

Derby & District Organists' Association

Registered Charity No. 510567

Newsletter



Renovation, Restoration, Rebuild

It is a slight paradox that in these uncertain times associated with Brexit and declining church congregations the national appetite for organ building and restoration has been sustained, and, according to Paul Hale, growing; the demand for his services as an organ consultant has increased to the extent that he decided to retire from his prestigious post as Rector Chori at Southwell Minster to devote himself full time to consultancy. In his recent Zoom presentation to the Nottingham and District Society of Organists, he declared that he loves this role and is amply fulfilled by the "creative joy of bringing organ projects into being".

As well as being recognised as a superb musician and recitalist, Paul's enthusiasm for all things 'organ' is well known. Two years ago he attended one of our CATO children's workshops and charmed us all with his spontaneous participation in the activities. His prolific writings in organ literature are models of communication, and the NDSO event was a wonderful

opportunity to tap into his encyclopædic knowledge of organ building and restoration projects. In his presentation lasting 90 minutes, Paul described in fascinating detail five organ projects of diverse character: restoration projects for three large parish churches, one for a country church previously without a pipe organ and a new-build project for a public school chapel. You can still access the YouTube recordings of the event on the NDSO website. <https://nottsorganists.org.uk/events>.

The restoration project for **St Peter's Collegiate Church, Wolverhampton**, after 20 years gestation, was completed last year. The original Father Willis 3-manual instrument of 1860 had suffered a disastrous rebuild in 1970 by Willis IV resulting in a ruined tonal scheme. Subsequent amateur attempts at improvement by switching ranks of pipes etc. simply made its situation worse, so that by 2000, its ability to accompany a large choir as well as providing a solo instrument was severely

DDOA Events 2021

Monday 2nd August at 7.30pm

Please note change of date

Talk by Richard Brice. 'Music of René Becker' St Peter's Belper. (See page 8)

Saturday 25th September

Visit to Lincoln Cathedral and St Peter & St Paul Church, Lincoln.

Saturday 23rd October

Association Annual Lunch

Monday 22nd November

AGM

Concerts & Recitals

Wednesday Lunchtime Recitals

12.30 - 1.10pm

at St Modwen's, Burton-upon-Trent

7th July Ben Mills (London)

14th July Matthew Gibson (London)

1st Sept. Alexander Binns (Derby)

8th Sept. Cathy Lamb (Lichfield)

15th Sept. Mary Cobbold (Sheffield)

22nd Sept. John Keys (Nottingham)

29th Sept. Martyn Rawles (Lichfield)

Friday 9th July 1.00 - 1.45pm

at Derby Cathedral. Free entry. [Booking](#)

Recital by Christopher Ouvry-Johns (Leicester Cathedral)

Derby Cathedral Summer Recitals

Wednesdays 7.45pm Admission £10

Celebrating Vienne Symphonies

21st July Edward Turner (Derby)

28th July Peter Wright (London)

4th August Simon Hogan (London)

11th August Jeremy Lloyd (Rochester)

18th August Francesca Massey (Rochester)

25th August Alexander Binns (Derby)

Your Newsletter

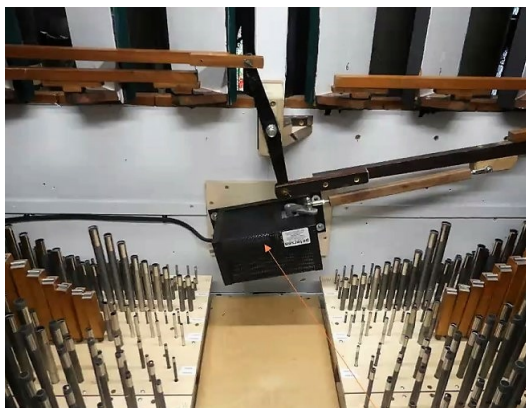


The costs of producing and distributing the paper copy has increased in the past year to £3 per issue. In a year this now exceeds the annual subscription! The committee would like to hear members' views on a method of covering the cost which is fair to all members, many of whom receive only the pdf copy via email. Please address your views to the Editor.

Photo: The 1860 Father Willis case above the chancel arch at St Peter's Collegiate Church, Wolverhampton. Restored by Michael Farley 2020. Photo by Paul Hale.



Facade pipes restored



The Peterson electric Swell engine, controlling shutters to the right and left in opposite directions.



Declining to sit on the red cushion, Paul inspects progress. Michael Farley relaxes with a coffee.

compromised. On Paul's advice a scheme to restore Father Willis characteristics involved completely new soundboards for the three manual divisions and a brand new detached console. Working on a tight budget, the soundboards and console, each containing modern electric action, were manufactured to a high spec. by Renatus and the organ building work was carried out by Michael Farley of Devon. A nice feature of the stop jams was the retention of the Willis curvy labels for each division. The lavishly decorated case front pipes were beautifully restored by 'Bob the Gilder' a well-known craftsman in the trade. For the spec, see [here](#).

The story of a similar size 3-manual organ at **St John's, Ranmoor, Sheffield** contained a history of more responsible stewardship beginning in 1888 with one of the best organs of the local builder, Brindley and Foster. A Tuba and electric action were added in 1911. A substantial rebuild by Nicholsons took place in 1963 followed in 1989 by many further additions, including a 32ft reed according to a scheme designed by Roger Fisher and executed by David Wells. This was the instrument that DDOA members experienced in their 2013 visit to Sheffield. The

Nicholson detached console on the opposite side of the chancel from the organ was comfortable to play, apart from the extremely stiff Swell expression pedal which used a direct mechanical coupling through a tunnel under the sanctuary floor and involved a mechanism with several levers within the organ. In Paul's recent restoration scheme this was easily solved with a *Peterson* modern electric shutter machine. However there were several more subtle challenges; the tonal balance between the Choir speaking into the nave and the Great facing the chancel was considered unsatisfactory, calling for revoicing; the church's heating system had caused splits in soundboards and wind trucks; this turned out to be the result of completely collapsed lagging of heating pipes passing through the chamber. Tuning had always been a problem and seemed to be related to wind pressure. This was tracked down to the absence of a pressure regulation device between the blower and the bellows; Such a device is needed to maintain a steady pressure as demand for wind varies with the number of notes being played. For the specification, see [here](#).

Compared with the previous examples, the organ project at **St**

Martin's, Barcheston, Warwickshire presented Paul with a very different challenge indeed. In this case, the tiny country church had no pipe organ at all, just a rather old harmonium, but happily became the beneficiary of a former house organ gifted by the educationalist and former Director of Music at St Mary's, Warwick, Geoffrey Holroyde. The principal challenge was where to place the 2-manual and pedals, 32-stop instrument in such a small environment. The solution was to create two slim cases to accommodate the two manual divisions on either side of the west window. A design was commissioned from Kenneth Tickell, and in the event, sadly, this was to be his last, as he died three weeks later. The cases were made by Penny's Mill of Great Bedwyn, Wiltshire and the organ was built and installed by Groves and Son (Jonathan Wallace) of Nottingham. The south case contains the Great and Pedal; the north case contains the Swell and built-in console. Each case contains its own small electric blower. The thirty speaking stops, judiciously derived from twelve ranks of pipes using the extension principle. The lowest pitch ranks are produced digitally, due to the lack of space for large



St John's, Ranmoor. Beautiful spotted metal pipes in the chancel painted horrible grey to match the décor.



Organ builder Andrew Carter at the Nicholson console.



Unlagged heating pipes detrimentally close to reed pipes!

pipes. The result is an amazingly colourful tonal scheme despite the limited available space. The full specification can be found [here](#).



Geoffrey Holroyde's former house organ



Kenneth Tickell's design concept for Barcheston



Completed Barcheston installation

The Editor is grateful to Paul Hale for permission to reproduce images from his presentation.

The project at **St Margaret's, Olton, Solihull** took Paul back to his roots in that, as a teenager learning the organ at Solihull School, he would accompany the choir of St Margaret's for choral evensongs where he became familiar with the canon of Anglican service settings. He also learnt something of the inside workings of the organ which was frequently going wrong. He would later understand that the organ had suffered at the hands of an incompetent organ builder who implemented a poor quality electrification in the 1960s of the original 1900 'solid' 3-manual Norman and Beard. Moving forward to 2020, the time was ripe for a 'root and branch' rebuild and Paul was invited to advise a remedial scheme. Apart from the unsatisfactory condition of the inner workings, the organ suffered the familiar problem of inadequate egress of sound into the nave. Thus a major feature of a revised layout in the chamber involved a new chest for the Great diapason chorus with the ranks of pipes pointing west. The Tromba and Trombone reed ranks would similarly point westward through the aisle arch. The Swell box would be easternmost and turned through 90 degrees to also face west. The Choir chest would be behind the chancel case. With a fair amount of borrowing between divisions, the restored organ now has 44 speaking stops which includes a generous assortment of reeds; Clarinet, Oboe, Horn, Bassoon, Tromba and Trombone. The full specification can be viewed [here](#). The work by Groves & Son (Jonathan Wallace) is nearly complete and the opening recital by Paul is planned for 2nd October.

How wonderful it must be to have a congregation that sings so lustily that you need a larger organ to accompany them! This seems to be the situation at **Radley College, Oxfordshire**, the independent boys school. At one time its chapel had a 5-manual organ by Telford of Dublin in a western gallery. Then with school expansion in the 1930s, the gallery space was needed for additional seating so the organ was relocated by Rushworth & Draper into a newly created chamber on the north side of the chapel adjacent to the gallery. Come 1980, the fashion for a neo-classical tonal scheme took hold and a new 3-manual organ was



Olton: New Great Diapason chests speaking through the western arch. The upper chest shows the Tromba pipes also pointing west.



Work in progress at St Margaret's, Olton.

commissioned from Hill, Norman and Beard (HNB), repeat with en chamade Trumpet pipes. Curiously, at this time builders were experimenting with aluminium tracker rods, lightness being the quality that could promise lighter keyboard touch. The Radley instrument has this feature. In the fullness of time it was found that the accumulation of dust and the wearing of needle bearings had the opposite effect, so this was a short-lived innovation and modern practice has reverted to the use of wood. As we entered the new millennium it was becoming clear that the neo-classical voicing was not best suited for leading singing and by 2017 the college had further expansion plans; an eastward extension to the chapel and even more lusty singers would certainly render the organ inadequate. Its replacement by a new instrument had to be part of the school's development plan. Paul showed us in intricate detail how a new mechanical action organ would be built in the old position on the gallery but with electro-pneumatic action for the pedal division which

would be sited in the existing organ chamber. The £1.1M contract was awarded to Nicholsons and the manufacturing process is in full swing in their Malvern factory. The specification can be found [here](#).

Finally, looking to the future, Paul indicated that he expected to fly out to **Christchurch, New Zealand** in one year's time to advise on the restoration of the organ in the cathedral. Ten years on from the earthquake, much of the city has been rebuilt, but the cathedral ruin remains at its heart. It has taken all that time for authorities to agree on a strategy for the cathedral's future. Meanwhile, the organ, undamaged by the earthquake, has been open to the elements and the ravages of pigeons and rats. Paul promises to tell us all about it on his return! In the meantime he concluded his action-packed presentation to a chorus of virtual applause.

Laurence Rogers

Recent Events

Organ Recitals at St Modwen's, Burton-upon-Trent

June 2nd turned out to be a very good day, the sun was shining and the first of this year's recitals at St Modwen's, Burton took place. The recitalist was Ben Bloor, formerly organ scholar of Derby Cathedral, now Organist at Brompton Oratory in London. Ben's programme consisted of two Bach pieces, *Fantasia and fugue in g minor BWV542*, *Trio super "Her Jesu Christ, dich zu uns wend"* BWV655, *"Choral Varié sur Veni Creator"* by Duruflé, three of the *Six studies in Canonic Form* by Schumann and the *Overture to St Paul* by Mendelssohn.

Overall it was a well chosen programme with confident performances of the Bach, a particularly enjoyable performance of the Duruflé, which Ben played a little slower than some performers, and brought out things I had not heard in the music previously. I can't say that I have previously enjoyed the Schumann, but Ben's rendition revealed its hidden depths. For the climax of the recital, Ben's playing of the Mendelssohn was magnificent.

If you are free on Wednesday lunchtimes until 14th July and from 1st to 29th September between 12:30 and 13:10, the remainder of the series (see page 1) will take place and your journey to Burton will be well-rewarded.

Denis Littleton



The former 1980 Hill, Norman and Beard organ in Radley College Chapel, before the chapel extension.



The new main organ for the gallery, taking shape in Nicholson's factory.

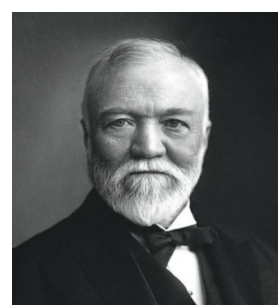
Some Reflections on Andrew Carnegie

Recently, many of the Carnegie archives have been scanned and are accessible on line. Everyone knows that Andrew Carnegie, the Scottish-American philanthropist, donated libraries but it is not so well-known that he donated organs to churches - the extent of this I don't think has ever been appreciated. For example, Dunfermline Abbey received £1000 in the early 20th century when a good organ could be had for double figures!

What we have are several account books referring to organ donations. Book I contains 149 pages and each page has 26 entries. It has taken me over a month to enter the details for 25 pages onto a spreadsheet; others are doing the same and hopefully when the task is finished there will be an easily searchable electronic list of all the organs for which the grants were in Sterling - about a third of the total, the rest being in dollars and mainly for the USA.

Sometimes the organs are alphabetically listed, sometimes chronologically. Occasionally a church is named but more often the town and denomination are all that is given; "Glasgow UF" or "Sunderland PM" not being especially helpful in tracking down an organ! Other information given is the date the donation was agreed, the date it was paid and the name of the "Applicant" (usually the incumbent).

Transcribing the information is not as easy as might seem to be: finding towns or villages which have been misspelt or have disappeared, particularly in the case of new churches which have gone as a result of slum clearance schemes; wondering which of several similarly-named villages or towns is meant; and to complicate matters further, Wales is always referred to as England and the



Andrew Carnegie 1835-1919

spellings of the time make it hard to find some of the Welsh villages.

We believe that all the donations date from around the start of the 20th century. Carnegie's grants are always half, i.e. match-funding, except educational institutions where full cost was the order of the day. Generally the grant was for the organ, but I suspect that sometimes it was for the purchase and setting-up of a second-hand organ and sometimes for repair or rebuilding.

NPOR can flesh out the details in about one out of every ten cases so that leaves a huge number of unknown organs. It must be remembered that NPOR is very largely the work of you and me reporting details of organs and, if you know NPOR to be wrong, or come across an instrument not in NPOR I would encourage you to submit the details.

Whilst many grants cover tiny organs in Chapels and Churches of all denominations, I have found some surprises: the old organ (Willis) at St Salvator's Chapel in St Andrews University was paid for entirely by Carnegie and in 1908, half the cost (£500) of the organ rebuild in Lichfield Cathedral came from Carnegie.

Richard Brice

Recent Events

CATO Video Presentation at The Organ Show

The previous *Newsletter* carried a report on the week-long online transmissions of *The Organ Show* sponsored by the Royal College of Organists in April. The Monday evening transmission was intended to feature activities of associations affiliated to the IAO, but had to be curtailed due to technical problems. The result was that our DDOA video was not aired during the transmission but was made available as a later download from the RCO website.

We later received a letter from the IAO Chairman, Prof. David Saint, addressed to our members apologising for and explaining the technical problems. His letter concluded with some very complimentary comments about our CATO project reproduced here.



Click on this image to view our video.

"Your own video has had 88 views at the time of writing and I was very impressed with your programme of events designed to stimulate children's interest in the organ – the CATO project. The point that many children do not go to church and so do not have any experience of the organ is so true. I was captivated by the instrument from the age of four when my mother started to take me to church and we would sit with a full view of the organ gallery. I can still remember the whole sequence of the organist disappearing at ground-floor level, appearing in the gallery, turning on the light, then the motor, opening a hymnbook, putting it on the music desk and pulling out those 'things' before, finally, playing. And then those sounds....

I ramble but only to explain why I think you are doing such good work. Your workshops sound as though they're full of variety and the fact that you've involved so many schools is evidence of your own success. I do congratulate you.

In case you haven't seen the other videos, you can find them at:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLGwC96XjFK60cH_uUyqB-rzJOYVw9T1Om

Please encourage your members to take a look and I hope you'll be able to use your video for your own purposes too.

The Organ Show was a very complicated project organised by volunteers, many of whom had not attempted anything like this before. I know that everyone involved worked extremely hard and has learned a lot from it. Overall, the Organ Shows have been extremely successful in reaching out to many thousands of viewers across the world and, hopefully, giving them an insight into what we all love about the instrument in its many different forms and expressions... and raising their interest in getting more involved.

I am proud that we have been able to be a part of it and I know that the RCO have already started planning for next year's International Organ Day which will be on 23 April 2022. I hope that further details will be released soon so that we can begin planning our involvement."

With all good wishes,

David Saint

IAO Chair

Book Review

Organ Works by John Norman

For many organ lovers John Norman is a highly regarded elder statesman in the world of organ building. His regular lucid articles in *Organists Review* confirm not only his flowing pen but also his wide and intimate knowledge of the art and craft of the business. It is no surprise therefore that his latest and probably most significant publication, *Organ Works* is authoritative, comprehensive and makes very enjoyable reading. This volume of 274 pages sums up a lifetime of experience and understanding and is produced to an exemplary high standard, lavishly illustrated with coloured photographs and clear line drawings, many of which John has taken or drawn himself. It is not an encyclopædia fettered with every intricate detail, but takes you on a journey which confirms many things you perhaps knew already but which also allows you to probe new corners and discover many nuances.

Crucially, this book is brilliant at putting things into context, and although inevitably it is necessary to use much organ-specific terminology, it is done gently, and terms are introduced and explained as required. John draws you in with anecdotes and snippets of fascinating interest borne of many years at the front line in the trade. But he is an artist too and clearly understands not only the history of the development of the organ, but also the cultural, artistic and changing musical tastes that influenced that development.

John was born into an organ building family and learnt to play the organ at a young age, but went on to achieve academic qualification with a physics degree. It was natural perhaps that he would follow his father, Herbert Norman, into the business that flourished in the post-WW2 days, so from the outset, he learnt his craft from the shop floor. His early experience included over thirty new instruments and work on the organs in Gloucester Cathedral and the Royal college of Organists. His latter career has been as an

organ consultant, and in this capacity he has advised on many prestigious organ projects including the organs in Worcester Cathedral and the Palace of Westminster.

Is this book for you? Almost certainly. If you are a student, its seventeen chapters will introduce you to all the major concepts of organ structure and design. If you are an old-hand, you will thoroughly enjoy the ride, a mixture of familiarity, discovery and enlightenment. If you like pictures, there are plenty. You will learn how the organ is unique among musical instruments, changing its characteristics in every generation. It is an instrument of extremes in loudness and pitch. Read about innovations that have come and gone, how builders have imitated each other, get to the bottom of scaling and voicing.

This is 'must have' book. At £45, it costs less than a tank of petrol, but if you can't afford that, persuade your family (as I did) to buy it for your birthday. [BIOS bookshop](#).

Laurence Rogers

Farewell to notable musicians

Malcolm Goldring 1949-2021

Malcolm was not an organist - he originally trained as an oboist - but his name may be familiar to readers because of his long association with the Sitwell Singers. His death, after a short and aggressive illness, came as a shock and sadness to many.

He had a distinguished background in music and musical education, which included a spell as Assistant Principal of the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. About twenty years ago he settled in Leicestershire, where he was active as an independent education consultant, an examiner for the Associated Board and a conductor of choirs and orchestras. He took on the Sitwell Singers in 2008.

He made an impression in so many ways. His rehearsals were amazing for their meticulous planning. He knew exactly which part of each piece he was going to rehearse and for how long. He was equally conscientious in his preparation of scores. Every detail was thought through and marked up. And yet his rehearsals were never dry. For all his love of precision and his insistence on the highest standards, he was unfailingly good-humoured (with a gift for mimicry that enlivened



many sessions) and he was always encouraging. He made people working for him feel valued and he brought out the very best in them. Playing the organ under his direction has been one of the most rewarding musical experiences of my life.

The repertoire of the Sitwell Singers with Malcolm was wide and included much contemporary music. On a few occasions the choir sang music by the Czech-born Antonín Tučapský, who was himself present at one of the performances. In a more relaxed vein, Malcolm had a particular fondness for the music of Bob Chilcott, from whom he

commissioned a piece to mark the choir's fiftieth anniversary. Chilcott himself came to conduct the first performance, which was part of a concert in Derby Cathedral. It is impossible to mention all the memorable occasions, but for some the highlight of his time as conductor was Monteverdi's Vespers with the combined Sitwell and Derwent Singers (again in the Cathedral).

Malcolm strove for blend and this was an impressive feature of the choir. Although there were fine soloists in the ranks, individual voices never obtruded. But perhaps the most important thing to stress is the musicality of his interpretations. Every phrase was lovingly and appropriately shaped and nothing was ever routine. His Fauré Requiem (planned, as always with Malcolm, in every detail) was quite simply the loveliest reading of the work that I have ever encountered.

Countless musicians and music-lovers throughout the country have reason to be grateful to Malcolm and it is wonderful that we in Derby had the benefit of his talents for a time. The Sitwell Singers have lost an inspiring leader and a great friend.

Tom Corfield

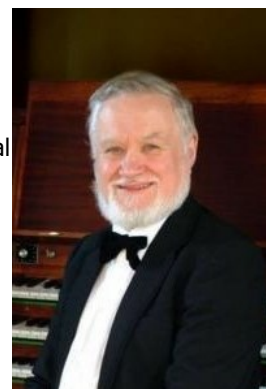
Professor John Morehen 1942-2021

John Morehen was well known and respected in Nottinghamshire, and indeed nationally, as a musician with many facets, not least as an organist. He served for a period on the committee of the Nottingham and District Society of Organists and held the office of President for a year. That was the year that he organised a memorable trip to the Grand Temple of the Freemason's Hall in London to see and play the magnificently gilded organ there. At the time he was Grand Organist of the United Grand Lodge of England, but he held many leading positions in both local and national organisations; Conductor of the Nottingham Bach Society, President of the Nottingham Harmonic Society, Master of the Worshipful Company of Musicians, Fellowship Director of the Guild of Church Musicians. David Butterworth, who has been a good friend of John since their student days at Cambridge, speaks admiringly of John's loyalty to the causes he espoused, his wit and humanity. The latter pointed him to the role of magistrate on the Nottingham bench. Is was in academia that he won national recognition as a specialist in early music, in particular editing performing scores of Tudor choral music for O.U.P. In his career at the University of Nottingham he was elevated to the Chair of the Music Department. After retirement in 2002 John remained active on many fronts, always having a full diary. He touched many lives and will be missed, but he leaves an admirable legacy.



Roger Fisher 1936-2021

Roger Fisher was appointed Organist and Master of the Choristers at Chester Cathedral in 1967, a post which he held for 29 years. There he was known as "The mighty atom", a title which reflected his energy and absolute commitment to the highest standards in playing and singing. As a player he made many BBC broadcasts and numerous recordings which enjoyed world-wide sales and in latter years have been reissued as CDs. He was frequently sought as an adviser on organ projects, and as such I first encountered him when we rebuilt the organ at Melbourne Parish Church in 1979. He was full of ideas but had a very practical outlook with plenty of common sense. He gave a brilliant opening recital for the completed organ. In 2009 he visited St Oswald's, Ashbourne, to give an organ workshop for our members. I am sure that Gillian, Denis, Tom and others can remember the experience. He will be remembered as a great musician and great teacher.



Laurence Rogers

Member's letter

Margaret Eades raises some interesting issues in her May 2021 contribution about canned music at funerals. As someone who has been both organist and priest I have some thoughts.

Margaret is well known as a professional and obliging musician and churchwoman. I applaud her wish to contribute to the spiritual ambience of a good send-off or wedding. But unfortunately, not every organist is as accomplished as Margaret. When I was curate in a rural team ministry there was one village where the resident organist was – words fail me – dire and woeful are inadequate. There was the occasional hint of a tune in the right hand, but the left simply played random notes in random rhythms with no discernible relationship to what the right hand was doing. Feet were not used, thankfully. Any attempt to give her the old heave-ho would have been politically disastrous for she was related to more than half the village. In one of my incumbencies

I inherited an organist who had once been good, but now in his 80s, was no longer. There was no sense of rhythm, no sense of musical discipline, and as to the pedals, why depress one note when with one foot judiciously placed one can depress two. He simply did not listen to what he was doing. The fee at that time was £70 and I was truly embarrassed asking families to pay this when in truth the organist should have paid them. I solved the problem PDQ by asking someone else to play.

Weddings and funerals to my mind are family occasions and the family's wants and needs are paramount. If they want to bring a CD player and play their own "music" – fine. If the organist wanted to resign over it – and one threatened to do so – I would have let him go, and I told him so. Speaking as an organist myself, I found weddings particularly tiresome: another Saturday ruined for the sake of (in those days) twenty quid, Sing hosanna and All things bright and beautiful. I dare say things are different in churches

with decent musical traditions (there are some left, I gather).

It's worth pointing out that in law for weddings and funerals neither the church nor the musicians have the right to charge for "optional extras" such as music. It has even been suggested in the church press that a family or diocesan official should prosecute those clergy and/or musicians who flout this.

In truth, it's hardly worth doing anything about it. For most people who are not regular churchgoers, why have a funeral or wedding in a cold, damp building that is hard to get into and may come with clergy and musicians who impose restrictions, when you can be at the warm crem or stately home and have more or less what you want?

I admire musicians like Margaret who have standards and give of their best no matter what. That's the best way of encouraging people to use live music and musicians. We reap what we sow. Garbage in, garbage out.

Stanley Monkhouse FRCO

Miniature organs - Laurence Rogers

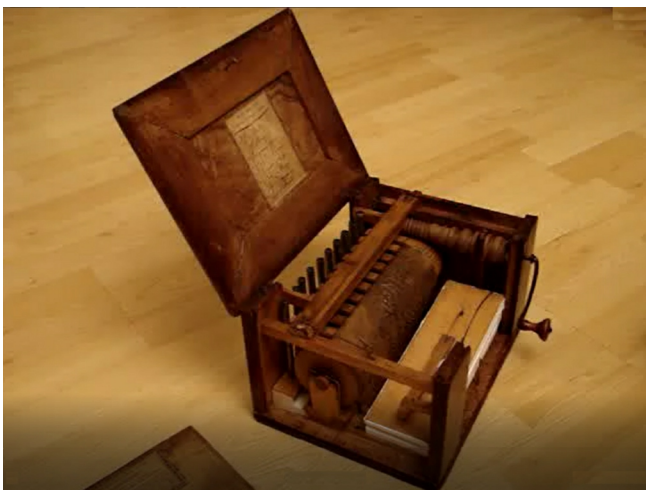
Serinette

In our CATO workshops we show children our 'mini organ' for demonstrating how bellows, keys and pallets are organised to enable pipes to sound. 'Mini' implies a small version of the real organ, but recently I discovered what one might call a 'micro' organ. It is actually called a 'serinette' and is built inside a wooden box with a base about the size of a sheet of A4 paper. It has a rank of ten pipes which play at the pitch of a

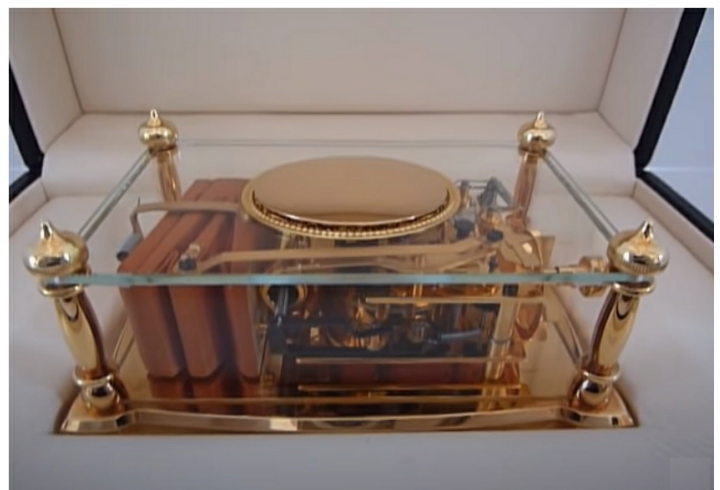
2ft piccolo stop and the tone is not unlike that stop. It has a tiny set of bellows which are operated by turning a crank handle. The same handle also causes a drum to rotate in the manner of a barrel organ or musical box; the drum has a series of brass pins which define the tune to be played. Presumably the pins cause pallets to open and close, controlling the air flow to different pipes. The horizontal position of the drum can be adjusted to engage alternate sets of pins offering a selection of different tunes.

The device originated in eastern France in the first half of the 18th century and was used to teach tunes to canaries, thus its name, derived from the French *serin*, meaning 'canary'. Click on the photo to see a demonstration of this antique model.

Less authentic, but with beautiful mechanical engineering, is this 20th century posh successor, called a 'Singing Bird Box'. Click on the photo to see a demonstration.



Mougenot - Serinette



Reuge Byzance - Singing Bird Box

YOUNG ORGANISTS' CORNER

Organs and Acoustics

In a previous *Newsletter* we began to think about some of the factors which influence organ design; the size and type of building, and the purpose for which the organ will be used.

Thinking further about the building, you sometimes hear organists say "The most important stop on the organ is the building." Although this cannot be literally true, this saying conveys the experience that, no matter how good the specification of an organ or the beauty of its pipework, the quality of sound may be enhanced or ruined by the acoustic properties of the space in which it speaks. The term 'acoustic' describes how sound behaves as it is conveyed within that space; how long it lingers ('reverberation') or how 'bright', 'dead' or 'dry' is the sound. ('Reverberation' is often confused with 'echo' which describes a separate sound image in repetition after reflection off a large surface such as a smooth wall. If you shout "Hello" in a building, an echo is produced when you hear a "Hello" coming back to you, whereas 'reverberation' is what you hear dying away after the last chord of a piece.) For an organ designer it is important to match the design of the organ to the acoustic of the space in which it will be used. Let's think about the organ *sound spectrum*.



An ideal position - Derby Cathedral organ

The frequency range (pitch) of the sounds produced by an organ is enormous, from deep bass notes to shrill mixtures. It is wider than any other musical instrument. Low notes generally travel well, passing easily around corners and pillars, but their energy can be absorbed by large leaded windows. In contrast, high pitch tones most efficiently travel in straight lines and are heard best when the listener has a direct line of sight to the pipework. Hard smooth surfaces such as marble floors and vaulted or plastered ceilings help by being good at reflecting rather than absorbing sound, but soft absorptive materials like carpet are absolute death for the bright tones on an organ. Added to this, the intervening air itself acts as high

frequency absorber, so the further you are away from the organ, the fainter the bright tones become. The resultant effect is that the sound spectrum of the organ changes with distance and is modified by the materials surrounding the aural space. Skilled organ voicers enhance or dampen the brightness and loudness of the pipework in its various registers to match the acoustic of the building.

With some understanding of how the perceived sound spectrum of an organ is dependent on the acoustic of the building, we can soon appreciate the importance of the location of the organ within the building. In a church, the ideal position is in a western gallery. Happily, this is the case in our local cathedral in Derby. This was the common situation in most churches until the mid-19th century when chancel choirs became fashionable, requiring the closer proximity of the organ. The result is that many of our church organs are now located in a corner chamber adjacent to the chancel. The arrangement has always been a compromise between visual and aural needs, and successive generations have attempted to adjust the compromise, ensuring that organ builders continue to thrive!

Laurence Rogers

Forthcoming DDOA Meeting

Monday 2nd August 2021 7.30 pm at St Peter's Church, Belper
The Music of René Becker – An Illustrated Talk by Richard Brice

Please note the new date for this meeting, postponed from July due to Covid restrictions.

René Becker (1882-1956) was a French-born American composer and organist who is little-known today. After a chance finding of a *Toccata* of his, Richard has spent some time researching his life and music and hopes to whet our appetites for discovering more of his music.

'Lockdown' pieces: After the talk there will be refreshments and a chance for a "catch-up" natter with the second part of the evening being an invitation to play something you have learnt during lock-down. Please contact Richard on 01773 826719 if you would like to play so that a balanced programme can be devised.

For those who have not been before, there is only parking at the church for three disabled users of vehicles but there is on-street parking in both Chesterfield Road and Church Lane and a car park close by as well. For further information please contact Richard.

Items of news or articles for the September / October edition of the *Newsletter* should reach the Editor by **Monday 23rd 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.