

The Cornopean

EXETER & DISTRICT ORGANISTS' ASSOCIATION

Newsletter

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Letter from the President

29th December 2020

Dear fellow members

I am sorry to report the death on Christmas Eve of Catherine Ennis, Organist and Director of music at the church of St Lawrence Jewry in the City of London.



Her concert engagements included recitals at Christ Church Spitalfields, Westminster Cathedral, and the Royal Festival Hall. She recorded works by JS Bach, Reubke, Guilmant, and English romantic composers, among others; her latest CD, a recital disc on the Peter Collins organ in St Bartholomew's Church, Orford, was released in October 2020. Ennis was known as a 'mover and shaker'. She was an energetic force in the creation of no fewer than four London organs: St Marylebone Parish Church (Rieger, 1987), St Lawrence Jewry (Klais, 2001), Trinity College of Music (William Drake, 2003) and the Queen's Organ, originally in the Mansion House, now in the Lady Chapel of Westminster Abbey (2012, Mander). She also founded the London Organ Concerts Guide, was president of the Incorporated Association of Organists and Royal College of Organists, a trustee of the Nicholas Danby Trust, and in 2018 was awarded the Medal of the Royal College of Organists*.

I met her only once when, on the eve of the awarding of the contract for the new organ at St Laurence Jewry; together with Peter Hurford she visited Bath Abbey to inspect its brand new Klais organ (1997) – resulting in a change of mind and the award of the Laurence Jewry contract to Klais. A lady of quick wit Catherine famously, in response to Simon Preston asking at a London party, "anybody for Ennis?" delivered the immortal line, "O press off, Piston."

Despite the arrival of vaccines, the rise in the Covid infection rate still renders it impossible to plan future events. This means that monthly, rather than quarterly, editions of The Cornopean are likely to continue into the Spring. Let us hope that the President's Evening, a river cruise on the Exe Estuary can go ahead as planned on 21st June. With any luck we might get an AGM in before then...

The front cover this month features the Klais organ (2013) of St Stephan, Mainz. The case was designed specially to reflect the church's famous Marc Chagall windows. "Desert Island Discs" are contributed by David Davies. David has the distinction of having landed Cathedral positions after two periods of working in the USA – something most British organists who travel to the States don't manage even once: firstly as Assistant Organist at Guildford Cathedral, then at Exeter Cathedral. He is now Organist at Buckfast Abbey.

I am delighted that we have been able to continue the inclusion of articles written by non-member guests. In this issue we break new ground and enter the world of scholarship: Peter Dyke expounds his theory of the eponymous enigma in Elgar's Variations on an Original Theme Opus 36 "to my friends pictured within". Of the many suggestions that have been put propounded over the years it is Peter's theory which I find most convincing. This month the distinguished organist Christopher Herrick, in the first of two articles, tells us about his experiences recording his best-selling "Organ Fireworks" CDs for Hyperion Records, and in the second of a series of four articles, James Lancelot, continues the story of his career by writing about his time as Organ Scholar at King's College, Cambridge.

Nerdy Corner this month returns to the anagram format, exotic stop names having produced no takers whatsoever. Ian Carson has contributed a new travellers' quiz and David Lee has written about his experiences learning the organ in Exmouth in the 1950s.

With best wishes for the New Year as you sink back into winter lockdown hibernation...

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

Peter King

*Information from *Choir and Organ* magazine.

Desert Island Discs

David Davies is currently Organist of Buckfast Abbey and Organist at the University of Exeter. Formerly Assistant Director of Music at Exeter Cathedral he was educated at Magdalen College, Oxford and at the Institute of Sacred Music, Yale University.

'Coast' (Hoodoo Zephyr) – John Adams

At school I became obsessed with Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Gesang der Jünglinge* after which the floodgates of electronic music opened. I remember being wide-eyed hearing Milton Babbitt and Edgard Varèse for the first time, and I wish I'd lived during the 1950s to experience that explosion of seemingly endless creativity that has now been cheapened by the pre-packaged and derivative synthesized music we hear everywhere. One of the reasons this piece by John Adams attracts me is because it uses, in part, the 'auto-chord' idea of bass notes generating pre-determined majors and minors, and organists already have that in their ears because of exposure to tierce and quint mixtures in the bass and tenor range. My discovery of 'Coast', the first track of Adams' electronic music album *Hoodoo Zephyr*, coincided with the only time in my life that I could afford to buy a brand new car, so it reminds me of driving past the lakes and mountains of Georgia and Alabama on hazy summer days, surrounded by 'new car smell' without a care in the world! (And, tut tut, possibly not adhering inviolably to the speed limit...)

Suor Angelica – Giacomo Puccini

I heard Mozart *Die Zauberflöte* when I was about 16 – ENO at the Coliseum, and my very first live opera-going experience. I was immediately hooked! (When, in 1999, I went to see Robert Carsen's exquisite production of Handel *Semele*, also at ENO, I was so blown away that I booked a ticket for the next night. And the next night. This is why I have no money to buy another new car.) *Suor Angelica* means a great deal to me because it brings together so many things I like: dressing up, heart-rending melodies, nuns, second-inversion harmonic sequences, melodrama and the wagging finger of doctrinal error. If I can't have the whole opera, I'll just opt for *Senza mamma* sung by Mirella Freni, and thus be reduced to a blubbering mass. Is Kleenex provided or must I pack my own?

Symphony – Shulamit Ran

The dissertation I wrote to be accepted at Yale (or, rather, so they knew if I had a rudimentary enough grasp of English not to cause embarrassment) was an analysis of Schoenberg's Op. 15 *Das Buch der hängenden Gärten* and, alongside my studies in organ, I had the incredible privilege of studying atonal music with one of Yale's most distinguished musicologists, Allen Forte, just before his retirement. Forte debunked the lie that so many of us had been fed in standard textbooks that the future of twelve-tone composition is dead, as is demonstrated in this wondrous masterpiece by the American-Israeli composer Shulamit Ran. Winning the 1991 Pulitzer Prize for Music it's a work that gives up its secrets slowly, but how better to while away those languorous hours under a shady palm tree than to play 'spot the inverted cancrizans'?



David Davies

Symphony No 1 – John Corigliano

Many of us will remember the bleak adverts about HIV/Aids infection that were broadcast on TV in the 1980s, right at the time when many people of my generation were coming of age, with this new disease representing a terrifying threat not just biologically but psychologically too. John Corigliano's *Symphony No 1* is dedicated to those who died before advances in medical therapies changed the goalposts of survivability, and the piece was inspired, in part, by the NAMES Quilt that has moved principally between San Francisco, Washington DC and Atlanta, Georgia. The quilt is now an enormous installation, with woven, patchwork panels commemorating some 94,000 souls. I visited it when I lived in Georgia and, seeing a woman on her knees weeping, it seemed right to try to say something to her as there were only two of us there. I learned that, because of her Mormonism, she had kicked her son out of the house when he had come out to her. She rejected all his pleas to come home, never knew that he had become HIV-positive, never reconciled with him before he died in his 20s, and now was gripped by remorse. In her hand, a tiny, faded kodak photo of an adorable little boy with a big toothy grin. Had he lived, he would have been the same age as I. Why can't people just be nice to each other? It's not rocket science.

Book of Proverbs - Michael Torke

I adore Torke's music in its ability to transmit such joy. It was hard to choose between this work and the same composer's '*Ash*' – the latter would have ticked the Beethovenian soundscape which I shall miss on this desert island – but the freshness of all of Torke's music never pales. I seldom remain dry-eyed during the fifth movement, *The Way of an Eagle*, so I can just imagine myself listening to this particular track while looking out over a glassy sea as the island sunset gives way to a deep azure night. Really hoping that we will be allowed booze in this god-forsaken existence because a glass of crisply-cold Vouvray Demi Sec would hit the spot right now. Oh, and Pringles.

Plebs angelica – Michael Tippett

For most organists, this desert island would just sink if we were to take all of the recordings we want of choral and organ music. It was a toss-up, in the end, between this piece by Tippett and Praetorius' *Sanctus* (*Jesaja an dem Propheten*), the latter having been made famous in the magnificent recording of a reconstructed Mass for Christmas Morning masterminded by Paul McCreesh. Angels appear throughout the Bible, and, of all liturgical Christian imagery, it is that of the transforming, angelic army confronting/inviting us at the Sanctus of the Mass that marks my own personal, liturgical 'shift' at the anaphora of the Eucharist. While I shall miss Praetorius on this salty spit of land to which you are consigning me, the awesome theological heft of angelic ministry - Isaiah, seraphim, cherubim, the Revelation of John, a physically gorgeous Michael the Archangel – influences how I visualise the imagery of Tippett's exquisite motet, its treatment of the final word *Paradisicolas* being particularly transportive for me. Owing in part to reverberation time, it is the recording by St Paul's Cathedral Choir under the direction of the late John Scott that conveys, for me, the innate 'other-worldliness' of this interfusion of text and music.

just_more_idle_chatter – Paul Lansky

I imagine that this desert island will be a lonely place, and, while having a recording of a Debussy song cycle or some mellifluous Gregorian chant would be delightful, I suspect that having too many pieces rich in musical introspection would exacerbate one's sense of *ennui*, hammering home the inevitable meaninglessness of life, and having one reach for the next volume of Proust. (Note to self: don't drink the sea water.) To counter that, I choose Paul Lansky's brilliantly imaginative electronic conflation of the pitch ranges of the human voice. I imagine it's like running down Oxford Street during rush hour high on crack cocaine (which, just to be clear, I've never done.)

Climb ev'ry mountain – Richard Rodgers, remixed Junior Vasquez

As the youngest of seven, I grew up in a household that was full of recorded music: my parents' love of the great swing era tunes, my sisters' wide ranging taste of music (Brahms, Beatles, The Velvet Underground, Pink Floyd et al.) and my brother's harder-edged addiction to Anthrax, Black Sabbath and

Mötley Crüe. My parents decided that six children were plenty enough, at which point the Universe intervened with its usual capricious sense of irony. (I've a September birthday so I reckon I'm the result of a bit of Yuletide *amour*. If only Father had resisted that second schooner of Tio Pepe...) My own graduation through the popular sound worlds of the 70s and 80s was much more tame than my brother's – only Dire Straits, Fleetwood Mac, Wet Wet Wet and Thompson Twins for me – but that morphed into all the electronica of my louche university years that landed eventually somewhere in an admiration for Skrillex. (In return for mastering one of my own recordings, I once paid a recording engineer 'in kind' – as it were – by improvising a dubstep drop on the organ of Exeter Cathedral for a totally different project in which he was involved. It worked alarmingly well, and is doing the rounds in the backstreet bars of Ulan Bator, I'm told.) I'm assuming nobody will be able to see me on this island if I fancy a solo frolic? Because I defy anyone not to want to dance on hearing the Junior Vasquez remix of Mother Superior Peggy Wood's classic from *The Sound of Music*, which, again, has the whole 'auto-chord' sonority going on. This remix also happens to come from the soundtrack of my favourite movie, *Welcome to Woop Woop*, and, as I imagine I won't be allowed Netflix, this song will be a jolly reminder of that.

On Radio 4 some years ago, when asked for her luxury, one castaway (whose name I cannot remember) said, "Freshly laundered sheets every night". I love that idea. But it's hers, and I mustn't nick it. **My luxury**, therefore, is my own 'invention' – a solar-powered, five-manual organ where the bottom manual is a seven octave, touch-sensitive digital piano, and all other keyboards have a standard 61 note compass, with the upper four manuals operating a digital organ (something like Hauptwerk with lots of different specification options). Not totally sure where the *una corda* and sustaining pedals will go yet, but the music desk is an LCD screen, with my whole library of music (literally everything, including orchestral and choral scores) pre-loaded into a computer that then can be displayed on the screen, so I can access it all.

My book would be 'The Making of Americans' by Gertrude Stein. I cannot for the life of me understand a word of it: I have a love/hate relationship with Stein, and who she was, and everything she stood for, and her nauseating self-acclamation of genius that genuinely leaves me clueless about whether she was a fraud or not, so I guess my time on this island is an ideal opportunity for me to buckle down and see if her literary genius can register somewhere in my fat head. I hope it'll be worth it.

I'd like to save the Puccini from the waves, please, and, although I know I get Shakespeare and a Bible, can I substitute the latter for Clarence Jordan's *Cotton Patch Gospels*? Any translation of the Magnificat that renders *fecit potentiam in brachio suo* as 'with his strong arm he scatters the big boys who think they're somebody' is bound to be a colourful read!

David Davies is currently Organist of Buckfast Abbey and Organist at the University of Exeter. Formerly Assistant Director of Music at Exeter Cathedral he was educated at Magdalen College, Oxford and at the Institute of Sacred Music, Yale University.



EMOJI HYMN QUIZ

- 1 Shine, Jesus, shine
- 2 Holy, holy, holy
- 3 Be thou my vision
- 4 One more step along the world
- 5 Come down, O love divine
- 6 Lord of the dance
- 7 Crown him with many crowns
- 8 Hills of the North
- 9 The King of Love my shepherd is
- 10 Lo, he comes with clouds descending

Elgar the enigmatic: A new approach to an enduring puzzle

"I have been.... playing Bach, who heals and pacifies all men and all things."

Edward Elgar, in a letter to Ivor Atkins, 2 July, 1902

It is the moment the whole of the preceding eighty minutes of music have been preparing us for: the instant when the soul of Gerontius is brought face to face with God. The impact is cataclysmic, but the context makes it even more so: Elgar has taken the soul – and the listener – through wondrous and strange firmaments filled with demons and angels, and the music's rich harmonic language and vividly colourful orchestration has powerfully illustrated the extraordinary journey.

Now, in the last moments before the climactic point of *The Dream of Gerontius*, there is an urgent statement of the D minor “judgement” theme (with which the work started) over a dominant pedal point. Tension mounts as the tessitura rises and the harmonies become more dissonant; finally, the pedal abandons the held A and starts shifting chromatically – and then with a huge orchestral crash, the soul momentarily looks upon God and cries “Take me away!” This is a moment of huge musical and theological drama.

Closer scrutiny of the orchestral bass line at the end of the build-up reveals that the final four notes before the climactic crash are B flat–A–C–B natural (Ex.1). Is this a coincidence, or could it be that Elgar intentionally uses the four notes that spell the name BACH (in German note-names) at this crucial point? Could Elgar be identifying with the soul of Gerontius, thinking “Whatever my worth as a composer, I am as nothing in front of the great J.S. Bach: Take me away!”?



Ex. 1: Elgar, *The Dream of Gerontius*, orchestral bass part before figure 120

To some observers this may seem fanciful, but it prompts examination of how Elgar viewed Bach. We perhaps tend to overlook Elgar’s admiration for Bach in favour of his celebrated devotion to Wagner and other nineteenth-century Romantic composers; Elgar’s compositional style was changed radically by his visits to Bayreuth, but it was in Leipzig that the young Elgar would have loved to have studied. When Elgar was at the impressionable age of 18, he was thrilled by the playing of Bach’s music (the fugues BWV 548 and 680) by S.S. Wesley at the 1875 Three Choirs Festival at Worcester¹ – and he later made orchestrations of organ music by Bach.

The “sensation” of the 1911 Three Choirs Festival was the playing of brass arrangements of Bach chorales (swiftly provided by Elgar) from Worcester Cathedral tower just before the performance of Bach’s *St Matthew Passion*, sung from the new edition of this great work that he and Ivor Atkins had completed.²

Most fascinating though is the fact that the famous musical device whereby Bach’s name can be shown in music by a single note on four interlocking staves was written out by Elgar – apparently at the age of just eight, and early indication of his delight and interest in puzzles. Schumann, another composer Elgar admired, also incorporated the BACH melodic motif into some of his works;



Fig. 1: BACH as a single note on four interlocking staves, in Elgar’s hand, at the Elgar Birthplace Museum

¹ Atkins, E.W., The Elgar-Atkins Friendship (David and Charles, 1984) p. 474

² Ibid., pp. 227–231

and in 1878 Elgar began to compose a tribute to Mozart written with the exact structure and number of bars as the 40th Symphony.

Did Elgar know of the musical symbolism used by Bach himself? Numerology is hidden within much of Bach's music, and one of the most evocative musical symbols is that of the cross motif, where four notes are written in a kind of zig-zag, alternately falling and rising. A line drawn between notes 1 and 4 and another drawn between notes 2 and 3 will form a cross. Examples of this pattern occur throughout Bach's music: three examples are the organ chorale prelude *Da Jesus an dem Kreuze stund* (BWV 621) begins with the shape in the pedal part (Ex. 2); in *Christ, unser Herr, zum Jordan kam* (BWV 684) the cross shape can be seen to represent Christ at the river (Ex. 3); and in the *St John Passion* the word "kreuzige" ("crucify") is powerfully set to a cross shape (Ex. 4). The BACH motif also, interestingly, traces the shape of a cross.



1Ex. 2: Bach, BWV 621, opening of pedal part



Ex. 3 Bach, BWV 621, opening of RH part



Ex. 4: Bach, St John Passion, 21d, bb. 38–40 (soprano part)



Ex. 5 BACH motif

At the very least, it is a fascinating coincidence that the opening bar of the *Variations on an Original Theme* ("Enigma") is also a cross-shaped phrase. Although each of the first six bars of the melody contains four notes that could also be related to a cross shape, there is, of course, far more to the theme than this (notably the major-key middle section). It is intriguing to think that the genesis of the theme in Elgar's mind – which we believe to have originated from improvising an idea at the piano after a day's teaching in October 1898³ – was perhaps how to use and develop the cross shape in a melody.

For the programme note of the *Variations'* first performance Elgar refused to elaborate on the nature of the enigma:

"The Enigma I will not explain – its "dark saying" must be left unguessed....through and over the whole set another and larger theme "goes" but is not played... the chief character is never on the stage."⁴

Julian Rushton proposed that

the 'theme' could be a metaphor for an idea, perhaps 'friendship'.⁵

Elgar's Roman Catholic upbringing and lack of self-confidence suggest that he understood the cross to be the symbol of personal self-sacrifice, rather than a flag behind which to march into battle against the unfaithful. He perhaps recognised a shadow of the self-sacrifice of the cross in the generosity and friendship his "friends pictured within" the variations had shown him. August Jaeger, depicted in Variation IX, Nimrod, clearly moved Elgar deeply when he took the trouble to compare him to Beethoven, who persevered with composition despite setbacks and discouragement⁶.

³ Kennedy, Michael, *The Life of Elgar* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.61

⁴ Programme note for the first performance on 19 June 1899 by C.A. Barry, quoted in Moore, Jerrold Northrop, *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life* (Oxford, 2002), p.71

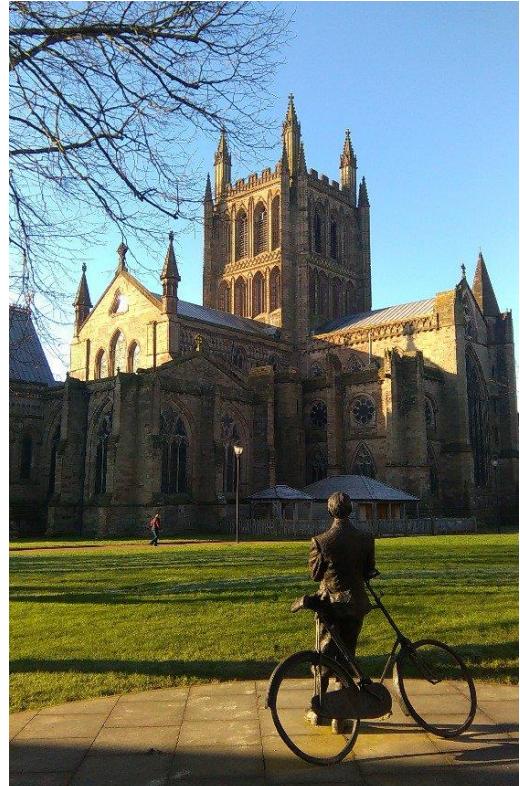
⁵ Rushton, Julian, Exploring Elgar's Enigma Variations (British Library Website) <https://www.bl.uk/20th-century-music/articles/exploring-elgars-enigma-variations>

⁶ Powell, Dora (1947), *Edward Elgar: Memories of a Variation* (London) 2nd ed. pp. 110–111

The number of variations matches the fourteen stations of the cross that Elgar would have known from his attendance at St George's Church in Worcester; and this suggestion goes a little way to explaining why he thought Dora Penny (the daughter of a clergyman) should "of all people" have been able to work out the nature of the mystery.⁷

What makes the *Enigma Variations* great, however, is not the puzzle, but the quality and beauty of the music. Similarly, Bach's own use of the cross motif would be irrelevant, were his music mediocre. Elgar never revealed the nature of the enigma, and this supports the idea, expressed elegantly by Julian Rushton, that "maybe, far from being amusing and ingenious, the enigma hid feelings too deep for words, too tender for public scrutiny."⁸

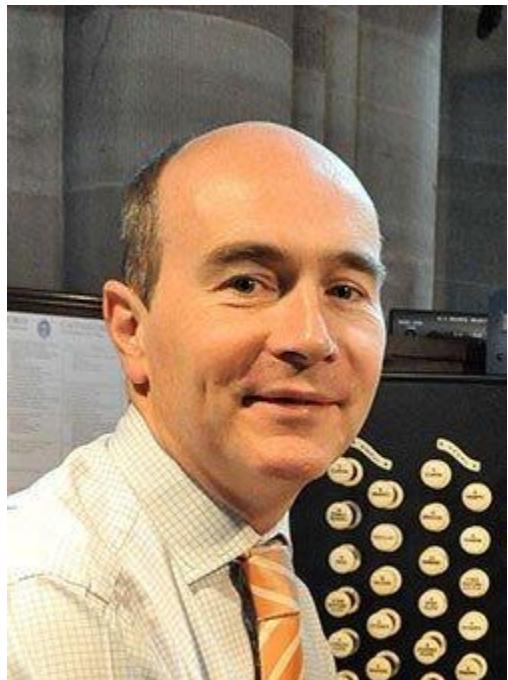
Like his possible private acknowledgement of J.S. Bach in *Gerontius*, his possible acknowledgement to the cross as the model for friendship and love is a deeply personal and private one. The enigma remains a mystery, as profound and wonderful as the human heart – and perhaps that is a clue to its real meaning.



The Elgar statue, Hereford Cathedral

Peter Dyke
Hereford, 17 April 2020

Peter Dyke was Organ Scholar of Robinson College, Cambridge. He won second prize in the Interpretation Competition in the St Albans International Organ Festival, has held posts at St Woolos, Newport and St Albans cathedrals and has been Assistant Organist of Hereford Cathedral since 1998. As well as accompanying the daily services he plays regularly for the choir on recordings, radio and television broadcasts and overseas tours. He founded and directs Hereford Cathedral Voluntary Choir, which has made its own European tours. Peter has a keen interest in teaching and was made an Associate of the Royal School of Church Music in 2010 for his work founding two successful organists' training schemes. His three solo CDs have received much critical praise. In 2005 he recorded a series of programmes for BBC Radio 3 exploring J S Bach's 260-mile journey on foot to Lübeck to visit Buxtehude.



Peter Dyke

⁷ Ibid, pp. 119–120

⁸ Rushton, J., Elgar's 'Enigma' Variations (Cambridge University Press, 1999)

Organ Fireworks Odyssey: Part 1

Christopher Herrick

Peter King suggested that I should write something for *The Cornopean* about my experiences recording what he flatteringly describes as my ‘wonderful Organ Fireworks series’. Having been shown two back numbers of his splendid magazine it became obvious that I had been invited to join a very distinguished company.

It amuses me that during my nearly forty years recording for Hyperion Records two very distinct fan clubs have sprung up: those who know me as ‘Mr Organ Fireworks’ and those who admire me for my ‘Complete Bach’ recordings. As the fourteen Organ Fireworks CDs and the sixteen Bach CDs make up less than three quarters of my Hyperion output, it was rather pleasant to get an email from Canada recently which was from my very first Buxtehude fan!

My relationship with Hyperion has been lucky and productive. It has been a privilege to be an exclusive artist and organist for so many years of Britain’s leading classical music label.

But first, let us rewind to the back story...

My first commercial recording was a vinyl release from St Paul’s Cathedral issued in 1970 on the



St Paul's Cathedral, the North case, when the console was still inside the chair case

Vista label. This appeared simultaneously with my boss Christopher Dearnley’s recording in the EMI ‘Great Cathedral Organs’ series. Moral: never compete with your boss! This was followed by more discs recorded by the legendary Michael Smythe, some released on his Vista label and some on Decca’s l’Oiseau-Lyre label. My two favourites of these are the complete William Mathias organ works recorded at Hereford Cathedral, and a compilation disc made at Coventry Cathedral. Michael Smythe, having been granted permission to record in Coventry, had been stood up by Ralph Downes so, at short notice, he asked me to fill the gap.



The Willis III console at Herford Cathedral

Normally Michael preferred to record repertoire that was not already in the catalogue but exceptionally for Coventry he gave me carte blanche to choose any programme. The happy result was Bonnet’s *Variations de Concert*, two Brahms *Chorales*, Mozart’s *Fantasia* (K608) and Reubke’s *Sonata*. However, it should be said that Michael’s customary pressure on me to find more obscure repertoire in the long run stood me in good stead: less well-known composers and unusual pieces were in due course to become the backbone of the Hyperion Organ Fireworks series.

Michael sadly died prematurely but it turned out that John Shuttleworth of Meridian Records was keen to record me on the Westminster Abbey organ. By the way, my old recordings made by Michael Smythe and John Shuttleworth can apparently be accessed on Spotify.

Hyperion was founded in 1980 and my debut with them was in 1983 on the Westminster Abbey

Organ. The title 'Organ Fireworks' was greeted with little enthusiasm at the time though history has vindicated me. We recorded it all in a three-hour evening session which was annoyingly interrupted by a bells practice in the tower of neighbouring St Margaret's. The ringers were open to persuasion and soon stopped, though the producer and recording engineer had meanwhile encouraged me to go on recording a very loud passage against the bells which can just be heard on the CD but not on the vinyl disc or the cassette tape.



Westminster Abbey S case, by JL Pearson,
decorated by SE Dykes Bower

It was extremely fortunate and good timing for me making this recording just as the new-fangled CD was wiping the floor with vinyl. Classic FM was just coming on the scene and thanks to the fact that Ted Perry of Hyperion was so far ahead of the game, my CD was for a time one of the few organ CDs available on an international scale. For instance, one of the tracks, Johnson's *Trumpet Tune* in D major, became the signature tune of US Public Radio's 'With Heart and Voice'.

In due course Ted Perry invited me to make another recording. A whole day at the Royal



Coventry Cathedral, a trend setter in many ways,
not least the design of an organ on shelves

Albert Hall became available because of an 'awayday' for the Hall's staff and I offered a repertoire which included some jingoistic pieces by Guilmant and Lemare replete with *Rule Britannia!*, *The Sailor's Horn Pipe* etc, which nowadays might be deemed to be on the verge of politically incorrect. It was one hell of a recording session with long interruptions while we endured the organ tuners tuning the big reeds which they were supposed to have tuned before we arrived! Paul Spicer, who I had got to know through many



Royal Albert Hall console (four manuals is plenty!)

BBC recordings, was the producer. He went on to produce nearly all the rest of my Hyperion recordings and this proved to be an excellent musical partnership. In the Albert Hall Paul nursed me through that long fraught day and against the odds we produced the goods. At close of day my head ached as never before or since.

Gradually I became Hyperion's house organist. In tandem with the Bach series all recorded in Switzerland on Metzler organs (another story), we started taking the Organ Fireworks series abroad, first to St Eustache in Paris.

It was something of a scoop to be allowed to record Jean Guillou's brand new organ. Guillou was influenced to give his go-ahead by Paul Spicer's BBC connection and because he had just composed his op. 45 entitled 'Hyperion'! The organ tuners of the 1989 van den Heuvel organ were a married couple who complemented each other particularly as the lady was able to access parts of the organ too narrow for her husband to penetrate. Recording in an area like Les Halles proved to be far from peaceful. We availed ourselves of the rather dodgy and by today's standards quite primitive organ playback equipment which my son was luckily on hand to figure out and persuade to function. We called on it for some of my performances in the small hours when Paris street life became marginally less vibrant. The recording team emerged from St Eustache at 4am to find ourselves drawn into the busy market life of Les Halles where we partook of a hearty breakfast in the workers' café. It was just as well we got the whole CD done in one marathon session because we found ourselves in frightful trouble with the clergy whose slumbers we had inadvertently disturbed.



S Eustache, Paris seen from Les Halles

By now the Fireworks series was well established and had become something of a collectable, selling well world-wide. This success could be put down to three contributory factors: the new CD craze; the fact that organs with their wide sonic range recorded more authentically on the new medium; and not least that the programmes were a bit unusual. At that time organ programmes tended to have a predictable 'Couperin – Bach – Mendelssohn – Hindemith – Messiaen' shape, whereas the Organ Fireworks series sought to juxtapose a whole host of offbeat pieces with established repertoire in a sequence both pleasurable and stimulating.



S Eustache, Paris, Nave console

Rarities included Jolivet's *Hymne à l'Univers*, Shostakovich's *Passacaglia*, Bartok's *Six Romanian Dances*, Janáček's *Organ Solo* from the *Glagolitic Mass* and Eben's *Hommage à Buxtehude*.

There were a number of big statement works – Nielsen's *Commotio*, Vaughan Williams's *Prelude and Fugue in C minor*, Reubke's *Sonata*, Bourgeois's *Variations on a theme of Herbert Howells*, Jongen's *Sonata Eroïca*, Elgar's G major *Sonata*, Karg-Elert's *Passacaglia and Fugue on BACH*, Guilmant's First *Sonata*, Mozart's two great *Fantasias* and Liszt's first version *BACH* and his *Ad nos*.

Fun contemporary works proved very popular – Takle's *Blues Toccata*, Farrington's *Barrel Organ Monkey*, Preston's *Allelujas*, Bourgeois's *Serenade*, Cocker's *Tuba Tune*, Garth Edmundson's *Vom Himmel hoch*, Spicer's *Kiwi Fireworks*, Gowers's *An Occasional Trumpet Voluntary*, Behnke's *Siyahamba*, and Grainger's *Handel in the Strand*.

Arrangements enriched the series – Wagner's *Meistersinger Overture*, Brahms's *Academic Festival Overture*, Verdi's *Grand March* from *Aïda*, Berlioz's *March* from *The Damnation of Faust*, Elgar's *Imperial March* and two of the *Pomp and Circumstance Marches*, Reger's arrangement of Bach's *Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue*, as well as Sibelius's *Finlandia*.

There was also a cornucopia of works such as Franck's *Pièce Héroïque*, Lanquetuit's *Toccata*, Hollins's *Trumpet Minuet* and *Triumphal March*, SS Wesley's *Choral Song and Fugue*, Buck's *Variations on 'Old Folks at Home'* and '*The Star Spangled Banner*', Alain's *Litanies*, Monnikendam's two *Toccatas*, Hovland's *Toccata 'Nu la oss takke Gud'*, a few of Johnson's *Trumpet Tunes*, Rutter's *Organ Duet* (with Jeremy Spurgeon), Weaver's *Passacaglia on a theme of Dunstable* and Brewer's *Marche Héroïque*.

Many standard composers were represented – Duruflé, Widor, Rheinberger, Langlais, Copland, Dupré, Mathias, Vierne, Whitlock and Saint-Saëns.

These were joined by slightly less well-known composers – Lemare, Dubois, Lang, Litaize, Sumsion, Lefébure-Wély, Paine, Bossi, Rawsthorne, Mulet, Wolstenholme, Bonnet, W. Lloyd Webber, Gigout, Rinck and Weitz.

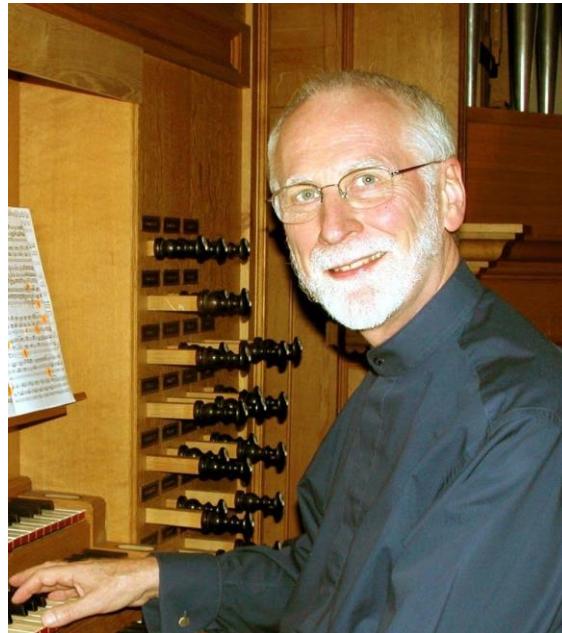
As a boy chorister at St Paul's Cathedral, Christopher Herrick sang at the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. Later he was Organ Scholar at Exeter College, Oxford, where he studied music. Following this, he obtained a Boult scholarship to study at the Royal College of Music where his interests expanded to the harpsichord. This later led to the formation of the Taskin trio (violin, viola da gamba, harpsichord), playing baroque music on period instruments.

He was assistant organist at St Paul's Cathedral (1967-1974) and Sub-Organist at Westminster Abbey (1979-1984), playing at royal and state occasions and giving over 200 solo recitals there in that time. In 1984 he embarked upon a solo career as a concert organist and toured worldwide. In this was he was able to confound his former Choirmaster, Sir John Dyles-Bower, who had told the 12-year old Herrick "Well... I suppose it might be just possible to be an organist giving concerts, with no permanent church appointment – but even Thalben-Ball has a city church." His concerts have included the solo organ concert in the centenary season of the Proms (1994), Bach's complete "Well-Tempered Clavier" on the harpsichord at London's South Bank and Bach's complete organ works at the Lincoln Center Festival in New York

Even Pachelbel and Buxtehude get a surprise airing!

Finally, some Scandinavian novelties by Gade, Lindberg, Sløgedal, Eftestøl and Otto Olsson were stirred into the grand mix.

Christopher Herrick



Christopher Herrick

James Lancelot looks back on his career – Part 2, King's College, Cambridge

When I travelled to Cambridge aged 16 in September 1969 to sit the Organ Scholarship trials, the proud possessor of a newly-minted FRCO, it was with no other expectation than to gain experience in readiness to try again more seriously the following year. My Director of Music at Ardingly College was Alan Angus, an enormous admirer of David Willcocks' King's choir (his son David was a Chorister).

The initial playing test, as always at that time, consisted of the *Adagio and Fugue* in C by Bach; mercifully, the *Toccata* had been dropped a few years before. Placed in the second round, I found myself in the organ loft at King's itself under the eye of David Willcocks, who put us through a series of keyboard tests (amongst them, improvising with a right-hand solo on Nazard, transposing down a twelfth; sight-reading Brahms' *Schmücke dich* with the treble part played on the pedals on a 4' reed, playing the final verse of a hymn and continuing an improvisation while David mimicked the motions of an old-fashioned television cameraman under one's nose).

I heard myself appointed to the Scholarship with incredulity, and returned to school determined to build up my repertoire, which I did initially by learning the whole of the *Orgelbüchlein*. After a "gap" year at the RCM studying with Ralph Downes, I matriculated in 1971 and took up the scholarship under the eagle eye of Ian Hare, the Senior Organ Scholar, with whom I overlapped for a year. I could only regard with amazement the invariable accuracy of his playing, a standard which I never thought I would reach.



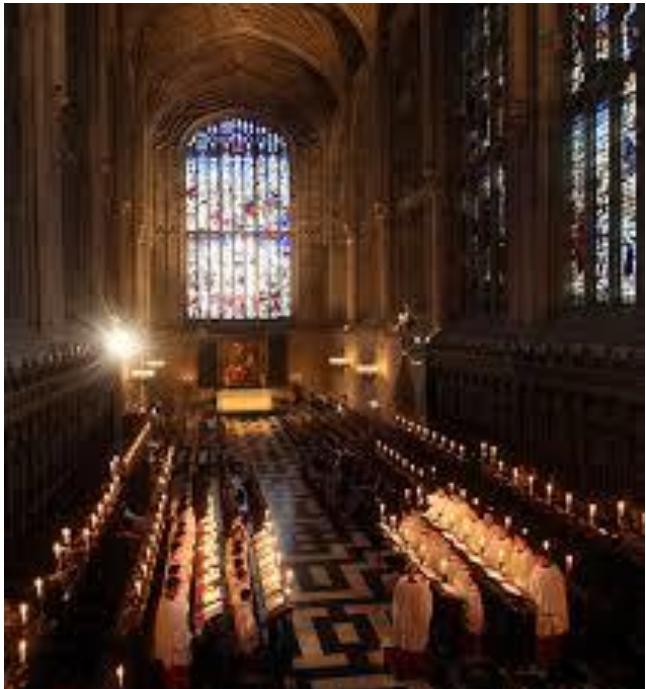
James Lancelot

The first hurdle that any King's organ scholar has to surmount is the time-lag. The organ is at some distance from the choir (and the action was probably not as prompt in 1971 as it is today). There was no CCTV (except for EMI recordings) and no mirror (except on Christmas Eve; an enormously heavy mirror was hauled over the side of the loft and placed on top of the choir stalls, a move which health and safety would not countenance today). This was both a help and a hindrance; one had to anticipate exactly what David and the choir would do, but at the same time one was free of the need to watch the beat. We learnt to listen – and to anticipate. I never quite gained the knack in my first year; in my second year, with no fellow Organ Scholar, I found that I clicked very quickly and never looked back.



Ian Hare

The choir of that era was very much David's creation. His Choristers held him in awe, but in affection too, for despite his insistently high standards he allowed his human side to be seen in early-morning practices. Some of the Choral Scholars were I think genuinely nervous of him, to the extent of ensuring that they had their cafeteria lunch in Hall on the early side, since David tended to arrive quite late (there was no high table at lunch). While David could put the fear of God into one, I found him hugely



The Choir in King's Chapel from the organ loft,

showing the distance between the two
supportive and approachable; there was virtually
never a cross word. Accompanying Cambridge
University Musical Society chorus rehearsals
under David's baton also showed me another
side; again, no slovenliness whatever was
tolerated, but there was much humour.



David Willcocks at King's

The rule in the loft was that each Organ Scholar (when there were two of us) was expected to prepare every accompaniment and to be ready to play it at a moment's notice. David himself accompanied many of the canticle settings – even playing Stanford in C at his final Evensong on Christmas Day 1973. He could occasionally be prevailed upon to play voluntaries; on the other hand, he challenged me (during the sermon one Sunday morning) to sight-read his fanfare on

Gopsal after the service, that being the tune of the final hymn. Frantic silent practice followed; I think I passed!

Above all, David always played the psalms (except on live broadcasts, when the Organ Scholar was expected to have picked up enough ideas to play them himself). This is the aspect of his playing that I remember most vividly; the two discs *The Psalms of David* volumes one and two are a master-class in psalm accompaniment. The education I had in this art under John Dykes Bower and David Willcocks was without price; there are many fine accompanists today, but there no longer seems to be the opportunity to learn the art from those with many years' experience, which I think is a pity.

One might have expected David to stay with the choir at the end of a service; instead, he almost always came up to the loft after the anthem, observed the playing of the voluntary, and expected us to voice any criticisms of the choir's singing. There was no suggestion of his taking offence at any of this; in retrospect I realise that he was preparing us for the time we would have our own choirs.

David's rare absences gave me the opportunity to conduct the choir myself, a huge privilege. Particular memories are of conducting Palestrina's *Missa Pape Marcelli*, and – rather differently – Parry's *My soul, there is a country* towards the end of David's time when he was present in the loft but sent me down during the Creed to conduct. Inevitably I was rather nervous – until I realised that the strange noise I could hear was David going through his correspondence and tearing up letters!

In 1974 Philip Ledger succeeded David. Very much a new broom, he opened my eyes to new music and new ideas, at the same time giving me warm support – convivial breakfasts at his house after the morning Chorister practices are a particular memory. What I admired above all, though, was his piano accompaniment, as demonstrated in a disc of Schubert and Brahms that the choir recorded in 1974. At the same time, Francis Grier had come up as Organ Scholar (we overlapped for

my final year), and he too brought a wealth of new ideas; it was an exciting time.



Philip Ledger playing the harpsichord

Working under such pressure and to such standards, there were inevitably near misses or mishaps – I am only surprised at how infrequent they were. Ian Hare once embarked on the “Giant” fugue after Evensong only to realise that he had forgotten to place blocks under the organ stool (he is a tall person). I shall never know how I managed to cancel the pedal, insert the blocks while Ian stood up during the opening bars, and restore the pedal registration in time for the initial pedal entry; but I did, and nobody was the wiser.

Mercifully, David was not present this time! I am told also that when through my own fault the pedal reeds made an uncalled-for and single-note appearance during a *pp* section of Britten’s Festival *Te Deum* at Matins on the occasion of the University Sermon, many august nodding heads were seen to be rudely awakened!

Looking at the level of staffing of some of today’s musical establishments, I cannot but remark on the contrast with my second year, when the conducting and playing were in the hands of just David and myself – while I was studying Classics, moreover. Life was busy and demanding, but hugely fulfilling; there could have been no better preparation for a career in cathedral music, and I can only look back in gratitude.

James Lancelot

The Editor once asked a former King’s Organ Scholar how new organ scholars, 18-years old and fresh from school, knew how to register accompaniments for a world class choir on a large 4-manual organ. “O”, he replied, “we just do what’s written in the copy. I think James worked it out and it worked well so we all used his registrations.”

Nerdy Answers

On which organs these exotic stop names are to be found

1	Trompette Militaire	8	St Paul’s Cathedral
2	Royal Trumpet(s)	16, 8, 4	St Paul’s Cathedral
3	Trompeta Real	8	St John’s College, Cambridge
4	Fanfare Trumpet	8	St Albans Abbey
5	Trompete de maris	8	Portsmouth Cathedral
6	Contra Trombone	64	Sydney Town Hall
7	La Force		Weingarten Abbey (Germany)
8	Serpent	32	Blackburn Cathedral
9	Sackbut	32	York Minster
10	Pontifical Trumpet	8	Buckfast Abbey
11	Abbatial Trumpet	8	Buckfast Abbey
12	Grand Contra Bourdon	32	Huddersfield Town Hall
13	Voce Umana (Pos)	8 nb not Buckfast	Symphony Hall, Birmingham
14	Principal Céleste (Gt)	8	Marlborough College
15	Dolcissimo	4	St Bartholomew, Armley
16	Flauto Dolcissimo	4	St George’s, Doncaster
17	Zauberflöte	4	Tewkesbury Abbey (Grove Organ)
18	Glocken		St Giles’s Cathedral, Edinburgh
19	Glockenspiel (Gongs)		Hereford Cathedral
20	Glockenspiel (bells)		Bath Abbey

This was a disappointing quiz with no answers submitted. Clearly these exotic stop names failed to capture the imagination of EDOA members.

MEMORIES OF LEARNING THE ORGAN

After several years of learning the piano, lessons ceased when I had to have private coaching to resit two "O" Levels (Latin and Maths) and the family could not afford both. Having successfully passed them in the autumn of 1952 by Mother suggested I might like to learn the organ as she thought it would be a useful accomplishment, particularly if I moved away from Exmouth. The family attended Glenorchy Congregational Church in Exmouth whose Organist and Choirmaster at that time was H Cyril Robinson ARCM. He had been articled to John Pulein the Organist of Glasgow Cathedral and a fellow pupil at the same time was Ernest Farrar who left a small number of compositions for the organ. I can still remember Mr Robinson saying Farrar was "blown to smithereens" in the First World War. I was not quite 17 when organ lessons started and continued for about four years until legal studies put an end to them when I went to Guildford to the Law School there. As Mr Robinson was clearly a capable musician you may think it strange that he didn't hold a position in the Anglican church but I understood it was because he had been divorced and that church would not employ a divorced man as Organist and Choirmaster.

The book I learnt from was Percy Buck's *First Year at the Organ* which I still have almost 70 years later. Not only were there scales to practise on the manuals and pedals, but arpeggios etc. Some of the exercises involved holding down one note whilst playing two other notes alternately. If it was the 1st or 5th finger to hold down there wasn't much problem but others, particularly the 3rd finger, I found more difficult. Mr Robinson would also do aural tests – eg saying whether a chord was major or minor which I found easy and never got wrong. Root, first and second inversions were much more difficult. Apart from scales there were also exercises on the pedals. Mr Robinson believed in playing these with the legs well apart* and would put his hand briefly on one leg to pull it

apart**. As time went on I progressed to playing hymn tunes with the manuals and pedals and also learnt Bach's *Eight Short Preludes and Fugues* which I'm sure many readers do, too.

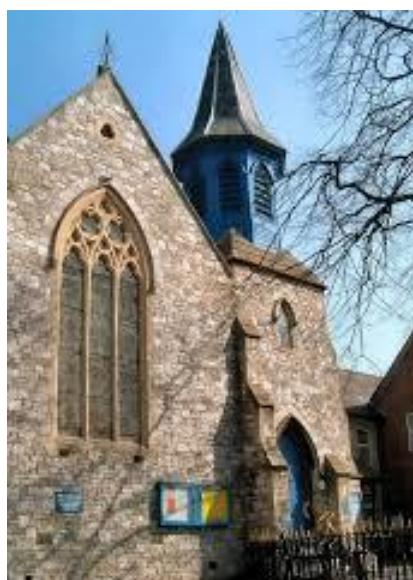


David Lee playing the piano at Treorchy URC Exmouth

In those far-off days Congregational Churches generally sang a chant at the morning service so I had to do this and follow the pointing. The first time I did that in public on a Sunday was to play the *Venite*. I'm sure if one could play from memory, following the pointing would have been somewhat easier. Chanting ceased many years ago when our choir was disbanded due to advancing years. Mr Robinson was a stickler for keeping exact time in the hymns and made sure I did too if he was sitting beside me on the stool. If choir and congregation were lagging he just kept going in strict *tempo*, even if he was a note or two ahead of everyone. Not really very worshipful! I've always found that playing *staccato* can usually cure this and congregations don't seem to like being unsupported. The way I was taught to play hymns was in a very *legato* style so any repeated notes in the harmony (not the melody) were generally held down and not repeated. When our choir was disbanded Mr Robinson resigned and took a post at East Budleigh Parish Church, so either the bit about being divorced no longer applied or else it never had applied and what I was told was not correct.

David Lee

*Why? **No longer recommended practice. Editor

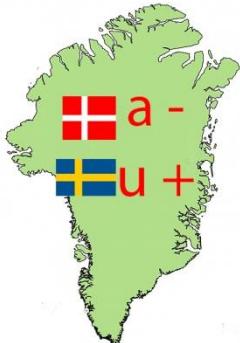


Treorchy URC Exmouth

ORGAN QUIZ FOR TRAVELLING NERDS

The photos below are of organs encountered by Ian Carson in his travels. A round trip from Exeter to view all four would encompass about 25,000 miles. The maps are clues but do not necessarily give away the locations of the organs.

ORGAN 1



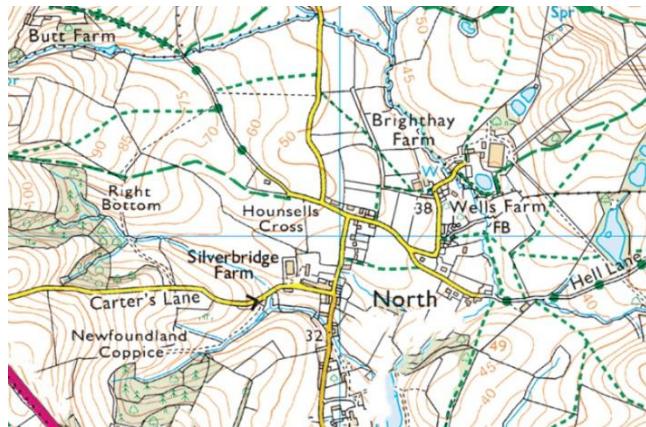
ORGAN 2



ORGAN 3



ORGAN 4
...which only involves crossing one English county border!



NERDY ANAGRAMS
Organ Composers

- 1- - THICK CROW YELP
- 2- - WE BROTHERS HELL
- 3- - PHIL, I`M HAUNTED
- 4- - I SURE IN LOVE
- 5- - FRIDGE GIRL SKATER
- 6- - I E MISSION REVEAL

- 7- - CRACKER FANS
- 8- - BEG, REFRESH, REJOIN
- 9- - I`D BE TOWARDS WAR
- 10- - I DID THE UK EX-BRUTE
- 11- - SUNROOF I CAN PRICE
- 12- - FLEES REPORT

Calendar of forthcoming events

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

NB, 18th June 2021 Exe River cruise on the *Tudor Rose*.
Buffet supper, cash bar. Departs Exmouth Quay 6:45pm,
returns 9:45pm



The Tudor Rose on the Exe