

FUN ORGAN FACTS

The largest pipe organ ever built, based on number of pipes, is located in the Boardwalk Hall Auditorium in Atlantic City, New Jersey. It was built between 1929 and 1932 and consists of 33,114 pipes and weighs roughly 150 tons. Sadly, this organ is no longer operational. * That's about the weight of 25 large male elephants or the size of one Blue Whale (did you know a blue whales tongue can weigh as much as one elephant)

The largest operational organ is the Wanamaker Grand Court Organ. Originally apart of Wanamaker's Department Store in Philadelphia, it is now owned by Macy's. It is second to the Boardwalk Hall organ in number of pipes at 28,677. However, it has the greatest weight of any organ in the world at 287 tons. It is still performed twice daily, Monday through Saturday.

There is an organ made entirely of bamboo located at St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church in Las Piñas Philippines. Building of the organ began in 1816 and was completed in 1824. Due to age and numerous national disasters, including earthquakes and a typhoon, the organ was rendered unplayable. Many restorations have been made, most notably in the 1970s when it was sent to Germany for repairs. It is now playable and several recordings have been made of it. The annual International Bamboo Organ Festival was established to celebrate the restoration of the unique instrument.

Sporting Instrument: The organ has been used at baseball, basketball and ice hockey games in the United States and Canada.

The Chicago Cubs were the first team to use the organ during play breaks in 1941.

The Brooklyn Dodgers hired baseball's first full-time organist, Gladys Gooding. She became so famous that a joke was made in her honor: "Who played every game last year for the Dodgers without making an error?".

In the 1990s, organists were replaced in ballparks by recorded music. However, many fans felt it was an essential part of the baseball game experience, so some fields have been reintroducing organ music. **In 2009, the Atlanta Braves brought back an organist to Turner Field. Current Braves organist is Matthew Kaminski** who recently appeared with the Georgia Polka Connection in Spivey Hall's 2015 World Music Festival.

WATER AND AIR

The concept of the organ appears to have been created in 246 BCE by Ctesibius of Alexandria. He invented a mechanical flute-playing instrument with wind pressure regulated by means of water pressure, called a hydraulis.

TOOTLING WHILE ROME BURNS

The first reference to hydraulis-playing, in the form of a "delphic inscription" was in 90 BCE. The instrument was introduced to Rome where Cicero, Lucretius, and Petronius wrote of its powers. Nero didn't fiddle (the violin hadn't been invented yet!) but he is said to have played the hydraulis (perhaps even while Rome burned).

GUITAR OF THE FIRST AND SECOND CENTURIES

The hydraulis spread throughout the Mediterranean region and is recorded as having been played at banquets, games and circuses. This is a very different vision of the organ than most Americans have today, who often link organs to more serious occasions.

AN ORGAN BY FEDERAL EXPRESS

In 757, Byzantine Emperor Constantius sent an organ and other costly gifts as peace offerings to Pepin the Short, King of the Franks. His act had remarkable consequences. In order that the gift might be copied, a Venetian monk was requested to teach organ building methods to students. From that time onward, the organ spread throughout Europe.

OUT OF THE CIRCUS AND INTO THE CHURCH

The organ began making its way into churches around 900 CE. Exactly how and why remains an enigma, but it appears that the organ was first used for ceremonial purposes. By the 1400s, the use of organs was well established in monastic churches and cathedrals throughout Europe. Large and small organs were in use on festival occasions and in alternation with church choirs for liturgical purposes. While most Americans may link the organ to the church, the instrument was around for more than 1100 years before it made its way into a church setting.

PULLING OUT ALL THE STOPS

Until about 1500, organs could only make one sound, regardless of how many pipes they had per note. Mechanisms were developed so that separate sets of pipes could be "stopped off." This meant they could be played alone, providing some variation in dynamics (degrees of loud and soft) and color. Today, we routinely associate the organ with the ability to generate an array of sounds—as well as the power to make a splash by "pulling out all the stops."

THE FIRST "MODERN" ORGAN

Between 1510 and 1520 a type of organ appeared in the upper Rhineland which incorporated virtually all features to be found in present-day organs. The "modern" organ, with all of its new stops and effects, was described in a work entitled *Mirror of the Organbuilder* by Arnolt Schlick of Heidelberg (1511).

JOHN WAYNE'S WESTERNS NEVER SHOWED THIS

In 1524 the first music school in Mexico was established by Spanish missionaries. Organ building was among the subjects taught. Native peoples displayed a gift for organ building and soon were

building organs independently. When the Cathedral in Mexico City desired a second large instrument, in 1735, it was a Mexican, José Nassarre, who was hired to build the organ.

NOT JUST A LOT OF WIVES

An inventory of the estate of Henry VIII, taken in 1547, revealed that he owned dozens of chamber organs, regals, and claviorgana (an instrument that used strings and pipes).

BEFORE THE EUROPEAN UNION

In 1599, Queen Elizabeth of England, seeking trade favors, sent a self-playing organ as a gift to the Sultan of Turkey. During Elizabeth's reign, keyboard music flourished; she encouraged notable composers such as Byrd, Bull and Gibbons.

NOT FOR PURITANS

Fearing Puritan persecution, members of the famed Dallam and Harris organ building families fled England for Brittany in 1642. Oliver Cromwell's Puritan movement, in power as of 1649, was responsible for destroying many organs and other works of art in English Churches. For the Puritans, the organ and its music represented anything but the piety and religiosity with which we often associate it.

BATTLE OF THE ORGANS

Famed composer Henry Purcell, appointed organist to the Chapel Royal of Charles II in 1682, played one of the organs in the great "battle of organs". The battle, between builders Harris and Smith, was to decide which builder should build the organ for London's Temple Church. Smith won!

PAUL'S REVERED ORGAN

In 1759 Thomas Johnston, a native of Boston, built an organ for Old North Church where Paul Revere was the sexton. The church was soon to become famous as a result of Revere's ride. The organ was enlarged many times and recently a new organ was build by David Moore, of Vermont, and the beautiful Johnston case restored.

GEORGE & THE ORGAN

Organs, an integral part of American society since its very beginnings, were exported to the American colonies before the Revolution. An organ by John Snetzler, official organ builder to King George III of England, was given by George Washington's physician, Dr. Samuel Bard to Bard's daughter, who played the instrument for the Father of our country.

HAYDN'S HIDDEN ORGAN

Composer Joseph Haydn wrote a set of pieces in 1772 to be played on a mechanical organ located in a clock.

THEY ALL PLAYED THE ORGAN

Mozart and Beethoven were both court organists. Mozart's appointment came in 1779 to the court of Salzburg and Beethoven's in 1784 to the court of Elector Max Franz. While we often associate J.S. Bach closely with the organ, many today do not think of Mozart and Beethoven as court organists. These positions were ones of importance to the composers, the courts and the people of western Europe. Other famous composers who were organists: Handel, Mendelssohn, Liszt, Franck, Dvorak, Bruckner, Fauré, Ives, and Messiaen.

MOZART WAS HIGH ON THE ORGAN

"In my eyes and ears...the king of instruments" (taken from a letter to his father dated 17-18 October 1777)

ORGANS AND THE MODERN AGE

Organs from several countries were featured in the 1851 Great Exhibition in London's Crystal Palace. In 1855 Joshua C. Stoddard of Worcester, England introduced a steam-powered organ called the calliope. The Worcester City Council banned him from playing it within the city limits because it was so loud. In 1934 Laurens Hammond patented an electronic keyboard instrument called the "Hammond Organ".

HEARINGS ON THE ORGAN

One of the liveliest chapters in American organ history began in 1934 when Laurens Hammond (owner of a clock manufacturing company) patented an electronic keyboard instrument called the "Hammond Organ". Hammond claimed that the instrument could equal a pipe organ in its range of harmonics and could produce the tone colors necessary for proper rendition of the great works of organ literature. Counter-claims were made by organ builders in organ periodicals. Complaints were filed with the Federal Trade Commission in 1935 and hearings were held in Chicago, Atlantic City and Washington, D.C. The outcome: In 1938, the FTC ordered the Hammond company to cease its claims that the instrument could equal a pipe organ.

NO STOPPING DISCRIMINATION

English organ recitalist and composer Elizabeth Stirling passed all of the requirements for a degree in music at Oxford in 1856. The degree was not awarded because only males were eligible for

Oxford degrees. Fortunately, times have changed. Today, males and females routinely hold positions as organists throughout our country—and Oxford degrees are awarded to both sexes.

ORGANS IN UTAH AND BOSTON

Joseph Ridges built the first organ in the Mormon Tabernacle, in Salt Lake City, Utah, in 1869. The same year witnessed the first Peace Jubilee held in Boston with an orchestra of 800, a chorus of 10,000, and a large organ made by the Hook & Hastings Organ Co. While 17th-century audiences consisted mostly of the aristocracy, music lovers from various economic and social strata began attending concerts during the 19th- and 20th-centuries which witnessed an increase in the size of performing ensembles, concert halls and organs.

MORE COMPLEX THAN WE REALIZE

According to Sir George Grove in his famous Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 1889: "The organ is, together with the clock, the most complex of all mechanical instruments developed before the Industrial Revolution. Among musical instruments its history is the most involved and wide-ranging, and its extant repertory the oldest and largest...No other instrument has inspired such avowed respect as the organ."

BEFORE THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS

Many great industrialists of the 19th century became patrons of the arts. For example, Andrew Carnegie began giving away organs in 1873 and organs made possible by gifts from Carnegie were installed in 8,812 churches, schools and civic institutions.

ORGAN SYMPHONY

In 1886 composer Camille Saint-Saens composed his third Symphony, the "Organ" symphony which includes a major part for an organ. This was the first work to place the organ in a prominent role in a symphonic setting.

MOVIES!

In 1910 the Wurlitzer company began building organs with special sound effects designed for use in movie theatres to accompany silent films. Large and spectacular organs could be found in beautifully crafted art deco movie theaters across America. Many a mighty Wurlitzer was switched off and many an organist out of a job when "talkies" successfully integrated sound on film.

PIPES WERE BIG BUSINESS

Pipe organs became big business in America. In just one year, 1927, 2,400 pipe organs were made (compared to 1,200 in 1909). 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 and even public schools. Marcel Dupré, the great French organist and composer, played 110 recitals in 1923-24 and French virtuoso Louis Vierne's tour of America included audiences of up to 30,000 per concert.

MUSIC TO SHOP BY

John Wanamaker, the owner of the largest department in the United States, and a patron of the arts and lover of music, built an organ in the center of his Philadelphia store. According to internationally known organist Louis Vierne, who journeyed from France to perform in America in 1927, the organ was the largest in the world at the time. Vierne recounts his experiences with the instrument: "In the evening the center of the store is transformed into an immense concert hall capable of holding more than ten thousand persons. I played before the audience with an emotion which I shall remember all my life."

ORGANS ON THE AIR

The first concert broadcast of organ music was made in 1922 in New York.

ROCKEFELLER CENTER HAS ONE, TOO

In 1939 Rockefeller Center completed its theater organ. It proved to be the last large theater organ built in the United States.

WAR PUTS THE STOPS ON ORGANS

Beginning in 1941, organ building in the U.S. and Europe came to a virtual standstill for five years. In Europe, times were even harder for organs. Many historic European organs, some of them centuries old, were destroyed by bombing, fires and vandalism.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

In 1961 Charles Fisk built an organ for a church in Baltimore, Maryland, the first of many organs inspired by historical European models to be built by his firm. Today many American organ building firms, located in every region of the country, emulate historical methods and techniques and create instruments which are a unique American blend of the old and the new.

ORGAN IN CHATTANOOGA

In 1986 famed organ builder John Brombaugh built two historically-inspired organs for Southern College, in Chattanooga, TN. The large instrument, with 4,860 pipes, is the largest mechanical-action organ ever built in the United States.

Since the strengths and weaknesses of the organ are difficult to understand without a good deal of playing experience, **most music composed for organ has been written by organists**. Since the majority of pre-twentieth-century organs were installed in churches, classical organ literature was almost exclusively written for liturgical use.

Many composers, therefore, are equally known for their performance talents, some historical examples being [Johann Sebastian Bach](#), [Dieterich Buxtehude](#), [Felix Mendelssohn](#), [Franz Liszt](#), [César Franck](#), [Camille Saint-Saëns](#), [Charles-Marie Widor](#), [Louis Vierne](#), and [Marcel Dupré](#). In Europe, the historical importance of churches as employers of musicians meant that many composers who now are very seldom remembered for their association with the organ were, nevertheless, engaged as professional organists: for example, [Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart](#) and [Edward Elgar](#).

Organ shoes are [shoes](#) worn by [organists](#), designed to facilitate playing of the [organ](#) pedal keyboard. Also, since organ shoes are worn only at the organ, the use of special footwear avoids picking up grit or grime that could scar or stain the [pedal](#) keys. Shoes are not always used, some famous organists like [Rhoda Scott](#) play with bare feet.

Fratelli Ruffatti (maker of the Spivey organ make all their own pipes in order to have full control over the tone quality of their instruments.