

# *Birmingham Organists' Association*

affiliated to the Incorporated Association of Organists



<https://BhamOrgan.org.uk>



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## **BOA newsletter** volume 16 no 1, Summer 2020

Welcome to this new-style BOA newsletter, which we hope may be in a format more suitable for reading online using mobile devices.

It's been an unprecedented year so far, with so many restrictions resulting from the consequences of the pandemic that are only now beginning to ease – and we can only look with uncertainty towards the coming winter months. But we felt the time was overdue to once again communicate with BOA members.

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## Past Event: historic organ recordings

Alan Taylor

Friends Meeting House, Selly Oak, 22<sup>nd</sup> January



Michael Jones presented another of his sessions using historic recordings of organs, many sadly no longer extant including several local instruments, from the private collections of Malcolm McDonald and the late Alan North. It was a pleasure to welcome Malcolm to the meeting and to hear recordings made by Alan North, a long-standing member of the association who died last year.

These sessions are always well received and this one attracted a good-sized audience for a cold winter's night. Although the venue did not possess hi-fi equipment, we were able to use portable lo-fi CD-playing equipment kindly loaned by a member.

The recordings heard during the session included an excerpt from a BBC 'live' broadcast of "Sunday Half-Hour" from the Church of the Redeemer, Hagley Road in 1962, as well as a later (1974) recording of Alan North playing there, prior to the church's closure; Norman Dyson playing at St Mary's Moseley prior to the organ's 1966 rebuild; Simon Lumby playing at St Luke's, Bristol Road (the church was demolished last year) in 1989; and Andrew Fletcher in 1990 at St Anne's Moseley, the recital given at the re-dedication of the organ after its rebuild.

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## Past Event: 20th century English organ music

Michael Jones

St George's Church, Kidderminster, 19<sup>th</sup> February

Around 20 members of both WOA and BOA gave a warm welcome to Dan Moulton in the comfortable surroundings of St. George's Church, Kidderminster. I say "comfortable" because since my previous visit in 2004 the interior décor has been greatly modified – soft chairs and more carpeting have toned down the former rich acoustic I formerly remembered. A gigantic screen also spans the East wall - ideal for the excerpts from Dan's blockbuster DVD documentary 'The English Organ' (issued last Christmas)



Dan was introduced by Nigel Morris (BOA President), then played his first piece, the 'Postlude in D Minor' Op.120/5 by Sir Charles Villiers Stanford and went on to explain how certain influences from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century were carried over into the 20<sup>th</sup>. Two interpretational criteria, *tempo rubato* and *crescendo*, were explained - great musicians of the previous age, such as Richard Wagner, who conducted in London during the 1850s, employed a very free conducting style, and we are now seeing modern playing styles re-discovering this freedom again after the perceived constrictions of 'Early Music' fashions of the last 50 years. Dan also referred to one of Stanford's pupils, Herbert Howells, whose freer and highly personal style was heard to good effect in an excerpt from 'Psalm-Prelude no.3'.

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A wide range of great British organ builders feature in the DVD, including William Hill, and his son Thomas Hill's magnificent 1890 organ in Sydney Town Hall and the interview with Robert Ampt (City Organist) were particularly illuminating. We also saw Dunedin Town Hall NZ and an interview with John Maidment. Other great builders featured in the excerpts: Henry Willis 1, II and III and T.C.Lewis. We also saw Dan's interview with our Chairman Andrew Caskie on the unique Mitchell & Thynne organ in Tewksbury Abbey (the Grove). Had this partnership continued it would have continued organ building in a very positive way. Instead, by the 1920s organ design moved in a very different direction through the intense use of electronics and new tonal structures by Robert Hope-Jones. William McVicker's interview described this very well, as Hope-Jones' work – taken up by the cinema-organ world of Christie, Compton and Wurlitzer - is still controversial.

Dan moved on to assess Harrison & Harrison's work – at the console of Kings College, Cambridge, then focusing on the 1951 organ in the Royal Festival Hall – a more individual and eclectic approach pioneered by Ralph Downes (Organist at Brompton Oratory).

In his conclusion, Dan gave a positive and up-beat assessment about future developments: Organ design and playing style are always constantly evolving, and in the hands of brilliant musicians will continue to do so.

WOA Chairman, Andrew Caskie, spoke for us all in expressing appreciation of Dan's highly informative and splendidly entertaining presentation - I think he even sold some of the DVDs (I had already bought mine last year!). We are especially fortunate to have such close links to the RBC Organ Department, which we hope will long continue.

## **Future events: situation uncertain**

Our programme for the last few months had originally included a recital by RBC students, a “Come & Play” cheese & wine fund-raiser, a session on correct posture at the console and a visit to the newly restored organ of St Peter’s Wolverhampton. Sadly, none of these happened because of “lockdown”, but we hope to rearrange at least some of them in the future.

Our next event should have been to join the IAO’s Midlands Organ Day in Northampton at the end of September. This event has been postponed until Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> September 2021, see <http://www.northamptonorganists.org.uk/midlands-organ-day/> .

Our October event was planned as a joint meeting with the Worcestershire Organists’ Association on Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> October at the BMI and St Chad’s Cathedral in Birmingham. This was to have been a presentation to celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of **Louis Vierne**. We have just heard from WOA that this event is being postponed until next year.

We shall await developments on the progress of the virus and any possible local lockdowns in the Birmingham area before planning further ahead. Meanwhile, do try to stay safe and well!

## **Covid-19: advice for organists via the IAO**

Towards the end of August 2020, for most parts of England, concerning Covid-19 matters of particular relevance to church organists, the situation appears to be:

- When inside a hall or place of worship, face coverings are **mandatory**, with very limited exceptions (more details [HERE](#)).
- Church organs can be played for services, practice and maintenance, but should be appropriately cleaned after use.
- Congregations are **not** permitted to sing, but **small** groups of professional and non-professional singers and musicians can perform both inside and outside buildings in line with recommendations for physical distancing & hygiene set out by the government. The use of screens is advised where masks cannot be worn.
- People at increased risk of severe disease from Covid-19, including all those aged over 70, are advised to stay at home as much as possible.

Source: The Church of England's [Covid-19 Advice on the Conduct of Public Worship](#).

Those considering mounting events that include the performance of music, including recitals, should consult the [government guidance](#).

Clearly, the situation is likely to be subject to change, both locally and nationally as time passes. You are therefore advised to check both local & national sources for up-to-date information.

## Notices

### Free online organ recitals

Have you been missing “live” organ recitals? We have been notified of the following forthcoming recitals that will be streamed via the internet. So you can enjoy them from the comfort of your own home in (hopefully) a Covid-secure environment!

#### Sunday 6 September 3pm



**Paul Carr**'s regular series of *Sunday Afternoon Organ Music* on the first Sunday in every month is now online, this month featuring music by Boëllman, Frank Bridge, David Johnson and Vierne. For details, visit

<https://www.facebook.com/SundayAfternoonOrganMusic/>

#### Tuesday 29th September, 8pm



The fourteenth annual Andrew Chamblin Memorial Concert will be given by **Margaret Phillips** in Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford and streamed “live” online this year due to the pandemic (no physical attendance will be possible).

Ms Phillips will play an hour-long programme of organ works by Bach, Böhm, Frescobaldi, Marchand and Walond.

The concert is free and the weblink for the live-streamed performance is: <https://youtu.be/ujVimzjiuMY> .

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**Halesowen Masonic Hall** is disposing of its pipe organ by John Compton.



*Specification*

<b>Swell</b>	<b>Great</b>	<b>Pedal</b>
Contra Salicional 16	Bourdon 16	Bourdon 16
Open Diapason 8	Open Diapason 8	Flute 8
Harmonic Flute 8	Harmonic Flute 8	Gt/Pd
Salicional 8	Salicional 8	Sw/Pd
Vox Angelica 8	Octave 4	
Harmonic Flute 4	Harmonic Flute 4	
Salicet 4	Salicet 4	
Vox Angelica 4	Salicet 2 2/3	
Piccolo 2	Salicet Fifteenth 2	

From the specification, one assumes there is multiple “borrowing” and probably no more than three or four actual ranks of pipes.

Anyone interested should contact John Chapman via [chajdman@gmail.com](mailto:chajdman@gmail.com) .

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**The family of the late Margaret Handford** are disposing of her house organ.



The specification is not available, but the name-plate on the console says “Manufactured by W.M. Classical Organ Centre Ltd”. It comes with three loudspeakers.

BOA member Michael Jones is in contact with the family and anyone interested should contact him via [michaeljonespiano@gmail.com](mailto:michaeljonespiano@gmail.com) .