

# Farrand & Votey Organ Installed in Ransdell Chapel

Wesley Roberts

A century-old slice of music history arrived on the campus of Campbellsville University in central Kentucky in early 2007, when a Farrand & Votey organ was moved from Nashville, Tennessee, to the George W. and Marie T. Ransdell Chapel. The organ was built in 1894 for Christ Church in downtown Nashville, as a modest instrument of approximately fifteen ranks.<sup>1</sup> Over the course of many years, it has been rebuilt and enlarged to its present size of 51 ranks and 3,014 pipes. That Campbellsville University could acquire such a treasure was in itself a miracle, considering few universities nowadays are in a financial position to afford an organ of this size. But the miracle of a pipe organ is that it can be rebuilt and enlarged for much less expense than the purchase of a new instrument. Such would be the story of Farrand & Votey's pioneering instrument from the 1890s.

## The organ's origins

At the time Christ Church contracted with Farrand & Votey for an organ in June 1894, the church was moving into a new sanctuary and desirous of a fine instrument for its new facility. William R. Farrand (1854–1930) and Edwin Scott Votey (1856–1931) worked for Whitney Organ Company in Detroit, and when Whitney retired in 1887 the two joined to establish their own company. The company was soon expanded through the acquisitions of two small organ building firms, Granville Wood (1890) and Roosevelt (1892). Always seeking new innovations, Farrand & Votey employed the most modern construction techniques of the time, using several recent developments patented by Roosevelt and a few of their own. Their technique paid off handsomely, for they quickly reached national attention with important installations in key locations across the United States. At the Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago, they exhibited two organs, including a four-manual instrument in Festival Hall. Undoubtedly, these accomplishments attracted the attention of Christ Church, as it did others.<sup>2</sup>

Farrand & Votey's new organ for Christ Church was a three-manual instrument of approximately fifteen ranks. It was played for the first time during the opening services for the new building on Sunday, December 16, 1894. The organist was accompanied by a quartette plus a "chorus choir" of three ladies and fourteen men. The organ used the newly developed electro-pneumatic action, a revolutionary technique for the time; called ventils, it had a separate wind supply for each stop, with individual valves for every pipe. Its keyboard was attached to the instrument, as in tracker actions, although the original plans had called for it to be set across the chancel in a detached console. The organ was considered the best that could be obtained for the time and was the only one of its kind in the southeastern United States. As might be imagined, the organ quickly became a source of pride for the church and city.

The new instrument drew its electrical power from a series of four large batteries for key action, and obtained wind pressure from a water pump. The batteries were expensive to maintain and proved to be unreliable. Little to no maintenance seems to have taken place during the first dozen years. During this period, there were no fewer than seven different organists. In 1906, Arthur Henkel was hired as organist/choirmaster, and entrusted to care for the instrument. A committee was formed and before the end of the year, Orla D. Allen, a builder who had been with Farrand & Votey, was contracted to restore the instrument. Allen installed a new electrical Holtzer Cabot rotary transformer, or motor-generator, for key action and a Ross hydraulic



Console and façade

engine for wind pressure. He releathered the organ, rebuilt much of the internal workings of the console, and moved the latter across the chancel, as the original plans detailed. The work took six months and was said to be thorough and complete in church documents.

In the years to follow, the organ served as the principal musical vehicle for worship services and concerts. Henkel gave concerts on the new instrument to demonstrate its capabilities. One such concert program, dated December 5, 1909, included J. S. Bach's *Toccata and Fugue in D Minor* and Boëllmann's *Suite Gothique*, as well as lesser-known works by G. M. Dethier, Edwin Lemare, and Edward d'Evry.

## Additions and repairs

A set of chimes with twenty tubes was presented for the organ by Jane Washington Ewing in memory of her husband Felix Grundy Ewing in 1936. They were dedicated and heard for the first time on October 28, 1936.<sup>3</sup> Later, a Schulmerich carillon was given by Louise Bransford McGavock in memory of her parents, William Settle and Noda McGavock Bransford, in late 1944. With no place to install the gift, a front tower for the church was constructed in 1947, and the carillon was installed therein.<sup>4</sup>

By 1940, Henkel had noted to the church that the relays between the console and the organ had deteriorated to the point that repairs were needed.<sup>5</sup> Pilcher Organ Company from Louisville, Kentucky, was engaged the same year to install a new console (with relays built inside) and seven new ranks. Company records show that by the time work was complete, Pilcher had added nine new ranks. These consisted of a Gemshorn 8' on the Great; Vox Celeste 8', Aeoline 8', and Trompette 8' on the Swell; Flute Celeste 8' and Unda Maris 8' on the

Choir; and a Flute 8', Octave 8', and Super Octave 4' in the Pedal. In addition, three ranks were revoiced: the Trumpet 8' (Great), Oboe 8', and Vox Humana 8' (Swell); and the Clarinet 8' (Choir) was given new bass. By the time work was finished in September 1940, the organ was said to have been enlarged to 2,438 pipes.<sup>6</sup> Pilcher's fee for these additions and service was \$7,298.<sup>7</sup>

Further expansion of the organ began to be discussed after World War II, and a new console was installed by Möller Organ Company in 1955. This console, the third for the organ, is still in use today. Tonal improvements were made a few years later in 1959.

Henkel continued service at Christ Church until his retirement in 1959. He had served a total of fifty-three years as organist-choirmaster, and in honor of his ministry, the church dedicated the organ to Henkel upon his retirement. He was succeeded by Peter Fyfe, who served in the same capacity for the next thirty-five years, until 1994.<sup>8</sup> During Fyfe's years of service, many fine musicians from around the country came to Nashville and played the organ in either church services or concerts, including Leo Sowerby, John Scott, and Fred Swann, among others. An unusual event was the first performance of a Mass for Moog synthesizer and organ given in Christ Church by Nashvillian Dr. Gregory Woolf in the early 1970s.<sup>9</sup>

In 1967, Fyfe and Christ Church turned to A. W. Brandt and Company of Columbus, Ohio, for extensive work, releathering much of the instrument and repairing pneumatics and pipe boards. An extensive contract detailing the operation was signed in September for the sum of \$16,535. The Choir organ was expanded in a second agreement with Brandt two months later, which called for the installation of six new stops in the

Choir and one in the Great. Additions in the Choir included a new Rohrflute 8' (replacing the Concert Flute 8'), Spitz Principal 4' (replacing the Rohrflute 4'), Nazard 2½' (replacing the Flute Celeste 8'), Blockflute 2' (replacing the Harmonic Piccolo 2'), Cymbal III (replacing the Geigen Principal 8'), and Krummhorn 8' (replacing the Clarinet 8'). A new Gedeckt 8' (replacing the Doppel Flute 8') was placed in the Great. The total cost for these additions was \$6,730.

The maintenance and care of the organ was entrusted to Dennis Milnar in 1968 and has remained with him and the Milnar Organ Company to the present day.<sup>10</sup> A newcomer to Nashville from upstate New York, Milnar soon established his own company and developed a business that has serviced organs throughout Tennessee and in surrounding states. Under Milnar's guidance, a new Tierce 1¾' was added to the Choir in 1974. Additional work was done on the organ throughout the 1980s, including releathering the console pneumatics in 1981, converting the Double Open Diapason to a 32' Sub Bourdon in 1984, releathering the wind chests in 1987–88, and installing a Scharf III, Trombone 32', and other stops in 1989. The expression machines were releathered in 1991.

## Liturgical renewal—changes at Christ Church

While many of these changes were being made to the organ, discussion within Christ Church began to develop following World War II on the placement of important items within the chancel. Those concerned with liturgical renewal suggested the baptismal font, pulpit, and altar of the church be brought forward from the back wall to the front of the chancel for closer contact with the congregation. Similarly, efforts to study the possibility of placing the organ in the balcony began during the 1960s after Peter Fyfe had been organist for several years, but there was never a coordinated effort to any of these ideas until after 1980, when Rev. Tom Ward became rector. Ward enthusiastically supported changes in the liturgy laid out in the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer*, and it was through his encouragement that church leaders studied and retained a liturgical consultant to suggest changes. A new design was approved in 1990, which called for the altar table, with adjoining pulpit and baptismal font, to be moved close to the front of the chancel, and for an extension of the balcony to relocate the organ and choir therein. The initial changes to the front of the chancel were completed in 1992 with the installation of a new altar. Shortly thereafter, discussion turned more decidedly toward moving the organ and choir to the balcony, and plans began to be developed to reinforce the balcony and enlarge it for this purpose. As these plans developed, various organ consultants agreed that the Farrand & Votey could not satisfactorily be reworked and reinstalled in the balcony. Consequently, the decision was made to purchase a new organ rather than move the existing instrument to the balcony. Renovation of the balcony for this purpose was completed in 2003, and an impressive 60-rank Lively-Fulcher organ was installed. The new organ was played for the first time on June 1, 2003, by church organist Michael Velting.<sup>11</sup> With these changes complete, the church no longer needed its Farrand & Votey organ and placed it up for sale.

## An organ for Ransdell Chapel

About the same time, the initial stages of designing the new Ransdell Chapel for Campbellsville University were beginning. Upon learning of the availability of the Farrand & Votey organ in October 2003, University Organist Nevalyn



With speaking façade pipes, the organ room behind is 56 feet wide.

Moore and Wesley Roberts approached University President Michael Carter and received permission to investigate the possibility of acquiring the instrument for the new chapel. As they visited the church and played the organ, they realized that the organ would serve well as both a service organ to support the university's chapel services, and a concert organ to support the academic program. Upon Moore's and Roberts' recommendation, with the assistance of Dennis Milnar, the organ was purchased for \$30,000. The university then engaged Milnar Organ Company to convert the console and relays to solid-state technology, rebuild, redesign, move, and install the instrument in Ransdell Chapel.

The purchase of the organ at the early stages of design for Ransdell Chapel enabled architects to provide adequate space and facilities to house the instrument. Groundbreaking for the chapel was on October 25, 2005. Two additional stops were offered as gifts to the university for the organ. James and Nevalyn Moore, Campbellsville University School of Music faculty, gave a Zimbelstern, and Maynard and Jewel Faye Roberts of Ocala, Florida, gave a Trumpet en Chamade.

Excitement grew over the next year and a half as Ransdell Chapel was being built. As construction neared completion, Milnar began delivery of the organ

in February 2007, in a series of six weekly trips from their shop in Eagleville, Tennessee. The initial delivery on February 20 brought many of the largest parts of the organ, including the huge wooden Sub Bourdon pipes and wind chests. Students and faculty joined the Milnar crew in unloading its precious cargo from week to week as pipes and equipment arrived.<sup>12</sup> The *Central Kentucky News Journal* featured a front-page story on the organ in its April 5, 2007 issue.

The installation was completed in time for the dedication of Ransdell Chapel on April 18, 2007. University Organist Nevalyn Moore was at the console for the momentous occasion. Later in the summer, the Trumpet en Chamade arrived and was installed in the rear of the chapel for antiphonal effect. The chapel was also equipped with a Bechstein concert grand piano built in 2002, and a new Yamaha upright piano in an adjoining class/rehearsal room. Both instruments were gifts from friends of the university.

The organ was formally dedicated in a recital by Nevalyn Moore on September 4, 2007. On the program were selections by Albert Travis, Johann Sebastian Bach, Gordon Young, James Moore, Jean Langlais, and Charles-Marie Widor. The organ has since come to be admired in its new setting for its visual and musical beauty, and treasured for its capabilities and rich heritage. ■



The Trumpet en Chamade has copper resonators, with a fairly large scale creating a round, full sound.

**Christ Church Cathedral  
Specifications of the original Farrand & Votey organ<sup>13</sup>**

- GREAT**  
16' Double Open Diapason°  
8' Open Diapason  
8' Viola de Gamba  
8' Doppel Floete  
4' Octave  
2½' Octave Quint  
2' Super Octave  
Mixture III°  
4' Trumpet

- SWELL**  
16' Bourdon  
8' Open Diapason  
8' Salicional  
8' Stopped Diapason  
8' Gemshorn  
4' Flute Harmonique  
Cornet (?) ranks  
8' Oboe  
8' Vox Humana°  
Tremolo

°To be added later

- CHOIR**  
8' Geigen Principal  
8' Dolce  
8' Concert Floete  
4' Rohr Floete  
2' Piccolo Harmonique  
8' Clarinet

- PEDAL**  
16' Open Diapason  
16' Bourdon  
8' Violoncello

**Couplers**

- Great to Pedal  
Swell to Pedal  
Choir to Pedal  
Swell to Great Sub Octaves

- Swell to Great Unison  
Swell to Great Super Octaves  
Great Octaves  
Choir to Great Sub Octaves  
Choir to Great Unison  
Swell to Choir  
Swell Octaves

**Ransdell Chapel  
Farrand & Votey organ  
Redesigned and rebuilt by Milnar  
Organ Company, 2007**

- GREAT**  
16' Quintaton  
8' Open Diapason  
8' Gedeckt  
8' Gemshorn  
4' Octave  
4' Koppel Flute  
2½' Twelfth  
2' Fifteenth  
V Fourniture  
8' Trumpet  
III Scharf  
8' Trumpet en Chamade  
Unison Off  
Great 16  
Great 4  
Chimes  
MIDI to Great

- SWELL**  
8' Open Diapason  
8' Stopped Diapason  
8' Salicional  
8' Aeoline  
8' Vox Celeste  
4' Flute Harmonic  
4' Gemshorn  
2' Principal  
III Plein Jeu  
II Sesquialtera  
16' Contra Fagotto  
8' Trompette  
8' Oboe  
4' Clarion  
8' Trumpet en Chamade (Gt)  
Tremolo  
Unison Off  
Swell 16  
Swell 4  
MIDI to Swell

- CHOIR**  
8' Rohrfloete  
8' Dolce  
8' Unda Maris  
4' Spitz Principal  
2½' Nazard  
2' Blockflute  
1½' Tierce  
III Cymbel  
8' Krummhorn  
8' Trumpet en Chamade (Gt)  
Tremolo  
Unison Off  
Choir 16  
Choir 4  
MIDI to Choir  
Moore Zimbelstern

- PEDAL**  
32' Sub Bourdon  
16' Principal  
16' Quintaton  
16' Bourdon  
8' Octave  
8' Flute  
8' Cello  
4' Super Octave  
32' Trombone  
16' Trombone  
8' Trumpet  
4' Clarion  
MIDI to Pedal

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Understanding the basics of pipe scaling

*Kimball organ restorations*

Company history and a demonstration of the restored 1931 Kimball organ at First Congregational Church

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The 3-manual console was rebuilt with a software-based organ control system.

#### Couplers

Great to Pedal 8, 4  
Swell to Pedal 8, 4  
Choir to Pedal 8, 4  
Swell to Great 16, 8, 4  
Choir to Great 16, 8, 4  
Swell to Choir 16, 8, 4  
Great/Choir Transfer

#### Pistons

Generals: Thumb 1-6 & Toe 1-9  
Swell: Thumb 1-6  
Great: Thumb 1-6  
Choir: Thumb 1-6  
Pedal: Thumb 1-6 & Toe 1-6  
Swell to Pedal: Thumb & Toe  
Great to Pedal: Thumb & Toe  
Choir to Pedal: Thumb & Toe  
SFZ: Thumb & Toe  
Combination Adj.: Thumb  
Cancel: Thumb

#### Expression

Swell  
Choir

#### Compass

61-note manual  
32-note pedal

#### Memory System

Peterson ICS-4000

#### Notes

This article first appeared in *The Campbellsville Review*, Vol. 3, 2005-2007, and is reprinted by permission of its editor.

1. In 1998, the church was consecrated a cathedral and its name changed to Christ Church Cathedral.

2. Including St. Martin of Tours Catholic Church in Louisville, Kentucky, which also purchased an organ from the firm in 1894. Farrand & Votey's business was dissolved in 1898, and Votey Organ Company was established. No sooner was the new company established than it was purchased by Aeolian Organ Company. The changes were without doubt prompted by Votey's success as the inventor of the pianola in 1895, and his desire to explore its commercial possibilities. For more details on these developments, see <[www.pianola.org/factsheets/votey](http://www.pianola.org/factsheets/votey)>.

3. This set of chimes is still in the organ today.

4. The carillon was played until the 1980s, when it was no longer possible to obtain replacement parts to maintain the equipment.

5. The author is indebted to Dennis Milnar for providing a copy of Henkel's brief history of the organ as well as another brief history by an unknown author. Both are undated but were undoubtedly written after 1940.

6. Nashville *Banner*, September 18, 1940. Erroneously, the newspaper reported that chimes had been added at this time.

7. The author is indebted to Jim Miller and Keith Norrington of Miller Pipe Organ for providing copies of pages from Pilcher's service ledger detailing the transaction.

8. Peter Fyfe (b. 1923) also served as an adjunct faculty member at the Blair School of Music from 1964-2004. He was ably assisted by his wife Lois. The author graciously expresses appreciation to Peter Fyfe for comments regarding the organ and its history.

9. Dr. Woolf taught at Peabody College and was a neighbor of the Milnars. Their families became close friends, and after Woolf died in his early thirties from cancer, the Milnars named their last son Gregory in his honor. Woolf's Mass was sung at Washington Cathedral for its second performance.

10. Milnar's first service call was for a touch-up tuning. Company records show his fee was \$20.

11. The author expresses appreciation to Fletch Coke, Christ Church Historian, and Bill Coke, chairman of the organ committee,

for supplying details on changes that took place within the sanctuary, as well as Michael Velting, for additional information on the history of the organ.

12. The entire Milnar team assisted in the initial delivery. They were: Dennis Milnar, Derek Milnar, Todd Milnar, Jeff Milnar, Greg Milnar, Tim Murphy, Kevin McGrath, and Chris Brent.

13. Of the original ranks, the following are still in use in the organ: Open Diapason 8', Octave 4', Octave Quint (Twelfth 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ '), Super Octave (Fifteenth 2'), Mixture (Fourniture V), Salicional 8', Stopped Diapason 8', Gemshorn 4', Flute Harmonique 4', Cornet (Sesquialtera II), Oboe 8', Dolce 8', Bourdon 16', and Violoncello 8'.

*Wesley Roberts is Professor of Music at Campbellsville University, where he teaches piano, organ, and musicology, and has been a member of the faculty since 1982. He has presented concerts as pianist and organist throughout the United States, in Europe and in Asia, including premieres of works by the Dutch composers Hans Osieck, Johan van Kempen, and Kees Weggelaar, and the American composers Tom Johnson and James W. Moore. He is the author of articles and reviews in British, Dutch, and American journals, and co-author with Maurice Hinson of The Piano in Chamber Ensemble, 2nd Edition, published in 2006. Dr. Roberts has served as a visiting professor at the French Piano Institute in Paris and at Shanghai Normal University, and is currently organist at Calvin Presbyterian Church in Louisville.*

#### From the builder

When Christ Episcopal Church in Nashville, Tennessee, asked us to market their Farrand & Votey organ for them, we took the project to heart. The organ had been under our care for almost 40 years, and this project became personal.

I thought we had a possible new home for it in Nashville, but that did not materialize. Professor Wesley Roberts, of Campbellsville University in Kentucky, read an advertisement of ours and called us. After several discussions, Wesley, Nevalyn Moore, and I met at Christ Church. The organist of Christ Church, Dr. Michael Velting, gave a demonstration of the instrument, and they were impressed. I told them if we could redesign the organ to be on one level, instead of several, within a good room, in a good location, the organ sound would be enhanced.

We were so pleased when the university decided to purchase the organ and commission us to redesign, rebuild and install it in their forthcoming new chapel. That was the beginning of a long successful project. There were two major factors that made the project successful. First was the university's willingness to make the necessary repairs and upgrades to the organ. The second was the architect, Jeff Bennett, who was enthusiastic about the organ and open to our recommendations.

The organ room at Christ Church was about 15 feet square with a height of about 25 feet. The tonal opening that faced the congregation was in front of the Choir box wall, and allowed limited egress of sound. The opening facing the Choir was larger, and allowed most of the sound egress. Both openings supported pipe façades with lovely hand-painted pipes. The limited floor space made it



Façade above stage

necessary to have the organ speak at several levels. Fortunately, it was an inside room, and the organ enjoyed good tuning stability.

The new home in Ransdell Chapel gave us an area that is 58 feet wide and 18 feet deep, with 26 feet of height. This area has complete temperature and humidity control. The outside walls of the organ area consist of eight-inch thick block, ridge insulation and a brick exterior. The ceiling has two layers of 5/8-inch drywall and the concrete slab floor is about 12 feet above and behind the stage. The sound projection is fantastic.

The architect provided us with new Swell and Choir chambers. These virtually soundproof enclosures have six-inch thick insulated walls, with two layers of 5/8-inch thick drywall on the inside with another layer outside. The doors are made of insulated steel, providing a most effective crescendo of sound.

Pipes that were once placed deep in the chamber were placed in an unobstructed position. The 32' Bourdon spoke under the Choir and Great windchests and about 18 inches from a large bellows; it

now has five feet of unobstructed space to develop its full sound and bounce off a solid wall. The listener can not only hear this powerful stop but also feel its reverberating tone. This is also true for the 32' Trombone and the 16' Principal, which were in the back of the old chamber behind the Swell box.

The organ now speaks with greater clarity and the volume has increased by at least 50 percent. To crown the organ, the parents of Professor Roberts donated funds to add a beautifully made (A. R. Schopp's Sons) Trumpet en Chamade. We mounted this on the rear wall at the height of the main organ. The large-scaled, flared copper reed has a warm strong sound that truly crowns the instrument without taking away from the grandeur of the main organ.

To hear and see this instrument today with its software-based organ control system (Peterson ICS-4000) and think back to its beginning with a water pump for air pressure and batteries to operate the magnets, speaks volumes about the reigning king of instruments.

—Dennis Milnar

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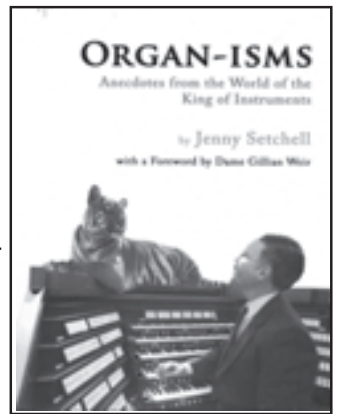
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