



**NORTH HAMPSHIRE
ORGANISTS' ASSOCIATION**
www.nhoa.org.uk

Newsletter 205 September 2021



*Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck (1562-1621), Jeanne Demessieux (1921-1968), Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921):
all to feature in the programme on 20 November*

PROGRAMME
for the remainder of 2021

Saturday 16th October: Maidenhead visit. Details to follow by e-mail as soon as they are confirmed.

Saturday 20th November: Composers' Anniversary Evening at St. John's Church, Fleet Road, Hartley Wintney, Hook RG27 8ED. Time to be announced. See note on page 2.

News of members and friends

We're very pleased to welcome (back) into membership Peter Rowe, who was with us for a while in the '90s and has now rejoined. It's good to have you back with us, Peter, and thank you for the **article** (on page 6 below) that you have sent to introduce yourself.

Talking of Peter - does anyone recognise this cheerful young man? Scroll forward a few years, and we have our friend Pete Currie, who recently celebrated a special birthday in great style, in the process raising over £200 in a



collection for the Spiers-Turner Fund. That was a lovely idea, Pete, and we, as well as any potential beneficiaries from the Fund, are very grateful to you.

Just to check that everyone knows that David Oldfield's landline number is now 01329 481707.

And finally: if you have any news that you would like to share with members, please do let Gillian know (nhoa.secretary@gmail.com).

Composers' anniversaries

Your Committee has been thinking hard about setting up a meeting in November to mark a composer or composers who have important anniversaries in 2021. We have

booked St John's, Hartley Wintney for the event, which will take place during the evening of Saturday 20 November 2021. Those who have visited the church will know that it has a fine 2-manual organ (Gt 10, Sw 11, Ped 6: full specification visible on NPOR: <https://www.npor.org.uk/NPORView.html?RI=D07276>). The following composers made notable contributions to the organ repertoire: Jeanne Demessieux (born 1921): Camille Saint-Saëns (died 1921): Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck (died 1621). Please get practising so that we can

have a stimulating and cheerful evening, and let me know what you can offer, so that I can put a programme together. (If anybody would care to play any transcriptions of works by Josquin des Pres (d. 1521), Engelbert Humperdinck (d. 1921), Igor Stravinsky (d. 1971), Malcolm Arnold (b. 1921) or any other composer with a significant anniversary this year, please let me know, and good luck!)

John Mansfield
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Copy Date for next Newsletter Please send any material for Newsletter 206 to the Secretary not later than **1 November**.

North Hampshire Organists' Association

Registered charity, no. 275207

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News round-up

Geoffrey Coffin's Zoom presentation on 18th May gave us a fascinating insight into the story of Selby Abbey and its organs, including his company Principal Pipe Organs' 2016 restoration, along with an account of the construction of the various families of organ pipes. The latter proved a revelation to some of us, who have a fairly general idea of issues such as pipe materials, scaling, wind pressures, nicking, beards and ears, but, not surprisingly, nothing approaching an organ builder's detailed knowledge.

Geoffrey is also a distinguished organist in his own right, having studied with Sir David Willcocks whilst an organ scholar at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and served as assistant organist to Francis Jackson at York Minster from 1971. Accordingly, he has a thorough understanding of organs from the player's perspective as well as from the builder's; an invaluable resource. His presentation was richly illustrated with slides, and we are very grateful to him for a most entertaining and informative evening.

It was followed by a similarly enlightening evening on 28th June when Geoff Willis, Martin Barnes and Rob Goldfinch shared with us the story of NHOA's Schools Project, a visionary initiative which aims to introduce state school pupils to our beloved instrument in an exciting and inspiring way. We met Ross Walker, Head of Music at Calthorpe Park School, which is to be the project's pilot school. It is clear that Ross is the ideal partner for this venture; totally committed and brimming over with enthusiasm. He has obviously already communicated this to his students, who evidently can't wait to 'meet the organ'. Martin gave us an outline

of the presentation to be offered to the students, then Rob demonstrated the organ, largely, and most impressively, built by Geoff, which he will use for the presentation. As Martin pointed out, Rob is the ideal person to engage with these young people; many of us know his intuitive and totally unstuffy style, which can't fail to appeal to them. Other members of the Willis family have also contributed to the project, of which everyone involved should be very proud. It's frustrating that Covid (which also knocked out the team's distinguished colleague Sir Andrew Parmley, CEO of the RCO, who had intended to take part in the Zoom presentation but was too unwell to do so) has so much delayed the commissioning of the project; but we fervently hope that, with the new term approaching, it will soon be on its way.

Reports of our recent **Kent visit** will appear in Newsletter 206, but Frances Whewell thought that you might like to read the following from our host, Mike Keays, whom many of you will remember from his highly-entertaining presentation on F.H. Browne's and Mander's:

I really enjoyed the week myself as well – doing something you like doing, and that being received enthusiastically, is always good!

As I mentioned a few times, I think NHOA is a superb organisation – not just because of the passion for organs, but the camaraderie, the social side, the friendliness, the real sense of fun, the efficiency, the dynamism, and the palpable enthusiasm for pretty much anything and everything!

My time at the Academy so far

When I first heard about the Royal Academy of Music at the age of 18, I never thought I would have successfully entered it. But I was proved wrong by my own determination and hard work which led me to gain a scholarship for September 2019 to study the organ. The Academy is everything you could want in a music conservatoire. Brilliant and dedicated teachers, beautiful instruments and an inviting and diverse community of students situated in one of the best cities in the UK. To any students reading this I strongly suggest making the most of your fresher's week as it is the best time to make friends in your year and you have a great time enjoying events put on by the Academy.

When I started my organ teacher Prof. David Titterington made sure that my knowledge of repertoire was expanded. I worked through the Mass of the Parishes by François Couperin, learning about ornaments, *notes inégales* and the registration of French classical organ music. From there I looked at the music of César Franck, having coaching lessons from Susan Landale and enlightening me on the structure of the organs of Cavallé-Coll.

One of the main skills of church organists is improvisation and the importance of this is reflected in our timetable with an hour class with Gerard Brooks once a week followed by an assessment exam at the end of the year. Part of the programme also explores less traditional improvisation techniques and looking at more contemporary styles. One of our visiting professors - Franz Danksagmüller teaches us styles of improvisation used for silent films and the use of live electronics in performance. This is a truly interesting topic as it expands the organist's capacity for new sounds and music. In my first year I took part in the performance of the silent-film *Nosferatu* with the use of live electronics on the Duke's Hall organ and students also playing the chamber organ, piano and celeste.

In February it was my pleasure to play the Saint-Saëns Symphony No 3 in C minor, Op. 78 with the University of London Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Peter Stark at St Stephen's Church Gloucester Road. Collaborating with musicians outside of RAM and those who do not take music as a principal study was a nice breath of fresh air and my time in London allowed me to meet lots of new and interesting people from different walks of life.

Sadly, our lives changed dramatically with the un-

folding pandemic which was spreading around London and the UK forcing the Government to impose lockdowns and restrictions which closed the Academy in March, sending students back home and some trying to get back to their homes abroad. Over the past two years I have felt like I have only had one real year at university with large chunks of my education taken up with online teaching. The Academy was as supportive as it could be with classes moving online to zoom calls, but all end of year exams were cancelled in summer 2020. Life in lockdown was a struggle, living at home while trying to continue a performance degree without having access to the high-quality instruments of the Academy and in London. It also made me realise the sense of community at the Academy is central to my well-being as a student and drives me in my work.

The summer break did give me time to reflect on things, but I was anxious about returning in September for my second year, wondering how it will turn out and how I will cope. It was a little bumpy getting back to London and returning into the swing of things after such a long time away. My autumn turned out to be the pivotal point where my progress began to increase as the Academy returned to life. As I have stressed the importance of community it is necessary to mention it again here. This is something that can be seen/heard in music like every member of the orchestra playing together or in my case the hands and feet working simultaneously. Before the autumn term ended, I played in the 'New Works for organ' concert featuring Bach's prelude and fugue in E minor BWV 548 and Petr Eben's exciting *Moto Ostinato* from *Sunday Music*. The Eben works well on the Duke's Hall organ as the configuration of manuals is Great – Solo – Swell. The ending of the piece requires the organist to play each chord on a different manual from Great to Swell and back to the Great creating a crescendo and diminuendo effect. Those who do not know this organ it is a fine example of a mechanical symphonic organ built by Kuhn Orgelbau and inaugurated in 2013.

When the government announced the third lockdown after Christmas in January 2021, we hoped that it would not last long and we could return to the Academy in the spring or early summer. Luckily, we spent around two months in lockdown before we were allowed to return to in-person teaching on the 8th of March. I wasted no time in preparing for my technical exams in the spring term and my summer

end of year recital, then the organ department could plan trips and workshops for the rest of term. I had the great pleasure of participating in the De Grigny Organ Mass (1699) concert in April, alongside fellow organ students and singers who sang the chant, all coached by David Ponsford. In May I found myself playing in the "Bach the European" concert series alongside the Academy Bach consort and Baroque soloists conducted by John Butt. This was a very proud moment for me and showed me what I was achieving and my potential for the future.

During the first lockdown we had been deprived of something most people will not have heard of. At the Academy organ students are required to learn how to play the harmonium for one term a year under the direction of Anne Page, a very fine teacher of the harmonium. It is an interesting course and

shows the harmonium as a halfway point between the organ and the piano. Its difficulty being underestimated and proving to provide a medium for beautiful music playing and giving quite a powerful punch when need be.

The last month of the summer term culminated in trips to organs around the city, most notably to St James Spanish Place in Marylebone where we played a selection of mostly English and French Romantic repertoire on the Bishop & Son organ. It was nice to end the year with an organ department party signalling a better future ahead with hopefully no more restrictions on our studies.

Josef Gaszka

Tim Stewart's Recital

As many members will know, St Mary's, Quarry Stret, Guildford, hosts a series of lunchtime recitals on the notable organ built in 1988 by Saxon Aldred. The recital on Wednesday 11 August was given by our member Tim Stewart, who started organ lessons with Gillian Lloyd, and it was Gillian who turned the pages for him.

Tim started his recital with five of Haydn's works for musical clocks, surely still under-rated as music and showing the jolly side of Papa Haydn.

After this musical *hors-d'oeuvre* we came to the main course, which was provided by Bach (who else?), starting with the Fantasia in c minor BWV 562, which received a full-blooded performance, using all the upperwork of which the organ was capable. It was a secure and confident performance.

The next piece presented formidable difficulties. The chorale prelude "Ach bleib bei uns, Herr Jesu Christ", BWV 649, is arranged from Bach's Cantata no. 6, where the chorale is accompanied by an obbligato piccolo cello, and this sprightly cello solo dances along in a carefree manner very difficult to imitate on the organ. Nevertheless Tim coped well.

The second movement of the second trio sonata, BWV 526, preceded the final Bach offering, which was the Prelude and Fugue in G major (BWV 541), played *con fuoco*. It was clearly a piece Tim knew well and enjoyed, as we all did.

The final two items were Elgar's Vesper Voluntary no. VI and the short Paeon by Philip Moore, two well-contrasted pieces which rounded off an excellent recital. Thank you, Tim.

Forthcoming Recitals

David Oldfield has told us about two recitals he is to give at town centre churches in Havant and Gosport.

The first is on Wednesday 29 September at 12.30 at St Faith's Church, Havant and will include music by Dyson, Buxtehude, Bossi and Bach (BWV 544).

Then on Monday 15 November at 1300 at Holy Trinity Church, Gosport, the music will include Handel's Organ Concerto Op7 No 4 (arr Hermann Keller). (The organ at this church is the "Handel Organ" which contains a substantial part of the Abraham Jordan instrument from St Lawrence Stanmore near the gateway to Chandos House.)

My journey with the organ

Peter Rowe writes:

My brother (who was 4 years older than me) was far more intelligent than I was. I don't know why, but I was rather jealous of him. But it was he, that introduced me to music and playing the piano.

We had a piano at home and one day, he (my brother) started to show me how to play Good King Wenceslas with one finger. For some reason, I found this interesting, and on account of this, I persisted (albeit rather slowly). I was aged about 12 at the time.

My parents decided to send me and my two little sisters to music lessons. On the first day, I rather misbehaved and the lady teacher asked me to leave the room. I was no better behaved when she let me back in again – and on account of this, she banned me from the lessons forthwith.

But this didn't put me off. I persisted with the piano. Onward Christian Soldiers seemed another tune to (part) learn. As I progressed, I managed a bit of it with two fingers, then with three and eventually with four.

At the school I attended as a child, we had an assembly first thing every morning. It started with us all singing a hymn. One day, the lady who usually played the piano didn't turn up and the headmaster asked the staff if any of them might play instead. With no positive replies from any of them, I said that I could play a bit of Onward Christians Soldiers. So, he asked me to do so. One of the masters had a good voice so when I reached the limit of what I knew, he sang the remaining part with gusto. I well remember the headmaster being very pleased with me.

I progressed with learning to play (easy) hymns. Each Sunday afternoon, I attended a children's service. The organist knew about my limited capabilities and interest on the piano, and she asked me if I would like to have a go on the organ. The then vicar also seemed impressed with what I did, and he very much encouraged me to persist with the interest I had.

A year or two later, the organist asked if I would like to play at one of the Children's services. And so, I did, and as time went on, more and more often.

That was all 60 odd years ago

With all the encouragement I got in those early years, my interest grew and grew, and in the years that followed, I joined the North Hampshire Organ

Association and the Royal School of Church Music. I also had real pleasure of playing on the organs of Gloucester and Salisbury Cathedrals.

My professional life took me to the Far East many times. In Shanghai with my Chinese associate, I noticed a church spire while we were walking around. It turned out to be Xujiahui Cathedral. We walked towards it. The whole area was fenced off, so access was not permitted. But, on the other side of the fence was a guard who started to chat with my friend. My friend explained who I was and that I played the piano and had played an organ. Surprisingly, he invited us in and given an extensive tour of the massive building – including the organ loft. The guard had no idea what he was talking about but asked me if I would like to play on the organ. Suspecting that there was no power, I dusted the down the seat and sat on it. I noticed an off/on button and assumed nothing would happen if I pushed it. After all, the church had been closed since 1937. Anyway, I did push it. Clouds of dust blew everywhere. Pushing one or two keys down did (sort of) make a noise. In later years, I visited the Cathedral several times after all had been restored and I played for 3 services with their kind agreement.

Since that time, I have played in Salisbury and Gloucester cathedrals.

In more recent times, I have played each week at one of the 4 churches in the Basingstoke area of the Farleigh Benefice (Dummer, Cliddesden, Farleigh Wallop and Ellisfield).

Today, as I approach my 81st birthday, my eyes are not so good. Sight reading music (or indeed text) is no longer easy, and on account of this, I have retired from regular organ playing. Fortunately, our local vicar has been a very understanding man and insists that I can visit any of his churches and have a play.

But, to all those who encouraged me through the years gone by – my parents, my brother, church organists and vicars, I am forever grateful to all of them all for the enjoyment and satisfaction that I have gained. Just maybe I should not have been so jealous of my brother John after all?

Peter Rowe

The Festival that nearly wasn't

The St Abans International Organ Festival is held every two years and little did the organisers of the 2019 festival suspect that a pandemic would threaten the 2021 season. But, as we all know, performances of live music have been almost extinguished, and in the dark days of November 2020 there was deep concern, despair almost, as to whether the 2021 Festival would take place at all.

In previous years the organisers have been able to run two competitions at the same time, one for interpretation and one for improvisation. Candidates were required to demonstrate their skills on three organs, the Society's Peter Collins 2M+P baroque style organ of 1989 which has no playing aids, the comprehensive 3M+P Mander organ of 2006 and the 4M+P Cathedral organ (Harrison & Harrison, 1962, 2009).

This year, by contrast, because of COVID-19 restrictions on mingling and console sharing meant that the whole competition was run and judged on line. The authorities reported that an exceptionally large field participated in the preliminary recorded round (organists of all nationalities born after 17 July 1988 were eligible). The judges selected twelve performers to take part in the online competition. There was no improvisation competition this year.

Apart from the competition there were (as always) some outstanding concerts and recitals. Since these were some of the first public concerts of 2021, it is well worth reporting on them.

All events had to be Covid-Secure. The Cathedral had a process in place to maintain cleanliness and aid social distancing. All audience seating was arranged with social distancing of 1-metre-plus between each household group, in accordance with the regulations in place since mid-May. Audience members were expected to use a face-covering throughout their time in the Cathedral.

But there was a palpable buzz among the listeners who had not heard live music for so many months of lockdown. David Titterington could hardly control his excitement as he introduced the Aurora Orchestra, who started their programme with the ballet music from Mozart's *Idomeneo*. Then as the conductor, Nicholas Collon, addressed the audience, scene-shifters moved silently among the members of the orchestra, removing their music stands, for they had memorised the orchestral part of Beethoven's Violin Concerto. A magical concerto, of course, with a soloist who was none other than Nicola Benedetti. It was riveting. At the end of the first movement the oboes and bassoons moved noiselessly to the front of the orchestra (they had no music stands to bring with them of course) for their important part and moved back in time for the rondo. It was a performance to dream of.

Another concert to dream of was given by Roderick Williams and Felix Kemp (baritones) with Susie Allan at the piano. Called "The Great Outdoors", it was devoted to English songs from the twentieth Century: Butterworth, Ireland, Warlock and Gurney; then Vaughan Williams' *Songs of Travel* before four of Benjamin Britten's Folk

Song arrangements.

Felix Kemp joined Roderick through the *Momentum: Our Future, Now* initiative which supports young, high quality, professional musicians in the first substantial phase of their career. It is needed now, more than ever, when, post-lockdown (or after the most brutal phase of lockdown) music societies may tend to go for the well-known names and the young artists not gain the experience they need. It is vital that colleagues and audiences see young artists who are ready to gain recognition and who can occupy the podium with artistic authority. This model has resonance far beyond the classical music industry.

The piano recital given by Steven Osborne started at 8.30 pm, a ridiculous time for such a concert. No doubt they had to fit in with the Cathedral timetable, and as one would expect, it was a first-class event, with music by Schubert, Debussy, Beethoven and the American composer George Crumb. But it was 10.30 by the time the concert finished.

Then there was a concert given by the Jess Gillam Ensemble, an eclectic mix of music of all styles, played by Jess herself on saxophones with strings, percussion, piano and synthesiser. All I can say is where does she get that energy from?

The Festival was rounded off by St James' Baroque, conducted by David Hill with Peter Holder at the organ for a Handel organ concerto. Other works included Lalande, Telemann and Vivaldi, and the concert ended with Bach's orchestral suite in D.

And there were organ recitals by Thomas Trotter & Daniel Hyde among others.

So the organisers had every good reason for being mighty pleased that the Festival took place at all, let alone that it was such a success.



New music for Christmas

We are indebted to **Ian Harrison** for the following reviews of Christmas music (*yes, really!*) which may well be of interest to you. These reviews first appeared in 'The Methodist Recorder', as did those included in the previous Newsletter; we apologise for not having printed a proper acknowledgment.

Christmas is coming

.....oh yes it is! Here is another batch of pieces from Banks Music Publications: it felt rather odd playing these pieces through on the warmest day of the year (so far) – now I know how our Antipodean cousins feel in December!

We begin with two items from the Eboracum Choral Series: ***At Christmas be merry*** (ECS 613, £1.95) comprises words by Thomas Tusser from 1558 for SATB and set to music by Bernard Trafford. It is of a secular nature (eg the line *The profit is mickle, the pleasure is much, At pleasure with profit few wise men will grutch.*) but good fun with a fairly straightforward piano accompaniment (in E flat) which is slightly reminiscent of the John Rutter style.

Rather different are ***Two Carols of the Nativity*** (ECS 614, £1.95) which again are mediaeval words and set to music by the late Dr Alan Spedding, formerly Director of Music at Beverley Minster. *I saw a Maiden* is a gentle "verse with lullaby refrain" in $\frac{3}{4}$ time. Largely unaccompanied but with organ introductions to the verses it is a very effective piece for a smallish choir or four singers.

The second piece is *Puer natus in Bethlehem* which originated in *Piae Cantiones* – a collection of mediaeval songs in Latin which were sung in Finland and Sweden. From that collection we derive a good many well known Christmas carols. Spedding's setting is in Latin but a free translation by GR Woodward is appended.

It is a straightforward piece for SATB and probably best sung unaccompanied. Verse 3 is for ATB only before it bursts back into full volume in verse 4.

Olivia Sparkhall is Head of Academic Music at Godolphin School, Salisbury. For Banks she has focused on producing arrangements either for or by women known as the "Kassian Choral Series". We begin with two arrangements of folk melodies: ***Ding, dong! Merrily on high*** (£1.95) is an arrangement of the well-known carol for women's voices. Like the Willcocks version it is in B major which makes for some interesting fingering for the piano accompanist in a short passage in verse 2, but one can see the attraction of the brighter pitch for women's voices. It's an interesting variant on the usual, but if you have a full choir I wonder what the attraction would be of this version?

Gabriel's message (£1.95) is a version of "The angel Gabriel from heaven came", again arranged for women's voices. Although not specified as such, I would hope that choirs would give Gabriel's lines to a male voice. In my view we have lots of problems with people thinking that angels are invariably female: largely as a result of school nativity plays! The setting is in the usual A minor but in $\frac{6}{8}$ time rather than $\frac{9}{8}$ which adds a certain lift and life to the piece.

Now for two organ pieces: Vernon Hoyle – who seems to be Banks's organist in residence – has written a charming

Prelude on a Traditional Polish Carol (£3.95) and you can probably guess what it is – "Infant holy, infant lowly". This is in G major and is quite straightforward. Ideally it needs a two manual and pedals instrument with some soft stops such as a Voix Celeste or similar to counter soft flutes on the other manual.

And something topical but not for Christmas: we all remember Captain Sir Tom Moore's courageous efforts last year. Anthony Baldwin has written a short ***Lament for Captain Tom*** (£3.50) in his memory. It's written as a sarabande in G minor, so rather wistful and moving. It would make an ideal piece for a funeral or memorial service. All these pieces are available in hardcopy or as downloads from www.banksmusicpublications.co.uk

More music for Christmas

Here is another batch of music from Banks Music Publications largely, but not entirely, for Christmas. Generally speaking Christmas music tends to be in the major mode and jolly (yes, there are exceptions such as *Coventry carol* and *Noël nouvelet* – but they are fairly unusual).

This batch of modern music in Banks' "Kassian Choral Series" by women composers is almost universally in the minor mode which adds a certain "edge" to the ambience. All are available in hardcopy or as downloads. ***The manger is empty*** (KCS 016 £2.95) is a triptych of words from the poems of (Revd) R S Thomas (1913 – 2000) which have been set to music by Sarah MacDonald who is Director of Music at Selwyn College, Cambridge. The three settings – *Like the snow in winter*; *As among broken glass* and *The manger is empty* are all in G minor but in quite different moods. *Like the snow in winter* is "sombre and wintry" and set for unaccompanied SATB and contrasts the whiteness of snow with the red of holly berries, the robin and Christ's blood. *As among broken glass* is a sparkling $\frac{6}{8}$ rhythm contrasting the white-garbed child in the manger with the moon among the clouds. Set for divided sopranos and ATB it still manages that bite at the end with the moon among the clouds but "as among broken glass". And the final item also has bite: in *The manger is empty* Thomas contrasts the three kings with "the three trees" – the Crucifixion. So although nominally a lullaby it moves us out of the warmth of Christmas into the reality of Jesus' reason for coming to Earth. Set again for unaccompanied SATB and not difficult, this would make a very good counterfoil for a choir looking for something different for Christmas.

In a similar mode, ***The Desert*** (KCS 015 £1.95) is a setting of words by Shapcott Wensley (1845-1917) by Emma Mundella (1858-96) and arranged by Olivia Sparkhall who is Head of Academic Music at Godolphin School, Salisbury. We are so used to singing jolly songs about "We three Kings of Orient are" – etc – that we forget the tedium of crossing the desert by camel power at night. Set for divided sopranos and alto with piano accompaniment the piece comprises five short stanzas, each given a different musical treatment. This piece would suit a small ensemble of say six voices and is not at all difficult.

And now some non-Christmas music! ***St Paul's Benediction*** (Philippians 4: 6-7) (KCS 009 £1.50) comprises words we all know set to music by the American Amy Beach (1867 – 1944) and arranged for divided sopranos by Olivia Sparkhall. It's very short, but sadly not particularly memorable music. One can only think that it was an opportunity lost!

I'm not sure if Methodist choirs are up to speed in their Latin, but here is an opportunity to learn with two very distinct pieces: no translation offered but the words are well known.

Ave Maria (KCS 007 £1.75) is an arrangement – again by Olivia Sparkhall – of the setting by Clara Schumann (1819-96) of the Angelic Salutation. (Clara was the wife of Robert Schumann, brilliant concert pianist and confidante of Johannes Brahms). The setting is for soprano and alto with piano or organ and could be sung very effectively by solo voices or a small ensemble. As settings go this is short and easy and an ideal “starter” for an ensemble. And finally – a piece for choirs to get their collective teeth into! I'm not sure that Methodists are into Latin Masses but here is one that deserves a look as it's not as difficult as its forebears.

The *Missa Brevis* (GCL 039, £3.95) by Richard Nye is setting for conventional choir and organ and follows the traditional words of the Mass. The piece was heavily influenced by a musical phrase that Nye found in a faint carving of the cross at St Govan's Chapel in Pembrokeshire. This phrase effectively becomes a *leitmotif* for the *Kyrie* and is echoed throughout the work. The *Gloria* and *Sanctus* are followed by a jolly *Benedictus* that could be extracted and performed on its own – ending in a shouted “Hosanna in excelsis!” The piece is rounded off by a quiet *Agnus Dei* and a gentle *Dona nobis pacem*.

Ian Harrison

The NHOA Website

In spite of the social distancing the Programme page on the website is still very much active. Do visit it at

www.nhoa.org.uk/

These days, while we are unable to visit organs, every month the Programme page will include a new virtual event such as a talk or a demonstration. John Morris's interactive poster for May featuring home-made and unusual instruments has been quite popular: keep watching for more. Note that all previous interactive posters can be found on the Events page. We hope to be able to get back to more social events very soon so watch this space!

The Photo Gallery page has photos of recent visits and there is always room for more photographs of other NHOA events, recent and past. If you have any you would like to share on the site (any format but should be at least 640 pixels on the longest side), please email them to Derek at the address which appears on the foot of every page — just click on Derek's name to bring up an email page. If they are too big to email please send a message to let him know so that an alternative means of sending can be arranged.

From the Archives



Taken from the front page of the Farnborough Courier, October 1984

Organist plays the last Chord

Farnborough Abbey organist and choirmaster Mr. John Slater has retired after 27 years.

Mr. Slater, who is a much loved Farnborough musician, is planning to retire to Spain in 1986, but until then will continue to teach the piano to a group of over 20 pupils.

An Essex man, he was educated at Snaresbrooke. He came to Farnborough Abbey in 1957 and has lived there ever since. Before then he spent many years at Quarr Benedictine Abbey on the Isle of Wight and

some time with the Jesuits at Heythrop, where he helped catalogue the largest private collection of books in the country.

He started the choir at Farnborough in 1966 with just nine boys. Since then numbers have grown. "You must keep them interested by providing a varied programme. Don't bore them rigid. You are lost if you do," warned Mr. Slater.

Who make good choristers? "Oh extroverts, without a doubt," he said. "They will sing out and don't mind admitting they have sung a wrong note. Very timid, introverted choristers are too frightened to sing. They need a good deal of coaxing".

One of the biggest pitfalls of being an abbey organist is encouraging the congregation to keep in time: most of them would quite cheerfully slow the liveliest of music down into a dirge.

"Take the lead and carry on regardless!" advised Mr. Slater, adding: "If you are desperate to speed them up a bit play staccato, it never fails."

One of the highlights of Mr. Slater's career was playing the organ at Canterbury Cathedral. He was organist and Farnborough Abbey choir sang at the cathedral services for a week: "It was an unforgettable experience for us all. We