

Clifford Gilmore — Anthony Newman

ABOUT THE ORGAN:

A Statement by the Builders

The chapel of the Wooster School in Danbury, Connecticut is a small room, seating about 250 people, with a gracious and live acoustic. The organ here is used not only to lead chapel services and other school functions, but also as a teaching instrument and a recital instrument.

When it was decided to rebuild the 1887 Steere & Turner mechanical action (tracker) organ located here, we had the pleasure of working closely with Anthony Newman in developing the basic concept for an entirely new and, we believe, unique tonal design. (The existing mechanical action needed only slight renovation.)

The two-manual Steere & Turner organ had only 12 stops, but we found that the slider and pallet chests were large enough to accommodate up to 23 stops. Working within this limitation, our goal was to provide a balanced musical instrument with as clean, vivid and exciting a sound as possible. This led to some "unusual," non-traditional solutions to age-old problems.

Our point of departure in determining the scaling and voicing of the principal choruses in all three divisions was the great North German/Dutch school of organ building, epitomized by Arp Schnitger. Specifically, these pipes were voiced to speak softly but with a rich harmonic development. This was achieved by using small scales, low wind pressure, and particularly for the upper work, low cut-ups with wide mouths and open toes. When used in chorus, this results in a tremendous intensity and a very full sound from a relatively few stops. It is a harmonic intensity, though, giving the illusion of a loud sound with a transparent texture, rather than a mere decibel intensity, which, impressive though it may be, tends to become opaque and destroy the linear clarity of polyphonic music. The mixtures can play a decisive role here too, adding clarity to the bass and broadening the line in the treble, and these mixtures were designed to emphasize that by being rather higher pitched in the bass than usual. An extremely high-pitched Terz Zimbel on the top further emphasizes the sharp brilliance and adds a unique quality to the principal chorus or plenum sound.

Both manuals and the pedal division, then, are based on complete principal choruses inspired by the North German/Dutch tradition. To these harmonically rich and intense choruses we decided to add reed stops and cornets modeled on those of the French classical tradition, especially Cliquot. The Trompette and Clairon on the Positiv provide a brilliant and fiery reed chorus and the Cromorne on the Great is of the rich and broadly voiced French type rarely found outside of France. These reeds, with the mounted Cornet and the flute-scaled Sesquialtera, make it possible to perform with the appropriate colors most of the organ music from the great French classical school as well as the German.

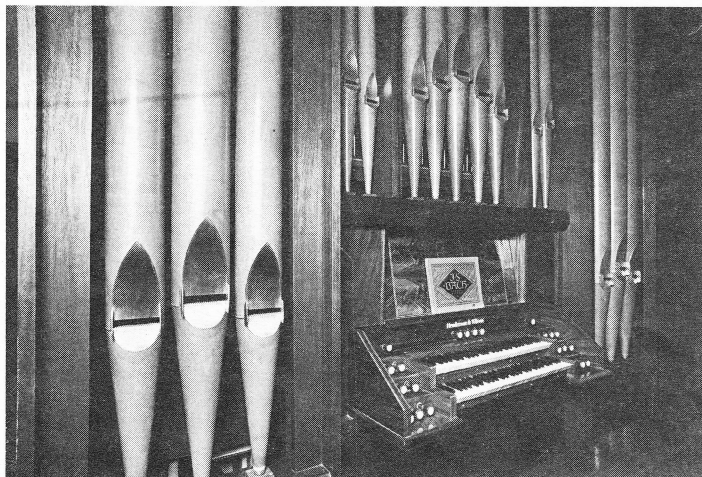
One of the most unusual, non-traditional features of the design of

this instrument is the placement of the 8' and 4' Trompettes and the Sesquialtera on the Positiv and the Cromorne on the Great. Essentially, our aim was to provide two equally balanced manual divisions, not a heavy Great division and a light, delicate Positiv. The principal choruses on the two divisions are contrasting but balanced; the Trompettes also balance and oppose the Great plenum; the Cromorne balances with the Trompette. In fact, the two manuals are almost interchangeable: both the Great and the Positiv can function as the primary or secondary division, at the performer's discretion.

There were other reasons for this placement as well. Because of space limitations, a 4' flute had to be omitted from the Great; this dictated the placing of the Sesquialtera on the Positiv. Since a Sesquialtera and Cromorne should be on opposing divisions, and since the Sesquialtera and Cornet should be on the same division as the Trompettes for the Grand jeu combination, this unusual distribution resulted.

We believe the Wooster School organ provides a unique combination of German and French classical elements, adapted to contemporary requirements, which gives the instrument an unusual versatility. It is our hope that it will play some part in re-establishing the French classical organ literature on an equal footing with the German, a trend which is already clearly evident.

Henderson & Wilson, Summer 1976



The David M. Keiser Organ in the Wooster School, Danbury, Connecticut
Built by Henderson & Wilson (1974/75)

Photos: Michael Toomey

The Specification is as follows:

GREAT: 70mm Wind Pressure

Bourdon	16'
Prinzipal	8'
Holz Gedackt	8'
Oktave	4'
Super Oktave	2'
Quinte	1 1/3'
Mixtur IV	1'
Terz Zimbel III	3/4'
Cromorne	8'

POSITIV: 70mm Wind Pressure

Rohrflöte	8'
Holz Flöte	4'
Prinzipal	2'
Blockflöte	2'
Scharff IV	2 2/3'
Sesquialtera II	
Cornet IV	
Trompette	8'
Clairon	4'

PEDAL: 80mm Wind Pressure

Subbass	16'
Prinzipal	8'
Oktave	4'
Mixtur IV	2'
Bombarde	16'

COUPLERS

Positiv to Great	
Great to Pedal	
Positiv to Pedal	
Tremolo	