

# Conference of Roman Catholic Cathedral Musicians Conference XXIX, Columbus, Ohio, January 9–12

Donald Fellows

## Monday, January 9

The 29th Conference of Roman Catholic Cathedral Musicians took place January 9–12 at St. Joseph Cathedral in Columbus, Ohio. The conference began with the traditional greeting and introduction of members, which took place in the undercroft of the cathedral. A warm and gracious welcome was extended by host Paul Thornock, Bishop Frederick Campbell, and the Very Reverend G. Michael Gribble, rector of the cathedral. CRCCM Chair Peter Latona introduced the week's agenda. The reception included the usual conviviality in addition to champagne and hors d'oeuvres. The evening concluded with Solemn Compline sung by the Men of the Cathedral Choir.

## Tuesday, January 10

The first full day began with Morning Prayer in the cathedral apse, which was preceded by an elegant prelude of music of Frescobaldi, Couperin, and Bach performed on the cathedral's harpsichord (on loan from Columbus's First Congregational Church) by Marie Rubis Bauer of St. Cecilia Cathedral, Omaha. Morning Prayer for Tuesday of the first week in Ordinary Time followed.

Matthew Peattie of the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music presented "The Sight and Sound of the Gregorian Propers: Medieval Chant in Nuance-Rich Manuscripts." This fascinating presentation traced the origins and development of historical notational methods, which helped propel that which began as oral transmission. The Catholic Foundation served as the location for Peattie's presentation (and others throughout the week).

Lunch in the cathedral undercroft followed, sponsored by Peter's Way Tours. Peter Bahou presented a sneak-preview of the possibilities for CRCCM XXX, which will take place in Rome, Italy.

Organbuilder Paul Fritts presented "Building a Cathedral Organ," in which he detailed the history of his own organ-building principles and experience, and how they contributed to the design and development of the St. Joseph Cathedral organ.

Kevin Vogt presented "Striking the Tonic Chord: Mission, Vision and Practice in Church Music Ministry." His interactive session detailed a model and structure for long-term prioritization for music ministers, as well as suggested steps for achieving those goals.

The week's first business meeting was then held. Business agenda items included the nomination/election of steering committee members, a description of the newly restored CRCCM website, and discussion on the 30th anniversary conference to be held in Rome in 2013.

Participants found dinner on their own, which preceded the day's concluding event, a stunning concert sung by the St. Joseph Cathedral Choir. The exciting and demanding performance included music of Wood, Tallis, Guerrero, Cornysh, Pärt, Mendelssohn, Briggs, Wisniewski, Howells, and Frank Martin's *Mass for Double Choir*.

## Wednesday, January 11

Morning Prayer was preceded by the prelude, performed by member Ricardo Ramirez of Chicago's Holy Name Cathedral. Movements I and II of *Suite for Organ*, op. 5 by Maurice Duruflé were followed by Morning Prayer for Wednesday of the first week in Ordinary Time.

The Most Reverend Frederick F. Campbell, Bishop of Columbus, addressed the conference at the Catholic Foundation. His insightful presentation gave members a glimpse of worship through the eyes of a bishop. He spoke of the challenges of managing the liturgical life of an entire diocese, while detailing the essential role of the cathedral and its impact on the community.

The afternoon session began with a "Liturgical Improvisation Workshop" led by David Briggs. Briggs related many stories of his own study of the art of improvisation, particularly those surrounding his time with Jean Langlais and Pierre Cochereau. Many agreed that the art can take as long as fifteen years of study before one can consider oneself a master of improvisation. Briggs concluded with an elaborate and dazzling improvisation on *Pange Lingua Gloriosi*.

Following a break sponsored by Peebles-Herzog Organ Builders, the conference continued with Richard Sparks pre-



CRCCM participants gathered in the gallery of St. Joseph Cathedral. Paul Thornock introduces David Briggs for the improvisation session.

senting "Erik Ericson and the Swedish Choral Sound: What Can a North American Choir Learn from That Tradition?" Sparks provided examples of how to adjust choral tone and vowel placement. Consideration of this technique offered a greater variety of vocal tone for the participants. The second half of Sparks' presentation included a rehearsal with members of the St. Joseph Cathedral Choir, by which his technique of vowel modification was demonstrated within their performance of choral literature. The excellent singers worked hard to adjust their technique in order to show the possibility of tonal variety. Repertoire included *O Thou, the Central Orb* and the Frank Martin *Mass for Double Choir*.

The concluding event of the day was a solo organ recital by David Briggs. Briggs was a featured performer in the dedication of the Fritts organ and was back by popular demand. His program included works by Bach, Haydn, Franck, Elgar, Tchaikovsky, Duruflé, and a multi-movement improvisation on submitted themes. Briggs demonstrated the versatility and the tonal variety of the cathedral organ, and was very well received by the appreciative audience.

## Thursday, January 12

The day began with the Morning Prayer prelude, performed by Phillip Brisson of the Cathedral of the Assumption, Louisville, Kentucky. Bach's *Sonata in C Minor*, BWV 526, was right at home in the hands (and feet) of Brisson and on the cathedral's organ. Morning Prayer for Thursday of the first week in Ordinary Time followed. In addition to the elegant nature of the manner of prayer was the presence of Fr. James Moore, O.P. of the Western Province of the Dominican Order. Each Morning Prayer celebration of the week included a hom-

ily by Fr. Moore. A musician himself, he expertly offered timely reflections for the unique assembly.

The annual CRCCM Composers Reading Session was held in the cathedral choir room. Facilitated by Brian Luckner of St. Joseph Cathedral, La Crosse, Wisconsin, the session included new compositions of Ordinary texts of the Revised Roman Missal, in addition to several Christmas carol arrangements. The reading session provided many high-caliber compositions that will undoubtedly make their way to the repertoire lists of many member cathedrals.

The afternoon was devoted to a tour of several important institutions and their facilities. Visits were made to the beautifully preserved Church of St. Mary, German Village, and its historic 1902 Wm. Schuelke/J. W. Muller (2001) organ. The instrument was demonstrated by Scott Gregory Hayes. Columbus's First Congregational Church is the home of two historic instruments: the 1972 Beckerath and the 1931 Kimball. Resident organist James Bobb performed the demonstrations on these two unique and vastly different examples of organbuilding. St. Agatha Church houses the Opus 75 Bédient organ, 2006, built in Cavallé-Coll style. Cathedral organist Robert Wisniewski performed works by Messiaen, Guilaïn, and Saint-Saëns. The final stop of the tour was at the Pontifical College Josephinum. Resident organist Jason Keefer performed music of Reger to demonstrate the recently relocated 2003 Beckerath organ in the seminary's St. Turibius Chapel.

Solemn Eucharist was celebrated in the cathedral with Bishop Frederick Campbell presiding, the cathedral choir under the direction of Paul Thornock, organist Robert Wisniewski at the Gober organ, and improvisations by David Briggs at the Fritts organ. Music included Propers from the Roman Missal, Kyrie & Agnus from *Mass for Five Voices* by William Byrd, *Psalm 44* by Robert Wisniewski, Gospel Acclamation by Kevin Vogt, Eucharistic Acclamations from the *Mass in Honor of St. Cecilia* (commissioned by St. Cecilia Cathedral, Omaha) by David Hurd, *A Fair and Delectable Place* by Richard Webster, and *Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence* by Edward Bairstov. Following Eucharist, the conference concluded with the closing banquet at the Sheraton. Fitting gratitude was expressed to CRCCM Chair Peter Latona; conference host Paul Thornock; the Very Rev. Frederick Campbell, Bishop of Columbus; and the Very Reverend G. Michael Gribble, rector of the cathedral. ■

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