

Exploring Organs In Our Neighbourhood

By Yap Wai Hoong

Since April 2021, several members of SAGO have been involved in a series of filming sessions across the island. Named “Organbytes”, this project features episodes of short videos at different locations (minus the usual performance venues) with organs. Videos include the featured organs, interviews and a short recital segment. The organs at Singapore Bible College, Norwegian Seamen’s Mission and Freemason Hall are just some of the many interesting locations the Chapter hopes to feature. It is heartening to see many of our members getting involved in script-writing, directing, filming, sound recording and video-editing, not to mention performing and presenting.

We hope these videos will transport our viewers on a journey into the fascinating world of organs, starting from a cup of *kopi* in Adam Road! Stay tuned to our usual Chapter broadcast and media channels for updates!



Recording in progress: One of the moments captured during the recording process

Message From The Dean

Support Local Products!

This has become a popular call in recent times. Border closures, labour crunches and dampened economies -- if anything positive has resulted from this ongoing virus situation, it has been to support businesses and talents. Local artists, including musicians, have largely replaced foreign names in our arts spaces, and in some ways allowing audiences here and beyond to appreciate the uniqueness of Singaporean culture. In the same vein, the Singapore Chapter has unearthed in our backyard some understated organ installations of which the music-loving public has largely no awareness. Beyond the glitz of concert halls, some of these instruments are housed not just in worship spaces but in schools and heritage sites. Over the past few months, our members have been busy exploring, recording and filming a series of short videos to capture these gems. Aptly called “Organbytes”, the video snippets will be released gradually over the next few months. Another home-grown project by fellow member Phoon Yu aims to showcase local composers for the organ with an international CD release.

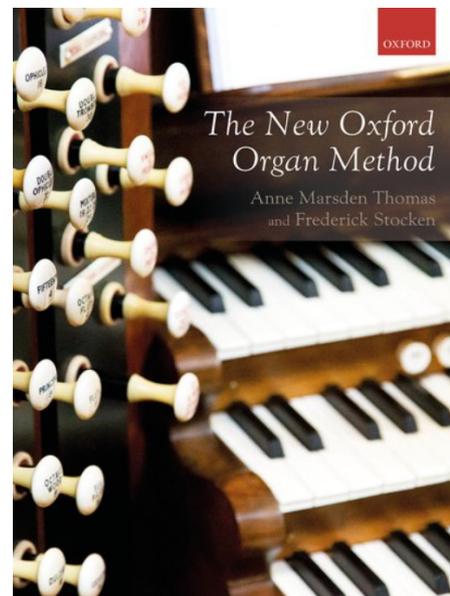
We look forward to seeing these local products come to fruition!

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



Singapore AGO Hosts *The New Oxford Organ Method* Webinar

By Suzanne Lau



Cover of *The New Oxford Organ Method*
Source: Oxford University Press

On 20 February 2021, the Singapore AGO was delighted to host two esteemed organ teachers: Anne Marsden Thomas and Dr Frederick Stocken, who introduced their newest organ instruction book *The New Oxford Organ Method* via webinar.

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Organically Singaporean – ‘SEVEN: Organ Music of Singapore’

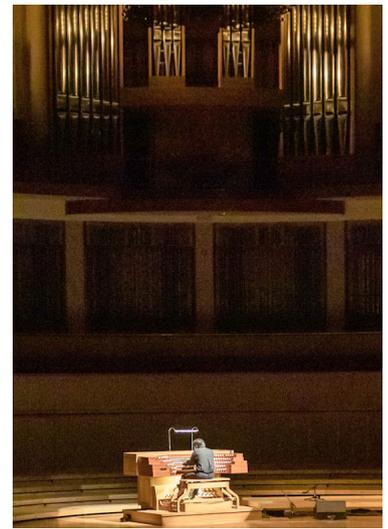
By Phoon Yu. Photo courtesy of Esplanade - Theatres on the Bay

For many composers, the sheer versatility, diversity, and size of the King of Instruments often trips them up when they think about composing for it. “What are all these knobs on both sides? What do all the buttons near the pedals do? Is this mirror for your face?” These problems are particularly acute here in Singapore, where the organ gets short shrift in both churches and concert halls, leading to a general lack of knowledge amongst composers here about it. This is indeed a pity, as composers can often popularise an instrument to the masses through their works – just ask Andrew Lloyd Weber!

Over the past few years, I have sought to rectify this problem and tried to get more Singaporean composers interested in writing for the organ. In 2018, I commissioned a set of seven pieces inspired by Bach’s *Clavierübung III* from seven composers, while in 2019, I persuaded another composer, Chen Zhangyi, to complete his cycle of organ works based on the seven trumpet-blowing angels of Revelation, so that I could perform it in a concert featuring animation and electronic music.

Now, with the upcoming release of my album ‘SEVEN: Organ Music of Singapore’, you too can hear the fruits of their labour. Featuring all the works mentioned above recorded on the Klais organ at the Esplanade Concert Hall, ‘SEVEN’ brings together various styles of uniquely Singaporean compositions for the organ in one CD. One of the rare solo recordings made of the Klais organ available commercially, ‘SEVEN’ is a way to bring audiences to the organ who would not normally encounter it in their lives. My hope for this album is that by reaching more people, we can interest them in listening to, and perhaps picking up, the organ.

‘SEVEN: Organ Music of Singapore’ will be available for purchase from 11 January 2022 during a showcase hosted by myself at the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, and from Centaur Records’ website and distributors from late February to early March onwards. This has been a long journey for my collaborators and me from recording to release, and I would especially like to thank the Singapore Chapter of the American Guild of Organists for its support in this venture, alongside that of the National Arts Council and Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music.



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Both Thomas and Stocken acknowledge that organ students generally struggle with sightreading and organ registration. They also recognise that most students prefer learning pieces rather than being explicitly taught technique, as learners do not necessarily appreciate the need to acquire said technique. This has led to the birth of this instruction book.

The book contains 20 chapters, each centred around a piece that looks at different components of organ playing: sightreading, organ registration, technique, style and musical interpretation.

To conclude, the book can be a good guide for organists of all levels -- for the beginner who is developing an interest in the organ to seasoned organists who are looking to further improve their playing.

AGO Webinars & Workshops Going Virtual

Access these concerts, webinars and workshops through the links below:

- AGO Organ Fest 2021 (27 Jun - 2 Jul 2021): <agoorganfest2021.org>
- AGO Webinars & Workshops (On-going): <www.ago.org/webinars-and-supporting-documents/>

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