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AN INTERVIEW WITH CHORAL CONDUCTOR MELISSA MORGAN, PART 1

LYNN CAVANAGH

THE AGING VOICE AND THE CHURCH MUSICIAN GARRY FROESE

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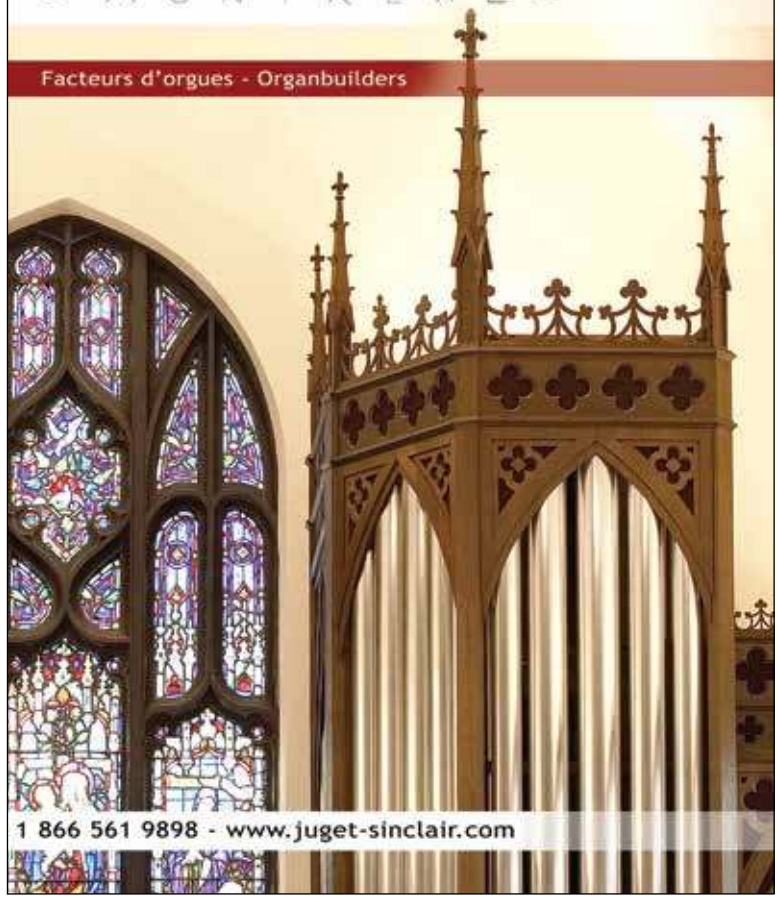
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To our readers:

20/21
Winter
greetings
and warm wishes
for a new year filled
with hope, health, reunions,
music,
and
joy.

— the *Organ Canada* editorial committee
(Lynn Cavanagh, Sandra Fletcher,
Chellan Hoffman, Gilles Leclerc, Jutta Thiel)

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President's message
Le message du Président

Peter Nikiforuk

PRÉSIDENT/
PRESIDENT



AS I WRITE THIS MESSAGE, we are now nine months into what is clearly a pandemic that will not be ending anytime soon. Whereas in June or August there was some optimism that things were calming down, in mid-November, with case rates rising rapidly in North America and Europe and new lockdowns either imposed or imminently about to be imposed, we must accept that this really is a new normal for months to come. In terms of the stages of grief, most of us have moved on to acceptance. In the midst of these changed times, however, are opportunities for great optimism for the future.

In this issue of *Organ Canada*, lives and careers are celebrated, Canadian superstar organist Rachel Mahon has a new CD reviewed, and practical advice is shared. Within the College, COVID has forced us to adapt to new ways of doing things and, more importantly, embrace technologies and media that most of us would never venture anywhere near. Many Centres have risen to the challenge with exceptionally creative programming and the development of resources that will be useful long after COVID is nothing more than a bad memory.

Many Centres moved annual Halloween recitals online and reached larger audiences than they would with in-person concerts. My own centre of Waterloo-Wellington hosted a series of webinars on aspects of technology, recording, and live streaming and had attendees from across the country. The Toronto Centre is taking advantage of its large membership and contacts outside the Centre by releasing a series of videos of Bach's entire *Orgelbüchlein*, with each chorale prelude introduced and performed by a different musician. They have also begun a series of examinations masterclasses being led by experienced examiners. Both of these resources will soon be available to a larger audience with links on the national Web site. These are just a few examples of how our profession is taking the lemons of COVID and making lemonade like never before.

At the national level, your Board of Directors has begun a full governance review with the intention of finding ways to communicate more effectively with Centre leadership, and amongst directors and committees of the College, with an aim to respect the time commitments that our volunteer leaders offer to the College. It has been twenty-five years since any sort of complete review has been done at the national level, so it is an appropriate time to look at what we do, how we do it, and even why we are doing certain things. In the New Year, we will consult with the full membership as well. Keep an eye out for details in January.

Other national initiatives are also starting to bear fruit. Our podcast, FutureStops, funded by the Digital Strategies Fund of the Canada Council for the Arts has been launched and is receiving positive reviews. New sections are being added to our Web site <rcco.ca> including a Buy and Sell Forum in the Store menu. Centre leaders are invited to subscribe to the Centre Leadership forum. And members are invited to subscribe to the Members Discussion Forum found under the Members menu when you log in to the Web site. Contact Hayley in the national office if you need help.

EN ECRIVANT CE MESSAGE, nous entamons le neuvième mois d'une pandémie qui est loin de terminer. Alors qu'en juin ou août les choses semblaient s'améliorer, voilà qu'en novembre, les cas de COVID augmentent rapidement en Amérique du nord et en Europe ; avant longtemps, de nouvelles fermetures s'imposeront. Nous devons accepter cette nouvelle réalité pendant encore plusieurs mois. Cependant, au sein de ces temps bousillés, pouvons-nous demeurer optimistes devant l'avenir.

Dans ce numéro *d'Orgue Canada*, nous célébrons des vies et des carrières , vous trouverez une recension du nouveau CD de l'une de nos vedettes de l'orgue, Rachel Mahon, en plus de conseils utiles. À cause du COVID, le Collège a dû s'adapter à de nouvelles façons de fonctionner et exploiter de nouvelles technologies qu'autrement nous n'aurions probablement jamais considérées. Plusieurs de nos Centres ont répondu merveilleusement aux défis en offrant à ses membres une brochette d'activités et de ressources qui perdureront bien après les mauvais souvenirs du COVID.

Plusieurs Centres ont présenté leur concert de la Halloween en ligne, ce qui les a permis de rejoindre un plus vaste auditoire. Le Centre Wellington-Waterloo, dont je suis membre, a animé une série de formations *webinar* qui portaient sur diverses technologies, l'enregistrement et la diffusion en ligne. Les participants à ces événements venaient d'à travers le pays. Le Centre Toronto a puisé parmi ses nombreux membres et contactes en dehors du Centre pour présenter en une série de vidéos l'intégrale de l'*Orgelbüchlein* de Bach. Chacun des quarante-cinq préludes est introduit et interprété par un membre différent. Le Centre a aussi offert des cours de maître présentés par des examinateurs chevronnés sur les examens du Collège. Tous pourront accéder sous peu à ces deux ressources depuis le site web du Collège. Ne voilà que quelques exemples de comment notre profession a su profiter d'une situation qui *a priori* s'avérait difficile.

Votre Conseil d'administration est en voie de réviser la gouvernance du Collège avec les objectifs d'améliorer les communications avec les dirigeants de nos Centres et nos comités, et de tenir compte du temps que nous offrent nos bénévoles. Comme la dernière telle révision remonte à vingt-cinq ans, il s'avère important de réviser ce que nous faisons, comment nous le faisons, voire, pourquoi nous offrons encore certaines

Cont'd on page 5

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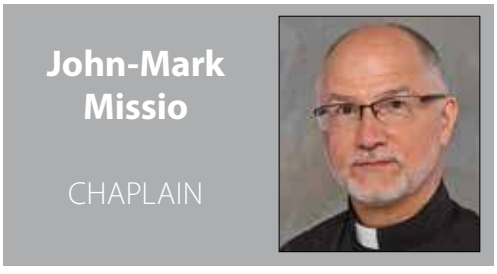
We acknowledge the support of the Canada Council for the Arts.

de nos activités. Nous consulterons tous les membres sous peu, alors, attendez-vous à plus d'information en janvier.

D'autres projets d'envergure nationale donnent de bons résultats. Notre podcast, *FutureStops*, qui est subventionné sous le programme du Fonds des stratégies numériques du Conseil des Arts du Canada, a été lancé et a fait l'objet de commentaires positifs. Des nouvelles pages sont en voie d'être ajoutées à notre site Web <rcco.ca>, y compris un forum d'Achats et de ventes sous notre page de magasin. Les dirigeants de nos Centres sont priés de s'abonner au Forum leadership qui leur est destiné. Tous nos membres sont invités à s'inscrire au Forum de discussions des membres depuis l'onglet des Membres sur la page d'accueil du site du Collège. Communiquez Hayley, de notre bureau national, pour plus d'informations.

—PETER NIKIFORUK

Chaplain's column



IF THESE WALLS COULD TALK… If this facade could talk… Just imagine what tales the organ could tell of what it witnessed while looking back on many a faithful assembly over the centuries.

I am pondering the timelessness of the organ in these days when the instrument will perform its ministry of *kairos*, as we roll back the liturgical calendars to another season of Advent, another time of the coming of the Lord. Organ preludes on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland* and improvisations on *O Antiphons* will regale our ears once again, melodies recalling Advents past while setting this year in procession towards the future. The organ is an agent of *kairos*, that stepping out of time in liturgical celebration when past, present, and future are not separated by the unrelenting *chronos* of our daily struggles.

Not only the repertoire, but the very sonic presence of the instrument connects us over time. Although an organ is periodically renovated, the same sound is heard for decades if not centuries. If you are blessed with such an instrument, you can imagine that these are the sounds your grandparents heard at their first communion; the sounds that accompanied deaths, births, commitments, milestones, all the encounters with the Holy that grace our lives.

I love that sense of sonic unity across generations that the organ brings. My prayer for you is that you find some consolation like this as your old friend looks out on your sacred assemblies this season, knowing that other generations have been through hardships like the present times, but countless joys as well. May your instrument's ministry of *kairos* lift you out of the present moment of worry, and into the timeless joys of Advent, Christmas, and beyond.

—THE REV. JOHN-MARK MISSIO

NATIONAL AND CENTRE NEWS

REGINA CENTRE

Precautions against COVID-19 were many when the Regina Centre held its **Gordon C. Wallis Pipe Organ Scholarship Competition** at Westminster United Church on the evening of Oct. 30. The restricted-size audience for the event heard four students perform. Winner of a $500 scholarship was **Barbara Zerr**, a student of **Valerie Hall**. Winner of a $250 scholarship was **Jessica Stroeder**, a student of **Hart Godden**. The adjudicator was **Dr. Neil Cockburn** of Calgary. Regina Centre president **Dr. Allan East** was master of ceremonies for the event and **Dr. Thomas Chase** spoke to the audience concerning his memories of his former teacher, the late Gordon Wallis. Wallis, MusBac, ACCO, AAGO (ChM), LTCL, LRSM, the donor of the funds upon which the scholarship depends, was a leading Saskatchewan-born educator and long-time member of the RCCO. He served churches in the Toronto area and, returning to his home province, served as director of the Regina Conservatory beginning in the late 1960s. At the 2020 competition, each student played one 19th- or 20th-century piece and one piece by J. S. Bach. After the performances, Dr. Cockburn addressed the audience with remarks about each individual piece, all of which were well executed. This was the first live music many of us had enjoyed in almost eight months! A video capsule of the event is at <https://vimeo.com/474554885>.

—LYNN CAVANAGH

VANCOUVER CENTRE

On Oct. 28, the Vancouver Centre presented its fifteenth consecutive Halloween Concert. This was an online event for the first time and included four performers from the first concert in 2006 (Rachel Alflatt, Denis Bédard, Tamar Genossar and Michael Molnar).

Rachel Alflatt opened the concert with the Bach D-minor Toccata, followed by **Denis Bédard** playing Gabriel Pierné's Prelude in G Minor, Op. 29/1. **Jannie Lo Burdeti** then performed Denis Bédard's *Round of the Ghouls* and the "castle theme" from the game Super Mario World, to which she and her spouse had added some very clever and delightful special effects. **Tamar Genossar** followed with Anton Bruckner's little-known *Vorspiel und Fuge* (WA 131), after which **Michael Molnar** offered his own work: *Dragon's Lair*. **Susan Ohannesian** played Robert Eilenberg's *Goblins' Revelry* and Robert Schumann's *Fürchtenmachen* (Bogeyman), and **Angelique Po** concluded the concert with Charles Tournemire's Toccata from *Suite de Morceaux*, Op.19/3. All the performances were recorded by the performers or their spouses, either at



Scholarship competition participants (l-r): Jarrod Daunheimer, Andrew Polasek, Neil Cockburn (adjudicator), Barbara Zerr, Jessica Stroeder.



Jannie Lo Burdeti playing *Round of the Ghouls*.

home or in their respective churches, and the video was edited and assembled by **Frank Ezinga**. The video was programmed as a YouTube premiere, which enabled a lively and appreciative chat during the performance, and will remain online at <https://youtu.be/giF6zBtTB_s >.

Other virtual events over the past few months have included our Centre AGM and monthly Zoom get-togethers with the Victoria Centre, with conversation topics ranging from favourite recordings and practice tips to "organ horror stories," which was a very enjoyable and often hilarious topic not long before Halloween.

—RACHEL ALFLATT

VICTORIA CENTRE

For our annual Fall Social, on Sept. 19 thirteen participants gathered via Zoom, in the convenience of their homes, for a fun time of fellowship. It was great to "see" Centre members and friends again, albeit online.

Many more viewers from all over Canada, the U.S. and abroad watched live on Oct. 31 a "spook-tacular" Halloween concert featuring eight organists from Western Canadian RCCO Centres, playing six different organs. Performers included **Marnie Giesbrecht** and **Joachim Seeger** (duet, Edmonton), **Leanne Fidan** (Edmonton); **Colin Redekop** (Calgary); **Michael Dirk**, **Angelique Po** (Vancouver); and **Donald Hunt** and **Mark McDonald** (duet, Victoria). The audience was greatly entertained by suitable All Hallows' Eve music by Bach, Willan, Albinoni, Vierne and Saint-Saëns (arr. **David Cameron**) and an improvisation by **Michael Dirk** on themes from musicals, motion pictures, and TV. The production team included **Jenny Vincent** (producer), Paul Vincent (poster design), Ron Vermeulen and DragonFly Mobile Recording (video editing), **Sandra Fletcher** and **Kathleen Edge** (advertising), **Douglas Adams** (web site posting), **Mark McDonald** (live-streaming), and **Susanne Reul-Zastre** (program notes). In case you missed the live-stream premiere or would like to watch the concert again, follow this link: <https://www.facebook.com/RCCOVictoria/videos/2563124240579142>.

—SUSANNE REUL-ZASTRE

OPPORTUNITIES AND DEADLINES

HONORARY AWARD NOMINATION DEADLINE: FEBRUARY 1, 2021

Do you know someone who, through their work locally or nationally, have made a significant contribution to the organ and its music in Canada? For awards and nomination information go to www.rcco.ca/Honorary-Awards.

EXAMINATION APPLICATION DEADLINE: MARCH 15, 2021

For more information please go to www.rcco.ca/examinations.

SCHOLARSHIPS

The RCCO offers a wide variety of scholarships for organists at all levels of ability and experience. For further information go to www.rcco.ca/scholarships.

NEW ONLINE RESOURCE: BUY & SELL FORUM

Looking for an organ? Have some music that you would like to sell? Post it on the RCCO Buy & Sell Forum! The new Buy & Sell Forum is for organs or other music-related items that are being offered or sought. For more information go to www.rcco.ca/Buy-&-Sell-Forum.

ONLINE CONCERT CALENDAR

Do you have a concert coming up? (Virtual or otherwise!) If so, send us an email at info@rcco.ca to get your concert posted on our Online Concert Calendar.

ONLINE ORGAN LESSONS

Looking to improve your organ skills, but don't live near a teacher? The RCCO offers a directory of instructors who provide online lessons. To view the directory, go to www.rcco.ca/page-18416.



Gordon Atkinson, far right, with other Vancouver Centre members at Government House during a daytrip to Victoria as part of the 1969 RCCO national convention.

GORDON ATKINSON
September 9, 1938–May 5, 2015

by SAM BALDEN

SOME OF THE OLDER MEMBERS of the College may remember Gordon Atkinson, MA, ARCCO (ChM), FTCL, PhD, a highly involved and contributing member of the Vancouver Centre for a considerable number of years. His death went largely unheralded in the organists' community (there was no obituary published), and this short article is my attempt to redress this. The Vancouver Centre owes much to Gordon for his dedication and service and his tremendous capacity to serve others as an educator and as a musician. Yet many present members know little or nothing of these contributions.

His memorial service was held Saturday, May 16, 2015 at St. George's School, Vancouver. Word of Gordon's death had spread among the alumni of St. George's (an independent boarding and day university-preparatory school for boys). Appropriately, in view of Gordon's cradle Anglicanism, the service included the well-known hymns "The King of Love My Shepherd Is," "Jesus, Lover of My Soul,"



Gordon Atkinson at the St. James' Anglican Church organ console

"O Worship the King," and "For All the Saints." Michael Murray of St. Philip's Church, Dunbar served as the musician.

While at St. George's, Gordon admonished students at assembly to "Stand up! You sing from here, and you commit like this: HA–AL–LE–LU–JAH, HA–AL–LE–LU–JAH!" in reference to the verse endings of "For All the Saints." That "singing legacy" exists to this day!

Gordon began his time with St. George's in 1963, initially as part-time choirmaster, later becoming Maitland housemaster and teacher of music, mathematics, and games. In 1967 he was appointed head of Middle School; in 1972 he became deputy headmaster with responsibility for leading the Senior School, meanwhile teaching music and mathematics and coaching a variety of sports. Retirement in 1990 to his home in Agassiz was followed by a return to St. George's (where the school magazine referred to Gordon as a "compleat Renaissance man") in 1991 to serve as headmaster until 1996, "providing much-needed stability and leadership during a crucial period of transition."

Gordon's beginnings were in Hetton-le-Hole, in England. He won a scholarship to the Durham Grammar School and was selected to be a choirboy in the Cathedral Choir School, which gave him his training in the ancient traditions of the Anglican Church. His family emigrated to Canada in 1955 and Gordon, after attending UBC, received his first teaching position in Burns Lake in 1959. His passion for music played out in every B.C. community in which he lived and served, whether as an organist, choirmaster, or singer, but particularly at St. James' Church (a high Anglican church) in the Vancouver downtown east side, where he worked with dedication and enthusiasm as organist and choirmaster

from 1963 to 1990. Gordon's organ teachers were Hugh McLean and Leonard Wilson (organist at St. James').

Susan Ohannesian of our Centre kindly searched through RCCO archival material for me to review. A prominent section is related to the 1969 Diamond Jubilee national convention of the College, held in Vancouver. It is notable that the general chairman was Hugh McLean and the vice-chairman was Gordon Atkinson.

My review of historical newsletters, notices, and Centre minutes from1962 to 2014 gave evidence of Gordon's extensive involvement—as a member, on the executive, and as publicity chairman, recitalist, Centre chairman, College Service participant, and so on. Susan remembers that "Gordon and I held the Vancouver Centre together for many years when there was hardly any activity."

Gordon was a dedicated and talented church musician, as well as a respected and loved educator. By this article I hope I have paid due respect to Gordon and reminded our colleagues across Canada that his time with the RCCO was both valued and treasured.

Sam Balden is a member of the Vancouver Centre of the RCCO.

RETIRED

David Palmer, MMUS, FRCCO (hon), played his last service at All Saints' Anglican Church, Windsor on Sunday, Oct. 18. The rector, the Rev. Robert Clifford, had written to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, and greetings were received from Buckingham Palace on the occasion of David's retirement. In his farewell speech to the congregation, David said how special the All Saints' parish family was and that Sundays were the highlight of his week. He also paid tribute to the choir: they had learned and offered lots of anthems and service music over the decades, but (and I can attest to it) the rehearsals were full of fun and laughter!

It all started in 1968 when David, then a graduate student under Robert Glasgow at the University of Michigan, received a phone call from childhood friend Christopher Steed, then organist of All Saints', Windsor, saying that the church's position of organist and choir director was open. (David and Christopher had sung under Christopher's father, Graham Steed, at Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria in the 1950s.) David Palmer took over from Christopher Steed on July 1 of that year. For about a year or so after, I was still a boy chorister at All Saints'. David had inherited a choir of men and boys which, understandably, sang English choral repertoire; when I returned to the choir in 1974, it had become a mixed choir. Over the years, he expanded the choir's repertoire with music of North American and European composers; he also featured instrumentalists for festive services. In the mid-70s, additional singers augmented the choir in performance of some of Bach's cantatas with orchestra.

In 1979, the church's three-manual Woodstock organ was replaced with a new, mechanical-action Karl Wilhelm organ. Two of David's requirements made this organ a Karl Wilhelm first: its rank



of celeste pipes and its piston system. With David being organ professor at the University of Windsor, the organ has served for students' practice, lessons, and recitals, and given them valuable experience when helping out at services. David also developed an organ concert series which has been strongly supported by the congregation in both time and donations.

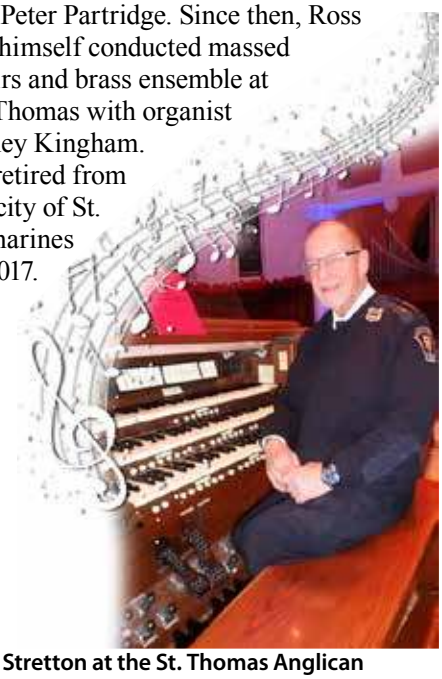
We thank and congratulate David Palmer for his 52 years of distinguished service at All Saints' Church, Windsor, and wish him a happy and healthy retirement in Victoria, B.C.

—ROBERT P. JONES

Ross Stretton has retired from church music ministry after 56 years. In the late 1960s and 1970s he served three small, Niagara-area Anglican parishes. Beginning 1980, Ross was organist and director of music at Queen Street Baptist Church, St. Catharines for 18 years. In 1998 he was appointed director of music at Lundy's Lane United Church in Niagara Falls. His last post began in 2010 when he was appointed organist and director of music at St. Paul's United Church, Oakville. Among his organ teachers were the late Frank Olsen; the Rev. Peter Orme; the late Dr. Melville Cook, FRCO; the late Keith Hopkins, FRCCO. Ross is known for his annual Church and Organ tours, which he has conducted since the early 1980s to all parts of southern Ontario and upper New York state. He is a Fellow of three learned societies: The Honourable Company of Organists, The Academy of Saint Cecilia (England), and The Guild of Musicians and Singers (England).

Ross first joined the RCCO in 1964. A resident of Toronto, he currently belongs to the Niagara, Hamilton, and Toronto Centres and the Buffalo Chapter of the AGO. In 1989 Ross won the Kathleen Williams prize for service playing at the Hamilton RCCO Convention. He was active with Niagara RCCO Convention committees in 1973, 1987, and 1997 and for 14 years chaired the national professional concerns committee.

Employed by the city of St. Catharines for 37 years, during his last 29 years he organized and played the organ at St. Thomas Anglican Church for the city's annual Civic Carol Concert, with school choirs and brass under the direction of the late Peter Partridge. Since then, Ross has himself conducted massed choirs and brass ensemble at St. Thomas with organist Lesley Kingham. He retired from the city of St. Catharines in 2017.



Ross Stretton at the St. Thomas Anglican Church Casavant organ (an organ he helped install), for a St. Catherines Civic Carol Concert.



PHOTO: Danielle Tocker Photography

AN INTERVIEW WITH CHORAL CONDUCTOR **MELISSA MORGAN** PART 1

by LYNN CAVANAGH

A performer, adjudicator, and clinician who has appeared throughout Canada, Regina-born educator and conductor MELISSA MORGAN was named one of CBC Saskatchewan's "Future 40 under-40" recipients in 2017. Also in 2017, she completed a DMA in choral conducting from the University of Toronto, meanwhile holding the position of Pfeifer Memorial Chair of Music at Regina's Luther College High School. Under her direction, the LUTHER COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR CHOIR appeared at CHORAL CANADA conferences and at Lincoln Centre in New York. In 2016 Melissa Morgan founded a choir to perform music by Saskatchewan and other prairie composers. Called the PRAIRIE CHAMBER CHOIR, in 2019 it won second place in the chamber choir category of the NATIONAL COMPETITION FOR CANADIAN AMATEUR CHOIRS. Meanwhile in 2019, Dr. Morgan was appointed an assistant professor in the University of Regina Music Department where she teaches courses in choral techniques and vocal diction, and where she directs the University Concert and University Chamber choirs. I spoke to Melissa Morgan at her home in Regina early this past August. Here is part of that interview.

Who are the conductors that influenced you as a choral conductor?

I'm a product of a huge melting pot of influences from many choral conductors! I think I was around 11 or 12 when I joined Diana Woolrich's JUVENTUS CHOIR as a founding member. Diana and her husband **Robin Swales**—also involved with the choir and also British-born—imparted to us some of that British school of singing, its sound, and its appreciation of plainchant. As Juventus choristers, we became very proud of our choir's achievements. I remember Diana was quite a strict teacher, whether of the choir or of solo singing; I also remember she spent hours and hours selecting the right pieces. That repertoire remains with me, and the care she took in choosing it has influenced me.

I was also strongly influenced by mentors Gail Fry and Deborah Nelson: from them I learned a lot about working with young voices, especially teens whose voices are changing. While I was interning with Deborah Nelson in my fourth year of university, I even had opportunity to conduct her Girls' Choir when we attended a choral festival. At the festival, Carol Beynon, (then co-conductor of the AMABILE CHOIR with Ken Fleet) was our choir's adjudicator and she saw something in me when I was directing. She said: "You're doing such a remarkable job with this choir and you're just an intern! Have you considered doing your Master's?"

The upshot was that I enrolled in a Master's program in choral conducting at Western [in London, Ont.] where my conducting teacher and mentor was Dr. Victoria Meredith. From the opportunities Dr. Meredith gave me, I learned how to work with voices of typical university students and I learned to get to the point in a rehearsal—not talk too much! Dr. Meredith also modeled for me how to speak to singers in a way that motivates them and just how to be honest with one's choral singers—letting them know when things needed to change or improve, but never making them feel exposed or blamed: that's a fine line we have to walk!

The next influences on me as a

choral conductor were the result of conducting choirs at Luther College High school in Regina: we brought in clinicians such as Jon Washburn, Melanie DeMore, Brian Tate, from all of whom I picked up tips. And, when I took a high school choir to an event such as the Rocky Mountain Music Festival in Banff, I came in contact with a host of conductors from whom I gained insights. Meanwhile, for my doctoral program at the University of Toronto I worked under Dr. Hilary Apfelstadt; she was and continues to be a major influence in my life and a mentor to me.

A big influence of a different sort occurred back in 1999 when I travelled to Chicago with the UNIVERSITY OF REGINA CHAMBER SINGERS and there heard the MOSES HOGAN CHORALE perform. I had never seen or heard an ensemble comprised of all Black professional singers performing in *bel canto* style. It was a powerful thing for me!

We'll return to that important topic later. Currently you are directing the University of Regina Chamber Singers. What has it been like being on both sides of the podium?

It's been a fantastic experience! I remember feeling a lot of pride singing with that choir. Its director then, Kathryn Laurin had amazing ears: she knew every individual voice, where to place every person, though I must say that at the time I did not understand all that she was hearing. She was the master at mixing voices; she knew which voices worked well beside one another both for tuning and so as to create a specific tone colour: she really understood how those choristers' voices worked together to create a certain sound. I think that influenced me a lot. Now that I am a choral director, I think about placement in terms of vocal quality.

Kathryn never said much about potentially controversial things such as vibrato, but she would talk about *colour*, she would describe the sound in a certain way, and under her the University of Regina Chamber Singers was known for its sound: it won national and international competitions. These are things that I've "taken away" from singing in her choir and continue while directing the UR Chamber Singers. Each past director has made their mark, left their sound. I don't want to copy Kathryn Laurin or any other conductor, though I hope that the singers continue to feel pride in their choir as I did under Laurin. When COVID is over (hopefully), the choir can travel and make recordings, just as under previous directors.

Is there a difference between how you spend time in a choir rehearsal during the first semester compared to the second?

As a new director of the University Concert Choir, I take the fact that some first-semester students come from small towns where they do not have a choir, or where the choir program does not have the repertoire or numbers we have at the University. During the first semester, there are routines and repertoire that newer choristers especially need to acquire. Part of that is getting to understand me as conductor—my methods, my warm-ups, my terminology about how to sit, how to open the mouth to get a resonant tone. Every conductor has their own choir culture that they create, and it takes time for choristers, but especially the first-semester students, to absorb this. The first semester is really about getting to know one another and developing a sense of trust. By the second semester the entire choir can approach repertoire a little faster: all singers are used to the conductor's terminology and how we break down a rehearsal. First we look at the text. We may analyze some of the harmony perhaps, and now they understand why: instead of just looking at their own line, they know that, to be a good listener, you have to be able to hear all the parts and how you fit within the whole. That, too, takes time to instil and generally, by the second semester, I don't have to prompt them by saying: "What's happening in the soprano? What's happening in the bass?"

How do you approach choosing repertoire for any choir you direct?

First, I am always looking for something that is achievable—that we will be able to perform successfully, that will contribute towards developing a great sound, and that will make choristers feel good. Then I look at the text, and generally I have a theme in mind and try to choose texts around that theme. Next, I look for musical elements that I want to teach: what I want the choristers to learn by the end of their degree program. It might be legato singing, line and long phrases as in a passage of plainchant; or mixed metre in contemporary music. I look for repertoire that is contemporary and repertoire from the choral canon of every era; I look also at who the composer is because I want the music to be diverse, to represent peoples of every walk and background. I'll choose a couple of pieces that I know this choir will have to work towards and I look for music that I've never done before because that's how I learn new things (and there is so much new repertoire out there and longstanding repertoire that I've never done). For choristers who after university will not have the opportunity, I program the occasional larger work and more difficult contemporary pieces. A lot depends upon who is in the choir: perhaps there's a group that's really into world music, or for whom early music sits well with their voices. There are so many ways to approach repertoire and so much wonderful repertoire options out there.

To be continued.

NATIONAL ORGAN PLAYING COMPETITION APPLICATION DEADLINE: FEB. 1, 2021

The RCCO is currently accepting applications for the 2021 National Organ Playing Competition, to be held during Organ Festival Canada 2021 in Hamilton, Ontario. The deadline to apply is February 1, 2021. Please navigate your way to rcco.ca>Festivals>National Competition, or use this link https://tinyurl.com/rcco-comp-app to go directly to the application information.

U.K. Report
"The elusive "Tied Quaver"

by SARAH MACDONALD

This article was first published in The American Organist *magazine in November 2016. It is reprinted here with permission.*

A PERENNIAL QUESTION WITH WHICH CHOIR MEMBERS interrupt rehearsals runs as follows: "Where does the final consonant go?" This legitimate enquiry can be particularly irritating when asked by someone who only achieved 60 percent accuracy in the preceding phrase. Now, I am a stickler for final consonants—some might argue to a fault. Nonetheless, if by the end of a rehearsal a choir's consonants are perfectly together but the notes are still wrong, one wonders about their conductor's priorities.

In theory, of course, this question should not need to be asked by anyone from a well-trained choir. However, confusion inevitably arises with that very British of choral quirks, the tied quaver or eighth note. How many times have you seen this—



and agonised about where the *d* should be placed? (This example is taken from Howells' *Like as the hart.*[1]) Perhaps those of us who are particularly OCD about final consonants can be forgiven for having forgotten that 40 percent of the previous phrase was inaccurate.

Historically, these pesky eighth notes began to appear inconsistently in the early works of Elgar (there are a number of instances in the 1897 *Te Deum and Benedicite* Op. 34, for example). Vaughan Williams was the first to use them habitually, though his application of them is also inconsistent (see below). The tied eighth note is especially ubiquitous in the works of Howells, Finzi, Leighton, and their ilk, and has for many years perturbed singers and conductors alike. Fortunately, many contemporary composers (James MacMillan, Jonathan Dove, Cecilia McDowall, et al.) seem to have abandoned them.

So, what is that tied eighth note for? Is it correct to place the consonant directly on the note, or should it occur on the ensuing rest? What were the composers' intentions? And, assuming they had intentions for those consonants, what on earth did they mean by adding a tied eighth note to a word ending in a vowel—as in this example from Vaughan Williams' *A Choral Flourish*? [2]



My personal practice is consciously inconsistent. I consider each instance individually, and base my decision on tempo, style, harmony, and context, varying my verdict from bar to bar. I do not teach my choirs a specific "policy," which is why that aforementioned question occurs. In an informal survey of cathedral and Oxbridge colleagues, I was not surprised to find that they follow this route as well. Those who do attempt to abide by a policy inevitably stray from it on a regular basis.

It is widely agreed that tempo is the most important factor in deciding where to place the consonant. In general, at a faster speed the consonant is placed directly on the tied note. So, in the quick middle section of the Magnificat

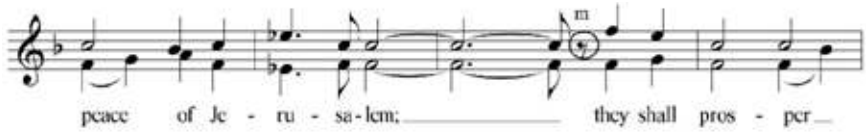
Notes:

[1] Herbert Howells, *Like as the hart* (OUP, 1943).
[2] Ralph Vaughan Williams, *A Choral Flourish* (OUP, 1956).

from Leighton's *Second Service*, [3] placing the consonants on the tied note enhances rhythmic clarity and keeps contrapuntal ensemble precise.



On the other hand, in a slower, more lyrical work, placing the consonant on the rest after the tied note creates subtle and less perceptible joins between phrases. For example, in Howells' *O pray for the peace of Jerusalem*, [4] the consonants in the opening and closing sections are most musically placed on the rests (or at least this is true at the tempo at which I take the piece!).



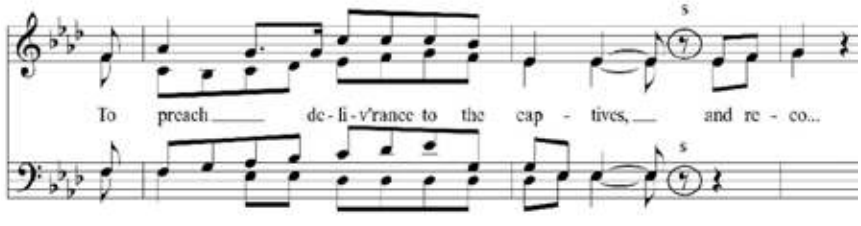
Frustratingly, composers themselves were inconsistent. In Vaughan Williams' setting of *Let all the world*, [5] the following two phrases occur within three bars of each other. Surely they are not meant to be sung differently!



Elgar's anthem "The Spirit of the Lord" (from *The Apostles* [6]) contains the following three examples of tied eighth notes, each of which demands a different interpretation. First:



For *poor*, a tied eighth note is provided for no final consonant (the r is not pronounced when singing with a standard English accent). Another example:



[3] Kenneth Leighton, *Second Service (Evening Canticles)* (Novello and Co., 1972).
[4] Herbert Howells, *O pray for the peace of Jerusalem* (OUP, 1943).
[5] Ralph Vaughan Williams, *Five Mystical Songs*, No. 5 (Stainer and Bell, 1911).
[6] Edward Elgar, *The Apostles*, Op. 49 (Novello, 1903).

Putting the *s* of *captives* on the rest creates a more refined connection between the phrases. Finally:



The complexity of the syncopation and the *rallentando* in the accompaniment makes putting the *s* of *righteousness* on the tied note by far the simplest and tidiest solution.

A particularly awkward example of the phenomenon occurs in Howells' *Magnificat in B minor*, [7] during the quicker middle section, which is conducted in half-notes.

Howells' original:



My alternative:



Placing the *t* on the tied note itself makes the gap feel unnaturally long and, inevitably, someone comes in early after the rest. On the other hand, it is mathematically very difficult to place the final *t* of *seat* on an eighth-note rest when counting in half notes. My (undoubtedly controversial) solution is actually to rewrite Howells (!), which, fortunately, works well harmonically in this case.

There is, of course, no right answer. Composers themselves were varied in their approach, and it is a relief that the practice seems to have fallen out of use. As to why it was introduced originally, one theory is that the tied notes were added to encourage less-accomplished singers to hold long notes with conviction right to the end. Since many of the works in which they first appeared were oratorios written for amateur choral societies, this conjecture seems plausible.

The late former director of music at King's College, Cambridge told me that he had actually asked Howells about the tied eighth notes many years ago. Howells "didn't comment in detail," presumably "preferring decisions in this area to be made by conductors." [8] Consequently, it looks as if we are required to make an informed and musical judgement in every individual case rather than meant to construct a universal policy. So, mark up your choir's scores before the rehearsal, in order to avoid being asked that old familiar but irritating question!

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[7] Herbert Howells, *Evening Service in B Minor* (Novello, 1955).
[8] Stephen Cleobury, personal correspondence, 29 August 2016; quoted with permission.

Encouraging participation in worship: print or projection?

by FRED GRAHAM based on a reflection by R. BRISSON

The following article was received by Organ Canada prior to the pandemic. The editors believe it continues to have relevance for some congregations and parishes, even in the "days of COVID."

FOLLOWING THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, there were many changes in terms of liturgical music and hymns: new language, new tunes, new texts. As a pastoral musician, I did not witness all the changes, but I live in the evolving environment of liturgical praxis in a new century. The most recent and most obvious change is related to a declared preference for projection over use of print material for the faithful who gather.

When the innovation of projection systems was introduced, I used acetates, followed by a computer-based projection system, including, over the past season, a digital projection system. I also rely on the hymnal *D'une même voix* (DMV) and the missalette *Prions en Église*. I frequently consult the document *Guidelines for the Use of Visual Display Systems* in Liturgical Celebrations from the diocese of Parramatta, Australia. This document was written as a response to the increased use of projection systems in Australia, and the perceived need to develop standards for use of such systems. In reflecting on certain liturgical approaches in Canada and elsewhere, I offer what I hope will be useful observations resulting from experience.

As a starting point, it seems obvious to me that we should ask why this increasingly common phenomenon is growing, especially in the context of a Sunday eucharist. Participation formerly relied upon use of print resources; now participation is often prompted by use of a projection system such as Proxima, and software like Power Point or Google Slides, all developed originally for office and workplace use. What are the implications for a Christian liturgical celebration?

When comparing the use of print resources such as a missalette (e.g., *Prions en Église*) or *Living with Christ* along with the hymnal *DMV* or *Catholic Book of Worship III*, over against the process of computer projections, several key elements become evident. First, we as humans respond differently to visual images than to published literary or word images. In this age of personal devices, computers and televisions, we are captivated by the screen. We cannot ignore it or set it aside. The exposure is universal. A hymnal or missalette can be laid aside as one enters meditation or prayer, whereas the screen is ever-present. Second, western readers follow a sequence of words moving forward, while simultaneously reviewing what they just read. Absorbing the message involves the eyes revisiting previous words to achieve a compilation of detail and narrative. This happens easily when using a print resource. The process is less successful when engaged with a rotation of slides because what we have just read disappears in favour of the next new segment. Third, and not insignificantly, the planning leaders are charged with choosing the texts and songs for the day for the projection slides, and the assembly never has opportunity to see other prose or poetry on the opposite or following page. When handling a print resource, it is a frequent experience that one is able to find a relevant phrase or composition outside the prescribed menu for the celebration.

On the other hand, a projection system, used wisely, permits the participants to be active— "hands-free" and "heads-up." One could debate the merit of those goals. If members of the assembly are not familiar with liturgical content and order, if they are seekers or visitors, a well-crafted power point can provide a comforting guide. A further advantage is seen in congregational access to newly published hymns, relevant to our time and mission concerns. The average life of a hymnal is fifteen to twenty-five years.

Concerns arise if or when a projection system is poorly implemented or over-used. The contents must be visually appealing. Preparation involves dealing with questions such as whether congregational responses are more effective in black type or yellow type. Are responses from the assembly limited to what is on the screen? Are spontaneous and memory-bank responses then proscribed? Do worshippers become an audience, prompted at every turn, instead of principal actors in the liturgical drama?

My experience reveals the tendency for congregations to be guided precisely by what appears on the screen, a process which often fails to embrace the totality of energy and responsiveness of the moment. How does a screen invite Christians into the mystery of the resurrection, or into baptismal joy? Even though the liturgy is designed around a "dress-maker's form" of events, is it not time to allow space for the unexpected and the action of the Spirit, to promote contextual reaction, such as we experience in the (unscripted) singing of "Happy Birthday" at a family gathering?

Thus far, we have not paid attention to the spaces we enjoy using for liturgical celebrations. In the presence of a dominant screen (or screens), are worshippers free to savour the affect of stained glass, floral displays, or liturgical art? Surely active, whole-body, participation is more desirable than passive, rote participation.

My thesis is that the projection system should support the eucharistic celebration rather than being permitted to become a focal point. There is danger of substantial loss when attention is diverted away from the proclamation of the Word and the ritual at the Table. One hopes that the faithful are gathered to encounter Christ in Bread and Wine. A projection system, sensitively used, facilitates the holy encounter, without interfering or replacing it.

When we teach a song or nursery rhyme to children, we appeal to their listening skills and the familiar experience of learning "Twinkle, twinkle little star" or "Frère Jacques." Singing with a group allows confidence to grow and

develops self-worth within the group. The same process is available in the Christian community. Leaders sing, people repeat. "Call and response" methodology is both multi-cultural and international.

If the assembly sings certain elements of the liturgy by heart, they will soon sing *with* heart, united *in* heart and mind. This approach relates directly to repeated use of key components of the service. Uninterrupted projection, however, tends to undermine community memorization. Many congregations depend on a cantor to "line out" a refrain or response in fruitful collaboration. Why is there a perceived need to duplicate the response through projection? Persons (young or old) of short stature tend to hear a leader better than when they try to view a distant screen. Educational experts inform us that the cognitive process differs substantively when we listen to a message as it is proclaimed, in contrast to seeing and hearing a message projected while it is read aloud. What is the pastoral goal in each instance?

The projection of texts is related to an administrative challenge labeled "securing copyright permission." Texts may not be reproduced or projected without explicit clearance to do so. On pain of litigation, we are bound to respect copyright regulations. The task embraces both a legal and a justice-based obligation. It is necessary to list the title of hymns or other texts, the name(s) of the copyright holder(s), as well as authors and composers and the applicable licence information depending on the circumstance.

Experience has taught us all that projected materials are best when they appear in a clear, simple, and concise way to reflect the dignity of the occasion, so that the result is full participation. Preferred font choices should enable all to read. Experience has also taught that the system should "sleep" when not in use!

Slides and images are normally used sparingly during the liturgy, though when used before and after the celebration they can be inspirational. Many would agree that the liturgy should avoid any semblance of being a multi-media event. If the approach by leaders is "both-and" (print plus projection), a complementary balance of systems can be achieved. A bonus is the strengthening of corporate memory amongst the assembly, along with their listening skills. This applies particularly to the shorter texts and repeated elements (such as the Our Father) and for psalm responses such as "The Lord is my Shepherd," or "A Light rises in the darkness."

If we opt to project the readings for the day during the Liturgy of the Word, we risk undermining the dialogue that is key to any celebration. Of what benefit is the projection of Holy Scripture that is meant to be proclaimed by a person in the room and heard rather than seen? In the case of new materials, projection may be a welcome interim solution until the worshipping community absorbs the new wording into their collective memory to pave the way to a richer dialogue between cantor (or choir) and the assembly, recalling the ancient pattern of dialogue between the Holy One and the faithful.

The removal of hymnals or missalettes from the worship space inevitably leads to aesthetic and cognitive loss, as solely selected texts for hymns, songs, and responses (lacking musical notation) become the norm.

A FEW GUIDELINES TO ENRICH THE CELEBRATION

Entrance hymn: If the refrain is well known, the congregation does not need to see it projected. However, a new refrain will benefit from projection. If the text and tune are available in a hymnal or missalette, the relevant number, even when projected, is a help.

Mass texts (Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus, Agnus Dei): Access to these recurring elements can be facilitated by projection of the page number in the print resources. The celebration finds its nexus in the midst of the people, not on a screen. A revised or new text may be projected for a limited period until it is firmly in the memory of the congregants.

Liturgy of the Word: Scripture passages are proclaimed for congregational listening; seeing them projected has dubious value for worshippers and directs their attention away from the reader. When the psalm is available in printed format, the related page number may be projected, as can the melody for the psalm refrain.

Gospel acclamation: Since the cantor or choir proclaim the acclamation first, inviting the congregation to respond, a projected text is unnecessary.

Communion hymn: Once again, providing the relevant page number suffices, unless the song chosen is from another source, in which case the new text is best projected on a screen.

IN SUMMARY

The use of a projection system calls leaders to exercise pastoral and pedagogical sensitivity, common sense, and cultural awareness. *Leitourgia* (liturgy) is a whole-body experience for everyone in the room, not limited to visual stimulation. Suitable attention to nurturing the memory banks of those gathered promotes unity of the Body, frees the worshipper to encounter the Christ in another, and strengthens the bond among the participants in the celebration. We are blessed to live and bring praise to the Triune God through both print resources and electronic methods. Both methods, used wisely, lead the whole people of God to active discipleship following the commands of the Risen One who lived among us.

Dr. Fred Graham (MusBac, MMus, MPhil, PhD, FRCO, ARCT, FHS) is a retired church musician and member of the Waterloo-Wellington RCCO Centre.



The Aging Voice and the Church Musician

by GARRY FROESE

This is the first of three articles encouraging church musicians to consider why they should invest time and effort in the aging voice and how to do so realistically, safely, and effectively.

WHY WORK WITH THE AGING VOICE?

When one begins to look at the myriad of challenges that can beset the singing voice as choristers age, the possibility of becoming overwhelmed can loom rather large. In 1998, for instance, a study by Sataloff, Spiegel, and Rosen provided a lengthy list of physical challenges that can be encountered in the aging process, namely "…accuracy, speed, endurance, stability, strength, coordination, breathing capacity, nerve conduction velocity, heart output, and kidney function,"[1] many of which can affect the singing voice. When one considers that there "can be as much as a 40 percent loss of vital capacity in the lungs between the ages of twenty and eighty"[2] or that other "lung-related changes include a reduction in maximum breathing capacity and a decrease in metabolism, which lessens the demand made on the breathing mechanism" one might justifiably ask why a church music director would want to take on the challenge of the aging voice.

The reason lies in rapidly shifting demographics which make the challenge impossible to ignore. Growing numbers of senior citizens are looking for ways to make their lives meaningful, rich and stimulating, as opposed to "going quietly into that good night." Churches are community-based institutions, well-positioned to provide such opportunities in a cost-effective and safe manner. Since they are also faith-based organizations, they provide all of this in a setting that also looks after the spiritual well-being of their adherents! As Julene K. Johnson, et al., state in a study report of 2015, "choral singing is multi-modal, [for it] requires cognitive, physical, and psychosocial engagement"[3] and, this author would add, spiritual development. The report goes on to say that choral singing "has the potential to improve health outcomes across several dimensions to help older adults remain active and independent."[4]

Many churches in this country are looking at shrinking membership numbers, yet the proportion of senior citizens in the population is burgeoning! Hence, is this sector of the population not potentially a source of prospective singers? As we consider how to become more actively involved in our communities, that is, how to effectively *build* community through our churches, maybe it is time to cast the function of the church choir in a new role.

This, by extension, means that church musicians may have to re-equip themselves to work effectively with aging choristers. Many see themselves primarily as conductors, but they also must have training and understanding of choral ensemble methods and vocal pedagogy. They need knowledge of symptoms and issues they'll encounter when working with aging voices, and skills to guide these singers in an encouraging and constructive manner. There is, in fact, a growing need for capable professionals who can work in cross-disciplinary teams to assist senior citizens who looking for ways to maintain the vitality and functionality of their singing and speaking voices. Physicians, otolaryngologists, speech therapists, singing teachers, acting- voice specialists, and the like are needed to provide the health support that senior citizens need to remain active and confident members of their communities. The church musician has every reason to be perceived as part of this team!

MANAGING SYMPTOMS AND SPEECH HABITS OF AGING SINGERS

When one is dealing with choristers in this demographic, it is important to pay attention not only to how they sing, but the clarity and quality of their speech habits. As well, it is important to observe how well they hear—possible by observing how efficiently they pick up verbal directions in groups of people.

In order to work effectively with seniors, one must be aware of symptoms, habits, behaviours, and reactions that may be encountered. Indeed, helping seniors narrow down, or define, what their complaints, limitations, or irritants in singing may be is part of the process of encouraging them when, or where, to go for a medical diagnosis. Therefore, at least an awareness of some of the conditions that singers may face becomes an important part of working with them. Possible diagnoses (which are not limited to aging voices) include: benign vocal fold lesions; chronic inflammatory laryngitis; acute inflammatory laryngitis; muscle tension disorders; neurologic disorders; vocal malignancies; vocal fold immobility; vocal fold paresis of the superior or recurrent laryngeal nerve.[5]

Notes:

1 Quoted in Sarah Parks, "Enriching Choral Opportunities for Aging Voices," *Choral Journal* 53/11 (2013), 36.
2 Ibid., 35.
3 Julene K. Johnson, et al., "Study protocol for a cluster randomized trial of the Community of Voices choir intervention to promote health and well-being of diverse older adults," BMC Public Health (2015) 15:1049; DOI 10.1186/s12889-015-2395-9.
4 Ibid.
5 Karen M. Kost and Robert T. Sataloff, "Voice Disorders in the Elderly," Clin Geriatr Med 34 (2018): 192.

Other terms you will hear in medical diagnoses are:
Dysphonia, or "defective use of the voice,"[6] Dysphonia "in the elderly typically presents as a deterioration of voice quality, altered pitch and fundamental frequency, vocal fatigue, and strain."[7]
Presbyphonia, defined as aging of the voice. Attention to presbyphonia as a medical concern parallels the increase of the geriatric population worldwide. It results from physiologic changes to several laryngeal structures, including the musculature, surrounding cartilage, and lamina propria of the vocal folds."[8] Presbyphonia can coexist with any of the diagnoses listed above.

REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS OF AGING VOICES

Increasingly, the vocal pedagogy profession has come around to acknowledge that many of the stereotypical symptoms concerning aging voices can be effectively postponed or managed. Simply put, the maxim "use it or lose it" is relevant when it comes to maintaining vocal health. Thoughtful vocal and breathing exercises, appropriate vocal and musical expectations, regular practice of safe and effective singing habits, and insightful choices of repertoire are all part of a regimen for keeping senior singers purposeful members of our society. And while it may be easy for aging singers to focus on their limitations, it is healthy to encourage singers to focus on their capabilities!

This author has found it useful to approach the aging voice with an attitude similar to that of a conductor working with adolescent changing voices. It is best to avoid prematurely placing a singer in a specific "voice part" and beneficial to allow the singer's voice to guide the conductor in selecting the appropriate vocal range or choral part to sing. Listening carefully to the singer's speaking voice by paying attention to the approximate pitch level of most of the speech often provides a good starting point for identifying a comfortable singing range. Just as for the changing voice, however, the choral part appropriate one year may not be as appropriate the next. In the case of the senior, changes in medications may have an impact on the vocal instrument, for instance, the dryness experienced in the pharyngeal passage due to some medications. Above all, it is vital for the singer to feel comfortable in approaching the conductor about whether or not a part takes them into territory that makes the vocal instrument tense.

When selecting literature, it is important to take a look at the pitch level of an entire composition, vocal part by vocal part. It is not a matter of how high and low the singer can sing, or what the lowest or the highest pitches in the vocal line may be, but rather of where the bulk of the vocal line lies—what is its tessitura? An occasional high note for a singer, followed shortly thereafter with the respite of the middle of his or her register, is workable. Similarly, an occasional low pitch for a baritone or alto, as opposed to a part which lies primarily in the lower part of the voice, is workable. It is also helpful to determine whether the composition's rhythmic pace allows the singer to maintain the breathing energy required to sustain the vocal line throughout. A slow pace can make it considerably more difficult for an amateur senior singer to sustain good breath support throughout the composition.

To promote further constructive thinking about aging voices, follow-up articles will examine:
• vocal and breathing techniques for aging voices; the usefulness of singing in languages other than a singer's "mother tongue";
• aural exercises and strategies to develop the "musical ear" of the aging singer.

Dr. Garry Froese has worked with aging voices in both community and church choirs. As well as operating a private voice studio in Victoria, B.C., he presently conducts the Harmony Choir and is music director at Cordova Bay United Church.

[6] "Dysphonia." *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dysphonia. Accessed 2020-08-03.
[7] David E. Rosow and Debbie R. Pan, "Presbyphonia and Minimal Glottic Insufficiency": Abstract. Otolaryngol Clin North Am. 2019 Aug; 52(4): 617–25. DOI: 10.1016/j.otc.2019. Accessed 2020-08-03.
[8] Ibid.



Nouvelle commande d'œuvre accordée à Rachel Laurin

Rachel Laurin nous écrit: Quelle belle nouvelle j'ai reçue il y a quelques jours : ma soumission au Concours de Composition Pogorzelski-Yankeea été choisie avec l'obtention d'une commande de $10,000 pour une ouvre d'orgue solo de 10 à 12 minutes, qui sera créée en 2022 ! Je tiens à féliciter tous les candidats car je suis sûre que tous leurs projets étaient méritoires: c'était ma troisième tentative et je n'y croyais plus trop...Mais voilà que c'était la bonne! N'abandonnons jamais ! J'ai proposé une pièce qui démontrera l'orgue, ses différentes familles de sons, avec narrateur (optionnel), en relation avec l'Halloween, sur l'histoire de Washington Irving "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow". Cette histoire se prête très bien aux couleurs contrastantes de l'orgue et fascinera les auditeurs, jeunes ou moins jeunes, tout en initiant les plus nouveaux aux différents aspects sonores de l'orgue. J'ai très hâte d'y travailler! Le lien ci-dessous vous renseigne sur le concours de l'année dernière <https://www.agohq.org/pogorzelski-yankee-competition/>.

Rachel Laurin wins new commission

Rachel Laurin writes: I received exciting news a few days ago from the AGO: my proposal for the Pogorzelski-Yankee Composition Competition was selected as the winner of a $10,000 commission for an organ solo work of approximately 10 to 12 minutes. The work will be premiered in 2022. I would like to congratulate all the participating candidates as I'm convinced that their proposals were as deserving! As my submission was my third attempt at this competition, I was not really counting on winning. Well, all I can say is: always try and try again! The project I have proposed is a work that will be associated with Halloween and will demonstrate the organ's range of colours. It will include an optional narrator's part. It will be based on Washington Irving's "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," a story that will lend itself well to featuring the organ's many colours and will surely captivate the listener—whether young or old—who might be discovering the King of Instruments for the first time! I'm really looking forward to beginning work on this project! The link below provides information on last year's competition <https://www.agohq.org/pogorzelski-yankee-competition/>.

Review of Isabelle Demers recording

Recently released by Acis Productions, this thrilling new recording from the diminutive dynamo doesn't disappoint. Demers delivers in this varied program what all good performances should: she steps aside and lets the others she stands on have voice—in this case, six fabulous composers, one genius organ builder (E.M. Skinner), not to mention the sensitive restoration work (2006-2008) of the Shantz Organ Company.

It is fitting that a Canadian-born and globally-renowned artist should make this disc so early in the Rockefeller Chapel organ's second life, given that the organ was originally inaugurated in 1928 by Lynwood Farnam (to a reported audience of 2,500), another Canadian of international repute.

Demers opens this recital, appropriately, with yet another nod to the north: Ernest MacMillan's Cortège Académique. Cast firmly in the style and form of an early-20th century English voluntary, this piece is well-suited to the Skinner's genteel 8-foot diapasons and noble tubas. The interpretation is precise, rhythmic, and sensitive—though a bit more breadth in the opening theme could have worked well in the expansive acoustic of the University of Chicago chapel.

Orchestral transcriptions have been enjoying something of a resurgence in the past fifteen years or so in organ recitals. The performer includes here her own transcription of six tidy miniatures from Tchaikovsky's Sleeping Beauty. Each one taken in insolation does exactly what a miniature should: it delights! Taken together as a short suite, they are this transcriber-performer's "tombeau" to a ballet composer with notable ability to underscore mood and movement with just the right harmony and mood.

The performer's virtuosity is again evident in her own transcription of two excerpts from Mendelssohn's A Midsummer Night's Dream, Op. 6. This is never a glib virtuosity, but one that ultimately serves the music and the instrument. In the second excerpt (Nocturne), a brilliant combination of open diapasons and a clarinet proves to be the slight of hand required to evoke the foggy yet somehow direct character of the original version's opening horn calls. The organ's string section is also to be commended for its lushness, and the flutes for their verdant freshness.

It's also springtime Rachel Laurin's Three Short Studies, Op. 68, albeit a slightly more sinister spring than Mendelssohn's. Here, the language of Vierne, Dupré, Langlais (and a couple of others, fleetingly) are synthesized in these humourous little pieces. The organ speaks French well under Demers's tutelage—even if the cheekiness of the music goads it to occasionally talk back to its maître!

The disc's centrepiece is the large-scale triptych, the Introduction, Passacaglia and Fugue in E minor, Op. 127. Demers's commanding playing of this expansive work allows Reger's dense contrapuntal writing with unemancipated dissonance to breath and sing in its own time. Her performance of both the dizzying passacaglia and the somewhat puckish fugue not only showcases the vast tonal palette of the instrument (from the coy Kleine Erzhäler and sparkling upperwork to the earth-shattering full organ with 64' Gravissima), but also

stands as testament to the immense skill of recording engineers Lauren Stata and Drew Schlegel for their ability to capture and deliver through headphones the physicality of actually being there.

Rounding off this stirring recital is a flawless rendition of Dupré's Prelude and Fugue in B major, Op. 7, no. 1. The versatile E.M. Skinner again effortlessly rejoicing in French, though this time with the appropriate solemnity of Easter Day. Isabelle Demers, humbly toiling in service of both repertoire and instrument, once again delivers with this laudable release, on all she promises and everything we have come to expect from her. Highly recommended.

—DONALD HUNT



Rachel Mahon, *Canadian Organ Music on the Organ of Coventry Cathedral*, Delphian DCD34234, 2020



In the Winter 2020 issue of *Organ Canada*, Rachel Mahon described the historic links between the Canadian organ community and Coventry Cathedral. Destroyed by Luftwaffe bombers in 1940, the cathedral was rebuilt in 1962 with an eye-catching modernist building and a pipe organ paid for in large part by donations from members and friends of the Canadian College of Organists, organized by then-president Healey Willan. The Canadian connection makes the Harrison & Harrison organ at Coventry an especially appropriate venue for this recital of all-Canadian repertoire by Mahon, a Toronto native recently appointed as director of music at the cathedral.

Mahon's program opens with Willan's famous *Introduction, Passacaglia, and Fugue*, one of the pinnacles of early twentieth-century organ literature and a work that has been frequently recorded by Canadian and international organists. This performance is somewhat faster than many other recent recordings (18'27", where the renditions by David Baskeyfield, Jonathan Ryan, and the late Patrick Wedd all fall between 19'23" and 19'45"). This is not to imply, however, that Mahon's interpretation sounds rushed; in fact, Mahon's quicker tempi in several later variations of the passacaglia turn out to be amply justified by Willan's own metronome markings. The performance is beautifully registered, inventively translating the orchestrally inspired stop choices of Willan's score to the more neoclassical style of the Harrison & Harrison organ. The Coventry Cathedral instrument lacks a Harp and its solo reed is a bright Orchestral Trumpet rather than the more muted chorus of Tubas on Willan's organ at St Paul's Bloor Street, yet Mahon's rendition makes the piece sound entirely at home on this instrument.

The other Canadian works on this program are ones much less familiar to an international audience: Gerald Bales's *Petite Suite*, Ruth Watson Henderson's *Chromatic Partita*, and Rachel Laurin's *Première symphonie*, Op. 36. This recording of the Bales suite is set apart from others by an unusually slow and introspective interpretation of the Intermezzo (second movement); the resulting performance seems out of proportion given the extreme brevity of the first and third movements. Henderson's *Chromatic Partita*, by contrast, is impeccably shaped, the best rendition I have heard of this now-classic piece; Mahon expertly builds up a sense of tension through the eight variations and her interpretation of the closing toccata is genuinely thrilling. Last on the program is Rachel Laurin's First Symphony (2008), a technically assured large-scale work by one of North America's leading organ composers. Mahon's performance brings out the work's indebtedness to the symphonies of Vierne as well as its range of emotions, from the dusky, almost Brucknerian, slow movement to the jubilant finale.

—AARON JAMES

Music in the Time of Covid-19

by JOHN COENRAADS

DURING THIS TIME, when access to live music has dried up, I find myself resorting to going on-line formy music fix. When the dinner dishes have been put away, I settle down in my favourite chair, plug headphones into my iPad or computer, eager to see what the YouTube algorithm has found for me to enjoy. Currently multiple "pandemic concerts" are available on-line including of course those on the Organ Festival Canada website and also, and especially, organ concerts from the Netherlands.

As a young child growing up in Holland, my first exposure to music was through the church where I learned to sing the psalms to the Genevan melodies. Later I acquired on old radio and would avidly search for classical music to satisfy my thirst. And when we bought a record player, I still have memories of falling asleep to the sounds of Haydn's Creation. Acquiring my first "Hi-Fi" system enabled me for the first time to seriously sample the world of classical music and I soon acquired a significant record collection. But despite some excellent "direct to disc" recordings, I happily gave up the sounds of pops and scratches and the ritual of "Cleaning the Record" when CDs came along. The silky smooth and quiet backgrounds made listening with my newly acquired, and expensive, electrostatic headphones a special pleasure.

Fast forward to 2020 and my collection of CDs collects dust while YouTube has become my main source of music. Even as I am writing this, I am listening to a Bach harpsichord concerto courtesy the Baroque Channel made available 24 hours a day by my cable provider. But isn't it true that YouTube uses compression to efficiently store and transmit its audio over limited bandwidth channels and isn't that too high a price to pay for access to an unlimited source of music? On paper it looks bad. Unless you are a YouTube Premium subscriber, YouTube limits the audio channel to 128 kilobits/second compared to the 1,411 kbps from a CD, a data loss of about 90%. This is similar to the compression used by the MP3 format which has made iPods and the wide dissemination of music in the last two decades possible. So how can this even be listenable? The trick is to use a sophisticated compression algorithm that is based on the psychoacoustics of human hearing and that eliminates only those parts of the data which really don't contribute to anything we can hear. Given that at my age my high frequency hearing is not what it used to be, I may not be the best judge of this matter. Still, to my ear, when properly done, despite the compression, YouTube music can still be remarkably crisp and clear.

Whenever I click on a YouTube video, an algorithm keeps track of what I have chosen and makes an effort to suggest similar videos for me to sample. But although "Bach" and "organ" must be high on my keyword list, sometimes, along with cute cat videos, it surprises me and suggests I try unfamiliar repertoire which leads me in a new direction. Listing all the performances I have enjoyed would fill pages. Instead, let me share with you the names of some of the performers and groups I recommend you sample.

ORGANISTS AND THEIR ORGANS:

Sietze de Vries (Schnitger Organ: Martinikerk, Groningen)
Bálint Karosi (Richards, Fowkes & Co. Opus 5, St. John's Lutheran, Stamford, CT)
Ullrich Böhme (Brunckhorst, Prelude and Fugue in E minor: Hildebrandt Organ (Naumburg Germany),
Luciano Zecca (The Schmid Organ of the Stadtpfarrkirche, Mariä Himmelfahrt, Landsberg am Lech)
Ennio Cominetti (Italian Organs)
Michel Chapuis (l'orgue Dom Bedos Quoirin de l'abbaye Ste Croix de Bordeaux)
Gert van Hoef (Hinsz Organ, Bovenkerk, Kampen,The Netherlands)
John Propitius (Fantasie Psalm 42: Martinikerk, Bolsward, The Netherlands)
Johnathan Scott (Propsteikirche (Kempen, Germany)
Dave Wickerham (Theatre Organ),
Pascale Mélis (J.S. Bach, Concerto en La mineur pour 4 clavecins: Cavaille-Coll organ in St. Cloud),
M. M. Kaczor (J. S. Bach: Schmücke dich o liebe Seele: the 2006 Chiminelli organ is a gem),
Monica Czausz (Bach's Prelude and Fugue in D: the "Bach Organ" of Houston, Texas),
Anne-Gaëlle Chanon (Buxtehude: Schnitger, Martinikerk, Groningen)

PLUCKED STRINGS:

Amy Turk (Harp), Steve Sic and Jenny (Celtic harp), And on guitar: Ana Vidovic, Tom Savadel, Drew Henderson, Andrea González Caballero, Leonora Spangenberger, Anika Hutschreuther

SOLOISTS:

Blandine Staskiewicz, Dorothee Mields, Amanda Forsythe, Maria Keohane, Sonia Prina, Lea Desandre (Juditha triumphans), Mary-Ellen Nesi, Sheila Blanco (Bach es Dios)

ENSEMBLES:

VOCES8 is a British vocal ensemble
L'Arpeggiata is a European early music group led by Christina Pluhar
La Divina Armonia is directed by Italian born organist Lorenzo Ghielmi.
Voices of Music (Bertali Ciaccona: Alana Youssefian, baroque violin)
Apollo's Fire - The Cleveland Baroque Orchestra
All of Bach (a project of the Netherlands Bach Society)

J.S. Bachstiftung (a Swiss foundation established in 1999)

TRUMPET:

Alison Balsom, Tine Thing Helseth

PIANO:

Nathalie Matthys, Khatia Buniatishvili, Hélène Grimaud, Polina Osetinskaya (J.S.Bach Harpsichord Concerto in D Minor)

HARPSICHORD:

Jean Rondeau (Rameau – Les Sauvages: the harpsichord at Château d'Assas)
Chiara Massini (Bach's Prelude and Fugue in A Minor BWV 894: copy of the 1679 J.J Couchet made by Sebastiano Calì)
Hanneke van Proosdij (François Couperin's rondeau in Style Brisé, harpsichord by Johannes Klinkhamer, after the Ruckers-Goujon in Neuchâtel, Switzerland. Pitch: A=392 Hz.)

And if this whets your appetite, do a Google Search for Maurizio Machella and click on his YouTube channel. Then click on Videos and you will be presented with a near endless list of organ videos. In many cases, the scores may be downloaded for free; an unbelievable resource.

The transistor was invented in 1947, a few years after I was born. We grew up together. The cumulative effect of 13 sextillion (yes, I Googled that) of these tiny silicon miracles clicking away in computers and massive server farms all over the world has had an impact unimaginable in 1947. What awaits a child born today?

A Note on Headphones: I am currently using a $300 set of Sennheiser headphones and consider it money well spent. I would shy away from anything that would stand between me and the music, e.g.,headphones that are noise cancelling or wireless (BlueTooth).

TROUBLESHOOTING ORGAN PROBLEMS: PART 4– THE CIPHER

by STEPHEN MILLER

MY GOAL WITH THESE ARTICLES is to provide information so that you can help yourself with the more straightforward problems an organ might have. While access to technicians can be pretty good in larger cities, in less populated areas of Canada it is a problem. My hope is that, with these minor problems solved, the church's organ budget can be used to fix and improve the instrument and avoid the "Organ of Perpetual Need" problem.

However, this approach is not without problems. Organs are precision devices; therefore, the organ is safest when no one goes inside. The problem may not even be in the organ itself but in the console. If need be, you must carefully determine what is needed before entering the organ chamber. Needless to say, one cannot just stomp around in the chamber, for disturbing the organ will always create more problems. You must not shake the instrument; you must touch only structure. As for the pipes, it's best not to touch them ever. I have seen people happily touching everything in sight and cause tuning issues because they don't realize that a pipe's tuning sleeve or curl may have changed slightly as a result.

All that said, people with respect for the instrument can safely help themselves. One of those ways is to stop what is called a "cipher," that is, a pipe that will not stop playing. This is the result of some object in the mechanism causing a valve to stay open. Finding that object is the job for the technician. Stopping that pipe from sounding can be a task for the organist.

It is much safer for the pipe to be left in place. Taking it out and laying it somewhere invites damage and loss. Therefore, the best solution is to block the air going into the pipe. The easiest way is simply to slip a piece of paper between the bottom of the pipe and the wind chest (the source of the air). Of course, you must touch the pipe to do this, but it will cool off and be back in tune (when playing again) as long as the tuning sleeve or curl has not been disturbed. In the case of very small pipes, one can lift the pipe off the chest and angle it so that the "foot" of the pipe rests beside the valve hole.

When the pipes are longer than 4' or so, they are held upright by racks and these will allow you to lift the pipe up enough to slip that paper under. But try to limit the lift to the minimum unless you take a look to see that there is a long pin on the rack. Beware of lifting the pipe so high (usually 2–3 inches) that it comes off the upper rack pin. On old organs these pipes are held in place by cotton "tape" and can usually be lifted a small amount without binding. Beware of old cotton tape which will break quite easily. Perhaps it's best to put a cloth in the mouth if you have doubts.

In the case of very big pipes, you can roll up a towel and place it in the mouth of the pipe. Tape is not good as it leaves a residue and rarely works long term (or even medium term). I have seen cases where the organist filled up the mouth of a big wooden pipe with hymn books. It worked fine. Some of the large pipes (Bourdon 16' and such) may have an adjustable wind regulator on the foot

and you might be tempted to turn that to make the pipe stop. These valves rarely stop the wind completely and fiddling with them will upset the regulation of the pipe; therefore, it is best to use a towel or books instead.

If you find yourself putting something in the mouth of the pipe remember: if the pipe is metal it is easily bent, and the relationship between the mouth parts determines the attack, tone and volume. Be sympathetic to the materials.

And make a note for your technician so they can deal with these matters on the next visit.

Stephen Miller has been western Canada representative for Casavant Frères since 1987 and, since 2006, a software and hardware designer for Solid State Organ Systems, now including Hoffler Systems.

*

Organ Canada invites RCCO members to submit brief, two-sentence-long notices of **career milestones**, for themselves or for members who have given their permission, under the following headings: **Appointments**, **Honoured**, **In Memoriam**. Notices should contain a maximum of **forty words** and be submitted to <editor@rcco.ca>. They will be published according to submission deadlines printed near the front of each issue.

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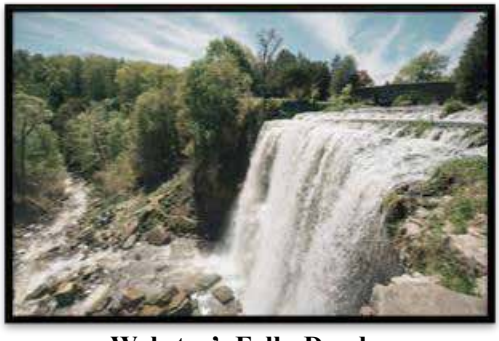


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