

Obituary **Barry Jordan** (*17 Dec. 1957 – † 13 Nov. 2024)

Barry Jordan, organist, conductor and composer in Magdeburg, Germany, passed away after a prolonged illness on Wednesday, November 13th, 2024 at the age of 66 years old.

Barry Jordan was born on Dec. 17th, 1957 in Port Elizabeth, South Afrika. He studied initially at the University of Cape Town where he completed his Bachelor of Music in 1979. Influential teachers there included Peter Klatzow (Composition und Piano), Shirley Gie und Barry Smith (Organ). During this time he also worked with Dame Gillian Weir who was there on a visiting professorship. From 1977 he was Organ Scholar at St. George's (Anglican) Cathedral. After 4 years of alternative military service as clarinetist in the South African Police Corps Band he returned to Cape Town where he taught music, directed choirs, and resumed playing organ at the cathedral. At the same time he also resumed his studies with Gie in Organ and with Klatzow in composition, preparing a portfolio for his Master of Music Degree in composition which he attained with honors in 1985. With his work "Last Things" for orchestra he won the Peter-Klatzow-Prize and a further scholarship for Cape Town University.

In 1986 Barry went to Vienna where he studied composition with Francis Burt and organ with Martin Haselböck. Following Haselböck to the Hochschule für Musik in Lübeck a year later, he there completed his Concert Examination in Organ with honors in 1989 and his Examinations for Church Music in 1994. While studying in Lübeck Barry worked at the historic St. Nikolai church in Kiel as the assistant of Hans Gebhard, then as choir director and organist at the modern Osterkirche in Kiel.

In August of 1994 he was appointed Cathedral Organist and Choirmaster of the Protestant Cathedral (Dom) of Magdeburg. He officiated there for almost 30 years, retiring on December 1st, 2023. In this position he distinguished himself not only as an outstanding liturgical and concert organist but also as a conductor of major choral works with and without orchestra. He also built up the youth and children's choirs, taking these on concert tours to Scandinavia. For his commitment and service in the field of church music, the leadership of the Protestant Church Region bestowed upon him the honorary title of "Church Music Director" in 2004.

He was largely responsible for initiating the building of two new instruments in the Cathedral. The main organ (IV/92) was built by Alexander Schuke (Werder) and completed 2008. The organ in the Cathedral Remter (II/22) was built 2011 by Glatter-Götz and voiced by Manuel Rosales. After the main organ was completed he started up the concert series "Orgelpunkt", which has become very popular and reaches a broad audience. He also organized the International August-Gottfried-Ritter Organ Competition, which is named after one of his predecessors.

In addition to bringing in colleagues of international stature he performed regularly at the Cathedral himself and maintained an active recital schedule in Germany and abroad. His playing is documented on commercial CDs appearing on labels including Prospect, IFO, and Querstand. These document the instruments mentioned above as well as several of his compositions. From 2003 until 2006 he taught organ at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater "Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy" in Leipzig. In 2014 he held Masterclasses at two renowned Universities in the US: Notre Dame University and University of Alabama.

His unbounded knowledge of and avid interest in historic instruments led him to become an organ consultant. In this capacity he oversaw the restoration of unique baroque and romantic instruments. In addition to specifying and overseeing the installation of the two new organs at the Cathedral, he also supervised the restoration of the Compenius organ in the nearby town of Niederndodeleben. After this jewel had been brought back into mint condition, he started up an organ concert series there and served as artistic director (without remuneration). The organ landscape in the cathedral bears his signature and the entire surrounding area his stamp.

Barry Jordan was a longstanding active member of the European Chapter of the **American Guild of Organists**, becoming a Board Member in 2012 and maintaining the Chapter's web-presence on the Internet. He regularly attended both Board Meetings and the Spring Meetings, the latter being the most important annual Chapter event at which many of the members meet. He single-handedly organized the Spring Meetings which took place in Magdeburg (2013) and Erfurt (2023).

Although his more than full-time job allowed him little time to compose, Barry was in recent years more and more active as a composer for organ and other ensembles. Just a few recent substantial works include:

Letters from Lambarene

for organ solo, written 2013 for Rhonda Edgington

Ox and eagle, angel, lion

for organ solo, commissioned by the Chapter of the Turku Cathedral in Finland for the 50th anniversary of their summer organ festival. Barry premiered it there himself on July 12th, 2023.

“**The Ladder to Heaven**” (Die Himmelsleiter), an Oratorio for Soli, Choir and Orchestra, commissioned by the Magdeburg Church District for the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. It was premiered by the Magdeburg Cantata Choir conducted by Tobias Börngen on June 15th, 2024.

In recognition of his contributions to the city he was invited to enter his name into the Golden Book of the City of Magdeburg. This took place the end of November 2023, upon the occasion of his farewell from the Magdeburg Cathedral.

He is survived by his wife, Katrin, and children Emma and Rupert, plus Nicholas (from his previous marriage), and two brothers, one in South Africa and one in the US.

Barry Jordan was a consummate musician who upheld a consistently high level of quality in all of his musical endeavours. He was an extraordinary organist who enriched the lives of his listeners with deeply moving interpretations, an intrepid choral conductor who formed even old works to leave a fascinating new impression, and an inspired composer whose well-crafted works go above and beyond technique and touch the soul. His accomplishments radiate far beyond the borders of Magdeburg. He will be sorely missed by all who were blessed to know and appreciate him.

May he now be a part of everything that he has so often interpreted in a musically vivid way and may we who are left behind be comforted by the thought that he has been redeemed and that his trials here on earth are over.

Johann Sebastian Bach: St. John Passion (BWV 245)

No. 40. Ach Herr, lass dein lieb Engelein

*Ach Herr, lass dein lieb Engelein am letzten End die Seele mein in Abrahams Schoss tragen,
den Leib in seim Schlafkämmerlein gar sanft, ohn 'ein'ge Qual und Pein ruhn bis am jüngsten Tage!
Aldenn vom Tod erwecke mich, dass meine Augen sehen dich in aller Freud, o Gottes Sohn
Mein Heiland und Genadenthron!*

[Oh Lord, let your dear little angels at the very end carry my soul into Abraham's bosom,
(let) my body rest in its little sleeping chamber, altogether peaceably, without any sorrow and pain,
until the day of judgement! Raise me thereafter from the dead, so that my eyes will look upon you
in all joy, O son of God, my savior and throne of grace!]

The funeral service took place on Saturday, December 7th, 2024, at 2 p.m. in the Pauluskirche in Magdeburg.

Bernard Sanders