

SOUNDBOARD

A Newsletter for Church Musicians



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Editorial Comment

This is the time of year when information begins to arrive about Summer courses for organists and other church musicians. Anyone thinking of attending such would do well to at least explore what is available.

The RSCM has available two brochures — *Short Choral Courses 2007* and *Organ Courses 2007*, both of which list many courses of interest. Details can be obtained from the website: www.rscm.com/courses.

While the full details of the Charles Wood Summer School are not yet available, the dates are 19 to 26 August. A huge variety of events, concerts and workshops take place during this annual festival. With something to whet everyone's appetite, why not take some time to visit the beautiful city of Armagh during this year's festival?

The Website

Do you know what is on the Church Music website www.churchmusicdublin.org, (or have you ever even looked at it)? James Pasley has done great work on it over the last year or so and he is keeping it really up to date. Click on 'what's new' to see what has recently been added; click on 'recent events' or 'future events' for the latest news. You can also get full details of the Archbishop's Course and of other training opportunities, and if you want to see who is at present on the Committee, it's all there — with their photographs! The **church musician remuneration guidelines** for 2007 are also online and are referred to widely throughout Ireland. There's lots more too. And do publicise any relevant events on the site — send brief details to events@churchmusicdublin.org.

Archbishop of Dublin's Certificate in Church Music

The closing date for applications for the 2007 – 08 academic year is **31 May 2007**. This popular course provides training in the skills needed by the musician working in the local church: organ playing, choir training and a basic understanding of the place and role of music in the liturgy. Students must be sponsored by a parish and the cost is shared between the student, the parish and the diocese. Subject to the availability of places, it may be possible to accept those from traditions other than the Church of Ireland. For further information, visit the website or contact the Hon. Secretary, Mrs Ruth Maybury.

Finally, in lighter vein, to fill the space still remaining.....

From the October 2006 Church Review

"Sunday 3rd September saw the church full to capacity for the baptism of..... The music was chosen especially by the family and Karen sang a very beautiful and moving duet"

WHAT'S IN THIS ISSUE?

- 1. Editorial Comment**
- 2. An Introduction to Hymnody**
Adrian Somerfield describes an event in his parish of St Thomas Mount Merrion.
- 3. House Organs (Part 3)** This time it is Gerard Gillen's instrument that features.
- 4. Music in the Unitarian Church Dublin** Josh Johnston (organist) writes about his new position.
- 5. Celebrating St Brigid in Dublin and Kildare** A joint festival in two St Brigid churches is described.
- 6. Peter Barley talks to Harry Grindle**
- 7. Notes & News** — containing a miscellany of bits and pieces of information for organists.

The Church Music Committee supports and resources music and musicians in the local church. The Committee is appointed by the Church of Ireland Dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough.

Chairman: Archdeacon Edgar Swann, Greystones.

Secretary: Mrs Ruth Maybury.

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Editor: Randal Henly

An Introduction to Hymnody

Adrian Somerfield, Organist, St Thomas, Mount Merrion

This article is a modified version of a "Talk with Hymns", given by the writer in both St Thomas' Mount Merrion and St Philip and St James, Booterstown on 14 January 2007

I had suggested to the Rector that we might have an "Organist's Choice" Sunday. As I developed this idea, I decided to try to illustrate various examples of hymnody during Morning Prayer, though in six items, which is less than 1% of the current hymn book, I can't cover everything! For those interested in church music there is a most useful recent book by Edward Darling and Donald Davidson, *Companion to Church Hymnal*, which I have referred to extensively.

In early editions of the Book of Common Prayer, there were very few references to hymns and, apart from the psalms and canticles, virtually the only position for music was the point after the third collect: "*In quires and places where they sing, here followeth the Anthem*". It used to be common to have a hymn at this point but even so in the past there was considerable opposition to having any sort of hymns, other than psalms and anthems, in the Church of Ireland.

Hymns in anything like a modern sense started with Luther around 1500 (1483—1546) and were part of his reforming ideas. He believed in the effectiveness of popular hymn-singing in advancing the cause of reform. He wrote many hymns and knew how to match them with telling melodies, either his own or by others. There was a great burst of hymn and tune writing in the Lutheran Church.

In the mediaeval church audience participation was not encouraged. The priest said Mass in the Choir behind a screen, and the mob just attended, and this was very much the custom in the pre-Reformation Church and even in the Church of England, until quite recently.

Most of the earlier official music in church would have been modal settings of the Mass and psalms, such as is often to be heard as "backing" on TV whenever a picture of a monastery appears. We then think of sixteenth and seventeenth century musicians such as Monteverdi (1567—1643) and Palestrina (1525—1594) in Italy and William Byrd (c.1542—1623) and Merbecke (c.1510—c.1585) in England, with more elaborate settings. Merbecke's was probably the first setting of the Communion Service in English. It is still popular and to be found in the C of I Chant Book. The Council of Trent

(1545—1563) regularised music for the future in the Roman Catholic Church; the Church was worried about music becoming dangerously elaborate. However, I suspect that there may have been "unofficial" religious music, such as carols using popular tunes of the day, going back a long way.

In the Lutheran Church more emphasis began to be placed on the congregation. Many Lutheran hymns and tunes were worked up by Bach, mainly in the years 1723—50 while he was Cantor at St Thomas School and organist at two churches in Leipzig, where he was expected to compose vast amounts of music for each Sunday; the Lutheran service of those days lasted several hours!

A number of these Bach arrangements occur in our hymnal. For example there is "*Wachet Auf*" or "*Sleepers awake*" for Advent; "*How brightly beams the Morning Star*" for the Epiphany, and several for Holy Week and Easter, including "*O sacred head, sore wounded*" as the Passion Chorale. For modern tastes these tend to be seen as too solemn and stolid for congregational use, but because of Bach's rich harmonisations, choirs love them.

We start with one of these, **Hymn 668, *God is our fortress and our rock*** to the tune **Ein' feste Burg, a Strong City**. The words are based on Psalm 46, which may have been written at a time of great historic crisis, possibly when Jerusalem was delivered from the overpowering Assyrian army in 701 BC, and is widely used in times of crisis today. It is also reminiscent of the canticle *Urbs fortitudinis* which uses words from Isaiah. Probably both the words and tune were originally by Luther and it became popular in Protestant parts of Germany. The poet Heine referred to it as "the Marseillaise of the Reformation"

The first hymn I chose was based on a psalm, as many are. These would have been the temple music that Christ knew and the basis of much church music in monasteries and cathedrals, where they were sung to plainsong chants, which in England melded into the ingenious Anglican chant. However, for congregational use chant is not very popular (though I enjoy it) especially in the Calvinist tradition in Geneva and in particular in the derived Presbyterian tradition in Scotland, metrical versions of the psalms such as the

Geneva Psalter of 1551 were produced. Calvin would not allow anything to be sung in public worship which was not wholly based on the scriptures.

Metrical versions are paraphrases such as "*The Lord's my shepherd*" for Psalm 23, originally found in the Scottish Psalter of 1650. One of these compilations was by Sternhold and Hopkins (1572) and became known as the "Old Version" to distinguish it from a later compilation by the Irishmen Nahum Tate and Nicholas Brady published in London in 1696 and referred to as "The New Version". Tate and Brady's book with numerous supplements became essentially *the* hymn book used in most churches well into the nineteenth century. Tate and Brady hymns we still use include "*While shepherds watched*" and "*Hark the herald-angels sing*". Our hymnal contains several tunes with titles such as Old 104th, Old 120th, Old 134th and so on.

One of the best known is **The Old Hundredth**, this being a setting of the hundredth psalm, or Jubilate Deo. The melody derives from the Geneva Psalter and was probably composed by Louis Bourgeois who was choirmaster at St Peter's Church in Geneva under the patronage of John Calvin. The words are attributed to a Scot, William Kethe, who, like many other puritans, had fled to Europe in the reign of Queen Mary Tudor, and had settled in Geneva. We find it in the form of **Hymn 683, All people that on earth do dwell**.

It is often thought that I am old-fashioned, and that I do not like "modern" hymns or those written within living memory! This is not altogether true, though I do find some of the modern jingles and jangles unattractive. However, to be a bit up to date I would like to have another hymn derived from the first few verses of Psalm 42, which opens "*Like as the hart desireth the water-brooks, so longeth my soul after thee O God*". The setting I have chosen was written by Martin Nystrom of Seattle in 1981 and we have it as **Hymn 606, As the deer pants for the water**. It is a little unusual in that the tune and words are by the same author. While particular hymns are often associated with particular tunes, we must remember that they may date from different periods. For example, *Come down O love divine* (294) has words by Bianco da Siena from the fifteenth century to the tune Down Ampney by Vaughan Williams from the twentieth.

While on the subject, I do think that it is a pity that recently we have lost so much of *poetry* in our services in

attempts to be modern and 'with it'. We have entirely lost the Authorised Version of the Bible and also the Coverdale version of the psalms which the C of I used up to 1926 and in a modified version up to 1984. Many well-known quotations in the English language are taken from the 16th century versions of the bible and the psalms, as well as from the plays by Shakespeare.

Hymn singing developed much more quickly in the Evangelical churches than in the Anglican, and one of the most prolific writers of hymns was Charles Wesley (1707—1788). Charles was the younger brother of John Wesley, the founder of Methodism. He also was the father of Samuel Wesley (the younger) and grandfather of Samuel Sebastian Wesley, both of whom were consummate musicians, SS having ended up as organist at Gloucester Cathedral. Both have contributions in our book, which contains twenty-three hymns by Charles. It is notable that often you find you have been singing a “good hymn”, and you see the name Charles Wesley at the bottom. All these we sing to tunes by others, and I have chosen a setting derived from Handel,

281 Rejoice the Lord is King (Gopsal). Handel, who accompanied George I from Hanover to England, was acquainted with the Wesley family and wrote this tune especially for this hymn. Gopsall Hall was the home in Leicestershire of Handel's friend Charles Jennens, who compiled the libretto of *Messiah*. It is interesting to compare the different musical styles of the two German contemporaries, Bach and Handel.

I would like to include an Irish hymn. In the previous book there was a section quaintly called “*Hymns from Ancient Irish Sources*”. It contained “*St Patrick's Breastplate*” and “*Be thou my vision*” and various hymns derived from the writings or traditions of early saints, translated and versified in more recent times. One of these, **Hymn 560, Alone with none but thee my God** is attributed to Columba (sixth century). This is usually sung to Emain Macha but I like the tune **Tibradden**, written by my old teacher Joe Grocock for use at St Columba's College. I remembered this tune from schooldays and was delighted to see it in the new hymn book. It catches a nice Irish flavour. In the days I knew him, Joe lived

with his wife and family in an old cottage on the slopes of Tibradden Mountain, and his daughter Jenny Robinson suggested the title for the tune.

There are many good tunes from Wales: Aberystwyth, St Denio, Blaenwern, Hyfrydol, Cwm Rhondda, Gwalchmai, Rhyddlan, Llangollen and so on, where there is a great tradition of singing and Welsh choirs from the slate mines of the north and the coalfields of the south are famous, so we will finish with a Welsh tune, although the words are not by a Welsh author.

Hymn 105 O the deep, deep love of Jesus goes to the tune **Ebenezer**. The writer, Samuel Francis, was a member of another evangelical group, the Plymouth Brethren, and the tune is by Thomas John Williams of Ynysmeudwy. The words have a very nautical theme, with Jesus' love being compared with a “mighty ocean, vast, unmeasured, boundless, free”. Ebenezer, the “stone of help”, was the name of a monument raised by Samuel after a victory over the Philistines, and is a name often applied to non-conformist chapels, especially in Wales.

House Organs (Part3)

Just one organ is featured this time; there are several more to be visited, one in Bray, one in Hillsborough and one 'somewhere in Kerry'. Let us know of any others and we will try to visit and report on all in due course. RH.

Gerard Gillen thinks he was probably the first in this country to own a ‘house organ’. His instrument was built by Ken Jones in 1980. It is a small organ of two manuals and four stops. The lower manual has just one 8 ft stop (it's unlabelled but is a flute of some kind). The upper manual has an 8 ft flute, a 4 ft rohrlute and a 2 ft principal. There are two other stop knobs labelled Larigot 1¹/₃ and Tierce 1³/₅, but they go nowhere! Space on the soundboard has been provided for these stops. The pipes are behind glass for both protection and muting but there are slots at both sides so that the sound come through perfectly. There are no dedicated pedal pipes. Couplers can connect the pedals to either of the two manuals — or to both.

I was particular taken by the sound of the instrument while Gerard improvised in the classical style. The three stops on the upper manual blend beautifully and give the impression of a mutation or light mixture being present. The ‘feel’ of the instrument is also super making it a delight to play. I enjoyed my half hour with Professor Gillen.



Announcing the new revised CD version of Bishop Edward Darling's **Lectionary Hymn Guide** in CD format is available from The Good Book Shop, 61-67 Donegall Street, Belfast BT1 2QH, Tel: 028-9024 4825, or the Resource Centre Bookshop, Holy Trinity Church, Rathmines, Dublin 6, Tel: 01-4972821. Price £15.00 or €22.50.

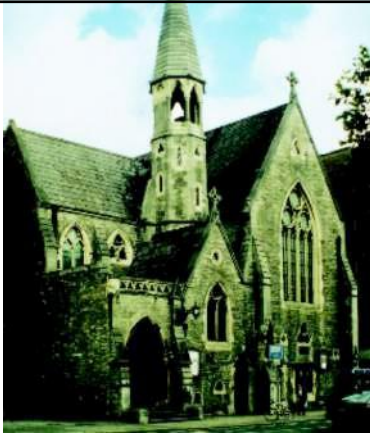
Who Wants?

A good home is required for a Kawai electric organ which is surplus to a church's requirements. It has two 30-note manuals (12 stops in all) and a 12-note pedal board, plus various effects like mambas and swing sounds. Nominal charge. Details from the Editor.

Music in the Unitarian Church, Dublin

Josh Johnston, Organist; www.joshjohnston.com

My first visit to the Unitarian Church on St Stephen's Green was on New Year's Day 2006, when I was asked to play the organ for a service. I was subsequently offered the post of organist, a position I jumped at, and it has been a learning experience ever since.



The Unitarian church in the Republic of Ireland comprises two congregations (Dublin & Cork) and is affiliated to both the General Assembly in England and the non-subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland in the North. With each congregation across the world taking its own distinctive personality, and being encouraged to do so by the General Assembly (an administrative centre rather than a governing body), I soon discovered that their 'musical rulebook' was there to be discovered, read, interpreted, discarded and re-written if desired. The reason for this is that the Unitarian Church—while its roots are in a small group of Christian people, which dismissing the Nicene Creed and the Trinity, in the twenty-first century has a very diverse theological outlook and is very much about personal faith, where you are on your spiritual journey rather than where the church is. The church's roots are Christian but the members now come from Christian, Atheist, Humanist, and many other backgrounds. The church is there to nurture spiritual growth and to foster tolerance and respect for all religions. The liturgy can be based on the bible but doesn't have to be. For instance, the readings are chosen by individual congregation members, and these highlight the interests of different peoples through the various ways that God (or whatever you want to call the creator) speaks to people through readings.

Because of the differing cultures within many diverse communities, I can't comment on music in general in the Unitarian Church, but rather tell you how I operate in Dublin. Musically, the service is quite straightforward. We have four hymns each Sunday, a voluntary at the end and a few spaces in the middle ideal for improvisation or other pieces. Unitarian hymns have different words and these have been written down the years since Unitarianism started to reflect the differences

between its faith and that of other churches, and also to try and accommodate the wide range of backgrounds within the one church. Jesus is rarely mentioned in the hymns; instead, the creator and his influence on the world—nature, the seasons, ourselves—is celebrated. The hymns are collected in an old

hymnal (which focuses on Anglican hymn tunes, but with appropriately modified words) and a new book called *Singing The Living Tradition* which attempts to marry this tradition with that of the American Unitarian Universalist community—which sings a lot of gospel songs and hymns set to folk music from around the world. With the organ as our main instrument in Dublin, we're still using the Anglican tunes most of the time but there's a growing push to test out some of the lesser-known tunes in the new book—giving ourselves a challenge. At the moment, I'm working my way through the book to find tunes that we may not have sung before. Ironically, The congregation is ready for new hymns.

There are three or four excellent musicians in the church and we have musical interludes, on average about twice a month, during the service. Instruments played include piano, voice, flute, guitar, organ and sousaphone (!!) sometimes together, sometimes separately. This allows for a moment of meditation and also for God to speak through media other than the written word. This is usually greeted by a healthy round of applause, not seen as a bad thing in the church, rather as an appreciation of the effort undertaken to contribute to the worship.

There are about ten in the choir, and up to recently just sang hymns in harmony and the occasional anthem at festival services. This has stepped up a notch now with the commencement of regular rehearsals at 10 a.m. on two Sundays a month, to prepare an anthem for the third Sunday. We have a choir director who works on a voluntary basis.

The entire congregation is also instrumental in setting up and promoting concerts in aid of the church restoration fund, and this is a great way of bringing the congregation and the local community together through music.

I feel at home at the Unitarian

Church. I have much to learn from them and about them but I think I have a lot to contribute too, in many ways thanks to my multi-denominational school education and also my experience on the Archbishops' Church Musician Award (thanks again to my organ teacher Siobhán Kilkelly and the Dublin Diocesan Church Music Committee).

Josh Johnston is a pianist, arranger and composer/songwriter. After graduating from the University of Salford in 1997 with a degree in Popular Music, he worked in radio and music retail before taking the plunge to try his hand at being a full-time musician. He also accompanies choirs, singers and soloists for exams, rehearsals and recitals. Classically trained and with a keen interest in all forms of popular music, he is a versatile and valuable session musician, equally at home in jazz, folk and rock.



Organists' Hints & Tips

No 'Hints & Tips' were forthcoming for this issue so the Editor must fill the gap himself. What follows hardly constitutes a hint or a tip but I hope it may be useful to readers to draw attention to two volumes that I find very useful

A volume called '*From Key to Key*', is a collection of 288 easy and effective modulations between all keys of up to four sharps and four flats. I find this very helpful for situations such as the recessional hymn being in, say D, and the recessional voluntary in A flat. Some skilled organists can modulate effortlessly and effectively between any two keys, but for many us very amateur organists it can be a bit of a hit-and-miss situation! This book solves the problem.

Volume No 2 is entitled '*Liturgical Interludes*', and it contains 100 short pieces (mostly easy and sight-readable) for playing perhaps during Communion or for filling those gaps that occur when for instance the collection hymn is not long enough or the cleric is late in starting the service! There are pieces in most keys, both major and minor.

Both books mentioned are published by Kevin Mayhew, whose contact details are: Buxhall Stowmarket, Suffolk, IP14 3BW, Tel. 0044 1449 737978, info@kevinmayhewltd.com, www.kevinmayhewltd.com

Celebrating St Brigid in Dublin and Kildare

The following two accounts describe the services held in St Brigid's Church, Stillorgan and in the Cathedral Church of St Brigid, Kildare, when their choirs collaborated to celebrate St Brigid's Day in February 2007. From St Brigid's Stillorgan, Frank Guter writes, and from Kildare Cathedral, Derek Verso gives the account.

Frank Guter

A desire and hope grew to undertake the collaboration of two choirs, that of St Brigid's, Stillorgan and the choir of St Brigid's Cathedral Kildare, in order to celebrate the Feast Day of St Brigid in a special way. The directors, Hilary Guter of Stillorgan and Derek Verso of Kildare, agreed to join their choirs together so that the gifts and resources of both could become one greater whole. Their plan was to do a joint service on Thursday night, 1 February in St Brigid's of Stillorgan and then a second service on Sunday, 4 February in Kildare Cathedral.

As it turned out, this was a bigger challenge than anticipated. First there was the distance to overcome. Secondly, there was a time factor as this would occur very soon after the Christmas holidays. This was further complicated due to a heavy commitment by many of the choir members of Stillorgan and their director, Hilary, to a pantomime running for nine shows until mid-January!

However, with the willing and dedicated practice of both choirs separately, the prospect of successfully presenting the chosen music began to take shape. This included William Byrd's *Ave Verum*, Pitoni's *Cantate Domino*, *Cantique de Jean Racine* by Fauré, the St Patrick's Setting of the Communion Service by Colin Mawby, a psalm and hymns. The real test came when we travelled to the cathedral in Kildare to join both choirs together for the first time on the Tuesday just before St Brigid's Day. Even though the temperature was very cold the practice went very well and the warmth of the hospitality of the hosts was great. With our processional practice done, the blend of forty or so voices and the adjustment to the acoustics all having gone very well, we all started to really look forward to our first worship service. Both choirs felt a rapport from which we hoped would come a worthy result.

In the interest of fairness, we agreed to follow the practice of wearing robes in Kildare and smart casual dress in Stillorgan.

On St Brigid's Day, our service was in Stillorgan and was very well

attended and felt very meaningful. The response by the choir and the congregation was remarkable and we felt it was worth all of the effort. A cosy atmosphere and a well-attended communion service supported a very worshipful interaction of choir and congregation.

Then our service on Sunday afternoon in the cathedral unfolded in the historic and special setting of this 13th century building. In our second experience together, we sensed a real confidence in each other. We were grateful to have had the opportunity to work together in the interest of worship. Even a heavy fog over the Curragh could not prevent a glorifying worship experience. Many felt that such endeavours are extremely worthwhile and deserve to be repeated.

Derek Verso

"I enjoyed working and singing with another choir. A lovely idea to sing in both the churches. Hope we do it again."

It all began last summer when Kildare Cathedral choir sang at a summer concert series in Christ Church Cathedral Waterford and we asked Hilary Dickinson-Guter to play the organ, as our usual organist Dr Kerry Heuston was on holidays. Hilary also performed three major Bach organ works magnificently on the wonderfully restored Elliott/Jones pipe organ as part of the programme. After that concert she suggested that the choirs of the two St Brigid churches should do something together for St Brigid's Day. And that's exactly what happened ... well we didn't really have a choice, did we!!

We chose a fairly challenging programme for the group and set about learning it, coming together only for a final combined rehearsal a few days before the first service. While we set out to share conducting and accompanying, in the end Hilary did all the accompanying and I the conducting, as the practicalities of swapping roles during the service might have been disconcerting for everyone, including ourselves.

Singing exactly the same music at both services gave great confidence to the combined choirs (as well as reducing the workload). By singing

the same music in two totally different buildings – one a tiny homely early 19th century rural style building, with carpet, no acoustic, yet warm as toast, with a small Jones pipe organ and a piano; the other, a large 13th medieval structure with a reasonable acoustic, loads of open space, a large three-manual Conacher pipe organ and a constant force 5 gale blowing indoors in very cold temperatures! — they began to appreciate how the space and its layout can influence so tellingly not only the sound we make but the ambience, and how this has an influence on the act of worship, whether we like it or not.

Another real benefit of singing in each other's churches that we hadn't considered, was that both choirs got to be host and guest to each other which created a great rapport. Both services were very well attended — 168 according to church records in Stillorgan and a full nave in Kildare. More particularly, all present felt an uplifting sense of spiritual and corporate worship together. Perhaps it was the rector of Stillorgan, the Revd Ian Gallagher who best summed it up, *"this evening we have experienced a touch of heaven through our worship."*

There were many interesting coincidences about this get together that cannot be ignored. For instance, Bishop Roy Warke, who preached in Stillorgan on the life of Brigid, was himself consecrated as bishop on St Brigid's Day nineteen years ago, and he also sings tenor in the St Brigid's cathedral choir! For Hilary and myself, we both started in our "new" churches on St Brigid's Day exactly one year ago. She has achieved more in one year there than most would in a lifetime. Kildare Cathedral choir had launched its new CD on St Brigid's Day just a year ago! It was the first time that Stillorgan had celebrated their patron saint in many years and it was the first time for some choir members to sing in latin, french and in a cathedral!

"A good co-operative exercise well worth doing, highlighting the life of one of the Church of Ireland's forgotten saints."

Peter Barley talks to Dr Harry Grindle

Director of the Priory Singers and a former organist of St Anne's Cathedral Belfast

I'd like to begin by asking you about your earliest musical influences.

I began to have piano lessons at an early age, but in terms of church music it all began when I became a chorister in Bangor Abbey when I was seven or eight. The organist was a competent amateur musician who played the organ well, but he wasn't really a choir-trainer. Thus, although he had a good boys' section of at least twenty boys, we didn't really get any training in voice-production, sight-reading and the like. However, it must have been a good choir, as on a Sunday the organist would look round and if he had a quorum he would put up a piece of paper with a number on it. This meant that he wanted us to do the canticle setting of that number.

This organist was succeeded by Houston Graham, who was the key figure for me. My voice was just about to change and I became an organ pupil of his. Houston had a tremendous technique; he played all the major organ works. This opened my eyes and thrilled me and he became my hero. It was his sheer musicality and his imagination. I still look back and see him as a very significant figure in my musical life. He went on to be Assistant Organist at Belfast Cathedral and by a lovely twist of fate when in 1964 I was appointed as Organist of the Cathedral many years later, he was my assistant. That must be most unusual. I thought that this might possibly be awkward but he just said to me that he was very proud.

That was a lovely accolade. What had you done prior to this important appointment?

In 1953, I went to Queen's University, Belfast to read French. My first organist post was in a Presbyterian Church in Donaghadee and from there I went to a parish church in Belfast. However, really I felt that I needed to get to England, and upon finishing my degree I took a post as Head of French and Music in a small Church of England grammar school in North London. I studied harmony and counterpoint with Eric Thiman. I found him to be a superb teacher with great technical facility- he could write a fugue as easily as one would dash off a letter. I studied for the RCO diplomas with Douglas Hawkrigde at the Royal Academy of Music and orchestral conducting with Sir Adrian Boult as well as going on



various conducting courses. I would have stayed in England but for the fact that my only brother developed cancer and was clearly going to die. When he died it was such a shattering experience for my whole family that really I took the decision to return to Northern Ireland to support my distraught

parents. At such crucial times in one's life personal ambition goes out the window.

So you managed to rejoin the Belfast church music scene?

Yes indeed, in 1962 the important post at Bangor Parish Church became vacant. This had been held for many years with distinction by one of my previous teachers, Dr Ernest Emery. After two years in this job I moved to St Anne's Cathedral.

What musical resources did you find at the cathedral when you arrived? Did you make some changes?

There was a large choir of between fifty and sixty singers. It included about 24 boys in addition to ten sopranos, who had a mature sound with lots of vibrato. My predecessor thought in choral society terms rather than along cathedral lines. I decided to focus on the boys' choir and not to replace the ladies as they left, thus gradually solving the problem of blend. I also introduced countertenors, who, I think, are an essential ingredient of the genuine cathedral sound. I also developed a young men's choir for the boys as their voices changed. Previously, they had just left the choir and so you lost most of them. I felt the extra effort was worthwhile.

In terms of recruitment of the boy choristers, were they from particular schools or from all round Belfast?

There had been a connection with Belfast Royal Academy. A scholarship had been set up (before the days of the 11-plus) to enable boys who were musically able, but who would otherwise have missed the opportunity, to receive a grammar school education.

For many boys this would have been their first experience of music or worship at a high level. Presumably this encouraged a number later into ministry or professional music making.

Many boys went on to be clergymen, some becoming bishops in due course. Former primates of All

Ireland, Dr John Armstrong, and Dr James McCann, had both been choristers at Belfast Cathedral.

You mentioned that your predecessor, Captain Brennan, had been there for sixty years—in fact I see that he was the first Cathedral Organist. When you arrived, did this present you with a tough situation, or did you feel that people were pleased to welcome a new organist and were keen to give you their full support?

It was certainly a challenge and I think the fact that I came from Northern Ireland didn't help. There were those who considered that someone from England should have been appointed and there was a certain amount of animosity. However I was determined, with God's help, to make a good job of it and that is why I decided to focus initially on the recruitment and training of the boy choristers.

Were there other aspects that you were keen to work on when you first arrived?

The repertoire needed to be revised and a whole new vision of what the cathedral choir could and should do had to be realised. Over a period of time I began to arrange regular recitals of church music on a Sunday afternoon in place of the sermon at evensong. This became a monthly event, even right through the Troubles, and occasionally I would get together a small instrumental ensemble. We performed Bach Cantatas and other sizeable choral works such as the Bach Passions, and we also commissioned new works, such as an anthem from John Joubert for the dedication of the South Transept.

I was also very interested in orchestral conducting. I had the opportunity to work with the Ulster Orchestra and also got a grant to study with Igor Markevitch at the International Summer School in Monte Carlo. We were able to set up a concert series on Sunday afternoons in place of evensong at periodic intervals and we would fill the cathedral on these occasions. We would promote a full-blown programme with the Ulster Orchestra playing an overture and a symphony, while the cathedral choir would contribute a choral work with the orchestra as well as singing a group of unaccompanied items.

These were exciting and fulfilling times, then for you as a musician?

Absolutely, and I would have to say that the greatest thing that happened to me, apart from my coming across Houston Graham, was meeting with Sammy Crooks, who succeeded Cuthbert Peacock as Dean. He just couldn't have been more supportive.

How much rehearsal time did you have with the choir?

Traditionally the boys rehearsed on a Tuesday afternoon from about 4.30—6 pm with the Assistant Organist, but I realised when I came that since this was probably the most important rehearsal of the week, I'd better take it myself. In so doing I could prepare the boys thoroughly for Wednesday night when the adults came in preparation for Sunday. The boys (including probationers) also came on a Saturday morning, and I introduced a scheme similar to one later created by the RSCM—a chorister training scheme with various different levels. The Saturday session became a hive of activity, with senior boys testing junior boys. We eventually had the most St Nicholas awards anywhere in the world.

The Troubles must have had an enormous impact on running all these activities, however?

Absolutely, and in my more gloomy moments I thought that the Troubles might wreck everything. You might set off on a Tuesday afternoon to take that crucial rehearsal with the boys, and you never got there because the centre of town was roped off due to a bomb scare. There might be no bomb at all, though there very often was, and so that rehearsal didn't take place. Even a rehearsal for a TV broadcast once had to be abandoned, and sometimes we had to decamp to the cathedral crypt during a bomb scare, where our rehearsals competed with a transformer humming a bottom G sharp!

Running a choir against the backdrop of the Troubles must have been very hard going for you?

It was, yes. Church music has been my greatest interest, but those years did take a lot out of me. I set high standards and I was determined to keep them up. But it was very difficult. The Troubles had an impact on my recruitment. When I went round the schools, the boys were interested, but when their parents discovered where the choir was based, many were unwilling to allow their sons to come to the cathedral. So in fact I was trying to achieve high standards with a quality of boy eventually who mightn't have got it into some of the better parish choirs around. But I was just glad to have anyone. This meant I had to work extra hard myself.

What was your next move?

By now I had taken on a full-time school job, as I had a family to support, and so in 1975 I moved into teaching. I later became a lecturer in music at Stranmillis College

of Education, subsequently being appointed Head of Music there.

You are well known as the author of 'Irish Cathedral Music'. What are your impressions of how church music in Ireland has changed?

It would be fair to say that the scene today is worlds apart from that when I was a chorister at Bangor Abbey. I occasionally now deputise for organists in some of our parish churches, and it is often a depressing experience. There are choirs with folk in their 80's who are hard of hearing. There is a sad lack of young people, and one wonders what the future will be for the average parish church. One would have thought of Belfast as being a bastion of good church music, but there are now some churches with no choir at all.

Why do you think that young people are not coming forward?

Schools are now offering so much by way of musical opportunity to youngsters that their time is fully taken up and they are often unable (or unwilling) to make the additional commitment. This is sad, as they are missing out on something very special. I was for a number of years a member of the panel of adjudicators for the Ulster School Choir of the Year Competition and heard many excellent choirs. This competition was very successful, but it was really very surprising to find that very few of the children would have been singing in a church choir.

How about happier memories, such as your most satisfying moments?

It was particularly rewarding to find that some of the boys went on to pursue successful musical careers. A number became Oxbridge choral scholars and lay-clerks in English cathedrals. One also had great encouragement. I've already mentioned Dean Crooks, but there was also Bishop Butler, Bishop of Connor (he had come from Tuam). Here was somebody who appreciated the value of what was happening in the cathedral in those dark days. He would occasionally write letters and when he was visiting the cathedral he would come down to the choir after the rehearsal before the service and offer words of encouragement. Things like that I will never forget.

What do you think has changed in the cathedral world since your day?

I think pay and conditions are greatly improved. When I began at St Anne's, I was being paid the princely sum of £500 per annum, which was the same as for the post at Bangor Parish Church and the latter also included accommodation. I was running at a loss for my first few years at the cathedral and had to

teach in all my spare hours to make up a salary. I was really doing the job for the love of it.

In the light of these conditions would you have any advice for church musicians who are perhaps just starting out now?

I think you have to have a huge commitment to church music to want to do it. After all, it imposes strains on home arrangements, with weekends being tied up with church work. In some churches, the church authorities are approaching the situation sympathetically. I can think of one church that I know of where they were in danger of losing their organist because of the pull of his family commitments. Here they now have a system where they provide an assistant or substitute to play for certain services, perhaps a couple of times a month. This gives him a bit of freedom. A little bit of flexibility has to be shown by parish vestries, otherwise the future could be even less promising for some churches.

This is wise advice not just for organists and their families, but clearly for clergy and those who are charged with the administration of church affairs.

I should also mention that of course there are shining examples of excellent parish church music around the country. I think particularly of the tradition here in Belfast at St George's. The basis to the success of that choir owes much to the work of Nigel McClintock. He really fostered the musical programme there and showed what could be done in a parish setting where there is somebody with the ability, drive and enthusiasm.

If you had a magic wand, and could grant any wish for the church music scene in Ireland, what do you think that would be?

Well I must say that I am very pleased to see that the RSCM is at last doing something to improve the situation. There's now a regular newsletter and people are being encouraged to send in details of what they're doing, and there is *encouragement*. That has to be writ large—there are souls out there struggling in many cases, and they just need some support. We all respond well to a bit of encouragement—it makes us feel good, and we feel that we want to do even better next time.

That's a very strong message with which to end. Dr Grindle, thank you for taking the time to talk to SOUNDBOARD.

Notes and News

NEW COMMITTEE MEMBER

Jacqueline Mullen is a parishioner of St Thomas', Mount Merrion, where she is a member of the music team with responsibility of helping to teach new material, accompanying on piano and occasionally substituting on the organ. As a Sunday Club leader she teaches new songs to the children—who then teach them to the adult members of the congregation. She became involved in church music in her teens, playing piano for services in a Baptist Church. She took organ lessons while at secondary school. A piano diploma, obtained after leaving school, became very useful when she gave up her career to be a full time mother. She now teaches piano and the theory of music to children and adults, and currently she is studying for a certificate in sacred music with the RSCM.



WHO WANTS?

A good home is wanted for an extensive collection of classical LP records that belonged to the late Eric de Courcy. They are in immaculate condition and are all catalogued. They range from opera, symphony, piano, instrumental to song. Contact Brenda Alexander on 087 220 9086 if you are interested.

SUMMER ORGAN RECITALS AT SAINT PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL

Each summer, the Willis organ in Saint Patrick's Cathedral is used to host a series of organ recitals. This year, the recitals occur in May and June, and also in conjunction with the Cathedral's *Heritage Week* at the end of August. Recitalists come from many countries, and are a mixture of established musicians, and younger prize-winning performers. This year the programme includes the Cathedral's own trio of organists, as well as Eric Sweeney, Head of Music at Waterford Institute of Technology, and Guttorm Guleng, winner of the 2005 Pipeworks Dublin International Organ Festival. Recitals take place on most Wednesday evenings at 18.30 from 23 May—27 June (except 13 June). Please contact the Cathedral Office at (01) 453 9472 for more information.

LIMERICK ORGAN DAY

Norbert Kelvin, Secretary POSI
Michael O'Brien did a superb job of organising visits to several excellent organs in Limerick on Saturday 3 March 2007. The day before, Steve Smith and I visited two organs thought to be out of operation, but they were in excellent voice. The Jesuit Church has been sold and its fine organ (Telford 1924) may be seeking a new home if planning permission is granted to allow it to leave its present home.

We also visited the Dominican church where Derek Verso in 1991 had over-hauled and re-actioned the organ. For some reason it is not now being played but with some minor adjustments to fix ciphers, the organ showed off its fine voice. We heard from one of the staff at the church that they had been told it would cost several thousands of euros (I heard "a quarter of a million") to fix the organ. The symptoms seem to indicate that some maintenance and minor repairs may be in order, but not a major rebuild!

Saturday's organs were all very satisfying, especially the large Hill at Redemptorists and the Kenneth Jones rebuild at the Franciscan. The smaller organs of St Michael's C of I, St Mary's RC and Christ Church Presbyterian were all in fine voice and had their special charm and character.

Limerick University Concert Hall's Comptom theatre organ's pipes, chest, wind system and brain (console) are all in excellent condition. However it has contracted something akin to multiple sclerosis, probably due in part to lack of medical attention to the nervous system, not Parkinson's disease—none of the tremulants work. The University is anxious to see it moved to a home where it will be appreciated as they would like to expand the stage area for decent opera productions.

We were also treated to Anúna's concert in the Franciscan church, the finals of the choral competition (wow! were there some good Gregorian chant singers present) in the Augustinian church, and Jean-Paul Lécot's (of Lourdes) closing recital on the Hill instrument of St John's Cathedral.

It is gratifying that by and large the clergy in all these churches appear to appreciate their organs as important parts of their respective liturgies. We have to work on one of them to see that they bring their fine organ back into regular service.

DEPUTY ORGANISTS

With the summer holiday season fast approaching, now is the time to book deputy organists. Recent additions to the **deputy organ list** are Alexandra Jobling (a former Cambridge college organ scholar), Peter Parshall (Christ Church Cathedral) and Raymond Russell (formerly organist at Castleknock & Clonsilla). The full list of names is on our website and to add or amend details, simply send us an email.

ORGANISTS' CROSSWORD 10

The following are the entrants who sent in correct solutions to the Christmas Crossword puzzle in the last issue of *SOUNDBOARD*: Harry Grindle, William Yeoman, Roberta Shellard, Adrian Somerfield, E Ashmore, Derek Seymour. The lucky one whose name came out of the mythical hat is Roberta Shellard, to whom a token prize has been sent.

RSCM (IRELAND) EVENTS

Thursday 19 April, 8.00 p.m., Church of the Assumption, Milltown, Dublin 7. In a follow up to our popular workshop for Cantors in January, John O'Keeffe from NUI Maynooth and freelance singer Aine Mulvey lead a workshop for choir trainers, organists and singers exploring a wealth of new music for choirs and congregations. Singing and voice training techniques will be explored as will methods help you to obtain the best from your choir and congregation. Cost !10.

Saturday 13 May. The Reluctant Choir Trainer. Belfast (venue TBC). 2.00 pm to 5.00 pm. Cost £5.00. Led by David Revels, and aimed at those who find themselves running the choir 'by default' this event will cover aspects of basic voice-training, effective repertoire for smaller choirs, running rehearsals and recruitment. With much to be gained from David's experience as a professional singer, teacher and choir trainer, this is an event that will appeal to all involved in training choirs.

Saturday 23 June. Voice for Life. Training the Trainers. Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin. Cost !10 including sandwich lunch. Time TBC. "I want to begin using Voice for Life with my singers, but I don't know where to start". "*How can I fit Voice for Life sessions into our weekly rehearsal when we're so pressed for time?*" These and other questions will be answered during an invaluable session aimed at all choir trainers planning to use the RSCM's Voice for Life training scheme.