

FROM THE PRESIDENT



On September 2, 2002, with great fanfare and incredible media attention, the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels in Los Angeles opened its massive bronze doors for the first time. John Panning and I attended all the events surrounding this great occasion. The 55 minute procession was an overwhelming experience for us as the organ led the singing of the assembly and choir while 3,000 people processed into the new building. This event made a wonderful day of culmination for us after five years of planning and constructing the organ.

With thousands of people hearing the organ daily it has become clear that this project will become our most visible work of all the organs we have built to date.

One might wonder what life will be like after the “big one.” Will it be a let down for us to work on smaller, more normal instruments after the excitement of a huge undertaking? Of course, an even bigger project lies ahead as we begin final planning for the 125 rank mechanical action instrument for The Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts in Philadelphia. However, right now our attention is focused on building three smaller organs, each one exciting in its own way.

At Kenilworth Union Church, on the North Side of Chicago, we will have the opportunity to work again with Maggie Kemper on a nice two manual instrument. It is not often that we get to work with an organist a second time (Presbyterian Homes II/25; 1994) and we really look forward to this new collaboration.

Another new project is at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Rock Creek Parish in Washington, D.C. It is the oldest church building in the city, built in the first decade of the 18th Century. The Church is surrounded by Rock Creek Park, a beautifully landscaped 100 acre park, including a cemetery that serves as the final resting place of many presidents and political figures. The Parish is home to the Rock Creek Music Festival which was started by the Church's Director of Music, Dr. Graham Elliott. Graham came to Rock Creek from Chelmsford Cathedral and is quickly establishing a very dynamic music program. The Parish Hall is cur-

rently undergoing renovation and after the church organ is completed, there are plans to build a three manual organ for this new concert venue as well. This unique project is proving to be a wonderful opportunity for us to make our mark on the musical scene of Washington, D.C.

Our third new project is for Shepherd of the Bay Lutheran Church, Ellison Bay, Wisconsin. Located in scenic Door County, with Lake Michigan on one side and Green Bay on the other, the county is a picturesque area that could just as easily be a group of New England fishing villages as a place in the Midwest. The Church, built just a few years ago, is undergoing such rapid growth that the organ project has grown to include the expansion of the building. Along with an active music program, the Church will become another venue for the Peninsula Music Festival. In an area where both the visual arts and music are so important to the peoples' identity, the folks at Shepherd of the Bay have asked me to create an organ with a unique visual design. What is developing should be very exciting.

We continue to find that even the smallest projects can present challenges and opportunities to be creative and fresh in our thinking. For us here at Dobson Pipe Organ Builders every new endeavor can lead to ever more fulfillment in our work.

PROFILES



John A. Panning, like many organbuilders, has had a lifelong fascination with the organ. Born in Watertown, Wisconsin in 1963, the son of a Lutheran minister and educator, he was exposed at an early age to the pipe organ and its music. He fondly recalls his mother's inherited Estey Cottage Organ, which John learned to play around age seven, although he did not start piano lessons until sixth grade. He began studying organ in high school and has regularly played for church services ever since, providing him experiences with organs of all kinds.

Although there was some hope that he would follow in his father's footsteps, John was intent on building pipe organs. After graduating from high school he worked for Milwaukee area organbuilders Hammes-Foxe, acquiring his first taste of the organbuilding business. After two years with this small builder of mechanical action organs, he joined the Dobson firm and moved to Lake City in January of 1984.

The shop was small at the time of John's arrival and so he was engaged in all areas of organbuilding as well as service and tuning. From the outset he was interested and involved in the tonal aspects of organs and worked closely with the late Robert Sperling in voicing and tonal finishing. In 1992 he set up the company pipeshop and himself made the first pipes in Lake City. Beginning with Opus 59, in 1993, John was asked to assist with tonal design of new instruments and determine the pipe scales. This eventually led to his appointment as Tonal Director, although he remains involved in many other aspects of the firm's activities, including that of website manager.

Anyone who knows John would tell you that he is extremely well read, with interests in and broad knowledge of subjects ranging from American bridge building to theology. He is the shop's resident wordsmith, called on to write or edit much of the printed material that leaves the office. John is fond of Lutheran hymnody, which he is known to recite or sing with great abandon from within the organ case as he works on a pipe. As one observes his keen ear for the subtleties of voicing and tuning, one soon learns he has perfect

pitch. And, whether it is technical information, rules of grammar, organ stoplists, the year an instrument was installed, or an obscure hymntext, John has a quick and sharp mind which seems to recall nearly everything!

In order to gain the valuable experience and historical perspective that underscore the links Dobson instruments have to their heritage both here and abroad, John has studied many historic organs in Europe as well as important instruments by American builders. He has served two terms as National Secretary of the Organ Historical Society, two terms as Secretary of the American Institute of Organbuilders, and since 1991, has served as North American Editor for the Journal of the International Society of Organbuilders.

John's voice is clear about the organ's place in the present day church and how building a good instrument is achieved: "The organ is a vital part of worship, which may draw on a half millennium of church music. Each style of organ building throughout history contains common elements. Finding these common threads enables us to build eclectic organs capable of honoring this heritage and inspiring present-day composers and musicians."

John lives with his wife Judy and two elusive cats in a large, historic home in Lake City. Judy is the music teacher in the local elementary school, teaches piano privately and directs her own *Young Musicians Workshop*, a developmentally appropriate children's music education program she has introduced to the Lake City community.

DEDICATION OF A CATHEDRAL

On September 2, 2002, the Mass of Dedication of a Church and Altar was celebrated in Los Angeles' new **Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels**. Designed by renowned Spanish architect José Rafael Moneo, the 3,000 seat edifice and its 156 foot campanile rise next to the Hollywood Freeway in Downtown Los Angeles. Built of ochre-tinted concrete and featuring immense windows covered in translucent alabaster, it is the first major Catholic Cathedral constructed in America in two generations.

No less monumental in scale or voice is the four manual, 105 rank pipe organ, which first sounded publicly during the Mass of Dedication. Standing above the choir at the front of the church, the instrument rises 85' above the floor. The façade contains the largest tin pipes in North America, including low C of a 32' Principal and a full-length 16' horizontal reed. Its visual design, a collaboration between Lynn Dobson and architect Moneo, gracefully and proportionately introduces into the Cathedral an instrument that would be gargantuan in a lesser space.

Looking up at the organ façade from the right transept



The Mass of Dedication as seen from the rear gallery

The organ's tonal design is chiefly inspired by the needs of church music as it is practiced in a building that encloses 3.3 million cubic feet. An important factor in the design was the Archdiocese's requirement that the instrument that had served the former Cathedral of St. Vibiana, which was condemned as a result of the 1994 Northridge earthquake, be re-used in the new organ. Once a plan had been prepared for the new organ, the St. Vibiana instrument was examined to consider how its voices might fit into the new scheme. Although not a product of our first thinking, the presence of useful and interesting sounds in the old organ such as the *Viole d'orchestre*, English Horn and Harp suggested their inclusion in the new stoplist. All pre-existing pipes were cleaned and repaired, and revoiced to suit their new roles.

Before shop voicing began, sample pipes from the various divisions were taken to be voiced in the Cathedral. This process, which we undertake for every organ, required some conjecture in Los Angeles because the Cathedral was not yet finished—in fact, the ceiling was not completed, the marble floor was still being laid, and many windows had yet to be installed. Lynn Dobson, John Panning and Bill Ayers carried this work out on September 10, 2001. The next day the horrific attacks on New York and Washington occurred, throwing the airlines into turmoil; they finally rented a car on the following Friday and drove the 1,750 miles from Los Angeles to Lake City. In the end, we came fairly close with the shop voicing, but it was not until the building was fully enclosed and free of construction noise that we could adequately assess the dynamic levels required for this immense space.

WORK IN PROGRESS

The instrument is arranged in six levels, with a central access shaft also containing the electronic systems. Levels 1 and 4 are devoted to wind trunks and reservoirs. The Swell is divided between levels 2 and 3 at the left of the case; the Positive is on the right. The Great and Solo are similarly arranged on levels 5 and 6, with the Great on the left, the Solo on the right. The Pedal 16' and 32' stops are arranged in the remaining floor and wall spaces.

The Great, Swell and Positive divisions employ slider windchests with electric actions, and their pipes are voiced on pressures ranging from 5" to 7". The Solo and Pedal pipes speak from electro-pneumatic windchests and employ pressures ranging from 8" up to 20" for the Solo Tuba. Three blowers in the basement provide 6,000 c.f.m. of wind. The organ is constructed on a steel frame that for earthquake safety is fixed to the monolithic concrete walls. The instrument weighs about 75,000 pounds.

Because the console is primarily associated with the choir area, it was important to design one that was no taller than necessary so that sightlines would not be blocked. To satisfy ourselves that proportions were comfortable for the performer and that all 123 drawknobs were within reach, a full-scale mockup of the console was built in our shop. The console is placed on a substantial, movable platform; for ease of connection at various locations in the chancel area of the Cathedral, an electronic multiplexing system is employed.



The installation of the organ began in January, 2002, and tonal finishing commenced in May, with much of it taking place at night to accommodate the building's schedule. Work ceased before the Cathedral's dedication in September, but will resume in December and continue until the organ's completion in February, 2003.

The instrument's specifications and many photographs taken throughout the installation process and can be found on our website at www.dobsonorgan.com.

Construction of Op. 78 (III/42) for **St. John United Methodist Church, Augusta, Ga.**, continues on schedule. The windchests have been finished, as well as the console. The cabinetmakers are completing the cherry case and are beginning to assemble the organ in the erecting room. The making of key action components has begun, and shop voicing of the pipe work is underway. The instrument's installation is scheduled to begin in February, 2003.

RECENTLY COMPLETED

Reinstallation of the rebuilt 1964 Holtkamp organ at **Westwood Lutheran Church, St. Louis Park, Minn.**, was completed in September. Kristina Langlois, Director of Music and Organist, presided at the festive morning worship services of dedication on November 17, 2002. Martin Jean, Professor of Organ at Yale University, New Haven, Conn., played the dedicatory recital in the afternoon.

The rebuilding included the redistribution of several existing ranks, the addition of 14 new ranks and a general revoicing. The original Great and Swell windchests were replaced with new ones of electric-slider construction. The entire windsystem was releathered and tremulants were added for the Swell and Positive divisions. The console was refinished and refitted with new keyboards, a rebuilt pedalboard, new stopkeys and a solid state combination and key action. Also included were 99 levels of combination memory, a piston sequencer and MIDI compatibility.

With able assistance from the two congregations involved, a 1975 Holtkamp organ (II/17) from **First Presbyterian Church, Rockwell City, Ia.**, was moved across the street to **St. Paul Lutheran Church**. Having voted last year to worship with the Lutheran congregation, the Presbyterians offered their fine pipe organ as a gift, including the cost to move it! After church on Sunday, October 6, members of both congregations together transported the entire organ across the street in fifty minutes. Reinstallation of the organ was completed during the remainder of the week.

NEWSBITS

Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, Minn., presented **Sarah Koehler** in a faculty organ recital on November 21, 2002. Bethany's Trinity Chapel is home to Op. 10 (II/24; 1979/1996).



St. Paul Lutheran Church, Neenah, Wis., was included in the annual summer "Lunchtime Organ Recital Series," June 12 through August 28, 2002, along with several other Appleton, Wis. area churches. St. Paul organist **Marillyn Freeman** played Op. 32 (II/31; 1986).

Stephen Gabrielsen, Professor of Music at Augsburg College, Minneapolis, Minn., presented his annual organ recital on September 29, 2002, playing Op. 42 (III/49; 1988) at the college's Hoversten Chapel.

Trinity Lutheran Church, Webster City, Ia., sponsored **Duo Danica** on October 6, 2002, featuring Op. 43 (II/20; 1988). Consisting of **Asger Troelsen**, organ, and **Merete Hoffman**, oboe, the duo from Denmark maintains an active schedule of recordings and appearances in Scandinavia and Europe as well as the United States.



Hope United Church of Christ, Sturgeon Bay, Wis., presented organist **Naomi Rowley** on August 3, 2002, playing Op. 47 (II/16; 1990). The concert honored the late **Ed and Lois Schreiber**, who were involved with the acquisition of Opus 47, and left a memorial gift for the maintenance of the organ.

Trinity Lutheran Church, Manhattan Beach, Calif., recently celebrated the tenth anniversary of their Op. 56 (II/17; 1992). The November 17, 2002, recital was performed by **Gregory Peterson**, Organist at Old South Church, Boston, Mass.

St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Minneapolis, Minn., presented a series of "Summer Friday Noon Organ Recitals" featuring thirteen Twin Cities organists playing Op. 70 (II/45; 1997). After each program concertgoers were invited to enjoy lunch on the terrace overlooking beautiful Lake of the Isles.



Presbyterian Homes, Evanston, Ill., continues its "Gift of Music" organ recital series this fall with resident organist **Maggie Kemper**, as well as **Jerome Butera**, **Rhonda Sider Edgington**, and **Uwe Karsten Gross**. The organ is Op. 64 (II/25; 1994).

United Lutheran Church, Red Wing, Minn., hosted Ukrainian organist **Volodymyr Koshuba** in a recital on November 7, 2002, featuring Op. 77 (II/19; 2001).

The Organ Historical Society included a visit to The Chapel of the Resurrection at Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, Ind., as part of its 2002 convention in and around Chicago, Ill. Playing the Dobson rebuilt instrument (IV/102; 1996) was **John Gouwens**.

The Des Moines Register carried an article profiling Dobson Pipe Organ Builders on the front page of the Business Section, Sunday, June 6, 2002. On August 16, 2002, **The Los Angeles Times** featured an article on the voicing process of Op. 75 (IV/105; 2002) at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels, Los Angeles, Calif. The October 28, 2002, edition of the **Omaha World-Herald** published a story about the company and its current high profile projects.

The Blandon Memorial Art Museum, Fort Dodge, Ia., included three sculptures by **Lynn Dobson** in *Out of the Woods*, a Summer 2002 exhibit celebrating the Museum's 70th Anniversary. Part of Lynn's *Arcadian Fantasies* series, these wood collage pieces were made entirely of fragments left from building organs.

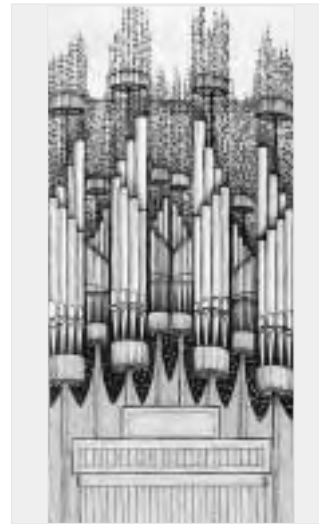
NEW CONTRACTS

The Regional Performing Arts Center, Philadelphia, Pa., has signed a contract for the construction and installation of Op. 76 (IV/125) in Verizon Hall of The Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts. With its façade already in place, the instrument itself will be installed during the summers of 2004 and 2005, with tonal finishing to follow. Dedication is set for May of 2006.

Kenilworth Union Church, Kenilworth, Ill., recently signed a design contract and schedule retainer for Op. 81, a two manual instrument with mechanical key action and electric stop action. Maggie Kemper serves as Organist. The projected completion date is Fall 2003.

St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Washington, D.C., has signed a contract for Op. 80 (II/26) with mechanical key action, electric stop action and an attached console. The classic, freestanding case is to be made of solid American black cherry. Although modest in size, the instrument has been conceived to convincingly accom-

pany the liturgy and, particularly, the English choral repertoire. The Swell division will include a principal chorus and 16' and 8' reeds. Dr. Graham J. Elliott serves as Organist and Choirmaster. The completion date is anticipated for Spring 2004.



Shepherd of the Bay Lutheran Church, Ellison Bay, Wis., has signed a contract for Op. 79 (II/23). The instrument, designed with mechanical key action and electric stop action, features a unique case design that includes eight spiral towers and a detached, reversed console. Installation is scheduled for Fall 2004, after the completion of building renovations.

THE ORGANBUILDER

FALL 2002

NEWSLETTER

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DOBSON PIPE ORGAN BUILDERS, LTD.

200 North Illinois St.
Lake City, IA 51449
T 712 464 8065
F 712 464 3098
info@dobsonorgan.com
www.dobsonorgan.com