

# ND NORTHAMPTON & DISTRICT ORGANISTS' ASSOCIATION



NEWSLETTER—ISSUE 3/2019



## FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the latest edition of the Newsletter. I am delighted that we are able to feature an exclusive interview for NDOA with Thomas Trotter ahead of his concert at Castle Ashby on Saturday 6th July at 7.30pm.

We also look at the Kenneth Tickell organ at the Chapel of the Abbey Centre Baptist Church in East Hunsbury, which is currently for sale and looking for a good home as a result of a change in the worship patterns at the church.

NDOA continues to have a busy programme arranged by Alan Cufaude, our President, and Helen Murphy has kindly provided a report of the Association's visit to Coventry Cathedral, hosted by Rachel Mahon, the Deputy DoM. By the time you read this, we will also have visited St Mary and St Giles at Stony Stratford to play the restored Willis, and we will be looking forward to the Members' Recital at Castle Hill United Reformed Church on Saturday 20th July. Details of this and subsequent events can be found on the back cover.

There is also exciting news for 2020. NDOA has been asked to host the 2020 Midlands Organ Day by the Incorporated Association of Organists, and plans are already in hand. The date is yet to be confirmed, but will be a Saturday in October 2020. Watch this space.

Amongst other highlights we have a reports of two recitals at St. Mary's Wellingborough—the Roger Smith Memorial Recital given this year by Jeremiah Stephenson, and our own Lee Dunleavy's excellent *Vive La France!* recital. We also have a review of Horatio Clare's new book of his sound-walk *Something of his Art—Walking to Lübeck with J S Bach*. Still on JSB, this year's Oundle International Festival includes the launch of James McVinnie's *Big Bach Project* to play all Bach's keyboard works.

Finally, conscious of the fact that many of our members also have responsibility for leading their choirs, we have an article on the latest book by our member Dr John Bertalot—*Help! I have to lead the Choir*, which is a fabulous—and very readable—collection of priceless tips and techniques from John's extensive experience of leading choirs in the UK and internationally over so many years.

Do please keep your articles—and ideas for articles—coming. They are very much appreciated. I hope you enjoy reading this issue.

Richard Tapp

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The NDOA Newsletter is published four times a year. Contributions are always welcome and should be submitted to the Editor, please - by 1st September for the next issue.

## NORTHAMPTON AND DISTRICT ORGANISTS' ASSOCIATION

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Cover: *The Abbey Centre Chapel, Northampton—Kenneth Tickell & Co. Ltd. Opus 19 (1990). This exquisite small organ is currently for sale—see p.5. Photo—Editor.*

## THE NDOA INTERVIEW—THOMAS TROTTER

**Thomas Trotter** is one of Britain's most widely admired musicians. Birmingham's City Organist since 1983, serving both at the Town Hall and as Resident Organist of the magnificent Klais organ in Symphony Hall, Thomas is also Organist at St. Margaret's Church, Westminster Abbey, in London and Visiting Fellow in Organ Studies at the Royal Northern College of Music. Ahead of his concert at Castle Ashby on Saturday 6th July, Thomas speaks exclusively to NDOA on his career, his motivations and his thoughts for the future.



*NDOA: What sparked your interest in the organ - and what motivated you to reach the highest levels of the profession?*

TT: I always wanted to play the piano, and started having lessons at the age of 5. My piano teacher was also the school organist, and he introduced me to the organ when I was 11. From then on the organ became my passion, even though being very small for my age it took another two years before I could reach the pedals. I always wanted a career in music, although it was many years before I knew I could achieve that as an organist.

*NDOA: You have followed what might still be said to be an unusual path, primarily as an international concert organist, recitalist and recording artist rather than in a cathedral post. What led you to do that - and why do you feel so few have followed your example?*

TT: I came to the organ via the piano rather than by singing in a church or cathedral choir. I had no particular interest in choral repertoire, although I realised quite early on that since most organs were to be found in churches it would be difficult to be an organist without some involvement with church music. I was a scholar first at the Royal College of Music, then at King's College, Cambridge, where I accompanied the world-famous choir (and was its reluctant conductor on numerous occasions!). After university I embarked on a freelance career in London playing piano, harpsichord and organ. My big break came in 1983 when I was appointed Birmingham City Organist, which enabled me to concentrate solely on organ performance. There are many organists out there who have the talent to be full-time concert organists, but it's an overcrowded market and not everybody gets that lucky break.

*NDOA: Reviewers of your work long-ago ran out of superlatives for virtuosity and musicality – how do you manage to maintain and continue to enhance your work at that standard?*

TT: Well, they say you should never believe your own press, and it's always the bad reviews you remember rather than the good ones. Setting and maintaining your own standards in any field requires a huge amount of discipline, dedication and hard work. Fortunately organ-playing is my hobby as well as my profession, and I enjoy all the preparation and long practice sessions as much as the performances themselves.

*NDOA: You have created a marvellous legacy in Birmingham, with the restoration of the Town Hall and the installation of the fabulous Klais in Symphony Hall. What have been the highlights - and challenges?*

My first 35 years in Birmingham have been marked by various milestones—the opening of Symphony Hall, the arrival of the Klais organ, the 11-year closure of the Town Hall and recently its superb restoration

have certainly varied the routine! My residency in Birmingham has presented a wide range of opportunities on top of the solo concerts I play, including concerto performances with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, commissioning new works, collaborating with other instrumentalists and accompanying some of the best choirs in the country. I can't think of anything I haven't enjoyed! It's not all plain sailing though—times are tough for the Arts as public funding is cut and private sponsorship becomes increasingly scarce, and in that respect Birmingham is no different from anywhere else in the UK. But in the organ world there is much to be optimistic about: wonderful instruments are still being built and fine old instruments are being sympathetically restored, and the teaching and performing standards of our younger players continue to rise.

*NDOA: Your Birmingham recitals attract many regular and loyal attendees, as well as those new to the organ—and you've now performed more than 750 recitals as City Organist. How do you develop your repertoire to keep it fresh while at the same time maintaining the interest of your audience?*

TT: I've always made time to learn repertoire, because making new discoveries keeps me interested in what I do. My Birmingham programmes tend to be a combination of standard works interspersed with lesser-known repertoire, the weirder the better! Finding good-quality repertoire that isn't already well known can be a challenge, but it's one that I enjoy. The internet makes the task so much easier – IMSLP and Spotify are my favourite websites.

*NDOA: Do you have a favourite organ?*

TT: The Cavallé-Coll at St. Sulpice Paris would be high on my favourites list, but for sheer elegance and beauty of tone I might choose the Frobenius organ at Queen's College Oxford. I also admire the Ladegast organ at Merseburg Cathedral in Germany which has a strong personality and dictates to the player how it wishes to be played.

*NDOA: ... or perhaps a favourite piece in the repertoire?*

TT: The Elgar and Reubke Sonatas and anything by Messiaen are favourites, but like most organists I couldn't live without the music of Bach. I never tire of playing this repertoire and each time I revisit a particular work I always discover something new.

*NDOA: And finally - we are lucky enough to have a number of student members - what would your advice be for them? And for us in seeking to interest people in the organ?*

Music is so available on the internet that sometimes it's easy to forget to attend live events. Watching a concert on YouTube is convenient but it's never as good as being there in person. So I'd advise young organists to go to concerts, and if they are serious about improving their organ playing to get experience on as many instruments as they can. Every organ is different and one of the essential skills of an organist is to be able to adapt to different circumstances.

There is no simple answer to how to interest people in the organ. Organ music is a very specialist interest, and nobody need apologise for that!

*NDOA: Thomas, thank you very much.*

**St Mary Magdalene, Castle Ashby**

**ORGAN CONCERT—THOMAS TROTTER**

**Saturday 6th July at 7.30pm**

*Tickets £15 from editor.ndoa@gmail.com; from Mrs Judith Cundell on 01604 696340, or on the door.*

# THE ABBEY CENTRE CHAPEL, NORTHAMPTON

## Kenneth Tickell & Co. Ltd Opus 19—1990

The Abbey Centre Baptist Church, on the southern fringe of Northampton, was opened in January 1987 following the decision of the congregation of the former Abbey Road Baptist Church in the town to

Manual	Stop Diapason	8
	Principal	4
	Chimney Flute	4
	Fifteenth	2
	Cornet	II
	<i>Manual to Pedal coupler</i>	
	<i>Tracker key action</i>	
	<i>Mechanical stop action</i>	
	<i>Slider soundboard</i>	

create a new Centre in the then-new East Hunsbury area of the town. The Centre was built with the intention of being a gift to the local community, and it has fulfilled that aim very successfully from the start. Such was its achievement, that the following year, a decision was made to add a small Chapel, seating around 120 people, suitable for weddings, funerals, church meetings and private devotions.

The Chapel at the Abbey Centre was opened by the Abbey Centre Life Deacon, Mr Frank Summerford, and dedicated on Saturday 23rd September, 1989. Three crosses in the Chapel are made from wood which originally formed the front of the organ loft balcony in the Abbey Road building.

In March 1991, an exquisite, small pipe organ (*pictured, front cover*) by Kenneth Tickell & Co. was installed in the Chapel. The organ was a gift to the church by regular worshipper Miss Winifred Throssell as a memorial to her sister, Mrs Beatrice Elizabeth Griffin, who died in 1988. Miss Throssell herself passed away in 1998.



Kenneth Tickell & Co. Ltd's website describes the organ:

*'The organ is built to a simple, yet elegant design. The action is mechanical, with a small electric blower set in the lower section of the instrument. The case is of American White Oak, finished with a dark stain and oil polish to blend with the furnishings of the Chapel, while the keys are covered with Kingwood on the naturals and the sharps are of solid Pearwood.'*

*The fretted pipeshades were designed by Derek Riley, and are cut from solid White Oak. The rather striking design depicts water, reeds, and fish; symbols of Christian life, and of Baptism in particular.'* (*pictured, overleaf*).

The organ was soon in regular use, and the Chapel enjoyed the services of its organists for many years, including Derek Whittington and George White, with the organ used particularly during Sunday evening services. However, changes in the worship patterns and arrangements have meant that a decision was made recently by the Church to re-locate the morning service from the main Abbey Centre building into the Chapel itself.



In turn, the style of the Centre's Sunday morning worship, the need for overhead projection screens and the availability of accompanists have led to a decision to seek a new home for the organ.

The task of a sale of the organ has fallen to the Pastor Emeritus, the Revd. Dr. Ted Hale. The Church is very keen to find a home with which the donor, the late Miss Throssell, would be happy.

The organ is in excellent condition, and bearing in mind the cost of an equivalent new organ today, the Church is seeking offers in the region of £15,000 to £20,000, with the purchaser covering the cost of removal. Dr Hale notes that one of Ken Tickell's former colleagues, Tony Coles, who helped build and install the organ in the Abbey Centre Chapel, would be willing to help with removal.

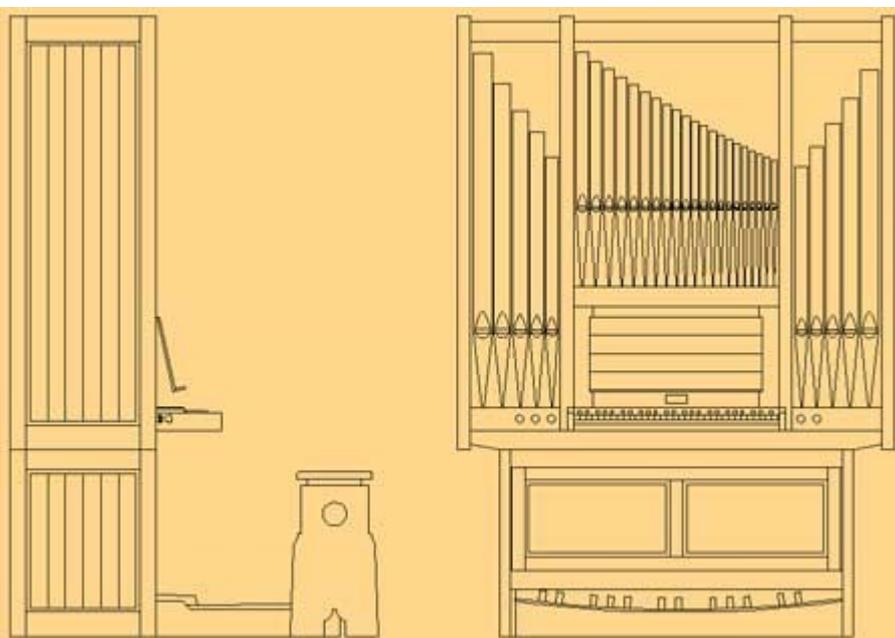


Your Editor has had the opportunity to view and photograph the organ for this article, and can report that it is a delight both to look at and to play. The organ is voiced to a very bright and clear tone which means it has ample presence for a building of the size of the Chapel and may well suit a larger space still, whilst at the same time being of relatively compact dimensions.

The pedals couple through from the manual stops, whilst the Cornet pipes are provided from Middle C upwards, giving greater flexibility for the playing of a solo line for Cornet or Trumpet tunes, or perhaps with the Baroque chorale repertoire. The organ has clearly been very well and lovingly maintained and respected by the Church.

It is a delightful example of a relatively early Tickell instrument. Particularly in the light of the recent closure of the firm's Rothersthorpe Crescent workshops, it is very much to be hoped

that a new and suitable home can be found for the organ. If that home could be in Northamptonshire, of course that would be even better.



Anyone interested in the organ is welcome to contact Dr Hale directly by email or phone on [ted@halesnorthampton.plus.com](mailto:ted@halesnorthampton.plus.com) or 01604 762305.

*NDOA gratefully acknowledges the help of the Revd. Dr. Ted Hale and the Abbey Centre in providing information for this article, and the extract from the website of Kenneth Tickell & Co. Ltd.*





## **St. Mary the Virgin, Wellingborough**

### **THE ROGER SMITH MEMORIAL RECITAL**

#### **JEREMIAH STEPHENSON**

On Saturday 2nd March, the third annual Roger Smith Memorial Recital at St. Mary the Virgin, Wellingborough was very ably given by Jeremiah Stephenson MA (Cantab) MMus FRCO, Acting Director of Music at All Saints' Margaret Street, London.

Jeremiah combines his duties at Margaret Street with a busy career as a freelance recitalist, accompanist and teacher. He held organ scholarships at Queens' College, Cambridge, and Peterborough Cathedral before studying at the Royal Academy of Music, graduating with multiple prizes.

From 2015 to 2017, Jeremiah received funding from the Nicholas Danby Trust to study in Toulouse with Michel Bouvard and Willem Jansen. He regularly appears as accompanist to La Maîtrise de Toulouse, France's premier children's choir, both in concerts and recordings.

Jeremiah won prizes in the Associateship and Fellowship diploma exams of the Royal College of Organists. He won first prize in the Eben International Organ Competition held in the Czech Republic, and second prize in the International Competition 'Prix de J L Florentz' organized by L'Académie des Beaux-Arts in Angers, France.

Jeremiah's programme seemed ideally suited to the St. Mary's organ. It opened with a bright exciting start – Sinfonia from *Wir Danken dir, Gott* (We thank you, God) by Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) arranged by Marcel Dupre (1886–1971).

The performance was displayed on a large screen which enabled the audience better to appreciate the performer's skills, although the delay between sound and vision could be a little disconcerting.

The second piece was also by JSB – *Dies sind die heil'gen zehn Gebot* (These are the Holy Ten Commandments) (i) Chorale, BWV 678 and (ii) Fughetta, BWV 679. Jeremiah gave us an interesting explanation as to why Bach wrote this simple-style Chorale. Apparently he had been criticised for the complexity of an earlier piece which the critic said overshadowed the musical message. Undaunted by the critic, JSB made the contrasting short Fughetta extra complex!

There followed a rousing performance of Organ Sonata No.4 in B $\flat$  major by Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847).

Then back to Bach with three Schübler Chorales:

- *Meine Seele erhebt den Herrn, BWV 648* – (*My soul doth magnify the Lord*).
- *Ach bleib bei uns, Herr Jesu Christ, BWV 649* – (*Abide with us, Lord Jesus Christ*). This displayed a lovely solo stop on the Swell, (probably the Oboe), with a fast moving accompaniment in the left hand on the Great.
- *Kommst du nun, Jesu, vom Himmel herunter, BWV 650* – (*Come thou, Jesus, from heaven to earth*). This displayed the dexterity of Jeremiah's finger-work with the chorale tune being played with a 4-foot stop coupled to the pedal.

The final flourish was provided by *Fantasia in F minor, K608* by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791), a wonderfully intricate piece of music written for an amazingly complex piece of machinery, the mechanical clock, and requiring considerable skill to realise by human hands, at which Jeremiah (*pictured, right*) succeeded admirably. Until the beginnings of the industrial revolution the most complicated machine devised by man was the organ, closely followed by clock-type mechanisms.

In Mozart's time, one Count Joseph Deym was an enthusiast for 'mechanical clocks', clockwork devices which caused pipe organs to play. Mozart's F minor piece for Deym did not gain the title 'Fantasia' until it was arranged for piano duet during the last century. However, it is a totally appropriate name for a piece



which is even more fantastic than the machine for which it was created.

The organ at St. Mary's was completed in 1918 by Wm. Hill & Sons, later to become part of Hill Norman & Beard. Although both cases are highly decorated, and in keeping with the opulence of the building, the specification of the organ is by comparison modest (*see left*).

The Recital was given in memory of Roger Smith, former organist of St. Mary's, former President (2001–2002) and former Hon. Secretary of our own Northampton & District Organists' Association. Roger was instrumental in the comprehensive restoration of the organ which was completed in 2011 at a cost of more than £100,000, and included the installation of the Pedal Trombone. The retiring collection was to be divided between the Motor Neurone Disease Association and the music fund at St. Mary's.

**Alan Cufaude**

#### St Mary the Virgin, Wellingborough

Wm. Hill & Sons, 1918

##### **Pedal**

Open Diapason	16	
Double Dulciana	16	
Bourdon	16	
Bass Flute	8	
Trombone	16	<i>The Pedal Trombone is from the discarded 1840 Wm. Hill organ in All Saints' Northampton.</i>

##### **Great**

Double Dulciana	16
Open Diapason 1	8
Open Diapason 2	8
Salicional	8
Hohl Flute	8
Principal	4
Harmonic Flute	4
Twelfth & Fifteenth	

##### **Swell**

Open Diapason	8
Rohr Flute	8
Echo Gamba	8
Voix Celeste	8
Principal	4
Lieblich Gedact	4
Flautina	2
Horn	8
Oboe	

## **'VIVE LA FRANCE!'**

### **LEE DUNLEAVY**

As most Newsletter readers will know, our past President Lee Dunleavy is currently Director of Music at St Mary's, Wellingborough. Many members will also be aware that John Burden, of St Mary's, is assiduous in letting people know about musical events there, including the Saturday morning organ recital series.\*

Having missed Lee's New Year's Day recital (Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, etc.) I was looking forward to his 'All Yorkshire' recital which was planned for 4<sup>th</sup> May. I was therefore a bit disappointed, but not surprised, to find that the recital had been changed to an All-French programme, 'In aid of the Notre-Dame Restoration Appeal'. In the event, the recital was very far from being a disappointment – it was in fact a most interesting programme of French organ music (or French music arranged for organ) and the large audience thoroughly enjoyed it, even if the occasion was marked by sadness at the reason for it.

Lee began his recital with the *Suite Gothique* by Léon Boëllmann, with which many NDOA members will be familiar. The *Introduction* and the final movement (*Toccata*) showed off the power of the organ, while the Minuet (*Menuet gothique*) showed its more sprightly character. The *Prière*, which Lee took quite slowly, showed off the organ's range of soft stops. The recital ended with that well-known warhorse (or cheval de guerre?) the Widor *Toccata* from *Symphonie No. 5*. Lee managed it without a page-turner, which was quite a feat.

In between we had a more modern piece by Elsa Barraine (1910-1999), a new name to me and probably many readers. It was a *Prélude (Lent)* and a *Fugue (Lent)* 'sur un chant de prière israélite'. It proved to be very French, with Messiaenic harmonies and interesting counterpoint. The other pieces were arrangements of more well-known music – the *Pavane* by Fauré and Debussy's two piano *Arabesques*, which proved surprisingly adaptable to the organ. Altogether a most satisfying programme and a worthy tribute to the French organ tradition.

My own enjoyment was enhanced by trying to work out the significance of the letters GS and HS worked into the lower rood screen. It turns out that they are the initials of the Misses Harriet, Henrietta and Gertrude Sharman who financed the building of the church (designed by Sir Ninian Comper) back in 1905. No liturgical significance at all!

**John Wilson** (NDOA President-elect)

\*John would be glad to add people to his circulation list for music at St Mary's if they wish—contact [jonwburden@aol.com](mailto:jonwburden@aol.com).

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**NOTRE-DAME DE PARIS.** Olivier Latry, the Organiste Titulaire, writes the following open letter:

'In these tragic moments for the Cathedral, you have been extremely numerous to send kind words of support, all more moving than the others, either by e-mail, SMS, FaceBook, Instagram or on the phone. I will never thank you enough for that. I would have liked to respond personally to each of you, but given the urgency of the situation, it is unfortunately not possible for me, at least for the moment. I hope you'll understand. Notre-Dame, who had resisted revolutions and wars, burned in a few moments. 855 years destroyed in four hours ... Like you, I feel terribly sad, with contained rage, total sorrow. The images that we have seen are horrible. How not to think that we are in a bad dream? Reality comes back to us, unfortunately.

Despite all the damage in the Cathedral, the organ miraculously escaped the flames, as well as the water supposed to extinguish them. It is very dusty, but will continue to enjoy us as soon as the building will be restored. When? No one knows yet. "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." (John, 2). It will surely take more time in Notre-Dame, but I still live with great confidence and hope.'

With warmest regards. Olivier Latry'

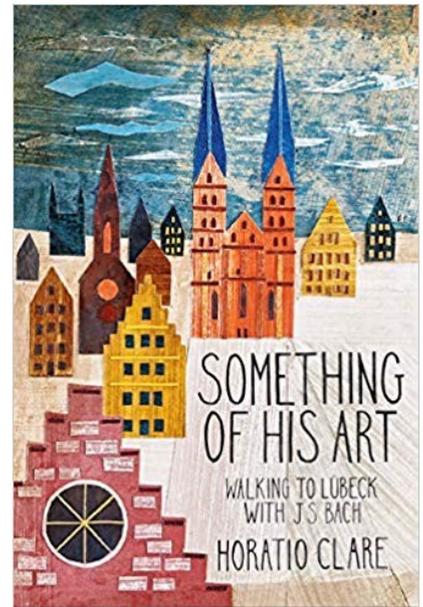
## FROM AN ORGANIST'S BOOKSHELF

Bach's journey from Arnstadt during the winter of 1705 to hear Dieterich Buxtehude play at the Marienkirche in Lübeck is one of the most influential stories in any organist's musical education. Here in Northamptonshire, the tale was told most eloquently by Mark Gibson and Lee Dunleavy at their presentation last year, It was also recalled by the Oundle International Festival's Big Bach Walk where William Whitehead (and friends) walked the 70 miles from Towcester to Peterborough (with recitals along the way) to celebrate the completion of the *Orgelbüchlein* project to fill in the missing 118 pieces in Bach's score, with international composers contributing material based on the chosen Chorale melodies.

Back to Bach's own journey, though, and Horatio Clare's beautifully-produced book *Something of His Art—Walking to Lübeck with J.S. Bach* (Little Toller Books, £12) retraces an imagination of Bach's journey for the twenty-first century for a Radio 3 series, broadcast as a sound-walk in five parts just before Christmas 2017. Clare's work is at once descriptive, analytical and incisive. From the beginning of the journey in organ loft at the Neue Kirche at Arnstadt where "the intimacy and privilege of being high up in a restricted space, with the smell of wood and metal and the whole church below you like a breath inhaled, waiting for the notes of a chorale" to the "electric feeling of his presence" as he enters the Marienkirche, it is clear that Clare was moved deeply and spiritually by his own journey, as was Bach himself more than three centuries earlier.

Bach was famously absent from Arnstadt for some three months: on his return he faced a Consistory Court to explain himself. Clare's journey was shorter, of necessity, but he draws together the threads of the experience which Bach found so influential, so transformational, as a young man of only 20 years of age. From Buxtehude's Advent *Abendmusik* concerts, the cantatas Buxtehude is known to have performed in December 1705, to the master's use of pedal solos, the inclusion of multiple musicians playing in the galleries—in Clare's words all must have been 'revelatory to the young man from Thuringia... rapidly assimilating and transcending Buxtehude's influence.'

*Something of His Art* takes us from Arnstadt through the forests of Thuringia, noting that whilst we do not know the exact route, elements of the route are all but certain—north to Erfurt, from Braunschweig to Lüneburg, and then to Lübeck. Clare paints a glorious word-picture of the flora and fauna of the mountains, the natural world which would have coloured every aspect of the journey on foot. He ponders whether Bach would have carried books—perhaps the Bible, and a commentary? 'A person of faith could not but see God in these woods on a day like this.' Insights of Bach's character flood the page—the intensity of *Jesu meine Freude*, written after Bach had lost three children, his first wife, Maria Barbara, and his brother Johann Jacob; Clare's view is that Bach 'would have liked sex and beer'; and that 'he would have been good with the media'...'seeing us as allies and accelerators—a way to reach thousands over hundreds, millions over thousands.' Of all his insights, surely nothing could be a truer reflection of the lasting impact of Bach's music on subsequent generations.



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**OUNDLE INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL 2019** takes place from 4th—13th July. On Friday 12th July at 7.30pm at Oundle School Chapel, **James McVinnie** launches his five-year **Big Bach Project** to play all the keyboard works of Bach, with a piano concert including Prelude and Fugue in B Minor BWV 869 from the *Well-tempered Clavier*, the *French Suite No 5* and the *French Overture in B Minor BWV 831*.

At 10pm on the same day, at the Church of the Most Holy Name of Jesus, **Anne Page** will give the **25th Anniversary Recital** of the Bower & Company Festival Organ, in a programme which includes music by Bach and Buxtehude. Details and tickets for both events from [oundlefestival.org.uk](http://oundlefestival.org.uk).

## HELSINKI ORGAN SUMMER

RICHARD TAPP



When thinking of European organ culture, there is a tendency to focus on the great German and French traditions exemplified by Silbermann or Cavaillé-Coll. Looking north to the Baltic lands, however, there is a thriving organ culture, and Finland— one of Europe’s most northerly countries - boasts a number of fine examples of modern organ building, a vibrant organ culture, and a thriving concert scene.

Each summer, the capital city Helsinki hosts the Helsinki Organ Summer concert series—Helsingin Urkukesa in Finnish—which sees seven or eight concerts a week held at churches across the City between June and September. The city also hosts

a Chamber Music festival in July of each year, whilst the city of Lahti, some 60 miles north, has an international organ festival each August.

Organs showcased in the Helsinki Organ Summer concert series are very varied. They range between the magnificent 4-manual Marcussen of 1967 in the Lutheran Cathedral (*pictured right*) which hosts two or three recitals weekly, including a



celebrity concert every Sunday evening which attracts a substantial audience, to the 1967 2-

manual 13-stop instrument (*pictured left*) built by the Finnish Kangasala Organ Workshop in 1964 in the former garrison church on the fortress island of Suomenlinna in Helsinki harbour. Suomenlinna church started life as a Russian Orthodox chapel, but following the independence of Finland in 1917 became part of the Finnish Lutheran church, losing the onion domes from the roof in the process.

The Organ Summer concerts attract a wide range of Finnish and international recitalists, and are an enjoyable diversion in a most attractive city. The larger churches—which can be very large, seating up to 1500 or more people—tend to have a substantial romantic instruments, but in recent years some have also installed smaller organs. One of my favourites is the exquisite small two-manual and pedal organ (*pictured, right*) newly installed in the JohanneskirKKo—St John’s church— by the Espoo organ builder Veikko Vertinen OY in the spring of 2018. It contrasts beautifully with the 66-stop 3-manual by E.F. Walcker & Co dating from 1891 which sits proudly in the west gallery.

*More details of the annual Helsinki Organ Summer concerts can be found at [urkukesa.fi](http://urkukesa.fi). The site features English text each summer.*



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**THE SOCIETY OF WOMEN ORGANISTS** was formed earlier this year to celebrate female organists in all areas of music-making. With Jennifer Bate as one of its Patrons, and Morwenna Campbell-Smith ([theladyorganist.com](http://theladyorganist.com) blogger and Editor of iRCO, the Royal College of Organists’ online campus) as General Secretary, it sets out to support all female organists, to promote female interests in the organ world, and encourage women and girls to study the organ. [Societyofwomenorganists.co.uk](http://Societyofwomenorganists.co.uk)

## AN ORGANIC EASTER

HELEN MURPHY

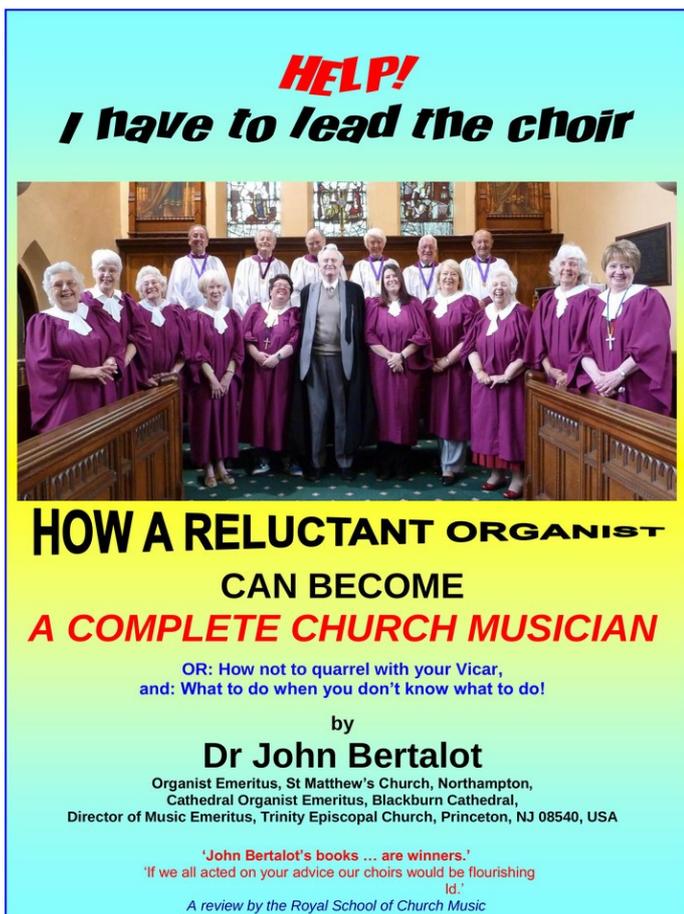
The date of Easter, named in English and German (Ostern) after Eostre, the Anglo—Saxon goddess of the Spring and the Radiant Dawn, can vary by several weeks. In the early days of Christendom, Easter was calculated from the date of the Passover (celebrated on the first full moon after the Spring Equinox). However, as the full moon varies across the time zones in Europe, it was decided by the Council of Nicaea in 325 to use the 14<sup>th</sup> Day of the lunar month, known as the Paschal Full Moon (now calculated as the nearest to 21<sup>st</sup> March) with Easter the following Sunday. Now you know! So, the date can vary from year to year—and in the northern hemisphere this can mean a considerable variation in weather conditions. Thus, this year, on Easter Monday, we enjoyed the luxury of 25°—I know because, along with half the world and his wife and family, I went to Cambridge—not just to stroll across Jesus Green and along by the river, but to fight my way through the tourists in King’s Parade to the chapel for a recital by Naji Hakim, consisting entirely of his own compositions: *Hagia Sofia*, *Ich liebe die farbenreiche Welt*, *O Filii et Filiae*, *Suite Française*, *Trois Dances Basques* and *Équisses Grégoriennes*.

It was supposed to end with an improvisation but, for some unknown reason, that didn’t happen; however, as we know (and as Wayne Marshall pointed out below), his style is naturally improvisatory, so we had to make do with that. And as I sat in the stalls looking up at the organ, I couldn’t help but remember the occasion when three of us on an NDOA trip in July 2016 were able to see inside it while it was undergoing restoration by Harrison and Harrison. My goodness—that was a day we shall never forget!

But in typical British fashion, 25° plummeted to 15° soon afterwards, and it was still quite cold when, eight days later (still very much in the Easter season, even though the children were back at school) in London, I was on my way to the Royal College of Music to watch a masterclass by Wayne Marshall on organ and piano improvisation. The organ pupil had prepared Naji Hakim’s *BACH’ORAMA*, *Orgelfantasie über Themen von Johann Sebastian Bach* and played it, to our ears, faultlessly. Wayne, however, had other ideas: he played around with varying registration (‘less Baroque’ he said) but, above all, he wanted the pupil to ‘bring out the humour’ in the piece and make it more improvisatory in style (which it was anyway). For the pupil to play it this way though – including his own improvisations on the innate improvisatory style – was quite a challenge, but which I think he eventually achieved.

The grand piano was wheeled into position centre-stage and the next pupil took her place on the stool – no music this time as her masterclass was Free Contemporary Improvisation. ‘Right,’ said Wayne, ‘I want you to improvise on *Frère Jacques*—you know that, don’t you? – and give me something interesting.’ She thought for a moment or two, then embarked on a very heavy, thickly encrusted, chordal *FJ*. Interesting harmonies but too many notes was the verdict—‘Give me just four-part harmony,’ he said, which she clearly found quite a challenge at first. However, he showed how, by isolating just a phrase (‘*Sonnez les Matines*’), many more experimental effects and variations could be achieved in a more pianistic style (less is more). Finally, after illustrating how again isolating a short phrase with repetitions and inversions could lead to much creativity, he asked her to ‘give it all you’ve got!’ After a short pause, she proceeded to give us ‘*Dormez-vous?*’ as we had never heard it before, expanded into a delightful Impromptu ... I wonder if someone was there to write it down!

But that wasn’t the end of it – as time had been allowed for questions and there was only one, Stephen Johns (Artistic Director RCM) and Wayne had a short informal chat in which Wayne revealed that he played for a local church in Valetta, Malta, where he now lives. ‘Does anyone play for Mass?’ he asked – no answer was the loud reply – ‘Well, you should do,’ he said, ‘it’s very good for your technique!’ He explained that he played the hymns and something of his own at the start, the Offertory and at the end. Finally, Stephen made the inevitable request for him to give us an improvisation, which he proceeded to do—not on any particular theme, just an exhilarating, exploratory excursion into the colours of the organ.



## HELP! I HAVE TO LEAD THE CHOIR...

**Dr John Bertalot** is one of our most distinguished members. Organist at St Matthew's, Northampton from 1958-64, John's career subsequently took him to Blackburn Cathedral and to Trinity Episcopal Church at Princeton, New Jersey, USA; now holding Emeritus appointments from all three.

John is also very well-known for his series of books on choir training. He has now published the fifth in the series, *Help! I have to lead the choir*.

The book's subtitles—'how a reluctant organist can become a complete church musician' or 'how not to quarrel with your Vicar' and 'what to do when you don't know what to do' suggest that the book is much more than a technical choir-training manual—and that is very much the case. It gives, clear, concise and immediately useable advice on these topics. However, going significantly beyond them, John captures a lifetime of experience in delivering music to the highest

standards on both sides of the Atlantic, analysing the techniques and skills that are needed—not simply to ensure your singers perform to the best of their ability, but that all the elements involved are thoughtfully considered, managed and aligned.

There is so much good advice in this book that it is difficult to know where to start—but as an example John himself sets out five essential preliminaries to success in a new role:

- Cultivate a creative and happy working relationship with your minister.
- Agree the financial details – contract, etc.
- The choir (if there is one) may be small and probably disheartened. Discover how you can transform them (and yourself) into a vibrant part of the church's spiritual, musical and social community.
- Work at promoting creative relationships with the members of your congregation so that you can be seen as a person who creates harmony not only in music, but also in personal relationships within your whole church.
- If you're not an organist, you need to learn to play the organ.

John gives a host of excellent advice on each of these topics and more - on music to use, on leading hymns and worship songs, on recruiting and leading the choir, on worship (including lesson reading and leading prayers), on fund raising and on project management. One chapter is entitled 'Leading Traditional Hymns is a skill' and John reminds us that in playing hymns, the organist is leading the whole church in its musical worship, central to helping the congregation understand some of the great truths of the Gospel—to realise, literally to make real—what they are singing.

In truth, this is a book about leadership, about building and cultivating relationships, and about celebrating the success which that collaboration brings. John asks for a contribution of only £5 for his e-book, which seems an outstanding bargain. Highly recommended.

*Help! I have to lead the choir* is available as an e-book download from John's website at [bertalot.org](http://bertalot.org).

## ASSOCIATION NOTES AND NEWS



### Side-tracked by the Angel—Coventry Cathedral, 21st March

I've always liked Coventry Cathedral. I was at art school when all the plans about rebuilding were being aired, so was aware from the start of the whole concept, particularly in respect to names such as Graham Sutherland, Jacob Epstein, Elizabeth Frink and so on. It was a very exciting time. I had forgotten when I first visited, but as I walked up the steps a very distant memory came filtering in of hearing that Marilyn Monroe had died – someone must have had a transistor radio on – and feeling rather shocked and saddened. That was in August 1962, so my first visit was not long after the consecration on 5<sup>th</sup> May of the same year. Some years later, the choir I was then singing with sang the Saturday Choral Evensong on a regular basis – and occasionally a whole weekend – so I got to know the cathedral and its environs well, though there have been many changes and developments over the years since.

And so it came to pass that ten NDOA members and friends gathered on those same steps on 21<sup>st</sup> March to contemplate the nearby 'Angel of the Knives' – a large artwork made entirely (apart from the face and hands) from knives confiscated by the police, over 100,000 of them of all shapes and sizes (NB with Home Office permission!): it's a terrifying apparition (designed by the artist Alfie Bradley and created at the British Ironwork Centre on Oswestry, Shropshire). The face says it all – 'What is going on?!' Having come from display in Liverpool, the Angel is to move on from Coventry and go on a country-wide tour later in the year. We had met together a little earlier in the Herbert Art Gallery opposite where, specifically, some Sutherland cartoons and a small full-size trial sample of the tapestry were on display and were on our way to lunch in Bayley Lane, when we were side-tracked by the Angel.

We lunched handsomely at the establishment at the top of Bayley Lane (as its name suggests, at one time part of the castle) running down the south side of the ruins and made our way to the 'new' building to meet Canadian Rachel Mahon, the Deputy DoM who welcomed us and introduced us to the organ – and reminded us of the strong Canadian connections to the new cathedral (financial as well as timber, as you might expect, marked symbolically by a maple leaf set in the nave floor in front of the great west window). Fittingly, she played for us her fellow-Canadian Healey Willan's *Introduction, Passacaglia and Fugue*, after which we were all able to 'have a go'. (Philip Bricher: *Toccata* by Egil Horland and *Wedding March* by Guilmant; Alan Cufau: Remo Giazotto's *Adagio in G Minor*; Mark Gibson: 'Intrada' from *Miniature Suite for Organ* by John Ireland and JSB's *Fantasia and Fugue in G ma BWV 577*; Rob Page: *Meditation*, one of his own compositions followed by his working of the chorale 'Es spricht ....'; Eric Cave: 'Pieds en l'Air' from Peter Warlock's *Capriol Suite*, followed by his improvisations thereon; Martin Rhodes: Kenneth Leighton's *Fanfare*; Robert Tucker: an improvisation followed by *Cantilena* by Rheinberger; Helen Murphy: *Lullaby for Baby Jesus* by Noel Rawsthorne.

As part of the day, current NDOA President Alan Cufau (who had been at university here) had arranged for a guided tour for those who wanted it, which was a good choice as our guide, Richard Parker, was excellent – not only was he very knowledgeable about local history, he was also a musician singing in the cathedral chamber choir. He was able to make clear Coventry's rather complicated ecclesiastical and civic background: a medieval priory, later to become a cathedral (located somewhere behind and beyond the present cathedral), which was then dissolved by Henry VIII in the 1530s (nothing remains above ground of this, but Time Team did an excavation there some years ago). At this point, St Michael's church becomes significant – it was originally the chapel in the castle, which was situated across this area (hence Bayley Lane running up from east to west – the 'bailey' being an enclosure), and was gradually extended over the years on the north side – the only way it could because of the castle walls – to meet the needs of the townspeople as the large parish church it had by now become until, finally, in

1918 it was raised to cathedral status as part of the programme of reorganising the dioceses in the Church of England. And so it continued until one night in November 1940 when Coventry, as a centre of heavy industry and manufacturing—all vital to the war effort, was targeted by the Luftwaffe. Fittingly, Coventry has been twinned with Dresden for many years, a close and fruitful relationship. Interestingly, Richard told us that, among all the entrants to the competition, Basil Spence was the only architect to propose keeping the ruins as they were and to incorporate his new design linking the two together at right angles – apparently all the others either wanted to demolish it or rebuild it. He was a worthy winner in my view. That link is a total success – and as we stood looking at it from the centre of the ruins, I noticed that the new stone had weathered to match old; you ‘couldn’t see the join’!

Finally, we slipped into the choir stalls for Choral Evensong, sung by the girls directed by DoM Kerry Beaumont. Interestingly, for us, they sang Simon Johnson’s *Evening Service on Plainsong Tones* (Simon, formerly of All Saints’, Northampton, is one of our honorary members). The girls sang well but, sadly (for me at least), sang their plainsong strictly syllabically and mechanically. This seems to be a particularly C of E affliction – yes, the notes are of roughly equal length, but I don’t believe they should be sung in such a regimented manner. I learned my plainsong in Latin, singing from neums, where everything flows naturally with a slight push on the first note of a neum. It is my contention that if only people would learn to sing in neums (not transcribed notation – whether in crotchets and quavers or ‘blobs’ on five lines) all would be made so simple. If it flows in Latin, it can flow in English (and it does). That minor quibble apart, it was a fitting end to a wonderful day – thank you Alan!

**Helen Murphy**

**Midlands Organ Day 2020 comes to Northampton.** We are very pleased that the IAO has asked NDOA to host the Midlands Organ Day 2020 – MOD 2020. Members will know that the regional organ day takes place only every two years, and it is a real honour to bring it to Northampton. It will take place on a Saturday in October 2020 – the date is being finalised and will be notified as soon as possible. MOD 2020 will focus on liturgical playing, and will be hosted jointly at All Saints’ and St Matthew’s churches – coinciding with the celebrations next year of the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the very fine J W Walker & Sons instrument at St Matthew’s. A small sub-committee has been formed with responsibility for designing and delivering the day under Alan Cufaude’s leadership.

**NTCG Recitals.** NDOA member Philip Bricher will be giving recitals at the New Testament Church of God (ex-College Street Baptist Church) on Thursday, 18th July and Thursday, 15th August, starting at 1.10pm. The programmes will be announced on the day, and will be varied, seasonal and very imaginative!



**SMSG Music.** NDOA’s visit to St Mary and St Giles’ Stony Stratford on 22nd June, courtesy of our member Jonathan Kingston, will have passed by the time you read this, but there are very regular events at SMSG. Forthcoming organ events include a First Friday recital with Francis Monkman on 2nd August, and the 2019 Pipe Organ Festival from 13th-15th September. Details available at [musicforallsmg.org](http://musicforallsmg.org).

**In the next issue.** The next issue is planned to include:

- **Tony Edwards**, writing on the restoration of the organ at Hardwick
- A review of **Thomas Trotter’s Recital** at Castle Ashby
- Reports of the **NDOA events** at SMSG Stony Stratford, the Members’ Recital and August Bank Holiday Organ Crawl.

# NORTHAMPTON AND DISTRICT ORGANISTS' ASSOCIATION

## PROGRAMME OF EVENTS 2019

Members and friends are most welcome to join us at our forthcoming events:

### **MEMBERS' RECITAL**

**Saturday 20th July 2019 at 7.30pm**

Castle Hill United Reformed Church, Doddridge Street, Northampton, NN1 2RN. Recital by members and friends, including solo instruments with organ. Players of all abilities are encouraged to perform. Practice time will be allocated earlier in the day. Please note the change of date and time.

### **BANK HOLIDAY ORGAN CRAWL**

**Monday 26th August 2019**

St. Lawrence's Church Towcester, Stowe School Chapel and Buckingham Parish Church. Lunch will be taken at 185 Watling St. Pub & Kitchen, Towcester.

### **ASSOCIATION DINNER**

**Saturday 28th September 2019 at 7.00pm**

Overstone Park Clubhouse, Billing Lane, Northampton NN6 0AF. The speaker will be Lt. Col. Derek Kimberley (retired), former Director of Music Grenadier Guards (Household Division). Members and friends at RSCM will also be invited. Booking is essential, please.

### **THE ORGANS OF POLAND AND DENMARK**

**Saturday 19th October 2019 at 3.00pm**

2, Frank Large Walk, St. Crispin's, Northampton NN5 4UP. Alan Cufaude will speak on the organs of Poland, and John Wilson on the organs of Denmark.

### **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2019**

**Saturday 9th November 2019**

Venue to be confirmed.

*More details of all Association events can be found at [northamptonorganists.org.uk](http://northamptonorganists.org.uk), on Facebook or LinkedIn, or from our President, Alan Cufaude on 01604 750687 email [alannorthampton@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:alannorthampton@hotmail.co.uk).*

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### **ORGANFEST 2019 —CARDIFF**

**6th—8th September 2019**

Organfest 2019 is centred on Cardiff and organised jointly by the IAO, the RCO and BIOS. Recitalists including David Briggs, David Pipe and Gerard Brooks will play at a range of venues including St. David's Hall and Llandaff Cathedral. Full details and booking arrangements can be found at **[organfest.org.uk](http://organfest.org.uk)**.

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### **Not yet a member of NDOA? Why not join us?**

Anyone interested in the organ is most welcome to join the Association. Membership details are available at **[northamptonorganists.org.uk](http://northamptonorganists.org.uk)**, or from the Secretary, Mrs Helen Murphy, on [Helen.e.murphy@outlook.com](mailto:Helen.e.murphy@outlook.com) or 01933 680955. Individual membership costs just £14 per year, student membership only £7 per year, and joint membership £21 per year.