

In The Pipeline



Journal of the Organ Society of Western Australia (Incorporated)
Founded 1966
ABN 49 302 148 987
www.oswa.org.au

Volume 22, Number 1, February 2018

St Francis Xavier Cathedral

Midway through 2012, John Larner asked me to consider assisting him in the building of a new organ for St Francis Xavier Cathedral, Geraldton which would subsume the existing free-standing organ he built in 1980. The cathedral authorities had approached him because of his long association with the people there. As it transpired, my company was engaged to build the organ and John to act as tonal director and consultant to the project, which was originally planned to conclude towards the end of 2013.

A contract was signed in Dec 2012 between the then Bishop Justin and Pipe Organs W.A (POWA). with the removal of the existing organ to take place sometime in April 2013. John Larner designed the tonal aspect of the instruments in consultation with myself and Tomasz Nowak and we commenced work in Jan 2013 building a new 3 manual console and a slider chest for the new "Cantoris" division, (a name chosen by John.) This new division was to be mounted on the wall of the north transept, above the location of the first organ, to provide more intimate accompaniment to smaller masses as well as choral performances.

New pipework from Poland was



St Francis Xavier Cathedral, Geraldton

purchased for the new Gallery organ. This would become the main core of the organ with the original Larner console to be installed in the gallery as well, duplicating the main 'mobile' console on the floor of the cathedral. Because the desire of the cathedral authorities was to have a mobile console, the retention of the original mechanical action was impossible, sadly, however it allowed more flexibility in terms of intra-manual couplers and the utilisation of unit chests to enlarge the organ within the constraints of the budget.

Towards the latter part of 2013, Bishop Justin asked if we could suspend work as the anticipated funding from State and Federal Governments had not come through. Therefore, all work ceased for the next three and a half years.

In early 2017 POWA was asked to prepare a new contract for the



The West Gallery organ

remaining work on this project as new funding was becoming available in order to complete the whole cathedral rebuilding project which by now had escalated to over nine million dollars.

A new contract was signed on 27th February 2017 and work commenced immediately with the removal of John Larner's original mechanical organ. This was taken to the POWA factory in Bayswater where components from this organ were modified to blend seamlessly into the new work. Additional pipe work was ordered from Poland and all other components assembled at the workshop

Throughout the following seven months POWA workers completed

most of the building work for the new Gallery division and the Cantoris division as well as adapting the 1980 console to modern switching at the keysets and pedalboard.

The design of the cases was modified quite considerably at the request of the new man in charge of the project, Fr Robert Cross, Director of Heritage at the Geraldton diocese. Together with Fr Robert, Tomasz and myself, we designed a new façade for the two main chambers in the gallery and also a modified front to the casework of the Cantoris, which now was to be located on the north wall of the north transept, below the stained glass window.

Originally, it was intended for the west wall in the north transept. We also modified our plans to include extra pipework in the Cantoris (Principal 8') by retaining the centre panel of John's original case in the Cantoris and creating two new lateral towers of semi-circular design and two timber screens between the towers and the centre panel. This allowed us to use the original Principal 8' pipes from the 1980 organ without change. New highly polished Principal 8' pipes of 75% tin were therefore purchased from Poland and arrived in the latter part of 2017. All these changes gained the imprimatur of John Larner who assisted in the physical work of project as he was able.

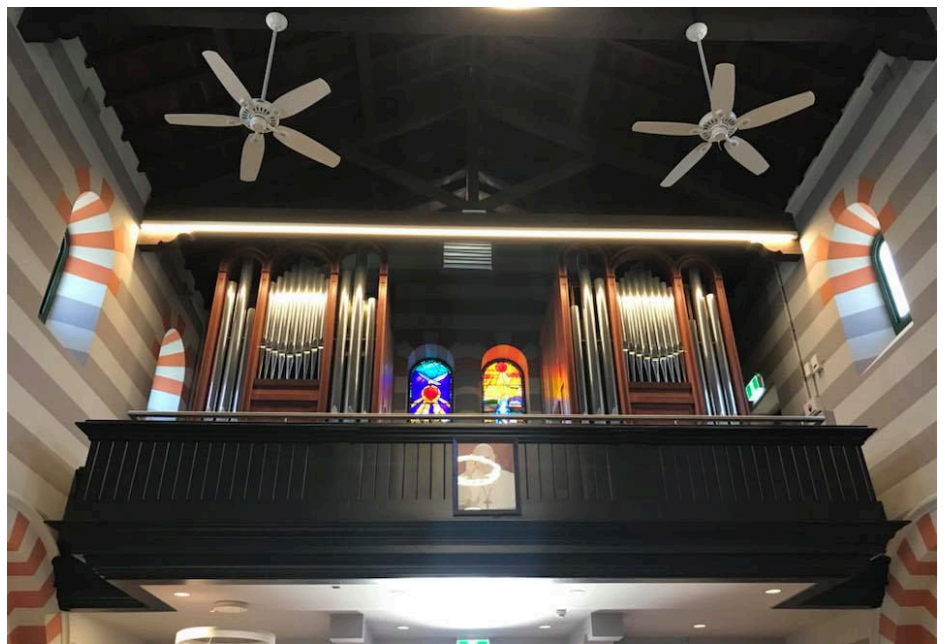


View of the nave from the West End gallery during construction

Due to building delays, the completion date for the new organ was pushed out from August 24th to September 22nd, to October 20 and eventually November 22nd. Had we known then what we know now, we should have insisted on further delays to the organs' installation because, although the building contractor for the cathedral's refurbishment graciously allowed us on to the premises for the purpose of installation some six weeks before the November deadline, it created more problems for us because the main cathedral floor had not been finished and more concrete grinding was necessary right up to early November.

With additional trades such as painters, electricians, sound engineers, carpenters, glaziers, cleaners, carpet layers, fine art detailers etc. etc. all jostling for positions in the mad rush to complete their tasks on time, it was a very trying time on everyone's patience, nerves and goodwill. It was the dust blown up from the concrete grinding and polishing that became a serious concern and one that we were still dealing with in December as it found its way into every nook and cranny of the organ. Nevertheless, our team of four workers managed to get the organ playable with 70% of the pipework voiced and tuned for the big opening mass on (appropriately) St Cecilia's Day, 22nd November. Guest organist, Jacinta Jacovsevic put the organ through its paces on this occasion and it performed faultlessly.

It took another 3 weeks for us to complete the project fully and to mark this occasion, Fr Robert asked Tomasz and I to play an impromptu recital at



The West Gallery main organ

6.00pm on 6th Dec. He gave us 2 days notice to dream up a programme and for Fr Robert to get the word out. In the event, some 60 people turned up and while I played some trusty repertoire, Tomasz provided an entertaining 20min improvisation on Australian native fauna using a couple of recognisable melodies.

So, this project came to a completion on 8th Dec 2017 and despite some initial problems with the control system, now sorted out, has been giving excellent service at the hands of the resident organist and others so far. It is fair to say that the organ sounds considerably different to the original organ despite the use of almost all the pipework from that organ. The acoustics of the cathedral have dramatically changed from prior to the major refurbishment. It now boasts at least 3.5 sec reverb.

The location of the organ has had a major impact on the sound as well, plus the air pressure has been increased marginally. Therefore, careful voicing was carried out in the final weeks and adjustments will most likely need to be made in the near future. There will be a major tuning and tonal work just before Easter 2018 after the organ has had some time to 'settle' in.

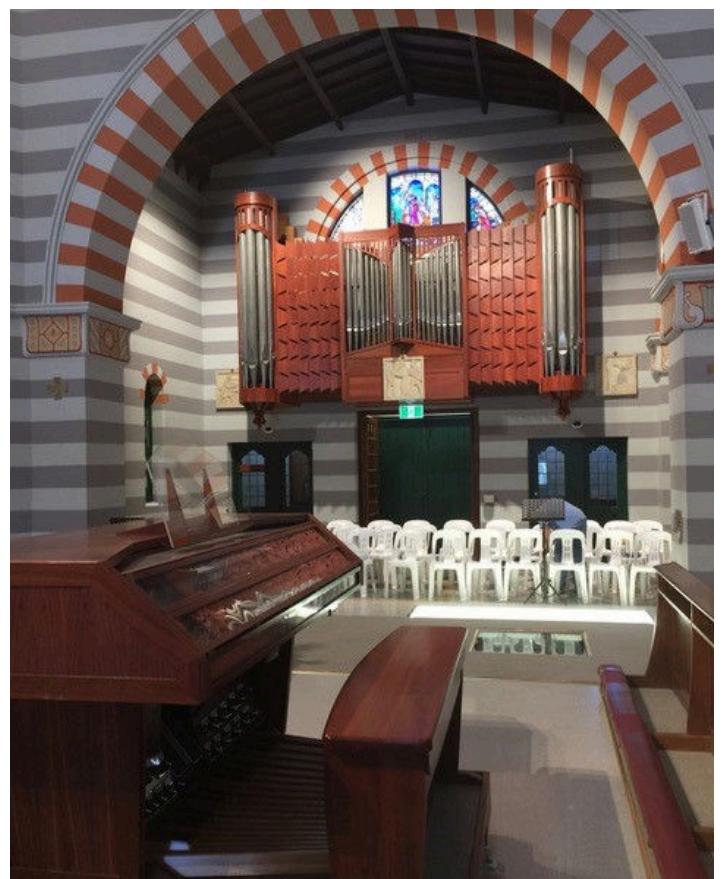
Our thanks go to all those who helped at the factory and 'on site' one way or another, particularly Tomasz Nowak without whose work, none of this would have happened.

Graham Devenish
Pipe Organs W.A.

Epilogue

John Lamer worked on this project up to early Sept when his health would not allow him to continue. His final request of me was to complete a small task in which he had been engaged for a week. This was done and only after dismantling the organ ready for transport to Geraldton, I discovered the task that he had wanted to finish. He had inscribed on the toe-board of the off chest pipes for the largest Salicional 8' in the Cantoris, the following words:

*John Lamer's last organ work.
September 4th, 2017.*



The Cantoris Organ and mobile console

GREAT C - ggg	SWELL C - ggg	PEDAL C - f
Principal 8' 56 new pipes	Hohlfute 8' 56 existing Swell	Sub Bass 16' 30 existing Pedal
Rohr Flute 8' 56 existing pipes	Gemshorn 8' 56 existing Swell	Principal 8' 30 borrowed Great
Principal 4' 56 existing pipes	Celeste 8' 44 new pipes	Flute Bass 8' 30 existing Pedal
Harmonic flute 4' 56 new metal pipes	Spitz Flute 4' 56 existing Swell	Fifteenth 4' 30 existing Pedal
Twelfth TG 2 2/3' 44 existing ex Gt	Flageolet 2' 56 existing ex Great	Bassoon 16' 30 existing Pedal
Fifteenth 2' 56 ex Swell division	Quintlein 1 1/3' 56 existing Swell	
Fourniture IV 224 existing and new	Oboe 8' 56 new pipes	
Trompette 8' 56 new French shallots, full length	Tremulant	

Details of the organ:

3 organ chambers

2 consoles (one 3 manual, one 2 manual with floating div)

1328 pipes

24 ranks including new Oboe 8', Trompette 8' with French shallots

2 'borrowed' ranks

1 mechanically extended rank

3 Discuss blowers in each chamber with breakdown bellows and Schwimmer regulators to the manual chests (Pedal pipes are supplied by air from the breakdown bellows)

Air pressure is approx. 81mm wg for each chamber manual division, 97mm for pedal pipes.

Control/memory system with wireless connection to the 3 chambers and 2 consoles. Sequencer, stepper and transposer. Keyed entry to each console, keyed start switch.

The keysets and pedal switching is done by "Hall effect" sensors and small magnets to each key which when moved away from the sensor will trigger the "on" switching. The actual 'firing point' can be finely adjusted and there are no contacts. This system was designed and implemented by Tomasz Nowak. Additionally, by the use of small neodymium magnets the 'pluck' feel of each key can be simulated and is infinitely adjustable.

CANTORIS C - ggg

Principal 8'
 56 existing pipes
 Stopped Diapason 8'
 56 pipes ex stock,
 Dolce 8'
 56 new pipes
 Celeste 8'
 44 new pipes
 Principal 4'
 56 new pipes
 Trompette 8'
 56 pipes from Gt

CANTORIS PEDAL C - f

Sub bass 16'
 12 new pipes
 extended St Diap 8

MEMORY SYSTEM

10 General pistons
 6 Divisionals to each division
 6 Reversible coupler pistons
 Sequencer Next, Previous
 Memory levels UP and DOWN
 Full Organ
 Control panel with 2 line LED
 and 6 buttons for accessing
 functions.

COUPLERS

Sw - Gt
 Sw - Gt Sub
 Cant - Gt
 Sw - Cant
 Sw - Ped
 Gt - Ped
 Cant - Ped
 Sw sub
 Sw super
 Cant super
 Gt & Ped Comb Coupled



Detail of the mobile console