

Past Events

EDOA visit to St George's Hanover Square

Saturday 11th April 2015

In April the EDOA visited St George's, Hanover Square, for a workshop with Assistant Organist and Director of Music Robin Walker, on the 2012 Richards Fowkes & Co organ. We had asked to focus on phrasing and articulation in North German Baroque, and Robin began with a short demonstration of what the organ could do in this regard, with Sweelinck *Balletto del granduca*, Walther *Variations on Jesu Meine Freude*, JS Bach *O Mensch Bewein*, and finally Buxtehude *Praeludium in D major BuxWV 139*.

O Mensch Bewein showed off the Sesquialtera, accompanied just with the Swell 8' Diapason and Gamba. The swell here is right at the front of the organ case, said Robin, and has a big sound not apparent at the console. Pedal registration was a simple 16' Violone with an 8' Flute "A lovely gritty sound".

Then it was our turn to play. There had been some nerves earlier on about the straight pedalboard which Robin dismissed with "They are all where you think they are!" – and he was right. It was only when you stopped to think about it that things went wrong.



Ashley Wagner being instructed by Robin Walker

Photo by Morwenna Brett

"Welcome to a real organ!" he added, as we sat down. "You are not living in a binary world, with just on/off switches for keys, anymore. Think of the keys as a big lever, which you need to control all the way through the key stroke." All of us struggled a bit with this, as old habits die hard, and it took a lot of listening to begin to understand and control the differences in touch. Being in charge of the key at all times, and not letting it just do its own thing, was quite a challenge.

Robin's general advice on all the pieces we brought was to keep the tactus, particularly in fugue. Fugue is ensemble music, he said, several voices of course, all inter-related. As organists, we don't have to refer to anyone else, so this can make us have bad habits of timing

that an ensemble wouldn't tolerate. Borrowing time here and there messes it up for everyone else. Imagine you have people dancing to your music – you can't stop, or jerk the music, otherwise they will literally fall over.

Certainly we found that not making tiny gaps between groups (particularly, for example, in the Dorian) felt quite uncomfortable at first. To make an accent, use articulation – this is about how you bring the key up, as well as put it down, said Robin. But don't hold up the barlines. Playing with a metronome will tell you if you are.

Naturally we all wanted to have a quiet hour or so on our own with this splendid instrument to really practise all this, but wedding guests had started arriving for the afternoon. So we thanked Robin and found somewhere for lunch, when there was much discussion about where we could find a modern mechanical action organ in Barnet or Enfield to continue the good work.

Our thanks to Robin, Simon Williams, and Stephen Wikner, Parish Administrator at St George's, for making us so welcome. We hope to return for a further event in the future.

Morwenna Brett

* * * * *

West London Visit:

St Michael and All Angels, Bedford Park and St John the Baptist, Holland Road

Saturday 9th May 2015



Organ at St Michael & All Angels, Bedford Park

Photo by Peter Smith

On Saturday 9th May some seven EDOA members travelled to west London to experience two splendid organs. The first was the organ at St Michael and All Angels, Bedford Park, installed by La Manufacture d'Orgues St Martin in 2013. Jonathan Dods who is the organist there gave a brief demonstration of the organ, playing some Demessieux variations, and then there was time for members to play. The organ has suspended mechanical key actions and dual mechanical & electric stop actions. More details can be found at <http://www.npor.org.uk/NPORView.html?RI=K01266>.

After a convivial lunch at the nearby Côte restaurant the party took the bus to St John the Baptist, Holland Road. The organ here was originally built as a 32 stop instrument by local builder August Gern in 1896, and was rebuilt and enlarged by Henry Willis III in 1928.



David Patrick playing the organ at
St John the Baptist, Holland Road

Photo by Peter Smith

The action is now in a poor state with several notes not speaking, but nonetheless it can still produce a glorious sound.

Further information can be found at <http://www.npor.org.uk/NPORView.html?RI=N00904>. Paul Joslin the organist gave a short talk on the history of the church and its organ, as well as providing tea and biscuits, and again members had the opportunity to play. Thanks are due to Jonathan Dods and Paul Joslin for their warm welcome and enabling members to enjoy a splendid day.