

President's Message June 2019

Notre-Dame! What a relief that the damage has not been as extensive as had at first been feared, but how long it will be before everything is fully restored and the indescribably magnificent Cavaillé-Coll is playable again is anybody's guess. Along with the whole organ world, our hearts go out to Vincent Dubois, Olivier Latry and Philip Lefebvre and all of the musicians of the cathedral. The fire must surely be the most dramatic event to have occurred there since Louis Vierne famously expired at the console in mid-recital in 1937. Anyone privileged to have been admitted to the organ loft at Notre-Dame (in my case to witness, spellbound, as Latry thundered away), will have seen Vierne's organ console and bench preserved nearby and one earnestly hopes that these are among the treasures to have survived.

A fortnight after the fire, our honorary member David Aprahamian Liddle was interviewed for the BBC R4 "In Touch" programme. To quote from David, "They are interested in my experience of playing the Notre-Dame organ, and in its connection with several blind players." In the background to the interview can be heard a piece from David's Notre-Dame recital of May 2002. Do listen on: <https://youtu.be/BYz76VYycNM> Our congratulations to David.

Curiously, while the fire was beginning to take hold but was barely a news item, I happened to be in Foyle's purchasing the latest recording of Olivier Latry playing at Notre-Dame! Entitled "Bach to the Future" (yes, English, even when in French, German and, presumably, Japanese), it is a most thought-provoking album and deliberately so. One is treated to the full range of sounds from the magnificent instrument, including the chimes on the recently installed 'floating' division. It is arguably worth buying the CD for the accompanying booklet alone, with its splendid photos of the console and pipework and the notes in the form of an in-depth interview with Latry. One surprise (of many) is his interpretation of *Erbarm' dich mein* (BWV 721), which is drawn out to an astonishing six-and-a-half minutes, though we are told why. I have been interested to learn that the piece is now believed to be taken from one of the only two surviving cantatas by the Estonian composer Ludwig Busbetzky, a student of Buxtehude in the days before Bach's famous pilgrimage.

You may recall reference in my previous message to the late Jean Guillou's remarkable piece *La Révolte des Orgues*, for one large organ, eight positives, percussion and conductor. It is good that plans are now in hand (and afoot!) for a performance at Westminster Cathedral on Wednesday 20th November. What a unique and exciting occasion that is likely to be! All details in due course via the RCO's packed and informative monthly e-Diary.

Robert Evans is thanked for his hard work in organising our Members' Recital at St Peter's, Edmonton, a most satisfying occasion at a welcoming and supportive venue. 'Welcoming' could also be applied to the recent "At home", but it would be an understatement, and there is every reason to be deeply grateful to Ted Sharp for the enjoyable afternoon spent playing his Hauptwerk organ. Once again, our warm thanks to Ted. Both events are reviewed in this newsletter.

As an Association we are looking forward to the imminent completion of the rebuild of the organ in Waltham Abbey and we're proud that our member Philip Shrimpton is directly involved through working for Mander Organs. Look out for news of the opening recital and for what is being planned for an EDOA visit. Also close to home, the delayed Organ

Spectacular of the refurbished instrument of St Mary Magdalene, Enfield, is now announced for Saturday 20th July, 6:00 pm – another date to look forward to. Meanwhile, in St Albans, the IOF...of course!

Terence Atkins