



Back With Bach

James Kennerley

Portland's Municipal Organist

September 26, 2020

Livestreamed from Merrill Auditorium





The **Kotzschmar Organ** is one of the grandest and most celebrated pipe organs in the world. Its home is in the historic Merrill Auditorium in the Arts district of Portland, Maine. With incredible power and range, the Kotzschmar offers an annual concert series featuring top guest artists from around the world.

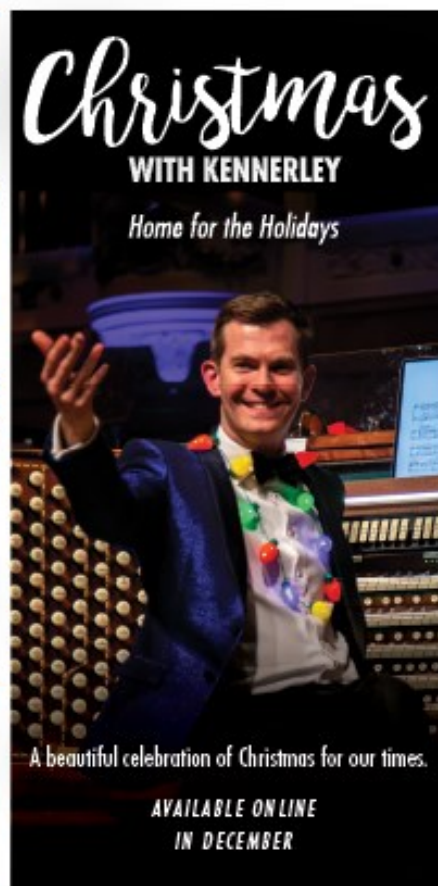
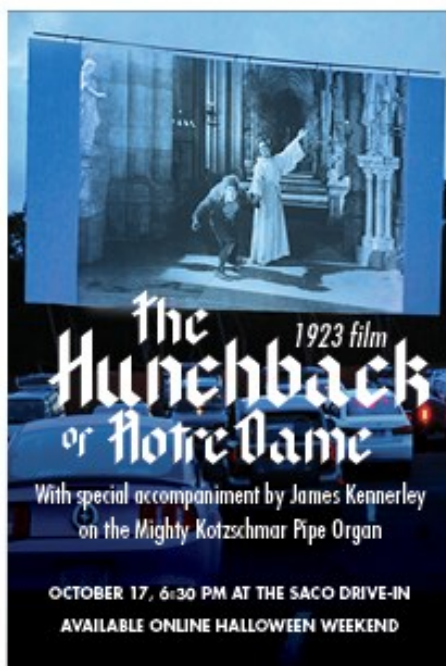
The organ's 7,101 pipes are arranged in 104 ranks and played from 239 stop knobs on the organ console. Its windchest is 9 feet tall, 7 feet wide, and 54 feet long, large enough for approximately 50 people to fit inside even when the organ is being played. The Kotzschmar's main organ chamber is 60 feet long, 16 feet wide, and 40 feet tall, big enough to hold about six tractor-trailers.

The Kotzschmar was built into the Merrill, originally known as Portland City Hall Auditorium, when the building was constructed in 1912. Publishing Magnate Cyrus H. K. Curtis, founder of the Saturday Evening Post, commissioned the Austin Organ Company of Hartford, Connecticut, to construct and install the organ, gifting it to the city. He named the organ after his music teacher, Hermann Kotzschmar, a man he greatly admired and respected. Kotzschmar, a German native, lived in Portland from 1848 until his death in April 1908. He had a pivotal and lasting influence in Portland's rich cultural life.

In 1981, the Friends of the Kotzschmar Organ was founded to maintain, protect and preserve the organ and inspire passion for its music. In 1995, with the organ nearing its 100th birthday, the Friends came to realize that this grand "King of Instruments" was in desperate need of critical repairs. The Friends pulled together and, with the help and support of grant funding and many generous donors, were successful in raising the more than \$2.6 million needed to return the Kotzschmar to its true musical splendor.

In 2012, the Kotzschmar was removed and a complete professional renovation commenced. The work took more than two years to complete. The fully revitalized organ was dedicated on September 24, 2014, a triumph for the Friends, the City of Portland, and other Kotzschmar devotees around the country and world.

The Friends of the Kotzschmar Organ, a volunteer-driven organization, continues to ensure the sounds of the Kotzschmar can be enjoyed by future generations.



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Hailed as “a great organist” displaying “phenomenal technique and sheer musicality” (Bloomberg News), James Kennerley is a multi-faceted musician, working as a conductor, keyboardist, singer, and composer. His performances are known for their illustrious flair and thrilling virtuosity, subtlety and finesse, drawing on the full resources of the instrument. James’ YouTube performances have enjoyed worldwide popularity and millions of views globally.

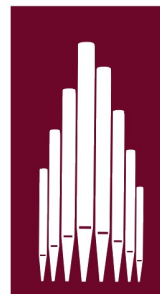
In 2019, James was named Director of Music at Saint Paul’s Church, Harvard Square, presiding over the world-famous choir of men and boys. He was appointed the Municipal Organist of Portland, Maine, in 2017, following a unanimous vote from the Search Committee and the City Council. A native of the United Kingdom, he has held Organist and Choirmaster positions at Saint Ignatius of Antioch Episcopal Church, New York City and the Church of Saint Mary the Virgin, Times Square.

He is also part of a team of musicians at Park Avenue Synagogue in New York City, one of the foremost centers of Jewish music and liturgy in the world.

Mr. Kennerley made his Carnegie Hall solo début in 2016 with the celebrated ensemble the Sejong Soloists. Performances last season included concerts at Alice Tully Hall, the Frick Collection, the Metropolitan Museum’s MetLiveArts series, and in the Lincoln Center White Light Festival. He has also given concerts at Washington National Cathedral, Saint Patrick’s Cathedral, Princeton University, the Royal Albert Hall, Saint Paul’s Cathedral, Westminster Abbey, and other major venues throughout the United States and Europe. He was a featured artist on recordings with the Grammy- nominated Choir of Trinity Wall Street including Handel’s *Messiah* and *Israel in Egypt*, and Monteverdi *Vespers*, as well as a recording of Julian Wachner’s *The Snow Lay on the Ground*. Mr. Kennerley was a prizewinner at the 2008 Albert Schweitzer International Organ Competition, and a finalist at the inaugural (2013) Longwood Gardens International Organ Competition.

Mr. Kennerley holds degrees from Cambridge University and The Juilliard School. He has studied the organ with David Sanger, Thomas Trotter and McNeil Robinson, and harpsichord with Kenneth Weiss, Peter Sykes, and Richard Egarr. He holds the prestigious Fellowship of the Royal College of Organists diploma.

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Friends of the Kotschmar Organ

Presents

BACK WITH BACH

JAMES KENNERLEY

PORTLAND'S MUNICIPAL ORGANIST

Saturday, September 26, 2020 ♦ 7:00pm

Livestreamed from Merrill Auditorium

Johann Sebastian Bach 1685–1750

Sinfonia *from* Cantata, BWV 29 “Wir danken dir, Gott”

transcribed by James Kennerley

Toccata and Fugue in D minor, BWV 565

Two chorale preludes from the *Schübler* collection:

Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme, BWV 645

Kommst du nun, Jesu, vom Himmel herunter, BWV 650

Prelude & Fugue in A minor, BWV 543

“Little” Fugue in G minor, BWV 578

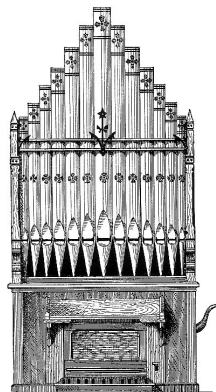
Fugue in G major “alla Giga”, BWV 577

Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor, BWV 582

Prelude and Fugue in D major, BWV 532

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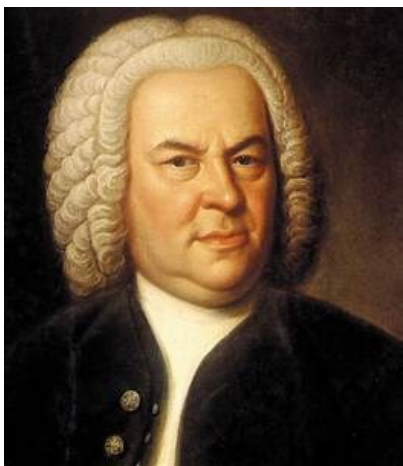
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Johann Sebastian Bach

Born on March 21, 1685, Bach was renowned during his lifetime as a “world-class organist” – more famous for his virtuosic organ playing than for his compositions. Bach’s organ music has captured the minds of performers and audiences for generations ever since. The program opens with the *Sinfonia* from Cantata, BWV 29, “Wir danken dir, Gott” transcribed by James Kennerly. It was originally composed for the opening celebrations for the Leipzig town council in 1731.

In Bach’s Weimar period, he worked as *Konzertmeister* (Director of Music) at the ducal court from 1708 until 1717. It was here that he began to compose keyboard and instrumental pieces in full force. Bach also came under the influence of Italian music composed by the likes of Vivaldi, Albinoni, and others. This is the music of a composer who is experimenting, absorbing styles from various other composers and finding his voice as a young composer.

The *Toccata and Fugue in D minor*, BWV 565, is one of the most famous works in organ repertoire. Scholars differ as to when it was composed; it could have been as early as 1704, when the composer was still 18 or 19 years old. To a large extent, the piece conforms to the characteristics deemed typical for the north German organ school with divergent stylistic influences, such as south German characteristics.

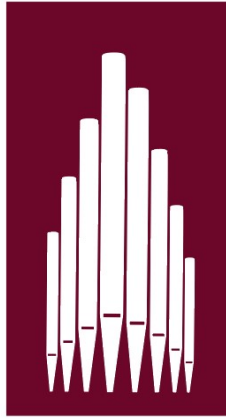
The chorale preludes, *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme*, BWV 645, and *Kommst du nun. Jesu von Himmel herunter*, BWV 650, are part of a The Schubler Chorales, named after Johann Georg Schubler. They were published in late 1747 or before August 1748, in Zella St. Blasii. At least five preludes of the collection are transcribed from movements in Bach’s church cantatas, mostly the chorale cantatas that he had composed around two decades earlier. *Wachet auf* features the chorale melody played by the left hand, while *Kommst du nun* calls for the melody to be played by the feet.

Prelude and Fugue in A minor, BWV 543, has the harmonic and melodic touches that are all Bach. The arpeggiated opening leads into a transition marked by pedal points, long-held pedal notes above which the harmony and virtuosic manual writing unfold. The rest of the prelude develops the arpeggiated figures with chains of beautifully written suspensions.

“Little” *Fugue in G minor*, BWV 578, and *Fugue in G major “alla Giga”*, BWV 577, continue as two classic Bach compositions. The “little fugue” was written during his years at Arnstadt (1703-1701), and has been arranged for ensembles, including an orchestral version by Leopold Stokowski. The “jig” has been traditionally challenged as attributed to Buxtehude. Obvious from the start, the richness and variety of the fugue subject makes colorful fugue dance through Bach-created episodes.

In the *Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor*, BWV 582, Bach’s ostinato melody composes eight measures. The opening begins in the pedal with no accompaniment from the manuals. There are 21 variations that build up to a crescendo in 12, followed by three quiet variations, forming a short intermezzo, then the remaining five variations end the work. The Passacaglia is followed, without a break with a double fugue, and extensive counterpoint development.

The concert concludes with Bach’s most virtuosic organ the *Prelude and Fugue in D major*. According to his obituary, “With his two feet, [Bach] could play things on the pedals that many not unskillful keyboard players would find it bitter enough to have to play with five fingers.” This work features a razzle-dazzle whirlwind of scales and arpeggios to be played by the feet—surely the young Bach showing off his famous virtuosic technique.



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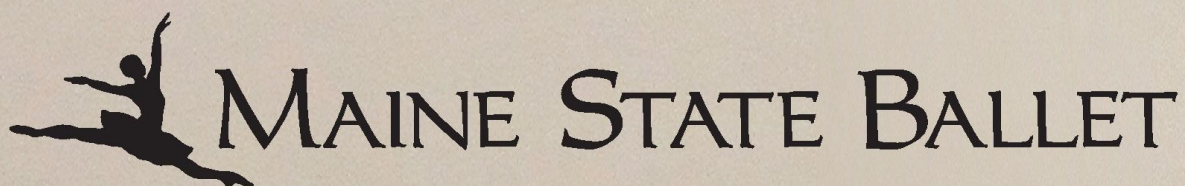
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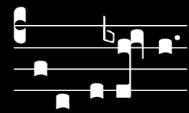
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This list includes gifts to the annual fund received between April 1, 2019 and September 22, 2020.
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Note from the Executive Director:


It took a village to get us to this night; from our friends at Merrill Auditorium, HeadLight AV and the city of Portland, to the patrons and sponsors (old and new) who donated and supported us, to a Board of Directors willing to take a big risk – we could not have reached this night without each and every person. When the COVID-19 pandemic forced the closing of so many things we hold dear, people had to rally; they had to become creative and willing to think in terms they never had to before. I thank all of those visionaries for bringing us to this first for the Merrill stage since March of this year, and for this momentous first for the Friends of the Kotzschmar Organ. We are so fortunate that the city of Portland's organ can ring out on this night. Thank you, one and all, for helping us get here. And for helping us think broadly and daringly for the months ahead. Be well. Be healthy. Be safe.

With much gratitude,

Shireen Shahawy

Executive Director, Friends of the Kotzschmar Organ

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