

Raphaël Ashby Biography



Raphaël Ashby is native from the city of East-Angus in Eastern Townships, Quebec. He has a varied background in human sciences, music and organ building. He started studying the organ with the Montreal organist Nicolas-Alexandre Marcotte. He earned his bachelor's and master's degrees with Jonathan Oldengarm and Hans-Ola Ericsson at the Schulich School of Music, McGill University. In September 2021, he will start a Doctorate in the same institution focusing on Canadian organ building and Quebecois organ compositions.

Raphaël is presently Organist and Choir director at Briarwood Presbyterian Church in Beaconsfield. Although his principal instrument is the organ, he has a large experience has a trombonist and singer. Raphaël performed in Canada and United States in important venues such as the St-Joseph Oratory,

Sanctuaire du Cap-de-la-Madeleine and the Church of the Most-Holy-Rosary in Syracuse (NY). Raphaël is the co-founder of the McGill chant club, which promote the historical practice of singing Gregorian chant. He is also involved in a few organisations dedicated to the promotion of the organ such as *Les Amis de l'Orgue de Montréal*.

Tyler Boehmer Biography



With international acclaim for his keyboard abilities, Tyler Boehmer carries much promise as a future organ virtuoso. His principal teachers include Dr. Don Cook (Brigham Young University), Dr. James Higdon (University of Kansas), and Professor Edoardo Bellotti (Hochschule für Künste, Bremen, Germany). He is currently pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts degree at the University of Kansas.

Boehmer has quickly begun to distinguish himself as a rising star. Recent solo performances have taken him to five cities throughout Russia, the Washington National Cathedral, and the 2016 AGO Houston Convention, as well as cities throughout Germany and the western United States. He has also been active in many national and international competitions. Recent accolades include first prize in the 2019 Miami International Organ Competition, third prize at the 2019 Shanghai International Organ Competition, second prize in the 2018 Sydney International Organ Competition, and the diploma prize in the 2017 Tariverdiev International Organ Competition. In addition, he has also competed as a quarter-finalist in the 2019 Rheinberger International Organ Competition (chosen from more than 100 applicants), the 2019 St. Albans International Organ Competition, the 2018 Grand Prix de Chartres International Organ Competition, and the 2017 Canadian International Organ Competition. He continues to set a high standard of excellence in his performances, and has been described as “consistently good and expressive” (John Karl Hirten, MM), and “accurate, musical, controlled, with good attention to detail” (Dr. John Longhurst, Tabernacle Organist Emeritus).

Until September 2020, Boehmer also worked as the Director of Music for Leavenworth First United Methodist Church, where he rehearsed and conducted the Sanctuary Choir and the three handbell ensembles. In the future, he plans to become a university professor.

Maria Gajraj Biography



Maria Gajraj is a dynamic multi-instrumentalist, specializing in piano and organ performance. She recently completed her Master's Degree in Organ Performance and Church Music at McGill University, where she studied with Hans-Ola Ericsson. Maria graduated with Distinction in 2019 from Carleton University, where she obtained a Bachelor's Degree in Music, studying the organ with Jennifer Loveless. Maria has received scholarships from the Royal Canadian College of Organists, and placed first in local music competitions from 2016-2019. She received the Kiwanis Club of Ottawa Arnt Loa Scholarship twice, and received a Graduate Excellence Fellowship from McGill University. She is the most recent recipient of the Arthur and Helen Henderson Scholarship. Maria has performed in public masterclasses and played solo concerts throughout Ottawa, Montreal, and Cornwall, and live-streamed organ recitals during the COVID pandemic. Maria has had a private piano teaching studio for the past seven years. She has mentored her students as they compete in music festivals, and organizes seasonal recitals for her piano students. She has been working within churches of various denominations for the past five years, playing for choirs, soloists, and instrumentalists, and directing choirs.

Samuel Lee Biography



With a study scholarship awarded in 2011 by the Royal Canadian College of Organists, Samuel began his organ study with Ms. Karen Holmes. In 2017, Samuel took up the role of Organ Scholar at St. Martin's Anglican Church, under the mentorship of Mr. Dave Dawson, Choir Director and Organist. Upon completing the FRCCO diploma in 2018, Samuel won the Healey Willan Prize for the highest marks in Canada and the Heather Spry Prize for the highest marks in the written section of the examination. In 2020, Samuel

has successfully finished a Masters degree in Organ Performance and Church Music at McGill University with Hans-Ola Ericsson and Christian Lane. Presently, he is pursuing a Doctorate degree in Organ Performance with Hans-Ola Ericsson and Jonathan Oldengarm. Samuel is a two-time recipient of the Graduate Excellence Fellowship scholarship awarded by McGill University for both levels of graduate studies.

Manuel Piazza Biography



Manuel Giovanni Piazza is a graduate organ student at the Yale Institute of Sacred Music in New Haven, Connecticut, where he studies with Martin Jean and serves as junior organ scholar at Trinity Church on the Green. He grew up in Toronto, Canada, where he attended St. Michael's Choir School and the University of Toronto, graduating with a BMus in Organ Performance and studying with John Tuttle. While in Toronto, he served as a choir director and organist at Our Lady of Sorrows Roman Catholic Church, organ scholar at Trinity College (University of Toronto), organ scholar at St. James' Anglican Cathedral, and one of the five organists of St. Michael's Cathedral Basilica. From September 2019 to July 2020, he was organ scholar at Truro Cathedral in Cornwall (UK).

Alexander Straus-Fausto Biography



Alexander Straus-Fausto recently completed his third-year organ performance studies at the McGill University Schulich School of Music, where he studies with Jonathan Oldengarm and Hans-Ola Ericsson and is the recipient of the school's 2020-21 John Grew award. Alex began piano studies at age four and organ lessons at fourteen. His early organ teachers include Christian Lane, Thomas Bara, Dr. Peter Nikiforuk, and Joe Carrere. Alex completed his secondary school studies at Michigan's Interlochen Arts Academy. In fall 2019, he was appointed Titular Organist-in-Residence at Église du Très-Saint-Nom-de-Jésus in Montréal.

While still a teenager, he undertook a successful summer 2019 concert tour of the UK, playing in historic churches and cathedrals. He has also performed on many landmark instruments across

Canada and the U.S. Alex's broad repertoire ranges from early 15th-century keyboard music to contemporary works.

He has further expanded the organ's reach by creating more than 50 original transcriptions of major orchestral works, reflecting his passion for the symphonic organ as a virtually unlimited medium for artistic expression.