



*The Royal Canadian College of Organists
Le Collège royal canadien des organistes*

KINGSTON CENTRE NEWSLETTER

Opus 88 – June 2012

Website: <http://www.rcco-kingston.org>

From the Chair

Dear Fellow Organistas!

This will be the last missive from me; some other dear soul will be assuming the reins next month. Please plan to attend the AGM. It is sure to be a wonderful event. Michael Goodwin and Josie Farrar have graciously offered to host the meeting.

I would like to leave you with quotations from Gary Rasberry's poems "Caffeinated Vision 2."

"Eventually you will come to recognize movement as that which takes place below the surface
..... Count on nothing, depend on others. Stand on shoulders for different perspectives.
Love tallness for the view."

All that to say, thank you for your contributions to the work we have done. I am thankful for being a part of our excellent community of organists and have truly enjoyed serving RCCO Kingston Centre as president.

All best wishes,
Aurora Dokken

From the Editor

This issue of the newsletter will also mark the end of my tenure as the editor of this esteemed periodical. I have been doing this job for about seven years and it's now time to move on to other interests of which there are many in Prince Edward County. I am very fortunate to be living in a community which is not only very pretty but also very

full of artistic and musical people. As well as my church, St. Mary Magdalene Anglican, I have numerous other interests, a baroque ensemble, an ecumenical choir, and the PEC Music Festival of which I am an active committee member. Then there are other things happening such as the Jazz Festival which actually comes right into the church when we have a Jazz Mass on the last day of the festival. All of this, including writing music for my church choir, as you can imagine, takes great deal of work and commitment. Therefore one has to choose ones tasks and move on when the time is right.

We have a list of positions to be filled on the RCCO executive this year. They are: Chairperson, Newsletter Editor, Publicity, Webmaster and Student Rep.

The Annual General Meeting where a new executive is elected will take place at my house in Picton on Sunday afternoon, June 10. You should try to arrive sometime after 3 and the meeting will begin at 4. I recently sent an e-mail around to members to tell them about this together with directions. I case you didn't see it I will give it again now:

The Annual General Meeting and Barbeque Party of the RCCO Kingston Centre will be held on Sunday June 10th at the home of Michael Goodwin and Josie Farrar just outside of Picton.

Picton is about an hour's drive west from Kingston, either by the 401, or by way of Bath Road and the Glenora Ferry.

If you come via the 401, you will come off at the exit to Tyendenaga and Picton, Hwy 49 which is the second exit after Napanee. Drive down Hwy 49 (this was wrong in my original e-mail, it said 62) to Picton, and when you reach the town there is a stop sign.

Turn left here and go down the hill to the bottom where there is a road to the right called Union Street. This is also County Rd 8. Turn Right here and continue for about 3 km. The third turning on the right again is County Rd 17.

Turn right here and continue for another 3 km. The second turning on the right is called McKinley Road. Turn here and we are the second house on the right, #327.

If you come by the ferry, drive into Picton and after going down a short hill you will see on the left Union Street. Turn left here and follow the direction as above. The ferry leaves from the Bath Road side at 15 and 45 minutes after the hour. I suggest you try for 2:45 or 3:15 to be here in good time.

Please bring with you some item of food for the barbeque and also either a salad or dessert. Soft drinks and tea or coffee will be provided. Please bring a folding chair if you have one.

Please plan to arrive sometime from 3 o'clock on. The meeting will begin at 4.

Josie and I will look forward to seeing you and having a very pleasant afternoon.

Michael Goodwin.

Utterly Uttley

It was a chemistry class at Trenton High School around the year 1957, and the teacher, Mr. Spear, was casually dropping tidbits of chemical knowledge in the hope of kindling some spark of interest in his teenage audience. The name 'mercaptan' came up. This is a family of evil-smelling sulphur compounds. A particular member of this family, butyl mercaptan, was selected for special mention. "This," said Mr. Spear, "is the active ingredient in skunk spray."

I was drawn to chemistry as a teenager because it is a form of magic, in which two wrongs can make a right. Sodium, for instance, is a useless, putty-like metal that has to be stored under oil, because it has the unfortunate propensity of bursting into flame when exposed to air. Chlorine, another chemical element, is a poisonous greenish-yellow gas. Sodium and chlorine unite to form sodium chloride, a white granular compound which is neither useless nor poisonous. We sprinkle it on our food, and it courses in our bloodstream. It is the one chemical compound commended by the Saviour to the disciples as worthy of emulation, no doubt because of its preservative and taste-enhancing qualities.

"What has chemistry to do with music?" you may ask. In 1863, an English chemist, John Newlands, put forward a primitive table, in which the chemical elements were arranged according to what he called "The Law of Octaves" - after the recurring notes of the musical keyboard. His table was not taken seriously by his peers. Perhaps they were resentful, or merely amused, at this intrusion into the realm of chemistry of musical terminology. But Newlands was on the right track. By 1869 the Russian scientist Mendeleev had devised the periodic table of elements which to this day graces the walls of chemistry classrooms.

Fellow musicians, the notes of the keyboard are the elements, and the chords the compounds, by which we work our musical magic. And like their chemical counterparts, chords can be classified into various families. In this article, I will be concerned with only one family, the diminished one. You probably encountered this family of chords along with others like the major, minor, dominant seventh, and augmented, in your early theory lessons.

The simplest member of this family is a chord of two notes, for example, F sharp and C. This is a diminished fifth, which on ordinary keyboards sounds the same as G flat and C, that is, an augmented fourth, or tritone. Now the tritone was poisonous to the mediaeval musical ear - composers of that era avoided it for the longest time. In truth, this chord has all the charm of a sawtooth.

But now superimpose on this chord a similar chord, a minor third higher. The result is a classic diminished seventh chord, F sharp, A, C, and E flat. Possessed of an obscure personality, it hints at mystery, even trouble or danger. But the cutting edge of both its component two-part chords has been blunted.

In the 1980's I studied briefly with Dr. Gordon Gosse, a fellow-parishioner and good friend. He is also a composer and a jazz pianist. He introduced me to the half-diminished branch of this musical family. An example of such would be the chord F sharp, A, C, and E. The fifth of the chord is diminished, but the seventh is minor, unlike the fully diminished chord in which the seventh, as well as the fifth is diminished. The half-diminished chord is to the fully diminished chord, as cauliflower is to broccoli - a creature of milder pungency.

A year ago, while browsing through a magazine meant for organists, I came across a fascinating article whose purpose was to exonerate Sir John Stainer of the charge of excessive sentimentality. Sorry, I can't remember the name of the author (the magazine is buried in a box who knows where) but I do remember the name of a chord never before encountered by me. The term `common-tone diminished chord` was used extensively in the article but never defined. I take it to mean a diminished chord that has at least one note in common with the chord that it follows. I will give you two familiar examples. Near the beginning of the hymns `The Old Rugged Cross` and `O Little Town of Bethlehem` (St.Louis) there is a diminished chord. Both of these are common-tone diminished chords, because they share a note (in both cases, the bass) with the chord they follow. But the diminished chord found near the end of Mozart's ``Ave Verum`` is not a common-tone diminished chord. It has no notes in common with the chord it follows, nor, in this case, with the chord it precedes. More of this particular chord later. The diminished chords in Stainer's `God So Loved The World` are of both types - common-tone and non-common-tone. Look them up for yourself.

After reading the article I gained the distinct impression that when sentimentality is concerned, the common-tone diminished chord is the villain of the piece. Now we know what causes schmaltz to smell, at least in the nose of one critic. I tend to agree with him, but I must move from the sense of smell to the sense of touch, to state his case in a nutshell. The common-tone diminished chord is an oily chappie that robs a musical structure of both sturdiness and integrity.

Non-common-tone diminished chords are pretty greasy critters too, but their effects are more subtle. One of the most ethereal passages in all musical literature is near the end of the aforementioned ``Ave Verum`` on the words ``et in hora``. The voice parts glide smoothly, effortlessly, and magically from G minor to E major, thanks to the interposition of a non-common-tone diminished chord. No small feat for a chord consisting of two sawteeth! If the diminished chord were a careerist, it would be a diplomat, smoothing out relations between keys normally distant.

The diminished chord may be dubbed `The harmonic passport beloved of classical and romantic composers.` I make no mention of modern composers, because they seem to shun the diminished chord. The diminished chord has not appeared in popular music for the last half-century . (Okay - `Bohemian Rhapsody and `What a Wonderful World`are exceptions.) But last week, while accompanying Albert College kids as they did their solos, I came across some diminished chords, in a recent musical-theatre piece. Is fashion about to take a turn?

Now if you are looking for a musical paradise where diminished chords run rampant, check out the gospel-song arrangements of Rollo Dilworth, a black American composer. I had the privilege of meeting him in person last year in Vancouver, at the Coastal Sound Children and Youth Music Festival.

John Uttley.

Coming Events

The St. George's Cathedral Summer Concert Series begins on Thursday June 14 from 12:15pm to 12:50pm with the Cantabile Men's Choir performing under the direction of Mark Sirett. The series will continue every Thursday through August 30. The concert on August 30 will be the first performance on the Cathedral organ following the completion of the restoration.

Admission is free, with a voluntary offering collected. The Cathedral is at 270 King St. E. (at Johnson) in Kingston. Call 613-548-4617 or visit www.stgeorgescathedral.ca. Join us for a mid-day musical interlude!

June 14 Cantabile Men's Choir
 June 21 Kingston Ceili Band
 June 28 Trio Dolce (Chamber trio)
 July 5 Sandra Smith (Harp)
 July 12 Cranberry Dixie Band
 July 19 Partita Trio (Wind trio)
 July 26 Deanna Choi & Michel Szczesniak (Violin & Piano)
 August 2 Jeff Hanlon & Chad Yacobucci (Guitar duo)
 August 9 Limestone Trio (String trio)
 August 16 Swamp Ward Orchestra
 August 23 Softwinds (Wind ensemble)
 August 30 Michael Capon (Organ)

Special Family Concert
 Friday August 31, 7pm-8:15pm
 Lily String Quartet

Concert at St. Mary Magdalene Church, Picton

On Saturday June 30 a concert will be given by the choir of St. Mary Magdalene Church, Toronto, under the leadership of its music director Stephanie Martin. This is the choir, and the church, which became famous when Healey Willan was organist and choir director from 1921 until 1967 (he died in 1968). It was also led for a time by our own Robert Hunter Bell. Now they will be coming to Picton to sing a program of Masses and Motets by Orlando di Lassus, Healey Willan and Stephanie Martin. They will also sing Motets for the birth of a church and Motets for St. Mary Magdalene since this year is the centennial celebration of the church building in Picton. The Saturday evening Concert will begin at 7:30 and the admission is \$20.

The following Sunday morning the choir will join with the choir of the Picton church to sing the Eucharist Service. This begins at 10:30.

Master Class with Rachel Laurin at Summer Institute of Church Music 2011

To many average organists, the idea of playing in a master class for one of Canada's top organists might seem a bit intimidating. However, four brave souls, including myself, took up the challenge last summer and prepared music to play in the master class at the Summer Institute of Church Music, hoping for some helpful criticism from Rachel Laurin.

I first heard Rachel Laurin as one of the featured organists at the 2009 RCCO convention in Toronto, and enjoyed her recital very much, so when I found out that she was going to be the organ clinician at SICM in 2011, I decided that I would work on something to play for the master class. A few minutes of personal instruction from one of Canada's great organists is something not to be missed.

Rachel Laurin had already presented the organ plenary session on Monday that week, in which she talked about the three essentials for being a good church musician: improvisation, sight reading, and registration. She was so friendly and enthusiastic in participating in other sessions and at meals, that by Wednesday morning there were four of us eager to play for the master class.

I had been working on Eleanor Daly's *Trinitas* for a few months, and had set my goal to play it at my church on Trinity Sunday in June 2011 (which I did). The third part ("And I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh") is the most challenging because of the speed and rhythmic patterns. So that short movement (about 2 minutes) seemed to be the one in which I could benefit most from some critical advice. The brief personal instruction time went by quickly, as Rachel had me go over short sections again, particularly concentrating on the staccato action which predominates in this movement. I tried to remember everything she said, and then scribbled notes on my music as soon as I returned to my seat.

The three other participants opted for the traditional rather than the contemporary, all playing works by J.S. Bach. We heard the *Little Prelude and Fugue in A*, the *Tocatta and Fugue in C Major*, and "*O Mensch, beweine deine Sünde gross*" (one of my favourite Bach organ works). For all, Rachel

had lots of helpful advice about registration, interpretation, ornamentation, and other details. I wrote notes for my future reference.

The organ master class is an enjoyable experience for the audience too, as they can hear the music their friends have been working on, and learn from the comments and helpful criticism from a great organist. Rachel Laurin is coming back to SICM as organ clinician again this summer. I hope to play in the master class again, unless there is a large crowd of organists lined up wanting to have their turn playing for her.

Elizabeth Mitchell

Supply Organists Mark Sirett is available to play for church services. He can be reached at 613-542-6506, or 613-542-9616 ext. 24, or msirett@cantabile.kingston.net

Kingston Centre RCCO Officers 2011-2012

Chair:	Aurora Dokken	home: 546-9868	e-mail: adokken@ucperformingarts.com
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Secretary:	Elizabeth Mitchell	home: 968-4498	e-mail: emitchell@cogeco.ca
Treasurer and Membership Convener	Joan Egnatoff	home: 634-3341	e-mail: joane@kingston.net
<i>Newsletter</i> Editor	Michael Goodwin	home: 471-1130	e-mail: mgoodwin@kos.net
Scholarship Secretary	Nora Vincent	home: 389-0866	e-mail: tvincent@cogeco.ca
Webmaster	Charles Walker	home: 530-2438	e-mail: cwalker@kingston.net
Publicity	Nicholas Walters	home:	e-mail: nicholas.walters@queensu.ca

The *Kingston Centre Newsletter* is edited by Michael Goodwin, 327 McKinley Crossroad, R.R.9 Picton, Ontario, K0K 2T0. He may be reached by telephone: 613-471-1130; or e-mail: mgoodwin@kos.net. It is published four times a year, in September, December, March and June, and is sent free of charge to all members of the Kingston Centre of the RCCO and to current scholarship holders. It will be sent on request to others on payment of an annual subscription of \$10.00, which should be sent to the Treasurer, Joan Egnatoff, 82 Braemar Road, Kingston, K7M 4B6. Cheques should be made payable to *RCCO Kingston Centre*.

Deadline for all submissions to the September Newsletter: August 31 2012

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