From the Municipal Organist
Hymn Sing opens Celebration

The Community Hymn Festival was a wonderful way to begin the Centennial Celebration Year of the Kotzschmar Organ. The morning singing of 1,000 voices joining in hymns of various styles and traditions led by organ, brass, percussion, African drummers and saxophones was a truly uplifting experience.

Thanks go to the many members of the Portland Chapter of the American Guild of Organists who planned, played, conducted, led, organized and participated in this event. I especially wish to express my immense gratitude to the hundreds of choir members from throughout southern Maine who formed the core of the singing and who in beautifully sang several hymn-based anthems.

The hymn festival hearkened back to the first decades of the Kotzschmar when every Sunday afternoon the Municipal Organist played a concert that included community hymn singing. Both Cyrus H. Curtis and Hermann Kotzschmar fully understood the power of music and its importance in building community. I felt their shining presence as so many of us gathered on September 25 to sing and celebrate in joyful song.

With immense gratitude,
—Ray Cornils

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piece was an exciting discovery. My piano teacher was also the choral director at my high school so I accompanied the choir and developed a love of choral music. Between the starting piano lessons and entering high school I discovered the organ. I was thrilled with the seemingly endless musical possibilities and as I became more familiar with organ literature, I was thrilled with that too. When, as a freshman at Westminster Choir College, I discovered that choral and organ music in the context of worship could be absolutely transcendent, my career path became obvious. After about five years as an active church musician, I pursued graduate study at Northwestern University. With some passing work as a teacher, I have happily continued my work in church music.

Docent Spotlight

David Kirstein is a retired biomedical research administrator and a former volunteer firefighter. He has served on the boards of several community and civic organizations and continues to serve in Portland. David says he has long been an enthusiastic listener of pipe organ music, and upon moving to Portland ten years ago, was pleased to learn about the Kotzschmar Organ and an opportunity to learn more by becoming a docent. Some of his most rewarding experiences as a docent are: watching young people learn about the instrument, seeing their eyes light up and listening to Ray Cornils explain the workings of the organ and play for the visitors.

The Phantom of the Opera

Friday, October 28, 7:30 pm
Organist Scott Foppiano returns to accompany this Halloween Silent Film favorite. Come in costume and join in the fun! Don’t miss the Portland Ballet Prelude.

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Hymn Sing opens Celebration

The Choral Art Society’s Robert Russell, one of several conductors during the Hymn Festival, took the podium to lead the choirs and audience in a Wilderford’s famous arrangement of “The Bottle Hymn of the Republic.” In the accompaniment of Municipal Organist Ray Cornils and brass choir.

Kotchschmar Korner

Barbara Blanchard Garsoe, 92, of Cumberland, attended the Hymn Sing with Connie and Peter Bingham. As a child in the ‘20s and ‘30s, she recalls that church and Sunday School, which were mandatory, took up three hours of a Sunday, followed by a long lunch. Then, if the conditions of the dirt road (now Route 9) into Portland permitted, the family would attend a Kotzschmar concert. She loved the music, and the adventure of the trip into the big city. At the Hymn Sing, Mrs. Garsoe stood for nearly every hymn, as she didn’t want to miss anything!

Photo by Kim Backight
Kotzschmar’s 25th Year

August 22, 1937, fell on a Sunday, so Alfred Brinkler, Municipal Organist, chose Wednesday, August 22 to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the installation and dedication of the Kotzschmar Organ.

Dr. Francis W. Snow, noted organist and choire master at Trinity Church, Copley Square, Boston, was the featured soloist, joined by the famed Curtis String Quartet of Philadelphia; Jascha Brodsky and Charles Jaffe, violin, Max Aronoff, viola and Orlando Cole, violoncello. Dr. Snow performed the “Dorian Toccata” by Bach, “Schêrzo” from Symphony II and “Caillou de Westminster” by Viereck while a member provided an interlude on Smetana’s First String Quartet in E minor.

In 1937, in the midst of the depression that gripped the world, the Curtis Institute suspended its program of completely subsidized summer studies, recital opportunities in New York, and extensive tours for their most promising students.

However, Mary Louise Curtis Bok, daughter of Cyrus Hermann Kotzschmar Curtis, had welcomed the Curtis String Quartet to the Camden-Rockport area for the past eleven summers. The Quartet and the Carlos Salzedo Harp Colony constituted a summer program for promising young students from the Curtis Institute.

In 1936 Mrs. Bok remodeled a large barn in Rockport creating a one-hundred seat concert hall, complete with special soundproofing and a huge ebony fireplace for cool August evenings. Since that time, the great organ has been augmented with a 1.1 million dollar grant from Cyrus H. K. Curtis, who was central to the life of the Portland community in the early 1900’s. What better way to honor the gift to the city on August 22, 1937, than 1,000 people coming together with area organists and choire directors to lead us in a medley of hymns from many traditions?

As we enter this year of celebration, we take time to reflect on how music over the century has continued to be an important part of our community events, holiday parades, civic celebrations, national events both celebratory and mournful, and the impact those events have had on our lives and community. Without music, there would be little harmony.

When I was aspiring to become a musician and teacher during my years at Lincoln High School under the tutelage of our local organist, I was inspired to take the plunge and begin my musical journey.

I started piano lessons when I was about eight. I was fascinated by music and the keyboard. I have always been amazed by the ability of the organ to involve the children in its talk, as well as the rest of the audience. That’s a fact that doesn’t exist in a lot of musicians.—Cynthia Baughman

From the Executive Director

The Kotzschmar Centennial celebration year began by honoring a great American tradition: the community festival. Kotzschmar Festival, an integral part of the history of a municipal or civic organ, which was central to the life of the Portland community in the early 1900s. The Kotzschmar Organ continued to be a gift to the city from Cyrus H. K. Curtis to 1,000 people together with area organists and choire directors to lead us in a medley of hymns from many traditions.

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A satisfied Tour-ist

Yesterday I attended Ray’s tour of The Mighty Kotzschmar. Wow. What an interesting time. I’d never been in a wind chamber before! Not many people have. Pretty amazing when he plays and the walls crazy while you are inside. Not that I have an active imagination... Not many people have. Pretty amazing when he plays and the walls... I believe that because of the arts, lots of us... I had the chance to talk with a... I believe that because of the arts, lots of us... I had the chance to talk with a... I believe that because of the arts, lots of us... I had the chance to talk with a... I believe that because of the arts, lots of us... I had the chance to talk with a... I believe that because of the arts, lots of us... I had the chance to talk with a... I believe that because of the arts, lots of us... I had the chance to talk with a... I believe that because of the arts, lots of us... I had the chance to talk with a... I believe that because of the arts, lots of us... I had the chance to talk with a... I believe that because of the arts, lots of us... I had the chance to talk with...