

# The American Organist Magazine

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VOX HUMANA: A visit from the tuner

With special apologies to Clement Clarke Moore and with affection and gratitude to those hundreds of organ technicians who are tuning thousands upon thousands of ranks this season...

**T**was the night before Christmas, and all through the church  
All creatures were singing, and from the high perch  
There I was playing a merry old din,  
Awaiting the service that soon would begin.

The choir was comfy all there in their seats  
While runs of sixteenth-notes they kept on the beats;  
The singers in red robes, and I in my suit,  
Had just settled in for the big Christmas toot.

When up the in chambers the came such a noise,  
I strained to keep playing and not loose my poise.  
A pause in E-flat... soon ears did detect,  
A cipher on E on the Lieblich Gedeckt!

A nave full of worshippers there down below,  
What now could I do, neither where could I go?  
When what did my eyes glance outside the window,  
The truck of the tuner! We hit it. Bingo!

The little old tuner, so crafty and dear,  
Had stopped by the tavern to drink up some cheer.  
A tenor sent I, just as quick as a bee,  
To fetch the old fellow to silence the E.

No Skinner, or Möller, or Schlicker, or Austin,  
In New York, or LA, or Dallas, or Boston,  
Had ever tripped up our technician so bright.  
So music this Christmas would turn out alright!

As choristers sang their motets all alone,  
On the organ that E continued to drone.  
But suddenly up to the choir loft flew,  
The tuner, the tenor, and lots of tools too!

And all the while waving my arms in three-four,  
I gestured the tuner toward chambers' small door.  
And e'en as I finished the Palestrina,  
He'd pulled out his chisel, and cones, and reamer!

Perhaps he'd not sized up my very real needs.  
"A cipher," I said, "not revoicing the reeds!"  
"Oh that," he replied, "is as simple as sin.  
But tell me first, please, just what key are we in?"

"What matter?" said I, not catching the trick,  
My mind was on Christmas, and not all that quick.  
"The Rutter's in D-flat, the first hymn's in G,  
The mass is F major, the postlude's in D."

"I'll tell you why maestro, it sometimes is best,  
To swap a few pipes than fix a big chest.  
A magnet, a valve, a leather, or pouch,  
These things mean tough work and make me a grouch."

"But you play your tunes, and if I know just when,  
I'll help with a carol, or fugue, or Amen.  
If you need a V chord, a seventh I'll add.  
Trust me, I've done it. My method's not bad."

My ears were astonished, as pipes he did swap,  
Arpeggios, trills, not a note did he drop.  
The choir sang lovely. The organ did shine.  
"Silent Night" was so sweet. The Widor went fine.

So mass got done right with music so thrilling,  
We all gave up thanks the tuner was willing.  
As packed he his tools, he turned to rejoice,  
"HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO ALL... and I'll send the invoice!"

- Haig Mardirosian