



# The American Organist

January 2014



## COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA A.E. SCHLUETER PIPE ORGAN COMPANY LITHONIA, GEORGIA

### From the Ministers of Music

In May 2003, we had the privilege of performing for the Piccolo Spoleto Festival in Charleston, South Carolina, playing on a new A.E. Schlueter instrument at Bethel United Methodist Church. This organ's tonal palette, craftsmanship, and imaginative flexibility made a great impression on us, planting the seed for a future new instrument in Covenant Presbyterian Church's Morrison Chapel.

The first organ in Morrison Chapel, an 1885 William A. Johnson & Son instrument, came from the old St. Mark's Lutheran Church of Charlotte. Enlarged and rebuilt by the Schlicker Organ Company in 1962, the instrument served the congregation until 2012. Gifts from individuals and local foundations established seed money for planning a new instrument. In 2010 a bequest from the estate of Esther L. and Charles E. Fishel provided the funds to build and endow a new organ as well as support other musical initiatives. Using information gathered in 2005, an ad hoc committee selected A.E. Schlueter Pipe Organ Company to build a 32-rank organ of great versatility and warmth. Its tonal palette, in the American Classic Style, resembles the design of the sanctuary's Aeolian-Skinner organ.

Upon its completion in May 2012, the new organ immediately displayed its aural beauty and dependability in weekly Sunday services, monthly Wednesday services, and frequent memorial services and weddings. Organists Susan and Stephen Talley, assisted by violinist Laurel Talley, dedicated the Esther L. and Charles E. Fishel Organ in two concerts on September 22, 2012. A festive setting of *Last uns Erfreuen* with original "organ dedication" text and harmonizations by Karen Keene opened the concert, leading the audience in celebratory song. Michael Bedford's *Theme and Variations on "Le Ping"*, premiered at the National AGO Convention in 2010, displayed the organ's flute and string colors as well as full organ in the concluding *Carillon*. Bach's *Prelude and Fugue in A Minor*, BWV 543, demonstrated the clarity and breadth of the new instrument's principal choruses. Boëllmann's popular *Prière à Notre-Dame* and *Toccata* from *Suite*



Front of sanctuary viewed from console in the rear gallery (photo: Thomas Geist)

*gothique* showed off the singing Harmonic Flute and the soulful Vox Humana as well as the dramatic reed choruses. A gentle violin and organ *Intermezzo* by Peter Matthews offered a sorbet before Albert Travis's brilliant *Toccata on "Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart"* concluded the program.

In the year following its formal dedication, the organ has continued its weekly and monthly service duties. Congregation members at these services frequently express their appreciation for the organ's elegant hymn leadership and warm service music.

The chapel's English Gothic architecture, elegant Willett stained-glass windows, and the new Schlueter organ create an inviting venue for the congregation's "Chamber Music in the Chapel" concert series. The organ will be a featured instrument at the 2015 Region IV AGO Convention.

The new instrument joins other distinctive organs on the Covenant Presbyterian Church campus: a 1949 five-manual, 96-rank Aeolian-Skinner, bearing the signature plate of G. Donald Harrison; a 1975 two-manual, 36-rank mechanical action Schlicker; and a two-manual ten-rank mechanical-action Flentrop. More information and photos of all the Covenant organs and the church's 48-bell Peric and Frisen carillon can be found at [Covenantpresby.org](http://Covenantpresby.org).

STEPHEN AND SUSAN TALLEY  
Ministers of Music



## From the Organbuilder

As we planned this instrument, we knew that it was going to be very important that it be prepared to take part in all forms of music. As we considered the tonal design, we quickly settled on an eclectic instrument that, while having resources that are an homage to early-American Classicism (inclusive of a Romantic/symphonic core), had a stoplist that could support a wider body of repertoire that spanned the pre- and post-Romantic periods.

I have often said that when I discuss the stops in a specification, such as an 8' Principal, I know distinctly, with utmost clarity, the sound that is in my head. However, this will also be true of the church musicians, clergy, organ committee members, and consultants—and the sounds that are in their heads. The question, of course, is, how are these individual definitions of sound bridged? The sound in my head may not be the right one if it differs significantly from what my client wants. As part of our tonal design process, I develop what I like to call a "living will" for the specification. During joint visits to instruments, meetings, telephone calls, and e-mails with our clients, we transcribe and document the way the organ will be used, characteristics about the way certain stops or a body of stops may be used, inter- and intra-manual relationships, likes and dislikes in various organ stops, and myriad other factors. The resulting documentation not only serves as a guide for the formal stoplist and development of the scaling sheets, but also provides a clearly defined guide to the entire staff of the Schlueter firm throughout the project. This methodology was a significant part of our process in building the new organ for Covenant Presbyterian Church.

The completed specification has 32 ranks with heavy reliance on an 8' weighted manual stoplist, the necessary resources to provide an appropriate gravitas in the Pedal, and replete with color, weight, and variety.

The instrument is centered around the generously scaled diapason chorus in the Great division. The 16/8 Violone is variably scaled to enhance its use as a 16' foundation under the chorus, and as a more defined string as it ascends above the 8' register. To complete the Great funds, we included a very generously scaled, tonally ascendant 8' Harmonic Flute, and companion 8' Bourdon of capped metal construction. The stops that are pitch ascendant from the 8' flue line (4, 4, 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ , 2, 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ , IV) are scaled and voiced to fold in with the chorus, not dominate it. In keeping with their solo nature, the Harmonic Flute and II Cornet were placed in a mounted position above the Great, which allow them to sing unforced into the sanctuary.



The console arrives. (photo: Stephen Tulley)

In an instrument with just one enclosed division, the Swell division takes on a special consideration. Our requirements for this division included a secondary principal chorus, a complete flute chorus, rich and vibrant strings, and reed chorus. The expression box was built over two inches thick to allow complete dynamic control of the full Swell resources.

The primary Swell strings are a pair of 8' Violas which are generously scaled to allow the unison rank to ably serve an 8' foundational role with the 4' Principal and IV Mixture (2') to form the Swell principal chorus. These strings are companioned with a pair of diminutive 8' Muted Violas and a pair of 8' Flauto Dolce. A generously scaled 8' Vox Humana in a separate enclosure provides the final ingredient with the massed strings for a shimmering, ethereal color.

The flutes in the Swell, while easily combined into a single unified voice, are made of differing materials and include stoppered, semi-open, and open flues to allow each stop its own unique, distinct voice, which ably serve solo or ensemble functions. The svelte flute cornet (8, 4, 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ , 2, 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ ) provides a wonderful contrast to the more incisive, focused, principal cornet in the Great.

The organ reeds were built with English shallots that provide a balance between harmonics and fundamental tone. The Swell reeds are duplexed to the Great, which allows scaled dynamics within the Great chorus due to their enclosed position. The 8' Oboe is fitted with domed lift caps, weighted tongues and heavy resonator construction, which provides a darker color with a large



Console in front of side casework and facade (photo: Thomas Geist)



vowel cavity, giving it a singing, plaintive voice. The 8' Swell chorus reeds are extended downward into the Pedal Division to provide two differing stop weights in the 16' register.

For a festive organ solo voice, we incorporated an 8' English Tuba into the specification. Featuring small Willis tuba shallots and higher wind pressure, this stop caps the organ with a voice that is at once smooth, fluid, and bright, without clangor or excessive éclat. This rank of pipes is located in the Swell expression box to allow full dynamic control of this powerful stop.

The primary foundational flue voices of the Pedal division are in the organ facade, where they can speak in a defined, unimpeded manner. While some duplexing and unification was included in the specification, it was often more a consideration of a dedicated built-in coupling of individual stops rather than pitch reliance. With space at a premium, digital stops were incorporated for the 32' pitches and the tuned percussions.

The rear gallery location provided a challenge in design, due to the gallery stairwell access on the right side and the centered stained glass window. This was complicated by the fact that the physical floor space was only available on the left side of the gallery. While we were confident that the organ could work tonally from this single speaking location, it presented the problem of a visual anachronism with the potential for an off-center case design in this Gothic space. Our solution was to bring the organ facade and case forward of the gallery rail. This placement and the inclusion of a canfilever let us make use of the thin veneer of wall space on the right-hand side with only a modest projection into the nave. The stairwell entrance into the gallery was engineered through the organ case.

Through some clever winding and internal transmissions for note actions, we were able to include speaking pipes in the right case. The wall sections behind these pipes were painted black, which spatially gives an impression of a large cavity of space behind the facade to match the organ side of the case. This treatment used little floor space and allowed symmetry and visual balance in the design.

The twin cases are built of white oak, finished to pair with the surroundings of wood, stone, iron, and stained glass. The exposed facade pipework includes the 16' Violone, 8' Pedal Octave, 8' Principal, 4' Choral Bass made of polished aluminum, and the wooden 16' Subbass, stained with an oak finish. We were very pleased with how the organ fits the visual fabric of this worship space.

To control the resources of the organ, we built a traditional, English-style two-manual drawknob console. The console sits on a rolling platform to allow it to be placed in a centered concert position or moved 90 degrees to the side to allow an unimpeded view down the length of the nave. The console exterior is built of white oak with an interior of mahogany and ebony. One unique feature of this console is the inclusion of ebony and ivory keyboards built from pre-ban ivory sources. Other console features include modern conveniences for the performer such as multiple memory levels, programmable crescendo and sforzando, transposer, MIDI, and the ability to record and play back organ performances. The record/playback capability has proved an invaluable aid to registration by allowing the performer to hear the organ from the chapel floor.

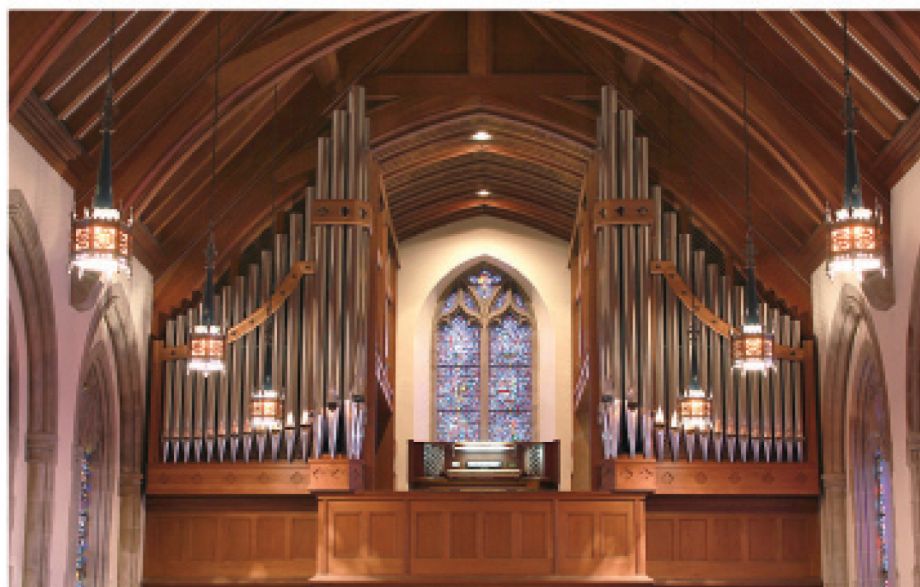
The design of the organ chassis incorporates electropneumatic slider windchests for the manual flue stops, with unit stops and reeds on electropneumatic unit action. The wind is raised through conventional spring and weight curtain valve reservoirs.

Owing to the favorable speaking location, the organ was able to be gently voiced with wind pressures in the three- to four-inch range, save for the English Tuba, which speaks on  $7\frac{1}{4}$  inches of wind.

As is our practice, the organ was tonally finished during several voicing sessions that allowed us to evaluate the results as part of the ongoing process. We have found that this method of tonal finishing results in a finer level of pipe voicing than would be possible from a single dedicated voicing session.



View of gallery before organ installation. Notice the walls enclosing the stairwell on the right side. (photo: Thomas Geist)

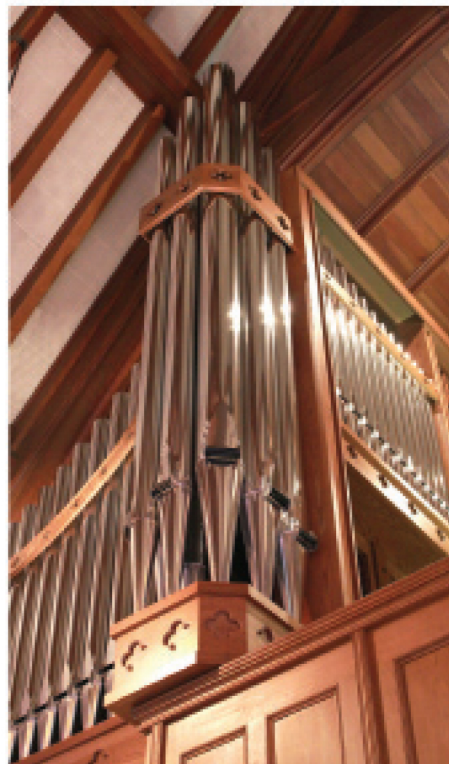


Pipe organ installed in gallery (photo: Kathryn G. Pickard)



**Covenant Presbyterian Church  
Charlotte, North Carolina  
A.E. Schlueter Pipe Organ Company**

**Two manuals, 32 ranks**



Facade pipes in cantilevered corbel  
(photo: Kathryn G. Pickard)

We would like to thank the staff and congregation of Covenant Presbyterian Church for their trust and support during the organ building and installation. We particularly would like to thank Stephen and Susan Talley for their vision and dedication to this project. We were constantly buoyed by their zeal and enthusiasm for building an instrument dedicated to edify and glorify God through music and worship. Truly, their mission became our own.

We are very fortunate to have so many talented craftspeople at our firm whose combined skills result in the ultimate success of our instruments. Our staff includes Arthur Schlueter Jr., Arthur Schlueter III, Robert Black, Steven Bowen, Kelvin Cheatham, Marc Conley, Patty Conley, Shan Dalton, Michael DeSimone, Pete Duys, Jay Hodges, Patrick Hodges, Ruth Lopez, Jeff Moore, Chad Sartin, Al Schroer, Barbara Sedlacek, Jim Sowell, John Tanner, Bud Taylor, Bob Weaver, Dallas Wood, and Bill Zeiler.

If you would like more information on this instrument and our firm, I invite you to visit the Schlueter Pipe Organ Company website at [pipe-organ.com](http://pipe-organ.com), write to me at A.E. Schlueter Pipe Organ Company, P.O. Box 838, Lithonia, GA 30058, or feel free to reach me at my personal e-mail address: [art3@pipe-organ.com](mailto:art3@pipe-organ.com).

ARTHUR E. SCHLUETER III  
Tonal and Artistic Director

**GREAT**

16 Violone  
8 Diapason  
8 Violone  
8 Harmonic Flute  
8 Bourdon  
8 Flauto Dolce (Sw.)  
8 Flauto Dolce Celeste (Sw., TC)  
8 Erzähler Celeste II  
4 Octave  
4 Chimney Flute  
2<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub> Cornet II (TC)  
2 Fifteenth  
1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub> Mixture IV  
16 Bassoon (Sw.)  
8 Trumpet (Sw.)  
8 Tuba (Sw.)  
Tremolo  
Great to Great 16  
Great Unison Off  
Great to Great 4

**SWELL (enclosed)**

16 Lieblich Gedeckt  
8 Stopped Diapason  
8 Viola da Gamba  
8 Viola Celeste (TC)  
8 Muted Violes II  
8 Flauto Dolce  
8 Flauto Dolce Celeste (TC)  
4 Principal  
4 Nachthorn  
2<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub> Nazard  
2 Flageolet  
1<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub> Tierce  
2 Mixture III-IV  
16 Bassoon  
8 Tuba  
8 Trumpet  
8 Oboe  
8 Vox Humana  
4 Clarion  
Tremolo  
Swell to Swell 16  
Swell Unison Off  
Swell to Swell 4

**PEDAL**

32 Sanftbass  
32 Untersatz  
16 Violone  
16 Bourdon  
16 Lieblich Gedeckt (Sw.)  
10<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub> Quint  
8 Octave Bass  
8 Violone  
8 Bourdon

8 Gedeckt (Sw.)  
4 Choral Bass  
4 Cantus Flute  
2<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub> Mixture II  
32 Bassoon  
16 Contra Trumpet (Sw.)  
16 Bassoon (Sw.)  
8 Trumpet (Sw.)  
8 Oboe (Sw.)  
4 Oboe Clarion (Sw.)  
8 Tuba (Sw.)

**PERCUSSION**

Chimes  
Harp  
Zimbelstern

**INTERMANUAL COUPLERS**

Great to Pedal 8  
Great to Pedal 4  
Swell to Pedal 8  
Swell to Pedal 4  
Swell to Great 16  
Swell to Great 8  
Swell to Great 4

**COMBINATION SYSTEM**

128 memory levels  
Great 1 2 3 4 5 (thumb)  
Swell 1 2 3 4 5 (thumb)  
Pedal 1 2 3 4 (toe)  
General 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (thumb)  
General 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (toe)  
Set piston (thumb)  
General cancel (thumb)

**REVERSIBLES**

Great to Pedal (thumb, toe)  
Swell to Pedal (thumb, toe)  
32 Sanftbass (thumb, toe)  
32 Bassoon (thumb, toe)  
Sforzando, programmable (thumb, toe)

**ACCESSORIES**

Swell expression pedal  
Crescendo pedal, programmable  
LED system control panel  
Sforzando indicator light  
Crescendo indicator light  
Signal indicator light  
Piston sequencer  
Movable console platform

**MIDI**

Six programmable MIDI tablets  
Playback/Record sequencer