

The bust located below the center tower of the façade is Hermann Kotschmar, a beloved Portland organist and music teacher, who died in 1908. The organ was donated in his memory.

Cyrus H. K. Curtis gave the organ to the City of Portland in 1912. It was one of the earliest organs in the U.S. to be designated a “municipal organ.”

The organ is No. 323 out of nearly 2,800 organs built by the Austin Organ Company of Hartford, CT. Each Austin Organ keeps its number forever.

The organ cost \$30,000 in 1912; its 2014 replacement value is between \$4 and \$5 million. The 2012-14 renovation cost \$2.5 million.

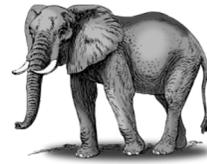


The organ was built in 1912, enlarged in 1927 and again in 2001. It was moved during auditorium renovations in 1968 and 1995. In 2012 it was removed for a complete professional renovation.

The auditorium’s main organ chamber is 60 feet long, 16 feet wide, and 40 feet tall – large enough to hold about 6 tractor-trailers.

The organ weighs 50 tons, about the same as 8 full-grown elephants, or 4 school buses.

The organ’s windchest is 9 feet tall, 7 feet wide, and 54 feet long – large enough for approximately 50 people to fit inside (even when the organ is playing).



Only 12 of the organ’s 191 façade pipes actually speak; they are in the center tower.

The organ’s 7,101 pipes would stretch for roughly 3.6 miles if they were laid out end to end. They are arranged in 104 ranks, and played from 225 stop knobs (plus 14 extras for future additions) on the organ console. There are 5,554 pipes behind the façade.

The longest pipe is 32 feet; the shortest is less than 1 inch.



The organ is tuned only once per year, but a spot check happens before each concert.

The organ is made up of 7 divisions: five are located behind the stage, and two are above the ceiling in the rear of the auditorium. These are called the Antiphonal and Echo divisions. They have 1,547 pipes that project sound from behind the audience, about six stories above the orchestra seats.

The organist can change the volume of each of the divisions with one of 5 large expression pedals that control “swell shades,” which look like big Venetian blinds.



A 25-horsepower blower supplies air to most of the instrument by pressurizing the air chest. An additional 1-horsepower blower provides extra “boost” to the largest pipes.

When the blower is activated, the air pressure inside the windchest is equivalent to that of an airplane during the last 7,000 feet of descent.



Pipes are “played” when “actions” open to allow air from the pressurized windchest to flow into them. The manuals (keyboards) control the actions through many miles of wires. During the 2012-14 renovation, the wiring consoles were reduced from two full walls of circuits to two circuit boxes, one at each end of the windchest.

The console has 5 manuals and one pedal board with:

Keys	305
Pedals	32
Stop knobs	239
Tilting coupler tablets	29
Thumb Pistons	112
Toe Pistons	31

The organ has had a few consoles: the original in 1912, and new ones in 1927 and 2001. The current console was completely updated and rewired as part of the 2012-14 renovation.

The toy box (aka “The Penthouse”) contains actual percussion instruments, including: snare drum, xylophone, marimba, crash cymbal, harp, glockenspiel, chimes, bass drum, Turkish cymbal, carillon, the bell in F, train whistle, doorbell, chime, horses’ hooves, castanets, wood block, triangle, sleigh bells, car horn, birds, and fire gong. Each instrument has its own stop knob at the console.



There are currently only two Municipal Organists in the U.S.: Ray Cornils in Portland, Maine, and Dr. Carol Williams in San Diego, California.

Ray Cornils is Portland’s 10th Municipal Organist.