



PIPE ECHOES

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



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Message From The Dean

Dear Friends

*“The old year now hath passed away; we thank Thee, O our God, today
That Thou hast kept us through the year when danger and distress were near.” **

What a year it has been for all of us! Plans, hopes and dreams were drastically altered, dashed, and perhaps even livelihoods decimated by an unrelenting, global virus outbreak. For those in the arts, entertainment and tourism industries, the trickle-down effect continues. One wonders when life would resume some sort of normalcy again. Organists have probably had a trying time as well, as live music in Singapore was restricted over the past months, and congregations could not sing. Indeed organs became inaccessible during periods of lock-downs. Perhaps the King of Instruments risked finally being silenced after 2 millenia of existence, not by “worship wars” and popular music trends, but by the devastation caused by tiny microbes! Looking back, we were really forced to take a “time-out” from our busyness and to ponder over what was really important.

Fortunately, where there’s a will, there’s a way. With some determination and creativity, despite the shut downs, our local chapter forged on, following the examples by our sister Chapters in the USA by broadcasting and sharing concerts, classes and discussions via online platforms. The Chapter worked with Methodist School of Music to provide teaching webinars and videos on organ-playing and organ history, and worked with the Singapore Symphony Group on a series of short segments at the Victoria Concert Hall organ. Many members remained engaged through recording projects for similar concerts and online worship broadcasts. But unexpectedly, the silver lining amidst the gloom was that groups of previously unreachable audiences both locally and internationally began to seriously notice the organ for the first time.

*“Oh, help us to forsake all sin, a new and holier course begin!
Mark not what once was done amiss; a happier, better year be this.” **

So as Singapore begins Phase 3 of the country’s re-opening, my wish is for all of us to recover physically, mentally and spiritually, and to regain our optimism and passion for organ and church music. May 2021 see a more fruitful and meaningful year for everyone!

With every good wish
Dr Evelyn Lim
Dean (2020-2022)

Bye Bye
2020
Hello
2021

* Translated texts from “Das alte Jahr vergangen ist” BWV 288.
(Bach’s chorale preludes for organ are BWV 614 and BWV 1091)

Singapore AGO 17th Annual General Meeting

By Terence Lee, Photos by Suzanne Lau

The Chapter's 17th Annual General Meeting was held at the Methodist School of Music on 29 November. Its members congregated for the first time since the Circuit Breaker was implemented in Singapore, as part of the nation's efforts to combat Covid-19.

The meeting's agenda included the election of EXCO Officers for 2020-2022, which saw the current members re-elected, having done a splendid job in their respective roles in the two years prior. The election also saw new members joining the Chapter's sub-committees, namely that of the Chapter's website, as well as the Programme and Newsletter committees.

The meeting also featured a pitch by Phoon Yu, who is currently pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts in organ performance at The Juilliard School. Phoon shared with the Chapter his plans to release a compilation of organ works composed by local artistes and performed by Phoon himself, with the aim of increasing awareness of organ compositions by local talents. The Chapter was happy to support Phoon's endeavour, as it constantly looks to champion the pipe organ and works written for this magnificent instrument.

To conclude, the Chapter reviewed a new book on learning to play the organ entitled 'The New Oxford Organ Method' by Anne Marsden Thomas and Frederick Stocken, and the possibility of inviting the author to conduct an online seminar with regards to this book. The members also discussed upcoming events to be held in 2021. This will likely include more online seminars, several of which were held in 2020 and proved to be fairly popular.

Following the end of the meeting, members were treated to refreshments and took the chance to catch up with each other (adhering strictly to safe distancing measures, of course!), with most not having seen each other in person for more than half a year. The Chapter hopes to build on what has been an eventful 2020 as we look forward to a myriad of events in 2021.



17th Singapore AGO AGM moments:
(Top) A socially-distanced AGM: Some of the attendees at the 17th Singapore AGO Annual General Meeting
(Below) Promoting new organ music: Phoon Yu pitching his proposal for album release

Singapore AGO Office Bearers for 2020 - 2022

Executive Committee:

Dean : Dr Evelyn Lim
Secretary : Ong Te-Min
Treasurer : Ng Chet Wei
Membership Officer : Grace Chiam
Programme Director : Yap Wai Hoong
Publicity Officer : Esther Seet
Newsletter Editor : Suzanne Lau

Honorary Advisor

Dr Margaret Chen

Standing Committees:

Webmaster:
Eugene Yeo

Programme Committee:
Isaac Lee, Loraine Muthiah

Newsletter Committee:
Terence Lee

Music for Comfort - Organ Concerts Online

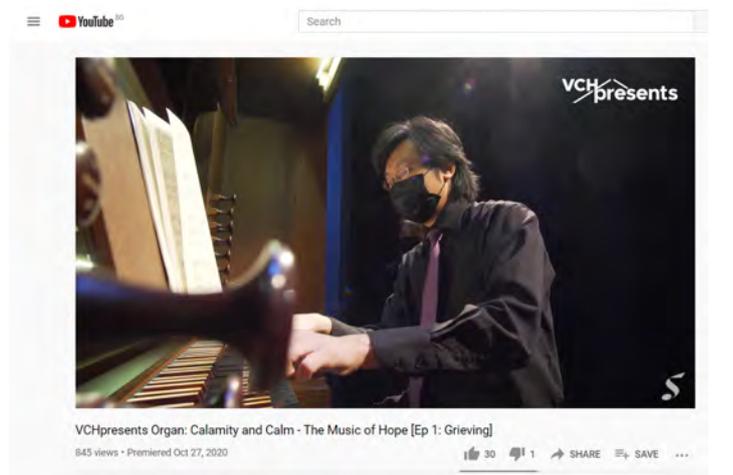
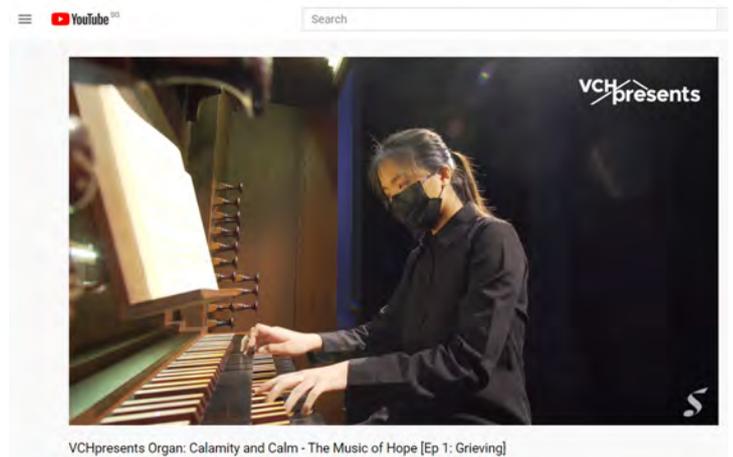
As a result of COVID-19, more concerts have gone digital. The Singapore AGO supported the *VCH Presents Organ* series in three short episodes of organ recitals entitled, “Calamity and Calm - The Music of Hope”. Watch some of our members at work at the Klais Organ.

If you thought that you have missed it, fret not! Check out the Singapore Symphony Orchestra’s Youtube page to watch the concert.

Visit the link below to the first of the series!



<https://tinyurl.com/VCHCalm1>



Almost All Things French With François Espinasse

By Suzanne Lau

February 24, 2020 was yet another eventful day for Singapore AGO as the Chapter had an opportunity to host esteemed French organist François Espinasse. This was in collaboration with the Victoria Concert Hall for the *VCH Presents Organ Series*, followed by a masterclass at the Singapore Bible College later in the evening.

The lunchtime concert certainly had a unique flavour. Espinasse is known to bring a French perspective to all music that he performs. He presented works by Bach that were transcribed by his mentor Isoir and French work for organ by Guilain, Franck, Vierne and Alain.

At the masterclass that evening, Espinasse started off the session speaking to all the attendees much about the organ music of François Couperin, on organ music that was composed for sacred purposes, specifically the Holy Mass. Thereafter, four of our Singapore AGO members played for Espinasse.

The session was definitely insightful for both participants and observers.



Insights on French organ music:

Clockwise from top: Masterclass players posing for a photo with François Espinasse; Espinasse sharing about French music; Espinasse with a masterclass participant

2020 Pipes of Praise & Thanksgiving

By Suzanne Lau

Another year, another edition of 'Seasons' Pipings' - held at Orchard Road Presbyterian Church (ORPC) on 9 January 2020. It was surely thrilling to be back at ORPC to once again experience the magnificent J.W. Walker & Sons Ltd (1962) pipe organ. The evening saw members of the Singapore AGO presenting works and leading the attendees into meditation and song.

It was also the second time that the Chapter gathered members to form a choir for the programme lineup. Concluding the night's programme was a rather fresh take on 'Nun danket alle Gott' arranged by Johannes Matthias Michel, played by Singapore AGO member Jens Kluge. This was followed by attendees for the evening taking the opportunity to also take a closer look at one of Singapore's organ history.



2020 Pipes of Praise & Thanksgiving: (Clockwise from top left: Attendees led into song with the support of the Chapter choir, works featuring violins accompanied by organ, Dr Evelyn Lim presenting performers for the evening, attendees getting a closer look of the ORPC organ after the session)

Coming Soon...

VCHPRESENTS: ORGAN - A CEREMONY OF CAROLS

- 3 January 2021; 4pm & 7:30pm, Victoria Concert Hall, Tickets on SISTIC at \$5 excluding booking fee
- Featuring Loraine Muthiah (organ), Charity Kiew (harp) & Raeanne Wong (soprano)

Stay Connected With Us!

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