

Birmingham Organists' Association

affiliated to the Incorporated Association of Organists



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CENTENARY YEAR: 1924 - 2024

BOA newsletter volume 20 no 3, Christmas 2024



Happy Christmas
to all BOA members
and best wishes for
2025



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REVIEW OF PAST EVENTS

A tribute to George Miles

Along with many other organists in the Birmingham area and well beyond, BOA member Michael Jones was a pupil of George Theophilus Miles (1913 – 1988). Last September, Michael presented this tribute to his former teacher at St Peter's Church, Harborne, where George had been organist from 1946 until his death in 1988.

George was educated at King's School Canterbury and the Royal College of Music, where he studied with Sir George Thalben-Ball, who also became well known in Birmingham as City Organist from 1949. George Miles continued his studies, both piano and organ, in Leipzig and remained in Germany for several years, later living in Hamburg.

From the 1930s, George became well known for his 'continental' style of playing, especially the music of Bach, and after the Second World War established himself as a much respected teacher at Birmingham University and Birmingham School of Music, the latter being the forerunner of today's Royal Birmingham Conservatoire.

To this, Michael was able to add many personal anecdotes from his memories of George, occasionally supplemented by comments from the audience, which also included several former pupils of George.

After a break for lunch at the nearby Bell Inn, Michael and other former pupils returned to take part in a recital using the St Peter's organ, an instrument installed there in 1975, during George's tenure, using pipework from an organ originally in a Walsall Congregational church built by the famous Leeds firm of J J Binns.



IAO Midlands Organ Day

This event, based at St Peter's Collegiate Church, Wolverhampton on 5th October, was promoted jointly by the Birmingham and Lichfield associations with Peter Morris (Chair of Lichfield), as the lead organiser and with a financial guarantee from the IAO.

Peter opened the event by explaining the history of the organ, originally by 'Father' Willis, and describing the recent rebuild by Michael Farley. The morning's programme continued with a recital by two students of the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, Godfrey Leung and Piotr Maziarz, playing music by J S Bach, Franck, Schumann and Widor.



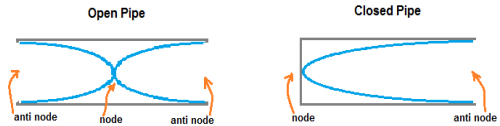
During the lunch break we made our way to the nearby St John's Church, which houses an organ originally by Renatus Harris, and heard about its history, including its use (in Dublin) by Handel for the first performance of *Messiah* in 1741. It was transferred to St John's some twenty years later. Peter Morris honoured the Handel connection with a performance of his Voluntary IV in G minor. There followed a recital of choral music by the choir of St Chad's Church, Shrewsbury, conducted by their DoM, Tony Pinel. Singing mainly *a capella*, they made a glorious sound in the generous acoustic. Our visit to St John's concluded with a performance of Handel's Organ Concerto in F by Toby Barnard with members of Wolverhampton Symphony Orchestra.

We returned to St Peter's for tea & cakes before the (very) grand finale: a celebrity recital by Jonathan Scott, fresh from his appearance at this year's BBC Proms. Playing mainly arrangements by himself of well-known orchestral works, this provided an exciting conclusion to a most enjoyable and successful day.

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The physics of organ pipes

BOA member Paul Hodgetts gave this presentation last October at St Chad's using the cathedral's excellent large-screen projection facilities.



Paul began with an explanation of the way in which the laws of physics apply to how we hear music in general, with reasons for why notes we describe as having a particular relationship (*eg* an octave or a fifth apart) sound as they do. He then went on to apply this to organ pipes, commenting not only on the relationship between pipe length and pitch but also on why open and stopped flue pipes of the same length sound different notes. There followed illustrations of how mutation stops reinforce different harmonics of the foundation pitch and the role played by the overlapping of harmonics in producing the timbres of different combinations of stops.

All this was very thought-provoking via a presentation that used diagrams rather than complicated equations to explain the mathematics involved and elicited a number of follow-up comments and questions from the audience. So many thanks to Paul for sharing his expertise with us.

Annual BOA Membership 2025

It's that time of year again when BOA membership fees are due. If you pay by standing order, you need do nothing; but if you still prefer to pay by cheque, you should please post it now to:

Dr Tim Batty,
Flat 11, Saturday Bridge,
Gas St, Birmingham, B1 2JX.

There's no change to the annual fee which remains at £14. Those who are retired only pay £10.

Situation Vacant

ERDINGTON ABBEY
Birmingham, B23 6QL

seeks an Organist and Choir Leader.

The 2-manual organ, with pipework dating from an 1884 instrument by August Gern, is currently maintained by Peter Spencer.

The role includes two hours on a Wednesday evening for a Novena session and choir practice, as well as Sunday masses at 9.15am and 10.30am.

For more details, including fees available, please contact

Father Kieran Brady via
Fr.kieran.brady@rcaob.org.uk

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One hundred years of the BOA



A goodly gathering of some forty members and friends came along to the Canons' Dining Room at St Chad's Cathedral on 16th November for our Centenary Buffet with special guest speaker Dr Roy Massey (left). While Birmingham Organists' Association was founded in 1924, Roy told us that, under a slightly different name, organists in Birmingham had formed a group a few years earlier and that he had discovered an article about seventy members organising a visit in advance of the official start date.

Roy talked about his growing up in Birmingham and being enthused through visits to hear local organs. He particularly mentioned St Martin's in the Bull Ring and St Alban's Conybere Street. His recollections of many venues and names of past members (including the Blenheim Palace 'wallah' complete with raincoat and newspaper) stirred fond and amusing memories for many of us – especially, dare I say, we older ones! Roy has always been an excellent raconteur and lived up to this reputation.

Mention must also be made of the excellent buffet provided by the cathedral's caterers, which included trays of both apple and rhubarb crumble complete with custard: this must be a 'first' for the association! Thanks are also due to our association secretary, Nick Fanthom, for organising the splendid celebration cake (left).



John Stormont

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RBC organ dept end-of-term recital

By kind invitation of Daniel Moulton, head of Organ at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, a number of BOA members (together with invited colleagues from the Worcestershire association), thoroughly enjoyed an end-of-term recital played by six students on the two new instruments in RBC's organ studio.

The evening began with pieces by Buxtehude and J S Bach played on the 'Wolfson' organ (Flentrop) by Thomas Howell and Timothy Stewart, both of whom were prize-winners in this year's IAO/RCO competition held in York Minister.



After this, the focus shifted to the newly inaugurated 'Juliet' organ by William Drake (see photo). For many of us, this was the first opportunity to see and hear this instrument, with the mainly 19th century repertoire during the rest of the evening chosen to illustrate its tonal qualities.

We heard music by Guilmant, Mendelssohn (a prelude and fugue originally for piano but arranged for the organ by W T Best & Martin Schmeding), Stanford and Vierne. Of particular interest was the *Finale* from an Organ Sonata by F E Gladstone (a

British cathedral organist-composer of the Victorian era new to many of us) which ended the recital, played by Godfrey Leung.

As always, we were made very welcome by the RBC organ department. Birmingham members are indeed privileged to have access to such world-class facilities, staff and organ students.

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FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Sat 22 February **Two Wolverhampton organs**
(a joint event with Lichfield & District Organists' Association)
11.30am St Michael's, Church Road, Tettenhall, [WV6 9AJ](#) (just off the A41)
2.00pm St John's, St John's Square, [WV2 4BZ](#) (city centre)
The 1957 Compton (III/50) at St Michael's has just been rebuilt by Michael Farley, so this is a first opportunity to hear the refurbished instrument.
The historic 1684 Renatus Harris (III/33) at St John's will be visited after a short lunch break.

Wed 19 March **Visit to Fentham Hall**
Marsh Lane, Hampton in Arden, [B92 0AH](#).
(a joint event with Worcestershire Organists' Association, WOA)
WOA member Michael Carter will be our host for the visit along with Cinema Organ Society District Secretary, Gordon Whitehouse.
They will talk about the Hall and the history of the fine Compton cinema organ and then demonstrate the instrument and give a short concert. After this, members will be free to play. The event is planned to conclude at about 8.30pm.

Sat 5 Apr **AGM & Annual Recital**
St Mary's Church, Selly Oak, [B29 6ND](#).
11.00am This event will follow our usual pattern of a (short) business meeting followed by the annual recital.

Additional dates for your diary include a visit to Cirencester Parish Church (Harrison, IV/65) on **Saturday 24 May**, an event to support the RCO's 'Play the Organ Year' on **Saturday 21 June** at St Matthew's, Walsall and a visit to the headquarters of Allen Organs in High Wycombe (date to be confirmed).

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NOTICES

Thursday *Live!* organ recitals St Chad's Cathedral

Free admission: retiring collection

Thursday 2 January 2025 1.15pm: Paul Carr

Modest Mussorgsky (1839–1881) [arr. Paul Carr]
Gopak

S.S. Wesley (1810–1876)
Choral Song and Fugue

Eduard Grieg (1843–1907)
*Peer Gynt Suite no.1:
Morning; The Death of Ase; Anitra's Dance;
In the Hall of the Mountain King*

Tomaso Albinoni (1671–1751) [arr. Remo Giazotto]
Adagio in G minor

Alexandre Guilmant (1837–1911)
Grand Choeur in D major

Thursday 6 February 2025 1.15pm: Carleton
Etherington

Sigfrid Karg-Elert (1877–1933)
Toccata on 'Herr Jesu Christ, dich zu us wend'

J.S. Bach (1685–1750)
Fantasia and Fugue in C minor BWV 537

David Briggs (b.1962)
Variations on Greensleeves

Flor Peeters (1903–1986)
Suite Modale: Scherzo

Charles-Marie Widor (1844–1937)
Symphony no.6: Finale

Thursday 6 March 2025 1.15pm: Paul Carr

Paul Spicer (b.1952)
Fanfares for Chad

J.S. Bach (1685–1750)
Prelude and Fugue in C BWV 545

Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1740)
*The Four Seasons – Spring:
Allegro: Largo: Danza Pastorale*

Thierry Pallesco (b.1956)
Fantaisie no.6

Edwin H Lemare (1865–1934)
Symphony in G minor: Scherzo

Oskar Fredrik Lindberg (1887–1955)
*Sonata in G minor:
Alla Sarabanda
Finale: Allegro con brio*

Symphony Hall

Monday 7 Apr, 1pm

Catrin Finch *harp*

Thomas Trotter *organ*

Admission £7.50

Town Hall recitals

Mondays, 1pm

Thomas Trotter

Admission £7.50

Jan 13, 27; Feb 10, 24;

Mar 10, 24

Emmanuel, Wylde Green

[B72 1YG](#). Fridays, 1pm

Free, retiring collection

3 Jan: Charles Wooler

7 Feb: Anthony Gritten

7 Mar: Terence Atkins

Holy Trinity, Wordsley

[DY8 5RU](#). Sundays, 3pm

Paul Carr

Free, retiring collection

5 Jan, 2 Feb, 2 Mar, 6 Apr

More details via <https://organrecitals.uk>

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