



# Bexley & District Organists' & Choirmasters' Association

Patron: Daniel Moult

## NEWSLETTER



Affiliated to the Incorporated Association of Organists

### Autumn's here

*I've run out of ideas for a title!*

September 2011

Last one was July 2011

It's our AGM on Wednesday 14.9.11 at 7.30 at St Paulinus church, Crayford, preceded by members' composite recital.

After the AGM, for those who wish to stay, Brian Melors will be giving an recording-illustrated informal talk on the joys of the Roland C-330 Classic organ.

We put on a wealth of events; yet, only a small percentage of our membership goes out of its way to support us. Why?

If you feel that the committee is not addressing a particular matter, please do say.

Not many of our events are exclusive to our membership (and our constitution says we should always open them to "outsiders", perhaps charging them), so please go out of your way to publicise what we're up to, and get others involved.

Finally, please do let us have offerings of articles or advertisements for inclusion in the newsletter.

#### **DON'T FORGET.....**

**BDOCA has a long standing commitment to support financially youngsters learning the organ. Contact Sue Moore for details, giving as much information as you can.**

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#### Diary dates:

- AGM + Members' recital  
14.9.11

### Treasure Hunt—John Le Masurier writes

We started at the traditional spot at the Ship car park at Green Street Green.

We were given our directions and set of clues. Cloaked in secrecy as usual we did not know where we were going to finish up. We drove down some lovely narrow country lanes and enjoyed the Kentish scenery, as it was a gloriously sunny evening. Some of us realised where we were aiming for and were surprised that Geoff had chosen the tiny village of Underriver.

As an 'experienced' organiser of treasure hunts in the past, I said to Elaine 'Where is he going to get the clues from?' Well, they were all there and we had an interesting time looking for the answers. I take off my hat to Geoff. I wouldn't have dreamed of having a treasure hunt there, but it was great. To me, if there are no shops around, it's a non starter, but Geoff unearthed some wonderful clues.

At 8 pm, we sat in the church and listened to one of Michael Bell's extremely thoughtful recitals showing the finer points of the instrument. Apart from the spec, the organ has a beautiful case, the sort of thing you would expect to find in a cathedral. The pieces that we heard were :-

Overture (K399) and Leipzig Jig	Mozart
Trumpet Voluntary	
Larghetto/Vivace	Boyce
Sundown (from twilight sketches op138)	Lemare
Humoresque	Yon
Toccata in G minor (op10)	Hendriks

After this we all retired to the The White Rock Inn where we were able to receive the answers to all the clues whilst enjoying a lovely meal together.

#### **SUBS NOW DUE**

##### **BDOCA's BANK DETAILS**

Alliance & Leicester  
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Subscription is £20 p.a.  
or £15 unwaged (student £5) and is  
due on 1st September each year

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Winners: 1. Marilyn Davey; 2. John & Elaine LeMasurier; 3. [joint] Lydia Gray & Bruce Davis



## Experience in Worship—Nik Kerwin writes

As you may know, over the last 3 years, I have been completing a Master of Arts degree in Sacred Music. This has involved taught and distant learning modules, research and lots of reading. The whole sacred music pathway covers everything from history to use of and research into both music and liturgy: not as boring as it may sound. As an aside to the degree, with Professor John Harper from Bangor University I have been involved in a three year project “Experiencing Worship” where we are keen to research the experience of worship in late medieval churches and cathedrals focusing on texts, rituals, space and objects. In effect, we want to use the five senses to experience what you cannot get from text only, it is proving fascinating work and there is interest from around the world in what we are doing.

The experience is gained through the preparation and enactment of a group of widely used late medieval liturgies, each to be enacted twice in two very different buildings: the great medieval cathedral at Salisbury, for which the liturgies were first intended, and a small rural parish church to which the liturgies were adapted – in this case St Teilo’s Church, now reconstructed as it was c.1520 in the grounds of St Fagan’s National History Museum, near Cardiff. To enhance the experience, the project has commissioned a late medieval portable organ with painted oak case, to be designed and built by the firm of

Goetze and Gwynn at a cost of almost £80,000. You can see the organ aside in situ at S. Teilo’s; you can also see some of the copies of medieval painting around the church which has been painted using designs that were found when moving the church from its old location to the museum. The new organ follows the same late medieval principles and processes developed and applied to two Suffolk organs recently built by Goetze and Gwynn base on the “Wetheringset” soundboard found in 1977 in Suffolk, where it had been used as a barn door. It has also been specifically designed to accommodate changes in performance practice (e.g. music sounding 'in C' rather than 'in F'), allowing research into 16th- and 17th-century repertoire for organ, and organ with voices. There is a clever drop down keyboard that can be used to play at pitch without the need to transpose. The music desk is a copy from one found in Radnor, Norfolk and means reading the music to the side. I had a go on the organ which has a sweet sound and very light touch and found no trouble looking to the left at the music.

In my last involvement, we re-enacted a Latin Lady Mass using a choir of 4, Celebrant, deacon and sub deacon, Acloyte, Thurifer (me) and two taperers from Llandaff school. There were several observers all in costume, observing from the Nave. The space was cramped but, as has now been found, the sanctuary would only have the essential people throughout the service, others come and go when needed. Although in Latin, everyone knew basically where they were as the format of the liturgy has not changed a great deal. The Sanctus and Benedictus were sung at the same time as the priest said the Eucharistic prayer, which, for me, enhanced it rather than detracting. The most powerful part of the service was the silence when the priest said the “secret” to himself, allowing time for all present to reflect. The congregations in the nave were free to move around, as they would have been, and as most would be illiterate said their own prayers and devotions until the elevation of the host where all moved to view as the bell rang. This is the most significant this act has ever seemed to me despite years of viewing it in organ console mirrors!

The whole project has been fascinating and is raising many questions around the use of sacred space. Take the wall paintings (see above), which tell important biblical stories, and the benefits and pitfalls of the rood screen which creates a very “them and us” atmosphere. However, as the congregation were creating their own encounter with God, it seemed less important than it would for a spoon-fed congregation of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Pax (peace) board was brought out into the Nave and this was the only contact, albeit indirect, with the priests. The whole style of liturgy may not be everyone’s cup of tea but you can see more opportunity to encounter God with this style than the busy Eucharist of today.

I did chat with Dominic Gwynne about the organ and have more photographs and I will do a subsequent short document about the organ in a future newsletter. Meanwhile, here are some WEB sites about the project and the organ and church if you are interested.

<http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/1191/>

<http://www.bangor.ac.uk/music/AHRC/index.php.en>

<http://www.goetzegwynn.co.uk/>

David Ball has some back issues of *Organists' Review* and *Theatre Organ* available to a good home. His phone number is 01322 524845. E-mail: [d.ball@btinternet.com](mailto:d.ball@btinternet.com)

### COMPETITION

A half page essay on “What’s the point of the Dulciana?”

PRIZE: A 15 minute very quiet recital on an instrument of your choice.

Entries, on tissue paper, by 20.10.11



**Memorable titles— Terry Barcock writes:**

A pop song is typically identified by its opening lyric - inane ones guaranteeing most success. Organ composers, however, have been too modest to promote their art with memorable titles and few cataloguers add more than a number. Bach named NONE of his fugues; Haydn named just two of his 125 symphonies. Handel's market-savvy agent who scrawled 'Harmonious Blacksmith' on a harpsichord score clearly earned his fee.

So organists may be asked 'can you play the one that goes . . .' and the questioner hums a few bars. With only a BWV number to distinguish THAT Toccata and Fugue in D minor (565) from the Dorian (538), many works are known to organists by nicknames - often irreverent words that fit the rhythm, such as:

Here comes the bride, all fat and wide (Wagner, 'Treulich geführt ziehet dahin', better known as the Bridal Chorus from Lohengrin)

My favourites include

Uncle James has lost his trousers (Bach, Fugue in C Minor BWV 545) and  
Cheer boys cheer, me mother's bought a mangle (Purcell, Trumpet Tune in D Major)

What others do BDOCA members know?



**The next generation of organists—Doug. Blew writes:**

I write this at the end of a rather varied week in the life of a freelance musician. There has been some teaching, examining (at all levels from copper Music Medals to diploma), organ playing and string playing. I have calculated that 723 miles have been driven in the last 7 days, and I have experienced both luxury hotels and a decidedly less luxurious bed and breakfast (to which I shall most certainly NOT be returning!)

I suppose this proves that there is no shortage of work and variety for us as musicians at present – but are we enabling pupils to prepare adequately for this market?

If I only had one “string to my bow”, so to speak, I doubt I would be able to earn a decent living, and it is only as a generalist that I have access to so many openings and career strands.

Thinking specifically of organists, I always struggle to understand why so many pupils want to learn the instrument, but remain reluctant to work at hymn playing (let alone psalm and setting accompaniment), which is the “bread and butter” for our sub-species.

Although I currently teach 9 organists in school, only 2 of them show any sort of willingness to learn the skills needed for liturgical accompaniment, whilst the others enjoy the instrument simply as that – another instrument on which to learn pieces and overcome technical challenges; in many ways, they appear to play only for their own gratification.

It cannot be lack of exposure to decent church music and choral tradition that is lacking here, since a large percentage of my pupils have been, or currently are, choristers at the Queen’s Chapel of the Savoy; so I have recently started to think that it might be fear of failure which is preventing them becoming church musicians.

I’m sure the challenge of playing hymns and voluntaries in school assemblies is familiar to many of us, and this is perhaps more likely in today’s climate to lead to teasing from peers at the slightest opportunity – but the fact that very few youngsters attend church regularly with their families also restricts their development within a supportive and understanding congregation.

Might it be possible for us as an Association to begin to address this by inviting young fledgling organists to come and play one (or more) hymns in a church service where they might not be known to the congregation, but would have the support of an experienced organist to assist in their development, expand their experience, and hopefully boost their confidence?

Sadly none of my pupils live close enough to my own church to be interested in this proposition when it has been floated before, but I’d really love to see a list of “recipient” churches where pupils could “donate” a hymn or even a voluntary available. It can’t just be my pupils who need something like this...



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## GOING ON..... from Doug's article on page 3

1. RSCM training demands quite a level of theological knowledge. Clergy training more or less ignores music—apart from telling them, for example [notice the way they come back from training sessions with *ideas*], that the Townend *The Lord's My Shepherd* is “lovely”. The sentimentalism which has been brought in over the last how many years is a worry.
2. The idea that all types of music have merit [in church—or elsewhere, even] is pure tosh. Judgment of music's quality and worth of purpose is always somewhat subjective—but it has to be done, and that should be our task. Those who claim to have “eclectic taste” lack discrimination and have egos to balance. Church musicians are threatened with being changed into Entertainment Officers. A comment I received from a warden, some while ago, points this up: “the vicar does the religion—you just do the music!”
3. Pope Benedict XVI's efforts to improve RC music may eventually rub off onto the CofE. Certainly, the row over Macmillan's *Newman Mass* was absolutely disgraceful—although it showed up the frightening shallowness of the clergy. Since that farrago, the RC Church has made some significant moves to raise standards: well worth watching progress. And I exhort you to look at Macmillan's mass—beautifully crafted and, contrary to what was accused, perfectly approachable—at least to those with a modicum of musical nous.
4. How many of us have a (younger) organist/choirmaster in training? BDOCA offers bursaries—but no-one asks. Do we see ourselves as the end of a breed, ready to wither away like the RCO and the RSCM have done over the last 30 years or so?
5. I know of one church where the vicar proclaims that “good liturgy, good music and good preaching” are his aim. His church is full every week. I know various tales of kids who've got involved where there was quality music/liturgy—and been utterly enthused at the demands made. Then, they were required to “watch the sunrise” - and left! What upcoming organists will be tempted to the task by some of the kitsch dished out nowadays?
6. On our fees, do we go for a “quiet life” and just accept what's offered? Or do we check the market? Look at [www.organistsonline.org](http://www.organistsonline.org) and you'll see that the going rate for playing for a service is running at between £50-70 (the odd one at £30 never gets any takers). Funerals round SE London/NW Kent are running at £80-90; in S London, you're looking at £90-100. And do our wedding fees take account of the fact that Joe Public will record on his mobile without asking permission? There are clergy moves afoot to kill off the 100% mark-up for recording: this on the basis of a few complaints from couples who have spent a king's ransom on the rest of the bash. This subject is not a matter of money-grubbing: it is vital for us to handle it properly, if we are to see a new generation of church musicians.

Reg.

## Other coming events etc.

**14.9.11 7.30pm AGM + MEMBERS' RECITAL at St Paulinus church, Crayford** *Please let Sue have your nominations for the committee and Presidency [Nik has already indicated that he's willing to stand again, if wished], as soon as possible.*

**ORGAN “SAFARI” FOR CHILDREN**

**This has had to be deferred to the new year.**

There's a possibility of a visit to St George's (RC) cathedral, Southwark. More anon.

Kent Organists Association events:

Sat. 15.10.11 2pm All Saints church, Mill St., Maidstone—Organ Competition for people under 21yrs—followed by recital by last year's winner.

Sat. 12.11.11—Organs in Chislehurst visit—10.30am Christ Church, Lubbock Road; 12.00 Methodist church, Prince Imperial Rd.; 14.15 Annunciation, High St.; 15.30 St Nicholas, Church Lane. Cost (includes tea) £10.

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### 2012

Tuesday 10.1.12 DINNER at Sophie's Choice,  
Saturday 3.3.12 Choristers' Competition—St Michael's, Abbey Wood

Saturday 24.3.12 Coach trip to OXFORD—lunch at Merton College, and various visits—being sorted

Saturday 26.5.12—NIGEL OGDEN at Christ Church, Bexleyheath

Saturday 21.7.12 TREASURE HUNT

Also...

A visit to Lullingstone Castle gardens and chapel with some sort of musical end to the visit—details being sorted.

And, perhaps, RC Vespers....