

'Another Exceptional Organ' Introduced by Dallas Artist

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Post-Bulletin Music Critic

The fact that Rochester has become a center of organ activity and a mecca for regional enthusiasts is now generally quite recognized. More fervor was kindled when in December, 1970, another exceptional instrument was completed and its dedicatory recital was eagerly anticipated. That event is now history. Approximately 700 persons were present Sunday night at Zumbro Lutheran Church to confirm in sound the prophetic rumors concerning this instrument. It is magnificent.



Oudal

The instrument was built by the Aeolian-Skinner Organ Company but its designer was the same Robert L. Sipe who designed and built the excellent organ in the Christ United Methodist Church. Give credit to the Aeolian-Skinner Company for recognizing Sipe's extraordinary talent and consequently digesting him into their system as vice president and tonal director. Sipe in consultation with Merrill Davis III, director of music at Zumbro Lutheran Church, has produced another one of the exceptional instruments in this country.

THE INSTRUMENT employs tracker action which is to say that the keyboard is connected mechanically (not electronically) to the pipe chest. To the performer, such construction affords a sense of touch or feeling of direct control which to the listener is translated into sound phenomena characterized by precise, clean articulation and some subtle differences in tonal attacks, the latter being particularly useful in producing rhythmic accents.

Sipe manages to produce organs of exceptional clarity while achieving amazing homogeneous ensemble within each of its divisions and this organ is further proof of his success. The anatomy of the instrument is exposed, lending its visual appearance an honest beauty.

AN ORGAN, HOWEVER, is not only its pipes and console, it is also its environment. This instrument is rather large and it taxes the physical dimensions of the space in which it is contained. This is not to say the instrument is "too loud" for the church. It is not, but rather the instrument needs an ample volume of space which will allow its tonal pro-

To demonstrate the capabilities of a first class instrument, a performer of similarly outstanding merits is necessary and for this event the choice of Dr. Robert Anderson was an impeccable one. Anderson is head of the organ department at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Tex.

ANDERSON'S PERFORMANCE was characterized by clear articulation, precise and vigorous rhythmic execution, clean melodic delineation and further a willingness to make expressive emotional commitments. Anderson is especially successful in maintaining the clarity of melodic development in polyphonic pieces such as in Bach's transcription of the solo Concerto No. II in A Minor for two violins and orchestra and also in the Fantasia and Fugue in C Minor by Bach.

Unfortunately the Fugue from this latter composition never really achieved its proper climax due in part to the phenomena previously mentioned (denial of spatial environment) which prevented adequate bass production. The Durufle Scherzo, brilliantly executed, would also have achieved more tonal diffusion under larger spatial conditions.

ANDERSON'S ABILITY to maintain distinctive melodic lines was particularly evident in his rendering of the Bach Trio from the Eighteen Chorales. In this performance Anderson made excellent use of the distinctive stops of the instrument and, through not balanced in volume, their distinctive qualities easily projected the independence of each line.

Particularly impressive was Anderson's presentation of Reubke's Sonata: The 94th Psalm. This composition cast in the programmatic manner of Liszt's tone poems using, in this case, selected verses from the 94th Psalm carefully chosen so as to effect in content the movement divisions of a sonata. Anderson's performance was bril-

liantly executed and dramatically exciting. After a merited standing ovation he responded with the Andante Sostenuto from Widor's Symphonie Gothique as an encore.

This is indeed a fine instrument and it was in especially sympathetic and understanding hands last night. The Aeolian-Skinner Organ Company recognize the merit of both in a bold act of confidence by utilizing this combination in a recording venture. The people of Zumbro Church can be proud of this instrument and happy to know it was singled out for recording honors. An expensive investment, yes, but a long-lived one and fortunately now others can experience via recording the fruits of this achievement.