

Derby & District Organists'

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Association



Baroque Organs Revisited with the Oberschwaben Orgelakademie Laurence Rogers

It was during my student vacation days spent in Germany when I first discovered the astonishing excesses of Baroque architecture in churches, which were in stark contrast with the grey gothic churches so familiar throughout England. Visiting a church as an organist, of course, my eyes would immediately turn to the organ, invariably situated in the commanding position of a western gallery and usually housed in a beautiful case, often adorned with cherubs and angels.

In July this year, I re-visited some of those celebrated abbey churches which first excited my imagination over forty years ago; Ottobeuren (pictured above), Weingarten, Rot an der Rot and others. I did this through attending the Oberschwaben Orgelakademie in the south of Germany.

When I first discovered this course, advertised on the internet, I had no idea what might be expected of participants, but enticed by a touch of

nostalgia for such historic locations, I felt compelled to sign up. In the event, I made new organ friends and enjoyed expert tuition from Franz Raml, a superb player and teacher.

Attending the four day course were eight active participants drawn from USA, Netherlands, England and Germany. Each day consisted of a series of masterclasses in a variety of locations which we visited by car. In successive afternoons we visited and played historic organs in Ottobeuren, Weingarten, Ursberg and Wolfegg. Morning sessions were always based in the spacious abbey church of Rot an der Rot (on the border between Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria, and a short bus-ride from Memingen Airport, which is conveniently served by Ryanair). On the final day, participants gave a composite public recital.

The three manual tracker organ in Rot was built by J.N.Holzhey in 1793, most recently restored in 1989, and in

Forthcoming Events

**Saturday 12th September
2.30pm**

Chairman's Event – Repton

**Wednesday 14th October
7.30pm**

Mendelssohn Event at St Mary, Ilkeston.

**Tuesday 17th November
7.30pm**

Annual General Meeting –
St Werburgh, Spondon.

**Victoria Hall Hanley
Saturdays 12 noon**

Geoffrey Morgan	12 th Sept.
Paul Prieto Ramirez	17 th October
Donald MacKenzie	21 st Nov.

**Southwell Minster
Wednesdays 7.30pm**

Paul Hale (1.00p.m.)	18 th Sept.
Graham Barber	14 th October

Lichfield Cathedral 7.30pm

Roger Judd	11 th Sept.
Carlo Curley	13 th October
Philip Scriven	} 10 th Nov.
Martyn Rawles	
Cathy Lamb	} 10 th Nov.

**Albert Hall – Nottingham
Sundays 2.45pm**

John Scott	25 th October
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Birmingham Town Hall 7.30pm

Thomas Trotter	5 th October
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1.00pm

Thomas Trotter	12 th October
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Symphony Hall 1.00pm

Thomas Trotter	2 nd Nov.
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See page 5 for details of recitals by David Wells, Laurence Rogers and Simon Collins.



The 1793 Holzhey organ of Rot an der Rot, and the console. The organ was restored in 1989.

excellent working order. In the generous, but not over-ponderous, acoustic of the church, the sound was magnificent; sonorous flues, bright upper work, rich reeds and thrilling pleno. Typically, Franz Raml would begin a session by improvising for about 15 minutes, exploring all the stops on the organ in a variety of combinations. The wealth of his imagination in these improvisations was astonishing.

Then he would invite a volunteer to play a prepared piece, and the whole group would study and discuss his remarks. He would analyse phrasing and dynamics in meticulous detail, and it was in this that we were reminded of the subtleties of touch possible on a well-designed tracker-action organ. He dwelt on two main aspects to this: depressing the keys sharply or gently, thus affecting the speed of attack, and controlling the detachment between notes. Franz refrained from using the term 'staccato', preferring instead to talk about 'articulation', implying the use of a continuous spectrum of detachment, ranging from legato to staccato. The combination of these two aspects made it possible for notes to sound louder or softer, albeit in a church with a generous acoustic.

Franz ably demonstrated this skill, frequently singing the phrases to us to emphasise their shape and vocal quality. So frequently would he sing cantus firmus lines to the words 'Kyrie eleison', it became a joke on the course that we might believe that all

organ music was really written for the mass. One of the set works was *Messe pour les Couvents* by Couperin. Here we would learn how to transform the notes on the page to convey the soul of the music. The haunting opening phrase of the Tierce en taille acquired an emotional quality in Franz's hands.

The spacious western gallery at Rot provided an ideal situation for the Holzhey organ, with the French style console located in the centre between the two main case towers. Thus the player was always in an excellent position for hearing the organ, although the balance between the Echo division and Hauptwerk could only be fully ascertained from the ground floor or from a side gallery. The nave was sufficiently wide and high to allow a full blend of sound from virtually every pew at floor level.

Specification of the Johan Nepomuk Holzhey organ in the Abbey Church of St. Maria & St. Verena

I Hauptwerk	
Praestant	16
Principal	8
Copel	8
Viola	8
Violoncell	8
Salicional	8
Oktav	4
Flöte	4
Mixtur	V-VI fach 2
Cimbal	V fach 2 ^{2/3}
Cornet	IV fach 4
Trompet	8
Dus Clarinet	8

Claron		4
Waldflöte		8
II Oberwerk		
Principal		8
Bordun		8
Flauttravers		8
Oktav		4
Feldflöte		4
Spitzflöte		4
Flageolet		2
Nasard	IV fach	2 ^{2/3}
Hörnle	II-III fach	2
Tremulant		
III Echo		
Copel		8
Dulciana		4
Unda maris		8
Fugara		4
Nasard	II fach	2
Cornet	IV fach	4
Vox humana		8
Pedalwerk		
Subbaß		16
Octavbaß		8
Violonbaß		8
Bombard		16
Trompete		8
Claron		4

Looking at the specification, it is interesting to note seven stops with multiple ranks. My favourites amongst these were the four-rank cornets on the Hauptwerk and Echo. The voicing of these stops, with a strong tierce component, gave an exciting rich quality which was almost reed-like in tone. The luxury of two cornets was ideal for playing 18th century English cornet voluntaries in which one could achieve a genuine

Snippets

Our thanks go to Laurence and Peter for their interesting and informative contributions to the September issue. I am always pleased to receive articles for publication, and, if possible, photographs to support them.

Progress at St John's, Derby

Readers will recall the articles in previous publications about the removal of the Willis/Adkins/Johnson organ from St John's, Bridge Street. Ed Stow has now re-leathered the bellows and re-erected the basic frame, which had to be raised 1½" due to settlement of the gallery floor.

The Open Wood, which was removed during the Johnson rebuild, is to be replaced with a similar rank from St Anne's, Derby. The scale of the new rank is substantial, though it has been suggested that it was never heard to advantage in St Anne's as it was placed at the back of the chamber. The three largest pipes were quite heavily mitred during the 1970's rebuild, though ERS hopes to return them to their original form.

The 'heavy gang' was once more engaged; this time to remove the pipes from St Anne's and assist with their transportation to St John's. Work on the Great chest is now complete and it has been returned from Ed's workshop to the church but has yet to be installed.

The rebuilding/restoration work is still on schedule, with completion planned for Christmas 2009.

Midlands Organ Day 2010

Following upon a meeting at Derby Cathedral with John Stormont and Graham Rock of the IAO, it was agreed that the date for the Organ Day is nominally fixed for Saturday, 2nd October 2010; the two venues will be Derby Cathedral and St John's, Bridge Street. The cathedral and St John's are within easy walking distance and are close to numerous restaurants and hostels.

The morning session will be in the cathedral with a talk on John Compton and his work, followed by a recital. After lunch there will be a session at St John's with a discussion on the organ, its restoration, and performances of various pieces, including some from the Millennium Organ Book.



Franz Raml directing one of the Orgelakademie study sessions in Rot an der Rot

cornet echo instead of borrowing the accompaniment manual for the phrases marked 'Echo'.

Pipes for the Echo division were enclosed behind panels at floor level in the gallery. These panels were hinged and could be opened before performance when louder tone was required. This facility was hardly as convenient as a louvered swell box, but it was an interesting historic precursor of the Swell principle.

The reed stops were generally voiced rather loudly: trumpets and clarions were bright and forthright; the Vox humana had broad enough tone to sustain chorus use as well as making a beautiful solo stop. The Clarinet was a Holzhey speciality, but not present in the original Rot instrument. This stop was added in the 1989 renovation, the pipes being modelled and voiced according to specimens on other Holzhey organs. Indeed the tone was quite remarkable, having more 'bite' than that commonly heard in English cathedral organs. This stop, together with an interesting selection of strings, indicates a French influence characteristic in Holzhey's organs.

Finally, I must comment on the pedal organ, which was so different from those on English organs in virtually every respect, making it nearly impossible for non-Germans to play with any confidence. The compass was limited to CC to A,

occupying the same width as a 31 note RCO pedal board, resulting in 2 inch wide pedals in a completely novel (for me) alignment. Also, the flat and parallel pedals seemed to be tucked underneath the console stool, making it impossible to use anything but a toes-only technique. I was advised to play pedals to the right of centre with the right toe, and the corresponding left pedals with the left toe, hopping between neighbouring notes as necessary.

The effectiveness of legato playing relies heavily on the kind acoustics of the church building. I have experienced this type of difficulty previously on other historic instruments in Europe and came prepared, well-armed with manuals-only music. To my relief, most of the other players had come similarly prepared.

Attending the academy was an inspiring experience which I strongly commend to colleagues. Further information can be found at www.ORGANpromotion.org.

Members will have no difficulty sensing Laurence's enthusiasm for the Orgelakademie courses, which are not expensive, and for the benefits to be derived from them. He hopes to repeat his experience with Akademie soon, in a new area of Germany.

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A Cautionary Tale of Two Organs in Venice

Peter Williams

Towards the end of June I was asked to travel to Venice to accompany a school choir in two concerts. Upon receiving the music list it became evident that no one had thought through the implications of trying to perform English Cathedral repertoire using Venetian organs! The list included Parry's *I was glad*, *O clap your hands* by Vaughan Williams and Vivaldi's *Gloria*, amongst many others.

The first concert was in the beautiful **Chiesa Santa Maria dei Miracoli** which, when we arrived to inspect the organ, was being used as a museum. After a lengthy discussion with the fierce lady guardian I managed to ascend the ancient wooden ladder and climb through the trapdoor to the gallery to see what our options would be.

I had been told that there was a two manual Viscount Jubileo available as well as a one manual and pedal pipe organ. After managing to power the Viscount up it soon became apparent that there would be no quick solution there – it had been mortally ill for some time and could only emit sickly groans!

The pipe organ turned out to be an early twentieth century romantic instrument by Annibale Pugina and Sons which had been restored in 2006. The firm was founded in Padua in 1810 and claimed to have patented pneumatic action. Like most Venetian organs there was a divided compass for most of the ranks. Reading from left to right the tab list was:

Ripieno		
Ottava		4
Dolce	(basso)	8
Dolce	(sopra)	
Principale	(basso)	8
Principale	(sopra)	
Subbasso		16
<i>Gamba</i>	(basso)	8
<i>Gamba</i>	(sopra)	
<i>Flauto</i>	(basso)	4
<i>Flauto</i>	(sopra)	
<i>Vox Angelica</i>	(T.C.)	

The ranks shown in *italics* were enclosed in a swell box. In addition there were four preset pistons and two cancel pistons either side. The

Chiesa San Pietro Di Castello

voicing of the principal chorus was quite forceful – the *Ripieno* mixture was particularly 'hair-parting'.

By dint of a certain amount of 'jiggery pokery' and the assistance of my forbearing wife, I managed Stanford's *Magnificat in B^b*, the whole of the Fauré *Requiem*, *Cantique de Jean Racine* and various other shorter items.

The second concert was in the old Cathedral **Chiesa San Pietro di Castello**. When we arrived to inspect this instrument we were welcomed and shown straight up. Of the two instruments this organ was the most interesting, although the hardest to manage, due to its nature and distant position from the visiting choir. It would have originally been used mostly in *alternatim* within the liturgy.

The instrument was built in 1754 by Pietro Nachini, originally Petar Nakić, a monk from Dalmatia which was a Venetian conquest. Nachini started an organ building school in Venice; this organ was described as his 'Opus 276'. The organ can be seen in the centre of the picture beneath the wonderful painted ceiling and above the high altar. Reaching it was another wooden ladder job!

The specification is typical of Italian organs of the period being built on an ascending *principale* ripieno with the

addition of some colouristic ranks on the side:

Principale Bassi	8
Principale Sopra	
Ottava	4
Quintadecima	2
Decimanona	1 ^{1/3}
Vigesimaseconda	1
Vigesimasesta	2/3
Vigesimanona	1/2
Trigesimaterza	1/3
Trigesimasesta	1/4

Colouristic Ranks – right hand stop column

Voce Umana (sopra)	8
Flauto in VIII (sopra)	4
Flauto in XII (sopra)	2 ^{2/3}
Cornetta Sopra	1 ^{3/5}
Tromboncini Bassi	8
Tromboncini Sopra	
<i>Contrabassi</i>	16
<i>Ottava di Contrabassi</i>	8
<i>Duodecima di Contrabassi</i>	5 ^{1/3}

The ranks shown in *italics* are Pedal stops. Only six notes were playable on the Pedals!



The Chairman's Event – Repton School Chapel

Saturday 12th September 2009 2.30pm

Six of the Best – an image to bring back memories for many members of schooldays punctuated by the occasional thrashing – a thought which leads me to one of those tangential connections which, rather disturbingly, seem to occur with greater frequency these days: Archbishop Michael Ramsey was not only an alumnus of Repton but also a headmaster of the 450 year old school, a headmaster with a reputation as a great flogger.

However, whatever memories members may have of their schooldays and floggings, they need not fear for their nether regions on Saturday, 12th September, when the 'Six of the Best' refers to British composers of organ music.

Peter Williams will present works by Sidney Campbell, John Stanley, Norman Cocker, William Wolstenholme, Edward Bairstow and Simon Preston, on the newly restored 1929 Harrison & Harrison organ in Repton School chapel.

As Head of Academic Music and Chapel Organist at Repton for many years, Peter is very familiar with the organ, the chapel and its somewhat dry acoustic, and is, perhaps, best placed to appreciate what changes have been made to the instrument.

The choice of Dr Sidney Campbell as the first composer is not a surprise: Peter was the first organ scholar at St George's, Windsor, working with Dr. Campbell for two years; Peter speaks of him with considerable affection.

Repton is best approached from the A38 via the B5008. Having driven through the Willington double roundabout you will eventually cross the causeway and approach the outskirts of Repton. The parish church spire is on the left; the school buildings begin to appear on the right. Parking for the chapel can be found between the sports hall (the first building on the right) and the chapel. As the school will be in session, this first parking area may be full. Further parking can be found near the parish church or by turning right at the mini roundabout and using the music school car park; a footpath leads to the chapel from there.



Specification

Great		Swell	
1	Double Geigen 16	14	Violin Diapason 8
2	Open Diapason Large 8	15	Lieblich Gedact 8
3	Open Diapason Small 8	16	Echo Gamba 8
4	Stopped Diapason 8	17	Voix Celestes 8
5	Hohl Flote 8	18	Gemshorn 4
6	Octave 4	19	Mixture III
7	Principal 4	20	Oboe 8
8	Octave Quint 2 ^{2/3}	21	Double Trumpet 16
9	Super Octave 2	22	Trumpet 8
10	Tierce 1 ^{3/5}	23	Clarion 4
11	Mixture III	24	Tremulant
12	Tromba 8		<i>Swell octave</i>
13	Octave Tromba 4		
	<i>Swell to Great</i>		
Pedal		Choir	
25	Open Wood 16	32	Harmonic Flute 8
26	Sub Bass 16	33	Viol d'Orchestre 8
27	Geigen (Great) 16	34	Concert Flute 4
28	Octave Wood 8	35	Orchestral Bassoon 16
29	Flute 8	36	Clarinet 8
30	Ophicleide 16	37	Tremulant
31	Trumpet (Swell) 16		
	<i>Swell to Pedal</i>		<i>Choir octave</i>
	<i>Choir to Pedal</i>		<i>Choir Octaves Only</i>
	<i>Great to Pedal</i>		<i>Swell to Choir</i>
			<i>Great Reeds to Choir</i>

At the end of the recital members may try the Chapel organ for themselves; refreshments will be available after this. The event will end at 4.45pm

Articles for the October edition of the *Newsletter* should reach me by Monday 21st September, either via e-mail: twes@fsmail.net or by post: Tony Westerman, 44 Beeley Close, Allestree, Derby, DE22 2PX. The Secretary, Mrs Siann Hurt can be reached via: mail@derbyorganists.co.uk
Please note that I shall be away for two weeks in September, though I hope to be able to access my e-mails during that period.
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