



The Old Southendian Organ Society (OSOS)



The Old Southendian Organ Society – Moving Forwards

Another year has brought another list of successes for the Old Southendian Organ Society, and if you were following us in the previous two magazines, hopefully you are already convinced that this group is “not a society just for the keen musician or organist”. This year, I hope to persuade you that the Society is no longer a small concern and is “going big” for the future. Read on to find out more...

Following the great success of the “eclectic mix” of music provided in *An Evening’s Entertainment* (reported on in the last issue), this spring saw a similar format repeated to no less acclaim. In our *Southendian Musical Showcase* on Saturday 16th April 2016, a large and friendly audience were treated to a great variety of polished performances and performers in a programme of show music, traditional organ repertoire, classical and contemporary music, song, and items from a one-off ensemble. Gerald Usher conducted the Southend Baroque Ensemble (formed of past and present students and other local friends) in the Allegro from *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale Concerto for Organ* by Handel, providing me the fun opportunity to create bird-like calling sounds from the organ console through light-hearted passages of interplay with the other instrumentalists! An unintended theme emerged when Samuel Eveleigh (then School Organist) provided more entertainment with Nigel Ogden’s *Penguins’ Playtime*, and current pupil Sam Willsmore performed an arrangement of Loesser’s *Variations on ‘The Ugly Duckling’*, complete with the twist of a costume change... Other highlights included Joe Palmer (Tuscany, 2004-11) with *Stars* from *Les Misérables* and *Mr Bojangles*, and Brian Fletcher (Troy, 1988-95) with French organist and composer Louis Lefébure-Wély’s *Marche in F Major*, which (as Brian described) becomes even more amusing and uplifting in style given the contrast with its origins in serious Roman Catholic church services in the 19th Century. Very many thanks to all who performed in and supported this thoroughly diverse and enjoyable evening.



Carrying the unintended bird theme in an inspired costume, Sam Willsmore performs at April’s Southendian Musical Showcase

We are looking forward to developing our plan of producing a CD recording of the organ (which will reflect the instrument’s versatility, both in style and role, and include a must-have recording of the School Song!) in the coming year. Unfortunately, due to the uncertainty and delays over the noisy building works planned at the School, less progress than previously envisaged has been made so far. As the School’s plans become clearer now that its planning applications have been settled, we hope to be able to announce more soon – so stay tuned!



SHSB students Annie, Keenan, Sam, Jack and Chris from the Organ Society at St Paul's Cathedral for a recital by Vincent Dubois in July 2016.

We were pleased to see the support of the growing group of eight (and counting!) organ pupils at the School continue under the watchful eye of Warren Symes (Teacher of Economics), and were also glad to be able to sponsor a trip to a recital in St Paul's Cathedral by Vincent Dubois in July. Jack Duffield (Tuscany, 2015-17) provided a great report on the excursion which I highly recommend interested people read in full at www.osos.org.uk. To quote Jack briefly, the music allowed him to "appreciate the skill of the musician...and the ease with which he built a piece from dissonant rumblings to euphoric climaxes, time and time again, each time differently and executed with a patience that belied his skill," and the excursion stood out as "a highlight of [their] time

at SHSB." The students were not only able to experience a fine concert organist playing a much larger instrument than they are accustomed to in Prittlewell Chase, but also had the opportunity to meet an Organ Scholar from St Paul's after the recital to learn more about the challenges and changes this brings. Following such positive feedback, OSOS hopes to enhance the experience for the School's Organ Society in the coming year with similar initiatives.

The Society has been fortunate to have had the support of a growing number of members and donors, with the additional assistance of a number of more substantial donations and gifts *in memoriam* gratefully received this year. We have also benefitted from becoming registered with HMRC to obtain the 25p per pound Gift Aid supplement from taxpayers' donations. I hope the earlier parts of this article have shown the enrichment this tradition provides students at the school, without mentioning in detail the countless other occasions in which the organ continues to take a central and iconic role within all students' school lives in assemblies, Prizegiving and Remembrance services and the like. OSOS is ready to support the School in preserving and enhancing the opportunities available from our most exceptional instrument. As the Hill Norman and Beard instrument approaches its centenary year in 2023, we are launching an ambitious target to raise £50,000 to see the organ into its next century and beyond as professional refurbishment and renewal become necessary. We already have a significant amount in our funds from membership subscriptions and donors, and would warmly welcome any further support from new members or donors as part of this effort. More information is available at www.osos.org.uk/membership and there is an insert with this issue of the magazine too – many thanks to all in advanced for helping at whatever scale is appropriate to strengthen the support OSOS can provide.

We are grateful to the OSA for its unfailing support of OSOS's activities, and are pleased that a recommendation for OSOS to be formally affiliated with the OSA is to be taken to this year's OSA in November. Particular thanks are due to Clive Shiret for his enthusiasm and encouragement in this area.

Moving ahead to our next event, after the success of our latest concerts, we are pleased to be able to invite you all to our next evening, which will be held on Saturday November 19th 2016. This will offer the opportunity to display yet more of the OSA's musical talent in an event with something for everyone! If anyone is at all interested in being involved in our events, or with anything else, please do not hesitate to contact me (email info@osos.org.uk).

For lots more information about the organ, events and programmes past and future, do see our website (www.osos.org.uk). Follow us on Facebook (search Old Southendian Organ Society), and please do not hesitate to get in contact. We'd be very pleased to hear from you!

*Joseph Zammit (Tuscany, 2004-11)
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