

The Influence of the American Orchestral Organ on Selected Works of Leo Sowerby

By
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ABSTRACT

Leo Sowerby (1895-1968), one of America's most prolific twentieth-century composers, wrote many organ compositions for the American orchestral organ, the instrument on which he played. Following a biographical sketch of Sowerby, I will describe the orchestral organ as exemplified in instruments by American organ builders Austin and Ernest M. Skinner. Six organ works—"Comes Autumn Time," "Carillon," "Requiescat in Pace," "Chorale and Fugue," "Fantasy for Flute Stops," "Luise"—representative of Sowerby's compositional Periods are analyzed in terms of registration peculiar to the orchestral organ. Melodic structure, a key feature of Sowerby's style in organ works from his earliest period, is also highlighted.

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
CONTENTS	v
INTRODUCTION	1
HIGHLIGHTS OF SOWERBY’S LIFE.....	1
THE AMERICAN ORCHESTRAL ORGAN	4
Nineteenth-Century American Organs	4
Austin Organs.....	5
Ernest M. Skinner Organs	7
Austin Organs and E. M. Skinner Organs—the Differences	8
Diapasons.....	8
Mixtures and Dolce Cornet.....	9
Flutes.....	9
Strings	9
Reeds.....	10
Pedal	10
Conclusions.....	10
SOWERBY: SELECTED WORKS	11
Orchestral Period	11
“Comes Autumn Time”	11
Crescendo pedal usage	13
Solo stops	15
“Carillon”.....	17
“Requiescat in Pace”	23
Pure Organ Period	31
“Chorale and Fugue:” Chorale.....	31
“Chorale and Fugue:” Fugue	33
“Fantasy for Flute Stops”	36
Baroque Response Period.....	39
“Luise”	40
CONCLUSION	42

BIBLIOGRAPHY	43
APPENDIX ONE.....	45
APPENDIX TWO	50
APPENDIX THREE.....	58

INTRODUCTION

The year 2018 marked fifty years since Leo Sowerby died. Sowerby wrote over 500 works for orchestra, piano, organ, and liturgical choirs. Although possessing impeccable piano technique, he was primarily a self-taught organist, yet he composed some of the most difficult and idiomatic works in the organ repertoire.

The focus of this document is to explore the use of orchestral organ registration in selected early works. After a brief overview of Sowerby's life, the document will summarize mid to late nineteenth-century American organs before examining the American orchestral organ—a style of pipe organ that emerged around 1911 and was in vogue into the 1930s—the instrument Sowerby played and for which he wrote many compositions. Specific periods related to Sowerby's compositional style for organ will also be identified with musical examples that illuminate these periods in terms of style and registration. Sowerby's melodic style—an important element to consider in relation to registration—will also be examined in the works to be reviewed.

HIGHLIGHTS OF SOWERBY'S LIFE

Born in Grand Rapids, MI on the first of May 1895, Sowerby was just four years old when his mother died. His father, John, remarried several years later and it was his step-mother, Mary, who realized Sowerby's musical aptitude. Sowerby studied the piano from the age of seven through the eighth grade, and he taught himself the rudiments of harmony from a public library book. Recognizing his potential, his family sent young Sowerby to Chicago for his high school education where he boarded with a family acquaintance.

In Chicago, Sowerby attended Englewood High School and also received piano and composition instruction from Mr. Calvin Lampert. After just a few months, Lampert realized that Sowerby needed an expert composition teacher and sent him to study with Arthur Olaf Andersen at Chicago's American Conservatory.

At the age of fifteen, Sowerby became interested in learning to play the pipe organ and asked Lampert to teach him. Sowerby's instruction ceased after only five lessons because he was unable to afford the twenty-five cents per hour fee for use of a practice organ.¹ Determined to learn the organ and especially the pedalboard, the resourceful Sowerby acquired a large sheet of brown paper from a butcher's shop onto which he traced an organ pedal board. Positioning this mock pedal board beneath his piano, he practiced pedal technique.

In the spring of 1917 the United States entered World War I and Sowerby enlisted the following winter. He was first a clarinetist in the band at Camp Grant, in Rockford, IL, and later became bandmaster of the 332nd Field Artillery. In the summer of 1918, Sowerby's regiment embarked for Bordeaux, France. It was a short tour abroad and he was honorably discharged in March of 1919.²

Following the war, Sowerby returned to Chicago where he served as assistant organist to Eric Delamarter at Fourth Presbyterian Church.³ Fourth Presbyterian's relatively new E. M. Skinner organ played a significant role in Sowerby's early organ works as they were registered for that instrument.

In September 1921, Sowerby wrote: "Dear Mother, I have some very surprising news for you, so get ready for it....I have been invited to go to Rome to live for either one or two years,

¹ The average worker's hourly wage in 1910 was just twenty-two cents per hour.

² Robert Rayfield, "Leo Sowerby," *Music: The AGO-RCCO Magazine* 10, no. 11 (November 1976): 40.

³ Ibid.

with all expenses paid. Some months ago, a fellowship for American composers was established by the American Academy at Rome.”⁴ Ordinarily, composers competed for the opportunity to live in Rome, spending their days at their craft. Sowerby chose not to compete, but since all the submitted manuscripts had been rejected, he was awarded the honor due to his established reputation as a composer. Sowerby remained in Rome for three years; he wrote no organ works but concentrated on music for orchestra, piano, chorus, and chamber ensembles.⁵

After returning to the States in 1924, Sowerby became the chair of the composition department at the American Conservatory, succeeding Arthur Olaf Andersen. Sowerby remained in this position until his retirement in 1962. He did not teach organ at the Conservatory but did have a few private organ students.⁶

Sowerby’s career was divided between three institutions: the American Conservatory, St. James Episcopal Church (later Cathedral) in Chicago, and the Cathedral Church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul in Washington, DC. He served as St. James’ organist and choirmaster from 1926-1962. Over time, he referred to himself as a “musical Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde” because he not only wrote organ and choral literature but also arrangements for the Paul Whiteman Orchestra.⁷

In a letter dated February 26, 1962, Sowerby wrote to his sister, Bertha:

I have been invited by the Dean of the Cathedral in Washington to be the head of the College of Church Musicians to be newly founded....This, of course, I am accepting, so after June, I shall give up my long residence in Chicago.... The students who apply for this College of Church Musicians must be of very high caliber as musicians and be skilled as organists....The number of students will be very small, and they will probably be known as “Fellows” as we were at the Academy in Rome. It will be a matter of our getting the “cream of the crop” of

⁴ Leo Sowerby to his mother, September 1921, Leo Sowerby Archives, St. Mark’s Episcopal Church, Grand Rapids, MI.

⁵ Marilois Ditto Kierman, “The Compositions of Leo Sowerby for Organ Solo.” Master’s thesis, American University, 1966, 10.

⁶ Rayfield, “Leo Sowerby,” 40.

⁷ Ibid.

young people who have a sense of vocation in regard to the music of the church....Love from Leo.⁸

After a few years in Washington, Sowerby's health declined, and he died on July 7, 1968, while attending choir camp near Port Clinton, OH. One of Sowerby's first students at the College of Church Musicians, Mr. William "Pat" Partridge, remarked, "He was the nicest man."⁹

THE AMERICAN ORCHESTRAL ORGAN

Nineteenth-Century American Organs

Organs built before the Civil War through the late nineteenth-century by builders such as William Goodrich, Thomas Appleton, and E. & G. G. Hook usually included one complete principal chorus, an incomplete chorus based on 4' pitch, and a few reeds such as a trumpet, hautboy, and cremona. The pedal division often consisted of one 16' stop with a span of seventeen to twenty-five notes. As electricity became available late in the century, blowers provided plenty of air for larger instruments. Lighter key actions were also built, including direct electric and electro-pneumatic. These replaced tracker action and paved the way for organs with gigantic stop lists and pipes with higher wind pressure that allowed the sound to get out of the pipe chambers.

American churches and concert halls with organs did not feature performances of works by Baroque European composers. Organ music of masters like J. S. Bach was largely unknown. By the time Mendelssohn featured Bach's organ works in his 1830s British recitals, English

⁸ Leo Sowerby to his sister, Bertha, February 26, 1962, Leo Sowerby Archives, St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Grand Rapids, MI.

⁹ William Partridge, interview by the author, Christ Church Cathedral, St. Louis, MO, June 10, 2018.

organs—on which many American organs were modeled—were just beginning to be equipped with pedal boards that could handle the requirements of the literature.

Factors that gave rise to the orchestral organ were electricity—first distributed for mass consumption in New York City in 1882—and the phonograph—invented in 1877. Electricity, in combination with the newfound enthusiasm of the public for organ and symphonic music, were two factors that pushed the orchestral organ into being. In the pre-radio days, the invention of the phonograph gave more and more people, especially those in rural areas, the opportunity to hear a symphony orchestra. What if the organ—an instrument heard at weekly church services—could deliver sounds like the orchestra? Organists were not content with the European-style romantic organ; they desired an instrument that could imitate the symphony orchestra as closely as possible.¹⁰ Thus, the American orchestral organ was born. Redesigning organ specifications from former classical design to an instrument suited to melody with accompaniment became the norm in the early twentieth century.¹¹ Two companies became the innovative leaders in the new, dawning age in organ building: Austin Organs of Hartford, CT, and Ernest M. Skinner of Boston, MA.

Austin Organs

Production at the Austin Organ Company began in Hartford, CT in 1893. Its tonal philosophy, described in a 1904 brochure, espoused adequate foundation tone and the inclusion of some solo stops. The brochure added that harsh reeds and mixtures were avoided as they were

¹⁰Dorothy J. Holden, “The Life and Work of Ernest M. Skinner.” Richmond, VA: The Organ Historical Society, 1985, 15.

¹¹Orpha Ochse, “The History of the Organ in the United States.” Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1975, 328.

considered an artificial means of achieving brightness.¹² The January 1911 edition of *The Diapason* described features of the Austin organ that were integral to the “symphonic”—also known as the orchestral—organ including a light playing action, concave radiating pedal board, and a noiseless fan blower.¹³

A characteristic of the orchestral organ was the elimination of most upper work—pipework above 2' pitch. The inclusion of the 2' flute was the exception. Builders believed that multiple string ranks of ultra-thin scaling would provide the organ with needed brilliance just as the string section did in the symphony orchestra. There might be a 2' Principal in the Great division, a 2' Piccolo in the Choir, and a Dolce Cornet III (12-15-17) in the Swell. Larger instruments simply indulged in more diapasons of differing scales as well as more trumpets and tubas.¹⁴ The Austin organ at St. James included a Dolce Cornet in its Swell division. Sowerby's student, Michael McCabe felt “the Dolce Cornet was practically useless.”¹⁵ Composed of Dolce pipes, this mixture was extremely soft; not the sort of mixture used either today or before 1900 to crown a principal chorus. Noted as a “timbre-creating stop,” the Dolce Cornet perhaps added a bit of piquancy to some registrations.¹⁶

Percussion stops, such as chimes, made their appearance around the turn of the century and became commonplace in even the smallest organs before the era of the orchestral organ. The harp—a series of metal bars positioned over resonators struck with sheepskin covered hammers—was new.¹⁷ Of the color stops, the vox humana—a short length reed—was the most popular. When used with *tremulant*, the vox humana has a mysterious tone.

¹²Orpha Ochse, “Austin Organ.” Richmond, VA: The Organ Historical Society, 2001, 93-94.

¹³ Ibid., 131.

¹⁴ Ibid., 102.

¹⁵Michael McCabe, interview by the author, May 20, 2015.

¹⁶Stevens Irwin, “Dictionary of Pipe Organ Stops.” New York: Schirmer Books, 1962, 75.

¹⁷ Ochse, “Austin Organ,” 141.

A standard feature starting in 1906 with Austin's opus 156 at Temple Auditorium, Los Angeles, CA, was the adjustable crescendo pedal which allowed the organist to select the order of stops that were added as the crescendo pedal was opened. The pedal was an invaluable tool at a time when consoles were minimally equipped with combination actions.

Ernest M. Skinner Organs

It is not uncommon to think that innovations develop in a vacuum; often they do not, and such was the case with the orchestral organ. Instruments by Austin and E. M. Skinner came into being at approximately the same time. After apprenticing at the George Hutchings organ factory in Boston, Skinner opened his own organ building firm in 1901.

From 1906-1913, he developed a number of solo and non-solo stops which defined his instruments. Skinner's notable contributions to orchestral reeds include the Orchestral Oboe (a stop with a thin, pointed, nasal tone),¹⁸ the English Horn, the French Trumpet (a bright trumpet on low wind pressure),¹⁹ the Flugel Horn (a capped, small-scaled Trumpet), and the French Horn, Skinner's only patented stop. Other stops included the Erzähler (a non-imitative stop that was useful in binding the tone between bright and dull stops), the Flute Celeste, and the Gamba Celeste, the largest scaled string stop.²⁰ Skinner's 32' Bombarde was noteworthy for its full and resonant effect created with wooden resonators.²¹ His 32' Violone was striking for its remarkable definition despite its low pitch.²²

¹⁸ Irwin, "Dictionary of Pipe Organ Stops," 146.

¹⁹ Holden, "The Life and Work of Ernest M. Skinner," 43-44.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 39.

²² Ibid., 43-44.

Skinner's instruments were never as muddy and dull as those produced by other builders in the teens and 1920s. In describing the attributes of a good swell box, Skinner notes: "In planning specifications for an effective organ, the swell organ should be provided with a full equipment of chorus reeds of 16-foot, 8-foot, and 4-foot pitch, a good Diapason, 4-foot Octave and mixture. These six stops....will insure a fine crescendo...."²³ Skinner was curious to learn about other builders' successes. In 1898, while still an employee of the Hutchings factory, he traveled to Europe. There he learned about high pressure reeds at the Willis factory in England—knowledge that proved useful in his own Tuba Mirabilis, an intensely loud tuba with the maximum number of upper partials.²⁴ During Skinner's 1924 European sojourn, he again visited the Willis factory inquiring about their diapason choruses and mixtures, the results of which were noticeably brighter diapason choruses.²⁵

Austin Organs and E. M. Skinner Organs—the Differences

Although both Austin and E. M. Skinner produced orchestral-style organs there were fundamental distinctions between the two (see Appendix One).

Diapasons

Skinner preferred to voice his diapasons with a pronounced first overtone, therefore one would hear the 4' pitch in an 8' diapason, or 2' pitch in a 4' diapason. This voicing method somewhat negated the fact that smaller organs contained no upper work in their specification. Diapasons made up twenty-five percent of Fourth Presbyterian's fifty-seven ranks, while just fifteen percent of St. James's forty-one rank organ were diapasons. Sowerby's student, Michael

²³Ernest M. Skinner, "The Modern Organ." New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1917, 10.

²⁴Irwin, "Dictionary of Pipe Organ Stops," 210.

²⁵ Holden, "The Life and Work of Ernest M. Skinner," 110.

McCabe, played the organ at St. James and indicated that it had a “brown sound” which may be indicative of the diapasons’ voicing or the foundation stops in general (see Appendix Two).²⁶

Mixtures and Dolce Cornet

Austin included mixtures in its organs until around 1900. By 1906-1907 mixtures in Austin organs had practically disappeared and the dolce cornet became pervasive. Skinner, on the other hand, used the dolce cornet in his earliest instruments but abandoned the practice by circa 1911 with the advent of the orchestral organ. Skinner included mixtures of at least three ranks in quite a few instruments beginning in 1911. If there was no mixture in the Great division, one could often be found in the Swell depending on the instrument’s size. The Fourth Presbyterian organ in Chicago, contained a 2’ Principal in the Great division and a three-rank Mixture in the Swell division; St. James’ had neither a 2’ principal nor a traditional mixture.

Flutes

Flutes stops represented thirty-two percent of the St. James organ with a wide variety represented from 16’ to 2’. Such a high percentage of flutes contributed to Austin’s ensemble quality. At Fourth Presbyterian, flutes made up twenty-six percent of the overall organ.

Strings

As noted earlier, builders of orchestral organs included pencil-thin strings to provide brilliance in the absence of mixtures. Thirty-four percent of the St. James organ was dedicated to string stops including a Gross Gamba in the solo division. By contrast, nineteen percent of the Fourth Presbyterian organ was allocated to strings which included a two-rank Dulcet, an Aeoline and 32’ Contra Violone.

²⁶ McCabe, interview by the author, May 20, 2015.

Reeds

Of all the stops in the orchestral organ, the reeds were perhaps the most distinctive. Skinner was, at times, obsessed with duplicating the sound of a particular reed or brass instrument he heard in a symphony; he spent hours in his laboratory trying to achieve the perfect replica. Twenty-five percent of the Fourth Presbyterian organ stops were reeds including Skinner's signature French Horn, Orchestral Oboe, and Tuba Mirabilis while twenty percent of the St. James organ stops were reeds.

Pedal

Because the orchestral organ was designed to play melody vs. accompaniment, the pedal division was frequently relegated to the status of providing only harmonic support. In this capacity it was common for an instrument to contain only 16' stops with 8' extensions. There were generally no independent 8' stops. Of the three 16' stops on the St. James organ, only one—the 16' Diapason—was extended to 8' pitch. This meant that a manual division was almost always coupled to the pedal. The Fourth Presbyterian organ provided a bit more flexibility as it contained four 8' extensions—a diapason, string, and two flutes.

Conclusions

The families of organ tone—diapasons, flutes, strings, reeds—were about equally split on the Fourth Presbyterian organ with slightly fewer string stops. There was a greater imbalance among tonal families on the St. James organ with flutes and strings having the greatest percentages and diapasons the least. The plethora of reed stops at Fourth Presbyterian would have provided many choices for orchestral style compositions.

SOWERBY: SELECTED WORKS

The lives and works of well-known musicians of the past are often divided into periods, particularly three—early, middle, and mature—usually by music historians. Sowerby, himself, divided his organ works into three compositional periods.

Orchestral Period

Sowerby's first years of compositional work—the orchestral period—date from 1913-1920. During this time, he often played the E. M. Skinner organ at Fourth Presbyterian; it was this organ that Sowerby had in mind when he composed and registered “Comes Autumn Time,” “Carillon,” and “Requiescat in Pace.” Sowerby thought of the organ as a symphony orchestra in these early works, complete with percussion. This is borne out by studying the intricate registrations he specified.²⁷

“Comes Autumn Time”

Composed in 1916 and inspired by the poem entitled “Autumn” (see Appendix Three) by Canadian poet, Bliss Carman, Sowerby composed his tone poem in a single day.²⁸ Written in sonata-allegro form: type 2, the exposition is reminiscent of the finale movement from Louis Vierne's “First Organ Symphony” with its toccata figuration in the manual and jubilant melody in the pedal.²⁹ “Comes Autumn Time” offers examples of two kinds of melodic construction for which Sowerby is known: “tunes” and “wandering or meandering” melodies.³⁰ Melodic lines defined as “tunes” are characterized by snappy rhythms with syncopation derived from the folk

²⁷ Rayfield, “Leo Sowerby,” 41.

²⁸ Liner notes to Robert Rayfield, “Organ Music of Leo Sowerby,” Raintree Records, RT 703 (long-play vinyl album), 1982.

²⁹ James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, “Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Sonata,” New York: Oxford University Press, 2006, 354.

³⁰ Burnet C. Tuthill, “Leo Sowerby,” *The Musical Quarterly* 24, No. 3 (July 1938) 252.

idiom. They have a degree of frankness and directness that is essentially American.³¹ The opening pedal melody in “Comes Autumn Time” comprises the first theme and falls neatly into the description of a “tune” with its snappy rhythm and syncopation (see Fig. 1).



Figure 1. “Comes Autumn Time,” mm. 4-10

The nostalgic-sounding second theme (mm. 57-75) is an example of a “meandering” melody which is often wistful and enters on the offbeat. Sowerby scholar, Ronald Huntington, states: “Traditional principles of melodic construction ...are by-passed in favor of an extended flowing line which at times seems capable of infinite continuation.”³² Meandering melodies are lyrical and rhythmically free, and are frequently used as a second theme in sonata-allegro

³¹ Ibid., 253.

³²Ronald Meredith Huntington, “A study of the musical contributions of Leo Sowerby.” Master’s thesis, University of Southern California, 1957, 161.

movements.³³ The first occurrence of the second theme in “Comes Autumn Time” appears above an ostinato pattern in the accompaniment (see Fig. 2).



Figure 2. “Comes Autumn Time,” mm. 57-65.

The theme is based on the pentatonic scale (E-F#-G#-B-C#) and provides a good foil to the energy of the first theme. Despite its wistfulness, the beginning the second theme seems related to the first by its occasional use of sixteenth note values.

Crescendo pedal usage

An important element of registration on the orchestral organ, and one that is especially pertinent in this work, is the use of the crescendo pedal. Beginning in 1914, eight general pistons affecting all manuals and pedals became standard equipment on Austin organs,³⁴ while large Skinner organs of this period sometimes included only two or three generals.³⁵ Some Skinnors were only equipped with divisional pistons in which registrations for a specific manual were preset by the performer. The crescendo pedal was crucial for the speedy addition and subtraction of stops. In the work at hand, Sowerby specified that the beginning registration include a full ensemble on the Swell division, foundation stops (i.e. 8' diapasons, flutes, and string) on the

³³ Ibid., 158.

³⁴ Ochse, “Austin Organ,” 134-136.

³⁵ Holden, “The Life and Work of Ernest M. Skinner,” 263-273.

Great, and 16' Bassoon with 8' Flugel Horn on the Choir with the crescendo pedal fully open (see Fig. 3). Stops were withdrawn by use of the crescendo pedal in mm. 1-3 and reduced even more at m. 20. The second theme (mm. 57-74) was soloed on the Choir division's flugel horn and bassoon against a quiet accompaniment of soft flutes 8' and 4' on the Swell. The reduction of stops was perhaps enabled by canceling the crescendo pedal although the score is not clear in this regard.

For Alice Main

COMES AUTUMN TIME

Swell: Full
Great: Foundation Stops
 (crescendo pedal open)
Choir: Flugel Horn 8'
 Bassoon 16'
Pedal: Full
 Sw. to Ped.
 Sw. to Gt.
 Gt. to Ped.

Joyously (♩ = 126-132) LEO SOWERBY

The musical score is written for Manual and Pedal. The Manual part is in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. It features a 'Great' stop with a 'fff' dynamic and a crescendo line. The Pedal part is in G major and 2/4 time. It features a 'Full Organ' stop with a 'Full Organ - reduce by closing crescendo pedal' instruction. The tempo is marked 'Joyously (♩ = 126-132)'.

Figure 3. "Comes Autumn Time," mm. 1-3.

Solo stops

“Comes Autumn Time” provides splendid examples of the use of solo stops in the orchestral organ as seen in the previously mentioned flugel horn-bassoon solo as well as a clarinet flourish (mm. 75-78) using the pentatonic scale (see Fig. 4).



Figure 4. “Comes Autumn Time,” mm. 74-85.

As most of today’s instruments lack a celesta or harp stop, modern performances rarely, if ever, include the celesta coupled to the pedal as indicated in mm. 80-97, but the inclusion of this stop would rescue the bass line from obscurity. The exotic sound of modal scales is in mm. 131-135 in solo lines played on flutes 8’, 4’, 2’ with Gamba 16’ against an accompaniment of parallel fifths on the Swell division’s 8’ foundations with added Dolce Cornet. (see Fig. 5). The oboe is heard in canon with the pedal, featuring a fragment of the second theme (mm. 143-148) followed

by a fragment of the first theme (mm. 149-153.) The last orchestral stop to receive a solo is the tuba (mm. 224-227) as triads used for declamatory effect just before the first theme's re-entrance (see Fig. 6).

Ch. Flutes 3, 4, 2
& Gamba 16'

mp

Gt. to Ped.

Sw. add soft Mixture stop (Dolce Cornet)

Oboe alone

p

Mixture off

Flutes 3 & 4'

Figure 5. "Comes Autumn Time," mm. 126-147.



Figure 6. “Comes Autumn Time,” mm. 224-228.

“Comes Autumn Time” is emblematic of Sowerby’s works during his orchestral period through its use of a broad spectrum of orchestral stops, excepting the strings and chimes, and utilization of the crescendo pedal.

“Carillon”

Composed in 1917, “Carillon,” consists of two themes with variations. The first theme (mm. 1-11, soprano voice) is largely homophonic and quite chromatic (see Fig. 7). The variation of that theme is in Sowerby’s “meandering” style, and its entrance is on the offbeat (see Fig. 8).

The carillon theme is heard for the first time in a solo (m. 30), in octaves (mm. 31-32), and with an accompaniment (mm. 33-52) that ranges from harmonic sixths to fifths to fourths (see Fig. 9). Sowerby gives two options for registering the carillon theme: The first is to use the celesta stop; if the organ has no celesta one may substitute flutes at 16’, 8’, 4’ and 2’ pitches. The carillon theme appears in canon at the octave—in the tenor voice—(mm. 76-79) and in augmentation—played by the chimes—in the pedal (see Fig. 10). As if to metaphorically drive the carillon theme “home,” Sowerby follows with four homophonic statements (mm. 84-90) each played on progressively louder registrations until arriving at full organ (see Fig. 11). In typical

Sowerby style, he then combines the first theme with the carillon theme in varying degrees of augmentation (mm. 94-102) before concluding with a coda.

“Carillon” is wholly dependent on the percussion stops for its success. They provide its charm and, without their presence in the orchestral organ, the piece would most likely not have been written. At a minimum, an organ requires chimes to make this work effective.

To my friends, Arthur Olaf and Mary Storrs Andersen

CARILLON

Solo : Chimes (See Note 1, below)
 Swell : Stopped Diap. and Voix Celeste
 Great : Waldflöte
 Choir : Celeste, or Harp, with 16' and 4' couplers (See Note 2, below)
 Sw. to Gt; Sw. to Ped.
 Pedal : Soft 16' and 8' stops.

Moderately and flowingly

I.F.O. SOWERBY

Manuals

Pedal

The musical score for 'Carillon' is presented in two systems. The first system shows measures 1 through 5, and the second system shows measures 6 through 11. The score is written for Manuals and Pedal. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is 'Moderately and flowingly'. The score includes dynamic markings 'Sw.' and 'pp'. The Pedal part is mostly rests, with some notes in the final measures.

Figure 7. "Carillon," mm. 1-11.

Add Fl. 4 and
 soft Reed 8

p

Gt.

Sw.

(Sw.)

Gt.

Figure 8. "Carillon," mm. 12-20.

reduce Sw.

p

Ped. as before

Gt.

Sw.

merrily but not too fast Sw. Soft Flute stops

Ch.

(L'istesso tempo)

Ch.

Figure 9. "Carillon," mm. 27-36.

Ch.

Sw. to Ch.*

Sw. to Ped. off
all Ped. stops off

add Solo to Ped.

Chimes to Pedal

Pull Sw.

Gt.
increase
Great

* If the Celesta on the Choir has sufficient power, do not add Sw. to Ch. coupler.

Figure 10. "Carillon," mm. 71-84.

Figure 11. “Carillon,” mm. 85-102.

“Requiescat in Pace”

Composed in 1920, “Requiescat in Pace” is Sowerby’s homage to those killed in World War I.

Solo. French Horn 8' Trem.
 Swell. Soft Flutes 8' + 4'
 Great. Waldflöte 8'
 Choir. Flute 4' + Gamba 16'
 Pedal. Soft 8' + 16' (no coupler)
 Sw. to Gt.
 Ch. to Gt.

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

LEO SOWERBY

Measured and Mournful

MANUAL

PEDAL

Ch. *pp*

Sw. *pp*

Figure 12. “Requiescat in Pace,” mm. 1-7.

A fantasy in arch-form, the work consists of two themes.³⁶ The first—a somber pedal solo—appears at the outset in the Phrygian mode (mm. 1-3; see Fig. 12). A homophonic second theme immediately follows (mm. 4-6.) Sowerby’s registration for the second theme uses the

³⁶Liner notes, Rayfield, “Organ Music of Leo Sowerby.”

Gamba 16' with Flute 4'. This is unusual because of the absence of 8' (or unison) pitches. The mysterious, hollow quality of this registration enhances the mournful nature of the work.

The image displays a musical score for three systems, each with three staves (treble, alto, and bass clefs). The first system is labeled "Solo. French Horn 8' + Trem." and the second system is labeled "Ch. Dulcet 8' + Picc. 2'". The music is written in a key with one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The first system shows a melodic line in the French Horn with tremolos, accompanied by a piano accompaniment. The second system continues the melodic line in the Ch. Dulcet and Piccolo, with a piano accompaniment. The third system shows the continuation of the melodic line in the Ch. Dulcet and Piccolo, with a piano accompaniment. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, accidentals, and dynamic markings like *p* and *pp*.

Figure 13. "Requiescat in Pace," mm. 20-27.

A soaring melody of the “meandering” type (see Fig. 13) that is a transformation of the second theme uses the French Horn, Skinner’s signature stop.³⁷



Figure 14. “Requiescat in Pace,” mm. 32-34.

A homophonic variation of the second theme (mm. 26-31) brings this section to a close as the chimes toll a motive of the first theme (mm. 32-34; see Fig. 14).

A new section opens in A Major (mm. 34-40), perhaps symbolizing new life. A variation of the first theme is heard in the left hand against the right hand’s countermelody of perpetual sixteenth notes (see Fig. 15). At Sowerby’s instruction, a sense of anticipation is felt as the crescendo pedal is used to add stops (mm. 61-64) and the tempo increases.

One of Sowerby’s standard practices is to thicken the texture as a climax is approached, as seen in the left-hand solo (see Fig. 16). Labeled “triumphant,” the manuals begin a toccata-like figuration (mm. 76-77) against which is a variation of the first theme in the pedal (see Fig. 17). Sowerby’s instruction in m. 72 (see Fig. 16) to “prepare Ped. *fff*” is indicative of the solo nature the pedal assumes in mm. 76-87. Sowerby does not specify whether the changes to the pedal registration are accomplished by use of the crescendo pedal or by a manual stop change. Sowerby’s ubiquitous combination of themes is ushered in with a pedal downbeat (mm. 88-90)

³⁷ Ibid.

and use of the sforzando pedal for maximum volume (see Fig. 18). Various repetitions of the first and second themes played in alternation settle the organ to a quiet ending as the crescendo pedal is withdrawn (mm. 99-100.) “Requiescat in Pace” closes as the chimes once again toll a motive from the first theme (mm. 104-108) played in alternation with the second theme (see Fig. 19). Sowerby’s registration for the call and answer is noteworthy as he indicates the vox humana, strings with voix celeste, tremolo, and the unusual addition of the 2’ flautino. The work recedes into nothingness as chords of seven voices—played on the Aeoline and Unda Maris—are heard above a pedal ostinato in which the celesta has been coupled (see Fig. 20). This fading away symbolizes “the peace of a soul at rest.”³⁸ “Requiescat” exemplifies a work composed for the orchestral organ with its use of the French Horn, a variety of string stops, vox humana, chimes, celesta, crescendo pedal, and sforzando pedal.

³⁸ Ibid.

Faster and brighter than before

Sw.

p

Gt. Waldflöte + Philomela 8'

Ch. w/ combination with Reeds

Gt.

mf

Figure 15. "Requiescat in Pace," mm. 35-40.

Gt.

ff

prepare Ped. *fff*

Figure 16. "Requiescat in Pace," mm. 70-72.



Figure 17. "Requiescat in Pace," mm. 76-77.

Figure 18. "Requiescat in Pace," mm. 88-90.

Reduce Sw.
Sw.

Solo Chimes *quietly*
p Sw. *p*

mf
Reduce Ped.

Sw. Voix Celeste
Vox Humana
Flautino 2' Trem.

calm and peaceful
Sw. Soft Flutes 8'+4'

Solo Chimes
Sw. Flautino 2' off
p

Ch. Celesta 8'
Ped. Soft 16'
Ch. to Ped.
Sw. to Ped. off

p

Figure 19. "Requiescat in Pace," mm. 102-108.

Unda Maris 8'
Sw. Aeoline 8'
Tremolo

Sw. Super-Octave (4')
coupler Sw.

pp *dying away to the end* - - - - *ppp*

Figure 20. "Requiescat in Pace," mm. 113-118.

Pure Organ Period

Sowerby composed no works from 1920-1927, in part because he was in Rome; upon his return he wrote arrangements for the Paul Whiteman Orchestra. The decade of 1927-1937, Sowerby's "pure organ period," was notable for two reasons: first, he wrote for the organ more idiomatically and used less tone-color; second, Sowerby conceived the works for St. James' Austin organ.³⁹ Some products of this period include *Suite for Organ* which contains "Chorale and Fugue" and "Fantasy for Flute Stops."

"Chorale and Fugue:" Chorale

Understanding the underlying structure of "Chorale and Fugue" makes its registration clearer. The "Chorale" hinges upon a ground bass which is heard in the opening four bars (see Fig. 21). It is repeated sixteen times before dissolving into a bridge that leads to the ensuing fugue (m. 74). A newly written chorale (mm. 5-21) in four to six-part harmony sits above the ground bass. After the chorale theme's initial presentation, Sowerby ingeniously foreshadows the fugue by alternating statements of the fugal subject with the chorale theme. The fugal subject (mm. 33-40) is first heard on an unspecified stop played on the solo manual and then repeated on an unspecified solo stop on the choir manual (see Fig. 22). The chorale theme follows in mm. 41-60 and is soloed out by the left hand before a final statement of the fugal subject (mm. 61-65), this time played on the clarinet at Sowerby's request. The ground bass continues for several measures in the opening key of G Major before ending prematurely and segueing into the key of G minor for the fugue.

³⁹ Ibid.

SUITE FOR ORGAN

I CHORALE AND FUGUE

For Harold Gleason

LEO SOWERBY

With breadth and dignity ($\text{♩} = 60$)

Manual

Gt. Diapasons to Full Sw.

Pedal

Sw. and Gt. to Pedal

The musical score is written for organ. It begins with the tempo instruction 'With breadth and dignity' and a quarter note equal to 60 beats per minute ($\text{♩} = 60$). The key signature is one sharp (F#). The score is divided into three systems. The first system shows the Manual and Pedal staves. The Manual part has two staves (treble and bass) and the Pedal part has one staff (bass). The Manual part includes performance instructions: 'Gt. Diapasons to Full Sw.' and 'Gt.' (Great). The Pedal part includes the instruction 'Sw. and Gt. to Pedal'. The second and third systems show the continuation of the music, with the Manual part featuring a complex melodic line and the Pedal part providing a steady bass accompaniment.

Figure 21. "Chorale and Fugue," mm. 1-13.



Figure 22. “Chorale and Fugue,” mm. 33-37.

“Chorale and Fugue:” Fugue

No registration is given at the beginning of the fugue, but the dynamic marking of the manual parts is “piano” with the pedal entrance marked as “mezzo forte” (see Fig. 23). After the exposition in G minor the fugue modulates through many keys during the episode. The texture varies from three parts (mm. 95-102) to five parts (mm. 143-149) to seven parts (mm. 167-187) where the fugue subject is treated in augmentation. As the texture changes, so does the registration (see Fig. 24). Sowerby requests the addition of the Swell reeds (m. 141) just before the texture increases to five voices (m. 143.) The fugue subject is proclaimed on the Solo division’s tuba (mm. 153-156) and as the texture thickens to seven parts (mm. 167-187) the tuba is coupled to the Great. After treating the fugue in such a wide range of voicings, Sowerby concludes the work with a cadenza played on full organ leading to the final G-major chord with added sixth in eleven voices.



Figure 23. "Chorale and Fugue," mm. 74-83.

The musical score is divided into four systems, each with a piano (p) part and a guitar (Gt.) part. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats).

- System 1:** The piano part features a complex, flowing melody. The guitar part provides harmonic support. Annotations include "add Sw. reeds" and "Gt. Diap.".
- System 2:** The piano part continues with intricate passages. The guitar part has a more active role. Annotations include "Gt." and "Gt. to Ped.".
- System 3:** The piano part features a dense texture. The guitar part is more melodic. Annotations include "open crescendo pedal" and a forte (*ff*) dynamic marking.
- System 4:** The piano part concludes with a final flourish. The guitar part has a more sustained, harmonic presence. Annotations include "Solo Tuba" and "close crescendo pedal".

Figure 24. "Chorale and Fugue," mm. 138-153.

“Fantasy for Flute Stops”

Dedicated to Chicago artist, Rainey Bennett—whose water color painting inspired this whimsical work—“Fantasy for Flute Stops” is reminiscent of Louis Vierne’s scherzos and demonstrates some of Sowerby’s new compositional style in the pure organ period.

Written in ABA form, the movement is noteworthy because no pedal appears for the first 57 measures and there is relative equality among the voices (see Fig. 25). The opening registration calls for the use of two flutes in dialogue. While Sowerby sometimes calls for a St. James stop by name, in this case he uses generic term—flutes.

Set against an interplay—at times an echo—of voices in the manual, section “B” (mm. 67-140) features a melody in the pedal—coupled from the Solo division’s “Gamba” (see Fig. 26). The twentieth-century American organist Catherine Crozier (1914-2003) played this work and reportedly asked Sowerby’s opinion of using a reed for the pedal solo to which he gave his consent, an indication that Sowerby was flexible regarding registration.⁴⁰

As Section “A” returns (m. 148) the registration likewise returns to the beginning registration of flute stops, now supported by a 4’ flute coupled from the Solo division. Parallel pentatonic scales in the manuals followed by a quiet B-major chord with added sixth and seventh chord played on string stops bring the work to a close (see Fig. 27).

Registrations in the pure organ period are open to interpretation and lacked the specificity of the orchestral period, making them less color dependent and more adaptable to a greater variety of organs. While Sowerby designates that certain melodic material be soloed he does not usually specify upon which stop, nor does he specify the accompaniment stops to undergird that solo. Greater concern is given for the appropriate dynamic levels. The number of stops often

⁴⁰James Higdon, interview by the author, February 18, 2019.

increases as the texture thickens (mm. 49-53.) Registration changes are often dictated by the formal structure of a given work.

For Rainey Bennett

II FANTASY FOR FLUTE STOPS

Fairly fast and whimsically (♩. = 72)
Sw. Fl. 8ft.
Manual *p* semi staccato
Gt. Fl. 8ft.

The musical score is written for a Manual and two flutes (Sw. Fl. 8ft. and Gt. Fl. 8ft.). The tempo is 'Fairly fast and whimsically' with a quarter note equal to 72 beats per minute. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The Manual part is marked 'p semi staccato'. The score consists of four systems of two staves each. The first system shows the beginning of the piece with various melodic and harmonic lines. The second system continues the development. The third system features more complex rhythmic patterns. The fourth system concludes the excerpt with rapid sixteenth-note passages in both flutes and the manual.

Figure 25. "Fantasy for Flute Stops," mm. 1-12.

pp
 Solo: Gamba 8 ft. to Pedal
 (no pedal stops drawn)

Sw. add 4 ft.
 and 2 ft. Flute
 Gt. add 4 ft. Flute

Sw.
p Gt.

mf

Figure 26. "Fantasy for Flute Stops," mm. 58-70.



Figure 27. “Fantasy for Flute Stops,” mm. 216-223.

Baroque Response Period

Interest in cleaner organ ensembles was taking place as early as 1906 when Dr. Albert Schweitzer advocated for instruments capable of playing polyphonic music. By 1926, the organ reform movement known as the *Orgelbewegung* began in Europe and not long after, two American organ builders, G. Donald Harrison (an employee of E. M. Skinner) and Walter Holtkamp, Sr. adopted *Orgelbewegung* practices in America. A renewed interest in the music of J. S. Bach and other composers of polyphonic works accompanied the resulting shift in organ building specifications. Sowerby decided to call the longest span of his creative work, encompassing the years 1937-1968, the “baroque response period.” Whether Sowerby was reacting to compositional styles of former decades and sounds of the orchestral organ or was simply ready to try something new is not known.

An example is Sowerby's arrangement of "Luise," from *Meditations on Communion Hymns*, composed in 1940. Although other works from this period are on a much grander scale, "Luise" captures elements of Sowerby's new style.

"Luise"

The work memorializes Luise Henrietta, Electress of Brandenburg, the assumed author of "Jesus, meine Zuversicht," the text of the chorale tune upon which the work is based.⁴¹

2. LUISE

Sw. soft Flutes 8', 4'
Gt. solo stop
Ch. soft Flutes 8', 4', 2' coupled to Sw.
Ped. soft 16' coupled to Sw.



Figure 28. "Luise," mm. 1-6.

⁴¹ Kierman, "The Compositions of Leo Sowerby for Organ Solo," 78.

In “Luise,” Sowerby returns to a form used in previous centuries—the chorale prelude. He begins by using *vorimitation* (mm. 1-3) in which the chorale melody is treated in fugal style before shifting to his own harmonic language (see Fig. 28).⁴² The chorale tune—delivered in three phrases (mm. 10-15, 26-31, and 44-50)—is presented in a straightforward manner with no ornamentation (see Fig. 29).



Figure 29. “Luise,” mm. 10-12.

Ensuing interludes between statements of the chorale also use *vorimitation* and, like the introduction, employ Sowerby’s tonal language. His organ works from this era are contrapuntal and marked by sparse textures while thickening at climactic points. The use of *vorimitation* dictates sparse texture, but this does not last long as six voices are present by m. 5 (see Fig. 28). The work is, however, characteristically baroque in its use of contrapuntal style.

While Sowerby’s works of the baroque response period generally lack registrations, they do appear in this work as well as the other works in the collection; yet they are more generalized as Sowerby specifies a solo stop for the Great manual without indicating which stop he has in mind. One of Sowerby’s last monumental works, the three movement *Sinfonia Brevis*, published

⁴² Burnet C. Tuthill, “Leo Sowerby.” *The Musical Quarterly* 24, No. 3 (July 1938) 254-255. Sowerby’s harmonic style is tonally based with use of ninth and eleventh chords as well as chromatic and enharmonic modulations. His works exert strong tonic and dominant harmony although they do not always follow standard chord progressions.

in 1966, gives no registration suggestions. Likewise, use of the crescendo pedal—an orchestral period trait—continues even in his final works including *Sinfonia Brevis*. It is not present in the works of this collection.

CONCLUSION

Leo Sowerby's three musical periods show not only differences in his style but also distinctions between two leading builders of the American orchestral organ. While the E. M. Skinner organ at Fourth Presbyterian Church had a large palette of solo stops, the Austin organ at St. James Episcopal Cathedral focused on an ensemble sound, with its high proportion of flutes and strings. Although the Austin at St. James contained solo stops, there was less variety than at Fourth Presbyterian.

Works of Sowerby's orchestral period depend on color stops. Even though orchestral period works can be played on instruments with fewer solo stops, their magic is linked to the variety of the orchestral organ. Works of the pure organ period—while they include solo writing—are more homophonic, which makes them better suited to the Austin's ensemble sound; they are more adaptable to a variety of organ specifications. Works of the baroque response period are also to be less tied to specific registrations. Leo Sowerby's organ works are a two-fold American treasure capturing the sound of the American orchestral organ and his distinctive melodic style.

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APPENDIX ONE

Fourth Presbyterian Church, Chicago, IL⁴³
Ernest M. Skinner Co., Opus 210, 1913
74 stops, 57 ranks

Great Organ	Choir Organ	Pedal Organ
16' Diapason	16' Gamba	32' Contra Violone
16' Bourdon (Pedal)	8' Geigen Principal	16' Diapason
8' First Diapason	8' Concert Flute	16' Violone
8' Second Diapason	8' Quintaden	16' First Bourdon
8' Third Diapason	8' Kleine Erzähler	16' Second Bourdon (Sw.)
8' Philomela	8' Dulcet II	16' Gamba (Choir)
8' Waldflöte	4' Flute	16' Dulciana (Swell)
8' Erzähler	2' Piccolo	8' Octave (ext.)
4' Octave	16' English Horn	8' Gedeckt (ext.)
4' Flute	16' Fagotto	8' Cello (Solo)
2' Fifteenth	8' Clarinet	8' Still Gedeckt (Swell)
16' Ophicleide	8' Orchestral Oboe	32' Bombarde (ext.)
8' Tromba	8' Flugel Horn	16' Ophicleide (Great)
4' Clarion	Tremolo	16' Posaune (Swell)
	4' Celesta (61 bars)	8' Tromba (Great)
		4' Tromba (Great)
Swell Organ	Solo Organ	
16' Bourdon	8' Philomela (Pedal)	No General Pistons
16' Dulciana	8' Gamba	
8' Diapason	8' Gamba Celeste	
8' Clarabella	16' Fagotto (Choir)	
8' Spitzflöte	8' Tuba Mirabilis	
8' Gedeckt	8' French Horn	
8' Salicional	8' Flugel Horn (Choir)	
8' Voix Celeste	8' Orchestral Oboe (Choir)	
8' Aeoline	Tremolo	
8' Unda Maris		
4' Octave		
4' Flute		
2' Flautino		
III Mixture		
16' Contra Posaune		
8' Cornopean		

⁴³ Organ Historical Society database,
<http://www.pipeorgandatabase.org/OrganDetails.php?OrganID=22272> (accessed February 13, 2019).

8' Oboe
8' Vox Humana
4' Clarion
Tremolo

St. James Protestant Episcopal Church, Chicago, IL⁴⁴
Austin Organ Co., Opus 948, 1920
47 Stops, 41 Ranks

Great Organ

16' Double Open Diapason
8' Principal Diapason
8' Spitz Flute
8' Doppel Flute
8' Gemshorn
8' Gemshorn Celeste
4' Octave
4' Harmonic Flute
8' Trumpet
Chimes (Solo)

Swell Organ

16' Bourdon
8' Open Diapason
8' Stopped Diapason
8' Viole d'Orchestre
8' Echo Salicional
8' Vox Celeste
4' Flauto Traverso
2' Piccolo
III Dolce Cornet (12-15-17)
16' Contra Fagotto
8' Cornopean
8' Oboe
8' Vox Humana
Tremulant

Choir Organ

8' Open Diapason
8' Concert Flute
8' Unda Maris
8' Dulciana
4' Flute d'Amour
2' Flautino
8' Clarinet
Tremulant

Solo Organ

8' Flauto Major (ext. Pedal Open Diap.)
8' Stentorphone
8' Gross Gamba
8' Gamba Celeste
4' Flute Ouverte
16' Tuba Profunda
8' Harmonic Tuba (ext. 16')
8' Cor Anglais
4' Harmonic Tuba (ext. 16')
Chimes (20 notes)
Tremulant

Pedal Organ

32' Resultant
16' Open Diapason
16' Violone
16' Bourdon
16' Second Bourdon (Swell)
8' Gross Flute (ext. 16' Open Diap.)
16' Tuba Profunda (Solo)
16' Contra Fagotto (Swell)
8' Harmonic Tuba (Solo)

8 General Pistons
6 General Toe Studs

⁴⁴ Ochse, "Austin Organ," 238-239.

Stop List Comparison
Fourth Presbyterian Church and St. James Episcopal Church

Fourth Presbyterian <u>Great Organ</u>	St. James <u>Great Organ</u>	Fourth Presbyterian <u>Swell Organ</u>	St. James <u>Swell Organ</u>
16' Diapason	16' Double Op. Diap	16' Bourdon	16' Bourdon
16' Bourdon		16' Dulciana	
8' First Diapason	8' Principal Diap.	8' Diapason	8' Open Diapason
8' Second Diap.		8' Clarabella	8' Stopped Diap.
8' Third Diap.		8' Spitzflöte	
8' Philomela	8' Spitz Flute	8' Gedeckt	
8' Waldflöte	8' Doppel Flute	8' Salicional	8' Viole d'Orchestre
8' Erzähler	8' Gemshorn	8' Voix Celeste	8' Vox Celeste
	8' Gems. Celeste	8' Aeoline	8' Echo Salicional
4' Octave	4' Octave	8' Unda Maris	
4' Flute	4' Harmonic Fl.	4' Octave	
2' Fifteenth		4' Flute	4' Flauto Traverso
16' Ophicleide		2' Flautino	2' Piccolo
8' Tromba	8' Trumpet	III Mixture	III Dolce Cornet
4' Clarion	Chimes	16' Contra Posaune	16' Contra Fagotto
		8' Cornopean	8' Cornopean
		8' Oboe	8' Oboe
		8' Vox Humana	8' Vox Humana
		4' Clarion	
Fourth Presbyterian <u>Choir Organ</u>	St. James <u>Choir Organ</u>	Fourth Presbyterian <u>Echo Organ</u>	St. James <u>No Echo Division</u>
16' Gamba			
8' Geigen	8' Open Diapason	8' Diapason	
Principal			
8' Concert Flute	8' Concert Flute	8' Gedeckt	
8' Quintaden			
8' Kleine Erzähler	8' Unda Maris		
8' Dulcet II	8' Dulciana		
4' Flute	4' Flute d'Amour	4' Flute	
2' Piccolo	2' Flautino		
16' English Horn			
16' Fagotto			
8' Clarinet	8' Clarinet	8' Vox Humana	
8' Orchestral Oboe			
8' Flugel Horn			
4' Celesta			

Fourth Presbyterian <u>Solo Organ</u>	St. James <u>Solo Organ</u>	Fourth Presbyterian <u>Pedal Organ</u>	St. James <u>Pedal Organ</u>
8' Philomela	8' Flauto Major	32' Contra Violone	32' Resultant
	8' Stentorphone	16' Diapason	16' Open Diapason
8' Gamba	8' Gross Gamba	16' Violone	16' Violone
8' Gamba Celeste	8' Gamba Celeste	16' First Bourdon	16' Bourdon
	4' Flute Ouverte	16' Second Bourdon	16' Second Bourdon
16' Fagotto	16' Tuba Profunda	16' Gamba	
8' Tuba Mirabilis	8' Harmonic Tuba	16' Dulciana	
8' French Horn	8' Cor Anglais	8' Octave	8' Gross Fl. (ext. 16' Open Diapason)
8' Flugel Horn		8' Gedeckt	
8' Orchestral Oboe		8' Cello	
	4' Harmonic Tuba	8' Still Gedeckt	
	Chimes (20 notes)	32' Bombarde	
		16' Ophicleide	16' Tuba Profunda
		16' Posaune	16' Contra Fagotto
		8' Tromba	8' Harmonic Tuba
		4' Tromba	

APPENDIX TWO

Interview with Michael McCabe: His Time with Leo Sowerby

Recorded at Mr. McCabe's home in Omaha, NE, May 20, 2015

Author: When did you study with Sowerby?

McCabe: That would have been in '66 and '67 in Washington DC. He was the director of the College of Church Musicians. I was not matriculated into that; I was private and cared for him when he had his strokes and we'd have theory lessons at his home and I knew everybody there and I would go to classes and go to Paul Callaway's rehearsals; they'd have all the students play for services there and I would be included in all that so I was not officially in the school but I was there for most of what they did.

Author: When did the school close?

McCabe: Well, not too long after that; it wasn't open very long and after Leo died. Richard Dirksen took over and it just didn't last.

Author: And so, composition was your field?

McCabe: Well, yeah, I was always interested, and I knew that if I knew more about it I'd probably write better. So, he was very helpful. He was a taskmaster; I'd write something and the red marks would come out. He'd say, "You'd better do that again."

Author: Did he ever teach organ?

McCabe: I don't believe that he did. When he was in Chicago he was the professor of theory and composition at the American Conservatory, but I don't think he had organ students. He had a lot of composition students, and Bill Ferris was a good friend of mine and probably his best student and every week you'd go and you had to have thirty-seven measures composed. Now why thirty-seven measures I don't know but all of his students had to have thirty-seven measures of something composed.

Author: When did the American Conservatory close?

McCabe: You know, I don't know. It's been closed a long time.

Author: But after he left?

McCabe: Oh yeah, after he left. Everything he left sort of collapsed. I was in Chicago to hear a piano recital of his works and I can't think of her name right now but I will in a bit. She was one of his students and fans. She played beautifully. All this hard stuff and it was the last days of that and that would have been maybe in the 70s.

Author: He left St. James in '62?

McCabe: I think it was something like that because he died in '67. [NOTE: Sowerby died in 1968.]

Author: Are there things that stick out in your mind that you remember about him?

McCabe: He was a taskmaster and if you did your work, he was very kind. He was never a warm and fuzzy person. He did it in a business-like manner but you knew when he liked you and you knew when he didn't. And I remember sitting in his living room and one of the students had been asked to leave. And they called and they said "Dr. Sowerby is this ir-revoke-able," and he said "No, it's irrevocable." That's kind of how he was and the phone went down. But he loved his students and he worked very hard with them and if you did your hard work then you knew you were appreciated and he would say some nice things but he was never huggy and that sort of stuff.

Author: You said he had his doctorate?

McCabe: No, he had an honorary doctorate. He had an earned masters.

Author: I thought maybe people just referred to him that way.

McCabe: Yeah, he was given an honorary, because I remember when he was out at Evergreen and Tom was there and Paul Lindsley Thomas was there and Leo Sowerby was there, and music doctor, music doctor, music doctor, FAGO, FAGO, FAGO, and Ronald and I were sitting there and he [Sowerby] says, you know "I don't have a FAGO. I've written exam questions for that but I never took the test." So he was never a Fellow of the American Guild of Organists. But he certainly could have been. One of the interesting things that is still in the archives in Worcester, he kept, he was a very meticulous person, he kept a list of all his preludes and postludes for his entire career and he played everybody's everything and he was asked one day, "Which one of the Franck chorales do you like best?" and he said "whichever one I'm playing." He loved Franck. Somebody said, "Dr. Sowerby, (this was when he wrote the *Pageant*) have you finally written something you can't play?" He said "We'll never know."

Author: Was that the one for...who was the Italian guy?

McCabe: Fernando Germani, the Vatican organist at the time. That's sort of interesting. I just found out recently that a great big Cavaillé-Coll was to be built in the Vatican, but they took the money and repaired the pavement. That's too bad.

Author: The Foundation, I know they print his music?

McCabe: I do all of that upstairs. I'm the vice-president of the Foundation. Ronald Stalford was, and when he died then I was appointed and then it was, "what do we do?" because when all that money came in, a whole bunch of music was printed and then we ran out of things we needed and I well, we can do that ourselves, so I got a machine upstairs and this weekend I'll be printing some stuff for somebody. So I've got a copy of everything he has written upstairs and we had permission from then [H.W.] Gray, of course Gray's been sold and sold and sold. So just we sort of let sleeping dogs lie.

Author: Did you hear Sowerby play the organ?

McCabe: No, but I saw him...he played the piano. He was a fine, fine player. He was a concert [pianist]. He'd go to the piano. He told me about one of his piano pieces. He just whipped it off and his fingers just moved. I never heard him play a note at the organ. It's interesting, the old Austin, a lot of it is still there, and Thomas Matthews was at St. Luke's, Evanston, when Leo was there and they were dear, dear friends and he used to go down and they'd coordinate something and Tom said "if you put full organ on with 16' couplers and play up an octave it will begin to sound like an organ." I played that old organ a long time ago; it was dreadful.

Author: I looked at the specification for it and I thought how could anyone do anything with this.

McCabe: Well you know, the organs of that period had a brown sound, and that was one of them.

Author: I remember the Great only had a couple of stops at 4' pitch.

McCabe: Yeah.

Author: So that organ had a Dolce Cornet on the Swell, a three rank.

McCabe: Oh, they all had that.

Author: Is that a string mixture?

McCabe: No, it had a tierce in it, and it didn't make much noise and it really wasn't a cornet, it was just almost useless. A whole bunch of those old Austins had that dolce cornet. I don't know what it was there for because it didn't do much.

Mark: Did he ever talk about his early life?

McCabe: He just—the only time he ever talked about that was about his step-mother and she was very kind, but it was, it wasn't a warm, fuzzy [relationship], and he said, "I had to clean up my plate." And if you ever ate with him, he'd take his fork and just scrape everything like that [AUTHOR'S NOTE: Michael demonstrates Sowerby's scraping technique.] and take a piece of bread and get everything. It was almost like there wasn't a crumb left on his plate, and one of the naughty things they used to do when they'd have their theory lessons, he always had crackers, and cheese, and things, and they'd sit there. He'd finish his and somebody would take their crumbs and put on his plate, and he'd say "oh, I left..." and he'd clean up his crumbs. He thought he left his crumbs behind. And then, he caught somebody doing that one day, and they all had a little giggle about it. But he was a compulsive person.

Author: It would be interesting to look at his scores and see if you could tell that from his writing. It seemed to me that we were looking at a photocopy of something that Duruflé had written and you could tell from the way he would over dot things, that he was very obsessed.

McCabe: While I think about the *Symphony*, we were talking about it one day, and he said "this was the original tune to the passacaglia [movement] and he played it, and I said "Leo, that's just lovely." I said, "why'd you change it?" He said, "because I wanted"—he had this little twinkle in his eye and this little grin on his face—he said, "I wanted two more variations than Bach had in his and I couldn't do it with that theme [i.e. the original theme] so I had to change this and I had to change that." And I wanted to say "I think you should have stuck with the two less variations because it was so much more lyrical; I mean not that monstrous, wonderful theme, but the other one was prettier, just plain prettier.

Author: Do you know any of his other students?

McCabe: Well, yeah, John Fenstermaker. I was the interim organist after Richard Purvis left Grace Cathedral in San Francisco, before John came and I knew him in Washington. And the fellow that actually wrote out the *E Major Symphony* is a friend of mine. We knew each other in Vietnam, and I'll think of his name in a minute and then Ronald Stalford was probably his favorite. Bill Ferris, I knew very well. Of course, he dropped dead conducting the Verdi *Requiem* of all things. And then David Koehring I knew, and I knew Paul Callaway and Richard Dirksen pretty well. They were not students. I knew Preston Rockhold well and he was the director of studies there and he dropped dead in the Atlanta airport, and he was gone. And Miles Criss, who just recently died.

Author: Do you stay in contact with any of these?

McCabe: Well Miles is dead, Ronald is dead, no. John Fenstermaker is now in Florida.

Author: Tell me again when you last saw him [Sowerby]?

McCabe: The last time I saw him is when I got that *Sinfonia Brevis* from him when I left Washington and went to anesthesia school in Hawaii. In fact, he and Ronald were to come and make a Hawaiian visit and we were preparing an all-Sowerby program at St. Andrew's Cathedral. John McCreary was there and I was his assistant, and Leo died before they got there. He died, like a week or two before he was supposed to come over. He was going to stay with us and that didn't happen. So, we never.... We did a lot of Sowerby there. John was a.... Do you know the name John McCreary?

Author: No.

McCabe: So that was the last time I saw him was in '67 in November of '67 because that's when school started. And then he died the next summer at Wa-Li-Ro. He went one year to Wa-Li-Ro and one year to Evergreen.

Author: Wa-Li-Ro? Tell me about Wa-Li-Ro?

McCabe: Well, it was a music camp, I think for trebles, and Warren Miller and somebody else had it and they were dear friends. It was up on Lake Michigan, I think, somewhere. And he wrote a number of things for Wa-Li-Ro as well as Evergreen. He was up there busy doing his stuff and he had a big stroke and died. I was back by the time, no, I wasn't back for his requiem, but I wrote.... They asked me to write the "bio" sketch on him, and I did that. They had to postpone the requiem because his ashes got lost in the mail. They were scheduled, and nobody knew what happened to them. The post office couldn't find them. A couple weeks later they finally arrived on Ronald's [Stalford] doorstep and there was Leo. He'd been cremated. He's in the crypt at Washington next to Helen Keller. Paul Callaway's down there and a lot of famous people are down there.

Author: I used to go the Cathedral a lot when I lived in Frederick, MD.

McCabe: Oh, who was there then? Was Douglas Major there?

Author: He was there.

McCabe: I remember the day he came to be Paul Callaway's assistant. Ronald Stalford had a dinner party for him and he had been what's his name's at St. Louis Cathedral—Ronald Arnatt. He had been Ronald Arnatt's assistant and then he went to be Paul's assistant, and then he was Richard Dirksen's assistant, and then he took it over.

Author: At one point there was a Leo Sowerby Association on Facebook, just for people who liked his music. And so, I happened to mention that I was going to be playing his *Symphony* on one of my recitals, and Douglas Major was also in this group and he said "that Sowerby had said about "Fast and Sinister," play it less fast and more sinister."

McCabe: Leo told me, "I tend to mark things a little faster than they should go." I heard him say that, and he said "Fast and Sinister" was just too fast. [So, it gives you license to slow it down.]

Author: I've gone through a lot of questions. Anything else that...?

McCabe: Well, you took your life in your hands if you ate his meatloaf. It was just wretched. It was greasy and he loved a deal. So he would sit in the afternoon and cut all these coupons out and then he'd give it to Ronald and me and we'd have to go, sometimes we'd have to go 25 or 30 miles to get five cents off a piece of something and we'd get the cheapest hamburger and he had all this stuff he'd put in it, too. It was just almost grease. It would come out of the pan and onto your plate and the grease would come out, and that was his *pièce de résistance*, and of course he loved Melrose Gin; it was his gin. It was the cheapest gin they made. I don't think they're in business anymore.

Author: I haven't heard of it.

McCabe: No, you don't want to. It made bath tub gin sound like Dom Perignon. It was bad stuff. And you know, when he got there, he brought all his furniture from Chicago and you went in there and his big chair in the living room had a dictionary under it because the leg had fallen off and you sat down in it and all the springs were gone and your knees came up to your chin and finally when Ronald moved [in], he says, "Leo, we gotta do something about this." I mean people would come from all over the world to visit with him and they would go and there's this dilapidated furniture that he had for 45 to 50 years and so they had somebody come in and redo the place, so there's no more dictionaries underneath the chairs.

Author: Did he live at the College of Preachers?

McCabe: Well, he did, no, not the College of Preachers. He lived on campus on the close and I think the place he lived was called "Rosedale". He's got that wonderful [hymn]; I think that's the name of his little house.

Author: Oh, that's where that name came from?

McCabe: Yeah. Then they tore it down and so they put him into an apartment right across the street. It was the Beverly and he was on, I think, the fourth floor [NOTE: Sowerby lived on the 7th floor per his correspondence from the 1960s.] Two bedrooms, two baths, a large living/dining room, and a little, sort of galley kitchen. And that's where, I never was in the other place. I was in the Beverly.

Author: So, you'd go to the apartment?

McCabe: Yeah. I'd spend two or three evenings a week with him so Ronald could go out. And then there were several of us that sort of shared that [i.e. taking care of him after his stroke/s.] He was a dear man and he was sort of a neurotic.

Author: He sounds like a real character.

McCabe: Oh, he was. He had a great sense of humor. He had an adroit sense of humor. He was sort of English and at the same time he could use that humor and twist it into, if he didn't like you or you said something...we were sitting having a lovely dinner party once and somebody said something from the other end of the table and Dr. Sowerby said, "them's fightin' words." But he certainly was a genius. It was a privilege to have known him and to have sat at his feet. I wished he had been with us a little longer. I wished he could have made the Hawaiian trip. I think he would really have enjoyed that, and the choir under John McCreary. I'm sure [it] was probably as good, they had this big men's and women's choir; they were all opera people. Well the church was big, so there was a big sound. It was not the tame men and boys choir, you know, it was a big, huge sound. You could put a lot of organ on and they'd just sing right through it so it was quite the thrill to be there. I used to play a lot of the accompaniments with a lot of the Sowerby stuff. One of my favorite pieces was "All Ye Works of the Lord"; it's in "d" minor. It paints pictures. It's one of his great pieces. And I played "My Heart is Fixed" and "I Was Glad". They did a lot of good stuff over there.

Author: It seems like his compositional style in the organ works changed over the years?

McCabe: From what to what?

Author: Well, in comparing the early things to what he might have written in the 50s and 60s.

McCabe: I think he might have been a little more romantic at the beginning and got a little more, as they said, “the sour in Sowerby.” Some of the harsher sounds....

Author: I think I’m appalled when I hear people say that.

McCabe: Yeah, I know, but it’s out there; it always was, because some of those textures are pretty, I mean, he makes them work. Like Messiaen, you can’t make one wrong note in that; you don’t do that to Sowerby either.

Author: I take it that there’s need for me to go to Worcester?

McCabe: The Sowerby Foundation isn’t there. Ronald’s partner, John, inherited the estate and he has the house and there’s a lot of scores up there, but John never knew Leo and he’s not a music person. One of the things that I would love to have is that...at the Queen’s coronation, you know the 853 book they put out, it has all the music for the coronation in there and all of the composers autographed to Leo, Vaughan-Williams and all those people, he’s got all that. I think it’s probably the only one in the world. And then his little book of all his preludes and postludes are up there and all the manuscripts are gone now and what would be there are just published stuff and I’ve got copies of all that here.

Author: So, you told me there’s a Sowerby Archives at Northwestern?

McCabe: At Northwestern.

Author: And then there’s a library?

McCabe: Yeah, the Newberry Library (downtown) has some stuff, but Northwestern has most of it, and they’re really good about reproducing and they’ll let you in to see all the stuff, too, so that might be an interesting trip. His symphonies are there, and one of the things that the conductors did is they put their marks in there and sometimes they shouldn’t have marked up the score quite so much. I was there when the stuff went in and I haven’t been back since.

Mark. Thank you.

McCabe: My pleasure.

APPENDIX THREE

Autumn

by Bliss Carman (1861-1929)

Now when the time of fruit and grain is come,
When apples hang above the orchard wall,
And from a tangle by the roadside stream
A scent of wild grapes fills the racy air,
Comes Autumn with her sun-burnt caravan,
Like a long gypsy train with trappings gay
And tattered colors of the Orient,
Moving slow-footed through the dreamy hills.
The woods of Wilton, at her coming, wear
Tints of Bokhara and of Samarcand;
The maples glow with their Etruscan gold;
And while the crickets fife along her march,
Behind her banners burns the crimson sun.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ <http://www.quod.lib.umich.edu/a/amverse> (accessed March 1, 2019).

AUTUMN.

(*Bliss Carman, in the Atlantic.*)

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46

⁴⁶ <http://archives.chicagotribune.com/1916/10/05/page/6> (accessed December 30, 2017).