

## From EDOA Newsletter June 2006

*As reported in the last newsletter, a Mozart Fantasia was included in the recital by Cathy Lamb after the A.G.M.*

*The performing edition of the piece was produced by Cathy herself (after a great deal of research), and so we asked her to shed a little light on how she went about it. Here is her response:*

### **Mozart's Fantasia in F minor K608**

After I played my arrangement of Mozart's Fantasia in F Minor at the EDOA AGM, Paul Minchinton asked me to put together an article on how and why I went about doing this.

The finals performance paper at Cambridge is not simply about playing; I had to perform a piece on which I had written a 3000-word essay. The essay had to have a direct impact on the way in which we played in our finals recital. Many of the organists play and write about Liszt's B.A.C.H. I decided to do the Mozart.

Many transcriptions of the work turn it into something more appropriate for the modern-day organ (as it had originally been written for mechanical clock) and probably into a version that Mozart himself would prefer (he detested the 'shrill little pipes' of the mechanical organ), a loud and austere work.

However, many arrangements, as I put in my essay, 'ignore much of the original choral spacing and articulation and that where Mozart's intentions seem unclear some editors re-rewrite whole passages of the left hand' and I thought it might be interesting to see if I could get close to how it may have originally sounded. Sadly there is no surviving autograph of the score but the Neue Mozart-Ausgabe does use the two most important manuscript copies.

I decided to attempt to create an edition that is extremely close to the original scoring, with only one or two areas changed due to practical implications. I focused on many aspects of performance in my essay such as national ambiguity, articulation, ornamentation, registration and tempo.

In brief I created my edition by using most of the original notation. For example, in the opening passages, many editions displace pedal notes down an octave to add gravitas and yet simplify many of the original chords.

As they are in fact playable I have returned the octaves to their original pitch and left all the notes in the chords.

Three other areas that I found fascinating were articulation, tempo and ornamentation and I had a great time visiting the British Library to listen to a wide range of recordings of the piece. I kept tables of different performers' articulation (the fugue subject caused the greatest variety), of metronome markings of the different sections, timings of the same sections and also whether performers ornamented above and below the note.

In Mozart there is huge dispute as to whether to use 'main-note' or 'appoggiatura' trills and I found it fascinating to read Frederick Neumann's 'Ornamentation and Improvisation in Mozart', which basically proves that one can do either, but it just depends on the individual case. I found that most recordings, however, stuck to main-note trills, and this generally provides the most comfortable solution.

Registration is a very complex issue with this piece but I do believe that many organists today over complicate the registration and make the piece thick and heavy, which just would not have been a resource of the mechanical clock.

I therefore chose to avoid 16 foot pitch, only introducing this for the final pedal fugue entry to add to the sense of climax.

I have to admit, that although the edition I have produced is theoretically playable, I do curse myself for having made it so complicated; I have never yet given it the performance it deserves. However, it was a fun and interesting project and something I really enjoyed getting my teeth into!

*Cathy Lamb*

### **The Organ at Stevenage St.George** *(and the effect of the Laws of Physics)*

The RSCM Regional Evensong held during March at the church of St.Andrew and St.George in Stevenage attracted singers from a wide area and in large numbers – there were around a dozen each of tenors and basses, and just over 70 singers all told, all conducted by Andrew Parnell with his usual good humour and expertise, and accompanied at the organ by Andy Benoy. Had the same event been held some years ago, however, Andy's job would have been rather harder, for reasons explained below.

According to the National Pipe Organ Register (NPOR), the present organ was assembled in 1989 by Peter Wood of Thaxted, Essex, using parts from two instruments - an 1897 Hope-Jones and a Hill from 1905. The job must have been quite challenging as there is not much space in its location at the east end of the south aisle for pipework and casing, but the instrument speaks out well and makes its presence felt right down to the far end of the building.

The NPOR entry describes the console as "ex-Miller electronic from previous pipeless organ" - which is *nearly* right. The console was indeed made by Miller, the usual comfortable stop-tab console, now placed just to the west of the pipework. However, there was an intermediate stage, described below, between the original "pure" Miller instrument and its present configuration.

The church was built in the era when it was thought that energy was going to be

more or less free. The outcome is that the building is thermally and acoustically transparent. On the one hand this means that the electric under-floor heating has to work hard, and on the other speech and music inside must contend with the noise of traffic (and low-flying airliners – the church is under the flight-path into Luton airport) from outside. The main structure is of gracefully-curving concrete beams which allow the nave and chancel areas to be free of pillars, also affording a clear view of the abstract-pattern stained glass window at the East end (designed to mask the view of the tower block just beyond it). The church is effectively at first-floor level; the crypt underneath houses the choir vestry, a practice room and the Stevenage Museum.

The original Miller organ was installed with multiple loudspeakers at the east end (above and to each side of the altar), and in a chamber part-way down the south aisle (where some of the pipework is now). The majority of the electronic equipment (including rows and rows of valve generators) was housed in a 6ft high cabinet in the crypt. It probably dated from the mid-nineteen-sixties, and was used in its original form for about 15 years, before the next attempt was made to improve the situation.

The next, intermediate, stage saw a combination of pipework and electronics brought into play. If memory serves, some or all of this hybrid was obtained through the firm of Woods of Huddersfield. The pipework was an impressive-looking extended rank of Open Diapason pipes (running from 8ft up to at least 2ft) housed in a free-standing oak case positioned in the nave, just by the main stairs down to the crypt. The lower part of the case housed not only the blower and bellows for the pipes, but also the generators and amplifiers of an Ahlborn electronic organ, imported from Germany. The Miller console was adapted for its new role and positioned near by. The loudspeaker systems for the Miller were re-used for the Ahlborn and were never very satisfactory, but the structure and layout of the building left very little room for improvement (though on one memorable occasion just a small increase in volume on one amplifier channel brought the museum staff rushing out to say they thought the ceiling was about to collapse on them – obviously a resonance somewhere, then!)

It will be remembered that mention was made above of the church heating having to work hard for congregational comfort. However, it was never switched on too soon before the start of a service – the church could not afford to heat half of Stevenage! Thus it was that the ambient temperature would rise steadily during a service – especially during winter – and we all know that this of course also changes the speed of sound in air, and therefore the effective pitch of the pipework. To give it its due, the pipework stayed in tune – with itself – very well. However, the electronic generators did not care about the speed of sound in air and were therefore less affected by temperature. (They were of the type with one high-frequency master generator from which all the other pitches were derived.) The work-round adopted by the supplier was to fit a rotary pitch control to the console, under one end of the Great manual, which allowed the pitch of the

electronic master generator to be varied. This allowed the electronics to be set to match the pipework at the beginning of a service (note that this is not something one can do discreetly when the pipe you are tuning against is an Open Diapason speaking down the building). Even so, temperature changes during services meant that it was sometimes necessary to re-tune before the final voluntary, or to be creative in one's registration. When the movements in pitch for a given temperature change were measured, it turned out that the pipework changed three times as much as the electronics – and in the opposite direction!

The Miller generator cabinet, incidentally, stayed in its chamber in the crypt (though disconnected) until it was sold in 1982 to a gentleman from Scarborough – where it may well be still to this day.

Looking at the NPOR entry for the present instrument, it seems likely that at least some of Wood's Diapason pipes were re-used.

*PRM*