

The Organ at St. Andrew's-Wesley United Church

One of the largest and most prominent pipe organs in British Columbia stands within the elegant gothic revival structure of this downtown Vancouver church. Following United Church union, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church amalgamated with Wesley Methodist Church in 1927 and they decided to move to a new location and build a new church home. The St. Andrew's organ, a 4 manual 50 stop instrument of English Romantic voicing built in 1910 as opus 390 by the Saint-Hyacinthe, Quebec firm Casavant Freres Ltee., was saved and in 1932, at a cost of \$9,500, Casavant commenced its Opus 1475 rebuild, enlargement to 56 stops, and relocation of the instrument to the new St. Andrew's-Wesley United Church which was opened on Friday, May 26, 1933 with the organ being dedicated one week later.

Over the years, changes in prevailing organ construction and pipe speech ideas influenced an undertaking to rebuild and update the organ to something suitable for a greater organ repertoire. Enlargement and versatility was the order of the day and in 1966 local technician G. Herald Keefer & Associates were contracted to build their magnum opus 15, an action change, pipe alteration, and enlargement, including a new 4 manual console. Seattle, Washington organ builder Balcom and Vaughan and Netherlands pipe maker, Stinkens were among the shops providing components. Upon completion the organ had 104 stops controlling a purported 6484 pipes, making it the largest instrument in the province at that time. I recall Donald Forbes, organist and music director in those days, being particularly proud of playing the instrument. Unfortunately the rebuild was not very successful and the eclectically voiced organ was eventually beset with pipe speech, mechanical, and electrical problems.

In 1983, Darryl Nixon was appointed organist and music director and he endured through the organ's shortcomings but eventually it reached a point where its operation became unreliable. Discussions with those involved in affecting the future of the organ in the church ensued. Mary (Bowden) Wattum, a long time member and supporter of the work in the church, funded the rebuilding of the organ and in 1994, Huestis Pipe Organ Associates of Ladner, B.C. were hired to construct their magnum opus, a restoration back to fundamentally English Romantic style. They retained 17 ranks of pipes and bellows of the original Opus 390 organ, downsized the pipe compliment which had overfilled the chancel chambers hindering sound projection, and rearranged the pipe chests to optimum and elevated placement close to the chancel facades to focus and enhance sound projection into the nave. Existing action and console were unusable and removed but some pipes added in the 1966 work were retained. A suitable console and action from the former 1955 Casavant Opus 2477 organ of First Methodist Church, Phoenix, Arizona were acquired from Texas organ builder Robert Sipe, along with components from the Organ Clearing House. New expression boxes built by Laval, Quebec organ builder Helmuth Wolff Associates, and new pipework by organ builder Martin Pasi of Kent, Washington were also among providers. The project was ended in 2001 at a cost of about ¾ million dollars with a new rear gallery division yet to be completed and facade pipes cleaned and restored. At that time the organ had 65 stops and 60 ranks of pipes in the chancel's 2 chambers controlled by a 3 manual console. The organ was then dedicated to the glory of God and in loving memory of Mrs. Thomas Bingham, a member of the church, who pioneered Scottish Country Dancing in Vancouver. The dedication was by her pupil and friend Mary (Bowden) Wattum. The general reaction towards this rebuild has been positive as St. Andrew's-Wesley United Church again has a reliable instrument of cohesive tone that faithfully supports music and singing in services and has been popular for community concerts and recitals.

In February 2019 the church underwent a major renovation, seismic upgrade, and restoration. The organ was also upgraded in 2021 with Casavant providing a new 4 manual and pedals drawstop console, a new rear gallery Solo division, and facades cleaned and restored. Once again St. Andrew's-Wesley Church moves forward with a renewed building and a fine updated organ.

Present Specification:

(72 stops, 73 ranks)

SWELL		GREAT		CHOIR	
Bourdon < (ext.)	16	Flute	16	Violin Diapason	8
Open Diapason*	8	Violone* (ext.)	16	Stopped Flute*	8
Stopped Diapason*	8	Open Diapason*	8	Viole*	8
Salicional*	8	Doppel Flute*	8	Vox Angelica (tc)	8
Voix Celeste* (tc)	8	Viola*	8	Fugara+	4
Principal+	4	Octave	4	Spire Flute	4
Open Flute	4	Flute*	4	Nazard+	2 2/3
Quint (tc)	2 2/3	Quinte+	2 2/3	Piccolo*	2
Fifteenth	2	Super Octave*	2	Tierce+	1 3/5
Mixture	(1) III rks	Mixture	(I 1/3) IV rks	Mixture+	(1) III rks
Contra Trumpet^	16	Cornet ^	(2 2/3) III rks	Clarinet #	8
Trumpet+	8	Trumpet> (ext)	16	Musette+	8
Oboe*	8	Trumpet>	8	Tremolo	
Clarion+	4	Great Unison Off		Choir Sub	
Chimes <	(21 tubes)			Choir Unison Off	
Tremolo				Choir Super	
Swell Sub					
Swell Unison Off		Subbass	32		
Swell Super		Double Diapason*	16		
	SOLO	Contrabass*	16	Great to Pedal	
		Subbass*	16	Great Super to Pedal	
Diapason**	8	Bourdon (Sw.)	16	Swell to Pedal	
Flute^	8	Violone (Gr.)	16	Swell Super to Pedal	
Bourdon**	8	Octave (ext.)	8	Choir to Pedal	
Viole**	8	Open Wood (ext.)	8	Choir Super to Pedal	
Viole Celeste** (tc)	8	Flute (ext.)	8	Solo to Pedal	
Principal**	4	Bourdon (Sw.)	8	Solo Super to Pedal	
Principal**	2	Viola (Gr.)	8	Swell Sub to Great	
Cornet^	(4) IV rks	Octave	4	Swell to Great	
Cornet** (tc)	(8)V rks	Flute	2	Swell Super to Great	
Trumpet^	8	Mixture	(2) III rks	Choir Sub to Great	
Tuba**	8	Trombone++	16	Choir to Great	
English Horn**	8	Trumpet (Gr.)	16	Choir Super to Great	
Chimes		Contra Trumpet (Sw.)	16	Solo Sub to Great	
Solo Sub		Cornopean (ext.)	8	Solo to Great	
Solo Unison Off		Trumpet (Gr.)	8	Solo Super to Great	
Solo Super		Trumpet (Gr.)	4	Pedal to Great	
#= 1890's S.R. Warren		Clarion (ext.)	4	Swell Sub to Choir	
*= 1910 Casavant opus 390				Swell to Choir	
++=1925 Midmer Organ. Co.				Swell Super to Choir	
<=Moller Organ Co.				Solo Sub to Choir	
>= Austin Organ Co.				Solo to Choir	
+ =1966 Stinkens				Solo Super to Choir	
^=Martin Pasi 1997-2001					
**= Casavant 2021					

ACCESSORIES

Thumb Pistons:

Manual I -

- Swell to Choir
- Choir to Pedal
- 5 Choir Pre-select
- General Previous (page turner)

Manual II -

- Swell to Great
- Choir to Great
- Great to Pedal
- 5 Great Pre-select
- 5 General Pre-select
- 2 General Next (page turner)
- Full Organ

Manual III -

- Swell to Pedal
- 5 Swell Pre-select
- 5 General Pre-select
- 2 General Next (page turner)
- Memory Up
- Memory Down

Manual IV -

- Solo to Pedal
- 5 Solo Pre-select
- 2 General Previous (page turner)

Toe Pistons:

- Swell to Pedal
- Choir to Pedal
- Great to Pedal
- Solo to Pedal
- 5 Pedal Pre-select
- 10 General Pre-select
- General Previous (page turner)
- General Next (page turner)
- Full Organ
- Soubasse 32 hitch-down
- Choir Shutter Pedal
- Swell Shutter Pedal
- Crescendo / Solo Shutter Pedal (gallery part)

100 levels of memory for each of 50 users