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COLLEGE OF ORGANISTS  
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CANADIEN DES ORGANISTES

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# KINGSTON CENTRE NEWSLETTER

Opus 124 - April, 2021

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



Foodland

## Happy Easter!

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## President's Message – Brad Mills

RCCO Kingston Centre  
April 2021 Newsletter

I just finished having a read through my June, October and December COVID-centric President's Messages. Who would have imagined in March of last year that this would all still be so front and center a year later?

It was interesting for me to read the evolution of our familiarity with the technology of offering virtual worship. At my church, in the last few months, we've added two cameras with good visual zoom capability, and a switcher that the operator can use to toggle between the images, resulting in a much more interesting experience for those watching at home. Sound technicians have also tweaked our system, so that the musical items are more accurately transmitted through the ether.

In mid March, my wife Sue (my virtual worship choir member) and I were lucky enough to get our first COVID shot at the No Frills Pharmacy in Kingston. A good friend had been monitoring the internet for updates about vaccinations and called us to tell us about this drop in/no appointment necessary opportunity, which was part of a trial program offered in Kingston and two areas in Toronto for those in their early to mid 60s. It was a relief to know that we're on the road to something approaching normality.

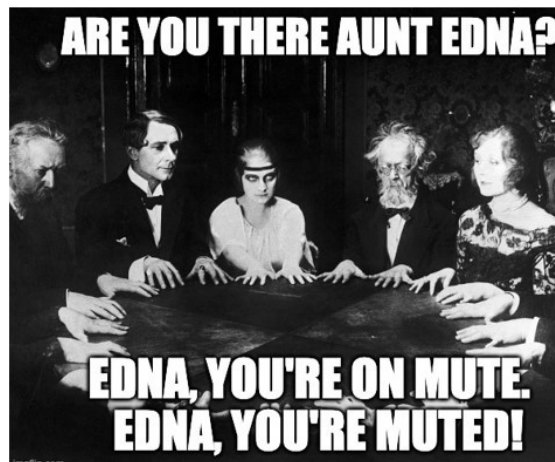
I wish you all, in George Woodward's words, a "joyful Eastertide" and a wish for happiness, good health and that you find a dose of Pfizer, AstraZeneka or Moderna tucked into your Easter basket.

Brad



*A virtual RCCO meeting;*

*do you recognize any of these organists?*



***From the Editors***  
**The Interface of Fingers, Feet, Stops and Keyboards:  
 Some thoughts on console design.**

**David Cameron**

It's with some trepidation that I approach an article based on the design of my own (former) console at Chalmers United Church in Kingston. Raised as a mostly polite child in Toronto in the 1940's, I've always been a bit reluctant to blow my own horn, although as a conductor I'm happy to point at some orchestra member so she can blow hers. However, in this issue I want to share some thoughts about the choices involved in designing of a console, and that requires me to write about my own experience.

It wasn't until a fire in 1995 damaged the Chalmers instrument that I was able to make substantial changes to the organ which was my professional home. Since water from the sprinkler system had devastated the original Casavant console of 1961, replacing it was an important part of those changes. The Casavant console had the firm's standard features from the 1960's. Its pneumatically-actuated piston action provided pistons in fours: four Generals, and four pistons for each division.



Typical small three-manual Casavant console (Trinity United Church, Port Hope). The original Chalmers console was virtually identical to this, except that it had only two expression pedals.

Naturally, multiple memory levels were unthought of. This meant that all too often I had to change several piston settings during services, even during the sermon. Chalmers had a very distinguished series of preaching clergy during my time there, and the pneumatic adjuster made sounds resembling how I imagine the guillotine must have sounded in the revolutionary *Place de la Concorde*. I had to hope for an ambulance or a big truck to pass on Barrie Street to cover the sound of my piston adjustments.

The Chalmers organ, of 41 ranks (29 stops) on three manuals and pedal, was designed in neoBaroque style by Lawrence Phelps, and installed and finished in 1961 by the late Raymond Barnes – excellent raconteur, good fellow, and a genius with pipework. Five years later, when I was invited to apply for the Chalmers job, it was the sound of that organ, played well by the then minister, the Rev. R. K. N. McLean, that persuaded me to move from Toronto.

Twenty-nine years later, after the fire, we knew that we had good basic material. The pipework was first class, the windchests were repairable, and a wall could be moved to provide an improved configuration of the pipework. To this, thanks to a generous and timely insurance settlement, we were able to add an entirely new console.

In consultation with others, I had made a possibly controversial decision, that we would augment the pipework with digital ranks from the carefully crafted, and at the time industry-leading tonal samples of Classic Organ Works. As the plan developed it meant that the new console had to accommodate four manual divisions, and not the 29 stops of 1961, but a total of 64 stops (I will discuss the reasoning behind the design in the next issue of the *Newsletter*). The organ's pipework was also expanded to 43 ranks, and there is space on the Pedal chest for two more.

### Decisions and choices:

1. **Three manuals or four?** An easy decision: three manuals. Any smug pride in having potentially the only four-manual in Kingston was quickly vanquished by the practical. We had worked for years to build a polished organ and choral ensemble which worked like a chamber music group. The extra height and depth of a 4-manual console would increase the separation between organist and choir, and was simply unacceptable. So the new Choir division is floating, playable on any keyboard through couplers, but without a home keyboard of its own, and the console, allowing for its 64 drawknobs and long row of coupler tabs, is reasonably low.

2. **Divisional pistons:** the new digital pistons operated almost silently, and Classic's console computer had ample memory, so we could double the number to eight per division (six to the Pedal). Easy access to a smooth buildup in each division!

3. **General pistons 1 - 12:** the bass ends of the Swell and Great keyboards easily accommodate twelve (the arrangement in the later console at St. George's Cathedral is the same).

4. **Tracker-touch keyboards.** The Classic firm serves a world-wide market for high-grade console components, and the quality of their keyboards was one of the things which made them attractive to us. Nothing replicates the feel of a real mechanical action, but for carefully controlled articulation and comfort even over long practice periods, they are really good.

5. **Drawknobs.** Over the years I have played many consoles whose stop control is by "stopkey" tabs, or by tilting tablets, but each occasion has confirmed my preference for the solid, certain action of drawknobs, especially those ranged on roughly 45-degree stop jamps. So that was our choice, with tilting tabs following the Casavant model, for couplers.



*Photo by Séamus Kelly*

The upper half of the 1996 console of the organ in Chalmers United Church, Kingston, designed by David Cameron and Michael Donahue, constructed by Classic Organ Works, and installed by Frederick William Knapton and Son of Kingston.

**6. Toe Studs:** The old standard arrangement was for them to duplicate the manual General pistons, but because we chose to provide many reversible controls, there was room for only ten General toe studs. Together with the Great to Pedal reversible, they occupy the two rows to the left of the expression pedals. An unexpected benefit was that although the toe studs *can* be set as duplicates of ten manual Generals, with the Classic system they are fully independent, able to carry quite different settings, and that is how I usually used them. This gives the console 22 General pistons.

I have had organists say that this is unnecessary, too many pistons, but this was a busy console. Sunday services usually required three voluntaries, often big pieces, and three choral pieces, plus hymns. I taught my university students there, as well as others, and we encouraged them to practice at the church. I myself practised at least a couple of weeks ahead, and there were always concerts and recitals in preparation. We often used most of the pistons.



*Photo by Séamus Kelly*

The lower half of the 1996 console.

**7. Memory levels:** the Classic system in 1996 provided a nominal 60 levels of memory; in fact there were several more levels available. By modern standards this is a small number, but it provided half a dozen memory levels for me, to cover music in preparation as well as immediate needs. Then it allowed at least one level for each student (one year there were sixteen of them), and more than one level for advanced ones, with other levels reserved for workshops, concerts, and special events.

**8. Sequencer:** In the photo it shows quite clearly, a bluish-grey box attached under the lowest manual keyboard at the treble end). It enables one to MIDI-record a piece, so that it plays back not through a sound system, but by actually playing the organ. It is a splendid tool which reproduces everything the player has done: articulations, registration changes, expression-pedal movements, wrong notes and all. This is invaluable; it allows a player to go out into the church, and hear just what people “out front” are hearing. It’s very helpful to one’s practising, in lessons, and incidentally to one’s humility!

**9. Registration sequencer,** with “Up” and “Down” thumb and toe pistons. Personally I have never felt entirely comfortable with these devices – what if you get lost or out of order? – but I know fine players who set up entire recitals on them. We certainly saw it as a necessity for a modern console.

**10. Special controls:** Years of experience registering a wide variety of repertoire, not just for myself but for generations of students, suggested several special choice:

- (a) **Great to Positive coupler.** This opens many possibilities otherwise unavailable.
- (b) **Unison off** to Swell, Great, and Positiv.

Together (a) and (b) enable a player to reverse the manual order, putting the Great lowest, and Positive above, like French or German consoles. Unlike the pistons-on-a-key jamb that many consoles use to reverse the Choir and Great keyboards, these are part of the regular registration controls and can be set on pistons. They also allowed Great plus Sw. or Pos. as Man. I, and Great alone as Man. II, so that the Great could effectively accompany itself. Over a loud post-wedding congregation in Chalmers' dead acoustic, sometimes a big Bach prelude needed more or less Full Organ as Man. I, with the Great as the secondary chorus, providing much more gravitas than the normal secondary divisions could manage.

(c) **Reversible pistons:** all interdivisional couplers, Choir Fanfare Trumpet mute (muted, the big digital solo reed makes a very useful extra chorus reed), Reeds off (I know some players who find this valuable), 32' Contra Posaune on/off, All Swells to Swell. The latter I had thought of as a theatre organ gadget, until I tried it: sometimes moving all three enclosures together on one pedal turns out to be convenient and intuitive.

7. **Two "MIDI alterables" tabs to each keyboard.** MIDI to the console in and out enabled the whole box of General Midi tricks and tones. Rarely used, but indispensable at, for instance, Hallowe'en concerts, or when showing the organ to school classes.

**If I had it to do again, what would I change?** There are a number of tonal things, which I will write about in our next issue, but having played the Classic console for fourteen years I think I can say that I would keep all our decisions unchanged. It is now twenty-five years old, which is the rule-of-thumb for a console's life expectancy, and it still works reliably.

Here is Séamus Kelly's very handsome complete photograph of the present console:



Chalmers United Church,  
1996 console, photo by  
former Centre Executive  
member Séamus Kelly

# The Twelfth Night Zoom Party!!



*On Sunday, 3 January,* at 2:00 in the afternoon, members and friends of the Kingston Centre assembled via Zoom, to keep up the Centre's long tradition of greeting the New Year together. The usual in-person photos of members offering entertainment were naturally impossible, but two members – our Centre President Brad Mills, and our Treasurer and Newsletter editor Fran Harkness – captured the assembly in screenshots. Their screenshots are virtually identical, so here's one of them, showing most of the afternoon's participants.



Top row L to R: Bill Egnatoff, hand?, Elizabeth Mitchell, Anke Carrington, Carol Ramer  
 2<sup>nd</sup> row: David Cameron, Peter Woodwark, Bev Koski, empty kitchen, Joan Egnatoff.  
 3<sup>rd</sup> row: Renata Van Vliet, Juliet Milsome, Aurora Dokken, Charlie Walker, Michael Capon.  
 Bottom row: Cathy Kelly, Angela Stewart, Gavin Winston, David Rankine. Out of picture, Jim and Shirley Zehr, Fran

There was a wide variety of entertainment. In no particular order, these were some of the offerings:

**Joan Egnatoff** and husband **Bill** gave us the story of "The Mouse that ate the wires".

**Bill** and their daughter **Beth** sang a duet, *Down by the Sally Gardens*.

**Joan** asked us to answer this topical question: "What's your best memory of the pandemic?".

Elizabeth Mitchel read a poem, and played, on her home organ, Daquin's Noel 10.

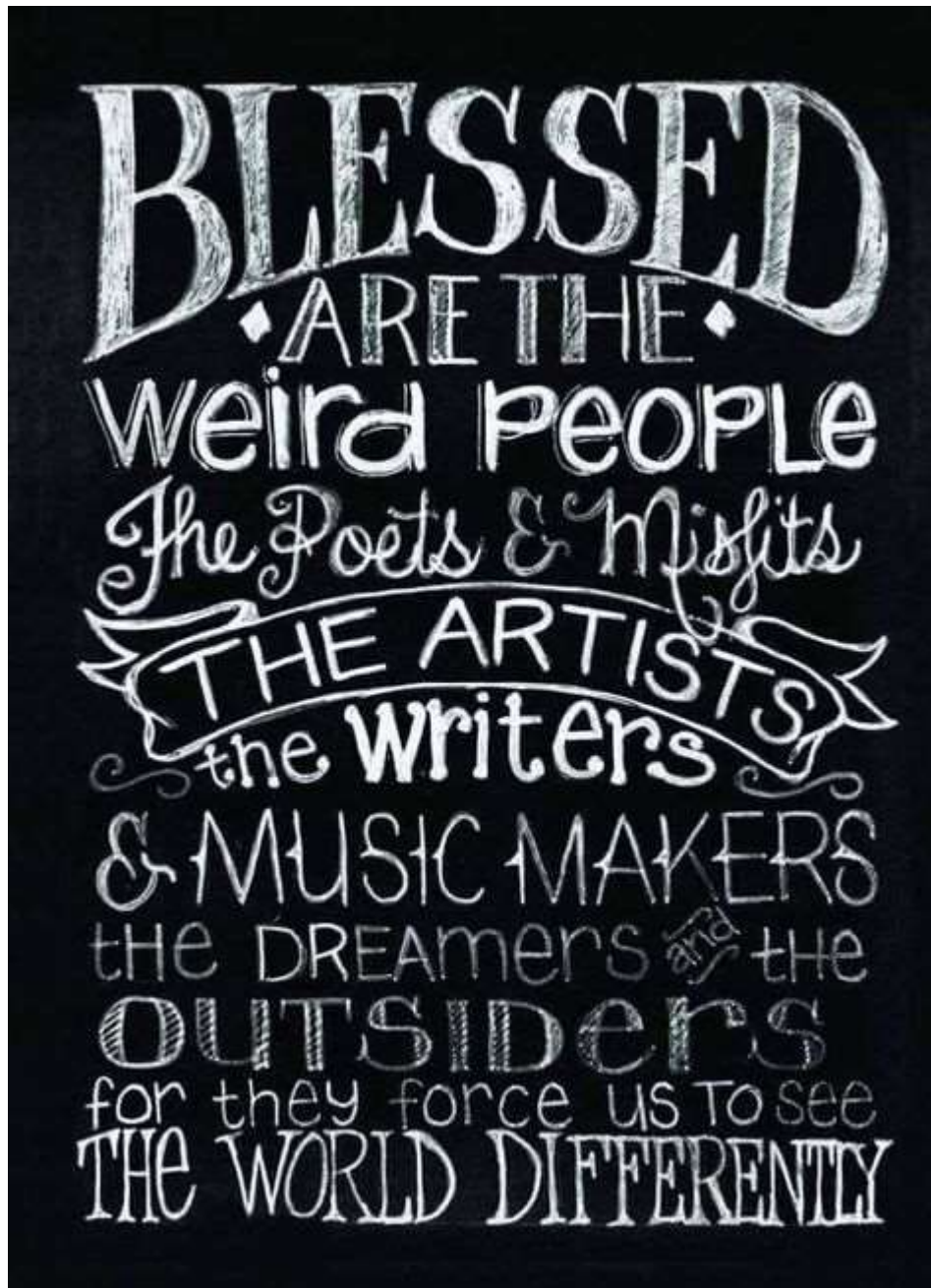
Michael Capon read Stephen Leacock's "Winter Pastimes" from *Literary Lapses*.

Anke Carrington and Bev Koski played an arrangement for oboe and piano of the carol *Do you hear what I hear?*

David Rankine showed us a video of the creation of a round.

And Your editors sent out in advance a quiz and a remodel-your-epigram challenge.

*Don't miss the next party like this – it's on Sunday, April 11, at 2:00 o'clock.  
(see Coming Events, page 12)*





To the Moellman family:  
*Our warmest*  
*Congratulations!*

*Some readers will already have read this paragraph, with which Jeff Moellman introduces his performing family:*

The children of the Moellman family are acclaimed for their engaging performances on violin and piano. They were featured in all three of the Barrie Concert Association's noontime concert series, sold-out fundraising concerts at the Orillia Opera House and, since 2012, yearly showcase concerts for the Orillia, Barrie, and now Kingston Kiwanis Music Festivals. Their participation in the National Finals of the 2018 Canadian Music Competition earned each of them 3rd place in their respective age categories. Awards at the annual OMFA Provincial Competition include 7 bronze, 4 silver, and 3 gold medals over the past six years. They frequently share their musical gifts with residents of local retirement homes, at annual Culture Days concerts, at St. Mary's Cathedral, and in other local performances.



The Moellman Family players: front ctr, Catherine, 2<sup>nd</sup> row L to R, Paul and Gabriel; rear, Jonathan and Clara.

At this year's Kiwanis Music Festival the Moellman family again distinguished themselves. Jonathan won the Donna Gobin Memorial Rose Bowl Award (the top award for piano), as well as the Carl A. Boe Memorial Multidisciplinary Award. Jonathan also won the Kiwanis Prize for Original Composition.

Clara won the Joyce Putnam Award for Senior Piano, and Paul won the Clifford Watt Memorial Award for Piano.

Gabriel won the Heeyun and Robert Brandon Memorial Award for Strings, and Catherine won the Ann McGuirk Memorial Award for Piano.

Jonathan, Clara, Paul, and Gabriel also won the Ann McGuirk Memorial Award for Family Ensemble (from ORMTA, Kingston Branch).

All five were also recommended by the adjudicators to participate in the Ontario Music Festival Association Provincial Competition on both violin and piano, at the following levels:

Jonathan: Diploma level (piano and violin)  
 Clara: Diploma level (piano), Grade 10 (violin)  
 Paul: Grade 9 (piano and violin)  
 Gabriel: Grade 8 (piano and violin)  
 Catherine: Grade 3 (piano and violin)

It is the students who do the hard work of practice and memorization, and it is they who find the inner poise to go before an audience, even a virtual one; and especially one containing adjudicators. It is they who marshall the concentration and musicianship to give that audience a prizewinning performance.

But such performances become possible only with the guidance, and the deep pool of experience, of fine teachers. Preparing for this Festival, Jonathan and Clara both studied with Dr. Adrienne Shannon; the other pianists were taught by their father, Jeff Moellman, and all of them have studied the violin, from the outset, with their mother Caroline.

To everybody concerned, ***Congratulations!***

***And— they can sing too!***

One snowy December evening your editors answered a knock at the front door, to find the whole Moellman family, who sang beautifully to us through our glass front door (social distancing was fully maintained!).

This picture was taken by a Medley Court neighbour whom they also visited that evening.



If you want to hear the Moellmans' prize-winning performances follow this link:

[www.isabeldigitalconcerthall.queensu.ca/concert-video](http://www.isabeldigitalconcerthall.queensu.ca/concert-video)

**Scroll down to KINGSTON KIWANIS MUSIC FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS CONCERT.**

# Scholarships

FROM THE RCCO:

Picture yourself seated at the helm of a huge cockpit lined with jillions of levers, pistons, and pedals. You are Commander in Chief (like Fran in the picture). At your fingertips, sounds are called, combined, silence and sound built layer upon layer, reverberations



*Newsletter editor Fran Harkness on the bridge of HMCS Bras d'Or.*



*A different power centre: Fran at St. James' Cathedral, Toronto.*

envelope you, resonating through your body, penetrating your being, filling the room, forming an incomparable sound experience.

## ***It could be you at the Pipe Organ!***

If you would like to know the awesome experience that playing the pipe organ can afford, you may be interested to hear that the Royal Canadian College of Organists (RCCO), Kingston Centre, offers **scholarships for talented pianists of all ages** who would like to be introduced to and develop their playing skills on the pipe organ. Scholarships provide 10 hours of free organ lessons with a qualified instructor. The application deadline is March 31. Auditions for qualified applicants will be held in April.

The Kingston Centre receives financial support for these scholarships from the National RCCO office, local individuals and churches, and raises funds by sponsoring centre events. Each student has the opportunity to perform in the student concert in late-winter and is invited to attend all local RCCO events.

Information and application materials are available at [www.rcco-kingston.ca](http://www.rcco-kingston.ca), by emailing [scholarships@rcco-kingston.ca](mailto:scholarships@rcco-kingston.ca) or by calling Aurora at 613-453-6323.

Aurora Dokken

***Please pass this message on to anyone who might be interested!***



## Coming Events: RCCO Kingston in the Spring.

**SUNDAY, 11 APRIL, 2:00 pm.** Don't miss our **Zoom Social and Trivia Gathering.** Those who attended the Twelfth Night Party know that, even with the constraints of Zoom, we have a congenial group of fellow members and colleagues. Watch for further details soon, but it wouldn't hurt if you had a couple of Trivia Questions ready for your fellow "guests".

**Meeting of the Executive Committee, Thursday, 27 May at 10:30 am.**

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the KINGSTON CENTRE RCCO.  
SUNDAY, 13 JUNE, 2:00 pm.**

Naturally there will be a short business meeting, and a chance to discuss future events; but these meetings are always social occasions as well, and there will be a chance again to talk and – virtually – mingle with friends.



## 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](mailto:charles.david.cameron@gmail.com) or [harknessfran@gmail.com](mailto: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 June, 2021 *Newsletter*: May 31, 2021.

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