

TWO-MANUAL ORGANS IN LITURGICAL SETTINGS

BY DAVID C. PIKE

AS 21ST-CENTURY ORGANBUILDERS, we face the question of how to maintain our work as desirable, central, and perhaps imperative to our greatest patron—the Church. At the Fisk workshop, organbuilding is firmly rooted in proven building practices of the past, even as we strive to create instruments that will ensure the pipe organ's continued role as a vital and relevant part of modern-day Christian worship. Our belief is that sensitive contextual visual design, deftly conceived mechanical key action, and attentive, historically informed voicing will best serve the requirements of sacred music and its role in liturgy and worship.

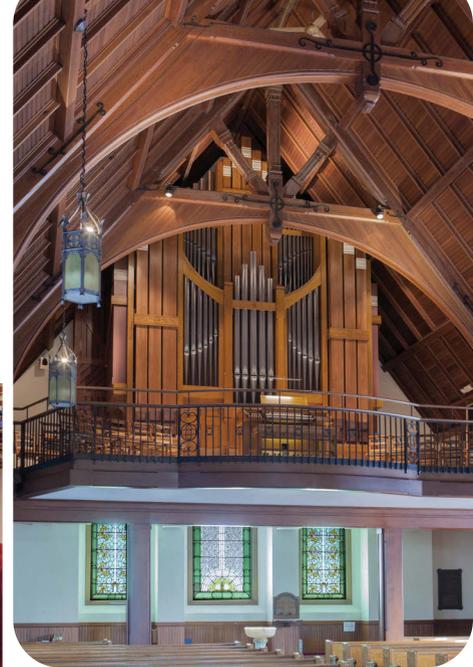
While our larger commissions may be better known, the Fisk opus list includes numerous two-manual organs in liturgical spaces. In many ways, these instruments present the greater test of the organbuilder's ingenuity and creativity—but any builder worth his salt lives for such opportunities. The settings are diverse and the challenges numerous. Yet, two-manual organs of modest specification, if well executed and smartly integrated into their surroundings, can be both versatile and transformative.

Throughout the course of any project, we recognize the primary importance of listening:

- Listening to the desires and expectations of the musicians, clergy, and congregation;
- Listening to what the space offers acoustically and in music-making potential;
- Listening to and incorporating relevant historical tonal antecedents.

A foundation of thoughtful listening, coupled with detailed study of the distinct architectural qualities of the church, supports our common goal of creating a liturgical setting to meet the musical and worship requirements set out before us.

The three organ projects that follow answer varied requirements. They are examples of Fisk expertise, artistry, and commitment—more than building an organ, we work alongside our clients to bring liturgy, worship, and music into a rightful balance.



Opus 137

CHRIST CHURCH • ANDOVER, MASSACHUSETTS

When we submitted a proposal for a new pipe organ at Christ Church in Andover, Massachusetts, we were especially excited because of our long acquaintance with the Rev. Jeffrey Gill and Barbara Bruns, minister of music. The 19th-century Richardsonian Romanesque church building made the project even more enticing. The tonal design of Opus 137 evolved over several months in consultation with the minister of music and the organ committee, and is the result of thorough discussions of the musical requirements of the Episcopal liturgy, the organ as accompanist of the choir, and the flexibility needed for a recital instrument.

Concurrent with the new organ project, a major sanctuary renovation was planned. The existing organ spoke from a deep chamber on the Epistle side of the nave, just forward of the chancel arch with the console on the opposite, Gospel side. The parish choir, singing from their chancel location, could not hear the organ well; furthermore, the sounds the organ produced did not encourage beautiful singing, as many of the stops were over-voiced so as to be heard by parishioners seated in the nave. The acoustics of the room offered no help whatsoever, being lifeless and utterly nonsupportive of musical expression. As beautiful as the sanctuary is architecturally, it needed help if it were to effectively support the grandeur and dignity of the Episcopal liturgy.

A design team comprising church governance and musicians, architect, acoustician, and organbuilder was tasked to study how this transformation would come about. Early on, it was decided to move the choir and the organ to the back of the nave and to construct a gallery large enough to accommodate both. The organ would thus speak unimpeded down the main axis of the nave, perfect

for leading congregational hymns. Its lofty placement immediately under the ceiling would give clarity and immediacy to its sounds. The console would be detached to allow for the choir to assemble in a way that provided a direct line of sight between all singers and the organist (carbon-fiber trackers allow this with essentially no loss of sensitivity or crispness to the key actions). Custom-designed temperature destratification and humidification systems in the gallery would be included for the sake of organ tuning and stability of wooden parts. Isolation of the blower from the organ space and improvements to the HVAC system would provide a foundation of silence for worship services.

With renovations complete, the historic sanctuary has a fresh new look and feel. A more open and expansive chancel was created, the apse windows restored, the altar brought closer to the congregation, new lighting installed, and the acoustics enhanced. While not as reverberant as one might wish for the organ, the improved acoustics offer presence, balance, life, and warmth where it was so sorely lacking. In December 2011, Opus 137 was installed, with finish voicing continuing into spring. Barbara Bruns played the inaugural recital and spoke eloquently of the long process and of her vision for music making at Christ Church: “Through countless hours of thoughtful decision-making, highly skilled labor—both professional and volunteer—and close coordination with the [building company], our new organ is seamlessly woven into the fabric of the building and our church community.”



*The Opus 137 stoplist is available at:
<http://tinyurl.com/137-Spec>*



ST. PAUL'S CHAPEL • RIKKYO GAKUIN, NIIZA, JAPAN

Bishop Channing Moore Williams, an American Episcopal missionary, founded the Rikkyo school system in Tokyo in 1874. In 1960, the Rikkyo High School was moved to a new campus in Niiza, just outside of Tokyo. Rikkyo maintains close ties with the Episcopal Church, the Church of England, and the worldwide Anglican Communion. St. Paul's Chapel on the Niiza campus was designed by Czech architect Antonin Raymond and built in 1963. Raymond, who worked for a time with Cass Gilbert and then with Frank Lloyd Wright, established his practice in Japan after briefly assisting Wright in the construction of the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo. The chapel, with its striking catenary arches, serves both as a worship space and a concert venue.

In 2008, Rikkyo University's director of sacred music, Scott Shaw, initiated the commission of two new pipe organs—one for St. Paul's Chapel at Niiza, the other for All Saints Chapel on the Ikebukuro campus. Following visits

by the Rikkyo organ committee to numerous instruments in England and the United States, it was decided that the Ikebukuro organ's role would be to accompany the Anglican liturgy and choral repertoire (Scott Shaw directs a very strong choral program in the Anglican tradition), whereas the Niiza instrument would be primarily French Romantic in style (with certain French Classic elements included to enable authentic performance of earlier repertoire). Proposals were submitted for both instruments, and in July 2009, Fisk was chosen to build the Niiza organ—Opus 141. The Ikebukuro project was awarded to English builder Kenneth Tickell, now deceased. Rikkyo Gakuin would receive two very different instruments from two very different builders.

Among its most striking features is Charles Nazarian's curvaceous, bright blue, wholly nontraditional case. It is a perfect foil to the monochromatic gray of the imposing concrete arches, and relates fittingly to the colorful hues of the stained glass surrounding the organ and throughout the chapel. The case came about in consideration of Dr. Shaw's vision for a design complimenting Raymond's 1960s modernist sensibility. An organ case of that era might have followed trends of the time, resulting in an angular design and open pipework. Working within a scale model of the chapel, the Fisk design progressed in a thoroughly 21st-century fashion—developing according to the unique characteristics of volume, shape, and color offered by the room itself.

Rikkyo students have aptly nicknamed the organ “Big Blue.” During Tokyo's notoriously hot, humid summers, Big Blue depends on a Fisk-designed, integral climate destratification system to maintain tuning between divisions.

The tonal design is a synthesis of 18th- and 19th-century French organbuilding practices—what today's builders in France would call an “orgue de synthèse” and a mainstay of Fisk tonal design. It plays the French repertoire exceptionally well, but also does justice to a much broader range of the literature. The chapel's acoustics, because of its concrete structure, are reverberant, warm, and nicely supportive of bass tone. Tonal finishing was largely in the hands of Fisk voicer Nami Hamada, who had just complet-



Opus 141

ed a one-year study-exchange, working in the atelier of Bertrand Cattiaux, the respected French organbuilder. There, she gained firsthand experience with some of the finest examples of the work of Aristide Cavaillé-Coll. Big Blue bears the first fruit of Nami's intensive study and serves St. Paul's Chapel in its role as accompanist of the daily morning chapel services and as a teaching instrument for the students of Rikkyo University organist Yuko Sakiyama.

On Bastille Day 2014, Shaw posted this on his blog *The View from Tokyo*:

Last Saturday (July 12), the opening concert of the Fisk organ at Rikkyo University's Niiza campus marked the end of many years of work to upgrade the chapel music facilities and instruments. Makiko Hayashima gave a brilliantly planned and played recital on the Fisk that demonstrated its multifaceted personality. As she explained before the performance, the organ may well be similar to the organ 19th-century French builder Cavaillé-Coll would have built had he lived another 20 years. It has a strong French Romantic character, yet has the brilliance and upper work of a French Classic-period organ. Playing works by Couperin, Bach, Franck, and Widor, Hayashima showed that this music all sounds great on the instrument. A capacity crowd of 350 braved intense summer heat to enjoy the afternoon.



The Opus 141 stoplist is available at:
<http://tinyurl.com/141-Spec>



ST. MARK'S LUTHERAN CHURCH • CHINA GROVE, NORTH CAROLINA

In spring 2010, we were contacted by Vincent Crist, organ consultant to St. Mark's Lutheran Church in China Grove, a small, quiet town in the North Carolina Piedmont. An unexpected bequest from a deceased chancel choir member would be used in part to purchase a new pipe organ and also for the necessary alterations that might be required to accommodate the new instrument. The gift was a great surprise, a great challenge, and finally a great blessing for the loyal congregation of St. Mark's. We were pleased to accept Dr. Crist's invitation to make a proposal, and, after deliberations were complete, proud to be chosen as builder. As we began tonal design discussions, Elizabeth "Libby" Staton, the cantor who presides over the music program at St. Mark's, wrote:

This is very exciting for St. Mark's and me. When I was in college [Greensboro College], I remember hearing Charles Fisk speak when the Flentrop was installed at Duke Chapel. Dr. [Harold] Andrews always spoke very highly of him. I never thought I would be in a position to work with your company, much less to help "birth" a Fisk organ for my church. This is pretty much like the best Christmas present ever.



Opus 143

As the design and construction of the instrument commenced in our workshop, the church undertook renovations to their sanctuary. Working closely with church architect Bill Burgin, Fisk designers developed a plan to move the organ from a fenced-in location at the front right corner of the sanctuary to a front-and-center placement, tucked into a shallow niche. The chancel choir would be arranged in front of, and to either side of, the attached console. The case would be built of quarter-sawn white oak, stained to harmonize with the woodwork in the rejuvenated sanctuary. Facade pipes would be of hammered lead. Tonally, the organ would be an eclectic design with the Great division primarily informed by the work of the 18th-century Saxon *orgelbauermeister*s, the Swell division by the work of 18th- and 19th-century French *facteurs d'orgues*. Early in our tonal design discussions, consultant Vince Crist and Libby paid a visit to Fisk Opus 136 in Charlotte. Their observations of and reactions to the tonal aspects of that organ were extremely valuable as we formulated pipe scalings, pipe materials, and voicing prerogatives for the organ.

Project manager Andrew Gingery's "Builder's Statement" from the organ dedication brochure begins:

We are often told, when we are finished with a project, that an instrument looks "as if it has always been there," and we consider that very high praise. At St. Mark's, the best compliment we heard was that the sanctuary, despite the dramatic reconfiguration, still had the look and feel of St. Mark's, the church that so many people had been attending for decades. Our involvement at St. Mark's is illustrative of the reason we at C.B. Fisk are involved in the craft of building pipe organs. Of course, we would like to believe that Opus 143 is a beautifully crafted jewel in the church, and we also very much enjoyed working with and getting to know the people we now call our friends there and in the community surrounding St. Mark's.



The Opus 143 stoplist is available at:
<http://tinyurl.com/143-Spec>



Vintage photo of St. Mark's Lutheran



We are reminded by these experiences that the pipe organ is not ancillary to Christian worship, but a powerful means for expression of faith and liturgical teaching. In its sacred setting, whether modest or grand, the organ speaks to the heart.

Continuing Barbara Bruns's eloquent remarks:

We continue the ancient tradition of singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to teach the faith. For generations to come, the new organ will be heard in its many roles as an instrument of accompaniment for choir, as a leader of congregational singing, and as a solo instrument resounding in majesty, lifting our spirits heavenward.

David C. Pike is senior vice president and tonal director at C.B. Fisk Inc.

Opus 145 Comes to Life

Currently under construction in the Fisk workshop is Opus 145, destined for Emmanuel Episcopal Church in Southern Pines, North Carolina. The church building presents many challenges, not the least for Homer Ferguson's music program. "We are finding ourselves in a real bind in our current sanctuary, and the organ there is failing miserably and takes up much too much room in the limited choir loft."

For a time, church leaders considered building a new, larger sanctuary, but the expense involved was prohibitive. As part of the design process, a scale model of existing space was built to explore various possibilities for siting the organ. Within this model, Fisk developed a new plan that would gain many of the desired benefits of a new building at a fraction of the cost. The new scheme gained additional seating for the congregation, sufficient space and acoustical support for the organ and choir, and a redesigned chancel area that serves as the sanctuary's primary focus.

You are invited to watch Charles Nazarian's video design brief that illustrates how liturgy, worship, and music are brought into balance at Emmanuel Episcopal Church:



<http://tinyurl.com/145-design>



\$20K FROM THE NEA

FOR EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND HOUSTON REGIONAL CONVENTION

THE AGO HAS BEEN AWARDED a grant by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) to support educational programming in 2015 and new music commissioned for the AGO National Convention in Houston, Tex., June 19–23, 2016. The \$20,000 NEA "Art Works" grant will support Pipe Organ Encounters for youth and adults, performances and workshops at all seven AGO Regional Conventions, the Guild's professional certification program for organists and choral conductors, and new music commissions. While the Guild has benefitted from NEA support for the past five consecutive AGO National Conventions, the 2015 grant represents the first support the Guild has received for its educational programs and regional conventions.

"This grant covers the full breadth of the AGO's educational activities for current and prospective members as well as our programs of outreach to the public," stated AGO Executive Director James Thomashower. "The

NEA's funding sends an uplifting message to the entire organ community: our instrument and its music are vitally important to the American people. The award validates the AGO's ongoing efforts to ensure that music for the organ is created by talented composers, performed by skilled musicians, and appreciated by the widest audience possible. It is an honor for the Guild to be recognized by the NEA, the most prestigious independent federal agency in the United States responsible for funding and promoting artistic excellence, creativity, and innovation."

NEA chair Jane Chu added, "I am pleased to be able to share the news of our support through Art Works, including the award to the American Guild of Organists. The arts foster value, connection, creativity, and innovation for the American people. This grant demonstrates those attributes and affirms that the arts are part of our everyday lives."

Art Works grants support the creation of art, public engagement with art, lifelong learning in the arts, and enhancement of the livability of communities through the arts. The NEA received 1,474 eligible applications under the Art Works category, requesting more than \$75 million in funding. Of those applications, 919 were recommended for grants totaling \$26.6 million. For a complete listing of projects recommended for Art Works grant support, visit the NEA website at Arts.gov. For further information about the AGO's educational programming, visit Agohq.org.



ART WORKS.
arts.gov