

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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ORGAN INAUGURATION AT SAINT PETER'S CHURCH
OUT OF TRAGEDY, A RESTORED ORGAN FOR THE CITY

SAINT PETER'S CHURCH | 619 LEXINGTON AVE, NEW YORK, NY 10022
SAT., NOV. 4 & SUN., NOV. 5

NEW YORK, Oct. 1, 2023— Saint Peter's Church is pleased to announce the inauguration of its Sanctuary organ (Klais, 1977 / C.B. Fisk, 2023) with a weekend of performances, receptions, and family-friendly events on Saturday, November 4, and Sunday, November 5. Participants will experience an instrument of considerable historic significance capable of a wide range of literature with convincing, stylistic integrity.

The weekend's programs will feature students from prominent conservatory organ departments and world-class musicians presenting solo, orchestral, and choral works spanning a variety of periods, from the Baroque down to today. A presentation of Guy Bovet's Peep the Piper is especially suited for children and families. Nathan J. Laube, who performs entirely from memory, is known for his sensitive and virtuosic playing. Nicole Keller takes on a number of challenging organ concerti, including the world premiere of Bálint Karosi's Organ Concerto No. 5 "In Memoriam György Ligeti." With Saint Peter's Choir and Chamber Orchestra, Colin Fowler performs Maurice Duruflé's beloved Requiem.

Saint Peter's is located within the sunken plaza at CitiCorp Center (1977) in the heart of midtown Manhattan. In January of 2021, a City water main pipe ruptured and sent hundreds of thousands of gallons of water into the iconic building, destroying or damaging everything in its path—the organ included.

Out of tragedy emerges this purposefully restored and reimagined organ, once again a centerpiece of Saint Peter's architectural, musical, and liturgical identity. Guided by an historic preservation expert, the distinctive case and console designed by Massimo Vignelli have been restored. The instrument benefits from a new action, five additional stops, total tonal re-voicing, and an improved acoustical environment.

**"THE BEST OF THE PAST
PRESERVED. A MAGICAL
TRANSFORMATION FOR
THE FUTURE."**

Martin Jean
Director of the Institute of Sacred Music
Professor of Organ, Yale School

From children to long-time admirers, this organ comes alive in community; these inaugural events present an opportunity for everyone to be a part of giving to New York City an inspiring instrument for the future.

Presented by The Arts and Architecture Conservancy at Saint Peter's with the New York City Chapter of the American Guild of Organists, the weekend is also the formal launch of a \$1.9 million campaign for the organ's restoration and long-term care. Already some \$600,000 has been pledged or received, including insurance proceeds.

A HISTORY WORTH PRESERVING

When it was built in 1977, Saint Peter's gave to New York City a significant instrument in the important lineage of historically-informed organ building. The instrument is the work of Johannes Klais Orgelbau (Bonn, Germany). New heights in organ building achieved today owe much to instruments such as this.

The organ's distinctive case and console were designed by Massimo Vignelli which, with Frank Gehry's design for the Walt Disney Concert Hall, remains one of only a handful of architect-designed organs of the modern era.



Left: Klais, 1977
Right: Klais / Fisk 2023
photo by Marco Anelli

No one invites or expects a disaster, certainly not a flood on Lexington Avenue. Not only did the Sanctuary sustain significant water damage, but dehumidification and other mitigation efforts to avoid a mold outbreak both cracked, warped, and stressed every piece of wood—especially the organ. Because the water brought mud along with it, a thick layer of fine silt came to cover every surface.

To prevent further damage, the organ was quickly removed for safekeeping. Transported to and stored at their shop in Gloucester, MA, C.B. Fisk Organ Builders developed a plan for restoring the organ and for reimagining it based on almost five decades of use, as well as tonal and mechanical development.

"Efforts like this typically enjoy years of planning. The flood gave us no such time. The expertise of many and their diligent care both saved our beloved organ from ruin and gave it new life," Saint Peter's Senior Pastor, Jared R. Stahler said. "Now, the circle of care grows with countless people singing their praises and supporting this instrument. This is not the path any of us would have chosen, and yet, in every step along the way and for the future, my heart is filled with nothing other than thanks."

The instrument's new tonal scheme is the vision of Saint Peter's Cantor, Bálint Karosi, and David Pike. The organ was voiced on-site for 12 weeks by Nami Hamada, the first female tonal director at any major organ builder, and Michael Kraft, president of C.B. Fisk. Historic preservation guidance was provided by Angela Wolf Scott of MacDonald & Mack Architects. Dana Kirkegaard designed acoustical improvements to the room and organ case.

Already a New York City Landmark (2016), in 2027 Saint Peter's will be eligible for inclusion on the prestigious National Register of Historic Places when it turns fifty. From the time of crisis response, every effort is being made to restore and preserve this modernist masterpiece. In this way, the inauguration of this distinctive organ not only celebrates an impressive musical instrument, but the collaborative, inventive spirit of a wide range of people committed to the future of Saint Peter's.

EVENT LISTING

ORGAN INAUGURATION AT SAINT PETER'S CHURCH

Presented by The Arts and Architecture Conservancy at Saint Peter's with the New York City Chapter of the American Guild of Organists

Saint Peter's Church | 619 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10022

Saturday, Nov. 4, 11:00 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. | Sunday, Nov. 5, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m..



PROGRAM

For the full program, including performer biographies and further scheduling, please see saintpeters.org/organ.

Peep the Piper | *Children's reading featuring live organ accompaniment and projections*
11:00 a.m. Saturday, November 4

Tickets | peepthepiper.eventbrite.com

Organ Half Marathon | *Featuring top emerging talent from leading conservatory organ departments*

1:00 p.m. Saturday, November 4

Tickets | organhalf.eventbrite.com

Organ Recital | *Grammy-award winning organist Nathan Laube explores the breadth of the organ's stylistic capabilities in solo recital*

4:30 p.m. Saturday, November 4

Tickets | recital.eventbrite.com

Concerti for Organ and Orchestra | *Nicole Keller, organist, performs three concerti with Saint Peter's Chamber Orchestra*

7:30 p.m. Saturday, November 4

Tickets | concerti.eventbrite.com

Durufé Requiem | *Colin Fowler, organist, is featured with Saint Peter's Choir and Chamber Orchestra*

10:30 a.m. Sunday, November 5

Solemn Mass for All Saints Sunday, beginning with a festive prelude at 10:00 a.m. Made possible by the Katherine and Harry Busch Fund.