

King of Instruments

In its dynamic range and kaleidoscopic variety of colors, the organ is as suited both to serenity and celebration as any other instrument. Yet the organ, as the sole wind instrument capable of infinite tone without decay, has a unique presence. Along with its mechanical complexity and sheer size, as well as expense, it has earned the title “King of Instruments.”

Together with harp and voices in a few of the pieces, **the organ evokes deep calm and meditation, and it can equally well throw quite a party. It is also a lot of fun to watch;** beyond the performer, video technology makes visible the parts of the creation of the music that often remain unseen. A legacy of the instrument’s music improvised for recordings or adapted from orchestral textures is brought alive through the art of transcription.

The marvelous 126-year-old instrument at St. John’s Church in Newport gives cause for celebration after the completion of two “pre-restoration” projects—a new blower room and a new console—as a prelude to the renewal of the pipes, wind system and playing mechanism in 2021.



At the inauguration of the new console on May 31, 2020, Father Nathan Humphrey, Rector of St. John’s, thanked donors and observed: “The restoration of our historic and cherished instrument is a tool for evangelism through music and inspiration for many more generations. **Having been handed a gift of inestimable value in the vision of the builders of the church and its musical furnishing, we renew and pass it forward better than ever.** Particularly during this time of isolation and social distancing, the gift of music, whether streamed into our living rooms or heard live in the church, will act as a healing balm for the soul. When this pandemic is but a memory, we know that many people will be left with scars both physical and mental. We believe that through sacred music, our bodies, minds, and souls will be renewed for service, and we will be able to commemorate the dead, honor those who

made a difference in our lives, and give thanks for the future God has in store for us in a more meaningful way with this pipe organ than without it. **The music it produces is personal protective equipment for the soul,** boosting our resilience to trauma and inoculating us against fear. Instead, we are infected with something that is a joy to spread: faith, hope, and love, communicated through the transcendent medium of music that gives glory to God and builds up our immunity to the ravages of death. We are so grateful to all of you who have made the medicine of music available just when it’s most needed. You have made it possible for St. John’s to be a source of healing, comfort, strength, and renewal in this crisis.”



drawers conceal computer and mini ipad interfaces, and seldom-used controls, maintaining an otherwise nineteenth-century period appearance