



PIPE ECHOES



THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE SINGAPORE CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN GUILD OF ORGANISTS

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INAUGURAL ISSUE

MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN



Dear Members and Friends of the Singapore AGO,

It is my joy to present to you the inaugural, official newsletter of our chapter! This publication is the fruit of a newly formed committee of enthusiastic individuals, who have spent many hours compiling articles that are informative, encouraging, and where appropriate, entertaining!

The year 2004 saw the birth and the first "baby steps" of the Singapore AGO, as several key members sought to organise and establish the leadership, direction and activities of the Chapter. The Pipeworks 2004 recital series, for example, was a dream turned reality, as together with the German Congregation associated with Orchard Road Presbyterian Church, the Chapter presented 3 pipe organ recitals to the community. It is my hope that one day, audiences and congregations in Singapore will duly recognise organ music as a genre in its own right, equally at home in both the concert hall and in the worship service. We will endeavour to achieve this through both regular recital programmes as well as music education. In this light, projects for 2005 will include the Pipe Organ Encounter-Plus (POE+) which aims to attract and expose young pianists to the organ music world. Several other projects involving Church Music and certification are also in the pipeline.

As the Guild's only South-East Asian Chapter, the road ahead is dotted with challenges and in largely "uncharted" territory as our chapter continues to grow. But I believe that if we hold on to our dreams, with faith, unity and much support from each of our treasured members, Singapore AGO will be well on her way to fulfilling the mission of education, enrichment and dedication to the organists in Singapore and the region.

May you experience peace, prosperity and fulfillment in the year ahead!

Evelyn S. E. Lim, DMA
Dean

*"May our dreams prove rich with promise,
each endeavor well begun.
Great Creator, give us guidance
till our goals and yours are one."*
- Hymn writer, Catherine Cameron, 1967

RECENT EVENTS

INAUGURATION OF THE SINGAPORE CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN GUILD OF ORGANISTS

- by Dr. Tang Boon Sen

The American Guild of Organists (AGO) is the national professional association serving the organ and choral music fields in the USA. The Guild serves more than 20,000 members in more than 340 local chapters throughout the United States and abroad. Founded in 1896 as both an educational and service organization, the Guild sets and maintains high musical standards and promotes the understanding and appreciation of all aspects of organ and choral music.

The Singapore Chapter is the Guild's first chapter in South-East Asia. It was approved by AGO Headquarters on 20th October 2003 and the Registry of Societies in Singapore on 23rd December 2003 with the 12 charter members, 7 of whom were elected to office and 1 appointed to the standing committee.

Dr. Evelyn Lim
Dr. Margaret Chen
Mr. Ong Te-Min
Ms. Ng Chet Wei
Mrs. Dorothy Lee
Mrs. Esther Seet
Dr. Tang Boon Sen
Mr. Adriel Yap
Ms. Mary Gan
Ms. Melissa Goh
Mr. Nicholas Leow
Ms. Ellena Yeo

Dean	Honorary Advisor
Secretary	Treasurer
Membership Officer	Publicity Officer
Newsletter Editor / Reporter	Standing Committee / Program Director
Member	Member
Member	Member
Member	Member

The Chapter hopes to advance the influence of organ and choral music (both sacred and secular) in Singapore by upholding the aims and purposes of the American Guild of Organists.

The Methodist School of Music, an institution which also shares many of the ideals of the Guild in upholding and promoting the ideals in church music, serves as the local headquarters of the Singapore AGO. Together, the Guild and MSM, with their combined resources and network, hope to cross religious and denominational boundaries to create an increased awareness of organ and choral music in Singapore, and in time, its neighbours.

The inauguration of the Singapore Chapter was held on 20th February 2004 at Kampong Kapor Methodist Church with a Walker & Taylor organ originating from 1936. The guest-of-honour for the evening, Bishop Dr. Robert Solomon, presided over the installation of executive and standing committee members.

In her Dean's address, Dr. Evelyn Lim outlined the reasons for the Chapter's inception and spoke of her hopes for the local Chapter. Mr. Ong Te-Min then read the Message from Dr. Frederick Swann, President of the American Guild of Organists. [continued]



Left to right - Dr. Tang Boon Sen, Ms. Ng Chet Wei, Mr. Ong Te-Min, Dr. Evelyn Lim, Dr. Margaret Chen, Mrs. Dorothy Lee, Mr. Adriel Yap, Mrs. Esther Seet

Musical items presented during the evening included organ solos played by Mr. Nicholas Leow and Dr. Margaret Chen, and two Chinese hymn-tune arrangements for the organ, *yangqin* and *erhu* performed by Mr. Adriel Yap and two of his friends.

Special thanks are due to Rev. Dr. Kang Ho Soon, the pastor of Kampong Kapor Methodist Church, for the kind hospitality and support of his church towards the Chapter.

To date, the Singapore Chapter has approximately 40 members comprising church organists, music educators and supporters of organ and choral music. A number of projects (music education, church music, recitals and awareness programs) have been lined up for the year 2004-2005. ♫

REPORT ON THE 2004 AGO NATIONAL CONVENTION IN LOS ANGELES (04 - 09 JULY 2004) - by Dr. Tang Boon Sen

Eight members from the Singapore Chapter of the American Guild of Organists (S-AGO) headed by the chapter's Dean, Dr. Evelyn Lim, attended the 2004 AGO National Convention held in Los Angeles, USA, from 4th to 9th July 2004. This biannual organ music convention is perhaps the most important event of its kind in the United States, attracting over 2,000 participants from all over America and the world. The opening day of the convention coincided with Independence Day which we celebrated along with the Americans over a rousing concert and spectacular fireworks at the Hollywood Bowl.

Over the next five days, recitals and worship services were held at various locations, showcasing up-and-coming and established concert organists. Our afternoons were spent attending workshops and organ competitions. The numerous workshops covered a broad variety of organ and choral music-related topics and interests, including worship matters.

Highlights of the convention include: a gala dinner on Wednesday night which featured the theatre-organ wizardry of Hector Olivera, the much-anticipated inauguration of the new Rosales organ at Walt Disney Concert Hall, and a visit to the visually impressive Crystal Cathedral where resident organist and current AGO President, Frederick Swann played a wonderful recital.

Following the Convention, we flew to Ann Arbor, Michigan, where Dr. Marilyn Mason, Professor and Chair of the organ music department at the University of Michigan – our

Dean's alma mater – extended to us her warmest hospitality. We received pointers from Dr. Mason on interpretation and technique, and we also had the pleasure of playing the 1986 Fisk organ at the University's Blanche Anderson Moore Hall (modeled after the organs of Gottfried Silbermann, master organ-builder of the German Baroque period). We are also grateful to Dr. Michele Johns, Adjunct Professor, for inviting us to her church and playing the delightful Casavant organ there.

By the kind invitation of Dr. Margaret Chen (organ consultant and former organ lecturer at the Singapore Bible College), we ended our stay in the United States with a visit to Chicago and Wisconsin. We played on the Schlicker organ at Dr. Chen's own church, visited a Schoenstein organ, and had a peek at the still-under-construction Overture Concert Hall in Madison, Wisconsin. Fortunately, we arrived at a time when the technicians from Klais (the builder of the concert hall organ) were voicing the new pipe organ there. What a rare treat that was!

While the hectic convention schedule and constant travelling left us quite exhausted, the intense exposure to organ music during the two weeks spent in the United States has instilled in us a greater appreciation of this King of instruments. ♫



The author, Dr. Tang Boon Sen

This issue also features an exclusive interview with Dr. Tang on page 5.

ORGAN MASTERCLASS AT THE ESPLANADE BY DR. WILLIAM McVICKER ON 13TH DECEMBER 2004 - by Dr. Evelyn Lim

Singapore AGO organists Christina Suresh and Nicholas Leow performed in Esplanade's "Explorations" masterclass on December 13th. William McVicker, organ curator of the Royal Festival Hall in London conducted the organ masterclass. ♫



Left to right: Dr. Evelyn Lim, Mr. Nicholas Leow, Dr. William McVicker, Miss Christina Suresh.

ORGAN RECITAL BY FELIX HELL AT THE
ORCHARD ROAD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
ON 7TH OCTOBER 2004
- by Tang Boon Sen

The supremely talented young organ virtuoso, Felix Hell, gave his debut recital in Singapore on the 3-manual J.W. Walker chancel organ at the Orchard Road Presbyterian Church on Thursday, 7th October 2004 at 8 p.m. This concert was jointly organized by the Singapore Chapter of the American Guild of Organists and the German Speaking Protestant Congregation associated with Orchard Road Presbyterian Church.

The first half of the 90-minute recital was devoted entirely to the organ works of Johann Sebastian Bach. The opening 'St Anne' Prelude & Fugue in E flat major, BWV 552 was given a deservedly noble and magisterial treatment, and this was followed by a poignant and sensitive reading of the Leipzig chorale prelude *Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele* (Deck thyself, beloved soul), BWV 654. Felix then tackled the challenges of Bach's Trio Sonata No. 1 in E flat major, BWV 525 with consummate ease and dexterity – his sparkling clean articulation, fluid ornamentation as well as the seemingly effortless co-ordination of all three independent lines in each movement were most admirable. He concluded the Bach segment with a vivacious and breathtaking rendition of the Prelude & Fugue in D major, BWV 532.

Through all these works, Felix proved himself to be in full possession of a first-rate technique, and equally gifted with a finely-honed interpretative flair. After the brief intermission, he further enthralled the audience with a superlative account of Mendelssohn's Sonata in F minor, Op. 65 No. 1, the ethereal 'Abendfriede' ('Evening Peace') from Op. 156 by Rheinberger, and a commanding performance of Liszt's Prelude & Fugue on 'BACH'. As an encore, Felix chose the much-loved Toccata from Widor's Fifth Symphony, which he played impeccably and with great aplomb.



Mr. Felix Hell celebrating with Dr. Colin Dürkop, Mrs. Esther Seet and Mr. Adrian Chong at the Raffles Hotel Long Bar after the concert.

Besides being one of the most gifted musicians of his generation, Felix is also one of the most personable and charming. He certainly delighted the audience with his helpful verbal introductions to the repertoire, and touched them with the sincerity of his artistry, his warmth and friendliness. This rare opportunity to hear Felix Hell 'live' in Singapore left many

eagerly awaiting his next stop-over where he would hopefully be invited to perform on the Klais organ at the Esplanade Concert Hall.

ORGAN RECITAL BY ROBERT LEHRBAUMER
OF AUSTRIA ON 4TH NOVEMBER 2004
- by Ong Te-Min

This was second recital of the inaugural "Pipe Works" series at Orchard Road Presbyterian Church (ORPC) on the 1962 J.W. Walker rebuild of the 1926 William Hill & Son and Norman & Beard – an organ with an English disposition. It was co-organized by the Singapore Chapter of the American Guild of Organists and the German Speaking Protestant Congregation in association with ORPC. Entitled "Bach and Austrian Organ Music" the programme presented by Lehrbaumer included pieces by composers with links to Austria, with the exception of Bach and Vierne. Familiar favourites such as the Johann Sebastian Bach Toccata and Fugue in D minor and Franz Liszt's Prelude and Fugue on B-A-C-H as well as treats in the form of Johann Pachelbel's Toccata in E minor and Aria Sebaldina and Variations were performed.

The playing was clean and accurate throughout; Lehrbaumer brought sparkle to the Pachelbel pieces in particular despite the weak upper work on the instrument. The second half of the recital included the Liszt piece, Anton Bruckner's Vorspiel & Fugue in C minor, Toccata alla Rumba by Peter Planyavsky, and Franz Schmidt's Prelude in A major and Toccata in C major. Lehrbaumer described each piece before performing it, a practice which received favourable response from the audience.

The evening concluded with a rousing encore piece, the Toccata in B flat minor from the 24 Pièces de Fantaisie by Louis Vierne.



Mr. Robert Lehrbaumer with his two assistants after the concert, Mr. Adrian Chong (left) and Mr. Alphonsus Chern (right).

PIPE WORKS
Organ Recitals at
Orchard Road Presbyterian Church, Singapore

Felix Hell (Germany)
Robert Lehrbaumer (Austria)
Singapore AGO Recital

Setting to Orchard Road Presbyterian Church

PIPE WORKS
Organ Recitals at
Orchard Road Presbyterian Church, Singapore

Felix Hell (Germany)
Robert Lehrbaumer (Austria)

Setting to Orchard Road Presbyterian Church

ORGAN RECITAL BY YOO JI EUN, ADRIEL YAP
and ESTER WONG ON 9TH DECEMBER 2004
- by Nicholas Leow

Yoo Ji Eun

The concert opened with a most sparkling account of the first movement from the first Trio Sonata in E flat major by J.S. Bach. Despite having to restart the work at a less frantic tempo, the organist demonstrated mastery of the demands of the piece and gave a confident performance with clear articulation. Such assured playing was also evident in the Pachelbel chorale prelude on "Vom Himmel hoch, da komm' ich her" with a satisfying build-up in tempo and texture to do justice to the piece's title (translated as "From Heaven on High I Come to You"). The rather slow opening did not exactly match the description of "lilting" as suggested in the programme notes but then again, there would not be as successful a build-up if it were already tripping quickly along in the beginning.

The seasonal settings of chorale preludes by Demessieux and Yon were enchanting and performed most satisfactorily by the organist. The reed stop used in Yon's setting was perhaps a tad too powerful in comparison to the rest of the stops used, but this could be attributed to the inherent nature of this particular organ. Being a rather tame instrument on the whole, it is perhaps more ideal for miniature pieces such as these chorale preludes.

The hymn "O Come, All Ye Faithful" was sung at the end of Miss Yoo's performance. The setting was rousing with an uplifting build-up before the last stanza. However, the registrations used were most disappointing, especially with the last stanzas where a modulation to a higher key took place. It is ironic that the final hymn's registration was louder than this one when this hymn has much more room for grander registrations than the last.

Adriel Yap

Mr. Yap's segment opened with two chorale-based pieces by J.S. Bach. "Wachet Auf" was interpreted rather smoothly, especially in the pedal line. Certain ornamentations were executed differently from traditional interpretations. However, this piece was still performed splendidly, as was the Fugue on the Magnificat "Meine Seele erhebt den Herren" which followed.

Franck's *Prelude, Fugue et Variation* provided the audience with an educational opportunity. A G# cipher occurred on the swell, rendering the entire manual unusable. This was not resolved up till the end of the concert. However, Mr. Yap, assisted by Dr. Lim, the AGO Dean, managed to pull through by readjusting all his stops on the spot to utilize only the other 2 remaining manuals (to quote Dr. Lim – "frantic readjustments").

Dedicated to the great J.S. Bach, Koehne's setting of "To His Servant Bach, God Grants a Final Glimspe: The Morning Star" was a charming, magically flowing piece reverently executed by Mr. Yap. In contrast, Rutter's Toccata was a flamboyant, flashy piece performed with energy. It would have worked even better had the pedal line been able to roar on this organ and the playing done with more crispness. Once again, the hymn that followed could have seen the use of more powerful registrations in line with the given text.

Ester Wong

Ms. Wong's segment opened with a characteristically French Baroque *Offertoire* from the Mass for the Convents by Francois Couperin. This stately piece was most enjoyable, with Ms. Wong showcasing the alternation of forte and piano between the two available manuals. I was amazed at how professionally Ms. Wong, like Mr. Yap, adjusted her registrations on the spot due to the technical defect in the 3rd manual. There was a most impressive instance where Ms. Wong pushed in a whole lot of stops in a flash between the piece's different sections.

Bach's 'St. Anne' Fugue in E flat major is a perennial favourite with organists, and was wonderfully executed by Ms. Wong. This is a triple fugue with an opening theme reminiscent of the hymn "O God, Our Help in Ages Past" (hence the nickname).

The Pierne and Carter works that followed were done most energetically and impressively. The two movements from Pierne's *Trois Pièces* sparkled brilliantly and were most refreshing. The climax to Carter's Toccata was rousing – a wonderful performance! However, the pedal-part at the beginning of the Toccata should have had louder registrations since the melodic line was there (unless of course it was deliberately meant by the organist to be subtle).

The hymn that followed the presentation of floral bouquets to our three wonderful performers was played by Mr. Yap. Similar settings to stanzas 3 and 4 where the pedals are absent are worth considering for use in church services when only men or women are singing.

In Conclusion

First, the pipe organ should be serviced once before each performance, especially given that on this occasion, a reed stop was detected as not sounding on the "B" note in the middle of Mr. Yap's performance. Second, the programme notes should be presented in the same order as that of the performance, and all translations for non-English texts be provided within.

Nevertheless, the performance was an overall success and beyond any doubt, my companion and I enjoyed it very much. Congratulations to all three performers and keep up the good work! ☺



From left to right: Miss Yoo Ji Eun, Mr. Adriel Yap and Ms. Ester Wong

COMING EVENTS

PIPE ORGAN ENCOUNTERS +
SINGAPORE, 1ST - 4TH June 2005 (tentative)
- by Adriel Yap

What are Pipe Organ Encounters + (POE+)?

The POE+ are 4–5 day introductions to the organ for adult pianists or beginning organists with little formal training, who are interested in learning more about the instrument. The POE+ are especially helpful to those pressed into service as church organists.

The POE programme was developed in response to the need for trained organists in churches. Beginning with pilot POEs in 1988, over 1,200 musicians have graduated from POEs and many have continued with lessons and some have gone on to become full-time organists and sacred musicians. Others have helped to build the numbers of informed, interested supporters of the organ and its music. Through the POE we hope to foster a greater awareness of sacred music and encourage the consideration of professional standards and concerns.

Pre-requisites: One should be able to play the piano at ABRSM Grade 6 or its equivalent, or have experience playing for congregational singing.

For more information on the Objectives, Proposed Curriculum and a sample Schedule, please visit our website www.singaporeago.org or email enquire@singaporeago.org.

- What is your secret to playing your entire recital from memory?

There is no secret formula (that I know of) for the memorization of music, but there are factors that I regard as important when I'm memorizing my pieces. Before committing a work to memory, all the necessary fingering, pedaling, technical and interpretative issues should already have been sorted out. It is also very helpful to have a clear understanding of how the music is put together both harmonically and melodically, so musical analysis for me facilitates the memorization process.

Depending on the piece I'm working on, I may memorize the more difficult passages first, or even try working at it from back to front, but I will very often work through a piece in sections when trying to memorize it. Studying the score and mentally rehearsing it during any spare moments away from the organ also reinforce memorization.

In addition, I make it a point to try and memorize all the crucial performance indications and directions by the composer, as well as all the necessary registration changes.

- How long did you take to prepare for the practical exam?

After my LRSM organ exam in 2001, I spent the next two years expanding my organ repertoire whilst completing my LRSM, FLCM & FTCL piano performance diplomas.



I had originally intended to sit for the FRSM organ exam in 2003 but could not complete my written submission in time for registration owing to other commitments. My programme then was also rather different, with a range of works by J.S. Bach through to Petr Eben.

In entering for the exam in 2004, I decided to focus on symphonic French & Belgian organ music composed during the period 1879 to 1942 with works by seven different composers. One work from my FTCL exam was retained and the remaining six pieces dated from late-2002 onwards (the most newly learnt work being approximately seven months old at the time of the exam).

- Which part of the exam did you find the most challenging?

I found doing research for and writing the dissertation-style written submission to be quite a daunting challenge, but the most

INTERVIEW

DR. TANG BOON SEN, FRSM SHARES HIS RECENT EXAMINATION EXPERIENCE

- with Alphonsus Chern, Melissa Goh and Nicholas Leow

- Why did you decide to attempt the FRSM, since you have already achieved the FTCL in organ?

Attempting the FRSM exam in organ performance was just a natural progression for me after having completed the Advanced Certificate of the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM) and the LRSM. The standard and demands are considerably more rigorous and taxing than the FTCL exam which entails only a 45-minute recital.

There are 3 components to the FRSM: a recital performance of up to 60 minutes' duration (60%), a written submission & viva voce assessment (25%), and a quick study test (15%) involving the performance of a previously unseen piece equivalent to ABRSM Grade 8 standard. All three sections must be passed for an overall pass to be awarded.

- How do you find the time to practise since you hold a full time job?

Basically, I face the same dilemma that affects other working adults who are learning musical instruments in their spare time. Sacrifices have to be made and late night practises are not unusual. At other times, I try to "practise" away from an instrument with the score in front of me and going through the music either in my head or on an imaginary console.

challenging component of the exam for me had to be the terrifying quick study test. The ABRSM has been known to set some rather tough quick study test pieces for their diploma exams and to assess them very stringently. The ones I got for my Advanced Certificate and LRCM exams were formidable enough, so I was expecting the worst for FRSM.

- We notice that you are still taking lessons under Dr. Lim after completing the FRSM; what is the reason behind this?

Completing the FRSM does not mean the end of the road where music lessons are concerned. Music education is a continuing process and there is just so much organ repertoire to explore and learn. I feel that it is essential to have a great teacher such as Dr Evelyn Lim to provide the necessary guidance as well as to offer wonderful insights, suggestions and constructive criticisms. I'm really blessed to have been taught by Dr. Lim since the very beginning.

- We heard that you have received an offer from the ABRSM recommending you to apply for a scholarship. What are your plans?

Yes, I received a letter from the ABRSM Exams Office in November citing the examiners' recommendation that I should consider applying for a scholarship at one of the Royal Schools of Music in the UK for further studies. I'm currently going through the various postgraduate programmes on offer at the four Royal Schools of Music through their respective websites, just to satisfy my curiosity if nothing else. Ultimately it will be a difficult decision for me as it will mean resuming the life of a full-time student if I choose to embark on further musical studies.

- How do you feel about your musical achievements; and what do they mean to you?

While I'm definitely elated and relieved that I've gotten through these organ music exams, I am really thankful to the Lord for the musical abilities and skills He has given me, and I'll continue to utilize them in His service. Soli Deo Gloria!

- What is your personal philosophy on music, and organ music in particular?

Music certainly has the power to touch a whole spectrum of human experience from the most profound sadness to the most exuberant joy. I strongly believe that the ultimate goal of music (of worthy music anyway) should be to glorify God the Creator and to edify fellow human beings. What better instrument to achieve such a lofty aim than the king of instruments itself! ☺

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The Ten Commandments of Organ Practice

1. Thou shalt practice every day, even if only for a short period.
2. Thou shalt NEVER practice faster than thou canst play perfectly, for it is written: Perfect Practice Makes Perfect.
3. Thou shalt NOT put off working on the hard parts; David did not invite Goliath to come back after tea.
4. Thou shalt work out a usable fingering, inscribe it on thy papyrus and NEVER vary from same, for Fumble Fingers Find Fate Fickle.
5. Thou shalt never apologise for thy playing, nor say "Oops!" when thou makest a mistake, for thou wilt only draw attention to things which otherwise would never be noticed by the thick people.
6. Thou shalt practice each composition in short segments; that thy fingers may not break off more than thy mind can chew.
7. Thou shalt listen ... and not only to organists, for it is written: What this untidy world needs is fewer organists and more musicians who can play the organ.
8. Thou shalt NOT play pedals without shoes ... for thy Odor-Eaters may be spent, and besides, it leads to sloppy playing.
9. Thou shalt begin and end each practice session with something thou canst play readily, that thou mayest not be discouraged.
10. Thou shalt always remember that thy practice is a labour of love and that by persistence (oft proved by thyself in other undertakings) thou canst bring to pass many wonders.

- contributed by Ms. Melissa Goh, courtesy of the Theatre Organ Society of Australia, New South Wales chapter



Eugène Gigout (1844-1925)

A beautiful caricature depicting the Titular Organist of the Église St-Augustin in Paris and Professor of Organ at the Paris Conservatory. He is probably best known for his Toccata in B minor and Grand Chœur Dialogué with its signature fanfares.

Here we see some evidence of his double pedal work, especially familiar to those who have attempted to play his pieces!

- courtesy of J. Parera