

Scottish Chamber Organ

The resurrection of a John Renton organ

By Thomas R. Thomas

A rare instance of a Scottish chamber organ (the only known example in the U.S.), with case and works by John Renton of Edinburgh, has found new life in the home of Thomas R. Thomas in Deering, New Hampshire.

Initial research suggested that the instrument may have been built for Fin-gass Castle around 1860–70 and moved to a church in Halkirk in the 1930s. According to the Scottish organ historian Alan Buchan, vandals broke into the church in the 1970s and smashed most of the pipework. An American organ builder purchased the organ in 1996 and had it crated and sent to Maine, with the intention of rebuilding it for a local church. The project seems to have been beyond his capabilities and he sent it to a local auction house in Concord, New Hampshire, where it was bought by Thom Thomas. The organ case, chest and some mechanism parts were in Thomas's barn for several years before he assembled the case.

Jeremy Cooper, a local organ builder, was enthralled with the elegance of the case and convinced Thomas he could restore the chest, fabricate action parts, and bring the organ back to life. The chest and other parts were moved to Cooper's shop and the case sent to a local furniture maker to be restored. Stopknobs matching a few remaining ones were fabricated in England and engraved in the original nomenclature. The keydesk was given to a craftsman in Vermont to replace two missing keys, recover naturals, rebush, and adjust. A new reservoir was fabricated by Jeremy Cooper, and pipes from several 19th-century New England organ builders were racked on the chest. The mahogany and gilt trim case, mechanics, and



Inner workings



Finished product

pipes came together at the end of the summer of 2013, and the organ once again speaks from John Renton's magnificent casework. ■

Height 11' 3"
Depth 2' 9"
Width 5' 3"
300 pipes
Self-contained Laukhuff .25 hp blower

MANUAL (CC to g3; 56 notes)

Left Jamb
8' Open Diapason Treble
8' Stopt Diapason Treble
8' Aeoline Treble
8' Stopt Diapason Bass

Right Jamb
4' Principal
4' Flute Treble
2' Fifteenth
Wind



Left jamb



Right jamb

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see website for details
and photos

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Milo Soques, violin • Matt Glazdoff, organ •
Alan Morrison, organ • Jeffrey Brillhart, organ

SUN, JAN 19 • 2:30PM • VERIZON HALL

HANDEL: *Alexander's Overture, HWV 21*
HANDEL: *Organ Concerto in G minor, Op. 4, No. 1*
PAULUS: *Concerto for Organ, Strings and Percussion*
JONGEN: *Hyena, Op. 78*
BROSSÉ: *Black, White and in Between*
RHEINBERGER: *Concerto No. 2 in G minor, Op. 177*

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