

Cover feature

Sebastian M. Glück, New York, New York The First Presbyterian Church in the City of New York, New York, New York

The First Presbyterian Church took root as a dissenting group of Scots and Irish Protestants who worshipped in a private home in 1706 and organized a congregation a decade later. By 1719, their first church building opened for worship, leading to a long and continuing history of controversial views regarding man's relationship to religion, scripture, science, and politics. "The Church of the Patriots" survived revolution, fire, and urban expansion, dedicating the present church in 1849.

Among those on Old First's roster of notable preachers was Harry Emerson Fosdick, who in 1922 declared from the pulpit that The New Knowledge, as postulated by Charles Darwin, was not inconsistent with Christianity. The uproar spread like wildfire; even the Presbytery of Philadelphia met in the home of John Wanamaker to discuss the matter. An unrelenting three-year campaign by notorious fundamentalist William Jennings Bryan led Fosdick to resign (without changing his views). Fosdick, a longstanding friend of the Rockefeller family, subsequently served as pastor of The Riverside Church for nearly half a century.

Only months before the demolition of the World Trade Center, Dr. Jon M. Walton became the Senior Pastor of First Presbyterian Church. He would soon inherit a stunned city and a congregation numbed by the murder of their members and the orphans left behind. Beginning their fourth century, the congregation and their pastor continue to rebuild—spiritually, physically, and emotionally. Out of tragedy, the church has strengthened, grown steadily in membership, and commissioned pipe organs for both the chapel and the sanctuary.

The Guilmant Organ School

During French composer and organist Alexandre Guilmant's 1898 American tour, he and Dr. William C. Carl, organist and choirmaster of First Church, decided to open the United States' first school for organ and church music, with instruction based upon the master's method of teaching. The Guilmant Organ School's first class was held on October 9, 1899 and offered instruction to church musicians until the early 1970s. The Guilmant Organ Recital Series continues in modern times, as part of the church's rich music program that includes oratorio performances by the church's respected choir and orchestra.

Previous instruments

Initially, conservative worship at First Presbyterian did not permit musical instruments or concert literature; unaccompanied psalmody was provided by a vocal quartet. They were permitted to sing the works of Palestrina, Victoria and Orlando di Lasso in the chapel, but only as entertainments and never at worship services.

In 1888 Roosevelt's III/52 Opus 368 was built for the east tower gallery. When the elaborately carved chancel was added in 1920, the organ was replaced by Skinner Organ Company's Opus 293, a IV/72 in the north chancel chamber. Its Echo division was given residence in the bell tower, speaking through an impossibly small grille in the ceiling. The doomed division was installed in a giant meat refrigerator with shutters, Skinner's attempt to defeat the elements.

By the 1960s, the heating system had "baked the Skinner to death," according to the late Dr. Robert S. Baker (1916–2005), then organist and choirmaster of the church. Tonal tastes had changed, and Austin Organs, Inc. installed their IV/85 Opus 2048, dedicated in 1965. The planned revamped Echo division never came to be, but the meat locker remains.

Upon Dr. Baker's retirement in 1988, he was succeeded by his student, Wil-



The console

liam F. Entriken. During Dr. Entriken's ongoing tenure the church commissioned two pipe organs, both of which were designed and built by Sebastian M. Glück. In 2004, the Rees Jones Memorial Organ, a Georgian-inspired instrument tuned in Werckmeister III, was installed in Alexander Chapel. A recording of Opus 8 is available from the Organ Historical Society. The large sanctuary organ, Opus 12, was completed this year, funded by both First Church and the generosity of donors who gave individual stops or entire choruses of pipework in memory or honor of special people in their lives.

—Benito Orso

From the tonal director

There are advantages to not being "the first man at bat" when it comes to designing a pipe organ for a particular room. One benefits from the lessons of the past: what did or did not work tonally, what physical or environmental conditions helped or hindered the making of music, and what resources musicians may have used most often or what they felt was wanting.

Prevailing scaling and voicing practices of the 1960s (small scales, even smaller scales for the reeds, underlength resonators, low cut-ups, minimal languid treatment), coupled with an acoustic that "eats bass" and a chambered installation, conspired to keep the organ's sound from reaching the listener.

Another characteristic of organs of the era (even very large ones) was the frustrating disposition of stops, often found at the wrong pitches in the wrong divisions for the accurate registration of the established literature. With enough stops drawn, the liturgy, hymnody, and anthem work were adequately accompanied, but registrational authenticity, saturated color, energetic drive, and cohesive clarity remained elusive.

The new approach

Two main divisions share the second manual: the superordinate Werck, inspired (in concept) by the late 16th-century Hamburg school, and the Great, a more familiar-looking Anglo-French amalgam with both 18th and 19th century ingredients.

The previous organ had no Great reeds, a Harrisonian trend that inevitably created balance problems. The provision of the Great Cornet, Trumpet, and Clarion in the new organ enables the rest of the organ's reeds to fulfill their duties without compromise, and makes the 18th-century repertoire of several cultures come alive.

Both of these divisions can move about the organ via the coupling system, and if the Werck is used as the main division in early Northern literature, the Great can serve as the Oberwerk, the natural foil, distinguished by character more than brute strength.

This permits the Choir division to serve as its namesake, a secondary Swell rather than a penumbral "toy Positiv" of compromised and disjointed identity. Far less bold yet more colorful than the Solo department, the Choir still retains the essential classical elements within its accompanimental palette and cluster of instrumental pastels. A coherent collection of stops duplexed from the Great is available on this manual as well.

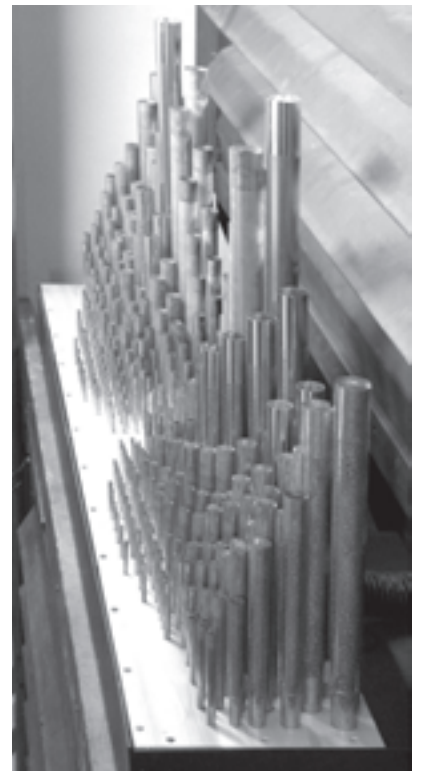
Large American Swell divisions have taken on a somewhat inelastic *grundriss*, the legacy of multicompetent sovereignty bestowed upon them by the English and thriving here through the Skinner school. And so it should be, a sensate plenipotentiary, home to a chorus of diapasons, a choir of flutes, two sets of undulants, the ubiquitous oboe and regal, and a molten battery of harmonic trumpets. Large scales and shallots with parallel walls (brilliance) and flat bottoms (fundamental) conspire to create a controllable, caged beast. My stratagem was not to reinvent the wheel, but rather to strip the execution of the formula of all shyness and vagaries.

Because we retained the cantilevered windchests from the previous organ (what was so bizarrely called "functional display" half a century ago), it was necessary to execute some compensatory tonal maneuvers for the enclosed divisions. Chambered organs of the period added to the disadvantage by drastically underscaling the expressive sections already in a sequestered relationship to the Great.

The Solo division is home to the usual suspects for an organ of this size and style. The soviet of harmonic bombardes



Solo English Horn and French Horn



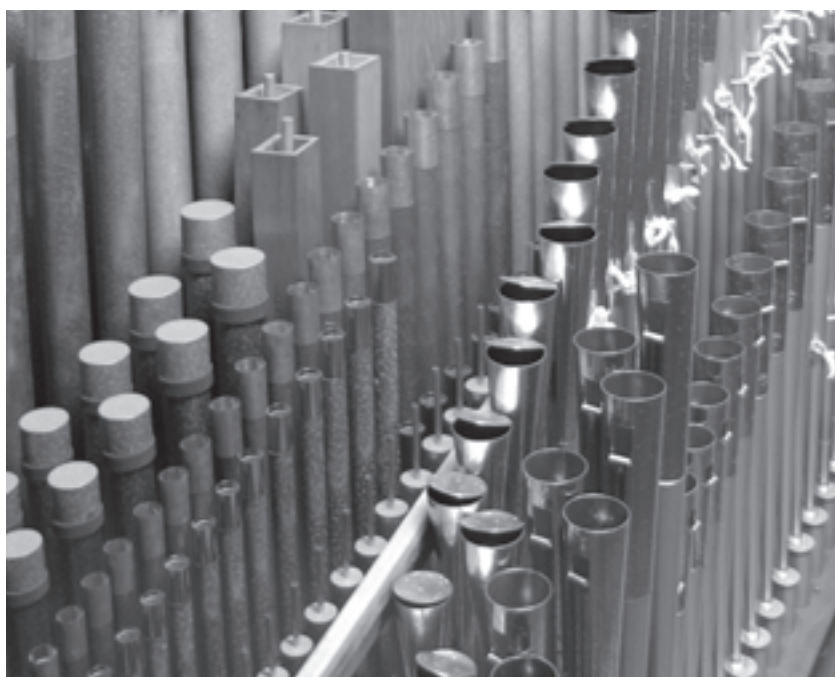
The Grand Chorus VIII

is more brilliant yet less richly dense than the Swell battery. The three orchestral reeds, like all the color reeds in the organ, are made of common metal, rather than spotted. The French Horn and flat-top English Horn are legacy ranks from the Skinner, but alas, were so drastically altered in the 1960s (lowered pressures, revised resonating lengths, new tongues, new wedges) that they are merely historic metal, and we cannot claim lineage. Like the Choir Flügel Horn, they were rebuilt for this installation and are successful and convincing.

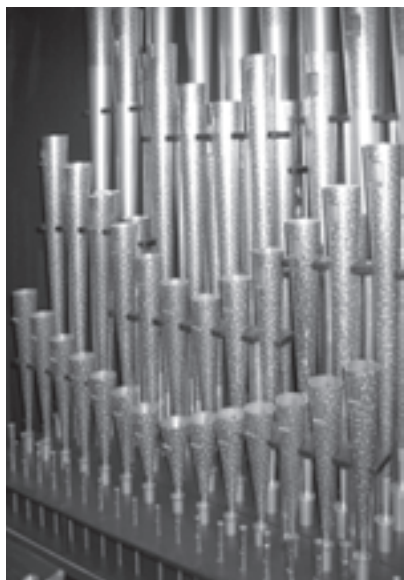
The Grand Chorus VIII is "the third Great," the only mixture in the organ to embrace the 16' harmonic series, voiced on 8" wind and mounted in a commanding position in front of the Solo enclosure. It is made of spotted metal, although the 16' rank is almost pure lead and the tenebrous 5 1/2' contraquint is subdued. This lends *gravitas* and avoids murkiness.

The Pedal department takes advantage of the instrument's electro-pneumatic action, supplementing its own structure with stops from the manual divisions. Some excoriate this centuries-old practice, but obdurate modern practitioners and their clients welcome the opportunity to mix mezzo-forte hues for the sake of nuance.

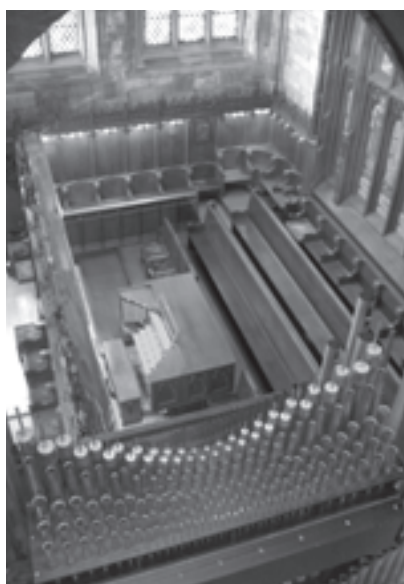
The full-length 32' Helicon is not overly noisy, but rather a gentle tympani roll beneath the ensemble. The Harmonics of 32' changes composition as it ascends the scale, maintaining clarity and immediacy of pitch identification in its reedy rumble. The recombinant effect of the two stops makes itself known without the vulgarity of a "loud for the



A glimpse into the Swell



The Tuba Major



The mounted Cornet with a view to the choir loft

sake of loud" voice that can be more ruinous than dramatic.

America's half-century love affair with horizontal blatancy seems to have reached its *dénouement* as musicians and builders realize that a more solid and focused formant may be a wiser choice for a herald stop. The key to success is to avoid the objectionable ends of the bell curve (splatter and honk), and work toward a brilliant, focused, pure tone, devoid of grittiness and fringe harmonics. Here the Tuba projects a definite "aw" vowel, not a nasal, short "a." After the stop's inauguration, I returned to revoice it on 12" rather than the original 10" pressure. The result is that it speaks with greater authority and majesty, with no loss of focus or nobility.

Are 93 ranks sufficient? Certainly, although in context I do not believe that there is any wasted metal in the organ.

Nonetheless, part of First Presbyterian's liturgical and musical tradition involves the choir singing from the narthex and the east tower gallery as well as the chancel. This is a church that fills its pews with energetic singers. The vision of a Tower division, within the church, encased where the Roosevelt once stood, is the reason for preparing for it in the console. Keeping it within the church itself, at the same level as the main organ, away from bells, frost, and pigeons, should assure a happier fate than "echoes of the past."

Both the new north balcony façade with its Zimbelstern and the console were designed to match the existing architecture of the room. The console cabinetry is oak, carved to match the window tracery found in the building. The interior is walnut, as are the manual accidentals and Skinner-style key cheeks. Pedal accidentals are rosewood, and the drawknobs are pao ferro. The three medallions that grace the music rack are jade.

The extensive combination action is a modern expectation, especially for a church with such a highly developed music program. We advise our clients that the combination action is likely the first item to need technical attention in a pipe organ, and we do keep more "precious" gadgetry to a minimum. Less-seen features are a separate set of pistons for the couplers, the Pedal on Choir coupler, and varying species of wood used for the toe studs, allocated by category. The divisional tags above each drawknob field, when pushed, cancel the knobs of their respective divisions.

The two organbuilders most responsible for the technical and structural realization of this installation were Robert Rast and Albert Jensen-Moulton, general manager of the firm. During onsite voicing and tonal finishing I was assisted by Mr. Jensen-Moulton at the console, whose ears and judgment I trust to achieve the firm's tonal signature.

I firmly believe that it is the small organ that challenges the creativity and ingenuity of both the builder and the musician. But an instrument of broad scope does not relieve the designer of the obligation to apply all that history has taught us, especially regarding the literature. The "concert" literature was written by church organists for the instruments they played for worship. The scores are the recipe books, and the surviving instruments the resulting cuisine. The large, eclectic organ is not a cultural grab-bag of incompatible material, but a conceptual coalition that must result in stylistic unity, bearing the sound and personality of the builder.

—Sebastian M. Glück

For information regarding new instruments and restorations, compact discs, consultancies, or lectures, write directly to <TubaMagna@aol.com>.

More photos may be found at <www.GluckNewYork.com>.

WERCK (Manual II)		
West Chancel Bay		
32'	Quintadehn (Swell) [1]	
16'	Præstandt [2]	61 pipes
8'	Octava	61 pipes
8'	Spitzflöte [3]	5 pipes
4'	Supra Octava	61 pipes
	Mixtur IV	244 pipes
	Zimbel III	183 pipes
16'	Fagott	61 pipes
	Werck Silent	

GREAT ORGAN (Manual II)		
East Chancel Bay		
16'	Bourdon (Swell)	
8'	First Diapason	61 pipes
8'	Second Diapason [4]	12 pipes
8'	Chimney Flute	61 pipes
8'	Harmonic Flute (Solo)	
8'	Erzähler	61 pipes
4'	Principal	61 pipes
4'	Octave [4]	12 pipes
4'	Night Horn	61 pipes
2½'	Twelfth	61 pipes
2'	Fifteenth	61 pipes
2'	Koppelpfeife	61 pipes
	Mixture IV	244 pipes
	Cornet V [5]	185 pipes
8'	Clarinet (Choir)	
8'	Trumpet	17 pipes
8'+4'	Grand Jeu [6]	12 pipes
	Great Silent	
	Chimes (Solo)	
	Tremulant	

SWELL ORGAN (Manual III)		
Chamber Level I, West		
16'	Bourdon	12 pipes
8'	Geigen Diapason	61 pipes
8'	Stopped Diapason	61 pipes
8'	Salicional	61 pipes
8'	Voix Céleste	61 pipes
8'	Flûte Conique	61 pipes
8'	Flûte Céleste	49 pipes
4'	Geigen Octave	61 pipes
4'	Chimney Flute	61 pipes
2'	Octavin	61 pipes
	Full Mixture V	269 pipes
16'	Double Trumpet	61 pipes
8'	Harmonic Trumpet	61 pipes
8'	Hautboy	61 pipes
8'	Vox Humana	61 pipes
4'	Harmonic Clarion	61 pipes
	Tremulant	
16'	Swell to Swell	
	Swell Silent	
4'	Swell to Swell	

CHOIR ORGAN (Manual I)		
Chamber Level I, East		
16'	Double Gemshorn	12 pipes
8'	Principal	61 pipes
8'	Doppelflöte [7]	61 pipes
8'	Gemshorn	61 pipes
8'	Gemshorn Céleste	49 pipes
4'	Præstant	61 pipes
4'	Flute	61 pipes
2½'	Nazard	61 pipes
2'	Recorder	61 pipes
1½'	Tierce	61 pipes
1½'	Larigot	61 pipes
	Mixture III	183 pipes
16'	Bass Clarinet	12 pipes
8'	Trumpet Minor	61 pipes
8'	Flügel Horn	61 pipes
8'	Clarinet	61 pipes
	Tremulant	
16'	Choir to Choir	
	Choir Silent	
4'	Choir to Choir	
Great Stops on Choir		
8'	First Diapason	
8'	Chimney Flute	
8'	Erzähler	
4'	Principal	
2'	Fifteenth	
IV	Mixture	
	Chimes (Solo)	
	Zimbelstern	8 bells

SOLO ORGAN (Manual IV)		
Chamber Level II, West		
8'	Spitzflöte (Pedal)	
8'	Viola Major	61 pipes
8'	Viola Céleste	61 pipes
8'	Harmonic Flute	61 pipes
4'	Principal	61 pipes
4'	Orchestral Flute	12 pipes
	Grand Chorus VIII [8]	370 pipes
8'	French Horn	61 pipes
8'	English Horn	61 pipes
8'	Corno di Bassetto	61 pipes
16'	Bombarde Harmonique	61 pipes
8'	Trompette Harmonique	61 pipes
4'	Clairon Harmonique	61 pipes
	Tremulant	
16'	Solo to Solo	
	Solo Silent	
4'	Solo to Solo	
	Chimes	20 tubes

TUBA ORGAN (Floating)		
North Gallery Arch		
	Cornet V (Great)	
	Grand Chorus VIII (Solo)	
16'	Tuba Magna	
8'	Tuba Major	61 pipes
4'	Tuba Clarion	12 pipes

TOWER ORGAN (Floating)		
East Tower		
8'	Principal	drawknob only
8'	Holz Gedeckt	drawknob only
8'	Viola Dolce	drawknob only
8'	Unda Maris	drawknob only
4'	Præstant	drawknob only
2'	Doublette	drawknob only
IV	Furniture	drawknob only

PEDAL ORGAN		
Chamber Level II, East		
32'	Contra Sub Bass	12 pipes
16'	Open Diapason Wood	32 pipes
16'	Open Diapason Metal	32 pipes
16'	Sub Bass	32 pipes
16'	Præstandt (Werck)	
16'	Double Gemshorn (Choir)	
16'	Bourdon (Swell)	
16'	Spitzbass	12 pipes
10½'	Contra Quint	7 pipes
8'	Principal	32 pipes
8'	Stopped Flute	5 pipes
8'	Spitzflöte	32 pipes
8'	Præstandt (Werck)	
8'	Stopped Diapason (Swell)	
8'	Gemshorn (Choir)	
5½'	Quint	7 pipes
4'	Fifteenth	32 pipes
4'	Spitzflöte	5 pipes
2'	Choral Bass	12 pipes
	Mixture III	96 pipes
32'	Harmonics of	
32'	Helicon [9]	12 pipes
16'	Posaune	32 pipes
16'	Bombarde (Solo)	
16'	Double Trumpet (Swell)	
16'	Fagott (Werck)	
16'	Bass Clarinet (Choir)	
8'	Trumpet	12 pipes
8'	Fagott (Werck)	
8'	Clarinet (Choir)	
4'	Clarion	12 pipes
4'	Rohr Schalmey [10]	32 pipes
	Chimes (Solo)	

TOWER PEDAL ORGAN		
16'	Tower Bass	drawknob only

Couplers

Werck to Pedal 8'
Great to Pedal 8'
Swell to Pedal 8', 4'
Choir to Pedal 8', 4'
Solo to Pedal 8', 4'

Swell to Great 16', 8', 4'
Choir to Great 16', 8', 4'
Solo to Great 16', 8', 4'

Choir to Swell 8'
Solo to Swell 8'

Pedal on Choir
Werck to Choir 8'
Great to Choir 8'
Swell to Choir 16', 8', 4'
Solo to Choir 16', 8', 4'

Werck to Solo 8'
Great to Solo 8'
Swell to Solo 8'

Transfers & Mechanicals

Tuba on each manual and pedal
Tower on each manual and pedal
Great/Choir Transfer
Mixtures Off
Reeds Off
Full Organ I
Full Organ II
Full Pedal
All Swells to Swell

Expression Pedals

Choir, Swell, Solo, Crescendo

Notes

- [1] 1–12 resultant
- [2] 1–12 wood
- [3] Upward extension of Pedal stop
- [4] Extension of Werck 16' Præstandt
- [5] G20–G56; mounted in East bay
- [6] Extension; draws 8' Trumpet as well
- [7] Wood; two mouths per pipe
- [8] Unenclosed
- [9] Wooden boots; 8" wind pressure
- [10] Brass; mounted in West bay

Wind Pressures

Main organ: 4"
Solo organ: 8"
Tuba organ: 12"
Tower organ: 3½"
Pedal 32" Helicon: 8"

Cover photo by Len Levasseur
Interior photos by Albert Jensen-Moulton

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