

The Great Auditorium Organ

Captivating the Jersey Shore for 115 Years



The organ console and facade of pipes of The Great Auditorium Organ in Ocean Grove.

Inside Ocean Grove's 5,500-seat Great Auditorium is one of the world's finest and most impressive instruments. The Great Auditorium Organ stands as a testament to the ingenuity of musical instrument design while boasting a rich history and a unique sound that has delighted audiences for over a century.

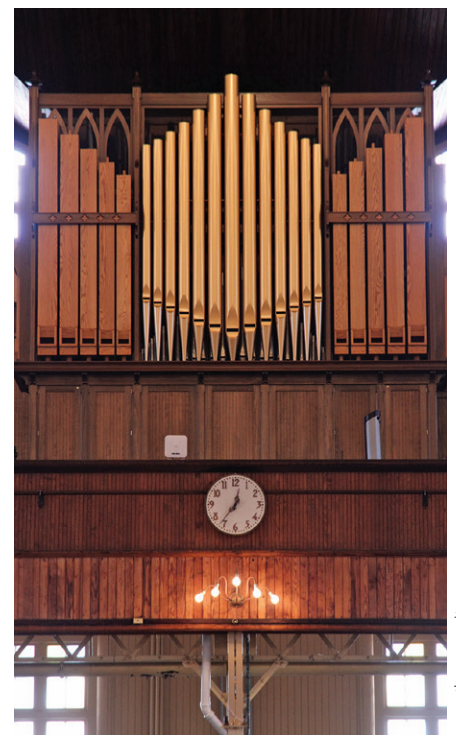
Built in 1907 by the Hope-Jones Organ Company of Elmira, New York, the instrument was officially dedicated in a concert by organist Mark Andrews on July 3, 1908 with over 8,000 people in attendance. It quickly became a popular attraction, drawing visitors from across the country and around the world.

Several restoration projects over the years have created a more versatile instrument. The organ has grown in size, from 1,400 pipes in 1908 to almost 13,000 pipes today, and ranks among the largest pipe organs in the

world. The instrument is the centerpiece of the Auditorium's music programs and is in constant use during the summer for special events, worship services, choral concerts, weekly organ recitals, and other concerts with instruments and orchestras.

Dr. Gordon Turk has been Resident Organist/Artist in Residence at the Great Auditorium for fifty years, alongside his esteemed colleague, former Metropolitan Opera tenor, Ronald Naldi, Tenor/Artist in Residence. "When I first began in Ocean Grove as the Auditorium organist, the instrument was of modest size and of some historic interest," he said. "During my tenure, it has been my privilege to see it grow to its world-class status, both in size and quality."

Turk explained that the almost 13,000 pipes range in size from individual pipes that are 32-feet tall to



The rear gallery division of the organ.

pipes only a few of inches tall, with the taller pipes having a deeper pitch. “Each of the pipes has to be individually tuned to the correct pitch so they can all ‘sing’ together,” he said. “To do a complete tuning of the instrument, it takes a professional team of organ tuners a minimum of four days to accomplish this task.”

The heaviest pipes, made from two-inch-thick sugar pine, weigh over 1,000 pounds each. Turk added that the sound they produce is of such very low frequencies that they can not only be heard but also physically felt in the Auditorium.



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Turk recalled that several years ago, folk-singers Peter, Paul, and Mary were performing concerts in the Great Auditorium and asked him to join in their finale, “Blowing in the Wind.” “We nearly blew the roof off the place,” he said, recalling the joy of accompanying them. He explained since the pipe organ is a “wind” instrument, the sound is produced by air blowing through its individual pipes. The air is supplied by the fans of a motorized blower. As such, the sound of the instrument is a live, physical air/wind event that is not electronically or digitally produced or reproduced.

One of Turk’s joys is playing the organ for weekly organ recitals, especially now that the instrument is capable of playing a wide range of organ ‘litera-

courtesy of Dr. Gordon Turk



The Ocean Grove Great Auditorium, home of the world-famous Hope Jones Pipe Organ.

ture,’ which is music from the 1500s to present day. “One of the most thrilling roles of the instrument is the way it can accompany large congregations of singers for Sunday services, especially the large-attendance Annual Choir Festival,” he said. “When there are four or five thousand people singing in the Auditorium, the organ leads and undergirds it all in a thrilling way.”

As a critically acclaimed concert organist, Turk has played countless organs both nationally and internationally, but the Great Auditorium Organ holds a special place in his heart. “We are in the midst of an extensive renovation of a large part of the organ, making improvements for its general maintenance and regrouping over 3,600 pipes for better tonal ensemble,” he said. “This ambitious project will enhance the instrument for years to come.”

With another summer season waiting on the horizon, the Great Auditorium Organ will strike up its pipes once again during weekly recitals, worship services, and special events. “One special event will be a concert on August 3, the finale concert

of the Summer Stars Festival,” Turk announced. “I will be playing some of the most thrilling music composed for a grand organ and a full symphony orchestra, including the magnificent Symphony No. 3 by Camille Saint-Saens, nicknamed ‘The Organ Symphony,’ plus a few other dramatic pieces for organ and orchestra.”

With Turk and other accomplished organists captivating audiences through their performances, the Great Auditorium Organ will continue to produce some of the most beautiful and awe-inspiring music along the Jersey Shore.

—Jill Ocone

The Ocean Grove Great Auditorium, home of the world-famous Hope-Jones Pipe Organ, is located at 54 Pitman Avenue in Ocean Grove. In July and August, organ recitals by Dr. Turk and guests are free and open to the public on Wednesdays at 7:30 PM and Saturdays at 12:00 noon. The Summer Stars Concert Series lineup will be announced later this season. For more information or to purchase tickets, visit www.oceangrove.org or call (732) 775-0035.

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