

## Looking Back

### 10 years ago in the January 2000 issue of THE DIAPASON

Cover, Dobson Pipe Organ Builders, Valparaiso University

Aaron David Miller appointed associate organist and assistant director of music, Fourth Presbyterian Church, Chicago

Stephen Roberts appointed director of music and organist, St. Peter RC Church, Danbury, CT

Russell Stinson appointed to Josephine Emily Brown Professorship of Music, Lyon College, Batesville, AR

Mark Zwilling appointed director of music ministries, Cathedral of Hope, Dallas, TX

George Baker rejoined Karen McFarlane Artists after an absence of 20 years

Daniel Roth awarded "Prix Florent Schmitt"

Marie-Madeleine Chevalier-Duruffé died in Paris at age 78

"Project 2000: The Diapason Index enters Y2K," by Herbert L. Huestis

"French Organ Seminar," by Kay McAfee

New organs: Phil Parkey & Associates, Fabry Pipe Organs, Inc., John Allen Farmer, Inc.

### 25 years ago, January 1985

Cover: Rieger Orgelbau, College View Seventh-day Adventist Church of Union College, Lincoln, NE

Robert Shaw appointed Robert W. Woodruff Professor of Music and Humanities, Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta, GA

Sandra Soderlund appointed director, San Anselmo Organ Festival

Keith Reas appointed director of music, First United Methodist Church, Phoenix, AZ

Robert Sutherland Lord appointed to full professor, University of Pittsburgh

"Organ Pedagogy: The Eighth Annual Organ Conference at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln," by Mary Ann Dodd

"Conférence de Notre-Dame," by Olivier Messiaen, translated by Timothy Tikker

New organs: Andover Organ Company, John-Paul Buzard, Lee Organs, Stephen F. Meador, Hellmuth Wolff and Associates

### 50 years ago, January 1960

Largest Schlicker organ goes to Valparaiso University

"If You Must Act as an Organ Consultant," by Charles H. Heaton

"Define Principles of Valparaiso Organ Design," by Paul G. Bunjes

People: Feike Asma, E. Power Biggs, Fernando Germani, Royal D. Jennings, Dr. Albert Schweitzer, Marianne Webb, John Finley Williamson

Organs by Aeolian-Skinner, Austin, Casavant, Keates, McManis, Möller, Reuter, Schantz, Tellers, Wicks

### 75 years ago, January 1935

Westminster Choir College opens new buildings

"Virtues and Faults Seen in the Various 'Classic' Designs," by J. B. Jamison

People: Alfred Brinkler, Winslow Cheney, Clarence Dickinson, Virgil Fox, Porter Heaps, Hugh McAmis, Cora Conn Moorhead, Sydney H. Nicholson, Renee Nizan, Hugh Porter, Günther Rammin, Mario Salvador

Organs by Aeolian-Skinner, Bartholomay, Estey, Kilgen, Kimball, Möller, Wicks

## In the wind . . .

by John Bishop



John Bishop

### Improbable recipes

My father is a retired Episcopal priest and as long as I've been in the organ business—starting as a teenager ostensibly growing up in the rectory—I've enjoyed corresponding with him about church music. We've spent countless hours together in section 26 (row 4, seats 13 and 14) at Fenway Park in Boston, watching the Red Sox play, and I've often reflected that we might be the only priest-organist team in the place. Last week Dad sent me the newsletter from the Parish of the Epiphany in Winchester, Massachusetts, the church where he was rector as I was growing up (The newsletter is called *Three Crowns*. Get it, Epiphany?), because the church's music director had written a nice blurb about an upcoming musical service:

Trapped on the paper, it is just a lot of lines and squiggles, circles and flags, black and white—an ancient language, undecipherable to the uninitiated. But to those who are "called" to it, music on the page is the door to a multi-colored, "sensational" world, both a challenge and a reward for heart, mind, and soul. . . .

It seems improbable that a few dozen pages of black and white "directions" could convey the recipe for an opera, or a symphony—and yet they do. But it is only the recipe. It takes a parish choir to pick up the pages, to apply much valuable time and energy, to learn the skills in order to share this amazing transformation with each other, with a church family, and in the praise of the Creator who has gifted us with the miracle that is music.



Fisk organ, Parish of the Epiphany, Winchester, Massachusetts

Take a look at the website of this wonderful parish, <www.3erovns.org>. Suzanne McAllister has been minister of music there for many years, leading a vibrant and relevant choir program and playing the 1974 Fisk organ. This is the church where more than forty years ago I sang in the choirs and was inspired to learn to play the organ.

What is all this that we do? Whose idea was it that we would make a liveliness of flailing at a stack of keyboards during worship? Whose idea was it to solder up a lot of pewter tubes and make of them a musical instrument? And how did it ever get to be that a lot of squiggles printed on a sheet of paper can be read as organized sound?

§

I love the thought that a printed score is a *recipe* for a piece of music. When cooking, we can personalize a recipe by substituting lime for lemon or by fudging the amount of sugar or spice. When playing or singing a piece of music, we can personalize the recipe by adding a trill, by altering the tempo, or even by adding passing notes, altering harmonies, and (God forbid) improvising cadenzas. The older I get, the harder it is for me to accept the idea that just because we know (or assume) that a piece of music was composed by Uncle Johann it is therefore sacrosanct, that it is somehow illegal to change a note or two for the sake of fun. If, as we are taught, that it's true that much of Bach's music is improvisations that happened to get written down, do we imagine that it would please *himself* that dozens of generations of musicians are then forbidden to mess around with it?

Cooking is one of my favorite pastimes and I seldom cook directly from a recipe. I love to try to replicate something I had in a restaurant or something I remember eating when traveling, and I think it's fun to fool with ingredients. For a long time I cooked "without a net"—throwing things together that I thought would taste well—and was often disappointed when the meat turned out tough, when the sauce congealed, and when one ingredient in a dish was overcooked while another was raw. With experience and lots of reading, I've learned a little of the chemistry of cooking and I'm disappointed less often.

During my recent trip to Thailand, I was thrilled with everything I ate. For many years I've enjoyed Thai cuisine as it is served in American restaurants, and while much of what I ate in Thailand was familiar (lots of what you eat in a Thai restaurant here is authentic), there was an unmistakable native flair about it in

Thailand. My host had run a Thai restaurant in "The States" and was familiar with many of the recipes and ingredients we were enjoying, so I was given good insight into how the flavors are blended, and I looked forward to trying to re-create dishes. Before I came home, I bought several cookbooks and some of the particular spices and flavorings I assumed would be difficult to find here.

In my first excursions as a Thai chef, I adhered closely to the recipes and was pleased with how the unfamiliar ingredients morphed into the dishes I enjoy. A creative amateur cook can dream up a great-tasting batch of something that looks like the ubiquitous noodle dish Pad Thai, but until you get a jar of tamarind paste (available at Whole Foods, believe it or not) you'll not get the authentic taste. Tamarind is a sticky, gooey, tarry substance that comes from a tree. It's close to jet black in color and it's hard to imagine that it's something that occurs in nature—it looks more like one of the lubricants I use in my workshop. Taste it straight from the jar and you'll be puckering for the rest of the day—*ptooey!* But when it's mixed with fish sauce and lime juice, it produces an elixir that transforms a plate of noodles into ambrosia. All you need to add is rice noodles, onion, chicken, shrimp, chopped peanuts, tofu, green onions, and bean sprouts.

Now that I've gotten the hang of some basic flavors that are the core of Thai cuisine, I find that when you sauté almost any meat or fish with onions, add the cooked meat to a sauce of coconut milk, curry paste of any color, and lime juice, and throw in a couple handfuls of frozen peas you get a yummy slurry. If you like it spicy, add some red chili sauce. Scoop it over jasmine rice and you'll recognize it as Thai food.

### Musical ingredients

Our serious classical musical educations teach us the accepted and traditional use of the rare but essential ingredients. Figuratively, we know where in a Bach Prelude and Fugue we should put the tamarind. In fact, we can say that without the figurative tamarind you might argue whether it's Bach or not. But some chopped toasted peanuts, a handful of raisins or grapes, or minced green onions can be tossed in without a need to change the name of the dish.

We place heavy emphasis on *Urtext* editions of the pieces we play, those publications claiming to be accurate transmission of the composer's intentions—the Ark of the Covenant or the Holy Grail. But does that mean we all have to play the pieces the same way? I think that *Ur-*

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texts ensure that we start from the same recipe—that our extemporizing comes from the same source. But for heaven's sake, don't be afraid to add some garlic and salt and pepper to taste.

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More than twenty years ago I took on the care of a large three-manual tracker organ built in the 1960s by one of our fine Massachusetts organbuilders. Without saying which organ and which builder, I'll say that it's a well-known example of the American Classic Revival, with a traditional architectural *Werkprinzip* form with towers and fields of façade pipes and an unornamented plywood case. It is considered an important example of that style of *Euromerican* organbuilding and it shows up in several of the standard pipe organ picture books.

Not long after I got to know the organ, I ran into the fellow whose shop built it. During our conversation about the instrument, I confessed that I had trouble tuning the Positiv Krummhorn. It was a thin-sounding buzzy little thing and many of the pipes were unstable in both speech and pitch. He replied, "I hate that . . . Krummhorn."

Aha. So every stop in every respected organ is not a masterpiece. So it's okay for an organbuilder to say that he's disappointed in some feature of an instrument he built. Does that mean that it would be okay when assessing an older instrument to recommend the replacement of an unsuccessful stop? Or should the organ be respectfully and dutifully preserved in its original condition?

What's that onion doing in my oatmeal?

Now just because I remember this one conversation about this one organ stop doesn't mean I'm ready to justify the replacement of any stop that I think is less than great. And I'm not saying that this opens the door for us to look for convenient justification to do what we want without good artistic and academic consideration. But I do think that insisting on authenticity solely for the purpose of authenticity is not the best way to serve the future of our instrument.

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Classic French cuisine includes some of the world's best recipes and some of the most rigid attitudes about food. Jacques Pépin was trained as a chef in post-World War II France. He immigrated to the United States in 1959 to work for Pierre Franey in the celebrated Manhattan restaurant *Le Pavillon*, that esteemed and influential establishment that grew out of the restaurant of the same name at the 1939 New York World's Fair. It was *Le Pavillon* that brought the grand tradition of French cuisine to America, and Jacques Pépin, along with Julia Child and other gastronomic luminaries, who created the revolution that remade the complicated and rigid tradition to be accessible and understandable to American palates and amateur cooks.

In his memoir *The Apprentice* (Houghton Mifflin Company), Pépin writes of the autocratic, authoritarian tyrants who were his mentors, and professional kitchens in which teen-aged apprentices were the butt of cruel jokes, subject to severe punishments for mistakes. It was not okay to substitute lime for lemon.

As I read and re-read Pépin's words, I'm reminded of the stories I've read of French musical pedagogy of early- and mid-twentieth-century France. Marcel Dupré's life as a student was as rigorous,

demanding, and demeaning as Pépin's. Dupré and his peers did not practice scales and arpeggios as if their lives depended on it. They practiced scales and arpeggios because they felt their lives *did* depend on it. Stern teachers stood over them ready to strike if a note was missed.

Modern educational theorists preach against such authoritarian techniques, quite correctly looking out for the feelings of the student. While it's easy to argue that especially gifted students should be challenged, it's equally true that rigorous, even violent teaching methods leave scars on the psyche that exceed the value of the lessons.

While Marcel Dupré was a generation older than Jacques Pépin, both were products of a rigorous, demanding, old-world educational system. Both were taught independently as apprentices rather than in large classes. Both were fully immersed and versed in ancient pedagogical traditions and both were able to use that intense pedagogy as a springboard for meaningful innovation. Pépin's lilting contemporary recipes are exciting and fresh in a way similar to the bold harmonies, beautiful melodies, and deep mystic symbolism of Dupré's masterpieces.

Neither Dupré nor Pépin could have achieved such breadth and depth of influence without the rigor of their educations, however demanding or daunting.

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Ingredients in a recipe are the blueprint, the roadmap to be translated by the cook, through the utensils and heat sources, into the magic that is delicious food.

Notes on a score—those squiggles and symbols—are the recipe, the blueprint, the format to be translated by the musician, through the instrument, into the magic that is audible music.

The chef learns the basics, the techniques, the theories, and the chemistry. Once he knows those basics and can reliably prepare and present traditional dishes, he's more free to experiment because he knows the rules.

The musician learns the techniques, the historical priorities, and the language of the art. Once he can reliably prepare and present the great masterworks, he's more free to experiment, to innovate, and to challenge himself and his audience. How's that for a lot of lines and squiggles? ■

## On Teaching

by Gavin Black

### Repertoire, part 3: Mailbag

This month's column is devoted to answering a few questions from readers, arising out of the two recent columns about repertoire. The questions all have to do with one basic point—namely, how it can be possible for students to work effectively on pieces that are "too hard." These questions have led me to believe that I should discuss this further, especially since I also consider it a very important point. I will revisit certain things that I have already said, looking at them from somewhat different angles, and add a few new ideas.

### What is too hard?

I begin by quoting at length from a set of questions sent to me by Don Stoner, a reader from Pennsylvania who studied organ in college and has taught



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