

In The Pipeline



Journal of the Organ Society of Western Australia (Incorporated)

Founded 1966

ABN 49 302 148 987

www.oswa.org.au

Volume 25, Number 1, February 2021

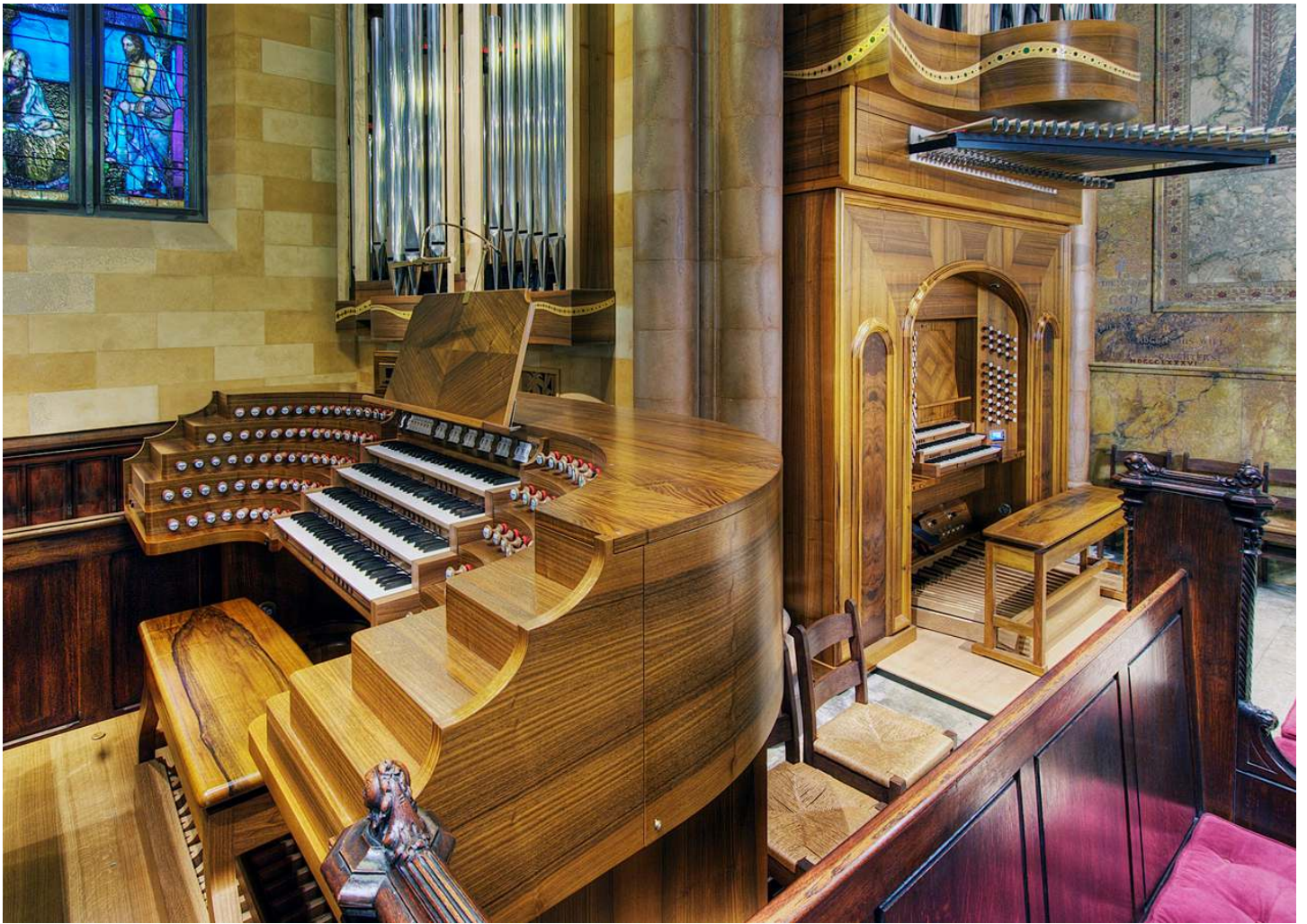
THE MANTON MEMORIAL ORGAN, NEW YORK

The Manton Memorial Organ
Church of the Ascension
Fifth Avenue, New York

The Protestant Episcopal Church of the Ascension formed in 1827 and built a church in Canal Street, New York, just east of Broadway. Just a few years later their first edifice burnt to the ground, and the congregation met in various places while making plans to erect a new church. The present edifice, notable as the first church to be built on Fifth Avenue, was designed by Richard Upjohn and consecrated in November 1841. The interior includes many outstanding sculptures, mosaics and paintings. Over the years the church has been home to seven pipe organs, the most recent and current organ being the largest of this succession.



A new organ for the Church of the Ascension was built by Pascal Quoirin of St. Didier, a town near Carpentras in Provence, South France. This organ is the first French-built organ ever to be installed in New York City. The core of the instrument is a three-manual 72 stop classical organ (Grand-Orgue, Positif, Echo/Récit, and Pédale) controlled by a three-manual mechanical action console. A second, movable console of four manuals with electric action controls the classical core as well as many other stops (97 stops altogether) intended for symphonic repertory, including a large



French Romantic Grand Récit Expressif. In particular, the organ has been designed to play the works of Olivier Messiaen, and includes every registration called for by Messiaen. Altogether there are 97 stops controlling 111 ranks of pipes. With a total of 6,183 pipes, it is the largest French organ built anywhere in almost 50 years.

The instrument is situated in the front of the church on two sides of the chancel. Four organ facades—two on each side—include elaborate wood carvings of peacocks, inspired by the peacocks of the 1880 marble reredos. Two trompettes en chamade, one on each side of the chancel, face each other in the manner of the historic Spanish organs.

For more than a half a century, Sir Edwin

Alfred Grenville Manton and Lady Florence Manton were known to generations of Ascension clergy and parishioners as “Jim and Gretchen.” Next-door neighbours to the church in Greenwich Village, they were active in the parish throughout their lives in New York, and Jim Manton served as a warden and vestry member for many years. Their volunteer efforts helped sustain the parish through the course of many rectors and their generosity during their lives and by bequest continues this day to support the daily life, worship, and programs of Ascension Church.

A British subject until his death and a great collector of British art, especially the paintings of Constable, Jim Manton was knighted and became Sir Edwin in



1994 in recognition of his charitable contributions to the Tate Gallery in London; in fact, he was, after Sir Henry Tate, the most generous benefactor in the gallery's history. But before and after that event, Mr. and Mrs. Manton's generosity toward the Church of the Ascension was unequalled in our parish history. In addition, they had a special love of great music and valued Ascension's unique place in the history of sacred music in America.

To honour their memory, The Manton Foundation chose a most appropriate gift to the parish by which to remember these two loyal parishioners: the first French-built organ ever to be installed in New York City, which, following its completion and dedication on May 1,

2011, is now one of the premier organs in the world.

The organ's remarkable sound qualities impress both the novice and experienced listener, with an extraordinary dynamic range from ethereal and delicate to powerful and profound. The organ has a coloristic palate that expresses the clarity of Baroque masterworks, the virtually infinite nuance of 19th and 20th Century French masters, and offers the versatility demanded by the works of today and the future.

From the beginning, the intent of this instrument was not to respond to a precise stylistic period, neither neo-classic, neo-symphonic, neo-baroque, etc., but rather it had the intention to lead, in terms of organ building, to a reflection on the best manner possible to perform a large body of music. The goal of this organ was defined during the course of conversations with the titular organist of the new instrument and choirmaster of the Church of the Ascension in New York, and an analyst of Olivier Messiaen's organ works.

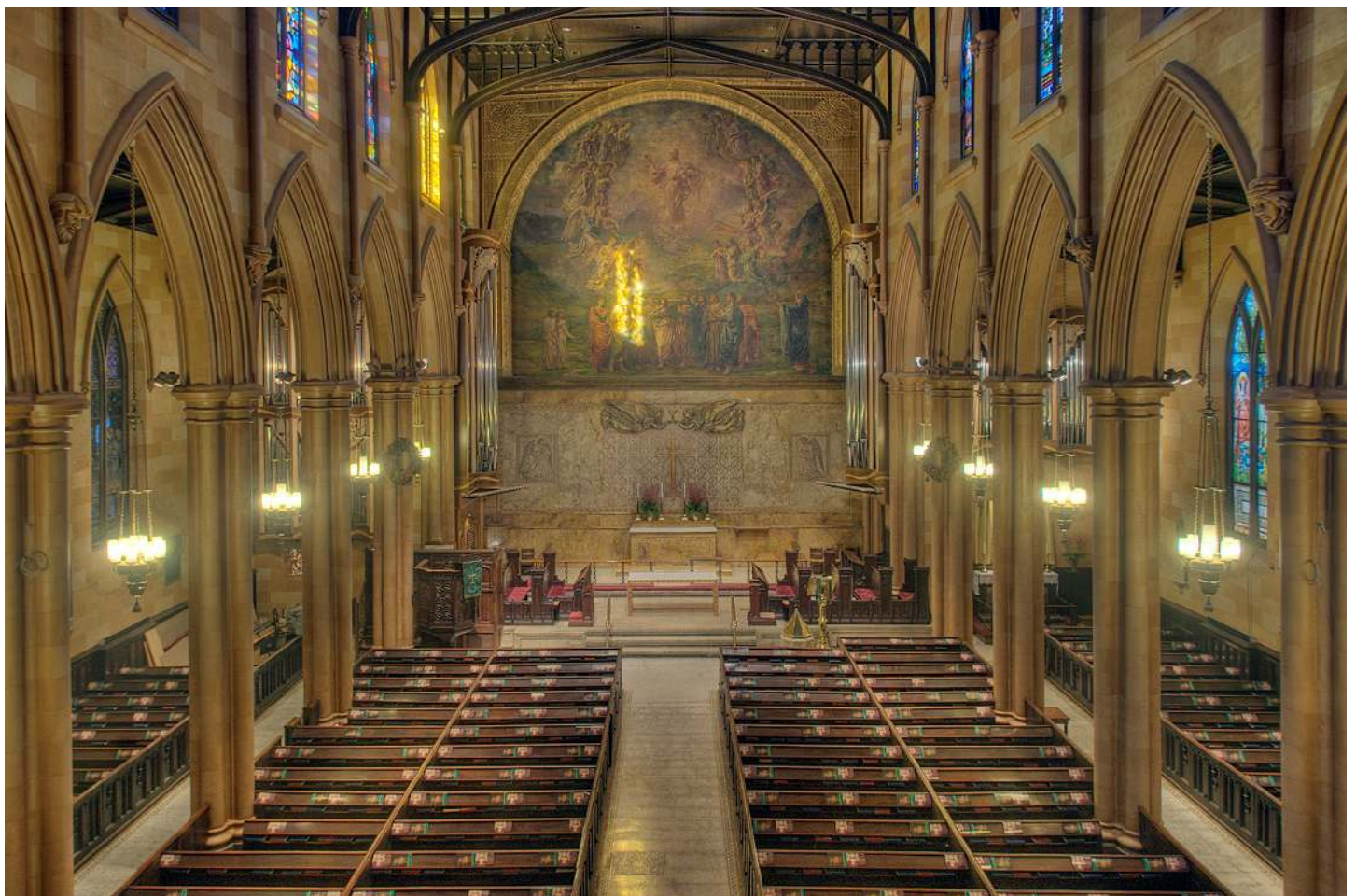
This reflexion was nourished by several visits to carefully listen to a number of instruments (St.-Rémy de Provence, the Cathedral of Évreux) and in particular to that of the Église de la Sainte-Trinité in Paris, representing the musical universe of Olivier Messiaen. The intention was to listen in detail to multiple combinations of sounds invented by Olivier Messiaen, for the most part on the Sainte-Trinité organ. The organ was conceived first of all to be an appropriate

instrument for interpreting modern repertoire of the 20th century and that of contemporary music. But, it is principally the music of Olivier Messiaen that was the dominating force in the conception of the organ.

It is this accumulated historic knowledge, strongly influenced by notable French organ builder Cavaillé-Coll, that has guided the conception of the organ at the Church of the Ascension. We find here, therefore, classical entities like the plenum, the "jeux de tierces" completely developed, the grand-choeur of reeds on their own chests, a classic disposition of the divisions: Grand-Orgue, Positif, Récit-Écho, Grand-Récit Expressif, "large" and "small" Pédale. A large part of the "classic" foundation (base) of the organ is found in the case

placed to the left of the choir: the Grand-Orgue, Positif, Récit/Écho and an important part of the Pédale. These ensembles are played with a suspended, mechanical action from the console located "en fenêtre" [in the casework].

An identical case, facing the first, houses the Grand-Récit Expressif and the remaining pedal stops. The whole organ, which brings together the two cases, to the left and right of the choir with their respective façades facing the side aisles, is played from an electric console of four keyboards. This is a mobile console that can be placed in the centre of the choir for concerts. It is at this console that one interprets most easily the contemporary repertoire or that of the 20th century, which, in general, was not written for direct mechanical action organs.

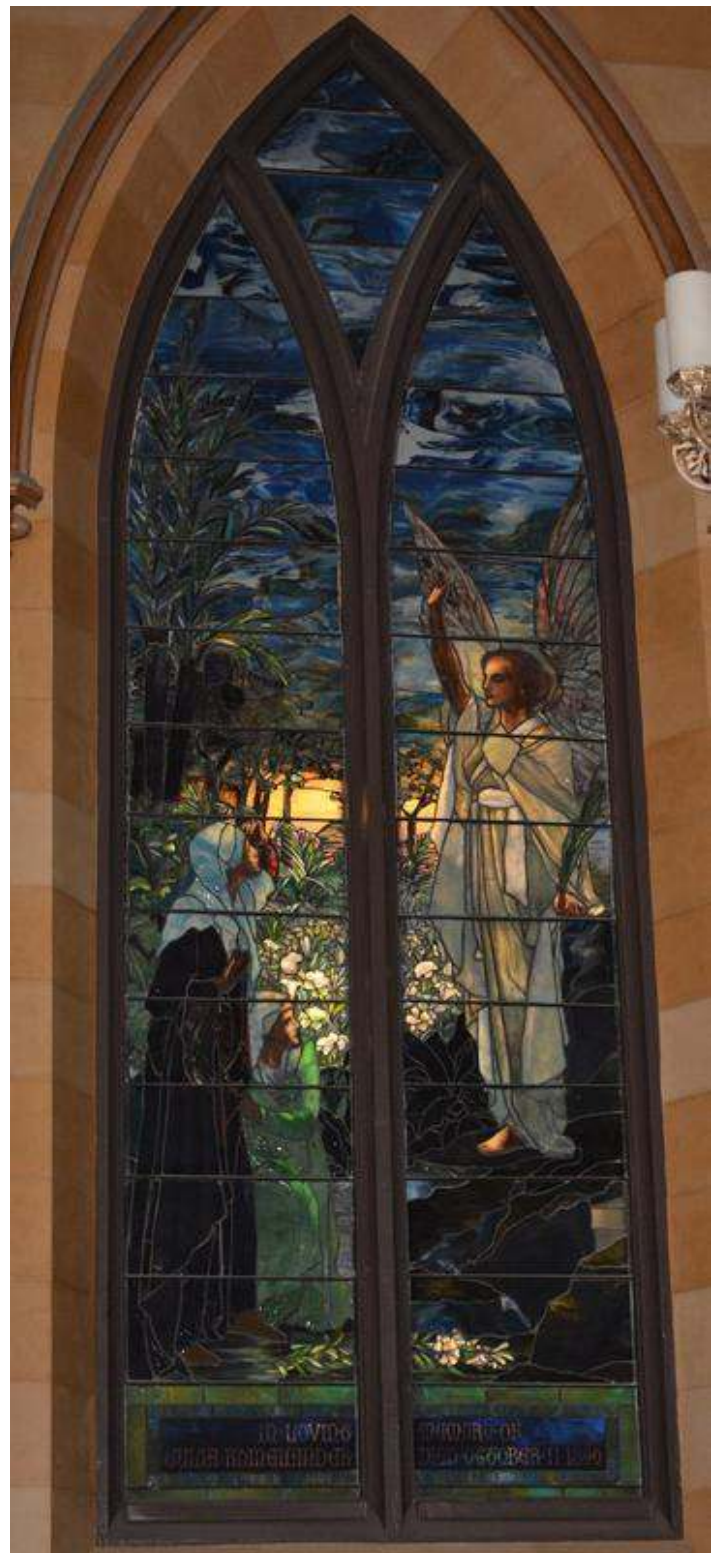


The cases were designed to integrate as harmoniously as possible with the architecture of the building. They are constructed of ash and walnut woods. The sculptured decorations are freely inspired by the style "Art Nouveau", an echo of the Tiffany stained glass windows of the church. The key motifs represent imaginary birds, recalling the birdsongs so dear to Olivier Messiaen.

There are four wind chests for the Grand-Orgue: 2 large chests for 16' stops and two others for the three reed stops, Bombarde, Trompette, Clairon. The 2nd Trompette (en-chamade) is the first stop on the foundation chest behind the façade. The configuration is the same for the Positif situated above the Grand-Orgue; the four chests have the same dimensions.

The mechanical action of the keyboards permanently pulls two sets of pallets, one for the foundation stops with pallets longer than one foot, the other shorter for the reed stops. To facilitate the opening, the first two octaves of each chest are equipped with a special assist. The touch is supple and responsive for each keyboard. There are two possibilities for coupling the manuals among themselves, either electrical or mechanical.

The pipes are cone tuned in the classic manner, but some stops have a tuning scroll: the Gambes and Voix céleste, les *Æolines*, the Second 4' and, of course, the Second 8' of the Grand-Orgue. These two stops, the size of which was given by Cavallé-Coll, are very strong, especially



in the top, and are voiced with open toes. When one plays the registration of all the 8' stops coupled together the "Second 8'" adds an effect of fullness, powerful, strongly powering upwards in a mighty crescendo. Thus, the sound of the organ is centred for the listener in the nave.

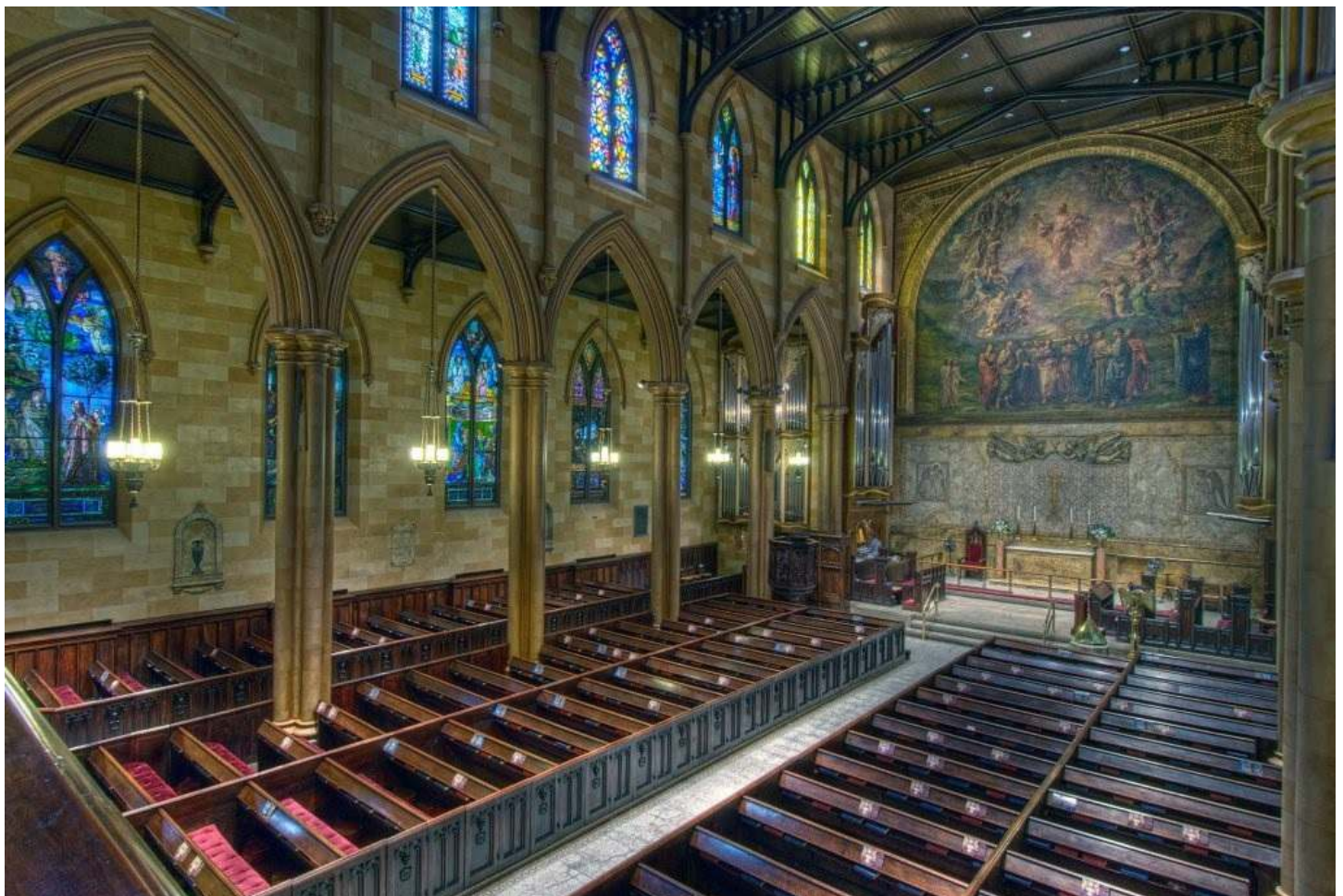
The plenum in two planes, Grand-Orgue and Positif, is founded on the

fundamental of the 16' in the French manner; Grande Fourniture with its resultants of 10 2/3', Fourniture, and Cymbale. The Plein-Jeu of the Récit Expressif is not a part of the configuration of the plenum. Its function is rather to be used with the reeds, which the symphonic character favours. On the other hand, the Sur-Cymbale on this keyboard is of the "neo-classic" type, narrow scale and high-pitched, voiced with low mouths and toes relatively closed. The use of such a stop figures in special registrations of Olivier Messiaen. It is also the typical colour of the neo-classical epoch that considered the effect of the plein-jeux as an intense and penetrating light of which the goal was to illuminate the foundations of the organ.

On the other hand, the classic conception interprets the Plein-Jeu, the plenum, as the result of a synthesis of harmonics: one homogenous sonority with its vowel sound perfectly defined. The reeds stops differentiate themselves in three different ways:

The first: classic, copying the "Dom-Bedos" reeds of the Église Sainte-Croix in Bordeaux, for the reeds of the Grand-Orgue, Positif, and the Trompette, Hautbois, and Voix humaine of the Récit/Écho, with their distinctive reeds made of brass in the form of a "U", 2/3 open.

The second: the Clarinette 8' and the Basson 8' of the Récit/Écho, the Basson 16' of the Positif, with their "tear-drop" reeds, according to the measurements of Cavaillé-Coll, and the Bassons 16' and 8' of the pédale with their rectangular "tear-



drop", tin-plated reeds.

The third: the harmonic reeds of the Récit, with their reeds more closed, of the "Bertounèche" type (French craftsman who made the shallots of Cavallé-Coll's reeds; this little factory remained in productivity until 1976).

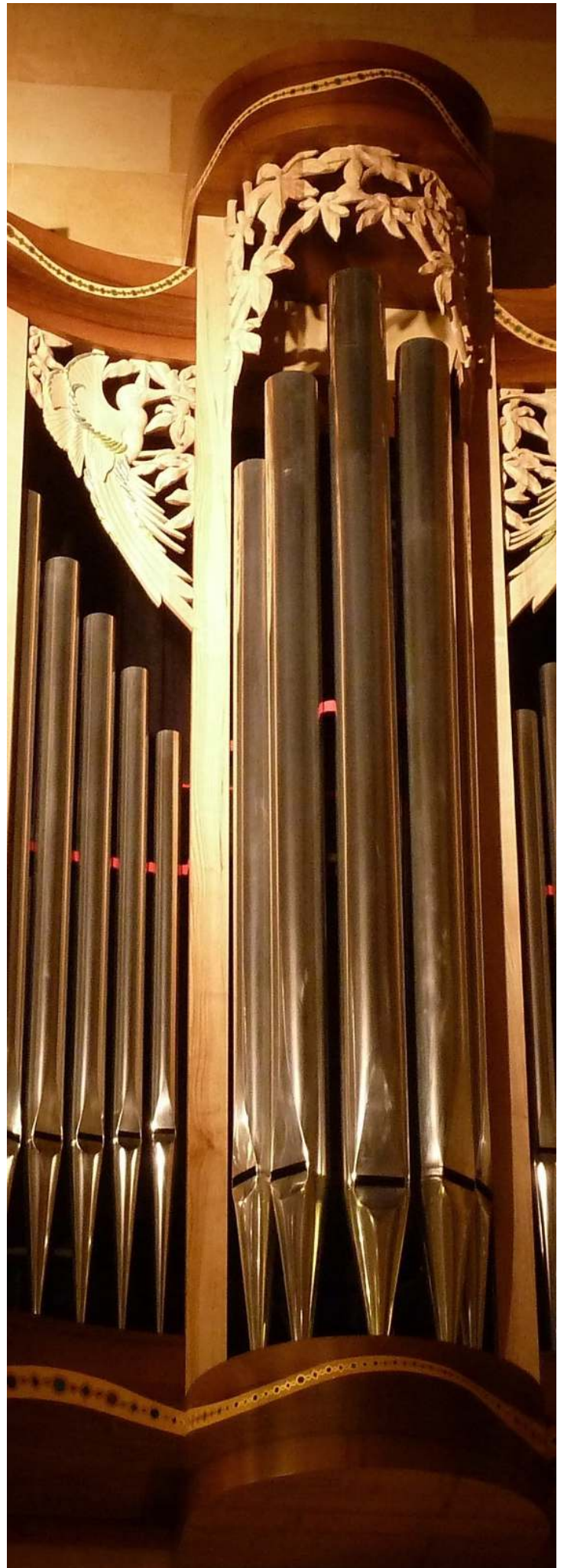
The acoustic of the church, where the reverberation time is about three seconds, can appear very short, yet it has the advantage of eliciting no deformation to the sound. The bass has a flawless definition and does not invade the space and the high sounds with any aggressiveness. There are no curved surfaces in the interior architecture that could introduce disturbing reverberation.

Bruce Duncan

Details of the organ from Pascal Quoirin, Saint Didier, Provence, France.
Reproduced with his kind permission.

With supporting information from

- The New York City Chapter of the American Guild of Organists (<http://nycago.org>),
- The Church of the Ascension (<https://ascensionnyc.org>),
- Orgues P. Quoirin (<https://www.atelier-quoirin.com>)



Stoplist of the Church of the Ascension Manton Memorial Organ

Grand-Orgue	Positif	Récit-Echo	Grand-Récit Expressif	Pedale
Montre 16'	Quintaton 16'	Bourdon 16'	Bourdon 8'	Bourdon 32'
Bourdon 16'	Montre 8'	Flûte d'allemande 4'	Principal 8'	Flûte 16'
Montre 8'	Flûte conique 8'	Nasard 2 2/3'	Flûte harmonique 8'	Principal 16'
Second (large Cavaillé-Coll-style Montre) 8'	Bourdon 8'	Tierce 1 3/5'	Bourdon 8'	Bourdon 16'
Flûte traversière 8'	Salicional 8'	Trompette 8'	Gambe 8'	Petit Bourdon (Récit) 16'
Bourdon 8'	Prestant 4'	Hautbois 8'	Voix céleste 8'	Grande Quinte 10 2/3'
Gambe 8'	Flûte conique 4'	Voix humaine 8'	Aéoline 8'	Flûte 8'
Gros Nasard 5 1/3'	Nasard 2 2/3'	Basson (Cor anglais) 8'	Aéoline céleste 8'	Violoncelle 8'
Prestant 4'	Doublette 2'	Clarinete 8'	Prestant 4'	Bourdon 8'
Second (large Cavaillé-Coll-style Prestant) 4'	Quarte de Nasard 2'	Tremblant	Flûte octavante 4'	Grande Tierce 6 2/3'
Flûte ouverte 4'	Tierce 1 3/5'	Trompette harmonique en chamade (Récit) 8'	Nasard harmonique 2 2/3'	Quinte 5 1/3'
Grosse Tierce 3 1/5'	Larigot 1 1/3'		Octavin 2'	Prestant 4'
Quinte 2 2/3'	Flageolet 1'		Tierce harmonique 1 3/5'	Flûte 4'
Nasard 2 2/3'	Fourniture IV		Plein Jeu V	Tierce 3 1/5'
Doublette 2'	Cymbale III		Sur Cymbale III	Quinzième 2'
Flûte 2'	Basson 16'		Basson 16'	Plein Jeu IV
Grande Fourniture II	Trompette 8'		Trompette harmonique 8'	Bombarde 32'
Fourniture IV	Claïron 4'		Clairon harmonique 4'	Bombarde 32'
Cymbale III	Cromorne 8'		Basson Hautbois 8'	Basson (Schnitger-type Posaune) 16'
Cornet VII (C3)	Tremblant		Voix humaine 8'	Trompette 8'
Bombarde 16'	Trompette harmonique en chamade (Récit) 8'		Tremblant	Basson (Schnitger-type Posaune) 8'
1ère Trompette 8'			Trompette harmonique en chamade 8'	Claïron 4'
2ème Trompette 8'(chamade)				Trompette harmonique en chamade 8'
Claïron 4'				
Tremblant				
Trompette harmonique en chamade (Récit) 8'				

Stops and couplers in red playable only on the electric console

Tirasse G.O. 8'	Récit – G.O. 16'
Tirasse G.O. 4'	Récit – G.O. 8'
Tirasse Pos. 8'	Récit – G.O. 4'
Tirasse Pos. 4'	Echo – G.O. 16'
Tirasse Réc. 8'	Echo – G.O. 8'
Tirasse Réc. 4'	Echo – G.O. 4'
Tirasse Echo 8'	Récit – Positif 16'
Tirasse Echo 4'	Récit – Positif 8'
Positif – G.O. 16'	Récit – Positif 4'
Positif – G.O. 8'	Echo – Positif 16'
Positif – G.O. 4'	Echo – Positif 8'
	Echo – Positif 4'

Tremulants GO, Pos, Récit, Echo

Swell on the right collateral - Expressive Echo - Crescendo
Electronic Combination action Eltec.

