

New Organs

Robert William Wallace Pipe Organs, Newport News, Virginia
St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Roman Catholic Church, Fredericksburg, Virginia

This new 49-rank organ is the centerpiece of a substantial renovation of the interior of the church (built in 1971). The east end of the church (behind the altar) was demolished and rebuilt to make room for the organ, and new flooring was installed in the nave to improve acoustics. The instrument resides behind large casework that doubles as the reredos of the altar. Flamed copper diapasons and dulcianas rest harmoniously amid sculptures and paintings of angels and saints. Organ chamber construction includes concrete block walls, cement board ceilings, and 2¾-inch-thick expression shutters with 45-degree bevels.

Through the guidance of tonal director Dr. William W. Hamner, Jr., the instrument unabashedly exhibits a neo-Romantic/neo-symphonic tonal palette, yet is equally capable of providing the color and contrapuntal clarity necessary to render even the most stylized of early literature. Moreover, scaling and voicing have been executed with liturgical collaboration fully in mind.

The three enclosed divisions include a partially enclosed Great and Pedal. Portions of the Choir and Swell are double-enclosed, utilizing Robert William Wallace inner-shade slide controllers, which are located at the forward end of the appropriate expression shoes. Wind pressures range from 5 inches in the outer Choir division and the unenclosed portion of the Great and Pedal, to 7 inches in the Swell division, 10 inches in the enclosed Great division, and 18 inches for the Pontifical Tuba. Fourteen vintage ranks, mid-1950s “Willis” Wicks pipes, were reclaimed from two older installations, reworked, and revoiced to integrate with the new choruses of the organ.

The action is electro-pneumatic and electric, and the movable English-style drawknob console was custom-designed to complement the church renovation. Console appurtenances include complete inter- and intramanual couplers, Gt.-Ch. transfer, pedal divide, all swells to swell, solid-state combination action with 128 memory levels per user, piston sequencer, playback, and MIDI.

The organ was blessed by Bishop Paul S. Loverde at a Mass on November 22, 2010, during which the new altar and renovated worship space were for-

mally dedicated, and first played publicly by director of sacred music David Mathers. An inaugural concert featuring Frederick Teardo, associate organist of Saint Thomas Church, New York, took place on June 17.

—Mary William Baines

- GREAT**

 - 16’ Double Dulciana (ext)
 - 16’ Violone (ext)
 - 8’ 1st Open Diapason
 - 8’ 2nd Open Diapason
 - 8’ Harmonic Flute
 - 8’ Stopped Flute
 - 8’ Violoncello
 - 8’ ’Cello Celeste (TC)
 - 8’ Dulciana
 - 8’ Dolcan
 - 8’ Dolcan Celeste (TC)
 - 4’ Principal (ext 1st Open Diapason)
 - 4’ Octave
 - 4’ Octave Dulciana (ext)
 - 4’ Open Flute (ext Stopped Flute)
 - 2½’ Twelfth
 - 2’ Fifteenth
 - 2’ Chorus Mixture IV
 - 2’ Harmonia Aethera IV (from Dulciana)
 - 8’ Pontifical Tuba (Ch)
 - 8’ Tromba
 - 8’ English Horn
 - 4’ Tromba Clarion (ext)
 - Chimes (Ch)
 - Tremolo
- SWELL**

 - 16’ Minor Bourdon (ext)
 - 8’ Horn Diapason
 - 8’ 2nd Diapason (from Octave)
 - 8’ Stopped Diapason
 - 8’ Salicional
 - 8’ Voix Celeste (TC)
 - 8’ Violin Celeste II (from Violina/Celeste)
 - 4’ Octave Diapason
 - 4’ Harmonic Flute
 - 4’ Violina
 - 4’ Violina Celeste
 - 2½’ Flute Twelfth (ext)
 - 2’ Harmonic Piccolo (ext)
 - 1½’ Tierce (TC)
 - 2½’ Full Mixture V
 - 2’ String Mixture IV (from Salicional)
 - 16’ Double Waldhorn (ext)
 - 16’ Bassoon (from Oboe)
 - 8’ Cornopean
 - 8’ Waldhorn
 - 8’ Oboe
 - 8’ Vox Humana
 - 4’ Clarion (ext Oboe)
 - Tremolo
- CHOIR**

 - 8’ Violin Diapason
 - 8’ Chant Flute
 - 8’ Bois Celeste (TC)
 - 8’ Harmonic Flute (Gt)
 - 8’ Viole
 - 8’ Viole Celeste (TC)
 - 4’ Octave



- 4’ Magic Flute
 - 2½’ Twelfth (ext Viole)
 - 2’ Fifteenth (ext Viole)
 - 2’ Recorder (ext Magic Flute)
 - 1½’ Seventeenth
 - 1’ Fife (ext Magic Flute)
 - 1½’ Mixture IV (from Viole)
 - 8’ Oboe Horn
 - 8’ Clarinet
 - 4’ Clarinet (ext)
 - 8’ Pontifical Tuba
 - 8’ Tromba (Gt)
 - 4’ Tuba Clarion (ext)
 - 4’ Tromba Clarion (Gt)
 - Chimes (21 tubes)
 - Tremolo
- PEDAL**

 - 32’ Double Major Bass (resultant)
 - 32’ Acoustic Bourdon (resultant)
 - 16’ Open Diapason (ext Gt 2nd Open Diap)
 - 16’ Major Bass
 - 16’ Bourdon (ext Gt Stopped Flute)
 - 16’ Minor Bourdon (Sw)
- 16’ Violone (Gt)
 - 16’ Double Dulciana (Gt)
 - 10½’ Dolce Quint (Gt Dulciana)
 - 8’ Principal
 - 8’ Octave Wood (ext Major Bass)
 - 8’ Stopped Flute (Gt)
 - 8’ Violoncello (Gt)
 - 4’ Fifteenth (Gt 2nd Open Diapason)
 - 4’ Major Flute (ext Major Bass)
 - 32’ Double Trombone (digital ext)
 - 16’ Trombone (ext Gt Tromba)
 - 16’ Double Waldhorn (Sw)
 - 8’ Pontifical Tuba (Ch)
 - 8’ Tromba (Gt)
 - 8’ Clarinet (Ch)
 - 4’ Clarion (Gt)
 - 4’ English Horn (Gt)
 - Glockenstern (seven bells)

3,298 pipes
49 ranks
76 stops

► page 31: Rieger cover feature

gether with the enclosed Orchesterwerk division, can be controlled from one swell pedal, thus enabling the player easily to make finely nuanced adjustments to the organ’s volume.

At the top of the organ, behind the façade pipes and partially in the space created by the triangular pediment that crowns the organ case, are a third blower and the wind reservoirs for the Hauptwerk, Swell and Solo organs.

Technical information

As already mentioned, the organ has two consoles. The attached console is made of walnut wood, whereas the mobile console has a black lacquered exterior that allows it to harmonize on stage with members of the orchestra. The key action of the attached console is mechanical, while that of the second, mobile console (which can be placed anywhere on the stage) is electric. In both cases, the stop action is electric. The normal couplers on the attached console are mechanical and the mobile console has additional “unison off” and adjustable “divided” pedal options. On the moveable console, the organist can choose between having the Hauptwerk or Orchesterwerk organs playable from the bottom manual. Furthermore, the mobile console is fitted with an electrically operated, adjustable feature that

allows organists to save their preferred positions for the organ bench and the pedalboard in relation to the manuals, and to recall these when required, after which the preferred positions are taken up automatically. The use of these features at the inaugural concert, and the resulting speed with which one organist could follow another, proved their value in a concert hall setting.

A final, unique, feature of the electric console is that the pedalboard and bench can be retracted electrically to the point where the console can be pushed on its platform through the narrow stage doors when not required on stage. In all other respects, including the layout, the two consoles are identical.

The Rieger capture system, Rieger Electronic Assistant (REA), is used in the Musikverein organ, fully at both consoles and interchangeably between them. The system makes provision for 20 individual organists, each having up to 1,000 combinations, the possibility of inserting three additional combinations between existing ones, and the ability to archive registrations for 250 pieces, each with up to 250 registration combinations. The system’s features include, among other things, sequencing, sostenuto, copying, and repeat functions; divisional and general cancels; unison-off options; and four individually adjustable crescendi. The Rieger recording and playback functions, tuning system, transposing facility,

and MIDI features are also available.

The organ has 6,138 pipes, most of which are on slider windchests that are operated by a tracker system from the mechanical console and by pallet magnets from the mobile console; some of the largest pipes are placed on auxiliary pneumatic chests. Individual wind pressures are used for the different divisions of the organ and all windchests are divided into bass and treble sections, each with their own appropriate wind pressures. The bass sections are supplied with stable wind from bellows, whereas the trebles are fed flexibly from swimmer reservoirs. Of the pipes referred to above, 639 are made of wood, with the remainder being constructed of various alloys of tin and lead. The largest pipe is more than 32 feet in length and weighs approximately 880 pounds.

Postscript

Vienna is the cradle of the symphony as art form, and the glorious Great Hall of the Musikverein a venue par excellence for symphony concerts. It is therefore entirely appropriate that the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Wien (the Society of Music Friends in Vienna) should have wanted a secular, symphonic organ for their beautiful hall. They specified an instrument that would match the quality of the world-renowned ensembles and artists that perform in their famous venue, a concert hall organ whose

primary function is playing with orchestras, but also able to accompany other instruments and choirs, and at times be a recital instrument. Rieger Orgelbau has met these high (and potentially conflicting) expectations by judiciously combining the positive features of symphonic organs from an earlier era with the time honored attributes of classical organ building, thereby masterfully overcoming the shortcomings of instruments from the Romantic period, and creating a prototype for a second generation of symphonic organs.

The Musikverein organ is not a copy of an instrument from any historical school of organbuilding, but an absolutely modern instrument that draws on the rich values of and experience from different organbuilding periods, and simultaneously leads the art of organ building into the future. Its essence is ‘symphonic’—not by being ‘historic’, but through infusing the term with new meaning. Those involved in the project—the Society of Music Friends, the committee of organ experts, Rieger-Orgelbau—are all to be congratulated on creating a new milestone in the history of organ building and setting the highest standards for concert hall instruments of the future.

—Dr. Antony Melck
Professor, University of Pretoria

Photo credit: Wolf-Dieter Grabner/
Musikverein