

# PRINCIPIA COLLEGE



*Casavant Frères Organ*



# COX AUDITORIUM AND THE CASAVANT FRÈRES ORGAN

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Cox Auditorium was constructed in 1964, primarily for the annual Principia Public Affairs Conference—the oldest collegiate public affairs conference in the nation—and commencement ceremonies. It was soon found that Cox Auditorium needed to accommodate a wider variety of activities and that a pipe organ would be a valued asset. Detlef Kleuker Orgelbau of Brackwede/Westfallen, Germany, installed a two-manual, thirty-two rank organ with electric-slider action in 1967. The instrument was the gift of Mr. and Mrs. Russell V. Williams of Idaho Springs, Colorado, as a tribute to John Sammons, a Christian Science practitioner and lecturer, and his wife Grace Banks Sammons, a Christian Science practitioner and teacher. The organ was mounted on a platform hung from the left side wall, near the stage, and the console was positioned in front of stage center. Famed American organist Virgil Fox performed the inaugural concert.

In time, irreparable mechanical problems developed, and the neo-classic tonal design of the instrument proved to be inadequate for the 1,100-seat auditorium. The organ was rebuilt and enlarged in 1985, but the result was unsuccessful. A reliable and highly versatile instrument continued to be a demonstrated need for Cox Auditorium. In 2001, three prominent North American organ builders were invited to study the situation and submit proposals for a mechanical-action organ that would reflect many of the tenets found in the organs of the great nineteenth-century French organ builder Aristide Cavaillé-Coll. Renowned organ builder Casavant Frères of St-Hyacinthe, Québec, was awarded the contract in August 2002 after several individual donors and Principia's 50th reunion classes of US '48-'49, JC '50-'51, and C '52-'53 generously provided funding.

The organ, Casavant's opus 3838, has three manuals, 55 ranks, and 3,069 pipes; the addition of one pedal rank is prepared for the future. The tonal architecture of the instrument is thoroughly grounded in the nineteenth-century French tradition. Dr. John R. Near, Principia College Organist and Professor of Music, drew up the stoplist, and Casavant's Tonal Director, Jacquelin Rochette, determined the pipe scalings and other tonal specifications. The case design, conceived by Didier Grassin of Casavant, is a reflection of the very successful Maybeck architecture which graces the original college buildings. Casavant tried to emulate the elegant Arts & Crafts feel by mixing strict main lines with gently curved pipe-shades. Great care was taken to enhance the verticality of the overall composition by breaking any potential horizontal lines. The case is made of stained solid American walnut throughout, with highlights of natural maple in the pipe-shades. The polished tin façade provides a strong contrast with the soft grain of the walnut.

The position of the previous organ was not adequate for the large three-manual scheme envisioned for the new instrument. Initial plans to locate the organ at the back of the stage had to be abandoned because it infringed too much upon the working floor space, and the

low proscenium was considered a sound trap. The possibility of adding a side extension to the auditorium opened the door to a viable solution. It was felt that the organ should not speak entirely sideways to the audience, as was the case with the previous organ, and sketches were prepared to study the feasibility of an angled case whose platform would link with the main stage. It quickly transpired that steel columns inside the brick walls supported the building and could be neither suppressed nor moved. This added another layer of technical difficulties, as the organ would have to be built either beside or around the immovable pillars, and any solution encompassing a steel column would have to give good access to the windchests and pipework for maintenance and tuning. After many careful studies, Casavant proposed a solution where the organ would be angled by twenty degrees, with some of the key-action trackers brushing past a steel column. The success of the placement had to rely on the precision of the new building extension and Casavant's own manufacturing, as both organ and building had to fit like hand and glove. It turned out that the construction of the new chamber was superbly crafted, and 30' tall walls were impeccably vertical and placed within a quarter of an inch of the required dimensions.



The internal parts of the instrument are organized in two layers: the Grand Orgue (first manual), the Positif (second manual) and the small pipes of the Pédale occupy the front section in the protruding casework, while the Récit Expressif (third manual) and the large pipes of the Pédale stand behind in the new chamber. The organ is set on symmetrical windchests laid out in major-thirds from tenor C for the manual divisions. Since the case follows a strict "Werk principle," one can read the placement of the main divisions on the façade: the Positif, just above the console, is crowned by the Grand-Orgue and its Montre 8'; the Pédale is on either side behind the 16' Montre. The Récit Expressif has been split in two sections: the flues, Basson-Hautbois and Voix humaine are at the front, and the 16', 8' and 4' reed battery are at the back.

The organ is articulated around a traditional 16' Grand Orgue. The Récit Expressif is typical of the large Récit found in late grand Cavaillé-Coll organs, with the exception of the 16' Bourdon doux that was placed in the Positif. The Positif is treated more classically with its series of mutations and a large-scale Cromorne. The Pédale is richly endowed from 32' upwards, though the large reed and flue stops are obtained through extensions. Thanks to the wealth of foundation stops, the organ is solidly grounded, and the generous basses contribute a wonderful gravity to the instrument. The mixtures have been purposely kept temperate, avoiding any aggressiveness, while the large number of reed stops—twenty percent of the ensemble—provides a thrilling tutti of great richness.

The winding is done through large single rise reservoirs and wooden trunks. The key action has been realized with traditional wooden trackers, wooden squares and steel rollers. The electric draw-stop action is complemented with a generous combination system.

Despite its curved draw-stop terraces and hand-lettered porcelain stop faces, the console is not trying to copy any Cavaillé-Coll examples. The various elements and their arrangement have been chosen for their elegance and feel. It is a play of simplicity and richness with walnut highlighted by thin strips of ebony. The manual natural keys are covered with bone and the manual sharps are of ebony. All the electronic controls, with the exception of a small readout, are discreetly hidden behind small doors.

This magnificent new organ in Cox Auditorium brings an exciting dimension to the performance opportunities at Principia College, and it is a wonderful addition to the musical landscape of the greater Saint Louis community.

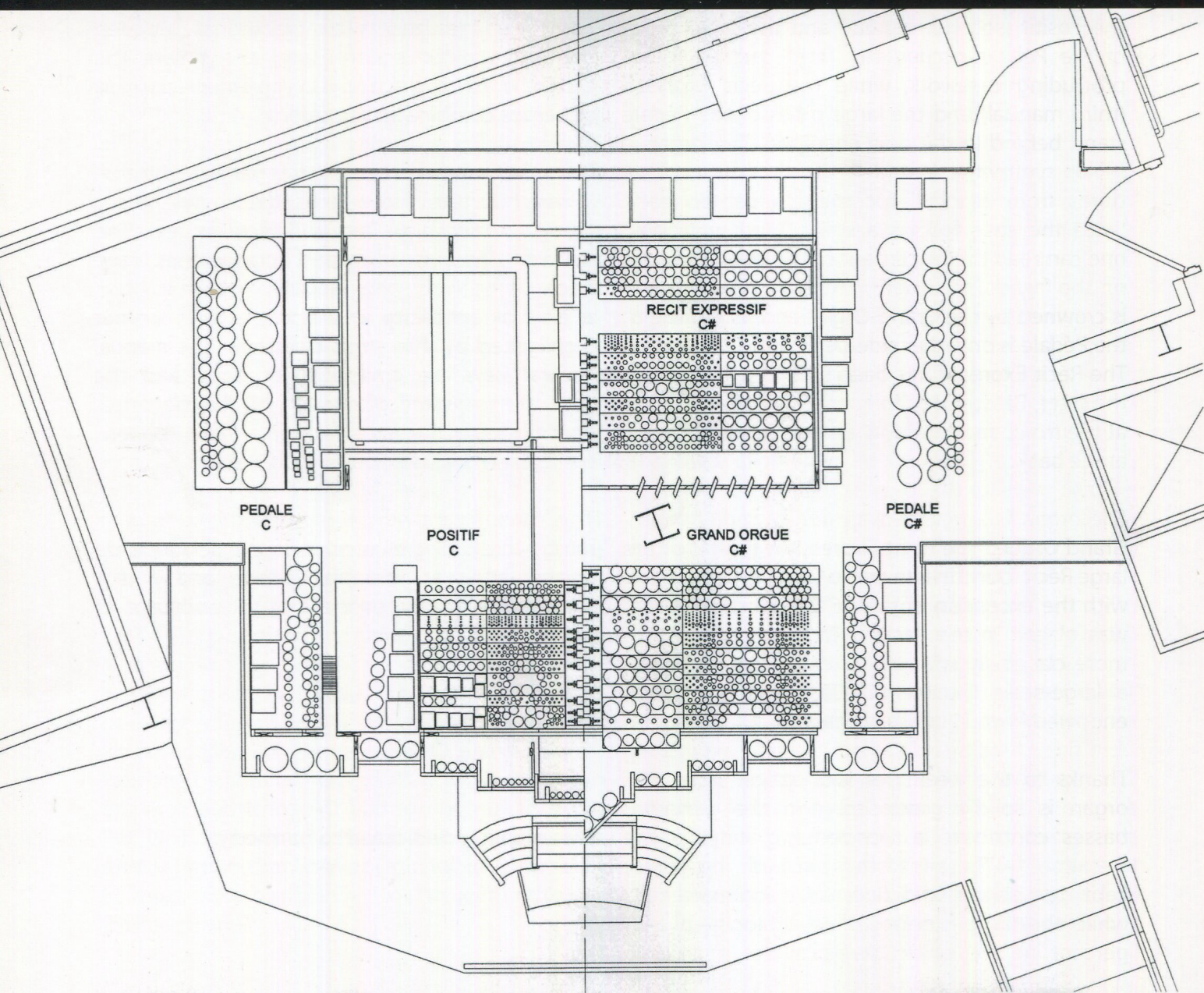
Didier Grassin  
Jacquelin Rochette  
John Near

**This organ is dedicated to harmony.**

*"Harmony in man is as real and immortal as in music."*

Mary Baker Eddy







# Stoplist

## **GRAND ORGUE** (*Manual I*)

Montre 16'  
Montre 8'  
Violoncelle 8'  
Bourdon 8'  
Flûte harmonique 8'  
Prestant 4'  
Flûte ouverte 4'  
Doublette 2'  
Cornet II-III  
Fourniture IV-V  
Bombarde 16'  
Trompette 8'  
Clairon 4'  
Positif/Grand Orgue  
Récit/Grand Orgue

## **POSITIF** (*Manual II*)

Bourdon doux 16'  
Principal 8'  
Cor de nuit 8'  
Prestant 4'  
Flûte à fuseau 4'  
Nasard 2 2/3'  
Quarte 2'  
Tierce 1 3/5'

## Larigot 1 1/3'

Mixture IV  
Trompette 8'  
Cromorne 8'  
Tremblant  
Récit/Positif

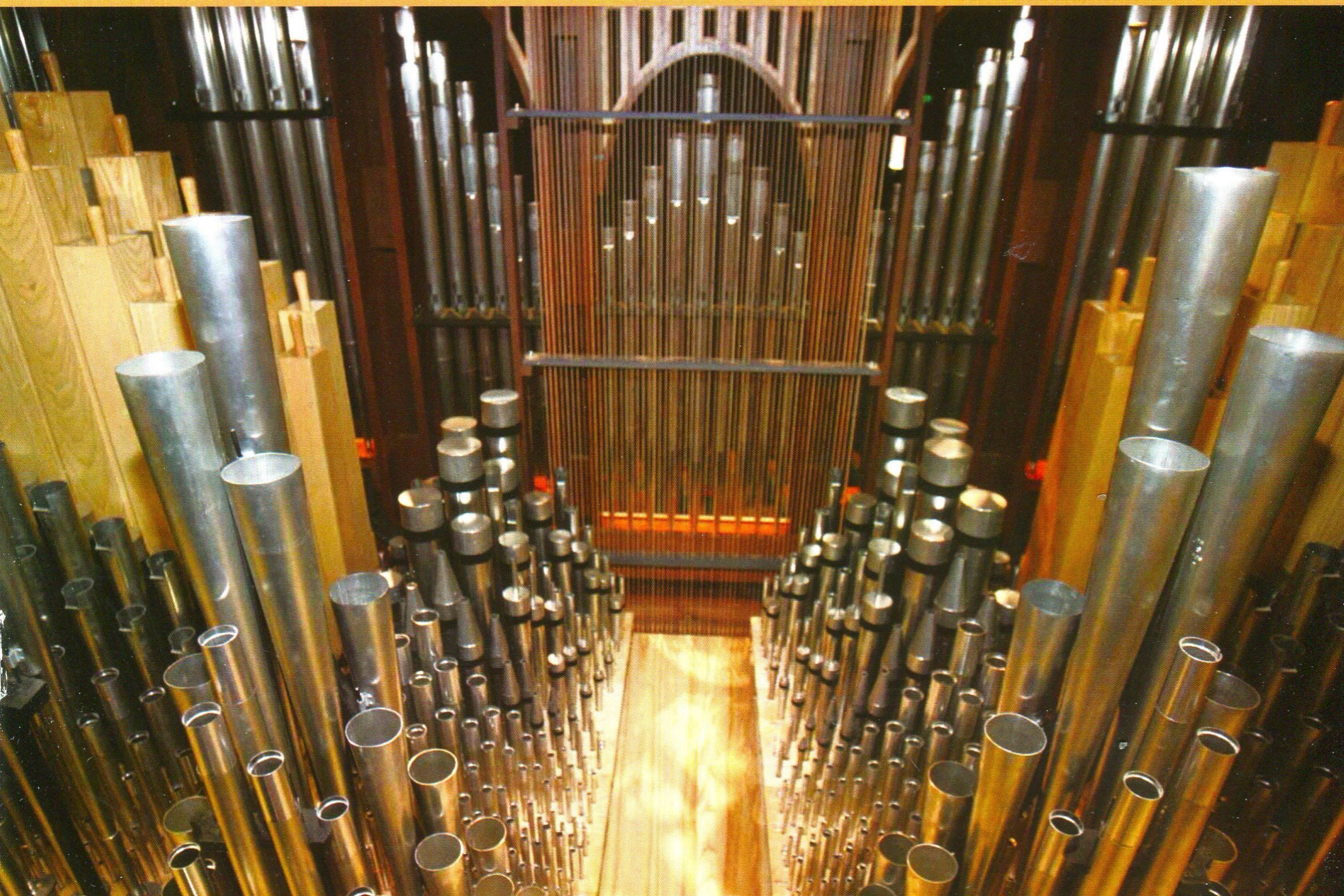
## **RÉCIT EXPRESSIF** (*Manual III*)

Diapason 8'  
Bourdon 8'  
Viole de gambe 8'  
Voix céleste 8' (*tc*)  
Octave 4'  
Flûte octaviane 4'  
Octavin 2'  
Plein-jeu V  
Basson 16'  
Trompette harmonique 8'  
Basson Hautbois 8'  
Voix humaine 8'  
Clairon harmonique 4'  
Tremblant

## **PÉDALE**

Soubasse 32'  
Contrebasse 16' (*prepared*)  
Montre 16' (*Grand Orgue*)  
Soubasse 16'  
Bourdon doux 16' (*Positif*)  
Quinte 10 2/3'  
Octavebasse 8'  
Flûte 8' (*prepared*)  
Bourdon 8'  
Octave 4'  
Flûte 4' (*prepared*)  
Contre Trombone 32'  
Trombone 16'  
Bombarde 16' (*Grand Orgue*)  
Trompette 8'  
Clairon 4'  
Tirasse Grand Orgue  
Tirasse Positif  
Tirasse Récit











Principia College · Elsah, Illinois  
Cox Auditorium

Inaugural Concert for the Casavant Frères organ, op. 3838

John R. Near, organist

Thursday evening, May 11, 2006  
7:30 p.m.

-Program-

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685-1750)  
*Toccata and Fugue in D minor, BWV 565*

*Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland, BWV 659*  
(Come now, savior of the heathen)

*Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme, BWV 645*  
(Sleepers awake, a voice is calling)

CHARLES-MARIE WIDOR (1844-1937)  
*Symphonie romane, op. 73 (1899)*  
Moderato  
Choral  
Cantilène  
Final

MARCEL DUPRÉ (1886-1971)  
*Suite Bretonne, op. 21 (1924)*  
Berceuse

LOUIS VIERNE (1870-1937)  
*Troisième Suite, op. 54 (1927)*  
Carillon de Westminster



John Near is Professor of Music and College Organist at Principia College in Elmhurst, Illinois. He has a B.A. from Principia College, an M.Mus. with honors from The New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, and a D.M.A. from Boston University. Before joining the Principia College faculty in 1985, Dr. Near was Associate Organist of The Mother Church, The First Church of Christ, Scientist, Boston, from 1972 until 1981. A double CD of organ music recorded on the great Aeolian-Skinner organ in The Mother Church Extension while Dr. Near was Associate Organist is issued on the Raven label. His solo setting of Mary Baker Eddy's poem, *Christmas Morn*, is published by The Christian Science Publishing Society and recorded on the album "Exalt the Lord." Dr. Near's 1984 doctoral dissertation, "The Life and Work of Charles-Marie Widor," is the first complete posthumous biography of this important French composer. His publications include a ten-volume annotated edition of the *Symphonies for Organ* by Charles-Marie Widor; *The American Organist* has called it "the definitive edition . . . a must for every music library" and "one of the most significant contributions to the scholarship of organ music of the 1990s." Dr. Near also prepared the first publication of Widor's *Symphonie*, opus 42[bis], for organ and orchestra. At the 2002 National Convention of The American Guild of Organists in Philadelphia, he lectured on the work, and the Philadelphia Orchestra premiered the new edition before an audience of 2400 organists. As the first recipient of the Dorothy D. Moller Research Fellowship for Advanced Study, Dr. Near was given a sabbatical for the 2002-2003 academic year to further research and writing of his biography of Widor. Dr. Near has written on Widor for *The American Organist*, and has presented scholarly papers at Göteborg, Sweden, University of Iowa, Yale University, The New England Conservatory of Music, Rice University, Princeton University, Oberlin College, and the University of Michigan. He has also performed a recital of Widor's music on the 102-stop organ of Saint-Sulpice in Paris, where Widor was organist from 1870-1934. Dr. Near has contributed a chapter on Widor in *Le Grand Orgue de Saint-Sulpice et ses Organistes*, an article in the *Dictionnaire de la musique en France au XIXème siècle*, and he is a book reviewer for *Notes*, the quarterly journal of the Music Library Association. As an organ consultant, he has designed new organs and overseen the rebuilding of fine historic instruments. He is also one of the organists of First Church of Christ, Scientist, St. Louis.