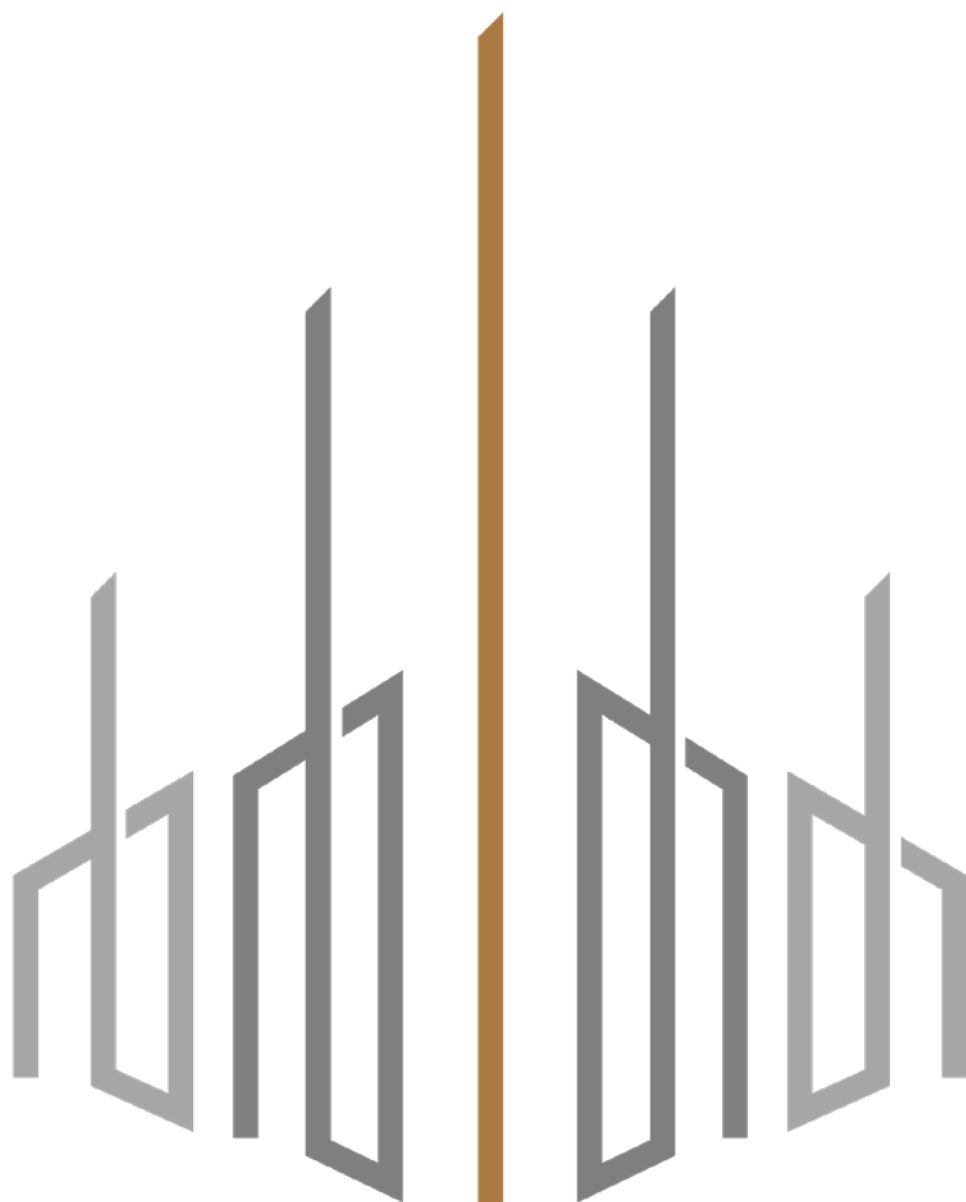


THE ORGAN MANUAL

ONLINE MAGAZINE



NUMBER 2 JANUARY 2022



**VISCOUNT
ORGANS** *Wales*



COACH HOUSE

*In partnership with
Coach House Pianos*

**Trusted to supply instruments and
service throughout the UK since 2008**

2 year interest free finance

Rent to own

Instrument hire

Play now, pay later™

Part exchange welcome

Mention code V01 for free delivery

Receive your free year membership of
the Royal College of Organists FREE,
with your home practice organ purchase

RCO

Tel: 01792 721499

www.viscountorgans.wales

viscount
Classical
organs

Technology bringing
tradition to life



Welcome

to the second edition of The Organ Manual Online Magazine!

We were delighted by the response to our first edition and were rather overwhelmed with the kind messages we received. Thank you for your support, it means a great deal to us. We're continuing to learn as we go and enjoying that journey. Part of the learning curve has been publication dates. We're sorry this one is a little later than advertised. In future and will be working with months rather than dates to give us a little more flexibility - so, you can look forward to seeing our third edition in May.

Our offerings this month include; a day in the life of John Challenger, Assistant Director of Music at Salisbury Cathedral, meet the Guildford Cathedral team, Jacob Costard writes about his YOST organ scholarship and Dan Mould, along with Charlie Francis and Matthew Foster talk to Alex about the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire. We hope there is something for everyone.

Sadly, we didn't receive any questions to launch our 'Advice Column'. We'll launch it as soon as questions come in, so if you have something you'd like to ask about the organ but don't know who to go to, drop us a line and we'll be happy to assist.

We'd like to thank our sponsors Viscount Organs Wales for their continued support. A big thank you too to David Baker, Sheet Organ Music and GSG Pianos for their generous donations to The Organ Manual.

We hope you enjoy this edition. If you have any suggestions or ideas, please do contact us at theorganmanual@gmail.com. Finally, a big thank you to our writers and readers!

Very best wishes,

Anna and Alex

In This Edition

Meet the Team 5

Guildford Cathedral Music Department

Applying for Organ Scholarships 8

Alex Trigg

Engaging with the Organ 10

Tom Bell

Beauty in Sound 13

Richard McVeigh

A Day in the Life of an Assistant Director of Music 15

John Challenger

Happy Tenth Birthday, Halifax Organ Academy! 17

Professor David Baker

A Potted History of Music at GMC 19

Gordon Amery

YOST: The Young Organ Scholars' Trust 22

Jacob Costard

Diocese of Leeds Keyboard Studies Programme 24

David Pipe

Adjustable Bench Campaign (ABC) 26

Marion Lees McPherson

A Discussion with The Royal Birmingham Conservatoire 28

Alex Trigg

Meet the Team

In this edition's Meet the Team we chat to Katherine Dienes-Williams and Richard Moore from Guildford Cathedral

Katherine Dienes-Williams

Organist and Master of the Choristers, Guildford Cathedral

Katherine Dienes-Williams, MA, BMus, LTCL, FRCO, Hon ARSCM, Hon GCM was appointed Organist and Master of the Choristers at Guildford Cathedral in January 2008 following six years as Director of Music at the Collegiate Church of St Mary, Warwick. She was the first-ever female member to be elected to the Cathedral Organists' Association, and on her appointment to Guildford, became the first ever woman to hold such a post in the Church of England.



How old were you when you first started playing the organ and what inspired you to start?

I was 17 years old when I began playing the organ. I was always fascinated watching our parish church organist in Wellington, New Zealand, play (the organ was in a pit and you could watch over the top of the pews) and then at age 10 I was lucky enough to be in Helsinki, Finland, where I heard someone practising the organ in the Cathedral there – I refused to leave the building as I was so entranced by the sound! At age 16 I was offered a scholarship at my secondary school to learn, which I took up at the start of my final year in school.

Who inspires you?

Musicians across the board – especially orchestral, solo and chamber musicians – amongst organists however, Dame Gillian Weir and Olivier Latry.

Who is your favourite composer?

I have too many to name one but amongst a very large group of them are J S Bach, J Brahms and O Messiaen.

What is your favourite piece of music to play?

I think the Sortie in E flat by Lefébure Wely is great fun to play because it always invariably draws a smile – but honestly, I love playing 'Dieu parmi nous' from 'La Nativité' by Olivier Messiaen.

What is your favourite service to play for and why?

Any service I am able to play for at all – as it is such a relaxing treat given that I am mostly conducting the choir.

What was the most embarrassing moment you have had when playing in public?

Goodness – probably several! I remember in my first year as Organ Scholar at Wellington Cathedral managing to feature a solo Tuba moment whilst improvising quietly during communion.

What is your proudest music moment?

To date, listening to my daughter sing 'Deh vieni' from Marriage of Figaro this term at Trinity College Cambridge. For myself – probably the live BBC broadcast the Cathedral Choir sang three weeks after returning from summer holidays and all back together socially distanced for the first time in many months.

What do you think makes the organ at Guildford Cathedral special?

The people who commit to come here time and time again to help make wonderful music.

Have you always wanted to be a Cathedral musician? If not what else did you consider?

Yes – I wanted to be part of that very special sound and liturgy combined which enhances worship, guards, nurtures and adds to a living tradition and to play the organ as and when I could, However, on enrolling in university my

career plan was to be a French and German language teacher at secondary school level!

What is the biggest highlight of your music career?

Almost impossible to answer – conducting the St. John Passion? Playing the Poulenc Organ Concerto? Live broadcasts? CD recordings? Or the choir excelling itself on tour or in a service – they all are highlights.

What has been the biggest challenge of your music career?

Keeping a consistently high standard over a long period of time – or trying to. Learning a new piece of organ music really well. People – they are often the biggest challenge – it's never the music. The music is what you live and breathe.

Which organ would you like to play most and of those you have played which is your favourite?

I would like to play the organ in Westminster Cathedral. Of those I have played, there is a fantastic Klais organ in a monastery called Himmerod Abbey in Germany in the middle of a forest. There is also a fabulous 17th century instrument in the Grote Kerk in Harlingen.

Do you wear organ shoes?

Yes I do and I find them invaluable.

If there was one piece of advice you could give to an aspiring organist, what would it be? ?

Make your practice meaningful and solve the problems – do 'deep' practice and above all, enjoy it as this is what leads to enjoyable performances.

What do you look for in an organ scholar?

Common sense, musicianship, hard work and fun combined. An ability to grit and get on and a real willingness to learn.

When you're not working, how do you spend your time?

Walking, reading, enjoying the company of my family and friends and doing some fitness training!

Richard Moore

Sub Organist, Guildford Cathedral

Richard Moore read Music as Organ Scholar of St John's College, Oxford, after which he took up a place at the Royal College of Music, studying Organ with David Graham, graduating from the MMus degree with distinction, and the Walford Davies prize in organ performance. Until August 2014, Richard held the William and Irene Miller Organ Scholarship at St Paul's Cathedral, where, in addition to playing for services and training choristers, he also played at a number of important occasions, including the funeral of Baroness Thatcher.



How old were you when you first started playing the organ and what inspired you to start?

I was 12 when I first started to play the organ. I'd been on a choir tour to Paris, and had heard the Grand Orgue of Notre-Dame, and seen the Orgue de chœur, which got me really excited!

Who inspires you?

I love reading biographies and autobiographies, as I find constant bits of inspiration. I think my favourite is Katherine Graham's autobiography - it's a wonderful testament to personal strength of convictions.

Who is your favourite composer?

Whatever I am working on at the time! But I have a particularly soft spot for Max Reger - his harmony in particular!

What is your favourite piece of music to play?

A hard question! But I think if I had to choose one (and if we are taking the works of J S Bach as a given) then

probably the Sonata on the 94th Psalm, by Julius Reubke.

What is your favourite service to play for and why?

Can I change the question slightly, please? I love playing for all the Holy Week liturgies because of the overall emotional arc that takes us through to the joy of Easter Sunday. There's fabulous music (both solo and accompanimental repertoire), and also quite a lot of opportunities to improvise, which I love doing.

What was the most embarrassing moment you have had when playing in public?

Ah. The moment I realised that I needed to go to the opticians to have my eyes tested...I had read the hymn number from the board across the aisle from me, and had read it incorrectly...a most unfortunate moment.

What is your proudest music moment?

Playing the Lou Harrison concerto for organ and percussion orchestra in Copenhagen a couple of years ago - it's an amazing piece!

What do you think makes the organ at Guildford Cathedral special?

I freely acknowledge that I am borrowing from the late John Scott, but I think the acoustic is the very finest stop on the organ. Since the Cathedral's refurbishment, I think that the building is now made for organ music - there's clarity, but also a glorious bloom to all the sound! And something like an 8 second echo...

Have you always wanted to be a Cathedral musician? If not what else did you consider?

I knew I wanted to have a career in music, whether it was freelancing, or in the context of a Cathedral.

What is the biggest highlight of your music career?

Playing for the 70th anniversary of the VJ Day service at St Martin in the Fields, in the presence of the Queen and Duke of Edinburgh.

What has been the biggest challenge of your music career?

Oooh! All the things which come to mind are repertoire-led - I was a rehearsal pianist for a production of Handel's Alcina, where all rehearsals required the score to be transposed down a semitone. A little lockdown 3 project I set myself was to learn Messiaen's Messe de la Pentecôte for performance at Guildford (which is dedicated to the Holy Spirit) on the 60th anniversary of the Cathedral's consecration this past May - it was great to do!

Which organ would you like to play most and of those you have played which is your favourite?

I think I have been very lucky in that I have been fortunate to go on a number of study playing trips when I was studying full-time, and had the chance to play St Sulpice in Paris, and the Bavokerk and Laurenskerk organs in the Netherlands. I've never played St Ouen, and would love to do that! But I have enjoyed some beautiful Danish organs - up at Helsingør (the first organ Buxtehude played), and also at Garnisonsskirken in Copenhagen - really beautiful building by Carsten Lund, whose work is exquisite.

Do you wear organ shoes?

Yes! Two good reasons - it gives support to the arch of the foot, and protects against splinters (they're real!). Oh, and walking around in socks never looks good to a congregation...

If there was one piece of advice you could give to an aspiring organist, what would it be?

Listen broadly, read lots, go for long walks! (I know it is three, but they are quick-fire!)

What do you look for in an organ scholar?

A quick mind and a sense of humour.

When you're not working, how do you spend your time?

I love cooking, reading, walking (and coveting other people's dogs!).



Applying for Organ Scholarships

by Alex Trigg
(written in 2020)



A cathedral organ scholarship is one of the best opportunities available to young organists. As a gap-year position, the scholarship presents a chance to work with expert organists and a fabulous choir, developing skills in accompanying, conducting and organisation, and learning new repertoire all the way. Several cathedrals and similar establishments offer such a position, with many gap year organ scholars going on to hold similar positions at top universities such as Oxbridge, or continuing their musical studies at conservatoires. If you're interested in applying for a cathedral organ scholarship, it's a good idea to start researching them far in advance.

RESEARCHING THE OPTIONS

Websites: Several websites, such as the RSCM, offer a list of organ scholarship positions across the country, but these are not always accurate. Since the structure of cathedral music departments changes all the time, you're better off looking at each establishment's website individually to find the most up-to-date information. Many positions will also be advertised in *The Church Times* and similar publications.

Getting in touch: Sometimes you will find detailed information about organ scholarships on the websites, and sometimes you will find next to nothing. Either way, it's worth getting in touch with the cathedral to find out some more information. Don't be alarmed if you don't receive a reply straight away – someone will have seen your message, but it sometimes takes them a while to get back to you.

Going to visit: If there are any positions you are particularly interested, see if you can arrange a visit. The best way to gain an impression of a place is to experience it for yourself, and this will give you the opportunity to meet the people you'd be working with and ask any questions you might have. Going to visit also makes a good impression of you – it shows you're really interested in the scholarship, which could give you an advantage over other candidates

APPLYING

Make sure you're prepared for your application well in advance of the deadline – as soon as the cathedral publishes the organ scholar job description and application requirements, read through them and start preparing. Filling out an application form is fairly straight-forward, but don't leave it until the last minute! I did mine for Windsor just a day or so before the deadline, but then couldn't find a necessary piece of information anywhere so ended up submitting with about half an hour to go! You may also be asked to send a CV and covering letter, though it might be worth send these even if they're not requested. There are plenty of people much more qualified than me to advise how best to write a CV and covering letter, but what I would say is this: they're not expecting a decorated professional, but rather someone who shows potential and eagerness – there's no need to scrape the barrel of your own achievements, just present yourself honestly and accurately. So, after you and several others have all proof-read your application materials thoroughly, send them off nice and early – punctuality makes a good impression!

AUDITIONING

Auditions will be different at each place, so make sure you're well aware of what you need to play in advance. They'll probably want a piece of Bach and something more modern. Whatever you pick, make sure they're pieces which you know very well, and have performed several times already. You'll have little or no time to practise on the organ

there so something you can just sit down and play comfortably is ideal, preferably with quite simple registration. You may well be asked to play an accompaniment, possibly with someone conducting from downstairs. Again, just make sure you prepare this well in advance so you're comfortable playing it by the time of the audition. There will (of course!) also be tests in sight-reading, transposition, score reading, improvisation, and possibly others too. The best way to prepare for this is, naturally, just to practise them over and over again, and to do so in stressful circumstances. Ask your teacher to test you on these, and force yourself to do them in services, even when it's not necessary. If something goes wrong during your audition, do your best not to stress about it – the ability to continue playing stably despite such problems is an important characteristic for an organist.

Your audition day will also include an interview. Again, there are so many people better equipped than me to offer interview advice, but be polite, and be yourself – demonstrate your enthusiasm for the organ and your eagerness to improve.

So, in summary, if you're interested in gap year organ scholarships, do your research, get in touch, go to visit, and make sure you're absolutely prepared for your auditions. Good luck!

Photograph of Alex Trigg courtesy of James Beddoe



The Maestro Online Aural, Improvisation, & Musicianship Courses

Online Skills Courses, Beginner to Diploma Level

Add these to your regular 1-1 lessons to help you really blossom!

How?

Snippets from famous songs are used to teach you key skills and to develop YOU, the musician.

Start with the sound and the music, focus on what you hear and then label it. Use specific exercises to train the mind and the ear that make you more acutely perceptive than ever before.

Which Skills?

Skills include aural, solfège, transposition, chords, counterpoint, improvisation, guided reading and sight-reading. You will sing and play quickly, and develop musicianship rapidly.

Format

A range of digital magazines with video tutorials on each page. Produced by an RCO Academy Teacher. He is published by Routledge in *The Routledge Companion to Aural Skills Pedagogy-Before In and Beyond Higher Education*.

Reviews

Organ Musicianship Course Review: "My husband added that well-known organ teachers would be unable to teach this. Because this is so revolutionary and brilliant can you copyright it ASAP?" Camilla.

Modern Pedal Technique Review: "I like the solfeggi approach very much - might have taught me to transpose - which I still can't do! Way too late now!" Kevin Bowyer.

Aural from Beginners to Diplomas Review: "My aural skills have improved in leaps and bounds. Thank you!" Michaela.

www.the-maestro-online.com



Engaging with the Organ



By Tom Bell
Concert Organist

tombell-organist.net

RCO

Ah, outreach, the vexed question. Even the very word causes trouble, suggesting to some the notion of an elite tossing scraps to the lower orders. “Engagement” is the buzzword now, though fewer people immediately grasp what is being talked about when you use it. But whatever you call it, how do you do it? How does one inspire the uninitiated to play or listen to organ music? The challenges are myriad; an abridged list of them being as follows:

1. The neglect of music education in many schools means many people are completely unexposed to art music, let alone the organ. Helping them to connect to the instrument as an object is one thing, making a connection with the repertoire is quite another.
2. Access to teachers across the UK home nations is patchy.
3. Access to instruments for teaching and (crucially) practice is equally patchy, especially where there are safeguarding issues to consider too.
4. Access to well-presented, quality organ concerts varies also.
5. Many of us, however self-assured as players, are not confident evangelists for the organ and its music.
6. Having reached people, staying connected with them afterwards can be difficult. All too often, an outreach project can prove to be a ‘flash in the pan’.
7. *Why bother in the first place?!*

That last question is key. We need to be clear why we want people to come to know and love the organ and its music. Dear readers, we are already converted, and know instinctively what it is we love and want to share. Yet, articulating why this is important can be harder than you might think. Have a go and see.

Some of the issues are vast - neither the RCO nor the readers of the *The Organ Manual* alone can address the systematic neglect of arts and humanities subjects in our schools. The schools are not to blame; the dual troubles are national policy and resource. Closely intertwined with this issue is the sheer ubiquity of music in modern society. For better or for worse, it forms a soundtrack to our lives, a background. We hear music on the phone when we’re on hold, we hear it in the supermarket, we hear it on TV. But as a society, we are no longer in the habit of listening to it for its own sake. This is a problem for more than just classical musicians. Nobody would go to a cinema, strap on an eye mask and insert earplugs, then wonder why they didn’t really get the point of the film. Yet this is what society teaches people to do with music. Thus, it is easy to get people interested in the instrument - it is big and loud and impressive after all - but making a connection with the music it plays is far harder. There are a number of important considerations when formulating an approach to this challenge. Classical music can seem to be a foreign language to many, so a ‘way in’ must be sought. At the same time, we must be honest about the breadth and depth of our repertoire. People know when they are being patronised, so we can’t just settle for playing the Harry Potter theme. Allowing people to approach the repertoire from their own perspective can be

crucial. Fortunately, there are practitioners out there who have managed to square this circle, such as Pam Hulme.

It is important to consider whether or not an outreach/engagement project is followed up in any way. I have been involved with countless exciting presentations about the organ over the years. Without question these can raise the profile of the organ, and introduce people - especially children - to the instrument and its music for the first time. But what happens next? If someone wishes to continue to learn about the organ, are there suitable resources to cater for them? Note that this is not just about getting people to play the organ, it is about growing the next generation of listeners too. How can they learn more about the repertoire or the instrument itself? If they wish to play, with whom can they learn, and how can they practice? Diversity issues raise their head here, too. Different people learn in different ways, and we must be aware of this, and of the need to find a variety of voices and role models to act as ambassadors for the organ. Remember also that, sadly, a church is an unknown and perhaps uncomfortable environment to increasing numbers of people. It is easy to forget this when, like me, you have spent your life hanging around in church organ lofts. I am sat in one as I write this article, and it may as well be my second home.

Again, there are answers out there. The Inspiring Organists project in London, formerly run by Tom Daggett and now by Jeremiah Stephenson, places digital organs in schools as a location for quality tuition, and as a safe space for practice. In other words, it normalises organ lessons such that they work on a similar basis to the study of other instruments. However, the students regularly play pipe organs too, not least the fabulous Father Willis at Union Chapel.

Presentation can be a problem. Believe it or not, people do sometimes wander in and listen to organ recitals on a whim. Only yesterday I gave a recital where two audience members were attending such an event for the very first time. They had visited the building I was playing in, saw there was a concert later that day, so they stuck around. I hope I welcomed them, played beautifully to them, and in my spoken introductions equipped them to approach music they had never heard before. Unfortunately, there are many organ concerts which do not seem to be focussed outwards. Perhaps on another occasion I can stoke controversy by sharing my personal thoughts on this matter. For now, I would observe that we must take care always to consider the stranger who might have taken a risk, and attended their first ever organ concert. It isn't about playing 'easy listening' music (people's tastes differ anyway), it is about how we introduce verbally the music we play. If a piece is challenging to listen to - and remember a Bach fugue can seem more unfamiliar to some people than a lot of modern repertoire does - then we must consider how we explain it, and choose carefully the other music in the programme.

Forgive the digression, but to lighten the mood I must share a tale about a stranger at a recital I gave some years ago. An American, she approached me after the concert to say that she had found the experience interesting, normally being a jazz listener. As it happened, I had played a heavily jazz-influenced Prelude and Fugue by an American composer (Henry Martin). I commented that I was concerned I sounded like an organist trying to play jazz. "Nah" my listener replied, "you sounded like an Englishman trying to play jazz!" You win some, you lose some!

If the foregoing seems a bit overwhelming or gloomy, I apologise. We need to be clear that there is a lot to think about. Lately, the RCO has spent much time doing just that, and whilst I am not quite ready to share our answers here, I promise to write again soon to elaborate. In the meantime, I think it is important to have a discussion. I'd be really thrilled if anyone reading this felt moved to share their thoughts or experiences with me via the RCO. Feel free to get in touch.

Tom Bell's playing has been described as "invigorating" (Sunday Times), "compelling" (Organists' Review) and "brilliant" (American Record Guide). He has built a vibrant international portfolio of work as performer and educator which has taken him across Europe, to Asia, the USA and Australia. Tom is known as an innovator having worked with beatboxers, visual artists, poets, folk musicians and dancers, and his work has been broadcast worldwide. Current projects involve music by Messiaen, and nineteenth century editions of Bach. His educational activities are centred on work with the Royal College of Organists; he is equally at ease leading workshops for children or teaching the next generation of professionals. His students have held prestigious scholarships in the UK. Tom is Artistic Director of the London Organ Day, studied with Kevin Bowyer, Jacques van Oortmerssen and Ann Elise Smoot, and lives in the north of England.

Your key to great playing

Music for organ

Not only do we supply the best digital organs from four leading organ builders, but we publish our own organ music and carry the largest stock of sheet organ music with over 1,900 volumes on our shelves from a catalogue of over 11,000 titles. Why not visit us in Shaw (OL2 7DE) where you can park for free, browse, have a coffee, play and purchase sheet organ music or use our online shop at www.sheetorganmusic.co.uk.



www.sheetorganmusic.co.uk

For more details and brochures please telephone 01706 888100

Beauty in Sound

By Richard McVeigh



I'm really happy to write for The Organ Manual, and I think it's a really great and innovative thing Anna and Alex are doing. It's really good that organ students have access to resourceful material online other than established places such as the RCO. This is also my main driver and inspiration for BEAUTY IN SOUND - providing people with an alternative platform with a rich and varied palette of organ material which people of all ages and abilities may find useful.

When I was first learning the organ the only resource I had access to was material published by the RCO - the various printed magazines and the attendance of workshops and masterclasses. There was of course very little internet in the late 90s, and it was still in its infancy in the early 00s and YouTube hadn't even been thought of! This meant that if I wanted to see other people playing the organ I would have to arrange a special visit to a venue or sign up to a workshop. This seemed like a bit of a faff to me, and nowadays people have access to everything 'on-demand'.

The combination of my own experience of organ playing and being able to give people access to the recourse 'on-demand' through YouTube made it a simple choice for me - I want to be able to provide people with such material that I didn't have access to when I was an organ student. And so BEAUTY IN SOUND was born.

With the recent arrival of a new 4-manual organ made of the highest quality materials (and modelled on the new York Minster console), it is my intention to invite organists of all abilities to play it for broadcast on YouTube. This will include organ workshops given by very experienced organists and organ recitals to be given by world-class performers, alongside the usual regular uploads of Virtual Church, Organ Compline and other uploads by me. The new organ will be very much central to the new online concert hall, and this is how BEAUTY IN SOUND will be different from other organ channels.

One of the most important and amazing things about BEAUTY IN SOUND is the community which is made up of a huge number of people (currently 72,000!). To help bring the community together, a new BIS Organists' Association has been formed on Facebook where people can share ideas, ask for advice and keep up with what other organists are up to.

I recently put together a Joint Junior Organ Recital where I invited the younger organists in my community to record themselves playing the organ for a combined online concert. It was wonderful to see a variety of organs and a wide range of repertoire, and is something that I'll definitely be exploring more of in the future, both in person on the new BIS organ and on their own instruments. Plans are developing to hold workshops and even have live audiences.

Another series on BIS is Call for Composers where I invite members of my community to supply me with their compositions. Choosing a programme out of over 50 submissions is both incredible and very challenging. Of course, music has to be of an excellent standard, but we also have to have the right amount of variety. I'd advise anyone wanting to submit a composition to keep it relatively simple and not to write anything 'flash' as there is a danger of the music too busy and unenjoyable for the listener. As someone said in a well-known film - "too many notes"!

It is my intention to build BEAUTY IN SOUND into one of the most resourceful places online for organ music, tuition and organ enthusiasts. If this sounds like something you're interested in, please click that Subscribe button!

www.youtube.com/beautyinsound

http://www.instagram.com/beauty_in_sound

<https://twitter.com/beautyinsound>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/organistsassociation>

The New Oxford Organ Method

Anne Marsden Thomas and Frederick Stocken

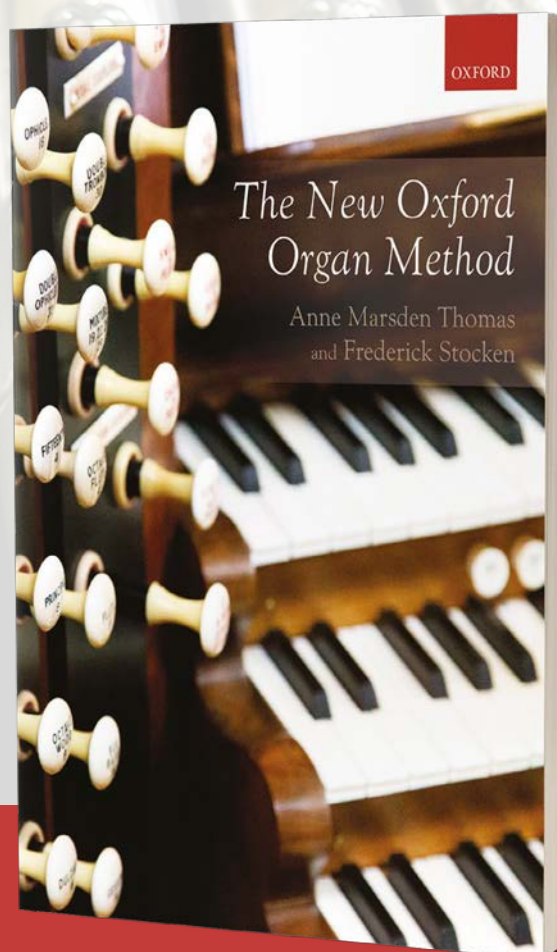
“A natural successor to C. H. Trevor... This contemporary and comprehensive *Method* will help shape the student's learning journey, providing a framework of repertoire that is holistic and relevant.

David Titterington, Head of Organ, Royal Academy of Music and Professor, University of London”

An inspired approach to learning

This comprehensive new method from Oxford is written by two renowned and highly-respected authors with a lifetime of professional experience of teaching and performing. Designed for use either as a teaching resource or for self-study, the content focuses on the organ's rich repertoire as the inspiration for learning.

- Each chapter focuses on a single piece, covering four main topics: practice methods, registration, fingering and pedalling, and historically-informed interpretation
- Attractive pieces include works by J. S. Bach, Buxtehude, Franck, Reger, and Walton
- Companion website offers extensive additional resources to enhance learning



The New Oxford Organ Method

Anne Marsden Thomas and Frederick Stocken

Published July 2020 | ISBN: 978-0-19-351832-2 | RRP: £29.95 / \$43.00

Available now from Oxford University Press and all good music retailers.

www.oup.com/sheetmusic

A Day in the Life of an Assistant Director of Music

by John Challenger

Photography courtesy of Ash Mills

I am very lucky to live a stone's throw away from my place of work, and even more lucky that my place of work is Salisbury Cathedral. Hardly a day goes by without my stopping for a moment to glance up at the tower and spire, and to marvel at the phenomenal achievement of those medieval craftspeople. The cathedral has a graceful interior and always feels welcoming, even on the coldest, darkest of days.

I'm usually an early riser, so I'll get up between 5.30am and 6am. On a Sunday, I'll head into the cathedral at around 5.45am, to get all the organ accompaniments sorted for Mattins, Eucharist and Evensong that day. The early morning can be a very special time in the building, especially in the winter when there are few lights on, and the building is yet to be opened to the public. It can also be magical in the summer at dawn, with the light shining at different angles, highlighting details of the masonry I would otherwise not have noticed. I'm privileged as part of my job to play one of the very greatest organs by Henry Willis. Completed in 1877, and following a recent restoration, it is sounding magnificent, and suits the building so very well.



Each weekday, I will head either to the cathedral school or to the cathedral at around 7.45am, to rehearse one of our sets of choristers (girls or boys). It's a great start to the day. The cathedral school (one of our rehearsal venues) is in the old Bishop's Palace, a large and ancient building in the south-east corner of the Close. The other rehearsal space (the cathedral song room) housed Magna Carta for many years, and is itself a fascinating room with the old Magna Carta 'cupboard', remnants of wall paintings, and an amazing tiled mediaeval floor. I love working with the choristers (and hopefully they like working with me!) and taking these rehearsals gives me a good heads-up for the organ accompaniments which are coming up.



I love the mix of roles in my job. It's certainly not all music as there are routine tasks to manage. Following the morning chorister rehearsal, I might head over to the office to deal with various administrative jobs, or attend a meeting. I might be planning a concert, adding information to the cathedral music scheme, booking a visiting organist into the cathedral diary, or writing programme notes. I try to find a good balance between managing administration and allowing enough time for my own musical preparation, and hopefully I strike the right balance most of the time. At Salisbury Cathedral the choir sings around eight services per week, most of which require organ accompaniment, and I also conduct the choir, play concerts and recitals in the cathedral and further afield, along with other bits of conducting work and teaching. It's a wonderful mix.

Without doubt, Evensong is the highlight of my day. I don't know what I would do without it. Whatever has occurred that day, the reassuring regularity of this early evening service keeps me going. Turning up at 5.30pm, ascending the

organ loft steps, switching on that wonderful instrument and playing the daily psalms is why I do this job. I love this part of the year particularly (writing in November), as the darkness in the early evening gives the candle-lit interior of the cathedral a much more intimate atmosphere.

The ending of each day is different. I get most of my own organ practice done in the early morning as I'm not a huge fan of rehearsing in the evening, as by that point my brain has been drained by the day's activities. And after



Evensong there are often other things to do: I sometimes meet people who would like to try the cathedral organ, I give organ lessons, or I might be involved in a rehearsal for the Salisbury Musical Society, Salisbury Symphony Orchestra or another one-off rehearsal or concert. It means that the working day can be rather long, but I'm hugely fortunate to live in a house in Salisbury Cathedral's famous Close, so it's easy to head home when it's all finished. Working and living in such surroundings, I cannot fail to be energised or enthused.

How to wind down? When I'm on holiday I like going on long walks all over the UK, and I've recently just taken up climbing again after a long break. I'll freely admit that in term time I'm not

very good at getting myself out of the cathedral Close, but Salisbury is a wonderful city in which to live, with a unique and fascinating history. It's full of wonderful people and surrounded by mildly-undulating, chalky Wiltshire countryside. If I have half an hour to spare, I might walk along the town path to Harnham, taking in the majestic view of the cathedral from the west, with the historic water meadows in the foreground. If I have an hour to spare, I might hike up to Old Sarum (the original site of Salisbury Cathedral pre-1220 – now abandoned) and take in the view of our cathedral from up the hill. What a great privilege to be a part of such history.

John Challenger has been Assistant Director of Music at Salisbury Cathedral since 2012. In this role he plays the cathedral's famous Father Willis organ, and assists in the running of the cathedral choirs. A Fellow of the Royal College of Organists, he is a former organ scholar of St John's College, Cambridge, and he was taught by Frédéric Blanc, David Briggs, Jeremy Filsell, Mark Williams, and the late David Sanger. In 2017, John acted as Director of Music at St John's College, Cambridge, during the sabbatical of the college's Director of Music, Andrew Nethsingha. At Salisbury, John continues to work regularly as a conductor with Salisbury Musical Society and Salisbury Symphony Orchestra. Alongside conducting and teaching work, he has also been responsible for many recent projects at Salisbury Cathedral including Organ Vespers, the Organ Prom, the installation of the cathedral's 'virtual' Father Willis organ, and several solo albums including, most recently, Salisbury Meditation, released to raise funds for NHS Charities Together following the use of Salisbury Cathedral as a Covid-19 vaccination centre with organ music.



Happy Tenth Birthday, Halifax Organ Academy!

by Professor David Baker



11 September 2021 was a special day for me: ten years exactly since I launched the Halifax Organ Academy. This was done with a master class led by Anne Marsden Thomas at Halifax Minster. To celebrate the anniversary, colleagues and students came together at my home to have a birthday party! We even had a cake with candles on top that spelled HOA! It was a wonderful opportunity for all those involved in the Academy – and especially tutees – to mix and mingle, exchange experiences, build a small pipe organ, participate in a short class on sight reading, hear fellow players and have a good time!

The attendees at the birthday party ranged from beginning organists to FRCOs, teenagers to pensioners, locals to not-so-locals. Just as at the Academy's inception ten years' before, they shared a love of the organ; many played in churches; some had an instrument in their own home. All were students of the HOA, some since 2011, many gaining much success along the way.

The event provided an opportunity to reflect on the HOA's achievements. These included exam passes and prizes, right up to and including achievement of the much-coveted FRCO qualification (three of my students graduated as Fellows at the same time!) as well as several organ scholarships to universities, conservatoires, and churches. This has always been supported by the HOA's provision of workshops, master classes, lectures, bursaries, and awards.

The assembly of my 'Orgelkids' kit was one of the highlights of the afternoon. Most students had not been aware of this tool, or how it was used in practical workshops for primary and secondary school students as well as adults over a number of years. The opportunity for people to find out how an organ works by building one – in this case a two-octave, two-stop instrument – has proved to be a vital way of explaining the innards of an organ in an enjoyable way. This mini-instrument, now with a second one in tow, remains a central focus of HOA activity. In the case of primary schools in particular, we blend the instruction with singing classes both as a way of involving all the participants and in order to use analogies between pipes and voices to explain how sounds are made.

One of the students who came to the birthday party was brave enough to be my 'guinea pig' while I gave a sample session on sight reading, how to do it and how to teach it, the philosophy being that if you can sight read you are likely to be able to achieve well in the other standard keyboard texts. It was very noble of her to 'volunteer' to 'perform' in front of 30 other organists! This session was an apt reminder of the significant benefits of working together with other students on shared challenges, with opportunities for exchanging tips and experiences, successes, and failures as well as the need to develop practical techniques and approaches.

A key aim of the HOA is to offer the chance for people to hear good quality performances. Arranging celebrity recitals – notably at and through Halifax Minster and its Friends of Music organization – has always been one way of doing this, right from the inaugural recital by Professor Dr Ian Tracey. A number of the students are themselves fine recitalists, and it was good to see this demonstrated at the birthday party in the composite recital that ended the celebrations. It was not only those at the 'FRCO' end of the Academy's membership who were invited to play, but also students at all levels who could celebrate their progress and achievement by performing some of their 'party pieces' as executed, for example, in various ABRSM grade exams.

Some of the people invited to the birthday party have become organ teachers themselves, including through accreditation by the Royal College of Organists. This is especially pleasing, given that when the HOA was set up, there were no accredited teachers living and working in Yorkshire or surrounding counties. See how many there are now, as part of a regional structure, with RCO (North) having its own director! It will never be possible to improve the standard of organ playing if there are insufficient tutors, and the work of the Academy over the last ten years suggests that there is a demand!

A number of the people at the birthday party do not live in Halifax or the Calder Valley, the Academy's core catchment area. We were fortunate in the early days of the HOA to have national as well as regional media attention, including breakfast television, Classic FM Radio, and other UK-wide and international music magazines. This brought in students from all over the north of England. The impact of the COVID lockdowns suggested that organ teaching would effectively cease, and it did in the short term, as far as I was concerned. However, in reality, before many weeks had passed, not only were existing students keen to continue virtually, but more enrolled! Distance was no longer a stumbling block and Zoom has proved effective in teaching and learning activities, including students' passing ABRSM examinations without my ever meeting them in person, at least not until the party!

'A good time was had by all', as they say, and the plan is to hold this event every year. I take pride that over the last 10 years, the HOA has offered

- Regular organ days, comprising masterclasses, seminars, performances, lecture recitals
- Provision of workshops for school children and adults
- Bursaries and scholarships (including in conjunction with churches)
- Help with finding an organ teacher

As of September 2021, the HOA has become the Halifax Organ and Choral Academy (HOCA). HOCA has been set up as a Community Interest Company (CIC), a Board of Directors (with RCO representation) formed and a new headquarters identified, for occupation in the early part of 2022. An exciting programme of work is now being planned for the next 12 months and beyond, in a deep partnership with the RCO.

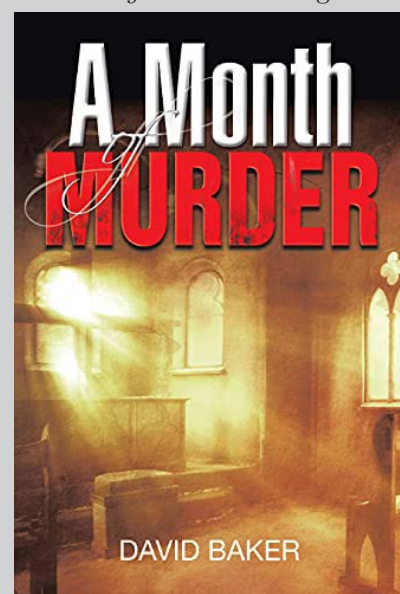
Here's to the next ten years and beyond! There is much to be proud of, and even more to look forward to in the future.



*Professor David Baker worked in UK higher education, latterly as Principal of Plymouth Marjon University. His first love was the church organ and by the time he was 17 he had his FRCO, graduating from Cambridge University with a first class honours degree in Music after three years as Organ Scholar of Sidney Sussex College. He also has an MMus from King's College, London. He is an accredited tutor with the Royal College of Organists' and founded the Halifax Organ Academy after retiring from academe. His book *The Organ* is a standard text. He has researched extensively on the music of Halifax Parish Church and edited all of William Herschel's compositions for organ. He is currently writing a monograph on Dr John Varley Roberts (1841-1920), Organist at Halifax and then Magdalen College, Oxford and has published Roberts's complete organ music. A biographical study*

*of Geoffrey Tristram, Christchurch Priory organist, is in preparation. He writes historical fiction and murder mysteries for fun. *A Month of Murder* is his first published crime novel. *Broken Eagle*, based on the escapades of Bishop Germanus of Auxerre in fifth-century Roman Britain, is his second.*

To read more about Prof Baker and obtain copies of 'A Month of Murder', visit https://www.amazon.co.uk/David-Baker/e/B019ADHAK0/ref=aufs_dp_fta_dsk



Concerts, Concerts and More Concerts!

A potted history of music at Gillingham Methodist Church (GMC), by Gordon Amery

I am pleased to have been asked by Anna to contribute to this second edition of The Organ Manual. I am one of the organists (we are lucky enough to have two!) and the concert organiser for Gillingham Methodist Church in North Dorset. I first met Anna in September 2019 when she came to GMC to play for one of our Summer Organ Recitals. It was a joy to hear her perform in public for the first time – she was nervous but played faultlessly! I'm sure she'll have an amazing career as a musician and hope that she'll come back and play for us (for a suitable fee 😊) when she's famous!

My involvement with Gillingham Methodist Church began in July 2002 and, like so many things in life, it was a case of being in the right place at the right time. My wife had been asked to be a godparent to a friend's baby boy and the christening was being held at the church. At the end of the service the Minister asked if there were any organists present since their elderly organist was retiring and they were desperately trying to find a replacement. My wife nudged me, even though I hadn't played the organ seriously for more than 20 years, so I talked to the Minister after the service and the rest, as they say, is history!

After an initial period of trying to assert control of my stiff fingers and regain some musical hand (and foot) to eye coordination, I found that I hadn't completely lost the art of playing hymns in such a manner that the congregation could sing them. Spurred on by this revelation I started to relearn some easy organ voluntaries and, as my confidence grew, some new pieces too. At this point it became clear that all was not well with the church's lovely Sweetland organ since I seemed to be spending an increasing amount of time mending broken tracker couplings, fixing stuck notes and taping up wheezing bellows etc. It was agreed by all concerned that it was time for a major restoration of the organ. The restoration was ultimately agreed by the Church Council and an appeal to raise the money needed for the work required was launched in June 2004. In late 2004, Michael Farley, Organ Builder of Budleigh Salterton was chosen to carry out the restoration and the work was finally begun in early January 2006. Incidentally, if you're interested in further details of the organ and its restoration please visit our web site at www.musicatgmc.org.uk/organ.

In 2004 we had made the decision to hold some concerts to help raise money for the restoration. The first of these, performed by a well-known local organist, took place on the 1st August that year and was well attended. We quickly built up a loyal following which prompted us to extend the frequency and variety of our concert offerings and to book performers for 2005. The most memorable of these early events again came about by chance when I attended an organ recital given by Professor Ian Tracey (Liverpool Cathedral & City Organist) at Wells Cathedral. During the interval I found myself standing next to Ian in the queue for a glass of wine. I got to talking to him about our organ and the restoration and was astonished when he offered to travel down and do a recital to help raise money for us. The 'demolition recital' (as Ian called it) took place on the 13th April 2005 and was a great success with a capacity audience present. Ian was keen to return and play following the completion of the restoration so in September 2006 we were excited to welcome him back for the 'Inaugural Post-Restoration Organ Recital' where he put our newly-rebuilt instrument through its paces. I am pleased to say that it didn't let us down, nor has it since! The following year we set up a website to help advertise our concerts, so I guess that really marked the birth of Music at GMC.

The next couple of years proved to be very exciting with an expanding concert series and a growing tally of 'celebrity' recitalists. In January 2007 we proudly welcomed the legendary Carlo Curley to the church. He attracted a huge audience and played a breath-taking array of music ranging from 'All Through the Night' and 'Moonlight and Roses' to the famous Toccata from Boëllmann's 'Suite Gothique'. It was such an honour to have such a famous organist visit

our small church in sleepy old Gillingham! In January 2008 Thomas Trotter (Birmingham City Organist) came to perform for us. He asked me to page-turn for him and this was probably the most stressful thing I've ever done since some of his pieces moved very quickly and didn't have a clear pedal line, so I found it very difficult to keep up with where he was on the page! I can remember being particularly amazed (and somewhat daunted) by the ease with which he brought off the pedal glissandos in Dan Locklair's 'Rubrics'. Stupendous!

2010 was a particularly notable year since we dedicated a brand-new Trumpet stop (16', 8' & 4') installed in memory of my father who had sadly passed away during the previous year. The Trumpet is controlled by a 'MultiSystem' switching unit (used in many well-known organs, including those in Sherborne Abbey and the Royal Albert Hall) so this also allowed the installation of two new flute stops – a 16' Bourdon on the Great keyboard and a quinted 32' Acoustic Bass on the Pedals. Ian Tracey kindly performed the dedication concert and it was such an emotional moment hearing the new Trumpet sound for the first time.

By this point the annual concerts had settled down into something of a routine with one 'celebrity' organ recital and five or six summer organ recitals, given predominantly by local organists. In other concerts we had welcomed a variety of musical genres including instrumental (organ(s), piano, harpsichord, violin, cello, flute, oboe and trumpet), choral (including gospel), vocal, folk, jazz and even full orchestral performances of Saint Saëns and Guilmant Organ Symphonies! To this mix we added improvisation when David Briggs (concert organist, composer, transcriber, one of the world's finest improvisers and thoroughly nice chap) visited us in 2010 to provide the music for a screening of the iconic silent movie, 'The Phantom of the Opera'. This proved to be so popular that we repeated the idea with 'The Hunchback of Notre Dame' in 2011 and 'King of Kings' in 2012. There wasn't a dry eye in the house for the final scene when the resurrected Christ stood as a giant above a modern city promising to 'Be with you always' as the full organ David had used for the climax fell to silence as he let the impact of those words sink in. Equally of note were the three 'Organ Fireworks' concerts featuring the maestro Briggs in 2015, 2016 & 2017. In these we used smoke, lights, lasers, video and indoor pyrotechnics to accompany David's stunning organ performances, to amazing effect. One amusing memory I have is of advertising one of the 'Fireworks' concerts on Facebook and having someone complain about how irresponsible it was to have fireworks in July when it wasn't even Bonfire Night. I still wonder whether the complainer felt a little sheepish when someone pointed out that the fireworks were of the indoor variety so no animals would be harmed! David has visited us on eight occasions to date and each one has been very special. The most recent followed the tragic events on the evening of 15 April 2019 when Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris was ravaged by fire and included a moving performance of Vierne's Messe Solennelle.

This just about brings us up to date with Music at GMC since we had to close the doors due to the pandemic in 2020 so all concerts were cancelled or postponed. We have however been able to record a number of virtual concerts, which has enabled us to keep our organ played and heard by anyone who cared to log in to our YouTube channel. It has also enabled me to learn the dark art of video editing and I was very fortunate to be able to put together a virtual Carol Service in December 2020 which included carols and other Christmas music recorded on our organ, lessons filmed at parishioners' homes during the lockdown and various other music including the concluding voluntary (JS Bach's 'In Dulci Jubilo') kindly provided by David Briggs from the organ of St. John the Divine in New York City. A wonderful end to a miserable pandemic year!

Looking back over the last 17 years for this article has been quite an eye-opener since I have discovered that Music at GMC has held a staggering total of 210 'real' and 14 'virtual' concerts! Obviously these have involved a huge amount of work in planning, marketing, advertising, printing posters and programmes in addition to actually hosting the events. However, the outreach benefits to my church have been tremendous - we have gained a loyal following of concert-goers as well as bringing in a little extra income. I am very proud that our beautiful Sweetland organ has been heard by many people locally as well as around the world through our virtual concerts. On a personal level, I have met many wonderful talented performers and some of them have become firm friends. I am profoundly grateful that through them I have been given musical opportunities that I wouldn't have thought possible.



PipeUp Devon

Learn to play the King of Instruments

**PipeUp Devon is the Diocese of Exeter's
Young Organists' Training Scheme.**

**It offers students throughout Devon subsidised tuition
from experienced professional tutors.**

The scheme offers young people aged 11-18:

**♪ the opportunity to transfer your existing keyboard skills to a second
and exciting new instrument.**

(Students should already be playing the piano, ideally to Grade 5 standard.)

**♪ the opportunity to offer your skills to your local church and
contribute further to your community.**

**For further information contact the PipeUp Administrator,
Mark Perry: pipeupdevon@exeter.anglican.org 07947 694903**

or visit the Diocese of Exeter website:

www.exeter.anglican.org/resources/worship/pipeup-devon



The Young Organ Scholars' Trust

by Jacob Costard



Organ lessons are often expensive, and the cost of purchasing music (and organ shoes!) in addition can be an overwhelming financial pressure for students and their families. In an age when church numbers are declining and the average age is not, there needed something to be done to inspire young people to take up the organ. Thanks to organisations and charities that are dedicated to supporting young organ students in their studies, there is hope that the great tradition of Choral music and the training of organists will continue for years to come. In this article I hope to explain a little bit about one such organisation: the Dr Martin Clarke Young Organ Scholars' Trust (YOST).

YOST was first conceived in 2013 when Chris Cowell was concerned about the ever-decreasing number of trained organists in churches in the UK. Chris had the vision of providing the correct training and support (including financially) that the next generation of organists in the UK need, and in doing so continue the illustrious history of the English Choral tradition. This vision of Chris's was made a reality with generous financial support – at the trust's genesis predominantly thanks to an old school pupil, Dr Martin Clarke, current President of YOST and after whom the trust is named.

It is increasingly common that playing the organ is accessible only for a small group of people at a young age, since the instrument is not commonly found in schools and is not one to be ferried to and from school like a violin or flute – as many parents may know from sitting in cold churches late after school hours! However, the option of learning the organ as a child should not be dismissed simply due to financial circumstances.

YOST is committed to ensuring that the instrument, which has most likely drawn you to this magazine, is accessible to all young people. A big part of this is providing the financial support for the student for their organ lessons, and other aspects of organ studies, for up to five years, when such endeavours might not have been possible otherwise. And so, when applying to the trust there are financial disclosures to be made, too.

YOST is a unique organisation; it nurtures talent in young organists or potential organists by enabling the opportunities to study with well-experienced and inspirational teachers, whilst not having to worry about the finances. Exactly who these teachers are is discussed as part of the process when applying to the trust, but the YOST team will ensure that he or she is well-versed in the practicalities of teaching and will be able to train the student in all aspects of the trade, from keyboard skills and repertoire playing to liturgical playing, improvisation, and choir training, to name but a few!

Of course, these essential components of being a well-rounded organist cannot each be discussed in a single lesson; but YOST ensures that the student and their teacher – and often another external teacher too – are monitoring the student's progress and receiving a 'complete' education in organ performance. Indeed, self-awareness is an important life skill, and I have found it to be a dealbreaker, or rather a gamechanger, when practising and organising myself – something I have certainly learnt from my teachers!

Jacob is a YOST organ scholar and a student at St John's School, Leatherhead where he is studying for A Levels in Latin, English Literature, and Religious Studies. At school, he balances his studies with accompanying the choir and performing solo works on both the organ and piano. He is a student at the Junior Department of the Royal Academy of Music, studying organ with Anne Marsden Thomas and Dr Frederick Stocken, conducting with Dominic Grier, and continuo playing with Debbie Diamond. When not on the organ bench, he enjoys reading a wide variety of literature, and is hoping to read Theology at university. Jacob is currently working towards his Associateship Diploma (ARCO) of the Royal College of Organists.



Diocese of Leeds Keyboard Studies Programme

By David Pipe

By way of an introduction, it's helpful to give a brief history of the Programme to date. Diocese of Leeds Music has attracted much acclaim for its successful Schools Singing Programme which delivers high-quality class singing sessions within primary schools, offering various pathways to after-school choirs in which interested pupils can further explore and develop their musical skills. Children within these choirs have enjoyed experiences as varied as tours to Rome, regular broadcasts on BBC television and radio, and ongoing partnerships with the Gabrieli Consort's Gabrieli Roar programme, all regardless of financial or social background.

In 2015, Ben Saunders (Diocesan Director of Music) and Philip Meaden (then Director of the Royal College of Organists) agreed that there was often a lack of opportunity for children to hone their musical skills even further through instrumental lessons, but that there was also a significant shortage of young people taking up the organ. As a result, they proposed the creation of the Diocese of Leeds Organists' Training Programme as a joint venture between the Diocese and the RCO. This was supported generously by The Liz and Terry Bramall Foundation, and I was appointed as its first Director in May 2016.

Our initial aim was to attract 35 new students within the first two academic years, although this target was surpassed before the end of the first year. What were some of the key factors that supported a successful uptake? It was crucial, firstly, to identify the small handful of schools that had pipe organs (either in a chapel or school hall), and then meet with respective Directors of Music. In many cases, organ lessons had once taken place but had fallen out of either demand or fashion. The organ obviously develops many musical skills and offers more than usual opportunities for public performance: perhaps during a Mass, before school assembly, or within class concerts. Schools were keen to embrace this new opportunity within the Diocese, and links were developed quickly. We were helped hugely by Viscount Organs, who kindly loaned an instrument to enable more flexibility for teaching within one of the schools.

This is a good juncture to think about how organ pupils can be encouraged and recruited. I think it's fair to say that any child will be bowled over by the sight and sound of an organ being played well, in whatever context. It's crucial that these first encounters involve music that will genuinely interest the children. Gone are the days, I feel, when a Bach fugue will do the job alone: anything by the great John Williams never fails to excite (think Harry Potter or Star Wars), and we should strive to prove to children that almost anything can be played on the organ. I've been known to wheel out The Wellerman sea shanty or even Baby Shark on occasions....

We've enjoyed several primary school events over the last few years in Leeds, culminating in our most recent Primary Schools' Organ Day in Leeds Town Hall just before their fine organ was dismantled. This event had been postponed several times owing to Covid. Originally we planned to have almost 1,000 children taking part, with group workshops on the wonderful WOOFYT (Jeremy Sampson's amazing Wooden One-octave Organ For Young Technologists) surrounding a lunchtime concert featuring a specially written piece for organ and narrator. We welcomed over 300 children despite the pandemic, which still gave us a great opportunity to perform to those who may never have even heard an organ before. The Q&A session following the concert showed just how much the children were able to



engage with such a fascinating instrument. We hope that at least some of these young people realise now that they, too, can learn to play the organ.

Considering the new pupils, it was essential in their first lessons to give each a sense of ‘ownership’ of the organs they played. I explained that they could go into the chapel to practise, for example, and underlined just how special an opportunity it was to have such quality instruments at their disposal. A state school in Harrogate had a dozen pupils in the first year of the programme, some of whom have now gone on to study music at university. Support from the school staff was of paramount importance, particularly for creating performance opportunities, but also for working together so that they could bring children to hear the organ during class music lessons. It was a nice discovery, when talking to A-Level pupils, to hear that even Sweeney Todd has an organ part!

It became clear that organ tuition would benefit from better support at entry level, particularly when bearing in mind that many children hadn’t had the opportunity to learn to read music confidently. Schools and parents were starting to ask if we could also provide piano tuition, and this led to the appointment of a part-time piano tutor to teach at Leeds Cathedral after school. More recently, an inner-city Leeds primary school embraced piano tuition wholeheartedly, with 40 children now having weekly individual lessons. To reflect this, the programme was renamed as the Keyboard Studies Programme.



During the first period of lockdown, we identified a further opportunity for broadening our tuition offer by buying thirty piano accordions from the local music service. These small – and, crucially, portable – instruments allowed many children from the Schools Singing Programme to take up a new challenge (and distraction) while confined to their homes. The accordion ensures that young players learn how music can breathe, which has turned out to be a beneficial factor when bearing in mind the accordion’s ‘big brother’ of sorts, the organ! In addition, there are a wealth of ensemble opportunities that will open up to the children as they progress in technical ability and musical awareness.

Finally, to our most recent development! Owing to a significant grant from the Hamish Ogston Foundation in 2021, Diocese of Leeds Music appointed a full-time accordion tutor in September, linking in with our new scheme of delivering whole-class melodica sessions to Key Stage 2 children in 14 primary schools across the Diocese. We were aware that the programme had offered very little for absolute beginners to keyboard tuition, and these compact 32-note instruments give a useful introduction to basic keyboard technique while building an appreciation of dynamics, phrasing and music-reading.

This scheme, in effect, has allowed us to form something of a ‘pyramid’ of keyboard tuition within the Programme as a whole:

- Whole-class melodica tuition in primary schools;
- Individual piano and accordion lessons in primary and secondary schools (with options for small-group work);
- Individual organ lessons in secondary schools.



To put this in perspective, at the time of writing we have 830 children taking part in melodica sessions each week, and 130 having individual lessons on either accordion, piano or the organ. My dream would be that a child starting melodica in Year 4 could progress through our Keyboard Studies Programme by learning the piano (or accordion), then becoming a skilled enough organist to play regularly in church and win a university organ scholarship!

Adjustable Bench Campaign (ABC)

by Marion Lees McPherson
Society of Women Organists

I wonder if any organist readers have shared my experience? I was asked by a friend to play for a family wedding in a distant town. Turning up at the church with the carefully selected music and organ shoes, there was no opportunity for a rehearsal, but I'd seen a photograph of the stops – surely, despite a bit of nervous apprehension, I was as prepared as I could be under the circumstances. But my heart sank when, after arriving at the church and being led up to the console, I saw the bench – not only non-adjustable but with wooden blocks fixed to its base! Clearly the six foot plus resident organist had altered it to his ideal height which made it impossible for a five-foot three inches body like mine to reach the pedals. Did this affect my performance? Yes, it did, and I am not alone.



The ABC has been launched by SWO as this is an issue which disproportionately affects women. In a recent survey carried out by the Society of Women Organists nearly half of the 486 respondents said that their playing had been compromised by the lack of an adjustable bench (adjustable meaning two or more possible heights) and 66% did not have a choice of heights at their regular place of playing. The average height of a non-adjustable bench in the UK is suitable for the average man, who is 5'9" tall while the average woman is 5'3".

Other responses from the survey 'I have never encountered an adjustable bench in 60 years of playing' 'I always get back ache' 'How many pianists would play with a non-adjustable stool?' 'give a clear indication that this is a widespread problem. Access to an adjustable bench is crucial to the development of a confident technique and can make all the difference between a good or bad performance experience for both player and listener.

In the past it was overwhelmingly men who held posts as organists. While this is still the case in major cathedrals and churches (only 8% of director of music or assistant organist posts in the UK are currently held by women) the numbers of professional women organists are steadily increasing and some prominent young women players are emerging in these high-profile roles. Large churches and cathedrals with more resources at their disposal will usually have fully adjustable benches but in many smaller churches and places of worship, organists (sometimes reluctantly

finding themselves 'filling in' for decades) are at the mercy of whatever fixed height bench is at the console and a bench built for a man of average height will not be suitable for a woman of average height or anyone below 5'9" which includes young people who are still growing. A too high bench is also a disincentive for the amateur organist to learn and practise on the pedals. It is also worth mentioning that for people of above average height a bench can always be made higher by raising it on blocks.

It is true that with so many demands being made on limited financial resources many churches would not be able to afford the £2,000 or thereabouts for a fully adjustable bench, however simple practical solutions are available, such as persuading a competent carpenter to reduce the basic height of the bench which can then be raised on blocks for taller people, or obtaining an inexpensive second bench which could be sawn down to accommodate the under 5'9"s.

ABC is proud to have the endorsement of Sir Andrew Parmley and Katelyn Emerson Through the SWO website ABC aims to give individual organists the opportunity to do their job properly and to support individual organists in making their needs known, we come in all shapes and sizes so please - may we all sit comfortably?

The Society of Women Organists was formed in 2019. SWO's key objectives are to support female organists; promote women's activities in the organ world; recruit girls and women of all ages and backgrounds to study the organ. SWO believes in giving girls and women an equal chance to excel as organists and so succeed in the profession.

Of the world's population, 51% is female. Of permanent Directors of Music and Organists in English and Welsh Cathedrals, just 10% are female. Only 8% of the organists listed on one of the main UK organ recitals page are women. And just 6% of recitalists at high-profile London venues in the first half of 2018 were female. SWO is committed to supporting women, giving them equal opportunities to increase these figures.

For further information visit www.societyofwomenorganists.co.uk; or contact Marion Lees McPherson at SWOABC@gmail.com or on 07773340079



Bath Course 2022 – Organ Scholarships

Are you an aspiring organist aged 16–21? Do you play at around or above Grade 8 standard? Why not apply to join our 2022 Bath Summer Course (22–28 August) as one of two organ scholars?



What can you expect as a course organ scholar?

- Expert tuition in organ playing, choral accompaniment, choral direction, and vocal technique.
- Opportunities to play for full and sectional rehearsals, and to work with the course director and other music staff.
- Opportunities to accompany singers and play voluntaries during services, and to experience the variety of instruments used during the course.

For course info and application details go to:
www.rscm.org.uk/bath

 www.rscm.org.uk  education@rscm.com

A Discussion with The Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

In December, Alex led a discussion with members of the RBC, to find out what life is like for students there, and what wisdom they have for young organ students. Present were head of department: Daniel Moult, third year student: Charlie Francis, and first year student: Matthew Foster.

Question: Charlie and Matt, what led you to choose conservatoire study over the other options?

Charlie: When I was looking at options in my sixth form, I think Oxbridge was probably above my considerations of conservatoire, I think largely because it's such a well-trodden route, so I was going on open days and writing application essays, etc. But then my teacher actually suggested I try out a few conservatoires (he went to one himself). I sent an email to Dan and we organised a trial lesson. It wasn't specifically the appeal of a conservatoire, but a lot of it was just that right feeling of a 'click'... I thought 'this just feels like something I could do for four years of my life.' It was the intensity of it... you leave the organ room after playing some Purcell and walk past a practice room where someone is playing a flute concerto... someone else is playing Mahler... what a way to be so immersed in music! That kind of utter immersion drew me to conservatoire.



when I got there it just felt right. Everybody was really nice, really friendly. I spoke to Dan, and the other students... it just fit me like a glove. Like Charlie said, the immersion is just absolutely everything I've been after, and having that level of music around you at all times just feels right.

Dan: That's really lovely to hear! I'm a firm believer that when you're doing anything vocational, like music, there's a sort of intuition when you get the right fit, which is why I say to anybody explore all the options before you commit to anything. We might not be the best fit for everybody, in the same way that a university music degree isn't. Also, it's not always an either/or. We have an increasing number of students coming to conservatoire after university to refine their playing, and we've also had people go on to do a master's degree at universities. There used to be this idea of a binary split... it's not like a decision that you make for life where you start down one path and can't ever go off it... education is more flexible than that.

Dan, you said it's important to 'explore all the options before making a decision'... how should a young person go about doing that? What would the first steps be?

D: All university music faculties have open days, and all conservatoires have open days. Open days are good, but they're slightly artificial... there's a bit of window dressing, like a brochure... you only get a gloss of what's going on.

I think, it's all about the teaching, rather than anything else – you're going to be spending maybe four years with that person and if the chemistry is wrong (either personally or musically), it's going to be miserable! So if you're looking at conservatoires, you absolutely must get consultation lessons with the head of organ – we're always delighted to receive and email (here, and also at RAM and RCM). Ideally, talk to students who are already there, as well (if you know any) – they will give you the honest truth! And most of all, trust your own intuition and your own judgement.

The same goes for university organ scholarships too – email the Director's of Music, go and play to them and see if it's the right fit. You'll hear all sorts of different opinions from lots of people, but at the end of the day, it's someone you're going to work with, and you need to see how that clicks for yourself.

D: You're absolutely right – it's a personal fit.

C: And a lot it so subjective... you'll hear hearsay about people that isn't true. It's certainly the healthier thing to go and meet people for yourself. There have certainly been occasions in my past when I've heard something about someone and been wary, then actually met them or worked with them and realised it's completely not the case. It's such a shame when that happens and it definitely can't be underestimated.

M: It's also important to take as much time as you can over a decision. I started thinking about it when I was 16, and started here when I was 20. That's quite an extreme example, but taking a while to think over your decisions is definitely recommended. It gives you time to consider all your options and to ask as many questions as you can.

C: That's actually something I was going to say too... For a lot of people, there's so much momentum from sixth form to higher education and sometimes people worry if they stop they'll never get anywhere else.. but things can take their time a bit. I know a lot of people who have taken a gap year or two just to take some time for themselves and focus on their playing, maybe get some private tuition, and six years down the line they're incredibly glad they did. There's no need to rush, and taking extra time will never do you any harm.

Charlie and Matt, you've both used the words 'immersion' when talking about conservatoire. Some potential students might be concerned that it's too much organ, too much of the same. Everybody around you is a musician, and there's a lot of practice and a lot of lessons. What would you say to someone to address those concerns?

C: Finding time to keep it just organ is a real challenge! There's the option of second study if you choose to do it. A lot of people I know are taking conducting lessons... a few doing piano, harpsichord, singing... Also, the Organ Department was put (I suspect deliberately!) in the same corridor as the Historical Performance department, and that in itself causes a lot of enjoyable calamity and chaos!

M: and collaborations as well!

C: I've had situations where you'll play a major piece of Duruflé in a performance class or something, then run to play for Evensong at whatever church or cathedral, then immediately go back to conservatoire because suddenly you're playing harpsichord for some concert of Monteverdi! And once you get to know singers you can end up with piano accompaniment, and there's ensemble work too... Especially with organists being quite acclimatised to accompanying, you can get yourself involved in a lot of different schools and a lot of different practices. It's all great experience – you might learn something from accompanying a singer in a Schubert song which may affect the way you accompany on the organ, and your awareness of listening to the voice.

D: At conservatoire, the focus is more on the practical aspects of musicianship (although we don't ignore the academic!), and I think that means at undergraduate level... we're very conscious about making people employable. We're aware that anyone who wants to go into cathedral/church jobs, either full or part-time, is going to need to direct choirs and accompany... so we have accompanying classes, we have choral direction classes... we do cater for that side. Now of course it is BMus, so we can't do everything equally intensely – the main focus is organ – but we do train in a way that maybe university organ scholarships don't

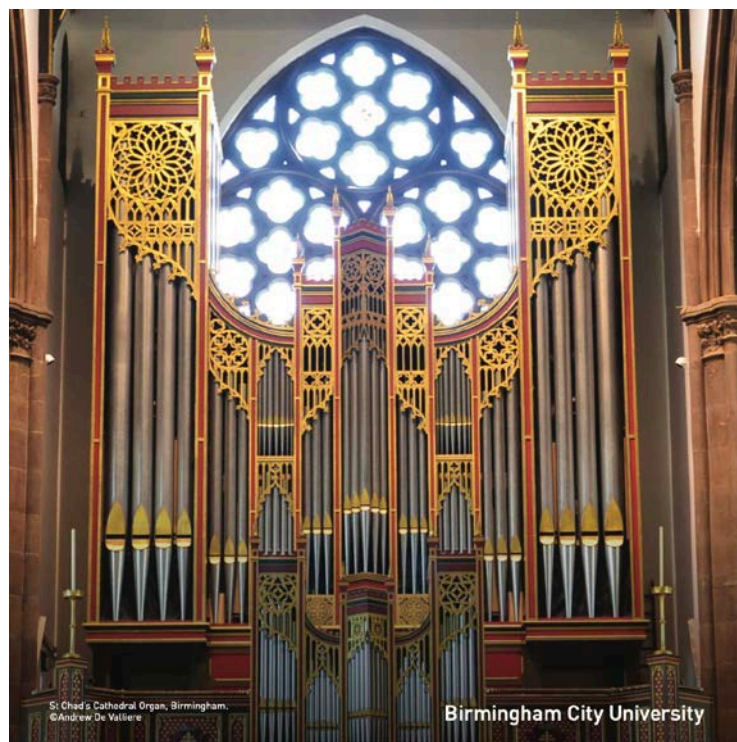


do so successfully. Sometimes perhaps they train academically, but on the practical side of things you're left to your own. Sometimes you can have three years at university and not have anybody give you input on how you conduct, how you accompany a choir – you know, it's all very much sink or swim – whereas the conservatoire culture is the opposite. We take each of these strands and we teach them. Yes, we focus on the organ, but we also teach all these associated branches as well. To the best of my knowledge, that doesn't happen yet at UK universities, so that's where we feel we have something of a USP.

I suppose what you don't get historically is the same academic level that you get at a university degree, but that's changed actually – it's more substantial than when I was a student. When I was a student it was quite a black and white divide: if you were interested in the academic side of music, you went to university; if you were interested in being a hands-on, practical musician, you went to conservatoire. But, without meaning to sound like a job advert, Birmingham is now one of the best places in the UK for musicological research at postgrad level. So it's all shifting sands – it's not as clear cut as it used to be!

So what kind of academic work is involved, and what proportion of your total study does it take up?

C: Well I'm a third year so I probably have a good idea of the trajectory of this. I think playing becomes more and more the emphasis as you go on. There's the nuts and bolts of year one: Bach chorales, counterpoint, the



classic lecture series on the history of Western music... the essay front is less intense though. That time spent at university preparing and writing essays is allocated more to practice here. We still have to write essays, e.g. about performance practice, and we do have modules, too. I'm working on two essays at the moment... one on German song cycles - I'm looking at how Butterworth might be harking back to the Berlin school... and another one on French Classical things, because that's another module I'm taking. There's quite a lot of choice too, so for example this year I've picked the pieces that I'm analysing and I've picked the modules and the subjects I'm doing. What I like about it is that the academics can be as intense as you would like... the tutors make it abundantly clear that they're very happy for you to spend all of your day doing it... you get given very big reading lists and ways to go further into it... so it's made available to us if we want to do more. So apart from the bare essentials, a lot of it can be left more up to the student.

Matt, could you talk us through a typical day as a first year at RBC?

M: A typical daily routine doesn't quite exist... but on a busy day we'd have maybe a few lectures in the morning, maybe a lecture in the afternoon, and try and dot some practice throughout the day. I go for about 4 hours a day, but it varies between students, and I'll split up my practice to look at all the repertoire I'm looking at in my lessons, and a bit of keyboard skills. I think that's pretty much it for me... lectures, practices, go to sleep, rinse and repeat!

And Charlie, how about you?

C: So my day would normally start at around 8, when I try to keep on top of emails and things, otherwise I don't get round to it! Often I have a lecture, seminar, class or something in the morning so I'll be in the conservatoire by 9 or 10. That works quite well because then I'm already in college and I can practise through till about 3, 3:30. If it's an Evensong day, I'll then go to the cathedral and prepare for that. Evensong will tend to wrap up about 6:30. Then, depending on how the day went, I might go back to college to do some more practice, maybe go home for some dinner, maybe do some academic work... I'm often in college quite late because I'm a bit of a night-owl, but I'll usually stop the day around 10, go to bed by about midnight. I tend to aim for 5 or 6 hours of practice a day.

D: Just so we don't intimidate your younger readers, Alex, I think maybe it's worth me adding that we do encourage a healthy work life balance! We strongly recommend that there's one day a week where there's absolutely no work.

Whilst we encourage hard work, we also encourage relaxation and having a social life, and with good time management, both are possible

C: Yeah it's worth saying I don't work intensely all that time... I have a few hours of lull in the afternoon!

M: Conservatoire is shut on Saturday anyway...

C: Yeah practice isn't available on Saturdays, probably to force rest among students!

D: Also after 10:30pm on other days... we had a discussion about going 24 hours like some of the European conservatoires but the general feeling was that that wouldn't be healthy.

M: That's come in handy for me several times! You know, you sit at the organ, slaving away and actually getting nothing out of it... then the alarm goes off to say it's time to leave and you think yeah, I guess you're right!

To what extent can students maintain a social life outside the Birmingham Organ Department?

M: Well there are plenty of opportunities, aren't there? Most of my socialising does tend to be within the organ department, and I think that's quite true of most of us, but the options are there! Lots of first years go to the pub fairly regularly, and there's lots of student union events, but I think we tend mostly to socialise within our department... would you say that's true, Charlie?

C: Yeah, I'd say it's probably similar to most people I know... your social life tends to be with the people you work with, just in the pub rather than in the workplace. There's still social events going on within the department, like a choir trip to the pub every now and then, and things like that... and there's this general camaraderie; often I'll end up going for coffee with people during the day and just chatting for an hour or so and unwinding. There's a 'conservatoire condoned' pub called The Woodman which is just outside and there's even a classical music thing going on so there's an opportunity to perform there. And of course there's the club scene... Birmingham is an exciting city – there's lots of universities... so if you're keen to socialise with 'normal people' there's plenty of opportunities to meet them, get to know them and form friendships.

M: As an organ department, we do go out for coffee all the time, or for a walk around the city.

C: One of the departments is trying to organise a group roller coaster trip but I'm not sure it's going to succeed!

D: If I remember correctly, Birmingham is the youngest city in Europe... because of all the tertiary education, and because so many young people move there.

Could you give us a picture of what playing opportunities are available outside the conservatoire?

M: I've personally been working on my playing and technique before going onto accompaniment, but there are plenty of things to do, aren't there Charlie?

C: Yeah, when I joined in my first year I was quite keen to have some church related job just to get a bit of money in the pocket, and I emailed Ashley Wagner, who's the assistant at Birmingham [St Philip's Cathedral], and he very kindly gave me some contacts of people in the area. You can get into the network of local organists who regularly need choir cover and organ cover, and there's actually really good ensembles around who are lovely to work with. From there you're likely to get invited to recital series and such like, and it all develops hand-in-hand. Recently one of the students was organ scholar at the Roman Catholic Cathedral: St Chad's, I'm currently organ scholar at the Anglican Cathedral: St Philip's (they're currently advertising for my successor – size 11 if you're wondering what size shoes you need to fill!) There's a lot of local churches as well where I deputise too. One of the other students is currently Director of Music at St Augustine's, Edgbaston. There's a lot of options around, to any level you want, whether that's just playing hymns or running the whole thing!



M: It's also worth mentioning that Birmingham has quite good rail... Harvey used to work at Coventry Cathedral

until recently, and there's lots of other cathedrals you can get to quite easily.

D: Yes that's true, we've had a few students work at Worcester before, also one at Lichfield... Birmingham and Coventry of course, and Wolverhampton. As Charlie says, there's a lot of flexibility, whether people want to play just Sunday hymns for beer money, or indeed none at all. If somebody just wants to focus on their playing, we also encourage that, and Matthew's a great example of that at the moment.

So it sounds like there's total freedom to do as much or as little as you like, and that's all supported by the tutors?

D: Yes exactly. Even though we're the largest organ department in the UK, we're small enough that we can absolutely tailor make things for each individual student. It's also worth mentioning, Alex, that (and this is unique not just in the UK but in all of Europe) we have a scheme with St Philip's [Cathedral] called Supporting Emerging Talent where students can drop in – as Matthew will be doing next term, in fact – and play just a tiny bit of a service, like maybe just an anthem, or a nunc dimittis, or more (maybe 3 or 4 items), as a gentle introduction to accompaniment, rather than a full on commitment. It's really great, especially for younger students, who are maybe excellent musicians, but might not have had that experience before. And we welcome hearing accompaniments in performance classes at the conservatoire, too.

We get a lot of festivals and venues which offer us concerts over the years. I tend to prioritise the slightly older players, so Charlie's had a good fill of them - and Matthew, your hour will come! We also have weekly performance classes, which is a friendly chance to put our playing under pressure, which is very important to help us deal with various performance issues, and for 'road testing' pieces. We also have a couple of internal competitions, the most famous of which we're resurrecting next year: the Dame Gillian Weir Messiaen competition which is going externally to a big festival in Yorkshire, so that's exciting news.

I have one final question. Before that, is there anything else you'd like to mention that we haven't already covered?

D: One more thing from me... We're about to go to press about four new organs, the first of which has just been built: a new Flentrop in the style of Schnitger, and then another two that we're about to sign the contract for, and then another big symphonic organ that is ongoing with structural, architectural etc... but hopefully it will be signed off in another six months or so, so there's really exciting things for the future in terms of resources.

So, finally: have you got any advice for younger players, perhaps students who are just starting to perform? e.g. methods of practice, dealing with nerves, etc.

C: I think the way I'd describe it is work with yourself. With other stresses around you, like school for example, you might only have time for 30 or 45 minutes of practice a day, which is certainly what I remember. Work with yourself - have an open conversation about what do I actually want to get done, and don't make too many bullet points about it... be patient. Musical tuition at school is very much about the enjoyment of it, and the journey. Maybe when you go to college or university, that's where it knuckles down and becomes more serious... but until that point it is really just an extra to your main school studies. If you start making it another stress, that's going to make it an unhealthy relationship. I find that if you're open with yourself and not too strict, I'm encouraged to be more structured, and... yeah to work with yourself, which I think is the best way I can describe it.

M: Planning and setting goals is a really good thing to do I think. It gave me plenty of motivation as a teenager... some realistic goals, and maybe some longer term goals, and planning your time accordingly... but not micro-managing. It's so much more rewarding to work that way, I think, and you get much more out of it.

D: If you're working with a performer (and all our tutors are performers as well as teachers), you ought to be getting a holistic tuition. In other words, as a performer myself I've had the experience of things going wrong, and the crippling effects of self-doubt at the wrong moment and so on. Part of what my colleagues and I teach is how to deal with anxiety and such like, and everything that Matthew and Charlie have talked about. So I think if you're with the right



teacher, that relationship is an important in dealing with those sorts of things, and making yourself more bullet-proof, emotionally and musically. You know, we're not psychotherapists, but we do identify common issues that we all have as musicians. We also have at Birmingham (as indeed our colleagues in London do as well) performance coaches, so if someone finds that whatever myself or another tutor says isn't quite working, we can recommend that they have some sessions with them, which is now quite a common path. So I think the big thing is, if anybody is struggling with things like anxiety, practice management, motivation, any of these things... firstly, there is help out there; and secondly, a good teacher ought to be aware of them and address them. And I wish someone had said that to me when I was 19 or 20 – it would have given me a lot of reassurance that I didn't then have.

M: I think not being afraid to talk to your teacher about what's going on, whether it's in your playing, in your head, or in the rest of you life, is really important... just to be open... you'll get everything you can out of your lessons then.

C: Especially from a student point of view... at school for me the organ lesson and the organ teacher were the big pillar of just getting through the week – school was really stressful but I really liked the organ and that's where I went to escape. You have this guiding figure – they're your teacher, but they really mean a lot... and let's say you haven't practised because you're having an awful week, if they don't know what's going on, you have a bad lesson and that's such a put down. Whereas if they're aware and you have that open discussion, (especially as a student, when life always has a habit of getting in the way!) that awareness can cause less stress. And that's really recognised here – mental health is very actively approached with the students and there are classes on methods of unwinding and managing tension and anxiety – we had a yoga class! We've also had Alexander Technique, meditation, reflection...

M: We had ear health recently too!

C: Yeah that's another one... all these open discussions. There's a weekly mental health and wellbeing session run by the principal herself – it's nice that that open discussion goes right to the top, and it creates a really healthy culture. If a student plays poorly in a performance class and be upset about it, you'll never see them on their own. There will always be another student comforting them or a member of staff bigging them back up again, making sure they're not alone. I think that culture and that openness is maybe what drew me to RBC in the first place....

D: That's really kind of you to say, and I agree – as an institution that's the vibe that I've always loved about the place and I've been involved with it for 18 years now! I think places do have vibes, don't they – good and bad – and I've applied for jobs in the past, like in my 20s, and instantly though nah... shall I get the next train home? But places have vibes and you can tell... it sounds a rather vague thing to say... but I think that's why going and experiencing the teaching and experiencing the place in as honest a way as possible is so good... maybe following around in term time, rather than an open day... because then you get to experience a place warts and all – it's not all about window dressing! That can be very instructive... perhaps young students might ask to shadow, with a parent or guardian, for half a day in an institution, when they're not on the best behaviour and when things go wrong... just how life normally is! And that's, I think, when you get the vibe of what a place is about for real.

The RCO logo consists of the letters 'RCO' in a white, serif font, centered within a solid purple square.

Join the Royal College of Organists

the first stop for every organist

www.rco.org.uk

Membership of the Royal College of Organists is open to anyone with an interest in organ and choral music, whether you play, conduct, teach, compose or simply appreciate and enjoy the music.

Beginner & Early Stage: invaluable support, advice and learning opportunities for some of our youngest members, as well as for those discovering or returning to the organ in later years.

Developing: The developing organist comes in all shapes and sizes, from talented teenagers looking towards Higher Education (and beyond) to parish organists keen to build a broader range of skills and repertoire.

Advanced & Professional: We are proud to have as members some of the world's most accomplished musicians, working in busy and varied careers as directors of music, recitalists, composers, conductors, choral trainers, teachers, scholars and administrators.



Membership benefits include:

- **Online learning:** 100% free access to our webinars and online learning hub, iRCO.
- **Events:** concessionary rates for courses, classes, and study days.
- **Accreditation:** the College's gold-standard diploma examinations and our early-level Certificate of Accredited Membership scheme.
- **Awards & bursaries:** awards and bursaries to support students and members pursuing organ studies.
- **Library:** access in two locations to the College's extensive collections of organ and choral music, books on organ music and the organ.
- **Publications:** Free copies of our print and digital publications.
- **Professional support:** support, advice and information for organists throughout their professional lives.
- **Discounts & exclusives:** A range of discounts and exclusive access arrangements for RCO members are negotiated for a variety of instruments, concerts, festivals and publications.

Join the Royal College of Organists today at www.rco.org.uk/for-every-organist

We Need You!

Wondering what you can do to support The Organ Manual Online Magazine?

- Send us your questions for the next 'Meet the Team' article by 12th March.
- We would love to share your keyboard images - please do send them through!
- **Advice Column** – do you have an organ related question you'd like to ask but don't know where to go? Send them to us by 1st April and we will get an answer for you!
- Do you run an event, a scholarship scheme, host recitals etc? Would you like us to advertise it for you? All adverts are placed free of charge! Please send us your artwork by 24th April to be included in the next edition.
- Is there an article you'd like to write about the organ? Let us know, we'd love to have you involved!

The next edition of The Organ Manual Online Magazine will be published in May 2022, including articles on writing programme notes, performance skills, selecting music for an exam and being an island organist.

