



THE ROYAL CANADIAN
COLLEGE OF ORGANISTS

**Vancouver Centre
Newsletter**



*Autumn Edition
October, 2020*



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★ President's Message

Dear organists and organ enthusiasts,

It's autumn, and, like any normal autumn, things are starting to get busy as we move towards the end of the year. I'm beginning to see my schedule book fill up with obligations, though it feels strange, as my meetings and church work are all mainly done online now. Meeting online is no substitute for seeing friends in person. I'm sure many of you have also experienced that feeling of distance, when speaking in video calls, or attending online church services. But I'm grateful for the technology that allows us to meet at all--and produce concerts, and listen to music.

Among some of the fun, organ-related things you can do online, consider joining in our monthly online organists' meet-up. I've had a great time chatting and sharing stories with our fellow organists in Victoria Centre, and with organists from every corner of Vancouver Centre. And, we're excited to present our first ever online Halloween organ concert, featuring performances from Rachel Alflatt, Denis Bédard, Jannie Lo Burdeti, Tamar Genossar, Michael Molnar, Susan Ohannesian, and me! Our performers have worked hard to put together this video, which will premiere on YouTube on Wednesday, October 28 at 6 pm. I hope to see some of you in the live chat. Mark your calendars!

With thanks,

Angelique Po
President, RCCO Vancouver Centre

★ **RCCO Halloween Concert, Useful Info**
by Rachel Alflatt



The concert will take place on our brand-new YouTube channel: “RCCO Vancouver”. This is the direct link: https://youtu.be/giF6zBtTB_s Many thanks to Frank Ezinga for his technical expertise putting the videos together, to all the performers, and to Angelique Po and Susan Ohannesian for organizing the concert. You will find the complete concert programme at the end of this article.

The concert will remain on YouTube in case you can’t catch it on Wednesday, but we invite you to watch the premiere and to enjoy the live chat feature which comes with it (instructions on how to do this below).

This will be our first virtual concert, but also our 15th consecutive annual Halloween concert, which may well be an RCCO record! And several of this year’s performers played in that first concert in 2006 at St. Andrew’s-Wesley:



Left to right, first row: Michael Molnar, Tamar Genossar, David Poon, Denis Bédard, Sam Balden. Back row: Yoon Park, Rachel Alflatt, Ben Cornelius-Bates.

For those who haven't yet tried YouTube's live chat feature, you will need a Google account (if you have a gmail address you have a Google account, but you can have a Google account without a gmail address), and you will need a YouTube channel.

If you don't have a Google account, this page will walk you through creating one: <https://support.google.com/accounts/answer/27441?hl=en>

Creating a YouTube channel is easy and I'd suggest you do it ahead of time if you think you would like to comment and interact during the concert. You must have a Google account to create a YouTube channel.

To create a YouTube account:

- Make sure you are signed into your Google account.

- Go to YouTube on your computer or other device.
- Click or tap on your account (the round icon at the top right which identifies you, might be your photo or initials) and a menu will appear.
- You will see “Your Channel”, click or tap on that, and then click or tap on “Create Channel”.
- A window will open asking you to customize your channel etc., etc., but you don’t have to do any of that. Once you’ve clicked or tapped on Create Channel, you’re done. Just make sure you are already logged in to your Google account when you watch the premiere, and you will be able to make comments and interact with other viewers.

Programme

Rachel Alflatt

J.S. Bach - Toccata in D Minor (BWV 565)

Denis Bédard

Gabriel Pierné - Prelude in G Minor, Op.29 no.1

Jannie Lo Burdeti

Denis Bédard - Round of the Ghouls

Koji Kondo - Castle Theme from Super Mario World

Tamar Genossar

Anton Bruckner - Vorspiel und Fuge (WA 3131)

Michael Molnar

Michael Molnar - Dragon's Lair

Susan Ohannesian

Robert Eilenberg - Goblins' Revelry

Robert Schumann - The Bogeyman

Angelique Po

Charles Tournemire - Toccata from Suite de Morceaux, Op.19 no.3

★ A Tribute to Gordon Atkinson

by Sam Balden

GORDON ATKINSON
M.A., ARCCO (ChM), FTCL, PhD
September 9, 1938 – May 5, 2015

Gordon Atkinson was a highly involved and contributing member of the Vancouver Centre of the Royal Canadian College of Organists for a considerable number of years. His death went largely unheralded in the organists' community (there was no obituary published*), and in an effort to redress this I have written the following, with assistance from the persons acknowledged at the end of this article. The Vancouver Centre owes much to Gordon for his dedication and service, although many of the Centre's present membership will not know of his contributions to the Centre. What follows will hopefully give a glimpse of the type of person Gordon was, and his tremendous capacity to serve others as an educator and as a musician.

*[*Gordon was survived by his second wife, Helene, his three sons, Leonard, Charles and Andrew, his daughter Vanessa, five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Gordon's first wife Elaine, who was living in England, died very suddenly in February the same year (2015).]*

Gordon's degrees, as listed above, were: Master of Arts
(English literature), UBC
Associate (Church Music) of the Royal Canadian College of Organists, Toronto
Fellow of Trinity College of Music, London
Doctor of Philosophy, Sacred Music, The Theological Foundation, South Bend,
Indiana

A Memorial Service for Gordon Atkinson, incorporating the Funeral Liturgy of the Anglican Church, was held on Saturday, May 16, 2015 at St. George's School, Vancouver. Word of Gordon's death had spread through the alumni of St. George's. Appropriately, in view of Gordon's cradle Anglicanism, the form of service included the well-known hymns "The King of Love My Shepherd Is", "Jesus, Lover of My Soul", "O Worship the King", and "For All the Saints**". The organist of St. Philip's, Dunbar, Michael Murray, served as the organist.

*[**As described in Wikipedia, "St. George's School (informally, Saints), is located in Vancouver, British Columbia as an independent boarding and day university-preparatory school for boys, founded in 1930." One of the anecdotes quoted at the memorial service concerned Gordon's admonition to students at an assembly to "stand up; you sing from here, and you commit, like this – HA – AL-LE-LU – JAH, HA-AL-LE-LU - JAH!" (in reference to the verse endings for "For All the Saints") which became a lasting school legacy.]*

Gordon was “much loved by the St. George’s community, and an Honorary Georgian who served the School with great loyalty, integrity, and commitment over the course of four decades.” Arriving in 1963, initially as part-time choirmaster, he later became Maitland housemaster and teacher of music, mathematics, and games. In 1967 he was appointed as Head of Middle School; in 1972 he became Deputy Headmaster with responsibility for leading the Senior School, while teaching music and mathematics and coaching a variety of sports. Retirement in 1990 to his home in Agassiz was followed by a return to St. George’s in 1991 to serve as Headmaster (where the School magazine referred to Gordon as a “compleat Renaissance man”) until 1996, “providing much-needed stability and leadership during a crucial period of transition.”

At his 1990 retirement, Dr. Tony Mercer gave the ‘goodbye’ speech, referencing Gordon’s organizational talents, his musical abilities, and using words like ‘cultured’, ‘articulate’, ‘knowledgeable about so many different aspects of the world’, ‘someone who has always maintained a sense of humour through any adversity’, ‘willing to listen and counsel’, ‘to put others before himself’ – all attributes which evidence the huge appreciation of his long and dedicated service to the School. And the retirement gift from the School was both amusing and appropriate, as stated by Dr. Mercer:

“In recent years the school has gone to a computerized marking system, and I think that Gordon is the only staff member who chose to avoid computers and let someone else input his marks. So that he can more easily write his first book in his retirement I would like to present him with this laptop word processor, not quite a computer but close enough.”

Gordon’s beginnings were in Hetton-le-Hole, County Durham, in England. He won a scholarship to the Durham Grammar School and was selected to be a choirboy in the Cathedral Choir School, which gave him his training in the ancient traditions of the Anglican Church. His family emigrated to Canada in 1955 and Gordon, after attending UBC, received his first teaching position in Burns Lake in 1959. His passion for music played out in every BC community in which he lived – as an organist, choirmaster and/or singer – but particularly at St. James’ Church in the Vancouver downtown eastside, where he worked with dedication and enthusiasm as Organist and Choirmaster from 1963 to 1990. [Gordon’s organ teachers were Hugh McLean and Leonard Wilson (organist at St. James’).]

At St. James’ Gordon was music director of a high Anglican church, sometimes referred to as a church of smells and bells or Smokey Jim’s, with an emphasis on plainsong as well as traditional Anglican church music inspired by the cathedrals and colleges of England. St. James’ held two Masses and Evensong every Sunday as well as Solemn High Masses for numerous holy days throughout the year. Gordon was very much involved in the fellowship of parish life outside of services of worship and, along with choir members, provided music for the annual May Queen Festival, Gastown Days and later the Canterbury Fair.

I spoke with Helene Atkinson shortly after Gordon's death. She told me that they had been married for twenty-seven years, and that she always thought that Gordon "was a good organist." Helene came from a Mennonite background and knew little about organs, especially pipe organs. She indicated that Mennonite churches had electronic organs - often played with tremulant style!

Helene had moved to North Vancouver and started to attend St. James' in 1979. She auditioned for the choir, even though she knew little about Anglicanism and Anglican church music. She passed the audition and ended up singing in the St. James' choir for 22 years. She married Gordon in 1988.

Gordon apparently had a practice organ at home (Agassiz) and spent a lot of time practicing right up to the time he had a fatal massive heart attack, which was not long after practicing for about 6 hours. Gordon must have known there would be a pipe organ awaiting him in heaven!

I am indebted to Susan Ohannesian of the Vancouver Centre for searching through and separating out RCCO archival material stored in her attic relating to Gordon. In my review of this material, a prominent section relates to the 1969 Diamond Jubilee National Convention of the Royal Canadian College of Organists, held here in Vancouver (August 25 – 29). Many of the executive and committee chairpersons are names no longer visible in the Centre ranks, but it is notable that the General Chairman was Hugh McLean, and the ViceChairman Gordon Atkinson.

The following photo shows Centre members at this event's reception at Government House (Victoria), with Gordon on the right.



F. Carter, S. Gibson,
F. Robinson, M. Briscall
G. Atkinson

A review of various newsletters, notices and minutes of the Centre shows:

- May 3, 1962 – Gordon’s name advanced for the 1962-64 executive committee, and a recital at Holy Trinity Cathedral, New Westminster on May 16
- October 1962 – Gordon’s responsibilities are listed as Publicity Chairman and “The Cypher” – the Centre newsletter
- July, 1963 – notes the appointment of Gordon to St. James’ Anglican Church
- October 15, 1963 – notes Gordon to give a recital at Holy Trinity Cathedral on October 19
- March-April, 1964 – Gordon’s recitals at Holy Trinity, on April 17 and St. James’, on May 4
- June 8, 1964 – Gordon is elected Centre Vice-Chairman
- March 27, 1965 – Gordon and others play at Canadian Memorial Chapel
- June, 1966 – Gordon elected to the Executive for a 2-year term, and appointed Secretary
- September 5, 1966 – notification to members of a Centre brochure including its programmed activities for the year (presumably Gordon played a role in this publication)
- October 12, 1965 – recital at St. James’
- January 14, 1967 – Gordon is one participant (out of 17) in a program of music for two organs and two harpsichords at Ryerson United Church
- March 11, 1967 – Gordon participates in a members’ recital at Kerrisdale Presbyterian
- July, 1967 – Gordon remains on the Executive and is named Co-Chairman of the 1969 Convention
- August 6, 1967 – Gordon’s recital at St. James’
- January 19, 1968 – note that Gordon is giving a series of weekly organ recitals on Sunday evenings at 7:00 p.m., prior to Evensong
- May 11, 1968 – Gordon elected for a two-year term and a recital by Gordon on May 29 at St. James’
- September, 1968 – Gordon becomes Chairman of the Centre
- December, 1968 – reminder of organ recitals at St. James’ preceding Evensong
- Undated (1969) – Gordon’s written promotion of the upcoming Jubilee Convention
- 1969 Convention Program – states that in 1963 “Gordon succeeded the late Leonard Wilson as organist and choirmaster of St. James’ Anglican Church, continuing a tradition of liturgical music which makes the church unique in Vancouver”. Also references Gordon’s positions as past president of the Vancouver Cantata Society and past chairman of the Vancouver Centre.
- April 19, 1972 – recital at St. John’s Church, Shaughnessy
- November 22, 1972 – Annual College Service at St. James’, with Gordon’s

- participation with others
- November/December, 1975 – editorial and articles – presumably Gordon is the newsletter editor
 - November, 1978 – College Service, November 26 – Gordon with St. James’ choir
 - 1981/82 – Organ Recital Series booklet, showing Gordon as a Vancouver Area Organ Instructor
 - June 27, 1983 – Executive meeting, chaired by Gordon
 - June 1983 – May 1984 – report by Gordon, as Chairman
 - November 21, 1984 – Solemn Evensong program (St. James’ choir, Gordon and Russell Savage)
 - May 18, 1985 – recital program, St. James’
 - 1985 – 86 – Organ Recital Series program with welcome from Gordon, as Chairman of the Centre; Gordon’s instructional areas shown as studies in liturgical music, service and recital repertoire, piano, theory and examination subjects
 - May 24, 1986 – Annual meeting – Gordon re-elected as Chairman
 - November 15, 1986 – recital program, organ and brass, St. James’
 - May 8, 1990 – recital program, St. James’
 - January 31, 1993 – participant in program of Bach Chorales, St. Mary’s Kerrisdale
 - November, 1997 – Centre Newsletter editor
 - January/February, 1998 – Centre Newsletter editor
 - March 16, 1998 – Centre Newsletter editor
 - March/April, 1998 – Centre Newsletter editor
 - May, 1998 – Centre Newsletter editor
 - May 26, 2007 – participant in program of Bach chorales at St. Mary’s Kerrisdale
 - July 5, 2014 – recital program, Sts. Joachim and Anne Church, Aldergrove

Here’s a photo of Gordon at the St. James’ console:



Remembrances of Gordon, the organist:

From Fr. Basil Foote (since deceased), Seminary of Christ the King (Westminster Abbey), Mission, where Gordon would help out:

I knew Gordon as a very likable friend, conscientious organist and church musician and all-round gentleman - but I had very little ongoing contact with Gordon, and only others will be able to supply you with more specific memories...St. James' Church, St. George's School, Sts. Joachim & Anne Parish in Aldergrove.

From Nick Fairbank, past RCCO President:

I knew Gordon through several periods, as a schoolboy at St. George's when he was the Senior School choir director, (Fred Carter directed the Junior School Choir at that time), and later as a young organist in Vancouver through the RCCO. Later we were involved together in the RSCM. He was a member of the Vancouver Centre for many years, as we were on the Executive together.

From Susan Ohannesian:

I grew up at St. James' and sang in the junior and senior choirs and Gordon was my first organ teacher.

I have lost touch with his family, although I did talk to Leonard, Charles, Andrew and Vanessa at the funeral. I used to babysit the Atkinson boys in the 1960s and early 70s and I gave them some piano lessons.

Gordon and I held the Vancouver Centre together for many years when there was hardly any activity. Gordon sent out a regular newsletter and I looked after the finances so that when we were ready to resurrect, there was still a viable body.

From Sharon Adamson, former General Manager, RCCO

Gordon maintained his membership his RCCO membership up until the time of his death. He obtained his ARCCO diploma in 1972.

From Andrew Atkinson, son

His music plays on in all of us (his family and all who knew him).

From Fr. David Marriott, St. Bride of Kildare, Pitt Meadows

Gordon has played for many 'special' Masses and celebrations for the Anglican Catholic Church of Canada, and the Traditional Anglican Church of Canada in BC and has proved a great encouragement to us all in adding the beauty of music so very well-played to the wonderful liturgy of the Book of Common Prayer and our traditional worship.

From The Rev. Scott Gould, formerly of St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Langley

So many memories of Gordon during his five years with us as organist and music director.

He made the congregations sing like no other. A true elder in church music.

To Sum Up:

Here was a dedicated and talented church musician, as well as a respected and loved educator, in our midst, who left us without fanfare or notice to the organist and RCCO community. By this article I hope I have redressed our lack of remembrance of Gordon Atkinson and reminded his widow and family that his time with the RCCO was both valued and treasured. I offer my apologies (particularly to Helene) for the length of time it has taken for me to complete this 'tribute'. Like many projects, this one got off to a great start and then lagged when life interceded. How ironic that a pandemic has allowed me to revisit and finalize my writing.

Prepared by:

Sam Balden, May 26, 2020

Current RCCO Vancouver Centre Member,

Former Regional Director for B.C.

Former Centre Secretary

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Susan Ohannesian, B.Mus., member Vancouver Centre, organist St. Mary's (Kerrisdale) Anglican, for personal remembrances and material from the Centre files referencing Gordon and his activities

Dr. Tom Matthews, Headmaster, St. George's School, and Nancy Kudryk, Senior Executive Assistant to the Headmaster, for provision of material relating to Gordon's school appointment, his retirement, his memorial service and texts of remarks given at the retirement and memorial occasions

Helene Atkinson, wife, interviewed June 30, 2015, and for the provision of the photo of Gordon at the organ console.



Online Church Services

- Brentwood Presbyterian Church, Burnaby: <http://brentwoodpc.ca/>
 - Sunday at 10:00 AM
 - Jazz Evensong on Wednesdays at 8:00 PM
- Canadian Memorial United Church: <https://www.canadianmemorial.org/>
 - Sunday at 10:30 AM
- Christ Church Cathedral, Anglican Church:
<https://thecathedral.ca/worship/this-sunday/>
 - Sunday at 10:30 AM and 5:30 PM
- Gordon Presbyterian Church: <https://gordonchurch.com/>
 - Sunday at 10:30 AM
- Holy Rosary Cathedral, Catholic Church: <https://www.holyrosarycathedral.org/>
 - Monday to Saturday at 7:15 AM, 12:10 PM, 5:10 PM
 - Sunday at 8:00 AM, 11:00 AM, 6:30 PM in Spanish, and 8:00 PM
- Knox United Church: <https://www.knoxunitedvancouver.org/>
 - Sunday at 10:30 AM
- Langley Canadian Reformed Church: <https://langleycanrc.org/live-video>
 - Sunday at 9:30 AM and 2:00 PM
- Pacific Spirit United Church: <https://www.pacificspirituc.com>
 - Archived
- Queens Avenue United Church:
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCf22S7Yuomi0iyUOyQ6XgSA>
 - Sunday at 10:30 AM
- Richmond Presbyterian Church:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChqAX2ogt9cgJ-04uSI_P7g
 - Sunday at 10:00 AM
- St. Helen's Parish, Catholic Church: <https://sthelen.ca/>
 - Sunday at 10:00 AM

- St. John's Shaughnessy Anglican Church: sjs.net
 - Sunday at 10:00 AM

- St. John's Vancouver Anglican Church:
 - <https://www.stjohnsvancouver.org/sermonslanding> <https://www.facebook.com/pg/stjohnsvancouver/videos/>
 - Sunday at 10:00 AM and 6:00 PM

- St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church (in German):
 - https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCixYSN_zG4aMev_FbCNGVqg
 - Archived

- St. Mary's Anglican Church, Kerrisdale:
 - <https://www.stmaryskerrisdale.ca/worship>
 - Sunday at 10:00 AM

- St. Michael and All Angels Cathedral, Kelowna, Anglican Church:
 - <http://ccsmaa.ca/video-streaming/>
 - Sunday at 10:00 AM

- St. Michael the Archangel Catholic Church: <http://stmichaelsparish.ca/>
 - Easter Sunday at 10:00 AM

- St. Philip's Anglican Church: <https://www.stphilipsdunbar.com/blog>
 - Sunday at 10:00 AM

- West Vancouver United Church: <https://wvuc.bc.ca/>
 - Sunday at 10:00 AM

- Other Catholic churches: <https://rcav.org/coronavirus/#streaming>

Also:

Organ Preludes and Hymns – Sing along with Susan:

On Saturdays from 11am to noon Susan Ohannesian (St. Mary's Kerrisdale) will play the hymns and postlude for Sunday and then continue with organ preludes and hymns of hope and trust for you to listen to and sing along with.

<https://zoom.us/j/948450509?pwd=ZlFlSXhHLzlVZFVTWFpVVThQeXVXQT09>

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 2020-2021

President	Angelique Po
Vice-president	Michael Dirk
Secretary	Ginger Shaw
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Education Officer	Michael Dirk
Centre Membership Coordinator	Susan Ohannesian
Member	Marianne Huestis
Member	Frank Ezinga
Member	Rachel Alflatt