

ABBAY MEMORIAL CHAPEL
MOUNT HOLYOKE COLLEGE, SOUTH HADLEY

C.B. Fisk, Inc., Op. 84, 1986

II. GREAT

16 Prestant
8 Octava
8 Spillpfeife
8 Violon
4 Octava
4 Offenflöte
2½ Twelfth†
II Sesquialtera†
2 Superoctav
1½ Quinta†
II Mixtura†
1 Sifflet†
II Scharff†
8 Trumpet

I. RÜCKPOSITIV

8 Gedackt†
II Gedackt† [treble, open]
8 Quintadena
4 Prestant
4 Rohrflöte
2½ Nazard†
II Cornet†
2 Waldflöte
IV Cimbel
16 Dulcian
8 Shawm

PEDAL

16 Open Bass
8 Spillpfeife [Gt.]
4 Choralbass
16 Posaune
8 Trumpet [Gt.]

†Indicates double-draw stops;
the first of the pair being part of
the following compound stop, but
capable of being drawn separately.

Manual compass, Great 58 notes, Rückpositiv 56 notes; Pedal 30 notes

Wind pressure: 1¾"

Tuning: Fifth-comma Meantone

ACCESSORIES

Tremulant, Wind stabilizer, Zimbelstern, Nachtigall, Glockenspiel, Tympani

Couplers: Rückpositiv to Great [shove coupler], Great to Pedal, Rückpositiv to Pedal

Mechanical action throughout

THROUGH THREE BUILDING ALTERATIONS, Mount Holyoke's chapel had seen three moves and expansions of its original 1898/1922 Hutchings/Skinner organ, all under the aegis of William Churchill Hammond, who died in 1949. This original organ, now installed in chambers at the front of the enlarged chapel, continues to be cared for and has remained in use during subsequent years. Many changes were occurring in the organ world during the decades following Dr. Hammond, one of them being an increased interest in historic European organs, and what they can teach us about the music. Organbuilders and organists alike began to desire organs more reflective of the earlier European classic ideal, particularly with regard to educational institutions.

At first, historically-influenced organs, usually with mechanical action, began either to replace older organs or to be installed in newer buildings, especially during the 1960s and 1970s. Some, however, were tending to be too specialized to fully supplant the older organs for certain uses, and so, in the 1980s and subsequently, one begins

to find in some churches, and even more so in college chapels, two very different organs, both in use, and both serving different educational and musical functions. Since the older organ is almost always at the front of the room, the newer one generally found a home in a gallery at the opposite end, a very typical location for organs in the Baroque period, as well. Some familiar examples of academic chapels each housing two very different organs are at Duke University, Wellesley College, Harvard University, and Yale Divinity School. Here in Abbey Chapel at Mount Holyoke College also, we will hear two organs, each doing what it does best.

Initially, when a new organ was being considered for Abbey Chapel, a somewhat eclectic instrument to replace the Hutchings/Skinner at the front was in the works. However,

with the advent of Margaret Irwin-Brandon as college organist, the plan shifted to an organ of more historically-informed design, and in a rear gallery placement, complementing the organ in front instead of replacing it. Irwin-Brandon was familiar with the early North German-based organ Fisk had built in the gallery of the Wellesley chapel (where an Aeolian-Skinner organ is retained in the front), and how useful it was in teaching the music of the period. With her strong interest in Italian Baroque organ music, a design began to be worked out with Fisk incorporating specific features of early Italian organs into a somewhat hybrid tonal scheme that could also serve the Germanic literature well, thanks to the incorporation of a Rückpositiv and an independent pedal division – things unheard of in historic Italian organs. However, for the Great division, voicing characteristics and the scaling of historic Italian organs were studied, resulting in a uniquely characteristic tonal color for this division.

Meanwhile, some alterations were being made again to the chapel interior, partly to improve acoustics; and in the process, the rear gallery was reconfigured to reproduce the double-balcony effect found in some European churches, thus allowing the new organ to be placed in the upper gallery, from which it projects warmly into the room. The Fisk organ was dedicated the weekend of February 15-17, 1985, three days of events that included lectures, the use of the organ in choral and chamber music, a festival service, and a solo recital by noted Canadian organist Mireille Lagacé.



ABBAY MEMORIAL CHAPEL
MOUNT HOLYOKE COLLEGE, SOUTH HADLEY

George S. Hutchings, Op. 436, 1898^A

Ernest M. Skinner, Op. 367, 1922^B

Ernest M. Skinner & Son, Op. 511, 1938^C

Alterations by William Baker, 2001^D and Czelusniak et Dugal, 2013^E

II. GREAT

- 16 Diapason^A
- 8 First Diapason^B
- 8 Second Diapason^B
- 8 Principal Flute^C
- 8 Erzähler^C
- 4 Octave^A
- 4 Flute^A
- 2½ Twelfth^A
- 2 Fifteenth^A
- IV Mixture^D
- 8 Trumpet^{A,C}

I. CHOIR

- 8 Diapason^C
- 8 Melodia^A
- 8 Viola^{A,C}
- 8 Kleine Erzähler^B [2 ranks]
- 4 Flute^A
- 2½ Nazard^B
- 2 Piccolo^A
- 1½ Tierce^B
- 1½ Septième^B
- 8 Clarinet^A

III. SWELL

- 16 Lieblich Bourdon^A
- 8 Diapason^A
- 8 Gedeckt^B
- 8 Clarabella^B
- 8 Salicional^B
- 8 Voix Celeste^B
- 8 Flauto Dolce^B
- 8 Flute Celeste^B
- 4 Octave^B
- 4 Violina^C
- 4 Harmonic Flute^A
- 2 Fifteenth^A
- IV Mixture^C
- 16 English Horn^B
- 8 Cornopean^A
- 8 Oboe^A
- 8 Vox Humana^A
- 4 Clarion^C

IV. SOLO

- 8 Orchestral Flute^D
- 8 Gamba^B
- 8 Gamba Celeste^B
- 8 French Horn^B
- 8 Heckelphone^B
- 8 Tuba [unenclosed]^C

PEDAL

- 32 Acoustic Bass^D
- 16 Diapason^{A,E}
- 16 Violone^A
- 16 Gemshorn^{C,E}
- 16 Bourdon^A
- 16 Lieblich [Sw.]
- 8 Principal^E
- 8 Violoncello^{A,D}
- 8 Gedeckt^A
- 8 Still Gedeckt^A [Sw.]
- 4 Octave^E
- 32 Fagotto^C
- 16 Trombone^B
- 16 English Horn^B [Sw.]
- 8 Tromba^B
- 4 Clarion^D

Manual compass, Great & Solo 61 notes; Swell & Choir, 73 notes; Pedal, 32 notes
Wind Pressures range from 4-10" with the new Pedal Principal unit on 6", the Pedal Trombone unit on 7½", & the Solo main on 10"

ACCESSORIES

Tremolos on Swell, Choir, & Solo
Chimes, Harp and Celesta are prepared for

Couplers: Swell, Great, Choir, & Solo to Pedal 8; Swell, Choir, & Solo to Pedal 4; Swell, Choir, & Solo to Great 8; Swell & Solo to Choir 8; Great to Solo 8; Swell to Swell 16 & 4; Swell to Great 16 & 4; Swell to Choir 4; Choir to Choir 16 & 4; Choir to Great 16; Solo to Solo 16 & 4; Solo to Great 16 & 4; [Great/Choir] Manual Transfer; Pedal Divide

Combination action: 16 General (thumb pistons, 1-9 duplicated by toe studs); 8 each Swell, Great, & Choir (thumb pistons); 6 Solo (thumb pistons); 6 Pedal (toe studs, 1-5 available as thumb pistons)

Reversibles (thumb pistons and toe levers): Great, Swell, Choir, & Solo to Pedal; All Swells to Swell (with indicator lamp); Sforzando II (with indicator lamp)

Reversibles (thumb pistons only): Swell & Solo to Great; Swell & Solo to Choir; Sforzando I (with indicator lamp)

Set, Cancel, Octave Couplers Cancel, Copy, & Paste (thumb pistons)

256 levels of memory, locking; 3 programmable Crescendi; MIDI connections

Swell, Choir, & Solo are enclosed for expression; Tuba is unenclosed, mounted over the Great division

Register Crescendo (with indicator)

MOUNT HOLYOKE COLLEGE, the first of the eventual “Seven Sisters” group of women’s colleges, was founded in 1837 by Mary Lyon under the name of the Mount Holyoke Female Seminary. Lyon, an early leader in the cause of higher education for women, previously had founded a similar school in Norton, Mass., which later became Wheaton College. Although not linked to any particular denomination, students were required to study the Bible and to attend church services and prayer meetings. Since it was a sister school to the all-male Andover Seminary, it is perhaps not surprising that student romances often followed, and many early graduates, along with their Andover husbands, became missionaries during the middle years of the 19th century. The curriculum eventually became broader and more secular, and under the name of Mount Holyoke Seminary and College the school achieved its collegiate charter as a liberal arts college in 1888. It assumed the name of Mount Holyoke College in 1893 and shortly after acquired its present campus in South Hadley.

The oldest building on the campus is Mary Lyon Hall, built in 1897 as the original administration building, to which a chapel seating about 800, originally called Mary Lyon Chapel, was attached. Music seems to have been a priority from the start, and George S. Hutchings’s firm was contracted to build an organ for the chapel, the gift of Mr. & Mrs. William Whiting of Holyoke. William Churchill Hammond, the distinguished organist of Second Church in Holyoke (who would begin teaching at the college in 1899), was involved from the outset in the tonal design of the three-manual 36-stop organ. It was completed in 1898 and inaugurated on April 25 with a recital by Hammond, whose program included organ works by Bach, Dubois, Saint-Saëns, Brison, Best, Guilmant and Lemmens, along with transcriptions from Handel, Schubert, and Bizet, plus some patriotic hymns for an audience sing-along. The organ would seem to have been a landmark project for Hutchings, presumably encouraged by Hammond. Said to have been then the only electric-action organ in the area at the time, it also featured nine adjustable combination pistons, sub and super couplers, and, most remarkably for that period, a movable console which was transported from the platform to the center aisle halfway through the program – no doubt to everyone’s astonishment. An image in the college archives, dating from 1909, shows W.C. Hammond playing the organ with the console in that position, and confirms that it was of



the compact “bat-wing” design known to have been employed by Hutchings in another 1898 organ, that for the large Mission Church in Boston’s Roxbury district. This design is said to have originated with young Ernest Skinner, who was working for Hutchings at the time, and who utilized the same design in some of his own earliest organs.

Skinner would re-enter the picture in 1922, when the chapel was lengthened and the pulpit relocated to the other end of the room, presumably leaving more space at the organ end. The 1898 organ was rebuilt and enlarged by Skinner’s own firm, which by

this time had been in business for two decades. Again, members of the Whiting family were the financial backers, and again, Hammond was given credit for collaborating with Skinner on the specification and its details. Similarities between this stoplist and that at Second Church, Holyoke, were obvious, despite the College organ being smaller and incorporating a large number of Hutchings ranks. Hammond also played the dedication recital on November 22, 1922, offering a similar mixture of organ works by Bach, Saint-Saëns, d'Evry, Faulkes, and two American contemporaries, Alexander Russell and Arthur Bird, as well as transcriptions from Beethoven, Ravel, Arcadelt and Bizet. Interestingly, Wagner's *Parsifal* Prelude was programmed for the 1898 recital but had been omitted in performance; it was included (and played) in the 1922 program, and was one of only two selections accompanied by a program note.

Although referred to as a new organ, this instrument was actually a very thorough rebuilding of the 1898 one, retaining a substantial number of the original stops but with additions in every division, as well as an entirely new division, the Solo, containing two of Skinner's signature reed stops, the Heckelphone and French Horn. A new and larger console, in what by then was Skinner's standard draw knob style, also was provided.

By 1938, Skinner had entered the picture again, called back to Mount Holyoke by Hammond, whose advice was still sought despite his having retired in 1936 from his teaching position there. Having parted company with the Aeolian-Skinner firm, Skinner was then doing business on his own in the former Methuen Organ Company factory, accompanied by his son Richmond and a few factory workers, and using opus numbers unrelated to those of the original firm. The College chapel had been renovated and enlarged to its present size in 1937, and renamed Abbey Chapel for the donor of the funds. A relocation of the organ to its present position was part of the project, and Skinner was engaged to carry out the work. He (and doubtless Hammond too) could not resist the addition of a few more stops, most notably an English-style unenclosed Tuba.

By the turn of the present century, though, restorative work was needed, and this was entrusted to local organbuilder William Baker, who in the year 2000 rebuilt the 4-manual Skinner console (with the participation of Richard Houghten and associates) as all-electric action with solid-state relays, combination action with increased capacity and accessories, and MIDI capability, and in turn adding a few stops, including the 4' Clarion and 32' Acoustic Bass (resultant) to the Pedal. Tonal changes were also made then in the Solo division, when the Musette was lost and the 8' Orchestral Flute installed. Mr. Baker left some of the proposed work uncompleted upon his retirement in the spring of 2005, due to ill health, at which time Messrs. Czelusniak et Dugal, Inc. took over the regular service of the Mount Holyoke College organs. Since then, the only further changes to this instrument have been in the reorganization of the Pedal division, in order to install the prepared for 8-4' Principal unit, using pipework from Opus 324, a wind reservoir from Opus 710, and new unit windchests built to match the style of the Skinner Organ Co. During the spring of 2015, Czelusniak et Dugal, Inc. hastened to complete releathering and pipework restoration in the Pedal and Solo divisions, as remediation of damage caused by water intrusion from an ice dam on the roof, in February of 2015.