

# Pipe Lines

The official newsletter of the Kotzschmar Organ



104th Season of Concerts

Winter 2015

FOKO's 35th Year



## *After 25 Years, Christmas with Cornils Continues to Evoke the Holiday Spirit.*

Ray Cornils became Portland's tenth municipal organist in 1990—following Gerald McGee and Earl Miller—after an extensive search and audition process. He had moved to Woolwich, Maine in 1987, and had experience playing the Kotzschmar in FOKO's summer series.

When he assumed the role of municipal organist, there was a dizzying array of performance possibilities. And when Russ Burleigh was appointed FOKO's first Executive Director in 1990, the two quickly became a solid team, developing

programs that would increase attendance, awareness, and the income that the Kotzschmar Organ needed dearly. One of the many popular programs developed under their watch was *Christmas with Cornils*, which included brass, choral, and bell ensembles. "Christmas is in a dark and cold time of year, but I think that allows light and hope and joy to shine that much more," Cornils says, noting, "These are powerful concepts and commodities to share with each other, especially through the evocative nature of the pipe organ."

*Christmas with Cornils* will delight audience members again this year, bringing its traditions to the Merrill stage on December 22. →



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*Christmas with Cornils ... continued from cover:*

Accompanying Cornils will be the Parish Ringers, the Kotzschmar Festival Brass, and the Oratorio Chorale, Emily Isaacson, director. Tickets for *Christmas with Cornils* are \$41, \$35, \$23, with reserved seating, and can be found on the PortTIX website, at the box office, 20 Myrtle St. Mon-Sat, noon-6 pm or call 207.842.0800.

*From the Municipal Organist*

During the past year people have asked me what it is like to play the newly renovated organ and if it feels different. My response has been that it is very satisfying and an honor to play. While there were some modifications to the console, including updating control systems and rearranging some stop knobs to accommodate additional ranks of pipes and percussions, the keyboards were in fine shape. Therefore the feel of the keys of the organ is unchanged.

What is different is no wind noise from the airchests. One of the fundamental reasons for the renovation was to address the dire condition of the Universal windchest with its hundreds of leaks. The organ was driven at a higher pressure to compensate for the leaks in the chests. Before the renovation I likened the sound to that of a singer who had been over-singing (singing too loud), giving it a somewhat forced and brittle sound. The wind pressure is now correct which allows a stillness especially in soft pieces that was not possible before.

The voicing of the reed stops (Clarinet, English Horn, Tubas, Trumpets, Oboes, Musettes, Bassoons, etc.) has been wonderfully restored by expert Christopher Broome. They sing with abundant color. The Tuba Magna (the loudest stop of the organ) is much more musical and refined – it no longer sounds like the horn on an old Buick!

There is an incredible clarity to the instrument. Each pipe speaks as it should. When the fuzziness of sound is removed, the essence and core of the sound is readily apparent. Inner notes and voices are now clearly heard.

The bass of the instrument is enhanced. This is mainly due to the attention to how clearly the longest pipes of the organ are speaking as well as new pipes including the 16' Principal and the 32' Major Bass.

There are some wonderful new percussions as well as refinements to the cymbals and careful adjustments to the marimba and xylophone. With the advice of noted theatre organists, we made changes to the disposition of the percussions among the manuals. You can now more easily add a percussive flair to organ works and transcriptions, allowing a wider range of expression than was previously possible.

Is there still a delay from when the key is pressed and you hear the pipe speak? Yes, although the speed of the key actions is faster than before, because they are perfectly seated to the windchests.

The nature of pneumatic actions has a slight delay in response in addition to the time that it takes for the sound to travel from the pipes to the listener's ears. Through years of training and experience, my mind continues to work a fraction of a second before hearing the sound of the organ.

Do I approach the instrument differently? Most definitely! While in many ways this is a familiar friend, in many other ways, every stop is new, or has a much more defined and refined character. The way they respond in various combinations is remarkably different in many cases. Every time that I sit down at this instrument, it continues to be an exhilarating learning experience. It allows my imagination to flourish.

I encourage you to come and hear this wonderful instrument many times. Its sound changes under the hands and feet of each artist.

— Ray Cornils, Municipal Organist

*From the President*

As I write this, we have just completed the four concert *Orgelfest* during the month of August and the opening concerts of our 2015-2016 season. We have yet to hear Ray Cornils' 26th annual *Christmas with Cornils*. Having attended all of the concerts and having hosted guests at all of them, I am struck by several observations which are reinforced by the guest

organists who have come to play the Kotzschmar.

This is an instrument which is virtually unique in the general music world, and specifically in the world of organ music. It is the only publically owned and maintained organ in the United States that has been completely renovated by a group of private, concerned individuals. It is one of the largest and most complete concert and theatre organs in our country. It is internationally known as a great historic instrument. Many great organists from all over want to come to Portland to perform on it.

Those are all historic and measurable indices. However. For me, as an organ aficionado who loves the grandeur and sound of a great pipe organ, there is much more, although it is less definable. The variety of sound that can be produced by great organists on the Kotzschmar constantly amazes me, and very often amazes the performers. Whether it is great classical works performed by Felix Hell or Ken Cowan, more popular material performed by Walt Strony or Carol Williams, improvisations during a silent movie performed by Tom Trenney, or the breadth of music performed by our own municipal organist, Ray Cornils, the ability of the Kotzschmar to facilitate every performer and every genre of music is truly amazing. It can articulate the almost inaudible whispers to the most bombastic clarion calls with ease and clarity. For me, it represents a divine presence, whether it be a still, small voice, or the roar of a whirlwind.

I would encourage all of the citizens of our area to take advantage of this unique instrument in our community and attend the Kotzschmar concerts.

— Larry Rubinstein

## From the Executive Director



The Kotzschmar was reacquainted with old friends during Orgelfest15. **Frederick Hohman, Felix Hell and Walt Strony** all performed for the first time since the Centennial Festival in 2012. They were thrilled to be back and to find the Kotzschmar's soul still intact. Ray and the Festival Brass ended our August with a celebration of his 25th year as Portland's

Municipal Organist. Our docents conducted many tours and we partnered with the Portland Chapter of the AGO to celebrate the 103rd birthday with an all-day "Performathon" featuring performances of area organists and tours of the organ.

Our 2015-2016 season opened with a remarkably talented performer. The sounds emulating from the Kotzschmar were exquisitely executed by **Ken Cowan**.

The brilliance continued with **Ray Cornils** and the organ featured in the Portland Symphony Orchestra's thrilling opening concert and the Berlioz *Té Deum*. The renovation was so evident when the opening chords of the orchestra were matched by the mighty Kotzschmar!

**Tom Trenney** returned to accompany our first showing of *Nosferatu* to an enthusiastic crowd of all ages. Of course "the other" civic organist, **Carol Williams**, joined us in November for a fabulous performance that featured a Gershwin duet with **Ray**. We will join forces with **Choral Art Society**, Maine bred Metropolitan Opera singers **Ashley Emerson** and **Megan Merino**; and organist **Randall Mullin** for an exciting *Grand Opera Meets the Mighty Kotzschmar*.

We continue to collaborate, to reach new audiences, to educate and to entertain. FOKO's job is never done. The Kotzschmar is the "Peoples' Pipe Organ" and it is our job to serve as ambassadors, to maintain this magnificent instrument and to make sure that it is heard.

With this responsibility comes the need for funding, continued support from you, our friends and audience members. As we continue to diversify our programs, bring new artists to Portland, collaborate with organizations in and around Portland, offer tours and raise the awareness of this magnificent pipe organ, so too do we need to reach our fundraising goals.

Thank you to those who continue to support the Kotzschmar Organ and FOKO! May this season of light bring you a time for reflection and much joy and peace.

— *Kathleen Grammer*

## From the Organ Committee



### It is finished!

After five years of study and planning, development and negotiation, two years of intensive work, and a year of celebration, the Centennial Renovation of the Kotzschmar Organ is complete. The staff of Foley-Baker, Inc. accomplished miracles by completing every stage of the project on time, meeting the demanding schedule of Merrill Auditorium, and accomplishing thousands of hours of highly skilled work, and the Kotzschmar Organ stands gleaming anew. Tonal modifications and upgrades blend beautifully with the magnificent sounds of the original organ, and myriad mechanical and electrical functions work silently in the background to provide the perfect platform for the most sensitive of musical expression from the procession of wonderful musicians who come to Portland to explore the renewed iconic masterpiece.

The depth of this accomplishment is recognized throughout the world of pipe organ professionals - that a publicly owned instrument of this scale has been renovated with such professionalism and depth of vision is remarkable. I'm happy to acknowledge the endless effort of the Organ Committee in the long hours of deliberation, and the exciting teamwork between all the committees of the Friends of the Kotzschmar Organ. And to you, the music-loving public who have supported and encouraged this project, thank you and congratulations. Our marvelous organ is well into its second century, in the same or better condition than in 1912 when it was first dedicated.

The Organ Committee is now working with the staff of FBI to create and support an appropriate plan for the ongoing maintenance of the organ, ensuring that it will always be presented to the public in the best light.

If you haven't come to Merrill to hear this miracle, you can't know what you're missing. See you there!

— *John Bishop*

## In Remembrance

### Eugene Douglas Story

July 7, 1927 – November 9, 2015

Gene served on the FOKO board.

Our condolences to his wife Ruth, and the Story Family

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## Highlights from Kotzschmar's Star Studded Past 2015-16 Season ...



Tom Trenney and Nosferatu



Ray Cornils - 25 Years



Carol Williams



Fred Hohman



Felix Hell



Walt Strony

## EXPERIENCE THE BRILLIANCE!

### The 26th Christmas with Cornils

Tuesday, December 22, 2015 / 7:30 PM

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

*Metropolis* - Epic Science Fiction Drama

Peter Krasinski, Sunday, March 6, 2016/ 3:00 PM

*Grand Opera Meets the Mighty Kotzschmar*

Choral Art Society, Randall Mullin, Ashley Emerson, Megan Marino  
Saturday, April 9, 2016/7:30 PM

## Portland Youth Wind Ensemble

On November 12, I had the pleasure of sitting in with the 85-member Portland Youth Wind Ensemble at Merrill Auditorium to play the organ part in Frank Ticheli's *Angels in the Architecture* on the Kotzschmar Organ. Peter Martin conducted in what was his final performance with the group after 28 years of directing it.

The large group of very talented young people dispatched this difficult work with virtuoso flair and it was a chance to use the organ in another collaboration with a local musical organization. The Mighty K made its presence heard and felt at the climax of the piece and impressed the young players. One girl told me after the rehearsal that she was smiling so broadly at its entrance that she couldn't play her clarinet!

— Harold Stover



Above: the Portland Youth Wind Festival with Peter Martin conducting.  
Below: Harold Stover provides accompaniment on the Kotzschmar.