

THE GRAND ORGAN IN THE CATHEDRAL OF THE HOLY CROSS

A MINUTE DESCRIPTION OF THE GREAT INSTRUMENT THE ORGAN CONCERT

The immense nave of the Holy Cross on Washington street was occupied – and perhaps one-third filled – last night by a company of some thousand persons, who were present by invitation at the formal opening of the great organ just completed by Messrs. E. and G. G. Hook and Hastings. The scene was most impressive and imposing; the noble proportions of the whole edifice; the dim magnificence of its arched roof, which in the obscure light seemed almost immeasurably distant; the chaste and severe beauty of the coloring and ornamentation, and the silence and decorum of the large company uniting to produce so noble an effect on the mind. The architecture of the organ is simple, but harmonious and pure in style and pleasing in impression. The instrument fills the rear and entire breadth of the gallery devoted to the choir, the shorter pipes being collected in front in seven groups surmounted by arches, while the longest go high above them on either hand at the extreme end in two towering masses, these last being connected by rows of graduated pipes defining the lower semi-circle of the great round window at the western end of the nave. The organ is the largest ever built by an American maker, and is the largest in the country, excepting that of the Music Hall; and even in comparison with the latter its size is not likely to be much depreciated, as the proportion of speaking stops is only that of 89 to 70 in favor of the great instrument made for Boston by Messrs. Walcker.

The description of the organ is as follows:--

The instrument comprises three manuals, each of 58 notes, and a pedal of 30 notes. 70 speaking stops, 13 mechanical registers, including couplers, 10 pedal movements for combinations, etc., and a crescendo pedal controlling the full powers of the organ. Total number of pipes 5,582.

The action is extended and reversed so the organist may face the altar and conductor. Pneumatic motors are applied to the great manual and all of its couplers, to the pedal throughout, to the basses of the swell and choir manuals, and to all the registers. All but those for the great manual are of a new device, operating by “exhaust” instead of by inflation. All the combination pedals are double acting, and operate without changing combinations previously made by the registers.

There are three bellows, operated by two hydraulic motors of the largest size. The two main bellows have vertical feeders, and combined can supply nearly 5000 cubic feet of compressed air per minute, with less than 25 strokes of the motors. An extra wind pressure is used for the pedals and a portion of the great manual, including the reed stops. An independent bellows supplies wind of great pressure to the tuba mirabilis.

The organ fills the whole width of the gallery, 40 feet. It has a total depth of 25 feet and a total height of nearly 50 feet. The exterior is from the designs of the architect of the cathedral, Mr. P. C. Keely, and displays rows and groups of metallic pipes finished in gold, silver and bronze clustering around a large circular window at the centre. The cathedral has a total length of 300 feet, is 108 feet wide at the transept, and is 105 feet high from the floor to apex. It has a space to be filled four and one half times larger than the Boston Music Hall, three times larger than the church of the Immaculate Conception, and eight times larger than

the new Old South Church. By these comparisons it will be seen how great a demand is made upon the organ to produce the unusually pervading effect it does. The instrument contains 2000 more pipes than the great Plymouth Church organ of Brooklyn, hitherto the largest organ ever built in this country. Not only is this later organ pre-eminent in size, because of the number of stops and pipes, but because these of superior selection, of very large scales, and of proportionately increased power.

The programme of music presented – which included selections from many of the greatest classical composers, as well as several living European authors, with Improvisations and original pieces by the performers – was as follow:

- Prelude, from “Faust”.....Gounod
- Prelude, in D-minor.....Bach
- Improvisations on Vesper Hymn
- Finale.....Lemmens
- S. B. Whitney, organist of Church of the Advent.
- Fantasia in G major.....Bach
- Improvisations
- Fugue on B. A. C. H.....Schumann
- B. J. Lang, organist of South Congregational Church.
- Berceuse.....Lysberg
- Improvisations
- Overture, “Masaniello”.....Auber
- L. G. Chaffin, organist of St. Paul’s Cathedral, Buffalo, N. Y.
- Prelude.....Mendelssohn
- Fugue in C-minor.....Mendelssohn
- Registration Fantasia, (Introduction, -Theme with Variations, -March
Tempo, -Finale)
- Overture.....Mendelssohn
- Prelude (Theme, -Variations and Finale.....Alex. Guilmant
- March, (Written for the Schiller Festival, at Paris, 1855)..Meyerbeer
- George E. Whiting, organist Music Hall Society.

The performance of this programme occupied from half-past seven to a little past ten o’clock, and was listened to with the most careful attention and evident interest. To affect to give a well-digested and elaborate opinion of the merits of such an instrument, after a single experience of its power, would be presumptuous in the extreme. But concerning this organ it may be safely said, after one hearing, that it is a remarkable instrument. Its power is simply immense, the body of tone supplied by the “great” organ is magnificent in solidity, fullness and sonorousness; and the sweetness and delicacy of many of the “choir” and solo stops are most exquisite. That the mechanical appliances of the organ supply all the elements of ease and convenience in manipulation, promptness in “answering” and general evenness of tone, we have no occasion to doubt. And when a little touch of age has given the complete mellowness which it alone can supply, we dare to prophesy that this organ will rank as the highest achievement of its kind which American skill has produced.

“THE GRAND ORGAN.” *Boston Daily Advertiser*, February 24, 1876.