

ULSTER SOCIETY OF ORGANISTS AND CHOIRMASTERS

President: Michael Tregenna MA BEd DipEd



USOC BULLETIN DECEMBER 2005

We wish all our members the compliments of the season.

STOP PRESS – STOP PRESS - STOP PRESS

Newly rebuilt and extended Kenneth Jones organ in St Peter's Cathedral, Belfast – I do hope that this Bulletin arrives in time for you to be made aware of a very significant event involving the newly rebuilt organ in St Peter's Cathedral, Falls Road, Belfast. On Tuesday 13th December 2005, at 6.00pm, USOC member and Belfast City Organist Colm Carey will be giving a Bach recital on the Kenneth Jones rebuilt organ in the Cathedral. Not only is this a wonderful opportunity to hear the organ, now extended to four manuals, you will also be able to see the Cathedral in its re-ordered splendour if you have not already done so. This will be a one hour recital, and is being recorded to be part of the great BBC Radio 3 Bach Christmas (of which more later) in December 2005. Do go along, support the Cathedral, Colm Carey, and the Bach Christmas; it would be wonderful to have a big audience for this occasion. And it's free!!

USOC's Next Event

The next USOC Event will not be until 2006! Yes, it's nearly New Year again, and time for our Annual General Meeting. This is scheduled for Saturday 7th January 2006 at 3.00pm sharp. The venue will be St John's Parish Church Malone, on the Malone Road, Belfast. Heading countrywards out of Belfast, St John's is on the right hand side a quarter of a mile before Balmoral Avenue. We invite all members to attend; this is your opportunity to choose the new Committee and the office bearers for 2006. It is also your opportunity to meet other members, and to give the President a pat on the back, or maybe even to sound off at the Society! Please put the date in your diary and attend -- it will be entertaining and it might even brighten up a Winter's day for you. There will be music to buy at modest prices. Much of this has been given by members, and all of it is for sale for the benefit of the Society. If you have any duplicates or surplus to requirements music, do bring it along, and it can be sold on a 'bring and buy' basis, for the benefit of USOC.

Please do come and support the Society!

Other Events

Carols by Candlelight with the Priory Singers under the direction of Harry Grindle with Philip Elliott playing the organ is on Saturday 17th December 2005 at 8.00pm. The venue is St Molua's PC, on the Upper Newtownards Road, in Belfast. Admission is £10 (£8) with tickets available from The Good Book Shop, Matchetts, or Tel: 028 9048 4913.

Come and **Sing the Messiah** says the Belfast Philharmonic! Just to spice up January a little, on Saturday 28th January 2006, you are bidden to Cooke Centenary Presbyterian Church on the Ormeau Road in Belfast, at 11.00am to practice and at 2.30pm to perform Handels great choral work. It'll cost you £8 if you are a singer, £6 as a member of the audience, and £4 if you are a student.

In the **Mulholland Grand Organ Concert Series**, please note two important Organ Concerts coming up in 2006. On Friday 3rd March, **Colm Carey**, Belfast City Organist gives a concert with music by Sir Arthur Sullivan, Rheinberger, Whitlock, Franck and Calvin Hampton. In this programme 'dance' seems to be a theme! Then on Saturday 3rd June 2006, **Thomas Trotter**, Birmingham City Organist, will be playing a concert with music by Bach, Messiaen, Thalben-Ball, MacMillan, Stravinsky and Flagler. Both concert are at 7.45pm, with a 7.00pm pre-concert talk.

On 12th May 2006, Colm Carey, Belfast City Organist, joins with the **Ulster Orchestra** to play the Guilman Symphony No 1 in D Minor – great stuff! Finally, on 21st October 2006 there is another **Belfast Community Organ Day**.

Please mark these dates in your new 2006 diary, and do try to attend these great events to show our support for the King of Instruments, and for the Belfast City Organist.

A Bach Christmas

This Christmas, BBC has been persuaded, on Radio 3, to put on throughout the UK a Bach Christmas. During the period 16th– 25th December, the schedule has been cleared to broadcast all of Bach's surviving works. This will of course include all his organ works – what a treat. So watch out for the schedules to hear your favourite works. The Royal College of Organists has joined with the BBC, as part of this, to make Sunday 18th December 2005 a celebration of the **Tocatta and Fugue in D minor BWV 565**. Wayne Marshall will broadcast this at 1.30 pm from St John's Smith Square that day, the origins of the work will be explored, and Pavlo Beznosiuk will play the version for solo violin. All church organists are invited to participate by playing the work on that day as a voluntary!! Now there's a challenge! -- well, for some of us at any rate.

Ideas for Christmas Presents

'Let Christians All with Joyful Mirth'. If you are having a problem finding a suitable Christmas Gift for a friend, why not consider the latest offering from the Priory Singers, under the direction of USOC member Harry Grindle, with organ accompaniment by USOC Committee Member Philip Stopford. The standards here are of the highest available in these islands. The CD, price £10, is Christmas Music from Northern Ireland. What this really means is that the authors are all either native to Northern Ireland, or have contributed to the music scene here while in residence in the Province. This is a wonderful opportunity to hear local talent at the highest level. Several of the items have never been recorded before. The CD is recorded in St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast. You can obtain the CD from The Good Book Shop at Church of Ireland House, in Donegall Street, Belfast; or telephone 028 4272 9997.

The Church Music of Philip Stopford, such is his formidable reputation, needs hardly to be recommended to any active Church Musician in Northern Ireland! Buy his CD at £13 from Priory Records, Tel 01525 377 566 to order. This is volume 2 in the British Church Composer Series. Lovely material, and superbly sung, so a great present for a friend, or even yourself – loads of local connections!

The Companion to Church Hymnal has slipped in without much notice! This is a fabulous book even though it relates only to the Church of Ireland Hymnal 5th Edition. If you are, like me, someone who needs to find out about hymns from time to time, this is an excellent source, for authors, origins, music and liturgical connection. Over 1000 pages, it is good value at £35. I find it essential for reference for the Songs of Praise Services we have in the Church where I am organist. A great present – I am asking Santa for it this year! By the way joint editor with Bishop Edward Darling is USOC member Donald Davison.

Everything else an organist needs to know might be a useful book for the politically aware (or do I mean unaware) church musician. This offering has been written by two organists who, like most USOC members are not primarily professional musicians, but have some other profession or skills, Robert Leach and Barry Williams. The book deals with all those other matters which surround being a church musician – including running a choir, working with clergy (tally-ho!!), employment law, child protection, copyright, fees, tax, licensing (sorry not the festive type!) and much else besides. The price is £15 and you can buy one at The Good Book Shop, or by phoning 020 8394 1026.

Edinburgh Organ Academy 2006

From 4th – 7th April 2006, this annual event is running at Napier University, Edinburgh. This is just the kind of event one of our members might apply to the Arthur Beggs Travel Fund for assistance; go on, apply! The Academy aims to 'provide a unique opportunity to develop or refresh an organist's skills'. Anyone who visited Edinburgh with USOC in 2001 will have learned what a terrific stock of magnificent organs are available in the City. The Academy is about offering organists an opportunity to improve their skills **at whatever level they happen to be**. The excellent tutors include Michael Harris, Gordon Stewart, Kevin Bowyer, Ludger Lohmann, Brigitte Harris and Philip Sawyer. Telephone 0131 455 6200 for details, and don't forget about the USOC Travel Fund – ask any Committee member or an office bearer.

New Members!

Once again, I am delighted to welcome new members. Their details are as follows:

Stephen Anderson MA Cert Ed,

_____, Winchester, Hants, SO_____ Tel _____,
St Michael's Church, and Winchester College.

Adam Walker,

_____, Belfast, BT_____ Tel. 028 _____ email: _____.com

Organ Scholar, Fisherwick Presbyterian Church, Belfast – from 2006, Organ Scholar Christ Church, Oxford

Michael Yeomans DFA(Lond) ATC ARCO MPhil

_____, Portaferry, BT_____ Tel 028_____ email: _____.com

Dep Organist, Ballyphilip PC

We are delighted to welcome these very talented new members and wish each of them a long and fruitful membership of the Society.

Programme for Members for 2006.

The Programme for 2006 as organised at this stage is as follows:

January -- in 2006 the AGM will be held on **7th January 2006**. The venue St John's PC Malone.

February -- on **25th February 2006** on the University of Ulster, Jordanstown Campus, arrangements being facilitated by USOC Honorary member Professor Desmond Hunter, 'Improving your singing and playing' is a workshop to be conducted by Barry Rose OBE.

March -- is a visit to Dublin on **11th March 2006**. Arrangements are in hand are for an all day trip.

April -- 1st April 2006 sees a visit to hear the rebuilt organ in St Peter's Cathedral, Belfast, with involvement of a well known youth choir.

April/May Paris Visit 28th April - 1st May 2006. It is hoped to arrange a post visit barbecue, for suitable de-briefing!

May -- on **20th May** an event, organised by Philip Stopford and Stephen Hamill entitled 'Filling the gaps' will take place. The venue, in a Belfast location, will have a modest organ appropriate for ordinary members to equate with that in most churches. The event is aimed at helping just these ordinary members.

June -- on **10th or 14th June**, there will be a visit to Londonderry. It is intended that non-members from the area will also be invited to attend. This will likely be an all day visit, with attendances at St Eugene's Cathedral, Christ Church, and St Columb's Cathedral.

September -- will be on the subject of 'Introducing new Carols'. The venue is still to be decided, but it is intended that the carols will be 'approachable'. The exact date will be confirmed later.

October -- has another Belfast Community Organ Day on **21st October 2006** -- details later

November -- on **18th November 2006**, it is planned that the Society will visit Queen's University. Organs and harpsichord will both be featured.

Members will recognise that, although the above Programme of Events for 2006 is offered in all good faith, there may well need to be changes given the pressures on contributors and venues. This is why it is always a good idea to consult your copy of the Bulletin when it arrives. We will endeavour to give the earliest possible notice of any such changes.

Vacant Consoles

Sadly, this item is becoming a too frequent inclusion in our Bulletin. The following would like to hear from you !

St John the Evangelist's PC, Magherally needs an organist, even on an occasional basis. There is a choir of 12 who sing well in unison. There is a brand new Johannus 5 organ. Sunday morning only services, with hymns and chanted canticles and no choir practices, except for special occasions. Contact the Rector Rev Elizabeth Hanna, 028 4062 9944, or The Rectory, 46 Kilmacrew Road, Banbridge.

Others we have heard of who may be seeking organists are Ballygilbert Presbyterian Church, St Coleman's PC Dunmurry, St Guaices' PC, Aghadowey, Holywood PC, Co Down, and on it goes. I fear also from the many phone calls I receive from demented clergy, and other key people in churches, that many of them have given up trying to find organsists. In some cases they have resorted to piano players, and one member of a moderately well known church arrived one Sunday to be treated purely to a CD, with no congregational participation!

There is one post of a rather different category at present (that we know of, there are bound to be others), and that is the vacancy at St Fin Barre's Cathedral in Cork for an Assistant Organist to work with Colin Nicholls. If you are mobile in regard to location and ambitious, why not give it a try, but best be quick as there is an early closing date. If you are interested telephone Colin Nicholls at (01) 353 21 4963433, or the Dean at (0) 353 214964742.

USOC Subscriptions

The Honorary Treasurer wishes to remind all members that subscriptions are due on 31st January each year.

Enclosed with this Bulletin is a reminder slip, unless you happen already to pay by standing order. Some members may receive a specifically labelled slip. If you believe you have received one of these in error, please let either the Treasurer or Secretary know. All members are invited to consider setting up a standing order for their subscriptions – about 50 already do. And many thanks to them; it is great for the Society, and great for you if you have difficulty (like me) coping with the rapidity with which the years seems to peel away! Do consider it! Some members always ask why we don't have a direct debit arrangement to cope with occasional increases in subscriptions. The answer to this great idea is that we are far too small for this to make any economic sense – ie we couldn't afford it!

We are grateful to so many of our members who pay promptly and with such good grace. This enables us to 'keep the show on the road'.

A Great Year

USOC has had a great year. Most exciting of all, to me at any rate, is the fact that our membership list has now topped 200. We all should recognise that if everyone contributing to Church music in the Province were to join, then there would be many multiples of this number. But bearing in mind that in the early 1990's we had 150 members, and that at the end of the 1990,s we had 170 members, this has to be good news. Now for 250! It is attainable, and if every member were to approach an organist they know who is not a member, then we could crack that figure too! The benefits are many to the Society in increasing membership. It strengthens our finances, it helps us become more influential and it enables us to put on more exciting events.

In an ambitious and high quality Programme, other highlights included the wonderful visit for choral & male alto singing, and organ playing to the Church of the Good Shepherd at Rosetta in Belfast, exciting visits to venues in the Ballymena area to hear young organists and instrumentalists play, and a simply superb Annual Recital in Bangor PC with a marvellous school choir and lovely organ playing. We have also had a very hard working Committee who have met more often than is usual to consider the 'Your Views' project and other important matters for the Society. Our visit to Wessex was magical – and I could go on and on!

A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND A PEACEFUL NEW YEAR TO ALL USOC MEMBERS