

THE DIAPASON

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First Baptist Church of Christ
Macon, Georgia
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**A. E. Schlueter Pipe Organ Company, Lithonia, Georgia
First Baptist Church of Christ, Macon, Georgia**

“Nurture. Love. Serve. ALL.” is the succinct version of the vision statement of the First Baptist Church of Christ, Macon, Georgia. For a congregation whose ministry spans nearly two centuries, including all of God’s children in ministry and leadership is a natural outgrowth of its character and a testament to its commitment to following the leading of God’s Spirit. The First Baptist Church of Christ has a history of committing itself to including all, in worship, discipleship, and service, from including women on the pastoral staff in the 1950s to ordaining women as deacons and Gospel ministers in the 1980s. This commitment is a reflection of the members of the congregation but also of the church’s connection to Mercer University, a leading and growing research and service-oriented institution of higher education.

One of the deep connections between Mercer University and First Baptist is the relationship of Mercer’s leadership to the congregation. From Mercer’s founding in 1833, First Baptist has been an ardent supporter of the school and, since the university moved to Macon in 1871, every president of Mercer except one has been an active member of First Baptist. The longest-tenured president of Mercer, R. Kirby Godsey, is no exception. Dr. Godsey and his family joined First Baptist in the late 1970s when he came



The First Baptist Church of Christ, of Macon, Georgia, Schlueter organ

to Mercer, and they have been a constant presence in the pew, on committees, leading in worship, and actively supporting the church since. Dr. Godsey’s wife Joan is an accomplished and recognized musician who has served as organist, choirmaster, Sunday School teacher, and deacon. Her deep devotion to the music ministry of First Baptist, combined with her encouragement of music and music education throughout the Macon community, is one of many reasons that her family’s generous gift of the A. E. Schlueter organ is dedicated in her honor. With the proximity of the church to Mercer University and the historic ties that it has had with the school, it is anticipated that the organ will be used

regularly by the university and its students.

This project came about when I was approached by the Godsey family to discuss the existing organ and how we could improve the music for worship at the First Baptist Church of Christ. This instrument had been built in the 1980s and followed the general stoplist design and tonal style of the majority of the instruments that were built by American builders at that time. It retained the 1949 console and several sets of pipes from the older instrument. It had 35 ranks of pipework, and, while it was a good, basic service instrument, it did not have the depth of resources to fully support the music program as it has evolved at the church.

Our discussions led to the design of a new instrument that would follow the precepts of American eclectic tonal design. We wanted to support some of the great organ works by luminaries such as Widor, Vierne, Bach, Buxtehude, and Scheidt, while also celebrating the offering of a Lemare orchestral transcription with equal aplomb. Admittedly this is a heady task and one that can be fraught with the danger of an instrument that is too focused for one style or lacking any focus at all. We steadfastly worked to avoid this trap.

Early in our discussions I recommended, where possible, reuse of pipework from the existing instrument. The pipework was generally well scaled and had low

A. E. Schlueter Pipe Organ Company

GREAT – Manual II

16’ Violone*	
16’ Lieblich Gedeckt (Sw)	
8’ Diapason (ext Ped)	29 pipes
8’ Principal	61 pipes
8’ Violone	61 pipes
8’ Harmonic Flute	49 pipes
(1–12 common bass)	
8’ Bourdon	61 pipes
8’ Erzähler Celeste II (Ch)	
4’ Octave	61 pipes
4’ Rohr Flute	61 pipes
2½’ Twelfth (TC)	49 pipes
2’ Super Octave	61 pipes
1¾’ Seventeenth (TC)	49 pipes
IV Fourniture	244 pipes
8’ Trumpet	61 pipes
Tremulant	
16’ Contre Trompette (Sw)	
8’ Bell Clarinet (Ch)	

8’ English Horn (Ch)	
Great to Great 4	
8’ Tromba Heroique (Ch, non-coupling)	

CHOIR – Manual I (enclosed)

16’ Erzähler*	
8’ Weit Principal	61 pipes
8’ Holzgedeckt	61 pipes
8’ Erzähler	61 pipes
8’ Erzähler Celeste (TC)	49 pipes
4’ Principal	61 pipes
4’ Nachthorn	61 pipes
4’ Erzähler Celeste II (ext)	24 pipes
2½’ Nasat (TC)	49 pipes
2’ Schwegel (ext Erzähler)	12 pipes
1¾’ Terz (TC)	49 pipes
1½’ Quint (ext 2½’)	12 pipes
1’ Siffote (from Erzähler)	
II Carillon (from mutations)	
III Klein Mixture	183 pipes

16’ English Horn (TC, fr 8’)	
8’ Bell Clarinet	61 pipes
8’ English Horn	61 pipes
4’ Regal (ext 8’ Eng Horn)	12 pipes
Choir to Choir 16	
Choir Unison Off	
Choir to Choir 4	
8’ Tromba Heroique	61 pipes
(non-coupling)	
Tremulant	

SWELL – Manual III (enclosed)

16’ Lieblich Gedeckt (ext 8’)	12 pipes
8’ Diapason	61 pipes
8’ Rohr Flute	61 pipes
8’ Viole de Gamba	61 pipes
8’ Viole Celeste (TC)	49 pipes
8’ Muted Violes II	110 pipes
4’ Principal	61 pipes
4’ Spindle Flute	61 pipes

2½’ Nazard (TC)	49 pipes
2’ Flageolet (ext 8’ Rohr Fl)	24 pipes
1¾’ Tierce (TC)	49 pipes
1½’ Quint (ext 2½’)	12 pipes
IV Plein Jeu	244 pipes
16’ Basson-Hautbois*	
8’ Trompette	61 pipes
8’ Hautbois	61 pipes
4’ Clairon (ext 8’)	12 pipes
8’ Vox Humana	61 pipes
Tremulant	
Swell to Swell 16	
Swell Unison Off	
Swell to Swell 4	

PEDAL

32’ Violone*	
32’ Bourdon*	
16’ Sub Principal	32 pipes
16’ Contra Bass*	



Detail of pipe shades

cut-ups and little nicking. This meant it was highly malleable for revoicing in the new instrument with the requisite rescaling and repitching and still allowing us a blank canvas with which to work. This reuse of resources along with the changes we have made to these pipes have allowed us to reuse material from the previous instrument in a positive, cohesive manner and still create an instrument that stands under our name and within our tonal design.

To house the organ, we planned a new case situated forward of the chamber. The design of the new case pays homage to the architecture of the 1887 sanctuary. With the baptistry offset to the right and the organ chamber centered above the choir, it allowed consideration for a classical organ case design on the central axis of the room. The case is built of white oak and finished to match the church

furnishings. The case and pipes rise over 30 feet from the raised choir loft for a commanding visual and tonal location in this worship space. The case is a rich brocade of carvings and custom moldings that harken to other ecclesiastical elements within the church. We designed open grilles into the organ case side returns to allow more diffusion of sound for the pipework behind the façade, along with a freer exchange of air for tuning stability.

The new casework is a blending of old world and new world technologies. The case drawing was conceived by hand and then drawn to dimension with Computer Assisted Design (CAD). We then rendered it in 3-D to allow the organ to be viewed in the sanctuary prior to its building. This level of visualization was unknown years ago and allows the design of the organ to be fine-

tuned for the worship space.

Technology found its place in the design of the carvings, which were designed by hand, redrawn in the computer, and converted into machine code to begin the initial process of carving with our computer numeric controlled (CNC) router in oak blanks. These were finished by hand. This resulted in carvings and pipe shades that maintain strict, repeatable tolerances but still have the look and feel of the work executed solely by traditional hand carving. The use of modern drawing and building techniques made it possible to build this type of case-

ment at a reasonable cost quotient without having to rob stops from the specification to lower costs, as is often necessary to provide this level of carving and molding.

The façade pipes of polished aluminum are taken from the Great and Pedal divisions. In addition to the beauty provided by the polished metal, we find that this material has speech characteristics that are very favorable and rival some other traditional pipe building materials for certain voicing styles. The added rigidity of the material and its resistance to surface oxidation made it an ideal choice for this installation. The polished surfaces reflect and refract light in such a way that the façade takes on the natural lighting in soft, even hues.

The new instrument contains 51 ranks of windblown pipes divided over three manual divisions and pedal. It is an instrument conceived first and foremost to solidly support the choir



Patrick and Jay Hodges hand fitting portions of the organ case

and congregation in worship while also allowing the varied repertoire that has been written for the organ across the span of time to flourish.

The organ is designed with a solid 8' tonal center with independent Principal choruses in each division that, while separate, are relatable and act as a foil one to another. The upperwork in the organ is designed to fold within and reinforce the chorus and not to sit above it. We very much wanted the chorus registration to be a hand-in-glove fit.

The pipework makes use of varied scales, a mix of shapes (open, slotted, tapered, harmonic, stoppered, chimneys), and materials to influence the color and weight differences in the organ flue stops. We were also careful in the placement of ranks in the chamber so that they had the best advantage for speech.

16' Violone (Gt)	
16' Erzähler (Ch)	
16' Bourdon	32 pipes
16' Lieblich Gedeckt (Sw)	
8' Diapason	32 pipes
8' Principal	32 pipes
8' Bourdon (ext 16' □)	12 pipes
8' Rohr Flute (Sw)	
4' Choral Bass	32 pipes
4' Cantus Flute (Gt 8' Har Fl)	
III Mixture (wired)	
32' Posaune*	
32' Harmonics (wired Cornet series)	
16' Trombone	32 pipes
16' Contre Trompette (ext Sw)	12 pipes
16' Basson-Hautbois (Sw)	
8' Trumpet (Gt)	
4' Clarion (Gt)	
4' Bell Clarinet (Ch)	
8' Tromba (Ch)	

* Indicates digital extension

Percussion

Chimes 32 notes (Pedal)
Chimes 32 notes (Great)
Harp 49 notes (Choir)
Zimbelstern (multiple bells)

MIDI (available as preset stops)

MIDI on Pedal
MIDI on Great
MIDI on Choir
MIDI on Swell

Coupler Rail

Great to Pedal 8
Swell to Pedal 8
Swell to Pedal 4
Choir to Pedal 8
Choir to Pedal 4

Swell to Great 16
Swell to Great 8
Swell to Great 4
Choir to Great 16
Choir to Great 8
Choir to Great 4

Swell to Choir 16
Swell to Choir 8
Swell to Choir 4

Great/Choir Transfer

COMBINATION SYSTEM

Syndyne 8400 with 5,000 levels of memory
10 General pistons (thumb and toe)
5 pistons affecting Great (thumb)
5 pistons affecting Swell (thumb)
5 pistons affecting Choir (thumb)
5 pistons affecting Pedal (toe)

General Cancel (thumb)
Next and Previous (thumb and toe, piston sequencer)
Set piston (thumb)
Great to Pedal reversible (thumb and toe)
Swell to Pedal reversible (thumb and toe)
Choir to Pedal reversible (thumb and toe)
Sforzando (thumb and toe, programmable)
32' Reversibles (thumb and toe)
Crescendo Pedal (programmable)

Three manuals, 51 ranks

Organbuilder's website:
<http://pipe-organ.com>

Church website:
www.fbcxmacon.org

As with most of the instruments we have built, we consider the strings and their companion celestes important for their sheer beauty and emotive quotient (and yes...there should be more than one set!). This organ has sets of string ranks divided between the Swell and Choir divisions that can be compounded via couplers. Along with the color reeds, these stops support the romantic sound qualities that were designed into this instrument.

The large solo reed in the organ is the 8' Tromba Heroique. It is on high pressure and located in the Choir expression box to allow control of this powerful sound. As it relates to the pipework, the expression fronts are carried the full width and height of the expression boxes and can fully open to 90 degrees. Our expression boxes are built extra thick and feature overlapping felted edges. This treatment allows focus of a division's resources when fully open and full containment and taming of the resources when closed. Even the commanding solo reed can be used as an ensemble voice when the box is closed.

The organ's main manual windchests are electro-pneumatic slider chests. They are patterned after the Blackinton-style chests and include double pallets with independent primaries to provide more wind supply to the bass registers in the chest. The duplex stops and large bass pipes utilize electro-pneumatic action. The façade pipes are remotely fed with transmission tubes from electro-pneumatic blow box actions.

The winding system makes use of a combination traditional spring and weight ribbed regulators along with floating lid reservoirs where appropriate. The tremulants are electro-mechanical to provide a quiet, gentle, even undulation to the wind when engaged. The reeds are placed on their own reservoirs to allow differential wind pressures and independent tremulants.

To ameliorate tuning issues, all of the manual and pedal divisions are located on the same elevation to allow a common thermocone. We engineered air returns in the



The façade at impost level

Swell and Choir divisions to assist in drawing the ambient air in the sanctuary into the organ space. The Great is positioned forward of the enclosed divisions but is shielded by the façade and case to minimize rapid changes in temperature as the air and heat cycles in the room. We also enclosed the blower room in the basement, which previously did not have any environmental controls, and provided it with a return air intake to take it off the untempered basement air.

The traditional drawknob console is built of oak with an interior paneled in mahogany and ebony. The keycheeks and piston slips are of ebonized mahogany. The thumb pistons are in the Skinner style. The manual key surfaces are of faux bone and ebony and are fitted with tracker touch via toggle springs. To assist the ergonomics of playing, the organ bench is adjustable, as is the music rack (in/out and up/down).

The combination system and relays are the Syndyne 8400 system. All of the features that one comes to expect on a modern console control system are present and include multiple memories, programmable crescendos, programmable sforzandos, blind checks, transposer, etc. One can use an external USB drive to save or import combination memories. This provides infinite options to the performer.

The system allows a single centralized control for the combination system, playback/record,

and MIDI into a single integrated touch screen. This same screen and USB interface allows testing, system configuration, and upgrades for the builder without the need for an external computer.

From a personal standpoint, I was humbled and honored to work with the church and the Godsey family in the design of the new instrument. Many of these discussions were ably led by Hunter Godsey, who with never-failing grace discussed the myriad of details that go into an organ design both tonally and visually. Not only is he an accomplished organist, he was a continuous champion for the instrument we were designing, and I value him and his family as friends.

As a way of saying thank you for this commission, several stops in the instrument were donated from the Schlueter family to the church. These included several sets of strings and the woodwind class reeds including the orchestral Skinner Bell Clarinet we restored for this instrument.

When my wife and I attended Mercer University, the president of the university was Kirby Godsey. I did not know at that time that, 30 years later, I would be able to have a "homecoming" and an opportunity to build a new instrument for this venerable church. When we were chosen to build the new instrument, you could not imagine how honored I was to be speaking to the same man who nearly three decades

ago handed me my diploma and told me to go out and do my part to make the world a more beautiful place. It was a great pleasure in telling this kind man that I had taken what he told me to heart, that it is what I had sought to do, and, importantly, I was able to thank him for his governance of the university that had such an impact on who I am today. In a wonderful turn of the page, just as a new instrument was being installed in the First Baptist Church of Christ as I moved to Macon to start college, my eldest daughter has now started studies at my alma mater and will be able to be part of the new organ installation and history.

I thank the church's ministerial staff including:

Rev. Scott Dickison, pastor

Rev. Julie W. Long, associate pastor, minister of children and families

Dr. Stanley L. Roberts, minister of music

Dr. Jody Long, minister of missions and students

Anne Armstrong, organist

Joe Johnson, church administrator

The building of any instrument demands the efforts of a talented and dedicated team. Our team includes the efforts of: Arthur E. Schlueter, Jr., Arthur E. Schlueter, III, Mary Schlueter, Sarah Schlueter, John Tanner, Marc Conley, Patrick Hodges, Rob Black, Jeremiah Hodges, Peter Duys, James (Bud) Taylor, Jr., Bob Weaver, Kerry Bunn, Al Schroer, Shan Dalton-Bowen, Barbara Sedlacek, Michael DeSimone, Dallas Wood, Clifton Frierson, Ruth Lopez, Kelvin Cheatham, James Sowell, Tim Brown, Marshal Foxworthy, and Carl Morawetz.

A. E. Schlueter Pipe Organ Company can be reached at art3@pipe-organ.com or by writing P. O. Box 838, Lithonia, Georgia 30058.

—Arthur E. Schlueter, III
Visual and Tonal Direction
A. E. Schlueter Pipe Organ Company

Photo credit: Jessica Whitley Photography