

Notes



International Adventist Musicians Association

“Such as Handle the Harp
and Organ”

Organs
and Their Masters
in the SDA
Church

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Organs and Their Masters in the Seventh-day Adventist Church

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On a late spring evening, a harried young mother, needing a break from her four children, decided to get away for awhile. As she had no money and since the local movie theater was closed anyway, she wandered into a tent meeting where she heard a discussion of Daniel 2. The tent's sparse furnishings included crude wooden benches, sawdust on the ground, a few lonely chairs on a platform and a makeshift pulpit. The one exception was a reed pump organ (harmonium).

Captivated by what she heard, the mother continued attending the tent meetings to hear the preacher. Her third son, barely six years old, developed a tremendous fascination for that reed organ. With its rich bass tones and multiple sets of reeds, the instrument and its possibilities intrigued the boy. On the piano at home he could play, by ear, almost anything he heard on the radio.

When granted permission to try the harmonium, the little organ dreamer was ecstatic. His joy turned to frustration, however, when he discovered the stool was too high for his short legs to pump the bellows. The young evangelist's wife, an enterprising school teacher, took two Campbell soup cans, bored holes in the sides, threaded strings through the holes and attached the cans to the boy's shoes. The little would-be organist could now pump the bellows and play the organ. And thus began for me what developed into a life-long career of serious interest in organs and organ playing.

During the early years of the Seventh-day Adventist church, no musical instruments of any kind were used in its worship services. In fact, it was not until 1877, at the sixth campmeeting held in California, that a reed pump organ was first used to accompany Adventist singing. James Edson White secured its use at no charge from a San Francisco dealer. All White had to do was pay the transportation charges each way and permit the dealer to hang a printed card giving the name of the business and address on the back of the organ, which stood toward the audience.

Apparently some at the meeting objected to the use of instrumental music in services. How to introduce the organ to the congregation was the

question. It stood in a large wooden box with the word "organ" printed in large letters on the side facing the audience.

At the first morning meeting, pioneer evangelist Elder J. N. Loughborough read the 150th Psalm in which the psalmist calls upon his readers to use instrumental music in praising God. As Elder Loughborough read, "... praise Him with stringed instruments and" - when he came to the next word he slowly spelled it out - "o-r-g-a-n-s." Loughborough then commented that this was what was in the box there on the platform. At the next service later in the day, he said they would have the organ unpacked so it could be used to praise God in the song service. In spite of the previous opposition to the idea, everyone soon

discovered that the pump organ made a decided improvement in the singing.

A few years later, in 1881, John Harvey Kellogg invited a twenty-one-year-old Englishman, Edwin E. Barnes, to come to the United States to become organist of the Battle Creek Seventh-day Adventist Church. By 1885 Barnes was the total music department of Battle Creek College. His talents while on the college faculty doubtless attracted students. In 1892, under the presidency of W.W. Prescott, the college bulletin read, "A good opportunity is given to students to study pipe organ, the College lately having purchased an excellent two-manual organ for this [music] department." The charge for one term of 20 lessons was \$15.

On June 30, 1892, Edwin Barnes made his initial appearance as organist of the First Congregational Church in Battle Creek, and by 1894 he is reported to have joined them. Through the years, Barnes continued his musical studies. He made five trips to Europe in order to improve his knowledge of piano, voice and organ.

As a member of the American College of Musicians, Barnes was well known in Battle Creek. In 1904, he guest-conducted both the visiting New York Symphony and Chicago Symphony orchestras. On October 1, 1908, Barnes opened the Congregational Church's new Austin pipe organ in recital. Many years later, this organ was purchased for the Seventh-day Adventists' Battle Creek Tabernacle for \$3,000. Renovated and dedicated on Sabbath, February 17, 1962, it is still in use by the Battle Creek congregation.

For years, the denomination installed only modest organs when and where the need arose. However, in the 1930's an unexpected turn of events occurred which influenced the type of organ purchased by many churches. Earlier, during the era of silent movies, a specific type of organ was developed, principally through the efforts of



Edwin E. Barnes

Robert Hope-Jones, which was orchestrally oriented for performing popular music to give background sound to the silent films being shown. Known as the theater organ, this type of instrument glorified "sound effects" but lacked a total cohesive ensemble. New solo stops, like the saxophone and tibia, were invented, and the principal chorus was no longer the backbone of the instrument. Full, strident tones of strings and celestes now became prominent. The large number of stops for the relatively small number of ranks, and also the "horseshoe" console, gave the theater organ a characteristic look and sound.

Now, with the invention of sound movies, theater organs stood idle or sold very cheaply. Thinking that any organ was an acceptable organ, many churches throughout the country took advantage of these low price tags to acquire theater organs for their congregations. This decision vexed organists and legitimate organ builders, and ultimately, many of the congregations themselves became dissatisfied.



For more than two decades, this large two-manual vocalion organ with pedal bass was available to Battle Creek College and later Emmanuel Missionary College students for their practice needs.

Such was the experience at La Sierra Junior College (now La Sierra University). The college secured a three-manual theater organ from the Walt Disney Studio in Holly-

wood and installed it in Hole Memorial Auditorium about 1939. The organ, however, with its great wobbly tremulants, kinura, saxophone, French horn, tibia and vox humana became a frustration to churchly hymn singing.



The La Sierra College three-manual theater organ from Walt Disney Studios

In 1944, Harold Hannum arrived at La Sierra College to chair its music department. He determined to gradually change the character of the Disney theater organ's tone quality, by making the ensemble more cohesive and church-like. In 1970, the theater



Harold B. Hannum

organ was replaced with a fine three-manual, 62-rank Casavant pipe organ of rich ensemble.

As the "Dean" of Adventist organists, Professor Hannum rendered



many memorable services, among which were the "organ vespers" to close Sabbaths. At these times he played most of the significant organ music. English Professor Harry M. Tippett and Mrs. Ethel Hannum further enriched the programs by reading literary selections.

In the meantime, the La Sierra Collegiate Church had been built. Today it possesses a magnificent four-manual, 100-rank pipe organ built by the industry and ingenuity of Donald Vaughn, church organist and instructor in organ at LSU from 1966 to 1998.

Besides the theater organs, another innovation relative to church organs was brought about with the invention of the Hammond electronic organ in 1935. Lavish advertisements in *The Diapason* (an organ magazine) proclaimed the grand qualities of this new instrument. Small in size, these new "electrotones" could be located almost anywhere. They purported to imitate most solo organ stops. It did not seem to matter that the organ community took Hammond to court for making such grandiose claims - the electronic organ business was on its way and flourishing.

Before long, Hammond organs were being used at our campmeetings. Adventist congregations everywhere thrilled to their sounds. Hammond organs were also installed in churches all across the country, including such places as the Sligo Church in Takoma Park, Maryland; the old General Conference headquarters chapel in Washington, D. C.; and the Green Lake church in Seattle, Washington.

Electrotones continued to be developed in both the United States and Europe. Schools and churches could now choose from an expanding number of organ models and compa-

nies, including Allens and many others. Allen electronic organs are located in such places as the new General Conference headquarters chapel in Silver Spring, Maryland; Avondale College, Australia (presently being replaced by a Johannus digital electronic); Caribbean Union College, Trinidad; and Samyook University, Seoul, South Korea.

Many European countries have also begun building electronic organs. The organ at Taiwan Adventist College is a Viscount, from Italy. Other electronics have been purchased by Southeast Asia Union College, Singapore; the church adjacent to Hong Kong Adventist Hospital; and the church at Taiwan Adventist Hospital.

And in the last decade, organs built by Johannus Organ Company in Holland have been installed in the campus churches at Montemoraes University in Mexico, River Plate University in Argentina, and East Brazil College. These were donated by Orland and Joan Ogden of Portland, Oregon.

For at least twenty years after Battle Creek College moved to Berrien Springs, Michigan, in 1901, the school, renamed Emmanuel Missionary College (now Andrews University), furnished "a reed organ and large two-manual vocalion with pedal bass for organ practice." During Guy F. Wolfkill's administration as president, a three-manual, 49-stop, nineteen-rank Moller electro-pneumatic pipe organ was built for the chapel, funded in part by the maker since it would be heard on national broadcasts by the college's radio station. It was finished on November 20, 1927, at a cost to the school of \$8,500.

Birt Summers, director of the EMC college music department,

announced that "those desiring to study will find here a fine opportunity to become versed in the art of organ playing." When the old chapel building was demolished in 1961, the Moller organ was sold and removed. In March, 1966, a new 75-rank Casavant pipe organ was completed in AU's Pioneer Memorial Church. This was refurbished and expanded to 78 ranks in 2001.

Additional organs at AU include two smaller practice pipe organs in the music building, a tracker-action and an electro-pneumatic, and a Brian Fowler seventeen-rank, two manual pipe organ, installed in the Theological Seminary chapel in 1998.



For over thirty years, worship services in the Pioneer Memorial Church at Andrews University have been enhanced through music played on its Casavant organ.

On the West coast, Pacific Union College, which had moved from Healdsburg, California, to Howell Mountain in nearby Angwin in 1909, acquired its first pipe organ in 1912, a Murray M. Harris of Los Angeles. Originally built

for a church in Van Nuys, it had 441 pipes and seven stops. At first it was installed in Irwin Hall when the platform was in the rear against the mountain behind the school. In 1917 the chapel was turned the opposite direction and greatly enlarged, so the organ had to move.



The Murray M. Harris Pipe Organ in Irwin Hall at Pacific Union College

In its new setting, it was quite spectacular, with redwood chests, a gilded Open Diapason and, after a time in its new location, a picture of the rich young ruler and Christ that hung among the display pipes. (This painting hangs in the narthex of the present college church.) Stanley Williams (representative of the Aeolian-Skinner Organ Company) was the tonal finisher of the original organ.

A 1929-remodelling by the Oliver Organ Company of Berkeley, California, produced a 27-stop, three-manual organ. An Echo organ was installed within the back balcony, but now there was difficulty in "getting it all together." In 1946 when Stanley Williams visited the campus, he exclaimed, "Yes, those are my pipes!" But when he heard them played, he retracted his statement and said they were not his. Upon examination, he discovered that the mouths of the pipes had all been cut up to make them louder - to fit the expanded instrument. The result of the makeover was that they now emitted quite a "tubby" sound.

In the 1950's a new three-manual Moller console was installed. It has since been rebuilt to serve the new Casavant pipe organ in Paulin Hall, home of the music department. The pride and joy of PUC, however, is the four-manual tracker-action pipe organ built by Rieger of Austria. One of the finest instruments in the denomination and the largest mechanical action organ in the western United States, the Rieger is adaptable to all styles of organ music. Del Case, who oversaw its installation, continues today as organ instructor and church organist at the College.



The Rieger tracker-action organ in the Pacific Union College Church

The first pipe organ at Walla Walla College was built by Sam Hanson, an 1898 church music diploma graduate of the school, and six students in his carpentry class. Incorporating pipes and fittings from a mail order house in Pennsylvania, the newly completed instrument was installed in the school chapel in the spring of 1910.

Designed by George B. Miller around two manuals he had brought

with him when he had come to the campus as music director two years earlier, the organ was propelled by water power. In freezing weather, the water had to be thawed before the instrument became functional. Some time later, a two-manual reed organ with pedals replaced Hanson's organ in the chapel. Unfortunately, both of these organs had benches much too high for the students to develop good



Walla Walla College's first pipe organ was made by the carpentry class.

pedal technique. The reed organ was used for student practice as late as 1945.

Margaret Holden Rippey, a 1916 graduate of WWC, began teaching piano and organ there in 1917. After leaving the college she settled in Portland, Oregon, where she became a highly respected musician. She returned to the campus in 1929 as guest organist to inaugurate a new nine-rank, two-manual Reuter pipe organ in the church. She again played the inaugural recital for another eight-rank, two-manual Reuter installed in 1940 in Columbia Auditorium, new home of the College Church since the congregation had outgrown its church. Just before the disastrous fire which destroyed the auditorium in 1978, the Reuter had been sold to the Spokane, Washington, Central SDA Church.

Under the leadership of Melvin West, chair of the music department,



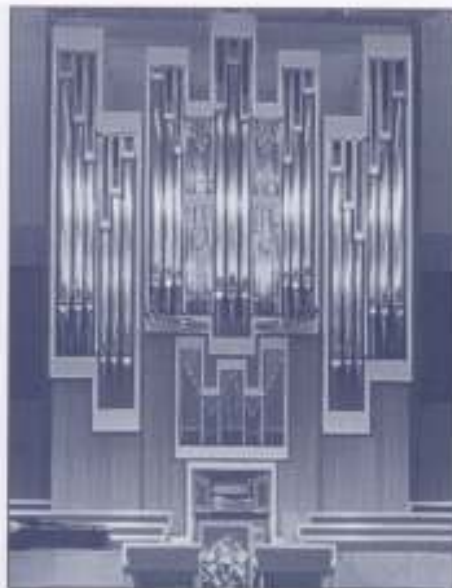
a new Fine Arts Center was constructed at WWC in 1966 and furnished with a 36-rank, three-manual Casavant, a three-manual Moller Artiste, and two smaller practice pipe organs. He also oversaw the installation of a 93-rank, three-manual Casavant in the College Church.



The WWC Fine Arts Center Casavant Organ

The first organ in the old church at Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska, was a two-manual pipe organ. Early in the 1950's, it was replaced with a three-manual Allen electronic organ. A new church, completed there in 1979, now has a tracker-action, three-manual Rieger pipe organ. The music building has a two-manual Wicks pipe organ, with glass shutters, in its 100-seat recital hall.

The pipe organ at the church in Southwestern Adventist College (now Southwestern Adventist University) in Keene, Texas, was purchased in June, 1972 from a Baptist church in Boston. Originally installed there in 1898, the organ, built by Hutchings-Votey, was rebuilt in 1962. Weighing 12 tons, the dismantled organ was moved to Keene in a large moving van, where after being assembled in the church by a crew of volunteers, it was dedicated Decem-



The Rieger tracker-action organ at Union College

ber 15, 1973. Originally installed with the pipes behind the congregation and the console in front, this awkward arrangement made coordination of the instrument with the choir and congregation difficult. This was corrected when the pipes were moved to the chancel in 1989. After additional modifications were completed in 1993, it was rededicated as the Clarence W. Dortch Memorial Organ.

Atlantic Union College's first notable pipe organ was a three-manual Moller, installed in Machlan Auditorium in 1956. A small two-manual Schlicker tracker-action organ was placed in the men's dormitory in 1959 and, in 1992, another tracker-action seventeen-rank, fifteen-stop, two-manual J. W. Walker was installed in the new college church.

Oakwood College has had a mix of electronic and pipe organs on its campus during its 103 years of existence. Currently the primary instrument is a new

Rogers Trillium 967 132-stop, three-manual digital electronic in the college church. It has a console that is midi-compatible, one that will also be able to access future planned additions of actual pipes.

A variety of pipe organs have been used by Adventist churches in the Washington, D.C., area. In 1951 a rebuilt pipe organ with good tonal design replaced the Hammond electronic organ in the Sligo Church in Takoma Park, Maryland. Nine years later, an Aeolian Skinner organ (three-manual, 26-rank) was installed in the chapel of Columbia Hall on the campus of adjoining Columbia Union College. A calamitous fire on February 19, 1970, leveled the building and took the organ with it.

In 1953 the Takoma Park Church purchased an Ernest M. Skinner four-manual, 42-rank organ from Town Hall in New York City, but it did not fulfill expectations - especially after a damaging fire. The next organ, installed by the E. H. Holloway Organ Company, later needed to be renovated. Capital Memorial Church has had a two-manual, eighteen-rank Schantz organ since 1963 - to which three mutation ranks have been added.

Elsewhere across the United States, several other pipe organs have been installed in Adventist churches. A significant three-manual Zimmer pipe organ is situated in the church adjacent to Porter Hospital in Denver. Everything has been done to make this a major concert instrument in the city. And the new church at Kettering College, Ohio, was, with its slate floor, planned around the new Casavant. In addition to effectively augmenting

church services, it was anticipated that the 89-rank pipe organ would attract concert artists.

The Casavant installed (in two phases) in Loma Linda University Church in 1971 was almost the largest one built at the time. It has 127 ranks, four manuals, and 85 speaking stops.

Another significant installation was that of a Rieger at the Sunnyside Church in Portland, Oregon, in 1988.

In April, 1986, Southern College (now Southern Adventist University), in Collegedale, Tennessee, opened the largest tracker-action organ built in North America. It dominates the front facade of the church and has elicited much interest in the organ community at large, both in the United States and Europe.

Recalling the lines of organ building during the High Baroque, John Brombaugh built this massive organ with 108 ranks. Designed to play exclusive music, the organ has been used in a series of concerts by European artists. Indeed, in the worldwide Adventist church, there is nothing to compare with this remarkable organ.

Outside of the United States, pipe organs have had little representation in Adventist institutions and churches. However, after foreign students have studied in the United States, many have gone back to their homelands and encouraged organ study. A European-built pipe organ furnishes many students with lessons at Japan Missionary College. Other pipe organs are to be found in Hiroshima High School and Tokyo Central Church.

In Europe itself, pipe organs are located at Newbold College, England; at Collonges-sous-Saleve, France (a six-stop Silbermann); in Wetzlingen,



The Brombaugh tracker-action organ at Southern Adventist University

Switzerland (two-manual); in Lyon (one-manual) and Paris, France; and in Frankfurt, Germany (a small two-manual).

In nearby Canada, a 45-rank, three-manual Casavant installation was completed in the Canadian Union College University church in 1997. It replaced a pipe organ that had been originally built in the 1920's for the University of Wisconsin, renovated by the Wicks Organ Company in the 1950's, and then purchased and installed by CUC in 1971.

What a heritage of organs played by dedicated organists has been passed down to present-day Adventist musicians. The Church, along with its educational institutions, has run the gamut from the small harmonium, to the pedal vocalion, to the theater pipe organ, to the electronic instruments (electrotones) ... and finally to the ultimate - the pipe organ - for the best

classic reproduction. These instruments have required steady, unrelenting vigilance to maintain and support them, whether pipe or electronic. As the music pours from them, I must exclaim with Paul: "But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of Him. For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing."

II Corinthians 2:14, 15, NIV

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Warren Becker, professor of organ and church organist at Andrews University from 1959 to 1995, now resides in Rocklin, California. He was chosen Teacher of the Year at AU in 1970, awarded the Charles E. Weniger and J. N. Andrews Medallions in 1982, and given the AU Faculty Award for Teaching Excellence in 1986. A 1945 graduate of Walla Walla College, Becker was named as an Honored Alumnus in 1985. He completed a master's in organ and a DMA in organ performance and pedagogy at Eastman School of Music. In 1979, he was chosen by Harold Gleason, noted musicologist and organ scholar, to co-author the well known *Music History Outline* series. A grant enabled him to spend two years in California working with Gleason on the five volume series. During that time he also prepared the sixth edition of Gleason's *Method of Organ Playing* for publication.