

KOTZSCHMAR
Organ

Bach Birthday Bash

James Kennerley

Portland's Municipal Organist

March 22, 2022





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 305 keys 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 that the sounds of the Kotzschmar can be enjoyed by future generations.



2021-2022 SEASON

James Kennerley, Portland Municipal Organist & the Mighty Kotzschmar Organ

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WITH KENNERLEY

LIVE in Merrill Auditorium
Monday, Dec. 20 at 7pm



BACH
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LIVE in Merrill Auditorium
Tuesday, March 22 at 7pm
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March 26-April 25

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RUSSELL BURLEIGH

A Memorial Concert Dedication

By Peter Plumb

Today we recognize, honor and salute one of Portland's best known and loved men of music, Russell Burleigh, a founder of the Friends of the Kotzschmar Organ, Inc. His tenure with FOKO was marked by his extraordinary love, passion and professionalism, traits that he shared with the many musical organizations he served throughout his career. After his retirement he continued to serve as a Trustee, and ultimately as an Advisory Trustee, remaining fully involved with FOKO until his death.

While some have heard this before, here is the story of FOKO's founding. Many will remember Russ's role as General Manager of the Portland Symphony Orchestra in the '70s and most of the '80s, and it so happened that in 1980 and 1981 I was President of the Symphony. Russ knew that I was an amateur organist and interested in the Kotzschmar. One day in 1981, Russ called me from his office at the Symphony and said "You know, Peter, a gentleman has just walked in off the street and handed me a check for \$10,000. His name was Abbott Pendergast. He said he wanted me to use this to help fix the organ." The Kotzschmar was in a terrible state of disrepair at that time. In fact, only about 25% of it was fully playable. In 1979 the City had stopped all funding for it and the curator responsible for tending it then quit and went to Florida. Russ said, "I realize that this money maybe should go to the Symphony for this purpose, but I think it would be better if we set it aside safely somewhere for the organ."

And so within a few days Russ and I had set up the non-profit corporation called Friends of the Kotzschmar Organ, Inc., and that \$10,000 was the first deposit into its bank account. Our next stop was to the City Manager and the Mayor. We wanted to get the City's blessing for FOKO to take over the management of the organ, hiring the municipal organist and presenting concerts when possible. We also wanted to have the city resume some funding for the organ. It helped that the Mayor at the time was my wife and we got pretty much what we asked for. Then we set about recruiting

an initial Board of Directors. Several of the local professional organists and some amateurs gladly stepped up. Not only was Russ in the right time at the right place to receive that initial gift, he had the forethought and understanding to see that the organ needed its own special organization and its own group of committed people to undertake the enormous renovations and revitalization which would be necessary over time. In fact, by the time Russ retired as Executive Director in 2006, FOKO had raised and spent more than \$700,000 on the organ alone, not to mention hundreds of thousands of dollars for programming. The \$3 million complete renovation was still ahead of us in 2012 – 2014 and Russ helped in the planning for that.

Russ served as the volunteer Executive Director of FOKO until 1991, when the organization could finally generate enough revenue to pay him a very modest stipend. He brought his impish sense of humor to the job on a regular basis: many will remember him walking around Portland and on the stage talking up the organ with his big Johann Sebastian Bach wig on. Many will also remember him being wheeled out on stage in a coffin at the Halloween Silent Movies to the enormous delight of all the assembled youngsters lured to the concert with the promise of a Halloween party.

Russ brought a level of professionalism to the activities of the Friends of the Kotszschmar Organ that could only have been dreamt of at its founding. In partnership with Ray Cornils, who became the Municipal Organist in 1990, a year-round concert series emerged in addition to the summer series, which included some of the greatest concert organists alive. FOKO began screening silent movies and an educational program for children. At his retirement party we noted: “Russ, you leave the helm of an organization that began on a wing and a prayer and is now in sound financial shape, with solid management and a great team of volunteers. You have won the respect and praise of your peers in the music community here. You have done a first-class job of leading the effort to restore and promote this wonderful instrument”.

Russ Burleigh was a giant in the musical life of Portland in his time, and it is entirely appropriate that we salute and honor him again today.

Peter Plumb, March 2022

Friends of the Kotschmar Organ

Presents

BACH BIRTHDAY BASH

JAMES KENNERLEY, PORTLAND'S MUNICIPAL ORGANIST

Tuesday, March 22, 2022 ♦ 7:00pm

Merrill Auditorium

Portland, Maine

Available On-Demand Online

March 26 through April 25

Pièce d'Orgue (Fantasia) in G major, BWV 572

Sheep May Safely Graze (aria from Cantata 208)

arr. James Kennerley (b. 1984)

Toccatà and Fugue in D minor "The Dorian", BWV 538

Ave Maria

Arr. Charles Gounod (1818-1893)

Toccatà, Adagio, and Fugue in C major, BWV 564

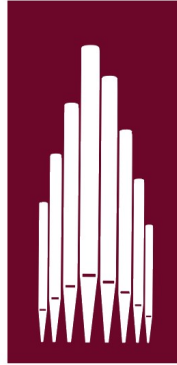
Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring (chorale from Cantata 147)

arr. James Kennerley (b. 1984)

Prelude and Fugue in E minor "The Wedge", BWV 548

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

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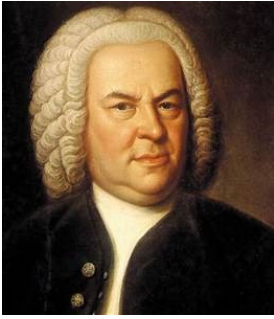
James Kennerley

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.



Johann Sebastian 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.

During the first part of the eighteenth century there were two distinctive musical styles for instrumental music: the Italian style and the French style. The Italian style was characterized by virtuosic and highly colorful writing for string instruments, particularly the “concerto” form that featured solo instruments accompanied by orchestra. The French style was eloquent and refined, highly ornamented and vocal in style, featuring musical forms like the Overture and stylized dances that included the Courant, Allemande, and Gigue. German composers—and Bach was one of the chief practitioners—excelled in promulgating a so-called mixed style, combining elements from both the French and Italian styles, as well as those from other national musical traditions.

The concert opens with a work that clearly identifies with the French school. The *Pièce d’Orgue* (literally “organ work”) probably dates from Bach’s time as organist (1708–1717) and, from 1714, *Konzertmeister* (music director) at the ducal court in Weimar, where he had an opportunity to work with a large number of professional musicians. It was here that much of his large-scale organ compositions derive, including all the major works performed today. *Toccata, Adagio, and Fugue in C major* is slightly unusual in that it contains three movements, as opposed to the two-movement pairing of Toccata (or Prelude) and Fugue that characterizes the vast majority of Bach’s keyboard music. The opening *toccata* for the hands is followed by a virtuosic *tour-de-force* solo for the feet. The central movement is a slow, eloquent *Adagio*, and the final movement is a striking, upbeat *Fugue*.

Included in the program are two transcriptions made from Cantatas—works for choir, soloist, and orchestra—by James Kennerley. Bach composed hundreds of such works, mostly, though not all, for liturgical performance in church. They share their basis on a *chorale* (a German Lutheran hymn tune), the melody and text of which inspire the musical settings that surround them. In *Sheep may safely graze*, the melody is sung by a solo soprano, with colorful accompaniment provided by the orchestra. In *Jesu, joy of man’s desiring*, the full choir would have sung

the chorale, again with orchestral accompaniment. They remain two of Bach's most transcribed and performed works.

The two mammoth *Prelude/Toccat*a and *Fugue* works included in the program have both characteristic nicknames. As is the case with works like Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata*, the composer did not provide these nicknames. Instead, they were acquired during the nineteenth century, probably as a way to distinguish them from other works in the same style and key.

The *Toccat*a and *Fugue in D minor*, nicknamed "The Dorian" because of the fact that its D-minor key lacks a B-flat in the key signature (harking back to Renaissance practice), is a veritable *moto perpetuo* for the hands and feet. While it recalls the North German *praeludium* tradition in which Bach was raised, it also bears influence from the trendy Italian concerto form that Bach was busy incorporating into his solo keyboard works. Uniquely for an organ work by Bach, it provides instructions for which keyboard to play on. While we know that Bach had access to instruments with multiple keyboards and many stops, he very rarely prescribes those details in his music. The fugue is a stunning example of the genre. Bach takes us on a journey, guided by the melody (the "subject") heard at the opening, which is subjected to all sorts of musical wizardry and permutation.

The final work, the *Prelude and Fugue in E minor* is nicknamed "The Wedge". This is undoubtedly due to the wedge-shaped appearance of the fugue subject in notation form (it starts on a note and expands outwards at an even pace, resembling a hairpin or wedge). It is a substantial work, perhaps emanating from the Leipzig years, the final position that Bach held. Philipp Spitta (1841–1894), who published a two-volume biography of Bach in 1873, characterized the piece as a "two-movement symphony". It is indeed the longest prelude-fugue combination in Bach's output. The opening prelude is in a clear Italianate concert-ritornello form. The fugue has a sense of extraordinary power and energy, derived in part from the chromatic nature of the wedge-shaped fugue subject, creating a constant feeling of tension and release. It is the perfect partner in crime for the extraordinary power of the Kotzschmar organ!

Notes by James Kennerley, 2022

The Friends of the Kotzschmar Organ (FOKO) was founded in 1981 by a group of pipe organ lovers to provide concert programming and maintenance support for the Hermann Kotzschmar Memorial Organ, one of only two municipal organs in the United States.

FOKO is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

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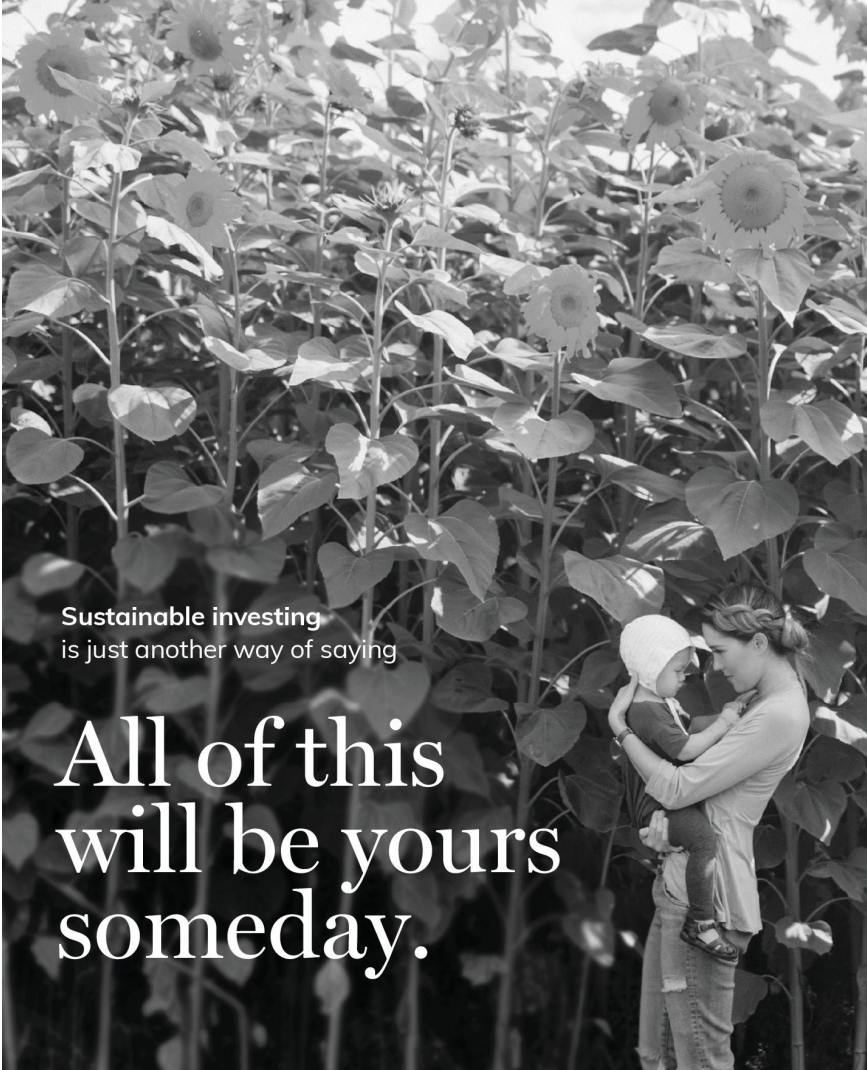
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