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Westminster Abbey Organist James O'Donnell to Give Recital on Winthrop's Famed Organ on Feb. 14

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Westminster Abbey Organist James O'Donnell to Give Recital on Winthrop's Famed Organ on Feb. 14

Quick Facts

- James O'Donnell, world renowned organist and master of the choristers of Westminster Abbey in London, England, will perform a recital on Winthrop's famed organ.
- The recital is the first of The Friends of the D.B. Johnson Memorial Organ Performance Fund Recital Series.
- Winthrop's D.B. Johnson Memorial Organ is considered one of the most historic instruments in the Southeast.



James O'Donnell

ROCK HILL, SOUTH CAROLINA – Organ and music enthusiasts will soon have more opportunities to hear some of the most sought after musicians perform on Winthrop University's famed **D.B Johnson Memorial Organ**, thanks to the generosity of Hazel Bailes Somerville '69 and her husband, Murray.

The Somervilles recently established two funds - The Hazel and Murray Somerville Organ Performance Endowment and The Friends of D.B. Johnson Memorial Organ Performance Fund - that will provide programming support for the organ and create the Friends of the D.B. Johnson Memorial Organ Performance Fund Recital Series.

The establishment of these two funds will provide vital financial resources to secure some of the **best musicians in the world**.



Murray and Hazel Somerville

The Friends of the D.B. Johnson Memorial Organ Performance Fund Recital Series will kick off **Feb. 14** with a recital by **James O'Donnell**, world renowned organist and master of the choristers of **Westminster Abbey** in London, England.

"It is my good fortune to be among generations of Winthrop students inspired by the glorious sounds of the Aeolian-Skinner organ in Byrnes Auditorium," said **Hazel Somerville**, who served on the faculty of Vanderbilt University as artistic director of the children's choruses at the Blair School of Music. "Bearing the signature of renowned designer G. Donald Harrison, this instrument is a major artistic treasure held in trust by Winthrop University for the entire community. So it's an honor for us now to enable this instrument to once again be heard in regular concerts; we're thrilled to welcome as the first performer the brilliant organist of London's Westminster Abbey, James O'Donnell."

O'Donnell, an internationally recognized organ recitalist, will perform Feb. 14 at 3 p.m. in **Byrnes Auditorium**.

O'Donnell has given concerts all over the world, including the United



Don Rogers

States, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and throughout Europe. He was a junior exhibitioner at the Royal College of Music and subsequently Organ Scholar of Jesus College, Cambridge. He was later appointed first assistant master of music and then master of music at Westminster

Cathedral. During his 12-year tenure as master of music, the choir of Westminster Cathedral became one of the most highly regarded choirs in the world, winning the Gramophone Record of the Year award and the Royal Philharmonic Society award.

Among recent notable events, **O'Donnell directed the music for the 2011 wedding of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge**, and the **memorial services for Nelson Mandela and Sir John Tavener**.

According to **Don Rogers**, chair of Winthrop's **Department of Music**, it is a huge honor to host O'Donnell as the first recital in the department's new Friends of the D.B. Johnson Memorial Organ Performance Fund Recital Series. "We are thrilled to have James O'Donnell perform at Winthrop. It's very seldom that we get to hear a musician of O'Donnell's caliber perform on an organ of this quality," said Rogers. "We are very appreciative of the generosity of the Somervilles and others who have made this opportunity a reality."

The D.B. Johnson Memorial Organ, an Aeolian-Skinner, was installed in 1955. Famed Aeolian-Skinner tonal designer G. Donald Harrison designed the organ from top to bottom. It was the last complete installation he worked on before he passed away, making it one of very few in the world fully designed by Harrison. **It is considered one of the most historic instruments in the Southeast**. The organ was sent to the Letourneau Organ Company in Saint-Hyacinthe, Quebec, Canada, in May 2007 for a complete restoration.

Admission to the Feb. 14 recital is \$10 general admission; \$5 students and seniors, and free for Winthrop students.

For more information on the recital, please contact the Department of Music at 803/323-2255.

[\[Back to Previous Page\]](#)

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