

**EDOA Visit to Methuen Park,
Monday 29th April 2013**

EDOA members gathered at the former home in Muswell Hill of Felix Aprahamian on Monday evening, April 29th. The house is now under the care of The Arabesque Trust for blind organists. David Aprahamian Liddle welcomed people and spoke about both chamber organs in turn: one built by Courcelle in approximately 1860, and the other rebuilt by Gonzalez for André Marchal in 1935. Richard Moore, a lodger in the house, is Organ Scholar at both St Michael Cornhill and St Paul's Cathedral.

After introducing Richard, David explained that they had had no chance at all to rehearse together. The two then performed Handel's Organ Concerto Op.4 No.1 in B flat, David on the Courcelle with Richard acting as orchestra on the Bechstein upright piano. The performance went with a swing, and the co-ordination between the two players was remarkable. The dance-like qualities of this work were well presented.

David next played Bach's Chorale Prelude on *Allein Gott* BWV 663, performed with his usual sensitivity. Richard then played Frescobaldi's Toccata No. 6 from Book 2. His phrasing and ornamentation were elegant. The Shepherd brothers have recently added a pedal chest with 16 ft Bourdon extended up to 8 and 4, which were heard to great effect, and enhance the Courcelle instrument wonderfully. A top F had also been added to the pedalboard, and a new brass plaque commemorates this recent work.

Seated at the Gonzalez, David outlined how he has become very familiar with the eight Gregorian Psalm Tones. A printed handout, taken from 'Briggs and Frere', illustrated the themes of his subject. He explained that he had composed a Suite of eight short pieces, originally to help him memorise these Tones and all their varied Endings. However, the *Mnemonic Suite* Op. 21 had become a serious, complex and emotionally kaleidoscopic piece, taking its Latin titles from mediaeval descriptions of the eight tones. David played three movements: 'Mysticus', a palindrome; 'Tristis', a more improvisatory piece; and 'Laetus', a mini-toccata.

After this, the floor was thrown open, people moved around, and refreshments were served in the kitchen. Peter St John Stokes improvised an exquisite piece on the Tonus Peregrinus; Robert Evans extemporised in an effortless Warlock / Whitlock style; and Stephen Jasper played Howells's *Ralph's Pavan*, an arrangement of a piece originally for clavichord.

Les Ames, dedicatee of the *Mnemonic Suite*, helped tirelessly behind the scenes to make the evening go smoothly. David gives the first two performances of his Suite at St Michael Cornhill on September 2nd and St Benet Fink on September 22nd.

As on previous EDOA visits, this evening was a great success. One always comes away from Methuen Park having learned something about organ playing and repertoire.

*Stephen Jasper
assisted by David Aprahamian Liddle*