

## SPRING MEETING 2010

# TOULOUSE

Due to the geographical expanse of the European Chapter (all of continental Europe plus the British Isles) it has become a tradition to hold only one general meeting per year. This 'meeting' generally lasts for 5 days and is held in a different cultural centre each time. Past meetings have been in London, Paris, Dresden, and Milan for example. This year's invitation was to Toulouse in Southern France; with its rich stores of historic classic and romantic, but also modern instruments, a truly magnetic location for organists from literally all over the world.

As usual the meeting opened with a welcoming banquet at the Grand Hotel d'Orleans, which was the 'convention hotel' for the duration. A variety of delicacies including fine wines was the first hint at the local cuisine in store. A total of 46 participants from 5 European countries, Canada, the US, and Australia (!) took part in the event.



The opening day heralded four romantic organs from different builders: Cavallé-Coll (1864) in L'Eglise de Gésu, Puget (1888/2009) in Notre Dame de la Dalbade, Poirier & Lieberknecht (1863) in Notre Dame de la Daurade, and Daublaine & Callinet (1845/2005) in St. Nicolas. The one modern instrument of the day (Temple du Salin, Daldosso, 2005) is notable first of all in that it stands behind a façade by Puget from 1922. Secondly, it is the only instrument in Toulouse with a modern electronic combination action, which makes

it attractive and important for the Conservatory students playing larger works! Notice that two of the romantic instruments were recently restored. It must be said that the presenters of all instruments from start to finish were marvellously talented colleagues. The organs in Gésu, Salin and Dalbade were superbly demonstrated by Jean-Baptiste Dupont with works by Brahms (Herzliebster Jesu), Liszt (BACH), Schumann (canonical studies 4 and 5), and exciting improvisations. He finished his studies in Toulouse and Paris including improvisation with Olivier Latry and Frédéric Blanc and has taken numerous prizes in improvisation competitions. In Daurade chapter member Jens Korndoerfer, a doctoral candidate at McGill University, put the instrument through its paces with two movements by Francois Couperin, the Sortie in E-flat by Lefébure-Wély and a captivating impressionistic "Oriental Sketch" by Arthur Foote. Matthieu de Miguel, titular organist at St Nicolas, knew how to put his instrument in a good light and performed Guilman's "Tempo di Minuetto, op. 45, and the Intermezzo from Widor VI. After the introductions of these and all other organs on the agenda, the participants were invited to play themselves. The repertoire in the course of the week was kaleidoscopic ranging from Couperin, Bach (Trio Sonatas and Chorale Preludes) to Franck (P,F, & V, Chorales),

Widor, Vierne, Dupré and published and unpublished works of composers still living. All of the churches in Toulouse on this day were within walking distance of the hotel.

On Wednesday a bus was necessary to reach destinations outside of the city, which turned out to be very fortunate, since it rained persistently on this day. Not even the bad weather could detract from the stunning impression made by the organ in Cintegabelle. Starting as an instrument by Mouchereau from 1741, it was rebuilt several times but finally restored to its original state in 1989 by Boisseau and Cattiaux. The titular organist Emmanuel Schublin briefly introduced the instrument before member Jennifer Chou masterfully interpreted six movements from the Suite du 7me ton by Jacques Boyvin and Dandrieu's Offertoire sur "O filii et filiae". After completing degrees in her native Hong Kong, Jennifer was enrolled at Northwestern University in Chicago before going to Paris and later to Toulouse for further studies. She joined the European Chapter as a student member and is now living and working in Australia. The next instrument was the 3-manual romantic organ in the St Volusien Abbey Church in Foix built by Fermis in 1869. The latest restoration was completed in 2007. The titular emeritus Henri Harlé described the instrument before his successor Christiane van Gorp, originally from Antwerp, Belgium, gave a rousing rendition of Flor Peeters' Toccata on *Ave maris stella*. Since she had studied with Peeters, this was most certainly an authentic interpretation. Advance

arrangements included a rustic but tasty meal in the only restaurant in this idyllic town big enough for the whole group. Unfortunately the rain detracted from the otherwise inspiring landscape on the journey to the next unique attraction, a German romantic organ in the middle of the French countryside. Gebrüder Link from southern Germany completed a 3-manual, 40-stop instrument for the Cathedral in Mirepoix in 1891. Its stoplist represents a synthesis of French and German aesthetics in that period of organ building. The instrument managed to avoid



any modifications in the course of time. This was the first instrument that Jean-Claude Guidarini demonstrated for the group. Guidarini is a noted expert on the organ scene in the Toulouse area, brilliant improviser, and professor for organ at the conservatory. He performed a piece by Böely and several movements of an Organ Mass from the period using themes from Verdi operas.

That evening saw a concert performance by chapter member Renée Ann Louprette, now organist at St. Ignatius Loyola, New York, and Professor of Organ at Montclair State University, New Jersey. She performed three settings of the chorale "Christ lag in Todesbanden" and the Prelude and Fugue in b minor, all by J.S. Bach, on the Jürgen Ahrend organ of 1981 in the Museum-Church of the Augustinians back in Toulouse. The program was appropriately chosen for this 3-manual, 33-stop North-German-Baroque instrument. Like Jennifer Chou, Renée also joined the European Chapter while studying in France. Her interpretation was stylistically and tastefully exquisite.

Thursday morning before the museum opened the participants were enthralled by the demonstration of the Ahrend organ by Jan Willem Jansens, titular organist and Professor of Organ. He first played a concert program with works



by Stephani, Weckmann, and an anonymous chorale prelude, concluding with Bach's Toccata, Adagio, and Fugue in C-major. He then proceeded to demonstrate stops individually with an impeccable improvisation in early baroque style easily equal to many compositions by lesser known composers of the period. This achievement was only heightened by the inherent beauty of the stops themselves. After a coffee break the rest of the forenoon was reserved for the Cathedral of St. Steven and the adjoining Chapel of St. Anne. Cathedral music director Fr. Pierre- Marie

Barthez related a brief but thorough history of the church and the organ before rendering Ave maris stella by de Grigny and Vivaldi-Bach a minor Concerto. Cavallé-Coll completely rebuilt the instrument in 1848 preserving a few old stops dating from 1612/1650. In 1970 the instrument was in very bad shape. The organbuilding firm of Kern (Alsace) was entrusted with a complete rebuild (47/IV) integrating historical elements. As mentioned in the handout, this instrument is known for its "poetry and brilliance". When the participants were finished trying out this magnificent instrument there was only little time for the one manual, 18 stop Tamburini (1980) in the chapel. This modern instrument is a somewhat expanded style copy of Italian Renaissance instruments including divided manual (treble/bass) and Voce Umana (Principal celeste). Thus in Toulouse, it is possible to hear Ricercari, Canzone and other Toccatas by Frescobaldi, Rossi, Zipoli, and many other Italian composers in an authentic timbre. After lunch Jean-Claude Guidarini was proud to present the organ in Notre Dame du Taur where he is titular organist. This organ (40/III) was built by Puget in 1878 and inaugurated in 1880 by Alexandre Guilmant. It was the most modern instrument in Toulouse at the time and is today practically in original condition. The dark, intense solo colors (Harmonic flute, Clarinet) and dazzling tutti testify that the quality of Puget was at least equal to his more famous colleague Cavallé-Coll! When asked what he would be playing, Mssr. Guidarini just shrugged his shoulders before he disappeared to the loft. He then proceeded to play an improvisation utilizing a veritable arsenal of technique and imagination and showcasing the instrument in all of its glorious facets. Hats off, ladies and gentlemen!

The next two organs are in the experienced hands of Michel Bouvard and his wife. Yasuko Uyama-Bouvard, titular organist of St Pierre des Chartreux presented her French classic organ (51/IV) with excerpts from Guilain's Deuxième Suite and Exultet Coelum by Titelouze. The oldest parts of the organ are from 1677. After no less than 7 alterations, including a move from the Jacobins church to its present location, the organ was completely rebuilt by Gerhard Grenzing in 1982 respecting and incorporating the preexisting elements. Before Michel Bouvard, titular organist at St Sernin, consummately demonstrated the renowned organ there, a student participant presented a brief lecture. In conjunction with his studies with Prof. Renée Ann Louprette at Montclair college Marcin Pekala had prepared a paper concerning the Basilica of St Sernin (architecture), the magnificent Cavallé-Coll organ there (partly dating from 1674), and the interrelationship with the composition of Widor's Symphonie Romane. The synthesis of these factors were then made apparent with Bouvard's performance of two movements from this glorious work. His demonstration also

included the Adagio from Vierne's 3<sup>rd</sup> Symphonie and the Franck a-minor chorale. The demonstration was a memorable musical and sonic experience. Although Mssr. Bouvard had to leave for a rehearsal of Saint-Säens Organ Symphony with the Orchestra, the participants were invited to stay and play on the organ as long as they liked with the assistant organist, Jean-Baptiste Dupont, who had begun the week with the group.

The final day started with an excursion to the UNESCO World Heritage medieval walled city of Carcassone. We were met in the lower city, whose historic name is actually Bastide Saint Louis, by the titular organist Jacques Brugoux and a representative from city hall. The town has two noteworthy instruments: a Puget (46/III) from 1875 in St Vincent and a Cavallé-Coll (42/III) from 1860 in the Cathedral of St Michel. Yet another colleague who joined the Chapter as a student member, Charlotte Møller, graciously demonstrated the first instrument with the seldom heard Prélude in

g minor by Gabriel Pierné and two of Vierne's Pièces de Fantaisie, Impromptu and Hymne au soleil. Since the church of St Vincent is no longer used for services the organ is not maintained regularly and ciphers made her beginning difficult. Capably assisted by Jens Korndoerfer and Matthieu de Miguel she managed very musical readings, the instrument found its stride, the pair rose to the challenge and convincingly conveyed the compositions. Oddly enough, by the end of her performance the organ itself had recovered. It just needed to be played! On



the Cavallé-Coll at the Cathedral Jens Korndoerfer rendered the first two movements of Widor's 6th Symphonie in reverse order, the Adagio in broad, sweeping lines and the Allegro with such energy and verve that one might think it was a Finale. Before going to the Cathedral, the group was invited to City Hall for a modest reception. Representatives of the city and of the region warmly welcomed the organists from all over the world, whose interest and presence cause the general public to also take notice of the musical treasures slumbering in their midst. They were especially grateful that two of the three instruments involved were in the lower town, which is much less frequented by normal tourists. No less than three newspaper photographers were there to document the historic moment. After time for lunch and sightseeing in the fortress or Cité, as it is called, it was time for the final instrument of the official itinerary. The 4 manual, 40 stop instrument has a history that sounds familiar. Starting as a modest organ from 1637, it was repeatedly enlarged and modified according to modern taste until the firm of Formentelli reconstructed the entire instrument incorporating the finest stops from both the 17th and 19th Centuries. The style is basically French classic with a modified meantone tuning and pitch at  $a = 415$  Hz. Jennifer Chou capably demonstrated the instrument with de Grigny's Récit de Tierce en taille from Livre d'Orgue and four movements of his Ave Maris Stella.

Also a tradition of these Spring Meetings is the closing dinner on Friday evening after a week of touring, listening and playing together. This is always a very special occasion, but seldom as special as this time. Somewhat further south of



Carcassone is the Domaine Régismont-le-Haut, formerly an important vineyard. It is now the domicile of the widely known and respected conductor Michel Plasson, who just happens to be the father-in-law of Renée Ann Louprette. He and his wife generously invited the entire group to come and visit them in the evening and prepared a lavish buffet dinner with local delicacies and beverages. Here Dean Judy Riefel-Lindel took the opportunity to thank our hosts, but also Chapter Board Member-at-large Charles Baer for his planning and preparation of the hotel and

transportation and especially Renée Ann Louprette for coordinating the entire itinerary. The organization had left nothing to chance and everything ran smoothly the entire time. It was a most fitting closing for a week filled with the widest variety of musical instruments and personal and professional exchange between young and old, students and professionals. To put it briefly: a good time was had by all!

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