

News

VIDEO: Splash Organ big fun for FLOW Festival



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Lee Tusman demonstrates a prototype of his "Splash Organ" in his studio. (The Review/Bernard J. Scally)



Water makes beautiful music; in this case not just the natural sound of running streams but an actual musical instrument. All you have to do is hold this wire and tap this puddle.

"You are using our own part of the body as a switch," said Lee Tusman, creator of the "Splash Organ". "The voltage and amperage are very low that you don't even feel it." Tusman demonstrated a prototype of his device in his studio. The organ uses a fairly new piece of new piece of technology, a preprogrammed arduino, in this case known as a "Makey-Makey" which will turn buckets of water connected to a laptop into a musical instrument. His studio prototype used only cups of water. The Makey-Makey can even

change what type of sound can be produced.

"Up until two years ago, this sort of project would have been impossible for a lay person," said Tusman. "I wanted people to perform with the water. I wanted a spectacle and I thought of that scene in the film 'Big' with the giant keyboard. I hope it'll be like that"

The "Splash Organ" will be unveiled at the FLOW Festival at the Fairmount Water Works on Sept. 21. FLOW (For the Love Of Water) is an family-friendly, outdoor, interactive showcase full of exhibits and activities; held at the Water Works, which is approaching its 200th anniversary, the festival also serves as a glimpse into the future of the historic site.

"This festival particularly emphasizes art, science, technology, and also participation, and the idea that we can build our world creatively," said Tusman, who serves as FLOW curator and did so for last summer's Hidden City Festival. "I want people to see how easy technology is to use, and how fun."

The Fairmount Water Works was one of the city's first tourist attractions and is the ideal location to learn more about the life in and around the river. It was constructed in 1812 to pump water from the Schuylkill River. Almost from the day the waterwheels began turning, the graceful neoclassical buildings and beautiful grounds made the place an international tourist attraction renowned for melding nature and technology. Currently, the Water Works serves as the Delaware River Basin's watershed education hub, offering visitors information about the impact of water on their daily lives and how they in turn impact their water supplies. The Fairmount Water Works features a variety of hands-on, highly interactive exhibits including a live view of the Fairmount Dam fishway and a flyover of the Schuylkill River watershed.

From 1 p.m. to dusk, the Fairmount Water Works' majestic grounds will be packed with all manner of interactive, family-friendly activities, including:

- **Swim the Fishway** – With only fabric and wood, local artist Kathryn Sclavi will create a replica of the passageway below the Water Works that allows fish to swim upstream to hatch their eggs. Guests will create their own fish puppet and "swim" it through the display, simulating the fish's journey.
- **Build a Water Drop** – Guests will help create a giant wave sculpture made out of hundreds of interlocking "raindrop" discs.
- **River Net** – An oversized fabric installation that depicts the power and essence of the Schuylkill River.
- **Grand Finale Light Show** – The festival ends in dramatic fashion with a light show, accompanied by original music and footage, reflecting the poetry and power of the river.

"Anyone who loves the environment, who appreciates history, art and science, or just wants to have fun, will find something at our FLOW Fest," said Karen Young, Director of Fairmount Water Works, in a press statement. "Through the creativity of local artists, attendees will discover the Water Works' history and exciting future and the power and mystery of the Schuylkill River."

For more information about the FLOW Festival, visit fairmountworks.com/event/flow

For more information, visit <http://www.fairmountwaterworks.org>.

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