

Derby & District Organists' Association

Registered Charity No. 510567

Newsletter



Early History of the Organ in Britain - Shameful or Glorious?

Readers may recall that the previous issue of the *Newsletter* featured a report on our visit to organs at Repton, Newton Solney and Winshill in the Trent Valley. This was a memorable visit for the quality and variety of the instruments we heard and played. In retrospect it must be even more memorable for the fact that being scheduled just two days before the national health emergency and consequent 'lockdown', it represented a 'normality' for organ visits that we had totally taken for granted; on that day we had no concept of a culture of 'social distancing' which has prevailed ever since. We constantly hear that the 'normality' that we have been used to will not return for a long while yet, and the 'new normal' will be very different from the old, but those differences have yet to be defined. We find ourselves living through an historic disruption to local, national and international life. Such events are not uncommon in history, the Derbyshire village of Eyam is famous for its social isolation as a means of fighting the Plague, but

in our own lifetime the experience is unprecedented.

Pondering on the history of the development of organs and its associated culture in Britain, one soon discovers disruptions that have caused organ building to stare in the face of extinction more than once. Whereas the existence of organs has been known since the Roman era, physical evidence in Britain does not exist before Tudor times and the earliest surviving playable instrument only dates back to 1704 (St Botolph's, Aldgate). Reflecting on our visit to St Wystan's Parish Church, Repton we learned that the new case for the rebuilt organ in 1998 "was inspired by the oldest known in Britain, the c.1540 case at Old Radnor in Wales" (photo). Organist, Terry Bennett, laments that funds at the time did not allow the protruding towers to be imitated, but is nevertheless highly gratified that such a handsome case was achieved, even to the point of including four embossed pipes imitating its precursor. Comparing the images of Repton and Old Radnor, the inspiration is clear to see.

DDOA Events 2020

Tuesday 7th July: Talk by Richard Brice. St Peter's Belper. **POSTPONED to 2021**

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

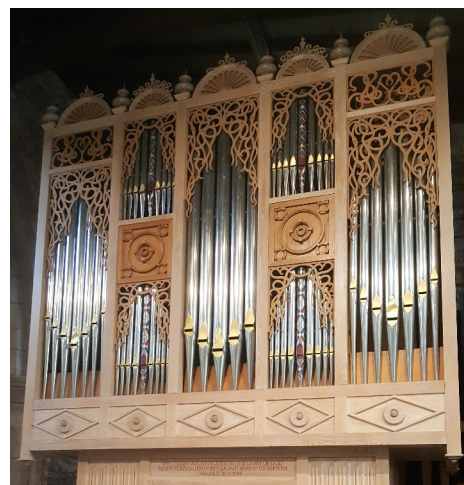
Tom writes:

Yes, practice makes perfect, but how do we practise? How can we use what time and opportunities we have to maximum advantage? These are vital questions for all of us who are players, but unfortunately there are no easy answers. There are no methods that can be universally applied; there are no routines that will fit every situation. Practice is essentially problem-solving and that will vary from one piece to the next, from one occasion to the next, and of course from one person to another. Perhaps though there are some underlying principles which can help us and perhaps there are certain specific techniques that people might find useful. **The meeting offers a chance to explore the topic together and to pool ideas.** I hope that we will all come away with some thoughts about how we can practise more effectively.

Saturday 17th October: Association Lunch, Horsley Lodge.

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

IAO Midlands Organ Day planned for September has been **postponed to 2021**.



Above: The 1998 Peter Collins Organ at St Wystan's Parish Church, Repton

Main photo: c.1540 organ case at St Stephen's, Old Radnor, Wales, considered to be the oldest organ case in Britain.



The Wetheringsett Organ (Goetze & Gwynn, 2001)

Recently, on revisiting *The English Organ (TEO)* DVDs, I was reminded that the Old Radnor case (in Wales) is where Daniel Moulton begins his odyssey in search of the origins of the 'English' organ. The origin of the case is unclear, but scholars are confident that it dates from the reign of Henry VIII. What is certain is that it was sensitively restored in 1872 under the supervision of Revd. Frederick Sutton, an ardent advocate of gothic organ design, and a brand new organ by J.W.Walker installed within. We can only guess about the original contents of the case but the discoveries of the remains of a 16th century soundboard at Wetheringsett, Suffolk in 1977 have given vital clues about a Tudor organ: 46 notes and 7 stops. On the basis of this fragmentary physical evidence, Goetze and Gwynn have built a modern reconstruction, the Wetheringsett Organ, and recordings on this by Moulton feature in the *TEO* DVD set. The modest size of this organ, thought to be typical of instruments in the period, reflects its limited role in the liturgy of the time. In huge contrast to what we have become familiar in modern usage in parish churches and cathedrals, the organ was rarely an accompanying instrument. Nicholas Thistlethwaite has described the musical demands of pre-reformation services in which the role of the organ was to alternate with singers rather than to accompany verses of psalms. There

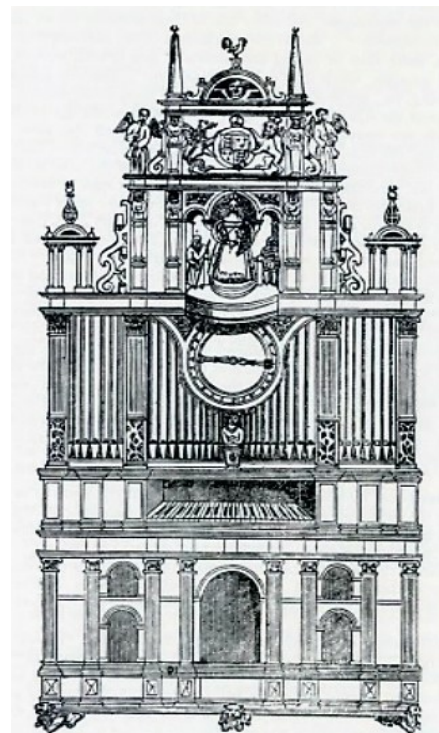
might be occasional solo organ items. For the congregation the Catholic mass was conducted 'on their behalf' and excluded direct participation.

The significance of these factors was that the organ of the period was never a large instrument. When the Reformation came along, aimed at shedding the Catholic past, organs were banished, or perhaps considered to be too small to be worth saving. The suppression of monasteries intensified the destruction of many cultural artefacts. Thus for organs there was a great disruption and break from the past. Development of its technology and culture came to an abrupt end and no organs were made in Britain between 1560 and 1590. This was in tragic contrast with the vibrant and innovative organ building culture on the continent which developed to fulfil the increasing status of the organ as a symbol of wealth amongst competing cities and ruling dynasties. When eventually organs came back into favour, the most successful builder was Thomas Dallam who, amongst several prestigious commissions, built organs for Kings College Cambridge, Worcester Cathedral, Tewkesbury Abbey and most famously an organ for Sultan Mehmet III in 1599. The latter was a gift from Elizabeth I to the new ruler of the Turkish Ottoman Empire, presumably oiling the wheels towards a new trade deal for spices.

It transpired that Thomas Dallam headed a dynasty of organ builders with son Robert and grandson Thomas II, but catastrophe struck the organ business again when Oliver Cromwell's troops got to work smashing organs in churches up



The 'Milton' organ at Tewkesbury Abbey, built by Thomas Dallam in 1631 originally for Magdalen College Oxford. Having been much altered down the ages, only the case is Dallam's.



Thomas Dallam's organ, commissioned by Elizabeth I as a gift to Sultan Mehmet III, was essentially a clockwork driven barrel organ, equipped with a keyboard, a clock and miscellaneous mechanical animations. Standing sixteen feet high, the oak case is carved, painted and gilded. The organ can be played manually and the clockwork can play five songs. The 24 hour clock shows the Sun's position and the phases of the Moon. On the hour the instrument would give a performance as follows: Trumpeters play - Queen Elizabeth raises her sceptre - Planets revolve around the Queen - Bells play a four part melody - Birds sing and flutter in a holly bush - A talking head tells the time.

and down the country during and after the Civil War (1649-60). Puritans regarded organs as idolatrous; unaccompanied singing of metrical psalms was the only music allowed during Cromwell's rule. The Dallam's response was to flee to Brittany where there was plenty of money still to be made building organs. Come the Restoration of the Monarchy and the reign of Charles II, Robert returned to England and took full advantage of the national mood to get back to 1642, as if the interim had never happened. Charles II, having spent time during exile at Versailles, brought back a Baroque influence to popular fashion. Unsurprisingly, the organs that Robert Dallam built on his return contained the sounds of French reeds and mutations. Thus the momentum for building organs was re-established paving the way to the prolific era of the 18th century with builders Renatus Harris (a grandson of Thomas Dallam), 'Father Smith' and others in great



The Renatus Harris organ of 1704 at St Botolph, Aldgate, London, considered to be England's oldest surviving playable church organ. Although there are older pipes and cases, this is the oldest collection of pipes in their original positions on their original wind chests. In the Victorian era it experienced additions first by Hill and later by Bishop, but these were removed in 2006 by Goetze & Gwynn to restore it to its original disposition.

demand, and the outpouring of those glorious cornet voluntaries by Stanley *et al.* As well as fulfilling the needs of churches, organs were frequently installed in music rooms, theatres and pleasure gardens that sprang up in this period. As music making found a wider audience, it became a major cultural and social activity, attracting musicians and composers from all over Europe, most notably Handel and J.C.Bach. The 18th century became a golden age for music in England.

Returning to the starting point of our story, it is sad that the loss of historical instruments wrought by the turbulence of the Reformation and Civil War has deprived us of physical connection with our early organ history, but we can marvel at the revival of organ building and its development when national life became more stable. However, by the beginning of the 19th century, English organs were still considerably smaller than their continental counterparts, and notably lacked pedals. This was forced to change with the discovery of Bach's organ

music, pioneered by Samuel Wesley, amplified by Mendelssohn's visits to Britain and promoted through the ventures of Gauntlet and Hill. (See *Bach in England*, Newsletter 75 November 2019). The Bach awakening, had a profound effect on the course of organ building, laying the foundations of the form of instruments we inherit today. The development of organs in the Victorian era and beyond into the 20th century deserves more than one further article. In the meantime I strongly recommend investing in *The English Organ* DVD set in which Daniel Moulton tells the complete story with ample demonstrations on historic and contemporary instruments.

Laurence Rogers

Acknowledgement

Many ideas for this article were inspired by Daniel Moulton's commentary in *The English Organ* published by [Fugue State Films](#). The DVDs include interviews with historical experts Nicholas Thistlethwaite and Paul Binski.

Letters to the Editor

From Peter Gould:

I was sorry to learn about the death of Bill Attenborough. He was extremely supportive of me, my family and the music and organ at the cathedral generally and took many organ photos of churches around the country including the major cathedrals and, I think, the Royal Albert Hall. He was a lovely man and always had time to chat.

I was very pleased to hear about the box organ project for the cathedral. Ed Stow was very gracious in loaning us his house organ which was used for many services and concerts in my time. I only had two regrets, one that it wasn't in tune with either cathedral organ (though visiting orchestras appreciated the sharper pitch for playing with). The other was the fact that it was just the right size for leaving the collection plate on during services!

You were lucky in getting in the last event before the lock-down. I was in New Zealand at the time and managed to give an organ recital in Wellington Cathedral just before they closed everything up. It was the only place in New Zealand that I have given two recitals. The first

time in 1983 was on the pipe organ. Since the earthquake there, which ruined the pipe organ, they have installed (temporarily, I hope) a four-manual Viscount organ. It has every sound that you would expect from such a large electronic organ but the acoustic of that very large building is probably bigger than St Paul's Cathedral and I found I had to play everything rather slower in order to get clarity of the textures! I was pleased to have the pleasure of being the final player in such an impressive building before they also closed all of their churches.

I'm sure that we all look forward to being allowed to re-enter our church buildings again for worship and I, along with all of you I'm sure, really missed the music and ceremonies of Holy Week and Easter. Whilst I was enforced into an extended quarantine in NZ I did compose an organ choral prelude on the Easter Hymn (which I dedicated to Tom Corfield) but will have to wait until 2021 now before performing it. I was so pleased to eventually return to England (11 days late) and have my own Viscount house organ which I bought about three years ago to play on again.

Best wishes to you all for a more productive end of the year.

Peter



Peter Gould at Wellington Cathedral

From Adrian Bonsall:

Adrian has informed us that his father's music and CD collection which was to be available free for people to choose from in April at 10 Park Road, Duffield, has been postponed until the present emergency situation is over.

From Alistair Johnston:

I am currently researching the organ builder Roger Yates and would like to get hold of pictures of his organ at Kegworth Parish Church. Can anyone help, please? johnston.aj@gmail.com

Bristol & District Organists' Association

The Barkaway Legacy Remembered

It was the last day of April when Ruth Barkaway passed away, aged 93. She was well known to many of our members as an inveterate attender of choral and organ concerts in the Derby area and frequently at the Cathedral. A charming and principled lady, she had an engaging personality that would never fail to pique your interest or bring a smile to your face. Her intelligence, broad interests and bubbling enthusiasm could keep you in conversation for hours. Beyond her passion for music, in which the organ played a major part, her enduring quality was concern for people's well-being. By profession a nurse, she had many and varied insights into the human condition, physical and spiritual, and many have benefited from her wise counsel. Sadly, in these lockdown times, many friends were prevented from honouring her passing in church, nevertheless the private family funeral fulfilled her wish to 'go out' to Widor's *Toccata*, albeit rendered from a CD.

Ruth and her late husband, John, came to Derby from Essex in 1961 and lost no time in involving themselves in the local community. By profession John was a manager for the Courtaulds textiles company, but also a keen and accomplished amateur organist; he was soon recruited to the DDOA committee. By 1966 he was elected Chairman. Our member David Johnson remembers John with great affection, recalling his calm businesslike conduct of affairs. He was brilliant at raising expectations of what can be achieved and rallying support for



John and Ruth Barkaway

colleagues; in short, a great persuader. Incidentally, he personally donated the medal of office which has been worn by successive Chairmen of the Association. As his successor at Melbourne Parish Church, I enjoyed not only John's affirmation of my musical activities there, but also his tremendous encouragement, loyalty and practical support for them. Not least, it was John who persuaded me to join the DDOA!

Ruth and John were absolutely devoted to each other, and shared an enduring *joie de vivre* encompassing a passion for church music. May they rest in peace. They are survived by three daughters, grand children and great grand children.

Laurence Rogers

Will your organ be ready for you when you return?

Until the relaxation of Government rules on 13th June, organists have been effectively restricted to practising at home – which is good enough to keep fingers moving, if not feet (unless you are lucky enough to have access to a pedalboard). However – what about

our instruments – what practice are they having? Leather can become stiff, joints and pivots can seize, and oil can creep from the bearing surfaces leading to potential problems – especially as our churches have probably had no heating whilst closed.

The Church of England official guidance on the matter does acknowledge, both for bells and organs, that maintenance may be necessary to ensure that the instruments remain playable in readiness for when services resume. For someone like me with a small and relatively recent organ, it may be sufficient to switch the blower on and play every note on every stop once or twice and exercise any swell shutters every couple of months. However, from both a personal and mechanical point of view, now that full-blown practice is allowed, this is far more satisfactory.

Details of the current C of E guidance are to be found at this [website](#).

Specifically, there are rules about the conditions of access and the need to maintain necessary hygiene and social distancing precautions:

Organists must get permission to enter the building from the incumbent or Church Warden, and their access must be coordinated with those responsible for cleaning. If the organist will be on their own in the building then a lone working assessment should be done. An example [can be found online](#).

The information on the webpage is regularly updated, so by the time you read this note it is worth checking the latest version.

David Henshaw

The Amazing Career of Samuel Corbett (1852-1924) - David Johnson

During the enforced isolation of the last few weeks, I have re-read the research I did on behalf of a colleague who worked as Music Officer for the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB), the object of which was to gain an insight into the number of blind and visually-impaired organists in the British Isles. To date I have managed to track down over three hundred such people, going back to the 1820s. One of these was Organist of All Saints, Derby, now

Derby Cathedral, 1886-1892, whose name was Samuel Corbett.

Samuel was born on 29th January 1852 in Wellington, Shropshire, and he lost his sight at the tender age of three months. Several years later he spent seven years at the Birmingham Royal Institute for the Blind where he was a pupil of James Simpson, the Organist of Birmingham Town Hall (and also Sir G.A. Macfarren and James Coward). During this time he gained the LTCL Diploma, I assume in organ playing.

In 1867, aged 15, he was appointed Organist and Choirmaster of Wellington Parish Church (Shropshire), and during this tenure he gained his ARCO in 1871 and FRCO the following year.

In 1873 he moved to London to become Organist at St Andrew's, Tavistock Place, but quickly moved on to an appointment at St Mary's, Bridgnorth (1875). Whilst in this post he gained from Cambridge University his Mus.Bac (1876) and D.Mus (1878). For his D.Mus exam

he memorised Handel's *Israel in Egypt* in six weeks! He was the first blind Mus.Bac at Cambridge, and was only twenty four years of age at the time. (In those days music degrees were taken externally, non-residentially, since there were no full-time faculties for this subject until, I think, the 1940s.)

He served at Derby for the six years mentioned above, and then at Holy Trinity, Bournemouth, a post he held until 1897. Some wrote of him that "He has trained

choirs, conducted concerts and frequently played the whole of such works as *Messiah*, *Israel in Egypt*, *Elijah*, etc.

From 1905 to 1912 he was Professor of Music at the Royal Midland Institute for the Blind in Nottingham, during which time he devised his own music notation system (similar to Braille), but it was never used outside the city. From 1905-8 he was at St Andrew's, Nottingham, and finally at Bottesford from 1908-12. He was a Freemason and held the title

of Past Provincial Grand Organist of Royal Arch Chapter of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. He died in February 1924 at Parkestone in Dorset, survived by three sons who each became distinguished musicians in their own right; therein lies another fascinating story.

Having worked occasionally for the RNIB, I am very conscious that those who are blind or visually-impaired rarely consider it a burden, and just get on with things – perhaps a lesson for us all!

David S. Johnson

Some Musings on YouTube Offerings - Peter Williams

By the time that this is published the events of Holy Week and Easter will be rather distant. Having churches shut, especially at this time, was horribly strange. There was little broadcast musical consolation although the Easter offering from King's College, Cambridge, was beautiful as was the technically adept broadcast of Easter motets by *Tenebrae*.

So, Margaret and I turned to *YouTube* and found a wonderful performance of Bach's *St John Passion*, BWV 245, by the Netherlands Bach Society conducted by Jos Van Veldhoven in the Grote Kerk at Naarden. This Society is approaching its centenary and is dedicated to recording and releasing all of Bach's compositions. Much information can be found on its website. This recording was made on March 11th, 2017 with masterclasses and auditions being held beforehand. We found this performance immensely satisfying. All the singers and most of the instrumentalists were under 35, with solo parts drawn from the small vocal ensemble of 16. Van Veldhoven used a system of *favoriti* and *ripieni* singers to achieve contrast by allotting the more florid of Bach's passages to solo singers. The whole performance was beautifully shaped with arias well sung and with a dramatic, affecting, Evangelist in Raphael Höhn. The instrumental ensemble, led by Shunske Sato, who has now succeeded Van Veldhoven as Director, was wonderfully clear with many attractive timbres.

Well that was Good Friday. We enjoyed it so much that the next day we watched their performance of the *Matthew Passion*, BWV 244 with similar rapt enjoyment. Van Veldhoven explained: "It all started in 1921 with the plan to perform Bach's *St Matthew Passion* in the Grote Kerk in Naarden.



The Netherlands Bach Society perform *St Matthew Passion*

It was deliberately decided to perform it in a church with a smaller group, as a counterpart to Willem Mengelberg's performances in the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam. The ensemble still performs the *St Matthew Passion* in the Grote Kerk in Naarden every year." Van Veldhoven's approach comes up from the 17th century rather than travelling back from the 19th. So, there are a number of continuo instruments: organs, harpsichords and a theorbo with an ensemble using 18th century instruments, or copies, which give a clear and transparent sound.

In the *St Matthew Passion* Bach arranges his forces into *Coro I* and *Coro II*. These terms include both singers and instrumentalists. Van Veldhoven arranged them with a clear divide using a larger vocal ensemble of soloists, the *favoriti*, favoured by Schütz, and *ripieni* for *Coro I* whilst *Coro II* is a solo quartet. In the middle he placed 6 choristers from the Kampen Boys Choir who sing the *cantus firmus* "O Lamm Gottes unschuldig" in the opening movement. The solo quartet of *Coro II* is not necessarily softer than *Coro I* as it is placed in

the front whilst the singers of *Coro I* stand behind their instrumentalists. It all works wonderfully well with the *Christus*, Andreas Wolf, appearing to be a similar age to Jesus when he was arrested.

There are other performances of these two Passions available on *YouTube* but some are in concert halls and Nicholas Harnoncourt's performance with the *Vienna Concentus Musicus* and the *Tolzer Knabenchor*, has a disconnect between the excellent boy soloists and the mature voices of Kurt Equiluz, (Evangelist), and Robert Holl, (Jesus). Harnoncourt's direction is electric and insightful as always and it is wonderful to hear the boys of the *Tolzer Knabenchor* but, for me, Kurt Equiluz and Robert Holl, whilst they are great singers, are just too old!

The Netherlands Bach Society have released other Bach works including the *Easter Oratorio*, BWV 249, Cantatas BWV 140 and BWV 29, the *Magnificat*, BWV 243, an exciting *Mass in b*, BWV 232, as well as several of Bach's instrumental compositions. *To be continued*.

Peter Williams

Why Learn the Organ? - Mary Cobbold

Receiving this contribution from our member Mary Cobbold, it hit a nerve to read

"Organ playing, in short, is an elitist pastime...."

For a number of years some of us have maybe harboured this thought from time to time, but have been fearful of its potential truth and to express it as baldly as this. Below, Mary summarises her research amongst her pupils and the ensuing discussion with her colleagues as RCO Accredited Teachers. It conjures a rather dispiriting picture. Is it really as bleak as this?

As part of a recent online meeting, I was asked to lead a discussion on why people take up organ playing. I sent the following to over a dozen of my pupils, past pupils and organist friends:

I wonder if you will be so kind as to respond to a quick question:

I have to lead an online discussion on "Why learn the Organ?", for the RCO Northern Accredited Teachers and I hope you will not mind giving me a brief response to that question and that you will be able to find time to do that.

What inspired you to learn the organ in the first place?

Your response will remain anonymous of course.

This resulted in some really interesting responses and lively discussion at the meeting. When I was inspired to learn, I had easy access to an organ as a child of the Vicarage. I hoped to follow in Gillian Weir's footsteps and/or become the first female cathedral Organist! I worked to gain my FRCO with these, or rather only slightly less lofty goals in mind.

Nowadays, it seems, organ pupils are interested primarily in as large an organ and acoustic they can gain access to and, of course, the repertoire. Church and religion are of little or no interest to them. Organ playing has become even more the preserve of the privately educated (with access to a school chapel organ), cathedral choristers and those with sufficient wealth to afford an organ for their home, costing as much as a high-end car.

Organ playing, in short, is an elitist pastime, unavailable to the vast majority of young people from modest and poorer backgrounds.

Access to an instrument on which to practise is not easy to acquire and there are often restrictions imposed by Safeguarding regulations and the requirement for the building to be silent during the day. Paid organist posts are becoming increasingly rare and organ music at ceremonies such as weddings and funerals is, in my experience, often limited to hymns only, in favour of recorded music for the entrance and exit. Voluntarys at Sunday services are mostly drowned out by congregational chatter - the idea that the music might actually be listened to is an alien concept in the age of piped (sorry!) muzak everywhere we go. I am required to play "to cover up the noise"!

Does organ playing, especially of pipe organs have a future in any but the largest churches and cathedrals? Is it to become a purely solitary pastime in the home? How can we hope to pass on the joy of organ playing and the marvellous repertoire to the next generations if they never hear an organ? Many of my respondents mentioned their first experience of hearing the organ played well in a building with splendid acoustic. The best stop on the organ is so often the building after all.

It would be very interesting to obtain some feedback/responses to my italicised question above. I have been asked to extend this project in the interests of 'market research' and it would be especially useful to know what inspired any pupils of DDOA members to begin playing.

I do hope this is helpful and some of this may spark some interesting debate.

Mary Cobbold

Please give serious consideration to Mary's request for responses. Send your thoughts or comments on any issues raised here to the Editor at DDOAnews@gmail.com.

In recent years it seems that more and more obstacles have been stacking up against the uptake of organ studies; the decline in church attendance and church choirs, the strictures of safeguarding procedures, the attitude of some

churches towards the organ, to name a few. As a counterblast, the responses of some of Mary's pupils are a cause for celebration:

♦ "I think playing an organ for a service, as nerve-wracking as it is, is an amazing privilege. I don't think there are many even professional musicians who get to perform in public every single week without fail. What a wonderful opportunity not only to produce music, be useful to the community, improve your own skills and have a real reason to practise."

♦ "Learning the organ has been an extremely rewarding experience for me. It is a brilliant instrument to play, and has introduced me to a vast amount of new repertoire and composers that I have come to love. Most importantly to me, it has been very satisfying to see my improvement at the organ, and learning pieces that had previously been far too difficult is very fulfilling. For me, the organ provides a more stimulating mental challenge than the piano. Learning the organ has also helped me improve as a musician in other aspects, such as greatly helping with my sight reading (which has been beneficial for the piano and choral singing). I would recommend the organ to any interested pianist."

♦ "Why learn the organ? - Because it's a life-long skill. Because it is a dying art. Because, it is a more exciting version of the piano. Because if you can afford to learn the organ, it is a key which opens doors to a different world; the same world that we associate with Hogwarts, Oxbridge and unfortunately, the Houses of Parliament. Because being able to play the organ broadens prospects and perspectives. Because it's very difficult and near impossible if you aren't from an independent school and aren't born male; because, quietly, you can be the anomaly in this. Because every time someone asks to meet the organ scholar, they already have. Because more people who learn the organ, from the widest range of backgrounds, will create a mindset of perseverance, inclusivity and vision which are indisputably essential for the survival of both the English choral tradition and the Church itself. Because it's fun. Because it's worship. After all considered, I would ask; "why not learn the organ?"."

Lockdown Stories

From Margaret Eades

I have found that despite missing the human contact of attending church services and other social occasions and the pleasure and satisfaction that comes with it, there have been plenty of other occupations at home that have kept me very busy! I have enjoyed the extra time I have had in the garden, watching the Spring growth and have loved the beauty of the flowering plants and noticed things about the garden that I have never seen before!

Reading, walking, yoga and house clearing out and tidying have been other occupations! I managed to unearth a diary which I kept when I was fifteen/sixteen from the late 1950s, and it has revealed an almost forgotten past, and many events at that time, including what it was like when preparing for GCEs and doing Associated Board exams!

I remember the organs I used to play then, a two manual Abbot & Smith at the local chapel and my first organ playing job playing a one-manual hand-blown instrument which a lady in the congregation used to pump for me as I played! I used to cycle

around, and often travelled from my native Newcastle through the Tyne Tunnel to Jarrow to play at Christ Church, which had a three manual Binns instrument. On one occasion, I visited St Mary's, Tyne Dock and played the famous Schultz organ which later in 1980 was transferred to Ellesmere College. Another time, for Grade 8, I played the then newly restored organ by Harrison & Harrison, which was originally a Binns instrument at St Thomas the Martyr organ in Newcastle.

Later, as a music student at Nottingham University, I was very lucky to meet Dr William Sumner, who took an interest in me and encouraged me with my playing. As a result of his introductions, I met Conrad Eden, who gave me the chance to play Durham Cathedral organ, also the chance to play St Paul's Cathedral, during one of the Willis tuning sessions, and the Goll instrument at Lucerne Cathedral.

Back to the present, I feel so grateful to have my Allen digital organ to use, and have spent some time practising the Vierne *24 Pieces in Free Style*, inspired by the DDOA meeting in February! I have loved the emotional appeal and beauty in the chromatic harmonies expressing the grief in the composer's tragic life. There are a few pieces which will

make good service voluntaries for church use and I look forward to using them in this context.

I have also enjoyed and was moved by listening to some streamed services online, including the Walsingham Shrine where a solo priest expertly sang unaccompanied the Roman liturgy, and St Peter's Rome on Easter Day, when a choir of eight men, suitably spaced with a distant organ accompaniment together with the Pope and other clergy and the sparse congregation of Vatican officials equally distantly spaced, celebrating the liturgy in as festive manner as possible!

Although, we shall all be relieved when this difficult time is over, for so many lucky people, of which I am one, the time has given us a chance to reflect on what are the most important things in life. Also I have become more familiar with new technology and realized its growing significance in everyday living. The fact that has struck me most however, is that we are all very dependent on others helping us and the goodwill so many people have shown when we need it, and the time has given us an opportunity to see this in action!

Margaret Eades

Arrangement of Bach for Organ - Stephen Johns

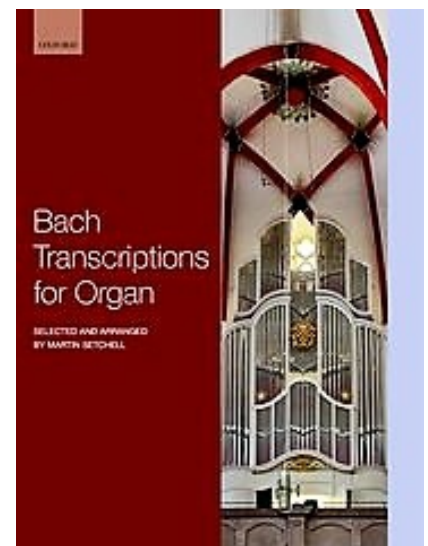
I can vividly remember the first time I heard the Widor *Toccata* – I expect that is true for many of us – in the Colston Hall Bristol when I was about 10 years old and of course I was bowled over. But another item in the programme, given by a local organist Herbert Byard, was, in retrospect, of equal but rather different significance: the *Prelude and Liebestod* from Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*. In the 1950s playing arrangements of orchestral music at recitals was common but it was to suffer a steep decline by the 1970s when such practices were frowned upon by organ purists. However, as we all know, the last 20 years or so have seen a much more liberal approach and members may remember the recent interesting session with Robert Gower on the

process of arranging for organ, not to mention the frequent use of arrangements in professional recitals.

All this preamble is occasioned by my recent purchase of a book of arrangements of movements from Bach's vocal and instrumental output by Martin Setchell, published by OUP. I recommend it as it contains such pieces as the *Badinerie* from *Orchestral Suite no 2*, the final chorus from the *St Matthew Passion*, the 2nd Movement of the *Double Violin Concerto*, and the real reason I bought it, a transcription of the *Overture to Cantata 29 (Wir danken dir)* which, if you do not know it, is a stunning 'Molto Allegro'. Dupré's version of this is on YouTube but personally I'm now 'digitally challenged' so my pace is more moderate. Bach was, of course, a keen re-cycler of his own and others'

music; in this case a movement from his *Violin Partita in E*.

I first came across this piece in an album of Bach 'transcriptions'

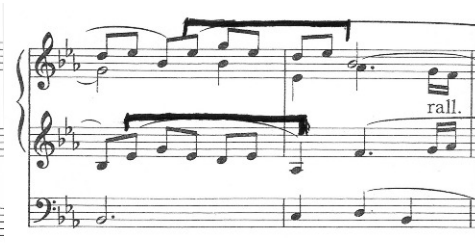




Ex.1. *Cantata 29* arr. Grace



Ex.2. *Cantata 29* arr. Setchell



Ex.5. *Bist du bei mir* arr. Grace

– a term open to many interpretations – by Harvey Grace (1874-1944) published by OUP in 1928. Some of you may know and love his wonderfully opinionated book, *The Complete Organist*, and may well play some of the work. So it was Grace's arrangement rather than Setchell's that I first knew and played. After a time I became dissatisfied with it, partly I must confess, because some portions had me twisted in knots. I bought a miniature score of the piece hoping I might make some 'adjustments' but to no avail – Bach was as unforgiving as Grace. Part of the arranger's problem is that the original is actually an organ concerto-like movement in which the player only has to play the semiquaver right hand part, plus a bit of continuo filling in with the left hand, leaving the orchestra to do the rest. The modern arranger has to marry up both parts of the score.

A couple of extracts will help to illustrate this. In bars 34/35 Bach uses strings to sustain the harmony and Grace reflects this (Ex.1) in the left hand part. Setchell by contrast (Ex.2) simply continues with the texture of previous bars ignoring the sustained chords. The reason for this might be that the dangers with Grace's approach is that the sustained chords, whilst effective on

orchestral strings may clog the texture on an organ. There are several other instances in the piece. Overall Grace seems to try and incorporate as much detail as he can whereas Setchell is more interested in comfort for the player and maintaining the open vitality of the texture.

We can see more radical divergence between the two with adaptations of the *Sinfonia* of *Cantata 156* which is itself another version of the Slow Movement from the *F minor Harpsichord Concerto*. Setchell ingeniously uses both Bach's examples in his extended arrangement but I am leaving that aside. He maintains Bach's basic texture (Ex.3) of florid Oboe solo with string chords. Grace (Ex.4) by contrast, moves the melody to the tenor register and, in an even more radical stroke, totally reorganises the accompaniment with his own contrapuntal 'weavings' – a step too far?

Both Grace and Setchell provide prefaces to their editions explaining some of their thinking which is very helpful and in this instance Grace maintains that simple accompanimental chords (pizz. in the original) are 'so ineffective on the organ that I have dared to re-write in a more suitable idiom'. At least he's honest and his attitude is

not untypical of those of the time but one only has to play Setchell to hear that there is no such problem.

Grace produced a second volume in 1934 which includes the version of *Nun danket alle Gott* that is still current and works well. Some of the pieces are hair-raisingly difficult and one wonders if the average 1930s' organists possessed a technique far in advance of what we know today or was it just that they played at far slower speeds? Finally, my favourite piece from this collection is *Bist du bei mir* which I have played for years, especially at weddings. If you seek it on YouTube you will see it is still popular in multiple arrangements. Here again (Ex.5) Grace decides to do his own thing introducing some 'clever' imitation of the melody in the accompaniment which is out of keeping with Bach's style, but I rather admire the ingenuity. The piece, which appeared in Bach's *Notebook for Anna Magdalena* is not actually his but is by G H Stözel.

Do try Setchell's [volume](#): it is full of lovely well arranged music, some of which I have not come across in any version before, and don't give up on Harvey Grace; he was providing a valuable service to the players of his time.

Stephen Johns



Ex.3. *Cantata 156* arr. Setchell



Ex.4. *Cantata 156* arr. Grace

Items of news or articles for the September/October edition of the *Newsletter* should reach the Editor by **Monday 24th August**, 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.