

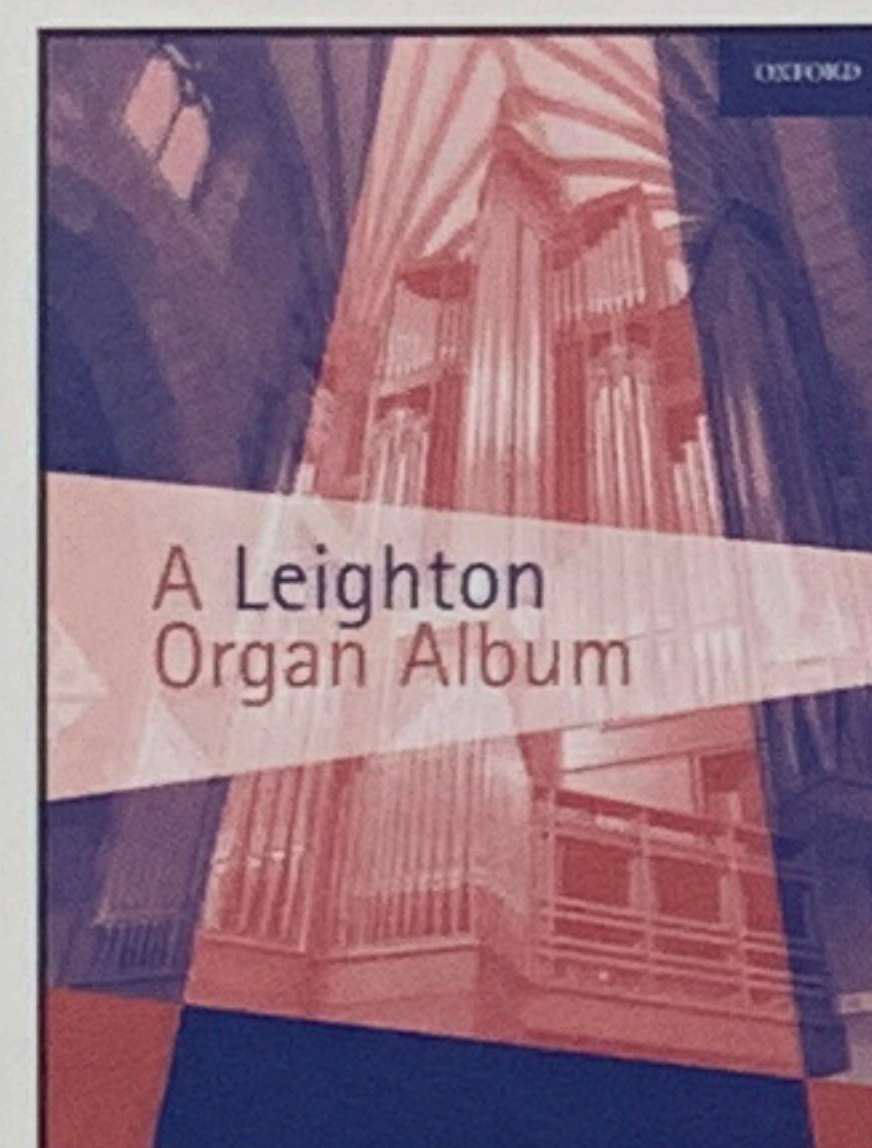
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### Celebrity Organ Recital

#### Jeremy Filsell

7.30pm

#### The Church of Our Lady and the English Martyrs, Cambridge

Sonata in C minor (1937) **Percy Whitlock** (1903-1946)  
*Grave-Animato - Canzona - Scherzetto - Choral*

Symphonie-Passion Op 23

**Marcel Dupré** (1886-1971)

*Le Monde dans l'attente du Saveur - Nativité -  
Crucifixion - Résurrection*

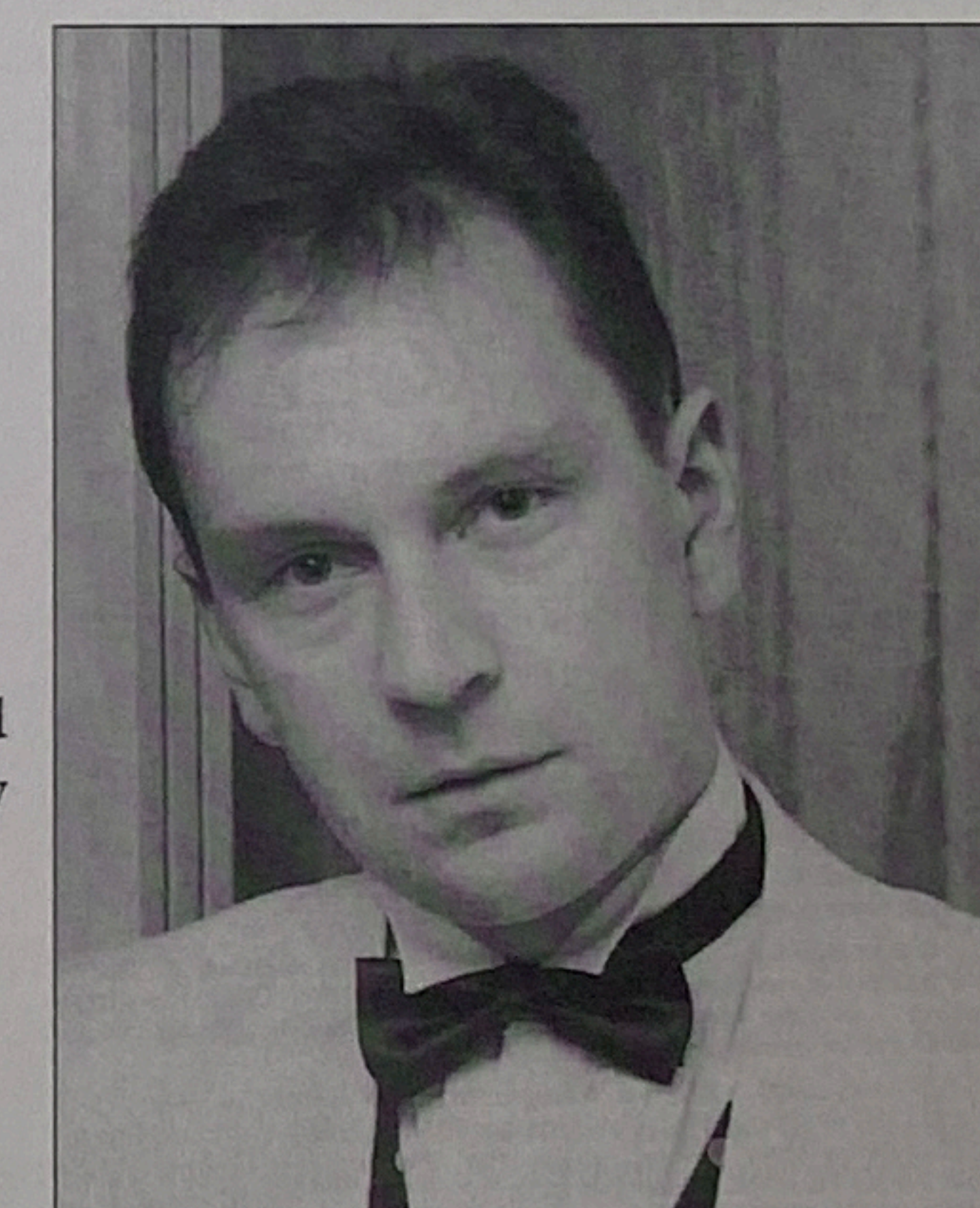
For most, the reputation of Percy Whitlock rests on a  
handful of occasional pieces, but a number of recent  
recordings have granted his more important music some  
exposure. Whitlock's compositional career (relatively  
prolific for one who died prematurely from tuberculosis  
aged 41) spawned works predominantly for, or including,  
organ but his 'light' music for orchestral forces reflects the  
close and productive relationship he enjoyed with the  
Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra. His various tenures  
as organist at southern town churches inspired many of  
the shorter character pieces, doubtless composed for  
liturgical use. They are generally pleasant, tuneful  
offerings that evoke the quintessentially English gentility  
of village green cricket and tea-time scones. Such *hors  
d'oeuvres* give little clue, however, to the scale and  
inspiration of the *C minor Sonata* of 1936. Dedicated to  
Dorothy Sayers, a neighbour and friend of Whitlock's and  
to 'Harriet', the heroine of her Lord Peter Wimsey tales,  
the *Sonata* is undoubtedly one of the most unjustly  
neglected English concert works of the period.

Whitlock's *Sonata* is comparable with the later  
Symphonies of Widor and Vierne in all but name, and  
contains as deft a craft as anything within the French  
oeuvre. The final two Widor Symphonies (the *Gothique*  
and *Romane*) and the sixth of Vierne, serve very close  
comparison to Whitlock's *Sonata* in the cyclic use of  
thematic material. Whitlock's first sonata movement  
presents in turn five independent themes: the first is  
announced fanfare-style at the very outset; the second is  
a turbulent rhythmic idea heard early on in C minor, the  
others of greater charm and lyricism. The middle two  
movements fall into broad ternary forms and the  
Scherzetto is a delightful, quicksilver and rhythmically  
risqué piece in which off-beat syncopation abounds.  
Cross-reference of theme and motive is extensive in the  
long final movement. The first movement fanfare figures  
return, interjecting chorale-related portions between two  
further scherzos; the first in 6/8 is derived from elements  
in the central portion of the third movement and the  
second, a paraphrase of the chorale, is heard in the pedal  
beneath appoggiatura-style accompanimental ostinati.

The apotheosis is an extended harmonization of the  
chorale of which Rachmaninov might have been proud.  
The movement comes to rest calmly in C major as  
elements of the chorale are dispersed over a low pedal C.

Marcel Dupré grew up as the only child in a household  
described as 'a veritable temple of music'. Marcel's  
father was an organist and his mother a cellist. Behind  
the Dupré home a music-room was built, large enough  
to accommodate the 100 singers of the choral society  
which Dupré père founded in 1897. Marcel acted as  
accompanist to the chorus and so became familiar with  
three centuries of choral music, as well as a wide range  
of chamber music and song. Dupré's compositional  
studies in the class of Widor culminated in winning the  
Premier Grand Prix de Rome in 1914. As a student he  
acted as Widor's Assistant at Saint-Sulpice in Paris, and  
in 1926 was appointed Professor of Organ at the Paris  
Conservatoire, where he remained for 30 years. In 1934  
Widor retired from Saint-Sulpice at the age of 89, and  
Dupré at last became titulaire in his own right - a post  
which he held until the day of his death.

Dupré's *Symphonie-Passion* has its origins in an  
improvisation on the organ of the Wanamaker Store in  
Philadelphia in December 1921, during his first visit to  
America. Presented on this occasion with themes of  
plain-song - *Jesu Redemptor, Adeste Fideles, Stabat Mater*  
and *Adoro Te* - he decided to use them as the basis of a  
four-movement symphony depicting the life of Christ.  
The Improvisation was greeted with such acclaim that  
he immediately undertook to write a properly-composed  
version of the work. Remarkable both for its vivid  
musical imagery and for its varied and imaginative  
treatment of the plain-song themes, fully integrated into  
the structure of  
the outer  
movements and  
treated with great  
delicacy and  
restraint in the  
more overtly  
programmatic  
central  
movements, the  
symphony enjoyed  
an understandably  
immediate  
success. Its  
moments of  
tumultuous  
rhythmic élan,  
pictorial charm,  
obsessive ostinati, bleak imagery and finally triumphant  
intensity have assured its place as one of the great organ  
works of the early 20th century.



Continued overleaf