the State of Connecticut. Anyone who has been around the students at Yale knows this is a workhorse organ—the blowers are running between 40 and 50 hours each week!

### The look of the sound

Look across a modern symphony orchestra and see how many different ways moving pressurized air can be turned into musical tone. The trumpet and the bass tuba are similar in tone production even though their physical sizes are so different. Because the tone is produced by physical “mechanical” vibration (the players’ bi-labial friction), they are roughly analogous to the reed voices in a pipe organ. The double reeds (oboe, bassoon, English horn) all act the same way, as do the single reeds (clarinet, basset horn, and saxophone). In the orchestra, the only wind instruments that do not have a physical moving part to create the tone are the flutes and piccolos. There, the player directs a carefully produced and aimed column of air across a tiny hole.

Over centuries of experimentation and development, organ builders have created a wide range of tonal colors by manipulating wind through vessels of different sizes, shapes, and construction. Assume an open organ pipe two feet long, which is middle C of an eight-foot stop. It might be the diameter of my thumb (a narrow-scale string like *Viole d’Orchestre*) or the diameter of a thistle-seed birdfeeder (a broad diapason). It might be made of wood or metal. It might have a narrow mouth (2/9 of the circumference)—imagine the embouchure of the flautist—or it might have a wide mouth. Years ago, a mentor gave me the clear image of air as fuel. In your car, stepping on the throttle (gas pedal) sends more fuel to the engine’s cylinders. In an organ, a wider mouth, a deeper windway, a larger toe-hole all send more fuel to the pipe’s “engine”—the upper lip of the mouth that splits the windsheet creating the vibration that generates the tone. Choosing which of these functions should send more air is at the discretion of the tonal designer or the voicer.

An organ pipe can be tapered, wider at the mouth, narrow at the top (Spitz Flute, Gemshorn) or tapered the other way, wider at the top (Dolcan—an unusual stop). And then—put a stopper in the pipe, cut its length in half, and you have the wide world of Gedeckts,

Stopped Diapasons, and Bourdons. In these, a one-foot pipe gives you middle C of that eight-foot stop, and they can be either metal or wood. Drill a hole in the cap of a metal Gedeckt, solder a little tube to it and you have a Chimney Flute or *Rohrflöte*. I like to think that drilling that hole sets the quint free (2½’ harmonic)—that’s what gives the lyrical brightness to a Chimney Flute.

I think an important test of the tonal content of an organ is to compare eight-foot flutes. A big organ might have five or six of them. Sort out which are stopped flutes and which are open, and play the same passage on each. If they are all different, individual voices, the tonal designer and voicer have done their jobs. It’s surprising how all the flutes sound alike in some large, and otherwise good organs. The wonderful Hook & Hastings organ at the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Boston, now dismantled and stored because the church closed, stood out for me as an instrument with a wide—even wild—variety of flute tone.

Let’s go back to those two blowers at Marquand Chapel. Any organbuilder

would be able to tell which blower belongs to which organ by listening to a couple measures played on each instrument, or simply by looking at photos of the organs and the blowers. The type and style of the blower is analogous to the type and style of the organ. And any organbuilder could compare photos of ranks of pipes with their sounds. If you look at a Gedeckt pipe and choose the sound of a Diapason, you’re no organbuilder!

The wide variety of shapes and types of organ pipes means that one blower can draw air from its surroundings, blow it into the organ, and allow the organist to blend sounds like the old-master painter chose and blended colors. I suppose when you were starting out with organ lessons your teacher may have given you rules about how to choose stops. Here’s one I remember, don’t put a four-foot Flute above an eight-foot Principal. Almost fifty years later I ask, why not? If it sounds good to me, maybe the listeners will like it too.

Or will I read a Facebook whine that says, “I heard Bishop play last night and



wouldn’t you know, he used a four-foot Flute above an eight-foot Principal.”

By the way, if you’re lurking about on Facebook, take a look at Andrew Gingery’s page. Andrew is a longtime member of the staff at C. B. Fisk, Inc. They’re installing a new blue organ in Japan. And while you’re at it, visit John Pike Mander of Mander Organs in the UK—he’s installing a new organ at the Anglican Cathedral in Kobe, Japan. Take their cues about what Facebook can be, and stop whining. Wonderful. ■

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