

Antique Organ Romance  
-- at Bethany UMC, July 14th

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Three antique reed organs that are vintage 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Trios performed on them by leading church musicians of the Bay Area.

That's in store for Noe Valley residents and others on Sunday, July 14, at 3 pm. Two of the instruments are the property of Bethany United Methodist Church, where a concert will be held at 1270 Sanchez Street (at Clipper).

The concert is the idea of Michael Hendron, president of the Reed Organ Society – who has been searching repertoire composed for them since he was a teenager, he says. He has presented concerts at San Francisco's Grace Cathedral and Mission Dolores. Joining him in July will be musicians Matthew Verona, organist at Stockton Christian Science Church and harpist for Opera Modesto, and Mark Bruce, former organist and music director at Trinity Episcopal Church in San Jose.

Reed organs, Hendron explains, were built in Europe and North America roughly from the 1840s to the 1940s. Their sound is produced (contrasted with pipe organs) by small brass reeds. One type is a melodian, which the *Noe Valley Voice* reported on in 2014 after one had been sitting at Bethany for years in disrepair – a leftover of the merging of two Methodist churches in San Francisco. It had been brought here from Buffalo NY in 1866 so a church, just after the city was founded, could have *any* organ. That organ was restored by George Lipp and Jim Tyler.

The other Bethany antique organ is called a harmonium, built probably in Paris about 1860. But how it also wound up at Bethany, across the Atlantic no less, is today a mystery, though it, too, had been sitting lonesome in the old Bethany basement prior to the church's reconstruction in 2012. A harmonium has pressure bellows, pumped by both feet, whereas a melodeon has section bellows, pumped by only one foot, Hendron related.

And then, for the July concert, there is a third organ – a second harmonium – that the three church organists will bring along. It has four ranks of reeds, is larger, and has bigger sound. It originated in Liverpool and was found in barn in the 1980s by an Englishman who brought it to California. Tyler restored it. It is one of only two such organs that the Reed Organ Society knows of.

Hendron will play all three reed organs. There will be duets on the harmoniums. Bethany's main piano played each week – the old Steinway – gets in the act at some point. The program will be of Romantic music (1860s-1920s) – American, French, English, German.

To hear and see some reed organs being played before July, go to YouTube (Mustel 1887).