

## Forthcoming event

LECTURE RECITAL BY HENRY FAIRS  
MONDAY 16<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2011, 7.30PM  
St. Mary's Church, Selly Oak,  
[B29 6ND](#)

Henry Fairs, (Head of Organ Studies at Birmingham Conservatoire and well-known for his urbane yet informative style) will talk about **and play** pieces by 19<sup>th</sup> century German composers/pianists who have recently had anniversaries - Mendelssohn, Schumann and Liszt. A fund-raising event for the **Leonard Gibbons Fund**, do please come and give **your** support to this worthy cause and have an enjoyable musical Spring evening.  
Admission: £5-00

## BOA newsletter

volume 7 no2e

# Spring 2011

Welcome to the new **electronic** version of our newsletter.  
*We hope you like it: please let us know!*

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## Concert Guide

**St. Philip's Cathedral: Music for Lunch**  
Fridays at 1.10pm:  
[www.birminghamcathedral.com](http://www.birminghamcathedral.com)

**THSH Town Hall/Symphony Hall:**  
Mondays at 1.00pm: [www.thsh.co.uk](http://www.thsh.co.uk)

**Holy Trinity, Wordsley:**  
*Sunday Afternoon Organ Music*  
Paul Carr: 1st Sunday of the month at 3.00pm:  
[www.paulcarr.co.uk](http://www.paulcarr.co.uk)

**St. Paul, Birmingham: Thursday Live**  
1st Thursday of the month at 1.15pm:  
[www.saintpaulbrum.org](http://www.saintpaulbrum.org)

**Emmanuel, Wylde Green:**  
*Anniversaries & Celebrations*  
Andrew Fletcher: 1st Friday of the month at 1.00pm: [www.andrewfletcher.org.uk](http://www.andrewfletcher.org.uk)

**The Metropolitan Cathedral and Basilica of St Chad, Birmingham**  
18th May 7.30pm: **John Pryer**  
(Birmingham Oratory)  
1st June 7.30pm: **David Saint**  
(St Chad's Cathedral)  
13th June 7.30pm: **Douglas Hollick**  
(Birmingham Conservatoire)  
21st June 7.30pm: **John W W Sherer**  
(Chicago, USA)  
[www.stchadscathedral.org.uk](http://www.stchadscathedral.org.uk)  
Car-park entered from Shadwell Street behind the Cathedral.

**Birmingham Organists' Association** affiliated to the Incorporated Association of Organists  
[www.BhamOrgan.org.uk](http://www.BhamOrgan.org.uk) [www.iao.org.uk](http://www.iao.org.uk)

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Click [here](#) to start

# The organ as an orchestral instrument

Kathy Guard

Monday January 31<sup>st</sup> was a very cold, frosty evening, and those of us without GPS did take a little time to find King Edward VI Five Ways School at Bartley Green, travelling along narrow lanes with no signposts!! However we were given a very warm welcome by David Griffiths and about 25 members of BOA who had gathered were brought to order with a loud rendering of the opening bars of *Also Sprach Zarathustra*!



Once David had brought all of us to attention we were treated to a most unusual evening. Maybe some of us thought we would be hearing Victorian transcriptions of orchestral works, which were so popular with the founding of the large Town Halls/organs, but no ... this was to be a rather more learned meeting. We were treated to a programme of music where the organ was either a blended sound within the context of a full orchestra or as a powerful partner with the rest of the orchestra. A very early example of the use of the organ was the *Canzon Vigesima terza a 5* by Merulo. Merulo was organist at San Marco in Venice until 1584 when he moved to Parma. In this piece the cornets and sackbuts are strong, but the organ is always audible. This was followed by the use of the organ as a continuo instrument, in the Allegro of the *Concerto for Diverse Instruments* by Vivaldi.

We then moved on to Bach, listening to some of the cantata *Wir danken dir, Gott*. BWV 29, where the organ is specified as obligato and the organist plays the original solo violin part transposed into D major, which enabled Bach to use 3 natural D trumpets, with 2 oboes, strings and continuo. The Classical period was represented by Mozart, who wrote 17 one movement pieces known as the *Epistle Sonatas*, where the organ usually fulfils the role of a continuo instrument. David pointed out that all this music would have been heard in Churches.

In the mid 1800s many large Town Halls were built, with organs in the gallery. This enabled the organ to be used as an orchestral instrument, as the organ added a lot of volume to orchestral music as well as producing a very low pitch when necessary. We were introduced to a work by Liszt called the *Battle of the Huns*, an organ/orchestral composition where the organ is used to portray the Christian Army fighting against the Huns, represented by the Orchestra.

Following the 'battle' we heard organ/orchestral music by Elgar, by the Belgium composer Fetis, an excerpt from *The Planets*, and an American composition called *Snow Walker* where the organ represents the sound of wind, wolves and storms. *Also Sprach Zarathustra* made a further appearance and the musical part of the evening ended with the Saint-Saens *Organ Symphony*.

Members were invited to partake the excellent spread of breads, cheese, paté and wine organized by Nick and Martin. A big thank you David for the warm welcome and a most interesting evening.

## Jehan Alain Centenary Celebration

Nick Fanthom



A few years ago the Association held an evening at St. Chad's Metropolitan Cathedral when the complexities and mystique of Messiaen's organ music was explained and demonstrated to those present by Colin Walsh. That was a wonderful occasion. Our evening exploring the music of, and associated directly with Jehan Alain, was equally as inspiring.

The copious programme notes provided the listener with real insight into the inspiration behind the pieces that we heard played – and what playing! Suddenly (for me at least) music that in the past seemed sometimes inaccessible suddenly spoke with a new voice: the notes on the page seemingly leaping up in a far more logical order. The sheer amount of music we heard was also extraordinary. Such an array of works would have been too taxing I'm sure, for one player at one recital, but with many players it became possible. Our sincerest thanks go to our *Leonard Gibbons Fund Sponsored Student*, Hannah Gibson, who not only came up with the idea of the event, but also co-ordinated the entire thing, cajoling her colleagues, friends and tutors to perform: no mean achievement! The atmosphere afterwards during *drinks & nibbles* in the crypt of the cathedral was really lively and it was so good to see younger people there with such life and vitality.

It really was an entertaining and educative evening. Those of us who were there experienced a wonderful occasion: those who weren't missed out.

## AGM: President's speech



Paul spoke of his unexpected adventures in Birmingham's sister city of Chicago, USA, where he gave an organ concert last Spring. He spent a total of three weeks in the city after becoming 'stranded' following the eruption of the Icelandic volcano! Paul and Hannah were looked after during this time by the Director of Music of The Fourth Presbyterian Church in the city, John Sherer and his family. The time there proved to be invaluable - an opportunity to see how a Director of Music works in a church which has a similar pattern of services to many of ours here. Paul spoke about the important role music plays in church and spiritual life, the support given to the ministry of music and the various factors which might contribute to the respective and contrasting situations on each side of the Atlantic both now and in the future.

John Sherer is coming to Birmingham in June and has agreed to join David Saint as adjudicator for the LGF Sponsored Conservatoire Student Competition at St Chad's Cathedral on **Monday 27<sup>th</sup> June**. John will also give a recital at St Chad's Cathedral the week before on **Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> June**, and will appear at the Wombourne Festival on **Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> June** in a concert and talk about the life of an American organist and the state of church music in the USA.

Paul went on to talk about the introduction of online newsletters, detailed further at the front of this year's Members' Handbook. He thanked the retiring and returning Members and Officers of the Council for their dedicated work over the last year, also welcoming the two new members of Council Jon Payne and James Luxton.

## Association AGM & recital

Alan Taylor

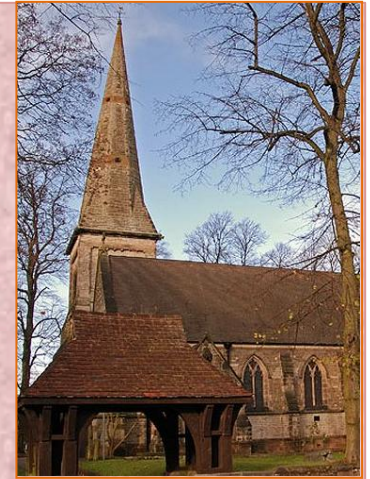
This year's AGM was held at St Michael's, Boldmere, where members were greeted with hot coffee and made most welcome. We were able to conduct our business meeting in a conveniently-sized room adjoining both the church and a kitchen area – ideal for the buffet lunch and recital that were to follow.

Following the usual formal reports from Secretary, Treasurer and President, James Luxton and Jon Payne were elected as new members of Council, and John Stormont was re-elected for a further three-year term. We were then delighted to hear that Paul Carr, having served for three years, had agreed to continue as our President, and he was duly re-elected.

Jenny's Kitchen again provided an excellent buffet lunch, and this was supplemented with wine and tasty desserts. We were then joined by a welcome number of parishioners and other visitors for a recital by Past BOA President and resident organist at St Michael's, Christopher Stormont.

The organ at St Michael's was featured as our website's Organ of the Month in January last year, and details of this 31-stop 2-manual instrument can be found (from the e-version of this newsletter) by clicking [here](#). It was built by Harrison & Harrison in 1967 following a fire that destroyed the previous instrument and most of the interior of the church.

Chris played music by Bach, Franck, Jules Grison, Saint-Saëns, John Stanley and Vierne. Launching the recital in grand style with Vierne's Toccata in B flat minor from *Pièces de Fantaisie*, we then enjoyed the lighter textures and characteristic 18<sup>th</sup> century English sounds of a John Stanley *Voluntary*: an opportunity to hear the Swell Organ's mutation stops. There followed one of César Franck's most famous and dramatic works, the *Pièce Héroïque* from *Trois Pièces* of 1878.



*St Michael's, Boldmere*

The centrepiece – and for me, the highlight – of the recital was Bach's sixth Trio Sonata, BWV 530. The Italianate style of the *Vivace* that is the concerto-like first movement, the plaintive *Lento*, and the complexities of the fugal *Allegro* were all executed with consummate skill and assurance.

The recital ended with more French music: a Saint-Saëns *Fantaisie* – not the more familiar E flat but the one in D flat major – and (as it had begun) with a Toccata. The F major piece by Jules Grison, with its fanfare-like flourishes, brought the day to a suitably exuberant close. Thus a happy blend of the familiar with the not-quite-so-familiar brought sustained and enthusiastic applause from the audience.

Many thanks, Chris.