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EDITOR'S LETTER

Boycotting and the arts

Any readers will remember that during the 1980s at the height of apartheid there was strong boycott, disinvestment and sanctions action ostracising all things South African. This included sport – hugely important to that country – and culture. Paul Simon notably came under severe criticism for collaborating with African musicians on his *Gracelands* album during the cultural boycott, and many more musicians



woke up to the fact that what had seemed to them a neutral activity was loaded with political significance.

So it is today, with Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the imposition of strict sanctions by many countries in the west. On 27 February Peter Gelb, general manager of the Metropolitan Opera in New York, made a statement in which he said, 'While we believe strongly in the warm friendship and cultural exchange that has long existed between the artists and artistic institutions of Russia and the United States, we can no longer engage with artists or institutions that support Putin or are supported by him, not until the invasion and killings have been stopped, order has been restored and restitutions have been made.' Gelb went on to comment to the *New York Times*, 'It's terrible that artistic relationships, at least temporarily, are the collateral damage of these actions by Putin.'

Gelb's comments have largely been met with approbation. But the withdrawal from performances of conductor Valery Gergiev, soprano Anna Netrebko and pianist Denis Matsuev – who have been criticised for supporting Putin and not speaking out against him, where many Russian musicians have now done so – has also generated a flurry of comment. In a statement, Netrebko said, 'It's not fair to force artists, or any other personality, to express their political opinions in public and denounce their homeland. I am not a political person. I am not a political expert. I am an artist and my aim is to unite people across the political divide'.

If there is a lesson to be learned, it is that all things are political in the broadest sense – we may live unawares for decades before an event occurs that

requires us to stand up and be counted: artists cannot hide behind their art, and need to accept 'collateral damage' (which is far less life-threatening than the victims') in circumstances that are beyond the control of any of us. But the other lesson to be learned is equally valid, that we must be careful how we judge before knowing the full circumstances: q.v. Richard Strauss's relationship with Germany's National Socialists, or Dmitri Shostakovich's with Stalin's regime, neither one straightforward. Not everyone is born to stand up to a dictator and run the risk of themselves or family members being imprisoned or murdered. And is it ours to judge anyway?

There is a long tradition of cultural boycotts of pariah states, which is clearly effective given that the states in question object so loudly. The South African liberation movement came to realise that what was important was to consider whether proposed cultural activities were supporting black people or whether they were shoring up apartheid. In the case of Ukraine, we would do well at least to consider similar issues before drawing conclusions.

Maggie Hamilton

Choir & Organ shines a global spotlight on two distinctive fields of creativity, celebrating inventiveness and excellence in all their forms.

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EDITORIAL

Phone +44 (0)7785 613144 Email maggie.hamilton@markallengroup.com Editor Maggie Hamilton Organ Editor and New Music Editor Matthew Power Assistant Editor Matthew Berry Designer Daniela Di Padova Editorial Advisory Board Thomas Allery, Chris Bragg, David Hill, Joy Hill, Graeme Kay, William McVicker, Matthew Power, Dobrinka Tabakova Editorial Director Ashutosh Khandekar

SUBSCRIPTIONS AND BACK ISSUES Phone UK 0800 137201 Overseas +44 1722 716997 Email subscriptions@markallengroup.com Subscriptions Manager Bethany Foy UK Subscription Rate £65.00

ADVERTISING

Phone +44 (0)20 7333 1733 Email maria.barnes@markallengroup.com Title Manager Maria Barnes, +44 (0)7785 613 142 Production Leandro Linares, +44 (0)20 7501 6665

PUBLISHING

PUBLISHING Phone +44 (0)20 7738 5454 Head of Marketing John Barnett Marketing & Events Director Tony Hill Publishing Director Owen Mortimer Group Institutional Sales Manager Jas Atwal Production Director Richard Hamshere Circulation Director Sally Boettcher Managing Director Paul Geoghegan Chief Executive Officer Ben Allen Chairman Mark Allen

MA Music Leisure & Travel

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www.markallengroup.com

Choir & Organ, ISSN 0968-7262, (USPS 7314), is published ten times a year by MA Music, Leisure & Travel Ltd, St Jude's Church, Dulwich Road, London SE24 OPB, United Kingdom.

The US annual subscription price is \$8499. Airfreight and mailing in the USA by agent named WN Shipping USA, 136-15, 146th Avenue, 2nd Floor, Jamaica, NY 11434, USA. Periodicals postage paid at Jamaica NY 11431, US Postmaster: Send address changes to Choir & Organ, VMS Shipping USA, 156-15, 146th Avenue, 2nd Floor, Jamaica, NY 11434, USA. Subscription records are maintained at MA Music, Leisure & Travel Ltd, Unit A, Buildings 1-5 Inton Busines Park, Catherine Ford Road, Dinton, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP3 SHZ.

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Printed in the UK by Pensord, Pontllanfraith, Blackwood, NP12 2YA Newstrade distribution by Seymour 020 7429 4000







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NEWS & PREVIEWS

NIIOC CELEBATES 10 YEARS

THE NORTHERN IRELAND INTERNATIONAL ORGAN COMPETITION (NIIOC) will celebrate its tenth birthday with a range of events.

Following prize performances in venues including Westminster Abbey, Saint Thomas Fifth Avenue and Stockholm Cathedral, NIIOC's first ten senior winners will unite in this anniversary year to perform joint gala recitals in Southwark Cathedral (28 March, 7.30pm) and Belfast Cathedral (6 April, 7.30pm). In addition, simultaneous lunchtime recitals will take place in each of the six counties of Northern Ireland on 5 April (1.15pm). And in a solo recital in Southwark Cathedral (28 March, 1.15pm), 2013 winner Richard Gowers gives the premiere of *Where the Birds Sing*, a new organ work by British composer Grace-Evangeline Mason, specially composed for NIIOC and the Commission for Victims and Survivors for Northern Ireland.

The ten winners are: Ben Comeau, Ben Bloor, Richard Gowers, Andrew Forbes and Alexander Hamilton (UK); Mona Rozdestvenskyte (Russia); Sebastian Heindl, Johannes Krahl and Laura Schlappa (Germany); and Ivan-Bogdan Reincke (Hungary).

Richard Yarr, founder and chair of NIIOC, said: 'We are very proud that NIIOC has been a proper trailblazer, changing the organ landscape locally and internationally. Competitors from Australia, the US, China and all across Europe have climbed the cobbled streets of the beautiful cathedral city of Armagh each August to perform in St Patrick's Church of Ireland Cathedral. If you ask any of them, they'll describe the experience as friendly, warm and transformative, and for many NIIOC has provided a network of colleagues for life.

'We're thrilled to be celebrating our first ten years with these very special concerts featuring ten young organists, who are such great ambassadors for the king of instruments and for our competition. NIIOC takes pride of place on their CVs and I know these events will offer something for everyone. They will also provide great opportunities to thank those who have supported us on this exciting journey.'

Tickets for each of the gala recitals cost £10 (students £5) and are bookable through the competition website. Tickets for the lunchtime recitals are free of charge. *niioc.com*



▲ Grace-Evangeline Mason and Richard Gowers in front of the pipes of Southwark Cathedral's T.C. Lewis organ



The IV/45 Alain family organ (I), restored and located in the attic of the Grange de la Dîme, is available to participants on the 2022 Cours International d'Orgue de Romainmôtier, Switzerland; also used are the IV/36 Lhôte organ in the Abbey Church, and Luigi Ferdinando Tagliavini's III/12 house organ by Orgelbau Kuhn. Organised by the Association Jehan Alain, the 54th annual edition includes a short course for non-professional organists, led by Michel Jordan and Guy Bovet (Practical course for church organists, 13-15 July); a week dedicated to improvisation, with Emmanuel Le Divellec and Tobias Willi (Improvisation, 17-23 July); and six days dedicated to repertoire, led by Pier Damiano Peretti and Louis Robilliard (Interpretation, 24-30 July). Contact: secretariat.cior@jehanalain.ch; jehanalain.ch/courses

GIRLS TO AUDITION FOR CATHEDRAL CHOIR

THE CHAPTER OF HEREFORD CATHEDRAL has announced that it will be welcoming girls to join the Cathedral Choir. Hereford's decision completes a Three Choirs hat-trick, with Gloucester and Worcester both having introduced equal opportunities for girl and boy choristers last year.

Until now, the Choir of Hereford Cathedral has consisted of boy choristers aged 7-13 and six adult professional singers. This year, girls of the same age as the boys will also be invited to audition for the choir and to receive a full musical education as choristers. The choir sings up to eight services per week in the cathedral during school terms and in the days leading up to Christmas and Easter.

Canon Geraint Bowen, director of music since 2001, said: 'We are very excited to be starting the search for the chorister class of 2022. These boys and girls will make history in Hereford as our choir begins this new phase of its centuries-old existence. We are looking for girls and boys who enjoy singing and being part of a team. It is not necessary for them to have had any previous choral experience or to play an instrument, although that is certainly an advantage: when we select choristers, we are looking for musical *potential*. It is the training they receive at the cathedral and their commitment and dedication which produces the results.'

Dr Michael Gray, headmaster of Hereford Cathedral School, added: 'Hereford Cathedral School was originally founded in the 13th century, or perhaps even earlier, for the purpose of educating the cathedral choristers and it is wonderful that this exceptional musical and educational opportunity is now going to be offered to girls as well as boys, further enhancing the cathedral's offering of worship as well as the school's sector-leading reputation for music.'

Choristers receive scholarships from the Chapter to attend Hereford Cathedral Junior School and Hereford Cathedral School. In cases of financial need these scholarships can be increased to 100 per cent of the school fees. Applications are welcome from potential choristers, whether or not they are currently pupils at Hereford Cathedral Junior School. *herefordcathedral.org*

The Choir of Hereford Cathedral with director of music Geraint Bowen



IN BRIEF

Daragh Black Hynes has won the 2022 **Seán Ó Riada Composition Competition** at the Cork International Choral Festival. Hynes's choral work *Behind This Light*, which was inspired by James Joyce's *Ulysses*, will receive its world premiere by Chamber Choir Ireland directed by Paul Hillier at St Fin Barre's Cathedral in Cork on 29 April.

In 2023, the first rounds of the **13th Mikael Tariverdiev International Organ Competition** will be held in Hamburg (17-21 April), New Haven, Connecticut (9-12 May), Beijing (22-25 May) and Moscow (28-31 August). Selected contestants will then participate in the second and third rounds in Kaliningrad, 3-9 September, on the Rieger-Kloss organ Opus 3525 (1982) in Phiharmonic Society Concert Hall and the Schuke organ (2008) in the city's cathedral. Martin Jean heads the jury.

Bryce Dunnewald will join Schoenstein & Co. Pipe Organ Builders as assistant to tonal director Jack Bethards. His work will focus on voicing, tonal design and client relations. Dunnewald holds degrees in orchestral conducting, organ and harpsichord from the Curtis Institute of Music and Mannes School of Music, and is currently assistant organist and choirmaster at St Mark's, Philadelphia.

Timothy Stewart has been appointed organ scholar at Chichester Cathedral for the 2022-23 academic year.

Choir of the Earth has launched a global project to learn, sing and record a new version of the UK's national anthem. Ralph Allwood, who composed the new arrangement, will lead online rehearsals. Following these sessions, each singer will record at home. The choir's sound engineers will mix the submissions to create the final recording that will be presented to the Queen's private secretary on 1 June. bit.ly/3h31Vlo

NEWS & PREVIEWS

PAST LIVES

JOSEPH HOROVITZ (1926-2022)



The composer, conductor and teacher, Joseph Horovitz, has died aged 95. Horovitz was born in Vienna and immigrated to England in 1938. He studied music at Oxford, with Gordon Jacob at the Royal College of Music (RCM), and then for a year with Nadia Boulanger in Paris.

A 70-year career in composition includes ballets, concertos – including a much-loved Jazz Concerto – chamber music, works for brass and wind bands, and choral works.

He may be best known for his contribution to the seminal series of pop cantatas commissioned by Novello. *Captain Noah and His Floating Zoo*, a collaboration between Michael Flanders and Horovitz, received the 1976 PRS Ivor Novello Award for the best British work for children. Both authors insisted that this light-hearted oratorio was not to be taken as a contribution to pop religion. Relatively short, the work was successfully adapted for adult performers, with a recording by The King's Singers, and was later released in an animated version for television.

Other dramatic works include *Horrortorio* commissioned by the Hoffnung Astronautical Musical Festival, *Samson* for baritone, choir and brass band, and *Summer Sunday*, a 'challenging comical-tragical-ecological pastoral' for mixed voices and piano. Horovitz's most significant standalone choral work is *Endymion*, for soprano and chamber choir; setting Oscar Wilde, it was commissioned for the centenary of the RCM and premiered there in 1983 by the chamber choir under the direction of David Willcocks. Other choral works include *Three Choral Songs from 'As You Like It'* and the psalm setting *Sing unto the Lord a New Song*, commissioned for the 317th Festival of the Songs of the Clergy in St Paul's Cathedral, as a link between the Jewish and Christian faiths.

Most recently, Horovitz celebrated his 95th birthday with concerts across Europe to mark the occasion, including a notable performance of his Jazz Concerto at the 2021 BBC Proms with Mahan Esfahani on harpsichord.

GERCO SCHAAP (1956-2022)

Gerco Schaap, who has died at the age of 65 was, despite his quiet demeanour, one of the most pervasive commentators on Dutch organ culture for a period spanning 45 years, writes Chris Bragg. For the last 28 of these he was editor of De Orgelvriend, the popular Dutch organ magazine catering for a wider demographic of musicians and enthusiasts than the more esoteric, research-driven Het Orgel. In this context his achievement in curating (in the smallest of details) a consistently high-minded and, above all, objective writing culture is a testament in itself, not least given the constant tension between Dutch mainstream and orthodox Protestant-driven cultures. Modest to a fault, but with formidable eagle eyes, he managed to maintain good terms with figures from all corners of this fragmented, sometimes fractious, world, to the perpetual benefit of his readers.

His crowning achievement was a meticulously researched and warmly received 500-page biography of the idiosyncratic concert organist, conductor and broadcaster Piet van Egmond (1912-82). The project took him nearly 20 years and followed his earlier establishment, with a group of friends, of a documentation centre with the purpose of gathering primary source material relating to Van Egmond's life and career. [Schaap's selfeffacement was never more evident than when he noted after the book's publication, 'I'm no musicologist. I wrote a sketch of how he played, what I heard him play, what others thought and what I discovered in preserved archive material.' The Dutch daily RD described it, not unreasonably, as 'a biography of great calibre.']

But if the focus of his magnum opus was a uniquely Dutch personality, Schaap's own vision and knowledge of the international organ culture, and in particular that of the British Isles, was astonishing. In 1993 he founded 'The Beauty of the British Organ', a dedicated group of Dutch enthusiasts and organists who this year will make their 25th pilgrimage to visit organs of particular interest. I had the particular pleasure of organising a tour in the west of Scotland with Gerco, and his encouragement and boundless curiosity, ever-taciturn, for the (mostly small, Victorian) organs we visited was a source of inspiration in our ongoing fight for their conservation. For nearly 20 years he served, remarkably, as vicepresident of the Percy Whitlock Trust and his close friends included Francis Jackson, about whom he spoke often and with great affection. Schaap was a frequent visitor to York and it seemed peculiarly fitting that he and Jackson should pass away within a day of each other.

To visit Gerco Schaap in the Baarn house in which he had been born was quite the experience. His collection of recorded classical music, in particular on vinyl, was so voluminous one suspected it was holding the walls up. Typically though, for a man who exuded the attention to detail of the schoolteacher he was trained to become (although his career as a journalist immediately superseded that plan), Gerco knew where everything was, promptly finding just the LP he wanted you to hear. His own playing was put to the service of the Mennonite church in his hometown, but seldom elsewhere.

Gerco Schaap's erudition, perceptiveness, and lifetime of commitment to the organ culture will be sorely missed.



2022 NYCGB ANNOUNCES YOUNG COMPOSERS

THE NATIONAL YOUTH CHOIRS OF GREAT BRITAIN (NYCGB) has announced the four emerging composers selected for its 2022 Young Composers scheme.

Thomas Metcalf, Ben Nobuto, Sun Keting and Claire Victoria Roberts join the scheme that supports composers in the early stages of their career. Metcalf, who currently teaches for various Oxford colleges and is a published academic, has written for the Kreutzer Quartet, Horizon Voices and Psappha. Nobuto, a British-Japanese composer with a style described as both 'postmodern' and 'utterly contemporary', has written commissioned works for Manchester Collective, CBSO and the Ligeti Quartet. Keting is a Londonbased Chinese composer and artist. This past year, she has received commissions from the LPO Young Composers 20/21, BBC Radio 3 for the BBC Singers, Psappha 20/21, the IGF Guitar Summit and Riot Ensemble. Roberts's works draw on diverse influences including lyrical jazz, traditional fiddle music, and impressionistic orchestral textures; her music has been performed by BBC National Orchestra of Wales, cellist Oliver Coates, the Solem Quartet, and the Carice Singers. She was the winner of the Royal Philharmonic Society Composition Prize 2019-2020.

The annual initiative is a fully funded, year-long programme of development opportunities for individuals from a diverse range of backgrounds and musical genres, who are committed to developing as professional composers and have a passion for creating high-quality, imaginative new music for vocal ensembles. It also provides the unique opportunity to write music to be sung and performed by NYCGB's choirs and programmes. An annual retreat takes place at the prestigious Red House, Aldeburgh in partnership with Britten Pears Arts.

Professional training and insights, and a professional recording and release for their work will be facilitated by Digital Partner, NMC Recordings. Free licences and training in Dorico Pro notation software



The four new NYCGB Young Composers (clockwise, from top left): Sun Keting, Thomas Metcalf, Claire Victoria Roberts and Ben Nobuto

are provided by Principal Innovation Sponsor, Steinberg Media Technologies. The composers will also receive unique opportunities provided by Innovation Grant Sponsors and Publishing Partner, Stainer & Bell. High-profile guest mentors and workshop leaders have recently included composers Jonathan Dove, Shiva Feshareki, Cheryl Frances-Hoad, Cecilia McDowall, Bob Chilcott and Alexandra Harwood.

Recent members of the Young Composers scheme – Amy Bryce, Joe Bates, Nathan James Dearden, Harry Baker, Lisa Robertson and Lillie Harris – were all commissioned by *Choir & Organ* for the magazine's New Music series; Young Composers' alumni have also written works for BBC Singers, Britten Sinfonia, National Youth Orchestra of Wales, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, NYCGB and the Royal Philharmonic Society.

Ruth Evans, head of artistic planning and participation said, 'Sun, Thomas, Ben and Claire thoroughly impressed the panel with their applications, interviews and appetite to be at the cutting edge of writing for young singers/emerging artists. They will all bring their individual experiences, influences and knowledge to the scheme, which will be magnified by close collaboration with NYCGB Fellowship, choirs, staff and partners. We are all thrilled to be working collaboratively with our fourth NYCGB Young Composers cohort.' *nycgb.org.uk*

NEWS & PREVIEWS

CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED FOR ADJUSTABLE BENCHES

THE SOCIETY OF WOMEN ORGANISTS (SWO) has launched the Adjustable Bench Campaign (ABC) in a quest for heightadjustable organ benches being made available for every organ in a public venue.

Most organ benches are fixed at a height to suit the average male who, in the UK, stands at 5'9". As the average height for UK women is 5'3", many struggle to reach the pedals comfortably. This is also the case for younger players.

A recent survey that elicited 486 responses from both men and women organists revealed that two-thirds of respondents did not have access to an adjustable bench at their regular practice venue. Almost half have had a performance compromised by the absence of an adjustable bench. One respondent commented that they had 'never encountered an adjustable bench in 60 years of playing'.

Accordingly, ABC has put together a list of five-point action plan to rectify this common oversight. Namely, ABC is: asking organ builders to recommend adjustable benches for



A Many women and younger players struggle to reach the pedals comfortably when playing from a fixed bench

all new organs; suggesting that every organist appointed in a church, concert hall or other public venue should request an adjustable bench; supporting individuals with substantive arguments, including the legal case to provide equipment suited to employees' needs; asking local organists' associations to raise the issue at committee level and encourage initiatives to replace fixed benches; proposing, on its webpage, easy and affordable solutions for those looking to replace a fixed bench.

Sir Andrew Parmley, director of the Royal College of Organists and former Lord Mayor of London, commented: 'I heartily support this campaign as it aims to ensure equal access to the organ irrespective of a person's height.'

International concert organist Katelyn Emerson commented: 'An adjustable bench is far more easily supplied than adjustable pedal or manual heights! Many thanks for an important campaign that can help the organ to become more accessible to and help prevent injuries in players of all heights.' *societyofwomenorganists.co.uk*



The III/44 Dobson organ in the chapel of Merton College, Oxford will be one of the stars of **Passiontide at Merton**, which runs from 8-10 April. On 9 Apr Margaret Phillips performs a solo recital of works by J.S. Bach (11.30am); and on 10 Apr Stephen Farr gives the premiere of Francis Grier's *A Celebration for All Saints* for solo organ in a concert with the Choir of Merton College, conducted by Benjamin Nicholas (5pm). The programme also includes the premiere of a choral work by Grier, *Osanna filio David*, and works by Byrd, Purcell, Poulenc and James MacMillan. Also in the festival is a performance of Mozart's Mass in C minor, K427 in the Sheldonian Theatre (7.30pm, 8 Apr) and Passion music presented by The Gesualdo Six (9 Apr, Merton College Chapel), as well as special music during services. For full details and booking, visit merton.ox.ac.uk/passiontide-merton.

St John's Smith Square, in London, takes up the theme with its **Easter Festival**, running through Holy Week. Performing artists include the Choir of King's College London (Rachmaninov's *All-Night Vigil*, 10 Apr); Martin Baker (Dupré's *Le chemin de la croix*, 11 Apr); Sansara (Gesualdo's *Tenebrae Responses* by candlelight, 13, 14, 15 Apr, and livestreamed; also, Arvo Pärt's *Stabat mater*, 14 Apr); Polyphony and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, conducted by Stephen Layton (Bach's *St John Passion*, Good Friday); and Vox Luminis (Schütz's *Musikalische Exequien*, Easter Sunday). Full details of the festival may be found at sjss.org.uk.

The Dobson organ in the chapel of Merton College, Oxford

VOCES8 PRESENT LIVE FROM LONDON EASTER

THE VOCES8 FOUNDATION is to present a LIVE From London Easter edition. The event will include VOCES8's first collaboration with Eric Whitacre, and the UK premiere of Swedish composer Mårten Jansson's *Requiem Novum* with the Philhamonia Orchestra and Anna Dennis. Both works set texts by poet and lyricist Charles Anthony Silvestri.

The sixth LIVE From London series opens on Maundy Thursday, 14 April, with a performance of *The Sacred Veil*, a 12-movement work telling a story of life, love and loss. Scored for mixed voices, cello and piano and written in 2018, *The Sacred Veil* also includes texts by the composer and Silvestri's wife, Julie, who died from ovarian cancer in 2005 aged 36. VOCES8 and Whitacre will perform alongside pianist Christopher Glynn and cellist Emma Denton in a pared-down version of the piece, which was first presented in Los Angeles in February 2019.

Whitacre said: 'It's been a dream of mine for over a decade to make music with these exceptional artists. The opportunity to bring to life my most intimate and personal work with them is the absolute fulfilment of that dream'.

On Easter Sunday, 17 April, and in celebration of the album released on 25 March, LIVE From London hosts the UK premiere performance of Mårten Jansson's *Requiem Novum – A Response of Hope and Wonder*. Premiered in Uppsala Cathedral in January 2020, the work pairs the traditional Latin texts and new poetry from Silvestri which represents a response to each movement from the perspective of the deceased. This Easter performance, filmed at All Hallows', Gospel Oak, will be conducted by artistic director Barnaby Smith.

The album project, recorded on VOCES8 Records, the recording arm of the VOCES8 Foundation, raised over US\$10,000 dollars from 121 backers in a Kickstarter campaign. A track from the album, *Sanctus*, was released separately on 5 March.

Jansson writes of *Requiem Novum*: 'I had a strong wish, being a man of faith, to bring to life through music a belief that we should not be afraid of death, but instead feel comfort in the knowledge that God will take care of us after our passing.'

Both concerts can be watched live or on demand from time of broadcast until 30 April. Combined and individual tickets are available. *livefromlondon.org*

V Soprano Anna Dennis takes the solo role in Mårten Jansson's Requiem Novum



EVENTS

abcd's Young Conductor Day is on 9 Apr at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, led by Lucy Hollins. Conducting technique and beating patterns, teaching songs, leading rounds, and directing simple songs in a variety of styles and languages. For 18-25s. Conductor fee: £40 (non-members), £30 (members); observer fee: £15; bursary places are available. Contact elisabeth. brierley@abcd.org.uk. bit.ly/3BDbGA9

Organs, organ music and organists will be celebrated around the world on **International Organ Day** on Saturday 23 Apr. The RCO will premiere a brand-new edition of *The Organ Show*, the online magazine-style programme featuring a mix of interviews, chat, features and studio guests. bit.ly/3LJD9Fb

South African artist **William Kentridge** presents *SIBYL*, an evening in two parts at London's Barbican Theatre on 22-24 Apr comprising *The Moment Has Gone* – a short film with live piano score and chorus – and the chamber opera *Waiting for the Sibyl. SIBYL* is a collaboration with choral composer and performer **Nhlanhla Mahlangu** and composer **Kyle Shepherd.** It is performed in English, Zulu, Xhosa, Sesotho and Ndebele.

Singers familiar with **Handel's Messiah** are invited to join a production of *Short Memory* – a play by Richard Roques about a choir, Alzheimer's and the redemptive power of music – at the Golden Goose Theatre, London. Singers are asked to join for two or three nights of the three-week run to perform short extracts from *Messiah*. richard@thehistoryoflondon.com

University Concert Hall, Limerick, celebrates its restored **Compton theatre organ**, in situ since the venue's inception in 1993 but silent since 1999, as part of its Spring 2022 UCH Cinema Season. Ronan Murray performs accompaniment to two of Charlie Chaplin's best-loved films, *The Rink* and *The Cure*, on 24 Apr at 3pm. bit.ly/3JI9nyu

NEWS & PREVIEWS

INA BOYLE WORK PREMIERED 97 YEARS ON

VA BOYLE SOC



RVW pupil Ina Boyle

THE PREMIERE OF A WORK by a pupil of Vaughan Williams is to be given at the Ludlow English Song Weekend. Ina Boyle's *Cædmon's Hymn* will be performed by the Carice Singers, directed by George Parris on 9 April. Boyle (1889-1967) is one of Ireland's most prolific and significant female composers; interest in her music has been growing recently as the 150th anniversary of RVW approaches.

With many still lying in manuscript in the Library of Trinity College Dublin, Boyle's choral works remain underperformed. Even those that are published – such as the substantial sequence, *Gaelic Hymns*, and *The Transfiguration* – are still infrequently programmed.

With the permission of Boyle's cousin Katie Rowan, Parris unearthed and edited *Cædmon's Hymn*. The work, scored for SSATTB choir and lasting roughly four minutes, was written in February 1925, by which time Boyle had been studying privately with RVW for just under two years. Boyle's biographer, Dr Ita Beausang, recounts how she would journey to London from her home in County Wicklow wearing galoshes and a herdsman's jacket, carrying the scores and money in her large pockets. She did this for 16 years, stopped only by the outbreak of war in 1939, after which RVW continued to arrange performances of her music as president of the Macnaghten New Music Group.

The premiere will feature in the Carice Singers' programme 'Flight of the Turtle Dove', which includes music from some of RVW's other pupils along with his own motet *O vos omnes* and Mass in G minor. Elizabeth Maconchy's early *A Hymn to the God the Father* anticipates the originality that was to come, and Imogen Holst's *A Hymne to Christ* has been gaining more performances; Jane Joseph's *Hymn for Whitsuntide* was admired so much that following her untimely death in 1929 RVW conducted it at the Kensington Competitive Music Festival, the audience standing in tribute.

ludlowenglishsongweekend.com

PREMIERES [RP = REGIONAL PREMIERE]

Grace-Evangeline Mason: Where the Birds Sing Richard Gowers (org) 28 Mar, Southwark Cathedral, London, UK

Sarah Quartel: Down the silver road Nazareth College Chamber Singers/Stevens 2 Apr, Nazareth College, Rochester, NY, USA

Paul Spicer: Sound the Invisible Trumps Birmingham Bach Choir/Spicer 2 Apr, St Philip's Cathedral, Birmingham, UK

Alison Willis: Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum Luminosa/Abbott

2 Apr, All Saints' Church, Odiham, UK

NYCGB & The Swingles: Until It's Gone National Youth Choir of Great Britain, The Swingles/Parry 7 Apr, The Fireworks Factory, Woolwich, London, UK

Melissa Dunphy: Eight of Swords National Concert Chorus/Wondemagegnehu, Redding

9 Apr, Carnegie Hall, New York, US

Ivan Božičević: Rivers of Eden

Ian Shaw: Solomon and the Gnat Anne Laver and Alex Meszler (org) 10 Apr, Hendricks Chapel, Syracuse University, NY, US

Francis Grier: Osanna filio David

Francis Grier: Celebration for All Saints Choir of Merton College, Oxford, Stephen Farr (org)/Nicholas 10 Apr, Merton College, Oxford, UK Nolan Williams: We are the ones to heal our land Washington Performing Arts Gospel Choirs, Choral Arts Symphonic Chorus 10 Apr, Kennedy Center Concert Hall, Washington DC, US

James MacMillan: Stabat mater [RP] MDR Rundfunkchor & Sinfonieorchester/ Ahmann

12 Apr, Gewandhaus, Leipzig, Germany Nico Muhly: The Street - 14 Meditations on the Stations of the Cross

Choir of King's College, Cambridge, Parker Ramsay (hp),

16 Apr, King's College, Cambridge, UK

Andrus Kallastu: Tropus nebulosus Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir/ Van der Ree 21 Apr, Estonian Museum of Architecture, Tallinn, Estonia

Becky McGlade: Of the Father's love begotten New York Polyphony 21 Apr, Friedenskirche, Handschuhsheim, Germany

Bob Chilcott: Opening Glasgow Phoenix Choir/Murdoch 22 Apr, Glasgow Royal Concert Hall, Glasgow, UK

Michael Gilbertson: Denial Volti, Piedmont East Bay Children's Choir/Simon 22 Apr, Herbst Theatre, San Francisco, CA, US

Lucy Armstrong: The Gardener

Salford Choral Society/Newell 23 Apr, Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester, UK

Bob Chilcott: Little Jazz Madrigals LandesJugendChor Rheinland-Pfalz/ Schumacher 23 Apr, St Bonifaz, Mainz, Germany

Charlotte Seither: Paintings

LandesJugendChor Rheinland-Pfalz/Schumacher 23 Apr, Christuskirche, Mainz, Germany

Phillip Cooke: Waiting Nazareth College Chamber Singers/Stevens 24 Apr, Nazareth College, Rochester, NY, US

Jeffrey Derus: From Wilderness Choral Arts Initiative/Elliott 24 Apr, St Mark's Presbyterian Church, Newport Beach, CA, US

Nicholas O'Neill: Cantata of St Dunstan Mayfield School Schola Cantorum, Mayfield Festival Chorus, Chelsea Camerata/Summerly 24 Apr, St Dunstan's Church, Mayfield, UK

Zanaida Stewart Robles: Mass for Unaccompanied Choir

Southern Tier Singers Collective/Culverhouse 24 Apr, St Patrick's Church, Binghampton, NY, US

Daragh Black Hynes: Behind This Light Chamber Choir Ireland/Hillier 29 Apr, St Fin Barre's Cathedral, Cork, Ireland

RECITAL ROUND-UP

SALISBURY ORGAN FESTIVAL RETURNS



SALISBURY CATHEDRAL IS CELEBRATING the return of its famous 'Father' Willis organ with a 2022 Organ Festival two years after the 2020 edition was cancelled owing to Covid-19.

The Organ Festival runs from April until November and includes six evening concerts, an organ 'prom', four editions of a Sunday Organ Music Series, and an afternoon performance of Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* with assistant organist John Challenger on 5 November. Thomas Trotter performs at the inaugural concert on 30 April, with further evening recitals from Colin Walsh (21 May), Katherine Dienes (18 June), Anna Lapwood (23 July), Richard Pinel (17 September), with David Briggs completing the set on 8 October. Challenger and the cathedral's director of music, David Halls, will present the organ 'prom' on 13 August. Two former organ scholars at the cathedral – Claudia Grinnell, now sub-organist at Winchester Cathedral, and Samuel Bristow, recently organ scholar at St Paul's Cathedral, London – will join Challenger in presenting the Sunday Organ Music Series (22 May, 10 July, 11 September, and 13 November).

Challenger told C&O, 'At Salisbury Cathedral we are fortunate to possess a particularly fine organ completed in 1877 by "Father" Henry Willis. This magnificent and historically important instrument received a major restoration by Harrison & Harrison in 2019, returning to use in February 2020. The instrument is sounding stunning, but the pandemic has prevented us from running a celebratory concert series until now. I am delighted to present the much-delayed Organ Festival, to herald the return of our beloved organ. The Festival (which runs from April to November) features some of the world's leading concert organists in Saturday night concerts, a Sunday Organ Music series, an Organ Prom, events for local children and an afternoon performance of Prokofiev's Peter and the Wolf. Come and celebrate with us!'

The organ was built in 1876 and 1877, and was subject to a complete 14-month long restoration by Harrison & Harrison who have had care of the organ since 1978. During 2019 and 2020, the instrument was completely dismantled with every pipe and component being cleaned, repaired and then reassembled (see C&O, May/June 2020). salisburycathedral.org.uk

Alton, St Lawrence at 8pm

Charles Harrison (5 Apr) 01420 543628, altonorgansociety.co.uk

Birmingham Town Hall at 1pm Thomas Trotter (11, 25 Apr) 0121 780 3333

Chelmsford Cathedral at 12 noon Hilary Punnett & Simon Hogan (1 Apr) 01245 294484, chelmsfordcathedral.org.uk

Hereford Cathedral at 1.15 pm Peter Dyke (18 Apr) 01432 374210

Leeds Cathedral at 1.15pm Darius Battiwalla (4 Apr) 0113 378 6600, leedsconcertseason.co.uk

Liverpool Cathedral at 11.15am Ian Tracey (18 Apr) 0151 709 6271

London EC2, St Margaret Lothbury at 1.10pm

Richard Townend (7 Apr), Margaret Phillips, Mark Venning & Richard Townend (21 Apr), Marc Baumann (28 Apr) 020 7726 4878 London EC4, St Paul's Cathedral

at 4.30pm William Fox (3, 10 Apr), TBC (17 Apr) 020 7651 0898

London EC4, Temple Church at 1.15pm

Charles Francis (6 Apr), Roger Sayer (13 Apr) bit.ly/3ICltZu

London SW11, St Mary's Battersea at 3pm

Robert Patterson (3 Apr) 020 7228 9648 London W1, Grosvenor Chapel

at 1.10pm Timothy Wakerell (5 Apr) 020 7499 1684

London W1, St George's, Hanover Square at 1.10pm Charles Wooler (19 Apr), Mark Brafield (26 Apr) 020 7629 0874

London WC2, Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church at 4pm

Richard Gowers (30 Apr) 01953 688393

Norwich Cathedral at 8pm* Ashley Grote (11 Apr), David Dunnett (11am, 18 Apr) 01603 218300, cathedral.org.uk

Oxford, Merton College Chapel at 11.30am*

Margaret Phillips (9 Apr), Stephen Farr (5pm, 10 Apr) 01865 276310, bit.ly/3LLVnpj

Portsmouth Cathedral at 7.30pm Colin Walsh (29 Apr) 023 9282 3300

Reading Minster at 12.30pm, Ian Hillier (8 Apr) 0118 9571057

St Albans Cathedral at 3pm* James McVinnie (10 Apr), Tom Winpenny (12.30pm, 13 Apr) 01727 890210 **St Albans, St Peter's at 5.30pm** Mitchell Miller (9 Apr) 01727 844765, organfestival.com

Salisbury Cathedral at 7pm Thomas Trotter (30 Apr) salisburycathedral.org.uk

Southwell Minster at 6.30pm* Jonathan Allsopp (10 Apr), Timara Easter (3.30pm, 18 Apr) southwellminster.org

Warwick, St Mary's at 1.15pm Mark Swinton (8 Apr) 01926 403940, stmaryswarwick.org.uk

Wells Cathedral at 1.05pm Claudia Grinnell (21 Apr) 01749 674483, wellscathedral.org.uk

* unless otherwise stated

While every effort is made to provide correct information, readers are strongly advised to telephone or check the websites to confirm details beforehand.

LETTERS



🛦 (centre) Francis Jackson and Katharine, Duchess of Kent, flanked by Margaret and Dr John Sentamu, photographed by the author

Remembering Francis

I first encountered Francis at the first, and sadly the only, Boosey & Hawkes Open Music College Celebrity Summer School Choral Course which took place at Trent Park, Herts between 4-11 August 1985. Francis was the course president and Alistair Jones, then DoM of Bristol Cathedral School, was a course director and vice-president. A full programme of music tutored and conducted by FJ included Bach (Singet dem Herrn), Stanford (Three Motets), Dvořák's Mass in D alongside FJ's own Alleluia, Laudate Pueri Dominum and Evening Hymn, together with the first UK performance of his setting of Psalm 117 (op.59), which took place on 8 August. At one point in rehearsal, when an entry after a bar's rest was far too loud, FI exclaimed, 'There's a whole blank bar to diminuendo in!' He also remarked upon his Organ Concerto op.64 - commissioned for the sesquicentenary of the Carnegie Hall and completed in March 1985 - that the musical subject was C-A-(rne)-G(ie), following, of course, the likes of B-A-C-H.

Also attending as a chorister was Claudia Flanders, wife of Michael Flanders. So, Day 3 of the course saw an impromptu evening of songs by Flanders and Swann, led by Claudia Flanders and accompanied with considerable verve, humour and merriment by Francis on the piano, looking for all the world like Donald Swann!

Francis often gave recitals at St Bartholomew's Church, Brighton. At the Choral Course, he'd mentioned his next recital there was to be on 24 August 1985. I went along to listen and was duly enlisted to turn pages. To do so was a privilege and not at all taxing, just a case of 'turn when I nod'. One of my Brighton Festival Chorus bass colleagues was Brian Richards, a former pupil of FJ's. When the Lewes Arts Centre was to be created from the old All Saint's Church, Francis had given the closing recital prior to the organ's rebuild. Brian invited me to the re-opening recital on 22 November 1985. In a vigorous moment during the recital, while playing the Mendelssohn Sonata no.4 in B flat,FJ's glasses slipped off and disappeared through the pedalboard. The interval was

announced, followed by much ferreting and poking to try to retrieve the specs. Thankfully they were indeed retrieved, thus saving the recital, but by then one arm was irretrievably broken. The remainder of the recital saw Francis play perfectly (of course) but with the glasses precariously perched at an improbable angle on his nose. Brian refused to tell me what was said, but suggested that it might have been unprintable!

Fast forward to 4 October 2017: I was privileged to be at Bishopthorpe Palace for Francis's 100th birthday celebrations, where he played the organ for the service in the Palace chapel, with John Scott Whitely playing *Sarabande and Invention* from FJ's *Georgian Suite* before the service and afterwards, and Philip Moore playing his own *Prelude and Fugue on the name 'Jackson*'. Just as well I took my camera, as the official photographer didn't show up! So I ended up taking some prized pictures of Francis with three very special people, Dr John and Margaret Sentamu and Katharine, Duchess of Kent. DR LEWIS JONES

Harston, Cambridge

Please email items for News and Letters to the Editor for publication in future issues to maggie.hamilton@markallengroup.com, or post to The Editor, Choir & Organ, Mark Allen Group, St Jude's Church, Dulwich Road, London SE24 0PB, UK.

Richard Houghten

pioneer of electronic controls for the pipe organ, Richard S. Houghten of Michigan died on 29 December at the age of 78. While his name is engraved upon no nameplate, no other individual played quite so many roles within US organ building or contributed so materially to its education and culture.

A Detroit native, Richard attended University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. Though majoring in psychology, he was drawn to the organ after attending a course by university organist Robert Noehren. He eventually worked for Noehren's organ building enterprise, and there met Jerroll Adams. When Adams formed his own business, Richard joined him in Milan, Michigan, sharing a workshop for over 50 years.

With a technological bent, Richard soon forged links to Solid State Logic Ltd (SSL), founded in 1969 to provide electronic control systems for organs. Richard established SSL's US office in Milan; as president, he expanded the market into professional audio with tremendous success. But he never stopped organ work, and eventually left SSL in 1995 to concentrate full-time on this first love. That ardour, coupled to charm, knowledge and fastidious skill, made Richard the midwife of solid-state technology in the 1970s and



his calm, helpful manner, technicians often rang him, not the manufacturer, in a crisis. His was the unflappability of legend: 'Is there smoke? No? Excellent. Next question...' These talents recommended him particularly to mechanical-action shops as they returned to, or employed for the first time,

With his calm, helpful manner, technicians often rang him, not the manufacturer, in a crisis

80s. He not only sold but also often installed the equipment, in the process demystifying the technology for organists and technicians alike. Innovation came naturally. At New York City's Riverside Church in 1980, it was Richard, at curator Anthony Bufano's suggestion, who introduced the first multilevel combination memory – one of many game-changing ideas Richard either dreamed up or had a hand in.

Projects came so naturally that Richard eventually worked at more illustrious places than any single builder ever could have. With combination actions and electric stop action. In this role, Richard was both designer and installer; the organs of C.B. Fisk, Richards, Fowkes & Co., Taylor & Boody and Noack, among many others, contain his work.

On his own, console renovation was the stock-in-trade, often with elegant touches that set his efforts apart. But he was equally sensitive in restoration, working with A. Thompson-Allen on landmark Skinner jobs where original equipment was preserved. In his final years, Richard's elegant new or restored consoles (coupled to Joseph Zamberlan's fine woodworking) graced locales of distinction: Harvard and Duke universities, Longwood Gardens, Boston's famous Trinity Church, to name but a few.

A lifelong bachelor with few links to blood relations, Richard cultivated an international network of friends. The shop family remained central, especially his assistant Vladimir Vaculik from 2001. A stream of flatmates coursed through Richard's tech-laden condominium, many of them organ students at the University of Michigan. Several of that coterie organised Richard's funeral, held on 12 January at Saint Paul's Cathedral, Detroit. A broader celebration is intended in conjunction with the 2022 Convention of the American Institute of Organbuilders in Atlantic City, of which Richard was a past president and central figure, teaching and lecturing regularly, and serving on committees. The Institute's annual October gatherings are where Richard celebrated almost 50 birthdays (7 October 1943), among friends and colleagues who now mourn a cherished pillar of their craft. Jonathan Ambrosino



Parisian inspiration

The Slovenian firm of Škrabl has built an organ in the French symphonic style for a Catholic church in London. **Paul Hale** finds immaculate voicing and tonal finishing

in the results. Photos courtesy timothy macklin

Polished tin principals and en chamade Trompettes sit within the refined English case preserved from the mid-century work of architect Adrian Gilbert Scott at Our Lady of Victories Church

he first church on this site, a short walk west from Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park, was built in 1869, when Henry Bryceson installed a 34-stop organ in a west gallery with a 'prepared-for' Chancel Choir organ. The church acted as pro-cathedral of the Archdiocese of Westminster until 1903. Tragically, it was destroyed by enemy action during the second world war. The fine new building by Adrian Gilbert Scott, dating from 1959, has resonant acoustics and a spacious west gallery for organ and choir. Despite the architect's provision of a large carved organ case, post-war funds permitted only an instrument assembled from second-hand materials. This organ fell into disuse and an electronic substitute stood in front of it during the 1970s and 80s, until in 1989 Bishop & Son effected a rebuild of the pipe organ. Its size with only 20 speaking stops remained modest for such a large church, but it

gave a hint of what a fine pipe organ could sound like in this spacious building.

In the years following his appointment in 2014 as organist and director of music, Timothy Macklin has directed a project to replace the organ, which after 30 years' service had become unable to fulfil the church's developing musical needs. Options were presented and discussions followed to consider a new instrument, encouraged by parish priest Mgr James Curry and members of the congregation. A successful appeal helped raise the required funds.

Macklin felt that a 'grand organ' in the French symphonic style would be an appropriate solution – a view shared by others involved. He writes: 'Kensington has long had a connection with France. A local French population in the area is reflected in the congregation at Our Lady of Victories. There is an echo of this in the

ŠKRABL ORGAN BUILDERS

Catholic liturgy and music at the church: French organ (and choral) repertoire features regularly, and a strong tradition of organ improvisation within the liturgy is maintained, alongside a range of other music. The resonant acoustics of the church also played a part in the choice of style for the new organ. I felt that these generous acoustics would be well-suited to the rich colours of the French symphonic organ sound, inspired by the Cavaillé-Coll tradition. Architecturally, the position of the grand organ high in a gallery at the back of the church provided another element to support our proposals. It is immediately reminiscent of the layout in many French churches.' Having played Parisian instruments including the organs of Saint-Augustin and Saint-Sulpice, Macklin was able to consolidate an understanding of French voicing, console layouts, sound colours and registrations. This provided a basis for initial stoplist discussions to take place, in collaboration with the Slovenian firm Škrabl, which was selected to build this large instrument.

The ongoing design process was led by Macklin, assisted by organist David Bednall, in collaboration with the Škrabl design team and the firm's UK representative Richard Wood. Sophie-Véronique Cauchefer-Choplin (co-titular of the Grand Orgue of Saint-Sulpice, Paris, and a professor of organ at the Royal College of Music, London) gave some useful advice in the early stages and offered some thoughts on which stops from the previous instrument could be reused. A small number have been incorporated after restoration, rescaling and revoicing. The original casework has been retained in good condition and is well suited to the building.

Visiting the Škrabl factory in Slovenia in 2019, Macklin saw the firm's considerable facilities. Anton Škrabl arranged a local tour of several of the company's instruments, which proved useful when forming ideas for the stoplist and the approach to voicing. Macklin adds, 'The choice of stops and sound colours in the new organ was inspired by several organs of the French symphonic tradition, such as those at Saint-Ouen in Rouen, Saint-Sulpice, La Madeleine and Sacré-Coeur, though expressed through the 21st-century voice of Škrabl.' The firm researched many of the great Cavaillé-Coll organs in Paris during 2018, to inform wind pressures, pipe scaling and voicing both for this project and for their large new organ in the Radio Symphony Hall in Katowice, Poland.

Construction started in 2019. Installation and voicing were delayed by the Covid pandemic and the work was

Our Lady of Victories Catholic Church, Kensington, London ^ŠKRABL ORGAN BUILDERS, ROGAŠKA SLATINA, SLOVENIA (2021)

I. GRAND ORGUE		Quinte	2 ² /3	IV. BOMBARDE	
61 notes		Octave	2	61 notes	
Bourdon	16	Tierce	1 ³ /5	Flûte traversière	8
Montre	8	Dulciane	8	Flûte traversière	4
Diapason	8	Trémolo		Trompette Pontificale	16
Flûte harmonique	8	Octave, unison and sub-octave	couplers	Trompette Pontificale	8
Bourdon	8			Trompette Pontificale	4
Prestant	4	III. RÉCIT EXPRESSIF			
Flûte	4	61 notes		PÉDALE	
Quinte	2 ² /3	Bourdon	16	32 notes	
Octave	2	Diapason	8	Contrebasse (digital)	32
Fourniture (19.22.26.29)	IV	Bourdon	8	Soubasse	32
Trompette	8	Violoncelle	8	Contrebasse	16
Clairon	4	Voix angélique	8	Principal	16
Octave, unison and sub-octave couplers		Flûte ouverte	4	Bourdon	16
		Nasard	2 ² /3	Prestant	8
II. POSITIF		Octavin	2	Flûte	8
61 notes		Plein jeu (15.19.22.26)	IV	Octave	4
Diapason	8	Hautbois	16	Contre Bombarde	32
Bourdon	8	Trompette	8	Bombarde	16
Rohrflöte	8	Hautbois	8	Trompette	8
Viole de gambe	8	Voix humaine	8		
Voix céleste	8	Clairon	n 4 Usual manual and pedal couplers		
Octave	4	Trémolo		2 tutti pistons, 10 divisionals, 10 generals	
Bourdon 4		Octave, unison and sub-octave couplers		(999 levels), stepper, pedal divide	
Rohrflöte Viole de gambe Voix céleste Octave	8 8 8 4	Hautbois Voix humaine Clairon <i>Trémolo</i>	8 8 4	Trompette Usual manual and pedal couplers 2 tutti pistons, 10 divisionals, 10 generals	

ŠKRABL ORGAN BUILDERS









Installation began in 2019, with voicing of the 53 speaking stops completed, after pandemic delays, in 2021 ◄ completed in late 2021. There are 53 speaking stops over four manual divisions and pedal, among them a dramatic Solo Trompette division en chamade, which appears as a Trompette Pontificale extended to 16, 8 and 4. At the blessing and consecration of the organ, each of these three stops received its own dedication: one to the parish priest of Our Lady of Victories, one to His Eminence the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, and the last to His Holiness Pope Francis. The console, reversed in front of the instrument with a clear view to the sanctuary, is of the terraced 'amphitheatre' style Cavaillé-Coll adopted for a few of his most significant instruments. Registration aids include the usual divisionals, generals and a stepper. The pedalboard is radiating and concave and features a pedal divide function. The voicer Emil But, says Macklin, 'displayed a masterful skill for shaping sound, and a superb attention to detail.

The Škrabl organ is unusual in having no main building frame. Its soundboards are built on low frames sitting on concrete slabs at two levels which are immovable and part of the building itself. There is plenty of height and all the departments including the Pedal are at an elevated position with no restriction of the egress of sound. Pipes remade from the previous organ can be found in the following stops:

- Grand Orgue: Bourdon 8, Quinte 2²/₃, Trompette 8 (resonators only)
- Récit: Flûte Ouverte 8, Violoncelle 8, Voix angélique 8, Octavin 2, Voix humaine 8
- Pedal: Contrabasse 16, Principal 16, Octave 8

The wind supply is regulated by Schwimmers under the soundboards. Pressures range from 85-110mm; they received their final adjustment during tonal finishing in the church. The action to the slider soundboards is electro-magnetic.

The inauguration of the instrument took place during a dedication liturgy and continued with an opening concert on 20 January given by Olivier Latry, titular of Notre-Dame Cathedral, Paris; there will be two further concerts later in 2022.

No single stop is particularly loud (even the chamades, which work perfectly as a *grand chœur*

ŠKRABL ORGAN BUILDERS

climax to the Grand Orgue), though it certainly builds up to fill the church with sound; the *tutti* is best reserved for brief climactic passages or special effects. The building is helpful to bass frequencies (the digital bass octave of the 32ft Contrebasse might perhaps be softened), so the instrument has an enormous sonority at all dynamic levels.

The most important test of an organ is to listen to how the Great principal chorus relates to the building. In the opening recital, Bach's Ricercare à 6 started on full Grand Orgue flue chorus, a wonderfully rich, broad sound with a perfectly balanced Fourniture at the top and a rich Bourdon at the bottom, which filled the nave at the right dynamic level to leave room for chorus reeds. This is a sound one could listen to for ever and a day. Much the same could be said of every register and every combination - the quality of voicing and tonal finishing is immaculate. Those expecting the rip-roaring blast of a Notre-Dame-type pedal bombarde will be surprised at how well the more modest Grand and Pédale reeds integrate with the flues; adding the chamades provides the ultimate glory. I particularly relish the sound of the Récit, which has both the retiring nature and the sweet voicing of César Franck's famed small Récit at Sainte-Clotilde. There is a maturity to this expression of the French symphonic style, evident in the remarkable blend and wide range of characterful but well-integrated softer colours throughout the organ. All the sounds for Vierne's *Pièces de fantaisie* came over as absolutely 'right', and the multiplicity of choruses used in Latry's kaleidoscopically registered 'symphonic' Bach aligned themselves perfectly with Widor's late-romantic reimagining of *Wachet auf*.

Yes, the organ could have managed with fewer stops – but why should it? The stop-list, combined with the fine voicing and the first-class build quality, have created an organ which will enormously enhance the liturgy and music-making at Our Lady of Victories. I have a feeling that this new Kensington Škrabl will come to be considered one of the great organs of London – a laudable achievement for all involved. ■

Paul Hale has been writing about organs for many years, while working as a cathedral organist, recitalist, teacher and organ consultant. Director of music Timothy Macklin seated at the terraced amphitheatre-style console with a clear view to the sanctuary



David Hill In conversation with ...

Simon Carrington Choral conductor, clinician and consultant

DH: Tea or coffee?

SC: It depends on the time of day. We have a strict routine which we never vary – tea first thing in the morning and at 4pm. The rest of the time it's coffee. It really has to be both.

DH: Favourite wine?

SC: This region of France from where I'm speaking is close to the town of Cahors. The rich, dark, local Malbec wine is not the best known, but it's referred to as 'vin noir' and very drinkable. The people round here live to a great age so I am hoping their wine is good for you!

DH: I won't argue with that! What about your favourite cuisine?

SC: It would have to be south-west France, where we've owned a house for over 30 years. There's a restaurant in Cahors which has been owned by the same family for over 100 years and where we are regulars. It feels like home from home, and we even have our names engraved on our knives! The style of cooking is just wonderful; we celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary there two years ago.

DH: Bach or Handel?

SC: After so many years of conducting the

great Bach choral works you'd think the choice would be easy; but this is a tricky one, as Handel constantly surprises me. I remember performing *Solomon* as one of my last concerts with Schola at Yale and finding it absolutely glorious. His vintage choruses such as 'Draw the tear from hopeless love' are relatively straightforward yet tremendously moving, and the Queen of Sheba's aria 'Will the sun forget to streak' – goodness! I'm currently working on the *Coronation Anthems* for a gig coming up in Germany and am once again full of admiration for his music. To be honest, I can't do without or seven. I was hawked around various choir schools, and my first audition was at Christ Church with dear Sir Thomas Armstrong. I had 'flu that day and I think I was scarcely able to squeak out more than a few notes. It must have been the aural tests that won me the offer. My parents accepted it immediately rather than trawling me around other choir schools!

DH: What next?

SC: I went on to the King's School, Canterbury. The bass David Thomas was my contemporary there and rightly considered far superior to me

Willcocks asked how many symphonies Brahms wrote. I hadn't a clue and took a stab at nine!

either composer. My last tour with Schola was to China and Korea with Bach's B minor Mass. The send-off performance was attended by my successor at Yale, Masaaki Suzuki, which slightly alarmed me!

DH: When did you start singing?

SC: My dad was a choral scholar at King's [College, Cambridge] in the 1930s, so singing was in the family. I started around the age of six as a singer. I felt somewhat in his shadow, but fortunately he went up to King's Cambridge very young, so I had a year to make my mark! I was determined to try for a choral scholarship to follow in my father's footsteps. There was an extraordinary man at school, Edred Wright, whom I always quote as my first mentor. He was a complete maverick but a brilliant choral director, voice trainer and inspiration to us all. His influences and advice are buried deep. At about this time, I switched from the cello to the double bass – and won a place in the National Youth Orchestra where I met my future King's Singers friend and colleague Alastair Hume in the double bass section! I auditioned for King's Cambridge, and managed to squeeze in as a 'volunteer', for my first year – i.e. a bass extra. David Willcocks agreed to accept me to read Music (rather than Modern Languages, which had been my first choice) if I could answer some simple questions. How many symphonies did Brahms write? I didn't have a clue and took a stab at nine! Of course, I was way off target, but he still let me in, and I will always be grateful to him.

DH: When did the King's Singers start?

SC: We started at King's as undergraduate choral scholars – Martin Lane, Alastair Hume, Alastair Thompson, Richard Salter, myself, and Brian Kay – but then we left and scattered about the country. I went to be a double bass player in what is now the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra. We were trying to hold the group together and I would regularly drive down to London for rehearsals and gigs. In 1968 we gave a proper 'debut' in the Queen Elizabeth Hall, which really established us. We were lucky as the concert was presented by the late David Booth Jones and his Hale Arts Trust, and he had invited the Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields with Neville Marriner, organist Simon Preston and horn soloist Barry Tuckwell to join us. The group became more established little by little and I started to play less double bass, although I did continue as John Eliot Gardiner's continuo player for quite a few years. In 1972 we toured Australia and New Zealand for three months – my daughter was one when we left and wondered who I was on our return! Soon after that we decided to go full-time and I put the bass away in a corner.

DH: Well, it became a household name: what were the highlights?

SC: The tenth anniversary concert sold out the Royal Festival Hall – quite something for an a cappella group in 1978. The concert was recorded by EMI on two LPs. We started a series of major recording projects in the early 1970s, some produced by George Martin, more famous as The Beatles' producer. George was keen we expand our horizons. Light entertainment music was a big thing in those days, and we were able to do TV and other commercial work reaching very large audiences, all of which allowed us to live more comfortably! That said, singing repertoire such as Tallis's *Lamentations* in some of the world's greatest renaissance buildings with that long silence as the last chord floats away will always bring back very special memories.

DH: What got you into conducting?

SC: I'm slightly embarrassed about this! I was wondering what to do as I reached my 50s and retirement from The King's Singers became inevitable. I'd had wonderful experiences in the US with the King's Singers, listening to some amazing choirs in schools and colleges all over the country. They have incredible choral departments with full-time directors of choral activities, and I thought maybe I should try and look for one of those posts. I'd done some conducting at various summer courses, and, as a freelance bass player in most of the great symphony orchestras in London, I'd played for and watched many of the great conductors over the years, which must have given me further insights. I was appointed at the University of Kansas, one of those big Midwest schools with remarkable music departments where you can do anything. In my first year, as a complete novice, I found myself organising and conducting Britten's War Requiem, the Monteverdi Vespers, Ligeti's Lux Aeterna and Tallis's 40-part motet, among many other things. All the concerts were performed entirely by my students - soloists, orchestra



Simon Carrington: 'I hope the UK can learn from the American system of training young singers'

SIMON CARRINGTON



◄ and different choirs of varying sizes. I got away with the conducting - just! However, when graduate students started enrolling, expecting to be taught the art of conducting, I had to up my game and think seriously about the technique and communicating ideas.

DH: You spent some time at The New **England Conservatory and then went to** Yale. What was it like starting an entirely new programme at the Institute of Sacred Music?

SC: While I was at NEC I received a letter from Martin Jean at the ISM at Yale asking me if I knew of anyone who might be interested in the new position they were creating. I replied mentioning some possible people who would be excellent, but also expressed an interest myself. I hesitated a little because I was enjoying building the programme in Boston, but this was such a wonderful new opportunity; and a full professorship at Yale was something I couldn't sensibly refuse. My first year at Yale was a bit of a struggle, though a lot of fun. Unlike Kansas or Boston, there weren't any first-study singers to draw from,

and I had to go around the university beating the bushes to find singers for the choir we had named Schola Cantorum! I'd already invited James MacMillan to come and conduct his magnificent Seven Last Words on the Cross but had to rely on whoever was available and willing in the University to make up a choir. The following year we announced auditions for a quartet of graduate soloists from outside the university and we increased this to an octet the year after. We persuaded the distinguished tenor James Taylor to return from Germany to lead the programme, and the octet is now called The Voxtet. They sing in Schola and undertake their own graduate programme training. It all continues in the same way under your direction, David, is that right?

DH: Absolutely! Everyone is grateful for the energy and vision you had for the group; and the effect of this programme has been wide-reaching in terms of the professional singing organisations - of which there are now many - in the US. SC: I recall that while the solo singers would add much to the colour of the sound, they

would often be challenged by the sightreading. It was important to me that the Voxtet Singers should become more proficient in their musicianship and sight-reading skills in order to exist in the wider professional world after leaving Yale.

DH: What shape do you think choral singing is in right now? What might the challenges be?

SC: I think we have to wait till Covid blows over. One thing I always hope is that the UK can learn something from the American system of training young singers, where 'choir' contributes towards the all-important grade point average (GPA), and is an essential part of your educational transcript. When I arrived in Kansas I was blown away by the standard of the choirs in the middle schools, high schools and all state choirs. They were mightily committed, excellent and worked hard. The choirs in the two highs schools in Lawrence, the university town, were astonishingly fine. In the UK it is the public schools overall who produce most of the best singers, with a few notable exceptions. Singing should be an essential part of the curriculum for everyone, and the American system is one we should look at much more closely.

DH: And choral composing?

SC: I hope that, sooner or later, the current fashion for writing in a series of block chords with added notes will gradually fade away and we can get back to a bit more counterpoint! The music is very touching, and thought of by many as the style; but I agree with JEG when he describes it as 'trying to catch soap in the bath!'

DH: Future plans?

SC: My wife and I are both 80 this year so we have to be realistic. So far so good! I'll keep going with my chamber choir conducting courses in Norfolk, Connecticut, run by Yale, and Sarteano in Italy which I really enjoy. They are challenging, but I get a great kick out of them. I'm looking forward to conducting Handel's Coronation Anthems in the Berlin Philharmonic Hall and Haydn's Creation in North Carolina in the spring, alongside some other bits of guest conducting. I'll push on for as long as I can!

DH: I think that'll be a long time, Simon! Thank you.

Leeds united

Founded in 1858 to celebrate the opening of the town hall, Leeds Festival Chorus has a tradition of commissioning new works, including *A Sea Symphony* and *Belshazzar's Feast*, and most recently a work by Jonathan Dove. **Clare Stevens** reports.

PHOTOS COURTESY LEEDS FESTIVAL CHORUS

There were welcome signs of choral life returning to normal when I sat in on a Leeds Festival Chorus (LFC) rehearsal last November in St Chad's Church, Far Headingley, a leafy suburb of the Yorkshire city. I chatted to two of the singers in the vestry while conductor Simon Wright ran an audition in a glass-walled side chapel and choir members took their socially distanced places ready to sing through a varied selection of repertoire which they had just started preparing for a Christmas concert. The venue for a postrehearsal conversation with Wright and accompanist Rebecca Taylor was the choir's 'local', Woodies pub. Was the Covid-19 chapter in the distinguished history of LFC about to be closed?

Not quite, sadly. LFC came back from its 18-month silence for two concerts in October 2021: 'A Night at the Opera' with York Guildhall Orchestra in the Barbican, York, and a performance of Mahler's 'Resurrection' Symphony in Leeds Town Hall with their colleagues from Leeds Philharmonic Chorus and the Chorus and Orchestra of Opera North. But the arrival in the UK of the Omicron variant meant that their Christmas concert had to be cancelled at short notice. Small groups from the choir managed to put on performances of seasonal music in a shopping centre and a restaurant in Leeds City Centre. But it was dispiriting to join the legions of choirs around the world that had worked hard to get back into singing shape last autumn, only to find full-scale in-person concerts stalled once again.

Getting into singing shape is important for LFC, an aspect of weekly rehearsals that Simon Wright takes very seriously, although the preliminary physical and vocal warm-ups are usually led by Rebecca Taylor, whose portfolio of freelance work as a pianist, organist, repetiteur, choir trainer and teacher includes a particular interest in vocal health.

Taylor also had the technical skills required to support online activity for the chorus during the lockdowns of 2020 and 2021, for which Wright and his singers express enormous gratitude. 'It was important that we kept something going,' he says, 'partly for our sponsors, friends and patrons, so that they could see that we were still doing something. But for the choir members themselves it was vital, because this is a sociable choir. Rebecca would get people standing up and marching ▲ Simon Wright conducts a rehearsal of Leeds Festival Chorus in Victoria Hall, Leeds Town Hall; the choir was founded to sing at its opening in 1858

LEEDS FESTIVAL CHORUS

around their sitting-rooms, and we had quizzes, social gatherings and talks where I chatted to guest musicians. There was an evening where we just listened to a selection of popular choral music; and we put on some virtual shows, adding readings to seasonal music.'

A temporary casualty of the pandemic was the premiere of *The Tin Soldier*, a 30-minute setting by Jonathan Dove of the Hans Christian Andersen story, some virtual rehearsals. One of their Zoom meetings took the form of a discussion of the piece between composer, librettist and conductor. At the time of writing the premiere has not yet been rescheduled, but Wright describes it as 'a very worthy successor to the best of Leeds Festival Chorus commissions, just the sort of moving piece to lift our spirits after the current situation is over.'

'Virtually everything is a highlight when you come to do a big concert'

with a libretto by the Yorkshire poet Ian McMillan, which was to have been performed alongside Mozart's C minor Mass in November 2020. Scored for soprano and tenor soloists, children's chorus, chorus and orchestra, it continues LFC's long tradition of commissioning new choral works, most famously *A Sea Symphony* by Vaughan Williams and Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast*.

Dove delivered the score of *The Tin Soldier* during the lockdown period, and Taylor was able to produce read-along scores for the choir so that they could familiarise themselves with the music and have The venue for the premiere was to have been LFC's principal performing home, Leeds Town Hall, and the chorus was to have been joined by the children's chorus of Opera North and the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra; but one of the reasons for the uncertainty over rescheduling is that the town hall is now closed for major refurbishment and modernisation of its facilities. Opened by Queen Victoria in 1858, it was built as a municipal palace, originally housing a council chamber, mayoral suite, council offices, courtrooms, judge's chamber, cells and accommodation for the police and a



Performing at Leeds
Piano Festival in 2021

LEEDS FESTIVAL CHORUS



- Simon Wright, choir director since 1976, takes his choir members to sing in Leeds Arcades
- Rebecca Taylor leads warm-up sessions with the choir and also supported the singers with online activities through Covid lockdowns

gaoler, and the Victoria Hall, the centrepiece of which is its three-manual Gray & Davison organ, also being restored as part of the current project.

LFC was founded to sing at the opening of the Victoria Hall, at the inaugural Leeds Triennial Festival. The first conductor was the composer Sterndale Bennett, followed by Sir Michael Costa and then in 1880 by Sir Arthur Sullivan, who conducted seven festivals. Under Sullivan's direction the festival gained international status as a result of both the quality of the chorus and the quantity of new works commissioned from composers such as Massenet, Humperdinck, Parry, Stanford and Elgar, as well as Sullivan himself.

Dvořák came to Leeds to conduct the 1886 premiere of his oratorio *St Ludmilla*, writing home to Bohemia: 'I am still in the greatest state of excitement, partly the result of the remarkable performance of the orchestra (120 players), chorus (350) and soloists of the first rank; and also on account of a magnificent ovation on the part of the public.'

More recent premieres have included Holst's *Choral Symphony* (1925), Peter Racine Fricker's *The Vision of Judgment* at the centenary festival in 1958, Alexander Goehr's *Sutter's Gold* (1961), *Lumina* by David Blake (1970), a *Choral Symphony* exploring the relationship between music and painting by Edward Cowie (1983), Dominic Muldowney's *Fall of Jerusalem* (2000), Judith Bingham's *Shakespeare Requiem* which marked the choir's 150th anniversary in 2008, and *Deus noster refugium* by James MacMillan (2014).

For more than a century the chorus was disbanded and reformed for each triennial festival, with conductors including Hugh Allen, Thomas Beecham, Malcolm Sargent, John Barbirolli and Donald Hunt; 300 singers were mustered in 1947 when the event resumed after the second world war, with Herbert Bardgett as chorus master. They were described by the 7th Earl of Harewood, director of the festival 1958-74, as having 'a peculiar kind of quality, massed and full-throated'.



Biennial Leeds Musical Festivals were introduced from 1970 and at that point a regular body of around 120 singers was established, meeting weekly and giving a small number of concerts between festivals, such as Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms* in Selby Abbey and Beethoven's *Missa solemnis* in Wakefield Cathedral.

A more significant change came in 1985, with the last ever Leeds Musical Festival. An era had come to an end, as explained on the history pages of the LFC website:

Long gone were the days when members of the Festival Chorus were drawn from thriving choral societies from all over the West Riding; when conductors, orchestras and soloists who were rarely heard there otherwise came to the city for one prestigious event. Now, in addition to a resident opera company – Opera North – at the Grand Theatre, a truly international pianoforte competition and a wide range of other musical activity, professional and amateur, classical and non-classical, the Leisure Services Department of Leeds City Council was providing a roundthe-year programme – the Leeds International Concert Season – of high-quality musical performances that had become the envy of many other towns and cities.

LEEDS FESTIVAL CHORUS



Rehearsing for a concert in Ripon Cathedral 4

In this context it was decided that LFC should become a completely independent, self-governing organisation that could sing works for which large numbers were not required, combining with other choirs such as Leeds Philharmonic Choir for larger-scale repertoire.

Bass John Dickinson, the longest-standing member of the choir, was closely involved in administering it in its new guise, with Dr Wynne Owen of Leeds University as chairman and Marie Holland as a very competent and forceful chorus secretary. 'They built the choir into what it is now,' says Dickinson. 'We started with no money and at first it was a case of putting on very cheap concerts and recruiting new patrons and friends. We had a certain amount of help from Leeds City Council; the incumbent Lord Mayor had always chaired the festival committee and became our principal patron.'

Continuity was provided by Simon Wright, who was appointed as chorus master in 1976. He had established his professional career as a teenage accompanist to the Hallé Choir in Manchester, working with Barbirolli. Wright combines enthusiasm for contemporary music with a relish for presenting popular repertoire; his orchestral conducting portfolio includes four televised Classical Brit Awards ceremonies with the English Chamber Orchestra.

Asked for stand-out memories of his time with LFC, Dickinson recalls singing for Aaron Copland (who conducted a concert of music marking the bicentenary of American Independence in 1976) and for Peter Maxwell Davies; a BBC Proms Verdi Requiem conducted by Mark Elder; and several performances of Bach's B minor Mass. 'Virtually everything is a highlight when you come to do a big concert, when the adrenaline starts running,' he adds, 'and with Simon at the helm we generally make a good fist of things.'

Alto Emma Bates is typical of the younger generation of LFC singers who are happily taking on the digital marketing, publicity and recruitment strategies required in the 21st century.

A health service worker but also an experienced musician who plays the flute in a local orchestra, she was initially attracted to the choir by the free membership for under-25-year-olds and by the high musical standard: 'I feel really lucky to be given the opportunity to sing with a choir like this. Performing with professional orchestras and soloists is brilliant. Everyone is really friendly; but it is very, very good and it does push me. It is the sort of choir that I would listen to on my iPhone before I joined and I'd think, "Wouldn't it be great to be part of something like that?" – and I have been for the past ten years.' ■ *leedsfestivalchorus.co.uk*

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Clare Stevens works as a writer, editor and publicist in the Welsh Marches, where she sings with Hereford Choral Society.

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US composer John Adams wrote little specifically for choirs, his vocal writing tending to focus more on stage works, in which the chorus often plays a key role. Now, to celebrate the composer's 75th birthday this year, his publisher, Boosey & Hawkes, has made available the choruses from his operas in three volumes, giving choirs the opportunity to explore this 'seriously good music'.

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Fathers of the Victorians

Nicholas Thistlethwaite continues his study of formative contributors to the Victorian era in the fields of church music and organ building

part <mark>3</mark> Henry John Gauntlett (1805-76)



hen Henry John Gauntlett died in 1876, a writer in The Musical Times observed that 'Few, if any musicians have done so much for Church music in this country as he whose decease we are now recording.1 Today, that tribute might strike us as excessive. Certainly Gauntlett's fame is assured by his setting of 'Once in royal David's city' (Irby), heard by millions around the world every Christmas Eve, and also by a number of other hymn tunes that have earned a permanent place in the repertoire of Anglican hymnody, but in other respects Gauntlett does not loom large in histories of church music in the 19th century. Yet this is the man of whom Felix Mendelssohn wrote:

his literary attainments, his knowledge of the history of music, his acquaintance with acoustical laws, his marvellous memory, his philosophical turn of mind, as well as practical experience, rendered him one of the most remarkable professors [of music] of his age.²

It was also Mendelssohn who chose Gauntlett as organist for the first performance of *Elijah* in Birmingham Town Hall in 1846; when the organ part went astray, he played from a full score to the composer's 'entire satisfaction.'³

Gauntlett's own personality probably contributed to this lack of recognition. His opinions were strongly held and he wielded an acerbic pen in his many journalistic

A portrait of Gauntlett as a young man, c.1840

FATHERS OF THE VICTORIANS: 3

OURTESY ST PETER & ST PAUL CHURCH, OLN

endeavours. As a controversialist, he seemed to enjoy setting himself against the spirit of the age. But his publications and lectures on music, his vigorous advocacy of J.S. Bach's organ works and the reform of English organ design, and his tireless promotion of congregational hymnody made him a uniquely influential figure in the early-Victorian years.

He was born in 1805, the year of the Battle of Trafalgar. His father was another Henry Gauntlett (1762-1833), an Evangelical divine who was curate of Wellington in Shropshire at the time of his son's birth. In 1811 he became curate, and in 1815 vicar, of Olney in Buckinghamshire. His predecessors in the parish included John Newton, a prominent figure in the early Evangelical movement, who had collaborated with the poet William Cowper in writing hymns of personal devotion, which in 1779 appeared in a collection entitled Olney Hymns. The elder Gauntlett continued this tradition, publishing several books of hymns for his parishioners.⁴ He also promised the congregation that if they would subscribe for an organ he would provide an organist from among his children. Henry John volunteered, and mastered the instrument within a matter of weeks in 1814.

The younger Gauntlett's involvement with hymnody and organs therefore began in his father's parsonage at Olney, and was a by-product of the Georgian Evangelical movement. From there, we can trace a direct line to the 'Anglo-Lutheran or Protestant Organ' pioneered by Gauntlett in the 1840s, with its 'great congregational chorus' intended to lead and support 'a noble and heart-stirring hymnody' after the example of the organs of Lutheran Germany.⁵



A St Peter & St Paul, Olney, where Gauntlett's father was incumbent during his son's early years

of organists surrounding Samuel Wesley (1766-1837). Known as the 'Bach junto' or 'Sebastian squad', they were enthusiastic promoters of Bach's music, little of which was known in England at the time.⁷ Charles Burney had a copy of the '48' given to him by C.P.E. Bach, and C.F. Horn had a manuscript of the six trios for organ. Gradually, more

The problem was, most English organists had only the haziest notion of how Bach should be played

Gauntlett senior had hoped that his son would enter the Church but the son had other ideas. At the age of 16 he was taken to London to meet Thomas Attwood, organist of St Paul's Cathedral. Attwood offered to take him as a pupil 'and eventual successor'⁶ but Gauntlett senior was unpersuaded, and in 1826 Henry John was articled for five years to a solicitor in Chancery Lane, London. Within a year, he was organist of St Olave, Southwark (1827) and had been drawn into the circle came to light, and Wesley and his fellowenthusiasts, including Benjamin Jacob and Vincent Novello, began to give occasional public performances in 1808. Gauntlett seems to have joined the 'junto' early in his London residence because he performed Bach's Fugue in E flat (BWV 552ii) in the competition for the organist's place at St Stephen, Coleman Street in 1827, undeterred by the fact that Avery's organ had only an octave-and-a-half of pull-down pedals. Everything suggests that by the late 1820s Gauntlett had found his musical mentor (Wesley) as well as a cause to which he became passionately committed (the promulgation of Bach's organ works). However, there was a problem: most English organists had only the haziest notion of how Bach should be played. Gauntlett later wrote that Wesley, 'never having heard a German organ, with its ponderous pedale ... could not realise the inventions of the author,' and therefore had no wish to risk the reputation of his idol 'by the performance of passages, which on the squalling organ (which in his day prevailed in our churches) must have sounded absurd and ridiculous.²⁸

This is why Mendelssohn's performances of Bach's organ works during his visits to England in the 1830s and 40s were so significant.⁹ It is clear that Gauntlett lost no opportunity in getting to know the brilliant young German whose public appearances were making such an impression. The year 1837 was particularly significant. It was in September of that year that Mendelssohn's post-service performance in

FATHERS OF THE VICTORIANS: 3

ANDREW FREEMAN, COURTESY BRITISH ORGAN A



The organ in Christ Church, Newgate Street in the City of London, where Gauntlett was evening organist, 1836-46

St Paul's Cathedral of Bach's Fugue in A minor was brought to an abrupt end when the blowers were bribed to stop pumping so that the vergers could clear the crowds from the building. Gauntlett was present and immediately invited Mendelssohn to resume his performance two days later in Christ Church, Newgate Street where he was evening organist. Samuel Wesley was in the audience, and despite his frailty consented to play for Mendelssohn. A month later, he was dead.¹⁰ Meanwhile, Gauntlett had accompanied Mendelssohn to Birmingham where his performance in the Town Hall of the Prelude & Fugue in E flat (BWV 552) was cheered to the rafters.

With Mendelssohn's encouragement, Gauntlett visited Haarlem and other notable continental organs around this time. On his return, he began his crusade to reform the design of English organs so that they conformed more closely to the 'German System'. With the collaboration of William Hill he developed schemes which included

C compasses, independent Pedal Organs, Swell Organs with choruses to match the Great in size and power, and novel flute, string and reed stops, some of which were loosely inspired by continental examples while others imitated orchestral instruments. Over the course of the next eight years (1838-46), he and Hill collaborated on 21 new or rebuilt instruments including those in Christ Church, Newgate Street (1838), St Luke, Cheetham Hill, Manchester (1840), Great George Street Chapel, Liverpool (1841), Worcester Cathedral (1842), Edinburgh Music Hall (1843), and St Olave, Southwark (1846), where Hill completed an organ with a 27-stop Great left incomplete by H.C. Lincoln. It was an astonishing achievement.11 How this professional partnership worked is unclear. The likeliest explanation is that Gauntlett provided the vision and energy while Hill applied his mechanical and tonal skills to developing practical solutions to Gauntlett's sometimes wayward schemes.

But all was not well. In the mid-1840s, Gauntlett seems to have had some sort of personal crisis which led him to resign his employment at Newgate Street and St Olave's (1846, 1847), sell his remarkable music library consisting of 524 items including rare manuscripts and theoretical works,12 and part company from Hill. In a peevish letter to Hill, which may actually never have been sent, he complained of the lack of remuneration that their collaboration had yielded despite his being 'for some years daily in the organ manufactory'.13 The crisis may indeed have been financial, but it was probably exacerbated by Gauntlett's acute sensitivity about being treated as an amateur in musical matters. Enduring vicious criticism in print, he overcompensated by attacking his detractors with his pedantry and sarcasm. The award of a Lambeth doctorate in 1842 was insufficient consolation, and by the late-1840s, Gauntlett had evidently fallen out with most of his former colleagues in the 'Sebastian Squad'.

He did not entirely desert the organ, and later held posts at Union Chapel, Islington (1853-61), All Saints, Notting Hill (1861-63) and St Bartholomew-the-Less, Smithfield (1872-76);14 he even patented an early form of electrical action for organs (1852),15 but devoted his energies chiefly to the composition of hymns. Estimates vary from 'hundreds' to a mind-boggling 'ten thousand'.16 The long list of hymn books which he edited or to which he contributed is equally impressive, including The Church Hymn and Tune Book (1851) which was widely used in the Church of England before Hymns Ancient and Modern appeared in 1861, The Congregational Psalmist (1856), and The Wesleyan Methodist Hymn Book.17 Gauntlett was nothing if not ecumenical. But it was in one sense unrewarding work. When he died unexpectedly in 1876, some of his friends were moved to launch a public appeal for his widow and family who were left 'entirely unprovided for?¹⁸ The fact that the list of subscribers included the names of Madam Balfe, Julius Benedict, Michael Costa, George Elvey, Professor W.H. Monk, Sir F. Gore Ouseley, Sir Henry Baker and Sims Reeves testifies to the regard in which he was held, and reflects a recognition that Gauntlett's critical roles in the evolution of the English organ and the composition and use of hymnody had a formative influence on Victorian culture.

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Henry Gauntlett pictured in his later years

Nicholas Thistlethwaite is a musical historian and organ consultant who has written extensively about English organs and church music. His book Organ Building in Georgian and Victorian England: the work of Gray & Davison, 1772-1890 was published by The Boydell Press in February 2020.



Freestyle by graeme kay

In praise of Liverpool...

A mong the businesses killed off by the pandemic due to the combined effects of the dislocation of supply chains, lockdown affecting retail footfall, and crippling business rates, was

the 90-year-old family electrical firm of Andrew Thomson in Dunfermline, Fife. I felt more than the usual pang of remorse at the news because the upper floor of an old Thomson's store was where I bought my first organ LP: Professor Michael Schneider playing Bach on 'Schleswig's Great Cathedral Organ' [Marble Arch MAL566, released in 1965]. Even then, my nascent sub-editor's brain was wondering whether it was the cathedral or the organ which was 'Great'... The second LP I bought there was no.1 in the Great Cathedral Organ Series [HMV CSD1534] – Noel Rawsthorne playing the organ of Liverpool Cathedral. Everything about that LP blew me away: the awesome grandeur of the cathedral building, Noel's fabulous programme of Mozart's Fantasia in F minor, Daquin's *Noël* (haha!) no.6, Karg-Elert's *Nun danket alle Gott*, Vierne's *Berceuse*, Whitlock's *Fanfare* and the Toccata from Duruflé's Suite op.5 – and of course the magnificent Willis III organ itself. Even to my then untutored ear it was clear that, in 1965, capturing the sound of the glorious behemoth was no picnic – there was some distortion in the tutti, at least as reproduced through the limited means of my Dansette Viva autochanger...

Fittingly, Noel is buried under the Cathedral organ next to the memorial to his predecessor Dr Harry Goss-Custard. Although it was the closure of a provincial record store which prompted this outpouring of nostalgia, it led to another serendipitous, and linked

discovery: a 1989 recital recorded in digital sound by Noel's virtuoso protégé, lan Tracey – for some unaccountable reason this disc had passed me by for nigh on 30 years. lan's eclectic programme dances through Handel, Bach, Reger, Widor, Thalben-Ball, Bossi's *Scherzo*, Walton's *Crown Imperial*, Cocker's *Tuba Tune* (the organ giving dear, departed Francis Jackson at York a run for his money), Mulet's *Toccata*, Pietro Yon's *Toccatina* and, in a nod to lan's predecessor, Henry Ley's arrangement of Purcell's *Two Trumpet Tunes and Air* which Noel had included in his GCO



no.1 disc. Quite apart from lan's whirlwind playing and astounding command of the organ's tone-colours, I doubt if the organ has ever been better captured than it is here by producer John West and recording engineer Mike Hatch. Ian takes up the story:

'The recording has been such a best-seller – EMI keep putting a different cover on it, at ever-reducing prices... and it just goes on selling. I remember that we did it on one day, all in one session, and all single takes. Mike and his "Floating Earth" company were fabulous – I worked with him regularly at the Liverpool Phil and had the utmost respect for his work... and his amazing ears! John West and I worked regularly together at the Phil. It was all hatched in a recording session in the halcyon days of Trish Byrne as label manager. We met regularly at the time, while Tod Handley's Vaughan Williams cycle was being recorded, along with lots of Czech music for Libor Pešek (then principal conductor). I would usually be there as an extra pair of ears listening specifically to the choir, but often just along for the ride! The same team had also recorded my Saint-Saëns Symphony no.3 from the Cathedral, with Andrew Litton back in 1986. Trish had at the time declared, "We must get a solo disc from lan", and so it was, though it took a couple of years for diaries and schedules to coincide. We joked about our little group being "The A Team"... and I was, of course, "*Mr* T", having not assumed my professorial chair until later that year. We had lots of laughs and produced, I think, so many benchmark recordings together.'

lan's highly recommended recording is widely available, in a number of EMI liveries; look for it on the internet – it's a real treat. ■

Graeme Kay is a digital platforms producer for BBC Radio 3 and 4.



Fifty not out

Yorkshire – dubbed 'God's own country' by locals – has many claims to fame, among them world-class cricket, opulent castles and stately homes, three national parks, and the splendour of York Minster. To these and many other attributes was added, half a century ago, a small music publisher that has blossomed to be a major supplier of choral and organ music, especially championing home-grown talent. **Stephen Pritchard** reports.

IMAGES COURTESY BANKS MUSIC PUBLICATIONS

V ou're reading this magazine, so it's a fair bet you sing in a choir or play the organ (or maybe both). Perhaps you've sung Andrew Carter's delightful arrangement of *I Wonder as I Wander*, or T. Tertius Noble's mighty Evening Service in B minor. Maybe you've played Francis Jackson's *Prelude on East Acklam* or his *Capriccio*. If the answer is yes to any of these, then raise a glass to Banks Music Publications (BMP), and Ramsay Silver, who founded the company 50 years ago this year.

In 1972 Silver, an organist and choirmaster, took over the publishing arm of the venerable music company Banks of York (est. 1752), and with it the familiar York Series of choral works by, among others, Noble and Edward Bairstow. Francis Jackson, then director of music at York Minster, who died in January at the age of 104, became the firm's principal musical editor and adviser – a relationship that was to prove lifelong, continuing with the business's present owners, Rosemary and David Goodwin.

Silver's decision to publish Andrew Carter's two-part arrangement of *Tomorrow Shall Be My Dancing Day* half a century ago is described by the composer as a turning point in his career: 'His enthusiasm and drive were infectious, mixed in with a great sense of fun. Over his desk a notice announced, "I may have my faults, but being wrong is not one of them.""

That jocular confidence and his enthusiasm for the work of contemporary

British composers led Silver to establish the Eboracum Choral Series, which today comprises more than 500 titles. He was also a champion of composers whose work he felt was overlooked, including Percy Whitlock, and he served for many years alongside Robert Gower, Denny Lyster, Francis Jackson, Malcolm Riley and Graham Barber on the board of the Percy Whitlock Trust.

Silver had worked with Oxford University Press, an association that some years later was to lead to BMP being awarded the contract to supply their out-of-print choral titles, alongside handling the catalogue of Basil Ramsey, publisher, organist and the founding editor of *Choir & Organ*. OUP's vocal titles followed, and last year its keyboard titles, expanding BMP's total offering to 18,000 works.

With its own printing facilities and using the latest technology, BMP can distribute from any of these catalogues – an activity that all but came to a halt during the pandemic. The Goodwins took over in 2014, and as Rosemary puts it: 'Considering all the possible problems we might have faced when we bought the business, it never entered our heads that it would be affected by a world pandemic that would result in singing being deemed a dangerous activity! Orders for choral music dried up almost overnight and we had to decide quickly how we could diversify and stay in business.'

BANKS MUSIC PUBLICATIONS

BMP had a few copies of Francis Jackson's autobiography *Music for a Long While* and his book *Blessed City: the life and works of Edward Bairstow*, which were advertised on social media. 'They sold quickly, so we decided to see what other books were available that might be of interest to our customers, and we now have a list of about 100 we sell through our website. However, I'm not sure we would have survived without selling singers' face masks'.

Adapting a design that originally came from Canada, BMP began having these made in the summer of 2020. Nicknamed 'duck masks', they have a lightweight frame that creates a space for the sound while keeping the fabric away from the nose and mouth. BMP has supplied thousands all over the world. Customers in the UK include the Royal Opera chorus, the City of Birmingham Symphony Chorus and Britten Pears Arts.

Silver gave music student Rosemary Goodwin a four-week placement in 1989. She immediately felt at home and stayed, learning all aspects of publishing. When Silver died in 1996, his widow Margaret took over. Carter recalls her 'expanding the catalogue with her unfailing warmth, friendship and efficiency'. Goodwin was appointed manager, and when Margaret retired in 2014, she and her husband David bought the business - 'a joyful move,' says Carter. 'They have proved a sparkling duo. As of old, nothing is ever too much trouble, and attention to detail is always high on the list.' Now their son Dan, who has considerable IT experience, has joined the family firm and is in charge of all digital aspects of the company.

Eager to continue Silver's commitment to publishing contemporary music, the Goodwins established the Genesis Choral Series just a year after they took over, attracting new talent to the catalogue, including Alex Patterson, Russell Hepplewhite, Thomas Hewitt-Jones, Edmund Jolliffe, Richard Nye and Mark Jordan.

Hepplewhite is generous in his praise for Banks: 'In our uncertain times, I think it takes courage for publishers to forge relationships with composers, because we need so much support – and it takes time for choirs to become familiar with new works. In my experience, Banks have never been afraid of this challenge. They have never tried to mould or change anything I have created; in fact, they have only ever encouraged me to keep composing in exactly the style I wish.' During its half-century, BMP has always been based in Yorkshire: first in York, then Sand Hutton, and now on the edge of Hovingham, in what Rosemary describes as a glorious setting in an area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. In a converted barn they work to publish, print and distribute their growing catalogue. Rosemary handles the editing of new works, getting choral and Alan Spedding, Simon Lindley and Robert Cockroft. The repertoire ranges from the fiendishly difficult through to more accessible preludes and arrangements of hymn tunes and popular themes.

BMP also publishes collections as tributes to notable organists, either as a memorial or to mark a milestone in their lives. *Echoes* – *A Tribute to Alan Spedding* is an example.

'In our uncertain times, it takes courage for a publisher to forge a relationship with a composer'

organ manuscripts into house style. She's a keyboard player but not an organist, so ensures that she always has a knowledgeable second pair of eyes: 'We are lucky to have several fine organists I can ask to doublecheck any organ pieces before they go to print.'

There's a strong Yorkshire accent in the list of organ composers published by BMP which, alongside Jackson, includes Philip Moore, who succeeded Jackson at York Minster, John Scott Whiteley, Philip Wilby, When Jackson was a mere 90 years old, BMP naturally produced a *Fanfare for Francis* collection, in association with the Percy Whitlock Trust. This included a piece by the York-born film composer John Barry – famous for his James Bond scores – who said Jackson was a mentor and inspiration to him.

The regrettable fall in the number of high street music shops makes it all the more imperative that publishers such as BMP can offer digital download licences, something that composers increasingly appreciate. One

(clockwise, from top I) Ramsay Silver, Banks Music Publications founder; composer Andrew Carter describes Silver's decision to publish his arrangement of *Tomorrow Shall Be My Dancing Day* as a 'turning point' in his career; David and Rosemary Goodwin bought the firm in 2014, and run it with son Dan









BANKS MUSIC PUBLICATIONS

If those is Olivia Sparkhall, who was taken on by Banks a year ago, shortly after it launched the Kassian Choral Series, which highlights the choral writing of women composers. 'At the time the series was very much in its infancy with only three titles, which has since risen to 13, with six pieces either composed or arranged by me,' Sparkhall says. 'It was heartening how readily Banks embraced me, both as a composer of original compositions, and as an arranger of pieces by historical women such as Clara Schumann, Barbara Strozzi and Amy Beach. My project to make works by neglected composers more easily available to upper-voice choirs clearly resonated with Banks' contemporary values.

'In addition to beautifully printed octavos, Banks also sell digital download licences, which have proved to be a popular way for choirs to acquire my pieces and generated an impressive number of sales. They also maintain an active social media presence, recommending my pieces and continuing to promote them among their followers'.

Rosemary says, 'A big party will have to wait until we turn 60,' but BMP will be marking its half-century with special offers, additions to the Genesis and Kassian series, more digital offerings and a new book by Suzzie Vango and Lucy Hollins: *How To Make your Choir Sound Awesome – the ultimate warm-up book* will be launched at this year's *abcd* Choral Leaders' Festival. Now there's a book we would all like to read. ■

Stephen Pritchard writes on music for the Observer and the classical music website Bachtrack. He trained at Portsmouth Cathedral and sings with the English Chamber Choir.

Composers published by Banks Music Publications include (top row, I to r) Em Whitfield Brooks, Francis Jackson, Thomas Hewitt-Jones, (middle row, I to r) Simon Lindley, Lucy Hollins and Susan Vango, Olivia Sparkhall, (bottom row, I to r) Russell Hepplewhite, Hilary Campbell, Gwyn Arch





























FESTIVALS 2022

APRIL

Passiontide at Merton 8-10 April, Oxford, UK Contact +44 1865 276310 choir@merton.ox.ac.uk Box office +44 1865 305305 boxoffice@oxfordplayhouse.com merton.ox.ac.uk/passiontidemerton

St John's Smith Square Easter Festival

10-17 April, St John's Smith Square, London, UK Contact +44 20 7222 2168 info@sjss.org.uk boxoffice@sjss.org.uk sjss.org.uk

The 1st International Online

Organ Festival 18 April-1 May, online (see box, below) io-of.org Slovakia Cantat 21-24 April, Bratislava, Slovakia Contact +421 908 693 395 info@choral-music.sk choral-music.sk Cork International Choral

Festival

27 April-1 May, Cork, Ireland Contact +353 21 4215125 info@corkchoral.ie corkchoral.ie

15th International Choir Competition & Festival Bad

Ischl 27 April-May, Bad Ischl, Austria interkultur.com Westminster Cathedral Grand

Organ Festival

27 April-26 October, Westminster Cathedral, London, UK Contact +44 20 7798 9057, musicadmin@rcdow.org.uk westminstercathedral.org.uk

Cornwall International Male Choral Festival

28 April-2 May, Cornwall, UK Contact +44 7584 296961 director@cimcf.uk cimcf.uk

Leamington Music Festival

28 April-2 May, Leamington, UK (see box, opposite) www.leamingtonmusic.org Salisbury Cathedral 2022 Organ Festival

30 April-13 November, Salisbury Cathedral, UK (see box, below) salisburycathedral.org.uk

MAY

London Festival of Contemporary Church Music

7-15 May, St Pancras, London, UK Contact +44 20 7388 1461 info@lfccm.com lfccm.com





Salisbury Cathedral Organ Festival

30 April-13 November, Salisbury Cathedral, UK

Join internationally acclaimed musicians for a celebration of organ music at Salisbury Cathedral's 2022 Organ Festival. After an extensive restoration project costing over £700,000, Salisbury Cathedral is holding a six-month Festival to honour the return of the refurbished Father Willis organ, featuring specialist concerts, an Organ Prom and much more.

Contact 01722 555100, visitorsadmin@salcath.co.uk salisburycathedral.org.uk



1st International Online Organ Festival

18 April-1 May

This is a major international event presenting more than 30 exclusive concert films, as video and on demand, starring the brightest names in today's organ scene, including Martin Baker, Wayne Marshall and Olivier Latry. Every day, three films will take centrestage, accompanied by live Q&A sessions (free). In addition, there are Zoom panels, webinars, further Q&As, and online masterclasses. **Contact** info@io-of.org io-of.org


Leamington Music Festival

28 April-2 May, Learnington, UK

The 2022 Learnington Music Festival has RVW150 at its heart, with works by those who taught him and those he taught. All Saints Church has organ recitals by Christopher Cromar and Rachel Mahon, and hosts the Sinfonia of Birmingham conducted by Michael Seal with Nicholas Daniel playing three works by Vaughan Williams. Chamber music artists include Ensemble 360, James Gilchrist, Leonore Piano Trio and Roderick Williams (pictured). **Contact** Festival director Richard Phillips +44 1926 497000,

richard@leamingtonmusic.org Box office 01926 334418 and online www.leamingtonmusic.org

Leeds International Organ Festival

10-13 May, Leeds, UK info@leedsiof.org leedsiof.org / lioflive.org.uk **Dresden Music Festival** 11 May-10 June, Dresden, Germany

Contact +49 351 478 560 info@musikfestspiele.com musikfestspiele.com

Salzburg Singt

12-15 May, Zell am See, Austria cantusmm.com

Bloomington Early Music Festival

22-28 May, Bloomington, IN, US Contact +1 737 900 1685 office@blemf.org blemf.org

The English Music Festival

27-29 May, Dorchester-on-Thames, UK

Contact +44 7808 473889 em.marshall-luck@ englishmusicfestival.org.uk

St Davids Cathedral Festival

27 May-5 June, St Davids, Wales, UK

Contact +44 7747 841576 festival@stdavidscathedral.og.uk stdavidscathedral.og.uk Händel-Festspiele

27 May-12 June, Halle, Germany Contact festspiele@haendelhaus.de bit.ly/3rTh5jt

JUNE

Aldeburgh Festival 3-26 June, Aldeburgh, UK Box office +44 1728 687110 boxoffice@brittenpearsarts.org brittenpearsarts.org

Bachfest Leipzig

9-19 June, Leipzig, Germany Contact +49 341 9137 300 bachfest@bach-leipzig.de bachfestleipzig.de Limerick Sings International

Choral Festival

10-12 June, Limerick, Ireland Contact +353 61 213312 information@limericksings.com limericksings.com

Orgelfestival Holland

24 June-1 July, Alkmaar, Netherlands



JAM on the Marsh

7-17 July, medieval churches and landscape of Romney Marsh, Kent, UK Live with virtual release in the autumn, with Anna Tilbrook, curator. Highlights include an open-to-the-public composition workshop with global sensation VOCES8 + performance, delighting all with their infectious joy of singing. Also, Paul Patterson's dramatic *Fifth Continent* for choir, brass and organ; Latin-heat with the London Tango Quintet; and the London Mozart Players and virtuosic clarinettist Michael Collins performing the world premiere of Judith Bingham's festival commission. **Contact** +44 7771 782890, sarah@jamconcert.org **Box office** +44 800 988 7984, sarah@jamconcert.org

jamconcert.org

info@orgelfestivalholland.nl orgelfestivalalkmaar.nl

East Neuk Festival

29 June-3 July, Fife, UK Contact +44 330 2211093 ian@eastneukfestival.com eastneukfestival.com

JULY

International Choral Festival Cardiff/ Gŵyl Gorawl Ryngwladol Caerdydd 1-3 July, Cardiff, UK internationalchoralfestival.wales 12th World Choir Games 4-14 July, Gangneung, South Korea interkultur.com Llangollen International Musical

Eisteddfod

7-10 July, Llangollen, UK Contact +44 1978 862000, info@llangollen.net llangollen.net

JAM on the Marsh

7-17 July, Romney Marsh, Kent, UK (see box, above) jamconcert.org

Cheltenham Music Festival

8-16 July, Cheltenham, UK Contact +44 1242 850270 boxoffice@cheltenhamfestivals.com cheltenhamfestivals.com/music York Early Music Festival

8-16 July, York, UK

Box office +44 1904 658338, info@ ncem.co.uk, boxoffice@ncem.co.uk ncem.co.uk

Creative Oundle International Festival

8-16 July, Oundle, Northamptonshire Contact +44 1832 279086 info@creativeoundle.co.uk creativeoundle.co.uk

Westminster Abbey Summer Organ Festival

12 July-9 August, Tuesdays, Westminster Abbey, London, UK Contact + 44 20 7222 5152 westminster-abbey.org

Europa Cantat Junior

15-24 July, Vilnius, Lithuania Contact + 370 6314 3428 info@europacantatjunior.org europacantatjunior.org/2022

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International Organ Festival

Haarlem

16-30 July, Haarlem, Netherlands **Contact** +31 6 28426540 office@organfestival.nl organfestival.nl

King's Lynn Festival

17-30 July, King's Lynn, Norfolk, UK Box office +44 1553 764864 info@kingslynnfestival.org.uk kingslynnfestival.org.uk World Peace Choral Festival

20-25 July, Vienna, Austria

20-25 July, Vienn wpcf.at

Three Choirs Festival

23-30 July, Hereford, UK Contact +44 1452 768928, info@3choirs.org Box office bookings@3choirs.org 3choirs.org

Bratislava Cantat

25-28 July, Bratislava, Slovakia Contact +421 908 693 395 info@choral-music.sk choral-music.sk

AUGUST

Musica Deo Sacra

1-7 August, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire, UK (see box, below) tewkesburyabbey.org.uk Edinburgh International Festival

6-28 August, Edinburgh, UK Box office +44 131 473 2000 boxoffice@eif.co.uk eif.co.uk Lahti International Organ

Festival

8-14 August, Lahti, Finland Contact +358 3 877 230 urkuviikko@lahtiorgan.fi lahtiorgan.fi

2nd Riga Sings 17-21 August, Riga, Latvia Interkultur.com Presteigne Festival of Music and Arts

25-30 August, Presteigne UK (see box, below) presteignefestival.com

Edington Music Festival

26-29 August, Edington, Wiltshire, UK Contact + 44 1380 831425 info@edingtonfestival.org edingtonfestival.org

SEPTEMBER Norsk Orgelfestival

15-18 September, Stavanger, Norway orgelfestival.no 4th Kalamata International Choir Competition & Festival

22-26 September, Kalamata, Greece interkultur.com **10th Isola del Sole**

25-29 September, Grado, Italy interkultur.com

The Cumnock Tryst 29 September-2 October, Cumnock, Ayrshire, UK Box office +44 141 332 5057 hello@thecumnocktryst.com thecumnocktryst.com

OCTOBER

Canadian International Organ

Competition Festival 2-30 October, Montreal, Canada Contact +1 514 510 5678 info@ciocm.org ciocm.org

Toulouse les Orgues

4-16 October, Toulouse and region, France toulouse-les-orgues.org

Internationales Chorfest

Magdeburg 5-9 October, Magdeburg, Germany interkultur.com

St Andrews Voices

12-16 October, St Andrews, UK Contact hello@standrewsvoices.com standrewsvoices.com 10th City of Derry International Choir Festival 19-23 October, Millennium Forum

and Guildhall, Derry, UK Contact +44 7754 750 646, info@derrychoirfest.com derrychoirfest.com

NOVEMBER

London International Festival of Early Music 9-12 November, London, UK Contact ann@lifem.org lifem.org

FESTIVALS 2023

A Festival of Pipes 2-6 July, Toronto, Canada St Albans International Organ Festival 3-15 July, St Albans, UK Contact +44 1727 844765

Contact +44 1727 844765 adminstrator@organfestival.com organfestival.com



Musica Deo Sacra

1-7 August, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire, UK

'A joyous meeting of music, of the liturgy and of people flocking to prayer.' This year's festival commemorates the significant anniversaries of Thomas Tomkins and Ralph Vaughan Williams, and celebrates the music of Francis Jackson who died earlier this year.

Contact +44 1684 850959, info@tewkesburyabbey.org.uk tewkesburyabbey.org.uk



Presteigne Festival 25-30 August, Presteigne, UK

The Presteigne Festival celebrates its 40th year in 2022. With an international reputation for commissioning new music and the support of young generation artists, the 2022 Festival takes the Vaughan Williams 150th anniversary as a central theme, and premieres no fewer than ten works from leading composers including Julian Philips (composer-in-residence) and Huw Watkins. **Contact** + 44 1544 267800, bookings@presteignefestival.com presteignefestival.com



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- $\cdot\,$ Royal Birmingham Conservatory / UK
- Cathedral of Milan ,La Révolte des Orgues' conducted by Johannes Skudlik
- Beijing National Grand Theatre -Shen Fanxiuu
- Vicenza Teatro Olimpico -Wayne Marshall (ARTE Coop)
- Alexander Fiseisky / Moskau
- Martin Baker Buckfast Abbey
- Bruckner Special: Hansjörg Albrecht



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JOSEPH VITACCO

Marvellous and magical

America's weekly radio programme *Pipedreams* is celebrating 40 years on the airwaves and has made its entire organ music archive freely available online. Its host Michael Barone shares some musical insights and tells **Matthew Power** how it all began

 Michael Barone at the Thomaskirche, Leipzig on one of many visits to Europe **C** am a musical omnivore... pretty much anything that calls itself classical music is and always has been of interest to me, though I think my tastes have evolved over the years. Only by happy circumstance did I become "The *Pipedreams* Guy".

This is Michael Barone, known internationally for his 40 years as host of *Pipedreams*, a radio programme distributed throughout the United States by American Public Media and available globally online at pipedreams.org. Before *Pipedreams*, Barone was music director of Minnesota Public Radio in its earliest days, and for a quarter-century helped shape the tastes of an ever-growing audience for classical music in the upper Midwest. His lifelong broadcasting career was one he never planned: 'It was the path of least resistance. All I've ever been really keen about is listening to classical music, and here I am, and getting paid to do it, too!'

As a boy in Kingston, Pennsylvania, Barone attended the Presbyterian church with his family, took piano lessons from the organist, Marian Wallace, sang in

PIPEDREAMS

the high school glee club and played sousaphone in the band. His organ-playing school friend Bob Wech sparked an interest in record collecting. 'My first LP was of Albert Schweitzer playing the Mendelssohn Fourth Sonata and Widor's Sixth Symphony... but I had grown up listening to 78rpm discs of the Shostakovich 'Leningrad' Symphony and other oddball stuff. Once I had some expendable income that I earned from my afternoon paper route, I started to collect organ LPs. Heaven help whomever will clear out the house after I'm gone?

Arriving at Oberlin College in the autumn of 1964, Barone began organ studies with Conservatory student Shirley Renshaw before entering the Conservatory himself and joining the studio of Professor Haskell Thomson, though he majored in music history and never felt destined to become a professional organist. He had initially imagined earning both a BA from the College and a BM from the Conservatory, but 'neither my fiscal nor my psychic accounts had sufficient capital to make a fifth year possible, so I left after four years, three credits short of graduating.' He completed his organ requirement during summer school and gained his final music history credits elsewhere three years later. 'My organ study enabled me to be sensitive to those who build, play and compose for the organ, he realised.

Back in 1968 his future seemed hazy. 'I didn't want to go back home to live with my parents and sell suits in the department store. But with three years' experience at the student-run FM station at Oberlin, I thought I might be qualified to do classical music announcing somewhere.' Seeing an advertisement for an announcer at KSJR (an educational radio station at St John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota), Barone sent an audition tape and was eventually offered the job of music director. 'That was a big deal, but where was Collegeville? Haskell Thomson knew.' Walter Holtkamp Sr, who designed instruments for the new Conservatory at Oberlin, installed his last major instrument at the Benedictine Abbey Church at Collegeville. 'Before attending my interview, I walked into the Abbey, a

beautiful modernist building by Marcel Breuer. There was the console: I switched the organ on and played the beginning of the Franck Third Chorale, which I had just performed in a student recital. The Abbey had around six seconds' reverberation time, and playing that Franck excerpt was revelatory. I figured if I could access this instrument occasionally, the radio job might work out pretty well!'

Barone was the second full-time announcer taken on by William H. Kling, director of broadcasting at the 18-month-old St John's operation and later president and CEO of what became a statewide network, Minnesota Public Radio (MPR). 'We were a slim operation at first. I had a nine to five on-air shift Monday through Friday, and my senior colleague, Arthur Hoehn, did the evenings. For weekends, he and I made voice tracks, and student board operators would run the tapes of our announcements? Although efficient, this method was prone to mishaps: 'Guys who knew nothing about classical music would play side two of a symphony LP before side one!'

Pipedreams is pre-produced and put into the distribution chain on a Monday morning, and stations generally broadcast it the following weekend, mostly on Sundays. Two hours of content are recorded, with most

- We were a slim operation at first': Barone at KSJR, Collegeville in 1973
- W Hosting Pipedreams Live! with Juilliard students at Alice Tully Hall, New York City, 2013





PIPEDREAMS





- With Widor scholar and organist John Near, 2016
- Appreciating American symphonic instruments: playing the Wanamaker Organ, Philadelphia
- The Walcker/ Aeolian-Skinner organ at Methuen Memorial Music Hall, Massachusetts, made a lasting impression on Michael Barone

stations carrying both hours. National listenership to *Pipedreams* is around 110,000 to 120,000, says Barone, and the online audience is about one tenth of that.

A national convention of the American Guild of Organists (AGO) in 1980, held in Minneapolis-Saint Paul, provided content for what would become *Pipedreams* in 1982. That AGO Convention included the first US residency by London's St Paul's Cathedral Choir. 'We did a live national broadcast of one of their concerts, and we taped the rest of the convention.' Barone approached his boss Nicholas Nash with a proposal to offer the music for National Public Radio distribution. Nash agreed, suggested the name *Pipedreams*, and the show Barone's primary production assistant – 'my extra hands' – keeping the website tidy, assembling the audio and mixing it with Barone's voice. 'I audition the result, we make any necessary edits, and then Dan sends it down the tube for distribution.'

Arranged in conjunction with regional chapters of the AGO, *Pipedreams Live!* has been a major hit with audiences. The first event, held in Buffalo, New York years ago, was followed by subsequent appearances all around the country, including at Alice Tully Hall with Juilliard students, and at the Walt Disney Concert Hall with an all-star lineup. Multi-day 'festivals' with Eastman School of Music and Indiana University students were

'We of a certain age were hugely influenced by E. Power Biggs and the instruments that he promoted'

was launched with an initial 14-programme package. No thought had been given to an ongoing series, but *Pipedreams* eventually relaunched in October 1983 and has been in essentially continuous business ever since.

Barone remains grateful to the family of Mr and Mrs Wesley C. Dudley, supporters of *Pipedreams* since its inception. Barone's boss Nick Nash made an arrangement with the BBC so that Americans could experience the English phenomenon of *A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols*. Since 1979 that event, distributed nationwide on Christmas Eve through MPR/American Public Media, has become the most listened-to classical music programme on American radio. Barone has been its US broadcast host since 1997.

The content of each *Pipedreams* episode is planned two months ahead so that it can be advertised in *The American Organist* magazine. The shows are recorded two weeks in advance of broadcast. Daniel Nass is particularly popular. Another fruitful partnership continues with the Organ Historical Society (OHS), for which Barone briefly served as president. He has been recognised by both institutions, receiving the AGO President's Award in 1996 and the Distinguished Service Award of the OHS the following year.

Artists and instruments of every sort have made an impression on Barone over the years. Can he highlight just a handful? 'We of a certain age were hugely influenced by E. Power Biggs, the recordings that he made in the 1950s, and the instruments that he promoted.' Barone flags albums of Bach on the Flentrop organ at Harvard University, omnibus collections of historic European instruments, including a pioneering one of music from Spain and Portugal, and another featuring works by Reubke and Liszt played at the Methuen Memorial Music Hall. 'I couldn't believe that the organ case pictured on the sleeve, as fanciful and exotic as that, existed in the United States. It's an astonishing building by architect Henry Vaughan with that magnificent, monstrous Walcker/ Aeolian-Skinner instrument that still blows my mind every time I visit!'

Barone met the German performer and organologist Harald Vogel through a colleague, Randy Bourne, who studied with Vogel in the 1970s. 'It was my first visit to Europe and through Harald's connections I got to play the organs in Groningen's Aa-kerk and the Bavo Church, Haarlem. Randy and I also spent an afternoon with the Schnitger at Steinkirchen. Herr Vogel's influence on early music studies throughout Europe, the United States, and even in Japan, has been incalculable.'

Despite an initial back-to-tracker neo-classic enthusiasm, Barone's perception of organ building grew to more fully appreciate American symphonic instruments, and is all-embracing now, delighted as much by the 1390 organ at the Basilica of Valère, Sion, Switzerland, as by the restored Möller at the Fox Theatre, Atlanta, Georgia or Philadelphia's Wanamaker organ. 'My ears were opened by Dr Edward Berryman, who had studied with Virgil Fox and had been organist at the University of Minnesota. I recorded him there, playing the grand 108-rank Aeolian-Skinner from the 1930s and on the 122-rank 1928 Kimball in the former Minneapolis Auditorium; these big organs – the antithesis of the Reform movement – are marvellous and magical, and absolutely revelatory'.

At 75, Barone is anxious about his vast archive of recordings and materials which he realises largely are only catalogued and searchable in his head. Does he have a plan? 'People often say that *Pipedreams* is me – but no, I'm the vehicle not the message. I'm like John the Baptist in that regard! I would like to hope that whatever *Pipedreams* has become and is doing in the world can be continued by someone else beyond me. We're trying to figure out how that could happen... it's a challenge!'

Matthew Power read Music at the University of London. He works as a musician and writer and is a contributing editor at Choir & Organ.



Discography

Four CDs of music, released by *Pipedreams*, include many unique recordings:

Pipedreams Premieres, vol.1 [CD-1001] Music by Stephen Loehr, Bach (*Contrapunctus 14* completed), Gian Carlo Menotti, Leonard Danek, William Bolcom, Monte Mason, Bruce Simonds, Nancy Plummer Faxon and Felix Mendelssohn (a first performance).

Pipedreams Premieres, vol.2 [CD-1003]

Music by Brent Weaver, Richard Wayne Dirksen, Libby Larsen, Thomas Kerr, Fela Sowande, Richard Stewart, Guy Bovet and Stephen Paulus. **Pipedreams Premieres, vol.3** [CD-1004] The first 12 of a 24-piece set of jazz-influenced Preludes & Fugues by American composer Henry Martin.

Pipedreams Live!, vol.1 [CD-1002]

Concert performances of works by Johann Strauss Jr, Clarence Mader, Healey Willan, J.S. Bach, Eugene Hancock, Felix Mendelssohn (Piano Concerto no.1, recorded at Methuen) and Guy Bovet.

Available direct from American Public Media: pipedreams.org/page/shop

Further reading

Haig Mardirosian, J. Michael Barone and Pipedreams, the organ on public radio (2018), the first in a series of monographs published by the AGO, available in a digital format free of charge: bit.ly/34kXZK1

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Precious things

Bernard Hughes tells **David Wordsworth** how he overcame his aversion to singing to end up composing a treasury of varied choral repertoire

S.J. FIELD

ernard Hughes openly admits that he found his way into the composition of choral music rather by accident. He didn't sing as a child, and indeed recalls that he was almost 'antisinging', partly because of his father being a keen singer – a small teenage rebellion. He studied music at St Catherine's, Oxford (the only Oxford college without a Chapel Choir), and later at Goldsmiths College with Peter Dickinson, privately with Param Vir, and at Royal Holloway College with Philip Cashian – none of whom are particularly known for choral music as far as their compositional careers are concerned. How did a composer that has, over the past few years, enjoyed close working relationships

with several prominent choirs in the UK, US and beyond, and is about to see the second CD devoted to his choral music released in May this year, change direction?

Hughes recalls that he submitted an early piece, *Three Swans* (2001-06), to a BBC Singers/SPNM workshop held at the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival. He freely admits that his pieces sat somewhat incongruously at a festival more used to welcoming the likes of Boulez, Berio, Stockhausen, their followers and admirers, rather than something that might relate to more traditional musical thought. While not straightforward from a rhythmic or textural point of view, *Three Swans* does not make use of the kind of advanced vocal A The 'accidental' choral composer: Bernard Hughes

techniques that one might expect to find at such a workshop. Perhaps this was the very reason that the piece went down so well with both the audience and, more importantly, the singers. Since then, Hughes has enjoyed a particularly fruitful relationship with the BBC Singers in both the recording studio and concert hall.

Central to this association are two dramatic works on a large scale, both inspired by books bequeathed to the composer by his grandfather. *The Death of Balder* (2007) was adapted by the composer from a contemporary telling of Norse myths by Kevin Crossley-Holland (a frequent collaborator with both Hughes and several other composers). Described as a miniature



The Epiphoni Consort record Precious Things - Choral Music by Bernard Hughes for the Delphian label. Recording Photographs by Ben Tomlin



arias, duets, ensembles, and provide a sort of 'orchestral-like accompaniment' as well as a spoken narration. First broadcast on BBC Radio 3 in 2008, the work has been taken up by several choirs and was shortlisted for a British Composer Award. A Medieval Bestiary (2010) explores medieval man's relationship with animals, real (such as the panther and the whale), and imaginary (such as the phoenix and the gryphon). This is a vivid and colourful work, that contrasts moments of calm and stasis inspired by plainchant with the 'organised chaos' of the naming of animals - something of a virtuoso workout for any choir prepared to take up the challenge. This collaboration culminated in the release of a CD on the Signum Classics label, I Am the Song, and most recently in Birdchant (2021), a work commissioned for the BBC Proms and first performed by the BBC Singers, conducted by Sofi Jeannin, at the Royal Albert Hall as part of a concert of contemporary responses to earlier choral works - in Hughes's case, Le chant des oiseaux by Clément Janequin (1485-1558).

Writing for a choir of the calibre of the BBC Singers, who can sing anything put in front of them, is but one string to a composer's bow. Hughes has taught a good deal and has been composer-in-residence at St Paul's Girls' School in London since 2015. His work for young people ranges from the self-explanatory Silly Songs (2013) and the mysteriously titled Esdras, Sir Isaac Newton and me (2013), to Alleluia Cantate Domino (2018) and Two Songs of Spring (2018), all showing an assured understanding of what young, less experienced and, dare one say, sometimes even reluctant singers will find challenging, rewarding, and approachable to perform.



Christmas is a major event in any choral composer's calendar, although Hughes suggests that some of his contributions to this well-worn genre might not be 'especially Christmassy'. *The winter is past* (2014) sets a not entirely optimistic poem by Robert Burns, while Kevin Crossley-Holland again provides the words for *Jesus, Springing* (2019). Perhaps more overtly seasonal are *The Linden Tree* (2012), setting a Victorian text about a linden tree standing in heaven, and the exuberant *Christmas Bells* (2010), setting Longfellow's well-known poem that begins 'I heard the bells on Christmas Day'. *Precious Things* (2021), another work written for the BBC Singers, has, the composer admits, a slightly more contemporary, political, and even satirical edge than most of his work. Hughes sets poems by friends of his that all deal with things that might or should be regarded as precious, and how these things are squandered and wasted. *Seek the peace of the city* (2019) is a short motet written for the London Festival of Contemporary Church Music, much of which is based in a church close to the frantically busy Euston Station. *Salve Regina* (2014), Magnificat &

'His music is listenable and accessible, but also fresh, original and genuinely contemporary'

Very much within the capabilities of more modest choirs is If we shadows have offended (2017), a tiny, gem-like setting of Puck's final words from Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream, that was originally written as a solo song for what Hughes describes as his first 'break' as a composer, providing incidental music and songs for a school production of the play when he was 14. Two Choral Fanfares (2010-11), as the title suggests, are concert openers. The first, setting Siegfried Sassoon's famous poem Everyone Sang, compares the joy of an outburst of communal singing to the relief and elation of post-Armistice Britain in 1918, but might equally apply to the recent singing-starved times we have all lived through. The second, I am the Song setting a poem by Charles Causley, is an anaphora each line beginning with the same words, a literary device that Hughes finds particularly inspiring, and one to which he has returned on a number of occasions when searching for suitable texts to set to music.

Nunc Dimittis (2019), Psalm 56 and Jubilate Domino (both 2016) demonstrate the composer's interest in setting religious texts, but sometimes in slightly unusual ways - for instance, he removes all direct references to God in the psalm setting, making much of a text that is rather dark, even aggressive at times. I Sing of Love (2012), written for Seattle Pro Musica in the USA, sets three love-themed texts from different religious traditions - from the Song of Solomon, the Islamic mystic Rumi, and the New Testament. In contrast, a striking work for double choir, Revelation Window (2010), is inspired not by a text but by the stained-glass window of the same name in Manchester Cathedral. Syllables reference the words 'light', 'colour' and 'revelation' in several languages, creating in effect a vocal tone poem, with the two choirs bouncing ideas off each other antiphonally before coming together in a final splash of bright light.

A broad selection of Hughes's choral work for a variety of forces – four- and eight-

part choir, female voices, vocal ensemble, sacred and secular texts - can be found on a forthcoming CD, Precious Things, recorded under socially distanced conditions by the Epiphoni Consort and due to be released on the Delphian label at the end of May this year. Tim Reader, the choir's music director, comments: 'Bernard's music manages to be both very listenable and accessible, but also fresh, original and genuinely contemporary. The singers really enjoy performing his work, which is far from a given when recording a full CD of just one composer's music - it includes a much higher than average share of fast and rhythmic music, which is somehow less common in a lot of choral music of today, and I think that appeals to singers and audiences alike. There is ample variety, and the singers forget that they are focusing on one composer'.

It has been a long and rewarding journey for a composer who 30 years ago might have described himself as 'anti-singing'. Still not yet 50, we can confidently assume that there is a lot more choral music to come from this decidedly 'pro-singing' composer. ■ *bernardhughes.net*

David Wordsworth is a freelance choral conductor, workshop leader, and music director of the Addison Singers. His book Giving Voice to My Music, interviews with choral composers, was published by Kahn and Averill in August 2021.

Precious Things Epiphoni Consort / Tim Reader (dir) Delphian DCD 34289 (to be released in May 2022)





Work in progress

Without the supply of high-quality parts, many organ builders would struggle to maintain their productivity. **Paul Hale** views the thriving output of P&S Organ Supply in Suffolk and delves into the history of component manufacturing. PHOTOS COURTESY P&S ORGAN SUPPLY

wo organ builders, born shortly before the war, were serving their apprenticeships at the slowly dying, long-established firm of Gray & Davison. Their names were Robert (Bob) Pennells and Raymond (Ray) Sharpe – P and S.

After National Service, Bob Pennells returned briefly to Gray & Davison before moving to the increasingly busy J.W. Walker & Sons. After a while, probably realising that the firm was suffering from too many layers of management, he decided to set up his own company. An increasingly shrewd businessman with an eye for a gap in the market, Pennells took into partnership his friend Ray Sharpe, who was a first-class craftsman. Pennells & Sharpe was established in the early 1960s in a rented stable in Billericay, Essex. At first they made kitchen cabinets but soon developed lines of wooden parts for organ builders, which were advertised in *Musical Opinion*. The high standard of their output was noticed by Kimber-Allen (K-A), which took a majority holding in Pennells & Sharpe, who relocated in 1966 to K-A's spacious premises in Swanley, Kent. There they made organ cases, console cases, pedalboards, benches, under-actions, drawstop machines and so on. One particularly significant organ case made at this time was that for the new Grant, Degens & Bradbeer organ in New College, Oxford.

The next significant change for the company occurred after Pennells met Colin Sanders, an electronics engineer. Sanders suggested that controlling organs by electronic switching would be cheaper than continuing with the

P&S ORGAN SUPPLY

bulky and costly electro-mechanical and electro-magnetic switching then used by all firms. Pennells hoped that K-A would develop such a product, but the company took another ten years to get round to doing so. Never one to hang around, Pennells left K-A, and with Sanders he set up Solid State Logic (SSL), also continuing with Sharpe their woodworking business rebranded as 'P&S'. Both businesses flourished and SSL expanded into designing and making well-reviewed and popular mixing desks for recording studios.

The Walker firm failed in 1974, as Pennells had thought it might, and he was probably the only person in the trade to have the funds to buy the rights and 'good will'. This he did, moving it, P&S and SSL to modern integrated factory premises in Brandon, Suffolk, where P&S remains to this day. As he developed a modern tracker-action style with J.W. Walker, P&S was able to function as a significant arm of the manufacturing process, while also providing a service to organ builders, most of whom came to buy from the enormous range of products which the P&S catalogue listed. Just as P&S had assisted the emerging Grant, Degens & Bradbeer at New College in 1967, ten years later they were able to help the emerging Huddersfield organ builder Philip Wood to build the firm's most renowned organ – the three-manual tracker instrument in St Paul's Hall, at what is now the University. set about designing a range of high-quality keyboards for P&S to build. Design features such as their magnetic toggle touch (keys being pivoted at the rear with coil springs on the tails rather than at the centre), and the easy key adjustment feature, propelled them into the 'highly desirable' category. That success story continues, the quality of P&S keys garnering the highest regard worldwide.

Projects include tulip-wood pipes and electropneumatic chests for a 32ft Contra Bourdon

The tall case was the first *werkprinzip* case design by David Graebe, an architect taken on (perceptively) by Pennells, whose superb case designs were to become a feature of the Walker/P&S output.

Recognising the demise of good keyboard manufacturers in the UK, and noting the poor quality of the cheaper organ keyboards being manufactured or imported, Ray Sharpe The company has come to offer both the full range of organ handcrafts and also the most modern manufacturing facilities, being the first organ business in the UK to install a computer numerical control (CNC) router and lathe, combined with constantly updated 2D and 3D software. At any time in the main workshops a visitor will see consoles, soundboards, tracker-action chassis, swell boxes, wind

A corner of the main workshop, high enough for 16ft casework assembly
 (clockwise, from below) Pneumatic pouches being made; elegant keys with inlaid cheeks and piston slips;
 'Skinner' pattern piston heads ready for fitting







The organ supply business: some historical context





There have always been companies to supply organ builders with components and structures they cannot make themselves, or choose not to. The nature of such firms changes from generation to generation according to need. For centuries the main suppliers to organ builders were the cabinet makers who crafted organ cases; organ builders generally made all their own pipes and parts. During the second half of the 19th century demand for new organs hugely increased. One needs to remember that virtually every church or chapel in the UK was built or restored at that time, and almost all installed a new or rebuilt pipe organ.

In order to keep the trade up to speed, specialist suppliers sprang up, often in London

near the many organ builders still based there. These suppliers made keyboards, pipes, stopknobs, pedalboards and benches, a few also fabricating small parts such as the components for mechanical and tubular-pneumatic actions. In due course, organ blower manufacturers appeared, and 'trade' voicers were kept busy. Once electro-pneumatic action came to dominate, suppliers of electrical components were needed, although a few larger firms wound their own electro-magnets and made moulds from which to cast (in Bakelite or aluminium) chest magnet bodies and stopkey units. After the second world war the UK saw a three-decade burst of widespread 'electrification' and 'modernisation' of organs, where old tracker or pneumatic instruments

were fitted with electro-pneumatic actions, extended ranks on unit chests and new consoles, often detached. Overlapping with that, and following on from it, came the 'tracker revival' of the 1960s and 70s, with companies large and small setting out to make new classical mechanical-action instruments.

Firms had for decades quietly bought from European suppliers such as Giesecke and Stinkens (pipes), Laukhuff and Heuss (parts and electrical components), but now there was a desire for more UK companies to supply these needs. There was also demand – significantly – for the supply of organ cases to some of the new small tracker firms which preferred or needed to have them made 'out'. The need for economical detached consoles and for decent pre-voiced pipes was great.

The small trade suppliers such as Thomas Harrison and Ernest Holt would not have been able to deal with the increased demand for parts, especially for newly developed tracker and electrical parts; as the British piano trade rapidly disappeared, so did the makers of fine keyboards for pianos and organs. Soon to close were J.F. Pyne and R.W. Clark. Eventually even Herrburger Brooks ceased trading; their 'Schwander' piano actions had kept them in business for longer than other key manufacturers, helped by a move from London to Nottingham (where, in a limited way, their successors still operate). The Thomas Harrison workshop was absorbed by Noel Mander in the late 1960s and Holts of Walsall faded away at much the same time.

A progressive new trade supplier to emerge after the war was 'Stero', based in Shirley near Birmingham. It was founded by Mr R.A. Williams who, having developed efficient low-voltage control solenoids for the RAF during the war, decided to apply that new technology to organ electrics. He soon became the 'go to' supplier of chest and lever magnets, ladder-switches, relays, reversers, drawstop solenoids and key contact assemblies for busy firms such as J.W. Walker. Meanwhile in Swanley, Kent, Kimber-Allen (founded in 1928 as an electrical engineering company) was flourishing, making a range of well-engineered components, many of them similar to those produced by Stero, though with significant differences such as their ladder-switches arranged at right angles to the Stero pattern.

P&S ORGAN SUPPLY

 systems, building-frames and casework under manufacture. Unlike most trade suppliers,
 P&S also takes a particular interest in historical restoration work, returning any part of an instrument to its original condition and style.
 For the past two decades P&S has been under the direction of Andrew Dolby, who was the works manager at J.W. Walker before becoming managing director of P&S in 2000.

Recent work has included rarely made items such as 32ft Double Open Wood pipes for Henry Willis & Sons and for Nicholson & Co. The firm continues to offer finely engineered tracker components such as the coupler chassis in the large new Nicholson instrument in Radley College chapel, inaugurated in a recital by Thomas Trotter in March this year. New P&S keys in the Willis style were fitted by Harrison & Harrison to the Willis III console at Southwark Cathedral, and for Nicholson & Co. they made an elegant three-manual set in vintage John Nicholson style for the new Radley organ. For King's College, Cambridge, P&S completed the exacting task of removing the ivory from the old H&H keys and fitting it to otherwise entirely new keyboards – not a task for the faint-hearted.

Current projects in the P&S workshop

- A new two-manual and pedal mechanicalaction organ with a modern style European oak case, reversed and detached console and electric stop action. P&S is to manufacture the case and building frame, slider soundboards, coupler chassis keyboards, pedalboard, swell pedal and action, plus adjustable oak bench
- The tulip-wood pipes and electro-pneumatic chests of a 32ft Contra Bourdon
- A wooden Swell 16ft Double Diapason
- ► A 16ft Pedal Open Wood
- A slider soundboard with nine slides and heavy-duty electric pull-down magnet action
- A custom-built pedalboard to match an existing mechanical scale

 A swell shutter front and two RCO/AGO pedalboards

The firm's restoration work currently includes two mechanical-action slider soundboards for complete refurbishment with new pallets and pallet tables, and two doublerise bellows for re-leathering.

The busy keyboard department has some 28 manuals of new keyboards to manufacture, for both mechanical and electric action, with 14 manuals awaiting recovering and restoration.

It is evident that P&S is thriving, and if there is such a call for its services, there is clearly much work of excellent quality taking place in the organ trade. Let us hope that, following the Covid months, there is no lessening of demand. Time will tell.

Paul Hale has been writing about the organ for many years, while working as a cathedral organist, recitalist, teacher and organ consultant.

(clockwise, from below) Plenty to see underneath a new keyboard; slider soundboard restoration almost complete; a piston rail being fitted out; a small soundboard taken apart to the grid for historic restoration











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A sense of terror

As choirs gear up to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Ralph Vaughan Williams this year, *Dona Nobis Pacem* is sure to be on the programme. In 2016, in this article from our sister magazine *Gramophone*, **Geraint Lewis** explored the work's eclectic recorded history

sing biblical imagery to telling effect in the House of Commons on 23 February 1855, the Member of Parliament for Manchester spoke against war in the Crimea: 'The Angel of Death has been abroad throughout the land; you may almost hear the beating of his wings. There is no one, as [when the first-born were slain] of old, to sprinkle with blood the lintel and the two sideposts of our doors, that he may spare and pass on? Around 80 years later, John Bright's memorable words came to life again in a work composed by Ralph Vaughan Williams to mark the centenary of the Huddersfield Choral Society in 1936, when the possibility of yet another war loomed threateningly over Europe. Today, 80 years on again, both impact and message of Dona Nobis Pacem resound even more powerfully, but it is a shamefully and inexplicably neglected masterpiece. It has made only one Proms appearance (1964), but was performed by the BBC at London's Barbican earlier this year and heard in July at Gloucester Cathedral as part of the Three Choirs Festival. What a great thing it would be if choral societies performed this wonderful and moving work more frequently.

Surrounded by conflict

Born in 1872, Vaughan Williams assimilated the shadows of the Crimean War within a liberal-minded household at Leith Hill Place in Surrey, dominated by the ethos of the Wedgwoods and the Darwins from his widowed mother's side of the family. Then came the equally distant but no less emotive Boer Wars and the mingled moods of jingoism, nostalgia and waste as conjured in A.E. Housman's *A Shropshire Lad* – poetry inspired by thoughts of gallant English lads fighting abroad, some of which Vaughan Williams set as *On Wenlock Edge* (1909). Two years later he made a choral setting of American poet Walt Whitman's *Dirge for Two Veterans* (1865), a poem reflecting vividly the horrors and terrible losses involved in the American civil war. But he put it away, unperformed, only to bring it out again in 1936 as the moving central panel of *Dona Nobis Pacem*.

When it came to the sudden and unexpected outbreak of the first world war itself in 1914, Vaughan Williams was nearly 42, yet he never shirked a personal determination to join younger comrades, even against passionate opposition from his teacher and mentor Hubert Parry. What he experienced in France was to colour and haunt the rest of his life and play a significant role in fashioning some of his most important later works.

Can't a person just write music?

Returning to civilian life and an interrupted career, Vaughan Williams began by finishing the piece he'd nearly completed before joining

Vaughan Williams in the Royal Army Medical Corps, 1915

up - the romance for violin entitled The Lark Ascending. It failed to make much initial impact when premiered in 1921. Without even a shadow of war's anguish over its idyllic pages, it was oddly out of kilter with the jazz-enlivened spirit of the new age, which didn't appreciate any perceived nostalgia for a lost English Eden. And when the composer did distil in music his haunted response to the war, few at the time quite realised that he'd actually done so - so understated and subtle was the saturated sadness of the Pastoral Symphony (premiered 1922). The sea change suffered by Vaughan Williams's harmonic language after 1916 (when work on the symphony began) certainly registered with some, but most memorably and stupidly it provoked from Peter Warlock the notorious 'cow looking over a gate' swipe echoed by countless others. Another fellow composer, Herbert Howells, understood, however: 'You may not like the symphony's



DONA NOBIS PACEM

I frame of mind; but there it is, strong and courageous. It is the truth of the work, and out of it would naturally arise whatever risk it has run of being publicly cold-shouldered. We now hear the work properly as Vaughan Williams's own 'war requiem'.

Because he wouldn't put into words at the time exactly what lay behind the music's 'frame of mind' (probably because he regretted being too literal with *A London Symphony* in 1914), Vaughan Williams was berated for not being explicit enough – as if the music itself wasn't sufficient. The same 'problem' would arise again for the cloth-eared with the premieres of the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Symphonies in 1935, 1943 and 1948 respectively, all of them

seen as 'war-related': was the first an angry premonition of another world war about to break, the next a prayer for peace in the midst of the war itself and the last a chilling reaction to its aftermath? In exasperation the composer would retort, 'Can't a man just write a piece of music?' - and even claimed that the Fourth was inspired merely by anger at a new roundabout under construction in Dorking. But the British aren't very good at detecting when a serious artist's tongue is in his cheek any more than they are at listening to music for its own sake. It is ironic, therefore, to find that Vaughan Williams's most clear and forthright statement about war in general, Dona Nobis Pacem ('Grant Us Peace'), didn't provoke much public





Comrades-in-arms: both Gustav Holst and RVW set Walt Whitman's 'Dirge for Two Veterans'

V RVW on leave in 1917, with Adeline: his experiences in France coloured and haunted the rest of his life



commentary at the time at all. Given the state of Europe then, it certainly should have been heard for what it undoubtedly was: a direct and impassioned warning.

Latin prayer meets Whitman

The construction of this 35-minute score is both audacious and ingenious. Six sections of varying lengths play out as a continuous symphonic structure in which part of the Latin prayer Agnus Dei from the Ordinary of the Mass punctuates three poems by Whitman (Beat! Beat! Drums!, Reconciliation and Dirge for Two Veterans), Bright's words of 1855 and a biblical montage culminating in part of the Gloria. We thus move from a despairing cry for peace in Latin to the declaration of 'and on earth peace' from the Gospel of Luke, but Vaughan Williams's imaginative dovetailing of the texts avoids any sense of false assurance and the work ends quietly with solo soprano and her plea left unanswered.

The most immediately moving and graphic part of Dona Nobis Pacem is the triptych of Whitman poems. Its onomatopoeic trumpets and drums which 'scatter the congregation' give way in time to the calm yet heart-rending vision that 'war and all its deeds of carnage' will be 'utterly lost' by the incessant washing of 'this soiled world' by Death and Night. The stage is thus set for the overwhelming nocturnal procession that is 'Dirge for Two Veterans' - a slow funeral march by moonlight which is at once triumphant, tragic and cathartic: it emerges as a distant rumble, comes gradually into devastating focus and then recedes gently into the distance again. That this music was written as early as 1911 - even before Vaughan Williams had his own direct experience of warfare - is eerily prescient. Now, with hindsight at his elbow, he found the ideal large-scale context for an unforgettable musical span and managed to make a virtue of its simpler musical language of tune, rhythm and harmony.

Why had he initially shelved it, then? He knew that his one-time Cambridge teacher Charles Wood had composed a setting (1901), but so, more significantly, did his closest musical friend, Gustav Holst (in 1914). My theory is that he didn't want to steal Holst's thunder at the time, but that with Holst's untimely death in 1934, here was the perfect tribute that the bereft Vaughan Williams could privately pay to his soulmate without having to

DONA NOBIS PACEM

make it publicly explicit. Although the veterans of the poem are father and son, Vaughan Williams and Holst were always comrades-inarms, and so the gap at the former's side would now remain forever unfilled.

Neglect - and a laudable action

Other performances did follow the Huddersfield premiere on 2 October 1936, when the choral society and Hallé Orchestra were conducted by Albert Coates: it got to the Three Choirs Festival (under Vaughan Williams's own baton) at Gloucester in September 1937 (as at Worcester in 1938) and also to the Leeds Festival later that autumn and thence a London premiere conducted by Malcolm Sargent on 5 February 1938. But with warning unheeded and war finally breaking out on 3 September 1939, another Three Choirs Festival outing in Hereford that very week was perforce cancelled: the peace for which the work so fervently called was cruelly denied the world. In the aftermath of the war the work's message - as with The Lark Ascending a generation earlier - inevitably seemed out of place, and so the work fell into partial neglect, although Vaughan Williams himself liked to conduct it within his regular, if limited, circuit. There wasn't a commercial British release until 1973, and the first recording of all was actually made in Utah, USA in 1966. This British neglect had nothing to do with Whitman's words, given that A Sea Symphony remained firmly in the repertoire during the composer's lifetime.

The BBC, however, should be commended for its immediate attention to the work by instigating a studio recording as the first broadcast performance in London on 13 November 1936, with Ralph Vaughan Williams conducting BBC forces plus the soloists who had given the premiere just over a month earlier: soprano Renée Flynn and baritone Roy Henderson. Issued officially on CD for the first time by Somm in 2007, this invaluable document now has unique historical authority in giving us a view of what the premiere might have been like but with the extra imprimatur of the composer himself in charge.

Although Vaughan Williams was typically self-deprecating about his abilities as a conductor, the few surviving recordings with him on the podium all show him more than capable of capturing the essence of his music. The searing account of Symphony no.4 in October 1937 with the BBC Symphony Orchestra (who, with Boult, had premiered the work in 1935) is the most celebrated example, but this *Dona Nobis Pacem* runs it close – and again, he arranged an unofficial run-through of the Fifth Symphony with the BBCSO in Bedford (on evacuation) so that the parts could be checked, even though the premiere would be given at the Proms by the LPO with the composer himself conducting.

Boult's 1973 Dona Nobis Pacem is therefore quite audibly an attempt to get as close to Vaughan Williams's spirit as possible, and he succeeds uncannily now that Somm's masterly transfer by Gary Moore can be checked for comparison. The London Philharmonic Choir as trained by John Alldis is on biting form, and diction throughout is exemplary. This is in effect a choral symphony, which is where Boult remains unrivalled as a master of architectural

Boult's 1973 recording is an attempt to get as close to RVW's spirit as possible, and he succeeds uncannily

may well have inspired Boult (who was BBC music director at the time) to instigate that very recording of the new symphony. The sound quality of this studio performance is pretty remarkable for its time and vividly captures a difficult balancing act: the initial quiet keening by the solo soprano and a hushed chorus suddenly drowned by a full orchestral onslaught and chorus in full cry. These huge differences are superbly maintained throughout.

It has to be said at this point that the BBC's 1936 performance provides a near-ideal template for others; however, until 2007 (officially) the only conductor who could have benefited from its example was Sir Adrian Boult, whose recording with London Philharmonic forces was made for EMI at Kingsway Hall, London, in 1973. As he showed in 1937 by giving Vaughan Williams his BBC band to record the Fourth Symphony, Boult was the least selfish of conductors; in 1943, span: from the visceral start to its echo at the end, he finds the unerring tempo and control for each section so that there emerges an inevitability to both musical and textual arguments. We are fortunate that EMI assigned this score to Boult and London Philharmonic forces and not (as they did around the same time with Sancta Civitas, Five Tudor Portraits and Hodie) to the then-soggier Bach Choir under Sir David Willcocks, whose shorterterm direction in general fails to meld chorus and orchestra into a proper dramatic unity. Boult's implacable and visionary long-term grasp is invaluable here and makes this a truly authentic document. The singing of Sheila Armstrong is peerless and the oft-maligned John Carol Case provides nobility and impeccable diction. It emerges that the latter's tone and rolled 'r's are possibly modelled on those of Henderson, and for some will have too much of a vintage character. So it is perhaps a shame that the more timeless and less dated Þ

Selected discography

1936 Flynn, Henderson; BBC Sym Chor & Orch / Vaughan Williams
1966 Christensen, Metcalf; U of Utah Civic Chorale; Utah SO / Abravanel
1973 Armstrong, Case; London Philh Ch & Orch / Boult
1988 Wiens, Rayner Cook; London Philh Ch & Orch / Thomson
1992 Kenny, Terfel; London Sym Chor & Orch / Hickox
1993 Howarth, Allen; Corydon Sgrs & Orch / Best
1997 Pelton, Gunn; Atlanta Sym Chor & Orch / Shaw
2009 Pier, Brook; Bach Ch, Bournemouth SO / Hill
2014 Fox, Maltman; Colorado Sym Chor & Orch / Litton
2014 Rivera, Polegato; Atlanta Sym Chor & Orch / Spano

(Gramophone review dates in brackets) Somm SOMMCD 071 (4/08) Vanguard SVC 7 (10/67R, 9/72R) EMI/Warner 574782-2; 903567-2 (5/74R) Chandos CHAN 8590 (3/89) EMI/Warner 754788-2 (12/93R) Hyperion CDA 66655 (5/94); CDS 44321/4 Telarc CD 80479 (11/98) Naxos 8 572424 (5/10) Hyperion CDA 68096 (6/15) ASO Media ASO 1005 (4/15)

DONA NOBIS PACEM



▲ Garnering the 'ultimate choice' slot: Richard Hickox's 1992 EMI recording with the LSO is 'simply magnificent'

◄ John Shirley-Quirk (who took the part in that only Prom outing in 1964, with Heather Harper and Sargent) wasn't selected for this recording - it would then have given the later top choices a genuine run for their money.

From across the Pond

The first commercial recording, in 1966, was made for Vanguard in Utah by Maurice Abravanel conducting the University of Utah Civic Chorale and Symphony Orchestra, and it isn't at all bad. It would have provided a necessary stopgap until Boult's was issued in 1974 but now sounds rather faded.

Perhaps because of the American poetry it sets, Dona Nobis Pacem has enjoyed another three US recordings, two of them made in Atlanta, Georgia. Robert Shaw's famous Atlanta Symphony Chorus was captured under his direction in 1997 by Telarc, but the account sounds boxed-in, even though it does showcase the fine baritone of Nathan Gunn. In 2014 with

Robert Spano at the helm (for their own ASO label), the same chorus and orchestra sound better and have a magnificently sonorous soloist in Brett Polegato. This powerfully straightforward account easily takes the American palm and contrasts painfully with another, also taped in 2014, by the Colorado Symphony and Colorado Symphony Chorus under Andrew Litton for Hyperion. This, unlike the other US recordings, imports British soloists in Sarah Fox and Christopher Maltman, but both sound under par and sing with too much obtrusive vibrato. The chorus is woeful, the orchestra perfunctory and the direction prosaic: this is one of those discs whose best feature is quite honestly its cover.

Modern Brits

Luckily there are four remaining British recordings which more than make amends: all are similar in character and their differences come largely down to the soloists they field.

In 1988, Bryden Thomson had the LPO in St Jude's Church, Hampstead Garden Suburb (north London), with the help of sumptuous Chandos engineering; but Edith Wiens and Brian Rayner Cook are pallid singers here, and the performance sounds more like a final afternoon rehearsal in an empty church than the real thing. At Abbey Road for EMI in 1992, Richard Hickox with LSO forces (the chorus trained magnificently by Stephen Westrop) had the luxury of Bryn Terfel as baritone, and this is what sets this version apart. From his first utterance to the last, Terfel brings warmth, humanity, superb but unobtrusive diction and a truly imperious ring when required; and in Bright's chilling speech he raises the hairs like no other singer. All others present seem to rise to the occasion around him (Yvonne Kenny is the superb soprano), and so this is easily the clinching version. Matthew Best for Hyperion in 1993 comes pretty close, however, creating a suitably different spirit - more inward and refined, and boasting Thomas Allen in gently restrained mode with Judith Howarth on radiant form. David Hill on Naxos in 2009. with Christina Pier and Matthew Brook and today's superb Bach Choir in Bournemouth, is adept at everything. But going back to Boult only emphasises that this music needs a genuine sense of terror and of seeing the whites of everybody's eyes to enable the release of compassion in the listener which makes this underrated work a pinnacle of 20th-century choral music.

Vaughan Williams - a 150th anniversary celebration is published by Choir & Organ in association with the Ralph Vaughan Williams Society; see opposite page for details.

HISTORIC CHOICE

BBC Symphony Chor and Orch / Ralph Vaughan Williams Somm SOMMCD 071

Capturing BBC forces and the original soloists under the composer's direction six weeks after the Huddersfield premiere in 1936 was a major act of broadcasting strategy, and Somm's transfer allows us to eavesdrop on history in the making.

AUTHENTIC CHOICE

London Philh Ch and Orch / Sir Adrian Boult EMI/Warner 574782-2

Boult would have arranged the 1936 BBC broadcast, and his 1973 recording is even more powerful in its ability to convey the bold structure as if in one breath and with an unrivalled hold over his galvanised choral and orchestral forces.

AMERICAN CHOICE

Atlanta Sym Chor and Orch / Robert Spano ASO Media ASO 1005

With the moving Whitman settings adding a touch of natural local colour, this sturdy performance by well-drilled Atlanta forces builds upon the famous choral legacy of Robert Shaw to capture nuance and integrity, outshining all other US accounts.

ULTIMATE CHOICE

London Sym Chor and Orch / Richard Hickox EMI/Warner 754788-2

Hickox brings his LSO forces together impressively in superb Abbey Road sound to convey all the sweep and power of this score. Of modern recordings, he pips Matthew Best to the post in large part owing to the magisterial presence of Bryn Terfel, whose commanding tone makes this a definitive reading and inspires all present to give their very best. Simply magnificent!



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Tom Bell samples culture across from the centuries in Thuringia's medieval capital of Erfurt

I love neo-classical organs. This isn't an especially fashionable statement, but I mean it; alas, such instruments are often 'romanticised', which is somewhat ironic. Typically inspired by the sound of historic north German or Dutch organs, even at its best, a neo-classical instrument could never prepare you for the sound of an 18th-century central German organ. When I first heard one (on a recording), it came as something of a shock. The opportunity to play such an organ in concert had to wait until a trip to Erfurt in 2020. Somehow, in the middle of the pandemic, and via an eerily quiet Frankfurt airport, William Whitehead and I made it to Erfurt to play in the Thüringer Bachwochen. Our shared programme, of pieces old and new from the Orgelbüchlein Project, was spread across several hours and two venues: the Cruciskirche and the Dom.

It was in the Cruciskirche that I met a central German organ in the flesh for the first time. Built by Volckland in 1737 and restored by Schuke of Potsdam in 2003, it rejoices in a magnificently decorated case, a highlight of Erfurt's only baroque church to retain its original decoration. It is a small space with warm acoustics into which the organ sings. Its sound was memorable; firstly, for the dark and spicy tone of its pleno - the mixtures have 16ft tierce ranks in them; but also for the delicacy of some of its individual voices. The Flaut Douce sounds for all the world like a real baroque recorder, and little wonder given the construction of the pipes. Is it unique? There are eight 8ft flues across the two manuals of only 28 registers. The colours produced are delightful and revelatory.

At the Dom, the organs are of 20th-century neo-classical persuasion. There are three, including a small chamber organ; William and I used them all. Unfairly, we did not expect much from these organs after the delights of the Cruciskirche. In the event, we were pleasantly surprised. I will never forget the sound of the last verse of BWV 627 sweeping majestically round this great space, William playing it while I made my way from one organ to another – a long

The Krämerbrücke, a 125-metre medieval arch bridge in Erfurt with the Ägidienkirche on the eastern side



TRAVELLER'S JOY



The 1737 Volckland organ of the Cruciskirche, restored by Schuke in 2003



A The larger of the Domkirche's two Schuke organs is at the west end

walk! At the west end there is a hefty Schuke from the 1990s with three manuals and mechanical action (Opus 583, 1992, III/63). Its impact is dramatic. Somewhat older, with two manuals and electro-pneumatic action, is the east organ (Opus 336, 1963, II/29). This sounds beautifully clear in the quire, where it is meant to be heard, but for an audience in the nave it serves as a kind of Echo division. To this end, it can be controlled from the west organ, although I also played it from its own console which, confusingly, still boasts all the stop tabs of the previous west organ! The building itself is intriguing in its combination of boxy, barn-like nave and slender, lofty gothic quire. Between the two soars a spire containing the heaviest surviving medieval bell in the world. The windows at the east end are beautiful, the acoustics equally luminous. This became especially apparent when listening to a rehearsal of the B minor Mass, which was to be performed the day after the Orgelbüchlein Project concert. Heavenly. Visiting Erfurt, and this part of Germany in general, is recommended during the Thüringer Bachwochen.

Erfurt has a number of claims to fame. For musicians, Pachelbel's tenure at the Predigerkirche between 1678 and 1690 would be chief among them. Martin Luther was ordained in the Dom in 1507. There was also a rather unsavoury tragedy here in July 1184 which the later Holy Roman Emperor Henry VI only narrowly escaped. The details of the accident I will leave you to research, but it took place at the Petersberg Citadel, which can be visited to this day. Sadly, I was only able to find time to gaze at it from without; within, there are myriad underground passages to explore.

The Krämerbrücke (Merchant's Bridge) is as picturesque as it is fascinating. The longest stretch of inhabited buildings on a

A neo-classical instrument could never prepare you for the sound of an 18th-century central German organ

bridge in Europe, perhaps it gives a flavour of what London Bridge would have been like before it fell down. It is, in fact, difficult to comprehend that it is a bridge at all, when walking across. There are 32 buildings across its 120 metres, now housing cafés, galleries and craft shops. At one time, each end was guarded by a church. To the east, the tower of the surviving St Aegidius offers a bird's-eye view of the Krämerbrücke. This is just one of a number of historic churches; don't neglect St Severus, though this would be difficult given the dramatic location it shares with the Dom. The streets of Erfurt are a delight to wander around, and the vintage trams are a peaceful way to view them too. One appeared to have a large cat

painted on it, and apparently offers music, food and drinks and can be hired as a party venue.

To conclude a day in Erfurt, head to *Zum Goldenen Schwan* to sample the beer and food. The oldest part of the restaurant dates back to around 1200. It's an atmospheric place where you must try the *Rinderroulade* with *Thüringer Klöβen* potato dumplings so highly regarded that there is a museum

devoted to them in nearby Heichelheim. *Rinderroulade* was new to me and, alongside the Cruciskirche organ, was the highlight of my trip – thin strips of beef encircled ham, pickles and a creamy sauce in a glorious carnivorous answer to the Swiss roll. There are delicious vegetarian dishes too. Too bad that I only managed a single visit to this restaurant before heading home through an airport every bit as deserted as on arrival. It was a bit surreal, but a happy time amid the Covid madness.

For more details visit erfurt-tourismus.de/en and thueringer-bachwochen.de. Train services to Erfurt operate across Europe. The recommended airport is Frankfurt, with a train to Erfurt taking 2.5 hours.



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ON RELEASE

NEW DISCS COMING OUT IN... APRIL 2022



Jeremy Filsell performs on the first solo recording of the 2018 Dobson organ at Saint Thomas Church, Fifth Avenue, New York City

he music-making at Saint Thomas, Fifth Avenue, New York City, is internationally renowned, its long tradition of excellence being established and upheld by luminaries such as T. Tertius Noble, Gerre Hancock and John Scott. Jeremy Filsell, who succeeded Daniel Hyde in 2019, has now made the first solo recording of the church's Dobson organ; Opus 93 – with six divisions and 102 stops – was completed in 2018 (see November/December 2018 issue). On **Michel Boulnois (1907-2008) Organ Music** [Raven OAR-175], Filsell presents the rarely heard organ works of French composer Michel Boulnois. Boulnois was titular organist at Église Saint-Philippe-du-Roule in Paris for 53 years and, together with contemporaries Jehan Alain and Jean-Jacques Grunenwald, was a member of Marcel Dupré's 1937 organ class at the Conservatoire.

Works by Titcomb, Kropfreiter, Pepping, Nicolai and Hindemith feature on **Sounds Lost But Not Forgotten** [Raven OAR-173]. George Bozeman (organ) and J. Bryan Dyker (flute), organ builders as well as musicians, combine as The Hot Air Duo. They performed live concerts in 1991 and 1992 with the 1974 Rieger (84 ranks) at St James's Episcopal Church, Richmond, Virginia. The organ was destroyed in a devastating fire following a lightning strike in 1994. Bryan Dyker, the youngest Organ Historical Society member when he joined at the age of 13, died the same year aged 37.

In choral releases, Belfast's early music ensemble Sestina, directed by Mark Chambers, releases the first of a trio of ⁶Master & Pupil' discs in partnership with Resonus Classics. **Master & Pupil - Exploring the Influences and Legacy of Claudio Monterverdi** [Inventa INV 007] is a particularly apt choice given an early performance of Montverdi's *Sestina* by Chambers and a young group of singers inspired the group's name. Monteverdi's *Dixit Dominus* (from *Selve morale et spirituali*, 1641) is programmed alongside music by, among others, Josquin, Mouton, De Rore and Rossi. A highlight is the little-known Mass for Eight Voices by Monteverdi's pupil Giovanni Rigatti.

Andrew Nethsingha and the Choir of St John's College, Cambridge, release a new live Evensong album for Easter. Eastertide Evensong [Signum SIGCD 707] follows on from the success of their Ash Wednesday disc. The recording is structured in a traditional Evensong format, including anthems, psalms, canticles, prayers, bible readings and organ music. After opening with Julian Anderson's My Beloved Spake, a programme of Goss, Hylton Stewart, Stanford, Taverner, Leighton and Howells is rounded off by the Finale from Widor's Symphonie no.6, to which Nethsingha refers as 'one of the most exuberant works in the repertoire'.

CHORAL CDS

Wolfgang Carl Briegel: Zwölff Madrigalische Trost=Gesänge Ensemble Polyharmonique CPO 555449-2

Eastertide Evensong Choir of St John's College, Cambridge/Nethsingha Signum SIGCD 707

Marc'Antonio Ingegneri: Missa Voce mea a5 - Polyphonic Motets for Double Choir Choir of Girton College, Historic Brass of RWCMD/Wilson Toccata Classics TOCC 0630

Johann Kuhnau: Complete Sacred Works vol.7 Opella Musica, Camerata Lipsiensis/ Meyer

CPO 555399-2

Master & Pupil Sestina Music/Mark Chambers Inventa Records INV 1007

O Sing unto the Lord a New Song Bruton A Cappella Raven OAR-171

Resurrexi!: Easter in Vienna with Mozart and the Haydn Brothers Choir of Keble College, Oxford, Instruments of Time and Truth/ Brough CRD Records CRD 3539

Rossini: Stabat mater Wiener Singverein Harmonia mundi HMM 905355

Marco Taralli: Cantus Bononiæ Missa Sancti Petronii Coro di voci bianche e orchestra del Teatro Comunale di Bologna/ Fogliani

Tactus TC 962001

When Sleep Comes Tenebrae/Short Signum SIGCD 708 John Wilbye: Draw on Sweet Night I Fagiolini/Hollingworth Coro COR 16190

KEYBOARDS CDS

J.S. Bach: Preludes and Fugues Hans Vollenweider, Metzler organ Opus 301 (1960), Grossmünster, Zurich, Switzerland Tudor TUD 7221

Michel Boulnois: Organ Music Jeremy Filsell, Dobson organ Opus 93 (2018), Saint Thomas Church, Fifth Avenue, New York, US Raven OAR-175

Johann Ludwig Krebs: Keyboard Works vol.2 Steven Devine (hpschd) Resonus Classics RES 10300

Rarità Organistiche tra Ottocento e Novecento Andrea Toschi Tactus TC 890090 Sounds Lost But Not Forgotten J. Bryan Dyker (fl), George Bozeman, Rieger organ (1974), St James's Episcopal Church, Richmond, VA, US Raven OAR-173



REVIEWS

Rating: $\star \star \star \star$ Highly recommended $\star \star \star \star$ Very good $\star \star \star$ Good $\star \star$ Average \star Poor





THIS ISSUE'S REVIEWERS

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KEYBOARD CDS

Merulo: Il Primo Libro de **Ricercare de Cantare a Quattro Voci**

Francesco Tasini, Antegnati organ (1565; rest. Carli, 1995-2006), Basilika Palatina di Santa Barbara, Mantua

Brilliant Classics 96204 (3CDs) [114:38]





The organist and publisher Claudio Merulo (1533-1604) was for

nearly 30 years organist at St Mark's, Venice, where this collection was published in 1574. He was described by contemporaries as the greatest organist of the period, and in Il transilvano his pupil Diruta described his performing methods. The style of Merulo's ricercars is vocal, but he forged a distinctive keyboard idiom with characterful ornamentation. Francesco Tasini's

interpretations on this historic organ are fine, but I recommend not listening to all 19 tracks in one sitting. This recording suits a library - a good source of reference for players, musicologists and organologists. DAVID PONSFORD

Le Fier Virtuose: Le clavecin de Louis XIII

Arnaud de Pasquale, harpsichords after Italian styles by Philippe Humeau (2005), and after Rückers by Emile Jobin Château de Versailles Spectacles CVS 047 [70:36]



Whereas harpsichord music from the era of Louis XIV has

been well published and recorded, the repertoire from the reign of Louis XIII has never

been taken as seriously, apart from Louis Couperin and Chambonnières. Together with works by these composers, Arnaud de Pasquale has recorded some lively dances, chaconnes, songs, pavans, fantasias and preludes by Moulinié, Mézangeau, Bocquet, Boësset, Dumanoir, Michael Praetorius, Le Jeune, De La Barre and Mersenne, organised into four suites. The 41 tracks contain mostly short pieces, of which the arrangements of ballet music for two harpsichords with François Guerrier are particularly attractive. A worthy project, well executed. DAVID PONSFORD

Karl Hoyer's Unbeaten Tracks

Graham Barber, Link-Gaida organ (1910/2014), Pauluskirche, Ulm, Germany Fugue State Records FSRCD 025 [64:42]



influence on his onetime pupil Karl Hoyer's music is

evident even to the casual ear. Carrying itself with a more rounded, approachable quality, it inhabits the same hinterland between late romanticism and early modernism. This collection of Hoyer's organ music offers a more expressively variegated account of his Variations on a Sacred Folksong than Anna Przybysz's 2001 Ars Sonora recital, and boasts two premiere recordings. Moving from funeral procession to transcendent transfiguration, the four-part Memento mori is a masterly exercise nimbly dispatched by Graham Barber; and similarly, the substantial 'Wunderbarer König' Fantasy & Fugue's transition from shade to blazing

light. The 2015 Link-Gaida in Pauluskirche, Ulm serves the music eloquently. MICHAEL QUINN

Con Fantasia vol.2

Arjan Versluis, Bätz-Witte organ (1853), Grote Kerk, Gorinchem, Netherlands

D.E. Versluis DEV-AV 1040 [79:59] ***



This is the second recording made by Arjan Versluis on this 18th-century

instrument. This time the focus is on the stylus fantasticus writing of Bach, Böhm and Buxtehude, which sounds well on the original Bätz pipework of 1761. In between two movements of Bach's G minor Fantasia & Fugue (BWV 542), Versluis provides a contrasting selection of chorale preludes and the more melancholic C minor Fantasia (BWV 537). Slower pieces are beautifully executed but more rhythmic passages, particularly fugues, lose their line through over-articulation and slightly unsettled rhythm. All this is complemented by three psalm improvisations: a partita in a classical style for Psalm 81; an impressionistic evocation of Psalm 66; and a rather jazzy song of praise for the Ascension in Psalm 47. RUPERT GOUGH

Vincent Persichetti: **Organ Works**

lain Quinn, Fisk organ Opus 126 (2005), St Paul's Episcopal Church, Greenville, NC, US Naxos 8.559887 [73:42]





1950s with his own style of modernism

and left a strong legacy, not least through his teachings at Juilliard to composers such as Glass and Rautavaara. Although a church musician early in his career, he wrote relatively little for the organ and the works recorded here by Iain Quinn represent around half his output. Persichetti was not afraid to write for beginners, or practical liturgical music, and Quinn includes some examples from Hymns and Responses for the Church Year. More complex works from later in his career include the Sonata as well as the Dryden Liturgical Suite and Auden Variations - which clocks in at nearly 30 minutes. These are demanding works, both technically and also to communicate well, yet Quinn's performances are very persuasive, enhanced by the colour and clarity of a fine Fisk organ. RUPERT GOUGH

Anton Bruckner: The Symphonies Organ **Transcriptions vol.2**

Hansjörg Albrecht, Willis organ (1922), Westminster Cathedral, London

Oehms Classics OC 478 [80:11] *****



Taking Bruckner's symphonies to the organ seems to be an increasingly

popular pastime. He is certainly an oft-misunderstood composer and whether or not you believe that he conceived these symphonies as an organist, Hansjörg Albrecht translates the fine Second Symphony seamlessly to the organ using new transcriptions by Erwin Horn. The nobility of the Willis reeds and the subtle string colours of the Westminster Cathedral organ suit the music perfectly. It was while staying in Westminster in 1871 to give an

REVIEWS

organ recital at the Albert Hall that Bruckner conceived this Symphony. This well-produced album is a part of a Bruckner series and also includes a highly effective transcription of Psalm 150 and a newly commissioned Meditation from David Matthews. RUPERT GOUGH

Lully

Frédéric Deschamps, Carouge-Garnier organ (1727/1995), Abbey of La Chaise-Dieu, France VOC 9784 [63:21]



Frédéric Deschamps, organist of the

famous Moucherel organ in Albi, has created here a magnificent CD entirely from scratch: he plays, he acts as his own engineer and producer and, as far as I can tell, penned the transcriptions of excerpts from Lully's operas which make up the programme. The result of this homespun project is simply fabulous. Michel Garnier's modern organ on the preserved wind-chests of Marin Carouge's 1727 instrument is colourfully convincing as an instrument of the French baroque, and is flawlessly in tune. Deschamps plays overtures, arias and gavottes from no fewer than 11 operas with abundant flair and swagger, the organ's unequal tuning providing an expressive tension in tracks such as the sorrowful 'Récit de la prêtresse' from Thésée which seems to heighten the music in a way not necessarily experienced in conventional performance. The booklet is slightly meagre (and in French only) but this is a tour de force. Very highly recommended. CHRIS BRAGG

O Güldnes Licht

Jürgen Banholzer, Huß-Schnitger organ (1668-75), Cosmaekirche, Stade; Georg Poplutz(t) Fra Bernardo FB 2121577 [78:43]



This disc is a bit of an enigma. The booklet contains no performer biographies, no organ

specification, no registrations, just a hypothetical conversation

between the record label and Berendt Huß, the original builder, together with pupil Arp Schnitger, of the famous organ at the St Cosmae church in Stade. In fact the concept of building a programme around the giant chorale fantasias of Buxtehude (Nun freut euch) and Reincken (An Wasserflüssen Babylon) is wonderful, and works especially well here thanks to the expressively idiomatic voice of tenor Georg Poplutz - a colour

which fits the vocal works by Tunder and Buxtehude (preserved in the Düben collection) like a glove. Google reveals that Banholzer too is a singer, a noted counter-tenor, so his recording here as an organist is exceptional. Even if I find his approach to the 'stylus theatralis' sometimes a bit literal (the echoes in Buxtehude's Nun freut euch, an occasional lack of gestural flair in the Reincken), he finds, undeniably, a convincingly musical equilibrium 🕨

J.S. Bach: Complete English Suites

Sophie Yates, harpsichord by Andrew Garlick after Ioannes Ruckers (1624) Chaconne CHAN 0826(2) (2CDs) [74:12; 74:47]



This sumptuously produced recording is a delight in every way. The harpsichord is a copy by Andrew Garlick of the famous 1624 Colmar Ruckers, and has the same sweetness of tone and sustaining power as the original. Excellent sleeve notes by Sophie Yates both on the background to these suites and for every individual movement, show her passion and

enthusiasm for this music - characteristics which pervade every moment of this recording. The English Suites are not the best known of Bach's suites, but have such variety and imagination, which is perfectly

This recording never fails to impress and delight

caught here by Yates. From the opening improvisatory Prélude to the first suite to the grandeur of the Prélude to the third suite, the lovely arpeggiation in the sarabandes, dancing vivacity in quicker dances such as bourrée and passepied, to the sheer virtuosity of the gigues - particularly that of the sixth suite this recording never fails to impress and delight. This has to be one of the best recordings of Bach harpsichord music I have heard in many years, and a 'must-have' for anyone who loves this repertoire. DOUGLAS HOLLICK

Sophie Yates catches the variety and imagination of Bach's English Suites 'perfectly'





REGENT RECORDS New Releases



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REVIEWS

◄ with organ and music. The wonderful Stade organ is gorgeously captured by Christoph Frommen. If the required sleuthing is frustrating, the musicmaking is nourishing indeed. CHRIS BRAGG

Bach & Hanson

Cameron Carpenter, Marshall & Ogletree organ Opus 8 (2014), Konzerthaus, Berlin Decca Gold 4856598 [80:05]

Cameron Carpenter aficionados know to expect the

unexpected, as this coupling of Bach's Goldberg Variations and Howard Hanson's Second Symphony illustrates. On the flamboyant organist's self-commissioned V/207 International Touring Organ, Bach's sleep-inducing nightcap sounds instead like the aftereffects of giving a child a doughnut just before bedtime. A characteristically extravagant performance, neon-bright when it's not candle-lit, it substitutes rococo dazzle, grand Guignol heft and Tchaikovskyan ebullience for baroque sensibilities, redemptively concluding with a fetchingly poetic Aria da capo. Carpenter's adroit, eloquently played transcription of Hanson's 'Romantic' Symphony catches the ear with its ingratiating melodies and lush harmonies, seized on with becoming ardour, attentive detail and due scale by Carpenter.

The Forest at Dawn -**Organ Works by Andrew Downes**

Robin Walker, Harrison & Harrison organ (1908), Ely Cathedral Regent Records REGCD 559 [49:22] ****



This first CD of organ music by Birmingham-born Andrew Downes

(who turned 70 in 2020) reveals a voice rooted in and relishing the instrument's cavernous lower registers, coupled with a facility for spinning light and shade out of their dark, subterranean hues. The early Prelude, Fanfare and Prelude op.9 (1975) shows Downes equally eloquent in its effusive middle section. But it's his dexterous way with evoking moment and mood, as in the splendidly ruminative Sonata (2006) and the imagistic The Forest at Dawn (2000), that catches the ear. So, too, his daring use of ambiguous harmonies as a prelude to the magnificent bombast that concludes the Introduction and Allegro op.94 (2017). A pity about the booklet's eye-straining print. MICHAEL QUINN

CHORAL CDS

Hypnos

La Tempête / Simon-Pierre Bestion (dir) Alpha Classics ALPHA 786 [76:36]



Hypnos, the god of sleep in Greek mythology, this

CD presents a carefully curated programme of music connected with night and dreams, as well as a world of mystery and looking beyond death. Simon-Pierre Bestion suggests his musical choices -ranging from the middle ages to the renaissance to the 20th century - have been made to form a 'sensory and emotional journey', evoking the Catholic ritual of the Requiem. Adopting an open vocal manner reminiscent of Byzantine chant

singing, much ornamentation and adding bass clarinet and cornet à bouquin, Bestion and La Tempête make no slavish reconstruction as far as the old pieces are concerned; rather, they offer an inspired response to the ancient music which gives context to the contemporary pieces by Tavener, Greif and Scelsi. The CD was recorded in December 2020 when the world was gripped by the Covid pandemic. Heard right through, it offers a powerful act of consolation in grief. PHILIP REED

Bruno Maderna: Requiem

Carmela Remigio (s), Veronica Simeoni (m-s), Mario Zeffiri (t), Simone Alberghini (b), Chorus and Orchestra of Teatro La Fenice / Andrea Molino (dir) Stradivarius STR 37180 [56:03] ****



Resurrected 60 years after it vanished, Bruno Maderna's

Requiem, written when the composer was only 26, is a remarkable piece of almost an hour's duration. Not only does it shed light on the pre-12-note Maderna, but it is a major work, exquisitely scored and displaying idiomatic vocal writing. The Requiem was known only to a few select contemporaries in 1946-47, and the shift in Maderna's musical language caused the composer, if not to supress the work deliberately, at least to cease promoting it. By the late 1940s, Maderna was committed to the cause of Modernism. In this live recording of the world premiere at la Fenice, Venice, in 2009, Andrea Molino and his forces are clearly fully committed to unwrapping Maderna's vision. Molino is alert to the Requiem's

many influences, from 16th- and 17th-century Venetian vocal and brass writing, to Stravinsky, Orff and Petrassi. While the Requiem is well captured on this CD release, a studio recording would have resulted in a wider range of dynamics and a more natural balance of the forces. Nevertheless, it amounts to a tremendous achievement. PHILIP REED

Jean-Noël Hamal: Latin Motets

Scherzi Musicali / Nicolas Achten (dir) Musique en Wallonie MEW 2098 [68:34]





Jean-Noël Hamal (1709-78) was a loyal son of Liège who was

connected to the city's cathedral for most of his life. At least two periods of study in Italy - the first in Rome - brought him into contact with the newest musical trends, which he fed into his own compositions. He enjoyed a long tenure as director of music at Liège Cathedral, despite regular complaints about his neglecting his duties in favour of pursuing his own compositional activity. The four multi-movement Latin motets on this fascinating CD give a fair idea of what Hamal is capable of. The musical style is a mix of the baroque galant reaching towards the fully classical manner: it's music that is always theatrical and vital. Nicolas Achten and his forces offer engagingly performed readings: rhythms are crisp, articulation precise, and they communicate the direct and open manner of Hamal's music extremely well. It's a fascinating project, beautifully recorded and presented. PHILIP REED

MICHAEL QUINN

⊳

EARLY MUSIC



Rebecca Tavener rounds up the latest releases

J.S. Bach would have used an indoor toilet and a piano if he'd had them' has become a cliché, but what would he think of Wendy Carlos and Jacques Loussier? If music is to stay alive after

the composer's death, is reinvention inevitable and even desirable? How about, 'Would Josquin have used the ondes Martenot'? What little we know of Josquin's character suggests that he might not. His 500th anniversary in 2021 inspired some 'alternative' approaches, so let's return to that unanswerable question in a moment. To begin, here's an uncontroversial interpretation from Metamorphoses in **Josquin Desprez Messes Malheur me bat & L'ami Baudichon** [AR RE-SE 2021-2], the tenth and final volume of this group's complete Josquin Mass survey. It's wonderfully madrigalian – flowing, tender, soulful, communicative – some tasteful rubato and independence of lines speak of profoundly, intelligently, musical and devotional engagement. Occasional technical lapses do not detract from an enviable emotional intensity as voices varied in character coalesce in sumptuous acoustics.

Quirky, exploratory, improvisatory, rich-toned, eccentric and divisive

Now, descend from the spiritual heights, take a deep breath and ask, 'How far can one go?' Two rich and strange releases pique the ear: **Josquin the Undead** [Glossa GCD P32117] from Graindelavoix features secular works from Susato's *Septiesme Livre* (Antwerp, 1545). Bookended by impassioned performances of *Musae Jovis*, lamenting Josquin's death, by Gombert and Appenzeller, and featuring similar *déplorations* by others, so deliciously dark a programme suits this quirky, exploratory, improvisatory, rich-toned, eccentric, divisive, ensemble. In a well-filled disc, seven male voices of extraordinary

character, with lute and cittern, live every note with arresting intensity. Their borderline Byzantine vocal decorations extravagantly flout Josquin's anecdotal hatred of ornamentation in a mouth-watering serving of guilty pleasures. Rarer still and guiltier are the flavours in **Baisiez moy – Josquin Desprez** [apartemusic AP 259] from the four voices and lute of thélème. The title track as sung by Graindelevoix seems like a wild animal compared to this domesticated beast, but don't get too comfortable - as the programme unfolds, exotically unpredictable sounds appear. In a set of mostly secular songs, electronic interventions from ondes Martenot, Fender Rhodes piano, and Buchla synthesiser thumb their noses at the authenticity thoughtpolice. Josquin's revenant lurks in the spooky, quasi-vocal utterances of the ondes Martenot, and the Buchla synthesiser challenges the precision of compositional techniques for which Josquin is famed. Both original, entertaining and meticulously prepared tributes from Graindelavoix and thélème invite us to view Josquin as an 'icon of pop culture' for both his and our times.

Recent tributes to another of last year's anniversarians, Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck, offer nothing to scare the horses: **Psalms and Motets from Renaissance Switzerland - Genevan Psalter, Goudimel, Sweelinck** [Claves 50-3008] is a clever juxtaposition of ten Geneva Psalm tunes with their simple congregational settings by Goudimel and expert polyphonic treatments from Sweelinck. Swiss vocal consort Ensemble Lamaraviglia sing all with great if mildly introspective precision and understanding. Sweelinck stood far above his contemporaries in Reformation music of the Calvinist persuasion and you can find all his psalms and everything else he wrote for the voice, including secular songs and Latin motets, in **Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck The Complete Vocal Works** [Glossa GCD 922411], a collection of quality reissues from the reliable Gesualdo Consort Amsterdam. Madrigalian intelligence, affection, vocal beauty and balance run through all 17 discs, recorded with impeccable clarity.

Rebecca Tavener is a singer and director specialising in early and contemporary music. She is founder-director of Canty, Scotland's only professional medieval music group.

The Gesualdo Consort Amsterdam bring 'intelligence, affection, vocal beauty and balance' to their complete Sweelinck



REVIEWS

Dove + Weir + Martin

Choir of Westminster Abbey, Peter Holder (org) / James O'Donnell (dir) Hyperion CDA 68350 [70:16]



This is a truly thrilling recording in every way.

Jonathan Dove, Judith Weir and Matthew Martin are each represented by a sequence of superb anthems or service settings, many of them (all, in the case of the three Weir anthems) written for Westminster Abbey. They exploit the vast spaces of the building to magnificent effect, sometimes with the simplicity of a translucent treble line, sometimes with the shattering

impact of splintering parts. However complex the music, the texts are always clear, and Peter Holder's organ playing is exemplary throughout. Martin's trebles-only evening service was an enjoyable discovery for me, and the many highlights of the album include the most exciting performance of Dove's popular Missa brevis I have ever heard. Interestingly, two of the recording sessions took place a week or so before the first pandemic lockdowns and two eight months later, but the programme feels seamless, maintaining a terrific sense of momentum from the ethereal opening phrases to the last ffff organ chord. A remarkable achievement. CLARE STEVENS

Legrenzi: Harmonia d'affetti devoti op.3

Nova Ars Cantandi, Ivana Valotti (org) / Giovanni Acciai (dir) Naxos 8.579123-24 (2CDs) [47:47; 42:31]



One cannot imagine this first complete recording of

Legrenzi's Harmonia d'affetti devoti (published in 1655) being better done. Using original rather than pre-existing liturgical texts, Legrenzi builds on Monteverdi's expressive new style of writing to produce a sequence of music that shows off his gift for melody and rhythmic vitality. Giovanni Acciai and Nova Ars Cantandi respond fully to the challenges

and delights of Legrenzi's style. The simplicity of the singers' sound is an abiding joy of this recording, with each piece delivered with beauty and honesty. It's a first-rate achievement. PHILIP REED

Andrzej Koszewski: **Choral Works**

Collegium Cantorum Choir of the Czestochowa Philharmonic / Janus Siadlak (dir) Dux 1772 [59:15]



Andrzej Koszewski is one of those betweengenerations,

between-stools composers who often misses out on international recognition. Stuck >

Benedict Sheehan: Vespers

Fotina Naumenko (s), Helen Karloski (m-s), Timothy Parsons (c-t), Paul D'Arcy (t), Jamal Sarikoki (bar), Michael Hawes (bar), Jason Thomas (b), Glenn Miller (b prof), The Saint Tikhon Choir / Benedict Sheehan (dir)

Cappella CR 423 [59:29]



In the Orthodox communion, Vespers come at the beginning of the day, not its end, and that sense of opening and growing light forms an important aspect of Sheehan's brilliant reimagining of Rachmaninov's All-Night Vigil. The psalm settings are beautifully handled by a choir which hasn't been around long but sounds every time like a pure emanation from the stones of St Tikhon's Monastery. The structure of vocal concertos is unusual, and the part for basso profundo, sung by Glenn Miller, is one of the very first in English. Sheehan's music is glorious, but it's the choir that makes it a special record, handling

Luminous and uplifting

every part with both delicacy and strength. A luminous, uplifting record that works on many levels and offers a virtuosic approach to vocal colour. **BRIAN MORTON**

The Saint Tikhon Choir handles Sheehan's music 'beautifully'



CHORAL SELECTION



A French-Canadian folk song, reworking Byrd, two anthems for Easter, and pieces by Malcolm Archer and Fred Gramann

Easter is just around the corner, so my first piece is probably one for next year. Jeffrey Smith's arrangement of **This Joyful Eastertide** [SATB div. & org.; E.C. Schirmer 0031348889, US\$2.85] takes the familiar Dutch carol and adds a characterful organ part that puts me a little in mind of a sailor's hornpipe. At the opening of the final verse the choir becomes two choirs: otherwise the music is adroitly written in four parts, and the whole piece exudes springtime optimism.

Sha! Shtil! [TTBB & pno; Oxford University Press 9780193560826, £2.20] is one of a number of pieces issued by OUP in a new series called 'In The Deep'. Composed or arranged for tenor-and-bass ensembles, they are designed to appeal to a wide range of male voice ensembles, from community and youth choirs to groups aspiring to professional standard. The arranger of this Yiddish folk-song is lan Assersohn, who engages us with a strongly rhythmic depiction of a dancing rabbi, effectively adding clapping, stamping and finger snaps to the singers' repertoire of sounds. The language is not hard to pronounce (a guide

Stephen Caracciolo's harmonies are warm and inviting

is provided); and where the text dramatically describes Satan falling down dead, Assersohn's music features a most appropriate *ritenuto* and *fermata*. The vocal ranges are not particularly taxing, and the music could be easily learned (by heart?), making the piece suitable in a wide variety of contexts.

I was strongly attracted to Stephen Caracciolo's **O Gracious Light** on first reading [SATB div. unacc.; MorningStar MSM-50-9859 US\$2.25]. The text is an English paraphrase of a very old Greek text, better known to some as *Hail, Gladdening Light* (John Keble's verse translation). Caracciolo's setting was made for the choirs of Washington National Cathedral, and the composer's sure handling of the a cappella texture ensures that this anthem would be effective in many a cathedral and collegiate setting. The harmonies are warm and inviting, and there is a nice upward tonal shift for the central section of the piece. The composer allows the music to fall back whence it came for the final passage, and the last thing we hear is the little melodic figure with which the motet started. I shall certainly include this piece in the repertoire for the Choral Evensong course that I direct each summer.

I am also very taken with **He'll Soon Come to Call Me**, arranged by Ben Atkins [SATB & vn, vc, hp; Encore Publications, £2.50]. This piece is a family affair: Anne Atkins has elegantly versified various biblical passages and the arranger has married the text to a beautiful Scottish traditional tune. His choice of accompanying instruments is just right (violin, cello and harp), though a separate edition exists for mixed voices and piano. There are opportunities for two sopranos and a tenor to sing the verse melody as a solo. Indeed, apart from the introduction, the original folk melody is entirely allotted to the singers in appropriately simple harmonies, while violin and cello weave whimsical descants around the tune, and the harp does what harps do. When a funeral for Anne Atkins's father was not possible under normal circumstances due to Covid restrictions, many musicians contributed their own vocal or instrumental line from home, and the composite first performance subsequently appeared on YouTube as a tribute.

Howard Goodall's A River out of Eden [SATB & pno; MorningStar MSM-56-0118 US\$3.65] reaches me via the American publisher MorningStar, though it will soon be available to buyers in the UK from Faber. The subject of the work is Creation, and the text is taken from Annie Dillard's book Pilgrim at Tinker Creek and Tyndale's 16th-century translation of the bible. The hand of an experienced composer at the top of his game is evident here. The words of the first section are necessarily fragmentary, being Dillard's description of the various natural elements that are brought together to make our world. The vocal lines are thus short and peppered with rests. Goodall binds these elements together by creating a background provided by the piano accompaniment in which the tonality barely moves - a daring ploy that lasts for 92 measures, and imparts a dream-like quality to the music thus far. Like a sudden shaft of light we switch to Tyndale's words from Genesis. Now we have a second section which is a short, exuberant musical essay on the theme we first heard like a spiral of mist at the very start of the piece. The technical writing for voices and pianist is spot on, and Goodall once again proves himself to be an admirable word-setter. For those who want to perform this work in a church setting, a separate organ part [US\$6.00] is available from the publishers.

After an early career as a freelance choral director and counter-tenor, Jeremy Jackman was a member of the King's Singers for ten years. In 1990 he resumed a career in conducting and leading workshops. He is currently musical director of the English Baroque Choir, and the Cecilian Singers in Leicester. jeremyjackman.co.uk

Y 'An experienced composer at the top of his game': Howard Goodall



◄ between giants, he has neither the monumental presence of Lutosławski nor the fearless radicalism of Penderecki, but he has great virtues. Music fa-remi-do is his solmization of the name Fryderyk Chopin, perhaps the major source and obsession of his career. The Greater Poland Triptych and Games are also early works, performed with verve and swelling pride by the Czestochowa choir. Koszewski was from Poznań and draws deeply on that city's tradition of male singing in particular. A lovely Angelus Domini and a non-canonical Mass triptych underline his touch with sacred material, and the singers move easily into that mode and the more rarefied but still earthy sound of the later work. BRIAN MORTON

Hans Leo Hassler: Regina Angelorum

Ensemble Vox Angeli: Verena Hofer-Nill (s), Martina Hübner (a), Juan Sebastián Acosta (t), Manuel Schuen (b); with Anita Rosati (s), Johanna Zachhuber (a), Bernd Oliver Fröhlich (t), Marcell Krokovay (b) / Manuel Schuen (org & dir) Gramola 99256 [62:45]



The star of this recording for me is the 1714 Sieber organ of

St Michael's Church, Vienna, which punctuates the choral performances of largely Marian repertoire with a Toccata and alternatim verses in a Magnificat setting and an instrumental version by Heinrich Scheidemann of Hassler's brief four-voice motet *Dixit Maria*. The four members of Ensemble Vox Angeli are resident at the church and are joined by four equally accomplished additional singers for the eight-voice works in this appealing showcase for a composer who was clearly one of the leading musical personalities of the late renaissance in the German-speaking world, yet remains a shadowy figure. CLARE STEVENS

J.S. Bach: Famous Cantatas vol.1 -Mühlhausen 1707-1708

Barbara Schlick (s), Kai Wessel (c-t), Guy de Mey (t), Klaus Mertens (b), Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra & Choir / Ton Koopman (dir) Challenge Classics CC 72897 [79:50]

Christ lag in Todesbanden, BWV 4, Gott ist mein König, BWV

71, Aus der Tiefe rufe ich, Herr, zu dir, BWV 131 and Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit (Actus tragicus), BWV 106 were the works chosen to open Ton Koopman's survey of J.S. Bach's cantatas, recorded in 1994 in the Waalse Kerk, Amsterdam. As Christoph Wolff points out in his booklet notes, these wonderful pieces may have been written before Bach moved to Leipzig, but they demonstrate utter confidence and sureness of style. Amsterdam Baroque's performances are well worth revisiting. Immaculate musicianship is matched by eloquent communication of the texts, so that drama and theological intention are atmospherically conveyed. A superb quartet of vocal soloists are well balanced in their ensembles, and the chorus has a gloriously flexible and unified sound. CLARE STEVENS

Xiaogang Ye: The Road to the Republic; Cantonese Suite

Liping Zhang (s), Guang Yang (m-s), Yijie Shi (t), Chenye Yuan (bar), China National Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, Beijing Philharmonic Choir (Jia Lu, dir), Deutsche Staatsphilharmonie Rheinland-Pfalz / Frank Ollu (dir)

Naxos 8.579089 [67:01]



'Found the Republic, and divide the land evenly. Expel the

Manchus and restore China.' The text of Ye's large-scale symphonic epic written to mark the centenary of the 1911 Revolution has its tub-thumping moments, but these are tempered by the delicacy, sometimes elegiac quality and even irony of the score, elements brought together confidently by Jia Lu's impressive forces. The heroic story of inaugural president and 'Father of the Nation' Sun Yat-sen brings together folk elements and a more abstract musical structure to produce a work of genuine power that nonetheless leaves open questions about China's past and destiny. **BRIAN MORTON**

Bob Chilcott: Circlesong

Treble Choir of Houston, Houston Chamber Choir, Richard Brown, Mark Stein, Leonardo Soto, Matt Richards (perc), Andreea Muţ, Jessica Myers (pno) / Robert Simpson (dir)

Signum SIGCD 703 [55:50] ★★★★



This is a 2019 revision of a substantial cantata originally premiered in 2004 by the Birmingham Festival Chorus and City of Birmingham Young Voices. It sets a selection of texts on the theme of the cycle of life based on First Nations poetry from North America, in a variety of English translations. In his thoughtful programme note Bob Chilcott preempts any disquiet listeners may feel about the use of this material, explaining how he sees it as offering wider access to what the texts have to say and give, enabling us to share different voices and cultures and to celebrate the unifying nature of choral singing. The Houston performers give an immaculate, eloquent performance of a charming, life-affirming piece. CLARE STEVENS

ORGAN MUSIC

From Jewish Life B. Kalinowska and S. Kalinowsky (eds.): Bärenreiter BA11252, £22.50

Andrew Carter: Franciscan Fragments - Variations on East Acklam Banks Music Publications, £6.95

Francis Jackson: Improvisation on a chant of John Goss

Banks Music Publications, £3.95

Frederick Frahm: 10 Fantasies

Firehead Organ Works, US\$25.00

From Jewish Life is a new collection of arrangements for viola/cello and organ. It adds some valuable repertoire to the corpus of works for organ and solo instrument, and in ►

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music of some fine, but quite possibly unfamiliar, composers to a wider audience. Works by Zeitlin, Ravel, Alman, Bloch, Stutschewsky, Halphen and Ludwig Mendelssohn are presented in thoughtful and pragmatic arrangements, and brief biographical and contextual notes give a glimpse both of the richness of Jewish musical culture in the first half of the 20th century and - poignantly - the extent to which the horrors of the 1930s and 40s impinged on the lives and careers of many of the composers represented here. All the music is finely crafted and expressive, with a strong sense of melodic gesture, and while I can't vouch for the difficulty of the string parts, the organ writing is admirably idiomatic. Worth investigating.

At the time of writing, the passing of Francis Jackson is still very much on the minds of many, and Andrew Carter's 2021 Franciscan Fragments set of variations on one of FJ's most enduring inspirations is a welcome addition to the fine set by Philip Moore. Carter's ten variations, lasting 18 minutes, are an imaginative and appealing exploration of the possibilities of the hymn melody, and there is plenty of textural and timbral variety to keep the player and listener engaged. The composer's brief notes give useful insight into the inspiration for each variation, and a resourceful and technically confident player (with a resourceful instrument at her/his disposal - the more colour that can be applied here, the better) may find this makes an ideal substantial recital item.

The great man himself is represented in this column by a typically polished vignette, an **Improvisation** just two pages long and based on a wellknown Anglican chant melody. The brief introductory note gives some charming context to the work, and its two pages are as finely wrought as one might expect. Not at all difficult, and a rather touching memento of Dr Jackson as practical cathedral musician.

Frederick Frahm's music is steadily garnering increased attention in the UK, and quite right too. A second volume of his works will be reviewed in the next of these columns, but in the meantime elegant pieces that comprise 10 Fantasies are testament to the fine imagination of the composer. Carson Cooman's eloquent preface identifies some of the qualities that make Frahm's music worthy of admiration clarity, precision, profundity - and all of the pieces here display a thought-provoking seriousness of purpose and lapidary economy of expression which is all too rare in much contemporary writing for the organ. It seems more than music for organ in the same way that a Brahms motet is more than music for choir. There's much more to be said about these pieces than space permits - so take a look at the Firehead website, where there is much of interest, including performances and extended comment from the composer about several of the works. Not by any means easy, for player or listener - but of considerable significance to anyone out there who still thinks of the organ as a serious musical instrument. STEPHEN FARR



John Adams's writing for choruses is 'powerful, dynamic and often haunting'

CHORAL MUSIC

John Adams - Opera Choruses

SATB div. (+ some sols) & pno Boosey & Hawkes, vol.1. 9781705110683, vol.2 9781705110690, vol.3 9781705110706; £15.99 per volume

Of all composers of opera living today, nobody's reputation is higher than that of the American John Adams. The chorus has always played a vital role in his stage works, and his writing for the chorus is powerful, dynamic and often haunting. Hot off the Boosey and Hawkes press comes John Adams - Opera **Choruses** in three volumes. These have been carefully edited by Grant Gershon, who has been involved in preparing and conducting many performances of this music. The difficult task of reducing the orchestrations to playable piano parts has been skilfully undertaken by Chitose Okashiro.

I welcome this publication,

since at a stroke it offers ambitious choirs the opportunity to address considerably more of Adams's choral output. This material is not for the faint-hearted, and that includes the pianist. Some of the soprano parts go high and stay high; some of the choruses still need a soloist or two; they are rhythmically complex, and there are some awkward intervals to negotiate. But this is seriously good music, and choirs with the energy - mental and physical - to approach these pieces will be amply rewarded. They will be helped by scores that feel good in the hand and whose typesetting is admirably clear.

And it's not all hard work. Adams's attitude to the words of the text is often playful, there's more fun to be had with unusual *tessiture*, and sometimes these combine – it is surely no accident that at the opening of *For With God Nothing Shall Be Impossible*, tenors and basses are singing pitches that would normally be given to sopranos and altos! JEREMY JACKMAN

EAUTY IS ONE OF GOD'S ATTRIBUTES. For the sacred musician, the expression of beauty forms a thin place, a mystical space where the veil between the holy and the human is traversed. Music knits together the physical and the spiritual worlds so we can transcend the ordinary for a glimpse of the infinite. Music speaks when words cannot.



As an organist, I am drawn to beauty and create beauty through institutional instruments. Pipe organs build community. The music expressed through them is used to lift voices in song, heal the brokenhearted, soothe the suffering, excite the mind, delight the soul, and inspire the heart.

Creativity is an inherent human trait. Every artist hopes to have at their fingertips the best tools for creating beauty and for carrying out the high calling of the musician. The organs of C.B. Fisk promote the finest musical expressions. Their instruments shape musical lines, breathing with the musician and congregation. They unlock musical potentials and create that thin place where we are transported into the fullness of human experience."

> Dr. Homer A. Ferguson III Organist & Choirmaster







ENCOUNTERS PETER MCMULLIN, PRINTED MUSIC SPECIALIST AND MUSICIAN



y parents used to play one of their three LPs, the Chopin preludes, to get me to sleep every night. That recording, which I still possess, was worn completely flat - I adored it. My father played the piano accordion, so we were serenaded daily. My parents bought an upright piano for £30 and sent me to Beryl White for lessons. My interest in music waned, but two things revived it aged 10: the music of Scott Joplin in a period of ragtime revival, and asthma. My doctor advised me to learn a wind instrument, and so I spent my formative years in the Devon Youth Jazz Orchestra playing saxophone. Jazz is brilliant for ear-training, sight-reading, rhythm and ensemble discipline - all skills that transferred well to classical music, with piano as my primary instrument, and to playing saxophone in dance bands.

I went up to Oxford in 1982 to read Music. Though I'd never sung a note before university, singing, alongside piano, has been a constant thread in life ever since. The new mixed college choir at Lady Margaret Hall got me into singing in a big way. I joined the University Church Choir in 1986 and have sung there ever since. As an undergraduate I became enthralled with avant-garde music and auditioned for the New London Chamber Choir. Strictly amateur, it could afford the extensive rehearsal time required to pull off challenging works like Xenakis's microtonal masterpiece *Nuits*. Oxford-London commutes and post-rehearsal kebabs dominated my life for over a decade. It was a unique opportunity to perform with electronics and alongside extraordinary musicians. Performing Xenakis *to* Xenakis was perhaps the most thrilling musical experience of my life.

After graduating, a DPhil fell foul of the Thatcher years' grant clampdown. I saw a job advertised in Blackwell's Music Shop, applied and am still working there 37 years later. Initially, in the pre-digital era with cassettes and LPs the height of technology, I worked under the tutelage of Keith Wright and also dealt in antiquarian music and books. It was enormous fun valuing, buying and selling collections of fascinating material. I get immense pleasure from selling people music – it's a potentially life-changing transaction. Selling music to some of the world's great performers (André Previn, Bernard Haitink and Jessye Norman have all been my customers) is obviously a pleasure; but the greatest satisfaction comes from selling book 2 of a clarinet method to a child's parent three months after selling them book 1, as it shows the child's life has been magically enriched by music.

Starting work in the pre-digital age, I developed the skill of memorising the provenance of thousands of printed music titles. It's very satisfying to source obscure music for customers from memory rather than Google. The legendary plastic record sleeves synonymous with the Blackwell's Music shopping experience are a throwback to this pre-digital age when our stockholding was enormous. They still keep the music in pristine condition but used to record sales and order history in addition to marking the music's place on the shelf. Covid and Brexit have hit the whole industry very hard and now we are all having to devise new and creative working practices for the future.

Digitisation of culture has led to a change of listening habits too. In 1982, students had to book a slot in the Music Faculty to listen to the only available LP of Purcell's sonatas. Now everything is two clicks away. Streaming sites have led to a very casual form of listening, which I feel is less enriching. It's harder to cherish the instantly accessible. With the pressures facing education post-pandemic, music in schools is sadly seen increasingly as a mere add-on. Music is fundamental to who we are as humans. I firmly believe that performing music gives access to parts of yourself that you wouldn't otherwise discover. This goes for everyone, not just professionals. Even when struggling with sight-reading in a massed choir on a cold Thursday evening after a day in the office, you are doing something fundamentally beneficial for yourself.

As I didn't work for 15 months during the pandemic, I took up the English concertina, playing a family heirloom made by Louis Lachenal in 1848. I like to play Bach and am intent on recording some difficult pieces for video on social media. Watch out! The natural world, especially birds and fungi, and cooking were my comforts during those socially distanced times. But it's great to have returned to my second home at Blackwell's. *Peter McMullin was talking to Matthew Berry.*

PSALTER PSAINT MICHAEL'S

The Psalms of David Composed & Pointed for Chanting by

> John Edward Cantrell Choirmaster & Organist St. Michael's Episcopal Church New York City

"John Cantrell's new psalter is a breath of fresh air in church music! This much-needed collection of new Anglican chants is an incalculable gift of creativity and beauty! John cleverly sprinkles in harmonies from jazz and other traditions, and backlights the psalms with fresh meaning and new emphasis. Choirs will love singing these psalms, organists will relish the chance to accompany them, and congregations will gain a new found love and appreciation for a venerable jewel in the treasury of church music – Anglican Chant."

Andrew Sheranian, M.M. Organist and Master of Choristers All Saints Episcopal Church Ashmont Boston, MA "Many recent liturgical treatments of the psalms we might consider modern use musical language that is fifty or a hundred years old, or violate the free form of the original Hebrew poetry by adding a highly forgettable refrain. John Cantrell, by contrast, has created something truly fresh, using harmony that takes a step beyond Stravinsky, Pärt, or Coltrane. And yet, the classic form of Anglican chant preserves the psalms' structure, even as they take flight with new wings."

David Enlow, M.Mus, FAGO Organist & Choir Master Church of the Resurrection New York, NY "The St. Michael's Psalter offers a fresh, new look at the Psalms through a modern musical lens. The music, so skillfully written, is combined with a thoughtful pointing of the Psalms, rendering an original and effective interpretation of the text. I commend this Psalter to choirs and directors who seek an adventurous departure from traditional-harmony Anglican Chant."

ST. MICHAEL'S PSALTER

Frederick Teardo, D.M.A. Director of Music & Organist Cathedral Church of the Advent Birmingham, AL



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