

Hertfordshire young organists project (YO!)

Introduction

In 2018, John who was our resident organist at St Mary's Essendon unexpectedly died leaving us with a vacancy. Our Rector was already swamped with work and immediately placed expensive advertising a number of times, with no result.

During that time, we learned that there were only 140 church organists in the whole UK without a resident position so the chances of finding someone to replace John was going to be hard road.

As a result, we needed a way to ensure that all our services, weddings, funerals and baptisms were covered and we came up with the idea to contact schools to find one with a student under organ tuition to play for us.

We were extremely lucky in finding two such pupils, one 14, one 15 who have been with us now for 3 years during which time, both have grown in confidence and ability, regularly covering our needs as well as playing for the other 4 churches in our group. Apart from vastly increasing their skills and personality, they have earned from the fees we have paid them and parents have been very grateful for the chance the experience has given them, often coming to church with them, one even joining our choir.

The older student is off to University shortly which will leave us a vacancy, but now we want to expand the scheme, ultimately to help young people all over Hertfordshire.

How the scheme works

YO! is looking for experienced organists with access to a church organ, willing to train Grade 6+ piano students and above to convert to playing the organ. It is hoped that within a few months, we will hold a register of available organ teachers. Your Registration will be deemed as acceptance of our holding your details under GDPR rules for the purpose solely of introducing pupils who apply to us. Your details will only be given to parents who enquire.

Starting in January 2022, YO! will be recruiting suitable young people from schools in districts where teachers are based and will be able to introduce teachers and pupils to each other to start the process off.

As this scheme is starting from scratch, YO! will be listing towns and villages within local areas first, and then gradually expanding the scheme throughout Hertfordshire if it proves popular.

Teachers will decide for themselves if they wish to charge for their services and make their own arrangements with each student we introduce. YO! will not be charging for their introductions but we do want to introduce a voucher system providing the first assessment/lesson without charge. This is to incentivise response as well as provide a definitive way of us knowing take up of the scheme.

Initial areas

We are currently looking for organ teachers in Welwyn Garden City, Hatfield, Hertford, Ware, Hoddesdon, Broxbourne and Wormley, and any towns or villages around that general area. However, if organ teaching for this scheme would be of interest to you, wherever you are, please let us know by email to colin4444@yahoo.com.

Conclusion

You need never have had experience of teaching the organ before. The scheme is designed to convert already competent, young pianists, and pupils will want to learn and be motivated. We are hopeful they would soon be competent enough to play hymns and take up a resident organist position at a church that has no organist. The higher number of organ teachers we can find, the greater the number of future, professional organists churches will all enjoy and the higher number of young people who will grow in confidence and ability. Thank you. Please email me if you can help colin4444@yahoo.com

*Colin Rees
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