

## CHAPEL ORGAN DEDICATION

On April 14, 1991, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary brought to a grand finale a project which had been on its drawing board for over five years and had been hoped for for almost 30 years. At long last it became possible to replace the aging chapel organ with a new, classically voiced pipe organ. April 14 was the day of dedication for the new instrument, and the small seminary chapel was filled to overflowing for two services, one at 3:00 p.m. and another identical service at 5:00 p.m.

The dedication services consisted of a half-hour recital and a short service of dedication and praise. Guest organist for the day was a 1983 seminary graduate, Pastor Bryan M. Gerlach, pastor of St. Mark Church, Citrus Heights, California. His recital selections displayed not only the organ's tonal capabilities but also the church-year-based music of Lutheran composers.

In addition to a selection of chorale preludes, Gerlach brought into use the fullness of the instrument as he performed the "Prelude and Fugue in E flat Major" by Johann Sebastian Bach. The organ consultant, Dr. Edward H. Meyer, of Dr. Martin Luther College, was at the organ during the Rite of Dedication. Leading the service was organ committee member Prof. David Valleskey. The undersigned, who served as chairman of the Organ Committee, preached the sermon on Philippians 4:8-9. The Rite of Dedication was read by Prof. emeritus Martin Albrecht, the long-time Director of Music at the seminary and faithful advocate of the organ project. A festival setting of the hymn, "When in Our Music God Is Glorified," was commissioned by the Organ Committee for the dedication services and was composed by Mr. Elfred Bloedel, Music Director at Grace Church, Milwaukee.

The new organ is Opus 54 of the Martin Ott Pipe Organ Company of St. Louis, Missouri. It is an instrument of 19 voices (stops) and 23 ranks, with space provided for an additional two rank pedal stop. It employs mechanical action throughout and stands in an oak case against the back wall of the seminary chapel. The silver facade pipes against the deeply stained oak make the new organ a striking addition to the chapel furnishings.

The new organ is much more than a piece of splendid furniture, however. Its classical sounds are adding much to the music and singing of those who assemble for regular morning worship. The music of the great Lutheran musicians, past and present, is played on the instrument with a vitality and vibrancy which was impossible on the older instrument.

Past issues of the *Quarterly* have kept its readers advised of the project's advancement. A quick review will call to mind that the organ project had been approved by the seminary's board in 1986 and that a special offering on the occasion of the seminary's 125th anniversary was designated for the new instrument.

Sufficient monies were not available to proceed with the project until January 1989, and in March of that year a contract was signed with the Martin Ott Company. Since the time of the anniversary, certain undesignated gifts which have been offered to the seminary have been earmarked for the organ fund. The actual cost of the organ itself has now been almost covered by offerings. About \$12,000 will need to be received in the months ahead to cover the total cost of the project.

The following comments, included in the dedication brochure, are from the son of a Lutheran pastor who studied with Luther at Wittenberg. They indicate something of the rich heritage we share as this new organ is dedicated to the glory of God and the service of his people:

"Almighty God can never be given sufficient thanks for having granted to man in his mercy and great goodness such gifts as have enabled him to achieve such a perfect creation and instrument of music as is the organ in its arrangement and construction and to play upon it with hands and with feet in such a manner that God in heaven may be praised, his worship adorned and man moved and inspired to Christian devotion." - Michael Praetorius, 1619.

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