OVERVIEW AND INTRODUCTION TO THE ORGAN MUSIC OF ALSATIAN-AMERICAN COMPOSER RENÉ LOUIS BECKER (1882-1956)

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This dissertation provides the first biographical overview and annotated catalog of the organ music of Alsatian-American organist and composer René Louis Becker. Born and educated in Strasbourg, Alsace, Becker emigrated to the United States in 1904 and remained active as a composer and church musician for the next 50 years. In addition to providing sources for his biographical information, documentation of the specific organs with which Becker was professionally associated is included for the purpose of evaluating possible dates of composition of his undated organ works as well as for consideration of organ registrations when performing his works. Primary sources include newspaper clippings, personal correspondence, family scrapbooks, organ archives, and both published and unpublished manuscripts. Study of these manuscripts, including rediscovery of more than fifty works of Becker’s which were previously published in the early 1900s, present an opportunity to introduce a large new body of sophisticated repertoire from a distinguished and accomplished musician to the field of organ music.

Becker composed more than 180 individual works for the organ, over half of which remain in manuscript and which were completely unknown since even before his death in 1956. Becker’s complete known oeuvre for organ includes 34 marches, 15 toccatas, three published large-scale sonatas as well as numerous works styled as preludes, postludes, finales, chansons, fantasies, fugues, and multiple small-scale compositions.

After a brief biography and an overview of Becker’s compositional style and complete extant organ works, an introduction to his largest-scale work for the organ, the five-movement
First Sonata in G, op. 40, is given. This is followed by an illustration of the overt stylistic influences present in the first two movements of that sonata with extensive musical examples, serving to establish Becker as one of the inheritors of the romantic tradition of the large-scale organ sonata and as a 20th century composer of note.
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For welcoming me into their hearts and home, and for providing me with open access to the music and materials left by their ancestor, René Louis Becker, I would like to thank Mr. and Mrs. Jay and Sheila Becker, and their daughters Meg and Catherine.

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INTRODUCTION

Although he received quiet but consistent recognition from many of his colleagues and published more than 50 works for the organ during his lifetime, the elegant music of René Louis Becker has been entirely overlooked for nearly one hundred years. It is the intent of this dissertation to remedy that omission, and to acknowledge his importance as an Alsatian-American composer of note and reintroduce his fine organ music to the world.

Becker’s formal musical education was undertaken in Strasbourg in his youth, and his career in America began in 1904, spanning decades of some of the most highly productive years of American and European organ history. His music was played and championed by great organists of the day including Alexander Schreiner, who wrote personally to René Becker’s family in praise of Becker’s organ music, and said specifically of the Finale to the second sonata, “It is excellent and stirring music!” Albert Riemenschneider was known to have played several of Becker’s compositions. Clarence Eddy, to whom both René and his wife Angela dedicated compositions, wrote a personal letter to René in which he praises his music, saying that Becker’s “…stunning new Toccata in Bb…is splendidly written…there are very few composers who know how to write such wonderful counterpoint!”

The earliest public professional mention of René Becker is in the very first edition of The American Organist magazine, which is still being published today. Becker was the subject of a

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2 Baldwin-Wallace College Bulletin, School of Music, Vol. 4, No. 4, September 1916, private collection of the Becker family, Birmingham, MI.
3 Alexander Schreiner to Julius Becker, Salt Lake City, 19 November 1969, private collection of the Becker family, Birmingham, MI.
4 Albert Riemenschneider, “Vesper Organ Recital” (organ recital, Baldwin Wallce College School of Music, Berea, OH, 12 November 1916).
5 Clarence Eddy to René Becker, Chicago, 29 November 1923, private collection of the Becker family, Birmingham, MI.
lengthy biographical article accompanied by a full-page photograph. But additional published research on René Louis Becker is minimal at best. He is not cited in New Grove, though he is listed briefly in *Baker’s Biographical Dictionary of Musicians*, fourth and fifth editions from the 1940s and 1950s, as well as in *The International Who is Who in Music* fifth (mid-century) edition. These sources provide only bare facts regarding birth, marriage, various professional positions, and sometimes include a limited list of various published compositions.

Prior to this dissertation, the most significant biographical information gathered in one modern source was a brief article written by Gene Scott. Though it provides a warm and enthusiastic general introduction to the Becker family history and to the existence of the organ music of René Becker, the article is brief and more anecdotal in nature, rather than a source of documented or scholarly information. However, as the sole mention of Becker for many years, information from this article has been copied and even translated to several additional web sources.

Both the quality and quantity of Becker’s extant organ music represent a significant contribution to American 20th century organ literature, including many works ideal for both liturgical and recital use. René Becker left more than 180 documentable individual compositions for solo organ, at least 71 of which were published singly, as multi-movement works, or in volumes between 1908 and 1928 by numerous publishing houses. The foremost challenge in creating a catalog of Becker’s works from both a scholarly and editorial perspective is the

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6. René L. Becker; a biography,” *American Organist* vol. 1, no. 3 (March, 1918), 140-141.
complete lack of dates on any of the extant organ manuscripts. Following the opus numbers offers only a very basic schema for probable or possible order of composition, but with many contradictions. Firstly, René assigned opus numbers to only some of his organ scores (both published and unpublished). Furthermore, the opus numbers are not consecutive, and there is evidence of frequent changes and alterations to the opus numbers on a large number of the original manuscripts, while some manuscripts exist in duplicate or even triplicate and exhibit conflicting markings.

Though a portion of Becker’s previously published organ works have now passed into the public domain, most of them are virtually impossible to obtain because of rarity and age. The majority of primary source materials obtained for this dissertation, believed to be a nearly a complete set of the extant organ works, were received directly from the Becker family. The first, second, and third organ sonatas can be found on occasional publishing sites\(^\text{11}\) where they are listed as available\(^\text{12}\), and they are also currently accessible online at the library of the University of Rochester.\(^\text{13}\) The extant musical scores of Becker were moved from the family estate to the library at the University of Michigan in June of 2010 for preservation.

Recordings are even more rare than scores, as this music has only been recently rediscovered. I recorded a world-premier disc of Becker’s organ music in Pithiviers, France in September 2010, it was released on the Raven Recordings label in 2011\(^\text{14}\). Prior to that there existed two European recordings of Becker’s First Sonata in G, op. 40, recorded by two organists

\(\text{14}\) Damin Spritzer, Organ Music of Rene Louis Becker, recorded 29 September – 1 October 2010, Raven OAR-925, 2011, compact disc.
in the Zwart family. The first was recorded in 1985 by Willem Hendrik Zwart, and produced by Jan Quintus Zwart for JQZ Muziekprodukkties. No longer commercially available, a single copy of that disc was sent to the author by Jan Quintus Zwart\textsuperscript{15}. The second disc, also no longer available\textsuperscript{16}, was recorded from a live recital at the church of Saint Eustache in Paris, France, performed by Everhardt Zwart\textsuperscript{17}, who likewise provided me with a single copy.

Unfortunately, additional materials that provide biographical or musical information about Becker and his life are very scarce, and due to the passage of time there is scant possibility of uncovering significant additional material. Many dates of performances of his works were located by pursuing references in various periodicals or collections such as that of the organ library of the Boston Chapter of the American Guild of Organists. This document is an attempt to bring together all currently known references to Becker’s life and music in prose form, to provide a catalog resource of his known organ works, and to provide an introduction to his most significant organ work, the First Sonata in G, op. 40.

\textsuperscript{15} Willem Hendrik Zwart, \textit{Bovenkerk Campen}, JQZ Muziekprodukkties, 1991, compact disc.
\textsuperscript{16} Everhard Zwart, email message to author, 6 July 2008.
The lineage of the family of René Louis Becker can be traced back to the late 1700s in Bischheim, Alsace, the ancestral home of René’s grandfather, Jean-Baptiste Becker. Jean-Baptiste lived from 1813 until 1865 and is recorded as having been an organist in Roeschwoog, an area of France near Strasbourg. Jean-Baptiste’s son Edouard Becker (René’s father) was born in 1838, and he was also an organist who held positions of note during his lifetime. According to a letter written by Edouard himself, he states that he served as the organist for St. Brigitte’s in Rome, and subsequently held similar positions for Chartres Cathedral and the Strasbourg Cathedral from 1871 to 1875. Edouard left Strasbourg and eventually returned to the family home in Bischheim. During René’s early youth, Edouard was the organist for St-Jean Church in Strasbourg from 1883 to 1895. No information survives to provide details about René’s childhood, and sadly, both of his parents died within months of each other in 1895 when he was only thirteen years old.

René Becker attended the Municipal Conservatory of Music in Strasbourg for eight years from 1896-1904, and his educational pedigree from that institution includes several instructors whose own educations represent musical lineage of note. Becker studied piano with Ernst Münch (the father of American conductor Charles Münch) from 1896-1897, and then with Fritz Blumer, a former pupil of Franz Liszt, from 1899-1904. Becker’s harmony professor from 1897-1904

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21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
was Carl Somborn, a former student of Joseph Rheinberger. His formal organ studies from 1899-1904 were with Adolph Gessner\textsuperscript{25}, whose own organ training was received from Georg Weiss in Bingen, from Haberl, Heller, and Mitterer at the Kirchenmusikschule in Regensburg, Hanisch in Regensburg, and last of all, Friedrich Riegel at the Akademie in Munich\textsuperscript{26}.

Another possible and potentially intriguing influence upon Becker during these formative years may have been acquaintance with the renowned organist and Bach scholar Dr. Albert Schweitzer, who also was active in Strasbourg from 1885-1893\textsuperscript{27} with Eugene Münch, the brother of Ernst Münch, Becker’s professor. Indeed, the Schweitzer family was so close to the Münch family\textsuperscript{28} that Münch’s daughter Emma later married Paul Schweitzer, Albert’s brother. René dedicated his Second Sonata in F, op. 41 to Ernst Münch, and it seems highly possible that the two young organists may have had occasion to make their acquaintance during their consecutive years in Strasbourg affiliated with the same family of organ professors. Regrettably, a concrete connection has not yet been established, but it bears consideration for additional reasons that are addressed in the chapter of this dissertation that discusses the stylistic influences in movements I and II of Becker’s First Sonata.

In 1904\textsuperscript{29} René emigrated to America to join his two older brothers, Lucien and Camille. The following year, the three brothers published the first catalog for the Becker Bros. Conservatory of Music in St. Louis, Missouri\textsuperscript{30}. Their conservatory catalog details that René

\begin{footnotes}
\item[25] Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
taught piano and composition along with twelve other instructors, including both of his older brothers. The Becker Bros. Conservatory was housed in a new facility that had been built expressly for the establishment of their music school, and that included a 300-seat recital hall with a small two-manual Geo. Kilgen & Son pipe organ, the stop list of which is provided in Chapter 3.

René was very active in St. Louis, where in addition to teaching and accompanying frequent performances at his conservatory he worked as a church organist at an institution recorded as “The Italian Roman Catholic Church”. During certain years he taught simultaneously at three institutions in St. Louis: the Becker Bros. Conservatory, St. Louis University, and Kenrick Seminary. He taught at his own family conservatory from 1905 to 1910, was listed as an “Instructor of Music” and taught pianoforte at St. Louis University from 1906 to 1908 and again from 1910 to 1911, and taught Gregorian Chant at Kenrick Seminary. The nine years that Becker lived in St. Louis also saw the beginning of his music publishing career. His first published organ works begin with op. 16 in 1908 and continue in subsequent years with opuses 32, 40, 41, 42, 45, and 69.

In 1912, Becker moved to Belleville, Illinois, and became the organist for St. Peter’s Cathedral, where he stayed only briefly from 1912 to 1915. An Estey organ, Opus 1093, was installed there in 1913, and the details of that instrument are provided in Chapter 3. Between 1913 and 1915, he published opuses 43, 47 (nos. 1 & 2), op. 51 (nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, & 5), as well as

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31 Ibid.
two works without opus number.

In 1915, Becker moved to Alton, Illinois, where he remained for 15 years until 1930 as the organist for Sts. Peter and Paul Church\textsuperscript{36}. The instrument at that time was an 1893 Hook and Hastings, Opus 1569, with two manuals and 27 registers\textsuperscript{37}. Though that organ was destroyed by lightning in the late 1940s\textsuperscript{38}, a record of it was located in the Hook opus list\textsuperscript{39} and the details are given in Chapter 3 of this document.

Becker’s last known published works for organ date from this period, and are opuses 1 (nos. 1 and 2), 2, 53 (a, b, & c) 62, 63, 68 (a & b), 69 (c & d), 70, 71, 75 (a & b), 76a, 77b, 81 (a, b, c, d, & e), as well as ten works without opus numbers.

In 1930, Becker moved again and became the organist at Blessed Sacrament Cathedral in Detroit, Michigan\textsuperscript{40} where he remained until 1942. The instrument that he played while employed there is still to be found at the cathedral today. It is an organ built by Casavant Frères, Op. 1114 that had been installed in 1925, five years before Becker arrived. The stop list for this Casavant organ is provided in Chapter 3.

After 1942, Becker left Detroit, and went to serve at St. Alphonsus Church in Dearborn, Michigan\textsuperscript{41}, his last church position. According to his obituary, he was the organist there for eight years. The instrument in the church at that time was an Austin organ, op. 1675, installed in

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Continuing the family musical legacy of father and son that began with his grandfather Jean-Baptiste, René’s youngest son Julius became the assistant organist for his father at St. Alphonsus in 1947. Just under ten years later, René Becker passed away on January 28th of 1956 at his home in Detroit, Michigan.

42 Memorandum of Agreement for the purchase of a pipe organ from Austin Organ Company, signed by Rev. John A. Reich, Dearborn, MI, 11 March 1929.
44 “In Loving Memory: René L. Becker, Musician, 73” *Detroit Sunday Times*, 29 January 1956
THE ORGAN MUSIC OF RENÉ LOUIS BECKER

After René Becker’s death, his adult children stored the collected music from his estate in their homes. Ultimately the boxes of manuscripts made their way to the home of his last living son, Julius Becker, where I counted more than 149 works for solo organ. That number expands to more than 180 to incorporate each individual movement of all works, as well as to include works that are mentioned in various sources but for which the actual manuscripts are now missing, and rare works discovered in other locations, such as the Library of Congress. Becker’s published organ works carry publication dates between 1908 and 1928, exclusively from the first half of his career and during the years he lived in St. Louis, Belleville, and Alton. During his lifetime, 71 organ works are known to have been published in total (if counting separately the individual movements of multi-movement works, since often works with the same opus numbers were published singly as well as in collections). A catalog of all the known works of Becker for organ is found in Appendix A to this dissertation.

Based upon numerical or sequential gaps and duplications or omissions in the catalog and opus list compiled from the extant scores, as well as the rare mention of additional pieces in concert programs or library archives, it remains a strong possibility that more pieces may have been written or published but are currently or permanently lost. Regrettably, more than fifty years elapsed between Becker’s death in 1956 and my examination of the extant scores, during which time they were of necessity moved multiple times between the homes of his descendants, without provision for long-term preservation or organization. In almost all cases, original manuscripts of published works appear to have either been lost or retained by the original publishing houses, many of which are now defunct or were purchased and absorbed by larger firms over the past century.
Becker’s complete oeuvre for organ is known to include at least 34 marches, 15 toccatas, three large-scale sonatas as well as archival evidence of two additional sonatas now believed to be misattributed or lost, numerous works styled as preludes, postludes, finales, chansons, fantasies, fugues, and multiple small-scale compositions with various descriptive titles (as was customary during the first part of the 1900s). While his compositional style gracefully combines the traditional classical training he received from his noteworthy professors in Strasbourg and his lifetime spent under the further influence of both American and European contemporaries, his appealing harmonic language is distinctly unique, often incorporating creative modulations and cadential sequences.

One key characteristic of Becker’s musical style that is consistently evident throughout his works is his ability to write long, lyric, singing melodies. His frequent use of counterpoint and fugue is highly skilled, and employs elegant and clean lines that form a very distinct characteristic of his best works in traditional romantic and classical idioms. Another prominent feature of his extant organ works is a preference for ternary form. More than 80 of his works display explicit ABA form with strongly contrasting sections. In his many meditative organ works and in many of the aforementioned contrasting B sections, Becker favors solo lines with soft accompaniment on another manual. Certain of his organ works are quite advanced and virtuosic and therefore ideal for recitals and concerts. However, a sizeable portion of his organ music is of more moderate difficulty, and those works are well suited for liturgical use in a wide variety of church services. The fact that Becker spent his entire career as a dedicated church musician in cathedrals and churches of note is clearly reflected in the liturgical sensibilities and practicability of so many of his works.

The foremost challenge from both a scholarly and editorial perspective in creating a
catalog of Becker’s extant works is the complete lack of dates on any of the organ manuscripts. As shown in the catalog, following the opus numbers sequentially offers only a very basic outline for creating a catalog of his works, but that list contains many contradictions and unanswerable questions when placed in the context of his complete extant works for organ. René only assigned opus numbers to 128 of his organ pieces (out of approximately 180, both published and unpublished, and including individual movements of multi-movement works such as the sonatas). Furthermore, those opus numbers are not consecutive, and this is significant because it is also true for the complete works of Becker, further suggesting that pieces may be missing or lost from the complete collection. There are occasional duplicate opus numbers in the manuscripts, as well as frequent written evidence of alteration of the opus numbers on many scores.

Though precise dates of composition are unknowable, closer examination of these scores provide several clues that strongly suggest that the majority of his organ works were written in his earlier years, primarily in the first half of his life up until 1928, the last documentable date of a published organ work for Becker. The most concrete evidence of early composition is the actual publication dates, which only span 1908-1928. Additionally, the fact that there are numerous alterations of opus numbers on several scores actually suggests early completion dates for possibly the entire oeuvre.

One example is op. 77. The evidence indicates that the manuscript to op. 77 was already written by 1908, because that identical work was published in 1908 as part of the collection published under op. 16, which was moreover his very first documentable published organ music. Another related example is the op. 69b manuscript, which shows that the opus number had been crossed out, and that it was also published in that first collection under op. 16. These examples
verify that Becker had completed music at least up to these high opus numbers prior to 1908, and that they were altered for inclusion in that early publication.

There are more examples of alterations that suggest early dates of composition. The manuscript to op. 31, No. 2, is titled *Finale Pomposo* (and curiously bears a number 6 in the title, but there are no other clues as to what that refers to, nor any extant manuscripts that incorporate similar or related numbering, thus supporting the speculation that there are missing organ works from the estate collection). A second manuscript of the same music exists, but it bears the title *Preludio Majestico* and has been given the opus number 100 as part of an unpublished loose collection of movements titled Suite for Organ, op. 100. But like op. 77, where the opus number had been altered to op. 16 for publication, the fact that two entirely separate extant versions of this manuscript span both the early and late opus numbers argues in favor of the idea that that majority of his organ music was composed earlier in his life and that he rearranged or renumbered his manuscripts frequently for either personal or editorial reasons. It is plainly apparent that Becker had completed compositions up through very high opus numbers by 1908, when he had only been in America for four years. Additionally informative is the fact that other high opus numbers including 32, 40, 41, 42, 43, 47, and 51 were published a full eight years before opuses 1 and 2, which were published subsequently in 1916. No documentation is known to exist that can provide information as to whether he composed while still a student in Strasbourg.

In addition to the works with opus numbers, the second large group of organ manuscripts in the collection is those works without opus number, of which there are more than 55. No evidence exists that assists with dating or cataloguing this group of manuscripts either, except for the few that can be matched with other duplicate scores or published materials as described
above in examples. For the purposes of the catalog included in Appendix A of this dissertation, they are alphabetized by title. As with the works that include an opus number, inconsistencies also arise within this group, including manuscript duplications and compositions that are unfinished or visibly altered in some way.

In considering compositions dates for Becker’s music, I attempted to link registration specifications on his compositions with specific instruments that Becker was known to have played. Unfortunately, the registrations found in his organ music do not provide any additional clues or information about possible dates of composition, and they often bear no resemblance to the various instruments. This is addressed in more detail in the chapter on organs known to Becker.

His publishing history is as follows, divided by the periods of time in which he lived in various cities:

During the nine years René lived in St. Louis:

Table 1. Published organ works while living in St. Louis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pub. Date</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Twelve Compositions for Organ</em>, op. 16</td>
<td>1908</td>
<td>Stark Music PTG. &amp; Pub. Co.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Toccata in D</em>, op. 32</td>
<td>1910</td>
<td>G. Schirmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>First Sonata for Organ</em>, op. 40</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>G. Schirmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Second Sonata for Organ</em>, op. 41</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>G. Schirmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Cantilena</em>, op. 42</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>G. Schirmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Toccata</em>, op. 45</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>G. Schirmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Marche Triomphale &quot;Ite Missa est,&quot; op. 69</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>The Boston Music Co.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interestingly, this list of his first published works represents many of Becker’s best and largest pieces, most importantly the first two of his three large-scale organ sonatas. As will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 of this document, the scope of his three multi-movement sonatas is
especially significant when compared to his other works, and the sonatas alone in his oeuvre harken back to the traditional symphonic style of major European organ sonatas and symphonies of the late 1800s by composers such as Charles-Marie Widor, Alexandre Guilmant, and Josef Rheinberger. After Becker’s sonatas, all his subsequent organ compositions gradually but steadily diminish in size, and stylistically they move markedly away from traditional classical idioms. Multi-movement works disappear entirely from his organ music, and in their place appear a substantial number of pieces that are not only shorter but also often quiet and contemplative. Becker’s compositional style was clearly adapting to smaller American instruments and acoustics, and he was writing works that were also more adapted to the liturgical needs of smaller American churches.

While in Belleville, Illinois between the years of 1913 and 1915:

Table 2. Published organ works while living in Belleville, IL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pub. Date</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Third Sonata for Organ, op. 43</td>
<td>1913</td>
<td>G. Schirmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Album Leaf</td>
<td>1913</td>
<td>The Willis Music Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chanson du Soir, op. 47, No. 2</td>
<td>1914</td>
<td>J. Fischer &amp; Bro.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chanson Matinale (Pastorale), op. 47, No. 1</td>
<td>1914</td>
<td>J. Fischer &amp; Bro.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canzonetta (Morceau pour Orgue), op. 51, No. 1</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>The John Church Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lullaby for Organ, op. 51, No. 2</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>The John Church Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meditation for Organ, op. 51, No. 5</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>The John Church Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reverie (Morceau pour Orgue), op. 51, No. 4</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>The John Church Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer-Idyll for Organ, op. 51, No. 3</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>The John Church Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marche Pontificale</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>Theodore Presser</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Though op. 43, the Third Sonata, has a 1913 publication date, it is logical to assume that its manuscript had to have been received by the publishing house in St. Louis prior to Becker’s move to Belleville, since the first two sonatas had been published by the same publishing firm.
(G. Schirmer) only the year prior in 1912. However, the subsequent pieces published in this period continue to reflect the prior observation that his style had altered to accommodate the instruments and churches he served, and that works with an emphasis on lyrical, contemplative writing were dominating his output.

During the 15 years he lived in Alton, Illinois, between 1915 and 1930:

Table 3. Published organ works while living in Alton, IL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pub. Date</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marche Nuptiale, op. 1, No. 2</td>
<td>1916</td>
<td>Theodore Presser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Song of the Seraphim, op. 1, No. 1</td>
<td>1916</td>
<td>Theodore Presser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melodie Élégiaque, op. 2</td>
<td>1916</td>
<td>Arthur P. Schmidt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legend</td>
<td>1916</td>
<td>Boston Music Co.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Festival March</td>
<td>1917</td>
<td>Theodore Presser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rêve des Anges (Angels’ Dream), op. 53a</td>
<td>1917</td>
<td>John Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romanzetta, op. 53b</td>
<td>1917</td>
<td>John Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chanson d'Amour, op. 53c</td>
<td>1917</td>
<td>John Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marche Militaire, op. 62</td>
<td>1918</td>
<td>Theodore Presser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cantilène, op. 63</td>
<td>1918</td>
<td>The Boston Music Co.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toccata (Benedicamus domino), op. 68a</td>
<td>1919</td>
<td>The Boston Music Co.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allegro Risoluto, op. 68b</td>
<td>1919</td>
<td>The Boston Music Co.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sur le Nil (Sérénade Orientale) pour Orgue</td>
<td>1920</td>
<td>Boston Music Co.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chanson sans Paroles</td>
<td>1920</td>
<td>John Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sortie Solennelle, op. 70</td>
<td>1922</td>
<td>G. Schirmer, Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toccata in Bb, Ite missa est, op. 69c</td>
<td>1923</td>
<td>The H. W. Gray Co.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postlude in F# Major &quot;Bendicamus Domino,&quot; op. 69d</td>
<td>1923</td>
<td>The H. W. Gray Co.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idylle Angélique, op. 71</td>
<td>1923</td>
<td>The H. W. Gray Co.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postlude in d minor, op. 75a</td>
<td>1923</td>
<td>The H. W. Gray Co.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March in d minor, op. 76a</td>
<td>1923</td>
<td>The H. W. Gray Co.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sur la Rivière, op. 77b</td>
<td>1923</td>
<td>The H. W. Gray Co.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued on following page...
As shown above by the long list of compositions, Becker published prolifically during his fifteen years in Alton, including his last known published work in 1928. However, since Becker did not appear to date any of his manuscripts, the publication dates do not appear to correspond in any way with the dates of composition. In several cases, there is actually clear evidence to the contrary as will be detailed subsequently in this chapter. But again, all the works published continued to generally diminish in scope and scale from the large multi-movement sonatas with which he first introduced himself as a composer of note in his early years in America. Becker’s penultimate set of published works under opus 81 are among the smallest organ pieces he is known to have written.
Information about the instruments with which René Becker was closely associated both in Strasbourg and in America is very valuable for historic purposes, since an important aspect of an organist-composer's biography is whether and how the instruments that they played influenced their compositions or can assist in establishing a possible compositional chronology for any of their music.

Regrettably, little to no information can be found concerning the organs that Becker’s father and grandfather played in Europe, and furthermore his grandfather, Jean-Baptiste, had passed away many years before René’s birth in 1882, and his father Edouard died when René was only thirteen. Though the family legacy of male organists is of interest, the scant records detailing the professional organist positions held by Jean-Baptiste and Edouard, and the family archives provide no additional material citing the extent of any teaching and guidance received by Becker from his elders, though it is logical to assume in a musical family some influence and exposure was inevitable45.

Becker’s years of study at the Strasbourg conservatory were surely formative ones, though information stating conclusively that Becker had actual contact any particular instruments has not yet been located. However, the organs played by his two keyboard professors, Ernst Münch and Adolph Gessner, were both quite notable and underwent significant alterations and renovations during Becker’s years of study. They should thus seriously be considered as potentially influential on the style of composition in his earliest published works as will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3, and they merit inclusion in this dissertation for that reason. These European instruments and acoustical spaces were surely a significant part of his heritage

and training.

Becker’s piano professor, Ernst Münch, was the organist and the choirmaster at Saint-Guillaume in Strasbourg, where he founded the Wilhelmer choir that was particularly known for performances of Johann Sebastian Bach’s music\textsuperscript{46}. Andreas Silbermann built the first significant organ there in 1726, a 19-stop instrument with two manuals and pedal. Stops were added in 1734, 1754, 1845, 1863 and 1881, including an extension of the manuals and pedal, but Münch had the organ completely rebuilt in 1898 by Walcker (opus 804, 52 stops, three manuals and pedal, pneumatic action\textsuperscript{47}). René studied piano with Münch from 1896 to 1897, so he probably had the chance to know both the original Silbermann as well as to have been present for some or all of the subsequent rebuilding activities of Walcker.

The Silbermann organ from 1728 was as follows\textsuperscript{48}:

Table 4. Stoplist for the St. Guillaume (Strasbourg) 1726 Silbermann organ

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grand-Orgue</th>
<th>Positiv</th>
<th>Pédale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bourdon 16’</td>
<td>Bourdon 8’</td>
<td>Supbass 16’ (ouverte)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montre 8’</td>
<td>Prestant 4’</td>
<td>Bomparte 16’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bourdon 8’</td>
<td>Nazard 2 2/3’</td>
<td>Trompette 8’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prestant 4’</td>
<td>Doublette 2’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nazard 2 2/3’</td>
<td>Tierce 1 3/5’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doublette 2’</td>
<td>Fourniture III</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tierce 1 3/5’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornet V (c’)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourniture III</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cimbale III</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\textsuperscript{48} Daniel Maurer, e-mail message to author, 22 July 2011.
The Walcker organ of 1898 was as follows\(^{49}\):

**Positif de dos** (the pipework in case for the first manual was emptied entirely in order to make more room for the choir at this time, so there are no stops to list)

Table 5. Stoplist for the St. Guillaume (Strasbourg) Walcker organ, Op. 804

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grand Orgue:</th>
<th>Récit (expressif):</th>
<th>Écho:</th>
<th>Pédale:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Montre 16’</td>
<td>Quintaton 16’</td>
<td>Bourdon 16’</td>
<td>Flûte 16’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montre 8’</td>
<td>Principal 8’</td>
<td>Cor de daim 8’</td>
<td>Violon 16’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bourdon 8’</td>
<td>Bourdon 8’</td>
<td>Bourdon à cheminée 8’</td>
<td>Soubasse 16’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flûte 8’</td>
<td>Gambe 8’</td>
<td>Gemshorn 4’</td>
<td>Bourdon (Echo) 16’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salicional 8’</td>
<td>Dulciane 8’</td>
<td>Flûte 4’</td>
<td>Grosse Quinte 10 2/3’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prestant 4’</td>
<td>Voix céleste 8’</td>
<td>Doublette 2’</td>
<td>Montre 8’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flûte à cheminée 4’</td>
<td>Flûte 4’</td>
<td>Larigot 2 2/3’</td>
<td>Bourdon 8’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quinte 2 2/3’</td>
<td>Prestant 4’</td>
<td>Tierce 1 3/5’</td>
<td>Cello 8’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doublette 2’</td>
<td>Quinte 2 2/3’</td>
<td>Plein Jeu 2’ III</td>
<td>Prestant 4’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quarte de nazard 2’</td>
<td>Doublette 2’</td>
<td></td>
<td>Flûte 4’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornet V</td>
<td>Tierce 1 3/5’</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bombarde 16’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourniture 2’ IV</td>
<td>Larigot 1 1/3’</td>
<td></td>
<td>Trompette 8’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cymbale 1/2’ III</td>
<td>Flûte 1’</td>
<td></td>
<td>Clairon 4’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombarde 16’</td>
<td>Fourniture 1 1/3’ IV</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clairon 4’</td>
<td>Cymbale 1’ III</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bombarde 16’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trompette 8’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Basson-Hautbois 8’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clairon 4’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Becker’s organ professor, Adolph Gessner, was organist at Saint-Maurice in Strasbourg.

In 1899, an organ by the builder Friedrich Weigle, from Stuttgart, was installed at Saint-Maurice,

with 42 stops and three manuals\textsuperscript{50}. Becker studied with Gessner from 1899 to 1904; so again, it is possible and quite likely that the young René at least witnessed and was aware of this installation, and perhaps even played for lessons and services.

The Weigle Organ of 1899 was as follows\textsuperscript{51}:

Table 6. Stoplist for the Saint-Maurice (Strasbourg) Weigle organ

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grand-Orgue:</th>
<th>Positif expressif:</th>
<th>Récit expressif:</th>
<th>Pédale:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal 16’</td>
<td>Bourdon 16’</td>
<td>Quintaton 16’</td>
<td>Principal acoustique 32’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal 8’</td>
<td>Geigenprincipal 8’</td>
<td>Bourdon double 8’</td>
<td>Violoncelle 16’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bourdon 8’</td>
<td>Hohlfloete 8’</td>
<td>Gemshorn 8’</td>
<td>Soubasse 16’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wienerfloete 8’</td>
<td>Salicional 8’</td>
<td>Viole 8’</td>
<td>Octavebasse 8’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viole de gambe 8’</td>
<td>Dolce 8’</td>
<td>Aéoline 8’</td>
<td>Choralebass 4’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stentorpon 8’</td>
<td>Gambe solo 8’</td>
<td>Quintaton 8’</td>
<td>Posaune 16’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grosgedeckt 8’</td>
<td>Flûte harmonique solo 4’</td>
<td>Voix céleste 8’</td>
<td>Harmonicabass 16’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuba mirabilis 8’</td>
<td>Doublet 2’</td>
<td>Flûte traverse 4’</td>
<td>I/P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Octave 4’</td>
<td>Cornet 3 rgs</td>
<td>Flageolet 2’</td>
<td>II/P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flûte à cheminée 4’</td>
<td>Quintaton 4’</td>
<td>Hautbois à bouche 8’</td>
<td>III/P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doublet 2’</td>
<td>Clarinette à bouche 8’</td>
<td>Voix humaine 8’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornet 3-5 rgs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixture 6 rgs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II/I (16’, 8’)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III/I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After joining his brothers in St. Louis, Missouri in 1904 for the founding of the Becker Bros. Conservatory, the instruments that Becker played changed markedly. Their conservatory


\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.
was housed in a new facility built exclusively for the establishment of their music school that included a 300-seat recital hall, in which was installed a two manual Geo. Kilgen & Son pipe organ with 579 pipes, 61-note manuals and a 30-note pedal board:

Table 7. Stoplist for the Becker Bros. Conservatory (St. Louis) Kilgen organ

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Great Organ:</th>
<th>Swell Organ:</th>
<th>Pedal Organ:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open Diapason 8’</td>
<td>Violin Diapason 8’</td>
<td>Bourdon 16’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melodia 8’</td>
<td>Salicional 8’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dulciana 8’</td>
<td>Stopped Diapason 8’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Octave 4’</td>
<td>Flute Harmonic 4’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oboe-Bassoon 8’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tremolo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By any standards, this is an instrument of very modest tonal resources, considerably different from and significantly smaller than the instruments found not only throughout Strasbourg but those played specifically by Becker’s keyboard professors. Kilgen was an extremely prolific American organ builder during this period in American organ history, and this is a very standard instrument from their factory. By 1924 Kilgen had installed as many as four thousand organs in the mid-western region of America, thus this instrument represents a very common type of organ that would have been found by Becker and his American contemporaries.

Becker’s publishing career began during his first years in America when this Kilgen was likely one of the most prominent instruments in his day-to-day life. Dating from the same period of time, his first published works, beginning in 1908 (they are listed chronologically in Chapter 2) include the first two sonatas, two toccatas, and the \textit{Marche Triomphale} that represent in many ways the pinnacle of Becker’s writing for the organ in quality, size, musical sophistication, and

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grandeur. When placed in the context of Becker’s entire oeuvre, the tonal resources provided by the aforementioned 15-stop Kilgen in a hall for 300 seem immediately inadequate for the style and scale of these first published pieces. The conclusion can be drawn that these first published organ works were significantly influenced by his training and exposure in Strasbourg, and moreover that they were possibly conceived, or even composed while he was still a student in residence there. More concrete evidence includes the fact that registrations in the sonatas call specifically for stops not present on the Kilgen organ, including mixtures, stops speaking at the 12th (2 2/3rds) and 15th (2’), Trumpet, use of a 16’ on the Great, as well as Super-Octave couplers and the extensive use of a third “Choir” manual. This evidence suggests that these pieces were at the very least not conceived for the small Kilgen, and that a relationship with Strasbourg and the grand European organs is very plausibly the inspiration behind these first published works. Regrettably, as was discussed in Chapter 2 of this document, the true dates of any of Becker’s compositions cannot be known, since he did not leave behind a single dated manuscript.

Becker’s next church position in Belleville, Illinois in 1912 at St. Peter’s Cathedral, featured this Estey organ, Opus 1093, installed in that cathedral in 1913:

Table 8. Stoplist for the St. Peter’s Cathedral (Belleville, IL) Estey organ, Op. 1093

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Great Organ:</th>
<th>Swell Organ:</th>
<th>Pedal:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Double Open Diapason 16’</td>
<td>Bourdon 16’</td>
<td>Open Diapason 16’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Diapason 8’</td>
<td>Open Diapason 8’</td>
<td>Bourdon 16’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Open Diapason 8’</td>
<td>Stentorphone 8’</td>
<td>Lieblich Gedeckt 16’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross Flute 8’</td>
<td>Viola 8’</td>
<td>Violoncello 8’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viol d’Gamba 8’</td>
<td>Salicional 8’</td>
<td>Flute 8’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dulciana 8’</td>
<td>Voix Celeste (TC) 8’</td>
<td>Trombone 16’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued on following page...

Table 8. (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Great Organ:</th>
<th>Swell Organ:</th>
<th>Pedal:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Octave 4’</td>
<td>Melodia 8’</td>
<td>Tuba 8’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hohl Flute 4’</td>
<td>Stopped Diapason 8’</td>
<td>Gt to Ped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Super Octave 2’</td>
<td>Flute Harmonic 4’</td>
<td>Sw to Ped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V Progressive Mixture</td>
<td>Violina 4’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuba Mirabilis 8’</td>
<td>III Flute Mixture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarion 4’</td>
<td>Cornopean 8’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gt Unison Off</td>
<td>Oboe 8’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sw to Gt 16-8-4</td>
<td>Saxophone 8’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vox Humana 8’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tremolo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sw Unison Off</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sw to Sw 16-4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Though easily twice the size of the Kilgen organ, this Estey instrument is again typical of modest organs found throughout mid-western America in the early 1900s. One particularly important similarity with the Kilgen is the limitations presented by having only two manuals (rather than three or more as is customary in Europe), since many of the registration instructions in Becker’s compositions explicitly call for the use of a third manual that was not present on the Kilgen instrument at the Becker Bros. Conservatory, nor on this Estey instrument at St. Peter Cathedral.

In 1915, Becker moved to Alton, Illinois, and became the organist for Sts. Peter and Paul Cathedral for fifteen years until 1930. An 1893 Hook and Hastings organ, Opus 1569, with two manuals and 27 registers was installed in this church, though it was completely destroyed by

56 William T. Van Pelt, ed., *Pipe Organs: Hook and Hastings Company 1827-1927*, (The Organ Historical
lightning in the late 1940s\textsuperscript{57}. The record of the existence and installation of the original instrument was located in the Hook opus list\textsuperscript{58}. The exact specifications are unknown, but the most similar instrument in the Hook opus list is as follows:


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Great:</th>
<th>Swell:</th>
<th>Pedal:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open Diapason 8’</td>
<td>Bourdon 16’</td>
<td>Bourdon 16’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dulciana 8’</td>
<td>Open Diapason 8’</td>
<td>Open Diapason 8’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melodia or Doppel Flote 8’</td>
<td>Salicional 8’</td>
<td>Swell to Great Coupler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Octave (Principal) 4’</td>
<td>Aeoline (or Voix Celeste) 8’</td>
<td>Great to Pedal Coupler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifteenth (Super Octave) 2’</td>
<td>Stopped Diapason 8’</td>
<td>Swell to Pedal Coupler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flute Harmonique 4’</td>
<td>Tremolo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Violina or Gemshorn 4’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 ranks Dolce Cornet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oboe (and Bassoon) 8’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Originally founded in 1822 in Salem, Massachusetts, the Hook firm, later to be known as E. & G. G. Hook & Hastings, remained in existence until 1936. During that time, Hook built more than 2,500 organs in the United States\textsuperscript{59}, so this modest-sized instrument is again a very typical American organ for the region in the early 1900s.

Becker moved again in 1930 and became the organist at Blessed Sacrament Cathedral in Detroit, Michigan\textsuperscript{60}, where he remained until 1942. The instrument that Becker played while there is still found at the Cathedral today, largely untouched. It is a Casavant Frères, Op. 1114


that had been installed in 1925, five years before Becker arrived:

Table 10. Stoplist for the Blessed Sacrament Cathedral (Detroit) Casavant Frères organ, Op. 1114

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Great:</th>
<th>Swell:</th>
<th>Choir:</th>
<th>Pedal:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Double Open Diapason 16’</td>
<td>Bourdon 16’</td>
<td>Open Diapason 8’</td>
<td>Double Open Diapason 32’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Open Diapason 8’</td>
<td>Open Diapason 8’</td>
<td>Melodia 8’</td>
<td>Open Diapason 16’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Open Diapason 8’</td>
<td>Stopped Diapason 8’</td>
<td>Viole Celeste 8’</td>
<td>Open Diapason 16’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violin Diapason 8’</td>
<td>Clarabella 8’</td>
<td>Waldflote 4’</td>
<td>Bourdon 16’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hohl Flote 8’</td>
<td>Viola di Gamba 8’</td>
<td>Nazard 2 2/3’</td>
<td>Violone 16’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gems horn 8’</td>
<td>Voix Celeste 8’</td>
<td>Harmonic Piccolo 2’</td>
<td>Gedeckt 16’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Octave 4’</td>
<td>Aeoline 8’</td>
<td>Tuba 8’</td>
<td>Flute 8’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmonic Flute 4’</td>
<td>Principal 4’</td>
<td>Clarinet 8’</td>
<td>Stopped Diapason 8’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Super Octave 2’</td>
<td>Flauto Traverso 4’</td>
<td>Orchestral Oboe 8’</td>
<td>Violoncello 8’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V Mixture</td>
<td>Flautino 2’</td>
<td>Tremulant</td>
<td>Trombone 16’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trumpet 8’</td>
<td>IV Mixture</td>
<td>Chimes</td>
<td>Trumpet 8’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub</td>
<td>Double Trumpet 16’</td>
<td>Celesta</td>
<td>Chimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unison Off</td>
<td>Cornopean 8’</td>
<td>Harp</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Super</td>
<td>Oboe 8’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chimes</td>
<td>Vox Humana 8’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celesta</td>
<td>Clarion 4’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tremulant</td>
<td>Sub</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unison Off</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Super</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chimes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Celesta</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is by far the largest instrument that Becker is known to have played professionally for any length of time, and the cathedral space itself is acoustically quite reverberant and more reminiscent of the spaces of Europe. The builder of the instrument, Casavant Frères, was
established in 1879, and remains prominent in organ building to this day, having constructed numerous organs in North America and the rest of the world\textsuperscript{61}.

However, the fact that this instrument is still in its original state is of disappointingly little consequence, as clear evidence from examination of René’s scores and publication dates indicate that this instrument likely had little or no influence on his organ works. All of the publication dates of his organ music (1908-1928) precede his tenure there (1930-1942). After 1928, none of Becker’s organ music was published at all until three releases in 2007 from Delatour France\textsuperscript{62}.

Becker’s final church position was at St. Alphonsus Church in Dearborn, Michigan\textsuperscript{63}. He moved there in 1942 and served as organist for eight years. The stop list for the Austin organ, op. 1675 that had been installed in 1925\textsuperscript{64} is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Great Organ:</th>
<th>Swell Organ:</th>
<th>Choir Organ:</th>
<th>Echo Organ:</th>
<th>Pedal Organ:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open Diapason 8’</td>
<td>Bourdon 16’</td>
<td>Claribel Flute 8’</td>
<td>Diapason 8’</td>
<td>Open Diapason 16’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concert Flute 8’</td>
<td>Concert Flute 8’</td>
<td>Diapason 8’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gemshorn 8’</td>
<td>Stopped Flute 8’</td>
<td>Unda Maris 8’</td>
<td>Viole Angelica 8’</td>
<td>Dolce Bourdon 16’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Octave 4’</td>
<td>Echo Salicional 8’</td>
<td>Flute 4’</td>
<td>Vox Humana 8’</td>
<td>Flute 8’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmonic Tuba 8’</td>
<td>Voix Celeste 8’</td>
<td>Clarinet 8’</td>
<td>Chimes</td>
<td>Trombone 16’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Sub</td>
<td>Flute 4’</td>
<td>Chimes (Echo)</td>
<td>Tremolo</td>
<td>Swell to Pedal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textit{Continued on the following page...}

\textsuperscript{64} Memorandum of Agreement for the purchase of a pipe organ from Austin Organ Company, signed by Rev. John A. Reich, Dearborn, MI, 11 March 1929.
Table 11. (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Great Organ:</th>
<th>Swell Organ:</th>
<th>Choir Organ:</th>
<th>Echo Organ:</th>
<th>Pedal Organ:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Great Unison off</td>
<td>Cornopean 8’</td>
<td>Tremolo</td>
<td></td>
<td>Swell to Pedal octave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Octave</td>
<td>Oboe 8’</td>
<td>Choir Unison off</td>
<td></td>
<td>Great to Pedal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swell to Great Sub</td>
<td>Tremolo</td>
<td>Choir Octave</td>
<td></td>
<td>Great to Pedal Octave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swell to Great Unison</td>
<td>Swell Sub</td>
<td>Swell to Choir Sub</td>
<td></td>
<td>Choir to Pedal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swell to Great Octave</td>
<td>Swell Unison off</td>
<td>Swell to Choir Unison</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Swell Octave</td>
<td>Swell to Choir Octave</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Austin organ company is a very historic American firm that began filing patents and building instruments in America beginning in 1893\(^{65}\). The company itself was formally started in 1899 in Hartford, Connecticut, and Austin organs, like Kilgen and Estey, represent a very commonly found style of American-eclectic organ for this period. The Austin firm is still in business today. All existing evidence, including publication dates and manuscripts, support the theory that this instrument played no role in the conception, realization, or publication of his organ music.

In summary, though the instruments that Becker played in America can be documented, and instruments that he may have played or heard in Strasbourg can likewise be listed, there does not appear to be a discernable “Becker organ.” The American instruments he was associated with vary significantly, and one can only speculate as to whether they exerted any provable influence on his music because of the lack of dates on the manuscripts and the fact that his organ

registrations rarely if ever specifically match existing stops on those instruments. Whether Becker was influenced by specific instruments while still in Strasbourg can be similarly considered, based upon the church positions held by his father and his keyboard professors, but there are no records or documentation regarding whether he did or did not personally play these instruments. Because of the lack of dates on his compositions, none of the instruments he knew or played in Europe or America can be definitively linked to any certain pieces or periods of composition.

However, these stop lists can be an important resource when preparing organ works of Becker for performance, and the performer should weigh whether the printed organ registrations or the overall stylistic content of the work should be the deciding factor in the ultimate choices of registration. In the many cases where original manuscripts are missing from published works, it is not possible to determine whether the registration instructions represent Becker’s original wishes or the alterations and suggestions of editors. Likewise, it is not possible to know whether Becker had one of the instruments listed above in mind, but it bears study before making registration decisions. Many of the larger works, such as the sonatas, benefit greatly when registered in the European style of the French Symphonic tradition, utilizing reeds, mixtures, and great dynamic nuance and contrast, for example. Despite the fact that the published registration indications do not conform to that tradition, the compositional style of the various works often does. The artistic style and experience of the individual performer as well as consideration of the various instruments and stops available must be the final arbiters of taste, since definitive conclusions cannot be drawn from the scores nor from the history of the specific instruments known to Becker.
OVERVIEW AND SIGNIFICANCE OF BECKER’S FIRST
SONATA FOR ORGAN, OP. 40

During the first half of the 1900s, the most active time of Becker’s publishing and composing, the composing of organ sonatas and organ symphonies continued to be a thriving and evolving genre in both America and Europe. These works had begun to emerge in Europe in the 1800s, and they developed in lockstep with the innovative, large-scale symphonic organs built by Aristide Cavaillé-Coll, which in turn broke new ground in 1841 with his monumental and unique instrument at St-Denis in Paris. These capable instruments helped give rise to organ music intended explicitly for concert rather than liturgical use.

The first example of this critically important genre is Cesar Franck’s *Grande Pièce Symphonique in F-# Minor*, published in 1868. The friendship and relationship between Franck and Cavaillé-Coll is well documented⁶⁶, and the *Grande Pièce Symphonique* was the first of its kind and vividly demonstrated that these symphonic organs of the 1800s could rival the popular symphony orchestra in scale, scope, and dynamic nuance. Though there are many, many composers in both Europe and America who contributed significantly to this school, some of the most well-known virtuosic examples provided by Becker’s immediate predecessors include the works of Charles-Marie Widor (1844-1937), who wrote ten organ symphonies, Louis Vierne (1870-1937), who penned six organ symphonies, Josef Rheinberger (1839-1901), whose output extended to 20 large-scale organ sonatas, and the eight organ sonatas by Alexandre Guilmant (1837-1911).

The blurring of the line between the use of the titles “sonata” vs. “symphony” can be documented in the music of Guilmant, as his first and last organ sonatas were also written as

“symphonies” for organ and orchestra. As summed up by Calvert Johnson, “The typical pre-twentieth century French organ sonata had three to four movements with at least one sonata-allegro movement... The typical symphony had four or more movements, the later ones usually with a sonata-allegro movements (frequently a concluding toccata).”\textsuperscript{67} Franck’s \textit{Grande Pièce Symphonique} is cyclic as well as intended to be played without break between the sections, and although it sets the precedent for the genre, it did not become the norm. The basic convention for multi-movement organ symphonies and sonatas was established by Widor, Guilmant, Vierne, and Rheinberger as having anywhere between three and six movements, and most often ending with a toccata. Many also incorporate fugues and scherzos. Guilmant wrote his first sonata in 1874, and Widor wrote his first symphony in 1876. Becker’s First Sonata was published in 1912 and the composition date is unknown.

All three of Becker’s sonatas, in particular the First Sonata, are a significant contribution to the continuation of this genre of organ literature, despite the fact that they do not necessarily innovate within this well-established form. Like Guilmant, Becker remained fairly conventionally bound by the traditional organ sonata in style, number of movements, and the use of fugue, counterpoint, and melody. Indeed, his material tends to be primarily melodic throughout his writing. Becker also prefers to introduce contrasting material in place of extended traditional development sections, leading always to a restatement of some or all of the main themes in their original keys. His First Sonata has five movements, the Second Sonata has three movements in the published version, though the original manuscript included a scherzo that was never published, and the Third Sonata has three movements as well.

The First Sonata in G, op. 40, stands out among Becker’s own three organ sonatas as his

\textsuperscript{67} Calvert Johnson, \textit{The Organ Sonatas of Felix Alexandre Guilmant}. D.Mus diss., Northwestern University, 1973, OCLC 17712009.
largest, most accomplished, and therefore most significant work. The five movements, despite the title of “sonata,” render it more on the scale of the organ “symphony,” though the compositional techniques employed (fugue, counterpoint, and melody), along with the general adherence to the convention of “fast-slow-fast” in regard to the movements themselves, are well-associated with both organ sonatas and organ symphonies. The five movements in order are Praeludium festivum, Dialogue, Scherzo, Prayer, and Toccata.

The first movement, Praeludium festivum, would appear to be following the basic conventions of sonata-allegro form: exposition, transition, second theme (contrasting), retransition, recapitulation, and coda, but the omission of an actual development section precludes the use of that term, and therefore sonatina form may more accurately describe this movement, which still displays Becker’s tendency towards ternary form. It opens with a very dramatic exposition in the tonic key of G minor that incorporates chords on the full organ interspersed with virtuosic solo triplets in scalar patterns. The closing material of the exposition has modulated and thus provides a transition to the contrasting fugal section in Bb major. This fughetta closes in F major, the dominant of Bb major. It is followed by two measures of modulation that prepare for the retransition on a dominant pedal in the original key of G minor, over which a motive derived from the 16th notes of the contrasting fugal section is treated in a rising sequential pattern that climaxes with the return of the dramatic main theme in G minor. The expositional material is somewhat shortened in the recapitulation, and leads to a brief coda of solemn cadential chords on the full organ with a Picardy third brightening the final ending.

The second movement of the Becker, Dialogue, is quite lengthy, and bears a remarkable structural similarity to the second movement of Widor’s Symphony No. 5 in F Minor, op. 42, No. 1, movement II: Allegro cantabile, from the opening solo in the tenor register to the dialogue
between the solo stops on two contrasting manuals as well as the chorale-like contrasting section before the recapitulation. Musical examples of this will be provided in Chapter 5 of this dissertation. As often found in sonata-allegro form, this movement incorporates a brief solo introduction for 8 measures before the primary melodic/thematic material begins, and this follows the pattern of a much more traditional sonata-allegro exposition wherein the primary material is developed more extensively before the section ends. The exposition is harmonically closed, both beginning and ending in G minor. The contrasting material presented after the final cadence of the exposition is implied as Ab major, the dominant of the key signature in this section, which is functionally that of Eb major. The melodic material of this contrasting section is only loosely bound together by linking passages of solo sixteenth notes before a deceptive cadence provides the opportunity for a modulating descending scale to re-transition to the dal segno al fine, and the entire first section is heard again.

The third movement is a Scherzo in ternary form (ABA) in the dominant major of D. The A section is harmonically closed and fairly brief. The B section contrasts with the sprightly scherzo material, and instead it is chorale-like and fairly peaceful with playful interpolations of 16th notes at various intervals. It is followed by a modulating transition that uses motivic material derived from the sixteenth notes of the original A section, leading to a Da capo al coda that incorporates the entire opening A section prior to the presentation of the brief coda itself.

The fourth movement, titled Prayer, is in the key of Eb major, the relative major of the original tonic key of G minor. The shortest movement by far, it is only two pages in length. The main theme and its answer are heard three times, each with minor melodic or harmonic alterations. The entire movement builds to a gentle crescendo, leading to six measures of an extended final cadence made all the more romantic with chromatic alterations including bIV and
The final movement of this sonata is an extended and dramatic *Toccata* in the original key of G minor. Beginning on the full swell but with the swell box tightly closed, the entire movement gradually builds to a frenzy of accelerated arpeggios and double pedal heard on the last page in the closing material. This toccata again appears to loosely follow the conventions of sonata-allegro form, though likewise with exceptions. The exposition is harmonically closed and marked with a repeat, followed by an actual development section that begins immediately after the repeat. As would be expected, the development modulates frequently and uses devices such as descending sequences to build tension. However, the deviation from true sonata-allegro form is that this development section uses explicitly new musical material. No themes or even fragments from the exposition appear until the re-transition and the actual recapitulation. Only the rising motive from the exposition is incorporated into the re-transition leading to the recapitulation in G minor, which is only very slightly shortened. It builds dramatically to the coda, in which the general figuration accelerates with cascades of arpeggiated triplets over a rising double-pedal theme in the bass. Mirroring the ending of the first movement, the toccata closes with grand chords that finally cadence in a triumphant G major.
ILLUSTRATIONS OF OVERT STYLISTIC INFLUENCES IN
MOVEMENTS I AND II OF BECKER’S FIRST SONATA FOR
ORGAN, OP. 40

Very few composers who choose to write extensively in an established genre can entirely escape the music of their predecessors, and Becker is no exception. Musical examples from Becker’s First Sonata indicate broad influence from three of his most important stylistic predecessors, Johann Sebastian Bach (1650-1785), Alexandre Guilmant (1837-1911) and Charles-Marie Widor (1844-1937). The three works in question are J. S. Bach’s Fantasie in G minor, BWV 542 (c1720), Alexandre Guilmant’s Preludio from the Sonata in C minor, op. 56, first published in 1883\(^{68}\), and Charles-Marie Widor’s Symphony No. 5 in F Minor, op. 42, No. 1, first published in 1887\(^{69}\). Though the deliberateness of any homage cannot be proven unequivocally at this late date, the stylistic, structural, and thematic influences that can clearly be illustrated with the use of musical examples suggest strongly that René was well acquainted with these compositions.

Though a concrete connection with Widor has yet to be documented, there is a strong case to be made for a possible personal connection to Alexandre Guilmant. René Becker’s older brother, Lucien, who was also a prominent organist and composer, is known to have been associated with the series of forty concerts that Alexandre Guilmant\(^{70}\) played for the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in 1904\(^{71}\). Though no detailed information regarding René’s participation or


\(^{70}\) M. J. Lowenstein, Official Guide to the Louisiana Purchase Exposition at the City of St. Louis, state of Missouri, April 30th to December 1st, 1904, (St. Louis: The Official Guide Co. 1904), 143.

attendance of these events has yet been uncovered, he did arrive in St. Louis in 1904, and considering Guilmant’s extended residence there for daily concerts and his brother Lucien’s involvement, it is quite possible that Becker had the opportunity to at least hear Guilmant perform, if not even meet or work with him personally.

Likewise, regarding a connection to the music of J. S. Bach, Becker’s conservatory piano professor Ernst Münch is well-documented by musical historians as having founded a choir at his church in Strasbourg that was particularly known for performances of Bach’s music. But even more interesting is the fact that as previously mentioned in chapter 1, the Münch family had extremely close professional and personal ties with organist and theologian Dr. Albert Schweitzer, who is renowned for both writing about and performing the music of Bach. Though exposure to the organ music of J. S. Bach very likely came from many sources during Becker’s formative years of musical training, the fact that both organists were closely affiliated with the Münch family practically guarantees that the music of Bach played a role in Becker’s formal studies.

The first theme of the first movement of Becker’s sonata, though unique in its own right, bears a strong thematic and textural resemblance to the first movement of Guilmant’s Sonata in C minor, op. 56, and a lesser but still discernable resemblance to Bach’s Fantasie in G minor, BWV 542. As shown below, all three of these works have similar textures and musical gestures. The Bach and the Becker even share the key signature of G minor, though after the first measure the approximate similarities between the two works do not continue. However, the Becker and the Guilmant, though in different keys, share vitally similar solo passages of running triplets in the treble line on full organ that are juxtaposed in alternation with full chords in both hands and

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pedal. They also share the sequential six-note rising and descending motive that is used to create the running triplets:

Ex. 1: Bach, Fantasie in G minor, BWV 542, mm. 1-2:

Ex. 2: Becker, First Sonata, op. 40, movement I. Praeludium Festivum, mm. 1-2:

Ex. 3: Guilmant, Sonata in C minor, op 56, movement I: Preludio, mm. 1-3:
For the most part, the strong resemblances in this movement to the Guilmant end after the presentation of the similar main themes. The Becker develops into a contrasting fugal section but the Guilmant does not, instead relying upon the chords and scalar triplet motives for the remainder of this movement. One smaller similarity is displayed deeper into the work in the pattern of the alternating chords:

Ex. 4: Becker, First Sonata, op. 40, movement I. *Praeludium Festivum*, mm. 17-18:

Ex. 5: Guilmant, Sonata in C minor, op 56, movement I: *Preludio*, mm. 62:

The stylistic influences of Widor upon Becker are significantly more pronounced in the second movement of Becker’s sonata, *Dialogue*, which displays an extended structural, thematic, and developmental symmetry to the second movement of Widor’s Symphony No. 5 in F Minor, op. 42, No. 1, movement II: *Allegro cantabile*. The striking likenesses are immediately apparent, from the opening solo in the tenor register, to the dialogue between the solo stops on two
contrasting manuals, as well as the chorale-like contrasting section before the appearance of the complete expositions in the recapitulations. Despite the significantly varying length of the two scores, the movements in performance are both approximately 7-8 minutes. The Becker movement is 234 measures, and the Widor is 370 (not accounting for the repeated sections, which add considerable length). The structural and formal similarities are explicit:

1. Both second movements open with an introductory solo, recitative-like passage in the tenor voice that utilizes both eighth note and triplet figures.

2. The similarities continue in the following theme in both movements, where the texture changes to a solo voice in the right hand on the Recit (Swell) manual, accompanied by syncopated sixteenth notes in the left hand on an alternate manual and by the use of intermittent pedal notes that reinforce the harmony. Also observable in these two musical examples is that following the introduction, the first theme in both begins with an 8th note pick-up, followed by an identical pattern of four 8th notes, two sixteenths to a quarter (a dotted quarter in the Widor, but this is a truly minor difference) followed by four more rising eighth notes to a held note before the melodies begin to diverge substantially.

3. The Widor is scored for a large three-manual organ, but the Becker is only scored for a two-manual organ as indicated in the registrations. Becker achieves the identical effect at the same point in the recitative-like introduction by indicating a change to the registration on the Recit (Swell) in mm. 8, rather than by specifying a third manual.
Ex. 6: Becker, First Sonata, op. 40, movement II: *Dialogue*, mm. 1-13:

Ex. 7: Widor, Symphony No. 5 in F Minor, op. 42, No. 1, movement II: *Allegro cantabile*, mm 1-10:

4. In mm. 8 of the Becker, and mm. 6 of the Widor, both movements incorporate the drop of an octave in the solo recitative voice. The Becker does so explicitly between
the octave from D to D, and the Widor creates the same effect by bringing in both the right hand and pedal on C, the pedal at the 16’ pitch that speaks an octave below the recitative voice.

5. Both pieces incorporate a dialogue between the solo melody voices, indeed calling for the identical organ stops (“Oboe” in English, “Hautbois” in French) on the Swell and an 8’ flute on the Great manual: beginning with the pickup to mm. 17 in the Becker, and the pickup to mm. 31 in the Widor, both melodies move to a solo voice specified as an 8’ flute stop on the Great manual. The Becker melody returns to the Swell manual with the pickup to mm. 25, and the Widor does so with the pickup to mm. 39.

6. In mm. 56 of the Becker, and mm. 78 of the Widor, both pieces employ soloistic descending scalar sequences to return to the primary melodic material of this section:

Ex. 8: Becker, First Sonata, op. 40, movement II: Dialogue, mm. 56-60:
Ex. 9: Widor, Symphony No. 5 in F Minor, op. 42, No. 1, movement II: *Allegro cantabile* mm 78-83:

![Ex. 9: Widor, Symphony No. 5 in F Minor, op. 42, No. 1, movement II: Allegro cantabile mm 78-83:](image)

7. In mm. 86 of the Becker and mm. 124 of the Widor, the first section cadences with repeated octaves in the manual (static harmony restating the tonic) and they are both harmonically closed.

Ex. 10: Becker, First Sonata, op. 40, movement II: *Dialogue*, mm. 82-86:

![Ex. 10: Becker, First Sonata, op. 40, movement II: Dialogue, mm. 82-86:](image)

Ex. 11: Widor, Symphony No. 5 in F Minor, op. 42, No. 1, movement II: *Allegro cantabile* mm 120-127:

![Ex. 11: Widor, Symphony No. 5 in F Minor, op. 42, No. 1, movement II: Allegro cantabile mm 120-127:](image)
8. Beginning immediately in mm. 89 of the Becker and mm. 128 of the Widor, both pieces begin a new section with choral-like material in a related major key area. The slow moving chords are heard on the Swell manual, while a rhapsodic melody is presented on the Great over a suspended harmony in mm. 89-106 of the Becker and mm. 128-143 of the Widor:

Ex. 12: Becker, First Sonata, op. 40, movement II: *Dialogue*, mm. 89-106:
9. In both pieces, the contrasting material develops into a section of sustained arpeggios over a sustained bass line, beginning in mm. 121 of the Becker and mm. 202 of the Widor. The Widor uses triplets rather than sixteenth notes and thus the passages are not identical, but overall they continue to demonstrate the structural similarities of these movements.
10. In mm. 143 of the Becker and mm. 239 of the Widor, both movements again use a solo passage of scalar motivic material to modulate and transition back to the original primary melodic material from mm. 9 of the Becker and mm. 7 of the Widor. Though the Widor is utilizing primarily ascending 8th notes and the Becker descending 16th notes in these particular passages, the functionality is the same and the similarity is apparent, especially when compared to the similar passage found in the Becker at mm. 56 and the Widor at mm. 78 where both utilize 16th notes. The Becker now repeats *dal segno al Fine*, as does the Widor, only Widor chose to rewrite the section entire at this point in the score, rather than merely indicating a return to the earlier
In summary, although Becker writes with his own unique voice, the influences of his predecessors in this genre are nonetheless staunchly apparent and deserve mention, both to highlight the scope of Becker’s training and exposure, and his own skill as a composer. The First Sonata was his first large-scale published work, no doubt intended to put his best foot forward in a new country while he was employed at his eponymous family conservatory and seeking to launch his career. This sonata is quite worthy of attention. Of all his sonatas, it is the most
cohesive in terms of key relationships and overall structure. And when compared to his other sonatas, the First Sonata stands alone in not only in scale but also in overall quality and sophistication. Precisely when or where Becker wrote the sonata, or any of his music is unfortunately not possible to determine, but the dedication reads, “Respectfully dedicated to Dr. William C. Carl, Director of the Guilmant Organ School, New York.” Becker is not known to have spent any significant time in New York City, so both the dedication and the nature of his acquaintance with Dr. Carl remain unknowable.

In conception and scope, the First Sonata looks most vividly back to Becker’s European roots and to his musical training in Strasbourgh. He never again wrote a sonata of this length or any other work of similar stature during his career, despite the fact that was an extremely prolific composer not just for the organ but also for choral music and for the piano, among others. It is logical to speculate that as one of his earliest works, and as his first major multi-movement published composition, this First Sonata could have been inspired by the grand instruments that he would have heard in his youth in Alsace and as a student in Strasbourgh. Likewise it follows that after coming to America, the smaller instruments and smaller acoustic spaces he encountered and worked in influenced him to develop a very different style, as no doubt did different liturgical expectations in American churches and possibly even editorial influences from his publishers.

For those who are just encountering Becker’s organ music, the First Sonata is an excellent work for a recital program, capable of being easily adapted to instruments of varying size and tonal resources. It also serves as an excellent introduction to the best of Becker’s organ works, and would most certainly lead the performer to seek out additional works by this unknown composer.
CONCLUSION

In closing, this examination of René Louis Becker’s career and prolific lifetime compositional output of more than 180 organ works shows a full life dedicated to music from start to finish and shared with family, church, and colleagues. His music provides a wealth of repertoire for both the concert organist and the modern church organist. A great deal of traditional romantic European influence can be heard in his major works, and in addition to his frequent use of classic musical forms such as sonatas, toccatas, and fugues, he wrote many smaller evocative pieces such as meditations, cantilenas, fantasies, and songs. After many decades of obscurity, there is fresh interest in Becker from many corners of the globe, and this author has been privileged to play a role in re-introducing this music to the organ world.

Becker’s music is perhaps best summed up in this apt and elegant description of his writing from Albert Riemenschneider, who said, “True to the heritage of his native land, he combines in an unusual degree the best characteristics of the French and German schools. His melodies are always singable and beautiful and his earnestness and seriousness as shown by his sonatas is equaled only by his great command of rhythmic treatment.”

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74 Albert Riemenschneider, Baldwin-Wallace College Bulletin, School of Music, Vol. 4, No. 4, September 1916, private collection of the Becker family, Birmingham, MI.
APPENDIX A

CATALOG OF WORKS
1. Works with Opus Numbers

1.1. Published Works with Opus Numbers


This is largely, but not entirely, the same music as the manuscript for *Twelve Compositions*, op. 10. The first piece is identical to the Op. 69a manuscript, which has evidence of an altered opus number. The music of Op. 77 is also included in this collection under the new opus number 16.


*Praeludium festivum, Dialogue, Scherzo, Prayer, and Toccata*


*Prelude, Pastorale, and Finale*

*Cantilena*, op. 42. New York: G. Schirmer, 1912.

*Third Sonata for Organ*, op. 43. New York: G. Schirmer, 1913.

*Prelude, Adoration, and Finale: Toccata*


"Marche de Fête (Festival Marche)", op. 81f. New York: J. Fischer & Bro., 1927.


1.2. Unpublished Works with Opus Numbers

"Twelve Compositions for Organ", op. 10. Manuscript

The majority of these individual movements were published in 1908 as op. 16 instead of as op. 10 as indicated on these manuscripts.

"Dance of the Elves", op. 11a. Manuscript

This is the same music, but a different manuscript, as the omitted Scherzo from the manuscript of the Third Sonata, op. 43.

"Chanson Bretonne (Offertory) for Organ", op. 11b. Manuscript

"Postlude and Requiescat for Organ", op. 16, No. 10. Manuscript

"Op. 77d" can be observed to have been scratched out on the original manuscript, and this music was published in the op. 16 collection.

"Wedding March", op. 16, No. 12. Manuscript

"Op. 69b" has been scratched out on the manuscript, and the same piece is now titled Postlude in the published edition of op. 16.

"Crépuscule à l'Orient: Melodie Arabe", op. 30. Manuscript

"Prelude for Organ", op. 31, No. 1. Manuscript

This is the same music as the first movement of the Quatrieme Sonate pour Orgue, op. 52, but the manuscripts are different.

(6.) Finale Pomposo", op. 31, No. 2. Manuscript
This is the same music as the first movement of the Suite No. 1 for organ, but it is a separate manuscript.

*At Eventide*, op. 34. Manuscript

*Quatrième Sonate pour Orgue. 1. Prelude*, op. 52. Manuscript

This sonata manuscript appears to be comprised of three single pieces written independently that were not originally intended to be grouped together. The three movements listed in this manuscript may not be the original manuscript for the 4th Sonata, as the prelude is the same music as the manuscript to op. 31, 1, and an additional manuscript exists titled *Finale de la Quatrième Sonata* that is not part of this manuscript and that was also published independently as the *Sortie Solenelle*, op. 70.

*Quatrième Sonate pour Orgue. 2. Pastorale*, op. 52. Manuscript

*Quatrième Sonate pour Orgue. 3. Finale - Caprice-Fantasie*, op. 52. Manuscript

*Rêve des Anges (Rêverie) for organ*, op. 53a. Manuscript in the library of congress, donated in 1917 by the John Church company, ML96.B424 Case.

*Romanzetta, op. 53b*. Manuscript in the library of congress, donated in 1917 by the John Church company, ML96.B424 Case

*Prélude pour Orgue*, op. 69a. Manuscript

This is the same music as the first movement of the set of *Twelve Compositions*, op. 16, published in 1908, but a separate manuscript.

*Fantaisie pour Orgue*, op. 69b. Manuscript

There are three separate manuscripts of this work, op. 69b in B minor, another marked as op. 82a in A minor, and a third one without opus in C minor. The
manuscripts are not identical, though the main thematic material is identical.

*Fantasie pour Orgue*, op. 78, No. 2. Manuscript

This was published by Delatour in 2009. The original manuscript shows evidence of alterations to the title and opus numbers.

*Prière: Morceau pour Orgue*, op. 78, No. 1. Manuscript

*Prelude-Fantasy (and Fugue) in A minor*, op. 82a. Manuscript

There exist multiple copies of this "fantasy," as there are duplicate manuscripts in two other keys with additional alternations to the music.

*Fugue in A minor*, op. 82b. Manuscript

A second fugue manuscript exists that employs the same fugue subject but treated entirely differently and written in C minor.

*Chanson celeste for Organ*, op. 82c. Manuscript

*Fugue in F# minor for Organ*, op. 83. Manuscript

*Invocation for Organ*, op. 84a. Manuscript

*Rêve des Anges (Angels' Dream)*, op. 84b. Manuscript

*Toccata in Re mineur from Suite No. I*, op. 85b. Manuscript

Light handwriting on the manuscript indicates that "from Suite no. 1" appears to be a later addition to the first page, and there are three separate manuscripts of this toccata. "Op. 77d" is scratched through and replaced with "Op. 85" on one, another is titled "4. Finale" and the last is titled *Toccata in D-minor for organ*.

*Toccatina*, op. 86. Manuscript

*Theme et Variations for Organ*, op. 87. Manuscript

There exist two manuscripts of this piece, one without the opus number, and
another with the written title in English instead of French.

Romanza, op. 88. Manuscript

There is evidence of alteration to the opus number or an erasure on the original manuscript.

Marche funèbre (Funeral March) for Organ, op. 90a. Manuscript

Meditation for Organ, op. 90b. Manuscript

Improvisation en Forme d'un Prelude, op. 92. Manuscript

Chanson Nocturne, op. 94. Manuscript

There is evidence of alteration to the opus number or an erasure on the manuscript, as well as an unidentified musical insert in the manuscript. A second manuscript exists with no opus number.

Oiseaux Volants (Birds of Passage) pour Orgue, op. 97. Manuscript

There is evidence of alteration to the opus number or an erasure on the manuscript.

Laudate Dominum omnes gentes: Toccata for Organ in e-minor, op. 98, No. 1. Manuscript

Marche Solennelle (Grand Chœur) for Organ, op. 98, No. 2. Manuscript

Processional March for Organ, op. 98, No. 3. Manuscript

This version is with an "Introduction."

Toccata in A minor for Organ, op. 98, No. 4. Manuscript

Mountain Idyll for Organ, op. 99. Manuscript

There is evidence of an alteration to the opus number or an erasure on the original manuscript, and a second manuscript of the same music exists that is titled
Melody for Organ.

Suite for Organ I. Preludio Majestico, op. 100, No. 1. Manuscript
This is the same music same as that in the separate manuscript to op. 31 No. 2, but
with a different title and opus.

Suite for Organ II. Andante Grazioso, op. 100, No. 2. Manuscript

Suite for Organ III. Marcia, op. 100, No. 3. Manuscript
This is the same music as 3. Marcia from the Suite 2 for Organ, op. 101 though
they are different manuscripts.

Suite for Organ IV. Finale (Toccata), op. 100, No. 4. Manuscript
There are three manuscripts for this toccata, one marked as part of Suite for
Organ, op. 100, another with no opus, and the last as op. 85, with an additional
penciled note in lighter writing indicating "from Suite No. 1." It was recently
published by Voix Celeste, VC 1002. The publishing date not on the score, but it
dates from approximately 2008, when the copy was mailed to the author by the
publisher.

Suite No. 2 for Organ IV. Andante Cantabile, op. 101, No. 4. Manuscript

Suite No. 2 for Organ. II. Intermezzo, op. 101, No. 2. Manuscript
This is the same music as II. Andante Grazioso, op.100, but there are two
different manuscripts. "Suite no.2 op. 101" is written at the bottom of the page but
may or may not be original.

Suite No. 2 for Organ. III. Lament, op. 101, No. 3. Manuscript
This is the same music as op. 106, No 4. "Suite for organ, (xxx) No 2)" is written
lightly at the top of the page.
Suite No. 2 for Organ. Marcia, op. 101, No. 5. Manuscript

This is the same music as Marcia, op. 100. “Suite for Organ…(xxx) No 2” is written lightly at the top of the page.

Suite No. 2 for Organ. Prélude, p. 101, No. 1. Manuscript

Arietta: Morceau pour orgue, op. 102. Manuscript

There exist two manuscripts for this piece, one without opus and with differences in the pedal part as well.

A Retrospection. Morceau pour Orgue, op. 106, No. 2. Manuscript

Chanson sans Paroles pour Orgue, op. 106, No. 1. Manuscript

There is evidence of alteration to the opus number or an erasure on the original manuscript.

Feuillet d'Album (Album Leaf), op. 106, No. 5. Manuscript

There are three manuscripts of this work in different keys with minor variations in the writing. Two are without opus number.

II. Lament for Organ, op. 106, No. 4. Manuscript

This is the same music as "op. 101, Suite II, no. III" but a different manuscript.

Intermezzo, op. 106, No. 7. Manuscript

Melodie Lyrique pour orgue, op. 106, No. 6. Manuscript

Melodie paysanne, op. 106, No. 3. Manuscript

Scherzo à l'Antique pour orgue, op. 106, No. 8. Manuscript

There is evidence of alteration to the opus number or an erasure on the original manuscript.

Volkslied (Folk Song) for organ (original melody), op. 106, No. 9. Manuscript
Intermezzo for Organ, op. 108, No. 1. Manuscript

Toccata, op. 110, No. 02. Manuscript

2. Works without Opus Numbers

2.1. Published Works without Opus Numbers


Chanson sans Paroles pour Orgue. Cincinnati: John Church, 1920.


March in G. King of Prussia, PA: Theodore Presser, 1926.


Marche Triomphale "Ite missa est". King of Prussia, PA: Theodore Presser, 1912.


2.2. Unpublished Works without Opus Numbers

Album Leaf (Bb). Manuscript

It is unusual that this manuscript is signed "R. L. B." There are also three separate manuscripts of this work: one is op. 106, No. 5. They are in different keys with minor variations in the writing.
Andante con moto. Manuscript

It is unusual that this manuscript is both untitled and unsigned, but it was included in the family estate of extant works of Becker.

Arietta for Organ. Manuscript

There are two versions of this work that are two separate manuscripts, the second being op. 102. The writing in the pedal differs between the two.

At Sunrise. Prelude. Manuscript

Bridal March (Processional) for Organ. Manuscript

Bridal March for Organ. Manuscript

This version is written in F, with the same theme as the Bridal March for Organ (Processional).

Bridal March for Organ (Processional). Manuscript

Written in F, this is the same as Bridal March for Organ only without the 4-measure introduction, and without pedal, written on two staves only.

Bridal March for Organ (Processional). Manuscript

This version is written in C major and with a different four-measure introduction, but the same theme as Bridal March for Organ (Processional).

Chanson Nocturne for Organ. Manuscript

There exist two manuscripts for this work, the second being op. 94.

Chanson Pastorale (Shepherd's Song) for Organ. Manuscript

Erotikon in Gb. Manuscript

No copy of this manuscript remains extant.

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75 Albert Riemenschneider, “Vesper Organ Recital” (organ recital, Baldwin Wallace College School of Music, Berea, OH, 12 November 1916).
Fantasy in C minor. Manuscript

Festival Prelude for Organ. Manuscript

Feuillet d'Album (Album Leaf). Manuscript

There are three separate manuscripts of this work: one is op. 106, No. 5. They are in different keys with minor variations in the writing.

Fifth Sonata. Manuscript

No copy of this manuscript remains extant.

Finale de la Quatrieme Sonate. Manuscript

This was published independently as the Sortie Solennelle, op. 70. The estate contains a collection of three manuscripts placed together with the title Quatrieme Sonate pour Orgue, op. 52, but with a different final movement than this one.

Fugue in C minor. Manuscript

This is based upon the same subject as the Fugue in A minor that is part of op. 82a.

Lyric Idyll. Manuscript

March in A. Manuscript

This is a simpler version of the same music as the March in A for Organ (In virtute...).

March in A for Organ. Manuscript

March in A for Organ (In virtute tua, Domine). Manuscript

The March in A is a simpler alternate version of this piece.

March in D for Organ. Manuscript

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76 Albert Riemenschneider, “Vesper Organ Recital” (organ recital, Baldwin Wallace College School of Music, Berea, OH, 10 December 1916).
March in F for Organ (For Weddings). Manuscript

This version has a title page, but uses the same music as Wedding March in F. Recessional with minor changes in the score.

March in G for Organ. Manuscript

There are two different manuscripts for this March, and this is the same music as the March in G for organ (Wedding March). There is different handwriting present on the scores, and the manuscripts are not identical.

March in G for Organ (Wedding March). Manuscript

This is the same as the March in G, with minor changes.

Marche Funèbre (Funeral March). Manuscript

Marche Gothique. Manuscript

There is evidence on the score that an opus in the 100's was erased or altered.

Melody for Organ. Manuscript

This is a second manuscript of the same music as the manuscript to Mountain Idyll, op. 99.

Nuptial March. Manuscript

Postlude for Organ. Manuscript

There exist two versions of this piece in two separate manuscripts, the second being a manuscript called Prelude pour Orgue.

Postludeum for Organ. Manuscript

There is evidence of alteration to the opus number or an erasure on the original manuscript.

Prélude in F for Organ. Manuscript
Prélude pour Orgue. Manuscript

There are two versions in manuscript of this piece, the second being a manuscript called Postlude for organ.

Theme and Variations in C-minor. Manuscript

There exists two separate manuscripts for this work, the second being op. 87.

Toccata in D minor. Manuscript

There are three separate manuscripts of this toccata. "Op. 77d" is scratched through and replaced with "Op. 85" on one, another is titled 4. Finale and the third is titled Toccata in D-minor for organ.

Toccata in E minor for Organ. Manuscript

There are two manuscript versions of this piece with different handwriting and minor variants.

Toccata in E-minor for Organ. Manuscript

There are two manuscript versions of this piece with different handwriting and minor variants.

Toccata in F-minor for Organ. Manuscript

Toccata in G-minor for Organ. Manuscript

Wedding March in C (Recessional). Manuscript

Wedding March in F (Processional). Manuscript

Wedding March in F (recessional). Manuscript

This work uses the same theme, but shorter, as the March in F (for weddings).
APPENDIX B

PRIMARY SOURCES
Nov. 19, 1969

Dear Mr. Becker,

On Sunday, Dec. 7th, I shall play on the CBS radio program the Finale to Sonata 2, by your father. I hope you will enjoy it. It is excellent and stirring music.

Greetings and best wishes,

Alexander Schreiner
VESPER ORGAN RECITAL
By ALBERT Riemenschneider
At the Fanny Nast Gamble Auditorium
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 1916
At 4:00 P. M., Eastern Time
(Fifty-fourth Recital, Series A)

1. T. TERTIUS NOBLE ..............................Triumphal March
   Mr. Noble is an Englishman who holds the position of Director of Music
   at St. Thomas' Church, New York City. Some unusual choral and organ
   compositions have been written by him. This is a strong and virile march
   with bold rhythmic and harmonic treatment.

2. A. WALTER KRAMER ..........................Pastorale Religieuse in D flat
   This composition, by the composer of the popular Chant Negre, is just
   from the press. The middle section makes free use of the Gregorian
   “Pater Noster.” The composition is very melodious and should appear
   often upon organ recital programs.

3. RENE L. BECKER ...............................Erotikon
   Dedicated to Albert Riemenschneider
   This beautiful love song is played from manuscript and is given its first
   public performance at this recital. It is written in the key of G flat.

4. RENE L. BECKER ...............................Second Sonata in F, op. 41
   Moderato
   Pastorale
   Finale
   This interesting composition is the third one of Mr. Becker's sonatas to be
   presented this season in this series. There are five—the 4th and 5th being
   still in manuscript.
   The Moderato is chaste and classical in style. Variety is offered by using
   a fugato exposition for the middle part. The Pastorale is quite unusual,
   with a middle section representing a church choir in the distance. The
   last movement is fiery and brilliant and reaches its climax at the close in a
   grand presentation of a majestic Chorale.

5. CAMILLE SAINT-SAENS .........................Nightingale and the Rose
6. CAMILLE SAINT-SAENS .........................The Swan
   Two descriptive pieces of great beauty.

7. PIETRO ALESSANDRO YON .....................Toccata
   Mr. Yon lives in New York. His record as a musician is very brilliant.
   Regular attendants at these concerts will remember the selections First
   Concert Study and Xmas in Sicily by the same composer.

Organ Recitals on the second Sunday of each month at 4:00 P. M.,
Eastern Time.
First Concert of the Choral Union Course will be given on Wednesday,
December 13. A few more Patron's tickets at $1.00 for the season are still
available.

Figure B.2: Concert program from 12 November 1916 organ recital by Albert Riemenschneider,
including works by Becker
Nov. 29th, 1923

My dear Mr. Becker,

This is Thanksgiving Day, and I have reason to be very thankful to you for your charming letter, and the dedication of your charming new Toccata in B flat. It is splendidly written, and makes me wish a mighty river. I'd like to play it on a good big organ, with a real solid pedal position, and the clavichord at the end must be perfectly gorgeous! There are very few composers who know how to write such wonderful counterpoint!
Thanks to for the Poetsiche in Esharp major on the same theme - I have carefully compared the two but I suppose you indicated the Toccata to me - which in every way is stronger and superior.

I am sorry to that you cannot be with me here in Chicago.
Nobody writes with me in kindness regards to yourself and René Becker and the children.

Yours most cordially,
Clarence Eddy.
Figure B.5: Becker Brothers Conservatory of Music catalog – front cover

Figure B.6: Becker Brothers Conservatory of Music catalog – title page
Figure B.7: Becker Brothers Conservatory of Music catalog – first page

Figure B.8: Becker Brothers Conservatory of Music catalog – faculty list
ANNOUNCEMENT

THE EXPERIENCE of years has shown beyond a doubt that a well-organized conservatory offers the most ample opportunities for the study and mastery of music. No mistake has had a more baneful influence than the notion that music can be studied equally well at home as in an institution thoroughly equipped and designed for the purpose. Mathematics, literature and the sciences demand carefully graded courses of instruction, and music which today is regarded as of equal importance, should receive the same care and attention. It should be studied in the proper environment, under favorable conditions and with no equal regard for the advancement of the student. "You will become musical," says Schumann, "not by shutting yourself up all day like a hermit, practicing mechanical studies, but by living, many-sided musical intercourse." Becker Bros. Conservatory has been established to meet these requirements. It employs the sanest and most approved methods of instruction. Its instructors have been chosen not merely for their ability, but for their ability and their ability to interpret the masterpieces of music, but also for their excellent training in correct pedagogical principles and their success in the art of teaching. Perfect uniformity of method wherever practicable exists in all departments, and a change of instructors means only a change of teachers, not a change of methods.

PIANO

MR. LEOPOLD E. BECKER, head of the conservatory, comes of a family prominent in European musical affairs. His father, the celebrated Maestro Eduard Becker, of Strasbourg, was the friend of such men as Niedermeyer and Rossini, and for a number of years was organist of the Strasbourg Cathedral. After a thorough course of instruction under his father, Mr. Lucien E. Becker further pursued his studies at the University of Strasbourg, of which institution he is a graduate. He studied piano with Pleyel and Hartert, theory and composition with Hilpert and Ernster, and violin with Florin Zugari. In this country he did advanced work with Mr. Charles Seifoway and more recently was associated with Mr. Alexandre Guilmant during his series of concerts at the Louisiana Parish. In addition, Mr. Becker has filled various positions most acceptably for the past twenty years, having been successively organist, choir master and musical director of a number of organizations. He is also widely and favorably known as a composer. His works, whether of a technical or soloistic nature, bear evidence of scholarly training and marked musical ability. At present Mr. Becker is Music Director of the Kerwick Diocesan Seminary and organist of two prominent churches of St. Louis.

Figure B.9: Becker Brothers Conservatory of Music catalog – announcement

Figure B.10: Becker Brothers Conservatory of Music catalog – Lucien Becker CV
Figure B.11: Becker Brothers Conservatory of Music catalog – Rene Becker CV

Figure B.12: Becker Brothers Conservatory of Music catalog – Neoma Webb and Doris Howell CVs
Figure B.13: Becker Brothers Conservatory of Music catalog – Camille Becker CV

Figure B.14: Becker Brothers Conservatory of Music catalog – Adah Black CV
VIOLIN

MRS. LULU KUNKEL-BURG. The Becker Conservatory considers itself fortunate in having secured the services of Mrs. Lulu Kunkel-Burg as head of the violin department. A consummate artist and a thoroughly fine teacher, her work has won universal commendation. While in Europe, she added to her laurels by winning the first prize at the Royal Conservatory of Brussels, after four years' study with Alfred Messiaen and the master violinist Eugene Ysaye. She has since amply sustained this reputation in her many concert engagements and as a member of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra and solo violinist at the First Presbyterian Church. Recently this talented lady has done considerable studying with our own great American violinist, Max Bendix of New York. Mrs. Kunkel-Burg brings to her teaching the same thoroughness and enthusiasm for which her public performances are noted, and her success as a teacher has been no less remarkable than in a concert artist.

A Few Words From:

London Musicale Courier.—Mrs. Kunkel-Burg proved herself a born virtuose, possessing an unusually fine technique, a splendid tone, verve and fire that were for her an enthusiastic frame of applause.

The St. Louis Republic.—Her local triumphs have seldom been duplicated in musical circles.

St. Louis Democrat.—Her work displays remarkable technic, beauty of tone and fineness of art.

St. Louis Post Dispatch.—An artiste of St. Louis can be proud of.

Figure B.15: Becker Brothers Conservatory of Music catalog – Lulu Kunkel-Burg CV

VIOLIN

(Continued)

MR. JOSEPH KERN, of the violin department, has been before the public a number of years and is known for honest and conscientious work. He will devote his time especially to ensemble playing, and those who wish to study the master works in this department will have the benefit of his instruction and advice. Mr. Kern will also have full charge of the Cello department. As teacher of stringed instruments he is considered second to none in the city.

Figure B.16: Becker Brothers Conservatory of Music catalog – Joseph Kern CV
MISS WILHELMINA W. LOKE, a harpist of international reputation, is a daughter of the late General W. W. Lowe, United States Army. Miss Lowe has been associated with all the prominent musical organizations of this city. As harpist for the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, she established a reputation for musical gifts of a high order, which she has amply sustained as soloist of the First Presbyterian Church. In addition, Miss Lowe has proved her ability as a successful and prominent teacher by her work at Forest Park University. She has made the Spring tours with the Boston Festival Orchestra and has been soloist on a number of occasions at the Fall Maine Festival. Her work as a member of the World’s Fair Orchestra won the unqualified approval of musicians. Recently Miss Lowe scored a great triumph abroad, during a four-month tour with Sousa’s Band.

Figure B.17: Becker Brothers Conservatory of Music catalog – Wilhelmina Lowe CV

Elocution

MISS ESTELLE M. BONROE has devoted much earnest effort to the solution of the problems connected with the teaching of Elocution. Miss Bonroe, a native of St. Louis, made her principal studies with Miss Shickman, an exponent of the Gerty method. Critics who have been privileged to hear her in recent programs, are enthusiastic in her praise. Her work in connection with the leading schools of the city has been eminently satisfactory. The keynote of her instruction is to develop thought, individually and self-control; to make the mechanical subservient to the mental; to give the pupil ability to express himself with that warmth, energy and grace of gesture which lead charm to every relation of life.

Figure B.18: Becker Brothers Conservatory of Music catalog – Estelle Bonroe and Mayme Vivion CVs
Figure B.19: Becker Brothers Conservatory of Music catalog – Objective statement

Figure B.20: Becker Brothers Conservatory of Music catalog – features and advantages
Symphony Society, the Union Musical Club, the Apollo Club and others, afford an excellent occasion for enlarging the sphere of one's musical activity. The pupil is encouraged to make combinations use of all art forms—the lecture, drama, good literature, church music, all of which are well represented in St. Louis.

Facilities

No expense has been spared to give the best mechanical arrangements and the best facilities for the study of music. Our building is absolutely new, specially built for conservatory purposes, and is easily accessible from all parts of the city. Besides the most ample studio accommodations it contains a Recital Hall, with all modern conveniences, seating three hundred persons.

Pupils

The Becker Bros. Conservatory in every sense of the word is a select school for the study of music and kindred arts. Before being admitted to the classes of the various departments of the Conservatory a pupil must show by practical work that he is qualified to follow credibly each course as he may select. Our intention is to gather together a body of active and intelligent students who will receive the benefits of individual instruction. Teacher and pupil thus are brought into close contact, the work of the pupil is well supervised, his contact with the master stimulates him to greater efforts, while his daily intercourse with other earnest students spurs him on to emulate their achievements.

Teachers Training Department

Good teaching demands a thorough knowledge of the principles underlying musical science. Too many of our teachers, feeling their own uncertainty when face to face with the problem of actual teaching, grope about in the dark for methods, which are at best but half hearted experiments on their pupils. The results are equally unsatisfactory to the teacher and pupil. Initiative, doubt, uncertainty take the place of progress and advancement, and dissatisfaction and discouragement are the ultimate results.

Experience is invaluable to a teacher, but even experience is costly and hardly of much benefit, except it be the practical application and working out of correct theoretical principles. Our teachers' training department was organized for the purpose of giving a thorough schooling in the best methods and thereby safeguarding our graduates from many of the mistakes daily made by half formed and immature musicians masquerading in the guise of teachers of music.

Ensemble

Many of the best masters are to be found in trio and quartette form. The study of this branch of musical literature therefore is of the greatest importance. Classes will be formed for the study of the master works under the direction of Mr. Joseph Keno.

Figure B.21: Becker Brothers Conservatory of Music catalog – facilities and pupils

Figure B.22: Becker Brothers Conservatory of Music catalog – teachers’ training
Teaching Methods

Intelligent musicians are the need of the day. To produce such men and women competent instruction is a primary requisite. But competent instruction does not mean merely the ability on the part of the teacher to impress his individuality on the pupil. It means the awakening of self activity on the part of the pupil. The advance of pedagogy has rendered it imperatively necessary that the pupil himself be transformed from a piece of inanimate machinery into a creative artist. It is no longer sufficient for the student feebly to imitate the work of the master; he must learn to think, understand and act for himself. The conservatory, therefore, places great stress on methods of study. From child to adult the pupil is shown how best to utilize his talents so as to awaken his musical consciousness and to insure broad, symmetrical development. With this end in view, the courses of study have been arranged in carefully graded sequence.

Courses of Study

It is not the intention to lay down any hard and fast course of study, to be pursued within a given time by all, irrespective of individual ability or inclination. No set time can be given for the completion of the course. Talented pupils necessarily will advance farther in a given time, under proper methods, than others less fortunate. Every pupil of the conservatory, however, is given the opportunity of completing the course as soon as is consistent with earnest consecration.

We recognize the fact that no diploma or certificate of graduation is worth anything except there be ability back of it, and we believe this holds good as well in the musical as in the intellectual world. The only proof worthy of the dignity of high artistic teaching is the result of its work. The course of study is grouped under four general divisions, viz.: Elementary, preparatory, intermediate and advanced.

**Elementary Course—Grades I and II**

Fundamental training, including hand position, finger exercises, rhythm, ear training, staff notation.

Studies for beginners by S. B. Mathews, Leckhomb.

Sonatas by Kuhlau, Clementi, etc.

Little solo pieces by modern and classic composers.

**Preparatory Course—Grades III and IV**

Technical exercises, scales, arpeggios, broken chords.

Studies by Daverney, Heller, Carney, Op. 296, Becca I and II.

Overture studies; short Preludes and Fugues, Bach; Mozart and Haydn.

Sonatas.

Mendelssohn songs and pieces by Reincke, Raff, Reinhold, Gade, Schumann, and others.

**Intermediate Course—Grades V and VI**

Technical work continued. Compositional studies.

Etudes, Two Voiced Inventions with selections from the French and English School; MacDowell, Op. 30 for technic and style.
Piano
(Continued)
Schumann, Scenes; Mozart, Concertos; Beethoven, Sonatas; and selections from Grieg, Hummel, Field, Handel, Schubert, Schumann, Chopin and the modern writers.

Advanced Course—Grades VII and VIII
(a) Advanced technical work, scales in thirds and sixths.
Clarinets, Tunes and Passages; Czerny, Op. 740, Art of Dexterity; Kallik, Octave studies; Bach, Preludes and Fugues.
Sonatas and Concertos by Mendelssohn, Schumann, Beethoven and others with selections from Schubert, Schumann, Chopin, Liszt, and many other writers.

(b) Bach, Preludes and Fugues, continued.
Mozart, Op. 76; selections from Mendelssohn’s Preludes and Studies.
Etudes by Chopin, Op. 10 and 28; Henselt, Maetowskr, Moszkowski.
Sonatas and Concertos by Beethoven, Schumann, Chopin, Liszt and larger works from both classical and modern composers.

Vocal
The desire to make the work of the vocal department one of the features of the conservatory will oblige us to give, from time to time, pupils’ recitals. Students will be enabled thereby to accustomed themselves to the always trying position of singing before the public. In their monthly recitals they will take part in concerted singing as well as solo work.

Organ
Preparatory Course
This includes the preparatory piano course with the beginning of pedal obligato.
Lemmens’ Organ School, Book I, for acquiring an organ touch and both legato and staccato playing. Guiliani’s Practical Organist, and Hymn Tune Playing.

Intermediate Course
Advanced Registration, Quartet and Chorus accompaniment, Lemmens’ Organ School, continued. Mendelssohn’s Sonatas, Preludes and Fugues selected.
Pieces by Bach, Guiliani, Lemmens, Dubois and others.

Advanced Course
This includes the Intermediate Piano Course.
Preludes by Allen and others, Mendelssohn’s Sonatas, continued, Bach’s Preludes and Fugues.
System of Instruction

Private tuition, which brings master and pupil into the closest possible relationship, is the system of instruction pursued. Only such branches as ensemble playing, harmony and the history of music are regularly taught in classes. For those, however, who are unable to avail themselves of the opportunity for private study, a limited number of class lessons will be given, subject in every case to the approval and supervision of the Director.

Graduation

The conservatory gives certificates and diplomas attesting the progress and fitness of the holder.

The teachers' certificate given by this institution supposes a thorough knowledge of teaching methods and ability to instruct others.

The requirements for this certificate are of a two-fold character:

1. Theoretical—Examination in harmony, history of music and musical analysis, showing a good acquaintance with the literature of music as far as the generally accepted sixth grade.
2. Practical—The playing of a recital programme in public, containing at least one of the master works in Sonata form. This certificate is not given for less than two years' work at the conservatory.

Conditions for the diploma of graduation will be subject to these regulations. They will likewise be required to play in public a recital, including some of the most difficult works and one concerto chosen by the board of examiners. A course of at least four years at the conservatory is required before a diploma can be issued. No one under the age of nineteen will receive the diploma of graduation.

General Regulations

Tuition payable strictly in advance.

No pupil booked for less time than ten lessons.

No deduction for omitted lessons for any cause whatever except in case of prolonged illness, when, if notice be sent to the Secretary, the hour will be cancelled and credit given on a succeeding term for the omitted lessons.

Lessons cancelled by telephone will not be deducted or made up.

Pupils may begin a term at any time.

Visitors are not allowed in the teaching rooms.

All arrangements for lessons and all changes of hours must be made with the Secretary and not with the individual teachers.
Rates of Tuition

PIANO
From Fifty Cents to Two Dollars per lesson according to teacher and length of lesson.

VOICE CULTURE
From One to Two Dollars according to teacher and length of lesson.

VIOLIN AND CELLO
From Seventy-five Cents to Two Dollars per lesson.

ORGAN
Two Dollars and Fifty Cents per lesson. This includes two practice hours a week.

HARP
Course of ten lessons Twenty-five Dollars.

HARMONY AND COMPOSITION
Class lessons: Seven and Ten Dollars per term of ten lessons.

MANDOLIN, GUITAR
Class rates: Five Dollars and Seven Dollars per term of ten lessons.
Private lessons from Seventy-five Cents to One Dollar each.

SCHOOL OF ORATORY AND EXPRESSION
Class rates: Five Dollars and Seven Dollars per term. Private lessons One Dollar each.

Figure B.29: Becker Brothers Conservatory of Music catalog – tuition rates

Organ

THE ORGAN STUDENT will find at the Conservatory a two manual pipe organ, built according to the most approved specifications by GEO. KIL-Gen & Son, of St. Louis. The instrument has all the tone qualities to be found in the largest pipe organs, viz: organ tone (diapasons), string, flute and reed tone; thereby giving the student the advantage of the modern organ and appealing to him as one of the most complete studio organs ever erected.

An electric motor furnishes the motive power for the bellows. The manual compass is five octaves and the pedal thirty notes.

Figure B.30: Becker Brothers Conservatory of Music catalog – organ description
Figure B.31: Becker Brothers Conservatory of Music catalog – organ stop list

Figure B.32: Becker Brothers Conservatory of Music catalog – Shakespeare quote
This is to certify that the undersigned, representing the

Committee of St. Alphonsus Parish

having this day examined the organ erected therein by the AUSTIN ORGAN COMPANY, of Hartford, Connecticut, find it to be constructed in accordance with the terms of the contract, so far as they are able to judge, and that the AUSTIN ORGAN COMPANY is entitled to payment for the organ as stated in the contract. It being understood, however, that the signing of this certificate does not affect the responsibility of said AUSTIN ORGAN COMPANY as to the guarantee expressed in the contract.

In presence of

John T. Mitchell

Representing Austin Organ Company.

The party of the second part, in consideration of the agreements hereof of the party of the first part, hereby requests the party of the first part to complete and erect said pipe organ, and agrees to purchase the same and to pay therefor the sum of one hundred and thirteen thousand, six hundred dollars in New York City funds as follows:

When the principal portions of said organ are assembled in the factory of the party of the first part, the sum of three thousand dollars.

Upon the delivery in the above named building of the principal portions of said organ, or if such delivery is delayed to accommodate the party of the second part, then when the principal portions of said organ shall be constructed and ready for shipment, the sum of

Upon the erection of said organ complete, in accordance herewith, the party of the second part agreeing thereto, shall pay, to the party of the first part, the sum of

The party of the second part further agrees to have the above named building in condition suitable and proper for the erection of said organ, motor, and blowing gear, and to permit the erection thereof at least

days previous to the date fixed for the completion of the organ aforesaid, and to give to the party of the first part the exclusive use of said building for the purpose of regulating and tuning said organ at least

days previous to the date fixed for said completion.

The party of the second part further agrees at its own expense to build suitable foundation, and enclosures, when necessary for motor, and blowing gear, to do all wiring or plumbing connected therewith, including all ducts from blowers to all parts of the organ, and conduits that may be necessary for the electric organ cables, to install such electric lights as may be needed for the erection and future care of said organ, and to do all cutting of floors, partitions or other parts of the building, when and as directed by the party of the first part, and to supply necessary light, heat and power during the erection, regulating and tuning of said organ.

The party of the second part further agrees to assume all risk of damage to the organ or its parts while contained in the above named building, and to insure the same in the form of fire, water, lightning and tempest, in the sum of not less than

per cent. of contract price

Dollars in the name of said and for the benefit of the parties hereto as their respective interests may appear.

It is mutually agreed that the title to and ownership of said organ shall be and remain in the party of the first part until the contract price, as heretofore stated, has been fully paid with interest upon any deferred payments at the rate of per cent. per annum, and that upon such payment said organ shall become the property of the party of the second part.

Form 1099

1% Account will be allowed if paid in full upon

date later.
Memorandum of Agreement, made this 11th day of March, A.D., 1929, by and between the
Austin Organ Company of Hartford, Connecticut, U.S.A.
party of the first part, and
St. Alphonsus A. C. Church, Detroit, Michigan,
party of the second part.

WITNESSETH: The party of the first part, in consideration of the agreements herein of the party of the second part, hereby agrees to construct, erect and sell to the party of the second part a pipe organ, according to the attached specifications, and agree to remove and complete and ready for use in a factory or a place designated by the party of the second part, on or about the 1st day of June, 1929, subject, however, to delays from fire, strikes or causes beyond the control of the party of the first part.

The party of the first part further warrants that said organ when completed shall be free from any defects in material or workmanship, and agrees that if any such defect or defects should develop within five years after completion the party of the first part will, upon written notice within such period of any defect or defects, forthwith remedy the same at its own expense. This undertaking does not include tuning or such care as may be necessary for the proper preservation of the instrument.

The party of the first part further warrants that the wind pressure of said organ when completed will be unvarying under all conditions of use, that the action will be practically instantaneous in response and repetition, that the touch will not be affected by additional couplers or atmospheric variations, and that the console arrangements will be convenient and reliable in operation.

The party of the second part, in consideration of the agreements herein of the party of the first part, hereby requests the party of the first part to construct and erect said pipe organ, and agrees to purchase the same and to pay therefor the sum of

$16,500.00

Dollars in New York City funds as follows:

When the principal portion of said organ is assembled in the factory of the party of the first part, the sum of

$1,000.00

Dollars.

Upon the delivery in the building of the principal portions of said organ, or if such delivery is delayed to accommodate the party of the second part, then when the principal portions of said organ shall be constructed and ready for shipment, the sum of

$12,500.00

Dollars.

Upon the erection of said organ complete, in accordance herewith, the party of the second part agrees to thereupon examine said organ immediately in the presence of a representative of the Austin Organ Company, and if found to be complete, the sum of

$16,500.00

Dollars.

The party of the second part further agrees to have the above named building in condition suitable and proper for the erection of said organ, and to permit the erection thereof at least 15 days previous to the date fixed for the completion of the organ aforesaid, and to give to the party of the first part the exclusive use of said building for the purposes of regulating and tuning said organ at least 5 days previous to the date fixed for said completion.

The party of the second part further agrees at its own expense to build suitable foundation and enclosures; when necessary for motor and blowing gear, to do all wiring or plumbing connected therewith including air ducts from blowers to all parts of the organ, and conduits that may be necessary for the electric organ cables, to install such electric lights as may be needed for the erection and future care of said organ, and to do all cutting of floors, partitions or other parts of the building; when and as directed by the party of the first part, and to supply necessary light, heat and power during the erection, regulating and tuning of said organ.

The party of the second part further agrees to assume all risk of damage to the organ or its parts while contained in the above named building, and to insure the same in reliable stock companies against loss or damage by fire, water, lightning and tornado, in the sum of not less than

$16,500.00

Dollars in the name of and for the benefit of the parties hereto as their respective interests may appear.

It is mutually agreed that the title to and ownership of said organ shall be and remain in the party of the first part until the contract price, as heretofore stated, has been fully paid with interest upon any deferred payments at the rate of 6% per annum, and that upon such payment said organ shall become the property of the party of the second part.

The party of the second part agrees to pay the balance of the contract price of said organ, which shall be $16,500.00.

2% above rate will be allowed if paid on June 1st.

Completed.

John A. Schenck

Figure B.34: Austin Organ Company contract with St. Alphonsus Parish, page 2
It is hereby mutually agreed that each and every part of the old organ and its blowing apparatus, which the said party of the first part has agreed to rebuild and replace by a new organ in accordance with the terms of this contract shall belong to and be the property of the said party of the first part, and the said party of the second part hereby agrees not to remove or allow to be removed any part of said old organ without the consent of the party of the first part.

It is mutually agreed that in consideration of any preparations made for future additions or steps, such steps and additions shall be installed by the party of the first part at prices then in force.

It is mutually agreed that in the event that a note or notes are given for the balance of said contract price the title to and ownership of said organ shall be and remain in the party of the first part until such note or notes are paid, and in the event of a default in the payment of any interest on such note or notes or in the event of a default in the payment of any one of a series of notes given for the balance of said contract price when due, then in either event all of said sums represented by said note or notes, as the same may be, shall become due and payable, and the party of the first part shall have the right to enter the premises of the party of the second part and remove said organ.

It is mutually agreed that in case there shall arise any differences between the parties hereto regarding the completion of said organ, such differences shall, at the request of either party, be submitted to a committee of arbitration, to consist of three disinterested persons to be faithfully chosen, one by each of the parties hereto, and the third by the two so chosen, and the decision of a majority of said committee as to whether and when said organ had been fully completed in accordance with this contract shall be final and binding upon the parties hereto.

It is mutually agreed that in the event the party of the second part shall fail to comply with the terms of this contract, or any of them, as hereinbefore provided, that all sums paid by the said party of the second part to said party of the first part shall be considered and treated as liquidated damages for the breach hereof, and the said party of the first part shall have the right to remove said organ, or any part thereof, situated on the premises of the party of the second part.

It is hereby mutually agreed that no changes, alterations or additions to this contract shall be valid unless assented to in writing by both parties hereto.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF the parties hereto have interchangedly set their hands and seals the day and year first above written.

[Signatures]

SPECIFICATIONS FOR A PIPE ORGAN
TO BE BUILT ON THE
AUSTIN UNIVERSAL AIR CHEST SYSTEM
(Patented in the United States, England and Canada)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manual</th>
<th>Compass</th>
<th>Pedal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>compass C0 to C7, 61 notes.</td>
<td>pedal compass C0C to G, 32 notes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Action:** Austin patent electro pneumatic key and electro pneumatic stop. 
**Couplers:** Pattern: Step Key. 
**Cabinet:** Any native wood. 
**Pedals:** A. G. C; mall, radiating and concave. 
**Organ:** Step Key: Upper Manual. 
**Stop Key:** Step Key over Upper Manual. 
**Compartments:** Under respective manuals, adjustable from bench, moving registers. 
**Composition Pedals:** Adjustable from bench, moving registers. 
**Swell box:** 8 ft. thick, Double Constructions. 
**Case:** Any native wood. 
**Finish:** As desired.

**Displayed pipes:** Plain zinc or French leaf cold bronze. 
**Electric blowers:** Multiple fan type of ample capacity with governor for action current. 
**Current:** Alternating. Voltage: 220. Frequency: 60. Phase: 2. 
**Pitch:** International 460A. Wind pressure: 7 inches. 

The above will be of suitable design without carving or elaborate detail, provided that if any work of special design is required by the party of the second part, complete architect’s drawings and details must be furnished within reasonable time, and the additional cost therefor shall be paid for in an extra, 50 per cent. upon delivery of the organ and the balance upon completion of the same.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Great Organ</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open Diapason 4' oboe</td>
<td>8' - 73 pipes metal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concert Flute small, small, gros flute</td>
<td>8' - 73 pipes wood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gemshorn</td>
<td>8' - 73 pipes metal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Octave 5'</td>
<td>4' - 73 pipes metal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmonic Flute 5'</td>
<td>8' - 73 pipes reed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Sub</td>
<td>Great Unison off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Octave</td>
<td>Swell to Great Sub</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swell to Great Unison</td>
<td>Swell to Great Octave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Right adjustable combination pistons to control great and pedal stops.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Swell Organ</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bourdon 4' 4 1/4'</td>
<td>16' - 73 pipes wood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Diapason 4' 3 1/4</td>
<td>8' - 73 pipes metal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stopped Flute small, small</td>
<td>8' - 73 pipes wood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voix Celeste 6' 1/2</td>
<td>8' - 73 pipes metal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flute metal flutes</td>
<td>4' - 73 pipes wood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornopean</td>
<td>8' - 73 pipes reed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oboe</td>
<td>8' - 73 pipes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tremolo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swell Sub</td>
<td>Swell Unison off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swell Octave</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Right adjustable combination pistons to control swell and pedal</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choir Organ</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Claribel Flute, small, small</td>
<td>8' - 73 pipes wood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faleseas 5' 3' 1/2</td>
<td>8' - 73 pipes metal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unde Maris</td>
<td>8' - 61 pipes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flute, Mount 4' 1/2</td>
<td>4' - 73 pipes wood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarinet</td>
<td>8' - 73 pipes reed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chimes (Kohn)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tremolo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure B.36: Austin Organ Company contract with St. Alphonsus Parish, page 4
Figure B.37: Austin Organ Company contract with St. Alphonsus Parish, page 5
Figure B.38: René Becker obituary from the Detroit Sunday Times
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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