

# THE NORTH HAMPSHIRE ORGANIST

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## **North Hampshire Organists' Association**

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affiliated to the Incorporated Association of Organists

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**Welcome** to the Second Edition of “The North Hampshire Organist”!

The whole world has been changing rapidly in the year past and we have taken this as a timely prompt to look at some other contrasts that have occurred over the years. Organs, organists and organ music have changed in many ways from historic periods to more recent times and we have some enthralling articles about events and personal stories.

Two fascinating articles look at organs and organ music in earlier times, firstly through Gillian and Jeff Lloyd’s visit to the Early Music Festival in Oaxaca, Mexico and also the history of organs in St. Andrew’s Church, Farnham penned by Jo Huddleston. In contrast, if you want to play the many historic and modern instruments in your own home, we look at how everyone could enjoy the benefits of affordable digital instruments.

In October 2020, Dr. Barry Rose, who is a vivacious octogenarian, gave his first ever on-line talk about his early musical life that led to the start of his outstanding career in cathedral music. We have a précis of this memorable event. Leading on from Dr. Rose’s views about favourite music, Rob Goldfinch tells us about some of the great pieces that have attracted him.

Finally John Mansfield writes about his experience of successfully gaining the diploma of Colleague of the Royal College of Organists.

Many thanks to John Mansfield who has again performed his editorial magic with this year’s “TNHO” publication.

We hope you enjoy a good read!

Geoff Willis

## Mexican Adventure

Like all good adventures, this one started by chance. Jeff had come across, as you do, in the Organ Club magazine, an advertisement for a festival arranged by the Institute of Historic Organs (wait for it), Oaxaca, Mexico... 'Do you want to go?' he wondered. 'Well, yes, I suppose so,' she replied, thinking that this was not a part of the world that we'd ever really consider visiting if there wasn't an organ (or six or seven) involved. So on 17th February 2020 we set off for Oaxaca (pronounced 'wah-haak-kah') via Dallas. We stayed in a very comfortable Holiday Inn, and spent a fascinating week exploring Oaxaca itself (a real eye-opener, not only for its fine buildings, but for the sharp contrast between the obvious poverty of many of the inhabitants and the vivid colours and huge vitality of community life) - and, of course, the historic organs. Many of these were to be found in remote villages, at least one of which would have been better accessed by helicopter than by the tour bus! The Institute, led by an extraordinarily energetic and committed American lady, supported by her very distinguished archaeologist husband and a devoted team of friends and colleagues, instils in the local people a real pride in the treasure they



*'Organ pipes' cactus*

have in their (often very beautiful) church, and supports them as best it can in its restoration and maintenance. This is as much a social as a musical project, and it was both inspiring and humbling to be part of it.

On 18th February, we, along with about 100 enthusiasts from four countries and six Mexican states, gathered for registration in, of all places, Oaxaca's philatelic museum. We then made our first attempt to order lunch, which was quite a challenge, and involved us choosing from a number of exotic fruits, seeds and spices which were combined at the table and served as a sauce. The afternoon



*Basilica de la Soledad*

was spent at the botanical gardens which featured local plants including a cactus forest; then in the evening we attended our first concert, in the Basilica de la Soledad, of popular music for organ and percussion. The magnificent decorated case of this monumental instrument is the earliest of any Oaxaca organ, dating from 1686. Restored in 2000, the organ is played regularly in the mass.

The Festival began in earnest the next day with an introduction at Santo Domingo Cultural Centre, followed by a visit to San Juan Teitipac. The route took us through miles of arid landscape and several small villages.

The early 18th century organ case had been modified in the mid- 20th century to serve as a confessional. The church is also renowned for its 16th century Dominican wall paintings.



*Dominican wall paintings*

Following a convivial al fresco lunch (at 4pm!) a few of us were privileged to play the 1866 organ at San Matias, Jalatlaco.



*Jeff and Gillian at San Matias, Jalatlaco (Oaxaca)*

The evening concert, of music for organ and baritone, took place at the Cathedral. This impressive instrument (still only one manual and no pedals! as, indeed, were all the organs that we saw) was built in 1712 and reconstructed in 1996, having, over the centuries, been so much altered that it had completely lost its 18th century character.

The church of San Juan Bautista Coixtlahuaca, which we visited on 20th February, with its beautiful stonework and magnificent open-air chapel, boasted two unrestored organs; a 2' table instrument with a highly-decorated case (and no pipes), and an 8' organ from 1876 by the organ-builder José Cano, with extravagant



*Oaxaca Cathedral*

“hips,” divided registers, and opulent neo-classical decoration, epitomising the distinctive style of local organ-building.



*San Juan Bautista, Coixtlahuaca*

A concert in the afternoon was given on the 2' table organ (ca.1720-1730) in Santa Maria de las Natividad, Tamazulapan. Situated in a high balcony it is exquisitely decorated with images of saints and angel musicians. The case and bellows are original, but the pipes, keyboard, and interior components were reconstructed in 1996. The bellows are still hand pumped, so visiting organists are invited to help out.

We returned to Jalatlaco for an evening concert by Dr. Pavel Kohout, whom some of us will remember from the NHOA visit to Prague in 2009 (he remembered us, too!). The concert included organ music by Czech composers never heard before in Mexico. Restored in 2016, this elegantly proportioned 8' organ was built by the Oaxaca organbuilder Pedro Nibra in 1866 and is one of the last to be built locally. It has a 56 note chromatic keyboard, pitch of  $a=396$  Hz (surprising for a 19th century organ), and "almost equal" temperament. In contrast, all the other organs heard during the Festival date from the 18th century and have or had a 45 note keyboard, a short octave, and meantone temperament.

The next day took us on an arduous three-hour journey, much of it on seriously unpaved roads, to the remote village of Ixtaltepec. Here we were proudly introduced to a musical instrument museum, amongst whose exhibits was a small table organ, which had actually retained its pipes, keyboard, and interior components (sadly it didn't work, but we were allowed to remove and blow some of the pipes):



We were also offered a local delicacy, which proved to be rabbit (not, as it turned out, a good idea!).



Santa María, Tiltepec, was the next stop, where our host was the 90-year-old custodian of the church, Don Arnulfo Cruz. The unrestored 4' organ here is one of Oaxaca's oldest (1703). It was last played in 1970 and abandoned; although it is complete, it unfortunately no longer works:



Following a truly splendid buffet at a former hacienda, we returned to Soledad for the evening concert by Craig Cramer.

Saturday, 22nd February: and we are on our way to the Mixteca Alta (north of Oaxaca). First stop: Santa María Tinú (population ca. 150). The church here boasts an unexpectedly large organ. Built in 1828 by M. S. Velásquez (name and date written inside the case), it still works when hand-pumped.

We were able to explore the extensive cemetery with its many home-made memorials:



before moving on to the lovely baroque church of San Mateo Yucucuí. When this largely intact 18th-century organ was last played (1930s?) the sound could apparently be heard for miles around.

The magnificent baroque church of Santo Domingo Yanhuitlán was the venue for a concert of music for organ, trombone and violin, after which we found time to take part in a fiesta in Zautla:



before Pavel played a  
second concert in the  
church of San Andrés:



In order to avoid miles of uncomfortable travel, our excellent organiser had arranged with the local authority to remove the motorway crash barrier to allow us direct access to the village. Imagine **that** happening on the M25!



Sunday was the last day for many of the Festival participants, and began with a concert by João Vaz at San Jerónimo, Tlacoahuaya. We then visited San Dionisio, Ocotepc, where only the case of the organ survives; the doors, now separate from the organ, are beautifully decorated with images of St. Cecilia and King David, each playing their instrument of choice. There were two organs in Santa Maria de la Asención, Tlacolula: a large restored instrument, and an unrestored table organ from c. 1700 (the smallest instrument that we saw, with only two registers). Craig Cramer played the final concert of the Festival on the larger instrument (1792). It's worth noting that all the Festival concerts were enthusiastically attended by local people, and that all the performances were videoed and projected onto a large screen.

It was recommended that we visit the large covered market in the village, although we were warned to take care of our possessions! The Festi-

val's farewell dinner was enhanced by local music for marimba ensemble with vocals from the padre.

But for some of us, this was not the end, as on Monday we had the opportunity to visit the renowned archaeological site of Monte Albán, not far to the west of Oaxaca, in the company of distinguished archaeologist Dr. Marcus Winter. This was a wonderful way in which to end our trip (although it was also an opportunity for the unwary to get seriously sunburnt!).

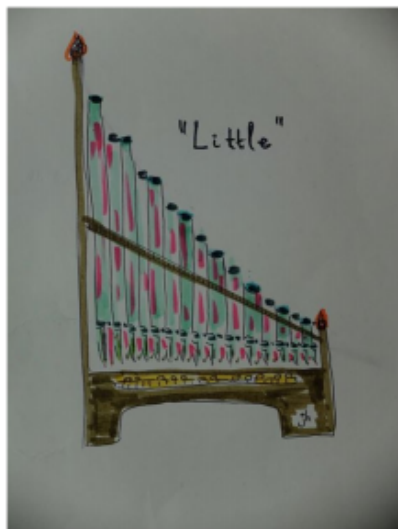


*Monte Albán*

*(It has obviously not been possible to include in this article all the information about the organs visited. More is available at <http://iohio.org.mx/eng/home.htm>.)*

## GREAT AND LITTLE ORGANS IN MEDIEVAL ST ANDREW'S

Sometime before the 1370s, as well as can be said, St Andrew's had a "Little Organ" with (apparently) 26 pipes visible across the front. It had no pedal notes at all. More details are given in the June 2017 edition of the Farnham Museum Society Journal.



The specification was probably based on a 5ft Principal, and above that basic rank perhaps a 2-1/2ft, perhaps nothing at all. Probably, the bottom 8-12 notes on the keyboard played not just the 5ft (which was permanently drawn, ie had no stop to silence it) but probably also a 10ft 'suboctave' sounding along with it. To keep such organs neat-and-tidy, to keep costs down, and to make the instrument 2-man-portable, this 10ft sound probably came from stopped 5ft wooden pipes or stopped 5ft "metal" pipes. These were perhaps

hidden internally, the front row of pipes being of high-content tin and painted.

From very early days, plainsong had been the basis of choral and organ music. So these 8-12 bass notes were for plainsong to be played, and clearly heard. The organist could then extemporise against this 'false Bourdon', using the middle and top end of the keyboard.

Teaching and other records of this early period suggest that the organ had two main uses in the Church. First of all, it would help singers learn the various plainchants. Secondly, as even more documentation proves, the organ would carry on the "organum" while the choir took a short rest. This liturgical approach is called alter-

natim, the choir and organ alternating to produce the musical piece.

There is some evidence that cantilena, carols, and popular melodies were also drafted into Church music.

Above is a free-spirited artistic impression of this “Little” organ, floating in mid-air, as all good music should.

Note that Church interiors were colourfully decorated, back in the day, and ‘thrusting Young Turk’ fashions could well be expected in wealthy and entrepreneurial Farnham. This illustration is, purposefully, a galaxy away from any workable blueprint.

Of course, there are no physical remains of the actual St Andrew’s instrument whatever. It was sold for scrap in the 1540s, as far as records allow us to say. That the organ had a saleable value at all means the 5ft pipes (and any 2-1/ft) were made of ‘metal’; 5-10% tin, 90-95% lead, to a first approximation.

In the records of the Commissioners of King Edward (Henry VIII’s son) it emerges that St Andrew’s had another organ, which seems to have been left in place.

This would in all likelihood be a “Great” organ, with more keys on the keyboard than the “Little” one, and no bass 10ft automatically drawn with the 5ft Principal.

The specification would probably be 10ft, 5ft, 2-1/2ft, 1-1/4ft, available by means of 4 independent stops across a keyboard compass of perhaps 36-40



notes. (For fuller details, see Organists' Review, March 2018, pages 38-41). As with the "Little" organ, this larger instrument would have no pedals, no reed sounds (eg, no Clarinet or Trumpet), no mutations (so no organist choices to parallel a modern player's 8 + II or 4 + 1-1/3 registrations, to take two examples at random.)

The author is most grateful to Dominic Gwynn, builder par excellence of historic English organs (in reproduction), for demonstrating what 10 5 2-1/2 1-1/4 actually involve in terms of hot metal and undecorated wood.

Another free-style artist's impression is shown immediately below. Foot-loose and fancy-free again!

This organ had perhaps been in place from the 1410s or 1420s, and was as large as known English Cathedral organs. (In fact, it was almost certainly much larger than anything owned by the cash-strapped and frequently harassed church-goers in Carlisle Cathedral, and as capable as 2 of the 3 in Durham.) Farnham was a very rich Parish, full of craftsmen of the highest skill levels, with Winchester's Bishop, no less, just up Castle Hill, and able to give or commandeer cash.

Oddly, it is much harder to say what a "Great" organ was used for, compared with a "Little"; and this remains true, whatever proud Church or ancient Monastery/Cathedral one chooses to examine historically across the whole of England. The national loss of written music (especially over the 1540s-1640s period) is colossal, leaving us in practically complete ignorance on such matters.

More information as to the detailed design of a "Great" can be found in a website (English Cathedral Organ 1500-1600); also available by email from the present writer.

Our best judgment is that the "Great" did not spend much, if any, of its life teaching plainchant or alternating with the Choir by way of a compassionate work-rest ratio. No English organ music survives before 1500, so urgently was the 'government' need to wash away Catholicism and embed Protestantism across the nation. So one can guess – no more than that – that this "Great" was an assertive,



showy instrument, proudly announcing a resident organist's skills at improvising on almost any tune known locally. We may never know, so sparse is the musical evidence and social commentary.

Given available records for "the Hundreds of Farnham", we are totally unable to say how this organ met its eventual end (perhaps as late as the 1640s). Neither have financial records been helpful here. Both instruments in St Andrew's would require payment to an organist/Master of the Choristers, and to a second man who worked the bellows. The organist held a professional position, with a declared salary and benefits; the blower could be any out-of-work warden or grave-digger or mini-beadle, one supposes, given the written history. In any case, documentation is silent as to what St Andrew's spent on these (effectively 1-1/4? 1-1/2?) working men. So we cannot say (eg) that the registered organist had no income after 1547, that no PC gardener was paid for acting as part-time organ blower after 1642.

It's interesting to discuss where in the Church these instruments lived.

The 12<sup>th</sup> Century pillar pictured below, has, fortunately for us, been roughly restored, leaving ancient damage able to speak for itself.

It is only one of many pieces of St Andrew's fabric which show the Church had at some time a plethora of screens and parclose screens. In fact, the east end of the building feels somewhat like a set of potential sheep-pens on the market, making as it does so many separable 'cells' available for Clergy to command.

In the writer's judgment, St Andrew's had 3 organs, over the 1350s-1540s time period.



The “Little” organ would quite likely be near the altar in the Lady Chapel. The writer argues this because BVM Chapels tend to have an urgent, herd-instinct build date, attracting new organs; and also because BVM services offered the more exquisite vocal harmonies appearing in extant manuscripts (so probably sponsoring matching-ly complex topwork improvisation over a false-“Bourdon” ground bass).

The “Great” was quite probably on a “perch” or platform, in St George’s Chapel. The next photograph shows some end-of-wall work, and at least one intriguingly asymmetrical old frame for inscriptions. It is possible the “Great” lived 10ft or more above the floor here, with a wind trunk going through the wall into whatever preceded a gloriously generous Victorian plumbing arrangement.

I am most grateful to my church archaeology and organ-builder friend Martin Renshaw and his lovely partner Vicki for this information. Their experience in this area is unmatched, nationally.



That leaves the author’s hypothesised third instrument, which was perhaps built and in regular use earlier than either the “Little” or “Great” discussed above.

The picture on the left shows evidence of a high-level door, (just possibly a window) such as an organist might use, to exit from a staircase on to the rood loft or candle-beam.



To the right of this archaeological marker (visible in the next photograph, above and behind a visiting organist at the present console) are the remains of a fine early screen.

In the writer's view, the "Little" organ (with player at front, blower behind) would be just too much for this rood screen to bear. A natural conclusion is that St Andrew's "orgayne in the roode lofte" was a small instrument, perhaps of 15 or fewer notes, sounding the "voice region" of a 5ft Principal rank of pipes. We shall, of course, never have the evidence to confirm or deny this.

The present author's current opinion is that this putative third organ would be like the one lovingly drawn and painted for the Lord of the Manor of Irnham, Lincolnshire, in ?1320-?1340. This is a portable instrument, the player well able to climb stair and negotiate doorways, while working the bellows



with one hand and playing the keys (not drawing sliders) with the other. This bijou treasure might also be the instrument carried at the local Beating of the Bounds.

Our grateful acknowledgments to the British Museum for permitting this picture (G-BL Add 42130) to be freely available on the web.

It serves us all well to remember that the alleged “break” between Church practice and town life was – in this era – never as formulaic and long-faced as our Victorian forbears would have us believe. It is perfectly likely that, in at least some Parishes, either a rood portable or a “Little” BVM organ was carried outside on high days and holidays, to entertain and educate the town population with events like Mystery Plays. But so far no direct evidence of such popular fetes is available for Farnham. Perhaps we should make this happen afresh in the town? Farnham is hardly short of keyboard artists and willing singers!



Coming now to the organ of today, it contains, of course, no splinter, no shaving, not even a whiff of the metals, woods, leathers, glues, paints etc which made up the three medieval instruments discussed above. The present organ has some superb sonorities and is played from 3 manuals and ROC pedal-board, with enough couplers and registration aids to perplex ten apprentice jugglers simultaneously. The various high-quality flues and reeds recall a proud history of

organ building: Walker (1847, 1861, 1867, 1881, 1910) Hill Norman Beard (1959), Bishop & Son (1983-5) and Principal Pipe Organs (2013/14). This date sequence alone should serve to remind readers that Farnham is a town always trying to excel, never sleeping unthinkingly on somebody else's laurels.

Jo Huddleston  
*jfh9feb2018*

## A DIGITAL ORGAN FOR EVERYONE



We all want to improve our playing, don't we? The best teaching seems to advocate short practice sessions done frequently. Having an organ at home is a great way to achieve that: even a few minutes can be useful in learning a new piece or improving a technique. In recent years it has been possible to have a digital organ for practice that can also sound like a cathedral instrument when required. This note describes how to obtain such an instrument, at an affordable price, using the Hauptwerk system.

### What is Hauptwerk?

Hauptwerk is a versatile software program, an "app", that produces authentic sounds of pipe organs from samples of real instruments. It provides all the features and functions that an organist would find on practically any console. Hundreds of pipe organs have been sampled (recorded) by expert sound engineers. For each organ, the sound of every pipe is sampled many times and processed into a format that is used by the Hauptwerk app. The software runs on a standard, commercially available home computer that can be upgraded, when required, to offset obsolescence. So you can choose to play a Baroque instrument or maybe a German Romantic with a few clicks on the screen. It uses the MIDI system for keys and pistons that has been incorporated into most makes of organ consoles for many years. Consequently, an instrument for this kind can be obtained in a number of ways.

### What do you need?

A digital organ using Hauptwerk consists of four main parts:

- a console with the desired number of manuals and pedalboard, with keys and pistons that have simple electric switches to indicate when they are used
- a Windows PC or Apple Mac with one or two touchscreens and an encoder to translate the key switches into a MIDI format
- the Hauptwerk software app and the organ sample-sets (special re-

cordings) of the instrument(s) you want to play a simple audio system consisting of speakers with amplifier (usually inside them) and an interface box to connect the computer. Alternatively, headphones can be used.

### How can I get one?

This kind of digital organ is modular as described by the parts above. That means there are options to obtain an instrument. At the most expensive end a complete “turn-key” package could be bought from a supplier using their expert services and at the other end of the scale, a suitable second hand console could be sourced, with the hardware and software purchased and the system put together by yourself or a confident colleague. Let’s look in a bit more detail...

#### Option 1. New console and system configured as a package by a UK specialist

There are a few small UK companies who will put together a Hauptwerk organ system as a package from their console range and choice of detailed items. They usually use consoles from specific manufacturers. They will recommend all the electronic units and, install and set it up for you at home.

The advantage of this option is that a high-end specification of console and electronic units will be provided with the all the technical and configuration detail dealt with by the company. Disadvantages are the high cost and that you can only learn how to use the Hauptwerk system when the complete package is delivered, some months after ordering.



#### Option 2. You buy the electronic units, the company delivers a new console and sets up the system

The company sources the console from their preferred manufacturer; you select the model and detailed items. A list of the electronic units is usually provided for you to purchase yourself (but care required as this can be rather over-specified). The company delivers and installs the console and will configure the whole system with your electronic units.

The advantage of this option is that electronic units with appropriate specifications can be sourced at optimum prices. By purchasing these and the

Hauptwerk software while waiting for the console to be delivered, experience with Hauptwerk can be gained using a simple MIDI keyboard. The disadvantage is that some technical advice would be required to confirm the appropriate electronic units. This is published by the Hauptwerk company and other information can be easily sourced from colleagues.

### **Option 3. Second-hand instruments already setup with Hauptwerk and electronics**

Complete Hauptwerk organs occasionally appear for sale e.g. on eBay and other advertising media. The specifications of the console and electronic units might not be exactly what you want but maybe good enough.

The advantage of this option is the much lower cost of an operational organ vs. Option 1 and 2. The disadvantages are the unknown timescale of a suitable organ becoming available. The lack of knowledge about the pedigree of the organ could cause problems in the organ's later life.

### **Option 4. Existing or second-hand console, with Hauptwerk and new electronic units**

You might already have an electronic organ and would like to have a much better organ sound? By connecting your console to a computer running the Hauptwerk app and using a touchscreen to select the stops, you're well on the way to having a fantastic range of organs to play. The advantage is that you get this for a very modest cost. The disadvantage is that you need a little technical knowledge to set it up successfully but this is available from a confident colleague.

An alternative would be to buy a second hand console that already has the MIDI connections.

## **The Next Step**

An increasing number of NHOA members have Hauptwerk instruments in their homes obtained through one of the options outlined above. You might be thinking it's a bit too complex to get the instrument that you'd love to play? Well, at some time you have probably chosen and connected up your hi-fi system or you use Zoom for your family catch-ups, maybe with a little help from your friends. In that case, you are well able to get yourself a wonderful sounding digital organ to play and enjoy at your leisure!



## A Celebrity of the Choral World



Let's meet a world-renowned choral director! What a privilege that would be - and so it was. On a Saturday evening in October 2020, NHOA members joined their first online event to meet Dr. Barry Rose, who gave an engaging talk with musical illustrations about his life before his rise to fame as the first choral director at Guildford Cathedral.

He called the session "As it was in the beginning" and he entertained, educated and enthralled us all about his early musical life.

Barry had no great calling for a career and went to work in insurance for some major British companies. His musical career started when he played the piano at Sunday school in his home town of Chingford. He was then invited to play the harmonium at St Anne's, a missionary church built of corrugated iron. He told us that it was there he learnt to play so the congregation *wanted* to sing.

He played there for nine years during which time a carol service was recorded using the latest technology of the time - cutting directly onto a shellac disc. A new church was built next door where he enjoyed 'upgrading' to a Compton Electrone, a two manual and pedal instrument with tabs and a lot of whirring from inside the console! (The author of this précis was also a proud owner of this model, which was his first house organ. This instrument, which was a marvelous piece of British engineering, had an electric motor with a long belt driving many pulleys and in the console case next to the Swell pedals, a large valve amplifier).

In the mid 1950s, Barry joined Hampstead Parish Church choir, which then had the reputation of being 'the best church choir in the country'. They certainly had something special because they made live broadcasts for the BBC. It was here that Barry learnt everything he knew about choir training.

Soon after, he got his first music post as organist and choirmaster of St Andrew's Church, Kingsbury in London. The choir needed improvement and Barry certainly achieved that because, three years later, they were broadcasting on BBC Radio 3 (the 'Third Programme' as it was then called).

He made the leap to an entirely musical career, gaining a place at the Royal Academy despite having no formal music qualifications. He studied organ with the renowned C H Trevor who was not so impressed with his organist abilities but was very impressed with Barry's musicianship.

It was Barry's flat-mate who showed him an advert in the Daily Telegraph placed on behalf of the newly built Guildford Cathedral. They required an organist and choral director to establish a choir in time for the Consecration Service one year later. The interview was in London and apparently was somewhat disastrous but the Cathedral Provost, Walter Boulton, saw beyond the establishment's view of a cathedral music leader and invited Barry to the cathedral the very next day. Barry must have also had a vision of the exciting possibilities as the choir and organ were non-existent! However, with one year to go, he committed to establishing a choir to sing at the Consecration Service and for daily services from that point on.

You might know that the cathedral organ came from a Baptist church in Shipley, Yorkshire courtesy of a lady benefactor of that church. Barry worked with Rushworth and Dreaper to greatly expand the specification and get the instrument installed.

Guildford Cathedral is due to celebrate its Diamond Jubilee in mid 2021 and Barry hopes that the five choral directors - himself, Philip Moore, Andrew Millington, [Stephen Farr](#) and Katherine Dienes-Williams will be able to contribute the celebrations.

Barry ended the talk with some practical insights into his comprehensive experience. He told us, "For training a choir to the highest level, look in the mirror. Your musical influence comes from your personality, your body-language, and the way you look and even talk to the choristers".

In answer to members' questions, Barry compared English choral music

from when he started to the current time. He felt that everything is now taken faster and choirs are more efficient and less emotionally involved with the musical performance. He enjoyed working with organists who were 'invisible' and just got on with their job. His favourite hymn or anthem? The one he was doing now!

We are indebted to Barry for his engaging talk and approval for this précis to be published in the second edition of *The North Hampshire Organist*. Much more information about the episodes highlighted here and many more are contained in Barry's memoirs that are due to be published in the coming months.

## What's your favourite?

I was recently asked "what is my favourite piece of organ music?". This had me thinking. My first reaction was to consider of all the organ pieces that I could put into my favourites list and this is not as straight forward as it seems. My memory could let me down here. How many organ pieces have I heard? How many organ pieces have I played (from just sight reading to playing publicly)?

I was probably 13 or 14 years old when I first heard a recording of a pipe organ and it was at that age I expressed to my parents I wanted to play the piano. I could even show them a couple of tunes that my friend showed me how to play with one finger. We had no room for a piano at home but my father managed to buy a Hammond style organ instead.

A family friend gave me a tape recording of some 'Real' organ music and I listened to this over and over on my headphones. After a while the music didn't sound alien to me anymore, in fact, I really came to like it. The recording was of some organ pieces by J.S.Bach performed by Karl Richter. They were the 'Fantasia and fugue in g minor', "Trio sonata no.2 in C minor" and the famous "Toccatà and Fugue in Dm". These recordings were one of the main reasons I started wanting to play some 'Real' organ music.

The first pieces of classical organ music that my teacher gave me to learn were 'Priere a Notre Dame' from 'Suite Gothique' by Leon Boellmann. 'Toccatà in G' by Theodore Dubois. I simply had to learn the 'Widor' Toccatà as soon as I heard someone playing it. I remember buying the sheet music and thinking "lots of notes", however, I soon realised that it's just a load of simple broken chords and if I could play the first page then I could play it all.

When I was 16 years old, I remember going to a lesson and found my teacher and another pupil were listening to some organ music. The volume was up very loud and it sounded to me like the organist was having a laugh! It sounded as if he was wearing boxing gloves. Why would anyone listen to that rubbish! It made no sense to me. The music was 'Dieu parmi nous' by Olivier Messiaen.

About a week or so later I was persuaded to learn it and soon I started to like it. How did this happen? I realised that sometimes I had to listen more than once (sometimes many, many times) to like and understand a piece of music. This is still true today.

I would not only add all of these early discoveries to my list of organ favourites but I've come to the conclusion that my list of organ favourites grows with almost every new piece I play. Having to choose one of these

as a favourite is impossible. If you had asked me this question when I was fifteen years old it would have been easy, the 'Widor' Toccata would have been my answer.

Still to this day, for me there is something magical in the music of J.S.Bach. I rarely listen to his organ music these days, but I have always have a piece or two of his 'on the go'.

Like many of us, I sometimes listen to 'Desert Island Discs' or 'Private Passions' on the radio. The guest chooses some pieces of music that have had an impact on their lives. It's certainly easier than having to choose just one piece of music. I've thought about this and I know my choices will change from time to time. I certainly wouldn't put any organ Toccatas on the list! In fact I'm quite sure that I wouldn't have any organ music on the list.

It's very difficult to say which my favourite organ piece is. When I was younger I would have said the Reubke 'Sonata' for organ, Bach "Passacaglia and Fugue" in c minor, Vierne 'Carillon de Westminster' Max Reger played by Lionel Rogg and Dupre 'Prelude and fugue in Gm' spring to mind. Pieces of music played by certain performers on certain organs obviously have a huge impact on ones enjoyment. I've rarely enjoyed baroque music played on an enormous organ with huge acoustics. To hear the Reubke organ sonata played on a small two manual organ with very dry acoustics would make me feel sick!

What would my desert island music choices be? 'Mass in Bm' J.S.Bach... 'Symphony no 1' William Walton... 'Daphnis et Chloe' Maurice Ravel... 'Symphony no. 7' Dmitri Shostakovich ... 'Symphony no.2' Sergei Rachmaninoff and 'Elektra' Richard Strauss' spring to mind.

But I'm afraid that I have failed to tell you what my favourite organ piece is. I could list lots that I wouldn't choose. For me though, there is only one composer for the organ that stands out above all others (and not just for his organ music) and that is J.S.Bach. I think my quick answer to this question from now on will be "whatever piece I'm currently learning to play on the organ".

Rob Goldfinch

## CRCO – a personal account

I have been asked to write my experience in studying for and sitting the CRCO<sup>1</sup> diploma examination. I started playing the organ at school and enjoyed the experience all my life; but it's one thing to enjoy playing the organ to one's own satisfaction but quite another to measure it against an objective test. Having heard about the diploma I wondered whether I was at that sort of level of attainment.

### Introductory course

Examinations for RCO diplomas are held every six months, in January and July, and a couple of months before each exam the RCO hold a one-day



course at St Barnabus' Church, Dulwich, about the course and how one might prepare for it. Why that particular church? Well, that organ is one of those used for the RCO Diploma tests<sup>2</sup>. It is a very fine organ, built by the much-lamented Kenneth Tickell in 1997 after the previous organ was destroyed when the church burnt down. (I remember a visit by NHOA when the organ was fairly new.)

So it was that in November 2016 I attended the introductory course.

The course was intended for organists thinking about, or entered for, the CRCO, ARCO and FRCO diplomas. On this particular day CRCO students had the use of the organ in the morning, considering the paperwork questions in the afternoon, and ARCO and FRCO students the other way round.

Apart from straight organ playing there are three tests of keyboard skills (sight-reading, transposition and hymn playing<sup>3</sup>), and we were

<sup>1</sup> CRCO is the latest diploma to be launched by the RCO. It was originally called a foundation certificate (CertRCO) to provide a means for the amateur player or developing student to calibrate his or her skills and musicianship. Later still the college decided to hold examinations at a level corresponding to the Associated Board examinations, called Certificates of Accredited Membership (CAM), so CertRCO became a diploma, and they had to think of a word beginning with C to describe the status of the holder. They hit on the word "Colleague" and so the CRCO diploma was launched.

<sup>2</sup> The other two are St Paul's Hall, Huddersfield University and Canongate Kirk, Edinburgh.

<sup>3</sup> As an alternative to transposition there is a figured bass exercise which I am told is a little easier but I didn't try it.

taken through them by Catherine Ennis (so sadly missed now). Every student had a go at the organ during the morning: obviously playing ones choice of piece or one of the keyboard skills tests.

The pieces are grouped into four lists, with six pieces in each list. List A consists of pieces by Bach and the other lists are, roughly speaking, old music (from the time of Bach or earlier), nineteenth century music and modern music. You have to choose one of the pieces by Bach and two from any two of the other lists. I chose a voluntary by Thomas Weelkes and a couple of pieces (counted as one) by Jean Françaix from the modern list as well as “Christ lag in Todesbanden” from the Orgelbüchlein, BWV 625.

For transposition you are given a hymn-tune in four parts (SATB) on two staves which you have to transpose up or down one or two semi-tones. You are given a tempo marking, so you are not allowed to play the tune very very slowly.

Then there is the sight reading test, and the remaining test is to play a hymn. It will be one chosen from a list of ten hymns, all taken from the New English Hymnal. You have to give the play-over and play the first verse, a middle verse chosen by the examiners and the final verse, with an improvised extension between 20 and 30 seconds. You have to imagine a heartily singing congregation.

So every one of us had a go at one of those tests at the organ in the morning. In the afternoon we were taken through the organ repertoire and music techniques questions by Frederick Stocken. In the repertoire section you have to demonstrate knowledge and appreciation of a set collection or group of works through analysing and annotating a facsimile extract and answering an essay question from a choice of several which will cover the collection or group as a whole. Frederick went through the works then set, which were a set of chorale preludes by Hubert Parry (the seven chorale preludes in set 1, in fact), but by the time I sat the paper the set works were the last 14 preludes in Bach’s Orgelbüchlein, a wonderful set of pieces to study.

The music techniques section consists of a Bach Chorale question and a two-part counterpoint question. The Bach Chorale is given with one passage where the alto and tenor lines are missing, but you are given a figured bass and the melody line: you have to fill in the missing parts. Another passage in the same chorale has no figures (as in figured bass): you have to supply them. Then at a cadence point where the alto, tenor and bass parts are missing for three or four soprano notes, and you have to supply those. Lastly you have to identify three or four

melodic and harmonic decorations in any printed part (such as an accented passing note, a suspension, an auxiliary note or whatever).

In the two-part counterpoint question you are given a figured bass and the start of the upper part plus some other little scraps of music, and you have to complete the upper part in the style given at the beginning.

Finally there are two aural tests (in the afternoon in question these were presented by Simon Williams). There are two tests in this category: in the dictation test you are given the melody and bass line of a hymn tune with some passages left out. First of all the whole tune is played and then section by section, and you have to fill in the parts left out. That is repeated, and finally the whole tune is repeated.

The aural perception test is great fun. A short passage of organ music is played: you are given a skeleton score showing the rhythm only. Then you are asked such questions as “at point B, what key are we in?” or “at point C what is that chord”, or “what compositional technique is being employed” and so forth; finally you might be asked to suggest a possible composer and date of composition.

Well, after this rigorous afternoon I thought to myself “I think I could try this”.

I knew Catherine and Frederick already, and I was impressed by their approach so I decided to ask for lessons with them for tests at the organ and paperwork respectively.

### **Preparing for the examinations**

I found the Bach Chorale and counterpoint questions not too difficult because I remember so much harmony and counterpoint from schooldays. The RCO will send you a list of suitable study guides which, if you don't want to buy, you can borrow from the RCO Library<sup>4</sup>. These aspects of the written paper are also very teachable, and I selected previous papers (bought from the RCO via their website) and, having done the exercises, took them to Frederick for discussion and marking. Once you have bought a particular set of papers from the RCO website you can print as many copies as you need.

<sup>4</sup> I found Ann Bond's handbook “Preparing for A.R.C.O.” published by the RSCM, very helpful. Bach's 371 Harmonised Chorales, collected by Albert Riemenschneider is published by Chappell, but the chorales in that edition, though easy to read, are rather cramped and I prefer the edition published by Breitkopf (Edition Breitkopf 8610) where the same chorales are much more spaced out and easy to use.



As to the questions on the set works, only recent papers will apply to the current set works of course, but one question always occurs and you have to be ready for it. A whole piece (or a lengthy excerpt) is printed and you have to put in your recommended fingering and pedalling. I mentioned that the set works I had the joy of studying were from Bach's *Orgelbüchlein*. There is a brilliant book discussing the whole work and individual preludes, called (hardly surprisingly) *Bach: The Orgelbüchlein*, by Russell Stinson. I recommend it even if you are not studying the works, but, as I was, I had the book by me constantly right up to the time of the exam.

During the exam itself you are allowed to bring an unmarked copy of the set works into the examination room<sup>5</sup>. So a lot of the people who were also taking the exam made photocopies for their own use when playing the pieces and made notes on the photocopies while preserving their special copy unmarked for the exam. That is a bit fiddly but it is expensive to have to buy two copies. It's your choice. During the exam I found I had no time to refer to my unmarked copy anyhow.

In preparing for the aural tests, again the RCO publish previous years' papers, both the question papers and papers with the answers. And again, you can borrow CDs of the questions from the RCO Library which will enable you to practise the tests in real time.

### **The written paper**

So I was ready for the written paper – or so I thought! I sat this paper in the summer of 2017. There were only seven candidates, and we started with the aural tests. I thought that the dictation question was fairly straightforward (and as you have to fill in gaps in just one of the parts, looking at the other part gives you a good idea of where your part is going, if you get my meaning).

I got mixed up in the aural perception test, though; if you lose your way in the skeletal score you don't know when you come to "point X" or whatever so it is difficult to comment on what happens there. But I did my best.

The Bach chorale and counterpoint questions were not too difficult, I thought; but disaster struck as I was answering the questions on the set works: I was practically finished (I thought) with a quarter of an hour to spare when I turned the page and found that there was an important long essay question to answer! It was so long since I had sat any exams like this that I had forgotten to look at the exam paper as a whole

<sup>5</sup> The full exam regulations are on the RCO website which is well worth investigating.

and divide time up according to the marks assigned to each question. So, while I made notes on the essay, they were scrappy and after the exam I was mentally kicking myself and not at all happy.

Nevertheless, I passed overall, the Bach chorale and counterpoint carrying me over the problem I had with the essay question (on which the examiner noted “Things were evidently heading in the right direction, but sadly this essay text was incomplete, presumably because of time limitations”).

### **Tests at the organ**

I wasn't able to take the tests at the organ in summer 2017 because of family commitments (the RCO are flexible about such things where possible but it was simply impossible to find a date when the examiners were available) so it was not until January 2018 that I was able to take the tests. That meant that I was able to attend the introductory course again (you can take that course as often as you like, and I found it very useful to become acquainted with the organ again as well as hearing my playing commented on: I had no need to attend the paperwork part again, of course).

You are allowed an hour and a half's practice time on the organ before your exam, and in my case it was three weeks beforehand<sup>6</sup>. In that time you can set the organ up (you are allowed to use the general pistons) and leave a note so that it will be set up for you when you come to take the exam - but you have to check, of course. It is also very helpful to get thoroughly acquainted with the organ. I found 1½ hours reasonably generous and was able to pay attention to the hymn test. You know that the hymn will be one of the ten set hymns and there is time to play them all. In fact, I also made notes in a manuscript book of a possible beginning of my improvisation of each of those hymn tunes. That was very useful too.

When it comes to the actual day of the test you are well advised to arrive early. You are made welcome and asked to confirm the pieces you are to play, and what edition (if more than one edition is allowed). Fifteen minutes before your start you are led into another room where you are given a sight of the test papers and told what hymn you are to play and which verses (there is a hymnbook provided, of course); and for the transposition test what the hymn tune is and what is the new key you are to play it in. There is no keyboard but there is a metronome for your use (two, in fact, in case one of them fails).

<sup>6</sup> If you live a long way from the venue they do their best to give you your practice session a day or two before your tests.

At the end of those fifteen minutes you are led into the church and welcomed by the chairman of the board of examiners who tries to put you at your ease, and another steward leads you to the organ. You have the option of playing your pieces or the tests first.

So at my first attempt things started out happily enough, but I'm sorry to say I started to become tense and as a result my concentration and accuracy suffered. So I didn't quite pass that time.

I resat the organ tests in the summer of the same year; but a dreadful thing happened: in my music case I had some old exam papers which I obviously didn't need, so I left them out; but unfortunately I also left out one of my pieces (the back of the piece looked just like an exam paper). So when I was invited to say what pieces I was to play, I found to my horror that it was not there! I therefore asked the steward whether there was a spare copy of the piece and, bless him, he let me borrow a spare copy of the volume used by the examiners containing all the pieces (CRCO, ARCO and FRCO) which of course did not have my own markings, but was far, far better than nothing. This time I passed the keyboard skills tests but failed the pieces (although I passed on the piece which I had forgotten to pack).

For my third attempt in January 2019 I only had to play the pieces, as I had passed the tests at the organ (you have four years within which you have to pass everything); so I told myself that I really had to control myself and show "reliable and confident musicianship in public performance" as required by the regulations. I am glad to report that this time I passed.

So I am glad I tried. At times I thought how ridiculous it was going through all this at my age, but it was worth it. To my surprise and delight I was afterwards informed that I had been awarded a Dr John Birch Scholarship.

John Mansfield