

Benjamin Sheen (UK) Performs With Home-Grown Sand Artist Lawrence Koh

By Suzanne Lau

What would it be like to listen to live organ music while watching sand art?

The audience was treated to this rare performance which paired aural and visual aspects on 24 July 2015 at the Victoria Concert Hall (VCH). This programme is part of the VCH Organ Series with support from Singapore AGO.

Art came alive as young British organist Benjamin Sheen played Mussorgsky's *Pictures At An Exhibition*, with home-grown sand artist Lawrence Koh drawing the individual scenes on an illuminated canvas which was projected on a side screen. Sheen's expression of the piece coupled with sand art by Koh was definitely a feast to both the ears and the eyes.



Art & music come alive:
Photos: (Above): one of the
sights during the concert

(Left): British organist
Benjamin Sheen

Jerry Westenkuehler in Singapore

By Dr Evelyn Lim & Suzanne Lau

For Christians, music is truly a big part of liturgy and the worship service, and a large portion of it occurs in congregational singing. Dr Jerry Westenkuehler, an American organist/composer who specialises in hymn improvisations, shares that it is the great responsibility of organists to encourage the laity to participate in the worship. Organists can make hymn introductions and postludes more exciting, and this is where hymn improvisation comes in.

When asked if he had any tips for pianists who wish to learn organ improvisation quickly, Dr Westenkuehler says that there are no 'quick fixes'. Instead, he advises that organists to start by "trying new things and modelling composers".

Dr Westenkuehler will perform a recital and present hymn improvisation workshops on 6-7 October at Singapore Bible College.



A specialist in hymn improvisations: Dr Jerry Westenkuehler will be in Singapore this 6 - 7 October 2015

SG50 Organ Works Commissioned

By Dr Evelyn Lim & Suzanne Lau

In a recent issue of Pipe Echoes, plans were reported for local organ works to be commissioned in conjunction with Singapore's jubilee celebrations.

Here's a follow up with Phoon Yu, 25, a local composer and a member of the Singapore AGO, who wrote organ solos on two folksongs: 'Lenggang Kangkung' and 'Singapura, O Singapura'. Both works were premiered by him at the VCH Organ Series on 17 August 2015.

When asked why he chose the two songs, he shared that 'Lenggang Kangkung' was worth exploring as the work itself was short and also uncommon. As for 'Singapura, O Singapura', Phoon Yu says that this revised version is more energetic than his previous 'more contemplative' take.

So what's next for Phoon Yu after this project?

Phoon who recently graduated from the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music in Singapore, is now at the Peabody Institute of the John Hopkins University in the USA to pursue a two-year, Master of Music programme in Organ Performance. While pursuing his studies, he will work on various compositions which involve the orchestra and the saxophone.



Organists dedicating their craft to our nation's jubilee:
Phoon Yu (right) with Alexia Tye; pose for a photo outside the Victoria Concert Hall

Message from The Dean

Dear Friends,

Time seems to roll at an ever-increasing rate. Easter is long past, and the busy period leading to Christmas and the New Year are soon upon us.

Whether we are professional musicians or amateurs in a volunteer capacity, we may find ourselves losing steam from the constant demands of our vocations. In times like these, it is important to step back and remember once again, what drew us to the organ, and to enjoy the experience of listening (or playing).

Organ activity in Singapore has stepped up a notch since the re-opening of the Victoria Concert Hall. These events, as well as others organized by the Chapter, are good opportunities for our musical refreshment.

As a participant or supporter, let us collectively continue to promote the cause of organ music to our friends and society at large, and in doing so, share the enriching and uplifting experience that organ music brings.

With every good wish,
Dr Evelyn Lim
Dean 2014-2016

Singapore AGO Members in Leipzig

By Ng Chet Wei

On July 26th- 8th August 2015, six Chapter members went to an organ academy at the Hochschule für Musik und Theatre in Leipzig, Germany. They participated in various classes ranging from the music of the North Germans, Bach, the German Romantics and the French Symphonists. The concerts and masterclasses were presented by renowned organists and teachers from Europe and the USA.

Koh Jia Hwei's one-liner about her experience: "Stunning organs and music, hearty fare and excellent company!"

Ong Su Ling's thoughts: "I thank God for the opportunity and privilege to play and experience the wonderful sounds at the organ at St Georgenkirche, Rotha, which is one of the last remaining, nearly-all-original Silbermann organs."



One For The Album: [Left to Right] Ong Su Ling, Ng Chet Wei, Dutch Organist Pieter van Dijk and Koh Jia Hwei



Memories captured from the organ academy:

[Left] One of the last remaining nearly-all-original Silbermann organs

[Right] Some of Singapore AGO delegation at the Grosser Saal, Hochschule für Musik und Theatre (L-R): Chet Wei, Phoon Yu, Su Ling, Xiaoting & Loraine

Pipe Works 2015 featuring Graham Barber (UK)

By Suzanne Lau

28 April 2015 marks the last concert in the Pipe Works series, as the Orchard Road Presbyterian Church which houses the JW Walker (1962) organ, goes under renovation for the next couple of years.

The last concert featured Dr Graham Barber (UK), who presented organ works by Bach, Reger and Whitlock.

Dr Barber's programme line up for the evening was refreshing as it gave the audience a taster of organ music from the different music periods.



Taster of organ music from three different musical periods:
Dr Graham Barber at the organ

Seasons' Pipings 2015: Lent

By Suzanne Lau

On 11 March 2015, members of the Singapore AGO presented a Lenten edition of Seasons' Pipings. Held at Kampong Kapur Methodist Church, it was a great evening of instrumental, organ and vocal music for Lent, as well as reflective readings.

One of the special guest players that evening was oboist Mr Joost Flach, Head of Winds for Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts.

Here are some moments captured from the evening:



Seasons' Pipings 2015:
An evening of Lenten Music, presented by members of the Singapore AGO: Guest player Mr Joost Flach on the oboe is seen on the bottom left, who is accompanied by Yap Wai Hoong [organ], assisted by Joanna Paul

Look Forward To 2015/16!

Hymn Improvisation Recital /Workshops

- Jerry Westenkuehler (USA), Singapore Bible College
(6 - 7 October 2015)

VCH Organ Series

- Dong Il-Shin (Korea), Victoria Concert Hall
(1 February 2016)

Seasons' Pipings 2016

- To Be Confirmed

Stay connected with us!

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