

After 17-year effort, \$2 million organ being installed in IU's Auer Hall

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A new pipe organ in Auer Hall of Indiana's Jacobs School of Music has been a long time coming, and includes parts of another organ project that began — and stalled — years ago.

Chris Young, IU organ professor, said bringing the organ to IU has been a long process, spanning more than a decade. Gloucester, Mass.-based organ builder C.B. Fisk Inc. has been contracted to design and build the Seward Organ, named for two donors. "The organ's specialty will likely be late 19th- and 20th-century music," Young said. "A more modern tinge."

Janette Fishell, chairwoman of IU's organ department, said the organ, which is also called the Opus 135, is just another "jewel in the crown of IU." She said students and faculty will be able to communicate "incredible music" to an audience with an instrument of international stature.

"An organist student has two teachers — the human teacher and the instrument," Fishell said. "The instrument is an important part of the learning process. One cannot overstate what this instrument will mean."

Pieces of the organ were moved into Auer Hall on June 1 and construction is expected to last five to six weeks, Young said. But it will take eight months to work with every pipe and shape its sounds.

The \$2 million pipe organ consists of 3,945 pipes, three manuals (keyboards) and one pedalboard.

Young and Fishell were able to breathe a sigh of relief when C.B. Fisk and the Seward Organ arrived. For about 17 years, the Jacobs School has been struggling to get an organ installed in Auer Hall, Young said.

In 1992, a contract was signed for Rosales Organ Builders to install an organ in the hall. But Young said the builder did not manage his resources well. That contract with Rosales cost about \$800,000.

"As the project got on, we discovered that what we asked for wasn't what we'd gotten," Young said. "There were so many problems both from his financial perspective and aspects of the organ design that we felt we had to cease at that point."

In early 2006, the Jacobs School looked to C.B. Fisk to fix the organ in Auer Hall. Gwyn Richards, dean of the Jacobs School of Music, said the decision to go with C.B. Fisk was due to the company's ability and willingness to use many of the pipes and casing originally built for the Rosales organ.

"It was a bumpy ride to get us here," Fishell said. "It never came to full fruition (with Rosales), but we're looking at that as an opportunity because it gave us a chance to work with the Fisk firm."

Richards said IU is especially grateful to donors Maidee Seward and son John Seward, for whom the organ was named and who have "patiently waited for us to find a way to build one of Indiana's finest pipe organs."

A public dedication recital for the Seward Organ is planned for next year on April 30, which will be the first public hearing of the organ.

The Seward Organ is being constructed in Auer Hall on Indiana University's campus. Construction is expected to last five to six weeks, while tuning will take about eight months. Dedication for the pipe organ is scheduled for April 2010.
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Jason Fouser, organ builder for C.B. Fisk Inc., straps a rope to a pipe to lift it in place. The Seward Organ, or Opus 135, was moved to Auer Hall on June 1.
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