

President's Message September 2021

Earlier in the summer, news came through of the death of David Felstead, one of the co-founders of our Association. You will find a moving tribute by Robert Evans elsewhere in this newsletter. There is also an obituary in the current issue of the RSCM's *Church Music Quarterly*, but sadly it makes no mention at all of the EDOA.

There are good things in store for us in the coming weeks, starting with an invitation from our friends in the Southwark & South London Society to join them at St Paul's, Clapham, Rectory Grove, SW4 0DZ on Saturday, 25th September at 2.30 pm. Their president, Dr Harry Brama, will give a talk entitled "My Life as a Cathedral Organist". A month later we have our visit to All Saints', Hertford, arranged by Martin Penny: Saturday, 23rd October, from 11.00 am. Martin's tireless efforts as our newest committee member are much appreciated. I am also grateful to Ruth Lewis for offering to host another 'At Home', this time on Thursday, 11th November from 7.30 pm. Intriguingly, a firework theme has been suggested for the evening; full details in due course.

Warmest congratulations to our member Ashley Wagner for being placed joint second in the recent IAO/RCO organ competition, postponed from last year when the six finalists were chosen. The whole event is still available online and very impressive it is too, ending with the live adjudication. Ashley's programme was the only one not to have any piece duplicated by any of the other performers. Recorded in St Philip's Cathedral, Birmingham, where he is Assistant Director of Music, Ashley began with Weber's rarely heard *Jubel-Ouverture* arr. W T Best (no prizes for naming the tune that finally emerges!) and ended with the still largely unknown *Mr Mistoffelees Overture (Concert Piece No 3)* by the Canadian organist-composer Rachel Laurin, who had actually encouraged him to learn it. Among the less challenging pieces of Rachel Laurin's vast output, Ashley commends her *Three Impressions on 'Kingsfold'*.

All of the BBC Proms can be heard again for 30 days after the final concert. How curious that both solo organ recitals required a substitute performer: Martin Baker for travel-restricted Olivier Lamy and Peter Holder for indisposed Thomas Trotter. Peter Holder is remembered as the brilliant recitalist at the opening recital at Ware after the restoration of the organ in 2016, and his Prom performance was simply stunning. Did I hear the R3 commentator state that the Royal Albert Hall organ has 9, 999 stops?!?

Another Prom worth hearing again was that given by the ethnically diverse orchestra 'Chinike!' We all know Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's *Hiawatha*, and indeed the concert began with its Overture, but I'm sure his youthful *Symphony in A minor* was new to nearly everyone. Equally revealing and delightful were the *Piano Concerto in One Movement* by Florence Price and the *African Suite* by Fela Sowande. It is good that Florence Price's lovely organ piece *Adoration* has attracted various instrumental ensembles. Fela Sowande was a Nigerian organist who swept up every first prize when he took his FRCO during the war in his late thirties, including the prestigious Read prize. Here again there is much wonderful music – organ and otherwise – to investigate and enjoy.

Terence Atkins