

## THE ORGANISTS' GUIDE TO POLITICAL TERMS – By John Riley

*Given all the present political and economic turmoil and uncertainties, here is a bespoke guide for organists to help navigate the plethora of jargon and follow current happenings.*

**Brexit** The procession of the bride after the wedding ceremony.

**Grexit** The procession of the groom after the wedding ceremony, (usually simultaneous with 'Brexit', unless something distinctly unfortunate has happened/not happened, up at the altar).

**Soft Brexit** Only the choir division on the organ is working.

**Hard Brexit** Having to play Widor's Toccata.

**Quick Brexit** Widor's Toccata played by Cameron Carpenter.

**E.U. Budget** 'Exceptionally Unpalatable Budget', e.g. organ maintenance or choir budget completely slashed.

**D.U.P.** Desperately uninspired playing.

**Bung** What some congregations have to do to their ears to protect them from organists' noisier expressions.

**Leak** Mice have been at the bellows again.

**Deflation** During the final voluntary, the Worship Band practicing next door for the family service accidentally blow all the electric circuits.

**Low interest rate** The congregation's response to the pre-service preludes.

**Record low interest rate** A recital series on the complete works of a very boring composer, e.g. Caleb Simper.

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

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

**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.

**Notes of No Confidence** Music that an organist plays out of time and very quietly because they know that they have not learnt it properly yet.

**Motions of No Confidence** Where a clueless conductor reacts to what the choir are doing, rather than showing the choir what to do.

**Early Day Motion** Organist moves to turn off the Sunday morning alarm and goes back to sleep.

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

**Right** What some organists believe they always are.

**Leave** What some organists wish some of their wobblier choir members would do.

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

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

**Safe seat** An organ bench that is not reliant on books and other objects to precariously raise it to an adequate height, nor one that the organist is liable to fall backwards from, and into the laps of the congregation below.

**Select Committee** What an organist would like to do, so as to give the maximum chance of authorising major funds to be spent on the organ.

**Divergence** The difference between what is written in the music and what is actually played.

**Single Market** Sometimes mistaken for the 'singles market', something that a married organist may end up rejoining if they keep blasting organ music CDs in the house all day.

**Divorce Settlement** Organist generally gets to keep the CDs.

**Alternative arrangements (1)** Versions of organ works for organists who find that originals too difficult, too long, or want the boring bits to be taken out.

**Alternative arrangements (2)** Organ versions of works composed for types of other instruments that the organist cannot play. However, arrangements of works for some instrumental forces, e.g. banjo orchestra, can be a bit of a stretch.

**Alignment** The art of keeping the pulse the same in each hand and pedal; doesn't always happen, though.

**Treaty** Something that marks the end of a major bust-up between organist and music group or clergy. Treaties however can sometimes be broken, or merely serve to kick the can further down the road.

**Having your cake etc.** A church or congregation wanting a top-class professional organist on an honorarium basis.

**Free Movement (1)** A style of playing characterised by pronounced gestures and emulating the role of a conductor; liable to give anyone next to the organist, e.g. a page turner or a duet partner, an elbow in the side or slap in the chops.

**Free Movement (2)** A movement of an organ work that is devoid of any discernible pulse or metre.

**Free Movement (3)** An encore.

**Remoaners.** Members of the congregation who keep complaining to the organist about the same thing.

**Transition period (1)** The time it gets to return to the home key in an improvisation. In the case of an improvisation that started in 'F' major and wandered into B minor, this may require an **Extended Transition Period**.

**Transition period (2)** The point at which an improvisation in roughly Baroque style moves into something approximating that of Howells on an off day.

**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.

**Whistleblower** A term sometimes applied to organists, usually by those who do not like organists and/or what they do.

**Floor of the House** A part of organists' homes where can be found piles of music, CDs, scattered papers, and the odd keyboard instrument.

**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?'

**Second Reading** Like a first reading and third reading, a breathing space for the organist that might allow them to (a) search for the music for a forthcoming part of the liturgy that they have just mislaid; (b) digest some impending music that they never learnt properly; (c) mop their brow after a particularly stressful few minutes; (d) nip to the loo.

**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.

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

**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.

**S.N.P.** ‘Some Nasty Passages’, usually towards the end of a piece; can be circumvented by repeating the easier bits of the opening, and by the time one gets to the hard bits the congregation will hopefully have left the building, or be chatting too noisily to notice or care.

**Investments** When the clergy look colourful, important, and in better touch with The Almighty; (similar to ‘Incassocks’ for the organist and choir, except that this particular term has not yet been invented.)

**Minister’s Questions** Usually following suspicions that the organist played a rude hidden melody as part of a voluntary in reference to something in the sermon or some aspect of The Minister’s person.

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

**Recount** What the choirmaster sometimes does on the coach after each stop on a choir tour, either because choir members have found something of greater interest at their last port of call, or because some locals have come on board for a free ride.

**All Night Sitting/ Late Sitting** Extremely long sermon with some hymns chopped as a result.

**Strong and Stable** A vital quality of the organ’s wind supply, without which certain important parts of an organist’s music programme might have to be left out, such as full chords, long held notes with full organ, and various fast showy bits.

**Large Majority** The proportion of the general population, which organists deem to have shallow and restricted musical tastes.

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

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

**Running out of road** What usually happens when you get to a cliff edge (q.v.).

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

**Austerity** A wartime class of steam freight locomotive that was designed as a temporary expedient but found to have much more enduring qualities, and which gave many years of service; (sometimes confused with music for 'posterity', a somewhat ambitious concept on the part of some church music composers, whose output is found to have rather less enduring qualities, and just a few years in services).

**Norway/Norwegian model** A type of person not normally found in church choirs.

**Future relationship** What some organists might be hoping for if they did.

**Fudge (1)** Something that the organist should not be eating at the console; liable to lead to excessive legato, note clusters, (as opposed to nut clusters), and some annoyance on the part of organists who have to play the instrument afterwards.

**Fudge (2)** A word sometimes substituted for a similar sounding word, of somewhat different meaning, and uttered discretely (and occasionally not) upon such occurrences as:- (a) A cipher appearing just at the start of the organist's recital; (b) the only pencil falling between the pedals; (c) the conductor being about to start the anthem, and the organist sees that they have left their copy of the music downstairs; (d) the page turner knocking the organist's music off the stand during one of their recital's really hard bits; (e) the organist opening the page of an organ diploma written paper and realising that they have totally misread the syllabus.

**For the many not the few** The policy of a small number of organists who do not get out of bed to give a recital for audiences of less than 300, (and with a fee to match).

**Cliff Edge** A metaphorical term referring to the job security of an organist who has played too many wrong notes at too many important services.

**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).

**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 the over 18s, trained professional singers and other cognoscenti.

**Broken Society** Also known as ‘Society’s Broke’; often on account of the organists’ society laying on too many foreign organ tours and social nights out.

**Boxed into a corner** When an ambitious last verse reharmonisation ends up in a totally unrelated key, with no obvious or painless way back.

**Unexpectedly difficult negotiations ahead** When the organist accidentally gives the choir their starting chord several keys too high.

**We’re all in it together** What the conductor might tell his a choir when they experience a calamitous collapse of ensemble, solely on account of the conductor’s totally mishandled direction.

**Just about managing** Playing a Bach Trio Sonata two parts at a time.

**Independence (1)** A description of the connection between some organists’ perception of what they are playing and how it really sounds.

**Independence (2)** A genre of playing style influenced by such factors as the organists being miles away from the congregation or singers; miscounting the number of hymn verses; forgetting/willfully ignoring the fact that the choir are singing the hymns in strict four part harmony.

**A colony** A collective noun for a group of organists; one of many such terms and decidedly among the more polite ones.

**Giving people the right to choose** A process by which a group of people, for example a music committee or congregation in general, express their choice, thereby – and often by a very slender majority – completely denying the other people their right to choose.

**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 organ, or the purchase of a new one.

**Meaningful votes** ...Or to be more exact, *meaningful notes*; music that rises above the function of conversation smotherer or general-purpose musical wallpaper to convey and engender thoughts and emotions. Sometimes however, this lofty aim merely ends up producing meaningful thoughts that the organist and/or organ aren't any good.

**Directives** A series of signals between the brain and the hands and feet, which are all too rarely carried through to the letter.

**Taking back control** What an organist would like to do when they feel that the Minister is having too many ideas of their own about what music to use.

**Sovereignty** The sense, albeit sometimes delusional, that the organist is in ultimate control of all matters regarding the music.

**Controlling our borders** What those working in cathedral choir schools aspire to when they feel that the choristers are becoming a bit unruly.

**Defections** Another form of *defective*. A term often applied to instruments, organists' playing, and occasionally even organists' thinking and broader sanity.

**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; the day job is becoming the evening job as well; not enough energy; not enough time; not enough talent; mother-in-law coming to stay; triplets on the way...etc. etc.

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

**Back stop** Something fixed to the rear of an organ bench to help stop the organist falling over backwards, e.g. whilst playing an exciting piece or upon a shock announcement from the pulpit.

**Divergence** The difference between what is written in the music and what is actually played.

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**Treaty** Something that marks the end of a major bust-up between organist and music group or clergy. Treaties however can sometimes be broken, or merely serve to kick the can further down the road, (q.v.).

**Having your cake etc.** A church or congregation wanting a top-class professional organist on an honorarium basis.

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**Remoaners** Members of the congregation who keep complaining to the organist about the same thing.

**A special place in hell** A flexible space and concept, which an organist may deem to be an appropriate resting place, or even originating place, for such things as: A particular organ builder renowned for ruining decent organs, a choir member of a certain distinctive vocal timbre, a particular organ, the music of a certain composer, their boss etc. etc.

**Cliff Edge** A metaphorical term referring to the job security of an organist who has played too many wrong notes at too many important services. (Not to be confused with *Cliff Richard*, a noted musician but not, so far we are aware, an organist.)

**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.

**Kicking the can down the road** A less destructive means of venting frustration (e.g. at the organ, one's playing, an awkward or musically-bereft choir member etc. etc.), than kicking something/somebody else.

**Article 50** The product of an especially prolific and enthusiastic writer on matters relating to the organ world, and intended for an organist journal.

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**Taking back control** What an organist would like to do when they feel that the clergy are exerting too many ideas of their own about the music.

**Sovereignty** The sense, albeit sometimes delusional, that the organist is in ultimate control of all matters affecting their domain.

**W.T.O. rules** The disciplines required to be a 'Well Trained Organist'.

**Controlling our borders** What those working in cathedral choir schools aspire to when they feel that the choristers are becoming a bit unruly.

**Heel or no heel** A debate between purists who argue that in Baroque music especially, pedalling with toes only gives you greater control, as opposed to those of more pragmatic persuasion who argue that a heel provides a smoother transition.

**Frictionless** An attribute of some organ benches of mixed virtue; possibly useful for music with sudden five octave leaps, but with possible consequences of a sore, disruptive and embarrassing nature.

**New ideas** A term given to initiatives to revive music in a church, and recognised by those who have been there for a long time as old ideas (albeit with different terminology) that have been tried before and failed.

**Extension** What an organist might request of an organ-builder, to make the high sounds a bit squeakier and tinklier, and the low sounds bit growlier and rumblier...particularly if the church is a bit tight for cash, ...or if such things as coffee-serving areas, technician's control desk, drum kit, or unloved but listed monuments stuck to the wall, are restricting expansion of the organ.

**Customs checks** Something that a visiting organist to a church is well advised to make. For example, is it the church's custom to pay, and how much? Do the clergy customarily enter with regal pomp, with music to match, or funereal silence? Are there pre-service announcements or a warm-up act likely to cut into the music? How long is the sermon; long enough for the organist to nip to the pub/do a bit of shopping/have a worthwhile kip? Do the congregation notice or care whether the organist has done any practice or not? Is it their custom to ask the organist back if they have committed various sins, e.g. played a verse too many or too few, played too fast or too slow...or incorporated melodies of a frivolous or satirical nature in their interludes?

**Deadlock** An occasional hazard with organ consoles, brought about by rust, mechanical issues, or someone having gone off with the key; is likely to lead to having to use the piano, ancient electronic keyboard...or failing those, worship of an Eastern Orthodox or Quaker nature.

**Settled status** An organist who, for a variety of possible reasons, is pretty well immune from the sack, no matter how badly they play.

**Summit (1)** An alternative spelling of 'summat', used in the North of England for such phrases as, "Thuz summat wrong wi't blower"...or "This 'ere organist is always complaining about summat 'n nowt"

**Summit (2)** 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.

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