

PCC REPORT – Music, Feb 2016

Highlights

Since the spring:

Music for May - a concert of solos in support of the Choral Scholarships

Ascension - Finzi's epic anthem 'God is gone up'

Conclusion of the concert season with a Victoria Baroque concert, featuring the Chamber Choir, conducted by POV's Timothy Vernon. Soloists included former MacRae scholar Rebecca Genge, now based in Toronto.

Holiday organist coverage was provided by Sutton Organ Scholar Kim Farris-Manning

Pride Evensong in July was a success - I was away in Europe, but it was ably organized by Kim, Patrick, and Gillian.

Kim also gave an organ recital in late August.

Of note/changes: Evensong is now on the 1st Sunday, 7.30pm; Purple will sing that Sunday morning; we will offer an Advent choral service this year.

Scholarships

Our soprano, alto, tenor, and bass **MacRae Scholars** all return this year: Rachel Allen, Alana Hayes, Taylor Fawcett, Felix Butterfield.

A small termly **bursary** will be offered as a 'thank you' to any other students who are singing regularly (not just from time-to-time). Given at the end of term, likely recipients will be from among Annalisa (S), Emily (S), Minhee (S), Madeline (S), Gary Sun (A), Cedric (T), and Matt (B). This will be both a nice acknowledgement of commitment, as well as a small help toward their tuition etc.

Matt Brown, returning from England (he was here on a gap year last year and has deferred his Uni place for a year) will be essentially functioning as a choral scholar, in return for organ and conducting lessons plus the small bursary.

Kim Farris-Manning returned (this is her fourth and last year of Uni) as **Sutton Organ Scholar**.

Plans for Advent

We will be offering a full, choral Advent evening service (often called an Advent Carol Service, though I prefer to use other terminology such as Advent Procession, to avoid confusion with the Christmas Carol Service) on Advent I. Readings will be from one of the sets in Times and Seasons, with choral music and hymnody chosen to reflect on and elaborate the themes of the readings. This can be one of the most meaningful choral services of the year - the themes of Advent (end times, despair, hope, darkness, light, waiting...) offer a much 'deeper' perspective than the traditional Christmas lessons, and the music and hymnody composed on these themes is particularly moving. The traditional Lessons and Carols for Christmas will still be offered, on the Fourth Sunday of Advent

Organ situation

Our marvellous Casavant continues to give service, but there have been some recent and ongoing technical problems, that indicate the growing urgency around the overall condition of the instrument:

- the capture actions on the console failed while I was on holiday (inconveniently on the day before the Pride Evensong, necessitating an emergency patch job from Grant). The repair when completed properly was \$500. This failure was due to disintegrating leather pneumatics, such as are found throughout the console and instrument proper. More such failures can be expected.
- a swell capture failed a few weeks ago - this time an electrical problem
- several Choir captures haven't worked for years
- several stop knobs repeatedly fall out of the console stop jamb
- the bench adjustment doesn't work properly - a particular problem now there are three organ students using the instrument, at least two of which are regularly playing in services, and have much shorter legs than I do
- winding problems developed recently to some chests in the antiphonal meaning several stops there are unuseable
- there is a loud rattle in pedal bourdon
- the swell shutter pneumatic engine is failing (loud rattly whooshing noise when closed - complete failure possibly imminent)
- note response is sluggish - due probably to worn parts and leathers.

A proposal was made from Grant Smalley (made in a letter to John MacVie, presented to PCC) to start with the swell engine for approx \$3000, and begin cleaning pipes and racks on an hourly basis, moving on to releathering and console updating/replacement. He didn't provide an overall estimate in this letter (it should be noted he is trying to move fully into retirement!). He also pointed out that we could get a thorough assessment from Casavant (or another builder such as Letourneau) – though this would in itself cost money (Grant has numerous times provided assessments and proposals free). I believe that a considered, thorough evaluation of the situation would be useful. A thorough overhaul has been suggested at well over \$100,000, but I believe that none of the assessments have been formal (though Grant does have an ongoing, strong familiarity with the instrument).

Follow up on points from last report

Robes Cassocks for the Red Choir are the stronger need - the larger ones are quickly disintegrating, and were flimsy to start with. We have youth-sized cassocks which are in somewhat better shape, and which serve for smaller adults, so the larger ones would be the logical place to start replacing choir kit. A cassock of the sort I bought for myself from J&M (England) currently costs about 100 pounds. For comparison, Gaspards offer an 'Anglican Cassock' for \$141 US, and Almy's offers a 'Quickship cassock', for \$112-129 US. Surplices are less critical - we have more, some are in ok condition, and they can be sourced more easily locally.

(In June 2014, the following quote from J&M was received:

10 cassocks and surplices 1,350 pounds

30 cassocks and surplices 4142 pounds

including an estimated amount for postage and packing but not customs.)

Carpet The last time I presented to PCC, there was some approval voiced for the removal of the red runner in the chancel aisle - this would considerably improve the choir's ability to hear each other. I'm hoping this is still being considered!