

# MULLER PIPE ORGAN COMPANY

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## **Trinity Episcopal Cathedral Little Rock, Arkansas**

**Four manuals, 65 stops, 82 ranks  
Muller 1999**

The highlight of the Muller Pipe Organ company's 80th anniversary year was the completion of the new organ at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral. The 4-manual, 82-rank instrument is designed in the American Classic tradition as developed by the Aeolian-Skinner Company. In great measure, the organ is modeled after the G. Donald Harrison instrument at All Saints Episcopal Church, Worcester, Massachusetts. James R. Metzler, organist and choirmaster at Trinity at the time of the organ project, was privileged to sing treble in the Choir of Men and Boys at All Saints as a boy, and to study organ with Henry Hokans on that landmark instrument.

As at All Saints Worcester, the Cathedral organ has complete choruses in each division, and is an excellent vehicle for accompanying choral music as well as congregational singing. The Cathedral organ is noted for the warmth of its strings and foundation stops, the variety of character in its flutes and solo reeds, as well as for the brilliance of its ensemble and the "fiery" French-style chorus reeds.

The reeds in particular were the focus of research done on the organ at All Saints Worcester as well as the Aeolian-Skinner at St. John's Chapel at the Groton School. Careful measurements were taken of the shallots and tongues as well as scaling and pressure relationships. Of special significance were the scale relationships of the "909-C" Swell chorus reeds that date to G. Donald Harrison's 1946 revisions to the All Saints organ. This information was offset with knowledge of Trinity Cathedral's acoustic characteristics and modern reed making practices. The new reeds are well balanced to their acoustic environment and extremely stable in their tuning.

The ensemble of the Trinity Cathedral organ builds from its softest stops (the Swell Flauto Dolce and Flute Celeste) to full organ quite seamlessly, and strikingly so with regard to the 24 ranks of mixtures. The scaling, disposition and finishing of the mixtures balance responsibilities between choruses in their own divisions as well as within the full organ. The Swell mixtures add the right amount of brilliance to their principal and reed choruses, yet perfectly "fill in the gaps" between the two Great mixtures in pitch and volume. As each successive mixture is added to the ensemble, it adds its own level of brightness, yet does not cover the stops already drawn. The choir Zimbel, a repeating mixture, works equally well with the Choir flue chorus in baroque music and as the final glitter in the full organ.

Certain playability options made possible with the electro-pneumatic action are used to the fullest. The Great Montre, primarily intended as a 16' manual stop for the Great, is also playable at 8' as an additional foundation stop. The Choir organ features a French Cromorne as well as an English Clarinet, and both of these stops are playable from the Solo. The Great Principals are also available as the Grand Cornet on the Solo manual. The 8' Cor Anglais, a solo reed in the Choir, is extended downward as the 16' Choir chorus reed. It functions beautifully with the Cromorne and Rohr Schalmey.

The exposed Antiphonal has a complete principal chorus and flutes at 8' and 4', plus an 8' chorus reed (the "Dean Higgins' Trumpet"). The Antiphonal also boasts a Trompette en Chamade with lacquered brass bells, playable at 16', 8', and 4' in the Antiphonal, and at 8' in the Great, Choir, and Solo.

The Pedal is complete and independent. The 32' Contre Bombarde consists of full-length pipes, but because of space limitations, the softer three of the four 32' stops are digital. The Pedal also features an independent 4' Flute Harmonique. The gold finished façade pipes all speak and are members of the Great and Pedal Principal, Montre, and Contre Basse ranks.

The specification (designed by Metzler) and layout of the console stops and pistons are designed to make the organ as flexible as possible for visiting recitalists. This is particularly so with the array of couplers, which are complete and include Great to Choir as well as Great/Choir Transfer for performance of French music.

The moveable console is a measured reproduction Aeolian-Skinner, and the raised panel case is of quarter sawn and rift-cut oak with a walnut interior. The console features reproduction Aeolian-Skinner components throughout, and is fully equipped with 99-memory level combination action, two piston sequencer formats, MIDI, transposer and record/playback sequencer.

The expression boxes make use of extremely tight fitting and thick horizontal shutters with 16 stage motors. Consequently, the effect of the crescendo is unusually successful. When the shutters are open, the full Swell is a voice of authority that easily dominates the combined Great foundation stops. Yet the full Swell can sneak in underneath those same foundation stops when the box is fully closed, with a wonderful crescendo at the organist's disposal.

The installation of the organ was made possible through funds for a multi-million dollar restoration program at the Cathedral, which dates from the 1800s. Martin Neary, former Organist and Master of Choristers at Westminster Abbey in London, England played the dedication recitals.