

Westminster Presbyterian Church, Des Moines, Iowa, will conclude its "2008-09 Fine Arts Series" with a recital by resident organist, **Ruth Harris**, 5/17, 3:00 p.m. The program, featuring Op. 14 (II/29; 1981), is offered as part of the AGO International Year of the Organ.

St. Paul Lutheran Church, Neenah, Wis., hosted a program of the **Northeastern Wisconsin Chapter AGO**, 3/29. Several chapter members played Op. 32 (II/31; 1986) in an all-Bach program honoring the composer's birthday.

The Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd, Richmond, Va., presented two recitals on Op. 40 (II/17; 1988): 2/15, **Allen Bean**, St. Bridget's Catholic Church, Richmond; 3/20, **Crystal Jonkman**, St. Michael's Episcopal Church, Bon Air.

Calvin Institute for Christian Worship, based on the campus of Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Mich., presented its 22nd annual "Symposium on Worship," January 29-31. Organists **Robert Hobby**, Fort Wayne, Ind., and **Martin Tel**, Princeton, N.J., offered workshops and played services on Op. 44 (III/49; 1989), located in the College Chapel. In the same venue the **2009 Grand Rapids Bach Festival** sponsored an all-Bach organ recital (4/20, 8:00 p.m.) and masterclass (4/21, 4-6 p.m.) by Japanese organist and Bach specialist, **Masaaki Suzuki**.

Trinity Lutheran Church, Manhattan Beach, Calif., continues its 2008-09 concert series featuring programs on Op. 56 (II/17; 1992); 2/8, **David Chervien**, leading a hymn festival; 4/3, **Russ Litchfield**, Whittier; 5/1, **James Taulbee**, West LA.

First United Methodist Church, Mesa, Ariz., will be one of the venues for the **AGO Region IX Convention**, June 22-25, 2009. Playing Op. 60 (III/49; 1993) in a morning recital on 6/24 will be **Linda S. Margetts**, one of the staff organists at the Mormon Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Utah. A "Pedals, Pipes and Pizza" event is scheduled later in the morning with FUMC resident organist, **Bonnie Loney** and **Mark Ramsey**, organist of First Presbyterian Church, Mesa.

Presbyterian Homes, Evanston, Ill., continues its 2008-09 "Gift of Music" series featuring recitals on Op. 64 (II/24; 1994). The 1:30 p.m. Monday concerts this winter and spring include: 1/26, **David Pickering**, Graceland University, Lamoni, Iowa; 2/23, **Timothy Olsen**, Oklahoma City University, Oklahoma City, Okla.; 3/30, **David Lornson**, First Congregational, Evanston; 4/27, **David Lamb**, First United Methodist Church, Columbus, Ind.; 5/18, **Paul Vander Weele**, Northminster Presbyterian, Evanston; 6/15, **Christine Kraemer**, Trinity United Methodist Church, Wilmette.

Wartburg College, Waverly, Iowa, home to Op. 67 (II/32; 1996), presented **Karen Black**, College Organist and chair of the music department, in recital on 3/26.

The Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels, Los Angeles, Calif., home to Op. 75 (IV/105; 2003), hosted a 3/7 performance of Benjamin Britten's "Noye's Fludde" by the **Los Angeles Opera** with Cathedral Organist, **Samuel Soria**, at the organ.

The Cathedral's popular Wednesday noon recital series features programs by a variety of organists including the 3/25 recital by thirteen-year-old **Karen Christianson** of Philadelphia, a student of **Alan Morrison**. Sal Soria's annual organ recital on 5/16, 7:30 p.m., will include the complete *Symphony No. 6, Op. 59*, by Louis Vierne.

The Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts, Philadelphia, Pa., home to the Fred J. Cooper Memorial Organ, Op. 76 (IV/125; 2006), continues its 2008-09 "Master Musicians Organ Recital Series" with two programs: 3/7, **Jane Parker-Smith**; 5/2, **James David Christie**. Kimmel Center has announced its "2009 Teen Summer Arts Camp," July 13-24, which will provide private organ study and performing opportunities on Op. 76 for teens. The annual "Summer Organ Recital Series" is scheduled for July 9, 16, 23, 30. Guest artists will be announced soon.

St. John United Methodist Church, Augusta, Ga., continues its 2008-09 "Concert With A Cause" series with two programs involving Op. 78 (III/42; 2003): 1/11, **W. David Lynch**, Organist and Professor of Music, Meredith College, Organist-Choirmaster, Christ Church Episcopal, Raleigh, N.C.; 2/8, **The Atlanta Sacred Chorale**, **Eric Nelson**, conductor, **Deborah Thoreson**, piano, **Sue Mitchell-Wallace**, organ.

Shepherd of the Bay Lutheran Church, Ellison Bay, Wis., has announced two summer recitals on Op. 79 (II/23; 2004): 6/16, **Gary Beard**, Lynwood Christian Church, Memphis, Tenn., with **Ryan Anthony**, Principal Trumpet of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra; 7/16, **Daniel Sullivan**, The Juilliard School, New York.

The Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, Lancaster, Pa., concludes its "2008-09 Fine Arts Series" with a 5/3 recital on Op. 83 (II/27; 2006) by the **Rev. Marilyn Witte**, Cantor.

Westminster Presbyterian Church, Minneapolis, Minn., continues celebrating the completion of Op. 86 (II/24; 2008) with the "Chapel Organ Inaugural Concert Series": 2/1, *Celebrating the Organ With Our Youth*, **John Ourensma**, guest organist and director, with WPC's children's and youth choirs; 3/15, *Celebrating the Organ in Community Collaboration*, **The Gregorian Singers**, **Monte Mason**, founder and director, performing Carissimi's oratorio, *Jonas*; 4/5, *Celebrating the Organ As Leader of Congregational Singing*, **David Chervien** leading a hymn festival for Palm Sunday; 5/17, *Celebrating the Organ As An Ensemble Instrument*, **Melanie Ohnstad**, WPC Organist and Minister of Music and the Arts, in a recital for organ and a variety of instruments. On 2/21, WPC hosted the **Twin Cities Chapter AGO's** annual "Pipe Organ Discovery Day," featuring Op. 86 as well as the Dobson-built demonstration organ (I/2; 2004).

Dobson Pipe Organ Builders was featured in the March/April 2009 issue of *The Iowan* magazine. Additional information and pictures are available online at www.iowan.com.

Randall Dana, the Dobson employee profiled in the last issue of *The Organbuilder*, recently presented an exhibition of his architectural sculptures at the **Blanden Memorial Art Museum**, Fort Dodge, Iowa.

THE ORGANBUILDER

NEWSLETTER

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LOOKING BACK

20 Years - Op. 44 (III/49), for the new chapel at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Mich., was installed in May. Ten weeks later John Ferguson, St. Olaf College, first played the instrument for the Hymn Society of America's National Conference held at the college that summer. Twenty years later Ferg likely holds the record for the most hymn festivals (eight) led from Op. 44. Lynn Dobson addressed that same HSA conference with a lecture on "Architecture, Organbuilding and Hymn Singing." Dedication events took place on October 29 and included a recital by College Organist, John Hamersma, followed by a service of Evening Prayer. Subsequent events included recitals by Joan Lippincott, Westminster Choir College, and Joan Ringerwole, Dordt College. It was the largest organ built by Dobson up to that time and was the first of the firm's instruments to have two enclosed divisions as well as the first to include a large scale 16' wood Open Diapason in the pedal.

Op. 45 (II/14), for the chapel of First Congregational Church, Battle Creek, Mich., was installed in June, immediately following the installation of Op. 44 in nearby Grand Rapids. Larry Smith, Indiana University, played two identical inaugural recitals on October 8 and 9. A Festival Concert involving the organ, choir and orchestra took place on October 15. Arnold Sten, Director of Music, was the organist, along with conductors John Ourensma (choral) and Philip Bauman (orchestral). The organ's elegant multi-colored painted case houses a central Swell division with the Great at the same level but

divided on either side. The Pedal 16' Bourdon stands behind and on the sides of the case. The project was part of a complete chapel renovation and redecorating.

10 Years - Op. 71 (III/58), for West Market Street United Methodist Church, Greensboro, N.C., was installed beginning in late April. The dedication recital was performed by resident organist then and now, Susan Bates, on October 17. The generosity of a church member made it possible for a record number of Dobson employees to attend the weekend events. A collaboration between Dobson and Rosales Organ Builders of Los Angeles, Op. 71 was Dobson's largest mechanical action organ up to that time. The specifications include fully developed Great and Swell divisions, a small but effective Solo division and two full-length 32' registers in the Pedal. With its richly detailed woodwork, the organ's case ranks as one of the most ornate on the Dobson opus list. The church has recently announced a recital series celebrating Op. 71's 10th anniversary: 4/19, 7:00 p.m., Susan Bates; 5/9, 7:00 p.m., Joseph Roenbeck, student at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts; 6/10, 7:30 p.m., Edie Johnson, St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Indianapolis; 10/18, 4:00 p.m., David Arcus, Chapel Organist, Duke University.

In addition to complete organ specifications, pictures of all Dobson instruments are included on the "Instruments" page of our website. We invite you to learn more about the particular organs listed in this column by visiting www.dobsonorgan.com.

Quite often, it seems, something happens that reminds me of how long we've had our business in Lake City - 35 years this fall! For example, a few weeks ago I received a bitter-sweet phone call from the family that donated our Opus 1 to their church, Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Sioux City, Iowa. They were calling to tell me that the church has closed its doors and that the organ needs a new home. I built Op. 1 (II/15) by myself in 1971/72, right after graduating from college. It was installed in the summer and fall of 1974 as I first hung out my shingle.

Op. 1 was built in a shed on my father's farm southeast of Lake City using mostly hand tools and with a lot of support and encouragement from my family. While not of the level of artistry that our newer instruments display, at the time it represented my very best efforts. A flood of good memories come to mind as I remember building Op. 1 and I wonder what will happen to it now. I recall being uneasy about selling the organ to a church since it was a "homemade organ," the product of an amateur organbuilder. However, I did sell it and am happy to say that it served this small church trouble-free for 35 years. It certainly was far better sounding than their old amplified Wurlitzer reed organ.

In addition to being my first organ building effort and a somewhat surprising sale, Op. 1 provided me with an unexpected and exciting opportunity. My early teacher and mentor, Antony Garlick, played the first service on Op. 1 in September 1974. He was so impressed with it that he commissioned my Op. 2 (II/12) for his studio. With that I moved back from Minnesota where I was working at the time and opened my own shop in November 1974. Soon after this I was fortunate enough to win the contract for Op. 4 (II/33; 1976), a new organ at Olivet Congregational Church, St. Paul, Minnesota. I'm grateful that there has been a steady stream of work ever since.

In mid-February we had a shop retirement party for Lyndon Evans. Lyndon was our lead cabinet-maker for 21 years and has been at the center of case construction for forty-six instruments! On many of those projects he devised creative ways to build particular details of the organ case that I had envisioned in my mind and drawn on paper. He enjoyed these new challenges and steadily made significant contributions to the fine casework for which we've become known. We will truly miss Lyndon's presence in the shop but wish him well as he spends more time at home and pursues various interests.

On March 8 John Panning and I gave a presentation on the design and building of Op. 87 for Highland Park United Methodist Church, Dallas. As part of the church's "Tower Fine Arts Series," our portion of the program was followed by a reception during which we heard a carillon concert by John Acker and concluded with a duo-piano concert by Bradley Welch and Chris Brunt. The church has just announced that the reconsecration of the sanctuary and dedication of the organ will take place at all three Sunday morning services on November 8. At 6:00 p.m. that evening, the church will host Ken Cowan, Chair of the Organ Department at



Westminster Choir College. On November 22, 6:00 p.m., Bradley Welch, HPUMC Artist-in-Residence, will play a recital. Additional programs include: 12/6, Christmas Concert, with a commissioned *Fanfare for Organ and Orchestra* by John Gibson, Vaughan Williams' *Hodie*, and another commission for carillon, organ, chorus, and orchestra by Barlow Bradford; 1/31/10, Concerto Concert featuring *Festival Procession*, Strauss, *Coronation Te Deum*, Walton, the Finale from *Symphony No. 3*, Saint-Saëns, *Concerto for Organ, Strings and Harp*, Hanson, and *Symphonie Concertante*, Jongen. Organists will be Bradley Welch and Chris Brunt with members of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, and David R. Davidson, conductor. It is an ambitious series of events and makes me eager to hear the completed instrument.

In late March we sent a crew to Columbus, Indiana, to move our Opus 54 (II/16; 1991) from the old St. Paul Lutheran Church to the congregation's new building. This is the eighth organ that we have built for a church or school that has decided to move their instrument to a new site. In many of these situations we have consulted with the congregation's building committee and architect to help ensure that the new worship space provides favorable placement and acoustics for the organ. It is a source of pride for me that these clients appreciated our work and trusted us enough to invite us to be involved in the design of their new churches.

Meanwhile the shop is getting started on Op. 88 for St. Andrews Lutheran Church, Park Ridge, Illinois. The drafting department is busy with construction drawings for Op. 89 for the University of Tampa and design work continues for the project at St. Thomas Church in New York. We are also planning restoration work on several interesting instruments: a 1896 Kimball (II/27), Union Sunday School, Clermont, Iowa, a 1938 Skinner, Op. 516 (II/5), Lakewood Cemetery Chapel, Minneapolis, and a 1913 Wangerin-Weickhardt (II/9), United Methodist Church, Corning, Iowa.

Despite the dismal economic situation we are fortunate to have a good mix of new projects and service work on the schedule. Inquiries continue to come in and we are working on several proposals for new instruments. I'm very thankful for the company's relatively good situation.



Lifelong influences came at an early age. The first organ in their parish church was built around 1665; the current instrument by Van Dam dates from 1868. The vigorous Romantic tone of this organ and the strong singing of Genevan Psalms and hymns made a powerful impression on young Jan.

When John was in first grade, his parents moved to the United States, first living near relatives in Blairstown and then Sussex, N.J. Four years later, his father bought a meat processing business in Ferrisburg, Vt. It was a family affair, with John helping after school; as a result, he has a thorough knowledge of bovine musculature. He started organ lessons in junior high; local AGO programs exposed him to several famous recitalists. In 1970 he participated in a trip to Montréal, visiting many prominent organs as well as the Casavant factory.

In 1972, John enrolled at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, studying organ with John Hamersma and singing under Howard Slenk. A choir tour to England included services sung at Westminster Abbey, Ely, Chichester and Coventry. A highlight was the presence of David Willcocks and Herbert Howells at a rehearsal in St Margaret's, Westminster; he recalls that singing the Collegium Regale canticles for their composer was a remarkable experience. He graduated in 1976 and enrolled that fall at Northwestern University, where he obtained a Master of Music degree, studying with Wolfgang Rübsam and Richard Enright.

Armed with his degrees, John served a succession of Presbyterian churches. From 1977 to 1980, he was Director of Music at Rivermont Presbyterian Church in Lynchburg, Virginia, and also Lecturer in Organ at Lynchburg College. From 1980 to 1986, he was Organist/Choirmaster at Collingwood Presbyterian Church in Toledo, Ohio. In 1986 he became Minister of Music at First Presbyterian Church in Battle Creek, Michigan; from 1991 to 1999 he was also organist for the Battle Creek Symphony Orchestra.

After 13 years in Michigan and 22 in church music, a certain restlessness crept in. New clergy in Battle Creek brought a different direction in worship, and John considered his options. Organ building always interested him, and he has served several churches as an organ consultant. It was in this role that he came to know our company. Arnold Sten, Director of Music at the First Congregational Church in Battle Creek, asked John for advice as he investigated an organ for their chapel. That search led to Dobson, with 1989's Op. 45 being the result. In 1996, we rebuilt the organ John played at First

We are a nation of immigrants, but for most of us, our family's travel to this country occurred in the distant past. Not so for Dobson voicer and pipemaker John Ourensma. Born Jan Wytze Ourensma in the city of Harlingen, Province of Friesland, the Netherlands, Jan lived with his parents in Oosterbierum, on the Waddenzee, where his father owned a butcher shop. He was baptized in the local Reformed church, which had been built in the 16th century as a Roman Catholic parish church dedicated to St. Joris.

Presbyterian. So it was logical that he contact us, and we were delighted to welcome him to the shop.

John's real-world church music experience gives him a perspective that many of us envy, one that is invaluable in voicing and tonal design. His finely-tuned ear not only precisely dissects musical sounds but also delights in quirks of language and pronunciation. His warm familiarity with many in the organ world makes it natural that he handles inquiries from prospective clients and represents the company at conventions. Making music is still a vital part of his life: he is the organist at the Lake City Union Church (home of Op. 13), sings in a local men's quartet, and presents recitals, including programs on our instruments in Augusta, Ga., Lancaster, Pa., and Minneapolis, Minn.

In 1983, John married Laurel Baker, a fellow Calvin student who was born of missionary parents in Nigeria. Their 16-year-old son Nico enjoys football and golf, and has played trombone in our state champion jazz band since he was in 6th grade. Shortly after John moved to Lake City, his parents Bruce (Bote) and Frances (Froukje) followed, establishing themselves here with the same aplomb that carried them to the new world almost four decades earlier. Sadly, Frances passed away in 2007 at the age of 87, but Bruce continues the very Dutch habit of riding his bike around town, enjoys coffee with his friends, and follows Nico's school achievements.

As an employer, one always hopes to have coworkers who are so good they could get jobs anywhere but choose to stay. We wouldn't have been surprised if John returned to church music, given his talents, but it would certainly be our loss. Now in his tenth year in Lake City, we continue to enjoy his thoughtful insights, sensitive musicianship, and rollicking sense of humor.



JO in the Netherlands at the tiller of a restored 1911 Frisian skútsje

The installation of Op. 87 (IV/95) for Highland Park United Methodist Church, Dallas, continued with the February 16 arrival of the main organ. The picture at right was taken on March 18, soon after the massive scaffolding that had enveloped the entire façade was taken down. The chamade trumpet had not yet been installed and several façade pipes were left out to allow easier installation of interior pipework. Pictured below are musicians Bradley Welch, Organist and Artist-in-Residence, Chris Brunt, Organist/Music Associate, David Davidson, Director of Music and the Arts.

Photos by Lynn Dobson and John Brown



Bradley, Chris and David



Op. 87 (IV/95) Highland Park United Methodist Church



Lowest 16 notes of the 32' Open Diapason



Hoisting 32' C of the Open Diapason



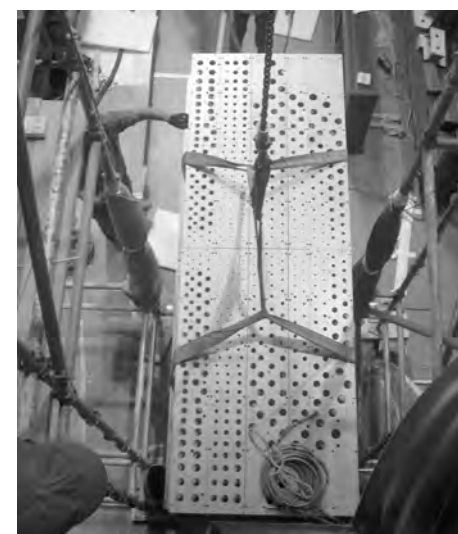
Lifting sequence 3- lowering to chest supports



Lifting sequence 2- on its way up



The crew prepares to hoist 32' C of the Open Diapason



Lifting sequence 1- windchest in its slings



Front tower, left case



Hoisting front façade post, right case



Hoisting tower top, left case



Completed rear tower, left case



Gallery Organ as seen from top of scaffolding



Hoisting façade post, left case



The console on its transport dollies



Moving the console into the building



Organ parts await installation



Fellowship Hall converted to storage area



Wiring in the Gallery Organ