

Hilbus Chapter

The Organ Historical Society, Inc.

Where the Tracker Action Is!

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Saturday, April 26, 2008

[THANKS TO TOM COWAN OF THE DC CHAPTER OF AGO FOR ARRANGING THIS DAY!]

A Day in the District

This month, we're joining the DC Chapter of the American Guild of Organists for a joint crawl. Just as last month, let's hope for good weather; this will be a walking tour of three organs near Dupont Circle in DC. It is suggested that we park once at the first church and then walk. The crawl will end at 1:00 pm with an optional lunch to be announced.

10:00 AM

First Baptist Church

1328 16th Street NW

Washington, DC 20036

2 manual Möller/Skinner; Lon Schreiber, host organist

Directions:

Parking is available in the church lot at 16th and O Streets NW; south on 16th (divided at this point) then right on O Street, or approach from 17th street, one way headed south.

Metro:

Take the Red Line to Dupont Circle. Walk 2 blocks SE down Massachusetts Avenue; turn N on 17th Street – the church parking lot is on the right.

[crawl information continued next page]

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Articles and news may be submitted to the Editor electronically: music.director@gracealex.org

Dues due in October: \$14, mailed to Secretary-Treasurer (Checks payable to Hilbus Chapter, OHS)

11:00 AM

Grace Reformed Church

1405 15th Street NW
Washington, DC 20005

M.P. Möller Opus 6018, 1931
2 manuals, 16 ranks

12 NOON

Ascension & St. Agnes (Episcopal)

1217 Massachusetts Avenue
Washington, DC 20005

Orgues Létourneau, Opus 68, 2000
3-manuals, 55 ranks; Haig Mardirosian, host organist



MARCH 2008 - A DAY IN OLD TOWN ALEXANDRIA

– *Review by Carl Schwartz*

Three venerable historic churches in Old Town Alexandria provided the venue for our March crawl. We began our day at the Old Presbyterian Meeting House, originally built in the mid-18th century, which houses two organs. Our host, Sam Baker, graciously demonstrated each in turn.



**Old Presbyterian Meeting House - Erben
Host Sam Baker**

The 1849 Henry Erben organ, original to this building, is well known to our membership. Recently it was relocated to the original position behind the pulpit at the front of the hall. It is housed in a plain Neo-classical case with gilded pipes in a 3-7-3-7-3 arrangement. The later Pedal Bourdon addition and pedal clavier have been removed. At some point the hitch down Swell was altered and there is a balanced Swell pedal at the right of the [now removed] pedalboard. It's not clear that the Swell enclosure has a top or is thoroughly sealed any longer; the effect of the Swell is minimal.

The tone of the organ is quintessentially Erben: a soft, round, singing tone with gentle upperwork. The 4' flute is perky and bright. The Trumpet received new shallots and tongues when Newcomer rebuilt the organ years ago and for this the pipes were sent to M. P. Möller.. The admirable qualities of the instrument are apparent: it is a pleasure to play and has a seductive quality for both the player and listener in that it is so very musical and pleasing to hear. One has to bring oneself to a "quiet place and time" to absorb the subtle tones of Erben's organs. It is a spiritual experience.

[Review continued next page]

Henry Erben, 1849

Manual 56 notes C-g; Mechanical Action

8' Open Diapason Bass 12 pipes
 8' Open Diapason Treble TC 44 pipes
 8' Stopped Diapason Bass 12 pipes
 8' Stopped Diapason Treble TC 44 pipes
 8' Dulciana Treble TC 44 pipes
 4' Principal 56 pipes
 4' Flute TC 44 pipes
 2' Piccolo [sic] 56 pipes
 8' Trumpet TF 39 pipes

1849
 Erben
 keydesk



The most recent addition [1997] to the church is a grand 2 manual and pedal Lively-Fulcher mechanical action instrument housed in a handsome 18th century-style case in the rear gallery. This is built in that firm's eclectic "English" tonal style; that corresponds broadly to the Anglo-American style of the late 18th and early- to mid-19th century rather than the late Victorian or Edwardian English organ. One is immediately struck by the gentle but full tone of the organ. Upon hearing the sound it is apparent (without reference to the stoplist) that the Principal choruses have high lead content, a good choice in this intimate and acoustically unresponsive room. The flutes are varied and charming. The Swell strings are gentle and warm.

Mutation stops abound. The reeds are good low-pressure type reeds, perhaps the least engaging aspect of the organ to this writer, but in no way unsatisfactory in their tone or ensemble effect. The splendid Great Harmonic Flute is a desirable concession to the French repertoire. The stop action is electric and is provided with a state of the art combination action. The organ is played from a low-profile Cavallé-Coll style terraced keydesk, comfortable and conveniently appointed with all the conveniences one could want for recital or service playing.

Lively-Fulcher, 1997

GREAT

16' Bourdon (TC)
 8' Open Diapason
 8' Stopt Diapason
 8' Harmonic Flute (TC)
 4' Principal
 4' Open Flute
 2 2/3' Twelfth
 2' Fifteenth
 2 2/3' Cornet III
 1 1/3' Furniture IV
 8' Trumpet
Swell to Great
Tremulant

SWELL (*expressive*)

8' Diapason
 8' Chimney Flute
 8' Salicional
 8' Voix Celeste (TG)
 4' Principal
 4' Tapered Flute
 2' Flageolet
 2 2/3' Sesquialtera II
 1 1/3' Larigot
 1' Mixture III
 16' Bassoon
 8' Hautboy
Tremulant

PEDAL

32' Contra Bourdon (digital)
 16' Open Diapason (wood)
 16' Subbass (wood)
 8' Principal
 8' Bass Flute (ext.)
 4' Fifteenth (ext.)
 4' Fifteenth (ext.)
 16' Trombone
 8' Trumpet (ext.)
Great to Pedal
Swell to Pedal

Mechanical key action

Electrical stop action
8 level combination action



Lively-Fulcher keydesk



Old Presbyterian Meeting House
 Lively-Flucher



Christ Church

Our crawl took us next to Christ Church (Episcopal), another 18th century building once home to an organ built by Jacob Hilbus [the organ pictured on the masthead of this newsletter]. Later instruments included organs by E. and G. G. Hook and Hilgreen-Lane. Like Old Presbyterian Meeting house this colonial building is noted for dry and not particularly resonant acoustics. The present organ is Austin Organ Inc. Opus 2579 of 1975. It was installed during the tenure of member Ted Gustin as Organist-Choirmaster at the church. The present musician, Jason Abel kindly took time from his busy schedule to demonstrate the organ for us and shared some of his thoughts and desires for future changes to the organ.

This small three-manual organ was built at the zenith of the neo-baroque revival which tendency is apparent in the tonal design and original voicing, now somewhat altered. The principal voicer for this organ was the late Zoltan Zsitvay who worked under the direction of David Broome and Richard Piper. Zoli was once a member of the Hungarian Olympic Team and escaped that country as a refugee in 1956. He was employed by Austin until he retired in 1993, voicing and tonally finishing many distinguished organs. This one was designed to Ted's requirements and Haig Mardirosian was the consultant for the church. The installation posed challenges for placing an organ of any size in the historic building as well as considerable difficulty during installation with regards to aspects of protecting the historic fabric of the building. The space available was strictly defined by the architecture of the room and no windows were blocked. The Swell and Choir are nestled in the corners of the Gallery with the Great in simple cases on either side of the passage door at the center rear of the three-sided gallery.

The style of the organ is strongly neo-classical with the Great based on an 8' Principal, the Choir on 4' and the Swell on 2' with a high pitched Plein Jeu (22-26-29). The Octavin is actually a Principal. The Viole and Voix Celeste of the Swell are "signature" Austin strings complimented by the floating tones of the Flauto Dolce and Flute Celeste of the Choir division. The Fagotto of the Swell was envisioned as a 16' reed first of all and then extended to 8' pitch. Here a Trompette stop is located in the Choir under expression and can be coupled to the Great as may be desired. Over the past 33 years the organ has been played and praised by many recitalists and visiting organists. It has proven itself to be a versatile and effective musical instrument in the opinion of many who have had the opportunity to play it.



Christ Church - 1975 Austin

Recently the console has been provided with a solid-state multi-level combination action. A Peterson electronic 32' Reed has been added along with some extra drawknobs in the stop jambs. Further, the original Choir Gedeckt 8', which was voiced along the lines of a Nason Flute, has been replaced with a 1926 Pilcher Stopped Diapason. This rank came from an instrument which served the old Woodside United Methodist Church and then Francis Asbury United Methodist Church in Rockville, MD. The Cromorne has given way for a plump Möller Clarinet. These changes were directed by Ted Gustin. All this reflects changing tastes certainly and the problematic acoustic of the room which simply does not enhance any type of organ sound - the instrument is on its own. Lewis and Hitchcock has carried out the recent work to the instrument.

[Review continued next page]

Austin Organs, Inc. Opus 2579, 1975

3 Manuals and Pedal - Electropneumatic Action

Compass 61/32 - standard inter-divisional and intra-divisional couplers

GREAT

- 8' Principal
- 8' Gedeckt CH
- 8' Flauto Dolce CH
- 4' Octave
- 2' Super Octave
- Fourniture II-IV
- Chimes

CHOIR

- 8' Gedeckt
- 8' Flauto Dolce
- 8' Flute Celeste
- 4' Principal
- 2' Blockflute
- 1 1/3' Larigot
- 8' Clarinet
- 8' Trompette
- Tremulant (valve)

SWELL

- 8' Rohrflute
- 8' Viole
- 8' Voix Celeste
- 4' Spitzflute
- 2' Octavin
- Sesquialtera II
- Plein Jeu III
- 16' Fagotto
- 8' Fagotto (ext.)
- Tremulant (valve)

PEDAL

- 32' Resultant
- 16' Soubasse
- 16' Bordun (ext. SW)
- 8' Montre
- 8' Rohrflute SW
- 4' Choralbass (ext.)
- Mixture III
- 32' Bombarde (Peterson electronic)
- 16' Trompette (ext. CH)
- 16' Fagotto SW
- 4' Clarinet CH



Christ Church console



Plaque in memory of R. E. Lee at Christ Church

Following lunch in Old Town Alexandria the last stop of the day was at St. Paul's Episcopal Church with its 1968 Casavant Organ designed by Larry Phelps. The architect of St. Paul's was Benjamin Latrobe and the Church was built in 1817. The acoustic is more favorable than the other church buildings visited this day. Here is another neo-classic instrument, one with a bold and angular tonal perspective. The individual voices stand out in relief and the ensemble is gripping in its intensity.

Many comments are made in organ circles about the work of Larry Phelps. This is one of his instruments that acquits itself especially well, and in the expected tonal style. It does get the music out which is the point of organ design.

It has the now ubiquitous Walker Technical 32' digital stop which is so desired by many organists. This old fogey still fails to see the point.



1968 Casavant - St. Paul's Episcopal Church

I was unable to visit the organ on the day of the crawl but have heard this instrument previously, most recently in a fine recital by our Membership Coordinator and past-Chair Carolyn Booth. Her well chosen program explored the good variety of stops found in this organ which works well for a wide range of the literature in spite of the severe Germanic nomenclature. It responded well to her musically sensitive playing. This is the mark of a successful instrument.

[Review continued next page]

Hilbus member Douglas Beck, the Music Director and Organist of the church, generously rushed back from a trip to host our group and demonstrate the organ for us.

Casavant Freres Ltd. Opus 2972 (1968)

tonal design by Larry Phelps

40 ranks, C – g''' compass (56 notes)

GREAT	SWELL (Enclosed)	PEDAL	General Pistons 1-4 thumb and toe
16' Quintation	8' Salizional	Untersatz 32' (Walker, 2005)	Great Pistons 1-4 thumb and toe
8' Prinzipal	8' Schwebung	Prinzipal 16'	Swell Pistons 1-4 thumb and toe
8' Bordun	8' Gedackt	Subbass 16'	Pedal Pistons 1-4 toe
4' Oktav	4' Prinzipal	Oktav 8'	
4' Rohr Flöte	4' Wald Flöte	Gedackt 8'	Great-Pedal reversible thumb and toe
2' Oktav	2' Oktav	Choral Bass 4'	Swell-Pedal reversible thumb and toe
2' Block Flöte	1 1/3' Quint Flöte	Rohr Pfeife 4'	Sforzando toe
Sesquialtera II	Scharff IV	Nachthorn 2'	Crescendo Pedal
Mixtur IV	16' Dulzian	Mixtur III	Memory Levels 1-32
8' Trompete	8' Oboe	Posaune 16'	
<i>Swell-Great</i>	<i>Tremolo</i>	Trompete 8'	
		Schalmei 4'	
		<i>Great-Pedal</i>	
		<i>Swell-Pedal</i>	

Thanks to Ted Gustin for arranging this Crawl.



Casavant console

The May crawl on Saturday, May 31st will include our Annual Meeting with election of officers. The slate is as follows:

- Kevin Clemens — *President*
- Tom Scheck — *Vice President*
- Barb Birkner — *Secretary-Treasurer*

We express thanks to Bob Hobbs, Wayne Selleck and John Becker for being on the nominating committee.



CONCERTS AND EVENTS TO NOTE:

- Saturday, April 19*
Potomac Chapter AGO Organ Crawl
- Sunday, April 20 at 5:00 pm*
David Hurd recital at National Cathedral
- Sunday, May 4 at 5:00 pm*
Naji Hakim recital at National Cathedral

ORGAN AND ORCHESTRA CONCERT:

Sunday, May 4 at 7:00 pm, the Choral Society of Grace Episcopal Church, 3601 Russell Road in Alexandria, VA will present two choral works by G. F. Handel: “Utrecht Jubilate” and the coronation anthem “Let thy hand be strengthened”. Also featured on the program will be two of Handel’s organ concerti featuring organist Thom Robertson with chamber orchestra. The concert is free and open to the public.

2011 Convention update: Your committee has chosen June 27-July 1 for the dates of the Convention to be held in DC. Tentatively, the hotel chosen will be the Holiday Inn in Crystal City, with easy access to Metro.

Dates to remember:

April Crawl - Saturday, April 26th

May Crawl - Saturday, May 31st

Deadline for May Newsletter:

Tuesday, May 20th