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The National Carillon at Canberra

Statement from John E. Courter
Professor Emeritus of Music
College Organist & Carillonneur
Berea College
Berea, Kentucky USA

Dear Members of the Carillon Committee:

From February 2-9, 2004, I was a Visiting International Carillonneur at Canberra, giving a series of recitals, master classes, and participating in a Forum for the Canberra carillonists and the general public. It was an especially thrilling time for me to be there, because I had known for many years about the superb carillon on Aspen Island in Lake Burley Griffin. It is one of the most spectacular settings for a carillon in the world, and that, combined with the quality of the Taylor bells and the elegant architecture of the tower, has been recognized by all carillonists in the world. When I sent a photo of the tower back to Berea for publication in "Reflections," a journal of Faculty accomplishments, I received a one-word reply: "Wow!"

The Canberra instrument serves as a perfect example of a carillon: its wide range of notes and warm, luxurious tone are an ideal for what a carillon should be. Many of us have smaller, lightweight instruments that are adequate in their surroundings. But when we hear and play the Canberra carillon, the music comes alive with the composer's intentions, and we are filled with joy at the musical qualities we draw forth from the instrument! Persons who have heard only the Canberra carillon may take it for granted, not realizing that there are but few carillons of such a high quality. As a result, it may be more highly respected around the world than at home. It is truly a 'National Treasure.'

On February 7th, 2004, the Belgian community in Canberra gathered on Aspen Island in Lake Burley Griffin to hear Timothy Hurd, QSM, play a recital of Belgian Romantic carillon music. Since the carillon is the 'national instrument' of the Lowlands (Holland & Belgium), this was a most welcome 'piece of home' to those 120 or so persons gathered there. It served also to introduce many of these people to each other, since they did not know there was such a large group of their countrymen in Canberra. This event was the first of its kind, and was facilitated by Greta Fernie, the Cultural Attaché from Belgium to Australia.

Another significant result of the Canberra carillon was the creation of new carillon music by Australian composer Terry Vaughan. His works "Lake Music" and "Summer Music" have been played throughout the carillon world, but rarely with the beauty found in their home carillon. "Lake Music" was written for the dedication of the Canberra carillon.

The National Carillon at Canberra has earned worldwide recognition. It deserves to have a sufficient budget for maintenance, concerts by local and guest artists, publicity, workshops, the production of CDs to sell to interested locals and tourists, and other programs, such as commissioning new works to be written for this fine instrument.

There is a loyal group of Canberra carillonists who have a passion for this instrument, and the ability to play it very well. They and your listening public are grateful to have this first-rate carillon in your vicinity, and it is hoped that the Federal Government will continue its support of this endeavour.

Sincerely,

John E. Courter