

ALTON ORGAN SOCIETY
REVIEW OF DAVID HILL'S ORGAN CONCERT 13 OCTOBER 2020

It was touch and go but, despite the restrictions of Covid-19, the Alton Organ Society got the 2020/2021 Season of Organ concerts off to a successful start on Tuesday 13 October. David Hill (International Choral Director and Organist) opened his concert with the famous and popular Toccata & Fugue in D minor (yes, that one) by JS Bach. Incidentally, this piece will be included in a new CD recording to be made by David in January 2021. It would have been the day after the concert but the dreaded Covid-19 got its revenge and placed the producer in 14 days self isolation. In fact, most of David's programme performed on the 13 October will feature in the CD including George Thalben-Ball's "Elegy" which followed the Toccata & Fugue. The story goes that a BBC recording of choral evensong from the Temple Church in London threatened to finish too early and organist George was told to fill the space which he did with what must rate as the most perfect improvisation. It was later committed to paper and is widely available to and popular with organists.

What a contrast next when David played German/Hungarian organist Zsolt Gardoni's "Mozart Changes". This started with a standard well known Mozart piano work and then launched into variations including magnificent jazz syncopations which, apparently, were tributes to Oscar Peterson, Errol Garner and Art Tatum. Moving to France we next heard César Franck's "Pastorale" one of his lesser performed pieces from his extensive repertoire. To keep ex-Chairman Peter Ashworth happy, David played Buxtehude's "Fugue in C" which is an exciting work that features on manuals only. It was apposite that both Bach and Buxtehude were included in the programme as the latter was a huge influence on Bach's playing and composing style.

Herbert Howells was both a fan and friend of Vaughan Williams and his "Rhapsody No 1" - beautifully performed by David - had a recognisable RVW composing style. This was followed by two choral preludes by Brahms and Marcel Dupré's "Cortege et Litanie". Dupré was an extraordinary organist and improviser who, like Rachmaninov, had large hands making some of his compositions quite challenging but, nonetheless, inspiring. David included the well known Welsh hymn tune "Rhosymedre" as arranged by Vaughan Williams closing the link to Howells. Finally, as a rousing end to this brilliantly performed concert, David Hill performed Grieg's "Wedding Day at Troldhaugen" as arranged by Drage.

It was a great relief that this concert was able to proceed in light of all the restrictions of social distancing but it happened. Moreover, we look forward to the next organ concert which takes place at St Lawrence Church, Alton next Tuesday 3 November starting at 8.00 pm When Jane Watts (International Concert Organist) returns to Alton. She will play music by Dudley Buck, Parry, William Lloyd Webber and Guilment's Sonata No 5. To book a seat do please email familyhowe@talktalk.net and when you attend bring a face mask which should be worn during the concert. Further details can found at www.altonorgansociety.co.uk or contact Tony Willman at tony.willman@mac.com or 01420 543628.