

THE BULLETIN

Newsletter for the Toronto Centre of the Royal Canadian College of Organists

Fall 2020



THE FALL OF 2020 would seem like a uniquely unpropitious time to be taking up the presidency of this Centre. All of us who work as church musicians are facing real and continuing difficulties as we struggle to come to grips with the new reality of life with COVID-19: capacity restrictions on worship services, limitations on singing, enhanced cleaning regimens, and the constantly changing advice of public health agencies and denominational authorities. In the RCCO's online forum on "COVID-19 Impact on Canadian Organists," Fred Graham spoke movingly about the mental health challenges that we face in this time of anxiety and isolation: it is no exaggeration to say that "a kind of death occurs" when we are separated from the communities we care about and deprived of many of our usual avenues for musical expression. It is more important than ever that we organists support each other: perhaps the most important thing that you can do for the profession this fall is to check in with your RCCO friends by phone, email, or text, to share ideas, provide mutual support, and plan for the future.

One of the advantages of planning an all-virtual season for the fall of 2020 is that it becomes possible to involve a much wider range of people in our events than would be able to attend in person. Throughout the fall, we'll be releasing a video series called the Orgelbüchlein Project, with performances of all Bach's Orgelbüchlein chorale preludes by forty-three different organists, including our own Centre members, former members who have moved away, and friends of the Centre. The videos will release on our YouTube channel three times a week (on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday), beginning on September 8th and ending on December 31st; it's a perfect opportunity to see many of your friends performing in their own homes or churches, and I hope that you'll take the opportunity to watch the videos and connect with the performers by leaving a comment. Later in the fall we'll also be releasing a series of educational videos focusing on keyboard skills such as hymn playing, transposition, and sight reading—useful to all, but particularly helpful for anyone considering preparing for an RCCO exam.

Our season-opening event this year will be an Online Trivia Night on Friday, September 25th, at 7:30 pm. Bring a beverage of your choice (and a pad of paper to write down your answers) and test your skill with trivia categories like "Organ Haters," "Name That Piece," and "Which One Doesn't Belong?" The event will be open to members of other Centres in Ontario, so besides being an entertaining evening it should be a great opportunity to meet organists from other parts of the province. Finally, our annual *Phantoms of the Organ* concert will go ahead in digital form on Friday, October 30th, featuring a diverse roster of Toronto performers performing in costume.

(Continued on Page 2)



(Continued from Page 1)

Despite the many difficulties brought by COVID-19, the experience of the past few months has brought home the importance of community: our choirs and church congregations may not be able to socialize in person, but they have proved their resiliency by finding so many creative ways to stay connected. One might see this as the definitive proof, if any were needed, of the importance of what we do as organists: we've spent our careers building up vibrant musical communities in our churches and schools, and now in a time of crisis we can rely on those same communities to support each other. I believe the RCCO has a uniquely important role to play in the musical life of Toronto, now more than ever, and I'm proud to be leading this Centre for the next two years; I hope you won't hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns you may have.

Aaron James, RCCO Toronto President

Fall 2020: Season at a Glance

The Orgelbüchlein Project: Video performances of all 45 chorales from Bach's *Orgelbüchlein*, featuring different organists from Toronto.

Every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, beginning September 8th on our [YouTube channel](#)

Online Trivia Night: Friday, September 25th, 7:30 pm via Zoom; details to be sent out in the week of the event.

Keyboard Skills Tutorials: Educational videos on organ skills such as hymn playing, transposition, sight-reading, and score reading.

Throughout October and November on our [YouTube channel](#)

Phantoms of the Organ: Friday, October 30th.

Online event; details forthcoming



**Royal Canadian College of Organists - Toronto Centre
Annual General Meeting
Monday, June 15th, 2020.
6:30pm Recital & 7:00 pm Meeting via ZOOM**

Pre-Meeting Recital

Attendees were treated to a pre-recorded recital which featured Sebastian Moreno, Matthew Fraser, Thomas J. Gonder, Aaron James and William Wright.

Welcome & Call to Order

Mark Ruhnke called the meeting to order at 7:15pm.

Present

32 Members: Mark Ruhnke (presiding), Stefani Bedin (recording), James Bailey, Tom Bell, Daniel Bickle, Matthew Boutda, Ethel Briggs, Tom Fitches, Christine Hanson, Rev. Sherman Hesselgrave, Lester Hiraki, Mel Hurst, Aaron James, Paul Jessen, Marcia Kavanagh, Roy Lee, Damien Macedo, Elisa Mangina, Patrick McElcheran, Rev. John-Mark Missio, Sebastian Moreno, Jean Nichols, Hazel Ogilvie, Thomas Schadl, David Simon, Taylor Sullivan, Lorne Swan, Ashley Tidy, Mark Toews, David Weind, Patricia Wright, William Wright

Regrets

John Paul Farahat, Fred and Melva Graham

Adoption of Agenda

A motion to adopt the agenda was moved by Mel Hurst, seconded by Tom Fitches. Carried.

Adoption of Minutes from 2019 AGM

A motion to adopt the minutes from the 2019 AGM was moved by James Bailey, seconded by Ashley Tidy. Carried.

Business Arising from the Minutes

There was no new business arising from the minutes.

President's Report- Mark Ruhnke

Mark began by acknowledging the fluid times we are living in. He then reflected on the busy 2019-2020 season, recounted how some events needed to be cancelled or postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and described how the executive has adapted to the ongoing situation by moving activities online.

The president expressed gratitude to the many individuals involved in putting together the season's events, as well as the hosting communities, donors, concert attendees, educators and other community partners who contribute to the centre in a variety of ways. Special thanks were conveyed to retiring executive members: Sherman Hesselgrave, who is moving to the U.S. after many years as both centre and national chaplain, and William Wright, a long-serving and distinguished member. Those who moved away from the centre during the past season— Stephen Frketic (past president) and Karen Price (former membership secretary)— were also acknowledged.

Mark also recognized the work of executive members and other volunteers including: Mel for co-ordinating the Barwell Scholarship; Patricia and Fred for their work in professional support; Tom B. for his work as Programming Chair; Stefani for executive meeting minutes; Matthew W. for the bulletin; Tom F. for *Organ Canada* reports; Lorne for his work as Treasurer; Patrick for organizing Phantoms and taking on the role of Membership Convenor; Dan for his assistance at the New Years' Dinner; Aaron, the incoming president; Sebastian, the incoming vice-president and programming chair; David S. the incoming exam coordinator; Matthew B. who will manage the centre's Youtube page; David W., Mark T. and all those who are involved at the national level. Congratulations were also expressed to Peter Bishop and Florence Barwell, who are the centre's 2020 National Distinguished Service Award recipients.

Mark stated that it was an honour to serve as president. He concluded with a message of hope, encouraging all to continue building a caring, collegial and pastoral community.

Membership Report- Patrick McElcheran

Patrick noted that while the National Office records indicate that the centre has 178 active members (as of May 27, 2020), this report is inaccurate for it is known that at least seven members do not appear on that list. Therefore, it is estimated that the centre has at least 185 members, which is comparable to last year's total membership. The National Office has indefinitely postponed the membership renewal deadline due to the pandemic. Thus far, 77 members have paid their dues for the upcoming season.

Bulletin Editor's Report- Matthew Whitfield

No report available.

The bulletin was emailed regularly until the COVID-19 disruption.

Treasurer's Report - Lorne Swan

Lorne presented the 2019-2020 financial reports (also distributed by email to meeting attendees). He highlighted that the centre ended the year with a surplus of approximately \$3200, largely accounted for by membership dues (the re-defining of student membership did not cause as great of a loss of income as projected), higher donations, and lower programming expenses due to the cancellation of March, April and May events.

Lorne displayed a balance sheet as of May 31, 2020. He made note of the centre's Sutton scholarship, and also indicated that the Student Bursary Fund (used to sponsor students' convention attendance) was not used this past year and is building up.

Lorne Swan moved a motion to approve the 2019-2020 financial statements, seconded by Aaron James. Carried.

Lorne then presented the budget for the 2020-2021 season and commented on the budgeting challenges associated with the uncertainty created by the pandemic. There is the potential for a decrease in membership and cancellation of in-person events. As the season and pandemic situation unfolds, the programming committee will be sure to plan events within the budget. Similar numbers as last year were presented in the areas of donation and programming. Few changes in operating expenses are projected.

Lorne Swan moved a motion to approve the 2020-2021 budget, seconded by William Wright. Carried.

Programme 2019-2020 - Tom Bell

Tom Bell began by thanking members of the programming committee: Tom, Mark, David W., Aaron and William.

Tom reflected upon the events of the 2019-2020 season which included: David Simon's recital at St. Michael's Cathedral, Phantoms of the Organ at Holy Trinity, The Panel Workshop on the Employment of a Church Musician held at Wycliffe College, Oliver Latry's concert and masterclass at St. Basil's Catholic Church, the New Year's Dinner at St. Andrew's United, and the Young Organists' Recital at St. James' Cathedral. He also noted that much effort had gone into planning other events including the Bach Walk, Vierne Symphony event, and workshops, which unfortunately had to be cancelled/indefinitely postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Tom was thanked for his work as Programme Chair. Sebastian Moreno will be taking over this role for the 2020-2021 season.

Barwell Scholarship Report – Mel Hurst

Mel Hurst reported that there were only three applicants to the Barwell Scholarship this year, which is about half as many as last year, perhaps owing to the distractions caused by the pandemic. Auditions are normally held at Humbercrest United Church in late-May or June, but have been rescheduled to September 9th. The names of the winners shall be announced at the next executive meeting. Mel also noted that Mrs. Barwell has received a Distinguished Service Award for her many contributions to the centre. David W. and Mel plan to visit her.

Mel proposed that the centre should offer complimentary tickets to potential organists (e.g. advanced pianists studying at the RCM), with the view toward introducing them to the organ and RCCO. The idea was met with approval and should be revisited by the executive.

Items from National Board Meeting & OFC – David Weind

David Weind reported that planning for Toronto's 2023 national organ festival is moving along. To reduce expenses, a church (instead of a hotel) will likely be used as the central headquarters.

The festival committee will be meeting again soon via ZOOM. David reported that the 2021 Hamilton festival committee is currently exploring 4 different convention formats.

David also described the exciting directions and future ventures made possible by the National Office's receipt of a Canada Council Digital Engagement grant. The "Future Stops" project will increase the RCCO's web and social media presence, and be used to offer e-symposiums and other world-class digital projects.

Slate of Nominations to the Executive/Elections/Installation

The following slate of executives was proposed for the 2020-2021 season:

PresidentAaron James
Vice-PresidentSebastian Moreno
Secretary Stefani Bedin
Treasurer Lorne Swan
Membership ConvenorPatrick McElcheran
Past PresidentMark W. Ruhnke
Bulletin Editor Matthew Whitfield
Programme ChairSebastian Moreno
Professional Support Patricia Wright
Communications Tom Fitches
ChaplainFr. John-Mark Missio
Examinations David Simon
Members at LargeTom Bell,
.....Dan Bickle,
.....Matthew Boutda,
.....Matthew Fraser,
.....Mark Toews,
.....David Weind
Social MediaStefani Bedin,
.....Aaron James,
.....Mark Ruhnke

National Reps: Aaron James, Sebastian Moreno, Mark Ruhnke, David Simon

Patricia Wright moved a motion to accept the proposed slate of executive officers, seconded by Mark Toews. Carried.

In accordance with a recommendation made at the meeting, the number of permissible National Council reps has been verified and a necessary adjustment was made on June 16.

New business –led by Aaron James, Incoming President

Aaron James expressed thanks to Mark Ruhnke for his outstanding contributions as president. He especially commended Mark for his work in bringing people together and involving new members. Aaron indicated that online endeavours are in the works, including a Youtube *Orgelbüchlein* recording project featuring several local organists. Other digital engagement initiatives are being planned for the summer and fall. He invited organists who may have content they would like to share on the RCCO social media to be in touch. Aaron also thanked Sherman and welcomed Fr. John-Mark Missio, who has graciously taken on the role of national and local chaplain.

Sebastian Moreno (incoming Programme Chair) spoke about the upcoming fall season, which will largely be presented in a digital format. Phantoms of the Organ will be held virtually and the season may also include video-masterclasses related to exam preparation and other keyboard skills. Evaluating possibilities for meeting in-person will occur as the season progresses. If live concerts become possible, the featured performers will likely be Canadian to facilitate travel arrangements.

Remembrance of Departed Members

Sherman Hesselgrave indicated that no members are known to have passed away this year.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:24pm.

-Minutes respectfully submitted by Stefani Bedin