



Outlook

New Film Project - The Organ in America

From Fugue State Films <will@fuguestatefilms.co.uk>
via mailchimpapp.net

Date Thu 3/13/2025 7:46 AM

To Anne Laver <alaver@syr.edu>

The Organ in America - Please help us make our most ambitious film!

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Dear Friends,

We are thrilled to announce that we are moving ahead with our next set of films about the pipe organ and its music!

[The Organ in America](#)

[The Organ in America](#) will be a fascinating exploration of a narrative spread over 400 years and thousands of miles. It will show how the story begins with organs built by immigrants in English and German styles, then show the organs that American builders created in their own distinct styles, as well as organs overseas builders have created for both church and entertainment, usually on a scale and with a vision that their homeland would never support, and will of course detail the more recent American instruments inspired by historical European models.



This story will make for an important, unique and far-reaching narrative. More organs have been built in America than any other country – one company alone built more than 12,000 instruments. Today, organ building employs more people in America than anywhere else, and is done on a scale and with attention to quality and detail that is the envy of other countries.



We deeply appreciate this, and want our upcoming set of films to be of similar breadth and quality to match its subject. Please read below how we plan to make our vision possible, and how we plan to start filming in April with Anne Laver, Nathan Laube, Annette Richards, David Yearsley, William Porter, David Higgs and Ivan Bosnar.



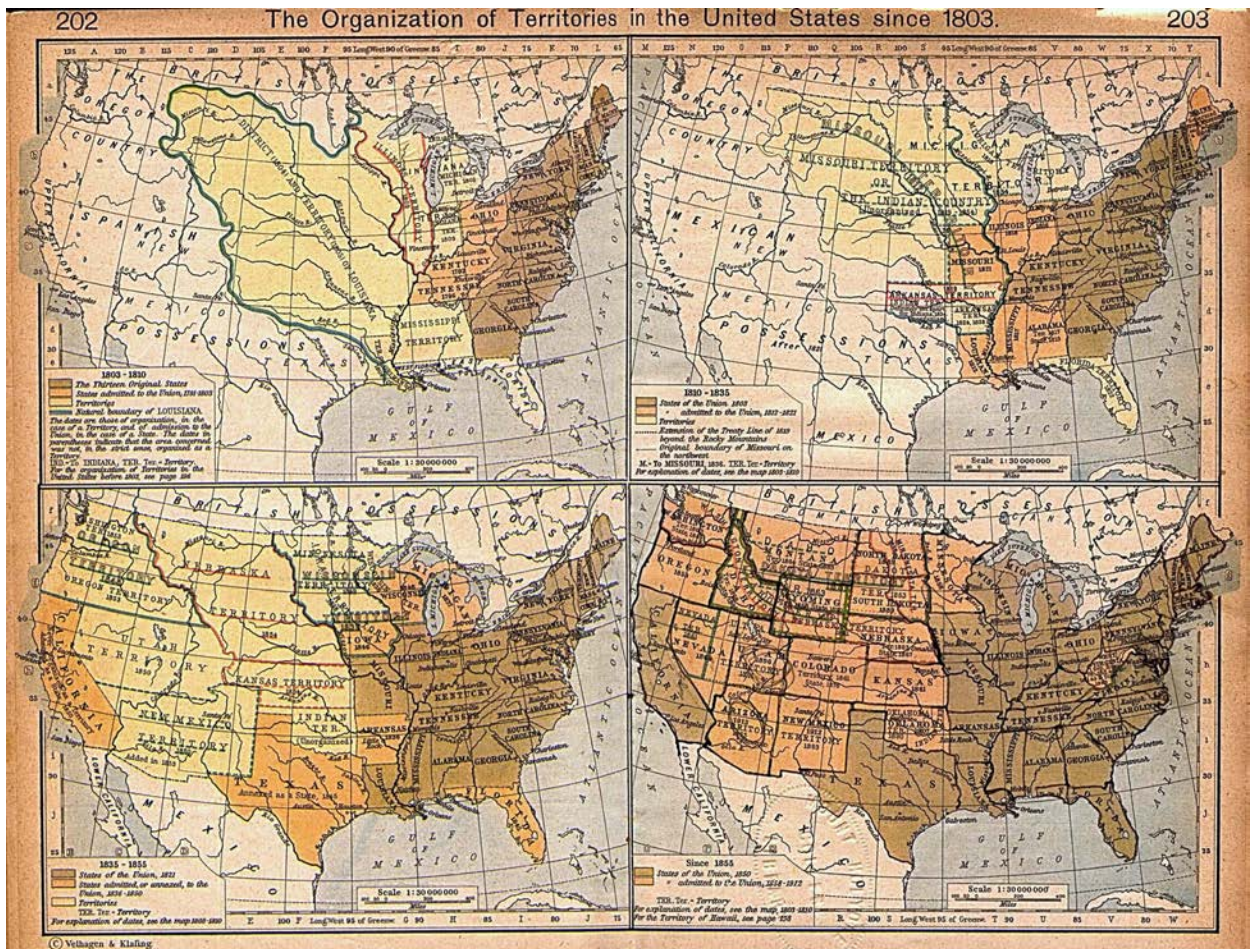
Photo by Joseph Routon

In terms of our previous work, our goal for [The Organ in America](#) is to be most like [The English Organ](#), released in 2019, which was a set of documentaries,

demonstrations and performances that included 33 instruments, with a narrative covering hundreds of years. It was made up of 79 individual films including documentary, demonstration and performance.



However, for [The Organ in America](#) the geographical scope is wider than our English production, and therefore the project needs to be bigger financially. Because there is therefore an element of risk, our plan is to make three discrete film projects in three stages, each of which contains a complete and interesting narrative. The first goal is to finance and make the first film, then subsequent funding secures the second film, and then the third. Therefore there is less risk we will not finish the project; instead, if we raise more than enough money we can enhance the level of narrative detail according to the resources we have.



Our starting point will be the area in northern New York state. Upstate New York has one of the richest collections of organs in the USA, and it serves as a fascinating microcosm of American organ building and culture. The region includes industrial areas, the state capitol, and three top tier research institutions in the universities of Syracuse, Cornell and Rochester (the home of the Eastman School of Music, one of the leading

places to study the organ in the world). This area, from Albany in the east to Buffalo in the West, passing through Rochester, Syracuse and Ithaca, gives us an astonishing range of organs, from a reconstruction of a Casparini to a rare surviving Hope-Jones to one of the best of Holtkamp's iconic, futuristic, caseless organs (Holtkamp's bold instruments have always intrigued me because a photo of one of them was on the wall of my school music room):



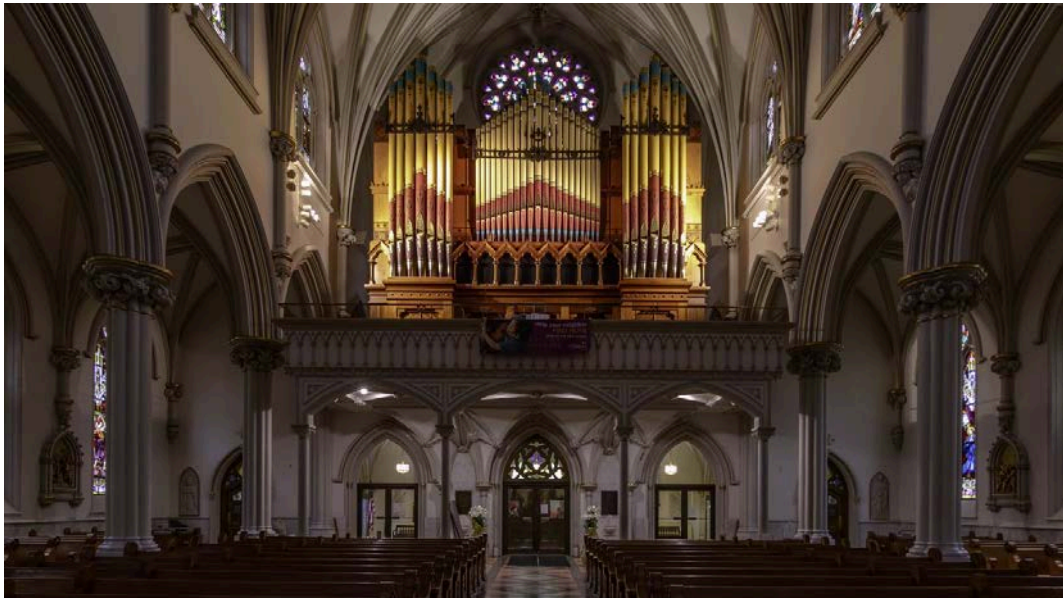
These towns are all connected by the Erie Canal and its tributaries, so our film has a narrative spine that also contributes to the sense of the history of the area. At the heart of the film will be an exploration of how the pipe organ fits into the history of America. We are now a hundred years past the peak of American organ culture in terms of numbers – in the 1920s the organ was ubiquitous – in church, in the cinema, at home and in concert, in halls and conventions. Millions and millions of people experienced organ music every week. Now the story is different – a smaller audience and overall culture, but the standard of organ building and playing has never been higher.

Here is a photo of the old Wurlitzer factory near Buffalo, and the Wurlitzer organ in Rochester is excellent, and in excellent condition.

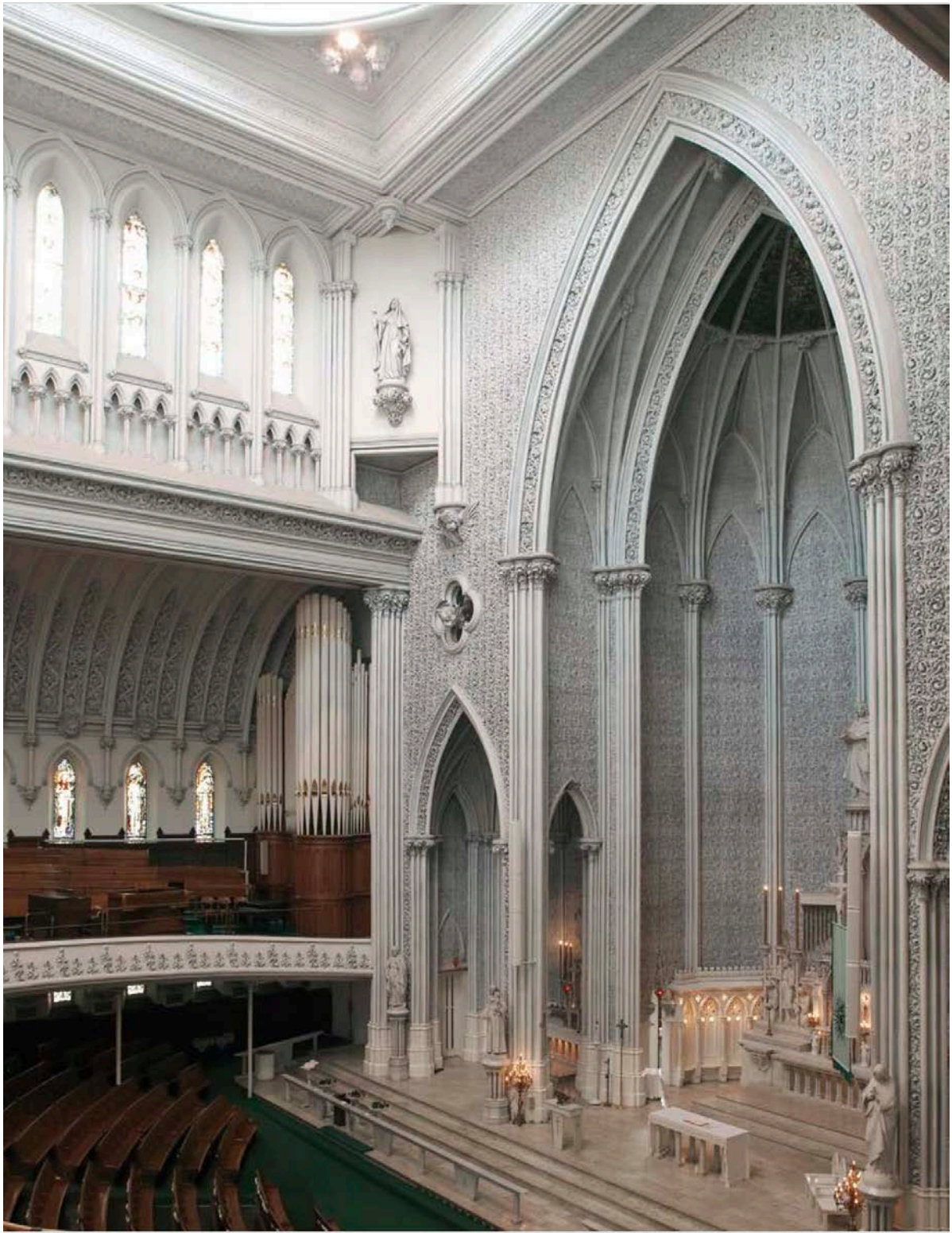




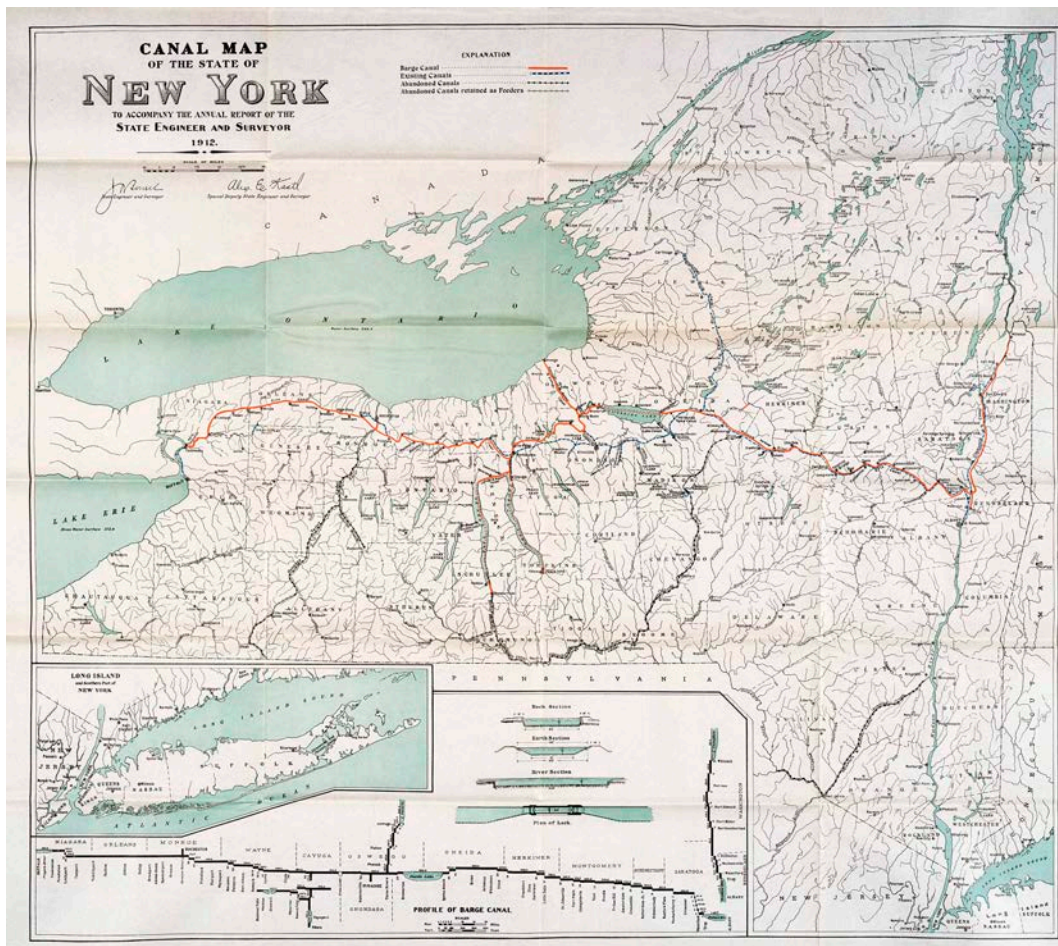
We shall therefore tell a history of the American organ from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, while relating it to the social and historical trends, including industrialisation and de-industrialisation, that are very apparent in this part of the USA. We will include instruments by Hook and Hastings, E. M. Skinner, Aeolian-Skinner, Hope-Jones, Wurlitzer, Holtkamp, and Munetaka Yokota, who built both the North German-style organ at Cornell and the Casparini in Rochester. Here's a photo of the Hook and Hastings in Buffalo, moved there after being an exhibit in the massive 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia.



From a European perspective, it is possible to underestimate the quality and scale of America's antique cultural heritage. Look at this fantastic and vast church interior in Schenectady, NY, that we hope to include in our filming:



Because of the Erie Canal and the ever-present sense of economic change, this film will resonate with many important themes today as the USA grapples with its industrial past and how to turn this into an industrial future.



This first documentary will be presented by Anne Laver, and will also feature Nathan Laube, David Higgs, William Porter, Annette Richards, David Yearsley, Ivan Bosnar, Christopher Marks and Laurence Libin. These are some of the best organists and organ historians in the world, and the standard of playing, improvisation, demonstration and discussion will be excellent. We will ensure that there is varied repertoire to suit the instruments, as well as some new music composed or adapted specially for the films.



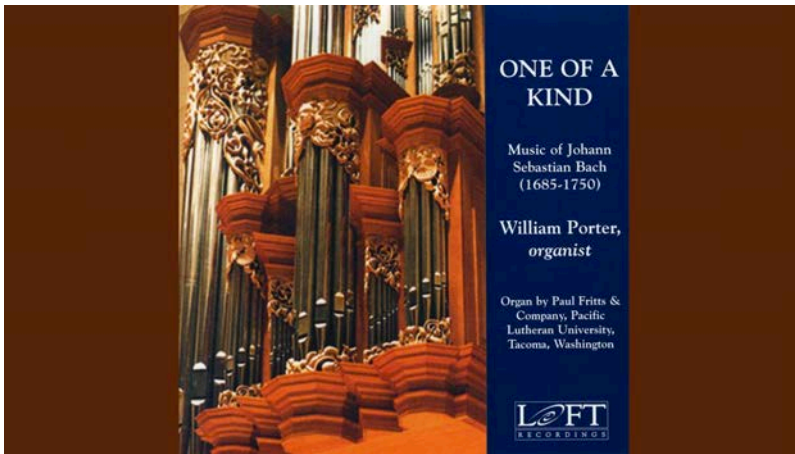
Anne Laver, described by *Fanfare* magazine as a “complete musician, totally adept and utterly stylish in everything she plays,” she has given organ concerts in Europe,

Scandinavia, Africa and across the United States and has been a featured recitalist at conventions of the American Guild of Organists, the Organ Historical Society, the Westfield Center for Historical Keyboard Studies, and the Göteborg International Organ Academy in Sweden. She is a professor at Syracuse University and has been a visiting professor at the Eastman School of Music. As a scholar, Anne's research interests focus on organ music at the nineteenth and twentieth century world's fairs. She studied organ with Mark Steinbach as an undergraduate student at Brown University and spent a year in The Netherlands studying with Jacques van Oortmerssen. While pursuing masters and doctoral degrees at the Eastman School of Music, she studied with Hans Davidsson, William Porter, and David Higgs.

Because we will be filming in Rochester and at Cornell, we will also work with the world-famous organists at those universities. These include Nathan Laube, hailed as a 'once in a generation talent', who will be well known to audiences for his many superlative concerts and who in England is one of the visiting professors at the Royal Birmingham Conservatory.



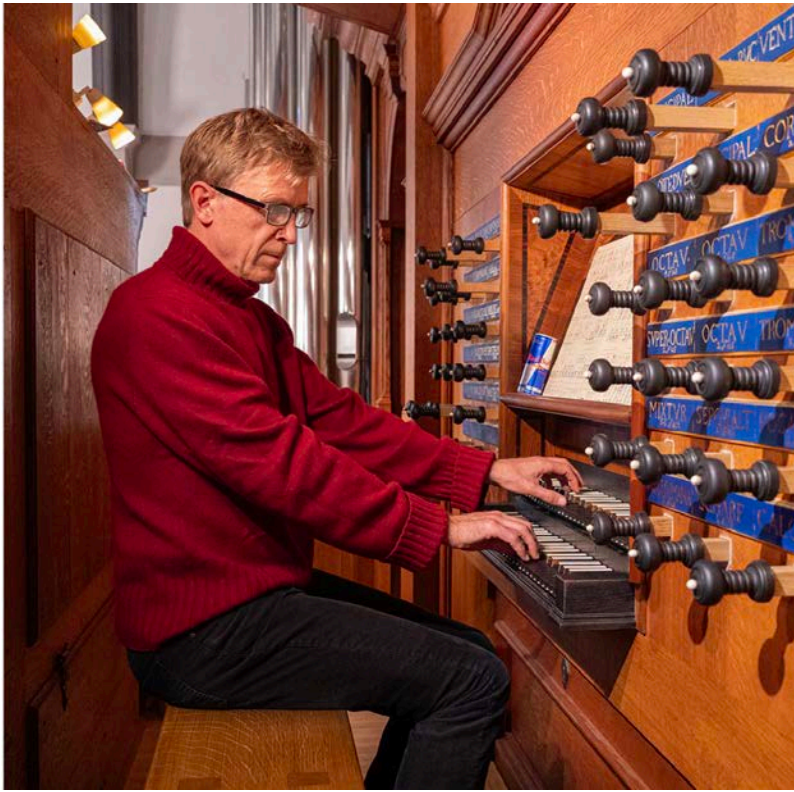
William Porter is particularly associated with baroque music through his recordings of Bach and others, both on organ and harpsichord. He is also noted for his improvisations.



Annette Richards is both a world-renowned performer but also a scholar known for contextualising the organ and its music into broader social and historical patterns.



David Yearsley is one of the world's foremost Bach scholars.



David Higgs is one of the USA's foremost recitalists, and has distinguished himself as a teacher of a generation of students.



Ivan Bosnar is an instructor of organ and improvisation at Syracuse University, and in 2020 won the American Guild of Organists National Competition in Organ Improvisation.



Christopher Marks is a professor of music at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, but before that was University Organist at Syracuse University.



Laurence Libin is emeritus curator of musical instruments at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and is expert both about American organs and the broader culture into which they were built.



Once we have completed filming in northern New York state, where and what next?

Because organ building is in such fine form in the USA at the moment, we would plan the next documentary to be a celebration of the amazing instruments being built by the current generation of organ builders, who work in varied styles but with an emphasis on awareness of European historic models which can then be adapted for contemporary America.

We would also plan to film instruments from a list of historically important organs from 1630 to the present that are located across the USA. If we raise enough money we can film at as many as these as possible. I'm not going to list locations here, because that would be premature, but our wishlist would include instruments such as anonymous English organs from the 17th century, and organs by Tannenburg, Appleton, Davis-Ferris, Hook and Hook & Hastings, Roosevelt, Ridges, Erben, Bohler, Walcker, Skinner, Aeolian-Skinner, Hope-Jones, Wurlitzer, Harris, Kimball, Möller, Austin, Hammond, Milmer-Losh, Holtkamp, von Beckerath, Flentrop, Fisk, Brombaugh, Pasi, Rosales, Taylor & Boody, Richards & Fowkes, Bedient, Fritts, Dobson, Schoenstein, Schantz, Juget-Sinclair, Letourneau, Casavant, Noack, Parsons, Kerner and Merchant, J.F. Nordlie, Lively-Fulcher etc. etc.

If you know about the works of these organ builders, you can probably start to see in your mind what our list of instruments is like, though some of them have produced

multiple noteworthy instruments so there will be some flexibility in where we go to film.

This is a long list, maybe longer than we can hope to accomplish, but with enough support we can travel to as many of these as possible.

[Please support this project!](#)

We already have raised, or have been pledged, almost \$50,000. This will be a very expensive project – certainly by our standards – so to make sure it will work we need to gain as much support as possible before we start filming. We need to reach about \$100,000 to start with, \$200,000 to complete the project in a basic form, and \$300,000 to complete the project in a very rich and varied way.

You can contribute either to the first of the three sections, or to the overall triple-section project. We would welcome support for all three. This is a high stakes project that could result in one of the finest and most interesting films we have made, though there is an element of risk that we do not raise the funds to complete all three sections. But hopefully by now you know us well enough to know that however much we raise, we will do the utmost with our resources and make something really special.

[Please support the project through our webshop](#), or for US taxpayers, please take advantage of a tax-efficient way of donating via Syracuse University (details immediately below).

[For everyone in the UK, Europe, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, our webshop is the best way to pay](#), though if you want to go for one of the higher amounts, please email me as there will be cheaper, quicker and easier methods of transferring money than the webshop or paypal – we don't want to pay exorbitant paypal fees.

For American donors, you are more than welcome to use our webshop, but we can also offer you a tax efficient way of supporting the project. We are able to route donations through our partner Syracuse University, which is a 501(c)(3), so donations made this way will give you tax benefits. If you would like to pay via Syracuse University **[please email me now](#)**.

You can give any amount you like, but these are the levels we have set up (the price in pounds is followed by the approximate US dollar amount in round numbers):

Executive Producer £30,000 / \$39,000

Gold Co-Producer £20,000 / \$26,000

Co-Producer £10,000 / \$13,000

Associate Producer £3600 / \$4,700

Platinum Patron £2400 / \$3,150

Gold Patron £1800 / \$2,350

Silver Patron £1200 / \$1,600

Patron £900 / \$1,200

Gold Screener £750 / \$1,000 (Complete Set)

Screener £300 / \$400 (First Film)

Gold Recognised Subscriber (Complete Set) £555 / \$725

Recognised Subscriber (Complete Set) £285 / \$375

Gold Recognised Subscriber (First Film) £185 / \$245

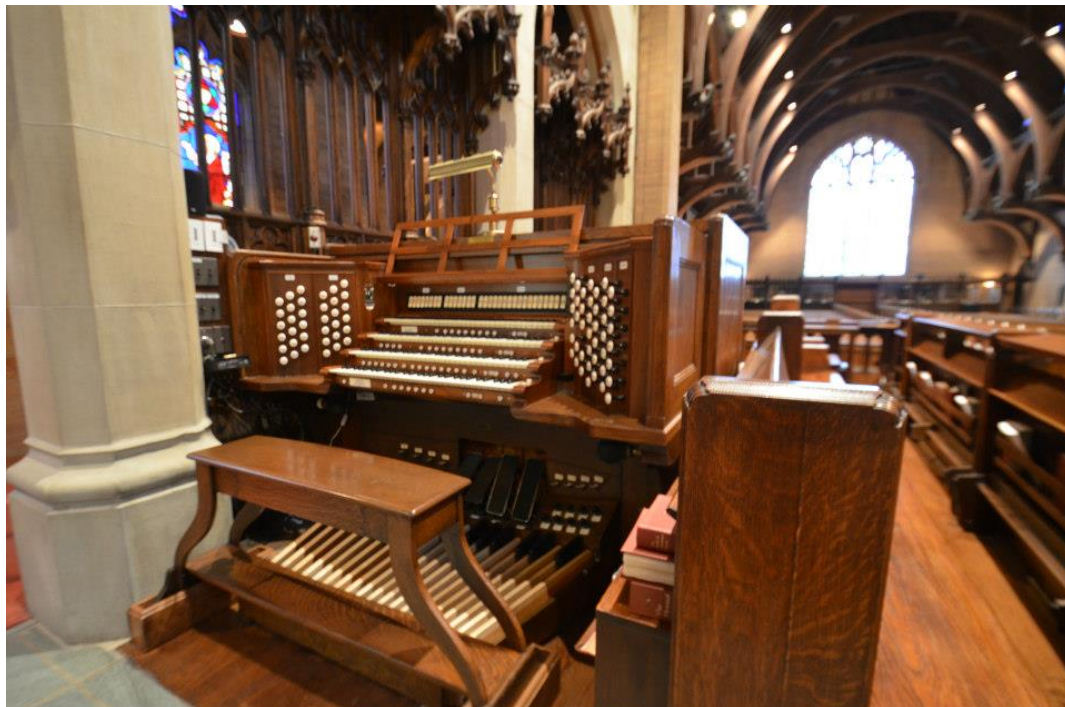
Recognised Subscriber (First Film) £95 / \$125

There's a good range of numbers here, but if you want to give a different amount, [please email me.](#)

These options are all recognised by having your name listed in the credits. We will launch a standard prebuy subscription in due course - this is for just the DVD Boxset but without your name being listed.

We will be having an event at Syracuse University on Saturday April 5th - if you are within striking distance of Syracuse, please come (details forthcoming). If not, [please join us via the livestream, clicking on this link.](#)

In short, the three phases of this American project will be our most ambitious, biggest, deepest, broadest production so far - an encyclopedia within an encyclopedia. Please support us and help us bat this one out of the park!



Thank you in advance for your support.

Very best and thanks,

Will Fraser

...and as a PS - this organ is in Texas, not upstate New York, but we hope it will be in one of the subsequent phases of filming which we shall announce soon...



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