

The Organ

Remembering Gerhard Krapf: A History Behind St. Andrew's 'New' Organ by Jeff Charis-Carlson

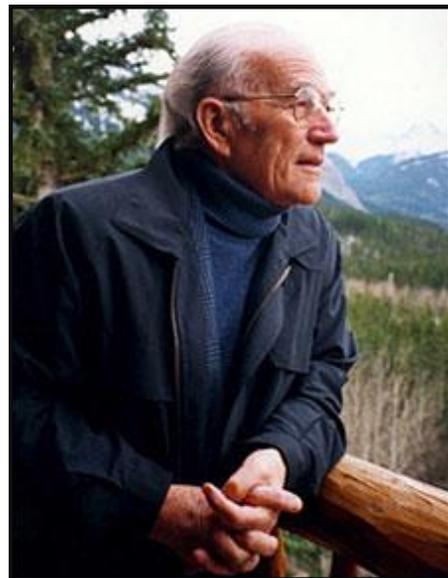
Back in 2013, the University of Iowa presented St. Andrew with an amazing opportunity: To salvage a historic organ from a flood-damaged building and thus save a nearly \$2 million instrument from being sold for scrap.

To the broader Iowa City community, the offer seemed primarily a chance to preserve **the Clapp Organ** — the informal name for the instrument that had been housed in the university's Clapp Recital Hall since 1972. The hall had been named for the composer Phillip Greeley Clapp who directed the university's music department decades earlier.

To the organ-building community worldwide, the instrument was known officially as **Casavant Opus 3105 (1971)**, referring to the Canadian-based company that designed and installed the organ in a brand new Voxman Music Building located along the Iowa River. By 2013, however, Opus 3105 — an organ that had accompanied and been played by musicians from around the globe — had been **sitting silent in an empty room for the five years** since the river flooded in 2008.

For St. Andrew, relocating and restoring the Clapp Organ offered a way **to weave the congregation's past into its future plans for a new building** on the western edge of town. And with Opus 3105 now almost fully installed in the church's new sanctuary, the congregation has a chance to reflect on the legacy of the person most directly responsible for the organ's very existence: **Gerhard Krapf**, the German-born musician, scholar and St. Andrew elder who arrived in Iowa City in 1961 to start an organ program at the University.

That's why, in conjunction with next month's dedication events, the St. Andrew Organ Team will start referring to this instrument as the **Krapf Organ**.



Gerhard Krapf, 1924-2008



Gerhard Krapf, a German-born musician and scholar, directed the University of Iowa's Organ Department from its founding in 1961 until 1977. At the time he was overseeing the installation of the new Casavant organ in Clapp Recital Hall, he also served as an elder on the Session of what was then called St. Andrew United Presbyterian Church.

photo by David Engen

It was Krapf who persuaded University of Iowa administrators and state lawmakers in the 1960s to provide the public funds needed to purchase a recital-quality instrument for the program. It was also Krapf who insisted that this new instrument be designed according to the principles of the Organ Reform Movement — using centuries-old tracker technology, rather than electronic signals, to physically connect each key on the manuals with the stops on the pipes.

While Krapf was overseeing the final design and installation of the new UI organ, he also was serving as an elder at what was then called St. Andrew United Presbyterian Church. After being elected to the Session in 1970, Krapf persuaded his fellow elders to set a special meeting with the congregation to approve the purchase of a new organ for St. Andrew. The meeting was later canceled, however, because a budget deficit delayed such plans for another decade.

There was no way for Krapf to know at the time that the instrument he was bringing into existence as part of his day job — an organ suitable for playing music from a variety of times and places — would eventually be used to accompany the congregation of his church home.

The history of this organ also reminds us how Krapf, during his time in Iowa, passed on to hundreds of students the inspiring — but painful — lesson he learned firsthand while coming of age under the rise of the Adolf Hitler: **That sacred music has power to change the world, especially during those times when the world seems to have gone mad.**

To be the body of Christ, living in Christ's love, serving as Christ served.

As Krapf grew up in the Germany of the 1920s and 1930s, he learned much from the example set by his father, a pastor who was a member of the Confessing Church that arose in opposition to the Nazis. But Krapf also credits his musical education with strengthening his faith and helping him endure as his nation fell under the sway of totalitarianism.

It was Krapf's experience serving at 15 and 16 as the substitute organist in his father's church — playing for regular worship services as well as during the memorial services for parishioners who didn't come home — that taught him how **to hold on to his humanity** after he was drafted at 17, sent to the eastern front, captured by the Russians and held as prisoner of war until 1948.

Within five years of being repatriated to his home town of Offenburg, Krapf set sail to the United States to continue the organ studies that had been delayed by the war. Less than a decade later, he arrived in Iowa City with a young family in tow, ready to put his musical and theological vision into practice.

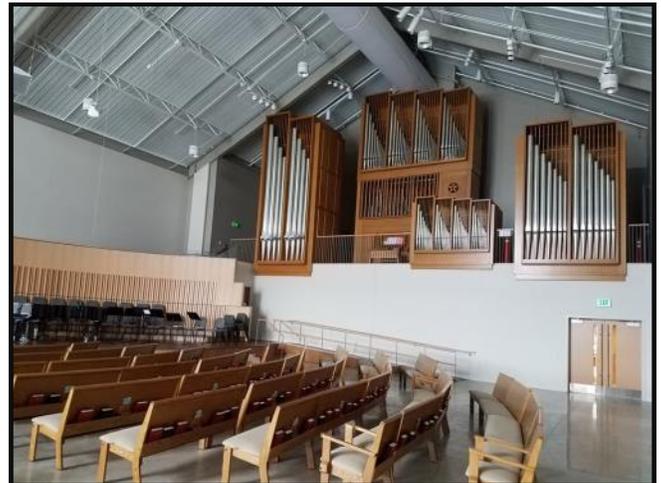
Throughout his long career, Krapf stressed that the sacramental role played by a church musician was every bit as important as the sermon delivered by a pastor.

He considered himself to be part of the ministerial profession.

It was Krapf's commitment to teaching and mentoring that led to Opus 3105's becoming one of the most **continuously played organs** among the thousands installed by Casavant. The instrument required an overhaul in the late 1990s after nearly three decades of heavy use by University of Iowa faculty, students, and guest performers.

Krapf left Iowa City in 1977 to begin a new organ program at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Canada. While there, he again worked with Casavant to construct a new recital-quality, tracker instrument. He died in 2008, less than a month after the Iowa City flood.

Despite Krapf's absence, the many connections he helped forge in Iowa City continued. When the Kelting family offered St. Andrew a large donation in 1980 for the installation of a new organ, church leaders worked with Casavant to design an instrument to fit the new sanctuary at 1300 Melrose Avenue. That instrument — which is about one-third the size of the Krapf Organ — was sold in 2015 to St. Paul Lutheran Church in Aurelia, Iowa.



From 1972 until 2008, University of Iowa students, faculty, and guest musicians made the Krapf Organ one of the most heavily used organs ever used by the Canadian-based Casavant Frères. After floodwaters inundated the Voxman Music Building and Clapp Recital Hall in 2008, the organ sat silent for five years. Starting in 2013, staff and volunteers from St. Andrew Presbyterian Church worked with Dobson Pipe Organ Builders to remove and restore the instrument. It was installed in St. Andrew's new sanctuary in late 2017 and was played in worship for the first time on Easter Sunday 2018.

And over the decades, St. Andrew's organists have continued to build on the church's connections with Krapf's successor at University of Iowa, Delbert Disselhorst. Shelley Moorman-Stahlman completed her Doctor of Music degree while serving as St. Andrew's first full-time director of music, Ed Moore taught classes at the university while on staff at St. Andrew, and Matthew Penning's relationship with University of Iowa organists made St. Andrew an attractive new home for a well-used and well-loved instrument.

Given Krapf's musicality and ministry mindset, it's fitting that the instrument he helped conceive was used in active worship for the first time on Easter Sunday 2018. And as St. Andrew now prepares to re-dedicate **Casavant Opus 3105 (1971)**, it's equally fitting to start referring to the organ informally by the name of the **teacher, mentor, scholar, war-survivor, and worship-leader** whose ideals can be seen (and heard) in every one of its 3,796 pipes.

ROLL OF ELDERS		
Enter date of each re-election in column four, thus keeping the record of the individuals period of service on the one line.		
1 NAME	2 CHURCH IN WHICH ORDAINED	3 Date of Ordination
Hillery, George (Jane)	Chapkl Hill Presbyterian - Lexington, Ky.	
Johnson, Mrs. Wallace	St. Andrew United Presbyterian	Jan. 25, 1970
Krapf, Gerhard	St. Andrew United Presbyterian	Jan. 25, 1970
Snider, Bill	St. Andrew United Presbyterian	Jan. 25, 1970
Trumpe, Richard	St. Andrew United Presbyterian	Jan. 25, 1970
Hoffman, William	St. Andrew United Presbyterian (Installed only)	Jan. 24, 1971
Over, John	St. Andrew United Presbyterian	Jan. 24, 1971
Huster, Mrs. William (Mary)	St. Andrew United Presbyterian	Jan. 24, 1971
Huson, Mrs. James (Jane)	St. Andrew United Presbyterian	Jan. 24, 1971
St. Galen	St. Andrew United Presbyterian	Jan. 24, 1971

Gerhard Krapf served on the St. Andrew Session from 1970-72. He left Iowa City in 1977 to start a new organ program at the University of Alberta in Edmonton.

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