

**Paul Fritts & Company,
Tacoma, Washington
Opus 35, St. Alban's Episcopal
Church, Tucson, Arizona
Opus 36, St. Albert's Priory,
Oakland, California**

Two recent instruments by Paul Fritts & Company Organ Builders of Tacoma, Washington, while built from the same design, demonstrate how different spaces contribute greatly to unique outcomes.

Opus 35 was completed in 2012 for St. Alban's Episcopal Church in Tucson, Arizona and Opus 36 was completed in 2013 for St. Albert's Priory in Oakland, California. Both are modest 2-manual instruments of 22 stops. Both employ suspended mechanical key action and mechanical stop action.

The case design is a modern realization based upon the drawing by A. G. Hill of the now lost, superbly proportioned Gothic organ in Rhenen, Holland.

Why do we do this? The organs from this period and more specifically, this part of the world, exhibit a brilliance of design that reached a very high peak of development. Building modern organs with this inspiration is much more than mimicking a façade layout. A freestanding case that creatively, and efficiently houses the mechanism and pipes while elegantly shaping the sound is essential to an outstanding instrument. While the new organs benefit greatly from these ideas they are by no means copies, rather, they utilize the acoustical and visual elements to take our efforts to a higher level. This actually requires extra creativity to meet the engineering and construction demands, together with a nod toward adequate access for tuning and maintenance in these modern instruments. There are even more important reasons to look to these masterful concepts when designing and making the pipes. Much has been said and written about pipes and their voicing over the years. It is important that the pipes function together in as many ways as possible, particularly when one desires a relatively small specification to be useful for a wide range of literature from many nationalities and periods. This goal can be broken down into a short list including the beauty of the individual stops, a large number of useful combinations of the stops and elegant speech; all of this accomplished without oppressive intensity. These qualities are present in the great antique organs for similar reasons they were sought after by the great violinmakers: they satisfied demanding ears.

The Arizona case is made of solid Douglas fir and the California instrument is from ammonia-fumed white oak. Both organs have façade pipes from 90% tin.

The compact design of the organs made their installations quick and straightforward, as they are entirely freestanding and self-contained. The two 16' stops, the Gedackt 8' of the Pedal as well as the bass pipes of the Principal 8' and Quintadena 16' and the inside access walkway to the main case pipes are housed in an enclosure making up the rear portion of the case. The main forward case then is open to the rear case enabling an interesting acoustical situation, the Pedal pipes speaking forward through the manual divisions as well as through side grills of the rear case. The bellows and blower are in the lower rear case.

The manual stops are all winded from the winchest at the upper level of the main case. Manual I stops are at the front and the Manual II pipes at the rear of this windchest. The common windchest makes it possible for the two manuals to share the pipes of the Gedackt 8' located at the juncture of the two windchest sections. Channel dividers prevent feedback and make it possible to draw this stop on both manuals with no restrictions.

The organs have a complete principal chorus undergirded by the full-compass



Façade, St. Alban's Episcopal Church

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Quintadena 16' and augmented by the Trompet 8'. There are numerous flute and mutation combinations and a Dulcian 8' on the second manual. The Violdigamba 8' and Celeste add capabilities for playing later literature and also serve Italian literature well. Three of the Pedal stops are unrestricted transmissions from Manual I and the Pedal Bourdon 8' is an extension of the Subbass 16'. These transmissions enable a relatively small instrument to be quite versatile.

While the instruments are voiced similarly, the different room acoustics and placement within the two very different buildings produce musical results that are unique. The smaller room in Arizona has a lower ceiling with a pleasant "focusing" effect that makes the organ sound clear and present with a pleasing amount of envelopment. The larger room in Oakland has a more gracious acoustical environment that gives the organ room to bloom into the space.

There is ample precedent for building organs from the same basic design. Design time, often many hundreds of hours, is saved and there is a welcome familiarity to the project as it takes shape in the workshop and is subsequently installed and voiced.

These organs are a next-generation and slightly larger version of Paul Fritts & Company's Opus 22 built in 2003 for the Chapel of St. Mark's Cathedral in Seattle. At the heart of any successful organ project is a well thought out specification and a meticulously planned design. A great deal of research and effort is expended throughout this process insuring that each instrument has all of the qualities expected of a fine instrument.

Everything except for the blowers and small hardware items was crafted in the workshop from carefully selected raw materials. Most importantly are the pipes, which begin with ingots of tin and lead combined with trace elements that contribute to the structural and musical integrity of the crafted pipes.

Special thanks go to the people of St. Alban's Episcopal Church in Tucson, Arizona, and of St. Albert's Priory in Oakland, California. Thanks and appreciation also go to the staff of Paul Fritts & Company: Greg Bahnsen, Paul Fritts, Ricky Frith, Raphi Giangiulio, Erik McLeod, Jakob Rechenberg, Andreas Schonger, Bruce Shull, and our bookkeeper Robyn Ellis. Carvings are by Jude Fritts.

—Paul Fritts and Bruce Shull

Photo credit: Paul Fritts

St. Albert's Priory

Oakland, California

Manual I

- 16' Quintadena
- 8' Principal
- 8' Gedackt
- 4' Octave
- 4' Spitzflöte
- Nasat/Comet II
- 2' Octave
- Mixture IV
- 8' Trompet

Manual II

- 8' Violdigamba
- 8' Voix Celeste
- 8' Gedackt (Manual I)
- 4' Rohrflöte
- 2' Blockflöte
- 1½' Lariot
- 8' Dulcian

Pedal

- 16' Subbaß
- 8' Principal (Manual I)
- 8' Bourdon (ext, Subbaß)
- 4' Octave (Manual I)
- 16' Fagott
- 8' Trompet (Manual I)

Manual II/Manual I
Manual I/Pedal, Manual II/Pedal

Manual compass: 56 notes, C–g^{'''}
Pedal compass: 30 notes, C–f^{'''}

Solid wood casework with carved pipe shades
Suspended key action; mechanical stop action
Variable Tremulant

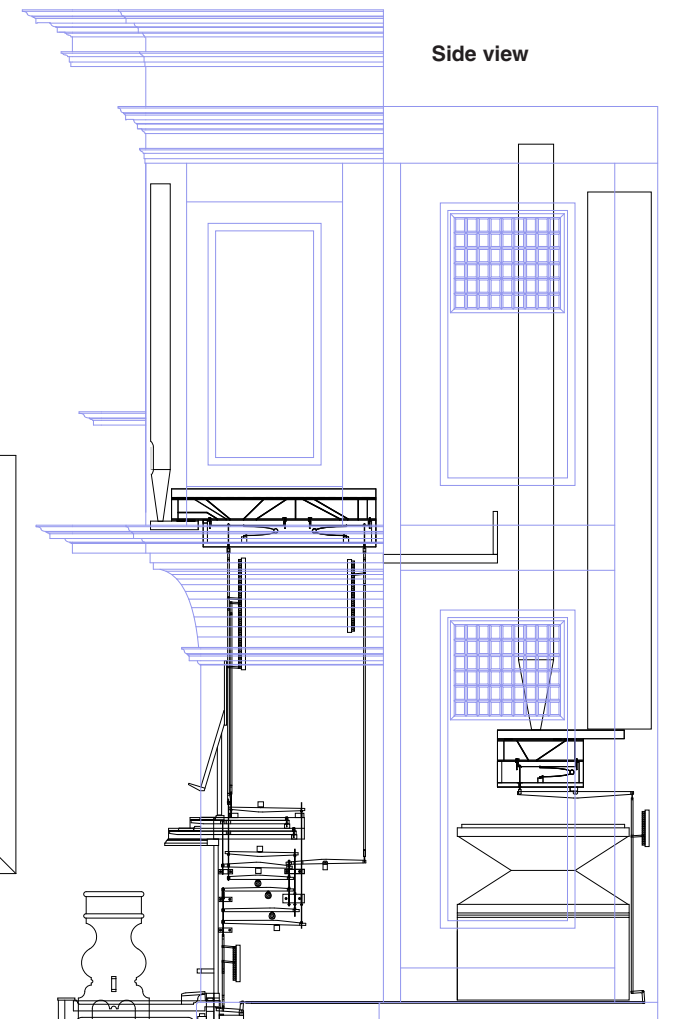
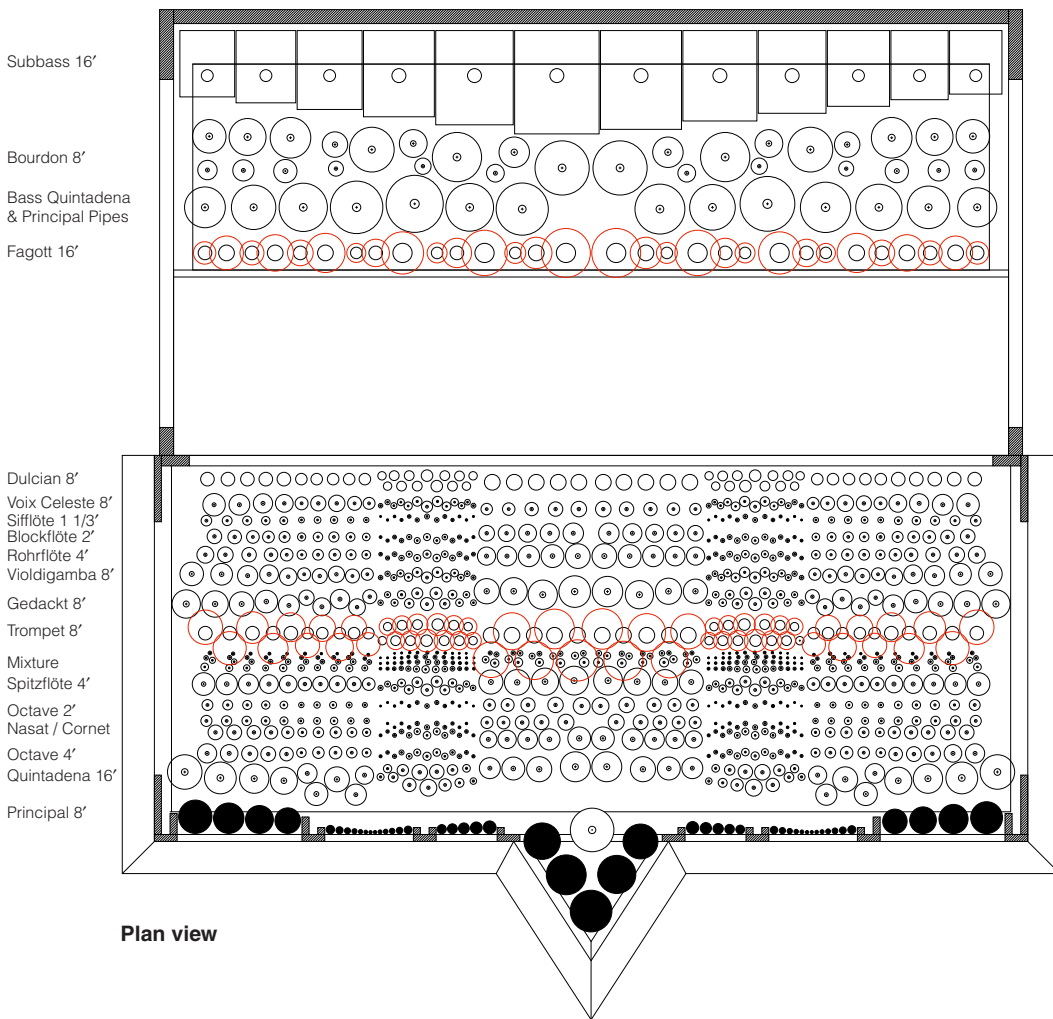
Polished tin front pipes
Hammered lead and high tin interior pipes
Subbaß 16', 1–12 solid wood pipes



Manual pipes in main case



St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Tucson, Arizona



St. Alban's keyboards



Pedal chest and wind

St. Alban's Episcopal Church Tucson, Arizona

- Manual I**
- 16' Quintadena
 - 8' Principal
 - 8' Gedackt
 - 4' Octave
 - 4' Spitzflöte
 - Nasat/Cornet II
 - 2' Octave
 - Mixture IV
 - 8' Trompet

- Manual II**
- 8' Violdigamba
 - 8' Voix Celeste
 - 8' Gedackt (Manual I)
 - 4' Rohrflöte
 - 2' Blockflöte
 - 1 1/2' Larigot
 - 8' Dulcian

- Pedal**
- 16' Subbaß
 - 8' Principal (Manual I)
 - 8' Bourdon (ext, Subbaß)
 - 4' Octave (Manual I)
 - 16' Fagott
 - 8' Trompet (Manual I)

Manual II/Manual I
Manual I/Pedal, Manual II/Pedal

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