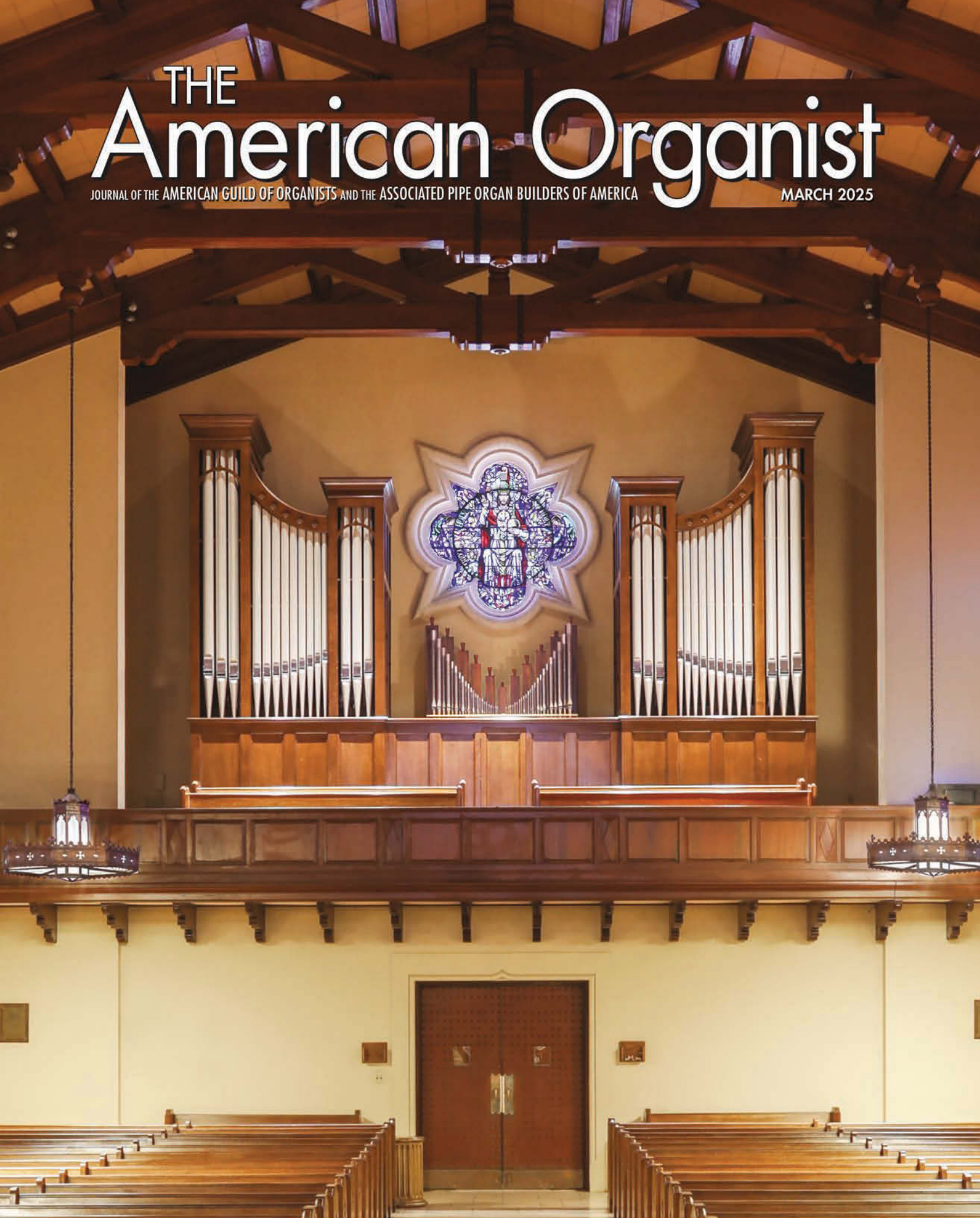


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The Accompanist-Orchestrator Getting the Best out of Stanford and Korngold

By Bryan Dunnewald

When listening to one of the old Hollywood soundtracks, our ears instantly recognize the hallmarks of the era: the singing melodies, the rich orchestrations, the ingenious musical devices (to say nothing of the fantastic playing). We remember the great film songwriters and composers, yet our modern minds often forget the many talented orchestrators responsible for two of these three hallmarks.

Consider now the talented choir accompanist. Seated at the organ bench, this person fulfills all the duties of the Hollywood orchestrator, with the added responsibility of playing the performance! The pianist accompanies sensitively, the conductor makes an orchestra do the same; only the organist is responsible for sensitive playing *and* orchestration. Charles Villiers Stanford writes the core material and the choir leads in the foreground, while the uniqueness of each organ forces the accompanist into their role as accompanist-orchestrator, responsible for realizing the full musical potential of Stanford's work.



Our organ for the Church of the Good Shepherd in Corpus Christi, Texas, was designed to give the accompanist-orchestrator the musical resources to fulfill this role with as much skill as the best Hollywood orchestrators. This project presents an opportunity to examine the relationship between composer, accompanist-orchestrator, and orchestra (organ).

The Composer

Hollywood composers bear a striking resemblance to church music composers. They both write music for practical use, sometimes for only one performance; their music is part of a larger art-piece (the movie or church service); they work with many stakeholders, including those who may have no interest in their craft (producers or clergy).

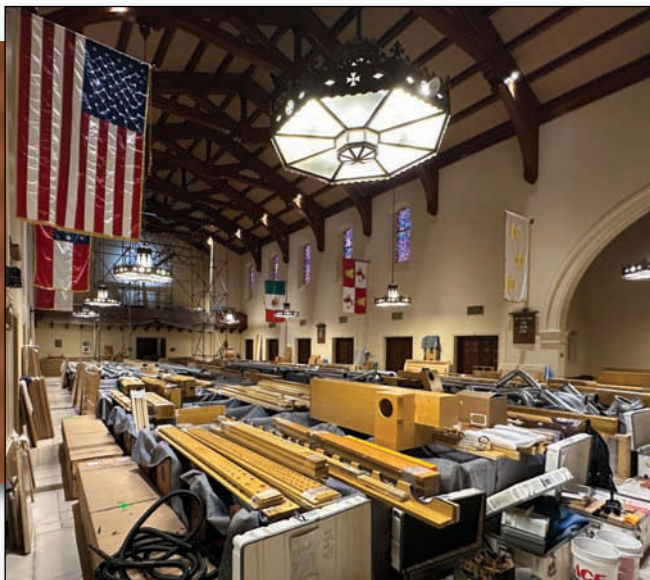
Some Hollywood composers were famous for beautiful melodies and nothing else, giving little more than a tune and a sketch to the orchestrator; others specified every detail of the orchestration. An experienced accompanist can think of examples from each category that are found in church music.

Although spectacular music has been written by both kinds of composers, the Hollywood orchestrators generally found the former, less micromanaging composers more creatively stimulating. The same can be said for the accompanist-orchestrator—and where there is more space for personal expression, there is more opportunity to match the composer's material to the organ.

The Accompanist-Orchestrator

The master orchestrators of Hollywood could make even the simplest song a masterpiece. More than assigning parts to players, their job was to realize the potential of the composer's material. Orchestrators and accompanist-orchestrators are at their best when they're musical chameleons. Much like good improvisation, good orchestration and accompaniment sounds inevitable. Rather than draw attention to itself, it highlights the best parts of the composer's piece and subtly makes improvements to anything lackluster.

In capable hands, everything from registration (musically timed changes, making certain lines solos) to added material (descants, additional counterpoint, subtle harmonic changes) is at the discretion of the accompanist-orchestrator. Sometimes "playing the ink" on one beautiful registration is all that's needed. Good taste is central to success, and the mark of success is simple: only the performers know what the accompanist-orchestrator is doing, while the listener, none the wiser, enjoys a fantastic performance of the composer's piece.



Components ready to be installed



Some of the inner Swell reeds

The Orchestra

Great orchestrators could work with nearly any orchestra, from awe-inspiring to frustrating. The same is true for great accompanist-orchestrators, craftspeople who never blame their tools. In order to realize the talents of the accompanist-orchestrator, however, the organ needs to sound as beautiful and function as musically as the best Hollywood orchestras. Each player (stop) must have a pleasing sound on their own and blend into a unified yet colorful ensemble tone. Ensembles must be highly expressive, capable of dynamic changes fast and slow. The string section (diapasons) must be perfectly balanced.

Roster Size and Personnel Budget

When designing an organ for the accompanist-orchestrator, tough choices must be made in order to fit the allotted space and budget. Orchestrators encountered the same challenges and, like creative organbuilders, found compelling solutions. Asking simple questions like “What’s more useful, an Oboe or a Glockenspiel (Larigot)?” can reveal the best path forward. Other learnings from the orchestrators can be found in their scores: the most important instruments have the largest usable playing compass; one beautiful violin is worth ten “color instruments”; effects are always subservient to a simple, never-tiring sound.

An Orchestra of Soloists

The Berlin Philharmonic is famous for its string section of soloists who play together in perfect ensemble. This should be the goal for all diapasons on the accompanist-orchestrator’s organ. For the Church of the Good Shepherd, we employed our usual diapason scaling methods to ensure color variety across the whole organ. Cohesion between diapasons comes from thoughtful scale variation, careful voicing, slotting, and—new with this organ—a languid counter-level.

Full-Compass Beauty

Organbuilders are always battling height constraints, and flue pipes are often mitered or Haskelled to compensate. The latter

method, better for strength and overall space, often leads to weak, unfocused basses. No Hollywood orchestra would settle for mediocre cellos and basses, and in the same spirit, we set out to find a way to improve Haskell bass tone. Our head voicer, Timothy Fink, found the answer in studying the master of Haskelling: Estey. Following Estey’s lead, we fitted all Haskelled pipes with a bucket languid. The result is fantastic: the change to Haskelled basses is imperceptible, with plenty of rosin and singing tone all the way to low C.

Employing bucket languids is one of many tools we used to make sure that every stop’s compass is musically relevant. This allows the accompanist-orchestrator to employ any stop they choose for the material at hand, offering unending possibilities for color and variety that sound musically convincing to someone who has never heard the organ.

Unenclosed = Unemployed

There are many musical instruments that, although beautiful unto themselves, cannot meet the demands of the accompanist-orchestrator, their choir, or their repertoire. With the exception of the diapason chorus and a few unenclosed color flues, an organ for the accompanist-orchestrator requires enclosed, useful stops.

Our double-enclosed Swell reeds can be used to anchor full organ or accompany a small choir. Mi Ou Lee, director of music ministries at the Church of the Good Shepherd, demonstrated their flexibility by using the 32’ Contra Posaune in perfect balance as part of the string celeste ensemble. In the Choir, the 16’ English Horn—a stop usually only useful for solos in one part of its compass—is voiced with a rich, full bass. Much like an orchestral bassoon section, it can be used in myriad ways for single lines and harmony.

Overlapping Dynamic Range

Soloists and accompanying ensembles within the orchestra need to balance with the singers across the dynamic range of the voice. No Hollywood orchestra would hire a player who can only accompany at their softest dynamic level. A diapason *mezzo-piano*

should equal a singer's *mezzo-piano* such that both can take advantage of their full dynamic range while singing together.

The Choir division for Corpus Christi deserves special mention here. It is designed to follow exactly the dynamic contours of a choir. The dulcianas sing with a pure “ah” vowel and blend seamlessly with singers. All color stops can be used with even the most sensitive singers, from the barely audible (box closed) Flute Celeste to the Cornet and Tromba. This division, more than any other, offers inspiration to the accompanist-orchestrator and begs for creativity in every accompaniment.

Beyond Movie Music

When a concertgoer attends a Philadelphia Orchestra program of Mozart, they do not hear Mozart's orchestra. Instead, they hear a compelling performance in the ensemble's own musical voice. All musicians—from the most versatile to the specialist—have a voice, and the same is true for organs.

Organs serve in many roles, and even the most devoted church musician will admit that there is more to life than choral accompanying. Expression and musicianship will always carry the day, and any organ that meets the demands of a talented accompanist-orchestrator will perform all music with ease. Building one organ to sound perfect in every context is impossible. Building one organ to sound *musical* in every context is the key.

This principle was demonstrated masterfully by consultant Ken Cowan, who took the organ through choral accompaniments, hymns, and repertoire from Rachel Laurin to Bach. Cowan's work with us produced an organ of many colors and capabilities, and Mi Ou Lee is already using the instrument to its potential each week. It was our pleasure to work with Cowan, Lee, and all the people of the Church of the Good Shepherd, including Fr. Milton Black, rector, and Shane Smith, facilities director.

Bryan Dunnewald is president and tonal director at Schoenstein & Co.

Church of the Good Shepherd • Corpus Christi, Texas

Schoenstein & Co. Opus 185

39 voices, 46 ranks, electric-pneumatic action

II. GREAT		PIPES	I. CHOIR (expressive)		PIPES	PEDAL		PIPES
16	Contrabass	61	16	Dulciana	61	32	Resultant	
8	First Open Diapason	61	8	Dulciana	12	16	Diapason (wood, Austin)†	32
8	Second Open Diapason (ext. Contrabass)	12	8	Chimney Flute	61	16	Contrabass (Gt.)	
8	Harmonic Flute	61	8	Flauto Dolce (Chimney Flute bass)	49	16	Dulciana (Ch.)	
8	Bourdon	61	8	Flute Celeste (TC)	49	16	Bourdon (Sw.)	
8	Flauto Continuo (Ant.)		8	Flute Celeste (TC)	49	16	Bass Flute (Ant.)	
4	Principal	61	8	Erzähler (Ant.)		8	Octave (ext. Diapason)	12
4	Octave (ext. Contrabass)	12	8	Erzähler Celeste (Ant.)		8	Bass (Gt. Contrabass)	
4	Spire Flute	61	4	Dulcet	12	8	Flute (Gt. Harmonic Flute)	
4	Flute (Ant.)		4	Silver Flute	61	8	Dulciana (Ch.)	
2	Fifteenth	61	2½	Nazard	61	8	Stopped Diapason (Sw.)	
2	Mixture III–IV	187	2	Piccolo	61	4	Choral Bass (ext. Diapason)	12
8	Tromba (Ch.)		1½	Tierce (TC)	42	4	Flute (Gt. Harmonic Flute)	
8	Solo Tuba (Ant.)		16	Bass Horn (ext. English Horn)	12	32	Contra Posaune (ext. Sw.)	12
			8	Tromba	61	16	Trombone (ext. Ch.)	12
			8	English Horn	61	16	Posaune (Sw.)	
			8	Clarinet	61	16	Bass Horn (Ch.)	
				Tremulant		16	Flügel Horn (Ant.)	
				Choir 16, Unison Off, 4		8	Solo Tuba (Ant.)	
			8	Solo Tuba (Ant.)		8	Posaune (Sw.)	
			ANTIPHONAL (floating, expressive)			4	Clarinet (Ch.)	
			16	Bass Flute	12	† Retained from previous organ		
			8	Echo Diapason (unenclosed)	61	Couplers		
			8	Erzähler	61	Great to Pedal 8, 4		
			8	Erzähler Celeste (TC)	49	Swell to Pedal 8, 4		
			8	Flauto Continuo	61	Choir to Pedal 8, 4		
			4	Erzähler	12	Swell to Great 16, 8, 4		
			4	Flute	12	Choir to Great 16, 8, 4		
			16	Flügel Horn	12	Swell to Choir 16, 8, 4		
			8	Flügel Horn	61	Choir to Swell		
			8	Solo Tuba	61	Antiphonal on Great		
						Antiphonal on Swell		
						Antiphonal on Choir		
						Antiphonal on Pedals		
						Manual I/II Reverse		
						All Swells to Swell		
						Pedal Divide		
						Cymbelstern		

* Stops under double expression