

Organs – short term hire

It is sometimes necessary to hire an organ for a Masonic event being held in a large venue, or when the usual organ is not working. Here are some tips for those who have to do this, often at short notice.

Our ceremonies need an instrument capable of providing ceremonial music, rousing marches for processions, fanfares when very high ranking officers are received, volume for encouraging good singing and the contrast of quiet background music for setting a tranquil atmosphere.

Avoid bringing in small home organs and those intended for the entertainment industry with lots of buttons and lights. Organs of this type have automated rhythm gadgets that are unnecessary, and insufficient selections of the sounds needed for our purposes.

Try to hire an organ with a 'church' type of specification and pedal board. This will enable the organist to play both the majestic music needed and the quiet background music that sets the scene.

There are very many makes and models available. Names like Allen, Viscount, Rogers, Wyvern are widely available in the UK and are very suitable.

Expect to pay approaching £150 to hire a suitable organ. The price may be lower if you have a friendly dealer who is a Freemason; the price is not based on the size of the organ; the main costs arise from delivery and collection. As these instruments plug into a 13 amp socket, theoretically you could organise transport yourself and save some money, but the dealer would want to know you'd insured his instrument. There is seldom any problem setting up – just switch on.

Don't be put off by the costs involved. Our ceremonies need dignity; we have standards to maintain in music as well as in Masonry. And, of course, good organs attract and inspire good organists.

About the author: Naunton Liles has been a Masonic organist for over 50 years and is a Provincial Organist in several orders. He is currently Assistant Organist in the Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons and Great Organist in KT. He has played at more than 60 Masonic centres in the UK and Europe. For further guidance he may be contacted on 07973 890601 or by e-mail: naunton@liles.org.uk