

MULLER PIPE ORGAN COMPANY

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St. Michael's Catholic Church Worthington, Ohio

Three manuals, 31 stops, 36 ranks 1975 Schantz Tonal Additions & Revisions 2009

Saint Michael's current church building was completed in 1964 and due to limited funds at the time, the congregation was unable to purchase and install a pipe organ. However, provisions were made during construction for a future organ with the construction of two organ chambers in the rear gallery of the church. From 1964 to 1977, a small Hammond organ was located in the choir loft to accompany the congregation and choir. Replaced in 1977 with a two manual Rodgers electronic organ, this improvement over the previous instrument still did not meet the ultimate goal of the congregation to have a majestic pipe organ in their Romanesque structure.

In 1989, the church was made aware of the availability of a recently removed 1975 Schantz organ from the First Church of Christ, Scientist in Akron, Ohio. The Akron church building had been purchased by the University of Akron in 1988 during its campus expansion. The University, having no use for the organ, allowed First Church to place it up for sale. In 1989, Muller relocated the entire instrument to its new home in the balcony of St. Michael Catholic Church.

The organ was typical of many instruments of this era. Although a great improvement over the previous electronic substitute, the limitations of the conservative style of organ voicing and design were apparent. Because St. Michael's sanctuary is larger than the organ's former home, we expected the sound to get somewhat lost in the vast acoustic. The vision to purchase this organ laid the groundwork for the results we hear today.

To overcome the tonal challenge, a comprehensive approach to the tonal renovation was necessary. All flue pipes were re-voiced to fully sound, as they should in such an expansive room. Reed stops were replaced with more broadly scaled and voiced pipes. Several ranks of pipes were added to fill out the sound, both to support congregational singing and to add excitement to the overall sound. Especially notable are the 16' Open Wood (from a 1920s Skinner Organ), the generously scaled 16' Trombone/8' Trumpet, and, of course, the horizontal brass Trompette en Chamade. While retaining the French nomenclature typically associated with horizontal Trumpets, this stop is voiced as an English Tuba. It possesses a round, unforced character, can be used as a solo trumpet, and is intended as the triumphant culmination of the full organ sound.

Also as part of this project, the console's operating system was upgraded to solid state. The keyboards were restored, and the console features new drawknobs and tilting tablets. New, quieter blowers were installed and the organ was cleaned. Non-speaking pipes were added to the façade, and a Zimbelstern was installed.

This project is one of the most comprehensive tonal renovations of an existing organ that Muller Pipe Organ Company has undertaken. It was a joy to bring this instrument to its full potential as an integral part of the worship life for the parishioners of Saint Michael Church. Now able to fully express the emotion, color, and depth of music in worship, we hope that it does so for generations.