

# BUILDING A PIPE DREAM

## IT TAKES A VILLAGE

BY ASHLEY SNAVLEY

**L**OCATED ABOUT 55 MILES EAST of Pittsburgh, the rural and historic town of Indiana, Pennsylvania, is known as the Christmas-tree capital of the world and the birthplace of actor Jimmy Stewart. It lies in a county that is a recreational mecca for parks and game lands abounding in wildlife, and is home to both traditional Amish communities and about 14,000 students who attend Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP).

Students at the university have been able to study the organ for almost 150 years. Since 1881, a time when the institution bore the name Indiana Normal School, a four-year program was in place to study music that included organ studies. However, throughout the history of the school, the organ program has predominately relied on the benevolence of local churches that offer their instruments for practice and performances. There has never been an organ of suitable teaching quality on the campus. In the last year, however, that has changed.

Thanks to the perseverance and dedication of IUP's professor of organ and keyboard, Christine Clewell—with help from the community, university, students, alumni, and the church—IUP has an instrument.

The official announcement about the Pogorzelski-Yankee Organ (PYO) lease agreement between IUP and the American Guild of Organists was made in January 2014. IUP was finally going to get an organ. Four years ago, the Guild announced a request for competitive proposals to house an organ via a special renewable lease, and IUP's proposal was selected. The PYO is a 24-rank mechanical-action organ built on commission in 1991 by Raymond J. Brunner & Co., with casework gilded in 22-karat gold leaf,

inspired by the early German organs of David Tannenberg (1728–1804). Valued at \$400,000, the organ is a bequest to the AGO from its original owners, Ronald G. Pogorzelski and Lester D. Yankee, formerly of Bucks County, Pennsylvania.

The proposal was written by Christine Clewell, who joined the faculty at IUP in fall 1999 after completing her doctoral degree in sacred and liturgical studies at the University of Michigan, studying with Marilyn Mason. Clewell also holds degrees from Susquehanna University and IUP, where she studied respectively with Susan Hegberg and Carol Teti, also a student of Mason. It was under Teti's tenure that the IUP organ program matured to the point where a master's degree in organ was conferred. Since Clewell's arrival at IUP, she has followed the footsteps of her predecessors in the pursuit to acquire a quality teaching instrument for IUP's campus.

In her proposal, Clewell indicated that the school's need for a superior on-site instrument was critical, especially as its preferred teaching and performance instruments are a mile off campus. (Up until now, the students have had lessons at the local churches that house a 1978 Gabriel Kney mechanical-action organ, and an M.P. Möller that was built in 1977 and refurbished in 1998.) In addition, IUP was recently designated an "All-Steinway School," and Clewell noted that it would be ideal to have organ-teaching resources that were comparable to the superior piano resources. Besides the 93 Steinways, the organ is a distinguished addition to a small portable Martin Ott organ and a two-manual Martin harpsichord. The PYO would serve as the school's primary performance instrument, used for solo

repertoire as well as collaborative music with strings, voice, woodwinds, brass, percussion, keyboard instruments, and choral accompaniments. Its acquisition would enhance the legitimacy of the organ program at IUP as both a "stand-alone area of study" and an "unapologetic component of liberal arts education."

On selecting IUP for the recipient, AGO Executive Director James Thomashower credits the "documented and passionate desire to have this instrument on campus and for its commitment to use the organ regularly for teaching and performance purposes exactly as Messrs. Pogorzelski and Yankee desired." Additionally, Clewell's proposal made it clear that "it would be of







The Pogorzelski-Yankee Organ in its new home  
(photo: Keith Boyer)

immediate and lasting benefit not only to the academic community, but to the larger community around Indiana.” Dean of Fine Arts Michael Hood stated, “We are thrilled with the great honor that the AGO has bestowed upon the department and IUP, and I can guarantee you that its honor and trust will be fully matched by the care and respect with which this marvelous instrument will be treated.”

One of the challenges for rural areas, like that of western Pennsylvania, with an abundance of small-

er churches is the shortage of organists to fill positions. Clewell envisions the future of the PYO as a “tool for building community relations.” Its accessibility to the community will encourage the study of the organ and its literature and attract more students of all levels. And while the relationship between IUP’s organ program and the local churches that offer their instruments will not change, the PYO “builds on the critical message that the organ and its great literature hold a viable voice outside of the church.”

### THE INSTALLATION

The installation process of the organ began in May 2014 with the arrival of three truckloads from a storage facility in Lancaster County. Its home would be in the Daniel DiCicco Rehearsal Hall of the Cogswell Music Building, which underwent an extensive renovation in 2004 to install state-of-the-art technology. The instrumental rehearsal space—which is the largest in the building at 78 feet long by 52 feet wide and features a ceiling height of 20 feet to the center “cloud” (a two-by-two-foot acoustical suspended ceiling)—is an acoustically ideal setting for teaching and performing.

The installation spanned over a month of work and was completed by the original organbuilder, Raymond J. Brunner. Throughout this process, volunteers including IUP students, faculty, staff, alumni, and local church organists assisted Brunner in the on-site work. The installation process pre-



Christine Clewell with a student at the Pogorzelski-Yankee Organ  
(photo: Keith Boyer)

sented an opportunity for the Indiana community to work together; the community embraced the opportunity to assist in reassembling, tuning, and celebrating the new pipe organ in town. The project was even captured on a time-lapse video by the university’s department of communications media, produced by Mark Piwinsky and students (viewable at [Tinyurl.com/ndnj47c](http://Tinyurl.com/ndnj47c)). The entire installation process is compressed into about three minutes! Volunteers assisted in all areas, from carrying pipes (more than 650 of them) and windchests to holding keys for the ten-hour tuning process. After allowing the pipes to acclimate to the temperature of the hall, the organ was first played in its new home on June 19, 2014.

Nicholas Capone, a current IUP physics major and organ minor, speaks of the excitement felt by many students regarding the instrument: “The PYO is a true blessing for many reasons. It has the capacity to play a large variety of musical eras, it has a digital memory system that allows each of us to store our own presets, it offers the straight pedalboard experience, it has spacer bars to raise the bench, and it sounds rich and colorful. It’s also a great way of promoting the organ department at IUP and a way to encourage students to study organ.” On a personal note, he adds, “When I first heard about the PYO and saw a picture of it, I was captivated. I have always had a great fascination with organbuilding, and when I heard that I could help assemble the organ, I couldn’t have been more excited.”

### SNEAK PREVIEW

In July 2014, several lucky alumni were invited to IUP to present the new instrument to the community. The former students—Maximillian Esmus ’12, Randy Frye ’11, Robin Malloy ’01, Vincent Ryan ’94/M’95, and Ashley Snavley ’07—were featured in a number of informal performances in which audience members could participate and ask questions. This unique opportunity was made possible by the



Carol Teti Memorial Organ Scholarship Committee (CTMOSC). Established in 1993 by the late Carol Teti, the work of this community-based, nonprofit organization has been integral to the success of the organ program at IUP. It helps support qualified students and also raises funds for bringing internationally acclaimed artists to the area to perform.

### INAUGURAL YEAR IN CELEBRATION

It was an exciting and eventful first year for the Pogorzelski-Yankee Organ. On September 21, 2014, Alan Morrison, head of organ studies at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, associate professor of organ at Westminster Choir College of Rider University, and college organist at Ursinus College, presented the inaugural recital. His appearance was made possible by the IUP College of Fine Arts and department of music and included a formal reception following the performance. Morrison's astute programming of works by J.S. Bach, C.P.E. Bach, Widor, Saint-Saëns, Debussy, Lefébure-Wély, Stover, and Locklair showcased the versatility and colors of the organ to the community.

Following its first public performance, the PYO was featured in Christine Clewell's faculty recital "Heroes and Martyrs from WWII" and as a collaborative instrument for the IUP Trumpet Fest. On March 15, 2015, the university and CTMOSC hosted AGO president and Indiana, Pennsylvania, native John Walker in a recital titled "Back Home Again in Indiana." His program featured works by Purcell, Krebs, Walther, Bach, Mendelssohn, Schumann, and a collaboration with Kevin Eisensmith, IUP professor of trumpet, called *Voluntary for Trumpet and Organ*. The composer, Domecq Smith, was a former student of Walker's. During the intermission, Walker presented a certificate to charter members of the Indiana AGO Chapter, which was revived upon the installation of the PYO. The chapter includes Indiana county and six surrounding rural counties. One of its



Indiana (Pa.) AGO Chapter members and IUP music faculty who performed in the world premiere of Dan Locklair's *Initial Memories*: Thomas Bush (treasurer); IUP alum Briana Brickner '13; Mary Logan Hastings, soprano; Jason Worzbyt, bassoon; Therese Wacker, flute; Stephanie Caulder, oboe; Jonathan Petty (secretary); Dan Locklair; Christine Clewell, organ; IAGO members Kay Thorell, Shawn Daly, and Roberta Jones; IUP alum Vincent Ryan '94/M'95

main initiatives is to create scholarship opportunities for organists in impoverished areas and to underwrite the cost of memberships.

### "INITIAL MEMORIES"

The most exciting event of the inaugural year was the commissioning of a work by renowned composer Dan Locklair by the IUP College of Fine Arts and the department of music. Locklair is composer in residence and professor at Wake Forest University and was named 1996 AGO Distinguished Composer of the Year. On November 7, 2015, IUP presented the world premiere of Locklair's *Initial Memories: A Divertimento for Organ and Woodwind Quintet*. The work was played by faculty members Rosemary Brumbelow (clarinet), Stephanie Caulder, department chair (oboe), Heidi Lucas (French horn), Therese Wacker (flute), Jason Worzbyt (bassoon), and Christine Clewell (organ). They were assisted by IUP voice faculty Joseph Baunoch (bass), Mary Logan Hastings (soprano), See-yin Lo (tenor), and alumna Briana Brickner '13 (alto).

The four-movement work was designed to highlight the unique tonal aesthetic of the PYO. According to Locklair's program notes, each movement is inspired and titled by a quote

from a different Pennsylvania author. The tonality of F came from the first American popular song to be written by an American woman—*The Blue Juniata* (named after a tributary to the Susquehanna River)—by Mrs. M.D. Sullivan. This melody is at the heart of *Initial Memories*. While it is obscured in the first movement ("Prologue") it is clearly heard in the last movement ("Dance") as it is playfully tossed back and forth within the wind quintet and between the wind quintet and organ. The third movement ("Hymn") was inspired by hymn text written by IUP alumnus Donald Clapper '50. He was a beloved musician in the Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, area until his death in 2012. Locklair writes that "although it is hardly necessary for a listener to hear them in order to enjoy the piece, the initials of several of the writers whose words inspired this work are remembered by note codes throughout the composition, giving rise to the title *Initial Memories*."

IUP alumnus Vincent Ryan '94/M'95, was present at the premiere and says, "The energy in Dan Locklair's *Initial Memories* is evident from the first note. The composer's economy of means pervades throughout the work, as the organ engages in thoughtful dialog with the wind quintet and sing-



ers. Locklair approaches his music with research and craft, thereby making it deeply meaningful to the IUP—and Pennsylvania—community. Dr. Clewell and her colleagues deserve kudos for their exciting performance.” The program also featured works by J.S. Bach, P.D.Q. Bach, Gladys Fisher, Libby Larsen, John Knowles Paine, and Bernard Wayne Sanders, and was followed by a formal reception. The weekend event included a “Meet-the-Composer” presentation and a pre-concert lecture given by Locklair and facilitated by John Levey, IUP professor of theory and composition.

### CULTIVATING A CULTURE FOR THE PYO'S MUSIC

Current students are also engaging in unique projects on the Pogorzelski-Yankee Organ that involve interdisciplinary collaborations. On May 4, the IUP organ studio presented a film-scoring project for the general public. Seven members of the organ studio composed original cues to accompany two films: Buster Keaton's *So You Won't Squawk*, produced by Columbia Pictures in 1941, and the Japanese film *Rodan! The Flying Monster*, made by Toho Studios in 1956. The musical impetus for each cue derived from an assigned scene, for which students had to write the music and identify registration that would make dramatic sense. The project as a whole resulted

from collaboration between Clewell and Levey, who decided to work together again this past fall to design a project whereby organ students create and play an original arrangement of a holiday carol, one tailored to the specifications of the Pogorzelski-Yankee Organ. These projects help students develop practical organ-playing techniques and composition skills—including score reading, transcription, and model composition. In terms of attracting an audience, the original music performances also create ways for nonorganists to actively listen to organ music.

The PYO has a bright future at its new home on the IUP campus. In addition to the gift of the organ, Ronald G. Pogorzelski and Lester D. Yankee also included in their bequest (the largest in AGO history) the funding of college scholarships for organ study and an annual new-music competition. One of the stipulations of the competition was that the winning composition be performed on the PYO. On March 13, 2016, the CTMOSC and members of the Indiana AGO Chapter will collaborate to present the world premiere of the winning composition for the Pogorzelski-Yankee Memorial Organ Composition Competition. The guest organist will be Kola Owolabi, associate professor of organ and improvisation at the University of Michigan. For more infor-

mation, visit [lagorgan.org/programs-and-events](http://lagorgan.org/programs-and-events).

The advancement of the organ in such a rural area depends largely on creating opportunities within the broader community. The PYO will not only serve as a significant performance instrument for the music faculty and students at IUP, but will greatly benefit the larger community as a versatile teaching and performing instrument. Its prominent location in the department of music will also promote interest among nonorgan students. This is important in a school in which many students are studying organ as a secondary instrument to acquire the skills needed to serve both the large and small local churches in rural western Pennsylvania.

As a native of western Pennsylvania, and a proud alumna and former student of Christine Clewell, I cannot fully express the joy I feel to see this wonderful instrument find its home at IUP. During my time there, I traveled off campus several times a week to practice at local churches. Although I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to learn on the many fine instruments in Indiana, I am certain that having the Pogorzelski-Yankee Organ on campus will help ensure the future of the university's organ program. I am honored to be able to participate in its inaugural celebration and to help bring this news to the larger AGO community. There is no place that the PYO will be more fully appreciated, used, and cared for than this institution, and we are deeply indebted to the generosity of the Guild and Ronald G. Pogorzelski and Lester D. Yankee for this opportunity.



Preconcert presentation of *Initial Memories* delivered by Dan Locklair

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