

# Casavant Frères



## ***Redlands, California – University of Redlands – Memorial Chapel***

Four manuals and pedals, 53 stops, 61 ranks  
Detached movable drawknob console <sup>1</sup>, compass 61/32  
Electro-pneumatic action  
Opus 1230  
1927/ 2003  
Photograph: Béla Fehrer

The initial contact from the University of Redlands contained in the correspondence file for this instrument is a letter dated September 27, 1926 from the Business Manager of the University, Mr. George P. Cortner. His description of the city certainly would have pleased the local chamber of commerce when he describes Redlands as a “most beautiful city of fifteen thousand, located sixty-eight miles east of Los Angeles. For years it has been known not only for its beauty but also for its culture. It is a music-loving city.”

He explained that the University was building a chapel to seat fifteen hundred people and that they were interested in a “four manual organ including harp, chimes and probably (an) echo organ”. This certainly left the design concept wide open to the builder, however his comments regarding what they did not want are perhaps more revealing about the general design of organs in the late 1920’s.

The organ will be used strictly for chapel purposes and occasional for high-class recitals. We do not care for a great many of accessories such as go with a moving picture organ. We wish an organ of

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<sup>1</sup> The original Casavant console was replaced in 1992 by a new four manual console built by Reuter.

sufficient volume to fill our auditorium. We are very anxious as to the quality of the tone of same. We wish excluded any unification on (the) organ purchased as we wish every pipe to answer its specific purpose and not be used for three or four different stops.

The response from Casavant came from Mr. Stephen Stoot, who would soon become the Tonal Director of the firm. Since it was Casavant's general practice to build instruments with a more classical approach to organ design, the request to avoid unnecessary unification and theatre organ accessories was immediately understood and appreciated. Mr. Stoot prepared a specification for a four manual organ of fifty-eight ranks distributed over Great, Swell, Choir and Solo divisions. This specification was sent to Professor Charles Howard Marsh who was on sabbatical in Paris studying with Marcel Dupré. In a letter of January 4, 1927 Mr. March wrote to Mr. Stoot,

I have your letter of December 18th enclosing (the) specification for the proposed organ at Redlands. Your statement that you seem likely to get the contract gives me great joy. In fact, I have just written Mr. Cortner the strongest letter I can, urging him by all means to accept your proposition, which I honestly believe to be superior to anything he could get for the money in the U.S. I have tried to explain to him the superiority of the Casavant materials, workmanship and voicing over all American makers with the possible exception of Skinner—and inasmuch as you are offering a better balanced organ than Skinner I hope the University will follow my advice and give you the contract.

The addition of a harp stop would be very simple if Mr. Cortner wishes it. There is one suggestion I would like to make and that is the addition of a French Horn to the Solo... I showed this specification to M. Marcel Dupré, with whom I am studying this year and he spoke very highly of your work and his friendship with members of your firm, and confirmed my own beliefs in the superior quality of the Casavant organ. I asked him about the addition of a French Horn and he thinks the idea a good one and he assured me that you could build a French Horn very similar and just as effective as the French Horn that Skinner builds. I have also talked with M. Dupré about the style of the console and he thinks as I do, the French style of stop-knobs in steps or terraces are preferable. I am suggesting this to Mr. Cortner also.

Very few modifications were made to the original specification drawn up by Mr. Stoot. The French Horn was included and another notable change was to place the Great division under expression. This followed a request from Mr. Cortner who wrote, "Most of the organs being installed in Southern California at the present are installed behind shutters". The original console was built in the "English style" following consideration that this was the preference of most organists at that time.

On February 11, 1928, following completion of the instrument in Redlands, Mr. Cortner wrote, "We wish to express to you our appreciation for the quality of the instrument which, we feel, in every sense of the word, is a first class organ." In November of the same year Arthur Poister, then University Organist, expressed his appreciation in the following way, "I am enjoying tremendously the greatness and the finesse of this lovely instrument."

Opus 1230 was the third, and largest Casavant organ installed in California in 1927 when it was finished. Pietro A. Yon, concert organist, composer and Vatican organist played the opening recital on February 28, 1928. The organ, which was highly praised by Ernest M. Skinner during a trip to California in 1929, has been played by major concert artists of the world, including E. Power Biggs, Virgil Fox and Clarence Madder, to name three. Throughout seven decades the instrument was used for teaching, recitals and heard at all virtually major university events including the popular Feast of Lights and the Redlands Organ Festival.

In 2001 the organ was returned to Casavant Frères while Memorial Chapel underwent a major restoration. While in St. Hyacinthe, more than seventy years of accumulated dust and dirt was removed, the playing mechanism was renewed and many of the tonal changes made after 1927, during times when the original sound of the organ was no longer in vogue, were reversed.

Even though Claver and Samuel Casavant were in their seventies when this organ was built, they remained actively involved in the work of the company during the course of its original construction. Our involvement with an organ built by our founders more than 75 years ago reinforced our already strong appreciation for these extraordinary individuals and their life's work. That the organ came back to St. Hyacinthe and was "re-assembled" in the same workshop it left in 1927 on its initial journey to California is all the more remarkable in an age when far too many objects are considered disposable. We are grateful to the University of Redlands for its appreciation for Opus 1230 and their decision to ensure its continued service to the university and community through the restoration work completed in 2003.

Our special thanks to the people of Casavant Frères who build instruments with majestic sound and restore them to their original splendor. We are the beneficiaries of their artistic integrity and their painstaking care.

—James R. Appleton, President (from the Organ Rededication Program)

See the Organ Programs page of the Archive section of the website for a copy of the Opening Recital played by Pietro Yon on February 28, 1928.

<b>Great Organ</b>		<b>Swell Organ</b>	
Double Open Diapason	16	Bourdon	16
Open Diapason No. 1	8	Open Diapason	8
Open Diapason No. 2	8	Clarabella	8
Violin Diapason	8	Stopped Diapason	8
Hohl Flöte	8	Viola di Gamba	8
Gemshorn	8	Voix Céleste (CC)	8
Octave	4	AEoline	8
Harmonic Flute	4	Principal	4
Twelfth	2-2/3	Flauto traverso	4
Fifteenth	2	Piccolo	2
Mixture V	2	Cornet harmonique II <sup>1</sup>	2-2/3
Contra Trombone	16	Plein-jeu V <sup>1</sup>	2
Tromba	8	Double Trumpet	16
Clarion	4	Trumpet	8
Chimes (Choir)		Oboe	8
		Vox humana	8
		Clarion	4
		Chimes (Choir)	
		Harp (Choir)	
		Tremulant	
<b>Choir Organ</b>		<b>Pedal Organ</b>	
Double Dulciana	16	Double Open Diapason (Ext.) <sup>2</sup>	32
Open Diapason	8	Bourdon <sup>3</sup>	32
Melodia	8	Open Diapason	16
Dulciana	8	Violone	16
Unda Maris (CC)	8	Subbass	16
Violina	4	Double Dulciana (Choir)	16
Lieblich Flöte	4	Gedeckt (Swell)	16
Flageolet	2	Octave (Ext. Open Diapason)	8
Clarinet	8	Violone (Ext.)	8
Chimes <sup>3</sup>		Subbass (Ext.)	8
Harp <sup>3</sup>		Stopped Flute (Ext. Subbass)	4
Celesta <sup>3</sup>		Bombarde (Ext.)	32
Tremulant		Bombarde	16
		Bombarde (Ext.)	8
		Harp (Choir)	
		Chimes (Choir)	
<b>Solo Organ</b>			
Stentorphone	8		
Gross Flöte	8		
Viole d'Orchestre	8		
Viole Céleste (CC)	8		
Fugara	4		
Cor Anglais	8		
Orchestral Oboe	8		
Tuba Mirabilis	8		
French Horn	8		
Tremulant			

<sup>1</sup> The original Swell mixture was a Cornet V, which has been reconstituted into a Cornet harmonique II and Plein-jeu V

<sup>2</sup> Seven stopped pipes and five open pipes

<sup>3</sup> Digital