

**Organs of Toronto.** By Alan Jackson and James Bailey, with a preface by John Fraser. Toronto: Royal Canadian College of Organists, Toronto Centre, 2002. xx, 156 pp. \$45.00 plus \$5.95 for shipping and handling. ISBN 0-9689713-0-X. Available from RCCO Toronto Centre, c/o Norma Brubacher (e-mail: jnbru@pathcom.com), Remenyi House of Music (Bloor Street, Toronto) and The Music Store at Roy Thomson Hall, Toronto.

*Organs of Toronto* is much more than a history, much more than a catalogue: it is a cultural document of the first rank. Jackson and Bailey approach their subject with a refreshing breadth of vision, which not only makes for interesting reading in what might otherwise have been a dry technical work, but also provides the true context for their subject: the physical and social environments in which the organs are situated. The gorgeous layout and rich quality of production make this a beautiful presentation or coffee-table book.

Unlike most instruments—pianos, violins, flutes—which are mass produced to a single standard, each individual organ is defined by the particular space in which and for which it is built; and it is the significance of place that is so admirably captured in this book. Not only do we have physical details about building styles and sizes, but also key information concerning the history and development of individual congregations and their place in the cultural mosaic that is Toronto. This book is as much ethnomusicology as it is organology.

*Organs of Toronto* originated in connection with the Toronto Organ Festival, 2001, and was intended as a companion to that event. The initial

selection of instruments and locations was thus determined in accordance with the performance venues of the festival. In the end, the book was not ready in time for the festival, but the results amply justify the delay. The original concept was enlarged and rounded out by the inclusion of a selection of other instruments of interest that were not used for the festival—instruments of particular historical significance, of exceptional design, or representative of the wide range of organ builders whose instruments are to be found in Toronto. The result is a distinctive documentation of thirty-six unique organs.

Apart from the superb concept and minutely detailed information, this book is a gem for the organ lover. It is lavishly illustrated in colour, showing not only the organs, but, in accordance with the philosophy of the writers, important features of the architecture and style of each building. Complete specifications are included for each instrument, as are detailed histories of tonal revision, restoration and expansion. A glossary of organ terms, intelligible and informative, provides technical information that the serious reader will want to understand.

An introductory essay relates the major events in the history of organs in Toronto, from the 1830's to the present.

The earliest extant instrument is a small organ from 1842, now located in the gallery at St. Clement's, Eglinton. It also makes reference to influential organs of Toronto's history that no longer exist, or that have been relocated to other places, such as those at the Royal York Hotel and the Eaton Auditorium. The authors also explain how the success of Casavant Frères was due not only to the well known absorption of European traditions and techniques, but also to the development of new manufacturing processes that permitted organs to weather the harshness of Canada's cold, dry winters, conditions that played havoc with the fine tolerances of wind-blown instruments. The influence of the organ-reform movement is also well detailed, from the radical 1959 instrument at Forest Hill United Church to the more moderate instruments installed in the later part of the twentieth century.

In Jackson and Bailey we have organ builder and architect, respectively, both of long-standing, and both intimately acquainted and enamoured with organs and their churches. Jackson has been working on Toronto organs for half a century; Bailey has a deep understanding of church architecture. Together, these gentlemen tell the stories of these churches and their organs in a splendid and lucid manner.

Often the most interesting part of the work is how the building of a particular organ came about, how choices of location and size were determined, and how alterations and additions arose. Typically, the size of the ninety-four

stop organ at Metropolitan United Church (1930) was determined as being two stops larger than the organ installed in the Royal York Hotel in the previous year. (In 1998, Metropolitan added a gallery organ, affirming its reputation as the largest organ in Canada.)

As I read the stories, I found that I often wished to know about the various organists who were involved in the planning and installation, and who led the music in these churches over the years. In a few instances, familiar names appear, but in many others the organists remain nameless. Granted, were the authors to fill that lacuna the stories (and legends) would multiply. Yet, a brief mention of names associated with the various instruments might enrich the context even more.

Canada is rich in organs and organ builders of outstanding international reputation. There remains plenty of history to uncover and relate concerning the growth and development of church buildings, church music, and organs in Canada. The Royal Canadian College of Organists is to be commended on this splendid documentation of our heritage. It is to be hoped that the RCCO may continue this quality of research and publication in other parts of Canada, not only in large centres but also in small communities throughout the rural areas of our country, which—unbeknownst to their congregations—often possess instruments of unique historical value.

*William Renwick  
McMaster University*