

## Cover feature

### Pascal Quoirin, St. Didier, France Church of the Ascension, New York, New York

The Manton Memorial Organ at the Church of the Ascension, New York City, is the first French-built organ ever to be installed in New York City. The 95-stop, 111-rank instrument has been designed to play as large a part of the repertoire as possible. The core of the instrument is a classical (baroque) organ of Grand-Orgue, Positif, Récit-Écho, and Pédale, played by a three-manual mechanical action console. A second console—this one with four manuals and electric action—controls that classical core as well as many other stops intended for symphonic and modern repertoire.

The instrument is situated in the front of the church on two sides of the chancel, flanking the famed 1888 mural “The Ascension” by John LaFarge. Four organ façades—two on each side—include elaborate wood carvings of peacocks, inspired by the peacocks in the marble reredos, also from the 1880s. The beautiful carvings were the work of Babou Vauquois, wife of Pascal Quoirin.

Unknown to most Americans, Pascal Quoirin has spent his career restoring and building organs throughout the world. Major restorations include many of the great historic instruments of France, such as the Dom Bédos masterpiece at Sainte-Croix in Bordeaux and the Cavaillé-Coll organ in Saint-Cloud, France. Quoirin’s new organs include his recent instrument in the gothic Cathedral of Evreux, France, and instruments in other European countries, Japan, and Mexico. The Church of the Ascension’s instrument is his first organ in the United States.

The new organ is made possible by a grant from the Manton Foundation to honor the memory of Sir Edwin and Lady Manton, who were active members of the Church of the Ascension for over 50 years. The Mantons were avid lovers of music, particularly the music of Olivier Messiaen and other French composers.

The Church of the Ascension is the oldest church building on New York City’s Fifth Avenue and has been known for its music program for more than 100 years. The church is the home of the Voices of Ascension Chorus and Orchestra.

Elaborate inaugural events took place in May and June and included a dedicatory Mass, three major organ recitals, two choral concerts, and the debut of the Ascension Organ Academy. Each concert had capacity crowds, and throughout the inaugural events the exceptional quality and range of the instrument were on full display. When the Quoirin team was presented to the audience they received a five-minute standing ovation.

This year the organ series begins on November 15 with Messiaen’s *Meditations on the Mystery of the Holy Trinity* played by Jon Gillock, followed later in the season with recitals by Louis Robilliard, Luigi Ferdinando Tagliavini, and a Vieme Marathon with Christopher Houlihan. The Ascension Organ Academy will take place in June. For information, visit <[www.voicesofascension.org](http://www.voicesofascension.org)>.

—Dennis Keene  
Organist and Choirmaster

### The organ of the Church of the Ascension in New York: The musical goal

The goal of this organ was defined, little by little, during the course of conversations with Dennis Keene, titular organist of the new instrument and choirmaster of the Church of the Ascension in New York, and Jon Gillock, organist of international renown and, most recently, author of a book providing an analysis of Olivier Messiaen’s organ works.

From the beginning, the design of this instrument was not to correspond to a precise stylistic period (neo-classic, neo-symphonic, neo-baroque, etc.), but rather it had to lead, in terms of organbuilding, to a reflection on the best manner possible to perform a large body of music.



The two consoles, with the mechanical action console on the right



Pipes of the Grand-Récit Expressif division

This reflection was nourished by several visits to carefully listen to a number of instruments (St.-Rémy de Provence, the Cathedral of Evreux) and in particular to that of the Église de la Sainte-Trinité in Paris, representing the musical universe of Olivier Messiaen—Jon Gillock having suggested that we listen in detail to mul-

iple combinations of sounds invented by Olivier Messiaen on this organ. Adhesion to this musical goal was immediate and natural for us because it is a process that is naturally inscribed in the history and evolution of the organ in general.

In effect, we observe that stylistic mutations are made most often by a pro-

gressive adaptation to an original model. That model transforms and evolves in step with the various styles of musical writing appropriate to each epoch: polyphonic, classical, romantic, symphonic, etc. It sometimes even happens that this evolution anticipates the imagination of musicians. That is the case with the instruments of Cavaillé-Coll in which his ideas preceded the compositions, among others, of César Franck.

The organ, therefore, is in perpetual evolution, and the history of the organ of Notre-Dame in Paris is a significant example: a Blockwerk from the Middle Ages was still present in the organ at the beginning of the 17th century; it was transformed by Cavaillé-Coll in the 19th century and, in its present state, it was completed and adapted to the modern techniques of today. All the marks of its evolution are still present, and the history of the French organ is inscribed there.

Organbuilding, furthermore, is continually subject to foreign influences, such as those of North Germany, Spain, Italy, etc. These also modify traditional practices and in each instance the organ adapts to new musical sensibilities. The experience acquired by organbuilders at the time of major historic restorations is, and still remains, absolutely necessary to understand and master the ensemble of the different aesthetics of organ design. This knowledge also permits a much more realistic approach in the design of a new organ voluntarily conceived in opposition to actual historic solutions.

Thus, we have explained the directions from which naturally ensued the general conception of the project: the organ was conceived first of all to be an appropriate instrument for interpreting modern repertoire of the 20th century and that of contemporary music. But, it is principally the music of Olivier Messiaen that was the dominating force in the conception of the whole.

The organ for Messiaen’s music, and particularly that of the Église de la Sainte-Trinité in Paris where he was titular organist for many years, is an instrument of Cavaillé-Coll modified to include several classical ingredients. It is principally this type of organ that inspired the composers of the epoch “Neo-Classic,” a term considered suspect today because of the numerous and unfortunate transformations made between the mid-1920s and 1968, sometimes in an irreversible man-



Pipes of the Grand-Orgue division



Pascal Quoirin adjusts the trackers of the mechanical console

ner, to masterpieces of the French patrimony of historic organs.

This concept of the organ, as badly realized as it was, nevertheless inspired many musicians (including Messiaen), and, in my opinion, it is unthinkable to ignore it. The purpose of this type of instrument, called "neo-classic," was to allow one to interpret a large part of the Classical repertoire. But, that type of instrument is accepted with difficulty today by many organists and European organbuilders, because we think that it is really possible to propose more logical solutions thanks to knowledge acquired during the course of restorations of an historic character, whether it be instruments of the renaissance, classical, romantic, or symphonic periods.

And, it is this accumulated historic knowledge that has guided the conception of the organ at the Church of the Ascension. We find here, therefore, classical entities like the plenum, the *jeux de tierces* completely developed, the *grand-choeur* of reeds on their own chests, and a classic disposition of the divisions: Grand-Orgue, Positif, Récit-Écho, Grand-Récit Expressif, "large" and "small" Pédale.

A large part of the "classic" foundation of the organ is found in the case placed to the left of the choir: the Grand-Orgue, Positif, Récit-Écho, and an important part of the Pédale. These divisions are played with a suspended, mechanical action from the console located *en fenêtre* [attached console].

An identical case, facing the first, houses the Grand-Récit Expressif and the remaining pedal stops. The entire organ, which joins the two cases, to the left and right of the choir, with their respective façades facing the side aisles, is played from an electric console of four keyboards, a mobile console that can be placed in the center of the choir for concerts. It is at this console that one interprets most easily the contemporary repertoire or that of the 20th century,

which, in general, was not written for direct mechanical action.

The cases were designed to integrate as harmoniously as possible with the architecture of the site. They are constructed of ash and walnut woods. The sculptured decorations are freely inspired by the Art Nouveau style, an echo of the Tiffany stained-glass windows of the church. The key motifs represent imaginary birds, recalling the birdsongs so dear to Olivier Messiaen.

#### Disposition and details of the instrument

The organ is divided into two groups situated in the choir of the church, on each side of the high altar. Two 16' façades are therefore facing each other. These two entities also have an opening into the side aisles to the right and left of the choir to which we have applied two cases, one of which is composed of two superimposed 8' façades.

The organ on the left comprises the major part of the instrumental structure: on the main level the Grand-Orgue, the Positif above, the Récit/Écho behind the Positif. The big foundation stops of the Pédale are on the bottom (Bourbons 32' and 16', Contrebasse 16', Flûte 8', Jeux de tierce 32', Bombarde 32', etc.). The whole rises in tiers to almost 43 feet.

The organ on the right is chiefly inhabited by the Grand-Récit Expressif of 21 stops; its main façade is formed by the pipes of pedal stops (Principal 16', Violoncelle 8'). Between this façade and the expressive box of the Récit are placed the Bassons 16' and 8', the Plein Jeu, the Prestant 4', and the Quinzième 2' of the Pédale. The façade facing the side aisle is made up of the bass pipes of the Second 8' of the Grand-Orgue. The rest of this stop, as is all of Second 4', is found behind this façade.

The windchests of the Grand-Orgue number four: two large chests for 16' stops and two others for the three reed



The south chancel façade



The south aisle façade

stops: Bombarde, Trompette, Clairon. The 2ème Trompette (en-chamade) is the first stop on the foundation chest behind the façade. The configuration is the same for the Positif situated above the Grand-Orgue; the four chests have the same dimensions.

The mechanical action of the keyboards permanently pulls two sets of pallets, one for the foundation stops with pallets longer than one foot, the other, shorter, for the reed stops. To facilitate the opening, the first two octaves of each chest are equipped with a special assist. The touch is supple and responsive for each keyboard. There are two possibilities for

coupling the manuals among themselves, either electrical or mechanical.

The pipes are entirely cone tuned in the classic manner. Yet, certain stops have a tuning scroll: the Gambes and Voix céleste, the Aéolines, the Second 4' and, of course, the Second 8' of the Grand-Orgue. These two stops, the size of which was given by Cavallé-Coll, are very strong, especially in the top, and are voiced with open toes. When one plays the registration of all the 8' stops coupled together, the Second 8' adds an effect of fullness, powerful, strongly

► page 32

**The Manton Memorial Organ**  
**Church of the Ascension, New York City**  
**Pascal Quoirin, Saint-Didier, France**  
**Three-manual mechanical (suspended) action console**  
**Four-manual electric console (movable)**  
**95 stops, 111 ranks**

#### GRAND-ORGUE

16' Montre  
 16' Bourdon  
 8' Montre  
 8' Second (large Cavallé-Coll-style Montre)<sup>°</sup>  
 8' Flûte traversière  
 8' Bourdon  
 8' Gambe  
 5½' Gros Nasard  
 4' Prestant  
 4' Second (large Cavallé-Coll-style Prestant)<sup>°</sup>  
 4' Flûte ouverte  
 3½' Grosse Tierce  
 2½' Quinte  
 2½' Nasard  
 2' Doublette  
 2' Flûte  
 Grande Fourniture II  
 Fourniture IV  
 Cymbale III  
 Cornet VII (c3)  
 16' Bombarde  
 8' 1ère Trompette  
 8' 2ème Trompette (chamade)  
 4' Clairon  
 Tremblant  
 8' Trompette harmonique en chamade (Récit)

#### POSITIF

16' Quintaton  
 8' Montre  
 8' Flûte conique  
 8' Bourdon  
 8' Salicional  
 4' Prestant  
 4' Flûte conique  
 2½' Nasard  
 2' Doublette  
 2' Quarte de Nasard  
 1½' Tierce  
 1½' Larigot  
 1' Flageolet  
 Fourniture IV  
 Cymbale III  
 16' Basson  
 8' Trompette  
 4' Clairon  
 8' Cromorne  
 Tremblant  
 8' Trompette harmonique en chamade<sup>°</sup> (Récit)

#### GRAND-RÉCIT EXPRESSIF

16' Bourdon<sup>°</sup>  
 8' Principal<sup>°</sup>  
 8' Flûte harmonique<sup>°</sup>  
 8' Bourdon<sup>°</sup>  
 8' Gambe<sup>°</sup>  
 8' Voix Céleste<sup>°</sup>  
 8' Aéoline<sup>°</sup>  
 8' Aéoline Céleste<sup>°</sup>  
 4' Prestant<sup>°</sup>  
 4' Flûte octaviante<sup>°</sup>  
 2½' Nasard harmonique<sup>°</sup>  
 2' Octavin<sup>°</sup>  
 1½' Tierce harmonique<sup>°</sup>  
 Plein Jeu V<sup>°</sup>  
 Sur Cymbale III<sup>°</sup>  
 16' Basson<sup>°</sup>  
 8' Trompette harmonique<sup>°</sup>  
 4' Clairon harmonique<sup>°</sup>  
 8' Basson Hautbois<sup>°</sup>  
 8' Voix Humaine<sup>°</sup>  
 Tremblant<sup>°</sup>  
 8' Trompette harmonique en chamade<sup>°</sup>

#### RÉCIT-ECHO (expressif)

8' Bourdon  
 4' Flûte allemande  
 2½' Nasard  
 2' Flûte  
 1½' Tierce  
 8' Trompette  
 8' Hautbois  
 8' Voix Humaine  
 8' Basson (Cor anglais)  
 8' Clarinette  
 Tremblant  
 8' Trompette harmonique en chamade<sup>°</sup>

#### PÉDALE

32' Bourdon  
 16' Flûte  
 16' Principal  
 16' Bourdon  
 16' Petit Bourdon (Récit)<sup>°</sup>  
 10½' Grande Quinte  
 8' Flûte  
 8' Violoncelle  
 8' Bourdon  
 6½' Grande Tierce  
 5½' Quinte  
 4' Prestant  
 4' Flûte  
 3½' Tierce  
 2' Quinzième  
 Plein Jeu IV  
 32' Bombarde  
 16' Bombarde  
 16' Basson (Schnitger-type Posaune)  
 8' Trompette  
 8' Basson (Schnitger-type Posaune)  
 4' Clairon  
 8' Trompette harmonique en chamade<sup>°</sup>

<sup>°</sup> playable only on the electric console

# New Organs

**Kegg Pipe Organ Builders,  
Hartville, Ohio  
Private Residence, Palm Springs,  
California**

Traditionally, American residence organs have taken one of two roads. In the first half of the twentieth century, the Aeolian company specialized in a style of organ that was heard but not seen. The pipes were typically in fairly remote chambers, and the music was mostly intended to provide a luxurious background to some other activity around the house. Scaling and voicing could be done in a normal or even aggressive way, relying on distance to blend and mellow the final result.

In the second half of the century, with the advent of the Organ Reform movement, a residence organ became much less of an entertainment device (radio and recordings had filled that role) and more of a practice instrument. Crisp, responsive key actions were far more important than variety of color, and many an organist spent countless hours training his fingers and feet to control two eight-foot flutes while his mind's ear heard Schnitger.

The function of the new Kegg organ for a private residence in Palm Springs,

## ► page 31: Quoirin cover feature

crescendoing upwards. Thus, the sound of the organ is centered for the listener located in the nave.

The plenum in two planes, Grand-Orgue and Positif, is founded on the fundamental of the 16', in the French manner, Grande Fourniture with its resultants of 10 2/3', Fourniture, and Cymbale.

The Plein Jeu of the Grand-Récit Expressif is not a part of the plenum. It is rather to be used with the reeds, which the symphonic character favors. On the other hand, the Sur Cymbale on this keyboard is of the "neo-classic" type, narrow scale and high-pitched, voiced with low mouths and toes relatively closed. The use of such a stop figures in certain very special registrations of Olivier Messiaen. It is also the typical color of the neo-classical epoch that considered the effect of the Plein-jeux as an intense and penetrating light, whose goal was to illuminate the foundations of the organ. On the other hand, the classic conception interprets the Plein Jeu, the plenum, as the result of a synthesis of harmonics: one homogenous sonority with its vowel sound perfectly defined.

The reed stops differentiate themselves in three different ways.

The first: classic, copying the "Dom-Bédos" reeds of the Église Sainte-Croix in Bordeaux, for the reeds of the Grand-Orgue, Positif, and the Trompette, Hautbois, and Voix humaine of the Récit-Echo, with their distinctive reeds made of brass in the form of a "U", 2/3 open.

The second: the Clarinette 8' and the Basson 8' of the Récit-Echo, the Basson 16' of the Positif, with their "tear-drop" reeds, according to the measurements of Cavallé-Coll, and the Bassons 16' and 8' of the Pédale, with their rectangular "tear-drop", tin-plated reeds.

The third: the harmonic reeds of the Grand-Récit Expressif, with their reeds more closed, of the "Bertouneche" type (Bertouneche was a French craftsman who made the shallots of Cavallé-Coll's reeds; this little enterprise existed, remaining in productivity, until 1976).

The acoustic of the church, where the reverberation time is about three seconds, can appear very short, yet it has the advantage of eliciting no deformation to the sound. The bass has a flawless definition and does not invade the space, and the higher pitches sound without any aggressiveness. There are no curved surfaces in the interior architecture that could introduce disturbing reverberation.

—Pascal Quoirin

<http://www.atelier-quoirin.com/>

Photo credit: Tom Ligamari

California, falls somewhere between these two. The client uses it to practice, yes. But his organ playing is something he does purely for pleasure, not a first or even second job. It is nearly impossible in these pages to find the term "unification" without the qualifier "judicious" close at hand. The Palm Springs organ goes beyond simply embracing the unit organ concept: it exploits it! Even this electric-action unit organ needs to be responsive and meticulously regulated to encourage good technique, but it also must be beautiful to listen to, musical in its own right, and visually cooperative with the guest suite whose 16' x 24' space it shares.

It begins with taking into account that the requirements of this organ differ significantly from a church organ of the same size. There is no congregation to lead in singing, no choir to accompany, no bride to bring down the aisle, and no Easter Sunday postlude, although all of that music will probably be played.

The specification is built around trying to extract as many different color combinations as possible from the resources available. All eight of the ranks are quite similar in volume, so that any given pair of stops drawn from them has a reasonable chance at sounding balanced. The two flute stops in particular change construction frequently in order to emphasize different colors at different pitch ranges. They include stopped wood, capped metal, chimney flute, koppel flute, spitzflute, open and harmonic pipes. The Viola and Celeste are scaled small enough to have a definite string tone, but are voiced gently enough to beguile even a listener standing directly in front of them. The Quinte is voiced to work well with the Octave in the wired Mixture, providing a satisfying but not earsplitting top end to the ensemble. The unenclosed Principal gives a solid foundation to the rest of the organ with the shades open, but also sings a rich velvety solo line, particularly in the tenor range, when the shades are closed. Finally, the capped Fluegelhorn walks the fine line of being able to simulate "full Swell" as a chorus reed, or play solo melodies against a variety of accompaniment registrations.

Two other components are crucial to the success of this instrument: a very effective swell box, and a virtually silent, well-regulated tremulant. A great deal of care was taken in making the swell box as airtight as possible. The bottom 15 pipes of the 16' flute are wood, and mounted horizontally behind the swell box, with their mouths speaking into it. The 16 swell shades are operated noiselessly in 32 stages by an electric shade motor.

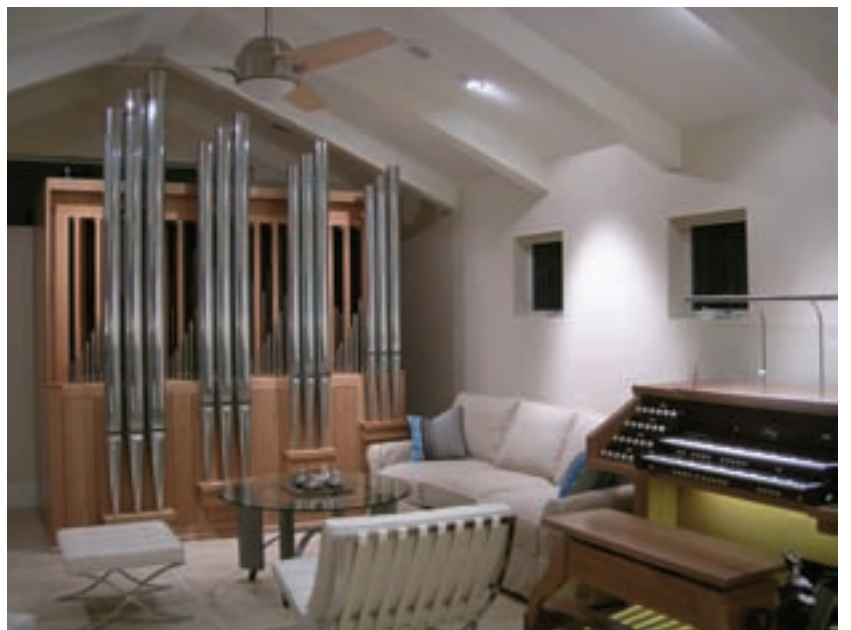
At a small dinner party the evening of the tonal finishing was completed, the client chose as his opening selection Alec Wyton's arrangement of the Billy Strayhorn tune, "Lotus Blossom." We did not hear an organ preparing a player for a real performance somewhere else. We heard an instrument completely content with its surroundings, happy to get out of its own way and let the beautiful music sing for itself. And that is a deeply rewarding experience for our company of organ builders.

—Fredrick Bahr

## Kegg Pipe Organ Builders

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Kegg Pipe Organ Builders, Palm Springs residence

| Tonal Resources |        |                        | SWELL |        |                     |       |
|-----------------|--------|------------------------|-------|--------|---------------------|-------|
| 1.              | 8'     | Principal (unenclosed) | 61    | 8'     | Rohrflute           | 2     |
| 2.              | 16'    | Rohrflute              | 85    | 8'     | Viola               | 4     |
| 3.              | 4'     | Harmonic Flute GG      | 54    | 8'     | Viola Celeste       | 5     |
| 4.              | 8'     | Viola GG               | 42    | 4'     | Principal           | 6     |
| 5.              | 8'     | Viola Celeste TC       | 37    | 4'     | Harmonic Flute      | 3     |
| 6.              | 4'     | Octave                 | 73    | 2 3/4' | Nazard              | 7     |
| 7.              | 1 1/2' | Quinte                 | 49    | 2'     | Octave              | 6     |
| 8.              | 16'    | Fluegelhorn            | 85    | 2'     | Flute               | 2 & 6 |
|                 |        |                        |       | 1 3/4' | Tierce              | 2 & 6 |
|                 |        |                        |       | 1 1/2' | Quinte              | 7     |
|                 |        |                        |       | 1'     | Fife                | 2 & 6 |
|                 |        |                        |       | 16'    | Bassoon             | 8     |
|                 |        |                        |       | 8'     | Fluegelhorn         | 8     |
|                 |        |                        |       | 4'     | Hautbois            | 8     |
|                 |        |                        |       |        | Tremulant           |       |
|                 |        |                        |       |        | Swell 16, UO, 4     |       |
|                 |        |                        |       |        | MIDI Ch. 3          |       |
| GREAT           |        |                        | PEDAL |        |                     |       |
| 16'             |        | Viola TC               | 4     | 16'    | Bourdon             | 2     |
| 8'              |        | Principal              | 1     | 8'     | Principal           | 1     |
| 8'              |        | Harmonic Flute         | 2 & 3 | 8'     | Flute               | 2     |
| 8'              |        | Rohrflute              | 2     | 8'     | Viola               | 4     |
| 8'              |        | Viola                  | 4     | 4'     | Octave              | 1     |
| 8'              |        | Viola Celeste          | 5     | 2'     | Cantus Flute        | 3     |
| 4'              |        | Octave                 | 6     | 16'    | Bassoon             | 8     |
| 4'              |        | Harmonic Flute         | 3     | 8'     | Fluegelhorn         | 8     |
| 4'              |        | Rohrflute              | 2     | 4'     | Hautbois            | 8     |
| 2'              |        | Piccolo                | 3 & 6 |        | Great to Pedal 8    |       |
| III             |        | Mixture                | 6 & 7 |        | Swell to Pedal 8, 4 |       |
| 8'              |        | Fluegelhorn            | 8     |        | MIDI Ch. 4          |       |
|                 |        | Swell to Great         | 8     |        |                     |       |
|                 |        | MIDI Ch. 1             |       |        |                     |       |
|                 |        | MIDI Ch. 2             |       |        |                     |       |