

THE ORGAN OF THE DUOMO DI MILANO

Milan Cathedral (Italian: Duomo di Milano) is the cathedral church of Milan, Lombardy, Italy. Dedicated to the Nativity of St Mary (Santa Maria Nascente), it is the seat of the Archbishop of Milan, currently Archbishop Mario Delpini.

The cathedral took nearly six centuries to complete: construction began in 1386, and the final details were completed in 1965. It is the largest church in Italy—the larger St. Peter's Basilica is in the State of Vatican City, a sovereign nation—and the second largest in Europe and the fourth largest in the world.

The plan consists of a nave with four side



The Duomo seems to wait around the corner in many of Milan's streets

-aisles, crossed by a transept and then followed by choir and apse. The height of the nave is about 45 metres (148 ft), the highest Gothic vaults of a complete church (less than the 48 metres (157 ft) of Beauvais Cathedral, which was never completed).

The roof is open to tourists (for a fee), which allows many a close-up view of some spectacular sculpture that would otherwise be unappreciated. The roof of the cathedral is renowned for the forest of openwork pinnacles and spires, set upon delicate flying buttresses.

The cathedral's five broad naves, divided by 40 pillars, are reflected in the hierarchic openings of the façade. Even the transepts have aisles. The nave columns are 24.5 metres (80 ft) high, and the apsidal

The Duomo	
Status	Cathedral, minor basilica
Functional status	Active
Architect(s)	Simone da Orsenigo
Style	Gothic, Renaissance architecture
Groundbreaking	1386 (original building)
Completed	1965
Capacity	40,000
Length	158.6 metres (520 ft)
Width	92 metres (302 ft)
Nave width	16.75 metres (55.0 ft)
Height	108 metres (354 ft)
Dome height (outer)	65.6 metres (215 ft)
Number of spires	135
Spire height	108.5 metres (356 ft)
Materials	Brick with Candoglia marble



The sheer size of the cathedral can be seen from the roof

windows are 20.7 by 8.5 metres (68 by 28 ft). The huge building is of brick construction, faced with marble from the quarries which Gian Galeazzo Visconti donated in perpetuity to the cathedral chapter. Its maintenance and repairs are very complicated.

In 2015, Milan's cathedral developed a new lighting system based on LED lights.

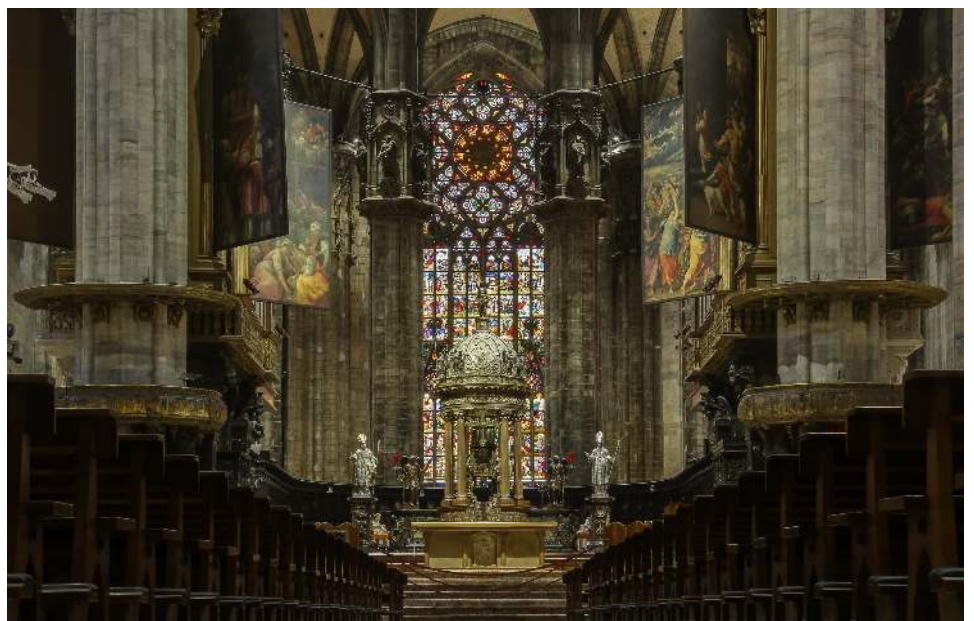
There is a small red light bulb in the dome above the apse which marks the spot where one of the nails reputedly from the Crucifixion of Christ has been placed. The Holy Nail is retrieved and exposed to the public every year, during a celebration known as the Rite of the Nivola.

Suited to this mighty church is an impressive

organ. Built by Mascioni of Cuvio (Varese) and Tamburini of Crema in 1938, restored and relocated entirely in the Presbytery by Tamburini in 1986, the grand organ of the Duomo is the largest in Italy and firmly maintains its second place in Europe as regards the number of pipes and stops (surpassed only by the organ of Passau cathedral, in Germany) and is among the fifteen largest organs in the world.

The current numbers of this giant instrument are truly impressive:

- 15,800 pipes, the highest over nine meters high while the smallest measures just a few centimetres
- Five organ cases (Grand Organ North and South Side - Positive and Recitative North Side - Solo and Eco South Side - Choral at the altar level)

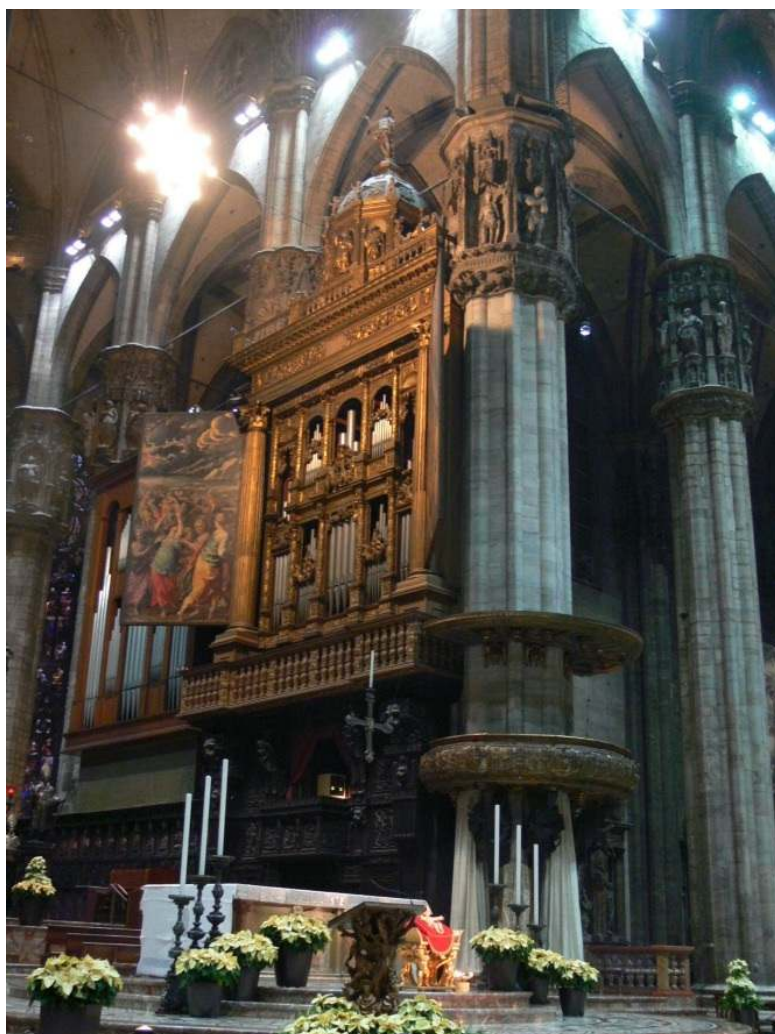


Organ cases flank the Presbytery

- Five consoles (main console with five manuals, altar-side console with three manuals, choral console with two manuals, two apse consoles with one manual)

If these numbers look impressive, the artistic aspects are even more precious: the grand organ of the Duomo of Milan combines the timeless sounds of the Italian tradition with a decidedly eclectic sound structure, which allows for an exact characterisation of a considerable portion of the organ literature, making the Mascioni-Tamburini an instrument with an absolutely exceptional timbre for the romantic-symphonic repertoire, like the instruments of the most important European cathedrals.

However, an organ cannot be qualified



as a work of art only through its numbers. It is the nobleness of its sound that characterises the grand organ of the Duomo as the last of a glorious series of musical instruments. The history of Milan cathedral has been linked to that of its organ since its foundation. The first instrument was reportedly built in 1394, after only 7 years from the laying of the first stone of the church. The assignment was entrusted to a friar, brother Martino de Stremidi, who completed it after two years of work. The original position of this first organ is not well known, but it must have been of considerable size because of the bellows that were operated through a large wheel set in motion by two men.

The liturgical and architectural reform promoted by San Carlo Borromeo in response to the new requirements arising from the Council of Trent entailed a rearrangement of the organs, which were definitively placed at the sides of the high altar.

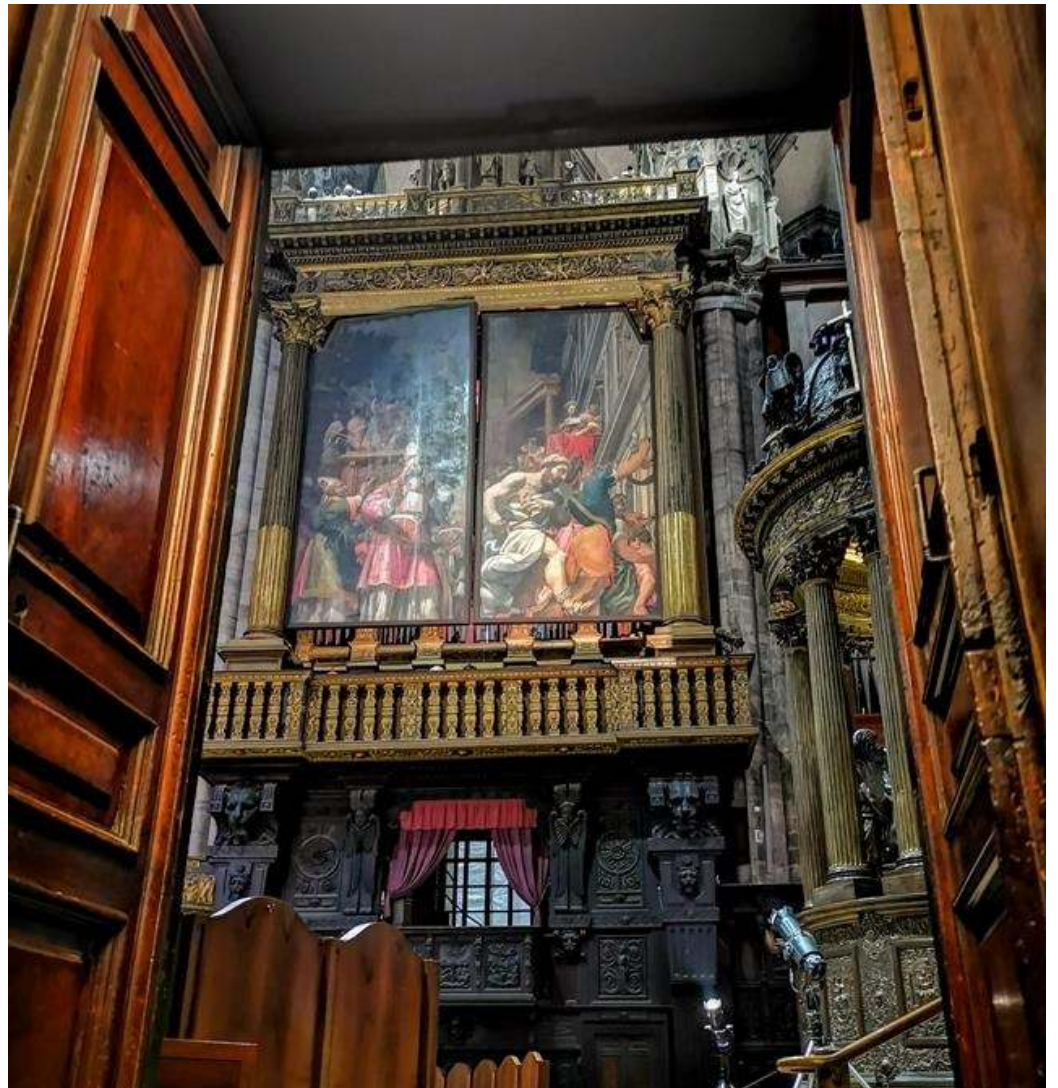
During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the instrument was overhauled several times to adapt it to the growing needs for a more sophisticated sound. New stops were added and the bellows were replaced.

From the end of the nineteenth century, the need to introduce electric transmission became more pressing. The new system allowed the consoles to be detached from the pipe cases, so that the organist and choristers could more easily see the master



conducting. The original consoles were set deep inside the two major cases of the organ.

Following the installation of the current instrument in 1938, the restoration works according to the liturgical directives of the Second Vatican Council were seen as an opportunity to intervene on the organ complex. The irregular arrangement of the cases, which were far from each other and from the





The main console

New Testament: the pictorial decoration was begun by the Fabbrica in 1559. Several artists took turns painting them, among them Giuseppe Meda, Ambrogio Figino and Camillo Procaccini.

The entire renovated organ complex was solemnly inaugurated on 8 September 1986 with a concert by Maestro Luigi Benedetti, then principal Organist of the Duomo.

new console, caused considerable acoustic problems: the entire sound set then was brought together by placing two new cases next to those dating back to the sixteenth century and the console was placed at the level of the presbytery.

The panels on both sides of the two monumental sixteenth-century organ cases consist of sixteen large canvases depicting episodes from the Old and

The instrument is suitable for all services on Saturdays, Sundays and on other religious holidays, also allowing the possibility of offering concert performances that have seen the presence of some of the most renowned performers on the international scene.

Since 2005, the Organist in charge of the Duomo of Milan has been Maestro Emanuele Carlo Vianelli. The Sub-





Organist of the cathedral is
Maestro Alessandro La
Ciacera.

Bruce Duncan

Photographs by Bruce Duncan and Martin
Doering

Supporting information from
www.duomomilano.it



The choir organ and the south divisions of the main



Stoplist of the organ complex in Duomo di Milano

Organo Nord II. Grand'Organo		Organo Nord Pedale		Organo Sud II. Grand'Organo		Organo Sud Pedale	
Principale	16	Acustico	64	Principale	16	Contrabbasso	32
Principale major	8	Principale	32	Principale violone	16	Contrabbasso	16
Principale diapason	8	Principale	16	Principale forte	8	Gran Quinta	10 2/3
Bordone	8	Subbasso	16	Flauto aperto	8	Basso forte	8
Ottava forte	4	Principale	8	Viola armonica	8	Quinta	5 1/3
Flauto in VIII	4	Bordone	8	Voce umana	8	Contrabombarda	32
XII	2 2/3	Ottava	4	Ottava	4	Bombarda	16
XV	2	Bordone	4	Flauto ottavante	4	Tromba	8
Flauto in XV	2	Contrafagotto	16	XII	2 2/3	Clarone forte	4
XIX	1 1/3			XV	2		
Cornetto	IV			Flauto in XVII	1 3/5		
Ripieno	X			XIX e XXII	II		
Tube F.S.	?			Ripieno	X		
Tuba major	8			Tromba	16		
Tromba armonica	8			Tromba	8		
Clarinetto	8						
Trombina	4						

Organo Corale III. Corale		Organo Corale Pedale		Organo Eco V. Eco		Organo Eco Pedale	
Principale	8	Subbasso	16	Gemshorn	16	Flauto	16
Flauto camino	8	Basso	8	Principale aperto	8	Basso d'eco	8
Bordone	8	Bordone	8	Principale corno	8	Flauto	4
Violoncello	8	Clarone	4	Corno di notte	8		
Ottava	4			Viola d'amore	8		
Principale	4			Voce angelica	II		
Ottava	2			Ottava armonica	4		
XV	2			Flauto silvestre	4		
Ripieno	IV			Flauto in XII	2 2/3		
Cimbalo	II			Flautino	2		
				Concerto Violini	IV		
				Harmonica eterea	V		
				Corno francese	8		
				Oboe d'eco	8		
				Schweller			
				Tremolo			



Organo Positivo I. Positivo		Organo Positivo Pedale		Organo Recitativo III. Recitativo		Organo Recitativo Pedale	
Principale violone	16	Principale	24	Principale armonico	16	Principale armonico	16
Bordone	16	Contrabbasso	16	Contragamba	16	Subbasso	16
Principale I	8	Subbasso	16	Principale	8	Basso violone	16
Principale II	8	Violone	16	Principale diapason	8	Bordone	8
Flauto a camino	8	Basso armonico	8	Eufonio	8	Violoncello	8
Flauto conico	8	Ottava	4	Bordone	8	Fugara	4
Gemshorn	8	Corno di bassetto	16	Flauto celeste	8	Contretuba	16
Viola di gamba	8	Tromba	8	Viola di Orchestra	8	Tuba	8
Salicionale	8	Clarino	2	Ottava	4		
Unda maris	8			Flauto ottavante	4		
Ottava	4			Flauto in Selva	4		
Flauto doppio	4			Fonino	4		
Fugara	4			Salicet	4		
XII	2 2/3			Flauto in XII	2 2/3		
Nasardo	2 2/3			XV	2		
Flagioletto	2			Flautino	2		
Terza di nasardo	1 3/5			Larigot	1 1/3		
Piccolo	1			Gran Concerto Viole	V		
XV e XIX	II			Concerto Violini	IV		
Ripieno	V			Mixtur	II		
Ripieno	VI			Scharf	III		
Corno di bassetto	16			Zimbel	III		
Tuba mirabilis	8			Controtuba	16		
Tromba armonica	8			Tuba	8		
Corno inglese	8			Tromba Corno	8		
Chiarina	4			Oboe	8		
Tremolo				Cornamusa	8		
				Tuba	4		
				Corale Angelica	II		
				Schweller			
				Tremolo			
Organo Solo IV. Solo				Organo Solo Pedale			
Principale	16	Flauto ottavante	4	Fagotto	16	Principale	24
Quintante	16	Flauto solista	4	Tuba Trionfale	8	Principale stentor	16
Principale stentor	8	Fugara	4	Corno Orchestrale	8	Tibia	16
Flauto a camino	8	Grosse Tierce	3 1/5	Corno Inglese	8	Armonica	16
Gamba serafona	8	Squillante	2	Cornetto fanfara	5 1/3	Principalino	8
Armonica	8	Viola celeste	III	Chiarina	4	Basso forte	8
Flauto in quinta	5 1/3	Coro d'Archi	V	Schweller		Tuba profonda	16
Principalino	4	Sesquialtera	II	Tremolo		Tuba	8
Tibia major	4	Mixtur	VI			Trombina	4