

The Chapel Organ

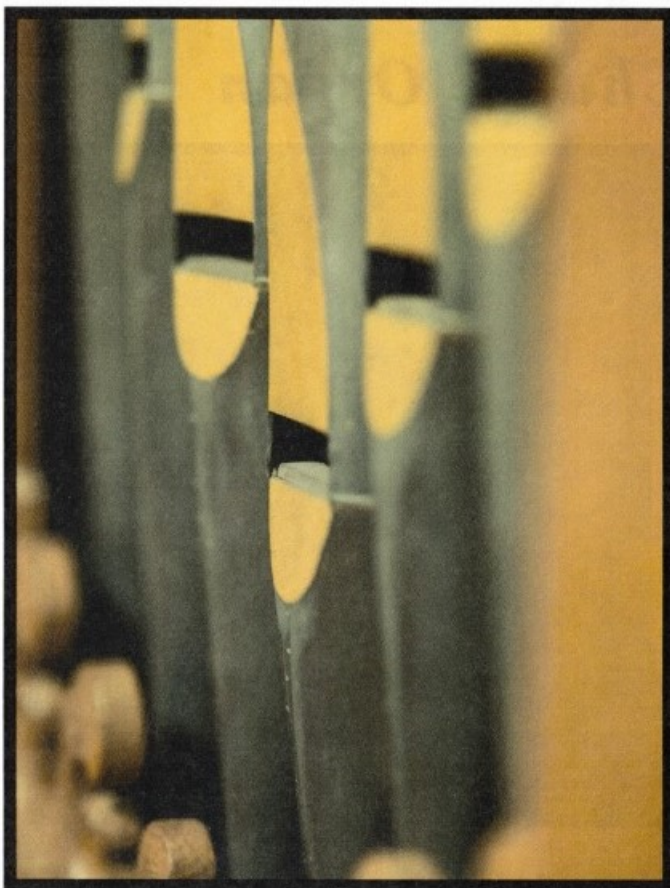
Our new-to-us chapel organ was built in Zaandam, Holland in 1976 as a chancel organ for Trinity Episcopal Cathedral in Cleveland. I heard about the availability of this instrument through an ad in *The Diapason*, a magazine for organists and organ enthusiasts. I made contact with Patrick Murphy,



one of the organ builders who has bid on renovating our Cathedral organ, and whom I have kept in touch with. He spoke with Trinity's Music Director, Todd Wilson, and we made arrangements for me to come out to Cleveland and try the instrument. After hearing the organ and taking measurements, Msgr. Bob and I, together with



Dave Raatz, decided it would be a good fit for our chapel. While the price for purchase and installation seemed a little high, replacement costs alone would easily be 3-4 times what was paid for the instrument.



The instrument was installed over two days (4-5 October) by a team from Patrick J. Murphy and Associates from Stowe, Pennsylvania. The organ is made of all natural materials and has a “break in” period during which the metals and wood adjust to the temperature and humidity of the new location. And, of course, as temperatures change, so does the tuning, but it will stabilize as the season stabilizes (or as much as is possible in the mid-west!)

The firm of Flen-trop Orgelbouw is well known is organ circles. They have been in business since 1903 and have built or restored many famous instruments, especially in Germany and Holland. Since the 1950’s they have also built some instruments for churches and universities in America. One of their main proponents in this coun-



try, was the late organist, E. Power Biggs, who was instrumental in getting one of their organs installed in the Busch-Reisinger Museum (a museum of Germanic art and part of Harvard University) in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Many organists of my generation cut their organ playing teeth listening to Biggs' recordings of Bach made on that instrument. In 1989, Flentrop also built a large gallery organ for Holy Name Cathedral in Chicago, Illinois.



The new chapel instrument, like any organ, is made entirely by hand. While electric tools may be used in the cutting and shaping process, human hands do most of the work. The Flentrop Company



also manufactures all their own pipes, including making the metal itself (a combination of mostly lead, tin, and zinc) from which the pipes are formed. Each pipe, once made, is adjusted by hand and by human ears, so that all the notes in each set of pipes sounds as it should. The organ has 13 stops or "sounds" and 16 ranks (or sets) of pipes. The case is made of oak and the keys are of rosewood and bone. Unlike the Cathedral organ, pressing a key on this organ puts you in direct contact with a valve under the pipe so you feel a direct connection with the sound you are

an “electrical switch” as you do on other types of organs. This is how all organs were made before the advent of electricity.

As I mentioned above, this instrument was built in 1976 making it currently 42 years old. In that time it has had just routine service, much as an automobile needs routine service to keep running efficiently. Unlike many modern organs, there is no leather to wear out and need replacing; there are no circuit boards that go out of manufacture; the technology really hasn't changed much in several hundred years. Though there are specific adjustments necessary with a mechanical instrument, the expense tends to be in the initial building rather than a continuous stream throughout its lifetime. There are many mechanical action instruments of this kind in Europe, built in earlier centuries, that still playing and sound as fine as they day they were dedicated. This organ too, with proper and regular maintenance, will last for well over 100 years.

