

Organs Are Not Just For Churches

Did you know that in the early 20th century, organs reached an unprecedented popularity as instruments for concerts, entertainment, and education? Organs were built in concert halls, municipal buildings, universities, homes, public schools, and even millionaires' yachts.

In 1958 the Dutch-built Flentrop organ arrived at Harvard University and more recently a long-awaited \$1.5 million organ was installed at the University of North Texas' Murchison Performing Arts Center.

As you can see, organs are still going strong and not just in houses of worship!

The American Guild of Organists (AGO) is the national professional association serving the organ and choral music fields. AGO serves approximately 20,000 members in 330 chapters throughout the United States, Europe, Korea and Singapore.

Here are some statistics and facts on organs that might help for a good story idea to spark your interest:

- As an instrument with a broad artistic construct, the organ can play everything from symphonies to jazz. It has been an instrument played by a spectrum of the musical giants throughout history, from jazz great Fats Waller to symphonic master Beethoven.
- The wide range of pipes found in each organ reveals an astonishing palette of musical hues that speak out of each "stop." There are metal pipes, wooden pipes, open pipes, stopped pipes, a pipe with a chimney, cylindrical pipes, conical pipes, tapered pipes, and over-blowing pipes.
- In 1939 Rockefeller Center completed its theater organ at Radio City Music Hall. It proved to be the last large theater organ built in the United States. This Winter, the organ will be played during the famous Radio City Christmas Spectacular!

If you would like to speak with regional organ experts, please feel free to contact me anytime and I will be more than happy to assist you in setting up an interview.

For more information on the AGO, please visit <http://www.agohq.org/home.html>.

Thank you and I look forward to speaking with you soon

Kind Regards,
Kristina Irwin

Hello Phyllis,

I wanted to run a segment idea by you that could be fun and interesting for your listeners: the organ . . . in all its glory! With its roots extending back to ancient Rome, the organ was **the world's first keyboard instrument**. It can have as many as 30,000 pipes, from the size of a pencil to the length of a trailer truck, and these pipes can be constructed from a variety of materials and formed into various shapes.

Most Americans today associate the pipe organ with church music, and the instrument remains a little known byway of musical and cultural history. The truth is, the organ has always had a more widespread role in our culture. In fact, it's been played by a large number of musical giants throughout history, from jazz great Fats Waller to Beethoven. It has also enjoyed somewhat of a resurgence in interest in recent years due to the opening of new concert halls in Boston, Nashville, Jackson and L.A., among other cities.

If you're interested in pursuing this, I could supply you with a wealth of audio tapes and video background information , including how organs are constructed and the largest and most unique organs in existence today, as well as arrange a spokesperson for you. The person I would like to suggest is **a child prodigy living in Philadelphia named Karen Christianson. Karen is a seventh grader and Organ Scholar at the Philadelphia Cathedral**. She's an amazing talent at her young age and would be happy to talk with you and/or demonstrate her organ playing skills. I've attached a copy of her C.V. so you can get a better idea of her musical background. If you would prefer an L.A.-based spokesperson, I could arrange that as well with, for example, the organist for the Disney Concert Hall or the El Capitan Theatre.

A feature on the organ would also be very timely as July, 2008 through June, 2009 has been declared the International Year of the Organ (IYO). Throughout the year, the American Guild of Organists (AGO) will be celebrating the organ through a series of special events, recitals and school programs. Showcasing the IYO will be an "Organ Spectacular," during which an estimated 250 organ concerts will be held throughout the world. The event, scheduled to be held on October 19, will be the world's largest organ concert and will feature the organ in its historic and evolving roles as a solo, accompanying and ensemble instrument.

I would be happy to provide you with additional information, if you'd like. In the meantime, I'd suggest you also check out the AGO website (www.agohq.org).

Thanks so much.

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