

Grinnell College Aeolian-Skinner Opus 1091 restoration



Herrick Chapel

Surrounded by farmlands planted in thick carpets of corn, Grinnell, Iowa, is considered one of the most livable small towns in America. Founded in 1854 by abolitionist minister Josiah B. Grinnell, it is home to the college that now bears his name, first established in Davenport in 1846 as Iowa College. Within twenty-five years of its founding, Iowa College relocated to Grinnell, and in 1909 its name was changed officially to Grinnell College. Today it remains an outstanding liberal arts school that pioneered the Social Gospel Reform Movement, a tradition that continues to present times.

Herrick Chapel was dedicated in May 1907 and first housed an organ by Lyon & Healy. This instrument served the college for about thirty years until it was rebuilt by the Kimball Organ Company in 1940. Dedicated by Clarence Dickinson, the Kimball organ had an astonishingly short lifespan. In 1948 it was replaced by Opus 1091 of the Aeolian-Skinner Organ Company, retaining only the forty-six case pipes from the Lyon & Healy instrument. On May 19, 1949 the organ was dedicated by none other than Virgil Fox.

Opus 1091 proved to be, in every sense of the word, an extraordinary instrument. Its feet firmly planted in two distinctly different soils, not only did it feature a Flute Celeste, English Horn, Clarinet, and Vox Humana, it also boasted a Harp/Celesta percussion stop, thought to be one of the last, if not the last such device made by Aeolian-Skinner. These Ernest Skinner-style stops were juxtaposed with a low-pressure floating Positiv division and G. Donald Harrison's renowned American Classic scaling and halving-ratios. As if that were not diversity enough, Opus 1091 also included three electronic

32-foot stops (Bourdon, Bombarde, and Fagott) that were downward extensions of their pneumatic siblings, and which were designed and executed by Michael Harrison, son of the firm's forward-looking president.

When Opus 1091 was surveyed in 2003, it was found to be in pristine, perfectly restorable condition. Always the fortunate recipient of responsible and sympathetic care over the years, the organ seemed to be waiting for the restoration that had been predicted by its builder upon its completion some fifty years earlier. Perhaps not surprisingly, the only casualty proved to be the electronic 32-foot stops, of which only the loudspeakers remained.

Restoration of the organ began in mid-2006, when Richard Houghten of Milan, Michigan removed the console for restoration. The following January began the systematic removal and restoration of the pipework and chassis within the organ chamber. After the chamber had been emptied of its contents, repair and restoration of the organ's environment could take place. Walls, ceilings, and floors were cleaned and given several fresh coats of paint to aid in delivering the organ's sound to the listeners seated in the chapel.

All of the organ's pipes were washed, repaired, and restored to original specifications. The fluework was restored in-house without any attempt to second-guess the builder's intentions. Reed stops were carefully restored by Broome & Company, and now provide the organ with the éclat that Donald Harrison envisioned in 1949. All of the organ's chassis was dismantled, cleaned, re-leathered, and adjusted to replicate original factory standards. It is accurate to state that ev-



This photo, taken at the rededication, shows the placement of the console across from the pipe chamber; in use since 1940, this placement was kept when the current organ was installed in 1949. A video screen is in place so the organist can be more visible when performing. Linda Bryant is speaking at right.



Grinnell College Organist Linda Bryant studies the restored console of Aeolian-Skinner Opus 1091



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everything was done to make this a truly transparent restoration, one in which the original builder's concepts and execution were respected at every step of the way. Even Aeolian-Skinner's elegant remote electro-pneumatic machinery for the combination action was retained and restored to its original standards.

An interesting conundrum appeared when it came to the organ's 32-foot stops. There was little room in the organ chamber for real organ pipes, nor budget for their inclusion. And as much as the restorers resisted the thought of non-pipe sound generation in the organ, the original instrument made no apologies for the installation of such effects. Even though Michael Harrison downplayed the authenticity and effectiveness of such voices in his later years, claiming that they remained "underdeveloped" when he left Aeolian-Skinner, the re-

storers were left with the dilemma of either replicating the original stops with modern digital voices, or leaving three stops in the Pedal Organ without bottom octaves. In the end, the missing 32-foot voices were replicated by Walker Technical Company's contemporary versions of Michael Harrison's experimental stops of 1948. Opus 1091 was rededicated April 3-4, 2009 in a series of events featuring Kevin Bowyer (University of Glasgow), Paul Jacobs (The Juilliard School), and Davis Folkerts, who improvised accompaniments to the silent films *Laughing Gas* and *The Vagabond*.

At every step of the way, the restorers endeavored to stand aside and let the work of the Aeolian-Skinner Organ Company shine through. College Organist Linda Bryant threw her full support behind the restoration project, as did College President Russell Osgood



The pipe chamber can be seen through the refurbished non-speaking façade pipes, which have guarded the chamber since Herrick Chapel was built in 1908.



Aeolian-Skinner remote combination-action machines awaiting restoration



Pedal organ chassis being reinstalled



Herrick Chapel filled with organ components on their way to New Haven



Pitman chest pouch-rails and expression shades ready for re-installation in organ



Grinnell College Organist Linda Bryant at the console of Aeolian-Skinner Opus 1091

and local curator Carroll Hanson, all of whom were enthusiastic about the concept of restoring Opus 1091 to its original condition. Today, more than sixty years after it was dedicated, this organ works and sounds as it did when it left the Aeolian-Skinner shops in 1948. It is the restorers' sense that history will applaud what was done in Herrick Chapel, and that musicians and historians of the future will be grateful that one of G. Donald Harrison's larger and more interesting instruments survived a critical moment in its life, and now serves to teach the future about the past.

*Nicholas Thompson-Allen
Joseph F. Dzeda
A. Thompson-Allen Company, LLC*

Grinnell College has had its wonderful Aeolian-Skinner pipe organ for over sixty years. Situated in Herrick Chapel,

it is used for recitals, religious services, weddings, organ teaching, and concerts. Herrick Chapel has been maintained regularly with modest improvements (sprinklers, simplifying the altar area, restoring stained glass windows, and carpeting). But our organ, which was maintained and repaired, had not been thoroughly renovated.

At the same time as we were getting pointed suggestions to do a restoration, a donor stepped forward who offered to pay half the bill for a thorough estimate of the cost of a renovation. I gladly agreed to this and we hired Joe Dzeda and Nick Thompson-Allen of the A. Thompson-Allen Company of New Haven. I had some acquaintance with the firm due to their work on the Yale campus (where I was an undergraduate and a law student) and at an Episcopal church in New Haven that I had attended.

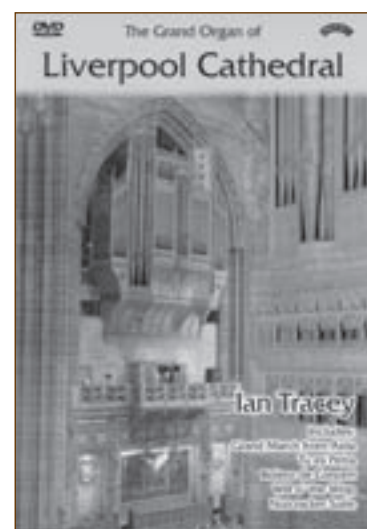
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The estimate was over a million dollars; it called for a restoration of the organ along the same lines as the initial installation. The main problem was finding the resources to pay for the renovation. No one doubted that the project was needed or that the organ was worthy of this investment. Grinnell College

maintains a fund for larger repairs that we believed could pay for a substantial portion, but perhaps not even half of the cost. Fortunately, one of our alums who had died at about this time left the Music Department a very large bequest. The department, after some importuning by the president, agreed to contribute a

significant amount of the bequest to the organ project.

In the world of fine organ restorers, the work never starts immediately after an agreement is reached, because there is a waiting list. We got in line and soon the project was underway. At the very end, our original donor stepped forward again and suggested he would pay half the cost to refurbish the non-speaking visible pipes.

Finally, we had a series of dedicatory concerts with two well-known organists playing familiar pieces (Bach) and some not-so-familiar modern organ works. It was a wonderful culmination of a needed project that will pay dividends of another fifty years of great organ music. This project would not have happened without the following: 1) an organist who cared, 2) a president who was sympathetic, 3) donors willing to help, and 4) a very fine restorer.

*Russell K. Osgood
Grinnell College President*

I became Grinnell College Organist early in 2001. I inherited an organ with much beauty and potential but with many "issues" because of its age. Turning it on was often an adventure! I very quickly became friends with Carroll Hanson of Iowa City, who had for many years taken care of the instrument—tuning, repairing, and sometimes protecting it from those who thought it should be replaced.

Mr. Hanson introduced me to James Windsor, III of Des Moines, an alumnus of Grinnell College and a huge fan of Aeolian-Skinner organs. He expressed interest in helping me get Opus 1091 restored. I did some research to determine who should be invited to look at the instrument with restoration in mind and together we approached Russell Osgood, Grinnell College President. Mr. Windsor

offered to help pay expenses to bring Joseph Dzeda and Nicholas Thompson-Allen of the A. Thompson-Allen Co., New Haven, Connecticut, to do just that. President Osgood agreed.

Joe and Nick were dancing in the aisles of Herrick Chapel when they realized that this was truly the gem we had told them to expect! They wrote a proposal, which was accepted. I might add that the project became possible because of a large bequest that came to the college at the right time and which was able to be used for this project. Thus began a happy chapter for this instrument, the college, the area, and the organ world. At an age when pipe organs require this kind of attention and funds are not always available, making an instrument vulnerable, this one was restored!

A used three-manual Allen electronic was purchased for use while the restoration was underway. It is now in use at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Grinnell.

The organ was rededicated April 3–4, 2009, with a recital by Kevin Bowyer of Glasgow, Scotland, who performed a work by John Zorn commissioned by Grinnell College for this event, a recital by Paul Jacobs of the Juilliard School, and a silent film accompanied by Davis Folkerts of Pella, Iowa. The same weekend, the organ was designated an "Historic Instrument" by the Organ Historical Society. The certificate hangs on the case just below the pipe chamber.

I am blessed with the opportunity to perform regularly and to teach on this instrument. My students are able to practice on it. It still lends its voice to worship, weddings and memorial services, baccalaureate, alumni events, and various concerts and performances.

*Linda Bryant
Grinnell College Organist*

Photos courtesy of Grinnell College

Aeolian-Skinner Opus 1091, Grinnell College, Grinnell, Iowa

Great Organ – 61 notes – 3¼" wind

16'	Quintaton	42 scale, com.
8'	Diapason	43 scale, ¼ m, ½ on 17th
8'	Bourdon	#2 1–12 stopped wood, 13–61 spotted metal with felted canisters
8'	Gemshorn	great type, cone tuned
4'	Octave	56 scale, ¼ m, ½ on 18th
4'	Flute	50 scale at 8'C, harmonic at 1'C
2½'	Twelfth	67 scale, ¼ m, ½ on 18th
2'	Fifteenth	70 scale, ¼ m, ½ on 18th
III-V	Fourniture	46 scale at 8'C, ¼ m, ½ on 19th
		15-19-22 12 notes
		12-15-19-22 18 notes
		8-12-15-19 6 notes
		1-8-12-15 12 notes
		1-5-8-12-15 13 notes
		245 pipes

Chimes
Tremolo

Swell Organ – 73 notes – 5" wind

16'	Gedeckt	1–24 stopped wood, 25–73 spotted metal with felted canisters
8'	Geigen Diapason	46 scale, ¼ m, ½ on 17th, slotted and slided
8'	Chimney Flute	1–12 zinc metal with felted canisters, 13–61 spotted metal with felted canisters with chimneys, 62–73 open spotted metal
8'	Salicional	60 scale, 1/5 m
8'	Voix Celeste (t.c.)	60 scale, 1/5 m
8'	Flauto Dolce	com.
8'	Flute Celeste (t.c.)	com.
4'	Octave Geigen	57 scale, ¼ m, ½ on 17th
4'	Flute Triangulaire	1–49 open wood, 50–73 open common metal
2'	Flautino	61 pipes, 70 scale, ¼ m, ½ on 17th
IV	Plein Jeu	all 48 scale at 8'C, ¼ m, ½ on 18th
		19-22-26-29 17 notes
		15-19-22-26 12 notes
		12-15-19-22 12 notes
		8-12-15-19 7 notes
		1-8-12-15 6 notes
		1-5-8-12 7 notes
		244 pipes
16'	Contra Hautbois	5¼" at 16'C, parallel domed shallots
8'	Trompette	French #2 – parallel domed shallots
8'	Oboe	com.
8'	Vox Humana	lift cap
4'	Clarion	French #2 – parallel domed shallots
	Tremolo	

Choir Organ – 73 notes – 5" wind

16'	Contra Dulciana	12 pipes, 44 scale at 16'C, ½ m
8'	Viola	54 scale, ½ m
8'	Concert Flute	old stock Orchestral flute with open bass
		1–49 open wood, harmonic at 1'C,
		50–61 harmonic open metal, 62–73 open metal
8'	Dulciana	73 pipes, 56 scale at 8'C, ½ m
8'	Unda Maris (t.c.)	56 scale, ½ m
4'	Orchestral Flute	50 scale at 8'C, harmonic at 1'C
4'	Dulciana	12 pipes
2½'	Nazard	61 pipes, helical metal to metal koppel-type canisters
2'	Piccolo	61 pipes, 70 scale, ½ m, harmonic at 1'C
1½'	Tierce	61 pipes, baroque type, ½ m, breaks back one octave at G56
8'	Clarinet	com.
8'	English Horn	com.
	Harp	
	Celèsta (61 bars total)	
	Chimes (25 notes)	
	Tremolo	

Positiv Organ – 61 notes – 3" wind

8'	Nachthorn	1–12 zinc with felted canisters, 13–61 spotted metal with felted canisters
4'	Koppel Flute	helical metal to metal koppel-type canisters
2½'	Nazard	"baroque"
2'	Blockflöte	"baroque"
1½'	Tierce	"baroque"
III	Cymbel	as Germanic Positiv opus 951
		29-33-36 12 notes
		26-29-33 6 notes
		22-26-29 6 notes
		19-22-26 6 notes
		15-19-22 12 notes
		12-15-19 6 notes
		8-12-15 13 notes
		183 pipes

Pedal Organ – 32 notes – 5" wind

32'	Bourdon	(electronic)
16'	Contre Basse	#1
16'	Bourdon	#1A
16'	Viola	42 scale, ½ m
16'	Dulciana	(Choir)
16'	Quintaton	(Great)
16'	Gedeckt	(Swell)
8'	Spitzprincipal	32 pipes, 43 scale, ¾ m, straight pipes
8'	Flute	12 pipes – Bourdon
8'	Dulciana	(Choir)
8'	Gedeckt	(Swell)
4'	Choral Bass	32 pipes, 56 scale, ¼ m, ½ on 17th, slotted and slided
III	Mixture	96 pipes, all 46 scale at 8'C, ¼ m
		5½', 2½', 2' no breaks
32'	Bombarde	(electronic)
32'	Fagott	(electronic)
16'	Posaune	8" scale at 16'C, English shallots
16'	Hautbois	(Swell)
8'	Tromba	12 pipes
4'	Clarion	12 pipes
	Chimes	

Unison Couplers

Swell to Great
Choir to Great
Swell to Choir
Great to Choir
Unison release to Swell, Choir, and Great

Octave Couplers

Swell to Swell 16'
Swell to Swell 4'
Swell to Great 16'
Swell to Great 4'
Swell to Choir 16'
Swell to Choir 4'
Choir to Choir 16'
Choir to Choir 4'
Choir to Great 16'
Choir to Great 4'
Great to Great 16'
Great to Great 4'

Pedal Couplers

Great to Pedal
Swell to Pedal
Choir to Pedal
Positiv to Pedal
Swell to Pedal 4'
Choir to Pedal 4'
Great to Pedal 4'

Combinations

Great 1–6
Swell 1–6
Choir 1–6

Positiv 1–4

Pedal 1–6
General 1–7
Coupler 1, 2, 3 (one under each manual)

Mechanicals

Positiv to Great on, off and release
Positiv to Choir on, off and release
Swell expression pedal
Choir expression pedal
Crescendo pedal with 6 indicator lights
Sforzando reversible pedal and piston
Great to Pedal reversible pedal and piston
Swell to Pedal reversible piston
Choir to Pedal reversible piston
Swell to Great reversible piston
Swell to Choir reversible piston
Choir to Great reversible piston
Pedal to Manual combinations "On" and "Off" for each manual
16' Stops and 16' Couplers off, to work on
Crescendo and Sforzando
Tracker touch on keys
Setter button with lock

All metal flues are zinc and spotted metal from 4'C up with the exception of the Swell 8' Flauto Dolce, Flute Celeste, and 50–73 of the Flute Triangulaire.

All reeds are zinc and spotted metal with the exception of the Choir 8' Clarinet and the Pedal Posaune unit, which are common metal.

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