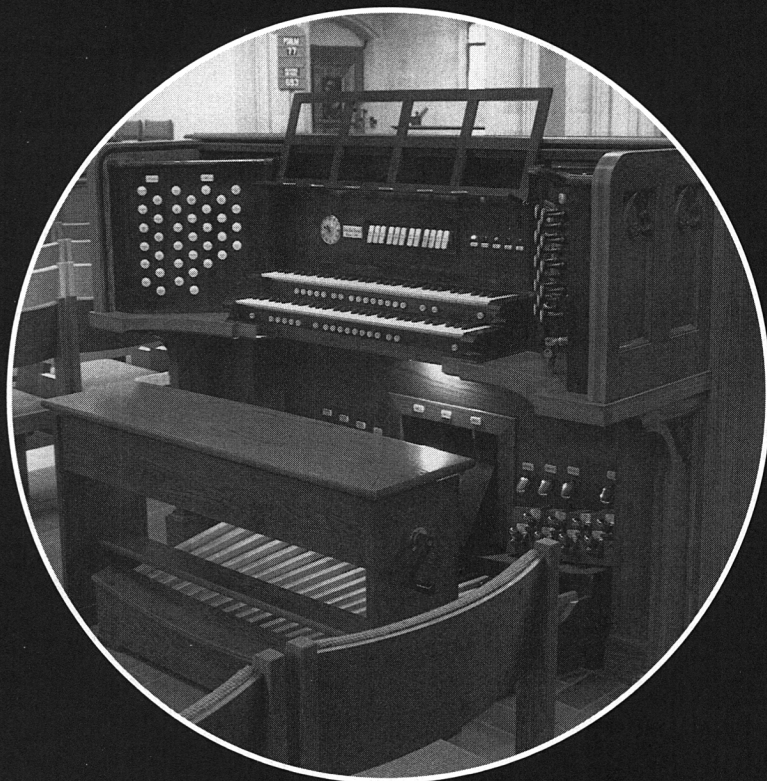


John-Paul Buzard Pipe Organ Builders



“Buzard’s actions, whether electric or tracker, are responsive and rewarding, and console design places a premium on elegance and efficiency.”

• Mark Buxton, “Organist’s Review,” 1995

112 West Hill Street • Champaign, Illinois 61820
800.397.3103 • <http://www.Buzardorgans.com>

DEAR UNCLE MAX

Send questions to Dear Uncle Max, AGO National Headquarters, 475 Riverside Dr., Suite 1260, New York, NY 10115.

Something that I find troubling about many recent organ specifications is the lack of a 4’ reed stop in the pedal. One prominent builder suggested to me that when this occurs, it is likely merely a matter of economics. However, I wonder if this answer is too simple for the following reason: I often see specifications of new three-manual (usually tracker) organs of 40-plus ranks that are impressive, and yet still no 4’ reed stop in the pedal. Could this be an economic decision on an organ costing over \$500,000?

Of course, on an electric-action organ, one can have a borrowed 4’ pedal reed stop from the manual Oboe or the pedal Bassoon; and on a smaller electric-action organ, one generally does see this done. One can easily understand that on a smaller tracker organ, the 4’ pedal reed may readily be considered a luxury item; and I fully understand the economics in this situation.

I have failed to mention that my main concern in having a 4’ pedal reed is not so much for the pedal chorus but as a solo voice for chorales such as Bach’s Kommst du nun, Jesu, vom Himmel herunter. Yes, the 4’ Choral Bass can effectively render this style of piece, but most organists prefer a 4’ pedal reed in such an instance.

Moreover, those same III/45 trackers that lack a 4’ pedal reed also generally lack 4’ manual reed stops that can be coupled down to the pedal. At the risk of sounding ignorant and/or paranoid, it is almost as if there is some kind of philosophical conspiracy afoot that has determined that the 4’ pedal “solo” reed is not a legitimate stop that belongs on a genuinely serious organ. I am thinking of the more conservative tracker builders, builders whose instruments are of the utmost quality and musicality.

S.J., Calif.

A good many years back the Associate examination given by the AGO used to have, with some regularity, a question something like the following: Design a specification for a two-manual and pedal organ of twelve stops. The question was without boundaries. I often wondered how in the world one could grade such a question and what would the graders do if you turned in a specification of nothing but Vox Hu-

manas at various volume levels and pitches with three tremulants, Mild, Normal, and Window-shaking Violent. You would have designed, if you counted to twelve correctly, a specification that answered the printed question. But what was really expected? You were actually in the realm of taste, and definitely in the dark about whose taste. Your letter is something of a question to me, but more, it is a well-argued statement of what is going on in current organbuilding, together with a rationale for what you think is often a lack and why it should be changed.

I have no problem with anything you have to say. What it does indicate is the importance of the involvement of the organist in the whole process of building a new organ. In other words, the more input you are allowed at the drawing board, the better satisfied you may be later. You need to say quite strongly: I want a 4' reed on the pedal to play solo lines from the chorale prelude literature. Borrowing on a tracker organ has been done for a very long time and could be done as a means of achieving what you want. If it is a three-manual electric-action, one division ought to have a reed that might be used coupled if it does not appear in the pedal.

It could be that in addition to the economic issues, the builder will have factored in space problems, some matters of historic design—that is, the builder is basically copying some older instrument, and so forth.

Mid-century organs were being built with pedal divisions considerably larger than any other single division. This was a great boon for chorale-prelude literature; but for all that, a good bit of the pedal division remained as a clutter of stops on the console and pipes in the chambers, more for decoration and for impressing the layman than for frequent, necessary use.

Again, it may be taste or an attempt at historicity to omit a 4' reed on the manuals. My own preference is to include it, as I think its lack may make the ensemble sound a bit heavy and thick, especially when a 16' reed is used as well as an 8'.

While I suggested giving your input as an organist very firmly, I feel equally strongly that you need to pick a builder who will build an instrument to your taste and style preferences. Then give him as much freedom as possible. All builders have their idiosyncrasies, and you are wise and will get the best results to let them stand if possible.

Let's hope there is no philosophical conspiracy afoot in the organbuilding industry—they disagree among themselves much too much to make that convincing!

MAX B. MILLER, FAGO

The University of Illinois School of Music

proudly announces
the appointment of

Dr. Dana Robinson

who will join a faculty of
world-renowned
performers, scholars,
composers, and educators



After learning more about us,
we hope you agree with *The
New York Times*:

**"If you're a music student,
you couldn't do much better,
if at all better, than Illinois
at any price."**

*Member, National Association of
Schools of Music*

*The University of Illinois School
of Music is a unit of the
College of Fine and Applied Arts.*

Consistently ranked among the top music schools
in North America

Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral degrees in organ
performance

Outstanding performance facilities, including the
incomparable Krannert Center for the Performing
Arts and historic Smith Memorial Hall

Aoelian-Skinner, Buzard, Casavant, Dobson, Ott
and Schultz practice and performance organs
located on and near the campus

Ten choral ensembles; an early music program
under the direction of Dr. Charlotte Mattax

One of the ten largest music libraries in the United
States, with more than 750,000 volumes

Extensive financial aid program, including
scholarships, assistantships, fellowships, and
special awards for excellence in academics and
performance

A world-class research university at the leading
edge of technology, including the Beckman Institute
for Advanced Science and Technology, and the
National Center for Computer Applications

Thousands of successful alumni who are active
church musicians, composers, concert artists,
members of major symphony orchestras, leading
opera houses, and professional choral and jazz
ensembles, and leading educators at the elementary,
secondary and university levels

**For more information about organ studies at
Illinois, please contact:**

Dr. Dana Robinson
School of Music
1114 West Nevada Street
Urbana, IL 61801
<http://www.music.uiuc.edu/Music>