

Looking Back

10 years ago in the November 1999 issue of THE DIAPASON

Cover: Muller Pipe Organ Company, Trinity Episcopal Cathedral, Little Rock, AR

Marie-Claire Alain receives AGO's Lifetime Achievement Award

AGO receives \$500,000 bequest from the estate of Gordon Young

Larry Visser appointed Minister of Music, LaGrave Avenue Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, MI

Thomas R. Vozzella appointed Music Minister, St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Franklin, TN

"The north German organ school of the Baroque," by Paul Collins

"SEHKS Conclave in London," by Lilian P. Pruett

New Organs: Dobson, R. T. Swanson

25 years ago, November 1984

Cover: Andover Organ Company, Meredith College, Raleigh, NC

Maria Moshinskaya-Wagner wins Gruenstein Memorial Contest

Brian Swager wins Chicago AGO student competition

Brian Jones appointed director of music, Trinity Church, Boston

John G. Marberry appointed organist, Cathedral of St. Paul (R.C.), Birmingham, AL

Timothy McKee appointed director of music, Irvington Presbyterian Church, Irvington, NY

Susan Randall appointed assistant professor of organ, Houghton College, Houghton, NY

Larry Reynolds appointed music director, St. Stephen the Martyr, Edina, MN

John Cook died August 12
"The Pedal Piano, Part II," by Karrin Ford

"The Chorale Preludes of Helmut Walcha," by David Burton Brown

New Organs: Casavant Frères, Hendrickson Organ Company, Prestant Pipe Organ Builders, Jan van Daalen

50 years ago, November 1959

Heinrich Fleischer appointed to the University of Minnesota

Paul E. Koch appointed to First Methodist Church, Springfield, IL

Adolph Torovsky honored for 40th anniversary at the Episcopal Church of the Epiphany, Washington, DC

Camil Van Hulse honored by Southern Arizona AGO

James Hopkirk elected president of the RCCO

News of Gordon Black, Jessamine Ewert, Virgil Fox, Robert W. Glover, David N. Johnson, Franklin E. Perkins, Phyllis Stringham, Phillip Treggor, Wilmer H. Welsh, Stanley Williams

"Articulation—The Role It Plays in Organ Performance, Part 2" by Klaus Speer

"Why Is Today's Organ Writing No Better?" by Wesley Morgan

"Acoustical Bases Govern Harmony at the Organ," by Charles Naylor

Organs by Aeolian-Skinner, Aus-

tin, Casavant, Möller, Reuter, Schantz, Schlicker, Tellers, Wicks

75 years ago, November 1934

W. W. Kimball builds 4-manual organ for Pretoria, South Africa Town Hall

George Kilgen & Son builds 2-manual organ for St. Anne's Catholic Church, Wellington, New Zealand

News of Palmer Christian, Donald Le Roy Coats, Charles M. Courboin, Clarence Dickinson, Herbert A. Fricker, Virgil Fox, Frank B. Jordan, Charlotte Lockwood, J. Parnell Morris, Carl F. Mueller, Renee Nizan, Günther Ramin, Stanley E. Saxton, R. Deane Shure, Frank W. Smith

Organs by Aeolian-Skinner, Austin, Casavant, Estey, Kilgen, Kimball, Möller

In the wind . . .

by John Bishop

Is your refrigerator running?

There's an urban legend that tells us that Alexander Graham Bell placed the first phone call because he had spilled acid or some other chemical on his workbench. He used the device he was tinkering with to call for help: "Mr. Watson, come here. I want to see you." That sentence has joined a long list of famous utterances, both famous and infamous. Neil Armstrong's "That's one small step for man," John Kennedy's "Ask not what you can do for your country . . ." Thomas Edison's voice on the first scratchy recording, "Mary had a little lamb . . ." and Franklin Roosevelt's "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself" have gathered as an historical list of world-changing sentences.

I don't suppose it was long after Mr. Watson ran to the next room having received the first telephone call that some wag came up with the idea of the crank call: "Is your refrigerator running?" "You'd better go catch it." Gosh, as teenagers we thought that was funny. That's what went through my mind as I answered a phone call in early February 2008. A strongly accented voice came on the phone saying, "My name is Zina Andrianarivelo. I'm Ambassador to the United Nations from Madagascar." Of course you are, and I know exactly that my refrigerator is right where it belongs. And organbuilders get phone calls from African ambassadors all the time. What's the big deal?

It was not a crank call. The ambassador told me that his president had asked him to find out how to bring American organs to his country. Could I come for lunch? A couple weeks later I met the ambassador at a restaurant a few blocks from the United Nations. He explained to me that the central churches of the Church of Jesus Christ of Madagascar (FJKM) were approaching an important anniversary. It would soon be 140 years since the four stone churches were built along the ridge of hills that dominate the landscape of Antananarivo, the capital city. Each of



The Ambassador, the President, and the Organ Guy

these churches is dedicated to an event of Christian martyrdom. For example, the church FJKM Ambonin Ampamarinana translates as "the stone church of the hurling cliff," the cliff being the site where Christians were thrown to their deaths. President Marc Ravalomanana, who in addition to his duties as President of the Republic was also Vice President of the FJKM, had preached a sermon during which he pointed to the ambassador and said, "Mr. Ambassador, I want you to go back to America and find a pipe organ for this church."

They invited me to visit Madagascar in June, concurrent with an international conference hosted by the president, and the announcement of the Madagascar Action Plan (MAP)—a major effort to improve living conditions in this poorest of nations. I learned a new standard for planning. What would be the longest and most exotic trip of my life had only the sketchiest of plans. I received an airline itinerary that would get me there, but there was some problem scheduling a return trip. I now know it's routine to make your return plans once you get there and can work directly with a local travel agent, but as someone who travels extensively and frequently, I've developed deep habits of planning my trips so as to avoid surprises. I don't want to arrive at a hotel late at night to find there's no reservation in my name, I don't want to have to improvise how to get from airport to hotel, I don't want to be fumbling for directions, phone numbers or any of the myriad details involved in the efficient management of even the simplest domestic business trip. So my friends and family were as astonished as I was when I boarded an Air France 747 in Paris for the non-stop flight to Antananarivo without knowing who would meet me at the airport, where I would be staying, or when I would be returning. All I knew was that the ambassador would be in Madagascar when I arrived. He told me everything would be arranged.


If you say so

It's an eleven-hour flight and the plane was jammed. I was lucky enough to have



FJKM Ambonin Ampamarinana (The Stone Church of the Hurling Cliff)

an aisle seat, but while I expect most readers of THE DIAPASON who have frequent flier miles on Air France got them from flying between a major American city and Paris, I can tell you that the airline does not use the same equipment to fly to Antananarivo as to JFK in New York. The plane creaked and groaned, the floor squeaked, and I imagined we were leaving a trail of rivets across the African continent—something like Gretel's trail of bread crumbs? We were to arrive at midnight, and I remember sitting in that plane wondering—and worrying—about just what I would find.




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Going down the stairs to the tarmac, I spotted my name on a sign (whew!) held by a handsome young man with an ID card hanging from his neck that identified him with the office of the President of the Republic. We were quickly joined by a half-dozen very heavily armed military police who whisked me around customs and into a VIP lounge. They asked for my passport and claim tickets for my luggage and offered me a drink. Two minutes in the country, and I was drinking good British gin. They gave me a cell phone with the ambassador's number programmed—I was to call. He welcomed me and told me he'd meet me in the hotel lobby at eight-thirty in the morning.

It was a deluxe four-star hotel owned and operated by a French company. (Madagascar was a French colony until 1960.) My reservation was in the name of the President of the Republic and there was a beautiful fruit basket waiting in my room.

Ambassador Zina set me up with a car and driver and an interpreter, Adolha Vonialitahina, a young woman who had just graduated from Texas Christian University, where she went on scholarship won in a national competition sponsored by President Ravalomanana. Next, I met officials from the FJKM, who would show me some of the organs already in Antananarivo (this, like many Malagasy place names, is shortened popularly to Tana). I would visit the stone memorial churches and those churches that had organs. I was an entourage. Toward the end of my visit, I would meet with the president to offer a plan for repairing existing organs and bringing more instruments from America.

The organs in Tana were relics of French influence. I saw several fine instruments by Merklin (none in playable condition) and my breath was taken away when I sat at a keydesk to see that most familiar of French nameplates—Cavaillé-Coll (in this case reflecting the later partnership with Mutin).

As part of my general introduction to the country, I visited an orphanage, shopping centers (so I could get a sense of the availability of hardware and building supplies), and the national park at Andasibe (100 kilometers and more than four hours from Tana), where I saw lemurs in their natural habitat. I attended worship in three different FJKM churches and met privately with the church's national president. I visited the new home being built by President Ravalomanana's family in the village of Immerinkasinana (pronounced *Americaseen*) because he thought we might put a small organ in a room where the family would have private worship services.

I met with the president and proposed a plan to renovate two organs and to bring instruments for five churches. The first would be brought to the church FJKM Faravohitra, the stone memorial church in Tana marking the site of burning martyrs, the church near the president's official residence, where he would preach at the anniversary service in November.

We had a Hook & Hastings organ (four stops and one manual) that we could



Five-foot-tall lemur, Andasibe National Park

send. We would install it in the church temporarily (it would not be possible to renovate and ship a larger permanent organ in time), and come back later with a fleet of instruments to complete the plan. We would fill the shipping containers with pianos, printed music, and building supplies to support the entire project. Six surplus pianos were donated by a moving company in Maine, and I brought them in a rented truck to Boston, where we would be loading the container. As required, I stopped at a weigh station on the Maine Turnpike. "What are you carrying?" asked the friendly trooper. "Pianos." "Where are you taking them?" I couldn't resist: "Madagascar." "You'd better pull over."

My colleague Amory Atkins (Organ Clearing House President) and I traveled to Tana in October. Because the city's streets are narrow and crowded and electrical wires are not up very high, we would transfer the load from the container to a borrowed army truck. We did this at the presidential palace on the outskirts of the city in a parking lot occupied by the presidential motorcade. Twice while we worked, the fleet of black cars and motorcycles scrambled and returned. We drove across the countryside into the city and installed the organ. I played for the anniversary service. The service was conducted in Malagasy (pronounced *malagash*—Madagascar's second official language is French), but the president addressed me in English in front of the congregation asking if I would demonstrate the organ. After I played he said, "It's beautiful, but it's not enough." And he went on in Malagasy to tell the congregation that the larger organ would be coming in June. We hadn't made that kind of a definite schedule. I whispered to Amory, "That's some way to sell an organ."

Revolution

I was invited to tell this story to a group of organists in New York City, so I prepared a talk with several hundred photos. I was to have lunch with the ambassador in New York that day. He called me early in the morning, saying he had to cancel and told me to look at a web-

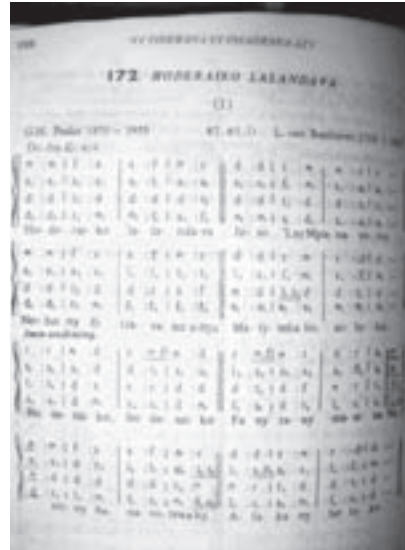


Hook & Hastings organ passing a herd of xebu

site called <France24.com>. There I read that Tana was under siege by rioters protesting the policies of President Ravalomanana. The photos showed places I'd been, including the pillaging of the offices where I first met the president. After three weeks of violence, burning and looting, and many deaths, the president resigned and the Malagasy Army supported the new presidency of Andry Rajoelina, Tana's 34-year-old mayor and a former disc jockey. It was necessary to alter the Republic's constitution, as Rajoelina was younger than the minimum age required of Malagasy presidents.

While it was a disappointment not to return with more organs for Madagascar, it was a rich experience to visit that country twice in the same year. These pages are too short to tell the full story or to share the 2,500 photos I brought home. I haven't written about

- The flip-flop-clad steel workers preparing the balcony in the church to support the weight of the organ,
- The spider hanging from a tree that in Amory's words "blocked out the sun,"
- The spectacle of four million people living in slums of one-story huts cooking with charcoal,
- The sights and smells of third-world poverty that cannot easily be described to well-fed Americans,
- The zeal and fervor with which 400 worshippers crammed into a stone church two hours before the start of worship,
- The hymnal of the FJKM notated in four-part solfège—something I had never seen before,
- The brilliant and energetic choir of the church FJKM Faravohitra, who presented a night of opera scenes in the hotel ballroom and who invited me to rehearse them and coach them in English diction,
- Adolha's gratitude for her education and enthusiasm for a now unfilled opportunity to help her country,
- Or the extraordinary feeling of sitting in an anteroom waiting for my appointment with the president, thinking how much Alan Laufman, founder of the Organ Clearing House, would have loved this.



Key of G—try to sing it

What's next?

There's plenty of time to write more about all those things, and I look forward to telling the story in person to anyone interested. The slide show is ready to go. And the next adventure is just starting. Yesterday I returned from the Kingdom of Thailand, the only country in Southeast Asia that was never a colony, the country where more than 90 percent of the people are Buddhist, and where there is presently a pipe organ languishing in an Anglican Church in Bangkok—the only pipe organ in the kingdom. My hosts were the people of the Prince Royal's College in Chiang Mai, a city of one-and-a-half million people in the north of the country near the borders with Laos and Myanmar (Burma). The Prince Royal's College was founded by Presbyterian missionaries in 1887. In 1906 His Royal Highness Prince Vajiravudh laid the cornerstone for the first classroom building, renamed the school, and honored the school by presenting his royal colors of blue and white.

The PRC is now a general Protestant Christian school, with 6,000 students from kindergarten through high school. The chapel in the center of the campus is

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Jungle travel—the trunkated version

the only example of Gothic architecture in northern Thailand, and now there will soon be an American pipe organ added to the life of this active school.

I lectured three classes of high school students of the Gifted English department, sharing with them the history of the organ. I lectured the graduate international class of the McGilvary Seminary of Payap University, comprising students from Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Thailand. And I was treated to about twenty-five of the best meals I've ever eaten. I'm not writing about

- The hour-long elephant ride through the jungle, and how elephant camps have been established to sustain the beasts left unemployed by recent mechanization of the logging industry,

- The demonstration of traditional Thai dance given by students at a Friday-night banquet,

- The visit to an 800-year-old Buddhist temple on a mountaintop overlooking the city of Chiang Mai,

- The beautiful set of Celadon ceramic tableware (six big place settings) I brought home for \$125.00,

- The mystery of a parliamentary monarchy in which the prime minister is appointed by a privy council that is in turn appointed by the king, and the hush-hush of the Thai when it comes to talking about the king,

- The spectacle of 6,000 day students coming and going from the inner-city campus every day,

- The little lizards that scoot across restaurant ceilings, prized for their voracious appetite for mosquitoes,

- The brilliantly ornamented tropical birds flying in both the jungle and the city streets,

- Or the exquisite politeness and respect of the Thai people toward foreign guests and toward each other (I was startled by returning to the American tone of voice in airports in Chicago and Boston on my trip home).

In the past twenty-four months, the Organ Clearing House has shipped organs to New Zealand, China, and Bolivia. We've sent the first Skinner organ to Germany (Germany's first Hook organ has been in place for more than ten years) and the first Hook & Hastings to Madagascar. I'll let you know when we have the plan in place for our shipment to Thailand, and if you know a church that needs an organ, let me know. We'll go anywhere. ■

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On Teaching

by Gavin Black



Repertoire, part 2

Last month's column was in large part an argument in favor of letting students work on whatever music they want to work on: that is, not believing that it is necessary for a student's development that he or she work on any particular piece or pieces, or on any particular subset of the repertoire. I base this be-

lief on several things: the large size and great diversity of the repertoire; the fact that any student works better—and any performer, no matter how accomplished, plays better—when he or she really likes and cares about the music involved; and that it is better—more interesting—for the world as a whole if organists learn and play as wide a variety of pieces as possible, rather than all focusing on a narrow “standard” repertoire.

This month I want to address some ways of implementing this philosophy. Letting students work on the music that they really want to work on does not, of course, mean just coming to lessons with no ideas about repertoire: just shrugging the shoulders and saying “work on whatever you want.” That would be abdicating our responsibility to help students find out what it is that they might like or want to work on. The point is to figure out how much help each student needs in exploring the repertoire, and then to offer that help in a way that is maximally helpful and minimally coercive. That way we will never lose the advantages created by the student's own intense involvement with the music.

Determining what to study

It can be very productive to start the first session with a new student by asking a question more or less like this: “why are you interested in studying organ right now?” Many students will talk about the

instrument as such, perhaps their love for organ sound. Some will also talk about something in their life experience, maybe some involvement with the church or with church music. But most will also talk about repertoire. They will say that they have always loved Bach, or Baroque music, or that they are fascinated by French Romantic or twentieth-century music. I have had students, at this early stage, mention something very specific and unusual: Messiaen, for example, or Rorem, or the Couperin organ Masses.

If this question does not evoke any response about repertoire, then it is a good idea to ask more specific, targeted questions: What music have you worked on in the last couple of years (for existing organists)? What organ music have you heard that you like (for new organists)? What non-organ music have you played by organ composers? What music do you like to listen to? Have you worked on any pieces that you found frustrating? Why were they frustrating (if you know)? One of the most fruitful questions of all is “What piece is it your dream to work on?” Or, to put it another way, “What piece would you love to work on right now, but you assume that it is too hard?”

These are all questions that can, of course, be asked and explored at any time, not just at the first lesson. Such a discussion will tell the teacher a lot about the student's relationship to the repertoire and will give the teacher spe-

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