NORTON MEMORIAL ORGAN

E.M. Skinner, Op. 816 (1931)

A driving force behind the 1998-2000 Severance Hall Renovation Project was the decision to restore and relocate Severance Hall's Norton Memorial Organ. From the beginning of his tenure as Music Director of The Cleveland Orchestra, Christoph von Dohnányi had expressed the need for a functioning concert hall organ and took a great interest in the existing instrument that had been hidden from view and virtually unused for many years.

The Norton Memorial Organ, considered to be one of the finest concert hall organs ever built, was one of the last, large E. M. Skinner organs still intact anywhere. It was repaired and refurbished by the Schantz Organ Company of Orrville, Ohio, and reinstalled during the summer of 2000, six months after Severance Hall reopened. The reinstallation has enabled this magnificent organ to be heard once more — both as a solo instrument and in its intended role as sonic partner to The Cleveland Orchestra — and marks the final milestone of the Severance Hall Renovation Project.

The Building of the Norton Memorial Organ

Adella Prentiss Hughes, founder and first manager of The Cleveland Orchestra, believed that its permanent home should include a concert organ. So it was that the 1928 announcement of John and Elisabeth Severance's gift of $1 million (for what would become Severance Hall) was followed in 1929 by the news that the children of David Z. and Mary Castle Norton would fund an organ in memory of their parents.

The Nortons' influence had permeated musical circles in Cleveland throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries. David Z. Norton (a founder of the Oglebay Norton Company) was one of the original incorporators of the Musical Arts Association in 1915 and served as its first president. Mrs. Norton had been among the founders of the Fortnightly Musical Club in 1894. Both served on the MAA Board of Trustees. Their children, Miriam Norton White, Robert Castle Norton, and Laurence Harper Norton, decided that a symphonic organ in Cleveland's new concert hall would be a fitting tribute to their parents, who had died in January 1928.

Boston organ builder Ernest M. Skinner was well-known in Cleveland by the late 1920s. Grand, romantic Skinner instruments had been installed in the Cleveland Museum of Art, Epworth-Euclid Methodist Church, Trinity Cathedral, Public Hall, Finney Chapel at Oberlin College, and at the home of Cleveland Orchestra trustee Dudley S. Blossom, Sr. Thus, the Musical Arts Association engaged the Skinner Organ Company, and the contract was signed in June 1929. After consultation with Walker & Weeks, the architectural firm that designed the Orchestra's new home, and Dayton C. Miller, chair of the physics department at Case School for Applied Science, E. M. Skinner remained firm in his belief that Severance Hall's organ should be placed in a large catwalk area high above the stage, an almost unprecedented location for an organ.

The Norton Memorial Organ was designed specifically for symphonic use. Skinner concert organs were known for their tonal sophistication, mechanical reliability, and comfortable touch. To build an organ that would neither compete with nor dominate an orchestra, Skinner created unique voices that blended with and enhanced orchestral sound. These voicing and pipe construction innovations yielded orchestral stops in the Norton Memorial Organ such as the imitative French horn (found in the Solo division), the mysterious Flauto Dolce and Flute Celeste (Swell division), and the Erzähler (Great division). In addition, Skinner contoured his concert hall instruments around unison pitch rather than the vertical tonal design of the classic organ.

Severance Hall was nearly completed when E. M. Skinner directed the installation of his Opus 816 during December 1930 and January 1931. Of this

project he said, "This is going to be one of the four or five most colorful organs in the world, and it will be housed in what seems to me the most beautiful home any orchestra in the world possesses." The 94-rank Norton Memorial Organ included 6,025 pipes made of lead and tin alloy, zinc, and wood, organized in five divisions: Great, Swell, Choir, Solo, Pedal. A huge trap door at the top of the stage was the means by which the organ's sound would reach the audience.

The Norton Memorial Organ was dedicated on March 6, 1931, in a special recital performed by Palmer Christian, a prominent American organist from Ann Arbor, Michigan. The recital began with Johann Hanff's *Choral Prelude on "Ein feste Burg,"* and included works of Frescobaldi, Bach, and Christian's own arrangement of Debussy's *Prelude to the Blessed Damozel*. The event also marked the debut of the color organ. This novel (though short-lived) system involved an elaborate set of colored lights, controlled by a console similar to the organ console, that could illuminate a concave section of the rear stage set, known as the cyclorama. A review of this concert noted that Mr. Christian sat at the organ console bathed "in a golden spotlight against a cerulean blue background."

It was not until 1932 that the organ made its debut with The Cleveland Orchestra. Guest organist Carl Weinreich performed Handel's *Concerto in F major* for organ and orchestra and Bach's *Prelude and Fugue in A minor* for organ.

Disappointments and Dormancy

From the beginning, it was clear that the placement and the resulting sound of the Norton Memorial Organ did not meet The Cleveland Orchestra's acoustical expectations. A month after the 1931 dedication concert, Frank Hadley Ginn, chair of the building committee, wrote to John L. Severance, ". . . the place from which the organ speaks is not the best that could have been chosen. . . . The general comment which I have heard is not entirely favorable to the organ."

The *Plain Dealer* review of the Orchestra's first concert with the organ stated that the instrument "seemed an adjunct to the orchestra, instead of sounding forth as a bold, commanding, individual voice, accompanied discreetly by other instruments." After being ignored by Orchestra music director Artur Rodzinski during his ten-year tenure, the Norton Memorial Organ was disdained by the Orchestra's third music director, Erich Leinsdorf. He advocated selling the organ, which in his opinion, did "not rank in organ quality like the Steinway piano would rank among pianos; it is definitely a second-rate instrument." Not surprisingly, between 1932 and 1958, the organ was rarely featured in performances. Fortunately, it also was protected from the fate that befell Cleveland's other Skinner organs (and many throughout the country). The organ reform movement replaced, refitted, or altered many of the instruments so that their character forever changed.

By 1958, it was apparent that the original acoustics of Severance Hall were neither ideal for the organ nor the concert hall as a whole. At the insistence of music director George Szell, a new stage shell was erected to improve the hall's acoustics. While vastly enhancing the sound, the shell effectively entombed the Norton Memorial Organ and compromised its voice even further, although louvered slats were installed to enable speakers in the rear wall of the shell to broadcast its sound out to the audience.

Though inadequate, this new electronic transmission method was used sporadically until 1976. Works performed during this time included Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, *Passion According to St. John*, and *Mass in B minor*, Haydn's *Lord Nelson Mass*, Poulenc's *Concerto for Organ*, Janáček's *Glagolitic Mass*, and Strauss's *Also sprach Zarathustra*. After 1976, small portatives and electronic substitutes were utilized for repertoire that required an organ. The last piece performed on the Norton Memorial Organ was Berlioz's *Te Deum* in April 1976, with the Orchestra's keyboard principal, Joela Jones, at the console.

Shortly thereafter, organ restoration expert Joseph Dzeda wrote, "In my opinion, this is an especially fine example of a Skinner organ, and worthy of careful preservation. . . . The organ in Severance Hall represents a great tradition in organ building, and is one of the outstanding instruments in any American concert hall. Were it possible to overcome the serious disadvantage of its tonal egress, the full potential of this organ as a solo and accompaniment instrument could be realized . . . increasing the richness of the musical resources of the city."

Renewal, Restoration, and Return

By the 1980s the prevailing opinion about the Norton Memorial Organ was that it either needed to be

moved to a more suitable space within Severance Hall or removed altogether. However, after becoming The Cleveland Orchestra's sixth music director in 1984, Christoph von Dohnányi was a strong advocate for restoring the organ and incorporating it into a stage shell. Mr. Dohnányi believed that an orchestra of Cleveland's stature deserved a large concert hall organ and that the introduction of organ pipes into a new shell would enhance the concert hall's acoustics. It would take another decade for the time to be right for such an ambitious and risky undertaking.

In January 1997 the Musical Arts Association Board of Trustees endorsed plans for a major renovation and expansion of Severance Hall, including $2 million for relocation and restoration of the organ. Jack M. Bethards, president and tonal director of Schoenstein & Company in San Francisco, guided the initial planning and served as the Orchestra's organ consultant throughout the project.

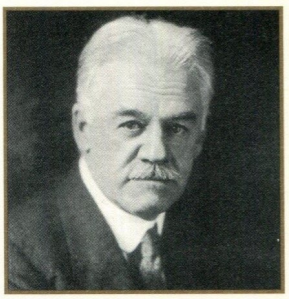
After considering several firms for the restoration of the organ, representatives from The Cleveland Orchestra's acoustics and organ subcommittee traveled to Orrville, Ohio, to visit the Schantz Organ Company. Founded in 1873, the company is recognized as one of the foremost builders and restorers of pipe organs in the United States. Subcommittee members quickly decided to recommend Schantz to restore the Norton Memorial Organ.

In July 1997 the organ was removed from Severance Hall through a seven-by-seven foot hole cut in the back wall of the building. Pipe by pipe, the entire 94-rank instrument was lowered to the ground and transported to the Schantz Organ Company. The pipes remained in climate-controlled storage during the completion of Severance Hall's renovation, which included the building of a new concert stage that features organ façade pipes — newly constructed by Schantz Organ Company and purely decorative — across the back. A new organ chamber occupies the space directly behind this façade, one level above the stage.

Although the Norton Memorial Organ was not in ideal performance condition and needed rebuilding, inspection by the Schantz staff revealed an instrument in excellent condition for its age. Their full-scale restoration proceeded, and in June 2000 they began reinstalling the organ pipes in Severance Hall. Over a four-week period, the Schantz staff fitted thousands of pipes and parts into the new organ chambers at the back and

E. M. Skinner

January 15, 1866 to November 27, 1960



At about the age of 10, Ernest M. Skinner began his lifelong association with the organ while listening to his father rehearse a church choir in Taunton, Massachusetts. Within two years he became the "bellows boy" for an organ in another church there, and at age 20, he began working at an organ factory in Reading, Massachusetts. Although his responsibility was to sweep the shop floors at day's end, Skinner's curiosity and spirit led him to watch the organ voicers and tuners. Eventually he worked in that capacity for several Boston-area organ builders.

Armed with confidence and experience, Ernest M. Skinner established his own organ shop in 1901. In 1932 his business merged with the pipe organ division of the Aeolian Company. Four years later, he formed Ernest M. Skinner & Son Company. E. M. Skinner served as technical director for the Schantz Organ Company from early 1947 through 1948 and retired from organ building and repairing in 1949.

In 1922 he observed, "What I have done in creating the Skinner organ is due almost wholly to a love of music, plus a mediocre inventive faculty, plus an unbounded belief in the possibilities of the organ. The symphonic orchestral colors have always seemed to me to be as necessary to the organ as to the orchestra and so under the stimulus of some great orchestral or operatic work, I have worked out all the orchestral colors and have included them in Skinner organs."

Upon his death, the periodical *Diapason* observed, "Few of Mr. Skinner's masterpieces — and masterpieces of their time and taste they surely were — still remain in their original design." Indeed, it became fashionable in the mid 1930s to rebuild Skinner organs throughout the country, but through luck or inertia, Skinner's Opus 816 in Severance Hall was saved from such an ignoble fate.

(photograph courtesy of Organ Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia)

sides of the Severance stage. Through careful coordination between Eric Gastier (Schantz staff architect) and David M. Schwarz and Craig Williams of David M. Schwarz Architectural Services (the Severance Hall Project's design architects), the new organ chambers duplicate the previous space, and the enclosed divisions of the organ are configured as they were in the original installation. The Great and Pedal organ layout was altered slightly to accommodate the new location; however, all wind chests and reservoirs are original.

While the duplication of the Norton Memorial Organ's layout preserves the balance and ensemble cohesion as E. M. Skinner intended, it was necessary to check each pipe for proper speech and balance, from pipe to pipe and rank to rank. Throughout the summer and early fall of 2000, experts from Schantz tuned and voiced the organ and conducted tests on the organ, playing solo and with The Cleveland Orchestra.

The restoration and reinstallation of the Norton Memorial Organ was funded through contributions to the *Campaign for The Cleveland Orchestra: Our Legacy to the Twenty-First Century*, a comprehensive fund-raising effort from 1996-2000 that exceeded its $100-million goal by nearly $16 million. In addition to leadership contributions to the Norton Memorial Organ Fund, over 400 donors have endowed nearly 450 of its 6,025 pipes.

The rededication of the Norton Memorial Organ successfully marks the completion of the Severance Hall Renovation Project. Just as the project respected the integrity of the original design for Severance Hall, the restoration and return of the Norton Memorial Organ proceeded in accordance with E. M. Skinner's objectives for his Opus 816. To date, the organ has never achieved its potential, and it is a benefaction of history that the instrument survived until that time late in the twentieth century when conditions for its salvation were optimal.

Seventy years after its creation, the Norton Memorial Organ has assumed its rightful place in Severance Hall and has found its splendid voice. In many respects, the Organ Gala Celebration on January 6, 2001, is the true dedication concert for this glorious instrument.

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Jeffrey Dexter
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Eric Gastier
Staff Architect

The Musical Arts Association acknowledges with gratitude the volunteered efforts of Ethan Connor toward the preservation and restoration of the Norton Memorial Organ. Ethan, a member of the bass section of The Cleveland Orchestra, is also a trained organ builder who quietly watched over the health of the instrument during its decades of silence. Also of note are the efforts of Jeff Weiler and Jonathan Ambrosino, who were engaged in the spring of 1996 to bring the organ partially back to life. Working together with Ethan Connor, their efforts were crucial to our decision to restore this magnificent instrument.

Schantz Organ Company

Orrville, Ohio

E.M. Skinner Opus 816 at Schantz Organ Company

Established in 1873 by Abraham J. Tschantz (later changed to Schantz), The Schantz Organ Company is the oldest and largest American pipe organ builder still under the management of its founding family. Born in Kidron, Ohio, in 1849, A. J. Schantz, the grandson of Swiss immigrants, combined his inventive skills and love of music by building pipe organs. His company's operations were moved to Orrville, Ohio, in 1874, and the current site has been in use since 1901.

Early in the 20th century, Schantz's sons joined him, and the company developed a strong reputation as a regional organ builder. During World War II, pipe organ building was among those industries whose use of strategic materials, such as wood and metal, was curtailed by law. Instead, Schantz produced government-contracted munitions boxes and other war-related parts.

After the war, the Schantz sons continued the family tradition, building a national demand for Schantz organs. At that time, the tremendous surge in need for products of all kinds was reflected in the unprecedented demand for pipe organs for churches and colleges. Schantz gradually built a sales force across the United States, and the company's reputation for quality, conservative management, and ingenuity attracted a staff of young, industrious craftspeople, many from the surrounding Mennonite community. Today, the old-world crafts of metal casting, metalworking, and woodworking co-exist with modern technologies such as solid-state electronics and computer-driven cutting tools to produce instruments of the highest musical integrity and mechanical reliability.

The Schantz Organ Company's staff of 95 produces about 12 to 24 organs per year, depending upon their size. The entire group was involved in the restoration of Severance Hall's Norton Memorial Organ. Other recently completed projects include the rebuilding of the organ in Melbourne Town Hall, Melbourne, Australia. Schantz's magnum opus is the 154-rank organ of Sacred Heart Cathedral in Newark, New Jersey (originally built in 1953-54 as 135 ranks and rebuilt in 1989-90).

Swell Division 2000

Specification of the E. M. Skinner Pipe Organ

Norton Memorial Organ at Severance Hall, Opus 816

Great Organ

6" Wind Pressure

16'	Double Diapason	61 pipes
8'	First Diapason	61 pipes
8'	Second Diapason	61 pipes
8'	Third Diapason [enclosed in Choir]	61 pipes
8'	Harmonic Flute	61 pipes
8'	Gedeckt [enclosed in Choir]	61 pipes
8'	Viola [enclosed in Choir]	61 pipes
8'	Erzähler	61 pipes
5-1/3'	Quinte	61 pipes
4'	Octave	61 pipes
4'	Flute [enclosed in Choir]	61 pipes
2-2/3'	Twelfth	61 pipes
2'	Fifteenth	61 pipes
	Chorus Mixture VII (15-19-22-26-29-33-36)	427 pipes
	Harmonics IV (17-19-flat21-22)	244 pipes
16'	Trumpet *10" Wind*	61 pipes
8'	Tromba *10" Wind*	61 pipes
4'	Clarion *10" Wind*	61 pipes
	Chimes	(Solo)
	Solo High Pressure Reeds	(Solo)

Swell Organ

6" Wind Pressure

16'	Melodia	73 pipes
8'	Diapason	73 pipes
8'	Rohrflöte	73 pipes
8'	Flauto Dolce	73 pipes
8'	Flute Celeste [TC]	61 pipes
8'	Salicional	73 pipes
8'	Voix Celeste	73 pipes
8'	Echo Gamba	73 pipes
8'	Echo Gamba Celeste	73 pipes
4'	Octave	73 pipes
4'	Flute Triangulaire	73 pipes
2'	Flautino	61 pipes
	Mixture V (15-19-22-26-29)	305 pipes
	Cornet V (12-15-17-19-22)	305 pipes
16'	Waldhorn *10" Wind*	73 pipes
8'	Trumpet *10" Wind*	73 pipes
8'	French Trumpet	73 pipes
8'	Oboe d'Amore	73 pipes
4'	Clarion *10" Wind*	73 pipes
8'	Vox Humana	73 pipes
	Tremolo	
	Harp	(Choir)
	Celesta	(Choir)

Choir Organ

6" Wind Pressure

16'	Gamba	73 pipes
8'	Geigen	73 pipes
8'	Concert Flute	73 pipes
8'	Dulciana	73 pipes
8'	Gamba	73 pipes
8'	Dulcet II	146 pipes
4'	Octave	73 pipes
4'	Flute	73 pipes
4'	Gambette	73 pipes
2-2/3'	Nazard	61 pipes
2'	Piccolo	61 pipes
1-3/5'	Tierce	61 pipes
1-1/3'	Larigot	61 pipes
	Carillon III (12-17-22)	183 pipes
16'	Fagotto	73 pipes
8'	Orchestral Trumpet	73 pipes

8'	Orchestral Oboe	61 pipes
8'	Clarinet	73 pipes
	Tremolo	
	Harp *10" Wind*	61 bars
	Celesta	(ext.)

Solo Organ

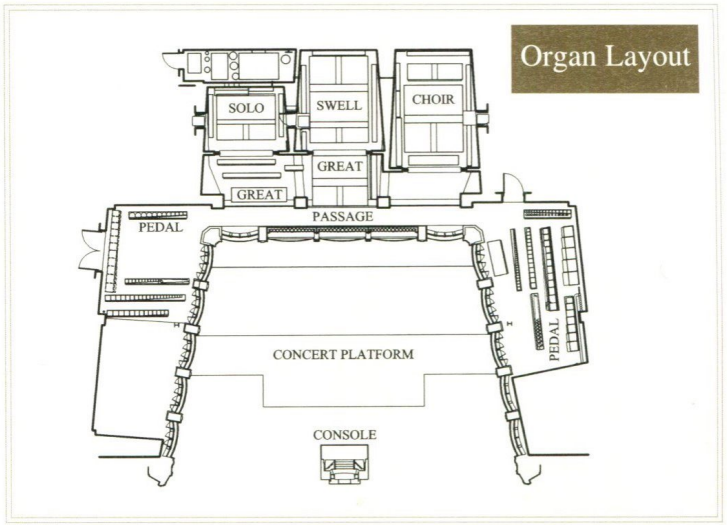
10" Wind Pressure

8'	Flauto Mirabilis	73 pipes
8'	Gamba	73 pipes
8'	Gamba Celeste	73 pipes
4'	Orchestral Flute	73 pipes
16'	Corno di Bassetto	85 pipes
8'	Tuba Mirabilis *20" Wind*	73 pipes
8'	French Horn *20" Wind*	73 pipes
8'	Corno di Bassetto	(ext.)
8'	English Horn	73 pipes
4'	Tuba Clarion *20" Wind*	73 pipes
	Tremolo	
	Chimes	25 bells

Pedal Organ

6" Wind Pressure

32'	Major Bass	56 pipes
16'	Diapason	32 pipes
16'	Contra Bass	56 pipes
16'	Diapason	(Great)
16'	Bourdon	(ext. Major Bass)
16'	Melodia	(Swell)
16'	Dulciana	32 pipes
16'	Gamba	(Choir)
8'	Octave	(ext. Contra Bass)
8'	Gedeckt	(ext. Major Bass)
8'	Cello	(Choir 16' Gamba)
8'	Still Gedeckt	(Swell 16' Melodia)
4'	Super Octave	(ext. Contra Bass)
	Mixture IV (10-12-flat14-15) *5" Wind*	128 pipes
32'	Bombarde *20" Wind*	56 pipes
32'	Fagotto *1-12 on 10" Wind*	12 pipes
16'	Trombone *15" Wind*	(ext. Bombarde)
16'	Waldhorn	(Swell)
16'	Fagotto	(Choir)
8'	Tromba	(ext. Bombarde)
	Chimes	



Console Appointments

4 manual keyboards [ivory naturals; ebony sharps]

1 pedal keyboard [maple naturals; ebony sharps]

97 drawknobs

28 rocking tablets

7 Pedal couplers, 7 Unison couplers,

14 Super and Sub-Octave couplers

8 reversible coupler pistons

3 reversible coupler toe pistons

All Swells to Swell (key cheek thumb piston and toe piston with indicator light)

Great unenclosed stops (On/Off, thumb pistons with indicator light

Sforzando reversible (thumb and toe pistons with indicator light)

8 General thumb and toe pistons

Set and Cancel thumb pistons

10 Great divisional thumb pistons and divisional cancel

10 Swell divisional thumb pistons and divisional cancel

10 Choir divisional thumb pistons and divisional cancel

6 Solo divisional pistons and divisional cancel

8 Pedal divisional pistons and divisional cancel

Pedal to Manual On/Off (Pedal divisional pistons on manual divisional pistons for Great, Swell, Choir and Solo)

16' Stops Off Manuals (key cheek thumb piston)

32' Stops Off Pedal (key cheek thumb piston)

3 expression shoes [Swell, Choir, Solo]

Crescendo shoe with indicator light

Severance Hall 1997