

## President's Message September 2020

It was with great sadness that we learnt of the death of our distinguished Honorary Member Jennifer Bate, following a long illness. Jennifer's obituary from *The Times* has been reprinted in this newsletter. Many of us will have fond memories of her enlightened and revealing presentation a few years ago on performing Messiaen and several EDOA members were part of the enthusiastic audience which greeted her last recital at the Royal Festival Hall. A significant part of her legacy is the annual Jennifer Bate Organ Academy, set up to encourage young female organists; this year's would have been the 16<sup>th</sup>. In addition to her landmark Messiaen recordings and the others named in the obituary, I would also commend her two CDs of organ music by Samuel Wesley and of the Wesleys and their contemporaries, played mostly on the historic instrument at St James's, Bermondsey, the venue of a highly satisfying EDOA visit some years ago.

Jennifer had generously offered a celebrity recital for the Society of Women Organists, but had had to withdraw. In her place, for a later date, was booked Jane Parker-Smith; but alas, we are now mourning another untimely demise. What a shock to the organ world! Jane died in hospital on her 70<sup>th</sup> birthday – but she never seemed that old! She was variously labelled “The Martha Argerich of the organ” and “The Brigitte Bardot of the Organ World”, and it was no surprise to read “she swore like a trooper, drank like a fish, smoked like a chimney and played the organ like a woman possessed...”. Of course there are obituaries to be found, but I would especially urge you to search out ([www.rhinegold.co.uk](http://www.rhinegold.co.uk)) the interview featuring Jane in the Jan/Feb 2003 issue of *Choir & Organ*, a revelation! Well-worth exploring are her three CDs of Romantic and Virtuoso Works for Organ, the first item being the Lanquetuit Toccata, which epitomises the sheer brilliance that shone through in all her playing.

Another shock has been the unexpected closure of Mander Organs, one of our most significant organ firms, renowned for their work in such prestigious venues as the Royal Albert Hall, St Paul's Cathedral, St John's College, Cambridge and not least Waltham Abbey, where we enjoyed our very last event. Thankfully, welcome news has just come through that the Canterbury firm of F. H. Browne (Organ Builders) Ltd has acquired the trading name and intellectual property rights, so the name Mander Organs will live on. What a relief!

I'm sure none of us have been short of things to do during the last few strange and frustrating months. In my case, playing through the famous '48' at a rate of two per week has proved immensely satisfying. This is being written in the same week of embarking (no pun intended!) on the final pair of preludes and fugues (B major and B minor of book two), making this the 24<sup>th</sup> full week since 'lockdown'. Sadly the pandemic is still a reality, but at least church services have started again, live organ music is being heard and partial choirs are singing once more. But what will congregations make of harvest festivals without being allowed to sing 'We plough the fields' and the like? – and what if there is no change by Christmas?!

Peter Smith deserves our heartiest congratulations for his prizewinning 'A Solemn Sarabande for these Distracted Times'. It is dedicated to Robert Evans. A performance on the organ of St Michael & All Angels, Bedford Park by Peter's former student, Jonathan Dods, can currently be accessed through the EDOA website <https://edoa.org.uk/> and illustrates what a lovely piece it is. The competition 'Organ Music for Quiet Moments' attracted many entries and was organised by Tim Knight Music, from whom copies can easily be obtained.

Another member to be congratulated is Ben Markovic, for entering the Bury St Edmunds Virtual Piano Competition and being awarded a joint Second and Highly Commended – well done! Ben is now off to take up his organ scholarship at Queens’ College, Cambridge, and he goes with our very best wishes. We also wish Godspeed to Elliot Clark, who is venturing north to read Law at Aberdeen University.

*Terence Atkins*

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