

ORGANISTS' POLITICAL DICTIONARY

Compiled by **John Riley**

Given the interesting political times that we live in, organists are even more aware of the need to understand political and economic jargon. Here are some useful terms.

Allowances What one has to make in respect of the eccentricities of some organists.

Amendments What organists do to the scores when they can't play what is written.

Austerity Rhymes with 'posterity', something that many organists hope that their written creations will achieve, but all too frequently don't.

Brexit The procession of the bride after the wedding ceremony.
Soft Brexit Only the organ's choir division is working.
Hard Brexit Having to play the Widor Toccata.

Budget The amount that most people would deem sensible to spend on an organ, to which the organist would add at least one zero

Cabinet Leak The open whisky bottle in the music cupboard has been knocked over.

Chequers (1) An alternative spelling of *checkers* – a type of person in the congregation or at a recital that delights in spotting and seizing upon every mistake, or otherwise querying and probing every musical decision.

Chequers (2) The current tense of *chequered*; a description of the previous career of an organist who has played too many wrong notes at too many important services.

Coalition Partners What church musicians of two very different musical styles and traditions become in order to remain operational in the short to medium term, whilst secretly hoping for the complete subjugation and ultimate demise of the other.

Cost of Borrowing When an organ composer gets sued for using someone else's published ideas.

Cross-bencher An organist who habitually finds a place to sleep during the sermon.

Crossing the floor The process of discretely moving from the organ console to a distantly located piano or keyboard for a hymn that would be unplayable on the organ.

Crunch moment When the organist realises where they had dropped their glasses.

Cutting Public Services An aspiration of some organists, frustrated by poor singing, screaming children, noisy chatter and the clatter of coffee cups during their voluntary; to be replaced by services restricted to trained professional singers and other cognoscenti.

Deflation 1 What can happen to the car tyres of those who park in the clearly-marked organist's parking space.

Deflation 2. During the final organ voluntary, the worship band practicing next door for the family service accidentally blow all the electric circuits…including the organ blower.

Difficult negotiations ahead The organist has accidentally given the choir starting notes a fifth too high.

Early Day Motion The organist blindly reaches to switch off the Sunday morning alarm and goes back to sleep.

Exit poll The gathered opinions of those who leave an organ recital given by someone who had spent too much time in the pub beforehand.

Fake News An announcement of an international symposium on the organ music of Debussy.

First past the post Or, in the case of the candidates to succeed Buxtehude in his post, it was the first of many.

Free Movement An encore.

Growth target Mainly confined to very young organists, the objective of being able to reach the pedals, or (for some young American organists), being able to reach the top manual.

Inflation concerns The blower motor is making some funny noises.

Independent The organist decides to reharmonise the last verse without telling the choir.

Leak Mice have been at the bellows again.

Leave What some organists wish some of their more raucous-sounding choir members would do.

Remain What a note sometimes does when it is not supposed to, ('Cipher').

Labour The audible sign of the organist having picked a piece of music well beyond their capabilities.

Left What the last organist did rather suddenly, though quite why has never been revealed.

Right What some organists believe they always are.

Liberal Some organists' interpretation of a composer's tempo and registration markings, and/or ample sprinklings of added trills and other decorations to the printed score.

Losing seats People at a meeting next door have taken chairs from the choir practice room.

Low interest rate The congregation's response to preludes by a particularly dull composer.

Marginal seat The organist's page turner and/or registrant decides they want to sit on the organ bench too.

Minister's Questions Usually following suspicions that the organist played a cheeky hidden melody as part of a voluntary in reference to something in the sermon…

Migration Where organ pipes transfer between different instruments, usually authorised, but occasionally illegal, especially if the receiving organ happens to be in the organist's home.

Number 10 The number of a sonata by Rheinberger, already an unusually high number of organ sonatas by a single composer, at which point he decided to write 10 more.

The Opposition A broad litany of factors governing why organists cannot always produce the quality of musical result that they would like to. Such factors might include:- indifferent pipework; failing mechanics; slipped tuning; church is too cold; church is always booked up with people doing other things; just trapped the fingers in the console lid etc. etc.

Outside interests Often feature railways, traction engines, spending time in pubs, etc. etc.

Pledge Something occasionally applied to an organ bench by well-meaning cleaners, but which can lead to some embarrassing moments, particularly during wide multi-octave leaps.

Public gallery An area of some churches, particularly nonconformist ones, for those who delight in the thrill of sitting in front of the pipes and getting their ears blasted.

Questions in the house Such as, '….and for exactly how long are we expecting to be giving a 'temporary' home and looking after these redundant pipe organs?'

Rebel The organist who insists in doing souped-up harmonies to the hymns when the choir are trying to sing the harmonies in the hymn book.

Recount The organist has misread the time signature.

Researcher What deputising organists sometimes have to be at an unfamiliar organ in finding where the blower switch or main electrical supply is located.

Reshuffle What an organist sometimes unwittingly does to the order of the notes, each time that the piece is played.

Resignation Something through which an organist whose playing has proved unacceptable to the church, agrees to leave. A financial incentive, or threat of referral to the NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Congregations), may form part of a process of encouragement.

Safe seat An organ bench that is not reliant on books and other objects to precariously raise it to an adequate height.

Second Jobs The practice of simultaneously holding organist posts at two churches, whose morning service times do not overlap. This can result in styles of driving that most organists would not adopt on any other day of the week.

Second Reading A convenient moment for the organist to nip to the loo. This would sometimes be the last opportunity before the sermon.

Second Reading of the Bill What the treasurer does upon receiving the bill for some work on the organ after disbelieving what they saw on the first reading.

Service cuts Something that can involve the impromptu chopping of hymn verses, a whole hymn, or a carefully prepared anthem if the sermon goes on too long, or if prayers turn into a mini sermon.

S.N.P. Some Nasty Passages; lots of pieces of organ music have them.

Speaker The place where the sound comes out of an organ without pipes.

Split What can happen to the organ soundboards and other critical components if a church puts the warmth and comfort of its congregation above the well-being of its greatest asset and priority..

Small Minority The proportion of the general population that organists, and their tastes, will always inhabit.

Stalking Horse As with a 'Talking Horse', this is one of the few sounds that have not thus far been approximated and created into an organ stop.

Standing orders The clergy have arrived and/or the organist has started playing the first hymn.

Summit The point of a composer's life and career deemed to represent the peak of their inspirational powers. It is generally held to be a good idea for composers to be fully aware of which side of the summit they are travelling along before producing any more compositions.

Taking back control What the organist has to do in the face of a congregation's flagging tempo.

Term The length of tenure of an organist who will 'just do for the moment' while the authorities hope to find somebody much better, (but often don't).

The will of the people **…**Or to be more exact, *the wills of the people*; the only way that a cash-strapped church can possibly afford the totally disproportionate cost of major restoration of their pipe organ, or the purchase of a new one.

Third Reading The stage at which the organist is beginning to work out the actual notes in a bar of Reger's music.

Three-way-split Playing a trio sonata.

Turnout Something that organists should do (but all too often fail to) with dusty old music, service sheets, sweet papers etc., which can turn an organ loft into an absolute tip.

U-Turn What the Junior Organ Scholar is often told to do by the main organist when keen to show off the instrument (and themselves).

Unexpected Swing What an enterprising organist might inject into a hymn.

Unlock The very first thing that an organist has to do at the console before anything else can happen; a tricky challenge though when somebody else has inadvertently gone off with the key.

Whips A cathartic but ultimately futile instrument of frustration vented *in extremis* upon a constantly failing organ, (inspired possibly by an equally futile and cathartic act expended by a certain Torquay hotel owner upon his similarly non-cooperative vehicle).

Whistleblower A term sometimes applied to organists, usually by those who do not like organ music and organists.