

**President's Message
June 2014**

The *Pull Out ALL The Stops* festival is almost over, but the Southbank organ celebrations continue apace. On Saturday 2nd August there is an all day symposium in collaboration with the RCO and BIOS to examine “the design, craftsmanship and music which have made the Royal Festival Hall organ such a special feature of musical life since 1954”. In the autumn some free lunch-time recitals are promised and the first evening concert of the International Organ Series 2014/15 will be given on Monday 29th September by Jennifer Bate, whom we are proud to name as an honorary member of the EDOA.

Reviews of the Gala Launch Concert were rather mixed, the inclusion of music by Peter Maxwell Davies and the late John Tavener coming in for particular criticism. The celebrity solo recitals proved far more satisfying. Of particular interest was Olivier Latty's, which concluded with a spectacular improvisation on the very same theme presented to André Marchal sixty years earlier at the organ's opening. On that occasion, the theme, written by George Dyson, was handed in a sealed envelope to Ralph Downes, who played it over three times to the blind organist. Marchal's historic improvisation can easily be found and enjoyed on YouTube.

Improvisation was the subject of our most recent event, when Dr Peter St John Stokes gave a masterly and well illustrated account of a range of styles and best practices. We are most grateful to Peter for sharing his skills in this area and showing that one does not have to be a Marchal or a Latty to produce musical and effective results.

Latty's brilliance in improvising maintains the traditions of his legendary predecessors at Notre-Dame de Paris, notably the amazing Pierre Cochereau, *organiste titulaire* from 1955 until his untimely death in 1984, and of course the great Louis Vierne, who presided from 1900 until 1937. But what of him who came between these two giants, namely the virtually unknown Léonce de Saint-Martin? If you read *Organists' Review* (and if not, why not?!) you may have seen the first of two articles by Dr Anthony Hammond about Saint-Martin, entitled 'A forgotten organist and the scandalous Notre-Dame succession of 1937' – and gripping stuff it is indeed! As well as eagerly awaiting part two, I am also looking forward to hearing Dr Hammond's forthcoming recording of Saint-Martin's unjustifiably neglected organ music.

The same, current OR is also worth having for a most readable account of the RFH organ by its curator, William McVicker, and interestingly the first name he mentions regarding investigations into the principles of good organ building is Albert Schweitzer. As well as the specification, we are treated to a superb double-spread photograph. Incidentally, if the cost or storage of OR are deciding factors for you, it is now available on line at less than half price: <http://organistsreview.com/subscribe/>

This newsletter and www.edoa.org.uk will continue to keep you faithfully informed of all you need to know as EDOA members, including the regular listing of a vast wealth of concert and recital opportunities. With all this to enjoy, my best wishes to you all for a relaxing and healthy summer.

Terence Atkins