

# Our Sanctuary Organ

The Gabe M. Wiener Memorial Organ is an extraordinary instrument commissioned and custom built for Central's worship services and music program



**C**onstructed by the renowned firm of Casavant Frères of Saint-Hyacinthe, Canada and completed in 2002, Central's organ consists of two distinct, interconnected instruments: a bimah organ (Casavant Opus 3812) located alongside the bimah and used primarily during services to accompany the cantor, choir, and congregation; and a larger gallery organ (Casavant Opus 3813) located in the elevated rear choir loft and used both for services and concerts.

It is comprised of two consoles and 4,345 pipes, 55 stops, and 74 ranks, located in the front and rear of the Sanctuary. It replaces a 1926 Kilgen organ of 1,552 pipes that was destroyed in the fire that damaged the synagogue in August 1998. (That instrument replaced the original Jardine organ of 1880.)

## DEDICATION

The bimah organ, with Choeur, Echo, and Pédale divisions (groups of pipes) was installed and voiced in July 2001, in time for the rededication of the Sanctuary on September 9, 2001. The Gallery Organ, with Grand Orgue, Récit, Positif, Solo, and Pédale divisions, was installed and voiced in March 2002. Both coordinate in style and materials with the design of the restored Sanctuary. The entire instrument was dedicated at a concert on April 10, 2002, by concert organist David Higgs and the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra.

Each organ can be played from separate movable consoles: the bimah console, which has three keyboards,

and the gallery console, which has four. Either can control the entire organ. The bimah console is equipped with 40 pistons, 31 couplers, and 30 toe studs. The gallery console is equipped with 80 pistons, 24 couplers, and 34 toe studs. Both consoles have solid-state combination systems with 128 levels of memory, MIDI connections, transposers, and many other amenities.

## ONE OF A KIND

The organ contains two very special organ stops created specifically for Central Synagogue: a Trompette Shofar that replicates the sound of the traditional shofar, used for services on Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur; and a Klezmer Clarinette that reproduces the sound of a klezmer clarinet with great brilliance and clarity, believed to be the first such organ stop in the world. Both are used to enrich the accompaniment of contemporary anthems and liturgical music. The instrument also contains a rich array of other reed registers, including a Trompette-de-Fête that can sound out over the entire organ, and a 32-foot Contre-Bombarde in the pedal division that provides floor-shaking bass to the full ensemble.

The organ was designed by Pierre Dionne, President of Casavant Frères, and Jacquelin Rochette, Associate Tonal Director, in conjunction with George B. Stauffer and Shelly Palmer, who served as organ consultants for Central Synagogue. It is the product of three years of planning and a cumulative total of 21,000 work hours by Casavant's artisans and musicians.

To fully enhance the experience of worship and music in the Sanctuary, Central Synagogue commissioned a specially designed sound system. The Main Sanctuary Sound Reinforcement System provides clear intelligible reinforcement of speech and music to every listener in the congregation with more than 40 loudspeakers located throughout the Sanctuary. The use of a large number of smaller loudspeakers, combined with advanced digital signal processing, allows the listener to hear the sound as though it is coming from the bimah, rather than a loudspeaker, with minimal visual impact.



Photo: Michelle Young/Untapped Cities

A separate Reverberation Enhancement System helps to create an acoustical environment favorable to a concert organ. It incorporates four small microphones hung from the ceiling to pick up sound generated within the room, process it, and feed that sound back into the Sanctuary as additional reverberation. This system improves the amount, tonal balance, and spatial aspects of the reverberation within the Sanctuary and enhances congregational singing and responsive worship.

The organ was presented to Central Synagogue by Zena, Michael, and Jenny Wiener in celebration of the life of Gabe M. Wiener, his love of the instrument, and his passion for music in the hope that future generations will find inspiration in the superlative music that only an instrument of this quality can produce. Our organ concerts are free of charge and typically held on Tuesdays, October–May. Please check our website for dates and times.