

Austin, Steere and Bedient Organ History

Austin Organ:

Visitors among us often are amazed at all the organ pipes to be seen. Hearing the organ, they feel surrounded in sound. The organ sound is magnificent and at times overwhelming, but actually comes from only one part of the building, the rear balcony.

When Luther Memorial was first built, in the early 1920's, a large organ was part of the plan. This large instrument was however placed outside the worship space, in two rooms in the tower, and played through a hole in the wall behind the rose colored pipes in the right-hand balcony (when facing the altar). The elaborate display of pipes and woodwork was only that: a display. The pipes are real pipes, but were not a part of the sounding instrument.

Across the way in the opposite side balcony, an identical facade was built, for reasons of balance and symmetry. These pipes never played either.

There is not the space here to recount all the fascinating history of this first instrument at Luther Memorial. But, in short, several misfortunes seriously undermined its effectiveness and musical value. Eventually a new organ was planned.

The new organ, built by Austin Organs, of Hartford Conn., in 1966, was placed in an expanded balcony at the rear of the worship space. The pipes you see here are all functional. Rather than expensive and musically meaningless display pipes, here the actual sounding pipes of the instrument are arranged on the face with the rest of the pipe work immediately behind these. The whole instrument is placed within the worship space giving the sound immediacy and directness.

The main division of the organ, the GREAT organ is located at the upper left section. Its pipes are unenclosed. Its tones form the "backbone" of the organ chorus. It is played from the middle keyboard.

The CHOIR division, played from the lower keyboard, is enclosed within a louvered chamber. It includes some of the softer, accompaniment "voices". It provides a contrasting chorus to the other divisions. Not everything in it is soft; this division also includes the loudest solo "trumpet" on the organ.

At the top of the right section is the SWELL division. It also is enclosed in a louvered chamber. Opening the louvers gives a listener the effect of a swelling in volume, hence the name. This division includes a variety of loud and soft tone color. It is played from the top keyboard.

A fourth division, POSITIF, is located lower right. Its small, bright, clear ensemble may be played from any of the three keyboards.

The fifth division, played by the feet, and thus called the PEDAL organ includes some of the longest pipes in the instrument. Some pedal pipes are grouped at the corners of the pipe facades.

Specifically, the organ at present includes 52 “stops”. A “stop” controls a row of pipes (a “rank”) of one consistent tone color. The type of sound a pipe has is determined by the material of which is made, whether is closed or open at the top, and its shape.

GREAT:

Violone	16
Principal	8
Violone	8 (ext)
Gemshorn	8
Bourdon	8
Octave	4
Nachthorn	4
Quint	2 2/3
Superoctave	2
Terz	1 3/5
Fourniture	IV-VI
Trompete	8
Chimes	

CHOIR:

Gedeckt	8
Erzahler	8
Erzahler Celeste	8
Spitzflöte	4
Nazard	2 2/3
Blockflöte	2
Tierce	1 3/5
Krummhorn	8
Bombarde	8
Tremulant	

PEDAL:

Resultant	32
Lieblich(resultant-SW)	32
Principal	16
Violone(GT)	16
Bourdon	16
Gedeckt(SW)	16
Erzähler(CH)	16
Octave	8
Rohrgedeckt	8
Choral Bass	4
Nachthorn	4
Flute	2
Mixture	III
Basson	16
Bombarde	16
Bombarde	8
Oboe(SW)	4

SWELL:

Gedeckt	16
Geigen Principal	8
Viola da Gamba	8
Voix Celeste	8
Hohlflöte	8
Flauto dolce	8
Flute celeste	8
Principal	4
Rohrflöte	4
Doublette	2
Plein Jeu	III
Basson	16
Trompette	8
Oboe	8 (ext)
Clarion	4
Tremulant	

POSITIF:

Violone(GT)	8
Nason Flute	8
Koppel Flute	4
Fifteenth	2
Larigot	1 1/3
Cymbal	III

In 2009 the Austin Organ was equipped with a Peterson ICS-4000 digital system that replaced the original electrical wiring. This renovation included the addition of a Manual Transfer tablet, which allows the playing of the Great Organ on the bottom keyboard and the Choir Organ on the middle keyboard, along with their respective divisional pistons.

Steere Organ:

John Wesley Steere (1824-1900) was a Protégé of organ builder William A. Johnson of Westfield, Massachusetts. Steere eventually developed his own organ building company and became Johnson's most serious rival. Initially known as Steere and Turner the company eventually became known as Steere & Sons.

The organ (LM dedication, 10/26/97) was purchased from the Chicago Conference of the United Church of Christ for a price of \$12,000. It was brought to the attention of Director of Music Bruce A. Bengtson and Pastor Harvey Peters by John Chappell Stowe, a member of Luther Memorial Church and the professor of organ at the School of Music, University of Wisconsin - Madison. Located in a church on the near west side of Chicago, it was no longer being used since there was no resident congregation. The organ was completely restored by J. C. Taylor and Co. of Kaukauna, Wisconsin. The stenciled pipes were repainted according to original colors and design, by Mary Lou Davis of Woodstock, Connecticut. In its new home the Steere organ is used to accompany choirs and smaller worship services. The organ has the following stops:

GREAT	Pipes	SWELL	Pipes
16' Bourdon Bass	40	8' Open Diapason	58
16' Bourdon Treble (Tenor F#)	18	8' Stopped Diapason	58
8' Open Diapason	58	8' Salicional	58
8' Melodia	58	8' Aeoline (Tenor C)	46
8' Dulciana	58	4' Flute Harmonique	58
4' Octave	58	4' Violina	58
4' Flute D'Amour	58	2' Flautino	58
2 2/3' Twelfth	58	8' Oboe (from Tenor C)	46
2' Fifteenth	58	8' Bassoon	12
8' Clarinet (Tenor C)	46		

PEDAL

16' Bourdon	27
8' Violoncello	27

All manual pipes except Great Bourdon and Open Diapason are enclosed in a single swell box

Swell to Great, Great to Pedal, Swell to Pedal Great Forte, Great Piano, Great to Pedal, Reversible Swell Tremolo. Mechanical (tracker) key and stop action.

The 1986 Gene Bedient Portative

Gedeckt	8 (wood)
Flute	4 (wood)
Praestant	2 (burnished tin)

Transposing device

Rosmaling by Gary Albrecht, member of Luther Memorial