

Organ Historical Society National Convention

Chicago, July 8–13, 2012

By Frank Rippl

Chicago? Again? A third OHS national convention in the Windy City? What else was there to see and hear in the way of the pipe organ? There was a great deal—and splendidly presented with grace, good humor, brilliant scholarship, and mid-western charm. Chicago has world-class museums, architecture, shopping, dining, magnificent Lake Michigan—and stunning churches and pipe organs!

Sunday, July 8

Jonathan Ryan played the opening recital at St. Chrysostom's Episcopal Church on Chicago's North Side, on the fine 2m Fisk Op. 123 (2005) that stands on the floor in the rear nave's left corner. Things got off to a lively start



Fisk, 2005, St. Chrysostom's Episcopal Church

with Dupré's transcription of Bach's *Sinfonia from Cantata 29*. This robust Fisk has strong, dark, full-bodied reeds; clean, striking mixtures; singing flutes and strings, warm foundations, and a powerful fortissimo. Ryan's playing had great drive; he saved the mighty reed sounds for a dramatic conclusion. In Sweelinck's *Balletto del Granduca*, I liked hearing the full-bodied Trompette, flutes accompanying a Cornet and a jolly Zimbelstern, and a nice *organo pleno* to close. Fine playing.

Francis Jackson's *Prelude on East Acklam* featured some very British sounds: celestes accompanied the 8' Octave in the tenor register; I believe we heard the 4' Open Flute. The organ more than held its own in the hymn "For the fruit of all creation." How I love hearing OHS hymn singing! I was seated next to Stephen Schnurr and Dennis Northway, leaders of the convention. Their faces expressed great pleasure. That first hymn is always a wonderful affirmation for convention committee members—a moment of satisfaction after years of hard work. I was happy for them, and all who made this moment possible. This was indeed "the fruit of their creation."

In György Ligeti's (1923–2006) *Étude coulée 1969* a busy, repetitive pattern

of phenomenally fast notes in the flutes flew out over sustained pedal notes, then suddenly ended, flitting off to the upper reaches. A few chuckles were heard.

Herbert Howells' *Rhapsody in C-sharp Minor*, op. 17, no. 3, started big and then presented typical Howellsian dynamic and tonal variations. I liked the Hautbois 8' as a chorus reed. The Great Prestant 16' in the tenor range was grand. Ryan had a very fine sense of this piece's architecture.

In *No. 4 in A-Flat Major* from Robert Schumann's *Six Canonic Etudes*, op. 56, Ryan showed the rich foundations, ending with *Viole de gambe* 8'; *No. 5 in B Minor* offered pluck and life. George Baker's *Berceuse Paraphrase* (1992) was a lovely combination of Vierne's *Berceuse with Away in a Manger*—easy on the ear with celestes, solo flute, and soft pedal.

Jonathan Ryan closed with Dupré's *Prelude and Fugue in B Major*, op. 7, no. 1—its lively toccata and angular fugue formed a test for hands and feet that he passed well! This excellent recital was a great start to our convention.

Buses took us downtown, where we had our choice of restaurants, then walked to Holy Name Cathedral for a recital by **Wolfgang Rübsam** on the 1989 4m, 117-rank Flentrop. With



Flentrop, 1989, Holy Name Cathedral

mechanical stop action and very deep mechanical key action, it is not for the faint of heart. Following a recent fire, the cathedral was closed for a time. The organ suffered only minor damage, to the Positif; building repairs, with a new terrazzo floor, improved the acoustics. The organ stands proudly in the rear gallery: its elaborate casework, in light-colored French quarter-sawn oak, starkly contrasts with the dramatic dark wooden ceiling. Herr Rübsam's all-German program began with Bach's partita *Sei gegrüßet, Jesu gütig*. Registrations were perfectly proportioned: cornets sang with grace and conviction, beautifully supported by foundations; the full plenum was rich and clear. Elegant playing throughout.

Chorale preludes followed: Helmut Walcha's *Jesu, deine Passion* (canon at the sixth) in trio texture; Rübsam's own *Wie soll ich dich empfangen* used an 8'

Principal with tremolo, a lovely pastel; Walcha's *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott* offered wonderful counterpoint against a sturdy pedal cantus firmus. Walcha (1907–91) was Rübsam's teacher; Rübsam is recording Walcha's complete organ works on the Naxos label. We then sang the hymn "A mighty fortress is our God." Our singing that night was some of the week's best!

Walcha's *Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ* presented effective combinations of 8' and 4' flutes, Cornet with tremolo, and a pedal-reed cantus firmus. Rübsam's own *O Heiland, reiß die Himmel auf: Entrée* opened with a grand *ff*; *Communio* was a continually moving trio followed by a lush passage on strings and flutes; a lively *Toccata* followed, including the pedal 32' Bombarde. This thrilling and joyful piece is a first-rate addition to the repertoire.

More Walcha followed: an introspective *Der Tag ist hin, mein Jesu, bei mir bleibe*. Usually I'm pretty good at identifying registrations, but not with this organ and organist. Rübsam drew forth a fantastic variety of color—the Dutch reeds were so subtle.

Rübsam closed this perfect recital with Bach's *Passacaglia and Fugue in C Minor*. Dynamics began softly but built quickly; tempo was *langsam* at first, but built momentum and energy. The fugue's familiar melodies were given their due in perfect balance. I've never heard it played better. Rübsam's wife, Jan, told me that he had had rotator cuff surgery on his shoulder in April. Only three weeks prior to the convention did he know he could play for us! The audience's roar called him back to the balcony railing countless times. This was a memorable OHS evening.

Monday, July 9

Monday dawned bright and sunny. Cooler temperatures followed weeks of horrendous heat. With perfect weather, we were eager to get started.

We divided into two groups. Mine went to St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Valparaiso, Indiana to hear **James Russell Brown** play the 2m Hook & Hastings Op. 1417 (1889). The *Atlas* contains



Hook & Hastings, 1889, St. Andrew's Episcopal Church

Stephen Schnurr's two-page essay about this organ and Scot Huntington's 16-page description of his firm's work restoring

the instrument. It stands at the back of the church resplendent in a beautiful oak case and painted façade; the 16' Bourdon pipes form the sides of the case. One of our Biggs Fellows hand-pumped the organ for the recital. Brown began with Handel's *Arrival of the Queen of Sheba* (from *Solomon*). The organ's sound was clear and warm. In Bach's *Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr*, BWV 662, the Melodia accompanied the (partially new) 16' Contra Fagotto played one octave lower, along with (I think) the 4' Violina, a lovely sound. Brown played with great sensitivity and sweetness. *Sur "La, mi, re,"* by an anonymous 16th-century English composer, was played on an 8' flute.

Chorale Variations on St. Elizabeth (Crusader's Hymn), from Frank Ferko's (b. 1950) *Music for Elizabeth Chapel* (2001), is charming and would please your congregation. I was eager to see how Brown would bring off the late-romantic Elgar *Nimrod* from "Enigma" *Variations* (op. 36), arranged by William H. Harris, on a small tracker organ without stop pullers. He did reasonably well, using the *piano* and *forte* ventillike toe studs, but it was ultimately awkward. Parry's hymn "O praise ye the Lord!" (LAUDATE DOMINUM) was a good follow-up, in a fine demonstration of a very beautiful 19th-century organ.

A pleasant walk through a park-like setting complete with pond and fountain took us to First Presbyterian Church for our choice of lectures, one on the restoration of a 1926 Casavant that will be moved to Chicago's St. John Cantius Church, about which we had received a DVD. I attended the other, "Issues in Restoration," by **Keith Williams** of Buzard Pipe Organ Builders, a fascinating consideration of "Why do we do what we do the way we do it," that also explored the words "conservation" and "restoration"—entertaining and enlightening, with plenty of photos.



Casavant, 1963, Cathedral of the Holy Angels

We then drove to Gary, Indiana, once home to U.S. Steel. It has stunning views of Lake Michigan, and an attractive English Gothic-style Catholic cathedral, built and dedicated in 1950 to the Holy Angels. The 2m, 33-rank Phelps Casavant, Op. 2769, installed in 1963, stands in the rear gallery on either side of a large window, and speaks clearly down the nave in a grand acoustic. This was a much-anticipated recital—word was out that this organ was exceptional (it was), and we all love **Derek Nickels**' playing (he did not disappoint!). Bach's *Prelude and Fugue in C Minor*, BWV 549, sounded clean and polished. The fugue began on the 8' Krummhorn—an unexpected surprise—and built to a blazing full-organ finale. We were all smitten with this instrument; music by Ernst Pepping perfectly suited it: *Wie soll ich dich empfangen* (*Grosses Orgelbuch*, 1941), *Vorspiel I, Andante cantabile* showed the beautiful 8' and 4'. *Vorspiel II, Allegro Scherzando* leapt about; a fine reed carried the tune. William Albright's ever-charming *Sweet Sixteenths—A Concert Rag for Organ* (1975) was very well played with loads of wit. As

it was about 90 degrees outside, and we were packed in the church without A/C, who knows how warm the church was, nor how warm Derek was up in the loft, but it never showed in his playing!

After “Father, we praise thee” (CHRISTE SANCTORUM)—brilliantly played and vigorously sung—Nickels closed with Dupré’s *Variations sur un Noël*, op. 20 (1922), a dazzling performance that lifted us out of the pews roaring our approval for this superb recital. (Derek was also in charge of the buses, and did his work very well, indeed!)

Next was Christ Temple Cathedral—Church of Christ (Holiness) U.S.A. in the Roseland neighborhood. The present building was dedicated in 1926. Originally a Dutch Reformed church, in the 1960s and ’70s it and the neighborhood became largely African-American. The church is a well-maintained part of the community. Its 3m, 39-stop electro-pneumatic 1926 Hinners—the largest surviving Hinners in the Chicago area—stands in the front of the church in chambers on either side of the seated choir. Chicago organist



Hinners, 1926, Christ Temple Cathedral

and composer Clarence Eddy played the dedication recital. In 1954 Austin replaced the console. The organ fell silent in recent years, but was brought back to life by the Chicago-Midwest OHS chapter especially for our convention. Recitalist **Mark Sudeith** began with Wilhelm Middelschulte’s (1863–1943) *Canon in F Major*, dedicated to Clarence Eddy—cheery music using the foundation stops. Schubert’s *Am Meer*, arranged by Eddy, showed the beautiful soft strings and Vox Humana; the tone is warm and luxurious. Sudeith then played (from the original manuscript) *Variations on a Folksong, “Peter, Go Ring Dem Bells,”* by Florence B. Price (1887–1953), which displayed the solo reeds and ended with a lively toccata. The hymn “I’m happy with Jesus alone,” by Charles P. Jones Sr. (1865–1949), founder of the Church of Christ (Holiness) U.S.A., was a rouser in the best sense—we loved it. The playing was first rate, and our voices filled the 1,150-seat church with joy.

Our buses took us to Rockefeller Memorial Chapel, on the University of Chicago campus, to hear the massive 72-bell carillon, the world’s second largest (the largest, also a gift of the Rockefeller family, is at New York City’s Riverside Church, with 74 bells). **John Gouwens** played a stunning program as we sat in the grass beneath the chapel’s soaring tower: Dave Grusin’s *On Golden Pond* (1981); John Courter’s *Suite No. 4* (2009); an improvisation on a submitted hymn tune; and Roy Hamlin Johnson’s *Victimae Paschali Laudes* (1986).

My group had dinner at Augustana Lutheran Church; organist Daniel Schwandt allowed us access to the



Carillon, Rockefeller Chapel

church’s new handsome 2m tracker built by Wahl Organbuilders of Appleton, Wisconsin. We took quite a shine to its clear voicing. Wahl reused pipework from an old Lyon & Healy organ as well as newly made pipes—a very successful blend.

On to the First Unitarian Church, completed in 1931 in the English Perpendicular Gothic style, to hear three historic organs from Stephen Schnurr’s collection. There was also a Hammond player organ performing: another treat! Who knew there was such a thing? **Gregory Crowell**, making his ninth appearance at an OHS convention, began on a Henry Willis “Scudamore” organ (ca. 1857–1860) with Gottlieb Muffat’s *Overture, Suite 1 in C Major*. The one-manual, 54-note organ had two ranks: Open Diapason 8’ and Principal 4’, with a permanently coupled 25-note pedal. The pleasing sounds graced the early evening. Crowell then moved to a sweet-toned little George Jardine & Sons (ca. 1850s) (“the oldest American-built pipe organ in the Chicago metropolitan area,” according to the *Atlas*). He gracefully



Jardine, 1850s, at First Unitarian Church

played Handel’s *Voluntary in C Major*, movements III and VI from Ernest Chausson’s *Vêpres des Vierges*, op. 31 (I enjoyed the flute in movement VI), and his own transcription of Mendelssohn’s *Lieder ohne Worte*, op. 67, V. *Moderato*.

A two-rank (no pedal) Hilborne L. Roosevelt, Op. 297 (1885) looked like an upright piano, having a reed organ’s foot-pumping pedals. It was meant to be portable. We heard *Voluntary* by Samuel Jackson (1818–1885), then some elegant Elgar: *Vesper Voluntaries*, op. 14, I. *Andante* and IV. *Allegretto piacevole*, with an effective Stopped Diapason. *Praeludium in F-sharp Minor* by Ernst Friedrich Richter (1808–1879) was interesting and well suited to the Roosevelt. Crowell concluded on the Willis, with Eric Thiman’s *Postlude on “Nun danket alle Gott”* and I. *Allegro* from *Sonatine for Organ* by Eberhart Egermann (b. 1933), good demonstration pieces, well played. We were grateful to Stephen Schnurr for making these instruments available (and to those who helped transport them!).

We returned to Rockefeller Memorial Chapel to hear **Nathan Laube**; the performance was broadcast over the Internet (available at: <http://news.uchicago.edu/webcast/nathan-laube-live-2012-ohs-chicago-convention>), an OHS first. The chapel is vast: long, wide, and high, with the main organ in front and a substantial gallery organ in the rear. The front 4m console plays both organs; a 2m gallery console controls just that organ. The room’s windows were never properly finished, so it lacks color, but is still quite impressive. The 132-rank Skinner Organ Company Op. 634 was built in 1928—a period in which Ernest Skinner built his magnum opus at Yale University’s Woolsey Hall, and huge organs at the University of Michigan and Princeton. This

organ suffered some rebuilding efforts in the 1970s and later; several ranks were dispersed. In 2005 the Schantz Organ Company returned old ranks, replicated others, and replaced some with vintage Skinner pipework. Rededicated on June 7, 2008, the organ, while not exactly as Skinner left it, is once again a major part of the Chicago organ scene.



Skinner, 1928, Rockefeller Chapel

OHS executive director **Jim Weaver** welcomed the audience, including those on the World Wide Web, then Nathan Laube opened with *Allegro vivace* from Widor’s *Symphonie*, op. 42, no. 5 (1878). This familiar music moved over us gently at first, followed by a good deal of aggression. Laube kept things in proportion, giving each melodic line its due, ending on full organ with those fabulous reeds. Laube spoke about growing up in Chicago; as a young boy he was taken to hear the E. M. Skinner organ at St. Luke’s, Evanston, and to Rockefeller Chapel, where he heard Wolfgang Rübsam play. He fell in love with these instruments and knew that playing the organ would be his career.

Mendelssohn’s *Sonata in A*, op. 65, no. 3 (1845), first movement ended in a blaze of glory, followed by the lovely *Andante tranquillo*. Laube’s transcription of Mendelssohn’s *Variations sérieuses*, op. 54 (1841), with passages of great wit and virtuosity, wonderfully displayed this huge organ’s colors. Though young (he turned 25 the day before this recital), Laube is a master of the art of transcription. He reached deeply into the vast Skinner tonal palette, and brought us to places we might not have gone before—a brilliant performance.

After intermission, he played Saint-Saëns’ *Fantaisie in D-flat*, op. 101 (1895). Its quiet opening showed beautiful strings and a solo flute that was to die for. A gentle reed chorus punctuated the flutes and strings, then stronger reeds were in dialogue with the foundations. A swelling crescendo then arose. Laube

played it beautifully, announcing the *ff* section on a powerful reed, then slowly drifted back to quiet strings.

In *Funérailles (d’après Lamartine)* from Laube’s transcription of Liszt’s *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses*, S. 173, no. 7 (1849), thunder-like pedal rumbles gave an ominous start, followed by a smashing fanfare played on the gallery organ’s horizontal trumpet. This piece is full of foreboding darkness, and Laube summoned forth remarkable color. A riotous pedal solo accompanied the active manual work, which featured a few blasts from a strong reed, and then gave way to a single flute. In two Brahms settings of *O Welt, ich muß dich lassen*, no. 3 employed a quiet 8’ Diapason on the choir, and no. 11 drew especially gorgeous foundations. Laube’s tempo was a bit restless, as though the soul longed to leave the body and journey heavenward.

The world premiere of Laube’s transcription of Brahms’s *Academic Festival Overture*, op. 80 (1880), featured melodic lines and rhythmic passages carefully delineated, and blended into a musically rich and full whole. The concert concluded with GAUDEAMUS IGITUR, so fun to sing in this full chapel, ending a wonderful day.

Tuesday, July 10

In the suburb of Downers Grove we visited the charming Tivoli Theatre, where house organist **David Rhodes** played its 3m, 10-rank Wurlitzer, Op. 942. The third organ to grace this theatre (it was preceded by a Barton and a Wurlitzer), this instrument is owned and maintained by Chicago Area Theatre Organ Enthusiasts (CATOE). We munched on popcorn as Rhodes entertained us with Richard A. Whiting’s *Hooray for Hollywood* (1937), and Charles Chaplin’s *Smile*, then accompanied a hilarious 1915 Chaplin short film, *In the Park* (possibly filmed in the Chicago area). Rhodes seemingly caught every nuance. In a hot dog-eating scene, he slipped in the “Oscar Mayer Wiener Song”—very clever playing and a fun start to the day.

Our next stop was very sentimental for me: the beautiful Noack organ, Op. 44 (1969) at the Convent of the Sisters of St. Joseph in La Grange Park. Installed



Noack, 1969, Convent of the Sisters of St. Joseph

the summer I graduated from college, this organ became a place of pilgrimage for us “Tracker Backers” on our visits to Chicago. It stands in a balcony in the rear of the nave of this handsome modern chapel. Originally the room had all hard surfaces, but now carpet covers the concrete floor, and padded chairs have replaced wooden seats. Though the acoustic is not as beautiful as it once was, the organ still sounds great.

Thomas Wikman began with Buxtehude’s *Partita on “Vater unser im Himmelreich”*; I especially enjoyed the 4’ flutes with tremolo. In Antonio

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Cabezón's *Tiento del quinto tono*, Wikman's well-chosen registration—reeds and Sesquialtera II—led the way. This organ's Italian accent spoke in Girolamo Cavazzoni's *Canzona sopra 'Il e bel e bon'*, played with good style. The sounds were as beautiful as I remembered. The music was cleanly and sensitively played.

After the hymn "Alleluia! Sing to Jesus" (HYFRYDOL), Wikman gave us a sweet performance of Robert Lind's *Prelude on 'Love Unknown'*, then Bach's *Pièce d'Orgue*, BWV 572, which worked quite well. The brilliant closing section brought this outstanding concert to a fine conclusion.

Emmanuel Episcopal Church in La Grange is the city's oldest congregation, founded in 1874. The present French Gothic-style church was built in 1926. (Our *Atlas* noted that it was featured in the 1995 film *While You Were Sleeping*.) The 1970 electro-pneumatic Phelps Casavant, Op. 3062, 3m, 46 stops, 63 ranks, stands in a chamber to the right of the chancel. **Stephen Schnurr**,



Casavant, 1970, Emmanuel Episcopal Church

author of the OHS *Organ Atlas 2012*, began with the hymn "Lo, he comes with clouds descending" (HELMSELEY), followed by Buxtehude's *Praeludium in A Minor*, BuxWV 153. Schnurr used the Krummhorn to good effect. Flutes led to the final fugue and a fantasia presenting the full plenum and pedal reeds—a wonderful sound, in a fine performance.

Next came the premiere of *Variations on HYFRYDOL*, written by convention chair Dennis Northway. At one point the tune appeared in the tenor with imaginatively placed fast notes up top. Another movement used a canon between a trumpet and pedal foundations. After a beautiful movement with sweet strings and soft foundations, a fugue brought this very good new piece to a close. Well done!

A hallmark of Stephen Schnurr's OHS recitals is the showcasing of young musicians and friends. This recital featured a mother and her children. Tenor **Willson Oppedahl**, a junior at Lawrence University Conservatory of Music in Appleton, Wisconsin, movingly performed Thomas Matthews' (1915–99) *The Lord Is My Shepherd*, beautifully sung with sincere conviction. *Elegy* for violin, harp, and organ, by Harold Friedell (1908–58), featured violinist **Allison Alcorn**, Willson's mother; her daughter **Kiersten Oppedahl** played harp. This enchanting piece, very well presented, cast a spell over all of us.

Horatio Parker's *Allegretto*, from *Sonata in E-flat*, op. 65, was a good contrast. The Phelps Krummhorn was playful, especially in the lower register, while flutes 8' and 4' scampered above. Stephen closed with the *Allegro* from Widor's *Symphonie VI*, op. 42, a fine

choice for this outstanding exemplar of the Organ Reform Movement. This organ has a lot of oomph, and Dr. Schnurr used it to good effect, playing with marvelous style and color.

La Grange's First Presbyterian Church was organized in 1890. The present church was built in 1962. Its 1962 3m, 46-rank Aeolian-Skinner stands in a gallery at the rear of the long, narrow nave. **David Jonies** and **Jay Peterson** shared the concert. Peterson opened with Rheinberger's *Sonata No. 8 in E Minor*, op. 132, *Introduction and Passacaglia*, which sounded very good, with clear sounds in every dynamic range. They then joined forces for Handel's *Organ Concerto in F Major*, op. 4, no. 4. Jay Peterson played the four-stop 1981 Brunzema Op. 3 portative organ from the front, while David Jonies played the orchestra bits on the main organ in the gallery. The organs were well matched, and the performance spirited.

Jonies then played *Andantino* from Vierni's *Pièces de fantaisie*, op. 51, no. 2, showing the beautiful strings, and *Naiades*, op. 55, no. 4. Next, both played the Skinner: John Rutter's *Variations on an Easter Theme (O sons and daughters)*, featuring a fine solo on the Oboe. The hymn was: "O sons and daughters let us sing!" (O FILII ET FILIAE).

On to Oak Park, to the beautiful St. Catherine of Siena-St. Lucy Catholic Church, a Tudor Gothic-style building dedicated in 1934. Casavant Op. 1467, built in 1932, stands in the rear gallery in two chambers that frame a large Tudor-style window. A modest 3m instrument, it has everything you'd need to be its happy player. The lucky person playing for us was **Rhonda Sider Edgington**, who opened with Percy Whitlock. In *Pastorale, Psalm 23:1* from *Seven Sketches on Verses from the Psalms*, a solo on the Clarinet was accompanied by flutes, a great choice that slowly revealed the organ's beauty. *Folk Tune*, from *Five Short Pieces*, used what I believe was the Cornopean in the tenor range. The beautiful strings crept in—still fresh after 80 years.

The hymn **PICARDY** ("Let all mortal flesh keep silent") was a joy to sing in this resonant room. We then heard our first music by Chicago composer Leo Sowerby: *Picardy* from *Meditations on Communion Hymns*. Edgington knew just how to express Sowerby's marvelous harmonic sense. Her closing selection displayed this organ's strong foundation tone: August Gottfried Ritter's (1811–85) *Sonate Nr. 2 in E Minor*, op. 19.

We went to Oak Park's Grace Episcopal Church for our Annual Meeting, followed by dinner; some explored the neighborhood, with its historic and architectural sites.

At nearby First United Methodist Church, **Ken Cowan** played the splendid 4m 1926 Skinner. The console stands in a front balcony behind and above the altar, with pipes in chambers on either side of the chancel; a two-rank Echo division is in the ceiling above the rear gallery. A division of select stops from the main organ speaks into the chapel, where the division has its own 2m console.

Cowan began with Liszt's arrangement of Otto Nicolai's *Festiva Overture on the chorale "Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott"*, op. 31. This organ was completely restored without alteration in 2005–6 by the Spencer Organ Company of Massachusetts and Jeff Weiler & Associates; except for an added stop in 1937, it is as it was when Skinner delivered it, producing powerful foundation tone and floor-shaking pedal notes. Cowan's arrangement of Liszt's *Consolation No. 3 in D-flat* featured lush strings and flutes,

and a Skinner French Horn, played with his usual sensitivity.

The hymn was "When the morning stars together" (WEISSE FLAGGEN). Ken Cowan's hymn playing, like everything else, is done with great art and grace.

John Ireland's beautiful *Elegiac Romance* began with a sweet Oboe solo followed by a wonderful section with celestes—perfect for a summer evening. It included the French Horn, and then built to a mighty roar; the plaintive Oboe returned, and it ended with quiet strings. Cowan closed the first half with a blazing performance of Dupré's *Prelude and Fugue in G Minor*, op. 7, no. 3. I liked the Clarinet's clear, round sound. The playing was precise and yet supple, with the musical line clearly shaped. That fantastic fugue really galloped along.

This organ had been restored but not modernized: it lacks levels of memory. So, as in the good old days, Cowan had to come out during intermission and reset his pistons. He chuckled about it, but went about his work good-naturedly.

Cowan then returned to his perch high above us to perform Rachel Laurin's *Étude Héroïque*, demonstrating the assertive Gamba Celestes on the Solo division, and a sweet 2' in a French Tambourin section of this piece. He closed with Guilmant's *Sonata No. 1 in D Minor*, op. 42, giving this well-known work a new sheen through his musical creativity. The *Pastorale* showed the Clarinet again, the beautiful Vox Humana, and the Chimes. The Finale swept us along for a gleeful ride, with our pilot Ken Cowan giving the OHS another brilliant and memorable concert! We returned to our hotel fired up for the instrument we love, having just heard one of its finest champions.

Wednesday, July 11

We began at Chicago's Carl Schurz High School. The 1910 building is a masterpiece, incorporating elements of both Chicago and Prairie School styles. The 1925 Waveland Avenue wing included an auditorium seating nearly 1,800 and boasting three seconds of reverberation. The 4m Richard O. Whitelegg Möller proved to be one of the favorite instruments heard at this convention. The console abuts the front-left of the stage on the auditorium floor; pipes stand on a wide shelf at the back of the stage. We were told that this organ was delivered seven weeks after the contract was signed; the high quality of the work tells a great deal about Möller's vast resources. (See Dennis Northway, "A new four-manual pipe organ in seven weeks: Möller Opus 6373 at Chicago's Carl Schurz High School," *THE DIAPASON*, May 2012, pp. 26–29; audio file available at www.thediapason.com.)



Möller, 1935, Carl Schurz High School

John Sherer, organist at Chicago's Fourth Presbyterian Church, presented a "Concert to Commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Sinking of the Titanic." "Music of 1912" began with Elgar's *Imperial March*, brilliantly

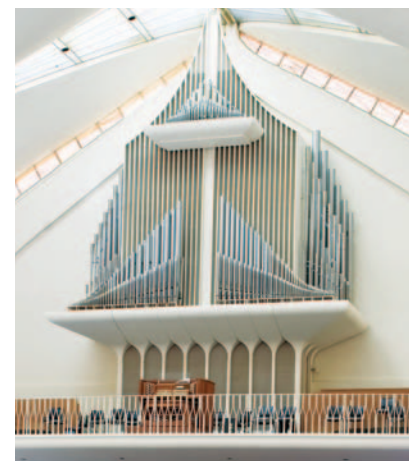
played. The instrument has an English town hall organ's power and grandeur. In Edward Bairstow's *Elegy*, gorgeous strings and flutes were played with just enough rubato. The pedal part rumbled quietly as though it were a creature of the deep ocean.

In "Music Heard Aboard the Titanic," John Philip Sousa's rousing and entertaining *El Capitan* was followed by Edwin H. Lemare's transcription of *Barcarolle*, from Offenbach's *The Tales of Hoffmann*, said to have been played one hour before the ship sank. Next came Irving Berlin's *Alexander's Ragtime Band*, which was played as the ship sank. Sherer played it very well.

"Music to Honor the Titanic Victims" began with Joseph Bonnet's touching *In Memoriam*. The organ gave us deeply moving sounds of sadness, grief, and horror, and images of the deep, cold ocean. The piece ended with a quiet farewell to the victims of this tragedy.

This beautiful organ is in need and most worthy of a complete restoration, but was made to sound quite fine this day. Sherer closed with *THE NAVY HYMN*, "Eternal Father strong to save." Here the too-brisk, march-like tempo seemed to not match the words. An over-busy accompaniment threw us off the pulse, and twice Sherer modulated up. The rest of the concert, however, was lovely and inspiring.

We then went to Glencoe and the beautiful North Shore Congregation Israel. It was a thrill to enter this holy space, designed by architect Minoru Yamasaki (who designed the Oberlin Conservatory of Music). A peaceful study in white overlooking Lake Michigan, the sanctuary is shaped like praying hands. Narrow windows start just above the floor and rise to form ceiling arches, allowing light to fill the space. The 3m, 46-rank electro-pneumatic Casavant, Op. 2768 (probably the largest untouched early Phelps Casavant in the Chicago area), perches on a free-standing rear balcony.



Casavant, 1963, North Shore Congregation Israel

The recitalist was **H. Ricardo Ramirez**, director of music/organist at Chicago's Holy Name Cathedral. Jehan Alain's *Les Fêtes de l'Année Israélite*, AWW 85, in the style of Hebrew chant and song, began quietly on the Krummhorn and gradually grew to a Trumpet fanfare. This very approachable music was so appropriate to the space, with clear and refined sounds. We sang the hymn "God of might" (ADEER HU) in both Hebrew and English. In Bach's *Trio Sonata in G Major*, BWV 530, the third movement showed the organ's Sesquialtera. Ramirez closed with Duruflé's *Suite*, op. 5. The Fagott 16' played one octave lower was a very fine sound. The *Toccata* was thrillingly played.

In the leafy suburb of Winnetka, we visited Winnetka Congregational Church

and its landmark 3m Martin Pasi tracker, Op. 18 (2008). Established in 1869, the church's present building, Colonial with Art Deco and Egyptian touches in its lovely white interior, was built in 1936. The ornate North German-style case in front commands the eye with the Great in the middle, the Swell above the Great, and the Positiv cantilevered in front of the Great with the keydesk below, similar to John Brombaugh's Op. 33 organ at Lawrence University in Appleton. The Pedal is in towers at the sides of the case; the 32' Subbass is in the old chambers above and to the sides of the altar, where the previous Austin once stood.

Nicholas Bideler, a doctoral candidate at the University of Kansas, began with Bruhns's *Praeludium in G Major*, which sounded wonderful on this organ. Bideler's playing had clear direction and he used the organ's many colors very well. Next was Bach's *Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele*, BWV 654. One tremulant affects the entire organ, and it was fine, although it did create a bit of a stir on that low pedal E-flat that starts the piece. I think Bideler used the Vox Humana with a 4' flute as the solo line. His performance was imbued with the inner joy expressed in the chorale.

In Karg-Elert's *Trois Impressions*, Op. 72—I. *Harmonies du soir*, Bideler showed this versatile organ's romantic voice. I enjoyed the Krummhorn and strings. "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind" (REPTON) was followed by *Impromptu* from Vierne's 24 *Pièces de fantaisie*, 3^{ème} Suite, which worked quite well. Bideler closed with Duruflé's *Prélude, adagio et choral varié sur le thème di Veni Creator*, Op. 4—III *Choral varié*. The triumphant ending was riveting.



Kimball, 1938, Grace Presbyterian Church

Grace Presbyterian Church in Winnetka had been First Church of Christ, Scientist, built in 1938—a white Colonial-style church, whose pewter and crystal lighting fixtures were imported from Czechoslovakia prior to World War II. The church was sold to Grace Presbyterian Church in 2012. The 1938 tonally and mechanically unaltered 2m W. W. Kimball Co. organ, Op. 7238, stands at the front. Both Swell and Great are enclosed in separate chambers. The first recital was given by William H. Barnes, of Evanston, on August 21, 1938. Our recitalist, **Elizabeth Naegele**, who, among other things, has the distinction of being Nathan Laube's first organ teacher, opened with Lefébure-Wély's *Sortie in B-flat Major*—jolly music, played with great spirit and flourish. In a salute to this building's long history as a Christian Science Church, the hymn

was Mary Baker Eddy's 1896 "Saw ye my Saviour?" (LAUNDON). We sang it well, and she played it with great sensitivity to the text, using the organ's colors nicely.

Naegele then played five of the "versets" from Léon Boëllmann's *Heures mystiques*, ending with *Entrée III*. I particularly liked the Oboe. *Sonata II—III Seraphic Chant* by Lily Wadhams Moline (1862–1966) was lovely music, beautifully played. Naegele ended this fine and well-chosen program with *Let Us Break Bread Together* from *Communion Hymns for Organ*, Vol. I, in a quite inventive setting by Edwin T. Childs (b. 1945).

Our next visit, to Techny's Chapel of the Holy Spirit, Society of the Divine Word, was highly anticipated as we had seen stunning photos of its interior. A huge complex, its property adjoins St. Joseph's Technical School, whence the "Techny" nickname originates. The large Romanesque chapel, adorned with beautiful carvings, statues, chandeliers, and sconces (forged in the Techny shops), opened in 1923. The second-story gallery runs the entire perimeter of the chapel, and our musicians took full advantage of it. Acoustics were generous and rich. The 4m Wiener organ, some of whose ranks are reused from other instruments, stands in the rear gallery in an attractive case. Its condition is not great, but it was shown to its best advantage.

We heard **The Madrigal Choir of Grace Episcopal Church**, Oak Park, led by **Dennis Northway**, along with young organists **Madeleine Woodworth** and **Charlie Carpenter**. Now in its twelfth year, the choir, made up of mostly high school students, is dedicated to singing music of the Renaissance. Mr. Carpenter began, playing Vierne's *Carillon sur la sonnerie du carillon de la chapelle du Château de Longpont (Aisne)* from 24 *Pièces en style libre*, op. 31, no. 21, with skill and aplomb.

The choir sang *Kyrie Eleison* from William Byrd's *Mass for four voices* very well, in proper Anglican style. They surprised us by singing not from the rear gallery where the organ was, but from the perimeter gallery above the high altar. After **Madeleine Woodworth** played *Divertissement* from Vierne's 24 *Pièces en style libre*, with plenty of drive from this powerful organ, the choir



Wiener, 1927, Chapel of the Holy Spirit

offered *Blessed Are the Pure in Heart* by Eric DeLamarter (1880–1953), a beautiful setting sung and conducted with great sensitivity. Woodworth led the hymn, Leo Sowerby's "Come risen Lord, and deign to be our guest" (ROSEDALE). The choir moved to different places along that perimeter gallery each time they sang, slowly making their way to the organ loft—a magical effect. Northway led these well-trained students beautifully in Peter Lutkin's *The Lord Bless You and Keep You*.

A new setting of *Ave Verum Corpus* was by a familiar figure: 20 year-old Adam Gruber, an alumnus of this choir and organ student of Dennis Northway, who has played for us many times and is now a student at Oberlin. The piece was well constructed and showed that Gruber has a future in the art of composition. **Charlie Carpenter**, a current Northway student, played the Widor *Toccata*. Great job, Charlie! Kudos to Dennis Northway for giving these young people a chance to perform at the convention!

Buses then took us to Evanston, for dinner at the North Shore Hotel downtown, and then the treat of several neighborhood open consoles. Some of the young, fast-moving types, led by Nathan Laube, made it down to St.

Luke's Church and its magnificent E.M. Skinner. It was a grand, fun, free time.

The day concluded at the Music Institute of Chicago. This building, a former Christian Science church, retained its 1914 E. M. Skinner organ, Op. 208 (the oldest functioning Skinner in Illinois, according to our *Atlas*), a modest 3m instrument whose pipes stand at the back of the platform in front of the 900-seat auditorium built in the Neoclassic style favored by Mary Baker Eddy. The console is on the stage. Recitalist **Scott Montgomery** began with Saint-Saëns' *Fantaisie in E-flat*. The *forte* sections demonstrated the sturdy foundation stops echoed by the Cornopean—a great sound. Montgomery played Bach's transcription of Vivaldi's *Concerto in D Minor*, BWV 596, in the Romantic tradition, with shades and all. I loved the *ppp* strings in the second movement. It worked surprisingly well.

In the *Choral* of Widor's *Symphony No. 7*, op. 42, no. 3, Montgomery captured the mood nicely, alternating string, flute, and foundation tone. *Scherzo* from Vierne's *Symphony No. 2*, op. 20, was an audience favorite; Montgomery did a fine job, and so did the Skinner. Huge flute sounds crowned the ensemble. Dudley Buck's *Variations on Home, Sweet Home*, op. 30, displayed the big, bold Cornopean, Vox Humana, Flügel Horn, and the Great Philomela. The Swell Aeoline and Unda Maris closed the piece—wonderful sounds that made my mouth water. One young member was heard to say, "I want an E. M. Skinner in my church!" In a beautiful calm Calvin Hampton *Lullaby*, Montgomery summoned all of the organ's softest sounds. The Swell Gedackt accompanied the Clarinet in the tenor range; the Vox Humana was heard again as a solo with a 4' flute. Unda Maris and Aeoline were a great combination. This is a piece your congregation would love!

In Guilman's *Caprice in B-flat*, op. 20, no. 3 from *Pièces dans différents styles*, Book VI, there was a good deal of playful shifting of manuals—welcome after the Hampton's quiet gentility, and very well played. This organ has no general pistons, so Montgomery employed two very skilled stop pullers. The hymn was Mary Baker Eddy's "It matters not what be thy



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Convention Report

lot" (GLOAMING). Montgomery closed his fine program with John Knowles Paine's sturdy *Concert Variations on the Austrian Hymn*, op. 3, no. 1—always a good tour of an organ. We returned to the hotel tired but exhilarated.

Thursday, July 12

Thursday dawned bright and sunny. At Chicago's Evangelical Lutheran Church of St. Luke (ELCA) we heard **Erik Wm. Suter** play the large 1963 3m Schlicker.



Schlicker, 1963, Evangelical Church of St. Luke

The church's long, high nave offers wonderful acoustics. The main organ stands in the rear gallery, with a Positiv mounted on the railing. The clear, refined sound includes marvelous mixtures that were like cooling drops of water. A smaller unit organ is in front of the church. Suter opened with Bach's *Prelude and Fugue in G*, BWV 541; he has a fine and clean technique, and tempos were perfect for both music and room.

Dale Wood's gorgeous setting of *In Thee Is Gladness* began with strings and a 4' flute. We also heard lovely solo reeds. In "Come down, O love divine" (DOWN AMPNEY), Suter showed brilliant hymn leadership. His time as organist at Washington National Cathedral was evident in a grandiose and thrilling style of playing; his last verse reharmonization was a thing of wonder.

In Peter Eben's *Nedelní Hudba* (*Music for Sunday*), *Finale*, Suter put the blazing reeds on full display. After a quiet section with strings, solo flutes, and quiet solo reeds, some growling and menacing pedal sounds took us back to the louder, livelier music. Organ and organist were a fabulous combination; this fantastic concert was a great start to the day.

We proceeded to the huge and imposing St. Josaphat's Church in Chicago, in Romanesque style with massive stone walls, blessed in 1902. The first organ in the rear gallery, built by the Wisconsin Pipe Organ Factory in 1902, was replaced in 1924 by a 3m Kilgen, Op. 3386, which used some pipes from the previous instrument and retained its case. In 2004, the Bradford Organ Company installed a "much traveled" 1872 2m



Johnson, 1872, St. Josaphat's Church

Johnson Organ Company Op. 386 in the nave on the right side. Our recitalist **Bernadette Wagner** earned her bachelor's degree from the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University; she is now a graduate student at Arizona State University. Wagner began with two Brahms settings of *O Welt, ich muß dich lassen* on the Kilgen; diapasons were warm and rich in the reverberant space—nicely played. She then came downstairs to the Johnson organ for the hymn "Creator spirit, by whose aid" (SURREY). Bernadette Wagner and the room-filling sound of this 14 stop-organ were quite up to the task of accompanying us.

Movements II and III of Mendelssohn's *Sonata No. 4 in B-flat*, op. 65, featured the organ's beautiful Clarinet, Oboe and Bassoon, and lovely flutes—very pleasing playing with a well-developed sense of musical line. Wagner closed her fine recital with Daniel Pinkham's *The Book of Hours*, a nice demonstration of the various combinations on this well-made treasure from another century.

Chicago's Wicker Park Evangelical Lutheran Church, ELCA, was formally organized in 1879; the present Romanesque church was finished in 1907. The 1907 Möller tracker is still in use; sadly, however, only part of the Swell division was operable; so much of the program was compromised; at times it was difficult to even hear the organ. Our players were **Dennis Northway** and **Adam Gruber**. Northway opened with a very soft Clarence Eddy *Prelude in A Minor*, using the Möller's beautiful strings very well, then played Harrison M. Wild's ironically named hymn "Softly fades the twilight ray." Adam Gruber played two selections from Bach's *Orgelbüchlein*, and Northway played Pachelbel's *Aria Sebaldina* from *Hexachordum Apollinis* (1699). I felt sorry for these gentlemen having to play an instrument not up to convention standards. We had to listen very carefully to hear anything, but I must say that it was always worth the effort.

During free time downtown, we could either visit the Chicago Cultural Center in the grand old former public library, or, as I did, cross Michigan Avenue and visit



Möller, 1907, Wicker Park Evangelical Lutheran Church

Millennium Park with its fantastic Frank Gehry-designed bandshell, and the three-story Anish Kapoor "Cloud Gate" steel sculpture (known locally as "The Bean"). The entire complex is brilliant.

A problem arose, beyond the convention leaders' control. The 1927 3m Estey at the John Murphy Auditorium of the American College of Surgeons was unable to be played. So our brave recitalist, **Cathryn Wilkins**, moved to a quite different venue and organ—the huge 4m Aeolian-Skinner in the Fourth Presbyterian Church on Michigan Avenue, across the street from the 100-story John Hancock Center—and very quickly adapted her program. Designed for a very different instrument, the program did not make full use of this organ's range, but was nevertheless entertaining. Wilkins played some waltzes by Brahms for piano, Vierni's *Scherzetto* from 24 *Pièces*, and *Le Cygne* from Saint-Saëns' *Carnival of the Animals*. She ended with three movements from *In Fairyland* by Roy Spalding Stoughton (1884–1953)—a pleasant recital.

Our buses took us to Navy Pier—a huge place with a highly charged carnival atmosphere. We boarded "The Spirit of Chicago" for a late-afternoon harbor cruise and buffet dinner. The dramatic Chicago skyline was very beautiful. We enjoyed each other's company and the tasty food.

As we were downtown at 6 pm, when traffic was busy (with numerous street carnivals), our buses got snagged—the only bus problem all week. Our evening recital was at St. Pauls United Church of Christ, founded in 1843 to serve German-speaking Protestants. In 1959 the present English Gothic-style building was completed and the 4m Aeolian-Skinner, Op. 1328, installed. Its main pipe chambers are situated above and on either side of the chancel. In 1998–2000 the Berghaus Organ Company completed the organ as originally planned, updating some of the mechanical features of the console, located at the front.

Our performer was well-known Chicago organist **David Schrader**. It took about 40 minutes for everyone to arrive, and bless his heart, Schrader entertained us early arrivals with an impromptu performance, from memory, of Bach's *Toccata, Adagio and Fugue in C Major*. It was delightful.

When the audience was finally in place, Schrader began with Bach's *Prelude and Fugue in E Minor*, BWV 548 ("The Wedge"). Some of the playing was rushed, which took away from the towering majesty of Bach's music. The organ was more than up to the style, and Schrader used it quite well. In *Commotio*,

op. 53 by Carl Nielsen (1865–1931), we heard mixture tone for a very long time, which, right after the Bach, grew tiresome. Finally, some flute sounds were heard, leading to contrasting dynamics in another section. A fugue began—Schrader's tempos were just fine. We then heard what I believe was the lovely Gedeckt in the Antiphonal division, located high in the rear balcony—imaginative and colorful use of contrast. He used dramatic moments to good effect. The piece was OK, but it seemed to be longer than needed. Although Schrader played it well, my ears could have done with less mixture tone; at the end, he drew all of the high-pitched mixtures, bordering on painful after such a long piece.

After intermission, the lovely hymn "O blest Creator of the light" (LUCIS CREATOR) was followed by Frank Ferko's *Symphonie brève* (1987). The opening *Andante* had a running bass line in the pedals, with foundation stops and reeds in chords on the manuals. Attractive flute sounds accompanied a Cornet. The pedal motion returned with punctuations from those singular A/S reeds. The *Toccata* began on strings and flutes with fast figures. A bonny solo flute sounded out a tune in the pedal's tenor range. We heard wonderful colors in this very appealing work. In the final *Chorale*, the use of mixtures and reeds was startling. The writing was fresh, sort of Messiaen or Langlais "lite".

Schrader closed with Reger's *Fantasia and Fugue in D Minor*, op. 135b. Plenty of contrast is called for and we got it, in a fine tour of this noble instrument's fine solo voices and choruses. It was all beautifully played with great attention to the rhythmic and thematic structure.

Friday, July 13

The final day, devoted to regional organbuilders, began with **Sebastian M. Glück's** lecture on "Innovation, Adaptation, and Stagnation: The Tonal Trajectory of the Roosevelt Organ." Hilborne and Frank Roosevelt, aristocratic aesthetes as well as businessmen, were interested in organbuilding. Glück discussed their life and work, people who influenced them, and how their work still influences American organ building over a century after their deaths—most interesting.

We then were bused to Grace Lutheran Church in River Forest. Founded in 1902, the present English Gothic-style building was dedicated in 1931. The organ began as Skinner Organ Company, Op. 833, a 3m, 36-rank organ, rebuilt in 1956 by Schlicker. In 1987, it was rebuilt and enlarged to its present size by the Berghaus Organ Company of Bellwood, Illinois. The pipes are in twin chambers on either side of the altar, the console in a balcony over the left transept. The church has beautiful carvings and a live acoustic.

Organist **Karen Schneider Kirner** began with a hymn: "As daylight steals across the skies." Kirner wrote the tune, MORNING HYMN, which was quite good. Eugène Gigout's *Grand Chœur dialogue* made good use of the reeds. I could have done with less mixture tone. Kirner's steady playing gave this majestic piece its just due. After Gigout's *Scherzo*, from *Dix Pièces*, we then heard *Variations sur un Noël bourguignon* by André Fleury (1903–95), which showed some of the organ's softer stops as well as fuller sounds. The music was attractive—like an updating of Dandrieu.

This is a very loud organ. Seated in the front row, I wished that I had sat further back because Kirner may have crossed a line with overuse of tutti. Mixtures and reeds together over a long stretch of time is tiring.

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A Gigue for the Tuba Stop by Donald Stuart Wright (b. 1940) was next—a thrilling piece, but again loud. My ears longed for strings and flutes played with the shades closed. Chicago composer Keith S. Kalemba's (b. 1972) *Toccata* was also a loud piece. Kirner is a fine organist, but her programming choices were not wise. We did not hear any of the soft solo reeds. Another hymn followed: "Sing the Lord a new song," to a tune written by Ms. Kirner. One final blazingly loud piece brought her program to a close: Marcel Dupré's *Carillon*, from *Sept Pièces*, op. 27.

OHS convention recitalists usually take great pains to show the entire range and color of the organs to which they are assigned in thoughtfully and carefully chosen pieces. Sadly, this was not the case.

On to Wilmette, and St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church ELCA, to hear **William Aylesworth**, former organist at that church, long-time and well-loved performer at OHS conventions, and past OHS president. The church, founded in 1903, built its present English Gothic red brick worship space in 1923. Aylesworth told us that he was approached in the late 1980s by the Bradford Organ Company, offering to build an organ as an example of what they could do with recycled materials from other organs. The result was Bradford's Op. 6 from 1990, a very



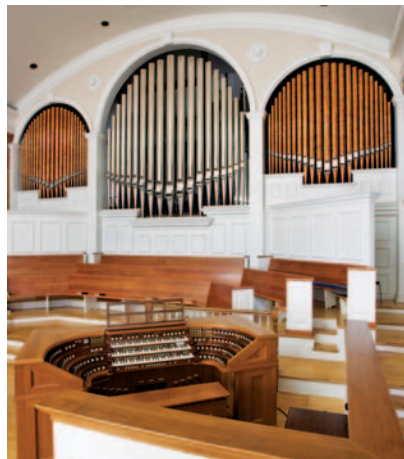
Bradford, 1990, St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church

successful 2m instrument. It stands in a small transept, with pipework in a chamber to the left of the altar, using a space formerly occupied by a Wangerin organ.

Aylesworth began with "O God, our help in ages past" (ST. ANNE). Bill was organist here for 38 years, and knows how to lead a hymn in this space. It was beautifully played. Bach's *Wir glauben all' an einen Gott*, BWV 680, wonderfully showed this organ's great clarity. *Ich ruf' zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ*, BWV 639, demonstrated the lovely Oboe with tremolo. In Dandrieu's *Trio avec Pédale*, we heard the warm Clarinet, which came from a Hutchings organ. The beautiful Great 4' Gedeckt, and the Swell 4' Flute d'Amour (from a Johnson & Son organ, Op. 389) worked very well. Dandrieu's *Duo en cors de chasse sur la trompette* used, I believe, the Great Trumpet, which came from a 19th-century organ. It had a surprisingly robust sound.

Aylesworth ended his fine recital with Guilman: Three *Nöels*, op. 60, demonstrated more solo stops; *Marche sur un thème de Hændel*, op. 15, no. 2 was very well played and sent us out on a high!

At Glenview Community Church (UCC), we heard young organist



Buzard, 1999, Glenview Community Church

Stephen Buzard in music for organ and brass quintet. The organ was built by Stephen's father's company: John-Paul Buzard Pipe Organ Builders, Champaign, Illinois, Op. 21 (1999). In the Colonial-style church the organ is in three chambers behind the altar; a rank of Principal pipes provides façades for each of them. The center chamber's façade is of polished tin, while the flanking chamber façades are flamed copper. The console is in the French style; the organ as a whole is highly eclectic, speaking with a sturdy sound and a wide range of color and tone on its 69 ranks.

Bach's *Concerto in C Major after Johann Ernst*, BWV 595, was a clean, spirited performance with just the right amount of rubato, followed by Buzard's own transcription of Schubert's *Du bist die Ruh*, D. 776, displaying strings and several beautiful solo stops (my favorite was the Great 4' Open Flute with tremolo), played with sweet sensitivity. Durufle's *Scherzo*, op. 2, showed more of this instrument's variety and range.

In Percy Whitlock's *Five Short Pieces*, the *Allegretto* used the many flute stops. The Great Harmonic Flute was featured as a solo accompanied by the Choir strings. We also heard the Swell Trompette in the tenor range. *Paean* featured the Major Tuba 8' stop (on 15 inches of wind), quite thrilling. We then sang Stephen Buzard's arrangement of the hymn "How shall I sing that majesty" (COE FEN, a marvelous tune). The time he spent in England was very much evident in his style of playing. *Prelude, Elegy and Scherzo* by Carlyle Sharpe (b. 1965) was commissioned for this convention by Rodney Holmes. Stephen used many beautiful solo stops in *Elegy*, beginning with a sad little song on the Choir's Cor Anglais, then a tiny Cornet, the Corno di Bassetto, and this organ's beautiful strings. The lively *Scherzo* for organ and brass is a good addition to the repertoire.

Stephen Buzard ended this superb recital with Jeanne Demessieux's *Te Deum*, op. 11, easily communicating the profound nature of this music, all very splendid. We heard this fine organ play music from many different periods and national styles with ease—and Stephen Buzard is someone to watch!

The grand finale of the convention was a visit to the Place de la Musique in Barington Hills, Illinois. It has the world's largest collection of restored automatic musical instruments, the largest theatre organ in the world (5m, 80 ranks), and is also the private residence of Mr. and Mrs. Jasper Sanfilippo. The 46-acre complex includes an enormous shed that houses most of the mechanical instruments and a huge carousel. We ate a picnic supper amidst this collection, then soon made our way to the 44,000 square-foot house with its huge theatre organ in a massive auditorium big enough to hold the entire

convention. The organ comes from many sources—some new, some vintage. There are four 32' ranks; the massive 32' Diaphone and Bombarde pipes line the walls on either side of the stage, as do the countless percussions, including a set of 32 Deagan Tower Bells, the largest of which we were told weighs 426 pounds!

Our multi-talented recitalist, **Jonathan Ortloff** (looking quite snappy in his bright red socks), presented a highly entertaining program of mostly familiar music played with great style and good humor. We heard the theme from *Family*



Jonathan Ortloff at Place de la Musique

Guy, some sweet salutes to the late Henry Mancini (*Charade* and *Moon River*), a bit of nostalgia for those of us of a certain age, "Puffin' Billy" (or as I remember it, the theme from *Captain Kangaroo*). *The Trolley Song* used all manner of percussion sounds, which raised the roof! Ortloff's transcription of Stravinsky's *L'Oiseau de Feu* (*Tableau II*) showed great skill. I really admire his generation of organists who have become so adept at the art of transcription. He ended with *An American in Paris*, which was great fun. But the part of the recital that left us all in pain with laughter was the hymn

"Earth and All Stars" (DEXTER), one not exactly on my list of favorites. The text is unintentionally humorous—I cannot get past "loud boiling test tubes" with a straight face. On this huge organ, Jonathan was able to illustrate each turn of phrase in sound effects that were hilarious and a perfect end to the evening.

This was a very good convention. Instruments, recitals, performers, lecturers—the great variety never left us bored. Buses were agreeable, respectful of our needs, on time, and quiet during recitals. Food was filling and good, and the publications (*Atlas*, *Handbook*, and *Hymnlet*) were beautifully produced, with wonderful content. (Good companions to the above would be *Pipe Organs of Chicago*, Vols. 1 and 2, by Stephen Schnurr and Dennis Northway. Gorgeous photographs, specifications, and histories of each building and instrument will keep you entertained for hours.) This was the third OHS convention in Chicago; we certainly saw and heard a breadth and depth of pipe organ beauty that other cities would be more than pleased to have. We were treated with great humor and kindness all week long. The committee did an outstanding job! Bravo, Chicago! "It's my kind of town."

The 2013 convention is in beautiful Vermont: <http://www.organsociety.org/2013/>. See you there!

Frank Rippl is a graduate of Lawrence University Conservatory of Music, where he studied with Miriam Clapp Duncan and Wolfgang Rübsam, and the University of Denver. He is co-founder of the Appleton Boychoir, coordinator of the Lunchtime Organ Recital Series in the Appleton, Wisconsin area, and has been organist/choirmaster at All Saints' Episcopal Church in Appleton since 1971.

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