



European Orchid Congress 2018

SARAH FORSYTH reports on the European Orchid Council's latest Conference & Exhibition (EOCCE), held in Paris, 22–25 March. PETER SANDER discusses some of the major trophy winners and shares the orchid memories stirred by the winning plants and exhibits

Sarah Forsyth



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Peter Sander

Peter Sander

THE 18TH European Orchid Congress was held in Paris, over four days, 22–25 March 2018. A large scale orchid show with more than 30 nurseries, from across Europe, and further afield, filled the Paris Convention Centre with imaginative displays of exotic orchids from all around the world. There were also educational displays, a photography competition, a floral art exhibition, and a separate area for the Scientific Conference lectures. The Centre was reminiscent of an aircraft hanger, with no natural light, and on the first day snow lay heaped around the building. It had been swept against the walls to clear the surrounding car park, and the frozen snow 'drifts' encircled the Centre. Once inside, all thoughts of this return of the 'Beast from the East' weather system were forgotten as visitors were transported to more tropical realms.

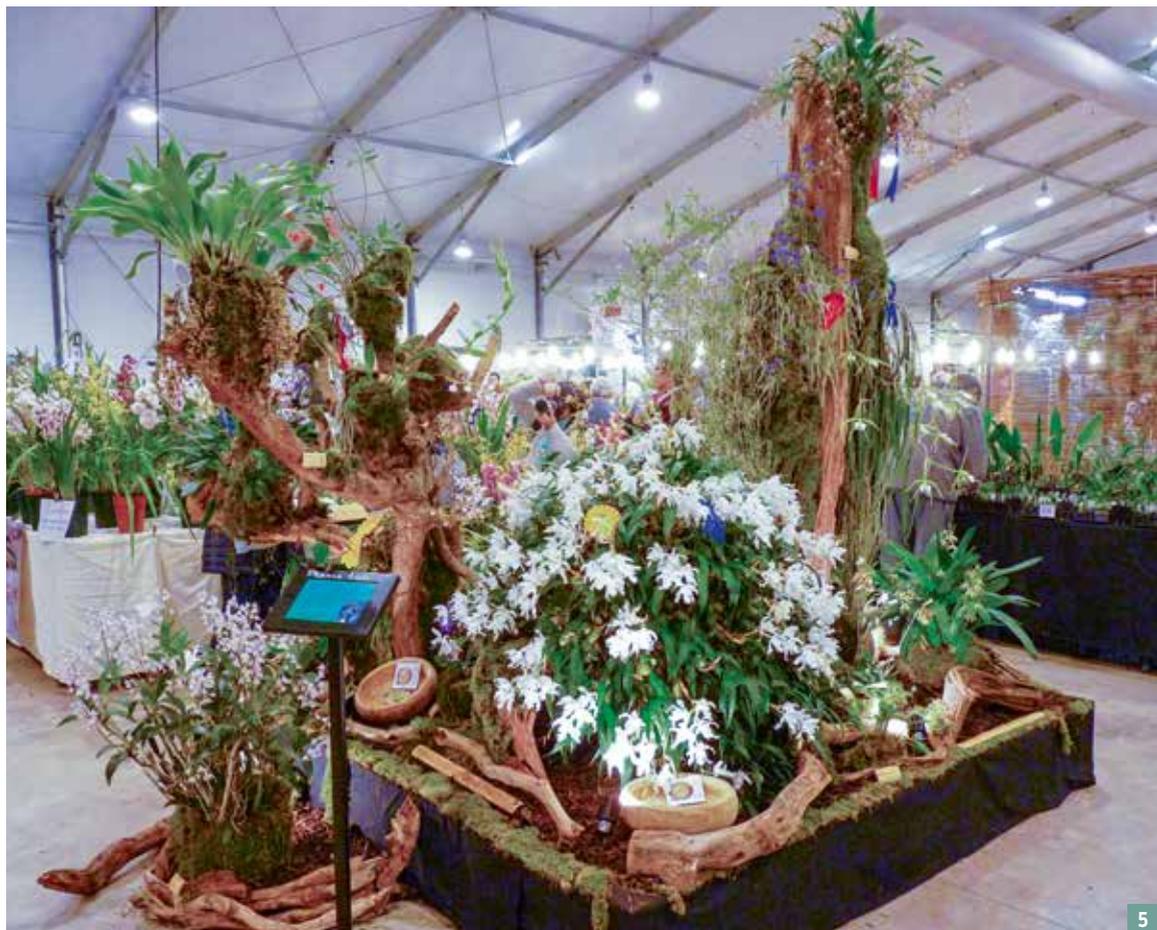
Grand Champion Display
Jardin du Luxembourg, owned by the French Senate, won this coveted trophy, with a muted, elegant display. A 'mulch' of golden vermiculite set

off the twisted, twiggy stems, on curving metal structures. These were arranged to create vistas and frame groupings of flowers in similar shades. Many of their historic *Paphiopedilum* hybrids were included. They won a Gold medal, Best Large Display, and Grand Champion Display (further details follow in Peter's report).

Reserve Grand Champion Display, Best Small Display, and a Gold medal were won by Hans Christensen from Denmark (p80). He used soft, open weave sack cloth to conceal pots and props. A new hybrid *Dendrobium* Mtn's Butterfly Kisses (*D. cuttbertsonii* x *D. sulawesiense*) was displayed on top of a short column, orange-to-pink flowered, and is featured in Rudolf Jenny's article on Unusual orchids on show at the EOCCE (p86).

Grand Champion Orchids
Writhlington School Orchid Project were the only UK exhibitor. They staged a wonderful, Gold medal-winning display of species grown by the pupils, including the Grand Champion Orchid, *Oncidium cristatum* (syn. *Odontoglossum cristatum*), which

1&2 Jardin du Luxembourg, Paris, won Grand Champion Display with an elegant exhibit in muted shades of gold, green, pink and white
3 Historic hybrid *Paphiopedilum* Cappamanga 'Frederick K Sander' was registered in 1921
4 *Cymbidium sanderae* was named in 1904 and has been used in the breeding of many hybrids



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- 5 Writhlington School's Gold medal-winning stand also won a total of 14 plant trophies and rosettes
- 6 An impressive, white-flowered *Coelogyne cristata* effectively filled one corner of the stand
- 7 The team (back row, l-r) James Stewart, Jess Buckle, Tallis Inger-Flecker, Abigail Baldwin, Charlotte Limond, (front row, l-r) Simon Pugh Jones, Chloe McGiveron and ex-pupil Jacob Coles
- 8&9 Grand Champion Orchid, *Oncidium cristatum* (syn. *Odontoglossum cristatum*)
- 10 This large, well-flowered *Epidendrum parkinsonianum* came first in the Laeliinae Species category



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crowned their exhibit at the top of an oak trunk, clothed in moss and orchids. The plant won the trophies for Grand Champion Orchid, Best Species, and Best Oncidiinae.

They also won First and Second rosettes for their *Coelogyne cristata* and *C. bolobchila* respectively. Firsts for *Epidendrum parkinsonianum* and *Phalaenopsis mannii*, three other Second places and a Third. They had more winning plants than any other exhibitor.

Pupils gave demonstrations of orchid seed sowing using a laminar flow cabinet, and several display towers gave information about the work of the project. The team, aged 15 to 17, and ex-pupils now in higher education, were enjoying the Easter holidays, and took the opportunity to promote the upcoming British Orchid Council Show & Congress, to be held at Writhlington School November 2-4 (see News p73).

The Grand Champion Hybrid was *Dendrobium x delicatum*, shown by French orchid nursery La Canopée, who also received a Gold medal for their unusual exhibit, which included a tri-porteur (a three-wheeled cargo bike). *Dendrobium x delicatum* is a naturally occurring hybrid, from Australia, and the cross is widely remade in cultivation. The plant awarded measured at least 1m across and was covered in scented blooms. Also on the exhibit was trophy-winning, dusky pink *Lycaste* Denley.

Gold medal exhibits

Other top quality exhibits awarded Gold medals included Belgian orchid nursery L'Amazone, whose exhibit included two trophy-winning plants, *Paphiopedilum* Wössner Vietnam Star and *Prostbecea* Synergistic Dream (*P. prismatocarpa* x *P. cochleata*). Akerner Orchids, also from Belgium, exhibited a trophy-winner, magenta *Masdevallia uniflora* on their Gold medal-winning stand. La Cour des Orchidées from



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France won a Gold, and a trophy for their *Cymbidium madidum* (also in the Unusual orchids on show at the EOCCE article p86). French nursery Vacherot & Lecoufle won a Gold medal for their elegant exhibit (more detail about this follows in Peter's report).

Other plants and stands of note

One trophy-winning plant was not on a Gold medal-winning stand, *Vanda ampullacea* 'Dario', was shown by the Federazione Italiana Orchidee, who won a Silver medal. The Eric Young Orchid Foundation staged an impressive display of cut flower *Cymbidium* and other orchids, but asked not to be judged as they were the only stand exhibiting cut flowers.

Lists of all the medals, trophies and rosettes are available on the European Orchid Council website: www.europeanorchidcouncil.eu under the EOCCE tab.

Scientific Conference

The theme of the two-day conference was What Future for Orchids? The 28 lectures were grouped into four half-day sessions: Conservation and restoration in a changing world; Ecology of mutualism; Orchids in the era of genomics; and Biotechnology and breeding. Speakers in the conservation session addressed how best to respond to the challenges facing orchids in the wild today. Keynote speaker, Tiio Kull, focussed on the status of European slipper orchid *Cypripedium calceolus*, and encouraged reintroduction projects.

The mutualism session looked at the interactions between orchids and various organisms ranging from mycorrhizal soil fungi to pollinating insects. The keynote lecture, given by Marc-André Selosse, discussed green-leaved orchids that have been found to be partially dependent on

fungi, a strategy called mixotrophy.

Barbara Gravendeel gave the keynote genomics lecture, looking at how new DNA data generated by technological innovations can be used to reveal more about the evolution of orchids and the relationships between species. In the biotechnology and breeding session, keynote speaker Hong-Hwa Chen revealed the DNA analysis techniques being used to enable scented *Phalaenopsis* breeding.

Posters

An impressive total of 59 posters presented the work of researchers from around the world. The judges chose the best three, and prize money and certificates were awarded. A first prize of €500, kindly donated by EOC Secretary General Rudolf Jenny, was presented at the Gala Dinner, to Alexander Gamisch for his poster explaining how Time-Dependent



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11 Hans Christiansen nursery, Denmark, won the Best Small Display trophy, with soft sacking draped around pots and props
 12 French nursery La Canopée won a Gold medal for their display, which included two trophy-winning plants (13 & 14)
 13 Best Hybrid trophy, and Best Dendrobium, was awarded to a large, scented *Dendrobium x delicatum* shown by La Canopée
 14 Dusky pink *Lycaste* Denley on the La Canopée stand won the trophy for Best Lycastinae / Maxillariinae / Zygopetalinae

Diversification Under High Species Turnover Shapes Species Richness Disparities Among Tropical Rainforest Lineages of *Bulbophyllum* (*Orchideaceae*) On A Global Scale.

Social events

The Gala Dinner was held in the grand surroundings of Le Train Bleu restaurant. Built in 1900 in the Belle Époque style, similar to Art Nouveau, the ornate dining room is decorated with gilded carvings and mouldings, chandeliers and frescoes. A total of 27

artists contributed to the incredible decor. Le Train Bleu was classified as a Historic Monument in 1972, and restored to its former glory in 2014.

Other activities

A one-day Cultivation Masterclass was held on Friday, with talks given in French. In the afternoon, a European Orchid Judging Symposium gave judges an opportunity to compare different systems of judging. An Orchid Editor's Forum took place on Saturday, which also proved fruitful.

The conference and exhibition was well attended with more than 7,000 visitors in total, many buying plants from the excellent range on offer.

The European Orchid Council organizes a show and conference every three years. The 17th was hosted by the RHS London Orchid Show in 2015, with the Scientific Conference at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. The location for the next Congress was confirmed at the EOC Annual General Meeting in Paris as being Copenhagen 2021, so put May 6 to 9 in your diary now!

**A Sentimental Journey
Peter Sander**

Returning to any place revives past memories and the beautiful city of Paris is no exception. In the early 1960s the secretary of the French Horticultural Society, Maurice Fromage, was a friend of my father, David. They arranged exchange visits for my sister and Maurice's daughter, Adeline. I was smitten with Adeline, and arranged that the next visitor to Paris would be me! During that visit Maurice drove me and Adeline to Boissy St Leger, to see the marvellous Vacherot & Lecoufle nursery and deliver some plants. I was already accustomed to beautiful orchids, and my host's French 'fast-driving' style, which my father had absorbed during his Belgian upbringing, so my lasting memory was Mademoiselle Fromage!

Vacherot & Lecoufle

Well over 50 years later, visiting the 2018 EOCCE at the Paris Convention Centre, the beautiful Vacherot & Lecoufle exhibit, constructed by the next two generations of the family, Philippe Lecoufle and his daughter Colomb, gave typical Vacherot & Lecoufle Gold medal joy.

The central focus was an *Angraecum sesquipedale* flanked by beautifully-grown, colour coordinated, tastefully



15 L'Amazone Orchidées from Belgium staged an elegant display, which included two trophy-winning plants (16, 17)
16 *Paphiopedilum* Wössner Vietnam Star won the trophy for Best Slipper Orchid.
17 Trophy-winning *Prosthechea* Synergistic Dream (*P. prismatocarpa* x *P. cochleata*)
18 Akerne Orchids, also from Belgium, won a Gold medal for their exhibit of well grown species and hybrids, including a trophy winner
19 Belgian nursery Akerne's trophy-winning, magenta-flowered *Masdevallia uniflora*

arranged bowls of fine *Phalaenopsis*, and many other species and hybrids. Rising from the grey tiled floor were vertical corner tiers decked with a wide range of quality plants. The whole shone with the expected excellence of this 19th century orchid firm, still maintaining the highest standards in the 21st century.

Jardin du Luxembourg

The French senate's Jardin du Luxembourg staged a wonderfully subtle display of their historic *Paphiopedilum* hybrids, and other interesting species, so winning the trophy for Grand Champion Display.

The illuminated substance of *Paphiopedilum* Cappamagna 'Frederick K Sander' shone beautifully; a complex hybrid involving four species. A glance in the eponymous Great Uncle Fred's *Sanders Complete List of Orchid Hybrids (1856-1946)*, reveals this hybrid has almost equal doses of *P. spicerianum*, *P. insigne* var. *Sanderae* and *P. villosum*

with a dash of *P. druryi*. *Paphiopedilum* David Sander, named for my father, has similar parentage. This hybrid list, the first volume of 14, which only the orchid family can boast, is so useful nearly 80 years after Great Uncle Fred hand wrote volume one.

Cymbidium sanderae also featured as a reminder of Micholitz's orchid collecting for Great Uncle Fred's father, Frederick Sander the Orchid King, and the contribution this *Cymbidium* has had in future hybridizing.

Writhlington School

I try to see orchid shows through the species-loving eyes of my father. He would have loved Writhlington School Orchid Project's exhibit. But he would have wanted to change the label of their Grand Champion Orchid from the currently accepted, *Oncidium cristatum*, to it's previous, name *Odontoglossum cristatum*. With multiple arched spikes, perched on a 2.4m vertical driftwood oak trunk,

this species, which grows at 1,200 –1,500m, would surely die in an *Oncidium* greenhouse. He would have feasted his eyes on the 90cm globe of pure white *Coelygyne cristata* and a beautiful *Epidendrum parkinsonianum* hanging at eye-level.

Like me, he would also have thrilled at the school's extra curricular activities, which include orchid growing and exhibiting, conservation, breeding, managing finances and winning medals. As a past Royal Warrant Holder, a worrier about the orchid world's future, and a friend of Keith Andrew (who mentored Simon Pugh Jones) he would have lauded the efficacy of teacher Simon Pugh Jones and the MBE he was awarded in 2012.

Orchideengarten Karge

The Dresden show coincided with the EOCCE which was apparently sadly unavoidable. Exhibitors chose one or other, but family-run German nursery Orchideengarten Karge



managed to attend both, with Marei Karge Liphard coming south while sending her parents east. Her exhibit included a huge *Cymbidium* Gymer 'Cooksbridge' with 28 beautifully flowered spikes, which won the Best *Cymbidium* Hybrid rosette (see Contents p69).

La Canopée

French nursery La Canopée won Best Small Display, and incorporated a tri-porteur. It reminded me of cycling around the 40 hectares of Sander's Bruges nursery on a tri-porteur: a painful business for a 10 year old! Their display included a lovely

specimen of *Dendrobium x delicatum*, awarded Grand Champion Hybrid. The parents of this natural hybrid, *Dendrobium kingianum* x *D. speciosum* var. *billii* grow in southern Queensland and northern New South Wales, and where their distribution overlaps the scented natural hybrid occurs.



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20 French nursery La Cour des Orchidées won a Gold medal for their display which included a trophy-winning *Cymbidium* (21)
 21 *Cymbidium madidum* won the trophy for Best Cyrtopodiinae for La Cour des Orchidées
 22 Vacherot & Lecoufle, from France, won a Gold medal for a fine display of orchids
 23 Trophy-winning *Vanda ampullacea* 'Dario' was exhibited by Federazione Italiana Orchidee
 24 Eric Young Orchid Foundation, Jersey, staged an exhibit using cut flower stems of *Cymbidium* hybrids with several species



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Eric Young Orchid Foundation

EYOF produced a fine exhibit of 160 cut flower *Cymbidium* spikes. Jersey is not a member of the European Union so exhibiting in France involves expensive and inefficient beurocracy – Chris Purver, EYOF curator, minimised CITES problems by using cut flowers and exhibited hybrids and species, using a small van rather than the pantehnicon that would have been needed if he had bought all those standard *Cymbidium* plants.

On display were 80 grexes as well as many cultivars, plus four different species, which included large arching spikes of *Cymbidium lowianum* var. *lowianum*, *C. seidenfadenii*, *C. insigne* and upright spikes of *C. eburneum*. This concentration of scented blooms, exquisitely arranged produced a heavenly scent and the public were buzzing with admiration like bees.

In the 19th century, jungle raiders, exporting orchids to Europe, were often frustrated by ferry timetables. Chris had to leave Jersey three days before the Paris Convention Centre opened for exhibitors and cope with



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three atypically cold, snowy nights. Consequently he had a maximum of three hours sleep at a time to keep candles burning and the van frost free – a devotion to duty which CITES policing has not always achieved. Hearing this my father would have had a wry smile, recalling the night in 1956 when in the early hours, due to boiler failure, he had to wake his friend, the manager of Woolworths in St Albans, to buy his entire stock of candles and electric fires. What orchid growers do, what they have to do, for their dedication to orchids.

The work growing and flowering

these plants so well, packing and transporting them to Paris still in peak condition is a huge tribute to Chris and the team he so ably leads.

Minimising border control issues reminded me of my father crossing the Swiss border at night in the 1960s and agreeing with a customs officer that his plants were onions as he ran his finger down the tariff list stopping short of orchidees – result: zero to pay!

While looking at this exhibit, I was delighted to meet Mrs Dominy, a direct descendant of John Dominy, breeder of the first man-made orchid hybrid *Calanthe* Dominyi (*C. masuca* x *C. triplicata*). It was made in 1853 at the suggestion of Exeter surgeon John Harris and registered in 1856 by Veitch. This hybrid, the first to be registered, has been highlighted in pen in my father's copy of the first *Sanders Complete List of Orchid Hybrids (1856-1946)*, referred to earlier. ■

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