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## Let the Music Play: The Saint Mary's Organ

By Sophie Braccini



Brother Martin inside the instrument Photo Sophie Braccini

musicians to make a personal selection and play here."

The de Vos recital will be on Saturday, November 12, at 8:00p.m. in the Chapel at St. Mary's College, 1928 St. Mary's Road, Moraga. It is free and open to the public.

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Rudy de Vos does not believe that organ music is solemn and only liturgical, and in fact the organist makes a point to include profane, if not humorous, pieces in the concerts he offers to the public. The 30-year old South African musician, who was recently appointed Director of Music for the Cathedral of Christ the Light that was dedicated a year ago in Oakland, will demonstrate this philosophy on November 21st when he plays the organ in the Chapel at St. Mary's College.

"This organ is a wonderful, eclectic instrument that can play a wide range of music," explains de Vos, "in this concert there will be substance for those who appreciate the baroque and early classical sounds with Bach and Gluck and more modern organ creations with Tournemire and Joseph Bonnet, among others."

Brother Martin agrees with de Vos regarding the excellence of the Saint Mary's instrument. Martin teaches at Saint Mary's and has been the College's organist and choir director since 1995. "We are incredibly lucky to possess this organ," he explains, "This instrument was originally constructed in 1856 in New York by Henry Erben for the Calvary Presbyterian church in San Francisco. At the time, it took the organ two months to travel coast to coast by boat, weathering Cape Horn," says Martin.

The Presbyterian congregation used the organ for many years but received a donation, in 1928, to construct a new one. "At the time, Saint Mary's chapel was being erected and it was a perfect opportunity; we ended up with a gem," states Martin, who believes that Saint Mary's is home to one of the top four instruments in the Bay Area. "It was completely renovated ten years ago by Austin Organs Inc. in Hartford, Connecticut, and to the original 44 sets of pipes were added 21 more."

The quality of the wood and metal that was originally used is such that little maintenance is needed and the original pipes still endure. "The core of the organ you see today is still made of the original wood pipes that constituted the instrument," says Martin, "and the facade is the original XIX century wood structure." De Vos is very fond of the original pipes as well. "Some of these original pipes constitute the 'flute' range of the instrument," he says, the sound is just beautiful and will shine particularly in the Gluck piece that I will be playing on the 21st."

The rest of the 3500 pipes that constitute the organ will be tuned for the evening, a small job of just a few hours, according to Martin, and the acoustics of the Chapel will do them justice. "I play this instrument during mass on Sunday and for religious ceremonies such as marriages or funerals, and special occasions" says Martin, "and I organize about three concerts a year to where I invite other