Looking Back

10 years ago in the August 2000 issue of The Diapason

Cover: Wicks, First Baptist Church, Ocala, Florida

Kyle Johnson appointed assistant professor of music, Missouri Valley College

Janet Kaltenbach appointed general manager, The American Boychoir

Ralph Mills appointed organist and director of choirs, First United Methodist Church, Charlottesville, Virginia

Christa Rakich appointed director of music, Church of the Immaculate Conception, Boston

Camilla Jarnot is recipient of the first Margaret Power Biggs Research Grant

Charles W. McManis honored on the occasion of his 87th birthday

Lawrence Schreiber named minister of music emeritus, National City Christian Church, where he served since 1960

Charles Burks wins first prize, Gruenstein Memorial Organ Competition

Leslie Spelman died May 28 at age 97

"20th-Century Church Music in Germany: An Overview," by Martin West

"Monumental Organs in Monumental Churches: The Brick Gothic Phenomenon in Northern Germany," by Aldo J. Baggia

New organs: Jaeckel, B. Rule & Company, Charles M. Ruggles

25 years ago, August 1985

Cover: Robert L. Sipe, University Presbyterian Church, Chapel Hill, NC

Lee Dettra appointed organist and choirmaster, United States Military Academy, West Point, NY

Jared Jacobsen appointed director of liturgy and music, St. Leander Roman Catholic Church, San Leandro, CA

Robert Parkins appointed artist-in-residence and chapel organist, Duke University

Michelle Lothringer named winner, Gruenstein Memorial Contest

"Catharine Crozier at Illinois College," by Anita E. Werling and Ted Gibboney

"Organ Planning for Architects," by Pieter A. Visser

"Bach's Canonic Variations on *Vom Himmel Hoch*: Text and Context—Part 2," by Gwen E. Adams

New organs: Gratian Organ Builders, Lee Organs

50 years ago, August 1960

All Saints Chapel of the University of the South, Sewanee, TN, contracted for a new Casavant organ of three manuals plus a nave division

Paul Lindsley Thomas appointed organist and choirmaster, St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church, Dallas, TX

John S. Tremaine appointed minister of music, Calvary Evangelical United Brethren Church, Detroit, MI

Richard Westenburg appointed director of music, First Unitarian Church, Worcester, MA

Dr. Clarence Dickinson retired from New York's Brick Presbyterian Church June 12

People: Edward Berryman, Marshall Bidwell, Herbert Bruening, Margaret Whitney Dow, Virgil Fox, Charlotte Garden, George Markey, Janice Milburn, Frederick Swann, C. Albert Tufts, Elizabeth Van Horne

"Are Organists Psychic," by Herbert D. White

"The Small Organ: Mutations and Other Trifles," by Harold Frederic

Organs: Aeolian-Skinner, Austin, Gress-Miles, Hillgreen, Lane and Co., Möller, Reuter, Schantz, Schlicker, Tellers, Wicks

75 years ago, August 1935

People: Roma E. Angel, E. Power Biggs, William C. Carl, Winslow Cheney, Ralph Downes, Edward Eigenschenk, George H. Fairclough, Virgil Fox, Franklin Glynn, Charlotte Lockwood, Alexander McCurdy, Homer Nearing, Carlos Francis Newman, T. Tertius Noble, Herbert Peabody, Arthur Poister, Hugh Porter, Barrett Spach, William C. Steere, Helen Searles Westbrook, Julian R. Williams,

Organs: Casavant, Hook & Hastings, Kilgen, Kimball, Möller, Pilcher, Reuter, Wicks

In the wind . . .

by John Bishop

The times they are a-changin'

When I was a teenager, I spent a lot of time in churches. We lived in a suburb of Boston that had a large Episcopal parish (my father was the rector), two Congregational churches, Methodist, Baptist, Unitarian, Christian Science, and three Roman Catholic. (There aren't that many Presbyterian churches in the Boston area.) All of them but two of the Catholic churches had pipe organs, and as an ecumenical kid and a young organist to boot, I played on most of the organs. I had a series of regular jobs playing for churches there, and I remember well that it was easy to come and go from the buildings. All of them had regular staffs and office hours. I guess I took for that for granted. In neighboring towns in each direction the situation was the same—a gaggle of big church buildings, each with a pipe organ.

That was the 1960s and 1970s and the organbuilding renaissance was in full swing in New England. Fisk, Noack, Andover, Casavant, Bozeman, and several European firms were building new organs in churches all around the area. Seems we were attending dedication recitals every few months. But the handwriting was on the wall. Aeolian-Skinner was breathing its last, and I remember clearly when the rumors started to fly that that venerable firm was closing. I was sixteen and was more than a little self-righteous when I spread the news to colleague organists before a recital at the First Congregational Church, ironically the new home of a three-manual Fisk organ (Opus 50) that had just replaced a Skinner. That church was two blocks from our house and was where I had my lessons and did most of my practicing.

In the 1970s I went to school at Oberlin, where I started working part-time for John Leek, the school's organ technician, who did lots of organ service work on the side. Later he started his own business, now operated by his son James. Together we blasted all over Ohio and western Pennsylvania and I remember all the churches had at least a secretary and a sexton on duty. The secretary knew everyone in the parish and could anticipate what would happen next, and the sexton scrubbed and polished five days a week and was on hand on Sunday mornings making the coffee and being sure that all the light bulbs were working. You could count on the sexton to have the heat on just right in time for the organ tuning, and as we worked he was in the chancel several times, almost a nuisance, making sure we knew there was coffee in the office.

It's different today. Many of those parishes I knew as a teenager have dwindled, 75 or 80 people spread out across 600-seat sanctuaries that were once full. Foundation plantings are overgrown, gutters and downspouts swing free, the bell can't be rung because it's off its rocker, the Echo division has been shut down because the roof leaked, and the secretary is in between nine and eleven, three days a week. Sexton? Forget it. A cleaning service comes in once a week, but the tile floor in Fellowship Hall never gets polished. Motors and pumps are never lubricated, heaps of ancient pageant costumes are shrouded with spider webs, and there's an almost ghostly sense of yesterday's glory.

And I almost forgot—the last three organists haven't used the pedals.

The good old days

In recent weeks I've had two telling experiences with these "former glory" parishes in my area: one that cancelled the service contract I've had for 25 years, saying they don't use the organ any more, and another where the insurance settlement for water damage to the organ was used for something else. I've been reflecting on what it must have been like in the twenties when all those buildings were new and all the pews were full. Those were the days when American organbuilders were producing 2,000 organs a year. Most of the venerable firms that contributed to that staggering output are gone. This is off the top of my head, but it's a fair guess based on experience that the lofty club of 20th-century 20-organs-a-year firms included Skinner, Aeolian-Skinner, Hook & Hastings, Kimball, Kilgen, Schantz, Reuter, Wicks, and Austin. Don't mention Möller with dozens of hundred-organ years, and even many organ-a-day years. Unbelievable.

And by the way, at least two of the most prolific American organbuilders were mostly in the secular world—Wurlitzer built thousands of organs for movie theaters and all sorts of other venues, and Aeolian built more than a thousand instruments for the homes of the rich and famous. Frank Woolworth, the Five & Dime king, had the first residence organ to include a full-length 32-foot Open Wood Diapason. You really have to stop and think just what that means. The biggest twelve pipes of that stop would fill half a modern semi-trailer. Big house. And by the way, it was his country house. He also had a big Aeolian in his city house at 990 Fifth Avenue, across the street from the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Nice address. In an age when there was no central air conditioning, no heated swimming pools, no surround-sound home movie theaters, Mr. Woolworth had a 30-horsepower organ blower in his basement.

I don't know whether the American organ industry has had any 100-organ years in my lifetime. Probably, because Möller lasted into the 1990s, but I think you get the point. It's less than that now.

The coal miner's heritage

Yesterday I visited a Roman Catholic parish in central Pennsylvania that is offering an organ for sale, built by M. P. Möller in the nineteen-teens. It has 26 stops on two manuals. There's a 16-foot Open Wood in the Pedal, a lovely 16-foot metal Diapason on the Great, and four reeds. I would have expected a dull and heavy sound, but the organbuilder who renovated the instrument about eight years ago described the organ as having a brilliant and exciting tonal character, enhanced by the spacious acoustics of its large and vertical Gothic building. I might not have bothered to visit if he hadn't spoken so passionately about what a beautiful organ it is. Let's face it, there are plenty of lukewarm Möller organs on the market.

It's a coal-mining town—there are lots of coal towns in that area. It was a family-owned mine with as many as 20,000 employees. The ruling family had built housing, schools, a hospital, and many church buildings. Trouble is, the mine stopped operating 50 years ago. There's a factory that builds high-end stoves, but it's about to close. The only remaining business of any size is a meat-packing firm that employs around a hundred people. The junior high and high school have closed and are boarded up—the kids are bused nine miles to the next town. Twenty-two hundred people live there, and there's not much for them to do. The movie theater is in the same town as the schools. A shopping mall ten miles away stripped downtown of all its businesses. And the jobs? A lot of them must be further away than that.

My host was the priest of the Catholic parish. He drove me around town, telling me the local lore and history. He said the owners of the mine were Episcopalians. We drove past their house and saw that "their church" was next door. Though the congregation had always been small, the Episcopal church was exquisite. We didn't go in, but he told me that all the windows are by Tiffany. And although there are fewer than ten parishioners now, the place is funded in perpetuity, and I'd guess the building had been painted within the last year. The only

two people who are buried on church grounds in the town are the mine owner and his wife. The company had provided land for six cemeteries. No schools, no jobs, six cemeteries.

There was one small and exclusive Episcopal church in town, but there had been four bustling Roman Catholic parishes: one Slovak (St. John Nepomucene), one Polish (St. Casimir), one Irish (St. Anne's), and one Italian (St. Anthony's). Because they all were founded by and for first-generation immigrants in the early 20th century, each had a distinct cultural and ethnic character. Four years ago, the diocese directed that the parishes should merge. Oof. Did you hear that? Four years ago. Remember I said the organ had been renovated eight years ago? That cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. My visit had started at the rectory where the priest lives. When we went outside to get in his car for our tour, he introduced me to his neighbor across the street who told me he remembered when they "came around collecting for the organ project. So much money and then they close the place."

A significant part of the priest's job is to divest the merged parish of redundant properties. As we drove he pointed out the recently sold vacant lot where the first building of the Irish parish had been, decrepit rectories, and crumbling church and school buildings.

The building where the organ is (by the way, it's the Slovak one) stands in a residential neighborhood on a side street that slopes gently up from south to north. That means the morning sun had shone through the St. Cecilia window every day baking the back of the organ until the organbuilder who renovated it recommended that the window be closed. The priest asked if that had been necessary and I replied that since people started building organs in churches there have been conflicts between organs and windows. It's both a shame to bake the organ and to lose the window.

I was impressed and moved by the relationship this priest has with his community. It seemed as though each time we turned onto a different street he beeped and waved to someone, sometimes calling out the window. We ate lunch in a pizza shop where he was obviously well known, well loved, and very comfortable. A troop of motorcycles thundered by, inspiring a whole series of hoots back and forth through the open door as neighbors (they must have been parishioners) expressed their reactions. I suggested maybe they were looking for the Catholic church. After all, it was Saturday and there would be a Mass in a couple hours.

Let's get together and be all right

Funny to quote Bob Marley when discussing the Poles, the Slovaks, the Italians, and the Irish. They're all Roman Catholics (the last four I mean), but they were surely not ready to be one parish. St. Anne's had built a new building in the sixties. Because it was in the best condition, it would be retained. But because it was built in the sixties, it was not the most lovely. Skylights were popular then, so the ridge of the cruciform roof is glass. There's no air-conditioning, so it's terribly hot inside whenever the sun shines. There's dingy industrial carpet, tacky ceiling fans, and straight, plain pews with crumbling varnish. Imagine a lifelong parishioner of St. John's (that's the Slovak parish) leaving the arched Gothic ceilings, gorgeous windows, colorful statues, and renovated pipe organ and going to Mass the next Sunday amidst that sixties kitsch.

I asked the priest how in the world you preside over the forced and unwanted union of such diverse ethnic and cultural communities. There was plenty of anger, and lots of people left the church altogether. Most of them grudgingly made the adjustment, but it wasn't easy. My host had been a seminary student just after the Second Vatican Council, and told me how as a young priest he had been involved in the removal of statuary from church buildings as part of that "new time." But as he started his ministry in this coal town, he found himself moving statues and icons from the other three

Möller organ, St. John Nepomucene

buildings to adorn the otherwise blank slate of St. Anne's building, itself a product of the austerity of the post-Vatican II Catholic Church. They moved memorial plaques, a tabernacle, the Stations of the Cross, a pulpit, and a heavy "priestly" chair, among many other things.

When I say moving statues, I mean personally moving statues. He'd get together a couple guys and they'd load these things into station wagons and pickup trucks. The Sunday after they moved the life-size statue of St. Anthony into the narthex, an elderly Italian woman came home from the 7:30 Mass and starting making lasagna in celebration of the appearance of "her" saint. Her middle-aged daughter called the priest to share the family's delight.

They even tried to achieve parity by moving the same number of things from each building, a formula that only works if you count "The Stations" as one! Now I've got to admit, this is a mighty various collection of stuff. There's no artistic or stylistic connection in the collection. It looks a little like a saintly yard sale. But while I doubt it calmed all the storms and salved all the wounds, it was a great thought and it obviously means a lot to this diminished and altered community.

What in the world is next for our world?

I left this town and this experience for the three-hour drive to Manhattan to continue work on our project there. Three became four as I realized I was not the only guy who thought of driving through the Lincoln Tunnel on a sunny Saturday afternoon, and I had plenty of time to reflect on my day. I had left home that morning at the militaresque *oh-dark-hundred* to drive 400 miles to see a 90-year-old Möller. Who would have thought? I found a cheerful instrument beautifully renovated, but suffering at the hands of four years of unheated neglect. I lifted a façade pipe and put a photocopied psalm between toe and toe-hole to silence a cipher. The pedal contacts were full of dust and other stuff causing so many ciphers

that I didn't play the pedals at all. Drawing a pedal knob was enough to show the weight and presence of the impressive bass stops. I played for 20 minutes to get the hang of it, figured out a few tricks to navigate around ciphers, and made a ten-minute recording. When I went downstairs, there was a group of former parishioners standing in the street with the priest. They had come when they heard the organ through the open door, the first time it had been played in three years.

The Gothic-inspired case is made of quarter-sawn oak, with lots of beautiful carved and formed details. The draw-knob console is comfortable and well appointed. It's nestled in an alcove of the case. The player sits under the impost and façade, looking down the aisle to the altar. There are heaps of white plaster dust on the pews. There are empty pedestals from which the saints migrated across town. Wrought-iron votive-candle stands are heaped in the narthex. The choir loft has pews to accommodate at least 50 singers. There is still a tray of paper clips, a basket of sharp pencils, a stack of photocopied psalms now one fewer, and a glass canister of Hall's and Ricolas. But there are no people.

You can sense the decades of rites of liturgy and rites of passage, all the celebrations, sounds, smells, and sights of a century of worship in a vibrant community. One can hardly grasp the number of First Communions with pretty little girls in frilly white dresses, weddings, and funerals, to say nothing of tens of thousands of Masses. There are 5,000 weekends in a century. I bet it's an understatement to say that there were at least five Masses a week for many years, 20 in the Glory Days. All that's left is an organ that needs a new home. It's got a lot of miles on it. Good care. No rust. Only driven by a little old lady on Sundays . . . and Saturdays, and Mondays . . . Take a look at <www.organclearinghouse.com>.

And to you all, my colleagues and friends in the world of the pipe organ, we have a special art that needs special care in this particular and transitory moment. ■

On Teaching

by Gavin Black

Boëllmann *Suite Gothique*, Part 1: Getting to know the piece

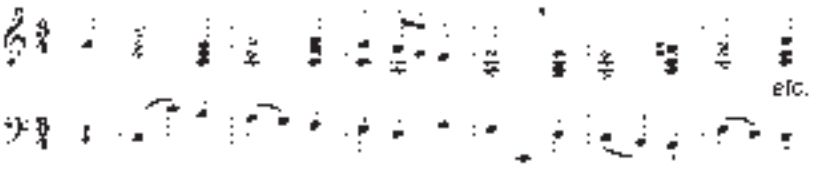
This month's column is the first in the current series to take a look at the Boëllmann *Suite Gothique*, op. 25. We will go through the first steps of getting to know the piece in a manner analogous to what we did with the Buxtehude *Praeludium* in June's column. In large part, this will be presented as a list of features or aspects of the piece, the noticing of which will help with learning the piece, either by suggesting approaches to technical problems or by helping with the task of knowing securely what is coming up next. Next month we will discuss fingering, pedaling, and practicing issues in the opening movement.

Editions

As with the Buxtehude, there are several perfectly good editions. There is (as of this writing) a Durand edition in print that is the direct successor to the original edition of 1895. There are also several free online editions available. The best of these seems to me to be the one at the Werner Icking Music Archive, edited by Pierre Gouin: <http://icking-music-archive.org/ByComposer/Boellmann.php>. This is essentially an accurate new type-setting of the original, with registrations and other performance suggestion transcribed in an undistorted manner. There are, I believe, other good editions to be found online. (This is, like the Buxtehude, a piece that is in the public domain.) However, there are also some editions out there that are misleading. For example, again as of this writing, both editions available through the Petrucci Music Library—in general a wonderful resource—omit original registrations and other performance suggestions. One of them also adds fingerings and pedalings, which, by the nature of printed technical suggestions, may or may not suit any particular player. They do not come from the composer and thus have no authority.

Whatever edition one is using, it is important to start by writing in measure numbers if, as in the case of the Durand edition, they are absent.

Example 1. Boëllmann, *Menuet Gothique* opening



Overall structure

The first thing to notice about this piece is that it is in four movements. The Buxtehude, we noticed, is in one movement but several sections. What is the difference? Would this piece be different—would we want to *play it differently*—if the movements were printed in such a way that the end of one was followed immediately on the same staff by the beginning of the next, and the various instructions—name, tempo, registration—were printed discreetly above the appropriate notes? What is the effect on our concept of the piece of all the thick double bars and new pages? There is a chance (danger?) that whereas it is obvious that *sections* should follow one another in a way that is dictated by musical sense, shape, and drama, it does not always seem obvious that *movements* should do so. Breaks between movements can seem like opportunities to cough, take a drink, reposition on the bench, and so on. Perhaps this is often just fine, but it is worth thinking about. In the case of this piece, the first movement ends with the word *enchaînez*, which is French for what we often call *attacca*—that is: let what follows arise directly out of what is ending. The other movements do not have this notation.

Each movement has a title and a tempo marking. The titles are in a sense "fanciful"—they are probably meant to suggest images and moods, and to link the music of each movement to the idea of the "gothic," which is found in the title of the work as a whole. How will these images affect choices made in playing the work? Three of the movements have ordinary Italian tempo markings: two *Allegros* and a *Maestoso*. The remaining movement has a tempo marking in French, that is, in the vernacular: *Très lent*. This means "very slow" and this movement—the third, titled *Prière à Notre Dame*—has no metronome marking, whereas all the other three do.

All of these various markings help to differentiate the movements; so does the fact that each is in a different meter, and so do the registrations offered by the composer. Interestingly, all of these things tend to separate out the *Prière* more than any of the other movements. It alone lacks a metronome marking, it has the vernacular—and extreme—tempo suggestion, and its registration is significantly more different from any of the others—they differ from one another slightly—and its name is fully extra-musical. It is also in a (very) different key, namely A-flat major. Meanwhile, each movement is remarkably consistent within itself in texture and mood, almost as if each movement had an "affect" in the sense in which people often apply that word to Baroque pieces. What does all of this mean? Not necessarily anything in particular. We will explore some of it along the way, but it is all useful to notice as part of getting to know the piece.

Now to go through the movements one by one.

First movement

The first movement is ***Introduction-Choral*** (not, by the way, "Introduction & Choral" as some editions have it). It is the shortest movement in the work, certainly in amount of musical material and probably in duration, even at its slow tempo. Perhaps this is in part what justifies calling it an "introduction". It is a "choral", essentially, because of the texture. In keyboard music, "choral(e)" texture means that by and large the voices all move in the same rhythm as one another. This is the case here. (Note: "by and large", not 100%.) So chorale texture is somewhat of a chordal texture, but not necessarily entirely so. The phrase structure here is also reminiscent of a chorale or hymn. The opening phrase is eight measures, and it is repeated. The next phrase is seven measures and it is also repeated. The final phrase is eleven measures, with an internal quasi-repetition after the first four measures, and with only the tail end of the phrase repeated at the end. The repetitions—mm. 9–16, 24–30, and 42–end—are quiet, whereas the initial statements—mm. 1–8, and so on—are loud: therefore the repetitions are echoes. These echoes are manuals-only, while the initial statements all use pedal. Thus the pedal/no pedal shift serves to intensify the *fff/p* contrast. There is pervasive octave doubling in the *fff* passages, and essentially none in the echoes. (In fact there is *one* instance of it in all of the echo passages, in m. 11. This has the look of an inadvertent "parallel octave" rather than a way of building a texture.) This also intensifies the *fff/p* contrast. It also serves to shift the feeling of the texture a little bit: the echoes seem closer to the contrapuntal than the initial statements do.

From the purely technical point of view, the two most noticeable issues presented by this movement are the fingering and execution of some very thick chords, and the double pedal that opens the work.

Second movement

This first movement ends quietly, and on a dominant chord. This, plus the *enchaînez* instruction, leads us directly into the second movement. Entitled ***Menuet gothique***, it is appropriately in the minuet meter of 3/4. The lilting minuet rhythm is very clear from the beginning. It is accentuated by the articulation in the bass line in the left hand (Example 1). The opening motive provides about half of the musical material of this movement. It is, somewhat like the first movement, organized in phrases that are repeated. In this case, the initial statements are manuals-only and quiet. The repetitions are with pedal and loud. The louder statements have octave dou-