



The Old Southendian Organ Society (OSOS)



SCHOOL ORGANIST REPORT (2017-2018)

Thomas Stanford (Sparta, 2011-18) recounts his year as School Organist



Throughout the year, I have been fortunate enough to receive fortnightly lessons on the organ from Warren Symes, particularly focusing on areas such as improvisation and hymn playing, allowing me to get involved in playing in assemblies from early in the year. This has been particularly important as I started the position with very limited experience of performing keyboard instruments in public. I have been able to accompany hymns, improvise pieces at the start of assembly, and play prepared pieces at the end.

In addition to the lessons received from Warren Symes, I have also had the opportunity to learn more about the workings of the organ through lessons and tuning sessions with Gerald Usher throughout the year. I am very grateful to him for teaching me this during my time as school organist.

Being school organist has also afforded me the opportunity to watch in detail much of the restoration of the Memorial Organ. I have been able to see large visible changes being made to the organ for the first few months of the school year, including the painting of the front pipes, updates made to the console, and seeing new pipes coming into the hall to be fitted. I have also had the privilege to speak regularly with the organ builders, and to ask them questions on the restoration process which has allowed me to better understand the workings of the organ.



One of the highlights for me was coming back after completing my exams to play in the end of year assembly. On top of the usual improvisation, I was able to play a fanfare I had been preparing at the end of the assembly. This piece showed off the volume and the stop combinations of the restored organ and was a fantastic way to end 7 years of being a student at SHSB.



Another enjoyable experience has been playing in the OSOS concerts. The first concert, in September, was held at St Augustine's while the school organ was out of action. As well as playing repertoire on the flute, recorder, and piccolo, I was also able to hear the church's organ, which all made for an enjoyable concert. Then in April I performed at the first composite concert for the newly refurbished organ, playing a piece that exhibited the new string stops that had just been installed to the Swell organ.

This year I have also played a part in preparing the school song to be published. Inspired at the end of year 12 by a passing comment made by Gerald Usher that it needed notating on a computer, and motivated to create a more legible part from which to learn the school song, I wrote up the piece using music notation software over the holidays. Since then, acting on suggestions by Joe Zammit and Gerald Usher, I added words and made other small changes and the final version is now freely available via the Old Southendian Organ Society website (www.osos.org.uk).

In all, I have thoroughly enjoyed being school organist for 2017-2018. I have learnt a lot, improved greatly as a musician, and I have had fun doing it. Most importantly, I would like to thank Warren Symes and Gerald Usher for all their teaching and guidance.

While I will not be studying music, I look forward to continuing the organ when I go to university, and I hope to continue to be involved in the Old Southendian Organ Society.

The School Song

Words by Lionel Elvin (Tuscany 1917-1924)
Music by Dr. Arthur Hutchings (Music Master 1938-1947)
Edited by Gerald Usher (Athens 1951-1958, Staff 1993-2005)
Organ Score by Thomas Stanford (Sparta 2011-2018)

With *Gusto* (♩ = 116)
Organ

1. When our ship shall leave the river bank,
Its timbers brave the main,
Our port shall gleam through mists of time,
And beckon back again,
Then each adventurer shall feel,
As onward strains the eager keel,
From the School beside the church and sea
The speeding wind of memory.

2. And some shall picture pounding ball
On turf of sodden field,
And some the fight on fiery pitch
When grit refused to yield,
And some shall think of desk and pen,
And organ-voices heard again,
And laughter ringing merrily
Adown the aisles of memory.

3. Here make we then, as old time men,
The pledge our souls demands:
To build as they, the best we may
The house not built with hands,
So, one with future and with Past,
Our work in School shall live and last,
And through the centuries to be
Our School shall grow in memory.