



THE ROYAL CANADIAN
COLLEGE OF ORGANISTS
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CANADIEN DES ORGANISTES

KINGSTON CENTRE NEWSLETTER

Opus 121 -October, 2020

Community. Inspiration. **Education**

.Website <http://rcco-kingston.ca>



Is it safe yet?

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**RCCO Kingston Centre
October 2020 Newsletter
President's Message – Brad Mills**



I hope that you are all bearing up and staying well as we enter our seventh month of living with COVID. My church resumed in person worship on September 6, but it is not the same worship we left in March. I'm sure many of you who were working with choirs miss them as I do, and look forward to the day when we can again make a joyful noise together, and of course meet together as a Centre and enjoy the camaraderie, live music and special events that unfold in a "usual" Kingston Centre year.

The RCCO both nationally and in Centres, has managed to make some lemonade from these sour Corona virus lemons, and three of these tasty citrus treats are highlighted below.

Organ Festival 2020 scheduled for Victoria, B.C was to have taken place July 6-9 but was cancelled. Former Kingston Centre member Mark McDonald, assistant Director of Music at Christ Church Cathedral, and his colleagues on the organizing committee set up a series of four online digital concerts. One of the concerts features Mark playing a transcription of Holst's "The Planets". There is an article in the Fall 2020 edition of "Organ Canada" which provides more detail on the concerts. The link to the videos of the four concerts can be found at https://www.facebook.com/RCCOVictoria2020/live_videos/

Also featured in the Fall 2020 edition of "Organ Canada" is an article on "FutureStops", the RCCO's new "robust and ambitious digital strategy". This could not have come along at a better time! I listened today to the first two "FutureStops" podcasts hosted by Blake Hargreaves and produced by RCCO Executive Director Elizabeth Shannon.

The first features John Cage's "Organ 2/ASLP (As Slow as Possible)". The piece is being "performed" over 639 years at a church in Halberstad, Germany on a dedicated seven notes instrument that has played continuously since 2001. The podcast contains some interesting musings on the nature of art, music, sound and soundscapes.

The second podcast focuses on the restoration of the Cathedral of Notre-Dame organ, following the 2019 fire. Both titular organist Olivier Latry and organ builder Bertand Cattiaux are interviewed. The interviews provide information on the degree of damage done, plans for restoration and a history of the instrument's evolution over the centuries, including the work done by Cavallé-Coll in 1863. An excerpt from Messiaen's "Apparition de l'église éternelle" is performed by Latry to demonstrate the instrument's extremely wide dynamic range up to fffff!

New podcasts will be available every second Tuesday, so do try to give a listen. You can follow the links from the RCCO website: <https://www.rcco.ca/>

The final bit of "lemonade" I'd like to direct you to is closer to home. The RCCO Ottawa Centre is hosting podcasts on virtual music making. Gordon Johnston conducted a Zoom webinar on Sept. 19 on "How to Run a Virtual Choir". I watched it and can recommend it to you. There will be a presentation on "It's Beginning to Look Like an On-Line Christmas" on Oct. 18 and on November 8,

there will be a presentation on “Recording a Choir and Organ”. Details on all of these webinars can be found at: <http://www.rcco-ottawa.ca/events.html>

In closing, I’d encourage you to turn to page 6 in the Fall 2020 edition of “Organ Canada”. A photo of our own David Cameron is smiling back at you from the Kingston Centre News entry about his recent Distinguished Service Award.



This Johann Snetzler chamber organ was built in 1759, and rebuilt by John Banfield of Birmingham in 1906. It was moved to Alec Cobbe’s Collection of musical instruments <http://www.cobbecollection.co.uk/musical-instruments/> in the National Trust house at Hatchlands near Guildford in Surrey in 1989. <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/hatchlands-park>. It came originally from Sherbourne Hall, Warwickshire.

Your editors played it there in 2015, along with pianos owned by Elgar, J. C. Bach, Haydn, Chopin, to choose just a few in random order. Well worth a visit!

From the Editors

A Touching Report

David Cameron

It has to be faced. Unless there is a startling and unheralded change in our situation, we are going to endure another winter with Covid-19. Churches are open, if barely so; but their music is seriously restricted, with solo singers only—no choirs, and above all no congregational singing. As I write this during the week before Thanksgiving, the infection rates in Ontario are rising, and the possibility looms that greater restrictions might have to return.

In this, some organists are relatively lucky. I've been told that in Ottawa they speak of the *Haves* and the *Have Nots*, the *Haves* being those organists playing in a church which is open and functioning. Their lives have resumed the pattern we all know so well, of constant preparation if not for this week's service, for next week's, or for some major festival, with always a target, often a challenge, but never a dull moment.

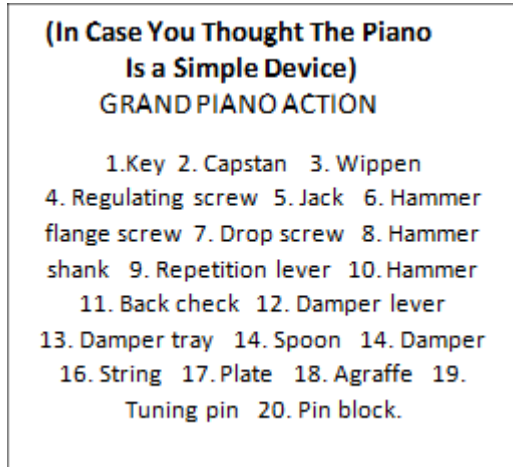
This isn't so for the *Have Nots*, we who no longer play—or perhaps never played—for regular services of worship. Some of us have access to organs, at home or through the kindness of someone whose church is open, but a good many of us (including some students, which is a shame) have lost our access to buildings which are locked down. First be reassured about pedal technique: you won't lose it! No doubt some of the finer points may become rusty, but if you were comfortable playing the pedals before Covid, it's "like riding a bike". Once learned, it can easily be recaptured, and it stays with you forever.

For our hands, many of us will be more dependent than ever on our pianos. This isn't a bad thing. We can learn the manual parts of new organ music, or keep in touch with the especially demanding parts of our repertoires. We can do piano technical exercises—as we should all do anyway. We can even explore the riches of the piano literature, the only repository of music for a single instrument that's larger than ours for the organ. Indeed, as I write, my co-editor—Frances Harkness ARCCO in one of her musical incarnations—is playing, on the piano, the F sharp major Prelude and Fugue from Vol. 1 of the *Forty-eight*. And this she does every morning—one of the *Forty-eight*, and then piano-trio piano parts because her "bubble" contains a violinist and a cellist with whom she can perform.

Moving back and forth between piano and organ is not as automatic, or intuitive, as it first appears. Two of my teachers dramatized this for me. One, the pianist and composer Mary Rutherford Gardiner, helped me with piano technique in my hour of need. I had just finished my ARCCO, then three years later my FRCCO. Needless to say those were years entirely dedicated to the organ, and they were also years which

highlighted for me some nooks and crannies where my technique was uncertain. Mary gave me several years of intensive piano technique, beginning with arm dropping to free the arm-weight on which good piano sound depends.

WHAT WE PLAY - I



The concept of controlled transfer of weight from finger to finger is not unlike something we sailors know, or had better know: the controlled transfer of a person's weight from a ladder or dock into a small dinghy. Done well, it's a graceful shift from one foot to another, with a handhold for balance. Done badly, the result is an unplanned swim. At the piano the penalty is much more lasting: neck and shoulder tension, stiff arms, locked wrists, and an ugly sound.

No doubt modern piano technique was largely formed by Chopin and Liszt, and we have a wonderful document about Chopin's teaching in his *Études*. However a systematic analysis of how the best sound is made at the piano didn't come until 1905, when Tobias Matthay, a forty-seven-year-old professor at London's Royal Academy of Music, published *The Act Of Touch In All Its Diversity An Analysis And Synthesis Of Pianoforte Tone Production*. This book, and Matthay's numerous later writings, did much to establish a scientific approach to piano technique, which however remained firmly rooted in musicianship and an interpretive overview. A younger professor at the rival Royal College of Music, Thomas Fielden, reinforced Matthay's analyses with his 1927 *The Science of Pianoforte Technique*.

The Matthay-Fielden approach to the piano outlines three principal elements. First, good tone is produced by *gravity* moving the arm, wrist, and hand, and *not by the contraction of muscles*, which always produces a harsh sound. Second, *relaxation* must always follow action, and in the case of playing a note or chord the action is placing the hand and fingers just so; the relaxation comes as they drop the right amount of weight into the key, and afterward. Third, mastery comes from extended—years—of *slow practice*.

Not all of this is usefully transferable to the organ. Most notably, we can't change either the weight or the timbre of our sound, no matter what we do with touch. The organ goes on to make its own sound—often a glorious sound—and to hold its volume undiminished until we release it (we can shade it with an expression box, but that has nothing to do with touch).

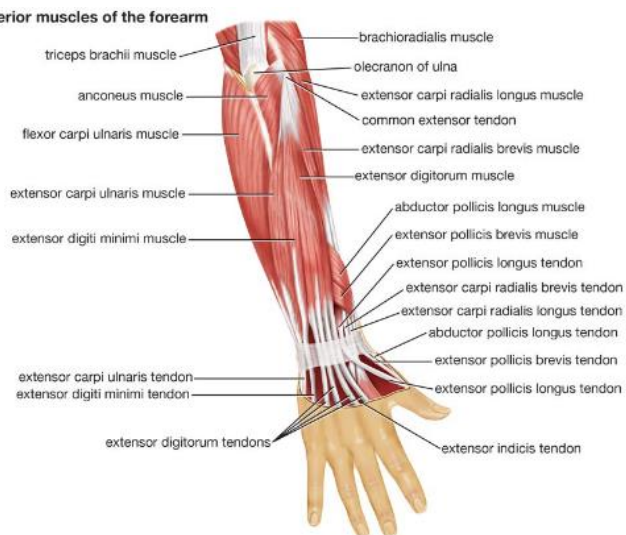
Musically these may seem like limitations, but in fact they conceal an opportunity. Another of my teachers, Douglas Bodle, concertized on three instruments: as a piano accompanist of unparalleled sensitivity, and as an internationally admired harpsichordist and organist. He is very clear about the distinctions among the three keyboard instruments, which he explained with great clarity, and his instruction has been foundational to any success I have achieved in later life, as a player or as a teacher.

WHAT WE PLAY – II

Inside a tracker organ console



AND WHAT WE PLAY IT WITH



Unlike the piano, the organ's sound does not attenuate and fade when a note is held. Apart from attack transients like the neoBaroque chiff, a pipe's sound is just as loud when the note ends as it was when it began. This means that releases are just as important as attacks, so accents can be created either by brief hesitations or by tiny breaks, before the accented sound: *agogic*, as opposed to *dynamic* accents. Thus arm weight, the core of good piano playing, is irrelevant to good organ playing. What matters most is an infinitely refined control of attacks and releases.

Among other things, this means that leaps above the keyboard, while thrilling to the watcher, are actually deleterious to an organist's results. It takes time, on a scale of milliseconds, for fingers to rise a couple of inches and then to return. That likely makes the next note late! Very often the most effective technique stays in touch with the keys, taking the most direct route (a straight line) as a deliberate lateral movement from one key to the next, and then using only enough finger pressure to depress the key(s). Extra pressure at the bottom—"keybedding" (the term is Matthay's)—results in a slightly delayed release, and a loss of control—not to mention tight wrists if you keep it up. So there's truth in the old statement that the pianist plays through the keyboard, from key bed to key bed, while the organist plays from

key surface to key surface. This means that the musical line is slightly articulated, with each note preceded by an infinitesimal articulation caused by the time between the cessation of tone as the key rises, and its arrival at “key surface”, its resting point between notes.

What, you may ask, does all of this have to do with Covid-19 and the impending winter of 2021? It might perhaps suggest several ways to fill the coming time. For any keyboard player, piano technique is an essential, and with or without a teacher all of us can find ways to improve. The exam syllabus of the Royal Conservatory lays out a progressive set of standards in its scales and other technical requirements. If you have access to an organ you can experiment with a non-pianistic approach, staying close to the keys and controlling releases just as carefully as attacks. If you do this make sure that your playing shows clear rhythmic groupings—accented notes are likely longer than their unaccented followers. You have an infinite choice of durations within the tactus, the continuing, underlying rhythmic pulse, with the spaces between notes varying in length for expressive or rhythmic reasons. Make your sound follow the fluid rhythmic varieties of English speech: “My true love hath my heart, and I have his” can only be roughly represented by notation. Its reality involves a hierarchy of rhythmic weights, a much more complicated mix than simply strong and weak beats.

This winter you may make yourself a better player. And perhaps you can understand better the magic that great players can weave in great performances. But above all, have fun with it—it isn’t for nothing that it’s called playing!

Now, we are close to Thanksgiving, so let’s be grateful for our arms and hands, those marvels of an engineering beyond engineering, and for the instruments our physical bodies enable us to play: and for the music we hear, or play, or remember, or look forward to. Happy Thanksgiving!

The First Thanksgiving at Plymouth, oil on canvas,
by [Jennie Augusta Brownscombe](#), 1914



Summer Institute of Church Music

51st session, July 7-9, 2020

Music Ministry in Strange Times



After celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Summer Institute of Church Music in July 2019, the SICM Board of Directors wondered how we could equal that in our 51st session. Little did we know that due to circumstances beyond our control, the 51st session would be entirely different.



Hilary Apfelstadt Matthew Larkin

As you would expect, planning for the next session starts at least a year in advance. By September 2019, Chris Dawes had already lined up Hilary Apfelstadt and Matthew Larkin as the choral and organ clinicians. Letters of agreement were sent and signed in November. As well as Trafalgar Castle School (“The Castle”), our residence and

headquarters, we had booked the additional venues of All Saints’, Whitby, and St. George’s, Oshawa.

By late October, discussions were being held with Betty Pries, of Credence & Co., about facilitating workshops on congregational life and music leadership in times of change. Arrangements were being made with St. John’s Music, our music supplier. Publicity, including posters and a redesigned website, were well underway. A brochure was distributed about the biennial Osborne organ competition for young Canadian organists, to take place on July 7, 2020. By December, Rev. Wanda Stride had been confirmed as our Chaplain.



Betty Pries – Credence & Co.

By the beginning of February we had a preliminary schedule for the week, covering everything from check-in on Sunday July 5 to the final Chapel service on Friday July 10. The theme for the 51st session would be “Church Music Leadership in Times of Change”. We had no idea how much change we would be facing in just a few short weeks!

Soon after hearing disturbing news about a new virus named COVID-19, we all found ourselves in a lock-down, with churches, like other public places, closed indefinitely. The Castle regretfully informed us that they had cancelled all their summer programs. On April 3 the SICM Board discussed two options for the summer of 2020. We rejected the idea of cancelling SICM 2020, and instead, decided to explore the idea of going online. Hilary Apfelstadt, Matthew Larkin, Betty Pries (Credence &

Co.), and Wanda Stride all were enthusiastic, and revised their planned presentations accordingly.

Because the SICM Board members are spread out geographically from Edmonton to the Ottawa area, we have been meeting monthly by Zoom for quite some time, so we felt comfortable with the idea of using Zoom as the platform for an online SICM 2020. Among our Board members there was expertise in producing YouTube videos, teaching via Zoom, working with “virtual choirs”, handling screen sharing and breakout rooms, and more. Who knew that church musicians were so versatile? A promotional YouTube video, featuring short clips from each of our faculty members, was added to our website and also sent out to everyone on the SICM email list. The theme for this year was changed to “SICM 2020 Online – Music Ministry in Strange Times”.

Online registration through Eventbrite proved to be fast and easy. We had wondered if we could possibly achieve a goal of 50 registrants, which at \$50 each, would be more than enough to cover our costs, but as our registrar gave us regular updates, we watched as the numbers climbed to a final total of 73 by the closing date of July 5. We had participants from seven provinces, all the way from Terrace BC, to Halifax NS, as well as from California and Virginia. We had gone national – even international!

An important part of the Summer Institute of Church Music is the SICM Chorale, which attracts choristers who meet for rehearsals from Sunday to Wednesday evening, to perform as part of the Gala Organ and Choral Concert on Thursday evening. This would not be possible for SICM 2020. However, the Board decided that we needed a “theme hymn” that we could use



Screen shot of some of the 73 attendees

every day in our worship segment with our Chaplain. Chris Dawes chose a joyful and uplifting hymn, “When all your mercies, O my God, my rising soul surveys”, to the familiar tune, St. Stephen, as well as an anthem using the same words to a different tune. All registrants were able to download the music, access the accompaniment videos, and follow instructions for making recordings of the hymn and anthem to submit to Chris for the virtual choir.

After a brief Board meeting on July 6 to make sure that all details had been taken care of, we were ready to “go live” on July 7 at 10:00 a.m., when people began checking in, ready for the 10:30 (Eastern Daylight Time) start. We chose 10:30 as the best time to start, because this would be 7:30 in BC, 8:30 in Alberta and

Saskatchewan, and 11:30 in Halifax. As people gathered and were “magically” separated into breakout rooms for conversation, it was good to see old friends from previous years and to welcome new people joining us for the first time.



Rev. Wanda Stride

Each day began with the singing of our theme hymn, accompanied by photos of the Castle and the SICM Chorale from last year. Then Wanda had an inspirational message for us, reflections on the lines from Ecclesiastes, “There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under the heavens . . . “

On Tuesday, Betty reminded us that living through hard times leads to transformation. On Wednesday, Matthew reflected on the effect of the pandemic on church musicians, and discussed and played several organ pieces useful in worship services. His scores in pdf format enabled us to follow along. On Thursday, Hilary spoke about choral music of peace, prayer, comfort and hope, and provided pdf notes with links to all the music she talked about.

Breakout rooms enabled us to discuss the various ways in which our churches were coping with music and ministry during the pandemic. Sadly, some music directors have been laid off. However, other churches have been learning about technology, and are finding new and creative ways with music and ministry in challenging times. As someone reflected, “The buildings may be closed, but the Church is open.”

The SICM Board is optimistic that we will be back at Whitby next summer. The faculty from SICM 2020 will be back and they look forward to meeting you in person at SICM 2021. However, our experience this summer has taught us that having an online presence is important. While nothing can beat the experience of actually being in Whitby, we realize that having some of it available online will enable us to include people who, for reasons of distance, time or costs, may not be able to attend in person at Whitby. Whatever the future may hold, the Board looks forward to welcoming our friends next year for the 52nd session of the Summer Institute of Church Music, July 4-9, 2021.

Elizabeth Mitchell
Secretary
Summer Institute of
Church Music





The Cocktail Party - Our Season Opener!

by Fran Harkness

Members and friends gathered from far and wide across Eastern Ontario with glass in hand to celebrate the 2020 season opening of the Kingston RCCO. It was nice to see so many once familiar (!) faces again and to toast each other's good health. In view of current restrictions no firm plans for activities have been made but, optimistically, Gord and Carol have reserved the Party Room at the august Royal George for a potential Twelfth Night gathering.



Participants, L to R by rows:

Michael Capon, David Cameron, Bev Koski, Centre President Brad Mills (highlight in gold!)

Carol Ramer, Elizabeth Mitchell, Jennifer Roche Brown, Ian Bevell (guest from Ottawa)

Fran Harkness, Joan Tobin, Joan Egnatoff, Angela Stewart

For Sale! A unique opportunity!



Rodgers 958 Trillium Masterpiece Organ

- "medium" oak AGO console with classic side panels
- 8 Rodgers speaker cabinets (8 audio channels - expandable to 12)
- Rodgers MX-200 organ expansion module
- Rodgers MR-200 MIDI song player/recorder
- Rodgers RSS ambient sound system
- Knight acoustic zimbelstern (see photo)
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ready for installation in a church, college, concert hall, or home
15 years of gentle use in an Ottawa home; selling because of downsizing

current replacement cost - approx. \$140,000; asking \$45,000

To "test drive" this impressive instrument please contact:
Ross Dixon, 613-727-8989, ross60dixon@gmail.com

The Newsletter

The Kingston Centre *Newsletter* is edited by Fran Harkness and David Cameron, 34-100 Medley Court, Kingston, Ontario, K7K 6X2. They may be reached by telephone: 613-549-7125, or by e-mail at either address: charles.david.cameron@gmail.com or harknessfran@gmail.com. The Newsletter is published four times a year, in September, December, March and June, and the digital version is sent free of charge to all members of the Kingston Centre of the RCCO and to current scholarship holders. Black-and-white hard copy will be sent on request to others on payment of an annual subscription of \$10.00, sent to the Centre Treasurer, Fran Harkness, 34-100 Medley Court, Kingston, ON K7K 6X2. Cheques should be made payable to *RCCO Kingston Centre*.

Deadline for all submissions to the March, 2020 *Newsletter*: February 31, 2020.

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Advertisements

Commercial advertisements will be accepted as follows: the normal size will be business card (one eighth of a page) at \$15 for a single issue and \$50 for a year (four issues). If space allows, we will accept an occasional half-page advertisement at \$30 for one issue. Please send your requests to the Editor, enclosing a cheque for the appropriate amount made payable to *RCCO Kingston Centre*. *Positions Vacant, Jobs Wanted* and *Supply Organists* notices will continue to be published free of charge.

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