Sacred Sounds and Settings: Artistic Performance in Sacred Spaces

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- Organs in NYC
From the President

Dear Friends,

We are delighted to present our latest edition of Common Bond. In keeping with our May 5th and 6th 2018 Sacred Sites Open House theme, “Sacred Sounds and Settings,” this issue focuses on music, performance activities and related fundraising.

The issue includes information on historic pipe organ restoration, performance, and fundraising; ‘Best Practices’ for hosting musical events in houses of worship; The American Guild of Organists (AGO) and its chapters throughout New York state; and the New York City Organ Project, an ongoing project documenting organs past and present in the five boroughs.

It is also a pleasure to announce this year’s special, pre-booked Open House tours at participating sites. These include organ demonstrations and other musical pleasures at Manhattan’s Marble Collegiate Church; a concert featuring works by American composers at Christ Church Riverdale, the Bronx, with The Riverdale Choral Society; programs at three sites in Queens presented with the Queens Historical Society illustrating the amazing religious and musical diversity of this county, and a musical walking tour of Westerleigh (formerly National Prohibition Park) by Immanuel Union Church and the Westerleigh Improvement Society in Staten Island.

The Landmarks Conservancy’s 32 year old Sacred Sites program is dedicated to the preservation of historic religious architecture throughout New York State. We are one of a handful of programs in the country offering financial help to religious properties and the only program covering an entire state. Over the past three decades, our program has granted close to $10 million, helping restore 760 religious buildings of all denominations.

Our eighth annual Sacred Sites Open House offers the public an opportunity to enjoy art and architecture and learn about the social services and cultural programs religious institutions provide.

We hope you find this edition interesting and useful. And, we hope that this May finds you out and about exploring houses of worship in your area and perhaps becoming acquainted with a few you never before entered. We appreciate your interest and support.

Peg Breen
President

The New York Landmarks Conservancy’s Sacred Sites Program offers congregations throughout New York State financial and technical assistance to maintain, repair, and restore their buildings. In addition to providing hundreds of thousands of dollars in matching grants each year, the Conservancy offers technical help, workshops for building caretakers, and publications.

Common Bond is the technical journal of the Sacred Sites Program.

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Photo by Albert Jensen-Moulton

Back issues are available in print and online at http://www.nylandmarks.org/publications/common_bond/

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Fig. 1  New Glück organ for Faith Lutheran Church, New Providence, NJ. Photo by Albert Jensen-Moulton
Four Rules for Historic Pipe Organ Restoration and Maintenance

by Sebastian M. Glück

Buildings and pipe organs are large, multidisciplinary works of art in regular use, designed to last for centuries. They often are altered (even butchered) at great expense by succeeding generations as tastes, economies, societal attitudes, and modes of use change. Conversely, paintings, drawings, and sculptures are sold, moved, or stored without costly and irreversible changes when they are no longer in fashion. Buildings are exposed to the elements and begin to age even while under construction, yet they are expected to protect the artwork within them, including pipe organs.

Ecclesiastical structures are closed and razed weekly in this nation. Owners of surviving religious properties must invest in conservation, restoration, or adaptation to remain viable. The pipe organ is usually the most vulnerable and valuable thing they own beyond the building and land. Some pipe organs have a replacement value topping seven figures, yet they have minimal resale value since each organ is custom built for the structure that houses it (although my firm and others have saved historic organs from the wrecking ball and brought them to suitable homes). Most of New York City’s remaining pipe organs have suffered decades of neglect or vandalism by inexperienced practitioners hired without information, research, guidance, or diligence.

First Inviolable Rule: Your chosen organbuilder or a qualified organ consultant should be hired at the start of the project and included in all discussions during the planning phase. Your organist is neither a preservation architect nor an organbuilder. Not every consultant is qualified to understand historic structures, and actually may provide opinion but not project guidance. If you believe that wiring codes, insulation, interior finishes, additions or deletions of walls, space acquisition, structural changes, lighting, plumbing, fire suppression, HVAC, and especially subcontractor selection and scheduling have no effect upon the preservation or effectiveness of your new or historic organ, you are headed for disaster. The organbuilder must be involved every step of the way, and an agreement delineating their responsibilities and compensation should be drawn up and signed in advance.

When building work is carried out, even if it is just painting, the pipe organ must without exception be protected by a professional organbuilder—not the contractor, not the sexton, and not volunteers unless they are supervised by the organbuilder. Pipe organs are damaged and destroyed yearly by being left unprotected, improperly protected, followed by even worse damage by volunteers or custodians attempting to clean up the mess. If the project is of significant scope, the organ’s pipes may have to be removed and crated and the mechanical infrastructure and console (keydesk) encapsulated. Any allied work of art, such as a monumental organ case or stenciled facade, should be protected with a plywood shed, a suitable membrane, and a positive air pressure system designed and installed by the organbuilder.

In some cases, substantial portions of the organ should be removed from the building, but the recent trend in removing entire organs from buildings, including their superstructures, may not be in the best interests of the instrument.

Mid-century buildings have reached the tipping point for conservation, and in this new Glück organ for Faith Lutheran Church, New Providence, N.J. was one facet of a church campus expansion project. Cooperation between architect and organbuilder resulted in a very stable tuning situation because the organ had no exposure to outside walls. The mahogany case features 18th century massing and proportions while paying homage to the roof line, and strikes the balance between traditional and modern. The Wright-inspired railing for the new choir loft was also designed by the organ company. (fig. 1)

"The pipe organ is the first thing to come out and the last to be returned during any construction or preservation project."

Second Inviolable Rule: The pipe organ is the first thing to come out and the last to be returned during any construction or preservation project. An organ may conceal and block access to serious structural, material, and systems issues because of its bulk and location. Even with that awareness and a careful annual walkthrough of the organ’s interior with church authorities, such concerns may not come to light until after the organ is removed or inspected in preparation for the building project.
An organ should not be entered by anybody other than your organ curator (do you have one?). An observant curator will notice asbestos, a leaking toilet above the organ chamber, mold growth, roof leaks, electrical code violations, or rodent nests. During an initial call to a neglected organ, I discovered that two dozen square feet of a roof were removed by gnawing raccoons, who had filled the organ chamber with their droppings as the rain poured in for a decade.

“\nThe organ facade or organ case can be considered a work of art of particular merit.\n”

Third Inviolable Rule: No water in or above the organ. Water destroys far more pipe organs than fire, usually from leaking roofs, neglected plumbing, or accidentally triggered sprinklers. A new client came to this office with water damage to their 1931 organ, which had gone unexplained until our inspection revealed new HVAC units dripping condensation into the organ and rendering it unplayable.

Negotiate to keep fire suppression systems outside of the organ. For the three Glück organs at Temple Emanu-El, a hypersensitive smoke detection system was installed by the organbuilders under the supervision of the system’s manufacturer. At Marble Collegiate Church, negotiations between organbuilders and fire officials were laborious, but a compromise was reached to keep water out of the organ as much as possible.

Fourth Inviolable Rule: If your church or synagogue owns a pipe organ, the addition of any artificial digital sounds to the instrument immediately strips it of its historical value and integrity. Phrases like “sampled voices” and “virtual pipe organ” are used to deceive the client. It is fraudulent to remove pipes from an organ and replace them with short-lived circuits and speaker cabinets (what is the life of your average electronic gadget, versus the 700 year life of a pipe organ?). Such tactics are becoming more common, resulting in lawsuits against unscrupulous builders. If you have an artificial unit, an established organbuilder can relocate an historic pipe organ from a similarly sized closed institution for installation, although this can cost nearly as much as a new one.

If your organ survived 50 or 120 years without fakery and your organist is pushing for such cheap expediencies, bear in mind that the organist is utterly temporary over the life of the institution, but the building and pipe organ will endure. It is better to let the ailing instrument lie fallow than to pay to ruin your own property. Artificial sounds in pipe organs are strongly condemned by respected organbuilders and organbuilding trade associations. A recent consultancy for an important monument of American organbuilding in a Westchester landmark revealed not only mold and rodent conditions, but historically corrupting alterations, and digitally sampled additions. The recommendations for that restoration are all subtractive, peeling back layers of harmful additions.

The organ facade or organ case can be considered a work of art of particular merit. In some nations, organ cases are designated and restored, yet the instrument within is replaced. Organs can be in freestanding resonant cases, in chambers behind carved woodwork or plaster grilles, or simply fronted by organ pipes, some of which are speaking and some of which are non-speaking and used to fill in architectural balances. Most 19th century organs featured elaborately stenciled polychrome on the façade pipes, sometimes with textured paint, which can be found beneath layers of sloppy overpainting. Stencil restoration and replication is a sub-specialty of organbuilding.

The mammoth 1853 organ case at Marble Collegiate Church houses one of two new organs by Glück Pipe Organs, both of which incorporate some sets of heritage pipes from previous organs in the church. Inappropriate 20th
If a congregation is patient and committed to authenticity, the right organbuilder will have access to a period organ case from a closed edifice to purchase, restore, and bring to the client’s sanctuary to maintain a degree of artistic and historical integrity. Some contentious facets of organ restoration invariably surface during project planning:

The organ’s mechanism from the 4th century BCE until the 19th century consisted of direct mechanical linkages or “tracker” action. By the Industrial Revolution, tubular pneumatic actions were introduced, and since the last century, electropneumatic and all-electric actions have been the norm. In recent decades, there has been a return to all-mechanical actions in some academic circles. A decision to alter the mechanism will affect the historicity of an organ, as well as the manner in which it is played and the sound produced by its pipes. Nonetheless, some mechanisms were never well engineered, causing the organ to be abandoned because of the nuisance and expense, so technical revision might be necessary. Non-mechanical actions permit the use of a mobile console, a significant consideration for some congregations.
The organ’s sound or tonal structure is almost always the first and most radically altered aspect of an organ, a process by which matched sets or “ranks” of pipes are physically modified, added, substituted, or sent to the landfill based upon changing tastes (or merely upon the whims of an insistent organist). Some of the greatest instruments in the nation have been destroyed on the orders of an organist who did not care for the organ’s tone, or who felt that it was too small an instrument for their perceived needs. The imposed changes destroyed the unique tonal signature, and therefore the historical value of the organ (think of Bette Midler’s voice issuing from Julie Andrews).

That having been said, if an organ has never been successful, is not an exceptional work of art, does not serve its purpose, and is being rebuilt rather than restored, tonal alterations can be justified. As with buildings, if our judgment is to be trusted, we must acknowledge that “old” does not necessarily transmute to “fine.” If changes are to be made, an established organbuilder in the historic organ community often will be able to provide period pipes salvaged from a redundant organ, sometimes from the original builder, to create a seamless match.

The new Glück organ in the 19th century French style was commissioned by the late David Rockefeller for Union Church of Pocantico Hills. In addition to insurance and protection considerations for the stained glass windows by Chagall and Matisse, the firm collaborated with Historic Hudson Valley for the infill of a small lancet window in order to insulate the organ space. Each stone selected from the estate had to be approved by HHV, who undertook the work. The organ’s turbine was installed in the basement, and recirculates air taken from the church to stabilize temperature and humidity. (fig. 5)

Beware the denominational favorite. If an organbuilder is described as the “semi-official” Lutheran builder, or the firm that “does” all of the Catholic organs, you risk hiring somebody who feels no artistic or moral obligation to complete a sensitive or exemplary job. Their “approved vendor” status, granted by the hierarchy, does not bestow carte blanche to ruin an intact piece of your history. They require as much monitoring as any other group of craftsmen working on your building or its contents.

Financing the project can be a daunting prospect. This firm has built single-donor instruments and built organs with “adopt-a-pipe” programs by which each congregant has the opportunity to sponsor a pipe or part of the organ and receive recognition. There are a very few foundations with restrictions on the use of their grants for pipe organ projects. Some foundation grants strictly prohibit alterations to heritage cultural property organs. Be certain that your organbuilder does not violate those terms, as has happened recently in the tri-state area. It is a very serious preservation, legal, and ethical matter.

As with historic structures, the first step is to invest in a conditions survey, even if that is all that is immediately affordable. If finances are so rationed such that a new, restored, or refurbished organ cannot immediately be achieved, invest the funds in the protection and documentation of the organ, or in keeping a portion of it usable for services. Leave it in its dilapidated state until such time as it can be given the attention it is due by an educated, experienced, and ethical team of craftsman with a respected visionary at the helm.

We must dip our quill in the ink of medical ethics: First do no harm.

Sebastian M. Glück is President of Glück Pipe Organs, now in their fourth decade of restoring, designing, and building pipe organs for houses of worship and heritage cultural properties. He earned his AB in Architecture and MS in Historic Preservation from Columbia University, and is an author, lecturer, and consultant in the field.
Hilborne and Frank Roosevelt were the finest and most prestigious organbuilders in the nation following the American Reconstruction. Born in New York, the brothers were first cousins of President Theodore Roosevelt, bearing an uncanny resemblance to him, right down to their choice of eyeglass frames. When Brooklyn’s Schermerhorn Street Evangelical Lutheran Church was to be demolished in 2003, Glück Pipe Organs purchased and dismantled the landmark instrument in order to save it from the wrecking ball. It sat languishing in a warehouse for a decade, when the firm signed a contract to incorporate it into two new pipe organs at opposite ends of St. Patrick Catholic Church in Huntington, Long Island. As we go to press, Glück will use some of the rarest pipes to restore Roosevelt’s earliest known instrument at The College of Mount Saint Vincent in The Bronx. Pipes had been stolen from the college chapel in 1969, and since the Roosevelt brothers died in their thirties, there was great continuity of craftsmen between the 1873 organ and the 1889 organ, so the match is historically “on target,” befitting both historic organ and the landmark Founders Hall where the chapel and organ are housed.
Ten Steps to the Successful Funding of a New Pipe Organ

by Stephen F. Brannon
Consultant in philanthropy in Dover, Delaware

Introduction

The power and beauty of a pipe organ raises our spirits, it lifts our minds and hearts, and it inspires our lives. With its rich resources, the organ helps explain sacred mysteries, reveals divine grace, and stirs our deepest emotions. The unleashing of the full spectrum of an organ’s power can move us to tears, can console our grief, and can enhance our joy. It has been said that no other form of music acts so powerfully as an instrument of both meditation and celebration.

Based upon experience in church fundraising throughout the country, Ten Steps to the Successful Funding of a New Pipe Organ begins when a specific builder and organ design have been selected and options narrowed to such a degree that a fund-amount can be identified.

The acquisition of organ funds is a major project for most churches, and the task often reveals unfounded fears. Will the organ drive be successful? Can we raise this amount of money? What will we do if we fail to reach our goal? Are we taking on more of a challenge than we should? Will the organ fund draw contributions away from regular church support? Ten Steps clarifies the activities required for a successful campaign, and it provides instructions on how to organize and implement an effective fundraising plan. Through Ten Steps, an organ funding committee can lead a congregation through an innovative, enthusiastic campaign, which raises funds and expands the church’s understanding and appreciation of organ and choral music. While a pipe organ fundraising campaign requires dedicated labor, it has been proven over and over again that it remains an enjoyable and satisfying experience for all participants.

Establish an Organ Fundraising Committee

Churches commonly establish organ selection committees which also serve as organ fundraising committees. However, since the organ selection committee works months and sometimes years in advance of any fundraising, and since the two processes of selecting a new instrument and raising funds to meet its costs involve differing scopes of knowledge and skill we recommend the formation of two separate committees, the organ selection committee and the organ fundraising committee.

Of singular importance to the success of the organ fundraising committee is the enlistment of the chairperson. Choose well. The chairperson, while knowledgeable about the organ, should have a greater understanding about how to motivate some individuals to serve on a committee and others to lend financial and personal support to a worthwhile project. The chairperson should make a leadership gift, likely being the first to make a gift. Both time and energy are required for a successful campaign, and the chairperson should have staying power.

Members of the organ fundraising committee should be influential and involved congregants, who early on make their own gifts to the organ fund. Usually, the organ fundraising committee includes representatives from various church constituencies: older members, middle-aged members, those married with children, young marrieds, singles, youth, musicians, those with local business connections, and those with college or university connections. It is important that the organ fundraising committee includes some members of the organ selection committee. The director of music, organist, or choirmaster may be considered, but having the organist and choir director visibly active in fundraising is not always good. In one church the congregation incorrectly surmised that the organist wanted a new organ for her own self interest, and that
the congregation was being asked to pay for it. Even the hint of this could be a problem.

Participation on the committee requires a strong, personal commitment, but there are many wonderful rewards for the service. It is not at all unusual at an organ dedication service to find the committee gathering to talk about the fun they had while working on the campaign. Often they are sorry the project is over, they want to keep going. While many campaigns, even sizable ones, have been successful without the aid of a professional fundraiser; the organ fundraising committee will need to decide whether or not to hire a professional fundraiser. Firms are available in all local areas, and you may contact them through either of these two professional fundraising organizations:

Association of Fund Raising Professionals
4300 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 300
Arlington, Virginia 22203
Tel: 703.684.0410
www.afpnet.org

American Association of Fund Raising Counsel
4700 West Lake Avenue
Glenview, Illinois 60025
Tel: 800.462.2372
www.givinginstitute.org

Determine the Clergy’s Role

How he religious leadership fits into the organ fundraising effort is largely dependent upon a religious institution’s policy and the leader’s personal preference and style, but the chaplain often serves as an ex-officio member of the organ fundraising committee.

The spiritual advisor and guide is always at the heart of activities, and certainly can encourage, inspire, and facilitate the fundraising committee in several specific ways. First, the religious leader shows support from the pulpit for the project. Second, knowing the congregation in great detail, the chaplain serves as a guide concerning who should be solicited, by whom, for how much-and who should be left alone. Third, the religious leadership often asks for gifts. In some instances, the chaplain alone has raised the entire amount needed for a new pipe organ.

Set the Goal

In nearly all first-time campaigns, the church faces an apparent dilemma between the amount of money needed for a new organ and the amount the church believes it has the capacity to raise. Too many churches make the mistake of guessing what can likely be raised from the congregation, usually based only upon anecdotal information. An unreliable estimate sometimes determines the price range of a new instrument. How does a church handle this dilemma?

First, determine the most desirable instrument for the needs of the church, then the selection’s cost becomes the basis for testing a possible campaign objective and for establishing a more realistic goal. From experience, we know that organs for most churches will fall within three broad ranges of costs, depending upon the size of the church:

- Lower Range: $100,000 - $400,000
- $400,000 - $800,000
- $800,000 - $1.5 million

Also from experience, we know that successful campaigns will reflect the following general divisions:

- One or two gifts will equal approximately 20% of the goal.
- The top thirty gifts will equal approximately 60% of the goal.
- Another seventy-five gifts will equal approximately 15% of the goal.
- The final five percent of the goal will come from many smaller gifts.

Research and Evaluate the Prospects

All individuals, groups, or businesses who could possibly contribute to your organ fund should be included on the prospect list. Enumerate those with close ties to your church: church members, former church members, choir members, former choir members, etc. Add those businesses owned or operated by church members. Community musicians and local music organizations and groups could be viable prospects. Also, national, regional, and local denominational funding sources should be explored.

A fundraising standard based upon successful campaigns suggests that the committee should identify at least three prospects for each gift needed. The committee can expect that with three prospects for a $10,000 gift, one of the prospects is likely to give $10,000 and the other two will usually make gifts, but not of that amount. A quick and easy way to conduct such prospect evaluation is to enlist an ad hoc committee, made up of three to five individuals, familiar with church giving patterns, and knowledgeable about the local community. The work of the prospect evaluation committee is always conducted in absolute confidence.

For additional help, reference sections of city and university libraries are filled with fundraising resources. Either in a
separate fundraising division or as part of the reference section, volumes of materials are available to guide you through individual and family giving, to direct you to biographical listings of wealthy individuals, and to instruct you in grants-writing for family foundations.

Create Individual Cultivation Plans

When the work of the prospect evaluation committee is completed, a cultivation plan is prepared, which lists the action steps required to solicit a gift from each prospect. Many prospects will fall into categories according to gift sizes, and the organ fundraising committee might wish to solicit some prospects individually while approaching others as a group. What information is needed to bring the prospect into a full understanding of the need for the organ? Who will ask for the gift? When is it appropriate to ask for the gift? Your cultivation plan will map all the steps required to move the prospective donor to the point of making a gift.

After reviewing the gift evaluations and the prospect cultivation plans, the organ fundraising committee can determine the information and activities needed to “make the case” for the new organ: What information should be included in weekly church bulletins? in the church newsletter? in displays? in brochures? in direct mailing of information packages? etc.

Select Ways to Raise Gift Dollars

Gifts of cash are the primary focus of each solicitation. Always the quickest route to reaching the goal, cash gifts can be solicited directly from the donor, either as a lump sum gift or as a gift payable over a period of time. The majority of new pipe organ funds are raised after signing the contract with the organ builder, and the committee can determine the length of time appropriate for gift payments-to coincide with the organ builder’s payment schedule.

While the bulk of the organ fund goal is most often reached only through sizable gifts of cash from individuals, the organ fundraising committee may consider other ways to raise gift dollars, as described below. During the identification and evaluation period before the actual campaign begins, consideration should be given to the several ways to raise gift dollars.

Financing the Organ

Some congregations choose to borrow all or a portion of the cost (usually one-third) from other church funds, from banks, from church members, or from other churches with large endowments. In at least one instance, a congregation borrowed a nest egg amount and gave it to investors to multiply into a larger amount. Often the amount borrowed is tied to the organ builder’s payment schedule and paid back as the gifts are raised from the donors.

Using Bonds to Raise the Funds

While not frequently encountered in church-related fundraising, the issuance of bonds earning interest may become a worthwhile consideration. One successful church campaign included the use of two hundred “Organ Notes” bearing a face value of $500, earning 6% simple annual interest. The holders of these notes could donate the interest earned each year, for a tax deduction, accumulate interest payments and donate them all at the same time, donate all or a portion of the amount loaned when the note became due, or collect the total principal and interest, without making a donation.
Disaster can sometimes present an opportunity for an expanded music program. Central Synagogue, and 1871, Moorish Revival landmark synagogue in Manhattan, received the gift of a new organ in 2002, part of a multi-million dollar fundraising effort that followed a devastating 1998 fire. The fire gutted the sanctuary, requiring comprehensive reconstruction and restoration of the synagogue exterior and interior, as well as replacement of the 1926 organ destroyed in the fire.

**Challenge Gift**

The organ fundraising committee should consider a challenge gift to spur others to give. Often the donor of a sizable gift will agree to match other gifts within a particular period of time. A challenge gift could become an effective part of the campaign strategies and plans.

**Interest Income**

Interest income from early gifts is a reliable way to raise additional funds, providing a significant percentage of the total raised. It is important to focus early on donors who have the potential to give large gifts; these early gifts can produce an extra margin of interest income.

**Gifts of Property**

While some donors can’t contribute much money, they might be able to give gifts of real estate, art works, rare books, etc. Prior to the campaign, the organ fundraising committee should determine how such gifts will be accepted and liquidated.

**Bequests and Wills**

An organ drive is a good time to educate religious institution members to the effectiveness of including the organ fund in their wills, for a specific gift amount, for a percentage of the total worth of the estate, or for the entire estate. Other forms of planned or deferred giving could also become part of the solicitation strategies. Individuals often create deferred gifts, through their own advisors and lawyers, by including the organ fund in their wills, establishing a charitable remainder trust, and through other bequest provisions. Bankers, investment advisors, and lawyers in the religious institution can establish an ad hoc advisory board to safeguard the interests of the religious institution while providing counsel and advice to the donors.

**Special Offerings or Donation Requests**

Most religious institutions only raise modest funds through special offerings or donation requests, but they find them a reliable way to regularly claim the congregation’s attention. Special offerings or donation requests tied to concerts and music programs, “Pennies for Pipes” jars, and monthly pew envelopes are such possibilities. One congregation discovered that during the Depression members in their church sold the eggs which their chickens laid on Sundays and contributed that income to a church project; current members decided to contribute for a certain period of time interest income earned on Sundays from investment “nest eggs.” Another church divided the total number of Doxology notes into their organ fund goal; each Sunday the organist played only those notes which were “paid for,” indicating the weekly progress of the organ fund.

**Souvenir Pipes**

When an old organ is dismantled to make room for a new one, selling parts of the old organ can raise additional funds. Likewise, naming specific parts of the new organ as memorial or tribute gifts is equally effective in generating gifts.

**Events**

Music-oriented events, concerts, movies, variety shows, dinners, etc., provide excellent entertainment and raise
important gift dollars. Such events attract guests from outside the congregation, expanding the scope of possible donors, while keeping the organ fund fresh in the minds of everyone.

**Project Based**

Many religious institutions use a variety of projects to raise gift income. Dinners, car washes, bake sales, rummage sales, silent auctions, cook books, raffles, holiday wreaths and wrapping paper, recycling bins, paper drives, ice cream socials, flower arranging sales, and craft fairs have figured in many.

**Single Donor**

In some instances, religious institutions discover that a new pipe organ may be donated entirely by a single donor. Such an act is often the response to an opportunity to name the organ in memory or in tribute to an individual or family.

**Organize the Fundraising Timetable**

It is important to construct a fundraising schedule or timetable, and it is equally important to remember that you will likely make several schedule adjustments as the campaign unfolds. However, the committee should expect to spend from three to eighteen months on the preparation, cultivation, and solicitation phases of the campaign, while allowing pledge payments to be made over a period of two to three years. Depending upon the size of the gift, some pledge payments could take up to five years. Of course, circumstances within individual churches, such as the overall goal and the number of prospective donors, require shorter or longer periods. A quick campaign could be completed within six months; a moderate campaign usually takes from twelve to twenty-four months; a long-term campaign could stretch out for four or five years.

A campaign timetable checklist reflects the following phases:

**Phase 1: Preparation (4-6 Months)**

- Establish the nature and scope of the campaign
- Determine the overall goal for the campaign
- Relate the organ project to the general church budget
- Explore monthly payments to possible lenders
- Determine amount to come from gift income
- Decide what the organ fundraising campaign will cost
- Prepare a campaign budget
- Draft the case for support
- Establish the organ fundraising committee
- Identify and evaluate the prospects
- Develop the cultivation plans for prospects

**Phase 2: Cultivation and Solicitation (6-8 Months)**

**Cultivation**

- Presentation Meetings
- Brochures
- Concerts
- Worship Bulletins
- Direct Mail

**Solicitation**

- Chair and Members of Organ Fundraising Committee
- Key Prospects for Leadership Gifts
- Challenge Gift
- Individual Solicitations
- Direct Mail Solicitations
- Telephone Solicitations
- Grant Proposals

**Acknowledgements**

- Thank-you Letters
- Order Plaques
- Compile Recognition Opportunities
- Plan Campaign Celebration Service

**Phase 3: Pledge Payment Period (1-5 Years)**

**Produce Fundraising Publications**

Campaign publications inform prospective donors of the need for a new organ, describe the scope of the campaign, and provide periodic updates on the progress of the organ fund. Early campaign plans should include careful consideration of the use of Sunday bulletins for updates, progress charts conspicuously posted, and a special campaign newsletter and progress reports along with interesting and motivating stories about the organ fundraising committee, the organ itself, the organ builder, etc.

An important campaign publication is the case statement brochure, which literally makes the “case” for the new organ, through a narrative which includes several important elements: history of the old organ, valuation of the old organ, the need for a new organ, the process of selecting a new organ, description of new organ with pictures, history of organ builder, cost of the new organ, fundraising plan, committee, timetable, etc, asking for a gift, ways to make a gift to the organ fund.

Obviously, the case for support should be drafted by someone with full knowledge of the organ and the fundraising process.
Our Lady of Refuge, just seven blocks away, raised $250,000 to restore their badly deteriorated organ painstakingly, over a period of six years, from 2006 to 2012, primarily via a dedicated young organist and parishioner who created and donated organ music recordings, generated substantial press coverage, and conducted what was an early example of a social media crowdfunding campaign. The church website thanks their hundreds of donors by name: https://olrbrooklyn.org/our-donors

Two Roman Catholic Churches located near one another in the Flatbush neighborhood of Brooklyn used different approaches to organ restoration. Holy Innocents in Flatbush was fortunate to secure a substantial, and rare, foundation grant from the Bradley Foundation for the restoration of their Skinner organ. The organ restoration and reinstallation, however, both necessitated and served as springboard for the restoration of the church’s leaky copper roof, and water-damaged interior, requiring a major fundraising effort. School alumni participated in a gala fundraising dinner at which the Bradley Foundation and other donors were honored.
Based upon the cultivation plans for each prospect, solicitation efforts will include individuals asking other individuals, congregational appeals, direct mail solicitations, grant proposals to foundations, phonathons, etc.

Orchestrating the solicitations is the key to success. It is advisable to begin this process with those closest to the project: the chair and members of the organ fundraising committee, key individuals who can make leadership gifts, the congregation, and others. Share with the prospects the fundraising plan, including the range of specific gifts needed. When a prospect sees that the goal can’t be reached unless certain gift levels are obtained, they are more likely to seriously consider solicitations of particular amounts. Also, early gifts allow donors to influence and help other donors.

Who asks for the gift? Simply put, the person who asks for the gift is the one person to whom the donor won’t say “no.” Your cultivation plan for each donor should identify the donor’s key solicitation volunteer. It can be the minister, the organist, a close friend, etc. How does one actually ask for the gift? There is no exact formula for success in asking for a gift. One should always find a way that is innately comfortable, which also allows one to rely upon well-practiced interpersonal communication skills. It is often helpful to tell what other gifts have been made. For many, one of the hardest moments in the solicitation process is asking the donor for a specific gift amount.

How should the question be asked? Never say, “We have put you down for $.” Experienced fundraisers suggest this approach: “Will you consider a gift of $?” Usually this phrasing is more comfortable for both the volunteer and for the donor.

Recognize the Gift

Each gift to the organ fund should be recognized immediately through a thank-you letter from the campaign chairperson, the minister, or both. Neither the name of the donor nor the size of the gift should ever be published without the permission of the donor, but special honor lists are usually prepared at the conclusion of the campaign. Plaques listing all donors, usually arranged according to gift ranges (leadership, major, special, etc.), are frequently mounted in a public space. Naming opportunities for parts of the organ, or for all of it, are normally recognized with plaques. The organ dedication event offers many wonderful opportunities to publicly acknowledge all the donors.
Jewish Heritage Grants

The Jewish Heritage Fund allows the Conservancy to make challenge grants of between $25,000 and $75,000 to assist major repair and restoration projects at New York City’s historic synagogues. In 2017, two grants were awarded, totaling $90,000. The average grant pledge in 2017 was $45,000. Since its launch in 2010, the program has pledged 20 challenge grants totaling $710,000, facilitating over $6.6 million in restoration projects.

2017 Grantees include:

Kings (Brooklyn)
Congregation Kol Israel, Crown Heights
Restoration of Brick Masonry
New Copper Leader $50,000

Park Slope Jewish Center, Park Slope
Exterior Restoration $40,000

Sacred Sites Challenge Grants

Sacred Sites Challenge grants of $25,000 to $75,000 are awarded statewide for major restoration projects at historic houses of worship of all denominations. In 2017, seven grants were awarded, totaling $215,000, with the average pledge totaling about $30,000. These grants helped fund over $2.2 million in comprehensive masonry, slate roof, and steeple restoration projects.

2017 Grantees include:

Albany
Westminster Presbyterian Church, Albany
Steeple Restoration $30,000

Chatauqua
St. Luke’s Episcopal Church, Jamestown
Exterior Restoration $45,000

Monroe
Christ Church, Rochester
Window Bay Reconstruction $25,000

Columbia
First Presbyterian Church, Hudson
Repair and Replace Existing Roof Structure and Roof $25,000

Nassau
Trinity Episcopal Church, Roslyn
Foundation and Floor Repairs and Restoration $25,000

New York (Manhattan)
St. Peter’s Episcopal Church, Chelsea
Exterior Regrouting and Repointing of Church Walls $25,000

Washington
Bottskill Baptist Church, Greenwich
Roof Truss Stabilization and Repair $40,000
Sacred Sites and Consulting Grants

The New York Landmarks Conservancy awards Sacred Sites and Consulting Grants to congregations that are planning or undertaking the restoration of historic religious properties. In 2017, the Sacred Sites program pledged a total of $192,100 in the form of 32 grants to 31 religious institutions throughout New York State, leveraging over $1 million in repair and restoration projects.

To be eligible for our grant programs, properties must be located in New York State, owned by a religious institution and actively used for worship, and listed on the State or National Register of Historic Places or designated pursuant to a local landmarks ordinance by New York State. Eligible properties include churches, synagogues, meetinghouses, mosques, and temples. The maximum Sacred Sites grant is $10,000. In 2017, the average Sacred Sites grant award for bricks-and-mortar repair and restoration was about $5,900. The maximum Consulting Grant, for project planning costs, is $7,500. In 2017, the average award for Consulting Grants was about $5,600.

2017 Grantees include:

**Albany**
- Presbyterian Church of Rensselaerville, Rensselaerville
  - New Standing Seam Metal Roof
  - $4,000

**Columbia**
- St. Peter’s Presbyterian Church, Spencertown
  - Roof Repair and Replacement
  - $4,000

**Erie**
- Our Savior Lutheran Church, Buffalo
  - Slate Roof and Copper Flashing Repair
  - $1,000
- St. John’s Grace Episcopal Church, Buffalo
  - Master Plan to Guide Restoration and Potential Partial Adaptive Use Scope
  - $4,000
- University Presbyterian Church, Buffalo
  - Architectural Services to Guide Tower Masonry Restoration
  - $2,000
  - Tower Masonry Restoration
  - $7,000

**Fulton**
- St. John’s Episcopal Church, Johnstown
  - Historic Structure Report
  - $7,500

**Greene**
- Christ Episcopal Church, Greenville
  - Masonry Restoration
  - $4,500
- First Reformed Church, Athens
  - Repair of Steeple and Dormers
  - $10,000
- Windham-Hensonville United Methodist Church, Windham
  - Roof Replacement
  - $8,000

**Hamilton**
- Church of the Lakes, Inlet
  - Stained Glass Window Restoration
  - $6,000

**Kings (Brooklyn)**
- Church of St. Ann and the Holy Trinity, Brooklyn Heights
  - Tower Brownstone Evaluation
  - $7,500

**Monroe**
- First United Congregational Church of Christ, Fairport
  - Replace Sanctuary Roof
  - $5,000
- Jefferson Avenue Seventh-day Adventist Church, Rochester
  - Stained Glass Restoration
  - $7,000

**New York (Manhattan)**
- Broadway Presbyterian Church, Morningside Heights
  - Architectural Fees for Exterior Envelope Restoration
  - $7,500
- Congregation Ohab Zedek, Upper West Side
  - Conditions Assessment
  - $5,500
- First Chinese Presbyterian, Chinatown
  - Architectural Fees for Roof Replacement Over Sanctuary and Bell Tower
  - $7,500
- Greater Metropolitan Baptist Church, Harlem
  - Stained Glass Conditions Assessment
  - $2,600
- St. Mary’s American Orthodox Greek Catholic Church, Lower East Side
  - Façade Inspection
  - $6,000
- West Park Presbyterian Church, Upper West Side
  - Roof Replacement Project Management Services
  - $2,500
- Yeshe Nyingpo, Chelsea
  - Front Entry Door Restoration
  - $3,000
Onondaga
Assumption Church, Syracuse
New Protective Glazing at Stained Glass Windows  $8,000

St. James Episcopal Church, Skaneateles
Stained Glass Restoration  $5,000

Orange
St. George’s Episcopal Church, Newburgh
Existing Conditions Study  $7,000

Rensselaer
First United Presbyterian Church of Troy, Troy
Feasibility Study for Increased Community Use  $4,000

Joy of Troy Seventh-day Adventist Church, Troy
Bell Tower Window Repair and Restoration  $10,000

Suffolk
Bethel A.M.E. Church, Huntington
Repair and Restoration of Stained Glass Windows  $10,000

Sullivan
St. John’s Episcopal Church, Monticello
Conditions Assessment  $6,000

Tioaga
Christ the King Fellowship Presbyterian Church, Spencer
Restoration of Stained Glass Windows  $10,000

Tompkins
First Baptist Church of DeWitt Park, Ithaca
Restoration of Stained Glass Window  $5,000
Performing Partnerships in Spiritual Settings:
Best Practices for Hosting Musical Events
in Your House of Worship

Music has great power.

While liturgical music remains an integral part of many worship services, some churches and synagogues also host concerts and performing arts programs either as fundraisers or part of the organization’s mission of community service. In some cases, congregations develop partnerships with arts groups, renting their unused space and turning otherwise empty real estate into a source of revenue.

Managing an artistic partnership requires the congregation to address numerous logistical and practical issues including scheduling, insurance, and marketing, and other unforeseen complications that inevitably arise. Compounding this challenge is the fact that many religious institutions function with limited staffs, both paid and volunteer, whose time is stretched by multiple responsibilities. To be successful, consider these ideas from congregations around New York City and State.

Planning Ahead Pays Off

In addition to its comprehensive liturgical music program, Christ and St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church, on Manhattan’s Upper West Side, produces concerts throughout the year. As part of their Adonai Concert outreach ministry, the church rents space at non-profit rates to musicians of all ages and types including choral groups, piano schools, opera companies, chamber groups and others. According to the Director of Concerts, Leonarda Priore, who is also the church’s book-keeper, many of these events are booked up to a year in advance.

At Kehila Kedosha Janina, (KKJ) the only Romaniote (Greek Jewish) Synagogue and Museum in the Western Hemisphere, long range planning is also a key to success. Offerings at KKJ, located on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, include their annual Greek Jewish Festival, an outdoor block party held each May, with traditional Greek dancing and live Greek and Sephardic music (fig. 1). The congregation also hosts Greek, Israeli and Ladino music performances throughout the year in the sanctuary, as well as a variety of public lectures and film screenings on Romaniote, Sephardic, and Jewish topics. “My calendar fills way into the next year,” says Marcia Haddad Ikonomopolus, Museum Director, who also organizes the events.

Selecting an advantageous day and time for an event is another planning consideration. “Some days are more popular than others which can influence audience turnout,” notes Elissa Sampson, long-term member of the Stanton Street Synagogue, also located on Manhattan’s Lower East Side. “Saturday nights tend to produce the largest crowds although Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings are also good choices. Sunday afternoons work well,” she adds, “but try to avoid Sunday evenings as this is typically a ‘stay at home’ night.” During the year, Stanton Street hosts concerts featuring many types of music including klezmer, folk, classical, opera, and “classical minimal” like the work of Steve Reich. (fig. 2)

“First Presbyterian Church of Buffalo has a long standing friendship with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, headquartered in the Eero Saarinen-designed Kleinhans Music Hall, right across the street,” says Dr. David Bond, organist and choirmaster. “The orchestra has been very supportive of church fund-raising efforts and did two fund-raisers for us, both set up through One Symphony Circle, the non-profit that facilitates grants for the restoration of the church building as an historic structure,” he adds. First Presbyterian hosts four concerts by the Ars Nova Musicians Chamber Orchestra each year as well as other events by outside groups who rent space in the church. (fig. 3)
**Identify a Point Person**

To help guarantee a successful event, one person should be given the task of making the major decisions and serving as the liaison between institution and performers. Ideally, the point person should be a ‘take charge’ person as well as a good leader and be able to multi-task, all with a “cool head” to cope with inevitable last-minute problems. However, even a capable leader needs the full support of the rest of the organization.

**Delegate Duties as Needed**

Of course, the point person will not manage all tasks personally and therefore must know how to delegate responsibilities that may include opening and closing the building, dealing with caterers, arranging parking and handling maintenance issues.

“Some churches pay the sexton to be on site whenever a group is rehearsing,” says Jennifer Clarke, Executive Director of Associated Chamber Music Players (ACMP) and Executive Director of Melodia Women’s Choir of New York. Since it is important for religious institutions to recoup all the programming costs of hosting an outside group, some institutions charge a fee for custodial services in addition to a space rental fee. For example, St. Jean Baptiste Roman Catholic Church on the Upper East Side of Manhattan instituted a surcharge for staffing costs which typically include opening up the church for piano tuners and rehearsing performers, making sure lights and heat are on, setting up chairs, arranging and monitoring a greenroom, and dealing with microphones and other audio/visual needs.

If the event requires parking, details and instructions should be clarified and clearly conveyed to both performers and public. When an event includes elected officials, VIPs, or honorees, the point person should make sure that appropriate church or synagogue members are on hand to greet them as they arrive at the site.

If the sexton is unavailable, The Church of St. Luke and St. Matthew in Brooklyn employs a key pad with a special code for each outside group to use. Since 2012, the church has been home to Gallim Dance, one of New York’s leading contemporary dance companies, which hosts weekly dance classes, including one with an Afro-Caribbean focus; specialized movement workshops; artist residencies and a monthly performing arts series. (fig. 4) In addition, the church’s choir presents an annual spring concert and rehearses at the church throughout the year.
At First Baptist Church, Niagara Falls, the Church soloist and Director of Music share responsibility for arranging musical events with maintenance managed by the administration. The church has a long history of the ‘Gift of Music,’” reports James Flood, Church Administrator, “and has concerts each month from October through April with a mix of offerings including classical, handbell, choral, Gospel, folk and other types of music.” Although this is a small congregation, these musical offerings fill a void says Flood, noting that “Church members attend as do those who follow a particular group or artist, sometimes coming from Canada, Buffalo and towns in the area. Our audiences range in size from thirty or forty people to over one hundred.” (fig. 5)

Investigate Insurance

Early in the planning phase, contact the religious institution’s insurance agent to find out what the existing policy covers. Some institutions like Kehila Kedosha Janina have policies that cover everything from musicians to the public; others insure each event under a special policy. In most instances, “outside” performing groups provide their own certificate of insurance, listing the host site as an additional insured, as is the practice at B’nai Jeshurun in Manhattan where a tribute to musician Leonard Cohen, held in the sanctuary, attracted seven hundred people.

“BJ is known for its wonderful music as part of services,” says Cantor David Mintz. “We wanted to expand opportunities to connect with our Center for Prayer and Spirituality which the Leonard Cohen concert did. We also had a Balkan group, Tavche Gravche, led by our Music Director, Dan Nadel, which focused on Jewish themes and texts working in the context of a different musical genre and plan a concert highlighting kirtan music that comes from India and other parts of Southeast Asia. Each of these offerings adds to the spiritual dimension.” (fig. 6)

At St. Jean Baptiste Church on Manhattan’s Upper East Side, groups renting their theater obtain their own insurance with the church directing them to the Archdiocese office that helps work through the process. “The church also carries its own insurance, so we are very well covered,” reports Father John A. Kamas, SSS. The Katherine Martyn Theater, located in the basement of the church, is rented mostly by schools for music classes although other non-profits, like the Blue Hill Troupe, an amateur theater group established in 1924, rent it on occasion. Camarata New York, an acclaimed orchestra that is currently the ensemble-in-residence at St. Jean’s, gives several concerts in the church sanctuary each year. (fig. 7) The church is also host to several choral groups.

Strategize for Robust Ticket Sales

Getting the word out is the key to selling tickets.

All organizations will use some form of marketing to promote their special events, whether it is posting it on their website, sending emails to members, listing an announcement in their weekly bulletin or all these. Many also use social media, especially Facebook. But when performing groups are renting space for their own event, promotion and ticket sales functions lie with the particular group and not the congregation. Nevertheless, promotion is a task that can be shared with the local church or synagogue host.
The host may permit banners to be placed outside the venue as well as assisting the group in sending postcards and flyers to its membership.

**The First Reformed Church of Athens, New York** actively publicizes the Hudson River Bells, their handbell choir, under the direction of Music Director Kathy Boyer. “We have a sign in front of the church for about a month in advance of a performance,” says Boyer. “We also write an article and provide information to our local paper, the Register Star and the Times Union in Albany as well as posting details on a local television public service channel. Other outreach includes distributing posters county-wide, putting information on our website and the HRB Facebook page, and asking the groups’ members to post on their own pages, as well as mailing reminder cards. In December when the Athens community band performs, it handles its own publicity.” (fig. 8)

When an event is a fundraiser, many organizations honor people who are friends of the institution. When prospects are asked to lend their names, the contact should explain that in return for the honor they will be asked to reach out to their own friends and families to further build the audience. Honorees should be recognized in all promotional materials, on the program, in a journal or in any other way that makes them feel valued.

Institutions sell tickets in person at the office, online through a website, or at the door, often at a slightly higher fee to encourage advance purchases. Although most sell tickets for an event, a few, like First Baptist Church, Niagara Falls will take a free-will offering during the event.

**Think Through Refreshments**

Serving refreshments is a good way to make an audience feel welcome. At some congregations like the First Reformed Church of Athens, parishioners are asked to provide homemade goodies while others simply hire a local caterer. However, the choice should be made thoughtfully:

“No one can use our church kitchen unless they are certified with New York State, so we stress using a caterer,” according to Rev. Imani N. Dodley, Pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Reformer in Rochester.

If plans include a reception with wine or liquor, discuss this with the insurance agent as a special permit and/or insurance rider may be necessary. When serving alcohol, offering coffee and small snacks at the same time is a good idea, notes Elissa Sampson as this may help decrease insurance costs.

**Finally, a great many religious institutions seek additional sources of revenue.**

Since houses of worship are primarily used for worship services that generally only occur once a week, congregations can raise income through renting their spaces on off days. Local music schools, conservatories, performing arts groups and other organizations may be interested if they know that a building can be used for performances, rehearsals, recordings, etc. If a congregation has a floor especially suited for dance, an organ that students can use to practice or other unique features, let them know: think about how your building can broaden its community appeal. “Houses of worship preserve beauty including the arts for the community,” says St. Jean’s Father Kamas. “These great gifts are a treasure we are proud to pass along.”

**Why offer music in addition to that which is part of worship?**

Rev. L. Kathleen Liles of Christ & Saint Stephen’s Church, sums it up eloquently:

“In a religiously diverse, music loving neighborhood such as ours, music unites while dogma divides,” she says. “Regardless of creed, the heart is moved and the soul refreshed by music. Our concert series enables us to open our doors to neighbors of all faiths – or none – and we find ourselves on sacred ground by what we share in common – the love of music. Our concerts also enable us to support and nurture the gifts of emerging, as well as established artists. Opening the circle and inviting people in is an important aspect of outreach.”

![Fig. 8](image-url) Handbell ringers with guest musicians at The First Reformed Church of Athens, NY.
AGO in Your Community

A pipe organ is like an essential element to many worship services, and since 1896, the American Guild of Organists has existed to “foster a thriving community of musicians who share their knowledge and inspire passion for the organ.” Both an educational and professional organization, the AGO, through its regions and chapters, promotes organ music, instrument preservation, and instructing the next generation of musicians. New York State alone has 18 chapters divided into three geographic regions, so there is plenty of opportunity for anyone to explore the majesty of organ music not far from home.

The chapters sponsor regional events tailored to their communities, as a way to expose people to a musical instrument that dates back to the ancient Greeks, although the ninth-century emperor Charlemagne is credited with establishing the pipe organ’s importance in Western liturgical music. New York State’s AGO chapters seek to keep this ancient instrument relevant to modern times. Not a football fan? The Brooklyn AGO chapter has an annual Not-The-Super-Bowl concert, this year the event was at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in the Carroll Gardens neighborhood. AGO chapters nationwide encourage the next generation of music lovers and performers with Pedals, Pipes, and Pizza gatherings. These multi-day immersion experiences are designed to help young people explore their interest in organ music.

One doesn’t need to leave town, or miss the big game, to enjoy the historic instruments in their communities. All chapters offer frequent concerts and tours of nearby organs. As co-sponsors of this year’s Sacred Sites Open House, chapters throughout NYS will be highlighting concerts, demonstrations, and performances, planned for participating sites.
District Conveners & Chapters

Western New York
John P. Novak
7 Maiden Lane
North Java, NY 14113-9724
585-535-0135 (h)
716-880-4920 (w)
Email
jpovak79@yahoo.com

Chapters:

• Binghamton
  http://www.binghamtonago.org

• Buffalo
  http://www.agobuffalo.org

• Chautuaqua

• Chemung Valley
  http://www.agohq.org/chapter/chemungvalley

• Ithaca

• Rochester
  http://www.rochesterago.org

• Syracuse
  http://www.syracuseago.org

Upstate New York
Edee Silva, CAGO Eastern New York Chapter (1/3)
20 Nottingtham Way North
Clifton Park, NY 12065-1728
518-465-0482, Ext: 18 (w)
518-877-8032 (h)
518-449-7088 (f)
Email
hymnodee@gmail.com

Chapters:

• Central Hudson Valley
  http://www.chvago.org/

• Central New York

• Eastern New York
  http://enyago.org/

• Oneonta
  http://ago-oneonta.tripod.com/

• St. Lawrence River

Metropolitan New York and Europe
Chelsea Chen, New York City Chapter
1 Station Square, Apt 314,
Forest Hills, NY 11375
858-405-2665 (c)
Email
chelsealeachen@gmail.com

Chapters:

• Brooklyn
  http://www.brooklynago.org

• European
  http://www.agoeurope.eu

• Finland
  https://www.agohq.org/chapters/finland/

• Nassau
  http://www.agohq.org/chapters/nassau

• New York City
  http://www.nycago.org

• Queens
  http://www.queensnyago.org

• Suffolk
  http://www.suffolkliago.org

• Sunrise

• Westchester County
  http://www.agowestchester.org
Organs in New York City: A Compendium

The New York City Organ Project is an ongoing attempt to document the organs – present and past – that have been installed in the five boroughs of New York City. The extensive, continually updated, website-based catalogue is a labor of love by Steven E. Lawson who began the work in 1999.

“The project began when the American Guild of Organists (AGO) was promoting a particular recital and I wanted to provide more information on the organ,” says Lawson, assistant organist at the Church of Heavenly Rest and webmaster for the New York City Chapter of AGO. “As time went on the project developed to include data on architecture and history.”

Founded in 1896, AGO is the national professional association of the organ and choral music fields. The Organ Historical Society, founded in 1956, celebrates, preserves, and studies the pipe organ in America but, until Lawson began the catalogue, there was nowhere to find information about New York City organs in one place. Now, because of the great research Lawson has made public via the New York City Organ Project, members of the public interested in historic religious buildings and their history can take advantage of this well documented and illustrated resource. The New York City Organ Project website: http://www.nycago.org/organisms/nyc/index.html is often the first – and sometimes the only – site that surfaces in a web search seeking information on the history and architecture of an older New York City religious property.

Lawson credits the internet with helping make his research for The Organ Project, which occupies a good deal of his spare time, much easier. Over the years, he has incorporated information drawn from books, periodicals including organ journals, newspapers, organ builders, and other sources including receptionists at houses of worship whom he says, often know a lot about their institution’s history and have made it available in the form of old programs and concert notes.

“Not all organs were in religious institutions,” Lawson points out. “They used to be in movie theaters, department stores, and even the homes of the well-to-do who had “residence organs” that, by the twentieth century, were often operated by music rolls like player pianos.” Today, in addition to showrooms and performance venues, some funeral homes, hospital chapels and educational institutions have organs.

Besides an interest in all things organ-related, Lawson is also fascinated by architecture. New York’s houses of worship reflect many diverse styles, often with several found in a single building. Many of these have buildings have organs, which is why the Organ Project includes detailed descriptions of both the buildings and the instruments within them.

For additional information:

American Guild of Organists
http://www.nycago.org

The Organ Historical Society
http://www.organhistoricalsociety.org
The NYC Organ Project website includes current and historic photos and narrative on both pipe organs and congregations. The project page for Congregation B’Nai Jeshurun, a landmark synagogue on Manhattan’s Upper West Side, is shown here (in part).


**Congregation B'nai Jeshurun**  
(Independent Jewish)  

257 West 88th Street  
New York, N.Y. 10025  
http://www.bj.org/

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organ Specifications:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>257 West 88th near Broadway (since 1918)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• II/11 Austin Organ Company, Op. 1623 (1928) – Auditorium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ III/32 Austin Organ Company, Op. 1244 (1925) – Sanctuary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46 Madison Avenue at 65th Street (1885-1918)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• III/40 George Jardine &amp; Son (1884)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West 34th Street and Sixth Avenue (1865-1885)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• II/25 J.H. &amp; C.S. Odell, Op. 68 (1868)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greene Street (1851-1865)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• unknown, if any</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>119 Elm Street (1827-1851)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Organ Project page for Immanuel Union Church, in the Westerleigh neighborhood of Staten Island, focuses exclusively on the site’s current and prior pipe organs:


The Conservancy has recently worked with the church to complete their National Register Nomination, scheduled for SHPO state board review in June. The Conservancy will feature a tour of Immanuel, highlighting the church and neighborhood’s fascinating Temperance history, as part of the Conservancy’s 2018 Sacred Sites Open House. We expect that the congregation’s history from the nomination will then be incorporated in the Organ Project website.
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The Conservancy’s Sacred Sites program was launched in 1986 and is the only statewide nonprofit program in the nation responding to the preservation needs of historic religious properties. Since its inception, Sacred Sites has awarded over 1,300 grants totaling more than $9.9 million to 760 congregations throughout New York State, regardless of denomination. These grants have leveraged restoration projects totaling more than $620 million.

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