



NEXT EVENT

Saturday 19th MARCH 2016 at 3.00pm in St Thomas' Parish Church, in Eglantine Avenue, Lisburn Road, Belfast

APPROACHES to ORGAN PRACTICE - a Seminar/Workshop led by Professor Desmond Hunter (Vice President and Hon Life Member of the Society). All members are welcome to attend with their friends. Professor Hunter writes:-

'The workshop will explore the range of issues involved in what we describe as 'practice'. Whilst acknowledging the need to develop facility and skill in using fingers and feet at the organ, the main focus will be on the interpretative concepts that inform our approach to the study and preparation of repertoire or performance. Selected works (eg short chorale preludes) will provide material for small-group discussion as we consider approaches that, hopefully, will offer helpful perspectives on the process. It is envisaged that particular experiences are shared and, ideally, illuminated through performance. In preparation for the workshop, members are asked to reflect on their own practice and bring ideas to the session. It would be helpful also if members offered suggestions of repertoire for discussion and (possibly) performance.'

This is a rare opportunity to review our approach to something we all have to do, like it or not! Please do come along, and play your part.

MORE USOC EVENTS in 2016

Saturday 9th April 2016 in St Patrick's CoI at Glenarm (1871 Walker) at 11.00 am in the morning, and in St Mary's RC Church at Cushendall (Wells Kennedy on a west end gallery) at 3.00pm in the afternoon.

We will hear excellent music from Samuel Wesley and J S Bach. This year marks 250th year since the birth of Samuel Wesley who championed and popularised the music of J S Bach. Organ music by Wesley and Bach will be played by James McConnell and Ian Mackrell.

For members who want to make a whole day of it, why not consider a visit to the Tearoom in the Walled Garden at Glenarm Castle for a cuppa before our first visit which will be at 11.00 am. For lunch, we are making a block booking at HARRY'S in Cushendall; they are offering a two course lunch at £14-95 and the time will be 12.30 -12.45. Anyone who is going to this event is asked to email the Hon Sec (or by phone if you do not have email) if you would like to join in this lunch, so that we may let HARRY'S know how many intend to have lunch there. We can then confirm in the week before the event.

Hon Secretary Alasdair MacLaughlin
Hon Treasurer Philip Walden

Footnote reference Wesley:- Samuel Wesley (Father of S S Wesley) faced a major problem when it came to promoting Bach's organ music in England. At the time, there were no or very few organs possessing an independent full-compass pedal board. He had to resort to drastic measures in order to render playable Bach's major organ works. – for example, he arranged some works for four hands and others he arranged for piano and orchestra.

Over the weekend of 1st May USOC OVERSEAS TRIP to OXFORD and Area

Booking for this USOC Trip is now closed. We wish the Party a wonderful time!

**Saturday 28 May 2016 at 3.00pm in St Anne's Cathedral Belfast
A CELEBRATION of the 90th BIRTHDAY of HM THE QUEEN
(Please note the change in the original projected date)**

This is a joint event with St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast on the Saturday of the weekend which concludes the Festival of Music in the Cathedral. The event will incorporate Choral and other music with Royal Connections. The Celebration will begin at 3.00 pm, and there will be contributions from Choirs and Organists. As this is a special event, there will be a voluntary retiring collection. Further details will be published in due course.

Saturday 17th September 2016 in the Chapel of Unity at Methodist College Belfast at 3.00 pm.

A CHORAL SCHOLAR and CONDUCTING SEMINAR – more details will be announced later but please put it in your diary now

This will be of interest to all our members. There will also be a focus on conducting techniques. The event will be directed by USOC Member David Martin who is from N Ireland and the MCB Chapel Choir will also participate. David works at Westminster Abbey, where apart from being a Lay Clerk, he is the Music Librarian. In addition, David directs the choir ENSEMBLE PLUS ULTRA which performs worldwide – so he is at the pinnacle of his profession. Don't miss this one at 3.00 pm.

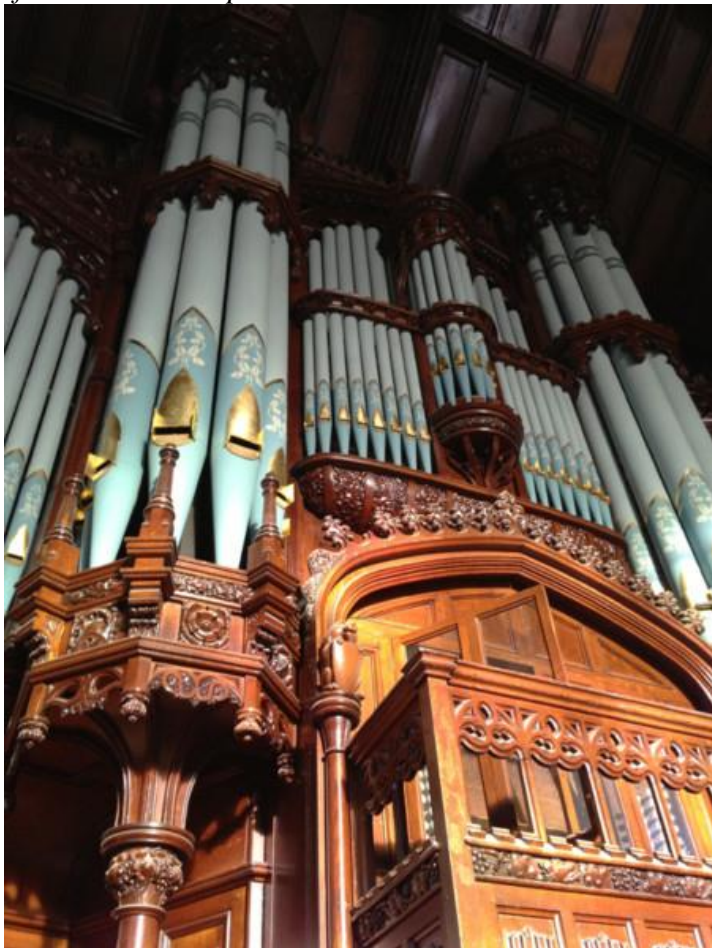
A separate event will focus on 6th Formers who are or may be contemplating competing for a choral scholarship at a University or other College; this will be arranged prior to the main event at 1.00pm in the chapel with a sandwich lunch for those involved. Members will be welcome to attend this if they have an interest in supporting such scholars.

In October 2016, we hope to have an all day visit to ORGANS in DERRY. Please note that the event and the date is yet to be confirmed.

In the morning it is planned to visit the Guildhall in the City where the venerable old civic Organ (installed in 1912) has yet again been attended to, during a £10 mn refurbishment of the Guildhall, which was completed recently. Here there will be a short recital and a talk on the challenges facing those rebuilding the instrument. Members will know that the Organ has silently sat through the interminable hours of the Saville Enquiry, and so access was therefore severely restricted. Also during the previous years of the 'Troubles', the instrument was badly damaged at that time. It will be wonderful to hear the instrument in full cry once again. There will be visits to other instruments in the City as well in the afternoon, and efforts will be made to ensure that members will be able to play the organs we visit.

Hon Secretary Alasdair MacLaughlin
Hon Treasurer Philip Walden

Please note that there will be a **Gala Concert** in the Guildhall on **26th June 2016**. This will be in association with the Honourable the Irish Society. As well as Codetta and senior choristers from Christ's Hospital and St Mary's College, the Concert will feature Catherine Ennis. Catherine was the President of the RCO in its 150th year. Her Father was Seamus Ennis, who was born in Dublin, and was **the** 'guru' many would say, in the twentieth century, of the Uilleann Pipes.



The Guildhall Organ, in Derry

November – COMPOSITIONS by USOC Members (date and venue to be confirmed)

This will be the final event of the USOC year, and will focus on choral and keyboard Compositions by USOC members past and present. The event will also include a session on how to write a good descant.

If you have a composition of your own, or you know of compositions by a member who is no longer with us and you would like it/them to be considered for performance on this occasion, please let a member of the Committee know before the end of June 2016. Also, if you know of a composition by a living member of USOC, or maybe by someone who **ought** really to be a member of the Society, please do let us know. We are aware of many works worthy of consideration already, but there may well be some gems out there waiting to see the light of day. Examples that have emerged include the piano works of the late Rodney Bambrick!

PLEASE NOTE ALL THESE DATES IN YOUR DIARY BRING YOUR FRIENDS AND MAKE SURE YOU JOIN US ON THE DAY. FURTHER DETAILS WILL BE NOTIFIED IN DUE COURSE

Hon Secretary Alasdair MacLaughlin

Hon Treasurer Philip Walden

CONGRATULATIONS & GOOD WISHES**Mr Billy Adair**

His many friends and our members will want to know that the President and the Hon Secretary had the privilege recently of conveying on behalf of the whole Society, our congratulations and very best wishes to Mr Billy Adair on his 95th Birthday. What a splendid record ! Billy, we all wish you a very healthy and happy year to come.

Mr Gabriel Kelly

It was very heartening to receive the good wishes of Mr Gabriel Kelly, from Westport, Connemara, who is a long standing member of the Society. Gabriel, who is now in his eighty first year, was until he retired a few years ago, 'Mr Organ' of Westport. He was organist in his own Catholic Church as well as in the C of I Church in the town. When he retired, some years ago, he received a reception and scroll from the Mayor to recognise his contribution to the music and good relations in Westport. It was great to hear from you Gabriel – and thank you for your good wishes to the Society. Gabriel has also kindly offered to assist James McConnell, who wrote in the Newsletter last month, with his research into European Organists in Ireland.

Mr Philip Stopford

Members will wish to know that our former President Philip Stopford has been appointed DoM at Christ Church, Bronxville, New York. Our congratulations to Philip on this appointment – we hope that he will remain in touch with USOC.

SOME OTHER EVENTS for your Diary

We would bring to your attention the series of ORGANIC LUNCHESES 2016 organised by our member and City Organist Colm Carey. There has already been one recital as I write given by Babett Hartmann (Denmark), see below on 29th January. The next is by Colm Carey himself on 4th March. Our member Dr Joe McKee OBE plays 'The Mulholland Grand Organ Entertains' on **22nd April**, and the series rounds off with Paul Young and Colm Carey 'Perform popular music for Trumpet and Organ' on **13th May 2016**. All these are at 1.00pm in the Ulster Hall. A lot of hard work has gone into this series by Colm and the City Hall Authorities, so do go along and support him and his fellow artistes. We need to show that our Society is in full support of the City Organist and this wonderful civic asset – the Mulholland Grand Organ.

Peter Gray writes:-

'On 29th January, the German Organist, Babett Hartmann, provided the lunchtime organ recital on the Mulholland Organ at the Ulster Hall Belfast. Normally these Recitals are not convenient for me to attend but I am extremely glad that on this occasion it was possible because it was one of those performances that from the first note sticks in the mind for its technical and musical quality, enjoyment and variety.

These days, she lives in Denmark, which she used as the basis for her programmes theme – the composers had some connection with the country. The four pieces she performed were:-

Praeludium in C, BuxWV 137 – Dietrich Buxtehude (1637-1707)

Music of an Organic nature – Benjamin de Murashkin (b 1981)

Sonata in G minor – Johann Peter Emilius Hartmann (1805-1900)

Hommage a Dietrich Buxtehude – Petr Eben (1927-2007)

'Music of an Organic Nature' will probably be unfamiliar to most people but fortunately a recording is available on YouTube, just search on the title and the composer's name. Anyone, who on hearing the piece wants to add it to their repertoire can even download a copy of the score from the composer's website.

Just as she assured us in her introduction to the Recital, the opening bars of the Eben piece were easily recognisable as coming from the Praeludium she began with. However, after that it was NOT Buxtehude that I was reminded of, it was 'Driving my Car', the 1980s hit from 'Madness' ! Whether that is another example of my warped sense of humour you must judge, as this piece too is on YouTube. I do hope that she will be back in Belfast in the not too distant future and that more of us will be able to enjoy her playing at a longer evening recital.'

Hon Secretary Alasdair MacLaughlin

Hon Treasurer Philip Walden

On **Monday 21st March 2016 at 7.45 pm, Cathedra**, directed by USOC Member Michael McCracken, will perform **John Rutter's REQUIEM** in Down Cathedral. The Orchestra will be led by Martin Surginor, and the Soloist is Jana Walsh. Please do support this ambitious event which should not be missed by Rutter fans. Tickets are £15 and these can be purchased at the door.

The **Miskelly Chorale** directed by Edwin Gray – USOC member – will perform again (they performed for USOC on 27th February) in Queen's Parade Methodist Church, Bangor, on **22nd April 2016** at 7.30 pm. Eva Richards, cellist, NI Musician of the Year 2014, will perform.

The St George's Singers have an event **20th Century Choral & Organ Music** on 1st April at 7.30 pm. In St George's PC, Belfast. Emma Gibbins, Sarah Richmond and David Robertson will perform with the Singers. The Conductor is Marion Docherty Hayden.

The **OUNDL** for **ORGANISTS** series of residential courses for young organists are scheduled for April 2016, Details are available at www.oundlefororganists.org.uk. Also, in August, the **RCO Summer School for Organists** is scheduled – this is suitable for organists of all ages. Other courses are available too from the RCO Academy in the Summer, and of particular interest to young people are those aimed at potential Oxbridge Scholars. Details are available on the RCO Website – RCO Academy Courses. **Please note that these are potential courses for which USOC ARTHUR BEGGS Travel Awards can be made.** If you wish to apply, or if teachers wish to encourage their pupils to apply for one of these awards, details may be obtained from the USOC Hon Secretary.

A SAD YEAR

There seems to have been something rather melancholy about the past year, quite apart from the weather. The Musical World in these Islands lost so many revered figures in the organ and choral world. The gaps they have left will, over the years, in terms of talent, doubtless be filled. However, the wonderful personalities left in our memories will not be forgotten. We lost our own incomparable RODNEY BAMBRICK, but his lovely and approachable piano, organ and choral music lives on. SIR DAVID WILLCOCKS, JOHN SCOTT, CHRISTOPHER TAMBLING, and others less well known also left us 'for another shore'. Then our own member THEO SAUNDERS and also UNA RUSSELL died. But so too did the organ builder PETER COLLINS, who followed WILLIAM DRAKE and KENNETH TICKELL from the previous year. There are others too, and they must not be forgotten, although they may be less widely known. Those specifically mentioned were all such large characters with such huge reputations that somehow their passing has been rather shocking.

Everyone will have their own memories and connections with all of them however indirect. The writer remembers particularly the personal kindnesses and generosity of Rodney Bambrick and was amazed to discover in various travel adventures that he was recognised nationally and in the USA for his many qualities. The writer remembers singing in St Anne's Cathedral under Sir David Willcocks many years ago, when the late Harry Grindle was in charge and he remembers being let loose on the extraordinary five manual Willis/Mander for an entire evening by John Scott in St Paul's Cathedral – probably only possible as the World Cup was 'on' at the time, and no one else wanted access that evening. He remembers Christopher Tambling's very approachable organ music, and debating musical matters with him at his 'old' school where Chris was DOM. He remembers playing the lovely little Collins Organ in Theo Saunder's Music Room. He remembers playing and practising on the gorgeous, brand new, large two manual organ built into the original case by Kenneth Tickell at St Mary le Bow when participating at the St Giles Barbican RCO Summer School. And who could forget our USOC visit to Christ Church, Spitalfields, last May 2015 to hear and play the William Drake rebuild of the Richard Bridge Organ installed originally in 1735; this was just prior to the official Gala Re-opening in June by John Scott – and in fact this was to be his last major Recital before he died in August. How privileged USOC were to have been allowed to visit and play the instrument, as arranged by James Little.

We will all have our own memories of these 'Greats', but it is well to remember such brilliant personalities and talents, and to be grateful for our connections with them for their example and for the pleasure they gave.

The Organ Gossip

Hon Secretary Alasdair MacLaughlin

Hon Treasurer Philip Walden

SCHOLA CANTORUM St Peter's Cathedral Belfast

Congratulations to USOC Member Nigel McClintock, and the Schola Cantorum of St Peter's Cathedral, Belfast on their recent award of £10K from the **Friends of Cathedral Music** (FCM) to enhance their Choir School. Other Cathedrals in the Province have also had awards in recent years, as well as St Polycarp's PC, Finaghy, and congratulations to them too. This year the St Peter's Schola Cantorum will be singing in Liverpool in the Summer, including both Cathedrals there, one at each end of Hope Street in the City. There will be more about Nigel, the Schola Cantorum and the FCM in the next Newsletter

USOC COMMITTEE for 2016

At the AGM of the Society on Saturday 9th January 2016, the following officers of the USOC were elected and appointed for 2016:-

President:- Dr Michael Callender FRCP ARCO
Vice President:- Dr Stephen Timpany ARCO
Vice President:- Professor Desmond Hunter FRCO
Committee:- Neale Agnew Peter Gray James McConnell
 David McElderry John McDonald Ivan Millen+
 Earl Moffitt John Murdoch David Rutherford
 Michael Tregenna Philip Walden (Hon Treasurer)
 Alasdair MacLaughlin (Hon Secretary)

Website at:- www.ulsterorganists.org (still under construction)

USOC SUBSCRIPTIONS

Please note USOC membership subscriptions for 2016 are as follows:-

Ordinary Membership NI & ROI	£25 p a	(raised from £20)
Member & Spouse NI & ROI	£30 p a	(raised from £25)
Great Britain	£15 p a	(raised from £10)

Student and International members remain unchanged at £0 and £7 p a respectively.

Philip Walden, Hon Treasurer writes: *Thank you to all those who renewed their subscriptions promptly. The Society is particularly appreciative of those who renewed their subscriptions by internet banking transfer and by S/O. Those who have paid a further £5 to supplement their S/O or early payment are also deserving of thanks. This still leaves around 20 members who have still to pay this year; I urge you to do so as soon as possible. In recent years we have been generous to non-paying members, only deleting them from the list at the turn of the year, and only then after failed attempts at making contact. This year could well see a further tightening up of that process. **Please don't delay, pay today.** I should like to stress the importance of informing the Hon Sec or Hon Treasurer of any change of address, telephone number or email details. Thank you. Philip Walden*

MEMBER FEEDBACK

If any member wishes to notify us of a musical event with which they are associated, please let the Hon Secretary know so that it may be assessed for publication in the USOC Newsletter. This if published in the newsletter, will be free of charge. If you don't tell us, we can't publicise your event. As in the past, and in addition, if there are flyers you wish to be sent out, please contact the Hon Secretary. It may not be feasible for us to do this within the restriction of the postal budget, but if it is possible, there will be a charge of £10.

If you know an **organist** or **choir leader** or purely an **enthusiast** who is not a member of the Society, please do invite him/her to join our ranks, giving contact details of any Committee member. Also, if you have any views on the Society at any time, which you feel might help us to enhance what we do for our members, please do let one of the Committee know.

The next Issue of the USOC Newsletter will be published in May/June 2016.

Hon Secretary Alasdair MacLaughlin

Hon Treasurer Philip Walden