

Pipe Lines

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE KOTZSCHMAR ORGAN

103rd Season of Concerts

Fall 2014

FOKO's 34th Year

RESERVE YOUR SEAT FOR THE

TRIUMPHANT RETURN *of the* KOTZSCHMAR ORGAN

Portland's mighty Kotzschmar Memorial Organ prepares for comeback

Sept. 27 will mark the historic organ's triumphant return to its home in Merrill Auditorium.

In September, the mighty Kotzschmar Organ in Portland's Merrill Auditorium will make its triumphant return to its home after a two-year out-of-hall renovation costing \$2.5 million. It will be a historic, joyous occasion. The Kotzschmar was donated to the city of Portland in 1912 by Cyrus H.K. Curtis, in honor of his music teacher Hermann Kotzschmar, and was at the time the largest concert organ in the Western Hemisphere. One of the first municipal organs, it was followed by hundreds more in American cities large and small. These served as surrogate symphonies and providers of music of all kinds: popular, opera and the symphonic literature as well as "pure" organ music.

Of them all, today only two remain: Portland's Kotzschmar and a similar, smaller, sister organ in San Diego, California. That organ, the Spreckles, is installed in an outside venue near the San Diego airport. While a century ago, nearly every city that had a municipal organ also had a municipal organist, there also remain only two today: Ray Cornils, who has presided over the

Kotzschmar for 25 years, and his counterpart in San Diego.

The road to a complete renovation for the Kotzschmar was not an easy one. In 1981, the Friends of the Kotzschmar Organ, Inc.(FOKO) was founded to support the organ, which by then, like so many others, had fallen on hard times. Only about half of its more than 7,000 pipes were then in working order. Over the years the Friends gradually brought the instrument back to decent playing condition, but as its 100th anniversary was arriving, it became clear that if it were to survive for another century and even another decade, serious work needed to be done. In partnership with the city of Portland, the Friends raised the necessary funds.

After a "Grand Centennial Closing" series of concerts, lectures and workshops in August 2012, the organ was shut down, removed from Merrill Auditorium in its entirety and shipped to the Foley-Baker Co. in Tolland, Connecticut. The massive instrument and its tens of thousands of parts and pieces filled up 18 tractor-trailer loads!

In the hands of skilled craftsmen, who practice an ancient but highly sophisticated art, every part of the organ has been rebuilt, renewed and rewired. The total renovation is

now almost complete.

The organ will be first heard during its grand re-opening concert Sept. 27. Interest in this wonderful instrument has been growing steadily over the last several years. More than 60,000 people annually hear it in all manner of situations. Every graduate of Portland and Deering high schools for generations has marched across the stage to the sounds of the Kotzschmar. Thousands more each year have heard it in the Portland Symphony Orchestra's iconic "Magic of Christmas" concerts. Many thousands more have enjoyed the silent movie series presented by the Friends. And, of course, most people hear it doing what it does best – playing the grand organ literature of the centuries, both classical and popular.

Looking to its bright new future, the Kotzschmar will be heard more than ever before. Its gorgeous palette of sounds – ranging from the softest ethereal strings in the ceiling to the booming roar of the 32-foot-long pipes – will be clear and crisp. Its brand-new walk-in wind chest will no longer leak air, hiss or moan. In its famous "Toy Box" the

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From the President



We are approaching the end of the dark period for the Kotschmar Memorial Organ (KO). In September, after 2 years away, and a complete renovation, our remarkable instrument will be back in Merrill Auditorium prepared to astound and uplift audiences for another 100 years. I think back to the first time I heard a great pipe organ. I was a freshman at Columbia in New York in 1956. A senior music major on my dormitory floor asked me if I were going to hear Virgil Fox inaugurate the great organ at Riverside Cathedral. I was clearly interested in music, having studied piano in the Juilliard preparatory program prior to coming to Columbia. I had no idea what he was talking about. He rightly labelled me a "philistine" and dragged me off to the concert. From the first moments of thunder, and then virtually inaudible sound, that Virgil Fox coaxes from that instrument I realized that I had just entered a different kind of world.

I had been studying the development of western civilization as part of Columbia's core curriculum. In that study, a great deal of attention was placed on the development of the Church. Whatever its fallibilities (and Columbia's professors were quick to point out how the Church had fallen short) it was clear that ideally, the role of the church was to provide a link between humanity and the divine. Churches that were built in the Middle Ages took generations to complete – some would say that they were never completed- and they served to remind the populace that humanity was frail in the presence of God.

Churches were designed to be awe-inspiring and both uplifting and overwhelming in their presence. In Art Humanities, I studied the cathedrals of Chartres, Siena and Rheims. I studied the incredible Sistine Chapel, and the stained glass of St. Chappelle. And years later, when I actually visited these places, I experienced what my professors had been talking about.

All the time, I would run to hear the great organs of the world

whose music paralleled the splendor of the churches in which they sat. It was no wonder to me that the pipe organ was the instrument of the Church. It was the only instrument that could match the grandeur, inspiration, power and awe, of the great medieval cathedrals. For me, the pipe organ was the voice of divinity in western religious society.

As a Reform Jew, whose synagogues were built by German Jews who came to the United States in the middle of the 19th century, I was exposed to Jewish houses of worship that attempted to emulate the power of the Church. My predecessors built magnificent buildings which almost always housed pipe organs in order to create a sense of grandeur and reverence. For me, the pipe organ was the voice of the divine coupled with the chanting of the Cantor in the Jewish liturgy.

From the first time I heard the KO, as a summer resident visiting Maine from the major cities of the east coast in which I lived, I was inspired. I realized that although it was not housed in a church, the KO represented a western tradition that attempted to uplift the human spirit. There are other wonderful organs in Maine that provide a sense of divine reverence, and I go to hear them. But the KO resides in a civic auditorium, non-sectarian and without religious symbolism, which makes it even more meaningful to me. It is a non-denominational voice that reminds me of the divine presence because of the musical and institutional history it represents.

Furthermore, the work that was done to renovate it and bring it back to its fullest glory, was a return to great non-mechanized western craftsmanship. The people of Foley-Baker, who did the restoration, used the same skills that produced organs many centuries ago. In the true sense of the word, they are guild masters, taking pride in their handwork. They remind me of the history of skilled labor that eventually became the industrial revolution.

So the first notes of the newly renovated KO in September will once again remind me of how fortunate we are to live in a society that allows us and encourages us to aspire to greatness, creating it through the work of our hands.

— Laurence H. Rubinstein

Triumphant Return *from page 1*

xylophones, marimbas, snare drums, harps and cymbals will be at the ready, along with new sounds including a train whistle, a doorbell, a car horn, some birds, hoofbeats and a fire gong! Several new ranks of pipes have been added, including a row of huge wooden pipes with thunderous bass sounds. The organ and its massive innards will be open to the public for tours on a regular basis.

The Kotschmar is not just a beloved Portland icon. It is a world-renowned instrument that attracts the highest-quality players from around the globe. The combined efforts of Friends and the city of Portland to renovate it have caught the attention of cities nationwide. When the last pipe is finally installed and the organ roars forth in September, much of the music world will be watching. They will not be disappointed. May our grand Kotschmar live and thunder for another 100 years.

— Peter S. Plumb, FOKO Founding President



Phil Carpenter of Foley-Baker deftly carries in a bass pipe.

EXPERIENCE THE BRILLIANCE!

Grand Opening Concert

Saturday, September 27 / 7:30 PM — *Already 900 tickets sold!*

Reserve your seat today by contacting PortTIX:

20 Myrtle St., Portland, ME 04101 / M – Sat., 12:00 – 6:00 PM

www.porttix.com / (207) 842-0800

Other Upcoming Events

Portland Symphony Orchestra's 90th Season Opening Concert: Organ & Choral Spectacular

Tuesday, September 30 / 7:30 PM

First Friday Art Walk / Organ Demos & Tours

Friday, October 3 / 5:00 – 8:00 PM

Kotschmar Organ Tours

Sunday, October 5 / 2:30 - 5:00 PM

Halloween Silent Film Night

Featuring "Phantom of the Opera" with Tom Trenney, organist

Friday, October 31 / 7:30 PM

From the Executive Director



FOKO was well represented at the American Guild of Organists National Convention in Boston this year. Ray Cornils served as chair of this massive event, Elsa Geskus chaired the workshops and John Bishop, Ray, David Wallace and I presented workshops.

This was my first AGO Convention and I wore several hats; one as FOKO's Executive Director, as an exhibitor for FOKO, another as a voice instructor presenting a workshop about the importance of healthful vocal production for church choirs and yet another as mover of FOKO education materials, keyboards for workshops and hauling K. J. home after his week in Boston.

We had two small gatherings in between the incredibly busy schedule of events. The first after Ray's workshop about our education outreach, with organists from various parts of the country and abroad discussing the challenges of educating the general public about the pipe organ and the second, an interesting group of people representing pipe organs in public venues. The discussion included sharing our current programs, challenges and taking a look at how we might work together in the future to better serve our constituencies, broaden our reach and join forces to have a national impact on our art form.

It was important to have a presence at this convention and an invaluable experience for me. I met new people, reconnected with many organists who have played the Kotzschmar, who will be back this year and who WANT to return and experience the brilliance of the renovated instrument, and reconnected with many former classmates from Westminster Choir College. The buzz was incredible and as an exhibitor sitting next to David and Nick Wallace and across the aisle from Foley-Baker, the KO and FOKO had a wonderful presence.

As we look forward to celebrating the triumphant return of the mighty Kotzschmar, may we all take a moment to remember those who came before us and dedicated time, talent and resources to this instrument, those in our lifetime who have passed and made a huge impact on where we are today, and those who have made this renovation possible: board members, donors, volunteers and friends, the City of Portland, FOKO staff and the last but not least, the staff of Foley-Baker.

"The greater danger for most of us lies not in setting our aim too high and falling short; but in setting our aim too low, and achieving our mark." — MICHELANGELO

— Kathleen Grammer

AGO Convention a Big Hit

The Kotzschmar Memorial Organ (KO) in Portland City Hall's Merrill Auditorium will open its second century on September 27. Friends of the Kotzschmar Organ (FOKO) wanted to make sure that the news of this major event had the widest possible spread. What better way to get this information out than visiting directly with over 2000 organists, musicians and organ lovers from all over the globe at one time and in one place!

FOKO partnered with David E. Wallace and Co. to share a display booth at the American Guild of Organists (AGO) Convention in Boston for a week this past June. We were able to share the history of the Kotzschmar Organ, the progress of the renovation by the Foley-Baker Inc. and spread the word of the up-coming reopening concert and programs to be heard later in the season.

FOKO commissioned me to build "Kotzschmar Jr" (K.J.), who also had a trip to Boston to serve as an ambassador for the AGO Convention and FOKO education programs, thanks in no small part to Convention Coordinator Ray Cornils and Workshops Coordinator Elsa Geskus. K.J. delighted young people at Youth Day on the Saturday prior to the convention at Old South Church and spent the rest of the week in the Copley Place Mall adjacent to the convention site, introducing the pipe organ to countless people who had never seen a pipe organ close up - let alone have the opportunity to play one were introduced by a team of young convention "fellows", artfully demonstrating and explaining how a pipe organ functions. K.J. made history in one of Boston's popular retail venues.

At the display booth, FOKO Executive Director Kathleen Grammer and I (former Curator of the KO) greeted convention attendees with all the latest news from Portland. K.J.'s new "cousin", Wallace and Co's new continuo organ built by Nick Wallace, while on display for its own debut, filled in for K.J. during discussions of the FOKO education and outreach programs. We also had the good fortune to be located directly across the aisle from Foley-Baker's display booth. From time to time both booths were simultaneously running KO renovation slide shows. Talk about getting the point across!

During the week we were fortunate to connect with many of the KO's visiting organists and had the opportunity to hear and greet some of the up and coming "Rising Stars" that may, no doubt, grace the KO with their incredible talents. Friends old and new visited the booth and seemed delighted that the citizens and music community of Portland, Maine cared enough to see that the KO would carry into its second century as fresh and new as it was at the start of its first century.

— David Wallace

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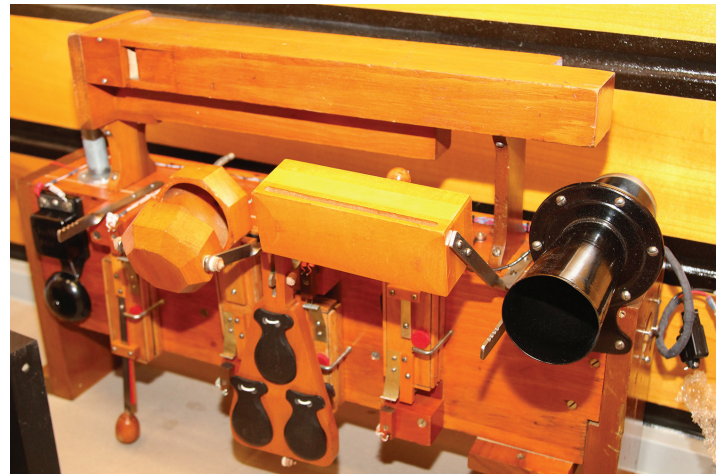
The freshly painted and refurbished facade



Newly refurbished pipes



The refurbished console dazzles with brand new wiring and stops with new nomenclature



Added toys including car horn, train whistle, birds, and fire gong

FOKO Welcomes Two New Board Members At Annual Meeting



Christi Razzi



Eugene Story



Annual Meeting



Reception