

## **CHAPTER IV FRENCH ORGANS**

Between 1880 and 1920, France was one of the most influential countries of the Argentinean enlightenment. French organs, along with their music, became fashionable instruments and a significant part of the cultural life of the New World. In Argentina, there are, at present, more than twenty-six organs that were imported from this important European musical center.

Organ building firms such as Aristide Cavaillé-Coll, Cavaillé-Coll Mutin, John Abbey and Vittorino Gonzalez installed fine examples of their craftsmanship throughout Argentina. Some of these treasures are small residence and choir organs, while others are instruments of larger proportions. Experts may give special attention and value to the name of Aristide Cavaillé-Coll, which is deserved based upon the quality and renown of his work; however, the organs of the Mutin era, especially the instruments installed in Argentina at the beginning of the twentieth century, must also be recognized. Another important builder worth mentioning, based on his style and later association with France, is Joseph Merklin, who installed three instruments of the finest quality in Argentina.

### ARISTIDE CAVAILLÉ-COLL IN ARGENTINA

Today, Aristide Cavaillé-Coll (1811-1899), *Manufacture d'Orgue d'Eglise et de Salon*, does not need much of an introduction. Thanks to his ingenious inventions, his willingness to sacrifice in order to achieve great art, and his receptiveness to musicians as well as other builders, the organ regained its place as a great instrument. His fame as the supreme builder of his time spread all over the world, including the Americas, where his legacy still exists in Costa Rica, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Bolivia, and Venezuela. In the case of Argentina, most of the Cavaillé-Coll organs were dedicated after the death of the great master and are therefore attributed to Charles Mutin (Aristide's successor).

However, in the province of Santa Fé, there is an organ that was built in 1885 (Opus 589). Professor Agnes Armstrong has compared the different lists of the arrival of Cavaillé-Coll's work in America and has created a chronological chart (See chart No 1).

Opus 589 left the factory in Paris for Buenos Aires, Argentina on October 14, 1885. Several lists of Cavaillé-Coll's works suggest that the organ was built for the Cathedral of Buenos Aires, but its final destination was a Jesuit church in the same city: *Iglesia del Salvador*. This discrepancy could have resulted either from the fact that, in order to accelerate the entrance of the organ to the country and clear customs, the Archbishop of Buenos Aires had to be the legal owner of the organ; or because the Cathedral had bought this organ as a second instrument (a Choir organ), and later changed its mind. One can speculate that when these lists were later edited and published, the persons involved did not realize that neither the Archdiocese nor its mother church were the final destination of the instrument.

Chart 2: Aristide Cavaillé-Coll organs imported to the American Continent.<sup>25</sup>

Liste Chronologique de les Orgues Exécutes pour toutes les Amériques par Cavaillé-Coll						
- Agnes Armstrong, Paris 1999						
Commissionnaire(s)	Lieux	Genre d'orgue	G.H.	C.-C.	Date de livraison	
Général Santa Cruz	Bolivia (Pérou)	O. de Chap.	599	42	5	12 1850
Mr. Marco del Pont	Costa Rica	G.O.	626	49	11	2 1851
Mr. Dupont	Amérique du Nord	G.O.	568	45	31	7 1851
Mr. Bihour	Amérique du Nord	O.Ch.	566	83/14	15	12 1855
Mr. Guerrico	Amérique du Nord	G.O.	570	96/32	5	7 1856
MM. Alcaín et Cie.	Amérique du Nord	O.Ch.	563	128/76	12	12 1857
MM. Lefèvre et Amaury	Amérique du Nord	O.Ch.	571	110/52	22	2 1857
MM. Alcaín et Cie.	Amérique du Nord	O.Ch.	564	146/96	4	12 1858
MM. Racine et Perrot	Amérique du Nord	O.Ch.	574	136/84	7	5 1858
	Port-au-Prince, Haïti	O.Ch.	666	170/137	31	3 1860
Mr. Ed. Lefèvre et Cie.		O.Ch.	572	220/192	10	9 1862
	Porto Rico, San Juan paroisse	G.O.	681	207/0 [sic]	10	9 1862
	Valparaiso, Chili, Coll. du Sacré-Cœur	G.O.	617	215/187	11	11 1862
MM. Carton et Cambissa	Amérique du Nord	O.Ch.	567	196/166	7	1 1862
Mr. de Joaquim	Monte-Carmelo, Brésil	G.O.	604	235/210	8	11 1863
Mr. de Aldecoa	Amérique du Nord	O.Ch.	565	278/263	6	9 1865
	Lima, Pérou, Chap. du Sacré-Cœur	G.O.	679	312/299	18	1 1868
Mr. Marco del Pont	Costa Rica	O.Ch.	627	350/338	11	6 1869
Mr. l'abbé Durler	Amérique du Nord (New Orleans)	O.Ch.	569	364/353	25	6 1870
Mr. Marco del Pont	Santiago, Chili	G.O.	612	369/358	25	3 1871
	Paincourtville, Louisiana	O.Ch.	577	377/366	16	11 1871
Mr. Marco del Pont	Valparaiso, Chili	G.O.	618	380/369	22	1 1872
	Valparaiso, Chili, Eglise des Sacré-Cœur	G.O.	619	375/364	20	3 1872
	Havane, Cuba, Théâtre Tacon	G.O.	628	391/386	29	8 1872
Mr. Dreyfuss	Lima, Pérou	O.Ch.	680	415/411	11	6 1873
Mr. Respadilza	Santiago, Chili	G.O.	613	422/419	21	2 1874
MM. Thirion et Damien	Amérique du Nord	O.Ch.	576	427/424	24	2 1874
Mr. Olano	Amérique du Nord	O.Ch.	573	435/432	30	9 1874
	São Paulo, Brésil	O.Ch.	611	445	12	7 1875
Mr. Agard de Nard	Amérique du Nord	O.Ch.	562	456	18	8 1875
Mr. Rampon	Amérique du Nord	O.Ch.	575	463	9	3 1876
	Santiago, Chili, Dames du Sacré-Cœur	G.O.	614	431/428	9	11 1876
MM. Thirion et Damien	La Guyera, Venezuela	G.O.	696	695	24	2 1877
Mr. Marco del Pont	Valparaiso, Chili	G.O.	620	484	14	5 1878
	Santiago, Chili, Dames du Sacré-Cœur	G.O.	615	477	21	10 1878
MM. Thirion et Damien	La Guyera, Venezuela	G.O.	697	510	15	7 1879
Mr. Rée	Rio de Janeiro, Brésil	G.O.	606	505	20	1 1882
	Para, Brésil, cathédrale	G.O.	605	553	ou 12	9 1882
	Itu, Brésil, paroisse	G.O.	602	548	27	12 1882
MM. Prévost-Despalanges	Buenaventura, Colombie	G.O.	625	577	17	8 1883
Mr. Delaunay	Campinas, Brésil	G.O.	601	566	25	9 1883
MM. Lassère et frères	Caracas, Venezuela	O.Ch.	692	546	24	12 1883
MM. Lassère et frères	Caracas, Venezuela	O.Ch.	693	584	24	12 1883
MM. R. Belloc et Cie.	Valparaiso, Chili	G.O.	621	580	31	12 1883
	Merida y Maracaibo, Venezuela, paroisse	G.O.	699	537	21	7 1885
	Buenos Aires Cathédrale, Argentine	G.O.	589	589	14	10 1885
MM. Mitjans et Cie.	Mazatlán, Mexico	O.Ch.	677	627	9	7 1888
MM. Fould et Frères	Bahia, Brésil	G.O.	600	631	9	11 1888
MM. Aron et Cie.	Rio de Janeiro, Brésil	G.O.	608	637	31	8 1889
	Guadalajara, Mexico, paroisse	O.Ch.	676	641	6	10 1889
	Maiquetia, Venezuela, paroisse	G.O.	698	643	16	5 1890
MM. Alph. Aron et Cie.	Rio de Janeiro, Brésil	G.O.	609	661	9	4 1892
	Santiago, Chili, Cong. Du Précieux Sang	G.O.	616	666	19	10 1893
Mr. L. P. dos Santos	Jundiahy, Brésil	G.O.	603	680	22	10 1895
M. Enrique Sanchez Barque	Mexico	G.O.	678	683	9	3 1896
MM. Alvarado et Cie.	Caracas, Venezuela	G.O.	694	693	6	4 1897
MM. Alvarado et Cie.	Caracas, Venezuela	O. d'acc.	695	695	19	6 1897
MM. J. R. Surena et Cie.	Rio de Janeiro, Brésil	G.O.	610	692	1	7 1898
	Montréal, paroisse	G.O.	?	?	?	? ? ?
	Rio de Janeiro, Brésil, I. N. De Mus.	[sans détails]	607	585	[sans détails]	

<sup>25</sup> Agnes Armstrong. (Paris: 1999). Unpublished document.

A periodical dated December 12, 1885, gives specific information of the organ's voyage:

It is now certain that the organ for the *Iglesia del Salvador* is on its way to Buenos Aires on the ship Senegal.<sup>26</sup>

According to Father Furlong, who wrote a history of the Church in 1944, the organ was partly used for the first time on December 31, 1885.<sup>27</sup> However, there is no way that an organ at sea on December 12 could have been played less than three weeks later, and therefore, one of these sources must be mistaken. Since the first two dates – October 14 and December 12 – are reasonable considering the time for shipping an organ from Paris to Buenos Aires in 1885, it is likely that Father Furlong's book has an error regarding the date when the organ was first used. Furlong also mentioned in his book that a quarter century later, the "old organ" (referring to the Cavaillé-Coll) was moved to the Jesuit School in the province of Santa Fé. Like the date in question above, this date is also vague, since the instrument that replaced the "old organ" dates from 1905, only twenty years later.

Opus 589 organ served *Iglesia del Salvador de Buenos Aires* until 1905 when it was moved to its present home at *Iglesia Nuestra Señora de los Milagros*, Santa Fé. The church is adjacent to a School and it is therefore possible to find the name of the location of Opus 589 as *Colegio de la Inmaculada*.

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<sup>26</sup> *La Voz de la Iglesia*. December 12, 1885.

<sup>27</sup> Guillermo Furlong, S.J. *Historia del Colegio del Salvador y de sus irradiaciones culturales y espirituales en la Ciudad de Buenos Aires*. (Buenos Aires: Imprenta de San Pablo, 1944). 2:62.





Figure 24: **Iglesia del Salvador**  
 Choir loft view  
 Photo: Archivo General de la Nación  
 Depto. Doc. Fotográficos, Argentina.

In the picture above the reader can observe the Jesuit Church, *Iglesia del Salvador*, in Buenos Aires where Opus 589 was first installed. This historical picture also shows the case and façade of the Cavaillé-Coll organ. It is probable that soon after the photo was taken the organ was moved to its actual location in Santa Fé.

At the time of the move to Santa Fé, it became evident that it was necessary to cut and rebuild part of the case's towers due to limitations of space (the organ was too high for the low ceiling), as shown in figure 25.

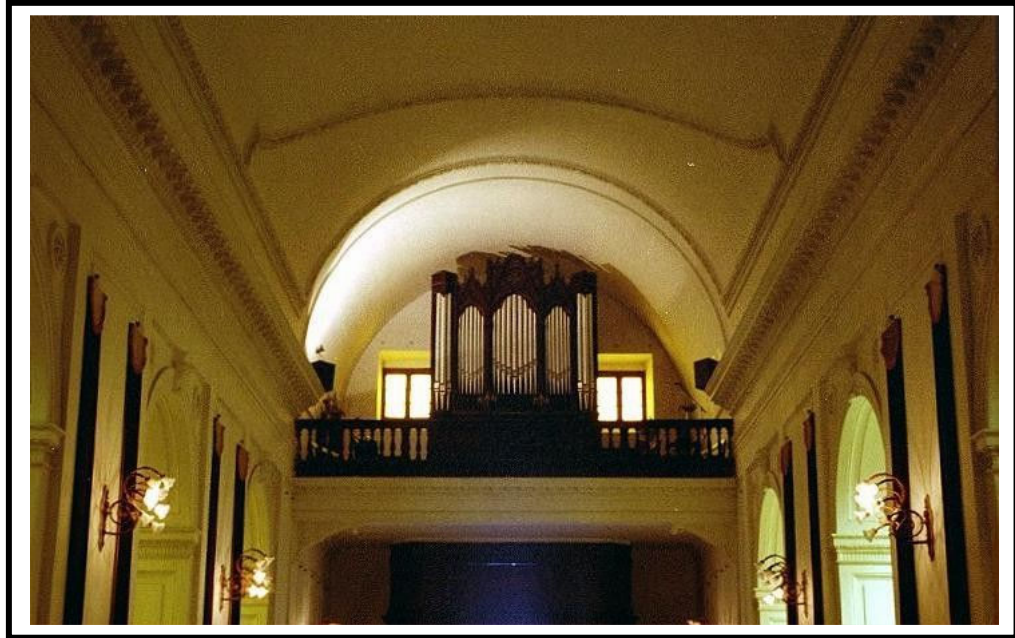


Figure 25: **Opus 589 at Iglesia Nuestra Señora de los Milagros, Santa Fé.**  
Photo: David Merello. July 12, 2003.

In the picture above one can observe not only the reduction in the size in the case of the organ, but also the small size of the church in comparison to that of the original home of Opus 589.

## TABLEAU DE SOMMIERS

The Lapresté Collection housed at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Département de la Musique, contains information that is important for the understanding of Opus 589. The author of this work was able to study the document microfilms at the Oberlin College Library's Special Collection. Cavaillé-Coll's workshop maintained detailed records of the series organs that were built. The shop register, as it is called, is a manuscript that contains a large quantity of this information; Professor Jesse Eschbach gave the following description of the material found in the notebook, the *Tableau de Sommers*:

What emerged was a veritable cornucopia of detailed shop information, including an exhaustive register of windchests constructed by the shop after 1850 and stop lists of their series organs. Since Cavaillé-Coll assigned drawing numbers for each chest constructed and could identify most of his stock stoplists with their windchest drawing numbers, one is immediately able to generate a theoretical stoplist for the majority of smaller, stock organs constructed by the firm during the 35-year period when the windchest register was maintained.<sup>28</sup>

Included in the *Tableau de Sommers* are several entries for Chest Design 586 (page 213). The following information is given in each column: Location, Length of the Chest, Depth of the Chest, Number of Section, Number of Stops, Number of Notes, Single or Double Palletbox, Windchest scale stick number, Number of drawing/Observation.<sup>29</sup> The intended destinations for organs found under drawing 586 are Campinas, Paris, and Buenos Aires.

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<sup>28</sup> Jesse Eschbach, *Aristide Cavaillé-Coll: A Compendium of known Stoplists*. (Germany: 2003).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

Figure 26: *Tableau de Sommiers*. Page 213  
Courtesy of Oberlin College Library's Special Collection

Courtesy of Oberlin College Library's Special Collection

**Original specifications****Aristide Cavaillé-Coll, Opus 589****Santa Fé, Argentina****Iglesia Inmaculada Concepción****Year of construction: 1885**

<b>Grand Orgue</b>		<b>Récit expressif</b>	
Bourdon	16'	Cor de nuit	8'
Montre	8'	Viole de Gambe	8'
Flûte harmonique	8'	Voix celeste	8'
Salicional	8'	Trompette	8'
Prestant	4'	Basson - Hautbois	8'
Sonnette	-	Clarion	4'
II à I			
<b>Pédale</b>		<b>Anches à Récit</b>	
Soubasse	16'		
Basse	8'		
Trompette	8'		
Clairon	4'		
I à Ped			
II à Ped			

Manual compass: C-g<sup>'''</sup>Pedal compass: C-g<sup>''</sup>

Wind pressure: 7.3 inches.

Though the organ has never undergone a major restoration during the hundred and twenty years since it was built, it remains in decent condition. Unfortunately, several careless changes have degraded the organ; in particular, the Clairon 4' was replaced with a *Voice humana* 8' of Italian origin (probably built by the firm of Locatelli). It is possible that the Clarion 4' was used for the new organ in *Iglesia del Salvador*, but extensive restoration of the Church has made that organ inaccessible at present. The good news is that the damage to Opus 589 is completely reversible since, as previously indicated, there are two identical organs built under chest design # 586 (Campinas in Brazil and Paris).



From these two organs the measures and characteristics of the pipes could be studied and, in time, a copied rank made. When the Clarion 4' was replaced, a second problem arose: the stop used to be borrowed in the pedal division, and naturally the Voice Humana was no longer a useful stop for the pedal. Therefore, today, the Clarion 4' knob in the pedal is connected to the Hautbois 8'. As soon as the Clarion is installed back in the organ, the pedal must also be re-connected to that stop as it was originally. Opus 589 has some outstanding qualities and is important in the history of organ building. It is imperative that this instrument be returned to its original state, and the job must be performed by artisans experienced in Cavaillé-Coll's work. It is always a challenge to find the proper restorer for an instrument like this, but there are people with vast training in the preservation of Romantic organs who could do justice to this treasure.

#### **THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF ARGENTINA**

The first Cavaillé-Coll organ was brought to Argentina in 1885, which is remarkable because it was also in that decade that the country's enlightenment began. Argentina's specialization in beef cattle, whose quality remains unsurpassed even today, was planned and implemented by a small group of landowners in the province of Buenos Aires between 1856 and 1900. Within the group of farmers, some surnames like Pereyra, Anchorena, and Unzué became symbols of success and even today these names are related to *estancias* or farms, as well as to the wealth and high society of Argentina. These families were the major donors not only of the instruments, but also, in many cases, of entire churches. The ladies of the household were usually the ones in charge of

dealing with gifts, not only by providing the funds but also by managing the details of each project and always looking for goods of the highest quality possible to give. Yearly shopping trips to Europe to look for a specific stained glass window or an organ were part of their lives. In Paris, the Argentinean *madams* visited not only the famous churches, but also the great expositions where they probably saw and heard Cavaillé-Coll's work.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the Cavaillé-Coll firm was going through difficult financial times and they welcomed the opportunity to export instruments to Argentina. More than twenty Cavaillé-Coll Mutin organs of superb quality arrived in the *tierra de los gauchos* between 1900 and 1920; those at the *Basílicas del Sagrado Corazón, Luján, and Convento de San Francisco* (destroyed during the riots of 1955) are, historically, the most important.

### **BASÍLICA DEL SAGRADO CORAZÓN DE JESÚS**

The *Basílica del Sagrado Corazón de Jesús* is one of the most beautiful churches in the country. It was the desire of Don Leonardo Pereyra Iraola, one of the successful farm owners mentioned above, to build a church dedicated to the Sacred Heart. Unfortunately, he died without being able to do so, but his family, especially his wife Antonia, continued the task in his stead and constructed the astounding church with an attached Seminary and School in his memory. Mr. Rómulo Ayersa, an engineer and member of the family, was in charge of the project. Dedicated on August 16, 1908, the church looks like a Renaissance cathedral of Europe. Its basic dimensions measure 80 meters long by 15 meters wide by 30 meters high. The white marble for the floor, the

pews, the ornaments, paintings, stained glass windows and organ are some of the elements imported from Paris.



Figure 27: **Basílica del Sagrado Corazón, Buenos Aires (1909)**

Front view

Photo: Archivo General de la Nación

Depto. Doc. Fotográficos, Argentina.

The façade of the *Basílica del Sagrado Corazón* and the adjacent seminary (on the right) shown in the picture of figure 27 is an example of the amazing architectural work performed in Buenos Aires during the first years of the twentieth century.



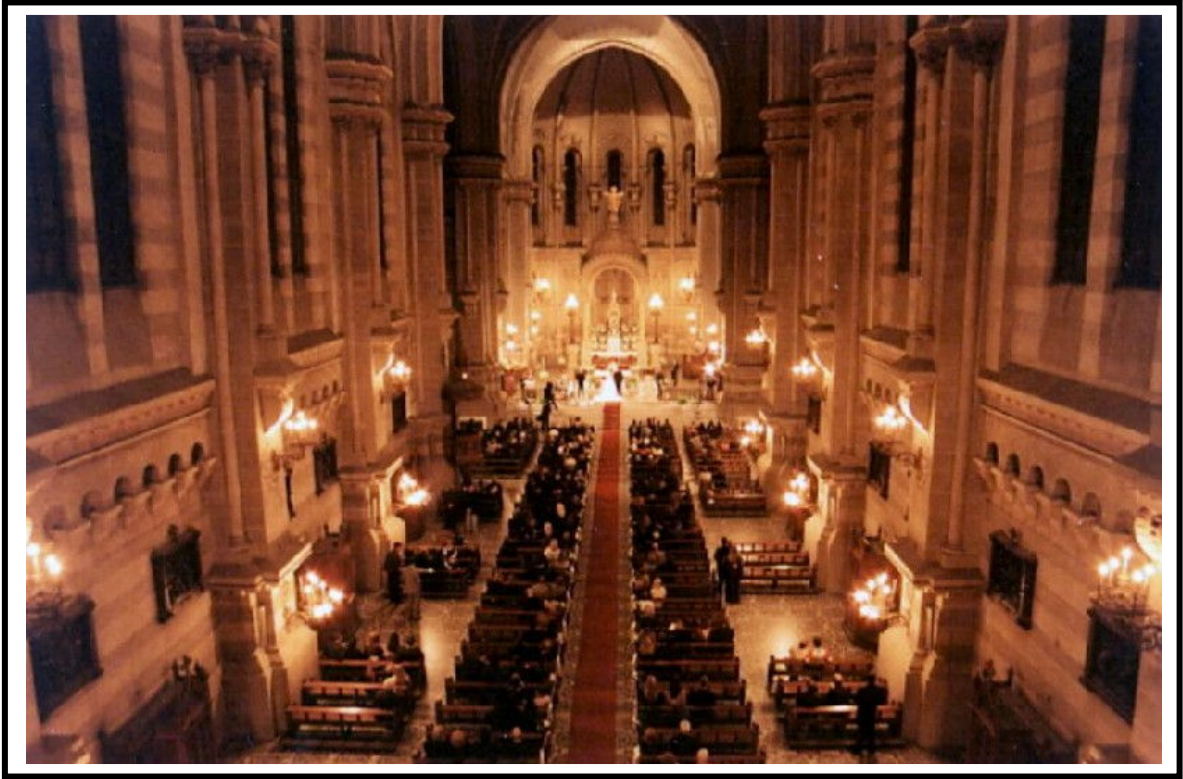


Figure 28: **Interior of the Basílica del Sagrado Corazón**

Photo: Rafael Ferreyra

The organ, Cavaillé-Coll opus 901, circa 1906, is installed in the rear gallery and divided into two sections. One question that remains unanswered regarding the instrument is why it was not finished, according to the original plan, as a three manual organ with two divisions under expression and a complete palette of colors on each of these divisions (Grand Orgue, Positif-Expressif, Récit-Expressif and Pédale); instead, the instrument was left with a three manual console, but with pipes for only two manuals (Grand-Orgue and Positif-Expressif). The mechanism and all the pipes that were going to be installed on the south side of the choir loft are missing (Récit and Pédale). The incomplete side, however, does possess the case and façade pipes (mute), but with empty

space behind the façade. It is very important to clarify here that the Barker machine was also constructed and installed for a three manual organ. The reason for the incomplete state of Opus 901 is unknown, but there are several possibilities. The first is that the ship bringing part of the organ sank and the pipes are somewhere in the Atlantic Ocean. The second is that the organ was going to be installed in the center of the gallery and, when Mr. Ayersa realized that it was going to cover an important stained glass window, he got into an argument with Mutin, the organ's builder, who then sold the Pereyra family what he had available already in the shop. This mystery can be solved as soon as paperwork, letters and other documents of Mutin's era are discovered.

Even though the instrument is unfinished, the combination of a very good organ and great acoustics makes it a unique instrument. The result is a rich and powerful sound, without losing its first class finesse. Each stop is unique and well balanced. This instrument belongs to a special group of organs in the world. It has never been modified and, therefore, is one of the few genuine examples of its type in the world.

**SPECIFICATIONS**

**Cavaillé-Coll/Mutin, Opus 901**  
**Basílica del Sagrado Corazón, Buenos Aires**  
**Year of construction: 1906**

<b>Grand Orgue</b>		<b>Positif expressif</b>	
Bourdon	16'	Diapason	8'
Montre	8'	Cor de nuit	8'
Bourdon	8'	Gambe	8'
Flûte harmonique	8'	Unda maris	8'
Violoncelle	8'	Flûte octaviante	4'
Prestant	4'	Octavin	2'
Quinte	2 <sup>2</sup> / <sub>3</sub> '	Trompette harmonique	8'
Plein jeu (4 ranks)		Basson - hautbois	8'
Tuba magna	16'	Soprano harmonique	4'
Tuba mirabilis	8'		
Suboctava II à I		Tremolo	
II à I		Anches II M	
Anches I M			
Unison I M			
<b>Pédale</b>			
Soubasse	16'	<i>(Bourdon 16' from Grand Orgue)</i>	
Bourdon	8'	<i>(Bourdon 8' from Grand Orgue)</i>	
Flûte ouverte	8'	<i>(Flûte harmonique 8 from Grand Orgue)</i>	
Violon	8'	<i>(Violoncelle 8' from Grand Orgue)</i>	
Tirasse I M (I à Ped)			
Tirasse II M (II à Ped)			

Manual compass: C-g<sup>'''</sup>  
 Pedal compass: C-f<sup>''</sup>  
 Wind pressure: 5.2 inches



Figure 29: **Cavaillé-Coll, Opus 901**

Choir loft view

Photo: David Merello

The choir loft of the Basílica del Sagrado Corazón in Buenos Aires is shown in figure 29. The divided case of the organ can clearly be appreciated. The organ, including its console, is installed in the left side section. The right side is empty of pipes, except for those mute pipes of the façade.

***GRAND ORGUES DE 32 PIEDS***

In 1923, Mutin published a list of the organs constructed by the firm. Under République Argentine, there are twenty-two instruments; three of the entries are of considerable size and are therefore listed as *Grand Orgue de 32 pieds*: Buenos Aires: *Convento de San Francisco*, *Basílica del Santísimo Sacramento*, and *Basílica de Luján*.

Of these three instruments, the only organ that has survived as a historical instrument is the organ at the *Basílica de Luján* (National Shrine). The organ at the *Convento de San Francisco* was set on fire during the riots of 1955 (Peronism party against the Church) and the one at *Santísimo Sacramento* has been transformed and downgraded during several unfortunate modernizations.

During our research in Argentina and abroad, my colleagues and I had as our major goal finding correspondence between the builders and their clients at the churches. We only found such letters in a single location: in a very important file which surfaced at *Santísimo Sacramento's* rectory containing, among other valuable documents, more than thirty letters written by Mutin. This is an important discovery because these letters contain all the necessary information regarding the organ at the Church, as well as some interesting information regarding the other two large instruments at *Luján* and *San Francisco*.

The task of choosing the builder for the organ at *Santisímo Sacramento* was taken very seriously by the persons involved in the process (clergy and the donor) to the point that a recommendation written by Charles-Marie Widor was necessary for the final decision.

Several builders were asked to submit projects including Puget (Toulouse), Goll (Switzerland), Hook (Boston) and Mutin Cavaillé-Coll (Paris). At a certain moment, a priest of the congregation from Buenos Aires requested the opinion of the organist of the Parisian church of *La Madeleine*, Monsieur Runner, regarding Goll. In time, Runner sought Charle-Marie Widor's judgment on the candidate from Switzerland.

During August of 2005, Padre Bevilacqua and I discovered a hand-written note signed by the famous composer (see figure No 30). Naturally, Widor did not have anything good to say about the builder from the neighboring country; instead, he criticized him vigorously. The following is the translation of Widor's reaction:

My dear Brunner,  
 The "Swiss" only builds vile rubbish.  
 These are not organs, but "cuckoos" for roadhouses.  
 The man is a brute; I know him.  
 To you,  
 Widor

There is no doubt that for Mutin, the installation of the organ at *Santísimo Sacramento* (largest Mutin Cavaillé-Coll in Argentina) was very special: even though the First World War had started, he made the long journey to be present for the organ's dedication. The first correspondence dates from 1908 and extends to the day of the dedication in 1915. In several of the letters found at *Santísimo Sacramento's* rectory, Mutin requested that the pastor at Luján convince the Franciscan priest, of the *Convento de San Francisco*, to transfer the final payment to him. It seems that the Franciscans were displeased with the builder because the Voix Humaine stop was not of German style. This angered Mutin and the letters convey the animosity between France and Germany

during the years preceding the War. In several instances, Mutin obsessed over trying to explain that the Voix Humaine of Cavaillé-Coll had always been better than any other in the world and was the first choice of the European organists. It is interesting to note that the organ at Luján has only one stop of German origin: Voix Humaine; it seems that the Argentineans preferred the sound of the Voix Humaine of the Walcker organs that were already in Argentina.

As previously mentioned, the riots that occurred on the feast of Corpus Christi, June 16, 1955, left part of the organ at *Convento de San Francisco* destroyed; the decline of the country could be marked from that moment. And just as appalling as the original damage is the ignorance and personal interests that caused the rebuilders of the church to discard the instrument that, as the reader can appreciate in the pictures below, was only partially damaged. During the same year, the Tamburini firm of Italy was in charge of the beginning of the major modification of the organ at Santísimo Sacramento. The Italian firm not only threw away a superb console, the pneumatic stop action, and the tracker key action, but also installed a console that does not match the instrument and does not meet any standards. The year 1955 should be remembered as the worst year in the history of organs in Argentina.



20 oct. 13 7, RUE DES S<sup>TS</sup>-PÈRES  
 Mon cher Brunet  
 Le "Suisse" ne fabrique  
 que de l'immense Camélote,  
 Ce ne sont pas des orgues, mais  
 des coucous pour amuser  
 de bonheurs.  
 L'homme est une brute;  
 de L. Carrière.  
 A vous W. Widor

Figure 30: Charles-Marie Widor's letter regarding the organ builder from Switzerland.

A translation of the above letter can be founded on page 79.



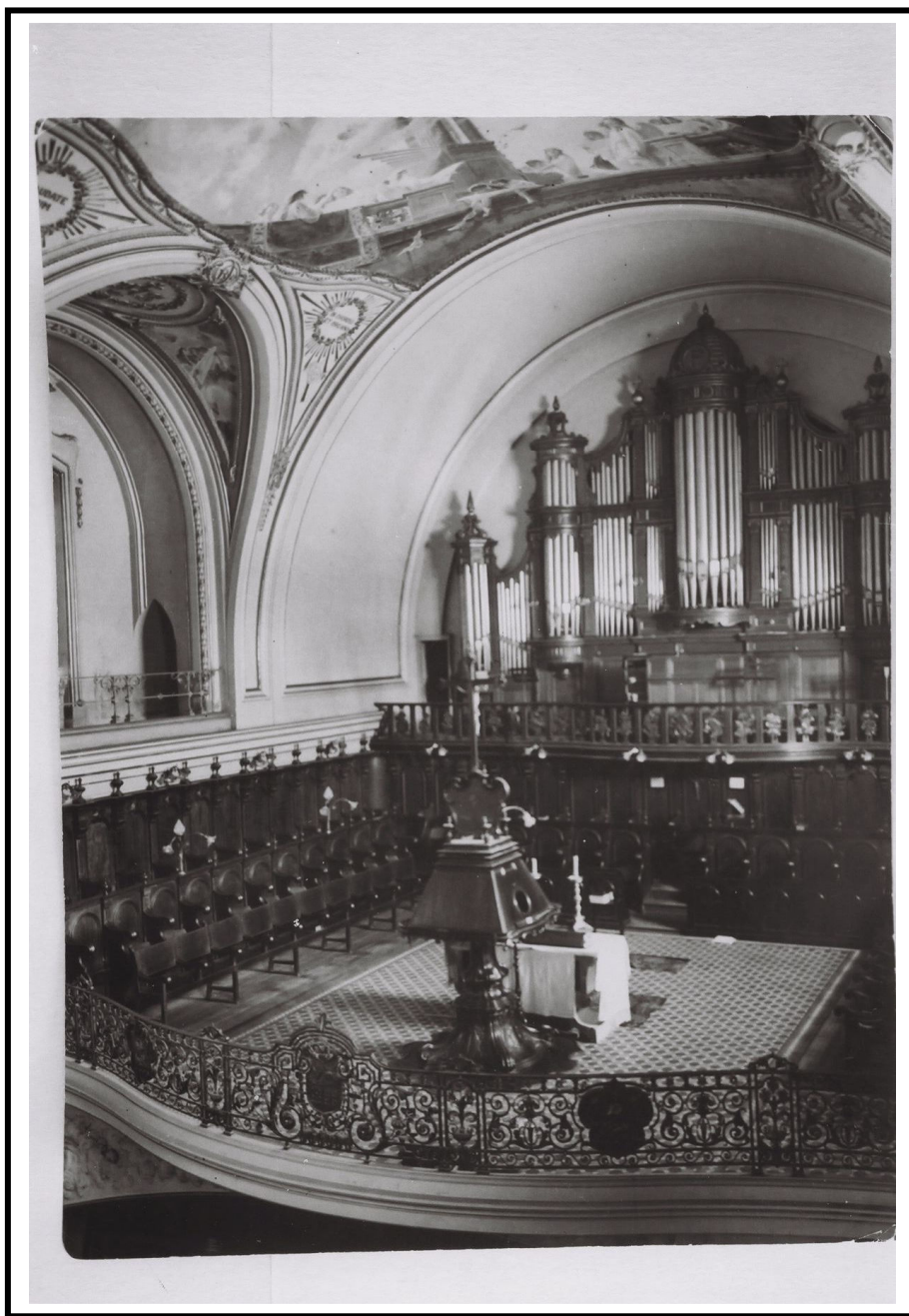


Figure 31: **Mutin organ at Convento de San Francisco, Buenos Aires.**  
Photo: Archivo General de la Nación  
Depto. Doc. Fotográficos, Argentina.

The organ, as shown in figure 31, before the damage inflicted during the riot of 1955. The instrument was installed in a choir loft.



Figure 32: **Mutin organ at Convento de San Francisco, Buenos Aires.**

Photos: Archivo General de la Nación

Depto. Doc. Fotográficos, Argentina.

As the reader can observe in the photo above, the organ at San Francisco was heavily damaged during the riots of 1955; however rebuilding could have been possible.

The console, mechanics and some pipes were intact, while some metal pipes were melted due to the fire in the church.

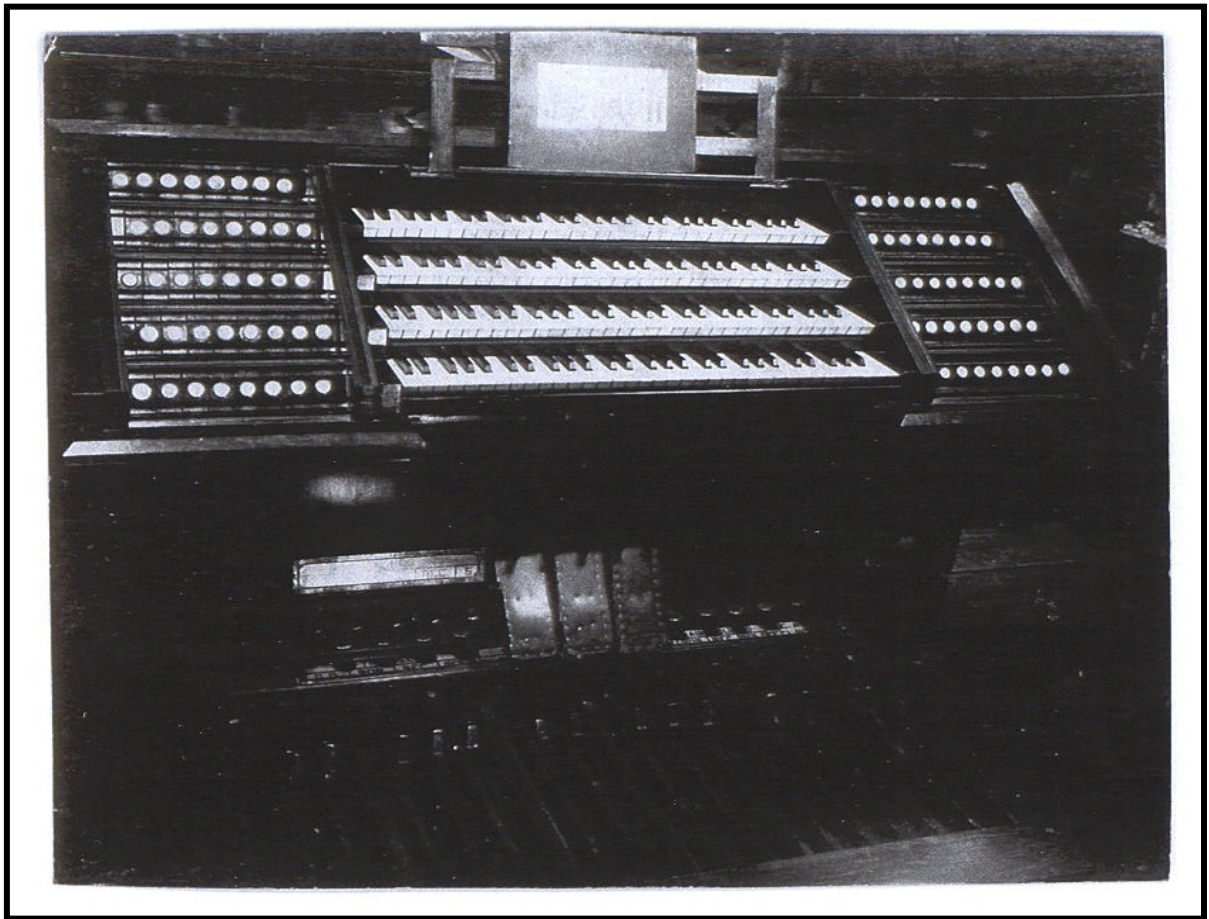


Figure 33: **Original Console at Santísimo Sacramento.**

Front view

Photo: Padre José Bevilacqua. 1945

The Mutin console shown above is another of the big losses for the organ world in Argentina. It was replaced by a “modern” Italian-built console that does not do justice to the otherwise superb organ.





Figure 34: **Console at Santísimo Sacramento built by Tamburini in 1955**

Front View

Photo: Ezequiel Menéndez. March 25, 1995

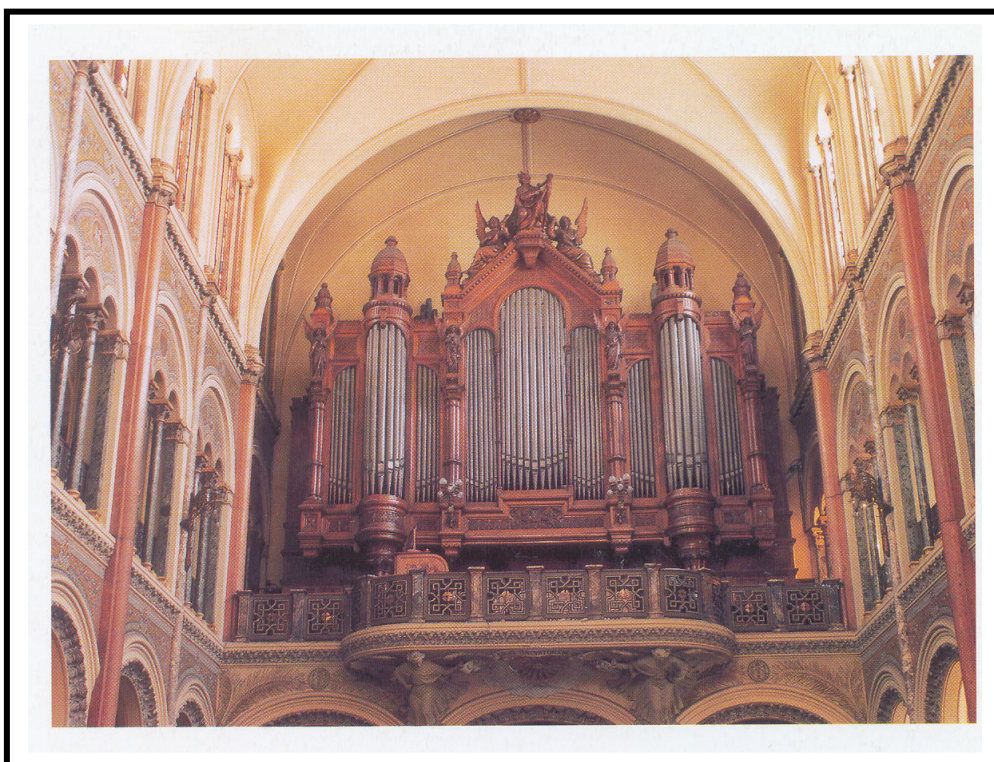


Figure 35: **Façade of Cavallé-Coll Mutin at Santísimo Sacramento, Buenos Aires.**

Front view

Photo: Ezequiel Menéndez

Due to space limitations and the nature of this study, the author cannot explore here all of the details in the file with the letters from *Santísimo Sacramento*. For further study of the material, a copy will be available at the *Biblioteca Nacional de Buenos Aires*, The American Organ Archives of the Organ Historical Society, Yale University Library and Oberlin College Library. I encourage the reader especially to relish the letter describing Mr. Walcker's visit to Cavaillé-Coll's factory in Paris.

## BASÍLICA DE LUJÁN

The history of the National Shrine of Argentina, the *Basílica de Luján*, is full of mysticism and devotion. The Virgen of Luján is *la patrona y protectora de Argentina y de los Argentinos*. Luján is a very small town, a special place that most South Americans know and visit in *peregrinajes* several times during their lives. Luján can be compared to Santiago de Compostela, or to many other places around the world where a great number of faithful people gather every day. My mother used to tell me the story of when she was a child, her grandmother, a strong Italian lady, used to rent a bus once a year and bring the family to Luján; but they had to pray the rosary during the whole trip from La Plata to Luján (a four to five hour ride each way).

Before the construction of the actual church, there had been several chapels where *la imagen de la Virgen de Luján* was protected.<sup>30</sup> A French priest by the name of Jorge María Salvaire, of the order of La Salette and a missionary in Argentina, was the man who, following a promise he had made to the Virgen of Luján, moved forward the construction of the enormous Basílica (with its cornerstone placed on 1887). For a study of the organ at the Shrine, it is important to bear in mind several crucial facts in the life of Father Salvaire: he studied in the Seminary of Paris, then was ordained at Notre Dame (Paris) in 1871, went to Argentina as a missionary, and returned to Paris in 1886 to order several objects for the future Basílica.

Unfortunately, Father Salvaire died in 1899. Despite his death, he remained pivotal in the building process because he left many of the details for the project already

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<sup>30</sup> For the history of Luján see: Juan Antonio Presas, *Anales de Nuestra Señora de Luján* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Dunker, 2002).

planned. Although it is difficult to prove, it is possible that he had spoken with Aristide Cavaillé-Coll regarding the organ for the Basílica on his trip of 1886. Due to the fact that it took a very long time to build the Church, almost twenty years for the first phase, it is also likely that the organ was finished and ready for shipment at the factory a long time before the Basilica of Luján was in a condition to house it. This organ is a Cavaillé-Coll Mutin, mentioned by Mutin in one of the letters from *Santísimo Sacramento*, but it could be that Aristide had some involvement with the design. Since the organ at Luján is similar to the organ at the Moscow Conservatory (a Mutin with some of Aristide's involvement) these two organs could be considered "organs of the transition period". Both of these instruments also have *Trumpettes en Chamade* which are played from the Recit and are installed on top of that division, as well as similar specifications.

The organ at Luján is in original condition and is probably one of the few instruments of this period that has not been changed. Its value therefore extends beyond Argentina to make it one of the most treasured organs in the world.



Figure 36: **Cavallé-Coll Mutin at the National Shrine of Luján. Buenos Aires.**  
Choir loft view

Photo: José Luis Alessandrini. September 2005.

The picture above shows the choir façade of the Mutin Cavallé-Coll organ at the National Shrine of Argentina, the *Baílica de Nuestra Señora de Luján*. It is clear that Mutin was very aware of the rose window, since he designed the organ with towers on both extremes: the instrument is an integral part of the architectural design.



As noted earlier, the organ had to wait a long time for the Basílica to be ready, and finally, on June 11, 1911, the beginning of the installation was announced in the local Catholic newspaper “*La Perla del Plata*”:

It will not be long before we could announce the installation of the magnificent organ, whose pieces (parts) are at the moment deposited in the lateral chapels of the basilica. The worker that the organ factory from Paris has sent is already here and the work will begin immediately.<sup>31</sup>

Monsignor José León Gallardo was a man of great wealth who donated not only the instrument for Luján but also two churches and their organs by Mutin: the Argentinean church in Rome *Chiesa de la Doloma* and *Parroquia San Francisco Solano*. He was born in Buenos Aires in 1871, where he became a lawyer following the expectations of his rich family. In 1894, he traveled to Europe and entered the Schola Cantorum of Paris, where he studied under D’Indy and Guilmant. In 1908, he was ordained a priest. Monsignor Gallardo was a great composer. He loved good music and was pivotal in the organ project for Luján; according to the letters from *Santísimo Sacramento*, the organ for Luján cost 120,000 Francs.

There are no archives of the organ in the church, but it is known that for many years it was played by a great organist who was brought from Italy to become the *Maestro de Capilla*, *Maestro* Juan Milanese. Unfortunately, the organ became unplayable fifty years ago and has been silent since. Due in part to the fact that there is another organ in the Basilica and to the changes imposed by Vatican II, the clergy may have thought

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<sup>31</sup> La Perla del Plata. June 11, 1911.

that there was no need for the restoration of the organ. It is fortunate that this instrument was silenced, since, as a result, the organ has survived in its original state.

As an anecdote, at that time, the organ curator and his friends in the government decided that it was time to electrify the old organ and, naturally, to change the console. While bringing the historic inappropriate Laukhuff console to the choir loft, the French Pastor saw the workers and inquired about the new machine. Here is how the story has been orally transmitted for many years.

Pastor: What is that?

Workers: This is the modern new console for the organ.

Pastor: Where is it from?

Workers: Germany.

Pastor: As long as I am the Pastor I do not want anything German in my Church.

The “modern” console was left in the stairway and is still there. This occurred during World War II, and the French Pastor may never have realized how important his decision would be for the preservation of the Cavaillé-Coll Mutin.



Figure 37: **Laukhuff Console**

Photo: Marcelo Ramos. 1995

Miraculously the console shown above was never installed in the organ at the Basilica. That change would have destroyed the character of the Cavaillé-Coll Mutin forever. The original console is in perfect condition and it is a treasure and a very important part of this historical instrument.

The specification found on the next page is copied from the designations on the stop knobs. Mutin's use of the Castellano language is very unusual. This type of nomenclature appeared also in at least one more organ by Mutin in Buenos Aires housed at the *Basílica San Nicolás de Bari*.

## SPECIFICATIONS

**Cavaillé-Coll/Mutin, Opus 899**  
**Luján, Argentina**  
**Basílica de Nuestra Señora de Luján**

<b>Grand Orgue</b>		<b>Récit expressif</b>	
Muestra	16'	Diapason	8'
Bordón	16'	Bordón	8'
Muestra	8'	Flauta travesera	8'
Bordón	8'	Viola de Gamba	8'
Flauta armónica	8'	Voz celeste	8'
Violoncello	8'	Flauta octavante	4'
Prestant	4'	Octavín	2'
Quinta	2 2/3'	Lleno (3 ranks)	
Dublet	2'	Tuba Magna	16' <i>Chamade</i>
Lleno 4 ranks.		Fagot	16' <i>Chamade</i>
Corneta 5 ranks	8'	Tuba Mirabilis	8'
Bombarda	16'	Trompeta Real	8'
Trompeta	8'	Fagot - Oboe	8'
Clarín	4'	Voix humaine (s)	8'
		Trompa armónica	4' <i>Chamade</i>
		Corno armónico	4'
Octava grave à G.O.		Octava grave à Récit	
Positif à G.O.		Octava aguda à Récit	
Octava grave Récit à G.O.		Lengüetería à Récit	
Récit à G.O.		Llamada a la Chamade	
Anches à G.O.		Anulador Unísono al Récit	
Unísono à G.O.			
<b>Positif</b>		<b>Pédale</b>	
Principal	8'	Quinta	32'
Trompa de Noche	8'	Contrabajo	16'
Jubal	8'	Contras Pedal	16'
Salicional	8'	Subas	16'
Unda Maris	8'	Flauta	16'
Flauta Dulce	4'	Bajo	8'
Nazardo	2 2/3'	Bordón	8'
Flautino	2'	Violín	8'
		Flauto	4'
		Bombarda	16'
		Trompeta	8'
		Tirasse G.O.	
		Tirasse Positif	
		Tirasse Récit	
		Anches à Pédale	
Manual compass: C-g <sup>'''</sup>			
Pedal compass: C-f'			
Wind pressure 4.7 inches.			

Today, the organ at the *Basílica de Luján* remains one of the most important instruments in the Americas. A significant plan is underway to restore the whole church starting with the outside (which has been completed), the inside, and finally, the organ itself. The hope is that a builder with experience in this kind of preservation will take the task seriously and return this glorious instrument to its original splendor.

The final chapter of this study will take the reader to the British instruments found in Argentina. Compared with the number of French or German organs in Argentina, the number of British instruments is very small; however, these organs are very important for the study of *Historical Pipe Organs in Argentina*.