

Organ Control: Jack Fringe

Miss Gloria Fitzsimons, the Senior Organist at Saint Genesius Cathedral in Sydney, became ill and Mrs Edith Clampton was elevated to Acting Senior Organist in her absence. While this senior position brought Mrs Clampton much social recognition, especially from the Bishop, she felt uncomfortable that her name tag identified her as 'Acting'.

Prior to the Senior Organist becoming ill, Mrs Clampton had dreams of being the lead organist and prayed that Miss Fitzsimons would retire early or even take extended holidays. But those prayers were left unanswered. Miss Fitzsimon was often praised in the Church Flyer. And occasionally parishioners would run up the gallery stairs to catch a glimpse of her at the organ. Of course, her junior was jealous.

As second, Mrs Clampton's duty was to play the organ at minor masses and pauper funerals, but she wanted better. She admired her own talent and knew that to get to the top position, she would need to pray harder. And she did. She visualised her superior developing an ailment. But then, in her darkest moments, she hoped it would be cancer or even a car accident. Guilt caused her to amend that to passing in her sleep.

Finally, someone answered her prayers and Miss Fitzsimon became too ill to attend Church. But that also bugged Mrs Clampton, as she worried the Senior Organist might live for another year - and she'd still be in the 'acting' role. She knew she was a far better organist than Miss Fitzsimon, and some parishioners said she offered a much better recital. Even the Bishop commented that her music lifted the hearts and souls of the congregation.

Then it all happened quickly, thanks to a German Baroque composer. Mrs Clampton played Pachelbel's Canon in D Minor at the main Sunday mass. The Bishop wept, it was his most favourite music ever - something he mentioned to Mrs Clampton at the Church fete. Through a visiting Priest the declining Miss Fitzsimon learned her understudy had played Pachelbel's Canon - a piece she disliked. It sent her into such a rage that she had heart failure and passed quickly to the next. Fortunately, the visiting Priest could offer immediate Last Rites.

Mrs Clampton, now as Senior Organist, performed that same piece at Miss Fitzsimon's funeral, much to the delight of the living.

Ill-gotten gains can often cause hardship, as Mrs Clampton would soon find out.