Berea College, Berea, Kentucky, held a ceremony to rename the Berea College carillon after **John Courter**. Courter, who died in June 2010, joined the Berea College faculty in 1971 and served there for 39 years. He was music professor, organist, and carillonneur at the college and is highly regarded here and abroad for his carillon compositions. A large bronze plaque was installed in Draper Hall, which houses the carillon.

The University of Chicago's Rockefeller Memorial Chapel has released a new compact disc of organ, choral, and carillon music, *Rockefeller Gala I*, recorded live at the chapel, in celebration of the 100th anniversary of John D. Rockefeller's "final gift" that established the chapel and its diverse arts and spiritual programs. The 71-minute CD features university organist Thomas Weisflog, carillonneurs Wylie Crawford and James Fackenthal, and the Rockefeller Chapel Choir and Motet Choir under the direction of James Kallembach performing English, French, and American classics in the contemporary era. Almost all of this music was written during the lifetime of the chapel itself. Rockefeller made his donation in 1910, and the initial architectural drawings were created shortly after the end of the First World War. Construction was begun in 1925, and the chapel was dedicated in 1928. The E. M. Skinner organ was built with the chapel itself, and the carillon was installed in 1932. The CD can be purchased by mailing a check for $17 to: Rockefeller Memorial Chapel, 5850 S. Woodlawn Ave., Chicago IL 60637, attention Lorraine Brochu. ■

Send items for "Carillon News" to Dr. Brian Swager, c/o THE DIAPASON*, 3030 W. Salt Creek Lane, Suite 201, Arlington Heights, IL 60005-5025; or e-mail <brian@allegrofuoco.com>. For information on the Guild of Carillonneurs in North America: <www.gcna.org>.*

In the wind . . .

by John Bishop

Ancient becomes the modern

A quick, unscholarly search of the Internet tells me that besides the human voice, the flute is probably the oldest of musical instruments. Various articles date its origin between 30,000 and 45,000 years ago. I imagine that all the first flute-maker needed was a hollow stem of grass and an accidental embouchure. A musician playing a seven-string lute is depicted on a sarcophagus dating from 1400 BC found in Crete. I'm curious to know what material was used for

John Bishop

those early tensioned strings. Sometime before 500 BC, the great mathematician, religious philosopher, and harmonic theorist Pythagoras used a sort of a single-string lute called a monochord to prove his theories of harmonics and overtones.

It's wonderful to think of all this musical creativity going on in such ancient times—proof, as if we needed it, of how important music is to our society and our psyches, especially for those of us who toil in the vineyards of church music.

The earliest instrument recognizable as a pipe organ was the *Hydraulus*, built by Ctesibius of Alexandria in about 256 BC. It had a row of tuned vertical flutes, a source of stabilized pressurized air, and a mechanical action that operated valves that delivered the air pressure to the pipes. As far as I know, this was the first leap of technology applied to making music—the first time that musical tone generators were gathered into a machine and operated mechanically. The next such device to appear was a collection of tensioned strings with a plucking action known as the harpsichord, which had its origin in the Middle Ages and didn't become popular until the sixteenth century.

We celebrate the extraordinary pipe organ at Sion, Switzerland, built in 1390 (102 years before the voyage of Christopher Columbus), and still playable today, renovated every century or so, whether it needed it or not. In around 990 AD the monk Wulstan wrote about the powerful new organ at Winchester Cathedral: "*Like thunder its iron tones batter the ear, drowning out all other sound. Such are its echoes everywhere that hands cover ears and no one dares draw near to approach this roaring mass of tone*." I love that quotation, and use it frequently when I speak in public about the history of the pipe organ. I always follow it with the quip, "which proves that it's more than a thousand years since people started to complain that the organ was too loud."

Hydraulus mosaic

The parallel technological development was the sailing ship. Egyptian pharaohs owned large vessels, some over 140 feet long that were apparently not rigged for sailing. But if we return to Crete, we find that the Minoan culture had a navy that included sailing ships around 2000 BC.

The Sion organ has a keyboard with sharps and flats similar to those we use today, and a stop action that allows the separation and combination of ranks of pipes. Fifty years later, into the fifteenth century, organs with multiple keyboards were introduced and the instruments grew more and more complex. By comparison, in 1519 Ferdinand Magellan set sail from Spain with a flotilla of five ships ranging in length from 45 feet to about 100 feet in length. Tiny as they were, these were square-rigged vessels with multiple masts and sails. Two years later, the rag-tag remnants of the fleet returned, completing the first circumnavigation of the globe. Imagine the courage and fortitude that effort took. Forty-five feet is pretty big for a recreational boat with five or six people on board, but with 50 or 60 men on board, eating salt beef and suffering from scurvy, navigating around the Cape of Good Hope was no summer afternoon picnic.

Pipe organs and sailing ships remained the most complex of devices created by humans until well into the nineteenth century when steam engines became safe enough to use publicly. The organbuilder C.B. Fisk uses as its logo a silhouette photograph of a square-rigged ship—take a look at their website and you'll see it in the upper left-hand corner of the home page (www.cbfisk.com). The Fisk workshop is in Gloucester, Massachusetts, a town with a rich heritage of fishing and ocean travel. Gloucester's commercial fishing fleet was the subject of Sebastian Junger's popular book, *The Perfect Storm*, and the subsequent George Clooney movie of the same title. You might think that would be reason enough for Fisk to use a ship as its logo—but I think the mechanical and historic parallels between ships and pipe organs are more to the point.

Study the myriad lines of the rigging of a large sailing ship and you'll see that each has a specific function relative to the control of the sails. Halyards are cleated near the base of the masts and serve to hoist the sails. Sheets are the lines that control the angle of the sails. In square-rigged ships, the sheets are connected to

Magellan's victory

Müller organ, St. Bavo, Haarlem

each end of the horizontal yards. There are hundreds of lines that seem to the layman to go helter-skelter all over the place, but they are the exact mechanical equivalent of the trackers that connect keys to valves in the most primitive and the most complex (mechanical action) pipe organs. Add to this the fact that ships and pipe organs both harness wind to achieve their purposes and you have a very special link. It's common to find boat parts stored under the workbenches in organ shops—evening and weekend projects for the organbuilders—and the common interests are no coincidence.

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Why rummage through all this ancient history? Modern pipe organs are built in a stunning variety of forms and styles, but even with fancy solid-state combination actions, electro-pneumatic actions, multiple chambers and expression boxes, multiple wind pressures with blistering solo reeds, and movable consoles all a-blink with indicator lights and bar-graphs, the basic technology of keyboards controlling valves that allow air to blow into note- and tone-specific vertically mounted flutes hasn't changed for most of 2,000 years.

Take a look at the massive ebullient case of the Christian Müller organ (1735) in the Grote Kirk of St. Bavo in Haarlem, the Netherlands, and compare

it to the technological state of transportation (ox-drawn drays), agricultural machinery (ox-drawn ploughs), or military hardware (ox-drawn cannons). Weren't those organbuilders out in front of the technological parade? And for what? The creation of beautiful sounds and the enhancement of public worship, as though they were the most important goals of society—more important than transportation, agriculture, even warfare. Just think what we could do for pipe organs with a modern military budget!

That great iconic lion-bedecked organ is pushing 300 years old now. It's probably the most photographed organ in the world—the Angelina Jolie of pipe organs—and it sounds fantastic. Of the many recordings I own of that instrument, my favorite is that by Stephen Tharp (JAV 178). It includes vibrant performances of music by Bach, Buxtehude, Böhm, and Bruhns—just what you'd expect for ideal matching of an historic instrument to the music of its day. But Franz Liszt's *Ave Maria von Arcadelt* bridges to music of Vierne, Alain, and Flor Peeters' *Toccata, Fugue, and Hymn on Ave Maris Stella*, composed in 1935. It's truly remarkable that an organ built in 1735 is ideal for the stylish and exciting performance of music written 200 years later.

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The history of the organ is easily divided into epochs. We all recognize and distinguish between the eighteenth-century North European music of Bruhns, Buxtehude, and Bach; that of eighteenth-century France (Couperin, Clérambault, Corrette, DuMage, and friends); and that broad body of work inspired by the organs of Aristide Cavaillé-Coll (Franck, Widor, Vierne, Tournemire, Dupré, Messiaen, and friends). The introduction of low-voltage electric actions in pipe organs brought us the marvelous instruments of Skinner, Austin, Möller, Kimball, and others, and concurrently brought us the grand tradition of symphonic instruments and playing. Many of us lived through the great revival of interest in classic styles of organbuilding starting in the middle of the twentieth century that gave us the organs of Fisk, Noack, Flentrop, Beckerath, Taylor & Boody, and many others, and that brought the revival of interest in the music and performance styles of earlier times. And now, on the heels of the Classic Revival, we see a revival of interest in the sophisticated tonal concepts of the symphonic organ and techniques of symphonic playing, all enhanced by the seemingly limitless capabilities of our latest solid-state contraptions.

It's fun to note that both generations of symphonic playing have been enhanced by great leaps of technology. Today, the capabilities of solid-state console control systems seem to advance with each system I order. And I've spent considerable time trying to prove false my assertion that the combination actions of Ernest Skinner built in Boston in the first days of the twentieth century were in fact (at least among) the first user-programmable, industrially produced binary computers. If anyone can disprove that claim, please be in touch. Think of that. If the Haarlem organ was the technological marvel of its day, imagine being among the first to program a memory by punching buttons. And again, this was not for the purpose of agriculture or warfare, but making music!

It's fun to chat about all this with professional organists and organbuilders, but want I really want is to reach the public, and I need your help.

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Consider the recital. My dictionary gives as one definition simply that a recital is a performance of music, especially by a solo performer. But does the word have a further and limiting connotation? To recite is simply to repeat. When we speak of the recitation of poetry, we infer a mechanical repetition. If it's feeling of expression we look for, the word is declaim: "utter or deliver words or a speech in a rhetorical or impassioned way, as if to an audience" (from the version of *Webster's Dictionary* that's embedded in my MacBook). Although the stated definition of recital is technically appropriate for our performances, I wonder if we can refresh the exercise with more stimulating monikers.

Value added

A live performance of organ music should be—must be—more than a recitation of published scores. It should be—must be—an event designed to captivate the audience, an event that stimulates, excites, and even challenges the listener. It should be educational in an open and accessible way, giving listeners of all backgrounds something new to enjoy and understand. It should be lively, personal, and inspiring. And it should be current. We can present the deep repertory of organ music by recitation, dutifully getting the notes right, and organizing the program by some historic logic. Or we can bring it to life in the modern world, allowing our listeners to understand why it's important to hear and love the music, the heritage, and the instrument we play.

We can wander through a great museum, casually taking in the beautiful images, and miss the point completely. Just because I took art history courses when I was a student at Oberlin, I might think I know enough to fully appreciate a painting by Titian, Rembrandt, or Monet. But when a knowledgeable docent gives me background about a particular image, allowing me to see it in historical context, to know something about the personal life of the artist, to compare it with well-known political events, in general putting it in the context of the rest of the world, my experience is enhanced by the enthusiasm and passion of someone who knows much more about it than I. Hearing that the painter had to scrounge to pay for paint, was jilted by his girlfriend, and that his parents were disappointed in him, enhances the experience of viewing his art by letting me know a little about the artist as a person.

We can walk down the street in a great city surrounded by massive and magnificent architecture, knowing perfectly well which are residential, which are businesses, which are old, and which are new. But suppose you were walking past the Boston Public Library on Copley Square, across from famed and fabled Trinity Church, and I told you that architect Stanford White of McKim, Mead & White had designed the library, and had started his career as principal assistant to Henry Hobson Richardson, architect of Trinity Church, wouldn't your experience would be enhanced? And if I added that White had designed the original Madison Square Garden in New York when Madison Square Garden was actually located in Madison Square Park, that he had an apartment in the Garden building that included a red velvet swing on which his many lady friends entertained him in "various stages of undress," that he had a significant relationship with entertainer and revered beauty Evelyn Nesbit when he was 47 and she was 16, that Evelyn's husband Harry Thaw murdered Stanford White in public during an open-air musical review in the rooftop garden of Madison Square Park, and that the resulting trial was notorious as the "Trial of the Century" as reported by the Hearst Newspapers—wouldn't that bring some pizzazz to walking past the Boston Public Library, or Judson Memorial Church or Washington Square Arch, both at Washington Square Park in Greenwich Village, New York, or any of the other buildings that White designed?

When you're planning your next recital, please go digging. You don't have to get as lascivious as I just did about Stanford White. In fact, do be careful to match your spices to your audience. As you play, present a case as to why you expect your audience to listen. What about the music matters to you? Why have you programmed two particular pieces together? What was going on in related fields when this piece was written?

Sweelinck died in 1621, one year after the first religious Pilgrims landed in Plymouth, Massachusetts. Mozart was born in 1756, the year the French and Indian War started. Beethoven was born in 1770, the same year as the Boston Massacre. And think of Minutemen run-

ning along behind stonewalls shooting muskets at British Redcoats in Concord and Lexington, Massachusetts in 1775, while Viennese noblemen in powdered wigs danced the minuet to the new music of Haydn. Tra-la!

Jeopardy:

A group of people who are united by a common interest and allow themselves to be sequestered toward that interest, failing to communicate with the rest of society.

"What is an ivory tower?"

I've been down this path with you before, and we'll do it together again, because our future depends on it. With only a few regional exceptions, traditional organized worship is taking a different place in our society than it did when I was a kid. The Organ Clearing House thrives because churches close—a tough place to be—and I can tell you that churches are closing by the hundreds all across the country. I've heard colleagues say that we have to separate the pipe organ from the church in order to sustain it, but let's face it: besides a few dozen spectacular concert-hall installations, separating the organ from the church is like separating ice cream from sundaes.

We are promoting an ancient instrument in a modern society. Get with it! ■

On Teaching

by Gavin Black

Hard pieces and recalcitrant passages

This month I am writing about the phenomenon of pieces being difficult and the related phenomenon of specific passages being hard to learn: either difficult by any standard or surprisingly difficult—for reasons that may seem elusive—for a particular student. This is not a very systematic or methodological discussion: just a few ideas—almost just random thoughts—that I think are interesting or that may help some students or teachers.

We all believe that some pieces are harder to learn or to perform than other pieces. This—just as a basic fact—is probably as close to uncontroversial as anything gets in the field of music and music teaching in general, or of organ-playing and organ teaching in particular. We don't necessarily all agree as to which pieces are more difficult and which less so. Most of us, from our own experiences as players and from what we have seen with our own students or other performers, know that different pieces or sorts of pieces are more or less difficult for different players, and at different times in one player's career.

Repertoire in order of difficulty

When I first acquired copies of one or two volumes of the Peters edition of the Bach organ music—in about 1971, at the age of about fourteen—I noticed that the separately bound Preface included a listing of all of the (non-chorale based) pieces arranged according to difficulty. I was excited about this, since it seemed both useful and authoritative. I allowed it to influence what pieces I chose to work on—though not in a logical or consistent way. Sometimes I would choose a piece because I thought it was easy enough to be within my grasp, sometimes I would spurn and reject pieces that were described as being "easy," because I thought that working on them would be sort of embarrassing, classifying me as "not very good." Needless to say, this was all rather silly.

I did continue for a long time—after my studying had become at least a bit more systematic and effective—to cast sneaky glances at the list out of the corner of my eye. I would pat myself on the back just a little a bit whenever I put in some work on a piece in the top half or so of the difficulty scale. I pretty much stopped doing this when Eugene Roan, with whom I had by then started taking lessons, mentioned casually to me one day that an eminent recitalist he know thought that piece x was much more difficult than piece y—the opposite order from the Peters list. This introduced me to the idea that this whole difficulty thing could be relative, though at that point in my career I couldn't have said how or why this might be so.

Reger and Straube

Another way that the concept of difficulty as a kind of independent variable in pieces of music came to my attention when I was first getting interested in organ was through hearing the story of Max Reger and Karl Straube. The idea was that Reger had made his organ pieces more and more difficult in the hope of writing something that Straube, his good friend who was also the leading German organ virtuoso of the time, would be unable to play. It was also said that he never succeeded: that Straube "won." There are a couple of interesting things about this. One is that, of course, it is trivially easy to write a piece that is unplayable, if that is really all that you want to do. All that you need to do is to write notes that are too far apart in compass to reach. The music does not have to be particularly complex or intricate or fast. However, a piece that is really unplayable will, in fact, *not be played*. That is never in any composer's interest. Not surprisingly, composers—whether they are writing for Karl Straube or not—tend to approach daringly close to that "unplayable" line, and then to decide not to cross it. This is as true of a composer like Beethoven, who stated bluntly that he didn't care what performers could or couldn't do, as it is of composers like Bach or Franck, whose keyboard compositions arose out of their own work as performers and improvisers.

It is also interesting that Straube—as a student, before he had met Reger in person—was in fact drawn to Reger's music in part *because* it was first presented to him as being too difficult to play. Straube's teacher Heinrich Reimann showed him Reger's then very recently published *Suite in E Minor*, op. 16, telling him that it was unplayable. This seems to have motivated Straube to learn it, which may or may not have been Reimann's intention all along. I myself, when I was still more-or-less a student, occasionally started to work on a piece *because* someone had said to me that I could not learn it. (This was never, in my case, one of my own teachers.) I always learned something valuable from the attempt, although it did not necessarily result in my mastering the piece in question at that time.

Aspects of difficulty

When we talk about a piece's being very difficult, we are almost always talking about the learning and reliable playing of the notes: the right notes, in the right order, at a suitable tempo. That is not to say that anyone denies that other aspects of playing a piece can be difficult. In fact, performing even a simple piece in such a way that it is extraordinarily compelling, beautiful, interesting, thought-provoking, disturbing, whatever we want it to be, is probably as hard and (at least) as rarely achieved as playing a difficult piece competently. However, that is indeed a different thing. When students ask whether the *Goldberg Variations* or the Dupré *Prelude and Fugue in G Minor* is too hard for them, they are rarely inquiring about whether the teacher thinks that they can project the deepest meaning of the piece effectively. Of course, there is always this relationship between what might for the sake of simplicity be called the two types of difficulty: that the better-learned the notes of a piece can become for a given player—the closer the piece can come to feeling *easy* once it has been learned—the more of a chance there is that a performance can also be musically effective.

The piece that I happen to have been practicing the most in the week or so before I sat down to write this column is the "In Nomine" by John Bull that is found in volume 1 of *The Fitzwilliam Virginal Book*. The makers of a list like the Peters Bach organ repertoire list would probably put this piece at the easy end of "moderate" or the somewhat high end of "easy." It is in three voices throughout, but none of the voices is very busy or intricate. For much of the piece the middle voice lies in such a way that it could be taken by either hand, so there is a fair amount of fingering flexibility. It is (though this is obviously subjective) not a piece that many people would think should go very fast: certainly not fast enough to make playing it into an athletic challenge—which some of Bull's pieces are. This is a piece that I used to play a lot and, as best I can remember, I did indeed initially choose it because it was not too athletic. Bull's *Walsingham* or *King's Hunt* would have seemed beyond me many years ago. However, it occurs to me that this piece is a good illustration of the relationship between note-learning difficulty and tempo. There is—literally—a set of tempos at which this short Bull piece would be harder to play than the Reger Opus 16: that is, a mind-bendingly fast tempo for the Bull and a glacial tempo for the Reger. In order to achieve my inverting of the difficulty of these two pieces, the tempos would have to be so extreme that they would both be well outside what anyone would ever do. However, within a more realistic range of performance tempos, the Bull can become a virtuoso challenge of its own, and the Reger can move from the "impossible" all the way down to the "very hard."

Difficult passages

Many pieces that have a reputation for being very hard are as difficult as their reputations suggest only in spots. For example, the Bach F-major Toccata is considered one of his hardest organ pieces. It earned a very high place on "the list"—maybe at the very top, certainly close. However, long stretches of the piece are really not hard at all. The opening has nothing going on in the pedal, and the two manual lines are somewhat intricate, but not remotely beyond the bounds of the "intermediate" for anyone. Then there is a pedal solo, which is also quite learnable. The following two pages are essentially a recap of this opening: carefully designed by the always pedagogically aware composer to be a bit longer and a bit trickier than the opening itself, but similar in nature. Then, beginning at about the fifth page, the hands and feet start moving together, and things get more complex. Still, however, the notes fall into place quite naturally. Most players I know who have worked on this piece report that this section yields nicely to practicing and is not more difficult than other Bach prelude-type pieces. It is the three brief passages that involve the return of the opening motif of the piece, this time in manuals and pedal together, that seem really hair-raising to many of those who work on the piece. This is not everyone's experience, but it is a common one. Other very difficult pieces can be analyzed this way as well: perhaps most of them. In the *Goldberg Variations*, for another example, probably about eighty percent of the writing is no more difficult than the average for *The Well-tempered Clavier* or Handel harpsichord suites. That is not, by any standards, "easy." But it is the remaining fifth or so of the work that gives it its reputation as "only for advanced players."

One source of difficulty in working on pieces of music is unfamiliarity with a particular style or the technical tendencies of a particular type of music. Ralph Kirkpatrick, in his preface to his edition of sixty Scarlatti sonatas, first outlines a set of rigorous ideas about how to work on the sonatas, both as to analysis and as to practicing. Then he says that if a student approaches six sonatas this thoroughly he or she will not have to do the same with the next sonata or later ones. The particular shapes of a given kind of music become ingrained. I myself, as a player who has worked more on Baroque music than on anything else, find it much easier both to sight-read and to learn Baroque pieces—even complex and difficult ones—than music from a later era. To me this suggests patience. If a student is working on his or her first piece from a particular genre or style or time period, then that piece is going to be harder than the next one will be. That should not be surprising.

Practice strategies

If a student is interested in working on a piece that seems too hard, I am extremely committed to letting him or her do so and to making it work. The first step for me is to try to figure out whether the difficulty is found in a few spots or more or less throughout. This affects