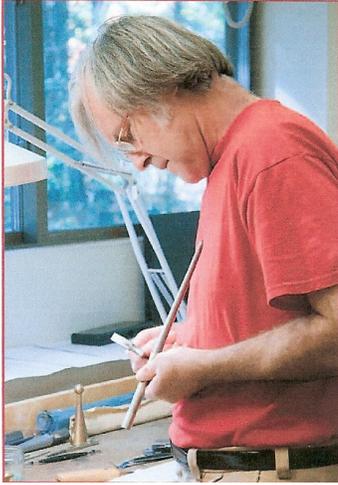


THE ORGAN at GRACE CHURCH, HONESDALE FINDS A NEW VOICE

1 April 2012



During January, one might have heard some strange sounds at Grace Church in Honesdale - all coming from the organ. Strange - and yet filled with hope and excitement! A friend of our parish organist, Maria Zengion, was in America (he currently lives in Basel Switzerland) and offered to work on the organ as a free gift to his friend and her parish.

Here is Maria's tale:

I received an e-mail from Ken Wolfe saying he would be in the United States for three weeks and asking if we were still pursuing our organ project. He stated that he would be happy to voice Grace's Möller pipe organ at no charge so he could have the opportunity to work with me once again. I called Fr. Ed immediately for his approval saying that the Holy Spirit has landed once again on Grace Church.

When I attended Westminster Choir College in Princeton, NJ as an undergrad, Ken Wolfe was the Associate Curator of organs there. On the Organ Department bulletin board there was a request from Ken for assistants. I eagerly signed up for many hours. Ken taught me how to tune as well as voice. We found through many projects we worked on that our artistic needs and goals matched, thus creating a special bond. Ken became my colleague and friend.

Ken Wolfe at his shop

In the early 1990's I had the opportunity to apply for Associate Curator of Organs and Harpsichords at the Choir College where Ken Wolfe was now the Curator of Organs. For the next five years I had the pleasure of working side by side with him once again. I marveled at how he could hear an organ and discern the proper tonal direction it should head. He would remove his tools and examining the pipes by the position of its languid, cut-up and nicking of its mouth. He knew exactly what to do in order to bring out each pipe's soul. When he was finished the pipes seemed to sing for the first time, each one having its own character but always sounding beautiful together. He was like a well-experienced choirmaster, letting each of his choiristers have their individuality, however, needing to sound as one choir. This is the true talent of a master organ voicer.

Ten years ago Ken was hired by C.B. Fisk, Gloucester, MA as one of their lead voicers. The voicers of Fisk have opportunities of continuing education by studying historical organs and how they were voiced. Instruments from Schnitger's, Silbermann's, Dom Bedos', Cavaille-Coll's and Father Willis' voicing and pipe construction techniques. By examining the Moller organ at Grace Church and the acoustical architecture, Ken decided to re-voice the instrument according to the scalings of an 1887 "Father" Willis practice organ at the Choir School of St. Mary's Anglican Cathedral, Edinburgh, Scotland.

The organ at Grace Church was built in 1960 by the M.P.Möller Organ Company of Hagerstown Maryland, which closed its shops a number of years ago. Except for some minor repairs and tuning, the organ has maintained its service to the Church without major renovations or rebuilding. Ken's work on the organ in January has already brought new life to the organ and the worship in the parish. We are looking forward to possibly another visit from Ken this summer as he offers more time to finish ranks of pipes he was not yet able to revoice.

Because of the interest in the organ Ken has brought about, Grace Church is looking to the possibly of addition repairs to make the organ (slightly) "bigger and better." First Presbyterian Church in Honesdale donated hundreds of unused pipes from their organ, many of which will complete the specifications of the "orchestra" which makes up the pipe organ. This will require an additional keyboard to be added to the console, as well as an additional chamber for pipes on the opposite side of the chancel. An organ builder from southern Pennsylvania has already been consulted. Needless to say, though the pipes were free, the work and additional building costs will not be. So before anything else is done, an organ fund will be established. We are extremely grateful to Ken for starting this off and exciting us to the possibilities.



Maria Zengion and Ken Wolfe