

President's message

June 2023

It is most heartening that the Eastern Regional Organ Day in Chelmsford Cathedral on the last Saturday of May proved to be so worthwhile. We in the EDOA are proud to have been involved from the start in all the planning and sponsoring, working alongside our colleagues in the Beds & Herts, the Cambridge, the Essex, and the Norfolk Organists' Associations and the City of London Organ Society. A full account of this most enjoyable and rewarding occasion has been written by Luke Jones, who is warmly thanked.

Opportunities to meet fellow organists beyond the usual confines are most welcome and so we look forward to joining the Southwark and South London Society of Organists when they venture into our own 'territory' on Saturday 23rd September. The plan is to meet at All Saints', Friern Barnet at 11.00 and move on to St Andrew's, Southgate for 2.30. When John Webber (SSL SO) and I met to check out the lie of the land, we not only found St Andrew's open but also the (musical!) vicar within and most supportive of our proposed visit. There's a wealth of lunch venues nearby or the peaceful garden at All Saints' would be ideal for a picnic; and bus and tube facilities are excellent. All details in our next newsletter of course and on Facebook and our website, but do please add this event to your diaries now.

Meanwhile, the date of our annual Members' Recital is almost upon us: Saturday 24th June at 6 pm. Following last year's enjoyable visit, hosted by Dave Miller, St Mary's, Potters Bar is the obvious venue. Everyone is invited to take part in what is always a relaxed and friendly occasion, and the option afterwards of the nearby Chinese Buffet should be an added enticement. See you there!

I'm sure none of you will need reminding that the 32nd St Albans Organ Festival is about to happen, from Monday 3rd to Saturday 15th July. An attractive innovation in recent years has been the free half-hour Bach Corners featuring promising young players. This year they take place on the Thursdays and Fridays at 1.15 and the organists are, respectively, Paul Greally, Ophelia Amar, Johannes Güdelhöfer and Charles Francis. This year marks the 60th anniversary of the IOF, for it was founded in 1963 – as of course was the EDOA!

A near contemporary of the St Albans Abbey organ is that of the Fairfield Halls, Croydon, similarly built by Harrison & Harrison in consultation with Ralph Downes. That was in 1964, the only 'even' year of the Organ Festival, the one that launched Gillian Weir's meteoric career. She was one of the early Fairfield recitalists and I recall from student days hearing her there in stunning form, including two encores, one of which was the 1st movement of Widor Six! Sadly that organ suffered from neglect for some decades, but it is at last being revived thanks to the Fairfield's Associate Director, assisted by the Bromley & Croydon Organists' Association. A new lunchtime series was recently launched, appropriately with Andrew Scott who maintains the instrument on behalf of H & H. He not only played well but also spoke well, not least with some entertaining anecdotes about the legendary Downes. With train travel from London to East Croydon so rapid, it will be worth looking out for the further Thursday 1.30 recitals, starting with Jonathan Holmes of the B&COA on 29th June.

The music printed at the end of our newsletters is invariably much appreciated. Our most frequent contributor is Peter Smith to whom we are most grateful. Peter tells us that his reduced mobility now prevents him from coming to events, but he still wishes to stay in contact, having been in the EDOA since 1967, and he sends his warmest greetings to all who know him. Thank

you, Peter, for all you have given over the years and will, we hope, be able to continue to do so!

As always we are spoilt for choice in our enjoyment of all the music on offer during the summer, either in person or as listeners, home or away, by whatever device. As well as the IOF so close to home, there's the greatest music festival of them all, the BBC Proms. Of obvious interest will be Prom 15, Anna Lapwood, and Prom 54, Isabelle Demers, but we cannot live by organ music alone! Dip your toe, as it were, into as many of the others as you can, though the IOF finale will let you off the hook from Prom 2: 'Northern Soul', "a stomping celebration of underground British club culture", though it might just possibly be your thing...

Terence Atkins