



# THE Pipeline

A NEWSLETTER FROM

**C.B. Fisk, Inc.**

Volume 1, Number 2

October, 1990

## Notations

Thank you all for the enthusiastic response to our first newsletter; we have appreciated the calls and letters of encouragement. I have enjoyed helping Kathleen Adams and Forrest Dillon put the newsletter together. So much has happened since our first issue in June! The AGO convention was a stellar event. Many of us were busy keeping five organs in their best form and attending the lectures and recitals, but it was a privilege to be a part of it. It also gave us a chance to see many people we have come to know over the years and to have them visit the shop, share a New England Clambake with us and see the changes we have made since their last visit.

Patient viewers were rewarded on September 23 when the CBS feature about the shop was broadcast on "Sunday Morning." The wonderful shots of the Buffalo and Houston organs, Charles Kuralt's glowing commentary, and cameo appearances by shop members made the wait—after several reschedulings—more than worthwhile. Let us know if you missed it and we will loan you one of the copies that we made.

PBS recently broadcast a program on the Dallas Concert Hall in the "Frozen Music" series. It tells the story of the design and construction of the hall, with some tantalizing glimpses of the Opus 100 facade.

Our next newsletter will contain a calendar of spring and summer organ recitals and special programs. Please send notices of your musical events by May 1.

*Virginia Lee Fisk*

## A Special Fisk Employee

When Dave Waddell first walked through the door of the old shop on Maplewood Avenue in November 1961, Charles Fisk realized immediately that he would be a valuable addition to the small group of co-workers that he had just begun to gather around him. Dave was not only Shop Foreman, but for twenty-four years his work also included design, drafting, woodworking, shop maintenance, and set-up coordination. To meet this challenge of organ building, he

drew from his vast experience in carpentry, boat building and working in the pattern shop at United Shoe.

Even though he retired five years ago and moved to Florida, Dave has returned to work at the shop for the past four summers. From advice about a jig for a stop action part to guidance in our personal lives, Dave has always been someone we could rely on. It is great to be able to look to Dave once again.

Janice, Dave's wife, also worked in the office at the shop for many years. Whenever we needed anything, from an airplane ticket to a dental appointment, Janice was the one to ask.

Dave has seen a lot of changes over the years as the shop has grown from five to twenty-six employees. His presence at the shop enables newer members to acquire a sense of the history of the company.

Throughout life, one crosses paths with those rare individuals who impart a special influence. Dave Waddell is such a person, and we are fortunate to have the privilege of sharing life's path with him. Thanks, Dave!

—Patti Pike



Dave and Janice Waddell at the shop

photo: Stephen Malionek



Opus 100's facade in its new home

photo: ©1990 Paul Warchol

## Case & Facade Installed in Dallas' New Symphony Hall

Sixty-five feet off the floor and leaning through the narrow, open case facade that would eventually hide the Swell division, we carefully haul up the 8' tin pipes. They are the last of the seventy pipes in the case; we are at the end of a grueling two-week stint installing the "big pipes" of our Opus 100 at the Meyerson Symphony Center in Dallas.

Our crew of six arrived in Dallas last August, joined by our colleague Ferdinand Mettler from Switzerland. "Ferdi" is a specialist in tin facade pipes, especially for the sizes we were about to tackle. The pipes, the largest of which weighs over 1200 lbs. and is over thirty-two feet long, were packed in foam in wooden crates. The 70% tin bodies required care and delicacy in handling so as not to mar the polished finish. Eight of the largest pipes were shipped in two pieces and were sleeved and welded together on the spot. We were

working in limited space, rubbing shoulders with every tradesman imaginable, while the Symphony Center was literally being constructed around us.

Even with the services of Fine Arts Express, a local rigging firm, lifting the largest and heaviest pipes was a strenuous operation. Besides having to ask others around us to stop work and stand clear, we had to manipulate the huge pipes and place them into the casework which at present is only a facade, with no supporting organ or framework behind it.

As pipe after pipe was unpacked, assembled, polished, and hoisted into place, we felt more and more comfortable with our job. By the time a camera crew arrived unannounced from the local PBS station, we felt we almost knew what we were doing!

The finished case and facade pipes present a striking centerpiece to the stage of the magnificent Meyer-son, designed by I.M. Pei.

—Jerry Wayne Lewis

## "R & D" For Opus 100

The interior design of Opus 100 for the Dallas Symphony Orchestra is well underway. Actual construction will begin later this fall with delivery scheduled for August 1991. This past summer Fisk staff members Stephen Kowalyshyn, Steven Dieck, and John Schreiner toured large instruments in France and England with an ear to the ideal sounds for an organ to be used with a symphony orchestra. Instruments that we studied in France included those of Cavaillé-Coll in Bayeux (1862), in Caen (1885), and at St. Esprit in Paris (1890). We spent most of our time in England studying early twentieth century organs, devoting particular attention to high pressure reeds (Opus 100 will feature two trumpets on eighteen inches of wind). Other English instruments we visited were at the Royal Albert Hall and St. Paul's, London; Liverpool Cathedral; St. Mary's, Redcliff, Bristol; and Birmingham Town Hall. Of special interest was our discovery of what may be the only extant Willis "floating lever" in an 1889 Willis organ in Wandsworth, outside of London. This device is very similar in action to the Servopneumatic Lever developed in the Fisk shop and first used in Opus 95.

Though massive in scale, Opus 100 will not surpass Opus 78 at House of Hope Presbyterian Church in St. Paul as the largest instrument the firm has built. House of Hope still has more pipes than the new organ for the Meyerson Symphony Center, but the 32' facade which was installed a year ago is already heavier than the entire Opus 78 instrument!

The installation and voicing of Opus 100 is expected to continue for twelve months. Robert Anderson of Southern Methodist University will play the inaugural recital sometime during the 1992-93 Dallas Symphony season.

—Steven Dieck

## Organ Research in the DDR

One year ago, in September 1989, Mark Nelson and I joined a group of organists, organ builders, and scholars on a tour of Thuringia and Saxony, sponsored by the Westfield Center for Early Keyboard Studies. The purpose of the trip was to re-examine our understanding of the organ world known to J. S. Bach. In our visits to organs we were accompanied by East German organists, builders and scholars who provided invaluable information and insight. Our first-hand experience with the instruments was interspersed with visits to musical instrument museums and archives in Halle, Leipzig, and Dresden.

While the Trost organ in Altenburg—excellently restored by Orgelbau Bautzen—provided extraordinary insight and feeling for the Thuringian school of organ

building with which Bach was familiar, many of the instruments have not been restored to their original beauty and many remain almost unplayable. Nevertheless our examination of instruments in remote villages such as Klettbach, Waltershausen, Gräfenhain, and Hermstedt gave us a view of an organ building practice which was unique in style and avant-garde in concept and execution. In the village of Dornburg overlooking the Saal valley we heard an organ built 70 years after Bach's death. This instrument is remarkable: while it clearly points to the more romantic style of the nineteenth century, it is very little different from organs we saw dating from the early 1700's. This is a testament to the prophetic ideas of the early Thuringian builders who even in the early part of Bach's life were housing instruments in spacious, mellowing cases and including tierces in the mixtures, a multiplicity of foundation stops, and string stops such as the *viola da gamba* and *pedal violon*.

The social highlight of the trip was a celebration of the opening in Dresden of the new organ workshop of Kristian Wegscheider. For the occasion Kristian had hired a steam train (on a line still in regular service!) for an afternoon's excursion up into the hills south of Dresden. It was a fantastic, almost storybook-like journey with talented and imaginative entertainers at every stop: a quartet singing from the baggage car, a picnic with music by a folk band from Leipzig, and the organ builders dressed in made-up costumes playing made-up instruments in imitation of a Russian band.

On the final day of our trip we attended the Sunday service in the tiny church in Störmthal where Bach dedicated the Hildebrandt organ in 1723 and were again reminded of the generosity, diligence and enthusiasm of the East German people. Little could we have known that only weeks after our return the world would be astonished to find the Berlin wall coming down and the borders opened. But looking back on the excitement and electricity we felt while visiting our East German friends, I suppose we should not be so surprised.

—Robert Cornell



## Concerts and Organ Recitals 1990-1991

### **Ann Arbor, Opus 87, University of Michigan Conference on Organ Music**

*October 8, 11:00 am* Gary Verkade: Works of Rossi, Roller, Cornet and Herchet

*October 9, 11:00 am* Hyeon Jeong and Larry Visser: Works of Sweelinck, Bach, Pepping and Ropek

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### **Baltimore, MD, Opus 35, Mount Calvary Church**

*November 18, 4:00 pm* Joseph Stephens: Works of Bach, Brahms, Guilmant, and Widor

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### **Boston, Opus 44, King's Chapel Concert Series**

*September 23, 5:00 pm* Works of Fauré, Pinkham and Franck

*December 16, 5:00 pm* North German Baroque Music for Advent and Christmas

*February 3, 5:00 pm* Works of Michael Haydn, Beethoven and Mozart

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### **Buffalo, Opus 95, State University of New York at Buffalo, Slee Concert Hall, Inaugural Season**

*October 7*, Lisa M. Scrivani; *October 21* David Bond; *November 11*, David Fuller; *December 16*, Michael Burke; *February 3*, James Bigham; *February 24*, Donald Fellows; *March 17*, Brian Aranowski; *April 7*, Roland E. Martin; *April 28*, Bruce Neswick

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### **Marblehead, MA, Opus 69, St. Michael's Church**

*October 14, 7:00 pm* Steven McDonald: Baroque Music for Organ

*October 28, 7:00 pm* Barbara Bruns joined by the Boston Chamber Brass

*November 25, 7:00 pm* Renaissance Music for Two Choirs

*April 28, 7:00 pm* Baroque Solo Cantatas with Orchestra

*May 19, 7:00 pm* "Acis and Galatea"

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### **New Bern, NC, Opus 89, First Presbyterian Church,**

*November 10, 8:00 pm* Richard Heschke (in conjunction with "New Bern at Night")

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### **New Haven, CT, Opus 54, Center Church on-the-Green**

*October 7, 3:00 pm* Eileen Hunt

*February 24, 3:00 pm* Sally Cherington

*May 5, 3:00 pm* Eleanor Fulton

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### **New York City, Opus 92, Church of the Transfiguration, The Little Church Around the Corner**

*October 21, 3:00 pm* Heinz Wunderlich. Weekly recitals on Tuesdays in October, 12:30 to 1:00 pm

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### **Rochester, NY, Opus 83, Downtown United Presbyterian Church**

*January 27, 5:00 pm* Brian Carson

*February 24, 5:00 pm* James Bobb

*March 10, 2:00 pm* J. Melvin Butler assisted by John Lillard, trumpet

*March 24, 5:00 pm* Eric Plutz

*April 28, 5:00 pm* John Sitard

*May 26, 5:00 pm* Adrienne Pavur

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### **St. Paul, MN, Opus 78, House of Hope Presbyterian Church**

*November 18, 4:00 pm* Nancy Lancaster, Organist, concluding a four-recital series on the organ music of César Franck

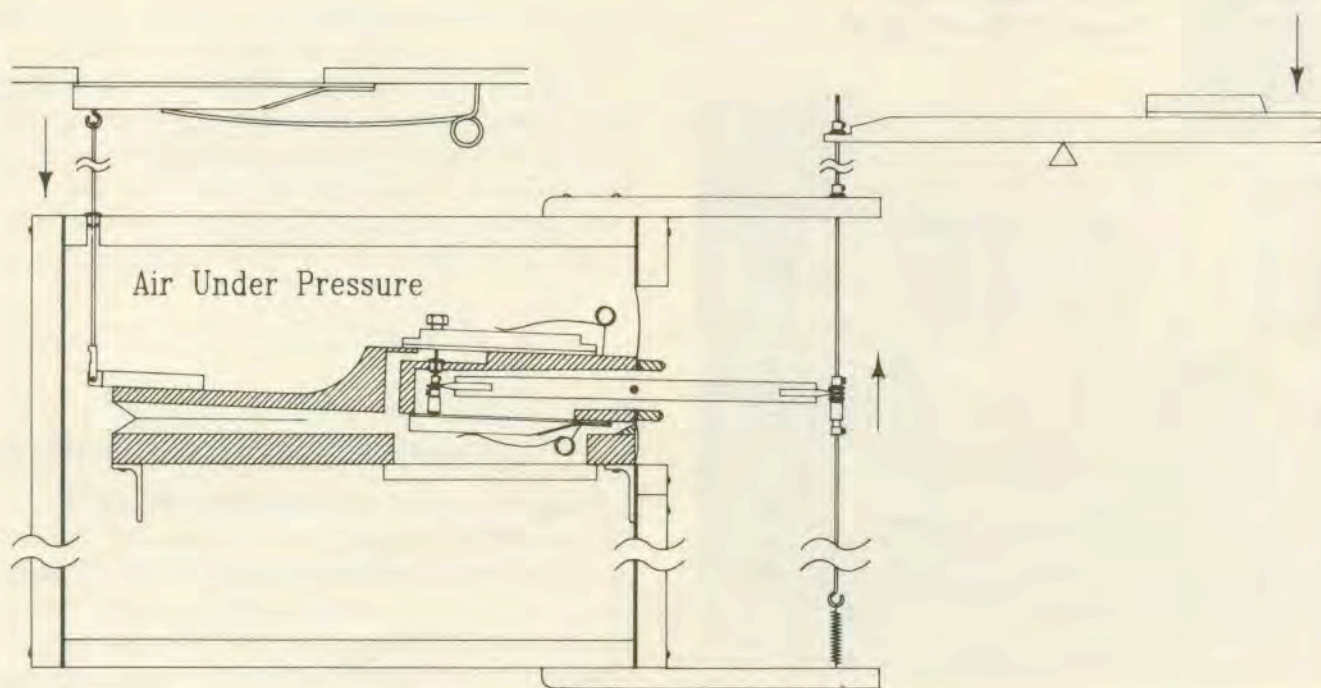
## An Innovation for Opus 95

In larger tracker organs there is a possible drawback, namely the "weight" of the action, or the resistance presented to the fingers by extensive mechanism and the pressure of wind against many valves. Many solutions have been tried to alleviate this problem—among them electric action. One of the earliest was the "Barker Machine," invented by an Englishman but patented in France in 1839 and consisting of a stack of pneumatic motors which, activated by the keys, does the work of opening the valves via a normal tracker action. While not entirely insensitive to touch, it is far less so than a direct mechanical link, and it can also be rather noisy.

In the 1860s or '70s, a far more sophisticated device called the "floating lever" was invented by another Englishman, Vincent Willis, used "in four or five organs" by his father's firm, then abandoned in favor of "tubular pneumatic" action and forgotten (see the British journal *The Organ*, October, 1933, pp. 110-115 for an account). It was a device similar to this that was "reinvented" and named the "Servopneumatic Lever" by Stephen Kowalyshyn of the Fisk staff, and developed by him and members of the firm for the Slee Hall organ at State University of New York (SUNY), Buffalo. Kowalyshyn, who only later learned of Willis's invention, based his idea on a swell mechanism with which the American organ builder Ernest M. Skinner had once experimented.

The Servopneumatic Lever is as different from a Barker machine as a rheostat is from an ordinary light switch: as the finger depresses the key, the valve under the pipe (or "pallet") follows its motion, opening as slowly or quickly as the finger descends, stopping wherever the finger stops, and closing only as rapidly as the finger releases the key—all this with no added effort no matter how many stops are drawn or how many manuals are coupled together. Although the feel and "feedback" of tracker action is gone, since all the work is being done by air pressure, the control over the speech of the pipes is actually greater than with tracker action because of the reduced "breakaway" effect or "pluck" as the finger overcomes the initial air pressure holding the pallet closed (the "breakaway" is not entirely eliminated because of elasticity in the linkage between the pneumatic machine and the pallets). Moreover, one is aware of no noise at all from the machine, even when the keys are struck harder than they ought to be, and the response is for all practical purposes instantaneous. The pneumatic machine also makes it possible to have a sub-octave coupler on the Great manual, doubling whatever is played on the full organ at the octave below and giving an incomparable grandeur of effect in certain passages. Such a coupler would make a normal tracker action impossibly heavy to play upon. It is hard to resist the conclusion that this is the most important innovation in organ action since the electromagnet—that is, in the last hundred years!

—David Fuller



Servopneumatic Lever

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## Houston Organ Installed

Hundreds of parishoners waited in line to help unload two forty-four foot moving vans that carried Opus 99 from Gloucester to Palmer Memorial Church in Houston last June. Support of this kind from the church continued throughout the set-up of the three-manual, forty-six stop organ, allowing our crew of five to ready the instrument for voicing in an atmosphere of graceful hospitality and intense interest.

A number of acoustical improvements have been made by Palmer Church, including the hardening of the ceiling. The first stages of voicing have already shown results, as the building's improved surfaces reveal the singing qualities of the organ. Those stops which have been voiced are now being used in regular Sunday services and have encouraged congregational participation in a way that music director Meg Flowers describes as inspiring. Voicing will continue throughout the fall and winter, and a dedicatory recital by Clyde Holloway has been scheduled for April.

—Greg Bover

## Opus 98 Progress Report

The current project in construction at our workshop is a twenty-nine stop two-manual instrument for First Presbyterian Church in Evansville, Indiana. The organ is made from American walnut in the "Victorian Gothic" style and will stand in the rear gallery of the rather large, lofty church. Set-up and voicing will begin after the New Year. The organ dedication is set for October, 1991.

—Mark Nelson

## Pipe Dreams

Minnesota Public Radio's PIPE DREAMS will feature highlights of the April 21, 1990, dedication of Opus 95 at Slee Hall, SUNY-Buffalo. The program will include the Widor, Ives, Harrison, Lockwood, and Rheinberger selections from the faculty concert and works by Marchand, Bach and Moretti from Daniel Chorzempa's recital. It is scheduled to be broadcast within a week or two of October 22 and will be heard on 147 stations nationwide.



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