

New Organs

Kegg Pipe Organ Builders,
Hartville, Ohio
Private Residence, Palm Springs,
California

Traditionally, American residence organs have taken one of two roads. In the first half of the twentieth century, the Aeolian company specialized in a style of organ that was heard but not seen. The pipes were typically in fairly remote chambers, and the music was mostly intended to provide a luxurious background to some other activity around the house. Scaling and voicing could be done in a normal or even aggressive way, relying on distance to blend and mellow the final result.

In the second half of the century, with the advent of the Organ Reform movement, a residence organ became much less of an entertainment device (radio and recordings had filled that role) and more of a practice instrument. Crisp, responsive key actions were far more important than variety of color, and many an organist spent countless hours training his fingers and feet to control two eight-foot flutes while his mind's ear heard Schnitger.

The function of the new Kegg organ for a private residence in Palm Springs,

► page 31: Quoirin cover feature

crescendoing upwards. Thus, the sound of the organ is centered for the listener located in the nave.

The plenum in two planes, Grand-Orgue and Positif, is founded on the fundamental of the 16', in the French manner, Grande Fourniture with its resultants of 10 2/3', Fourniture, and Cymbale.

The Plein Jeu of the Grand-Récit Expressif is not a part of the plenum. It is rather to be used with the reeds, which the symphonic character favors. On the other hand, the Sur Cymbale on this keyboard is of the "neo-classic" type, narrow scale and high-pitched, voiced with low mouths and toes relatively closed. The use of such a stop figures in certain very special registrations of Olivier Messiaen. It is also the typical color of the neo-classical epoch that considered the effect of the Plein-jeux as an intense and penetrating light, whose goal was to illuminate the foundations of the organ. On the other hand, the classic conception interprets the Plein Jeu, the plenum, as the result of a synthesis of harmonics: one homogenous sonority with its vowel sound perfectly defined.

The reed stops differentiate themselves in three different ways.

The first: classic, copying the "Dom-Bédos" reeds of the Eglise Sainte-Croix in Bordeaux, for the reeds of the Grand-Orgue, Positif, and the Trompette, Hautbois, and Voix humaine of the Récit-Echo, with their distinctive reeds made of brass in the form of a "U", 2/3 open.

The second: the Clarinette 8' and the Basson 8' of the Récit-Echo, the Basson 16' of the Positif, with their "tear-drop" reeds, according to the measurements of Cavaillé-Coll, and the Bassons 16' and 8' of the Pédale, with their rectangular "tear-drop", tin-plated reeds.

The third: the harmonic reeds of the Grand-Récit Expressif, with their reeds more closed, of the "Bertoumèche" type (Bertoumèche was a French craftsman who made the shallots of Cavaillé-Coll's reeds; this little enterprise existed, remaining in productivity, until 1976).

The acoustic of the church, where the reverberation time is about three seconds, can appear very short, yet it has the advantage of eliciting no deformation to the sound. The bass has a flawless definition and does not invade the space, and the higher pitches sound without any aggressiveness. There are no curved surfaces in the interior architecture that could introduce disturbing reverberation.

—Pascal Quoirin

http://www.atelier-quoirin.com/

Photo credit: Tom Ligamari

California, falls somewhere between these two. The client uses it to practice, yes. But his organ playing is something he does purely for pleasure, not a first or even second job. It is nearly impossible in these pages to find the term "unification" without the qualifier "judicious" close at hand. The Palm Springs organ goes beyond simply embracing the unit organ concept: it exploits it! Even this electric-action unit organ needs to be responsive and meticulously regulated to encourage good technique, but it also must be beautiful to listen to, musical in its own right, and visually cooperative with the guest suite whose 16' x 24' space it shares.

It begins with taking into account that the requirements of this organ differ significantly from a church organ of the same size. There is no congregation to lead in singing, no choir to accompany, no bride to bring down the aisle, and no Easter Sunday postlude, although all of that music will probably be played.

The specification is built around trying to extract as many different color combinations as possible from the resources available. All eight of the ranks are quite similar in volume, so that any given pair of stops drawn from them has a reasonable chance at sounding balanced. The two flute stops in particular change construction frequently in order to emphasize different colors at different pitch ranges. They include stopped wood, capped metal, chimney flute, koppel flute, spitzflute, open and harmonic pipes. The Viola and Celeste are scaled small enough to have a definite string tone, but are voiced gently enough to beguile even a listener standing directly in front of them. The Quinte is voiced to work well with the Octave in the wired Mixture, providing a satisfying but not earsplitting top end to the ensemble. The unenclosed Principal gives a solid foundation to the rest of the organ with the shades open, but also sings a rich velvety solo line, particularly in the tenor range, when the shades are closed. Finally, the capped Flugelhorn walks the fine line of being able to simulate "full Swell" as a chorus reed, or play solo melodies against a variety of accompaniment registrations.

Two other components are crucial to the success of this instrument: a very effective swell box, and a virtually silent, well-regulated tremulant. A great deal of care was taken in making the swell box as airtight as possible. The bottom 15 pipes of the 16' flute are wood, and mounted horizontally behind the swell box, with their mouths speaking into it. The 16 swell shades are operated noiselessly in 32 stages by an electric shade motor.

At a small dinner party the evening the tonal finishing was completed, the client chose as his opening selection Alec Wyton's arrangement of the Billy Strayhorn tune, "Lotus Blossom." We did not hear an organ preparing a player for a real performance somewhere else. We heard an instrument completely content with its surroundings, happy to get out of its own way and let the beautiful music sing for itself. And that is a deeply rewarding experience for our company of organ builders.

—Fredrick Bahr

Kegg Pipe Organ Builders

Charles Kegg, President*
Fredrick Bahr, Tonal Director*
Philip Brown
Michael Carden
Joyce Harper*
Philip Laakso
Thomas Mierau*
Bruce Schutrum

*members, American Institute of Organ-builders

Kegg Pipe Organ Builders
1184 Woodland St., SW
Hartville, OH 44632
330/877-8800
cek@keggorgan.com
www.keggorgan.com



Kegg Pipe Organ Builders, Palm Springs residence

Tonal Resources			SWELL			
1.	8'	Principal (unenclosed)	61	8'	Rohrflute	2
2.	16'	Rohrflute	85	8'	Viola	4
3.	4'	Harmonic Flute GG	54	8'	Viola Celeste	5
4.	8'	Viola GG	42	4'	Principal	6
5.	8'	Viola Celeste TC	37	4'	Harmonic Flute	3
6.	4'	Octave	73	2 3/4'	Nazard	7
7.	1 1/2'	Quinte	49	2'	Octave	6
8.	16'	Flugelhorn	85	2'	Flute	2 & 6
			1 1/2'	Tierce	2 & 6	
GREAT			1 1/2'	Quinte	7	
16'	Viola TC	4	1'	Fife	2 & 6	
8'	Principal	1	16'	Bassoon	8	
8'	Harmonic Flute	2 & 3	8'	Flugelhorn	8	
8'	Rohrflute	2	4'	Hautbois	8	
8'	Viola	4	Tremulant			
8'	Viola Celeste	5	Swell 16, UO, 4			
4'	Octave	6	MIDI Ch. 3			
4'	Harmonic Flute	3	PEDAL			
4'	Rohrflute	2	16'	Bourdon	2	
2'	Piccolo	3 & 6	8'	Principal	1	
III	Mixture	6 & 7	8'	Flute	2	
8'	Flugelhorn	8	8'	Viola	4	
Swell to Great		8	4'	Octave	1	
MIDI Ch. 1			2'	Cantus Flute	3	
MIDI Ch. 2			16'	Bassoon	8	
			8'	Flugelhorn	8	
			4'	Hautbois	8	
			Great to Pedal 8			
			Swell to Pedal 8, 4			
			MIDI Ch. 4			