

Take Me Out to the Ballgame

BY CHERIE YURCO

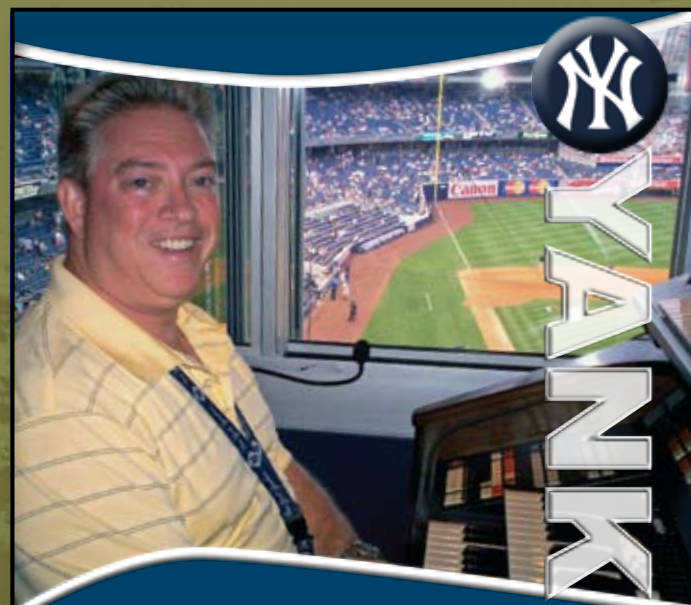
■ According to Gary Pressy, current organist for the Chicago Cubs, his club was the first to bring an organist into the ballpark in April 1941. That was just a one-time gimmick, however, and the organist didn't become a permanent part of the Cubs' roster until 1967, he explains. The trend grew from there until most of the clubs had full-time organists. During this heyday, it was routine for the organists to have a different "at bat" song to play to introduce each member of the home team.

But, time moves on and changing culture meant a reduction in the role of the organist as the hub of entertainment at the games. Though today most of the "at bat" songs are

prerecorded rock and pop tracks, you might be surprised by how many clubs still have live organists at every game.

For longtime fans, the sound of the organist is as much a part of the game as homeruns and hotdogs. He or she connects with them in a very personal way that canned music just cannot. And a rousing 7th inning rendition of "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" brings fans to their feet as quickly as a home team home run.

So, sitting behind the keyboard at ball clubs from the New York Yankees to the Florida Marlins are some very hardworking musicians who are just as dedicated to baseball as they are to music. We've profiled a few here. Gary Pressy's profile and a few additional ones can be found online at www.MakingMusicMag.com/baseball-organists.



YANKEES

Paul Cartier, 52

Best ballpark memory:

"When the Yankees clinched the Championship in 2009. At the end of the game I just sat there and took it all in—the crowd, the players, the celebration, and eventually, the Championship Parade in NYC. So surreal!"

Paul Cartier has shared the position of organist for the New York Yankees with Ed Astrom for the past eight seasons. Cartier works the weekday games. Astrom works the weekend games, while Cartier works his other full-time job as an air traffic controller for the FAA.

"I always start off the night with 'New York, New York,'" says Cartier. "I love to hear the crowd sing along."

Cartier also plays organ at all New York Islander home games and at Our Lady of Hope Catholic Church in Carle Place, New York. He is a volunteer firefighter and fire commissioner for the South Hempstead Fire District. In his free time, he enjoys boating and camping with his family in the Poconos.

Cartier first began playing organ at age 10. At home, he's set up an exact replica of what he performs on at Yankee Stadium—a Hammond Elegante organ with a Yamaha Tyros. "I also have a Roland electric piano right next to it," he adds.



WHITE SOX

Lori Moreland, 52

Best ballpark memory:

"Watching my children having a blast on Kids Day at the baseball park."

Lori Moreland became organist for the Chicago White Sox this spring, following the retirement of the team's longtime organist Nancy Faust. She is also organist for Our Lady of Knock Roman Catholic Church in Calumet City, Illinois.

Moreland, who began playing organ at age seven, says that "My Kind of Town (Chicago Is)" is her favorite ballpark song. At home, in Crete, Illinois, she plays a Roland EP85 electric piano, a Yamaha E5 organ, and a Yamaha PSR keyboard. The Cellular Field instrument is a Technics.

Moreland has been a three-time Mid-West representative for the National Yamaha Competition, securing the second place spot for two consecutive years.

When not making music, Moreland also enjoys reading, watching sporting events, and traveling with her husband, John, and her two sons, John and Scott.

Josh Kantor has proudly served as organist for the Boston Red Sox at Fenway Park since 2003, where he performs on a Yamaha Electone AR-100. Aside from his job at the ballpark, Kantor works as a librarian and enjoys playing, recording, and composing music with friends. A true multi-instrumentalist he also plays piano, accordion, upright bass, guitar, banjo, melodica, and harmonica.

This spring Kantor also performed on several ESPN SportsCenter broadcasts and at Austin's South by Southwest (SXSW) music festival in a handful of concerts with the indie-rock group The Baseball Project, featuring Steve Wynn, Scott McCaughey, Linda Pitmon, and Peter Buck.

Kantor has also contributed to many CD recordings, scored several short films, and plays piano, organ, and accordion in the band Jim's Big Ego.

Josh Kantor, 38

Best ballpark memory:

"From childhood, there are too many to name. From adulthood, it would be the 2004 playoffs."

RED SOX



REDS

John Schutte, 46

Best ballpark memory:

"One of my first games as organist was on Mother's Day. My family was there and while I was playing 'Take Me Out to the Ballgame,' the crew split the scoreboard in half showing me on one half and my family singing on the other."

John Schutte is in his second season as organist for the Cincinnati Reds, but the team's tradition of using an organist started long before. "There was an organ at Cincinnati's old Crosley Field, so I would guess we've had organists since at least the '50s," he says. The ballpark's current organ is a Baldwin Super Pro 222 built in Cincinnati.

Schutte, who is also a full-time firefighter and paramedic, has collected quite a few musical instruments over the years. "Ask my wife and she'll tell you I have one of everything," he says. "I have had a baby grand piano for years that I like to play, and recently I purchased the same model organ that's at Great American Ballpark, so I can practice my 'Charge!' in the off season."

Schutte is also a member of the rock cover band The Rusty Griswolds. Since becoming the Reds' organist, he has focused on widening the appeal of the ballpark organ by adapting rock for organ and bringing in synthesizers and drum machines to expand the number and types of sounds available.

Dick "Janz" Jankowski, of Orlando, Florida, has been ballpark organist for the Florida Marlins since the team was established in 1993. At the Marlin's Sun Life Stadium he performs on a Casio CTK-620L Midi keyboard with rhythm.

A professional performer almost his entire adult life, prior to working for the Marlins, he was the Atlanta Braves' spring training organist for 16 years and played organ for the Orlando Rays AA team at Disney's Wide World of Sports Stadium for four years. His favorite ballpark tune is the classic "Take Me Out to the Ballgame."

During the off-season, Janz sings and plays keyboard at the Ritz Carlton Hotel in Palm Beach, Florida. He also plays organ and bass guitar at his church on Sundays. Fittingly, in his free time, he collects baseball cards. He's been married to his wife, Marilyn, for 47 years and together they have three daughters and four grandchildren.



MARLINS

Dick "Janz" Jankowski, 70

Best ballpark memory:

"Seeing a perfect game pitched by Roy Halladay in 2010."