

“Opus 17” for St Margaret’s Church, Annapolis

Marshall & Ogletree was founded nearly 30 years ago by organists Douglas Marshall and David Ogletree, with a goal to produce digital organs to compete with the sound quality of pipe organs. Their organs are widely admired for their craftsmanship, innovation and excellence. Individuality is a hallmark, with each of their custom instruments uniquely designed for each customer. Each M&O instrument has distinct features which separate it from every other organ in the world, including other M&O instruments.

The Organ Committee was impressed with the M&O “Opus 17” proposal, a state-of-the-art customized digital instrument with a new console to fit the aesthetic of St Margaret’s historic sanctuary, a speaker array hidden from view that would immediately improve ensemble and congregational singing, and a necessary detailed palate of sounds required for the musical repertoire offered at St Margaret’s. Some of the unique details of the console include solid-wood paneling and carvings designed to fit the aesthetic of the sanctuary, a solid mahogany interior finish, solid wood English keyboards made of wood, ebony and ivory (not plastic), and an integrated console dolly with concealed wheels for easy console movement and positioning. Regarding the speakers, they are currently placed in the chancel corners and above the altar and north transept. This placement provides inadequate support for singing throughout the sanctuary, and the small number of speakers creates a very narrow sound array. Additionally, they have become visually and aurally unappealing over time. New placement would improve upon this, with a greater number of speakers placed to provide a broader sound for adequate support for singing throughout the sanctuary, housed in custom cabinetry to fit the sanctuary aesthetic without compromising limited sanctuary space. M&O’s technological capabilities are second to none. Other digital builders have remained steady or in some cases become substandard, this despite technology improving with the times. Technologically, M&O’s exclusive computer and hardware features include alternate stops with real time digital screen displays showing customized lists of additional voices. This is unique in that the instrument has a palate of additional sounds without compromising the size of the console. Usually, the more sounds an organ has, the larger the console. Proprietary to M&O Opus instruments are couplers that allow the organist to group sounds together from anywhere on the instrument with a single control. This cannot be accomplished with any pipe organ or any other digital organbuilder. Also unique are chamber sounds that mimic every detail of a pipe organ’s sound, including sounds of the blower, chests, stop actions, tremolos, swell shade motors, etc.

With M&O’s “Opus 17,” St Margaret’s will be home to a world-class, state-of-the-art custom digital instrument with endless capabilities that will be satisfying to play. In addition to enhancing our music ministry, it will serve as an additional vehicle for outreach, facilitating and hosting collaborative community events such as worship services, hymn sings and workshops for all ages, in addition to events to introduce the church organ to children and youth. Further, St Margaret’s can be proud to host recitals and invite organ teachers to use our space and instrument to teach, practice, perform and host recitals.