

COVER FEATURE
ST. FRANCIS XAVIER CATHEDRAL
ALEXANDRIA, LOUISIANA
REUTER ORGAN COMPANY



From the Builder

Pipe organ builders deal with many types of buildings, some notable and others infamous. Often a builder can be judged by his creative ability to rise to the challenging demands of building a pipe organ that both sounds good and looks good in a not-so-splendid room. Every once in a while, though, both creativity in design and beauty in architectural/acoustical surroundings come together in a delightful marriage, a mingling where the ease at which the pipes resonate, the beauty of the colors they create, and the visual impact on the space is surpassed only by the glorious ensemble produced when the room sings *with* the instrument. We believe Reuter realized a measure of that achievement with the installation of Opus 2218. The handsome and acoustically marvelous space is truly remarkable, and any pipe organ builder would be honored to work there.

From the beginning, our goal was to craft an appropriate instrument for the unique situation of the cathedral; however, we intended to make every effort to salvage anything of value from the old organ and

preserve its most beautiful sounds. Given the historic beauty of the building and the care with which it has been restored, it was our objective to ensure the appropriateness of any visual changes that the new organ would bring. After much discussion, an organ design of 48 ranks was developed, using 17 ranks from the original organ and its subsequent rebuilds, including pipes from the Estey firm of Brattleboro, Vermont (1920s), as well as other builders and supply houses (1970s and 1980s). The placement of the new *Trompette en Chamade* was a point of concern. While such pipes are normally mounted in a prominent visual display, we arrived at a mutual decision to place this stop inside the tower chamber to preserve the architectural integrity of the nave.

In June of 2003, all of the salvaged pipework and mechanisms were transported to the Reuter facility in Lawrence, Kansas, to be reconditioned and assimilated into the new instrument. Part of the collaborative art of organbuilding involves artisans of many backgrounds and talents, plus a unique ability by the customer to stay tuned in to the process but reserved enough to let the craftsmen

do their exacting work of creating and building. Much of this work is done in the Reuter shop before the instrument starts to take on its final, more mature appearance. We have pipemakers, designers, woodworkers, technicians, voicers, and assemblers who play distinct roles in a complex teamwork dedicated to artistry and integrity on every project. Prior to delivery, and just after the final stages of testing and assembly in September of 2003, Merle and Al Vahlkamp (Merle is the organist at St. Francis Xavier) visited our shop in Lawrence to see and hear the new organ. While in the shop, they enjoyed a little "going away" party for Opus 2218. It was clear that the Reuter artisans' sense of commitment and dedication to their craft stayed with the Vahlkamps as they traveled back to Louisiana to await delivery of the new instrument. Opus 2218 arrived via the Reuter semi in Alexandria on September 29, 2003. After the installation, tonal finishing, and tuning—which happened over the course of about eight weeks—the organ was heard for the first time by the organ committee on Monday evening, November 24, and used for its first Mass on Thanksgiving weekend.



Forty-three ranks are meticulously engineered into the tower chamber in the gallery, and the remaining five ranks and chimes are installed inconspicuously in a small chamber (the Echo division) behind the high altar. The Grand Orgue and Pédale are mounted high, front, and center in the tower chamber. The Récit Expressif and Positif Expressif are installed at the back of the tower chamber behind large banks of mechanical shutters. To aid in its main intended purpose of accompanying the cantors during Mass, the Echo division is also fitted with a small bank of shutters mounted on the chamber ceiling.

Tonal direction at Reuter involves a conscious effort of coupling the right specification with the appropriate worship space and style. Here in Alexandria, the smoothness of sound throughout the compass of the stops, and the subtlety of colors come together to achieve extraordinarily well-developed divisions wonderfully suited to the room. While the new instrument fills the cathedral with its breadth of grand, full-organ sound, it contains a deep abundance of interesting and refined colors. This work stands very much as a clarion call to what is possible between church and builder. When cooperation and partnership define an organ project, the results are dramatic. Here, existing resources contributed to a complete instrument in a seamless blend of new and reconditioned pipes. The crowning tone of the Trompette en Chamade, which is mounted at the top of the tower chamber, is magnificently carried through the nave by the Gothic-vaulted ceiling. The Echo division became the new home for some of the most beautiful and beloved sounds from the original Estey organ. The vivid presence of Opus 2218 artfully complements the worship space in sight and sound.

The facade pipes in the gallery tower chamber were designed to blend with the impressive architecture. Reuter used visual elements typical of organs built during the same period as that of the cathedral. This display contains speaking pipes from the Pédale 16' Montre. The large pipes (those in the back row) are constructed of polished copper, and the front row of pipes is of polished zinc.

As with any acoustical situation, the sound source and the listener respond to each other in varying degrees, depending on placement in the room. Since the organ can come across differently in the nave than it does in the choir loft, the record/playback feature becomes very useful. It allows the organist to listen to the music away from the console, hearing what it really sounds like to the parishioner in the pew.

A project like this is gratifying to a pipe organ builder for more than simply its artistic achievements. The nature of our work—and one of the most rewarding aspects of being in a business like this, with such a great cast of characters from near and far—is forging relationships. Organbuilding is people. When a firm asks a customer to trust their vision, their artistic philosophy, their business practices, they are asking for more than a check and a contract. They are asking for a partnership, a mutual understanding about what is important in the life of the parish community. At a cathedral, there are so many considerations to be weighed. Setting the tone for the worship life of the diocese and the sacred mystery of time-honored ritual is of utmost importance. A fine pipe organ helps set that tone and makes a statement about the value of a rich musical life in the church. For our role in that partnership with St. Francis Xavier Cathedral, we are grateful.

Reuter wants to offer its special thanks to Merle Vahlkamp, Fr. Edwin Rodriguez, Bishop Sam Jacobs, Jack Randall, Cindy Van Langendoc, Robert Hunter Sr. and Jr., and Sharon Saybe. We very much enjoyed working with these and all the many fine folks in Alexandria who made this project a reality. It is our hope this instrument inspires meaningful worship in this special place for many generations to come.

Soli Deo Gloria
THE REUTER ORGAN COMPANY

Albert Neutel, Chairman of the Board
Albert Neutel Jr., President
William Klimas, Vice President and Artistic Director
S. Christopher Leaver, Chief Operating Officer

The Artisans

Monty Amick
Roger Banks
John Bechen
Paul Benner
Trace Bunker
Ted Burgess
Tom Cashen
Kim Cooper
Proctor Crow
Rod Czerniak
Ed Dorssom
Eric Farnsworth
Robert Fort
Don Gauthier
Fred Grammer
David Hadl
Paul Harris
Justin Hodson
Mary Hulse
Megan Hulse
Lloyd Jensen

Norm Kinnaugh
John Leach
Kay Leach
Robert Leach
Kay Miller
Mike Morgan
Jeff Noll
Rorie Orgeron Jr.
Vincent Perdue
George Renault
Chris Ruhlman
Dorothy Schaake
Andy Siler
Gilbert Stone
Phil Swartz
Karl Swoyer
Robert Vaughan
Tom Watgen
Steve Westphal
Fred Whitehead Jr.
Aaron Young

From the Parish

We evaluated three designs from major organbuilders. The Reuter design was far superior to the others in that it was so respectful of the 100+-year-old cathedral architecture, which is in eclectic English Gothic style, rendered in indigenous brick on the exterior and wood and plaster on the interior. We were particularly impressed with two features of the Reuter design: 1. The antiphonal organ is completely concealed behind the ornate Gothic reredos; 2. The design of the facade pipes in the choir loft is truly beautiful, reflecting the form and shapes of the reredos and the stained glass window above it, which depicts Christ ascending with arms upraised amid radiant clouds. The facade sits perfectly in the Gothic arch behind the choir.

Yours truly is an amateur musician, albeit from a musical family, who learned to read music by singing in the choir these past 30 years. I have a decent ear for music, though, and I must say that the instrument Reuter gave us is simply exquisite. It sounds like glass: it's rich, silky smooth, brilliant, and vibrant. I particularly love the purr of the Vox Humana. Also, the Chimes-Cloches, cleverly located behind the reredos, are delightfully surprising and immediate (the Randall family donated them in memory of our late parents, who sang in the choir for over 40 years).

We enjoyed working with Bill Klimas and the Reuter professionals. Our group has profited both musically and spiritually from our association with the Reuter Organ Company.

JACK RANDALL, Organ Committee

From the Organist

Getting a new organ is an awesome experience and a long process. Working with Reuter was a very good experience as well. Bill Klimas, our main contact with the company, had so many good ideas about the right organ for the cathedral and took a very personal interest in the building and in making everything just right. We couldn't be more pleased with the organ, the quality of work, and the price. The cost of an organ this size is astonishing, but when the congregation saw all the parts unloaded and filling the nave, they were amazed at what went into it. It seemed to me that we got more than we paid for. Everyone who hears the organ loves it, and I think it is a magnificent instrument. We never had a capital campaign to raise the money, but the organ is now all paid for and only took two years. God is so good and the people so generous. No church should be afraid of a project like this, and they will never be sorry that they have a Reuter pipe organ.

MERLE VAHLKAMP

From the Dedicatory Recitalist

It is somewhat rare when an organbuilder is given the opportunity to create an instrument within a room that provides an outstanding acoustic. Such was the case for the Reuter Organ Company and St. Francis Xavier Cathedral. A truly magical unity exists between both the organ and the grand expanse of this cathedral. I felt as if I had been transported back to Europe as I performed the dedicatory recital on this most successful and colorful instrument. The program had been planned to highlight not only the full brilliance of the combined ensembles but also the considerably rich and colorful palette of various solo combinations. Of notable interest was the Echo division, located behind the altar, which was most useful in creating special effects. This organ excels equally well as an accompanying instrument; the singing of *Hyfrydol* with a full cathedral of excited participants was a special thrill.

Reuter has created an outstanding instrument with exceptionally grand ensembles and an almost endless array of color possibilities. It was indeed a privilege to perform on such a wonderfully successful instrument. Congratulations to all at Reuter who have provided such a spectacular new instrument!

SCOTT BENNETT

Organist and Choirmaster
Grace Episcopal Church
Charleston, S.C.

ST. FRANCIS XAVIER CATHEDRAL ALEXANDRIA, LOUISIANA REUTER ORGAN COMPANY OPUS 2218

GRAND-ORGUE

16 Flûte à Cheminée (Réc.)
8 Montre
8 Flûte à Cheminée (Réc.)
8 Flûte Harmonique
4 Prestant
4 Flûte à Fuseau
2 Doublette
Fourniture IV
Cornet III
16 Basson (Pos.)
8 Bombarde
8 Trompette en Chamade
Glockenstern
Cloches (Echo)
MIDI

RÉCIT EXPRESSIF

16 Flûte à Cheminée
8 Flûte à Cheminée
8 Salicional
8 Voix Céleste
4 Prestant
4 Flûte Ouverte
2% Nazard
2 Flûte
1% Tierce
Plein Jeu IV
16 Contre Trompette
8 Trompette
8 Hautbois
8 Voix Humaine
8 Trompette en Chamade (G.O.)
Tremblant
MIDI

POSITIF EXPRESSIF

16 Dulcianne Conique
8 Diapason
8 Cor de Nuit
8 Dulcianne Conique
8 Unda Maris
4 Octave Diapason
4 Flûte Traversière
2 Flageolet
1½ Quint
Mixture III
8 Petite Trompette
8 Clarinette
8 Trompette en Chamade
Tremblant
MIDI

ECHO

8 Principal
8 Voix Aetheria
8 Voix Céleste
8 Bourdon
4 Octave
4 Flûte Ouverte
Cloches (Chimes)
Cymbelstern

ECHO PÉDALE

16 Bourdon
8 Bourdon

PÉDALE

32 Acoustic Bass
16 Montre
16 Soubasse
16 Dulcianne Conique (Pos.)
16 Bourdon (Réc.)
8 Octave
8 Soubasse
8 Diapason (Pos.)
8 Dulcianne Conique (Pos.)
8 Bourdon (Réc.)
4 Octave
4 Soubasse
32 Basson
16 Bombarde
16 Contre Trompette (Réc.)
8 Bombarde (G.O.)
8 Trompette (Réc.)
4 Trompette (Réc.)
MIDI