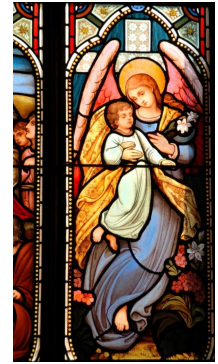




Royal School of Church Music (ACT Branch)



NEWSLETTER November 2008

DATES

NOVEMBER 23rd 2008 2pm

Demonstration of the newly restored Compton Theatre Organ.

Albert Hall

Entry by Donation

DECEMBER 12th 2008 7pm

Christmas Party

See below for details

FEBRUARY 14th 2009 Time TBA

North Belconnen Organ Crawl

MARCH 15th 2009 3pm

AGM

All Saints' Ainslie

CHRISTMAS DINNER AND CATCH UP 12 December 2008 (Evening)

It's that time of year again where Christmas Parties take up the majority of our non-working lives! So here's another one to add to your list.

We are currently negotiating a suitable venue to host our event which will likely include a sit down dinner and some musical entertainment. Specifics will be provided asap.

An idea of numbers would be good, so RSVP to Gemma on 0413852911 (leave a message if she doesn't answer) or e-mail gemmster@hotmail.com.

Members, partners and friends all welcome!

Royal School of Church Music (ACT Branch)
ABN 15957330863
www.rscm-act.org

**RSCM EVENT REPORT:
Music at the Ross Memorial Church**

Southern NSW is not well endowed with pipe organs and there is value in encouraging the use of those that are available.

The RSCM (ACT branch) recently conducted a very successful musical programme at the Ross Memorial Uniting Church at Murrumburrah on 13 September, a bright spring morning. A large congregation included folk from surrounding centres such as Cootmundra, Boorowa and Young, as well as more immediate localities. A number of organ and vocal items were provided by local musicians and some from Canberra who had experienced an enjoyable journey through vast fields of yellow canola. A sumptuous lunch was provided by the congregation to conclude the event.

The Ross family of *Garangula* were lavish in their gifts to the Presbyterian church which included this handsome building erected in memory of their parents, opened and dedicated on 15 December 1915. The interior reveals striking furniture including a tall central pulpit and the elders' court, all constructed in the church. A fine 2 manual pipe organ with tracker action, built by Dodd of Adelaide, was installed in 1917, the cost of 950 Pounds being raised by local subscription including regular collections by the church choir. A commissioning recital was given at the time to a packed church by Ernest Truman, the Sydney city organist.

It is hoped that further musical celebrations can be organised in the near future to utilise the excellent facilities in the church and the wonderful hospitality of the local people.

Bill Fraser

**A CHALLENGE FOR ALL ORGANISTS:
An Ataccot and a blindfolded organist!**

Recently while voyaging through the auspicious town of Düsseldorf, Germany, we stumbled across a small church which was holding a 24hr Organfest. The event included 24 hour long recitals from local musicians and concluded with a rousing hour of "Toccatas Through the Ages". The programming of the final hour was superb, with a television link to the loft set up at the front of the church so that the audience could watch the organist at work..

Somewhat predictably THE Toccata and Fuge in D minor (Bach BWV for those of you who don't know it!) was performed as the opening piece of the recital. However somewhat less predictably, the Toccata was followed immediately by the Ataccot - which those of you not used to reading in mirror image was the Toccata played backwards. Amazingly the result was exceedingly musical and I'm sure that Bach himself would have used that trick if he had thought of it!

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In conversation with the organist (Peeterson) after the recital, we were informed that he hadn't written the music out again, but simply read it backwards as he played. (I was somewhat astounded at this as I have enough trouble reading music forwards let alone backwards!)

And as if that wasn't enough to make one feel inferior, when we had returned to England we visited Guildford Cathedral where we discovered that they too had held a 24hour "Organathon" in order to raise money for their music programme. The Organist and Director of the Choristers, Katherine Dienes-Williams (incidentally the first female Organist and Director of Choristers of a cathedral in the Anglican Church) was sponsored £1000 to play Widor's Toccata blindfolded! She carried out the quest in true style and was presented with the cheque shortly afterwards.

I guess this goes to show that you can always find challenges if you want them!

RECENT RSCM PUBLICATION: SEASON BY SEASON

Reviewed by Nigel Poole

After ordering a copy on behalf of the choir with which I sing, I recently had the opportunity to examine the contents of the RSCM's newest publication, Season By Season.

The size of it takes you by surprise. It is not your average anthem book: 100 anthems are presented in a large ring-binder, making it simple to remove any one piece for photocopying. A main point of this collection is that it is a legally photocopyable resource. Where copyright exists, the RSCM has arranged that copying for local, non-profit use by a choir is permitted.

But the hard-copy music sheets are just the start. An accompanying CD-ROM contains alternative versions of most of the anthems. These are in PDF format, easily printable. The arrangements offered vary from piece to piece, depending on the nature of the work. There are versions for 2 or 3 voices, or unison, or in alternative keys. In some cases, organ accompaniments without all the vocal lines are provided, so that the organist does not have to wrestle with a ten-page vocal score. Similarly, there are vocal scores minus accompaniment for use by choristers. Options such as this have the added advantage of reducing the amount of printing and/or photocopying required. The different versions are easily selected via an interface that opens automatically for Windows users: Mac or Linux users can still access the files via their file managers.



The CD-ROM also includes the texts of the anthems in MS Word format, suitable for cutting and pasting into service sheets, plus eleven MP3 audio files to demonstrate a selection of the anthems.

The music itself ranges from traditional to modern, including a few pieces by the editors of the publication. As the title suggests, the intent is to provide an appropriate selection of music suitable for the various seasons of the church year (excluding Christmas, which was catered for in an earlier publication).

This package aims to please everyone. Despite the truism that when you try to please everyone, you usually end up pleasing no-one, this might well be an exception to the rule. At £80.00 full price (or £60.00 for members, plus £20.00 postage to Australia, so still £80.00 for us), that's \$AUD200, which may seem a little costly on the surface. But, of course, with unlimited legal photocopying, you only need to buy one copy for the whole choir!

For many choirs, Season By Season should prove to be a useful long-term investment.

MESSAGE AND NOTES FROM THE CHAIR - Bill Fraser

Since last writing, I have visited the exciting city of Broken Hill, where I was able to view one of the two pipe organs there. I understand both these originated from the Pro-Hart Gallery, which still houses a Rodgers combination pipe and electronic organ. I was also privileged to attend the annual meeting of the Organ Music Society of Adelaide, which was preceded by a brief recital on the charming one manual Rendall organ in St. Cyprian's church at North Adelaide. I always like to visit Adelaide to hear and play the many fine instruments there, several built locally by Dodd or Rendall.

In addition, I also visited my native Queensland, which proved much less pleasing. We attended worship at a Uniting Church which used recorded music due to unavailability of an organist. I was handed a copy of *Journey*, the UC Queensland magazine. The November issue was largely devoted to "Worship Wars" concerning music in the church. Inter-alia, it was claimed that "who played the music and how it was played was ultimately a question of power". Further, "and it was when the pipe organs... took over and simply because of the mechanics of how you play those instruments the music was slowed down and I think over a period of time it has got slower and slower." The use of contemporary drums and guitars was presumed to relieve this problem.

I would contend that the musicians are among the most powerless in the church and that the speed of hymns is determined by a multiplicity of factors, none of which relate to the pipe organ. I would suggest we reassert our belief that church musicians need to develop proficiency in both the technical music requirements, as well as being rich in faith, and this will enable provision of the best means of

help to the worshippers. This is certainly a tall order, but we pray that God will give us strength and grace to meet these very demanding requirements.

The Theatre Organ

Bill has provided these notes in preparation for our next function

Theatres have been venues for musical performance for a very long time. However in the early twentieth century, a new development occurred. Electronic motion pictures appeared, initially in black and white and were silent. Some form of musical accompaniment was required and in addition, most theatres provided a live segment as part of each performance. Sometimes, a sole pianist was engaged, but larger venues often employed live orchestras as well. Subsequently the potential of using an organ was realised. Initially, instruments similar to those in churches were used, but progressively a more distinctive technology and features were adopted. Many of the innovations were the work of an Englishman, Robert Hope-Jones in collaboration with Rudolph Wurlitzer of New York state, USA and their efforts brought the theatre organ to its zenith. In England, the John Compton Organ Company built both theatre and church organs as did Hill Norman and Beard. The latter called their creations *Christie*, to avoid any evident association with church organs.

In Australia, several cinemas in all state capital cities employed theatre organs for varying periods. However some others used devices such as a Fotoplayer, which consisted of some ranks of pipes together with a piano or reeds to provide an imitation "one-man" orchestra.

Theatre organs utilise electric action and adopt the "unit-extension" principle, whereby a number of stops at different pitches are derived from one rank of pipes. Theatre organs have 2 or more manuals and pedals, but the stops on each manual are usually derived from the same sets of pipes. The pipes are usually located in at least 2 chambers bearing swell shutters, but again, the division of ranks does not correspond with the various manual or pedal departments. A number of percussion and other effects are included, such as castanets, drums, fog horn, fire sirens, bird whistles etc. which enhance the silent film accompaniment.

Many theatre organists of the past were very skilled musicians and played classical organ as well. For example, Horace Weber officiated for several years at the Capitol Theatre, Melbourne and was renowned for performing classical items. He is reputed to have influenced the design of the Melbourne Town Hall organ built after the fire of 1925 and rebuild of St. Paul's Cathedral organ in 1929. He was also the organist at Armadale Baptist Church.