

# FROM THE PRESIDENT

This column is being written from Wayne, Pennsylvania, where my crew and I are installing our Op. 84 in the Chapel of St. David's Episcopal Church. I can look out of the window of this spacious new Chapel and see the original St. David's Church. Built in 1715, the quaint and historic building barely seats 100 persons but will always be known here as the "Church." It stands in a large and picturesque Church Yard filled with the graves of church members spanning 300 years. It is hard to believe that this peaceful place is surrounded by Philadelphia's urban sprawl.

The people at St. David's are especially excited by the completion of their beautiful Chapel, which seats over six times the number of worshippers that can be accommodated in the Church. It is actually the third "new" Chapel since the congregation outgrew the original Church many years ago. The former two chapels are still in use for other purposes, and together with space for offices and church education, the campus is all tied together with sensitivity to the architecture and style of the 1715 building. The original Church and the Church Yard are on one side of the street while all facilities built subsequently are on the other. This arrangement wonderfully preserves the beauty and serenity of the historic building and the grounds surrounding it.

We have been working with the folks at St. David's for some five years during the planning and construction of this new Chapel. For us and the congregation, the new organ has come to represent the final step of the entire building project. Some of the congregation's enthusiasm was evident on Sunday, March 3, as over 300 members of all ages stayed after church to help us unload the organ! At first it was nearly a grid-lock situation but, after some redirecting of traffic flow, the truck was unloaded in record time. Everyone was smiling!

The installation of Op. 84 has gone very well. Our own crew was joined by freelance organbuilder Randall Karstens from Columbus, Ohio, as well as Richard Frary of Czelusniak et Dugal, Inc., of Northampton, Massachusetts. As I write this, near the end of the first two weeks of installation, we've managed to erect the forty-foot tall white-painted case with its 16' façade and install the wind system and key action. We've also completed the gilding of the mouths of the façade pipes, a first for the company. In the picture above Randy assists me in applying the gold leaf. Over the next two weeks the installation should easily be completed; voicing is scheduled to begin after Easter.

Being back in Southeast Pennsylvania for our third installation here in two years makes it convenient to take in some events involving our other two instruments in the area. Several of us attended worship in nearby Lancaster where it was a joy to hear how well Op. 83 leads and supports the choir and congregation in their worship. We also were able to attend the Kimmel Center debut of British organist Wayne Marshall in a stunningly virtuosic program on our Op. 76. It was thrilling to hear how well that large organ handles the solo repertoire as well as orchestral transcriptions and imaginative improvisations! These experiences impressed upon me again



that no matter how large or small the project our goal must always be to make each instrument our very best.

As I look ahead there is a lot of exciting work in our future! Next week several of us will be in Washington D.C. to continue the planning for our new instrument at the National Cathedral. Then we'll be off to Dallas and Birmingham to discuss details of two large new organs. At the same time we are pleased to be working on plans for two more modest instruments: Op. 85 (II/19), for the Church of St. Peter Claver in West Hartford, Connecticut, is in the final stages of design, and design work continues for Op. 86 (II/24) for the chapel of Westminster Presbyterian Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota. Additional information on all these projects can be found on our company website at [www.dobsonorgan.com](http://www.dobsonorgan.com).

I want to mention how very pleased I am to have three outstanding new employees join us over the last few months. Kent Brown has an interesting background with the United States Air Force, law enforcement and woodworking. He came to us last fall and immediately joined our other cabinetmakers in building the casework for Op. 84, currently being installed here in Wayne. Abe Batten has degrees in architecture and church music and thus brings a unique combination of skills to our design department. John Streufert has a degree in piano performance, is trained as a piano technician and has 16 years of experience as an organ builder, mostly as a voicer. He joins our voicing staff and will also be involved in other areas of organbuilding. These new faces in our shop and the talents they bring are very much appreciated as we embark on the exciting work to be completed in the next few years.

Another development at the shop is our recent decision to expand our shop facilities. With bigger organs to build and a larger staff requiring additional work space, we are bursting at the seams. More space is essential for us to be able to do our work efficiently. We hope to start construction soon and have the expanded shop area ready to use by the end of the year.

# PROFILES



Sac City, Iowa, Kirk's birthplace, is home to the world's largest popcorn ball, a fact that probably doesn't do much to dispel Iowa's fly-over reputation. Still, Sac City is a prosperous small town, a good place for Kirk and his three older siblings to grow up in the 1950s and '60s. Orville Russell owned two filling stations and was a Texaco Oil jobber who supplied other stations. He kept his sons busy pumping gas and washing windows at the family stations on Main Street. A talented student-athlete, Kirk graduated from the local high school in 1965.

After a year attending Drake University in Des Moines with the idea of pursuing a legal career, he transferred to the University of South Dakota in Vermillion, graduating with a degree in sociology. While there he met and married Debbie Herbrandson, a music major who grew up in the nearby town of Alcester, S.D. They moved to San Antonio, Texas, so that Kirk could do graduate work at Texas Christian University. After completing two years of a three-year program, they switched gears and moved back to Iowa, where Kirk served as Director of Financial Aid and Placement at Briar Cliff College in Sioux City and Debbie received her degree in accounting. Following this, the Russells held positions in business and accounting, moving through various cities in the Midwest, on to Trinidad, West Indies, and ending up eventually in Visalia, California. When the older of their two boys was five, they realized that they wanted their children to attend better schools than were available in California, and they chose to move back to Iowa.

Shortly after returning to his home state in 1990, Kirk saw a tiny classified ad in the *Des Moines Register* advertising a business manager position at a small manufacturing company in Lake City. Among other requirements, the ad said, "Must be familiar with Macintosh computers." Since he had once turned on a Mac, he figured he was qualified. Fortunately, he had solid business skills that filled our needs, and he and his family soon moved to Lake City.

It was unusual for a company of our size at the time to employ a full-time business manager. In smaller shops, the owner often runs everything out of his back pocket. Though few, there have been several failures in the industry, often involving people who were fine craftsmen but found themselves at sea when managing customer deposits of hundreds of thousands of dollars for projects spanning several years. Lynn Dobson determined that in order to focus more fully on the artistic aspect of building organs, someone other than he should be responsible for daily management of the business.

Among coastal jet-setters, Iowa has a reputation as a "fly-over" state, a boring place young people can't wait to leave. Fast forward a few years, however, and you'll find a striking reversal: a notable percentage of Iowans return to the state later on. Some are searching for more affordable housing or safer cities, for others it's better schools. For a real-world example, you need look no further than our Business Manager, Kirk Russell. His profession has taken him all over the country and even overseas, yet here he is, an hour away from where he was born.

As the Business Manager of Dobson Pipe Organ Builders, Kirk would be the first to say that nothing he does is very glamorous. Paying the bills doesn't draw admiring attention from organ aficionados as might carving pipeshades or voicing reeds. Still, clients and suppliers quite reasonably expect that all business dealings with us will be handled promptly and correctly. In the thousand unsung details of running a business, from dealing with bankers and insurance agents to making budgets, doing payroll, controlling inventory, cost accounting and arranging maintenance of company vehicles, Kirk carries out his duties efficiently, effectively and with good humor.

To his wide-ranging business experience must be added Kirk's service to country and community. He was in ROTC, and after moving back from Texas served as Executive Officer of his local Army Reserve unit, attaining the rank of Captain before going on inactive status. More recently, he served on our local school board, on the Calhoun County Ambulance Commission, and on the board of the Domestic/Sexual Abuse Outreach Center.

When his sons moved away from home and his wife was named Chief Financial Officer of Friendship Haven, a retirement community in Fort Dodge, Iowa, Kirk and Debbie moved from Lake City to be closer to her job. Kirk now has an eighty-mile daily commute across some of that fly-over farmland. For him, relaxation always involves activity, and it frequently leads him to the mountains: he has conquered the summits of Mt. Whitney, Long's Peak, Pike's Peak and others, and has hiked rim-to-rim through the Grand Canyon.

Climbing a mountain: not a bad analogy for the business of building an organ. Kirk helps us keep an eye on the goal while managing our resources to meet that goal, which also allows us to enjoy the view along the way.



*Kirk and his best friend, Sadie, a five-year old female Yellow Labrador Retriever, before a romp in the park.*

# WORK IN PROGRESS

The installation of Op. 84 (III/46) for St. David's Episcopal Church, Wayne, Pa., began on March 3rd. Shown here are just a few of the photos taken during the first two weeks on site. The 40' case is painted white and features a tin façade with gold leafed pipe mouths. Carved and gilded pipe shades will complete the casework. The Choir division is located behind the screen, the Great/Pedal at the upper impost level towards the sides of the case. The Swell rests in the valley of the Great/Pedal. The larger Pedal pipes stand behind the organ.



*The chapel as work begins*



*The fully assembled case before pipe shades are installed*



*A tower top is hoisted*



*Installing the Great impost molding*



*Partially assembled casework*



*Connecting the console*



*Installing the 16' Principal*

## RECORDINGS

The Finnish recording label **Ondine** has released a CD of the May 2006 inaugural concert of Op. 76 at Philadelphia's Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts with the **Philadelphia Orchestra**, **Christoph Eschenbach**, conductor, **Olivier Latry**, organ. The CD (ODE 1094-5) includes: Barber, *Toccata Festiva*, Op. 36; Poulenc, *Concerto in G minor for Organ, Strings and Timpani*; Saint-Saëns, *Symphony No. 3 in C minor*, Op. 78 "Organ". The CD is available from the OHS Catalog <[www.ohscatalog.org](http://www.ohscatalog.org)>.

The new release, which has received critical acclaim, was the focus of the March 2, 2007 edition of American Public Media's "Performance Today" program hosted by **Fred Child**. The broadcast included the entire performance of the Saint-Saëns symphony as well as commentary from **Lynn Dobson**.

## NEW CONTRACTS

**Highland Park United Methodist Church**, Dallas, Texas, recently signed a contract for a new 95 rank electric-slider instrument of four manuals and pedal. Op. 87 will be the company's first instrument in Texas and is scheduled for installation in 2009.

**The Cathedral Church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul in the City and Diocese of Washington, D.C.**, better known as Washington National Cathedral, has chosen Dobson Pipe Organ Builders to design and build a new instrument to replace the present organ. That instrument, built in 1938 by Ernest M. Skinner & Son, has been altered and enlarged on numerous occasions. The decision has been made by the musicians and the Cathedral Chapter to build a new organ that retains the historic casework as well as several beautiful voices from the present instrument. Details of the project can be found on the Cathedral's website <[www.cathedral.org/cathedrall/music/organplan.shtml](http://www.cathedral.org/cathedrall/music/organplan.shtml)>.

# FEATURED INSTRUMENT

From the first meeting with the organ committee at the Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, we knew that this was going to be a delightful collaborative project. The church has long been known for its strong grounding in fine music and a living Lutheran liturgy. The creative church staff along with the eager and committed congregation presented a wonderful opportunity to explore the various options that present themselves as an organ project develops.



Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd  
Lancaster, Pennsylvania  
Op. 83, 2006

The church building, dedicated in 1973, required updating of its HVAC systems as well as minor changes to the gallery to accommodate the organ. The project then expanded, as they so often do, to include not only that work but also new lighting and sound systems, an elevator to the choir room and gallery, and other architectural changes to improve liturgical functions and make the nave completely handicapped accessible. In the end, the result was a major renovation of the entire worship space.

Donald Main of M&M Architects was the principal architect for the project and injected many creative ideas into the planning. Scott Riedel served as organ consultant and acoustical advisor to the project, and the Rev. Marilyn Witte, Cantor, and the Rev. Mark Russell, Senior Pastor, guided the liturgical considerations. With the removal of an antiquated sound booth at one side and a large room for the old HVAC equipment on the other, the balcony's floor space was nearly doubled, making much more room for the choir, organ and the variety of other instruments that are regularly a part of the the congregation's worship experience. A new color scheme for the walls and an enlarged chancel area with dramatic new lighting has resulted in a wonderful space for worship.

Given the flattened hexagonal plan of the room, the organ case takes on an angled shape to fit closely to the back wall of the gallery. The case is very wide and shallow in order to provide maximum space for singers and other musicians. The console is detached to allow two rows of choir chairs to be placed between it and the case.

The visual design of the organ takes its inspiration from medieval musical manuscripts. The horizontal beams under and behind the façade pipes represent the lines of the musical staff. Since the lower members each step out a little farther as they descend, the façade pipes move in or out depending upon which level they stand. The supporting elements behind the pipes are painted blue and plainly show between the widely spaced pipes, thereby connecting the pipes as in musical notation. The regular placement of the 16' Bourdon pipes that are painted burgundy act as bar lines or punctuation between the metal pipes. While in plan the organ looks like an old manuscript, it takes on a very unique and fresh appearance in real life while still retaining the time-honored tradition of being a freestanding encased organ. The case and console are made of maple with a clear finish.

## GREAT

16' Bourdon	<i>wood &amp; 30% tin, façade</i>	32 pipes
8' Prestant	<i>75% tin, partly in façade</i>	58 pipes
8' Chimney Flute	<i>wood and 30% tin</i>	58 pipes
4' Octave	<i>52% tin</i>	58 pipes
4' Spire Flute	<i>30% tin</i>	58 pipes
2' Fifteenth	<i>52% tin</i>	58 pipes
III Cornet 2 $\frac{2}{3}$ '	<i>30% tin, mounted g20-d51</i>	96 pipes
IV Mixture 1 $\frac{1}{3}$ '	<i>52% tin</i>	232 pipes
8' Trumpet	<i>52% tin</i>	58 pipes
Swell to Great		

## SWELL (expressive)

8' Lieblich Gedeckt	<i>wood and 30% tin</i>	58 pipes
8' Viola	<i>75% tin</i>	58 pipes
8' Viola Celeste	<i>FF, 52% tin</i>	58 pipes
4' Principal	<i>52% tin</i>	58 pipes
4' Harmonic Flute	<i>30% tin</i>	58 pipes
2' Piccolo	<i>52% tin, harmonic</i>	58 pipes
III Mixture 1'	<i>52% tin</i>	174 pipes
8' Oboe	<i>52% tin</i>	58 pipes
Tremulant <i>affects entire organ</i>		

## PEDAL

16' Subbass	<i>wood, façade</i>	32 pipes
16' Bourdon	<i>Great Bourdon</i>	- pipes
8' Principal	<i>75% tin, partly in façade</i>	32 pipes
8' Gedeckt	<i>extension of Subbass</i>	12 pipes
4' Choralbass	<i>extension of Principal</i>	12 pipes
16' Trombone	<i>52% tin</i>	32 pipes
8' Trumpet	<i>extension of Trombone</i>	12 pipes
Great to Pedal Swell to Pedal		

## Zimbelstern

The specification of Op. 83 recalls 19th century Dutch and German organs with its substantial Great chorus, Cornet and Trumpet. The Swell contains the secondary chorus, quite comparable in strength to the Great, the Oboe and a variety of accompanimental voices. The Pedal, like those of most historic organ traditions, is small; its versatility is increased by permitting each stop to also play at its octave. All pipes speak on a wind pressure of 76 millimeters, which is supplied by a large, weighted, single-rise bellows. The instrument employs mechanical key action for the manuals, electric action for the Pedal, electric stop action and an eight-level memory combination action.

*A Festival Eucharist of Re-dedication and Dedication of the Organ* took place on September 17, 2006 with the Rev. Marilyn Witte, Cantor, at the organ. Martin Jean, of Yale Institute of Sacred Music, played the dedicatory recital in the afternoon. Additional recitals this season included a February 18 recital by Mark Mummert, former Cantor at the church, now at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, and an April 29 recital by Paul Jacobs of The Juilliard School of Music, New York.

# NEWSBITS

In the previous issue of this newsletter we misspelled the name of **Trudy Pitts**, the superb Philadelphia jazz organist who played Op. 76 in the groundbreaking September 15, 2006 concert that opened the Kimmel Center's "Mellon Jazz Series." We apologize for the error.

**Westminster Presbyterian Church**, Des Moines, Ia., has its 2006-07 "Fine Arts Series" underway. Included this season were two programs featuring Op. 14 (II/38; 1981): an ever popular annual Halloween program given last fall, featuring organists **Ruth Harris**, **Tom Harvey** and dramatist **Mark Gruber** and a solo recital by Ruth in February honoring the centenary of one of her former teachers, **Jean Langlais**, and celebrating her thirty years as organist at Westminster.

**Calvin Institute for Christian Worship**, based on the campus of Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Mich., presented its 20th annual "Symposium on Worship," January 25-27. **John Ferguson** of St. Olaf College served as conference organist playing Op. 44 (III/49; 1988).

**Presbyterian Homes**, Evanston, Ill., continues its 2006-07 "Gift of Music" series featuring recitals on Op. 64 (II/24; 1994): 1/22, **Christopher Urban**; 2/26, **Emanuel Schmelzer-Ziringer**; 3/26, **Paul Ayres**; 4/23, **Margaret Wilson**; 5/21, **David Christiansen**; 6/25, **James Russell Brown**.

**First Unitarian Church**, St. Louis, Mo., celebrated the 15th anniversary of Op. 52 (II/20; 1991) with a festival service on October 22, 2006. Current Director of Music and Organist, **Dennis Bergin**, was assisted by **Laurie Ryan**, organist at the time of Op. 52's installation. **Lynn Dobson** took part in the weekend's festivities.

**St. John Lutheran Church**, Storm Lake, Ia., last fall presented a "Festival of Praise" honoring organist **Suzanne Winterhof** for fifty years of music ministry. Former students, family members and organist **John Ourensma**, representing Dobson, performed a variety of music on the piano and Op. 55 (II/32; 1991).

**Trinity Lutheran Church**, Manhattan Beach, Calif., continues its 2006-07 concert series with many programs featuring Op. 56 (II/17; 1992). In March **Mark Sedio**, Central Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, Minn., led the series' annual hymn festival. First Friday of the month "Bach's Lunch" series continue to feature area organists: 1/5, **Mark Robson**; 4/6, **Russ Litchfield**; 5/4, **Charles Raasch**; 6/1, **James Taulbee**.

**Faith Lutheran Church**, Des Moines, Ia., continues its 2006-07 "Soli Deo Musica Fine Arts Series" which includes numerous events involving Op. 61 (II/34; 1993). Season highlights include a concert by the **American Boychoir**, **Fernando Malvar-Ruiz**, conductor, and a hymn festival led by **William Kuhlman**, Professor Emeritus of Organ at Luther College, Decorah, Ia.

**Pakachoag Church**, Auburn, Mass., celebrated the 10th anniversary of Op. 69 (II/31; 1997) with a Sunday afternoon recital series in March: 3/4, **Andrew Shenton**; 3/11, **Patricia Snyder** (former Pakachoag Church organist); 3/18, **Ian Watson**; 3/25, **Donald Meineke**.

**St. John United Methodist Church**, Augusta, Ga., completed its fourth of "Concerts with a Cause" series with two programs this spring: 2/18, Philadelphia organist **Peter Richard Conte** playing Op. 78 (III/42; 2003); 3/25, **The Manhattan Trio**, with **John Scott**, clarinet.

**The Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels**, Los Angeles, Calif., continues to host a variety of programs featuring Op. 75 (IV/105; 2003). In February **The Mark Thallander Foundation** presented *Rejoice! The Lord is King*, a choral/hymn festival featuring a choir of 900 adults and 300 children, under the direction of **Paul Salamunovich** and **Eric Dale Knapp**. **Frederick Swann** was festival organist and also presented a half-hour recital prior to the service. **Samuel Soria**, Cathedral Organist, and **Mark Thallander** each contributed an organ solo. Upcoming events this season include: 5/5, **Sal Soria** in recital; 6/24, a concert by **The Cathedral Choir**, **Frank Brownstead**, conductor. The Wednesday recital series continues with programs beginning immediately following the 12:10 p.m. Mass.

**Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts**, Philadelphia, Pa., has announced its 2007-08 "Organ Recital Series" featuring Op. 76 (IV/125; 2006): 9/20, **Todd Wilson**; 2/16, **Hector Olivera**; 4/12, **Dame Gillian Weir**. The inaugural year series recently concluded: 2/10, **Paul Jacobs**; 3/14, **Wayne Marshall** (including a lecture/demonstration for local high school students). Other Kimmel Center sponsored organ events this spring include: 4/10, 8:00 p.m., a taping of NPR's "From the Top" hosted by **Christopher O'Riley**; 5/5, 11:00 a.m., **Rodney Mack's Philadelphia Big Band** with **Alan Morrison**, organ, (to be repeated for a student audience on May 22); 5/5, 1:00 p.m., an "Organ Recital Marathon." The organ continues to be heard in "prelude" and "postlude" recitals in conjunction with Kimmel Center presentations. **Peter Richard Conte**, **Alan Morrison**, **Matthew Glandorf** and **Ken Cowan** each played 30 minute recitals following the Kimmel Center's prestigious "Visiting Orchestra Series." Eight more organists gave prelude recitals at **Widener University's** "Philadelphia Speaker Series." Held at the Kimmel Center, the popular series featured the likes of **James Lovell**, **Colin Powell** and **L. Paul Bremer**. In January an edition of "A Prairie Home Companion," hosted by **Garrison Keillor**, was broadcast from the Kimmel Center, featuring **Philip Brunelle** playing Op. 76. A new Summer 2007 organ recital series will be announced later this spring.

**Shepherd of the Bay Lutheran Church**, Ellison Bay, Wis., has announced several upcoming musical programs. Those involving Op. 79 (II/23; 2004) include: 4/18, **Naomi and Gordon Rowley**; 6/1, **Stephen Alltop**; 8/15, **Paul Jacobs**.

**Chapel of Our Lady of Good Counsel**, Mankato, Minn., hosted a Summer 2006 recital series presented by the **Sioux Trails Chapter of the AGO** featuring ten area organists. Organist **Timothy Frank** recently played his senior recital at the Chapel as part of the graduation requirements for nearby Bethany College, home of Op. 10 (II/24; 1979). The Chapel's historic Johnson and Son Op. 499 (III/53; 1877) underwent extensive restorative repairs by Dobson in 1995.

# THE ORGANBUILDER NEWSLETTER

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## LOOKING BACK

**20 Years ~ Op 34 (II/28)**, for St. Paul Lutheran Church, Postville, Ia., was built in late 1996 and installation commenced on January 12, 1997. The service of dedication took place on May 31 and a dedicatory recital was presented later that afternoon. John Ferguson of St. Olaf College was the service organist and recitalist as well as project consultant.

**Op. 35 (III/26)**, installed during the summer of 1987 at Indiana University, Bloomington, Ind., is one of the firm's most unique instruments. The all-mechanical instrument exhibits Italian influences on design, scaling, voicing and stop nomenclature. All mixture pitches are available separately; tuning is Kirnberger III. As the first substantial mechanical action organ on campus, Op. 35 has played a key role in the organ department's informed teaching and performance of early music.

**10 Years ~** There are a few examples in the Dobson Opus List where the order of opus numbers does not reflect the chronology of actual delivery and installation. Such is the case with our Op. 68 and Op. 69. Though the contract was signed first, Op. 68 was actually delivered at the end of 1997 and will be considered in the next issue of the newsletter.

**Op. 69 (II/31)**, for Pakachoag Church, Auburn, Mass., was nearly complete on the shop floor for a company open house on January 12, 1997. The design of the instrument grew out of a request from the church that their new organ would "enhance the

already superb variety of organs found in Worcester County and the surrounding area." The recently-built New England meetinghouse-style church building, though modest in size, has a generous acoustic. Inspired by historic English organs, Op. 69 organ features a striking four-tower case of cherry with a natural finish. The mechanical action instrument boasts a substantial two manual specification with the convenience of a modern electric stop and combination action. The organ was completed by March, 1997; the dedication service took place on March 4. Jeffrey Brillhart played the dedicatory recital on April 6.

**Way Back ~** Our archives include a postcard of the original building located at 200 North Illinois Street, Lake City. Dated August 30, 1908, the sender notes with pride that it is the "biggest building in town." After removal of the upper story, major renovations and subsequent additions, it has been home to the Dobson shop since 1979.

