

Casavant Frères



Toronto, Ontario – St. Paul's Anglican Church

Four manuals and pedals, 94 stops, 119 ranks

Detached drawknob console, compass 61/32

Electro-pneumatic action

Opus 550, 1914

Photographs: Robert Hiller (color); Casavant Frères Archives

The construction of St. Paul's Anglican Church in Toronto dates to the years 1909-1913. Designed by Edward James Lennox, the church is 46 feet wide, 152 feet long and 92 feet high. With a seating capacity of 2,500, it is one of the largest churches in Canada. The Blackstock Memorial Organ was donated by Mrs. T. Gibbs Blackstock and family in memory of Thomas Gibbs Blackstock, K.C. The dedication was held on April 29th, 1914 with Dr. Healey Willan, Organist and Choirmaster, at the console. At the time of its dedication, the organ was believed to be the fifth largest organ in the world eclipsing London's St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey. The consultant for the first design dating to 1906 was T. J. Palmer, ARCO, who asked to have the responsibility passed to English consultant Lt. Col. George Dixon who had worked with Palmer at St. Nicholas Church, Whitehaven, Cumbria.



Installation photograph marked "Friday morning 10 o'clock, February 20, 1914"

The English influence for this organ was considerable and Dixon listed eighteen ranks of reeds that were to be “voiced in England under the direction of Lt. Col.



The rear gallery & Echo Organ

Dixon and his choice of voicer to be accepted by the builders, provided cost does not exceed \$ 2,730 for the whole.”

The chorus reeds of the Swell, Great and Tuba divisions were made by Harrison and Harrison of Durham and by Frank Wesson and W. G. Jones in England. The Great and Swell divisions are located on the West side, and the Choir, Tuba and Orchestral divisions are located on the East side in organ lofts specially prepared for this instrument. The Pedal organ is divided between the East and West lofts. The Echo Great, Swell and Pedal are located in a case above the Gallery on the North Wall of the nave.

The original scheme of the organ was that of the English concert hall type, with the French ventil system used to bring on all reeds, strings, diapasons or flutes.



The 1914 console, with its unique controls, was displayed in the choir rehearsal room beneath the nave for years where Dr. Charles Peaker used to do silent practice.

I still practice on it—heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard are sweeter. As its cadences roll through my mind, I think of the men who have played it; Hollins and Vierne, those blind virtuosi from Edinburgh and Paris; Farnam, Dupré, MacMillan, Sir William MacKie of the Abbey and my own distinguished predecessors—Maitland Farmer, the late T. J. Crawford and that most eminent musician, Dr. Healey Willan. Nor could I forget Dr. Alexander Davies who filled in so well at each interregnum.

—Dr. Charles Peaker, *The Globe and Mail*, November 24, 1956

For 45 years, the original console remained in the undercroft until it was relocated to the gallery in 2002 where it is used to play the Echo Organ and the main organ in part.

In 1956 a tonal revision and mechanical restoration was performed by Casavant Frères under the supervision of Edwin D. Northrup of Casavant and Dr. Charles Peaker, organist of the parish. Reworking the 1914 scheme, much new fluework was incorporated, including some more assertive upperwork for the principal choruses. The reeds remained as they had been and, as such, are considered to be some of the finest



The 1956 console

examples of English chorus reeds in North America. A new four manual console built by Casavant was given in 1956 by Mrs. H. J. Cody.

A letter from the late Edwin D. Northrup, Assistant Vice President of Casavant Frères dated July 8, 1967 relates some interesting information from the files on the organ.

With reference to the organs listed—I will skip to St. Paul's Bloor Street organ, which had 106 stops originally. It was based on suggestions by the late T. L. J. Palmer, who wished the then Lt. Col. George Dixon (late of the Border Regiment) to assume the responsibility. He agreed to design, and actually scaled the organ, provided he could oversee the reeds, which were to be made in England. This was agreed to, and the organ was under contract before Healey Willan came out. The Bombardon 32'-Ophecleide 16' and Posaune 8' were from Jones and Blossom, and were made by the late William Cyples Jones, who only this year (1967) died at age of 92 was a choir boy under Robert Hope Jones at Birkinhead, and through Hope-Jones (no relation) got into organ business, and has taught most of the fine reed voicers in England, with the exception of Willis. This was the FIRST metal 32' made in England and was to

be "like Carlisle Cathedral carried down" one octave. Cost 88 pounds! Jones also did the Great reeds 16'-8'-4', the Swell Trumpets 16'-8'-4', the Tuba Sonora, Quinte Trombone 5-1/3'.

Mr. Frank Wesson, was a Willis voicer who did a bit of moonlighting to put bread on his table, and so the old man sacked him. At the time Dixon wrote that he did not think Wesson's slight hearing defect would hinder him, and he voiced the Tuba Organ Trombone 16' and the Tuba Mirabilis and Clarion.

Healey Willan has told all who will listen that Arthur Harrison made ALL the reeds and actually Harrison and Harrison made the Trompette harmonique and Clarion 4' in Tuba Organ. They gave a price of something like 27 pounds, and later sent Dixon a bill for experiments. I recall the letter said "Harry (brother of Arthur) and I have finally got our costs together on the experimental trumpet for St. Paul's." Dixon refused to pay, and was furious, and his handwriting showed it. But J. C. Casavant paid it and they incurred a loss of \$1,300 alone on the reeds.

The Great reeds were to be mitred and hooded and toned like 'St. Paul's Edinborough.'

In 1982 and 1983 Casavant completed another mechanical restoration and cleaned the entire instrument. Some re-regulation of the swell flues was undertaken and additional swell shutters were added to the swell box to facilitate using that division to accompany the choir.



This instrument, like many large organs of this period as well as those built through the late 1930's, incorporates a large-scale open wood thirty-two foot pedal stop, which was most often a twelve pipe extension of a full-compass large scale open wood sixteen-foot pedal stop. When there was not enough room inside the organ for the considerable space required for all twelve of these huge pipes, their wind chest and wind regulators, the Casavant brothers solved the problem by using polyphone pipes. The number of polyphones in any given organ depended upon the available space and could, like this organ, make use of a maximum of six pipes to produce the twelve pitches of the bottom octave. Each polyphone pipe was fit with a large rectangular padded hinged

door near the top of the pipe that functioned in the same way that the key on a woodwind instrument does by changing the length of the resonator for two different pitches, therefore one pipe could be used to play both CCCC and CCCC#. The mechanism operated by means of a pneumatic valve located inside the windchest with the pipe's pallet. This valve was attached to a wood pole mounted above the windchest that ran parallel to the pipe body and was attached to the door at the top. The mechanism closed the door when the lower of the two pitches was selected. The mechanism works quickly and reacts in sufficient time for the pitch to develop as it would in the normal open pipe of this length.

Great Organ		Swell Organ	
Gross Geigen	16	Double Stopped Diapason	16
Diapason I	8	Horn Diapason	8
Diapason II	8	Stopped Diapason	8
Geigen Principal	8	Viola da Gamba	8
Waldflöte	8	Voix céleste (CC)	8
Rohrflöte	8	Octave Gamba	4
Spitzflöte	8	Lieblichflöte	4
Quintflöte	5-1/3	Flautina	2
Octave	4	Plein Jeu V ¹	2
Geigen Octave	4	Double Trumpet	16
Flute Triangulaire	4	Trumpet	8
Flûte ouverte ¹	4	Oboe	8
Octave Quinte	2-2/3	Vox Humana	8
Super Octave	2	Clarion	4
Fourniture IV ¹	1-1/3	Tremulant	
Cymbale III ¹	1/2	Tuba Organ Coupler	
Contra Tromba	16	Swell 16', Unison Off, Swell 4'	
Tromba	8	Chimes (Orchestral Organ)	
Octave Tromba	4	Harp (Orchestral Organ)	
Tuba Organ Coupler		Celesta (Choir Organ)	
Great Unison Off, Great 4'			
Chimes (Orchestral Organ)			
Harp (Orchestral Organ)			
Celesta (Choir Organ)			
Choir Organ		Orchestral Organ	
Quintaton ¹	16	Contre Viole	16
Spitzprincipal	8	Flute Harmonique	8
Cor de Nuit ²	8	Quintaton	8
Viole de Gambe	8	Viole d'Orchestre	8
Salicional	8	Viole Céleste (TC)	8
Vox Angelica (TC)	8	Concert Flute Harmonique	4
Spitzflöte	4	Viole Octaviane	4
Zauberflöte	4	Piccolo Harmonique	2
Nazard ¹	2-2/3	Cornet de Violes III	2-2/3
		Corno de Bassetto	16
		Cor Anglais	8
		Hautbois d'Orchestre	8
		Tremulant	

Choir Organ (continued)

Blockflöte ¹	2
Tierce	1-3/5
Larigot ¹	1-1/3
Sifflöte ¹	1
Zimbel IV ¹	1
Contra Fagotto	16
Clarinet	8
Tremulant	
Tuba Organ Coupler	
Choir 16', Unison Off, Choir 4'	
Chimes (Orchestral Organ)	
Harp (Orchestral Organ)	
Celesta (Choir Organ)	

Tuba Organ ³

Principal	4
Grand Fourniture V	2
Trombone	16
Tuba Sonora	8
Trompette Harmonique	8
Quinte Horn	5-1/3
Clarion Harmonique	4
Tuba Mirabilis	8
Tuba Clarion	4

ECHO ORGAN ⁵**Echo Great**

Contra Gamba	16
Open Diapason	8
Salicional	8
Harmonic Flute	4
Horn	8

Echo Swell

Viole de Gambe	8
Voix Céleste (TC)	8
Gedackt	8
Erzähler ⁶	8
Unda Maris (TC)	8
Lieblichflöte	4
Dolce Cornet V	8
Contra Oboe	16
Tremulant	

Orchestral Organ (continued)

Tuba Organ Coupler	
Orch. 16', Unison Off, Orch, 4'	
Chimes	
Harp	
Celesta (Choir Organ)	

Pedal Organ

Double Open Diapason (Ext.) ⁴	32
Diapason	16
Contrebass ¹	16
Subbass	16
Geigen (Great Organ)	16
Viole (Orchestral Organ)	16
Gedeckt (Swell Organ)	16
Quintaton (Choir Organ)	16
Gemshorn Quint ¹	10-2/3
Octave	8
Principal (Ext. Contrebass) ¹	8
Viole Octave (Orchestral Organ)	8
Stopped Flute (Ext. Subbass)	8
Still Gedackt (Swell Organ)	8
Octave Quinte (Ext.) ¹	5-1/3
Super Octave (Ext. Octave) ¹	4
Choralbass (Ext. Principal) ¹	4
Flute (Ext. Stopped Flute) ¹	4
Blockflöte ¹	2
Fourniture III	4
Harmonics II ¹	3-1/5
Bombardon	32
Ophecleide (Ext. Bombardon)	16
Trombone (Tuba Organ)	16
Posaune (Ext. Ophecleide)	8
Clarion (Ext. Posaune)	4
Tuba Organ Coupler	
Chimes (Orchestral Organ)	
Harp (Orchestral Organ)	
Celesta (Choir Organ)	

Echo Pedal

Diapason	16
Gamba (Echo Great)	16
Bourdon	16

Notes

- ¹ New pipes in 1955
- ² New stop added in 1962
- ³ Enclosed with Orchestral Organ
- ⁴ Numbers 1-4 are polyphones
- ⁵ Both divisions of the Echo Organ are enclosed in the same enclosure
- ⁶ New pipework from 1955 that was originally installed in the Swell on the Vox Humana action, the pipes of which were discarded. Later (1981 ?), the Erzähler was moved to the Echo and the Echo Vox Humana was installed in the Swell.

Considerable information for this text comes from Alan T. Jackson, who has maintained this instrument for many years and has written about it in the convention brochure for the American Institute of Organbuilders convention held in Toronto in 1988 and in the book, Organs of Toronto. Please see the Published Articles section of the website for additional information.

