

II Organs - Definition

In our first section, we discussed the purchase process and three main categories of instruments. Items II to VI will discuss general information and definitions that an organist or organ committee person might encounter in the process of working with the pipe organ.

A) *Electronic organs* - Electronic organs, for the purpose of this website, are instruments with keyboard(s) and pedalboard that emulate sounds characteristic of the pipe organ. The electronic organ may be configured as a theater instrument or classical church instrument. The number of manuals and stops will vary depending on its design. The tone generation is created via audio oscillators or computer-generated sample loops, played through an amplifier circuit and broadcast through loudspeakers. Custom electronic organs, like pipe organs, will vary in size depending on their installation location. The larger the space, the more stops, amplifiers and speakers will be required to fill the space with sound. With the advancement of electronics, most new electronic organs rely on computer-generated samples. Electronic keyboard instruments or synthesizers with "pipe organ" samples are not to be confused with electronic organs.

B) *Hybrid organs* - In the early 1980s, we saw the advent of the hybrid (sometimes called "combination") organs. The hybrid organ, for the discussions within this website, is musical instrument with keyboards and pedalboard emulating sounds characteristic of the pipe organ. The tone generation may come from either electronic voices as per the electronic organ or by wind-blown pipes. The individual builder of the instrument is responsible for the configuration of voices, determining which voices are electronic and which are pipe. Below are the distinctions of the different realms or levels of hybrid organs.

- **Electronic organs with pipe voices.** The initial hybrids used core stops of real pipe voices with auxiliary electronic voices to provide additional presence and depth of tone in the electronic organ. In a typical hybrid organ, fewer than 25% of the stops are real pipes with the remaining stops as electronic voices, though larger hybrid organs may contain a much greater percentage of pipe voices.
- **Pipe organs with electronic voices.** Pipe organs with electronic voices have raised quite a controversy within the electronic and pipe organ industries. The line has become blurred between what are electronic or hybrid organs and pipe organs. For the purposes of definition, the American Institute of OrganBuilders stipulates that an organ must remain a fully viable instrument *without* the use of electronic voices in order to be considered a pipe organ. Any organ that relies on electronic voices in any manner to complete core manual or pedal voices would be considered at the very least a hybrid organ, and in many circles will be considered an electronic organ.

C) *Pipe organs* – A pipe organ is a musical instrument that utilizes keyboards and pedalboard to operate wind-blown pipes. The tone generation source is the wind-blown pipe.