

# Casavant Frères

## ***The Résonance Concept***

The *résonance* is a historical concept that Casavant reintroduced in the instrument built for [Bel Air Presbyterian Church in Los Angeles, California](#) in 1991<sup>1</sup>. The basic principle is to expand the normal pedal compass upwards to manual compass in order to provide a division that is used to increase the resources and power of an instrument. In the overall tonal architecture of an organ this division becomes a kind of grand, Grand Orgue. While its use is most prevalent in instruments installed in buildings with a large seating capacity or rooms containing a large cubic volume<sup>2</sup>, it was also used as early as 1985 in the instrument for the University of Nebraska at Omaha on a smaller scale to provide additional resources on third, coupling manual<sup>3</sup>.

It is obvious that the Pedal division of an organ is usually the largest and most expensive part of an instrument, and although its use is extremely important to the instrument as a whole, the use is usually constrained to playing single bass notes. Adding treble pipes from note 33 to note 61 costs only a small fraction of the price of the first 32 notes but adds a whole new dimension to an organ by providing a powerful manual ensemble for accompanying large crowds and solemn celebrations.

The historical basis of the *Résonance* concept is found in the organ built by a monk, Brother Jean-Esprit Isnard in 1772-1773 for the Basilica of Saint-Maximin-la-Sainte-Baume. In the “*Devis d’un orgue pour le couvent royal de Saint-Maximin*” he wrote:

“The first keyboard is that of the Positif, the second is for the Great, the third is the *Résonance* keyboard which, according to the organist’s wish, will go thoroughly into the Great and Positif and will be playable separately with hands and feet.”

The third keyboard had a 49-note compass with the following specification:

Flûte 16  
Flûte 8  
Flûte 4  
Dessus de Flûte 8  
Dessus de Cornet V  
Dessus de Trompette en chamade 8  
Bombarde 16  
1<sup>ère</sup> Trompette 8  
2<sup>ème</sup> Trompette 8  
Clairon 4

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<sup>1</sup> This instrument was damaged in the 1994 Northridge earthquake and was subsequently significantly altered and therefore no longer exists as a Casavant organ.

<sup>2</sup> See the Community of Christ Headquarters-Temple Sanctuary in Independence, Missouri, [Opus 3700](#)

<sup>3</sup> See also Grace Episcopal Church in Newark, New Jersey, Opus 3676

This kind of disposition is unique not only in France but also in the world, although a few organ builders, especially in Germany—Schmidt for example, have sometimes used a manual as a complement of the Pedal under the name *Kleinpedal*.

See also: Vallotton, Pierre, “On the Usefulness of the Résonance Manual,”  
*ISO Information*, No. 31, May 1990, pp 29-33.

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