

RCCO National Council Meeting

The RCCO National Council met in Toronto on February 28 and 28, 2015 to discuss a number of matters of importance to the organization as a whole. Our centre was represented by David Palmer, who is Regional Director for Western Ontario and Paul Wharram. Also in attendance from our Centre was Brian Sweetman who is the Treasurer. The meeting was chaired by National President, James Bailey.

The Council received reports from the Officers, Standing Committees of the Board of Directors and National Council as well as from the Regional Directors.

The College Registrar reported that while the overall membership numbers are slightly lower than this time last year (1,058 down from 1,091) we should be encouraged by the increased number of students who have joined.

The Chair of Scholarships and Bursaries updated members about changes in the works or being discussed to the scholarships and bursaries guidelines including the possibility of offering scholarships for continuing organ students and lowering the piano pre-requisite to Grade 5 or 6. Final recommendations should be ready in July.

Considerable attention was given to the new and improved website, which has a number of features that should be of interest and use to all members. Among them is the on line store from which some excellent choral and organ compositions can be previewed and purchased. There are numerous resources available to download such as repertoires for weddings and funerals, tips on organizing centre events and articles on improvisation, registration and hymn playing. Soon members will be able to renew their memberships on line and new members will be able to register. Every effort should be made to direct our members and the public at large to our website www.rcco.ca.

All centres are being encouraged to use the newly-approved logo and use up as soon as possible all supplies of letterheads and publications with the old logo. Various approved versions of the new logo can be downloaded for use from the guidelines and Brand Book available to members and centres (you need to be logged in to access these files).

Approval was given to the creation of an RCCO award of distinction (the title will be determined later), which may be given to individuals, groups or organizations “to recognize outstanding and significant contributions to the art or the promotion of the organ in Canada.”

And finally, National Council approved a report and recommendations from the Honorary Awards Committee and it is with great pride and pleasure that we officially announce by way of this newsletter that David Palmer will be receiving A Distinguished Service Award for his exemplary work to and for the Windsor Centre. Congratulations David!

A Diamond in the Rough

Submitted by Ron Dosenbach, Organ Advisor

The Wurlitzer organ at St. Peter's Maronite Church, formerly St. Clare Catholic Church, (the familiar yellow brick church in Windsor on Tecumseh Rd. W at Pelissier) is notable.



I was asked to take a look at it. I did some research, which has uncovered an interesting history. Opus 1242A was installed in the Van Croix Theater in Titusville, Florida in 1926. Soon after, Wurlitzer responded to the theater's falling back on the payments by sending their repo crew to Florida, who promptly removed it from the theater and returned it to the North Tonawanda NY factory. This was at the height of Wurlitzer's productivity, when the large factory had several installation crews, who were installing as many as one organ a day. (!)

The organ was modified for church use and sold to St. Clare's Church in 1931. The organ, now Opus 1242B, was "churchified" by deleting the 18 traps (literally the bells and whistles!) and two of four tuned percussions - the Glockenspiel and Xylophone, but including the Chimes and Chrysoglott. The blower was installed in the bell tower, exposed to the elements, but inside an insulated metal enclosure. The organ was installed in the choir loft in two chambers with the console, where it has served faithfully for many years. I played my very first wedding on this instrument in 1972. By sticking to the Diapasons and Flutes, and avoiding the heady tremulants, an acceptable classical organ tone was attainable.

There have been no modifications, other than a replacement of the belt driven generator with a rectifier. The old generator is still present. Around 2001, the organ went dead and a Rodgers electronic organ was added to the choir loft.

I was able to get the old organ to once again sound. Although much repair work is needed, it still produced the iconic Wurlitzer sound.

The organ has good bones and is worthy of a restoration. But its future is uncertain. The building is in poor repair and the costs are so high to make repairs that the owners are considering a move to another location. That location already has a pipe organ.

If a new home could be found, perhaps it could be transplanted and restored.

Ron Dosenbach





Update on Scholarship Programme for 2014-15

Submitted by: Judy Boutin, Scholarship Programme Coordinator

First of all, I am happy to say that we are enjoying working with an unusually large group of students this year, three first year and four second year. And, judging by the Masterclass held on December 14th, they're unusually good students.

Of the three first year students, one, Erin Armstrong, was unable to begin her lessons until January due to other commitments. The other two, Ashley Allen and Joshua Palmer, both participated in the Masterclass and showed that they had made great progress. The four second year students, Jonathan Kaberuka, Anita Sehra, Cameron Adams and Joyce Fung demonstrated the wonderful progress they have made, playing hymns well and at a good tempo for singing, and performing pieces of considerable difficulty with panache. We also need to thank our excellent teachers, David Palmer, Margita Lange and Brian Sweetman.

We were fortunate that Nancy Tapley agreed to act as clinician. Nancy did an excellent job of involving the students in discussing the problems involved with pedalling, for example, and gave useful tips on solving them.

The Masterclass left me with a warm glow and a desire to have the membership hear these students play. Your opportunity will come either at the Members Recital early in May or at the College Service before the Annual Meeting. Don't miss out!

Who are our new students?

ASHLEY ALLEN: Ashley was hired as pianist at Ben's church, and probably due in part to Ben's influence, decided she should learn to play the organ. She is a very busy young woman who is the mother of a toddler but also manages to teach 30 piano and violin students in addition to her work at the church. It was obvious at the Masterclass that she had also spent a considerable amount of time practising the organ.

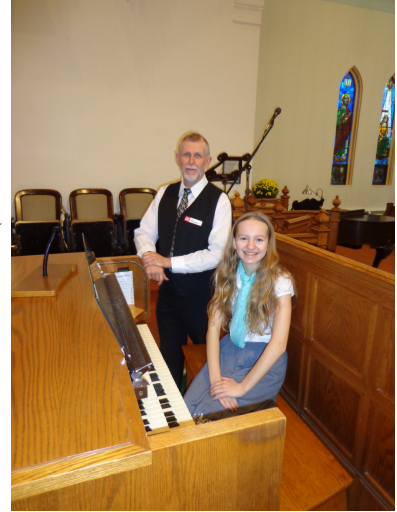
ERIN ARMSTRONG: Erin is a highly qualified musician with a B. Mus. in Voice Performance from the University of Windsor, a M. Mus. in Opera from U.B.C., 15 years performing experience in voice, piano and guitar. Currently she serves as "organist" at Mersea United Church, thus her interest in studying organ. She became the conductor of the Windsor Community Choir last fall. In addition, she enjoys working with children and trains a children's choir. She too is a very busy lady!

JOSHUA PALMER described his love of music and interest in learning to play many instruments in the last newsletter.

Update from a former Windsor RCCO Student

We recently heard from Diane Falkenholt who shared news about her daughter Kayla's activities since moving to Thunder Bay.

"Kayla loves music"! She is writing her Harmony exam along with Jared (her brother) this May (RCCO teacher Sean Kim - highly knowledgeable and kind human being) and she has entered the Lakehead Music festival in harp and piano for this spring. Kayla will be accomplishing her grade 9 piano this June (as Brian Sweetman-Kayla's wonderful former organ teacher suggested that she continue with piano). Kayla also is excited in preparing for her grade 10 harp exam next January. Kayla absolutely loves singing in youth choir and seasonal choir at our church with an amazing Music Director! (Continuing to sing in choir was also one of the suggestions from Brian.) Kayla has not missed a choir practice yet.



Kayla loves the organ! She serves by playing hymns in our church frequently and accompanies the youth choir on at least one or two hymns each time it is their week to lead music worship. Kayla has also filled in for our music director (on organ) for whole services! Kayla was most willing to fill in last January when a dedicated organist from another LCC church was in a terrible life threatening accident. Praise God this wonderful woman has made extensive strides in recovery and plays twice a month at one church and twice a month at another church! Kayla also serves by playing the organ once a month at one of the six LCC churches. Kayla took about a month at the beginning to learn the hymns and play them very well during the service but she can successfully do this in a week now-no surprise. Kayla often skips in the door from practicing the organ and exclaims that she has a new favorite hymn - one that she just decided to learn on her own and asks if she can play it as a prelude for fun! Kayla was also asked by another LCC church to play for a funeral this past summer with three days notice- she played wonderfully- by then she had an organ binder all organized for events -with successful numbers of hymns to play! Kayla loves playing hymns- she sings them as she goes about her day :) She is a blessing to our family and to her church family and to other church families!



Kayla was the recipient of the Royal Conservatory 2014 Gold Medal for Grade 8 Harp in Ontario and Quebec! In honor of her "extraordinary accomplishment", she was invited to receive her award on Sunday, February 1, 2015 at the Toronto Convocation and Gold Medal Ceremony. This was for highest mark in the practical exam and theory exam.

Kayla really loves learning! We are pursuing admissions for homeschoolers at many universities and are

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