

## Past Events

- **EDOA AGM Recital - Saturday 11th February 2023**
- **Bachhaus 2 (not an EDOA event) - Saturday 18th February 2023**

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### EDOA AGM Recital

Rosemary Evans treated us to a wonderfully varied selection of repertoire for her recital at St Alphage, Burnt Oak on 11th February and for her first item she summoned us to attention with **Fanfare** by Mark Burbridge, composed for a family wedding.

Following this arresting opening, Rosemary introduced her programme section by section and next was a group of pieces by Baroque composers. This comprised the “Little” E minor **Praeludium** by Bruhns (played with each of its sections being nicely characterised), a beautiful **Andante** from a Bach Violin Sonata (in an idiomatic transcription by our member Peter St John Stokes) and three chorale preludes from Bach’s *Orgelbüchlein*: **Wer nur den lieben** (with its rhythmically incisive use of *figura corta* motifs), **Ach wie nichtig** (sounding particularly beautiful with its rippling scales on a gentle registration) and **In dir ist Freude** (with its carillon-like figurations to welcome the New Year).

Rosemary’s next group brought us closer to the present day, beginning with two settings based on the **Ave Maris Stella** by Marcel Dupré (making interesting use of the melody canonically and in a cantilena style). We then moved to William Whitehead’s commendable *Orgelbüchlein* Project, instigated to commission settings of those chorales planned by Bach, but which he didn’t get round to completing himself. The example here was a setting of **Ach Gott, wie manches Herzeleid** after *Maurice Duruflé*, which no less than three composers had been involved in bringing to fruition: Peter Shepherd, William Whitehead himself and Timothy Byram-Wigfield. This was followed by the hauntingly beautiful **Arabesque** from Louis Vierne’s *24 Pièces en style libre* – with a waft of incense and the beautifully judged atmospheric musical haze I, for one, could well imagine that I’d been transported to a French basilica!

Next we heard Hendrik Andriessen’s **Thema met variaties**, arguably his best known work. This gave the opportunity for Rosemary to explore a wide range of colours in a piece which lends itself to exploring the tonal possibilities of an organ. Following this was another **Arabesque**, this time by Keith Lambert, but partially inspired by Vierne’s earlier setting, acknowledging its melody in various ways. David Burchell’s **Prelude on Love Unknown** made reference to the melody in various ways and exemplified an interesting use of harmonic language, sometimes lyrical, sometimes less so.

The delightful **Partita super Merton Chapel** by Magdalen Pemberton, arranged by Peter Szeles, offered some enjoyably piquant moments, ending with a toccata with the tune in the pedals.

To conclude this wide-ranging recital, Rosemary chose two pieces by César Franck. We heard first his delightful early **Andantino**, published in 1837, where a haunting minor section felt as though it could be a signature tune to a series set in Paris. We were then treated to the monumental third **Choral** (from over fifty years later) in a very idiomatic rendition – rhapsodic points of tension were highlighted and well contrasted with the lyrical central section. In a work which can, if not treated with care, lack cohesion, we heard here a performance which succeeded in bringing its strands together in a well judged combination of bravura and lyricism.

We owe Rosemary our very grateful thanks and many congratulations on guiding us so deftly and musically through such a diverse and fascinating programme, which also served to demonstrate the wide-ranging tonal possibilities of this organ.

*Roger Carter  
March 2023*

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**Bachhaus 2  
Saturday February 18th, 2023**

Huge thanks must go to Ian and Hilary Needleman and Rob their son, who organised and hosted this splendid study and masterclass day at their home in Tring using their beautiful house organ. It was made by William Drake in 1994, and they have had it for around 5 years in their spacious sitting room. There were six players and about five of us observers and there was a lovely friendly and informal atmosphere. Incidentally, sitting next to the Drake organ was a tiny one manual organ that Ian had built himself!



Drake organ at Tring

*Photo: Hilary Bailey*

The organ has mechanical action, two manuals, with five stops on one and two on the other, and one stop on the pedals with a coupler for either manual. It has a very sensitive and unforgiving touch and sounds very beautiful.

Bachhaus 1 was held in 2020 and the second was planned for October 1st, 2022, but it had to be postponed twice owing to train strikes.... However, it was third time lucky for February 18th, 2023, and I had a memorable day!

It was wonderful to have Daniel Moulton there – he was a star! He is Head of Organ Studies at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire and (after coffee and home-made organ-shaped biscuits) he gave an illustrated talk on the influence of Dance forms on J. S. Bach and the use he made of it in his organ music - these included the Bourée, Passepied, Gigue and Sarabande. Dan gave background information and showed video clips of dancers dancing and examples of where they appear in the music. It was very interesting, illuminating and entertaining and delivered in a scholarly yet listener-friendly and informal manner.

There followed a splendid lunch during which the six masterclass participants had a chance to familiarise themselves with the organ.

Adrian played the “Little” G minor Fugue, BWV 578.

Irene – *Ach bleib bei uns*, BWV 649.

Mark (aged 15) – *Ich ruf zu dir*, BWV 639.

Tea (with cake and biscuits)

Jenny – Fugue in C minor, BWV 575.

Paul – *In dich hab' ich gehoffet, Herr*, BWV 712.

Pavlos – Concerto in A minor (after Vivaldi) 1st movement, BWV 593.

Dan gave kind and helpful comments to all, and the most important things I took away with me were:-

- Take time before you start; breathe! Start on an outbreath
- Relax—no tension—play with relaxed thumbs, and loose fingers and rotating wrists, keep a space of air (or a clementine) between your elbows and body—elbows out. Shoulders down. Lean when necessary but keep finger movements to a minimum. Keep contact with the keys.
- Close pallets slowly—i.e. don't jump off pedals.
- Detaché = a Bad Word! Use “ordinary” touch and if there are no slurs—don't!
- How to play with expression and achieve strong and weak notes on the organ depending on the touch; give notes varying lengths according to their importance.
- **Do very slow** practice for no longer than 10 mins at a time. Then do something quite different. Playing slowly is the most difficult; it takes a lot of mental energy – speeding up is easy! Don't get bored!!
- Make your middle (abdomen) take the strain; don't put your weight on your feet.

I bought Dan's “Bach and Expression” DVDs—I haven't watched all 4 yet but have enjoyed what I have seen, which includes some stunning looking and sounding organs...

Altogether it was a most enjoyable, interesting and inspiring day and **huge** thanks must go to our kind hosts for their hospitality, refreshments and efficient organisation. They are planning Bachhaus 3 for next year and I shall definitely try and get a place! Thank you so very much Ian and Hilary and Rob Needleman, and of course Dan, the players and everyone else!

*Hilary Bailey*