

THE HILL RECORD

Fundraising concert will help pay for repairs on church's pipe organ

By **Wade Hill** Special to the Record

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KITCHENER — As St. Matthews Lutheran Church was busy reinventing itself as a music venue, the magnificent 1943 Casavant organ decided to test the new program.

"We had to replace the bellows," said Bob Karn, one of the church's board members. "We have four rooms of pipes, 2,958 pipes and they're all over the place.

"To even get at it, you have to take all the pipes out."

Of course, this meant a big expense, \$8,000 in total, paid to the specialized organ repair firm, Dodington & Dodington from Aylmer. Like most large old churches, however, funds are rather scarce. They had to dip into the church's current operating fund which is meant to cover expenses such as heat, hydro and salaries, and it's all carefully budgeted. So how to recoup those costs? A concert, of course.

On Saturday the church will shift its music-making to Kitchener's Schwaben Club for a fundraising concert "Pipes, Strings & Horns" featuring the nine-piece R&B and classic rock band, "Group Therapy & the OCD Horns" along with Turkish-born Flamenco guitarist Juneyt and Flamenco dancer Ishra.

"We had decided to go ahead with the repairs," said Karn, remembering the highly skilled repair team spending a full week to first mark and remove all the pipes, replace the bellows with new leathers, then put the pipes back in exactly the same position.

It wasn't the bellows that were expensive, it was the darned work getting at them, but this organ is St. Matthews' jewel, a rare instrument where the handmade pipes are placed all around the sanctuary.

"It's in the top 10 in Ontario in terms of the number of pipes and the sound," said Karn.

When music director, Corinne Dutton plays, the sound fills the 1914 neo-Gothic cathedral-style church with its wide arches and spectacular wood finishes.

As Karn said, this church is comparable to the old cathedrals in Europe, only on a slightly smaller scale but equal in the importance of music.

A concert at the church last November, featuring Juneyt and classical guitar legend Liona Boyd, was pretty much sold out, boosting the church's confidence that they can do it again. This time, however, they decided to hold it off site, in a club where there is a bar and food, more of a party atmosphere.

After all, they have a lot to celebrate even if they are in debt.

Pipes, Strings & Horns

Featuring Juneyt, Group Therapy & the OCD Horns

Saturday, Sept. 22, doors open 6:30 p.m.

Schwaben Club, 1168 King St., Kitchener

Tickets \$25, in advance from the club or St. Matthews Lutheran Church, 54 Benton St., Kitchener. Limited tickets at the door.

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