

ROOM 1204, 134 SOUTH LASALLE ST.  
TELEPHONE FRANKLIN 214

The University of Chicago  
Office of the Counsel and Business Manager

January Twenty Six  
1 9 2 1

Mr. Edgar J. Goodspeed,  
Office of the President,  
University of Chicago.

My dear Mr. Goodspeed:

I am sending with this, copy of a  
communication from one of the foremost of our  
musical men, Mr. Andersen, giving his views as to  
organist and choir leader for the new chapel.

He had stated to me in conversation  
some quite definite views which I thought might  
be helpful to you later, so asked him to put  
them down. This he has done.

Very truly yours,

WH:RA  
Enc.

*Organs*  
*Walter Haddon*

The University of Chicago

Office of the Journal and Student Council

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W.H.A.  
Enc.

C O P Y

January 19, 1921.

Mr. Wallace Heckman,  
4505 Ellis Ave.,  
Chicago, Illinois.

My dear Mr. Heckman:

You will probably recall that we have had several conversations on the subject of organists and choirs and that you asked me to put into writing the ideas that I then expressed on the subject. I am sorry that I have been so long in getting around to doing this, but I have been considering the matter from every possible angle and have finally come to the following convictions:

Two branches only of musical art remain a community interest--- that of the organ, as a solo instrument, and that of the choral ensemble. These two have not been put upon a commercial basis. Their activities are associated largely with the church, which brings them into touch with the non-concert-going public as well as with the concert-goer. Therefore, in planning an institution such as the one under discussion, I wish to consider carefully the field and its opportunity, first, and, second, the possible executive.

The organ has changed within the past fifteen years from an unwieldy mechanism of uncertain and questionable tone-values into an instrument whose flexibility is surpassed only by the stringed instruments, and in timbres, very nearly the equal of the orchestra. The literature, like the interpreter, has not developed relatively with this change. Mr. Frederick Stock once said, in my hearing: "The modern organ is the greatest one-man instrument."

It is much the same with regard to choral art, a glorious and ancient medium of expression. While opera and oratorio in a lesser degree, have kept pace with the general development of music during the last generation, the pure beauty of the old polyphonic art of Palestrina, of Bach, with the newer modern creations of Debussy, Elgar, Bantock, and others, is almost forgotten.

Therefore, I think, your committee has a wonderful opportunity, in the planning of your musical institution, through which might be established a twin organization, to do in the musical world for the organ and for choral art what the Chicago Symphony Orchestra does for the symphonic literature. For its function is twofold: it is the conservator of the classic beauty, and it is the voice of the future in the works of the newer, younger composers of the present day. So should your institution keep alive the great classics of the organ and the

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singing ensemble and bring adequate performance to the most recent and fertile novelties. This way lies progress.

For the instrument, I believe that none but the best should be considered. My first choice among organ builders is Ernst M. Skinner, of Boston. It need not be a large organ, but it should be the result of study. No one organist should be allowed the final dictum as to its specifications, unless you have chosen your man for the place. His word, in that case, should be taken into account equally with that of the builder. One thing which should be guarded against carefully is the space provided, both for the organ and also the choir, by your architect. Three organs out of seven are ruined by architects' parsimony in this respect, and seven out of ten are seriously handicapped. This point cannot be urged too strongly.

On the matter of the choir, I cannot compromise with my conviction, grown out of many years' observation and study; the day of the solo quartette, or its even more illogical sister, the double quartette, is ended, just as its musical value is beyond the pale. The solo quartette really has the same relation to the great singing art as that of the string quartette in the instrumental field. It is an etching-like speciality. It has no flexibility and no tonal resource. It is the absurd apotheosis of the spot-light solo singer. Nine-tenths of the literature is impossible of adequate interpretation by a quartette: little of the other tenth is worth interpretation.

There is only one choir in the city of Chicago, that of the Fourth Presbyterian Church, which is, to my mind, operated as a choir should be. The "first choir" consists of eighteen or nineteen voices; the soloists are engaged for so many services a month, when they appear in their rightful place as soloists--- as Mr. Albert Spaulding appeared recently with the Chicago Orchestra. In this way the cost is lessened, the best soloists are available, and always is there a solid, schooled singing ensemble, presenting unaccompanied Russian, Italian, British, German, American works in anything from three to twelve voice parts, oratorio, cantata, double-choir works --- anything, in short, in the repertory.

With such an ensemble of the flexible, exquisitely-toned voices of our young singers--who have no equal in the world in vocal gifts, in

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enthusiasm, and in quickness of comprehension-- as the basis and the best soloists the markets affords, from time to time, you would possess the greatest choral instrument in the country. Its function would be the establishing and maintaining of a high standard in interpretation and in repertory, which does not exist now; it could, and should, present works of all epochs and schools, not only in its Chicago home but about the country, as well; its freedom from the grind of the ordinary church liturgy would make possible as perfect performance, and as great variety of compositions, as that of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. It could be enlarged, for special performance, by the addition of any number of voices.

The same function should be that of the organist: the conservation of the classics, the creation of new works, the systematic presentation of both. For more reasons than one, these two functions should be found in one person. Divided authority and responsibility never made a success. All successful institutions are the manifestations of one personality. Herein lies your difficulty. For the organist must be an organist of superlative power, not a technician only, with an understanding of orchestral idiom, upon which is based the art of modern organ registration. He must have imagination, catholicity of taste, scholarship. He should be a composer of standing. He should be a writer of English, for the greatest need of our national musical art today is comprehensive, illuminating, plainly written criticism of all branches of activity.

As choral conductor, he must be a deep scholar, familiar with the period styles of interpretation. He must understand the voice, individually, and in ensemble, through study and experience. He must be a born leader. He must have spoken our language from the cradle, for his problems of enunciation are not a scientific formula with the English tongue as they are with the German, French, or Italian. He must have the "feel", and the "flame", which is the soul of singing.

Through this man, you will possess the greatest instrument for ministry to the community, and to the country. It will be a beacon light in the art. And the problem of finding the right man is a serious matter. Of the men in this country (native) I should mention Clarence Dickinson, of New York, first. He is a virtuoso organist, an expert choral conductor, a critic, a composer, and a gentleman. After him I suggest Palmer Christian, municipal organist of Denver, whose qualifications are of the same order,--

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The same function should be that of the organizer: the conservation of the classics, the creation of new works, the systematic presentation of both. For more reasons than one, these two functions should be found in one person. Divided authority and responsibility never made a success. All successful institutions are the manifestations of one personality. Herein lies your difficulty. For the organizer must be an organizer of superlative power, not a technician only, with an understanding of orchestral idiom, upon which is based the art of modern organ registration. He must have imagination, catholicity of taste, scholarship. He should be a composer of standing. He should be a writer of English, for the greatest need of our national musical art today is comprehensive, illuminating, plainly written criticism of all branches of activity.

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Of the best known men, not Americans, I would suggest Louis Vierne, of Notre Dame, Paris, after Joseph Bonnet, however. Mr. Bonnet is probably the foremost French organist today. Both are famous composers and both are keen critics: both, you will note, speak our language as a secondary tongue. Again, Charles Courboin, the Belgian, must be ranked among the first: *plainly* as to his attainments outside of organ playing, I can recall no record. A great virtuoso is Edwin Lemare, the English organist, but his standards are not such that I can endorse his candidacy. Many others might be mentioned, whose span of life, unfortunately, is such that the art itself has outgrown their powers of perception and assimilation.

The organ and choral work of Mr. Dickerson, Mr. DeLamarter and Mr. Christian only, of these men is of sufficient standing to justify complete endorsement. If the matter be decided only on their standing as organists, I believe that the greatest reputation should determine the outcome.

Very sincerely yours,

(Signed) Arthur Olaf Andersen.

5323 Greenwood Ave.

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