

# The American Organist

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## GRACE CHURCH IN NEW YORK TAYLOR & BOODY ORGANBUILDERS STAUNTON, VIRGINIA

ON OCTOBER 31, 1863, when the great Walcker organ at the Boston Music Hall was inaugurated, it was George Washburne Morgan, the organist from Grace Church New York, who opened the program with the playing of the *William Tell* Overture, certainly, an indication of the leadership of Grace Church not only in the church music of New York, but in the entire country. *Dwight's Journal of Music* in 1861 described the quality of the singers in the double quartet of the choir and the style of the music at Grace as "especially famed for the quality of its music—less ecclesiastical and more ornate; selections from Beethoven, Mozart, Mosenthal, and Mr. Morgan are performed."

The organs of Grace Church represent a timeline of American organbuilding from the workshops of Henry Erben, Hilborne Roosevelt, Ernest M. Skinner, and Herman Schlicker. The architect of Grace Church, James Renwick Jr., who ranks as one of America's greatest, designed the building as his second commission at the age of 25. Completed in 1846, the church is one of the prized landmarks of the city, a survivor that should be forever preserved.

With this in mind, we first met with the organ committee almost seven years ago. After studying the church, we proposed that a four-manual tracker-action organ be built in double cases in the chancel, close to the liturgical and musical center of worship. Because the pipework serving these four divisions—the Great, Swell, Choir, and Choir Pedal—would be concentrated in the chancel cases, there was a need for additional space to house the large pedal stops and the large expression box for the Solo division. These we proposed to place in the chamber originally constructed for the Roosevelt organ.

Parts of the organ that we usually place within the casework of the instrument or nearby—namely the bellows, wind system, and much of the tracker action—are, at Grace, built into a climate-controlled mechanical space in the basement below the chancel floor. Some of the trackers run for more than 50 feet. Their mechanism is of modern design and materials incorporating two miles of carbon fiber trackers, with a self-adjusting key action. The stop action is controlled by electric solenoids with a solid-state electric combination action.

The tonal design was developed through many hours of discussion with organist Patrick Allen, whose love of Grace Church and vision for the new instrument has been the single most important force behind the project. The specification is a direct response to the music and architecture of Grace Church and may be described as a blending of all the previous organs of Grace

Church, although the heart of the instrument is distinctively Taylor & Boody. Stops enhancing this core could have come from Erben, Roosevelt, or Skinner. In the case of the Solo, we utilized some wonderful vintage Romantic stops to create an authentic orchestral voice. The massive E.M. Skinner 32' Open Wood pipes, twelve notes of the bottom octave, still play in their original place in the gallery. The pipes still have their original Skinner shipping labels from 1907.

The organ is intended foremost to accompany hymns, liturgy, and choirs. The Great division has a robust chorus of Diapason pipes with two mixtures, three trumpet stops, and a powerful Cornet for leading the melody of hymns. The Swell is a versatile accompaniment organ of great dynamic range with four reed stops. The Choir has gentle, sweet, and beautiful stops chosen especially for accompanying the children of Grace. The enclosed Solo contains many of the stops much beloved in American and English Romantic instruments: two strings with célestes, orchestral reeds, Vox Humana, and the powerful Harmonic Trumpet and Tuba on high pressure. The Pedal is

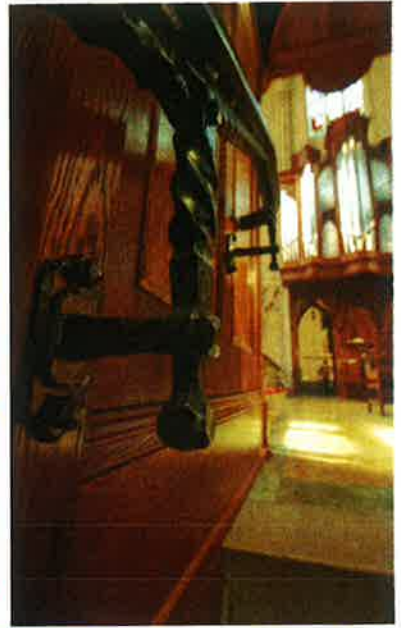
profound with its four 32' stops and a complete chorus comprising a wide variety of flue pipes and reeds. The organ is tuned in a well-tempered, close-to-Equal Temperament system developed by Taylor & Boody called "Grace Church." There is a sweetening of the keys close to C major, but the tuning does not exclude any keys.

Opus 65 has taken our 15-person workshop more than three years to build. It has been the labor of a lifetime. Even following our experience in building 64 instruments, many things about this project were new to us. We have frequently turned to our colleagues for their generous help, expertise, and advice. This has made Opus 65 an unusually cooperative adventure. At 77 stops and nearly 5,000 pipes, it will surely stand for a long while as our Magnum Opus. We give thanks for the saints of Grace Church who built, served, and loved this wonderful place of worship. We give thanks particularly to the Rev. J. Donald Waring, rector; to the vestry, especially Charlie Johnston; and to Patrick Allen, the organ committee, and the congregation for giving us the opportunity to build this instrument. Our appreciation likewise goes to the many contributors to the organ fund and for the restoration work done in the church.

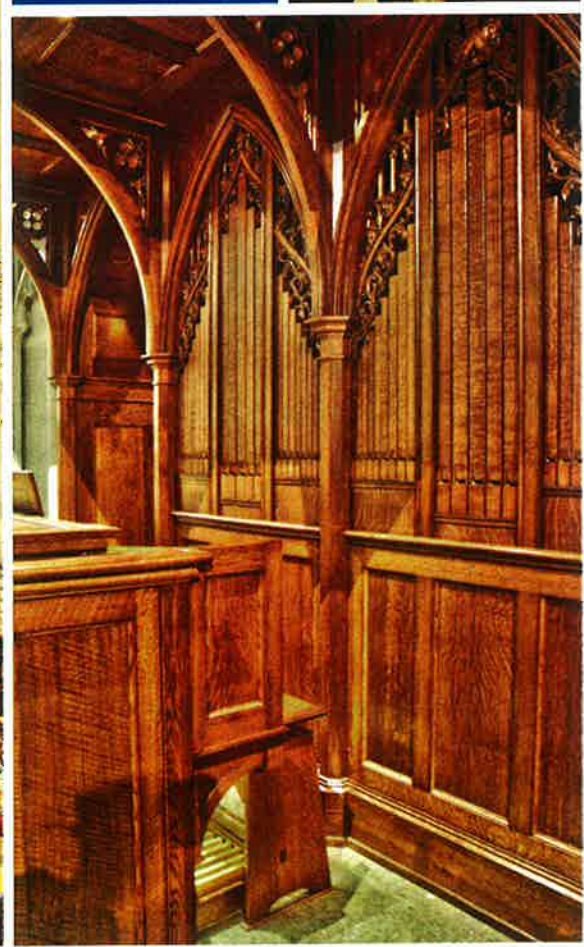
The builders were George Taylor, John Boody, Emerson Willard, Larry Damico, Chris Peterson, Kelley Blanton, Christopher Bono, Robbie Lawson, Thomas Karaffa, Erik Boody, Aaron

*"I saw—we all saw—that the organ could indeed be a musical icon, resonating with the sacred life of this community and the prayers and songs of its people."*

—Patrick Allen, organist and master of choristers



Clockwise from top left: the south chancel case (Great above, Choir below); ornamental iron railing; Solo drawknobs; Choir Principal Dolce 8'; the north chancel case (Swell above, chancel Pedal below)



Photography by  
Robbie Lawson

Reichert, Cindi Johnson, Thomas Rohlf, Steven Jett, Bobbi Jean Regi, Kate Harrington, Robert Harris, Olivia Kiers, and Katina Lawson, with assistance from Mika Oba, Jenna Dennison, and Autumn Coe.

It was Dana Kirkegaard, the acoustician, who gave us insight into the acoustical performance of Grace Church. He inspired us to place the organ in the chancel and gave us invaluable technical assistance in the design of the organ. Also thanks to Christopher Broome, Patrick Quigley, A.R. Schopp's Sons, Oak Hill Iron, Paul Fritts, Rick Isaacs, John Panning, Steven Dieck, Bruce Fowkes, Nicholas Thompson-Allen, Richard Swanson, Joe Sloane, John Bishop, Richard Houghton, and Vladimir Vaculik.

GEORGE TAYLOR AND JOHN BOODY

Years ago, the choirs of the Cathedral in Wilmington, Delaware, commissioned an icon of St. John the Evangelist as a retirement gift for their beloved dean of many years and his family. Before the artist began her work, she met with the choirs to explain that an icon is not just a piece of art, but a doorway to God, a meeting place of the human and divine, and that every member of the choir had a role to play in its birth. We were given a prayer to offer each day while it was being created. Many weeks later, the icon was unveiled in the presence of the bishop, who was to bless it. Everyone was speechless. The icon had resonance. We could feel the spiritual energy of the community. The icon radiated the love of the dean's relationship with the cathedral family.

Could a musical instrument also be an icon, a portal to the divine? String instruments are often thought of as living beings with a mystical energy. Why not the Grace Church pipe organ?

Grace Church in New York began its path to a new organ long before I came on the scene. Reports and histories were commissioned and assembled by countless esteemed colleagues and parish members. At my first meeting in 2000 with the organ committee, chaired at that time by the historian and Columbia University professor Eric McKittrick, I was moved by the passion and spiritual energy of this parish around this quest for a new instrument. I saw—we all saw—that the organ could indeed be a musical icon, resonating with the sacred life of this community and the prayers and songs of its people.

When we finally came to invite presentations by prospective organbuilders in 2008, Taylor & Boody was the last builder I would have expected to hire. They didn't make the sort of instrument we needed—the building and type of music offered were not right for a historical northern European instrument. We had just received their Opus 61, a beautiful continuo organ. It was almost an afterthought to invite them to make a presentation for the large instrument. When John Boody and George Taylor arrived, they asked me, "Why are we here?" It seemed there was no possible way for them to build their style of organ in our space.

Twenty-four hours later, the Holy Spirit had inspired in them



Console (detached and reversed; bone keys with Gabon ebony sharps) (photo: Robbie Lawson)

a vision, a concept that excited the organ committee and began the creation of this new voice. Our Grace Church community has invested countless hours in dialogue, visioning, and prayer in support of these master artisans as they crafted this new organ, a new servant to accompany the voices of prayer and thanksgiving in this holy place, and to offer comfort and inspiration to all who come through the doors of this house of prayer on the corner of Broadway and 10th.

This beautiful organ is indeed an icon, reaching beyond time, and by her special nature reflecting the past, supporting the present, and dreaming of the future of this parish.

Johann Sebastian Bach, among the greatest of all composers for the organ, understood something about music as a pathway to the divine. In his Bible, in the margins next to the passage in Second Chronicles that speaks of the work of musicians in the temple, Bach wrote: "At a reverent performance of music, God is always at hand with his gracious presence." May it ever be so at Grace Church.

PATRICK ALLEN  
Organist and Master of Choristers

# Grace Church in New York

## Taylor & Boody Organbuilders

Opus 65 • Four manuals, 77 stops, 96 ranks

### GREAT (Manual II)

- 16 Double Open Diapason (facade)
- 16 Bourdon
- 8 First Open Diapason
- 8 Second Open Diapason
- 8 Spire Flute
- 4 Principal
- 4 Spitz Flute
- 2<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub> Twelfth
- 2 Fifteenth
- 1<sup>3</sup>/<sub>5</sub> Seventeenth
- Cornet V (g-d<sup>3</sup>)
- Mixture V
- Scharf IV
- 16 Double Trumpet
- 8 Trumpet
- 4 Clarion

### SWELL (Manual III, enclosed)

- 16 Contra Gamba
- 8 Facade Principal
- 8 Violin Diapason
- 8 Rohr Flute
- 8 Salicional
- 8 Voix céleste (G)
- 4 Principal
- 4 Open Flute
- 2<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub> Nazard
- 2 Fifteenth
- 2 Wald Flute
- 1<sup>3</sup>/<sub>5</sub> Tierce
- Mixture V
- 16 Contra Bassoon
- 8 Cornopean
- 8 Oboe
- 4 Clarion
- Tremulant

### CHOIR (Manual I)

- 8 Principal Dolce (facade)
- 8 Stopped Diapason
- 8 Flauto Dolce
- 8 Unda Maris (TC)
- 4 Octave (prep.)
- 4 Rohr Flute
- 2 Gemshorn
- 1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub> Larigot (prep.)
- Sesquialtera II (prep.)
- Scharf (prep.) III-IV
- 16 Cor Anglais
- 8 Cremona
- Tremulant
- 8 Tuba (Solo)
- 8 Harmonic Trumpet (Solo)

### SOLO (Manual IV, enclosed)

- 8 Harmonic Flute
- 8 Gamba
- 8 Gamba Celeste
- 8 Viol d'Orchestre
- 8 Viol Celeste
- 4 Flauto Traverso
- 16 Corno di Bassetto
- 8 Orchestral Oboe
- 8 Vox Humana
- Tremulant
- 8 Tuba (15" wp)
- 8 Harmonic Trumpet (15")
- Solo 16
- Solo 4

### CHOIR PEDAL

- 16 Bourdon
- 8 Cello (facade)
- 8 Spitz Gedackt
- 4 Clarabella (prep.)
- 16 Bassoon
- 8 Schalmey

### MAIN PEDAL

- 32 Double Open Diapason
- 32 Contra Bourdon (1-6 resultant)
- 16 Open Diapason (ext. 32')
- 16 Subbass (ext. 32')
- 16 Violone
- 8 Principal
- 8 Spire Flute
- 4 Fifteenth
- Mixture V
- 32 Contra Ophicleide
- 32 Contra Fagott
- 16 Trombone (ext. 32')
- 16 Fagott (ext. 32')
- 8 Trumpet
- 4 Clarion
- 8 Tuba (Solo)
- 8 Harmonic Trumpet (Solo)

### COUPLERS

- Swell to Great 8
- Choir to Great 8
- Solo to Great 16, 8, 4
- Solo to Swell 16, 8, 4
- Swell to Choir 8
- Solo to Choir 16, 8, 4
- Great to Pedal 8
- Swell to Pedal 8
- Choir to Pedal 8
- Solo to Pedal 8, 4

### CONTROLS

- Great+Pedal on Great divisionals
- Swell+Pedal on Swell divisionals
- Choir+Pedal on Choir divisionals
- Pedal+Swell on Pedal toe studs
- All Swells
- All next
- Memory level up
- Memory level down
- Signal lights on buttons (4)
- Memory level display
- General piston display

### THUMB PISTONS

- Great 1-8
- Swell 1-8
- Choir 1-8
- Solo 1-8
- Pedal 1-8
- General 1-16
- Sequencer forward (4)
- Sequencer back (2)
- Swell to Great (rev.)
- Choir to Great (rev.)
- Solo to Great (rev.)
- Solo to Swell (rev.)
- Swell to Choir (rev.)
- Solo to Choir (rev.)
- Tutti I (rev. with indicator)
- Tutti II (rev. with indicator)
- Tutti III (rev. with indicator)
- Tutti IV (rev. with indicator)
- Set
- Scope
- General Cancel

### TOE STUDS

- General 1-16
- Pedal 1-8
- Great to Pedal (rev.)
- Swell to Pedal (rev.)
- Solo to Pedal (rev.)
- Swell to Great (rev.)
- Solo to Great (rev.)
- 32' Diapason (rev.)
- 32' Bourdon (rev.)
- 32' Ophicleide (rev.)
- 32' Fagott (rev.)
- 16' Trombone (rev.)
- Tutti I (rev.)
- Tutti II (rev.)
- Tutti III (rev.)
- Tutti IV (rev.)
- Sequencer forward
- Sequencer back
- Memory level up
- Memory level down
- Compass:
  - manuals 61 notes (c<sup>0</sup>-c<sup>4</sup>)
  - pedal 32 notes (CC-g<sup>1</sup>)

### Wind pressures:

- Great 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"
- Swell 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"
- Choir 2<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"
- Solo 5"
- Choir Pedal 3"
- Main Pedal 5"

- Two balanced expression pedals, for Swell and Solo
- All stop action electric solenoid (slider) or solid state switching
- Mechanical key action with floating square rails
- Offset individual valve E.P. chests for large bass pipes
- Six mechanical couplers; eleven electric couplers