

Cover feature

**Kegg Pipe Organ Builders,
Hartville, Ohio
The Sharkey-Corrigan Organ,
Texas A&M International
University, Laredo, Texas**

From the President of the University

Like a birth in the family, a new organ fills the community with expectation, optimism, and joy. Our experience of imagining an organ for Laredo very much mirrored a family's strategy for acquiring progeny: plan and hope. In August 2003, at Texas A&M International University we opened and dedicated to the people of South Texas our new fine and performing arts center. Conceived to offer the best possible venues for music, dance, and drama, the university planners insisted upon including both a recital hall and a theater. From the very first discussions, the recital hall was to have generously live acoustics to ensure that music played in that room, regardless of dynamic, envelop both player and listener in that three-dimensional experience we all cherish in great halls. A large expanse behind and above the stage in the recital hall, conspicuously vacant at the completion of the building, was simply marked "organ" on the architect's rendering.

A few days after the gala opening of the new center, E. H. Corrigan, native Laredoan and longtime patron of the arts in Santa Fe, New York, Washington, San Antonio, and Laredo, called and asked that we talk about how to fill that space. Mr. Corrigan's generous determination to bring to Laredo and South Texas a world-class instrument led first to a national call for proposals, then a contract with Kegg Pipe Organ Builders to build the instrument.

Our vaulted expectations for the organ, both our needs and our wants, established clear indications for design. Since the organ is to inspire and undergird an academic program, we asked that it accommodate repertoire of all periods. Placement in a concert hall would allow for an intimate relationship between the organ and programs of great diversity—choral, band, orchestral. The instrument must be adequate to support a full range of orchestral repertoire. While a tracker would be ideal for organ recitals, we asked for the flexibility of a movable console on the stage below the pipes. A plethora of reeds and solo stops, a solo division under expression, and a full positive division in the forward position rick style provide a variety normally only found on a much larger instrument.

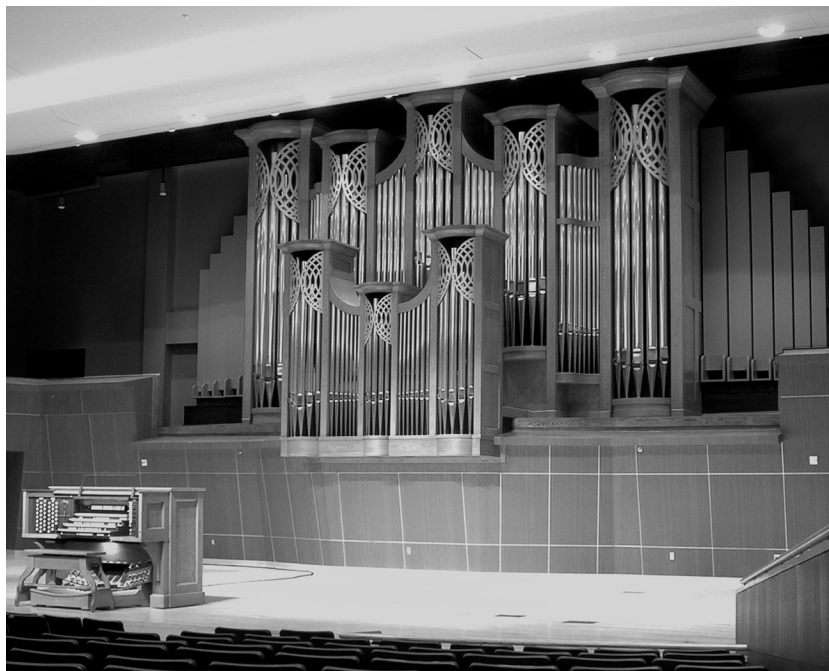
Today, like a family grateful for a trouble-free birth, we recognize that this project was from the first somehow marvelously blessed to be in the hands of Kegg Pipe Organ Builders. "I will be in Laredo on April 24, 2006. The organ will be done by late June," Charles Kegg promised the anxious organ committee in the fall of 2003. And it was. Voicing is rich and full, a strategy to exploit the marvelous acoustics in the hall. Visually, the organ is nothing short of spectacular, the first instrument of its kind built in South Texas and on the Texas-Mexico border.

The dedication recital, by Dr. David Heller of Trinity University, San Antonio, did, in Dr. Heller's words, "put the organ through its paces." A capacity crowd listened attentively and roared to its feet on the last note of Craig Phillips' *Fantasy Toccata*. In addition to numerous solo recitals and concerts with the Laredo Philharmonic Orchestra for this year, we are at present planning an organ symposium for the summer of 2007; the topic: "The Concert Organ: Its Music and Its Performers."

Ray M. Keck, III, PhD

From the Consultant and Artist

Selecting a builder for a new organ in a new concert hall is a rare opportunity for any consultant—and it poses a different set of questions with regard to its tonal design. At the onset of the project,



Texas A&M International University, Laredo, Texas



Dr. David A. Heller (consultant and artist), Dr. Ray M. Keck III (university president), Charles Kegg, and E. H. Corrigan (donor) (photo credit: Ana Clamont)

the following criteria were established for the new organ: 1) It should have the ability to perform a wide range of the solo repertoire for organ; 2) It should work effectively with an orchestra, both as soloist and as a member of the ensemble; 3) It should possess the capability for effective collaborative performances with soloists and vocal and instrumental ensembles; and 4) It should serve effectively as a teaching instrument.

Recognizing that this new installation was for a concert hall and not a church, the desire was expressed for a flexibility that would allow for the performance of non-traditional literature, such as transcriptions and literature from the "concert hall" era of the pipe organ in the earlier 20th century. After careful study and analysis of the proposals submitted, TAMIU awarded the contract to Kegg Pipe Organ Builders of Ohio because of the firm's innovative tonal design, the manner in which the proposal met our criteria, and the potential impact that such an instrument would have on the public. The end result has surpassed our expectations!

Each division of the Sharkey-Corrigan organ has a highly distinctive character. The Great Principal chorus is an evenly-voiced plenum based on 16' pitch and crowned by the Sharp Mixture III. This main body of the division is enhanced with a full complement of 8' registers (in the manner of 19th-century French organ building) and completed with a reed chorus that blends richly into the ensemble. One of the most beautifully voiced stops in the organ is the Harmonic Flute 8', which soars in the upper octaves, making it one of the most effective solo stops in the entire organ.

The Positiv division, cantilevered out

in front of the main case of the organ, is a perfect foil to the Great division with its Principal chorus based on 8' pitch (and of a different tonal character from the Great). Completing the Positiv are two marvelous Baroque style reeds—the Holz Regal 16' (with a darker character, perfect for running bass lines), and a brighter Krummhorn.

The Swell division has a complete array of tonal resources for both the solo literature as well as the accompaniment of vocal and instrumental ensembles, capped off by a powerful reed chorus at 16'-8'-4' pitches. Of special note here is the Vox Humana 8' that makes the performance of Franck's organ works an absolute joy for both the performer as well as the listener.

The Solo division gives this new organ its truly distinctive character with its combination of solo and ensemble registers. The Diapason 8' is especially effective when all of the divisions are coupled together, by reinforcing that particular pitch line. The Tromba chorus at 16'-8'-4' works extremely well in a full-organ registration much like the Bombarde division of a 19th-century French organ. The dark and haunting Clarinet along with the piquant English Horn provide the performer with greater opportunities for solo voices, particularly in transcription literature. One of the unique features of this instrument is the Solo Tuba, which is housed in its own expression box, making it useful not only as a solo stop but as an ensemble register as well, particularly in building up a crescendo to imitate the brass section of an orchestra.

And finally, the Pedal division provides effective support for the entire instrument, featuring an independent

Principal chorus, softer flue stops, string stops to support the orchestral strings of the Solo division, and a full reed chorus based on 32' pitch. Judicious duplexing of manual stops to the pedal provides even greater tonal flexibility for the performer.

As an artist, I can honestly state that this organ is one of the most flexible and musically satisfying instruments I have ever played. Each stop carries its weight, and each stop does what the drawknob tells you. The balance between the divisions is so finely honed that one can select registrations with complete ease. It was a joy to conceive and put together an inaugural recital that combined the works of Hancock, Bach, Franck, Duruflé, and Phillips with more non-traditional repertoire by Lefébure-Wely, Ramón Noble, and Edward Elgar. And if all of that were not enough, the design of the console and the operating system for the combination action (one of the most user-friendly systems I have seen to date) made the entire experience of recital preparation and performance a breeze.

Texas A&M International University and the city of Laredo have a musical instrument in which they can take great pride. It will serve them well in the years to come and help cultivate future generations of organists and organ aficionados.

*Dr. David A. Heller
Trinity University
San Antonio, Texas*

From the Builder

The new Texas A&M International University organ was at once a formidable challenge and a golden opportunity. The challenges were many: to build into a reasonable size instrument a tonal design that could play with conviction organ literature of all styles, accompany great choral works, and also crown the resident Laredo Philharmonic Orchestra in romantic splendor. Dr. Ray Keck, university president, organist, project lightning rod, and Bach aficionado, also made known his desire for accurate renderings of Bach. All this was to be done with an instrument that is not exceptionally large and with some significant space limitations. We are delighted to have been chosen for this landmark instrument.

Our tonal design was based on the simple fact that this was to be the only instrument on campus (indeed the only concert-size organ in a large geographical area), and needed to be used for teaching, practice, recital, and with orchestra. It needed to have a full spectrum of dynamic range from very delicate to confronting a full orchestra—and win. For practice and teaching, the majority of voices needed to speak at comfortable volume levels that would focus on color and deliberately counteract aural fatigue.

In addressing these needs, we started with four independent Principal choruses, each with its own character and purpose that provide proper polyphonic clarity. The articulation is not pronounced, but precise speech is always apparent. The Great chorus is full and noble. The Positiv is light and delightful, equal in impact to the Great. The Swell is richer than the Great with its slotted 8' and deeply textured Plein Jeu. The glory of these choruses is that Bach, Buxtehude and Bruhns are sheer delight, and it is not until six or seven preludes and fugues later that the organist realizes that not even a single unison coupler has been touched! When the couplers are engaged, the new organ at TAMIU begins a remarkable transformation. The same stops that gave such clear distinction to divisions in the Baroque literature now become contributors to a more global full organ sound. Beginning with the softest Flauto Dolce it is possible to build a seamless crescendo to full organ that is an intricate fabric of sound, at once cohesive and fabulously rich in texture and color.

Each stop in the organ does exactly



Console



Continuo console



Continuo console

what one would expect and need it to do, but there are several specific tonal features that will enjoy further exploration here. The Great has two reed choruses. The Trompetes are light and are intended for early works where the chorus reeds are subordinate to the flues. The Tromba chorus is intended for those works where the reeds must command the respect of the principals and dominate them. For those in-between works, the Tromba chorus is located in the Solo box such that they can be reined in as required.

There are three Cornets in the organ. The Great has a Principal Cornet that is commanding. Built *décomposé*, it can be

tailored. The Positiv Cornet is of lighter principal character and has a flatted seventh added to the normal third and fifth, giving the stop a lovely edge that is very distinct. The Swell Cornet is of flutes and is serenely gentle.

The Solo Diapason IV 8' is a collection of unenclosed principal stops from the Great and Pedal, all playing at 8' pitch. This quartet of 8' principals gives the organ a velvet Diapason line. The stops are drawn from the Great Principal, Great Octave, Pedal Octave and Pedal Choralbass.

The Tuba is located in the very heart of the organ case, in its own swell box. On 18" wind, this stop can solo above

the full ensemble or with shade control can be subtly brought into the full ensemble, blending easily with it and expanding it horizontally.

The case design here presented a particular challenge. The TAMIU organ is located in a low balcony above the hall stage. There is not a lot of height to allow the organ to visually soar. The solution was to build a Rückpositiv that is lowered into the back stage wall. This has the visual effect of anchoring the organ to the stage in addition to providing the classical forward position for the division. The main case is considerably wider than it is high. Organ cases are happiest when their proportions are as pipes: tall and slender. This was not possible here, and much care was taken to give the case as much verticality as possible. The lowered Positiv case helps with this. The center three towers of the main case stand forward of the side Pedal towers. The change of depth is accomplished as the outside pipe flats curve. The result is very satisfying in the room.

I approach every organ in a comprehensive manner. Placement of divisions within the room and in relation to each other is as important as scaling and voicing. The case design is a classic five tower design plus Positiv with a contemporary flair. The gilded pipe shades are a stylized interpretation of the university seal, which includes a globe showing the Western hemisphere. The internal layout has the Great high and in the center. The Swell is behind it. The Pedal upper work is below the Great. The Positiv is below and forward of the Great. Thus the main manual divisions are centered in the hall with their physical relationship matching their musical relationship. This enhances polyphonic music when the organ is played uncoupled and blends the divisions together when the divisions are combined. The Solo division is in the right side of the case and the Pedal basses are in the left side. For those that are interested in unusual pipe design, the 32' Trombone is large scale and is built with Haskell bass pipes, which are not common when used with reeds. They save considerable lateral space over mitering when height is severely restricted.

Working with the TAMIU staff could not have been easier or more delightful. We are indebted to Dr. Ray Keck, university president, who envisioned the instrument from the start and drove the project; Dr. David Heller, consultant and artist of the opening concert, for his thoughtful help and encouragement; physical plant manager Richard Gentry for his instant and complete help during installation; and of course to E. H. Corrigan for his generous funding of the entire project. The organ bears the name of Sharkey-Corrigan in memory of Mr. Corrigan's mother.

My personal thanks also to the Kegg staff including Fred Bahr, Phil Brown, Joyce Harper, Mike Carden, Phil Laakso, Walt Schwabe, Rick Schwabe, and Tom McKnight. In addition to these people being the finest craftspeople I know, they are also the finest friends.

*Charles Kegg
Kegg Pipe Organ Builders*

Kegg Pipe Organ Builders
Texas A&M International University,
Laredo, Texas
52 stops, 69 ranks, 4003 pipes

GREAT Manual II (3.5" wp)

- 16' Violone
- 8' Principal
- 8' Violone (ext)
- 8' Rohrflute
- 8' Harmonic Flute
- 4' Octave
- 4' Spitzflute
- 2½' Twelfth
- 2' Fifteenth
- 1½' Seventeenth
- 1½' Full Mixture IV
- ¾' Sharp Mixture III
- 16' Contra Trompete
- 8' Trompete (ext)
- Tremulant
- 16' Tromba (Solo)
- 8' Tromba (Solo)
- 4' Clarion (Solo)
- Zimbelstern (5 handbells, adjustable speed, volume and delay)

CONTINUO manual II

- (duplexed from Positiv)
- 8' Gedeckt
- 4' Koppelflute
- 2' Flute
- 2' Principal
- 1½' Quinte

This division also has its own small one-manual console including blower control and transposer switch that will lower the played pitch by one half-step for use with historical instruments. This console may be used in place of the large main console for chamber work.

SWELL Manual III (4" wp)

- 16' Bourdon (metal)
- 8' Principal
- 8' Bourdon (ext)
- 8' Salicional
- 8' Voix Celeste
- 8' Flauto Dolce (Solo)
- 8' Flute Celeste (Solo)
- 4' Octave
- 4' Flute
- 2½' Nazard
- 2' Piccolo
- 1½' Tierce
- 2' Plein Jeu V
- 16' Basson
- 8' Trompette
- 8' Hautbois (ext)
- 8' Vox Humana
- 4' Clairon
- Tremulant
- Swell 16-UO-4

POSITIV Manual I (2.75" wp)

- 8' Principal
- 8' Gedeckt (wood)
- 4' Octave
- 4' Koppelflute
- 2½' Quinte TC (from 1½')
- 2' Octave
- 1½' Quinte
- Sesquialtera II-III
- 1' Mixture IV
- 16' Holz Regal
- 8' Krummhorn
- Tremulant
- Positiv 16-UO-4

SOLO Manual IV (5" wp)

- 8' Solo Diapason IV*
- 8' Gamba
- 8' Gamba Celeste
- 8' Flauto Dolce
- 8' Flute Celeste TC
- 8' Clarinet
- 8' English Horn
- Tremulant
- 16' Tuba TC (ext)
- 8' Tuba (18" wp, separate enclosure)
- 4' Tuba (ext)
- 16' Tromba
- 8' Tromba (ext)
- 4' Clarion

*From Great 8' Principal, 4' Octave, Pedal 8' Octave, 4' Choralbass

PEDAL (5" wp)

- 32' Subbass (56 pipes)
- 16' Open Diapason (wood)
- 16' Violone (Gt)
- 16' Subbass (ext)
- 16' Viole (44 pipes)
- 16' Bourdon (Sw)
- 8' Octave
- 8' Violone (Gt)
- 8' Subbass (ext)
- 8' Viole (ext)
- 8' Bourdon (Sw)
- 4' Choralbass
- 4' Cantus Flute (Gt Harm Fl)
- 2½' Mixture IV
- 32' Trombone (full length, 68 pipes)
- 32' Harmonics (derived)
- 16' Trombone (ext)
- 16' Trompete (Gt)
- 16' Basson (Sw)
- 8' Trombone (ext)
- 8' Trompete (Gt)
- 4' Clarion (ext)
- 4' Clarinet (Solo)
- 4' Krummhorn (Pos)

Inter-manual couplers

Great to Pedal 8, 4
Swell to Pedal 8, 4
Positiv to Pedal 8, 4
Solo to Pedal 8, 4

Swell to Great 16, 8, 4
Positiv to Great 8
Solo to Great 16, 8, 4

Solo to Swell 8

Swell to Positiv 16, 8, 4
Solo to Positiv 8

Great / Positiv Transfer (including keys, pistons and couplers)
All Swells to Swell

Photos by Charles Kegg unless otherwise indicated.