

Derby & District Organists' Registered Charity No. 510567 Association



Ben Bloor

Looking to the Future

Ben Bloor, the 17 year old Organ Scholar at Derby Cathedral, is the subject of this month's article on young musicians.

Ben has just completed his lower sixth year at Derby Grammar School and is in the midst of preparation for accompanying the Derby Cathedral Choir in Westminster Abbey during the Abbey choir's summer break, the second part of his ARCO, and interviews at Oxbridge. In the midst of all this, Ben found time to give an interview for the DDOA *Newsletter*.

Preliminary interviews at Oxbridge colleges have occupied Ben in recent weeks with visits to King's College, Cambridge and Stephen Cleobury; Andrew Nethsingha at St John's, Cambridge; Edward Higginbottom at New College, Oxford, and Daniel Hyde at Magdalene. These interviews give the colleges the

opportunity to consider the talent available for these prestigious and career-enhancing positions as well as providing the candidates with some experience of what they will face in September when the formal interviews take place.

When I asked Ben what these interviews were like his response was typically self-effacing. 'It was a little bit daunting, to be honest. I played a piece and the interviewer gave some feed-back on the performance. However, I did feel at home in that situation after the experience I've been able to gain at Derby, playing for services and accompanying the choir.'

'Time was at a premium as the interviewers are all busy people; in some interviews I was given time to familiarise myself with the organ but in others it was just straight in. There were also sight reading and transposition tests. However, I think that I could get used to it.'

Forthcoming Events

Saturday 12th September 2.30pm
Chairman's Event – Repton

N.B. The Mendelssohn Event at St Mary, Ilkeston will now be on Wednesday 14th October.

Tuesday 17th November 7.30pm
Annual General Meeting – St Werburgh, Spondon.

Derby Cathedral Organ Recitals

The summer series of recitals will be on Wednesdays at 7.45pm and will feature the music of Mendelssohn. Admission £5.

Peter Gould	5 th August
Tom Corfield	12 th August
Paul Hale	19 th August

Victoria Hall Hanley Saturdays 12 noon

Clive Driskill-Smith	22 nd August
Geoffrey Morgan	12 th Sept.
Paul Prieto Ramirez	17 th October

Southwell Minster Wednesdays 7.30pm

Johann Hermanns	12 th August
Philip White-Jones	31 st August
Paul Hale	16 th Sept.
Graham Barber	14 th October

Lichfield Cathedral

John Hoskin	10 th August
Roger Judd	14 th Sept.
Carlo Curley	13 th October

Albert Hall – Nottingham Sundays 2.45pm

David Butterworth	9 th August
James Taylor	30 th August
Richard Hills	27 th Sept.

When I asked Ben which he found easier, transposing up or down, the answer was prompt. 'Up! I suppose that I've done more exercises that way, though I shall have to be prepared for anything. I'm getting better at the transposition, though I shall have to do a lot of practice before my ARCO and in preparation for the round of interviews in September.'

Oxford or Cambridge? 'I liked Cambridge but Oxford appealed more. I've put down New College, Christ Church and Magdalene on my application form though I'd be pleased to have a place with any of the colleges.'

Then we came to the question that has been exercising the minds of the Association for some time: what first attracts people to the organ?

'As a chorister I was surrounded by the music of the cathedral so I suppose hearing the organ has had quite an influence upon me. During my audition for the choir I played the piano for Mr Gould. He seemed to like what he heard and later asked me if I would like to have organ lessons. The organ seemed like quite a cool instrument – lots of different sounds. It's complex, and there is the additional challenge of pedalling, which is fun – one of the best bits of learning to play the organ.'

'When my voice changed I was offered the organ scholarship at the cathedral. My brothers and sisters are learning to play the flute, violin and guitar, though my parents don't play. It was my grandmother who started me off; I was always playing her piano when we visited and she suggested lessons.'

'I have been able to play quite a few organs when the cathedral choir has toured. The one which has excited me most is the one in Portsmouth cathedral; the choir visited there some years ago and I was sole accompanist so I got to know the organ quite well. It isn't dissimilar to the Derby organ; it makes a lovely sound. I should mention St Paul's; the second time we went there the organ was being refurbished so we only had two of the five manuals to use – that was

interesting. Each instrument is different; you realise this particularly when you travel to Italy and Germany where the organs are so different. It's a challenge in itself to work out what you're doing when you reach the console. I was glad that I had Dr Corfield to explain it all.'

'The work of a cathedral organist is quite taxing as there is so much music to learn, so my sight reading ability is useful. When I learn a new piece I play it through and then focus on the difficult bits. I think you have to learn a new piece as a whole, not as lots of bits put together. I'm not very good at annotating scores and rarely mark fingering, which I tend to remember as I learn a piece.'

'I don't listen to much recorded organ music. When I learn a new piece I tend to make my own decisions about the manner of performance and perhaps play it in public, then I might listen to a recording, perhaps changing some elements of my own performance.'

'French romantic and twentieth century music appeals to me most. I like Messiaen, Duruflé and Dupré – the range of tonal colours called for appeals to me. Bach was a genius and I like playing his music whereas Mozart has a limited appeal; four bar phrases and perfect cadences don't do anything for me – too predictable. I find the harmony and rhythm of later composers much more exciting to listen to and to play.'

'Besides organ music I quite like Jazz. I did my Work Experience with Jonathan Eno, who runs the East Midland Youth Jazz Orchestra – their name has recently been changed to Hot House – I played piano when working with them and enjoyed the change from church music, but church music is my scene. I don't mind rock music up to the end of the nineties but can't be bothered with more recent stuff – it's far too limited.'

As for the future, it will come as no surprise to members to know that Ben hopes to do a music course at university linked to an organ scholarship. 'I'll probably end up in a cathedral post, which I think

will be quite an achievement.'

For the immediate future Ben is focussing on his transposition and sight reading, and on the forthcoming visit of the cathedral choir to Westminster Abbey where Ben will accompany them.

My thanks to Ben for finding the time to speak to me. We wish him well with the challenges that face him.

TW



Haydn on the organ - does it work?

A review of *Joseph Haydn für Orgel*. Pieces transcribed by Erich Benedikt. Vienna: Doblinger, 2009. ISMN 979-0-012-19884-0.

It is a matter of regret that the great classical trio of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven composed so little for organ. Not everyone cares for transcriptions, and if you are one such, you had better ignore this review. Nevertheless, many of us do occasionally try to play Haydn on the organ.

Some years ago I transcribed the G major Andante of Symphony no 20: it did not require much 'transcription', as it is a perfect trio sonata movement as it stands - two string parts and pizzicato bass. It makes a perfect gentle voluntary. Organists occasionally play movements from Haydn's 'Seven Last Words of Jesus on the Cross' from the piano reduction of the vocal score of the choral version. This is not so easy, but effective if you can bring it off; the best movement for this purpose is the interlude for winds, which does

not appear in Haydn's choral setting, but it can be found elsewhere. Some of Haydn's piano sonata movements go well on the organ. Just the other morning on Radio 3 I heard an E major sonata, the slow movement of which sounded a likely candidate for an organistic take-over; however, further investigation showed that the compass went beyond that of the organ, and the movement leads directly into the finale. Both these problems can be overcome with a little judicious re-arrangement.

Haydn wrote over thirty pieces for mechanical clock-organs, and some of them are occasionally heard in recitals on appropriate instruments. Then there are his organ concertos. Only one of the 'Klavier' concertos is specifically described as 'per l'organo', (Hoboken XVIII no. 5 in C), but there are another four in the same volume of Hoboken (nos 2, 7, 8, 10) which are fairly generally agreed to be for the organ, by reason of the orchestration ('Church trio' of two violins and cello) or the compass of the solo part (four octaves from CC)—when Haydn wrote for the harpsichord or piano he used their full range. No. 2 in D is particularly fine: the whole lot are delightful to listen to, and have been beautifully recorded by Norbert Düchtel and the Munich-based L'arpa festante group on Ars Musici AM 1355-2.

A recent visit to Germany found me in the excellent Musikhaus Schlaile music shop in Karlsruhe—if only we had a shop in Derby or Nottingham with this range of sheet music on sale! Benedikt's volume of 11 transcriptions was displayed as a 'Neuheit' - something new. It cost €16.95; Windblowers in Nottingham assure me that it is obtainable here as a special order, but I cannot give a price. Now, Herr Benedikt is not the sort of idiot who would arrange the Gipsy rondo for organ—but, on second thoughts, it might go very well on certain organs, though on what occasion one would play it I cannot say. No, he gives us three versions of symphonic movements: the finale of symphony no.13 (the only Allegro piece), the Adagios from Symphony 49 ('La passione') and from the *Trauersymphonie* (no. 44), which Haydn is said (apocryphally?) to have wanted played at his memorial service. There is a Siciliana from a divertimento, and an Adagio from string quartet op. 17 no. 5.

Particularly interesting pieces in the collection are the other six. They are transcribed from the concerti and nocturni that Haydn wrote for the King of

Naples for chamber ensembles which included the hurdy-gurdy, or *lira organizzata*. And what lovely pieces they are. You might think that Haydn thought, 'My goodness! The hurdy-gurdy! I'll write him a load of old rope.' But no. Melodically and harmonically these works are highly satisfying, and well deserve a hearing. And here is the decisive argument for transcription: if these works were never transcribed, we should never hear them today. Moreover, the hurdy-gurdy had wind and organ-like pipes, so we are not moving away from home ground entirely.

Benedikt's edition in some ways leaves a little to be desired. There are a few obvious misprints. I know that Haydn was harmonically adventurous, but I cannot believe the chord (p. 33, bar 4)—bass clef bottom F and E flat, treble clef E flat, G, A flat, C. Surely G flat and A natural? Especially as in the next beat, while the treble holds its chord the bass introduces an A natural. Or was Haydn writing jazz in the eighteenth century? The editor gives no suggestions as to registration (except for dynamic marks) and is reticent about the use of the pedal. In the symphonic transcriptions 16-foot pedal is probably appropriate, in the others 8-foot pedal should perhaps be used mostly to facilitate simply playing all the notes. Some pieces can be played manuals only. The player will have to prepare his copy carefully in order to decide which hand and fingers to play certain parts with. If you, like me, are a Haydn 'nut', you will enjoy exploring these transcriptions.

James Muckle

Articles

I'm always pleased to have articles for the *Newsletter*. If members have discovered new editions of old favourites, new pieces for organ, or have played an interesting instrument, please let me know; photographs are also welcome.

The August *Newsletter* is a short edition due to the holiday period.

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Choral Workshop Day

Margaret Eades has supplied information about a choral day at St Mary's RC Church, Bridge Gate, on Saturday, November 7th, which may be of interest to members for a number of reasons.

The course will be led by **Jeremy de Satge** who is earning a reputation as a charismatic musician and animateur. The focus of the course will be: music for the catholic liturgy, both traditional and modern; plainsong and part singing, as well as singing technique. The music, which will be provided, will be rehearsed during the day and performed in a Vigil Mass at 6.30pm on the same day.

The cost of the day is £10 in advance or £12 on the day; students in full-time education, £5. More information can be obtained from Margaret on 01332 557884, or from Wyn Hinks on 01332 228332.

Members' Visit to Tibshelf and Somercotes

The evening was warm and pleasantly fresh after a period of wet and humid weather for the goodly number of members who visited St John's Church, Tibshelf, and the Birchwood Chapel at Somercotes.

St John's is a pleasant church, the organ being situated in the northeast corner of the north aisle, enabling the organ to speak clearly into the nave. The history of the instrument seemed uncertain though the scale of the two Great Diapasons would seem to suggest a larger building; in St John's they were quite overpowering. The pneumatic action is responsive and supports a range of couplers that lend some flexibility to the tonal colours available; the handsome, carved case is of light oak.

The Birchwood Chapel organ was quite a different creature: built by Adkins at the beginning of the twentieth century, the specification of Swell 9, Great 5, Pedal 2 allowed a range styles to be presented, with the extensive, wooden panelling in the chapel enhancing the mid-range frequencies. Whilst the tracker action was in need of some attention, the sound of the instrument was pleasing.

Players were challenged by the literal and metaphorical leap of faith required to descend from the organ bench!

Our thanks go to the wardens of both venues, to the ladies of the chapel for providing refreshments and to Siann Hurt and David Shooter for arranging the event.

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Articles for the September edition of the *Newsletter* should reach me by Monday 24th August, either via e-mail: twes@fsmail.net or by post: Tony Westerman, 44 Beeley Close, Allestree, Derby, DE22 2PX. The Secretary, Mrs Siann Hurt can be reached via: mail@derbyorganists.co.uk