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BIOS REPORTER

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The Editor reserves the right to refuse or amend material.

Editor: Gordon Curtis

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Cover photos Front: *SS Dunstan and Osmund, Parkstone. Organ by Compton now At Risk.* (Photo: NPOR [N07503]) Back: *St Cecilia. Detail from window in St Eloy, Great Smeaton, Yorks.* (Photo: Richard Hird)

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FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Life is far from being back to normal again, but at least the beginnings are there. Some 'real' meetings are beginning to take place instead of what had started to become yet another routine session on 'Zoom' (convenient and inexpensive though those have been) and trains, shops and city centres are once more beginning to feel crowded. Above all, our churches are open, organists are again playing and choirs are able to rehearse and sing. We have much to be thankful for as we strive to get life back to where it was before Covid.

Sadly, the past eighteen months have seen the loss of a number of very familiar faces from among the membership of BIOS. Paul Houghton, who died in April 2020, was of fundamental importance in getting the NPOR underway in its early years. The restrictions in place at the time of Paul's funeral meant that only a small number of the family were able to be present. However, a memorial service for Paul was held last month at which I and others were pleased to be able to represent BIOS. Other longstanding members and supporters we have lost include the Revd Jonathan Boston and the much loved Canon Hilary Davidson - both so familiar to those of us who have been regular attenders at the annual residential conference of Diocesan Organ Advisers. From the world of organ performance we have lost the distinguished recitalists Jennifer Bate, Catherine Ennis and Roger Fisher, and the world of organ building has suffered the loss of David McElderry of the Wells-Kennedy Partnership and, more recently, the legendary John Budgen of Bishop's. We are grateful to all of the above for their support of BIOS over many years.

Sad to recount, as the copy date for this edition of the *Reporter* was upon us we learned of yet another death, that of Michael Sayers, who died suddenly and unexpectedly in Cambridge on October 4th. Our President, Canon Nicholas Thistlethwaite, has kindly agreed to write a full obituary of Michael for the next *Reporter* but, in the meantime, and on behalf of BIOS, I extend our condolences to Michael's wife, Jean, and to the family as they come to terms with their unanticipated loss and bereavement. Michael wasn't just the founder of the NPOR, he was the NPOR. Those of us who were students at Cambridge in the late 1960s will recall the vision of Dr Peter Le Huray of having a national register of pipe organs, though in those days the talk was naturally about a massive card index. It was eventually Michael, with his technical knowledge and skills in the emerging world of computers (he was Head of Computing Services at Cambridge University) who grasped the nettle and not only proposed the founding of the online NPOR but actively took charge of it and, until relatively recently when he retired from active involvement, gave his services in setting it up and overseeing all the technical requirements. About three years ago, when he retired from that role, it was a great delight to the other members of the Joint Management Committee (BIOS and the RCO) that Michael agreed to stay on as a member of the team in an advisory capacity. When BIOS member Matt Dixon stepped forward to offer to take on the

oversight of the technical side it was an equal delight for us to find that Michael thoroughly approved of that appointment. It came as a relief to the other members of the team when we could see that Michael and Matt were happily able to converse in front of us at meetings in a technical language that none of us (except perhaps John Norman) could comprehend, but which we had confidence would produce the right solution! I see from the latest statistics - available from the 'activity graphs' link on the home page of the NPOR - that in the month of April this year the number of file searches peaked at staggering figure of sixty-eight thousand. It is the NPOR, more than anything else, which brings the name, existence and role of BIOS to the attention of the public, not just here but all over the world. We mourn the loss of the member whose technical skill and dedicated active work and support enabled that early vision of Peter Le Huray to be realised.

The publication of James Berrow's book *The Making of an English Organ Builder - John Nicholson of Worcester* has marked the beginning of an important new step in the publishing activities of BIOS. Our thanks and congratulations go to our Publications Officer, Dr Katharine Pardee, whose drive and energy has brought the project to fruition, and to Julian Littlewood, the designer, who has made the book into such an attractive publication (Julian also designed our 40th anniversary book *In Search of Organs*). Taking advantage of modern developments, and following the example of commercial publishers, we have also been able to produce a large amount of supplementary material which members and the general public are able to consult free of charge on our website. To find this, go to the Publications page of the BIOS website and click on the link to 'Supplementary Material for Publications'. The fact that we are a Charity (with a designated role to 'educate the public') and not a commercial publisher required to make a profit as a necessity of survival, has meant that we have been able to publish the new book at the very competitive price of £25. The aim is eventually to cover our costs and the initial sales (together with a generous grant from the Marc Fitch Fund) are very encouraging. The sales of both this book and John Norman's *Organ Works* (published privately by the author but on sale through BIOS) have meant that our Webstore has (by far) had its busiest trading year since it was founded. With the Nicholson publication now successfully launched, Katie and her team are beginning to plan the production of our next venture, which will be Nicholas Plumley's history of the Walker firm.

Also in hand at the moment is the long desired project to have the quarterly editions of the *BIOS Reporter* digitised and, on a searchable basis, made available to the public on our website. The first stage in this process is obviously the digitisation of the back copies, at a rough estimate around one hundred and eighty in number. Thanks to the research undertaken for us by Dr David Shuker it was found that the British Library can carry out this task for us on a commercial basis. The expenditure for their estimated cost was approved by BIOS Council at its recent meeting, and the work will in due course be put in hand.

While on the subject of publications, BIOS was sad to learn from John Brennan that he wishes to step down from his role as printer and publisher of our annual *Journal*. John, through his firm Positif Press, has been responsible for the production of every *Journal* since BIOS was founded in 1976. The high quality of the publication in terms of design, printing and production, as well as the scholarship contained in the articles has (like the NPOR) made it a flagship enterprise of BIOS, one which has built up an enviable reputation in academic circles. It was of course inevitable that John would have to retire eventually, though we all hoped that the day would never come. We are grateful to him for carrying on for so long, and will be very sad to see the end of what has been a wonderful partnership. John is of course in charge of the 2021 *Journal* (already at the printers and which members will shortly be receiving in the post) and he will also kindly see through the 2022 edition before retiring at the end of that year. We will in due course find a way of expressing and marking our great appreciation to John for his sterling contribution to our work over so many years. Meanwhile, our Publications Officer and her team are already giving thought to the new arrangement that will need to be put into place for 2023.

On a different front, our team is for the moment still without a Casework Officer following the retirement of Dr Andrew Hayden. Incoming casework enquiries are for the moment being dealt with jointly by myself and our Secretary, Melvin Hughes (both of us having experience as a Diocesan Organ Adviser). If any member has the background (and time, of course) necessary to take on this critical role in the work of BIOS do please be in touch.

Life during lockdown has been very limiting for all of us. We may not have been able to hold any members' meetings since the spring of last year, but I'm sure members will be encouraged to learn how much has been going on behind the scenes and will join me in thanking all those who have been working so hard to continue our important role as a Charity and as the amenity society for organs.

Alan Thurlow

FROM THE SECRETARY

BIOS Council (September 2021)

BIOS Council met on Saturday 18 September 2021 using Zoom Video Conferencing. Eleven members of Council participated. Nicholas Thistlethwaite (President), John Norman (Webmaster) and John Rowntree (Listing Committee Chairman) were also in attendance.

Council received reports and agreed or noted the following:

There had been no further meetings of the Working Group looking at the possibility of seeking funding for a worker to campaign for the cause of historic organs under threat. Martin Renshaw, who had proposed the idea, was establishing a charitable body of his own which to a large extent appeared to cover the same ground. Further consideration of this proposal was put into abeyance until Martin's new organisation came into being and its scope, aims and method of working became clearly established.

A small Group would both review the arrangements for future AGMs and consider the approach to a possible Governance review.

The Charity's Annual Return 2020 and Trustees' Annual Report had been submitted to the Charity Commission.

Following the AGM vote, the 3rd Aim of BIOS had been amended as proposed by Council. A member had suggested amendments to Aims 1, 2 and 4 but it was considered that the current wording should be maintained.

Subscriptions for the year 2021 had been paid, with many being paid before the end of 2020.

The BIOS Lunch would be held on Saturday 27 November at The Grosvenor Chapel. Arrangements for meetings in 2022 were in hand.

Jim Berrow's book on Nicholson was published by BIOS at the end of July and was for sale in the Webstore with supplementary material available on the Website. Initial sales through the BIOS Webstore were reported as being very encouraging.

The estimate provided by the British Library to digitise the first 31 years of the *BIOS Reporter* was approved and the work would now proceed.

John Brennan had indicated his intention to retire from his work of publishing the annual *Journal* with effect from the end of 2022. John has designed, printed and published every issue since the foundation of BIOS and Council members paid tribute to his work for us over the past 40 years. The Publications Officer would be considering alternatives for the future production of the *Journal* and would bring a proposal back to Council in due course.

On the recommendations of the Listing Committee, Council approved the listing of four historic organs and two applications were refused. One reassessment was also agreed.

Two organs had been removed from the Historic Organs at Risk Register. The position on five recent casework items was summarised.

Contributions to the NPOR and completions had remained fairly consistent over recent months.

The current Review of the Mission and Pastoral Measure suggested that there was potential for a notable increase in organs at risk as a consequence of changes of use of church buildings (whole or part). A response to the consultation would be prepared.

The acceptance of the correspondence of the late Ralph Downes had effectively taken up the remaining allocated archive space in the Cadbury Research Library. Options for meeting this challenge would be pursued.

Council meets next on Saturday 22 January 2022. In future, it was intended four Meetings would be held each year - in January, April, July and October.

Melvin Hughes

ERRATA

BIOS Reporter August 2021 (45.3)

The Editor regrets the omissions noted below and offers his apologies to the writers of the affected pieces.

Page 55 Revision of the 3rd Aim of BIOS Item 3 should read:

To work for the preservation, and where necessary, the faithful restoration of historic organs in Britain and to encourage their use and appreciation.

Page 61 A Miller milled

This letter was truncated removing the correspondent's details and a reference. The letter is reprinted in its entirety on page 80.

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

I am delighted to welcome the following two new members to BIOS:

Mr Kevin Hood, MISOB, [REDACTED]

Mr Robert Sharpe, MA, FRCO, FRSA, HonFGCM, [REDACTED]

Members will find their new BIOS Membership List 2021 enclosed with this copy of the *Reporter*. The list incorporates all the changes that I've received up to the end of the first week in October 2021. Please notify me of any errors with reference to your list entry, and I can amend the database accordingly. As always, I extend grateful thanks to Melanie Plumley for her help in formatting and typesetting the new list.

We regret to announce the death of Dr Peter Chatfield of Gosforth, a BIOS member since 2007 and of our Honorary Member Dr Michael Sayers of Harlton, who was the founder of the NPOR and a BIOS member since 1984.

I shall shortly be sending a reminder about next year's subscription to those members who pay by BACS transfer, PayPal or cheque, so that, hopefully, subscriptions can be paid promptly at the beginning of 2022. Those members with Standing Orders need take no further action, other than checking that the amount is correct for their subscription category. Subscription amounts will remain the same for 2022: £37 (£32 concessionary, £12 student). For those outside the UK, rates are £10 higher respectively, to reflect the additional postage costs of publications. As always, you can pay in one of four ways: i) by Standing Order (as many hundreds of members do), ii) by direct transfer into the BIOS bank account, whose details are: NatWest; sort code: 52-30-44 account number: 05097169 account name: The British Institute of Organ Studies – Registered Charity, iii) via the BIOS website: <http://www.bios.org.uk> using PayPal and iv) by sending me a cheque to my address given on the inside front cover. Please 'Gift Aid' your subscription if you are able, and are not already doing so.

David Shepherd

HISTORIC ORGANS AT RISK REGISTER

Two organs have recently been removed from the Register: Bangor, St Mary (instrument dismantled and removed from the church, parts given to Barmouth, St John) and Totton, St Winfrid (organ removed from the church and in storage).

There are currently nine organs on the Register:

Margate, Royal Sea Bathing Hospital	2016	Cambridge, St Andrew	2017
Devizes, St Mary	2018	Tollington Park, St Mark	2019
Ipswich, St Clement's Congregational	2019	Edge Hill, St Dunstan	2020
Edge Hill, St Mary/All Saints	2020	Parkstone, St Dunstan	2021
Alexandria, St Mungo's Episcopal	2021		

Jonathan Goodchild

COMMITTEE FOR THE LISTING OF HISTORIC ORGANS

Grade I organs are of exceptional interest

Grade II* organs are particularly important and of more than special interest

Grade II organs are of special interest, warranting every effort to preserve them

The following organs were awarded Historic Organ Certificates at the BIOS Council meeting on 18 September 2021.

Location	Builder(s) and Date	Comment	Grade
St Paul, Helliwell BL1 8BR	Renn 1848	A rare and largest surviving example of Renn's firm.	I
St Peter, Stanton Lacy SY8 2AE	Gray & Davison 1854	An excellent example of Gray & Davison with good pipe decoration.	II*
St Peter, Ely CB7 4BQ	Hill 1891	A well-preserved organ from the concluding period of Thomas Hill's tenure.	II
Holy Trinity, Deanshanger MK19 6JP	Willis Scudamore 1870	An interesting and intact example, though with subsequent case redecoration.	II
St John the Divine, Richmond TW9 2NA	Beale & Thynne 1905	A unique survivor from this brief partnership but with alterations to the mechanisms	II

Future Submission Date:

Friday 09.00 26 November 2021 for meeting of Listing Committee to be held on 13 January 2022.

Jeffrey Williams

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

This letter was truncated during the editorial process for the August issue removing the correspondent's details and a reference. It is reprinted in its entirety here.

A Miller milled

Sir,

A H Miller & Son installed their last purpose-built organ at Cambridge Unitarian, in 1928:

Great

Open Diapason	8
Clarabella	8
Dulciana	8
Principal	4
Wald Flute	4

Pedal

Bourdon	16
Bass Flute	8

Swell

Open Diapason	8
Lieblich (sic)	8
Salcional (sic)	8
Voix Celeste	8 TC
Principal	4
Oboe	8
Tremulant	

Appropriate couplers were supplied.

The naturalised French organ builder, Joseph Riepp,¹ a vintner by trade and with an interest in catering, compared his 'mélanges' of stops with specific meals, as for instance on his Trinity Organ at Ottobeuren (1754-1756). We suggest, as a visual analogy, Seurat's pointilliste paintings the entire spectrum being resourced with myriad dots of complimentary colours, juxtaposed to invest his compositions with dynamic unity. Conversely, Miller's monotone in black and grey, for all the integrity of its tracker-action, timbre and West gallery acoustics, lacked the cohesive ensemble available from unison stops of significantly varied pitch, enriched by harmonics.

In 2017, the Church, aided by an auspicious bequest and a generous donation of redundant Norman & Beard Ltd upperwork from The Leys School, appointed Norman Hall & Sons Ltd to up-grade the Great, whilst preserving all Miller's Swell and Pedal stops in situ. Based on Miller's versatile Clarabella and Principal, the Wald Flute was transposed to a Nazard, a Fifteenth replaced the Open Diapason, the Dulciana (practically replicated, in both scale and timbre, by the Swell 'Salcional') made way for a Tierce. The result is an Organo Pleno, a 5-rank Cornet, and a host of other new combinations, as solo or ensemble, which bring Miller's dormant organ to life. J S Bach, Couperin and Stanley can now join an array of pre-nineteenth century and contemporary oeuvres, authentically registered, to serve worshippers a more eclectic menu for the three designated musical contributions integrated into the service whilst hymns profit from accompaniments more liberally equipped for chorus, expression and solo.

Miller's battery of Swell 8' voices speaks with clarity and welcome variety of timbre. It suggests opportunities for a serene Romantic feast (with a visit from the Tremulant) comprising Riepp's 'mélange No. 9, 'suitable for old men', equivalent, with a pinch of salt, to Miller's own 8' diet, wine (4' Principal) extra. Nevertheless, it is testimony to Miller's painstaking craftsmanship that his 'hors-d'oeuvre', prepared almost a century ago, has now matured for us to enjoy with relish.

My thanks are due to Andrew James Brown, Minister and professional musician, and Mark Mason, former Cambridge Organ Scholar, for their invaluable dialogue throughout the project.

John Dillistone,
Godmanchester, Cambs.

¹ See Sumner, W.L., *The Organ*, (London: Macdonald, 4th edn 1993) 214-216.

B.B. EDMONDS – THE LAST ORGAN PHOTOGRAPHS (2)

NICHOLAS THISTLETHWAITE

Readers will recall a short article in the last *Reporter* accompanied by six photographs of small organs in East Anglia taken by the Reverend B B Edmonds (1910-2003) shortly before his death. The subjects of the photographs were not identified, and we appealed to BIOS members to help trace them.

Several members responded with information, and the writer is particularly grateful to Tony Newnham, Kevin Hood, John Speller, Paul Tindall and Peter Wood for their assistance. As a result, the locations of all six instruments can now be revealed.

A Holy Trinity, Heydon, Cambridgeshire (formerly Essex) [NPOR D00760]

The Hon. and Rev. Latimer Neville presented a 2-manual organ with FF/f-compasses and eight stops to the church in 1852. It was made by J W Walker. According to a note in B B Edmonds's copy of *Organa Britannica*, vol. 1 (James Boeringer; Bucknell University Press, Lewisburg, USA, 1983; 315) 'Case and Great Organ [Walker's] remain; reb. Bevington (new Swell) and rehabilitated after 1941 war damage by Johnson of Cambridge'. The console retains Bevington's 'transfer' plate (photograph in NPOR) which is undated. It is a neat but plain case of a type which was ubiquitous at the period in which it was made.

B St Swithun, Great Chishill, Cambridgeshire (formerly Essex) [NPOR D00785]

The case front must surely be earlier in date than the instrument it contains. NPOR says, 'Holdich organ built 1810 (c.) purchased for £50 from Arthur Sperling Esq. of Lattenbury Hall, Papworth St. Agnes, and installed here'. The date of installation is said to have been 1861. Arthur Sperling must have been a connection of John Hanson Sperling of notebook fame, but I cannot as yet confirm this (John Hanson's uncle was Rector of Papworth St Agnes and the family were patrons of the living, which strengthens the case). Clearly Holdich was not building organs c.1810, so perhaps he had fitted the old case with a new instrument at a later date – probably before 1861, because the key compass began at GG and that would have been a bit late for a long compass even for the conservative Holdich. There are now five registers. The rococo case front is rather fun but one wonders what the ecclesiological John Hanson Sperling would have thought of placing it in a church.

C St Nicholas, Elmdon, Essex [NPOR H00263]

According to NPOR the organ was made by T C Bates 'c.1867'. This seems unlikely; DBOB suggests that the business fizzled out c.1864. The tall Gothic case is said to be 'c.1840', so perhaps that was also the date of Bates's involvement.

However, the organ now has C compasses, so there must have been a later rebuilding.

D St Andrew, Wickham Skeith, Suffolk [NPOR D02454]

This handsome little instrument presents further mysteries. NPOR records that a leaflet in the church states, 'Organ late 18th century by J. Soan & Sons of Bath, repaired during 19th century by Henry J. Rummens of Brixton and installed in this church by Mr F. Norden in 1928'. 'J. Soan & Sons' are unknown as organ-builders. However, Gordon Curtis (to whom I am grateful) has uncovered one 'William James Soane' who advertised as a piano tuner at 4 Prospect Buildings, Bath in 1862. By 1865, 'Soane's Piano and Music Warehouse' was established at 6 Quiet Street, Bath; 40 years later, the business title was 'J. Soane & Sons'. It may be that the instrument passed through Soane's hands before its installation at Wickham Skeith, acquiring an attribution to Soane in the process. There is clearly some confusion here. Henry Rummens is recorded in DBOB as in business between 1885 and 1903 in Brixton, but certainly not as early as 'c.1850' (NPOR). At least Mr Norden seems to have been in the right place at the right time; he was an ex-Bishop employee who worked from Ipswich c.1930-48 (DBOB). The organ appears still to have a GG-compass Great and g-compass Swell, but there have been tonal alterations, especially to the Great Organ which now has two undulating registers! The Gothick case appears to be c.1800, reminiscent of others of a similar date by the England family and William Gray.

E St Mary and St Clement, Clavering, Essex [NPOR H00572]

Gray & Davison supplied a 4-stop barrel-and-finger organ for the church in 1845 (not 1848, as in NPOR) with a 'deal, Gothic case' which appears to survive. NPOR records unspecified later alterations by Miller of Cambridge – probably the removal of the barrel mechanism and installation of two additional stops (Dulciana and Twelfth), making six in all.

F St Mary, Mendlesham, Suffolk [NPOR A01044]

The present organ was installed in an existing case in 1983 (the builder is not named by NPOR). An earlier organ provided in 1848 may have survived to be rebuilt with electric action by E and W Storr in 1960. This was removed in 1983 when parts of an organ built by Nicholson in 1897 for Worpole Road Methodist Church, Wimbledon were used as a basis for an otherwise new instrument housed in the old case. With its simple Gothic front this might well date from 1848, though it was presumably painted in 1983.

¹ Post Office Bath Directory, 1862-3, p.220.

² *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 24 August 1865

MISS STEEMSON, ORGANIST AND COMPOSER c.1780

DAVID WELCH

Miss Steemson has often been named, together with a mention of her only known composition *A Dirge for Funerals*, to show the rarity in Britain of lady composers and organists in the eighteenth century. But nothing has been published about Miss Steemson except that she was 'organist at Lancaster in 1780'. I here attempt to provide some detail on her position, and to make suggestions about the circumstances of her composing.

In 1780 the only church in Lancaster that certainly had a pipe organ with a Swell division was the Priory of St Mary. Its organist was the famous John Langshaw who had worked in London pinning the Earl of Bute's large barrel organ. Langshaw was appointed to the St Mary post in 1772 and had signed an undertaking that listed his duties including teaching a Miss Parrin to play the organ.¹ She was the daughter of the previous organist, and probably had moved on by 1780, so to supplement his salary Langshaw may well have taken on other students including Miss Steemson. There is no evidence of a deputy organist being employed then.

The *Dirge* is a single sheet of music apparently collected by Edward Skilton along with many other items in score that had been composed over the previous hundred years. It is held by the British Library [Add MSS 37027] sitting in the folder with works by John Blow, William Croft and Henry Purcell; notable in the scores is *Thou knowest, Lord, the secrets of our hearts*, which Purcell composed for the funeral of Queen Mary in 1695.

I have now obtained a scan of the sheet, and believe that the handwriting gives more evidence of Langshaw's involvement. Above the five staves of 18 bars at least two writers have made annotations, and the title *A Dirge for Funerals* has a distinctive capital F very similar to two occurring in the tune list of Langshaw's barrel organ now on display in a Lancaster museum.² The top annotation is in similar style, stating 'to be played upon the Organ whilst the Corpse is brought into the Church'. Then immediately below is 'Swelling Organ' written in quite different style with an italic pen, similar to that used for the actual notes on the staves. It suggests that Miss Steemson was demonstrating not only her compositional skills but an ability to write out music (see illustration of the sheet's top opposite). The handwriting, the dotted notes, the hair-pin, are all visible.

A third annotation placed on the right above the top stave reads 'Composed by Miss Steemson, Organist at Lancaster, about 1780'. The writing is slanted as for the sheet's title, but in different style. A significant word is 'about' which suggests the writer did not know the full circumstances of the composition, and would fit with the annotation being added by Edward Skilton after he had acquired the manuscript.

A Dirge for Funerals

(Manuscript)

to be played upon the Organ, whilst the Dirge is brought into the Church.

Composed by Miss Steemson, Organist at Lancaster, about 1780.



Incipit of *A Dirge for Funerals*

© British Library Board (shelfmark Add MS 37027 f.55b)

A plausible explanation for John Langshaw passing to other musicians the work of a pupil is given by his family situation in the 1778-1780 period. Much detail on this is given by Madeline Goold in her book *Mr Langshaw's Square Piano*³. Langshaw was very concerned about training his son (Jack, later known as John junior) to become a skilled musician and to inherit the family enterprises so he had sent Jack to London and arranged for him to be a pupil of Dr Benjamin Cooke, the organist of Westminster Abbey. These lessons started in 1778 but did not go well, and soon many letters were passing between Langshaw and the Rev. Charles Wesley in whose house Jack was lodging. By October 1778 Jack had started to have lessons with Wesley's son, Charles, who was developing into a fine musician. This caused a 'simmering' row⁴ between London musical notables and some previous friends of Langshaw; so in order to help Jack who had been largely taught by Langshaw, it would have been a wise step for Langshaw to make available in London the work of another of his pupils, thus demonstrating his own teaching prowess.

Possible parents of Miss Steemson were two main performers in Manchester concerts in 1744 and 1745.⁵ In the detailed list of payments for each concert usually Steemson and his wife are named, so very likely one of them was a singer and the other the accompanist. On one occasion a Paul Steemson performed alone, but he could have been a son. Without Christian names, it is impossible to use genealogical sources to pinpoint births or places of origin.

The *Dirge* manuscript has chords with two and sometimes three notes on the upper stave that has a treble clef, and single notes on the lower stave having a bass clef. There are several dotted runs for both hands, which could be thought odd for a composition marked very slow. An American feminist musician, Barbara Harbach, regularly played the *Dirge* in concerts of music of women composers, and also

included it on a CD; she wrote in a review document that if played at a quicker tempo the piece resembles a charming trumpet tune,⁶ and that is how she played it on the CD. However the original manuscript has nine hair-pin crescendo and diminuendo markings, some extending for very few chords, and clearly Miss Steemson did not intend so fast a tempo.

On the rarity of lady participants in eighteenth century church music, this single item of evidence from Lancaster can only negligibly change opinion. Recently some researchers have taken a contrary view, e.g. Blackmore in a 2016 thesis asserts 'From the eighteenth century, ... possibly earlier, women have not been absent from parish church music. They have not even been unusual'.⁷ A listing of David Shuker records 28 lady organists playing in English churches before 1800, most of them titled 'Miss' rather than 'Mrs',⁸ and doubtless there is more information available than has been gathered so far. For example, in 1796 Mrs Simpson was appointed organist for Aberdeen St Andrew's Chapel (later renamed St Andrew's Cathedral), and in 1815 her salary was increased rewarding her 'faithful attention... over nineteen years'.⁹ Moreover in 1814 her daughter was presented with five guineas for acting as assistant and as 'an encouragement for her future exertions on the Organ'.¹⁰ The increasing knowledge on these young lady organists may produce other examples of their compositions, and support my view that Miss Steemson's *Dirge* was a product of her tuition rather than the work of a neglected composer.

Acknowledgements

My fascination with Miss Steemson was triggered by Paul Guppy, a Lancaster choir leader, and he started this research by contacting Barbara Harbach. We have long shared an interest in the Langshaws, their organ building and music, leading to useful exchanges, and Paul has vetted my draft. Tim Austin, a descendent of the Langshaws, passed to me links of their writings now in archives, allowing perusal of their handwriting.

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- ¹ Goold, M. (2008) *Mr Langshaw's Square Piano*. Cromwell Press, Wiltshire, p 107
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- ³ Goold, op. cit., pp 139-178
- ⁴ Goold, op. cit., p 157
- ⁵ Harland, J. ed. (1867) *Collectanea relating to Manchester and its neighbourhood*. Vol II. Chetham Society 72, pp 66-72
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SAMUEL STREET OF GREAT YARMOUTH AND HIS BARREL ORGAN FOR WEST SOMERTON

DAVID SHUKER

Julian Litten's article in the *May Reporter* (pp 37-41) on the work of Norfolk organ builder Samuel Street (1813-1888) highlighted some of the surviving instruments as well as those known only from contemporary newspaper reports and other sources. Julian Litten noted that we know almost nothing of Street's early life and that it was unclear whether he built organs himself or merely acted as an intermediary, perhaps dealing mostly in second hand organs.

Street established his business in around 1840 in Great Yarmouth and his earliest known organ is a barrel organ for the nearby village of West Somerton. The *Norfolk News*, *Eastern Counties Journal*, and *Norwich, Yarmouth, and Lynn Commercial Gazette* of 21 June 1845 reported the following:

SOMERTON CHURCH. An organ has lately been built by Mr Street, of King Street, in this town, for Somerton Church, and was opened by him on Sunday last. The church was well attended; divine service was conducted by the Rev. Mr. Morton, of Caister, Rector of the parish. The organ presents a very neat and ecclesiastical appearance – its tone is full without being harsh, and though only a small instrument, its power and compass were found adequate to the size of the church.

The phrase 'built by Mr Street' is perhaps ambiguous in this context and could just mean 'erected by' or 'installed by' – I will come back to this later. The surviving church records in the Norfolk Record Office do not mention the barrel organ. There is no further record of the West Somerton barrel organ until 1932 when a short note in *The Organ* (Vol. 11, No 44, p.246) revealed a few details:

WEST SOMERTON

There is a small barrel organ in the church containing open diapason, principal and fifteenth, though quite unplayable. It might conceivably be converted into a one-manual, with the addition of a stopped diapason, for the pipes appear to be quite sound.

It would appear that something like this proposal might have been carried out as by 1967 Boston and Langwill, in their book *Church and Chamber Barrel Organs*, made the following observation:

WEST SOMERTON – The case of an early 19th century barrel-organ is preserved. Abortive attempts at conversion appear to have destroyed most of the mechanism. The case of Street's 1845 barrel organ is still in West Somerton church and is completely empty of any mechanism save for the metal catch on the side of the case that engaged with the slotted axle of the tune barrels to select the tune. However,

recent enquiries revealed the presence of two barrels in the church which clearly belong to the organ. The barrels have survived with surprisingly little damage, and with investigation will reveal the number of pipes and the spacing of the key frame.

What more can we learn about 'Mr Street of King Street, Great Yarmouth'? An advertisement in 1842 confirms Nicholas Thistlethwaite's suggestion in Julian Litten's article that Samuel Street was a seller of a range of musical instruments. From his 'Piano-forte & Music Warehouse' in King Street we are informed that 'S Street has returned from London with a selection of New and Second-hand Cottage, Cabinet and Square Pianofortes ...' and that 'Pianofortes and organs are tuned and repaired'. In addition, there are 'several fine-toned finger and barrel organs for sale, adapted for church and chapel'.¹ We do not know if Samuel Street employed someone to carry out the organ building work but there are some tantalising suggestions from contemporary documents that he did at least some of the work himself.

In the newspaper announcement of Street's marriage at the age of 26 to Mary Grigson in 1839 he was described as 'organ builder and tuner' indicating that he might have served some sort of apprenticeship in the trade.² In 1847 the organ installed in All Saints South Lynn is reported to have been both built and installed by Samuel Street. It only had three stops, open and stopped diapasons along with a principal but it also had a diaocton – the octave coupler invented by G M Holdich in 1843 in which an extra octave of pipes was added for each rank 'by which the power is much increased'.³ It seems unlikely, although not impossible, that a second-hand organ with such a new mechanism would be available but it is also plausible that Holdich might have supplied the mechanism and pipework to a competent middle man such as Samuel Street, having advertised the availability of such items as early as 1839.⁴ The years 1847 and 1848 seem to have been busy for Samuel Street, as noted by Julian Litten, with organs being installed at St Faith Gaywood, Our Lady of the Annunciation Kings Lynn and St Nicholas Chapel-of-Ease Kings Lynn. A newspaper report states that the organ for the Roman Catholic chapel was second-hand but that the other two organs were 'built by Mr Street'.⁵

In summary, closer examination of reports in contemporary newspapers provide some evidence that Samuel Street was indeed an organ builder, albeit in a highly localised and small-scale way. This information may be relevant if surviving instruments are to be restored or reconstructed.

References

- ¹ *The Norfolk Chronicle and Norwich Gazette*, Saturday 2 July 1842, p1c
- ² *The Norfolk Chronicle and Norwich Gazette*, Saturday 19 January 1839, p3c
- ³ *The Lynn Advertiser and West Norfolk Herald*, Saturday 17 April 1847, p2c
- ⁴ *St James Chronicle*, Tuesday 27 August 1839, p1a
- ⁵ *The Norfolk News, Eastern Counties Journal, and Norwich, Yarmouth and Lynn Commercial Gazette*, Saturday 18 December 1847, p3c

HANDEL AND THE ORGAN OF BELCHAMP WALTER HALL

DAVID FORCE

Chamber organs played by Handel are rather like beds slept in by Elizabeth I: implausibly numerous. Nevertheless, there can be truths lurking behind such legends that are no less interesting. One such example concerns the organ at Belchamp Walter Hall in Suffolk, which, according to family tradition, was given by Handel to Isabella Raymond (d.1808) at the time of her first marriage to John Mayne (1722-1785). The connection behind the gift is explained by a note pasted inside the case: 'This organ was given by Handel to Lady Dundonald [Isabella's title after her second marriage], who was his favourite pupil. E. B. Perry'. The organ has remained in the family's possession ever since and is still in use at the hall for occasional concerts and recitals.¹

The instrument is in the tradition of the seventeenth-century English consort organ, although it is a late example dating from c.1690-1710.² It has two stops consisting of wooden pipework but, as is sometimes the case in such examples, the two-rank mixture has metal pipes that may not be original. Inevitably, Father Smith's name has been mooted as a possible builder, but a safe attribution is difficult to make other than to say that the workmanship suggests an origin among the Germanic-influenced school of builders operating in England at the time. One of the organ's most unusual features is its remarkable front of polychromatic painted dummy wooden pipes. These are adorned with elaborate swathes of foliage and arabesque ornamentation, into which are painted, on the outer compartments, cartouches containing winged angels, and, on the inner compartments, head-and-shoulder portraits of individuals, two per pipe. Whom these portraits represent, if indeed anyone, remains a mystery.

Unfortunately, closer scrutiny of the claims surrounding the origins of the organ reveals some problems, most notably that a direct connection between Handel and Isabella Raymond as a pupil remains unproven. Isabella married two years after the composer's death, by which time the organ was already at Belchamp Hall.³ But before we dismiss the romantic tale as the stuff of legend, there is more information surrounding this organ that suggests there is still a story to be told.

In her book on Handel's circle of London acquaintances, Ellen T Harris suggested that Isabella 'might have' studied with Christopher Smith Jr, who later took over the direction of Handel's oratorio performances due to the composer's failing eyesight.⁴ Smith was a pupil of Handel and went on to establish a profitable teaching practice in London using Handel's methods, although there is no record of Isabella among his clients. Handel was said to have given his chamber organ to Smith's father, and Harris surmised that it is '*just possible*' (her italics) that this was subsequently given to Isabella by Smith Jr as a wedding present.⁵ Such a generous gift from a person with whom Isabella had no proven connection seems rather a tenuous idea, however, especially as there are more concrete but no less interesting facts that can account for the organ's presence at Belchamp Walter.

Another note placed inside the case states that the organ was given to Isabella in 1757, and that it was loaned to the local church on the occasion of her marriage in 1760. Isabella's

bridegroom, John Mayne, was the son of John and Elizabeth Mayne of Kensington. Elizabeth (1695-1769) was born Elizabeth Batt, the daughter of Christopher Batt, a wealthy London merchant of Cornish origin. Like many young girls, Elizabeth was taught to play the keyboard as part of her wider education and her book of pieces, carefully inscribed with her name, survives in the British Library as GB-Lbl Add. MS 52363. Copied between 1704 and 1707 in her own hand, it contains a wide variety of works mostly taken from published collections of the time, but some of which are evidently drawn from manuscript sources.⁶ As Mrs Mayne, Elizabeth became a member of the circle of friends who gathered around Handel at his London home in Brook Street. No doubt her ability at the keyboard assisted their friendship and his regard for her was reflected in a bequest of 50 guineas in his will of 1759.⁷ In 1739, Elizabeth Mayne benefitted from the will of her father, Christopher Batt, who left her his house in Kensington, £1000 and his 'house organ and harpsichord made by Henricus von Burgen'.⁸ In her own will of 1769, Elizabeth left a harpsichord to a Miss Fortin, but there is no mention of the organ.⁹ Could it be therefore that Elizabeth Mayne had passed on her father's organ to her son and future daughter-in-law in 1757, and that this is the instrument now at Belchamp Walter Hall? Such a gift may conceivably have become mixed up in the family's lore with Handel's bequest to Elizabeth, resulting in the story as it is currently told. Alice Raymond, Isabella's present-day successor at Belchamp Hall, believes that Isabella may have met her future husband through a connection with Handel's London circle, which is indeed a possibility. At a sale of paintings held in London in March 1750, it was recorded that among the purchasers were Elizabeth Mayne's brother, Christopher Batt (Jr.), Isabella's brother Samuel Raymond, and Handel himself.¹⁰ There is also a tradition at Belchamp Hall that Handel visited the house in 1712, though there is no extant evidence to prove it.¹¹

A happy consequence of this hypothesis, if correct, would be that if Handel knew the Belchamp Walter organ when it was in the possession of his musical friend Elizabeth Mayne, it could rightfully take its place among the small number of surviving instruments that he might genuinely have played. After Isabella's wedding, the organ remained in the church until a new instrument was installed in 1867, after which it was returned to the hall.¹² In 1903 Thomas Elliston removed some minor alterations and additions and the instrument was restored to something close to its original disposition.¹³ The family also retains two early seventeenth-century flutes and some eighteenth-century music manuscripts for strings and organ that are occasionally heard alongside the organ. Two intriguing questions remain. Are the portraits that gaze out from the pipe front members of Christopher Batt's family?¹⁴ And did the young Elizabeth Batt try out the keyboard pieces from her manuscript book on the organ when it was in her father's house? If so, perhaps it is time to reunite the music and the instrument.

References

¹ Described in Wilson, Michael, *The Chamber Organ in Britain, 1600-1830* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 107

² I am grateful to Dominic Gwynn for sharing with me Martin Goetze's 1984 technical notes on the organ.

³ I thank Alice Raymond of Belchamp Hall for further information on the organ.

⁴ Harris, Ellen T., *George Frederic Handel: A Life with Friends* (London: Norton, 2014)

⁵ Ibid. 141

⁶ See Woolley, Andrew, *English Keyboard Sources and their Contexts, c.1660 – 1720*, PhD thesis, Leeds University (2008), 139-42

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⁸ Cornwall CRO, CY/1594. Von Burgen is otherwise unknown as an instrument maker.

⁹ Quoted in Colt Hoare, Richard, *The Modern History of South Wiltshire* (London: J.B. Nichols, 1829), 117

¹⁰ *The General Advertiser* no. 4805 (Friday 16 March 1730). See also Harris, op. cit. 251-2

¹¹ Handel spent most of that year in Hanover, but he was back in London in the autumn.

¹² It appears to have remained in the church until 1870.

¹³ NPOR D02243

¹⁴ Batt married Elizabeth, daughter of Sir John Coryton, 2nd Baronet of Newton Ferrers, in 1692, so one may wonder if members of the two families might be represented here. CY/1593 (Christopher Batt's marriage settlement).

WAKEFIELD: A REDISCOVERED ORGAN BY THOMAS HAXBY?

PAUL TINDALL

In the Cathedral of Wakefield¹ stands an attractive eighteenth century organ case of mysterious origin (see photo below). It might be a surprise to the casual visitor to this relatively modest building that it screens from view most of a five manual organ of 90 speaking stops, much of it enclosed in swell boxes and on the extension principle.²

The records of the church are insufficiently researched, but extracts were printed by

John Walker in his book of 1888.³ He alleges⁴ that an organ was presented to the church by Thomas Wentworth, 1st Earl of Strafford (1593-1641), but there is no corroborative evidence for this, except that a payment was made for the first time 'to ye organist 5d' in 1624.⁵ Although not mentioned in Sisson's earlier book of 1824,⁶ it is not impossible: Wentworth was a rich and powerful man, chief supporter of the King, at least until his own head was cut off in 1641. He was a major landowner in Wakefield, a Yorkshire MP from 1614, and Lord Deputy of Ireland 1632-40. In 1639 his arms were painted on Robert Dallam's organ of 1634 at York Minster, an instrument whose position was discussed by the King himself during a visit the previous year.⁷ Wakefield had grown rich on the woollen trade: Leland in 1538 calls it 'meately large' and that 'al the hole profite of the town stonndith by course drapery.' Daniel Defoe in the 1720s says it was 'clean, large, handsome and very rich,' so it was



Wakefield Cathedral
(Photo: Chris Stafford)

the sort of place which might be expected to have an organ at an early date. However,

it is odd that there are no other payments for organ playing or tuning in the rather detailed accounts relayed by Walker.

The next relevant payment is in 1717, for 5s 'Spent with Mr. Smyth about repairing ye Organ.'⁸ This may be Gerard or Christian Smith. The lack of references to a new organ being built before this (for it would hardly be the pre-Commonwealth one), is easy to explain, since at the time and much later, an organ which was paid for by subscribers or was a gift would leave little or no trace in the church books. A loft was pulled down and 'all the pews made uniform etc' in 1711-12,⁹ so was this the moment when a new loft appeared, perhaps carrying an organ? 'Damage to the organ' is recorded in 1725, and the collection of subscriptions for a new one in 1743, but otherwise the records appear to be silent until the 1770s, except that a certain Denby was paid as organist in 1733.¹⁰ 'William Denby Organist Wakefield' subscribed to Maurice Greene's Forty Select Anthems in 1743, and he was appointed organist of All Saints, Derby the same year.¹¹ A friend of the painter Joseph Wright,¹² he died in 1771 and was succeeded at Derby by his son Charles (1752-1791). He was a well-known musician, and subscribed to several of Charles Avison's publications,¹³ but whether he came from Wakefield originally and his date of birth are unknown. There was certainly a substantial organ in All Saints, Wakefield by 1760, when a 'Sacred Performance of Music' took place, at which the famous John Stanley performed a Grand Concerto.¹⁴

In 1767 appeared the following announcement:

Leeds Intelligencer, Tuesday 18 August 1767

'In the PARISH CHURCH of Wakefield. At the Opening of the ORGAN (Which has been almost totally rebuilt) On Wednesday the 26th instant will be perform'd ... the Oratorio of JUDAS MACABAEUS ... on Thursday 27th MESSIAH ... on Friday 28th JUDAS MACABAEUS again.'

There is no other evidence for the rebuilder (or indeed the builder) of this organ, but according to Walker,¹⁵ in 1771 and 1777 a Mr Harley made repairs: he is otherwise unknown. On 6 August 1767, Thomas Haxby, organ builder of York, wrote a letter to the authorities at Louth, from Wakefield.¹⁶ This coincidence of person, place and time suggests strongly that Harley=Haxby, and it was he who made the 'entirely rebuilt' organ at Wakefield in that year. He had repaired the organ at Leeds in 1760, built a large new one in Scarborough (1762), and was in the middle of constructing his magnum opus for Louth, so was certainly prominent enough to be doing the work. Unfortunately there are no known illustrations of the organs at Scarborough and Louth for comparison, but the extant case at Wakefield (moved to the east end in 1879 by Scott) is decidedly mid-eighteenth century in style, with fine, almost rococo pipe shades.

Further thoughts occurred when a friend sent me a picture of the organ in Wragby church, the parish church of Lord St Oswald of Nostell Priory, with whom it shared



The surviving case at Wragby (Photo: Philippa Hyde)

an organist. Forster & Andrews worked at Nostell Priory in 1851 and 1914 (Elvin's 1976 index), and this is believably the present organ, (with a TC swell). It is said to have stood in the Top Gallery of Nostell Priory, and moved to the church in 1902. The case, however, though it has evidently been altered, has segmental tower caps which look early eighteenth century. Segmental caps are characteristic of the Smith school.

According to the same letter mentioned above, Haxby was building an organ for 'a Gentleman' in

1767,¹⁷ and this might be Sir Rowland Winn of Nostell, who succeeded in 1765. He immediately commissioned a great deal of work from Chippendale, but the only organ related payment is of 18 May 1767: 'Altering and repairing a large organ case £4 19s'.¹⁸ It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that the surviving case at Wragby is part of the old, pre-Haxby organ from Wakefield, certainly worked on, and therefore perhaps built by one of the Smiths.

To stretch surmise even further, there is yet another possibility. William Denby moved from Wakefield to All Saints, Derby as organist in 1743, and an organ was opened there in 1745.¹⁹ There was no organ previously, but the case, sadly destroyed in 1939, was clearly of Smith-type, with four towers and segmental caps. Its origin is entirely mysterious, unless this was in fact the old organ from Wakefield. As seen above, the Wakefield parish was collecting subscriptions for a new organ in 1743. The Derby organ was clearly second hand, not only because of the case design, but

because as early as 1747 it was in need of repair:²⁰

[The Honourable John Stanhope, brother to the Earl of Chesterfield] has been graciously pleased to order the sum of 50 L to be given, towards repairing the Organ lately erected in All Saints Church, being it's said much out of Order.

References

¹ Parish Church of All Saints until 1888. It is still a cathedral, governed by a Dean and Chapter, but the Diocese was subsumed into the new Diocese of Leeds in 2014.

² Anyone tempted to imagine this wouldn't happen now should have a look at the organ of the Katharinenkirche in Brandenburg, built in 2018.

³ John W. Walker, *The History of the Old Parish Church of All Saints, Wakefield*, Wakefield, W.H. Milnes 1888. Walker says that he has 'carefully searched the churchwardens accounts from 1585 downwards.'

⁴ Ibid. 117

⁵ Idem

⁶ Rev. J. L. Sisson, *Historic Sketch of the Parish Church, Wakefield*, Wakefield, Richard Nichols; London, Hurst, Rees, Orme & c. 1824

⁷ Nicholas Thistlethwaite, *The Organs of York Minster 1236-2021*, Oxford, Positif Press 2021, 28, 33

⁸ Walker, op. cit. 118, 172

⁹ Idem 113

¹⁰ Idem 272

¹¹ Rodney Tomkins, *Organs of Derby Cathedral*, Derby, The Friends of Derby Cathedral 1992, 5

¹² Denby held weekly concerts at his house, at which Wright played the flute. See William Bemrose, *The Life and Works of Joseph Wright A.R.A.*, London, Bemrose & Sons and Derby 1885, 9

¹³ Op. 2, 1740 as 'Mr Denby, Wakefield', and Op. 7, 1760 and later as 'Mr Denby, Derby'. He also subscribed to Boyce's Twelve Sonatas for Two Violins (1747) as 'William Denby, Organist at Derby'

¹⁴ *Leeds Intelligencer*, 10 June 1760. Oddly, the concert was 'for the Benefit of Mr Denby, Organist', who had left for Derby 17 years previously. Robert Jobson became organist at Wakefield in 1761, according to the *York Courant* of 11 August.

¹⁵ Op. cit. 118

¹⁶ David Haxby and John Malden, 'Thomas Haxby of York (1729-1796) an extraordinary musician and musical instrument maker,' *JB IOS* 8 (1983), 64

¹⁷ Ibid, 64

¹⁸ Lindsay Boynton and Nicholas Goodison, 'Thomas Chippendale at Nostell Priory,' *Furniture History* IV (1968), 42

¹⁹ *Derby Mercury*, 3-10 May 1745

²⁰ *Derby Mercury*, Wednesday 4 March - 11 March 1747

REVIEWS

Alessandro Scarlatti: 15 Fugues for Keyboard edited by Francesco Tasini.
Ut Orpheus HS282 available through Universal Edition £25.50

To keyboard players Alessandro Scarlatti is best known today for his mercurial toccatas, many of which contain *moto perpetuo* fugues, but in volume VI of his complete keyboard works we find a large collection of instructions for beginners in harmony in a manuscript in the British Library and also a set of 15 two voice fugues, taken from a manuscript now in the library of the Conservatorio di Musica S. Pietro a Majella, Naples, the heading of which tells us that they were copied with various annotations by Nicola Sala, an eminent teacher of and writer on contrapuntal studies during the mid to late eighteenth century, who used some of the subjects for his own versions in his *Regole del contrappunto pratico*.

In the volume under review, following Scarlatti's own very loose approach to fugal writing regarding voices appearing and disappearing haphazardly and breaking certain rules such as non-consecutives, Tasini has arranged these Fugues in ascending order by key from D minor to C major, concluding with D major. Eight are in minor keys, with key signatures not exceeding two flats (C minor) and seven in major keys not exceeding two sharps (D major). Ten are written in the 'stile osservato', five in the innovative 'instrumental' style. Ten are in cut C time, with numbers III and VII in 3/8 and numbers V, IX and XIII in 3/4; length varies from 44 to 100 double bars in cut C and 65 to 147 bars in the triple time fugues. Some subjects contain jagged, chromatic intervals, with further spicy dissonances being features of the editor's workings. Rarely in the cut C fugues does movement exceed quavers, although shorter note values appear more frequently in the other metres. Many of the pieces contain indications of the contrapuntal device used on its appearance.

Tasini has produced some attractive pieces in their own right that generally lie comfortably beneath the hands but some have occasional stretches of a tenth between voices, which will need to be considered carefully by those with small hands, and number III has several passages with left hand octaves in quavers as well as indications for held notes for the pedals. These workings will be very helpful and full of hints to those players feeling minded to tackle the many sets of partimenti left by Italian composers in particular. The introduction gives valuable information about the classification of the fugues according to the terminology in use during the eighteenth century and their didactic importance, as well as the *modus operandi* of the editor in providing a fully worked out piece in four voices, and should be read and assimilated carefully. The modern aspect of this collection is evaluated with reference to Gasparini's treatise on harmony of 1708.

The edition can certainly be used as a stand-alone volume, but a copy of volume VI, mentioned above, in which the original two-voice pieces are printed, will highlight the changes made not only by Tasini to the original treble and bass as the Fugue progresses, but also those made by Sala in his own working of the first Fugue, a copy of which is included in the volume under review. It is clearly printed with five systems to a page but a page turner will be required for performance. These pieces provide an interesting contrast to the composer's highly virtuosic works, and require a rather different, more cerebral approach to performance.

Miroslav Kabeláč; Four Preludes for organ, op. 48

Bärenreiter H8022

ISMN: 9790260108929 £9.50

The conductor Jakub Hrůša has described Miroslav Kabeláč (1908-1979) as 'the best composer you've never heard of', and one that had been 'born into the wrong time'. His life was spent entirely in Prague, where, following a period studying at the city's conservatoire, he worked for Prague Radio from 1934 to 1954, and taught at the conservatoire from 1957 to 1968. A staunch opponent of communism, after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 he was effectively silenced in his own country, though his music did continue to receive performances abroad.

Kabeláč is best-known today for a series of increasingly experimental and bold works composed in the late 1950s and 1960s, both large-scale, such as the magnificent orchestral *passacaglia* *Mystery of Time* op. 32, as well as more intimate works including the strange and beautiful *Eight Inventions* op. 45 for percussion ensemble. Composed in 1964 and included in the Prague Spring International Organ Competition of 1966, these *Four Preludes* op. 48 should be included amongst these works. Kabeláč wrote for the organ throughout his career, mainly exploiting the power and drama of the instrument in works such as the two solo *Fantasies* op. 32 or the third and eighth *Symphonies*: here though, the general mood is intimate and quiet.

The Preludes are particularly noteworthy as being some of the earliest examples of Kabeláč's proportional notation, arising from his desire to express rhythmic and metrical relationships with the greatest possible clarity. This volume, part of a collected critical edition of the composer's works, includes a restored version of the original printed proportional notation alongside the editor's transcription into conventional notation, as well as some facsimile plates of Kabeláč's manuscript (which demonstrate some beautiful calligraphy). Comparing these versions is fascinating, though the proportional notation seems not so radical by modern standards, and perhaps a little clumsy and unnecessary too. Whatever the merits of his system, Kabeláč used it almost exclusively from that point onwards for the rest of his composing career.

These are short works, little more than two minutes each: compressed, dense, richly dark and chromatic. They deserve close and repeated scrutiny and will need an inspired imagination to register with enough colour to lift the music from the page: no registration marks are included, only scant dynamic instructions. A sound technique is necessary for the more technical passages, and though the first prelude is the most accessible (and deeply beautiful), the hand positions of some of the chords are awkward in places. Some of the textures, such as passages of runs doubled in octaves, feel more pianistic, but again with close study and some imagination can be very effective and exciting. This is deeply intriguing and unusual music by a hidden great of the twentieth century, of particular interest to students of Czech and central European music.

Huw Morgan

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