

## Past Events

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- **AGM Recital**
- **At Home with Ruth Lewis**

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### EDOA AGM Recital

It was musical chairs at the annual EDOA recital, held this year at St. Mary's Church, Welwyn. Dominating the village of Welwyn, St. Mary's is a Grade II listed building, which houses a fine two-manual organ built by Nicholson & Co. in 1992. Mechanically, this is a new instrument, but which incorporates pipework from both the previous Welwyn organ, and that of St. Paul's, Luton which became redundant in 1991.

Terence Atkins and Roger Carter presented a delightful recital of organ duets, ranging from the late Renaissance Welsh composer, Thomas Tomkins, to the Modern French composer and Organist, Jean Langlais.



Attended by around forty people, the recital entertained the audience both musically and visually, including a couple of comedic mishaps like when Terence initially forgot to put on his glasses – a light-hearted moment which drew some chuckles! Terence and Roger made full use of the instrument throughout the programme, with all resources put to the test in the larger, more substantial pieces by Merkel and Langlais. Initial reports confirmed that all feet and fingers remained unscathed from this!

The recital opened with Beethoven's 'Adagio for a Musical Clock', arranged by the composer for four hands: a beautiful, lyrical piece with child-like simplicity and light ornamentation, which was a delightful start to proceedings. Next was Tomkins' 'A Fancy for two to play' – a piece typical of the Tudor style which displayed the

Hill Diapasons to good effect. Mendelssohn's 'Fugue in D' called for a swap around for

Terence and Roger, and explored the Principal chorus in greater depth. To conclude the first half of the recital, Merkel's Allegro moderato from the Sonata in D minor brought everything into play in classic German Romantic style.

The second half began with John Marsh's 'Prelude and Fugue in C'; a stately and triumphant prelude leading into a joyful and well ornamented fugue, showcasing the Principal and Mixture choruses available at Welwyn. Time to change position again, this time for Wesley's 'Fuga' – a bold and celebratory conclusion to his Duet for Organ. Mozart's 'Fantasia in F minor and major' followed this, clearly defined in its three movements of minor, major, then minor; this allowed Terence and Roger to explore some of the many softer sounds available to them. Langlais' 'Final' from his Double Fantaisie involved another swap of organ bench positions and was a tour de force conclusion to the recital. A powerful piece using the full resources of this organ, requiring great dexterity and coordination between both players, masterfully executed.

This was an excellent recital overcoming the many challenges of performing duets on the organ with style and precision; the programme providing a great tour and demonstration of what this fine instrument is capable of.

*Philip Shrimpton & Poly Victoros*



After the recital members enjoyed a meal at the Wellington opposite the church. *Ed.*

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## At Home with Ruth Lewis: 29th February 2024

We had another great “At Home” evening on Thursday 29th February at the home of Ruth Lewis, attended by eight members: a wonderful hostess with a plentiful meal eaten in between playing/singing/listening to a variety of music on the theme of “spring”.

David Patrick opened the evening with a recording of Jongen’s Chanson de Mai. Rosemary Knight shared *Le Chant des Oiseaux* by Clément Janequin, (circa 1529), pointing out that it refers to May 1st and not “spring”. However, it was fascinating listening to the four-part voice sounds of creatures waking up and starting the spring season. Sounds sung were representations of the sounds of creatures, (including “cuckoo”), and not actual French words. We were grateful to have the score to view.

Michael Hennin and I played a piano duet arrangement of “I love Paris in the Springtime” by Cole Porter, from Porter’s musical *Can-Can*. The minor section was likened to the Greek folk dance “hasapiko”. Michael then shared a recording of *The Three Elizabeths* suite for orchestra, composed by Eric Coates, a contemporary of Cole Porter. We listened to the reflective middle movement, alluding musically to Elizabeth of Glamis, (the then queen consort), written in 1944. Movements either side alluded to Elizabeth I and Elizabeth II.



We were then treated to a recording of David playing his own organ transcription of Wagner’s “Ride of the Valkyries” at the church in Sora Tuna, Sweden, when he visited in 1980. It was good to see a copy of his arrangement.

Our supper break was preceded by a gathering around the piano in the hall, with Terence playing and conducting us as we sang the Flower Carol, beginning “Spring has now unwrapped the flowers”, sung to the 14th century tune *Tempus Adest Floridum*, (7676D), found in *The Oxford Book of Carols*, 1928, and in *Songs of Praise*; author unknown, 13th Century. The melody first appeared in the Swedish *Piae Cantiones*, 1582. *Piae Cantiones* was compiled and edited by Jaakko Suomalainen, a Protestant, and published in Finland by Theodor Petri, a Catholic.

This was followed by another song, “Spring bursts today, For Christ is ris’n and all the earth’s at play” — Music by Martin Shaw (1876-1958), and text from Christina Rossetti’s (1830-94) poem, “Easter Carol” — a total of nine verses!

After a delicious meal, we were treated to Hilary’s CD of a dawn chorus of birdsong plus cuckoo in a Sussex wood. We then moved on to a CD of Wild Goats and Unmarried Women, portraying the rich folk music of nineteenth century Eastern Europe, Turkey and the Balkans. Turkish tradition is illuminated in the track played: 'Teke Zortlatmasi', which takes its name from the *tekes* (billy goats) that live along the South West coast of Turkey. When the mating season starts, the males jump up and down to attract female goats — allegedly the inspiration for the genre of music heard here.

We were then entertained with Hilary and Ruth waltzing to some of J Strauss II’s “Voices of Spring”. Pavlos shared a recording of the symphonic poem “At St Luke’s Monastery”, (10th century, in Boeotia, Greece), based on a poem by Angelos Sikelianos set to music by Manolis Kalomiris in 1937.

Finally Terence shared some composers born on 29th February, including Rossini b. 1792, and Alessandro Striggio, 1536/7-1592, whose motet for 40 independent voices, inspired and challenged Thomas Tallis in his writing of his own 40 voice part *Spem in alium*.

A big thankyou goes to Ruth for hosting such an interesting evening and for preparing a lovely meal. It is always good to hear and learn about new music. Thank you to everyone for their “spring” contributions.

*Susan Dingle*