



THE ROYAL CANADIAN
COLLEGE OF ORGANISTS

**Vancouver Centre
Newsletter**



*Winter Edition
February 2020*



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President's Message

Dear organists and organ enthusiasts,

The Christmas season was festive and busy as always. But now, with the New Year (and new decade) come new plans for the RCCO! At the Vancouver Centre, we're hard at work putting together an organ crawl for February, and a masterclass with the Pacific Baroque Orchestra's Alexander Weimann in late March. Alex is an excellent source of knowledge when it comes to playing Baroque music, and a talented organ and harpsichord player. His masterclass is sure to be informative. We'll be sending an email to our RCCO members to ask for participants, hopefully soon.

In the meantime, if you're not yet a member, do consider joining! The 2020 RCCO National Convention in Victoria has a fantastic deal for non-members which includes a year of free membership in our Centre. Just select the "non-member" option when you go to purchase your registration. Early bird registration is open now, and helps to support Victoria Centre's planning activities. The festival includes an exciting line-up of performers and speakers, including some from Vancouver Centre. Among the many inspiring performers are our very own Denis Bédard, Christina Hutten, and Edward Norman. Michael Dirk (current Vice President of the Vancouver Centre) will also be giving a

workshop on "Selling the Organ in a Digital World". Do take a peek at the website for more details about all the performers and workshops, at rccovictoria2020.ca.

Warmest wishes to all of you for the New Year. And many thanks for the support and enthusiasm that make the RCCO Vancouver Centre a pleasure to be a part of.

Sincerely,

Angelique Po
President, RCCO Vancouver Centre.

Centre News

The Annual RCCO Members Recital will be on Saturday, May 23 at 7pm at St. Mary's Kerrisdale.

Susan Ohannesian will be organizing this recital as usual. This year, in the interest of time, we are going to restrict the recital to 8 performers playing no more than 6 minutes each. Please send Susan your intention to perform by March 1.

The reason for this early cut-off date is that Susan will be away April 21 to May 15 and has to have everything organized before Easter.

Also, because Susan will be travelling out of the country, practice times will be restricted to the week after Easter, April 14 to 21, and the week before the concert, May 16 to 23. Special arrangements may be made for other times for performers coming from out of town or if someone wants to play a complicated piece with lots of manual and stop changes. Please make these arrangements also before Easter.

Please contact Susan by March 1.

s.ohannesian@icloud.com

★ RCCO 50 Year Membership Reflections

By Susan Ohannesian

In 1969 I had been studying the organ with Gordon Atkinson at St. James' Vancouver for two years. I was just finishing high school and the RCCO Diamond Jubilee Convention was being planned for Vancouver. With the encouragement of my teacher and money from babysitting and a few piano students, I joined the RCCO and signed up for the convention.

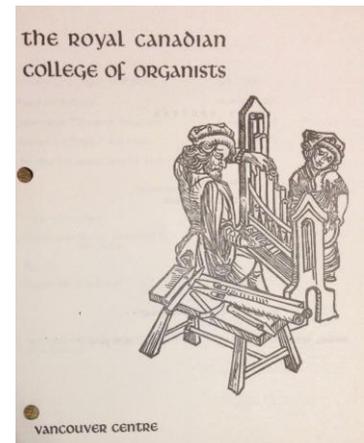
What an exciting convention it was and what a wonderful introduction to the RCCO! The line up of recitalists, organs, lectures and workshops was inspirational. Wilma Jenson, Hannes Kästner, Anton Heiller, Gillian Weir, Ralph Downes, John Toll, Bernard Lagacé, Frederick Carter and Suzanne Gibson were the featured performers and the organs were the brand new Casavant at UBC, organs at St. James' Anglican, Kerrisdale Presbyterian, Ryerson United, St. John's Shaughnessy and St. Andrew's-Wesley.

That introduction to RCCO conventions led me to attend conventions in Victoria, Calgary, Edmonton, Hamilton, Toronto, Montreal, Seattle and Denver.

I remember well hearing Patrick Wedd's winning performance at the 1969 convention, turning to a friend and saying "well, somebody has to play the hymns in church", knowing I would never reach his high standard of virtuosity. A few years later Patrick moved to Vancouver and became my teacher and mentor.

In the 1970s the Vancouver Centre of the RCCO was lively and engaging (local membership around 75 people):

- student organ competitions (I won second place in 1971 and 1972)
- student recitals (I performed at St. Philip's in 1974 with Dietrich Bartel, Mark Toews and John Dolman)
- organ workshops, choral workshops, parties and potlucks, annual clergy/organist dinners



The logo we used for many years for all RCCO Vancouver Centre events.

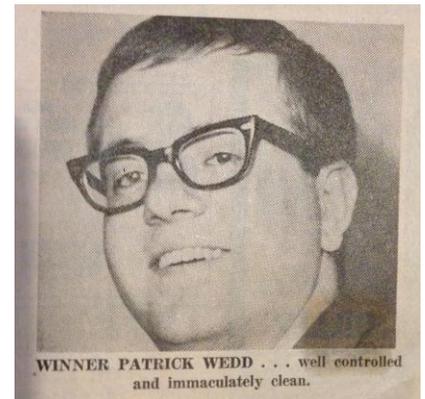


Photo from an article in the Vancouver Province when Patrick won the competition

- organ crawls around the lower mainland and to Victoria, Seattle and Tacoma to hear and play many new mechanical action instruments
- recitals by local, national and international organists including Melville Cook, Arno Schönstedt, Peter Hurford, Louis Halsey, Jan Jongepier, Arthur Wills, Robert Langston
- Sunday afternoon concerts at St. Philip's (I played many of those as I was organist there), Sunday evening concerts at Holy Rosary, Wednesday or Friday noon hour concerts at Christ Church (I played quite a few there)
- a newsletter every other month
- an annual college service for the feast of St. Cecilia (I played the preludes in 1974)
- an annual choir festival at the beginning of December

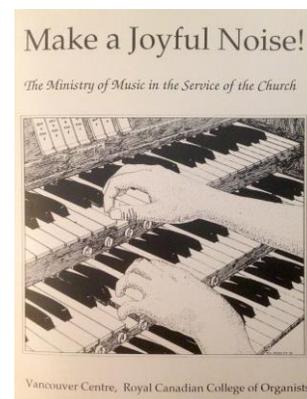
In the 1980s the Vancouver Centre strove to have a more professional look in the recital series, producing booklets for each year's recital series which featured a local, national and international organist. I worked on the recitals committee and my husband Paul did the art work for some of the brochures. The international organists were Robert Munns, Gerre Hancock, Odile Pierre, Simon Preston, Frederick Swann, Peter Hurford, Joan Lippincott, Jan Bonefaas, Peter Sweeney, Paul Manz, Xavér Varnas.



Cover of a recital series brochure
drawn by Paul Ohannesian

The annual student organ competitions (I sometimes played for adjudication only) continued. The November St. Cecilia services continued to 1988 and the annual December choir festival didn't make it past 1980. By 1988 the Vancouver Centre was struggling with reduced membership and declining attendance at events. There were still a newsletter, organ crawls, organ workshops, choral workshops, parties and potlucks and occasional clergy/organist dinners. Regular short recitals by local organists at Holy Rosary, Christ Church and Ryerson were no longer under the aegis of the RCCO.

The 1990's started off with a bang as we produced a brochure, "Make a Joyful Noise! The Ministry of Music in the Service of the Church", in 1991. Paul did the artwork for the cover, depicting my hands on the organ at St. Philip's. I think it was a last gasp at trying to make the RCCO relevant to churches while Vancouver was becoming more and more secular, many of the organists at large churches in Vancouver weren't members of the RCCO (in 1994 our membership had dropped to 48) and members of the RCCO weren't necessarily church musicians. It wasn't just the Vancouver Centre that was struggling. At an AGM we discussed an article produced by the Hamilton Centre, *Where is the RCCO Going?*, which ended with these words "Let us all reassess our own personal situations, those of our colleagues, and throughout the RCCO, and make a commitment to stem the decay of our profession and renew its vitality and respectability." In 1994/95 there were only 3 people on the executive of the Vancouver Centre, Steve Morgan, Brigid Coult and I and in 1995/96 Madelene Klassen, David Millard and I.



By the end of the decade I was involved in contributing to and editing the national headquarters booklet "The Employment of a Church Musician, A Guide for Canadian Churches, Revised Second Edition".

I joined the executive in 1991 and became treasurer in 1992. Also in 1992 the RCCO presented me in a concert at St. Philip's called "Kids Only", which featured movement to music and a visit (in groups of 5) to the organ loft.

Organ competitions (intermittently), organ crawls (to Seattle in 1993), workshops, members' recitals (we performed the Leipzig Chorales of JS Bach in 1993) all continued. I was involved in organizing the members' recitals back then, as I am now. The members' recital in 1994 was "Three centuries of French Organ Music". Since we almost always had a theme, I keep trying to find a theme in current members' recitals.

The recital series continued and the RCCO co-sponsored some of the recitals with churches. Featured international recitalists were Michele Johns, Kei Koito, Carey Coker Robertson, Peter Hurford, Christiaan Teeuwsen (almost as hard to spell as Tsawwassen), Simon Preston, Thomas Trotter, Eddie Davey, Diane Bish, Ton Koopman, Dirk Donker, Maurice Clerc. Our recital booklets were reduced to a one page brochure.

By 1997 the RCCO Vancouver Centre was totally inactive. I continued to hold the reins as treasurer and I sent out an occasional newsletter.

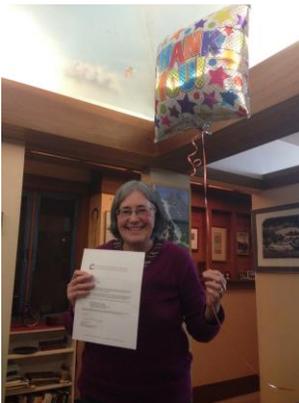
On December 8, 2000 I sent out a newsletter entitled "A Pre-Christmas Surprise from the RCCO Vancouver Centre". The newsletter invited anyone interested in reviving the centre to come to my house on January 12, 2001 to discuss our future. The impetus for this was the restoration of the organ at Holy Rosary and the arrival of Rachel Alflatt and Denis Bédard. All of a sudden big things were happening in Vancouver including recitals by Denis, Simon Preston and Gillian Weir. Unfortunately there was a very small response to

my invitation and the only events we sponsored were the reception after Simon Preston's recital and co-sponsorship with Early Music Vancouver of a presentation of their new Helmuth Wolff continuo organ.

I made another request for a meeting, this time with wine and cheese, at my house for February 8, 2002 and there were 12 people in attendance, including Sam Balden, Rachel Alflatt and Denis Bédard and we were off and running again. Robert Batt and I organized a members' recital, the centre sponsored a master class by Naji Hakim and Sam Balden arranged for the showing of Howard Goodall's video "The Life and Times of the King of Instruments". Gerald Harder started publishing a quarterly newsletter. Workshops, organ crawls and members' recitals were reinstated. In 2006 the National RCCO launched the Halloween Project and we decided to take part with a concert on Tuesday, October 31 at St. Andrew's Wesley. In 2006 Gerald Harder stopped publishing the quarterly newsletter and Rachel Alflatt started sending regular emails to members. The minutes from the AGM on June 10, 2006 stated that the new executive would be Rachel Alflatt (president), Frank Ezinga (vice president), Tamar Genossar (treasurer) and Sam Balden (secretary). My long serving efforts as treasurer were recognized and I stepped down from the executive and continued to work on members' recitals (for a time with Robert Batt), produced posters and programs for the Halloween concerts and helped with invigilating and marshalling RCCO exams. We started taking advantage of the RCCO travelling clinicians and John Tuttle was the first in 2007. In 2010 we organized a day in Vancouver following the RCCO Festival in Victoria and I was on the committee to plan that day.

From 2011 to the present I continued to be very involved in the Vancouver Centre although I didn't rejoin the executive until, I think 2014, and I took on the position of membership coordinator in 2018.

When I started organ lessons in 1967 at the age of 16 I became passionate, even fanatical, about the organ and, when I joined the RCCO in 1969, it started a journey, just like most journeys in life, of highs and lows and some just slogging along. The journey is not over yet. I am celebrating 50 years in the RCCO and I'm still playing the organ in church and in recitals, attending concerts, workshops and organ crawls and continuing to serve on the executive.



I'm grateful to Tamar Genossar for organizing the recognition of my 50 years from the Vancouver Centre and to Sam Balden for organizing a letter of recognition from headquarters.

I'm very thankful that the dry years of 1997 to 2002 ended and that when I sent out the request for a meeting saying "Wachet auf, ruft uns die stimme", people responded and we are now again a vibrant organization with younger, energetic organists taking leadership roles.

★ Upcoming Events

Saturday, February 22, 10:00am – 3:00pm, RCCO Organ Crawl
Knox United Church - St. John's Shaughnessy Anglican Church - Central Presbyterian Church.

RCCO members free of charge, non-members \$10 (or \$5 per church)

More info: www.rcco.bc.ca Upcoming Events

Friday, February 28, 8:00pm, Holy Rosary Cathedral

Cathedral organist Denis Bédard and guest organist Rachel Alflatt in concert.

Duets and solos by Walther, Boehm, Pachelbel, Mendelssohn, Hesse, Brahms, Pierné, and Bédard.

Tickets \$20 adult, \$15 student/senior

Saturday, March 28, 11:00am, West Vancouver United Church

Masterclass with Pacific Baroque Orchestra's Alexander Weimann

Auditors \$10 (RCCO members free of charge)

More info: www.rcco.bc.ca Upcoming Events

Friday, April 24, 7:30pm, St. James' Anglican Church

The Virtuoso Organist and Queen of Transcriptions

Loreto Aramendi, organist of the Basilica of San Sebastián, Spain.

Works by Buxtehude, Liszt, Saint-Saëns, Tournemire, Rachmaninoff.

More info: <https://stjames.bc.ca/events/list>

Tuesday, May 5, 11:00am, Central Presbyterian Church

Tuesday Morning with Jeremy Berkman

Music for trombone and organ

By donation

Saturday, May 23, 7:00pm, St. Mary's Kerrisdale

RCCO Members' Recital

By donation, reception and music sale afterwards.

★ Useful Information

Vancouver Centre Teachers List:

Rachel ALFLATT (Queens Avenue United Church, New Westminster)

Phone number: 604 322 5995

Email: cheldar@cheldar.com

Frank EZINGA (Canadian Reformed Church, Langley)

Phone number: 604 807 5246

Email: frank.ezinga@langleycanrc.org

Vancouver Centre Executive 2019-2020

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| President | Angelique Po |
| Vice-president | Michael Dirk |
| Secretary | Ginger Shaw |
| Treasurer | Tamar Genossar |
| Education Officer | Michael Dirk |
| Centre Membership Coordinator | Susan Ohannesian |
| Member | Marianne Huestis |
| Member | Sam Balden |
| Member | Rachel Alflatt |