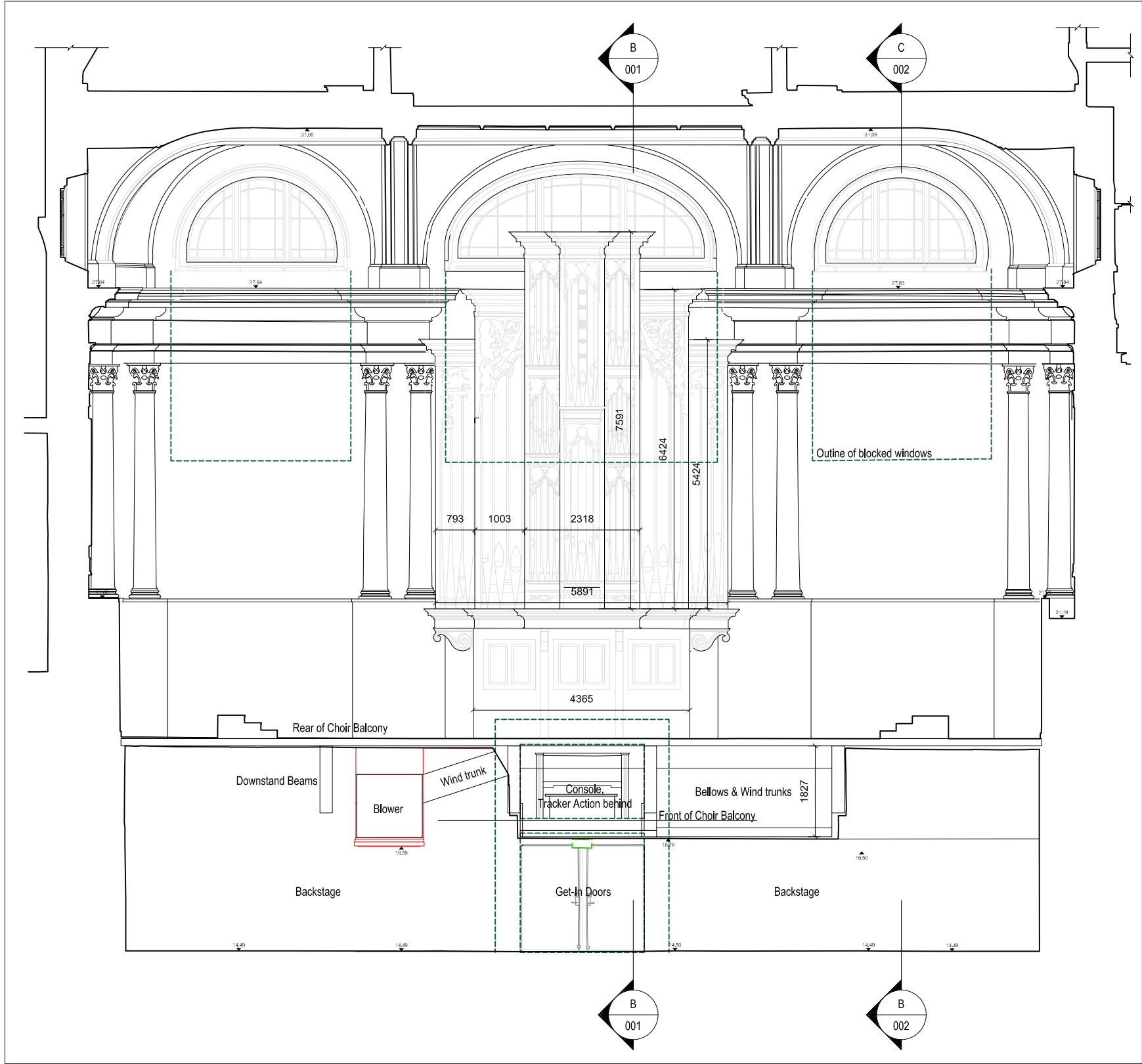
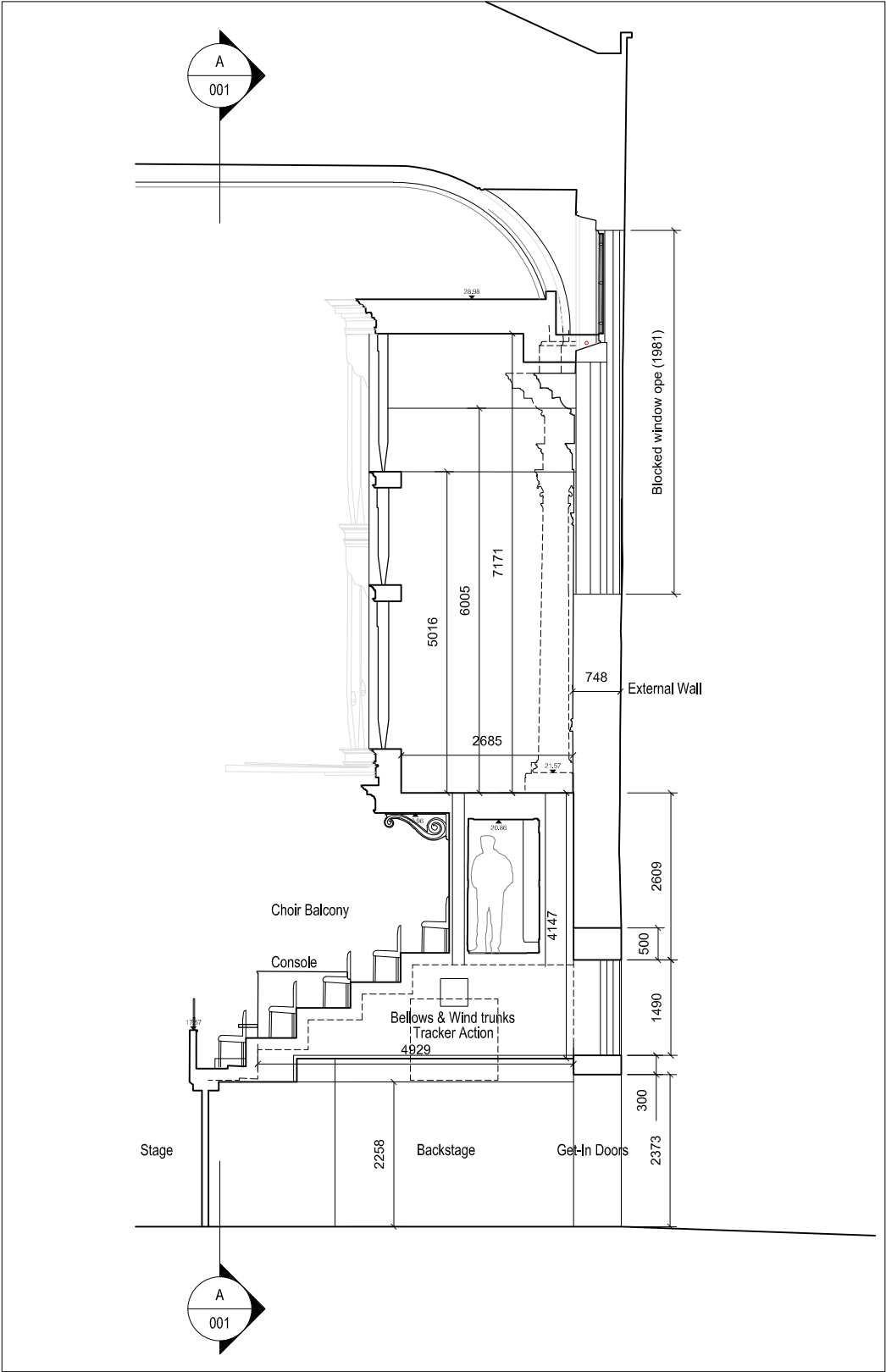






Existing Organ Siting: Part Sectional Elevation A-A
1:100 @ A3



Existing Organ Siting: Part Sectional Elevation B-B
1:100 @ A3



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Major Projects

Ciaran O'Connor FRIAI State/Principal Architect
Edel Collins MRIAI Assitant Principal Architect
Sarah Woods MRIAI Assitant Principal Architect
Colm Dunbar MRIAI Senior Architect

Drawing Revision:

Revision	Date	By	Chk'd	Description
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National Concert Hall
Earlsfort Terrace
Dublin

Drawing Title:

Organ Options
Existing Organ Siting

Project Role:

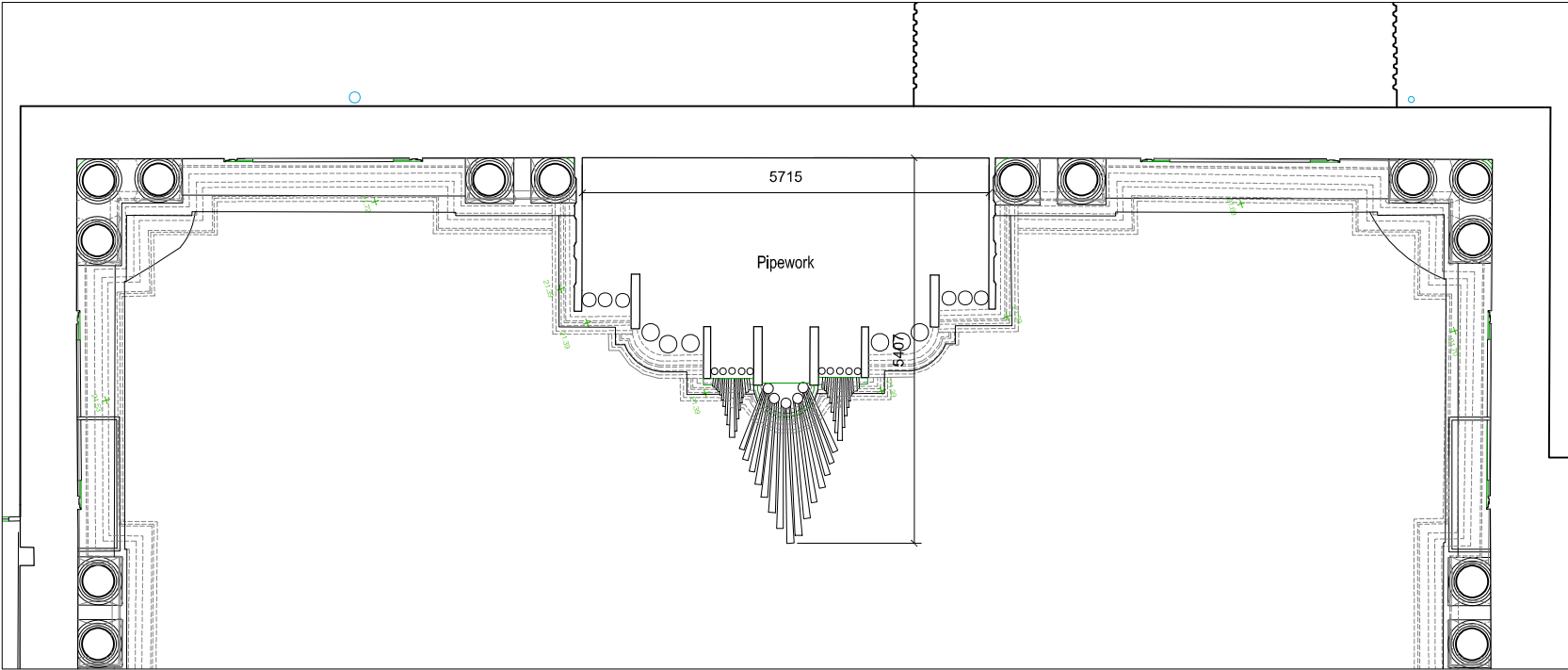
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H.16.020_08

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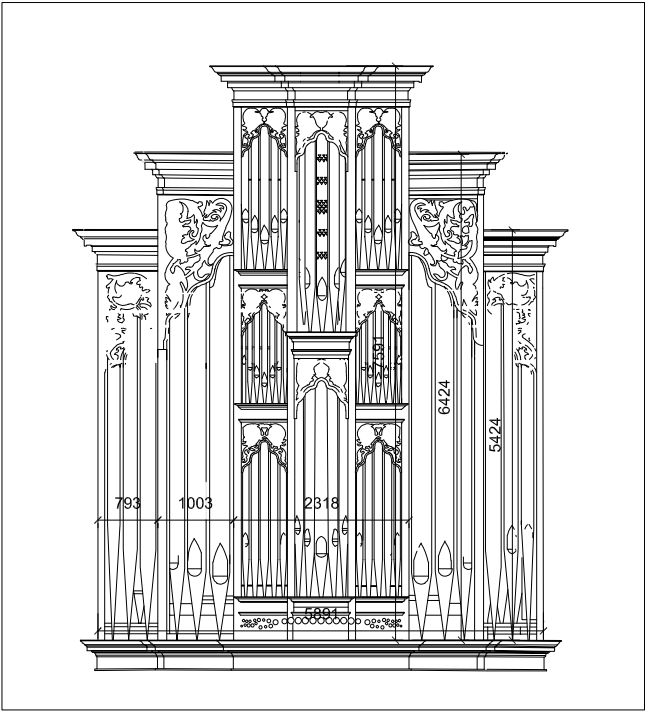
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CD			25/05/2023

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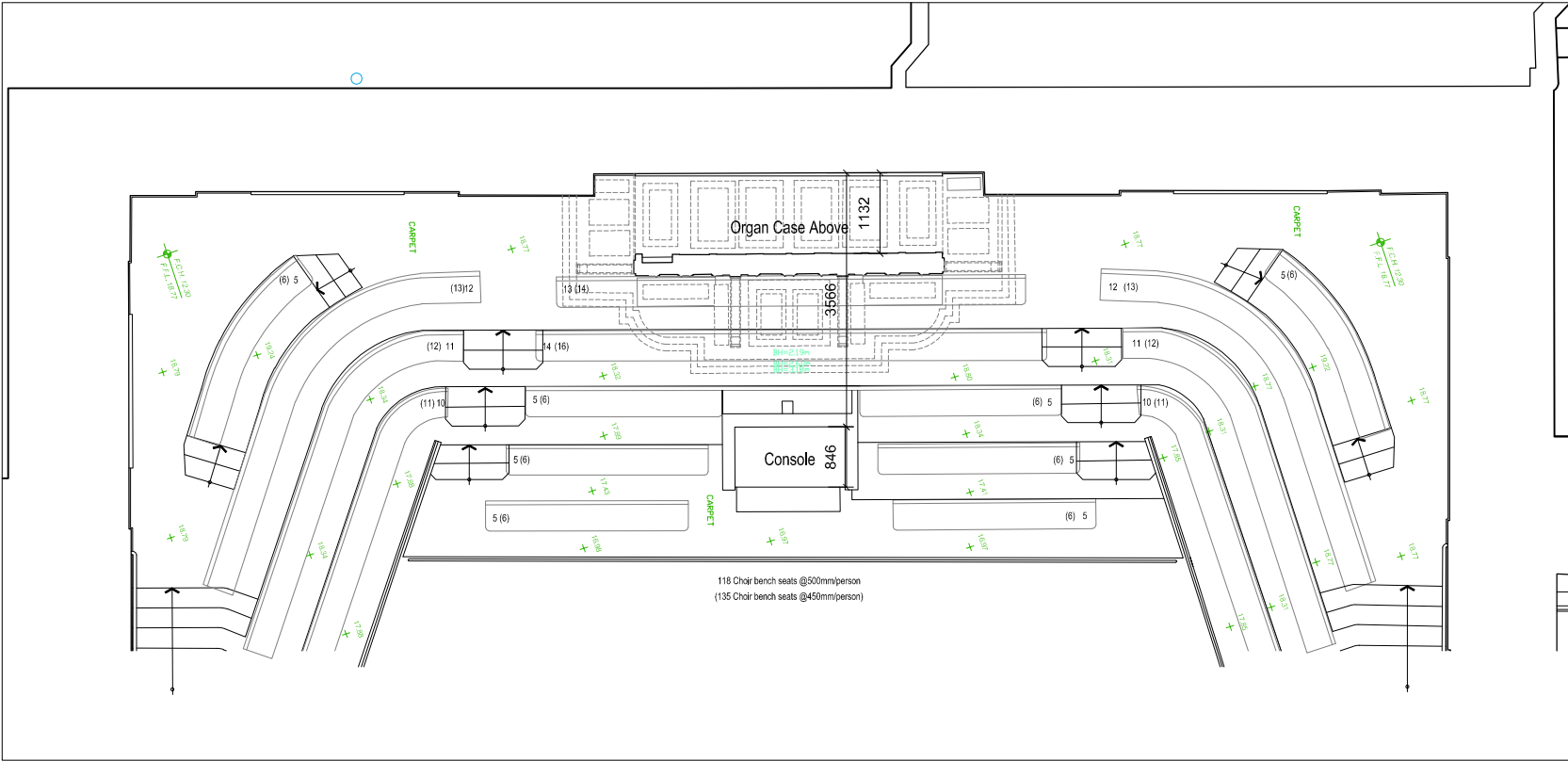
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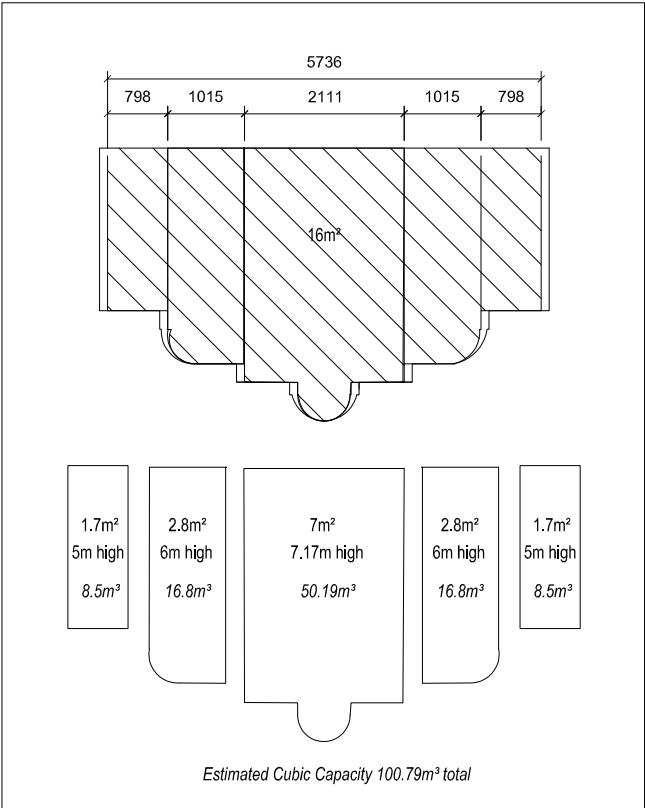
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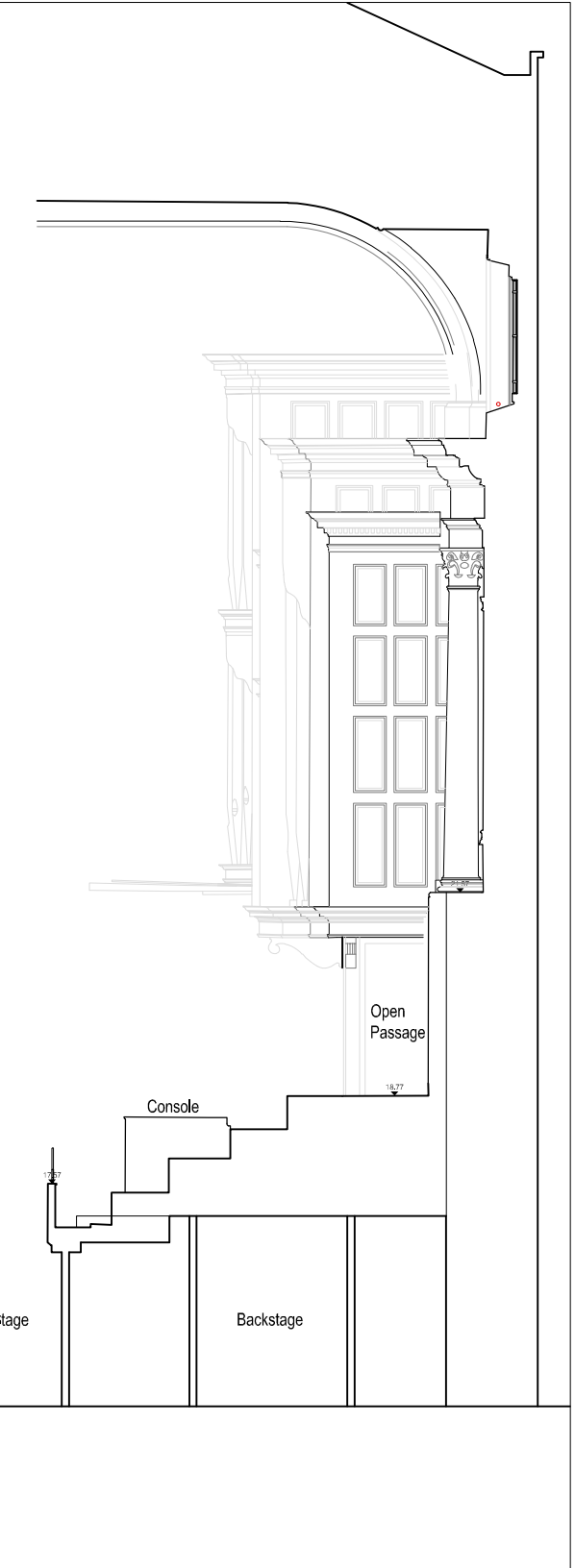
Existing Organ Casing
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Existing Organ Siting: Choir Balcony Plan
1:100 @ A3



Existing Organ Casing: Estimated Cubic Capacity
1:100 @ A3



Existing Organ: Part Sectional Elevation C-C
1:100 @ A3



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Drawing Revision:

Revision	Date	By	Chk'd	Description
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Project Title:

National Concert Hall
Earlsfort Terrace
Dublin

Drawing Title:

Organ Options
Existing Organ Siting

Project Role:

OPW Section Project Reference:

H.16.020_08

Scales at A3:

1:100

Drawn:

CD

Checked:

Approved:

Date:

25/05/2023

Status Description:

Sketch

Status Code:

SKE

Revision:

Drawing Number:

002







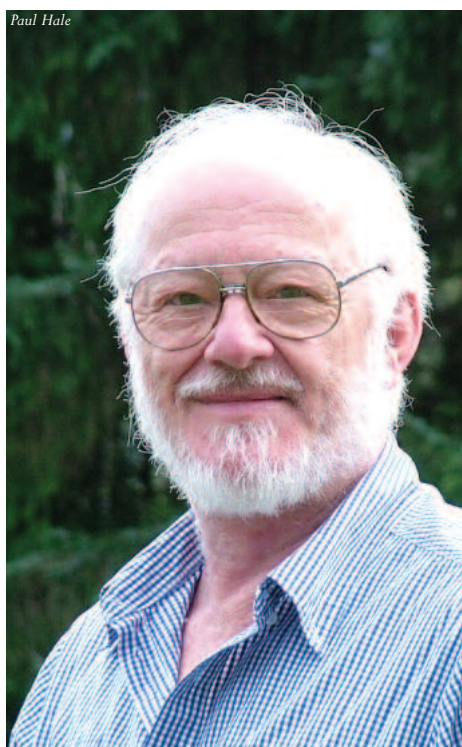
The organs of Kenneth Jones

Paul Hale

The Irish-born organ-builder Kenneth Jones, whose work is found in every continent except Antarctica, is easing into semi-retirement, handing over control of his busy company (Kenneth Jones & Associates). This is a good opportunity to look back over his long career, so I recently visited him at his beautiful home (self-designed and partly self-built, of course!) in the inspiring Wicklow hills.

‘Something old, something new’ has been an *idée fixe* throughout his career, so I thought that this column would be an appropriate place to survey his output. The front covers of *Organists’ Review* have displayed over the years numerous examples of his striking organ-cases; to our readers his work will be familiar.

As much a musician, philosopher, student of architecture and original thinker as an organ-builder, Kenneth enthuses about the early influences which drew him to organ-building, while musing that it may be an appropriate time to retire because organ design has ‘perhaps reached the end of a cul-de-sac’. An unexpected statement, one might feel, from a man who has been more richly inventive in case-design, layout and mechanism design than any of his generation. ‘There’s nothing new’ he opines ‘someone, somewhere has done it all before’. The modesty of this statement is genuine and it evidences the true philosopher – someone who continually seeks for the truths he knows to be out there. He feels that given the current decline in church-going the only likely productive future fields for the imaginative organ-builder are ‘in historical restorations (and new historical copy organs)’ and ‘new organs for concert halls, such as those springing up in the Far East’.



Born in 1936 to a Church of Ireland Rector, Kenneth heard the organ from an early age and was taught it by his mother, a skilled trained player. Early Telford organs, with their low cut-ups and musical, singing tone delighted him – as they do still, remaining one of the guiding principles of his tonal philosophy. At the same time, the brilliant virility of the 1878 T.C. Lewis organ in Christ Church, Cork, excited and inspired him. It was not just the organs themselves which provided the spur; it was musicians such as the remarkable Calvert Swanton, a skilled amateur and frequent visitor to Paris who championed the works of Dupré, Vierne, Langlais and Messiaen in Ireland, performing them regularly on the 1901 Abbott & Smith at Dun Laoghaire and bringing to Ireland players such as Langlais, Demessieux

and Dupré. The musical environment in which Kenneth found himself allowed him to develop broader interests than purely the organ – piano, harpsichord, singing, chamber music: he was involved in them all.

Boarding-school educated, Kenneth proved an able mathematician so he read for Engineering (and Arts) degrees at Trinity College, Dublin, deciding to keep music as a hobby rather than a career. On graduation he thought – as ever – ‘out of the box’, and accepted an engineering post on the rail system in Nigeria. Bereft of organs to hear or play, he took to the radio and tuned in one day to the English Language Service of Swedish Radio. There he was bowled over by the sound of a Marcussen organ being broadcast and began to seek out recordings of such organs, and recordings of the great historical instruments which inspired them – such as Helmut Walcha’s Bach at Alkmaar. He earned nearly five months leave from the tropics every couple of years or so; much of this time he spent in the Netherlands with the organ-builders Pels & Van Leeuwen, whose work he had come across in Ireland. With them he was to learn many skills such as pipe-making and tonal finishing. With them, too, he visited and studied several of the iconic Dutch instruments, even helping to tune at the Bavokerk in Haarlem, which he still regards as ‘the most beautiful organ in the world’.

Deciding the time was right to leave the railways and start up as an organ-builder, he took a ‘golden handshake’ in 1964, assembled a small team of trainees around him and did just that. Over the next eight years he built twenty-five new organs (most of them modest electric-action instruments) in Nigeria, Ghana and Sierra Leone. Two



National Concert Hall, Dublin



Trinity College, Melbourne, Australia



Parish Church, Eskra, Co. Tyrone

tracker organs were designed and built, and with them under his belt he decided to move back to Ireland and set up shop in his homeland.

Once again he assembled a team of trainees: this has always been a Jones characteristic, as he has endeavoured for the whole of his career to seek out latent talent and train the next generation of organ craftsmen. For a

while in the early 1970s a directorship of Nicholson's (the other directors/owners were Denis Thurlow and Raymond Todd) proved mutually beneficial to both firms, but very soon Kenneth Jones & Associates built up an enviable order book, mainly for new organs, in Ireland and abroad. He was set fair.

Kenneth's involvement in music

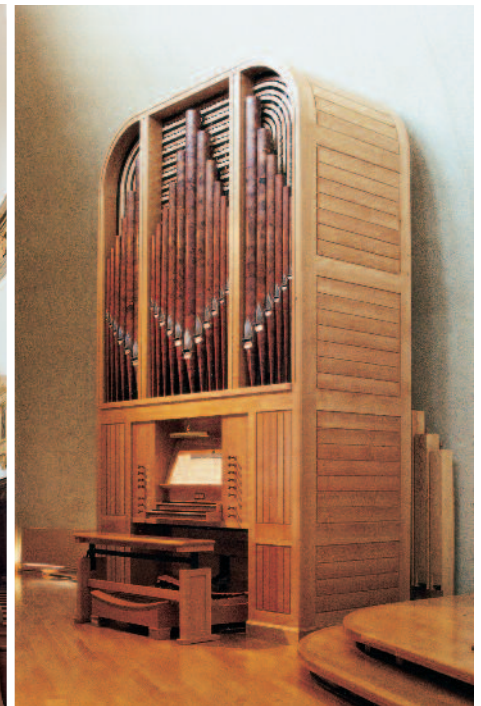
had flourished in Nigeria, as conductor of Pro Musica Lagos, an orchestra which he founded, and this continued in Ireland where he was appointed Principal Conductor of the Dublin Orchestral Players, Ireland's leading semi-professional symphony orchestra. Music has continued to be an underpinning of his craft to this day; recently he conducted the China Youth



St Mark, Anchorage, Alaska



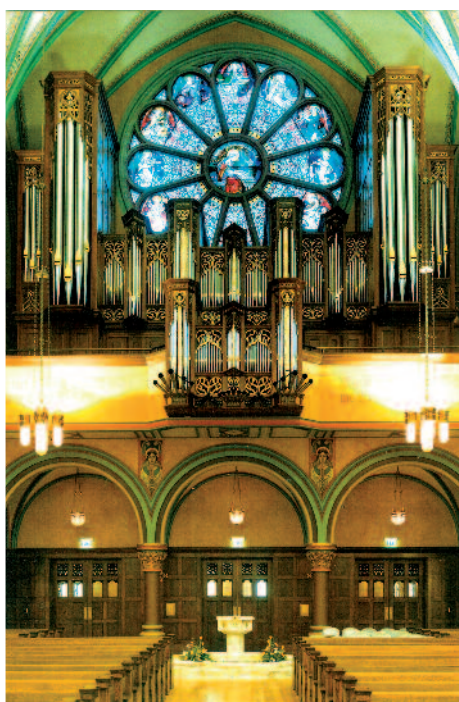
Mount St Mary's, Spinkhill, Yorks



Fukuyama, Japan



Christ Church Cathedral, Vancouver, Canada



Cathedral of the Madeleine, Salt Lake City



Holy Cross, Dundrum, Dublin

Orchestra at the inauguration of his new concert-organ in Beijing Youth Concert Hall.

His output of new organs has been remarkable – outstripping in number of organs all other companies in the UK and Ireland. Between 1973 and 2006 he and his company built six four-manual organs, fifteen three-manual organs, forty-three two-manual organs, twenty

one-manual organs and a number of house organs. Every one of these is unique and was designed personally – internally, technically and musically as well as architecturally – by Kenneth Jones (just a few of his extraordinarily varied organ-cases are illustrated here). In addition there were twenty restorations (mainly ‘historic’) and nineteen rebuildings. Much of his most interesting work has been abroad – across the USA (several in Alaska), China, Greece, Australia, Japan, Canada, Falklands (Christ Church Cathedral) and so on. In addition to work in the UK, many of his organs have naturally been for Irish clients.

What are the characteristics of a Kenneth Jones organ? Well, the first thing that is abundantly clear is that all has been thought out from scratch: Jones has never been content to make something in a particular way just because others do. This applies to every aspect of his organs – from pedalboard to tuning-slide, from key-action to pipe-scaling, from soundboard to toe-piston: all have been reconsidered from scratch, tried and tested, and then used regularly in his organs. His console design is ergonomically thought-through, as is the shape of his unique pedalboard which successfully combines the best characteristics of straight and

radiating/concave boards. His tonal designs combine – even after all this time – the sweet singing Principal choruses of his youth with the vivacious mixture-work of his ‘Marcussen-influenced’ years. Stop-lists often have a loosely English look, though fully specified with mutations and a rich palette of reeds, and he has gone through periods where particular



Youth Concert Hall, Beijing, China



Glenstal Abbey, Co. Limerick

enthusiasms are evident. One of these was a reconsideration of the concept of a 'Résonance' department acting both as a Solo Organ and as the Pedal upperwork; examples of this dating from the early 1990s may be found in such otherwise wildly dissimilar organs as those in the National Concert Hall (Dublin) and the University Church (Cambridge). His actions are respected for their elegant, light, responsive touch, aided in his largest organs by a variety of clever 'assists' (pneumatic or electric, usually involving secondary pallets) for the couplers – some of which he has revisited in later years to improve. Stop action is usually mechanical, often with electric solenoids in parallel to enable a combination action. Other firms have attempted this; few succeed. His recent beautiful organ (a recreation and development of a rare organ by Thomas

Elliot, 1817) in Waterford Cathedral succeeds triumphantly in its stop action – each stop having a sensor to ensure its on/off current is supplied just long enough to draw/withdraw it silently, however broad the slide.

Jones's organ-cases are striking: each of his imaginative case-designs is quite different (no 'samey' standard re-used CAD work here); readers over the years will have come to appreciate the enormous range he has shown, from historically-inspired to a variety of 'contemporary' styles. He has also been known, like several famous organ-builders of the past, for managing to lay out an organ internally getting in more than most would have considered possible, yet leaving all accessible. Great challenges in design and layout include, of course, the historic organ at Tewkesbury Abbey, perhaps an instrument by which he will be best

remembered in the UK, for many of his other British organs are in university or school chapels and are therefore rather less in the public eye: Rugby School (for which he received the *Jeu d'Esprit* award of the Royal Fine Art Commission Trust in 2002), Loretto School, Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and Mount St Mary's College (near Sheffield) are among the latter.

A book would be needed – is needed – adequately to do justice to the lifetime achievements of Kenneth Jones. All this article has space for is a modest résumé of his career and a small selection of photographs of his remarkable output. In the next issue, we will print more photographs and I will carry on assessing Jones's work by looking in detail at a number of his organs and in discussing with him his views on various aspects of tonal and mechanical design.

Colin Andrews

Concert Organist, Lecturer, East Carolina University

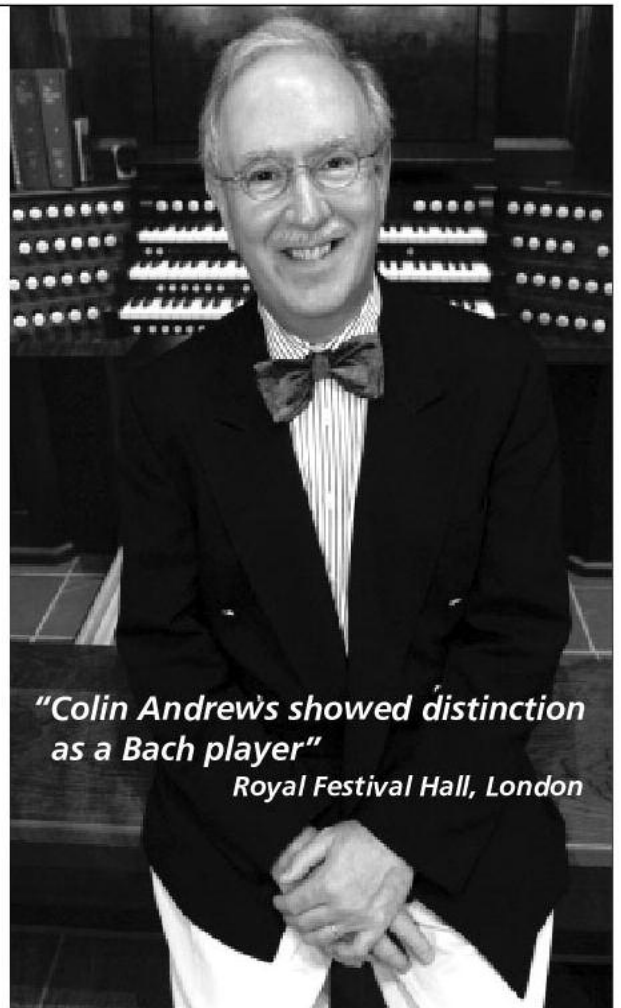
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The Gramophone

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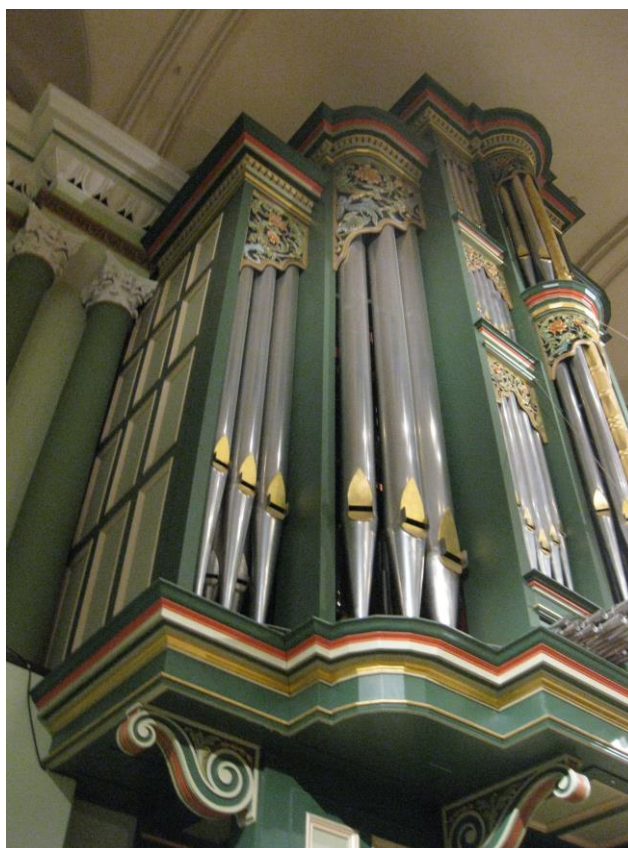
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*"Colin Andrews showed distinction
as a Bach player"*
Royal Festival Hall, London

A Report
regarding the
Kenneth Jones Organ
in the
National Concert Hall, Dublin



Dr John P Rowntree

July 2017

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A Report regarding the Kenneth Jones Organ in the National Concert Hall, Dublin

The purpose of this report is:

1 to provide a review of the organ

2 to assess work that has been undertaken on it

3 make recommendations as to future work required

The Organ

The organ was built by Kenneth Jones, of Bray in 1991. The stop-list is appended for reference in relation to this report. The building of the organ was a bold and thoughtful statement and there was clearly significant - indeed proper - national pride in 1991 in the placing of such an instrument in the National Concert Hall, and especially in it being built by an Irish organ-builder.

It is however important to consider the context in which the organ was conceived and built. The latter part of the 20th century saw the revival of the classical organ, with its roots in the baroque period though, as the end of the century approached, there was growing re-consideration of the romantic repertory. This is reflected in the Jones organ, though I think it would be fair to say that Jones' development as an organ-builder had been consistently within a neo-classical framework. A further element in the thinking was that of the concert-hall organ as it developed in the 19th century. The organ thus set out to meet multiple demands of both the solo organ repertory and that of performance in conjunction with both chorus and orchestra in a major public space. In the words of Jones:

The scheme of four manuals and pedals, six divisions, is conceived as having organic unity but in which it may be said that two distinct three-manual organs are discovered - one providing all the appropriate dynamics, balances and tone colours appropriate to the classical repertoire of the various historical national schools while the other serves the requirements of the romantic and symphonic repertoire with particular reference to the fact that this is a concert organ.

The organ had mechanical action for the manuals, with some pneumatic coupling and pallet assistance, and electrical stop and combination action.

The organ was provided with an outstanding case, beautifully matching the Hall in proportion, detail and colour. It should be regarded as a highly significant contribution to the Hall. Indeed, I would suggest that it is probably the most significant single artefact in the NCH complex, and the equal of many very fine organ cases of all periods. It is also worth commenting that the case is an artistic presence within the Hall that is seen by everyone who comes into the Hall, whether the organ is sounding or not.

The Organ-builder

The Jones workshop was a modest one and much of the material, and some of the execution was sub-contracted. In an RTE broadcast just prior to the building of the NCH organ Jones describes his custom of ordering pipes, blowers, mechanical parts, electrical parts, keyboards etc., from outside suppliers. This said, the materials selected and used were all of good quality and the work well executed.

Appraisal

The Report by Ian Bell of 2008 is a model of clarity in its assessment of the organ mechanisms. My inspection confirms his description of the mechanisms, materials and construction. There would appear no reason simply to repeat his comments. On my visit the organ appeared to be in essentially the same condition as when inspected by Bell - now some nine years ago. Other than one or two notes not sounding, the organ was entirely functional, though it was not possible to check the function of the electronic memory systems without disturbance to the existing settings.

In reviewing the organ on the Friday of my visit I was able to hear the organ from both the body of the hall and the balcony in rehearsal and performance with orchestra of the late-romantic period Sinfonia Sacra by Widor, and in the Chorale Fantasia 'Ein feste Burg' by Reger for solo organ. The following day I heard the organ in a concert given by four student soloists performing works by Bach and Brahms.

I was also able to make a detailed internal inspection of the organ on the Sunday morning with Derek Byrne, of Kenneth Jones Pipe Organs present and continue this in the afternoon with David McElderry, an Accredited Organ Builder, of Wells-Kennedy Partnership. In my view the complexity and difficulty of access to the interior of the organ is such that it was not just helpful, but essential, to have an appropriate person present on each occasion

In reviewing the organ, its performance in the Hall with orchestra must be the starting point for any consideration.

The Widor Sinfonia Sacra is a work with a relatively small orchestra - (reduced) strings, oboe, clarinet, trumpet, three trombones and timpani. In relatively quiet passages using foundation stops, where the organ alternated with the orchestra, both balance and tonal colour were satisfactory. When the organ was playing in conjunction with the strings the presence of the organ diminished noticeably and, when the strings were joined by woodwind and brass, the organ was only just present. This raises the question as to how the organ will balance in relation to a large orchestra and chorus. Much of the organ figuration in the Widor was simply inaudible in the Hall. The organ simply lacked breadth and drama.

In the solo Ein feste Burg by Reger, a major solo work requiring considerable resources and power, the organ had an increased presence with the use of the State Trumpet and (I suspect) octave couplers. It is questionable however as to whether or not the State Trumpet should play such a significant role in the tutti.

In the Bach and Brahms recitals it was possible to hear a variety of appropriate sonorities for both areas of the repertoire. Whilst accepting these were student performances - some of which were indeed pleasing - nevertheless the organ appeared to be somewhat pallid.

The Hall and its Acoustic

In considering the projection and tonal colours of the organ the acoustic of the hall is clearly a significant factor. I am not an acoustician and can only consider this from the point of view of a performing musician, but there were a number of factors which struck me when listening in the hall. The orchestra seemed to benefit from a relatively resonant platform, especially the bass. In addition the overall orchestral sound appeared to benefit from the smooth, hard, underside areas of the balcony and for the sound to be contained very much at the lower level of the hall.

The organ, by contrast, projects its sound into the upper level of the hall. This has large surface areas of 'acoustic' panelling constructed of plywood with loose soft material behind the slotted surfaces. These panels, in my view not only have a negative effect on orchestral sound but especially on the organ sound and its projection. Added to this is the negative effect of the array of gantrys, speakers and lights hung from the ceiling and the very broken ceiling area. It should also be noted that the visual impact of the organ is totally negated from the balcony by this array of equipment. The shape of the hall is traditionally a good one for sound but it seems to me that this is diminished by the treatment of the surfaces.

In any consideration of the organ, an improvement in the acoustics for music in the hall should be a significant consideration.

Internal inspection

Turning to my inspection of the interior of the organ I would confirm that the pipework, wind-chests and wind supply are of good materials and well made. The mechanical action is also of good materials and parts. The wind supply seemed adequate, though the winding of the Positive division was not stable. The reason for this was unclear. The electrical wiring and switching systems are on the whole neatly done but there remains, as in 2008, one area of very untidy wiring.

The fact that the mechanical action, despite the difficulty of access and maintenance, appears to have functioned overall in a relatively trouble-free manner is a credit to the original builder.

There are however a variety of issues of relating to the interior of the organ that should be considered.

The first is that of access to all working parts of the organ. At the lowest level of the hall behind the platform there are small trap-doors with unfixed ladders which give constricted access to both the wind supply - bellows - and action. The bellows, wedge and single rise, are very tightly packed into a very restricted area with a low ceiling height

Access to the main sections of the organ above impost level is from the walkway behind the choir seating. It is exceptionally poor. An unfixed wooden ladder leads to a small trap-door, the entry through the trap door is partially blocked by a wind-trunk, care is then needed to avoid hitting one's head on a sharp steel joist, with room just to wriggle onto a narrow walk-board which gives access to the key-action below the main wind-chests.

At the next level are the Bombarde, Great and Solo divisions. The Bombarde pipework is placed immediately behind the facade and in front of the Great pipework. The placing of pipes from the Gedeckt Pommer - seemingly a late addition to the scheme - at the front of the Great wind-chest compounds the tight access space in relation to the walk-board.

Behind the Great/Solo wind-chest and the rear wall is a walk-board so narrow that it is virtually impossible to traverse it without coming into contact with the Positive action.

Above the entry hatch a vertical iron ladder gives access to the Positive and above that the Swell organ. The ladder rises relatively close to the front case-pipes, a not entirely happy arrangement.

I have dwelt on the matter of access at some length since straightforward access to the interior of the organ is vital so that it can be well-maintained without excessive or wasteful expenditure, and thus ensure the long-term good functioning of the organ.

In my view the constricted access to the action and pipe-work arises from more stops being placed in the space available for the organ than was wise. The demand for a large stop-list, in an attempt to meet all areas of the organ repertoire, effectively compromised the organ layout.

Layout

Turning to the matter of layout, it could be argued that placing the Bombarde division behind the prospect, and directly in front of the Great/Solo wind-chest, inhibits the projection of the Great and Solo. The placement of the Great/Solo wind-chest so far back from the front of the organ may also be seen as inhibiting projection.

The fact that the Great and Solo organs are placed on one wind-chest means that the two divisions are on the same wind pressure. It might be expected that the Solo Organ, with its Grand Mixture, would have been on a higher wind pressure than the Great, and consequently have had a greater impact on full organ.

While the majority of the manual pipe-work stands on the main wind-chests, there are related, 'off-note', bass pipes placed in positions nearby. Whilst this is not entirely unusual it also makes for a constricted space and weaker projection.

The Pedal Organ is in reality very small, just three stops, one of which, the Subbass 16', is extended to be playable 32' and 8' pitches.

It has to be said that the placement of the Pedal in such cramped circumstances at the sides of the organ is not helpful in terms of projection. In an attempt to overcome the limitation of the small number of Pedal stops three digital 'voices' have been added, however, the impact of the digital voices does not seem to me significant.

The Console and Actions

On my visit the console was all in functioning order. This said, the uncoupled action lacks the sensitivity that should be the hallmark of a good mechanical action.

In the first instance pneumatic mechanisms were employed to alleviate weight of touch in an organ with a large number of stops. It is not surprising that in an organ of this size such assistance was required initially to overcome the weight of touch in the bass, and in relation to the coupled touch. These pneumatic mechanisms did not prove adequate to the task and were replaced by electrical coupling.

It is interesting to note that not long after the completion of the NCH organ Jones discussed the problems associated with such mechanisms in a paper for the 1996 International Society of Organ-builders Congress in Cambridge.

It has to be said that when the electrical coupling is used, whilst it reduces the weight of coupled touch, it further reduces the benefit of mechanical action.

In considering the matter of touch, the position of the console, whilst beneficial in terms of contact with the orchestral platform, inevitably results in a long horizontal action run. This in turn adds to the weight of key-touch and adversely affects the sensitivity of the action.

The toe and thumb pistons were all working except for two thumb pistons below the Solo keyboard.

Recent work on the organ

These comments relate to an outline of expenditure provided to me by the Hall.

In 2005 '32ft enhancement' is noted, followed by the application of electrical coupling and assistance mechanisms, revision of the action tensioning and electro-pneumatic chests for pipes not standing on the main wind-chests. The total cost was €169,000

I am unclear as to the meaning of '32ft enhancement', costing €20,000. Was this an attempt to increase the volume of the Jones stop?

The application of electrical coupling systems appears to have been done neatly, the same can be said for the electro-pneumatic chests insofar as access was possible - though the original plastic wind conducts have been left in-situ and are unsightly. Without knowledge of the previous arrangement it is not possible at this point to determine the extent of improvements to tuning and access.

In 2006 there was the provision of a new high-pressure blower for the Bombarde division - clearly this was an attempt to increase the loudness of the division - the Bombarde stops being cleaned and re-voiced at the time. There was also cleaning and regulation of flue pipes. At this point in time it is not possible to draw any conclusion as to the necessity for this work, nor its effectiveness. Added to this was the commissioning of added Pedal resources - three digital voices - couplers, combination action and note switching system and tuning. The total cost was €44,000. Again it would appear that the extended provision of octave couplers and digital voices were an attempt to increase the loudness of the organ.

In 2008 self-closing trap-doors were supplied at a cost of €16,000 and a humidifier was installed costing €26,000. Both of these appear appropriate courses of action.

In 2010 the Swell Fagotto, Oboe and Cornopean were cleaned at a cost of €6,500, and in 2014 the Swell chamber, and presumably the pipe-work, were cleaned and overhauled at a cost of €27,000. The extent of this work seems strange since the Swell organ is enclosed and is unlikely to become unduly affected by dirt. Further the quality of the pipework is such that 'overhauling', whatever that may mean, so soon in the lifetime of the organ seems curious.

In 2016 there was emergency work, followed by re-leathering as a result of de-lamination of the leather, coupled with removal and cleaning of pipes, costing a total of €54,862. The difficulty of obtaining good quality leather at around this time has been commented on by organ-builders other than Jones. The 2016 work appears to have been done satisfactorily, no defects were evident, however it is difficult to comment on the level of cost.

Work was proposed in 2006, cleaning of the organ and pipes throughout, estimated at €54,000, supply of pipes, chests and action for enhancement of the specification costing €47,000. Also proposed was revision of wind pressures and re-voicing of the whole organ €51,000. As yet this work has not been carried out.

At the present time it appears that the existing capture system will be replaced and new thumb pistons and key-slips will be provided. The existing system did not show any malfunction on my visit but I understand the current system has caused problems in recent times. Such electrical malfunction does tend to be erratic and, as mentioned, I was unwilling to disturb any of the settings on my visit.

I note that the proposed capture - memory system allows for possible changes to the stop-list. This proposal to enhance the stop-list, as I understand it, is to change the stops of the Solo Organ and change the Open Diapason on the Great Organ. It is a course of action which would seem to me not only premature, but unwise.

Arising from the various works undertaken on the organ there is the matter of the environment within and around the organ.

There appears to me to have been a process of continual cleaning since the installation of the organ that is far more than might have been expected.

On my visit there were two areas where dirt was a significant factor. The rear wall behind the organ is in a poor state and some poor and minimal 'repair' work is evident. The plaster is loose and plaster grit and dirt were found on surfaces at the rear of the organ. In this context it is unfortunate that the organ did not have a timber back. This could have been helpful tonally and prevented such dirt being deposited in the organ. This said, I am surprised that the wall was not put into good repair before the organ was installed, or alternatively, that it has deteriorated to its present state since the organ was installed. Since the organ did not have a timber back it should have been essential that the rear wall was solid and reflective.

There is a second area of dirt at the front of the organ. This appears to emanate from the main body of the Hall. On the upper edges of the case mouldings and on the top of the horizontal State Trumpet, and on the inside of the Bombarde pipes is a substantial layer of fluffy material and dirt. This appears to me to result largely from the relatively soft fabric on the seating in the Hall being brushed off with continual use, and floating up towards the organ. It may be that the heating system plays a part in this deposit.

This said, other than the two areas mentioned above, the greater part of the organ appeared to have no more dirt present than might be expected.

All in all, this is a clear reminder that the traditional way of building an organ with full encasement has both acoustic and practical merit.

Review

In reviewing the work that has been undertaken over the years it is evident that the interventions have been piecemeal and palliative. What is clear is the continuing attempt to increase the power and effectiveness of the organ in solo performance and in particular when orchestral and choral forces are present.

Having heard the organ in a variety of contexts, my opinion is that the attempts have not been successful. What is more they have involved substantial expenditure, seemingly over €350,000. While the work done cannot be said to have been unsatisfactory, nevertheless the sum involved is indeed considerable.

With a view to the future it would be worth reviewing the procedures in relation to the initiation, authorisation and supervision of such work.

It is important to consider **why** the organ does not make the expected musical impact in the Hall. There appear to me to be several factors:

First, Jones' development as an organ-builder in the neo-classical style could be said to have resulted in a relatively lightweight approach to chorus-work. In the NCH, for example, the full Principal plenum, which is almost totally dependent upon mixture-work for power, does not reach a level beyond that of a secondary rather than primary division. I would also suggest that mixture-work in general tends not to blend with orchestral sound unless there is sufficient richness at foundation stop level. In addition the Great Trumpet is simply weak.

It should be said that Jones is not alone in providing a concert-hall organ in neo-classical vein which lacks presence when used in conjunction with an orchestra.

Secondly, and to my mind importantly, the organ design appears to have been too heavily influenced by the wish for a large, wide-ranging stop-list. The result being that the layout of the organ was responding to the demands of the number of stops wished for rather than to the space available and good projection.

That the stop-list was thoughtful in its intent is not in question. However, Jones's concept of the Bombarde division, as augmenting the Great and Solo and Pedal organs in terms of richness and power, whilst appropriate in principle, has not worked out in practice, the reeds are too thin-toned. In addition the Solo Organ, on the same wind-chest as the Great, does not add the weight that might be expected. The Positive is very small scale and weak in projection, adding little to the tutti. Indeed, the foundation Gedeckt 8' on the Positive provides little more than might be expected from such a stop in a box organ. The Swell organ has a good position but remains bland. As commented above, the Pedal organ has little chance to speak well from its cramped location at the sides of the chamber.

It might also be suggested that the wish to perform a large section of the organ repertoire on the organ is one possible reason for the tonal colours being somewhat monochrome, the flutes lacking warmth and resonance and the reeds lacking fire - or harmonic development.

Overall, the result is an organ which is unduly cramped and unable to project and expand tonally into the Hall.

Thirdly, the matter of the sensitivity of the key action requires consideration. While locating the console on the front edge of the balcony was attractive in bringing the player close to the conductor, the result is an action with considerable horizontal travel. This entails a lengthy complex action run, the trackers running under the balcony seating, travelling up the channel at the front of the balcony walkway, and then having further horizontal travel before reaching the soundboards. From the point of view of the sensitivity of the action the console would have been better located beneath the main prospect of the organ. There is also the matter of pallet size and how best in a large organ to reduce the weight of touch from the pallet and then when keyboards are coupled together. This is an area where there has been much thought and development in recent years.

All of this said, it is however all-too-easy to comment with the benefit of hindsight.

The project as undertaken in 1991 was a serious and thoughtful approach to the provision of a substantial and significant organ for the NCH. It was also undertaken with care and skill, as is evidenced by the fine case, and the continuing functioning of the mechanical action, the wind supply, the wind-chests, the pipes standing on them, and the materials employed.

The outcome of every individual artistic endeavour cannot be predicted with certainty. That the organ-builder had experience which made the choice of him realistic, is clear. That the outcome has not fully met expectations is also clear.

The question is now how should the weaknesses outlined above be resolved. What course of action should be adopted from this point onwards?

First, the organ should continue to be as well-maintained as possible as it stands without significant tonal or mechanical change. Discussion is needed as to how this might best be achieved.

In seeking a solution to the perceived weaknesses of the organ as outlined above I would suggest that the NCH should invite two, or at most three, organ-builders with a proven track record in building organs which fulfil the requirements of musical performance in concert halls to visit the NCH, make proposals, and provide budget costs to remedy these weaknesses. It might also be the case that it would be apt to consider the matter of maintenance, both short-term and longer, with such organ-builders. I would be happy to discuss possible organ-builders, draw up a letter of invitation/brief and, if felt appropriate, meet them on-site.

There is also the position of the firm of Kenneth Jones Pipe Organs Ltd, which currently maintains the organ and has undertaken work on the organ, though there appears to be no formal maintenance contract in place, and recent work appears to have been done has been on a piece-meal basis. I am unclear as to the precise relationship of the firm at present, under the direction of Derek Byrne, to that of the Kenneth Jones firm at the time of the building of the organ. This said, in view of the involvement of the firm with the organ, it might also be felt appropriate for the firm to be invited to make proposals in the same vein.

At present the splendid architectural presence of the organ in the Hall is not matched by its tonal presence. It is hoped that the approach outlined above will result in an organ with an appropriately sensitive action and a rich, singing sound to match the grandeur of the case.

Dr John P Rowntree
July 3, 2017

The Kenneth Jones organ (1991/2006) in the National Concert Hall, Dublin
Stoplist

Great Organ

Trumpet 8
Gedeckt Pommer 16
Principal 8
Spitzflute 8
Octave 4
Wood Flute 4
Superoctave 2
Nachthorn 2
Mixture IV–V 2
Cymbal II–III ½
Mounted Cornet V (c25)
Tremulant

Bombarde Organ

Bombarde 16
Trumpet 8
Clarion 4
State Trumpet (horizontal) 8

Positive Organ

Gedekt 8
Principal 4
Rohrflute 4
Nazard 2 2/3
Octave 2
Blockflute 2
Tierce 1 3/5
Larigot 1 1/3
Scharf IV 1
Curtal 16
Crumhorn 8
Tremulant

Swell Organ

Bourdon 16
Flute 8
Salicional 8
Voix Celeste 8
Principal 4
Coppelflute 4
Nazard 2 2/3
Octavin 2
Tierce 1 3/5
Mixture V 2
Contra Fagotto 16
Cornopean 8

Oboe 8
Voix Humaine 8
Tremulant

Solo Organ

Principal 8
Harmonic flute 8
Gamba 8
Octave 4
Open Flute 4
Grand Mixture IV 2 2/3
Clarinet 8

Pedal Foundation (**generated electronically*)

Subbass 32 (*Extension of Subbass 16*)
Principal 16
Subbass 16
Bass Flute 8 (*Extension of Subbass 16*)
Posaune 16

Major Bass* 32
Open Wood* 16
Bombarde* 32

Couplers

Bombarde to Great
Solo Suboctave to Great
Solo to Great
Solo Octave to Great
Swell Suboctave to Great
Swell to Great
Swell Octave to Great
Positive to Great

Swell to Positive

Bombarde to Pedal
Solo to Pedal
Swell to Pedal
Great to Pedal
Positive to Pedal

Full complement of accessories

Mechanical key action, electric manual coupling, electric stop action

Manual compass C-c 61 notes

Pedal compass C-g 32 notes