

President's Message March 2020

We owe an incalculable debt of gratitude to Eric Pask, for it was his foresight and inspiration that led to the very existence of the EDOA. An account of Eric's golden jubilee talk on the founding and early history of our association can be found in the September 2013 newsletter. Much else of tremendous interest was revealed to the vast congregation at Eric's funeral. The music included two of the finest hymn tunes of recent times (Coe Fen and Corvedale), *How lovely are Thy dwellings fair* (Brahms), the final chorale from Bach's *St John Passion* and, perhaps most moving of all, the Walmisley *Nunc Dimittis in D minor*, all beautifully sung by the large choir of St Nicholas, Harpenden; and it was also good that Roger Carter played beforehand, including Parry's Prelude on *Eventide*. We continue to hold Eric's sons and daughter and their families in our thoughts.

For the AGM at Waltham Abbey numbers were encouraging – and what fun it was to watch *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* to Jonathan Lilley's brilliant improvisation, with its many entertaining musical asides, some for the audience at large and others inserted solely for us organists! I am so glad we accepted Jonathan's generous invitation to be part of this most enjoyable occasion and we thank him and everyone at Waltham Abbey for hosting us. We're also grateful that Jonathan recommended The Gatehouse for our convivial meal afterwards. EDOA members will not need much persuading to return to Waltham Abbey for future organ events and we are looking forward to our own members' recital taking place there next year.

Last year's EDOA events once again offered plenty of variety: the members' recital (St Peter's, Edmonton), an organ visit (both Ponsbourne and Northaw), a talk by Philip Norman (Liturgical Organ Playing from 1600 to 2000). Always popular are our 'At Homes'. I was sorry that Ted Sharp was not well enough to attend the AGM to be thanked again in person for welcoming us to play his Hauptwerk organ. More recently, Ruth Lewis displayed her characteristic generosity when several of us responded to her invitation to take along "a recording of something, but as re-written or re-imagined by another composer". Thank you, Ruth, for a truly delightful evening!

Sarah MacDonald's article in *OR*, 'Very few female composers...' is a revelation of the male-dominated world of music composition and publishing. Last year's Cambridge Female Composers Festival was clearly a success and a positive outcome is Stainer and Bell's *Anthology of Sacred Music by Women Composers* (<https://www.multitudeofvoyses.co.uk/>). A recent R3 Composer of the Week featured the long and unjustly neglected Florence Price's glorious music, not least her *Toccato* [sic] for organ. The newly launched St Michael's, Cornhill CD, 'Cornhill Visions', of course has Darke, RVW, et al., but also proves that soprano choir member Rhiannon Randle is a young composer of great promise. At a more approachable level, Amy Beach's *Peace I leave with you* makes an ideal unaccompanied introit or short anthem.

Returning briefly to a serious point raised at the AGM, Robin Coxon made it quite clear that he cannot continue for ever as treasurer, giving us due warning of two years to find a successor. Any suggestions or offers, please, as soon as possible! Our deepest gratitude once again goes not only to Robin for all he does, but also to Michael Hennin as secretary, Rosemary Knight as editor and webmaster, and to all of the committee for their hard work: Roger Carter, Robert Evans, Ruth Lewis and Peter Smith.

Postscript: And now our lives have suddenly changed beyond belief! I share the pain of all of you who are deprived of choir practices, church services, organ recitals, concerts, teaching, eagerly awaited special occasions and a host of other things which mean so much to us all in a variety of ways. My heart also goes out to those dedicated youngsters (including our student members) whose examination aspirations have been thwarted. We take consolation in knowing that we all share the frustrations and uncertainties and will find ways of supporting each other. Meanwhile, there is a vast amount of music to enjoy on the internet and thanks are due to those organists and choir directors who are regularly sharing performances; and no doubt more innovating experiences will emerge in due course.

How lucky that the reopening of the 'new' organ in St Mary's, Potters Bar, with Paul Hale in fine form, was accomplished just in time! On your behalf I accepted Dave Miller's invitation for the EDOA to visit and I'm sure it will prove ideal for a future members' recital and more. A planned masterclass on Bach, with Richard Brasier at St Saviour's, St Albans, is of course on hold, another hope to cling on to for our longed-for return to normal life.

Terence Atkins

* * * * *