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Ormskirk Parish Church

Launch of the

Organ Restoration Appeal

3rd November 2012

Organ Recital

by

David Poulter

Director of Music, Liverpool Cathedral

Attended by the Mayor of West Lancashire,

Councillor Paul Greenall

PROGRAMME

Fantasia in G

J S Bach

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) is generally regarded as the foremost organ composer of all time, although his work was little known until the first half of the C19. At this time, English organs generally did not have the resources needed for the performance of his music and this revival was key in the development of the organ in Britain. The Ormskirk instrument, whilst not ideal for Bach, was nevertheless designed just before English organs turned away from classical choruses and became more orchestral, a situation which remained through much of the early C20. This fantasia forms a suitably dramatic opening to tonight's proceedings.

Sonata No. 2 in C minor (First movt.) **J S Bach**

Unlike the Fantasia in G, this piece is of a smaller, clearer and more intimate texture, with both hands and feet operating entirely independently, in trio form, requiring not only manual but also mental dexterity!

Scherzo in E

Eugène Gigout

Born in 1844, Gigout was one of the earlier French Romantic composers. He was a pupil of Saint-Saëns and served as Organist at the church of St Augustin in Paris for 62 years. Demanding very accurate articulation, this lively Scherzo was published in 1890, as no.8 of 'Dix Pièces', a collection which also includes the perhaps more famous Toccata in B minor.

Variations on a Noël

Marcel Dupré

Born in 1886 in Rouen, where his father was Organist of the Abbey of St Ouen, Dupré succeeded Widor in 1934 as Organist of the Church of St Sulpice, Paris, presiding over the largest organ in France. He remained in that position until his death in 1971. This piece is a set of twenty variations on a well-known carol often known as 'Noël Nouvelet', the first of which acts as an exposition of the theme.

when a substantially new instrument was built, although again incorporating the best of the old material. In 1927, minor additions and alterations were made, since when there has been some modernisation. Nevertheless, the vast majority of the instrument is now 135 years old. However, the 'battleship' quality of the workmanship, which has ensured its survival thus far, will also assure its survival for many years to come, provided that it receives some remedial work in the not-too-distant future, hence the current appeal.

This is not only a musical instrument; it is a piece of Ormskirk heritage which must be preserved in the same way that one might preserve an ancient building.

A complete history of the organ, including specifications over the years, is available from the church for a modest sum towards the Organ Fund.



The current Organ Console

Ormskirk Parish Church and its organ

The use of Ormskirk Parish Church as a symbol for West Lancashire is no accident; there has been a church on this site since at least Norman times and it is unique in being the only church in Britain to have a tower and spire side-by-side. The church itself has represented, over the years, the pride of the people of Ormskirk and the West Lancashire area.

In Victorian times, organs in parish churches and town halls were regarded as a symbol of civic status, and that in Ormskirk is no exception, being the largest church organ in Lancashire, with the exception of the instruments in the cathedrals in Liverpool and in Blackburn. In fact, other than these, only St George's Hall, Liverpool boasts a larger instrument in the old county. The specification of the organ of today is almost entirely as built in 1887, the magnum opus of one William Denman of York. Why Denman was entrusted with this major work is unknown, but it is almost certain that he had worked on the previous instrument in the church whilst an apprentice to one Robert Postill.

However, Ormskirk's organ heritage goes back far further than this. The first mention of an organ in Ormskirk Parish Church is in 1552, centuries before most churches had an organ at all. In fact, the organs in the church over the years have been a tangible representation of the status of the town as a major trading centre, more important in its day than either Liverpool or Wigan. During the Commonwealth period, when Cromwell's men were charged with the destruction of organs throughout the land, being regarded as 'Popish', the organ in Ormskirk was dismantled and stored in the tower. In 1731, when an organ was reinstated in the church, the best of the old material was re-used. This was added to over the years until 1887,

Prélude, Fugue and Variation

César Franck

Born in 1822, César Franck was a Belgian who settled in Paris which was becoming, at the time, the epicentre of the organ world. In 1858 he became Organist of the newly-constructed Basilica Sainte Clotilde, where he remained until his death in 1890. He was a prolific composer of romantic music for the organ, which showed off all the tonal resources which were becoming fashionable. The *Prélude, Fugue and Variation* in B minor demonstrates admirably some of the smaller solo voices available on an organ such as that in Ormskirk, as well as the 'thicker' tonalities characteristic of French organs of that period.

Tuba Tune

Norman Cocker

Norman Cocker (1889-1953) was Organist of Manchester Cathedral at the time of the Second World War. He was largely responsible for the design the instrument there today, its predecessor having been almost entirely destroyed in an air-raid on the city. The 'Tuba Tune' is written to showcase the most powerful stop on the organ; the Tuba is, in fact, simply a very powerful trumpet-style stop. Sadly, Cocker never lived to see his scheme fully realised, as the instrument was only completed shortly after his death.

Aria on a Chaconne

Joel Martinson

Martinson (born 1960) is a present-day American composer who serves as Organist and Director of Music to the church of Episcopal Church of the Transfiguration in Dallas, Texas. This haunting melody displays some of the more delicate sounds available on an organ such as this.

Scherzo Symphonique

Pierre Cochereau

Cochereau (1924-1984) was Organiste Titulaire at the Cathedral of Notre Dame de Paris from 1955. One key feature of French service playing in such large churches is improvised interludes, and this piece was first played in February 1974 as an improvisation, before becoming formally notated in written form. It would form a fitting postlude to a major church service, and serves the same purpose in tonight's recital!



THE RECITALIST

DAVID POULTER was born in Kent and educated at The Kings School, Rochester and at The Royal College of Music, London where he was a Foundation Scholar and *Walford Davies* prizewinner. He was also awarded the coveted *Limpus* and *Frederick Shinn* prizes at the Royal College of Organists. He is a Graduate of the Royal Schools of Music and he holds the organ and choir training diplomas

of The Royal College of Organists, The Royal College of Music and Trinity College of Music. He was awarded an Honorary Fellowship of the Guild of Church Musicians in 2008.

After five years as Assistant Organist at Rochester Cathedral, further study at London University, and some years teaching at Cranbrook School and Tunbridge Wells Girls' Grammar School as Head of Music, David Poulter went to Coventry Cathedral in 1990, first as Assistant Organist and ultimately as Director of Music. During his time in Coventry, he founded the Cathedral Girls' Choir consisting of 50 singers aged 8 – 16 years. He also initiated a course in Church Music at Coventry University.

David Poulter was appointed Organist and Director of Music at Chester Cathedral in April 1997, following a succession of distinguished organists dating from Robert Whyte in the 16th century to John Sanders and Roger Fisher in the 20th century. Under his direction, the Cathedral Choir undertook seven CD recordings, many broadcasts on BBC Radio and TV and Granada TV, and premiered many new works written especially for Chester Cathedral, including one by John Taven-

er. The choir also enjoyed tours to France, Holland, Ireland and the USA. David was actively involved in the planning and raising of £1.6 million for the building of a new Song School in 2005. Other highlights during his years in Chester were two International Church Music Festivals with Sir David Willcocks and, in 2007, a community project entitled *Singing Out Loud*, which resulted in over 200 school children joining with the cathedral choir in performances of a specially commissioned work celebrating the life of St Werburgh. During this period, David Poulter was also a regular conductor of the BBC Daily Service.

In January 2008 David Poulter was appointed Director of Music at Liverpool Anglican Cathedral. As part of the city's year as Capital of Culture, there were three BBC Radio broadcasts featuring the Cathedral Choir, including the Holocaust Memorial service in January, and two broadcasts on Easter Day. Other highlights included two performances of Britten's *War Requiem* in Cologne, a performance of Paul McCartney's *Ecce cor meum*, and first performances of specially commissioned works by the Liverpool-born composer, John McCabe, and Cecilia McDowall. Following tours in Poland in 2010 and Paris in 2011 the choir will be singing in Estonia later this year. Two CDs have been recorded recently with Priory Records : *Choral Evensong from Liverpool Cathedral* and *The Psalms of David*. Tallis *Lamentations* and Durufle *Messe cum jubilo* will be recorded in 2013.

David Poulter has appeared as a soloist with the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Jan Pascal Tortelier, and he has also travelled extensively, as a recitalist, and as a conductor to France, Germany, Holland, Italy, Norway, Jamaica and the United States.

His solo organ CD recordings include *Fanfare for Organ* (Mayhew 1995), *Toccatas from Coventry* (Lammus 1998) and *Organ Music from Chester* (English Cathedral Series, volume 5, Regent Records 2002).