

Chuff Chat — Monthly Newsletter

Springfield Massachusetts Chapter

American Guild of Organists

APRIL 2003



ABOUT CHIFF CHAT

Chiff Chat is the Newsletter of the Springfield, Massachusetts, Chapter of the American Guild of Organists and is published September through June. Closing dates are the 1st and 5th of the preceding month for Articles and Calendar/News Items, respectively. Please send material electronically (much preferred) or by US mail. See Yearbook for Editor's address or call him (# is below). Our website is www.springfieldago.org.

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REMAINING CHAPTER EVENTS

2002- 2003 Season

APRIL 6th – Sunday at 4:00 PM

“Felix Hell in Recital”

A joint presentation with “Music at First”
Old First Church, Springfield

MAY 4th – Sunday at 2:00 PM

“Members Recital”

St. Michael's Roman Catholic Cathedral
Springfield

JUNE 9th – Monday at 6:00 PM

“Annual Banquet”

Delaney House, Holyoke

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Chancel of Christ Church Episcopal Cathedral as viewed from the nave. Originally a divided chancel, choir seating now is semi-circular around the organ console, which faces the choir directly. The console is in a pit behind the altar.

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FROM THE EDITOR

In this Newsletter, we visit Christ Church Episcopal Cathedral, Springfield, which notes the 50th Anniversary of the Austin Organ installation. Your editor met with Peter Beardsley, Canon Precentor, on March 7th to develop material for this article. The tonal work under Pete's guidance, which has been done since 1985, is remarkable. Your Editor urges you to call him to arrange a visit to the Cathedral. Bring your music and organ shoes, and, as our UK friends say, have a play. You'll be thrilled!

It is quite unique for this Chapter (perhaps any Chapter) to hear, locally, three major international organists within a span of just two weeks. See the March *Chiff Chat* which provided information on organists David Briggs, Clive Driskill-Smith, and Felix Hell. David is a mature, seasoned musician with a strong concert career. Clive is a young Cathedral organist on a fast track career path. Felix is a teenage virtuoso. Your Editor secured very discerning Chapter members who reviewed these recitals for this issue. If you did not attend, these reviews will make you want to hear these artists.

In February, The Executive Board decided to have March-June *Chiff Chat* Newsletters mailed late each month, rather than mailed for arrival before the beginning of each new month.

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CHRIST CHURCH EPISCOPAL CATHEDRAL

Springfield - Massachusetts

INTRODUCTION

In January, Peter Beardsley, Canon Precentor at Christ Church Episcopal Cathedral, wrote to me saying that the original installation of the Cathedral's Austin organ, opus 2195, occurred 50 years ago in 1953, and suggesting that an article about this organ might be of interest to readers. I responded enthusiastically. We met in the afternoon of March 7th and covered the

gamut of history on this organ after its installation. Additionally, a profile on Pete developed quite naturally as we talked.

Originally, this organ, was a 3-manual instrument of 53 ranks controlled by a standard Austin stopkey console, and disposed over 5 Divisions including a floating Positiv Division (original).

In Pete's letter to me he said: While it is not the largest organ in Springfield, it is arguably the most intensely colorful, and in a fine acoustic (matched only, arguably, by St. Joseph's RC which is tragically being downgraded from full parish status). It is a much different animal than what Austin installed in 1953, thanks mostly to Ted Gilbert and more recently to David Johnston (formerly of Austin, now with Czelusniak et Dugal, and a member of the Cathedral Choir). He concluded by noting that And I suppose [*to be complete*] I have done much of the grunt work to support Ted's tonal genius.

(EDITOR: In perusing Orpha Ochse's magnum opus on The Austin Company, opus 2195 is mentioned several times. Richard Piper had been hired a few years earlier, and he was starting to introduce new ideas, carefully and slowly, into these instruments. For example, the unenclosed Positive was one of the first three ever done by Austin, and the Krummhorn stop was one of the first three introduced.)

As the discussion between Pete and your Editor progressed on how this organ has been changed tonally over time, it became very clear that these tonal efforts represented a sterling example of achieving desired goals on a shoestring budget.

It absolutely required a musician who knew the organ and its literature, and who full well understood the tonal requirements for the artistically valid interpretation of the instrument's vast literature. It also required a musician sensitive to the musical requirements of the liturgy and complex service playing. The ability to think outside the box, the impetus, and the stewardship of Peter Beardsley working in artistic lockstep with gifted organ craftspeople, produced results that could never have been otherwise accomplished with such minimum funding.

PETER BEARSDLEY

Pete grew up in Dalton, MA, very near Pittsfield. His interest in the organ dates from his youth. His dad was organist at Zion Lutheran Church in Pittsfield for 46 years. An MIT engineer who worked for General Electric in Pittsfield, he was, in Pete's words, a decent organist who never considered himself a professional, and who had a real knack for contemporary music also. Pete's mom also was an organist. He studied privately in the area, and his first instruction was on a Hammond Organ. He played his first service at age 11 in Grace Episcopal Church, Dalton. He remarked that at age 11 he was up to the hymns but not yet Anglican Chant. Pete substituted all over the central Berkshires area covering churches of all denominations.

After graduation from High School it was off to Middlebury College to study for the seminary. While at Middlebury he also studied organ with James Chapman, college organist, who was a Marilyn Mason student.

Within two years he said, I came to my senses and transferred to Indiana University as an organ major. Oswald (Ozzie) Ragatz was his organ teacher. Pete remarks humorously, Ozzie played here in 1978 in the proud tradition of organ students bringing their teachers to play recitals. He received both his BM and MM degrees from Indiana, and joined the Peace Corps in 1970. Assigned to El Salvador where he taught music in the public schools as part of a program supporting the Ministry of Education, he recalls seven people were recruited: one each in woodwinds, brass, choral, voice, and theory & keyboard (which he taught), and two for strings.

Returning in 1973 he worked first in the organ maintenance business of Rock Spencer in Albany. Rock was also the Aeolian-Skinner installer in the Albany, Schenectady, and Troy areas. I got my organ mechanic credentials from Rock. I consider myself a good mechanic, but neither a voicer nor tonal finisher. We did maintenance and tuning in the Capital District and the Berkshires. At the same

time he was organist in the First Methodist Church in Pittsfield.

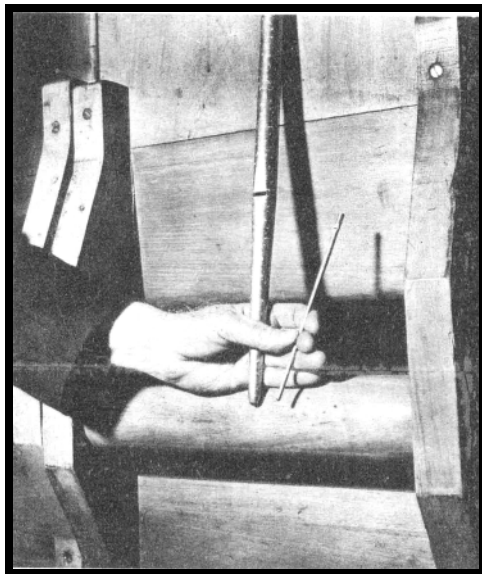
Pete first became acquainted with the Austin organ at Christ Church Cathedral, Springfield with recitals in 1974 and 1975 and I got to be not overly fond of it. However, I learned through the grapevine that the Cathedral job was open. I applied, and, lo and behold, I was hired in September 1976! I have now been there almost 27 years. Regarding the choir, I inherited a good SATB choir with the soprano section mostly children. The choir today is basically as I found it. The beginner kids are paid 70-cents per time they show up. The highest pay is \$2.10. There are 52 members in the choir. In 1999 they went on tour in England. This year they will sing in Lichfield Cathedral. The choir is marvelous and we have only the usual problems of balance that all people have to work on.

His immediate predecessor at the Cathedral was Robert Knox Chapman (the same name as his organ teacher at Middlebury, but not the same person). The authorities of the Cathedral decided to carpet the church completely in 1970, but the job was done when Chapman was on vacation, because it was known that he was vehemently against carpeting and the dreadful impact it had on good acoustics. Chapman had thought that the only work to be done was a reconfiguring of the chancel from a traditional divided form to one wherein the choir was seated centrally in a semi-circular arrangement, and that carpeting was NOT part of the project. When he returned and saw the carpeting, he marched into the Dean's office and immediately resigned. He was talked out of that, and stayed for six more years. Austin brightened all the upperwork of the organ in an attempt to deal with the carpeting.

TONAL CHANGES

Pete lived with the organ *unchanged* for 9 years. During this time, to save money for the church, he took over routine maintenance of the organ. And in 1976 soon after arriving, he determined that sometime after the organ was installed, the Choir Harmonic Trumpet 8 (originally on 15 inches of wind, a separate unit chest, and also playable on the Great), had had the

shallots and resonators swapped and the pressure reduced to 8-inches. The result was second rate English Tuba .



In 1985 work began on changing the organ tonally. Over the ensuing years and all the work, only four new ranks were actually added since 1953. But enormous changes were made through rescaling, revoicing, using original stops differently, and exchanging a few stops with old stops from other organs.

The first thing Pete and Ted did in 1985 was to rescale and revoice the Great Principal 8 in much more the German manner . In 1986 this work was extended to the Great 4 , 2 , and then the Mixture III. The Mixture, which was very quinty, was changed to a IV-V composition with V in the middle octaves and IV in the bass and top registers. At this time all the carpeting was still in place.

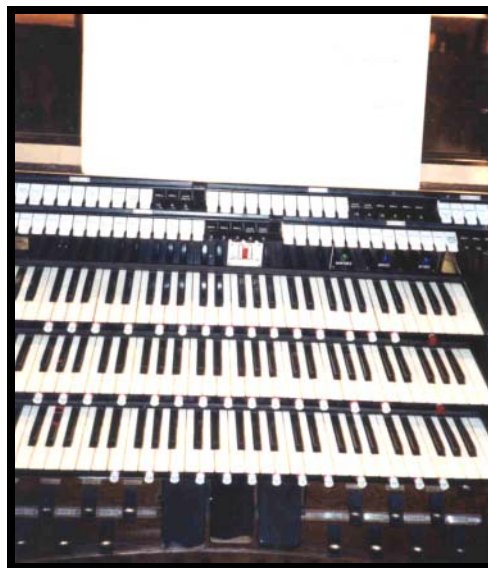
In 1989, the organ was releathered with the exception of the Choir Division. The reason for not doing the Choir was the future possibility of adding an Antiphonal Division and eliminating the Choir.

In 1990 the church had a capital fund drive. For the organ, this included complete removal of all carpeting, sheetrocking of the entire church interior and the application of a hard skimcote over the sheetrock. Also the floor of the chancel was

changed to marble and granite. Pete is very proud of the fact that he successfully made the case for this work which was critical to good acoustics. His wanted to make the console movable, but overall funding problems precluded this.

In 1991 the console was moved to the center directly in front of the choir, and another unsuccessful attempt was made to make the console movable. A recent fund drive was to have provided for a new console but sufficient money was not raised.

Yet, as a result of the 1990-1991 renovations and the first earful of new acoustics , Ted and Pete became very excited about continuing with the tonal work. This included adding a 32 octave to the Bombarde, which was dynamite . It was accomplished with modest fund raising for the pipe extension and a 12 note chest built by Ted. A 2 stopkey in the original Pedal specification (a SW extension) was utilized to control the 32 Bombarde. Also the Principal chorus rescaling was finally completed by doing over the Positiv Cymbale so that this stop actually became not only the cap for the Principal chorus, but also fell neatly back into the Positiv ensemble. The Positiv 8 metal Bourdon was replaced with an old 8 wood flute from the Marble Collegiate Church in New York City.



Next, a new Trompet made by Killinger of Germany was installed and made

available at 16 & 8 on the Great and Pedal. To operate this stop, stopkeys for the CH/GT 16-4 couplers were given up. Also, the Swell Melodia 8 and Chimney Flute 4 were revoiced for more presence and color. The original pair of Strings on the Swell (Salicional and Voix C leste) were scratchy and thin. Because a fine Geigen 8 was on this Division, the Salicional was removed, the C leste rescaled, and a new bass octave added (down to CC) to work with the Geigen. Now the Swell had a wonderful pair of larger scale strings.

In the Choir, the higher pitched stops comprising a Cornet were juiced up. The Viole 8 (skinny scale with a pencil-thin bass CC, and useless musically, because of an inability to blend) was replaced with an old Kilgen Stentorphone. This provided a good mid-range, English-style Diapason on 5 of wind, and made the Choir useful. Additionally, the organ now has several Divisions of big 8 ensemble which didn't exist before — so important for Franck Chorales and Widor.

The organ needed a big Cornet on the Great which would, in addition to the new Great Trompet, give big useful solo voices to the organ which it never before had. However, there was no space for this. With innovative thinking a solution emerged. The Great Violone 16, which was also duplexed/extended into the Pedal at 16 & 8, was reconfigured. The first 44 notes were on a separate unit chest, and the remaining 17 notes were on 2 pipe bars (Austin terminology). These bars had been drilled for only 17 notes, and the remaining lengths were undrilled and not actioned, although the tracers were there. A new 17 note offset unit chest was made for the Violone. Two free pipe bars now were available on the Great Chest. The original Twelfth was replaced with a tapered 2-2/3 stop. New 2 and 1-3/5 stops were purchased from Vermont pipemaker, Steve Russell. The two pipe bars were drilled out, new actions installed, and the new pipes mounted. The results were successful and it is now possible to solo out a hymn on this new Cornet.

Finally, David Johnston restored the enclosed Choir Harmonic Trumpet 8 to 15 inch wind pressure, thus giving the a organ

commanding English Tuba. Also two more Generals (#13 & #14) were made from Choir Divisional pistons. To do this a special tool was borrowed from Austin.

IN CONCLUSION

Peter Beardsley is the *only* active Chapter member to have earned the FAGO certification (honorary member Gerre Hancock of New York City's St. Thomas Church also holds the FAGO certification). He decided to try for AAGO certification in 1979 mainly because the three big pieces required were in his repertoire. I knew the theory. It [*the exam*] was not much of a struggle. He decided to take the FAGO examinations for the same reasons as the AAGO. He knew two of the three pieces (the Bach *C Minor Trio Sonata* and the Dupre *G Minor Prelude and Fugue*). He did have to learn C and Bass clefs, open score, and 16th century counterpoint.

In response to your Editor's question about organ world personalities who crossed his path, Pete emphasized Alan Wicks (Canterbury Cathedral), Andre Marchal, and Arthur Poister. He remembers playing at Canterbury when Wicks said to him: we don't do verses 3 & 4 quite the way they're written, but you'll get the idea. In 1970, he played the Franck *B Minor Chorale* for Marchal, who remarked: Young man, when you are older you will understand how to play Franck. Pete figured the only way Marchal knew he was young was by the way he played. At the AAGO National Convention in Boston in 1976, he played the (essentially unknown) Durufl *Scherzo* (Opus 2) for Poister. This was the first piece published by Durufl, and Pete had learned it because Ozzie Ragatz really believed in Durufl. It is a virtuosic piece and I played it from memory. Poister was excited as usual, but he didn't know the piece at all. I found this to be an unusual opportunity for a major organ teacher to comment on musicality, when he couldn't comment on details of the piece. Poister said that I played convincingly.

When you Editor asked for a final comment, Pete **very strongly encouraged** members to take the Guild examinations. He said everything he did to prepare for these

exams truly improved him — even the C clef requirement!

THE ORGAN

Originally Austin Opus 2195 Built in 1953
3M/P Stopkey Console

Stops in **Bold** are the work of Theodore Gilbert & Associates in an Ongoing Tonal Rebuilding Project That Began in 1985

GREAT

Violone 16
Principal 8
Diapason Conique 8
Bourdon (Metal) 8
Octav 4
Nachthorn 4
Nazat 2-2/3
Fifteenth 2
Blockfl te 2
Terz 1-3/5
Furniture IV-V
Trompet 16
Trompet 8

SWELL (expressive)

Geigen 8
Geigen C leste 8
Melodia 8
Fugara 4
Rohrfl te 4
Plein Jeu III
Fagotto 16
Trompette 8
Cor Anglais 8
Voix Humaine 8
Clarion 4

POSITIV

Bourdon (Wood) 8
Prestant (Tapered) 4
Doublette 2
Larigot 1-1/3
Cymbale III

CHOIR (expressive)

Diapason 8
Spitzflote 8
Dolce 8
Dolce C leste 8
Kopplefl te 4
Nazard 2-2/3
Blockfl te 2
Tierce 1-3/5
Harmonic Trumpet 8
Krummhorn 8

PEDAL

Double Diapason 32
Open Diapason 16
Violone (GT) 16
Gedeckt (POS) 16
Octave 8
Violone (GT) 8
Flute 8
Octave 4
Mixture III

Contra Bombarde 32

Bombarde (Unit) 16
Trompet (GT) 16
Fagotto (SW) 16
Bombarde (Unit) 8
Trompet (GT) 8
Clairon (Unit) 4
Fagotto (SW) 4

COUPLERS & ACCESSORIES

Usual Complement of Couplers
Tremulants in SW, CH, GT/POS
Ample Pistons & Toe Studs

PERCUSSION

Zimbelstern

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NEXT CHAPTER EVENT

MAY 4th 2003
Sunday at 2:00 PM
St. Michael's Roman Catholic Cathedral
Springfield, Massachusetts

Members Recital

The success of last year's Members Recital was a consideration in planning this event again. Also, there will be a brief ceremony in memory of all Springfield Chapter members who have passed away, particularly six former Deans who died within the past two years — Virginia Ring, Warren Amerman, Barbara Conant, Larry Buddington, Lee Flathers, and Richard Bennett. Charles Page will offer remarks at the memorial ceremony. The audience will be invited to sing a hymn, accompanied by John Anderson.

Four Chapter Organists (Peter Beardsley, Lori Bourret, Michael-Thomas Gilman, and Lad Pfeiffer) will perform music from Sebastian Bach through George Shearing.

PETER BEARDSLEY is Cantor Precentor at Christ Church Episcopal Cathedral. He studied organ with Oswald Ragatz at Indiana University where he received both the BM and MM degrees. He also holds both AAGO and FAGO certifications.

LOURI BOURRET is Music Director of Poquonock Community Church (part of Windsor, CT). She holds a BM from Hartt College of Music, having studied organ with Edward Clark and Larry Allen.

MICHAEL-THOMAS GILMAN, Director of Music Ministries at Elm Street Congregational Church in Southbridge, MA, holds degrees from both Yale University and the University of

Massachusetts. He studied organ with Robert Baker, to whom his afternoon performance is respectfully and affectionately dedicated.

LADISLAW PFEIFFER was a choirboy at Sacred Heart Church, Springfield. His interest in the organ started in High School. He studied with former Chapter members Claire Weir and Eleanor Wyatt. Lad continued organ study in college, before pursuing a theology degree at Louvain. He has served, since St. Cecelia's Day 1999, as Music Director for the Springfield Diocese.

JOHN ANDERSON (*who will accompany the Hymn*) earned a BM in Church Music and Vocal Music Education from Gustavus Adolphus College, and a MM in Organ and Church Music from Valparaiso University. He served as a full-time church musician in Jamestown, NY, for seven years. John holds the ChM and AAGO certifications. He is available as a substitute.

THE CATHEDRAL ORGAN

This 4M/P instrument of 75 stops and 90 ranks was originally built in 1861 by E. & G.G. Hook & Hastings. In 1929 Casavant installed a totally new organ, retaining only the original Hook & Hastings case. In 1967, the Berkshire Organ Company did rebuilding and additions. In 1987 Theodore Gilbert was under contract for rebuilding, tonal additions, and voicing. In 1997, The American Classic Organ Company was retained for mechanical renovations and tonal restructuring.

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CONCERT REVIEWS

DAVID BRIGGS, March 23rd, St. Andrew's Church, Longmeadow, MA

By JOHN ANDERSON

If audience reaction is a reliable indicator of a concert's quality, then David Briggs' dedication of the new Southfield organ at St. Andrew's in Longmeadow on March 23rd was nothing short of stupendous. Mr. Briggs, joined by Novi Cantori and its conductor, Allan Taylor, provided a stunning demonstration of this instrument's capabilities to a near-capacity crowd.

Mr. Briggs has achieved international fame for his improvisations, being the first British organist to win the coveted Tournemire Prize. This skill, so evident in the well-received improvisation on

the hymntune *Cwm Rhondda*, was also heard in the opening *Toccata and Fugue in D Minor* by J.S. Bach, which was delivered in a highly embellished and free manner.

Whether or not his interpretation of that familiar piece was to one's liking, there could be no denying the technical agility and creative genius that produced it.

Orchestral transcriptions and orchestral-like pieces were a large part of the program, ranging from Franck and Vierne to Sir Herbert Brewer, Richard Wagner, and Sir William Walton. Mr. Briggs is without a doubt totally at ease with that literature, and played it all with great aplomb. His own arrangement of the Final from the Saint-Saens *Third Symphony* was a great treat; if only we could all travel to Philadelphia to hear him play that on the Wanamaker Organ!

What impressed me the most, though, was Mr. Briggs' skill at choral accompaniments, obviously honed by his many years as organist at Truro, Hereford, and Gloucester Cathedrals. Those pieces showed off the various colors of the organ in imaginative yet completely appropriate ways. These were, in this reviewer's opinion, the true gems of the concert, and yet he was fully a partner with Novi Cantori, never taking the spotlight away from them nor detracting from their excellent choral sounds.

The audience was captivated not only by the music, but also by the verbal commentary. Mr. Briggs has a great sense of humor, and is quite at home talking to large audiences, making each person feel as if he were speaking intimately with them. His commentaries were enlightening and even funny at times.

If faults must be found, they are indeed few. This reviewer feels that Mr. Briggs was not always sensitive to the room. The acoustics with a full audience were rather dry, and yet he often did not play the room at all, much less to the extent that one would expect of an organist accustomed to a reverberant cathedral environment.

I also suspect that he may not have had much time at the console prior to the concert. In the first pieces, there were some

stop combinations used which were, to my ear, unfortunate choices, generally involving a soft 8 stop with an over-powering mutation, creating the impression that the music was suddenly transposed to an unrelated key. The addition of a 4, or perhaps an open 8, would fill in missing harmonics and reinforce the fundamental. Mr. Briggs, to his great credit, apparently noticed this situation and corrected his registrations in later pieces.

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CLIVE DRISKILL-SMITH, April 4th, First Church of Christ, Suffield, CT

By **PETER BEARDSLEY**

Blazing technique. Unbelievable virtuosity. Astounding talent.

The recital by Clive Driskell-Smith, the young English virtuoso (there's no getting around the use of that word here), invites a string of superlatives such as one does not often use. This performer surmounted the obstacles of a hugely difficult program, and a problematic instrument, with apparent unconcern.

To these ears, it was the Mozart K. 608 *Fantasia* that most successfully married the player's huge technique, pristine articulation, and sensitive phrasing with the uncompromising speech of this instrument and the dry acoustic of the church. The complex counterpoint of the two double fugues, the lavish ornamentation of both the fantasia sections and the quiet andante, and florid pedal lines were brought off with total clarity and complete control.

Also delightful was the Bach Trio on *Allein Gott in der Hoh sei Ehr*, registered with restraint and transparency. The music is characterized by incomplete fragments of the chorale tune (with which Bach's listeners would have been very familiar), and Driskell-Smith's wise use of articulation and subtle rubato encouraged the audience to hear and recognize the presence of the melody, and thus the structure and logic of the music.

The Reger *Fantasia on Wacht Auf* (a tune whose stark power has attracted

composers from Bach to Distler and beyond) was also well served on this occasion. The famous black-with-notes texture of the music of this post-Lizst, post-Wagner composer was rendered with an eye-opening degree of clarity. In one of the evening's few light moments, Mr. Driskell-Smith told us that the mysterious opening was supposed to represent Death. Or Creation. It depends whom you ask. To me, it was redolent of the famous depiction of Chaos that opens Haydn's *Creation*.

The Roger-Ducasse *Pastorale* has faded from recital programs in recent decades, and it was a delight to hear this gem of the early-20th-Century literature. Its elegant and graceful flavor veils its formidable technical difficulties, none of which seemed to hamper this performance in the least.

Anyone who can so much as play the notes of the Durufl *Suite* deserves admiration, and Driskell-Smith certainly managed that to a degree that makes my hands and feet ache just thinking about it. That said, the *Toccata* (among the most difficult *and* most controversial of major works of the great French school) was played at such a daredevil speed, and with articulation that cried out for a reverberant room, that its many awesome moments of unbearable tension and release, of muscular buildup and towering climax, were simply jettisoned in the interests of unfettered virtuoso display.

Some remarks on the organ: The instrument (the only tracker organ ever built by the late Gress-Miles) is distinctly neo-Classic in nature, and Driskell-Smith navigated its limitations with surprising aplomb in much of this program. Nowhere did the style of the music collide more painfully with the style of the organ than in the Op. 5 Suite of Durufl, one of the towering monuments of the 20th-Century organ literature (and incidentally, at 70 years of age, the newest piece on the program). The sweet, winsome, quintessentially French Sicilienne bleated painfully from the raucous German reed stop, and neither the Prelude nor the Toccata could find the seamless crescendo & decrescendo that they require for their emotional impact. In particular, the Great Mixture comes on, even after everything else is drawn, with all the subtlety of, say, the Bush foreign policy.

I am not able to distinguish the intentionally flexible wind of many recent tracker organs from the plain old unsteady wind that plagues many organs of every make, nationality, and age. Therefore, I will simply say that the fff unison opening of the Bossi Etude, the solo reed lines in the Durufl Sicilienne and the Karg-Elert Valse Mignonne, and the massive fistfuls of notes in the Reger Fantasia and the Durufl Toccata all exhibited the sort of instability of pitch that makes me want to reach for the Dramamine. Added to the organ's notorious problems of adjustment and reliability, one can only wish that this potentially excellent instrument is brought into shape tonally and mechanically.

Having said all that, it was an incredibly stimulating and impressive evening of organ playing.

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FELIX HELL, April 6th, Old First Church,
Springfield, MA

By E. JANET DUFFÉ

This recital, by an amazing young artist Felix Hell, was remarkably commanding! Felix at age 17, selected repertoire, which would have given pause to many an older seasoned performer, carrying the day with aplomb and first-rate musicianship.

The program provided a showcase for the varied stops of the church's treasured Aeolian-Skinner organ.

Opening with Bach's mighty *Fantasy and Fugue in G Minor*, BWV 542, Felix proved himself a master of his art, utilizing effectively the tonal resources of this fine instrument. Changes in registration were flawlessly executed. Judicious bending of phrases and cadences never marred the piece's marvelous evenness of tempo as Felix sculpted a true *object d'art*. Registration was full and bright with excellent balance between manuals and pedal, and articulation was notable for its clarity in the style of Biggs.

Following this grandiose piece, Felix treated an appreciative House to the expressive *O Mensch beweine dein Sündengross*, BWV 622. Again, rubato was nicely applied as performer and instrument honored

this greatly-loved work of the Master Composer. Ornamentation was perfectly executed within a fluid framework. An unanticipated breath announced the closing ritardando, followed by an inspirational moment of silence as Felix lifted his hands from the keys and held them suspended.

Full organ was once again Felix's chosen mount as he charged triumphantly into the closing selection of the first half of this remarkable program with Guillemet's *Sonata No. 1 in D Minor*. The massive chords of the *Introduction and Allegro* were attacked with precision and many ended with controlled orchestral releases appropriate to the acoustic of this space. A smooth transition was made to the marvelous reed section, with a final exciting return to Felix's original registration and tempo almost inviting the audience to dance. In marked contrast, the *Pastorale* section was notable for its well-balanced registration and double pedaling, featuring many colors of the Skinner spectrum. Supportive chords were audible but far from intrusive. An exciting *Finale*, marked by florid, bright runs and dynamic changes reminiscent of Fox, contrasted nicely with the chorale.

Tackling next the highly demanding Dupre *Prelude and Fugue in B Major*, Felix once again allowed the full resources of the Skinner to prevail as he executed pedal passages with virtuosic flair and punched the syncopations into a marvelous crescendo of controlled excitement. Finishing with a dashing flourish and a delightful display of humor, Felix wiped his brow as he accepted applause.

Samuel Barber's famed *Adagio for Strings*, arranged by William Strickland, with its somewhat uneven dynamic changes after a most successful opening section, was the only disappointment for this reviewer in an otherwise exquisite program. The use of tremolo, while expected, seemed somewhat overdone. A perfect return to the original tempo at the end of this selection, the wonderful hold on the final chord, and, again, the intense period of silence at the end of this piece orchestrated by this perceptive young artist provided a convincing close.

Liszt's *Fantasy and Fugue on Ad Nos Ad Salutarem Undam* was a stunning program choice for Felix's final selection. Its somber opening, gently executed ornaments and florid arpeggios executed on the Great combined with amazing pedal alacrity to impress the audience. Highlighting the Skinner's Trompette en Chamade in brief fanfare-like sections, the Liszt ran with great intensity through a multiplicity of stop changes and lovely rubato trills. Even barely audible passages had a commanding presence. The composer's stylish rhythmic motifs were cunningly executed. Felix maneuvered Liszt's massive chords and stunning pedal trills into a convincing majestic finale.

A deserved standing ovation preceded the Encore, Vierne's *Symphony No. 1, Final Movement*: a fitting ending to a superb program.

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

The Placement Director is Becky Isaacson (413-734-1623). Beckyisaacson@aol.com.

FIRST CHURCH OF DEERFIELD, 71 Old Main Street, Deerfield, MA, 01342, 413-773-5323. Organist/Choir Director. Adult choir, children's choir to be developed. Concert series to showcase new organ. BM or BA minimum level of education. 15 hours per week. Richards & Fowkes 2M/P pipe organ. Salary \$14,000 for 10 months. 4 weeks vacation in addition to Summer. Contact: Reverend Virginia Brown, PO Box 147, Deerfield, MA, 01342, 413-773-5689.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Tuesday, April 01

10:30 AM

Griswold Theatre at AIC, Springfield. Tuesday Morning Music Club, Jane Hanson, mezzo-soprano; Karen McCarthy, flute; Grant Moss, piano; Catherine McCurry, violin. Contact Gloria Barnes for details at 413-568-8405.

Friday, April 04

7:30 PM

First Church of Christ, 81 High Street, Suffield, CT, Music on High Series, British Organist, Clive Driskill-Smith, Organist of Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, England. Contact 860-668-7223. **\$5**

Sunday, April 06

4:00 PM

Old First Church, Court Square, Springfield, Felix Hell, Organist. This is a co-sponsored Chapter and Music at First Series Event. At age 17, Felix Hell is one of the most gifted young organists today. He performs in countries around the world every year. **FREE**

4:00 PM

St Paul the Apostle R.C. Church, 235 Dwight Road, Springfield. Ecumenical Vespers. Cathedral High School Chorale, Springfield, Carol Spinelli, Director; Reverend Franklin Darling, homilist.

Tuesday, April 15

10:30 AM

Griswold Theatre at AIC, Springfield. Tuesday Morning Music Club, Eileen Ruby, mezzo-soprano; Charles Page and Thomas Slowick, two pianos. This is the TMMC Annual Meeting and Luncheon. Contact Gloria Barnes for details at 413-568-8405.

Friday, April 25

8:00 PM

First Church, Deerfield, MA, Meg Irwin-Brandon, Organist. Program includes major organ works of Bach, Mendelssohn *Sonata 1 in F Minor*, other composers. Reception at Deerfield Inn. Contact Joan Vander Vliet, 413-665-3203. **ADMISSION \$26/person**

Sunday, April 27,

4:00 PM

Old First Church, Court Square, Springfield, Music at First Series, University Orchestra UMASS, Lanfranco Marcelletti, Director. **FREE**

Sunday, May 04

2:00 PM

St. Michael's Roman Catholic Cathedral, Springfield, Members Recital. Chapter Event. **FREE**

4:00 PM

Mittineague Congregational Church, West Springfield, Novi Cantori, 25th Anniversary Concerts, music includes Haydn *Grosse Orgelsolo Messe* with strings. Allan Taylor, Conductor, Ian Watson, Organist. **FREE**

4:00 PM

St Paul the Apostle R.C. Church, 235 Dwight Road, Springfield. Ecumenical Vespers. Schola Nova & St. Paul's Choir, Michael Dulac & Catherine Waldron, Directors; Reverend C. Lee Gilbertson, presider.

Friday, May 09

7:30 PM

First Church of Christ, 81 High Street, Suffield, CT, Music on High Series, Novi Cantori, 25th Anniversary Concerts, music includes Haydn *Grosse Orgelsolo Messe* with strings. Allan Taylor, Conductor, Ian Watson, Organist. **FREE**

Sunday, May 11

4:00 PM

Saints Peter & Paul Church, Three Rivers, MA. Novi Cantori, 25th Anniversary Concerts, music includes Haydn *Grosse Orgelsolo Messe* with strings. Allan Taylor, Conductor, Ian Watson, Organist. **FREE**

Sunday, June 08

3:00 PM

John M. Greene Hall, Smith College, Northampton. 50th Anniversary Concert of Hampshire Choral Society, Mendelssohn *Elijah* with full orchestra, Allan Taylor conducting. Tickets at Door. **ADMISSION CHARGE**