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The University of Richmond Department of Music Celebrates the 50th Anniversary of the Rudolf von Beckerath Organ

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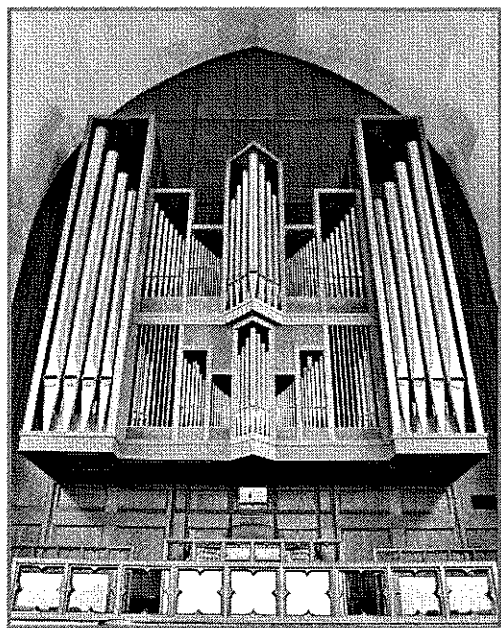
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**THE UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND
DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC**

*Celebrates the
50th Anniversary of the
Rudolf von Beckerath Organ*



ORGANISTS
Michael Simpson
Thom Robertson
Bruce Stevens

**February 10, 2012
7:30 p.m.
CANNON MEMORIAL CHAPEL**

The organ is best heard in the front half of the Chapel.

— Please turn off all electronic devices —



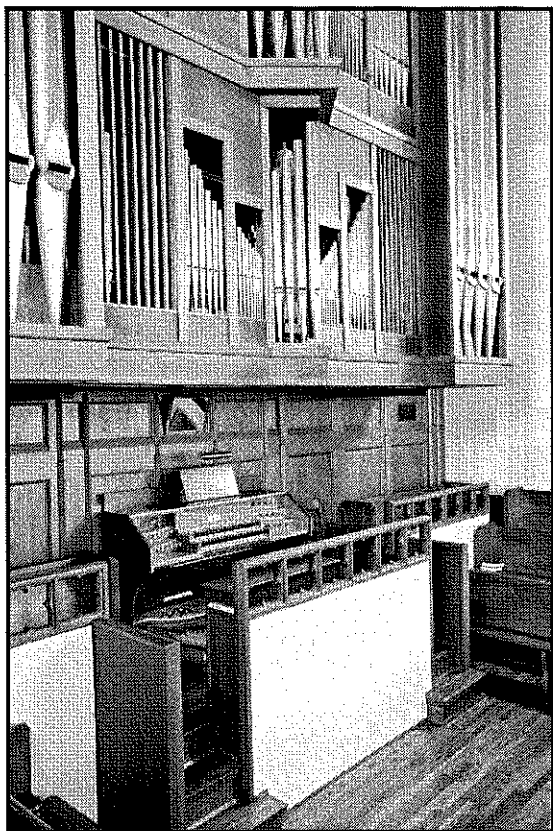
Please join us again at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, March 16, when Boyd Jones, Professor of Organ at Stetson University (home of our Beckerath's sister organ: see story following), performs in Cannon Memorial Chapel—sponsored by the Richmond Chapter of the American Guild of Organists.

About the Artists

MICHAEL SIMPSON (R '74) received a B.A. degree with honors in music from the University of Richmond, where he studied organ with Suzanne Kidd Bunting and Bruce Stevens. For more than 30 years, he was Minister of Music at Ginter Park Baptist Church in Richmond. From 2006 until 2011, he was Associate Music Director at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Richmond. Currently organist at Second Presbyterian Church in Richmond, he is also Director of the Richmond Renaissance Singers and Associate Director and Accompanist for the Richmond Symphony Chorus.

THOM ROBERTSON (R '69) is Director of Music at Grace Episcopal Church in Alexandria, Virginia, where he directs four choirs and administers a concert series. He holds a B.A. degree from Richmond, where he studied organ with Suzanne Kidd Bunting, and a Master of Sacred Music degree from Southern Methodist University in Dallas, where he was a student of Robert Anderson. Prior to his position at Grace Church, he held full-time church positions in Hampton and Danville, Virginia, Amarillo, Texas, and St. Paul, Minnesota. President of the Association of Anglican Musicians from 1996 to 1998, Thom has also taught organ, harpsichord, and studio piano as Adjunct Professor at West Texas A & M University in Canyon, and was Principal Organist and Harpsichordist for the Amarillo Symphony. He is serving the second year of his term as Sub-Dean of the Northern Virginia Chapter of the American Guild of Organists.

BRUCE STEVENS (R '69) has performed many organ concerts across the United States and in Europe, and he frequently plays for the annual national conventions of the Organ Historical Society. Additionally, he has performed for regional conventions of the American Guild of Organists and the national convention of the American Institute of Organbuilders. After receiving degrees in music from Richmond, where he studied organ with Suzanne Kidd Bunting, and the University of Illinois, where he was a student of Jerald Hamilton, he moved to Europe for an extended period of study, first in Denmark and then in Vienna, where he was a student of the legendary Anton Heiller for several years. He was a finalist in the American Guild of Organists Organ Playing Competition, as well as in other national competitions held in Los Angeles and Fort Wayne. Active as a recording artist, he has recorded seven discs for Raven Recordings. His performances have been broadcast over American Public Media, on *Performance Today* and numerous times on *Pipedreams*. Mr. Stevens has been organist at Second Presbyterian Church and St. James's Episcopal Church. He is currently engaged in performing recitals, preparing recordings, teaching at Richmond as adjunct instructor in organ, and directing annual Historic Organ Study Tours (HOST), which he founded to further the study of historic organs in Europe and elsewhere.



History of the University's Beckerath

On this same Friday evening in 1962, 50 years ago, Cannon Memorial Chapel was packed with an excited and slightly apprehensive, standing-room-only crowd of curious Richmonders who had come to see and hear the strange, new German pipe organ recently erected on the front wall. The event was also a momentous one for the University, because this was the first pipe organ on campus; up until then, the Chapel contained only a Hammond electronic organ-like device installed in 1936.

For central Virginia's citizens, whose concept of the pipe organ consisted of an instrument that was mostly hidden away in a separate room from the church and whose sounds oozed out of a discrete opening somewhere in the church wall, this new organ was revolutionary...and maybe just a little frightening. What would this imposing thing sound like? Would it blow us out of the building? After all, it was made in Hamburg, Germany!

To their delight, Prof. Robert Noehren's opening notes of the Buxtehude Praeludium in G Minor (the opening work tonight) proved that this German Baroque-style organ was not only *not* too loud, it was also crystal clear, incisive, full of personality, and downright beautiful, aiding and abetting the sonic and rhythmic aspects of the music like no other organ around here could. How wonderful! After playing several additional major works by Buxtehude and J. S. Bach, Noehren continued the program with a wide variety of works by various composers and from different periods of music. This demonstrated that the instrument, although specifically designed to suit the works of German composers of the Baroque era, could also present works from other eras and national styles convincingly and, indeed, compellingly. Noehren's splendid performances that evening of pieces by Brahms, Saint-Saëns, Franck, Schumann, Schroeder, and Liszt left no doubt that this organ, although perfect for only one major segment of the organ repertoire, was capable of far more than its limited tonal palette might suggest.

Despite its large appearance, the instrument with its two manual divisions, one pedal division, and 26 stops, is actually quite modest in size: a church this size would be expected to have an organ of at least three-manuals and over 40 stops. Limited funds prevented the organ from being larger. Only \$30,000 was available for the organ project, which in 1958, Dr. John White, Music Department Chairman, and Dr. George Modlin, University President, had determined was a priority. When it came time to select the builder of the new organ, Dr. White led the committee to the then-unknown German organbuilder Rudolf von Beckerath, whose Hamburg shop had previously built only one instrument for America—a magnificent four-manual organ in Trinity Lutheran Church, Cleveland. Signing the contract with this foreign company was made more enticing by the fact that a similar size organ from an American firm would have cost significantly more, due to the favorable exchange rate between the dollar and the German mark. Another push came from the fact that Stetson University, a Baptist school in Florida, was negotiating with Beckerath for an organ.

This helped make the risk seem manageable to the Baptist officials at Richmond. As it turned out, the "risk" was nonexistent, and the acquisition was to be one of the more inspired investments the University has made: today, a similar organ costs in the million-dollar range.

The pieces were shipped to the United States in 36 crates, and three workers arrived from Hamburg to install the instrument over the course of nine weeks, under the guidance of Richmond's music director, Dr. John White, and faculty organist Suzanne Kidd Bunting. Von Beckerath later traveled to Richmond to supervise the final installation and to voice the pipes.

Of course, the ultimate success and worth of the Beckerath organ has little to do with economics and everything to do with its lasting qualities and its usefulness for facilitating organists and their performances. In the last 50 years, the instrument, due to its sensitive mechanical action, has provided countless organ students the means to practice and learn such artistic playing essentials as finely honed rhythmic control, use of precise articulations between notes, and subtlety of touch—all things that would have been impossible on any 1961 American-built organ. Moreover, hundreds of organists have performed on the Beckerath for concerts and services, including some of the world's leading concert artists. Audiences and congregations have been inspired by the music made on the instrument at innumerable events. It would be impossible to quantify the Beckerath organ's benefits, but they are legion.

A strong selling point for such high quality, mechanical action organs during the past 50 years has been "It will last 100 years." Now that the Beckerath organ is halfway there, we anticipate another glorious 50 years for it. As Suzanne Bunting has written, "It will long remain a monument to good planning, skillful craftsmanship, and high standards of musical taste."

Happy 50th Anniversary!

— Bruce Stevens

Rudolf von Beckerath Organ

1961

Cannon Memorial Chapel • University of Richmond

I. Hauptwerk	II. Positiv	Pedal	Couplers
Quintadena 16'	Holzgedackt 8'	Prinzival 16'	Pos/Hw
Prinzival 8'	Prinzival 4'	Metallflöte 8'	Hw/Ped
Rohrflöte 8'	Rohrflöte 4'	Oktave 4'	Pos/Ped
Oktave 4'	Oktave 2'	Nachthorn 2'	
Spielflöte 4'	Oktave 1'	Rauschpfeife 3 fach	Mechanical
Nasat 2-2/3'	Sesquialter 2 fach	Mixtur 5 fach	key action
Flachflöte 2'	Scharf 3-4 fach	Fagott 16'	
Mixture 4-6 fach	Bärpfeife 8'	Trompete 8'	Mechanical
Trompete 8'	Tremolo	Schalmei 4'	stop action