

# Restoration of the 1770 Tannenberg Organ, Zion Moselem Lutheran Church

Raymond J. Brunner



Tannenberg organ, Zion Moselem Lutheran Church

Restoration of the 1770 Tannenberg organ at Zion Moselem Lutheran Church, Moselem Springs, Pennsylvania, was completed in September 2011 by R. J. Brunner & Co. of Silver Spring, Pennsylvania. The earliest of the nine extant David Tannenberg organs, it predates the Revolutionary War and is perhaps the oldest surviving organ built in the American colonies. As such, it is of great historic importance, and its restoration allows us to learn more about 18th-century organbuilding as practiced by Tannenberg and other German immigrants to Pennsylvania.

Tannenberg was a Moravian and built many organs for Moravian congregations in Pennsylvania and elsewhere. He also supplied organs to Lutheran, German Reformed, and Catholic congregations. His instruments ranged in size from four-stop positive organs for Moravian use to a large three-manual, 34-stop organ for Zion Lutheran Church in Philadelphia. Tannenberg's Moravian organs had a predominance of unison-pitch stops, since those organs were generally used in conjunction with other instruments. His Lutheran organs had more developed choruses that might include mutation and mixture stops, as well as reeds. The Moselem organ has eight stops on one manual, with a total of nine ranks. Built early in Tannenberg's career, it provides an opportunity to learn more about the evolution of his organbuilding. It is the only surviving example of his organs with a walnut case.

The Moselem organ was completed in 1770 and installed in the stone Zion Lutheran Church building, where it was located in a small gallery. This building was replaced by a new brick structure

in 1894, at which time the organ was moved and rebuilt by Samuel Bohler of Reading, Pennsylvania. Bohler replaced the original bellows with an internal winding system and replaced the keydesk and keyboard. He altered the stop action and also removed the Terz and Mixtur stops, replacing them with lower-pitched unison stops. By then the walnut casework had been painted over. The casework was eventually painted white, imitating the appearance of other Tannenberg organs.

In 2010, R. J. Brunner & Co. was chosen to undertake a historic restoration of the organ. Organbuilder Raymond Brunner was in charge of the project, and his previous research and restoration experience with several other Tannenberg organs was a valuable asset to determining how the work should be done. It was decided to restore the organ to its original form, including replacement of the two missing original stops and construction of an authentic winding system. Fortunately, the unaltered 8-stop Tannenberg organ at Hebron Lutheran Church in Madison, Virginia provided many of the answers. Although built 32 years later, it has an original pair of wedge bellows that could be copied for the restoration. Another fortunate event was that Brunner was able to obtain parts of two different period wedge bellows sets, once used on Pennsylvania German organs that are no longer extant. Using these historic fragments from other organs enabled the recreation of an authentic set of bellows like the original winding of the organ. An electric blower provides an alternate source of wind.

Twenty-five pipes of the Principal 8' and ten pipes of the Principal Octav 4'



Façade



Keydesk

are in the façade. The Flaut Major 8' and Flaut Minor 4' are identical open wood ranks made primarily from pine and walnut. The rack board for the Terz shows that this rank did not contain a break.

The restoration required making a new keydesk and stop action, as well as a new keyboard. The keyboard was copied from the Madison instrument, with the natural keys covered with ebony, while the walnut sharps are capped with reclaimed ivory from old keyboards. Removal of several layers of paint revealed the beauty of the walnut casework and the fine quality of this master organbuilder's work. The façade pipes were restored to their original appearance by removal of ears that had been applied when Bohler rebuilt the organ. A metallurgical analysis of the pipe metal was done to determine the proportions of lead and tin, as well as the amount of impurities in the metal. New Terz and Mixtur pipes were made for the organ by the Paul Fritts shop in Tacoma, Wash-

ington. Restoration of the original pipes and voicing of the new pipes was done by Hans Herr in the Brunner shop.

The organ was re-dedicated on October 2, 2011 with a concert played by Philip T. D. Cooper; it was hand pumped for the entire concert. Mr. Cooper also assisted in historical research for the restoration and was instrumental in encouraging the church to undertake the project. The fine sound of the organ delighted the large crowd in attendance, and Zion's organist Nancy Keller has been using the organ on a regular basis. This instrument should serve the congregation of Zion Moselem Lutheran Church well for many more years, and the organ can be heard once again as David Tannenberg intended. ■

*Raymond J. Brunner founded R. J. Brunner & Co. in 1981. He is a graduate of Lehigh University and a member of the American Institute of Organbuilders and the Organ Historical Society.*

## Manual (51 notes, C to d<sup>♯</sup>)

8'	Principal	12 stopped wood basses, 39 metal pipes, 19 in façade
8'	Flaut Major	Stopped wood pipes
4'	Principal Octav	2 open wood basses, 49 metal pipes, 10 in façade
4'	Flaut Minor	Open wood pipes
3'	Quinte	51 metal pipes
2'	Sub Octav <sup>o</sup>	51 metal pipes
1½'	Terz	51 metal pipes
	Mixtur II	102 metal pipes
		Mixture pitches are 1½' and 1', breaking once to 4' and 2½' at middle C.

<sup>o</sup> Tannenberg called his 2' stops Sub Octav rather than Super Octav.  
Wind pressure: 2¼ inches (56mm)