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# The Cornopean

2020

EXETER & DISTRICT ORGANISTS' ASSOCIATION

## Newsletter

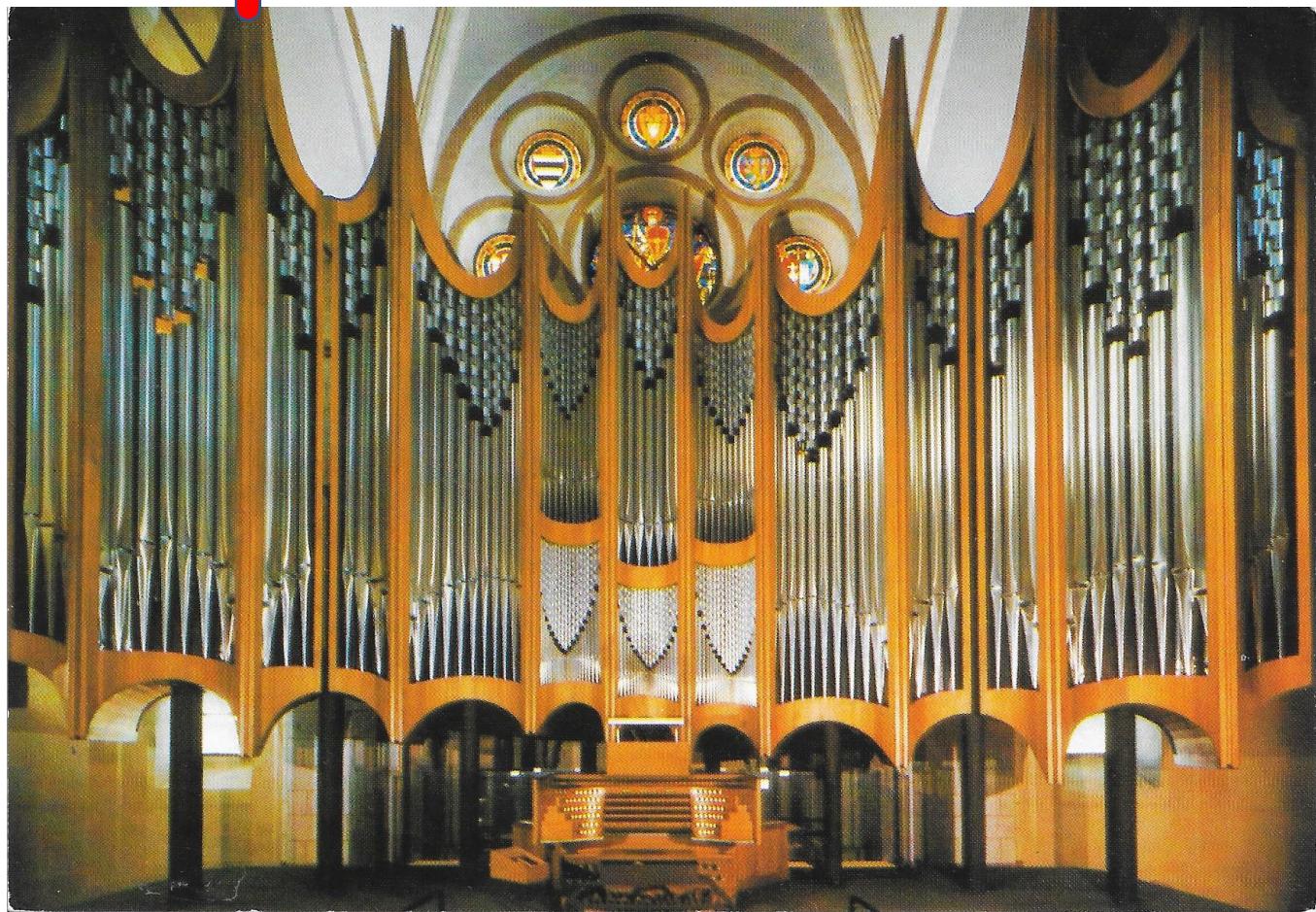
September 2020



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## Centenary Year



## Letter from the President

26<sup>th</sup> August 2020

Dear fellow members



*This month's edition of The Cornopean features articles by two Assistant Directors of Music at Exeter Cathedral: David Davies has written an engaging article about his musical education in North Wales and Timothy Parsons has contributed an enlightening article about his compositional process. "Desert Island Discs" are contributed by a former Assistant Organist of the Cathedral, Stephen Tanner, who is now known to many as Director of Music at St Peter's, Budleigh Salterton, Director of Isca Voices and joint Director of the Heritage Singers. His choice gets us nicely out of the organ loft!*

*I am delighted that, for the first time, this edition of The Cornopean features a guest article, contributed by a non-member: before his consecration as Bishop of Argyll & The Isles, The Right Revd Martin Shaw had a fascinating career which included a period at Exeter Cathedral, as Succentor, (with a return engagement later as Acting Precentor) as well as a period at St Edmundsbury Cathedral as Precentor. His article is about his two periods of work at King's College, Cambridge: Part 1, when he was Chaplain during Philip Ledger's time as Director of Music; Part 2, which will appear in the October edition, is about his time as Acting Dean, during Sir Stephen Cleobury's reign as Director of Music.*

*Martin & Elspeth are much loved figures on the Exeter scene. During Martin's period as Acting Precentor at Exeter Cathedral in 2017/18 choir, congregations and, dare one suggest, also the Almighty were delighted by his un-churchy cantoring of the Responses; moreover people could be observed listening to his sermons rather than, as might be the case, admiring the architecture of the cathedral or salivating about a forthcoming roast dinner – as a neighbour whispered to me during such an occasion "You just can't help but listen to the man, can you".*

*I am delighted that we have a new Nerd of the Month. This month we received several complete or almost complete answers, but congratulations go to Peter Parshall who submitted a complete list of correct answers on the morning of publication! After last month's departure with a picture of the former organ at Nantes Cathedral, this month we return to our front cover Lockdown series of the Editor's favourite modern organ cases. This issue features the Klais organ of Limburg Cathedral (1978).*

*With best wishes as you continue to emerge from Lockdown,*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter King".

Peter King

## Desert Island Discs

### Stephen Tanner

Stephen Tanner began his musical career as a chorister in the choir of Coventry Cathedral and studied for a degree in music at the University of Huddersfield. For many years he was Director of Music at Exeter Cathedral School and Assistant Organist and Director of the Girl Choristers at Exeter Cathedral. He founded the Girl Choristers' section of Exeter Cathedral Choir in 1994 and directed it for 22 years. He was musical director of Exeter Cathedral's nationally recognised Chorister Outreach Project, working to promote singing in Devon's primary schools.

Stephen directs "Isca Voices" a highly acclaimed choral group of former choristers from Exeter Cathedral Choir who perform a wide range of sacred and secular music. Isca Voices have in recent years toured to both Rome and Paris singing in prestigious venues including St Peter's Basilica in the Vatican and La Cathédrale de Notre Dame in Paris. Stephen is accompanist and Associate Director of Music of the Exeter Philharmonic Choir and is one half of the organ duo Organ2. He is also joint musical director of the Heritage Singers and Organist and Director of Music at St. Peter's Church, Budleigh Salterton. He has composed and arranged extensively and has won two national composition competitions. He is an examiner for the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music serving on both the main and jazz panels.

Stephen writes: Whilst choral and organ music has been the mainstay of my professional life, my musical taste has always been very wide. Jazz, folk and popular performances by some of the leading musicians in their fields have provided not only great memories but considerable influence and inspiration in so many aspects of my music making. I passionately believe in the power of music to inspire, move and entertain and know that the choices that I have made to accompany me on my Desert Island would continue to do this no matter how many years I was stranded for.

#### 1 JS Bach - Brandenberg Concerto no.3

To me JS Bach will always be the greatest composer of them all and so had to feature as number one in my list. My first thoughts were the *St Matthew Passion* which had such a profound influence on me singing it every year as a chorister at Coventry Cathedral with the intensity of its narrative or the sublime *Concerto for Two Violins* in D minor but in the end I chose *Brandenberg Concerto* number 3 for its sheer energy and exuberance.

#### 2 Jacques Loussier Trio - JS Bach Italian Concerto

My second choice stays with JS Bach but interpreted by the great French pianist Jacques Loussier (1934-2019). The Jacques Loussier Trio formed in 1959 used the compositions of Bach as the base for jazz improvisations and this fusion of styles was unique at that time. I have always loved jazz and Loussier was one of the greatest exponents of the art bringing Bach's music to a completely new audience. One of the most inspiring musicians that I have ever seen live, he would later interpret the music of other great composers including Handel, Vivaldi and Debussy but first and foremost he will always be remembered for his sublime "Play Bach" recordings. I would never tire of listening to the three movements of the Italian Concerto on my desert island.

#### 3 Howells - Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis, the Gloucester Service

The next three choices reflect the world of choral and organ music which has dominated my professional life. Few composers have had such a profound impact on anglican choral music as Herbert Howells both as a composer and teacher. His distinctive style is instantly recognisable and much imitated but never



surpassed seeming to effortlessly match the architecture, ambience and organs of the great religious buildings of the United Kingdom. His settings of the evening canticles are especially revered and the gentle setting dedicated to Gloucester Cathedral is a particular favourite of mine. I regard the climaxes in the two *Glorias* at “As it was” as amongst the most powerful in sacred music.

4      Paul Mealor - *Ubi Caritas*

The twenty-first century has seen the emergence of sacred choral music which is often slow moving and reflective with dense, shimmering harmonies influenced by the likes of Morten Lauridsen, Eric Whittaker, Gabriel Jackson, Will Todd and many others. Needing something calm and reflective on my desert island I have chosen Paul Mealor’s setting of *Ubi Caritas*, written for the wedding of Prince William to Catherine Middleton in 2011, as a wonderful example of this style and a piece that I particularly enjoyed conducting.

5      Jean Langlais - *Incantation pour un Jour Saint*

Room for just one organ piece so it needs to be dramatic one! I have always loved the sound world of Jean Langlais in which his highly distinctive harmonies are frequently fused with the timeless melodies of plainsong. I think the recording I would take to the island would need to be made on a large French Cavaillé-Coll, perhaps St Sernin, Toulouse, to get the full effect of those shattering reeds within a huge acoustic. This piece is based around the plainsong acclamations of “Lumen Christi” the Light of Christ.

6      Sting - *Fields of Gold* sung by Eva Cassidy

The American jazz / blues singer Eva Cassidy died tragically at the age of just 33. Two years after her death there was an overwhelming response when her music was widely aired on BBC Radio 2 and her posthumously released albums went on to sell 10 million copies world-wide. Her voice has both power and fragility as well as an extraordinary expressive range. An artist that I can listen to again and again not least her timeless interpretation of Sting’s beautiful song, *Fields of Gold*.

7      George Gershwin - *Porgy and Bess*

George Gershwin has always been a favourite composer of mine. He is regarded as one of the greatest of all song writers most frequently collaborating with his lyricist brother Ira, enjoying huge popularity and celebrity in his own lifetime. Alongside his many musical shows, his most popular work is *Rhapsody in Blue* for piano and jazz band which fuses a classical form into the jazz idiom but I would like to take his folk opera *Porgy and Bess* to my desert island. A profoundly moving storyline set amidst some of the greatest melodies ever written including “Summertime” which I believe is the most recorded song of all time. I had the extraordinary privilege of seeing the 1986 Trevor Nunn production at Glyndebourne conducted by Sir Simon Rattle with Willard White as Porgy.

8      Coldplay - *Up and Up*

One of the greatest joys of being a teacher is following the career path of your former pupils especially when so many are enjoying successful careers in music. Who can tell what may have been the triggers for this but I could never have predicted the world wide success of Chris Martin of Coldplay which began working out chord sequences on what were then very state of the art electronic keyboards in the Exeter Cathedral School music room. Even more remarkable is that we have stayed in touch and that I should have attended the Paralympics closing ceremony in London 2012, The USA Super Bowl final in 2016 and been backstage at Glastonbury amongst a wealth of amazing Coldplay adventures. It is the most moving thing to experience the songs written by a former pupil sung with such joy by crowds of over 80,000 people in huge stadia. True music power! Coldplay draw attention to the prejudices and inequalities of the world we live in but I am going to choose *Up and Up* for my final disc as it is hugely optimistic about never giving up and looking forward whatever the situation. As a huge encouragement to me on my desert island, this would be the piece of music that I would save from the waves above the others.

Luxury item

With music having dominated all aspects of my working life, I think my luxury item would have to be a piano so that I could keep making and composing music. Who knows, perhaps even some song writing as nobody would be able to hear me...

## 'Point!' Memoirs of King's. Part 1

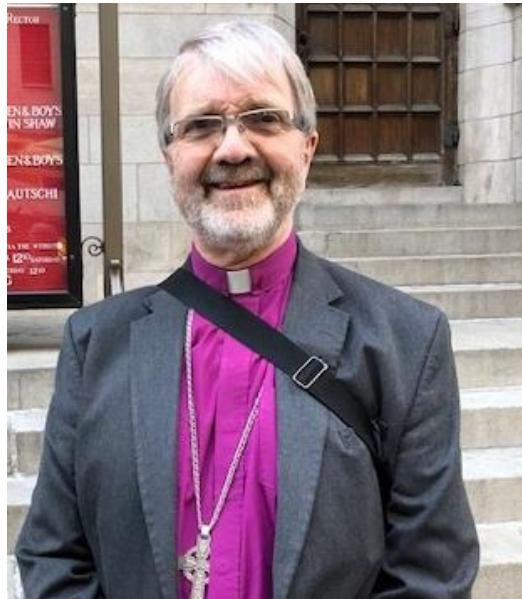
Both this memoir and the one to follow in the next issue, I write in appreciation and in the knowledge that the present Director of Music at King's Cambridge, Daniel Hyde, like so many in the Cathedral and Collegiate traditions of music, is facing the Covid-19 crisis, with all the uncertainties of sustaining and developing the world famous King's Choir.

Paisley, in Renfrewshire, may seem an unlikely place where my connections to King's College, Cambridge began. In the 1950s, Christmas decorations weren't put up until the afternoon of Christmas Eve. With my mother, I laboured with the 'fairy' lights [a description that, perhaps, has had its day!], while listening on the BBC's 'Third Programme' to Boris Ord's Choir at King's in the Nine Lessons and Carols. Meanwhile, my father recorded the service on a heavy Ferrograph tape recorder. In the evening, we would all listen again, with particular attention to Charles Wood's setting of *Ding! Dong! Merrily on High*. My father, an organist himself, was in awe of "Boris's precision and the choir's delicate and constrained singing, which was matched by his own 'Adam lay y-bounden'". For a Paisley boy of 10 in about 1954, the King's choir belonged to the beyond: an inaccessible world of wonder and beauty.

Twenty-one years later, I was a curate at Old St Paul's in Edinburgh. Through the letter-box dropped a letter that I shall never forget. The envelope had "King's College, Cambridge" printed on it. In my excitement, I ripped it open. The letter was from the then Dean of King's, Michael Till, asking me to consider applying to be Chaplain. The inaccessible suddenly seemed to become accessible! To live and work with 'that' choir in one of the most famous buildings in the world, let alone be daily with leading academics...me?



King's College Cambridge, the Gibbs Building (James Gibbs, 1724)



Bishop Martin Shaw outside St Thomas, 5th Avenue, where Carl Turner who was Precentor of Exeter Cathedral had invited him to preach. At that time, Dan Hyde was the D of M of St Thomas

Within a few weeks, I travelled to Cambridge. Walking through the archway of the King's Porters' Lodge, you find yourself facing the grey-white facade of Gibb's building, beautiful in itself. And there to your right, the Chapel. From Michael Till, in my interview, I discovered the background to my being invited to apply. In the recent summer vacation, the Chapel was used by "The Fisher Folk", a travelling music and missionary group that had originated in Houston, Texas. A few months before, as it happened, I had met them when they came for a few days "mission" to Old St Paul's, Edinburgh. When Michael Till met them, he asked whether they had, perhaps, come across a young priest who could sing and provide some energy in his attitudes and behaviour. The leader of the Fisher Folk, Graham Pulkingham, mentioned me as I had sung with them in Edinburgh. I certainly wasn't going to arrive in the interview through the academic route!

There was, of course, an interview and audition in the Chapel with Philip Ledger, the then Director of Music. Never had I been inside the Chapel in my life. As you go through the South West Doors, you find yourself almost hit by the seeming limitless height created by the fan-vaulting, a delicate tracery on the stonework throughout the Chapel; a sense of endless story-telling in the windows;

the rich dark woodwork and, of course, the complex proportions, the golden beauty of the organ casing that seems to float in the middle of the Chapel.



King's College Chapel, completed 1515, vault by John Wastell  
The romance was over, however. In the empty Chapel, Philip Ledger with the senior organ-scholar, James Lancelot, met me. I was given an A440 tuning fork and asked to sing the *Bernard Rose Responses*, which were, or so I thought, of little difficulty to me, as I regarded myself as a reasonably competent singer. When I knocked the tuning fork against the woodwork of the Chaplain's stall to give myself a note, there was a shout from the Organ Loft. "No! You'll damage it!" I thought Philip meant the



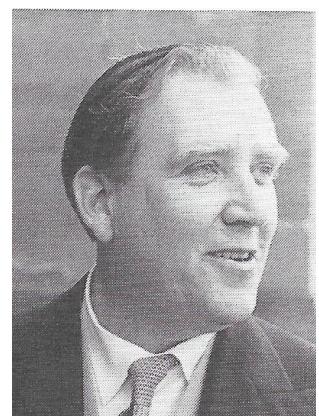
James Lancelot, Organ Scholar 1971-4, later Director of Music, Durham Cathedral



King's College Chapel, the stalls (1533-6)  
possibly French or Italian work

woodwork, but it was the tuning-fork for which he was concerned! I returned to Edinburgh, to receive a call from Michael Till in my favour. The world of Boris Ord, David Willcocks and now Philip Ledger, I could now enter, or so I thought.

Perhaps someone might contradict me, but I think I'm the first person ever to have become Chaplain of King's Cambridge, not only without an Oxbridge Degree, but with no degree at all! Yes, I have an AKC: an Associateship of King's London, an adequate enough qualification for training for ordination, as well as a Glasgow University Diploma in Social Psychology. The latter you would have thought might have held me in good stead! Perhaps, that inferiority that I felt [and still do feel!] was the principal reason why I tried too hard to feel included in such illustrious circumstances, both among choral scholars and the Fellowship. Yes, I'd been to the Royal College of Music, while I was at King's London, not as a student, but to have singing lessons from Gerald English, Gordon Clinton and David Ward. However, I didn't have it within me to get anywhere near thinking about, let alone passing the requisite exams and interviews to become a Cambridge undergraduate! So, I arrived at King's feeling that I had squeezed through some side-door, edging my way tangentially into the 'inaccessible'



Gordon Clinton (1912-1988), distinguished baritone, working with Beecham and others, Principal of the Birmingham School of Music, founder of the CBSO Chorus

A few weeks, prior to moving to Cambridge, I received a gift of an L.P. of *Anthems from King's*, with David Willcocks and the Choir singing some of the much-loved anthems of our choral tradition. I remember sitting by myself overawed, listening to Edgar Bainton's *And I saw a new heaven*. To think that in a few weeks, I would be there!

Of course, although I knew it, it wasn't long before I realised that I wouldn't be singing with the choir,

except for boosting the bass line in the occasional recording. After all, organ and choral scholars at King's achieve their places not only because of their musicianship, but by becoming undergraduates at Cambridge. Further, many of them become professional singers and musicians in their own right. The choristers, themselves considerable musicians, I saw every day at the Choir School where I taught Divinity, an enterprise that required tolerance on the part of the then headmaster, the gentle and experienced David Briggs. To this day, I can't help feeling a twinge of envy at what it is to be a Cathedral chorister.

The organ scholars, in my short time as Chaplain, were Francis Grier and Thomas Trotter, who have developed into leading musicians. However, the contrast in personality between the two, it seemed to me, was nothing short of spectacular. Francis was [and is] a fine pianist as well as organist. When I found life unbearably



Thomas Trotter, King's Organ Scholar 1976, Concert organist, Birmingham City Organist.

At the organ scholarship auditions, I was fortunate enough to turn pages for the candidates. Philip Ledger, if I remember correctly, asked Thomas Trotter to play a well-known hymn, transposing the key. Further, he only had one stop - the "twelfth" - I think it was. This meant that he not only transposed but couldn't hear the notes at the correct pitch - and - he was only 18. Thomas



Francis Grier, organist, pianist & composer, King's Organ Scholar 1973  
later Organist at Christ Church Oxford

tense in the Chapel, he seemed to rise above it, as if he was born to it. Indeed, he sometimes looked as if he owned the chapel! Thomas Trotter, a genius on the organ, never once gave me the impression that he was in a prestigious role. Who owned the Chapel was a matter of indifference to him.

calmly got on with it, without a flaw. When I asked Philip why, he simply answered that he needed to be confident not only about transposition, but that his organ scholar could trust his keyboard skills when he couldn't hear the organ because of congregational noise in the Chapel. An unnecessary trip wire, it seemed to me.

Philip Ledger, in the 1970s, at Evensong, as was the general habit at that time, would only occasionally leave the organ loft to conduct the choir prior to the *Magnificat* and *Nunc Dimittis* settings. What's more, he wouldn't use a music stand, as he stood at the end of the chorister stalls on *Decani*. The poor chorister who stood next to him had Philip's left arm waving about in front of him and his right arm behind him, close enough to give him a clip across the ear! A choral scholar in the middle of the back row of *Decani* and *Cantoris* would "conduct" with their fingers simply rocking up and down on the choir stalls to the pointing of the psalms. This, I think, used to be the received habit in most Cathedrals as well. In practices, Philip would remind the choristers to 'point'. A junior chorister with his senior next to him, was expected to point with his index finger along the line of the words of the psalms.

Philip or one of the organ scholars, every morning in term time, would come to the Choir School for a choristers' rehearsal. Observing this process was fascinating. Philip would have two choristers standing each side of him, not so much to hear whether they were singing the right notes, but to have a sense of how their voices were developing. As any chorister didn't know when it was his turn, it brought a certain alertness!

My relationship with Philip Ledger wasn't always an easy one, in fact it became at times, painful. He had built a fine reputation as an accompanist, particularly for Janet Baker, Robert Tear and Benjamin Luxon. Relaxing over a beer, after one Evensong, Philip spoke to me of



Sir Philip Ledger, King's Director of Music (1974-82), Director Royal Scottish Academy (1982-2001)

how he found it difficult coping with those critical voices ‘out there’ who compared him unfavourably with David Willcocks and other choirs. After all, David Willcocks had become for many a choral ‘master’. Philip’s anxiety, I suspect, no matter how hidden, is common to all Directors of Music and Conductors. Others, however, have come up with a more creative and less combative way of handling these pressures. However, in King’s, as in other leading collegiate choirs, each choral scholar has only three and occasionally four years in the choir. This means a change in atmosphere and sound, despite the unique and constant acoustic of the Chapel. Comparisons of directors, voices and organists, assuming musical competence and ability, are to me invidious and unhelpful. Envy and fear are poisonous diseases. I’m well-acquainted with both!



The choir of King's College, Cambridge in the chapel

This anxiety about standard and fear of criticism, hit me hard on two occasions. Most Evensongs, just before processing into the Chapel, Philip would say to me either “up a half”, “down a half” or “at pitch” depending on the music following the *Responses*. On Ash Wednesday, at the King’s Evensong, invariably in choral foundations, Allegri’s *Miserere* is sung. Philip mentioned beforehand that I would have no trouble pitching the correct note for the opening *Responses* without a tuning fork. All I had to do was pitch off the final chord of the Allegri. I put my tuning-fork to my ear, however, as I sensed that the choir had gone a little sharp. So, I gave a short scriptural sentence and then corrected the pitch. This did not go down well: during the first lesson, Philip Ledger came across the chapel and whispered rather loudly that I must get a grip and concentrate. My father, who was visiting me at

the time, was sitting on the other side of me. The remainder of Evensong became a blur of anxiety. Thinking about it now, it was illustrative of the tension that can build up in such high-quality choral institutions, and indeed in other aspects of the performing arts, so easily spilling over into difficult relationships. After all, Philip Ledger’s reputation rested on me doing my job properly, as he saw it. Mine didn’t, or so I thought!

In 1976, the Choir went on tour to Boston, New England. Before singing Evensong at Holy Trinity, Copley Plaza, I fulfilled a promise to the Head Chorister to take all off them to a MacDonalds. In those days, the fast-food chain didn’t exist in the UK and had an almost mythical reputation. The temperature on that June mid-afternoon was almost unbearable. The stipulation was that the choristers were to wear their ‘Etons’ while walking in the city streets, even if it was to partake of burgers. Despite the fact that they were all acutely uncomfortable, the sight of these boys, not only drew huge attention, but the head and deputy head chorister raised a considerable sum in tips for posed photographs! On arrival back at Holy Trinity, our matron had to find ways of disguising various ketchup stains from faces and white shirts!



King's choristers in their 'Etons'<sup>1</sup>

The following day, the whole choir and adjuncts, went to the huge estate, near Boston of the

Steinway family. On arrival, we were shown round the various rooms where vintage grand pianos were paraded and, indeed, the organ scholars played a duet. Perhaps Health and Safety regulations now would have saved the day for me. I had been asked to take four of them at a time to the lake in the gardens, where there were several 'boats'. When the boys were duly loaded on to one of the 'boats', I duly stepped in and sat on what I thought was a seat that crossed the width. The result was catastrophic; this was not a seat but a 'stay' that keeps the sides apart. Into the water we all went, much to amusement of the remainder of the party, except, not surprisingly, Philip Ledger. Yes, Choir Tours are memorable. By the way, I now know there's a difference between a kayak and a canoe!

In 1977, just before the beginning of the Lent Term, our second child, Timothy, at five months died suddenly: a 'cot death' [Sudden Infant Death Syndrome]. I was, thankfully, given some time off my duties. Later that year Ben, my two-year old son, fell seriously ill with peritonitis, which can be life-threatening as it's caused by the bursting of the appendix. I was in College at the time. Elspeth couldn't get hold of me. Philip dropped everything and drove her with Ben to Addenbrookes Hospital, where Elspeth stayed throughout Ben's crisis. On a Sunday morning, I thought I had time, before Sung Mattins, to go to the Hospital on my little motor-bike. After the visit, I raced back to King's wearing full motorcycling kit as it was wet and cold. I arrived with only five minutes to spare. Not wise! Philip followed me into the sacristy with a thunderous look. He pointed out that the Choristers assemble every day in the Chapel, having walked from the school, wearing their 'Etons', for countless generations, while

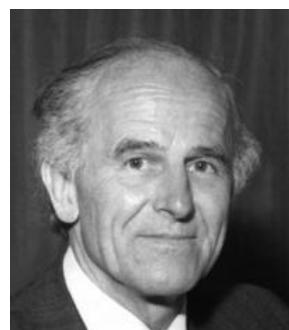
I had come in looking like a biker! My attempts to explain fell on deaf ears, not least as there were only seconds to go before the service started. Michael Till, the Dean,



The Very Revd Michael Till,  
Chaplain then Dean of King's,  
later Dean of Winchester

simply smiled and shook his head. After the service, he said, "Why didn't you simply tell him to..." To make matters even more of a challenge, the *Responses* were Herbert Howells', which are 'through composed', in that the cantor's *versicles* overlap with the choral *responses*. Not surprisingly, I made a dog's breakfast out of them. On the Monday Evening, again when I was still in College, he came to our house to suggest to Elspeth that my job was easy. "Tell Martin that all he has to do is turn up and sing a few notes!" Later that evening, Philip invited me round to his house for a stiff gin and tonic! In a way, the 'inaccessible' was even more 'inaccessible'.

At one of the Christmas Eve broadcast Nine Lessons and Carols, Philip Ledger had asked me to make sure that a good seat was found for David Willcocks and his wife. So, without thinking the request through properly, I placed the Willcocks in the fellows' stalls immediately behind *Decani*. With about 15 minutes to go, Philip approached me by the organ screen and asked me where I had placed them. He went white then puce (a not infrequent occurrence). The mistake then dawned on me: of course Philip wouldn't want them sitting so close to the choir and indeed to him! The order came to move the great man and his lady wife. When I made my way to David Willcocks, he stood up and, without my saying a word, said that he realised that it would be much better for them to sit in stalls a little closer to the East End, as that's the best place to enjoy the service. Gracious to the last!



Sir David Willcocks, King's  
Director of Music (1957-74),  
later Principal of the RCM

To reflect on the challenging times in the Chapel in those years may be in danger of distorting the experiences that were so life-giving. Philip was a highly regarded conductor of recordings. To watch him conduct Ely Ameling, Dame Janet Baker, Robert Tear and Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau in the recording of Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*, I can 'see' now: the delicacy and the energy, and lofty intensity that such forces, including the choir, brought together to honour a timeless work. At

his best, in the Liturgy, he conducted the choir with risk and adventure, not being too controlling.

In one of the rehearsals for a recording, the choir sat along the sides of the anti-Chapel to listen and watch Fischer-Dieskau rehearse the bass aria: *Grosse Herr*. In one of the recording breaks, one of the choristers bounced up to the great man and asked to see his watch. "You've got the same as mine, sir!" Those were the early days of illuminated red digital watches. Fischer-Dieskau, a tall man, bent down to the chorister and placed his wrist alongside the chorister's, who was not the slightest over-awed by the greatest baritone of the 20<sup>th</sup> century!

As with the best of collegiate choirs, precision tuning is of crucial importance. Although I only sang with the choir occasionally, learning to be precise with tuning was not only important from a musical point of view, but it enhanced my sense of detail and of listening attentively, which is, for me at least, an important art that lies at the roots of the practice of contemplative prayer as well as music. After all, meditation has been called 'silent music'.

The image of the Choir of King's Cambridge with that unique architecture is certainly dominant. One of the fruits of that dominance is that the College attracts talented musicians and musicologists, who don't necessarily have a direct link to the Choir. This also gave me the opportunity to give recitals, with other musicians, which I would never otherwise have done, encouraged by Philip Ledger. A fellow Scot, Susan Tomes, a concert pianist and writer, was doing post-graduate work in King's in the late 1970s. She and I gave a performance of



Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau,  
German baritone, one of the  
greatest singers of the C20

Schumann's *Dichterliebe* in the Great Hall. I feel nervous now as I think of a concert we gave in King's of Britten's *Songs and Proverbs of William Blake*: "The Lust of the Goat is the bounty of God!" Philip was present at both of these recitals and indeed, in the rehearsals, gave us the benefit of his recital experience and, of course, of Britten.

At the end of only two years, I made the decision that I should leave as I was finding the tensions difficult to resolve in myself. Maybe I should have found the resilience to remain, but the fact is that I didn't. And, yes, I regret that. But a gift was to follow.

In 2011, I had heard that Philip Ledger was seriously ill. He had been on my conscience for all these years. So, I wrote to him what I had hoped was a reconciliatory letter, to which he replied, surprisingly with kindness and warmth, repeating what he had said to me while at King's that the tense desire to meet and maintain some almost indescribable musical standard had its costs on both of us.

Philip died in 2012. I was astonished that I was asked to read a lesson at his memorial service in King's. In that wistful realisation that relationships don't come to an end with death, my reconciliation with Philip was never too late. This was, indeed, a redemptive experience. However, reconciliation does need to be practised. The assiduous practice of a young chorister 'pointing' along the words of the psalm remains, for me, a powerful metaphor.

Since those times, the attitude and behaviour of cathedral musicians is under much more intense scrutiny. That seems to me to benefit not just relationships but the music itself. In the second of these memoirs, I'll be returning to my King's experiences 25 years later.

Martin Shaw



Susan Tomes, concert pianist

Bishop Martin Shaw has enjoyed a distinguished career holding, at various times, the posts: Succentor, later Acting Precentor at Exeter Cathedral; Chaplain, later Acting Dean at King's College, Cambridge; Precentor at St Edmundsbury Cathedral; Bishop of Argyll & The Isles. A natural pastor, Martin is a fine singer and a powerful preacher.



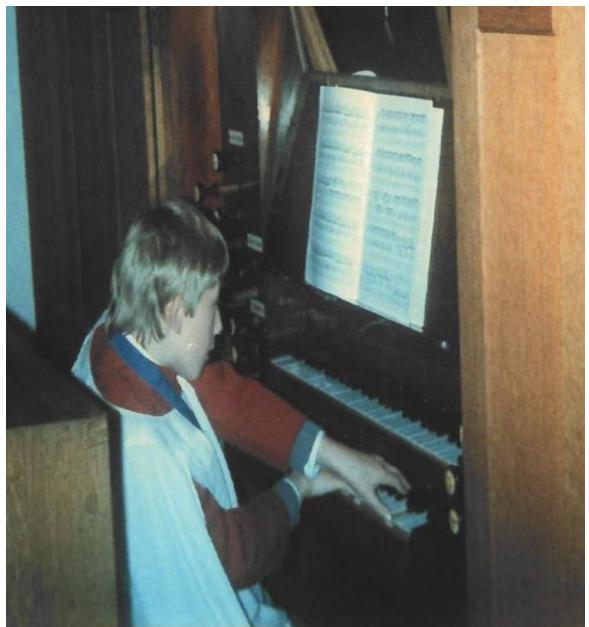
David Briggs with his family and their magnificent Great Dane, see page 11.

David had a long association with the choir of King's College, Cambridge, being at various times chorister, lay clerk and eventually headmaster of King's College School. When he died earlier this year, aged 102, he was the last surviving chorister to have sung in the first BBC broadcast of the service of Nine Lessons & Carols (1928).

### Fiat lux: David Davies reflects on growing up in the heart of Welsh Wales

The end of 2020 will mark a reasonably significant milestone in my organ-playing career: forty years since an unsuspecting Church in Wales congregation let me loose at the keys, my legs barely able to stab around at the pedals - no change there – and my inchoate abilities brushed under the carpet of boundless enthusiasm. To this day I've no idea really what the then Archdeacon of Bangor meant when he said, "Having heard you play the organ I think we'd best get you down to the crematorium", although I hope it was because of the dearth of organists in rural North Wales in the 1970s (no change there).

The church where I cut my teeth as an organist was built in 1892 as a public memorial to the local landowner and quarry magnate, Lord Penrhyn. Dedicated to the Holy Cross, the church is known in Welsh as Eglwys Maes-y-Groes. As such it recalls Calvary, and its patronal commemoration therefore falls on September 14th. The building features a Burne-Jones window and is modelled on Tractarian principles, with a raised chancel, and a sanctuary that houses a sedilia in medieval



At the organ of St Cross Church, Talybont, Bangor. Harvest Festival 1986 (looks like a Widor Toccata). Note the RSCM medal for good behaviour...

style. The two-manual organ is thought to be by either Bishop of Wearmouth or Forster and Andrews, and came from a larger church in nearby Bangor.



Talybont, pre-surplice days, a copy of Stainer's book on how to play the organ lies unopened before me. Would that I had read it more thoroughly!

Like many readers, I remember very clearly the first time I heard a church organ, exactly where I was standing, and what registrations were being used. It was in my parish church, Christ Church, Glanogwen, in the town of Bethesda, a typically long, winding Welsh habitation that runs along the base of the Ogwen Valley linking the peaks of Snowdonia with the sea. The organist at the time of my epiphany was my third sister Caroline, who had since somehow managed to beat some musical sense into me, and she was playing a rather lovely Welsh hymn tune called Bethany. This tune, as far as I know, is largely unknown in England, partly because the pervading Evangelical theology of many Welsh hymns, often doctrinally aligned with tenets of Calvinism, meant that their translations were never tonally sympathetic within the mainstream of Anglican hymnody. William Cowper's 'There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Emmanuel's veins' *et al* have many parallels in Welsh Nonconformist tradition, and, while the tunes sometimes 'jump ship' to accompany revised or different English texts, some never make it.

GREAT	Swell	Pedal
Open Diapason 8'	Bourdon 16' (TC)	Open Diapason (wood)
Stopped Diapason &	Open Diapason 8'	16' Bourdon 16'
Clarabella 8'	(Unmarked) 8' (much like a	
Dulciana 8' (TC)	Gamba)	
Principal 4'	Gedact 8'	
Wald Flute 4'	Gemshorn 4'	
Fifteenth 2'	Piccolo 2'	
Terce Mixture III	Mixture II	
Clarionet 8' (TC) [since removed owing to pipe collapse]	Oboe 8'	



Christ Church, Glanogwen, Bethesda The vibrant blue picks up the Marian hue of the Lady Chapel that is out of sight to the left. The 'IHS' Christogram is typical of the detailed level of stone carving found throughout the building. These choir stalls were once thronged with singers. Alas, no more

Christine, my eldest sister and yet another organist, took one look at me as a baby, couldn't stomach the horror of the sight and promptly emigrated to South Africa for several years. Life coming full circle, she ended up taking over the family business and became organist at Christ Church, Glanogwen. She and I did not meet each other properly until I was 14, and, in the intervening years, she wrote me musical advice on those thin, blue par avion letters while she was studying for a music degree at the University of South Africa. The physical separation between us coupled with our mutual love of the organ meant that we had an ideal sibling relationship, and I strongly commend 9,000 miles' separation as the ideal medium for maintaining sororal equanimity. I jest: we are, in fact, very close, and there really is something heartening about having a blood relative who knows what a Neapolitan sixth is.

All but one of the specifications of the organs cited in this article can be found on the NPOR website. The exception is this organ above, for which the NPOR entry is decades out of date. The current organ was possibly built by James Conacher:

The family business was running a hotel, which led to my obsession with stockpiling linens, but the local industry was slate. At the turn of the twentieth-century, Bethesda operated the largest open cast slate quarry on the planet, employed 3,000 quarrymen, and its products, such as Penrhyn Blue roofing slate, are still regarded as the acme of the industry. Places of worship abounded for Methodists (Primitive, Calvinist & regular), Baptists (including Strict & Particular), Congregationalists and Presbyterians. Then came the Anglicans and eventually the Catholics. That communal worshipping legacy is now desperately diminished, and the main Congregational chapel below (which once housed an organ by Jardine with a quinted 32' Sub Bass) has been turned into a nursing home.



Eglwys Gynulleidfaol Bethesda Congregational Church Named after the account of Jesus and the paralytic at the Healing Pool in John's Gospel, 'Bethesda' comes from the Hebrew בית־תְּדָא / בֵּית־תְּדָא. Biblical place names were often chosen for Welsh towns after the principal chapel of that dwelling, so Calvary, Bethany, Siloh, and so forth, are commonly found. The names are transliterated into Welsh (Calfaria, Bethania, Siloam etc), and this lovely bit of cultural history means that you are never very far away in Wales from a reference to the Holy Land. As an organist, you could be playing for four Sunday services in Hebron, Bethlehem, Jerusalem and Rehoboth! This type of chapel architecture is the most ornate of its kind.

I attended three schools in Bethesda where all subjects, except English, were taught exclusively through the medium of Welsh. To this day I have to translate certain things in my head, so

Newton's Second Law, for example, will always be  $G=MC$  to me rather than  $F=MA$ . The schools I attended once run by schoolmasters who would beat children for speaking Welsh instead of English in the corridors now had a culture of insisting that only Welsh be spoken inside and outside the classroom. Welsh was shot through everything: for example, I acted in a Welsh language production of *The Merchant of Venice* (in gorgeous silk tights, of course). I'm glad to say that children can now celebrate both languages and many more, which, of course, is absolutely right. It's completely true that there are certain things one cannot express adequately in English if one has had access to a Celtic alternative, and, equally, if you want to pepper your speech with expletives in Welsh you have to import English profanities. (And, by the way, if anyone ever tells you that 'popty ping' is Welsh for microwave then you can assure them that that is nonsense. The correct word is 'microdon'.)

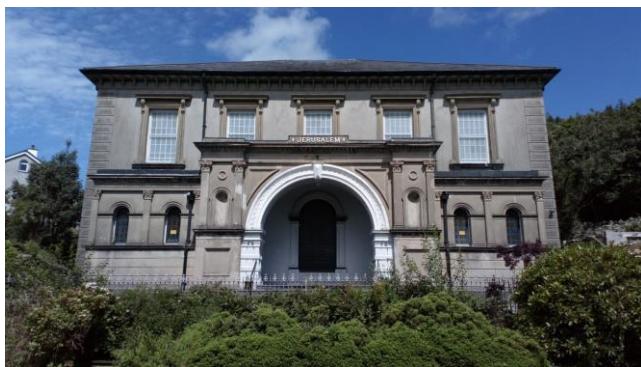
As with every nationality, the Welsh have had their fair share of being the butt of others' jokes, my favourite recalling the occasion when, after a glorious day of celebration, the newlywed couple make their way to the nuptial suite to spend their first night of intimacy together. As they embrace on the balcony beneath the stars, the best hits of Patsy Cline pouring from Alexa and the clinking crystal goblets of Bollinger Grande Année now but a memory, she whispers to him, 'Darling, there's something I must tell you.' 'Oh my God,' he recoils, 'you're not Welsh are you?' I'm unsure now about whether telling racist stories against one's own people is forbidden. Ah well, publish and be damned, right?

My final local education took place at Ysgol Dyffyn Ogwen, its motto *Bydded goleuni* a translation of the phrase Let there be light in the Genesis Creation myth. As a comprehensive school it was the successor of the old grammar (or 'County') school attended by my father, and each of my six siblings went through the ranks here too. There was a good and fairly new grand piano in the main school hall together with a two-manual Compton Electronique organ with its unmistakeable tone wheel generated sound:



Evidence that I have watched a conductor once in my life. Notice that all the pedal stops are on – oh dear... This is the same mighty Compton upon which I played Poulenc's Organ

Concerto for the first time, aged 14, with a local scratch orchestra. I imagine it was a performance heavy on vim and light on attention to accurate musical detail. The whole school sang a hymn at assembly every day: when the first period was PE I made sure to choose a belter of a hymn with eight verses followed by those choruses that you can just keep repeating over and over with more enthusiasm each time, going up a semitone each verse. I got the football team singing top F#s once. It wasn't pretty. I only wanted a long hymn to delay the indiscretion of being made to leap around the gymnasium.



Jerusalem Chapel (Calvinist Methodist), Bethesda; another example of grand architectural statements for a once-wealthy town

My broadcasting debut took place in the early 80s when an episode of the Welsh version of Songs of Praise was transmitted from Jerusalem Chapel in Bethesda, and I was assigned some of the organ playing. In addition to the hymns, my school choir sang a calypso rip-off of some Andrew Lloyd Webber musical that had a plucked bass.

Somewhere there's a hideous recording of my left foot mooching around on the very large-scale Pedal Open Diapason. It really is true that some things are best left in the memory...



Jerusalem Chapel: Peter Conacher (The Old Firm) at its finest. A bold Great chorus to Mixture and Trumpet sits on top of rich foundations, and five distinct reed colours allow for a spectrum of sonorities.

One of the remarkable influences for me was the sheer diversity of denominational traditions and practices I encountered, and being exposed to such a variety of different theological and doctrinal ideas from a young age is one of the most enduring aspects of my upbringing. Important, too, was the huge amount of encouragement and support I received from all these congregations for whom I played either regularly or occasionally. My first, formal organ lessons took place at the church of St David's, Glanadda, in Bangor, on an exceptional, untouched Hill that, in turn, had replaced an impressive Willis of 1888. That Willis ended up in St. Tanwg's Church, Harlech – more of which anon. It is very sad to me that St David's Church is now on the brink of dereliction, once such a vibrant place where, amongst other things, I played for Martin How when he directed a local RSCM Festival eons ago. The place was packed, and we sang everything from Gelineau to Stanford. Happy days. The church closed in 2014.

Although universally useless at terrestrial sports, I spent much of my spare time boating and sailing on the Conwy River and on the Menai Strait. My best friend's father was a very keen yachtsman and sea fisherman, and was always on the lookout for crew; what I lacked in body weight back then I



St David's Church, Glanadda, Bangor; William Hill, 1906. Only 21 stops, but a real 'Truro Cathedral' effect, with every stop making a difference, and the Full Swell as thrilling as any. Sadly, this is a view I never knew, as all of the church furnishings have been disposed of in this image prior to the condemnation of the building. As a teenager, I'd accompany choir practices here: not visible are the sumptuous oak choir stalls that were once laden with young voices. During this time, I also apprenticed with local organ builder, Eric Newbound, who had trained with Hill, Norman & Beard, and, as well as being a superb craftsman, is also a fine organist. I learned so much, from restoring mechanical wind chests to tuning to electrifying pneumatics.

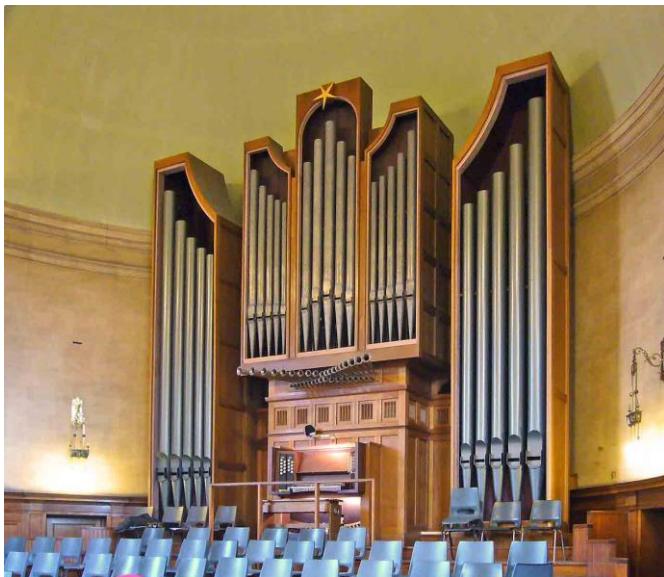
made up for in agility (a situation that is now completely reversed...) In 1926 the famous boat-builder William Fife engineered a yacht specially designed for racing in the treacherous waters of the Menai Strait – the so-called 'Fife One Design' – and I learned to sail in one of these beautifully elegant wooden boats in local regattas. They have a shallow draft, but are long and broad in the beam, so are fast but stable. Because of the tidal nature of the waters, together with often opposing wind conditions, these qualities are vital. (It's interesting that the same kinds of argument of pipe organs vs electronic organs exist in the nautical world between the world of wooden boats and those built in glass fibre, with owners of wooden yachts haughtily disregarding any other material!) Teenage summers were spent at sea, often catching dozens of mackerel off the coast of North Wales. It was only years later that I discovered my family hated the fish, but gnawed their way through each catch to support my ego.

Another organ that featured in my youth was the Hill, Norman & Beard in Bangor University's Prichard-Jones Concert Hall, a direct outcome of the Orgelneuerunsbewegung movement that



Teenage summers were spent at sea, often catching dozens of mackerel off the coast of North Wales. It was only years later that I discovered my family hated the fish, but gnawed their way through each catch to support my ego.

had gained hold since the 1950s. I churned out lots of Bach and Buxtehude on this organ, but, more alarmingly, provided an organ-only accompaniment to Jesus Christ Superstar, sung in Welsh. (Years later, in New Haven, Connecticut, I accompanied Handel's Messiah sung in Korean. Thank heavens that, in the latter case, I knew the tunes well enough not to have to follow the words!)



Built in the same year as I: the two-manual HNB at the University of Wales, Bangor, Prichard-Jones Concert Hall. Complete with a horizontal Trompeta Real and a Cymbelstern, the organ, although typical of its genre, really packs a punch in the generous acoustics of the hall. It was designed in part by Dr George Guest, who stayed regularly at my parents' hotel, being a native of Bangor, and who arranged for me to play the organs at Christ Church, Oxford, and St John's, Cambridge at the age of 10. You can see the similarities between this organ and the former St John's instrument.

As a would-be middle-class family of Anglicans (my father drove an Austin Princess and we took The Telegraph) I was duly sent off for organ lessons in Bangor Cathedral, an understated building nestling in a hollow that was allegedly constructed there so as to pass under the radar of those pesky Vikings with their pillaging and their raping.

The ancient site has one of the richest histories of the old foundation Welsh cathedrals, its medieval interior having been extensively remodelled by Giles Gilbert Scott, a restoration which doesn't sit quite correctly to the contemporary eye. In my youth, the cathedral housed one of John Compton's last organ rebuilds before his death in 1957, and it was on this sprawling four-manual ex-

William Hill/Rushworth, with its failing electric transmissions and perilous double-touch cancellers that the then cathedral organist, Andrew Goodwin, started to turn my playing technique into something more refined.



Part of the north east casework of Bangor Cathedral organ after the comprehensive restoration by David Wells in 2007. The considerable amount of extension by Compton that had resulted in a huge stop-list was modified, but this is still a substantial four-manual instrument. Part of David Wells' challenge was to get the sound of the organ out of the north transept and around the building.

Travelling towards Chester along the North Wales coast brings you past the seaside town of Llanfairfechan, its secondary Anglican church, Christ Church, boasting a substantial three-manual instrument with the same kind of 'clang' as the Willis in Great Torrington. The organ is regarded as one of the best in the principality, with good reason.



Christ Church, Llanfairfechan; William Hill, 1876 – 1902. A truly exciting instrument crying out to be in a more flattering acoustic. The main choruses all speak into the Chancel, while much of the Pedal flue-work speaks down the north aisle. This includes an octave transposition of the 16' Open Wood that sounds like the Queen Mary docking in Fleetwood Harbour on a miserable night. I'm so glad that this is an organ sonority no longer in fashion.

By sheer chance of his marriage into a Welsh heritage, and because of his interest in William Hill organs, Alastair Sampson, then organist of Eton, came to a recital I was giving at Christ Church, and our meeting paved the way for my transition, aged 15, from a Welsh comprehensive school to that equally comprehensive (if not in quite the same way) college over the bridge from Windsor. I gained a sixth-form scholarship there, a scheme offered by Eton whereby four boys each year from any state school in the UK are given 100% scholarships to study for their A-levels. I loved my time there, not least because there was such great local support for my move from my old Welsh friends, but also because I was made to feel so welcome by new Etonian friends. Needless to say, the educational standard was tremendous, and the passion for communicating knowledge that exuded from the ‘beaks’ was palpable. The stories are too numerous to recount, but I have to share my brush with the true meaning of muscular Christianity. My Divinity (R.E.) teacher had been a Forces Chaplain, and, in addition to keeping textbooks on exegesis in the classroom cupboard, stored various weapons he’d picked up after certain conflicts. It was the first (and only) time I saw submachine guns up close. He told me once to go get the bibles, so I dutifully went hunting. ‘Er, Sir’, I asked, ‘where are the NRSVs?’ ‘Oh come on Davies, they’re where you would expect them to be. On the shelf by the grenades underneath the Uzi. Mind the shelf though – it’s loose and those detonators are rusty. The last poor b\*\*\*\*\* nearly lost all his fingers. (Pause). I suppose you need yours, don’t you?’

In a pleasing turn of events, Alastair Sampson spearheaded the restoration of the 1888 Willis organ in Harlech I mentioned earlier, and invited generations of Old Etonian organists to perform a series of recitals in the following years, giving me a particular sense of the circularity of life. It’s strange how the big decisions of life are often the ones that come about so randomly – meeting a particular person in a particular place at a particular time. The notion of someone from my background winding up at a place like Eton seemed remote, but out of this unique cocktail of early experiences came an opportunity, truly, of a lifetime.



Another happy connection with organs by William Hill: 16-year-old me at the console of the then recently-restored instrument in Eton College Chapel. Mander’s had renewed the tubular pneumatic action which was a very niche thing to do. In spite of the organ’s 20th-century history, it is now generally regarded as being closest to its 1902 incarnation.



Having spent his A-level years at Eton, David Davies then became organ scholar at Magdalen College, Oxford, and subsequently pursued a Master’s degree in sacred music at Yale University. He worked as a church organist in London and in the USA, spent six years as Sub Organist and Director of the Girls’ Choir at Guildford Cathedral, six years as Assistant Director of Music at Exeter Cathedral, and is currently Organist of Buckfast Abbey and Organist at the University of Exeter.

## "Without an India rubber I'm absolutely sunk!"

### Some thoughts on composition

What is it to make music? Most people think of the finished product: the stuff you hear people doing in concerts, on the radio, in church. Music is made when at least one person plays an instrument or sings. It has lifted the hearts of our species since time immemorial. But what about the raw material from which the finished product comes? That's the other way of making music – to delve into one's own musical mind and write down what's inside for others to learn and perform.

I love composing, especially for the musicians with whom I have the privilege of working at Exeter Cathedral. The legendary cartoonist Gerard Hoffnung once said that "there's nothing more sordid, nothing more dreadful, than having to do funny drawings all day long" – and sometimes, when I'm sat alone for hours trying to compose something half-presentable, these words go through my mind. But it's all worth it for that one percent of the time when things fall into place and you know you've come up with something that's there to stay. And ultimately to hear one's own work performed for the first time is a thrill that few music-makers know.

The enforced period of inactivity over the past few months has meant that I've been doing more composing than normal, and I've done quite a lot of thinking about the process of composition too. Among Cornopean readers, there are some experienced composers, some who might confess to an occasional dabble, and some who wouldn't touch it with a barge pole. Whichever category is yours, I hope some of the following musings might be of interest.

The blank canvas is as daunting as it is exciting. The staves sit there, empty and inviting, and you wonder if the first thing to do is to pick a key signature at random and get going. But composing a piece doesn't start with pencil and paper: it's important to have a clear vision of it in your mind before you even wonder what it might sound like. It's good to have the performer(s), the intended listeners, even a specific occasion in mind. If writing for a choir, the text is paramount. You've got to know it inside out and have a clear

sense of what you want to do with it: how many sections? Where are the musical high points? What about a dynamic scheme? Only once you've got a clear idea what you want to end up with should you think about putting anything on paper.

Actually getting notes on the page can be frustrating. There are as many methods of composing as there are composers. I think of it as a kind of sculpture. When you sit down to write, there's an infinite world of sound available from which to carve out your own music. You start to whittle away, and for me it usually starts out rather unrefined and ill-formed. But it's important to have some faith in your first instincts – often an idea which initially seems too rough round the edges to be presentable will benefit from further honing, and soon you may find that you end up with something much more polished and refined. What exactly do I mean? Let's say you've got a melody vaguely in mind which starts with an octave leap. You're not sure how it's going to continue, how quick it is, or even what pitches are involved. (Time signature? Not yet. I often find the metre takes a surprisingly long time to reveal itself – in the meantime, forget barlines.) Play around with this idea of the octave leap on the piano; sing it; hear it in your head. Write down anything and everything you think of, and eventually you might find yourself with a page of jotted ideas. You might start to feel drawn to a particular pitch and key: stick with that one. You might realise there are now three or four features you've come up with which you rather like. Try combining them, perhaps in different orders. This process – of getting a lot of small ideas down on the page and developing them into something much better than the first thing you wrote – is where I get my image of sculpting from. It's easy to abandon an initial idea which seems dreadful: remember that no sculpture in the world started out looking beautiful. (And the great thing about working in pencil is that you can undo your mistakes... there is no such luxury with stone!)

It's common for people first experimenting with composition to be very preoccupied with considerations of style and influence. When I was

getting seriously into writing music at school, I was constantly at pains to avoid ‘sounding like’ anyone, and was concerned that my music didn’t have a voice of its own. At university, by contrast, I got into pastiche. In particular, I loved trying to write in the style of Brahms. In my attempts to imitate the great composer, I discovered an unexpected freedom: I no longer worried about trying to find sounds which no-one else had come up with, and I was free simply to enjoy what I was doing. It can be fun to pick a form or a genre and go with it – you might try, for instance, writing a minuet and trio for the organ. You’ll find the focus of a formal constraint has a surprisingly liberating effect on the imagination.

I wonder if anyone recognised the quotation at the top of this article. It’s from one of my musical heroes, William Walton, and he said it right at the

end of his life: wise words from a true veteran of composition. Having an eraser to hand is important not only so that you can whittle away at your ideas, but also to remove excess material you don’t need. You don’t need fistfuls of notes on the organ and all four parts singing at once to create effective and exciting music. Three parts is more than sufficient in creating a rich and satisfying texture: just look at Bach’s trio sonatas. So get the rubber out and delete anything that’s not essential.

I hope this jumble of cogitations will have been of some interest both to people who have done lots of composing and none. Time-consuming and frustrating though it undoubtedly can be, there’s nothing quite as satisfying. So dig out that manuscript and give it a try.

*Timothy Parsons*

## Nerd of the Month

### Peter Parshall

Organ Scholar of Westminster College, Oxford, between 1990 and 1993, Peter studied the organ with David Saint at the Birmingham Conservatoire. Alongside a career as a schoolteacher, in 1994, Peter was appointed Director of Music at St Mary Magdalen Church, Oxford, where, in 1997, he was instrumental in the establishment of a professional eight-voice choir, together with the commissioning of a new organ for the church. He held professional posts at Westminster College, Oxford (Director of Chapel Music) and at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford (Organist to the Cathedral Singers of Christ Church) and was an accompanist to the Royal School of Church Music’s Southern Cathedral Singers. He has taught on Royal School of Church Music residential courses based at the cathedrals of Oxford, Durham, Canterbury and York and also at Oakham school.

After some fourteen years in Oxford, Peter moved to Dublin in 2003 where he became co-ordinator of the Irish branch of the RSCM with responsibility for the development of the RSCM on the island of Ireland, together with the implementation of its

programmes of education and training. In addition to his post with the RSCM, he was a Lay Vicar Choral at Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin and Organist and Director of Music at the church of St Bartholomew, Clyde Road – now the only parish church in Ireland which maintains a choir of boys and men in addition to a thriving girls’ choir. He was an external examiner for the Royal Irish Academy of Music and remains an examiner for RSCM choral awards. Peter is delighted to have recently been made an Associate of the RSCM in recognition of his work for the organisation.

On moving to East Devon, Peter has built up a private teaching practice and is a tutor for the Pipe Up scheme run by the Diocese of Salisbury. He is Director of Music at Axminster Parish Church, Director of



Axminster and District Choral Society, and was, until 2017, Director of RSCM *Voices West*. He was the first Artistic Director of the South Wessex Organ Society which has been created in order to promote the art and appreciation of organ music through education, training, concerts and recitals. In addition, he is Chapel Music Co-ordinator at Jesus College, Oxford, directs Axminster Chamber Choir and is Accompanist to Bridport Choral Society. He is the co-editor of the choral anthology, *Weddings for Choirs*, published by Oxford University Press, and a contributor to the *New Dictionary of National Biography*, also for Oxford University Press. As a composer, Peter has been commissioned by choirs in the UK, Ireland and the USA and his music has been performed on the BBC and RTÉ networks.

## QUOTATIONS ANSWERS

From the August edition of *The Cornopean*

These famous remarks are usually attributed as follows

- 1 of the harpsichord "Two skeletons copulating on a galvanised tin roof."      *Sir Thomas Beecham*
- 2 I find brass bands have a melancholy sound. All right out of doors, of course – fifty miles away. Like bagpipes, they turn what had been a dream into a public nuisance."      *Sir Thomas Beecham*
- 3 "Please do not shoot the pianist. He is doing his best."      *Oscar Wilde*
- 4 To a naughty choir boy in exasperation, "Either behave, or not at all"      *Sir David Willcocks*
- 5 "Too much counterpoint; what is worse, Protestant counterpoint."      *Sir Thomas Beecham*
- 6 On being asked if he'd stayed with a certain member of the aristocracy "Yes, I spent a month down there last weekend."      *Sir Thomas Beecham*
- 7 On seeing an epitaph in a country churchyard that read Here lies a fine musician and a great organist, "How clever to get them both in so small a grave."      *Sir Thomas Beecham*
- 8 "Hats off, gentlemen – a genius"      *Robert Schumann of Frederic Chopin*
- 9 Of Debussy, "Better not listen to it; you risk getting used to it, and then you would end up hating it."      *Rimsky-Korsakov*
- 10 "Of course there are splendid things in Wagner. But he would go on so. He needed a good sub-editor."      *Constant Lambert*
- 11 "It is a funny thing, but you can go into the theatre humming the hit numbers of Andrew Lloyd Webber's latest show before you've actually heard it."      *Over-heard on a London bus.*
- 12 "Pay no attention to what the critics say. No statue has ever been put up to a critic."      *Jean Sibelius*

### Erratum

The August edition of *The Cornopean* wrongly attributed the picture below as being the young Tim Parsons. We apologise both to Tim and to whomsoever is actually depicted...



The picture below is the one we should have published as being the young Tim Parsons:



## NERDY CORNER

For a full mark on any question it is necessary to name both the musician and the building with which (s)he is associated and to get the correct pairing. Answers to the Editor: [peter@clox.eclipse.co.uk](mailto:peter@clox.eclipse.co.uk)  
If no entry achieves 100%, Nerd of the Month may be awarded to the highest scorer.

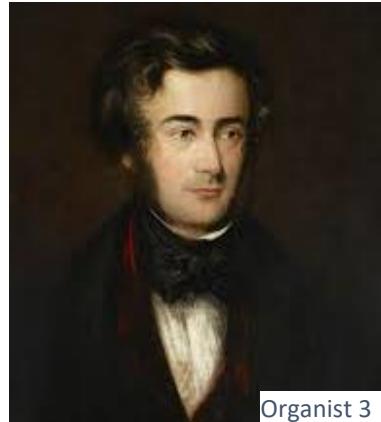
Organist 1



Organist 2



Organist 3



Organist 4



Organist 6



Organist 7



Organist 8



Organist 9



Organist 10



Organist 11



Organist 12

Building 1



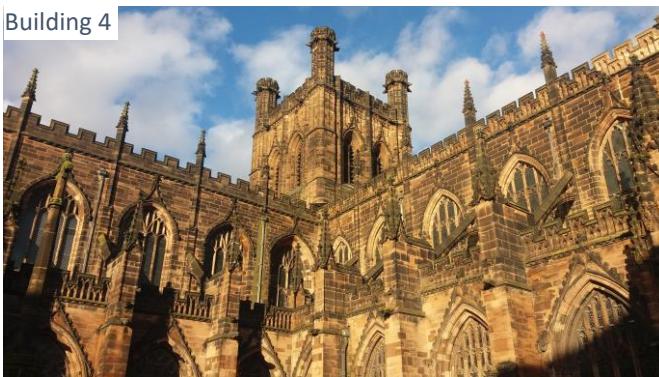
Building 2



Building 3



Building 4



Building 5



Building 6



Building 8



Building 9



Building 10



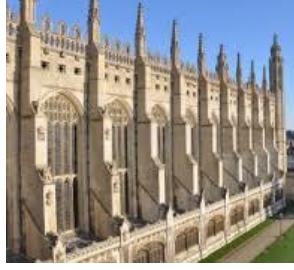
Building 11

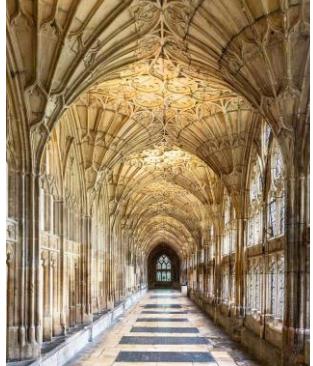
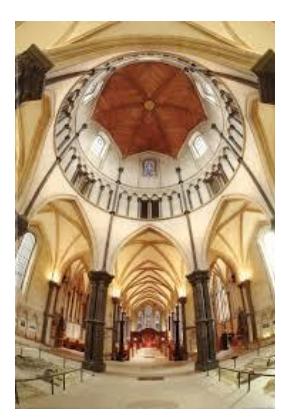


Building 12

## NERDY ANSWERS

Resident Nerd: Peter Johnson. Nerd of the Month: Peter Parshall

Organist	Building
 <p><b>Sir Edward Bairstow (1)</b> was Organist &amp; Master of the Choristers at York Minster from 1913 until 1946. Previously he held similar posts at Wigan &amp; Leeds Parish Churches. Bairstow was notorious for his terseness and bluntness. It was said that he adjudicated at every competitive music festival in the country – once. His many fine works for the cathedral tradition include the anthems <i>Let all mortal flesh</i> and <i>Blessed City</i>.</p>	 <p>The largest gothic building in the UK, <b>York Minster (5)</b> is a fine example of the decorated and perpendicular styles of Gothic architecture. The span of the main spaces is so great that they only ever received a wooden, rather than a stone vault. The Minster is famous for its huge collection of medieval painted glass. Like its near contemporaries, the West towers at Wells Cathedral, the central tower is innocent of pinnacles.</p>
 <p>Previously Organist at both Salisbury and Worcester Cathedrals, <b>Sir David Willcocks (2)</b> is probably best known for his work as Director of Music at King's College Cambridge and for his work as joint editor of the game changing <i>Carols for Choirs</i> series. Willcocks was later Director of the Royal College of Music in London.</p>	 <p>Begun by King Henry vi, The <b>Chapel of King's College, Cambridge (6)</b> was not finished until the reign of Henry viii. Together with Henry vii Chapel, Westminster it can be seen as the climax of English Gothic. The building is famous for its fan vault, its stained glass and carved wood work (both in Renaissance style) and its wonderful acoustic.</p>
 <p><b>Sir John Dykes Bower (3)</b>, a descendant of John Bacchus Dykes, was Organist of St Paul's Cathedral for over thirty years. There he played for, amongst much else, the thanksgiving service after the Second World War and the state funeral for Sir Winston Churchill. Earlier in his career he was Organist at Truro and Durham Cathedrals. For some years he played the piano for the aural tests in RCO diploma examinations.</p>	 <p>In 1669 Sir Christopher Wren was commissioned to rebuild <b>St Paul's Cathedral (10)</b> after the destruction of the medieval cathedral in the Great Fire (1666). The design evolved over several years and the final stone was placed on the lantern in 1708. Together with Blenheim Palace and the Royal Hospital Greenwich, St Paul's is considered one of the finest examples of English Baroque.</p>

 <p>He collaborated with Father Willis over the invention of the radiating &amp; concave pedal board. His many compositions include the anthems <i>Blessed be the God &amp; Father, Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, Wash me thoroughly, The Winderness</i> and other large scale anthems.</p>	<p><b>Samuel Sebastian Wesley (4)</b> was the preeminent Cathedral Organist of the C19 serving at various times at Hereford &amp; Exeter Cathedrals, Leeds PC, Winchester &amp; Gloucester Cathedrals.</p>	 <p>One of the “Three Choirs” Cathedrals (along with Worcester and Hereford), <b>Gloucester Cathedral (12)</b> is generally credited with the invention of the Perpendicular style (firstly in the S Transept, then in the remodelled Quire, the tower and the cloisters, which feature the earliest surviving fan vault. Its Norman nave has similarities with neighbouring Tewkesbury Abbey.</p>
	<p>One of England’s greatest composers, <b>Henry Purcell (5)</b> was Organist of Westminster Abbey from 1679 until his death, in 1695. He wrote music for the theatre as well as for the Anglican church.</p>	 <p><b>Westminster Abbey (11)</b> was rebuilt in the reign of Henry iii in a style which combines French (height, apsidal East end etc) and English (Purbeck Marble, Ridge rib, projecting transepts etc) Gothic. The Lady Chapel (pictured here), built by Henry vii, with its virtuoso fan vaulting, is the epitome of the Perpendicular style, &amp; therefore, of English Gothic.</p>
 <p>The Australian organist <b>Sir George Thalben Ball (6)</b> was Organist at the Temple Church for almost 60 years from 1923. His choir was so disciplined that he was able to maintain the tradition of leading his choir from the organ loft. Such was his talent that, aged 19, he played the solo part in the first performance by an English-trained pianist of Rachmaninoff's <i>Piano Concerto iii</i>. Sir George was Birmingham City Organist from 1949-1983.</p>	<p>The Australian organist <b>Sir George Thalben Ball (6)</b> was Organist at the Temple Church for almost 60 years from 1923. His choir was so disciplined that he was able to maintain the tradition of leading his choir from the organ loft. Such was his talent that, aged 19, he played the solo part in the first performance by an English-trained pianist of Rachmaninoff's <i>Piano Concerto iii</i>. Sir George was Birmingham City Organist from 1949-1983.</p>	 <p>Designed to recall the holiest place in the Crusaders’ world, the circular Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, The Nave of <b>The Temple Church (7)</b>, was consecrated in 1185 by the patriarch of Jerusalem. There are three other medieval round churches in England: Cambridge, Northampton and Little Maplestead (Essex). The Chancel is stylistically similar to its contemporary, the Trinity Chapel at Salisbury Cathedral.</p>

 <p>Bernard Rose (7) was Informator Choristarum at Magdalen College, Oxford (1957–1981). His special interest was the music of Thomas Tomkins. Of his various compositions, his <i>Responses</i> were a game changer. His pupils include Kenneth Leighton, Dudley Moore and Harry Christophers and Les Robertson.</p>	 <p>Magdalen College Oxford (8) was founded on the grandest scale in 1458 by William Waynflete, Bishop of Winchester. His foundation was the largest in Oxford, with 40 Fellows, 30 scholars and a large choir for his Chapel. Former students or Fellows include Cardinal Wolsey, Edward Gibbon, CS Lewis, AJP Taylor, no fewer than nine Nobel Prize winners, and David Davies.</p>
 <p>Holding organist's posts at Lichfield Cathedral, New College, and Christ Church Oxford, Sir William Harris (8) ended his career at St George's Chapel Windsor. Of his many organ &amp; choral compositions he is best known for the two 8pt anthems <i>Faire is the Heaven</i> and <i>Bring us, O Lord</i>. He gave piano tuition to HM Queen Elizabeth ii and to Mrs Anne Eyre.</p>	 <p>Founded by King Edward iii, St George's Chapel Windsor (1) is the home of the Knights of the Garter. It is a supreme example of late Gothic architecture. Its very elaborate lierne vault is remarkable for its great width and its very shallow rise. Through clever proportions building disguises its moderate scale, appearing to be rather larger than it is.</p>
 <p>For over thirty years Arthur Wills (9) was Director of Music at Ely Cathedral. He was also a Professor of Composition at the Royal Academy of Music (1964–1992). Of his many compositions for choir and for organ it is probably his setting of the <i>Evening Canticles on Plainsong Tones</i> that is best loved.</p>	 <p>Ely Cathedral (2) features most styles of medieval architecture: Norman Nave &amp; Transepts, Early Gothic Quire, Decorated Quire &amp; Lady Chapel; but it is probably for its unique central Octagon that it is best known – one of the most remarkable spaces of medieval Europe and an undoubted influence of Sir Christopher Wren, whose uncle was Bishop of Ely.</p>
 <p>Peter Hurford (10) was a renowned interpreter of the music of JS Bach. His recordings of JSB's complete organ works was greatly influential and is still highly regarded. A sought after teacher, his founding of the St Albans International Organ Festival is a lasting testimony to his work.</p>	 <p>St Albans Abbey (3) boasts the longest Nave in England which sports no fewer than three building periods and styles. Its tower is Romanesque in more ways than one, for not only is it Norman, but it reuses tiles from nearby Roman Verulamium. The Abbey was heavily over restored by Lord Grimthorpe in the C19.</p>

	<p><b>Lionel Dakers (11)</b> was Organist of Ripon and Exeter Cathedrals before taking up the post of Director of the Royal School of Church Music (RSCM) – a post he held for nearly twenty years. He was a member of The Athenaeum club in Pall Mall.</p>		<p>A Palladian style mansion near Croydon, <b>Addington Palace (9)</b> was for 90 years the summer residence of the Archbishops of Canterbury. It was the home of the RSCM (1953-1996). It is now a conference centre venue for hire. The grounds were designed by Capability Brown.</p>
	<p>Born in Chagford, Devon, <b>Henry Ley (12)</b> was Organist of Christ Church Oxford before being appointed Precentor (Director of Music) at Eton College. His best known composition is probably his setting of the <i>Prayer of King Henry vi</i>. He enjoyed watching trains.</p>		<p>Founded in 1440 by King Henry vi, <b>Eton College (4)</b> is an independent school for boys near Slough (Berks). Alumni include David Cameron, Boris Johnson and Jacob Rees-Mogg. The school boasts five pipe organs, most of them really rather fine and has produced many fine organists, including David Davies, Organist of Buckfast Abbey.</p>

### Planned Calendar of forthcoming events

Please watch your e-mails or consult the website <http://www.exeterorganists.net/> for updated information regarding cancellations:

**10<sup>th</sup> September at 7:00pm** Centenary recital by **THOMAS TROTTER** in Exeter Cathedral, sponsored by EDOA. Premiere of *Defeating Lucifer* by Thomas Hewitt-Jones (EDOA commission).

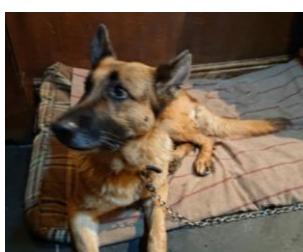


Snetzler Organ  
at The English  
Organ School



Sherborne Abbey

**17<sup>th</sup> October** Visit to Margaret Phillips  
at The English Organ School; trip to Sherborne Abbey  
to play the organ.



Nickie at the Ruffwell

**3<sup>rd</sup> November at 7:00pm** Annual Dinner at the Ruffwell Inn,

**Thorverton;** Carvery; celebrity guest speaker, DAVID OWEN NORRIS



David Owen Norris



The Tudor Rose on the Exe

**NB, 18<sup>th</sup> June 2021** River cruise on the *Tudor Rose* the Exe.

Buffet supper, cash bar. Departs Exmouth Quay 6:45pm,  
returns 9:45pm