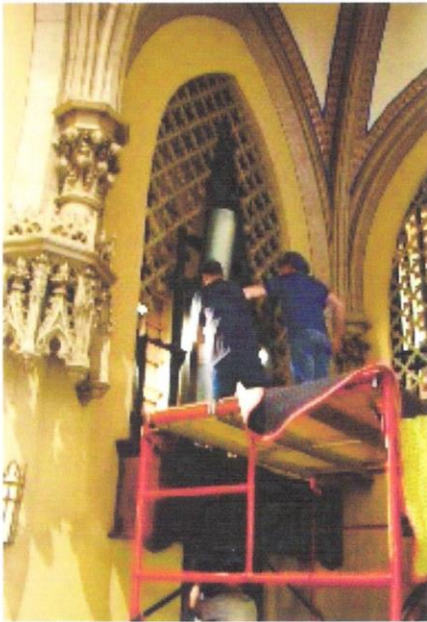


# St. Ita's Catholic Church—Chicago, Illinois—68 ranks

## H. A. Howell Pipe Organs, Inc.—Sterling, Illinois—opus 94 (2003)



installing the full-length 32 Ophecleide

### HOWELL OPUS 94 & WICKS OPUS 2918

The grand Wicks opus 2918 was a landmark organ in 1950's Chicago. Modeled after the instrument in St. Mary's Cathedral, Peoria, the St. Ita's organ was reputedly the largest Wicks had then built.

During the course of the next 50 years, the mechanism sustained such serious damage from water leaks and falling plaster that a simple restoration was not feasible. A new stop list was designed. All of the mechanism was replaced except for the Great chests, the console shell and manual keyboards. Existing stops were extensively revoiced and rescaled, pressures adjusted, and swell expressions increased more than four-fold. New stops were carefully voiced to fit the ensemble. A new Bombarde division was created so that the Great chorus could be voiced to balance the Swell. St. Ita's splendid French Flamboyant Revival architecture inspired the creation of an instrument capable of playing the French repertoire of all periods.

### Solo

- 8 Stentorphone
- 8 Claribel Flute
- 8 Viol d'Orchestre
- 8 Viol Celeste
- 4 Claribel Flute
- 16 Trombone
- 8 Tromba
- 8 French Horn
- 8 Orchestral Oboe
- 8 Clarinet
- 4 Clarion
- Tremulant*
- 8 English Tuba
- Solo 16, Unison Off, 4*
- Bombarde on Solo*

### Great

- 16 Bourdon
- 8 Open Diapason
- 8 Gemshorn
- 8 Harmonic Flute
- 8 Stopped Diapason
- 8 Chimney Flute
- 4 Octave
- 4 Octave Flute
- 2 $\frac{2}{3}$  Twelfth
- 2 Fifteenth
- III Mixture
- IV Harmonics
- 8 Trumpet
- 4 Clarion
- Great 4, Unison Off*
- Great Reeds on Choir*

### Bombarde

- 32 Bourdon
- 16 Open Diapason
- 8 Octave
- 4 Super Octave
- II Grave Mixture
- IV Mixture
- V Grand Cornet

### Swell

- 16 Contra Salicional
- 16 Bourdon
- 8 Open Diapason
- 8 Salicional
- 8 Voix Celeste
- 8 Stopped Flute
- 4 Octave
- 4 Block Flute
- 2 $\frac{2}{3}$  Nazard
- 2 Hohl Flute
- 1 $\frac{3}{5}$  Tierce
- IV Mixture
- 16 Bassoon
- 8 Trompette
- 8 Oboe
- 8 Voix Humaine
- 4 Clairon
- Tremulant*
- Swell 16, Unison Off, 4*
- Tuba Fanfare*

### Choir

- 16 Contra Dulciana
- 8 Geigen Principal
- 8 Gedackt
- 8 Dulciana
- 8 Unda Maris
- 4 Octave
- 4 Chimney Flute
- 2 $\frac{2}{3}$  Nazard
- 2 Flageolet
- 1 $\frac{3}{5}$  Tierce
- 1 $\frac{1}{3}$  Quint
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$  Septieme
- 1 Siff flute
- 8 Trompette
- 8 Cromorne
- 4 Clairon
- Tremulant*
- 8 English Tuba
- Choir 16, Unison Off, 4*
- Bombarde on Choir*

### Pedal

- 32 Bourdon
- 16 Open Wood
- 16 Open Diapason
- 16 Contra Salicional (SW)
- 16 Contra Dulciana (CH)
- 16 Sub Bass
- 16 Lieblich Bourdon (SW)
- 8 Octave
- 8 Gemshorn (GT)
- 8 Flute Bass
- 5 $\frac{1}{3}$  Quint
- 4 Choral Bass
- 3 $\frac{1}{5}$  Tierce
- 2 $\frac{2}{7}$  Septieme
- IV Mixture
- 32 Ophecleide
- 16 Ophecleide
- 16 Trombone (SO)
- 16 Bassoon (SW)
- 8 Ophecleide
- 8 Tromba (SO)
- 4 Clarion (SO)
- 4 Cromorne (CH)

(PLEASE SEE BUILDER'S NOTES ON BACK)

*Great to Pedal 8, 4**Swell to Pedal 8, 4**Choir to Pedal 8**Solo to Pedal 8, 4**Swell to Great 16, 8, 4**Choir to Great 16, 8, 4**Solo to Great 16, 8, 4**Solo to Swell 16, 8, 4**Choir to Swell 8**Great to Choir 8**Swell to Choir 16, 8, 4**Solo to Choir 16, 8, 4**Great to Solo 16, 8, 4**Bombarde on Solo**Great/Choir Transfer**Choir Box on Swell Shoe**Solo Box on Swell Shoe***COMBINATION ACTION***from Solid State logic, Ltd.*

- 12 General Combinations (duplicated on toe pistons)
- 8 Great Combinations
- 8 Swell Combinations
- 8 Choir Combinations
- 6 Solo Combinations
- 3 Bombarde Combinations
- 6 Pedal Combinations (duplicated on toe pistons)

Great to Pedal

Cancel

Swell to Pedal

Tutti

Choir to Pedal

Standard Crescendo

Solo to Pedal

Programmable Crescendos A, B, C

Bombarde to Pedal

Swell to Great

Choir to Great

Solo to Great

Swell to Choir

THE ORGAN PROJECT AT ST. ITA'S has been a privilege, a challenge, and a labor of love. More than any other organ in our firm's history, this instrument is about the space in which it sits rather than about any pre-conceived notion of organ design. The first and most obvious influence is the building's acoustic. A more subtle but equally great influence came from observing the way in which the parish executed the highly successful renovation of the church interior.

Note: renovation, not restoration.

Had the damage to the original instrument been less severe, we would have pressed for strict restoration. However, fate had not been kind, and the organ was beyond reasonable repair. Taking a page from the church renovation, we decided to preserve the best of the original organ, while making substantial changes to reflect the needs of a dynamic 21<sup>st</sup> century parish community. Wholeness is achieved by respecting the original organ's spirit.

We were also guided by correspondence from the 50's concerning the difficulties then experienced in attempting to get sufficient power and color to suit the scale of the building.

The organ was and is arranged in three main locations: the central portion under the rose window housing the Great and Pedal as well as the new Bombarde division; and chambers in the north and south corners enclosing the Swell, Choir and Solo. Originally, the north chamber housed both the Swell and Choir, with the unfortunate result that the Swell had only three expression shades. Tonal egress was further limited by meager shade movement (a scant 2 inches), and the fact that most of the stops were installed several feet below the tonal openings. Before addressing the issues of voicing, wind pressure, and pipe scaling, we knew it was critical to provide better tonal access for the enclosed divisions. The Choir organ was moved to the former Solo chamber in the south tower, and a new Solo chamber was created behind the south Bombarde pipes. Shade linkages were replaced and the plaster screen struts carefully modified so that all shades could open a full 90°—more than triple the original.

The existing chest actions in the Swell, Choir and Solo had been ruined by decades of falling plaster and persistent water leaks. New chests of pallet/slider construction were fabricated in our workshop, with electric unit actions for high pressure stops in the Solo. This allowed us to make substantial changes to the tonal design. The original correspondence emphasized the desire of the consultant to have the St. Ita organ play the Romantic works of the French and English schools. In our view, the instrument lacked the brilliance, internal balance and range to meet today's expectations. We provided new Mixture stops throughout, as well as new reed voices for the Swell and Choir. Pressures were increased for the English-style reeds in the Great and Solo. New French-style flutes were installed in the Great, as well as a suite of aliquot voices shared by the Great and Pedal.

In adjusting the balance between divisions, we had two goals: to improve the relationship between the Great, Swell and Choir, and to provide additional power for the grand statements of Romantic pieces. (Typical of the 50's, the contrasts between the Great, Swell and Choir were extreme - from loud in the Great to barely audible in the Choir.) These goals were contradictory.

Our solution was to create a new Bombarde division inspired by the French Classical RESONANCE. In some early French instruments the Pedal stops were extended up into the manuals for grand effects. In our case, we created a new chorus based on a 32' pitch using pipes from the original Pedal and Great, with new additions. The original Pedal Bourdon was relocated from the Swell enclosure to the upper balcony, rescaled and revoiced, and extended to 32' using twelve 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ ' pipes carefully voiced and tuned to create the proper resultant. The large scale 8' and 4' Diapasons were moved from the Great and voiced boldly to go with the new Mixture. A low-pitched French-style breaking Grave Mixture and 16' Grand Cornet were created from new Pedal stops. A happy side effect allowed us to refine the remaining Great division and improve its balance with the Swell and Choir.

Last but not least we came to the organ's most cherished stop: the famous 16' Pedal Bombarde. At its debut in the 50's, the 11-inch diameter stop became the talk of Chicago organ cognoscenti. In this case, we felt that there could not be too much of a good thing! We commissioned 53 new pipes to be made, extending the original pipes up into a hooded English Tuba and down into a full length 32' Ophecleide. The new hooded Tuba treble pipes are visible below the rose window.

During the more than 90 work days spent voicing the organ on site, special care was taken to make sure that the instrument had the desired effect in the Nave. Our goal was to balance elegance and power, filling the building more in the manner of Continental organs rather than the American Symphonic (Skinner) style. As with real estate, location is everything, and the sound is more aggressive and less balanced at the console. Another unfortunate effect for the organist is the location of every other note of the Pedal Bombarde on opposite sides of the balcony. A playback system was installed to let the musician assess the sound of the instrument where it counts—downstairs in the Nave.

The renovation of the church interior managed that all-too-rare feat: it provided for modern liturgical practice while cherishing the spirit of the original building in a harmonious way that creates a new work of art. We hope to have achieved something similar with the St. Ita pipe organ.

Timothy E. Boles  
H. A. Howell Pipe Organs, Inc.  
1881 Industrial Drive—Sterling, Illinois 61081