

The image shows the interior of a Gothic cathedral. On either side of the central aisle are tall, green-painted organ pipes with gold-colored decorative bands. The central focus is a large, ornate stained glass window with a complex tracery design. The window features a central circular medallion with a yellow starburst, surrounded by smaller circular and arched panels containing various colorful designs and figures. The architecture is dark wood and stone, with a high, vaulted ceiling. The lighting is warm, highlighting the details of the organ and the stained glass.

THE STAR OF THE SEA

Sergio de Pieri

move

St. Mary's Star-of-the-Sea Church

SERGIO DE PIERI

plays the 1898-1900 George Fincham
Grand Organ

- 1 Joseph Bonnet (1884-1944)**
Variations de Concert , Op. 1 9'12"
- 2 Marco Enrico Bossi (1961-1925)**
Canzoncina a Maria Vergine 4'07"
- 3 César Franck (1822-1890)**
Pièce Héroïque 9'18"
- 4 Pietro Alessandro Yon (1896-1943)**
Il Natale in Sicilia (Christmas in Sicily) 5'18"
- 5 Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)**
Prelude and Fugue in G minor 7'56"
- 6 Johannes Brahms**
Chorale Prelude, Op. 122 4'19"
- 7 Jean-François Dandrieu (1682-1738)**
Noël 6'26"
- 8 Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992)**
Le Banquet Céleste 7'08"
- 9 Claude-Bénigne Balbastre (1729-1799)**
Noël 6'23"
- 10 Jehan Alain (1911-1940)**
Litanies 5'21"



This recording is a concert of Italian and French organ favourites designed to exploit all the resources of this justly famous Grandfather Fincham organ in St. Mary's Star-of-the-Sea, West Melbourne.

César Franck (1822-1890) was the first French symphonic organ composer. Franck succeeded his own teacher Benoist as teacher of organ at the Paris Conservatoire, a post he held until his death. He was renowned as a master improviser. An epic poem in three parts, *Pièce Heroïque* **3** was written in 1878 and first performed at the Trocadero. It opens with pulsing chords and finishes in a blaze of glory on full organ. A truly satisfying piece which on its first performance was dismissed by the critics as lacking interest!

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) wrote organ music at the beginning and end of his life. The Prelude and Fugue in G minor **5** is a youthful virtuoso work with vigorous manual passage work in the Prelude. The Fugue is more serene. The Op.122 Chorale Preludes **6** are Brahms' last compositions. The tenth Chorale, "Herzlich tut mich verlangen" (My heart is filled with longing), has the tune in the pedals on an eight foot stop accompanied by an exquisitely beautiful arpeggiated figure over repeated bass notes.

Marco Enrico Bossi (1861-1925)

finished a distinguished career as Principal of the Rome Conservatoire. Fernando Germani one of his students and incidentally one of Sergio de Pieri's teachers writes of Bossi that he rescued the organ from the oblivion it has fallen into in Italy. The *Canzoncina a Maria Vergine* **2** is a charming little piece which exploits the quieter stops on the organ.

The French composers had a custom at Christmas of improvising on carols. These two Noels **7** and **9** are written down examples of this art form which filled Parisian churches each Christmas Eve. The one by Jean-François Dandrieu (1682-1738), treats the Noel as a "tambourin", a drum and fife tune. The other is by Claude-Bénigne Balbastre (1729-1799).

Joseph Bonnet (1884-1944) was one of the foremost French organists of his day. He was also very highly regarded in the United States of America where he made several trans-continental tours. The *Variations de Concert*, Op. 1 **1** give the performer ample opportunity to display virtuosity. They are built upon an original tune given out quietly after a stunning opening. The work closes with a section for octave pedals, a pedal solo and finally a mini-toccata.

Pietro Alessandro Yon (1896-1943) was a virtuoso Italian organist who spent much of his working life in America culminating his career as Organist of St. Patrick's Cathedral, New York. *Il Natale in Sicilia* (Christmas in Sicily) **4**, is a "cornamusa", a piece imitating bagpipes. It has an

appropriate Christmas pastorale flavour. It is a charming, miniature tone poem.

Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992), wrote *Le Banquet Celeste* **8** in 1928. This readily approachable piece begins mysteriously on the strings and has a spiky motif on high pitched pedal stops. It is slow moving and captures the timelessness of eternity.

Jehan Alain (1911-1940) is one of the most original voices of the twentieth century French organ school. *Litanies* **10** uses a short motif, heard at the opening, over and over, again and again just as in litanic prayer. The piece culminates on full organ.

SERGIO DE PIERI

was born in Treviso, Northern Italy, and graduated in Piano, Organ and Organ Composition from the Benedetto Marcello Conservatoire in Venice. In the 1960s he settled in Melbourne, Australia. He was responsible in Australia for reviving interest in the organ and its true repertoire. He was Organist at the Basilica of St. Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne and Chief Study Organ Lecturer at the University of Melbourne. For the past twenty years he has held the Chair of Principal Teacher of Organ and Organ Composition at the Benedetto Marcello Conservatoire in Venice. He has many recordings to his credit and concertises widely, especially in Europe, USA, Canada and Australia.

JOHN F. HOGAN

THE GEORGE FINCHAM GRAND ORGAN 1898-1900 ST. MARY'S STAR-OF-THE-SEA CHURCH WEST MELBOURNE

The organ at St. Mary's Star-of-the-Sea Church was built between 1898 and 1900 by the leading colonial organbuilder George Fincham at his factory in the Melbourne suburb of Richmond. It was the first pipe organ in Australia to be classified by the National Trust and is regarded as an instrument of national importance: it remains the largest organ built in Australia during the 19th century to remain essentially intact.

George Fincham's specification for a new three-manual organ of 37 speaking stops, 13 couplers, 14 pneumatic pistons to manuals, three pneumatic pistons (foot) to pedal organ, two tremulants, two crescendo (swell) pedals and tubularpneumatic action was accepted by the church on 12 September 1898. The cost for the instrument was quoted as £1,551.

On 24 April 1899, George Fincham wrote to Herr G.S. de Chaneeet, who was the choir conductor at St. Mary's suggesting the addition of a Mixture of 3 ranks for the Great organ and also a Fifteenth 4ft for the pedal at an additional cost of £45, bringing the total cost of the organ to £1,596.

The organ was already installed in the



church by 19 December 1899, but the action had to be re-regulated owing to climatic problems. The hydraulic engine which was initially installed for blowing the organ was showing signs of causing trouble owing to insufficient water pressure and on 25 January 1900 George Fincham agreed to replace the engine with an electric motor, one of the first such installations in Melbourne.

Both the church and the organ were opened on 18 February 1900 with Mansley Greer at the organ. The mass was composed and conducted by Herr G.S. de Chaneeet. At the last moment the organ had to be hand blown owing to the failure of the hydraulic engine; there had been delays in the installation of the electric engine which was not the responsibility of the organbuilder.

The Austral Light of February 1900 described the organ:

"The choir gallery provides ample accommodation for a large choir and instrumentalists, in addition to the organ, which was built by Mr. Fincham of Richmond. The instrument is complete, and contains about 2,500 pipes. It is built upon the pneumatic action from keyboard to stops and windchests. This action has entailed the use of no less than three and a half miles of tubing. The speaking pipes of the pedal, great and swell organ are 16ft, whilst in the choir organ they are 8ft. The labour of drawing and closing of the varied combinations of stops is abolished. The organist, while fingering the key-board, uses the thumb to "press a button; pneumatic action does the

rest." The richly-gilt and decorated pipes, and the stained case with the magnificent blackwood console, and the gallery front in blackwood and huon pine are a notable feature in the eastern end of the church. The cost of the organ was £1,600."

During the 1940s the organ was dismantled and the original external pneumatic underactions operating tracker connections to the windchests re-mounted directly to the underside of the windchests and extra lengths of small-bore pneumatic tubing employed to lengthen the action. The two lever swell pedals were converted to balanced operation and a new electric blower installed.

In 1976, the pneumatic piston action was removed from the console and the knobs rearranged to a new sequence. Also, several areas of panelling were removed from the casework and stored within the blowing chamber.

GEORGE FINCHAM

George Fincham, the builder of the St Mary's organ, was born in London on 20 August 1828. He was apprenticed to the leading London organbuilder Henry Bevington and was later a foreman with J.C. Bishop, another prominent London builder.

Fincham arrived in Victoria in 1852 but did not proceed to build his first Australian organ until 1864. He established a factory at the corner

of Bridge Road and Stawell Street, Richmond which was progressively enlarged until it occupied a large block. In 1866, Fincham was awarded £100 by the Victorian Government for establishing the industry of organbuilding in Victoria.

Fincham's instruments were widely sought after and in the ensuing years he built close to 200 organs for buildings in Victoria, South Australia, New South Wales, Tasmania and New Zealand. His magnum opus was the grand organ of four manuals and 70 speaking stops built for the Exhibition Building, Melbourne and opened in October 1880, several technical details of which were modelled on the organ of Notre-Dame, Paris.

Fincham exhibited instruments in a number of exhibitions both in Victoria and interstate. Invariably they received awards on account of their mechanical and tonal excellence.

In 1882 he established a branch in Adelaide under the direction of his former apprentice Arthur Hobday, who was later to become a partner until his departure to New Zealand in 1897.

In its peak years, the firm built many large organs including Freemasons' Hall, Melbourne (three manuals, 42 speaking stops), The Australian Church, Melbourne (four manuals, 53 speaking stops) and St Kilda Town Hall (three manuals, 37 speaking stops).

During the 1880s, Fincham developed and patented a form of tubular-

pneumatic action which was used for all large organs from that date onwards. This enabled consoles to be detached from organs, a full range of couplers to be supplied, and pistons to be provided for adding and subtracting stops.

Fincham's later organs displayed a more symphonic tonal palette than those dating from the earlier years of his career. A rich variety of strings and flutes were provided, together with reeds of great vibrancy. The St. Mary's organ is typical of Fincham's later tonal ideals, with its wealth of flute registers, rich foundations and generous provision of chorus and imitative reeds.

While building the St. Mary's organ, in September 1899, Fincham suffered a paralytic stroke, from which he made a full recovery. He admitted his son Leslie as a partner in the firm in 1900 which was henceforth known as George Fincham & Son. George Fincham continued to be involved actively as an organbuilder through the first decade of the present century until his death on 21 December 1910.

Fincham was the most important organbuilder in 19th century Australasia. His output exceeded the combined output of the other firms in business. His level of technical skill was such that he could build organs on the grandest scale. In addition, he supplied pipework and parts to organbuilders throughout Australia and New Zealand. The majority of Fincham's larger organs have been greatly altered or destroyed.

The organ in the Exhibition Building was broken up between 1947 and 1965 and others have been changed beyond recognition. The only two substantial examples of his later work which survive largely intact are the instruments at St Joseph's, Warrnambool (1892) and St Mary's Star-of-the-Sea, West Melbourne.

THE BUILDING

St. Mary's was designed by Melbourne architect E.J. Henderson in an early French Gothic style: it was begun in 1891 and was blessed and opened by Cardinal Moran on 18 February 1900. The cost of the building was estimated at £28,000 and its dimensions were quoted as: internal length 175ft, width across transepts 94ft, width of nave and aisles 68ft, height of groined wooden ceiling above nave floor 60ft, height of roof ridge 75ft, height of spire (never completed) 200ft. The building was designed to accommodate 1,200 persons, exclusive of the organ gallery. Classified by the National Trust of Australia (Victoria), the building is of cruciform shape, incorporating an aisled nave of five bays with tall clerestory, and a two-bay sanctuary terminating in a tripartite apse. The large transepts have apsidal chapels dedicated to the Sacred Heart, the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Joseph and St. Patrick. The groined ceiling to the nave, crossing, transepts and sanctuary is an outstanding example of craftsmanship in timber.

THE RESTORATION OF THE GRAND ORGAN

The restoration of the organ was made possible through a public appeal conducted by the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) launched in June 1990. Many generous donations from individual people, charitable trusts and corporations, together with two substantial bequests, made it possible for the restoration contract to be signed late in 1991 and the work to begin in March 1992. The total cost of the work was close to \$250,000.

The St. Mary's organ was barely

playable at the time of its dismantling in March 1992. It had not received any major attention since the 1940s and much of the original mechanism had not been repaired since 1900. The instrument's wind system (comprising three large double-rise wind reservoirs and long lengths of wooden trunking) was in a decayed state owing to the perishing of the original leather joints and water penetration on numerous occasions. The 1940s blowing plant could scarcely cope with leakage on such a scale. Additionally, much of the tubular-pneumatic action had ceased to function owing to perished



Metal pneumatic tubing awaiting installation

pneumatic motors and valves; also some of the metal pneumatic tubing had been crushed underfoot and numerous connections had come apart. The pipework was in reasonable condition, given its age, and was only superficially damaged, although very dirty, affecting the speech, regulation and tuning. The console had sustained considerable wear and a number of ivory keys, together with many pedal keys, were badly worn and the casework and facade pipes were grimy.

The South Island Organ Company Limited, of Timaru, New Zealand was selected to restore the St Mary's organ on account of its demonstrated skill in restoring tubular pneumatic organs, these including the large Norman & Beard Grand Organ in Wellington Town Hall together with other instruments by Arthur Hobday (Fincham's former partner), Hill & Son and Norman & Beard. The firm was established more than 20 years ago and is widely recognised as one of the leading firms specialising in conservative organ restoration.

The organ was completely dismantled by a team of organbuilders from the South Island Organ Company in March 1992. The components were packed in a large container for shipping to New Zealand. The only components which remained in the church were the largest of the three wind reservoirs, the casework, facade pipes and the larger zinc and wooden pipework.

As part of the restoration process, a full visual record of the work as it progressed was maintained by the firm. Video recordings, together with colour photographs, of all phases of the work, were carried out by the firm. Daily diaries were also maintained by staff members describing work in progress. Detailed technical drawings were made of numerous mechanical components. This work is in accordance with current restoration principles in Europe.

The work of restoration covered the following aspects:

The manual slider windchests were in reasonably good condition and did not require extensive restoration. However, the pedal vent chest (accommodating five ranks) had been severely affected by water and all of the mechanism had to be remade.

The manual pneumatic underactions were reconfigured in their original positions above floor level. This involved reconstructing the top of the action boxes, fitting new brass pulldown plates and tapped wires, and reconstructing 183 new wooden trackers to link the underactions to the pallets beneath the windchests

The three double-rise reservoirs were releathered and repainted. The large upper reservoir, measuring 3.64m x 2.44m, was too large to remove from the blowing chamber and had to be releathered on-site. The wooden wind trunks were repaired, repapered and

painted to provide a proper seal against leakage and a new German 'Ventus' electric blower, placed within a wooden silencing box was fitted to the existing wind system.

Most of the original lead pneumatic tubing was able to be salvaged. The original large-bore tubing has an outside measurement of 11mm (7/16") while the additional tubing dating from the 1940s for the resited underactions is 8mm (5/16") in outside measurement. It was possible to straighten and round out the majority of the tubing which was then cleaned and polished. The pneumatic slider machines were releathered and new disc valves with phosphor bronze tapped wires fitted while the action of the front pipe chests were releathered and the pipe holes properly countersunk to offer better support to the pipe feet. The pneumatic soundboard underactions were also releathered and new disc valves with phosphor bronze tapped wires fitted. The two pedal octave coupling machines (one for each side of the organ) were also repaired.

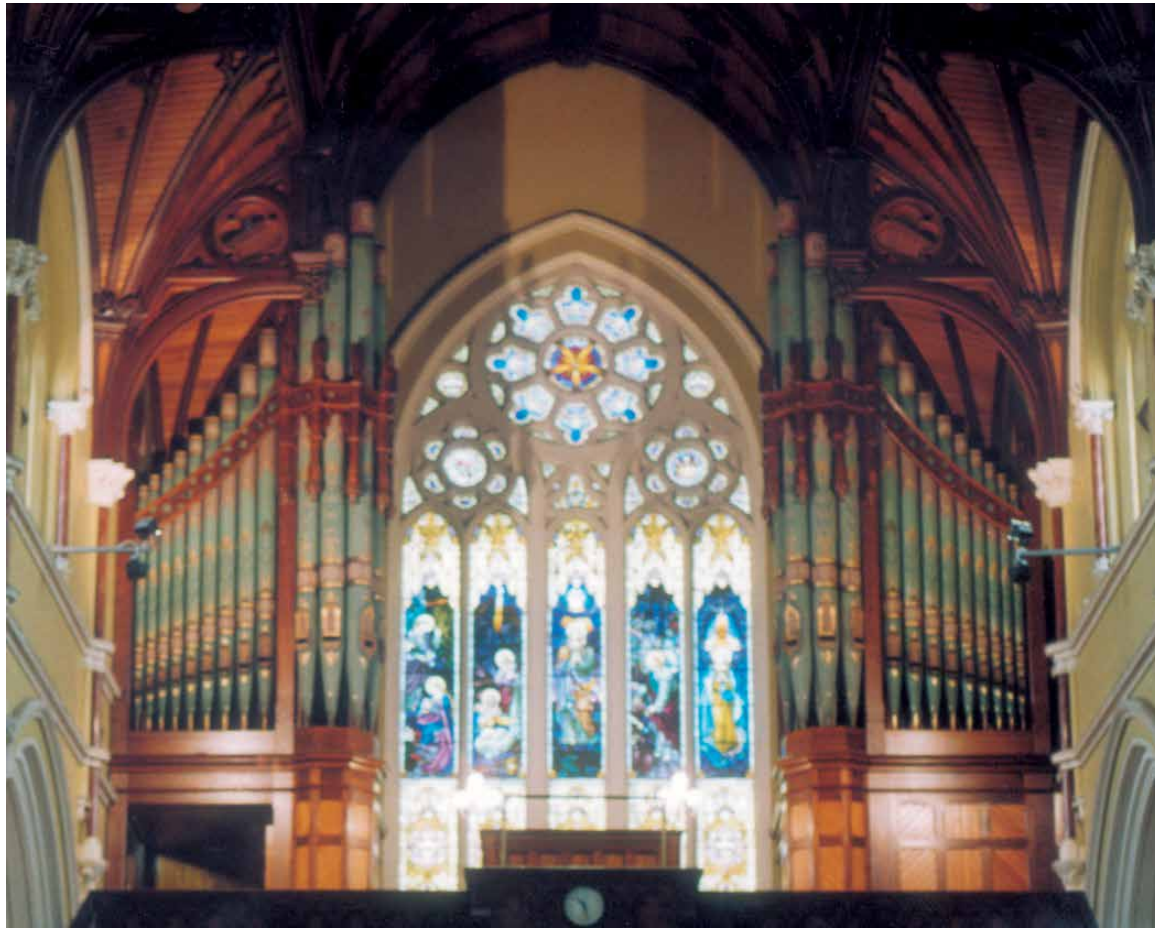
The action-work within the console is particularly complex, including both inter- and intra-manual coupling actions, operating pneumatically, and manual to pedal coupling actions, operating mechanically but pneumatically actuated. In addition, there are touch boxes for the three manuals and the pedal division which charge the pneumatic tubing with air to activate the soundboard underactions

and an elaborate series of clack valves (non- return valves) which prevent air proceeding along the pneumatic tubing in the wrong direction.

The stop action is similarly complex including the piston action (which had to be reassembled totally following its removal in the 1970s) and the action from drawstops to the slider machines attached to the windchests which activate the different stops. Finally, there are the two lever swell pedals which had been replaced by balanced pedals in the 1940s and have been reconstructed.

All of the action-work within the console had to be restored. All valves were releathered and all tubing had to be reassembled. The Tasmanian blackwood console case was rubbed down and waxed. The manual keyboards were partially replated in replacement ivory where excessive wear had taken place and the pedal board was repieced with new timber, rebushed and repolished. The drawknobs were refelted and the engraving of the ivory discs refilled with black wax. The knobs were replaced

in their original sequence which had been changed in 1976. The bench was repolished.



The two swell boxes, consisting of two layers of tongue and groove boards packed with sawdust, were in sound condition. However, the swell shutters were in poor condition and had to be repapered, painted and fitted with new felt. The action to the shutters has also been refurbished and connected to the

two new steel trigger swell levers at the console, which now offer a full range of crescendo.

Generally, the pipework of the organ was in fair condition given its age. The majority of the open metal fluework was still tuned by cone or slot, and this has been retained in the restoration. It is believed to be the largest cone-tuned organ in Victoria. The pipework was rounded out and repaired where necessary and cleaned with brushes and cloths, but not washed, to preserve its patination. The thin-brass reed tongues have been retained wherever possible and recurved as necessary according to the original pattern. The largest pipes were cleaned and repaired on site. The feet of the Open Diapason metal 16ft and

the Double Open Diapason 16ft had to be reformed owing to compression of the original lead tips.

The restoration of the casework took place on site early in 1993. All of the wooden parts were dismantled and the thick coating of varnish dissolved with spirit. The timber was then

sanded down. The darker sections of the casework were then restrained and the whole given a number of coats of shellac polish identical to the original treatment.

Restoration work in the Timaru factory was completed in late May 1993 and the instrument shipped back to Melbourne in June. Installation of the organ began in early July. The first team of three organbuilders spent three weeks assembling the building frame, windchests, swell boxes, casework, action and wind system. The second team of organbuilders arrived in early August. This team continued with the assembly of the pneumatic actions, especially linking up the large sections of pneumatic tubing. This exacting and time-consuming task consisted of laying out very large runs of lead tubing and affixing them into position with a silicone adhesive. Once the actions had been linked up, they were tested and adjusted for response and optimum repetition. The work within the console was particularly complicated owing to the confined space in which the actions are fitted. The console was progressively fitted together. The stop and piston actions, keyboards and swell pedals were assembled together and adjusted as work progressed. The pipework was finally installed, regulated where necessary for even speech and then fine tuned. This task was, again, most exacting to achieve optimum musical results and respect the historic qualities of the instrument.

SPECIFICATION OF THE ORGAN			
GREAT ORGAN			
Double Open Diapason	16	z & sm	
No.1 Open Diapason	8	z & sm	
No.2 Open Diapason	8	z & sm	
Claribel	8	w	
Principal	4	sm	
Flute	4	w & sm	
Twelfth	3	sm	
Fifteenth	2	sm	
Mixture	III rks	sm	
Double Trumpet	16	z & sm	
Posaune	8	sm	
Clarion	4	sm	
		Great Sub Octave	
		Great Super Octave	
		Swell to Great Sub	
		Swell to Great	
		Swell to Great Super	
		Choir to Great	
SWELL (enclosed)			
Bourdon	16	w	
Open Diapason	8	z & sm	
Hohi Flute	8	w	
Stopped Diapason	8	w	
Gamba	8	sm	grooved bass
Celeste	8	sm	TC
Octave	4	sm	
Rohr flote	4	w & sm	
Piccolo	2	w & sm	
Cornopean	8	sm	
Oboe	8	sm	
Vox Humana	8	sm	
Clarion	4	sm	
		Tremulant	
		Swell Sub Octave	
		Swell Super, Octave	
CHOIR (enclosed)			
Hohl Flute	8	w	
Gedact	8	w	
Dulciana	8	z & sm	
Harmonic Flute	4	sm	
Flageolet	2	w & sm	
Clarionet	8	sm	
Orchestral Oboe	8	sm	TC
		Tremulant	
		Swell to Choir	

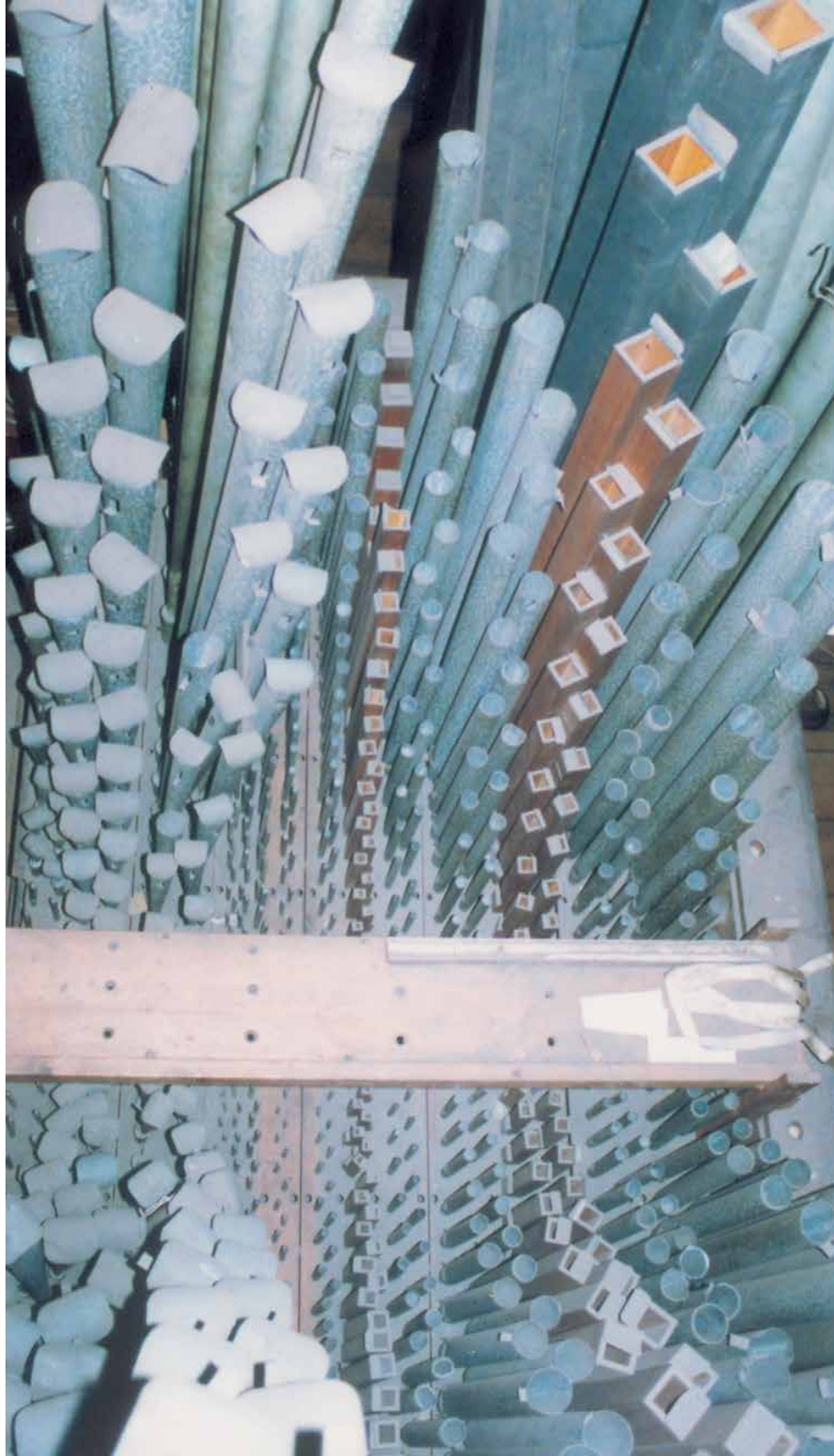
PEDAL			
Open Diapason metal	16	z & sm	
Open Diapason wood	16	w	
Bourdon	16	w	
Violon	8	w	
Bass Flute	8	w	
Fifteenth	4	sm	
		Pedal Super Octave	
		Choir to Pedal	
		Great to Pedal	
		Swell to Pedal	
PIPE MATERIALS			
sm = spotted metal (lead/tin alloy)			
w = wood			
z = zinc (flue pipes longer than 4ft; reed pipes longer than 8ft)			
COMPASS			
Manual	C - c ⁴	61 notes	
Pedal	CC - f	30 notes	
ACCESSORIES			
5 fixed thumb pistons to Great			
6 fixed thumb pistons to Swell			
3 fixed thumb pistons to Choir			
3 fixed composition pedals to Pedal			
Lever pedal to Swell (left pedal)			
Lever pedal to Choir (right pedal)			
MIXTURE COMPOSITION			
C - b ^o	17	19	22
c ¹ - f ³	12	15	17
f ^{#3} - C ⁴	8	12	15
PITCH			
a ¹ = 435 Hz at 13°C			
WIND PRESSURES			
Great, Swell and Choir 3-1/4" (84mm)			
Pedal and action 4" (103mm)			
Ventus 2-1/2hp blowing plant delivering 120mm output			
LAYOUT OF THE ORGAN			
Left case: Swell Organ, Swell reservoir (mounted over the top of the swell box and forming its roof), Pedal Open Diapason Metal 16ft (in facade).			

Centre of gallery:
Console

Right case: Great Organ,
Choir Organ (enclosed
in a swell box behind
the Great Organ), Pedal
Organ (mounted at floor
level behind the Choir
Organ).

Blowing chamber (over
former baptistery and
adjacent to right case):
Large reservoir (Pedal
Organ and action), Small
reservoir (Great and
Choir Organs), electric
blower.

JOHN MAIDMENT



Music notes:
John F. Hogan

Organ history:
John Maidment

Photographs supplied by John Maidment

Recording:
Martin Wright

Editing:
Vaughan McAlley

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PHOTO: pipework before renovation.
Note metal 'bonnets' over the metal resonators
which were removed at the restoration.