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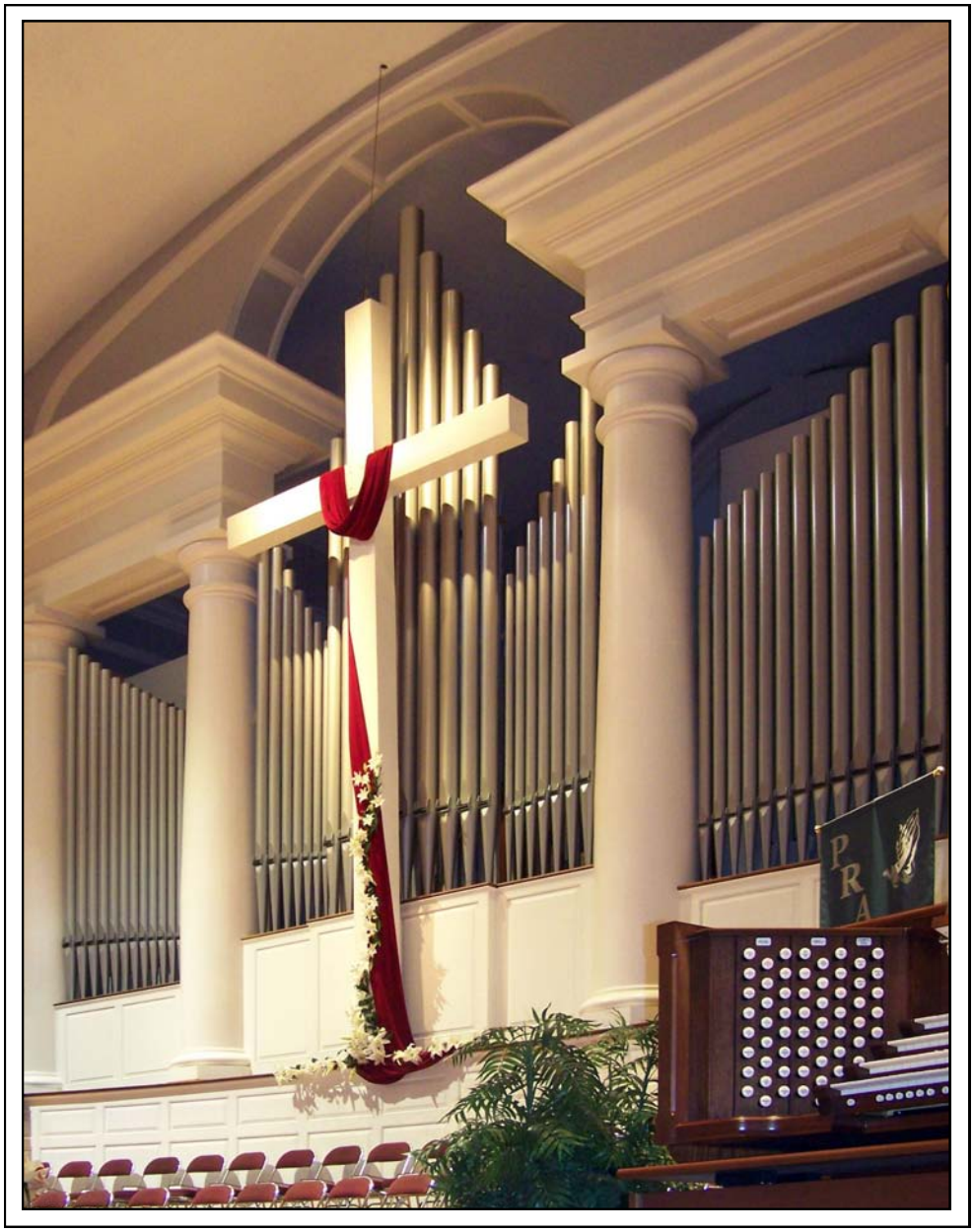

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary
Leavell Chapel
Cover feature on pages 26–27

Cover Story

A. E. Schlueter Pipe Organ Company, Lithonia, Georgia
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

Monday, August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina made landfall. The levee system failed, and over 80% of New Orleans was flooded. For weeks, portions of the city remained under water, with heat and moisture completing the destructive cycle that Katrina began. While waiting for the water to dissipate, we knew that the damage to persons and property would be immense.

Our firm was called by the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary to evaluate and salvage the damaged instruments on the campus. Founded in 1917, the seminary sits on a 75-acre campus in the hardest-hit 9th Ward area of New Orleans. The Division of Church Music Ministries aims "to equip leaders for excellence in music ministry among Southern Baptists through performance, education, and technology." Our charge was to assure that the musical resources were available for their mission.

What we found upon our arrival is perhaps best described by Seminary President Dr. Charles S. Kelly, Jr.:

> Hurricane Katrina well and truly earned its designation as the worst natural disaster in the history of the United States. Our campus, like most of the city, was devastated. Our homes, many of our buildings, most of our grounds, and virtually all of our musical instruments were hit very, very, hard. The recovery process was long, difficult, and messy beyond anyone's ability to describe. . . . What made our plight even more difficult was the massive damage to the rest of the campus and the severe losses sustained by our faculty, staff, and student families. The larger picture of what had to be done to reopen the campus and care for our families made allocation of the necessary dollars for the recovery of our lost and severely damaged instruments a very difficult thing to do.

Art Schlueter with Leavell console

Our work on the campus involved the protection and removal of many of the significant music instruments including multiple grand pianos, a harpsichord, and the 1954 Möller (III/27) and 1966 Aeolian-Skinner Opus 1468 (IV/38) pipe organs. Of prime concern was protecting the instruments to prevent further damage. In addition to water, the storm brought massive amounts of airborne contaminants into the instruments, and, with heat, mold.

The Möller organ, located in the Sellers Music Building Recital Hall, was damaged when the roof gave way, flooding the organ with thousands of gallons of water that passed through the two chambers and filled the pitman chests and winding system. When we arrived several weeks later and opened the chests, there was still a significant amount of water in the organ.

The Aeolian-Skinner was damaged when the 150-mile-per-hour winds blew out the window behind the organ. For hours on end, the outside became the inside as the storm vented its fury on the Skinner. As with the recital hall organ, we found water in the organ many weeks after the storm.

It was inevitable that there would be long and intense negotiations with insurance companies about the losses and rebuilding. The enormity of Katrina simply overwhelmed insurers. One could go on at length about the negotiations and the efforts and education that were required with the insurance companies. Suffice it to say that at one point the insurers appraised the older, smaller Möller at a greater amount than the larger, newer Aeolian-Skinner.

The Möller organ's status was very clear cut because of the extreme damage to the chassis and its utilitarian design. The Aeolian-Skinner and its disposition was a thornier issue. The damage to the organ was severe, but with heroic measures it could have been restored. The problem was that a true restoration would involve tremendous expense that could

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Leavell Katrina damage

Leavell Katrina damage

exceed the organ's replacement cost. The insurance company did not understand that if you replace the chests, swell box, some pipework, the winding system, and the console with new materials, the organ would cease to be Opus 1468. While we fought for funds for restoration, the client and our firm resolved that either the Skinner would be unaltered and restored without change, or if changes were required, that the resources would be folded into a new instrument. As negotiations concluded, funds available for the Skinner were not sufficient for a true restoration.

In addition to wide-ranging discussions about how the instruments would be used, we also traveled with Dr. Becky Lombard, professor of music theory and keyboard studies, to hear many of our recent instruments. We evaluated how these differing specifications might relate to the needs of the seminary and the church music program. From these visits it became apparent that we would build two distinctly different instruments.

Sellers Recital Hall (III/34)

The recital hall organ is used primarily for teaching and for literature performance. Space was limited, but we felt that the organ could be enlarged to provide additional resources not present in the 1954 instrument. With the performance of literature being the goal, choices had to be made about meeting the requirements of specific periods—yet the stoplist couldn't be too era-specific.

The decision was made to design an instrument that could create the colors of all periods of music history. We also had to consider accompaniment of voice, both solo and choral. In this diminutive hall with seating for around 100, we had to create a rich, full palette without overwhelming the performer or listener. Tonally, the voicing is in a very clean, unforced style. There is crispness to registrations that will promote clean, articulate playing.

This organ had to be able to transform itself into any number of service instruments that the student might encounter in music ministry. The organ we designed is three manuals with 34 ranks of pipe resources. It is equally tempered to accommodate contemporary worship and use with piano accompaniment, and also offers full MIDI capability. This was the first instrument delivered to the campus.

Leavell Chapel (IV/83)

The chapel organ was designed with a different focus. While literature will be performed regularly, the organ's role in service playing determined the overriding design. Each week chapel services are held and the organ is called on to support congregational singing and to accompany soloists. Collaborative performances with the organ and piano are quite common. The organ is also used to play for services with small numbers in the congregation and, at the end of each semester, for a "packed house" during graduation ceremonies, so a wide dynamic range was needed. The chapel is a cavernous space with seating for over 2000.

When the Aeolian-Skinner was installed, it had 38 ranks with "prepared for" Choir and Positiv divisions and additional Pedal and Great registers that were never added. The room had been acoustically altered from its 1966 incarnation, and the gently voiced Great and Swell on the Skinner did not have the presence required for this hall. Because of other uses of the chapel, the room had been softened with acoustically absorbent material, and this was to remain in place.

The new organ was conceived as a four-manual with Great, Swell, Choir, and Solo divisions. It is located on the central axis of the room on a shelf. The dimensions of this space are 36 feet wide and 18 feet deep.

It was important to the school that the room remain visually unaltered; so, the old façade and casework were restored. The Skinner 16′ Sub Principal was revoiced into a 16′ Violone for the Great division. The college wanted to leave the window at the rear of the organ, which was a concern thermally and acoustically. To overcome this problem, the new windows were designed as insulated units rated to resist a storm stronger than Katrina. We placed the enclosed expression boxes across the rear span of the

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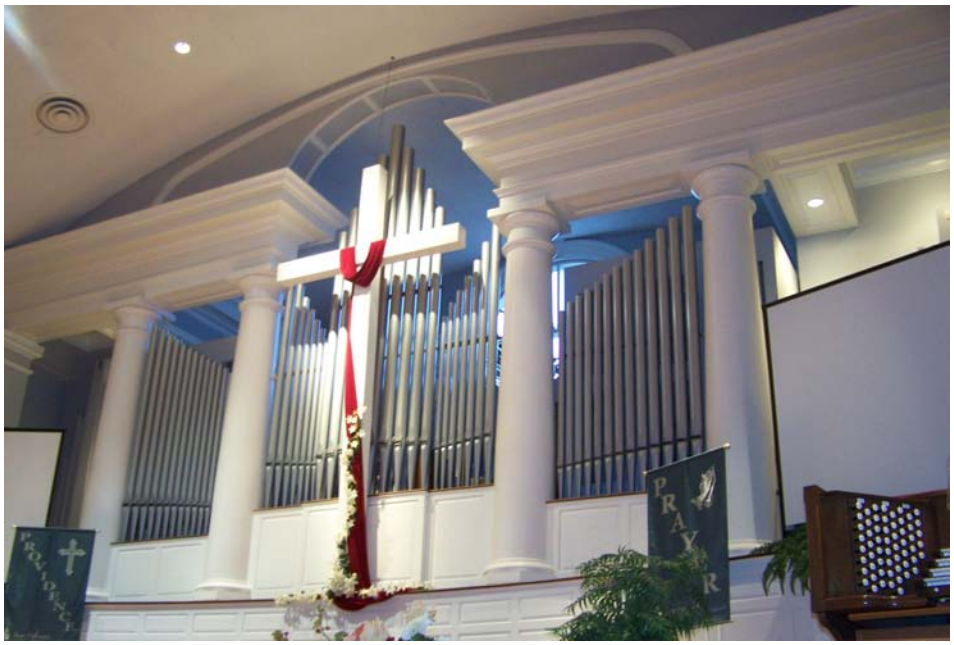
Becky Lombard at Sellers console



Leavell facade

space with inward partitions to provide our own back chamber wall. With a height of over 16 feet, the expression boxes provide a forward focus for the organ in addition to the needed thermal barrier, while still allowing light through the windows above the organ.

In designing the specification and scaling, I wanted to provide the resources that would allow the performer a vast array of color and weight, suitable for any repertoire. The organ was built with the classical underpinnings of principal, flute, and reed chorus structure to support classical and sacred repertoire; in a bow to Romanticism, I included elements of the American romantic or symphonic organ. This blending provides an instrument that would be evocative of early American Classicism, albeit with cleaner and more articulate flue choruses.

In concert with this eclectic tonal design, an expressive, floating Solo division was included. Included in this division are some of the rarer high-pressure stops, including French Horn, English Tuba, Solo Gamba and companion Celeste, and the hauntingly beautiful 8′ Philomela and 4′ Flauto Major.

We were able to retain about half of the Skinner resources, which were revoiced and rescaled for the new instrument. Some stops were either too damaged, or the material suspect, to consider their reuse. The original Skinner reeds were French in design and small-scaled. We felt that the size and acoustic of the chapel, in conjunction with the stoplist design, would be better served with English shallots, thicker tongues, and higher wind pressures. In addition to chorus reeds, the organ has a full battery of high wind pressure solo reeds that were duplexed in a floating Trompeteria division at multiple pitches with separate couplers.

In keeping with the accompanimental nature of the organ, each division is designed around an independent 8′-weighted principal chorus. The divisional choruses, while differing in color, are designed to be compounded as a unified whole. The mixtures in this instrument are pitched lower than what might be found in many contemporary instruments. Where additional treble ascendency is required, secondary higher-pitched mixtures were also included in each division, scaled and voiced to serve as a functional foil to the divisional chorus without stridency.

The strings and flutes in the expressive divisions are designed to build weightless accompaniment for choral work, or massed in support of romantic or transcription repertoire. The organ features a divided string division located among the Swell, Choir, and Solo divisions, to be compounded by means of couplers. Ever present, to be blended with this string chorus, is the 8′ Vox Humana, which has its own enclosure and tremulant.

With the exception of some 32′ Pedal registers and percussions, the organ does not include digital augmentation. We wanted the organ to stand on wind-blown resources. In support of this decision, we added an additional register to the Pedal—the independent 16′ Wood Open. Installed to the right and left of the center organ core and on 7½ inches of wind pressure, it provides a solid fundamental that is truly felt in the room.

Our experience in servicing instruments in this region has made us aware of the need for stability in the materials and action choices, due to the temperature extremes and constant humidity. The organ chest action is electro-pneumatic slider, with all reeds on electro-pneumatic unit action. The flue pipes and the reed pipes are thus on actions that maximize the speech characteristics of each type of pipe. This also allows the flues and reeds to be placed on differing wind pressures and tremulants. The wind is regulated with dual-curtain valve, spring and weighted reservoirs.

The wind pressures on this instrument vary from 4 to 18 inches. To control these resources, the expression boxes are built 1½ inches thick, with interlocking shades. Multiple motors are used on the shade fronts to allow a full dynamic gradation. The four-manual, drawknob console, built of mahogany and ebony, includes features such as multiple-level memory, transposer, Great/Choir manual transfer, piston sequencer, programmable crescendo and sforzando, record/playback capability, and MIDI.

Installation and voicing

The removal, building, and installation of these instruments were herculean

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tasks. It is an understatement to say that the staff of the Schlueter firm took up residence in New Orleans. I simply cannot give enough credit to the leadership of our senior organ builders Marc Conley, John Tanner, Rob Black, and Bud Taylor for the untold hours of travel and work that they put into these projects. Organ building cannot be achieved as the result of any one individual, but requires a skilled team. These individuals continue to exceed expectations in the creation of art.

From the outset, we decided that these two instruments would be voiced in the rooms, with the pipes arriving to the installation only prevoiced to allow full latitude with cut-ups and any required nicking. All of the samples were set in the chambers on their windchests and then the pipes were removed from the chambers. We brought a portable voicing machine and layout tables into spaces adjacent to the organ chambers to voice the pipes prior to their reinstallation in the chambers for final voicing and tonal finishing. Because of the size of these two projects, it was necessary to work as a team in tonal finishing, led by Daniel Angerstein, with the able assistance of John Tanner, Marc Conley, Bud Taylor, Kevin Cartwright, Lee Hendricks, and Gerald Schultz. As with so much of our previous work, I want to single out Dan and his contributions. In the many weeks of tonal finishing, he patiently brought forth the organs as they had been envisioned by the client and the builder.

Final thoughts

As we designed the two organs, it became clear that the organs that were desired could not be afforded by the school with the balance of their settlements. Over the years, we have been privileged to gift resources to churches. As owners, my father and I looked inward and decided that the importance of a continuing role of the organ in worship was a worthy cause. This required us to consider a donation, and without revealing the dollar value of our gifts, suffice it to say that there is a four-manual, 83-rank instrument where there had been a 3 8-rank instrument, and a 34-rank instrument where there had been a 27-rank instrument.

We would like to thank Dr. Charles Kelly, Dr. Becky Lombard, and Dr. Kenneth Gabrielse for their contributions and support during this project. Thanks also to our dedicated staff, listed on our website (www.pipe-organ.com).

Our tonal philosophy is to "build instruments that have warmth not at the expense of clarity, and clarity not at the expense of warmth, and to serve God in our efforts." We pray that in future years our gifts endorse the importance of the organ in worship, and we hope that our instruments will plant the seeds of worship through music, for future students who pass through this institution.

—Arthur Schlueter III

On a personal note

"New Orleans Spared"—Such was the erroneous headline of the newspaper in Savannah, Georgia, on the morning after Hurricane Katrina. At the time, the Schlueter firm was completing the organ at First Presbyterian Church in Savannah (featured in THE DIAPASON, April 2006). My father, members of the installation crew, and I had stared anxiously at the news the previous evening and wondered about our friends in New Orleans and outlying areas. Our firm has worked in the aftermath of a number of major hurricanes and storms in recovery and restoration efforts. Unlike these other disasters, every day the situation in New Orleans grew steadily worse.

Almost exactly one year prior to Katrina, we had completed the rebuilding, relocation, and enlargement of the IV/74 instrument for the First Baptist Church in New Orleans. We made many acquaintances during this period, and through the Internet we were able to find many of our friends who had fled to other cities and states. We prepared for what would face us when the water receded and we could make our way into the city.

It was surreal as the shop vehicles were packed with our own stores of food, water, fuel and medicine for the trip. As we neared the Gulf Coast, the sheer enormity of the disaster began to unfold. We crossed Lake Pontchartrain's 24-mile causeway on a road that had been reduced to a single lane, following the collapse of entire spans of the eastbound lanes. As we arrived in the evening, the scene before us was a macabre black hole that enveloped the city. From the elevated roadway, the marginally lit downtown of New Orleans was surrounded by a dark, lightless void for miles and miles, indicating the extent of the flooding. We arrived in the city under martial law, and had to learn the intricacies of identification and going through armed checkpoints.

With the daylight, the enormity of the flood was overwhelming. Driving into the 9th Ward, you could see watermarks that were many feet over one's head. Homes, businesses, and structures sported the hieroglyphics of spray paint, with X's, O's and slashes to indicate that the structures had been searched and what had been found. Traveling around places once familiar, we found abandoned cars, collapsed buildings, and most distressingly, an absence of life. When we talked with people we knew and asked what we could do, the answer was always the same, "Pray for us."

In the ensuing months that stretched out over two years for the three instruments we worked on, we became emotionally involved with the city and its people. We came to New Orleans to work on behalf of the First Baptist Church of New Orleans and the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, and to restore part of their community. When we visit today, there are still signs of Katrina that only the passage of time will erase, but undeniable is the resilience of the people as they seek to rebuild their community. It is our hope that our response to Katrina on behalf of this community exemplifies "laborare est orare."

—Arthur Schlueter III

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Leavell console

Leavell swell boxes

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Leavell Chapel, four manuals, 83 ranks

GREAT – Manual II (unenclosed)

16′ Violone (73 pipes) (1–24 façade)
8′ First Open Diapason (Pedal)
8′ Second Open Diapason
8′ Principal (1–12 façade)
8′ Stille Principal (from Cornet)
8′ Violone (ext, 12 pipes)
8′ Harmonic Flute (49 pipes)
(1–12 common bass)
8′ Bourdon
4′ Octave
4′ Diapason (Pedal ext, 12 pipes)
4′ Nachthorn
2⅔′ Twelfth
2′ Super Octave
V Cornet TC
2′ Mixture VI
1′ Scharf IV
16′ Contre Trumpet (ext, 12 pipes)
8′ Trumpet
8′ Tromba Heroique (Choir)
8′ English Tuba (Solo)
Tremolo
Gt/Gt 16′–Unison Off–4′

SWELL – Manual III (enclosed)

16′ Lieblich Gedeckt (ext, 12 pipes)
8′ Geigen Principal
8′ Rohr Gedeckt
8′ Viola de Gamba
8′ Voix Celeste
8′ Dolce
8′ Dolce Celeste (54 pipes)
4′ Principal
4′ Harmonic Flute
2⅔′ Nazard
2′ Flageolet
1⅗′ Tierce
2⅔′ Plein Jeu V
1′ Klein Fourniture IV
16′ Contra Bassoon (ext, 12 pipes)
8′ Trumpet
8′ Oboe
8′ Vox Humana
4′ Clairon
Tremolo
Sw/Sw 16′–Unison Off–4′

CHOIR – Manual I (enclosed)

16′ Gemshorn (ext, 12 notes)
8′ Principal
8′ Hohl Flute
8′ Gemshorn
8′ Gemshorn Celeste (49 pipes)
4′ Principal
4′ Koppel Flute
2⅔′ Nasat
2′ Principal
1⅗′ Terz
1⅓′ Larigot
1⅓′ Choral Mixture IV
8′ Clarinet
8′ Tromba Heroique (high pressure)
8′ English Tuba (Solo)
8′ Trompette En Chamade (Trompeteria)
Tremolo
Chimes (digital)
Harp (digital)
Zimbelstern (9 bells)
Ch/Ch 16′–Unison Off–4′

SOLO – Manual IV (enclosed)

8′ Philomela
8′ Gamba
8′ Gamba Celeste
4′ Flauto Major
8′ French Horn
8′ Tromba Heroique (Choir)
8′ English Tuba (high pressure)
Tremulant
Solo/Solo 16′–Unison Off–4′

TROMPETERIA – Manual IV

16′ Tromba Heroique (Choir)
8′ Tromba Heroique (Choir)
4′ Tromba Heroique (Choir)
16′ English Tuba (Solo)
8′ English Tuba (Solo)
4′ English Tuba (Solo)
8′ Trompette En Chamade (high pressure)
Trompeteria Unison Off
Trompeteria on Great
Trompeteria on Swell
Trompeteria on Choir

PEDAL

32′ Violone (digital)
32′ Bourdon (digital)
16′ Open Wood
16′ Principal (ext, 12 pipes)
16′ Violone (Great)
16′ Gemshorn (Choir)
16′ Subbass
16′ Lieblich Gedeckt (Swell)
8′ Octave Bass
8′ Violone (Great)
8′ Bass Flute (ext, 12 pipes)
8′ Spitz Flute
4′ Choral Bass
4′ Nachthorn
2⅔′ Mixture V
32′ Harmonics (wired cornet series)
32′ Contra Trombone (digital)

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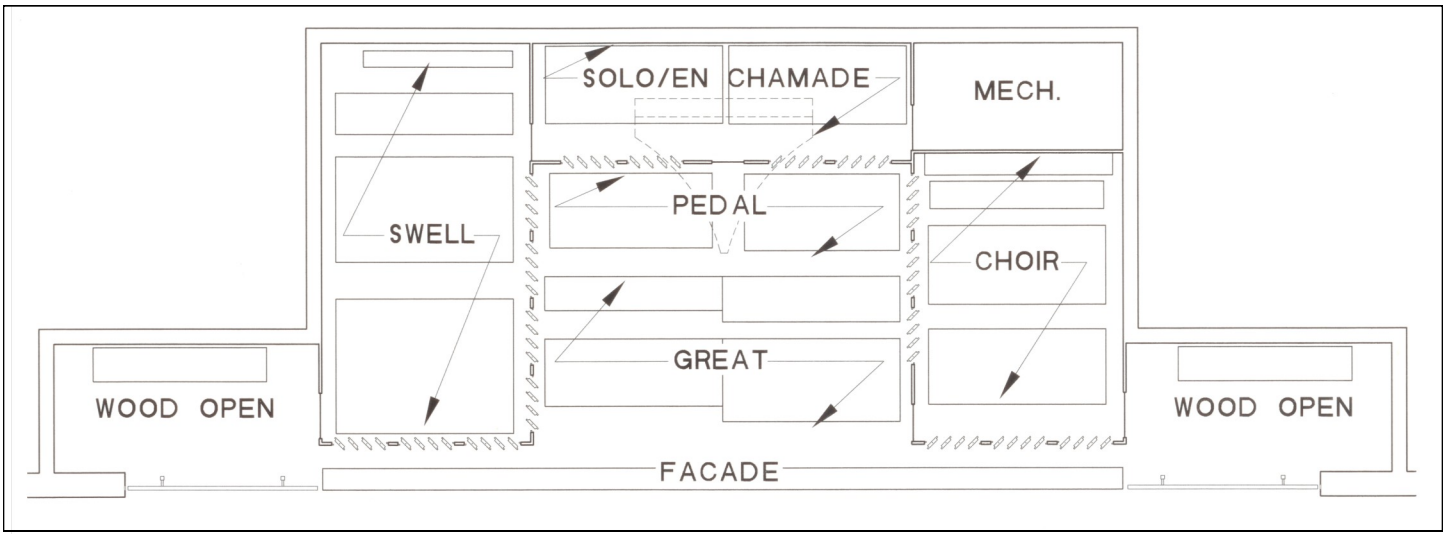

Leavell chamber layout drawing

16′ Trombone (ext, 12 pipes, enclosed in Ch)
16′ Contre Trumpet (Great)
16′ Contra Bassoon (Swell)
8′ Tuba (Solo)
8′ Tromba (Choir)
8′ Trumpet (Great)
4′ Tromba Clarion (Choir)

Standard couplers and MIDI

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Sellers Recital Hall, three manuals, 34 ranks

GREAT
16′ Pommer (Choir)
8′ Gedeckt Pommer (Choir)
8′ Principal
8′ Bourdon
4′ Octave
4′ Nachthorn
4′ Gedeckt (Choir)
2′ Super Octave
1⅓′ Fourniture IV
16′ Contre Trompette (Swell)
8′ Trompette (Swell)
8′ Clarinet (Choir)
8′ Festival Trumpet (Pedal)
Tremolo
Chimes
Great 4′

SWELL (expressive)
16′ Contra Viola (ext, 12 pipes)
8′ Gedeckt
8′ Viola de Gambe
8′ Viola Celeste (49 pipes)
4′ Principal
4′ Spitzflute
2⅔′ Nazard
2′ Blockflute
1⅗′ Tierce
2′ Plein Jeu III–IV
16′ Basson-Hautbois (ext, 12 pipes)
8′ Trompette
8′ Festival Trumpet (Pedal)
8′ Hautbois
4′ Hautbois (ext, 12 pipes)
Tremolo
Swell 16′–Unison Off–4′

CHOIR (expressive)
16′ Pommer
8′ Koppel Flute
8′ Viola
8′ Viole Dolce
8′ Viole Dolce Celeste TC
4′ Principal
4′ Gedeckt (ext, 24 pipes, from 16′)
2′ Gemshorn
1⅓′ Larigot
8′ Clarinet
8′ Festival Trumpet (Pedal)
Celesta (digital)
Harp (digital)
Tremolo
Choir 16′–Unison Off–4′

PEDAL
32′ Bourdon (digital)
16′ Principal (digital)
16′ Contra Viola (Swell)
16′ Sub Bass
16′ Pommer (Choir)
8′ Principal
8′ Viola (Swell)
8′ Bourdon (ext, 12 pipes)
8′ Gedeckt (Choir)
4′ Choral Bass (ext, 12 pipes)
4′ Bourdon (ext, 12 pipes)
4′ Viola (ext, 12 pipes)
32′ Posaune (digital)
16′ Contre Trompette (ext, 12 pipes)
16′ Hautbois (ext, 12 pipes)
8′ Trompette (Swell)
8′ Hautbois (Swell)
4′ Hautbois (Swell)
4′ Clarinet (Choir)

Standard couplers and MIDI

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