

# ORGAN MUSIC IN THE LIBRARY'S COLLECTION

BY **Harold Fabrikant**

Harold Fabrikant is a radiologist and one of Australia's leading organists. He has performed widely throughout Australia and overseas and has made many CD recordings and radio broadcasts. He is especially interested in the neglected repertoire for the organ and his research at the University of Melbourne's Music Library has revealed some rare treasures.

The Royal Melbourne Hospital has been very generous in allowing Harold Fabrikant time from his regular duties to forage in the Music Library collections. Dr Fabrikant has sorted through the uncatalogued organ music, advising on editions of merit, removing duplicates and revealing rarities. His attention to the organ collections has been meticulous and scholarly, and his voluntary work here is much appreciated. It is unlikely the organ music backlog would have received the attention it deserves were it not for the enthusiasm of Dr Fabrikant. Evelyn Portek, Music Librarian

**T**he organist's art depends on many factors; unfortunately we tend to ignore some of the them at times.

In sequence, we need the organ builders, composers, publishers and distributors, libraries and finally the players. A failure of any one may be disastrous.

Libraries are especially important as holding bays where music which has fallen out of favour may possibly survive. Their role in teaching and research is even more obvious.

The Music Library at the University of Melbourne is blessed with a superb collection of organ music but a chronic shortage of funds limits its use. Only a part is currently on the shelves, available for general loan — and some of this is rather dilapidated, lacking stiff

covers and well used over many years. Another part of the organ music collection comprises major general sets, such as the almost entire published output of J. S. Bach, Reger etc, in which their organ works are included. This material can only be borrowed by University staff on a short term basis but is available for others to reference in the Music Library.

Particularly remarkable is the vast organ music collection in the Stacks, which is now largely sorted and in process of being catalogued. Library purchases form but a small part of this, for the bulk comes from bequests; their content reflects the interests of the original owners and the period in which they lived. The condition of this

“second-hand” music varies greatly from virtually unusable (even incomplete), to as new. Very little is bound and most volumes have such clumsy paper covers that they cannot be placed on the shelves until money is found to provide stiffeners for their protection.

Donors are probably unaware (as was this writer) that a library must spend a great deal before bequests can be put to use. Staff must catalogue and compare each volume with material already held; book binding is frequently essential and this is expensive. Not surprisingly, funds are such that bequests must often languish, awaiting the day when money appears. One may go so far as to ask that bequests be accompanied by cash donations to permit this necessary work — hardly an acceptable way of wooing donors!

The Music Library has substantial bequests from the following people (and I refer here only to the organ music given, ignoring the other sheet music or books on music which often accompanies these gifts).

**Bernard Clark** (1906–1965) was a pupil of A. E. H. Nickson and was organist at All Saints' Church, Windsor (East St. Kilda) from 1951, teacher of June Nixon and Barrie Cabena. His well-used books comprise standard repertoire, for example

Bach, Novello, Mendelssohn, Guilmant, romantic English and German writers.

**Leonard Fullard** (1907–1988) was organist at Christ Church, South Yarra for many years and founder of the annual Bach Festival. Another Nickson pupil, he was initially a thoroughly trained pianist who turned to the organ relatively late. He was subsequently attracted to the Orgelbewegung in Germany and in the process was derided by the ultra-conservatives in Australia. His contribution to the University Library bears a major Baroque component, as expected, but there is also much romantic music (Widor, Rheinberger and so on).

**A. E. H. Nickson** (1876–1964) was particularly eminent in Melbourne music; the biography by the Reverend Howard Hollis is eagerly awaited. Nickson's large Karg-Elert collection is stored with his personal papers in the Grainger Museum. Curiously, Kar's Op. 96, dedicated to Nickson in 1921, is nowhere to be found amongst his belongings but there are other pieces by Karg-Elert inscribed affectionately to him. The Music Library's acquisition from Nickson is almost entirely Romantic and largely Anglo-German: Rheinberger, Reger, Howells etc; even transcriptions are to be found here, by Saint-Saens and Lemare, for example.

The most outstanding donations of organ music however, come from the next three sources.

**Leslie Curnow** (1887–1976) was an amateur of great ability from a Ballarat Methodist family, organist of Christ Church, South Yarra in the 1920s and who presided over the Willis III organ in the First Church of Christ Scientist in St. Kilda Road from 1946 (where the instrument, rather than the religion, was the attraction).

Curnow was manager of the men's suits department at Myer, conductor of the Myer store choir, eisteddfod



An example of organ music from the Music Library sheet music collection. Composer: Sigfrid Karg-Elert, *Funerale für Harmonium* (Berlin: Carl Simon Musikverlag, 1913).

adjudicator and recitalist. He had a vast repertoire, mainly Romantic and was learning (and playing publicly) new works even in his old age. A recital on the Willis organ in 1963 for example, included Tournemire's improvised *Petite Rapsodie* and *Cantilene*, reconstituted by Durufle as recently as 1957 and published in 1958. The former is no easy piece and Curnow was then almost 76! He was an avid Karg-Elert player: that 1963 concert included two movements from the *Partita*, Op. 100 and the complete *Jesu Meine Freude* symphonic chorale from Op. 87, both very demanding. It ended with Vierne's *Carillon de Westminster*, once again a very difficult piece.

His enormous music collection is in superb condition and some of the books are hard bound. Throughout are his meticulous pencilled notes — registrations, fingering, pedalling — showing how detailed were his studies of almost everything in the collection. May this be a model for us all. Many of his volumes have long been on the Music Library's shelves where they have been frequently used, surely the fulfilment of any donor's wish.

In case one thinks Leslie Curnow spent his entire life selling suits and playing the organ, it transpires that he had two marriages, each of which produced three children — a truly full life!

**Michael Wentzell** (1939–1973) was a brilliant student of A. E. H. Nickson in the late 1950s, who became an Anglican priest soon after graduating in music. A meeting with Cochereau in 1959, during his ABC tour, led to European studies, by which time Wentzell was firmly committed to a more contemporary repertoire than Nickson had taught. He bought organ music on a grand scale but studied very little of it before his tragically early death; most of this is French. Michael Wentzell was unfortunately rather brutal with his sheet music and the bold pencilling generally meant that a studied work is unusable to anyone else. But because of his premature death, very little in this collection is in this state — indeed, most has never been used. Included are such writers as Tournemire (much of *L'Orgue Mystique*), Dupre, Barraine, Daniel-Lesur, Langlais etc — a great treasure chest.

**Reginald Raymond** (c.1890–c.1960) has provided undoubtedly the most stunning bequest, which arrived as recently as 1990. This enormous body of sheet music is again largely Romantic and mainly German, all in outstandingly good order. Much has been studied and some of the pencil marks are unfortunately rather coarse, but nothing has suffered destruction and a good deal is as new. In addition to large collections, for example, Dupre, Karg-Elert and Rheinberger, there are some virtually complete sets, for example Vierne and Basil Harwood and also some writers largely if not totally unknown to us. The most striking example in this bequest is a very large collection from Hans Fahrman (1860–1940), who is not even mentioned in passing in the

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The role of sports, particularly rowing, in university and college life is well documented. The collection is strong in books on the history of the Oxford and Cambridge annual boat race, and also for college sport histories, particularly in rowing and to a lesser degree, cricket. Though not strictly a sport, several books describe the art of punting, and distinguish between the different styles adopted in Cambridge and Oxford.

Cambridge may boast of many famous authors, scientists and scholars, only a very few of which could be represented in the exhibition. The physicist Sir Isaac Newton studied at Trinity College and was declared Fellow in 1667. Alfred Lord Tennyson matriculated from Trinity College in 1828, Charles Darwin from Christ's College in 1831. Both the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the novelist and caricaturist William Makepeace Thackeray studied at Cambridge, but left without a degree. Coleridge left Jesus College in 1794, Thackeray left Trinity in 1830.

Certain Cambridge personalities authored numerous items. Thus the collection contains over 25 items by J.W. Clark, an University Registrar; over 24 books and articles on Cambridgeshire by W. M. Palmer, a medical doctor and antiquarian, while F. T. Unwin, penned 19 semi-autobiographical novels based on his lifelong experiences in Cambridge. Strangely, while three authors wrote specifically on cats in Cambridge, none did so about dogs!

While the University Library contains numerous biographies/autobiographies of Cambridge personalities, two merit special mention, namely *A Last Eccentric*, the biography of the Rev. F. W. Simpson, preacher, historian and eccentric; and *Goodbye Mr Chips and To You, Mr Chips*, based on the career of W. H. Balgarnie, master at Leys School, Cambridge.

There are many other topics in the collection, such as orations in Latin delivered by the University to royalty on the occasion of important events, college stamps designed for postage

purposes, the graces used by colleges for meals in hall, the night climbers of university and college buildings, as well as many others too numerous to mention here.

Though not on display in the exhibition because of space limitations, the important collection of material dealing with the county of Cambridge must not be forgotten, particularly the items on the Fens which form an unique feature of the north eastern portion of the county. Ely Cathedral, which dominates the fenland, is the subject of several books. A number of fiction books are also set in the fenland.

Finally, mention should be made of the fine collection of over 230 prints on Cambridge presented to the University Library in 1995. Its two categories consist firstly of a set of 65 rare prints from the 16th to the 19th centuries, both in colour and in black and white, which portray a variety of Cambridge scenes, and secondly a comprehensive series of over 175 prints dating from the 17th century to the present time, which depict architectural views of Corpus Christi College, of which the author is an Old Member. Though most of these prints are held in the University Library Print Room, some are hung in the Graduate Centre located inside the 1888 Building on the Parkville campus (occasionally as photographic reproductions because of the rarity or frail nature of the originals). A full list of these prints is in the data base held in the Library's Print Room to facilitate their individual examination. ❖

*This material relating to Cambridge, which is situated on the Granta (or Cam River), is held in the University of Melbourne Library, in Melbourne, through which the Yarra flows.*

Pierre Gorman has had a distinguished career in deaf education. He has been a book collector for much of his life and is a most generous benefactor to the University of Melbourne Library.

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*New Grove* (or in earlier editions of *Grove* for that matter); one must consult a major German encyclopaedia of music — the Music Library possesses two such works — to find that this prolific composer, who lived in Dresden, was highly regarded in his day and did not limit his writing to the organ.

Reginald Raymond was a successful manufacturer, a supplier of goods to the shoe trade. He had a passion for organ music but was apparently an incapable player. Undeterred by this, he procured a three-manual organ of 25 speaking stops from Fincham and had it installed in the basement of his home at Warrngal Place, Heidelberg. Raymond was affiliated with the Collins Street Baptist Church, where the organist was Lawrence Warner (before his shift to the nearby Scots' Church). Warner, an architect by profession, was designer of the Raymond villa in Heidelberg. Now armed with a room and its instrument, Raymond bought music in bulk and patiently studied it, undeterred by his inability to play it fluently. He obviously derived great pleasure from these strenuous endeavours; decades later, it is we who now reap the rewards.

How fortunate we are to own such a body of sheet music. The task of placing all in a catalogue is in progress but the material will not reach the shelves unless and until the money is found for its hard cover protection. By that time, this fine library will have fulfilled its role in seeing to the maintenance of the organist's art, but will always look forward to receiving more bequests in expanding that role. ❖

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