

President's message March 2023

The AGM is still fresh in the memory and what a satisfying occasion it proved to be. Eric Shepherd ensured a warm welcome at St Alphege, Burnt Oak and provided information about the very special instrument there. Sustained by tea and cake (thank you, Ruth), we were soon through with the meeting and able to settle down to the well-attended organ recital, beautifully played by Rosemary Evans. It was a programme full of variety and interest, including some pieces not well known but nevertheless worth exploring. One delight was Peter St. John Stokes' Bach arrangement printed in the last Newsletter. Our grateful thanks go to Rosemary. A goodly number of us then gathered at the nearby Harvester for a convivial meal, thanks to Michael Hennin's careful planning, not only of this, but the whole event.

I hope Saturday, 27th May is firmly fixed in everyone's diary for the IAO Eastern Regional Organ Day in Chelmsford Cathedral from 10.00 until 5.00. It will be a study day on French organ music for liturgy and chant at the time of Couperin and de Grigny, including a masterclass and lecture-demonstration with William Whitehead and ending with a service of Vespers. The EDOA has played its part in the planning of it all, in conjunction with our neighbouring associations. Your support is vital for the success of this action-packed and stimulating day. Are you able to recommend any students for the masterclass? Tickets are £30 (£35 for non-members), available from iao.org.uk/eeod – but free for masterclass participants.

Our student member Ben Markovic is congratulated on gaining his FRCO and also on his appointment to St Mary Magdalene, Enfield while still organ scholar at Queens', Cambridge. At the Conferment of Diplomas for 2022-23, one could not help noting that the number of male recipients yet again vastly outnumbered the females, but it was good that this was offset by being the other way about in terms of Limpus prizewinners. The Ede & Ravenscroft recital, given by Tristan Russcher, included the rarely heard Paraphrase on 'O filii et filiae' by Ralph Downes. It was the second recital I heard that week to begin with the Bach G Major (BWV 541) and proceed chronologically. Makoto James's at Cornhill was of interest in that each composer had been taught by the previous one, thus: Bach, Kittel, Rinck, Hesse, Lemmens, Widor, Vierne, Bouvard, Van Oortmersen and finally David Goode, who had taught Makoto at Eton (and was present). Goode's 'Concert Fantasy on Gershwin Themes' was a stunning conclusion.

By the time this is read, the musical and liturgical requirements of Holy Week will be to the fore and perhaps Stainer's 'Crucifixion' is on the menu. Have you seen the new edition of this work, recently produced by Jeremy Dibble? This was made possible because the original score has been presented to Durham University, where Professor Dibble is based. A surprise is the inclusion of a previously missing verse in 'All for Jesus'; and much useful information has characteristically been provided. If you are looking for attractive alternatives to the Stainer, I can strongly recommend 'The Passion of Christ' by Somervell (he of that fine tune to 'Praise to the holiest', used in this work) and 'The Saviour' by Lloyd Webber (William!). This year, however, I am looking forward to hearing Maunder's 'Olivet to Calvary' in Chingford Church on Good Friday evening.

Still on the theme of Passiontide, we know there is a host of splendid recordings to enjoy of Bach's 'St John' and 'St Matthew', and live performances (even better!) are not restricted to this time of year. In addition, if you would like to re-live what it must have been like to be in the choir of St Thomas, Leipzig and actually living in the Bach household midst all the frantic

preparations for, and the first performance of, the 'St Matthew Passion', do read James Runcie's 'The Great Passion'. It's a wonderful and deeply moving book – and I see it is now available as a paperback.

Before long, Eastertide will break forth and then thoughts will naturally turn to a certain day in early May. Some of us have memories of the last Coronation, most likely through the then novelty of television, and a precious few remain who have stories to tell of their actual involvement. Will the weather behave this time? The choice of June 2nd in 1953 was based on records showing it to be the day least likely for rain...! More important than this trivia, please don't forget that May is also the month of the IAO Eastern Regional Organ Day: Saturday, 27th May. See you there!

Terence Atkins