

THE ORGAN

An organ search committee was formed in January 1972 to begin listening to and evaluating many organs. Everywhere they went, the name of Rudolf von Beckerath of Hamburg, Germany, was mentioned. After hearing his landmark organ at Trinity Church in Cleveland, Ohio, the committee decided to recommend him as the man suitable to build the organ for First Lutheran. A contract was signed in January 1973. The succeeding months found a mounting inflation. Immediately after the first payment was made, the United States dollar was depreciated 10%.

At last on June 21, 1974, the organ arrived at New Orleans and came to Knoxville on July 2. Some 10 men of our congregation plus 2 from Hamburg carried the crates into the church. Getting 600 pounds of console to the second floor required a bit of courage. Construction was begun on July 10 and completed on July 31. Voicing and tuning of the organ was begun on August 19.

The organ is at once an example of the finest type of classical organ building, combined with the best technological advances of our time. The tracker action is typical of that of the great organs of the past, but the action has been made functional in 20th century terms. The organ has been built along lines similar to those of northern Europe and the contemporary tonal design philosophy of the "Orgelbewegung," or a stressing of tracker action, low wind pressures, casework surrounding the pipes, and an integral, self-contained approach to the design of the instrument.

The casework of the instrument is oak. Pear wood is used around the keyboard, oak or mahogany for wood-pipes, and grenadilla for the keys. The metal pipes contain a much higher percentage of tin than usual in many modern organs. The beauty of the sound we enjoy is partially a result of that. The organ contains 19 stops, 24 ranks, and 1204 pipes.

Rudolf von Beckerath Orgelbau, GmbH

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Perspective



Rudolf von Beckerath was a man very much ahead of his time. He was an artist, and one of vision and passion for his work. His output as an organ builder is an often monumental testament to his genius. It is often said that when one attains a certain level of creativity that it is possible to change the trajectory of human thinking by the example of your effort. Von Beckerath did just that as an organ builder. He synthesized his love for the historic instruments of his native country (especially Arp Schnitger), the principles espoused by the master builders and composers of the Baroque era, and his own mastery of modern mechanics to create instruments that are as much art forms as they are examples of outstanding musicianship.



Church of St. Peter and Paul
(Cappel) Arp Schnitger (1680)

It's important to note that von Beckerath's commission to renovate the Arp Schnitger organ in a small village near Hamburg called Steinkirchen was one of several watershed moments common to great artists. Not only did the successful completion of the project gain him international attention, but it also allows us to point to a particular spot on his career timeline where it is clear that the work of a great master inspired the work of a kindred spirit.

The von Beckerath firm of present day continues to maintain several of these spectacular historical instruments. In so doing, they remain in touch with their founder and their roots, and this is a mark of excellence.

It is not difficult to find discussion and perspective offered by scholars and accomplished performers alike. Von Beckerath is regularly mentioned in history books, and his instruments are well known by students. One can also find the influence of his work upon those who followed him in building their own instruments. Von Beckerath served as a teacher and an inspiration to a generation of America's most famous organ builders to include John Brombaugh, Fritz Noack, George Taylor and Charles Fisk. One can see a younger generation of organ builders carrying this revival forward in their own way in the work of Paul Fritts, Martin Pasi, Gene Bedient, and Martin Wech.

We offer here some excerpts from writing by an American organ builder, a composer, and a performer each of whom has written eloquently on the impact of von Beckerath's instruments upon the world in which he lived.



Lawrence Phelps, a noted designer of organs wrote in an article for Church Music (#67, vol. 1):

A Turning Point in American Reform

In 1957 the new wave of reform in America was given a great impetus by the installation of a 44-stop, four-manual instrument by Rudolf von Beckerath, with complete encasement and mechanical key and stop action, in Trinity Lutheran Church, Cleveland, Ohio. This instrument really marked the turning point in the American reform. Not only did it bring to America for the first time a modern, encased mechanical-action instrument with traditional classical voicing reminiscent of the finest instruments of Arp Schnitger, but it also marked the very first time that sounds of this stature had ever been heard in North America. Even the best of our old instruments, even the imported ones, even those built in America by imported talent, fell far short of the musical excellence of this organ. If there had been just one old instrument of this type somewhere in America and if it had survived until the beginning of the reform movement so that more musicians could have known it, the trend of the reform might have taken quite a different pattern right from the beginning. As it was, the selection as to what was right for America was made in the early stages of our reform by a very small group of experts who arbitrarily rejected the concept so well – but so belatedly – represented by the von Beckerath instrument. Without older instruments to serve as a guide, there was little else to do but go along with the experts, at least for a while.

The Cleveland von Beckerath had very far-reaching results, a few of which are well worth noting. First of all, a group of young organists in Montreal, headed by Kenneth Gilbert, organist of Queen Mary Road United Church, had, through their reading and study, become completely convinced that it was necessary for them to have instruments quite different from those available locally. A visit to the Cleveland instrument resulted in a two-manual von Beckerath of 26 stops for Mr. Gilbert's church in 1959. Subsequently, a five-manual instrument of 78 stops was ordered for St. Joseph's Oratory in Montreal, where Raymond Daveluy is the organist, and this was installed by von Beckerath in 1960. In 1961, a three-manual von Beckerath organ of 38 stops was installed in eglise de l'Immaculee-Conception, where Gaston Arel is the organist, and another von Beckerath was ordered some time later for the First Presbyterian Church in Winnipeg. Thus four von Beckerath instruments have appeared in Canada directly as a result of the 1957 installation in Cleveland. Several other von Beckerath instruments have also been installed in the United States primarily as a result of the success of the Canadian instruments, the most notable among these being the magnificent four-manual 67-stop instrument installed in 1962 in St. Paul's R. C. Cathedral in Pittsburgh.



Richard Proulx
(1937-2010)

Richard Proulx, prolific composer of church music:

...the von Beckerath organ was deemed a prophetic voice from the very beginning – its installation was a bold stroke for excellence at a time when American organbuilding was mired in mediocrity. This organ opened the door for other great instruments to follow, including the von Beckerath at St. Joseph's Oratory and the Flentrop Organs at Harvard, Oberlin, Duke, Seattle and Chicago. The Pittsburgh organ led the way by representing a restoration of ancient organ building principles as espoused by Albert Schweitzer and others. For over forty years this prominent instrument has stood in your cathedral as a symbol of the noblest ideals of Roman Catholic tradition, architectural integrity and truth.



William Porter

William Porter, virtuoso performer and improviser, Faculty at Eastman College of Music:

In 1962, Saint Paul's Cathedral in Pittsburgh became home to a monumental four-manual organ built by Rudolf von Beckerath of Hamburg, Germany. It was not the first von Beckerath organ installed in the United States...but the organ at St. Paul's Cathedral remains the largest of his American projects, and in the minds of many who know his work, the finest as well. The success of the Pittsburgh organ inspired a number of later instruments which were also to have a marked influence upon organ playing and organ building in America in the years that followed. His instruments, like the antiques that inspired him, are known for the rich warmth of their tone and the balanced and blending quality of their sound. Because of this, he is now often regarded as the greatest German organ builder of the mid-twentieth century. As such, his instruments are of immense value as they represent the highest quality in organ building of that time. When the organ at St. Paul's Cathedral was new, it brought the most renowned artists of Europe and America to St. Paul's, and sounds which had scarcely been heard in America were shaped by expert fingers to produce music of extraordinary beauty. As one who was present at many of these events, I can attest to the excitement these concerts generated, and to the extent to which the Cathedral was perceived by many as a place where the great music of the Church was supported and nurtured as part of the Cathedral's outreach.

Music in Worship

If you would like to thumb through our hymnal, you will quickly see that hymns are a major focal point in our worship. In addition to hymns in the front of the hymnal you will find Psalms and other aids to worship along with four different settings of our liturgy. The Word of God is central to our worship. Everything we do is in English, so don't worry about knowing German, Latin or any other foreign language. Jesus Christ is the focal point and reason for our celebration and we consider each Sunday a little Easter, celebrating his gift of salvation for all who believe. We use music to glorify God and sing praise to His name.

I have just a few comments about the music of the Lutheran Church and First Lutheran Church in general. Many fine Christians and church musicians before me have contributed to the music program of the congregation. I am so grateful to Ed Niedens, our former church organist and choir director, for his dedication and diligence to protect the heritage of the congregation and the church. I am also grateful to Ruth Couch who joins me to continue this heritage on a weekly basis from the organ bench.

At First Lutheran we are blessed to have devoted musicians like Karen Farris our parish choir director, who works with around 18 choir members in the vocal choir. They sing each Sunday morning and bring a quality vocal program to our congregation.

In addition to the choral program we have two handbell choirs that alternately play each Sunday during worship.

The Organ at First Lutheran

In 1972, the instrument was purchased from a company in Hamburg, Germany after a year of extensive investigation by the church's organ selection committee. The committee was chaired by one of our current members, Ralph Mertz. Under the supervision of Rudolf Von Beckerath, a true master in pipe organ construction, the instrument was packed and shipped from Germany to the Port of New Orleans, arriving in the summer of 1974. The organ consisted of numerous crates of pipes and a 600 pound console. All were carried into the balcony unassembled and tonally voiced during the same summer. The organ at First Lutheran contains 1,204 pipes composing 24 ranks. The casework of the instrument is oak. Pear wood is used around the keyboards, oak or mahogany for wood pipes, and granadilla for the keys. You may notice a bright "German" tonal quality to the sound produced by the metal pipes. The organ builder used a high tin content for the metal pipes to help make this distinct tonal character. Placement of the pipes in the center of the balcony allows the sound to flow down the full nave of the church, taking advantage of the length and height of the room, while giving each parishioner direct access to the sound. The swell division of the organ or upper manual of keys is under "expression,"

meaning the pipes are contained in a chamber with louvers that can be opened or closed to help control the volume of those stops. The great and pedal organ is mounted above the swell organ and is unenclosed.

Unlike many organs of today that use electric magnets to open the valve at the pipe, this instrument has mechanical action where a touch of the key on the console forms a physical link to the organ chamber and opens a valve that releases air into the specific pipe selected. This construction technique is known as a tracker organ because of the mechanical "physical" linkage between the key and the valve of the pipe. Tracker organs form a direct link between the musician and the release of air that produces the sound. Most organists feel this type of control is more expressive and sensitive to human touch. From the stop list you will see a wide variety of musical sounds. The organist selects combinations of these stops to create the variety of sounds that are heard when the instrument is played. The organ you hear today was one of the last instruments built and voiced under the guidance of Rudolf Von Beckerath himself. He was present during the actual installation and voiced the instrument himself. He died two years later on November 22, 1976.



German Fest Concert – First Lutheran Church - Knoxville, Tennessee

August 27, 2016

Brief History of the Organ

Pipe organs have been around for centuries with some being traced back to the Greek culture of the 3rd century. They were no more than pipe boxes at that time and certainly a far cry from the musical instrument we know today. It wasn't until the 12th century that they started to appear in churches and people learned their usefulness in leading the liturgy. The pipe organ that we have grown to know today really appeared in the 16th and 17th centuries. The four tonal divisions of the pipe organ became fully developed during the 17th century. Today you can visit the cathedrals of Europe and see working pipe organs from this era.

It was also around this time that the world saw a plethora of musical composers writing for the pipe organ. The most famous of all composers for the organ was Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750). Other composers that wrote for the church around the time of Bach also include Pachelbel, Buxtehude, Handel, Kindermann and Walter, to name only a few. But it was Mozart that nicknamed the pipe organ as "king of musical instruments" partly because of its size but also because of the diversity of sounds that it can create. The pipe organ can instantaneously move from a whisper to the volume of a moving freight train with trumpets and horns sounding forth in celebration.

The pipes on an organ can produce four basic tonal families: reeds, strings, flutes and diapason (principal sounds we identify as the foundation sound of a pipe organ). The sound itself is produced when air is forced into pipes of various lengths; this process resembles the blowing of air in a soft drink bottle to produce a sound. The bigger the bottle, the longer and lower the sound wave that is produced. Small pipes could produce sounds like a dog whistle that are too high for the human ear to detect. However, the sounds produced by pipe organs are intended to be heard by the human ear, although the huge 64' pipes found in some large cathedrals can certainly be felt as well as heard, much like the bass woofers on a car audio system. Most pipe

organs used in churches today fall in the middle of the tonal spectrum having representatives of all four tonal families.

Pipes are made from a variety of metals and wood. The type of material used in construction, combined with the size and shape of the pipe, gives the particular tonal quality as air is blown over the lip of the pipe. Reeds are often used to help produce the sound of trumpets, woodwinds, and other brass instruments. The use of wood in pipe construction produces a hollow or even flute-type sound, and the length of the pipe helps determine the pitch (high sound or low sound).

With that being said, let's talk about the pipe organ at First Lutheran Church.

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The Music of Bach

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750), known by many as the father of organ music, wrote in a variety of musical styles for numerous musical instruments and voice including the harpsichord, clavichord and organ. He was a German composer and musician of the Baroque Era in musical history. He was born into a family of musicians and after the death of his parents lived with his older brother, Johann Christoph Bach, and studied organ with him. He was admitted to St. Michaels in Luneburg and was exposed to a variety of European musicians and nobility during his study there. His musical creativity can be divided into three periods of time named after the three areas in Germany where he held musical posts: Weimar (1708-1717), Kothen (1717-1723) and Leipzig (1723-1750). Although the majority of Bach’s music was sacred, he also wrote secular works including orchestral suites, sonatas, concertos and other vocal works. One of his most recognized sacred vocal works is his Mass in B Minor.

He was a Lutheran musician and virtuoso in the field of organ, playing improvisations and often challenging fellow organists to musical sight-reading competitions. His life was full of challenges and opportunities as he

transitioned between the German posts he held. Bach was married twice and had between 18-22 children in all. Three of his children became well known musicians: C.P.E. Bach, W.F. Bach, and J.C. Bach. Before his death on June 28, 1750, Bach suffered from failing eyesight like many other famous composers. A stroke accompanied by respiratory problems and high fever is reported as his cause of death. After his death, it was years before his brilliance and creativity were truly recognized by the musical community. Today, his works are standard curriculum at any school of music and become a part of the repertoire of all organists. All together, his known compositions are catalogued at well over 1,000. He is famous for signing many of his works “Soli Dei Gloria,” reflecting his commitment to the sacred nature of his compositions.

At the Koncert this afternoon you will hear compositions of Bach as well as from other German musicians. The baroque period was truly a special time in the development of music for organ in Germany and other European countries. The influence of the reformation opened the door to creativity and variety of many musical forms. Luther himself composed many hymn tunes and introduced them in the protestant church.

Organ Stops

Great

Principal 8’
Rohrflote 8’
Octave 4’
Waldflote 2’
Mixture IV
Trumpet 8’
Swell to Great

Pedal

Subbass 16’
Octavbass 8’
Gedackt 8’
Choralbass 4’
Fagott 16’
Great to Pedal
Swell to Pedal

Swell

Holzgedackt 8’
Principal 4’
Rohrflote 4’
Octave 2’
Quinte 1 1/3’
Sesquialtera II
Scharf III

Organ Demonstration and History at First Lutheran Church

German Fest – August 26, 2017

Charles Wayne Poore, Organist

Trumpet in Dialogue

“Basse et de Trompette”

Louis Nicolas Clearmalt

Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott

“A Mighty Fortress is Our God”

Johann Pachelbel

Psalm Prelude 138

“By the Waters of Babylon”

Robert J. Powell

Psalm Prelude 117

“O Praise the Lord, All Ye Nations”

Robert J. Powell

Prelude and Fugue in G Major

Johann Sebastian Bach

Soli Deo Gloria

Louis-Nicolas Clérambault (19 December 1676 – 26 October 1749) was a French musician, best known as an organist and composer. He was born, and died, in Paris. The piece you will hear today was chosen because it eloquently demonstrates the Trumpet 8' stop found on the Great Manual of our organ. Note that Clérambault lived and composed virtually the same time as Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) in Paris, France. Bach was German, in contrast.

Johann Pachelbel (baptized 1 September 1653 – buried 9 March 1706) was a German composer, organist, and teacher who brought the south German organ tradition to its peak. He composed a large body of sacred and secular music, and his contributions to the development of the chorale prelude, and fugue have earned him a place among the most important composers of the middle Baroque era. The hymn by Martin Luther, "A Mighty Fortress is Our God" is one of the best-known hymns in the Christian Church today and stands as a symbol of the Protestant Reformation.

Robert Powell (born Benoit, Mississippi, 1932) is an American composer, organist, and choir director. Powell studied at Union Theological Seminary under the well known composer and organist, Alec Wyton, and served as associate organist under him at the Cathedral of St. John The Divine in New York City, as well as several addition congregations in the United States. He has composed in nearly all genres common to church music, including anthems, service music, hymn concertatos, organ music, music for handbell choir, and large-scale oratorios. Powell is the one contemporary composer on the program today. This composition was chosen to contrast the soft prayerful voices of our organ with the bright joyful full organ sounds.

Johann Sebastian Bach (31 March [O.S. 21 March] 1685 – 28 July 1750) was a German composer and musician of the Baroque period. He is possibly the most accomplished composer and organist known to the church today. Bach came from a family of musicians and mastered the organ at a very young age. He played and composed in several German cities, including Weimar, Arnstadt, Mühlhausen (1703–08), returned to Weimar (1708–17), Köthen (1717–23) and Leipzig (1723–50). He was a contemporary of other well-known composers such as Buxtehude, Handel, Pachelbel and Clérambault. Bach composed in many styles and for various musical instruments. He is well known for his choral compositions such as the Brandenburg Concerto and the B Minor Mass. He composed so many works that a special musical catalog was developed for them (BWV). Over 1126 compositions were assigned a BWV number in the 20th century. While Bach's abilities as an organist were highly respected during his lifetime, he was not widely recognized as an important composer until a revival of interest in his music during the first half of the 19th century. He is now generally regarded as one of the greatest composers of all time. As you leave the sanctuary today and enter the narthex, look up at the special stained-glass window dedicated to Bach's contribution to the musical life of the Lutheran Church.