

## FROM THE PRESIDENT



**W**ith this first issue of *The Organbuilder* I want to greet all the friends of Dobson Pipe Organ Builders, Ltd. After we let our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary year slip by unobserved in 1999 because we were too busy to plan a celebration, it became clear to me that we needed to create a way to keep in touch with all the people whom we have met and worked with in the past 27 years of building organs.

While a newsletter isn't as personal as we might wish, it seems a good way to communicate to everyone the exciting new things we are up to these days, as well as to give us a forum for our ideas and reminiscences of earlier times. We plan to publish a newsletter twice a year and I hope you will enjoy reading it.

As I recall back to all the projects and the people who were involved with them, it is astonishing to think that we have built 77 new organs in 23 states and restored or rebuilt some 35 older instruments as well. It is a matter of pride for me that we still maintain the instruments and/or have personal contact with the people associated with nearly every one of these projects. We are sometimes surprised to go back to a church or school, even after 25 years, and find the same organist, teacher, pastor or custodian still there. Those occasions seem like going "home" again. In other places, where the cast of characters has changed, it is equally rewarding for me to meet the new people, get their reactions to our work and see what they are doing with our "babies".

In many of the projects we've been involved with - 24 projects to be exact - a new building was being designed and built at the same time as the organ. Those many projects where we built organs for existing buildings often involved renovations to accommodate the new organ and the relocation or reconfiguration of the choir area. It is sometimes startling to receive calls from these institu-

tions, as they reach the 20<sup>th</sup> or 25<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of their projects, with the request to cover the organ during upcoming renovations or redecorating! For me these projects still seem so recent in my memory that it is difficult to believe that these buildings are already in need of redecorating or further renovation. The fact that we are almost always consulted in such situations is very rewarding to me since it is clear that the organ itself, as well as our expertise, is still respected and valued by the people with whom we have worked.

Perhaps the most difficult part of my work is to enjoy close collaboration with so many of you for a period of many years as we plan and complete a project only to finish and move on to something new. The demands of the new make it difficult for me to visit and keep up communication with the friends gained from earlier projects as much as I would like. I hope this newsletter can make it possible to convey at least some of the sense of friendship which I have developed with so many of you over the years.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lynn A. Dobson".

Lynn A. Dobson

# PROFILES



**A**s President and Artistic Director of Dobson Pipe Organ Builders, Lynn Dobson and his firm have acquired an impressive reputation by the completion of over 75 new organs and 35 restorations and rebuilds of older instruments since the company's founding in 1974. Though firmly rooted in the traditions of fine organ building, his artistic approach to elements of organ design has never been bound by the practices of those who have gone before him. He attempts to conceive each instrument as a unique work of art for our time.

Lynn Dobson's interests in architecture, gardening, the visual arts and the study of nature may seem peripheral to organbuilding, but they in fact are so intertwined as a single discipline that these interests become inseparable and define who he is, how he lives and what he does. Lynn experienced the ways of craftsmen at an early age. When the barn on the family farm burned in the winter of 1954, a new, traditionally framed barn was built the following summer. At the age of five, Lynn was given his first tool box and tools by the carpenters so he could "help" them with their work. Over the next dozen years, the same carpenters returned each summer, eventually building an entirely new set of buildings on the farm.

In 1966, while in high school, Lynn was awarded a scholarship by the James J. Hill Foundation to attend summer design classes at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design. This experience directed him into a lifelong journey of learning artistic integrity and discovering the secrets of good design.

Lynn studied Art and Industrial Education at Wayne State College in Wayne, Nebraska. He took the greatest interest in three-dimensional design classes and specialized in sculpture. He also studied drafting, woodworking, metal technology, blacksmithing, electricity, shop drawing and management skills, all of which proved to serve him well as an organbuilder.

Exposure to the organ and its music first came through his sister, a church organist, and continued through personal reading, study and working for an organ service company during his college years. By the time he graduated from college, Lynn had designed an organ which he then built during the year following his graduation. That

instrument has served Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Sioux City, Iowa, for 27 years.

A profound experience during college was Lynn's introduction to the writing of John Neihardt. In his *Cycle of the West*, Neihardt wrote heroic songs of the West celebrating the prairie lands, its native people and the 19th century pioneer settlers. This interest in the settling of the West, in addition to his own experience of growing up on the prairie, continually reaffirms his decision to live and work in rural Iowa. Lynn's own prairie acreage is covered with wildflowers in early summer and big bluestem grass which, come fall, stands a full eight feet tall.

Lynn has steadily continued to undertake sculptures and other art projects, completing many commissions for churches, residences and schools. The sculptures are made entirely from fragments of wood left from building organs, an expression of the symbiotic relationship between the sculptures and organbuilding.

Lynn Dobson remains thoroughly involved in the daily activities of Dobson Pipe Organ Builders, Ltd. His work includes extensive travel to meet with clients, architects and contractors in developing new projects. At the shop, Lynn generates the initial mechanical, tonal and visual designs of all new organs and continues to work closely with members of the firm as more detailed design decisions are made and construction takes place. His work on-site includes installation of the instrument, collaborating on the tonal finishing process, and final examination of the completed instrument. Attending the dedicatory event of a completed project provides Lynn with the satisfaction of seeing and hearing the finished instrument in the environment for which it was created.

## RECENTLY COMPLETED

**Dobson Op. 74 (III/38)**, for St. Joseph Abbey, St. Benedict, La., was completed in the Spring of 2000 and is featured as the cover article in the April 2001 issue of *The American Organist* magazine.

**Dobson Op. 59 (II/9)**, originally built in 1993 for the residence of Dr. Peter Szeibel, Fort Dodge, Ia., was recently moved and re-installed in the chapel of Central Methodist Church, Phoenix, Ariz. **Don Morse**, Director of Music at the church knows Dobson instruments first-hand, having served as consultant for the 1993 Dobson Op. 60 (III/49) at First United Methodist Church in nearby Mesa.

**Eastman School of Music** of Rochester, N.Y., engaged Dobson Pipe Organ Builders to rebuild the 1978 Van Daalen organ, II/45, in Schmitt Recital Hall. After consultation with Eastman Professor of Organ, **David Higgs**, the project included replacement of the entire key action, and console. The mechanical stop action was replaced with electric stop action and multi-level combination action with piston sequencer. Several ranks were replaced or rescaled and all pipework was reregulated and revoiced. The project was completed in time for a gala weekend for **Catherine Crozier** in October, 2000.

**Dobson Op. 9 (I/8)** was recently moved to Lord of Life Lutheran Church, Dubuque, Ia., in October. This instrument had served Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Cedar Falls, Ia., since 1979.



**Dobson Op. 77 (II/21)**, for United Lutheran Church in Red Wing, Minn., was installed in February and March, 2001. The Swell and Great divisions are in a free standing case of oak with a detached, mechanical console placed in front for ease of choir direction. The pedal division has electric action and is located in the old organ chamber directly behind.

## WORK IN PROGRESS

**Dobson Op. 75 (IV/105)**, destined for the new Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels, Los Angeles, Calif., is now under construction.

Delivery of the instrument will take place in January of 2002. Seen at right are tonal director John Panning and designer Jon Thieszen during a recent inspection of the steel substructure.



This steel frame is required for seismic stability of the instrument. The platform they are standing on is 20 feet above the raised choir level, with the steel framework topping out 53 feet overhead. The instrument will be enclosed in an American cherry case 58 feet tall, 33 feet wide, and 11



feet deep. The supporting wall behind is 120 feet tall. Meanwhile, back in the shop, the windchests, swell boxes, reservoirs and the terraced console are all under construction. At left, John Ourensma prevoices the 32' Bourdon, which was built here in Lake City.

**An 1896 Wm. Schuelke organ** is being cleaned and releathered for St. Mary's Parish in Remsen, Ia. This 14 stop organ instrument retains its unique membrane chests, a very rare tubular pneumatic action type of which very few remain. The organ was moved to a newly erected church in 1903. It boasts a full principal chorus on the Great, including a Mixture. The present church, largely untouched by Vatican II, has undergone restoration and retains its beautiful original furnishings.

# DOBSON INSTALLATION SEEN LIVE ON INTERNET

For years without a pipe organ on campus, the University of Delaware, Newark, Del., is now the home of Dobson Op. 74, a two manual mechanical action instrument of 22 ranks. Made possible by the generosity of Edward and Naomi Jefferson and named in their honor, the new organ is installed in the original home of Newark's St. Thomas Parish (Episcopal), which stands adjacent to the campus and was purchased and restored by the University for use as a small recital hall. Now named Bayard Sharp Hall, the building was deconsecrated in 1956; its subsequent physical decline has been arrested by a careful restoration directed by Homsey Architects of Wilmington, Del.

Located in an intimate setting with only 70 seats, Op. 74 has been designed primarily for use as a teaching and recital instrument. It is capable of accommodating a generous range of organ literature and is well suited for use with small instrumental ensembles. Because of the modest size of the hall, the voicing treatment emphasizes warmth and color rather than excessive strength or brilliance. Eleven of the organ's 22 ranks were constructed in the Dobson shop. The entire instrument is voiced on a wind pressure of 70 millimeters, supplied from a large, weighted, single-rise reservoir.

The instrument's location in a balcony of modest depth led to the unusual placement of the console on the right-hand side of the instrument. The Great is located immediately adjacent to the console; the Swell, whose enclosure has shutters on three sides, is in the center of the case; the Pedal is placed on the left. The casework is constructed of white oak with a fumed, oiled and lacquered finish, and is embellished with colors and gold leaf. The woodwork of the drawknob console incorporates black walnut, ebony, rosewood, Carpathian elm burl and cow bone.

Dedication series recitalists included Dr. David Herman (Chairman of the Department of Music and Professor of Organ), Thomas Trotter and William Owen. In addition to being the only organ on campus, the instrument carries another distinction; it is thought to be the first pipe organ whose entire installation, from delivery to final tuning, was broadcast live on the Internet. Video clips and stills recorded by the webcam can still be found at <http://www.udel.edu/pipeorgan/>



## ORGAN SPECIFICATION

### GREAT

8'	Prestant	
8'	Chimney Flute	
4'	Octave	
4'	Flute	
2'	Super Octave	
IV	Mixture	1½'
8'	Trumpet	
	Swell to Great	

### SWELL (expressive)

8'	Bourdon	
8'	Salicional	
4'	Principal	
4'	Chimney Flute	
2'	Recorder	
1½'	Larigot	
II	Cornet	2⅔'
8'	Oboe	
	Tremulant	<i>affects entire organ</i>

### PEDAL

16'	Subbass	
8'	Principal	
8'	Gedackt	<i>ext. Subbass</i>
4'	Chorabass	<i>ext. Principal</i>
16'	Trombone	
8'	Trumpet	<i>ext. Trombone</i>
	Great to Pedal	
	Swell to Pedal	

21 Stops – 22 Ranks – 1,234 Pipes

# NEWSBITS

**Op. 71 Makes its Mark** - The 1999 Dobson-Rosales organ (III/58) at West Market Street United Methodist Church, Greensboro, N. C., has been used extensively in a series of recitals. Resident organist **Susan Bates** has presented solo recitals including a concert with brass as part of the North Carolina Organ Festival in November, 1999. In October, 2000 **Dan Locklair** appeared in a recital comprised entirely of his own works. Among his newest pieces is "Jubilo (A Prelude for Organ)", a commission by the American Guild of Organists for their 2001 Regional Competition for Young Organists. **Robert Parkins**, University Organist at Duke, performed a recital in February, 2001. The **Organ Historical Society** has recently announced that it will feature **Peter Sykes** playing Opus 71 during its annual convention in June, 2001.



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**Op. 72 Recitals** - 2000 AGO National Competition Winner, **Ji-yoen Choi**, was recently featured in a recital on Dobson Op. 72 (II/24; 1999) at Calvary Lutheran Church, Brookfield, Wis. Since its dedicatory hymn festival by **Michael Burkhardt** in November of 1999, the instrument has been featured in a number of recitals, including an event for the Milwaukee Chapter AGO.

**Organ Conference** - January 26-28, 2001, at Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, Minn., (Op. 10, II/24; 1979/1996), featured **Douglas Cleveland**, of Northwestern University, in Master Class and a recital. **Wendy Markosky**, Canadian University College in LaCombe, Alberta, also lectured and performed.

**Magazine Feature Article** - Dobson Pipe Organ Builders, Ltd., was the feature of an article in *Iowa Commerce* magazine's December/January, 2001 issue. The publication spotlights Iowa's leaders in business.

**Service Work** - Each Fall, Dobson Pipe Organ Builders has a regular tuning route of nearly 80 organs in Iowa and Minnesota, many of which are new or rebuilt instruments from the firm's 27 years of work. Included

are various instruments by Estey, Giesecke, Hinners, Pfeffer, Schuelke, Tellers, Verney, and both the smallest and largest of the organs built by the American builder Johnson. Op. 579 (I/4; 1882) resides at St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Spirit Lake, Ia., while the famous Op. 499 (III/53; 1877) built originally for St. Mary of the Sacred Heart, Boston, was moved in the 1970s to Our Lady of Good Counsel, Mankato, Minn. In 1995 Dobson made extensive restorative repairs and built a new console in the style of Johnson for Op. 499.

**Company Office Renovation** - During these past nine months, the office facilities at the firm have been renovated. An air exchanger system, circulating fresh air and pressurizing the area, prevents shop dust and fumes from entering, and new triple glazed, ultraviolet-filtering curtain-wall windows and doors were installed for maximum fuel efficiency. A fresh coat of paint, new carpet and re-upholstered furniture complete the new appearance.

## LOOKING BACK

**25 Years Ago** - Dobson Op. 2 (II/12) was designed for the residence of Antony Garlick (1927-2000) of Wayne, Neb. Moved to a second Garlick home some years later, it was sold in 1988 to Mary Brooks of Doylestown, Pa. In 1998, the Church of The Holy Spirit, Souderton, Pa., purchased the instrument for their sanctuary which Dobson moved and re-installed with a few new additions.

**20 Years Ago** - When Lawrence Phelps was unable to deliver the organ for Westminster Presbyterian Church, Des Moines, Ia., the church contracted with Dobson to complete, install and voice the instrument that had largely been built by Phelps. The instrument, designated Dobson Op. 14 (II/38), was dedicated in March, 1981, by Ruth Harris, organist of the church then and now.

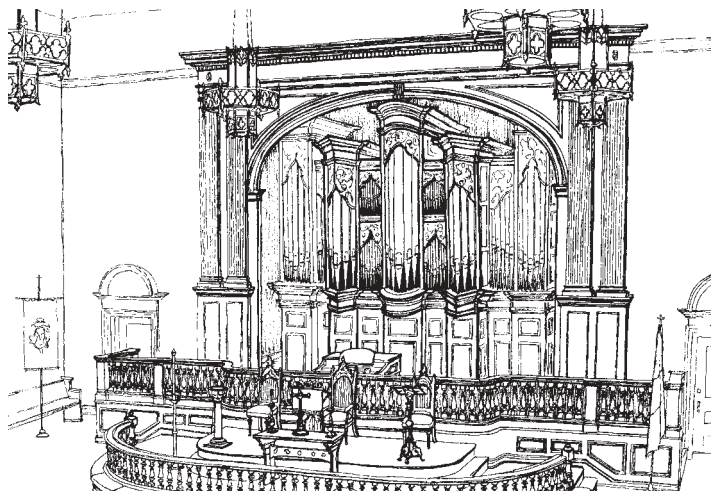
**10 Years Ago** - In the first two months of 1991, Dobson Op. 51 (II/26) was installed at St. John Lutheran Church, Northfield, Minn. John Ferguson, of St. Olaf College, served as consultant; his wife Ruth is organist.

## RECORDINGS

A CD recording has been released of the Reddel Memorial Organ, a IV/102 Dobson rebuild completed in 1996, located in Chapel of the Resurrection at Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, Ind. **Martin Jean**, formerly professor of organ at Valparaiso and now teaching at Yale, plays works of Bolcom, Bach, Brahms, Pachelbel and Liszt on the Raven label (OAR-480), available from the Organ Historical Society, Box 26811, Richmond, Va., 23261, or at [www.ohscatalog.org](http://www.ohscatalog.org). According to The Organ Magazine (UK) *"Amongst all the CDs I have of organs in the States, this is probably the best, both for instrument and performance: highly recommended."*

## NEW CONTRACT

A contract for **Op. 78 (III/42)** has been signed with St. John United Methodist Church, Augusta, Ga. The project is currently in the design stage. The organ's disposition consists of a well-developed two manual and pedal design augmented by an expressive Solo division including an 8' Harmonic Flute, 4' Traverse Flute, 8' Clarinet and 8' Trumpet. **Jamie Garvey** is the Organist/Director of Music. **Warren Hutton**, University of Alabama, served as the consultant. Projected completion is scheduled for the spring of 2003.



# THE ORGANBUILDER

NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2001

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