

Music Notes

The summer that was, and the year ahead...

The A&P music ministry staff have had an inspiring summer, and are excited to launch another year of great sacred music in our church. Here is an account of our adventures:



Jean-Sébastien writes:

What a summer it's been! The past few months have been a time of new discoveries, exciting music making, and obviously, much-needed rest. In May, I had the opportunity to travel to China to conduct concerts and offer masterclasses to young conductors. I travelled to Beijing, Shanghai, Handan, and Kunming.

In each city I met wonderful dedicated musicians and was touched by the warm welcome of the audiences. However, I was also challenged by the language and cultural differences, which led me to rethink my approach to music and my way of teaching it. After returning from China I spent a week in Edmonton for the Choral Canada conference – a convention bringing together choirs and conductors from all over the country. It was fulfilling to witness the vitality of the Canadian choral scene and to spend some time with new and old friends. I also received a lot of very positive feedback on the CBC Sing-In that many of my colleagues heard on the radio last December – hats off to the A&P Choir for shining all across Canada! Finally, right after completing the season with the A&P choir, I took off for six weeks in Los Angeles to conduct a series of concerts with the Mountainside Master Chorale and to record an album of choral works by Southern California composers – a project supported by the L.A. Arts Council. After my time under the warm California sun, I was glad to come back home in Montreal and spend the rest of the summer discovering all the extraordinary things this city has to offer. After this exciting summer I'm now very happy to find my colleagues at A&P and McGill for another year of music making.



Jonathan Oldengarm played on this monumental Schnitger organ of the Martinikerk in Groningen, one of the most perfect in the Netherlands.



Jonathan writes:

In late June, I had the privilege of playing several concerts in the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany, and also to play some historic instruments in Groningen, the northernmost province of the Netherlands. My first stop was Amsterdam, where I played at the Augustinuskerk, a modern building that houses an

1888 organ built by Aristide Cavaillé-Coll, 19th-century France's greatest builder. (He built or rebuilt the instruments at Notre-Dame, St. Sulpice, Sacré-Coeur, La Trinité, Ste. Clothilde and St. Denis in Paris, for example.) Next was a recital in Vlissingen, a beautiful city in the far south of the Netherlands, on the coast. Then it was off to Rhede (Germany), where the enormous neogothic parish church still has its original 19th-century stained glass windows and Jugendstil ceramic floor tiles, a rarity in Germany's WWII-ravaged city centres. Then several days in Groningen (NL), where I was able to play 16th and 17th-century organs built by the masters Hinsz, Schnitger and Faber. The musical quality and craftsmanship of these organs is almost unparalleled. The final concert was perhaps the most inspiring, in the great cathedral of Antwerp, Belgium. In the 17th century, Antwerp was the epicentre of the great Flemish painting school that grew around Rubens, and the cathedral commissioned many artworks in the day. Most of them have since been moved to the city's art museum, but since the art museum is currently under renovation, 25 of its altar triptychs are on display in the cathedral. Rubens' famous Descent from the Cross (1612) is displayed right next to the organ upon which I was playing music by John Bull (1562-1628), who was cathedral organist at the time Rubens was creating his masterpiece.

Upon my return to Canada, I taught in the summer academy of the Royal Canadian College of Organists' national convention in Kingston, Ontario. The Organ Intermezzi recital series here at the church was in full swing by that point (kudos to the artists, and thanks to all who attended and donated so generously again this year!), and Jean-Sébastien and I then went into full-on 2016-17 planning mode.

These varied adventures allow us to inspire and to be inspired by other people and places. We are both in perpetual learning mode, since music is an inherently dynamic art—no two performances or liturgies are quite the same. Working in the repetitive, cyclical context of the church calendar (Easter and Christmas happen every year!), it is essential to stay fresh and open to new approaches. We have returned renewed and recharged, and look forward to a 2016-17 season full of musical colour and variety. In addition to our primary role of leading Sunday morning's musical worship, special services and concerts are on the docket for the fall term and are listed on the next page.

*Jonathan Oldengarm, Director of Music and Organist
Jean-Sébastien Vallée, Conductor*