

## Around Town

### Sunday, 4 May, 3:00 pm

*Songs in Bloom* with the Bytown Voices, Robert Jones, director, Katarina Jovic, accompanist, and the National Chorale of Jamaica, Winston Ewart, director, Ann McNamee, accompanist. String quartet: Kevin James, Lisa Taras (violin), Mary Pat Grimes (viola), Steven Smith (cello). Music by Vaughan Williams (*Five Mystical Songs* and *Old 100th*), Mendelssohn (*I Waited for the Lord*) and Pachelbel (*Canon in D*). St. Basil's Church (Maitland Ave., just north of the Queensway). Tickets at the door: Adults \$10, Students \$5. Info: 613-521-5997 or [www.bytownvoices.com](http://www.bytownvoices.com)

### Sunday, 4 May, 7:30 p.m.

*Vocal and organ favourites from Bach and Mozart to contemporary American music including André Previn.* Susan Lines

(soprano), Teresa van den Boogaard (organ, piano). St. Luke's Church (760 Somerset Street West, 3 blocks west of Bronson Avenue). Admission is by donation. Info: [www.stlukesottawa.ca](http://www.stlukesottawa.ca), 613-235-3416, or [penland@hotmail.com](mailto:penland@hotmail.com).

### Wednesdays in May, 12:15-12:45 p.m.

*Lunchtime Organ Recitals*, St. Barnabas Anglican Church, Kent and James Street.

- May 7 - Mervyn Games
- May 14 - Wesley R. Warren
- May 21 - Thomas Annand
- May 28 - Philip Crozier.

Freewill offering. Info: 613-232-6992.

### Friday, 9 May, 7:30 p.m.

*Seaway Valley Singers Spring Concert* Robert Jones (director), Valeric Kilpatrick (accompanist). Music of Vaughan Williams, Rutter, Copland, G&S. Christian

Reformed Church, 12436 County Road 18 (½ km. east of County Rd. 31), Williamsburg. Adults \$10, students \$5.

### Sunday, 18 May, 7:00 p.m.

*Festal Solemn Evensong and Benediction, Trinity Sunday.* Parish Choir, Wesley R. Warren, director, to sing works by Willan, Victoria and Palestrina. St. Barnabas Anglican Church, Kent at James. Reception follows in the Parish Hall. All welcome.

### Sunday, 25 May, 3:00 pm.

The Seaway Valley Singers present *An Hymn Sing*, with hymns based on psalms. Robert Jones (SVS director) and Michael Goodwin (founding SVS director) share directing and accompanying. Iroquois United Church (2 Elizabeth Dr., Iroquois). Freewill offering. Info: (613) 448-1647 or [www.seawayvalleysingers.com](http://www.seawayvalleysingers.com)

## John West Recital—Review

**K**udos to Pro Organo Ottawa for scheduling a delightful evening of relaxation and sheer fun, entitled *Curiosities and Discoveries*, with organist John West, at Rideau Park United Church, on March 28. Normally, I tend to “hole up” after Easter (five different services in the space of four days) and surface, somewhat punch-drunk, several days later, more interested in a good book than attending an organ recital. The scheduling of the immensely popular and multi-talented West for the March 28<sup>th</sup> concert ensured a good turnout, and the program of music by 11 composers had something for (almost) everyone. If there was any distress amongst the listeners over the absence of the ‘regulation’ prelude and fugue of JSB early in the program, it was not evident. The audience applauded with enthusiasm and really enjoyed West’s engaging humour and anecdotes. A few of us may even have gleaned some bold new ideas on repertoire. The first half of the evening had an English flavour, with works by Walond, Hollins and Vaughan Williams, all given stylistically appropriate readings with great technical ease. A new work for me was a transcription of the “Lullaby” from Khachaturian’s ballet *Gayane*. (which contains the well-known *Sabre Dance*), very haunting in its folk-inspired modal harmonies and almost

‘Asian’ melodies. The Guilbault-Thérien 3-manual came into its own for Reger’s *Toccata and Fugue in D Minor*, for which



West had a lovely registration. The first half ended with three pieces on Spiritual themes by fellow American organist Ralph Simpson, who was Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s organist at Dexter Avenue Baptist. From the “trio sonata” style for *Jacob’s Ladder* to a “bluesy” *Swing Low* to a romping finale on *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, this music was very easy on the ear.

Music inspired by spirituals continued in the second half of the concert, this time

thanks to the work of Nigerian composer Fela Sowande. John West seemed to delight in the seamless interface of jazz and JSB in *Joshua Fit the Battle*. Another ‘discovery’ for me was the organ music of Mexican composer José Jesús Estrada. The *Procesion y Saeta* is an unusual though very approachable tone poem, built on Andalusian themes. As an aside, I have discovered that this piece is available in “Mexican Composers for the Organ, Vol. 2”, edited by James Welch. The program was rounded out with Vierne and Widor. Here, West was clearly in his element, and his exuberance came through, especially in his interpretation of the Finale from Widor’s *Symphonie II*. However, given his program, I was sad that we could not hear him on a bigger instrument, with the tonal diversity to which he is clearly more accustomed. He worked hard to overcome the limitations of the instrument, but it was not suited to his repertoire.

West is clearly a departure from our regular breed of recitalists. It was refreshing to hear how enthusiastically he promotes his fellow American composers. If he returns to Ottawa, it might be worth assuring the presence of young people who would find out from him just how much fun it can be to play the organ!

Rosalind Gordon Weeks