

and one contemporary. On Sunday, the candidates will perform the obligatory work as the contemporary composition, a baroque or classical work chosen by the jury, and a romantic composition also chosen by the jury.

First Prize: €3000, Prize of the Minister of Culture of the Flemish Government

Second Prize: €2000, Prize of the Province of Antwerp

Third Prize: €1500, Prize of the City of Mechelen and the Mechelen City Guides League

Fourth Prize: €1300, Prize of the City of Roeselare and the Royal Tower and Carillon Society "Jef Denyn"

Fifth Prize: €1000, Prize of Mr. A. Jans, honorary president of the Archeological Society and Mr. P. van den Broek, honorary director of the carillon school

Extra Prize: €1000, Prize of SABAM for the best interpretation of a Belgian contemporary work.

Applicants should send their curriculum vitae with a suitable photograph, the nine scores, and the choice of which work they will perform in the elimination

round before May 15 to the Royal Carillon School "Jef Denyn," Frederik de Merodestaat 63, B-2800 Mechelen, Belgium.

The organizers may refuse any submissions that do not meet the required standards. No appeal against their decision is possible. After approval by the organizers, candidates will receive a confirmation and additional practical guidelines.

In the wind . . .

by John Bishop

Life's rhythm

Working with the Organ Clearing House is all about travel. Most organ-builders spend most of their time in the workshop building an instrument, and then go on the road to install it. Ours is mostly site work. The OCH crew is busy dismantling or installing organs, shipping organs and organ parts around the country, or preparing organ cham-



John Bishop

bers for the installation of new instruments built by others. This means that we travel frequently—sometimes it feels like constantly. Many of our trips last two or three weeks. We arrive in a city, settle into a hotel, find our way around, and establish a temporary life rhythm of work, rest, meals, and calling home.

It's fun to visit the sites that make a distant city special. While on business

trips, I've visited art museums from Whitney to Walker and from Getty to Guggenheim. I've participated in a census of migrating whales in southern California, been to baseball games in a dozen cities, and attended a performance of *A Prairie Home Companion* at the Fitzgerald Theater in St. Paul. I've worshipped in many of America's great churches. On one notable Sunday morning, I attended the radio broadcast at the Mormon Tabernacle, a nine o'clock service at the Episcopal cathedral, and eleven-thirty at the Roman Catholic cathedral, all in Salt Lake City. I've visited organbuilding shops all over the country. And restaurants—sushi in Los Angeles, an Argentinean steak house in Dallas, Dungeness crab and salmon in Seattle, and I've mentioned before the Brazilian steak house in Philadelphia next to the Wanamaker store.

"If you got to ask, you ain't got it . . ."
(Fats Waller answering a fan's question about rhythm)

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often while traveling I miss the rhythm of life at home—chores, meals, errands, the familiarity of place. And while many evenings on the road bring thrilling new experiences, others are dull and lonely. Recently I ate alone in a restaurant in New York, where a young man was playing the piano. The food was good, service friendly, and there was a pleasant bustle in the place, but the piano playing was deadly. He sat with rigid spine, ninety-degree angle between neck and chin, never moving his head. He was playing standard crooner-type stuff as if he were an animatron in a department-store Christmas tableau. (Some- *plink, plink*, where- *plink, plink*, over the rainbow- *plink . . . skies- plink, plink*, are- *plink, plink . . .*) Yikes.

As he went from one song to another, I reflected on rhythm, how on the one hand it's important for musical rhythm to be firm and clear, even dependable, and on the other hand it's essential that rhythm be flexible and alive. A listener is troubled by the unpredictability of poor rhythm. A congregation is afraid to sing if the organist's rhythm is untrustworthy. But if it's too rigid or too strict, it stops being music. It's like the little girl dressed up in a starched pinafore, afraid to move.

Once at lunch with colleagues (it was the Brazilian place in Philadelphia, you really have to try it!), we were joined by a lover of organ music who was also a classic-car enthusiast. He talked about driving on a beautiful road in a terrific car, up and down hills, slowing a little before a curve and accelerating through it, taking a moment to notice a beautiful view or a particular building. He compared this with musical performance. A great musician, he said, knows how to step on the gas just enough to make a passage thrilling, how to slow slightly to notice a special sight, how to put the pressure on when things get exciting.

Listening to Mr. Plink-Plink in New York, I thought of that Philadelphia lunch where all of us around the table responded to the driving metaphor. I loved the images from that conversation. I pictured an organist wearing *Great Race*-style goggles, gloves, and scarf playing a snazzy toccata.

Having never owned a Porsche, I didn't know until recently that the automaker publishes a magazine for its customers. One of our neighbors does drive a Porsche, and he thought I'd be interested in an article about a pipe organ that he read in the Porsche magazine.

In 2002, Porsche established a new factory in Leipzig, Germany, joining luminaries like Franz Liszt, J. S. Bach, Johann Goethe, Robert and Clara Schumann, and Kurt Masur as good citizens. As the firm was introducing itself to the city, it provided funding for the renovation of the great Ladegast organ at St. Nikolaikirche, the "other" church in the town where Bach made music. Hermann Eule of Bautzen, Germany, was the organbuilder, and the artists at Porsche won a major design prize for the keydesk. (See photo.) Hang on to your hats! Form follows function? Careful of your tempos. And be sure to note the



Hermann Eule keydesk, Ladegast organ, St. Nikolaikirche, Leipzig (copyright © Hermann Eule Orgelbau, Germany; reprinted with permission)

company logo on the right-hand end of the keydesk.

"I got rhythm . . ."

Swiss musician and educator Émile Jaques-Dalcroze (1865–1950) is best known for the development of Eurhythmics, a study of motion as it relates to the performance of music. As a student at Oberlin in the 1970s, I was lucky to participate in a special month-long seminar in Eurhythmics, led by Oberlin's retired professor of Eurhythmics Ina Howland, who had studied with and was a disciple of Dalcroze.

There's a touching anecdote about how Dalcroze was led to develop this specialty. He was working with a piano student whose rhythm was poor enough that he had trouble playing even beats. Looking out his window across the campus where he taught, Dalcroze happened to see this student striding along with purposeful rhythmic footsteps. It was clear to him that the student had good rhythm at least in his walking, and Dalcroze was inspired to understand how to connect the easy rhythms found in everyday life, such as footsteps and heart beats, with musical performance.

Dalcroze exercises are tailored to emulate natural and easy forms of rhythm. You toss or bounce a ball back and forth in musical time with a partner for example, establishing a beat and letting the bounce of the ball occupy one beat, two beats, or a four-beat measure. The pace of the rhythm is defined by the arc of the bounce—it floats or soars, giving the image or feeling of freedom within rhythmic definition. If it's a four-beat bounce, it has a life and airiness not found in the pile-driving, one-beat bounce, a great demonstration of rhythmic principles.

Where do we find rhythm in our lives? Drive on a concrete highway. There are expansion joints every fifty feet or so and the tires of your car go *ba-dump, ba-dump, ba-dump*. When I was a kid these rhythms inspired family singing: "I've been working on the rail- (*ba-dump*) road (*ba-dump*), all (*ba-dump*) the live-

(*ba-*) long (*ba*) day, (*ba-dump*) . . ." My car's directional signals have a triplet beat to them and make me think of the subject of Mendelssohn's C-minor fugue (*Prelude and Fugue in C minor*) when I sit at a traffic light: (*ba-dee, ba-dah, ba-dee, ba-dah . . .*).

Nowadays, carpenters often use pneumatic nail guns that are loaded with cartridges of nails or staples. But watch a skilled carpenter using an old-fashioned "analog" hammer—it's a pleasure to see his natural rhythm as even, free strokes of the hammer send the nail into the wood in even increments. Twenty nails, a hundred strokes, no bruised thumbs, I feel another song coming on (and it's not *If I had a hammer . . .*).

We think of rhythms in larger cycles. Where we live, the ocean's high tides are about twelve hours and twenty or thirty minutes apart. It's not an exactly regular cycle, but high tide advances by about forty-five minutes each day. It affects the rhythm of life in subtle ways. My wife takes a water shuttle to her office. If it's low tide at seven-thirty in the morning, the ramp to the boat is dramatically steeper than if it's high tide—an issue in winter weather. The cycles make it be something like high tide one Monday, low tide the next Monday.

We tell time in days, weeks, and months. The tides tell time in lunar months—the tide clock on our wall counts lunar seconds. For centuries, the British Navy used tide cycles as pay periods—there are thirteen lunar months in a year so there were thirteen paychecks.

Ocean tides give us the image of ebb and flow, and we translate that into larger cycles like the rhythm of holiday seasons. As I write, Lent has just started. We're coming out of the post-Christmas ebb, getting ready to step on the gas and accelerate into Easter with its strong jubilant rhythms (*a-ha-ha-ha-ha lay-hay looo-ooo ya*). Many church musicians see post-Easter ebbs, followed by special services at Pentecost, church-school Sunday, and something around high-school graduation, all of which leads into

the quiet and regular pace of Pentecost through the summer, when choirs are on recess, there's no Sunday school, services are moved to the chapel, *fish are jumpin', and the cotton is high . . . one of these mornings you're gonna rise up singing, so hush little baby, don't you cry*.

I'm thrilled by the rhythm of good hymn playing. A steady and stately tempo, quick enough that the average congregant can sing a phrase in one breath, slow enough that everyone can sing all the words. Some ebb and flow of registration—not only playing each stanza on a different setting or manual, but including some Swell-box action and a knob or two to accentuate the text within the stanza. The organist who can't think of anything special to do with stanza three of Hymn 432 in *The 1982 Hymnal (O praise ye the Lord!)* isn't worth listening to:

*O praise ye the Lord! All things that give sound;
each jubilant chord re-echo around;
loud organs, his glory forth tell in deep tone,
and sweet harp, the story of what he hath done.*

Doesn't that imply some pistons being pushed? (It was sung at our wedding and it gets me every time!)

Stanza three of *O little town of Bethlehem* gives another registration hint: *How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given*. Please don't tear into that with mixtures and trumpets a-popping.

Or how about *Dear Lord and Father of Mankind* (I know, I know, it's not inclusive . . .), stanza five:

*Breathe through the hearts of our desire thy coolness and thy balm;
Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire; speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,
O still, small voice of calm.*

That's one hymn I wouldn't end on General 8.

The organist reads the words and thinks of stop combinations, rhythmic liberties, commas inviting breaths. The organbuilder thinks of quiet stop actions, fast pistons, swell shutters that don't squeak, bass pipes that speak promptly. How can your organist play rhythmically if low C says *fffffwwaaah*?

And this is where the art of organbuilding really gets special. Of all the musical instruments, the organ is the most mechanical. Any medium-sized organ has thousands upon thousands of moving parts, little things pushing and pulling, huffing and puffing. Switches open and close, magnets are energized by the hundred, huge masses of wood move silently as a swell pedal is moved by the organist. A rhythmic poke at a toe stud gives a rhythmic response. No organist, chorister, or congregant has to wait or be jarred by a machine responding a split-second late. A good tracker action operates in real time. A good electric or electro-pneumatic action operates at the speed of light: 670,616,629.2 miles per hour or 186,282,397 miles per second. Let's face it, we can argue about controlling the speed of attack but there's no appreciable difference in response time.

The machines we build that blow air into organ pipes must support the player with instant response so the machine can vanish into the art. That achieved, the rhythm can be free, the music alive, and we can leave Mr. Plink-Plink sitting stiffly on a piano bench in New York, stifling an otherwise pleasant dinner, while we accelerate into a turn with the sun shining and the wind in our hair. ■

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