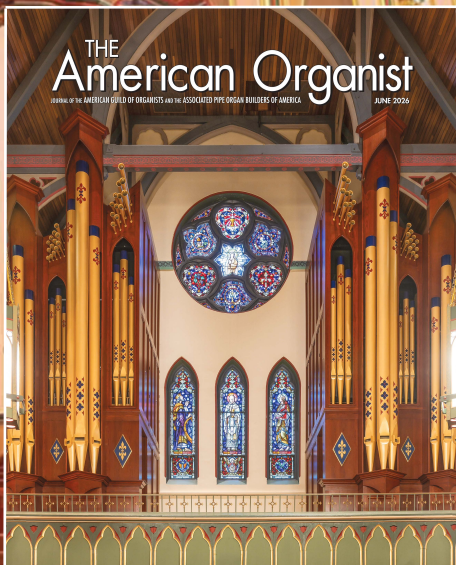


Cover Feature

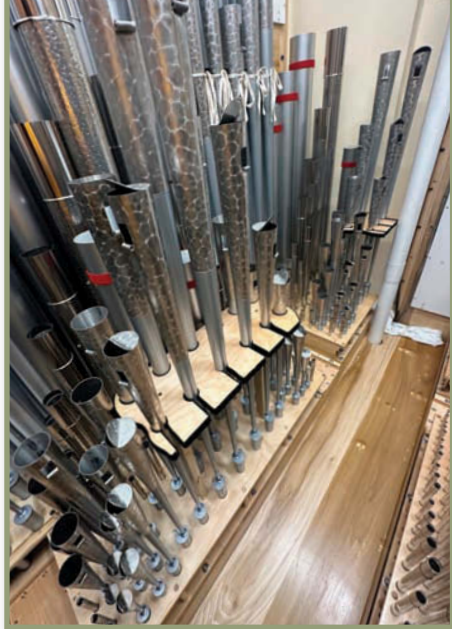


The Church of the Assumption
of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Morristown, New Jersey

Peragallo Pipe Organ Company
Paterson, New Jersey

For more than 120 years, the Peragallo family have happily called the Diocese of Paterson, New Jersey, home, with four generations of our family building, refurbishing, tuning, and playing instruments here. In the geographic center of the diocese is historic Morristown, which was settled around 1715 by English Presbyterians. Just off the central green lies the Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which has served the community since 1848. Constructed in Gothic Revival style, the building is the second house of worship for the parish; it is also the only church in Morristown listed on the National Register of Historic Places, as well as the oldest church in Morristown on its original foundation. The Peragallo Pipe Organ Company has a long-standing relationship with the parish—a relationship that is entering a new era with the completion of our Opus 784.

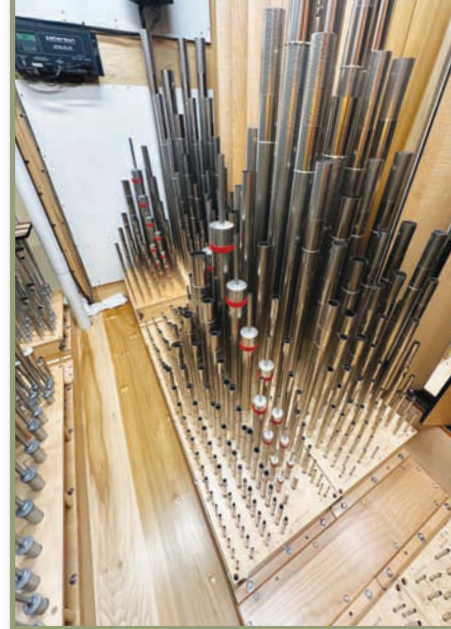
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Swell bass offsets



Great pipework



Swell upperwork

From the Music Director

I came to Assumption in November 2021. While I hadn't planned to take on an organ project, I immediately noticed issues with the Gress-Miles pipe organ that had been installed in the mid-1980s to replace a 1952 Peragallo instrument damaged in a roof fire. The original four-manual Gress-Miles console had already been replaced in 2007 with a three-manual console built by Peragallo after the original had deteriorated. At that time, the console and choir were moved to the front of the church, though the choir space was poorly designed, with no risers and limited functionality.

Tonally, the Gress-Miles organ was excessively bright: dominated by mixtures and with only the Swell division under expression. The Pedal division was limited, consisting of just two 16' ranks. Over its 30-year lifespan, the instrument had developed a host of structural and tonal issues that raised serious concerns about its long-term viability.

I began discussing these concerns with our pastor, Monsignor John E. Hart. These conversations were not always easy—many people felt that the organ was still serviceable—but through demonstrations of individual stops, I was able to highlight the instrument's deficiencies.

After my first year, Msgr. Hart announced a capital campaign to mark the 150th anniversary of the current church. During a staff meeting, he invited input on necessary projects, and I formally raised the issue of the organ. At the suggestion of my colleague Vince Carr, we engaged an independent consultant, John Schwandt, to conduct a thorough evaluation. His findings were striking. Many pipes had collapsed under their own weight, the organ was under-winded, and the overall construction quality rendered it effectively unrepairable. This report shifted the conversation to full replacement.

My goal was to create an instrument that was versatile, warm, and capable of leading congregational singing with clarity—quite the opposite of the previous organ, with its shrill sound.

We also explored relocating the choir and console back to the loft, but space limitations made this impractical, especially with a choir of 31 singers. After reviewing several proposals, we ultimately

chose to continue working with the Peragallo Pipe Organ Company, whose multigenerational expertise and collaborative approach aligned well with our vision.

Given spatial constraints, we decided to keep the choir at the front of the church and incorporate a floating Antiphonal division to accompany at this end of the room. Additionally, the speaking height of the gallery pipe divisions was raised to improve projection into the nave.

The new design incorporates 36 ranks of pipes (including three from the original instrument), augmented with 39 digitally sampled stops provided by Walker Technical Company.

The 2007 console was retained and beautifully refinished. New cherry manuals, a new pedalboard, and updated stop controls brought renewed elegance to the instrument. At Msgr. Hart's suggestion, a fleur-de-lis motif—symbolic of the parish's dedication to the Assumption of the Virgin Mary—was incorporated into the design. This is most notably seen in the etched wooden music rack, designed by John Peragallo IV, which maintains visibility from any angle.

The project also included structural improvements: a complete rebuild of the 150-year-old loft floor and the addition of new choir risers in the front of the church, significantly enhancing both sound and functionality.

Choosing the Peragallo family was absolutely the right decision. Their commitment to craftsmanship, design, and the needs of our parish community resulted in an instrument that is both musically and visually exceptional.

The organ was formally blessed in June 2025 by Bishop Kevin Sweeney, and an October 2025 dedication recital featured the artistry of Michael Hey.

Thanks to the generosity of our parishioners and the success of the capital campaign, we now have an instrument that will serve the parish for generations to come. Not a Sunday goes by without visitors stopping to admire and photograph the facade.

Here's to many years of music-making at Assumption.

PAUL KUSLER

Music Director
Church of the Assumption

From the Builder

The Peragallo Pipe Organ Company has served the Church of the Assumption for four generations, with John Peragallo Sr. refurbishing a 1902 Estey organ in 1952 (an instrument later damaged in a roof fire).

In 2024, under the direction of music director Paul Kusler, the Peragallo team was empowered to envision a new organ tailored to providing a strong foundation for parish worship and supporting the local musical community.

The finished instrument is “quintessential Peragallo,” with complete encased divisions offering the organist the ability to create seamless gradations of tonal color. The encased pipework produces a healthy, pleasing plenum that cascades directly into the nave.

The tonal design has been crafted to provide maximum creativity and nuance in support of the parish’s liturgical celebrations. Let’s take a closer look at exactly how that is achieved:

1. As many of you experience each week, the selection of stops in hymn accompaniment is often a direct function of the number of folks sitting in the pews. Those early masses may have a tenth of the number of congregants as the later celebrations, and the organist’s registrations must support sung worship regardless of attendance. The Great plenum includes layers of 8’ fundamental, providing a strong base for the tonal pyramid. Along the same lines, each of the manual divisions offers a uniquely scaled diapason; when coupled, they produce a gorgeous, lush foundation. This approach is in direct contrast to the “Werkprinzip” design of the former Gress-Miles instrument, which based each division on a different individual diapason pitch (16’, 8’, 4’, and 2’).

2. The mixture stops on this instrument have been carefully pitched, scaled, and tonally finished to tastefully crown the tonal pyramid of each divisional chorus. The previous organ included 19 ranks of mixtures (almost half the total rank count)—none of which was composed with a starting pitch lower than 1’. Ouch! Lots of dogs howling in the neighborhood, along with hesitation by the organist even to consider drawing them without a full church.

3. Another tool at our disposal is the *Cornet décomposé*, which allows the organist to pick and choose overtones. Cornets at Assumption can be composed of flutes or principals as the moment requires. Although the Cornet is part and parcel to registering French Noël’s and other Baroque literature, it is equally effective in introducing and leading the psalm refrain and soloing out the tune on select hymn verses.

4. The instrument includes multiple expressive divisions, in lieu of unenclosed secondary choruses. The priority here is nuanced accompaniment. Expression chambers are ergonomically constructed to provide a full dynamic gradient, and the speakers for the digital voices are enclosed in the chambers alongside the pipes for a happy marriage of sound sourcing.

5. The visual component of the handcrafted casework stands alongside the tonal elegance of the overall sound. Casework gives the organ its acoustical character, and as Paul mentioned, the aural and visual combine for a truly inspired result. The casework, with its gorgeous cherry frames and arches housing the gloriously stenciled facade pipes, gathers and projects the tone of the instrument. And seen from the nave during the day, the case is truly stunning, with cascades of bright sunlight pouring through the rose window, illuminating the rich cherry woodwork.

6. Technology can be a wonderful thing! The organ was limited to three manuals by the keydesk height, so floating divisions, non-coupling solo reeds, and celeste vents greatly expand its tonal resources.

7. Finally, the selection of stops colors the ensemble portrait. The Swell 16’ Waldhorn was always an Ernie Skinner favorite, providing full gravitas to the Swell reed chorus. The organist can choose from a plethora of stylized solo voices, including the Swell Oboe and French Horn; the Choir Cremona, Cor Anglais, and Bassett Horn; and the Antiphonal Fagotta. The 8’ flutes vary, with the Great capped Bourdon, the repurposed Choir Holz Gedackt, the Swell Chimney Flute, and the Antiphonal Hohl Flute each providing a distinctive color. The strings start with the full-bodied Great Violoncello and move through a broad Swell Salicional/Voix Celeste and a keener Choir Gambe Celeste to the softer hybrid Erzähler Celeste; softer yet is the Flauto Dolce Celeste. And the instrument’s assortment of percussion stops—Chimes, Harp, Glock, Tower Bells, Hand Bells, and Cymbelstern—runs the gamut.

Of course, no Peragallo organ would be complete without a chamade. The Assumption Trumpets definitely qualify as “commanders” and are perched high in the cases, speaking on 6½” of pressure, with Willis shallots and flared resonators. If you need a bit less power, the enclosed Choir Tuba functions as fully coupling (to add to the grand plenum) or non-coupling (as a solo voice).

All in all, this organ can provide lots of fun on a Sunday morning!

We need to acknowledge the cooperation of the staff at the church. The pastor, Rev. Msgr. John

Hart, was a daily visitor during the installation process and completely supportive of the project. Talented music director Paul Kusler brought all of his experience in Catholic worship to a truly collaborative and interactive design process.

Finally, I must acknowledge the work of our architectural designers, Frank Peragallo and John Peragallo IV; Anthony Peragallo, who has truly mastered the tonal finishing process; Peragallo's full staff of talented artisans; and our business manager, Ellen Kreil.

The instrument was celebrated with a tour de force dedication recital by the talented Michael Hey, with much of the Northern New Jersey organ community in attendance. It is our sincere hope that Opus 784 will musically inspire the faith life of this vibrant community for many future generations.

JOHN PERAGALLO III

President

Peragallo Pipe Organ Company

The Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Morristown, New Jersey

Peragallo Pipe Organ Company • Opus 784 (2025)

Seven divisions, 36 pipe ranks, 39 digitally sampled stops

GREAT

- 16 Contre Violone*
- 8 Principal
- 8 Violoncello*
- 8 Harmonic Flute
- 8 Bourdon
- 8 Angelic Flute (Ch.)
- 4 Octave
- 4 Open Flute
- 2½ Quinte*
- 2 Super Octave
- 2 Wald Flute (ext.)
- 1½ Tierce*
- Fourniture III-IV
- Scharf III*
- 16 Posaune*
- 8 Tromba
- Tremulant
- Chimes*
- Great MIDI 1
- Great MIDI 2

CHOIR (expressive)

- 16 Flute Conique*
- 8 Singen Principal
- 8 Holz Gedackt
- 8 Gambe
- 8 Gambe Celeste (TC)
- 8 Erzähler Celeste II*
- 4 Italian Principal
- 4 Nachthorn
- 2 Spill Flute
- 1½ Larigot
- Cymbel III*
- 16 Corno di Bassetto*
- 8 Fagotta*
- 8 Cremona
- 8 Cor Anglais*
- Tremulant
- Harp*
- Celesta*
- Hand Bells*
- Choir 16, Unison Off, 4
- 8 Tuba Mirabilis*
- Choir MIDI 1
- Choir MIDI 2

SWELL (expressive)

- 16 Lieblich Gedackt*
- 8 Open Diapason
- 8 Chimney Flute
- 8 Salicional
- 8 Voix Celeste (TC)
- 8 Flauto Dolce Celeste II*
- 4 Principal
- 4 Traverse Flute
- 2½ Nasat
- 2 Flageolet
- 1½ Terz
- Plein Jeu III-IV
- Cymbel V*
- 16 Waldhorn*
- 8 Trumpet
- 8 Oboe
- 8 French Horn*
- 8 Vox Humana*
- 4 Clarion (ext.)
- Tremulant
- Swell 16, Unison Off, 4
- Swell MIDI 1
- Swell MIDI 2

PEDAL

- 32 Contre Basse*
- 32 Contre Bourdon*
- 32 Flute Conique (Ch.)
- 16 Open Wood*
- 16 Principal
- 16 Violone (Gt.)
- 16 Bourdon
- 16 Lieblich Gedackt (Sw.)
- 16 Flute Conique (Ch.)
- 8 Octave
- 8 Bourdon
- 8 Still Gedackt (Sw.)
- 4 Choral Bass
- Fourniture IV*
- 32 Contre Bombarde*
- 16 Trombone*
- 16 Posaune (Gt.)
- 8 Trumpet
- 4 Cremona (Ch.)
- Tower Chimes*
- Pedal MIDI 1
- Pedal MIDI 2

ANTIPHONAL* (floating)

- 8 Geigen Principal
- 8 Hohl Flute
- 8 Cor de Voix Celestes
- 8 Gemshorn Celeste
- 4 Octave
- 4 Flach Flute
- 2 Octavin
- 8 Fagotta
- Tremulant
- Antiphonal 4

ANTIPHONAL PEDAL*

- 16 Geigen
- 8 Bourdon

ASSUMPTION TRUMPETS†

Assumption Trumpets on Swell
Assumption Trumpets on Great
Assumption Trumpets on Choir
Assumption Trumpets on Pedal

Couplers

Great to Pedal
Swell to Pedal 8, 4
Choir to Pedal 8, 4
Antiphonal to Pedal
Swell to Great 16, 8, 4
Choir to Great 16, 8, 4
Swell to Choir 16, 8, 4
Great to Choir
Antiphonal to Swell
Antiphonal to Great
Antiphonal to Choir
Manual Transfer

* Walker Digital

† Pipe/Walker Digital