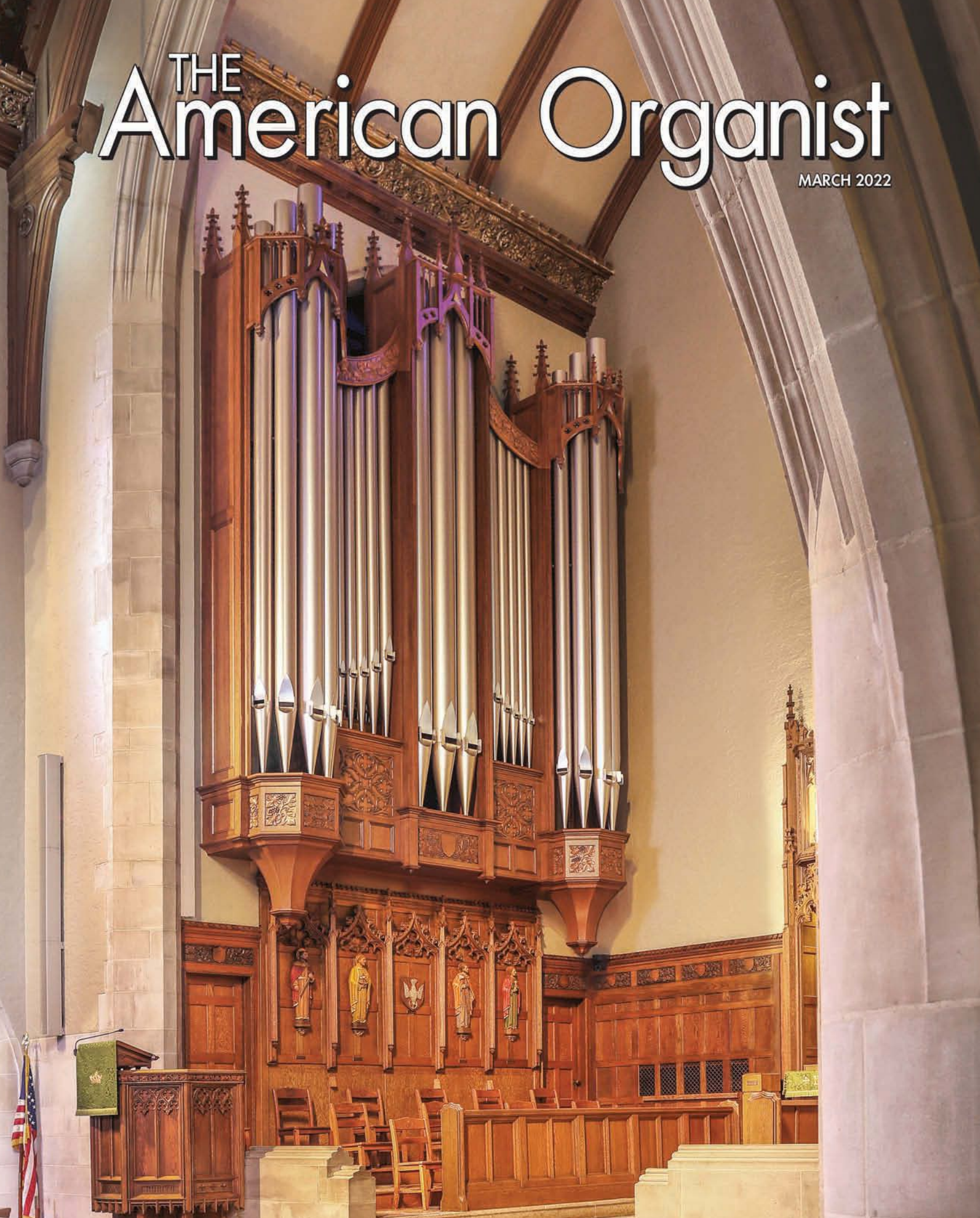


# THE American Organist

MARCH 2022





## Cover Feature



## First United Methodist Church Montgomery, Alabama

Schoenstein & Co.  
Benicia, California

By Bryan Dunnewald

### Rehearsal Technique

#### Preparing a Symphonic Organ for Its Debut Performance

Great performances live and die by effective rehearsing. From a string quartet to a symphony, the key to a life-changing, heart-wrenching interpretation lies in preparation. A new organ—at its best one of the few rivals to the timbral breadth of the symphony orchestra—requires a different kind of rehearsal: tonal design and finishing. As with an effective rehearsal process, so too with tonal design and finishing: it must be musically driven, organized, and efficient.

#### Creating the Roster (Stoplist)

Before rehearsals begin, the conductor (tonal director) must create the roster (stoplist). It needs to meet the musical needs of the program and strike a balance between budget and artistic ideals. First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, is an ideal acoustical setting for the symphonic organ. Recent improvements to the sanctuary resulted in a warm acoustic suited for high-caliber organ playing.

A successful church organ, like a modern symphony orchestra, must satisfy a variety of musical demands far greater than those placed on a repertoire-specific concert organ or an early-music instrumental ensemble. It must be a versatile instrument with maximum musical potential. The fundamental principle in a satisfying, versatile organ is beautiful tone that is well suited to the room. Musicians know when they hear the Philadelphia Orchestra play Mozart that it's not the same orchestra Mozart conducted. Yet the beautiful sound and musical performance leave the audience inspired nonetheless.

### **Auditioning the Orchestra (Tonal Design)**

Once the roster is chosen, the conductor needs to audition the orchestra. Should the brass section resemble the sound of Chicago (Tromba/Posaune) or New York (Trumpet/Bombard)? What kind of string sound is needed—Philadelphia (Diapason) or Berlin (Principal)? All this careful planning makes for a cohesive ensemble and faster work once forces join at the first rehearsal.

### **Practice (Shopwork)**

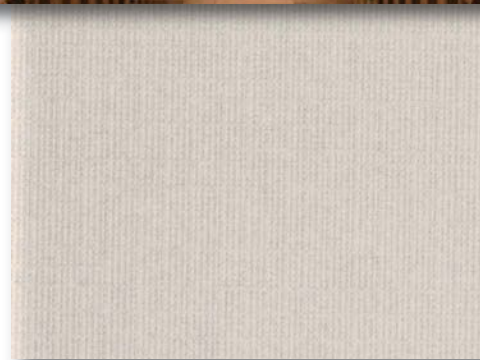
It would be unfair not to mention the work that makes rehearsal possible: practice. A professional musician arrives at rehearsal with all potential problems solved. Each player brings decades of hard work and meticulous practice—plus treasured instruments—to every rehearsal. Consider the oboist, giving significant effort to both practicing music and perfecting the quality of the reeds. Likewise, the experience and technical skill of the craftsmen, voicers, and other staff can be heard every time the organ is played. The instrument must be in fine tune and regulation to allow the music to speak.

### **Rehearsals Begin (Tonal Finishing)**

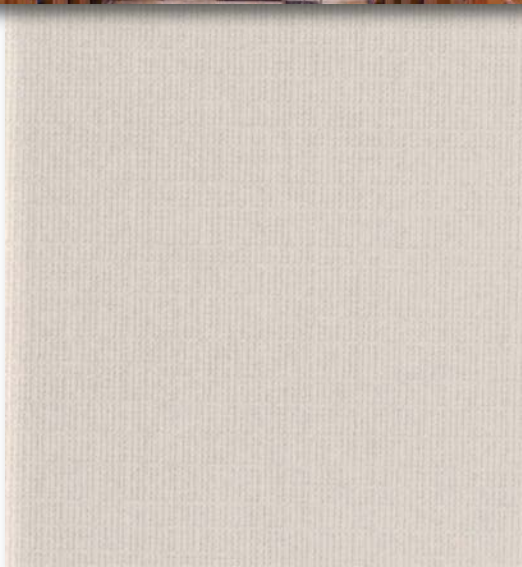
Once the musicians arrive for rehearsal (the organ is installed), rehearsals begin with an A. The organ is tuned before tonal finishing can begin, for it is impossible to judge differences in tone if the ensemble is out of tune. The conductor (tonal director) leads the session, with the all-important assistance of the concertmaster (voicer). Their relationship must be collaborative to realize the best musical outcome.

The first rehearsal is always the most important. After an initial read-through (assessment of the organ), the hard work of bringing together all the sonic contributions of the ensemble begins. Much of the work in rehearsal, particularly early on, is done with the primary section: strings in the orchestra, diapasons in the organ. These players are the tonal foundation of the ensemble, and an organ is only as great as its diapasons.

At First United Methodist Church, our tonal testing and design brought us close to the mark on the diapason sound, yet we still spent weeks working to make sure the diapasons (double through mixtures) across the whole organ were just right. We had to encourage more sound from some members and smooth out the usual bumps and hot spots resulting from acoustical phenomena.







### Sectionals (Small Projects)

As rehearsals continue, it may become prudent to have sectionals—small side projects to address loose ends and advance the overall tonal goal. A voicer may be adjusting beards as a technician works on muting mixture ranks, all while the tonal director goes through the remaining stops to make the next rehearsal agenda (to-do list).

### Dress Rehearsal (Final Check)

Just before the performance, a dress rehearsal (final check of the organ) offers the opportunity to take stock of the results of rehearsing. If the earlier rehearsals were successful, this should be an affirming day and a chance to fix small details.

### Debut Performance (Dedication)

As when the process began, the last step before beginning the concert is the final A. Once the orchestra (organ) is tuned, it's ready to perform, showcasing all the hard work done in the privacy of rehearsal. The organ's performance is a long one: it must serve in perpetuity for its musicians and listeners.

The organ of First United Methodist Church, Montgomery, gave its first performance on November 5, 2021, with David Higgs at the console. It now embarks on its career, lending itself to the talented team of First United Methodist Church: director of music James Seay, assistant director and organist Joshua Coble, and consultant Andrew Risinger. We hope our rehearsal technique leaves the church with an inspiring instrument that will perform well for decades to come.

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**Bryan Dunnewald** is a member of the Schoenstein flue tonal finishing crew, along with head voicer Timothy Fink, voicer David Anderson, and tonal director Jack Bethards.

All photos by Louis Patterson.

**First United Methodist Church  
Montgomery, Alabama**

Schoenstein & Co.

Three manuals, 33 voices, 41 ranks

**II. GREAT**

|                                      |     |
|--------------------------------------|-----|
| 16 Double Open Diapason              | 61  |
| 8 First Open Diapason                | 61  |
| 8 Second Open Diapason (ext. Double) | 12  |
| 8 Harmonic Flute                     | 61  |
| 8 Salicional (Ch.)                   |     |
| 8 Lieblich Gedeckt (Ch.)             |     |
| 4 Principal                          | 61  |
| 4 Lieblich Gedeckt (Ch.)             |     |
| 2½ Sesquialtera II                   | 115 |
| 2 Fifteenth                          | 61  |
| 2 Mixture IV                         | 201 |
| 16 Ophicleide (Ch.)                  |     |
| 8 Tuba (Ch.)                         |     |
| 8 Solo Trumpet (Ch.)                 |     |
| Chimes (digital)                     |     |
| Great Unison Off                     |     |

**III. SWELL** (expressive)

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| 16 Contra Gamba                                | 12  |
| 8 Open Diapason                                | 61  |
| 8 Stopped Diapason                             | 61  |
| 8 Echo Gamba                                   | 61  |
| 8 Vox Celeste                                  | 61  |
| 8 Cor Seraphique†                              | 61  |
| 8 Voix Angelique (TC)†                         | 49  |
| 4 Gemshorn                                     | 61  |
| 4 Harmonic Flute                               | 61  |
| 2 Octavin                                      | 61  |
| 2 Mixture III-V†                               | 236 |
| 16 Posaune†                                    | 61  |
| 8 Trumpet†                                     | 61  |
| 8 Posaune†                                     | 12  |
| 8 Oboe   | 61  |
| 4 Clarion† (Posaune)                           | 12  |
| Tremulant                                      |     |
| Swell 16, Unison Off, 4                        |     |
| † Stops under double expression, high pressure |     |

**I. CHOIR** (expressive)

|   |    |
|---|----|
| 16 Bourdon  | 24 |
| 8 Salicional (Bourdon Bass)                           | 49 |
| 8 Unda-Maris (TC)                                     | 49 |
| 8 Lieblich Gedeckt (Bourdon Bass)                     | 49 |
| 4 Salicet   | 12 |
| 4 Lieblich Gedeckt                                    | 12 |
| 2½ Twelfth (TC—Nineteenth)                            |    |
| 2½ Nazard (Lieblich Gedeckt)                          |    |
| 2 Fifteenth (Salicet)                                 | 12 |
| 1½ Tierce (TC)  | 42 |
| 1½ Nineteenth   | 54 |
| 16 Ophicleide†  | 12 |
| 8 Tuba†   | 61 |
| 8 Solo Trumpet††                                      | 61 |
| 8 Corno di Bassetto                                   | 61 |
| 8 Oboe (Sw.)  |    |
| Tremulant   |    |
| Choir 16, Unison Off, 4                               |    |
| Cymbelstern   |    |
| † High pressure                                       |    |
| †† Retained from previous organ—unenclosed with Great |    |

PIPES

**GALLERY** (floating)

|                                      |    |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| 8 Open Diapason (Chimney Flute Bass) | 49 |
| 8 Chimney Flute                      | 61 |
| 8 Dulciana (Chimney Flute Bass)      | 49 |
| 4 Principal                          | 61 |
| 4 Chimney Flute                      | 12 |

**PEDAL**

|                              |    |
|------------------------------|----|
| 32 Resultant                 |    |
| 16 Open Metal                | 32 |
| 16 Diapason (Gt.)            |    |
| 16 Gamba (Sw.)               |    |
| 16 Bourdon (Ch.)             |    |
| 8 Principal                  | 12 |
| 8 Flute (Gt.)                |    |
| 8 Stopped Diapason (Sw.)     |    |
| 4 Fifteenth                  | 12 |
| 4 Flute (Gt.)                |    |
| 32 Contra Posaune (ext. Sw.) | 12 |
| 16 Ophicleide (Ch.)          |    |
| 16 Posaune (Sw.)             |    |
| 8 Tuba (Ch.)                 |    |
| 8 Posaune (Sw.)              |    |
| 4 Corno di Bassetto (Sw.)    |    |
| 8 Solo Trumpet (Ch.)         |    |
| Chimes (Gt.)                 |    |

**COUPLERS**

Great to Pedal  
Great to Pedal 4  
Swell to Pedal  
Swell to Pedal 4  
Choir to Pedal  
Choir to Pedal 4  
Swell to Great 16  
Swell to Great  
Swell to Great 4  
Choir to Great 16  
Choir to Great  
Choir to Great 4  
Swell to Choir 16  
Swell to Choir  
Swell to Choir 4  
Great to Choir  
Choir to Swell  
Gallery on Great  
Gallery on Swell  
Gallery on Choir  
Gallery on Pedal  
All Swells to Swell  
Manual I/II Transfer  
All divisionals become Next

**MECHANICALS**

Electric-pneumatic action  
Solid-state capture combination action  
5,000 memories  
56 pistons and toe studs  
6 reversibles including Full Organ  
Programmable piston range  
Piston sequencer  
Record/playback system