

Attention: News Editor

For immediate release

REVENGE IS 'SWEET CHARIOT' FOR ORGANISTS BEHAVING BADLY

(LONDON -- 2 Dec 03) -- THE ENGLISH organist at St Peter's, Melbourne, rubbed salt into a gaping wound last week when he cunningly smuggled 'Swing Low, Sweet Chariot' into a musical interlude during morning worship.

Just 24 hours before, England had dramatically snatched the Rugby World Cup from the Wallabies in Sydney.

The event at St Peter's, Melbourne is just one example of church organists behaving badly - a growing, worldwide phenomenon documented by leading Christian webzine [shipoffools.com](http://www.shipoffools.com).

(<http://www.shipoffools.com>)

'When he got into the pulpit, St Peter's vicar boomed: "There's an enemy in the house!"' recounts Rachel Ellyard, a member of the church choir. 'I wanted the vicar to exorcise the organist who claimed that, had the Wallabies won, he would have played variations on Waltzing Matilda.

'But after the post-High Mass sherry, he admitted he was going to play "Swing Low..." regardless of who won the final.'

For years, worshippers have watched helplessly as organists pull out all the stops to get their own back on clergy and congregations - under cover of sacred worship.

'Several years ago I recall the "The Beer Barrel Polka" (or "Roll Out the Barrel") being played during a funeral Mass at St. Frances de Chantal Roman Catholic Church in Brooklyn, New York,' says reader Pax Romana. 'The deceased parishioner had been a heavy drinker. Nobody else in the congregation noticed the tune - except the priest, who had to hide his face behind a service book for laughing. Sadly, the organist in question died several years ago.'

During the processional entry of the elders at one communion service

in a church near Glasgow, a Church of Scotland organist played 'Send in the Clowns', according to shipoffools.com reader Diapason.

'Another departing organist took revenge on a group of elders he disliked by playing them in with the introduction to the roasted swan song (Olim lacus colueram) from Carmina Burana,' claims Diapason.

Sacristan recalls how, on one occasion, an organist played a heavily-disguised version of 'Smoke Gets in Your Eyes' during censing at Saint John's Church, Passaic, New Jersey.

'He concealed it well - but we noticed,' says Sacristan.

At St John the Baptist, Longbridge, Birmingham, UK, worshippers had the theme from the epic World War II movie Dambusters dropped on them by an organist during a Remembrance Day service.

'If there was such a book as the Basil Fawty Guide to Political Correctness, this would be in the opening chapter,' suggests Tony Potter, who witnessed the event.

Late-to-arrive brides stretch organists' patience to the limit - especially if they haven't brought enough music with them.

With the bride more than 45 minutes late, Arabella Winterbottom remembers how Anthony Jennings, a brilliant organist from the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, Auckland, New Zealand, resorted to 'delicately inserting Chopsticks into a long improvisation.'

'Anthony played it very slowly,' recalls Arabella. 'It took us time to work it out - but we had bucketloads of that to waste.'

Inspired by these accounts, Keren Terpstra, deputy organist at St Mary the Virgin, Sydney, Australia, gave worshippers a special combination of "Come Down, O Love Divine" and the theme from TV's Blackadder before the 8am service on Sunday morning (30 November).

'Not that anyone noticed,' admits a disappointed Keren.

shipoffools.com is the UK's leading Christian webzine currently winning more than 1.75m page requests every month. It is a global, interactive community with thousands of enthusiastic 'shipmates' valuing its unique blend of iconoclasm and devotion, where the ridiculous is

vigorously exposed and genuine spirituality actively pursued.

(ends)

* For more information phone Stephen Goddard, co-editor, shipoffools.com +44 (0)1744 733898 or +44 (0)7930 198209. Simon Jenkins, editor, shipoffools.com +44 (0)208 993 3936 or +44 (0)7808 297146.

Editors please note: Some names used are pseudonyms adopted by contributors to the shipoffools.com bulletin boards. If real names are required, please let us know.