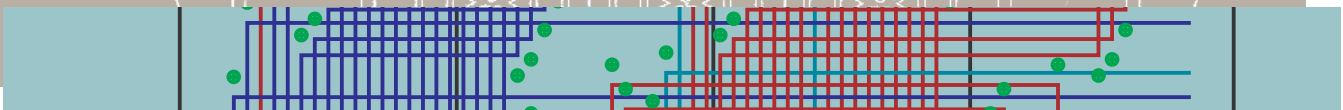
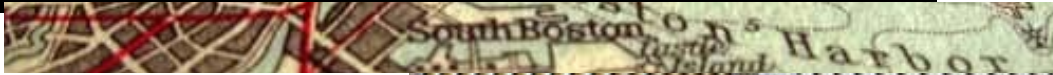


The Boston Organ Book

A collection of twenty-one old and new works
for the organ written by Boston composers
Compiled for the American Guild of Organists
Boston 2014 National Convention



BOSTON HAS HAD MUSIC ALMOST FROM THE BEGINNING, Puritans notwithstanding. But they sang psalms, and published the first psalm-book printed in the colonies—the Bay Psalm Book, printed in Cambridge in 1640. In 1708 Harvard’s Treasurer, Thomas Brattle, had a small 4-stop chamber organ, which he willed to Boston’s King’s Chapel in 1713, making it the first church organ in all New England. They traded it up for a larger one in 1756, and in the 1770s William Selby arrived from England to play it, and even wrote some organ music. Around the same time, native-born William Billings was writing his unique choral music, and Thomas Johnston had begun building organs in the North End. By the early 19th century the Handel & Haydn Society had been founded, Lowell Mason was teaching Boston’s school-children to sing, and there were music publishers and a thriving organ-building trade—but not much in the way of organ music beyond simple church voluntaries was yet being written, published or played. 🌀 That all changed in the second half of the 19th century. Boston got a Music Hall in 1853, and a few years later some young Yankee music students, most of them organists, went off to study in the conservatories of Germany. They came back singing the praises of Bach and writing some heavy-duty organ music, and in 1863 Music Hall got an organ for them to play it on. Three years later, Boston organ factories were working overtime, and there were not one but two thriving music conservatories, where some of these young organists were teaching even younger ones. You’ve heard most of their names, some more familiar than others. John Knowles Paine, who would become the first tenured Professor of Music at Harvard and the chapel organist there; Dudley Buck, who at one time taught at New England Conservatory and was organist of St. Paul’s Church; George Whiting, another N.E.C. teacher and later organist of Immaculate Conception Church; Eugene Thayer, organist of First Church; Samuel B. Whitney, organist of Church of the Advent. Some of their students later taught at the conservatories and played in local churches: Arthur Foote, George W. Chadwick, Horatio Parker, Henry M. Dunham, Everett Truette—some of whom may be better known for their “mainstream” music—but they all taught, played the organ in churches, and composed organ music. Several were among the founders of the A.G.O. in 1898. And their influence continued into the 20th century through their music and their students. 🌀 Here, in this book, we have compositions by some 20th and 21st century descendants of these pioneers, all members of what was initially called the New England Chapter of the A.G.O, before others split off to leave Boston still as the “hub,”—if not of the Universe, at least of the surrounding chapters. Not all may have studied at the local conservatories, but, with the exception of some of the commissioned composers, all have at some time studied and/or played the organ in Boston. Some are no longer with us, and some still are, for the Boston tradition of organ music composition continues in good health into the 21st century. Boston organs continue to attract fine players, and the young composers keep coming to write music for them to play. But we believe in sharing, and hope that you will use and enjoy this lasting souvenir of the 2014 National A.G.O. Convention.

—Barbara Owen, Ch.M.

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