

## CENTENARIES IN 1986

1987 sees the anniversaries of three composers who are all of great interest to organists; John Stanley (d.1786), Franz Liszt (d.1886) and Marcel Dupré (b.1886). Music by these outstanding figures – by no means all of it organ music – provides a binding thread for Second Oundle International Organ Week's Festival programme.

John Stanley (1713-1886) was organist of the Temple Church in London; notably he was blind. He enjoyed the universal admiration of his contemporaries for his stylish performances, improvisations and compositions; Handel was voluble in his praise and King George II granted a patent protecting for 14 years Stanley's copyright on his *Thirty Voluntaries for organ or harpsichord* – at least one of which finds a niche in every organist's repertoire. Over the years they have suffered at the hands of performers and editors who have frequently 'enriched' their original *gallant* textures with extra notes and pedal parts (English organs of Stanley's day had no pedals!).

Performances of his solo music by Jacques van Oortmerssen in the redecorated Georgian church at Stoke Doyle and of two of his newly republished op.10 concerti, by James Parsons, seek to reveal the true grain of this spirited music whilst, at Elton Hall, New London Consort's programme of chamber music and vocal items by Stanley and his peers gives an entertaining glimpse into the world of London's celebrated 18th century pleasure gardens.

In the 19th century most mainstream composers strangely ignored the organ; Franz Liszt (1811-1886) is an honourable exception; his organ literature is considered to be the bedrock of the instrument's romantic repertoire.

In his music a number of elements uneasily co-exist; keyboard wizardry, passion and bravura, and inspiration from J.S. Bach and other 'past masters' – all coupled with an eccentric introspection and piety when, in later life, he assumed minor orders in the Church.

Martin Haselböck editor of the first critical edition of Liszt's organ music is an ideal interpreter; *Huldigung an Franz Liszt* (26 July) should be a highlight of the Week, whilst Clare College Choir offers a welcome opportunity to reappraise Liszt's inspiring cantata 'Via Crucis'.

Of Marcel Dupré (1886-1971), Groves Dictionary was led to remark: "no organist of his generation has exerted so great an influence". Titulaire at Saint-Sulpice, Paris, he won, through worldwide tours, a degree of fame never before reached by an organist – virtuoso, improviser, composer.

Kimberly Marshall, in her programme *Hommage à Marcel Dupré* (21 July), draws on a rich vein of musical inspiration, illustrating too, in the fantasy and flair of this vivid music, the versatility of the Frobenius organ.

But if these diverse composers provide the Week's binding thread, read on in the pages of this programme to admire the embroidery – eclectic programmes by Danby and Richenhagen, new music from America, the Viennese classics from the Gabrieli Quartet, 'jolly japes' at the Demonstration of Small Organs, jazz at the Barbeque, the jangle of a street organ: an attractive sampler!

James Parsons

One is always slightly apprehensive when taking up a new teaching post, but when that start falls in the middle of the academic year the prospect is even more daunting. When I arrived here in January from Bournemouth the prospect of the Second Oundle International Organ Week was but a dim pinprick of light at the end of the academic tunnel. As that pinprick of light has grown so has my sense of excitement and expectation. There can be few Directors of Music who have been privileged to inherit a post which boasts not only a remarkably fine – indeed, perhaps one of the best – organs in this country, but also the foundations, well laid, for a most successful and educationally stimulating Festival. Indeed, I feel immensely proud to be associated so directly with such an exciting and unique event.

The organ is now eighteen months old; yet, for those of us closely connected with it, the thrill of playing or listening to it is undiminished. Moreover, it whips, cajoles, drives and uplifts eight hundred boys' lusty voices each morning, even at 8.30am on a Saturday! Rarely can an organ have fulfilled so admirably the dual role of accompaniment and recital instrument.

The first Oundle International Organ Week evolved along almost empirical lines through the indefatigable and tireless efforts of my predecessor, Peter Allwood, and James Parsons. They could hardly have envisaged the impact their work would have on the organ scene in this country or upon the musical climate in this immediate area. The phenomenal success of that first week – artistically and educationally – has ensured the future of this festival for years to come.

This year's Summer School for Young Organists has been expanded to provide four courses to cater for more diverse skills and differing aptitudes of young organists, and this reflects not only the individual skills of the Tutors on the course, but in many cases their specialised field of interest in music history. Once again we are fortunate to be able to promote concerts at Elton Hall and at Fotheringhay Church. By way of relaxation and celebration there will be a mid-week Barbecue in the Festival Club on Royal Wedding night (Wednesday 23 July) when music will be provided by the Back Alley Dixie Blues Band. The Festival Club now refurbished will, as before be at your service to provide the congenial and relaxing centre to meet before, during and after many of our concerts.

I should like to record, on behalf of the Week's Executive Committee, my thanks to the Governors, Headmaster and Bursar of Oundle School for the very considerable support they have given this project, and to express great appreciation to the generosity of our Sponsors.

And so – welcome to Oundle!

Martin Freke



James Parsons



Martin Freke