

President's Message

July 2024

An exciting and timely initiative from the Royal College of Organists to look forward to is *Play the Organ Year 2025*. The RCO's vision is for 'a world in which organ and choral music are widely valued as being central to cultural and spiritual life'. Working with its partner organisations, not least the IAO (which means 'us'!) and others such as the SWO, RSCM and BIOS, the aim is of course to encourage more people to play the organ, but also beyond this to increase an awareness of the pleasures of live and recorded organ music. As our honorary EDOA member and past-president Anne Marsden Thomas demonstrated with such foresight three decades ago when *National Learn the Organ Year* was launched, there is nothing like 'hands on' to engage and inspire. The now well-established *International Organ Day* will play a significant role, the date next year being 26th April. Further details are promised shortly on www.rco.org.uk/play

Closely related to all this is *The Organ Podcast* which the RCO began last January, and I would strongly urge you to explore the fortnightly episodes. They are hosted by organist and award-winning producer Mark O'Brien, and the sheer wealth of informative and entertaining interviews cannot be overstated. Just one example, episode 4 includes Darius Battiwalla on improvising to silent films, Tom Daggett on his outreach at Sheffield Cathedral, and our distinguished honorary member David Aprahamian Liddle on learning music through braille and on navigating his way around consoles, together with some delightful anecdotes from David about Marchal, Langlais, the Duruflés and Messiaen. One of the various ways of access is <https://theorganpodcast.buzzsprout.com/>

Following the success of the Eastern Regional Organ Day in Chelmsford last year, another is already being planned for the end of May next, this time in Cambridge. Once we have the date and venues sorted, these will be made known. I've every confidence that a splendid day there lies ahead. Meanwhile, as you'll see elsewhere in this newsletter, our next members' recital will take place on Saturday 28th September at St John's URC in New Barnet, where our member Richard Harvey has been at the helm for many a long year. Another date for your diaries is Thursday 14th November, for Ruth Lewis has kindly agreed to host another 'At Home'.

With the vagaries of the weather lately, we understandably wondered if the summer would ever arrive. In contrast, the BBC R3 Proms can always be relied on for day after day of wonderful live music-making. This year the organ prom is at the more convenient time of a Saturday mid morning, the better to avoid clashes with services and practices. I'm sure there are still tickets left for 10th August, when the legendary Jonathan Scott will put the instrument through its paces.

Thoughts of the Proms bring to mind the much-missed, internationally renowned conductor Andrew Davis, who died in April. It is worth recalling that he was a 'local lad' who received organ lessons in Watford (in fact from the uncle of the composer Alistair King) before Peter Hurford prepared him for the success of gaining the organ scholarship of King's Cambridge. Apparently, at the time of his death, Sir Andrew was working on orchestrating some of Bach's organ music.

The vicar of St Mary's Ware is inviting organists to take part in a recital/extravaganza planned for Saturday 24th August at 5.00 pm in memory of Peter Smith. To quote, she says, "This is in effect an extension of the funeral but the chance we didn't have to have fun with the instrument Peter so loved". The website is www.stmarysware.co.uk

Wishing you a relaxing and rewarding summer – and do find some time to dip in and out of those RCO Podcasts!

Terence Atkins