

THE NEW ORGANIST THE ORGAN AT BIBLE SCHOOL

Nancy Hostetler Watson

As director of music at Sharon Community Presbyterian Church in Moon Township (a suburb of Pittsburgh, Pa.), I teach bible school each summer for one week in June. This past year, our mission was to support the organ fund, since we are undertaking extensive repairs and the upgrading of our pipe organ. My mission was to make the organ exciting to the 80 children, ages four through twelve, who attended the bible school.

The children were grouped by ages for 20-minute music classes each day and the lessons were adjusted to accommodate the age level. On Monday, I greeted them with an assortment of bottles, which I blew into to produce beautiful fluty tones. With the older children we discussed and demonstrated that a low pitch comes from a large bottle and a high pitch from a small one. We talked about what causes that sound—wind and the vibration of the column of air. I then showed them flue pipes, both metal and wood, demonstrated their sounds, and told them about how the pipes sit on a box—the chest—and receive wind from the blower.

On Tuesday, I greeted each group with the sound that a wide blade of grass makes when blown while held between the thumbs. The cause of that sound, of course, is wind and the vibration of the reed. A reed pipe was then blown and examined by removing the boot and observing the metal reed. We also discussed the various parts of pipes and played a game. They guessed the names of the parts of the pipes after I asked leading questions about their faces: What opening in your face do you speak from? (mouth); What is above your mouth? (upper lip); What is below your mouth? (lower lip); What protrudes from the side of your face? (ear). Then we found those parts on the pipes.

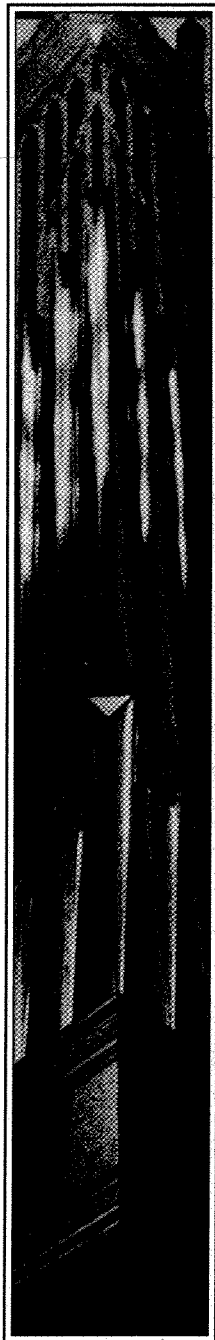
On Wednesday, I showed them the demonstration video distributed by the AGO that previews the 100th anniversary video. One little girl was so excited because she had visited the Paramount Theatre in Oakland, Calif., with her grandmother. That organ is shown and played in the video.

Thursday was the last day of regular classes for music, so I had the children meet with me in the organ loft. On our way to the loft, we stopped to examine a display in the narthex that illustrated our new three-manual console (which was due to arrive in March 1996). We discussed how the new console will be different from the old one, how the console is not the organ but merely the controller, just as a keyboard controls a computer, and we identified the parts of the console.

In the loft, we listened to flue pipes and reed pipes, reviewing what causes their sounds. I played the softest sound on the organ and told them that that is what I play on Sundays as they take their seats after chil-

dren's time. Then I demonstrated the sforzando to show them how loud the organ can be (they held their ears). I played the Bach *Toccata in D Minor* and one little boy asked if that was a Disney song. (They were all amazed when I told them that Bach lived 300 years ago.) I then allowed them to play the organ under my supervision and we sang some of the songs sung all week, only this time with organ accompaniment.

Nancy Hostetler Watson has been the director of music at Sharon Community Presbyterian Church in Moon Township, Pa., and an adjunct professor in the Sacred Music Department at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh.



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Funding for this event made possible by Mitchellcraft's