

Derby & District Organists' Association

Registered Charity No. 510567

Newsletter



Celebrating Louis Vierne (1870 - 1937)

The 150th anniversary of Louis Vierne's birth falls this year and the programme devised by Stephen Johns and Tom Corfield celebrated his music in magnificent style at St John's Church and Derby Cathedral in February. We had a practical workshop, led by David Cowan, a talk shared by Stephen and Tom, and in the evening, a recital given by Alexander Binns and Edward Turner.

Vierne's life spanned a golden period of French organ music and if time travel were possible, Tom Corfield would elect to visit Paris in 1900 when the memory of Franck was fresh and so many great composers were flourishing: Guilmant, Saint Saëns, Debussy, Ravel, Widor, Dubois, Dupré and so on. The stature of Vierne's organ compositions was every bit as worthy as the great works of the mainstream repertoire of orchestral and instrumental music. Stephen and Tom chose several CD extracts that left us in no doubt about this. The great monuments of Vierne's output were the *Six Symphonies*, *Vingt-quatre pièces en style libre*, *Op.31* and *Vingt-quatre pièces de fantaisie*.

Workshop

Our afternoon workshop focused on Op.31, the 24 pieces in 'free style'. David Cowan has studied and played extensively in France and was clearly a Vierne devotee and a lover of these works in particular. The 'free style' in the title identified these pieces as departing from the strictures of composition rules promoted by the Paris Conservatoire at the time. They are miniatures, extremely varied in style, form, mood and difficulty, but, in David's words, always "well crafted". In David's opinion they fulfilled the dictum that "perfection is achieved, not when there is nothing more to add, but when there is nothing left to take away." The score, set on two staves, is annotated for organ or harmonium, but Vierne frequently used them as recital pieces with pedals. (Vierne regarded the harmonium as "pitiful caricature of a pipe organ", so this annotation was probably a publishing ploy to broaden the market for sales.) The number of pieces, 24, is significant in that they employ all the major and minor keys. For the workshop, David, offered valuable insights in the performance of four of these pieces.

DDOA Events 2020

Saturday 14th March

Visit to organs in Repton, Newton Solney and Winhill. (See page 8)

Tuesday 28th April

Evening visit to St Edmund's, Allestree. (See page 8)

Saturday 13th June: Visit to Lincoln Cathedral and St Peter & St Paul Church, Lincoln.

Tuesday 7th July: Talk by Richard Brice. St Peter's Belper.

Monday 28th September: Seminar on 'Organ Practice' led by Dr Tom Corfield. St Matthew's, Darley Abbey.

Saturday 17th October: Association Lunch, Horsley Lodge.

Monday 16th November: AGM and Chairman's Evening.

Concerts & Recitals

Saturday 28th March, 7.30pm

St John's, Bridge St, Derby.
Derwent Singers directed by Richard Roddis with Tom Corfield, organ.
Laudes Organi - Kodaly, *The Twelve* - Walton, *Vast Ocean of Light* - Dove
Solo organ pieces. Tickets £12 or £10 in advance from www.derwentsingers.org.uk

Good Friday 10th April, 7.00pm

Derby Cathedral. *St John Passion* - Bach
Derby Cathedral Choir with Heart of England Orchestra, directed by Alex Binns.
Tickets £10 & £15 from 01332 202231 or www.ticketsource.co.uk/derbycathedralmusic

Saturday 18th April National Organ Day Event St Modwen's, Burton-upon-Trent 10.00am-1.00pm

See the organ, carillon and clock.
Opportunities to play and visit inside the organ. Children and adults welcome.
Refreshments available.

Photo: 'Vierne in Context' - Talk by Stephen Johns and Tom Corfield (Stephen reads the rules of improvisation by Marcel Dupré.)

Arabesque

(played by Suzanne Blagg)

The improvisory character of the melody probably takes its inspiration from the swirling patterns of visual art.

Phrasing: One should aim for a seamless legato, allowing the melody to breathe from time to time. There is much use of the whole tone scale which gives it a distinctive different character from major and minor keys.

Expression: With such complex rhythms it is not easy to find a 'motive force', so one must experiment to see what works; one strategy is to slow down in rising phrases, then more momentum on the way down (like a roller coaster?)



David Cowan as registration assistant to Andy

Cortège (played by Andy Storer)

A strongly chordal piece with the whole tone scale frequently creating augmented chords. These sort of chords have a less familiar feel than major and minor ones, so informal exercises are sometimes useful to gain confidence with them.

Registration: Expression is mainly achieved with sudden contrasts with reeds crashing on. Cavaillé-Coll organs with ventils made this very easy to achieve. If there are no registration aids, a registration assistant is necessary!

Articulation: Care needs to be taken over releasing keys. Staccato requires consistent shortening by a defined amount, usually to half length.

Élégie (played by Richard Brice)

Registration: Vierne was known to vary registration from one performance to another, so registration markings on the score may be treated flexibly as



Andy Storer, Laurence Rogers, David Cowan, Suzanne Blagg and Richard Brice

indications of general colouring. It is helpful to understand the difference between French and English traditions in combining stops; in general stops of similar pitch are more easily blended on Cavaillé-Coll organs than with English, whereupon greater care is needed here. Chromatic notes: The key signature has five flats, yet in some bars every note has an accidental. Careful planning is needed to achieve good legato; the left hand may be needed to assist the right hand and in general fingering needs to be planned for consistency. Also, it is important to focus on the release of notes so that rests do not suffer.

Carillon

(played by Laurence Rogers)

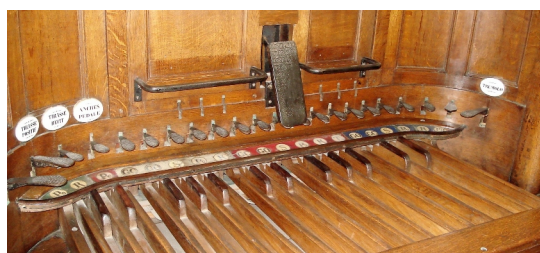
Unlike the others, this piece, based on chimes, demands a strict tempo. Like *Cortège* there are rapid registration changes which require an assistant if registration aids are absent. Full and vigorous use of the swell pedal is called for the terse *crescendi*, *diminuendi* and *subito* markings in the middle section. Although the score has only two staves, the big chords on the upper staff are better divided between the hands whilst the pedals hold the bass ostinato. The minim chords are another example of defined release, taking a quaver out of each, to achieve a consistent *marcato*. Vierne makes subtle contrasts between *legato* and *staccato* to achieve solo effects.

'Vierne in Context'

After tea and refreshments provided by Rosemary Corfield and Pam Storer, Stephen and Tom gave a talk which helped us understand the influences on Vierne's music. We learnt how at the very conservative Paris Conservatoire Vierne attended the group classes of César Franck. These predominantly concentrated on improvisation. Clues about the accepted approach to improvisation at the time come from a manual written later by Marcel Dupré which had at its heart a toolkit of structures and techniques which could be applied to any given theme or themes. After a very short period at the class, Franck died and was succeeded by Widor who pursued a contrasting agenda focusing mainly on repertoire. A student would be called upon to play a piece after which Widor would analyse the performance in minute detail. The other great formative influence on Vierne was access to instruments built by Aristide Cavaillé-Coll who towered above most



Vierne's console, preserved in Notre Dame, Paris



Close-up showing Cavaillé-Coll's ventils and couplers

other French organ builders in the 19th Century. His tonal and technical innovations made possible large instruments which could rival an orchestra in expressive ability. This was the sound world which gave birth to the great organ symphonies of Widor and Vierne.

Stephen spent some time setting the scene for the Second Symphonie which would feature in the evening recital. Here we learnt about the themes like *dramatis personae* which interact with each other within and across the five movements. Vierne's canvas is huge; his fertile imagination seems to know no bounds as he develops and augments themes and creates thrilling climaxes worthy of any romantic German symphony for orchestra.

Tom gave background to the *Pièces de fantaisie*, composed in four suites of six pieces between 1926 and 1927. The range of styles is amazing, from *Clair de lune*, every bit as impressionist as Debussy, to *Carillon de Westminster* (based on the famous chimes) in which each iteration of the theme becomes aggressively more chromatic. Perhaps the most bizarre is *Fantômes*, a surreal conversation between a number of spirit characters. What range! What colour! What imagination!

The range of Vierne's expressive abilities reflect the heights and depths of his inner life shaped by external circumstances. Born blind, an operation restored enough sight for him to get about, recognise people and read large print at very close range. During his life he suffered a fractured leg, marriage collapse, glaucoma, the death of a son and brother, a rift with his assistant Dupré, typhoid fever, depression and heart problems. He died during a recital at Notre Dame on 2nd June 1937.

Recital

The venue moved to Derby Cathedral in the evening for the final event of the day, a recital given by Alexander Binns and Edward Turner.

As Director of Music, Alex welcomed us to the cathedral and declared that, after Bach, Vierne was his next favourite organ composer, so clearly he was very happy to contribute to our celebration. He then gave us a virtuoso account of the Second Symphony. The performance of this massive work



Ed Turner and Alex Binns at Derby Cathedral

(45 minutes) was stunning. His command of registration gave a rich diet of contrasts and thrilling climaxes.

Symphony No.2 in E minor

1. Allegro risoluto
2. Choral
3. Scherzo
4. Cantabile
5. Final

It was then the turn of the Assistant Director of Music, Ed Turner, to beguile us with more Vierne magic:

From the 24 *Pièces de Fantaisie*

1. Fantômes
2. Clair de lune
3. Carillon de Westminster

The afternoon talk had given us a taste of the fantastic in *Fantômes*. By no means an easy piece to play, it was certainly challenging to the listener. (Shadows of Messiaen to come?) Vierne's chromatic and rhythmic imagination was unfettered. Ed must be congratulated on his mastery of the score. *Clair de lune* fulfilled that promise of dreamy impressionism. *Carillon de Westminster* brought us back to Earth for a while, but once again, Vierne's chromatic harmonies intensified as the piece progressed, paving the way for the triumphant final major chord - a fitting end to a brilliant recital and concluding a marvellously informative and interesting day.

Laurence Rogers

Members' News

We had the pleasure of meeting two newcomers at our Vierne Day event in February and are happy now to welcome them as members:

Andrew Cummings is Organist at St Peter's Church, Fairfield, Buxton.

Suzanne Blagg studies organ with Mary Cobbold.

Congratulations to our Secretary **Andy Storer** who recently gained his ARCO diploma. We have admired Andy's playing for many years, so we know this is justly deserved.



The Royal College of Organists is appealing to every building in the UK which houses an organ to open its doors on **18th April**, allowing people to hear and explore the wealth of organs, large and small.

St Modwen's, Burton-upon-Trent has organised this event:

The fine III+P Hill, Norman & Beard organ in the church of St Modwen

will be on display from **10.00am - 1.00pm** with opportunities to play the organ, visit the organ chamber and examine the one octave mini organ built by Ed Stow. There will be other CATO-related activities available, plus the opportunity to visit the carillon and the clock, should anyone be willing to climb the tower's spiral staircase.

This is an opportunity for children and adults to see the organ, carillon and clock in action.

Refreshments available.

DVD Review

The English Organ

The title of this DVD set conveys both all and nothing of its contents: It contains *all* you may wish to know about the history and development of English organs, whilst it implies *nothing* of the breadth and quantity of documentary and music within! Also, it is an understatement to describe its contents as 'superb in all respects'; playing, commentary, recording, filming, repertoire, locations, authority; one can wish for no more.

'The English Organ' boxed set from [Fugue State Films](#) contains four DVDs, three CDs and a 64-page colour booklet with full specifications and pictures of all the 33 organs featured in the audio-visual media. There are three documentaries (each 70 minutes) which trace the history and development of the organ and its music in England from 1550 to the present. The filmed performances feature repertoire from Byrd to the present and for each organ there is a filmed demonstration and evaluation of all the tonal resources. With only a little duplication, the CDs contain a generous amount of additional recordings within the repertoire.

Key to the superlative qualities of this production is the presenter and player for all the recordings and videos, Daniel Moulton. His engaging commentaries, interviews and demonstrations are buoyed along by his trademark enthusiasm. Already famous for both his playing and teaching skills, this publication cements his unassailable reputation as a leading musician in the organ world.



The titles of the three documentaries define the structure for the itinerary and repertoire:

1. The Long beginning
c1550 – 1855
2. The Victorian Boom
1855 – 1904
3. Modernity and Nostalgia
1908 – 2017

In each period the context and influence of historical events on the development of instruments and its music are inescapable; the Reformation, the Commonwealth, the Bach Awakening, Victorian civic pride, Choral traditions and so on; all had significance. These are addressed with great authority through interviews with experts such as Nicholas Thistlethwaite, William McVicker, Dominic Gwynn, to name just a few. Most impressive are the aural portraits that Daniel conjures for each organ. We all know in an organ crawl how beneficial it is when the resident organist shares their intimate knowledge of the qualities of the

instrument, these filmed portraits give us the organ-crawl experience *par excellence*! Here is a taste of the itinerary: Christ Church Spitalfields, Clare College Cambridge, St George's Hall Liverpool, St Bartholemew's Armley, Sydney Town Hall, Coventry Cathedral, Auckland Cathedral. There are 26 more! Finally, one must commend Daniel's superb playing of such a wide variety of instruments demanding a vast repertoire. It is a real bonus to hear pieces on instruments perfectly matched to their genre.



Daniel Moulton at St Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne

Audience: There is something for everyone in this production. Organ lovers everywhere will be thrilled with the performances. The documentaries and aural portraits are extremely informative and it is difficult not to be drawn in by Daniel Moulton's engaging manner, but much organ terminology is assumed, so practising organists will probably benefit most. For serious students of the organ, this production is an absolute must. I strongly commend it to members of our Association. If you have an imminent birthday, drop a hint around your family!

Laurence Rogers

Recent Events

800th Recital by Thomas Trotter at Symphony Hall, Birmingham

The fortnightly lunchtime organ recitals at Birmingham Town Hall and Symphony Hall are an institution for which the city can be justly proud. A fact to celebrate is that the post of City Organist was established as long ago as 1842 and the present incumbent, Thomas Trotter is only the fifth organist to hold the post. Furthermore, he has held it for 37 years. His longevity in the post follows the trend set by his predecessors with James Stimpson

at 44 years, C W Perkins 35 and GD Cunningham a mere 25 years. The latter was succeeded by his pupil, the renowned Dr George Thalben-Ball who held the post for 35 years. It is a cause of great celebration that in February Thomas gave his 800th recital. This was to a packed Symphony Hall replete with royalty, the Duke of Kent, the Lord Mayor and other local dignitaries.

As ever, Thomas's playing was immaculate and it was thrilling to be there in the audience. John Maxwell-Jones was also there and, at my request, has written a

fulsome account of the occasion. It is too good to abbreviate, so it will be published in the next Newsletter edition as space here is unfortunately limited.

Editor



Recent Events

George Thalben-Ball – organist extraordinaire

Some 25 members and guests of the Nottingham Association assembled in David Butterworth's music room at Halam on Saturday 18th January 2020 to hear Jonathan Rennert, Director of Music at St Michael's, Cornhill, London, give an illustrated talk on one of his heroes in the organ world, George Thalben-Ball (1896-1987).

Jonathan is well qualified as an expert on GTB (alias "The Doctor") having written his biography in 1979 at the age of 27 with Thalben-Ball overseeing and approving his efforts.¹ Contrary to the accepted belief, GTB was not an Australian although he was born in Sydney. His parents returned to England when he was four years old and he was based for his school years in Muswell Hill, London, where for a time he was a pupil for the famous concert organist G. D. Cunningham. Though today we see Thalben-Ball as an organ virtuoso, he initially concentrated on piano studies, entering the Royal College of Music at the age of 14. Aged 19, and still at the RCM, he played the solo part in Rachmaninoff's fiendishly difficult third piano concerto under the baton of one of his teachers, Sir Charles Stanford. However, he was increasingly drawn to a career in organ music (FRCO at the age of 18) and started off, professionally as assistant to Sir Henry Walford Davies at the Temple Church, London and succeeded him as *Organist and Director of Music* in 1923, a post he held for almost 60 years.

He combined his church playing with several additional posts, including conducting the BBC singers for the daily service, as organist to both Birmingham Town Hall and to the University and as curator of the Royal Albert Hall organ. As a player he was an unashamed performer in the W T Best, Virgil Fox and Carlo Curley style. As a composer, he was taught both by Stanford and Parry, and it shows. Moreover, he benefited from his association with Walford Davies. As Jonathan showed us, Thalben-Ball's famous "Elegy" owes quite a bit to Davies' "Solemn Melody", a coincidence that the latter composer was not in the least fussed about.

Jonathan concluded his talk by answering questions from the audience and encouraged members to reminisce. In answer to some of the enquiries:

- George Ball's middle name was "Thomas". He changed his surname name to "Thalben-Ball" by deed-poll in his twenties. Jonathan was unsure of the motivation and his conversation with GTB on the issue was unrewarding. "Thalben" was his mother's maiden name, according to Dr Google, and he might simply have wished to be known by something more memorable than plain "George Ball", or were, he to enter the Church, the name "Canon Ball" might provoke humour.
- He was married twice, in 1926 to Grace Chapman, a painter who bore him a son and a daughter, both now deceased. Neither pursued a career in music. After the death of his wife in 1961 he remarried, this time to an aspiring concert organist several years his junior. Jonathan chose not to enlarge much on this second marriage and its circumstances out of a commendable sensitivity to the lady concerned. Bearing in mind this sensitivity, I chose not to ask about Thalben-Ball's personal



vanity in his later years. Rumours persist about his liberal use of black hair-dye, or when supplies had run out, of *Cherry Blossom* boot polish!

- GTB left only a small number of compositions, the most famous being the "Elegy".² He composed some hymn tunes, now forgotten or seldom played. His "113 Variations on Hymn Tunes" was published posthumously in 2002 and remains in print. Please see Note 3 about his carol "Lullay Lord Jesus".

The afternoon concluded with tea and cakes, over which members continued to exchange their thoughts and opinions of this doyen of 20th century organists.

Notes

1. *George Thalben-Ball* by Jonathan Rennert (1979), published by David & Charles. Amazon has several second-hand copies available for about £7.00, including postage. See [here](#).
2. The British Library lists 39 "score entries" associated with GTB
3. Coincidentally I attended a service in Liverpool Cathedral last December and heard the choir perform Thalben-Ball's carol "Lullay Lord Jesus", a composition new to me, with strong hints of Stanford's choral writing. It definitely deserves a wider hearing. Listen to it performed by Lichfield Cathedral Choir [here](#).
You can see the first page of the score [here](#).
4. YouTube has several Thalben-Ball offerings. Some of my favourites:
 - (1) "Elegy", played on a first-rate Hauptwerk [organ](#)
 - (2) "Elegy", played by the man himself [here](#).
 - (3) "Ride of the Valkyries" (Wagner) played by GTB on the Alexandra Palace organ [here](#).
 - (4) GTB in 38 minutes of conversation with Barry Rose (1972) [here](#).

Alan Dronsfield

The St Andrews Organ Week had been highly recommended to me by fellow members of the DDOA.

Despite an advertised emphasis on French music for the 2019 week, the repertoire list was quite extensive and allowed me to choose some pieces by JS Bach, as well as others by F Couperin, Boëly and Tournemire.

I had initial concern over the practicalities of practising some of the French works, since the organ I usually practise on would not have the specification required for some of the later French pieces, however I was advised that most of the organs in St Andrews would have similar limitations, so I should not worry about this.

Furthermore, I was also glad of the advice from past participants that the repertoire list need not be rigidly adhered to, and that it was quite acceptable to take along other pieces not on the list should you want some specific help on these. Although this would be considered undesirable by the organisers, the tutors seemed more than happy to assist with any works you wished to play for them.

The repertoire list was split into 3 sections: Couperin's Organ Masses, the music of JS Bach, and French or French inspired music. We were asked to choose a piece from each section. Not being a rebellious sort, I stuck mainly to the list, and studied these pieces in advance:

Movements from *Messe pour les Paroisses* (F Couperin)

Fantasia in G (Piece d'Orgue)

Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland
BWV659

Caprice (LN Clerambault)

Allegro fugato Op.12 (APF Boëly)

Pièce terminale, and Offertoire
(C Tournemire)

Most of my free practice time from February onwards was devoted to these set works. I was keen to prepare them to the best of my ability to benefit most when working with the tutors. After all, it is their additional insights, advice and comments that you go for. I also enjoyed the structure that this gave to my practice time – it was like preparing for a concert or an exam.

The course itself was quite an expensive affair, especially if you took along a spouse as well, so I decided to register as a participant, but to sort out my own accommodation. Hence my husband, Derek, and I stayed on a nearby campsite for the week, and I was able to cycle in each day. We had good weather for the entire week, and Derek was able to explore many interesting things in the vicinity by bike while I participated in the organ activities. Derek then joined me in the evening for the various concerts.

Arriving in St Andrews at lunchtime on the Saturday, we erected our tent before cycling into the University in order to register. At this point I was introduced to the system of booking practice slots; there were 30 minute slots on several organs in the area, however they were in quite short supply! Slots were booked each evening for the next day's practice sessions.

The week's programme began on the Saturday evening with an extremely enjoyable concert in St Salvator's Chapel given by a very talented Baroque trio and mezzo-soprano. This rather gave us a flavour for the high standard of concerts that we were to expect for the coming week.

On the Sunday morning, we attended the Sunday service in the same chapel, at which we were treated to a Bach Cantata sung by the participants who had just completed the St Andrews Choral Course. After lunch, Christoph Mantoux, Professor of Organ at the Conservatoire Regional de Paris, spoke at length about the French organ tradition. After this, I was glad of my bike to get to my allotted practice slot at St Leonard's Chapel on time. Here I played a 2-manual instrument installed by J W Walker & Sons in 1994. This was nice to try, but it was a pity that I was not scheduled to have any of my lessons on it.

From Monday to Friday, lessons were organised with participants in groups of four on a different organ each morning. We stayed in these groups throughout the week. We each had a one hour lesson, but, with mutual agreement, other members of the group were able to

listen. I think you can learn a lot from someone else's lesson, even if it isn't concentrating on a piece that you are familiar with.

My first lesson on the Monday morning involved a bus journey through the local Haar (fog) to Dundee to play the 3-manual organ in St Paul's Cathedral, with Jo McHardy as my tutor. (Jo is currently the Director of Music at HM Chapel Royal, St James' Palace). I decided to play the Bach *Pièce d'Orgue* for this. Jo set quite a grand registration for me, and it sounded quite splendid in that building. It's quite a strange situation, however, having a lesson with a complete stranger, and they can pick up on all sorts of things that you were never aware of – in my case, my posture (left shoulder raised for no apparent reason!), and remembering to breathe! I felt quite nervous in the situation, but Jo was a real joy to work with, both encouraging, as well as giving some good advice on phrasing and interpretation. I listened to the other lessons that Jo gave that morning before returning to St Leonard's Church in St Andrews for my 30 minute slot on the 3m organ there. This was quite useful, as this was indeed one of the organs on which I would be receiving tuition later in the week.

Following my brief practice, I made my way over to the drop-in improvisation session being run by Christoph Mantoux at All Saints Church. This was very interesting; people with quite a spread of improvisational abilities were volunteering to have a go, and the advice was obviously quite varied.

Lastly, that afternoon, we listened to a very engaging talk given by Katelyn Emerson on practice techniques, injury prevention and performance confidence. Katelyn talked about how poor posture can lead to problems, which in her case had been tendinitis. She also stressed the importance of good preparation, including writing in fingering. She emphasised the importance of taking breaks, about concentrating on one small section, but then extending the section, and returning to it later, and how the human brain retains information. She gave some useful tips for performers who struggle to overcome nerves; she advised that

your thoughts should avoid anything negative but concentrate on the fact that everyone in the audience is supporting you and wants you to do well.

That evening we had a recital by Aude Heurtematte, Professor of Organ at the Conservatoire of Strasbourg, and titular organist of the historic Thierry/Clicquot organ at the church of Saint-Gervais et Saint Protais in Paris. (Members of the Couperin family presided here for a period of nearly two centuries). This was on the Hradetzky organ in St Salvator's chapel. The programme included the *Messe proper pour les Couvents* by F Couperin.

My Tuesday tuition took place at Kingsbarns Parish Church where my tutor was Steven McIntyre, currently Assistant Organist at St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral in Glasgow. Here I played on quite a small 2m Forster and Andrews organ. I chose the *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland* for this lesson, but also added a Bach F min prelude which wasn't on the list, as well as one of my Tournemire pieces. Again, I received comments on phrasing, and also on needing to show direction and the idea of moving forward in the first piece. However I also received the unusual comment of perhaps not including the Bach pieces in subsequent lessons since I already knew them very well! I took this as a compliment, but was really looking for different interpretations etc from the tutors.

Tuesday afternoon's speed practice was at Holy Trinity Church on the 3m Harrison and Harrison instrument where you climbed down onto the organ bench situated in a hole! I enjoyed my short session, and was looking forward to having a lesson here later in the week. For the rest of the afternoon, however, I went over to Jo McHardy's practical drop-in session at All Saints Church. This was a "free for all" session where you could discuss any practical issues you had. The group was talking about hymn playing and what can be done about certain tunes which are prone to congregations "dragging". The session turned into quite a lively affair with a group of us singing "Sing Hosanna" deliberately lagging behind, whilst Jo demonstrated some very skilful tricks to jolly us along.



The spectacular Hradetzky organ in St Salvator's Chapel

After this, it was over to St Salvator's chapel again for a masterclass on F Couperin; Aude Heurtematte gave a lengthy discourse on the artistic influences at the time. I would have liked more attention to the playing itself. However, the masterclass included some of the pieces that I had prepared, so this was beneficial.

That evening we were taken by coach to Leven for a concert in the Parish Church given by Anna Homenya (organ) and Andrew Lees (violin) entitled "Une Soirée au Salon". This started with the Bach's *Piece d'Orgue* and continued with a nice programme of 'house' music by Dubois, Fauré, Guilman, Pierné, Bonnal, and Lefébure-Wély. The church houses a Gern organ (1904).

Wednesday's tuition saw two groups gather together making eight of us with two tutors – Katelyn Emerson and Andrew Forbes. Here I played my Couperin piece. The stops available were not ideal, but we still found a very acceptable registration. Tutors offered some very useful detailed comments on ornamentation.

For the afternoon and evening sessions we travelled over to Edinburgh where we visited the Music Museum. Here we were treated to an enlightening, and very jovial talk and demonstration, given by the organist of St Giles Cathedral, on the chamber organ situated in the oval recital room in the museum. From here we went

on to hear about the vast collection of harpsichords, virginals and spinets, one or two of which some of our expert tutors were allowed to play for us. In the evening, Christoph Mantoux gave a concert of French music on the Rieger organ of St Giles Cathedral.

The best tuition session for me was on the Thursday morning with Henry Fairs on the Holy Trinity organ. Despite Steven's advice from earlier in the week about perhaps not needing to play the piece again, I did indeed play *Nun Komm, der Heiden Heiland* again, and I was glad I did. Henry was full of insight and understanding about the piece and was able to explain the significance of various motifs and "punctuation" within the piece – elements that I hadn't appreciated before, as well as suggesting alternative phrasing and ornamentation.

Later we had a talk by Christoph Mantoux explaining the French system of listing historic organs. He concluded by considering the digital future and the preservation of organs in this country.

Our final day had a different feel to it, as a number of us, including me, were to take part in the participants' concert in the afternoon. After my normal morning tuition, I had the opportunity to practise on the Hradetzky organ and had quite an entertaining session with Henry Fairs prior to the concert. Other participants were milling around while I was trying to concentrate on playing everything well. I was quite surprised when Henry started to rummage around in the pencils at the side of me, then starting to pull silly faces at me from the other side of the console! I started laughing but carried on playing. He was demonstrating his advice that I just needed to relax!

And so it was that I performed Bach's *Nun Komm* before all participants and tutors at the end of the course, thinking of Henry and the funny faces he'd been pulling and trying to relax and enjoy the piece. I was still extremely nervous, but I was happy with the performance, and for me it was a fitting end to a very enjoyable week in St Andrews.

Gillian Chatto

Forthcoming DDOA Meetings

Saturday 14th March 2020 **Visit to Organs South of the Trent**

We visit three historically interesting organs in three neighbouring villages just south of the River Trent. There is easy road access from the A50/A38 junction adjacent to Willington. In each case the church has a prominent spire in the centre of the village.

11am Repton

Meet at St Wystan's Church, Willington Road, Repton **DE65 6FH**. St Wystan's has a 2-manual, 23 stop mechanical action organ by Peter Collins, built in 1998. About half of the pipework is by Taylor of Leicester from the old organ.

12.30 Lunch

Arrangements for a local venue will be advised by Terry Bennett on the day.

2pm Newton Solney

Meet at St Mary's Church, Newton Solney **DE15 0SJ**. St Mary's organ is a 2-manual, 14 stop mechanical organ by Bevington of Soho, London, recently restored by MJ Thompson, Burton-on-Trent.

3.30pm Winshill

Meet at St Mark's Church, Church Hill Street, Winshill **DE15 0HS**. St Mark's has a 3-manual organ by JW Walker (possibly the last large organ he built before he died in 1870). This organ is of historical interest.



St Wystan's, Repton



St Mary's, Newton Solney



St Mark's, Winshill

Tuesday 28th April 2020, 7.00pm **Evening Visit to St Edmund's, Allestree,** **Derby DE22 2DZ**

There are two small organs to view: the Compton Miniatura, which lives in the church hall and the two manual 24 stop church organ by Wood of Huddersfield installed in 1977.

We shall start in the church Hall at **7pm** where it is hoped that David Redfern will be on hand to demonstrate the organ. The Miniatura was a small extension organ of two ranks, usually flute and diapason, from which a number of pitches are drawn.

At **7.35pm** we will transfer to the church to sample the Wood organ. This Neo Baroque instrument is capable of leading a full church and boasts a selection of mutations and mixtures and trumpet rank which extends to 16' on the pedal. There are 365 pipes over four ranks: Pedal Bourdon, Diapason, Stopped Flute and Trumpet.

Mike Thompson and Simon Tipping completed work on the organ last year, replacing old keyboards and reworking the stop layout and piston capture system. Two blowers were also moved out of the case for more accessible maintenance.



St Edmund's organ, Allestree

Items of news or articles for the May/June edition of the *Newsletter* should reach the Editor by **Monday 20th April**, either via e-mail: DDOAnews@gmail.com or by post: Dr Laurence Rogers, 24 St.David's Crescent, Coalville, Leicestershire LE67 4SS. The Secretary, Andy Storer, may be reached via mail@derbyorganists.co.uk. Please visit the DDOA Website www.derbyorganists.co.uk for information about Association activities, past editions of the newsletter, photo gallery and many special features of local interest.