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Organ Festival to Unite Alumni, Organists, Winthrop Community

Winthrop University

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Organ Festival to Unite Alumni, Organists, Winthrop Community

Quick Facts

- The Organ Festival will be held Aug. 13-16 on Winthrop's campus.
- Festival highlights will include an alumni recital and concerts by Richard Elliott, David Lowry and Robert Ridgell.

*Richard Elliott*

ROCK HILL, S.C. - The **Organ Festival**, set for Aug. 13-16, will bring together 13 Winthrop alumni organ majors, accomplished organists Richard Elliott and Robert Ridgell, Winthrop University Professor Emeritus of Music **David Lowry** and the Winthrop community for one purpose: to celebrate the restoration of the historic D.B. Johnson Memorial Organ, installed in **Byrnes Auditorium** in 1955.

Kicking off the festival will be an **alumni recital** on Thursday, Aug. 13, at 7:30 p.m. **Thirteen alumni organ majors** will perform a concert of pieces ranging from Bach and Mendelssohn to Calvin Hampton, a 20th-century composer. The lineup of alumni performers will include: Deborah Bagwell Bauer '93; Steven Blackmon '77, '86; Nelle Altman Boyce '71; Steven Branyon '82; Barbara Couch Dickson '71, '74; Cynthia Atkinson Fruth '77, '88; Elizabeth Miller '91; Lenora Lynn Morrow '01; Kevin Neel, former student in the Winthrop Academy; Greg Reynolds '89; Louis Shirer '80; Hazel Bailes Somerville '69; and Jennifer Zoellner '07.

*David Lowry*

The alumni concert offer graduates from a wide variety of class years the chance to play the **D.B. Johnson Memorial Organ**, an instrument that inspired them as students, according to Lowry, curator for the organ restoration.

*Robert Ridgell*

"Over 50 of our graduates have been inspired by the organ, going out to achieve remarkable careers in education, the church and the concert worlds," he said.

Elliott, one of three full-time organists for the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, will perform 20th-century works and classical compositions on Friday, Aug. 14, at 7:30 p.m. Appointed as a Tabernacle organist in 1991, **Elliott** taught organ at Brigham Young University in Utah and has performed extensively as a recitalist and accompanist in the U.S. and Europe.

On Saturday, Aug. 15, **Lowry** will play a 2 p.m. recital of pieces composed by him and for him, including "Nocturnal Soliloquy." Created by music faculty member **Leonard Mark Lewis**, the work will include accompaniment from **Hollis Ulaky**, lecturer of music, on oboe. Lowry, who taught organ for 30 years at Winthrop, serves as organist at The Church of the Good Shepherd in Columbia, S.C., and directs the York County Choral Society.

Ridgell, associate organist of New York's Trinity Episcopal Church, will perform on Sunday, Aug. 16, at 7:30 p.m. Part of the Charlotte, N.C., Chapter of the American Guild of Organists Summer Recital Series, the recital will include a premiere of a work for organ and percussion by Lewis. **Ridgell**, who took his first organ lessons with Lowry, also directs Trinity Episcopal's Trinity Choristers.

Efforts to restore the 54-year-old **D.B. Johnson Memorial Organ** launched in 2005, and in 2007 the instrument was sent to the Letourneau Organ Company in Saint-Hyacinthe, Quebec, for restoration. The organ, Lowry said, is "one of the country's most remarkable instruments."

"The organ (is) the last nearly untouched instrument designed entirely by G. Donald Harrison of the Æolian-Skinner Organ Company. It speaks into a remarkable acoustic where it has thrilled audiences for over 50 years," he added.

All four concerts, which are free and open to the public, will be played on the organ in Byrnes.

For more information, contact Department of Music Chair Don Rogers '75 at 803/323-2255 or e-mail Lowry at DavidL1205@aol.com.

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