From the Builder

Some time ago I heard an organbuilder explaining to a handful of devotees: "I could not design an organ that would have more than 60 stops!" I am afraid this resulted either from an obvious lack of imagination or from a behavior similar to that of the fox in La Fontaine's fable, "The Fox and the Grapes." In fact, most organbuilders dream of building a large organ that would be the magnum opus of their professional life. I confess it had been my dream for a long time, and I was more than happy and enthusiastic when we were entrusted with building this magnificent organ.

Huge organs, larger than this one, are not uncommon in the United States but most of them are, to a certain extent, disappointing, as they lack stylistic unity. They are often collections of stops in which the originality (not to say, the eccentricity) of stop names tries desperately to hide the lack of personality of sounds and the absence of definite tonal architecture. To some extent, it is easier to design a large organ than a small one, since one does not have to discard some fine but nonessential voices. But this facility also hides the dangers of redundancy and lack of personality. It is too easy to give birth to an enormous collection of characterless stops. This is a shortcoming I wanted to avoid in Casavant's Opus 3750. Not only does this organ have extremely wide dynamics—including the effectiveness of the swell boxes, which has been noted by everyone who has heard or played it—but it also displays an exceptional variety of colors. The various principals, flutes, mutations, strings, and reeds not only differ in power from one division to another but they also show different timbres. It is, therefore, possible to build up various ensembles contrasting in both dynamic level and color. My goal was not to generate enormous power, thanks to the great number of stops, but rather to realize a very rich palette of sounds that would be both individually seductive and eminently able to blend together.

For this purpose, the scaling has been calculated taking into account the role of the various stops, their position inside the cases, and the acoustics of the building. Similarly, the wind pressures were decided after conducting acoustical tests in the building that included pipes being blown in the areas where the organ was going to be installed.

One may wonder what makes this instrument so unique. Its unity originates from its French style but this does not mean that it is a slavish copy of any existing French organ, for copying is not art. The parameters of the most important voices (principals, mixtures, flutes, mutations, and chorus reeds) are directly inspired by the French tradition of the famous builders Clicquot and Cavailié-Coll. Although sometimes ignored or forgotten, organbuilding has been in constant evolution and it is possible to trace a kind of continuum from a very early age, with Dom Bédes, Clicquot, and Cavailié-Coll standing as landmarks along a line that leads to the type of harmonious synthesis that Casavant Frères has promoted for many years. The requirement of aesthetic unity, which has guided our conceptual work, however, has been devoid of sectarianism. Therefore, we have not hesitated to incorporate a "Trompeterie" of Spanish inspiration into the tonal scheme, remembering that Cavailié-Coll was of Iberian origin and had en-
riched some of his finest organs with bright trompettes-en-chamade. In fact, he had expected to include them in the huge organ he designed for St. Peter’s in Rome.

The voicing has been done, keeping in mind the best examples of French organs. Most pipes of the plenum have a high tin content, which encourages freshness and transparency. We have taken great care to refine the organ’s musical line, not to the point that it becomes dull and lifeless, generating opaque ensembles. This very delicate and touchy balance is one of the "secrets" of the wonderful singing quality of this instrument.

The specification is self-explanatory and does not need much comment. The approach was similar to Cavaille-Coll’s when he built his largest organ, that of Saint-Sulpice in Paris, where he combined the best of the existing classic voices with the new voices peculiar to the Romantic period. The Grand Orgue is "The Great" indeed, as it contains the instrument’s most important foundation stops. When additional power is needed (for example, when the organ is played with a large symphonic orchestra), the Bombardes division, voiced on higher wind pressures, can be coupled to the Grand Orgue. It has a large diapason chorus of slotted pipes, which imparts a distinctly different tone from the other principal stops, plus a battery of bright trompettes. The Piffaro II–III reinforces the foundation 8' and 4', and adds a 16' beginning at middle C. In fact, the Bombardes is the symphonic complement of the Grand Orgue.

Among the other features of this organ, the Récit, an organ by itself with its magnificent reed ensemble based on the Contre Trombone 32', is particularly noticeable. This large division has two chorus mixtures at 2' pitch. The Furniture III is designed for small ensembles and is useful for various accompanimental roles, while the Plein Jeu V is included for use with the full ensemble including the reed chorus.

The Choeur II is especially useful for accompanimental purposes. Its Jeu de Clochettes II with a high-pitched tierce rank provides a delicate percussion-like effect. The mutations in this division and those of the other divisions, especially the Positif with its seventh- and ninth-sounding ranks, provide the organist with almost endless possibilities for creating unusual and colorful sounds. The Récit Cornet decompôsé et Solo Clochettes II are made with harmonic pipework.

The antiphonal is by no means an echo organ; on account of its prominent position, it speaks with an unmistakable authority and adds a tremendous grandeur to the chancel organ. The antiphonal chamade has a more symphonic sound, while the chancel chamade is finished more on the classic side. However, the registral design of the chamades is loud enough to cover everything else; they voiced on moderate wind pressures and blend with big ensembles without annihilating them. Parenthetically, the exceptional blending capacities of the various stops have been underscored by everyone, which would seem to indicate that Sillou’s theory that the blending capabilities of organ stops is proportional to their personality and soloistic capacity.

Broadway Baptist Church now has an organ that will give satisfaction to the most demanding performers. Its flexibility is unparalleled: it can provide the best accompaniments for choirs and solo instruments, lead inspiring hymnody by aggregations of stops of different magnitudes, and be played with large symphonic orchestras without being overwhelmed. Above all, it is a moving musical instrument that will charm and delight music lovers and instrumentophiles.

Jean-Louis Cohen, Total Director Casavant Frères Limitée

When an organbuilder creates a new instrument for a church, there is always the accompanying development of performance and personal relationships, which grow during the course of the project. Since the term of the project for the organ at Broadway Baptist Church extended over twelve years before reaching a contract, these friendships have been well forged.

From the very first visit to this church, one is immediately impressed by the special qualities of this congregation. If large churches are automatically thought to be impersonal and unfriendly, someone forgot to tell the members of Broadway Baptist Church.

The imposing structure, the home of the congregation, stands proudly just south of the downtown commercial center of Fort Worth. The area once was home to many other mainline churches, and left the area for the growing suburban areas of the city. The congregation of Broadway elected to stay while others fled. Its perseverance and strong ministry to people of all economic and social levels is one small indication of the boundaries of its total worth.

When members tell the story of the building of their beautiful Gothic-style church, they relate how a young businessman who moved from New York and inspired and led the congregation to build a truly special building rather than one that was just adequate. The new organ project, too, was inspired by a church member, Van Giburn, when he made the comment that it takes only a little extra effort to go beyond what is merely expected to what is the best.

The space within which the Casavant organ was installed in the church when it was new. Typical of the 1950s, the organ was completely enclosed in chambers on the upper level of the chancel. The chambers were spacious but not deep; the tone openings could not provide any effective acoustical qualities present in the building.

When the project for the organ began with consideration to rebuild the existing Casavant organ, which was installed in the church when it was new. Typical of the 1950s, the organ was completely enclosed in chambers on the upper level of the chancel. The chambers were spacious but not deep; the tone openings could not provide any effective acoustical qualities present in the building.

Once a decision was made to install a new instrument, much discussion followed regarding ways to solve the placement and environmental problems. The previous organ was quite proper, and the planning committee of the chancel, one could see that this instrument would virtually sit on a shallow ledge just behind the casework and behind grilles to the left and right of the west front windows. The windows behind the organ were sealed and a passive heat removal system was designed to eliminate the buildup of hot air, which had caused so much difficulty and damage in the past.

Because of the very large expressiveness of the organ, it was decided to provide each with low velocity return air grilles for complete control of the temperature within these divisions. The organ’s wind supply is from blowers and air-absorbing enclosures inside the organ itself and from large units on the level just below the organ, where each unit receives conditioned air from the system supplying the chancel and nave.

Throughout the planning phases of this project, the goal was never to create a large instrument just for its size. In fact, it was only at the end of the process that someone raised the question about the instrument’s size in relationship to other installations.

In every case, the choice of stops was guided by the overall tonal architectural design of the church. The placement places important importance on the building rather than one that was just adequate. The new organ project, too, was inspired by a church member, Van Giburn, when he made the comment that it takes only a little extra effort to go beyond what is merely expected to what is the best.

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Broadway’s commitment to quality is seen not only in its physical plant and the care with which it is maintained but also in the programs the church provides to all people in the area. Music is just one facet of this church’s ministry. Under the leadership of director of music Thomas Stoker and organist Albert Travis, Broadway Baptist Church provides the congregation and community with a regular fare of excellent music involving choirs and instruments. The church’s annual musical presentations draw people from all over the metropolitan area. Included in the renovated chancel area is enough space to permit performance by a choir of 105 and an orchestra of 96. A large hydraulic lift in the forward pulpit platform allows any movement of the organ console or concert grand piano to any one of several levels in the front of the room.

In a recent Sunday morning newspaper, there was an article entitled “Church Goes to the Movies.” It related how many churches are trying to reach more people by employing creative methods of evoking interest in the entertainment business. With seemingly more and more churches lining up for the parade, it is inspiring to see the success this congregation has had in remaining committed to the choice and performance of the very best to inspire
and move listeners and to challenge them to think beyond the common and mundane.

Churches of all denominations should study the model offered by this congregation. There is much to learn from the level of activity and commitment of this group of unique individuals.

JACQUIN ROCHETTE
STANLEY R. SCHER
Casavant Frères Limitée

From the Consultant

I began discussions relative to organ concerns with the people at Broadway Baptist Church in 1982. Since the new organ was not dedicated until the fall of 1996, it truly can be said that this instrument sustained one of the longest gestation periods in history! The wait, however, has been both justified and rewarding, and the frustrations have given way to rejoicing!

You have read about the history and technical details from others. Aside from citing the great pleasure from working with and learning from all those involved, I can best sum up the result by saying that I believe this magnum opus of Casavant Frères to be the art of organbuilding brought to a pinnacle. No effort was spared by Casavant or by the church to ensure that the instrument would be a work of art par excellence. Having played hundreds of organs in many parts of the world, I can honestly say that Opus 3750 has few peers. It is supremely satisfying to have to listen to, and to look at. The church plans to share this instrument with the community in a variety of ways. I hope everyone who reads this will have the opportunity to experience one of the truly great organs of the world.

FREDERICK SWANN, Consultant

From the Minister of Music

Magnificent rooms, people with vision, and inspiring organists who have helped worshipers experience God through the majesty of the organ inspire the building of great organs. This is the case in the building of Casavant Opus 3750 at Broadway Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas. When I arrived on Broadway’s music staff in 1983, the first file I encountered on my desk was the organ file. Included in this file were letters of inquiry regarding the refurbishment of Casavant Opus 2091 (IV/92) installed in the church’s modified Gothic sanctuary in 1952. The instrument had served well, but the time of its installation, while exhibiting Casavant’s historic care in construction, represented ideal acoustical environment of the sanctuary and Albert L. Travis’s inspired skill at the organ had more than compensated for the organ’s shortcomings.

By 1981, the congregation decided to refurbish the organ. In 1982, after 12 months of planning, the congregation, the people at Broadway Baptist retained Frederick Swann to serve as the organ consultant. Fred was then the organist-director of music at the Riverside Church in New York City, whose sanctuary had inspired the building of Broadway’s sanctuary.

In the months that followed, we decided that the cost of refurbishment would be very close to the cost of replacement. We decided to plan toward a new instrument.

Albert L. Travis and I have heard well more than 100 organs during these years. We have studied the files on the construction of many of these instruments. Based upon these studies and Fred Swann’s great deal of the evidence of fine construction in Opus 2091, Casavant was selected as the builder.

Two capital campaigns included the replacement of the organ. Other priorities would take precedence over the organ project. In the late 1970s, a high rise sectional building of Broadway’s sanctuary.

The church’s modified Gothic sanctuary in 1952. The instrument had served well, but the time had arrived on Broadway’s music staff in 1983, the first file I encountered on my desk was the organ file. Included in this file were letters of inquiry regarding the refurbishment of Casavant Opus 2091 (IV/92) installed in the church’s modified Gothic sanctuary in 1952.

The Texas financial climate did not offer the best opportunity for completion of the project until 1992. After appointing a third committee to study the project and present recommendations to the congregation, the congregation voted to proceed with the project to renovate the sanctuary and build what was to become the Rildia Bee O’Bryan Cliburn Organ.

The congregation pledged itself to $2.75 million of a total capital project of $3.75 million and a mission tithe of more than $200,000 was included. More than 500 members, from children to adults, made pledges. The congregation is seeking community support to complete the funding.

We named the organ for Broadway member Rildia Bee O’Bryan Cliburn to honor her life, vividly lived in service to God, to the arts, and to humanity. The Rildia Bee O’Bryan Cliburn Organ was dedicated in October of 1996, it was a dream come true for me and many in Broadway’s congregation.

With the fulfillment of this long-awaited dream, we now have an instrument that we believe will be one of the great organs of the world. This is an organ of exceptional tonal subtlety and strength. From the whisper of the Flute Celeste to the brilliance of the Trompetera, there are infinite possibilities of combinations of colors throughout the 191 ranks.

The primary task of Opus 3750 is to serve as the major instrument in worship at Broadway. After its first service last October, the response of the congregation was overwhelmingly positive in the way the organ improved congregational singing. With the use of the antiphonal organ of 31 ranks, sounds surround the congregation. This has solved the problem of sound delays from the chancel organ down the long nave.

In addition to the wealth of tonal variety for hymn singing, the organ has endless capabilities for choral accompaniment. As an improviser, I am finding this instrument to be inspiring and totally satisfying. Literature from Frescobaldi, Bruhns, Bach, Mendelssohn, Brahms, Franck, and Widor to Messiaen and Albright is equally at home.

Opus 3750 was designed not only to be a sanctuary instrument for worship but one for community outreach. Hymn festivals, noonday recitals, and organ and orchestra concerts will maximize the effectiveness of this instrument. Broadway Baptist Church plans to offer national symposiums on improvisation, worship, and hymnody. This inspiring capacity will hopefully encourage young people who hear it to consider musical careers.

The real success of this instrument is due to Jean-Louis Coignet, Casavant Frères, to the installers and tuning finishers, and to the congregation of Broadway Baptist Church who sacrificially have given this extravagant instrument.

ALBERT L. TRAVIS
BROADWAY BAPTIST CHURCH
FORT WORTH, TEXAS

CASA VANT FRERES LIMITÉE
SAIN'T-HYACINTHE, QUÉBEC

GRAND ORGUE (II)
32 Violonbasse (Pédale)
32 Contre bourdon (Pédale)
16 Violonbasse (ext.)
16 Bourdon à cheminée (ext.)
8 Montre (70% tin)
8 Violon (70% tin)
8 Flûte harmonique
8 Flûte à cheminée
5% Grand nazard (open)
4 Prestant (70% tin)
4 Violin (70% tin)
8 Flûte ouverte
3% Grand tierce
2 Quarte de nèzet
2% Cornet V
2% Grand fourniture IV–V (70% tin)
14 Fourniture IV–VI (70% tin)
½ Cymbale IV (70% tin)
16 * Bombarde (full length)
* Trompette (70% tin)
4 Clairon (50% tin)
4 Chalumeau (50% tin)
4 Trompette (70% tin)
8 Cymbale-tierce III (70% tin)
8 Salicional
8 Cornemuse (50% tin)
4 Clarion (70% tin)
4 Chalumeau (50% tin)
8 Trompettes
8 Cymbales
8 Harpes (from Op. 2091)

SOLO (V)
9 Flûte double
9 Violoncelle
9 Trompette royale (CC)
9 Gambe
9 Gambe celeste (CC)
9 Flûte de concert
9 Nazard
9 Clochettes II (harmonic)
9 Carillon (Positif)
9 Hautbois d'orchestre
9 Trompette harmonique
9 * High pressure

RÉCIT (III)
16 Contre gambe (ext.)
8 Principal
8 Flûte traversière (70% tin)
8 Viole de gambe
8 Voix céleste (CC)
8 Flûte majeure
8 Voix angéliques II
4 Octave
4 Flûte octavante (70% tin)
2¾ Nazard harmonique (70% tin)
2 Octavin (70% tin)
1¼ Tierce harmonique (70% tin)
2 Fourniture III
1 Plein jeu V
2 Carrillon III
32 * Contre trombone (ext.)
16 Trombone (full length, ext.)
16 * Trompette (full length)
8 * Trompette harmonique
8 Hautbois
8 * Voix humaine
4 * Clarion harmonique
4 Trompette-en-chamade
4 Tremblant
4 * Hautbois d'orchestre
4 Trompette harmonique
4 Harpe
4 Voix humaine
4 * Clairon harmonique
4 Trompette (Positif)
4 * Cornets vénitiens
4 Trompettes
4 Cornets (Positif)
4 Octave
4 Bourdon (Positif)
4 Voix céleste (GG)
4 Principal
4 Flûte à bec
2 Octave
15 Larigot
1 Cymbale II–IV
16 Basson
8 Trompette
8 Trompette
Récit à Récit 16
8 Trompette
8 Trompette
Récit Unison Off
8 Trompette
8 Trompette
Récit Unison Off
8 Trompette
8 Trompette
Récit Unison Off
8 Trompette
8 Trompette

ANTIPHONAL (II)
32 Soubasse (Pédale)
16 Soubasse
16 Bourdon (Antiphonal Grand Orgue)
8 Octavebasse (50% tin)
8 Bourdon (Antiphonal Grand Orgue)
4 Octave (50% tin)
16 Bombarde (full length, ext.)
8 Trompette (Antiphonal Grand Orgue)
8 Trompette
8 Trompette
8 Trompette
8 Trompette
8 Trompette

ANTIPHONAL RÉCIT (III)
8 Flûte à cheminée
8 Principal étroit
8 Voix céleste (GG)
4 Principal
4 Flûte à fusée
2 Octave
1 Larigot
1 Cymbale II–IV
16 Basson
8 Trompette
8 Trompette
Récit à Récit 16
8 Trompette
8 Trompette
Récit Unison Off
8 Trompette
8 Trompette
Récit Unison Off
8 Trompette
8 Trompette

ANTIPHONAL PÉDALE
32 Soubasse (Pédale)
16 Soubasse
16 Bourdon (Antiphonal Grand Orgue)
8 Octavebasse (50% tin)
8 Bourdon (Antiphonal Grand Orgue)
4 Octave (50% tin)
16 Bombarde (full length, ext.)
8 Trompette (Antiphonal Grand Orgue)
8 Trompette
8 Trompette
8 Trompette
8 Trompette
8 Trompette

DESIGN DETAILS
Electropneumatic key and stop action
Electronic combination action—64 memories
Balanced expression—Récit, Choeur, Solo, Antiphonal, et Cembalo
Programmable crescendo—four levels
Consoles: Chancel, five-manual “English” style drawknob
Antiphonal, five-manual terraced-style drawknob with duplicate controls of the chancel console. Drawknobs for antiphonal organ only
Keyboards: ebony covered naturals, rosewood sharps with bone caps
Pedalboards: maple naturals, rosewood sharps, thumb pistons, and nameplates of rosewood
Photographs: Allan Akins

February 1997

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