

President's Message December 2017

I trust that everyone has the AGM clearly noted, since we have been privileged to secure as the recitalist Andrew Parnell, who was our EDOA president from 1994 to 2007. We shall meet on Saturday, 17th February at the church of St Francis of Assisi, Welwyn Garden City and follow our usual timings of AGM at 5:00, recital at 6:00 and meal at 7:00. Full details, including booking for the meal, are found in this newsletter and on our website. Not for the first time, I make an appeal for members to consider joining the committee, and do please come armed with ideas for future events and activities.

Two of our younger members are to be congratulated for each giving a superb recital at a prestigious venue in the City of London last month, namely Ashley Wagner at St Michael's, Cornhill and Damon Ying at St Sepulchre-without-Newgate, the National Musicians' Church (where incidentally Damon had succeeded Ashley as organ scholar). Both programmes concluded with a complete French organ symphony (Vierne 3 and Widor 5, respectively) and each included a spectacularly challenging and substantial rarity. Ashley's was Liszt's *St Francis of Paola walking on the waves* in the virtuosic arrangement by Reger, whilst Damon's was his own transcription of the first movement of Tchaikovsky's *Manfred* Symphony. If your listening experience of the orchestral repertoire needs refreshing – which for many of us organ recital habitués is highly likely – the *Manfred* could be a good starting point.

Standards of organ teaching and student attainment are seemingly higher than ever they were in this country, thanks to the excellent work of the conservatoires, the St Giles Organ School, the RCO Academy, Oundle for Organists... the list is far from exhaustive! It is therefore timely that the RCO and the IAO have jointly launched a new organ playing competition for those aged 18 to 26 to take place during the IAO summer Organ Festival. The first competition will therefore be held in Peterborough Cathedral in early August 2018, with six performers selected from submitted recordings.

Those of us who enjoyed Philip Norman's first-rate illustrated lecture on 'Music and the Reformation' will be pleased to know that he is one of the speakers at the Bloomsbury Organ Day on Saturday 27th January. Under the intriguing title 'Let the Organ Thunder???' he will cover 'Liturgical organ playing in the UK – what's gone wrong?' It is but one session in an action-packed day which will begin with a masterclass at 12:30 and end with a celebrity recital by Martin Baker at 6:00. Everything is free apart from the "legendary" buffet and the final recital. Definitely another date for your diaries, along with our own AGM three weeks later! Meanwhile, best wishes for a well-earned rest after a joyous Christmas.

Terence Atkins