



# RESONANCE

A NEWSLETTER OF THE EASTMAN ORGAN DEPARTMENT / SUMMER 2007

## *News from the Organ Department*

*by David Higgs*

Welcome to the eighth issue of *Resonance*, the newsletter of the Eastman Organ Department. In this issue you will read lectures and reports from the 2006 EROI Festival, which brought together several different groups of the organ world in one place and time. It was a wonderful celebration of all we have in common as musicians who play and build organs, despite our individual inclinations and preferences of style. We are a wonderfully diverse group, mirroring the great heritage of our instrument, and we strengthen our cause immeasurably by working together in such an environment of mutual respect and understanding. Those who attended the Festival commented on how their views had been expanded, deepened, and enriched. A special highlight of the Festival was the presentation of the Alumni Achievement Award to our distinguished alumna, Orpha Ochse. Her Festival keynote lecture on the history of the American organ is included here, and it's something you'll want to keep. For even more photos of Festival events, be sure to see the February issue of *The Diapason*. There's a three-page spread about it, and many thanks to alumnus Joel Kuznik for putting it together. We are grateful to everyone who made the Festival a resounding success!

You will hear soon about the 2007 EROI Festival, but in the meantime, save the dates of October 11–14, 2007. Further into the future, remember that the Craighead-Saunders organ



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***It [the pedal-piano] will be a wonderful complement to the pedal-clavichord . . .***

at Christ Church will be inaugurated at the 2008 EROI Festival in October, just a year-and-a-half from now, and we'll hope to see you there! As I write this, the balcony construction in Christ Church has begun, and the organ will arrive beginning in July of this year. It is a very exciting time indeed, and we hope you will all want to share in the fulfillment of our long-held vision for a major instrument in Christ Church.

Our late nineteenth-century pedal piano has finally arrived from Europe, after much delay in transit and in port security inspections of various kinds. We hope to begin using it regularly this spring. It will be a wonderful complement to the pedal-clavichord, both instruments being the standard practice instruments for organists in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, respectively. In a future issue of *Resonance* we will present more information and photos of the instrument. We are also the proud new owners of a two-manual and pedal Hook and Hastings organ from 1896, thanks to the generosity of donors Carolyn and Noel Nilson of Massachusetts, who owned the instrument for many years. This marvelous gift is being installed now in Christ Church by Rob Kerner and his organ maintenance class, assisted by other organ students as well, as a temporary instrument for the church while the Craighead-Saunders organ

is being constructed. At a later date we will decide how best to utilize this wonderful instrument in a new home, where our students will continue to have regular access to it. We are grateful beyond words to the Nilsons!

It has been a wonderful year here so far, with thirteen new students arriving last fall, including a significant number of undergraduates. Bill Porter is now teaching organ majors in addition to improvisation and harpsichord, (as well as the occasional coaching on the Wurlitzers), and Ulrika Davidsson has begun teaching secondary harpsichord as well as a required keyboard technique course involving clavichord, piano, harpsichord, and organ, for all entering organ majors. Hans Davidsson has been on sabbatical to complete his monumental Buxtehude recording project, which is already garnering rave reviews (*Dieterich Buxtehude and the Mean-Tone Organ* [Loft Recordings LRCD 1090-91]). We are also grateful to Jonathan Biggers and Todd Wilson who served as sabbatical replacements for Hans while he was away. In March we will present our first annual Spring Organ Week, this year featuring Edoardo Bellotti and Ludger Lohmann as guest artists and teachers. Our department continues to grow in breadth and depth, and we are grateful to have so many extraordinary students here. We hope you'll get to know them!

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## *The American Organ in the Twentieth Century*

*by Orpha Ochse*

Considering early twentieth-century movers and shakers in America's organ world, Danish-born M. P. Möller Sr. had a head start in establishing a company. His firm dated from 1875, and by 1881 it was already located in Hagerstown, Maryland. From then on, one by one, the major figures in our story entered the picture.

Around 1889 two young men began work at the Hutchings organ firm in Boston. Both were twenty-three years old in 1889, and both were intent on developing careers as organ builders. One completed an apprenticeship in 1894 and returned home to Los Angeles to build organs; his name was Murray M. Harris. The other

young man stayed with the Hutchings company until 1901; his name was Ernest M. Skinner. As Skinner and Harris pursued their careers, their primary focus and their most important achievements lay in the area of tonal excellence. We can imagine that in their four or five years together in the Hutchings shop they may have shared their ideas about ensemble, tonal beauty, and how it related to the organ and the orchestra.

One of their contemporaries, John T. Austin, was born in 1869, just three years their junior. Around the same time that Harris and Skinner entered the Hutchings shop, Austin journeyed from England to Detroit and found work with the Farrand and Votey Organ Company. Austin excelled as an inventor and technology expert, and in 1899 he and his brother founded the Austin Organ Company.

Skinner finally left Hutchings and opened his own shop in 1901. He had a brief partnership with James Cole in 1903. In that same year, 1903, Harris contracted to build the world's largest organ. That instrument was first heard in 1904 at the St. Louis Louisiana Purchase Exposition, and today it

remains the nucleus of the Wanamaker organ in Philadelphia. Harris lost his company by building that organ, and its nameplate bears the title Los Angeles Art Organ Co.

The stoplist for this remarkable organ was drawn up by George Ashdown Audsley, a native of Scotland who arrived in America in 1892. Audsley firmly believed that a concert-hall organ should have the resources for performance of any work written for orchestra, for the accompaniment of any choral work, and for performance of any work written for organ. He advocated complete choruses including mixtures, independent stops in all divisions including Pedal, and in addition to traditional ensembles, special divisions corresponding to those of an orchestra. The most important was a String division in its own enclosure, and we find just such a String division in the 1904 stoplist.

In 1903 Robert Hope-Jones arrived in America from England. He brought along some radical ideas about organ design, and also some innovations in using electricity that were of special interest to many organ builders. Hope-Jones was employed for a few months

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*Author Orpha Ochse, presenting her remarks during the 2006 EROI Festival*

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by the Austin Organ Company, and then, beginning in 1905, for some fifteen months by the Skinner firm. Although he proved to be a disaster for both companies, he was not without influence. He believed mixtures were unnecessary; one could derive plenty of upper partials from string stops, provided the strings were of sufficiently small scale. High pressures, extreme scales, unifying—these were all part of the Hope-Jones formula. Both Audsley and Hope-Jones had their disciples.

### **The Orchestral Organ**

The early twentieth century was a time of great optimism. In general, things were going well in America. The country was growing, and many people believed that bigger was better. In 1900 one could travel across the country by rail. There were some eight thousand registered motor cars in America. There were already over a million telephones, and by 1915 one could call from coast to coast. The Wright Brothers made their famous flight in 1903.

During the first three decades of the twentieth century there was a remarkable expansion in the demand for organs. Many new opportunities presented themselves, and organs were installed not only in churches but also in major expositions, department stores, hotel ballrooms, civic auditoriums, high schools, colleges, Masonic lodges, and homes of the rich and famous. In most of these locations organs functioned as all-purpose instruments, playing orchestral music, popular favorites, patriotic songs, accompaniments for choruses, and background music. Organs that could function as substitutes for orchestras were required.

The advent of motion picture theaters in the middle of this period called for a more specialized type of orchestra or organ, and it was here that the Hope-Jones unit organ found its home, reincarnated as the mighty Wurlitzer. We should be aware, however, that almost all major organ builders supplied organs for theaters,

and some of those instruments were quite similar to their church organs.

There are always critics, but in general the organ with orchestral characteristics matched the tasks it was supposed to perform. The demand for an orchestra disguised as an organ was not just a trend started by a few organ builders and encouraged by their organist friends—it was a public desire for music in a wide variety of public spaces as well as at home and church. There was never a time in organ history when the organ was as popular, or when it was as successful in satisfying a large part of both the general public and musicians. There was never a time when the organ was more people-friendly.

So for about thirty years there was in America a generation of talented, enthusiastic organ builders, including Skinner, Möller, Harris, and Austin; there were fresh, new ideas imported by men like Audsley and Hope-Jones; and there was an expanding market that kept the order books filled. It was in this musical environment that Harold Gleason designed the Kilbourn Hall organ at the Eastman School of Music. He said that he got his ideas for the organ “from reading Audsley and my experience with Farnam’s Casavant . . . at Emmanuel Church, Boston, where he had a complete complement of mutations.” (Dorothy J. Holden, *The Life and Work of Ernest M. Skinner* [Richmond, Va.: Organ Historical Society, 1985], 85).

### **A Difficult Decade**

The years of plenty for organ builders came to an end with the stock market crash in 1929. Actually, the stock market was only part of the problem. It certainly eliminated budgets for civic music programs and plans for new church organs. But there were also other problems; among them was the radio. Radio sets began to have a major impact on American life when the national networks were formed—NBC in 1926 and CBS in

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# *John Brombaugh: How It All Got Started*

*by David Boe*

It is a great pleasure to be part of this conference celebrating the work of two of the most important American organ builders of the twentieth century, Ernest M. Skinner and John Brombaugh. What a wonderful pairing of talents—two builders who each worked at high levels of artistic endeavor, but in such vastly contrasting esthetics. The temporary presence of the Brombaugh Opus 9 in Rochester has provided us with this unique opportunity to hear and discuss the work of both builders in a single forum. I was privileged to be able to work closely with John Brombaugh during the years leading up to the completion of this instrument and now am pleased for this opportunity many years later to lend my perspective on John's development, his early instruments, and, in particular, on the Opus 9 organ.

When the installation of Opus 9 in the Ashland Avenue Baptist Church in Toledo was completed in 1973 it was the feeling of many of us that it represented a landmark in American organ building. Judged simply on the basis of its sheer elegance and quality, it would have been important. But it reached beyond this by reinterpreting so convincingly and musically what was central to a historical tradition. In its design, construction, winding, and voicing, Opus 9 also charted the course for John's future instruments and became a significant influence on the work of other builders who worked in this style.

John's earliest work as an organbuilder can be found in the one manual and pedal organ for Trinity Lutheran Church in Ithaca, New York, which he completed exactly forty years ago. John had constructed this instrument during the time that he

served apprenticeships in the shops of Fritz Noack and Charles Fisk. Mark Brombaugh was a student at Oberlin at that time, and it was he who suggested to John that his teacher be invited to play the dedication recital. I was pleased to do this and in November of 1966 I met John for the first time in Ithaca. The Ithaca organ revealed an emerging builder of extraordinary skill and potential.

About this same time, First Lutheran Church in Lorain, Ohio, where I served as music director, was in the early stages of planning for a new organ. A decision had been made to place a new mechanical action organ, together with seating for the choirs, at the rear of the church. With John wanting to establish his own firm, this seemed like the ideal pairing of builder and project. After completing his apprenticeship with Noack and Fisk, John wanted to extend his knowledge and skills, particularly in reedmaking, so he was accepted by Rudolf von Beckerath in Hamburg to work about eight months beginning in September 1967 as a formal *Gezelle* (journeyman), perhaps being the first American to go above the apprenticeship level in Europe. It was during this time that a signed contract with First Lutheran Church in Lorain for a 26 stop, 2 manual and pedal tracker organ reached him, with the understanding that he would return to the States and start his own company. In the meantime, he had the opportunity during his year abroad to study in detail the historic organs of the North German tradition. In early April 1968 there was the now famous chance encounter with Harald Vogel at the church in Bremen-Oberneuland housing an organ from Ahrend and Brunzema. This was the beginning of a long and productive friendship that is

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now fortunately chronicled in John’s own words in the newly published Festschrift for Harald Vogel. To this account I can add the following, which is an excerpt from a letter written by John just a couple of days after this meeting. Here John reveals his own thinking about the old organs in relation to the challenges he faced as a builder in the twentieth century:

“Personally I am very excited by much of the old work both technically and tonally. But we have learned a few things in the last 300 years, and with courage and wisdom, a correct application of some of this experience should yield better instruments than a rather blind copying of every detail of the old instruments. Otherwise one can only assume that the ‘Urorgel’ was the best of all, which is an untenable idea to me. Naturally, it is very difficult to decide where we can improve on the old masters, but we must try. On the other hand enough modern examples exist to show what to avoid.”

(April 12, 1968)

As the design for the new organ in Lorain was being developed, John became increasingly desirous of capturing the sheer beauty of sound that he experienced in historic instruments such as the Arp Schnitger Rückpositiv in Der Aa-Kerk in Groningen. He wrote in one of his letters that he would be the happiest organ builder in the world if he could produce a Dulcian as beautiful as this one. As his respect for the old masters grew, so did his resolve to understand the intricacies of their techniques, a quest not unlike the effort of violinmakers to understand the art of a Stradivarius. The resulting plan for Opus 4 reflects this strong historical orientation and was to become an important first step in the development and maturing of his art.

At the urging of Harald Vogel he gave considerable thought to the acoustical qualities of the casework. Because of its non-resonant characteristics, plywood was avoided, the case being made almost entirely of solid wood, as are



the tableboards and other parts of the windchests.

The design of the case and the embossed pipes are based on geometrical proportion methods going back to the Gothic period. John was not yet prepared to set up a pipe shop and instead entrusted this work to Jacques Stinkens. I recall that his pipe order was a minutely detailed document running approximately forty pages. He utilized metal thicknesses heavier than were to be found up to this time in modern organs. The low tin alloy was similarly unusual for its time, although in later instruments he and other builders would utilize a nearly pure lead composition he had found in several Niehoff pipes that Dr. Maarten Vente gave him in 1971. He was particularly eager to achieve the dark and “vocale” sound that he heard in the 8’ Principals of organs at Krewerd and Oosthuizen. As a result he found himself using higher wind pressures and higher cutups than were to be found in the neo-baroque organs of the day. The old builders had hammered their pipe metal, but this technique was largely ignored by modern builders, except for certain registers in the work of Ahrend and Brunzema and Metzler, who had only recently revived the technique. Eager to learn what hammering would do for the sound, he gave detailed instructions to Stinkens for hammering the Great Octave 2’.

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A major design issue was the wind system. In September of 1969 Charles Fisk had published in *The Diapason* a highly provocative article “The Organ’s Breath of Life,” in which he argued that much of the charm in the sound of early instruments lay in the resilient quality of their wind systems. The article set off a storm of controversy. The debate continues up to this day, but was probably nowhere more intense than in the heated dialogue between David Cogswell and George Becker that appeared in the pages of the Boston Organ Club *Newsletter* beginning in February 1970. Cogswell accused Fisk of championing the cause of shaky wind without reservation or qualification. Defending Fisk, Becker went on to describe a conversation between Dirk Flentrop, Hans Stekete, and Charles Fisk, where the three agreed that the main battles of twenty years were over, e.g., for placement cases, tracker action, slider chests, etc., and now they must concern themselves with the very important subtleties of the old instruments that until recently had been overlooked. Becker encouraged Cogswell to hear one of the old instruments such as Medemblik, or, closer by, the recently-completed Lorain instrument, which, he noted, employed one diagonal bellows feeding the whole organ through smallish wind ducts, like the old instruments, with no provision for winkers. Becker then described the wind characteristic as not obtrusive, just enough to impart life to the music. Cogswell’s lengthy response concluded with his refusing the invitation: “I don’t see the need,” he said, “of traveling to Lorain, Ohio, Medemblik, Holland, or down to the church on the next corner to hear a wheezy organ with a cheaply built wind system. There are hundreds of them around.” Charles Fisk and John Brombaugh simultaneously developed what were probably the first modern wind systems using large wedge bellows and no steadying devices—Fisk for his Opus 51 in Souderton, Pennsylvania, and Brombaugh for Lorain.

Another challenging issue was that of an appropriate temperament. Historic non-equal temperaments had been used in a very small number of restorations of old instruments, but, to John’s knowledge, none had been used in a modern instrument in the United States. Flentrop’s restoration of the 1671 Pieter Backer/1785 Bätz organ in Medemblik, Holland returned that instrument to its original Werckmeister temperament, based on the existing pipe lengths. Since the Lorain instrument was to have the tops soldered fast on covered pipes and open pipes cut to length, any decision regarding temperament would be a nearly permanent commitment. Encouraged by the way in which the sound of Medemblik was enhanced by its temperament, John favored using Werckmeister temperament, although in one of his letters he called the decision “scary.” John urged the retuning of one of the practice organs at Oberlin to this temperament so that we could live with it before finally committing in Lorain. To avoid controversy, the issue was never brought up with the congregation in Lorain, and the specs published in the dedication brochure make no mention whatsoever of the adopted Werckmeister temperament.

The final design for Opus 4 found John compromising with early building techniques more than would be the case in future projects. The case construction and key action reflect perhaps more John’s engineering skills than they do historic techniques. The weight of the case is supported by conjoined bourdon pipes, the keydesk is detached, and the stop action electric solenoid. John was very committed to the idea of a 16’ Principal in the pedal, but because of the limited height of the sanctuary an organ with the desired 16’ required some offset bass pipes and a detached keydesk. Even though the horizontal distance from keydesk to case is substantial, and the tracker angles resulting from the

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# *The Kilbourn Hall E. M. Skinner Organ*

*by Jonathan Ortloff*

***the EROI  
Working  
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priorities . . .***

What does one do when a multimillionaire asks him to devise a recital organ for a professional school of music, and gives him carte blanche in the design? Why, naturally, one “goes all out,” of course. And that’s exactly what Harold Gleason did when his employer, George Eastman, put him in charge of the design of not only the concert and practice instruments at Eastman, but the whole organ program as well. Gleason himself admitted his decadence in a 1972 letter, saying “I went ‘all out.’ I wanted everything on the organ I could think of. It is one of a kind.” Sadly, only two vestiges of the Gleason legacy are left, but perhaps they are the most important two.

The organ program itself, of course, remains among the most prestigious in the country, thanks in large part to Gleason’s strong foundation and the legacy of unparalleled faculty following him. None of the fourteen practice organs remains, nor does Gleason’s largest creation—the 135-rank Austin in the Eastman Theatre, tossed out for trash in 1971. The latter, while unfortunate, is perhaps less stinging than for the Kilbourn instrument to have suffered the same fate, for all accounts report that the Austin was wholly, or nearly wholly unsuccessful in a 3,094-seat auditorium.

The Skinner, being installed in a less intrusive space than across the back wall and up the side wall of the Eastman Theatre’s stage (as the Austin was), and being able to speak more advantageously into the hall, was saved the fate of being thrown out, but its original tonal qualities were altered. The 1950s were a very different time from 1922, when the organ was installed, and the Gleasons, always at the forefront of organ performance and design, attempted to remedy what

they saw as its tonal inadequacies by a minor rebuild in 1951. Since that time the organ department acquired the Van Daalen tracker organ in Schmitt Organ Recital Hall, and the use of the Skinner dwindled to the point that in 2004 organ technician Robert Kerner advised the School that the organ was too unreliable to be used in public performance. In the 1970s this might have been welcome news—an excuse to discard the monstrosity with 23 ranks of string and celeste tone (honestly, one is just fine), ten orchestral reeds (that’s what the Krummhorn is for), piano (there’s a Baldwin upright right over there, thank you), and tympani effect in the pedal (are you kidding?). But times have certainly changed, and thankfully for the organ, and for us—enter EROI!

Early in the planning stages of the EROI project, the EROI Working Committee, with heavy support from the School, placed the restoration of the Kilbourn organ high on the list of EROI priorities, to be completed in the same first phase as the Casparini and Italian baroque organs. In January 2006 the reference group for the project met for the first time in Rochester, and, after two days of examining the organ, came to the unanimous decision to restore it, as closely as possible, to its 1922 condition—undoing the handful of tonal changes made in 1951, and recreating the ingenious playing aids originally installed on the 1922 console. We heard from the reference group at the Sunday afternoon presentation on EROI projects.

After another meeting on the Thursday of the Festival, the group was still in agreement that putting the organ back to the way it was (frankly, a much more tonally-

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successful instrument than the present, feels the group) was the way to go. The reference group's presentation consisted of a simple report on their rationale, summed up best by professor of organ at Yale University, Thomas Murray. The whole idea behind EROI is a *collection* of instruments, and in a collection of the scope envisioned by EROI, there is no need, nor should there be a "multipurpose" organ. Professor Murray pointed to the organ in Strong Auditorium as "the Harrison organ for EROI," and noted that in its current state, the Kilbourn organ is not true to either ideal—symphonic or "American Classic," and its restoration should be considered with the same level of seriousness as any of the other EROI projects.

Jonathan Ambrosino discussed the myriad unique features of the organ, including the numerous playing controls on what was the most advanced console of any built up to that point in history. Thanks to his research, as well as that of the present author, all the controls that were actually installed (which do not match those in the contract) have been identified, and it will now be up to the restorers to recreate these functions in 1920s technology.

The tonal work that Ambrosino outlined will be perhaps the most difficult part of the project. Since the Kilbourn organ was truly one of a kind, there are no examples to copy in recreating the piece of tonal fabric destroyed in 1951. Significantly, the First 8' Open Diapason in the Great division is gone, as well as much of the original upperwork, meaning that the tonal restorers must essentially recreate a Great chorus for which no model exists. In all, 33 of the original 96 ranks have been modified and replaced, including rare stops such as the Hecklephone, Orchestral Trumpet, and Musette. The latter, only 12 of which were built by Skinner and Aeolian-Skinner combined, will be

replaced by an example from the same year from Skinner opus 369, installed in the Capitol Theatre in Boston, procured by the author.

Fundraising for the project has not started, and a \$500,000 grant from the Schmitt Foundation will allow a crucial part of the project to be completed before one pipe is removed or one wire de-soldered: ensuring the air that the organ's 35-horsepower blower draws and the air in the chambers is healthy for the instrument. The blower, installed in the basement, is subject to vast changes in temperature and humidity—during the winter months the blower takes in hot, dry air that, once fed to the organ, dries out, shrinks, and cracks the thousands of wooden parts of the instrument. Inside the organ chamber, poorly-insulated steam pipes run above the organ pipes, also drying the air, but, more importantly, creating tuning havoc. Jack Bethards, president of Schoenstein Organ Company, has been working with engineers at the University to devise a plan to solve both these problems, including isolating the blower room from the rest of the building and providing a climate control system for both the organ and hall that can operate year-round to provide constant temperature and humidity. Not only will these steps improve the tuning and sound of the organ, they will also ensure a long life for the instrument.

As with the other EROI projects, the Kilbourn project is blessed with an excellent reference group that will continue to guide the project and advise the restorers on what will prove to be an exciting and major organ restoration, not just for Eastman, but for the larger organ world. And just what does one do when a multi-millionaire gives a school carte blanche to carry out a restoration of the finest quality on a significant pipe organ from the early twentieth century? We're still waiting to find out.

***The tonal work that Ambrosino outlined will be perhaps the most difficult part of the project.***

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## *The Opening Concert of EROI Festival 2006*

*by Randall Harlow*

The EROI Festival 2006 got off to a roaring start with a memorable concert featuring four Eastman DMA students on the two organs of Asbury United Methodist Church. The works on the program, and indeed the instruments themselves, formed a sort of macrocosm of the overall themes of the four-day Festival. Specifically, the contrasting organ-building philosophies of John Brombaugh and Ernest M. Skinner were mirrored in a program of repertoire ranging from mid-eighteenth-century German works on the 1984 Bozeman-Gibson organ in Silbermann style to an early twentieth-century transcription of Camille Saint-Saëns's *Danse Macabre* on the 1956 Austin organ.

Eastman School of Music Interim Dean Jamal Rossi began the evening with a welcoming address and presentation of the Alumni Achievement Award to distinguished scholar and organist Orpha Ochse, one of the Festival's keynote speakers.

Additionally, Flentrop Orgelbouw received recognition for its generous donation of the new 16' Posaunenbass to the Pedal division of the Bozeman-Gibson, complementing the 2005 donation by Paul Fritts of a Vox Humana on the Hinterwerk division.

Christopher Petit began the evening's performance with a rousing rendition on the Bozeman-Gibson organ of the rarely heard *Allegro, Chorale, and Fugue* by Felix Mendelssohn. Petit infused the energetic perpetual-motion character of the *Allegro* with a fiery drive keeping all present enthusiastically engaged throughout the rest of the work. The piece worked remarkably well on the instrument, reminding one of Mendelssohn's deep interest in the music of J. S. Bach and his familiarity with earlier German organ-building traditions.

Next on the program was an inspired improvised partita by Kola Owolabi on the Lutheran chorale

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*Student performers at the opening concert (from left to right) Christopher Petit, Kola Owolabi, Robert Kwan, and Erica Johnson*



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“Nun freut euch, lieben Christen g’mein.” Utilizing a wide variety of baroque contrapuntal forms, Owolabi made extensive use of the many colors found on the Bozeman-Gibson instrument, including the Vox Humana. Particularly striking was the last variation: an echo fantasia utilizing snippets of the chorale and tying together the work as a whole.

The second half of the program began with Robert Kwan on the rich sounds of the Austin instrument. With Sofia Gubaidulina’s *Hell und Dunkel* (light and dark), Kwan utilized all the subtle colors of the organ and gave a performance of great sensitivity to the acoustic space. One heard brightness and darkness, and indeed silence and sound, emerging in dialectic space of ever fluctuating unity and dissolution. In Kwan’s strong performance of Edwin Lemare’s demanding transcription of Saint-Saëns’s famous

*Danse Macabre* we heard the Austin organ as a compelling reproducer of Saint-Saëns’s vivid orchestration—but not without the help of the Vox Humana from the Bozeman-Gibson organ as the incarnation of a cock crow near the end.

The concert closed on the Bozeman-Gibson organ with two commanding performances by Erica Johnson. The first, a charmingly galant setting of “Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan” by an anonymous student of Bach, made effective use of the Vox Humana, which by now had become one of the stars of the evening. Johnson’s performance of Krebs’s *Prelude and Fugue in C-Major* exhibited a mature control of breadth and timing. From the sparkling opening toccata to a pedal solo of majestic weight, to the harmonically vibrant fugue and brilliant closing, Johnson brought the evening to a rousing conclusion.

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## *EROI 2006: The Opening Reception*

*by Jonathan Ortloff*

Several years ago the organ department was renamed to become the Department of Organ and Historical Keyboards. The rechristening was quite fitting as, over the past decade, the study of other keyboard instruments from the last five hundred years has taken an increasingly important role at Eastman. And so it was especially poignant when, on the opening night of the festival, David Higgs, standing next to the console of the Rochester Theater Organ Society’s (RTOS) three-manual Wurlitzer, patted the eighty-year-old case and said, “And this too is an historic instrument, just as much as any of the others we study.” David can play theater organ with the best of them; having spent much of his young life as a keyboardist in rock bands, his

comment was not unfounded. Thus began a night of wonderful music-making and brought to fruition an ambition of many of the past EROI Festivals—the joining of Eastman and RTOS to present part of the conference.

The Eisenhart Auditorium at the Rochester Museum and Science Center was the scene for the opening festivities, including welcoming remarks by Interim Dean Jamal Rossi, RTOS President John Grierson, and organ professors David Higgs and Hans Davidsson. All stressed what a unique gathering it was, bringing together those associated with the tracker revival in the United States, including John Brombaugh himself, and the “pneumatic fanatics” associated with the likes of Ernest M. Skinner. David Higgs also mentioned his delight in

***Eastman  
organ professors  
have recast  
the notion of a  
collegiate organ  
department to  
place value on all  
styles of organ  
playing.***

being able to share part of the festival with RTOS, getting back to Eastman's theater organ roots in the two departments of organ performance: the "Course for Motion-Picture Organists," and the "department of legitimate organ-playing," as Joseph Bonnet termed it.

Over the past few years the relationship between Eastman and RTOS has rapidly been thawing after some years of a less-than-warm rapport, due mainly to the arrival of more and more students with an interest in the instrument. Credit for bridging the gap must also go to the board and officers of the Society as well as the three Eastman organ professors who have recast the notion of a collegiate organ department to be inclusive of and place value on all styles of organ playing. Perhaps this new partnership allayed some of the surprise when William Porter, known primarily as an expert on early music, stepped to the console to play and demonstrate the Wurlitzer for the assembled crowd. After an opening number based on George Wright's arrangement of "I Know That You Know," Professor Porter demonstrated the organ, which, at only twelve ranks, still took almost fifteen minutes to exhibit fully. He closed

his performance with, appropriately enough, Vernon Duke's "Autumn in New York," on beautifully crafted registrations. Senior Jonathan Ortloff stepped to the console next to deliver a medley of songs from Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story*, pieces not heard often on the theater organ, but music that lends itself successfully to this instrument.

After the performances, a vast array of hors d'oeuvres awaited the guests in the dining room and conservatory of the building, where began a congenial bond between the three groups in attendance: the Brombaugh fans, the Skinner fans, and the Wurlitzer fans. RTOS vice president Kevin Scott performed on the Wurlitzer during the reception, and several new Eastman students explored the instrument as well, some for their first time at a horseshoe console. Most striking was John Brombaugh eagerly asking the author to explain several features of the Wurlitzer he hadn't quite understood, and being delighted to have them demonstrated. The reception truly set the mood of fraternity and friendship for the rest of the Festival, which was mentioned by many as being the most successful and enjoyable yet.

*William Porter and  
Jonathan Ortloff, the two  
theater organ performers  
at the Opening EROI Re-  
ception, at the Wurlitzer  
console*



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# Keynote Lectures on Ernest M. Skinner

by Tiffany Ng



A dropout largely self-taught in his field, an audacious youth who declines a promotion from his employer, who then quits his job to launch an innovative startup with a distinctive brand that will eventually find contracts across the country. . . .

For many Americans, this description evokes computer moguls Steve Jobs or Bill Gates. For organists it should perhaps also evoke Ernest M. Skinner. While no keen capitalist, “E. M. Skinner—the Man,” as portrayed vividly by lecturer Barbara Owen, was a visionary innovator hired by George Hutchings “to keep his firm on the technological leading edge.” Talks on the theme of “The American Organ in the Twentieth Century” by keynote speakers Orpha Ochse, Barbara Owen, Jack Bethards, and Jonathan Ambrosino, with a demonstration of Skinner Opus 325 by Thomas Murray, brought the prolific organ builder’s story to life on the morning of Friday, October 13 in Kilbourn Hall.

Following a welcome by Eastman’s Interim Dean Jamal Rossi and a stirring introduction by Ochse, Owen illustrated Skinner’s story with rare slides drawn from the A.G.O. Organ Library, books, and her personal collection. “If Skinner had a weakness, it was as a businessman,” she noted, for he sometimes added features not requested but that he was convinced

an organ needed. She retold the development of his relationship with the Eastman School, beginning in the early 1920’s with his introduction to Harold Gleason and the contract that quickly followed. He became an “enthusiastic fan” of Catharine Crozier, preferring to listen to her over E. Power Biggs or Virgil Fox. In return for his suggested organ practice room dimensions, George Eastman gave him a Kodak camera, for Skinner was a camera enthusiast.

In the 1930’s Skinner’s company merged with the Aeolian firm to form the Aeolian-Skinner Company, and Englishman G. Donald Harrison was hired to share design responsibilities with Skinner. While the two respected each other, their tonal ideals were different, and many organists began to favor Harrison’s. At retirement age, Skinner left and formed a new company with his son, building a “magnum opus” for the Washington National Cathedral, illustrated by a touching photo of a weathered but proud elderly Skinner at the console. In 1942 he declared bankruptcy, and though his shop later burned down, he stubbornly tried to start over. When he finally retired it was to contemplate his achievements and yet watch as many of his organs were altered or destroyed.

Jack Bethards next spoke to “Skinner—The Musician,” sketching him as a musician not in the



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*Barbara Owen, lecturing on E. M. Skinner*

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*Jonathan Ambrosino and Thomas Murray, demonstrating the Skinner Opus 325*

**Professor  
Murray  
demonstrated the  
stops beautifully,  
quickly  
substituting for  
dead notes.**

*Jack Bethards presenting  
"Skinner—The Musician"*

conventional sense but as one whose love of and contribution to music were of immense magnitude. Skinner was highly opinionated about music and musical practice, convinced that most organists "slavishly follow conventions [of registration]" without listening to the results. He applauded composers who explored tonal color and adventurous harmonies, and purchased every recording released of the works of his favorite composer, Richard Strauss, giving Richard Wagner and Gustav Mahler second and third place on his favorites list. He reveled in refuting critics, which Bethards illustrated with a triumphant quote: "Now those critics are all dead, but *The Rosenkavalier* is still with us. Why is it that my judgment is better than that of the so-called music critic when I cannot even read a hymn tune?"

Skinner developed the orchestral organ to increase the variety of stops without creating alien sounds that composers did not know how to employ. He encouraged them to create for the organ what they wrote for the orchestra, viewing transcriptions as temporary substitutes. Inspired by specific compositions to design each stop, Skinner found the Oboe and Cor Anglais in what he held to be the pinnacle of all music, Wagner's *Parsifal*. Yet he is also on record promoting his stops with the droll prediction that "a French Horn will put more money in the contribution box than will an extra Mixture," suggesting that he helped create the very demand his stops fulfilled.

As his ideas fell out of favor, he nurtured hopes that Henry Willis & Sons would carry them on, offering examples of his pipes as gifts. To reflect on his passing, Bethards quoted a poignant letter from Skinner's nephew, Ned Hastings, who wrote to Joseph Dzeda: "Ernest was sincerely devoted to music and to the ideals in which he believed. He was in the truest sense of the word a cultivated gentleman, a lover of the best in all the arts."

Jonathan Ambrosino gave a pointed analysis of the poor condition yet great potential of Kilbourn Hall's Skinner, Opus 325 from 1922. An atypical Skinner, it bears Gleason's unmistakable signature, striving to fill highly orchestral and yet also formally classical roles. While Gleason wanted all the orchestral opulence Skinner could provide, his French leanings led him also to demand mutations—"to have it both ways," as Ambrosino summarized it. The "lack of a really pervasive bass" may be understood from the relatively modest dimensions of the recital hall. Intriguingly, a Tympani stop was included to trill on the Pedal Open Wood (disconnected in the 1950's), and certain unified manual stops contradict Skinner's practice. Gleason's insistence on the inclusion of five blind general pistons reflected his desire to expand registrational possibilities.

Professor Murray demonstrated the stops beautifully, quickly substituting for dead notes. Ambrosino confessed that he had found examination of the organ tantalizing but frustrating. "For example," he elaborated, "what did the Great and Swell choruses sound like?" This question can no longer be answered, but an eventual restoration of Kilbourn Hall's Skinner, an instrument many generations of Eastman students remember well, can add a fascinating piece to the fragmented but tantalizing portrait of Ernest M. Skinner that the speakers of this session sought to reconstruct.



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# *Celebrating the Life and Work of John Brombaugh*

*by Annie Kaschube*

Friday afternoon of the EROI Festival was a celebration of the Brombaugh family's contribution to the organ art. A delightful performance, an inspiring lecture, and cherished personal stories gave EROI participants an intimate glimpse at the life, work, and legacy of John Brombaugh.

This commemoration began with a lunch recital given by Mark Brombaugh on John Brombaugh's Opus 9, currently sounding in the Sacred Heart Cathedral in Rochester. Brombaugh's program scanned the North German repertoire of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in addition to a twentieth-century composition commissioned for the inauguration of John Brombaugh's Opus 37. As listeners relished Brombaugh's performance of Dieterich Buxtehude, Georg Böhm, Heinrich Scheidemann, John Eggert, and J. S. Bach, they became acutely aware that something was delightfully different about the sound and character of this instrument. While Buxtehude's *Toccata in F* gallantly unfolded and Böhm's chorale and variations on "Herr Jesu Christ, dich zu uns wend" ("Lord Jesus Christ, turn toward us") sang, Scheidemann's *Magnificat* steadily progressed, and Eggert's *Partita on NETTLETON* cheerfully rang. Finally, J. S. Bach's *Prelude and Fugue in C Minor* (BWV 546) sounded with harmonic brilliance. The exquisite execution of these works revealed the grace and prominence of Opus 9.

Following Mark Brombaugh's masterful performance, David Boe took center stage and shed light on the intricacies of John Brombaugh's work. Here we learned of Brombaugh's training and inspiration as an organ builder. On two occasions he was

exposed to European trends through direct experience. In 1967 he was accepted by Rudolf von Beckerath to work for eight months in Hamburg as a journeyman. During this time John met Harald Vogel and gained significant background by examining and listening to historic organs of the North German tradition such as those of Arp Schnitger. Four years later, a grant from the Ford Foundation allowed the young organ builder to make a ten-week trip to Europe. Once again, this trip permitted the study of historic reeds, cases, and construction practices and acquainted Brombaugh with the contemporary Metzler organ in Amersfoort.

Reflecting upon Mark Brombaugh's performance and interpreting the information given by David Boe, EROI participants began to comprehend what made the sound and character of Opus 9 different. Professor Boe quoted from a letter written by John Brombaugh: "We have learned a few things in the last 300 years, and with courage and wisdom, a correct application of some of this experience should yield better instruments than a rather blind copying of every detail of the old instruments." With incredible detail, John Brombaugh considered the pipe construction, pipe voicing, wind system, temperament, and case construction of 47,927 pipes on 66 organs of his design. Opus 9, as a pinnacle example, echoes the past but resonates with vivacity in the twenty-first century.

The afternoon concluded with John Brombaugh and his former assistant George Taylor talking about their work together. Here EROI participants heard, sensed, and felt the passion and story behind the Brombaugh organs. We understood that John Brombaugh

***The exquisite  
execution of these  
works revealed  
the grace and  
prominence of  
Opus 9.***

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is a craftsman, not merely a builder. During his career he did not mindlessly produce instruments, but shaped each one individually, with precision. His first contracted instrument for First Lutheran Church in Lorain, Ohio was constructed with extraordinary detail in his father's barn in small Germantown, Ohio. The magnificent success of the Lorain instrument spurred the start of John Brombaugh's career and generated organs of pristine quality for the delight of organists and listeners.

Friday afternoon's EROI events offered participants an unparalleled acquaintance with the excellence of John and Mark Brombaugh. The Brombaughs will forever be recognized for their outstanding contributions to organ building and performance during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. When Brombaugh instruments are heard in churches, colleges, and universities throughout America one hears a timeless connection to the past sounding ever new in the present.

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## *An Afternoon at Ascension*

*by Timothy Spelbring*

On the afternoon of Friday, October 13, participants in the EROI Festival met at the Episcopal Church of the Ascension in Rochester for an organ demonstration and lecture presentations. Organ consultant Jonathan Ambrosino provided commentary for a most informative demonstration by Thomas Murray on the E. M. Skinner organ. This organ

was originally built for the Auditorium Theater in Rochester. Ascension acquired the instrument in 1967, and it has ever since played a formative role in educating Rochester organists in Skinner's tonal philosophy. This organ represents a transitional period in the organ builder's output, as G. Donald Harrison had begun work with the firm just as this instrument was likely in the

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*Thomas Murray and  
Jonathan Ambrosino  
following the demonstra-  
tion of the E. M. Skinner  
organ at Ascension*



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process of completion. Interestingly, the organ is contemporary with the firm's instrument in Woolsey Hall at Yale University and contains many aspects typical of Skinner's output in the late 1920s: a bright reed sound, and lush, warm foundation tone. The demonstration concluded with a stirring performance by Professor Murray of John Cook's *Fanfare for Organ*.

Following up on his performance, Murray gave a lecture entitled "Transcriptions—Performance Aspects." There was great merit in this address, which gave one a sense of Murray's process in interpreting orchestral works for the organ. He stressed the need for expressiveness in approaching this music, along with kaleidoscopic changes in tonal color. Altogether, Murray was keen on emphasizing the maxim that music lends itself to being adapted.

The afternoon concluded with Sverker Jullander's descriptive lecture on Edwin Lemare's Brahms transcriptions. In particular, he focused upon the *Tragic Overture*, op. 81. Giving a biographical sketch as an introduction, Jullander made mention of the fact that Lemare's ideal organ was one of an "orchestral" nature. Interestingly, however, the transcriber condemned fervently the use of the crescendo pedal. Eleven works by Brahms are found in Lemare's compositional output for organ. In reference to the *Tragic Overture*, Jullander pointed out the salient techniques of this genre such as thumbing down from one manual to another and the use of tremolo effects in the pedal to imitate the percussion part. Altogether, these presentations provided a welcome conclusion to a day filled with energy, healthy dialogue, and kindred spirits.

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## A Celebration of New Music

by Michael Unger

Continuing the theme of "American Organ Building in the Twentieth Century," the concert on the evening of Friday, October 13 at Saint Mary's Church was a celebration of new American music, offering a variety of styles found in recently composed works for organ and choir. Furthermore, the concert featured exclusively works by composers with connections to the Eastman School of Music, including current students and recent graduates. The choral component of the evening featured the Christ Church Schola Cantorum, under the direction of Stephen Kennedy, accompanied at the organ by David Higgs. The selection of choral compositions alternated with solo organ performances by Eastman students Rudy de Vos, Lars Gjerde, Michelle Rae Martin, and Justin



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*The Schola Cantorum  
with director Stephen  
Kennedy (center right)*

Wallace; with the global perspectives of Eastman and EROI, it was a fitting coincidence that three of the four organists were international students.

The Schola Cantorum featured several compositions by David Conte, who presented workshops to the ensemble and the Eastman Organ Department in the spring of 2006. Recently composed works for

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The organists who played as part of the Saint Mary's concert (from left to right) Lars Gjerde, Justin Wallace, Michelle Rae Martin, and Rudy de Vos.

accompanied and unaccompanied choir were featured; *O Salutaris Hostia* and *Ave Maria* were unaccompanied settings, while *Prayer of St. Theresa* and *Valediction* featured David Higgs accompanying the choir with the church's 1955 three-manual Austin organ (Opus 2186). Composers who write for both choir and solo organ were also featured. Scott Perkins, a student in Eastman's Composition Department, was represented by an unaccompanied choral setting of *O Magnum Mysterium*, and a recently composed set of *Three Prayers* for solo organ was performed by Lars Gjerde. Similarly, Zach Wadsworth, a recent Eastman alumnus, was represented by an unaccompanied choral setting of *O Saving Victim*, and a *Postlude* for organ, performed by Rudy de Vos. Justin Wallace performed one of his own compositions—a movement from his recently-premiered *Sonata for Organ*. Michelle Rae Martin performed *Three Pieces for Organ* by Aaron



Travers, another new alumnus of the Eastman Composition Department, whose recent solo organ and choral compositions are gaining widespread recognition. Stephen Kennedy's setting of *Novum Pascha* presented an effective combination of organ and electronics.

Complementing the theme of this year's EROI Festival, this Friday evening concert showed us that in the recent past of American composition for organ and choir there is much to celebrate.

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## Hearts, Minds, and Organs

by Thatcher Lyman

Early on Saturday, October 14<sup>th</sup>, a large number of organists and builders crammed into Eastman's Schmitt Organ Recital Hall for a panel discussion on John Brombaugh, his instruments, and his influence on the entire organ world. The panel members had each encountered Brombaugh and his instruments in a unique way in their lifetime, and the discussion proved fascinating.

Roger Sherman, the president of Loft Recordings, and Executive Director of Westfield Center, moderated the discussion. He began the discussion by recalling his days at Microsoft and the term "disruptive technology." A disruptive technology is one that literally changes the "rules of the game," forcing all competitors to rethink their course of action.

Munetaka Yokota provided a fitting opening to the discussion of Brombaugh's work. Having apprenticed with Brombaugh in his Eugene, Oregon shop, Yokota was able to provide an inside look into the process behind Brombaugh's building techniques. Indeed he began his discussion with a laundry-list summary of Brombaugh's contributions to the organ-building



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The intricately constructed facade of the Brombaugh organ at Fairchild Chapel, Oberlin College, Ohio



Panel members (from left) Roger Sherman, Munetaka Yokota, William Porter, David Boe, and Erica Johnson.

world, which proved to read like a list of parts of an organ. One was left wondering if there was any part of the organ-building art that Brombaugh had not influenced! Yokota emphasized that Brombaugh had not merely copied historical instruments in building his own, but rather had *improved* upon them. He used suspended tracker key actions, but he used rollers made of Teflon® in order to lighten the weight. He designed his own tuning machine, which Yokota described as “the gift from God . . . or from John.” Indeed, the focus on materials and a scientific and analytical approach to the copying of historical aspects of organ building seemed to form the basis of all of Brombaugh’s vast influences.

William Porter, professor of organ and harpsichord at Eastman, added that it was John Brombaugh’s willingness to do something different that caused such a dramatic upheaval in the organ world. Recalling Roger Sherman’s remarks at the opening, Porter reminisced that it was the recognition of “something different” that caused a paradigm shift in his own as well as many others’ thinking about

the organ. He credits Brombaugh’s willingness to build something different, which in turn teaches the player to listen and play differently, as the chief motivator for Brombaugh’s success.

David Boe, professor of organ and harpsichord at the Oberlin College Conservatory of Music, was the next panelist to speak. Boe is unique in his experience with John Brombaugh in that Boe practically discovered him and contracted him to build his Opus 4 instrument for First Lutheran Church in Lorain, Ohio. Boe also had an influence on Brombaugh’s installation of his Opus 25 in the beautiful Fairchild Chapel at Oberlin College in 1981. This instrument is built in mean-tone temperament with sub-semitones and manually-operable bellows. Boe explained that the hand position that is forced by the short natural keys and *very* short sub-semitone keys has a great effect upon the student of the organ.

Indeed, the final member of the panel, Erica Johnson, was a student at Oberlin who studied on Brombaugh’s Opus 25. In describing the instrument’s teaching qualities,

***In describing the instrument’s teaching qualities, she said it was “rather unforgiving,” to put it lightly.***

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she said it was “rather unforgiving,” to put it lightly. Indeed, it was only upon returning from a trip to Europe that Johnson observed how special are the Brombaugh instruments.

The discussion continued with contributions from members of the audience, including George Taylor, Barbara Owen, Jonathan Ambrosino, Jack Bethards, and Hans Davidsson. In the end, however, it was fitting that

John Brombaugh himself had the last word. He emphasized the importance of the human aspect of music making. At its core we have the human voice. The historic instruments are indeed interesting because they are the most connected to us. When one is able to construct an instrument that sings just as the human voice, then we are connected to it both in mind and in heart. In the end, is this not our life goal as musicians?

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## *One Street, Five Gems: The East Avenue Organ Walk*

*by Tiffany Ng, Patrick Henning, and Annie Kaschube*

Leading directly to downtown Rochester and the Eastman School, historic East Avenue is a tree-lined corridor of stately nineteenth-century mansions and fine churches. Its high concentration of organs makes it an ideal path for an organ tour on foot. So after a lunch recital at The Episcopal Church of St. Luke and St. Simon Cyrene, EROI attendees drove east to the First Church of Christ, Scientist and put on walking shoes. Since its completion in 1916, this Italian Renaissance gem has rarely opened its doors to non-members. Legend has it that George Eastman was so impressed with the building that he hired the same architectural firm to design the Eastman Theatre and School of Music. The organ was built in 1916 by Casavant Frères at its former second factory in South Haven, Michigan, and rebuilt in 1957 by M. P. Möller, resulting in a new console, mechanical restoration, and limited tonal modification. The main organ, spread out over four manuals, contains 60 stops and 47 ranks, but a six-rank echo organ in the ceiling has fallen into disrepair. As presenter Jonathan Ambrosino explained, the sound is rich and lush as the organ is heavy with foundation stops and lighter in upper

work. Professor William Porter’s stirring improvisation highlighted softer stops, the large-scaled Gross Flute and French Horn in the Great division, the Oboe of the Swell, and Clarinet in the Choir. These rich sonorities made for an impressive demonstration of the potential of this instrument, played at services by Eastman MM student Patrick Henning.

Our next stop, the intimate neo-Gothic chapel of Third Presbyterian Church, houses a “classic eclectic small American organ,” in the words of presenter Barbara Owen. Built by the Aeolian-Skinner Organ Company in 1954, the two-manual Opus 1215 offers just 17 stops and 14 ranks, but a wealth of versatility and expressivity. All divisions are enclosed in expression boxes on either side of the sanctuary, and while the Great division lacks an 8’ Principal, Thomas Murray demonstrated that the combination of 8’ flute stops and Swell stops produces a very convincing principal chorus. The chapel’s acoustics enhance the sound, which, as Owen noted, truly represents the timbre of the fifties, unlike grand organs almost too versatile to highlight what was essential to contemporary ears.

**Professor  
William  
Porter’s stirring  
improvisation  
highlighted  
softer stops . . .**

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Professor Porter's demonstration of the Aeolian Organ Company's Opus 947 (1904) and Opus 1416 (1917) at the George Eastman House revealed that many of the stops are no longer functional and that an extensive restoration is needed. Orpha Ochse recounted her memories of George Eastman and his love for music. In addition to hiring Harold Gleason as his personal organist, listening to him play every morning at breakfast, Eastman often hosted concerts with other instruments in his home on Sunday afternoons. EROI participants enjoyed a rare chance to hear several Aeolienne rolls, similar to player piano rolls, from George Eastman's large collection. But even the holes had been worn down, so these "performances" were unclear. Nevertheless, the sounds of this once glorious organ offered a window into George Eastman's passion and love for organ repertoire at the foundation of the Eastman Organ Department.

Yet another brisk stroll, and we reconvened breathless and quiet in the soaring English Gothic nave of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, warmed by the light of several Tiffany windows. To relieve the silence, Murray led us in an impromptu singing of "Tell Out My Soul," a hymn paraphrase of the Magnificat by Englishman Walter Greatorex. St. Paul's Organist Emeritus is legendary Eastman professor David Craighead, whose service spanned 1955 to 2002. Eastman BM student Adam Peithmann now serves as organist. Craighead has expressed great respect for the impressive Skinner Opus 655 of 64 stops and 68 ranks, installed by the Skinner Organ Company in 1927, with some unusual stops and controls for the period. Ambrosino noted that "color reeds are very lavishly represented" and that the influence of Skinner's

recent trip to France was evident in the inclusion of Dulciana and Cornet stops. To highlight the echo division inside the swell box, Murray improvised a haunting phrase that seemed to come from beyond the church walls. Ambrosino contrasted this effective facet with the 32' pneumatic start/stop mechanism operating from c to f, which he likened to "an elephant doing ballet." A complete mechanical restoration is scheduled for 2009.

Threatening skies cleared for our final trek to the Lutheran Church of the Incarnate Word, whose name is reflected in vivid symbolic stained glass windows. A conversation between the 8-stop, 7-rank 1869 organ by Samuel Bohler of Reading, Pennsylvania and the 40-stop, 45-rank 1964 Holtkamp organ seems unlikely, but Director of Music James E. Bobb and assistant organist Lars Gjerde, Eastman MM student, treated the audience to just that. Raymond Brunner explained the significance of the Bohler organ, which he recently restored, as one of eight surviving from the builder's work. Bobb's performance of George Shearing's charming hymn setting of "Jerusalem My Happy Home" and "Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern" by Samuel Scheidt brought to life the sounds that German Lutheran congregations in Pennsylvania once heard. Although the organ is small and its late nineteenth-century case unassuming, it fills the large space with its predominantly 8' sound and strangely complements the monumental 1960's interior. So does the Holtkamp organ, dominated by mutations and mixtures suiting it to neo-baroque and mid-twentieth-century repertoire. The closing dialogue of gradual buildup between the two organs, each surprisingly able to match the other in the "Allegro" from Handel's Organ Concerto No. 5, made for an extraordinary close to a stroll down one of Rochester's most beautiful, green, and organ-rich corridors.

*the sounds  
of this once  
glorious organ  
offered a window  
into George  
Eastman's  
passion and  
love for organ  
repertoire . . .*

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## The “Three Professors” in Concert

by Chris Petit

**From the students’ perspective, the “Three Professors” concert was an inspiring one that made us proud . . .**

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*David Higgs and Hans Davidsson, performing as part of the faculty organ concert during the EROI Festival*

Each year at the EROI Festival we celebrate the rich and varied nature of the organ. It represents our liturgical roots and, along with dance, brings us closer to the sounds and rhythms inherent to our bodies, planet, and universe. On Saturday after the organ walk, “the Three Professors,” along with principals of the Rochester City Ballet and members of the Christ Church Schola Cantorum (Stephen Kennedy, director), presented a program of organ music, chant, and dance that spanned four centuries, with John Brombaugh’s Opus 9 (at Sacred Heart Cathedral) making it all possible. For the audience members, however, these various times, cultures, and styles were fully alive in the present and allowed us, like the members of the church that Arvo Pärt’s *Annum per annum* celebrates, to have a cyclical experience of art.

Now, I must admit that I am fully aware of the dangers inherent to being a student of these three professors and reporting to you a description of their playing. Of course, one would assume that I would have nothing but praise, but let me be the first to admit my periodic frustrations with my mentors in order to assure you that what is written here is fully sincere. From the students’ perspective, “the Three Professors” concert was an inspiring one that made us proud, but I believe that it also made all organ builders and all those involved in the organ art proud to be doing what they do.

William Porter began the program with a brilliant execution of Georg Böhm’s *Praeludium in C*. As if intended to be the counterweight to the program’s concluding work, Pärt’s *Annum per annum*, Professor Porter treated the work’s great opening, suspenseful pedal point, and energized cadences in such a way that he let the listener know immediately that he

was in for a program of performances that would range from the regal to the delightful to the sublime. Porter’s touch and timing revealed one of the most amazing aspects of this concert: that this compact, Dutch-design “box of whistles” shaped to fit a small, Ohio space is capable of filling the entire Sacred Heart Cathedral with gusto! Professor Porter clearly understands and imparted to us not only how to manipulate this organ’s keys and speech, but also how to take advantage of how it sounds in its new, although temporary, home.

Hans Davidsson then led the listeners into the liturgical world of Matthias Weckmann. We received Professor Davidsson’s usual mastery of Weckmann’s rhetoric, especially in how he makes it so easy for the modern listener to hear the *Affekt* of the Lutheran baroque, turning this speech of the distant past into a living language for all to hear and feel in the present. Although I was familiar with his Weckmann playing from his recordings, experiencing Davidsson’s



live performance brought attention to relationships among works and movements in natural time. Every silence and pause somehow drew us in with equal conviction as the sounding notes. Davidsson's treatment of time, like Porter's treatment of releases and reverberation, and David Higgs's treatment of rhythm, exemplified the artist who does not merely record but who makes the most of the moment out of respect for his instrument, music, and audience.

A peculiar thing happened when the Christ Church Schola joined by singing the Magnificat. Whereas, admittedly, the masses still perceive organ music as heavy and arduous, chant as light and relaxing, on this night we heard chant sung with the dignity and *gravitas* of organ verses, and organ verses played with the fluidity of baroque opera. The second organ verse, in particular, sounded like a Monteverdi aria!

The wonderful Brombaugh organ then switched gears from ensuring that the German baroque works sounded convincing to making sounds that would capture the spirit of Mozart—and for works not even written for the organ! The three professors, in their partnering permutations, worked together to create the ideal sound for duets: that they do not sound like duets. Touch, timing, and temperament were impeccably coordinated! Also, instead of sounding like a transcription for the sake of being a transcription, these duets drew attention only to the ranges of Mozart's character—delightful, playful, spooky, and I had forcibly to remind myself that these are not organ works.

When the dancers entered in these duets they felt like an extension of the audience's inner responses to the music. They made use of the cathedral's entire central floor space and thus integrated space and sound. The elegant choreography had a lyricism that made it feel as if we were witnessing a story unfold, perhaps straight from one of Mozart's operas.



David Higgs then took us back in time with Johann Pachelbel's variations on the "Aria Sebaldina," and then forward in time for *Annum per annum* except that, once again, time did not function as usual in Sacred Heart Cathedral on this Saturday evening. While Pachelbel's baroque sang in the present, Pärt's 1980 penmanship danced the dance of the ancient Mass without end. This work written to celebrate 900 years of ritual in Speyer Cathedral was perfect for this setting. It celebrates the cyclical and eternal, and was performed on an organ that looks to the past but has given meat for the future of organ building. The Brombaugh organ in the hands of David Higgs (along with the light switches in the hands of Hans Davidsson) provided for the most effective fortissimos and sweetest pianissimos. Professor Higgs played with the piety needed for some movements, and then with an exquisite sense of meditative ecstasy in others with tricky dotted rhythms. Here in particular Higgs revealed his talents and spirit, for the rhythms and minimalist motives were so energized while simultaneously prayerful—truly an evocation of a non-earthly excitement. In the final movement, after contemplations upon rituals past

Professors (from left to right) William Porter, David Higgs, and Hans Davidsson

**When the dancers entered in these duets they felt like an extension of the audience's inner responses to the music.**

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and present, Higgs (and the sounds of John Brombaugh's masterpiece) combined to provide a driving buildup that seemed to have no ending, blasted us off into the future.

After spending some time on this organ and in its room when helping a colleague to record, I became very aware of the sounds coming from the large baptismal font. How odd it was to hear cascading water with an organ, for this is not ancient Greece or Rome! During the three professors' recital, however, everything spatial and sonic became oddly harmonious. Higgs's performance of Pärt especially drew connections with the age and eternal presence of water, sound, and worship. The dancing, furthermore, drew a

visual connection in the cathedral among the organ in the apse, the altar in the transept, and the font toward the narthex—a plan that mimics the geometrical layout of ancient cathedrals. (At Chartres, for example, the whole space is designed around three points: altar, transept, and labyrinth on the way to the baptismal font.) Our three professors in their three-based venue generated inspiring sounds on an organ that looked to the past for inspiration for the present, while accompanied by dancing, cascading water, and lighting. Even though music and dance are the only arts to exist in time, on this particular evening they came together to impart sublime timelessness.

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## *A Recital by Francesco Cera*

*by Fabrice Muller*

On the afternoon of October 15, 2006, the Herdle Fountain Court at the Memorial Art Gallery was filled with the noise of the expectant crowd awaiting visiting artist Francesco Cera. Hans Davidsson warmly introduced Cera, and a few moments later the first chords of Girolamo Frescobaldi's "Toccatina settima" from *Il Secondo libro di Toccate* (1627) set the tone: the majesty and purity of an old sound made new.

The "Canzon dopo l'epistola" from *Fiori Musicali* (1635) let us absorb the fluid and singing sounds of this Italian baroque organ so well restored by Gerald Woehl in 2005. This organ's great expressive quality, due in part to its low wind pressure, is enhanced by the manual blowing system, powered by Randall Harlow for this occasion.

The calm with which Cera moved the printed scores and drew the stop knobs was part of the calm and enchanted atmosphere he created by his playing. He played with his heart, and bowed with his hand on his heart.

What a wonderful interpretation we enjoyed in the second "Adagio" of the Sonata in F Major (HWV 427) by George Frideric Handel. This short third movement lasted only 1'25", but deserves to last longer in our minds. The slight "rubato," or rather "perfect timing," in his interpretation was so effective, so generous, that one could be delighted both by harmony and motion, the goal of any good interpretation that wishes to—and ought to—surpass any purely historical performance.

As he played Frescobaldi's "Toccatina per l'elevatione" it was interesting to see how heads in the audience were suspended and motionless. "I love that Frescobaldi toccatina" said Orpha Ochse, "because it is so adventurous harmonically." Indeed Cera slowly and tenderly delighted us with meantone consonances and dissonances. As with a good dinner, one could discover each aroma. One received the time needed to cherish and enjoy the music. While Cera



*Francesco Cera in  
recital on the Italian  
baroque organ located  
in the Fountain Court of  
Rochester's Memorial Art  
Gallery*

started this elevation toccata with the Principale stop together with the Voce Umana, he let us enjoy the Principale alone for the section in mm. 25–44, a Principale sound that Ochse described as being “to my mind the heart of the early Italian organs.” Following a deep breath full of drama, the Voce Umana was added again, both voices singing together with such a beautiful accent. The 16’ pedal reinforced the cadence, like a comforting arrival after a trip full of emotion.

As a contrast, the grandiose entrance of the Sonata by Bernardo Pasquini, registered with the timpani stop, sent me into a world of joy. Here, quickness was in order, and to savor it with time and excitement, as proposed by Cera, was simply wonderful.

Life was definitely at the forefront of this concert, and it was very impressive to see how the experienced ears of the attentive and knowledgeable people, together with the fresh ears of the novices, reacted to the mood and character of the playing. While Cera beautifully ended the “Toccata decima” by Georg Muffat, a toddler entered, running and smiling. Also, the Allegro movement from Handel’s Sonata in F Major displayed so much liveliness

and enjoyment that one could see professors William Porter and David Higgs almost dancing with smiles in the back of the Herdle Fountain Court. The toddler, too, was again running with a smile; he had been still for a quieter section.

The concert presented music that was received with joy and enthusiasm by the public who savored this program, which was not only played with soul but also intelligently conceived. The first part presented early Italian music, and the second part showed the Italian style assimilated by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century northern composers: Johann Jacob Froberger, Johann Caspar Kerll, Muffat, and Handel, all of whom spent time studying in Italy. This thoughtful programming was appreciated, and Ochse commented: “It was very interesting today to hear the two toccatas for the elevation, the one by Frescobaldi and the one by Froberger that are so closely related in their style.”

Thus, this concert displayed the great variety of tones and colors of this instrument, and the great variety of moods that one can create and hear when playing from a living soul, together with a splendid picture of

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early Italian music and its influences. It concluded nicely with the “Overture” from *Amadigi* by Handel, which was well-received by the chair of our department, who was, again, almost dancing! Thanks to Francesco Cera for his playing, and thanks to all the people who worked to make it possible to have such an instrument here!

Ochse, who received Eastman’s Alumni Achievement Award during this EROI Festival, did not have such an opportunity when studying here: “I had to go to Italy to hear anything like that.” Nor did she have access to this early Italian music: “When I came up here for a Master’s degree, it was shortly after the Second World War, and just about the only early music that was available [in printed performance editions] was the first volume of Joseph Bonnet’s series Historical Organ-Recitals, and the little Frescobaldi toccata for the elevation out of *Fiori Musicali*, and we all learned that.”

While the experience was different, however, the way to think about music at Eastman seems not to have changed that much, at least in the way Ochse thinks about it. Describing how it might have been to have a lesson with Professor Harold Gleason

(1892–1980) on the Italian organ at MAG, she said: “It would have been a very different experience. Had he lived to this time, he certainly would have been among the first to know all about the performance style and the performance practices of the period. Even before anybody else was talking about that sort of thing, he was guiding us to the prefaces of early works, and the Diruta book, and some of those other sources. So, I am sure it would have been a stylistic matter.”

Also, the love for music, for musicianship, and for all good organs of any kind was quite the same: “The sound is very different [between an E. M. Skinner and the MAG organ], but I have never been a specialist. I like to hear a good organ of any style, and particularly when music that is most appropriate for it is so well played. No, I wouldn’t say that I would prefer one or the other; I like to do with either one. You know, if that’s the organ I am hearing, that’s what I enjoy the very most, at that moment. I don’t like to confine myself to one period or one type of music.” We agreed it is always better to devote oneself to *music*, and she concluded: “It’s the same general experience even though it might be in a different form.”

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## Compline at Christ Church

by Ruth Draper

The EROI Festival closed with a Sunday night Compline, sung by the Schola Cantorum of Christ Church. Sung Compline is a weekly event at Christ Church, but usually does not include organ music. As part of the EROI Festival, however, Professor William Porter joined in the service, playing alternatim versets on the two-manual Fritts organ. Stephen Kennedy, director of the Schola, had the choir sing primarily unaccompanied chant, sometimes at the unison, sometimes in parallel organum, with a brief flowering of polyphony in Thomas

Tallis’s *Te lucis ante terminum*. The simplicity of the chant contrasted with Professor Porter’s distinctly French improvisations in Messiaen’s mode 6, throughout which he wove snippets of chant, tantalizing the listener with familiar fragments but refraining from extended quotes. The service, illuminated only by wavering candlelight, conducted in silence except for the hypnotic ebb and flow of chant and the delicate timbres of the Fritts organ, provided a quiet and reflective close to the action-packed weekend of the Festival.

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*O. Ochse "American Organ". . . continued from pg. 4*

1927. News, music, and entertainment became available in the home at a price many could afford. The program "Music and the Spoken Word" could be heard nationwide weekly from Salt Lake City beginning in 1929. Electric phonographs were on the market by the mid-1920s, giving music lovers recordings with improved fidelity. Many preferred to hear broadcasts or recordings of real orchestras, rather than organ transcriptions of orchestral music. At about the same time, between 1927 and 1929, the bottom dropped out of the theater organ business with the advent of "talkies" (movies with sound tracks).

According to census reports, 2,471 organs were built in 1927, and there were sixty-three organ firms. In 1935 only 478 organs were built, and the census listed twenty-eight firms. In that year, 1935, the Hammond organ made its public debut on April 15. This event added insult to injury where the organ-building world was concerned. However, it led to one of the most fascinating stories in our organ journals. Just follow this page-turning saga through 1936 and 1937 issues of *The Diapason* as the American Guild of Organists filed complaints with the Federal Trade Commission charging the Hammond Clock Company with unfair competition.

### **American Classic Style**

Meanwhile, even as one phase of our history drew to a close, new developments were under way. In Germany organ builders were turning to earlier organs for models, particularly those of Arp Schnitger. In France countless students of Charles Widor or Alexandre Guilmant were learning that the music of J. S. Bach was the essential cornerstone of the organ repertoire. American organists traveling to Europe to study came home with new ideas about organs and repertoire. Senator Emerson Richards was among the first in America to have both the interest and the means to experiment with a new organ style, and

his designs in the 1920s for Atlantic City High School and Convention Hall included many new style features.

In 1927 G. Donald Harrison arrived from England to join the staff of the Skinner Organ Company. His tonal ideas found support among many who were sympathetic with the European organ reform movement and/or who favored an organ style designed more for organ literature than orchestral repertoire. Although Harold Gleason had been a friend of Ernest Skinner for many years, when Gleason designed an organ for Royce Hall (University of California, Los Angeles) in 1929, he requested that G. Donald Harrison be in charge of building the organ. This may have been the first major Skinner organ for which Harrison had full charge of all tonal matters.

Without going into details regarding the unfortunate clash of personalities and artistic objectives between Skinner and Harrison, suffice it to say that by 1933 Skinner was only a name in the company. In that year G. Donald Harrison was appointed Technical Director and Chief of the Aeolian-Skinner Organ Company (the merger with the Aeolian firm had taken place in 1932).

Meanwhile, the Depression was in full swing and business for all organ companies was dismal. In the organ magazines the number of specifications of new organs was dwindling. The pages were filled instead with a lively debate between those who cherished the orchestral style and those who hailed the new trends as an enlightened rebirth of the true path of organ design. The former hurled insults at "screaming mixtures" and lamented the loss of warmth and beauty in the new style. Their opponents replied with scorn for scratchy strings and tubby diapasons. Their slogans were "clarified ensemble" and "terraced dynamics."

The new style had as its goal an organ suited for the performance of music composed specifically for the organ (although not for one specific segment of the repertoire). This style became

***American organists traveling to Europe to study came home with new ideas about organs and repertoire.***

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known as American Classic. The lean years of the 1930s provided organists with plenty of time to debate the pros and cons of all aspects of the orchestral and classic styles, extreme positions as well as compromise possibilities. On the more adventurous edge of new organ designs were those of Walter Holtkamp. His name came to the forefront in 1933 when he added a Rückpositiv to the Skinner organ in Cleveland's Museum of Art. A year later he built three organs that were unencased. One could see not only Great and Pedal pipes but also the Swell enclosure and the movement of Swell shades. Holtkamp's functional displays added a whole new ingredient to the debates about style. Before that time most twentieth-century American organs were installed in chambers.

Walter Holtkamp, G. Donald Harrison, along with Richard O. Whitelegg at Möller and James B. Jamison at Austin, were all influential in moving American organ building into a new style period. It is interesting to note that Herman Schlicker opened his shop in the unlikely year 1932, while the Depression raged and other shops were struggling to stay in business.

After the middle of the 1930s the economic picture brightened. One result was that in 1936 Mrs. Strong was able to pledge \$25,000 for an organ to be designed by Harold Gleason and installed in Strong Auditorium at the University of Rochester. Details about this organ are published in an excellent article by Jonathan Ortloff ("Harrison's Forgotten American Classic: Aeolian-Skinner's Opus 953 for Strong Auditorium at the University of Rochester, Rochester, New York," *The Tracker* 49 [Summer 2005]: 10–26). It is an indication of the state of organ building that the opening recital on this large instrument took place just ten months after the contract was signed. The price of roughly \$400 per stop was about the same as Austin prices for large organs at that time.

## **World War II and After**

Just as organ building was beginning to recover, the United States entered World War II in December 1941. Within six months the War Production Board shut down the organ industry except for repairs and maintenance. After the war ended in 1945 organs could again be built, but through the rest of the decade recovery was slow due to shortages of lumber, tin, and manufactured supplies such as motors.

Meanwhile, the style debate continued in the journals, centered primarily around the new eclectic design, proportions of its ingredients, and particularly the extent to which baroque characteristics should be included in an all-purpose instrument. However much the most outspoken participants seemed to disagree, all envisioned the ideal organ as a modern, eclectic, electro-pneumatic organ. At that point nobody gave serious thought to building what we later called a period instrument, and few other than E. M. Skinner were interested in continuing along orchestral lines.

To summarize the first half of the twentieth century, America had thirty years of orchestral style organs, followed by twenty years with very little organ building and quite a lot of theorizing about organ style. This long period was probably helpful in sorting out our future direction. It was clear by 1950 that mainstream organ builders in America were committed to the American Classic style.

I'd like to footnote that statement by observing that in reality, most of the organs one might encounter in America at mid-century were still left-over old tracker organs, instruments in the orchestral style, or theater organs salvaged from theaters that no longer wanted them. When I first came to Eastman for a master's degree in 1947, I had not heard any instrument like the Strong Auditorium organ in a live performance, even though it was then a decade old. I had

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heard broadcasts of E. Power Biggs playing the small G. Donald Harrison organ installed in Busch-Reisinger Museum at Harvard University. That organ had been installed in 1937, and weekly broadcasts dated from 1942. I had also heard the large 1945 G. Donald Harrison organ in the Mormon Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, in broadcasts played by Alexander Schreiner and his colleagues. There were no up-to-date organs near my home town in northern Missouri, or near the college I attended in mid-Missouri. Here at Eastman the Gleasons took the whole organ department to Strong Auditorium, where Harold discussed the design of the organ and Catharine played some demonstrations. It was rare for any of the Eastman students to have an opportunity to play that organ; our recital organ was still the Skinner in Kilbourn Hall. I returned to Rochester in 1951 and later that year made a trip to Syracuse to hear the new (1950) Holtkamp organ at Syracuse University. To my ears at that time it sounded quite aggressive; it was so different from the organs I had heard before.

### **The New Tracker Period**

Moving on to the second half of the century, after twenty years of famine, the decade of the 1950s was generally a fine time for organ builders. There were orders enough for everybody as churches undertook long-delayed building programs and colleges expanded their music programs. While the American Classic style was at its peak of popularity, the second tracker period had its tentative beginnings. A few small European tracker organs were imported beginning in 1950, and by 1954 American builders who had experimented with mechanical action included Ruben Frels, Otto Hofmann, Walter Holtkamp, Charles McManis, and Herman Schlicker. The organ profession did not take the tracker trend very seriously until about 1957, when Rudolf von Beckerath installed

a four-manual, sixty-five-rank organ in Trinity Lutheran Church, Cleveland, and when in 1958 D. A. Flentrop installed a three-manual, thirty-three-rank organ in the Busch-Reisinger Museum, replacing the G. Donald Harrison organ. Other impressive mechanical-action imports would follow in the 1960s.

The late 1950s saw the formation of the Organ Historical Society (1956), with its interest originally focused exclusively on mechanical-action organs, and its publication appropriately called *The Tracker*. In 1957 Joseph Blanton published his wonderful book, *The Organ in Church Design*—a revelation for people whose experience with organs had been with chambered organs, heard but not seen. Most of the modern American organs pictured had unencased pipe displays, but by 1965 Blanton could publish another book entitled *The Revival of the Organ Case* (Albany, Tex.: Venture Press). It included pictures of 112 encased organs built within the preceding ten years. Most of the organs were European, but there was at least a sprinkling of pictures of new American encased mechanical-action organs.

It was during the decades of the 1960s and 1970s that the American second tracker period really took hold. I'm calling it the second tracker period as a convenience, but it involved the whole issue of historic styles of music and authenticity in performance. Its partners were: 1) research studies devoted to early instruments, early music, and performance practices; 2) the availability of new scholarly editions of early music; and 3) the organization of groups specializing in early music studies and performances. It was not just an organ trend.

In his book, *The Tracker Organ Revival in America* (Berlin: Pape Verlag, 1978), Uwe Pape listed eighteen people in North America known to have built new tracker organs in the years 1960–64. Ten years later the number of builders was forty-nine. In 1960–64 North American builders

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accounted for fifty-five new tracker organs, averaging only eleven a year. In the 1970–74 period that number rose to 299 new tracker organs, averaging almost sixty a year, and rising. Added to the number of tracker organs imported, it was a significant, if not major, share of the market.

Most of the new tracker organs were small, but there were exceptions. Milestones included the 1964 three-manual Fisk organ in Kings Chapel, Boston, and the 1967 four-manual Fisk organ in Memorial Chapel, Harvard. Other builders whose names began to appear in the 1960s and 1970s include Gene Bedient, John Brombaugh, Lynn Dobson, and Fritz Noack.

America's old-line organ companies had to do some belt-tightening. The robust post-World War II economy was losing its momentum, and now they were faced with competition from abroad (imported tracker organs were available at bargain prices), and from a growing number of small American shops operating with relatively low overhead. Almost all established builders of electro-pneumatic organs tried to join the tracker movement. Some tried importing organs from European builders. The Schlicker and Casavant companies built tracker and electro-pneumatic organs. One lamented casualty of these times was the Aeolian-Skinner Company, which closed its doors in 1972.

I am among those who enjoyed the whole early music development. I went to Europe a number of times during the 1960s and 1970s, heard and played historic organs, attended conferences, bought new editions of old music, and learned a generous cross-section of the early repertoire. However, there were some less attractive aspects of the back-to-baroque trend. The most enthusiastic tracker-backers were sometimes also the most intolerant. Some labeled the whole first half of the twentieth century "decadent," and dismissed as inferior electric action organs of any style. Others stretched their intolerance further and refused

to recognize anything good about nineteenth-century organs and organ music.

In surveying the growth of the tracker-action, early-music trend, one should be aware that the majority of the organs built during the 1960s and 1970s still had some kind of electric action and still followed the general pattern of the eclectic American Classic design. However, this style, too, was tilted toward a greater proportion of upper work at the expense of the 8' line. Today, many of these instruments sound top-heavy and lacking in foundation. That direction had reached its limit, and it was time for the pendulum to swing back.

### **A Romantic Revival**

In the organ world of the 1980s there was a refreshing renewal of interest in nineteenth-century music, and organists began to apply the same standards of scholarship and authenticity to Romantic music as to early music. Organ builders traveled to France and England to study nineteenth-century instruments, new editions of Romantic music began to appear, and young organists brought up on large doses of early music reveled in a repertoire that for them was new, fresh, and exciting. The Organ Historical Society expanded its efforts to preserve historic instruments to include important electric-action instruments.

Finally it was apparent that there is not ever going to be one type of organ suitable for all situations in a country as large and diverse as ours. We need to be careful to judge instruments, music, and performances on their artistic merits rather than according to our specific style preferences.

### **Some Current Trends**

Curious to see where we are today with various forms of action, I tabulated all the new organs listed in *The American Organist* during the first six months of 2006. I counted

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fifty-seven organs, of which ten had mechanical action, twenty had a combination of electric stop and key action with slider chests, and twenty-seven had electric or electro-pneumatic action.

In surveying current trends, we can be particularly thankful for the wonderful new organs that have been and are being installed in concert halls all over America. After many decades of isolation from mainstream music-making, the organ again has the opportunity to participate. Those of us who live in or near Los Angeles can enjoy seeing the Walt Disney Concert Hall fill for the organ series. These audiences include not only organists but a broad representation of the music-loving public. These are the same audiences that go to symphony concerts. It was a special pleasure to hear David Higgs play to an enthusiastic house on the 2005–2006 series.

In Rochester the Eastman-Rochester Organ Initiative is a glorious way to bring the organ out of its traditional ivory tower and in to the larger community, involving a variety of facilities throughout the city. What an inspiration is this partnership between the whole city of Rochester and the organ profession! The cultural rewards for the general public and the educational opportunities for organ students are obvious. Less obvious at first glimpse, but equally impressive, is the way EROI has brought together specialists in many areas of organ construction, research, and performance. Reflecting standards of excellence that have long been associated with the Eastman School, EROI explores new ways to move the art of the organ beyond ordinary expectations. One can only imagine how this kind of innovative model might influence America's organ world in the twenty-first century.

***We need to be careful to judge instruments, music, and performances on their artistic merits rather than according to our specific style preferences.***

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*D. Boe "John Brombaugh" . . . continued from pg. 7*

offset keydesk position complex, the action would turn out to be light and responsive, and in thirty-six years not a single key depth or leveling adjustment has been necessary.

In addition to designing and building his first major project, John had the additional challenge of forming a company and bringing associates and assistants on board. Using his father's barn outside of Germantown, Ohio, John was able to get underway with the actual construction of Opus 4 on August 23, 1968, when he reported the first piece of wood going through the planer. By the time the organ was completed in the summer of 1970, George Taylor, Gerald Lakes, Jeremy Cooper, David Shaffer, Dan Littmann, Scott Shafer, and Norman Ryan had worked on the project. George Taylor's presence during the last half year of the project played an important part in the success of Opus 4, particularly with

regard to the tonal finishing. When John became frustrated getting the sound he wanted to hear in the Great Praestant treble, George told him that Beckerath would just cut the pipe up a little bit more to calm it down instead of crunching in its windway or toehole. John says that he learned what to do to get that desired vocale sound similar to a boy singing, and he gives George Taylor credit for his significant help.

Opus numbers 5 through 8 would become projects of a much smaller scale, but even before the completion of Opus 4, contact had been established with the organ committee at Ashland Avenue Baptist Church in Toledo. Sue Craig, organist at the church, whom I had known since our college days, was fully receptive to the notion of having an instrument that would adhere strictly to the North German tradition, and her enthusiasm and support became key to the project actually

**Charles  
Fisk and John  
Brombaugh  
simultaneously  
developed what  
were probably  
the first modern  
wind systems  
using large  
wedge bellows  
and no steadying  
devices . . .**

happening. She, by the way, remained as organist at the church during the entire thirty-three years that Opus 9 was in the building.

The design for Opus 9 would benefit significantly from another trip John was able to make to Europe, this one a ten-week sojourn beginning in early May of 1971 and supported by a grant from the Ford Foundation. The main purpose of this trip was to learn more about historic reeds, but it was important also for what John was able to learn about how the old organs were constructed, their internal structure, and how the historic cases were put together. Also, visits to several new instruments, such as the one-manual Metzler organ in Amersfoort, would eventually influence his thinking about certain design details such as stopknobs.

John returned from Europe in mid-July as his shop colleagues were completing the organs for Columbus and Toledo, Opus 7 and 8. He immediately set to work on the case and mechanical design for Opus 9. Much of the tonal design had already occurred before he left the country in May. In his letter of April 19, he wrote:

“I am working on the Toledo Baptist organ design now. It will be a good organ. I hope they get the (16’) Bourdon, and have made a plea with them to do so. Because of the room size we will try a double Praestant 8’ again, beginning about f# rather than c# like yours was. With a slightly smaller scale, this should work well. We will also try a large Blokwerk type mixture of relatively low pitch in the Gt., since we need to get experience with this and Toledo is a good acoustical setting to do it in. What do you think of having a Mixture III-X! The last time I saw anything like this was in a Scherer organ! I am going to get Stinkens to do some random variations in the scaling between all of these pipes, but basically the whole thing will be one scale—including the Praestant (like Medemblik). The new hammered metal is fantastic. We will use this throughout (including the Praestants) in the Toledo plenum.” That new metal composition, by the way, consisted of an alloy of 82 percent lead and 17 percent tin, with the remaining 1 percent being copper and antimony. John’s description of the Praestant scales sounds today like

*David Boe, presenting his remarks during the 2006 EROI Festival*



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a page out of the Da Vinci code, as he put it then: “The exact diameters of the two Praestants were developed out of two different Fibonacci series which asymptotically approach the golden section ratio on the octave.”

The Ashland Avenue church building, which was completed in 1895, is a tastefully furnished and meticulously preserved example of the Akron plan fashionable in the United States at the turn of the century. Opus 9 was to occupy the space above the baptistery where the previous instrument, a Farrand-Votey of 1896, had also stood.

The stylistic origin of the case lines is unmistakably Dutch. While the basic scheme of the main case borrows from the no-longer existing organ in Rhenen, and the motivation for the arrangement of the Praestants in the Rückpositive owes much to the Niehoff organ in Brouwershaven, in no sense should the design be considered a copy, for the proportions are John’s own, developed geometrically through applications of the golden section.

In order to match the wood of the church, hand-planed red oak with a shellac finish was chosen for the case work, complemented by a variety of other woods that add elegance to the case details: sugar pine in the pipe shades; ebony for the stop knobs, music rack inlay, and keytable moldings; zebra wood key cheeks and music rack; Brazilian rosewood pedal sharps; and maple for the pedal naturals. Granadilla wood was used for the manual sharps and ivory for the naturals, which are further decorated with nosings that are hand-carved and gilded. Gold leaf was also applied to the mouths of all the Praestant pipes, and the embossed pipes in the two corners of the Rückpositive are entirely gilded. I mention all of these details because, except for the ivory naturals that in later organs would be bone, these decorative aspects set the course for future work and changed very little throughout John’s career.

There is one feature in Opus 9 that John abandoned in future work and that was the modern radiating, concave pedalboard set in forward position. A second pedalboard made along with that in Toledo is still in John’s inventory! This led to his decision to make the upper manual the Rückpositive with the action for each of the keyboards running through the keys of the other, thereby avoiding too steep an angle for the stickers running to the base of the organ. The manual placement also facilitated a very simple type of manual coupler that functions by raising the pivot point of the Rückpositive keyboard so that a set of nuts on the Rückpositive stickers engage the Great keyboard. The Rückpositive action is in the German form with the action going through stickers to a set of squares into a roller board under the bench and thence to the pallet box. However, the Rückpositiv pallets are vertical, somewhat following the old Niehoffian tradition, allowing a lower placement of the windchest and avoiding a second set of squares. The Great arrangement more resembles the French system in that the action runs directly from keyboard to pallet with only a roller board in between. However, so that the pallet box could be at the rear and thus benefit the reeds, the whole action was tilted at a slight angle from the keys toward the back of the case. The crisp, responsive action is aided by the use of hardwood bushings and relatively heavy oak pallets covered with two layers of leathers but no felt. The keyboards have short dimensions with the naturals projecting 36 mm in front of the sharps and octave spacing of 161 mm based on the 1708 Andreas Silbermann instrument at Marmoutier in Alsace.

Of course, the use of historic techniques such as Werckmeister temperament, flexible wind, resonant casework, hammered metal, and high cutups would mean little if the musical result were not significant. The sound of Opus 9, to our ears

***John says that he learned what to do to get that desired vocale sound similar to a boy singing . . .***



in 1973, possessed breakthrough qualities: principal color that was rich, foundational, and intense; a plenum that was robust and forceful, but not brilliant; and flutes that were remarkably pure and lively, free of any extraneous wind noise. Totally compatible with the other stylistic elements of the organ, the three reeds possessed the characteristically smooth sound found in the basses of old northern reeds, achieved here by using brass shallots with lead plates and leather facing in the lower pipes. The Fagot uses cylindrical resonators with a conical lower section approximately one-third the overall length. The Musette, not a regal in this case, has double conical resonators that are large enough to be resonant on the fundamental.

Of course, John did not build this instrument by himself. Talented associates were finding their way to Germantown, and a number of them would eventually go on to successful careers as organbuilders. John Boody joined the firm as Opus 9 was getting underway, and by the time the shop moved to Eugene, Michael Bigelow, Bruce Shull, and Charles Ruggles would have worked with the firm. Two students from DePauw University, Steven Dieck and Anne Beatty, would also be among those working with John. Steve stayed only briefly, Anne continued for four years. After the move of the shop to Eugene

in 1977, Munetaka Yokota, who had been discovered in Japan by Harald Vogel, followed his apprentice years with a highly successful career on his own. Other fine builders, though not formally employed by John, have been significantly influenced by his work. John's contribution to the profession in his role as teacher and mentor must be considered no less than remarkable!

Throughout his career John has combined his keen understanding of historical tradition with an ingenious sense of innovation and creativity. There was no particular necessity in Opus 4, for example, for the bottom octave of the Ruckpositive 4' flute to have pipes of identical length. But John was eager to challenge his voicing skills by achieving uniform color from a set of pipes that changed incrementally from a Dolcan gedekt at the bottom to an open conical flute an octave higher. He was still innovating thirty-five years later in Opus 59, when he engineered a 90-degree spiral twist in a band of trackers. But most importantly, he has maintained a vision of how organs should be making music, and his incredible ear has coaxed beautiful music from 47, 927 pipes on 66 organs.

It has been my pleasure to be among the many who have had unabashed admiration for his work and who have enjoyed his friendship over these many years. It is fitting and appropriate that we celebrate his contribution to our profession at this conference.

## EROI Festival 2007

*festival highlights*

New Dimensions in Organ Documentation and Conservation  
*An international symposium in conjunction with EROI Festival 2007*  
Celebrating Dieterich Buxtehude (1637-1707)

### THURSDAY, OCTOBER 11

#### 9 am – 2:30 pm

Festival registration; Presentations and round table on the Casparini Project

#### 3:15 pm – 10 pm

Symposium Program: Presentations by John Watson, David S. Knight; Italian Baroque Organ demonstration by William Porter; Buffet Dinner; Historic Organ Citation for Italian Baroque Organ; Organ and Harpsichord Recital by David Higgs and William Porter at University of Rochester Memorial Art Gallery

### FRIDAY, OCTOBER 12

#### 9 am – Noon

Presentations and round table on documentation and preservation of Mexican organs

#### Noon

*Christ Church Episcopal*

Lunch recital by Eastman Students on Hook and Hastings Opus 1697 (1886) and Fritts Opus 7 (1989); visit to Organ Loft

#### 2 pm – 6 pm

Presentations on documentation and conservation by: Carl-Johan Bergsten, Matthias Scholtz, Paul Peeters, Margareta Madelung, Franz Körndle, Helmut Balk, and Ibo Ortgies

#### 8:30 pm

*St. Paul's Episcopal Church*

Organ Recital by Todd Wilson and David Higgs on the Skinner Opus 655 (1927)

### SATURDAY, OCTOBER 13

#### 9 AM – Noon

Restoration projects: Skinner, Aeolian-Skinner, and Tannenberg; with Jonathan Ambrosino, Jonathan Ortloff, Bruce Shull and Scot Huntington; Historic Organ Citation for Aeolian-Skinner Opus 953 (1937)

### SATURDAY, OCTOBER 13 cont . . .

#### Noon – 1:30 pm

Lunch/Carillon concert and River Campus tour

#### 2:15 pm – 6:45 pm

Presentations and demonstrations by: Thomas Murray, Kerala J. Snyder, Catherine Oertel, and Annika Niklasson; Round Table on Kilbourn Project and Skinner Issues with Jonathan Ambrosino, Jack Bethards, Joe Dzeda, Thomas Murray, Nicholas Thompson-Allen

#### 8:30 pm

*Sacred Heart Cathedral*

Recital by Hans Davidsson and William Porter on the Brombaugh Opus 9 (1972)

### SUNDAY, OCTOBER 14

#### 1 pm – 5 pm

Organ, pedal clavichord, and pedal piano concert by Eastman students; Open House at Christ Church, including demonstration of Hook and Hastings, Opus 1697 and presentation by Barbara Owen

#### 5:30 – 7 pm

Concert at Memorial Art Gallery of vocal and instrumental music by Dieterich Buxtehude and Italian Masters, Christ Church Schola Cantorum, Stephen Kennedy, director

#### 9 pm

Concluding Compline at Christ Church with the Christ Church Schola Cantorum, Stephen Kennedy, director

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## Sacred Music Update

by Peter DuBois

In May 2006 we successfully concluded the fifth year of the Sacred Music Diploma program, begun in the fall of 2001. Three students completed the program requirements and were awarded the diploma following the two-semester internship phase, which also included a final project consisting of a liturgical plan for an entire season, and a final oral examination. The three students completing their work include Matthew Brown, who began

work in the fall as Intern in Church Music at Grace Church (Episcopal) in New York, working with Eastman alum Patrick Allen; Christopher ("Kit") Jacobson, who began work late in the summer as Organ Scholar at the Washington National Cathedral; and Robert Kwan, who is continuing his studies at Eastman, working toward the DMA degree in Organ Performance and Literature.

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Professors William Porter,  
David Higgs, and  
Hans Davidsson



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## RESONANCE

A NEWSLETTER OF THE ORGAN DEPARTMENT  
OF THE EASTMAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC

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