INTERNATIONAL ORGAN FESTIVAL

THE ANATOMY OF A DREAM

1963 to 2001

Researched and compiled in 2003 by

PAUL COLLINS

CONTENTS

At the time of writing "The Anatomy of a Dream" in 2003 I had known Peter Hurford for more than 30 years and been associated with the IOF for nearly as long. As a member of the Society, I had fulfilled a wide variety of roles within the ambit of the Festival, ranging from performer to steward, from helping with the "heavy-gang" operations to page–turning at Festival recitals, from supervising competitors' practice arrangements to transporting the jury around the city of St Albans, from entertaining musicians to placating the public, from hanging banners to acting barman, from proof-reading programmes to turning out the Cathedral lights.

In 1985 I was elected on to the Society's Management Committee and then became a member of the Board when the charitable Company was established in 1991. During the years from 1992 to 1996 I served as the Society's Finance Director, after which period I resigned from the Board. My wife, Anne, was appointed as the IOF's first Administrator in 1988, a post she held with indefatigable patience and understanding – and no little success - until 1997. Anne and I were both made Honorary Life Members of the IOF in 1999.

Paul Collins
December 2023

THE ANATOMY OF A DREAM

INTRODUCTION

Hast thou a cunning instrument of play,
'Tis well; but see thou keep it bright,
And tuned to primal chords, so that it may
Be ready day and night.
For when He comes thou know'st not, who shall say :
"These virginals are apt"; and try a note,
And sit, and make sweet solace of delight,
That men shall stand to listen on the way,
And all the room with heavenly music float.

Thomas Edward Brown (1830 – 1897)

The International Organ Festival in St Albans in July 2001 was a special event. It marked the twenty-first gathering of young organists from around the world to test themselves in competition and be judged by a panel of eminent practitioners in their art. No other Festival of its kind has survived for so long; no other Festival has focussed with such tenacious devotion on the creative capabilities of the organ within the mainstream of music-making.

Founded in 1963 the International Organ Festival (IOF) was the inspiration of Peter Hurford when he was Master of Music at St Albans Cathedral. He had a dream then that the organ (and the organist), for ever hidden somewhere out of sight in the corner of the church or cathedral, could and should be released from its primary liturgical role and re-established as an influential instrument in its own right. Most dreams last a few seconds, and are instantly forgotten in the reality of daylight. This dream lived on, and the vision which Peter Hurford inspired in his friends and supporters during those early days of the IOF has been nourished and developed for forty years. Such is the reward for his initiative and his far-seeing ambition.

While the organ competitions – one for interpretation and the other for improvisation – have always been at the heart of the Festivals, Peter Hurford realised from the outset that the organ had to be seen and heard in a wider context, and he deliberately integrated the opening competitions into a mosaic of other events such as recitals, lectures and masterclasses, all of which took place in the Cathedral. From these adventurous beginnings the IOF has grown in stature, reputation and complexity so that it now offers a wealth of choral and orchestral concerts, recitals, lectures, demonstrations, side events and late-night entertainment every other year in a wide range of venues throughout the city of St Albans. But one crucial feature has never changed; the organ has always remained central to the ethos and character of the IOF.

The twenty-first Festival was certainly a landmark event and, in company with many of its predecessors, proved highly enjoyable and successful. And yet at its conclusion audiences as ever were simply left with their own memories of the music, the competitions, and the

friendships made (or renewed) during the previous ten days. While there's nothing original or surprising in that, was there not a more enduring means of recording the IOF's remarkable achievement in reaching this milestone? Was there not some way in which appropriate recognition could be given to the longevity of this unique fixture in the music world and the legacy which had been established? Was it possible to realise Peter Hurford's dream in a more tangible form?

I pondered for some time on these, and other similar, questions until it seemed to me that an analysis of all the music performed within the IOF since 1963 might in its own way graphically illustrate the breadth and scale of the Festival's success in remaining at the forefront of promoting the organ for such a long period. A record of the music played and the musicians who performed would perhaps also articulate Peter Hurford's vision and would provide a fitting testament to his pioneering dream.

The outcome of this endeavour was embodied in three separate, yet complementary, schedules which embraced all the music played, the artists, the type of event, the venues and the dates. In the first schedule the music was listed in alphabetical order by composer, while in the second the same information was listed by event (ie. competition, concert, recital etc) as well as in alphabetical order by composer. The third, and considerably shorter, schedule provided details of all the other events incorporated within the Festivals outside the principal musical arena, and covered those areas such as Lectures, Masterclasses, Late-Night Events, Organ Demonstrations, Workshops and Exhibitions.

The source of all the information used for this purpose has been the published Festival programme, supplemented where necessary by other material either issued in the course of each Festival or made available through my own or IOF records. The assumption has been made that the musicians and artists duly appeared and performed on the day as scheduled except where known otherwise. I tried to make the analyses as comprehensive as possible but there are inevitably some omissions either because I have been unable to find any record of the music actually played at a specific recital or concert or because both the artists and the music appear to be unknown. This is particularly applicable to the early years of the two organ competitions where the names of the winners are known but not all the names of the other competitors who reached the Finals. Moreover, while there is no problem in identifying the works set for the competitions, a significant proportion of the music played in the Eliminations and the Finals represented the competitors' own choice and, in the absence of appropriate information produced at the time for the benefit of the audiences, it has not proved easy to assemble the relevant material. On other occasions, even though the names of the finalists were known, alternative pieces were set for the Finals, and I have not been able to discover any supplementary programmes issued on the day which would have provided me with information on the choice of works made by those finalists.

In a Festival built around the organ it would be easy to overlook the contribution made by that other pillar of musical life in the Cathedral, the Cathedral Choir, particularly in view of the fact that the twin roles of Artistic Director of the Festival and Master of Music at the Cathedral have, except for a period of twelve years, been invested in the same person. The involvement of the Cathedral Choir has for many years been integral to the planning of the concert programmes.

But I could not at the same time ignore the part played by the Choir – and subsequently also the St Albans Abbey Girls Choir following its formation in 1996 – in the services held throughout Festival weeks, the music for which so often complemented what was on offer elsewhere. It is very much for this reason, therefore, that the music sung and the organ voluntaries played at the Cathedral services have been identified in the main schedules wherever possible.

The creation of "dry" analytical data would not attract much interest by itself except perhaps for those who take delight in poring over statistical records of this nature. It is not for me to provide a critical appraisal of the wealth of music and music-making which this research has revealed other than to suggest that it offers clear evidence of the extent to which Peter Hurford's original objectives in founding the IOF have been admirably fulfilled; and the volume and breadth of musical activity witnessed and heard thoughout all the Festivals provides a recognisable anatomy of that dream which so engaged his imagination in 1963.

Nevertheless, some observations on the Festivals and the Competitions might assist the reader in appreciating how the IOF – the "friendly" Festival - has progressed and might add "flesh" on the "bones" of all the data. This narrative does not represent a history of the IOF, although it encapsulates many historical features which were significant and important in respect of the Festival's general development. I have challenged other peoples' knowledge and memory for purpose of accuracy but I have not sought their views. Indeed, I have tried to avoid expressing opinions but on those occasions when they rise to the surface they very much reflect my own experience and my association with the IOF over a period of more than thirty years. I am very grateful to all those who have tested my memory, checked my facts and provided those missing pieces in the jigsaw.

April 2003 (revised in December 2023)

PREFACE

In 1979 Peter Hurford welcomed us to the International Organ Festival with a personal message :

We all have dreams – the stuff of life that kindles the imagination, sparks enthusiasm and fills the world with new purpose. But a vision is one thing : fulfilling it is another. Composition is ten per cent inspiration and ninety per cent perspiration. The first line of a poem arrives by heavenly messenger, but the rest is human endeavour, the experience of the spirit which, when honed and shaped, yields nurture for spirits yet to come.

I had a dream, twenty years ago. I loved the organ and yet saw how music lovers shunned this instrument of mine : it was tied to the church in an age of decreasing church-going ; its sounds, smoothing, soothing, seemed forever redolent of best hats and Sunday lunch ; why, the very word "voluntary" described anything from the organist's status, or the generic title of any piece played after the service, to church-going itself. The situation was unhealthy and unpositive. The poetic articulation of great counterpoint, the strong interpretation of vast musical forms all seemed submerged by the organ's incidental ability to cover the footfalls of sidesmen and reverently to blanket anything from worldly thoughts to poor liturgical stage-management. I well remember when a priest cried "the organ will play ……", and his surprise when it didn't.

The transition to a musical instrument for today seemed impossible. Yet the dream was there, and had been quickened by experience of competitions and festivals abroad at which in the 1950's the English organist was regarded as a contradiction in terms, and viewed with disbelief if he actually managed to make music against such competitors as the national descendants of Bach and Couperin and Frescobaldi (not for nothing, however, are we descendants of Byrd and Gibbons and Purcell and the Wesleys).

The English organ had a slow start ; later it was encumbered with our Victorian choral traditions (of which I am a practised admirer) ; but perhaps it is these very origins which today give the English organist a sense of line and colour that is an advantage over those lacking the benefits of a singing tradition, and themselves encumbered with weighty traditions of organ interpretation, some of which falls heavily upon light, modern ears.

Sixteen years ago the International Organ Festival was founded. In 1979 we celebrate our tenth festival with friends worldwide. Yet the tide is ever moving, and I have taken my dream a stage further by committing myself to performance and teaching on a variety of shores : I am trying to keep my instrument "bright and tuned to primal chords".

The Festival Society is trying to do the same thing, mindful of its traditions but not saddled with them, and remembering the objects for which it was founded. We have been fortunate over the years in having such a beautiful setting as St Albans Abbey – where men have tried their faith for centuries – in which to try our notes. Those who have stood and listened on the way have multiplied a hundred-fold, and many whom the vision has inspired have lent their talents and given their time to create a band of incomparably faithful helpers for whom our ten festivals are now a challenge to the future.

And challenges there are; for there will always be those who like the ends but not the means – who see a festival but dream no dreams. The years have given us dreamers and practical men, and both are vital. For the future we can but heed the words of Thomas Brown :

"Hast thou a cunning instrument of play, '*Tis well; but see thou keep it bright …"*

THE FESTIVALS

The early years

There can perhaps be no greater tribute to the work and inspiration of Peter Hurford than the fact that for a period of some forty years the International Organ Festival has continued to develop and flourish in St Albans, and even today continues to repay in ample measure the faith of those who first believed in, and shared, his dream back in the late 1950s.

When the Festival was founded in 1963 it had - in Peter Hurford's own words - two main purposes : to foster among young English organists a high standard of organ performance through contact both with their contemporaries from abroad and with the many internationally distinguished musicians invited to give concerts and judge competitions during the Festival week; secondly, to encourage the art of improvisation, which had flourished in the past four decades in the field of jazz but which otherwise had been for two centuries a lost art in England.

The IOF was born out of Peter Hurford's own personal experience of organ competitions and his wish to attract new and larger audiences to the "king of instruments" by broadening the range of activity on offer at the time. The Festival also provided an admirable platform from which to celebrate the arrival of the new Harrison organ in St Albans Cathedral which Peter Hurford himself had been instrumental in securing from the then Dean's Council a few years earlier and which was dedicated in November 1962.

In 1963 the IOF had no money, no reputation and a certain amount of cynicism to counter. There was, on the other hand, considerable faith, much energy, and the practical goodwill of many friends, all of whom wholeheartedly supported Peter Hurford's vision to draw the organ out from the darkness of the ecclesiastical liturgy into the light of relevance as a mainstream musical instrument. A review of the music played throughout the Festivals and the musicians who have contributed to this process is comprehensive testament to a flourishing outcome for those early aspirations.

The first IOF lasted for five days, and comprised *"separate competitions for Organ Playing and Improvisation, recitals, lectures and masterclasses by internationally renowned organists."* The Festival was run with the co-operation of the BBC, and the members of the Jury were :

Piet Kee (Holland) / Marie-Claire Alain (France)
Ralph Downes (England) / François Rabot (Switzerland)
Harry Croft-Jackson (for the BBC)

With the exception of François Rabot who was replaced in 1964 by Anton Heiller, all these organists returned as members of the Jury for each Festival up to 1969 ; the first three Festivals were held annually but the IOF became a biennial event in 1967, and has remained so ever since. The association and warmth of affection felt for the IOF by Marie-Claire Alain and Piet Kee is very much reflected in their welcome back to St Albans as members of the 2001 Festival Jury, some thirty and twenty years respectively after their last appearances in that capacity.

Apart from one of the lectures, all the events in that opening Festival took place in St Albans Cathedral, including the masterclasses which were held in the organ loft (maximum audience of 28) and relayed to the remaining audience in the Quire. A ticket for the whole Festival cost the equivalent of £2.63 at today's prices! And, we understand, the result was a profit of £0.50!

The competitions integrated within the IOF – for Organ Playing / Interpretation and for Improvisation – were central to Peter Hurford's aims and ambitions from the outset. Nor has the IOF ever failed to live up to the impact and resonance of its "international" status; jury members have always been willing to fly-in from around the world, and the prestige of the competitions – it can hardly have been the anticipated financial reward – have constantly attracted gifted young organists from a similar breadth of countries. For Peter Hurford it was crucial that a student could compete against, and gain experience from, his or her counterpart in other countries, and that he / she could hear (and talk to) musicians of international distinction within the ambit of the IOF's musical and social environment. This "credo" is as fundamental today, when there are many more opportunities for organists to test themselves in a competitive environment, as it was in the 1960s when the decision to launch the IOF reflected the paucity of openings for comparable exposure. Not without good reason has the IOF been described as a "friendly" Festival. The welfare of the competitors has been paramount, and the IOF has always embraced candidates with a warm welcome, accommodated them with local host families, encouraged them to attend Festival events, and provided facilities for mutual learning and debate either amongst themselves or, where appropriate, with members of the jury. There have been many imitators worldwide but none has outlived the IOF.

The prominence of the competitions within the ethos of the IOF warrants its own analysis, and their development and progress is analysed later in more detail. The pattern of the early Festivals – recitals, lectures and masterclasses - followed generally similar lines but there was a hint of the developments to come with the introduction of an orchestral concert for the first time in 1965 at which Marie-Claire Alain played Paul Hindemith's *Organ Concerto No 1* and for which the public was admitted free of charge because the concert was to be broadcast by courtesy of the BBC Third Programme. There was also a recital that year by The London Brass Consort, interlaced with music played by Gillian Weir, the winner of the previous year's Organ Playing Competition. Not without good reason have brass groups - including The Philip Jones Brass Ensemble, London Gabrieli Brass Ensemble, Grimethorpe Colliery Band, and the Royal Military School of Music, Kneller Hall – featured significantly in subsequent festival programmes.

Change and development

From its humble origins it soon became apparent that the IOF was not prepared to rest on any laurels which it may have gathered to itself in its infancy. Given the leadership and the commitment, innovation and development were inevitable. Nobody doubted that, while change might not necessarily lead to success, the Festival was unlikely to sustain its position and remain a positive voice for thrusting the organ into the mainstream of musical activity unless new avenues were explored and new initiatives taken. Change might involve risk but this was a familiar position for any ambitious arts organisation of its time.

Looking back over the history of the IOF certain Festivals stand out as milestones either because of the force of the changes which were introduced or because of the influence played by external factors in shaping their development. There were perhaps six Festivals – those in 1967, 1971, 1973, 1977, 1981 and 1989 – when this momentum was more noticeable because, for different reasons and on different scales, they all heralded the creation of a wider musical environment as well as providing a platform on which to broaden the interest and involvement of competitor, performer and audience alike. The 1989 Festival was also important for another reason in that it ushered in a period of twelve years when the Artistic Director did not hold the post of Master of Music at the Cathedral.

The developments associated with the 1967 Festival were particularly significant for their time. At the conclusion of the previous Festival, the Festival Committee launched a competition for the composition of two new works for the organ with (a) a prize of £100 for a concerto for organ and orchestra and (b) a prize of £50 for a work for solo organ. Both compositions were to receive broadcast performances. No less than 49 manuscripts were received from composers in twelve countries for this Composition Competition (as it was called) in June 1966. They were judged by a small panel chaired by Meredith Davies. The winner of the concerto competition was Robin Holloway, whose work was premiered by Gillian Weir at the final concert of the 1967 Festival. Sadly, this project was not developed further.

A further innovation that year was the introduction of an Exhibition of Small Organs in the Cathedral by UK organ builders. For practical reasons the number of exhibitors was limited to six firms of varying size – Grant, Degens and Bradbeer Ltd, Wm. Hill & Son and Norman Beard Ltd, N.P. Mander Ltd, Rushworth and Dreaper Ltd, J.W. Walker and Sons Ltd, and R.H. Walker and Son Ltd – all of whom were selected to demonstrate the *"tonal characteristics of small organs and to explain their construction"* at specific times during the week. A last-minute addition came in the form of a small *portatif* organ built by Ronald Sharp, an Australian later to be chosen to design and build the organ at the Sydney Opera House. This *portatif* organ was carried by the player who "blew" with one elbow and played the notes with his other hand. Thus was the pattern of the small organs' exhibitions established, and informal demonstrations by invited organists were increasingly built into the Festival programmes. To this day audiences and visitors to the Cathedral have been able to admire the delicacies and strengths of these instruments and to appreciate the sorts of organs that can be constructed for a reasonable outlay and with the minimum of resources. In 1991 these demonstrations of the organ builder's art were further complemented by practical sessions on making wooden pipes and the construction of the organ case.

Outside of the organ arena the 1967 Festival also featured a concert of madrigals sung *"under the stars"* in the amphitheatre of St Albans School by The Alban Singers under the direction of Peter Hurford. Coming at the end of an intense period of organ dominance, these madrigal concerts provided a perfect antidote to all the music played and heard earlier in the week, and remained a feature of future Festivals for many years.

Structural improvements

The changes adopted in connection with the 1971 Festival were fundamental to the future of the IOF in that they reflected the need to strengthen its structure and its finances. Hitherto, since its formation the IOF had been overseen and administered by an informal committee under Peter Hurford's leadership. However, there had been no formal governance, and the financial viability of each festival was undoubtedly starting to present increasing difficulties which could only be alleviated by broadening the base of public support. The growth in turnover at the time was around 30% to 40% for each Festival, and this could not be sustained without the expansion becoming a potential threat to the existence of the IOF.

A scheme to attract Patrons had been set up as far back as 1965, and the income from this source contributed to the IOF's finances and its plans for progress. Indeed, this manifestation of local support may well have helped to influence the Arts Council of Great Britain to provide *"some measure of financial backing"* for the first time in 1967 and to increase this funding for the following Festival.

However, this open endorsement by the Arts Council of the IOF's emerging stature in the musical life of the UK would not have been maintained in the longer term without simultaneous changes to the way in which the Festival operated. This was pushing at an open door. Peter Hurford himself was *"unhappy that a flourishing and promising concern should be held basically at the behest of one person"*; and it was acknowledged that more skilled help was needed in order to ensure that the internal and external demands placed upon the IOF could be adequately resourced and serviced. The time had come to place the IOF on a broader administrative and financial framework.

To this end, therefore, in June 1970 the decision was taken at a general meeting of patrons and supporters of the Festival that the IOF should become constituted as an unincorporated Society and registered as a charitable trust with the Charity Commission; the Society would have independent Trustees, and a formal Management Committee would be responsible for its operation. The "Patrons" now became "Members" who had voting rights and were empowered to elect the Committee.

Funding appeals

This new chapter in the life of The International Organ Festival Society, as it was now called, was accompanied by the launch of an appeal for £25,000, a substantial sum at the time in the context of the Festival's costs at around £3,000. The objects of the appeal were to finance an expansion in the Society's activities, with particular reference to developing its educational work

through specialist classes for advanced students and seminars on interpretative issues, and to consider promoting other events between the Festivals. The latter objective clearly embodied concern that the biennial timing of the Festivals was creating a musical "vacuum" which needed to be filled in some way. The ability of the Society to initiate programmes of activity between Festivals without simply adding to its existing financial pressures has never been easy but it was seen as important then, and remains as crucial now, for the Society to be offering some form of musical continuity in order to retain the interest of current supporters and attract new ones.

The appeal comprised two elements; the sum of £15,000 was intended for a Capital Fund, the income from which would enable the Society to fund the proposed expansion in activity. The balance of £10,000 was to be placed towards the design and purchase of the finest possible two-manual mechanical-action organ with pedals. The instrument was intended to be movable, and would be the property of the Society. The experience of a similar two-manual mechanical-action organ – built by D.A. Flentrop from the Netherlands and played at concerts at the 1969 Festival as well as for the Final of the Interpretation Competition that year – had provided convincing evidence of the artistic potential of such an instrument for purposes of interpretation, and it was reckoned that the possession of an organ built on these lines would not only enable the Society to become more independent of specific venues but would also demand an uncompromising standard of performance. While the Capital Fund appeal did not unfortunately prove attractive, the Society was nevertheless successful in fulfilling the other objective and building its own organ. But it was to be a further nineteen years before that particular dream was realised!

A broadening of interests

1973 proved another landmark. Ten years had now elapsed, and it was time to take stock. The foundations of the new Society were secure, even if the finances were never more than comfortable. Fringe activities, notably late-night entertainment, festival parties and a visit to the gardens of the Royal National Rose Society, had started to add breadth to the attractions on offer but there was more that could still be achieved with regard to the main musical provisions. Peter Hurford himself had come to realise that there was less excitement in a Festival which *"generally consisted of a number of organ recitals on consecutive days, sometimes with a competition thrown in to give the week substance"*, because this only catered for those who were already interested in the organ. He therefore sought to advance the Festival still further in a manner which allowed the organ to remain the dominant voice but within a context which "stretched" the music in different directions and broadened the interest of the listener.

The Festival that year lasted a full week and extended its boundaries in many ways. The Improvisation Competition became the *Tournemire Prize* as a result of an agreement with Mme Alice Tournemire to establish a competition in memory of her husband, Charles Tournemire, the eminent French organist and composer; the Society commisioned major new works from John Gardner, Patrick Gowers and Bryan Kelly; the Festival opened with a major choral concert (J.S. Bach's *Mass in B minor*) and concluded with a visit from one of the country's leading symphony orchestras (Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra), both events being "firsts" in their own field; the Festival programme offered a choral or orchestral concert on almost every evening; the closing concert provided an opportunity to hear performances of two contemporary organ

concertos by Paul Hindemith (1962) and Kenneth Leighton (1972); and the concept of the "Bach Corner" was introduced, a series of short daily recitals of music by J.S. Bach – subsequently embellished in later years to include related works by other composers - by young and relatively unknown British organists for which public admission was free.

Outside of the mainstream activity the 1973 Festival offered additional fringe and late night events, ranging from a visit by the King's Singers to a visit to the St Albans Organ Museum. The Members' Garden Party was launched, and the opportunity was taken to provide a social environment for audiences and members in the form of a Festival Club housed in the Abbey Institute, a building in Romeland Hill at the west end of the Cathedral currently occupied by the Crusader Book Centre, where people could meet, eat and drink, and generally reflect on life and the week's music. The Festival Club very quickly established itself as a permanent feature, although its location variously moved around St Albans, from the Abbey Institute to the Diocesan Offices in Holywell Hill, to the Abbey Theatre, and finally to St Albans School where (with one exception) it has remained since 1989. And, finally, on 30th June 1973 there was a party to end all parties to round off the Festival, suitably dubbed "The Ox Roast" which the Society organised in conjunction with the St Albans City Council and which occupied the whole of the "orchard" area south of the Cathedral.

Further expansion

All in all, there was a significant "shift of gear" in 1973, in part helped by an in-borne confidence that the public would respond to the challenges built into the programme for that year and renewed optimism that a sustainable financial future could still be secured. By contrast, 1977 was a year of anniversaries to commemorate the fact that (a) in 1077 Abbot Paul de Caen began rebuilding the Saxon Abbey Church dedicated to Alban, (b) in 1877 the diocese of St Albans was created, with the Abbey Church becoming a Cathedral and the town of St Albans a City by Royal Charter, and (c) it was also the year of the Queen's Silver Jubilee. There was much to celebrate, and the Society played its part. The ecclestiastical festivities were embodied in "FestAlban", a series of projects thoughout the year within the diocese based on the theme of "Belonging", and the Festival became an identifiable (but distinct) part of those celebrations.

For the first, and only, time the Festival was extended to nearly a fortnight which naturally provided the opportunity for many extra events. No less than six new works were commissioned, from composers such as Justin Connolly and Anthony Payne, although the work expected from Sir William Walton could not be delivered due to his ill health. One innovation that year was to become an instant success. Two eminent collegiate choirs from Oxford (Magdalen College) and Cambridge (St John's College) were invited to join the St Albans Cathedral Choir in a programme of collective and individual choral singing. Although the Cathedral Choir had performed in concert as far back as 1969, this was the first occasion when the stage was shared with other groups of comparable stature. In this way the "Three Choirs Concert" was established, and the special nature of this particular evening, with its spacial effects and its musical intensity, has never since failed to be incorporated into the Festival calendar to the delight of audiences and performers alike.

Organised visits outside St Albans to see and hear different organs were also planned in earnest in 1977 as a complementary part of the main musical feast ; demonstrations on the Ashridge College Chapel organ (Thomas Eliot : 1818) and the Hatfield House organ (Hahn : 1609, but restored by Noel Mander in 1972) contrasted strikingly with the powerful theatre organ at the Odeon, Leicester Square and the Compton organ transported from the Gaumont, Finchley Road to the slightly surreal surroundings of "The Plough" public house in Great Munden. As with the "Three Choirs" concert, so the novelty of these visits and the splendours which they unearthed proved popular with festival-goers, and quickly gained their own recognised place in future programme planning.

The end of an era

Peter Hurford retired from being Master of Music at the Cathedral in 1978; however, he was already planning the 1979 Festival, which he saw through to its conclusion before handing over the IOF reins to his successor at the Cathedral, Stephen Darlington. Peter Hurford was then elected Chairman of the Society for a short period before being elevated to the post of President, a position he continues to hold with notable distinction.

Looking back on the immediate post-Hurford period it is clear that Stephen Darlington saw little reason to make radical changes to a format which was firmly established and with which the public had become comfortably familiar. The pattern of large choral and orchestral forces for the opening and closing concerts, complemented on the one hand by chamber groups, the Three Choirs concert, and solo organ and other recitals, and interspersed on the other with visits, organ demonstrations, lectures and late-night entertainment, had proved a successful framework into which the two organ competitions could be seamlessly interwoven. So why introduce material changes? Stephen Darlington had, of course, benefitted from his association with the 1979 Festival as the Cathedral's Master of Music, rather than as the Society's Artistic Director with all its attendant responsibilities. He was therefore in an excellent position to judge which paths to follow in 1981 when the Festival became his sole responsibility.

While the approach to the overall outline programming for the Festival did not therefore necessarily change to any great extent over the next few years, some significant developments did nevertheless emerge. In line with prevailing interests at the time, Stephen Darlington exposed St Albans to the wonders of contemporary music and its theatrical overtones. In successive Festivals we witnessed The Fires of London playing and performing *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame* by Peter Maxwell Davies (1981), Arnold Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* performed by Jane Manning and the Nash Ensemble under Norman del Mar (1983), and Igor Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale* with Timothy West as the Narrator (1985). Indeed, this last item was featured within a whole evening of contemporary music played by Aquarius under Nicholas Cleobury, which also included music by John Casken (a work commissioned by the St Albans Festival) and Robin Holloway. The inclusion of music-theatre was maintained by Colin Walsh in his only Festival (1987) when the Liverpool University Music Theatre Group performed works by Harrison Birtwistle, Michael Whitticker and Peter Strudwick.

The pattern and continuity of the Festivals was therefore upheld during the 1980s, and the organ's central role never varied, whether as a solo instrument, part of a chamber ensemble or in

an accompanying capacity. However, there was a noticeable movement towards embracing subsidiary "themes" or focal points. In particular, greater attention was given to those composers whose anniversaries occurred in festival years, and programme planning reflected a more prominent coverage of their music. The 1989 Festival took this approach a stage further by having each day's music (and related activities) directly associated with a specific country in Europe.

The dream comes true

The final landmark year was undoubtedly 1989 – and for good reason. In the first place it was directed by somebody other than the Master of Music at the Cathedral, and secondly the delivery of the Society's own organ was finally achieved after nineteen years of hard labour.

In 1970 the Society had launched a capital appeal for £25,000, part of which (£10,000) was intended for the construction of an organ to serve the IOF's interests as both an educational and a concert instrument. The path to success was littered with difficulties, not least financial, and for many years the funds available were tantalising short of what was prudently needed to commission the instrument. Finding a suitable site for the organ proved similarly demanding until, with sufficient goodwill on both sides and the necessary approvals secured from the various authorities, the organ was installed in St Saviour's Church, St Albans in 1989 by kind permission of the Vicar and the Parochial Church Council. Compared with the appeal target of £10,000, the final cost amounted to £82,000 ; but the challenge was met, and the funds were raised.

The new organ, a two-manual mechanical-action instrument, was designed and built by Peter Collins in the style of, and as a homage to, Andreas Silbermann, an 18th century organ-builder of some renown. The inaugural concert, a programme devoted predominantly to the music of J.S. Bach and his contemporaries, was given by Peter Hurford on 8th July that year to launch the 1989 Festival. The installation of the Society's organ represented the culmination of an unquenchable dream; an instrument designed to test organists and their approach to organ-playing, it was to be made available on equal terms to members of the Society, organ scholars and professional organists for private study and social or public performance, and its arrival marked another turning-point in the Society's development.

In the circumstances, it almost goes without saying that the new organ made a significant and immediate impact, not least on all the competitors who now had to prove themselves equally adept at performing on two contrasting, yet complementary, instruments (the *Collins* organ in St Saviour's Church and the *Harrison* organ in the Cathedral). For its part the audience had the advantage of listening to a wider range and variety of music and witnessing at closer quarters the dexterity and skills of the organist, whether competitor or concert performer. And for the planner, St Saviour's Church now offered an alternative smaller-scale venue for concerts and recitals, and consequently more flexibility and scope for imaginative programming.

Changes in direction

Colin Walsh succeeded Stephen Darlington as Master of Music at the Cathedral in 1985, and was responsible for promoting the 1987 Festival. His departure for Lincoln in 1988 left the Society in a dilemma because final planning for the 1989 Festival could not be deferred pending the arrival of his successor at the Cathedral. So, the only practical outcome was to appoint an Artistic Director from outside the Cathedral's musical hierarchy in the manner of previous incumbents. No stranger to the workings and mysteries of the IOF, Susan Sturrock was chosen for this task, and led the Society through four Festivals up to and including 1995.

It was a period of excitement and exploration, not only musically but also in other art forms, with dance programmes (including Indian dance), opera, Gamelan workshops, mime, poetry, jazz groups and art exhibitions very much to the fore, all building on the lead taken in 1987 by St Albans Chamber Opera with Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* and The Company of Ten with John Barton's *The Hollow Crown.* Particularly significant for 1989 was a major exhibition in the Maltings Arts Centre of works by Tom Walker entitled *The Mystic Image* which represented a series of triptychs inspired by the organ music of Charles Tournemire and presented on the 50th anniversary of his death. Tournemire was best known for his organ music, especially *L'Orgue Mystique*, a monumental cycle which covers 51 offices throughout the liturgical year, with each office comprising an introit, offertory, elevation, communion and postlude. Inspired by this musical achievement, Tom Walker responded by creating a five-part image sequence corresponding to the structure of Tournemire's cycle. The only other art exhibition of similar consequence – but in a very different vein – had been held back in 1975 when the Festival presented around 200 original drawings of Gerard Hoffnung in the Abbey Institute, a rare insight into a man of many parts.

In addition to expanding the range of activity, more attention was focussed during the 1990s on the Society's educational obligations, particularly towards young people, and the need to involve them in the week's events wherever possible. There had been sporadic attempts in the past to attract the younger listener – in 1975, for example, Robert Spencer and Jill Nott-Bower devised an informal entertainment for junior school children in which they explored the instruments of the guitar and lute family; in 1977 Christopher Hogwood presented a survey of the piano and its antecedents; in 1983 a performance of Benjamin Britten's *Noyes Fludde* featured a vast number of local school children; and Children's Proms were given in 1985 and 1987 (complete with obligatory teddy-bears!). But these isolated events never seemed to be part of a cohesive policy. Now, we find the programmes offering concerts and recitals **by** young people, concerts **for** young people, and workshops for schools in various art forms, notably in Gamelan, dance and mime. The momentum initiated by Susan Sturrock was developed further during Peter Hewitt's tenure as Artistic Director (1997 and 1999) with workshops for percussion, brass and organ, and concerts by younger artists integrated into the overall Festival programmes.

A spotlight on jazz, an improvisatory art form *par excellence*, also emerged in the 1990s, and jazz concerts featured on their own terms as mainstream events. The National Youth Jazz Orchestra held centre stage in the Cathedral in 1989, and this was followed by Humphrey Lyttleton (1993), the Jacques Loussier Trio (1995 and 1997), John Dankworth and Cleo Laine

(1999 and 2001, nearly thirty years after their initial visit to the Festival), and Kim Creswell / Wayne Marshall (1999). And the subtle use of the Quire area within the Cathedral for late-night recitals by solo artists - John Williams (1989), Marisa Robles (1995) and Steven Isserlis (1997) - and small groups - Pärt's *St John Passion* (1991) and a programme of Indian dance by Sanchari (1993) - brought an individual musical intensity of its own which few will forget.

Diversification along these lines during this period proved easier than the commissioning of new work which struggled to make its mark. In the earlier years the Society had regularly endeavoured to incorporate commissions into its planning wherever possible, but restrictions on resources and the increasing inability to draw on the support of funding bodies inevitably meant that commissions and the promotion of new music could never become a priority, however strong the will to move in this direction. There were exceptions, nevertheless, and the Society could commend itself for being associated with the premieres or repeat performances of important new works from composers as diverse as Paul Hart (1989), Christopher Brown (1991, following an earlier commission for an Organ Concerto in 1979), Diana Burrell (1995), Giles Swayne (1997) and Piet Kee (2001).

THE COMPETITIONS

How they started

The brochure for the first International Organ Festival in June 1963 made it clear that the competitions were the key constituent feature. The Festival, it stated, *"…….. will consist of separate competitions for Organ Playing and Improvisation, ……."*.

The **Organ Playing Competition** was open to organists under the age of 35 years at the time of the Festival. The First Prize was £30 and a recital engagement from the British Broadcasting Corporation which was directly associated with the running of the Festival until 1969. An additional £10 was to be awarded to the winner if his / her normal residence was outside the United Kingdom. The second-place winner would receive a recital engagement from the BBC. Each competitor was allowed one hour's practice on the *Harrison* organ in the Cathedral in the month prior to the Festival, and the competitors were required to play one set piece (Buxtehude's *Prelude and Fugue in F sharp minor, BuxWV 146*) and a piece of their own choice lasting no more than eight minutes. The same music was played at both the Eliminations and the Final.

Competitors played anonymously throughout the Eliminations, but their names were made known to the audience (but not to the Jury) at the Final. The Jury was also given the right to reserve the award of a first prize if they so chose. Anonymity for the competitors and the withholding of a first prize – judged necessary at various Festivals over subsequent years - were therefore in place from the beginning and have remained central to the competitions to this day.

The **Improvisation Competition** was open to organists under the age of 40 years, with a single prize of £30 (plus the additional £10 for a non-UK resident). Anonymity also applied to this competition, for which candidates were required to improvise a short group of pieces lasting about 12 minutes on a set theme given to them one hour prior to the competition. A piano was

available only for the last 15 minutes of preparation. The improvisation was expected to *"be in accordance with the forms of the late seventeenth century French School (de Grigny, Clérambault, du Mage etc), though in a modern idiom."*

Thus were the two competitions launched. Some modest amendments to the rules and conditions were made for the 1964 Festival where the total number of entrants for the two competitions was restricted to 24 and the selection of competitors was determined by the Festival Committee; non-UK competitors were also obliged to submit testimonials from their teachers. The practice time was extended to 1.5 hours over the preceding two months, and the first prize for both competitions was increased to £50. The age limits and the format of the music remained the same as for 1963. The Improvisation Competition now included an elimination round, and the same set form (*Variations and Fugue on a Chorale Theme*) applied to both the Eliminations and the Final, albeit with a different theme on each occasion.

Further adjustments followed in 1965. The total number of competitors was reduced again (to 18), and every applicant was now required to submit a testimonial *"relating to their ability".* Overseas competitors were granted an additional 30 minutes practice time compared with their UK rivals, although the justification for this extension is not apparent. The first prize in both cases was held at £50 but a second prize of £20 was introduced for the Improvisation Competition. The length of the "own choice" music for the Organ Playing Competition was increased to 10 minutes, while the structure of the music for the elimination round of the Improvisation Competition (*"…… a free form, with evidence of being able to improvise contrapuntally*") was different from the form set for the Final (*Variations and Fugue on a Chorale Theme*).

The development of the Interpretation Competition

From these early and innovative beginnings the two competitions soon became established, and continued to grow in strength and renown. With the (perhaps curious) exception of the opening Festival, the music of Johann Sebastian Bach has always been pivotal to the Interpretation Competition – the title *"Organ Playing"* was dropped in 1969 – with set pieces by J.S. Bach programmed at every stage of every Festival (including the Final). Whatever choice might be available elsewhere, the organ music of J.S. Bach remained a constant ingredient, whether in the taped round, the second eliminations, the semi-finals or the final. In the early days, apart from the selected Bach work, competitors were free to play their own choice of music within broad ranges of periods or styles, and this also applied in part to the Final. A more rigid framework was introduced in 1977 when competitors were given no choice of music at all other than the occasional provision of alternative set pieces. This pattern was maintained until 1985 when, in an unexpected change of approach, the Interpretation Final incorporated the performance of two concertos, Handel's *Concerto in F major, Op. 4 No. 5* and the first performances in the UK of a *Concertino* by Pierre Petit, in addition to the set solo organ Bach work. The inclusion of a concerto was repeated for the following Festival but with only one work (Handel's *Concerto in F major, Op. 4 No. 4*) being played by each finalist.

The experiment – if it was regarded as such – did not endure, however, and in 1989 the Final reverted to the previous format of a solo organ recital. The element of "own choice" was also

re-introduced in that year, with competitors free to select music written between two specific periods – initially (a) from 1850 to 1939 and (b) after 1939 – to complement their Bach performance. This format has not subsequently changed, albeit the period dates have been updated so that they now cover the years (a) 1850 to 1960 and (b) post 1960.

The selection process

The age limit for entry into the Interpretation Competition was reduced from 35 to 31 years as long ago as 1969, and has never been altered. In the early years the Society relied on the testimonials submitted by the candidates with their competition entry as the basis for selection along with an assessment of their musical background and their choice of works to perform. But, as the reputation of the competition grew and the number of competitors increased, it became obvious that some form of selection based on performance was necessary, and a preliminary round by tape was introduced for the 1979 Festival, the panel for which comprised Felix Aprahamian (Music Critic), Christopher Hazell (Musical Director, Argo Records), and Allan Wicks (Organist at Canterbury Cathedral). Thereafter, up to 18 organists would usually be selected, and the second eliminations and semi-finals would then reduce the number of finalists to three or four. Since 1989 candidates have been expected to play both the *Harrison* and the *Collins* organs in the course of the competition, but only in 2001 were both organs used for the first time for each round. This was one of several changes initiated by the Society that year under Andrew Lucas' direction as part of a thorough review of the competitions and their position within the Festival as a whole.

While set pieces of music by J.S. Bach have remained at the core of the competitions, for the Festivals up to and including 1975 competitors were able to choose for themselves a significant proportion of the other works to be performed. Then, for a number of years, all the music was increasingly set in advance for both the Eliminations and the Final, although a choice of alternative pieces would regularly be offered. Since 1989, however, while all the early rounds involved set works, Interpretation finalists have had the freedom and the flexibility to present a recital programme (originally lasting up to 25 minutes but now extended to a maximum of 35 minutes) built around the set Bach work, in which they are expected to select music composed within specified periods of time and not performed at any previous stage of the competition.

Prizes and Awards

The Interpretation Competition has always offered cash prizes, and from an initial award of £30 in 1963 the value of the cash prize for the winner has grown steadily to £5,500 in 2001. The BBC was an important partner in the early days, and broadcast recitals represented an attractive part of the prizes on offer up to the 1980s. Equally significant, however, was the exposure to new audiences and career opportunities which the Society sought to enhance through the provision of recital dates in both the UK and Europe. In 1971 the Society offered the winner a recital at the Royal Festival Hall in London, and this was maintained until 1987 when an association with other international organ competitions in Chartres and in Haarlem had by then opened the way for additional recitals by the IOF winners in France and the Netherlands as well as reciprocal arrangements for their winners to visit St Albans. Other recital opportunities in Europe have since featured sporadically as part of the competition prizes – for example, at the

Thomaskirche in Leipzig, Notre Dame des Champs in Paris, and the Lahti Festival in Finland – but none of them has matched the length of the Society's association with its counterparts in Chartres and Haarlem.

Such has been the growth in the reward for achieving first prize that the 2001 Interpretation winner was offered no less than nine recitals in the UK, France and the Netherlands as well as a season's representation by a concert agency in the USA, and a solo recording contract with Priory Records.

The same approach has been taken with the second prize, where the value of the award for the 2001 competition comprised a cash sum of £3,000 together with a programme of seven recitals at various cathedrals and churches throughout the UK. The third prize, originally introduced in 1979, carried a cash award of £1,500 in 2001 and a "return" recital at the Cathedral in St Albans. Other prizes over the years have included (a) the *Audience Prize,* an award instituted in 1971 for the finalist who, in the audience's opinion, either gave the most enjoyable performance or who merited being the winner, (b) a *Bach Prize* (1979 and 1989) for the best Bach performance in the competition, and (c) the *Trustees Prize* – subsequently re-designated as the *Jury's Special Award* (1993) and, from 1995 onwards, the *Douglas May Award* – for the best performance on the IOFS organ by a competitor not in receipt of any other prize. Travel bursaries were also introduced in 1991 for the overall and second prize-winners as a result of specific grants from the Festival's principal sponsor that year (British Telecom) but the lack of any continuing funding from this, or any other source, reduced this scheme to a one-off experiment.

The Jury has always reserved the right not to award a first prize, believing that the attainment of a certain standard of achievement is paramount if the value of a first prize is to be upheld, and there have been four Festivals (those in 1977, 1981, 1987 and 1997) when the award of a first prize for the Interpretation Competition was withheld. Subject to the caveat regarding standards, prizes were consistently awarded on the basis of a process whereby each of the jury members marked his or her own assessment of the performances according to strict guidelines, and the points were then aggregated so as to determine the winners. This approach was maintained until 1989 when certain changes were introduced. The marking system was not totally abandoned but, rather than rely solely on the static process of a pre-determined marking or ranking structure, the collective deliberations of the jury on the comparative merits of each candidate's performance became a more integral and influential part of a dynamic process through which the selection of winners ultimately emerged.

Improvisation Competition

The development of the Improvisation Competition has been subject to less change over the years. The qualifying age was initially 40 years or under; this was lowered to 36 in 1961, and further reduced to 31 in 1973 where it remained until 1997; in that year, as part of a series of inducements to attract more applicants, the upper age limit was again raised to 35 years.

In the opening years of the competition candidates were usually required to play *Variations on a Chorale Theme* for the Eliminations, and either a *Prelude and Fugue* on a submitted or chorale theme, or *Variations and Fugue* for the Final. Occasionally, competitors were allowed to

improvise in a free form. The most significant development came in 1973 when Mme Alice Tournemire, the widow of the French composer and organist Charles Tournemire, entrusted to the Society the administration of a prize for improvisation in memory of her husband who had died in 1939. Charles Tournemire was appointed organist at St Clotilde in Paris in 1898 where he composed much of his major work for the organ (including the 51 suites which comprise *L'Orgue Mystique*). He was also an eminent recitalist and a master of the art of improvisation.

The whole nature of the improvisation competition now changed. Candidates were no longer able to enter this competition by itself as hitherto; instead, candidates selected for the Interpretation Competition also became eligible for the Improvisation Competition, now renamed the *Tournemire Prize*, and the selection of candidates for the improvisation final was made by the Jury at the eliminations for the interpretation competition. Improvisation competitors were therefore required to participate in the elimination rounds of the Interpretation Competition and to play some, or all, of the music set for those rounds as well as to perform a free improvisation on a given diatonic theme. A more direct Tournemire connection was also introduced in that (a) every improvisation final thereafter included a work by Tournemire in addition to the obligatory improvisation on a given plainsong theme, and (b) competitors were expected to submit a brief interpretational study of the Tournemire work selected for the Final. The marks awarded by the Jury for this study counted towards their assessment of the finalists' performance, and hence could influence the outcome of the first prize.

This approach to the selection of entries for the *Tournemire Prize* was upheld until 1983 when improvisation candidates were again allowed to enter the competition separately from the Interpretation Competition. Further modifications were introduced in 2001. While the adjudication of a set piece remained a pre-requisite of the taped entry for improvisation competitors, the requirement for them to play any of the works set for the Interpretation Competition during the Festival itself was relaxed in that year so that the 2001 competitive rounds in St Albans became the first to be judged solely on the candidates' ability to improvise.

More changes and improvements

Other changes to the Improvisation Competition have followed more naturally in line with comparable adjustments to the Interpretation Competition (for example, the introduction of taped preliminary rounds in 1979, and the use of both the *Harrison* organ in the Cathedral and the *Collins* organ in St Saviour's Church since 1989). The preparatory time for finalists to work on their given theme was originally set at 60 minutes, and they were only allowed the use of a piano for the last 15 minutes. In 1973 the preparatory time was reduced to 30 minutes – but with a piano available for the whole duration – and this remains the position today. The maximum length of the improvisation for the Final has varied substantially. There was no specific time up until 1981 when it was set at 10 minutes; it was increased to 15 minutes in 1989, reduced to 12 minutes in 1993, and extended again to 20 minutes for the 2001 competition.

As with the Interpretation Competition the Jury has always reserved the right not to award a first prize, and this was exercised on five occasions up to 1989. Since then there have been two Festivals (1995 and 1999) when the Jury agreed that none of the taped submissions met the standards expected so that the competitions in those years did not even proceed to the

elimination and final rounds. The evidence for this apparent decline in standards is not easy to define. Was there less emphasis given to the art of improvisation within contemporary organ tuition? Was the in-built association with the music of Tournemire, both from a playing and an academic perspective, a deterrent for young organists? Had the value of the prizes available reached such a low level that they had become unattractive and not worth the effort? Some, or all, of these may have been contributory factors.

Whatever the reasons, the Society has in recent years initiated several improvements designed to help restore the art of improvisation to a level of achievement and stature more closely aligned to the standards expected within the Interpretation Competition. Following Mme Tournemire's death in 1996 the competition reverted to being designated as the *Improvisation Competition*, and the requisite inclusion of compositions by Tournemire ceased. At the same time more attention was given to redressing the imbalance in prize monies between the two competitions. The Society can be, and was, very grateful for the financial support provided by Mme Tournemire up to and beyond her death but the fact remains that, while the cash value of the first prize for both organ-playing and improvisation winners was identical in 1963, a pattern of increasing divergence soon followed to such an extent that by 1991 the cash value of the *Tournemire Prize* amounted to £1,000 whereas the Interpretation winner received £3,500. The wrong message was clearly being given, and the diversity in prize values was specifically addressed for the 2001 Festival where the Improvisation Competition offered a first prize of £4,000 along with five recital engagements in the UK and France. It is too early to determine whether these improvements will have the desired effect in the longer-term.

The Jury

In the early years the composition of the Jury remained virtually the same, with Marie-Claire Alain (France), Ralph Downes (UK), Anton Heiller (Austria), Piet Kee (Netherlands) and Harry Croft-Jackson (for the BBC) forming the "back-bone" for each Festival up to and including 1969. Thereafter, with the competitions firmly established in the international musical calendar, successive Artistic Directors have managed to entice a wealth of eminent organists from around the world to participate as members of the jury, and the diversity of experience and expertise which successive juries have brought to the Festival, whether as adjudicators, teachers or performers, cannot be underestimated. As evidence of their loyalty and dedication to the cause, no less than nine winners of previous competitions have subsequently returned to St Albans to act as members of the jury.

The IOFS Organ

One of the most significant developments to impact upon the Interpretation and Improvisation Competitions was the construction of the Society's own organ, a two-manual mechanical-action instrument built by Peter Collins in time for the 1989 Festival. As Peter Hurford himself remarked, *"the inauguration of the Society's organ is the culmination of a twenty-year dream ……. and the completion of the organ launches the IOF into a new phase"*, in which he felt *"hopeful that planners, composers, players and listeners will respond to the challenge that this instrument presents".* And a challenge it proved to be, certainly for the following few years!

The additional scope afforded to the competitions by the arrival of the IOFS organ was substantial. In the first place competitors were required to exhibit a much broader range of technical ability and musicianship in respect of two very different instruments (the *Harrison* in the Cathedral and the *Collins* in St Saviour's Church). Secondly, it extended the listener's interest and involvement in the competitions, not least for those members of the Society and others who had so generously contributed to the cost of the new organ.

The IOFS organ may well have broadened the framework of the competitions but 1989 was not the first year in which a mechanical-action organ had featured. Some twenty years earlier, and for a limited period thereafter, competitors in the Interpretation Competition were required to play part of their programme in the Cathedral on the *Flentrop* organ, a small mechanical-action organ with two manuals and pedals, which was made available to the IOFS for this purpose.

Commissions

Music commissioned by the IOFS for the Interpretation competition has featured on two occasions. In 1977 Paul Patterson wrote a work for the Final entitled *Games* which was regarded as an *"interpretative rather than a technical challenge"*, and in 1993 the elimination round on the *Collins* organ in St Saviour's Church included *Jesse Tree*, a cycle of eleven short organ pieces by Malcolm Pearce, from which competitors could choose any two movements.

International aspirations

From the outset the inclusion of the word *"international"* in the Festival title was not an ambitious overstatement. This was never seen as a local, or even a national, project. The aim has always been to attract young organists from around the world who would, through competition, share their own backgrounds and cultures with audiences and fellow competitors alike, and who would at the same time be enriched by the experience and the challenge on offer. It is undoubtedly to the credit of Peter Hurford and his pioneer supporters that this international "mix" has never been compromised or lost. As far back as 1967 the competitors came from no less than nine countries, mostly in Europe but also including Australia and the USA, while the range of countries represented by the winners is testimony to the appeal which the competitions still hold amongst aspiring organists around the world. No less important are the jury members who have been invited from a similar range of countries and who have brought with them a breadth of experience based on different backgrounds and different attitudes to organ-playing. Certainly the IOFS could never be regarded as an "insular" institution.

Overseas links

Links overseas started as long ago as 1967 when a "policy of mutual support" was agreed between the *Foundation Schnitgerprijs Zwolle* in Holland and the IOF. The Foundation was established in 1963 - the same year, coincidentally, as the IOF – with the aim of promoting international interest in the Schnitger organ of St Michael's Church in Zwolle, built between 1718 and 1721 and restored to its original splendour by D.A. Flentrop in the mid-1950s. The Foundation sought to achieve its aims partly by organising periodic competitions for organ compositions, partly by commissioning new work, and partly by promoting concerts. Under

this policy new organ works from Zwolle were also intended for performance at the IOF in St Albans, which continued to be associated with the *Schnitgerprijs Zwolle* and its work until the Foundation's demise in or around 1976.

A more direct link overseas was initiated some years later with other organ competitions in Chartres (France) and in Haarlem (Netherlands). Under reciprocal arrangements the winner of the 1985 Interpretation Competition was invited to give a recital in Chartres Cathedral, the host of the *Concours International d'Orgue – grand Prix de Chartres*, while the 1986 Chartres winner gave a recital in St Albans the following year. A similar exchange started in 1987 with the winner of the organ competition in St Bavo's Cathedral in Haarlem.

In 2001 a new development within the competitions saw the formation of a network of International Ambassadors around the world. This network is intended to offer a focal point for potential competitors who can seek guidance and answers from a distinguished panel of organists, teachers and performers across Europe, the USA and the Far East, almost all of whom have first-hand knowledge of the two competitions as previous competitors, as members of the jury, or as both.

MEMBERSHIP and GOVERNANCE

Support for the IOF was sought at an early stage from people who shared the Society's vision and wanted to help in a practical manner, and as far back as 1965 anybody who contributed a minimum of £5 to the IOF Capital Account (a fund set up to provide scope for an expansion in activity) became a Patron of the Festival In return Patrons were entitled to receive a free pass to the whole Festival – and a copy of the latest available audited accounts!

The change in the governance of the IOF in 1970 and the creation of an unincorporated charitable society, whose operation was to be safeguarded by two Trustees and managed by a Committee of six members and officers, necessitated a comparable change in the role of the "Patrons" who then became "Members". There were two classes of membership : Full Members paid a higher annual subscription and received the right to vote – and thus elect the Committee to manage the Society's affairs from amongst the membership – and Associate Members who paid a lower rate of subscription and held no voting rights. This constitutional arrangement served its purpose for more than twenty years until it was felt that the onus of responsibility on the Trustees (now increased to three) engendered too much personal risk. Accordingly, in 1991 the decision was taken to establish a company limited by guarantee and registered as a charity, and the International Organ Festival Society Limited came into being. The members continue to control the election of the Committee – now constituted as a Board of Directors - to run the Society but they now fulfil this responsibility as the effective "owners" of the Company.

From a total of 57 individual and corporate patrons listed in 1965, membership has expanded steadily over the years and currently totals around 550. The support from the membership has undoubtedly been as important a factor in the Society's progress in its own way as any musical development. Indeed, the constant involvement of members and their active participation in a

voluntary capacity in all the practical aspects of organising the Festivals (and the inter-festival events) can never be underestimated.

FINANCE

In a commentary designed to highlight artistic achievement, it is only proper that the world of finance should play no more than a limited role. Suffice perhaps to say that the Society has never had the luxury or the security of long-term funding to support its operation. As a pioneering musical project in those early days, there was a natural pride in the Festival's ability to cover its costs, but it was never able to attract for a sufficiently long period the level of public funding from central or regional sources to which it aspired and which it might reasonably have expected. Government funding – initially from the Arts Council of Great Britain and then from Eastern Arts – was secured for the first time in 1967, and survived for nearly two decades but only in limited (and ultimately declining) quantities. Neither has the St Albans City and District Council ever recognised the true value of the Festival to the city and supported the Society's work at a level of funding which other Local Authorities would probably and properly have provided in similar circumstances. And yet the Society has survived! Even now, it remains the only organisation of its kind in the UK, and is the oldest institution in the world devoted to the promotion of the organ, with an unbroken history of progressive musical development over a period of forty years.

Patronage through the Box Office has been the crucial factor, and ticket sales have always represented the prime source of the Society's income. A few isolated donations and grants were received in the early years before corporate sponsorship began to emerge in 1977. The enhanced scale of the Society's operation justified the appointment of a paid Administrator for the first time in 1988, and it gradually became obvious thereafter that strategic fund-raising programmes also had to be delivered. Such support now, of course, plays an increasingly demanding part in the planning process, and it came as no surprise therefore that the appointment of a General Manager in 1997 to succeeed the previous Administrator included a remit both to raise funds and to establish a permanent office in St Albans as a base for the Society's future operations. Inevitably, perhaps, there are few signs that the scale of the requirement for funding from sponsorship and donations shows any sign of diminishing in the future.

THE FUTURE

There is no conclusion to this story, nor is there any need to try and "tidy it up". The IOF remains the embodiment of an idea which was almost revolutionary in its day; yet it has survived a whole range of difficulties and vicissitudes which would have defeated many a less determined band of pioneers. The competitions continue to offer encouragement to those young organists who seek to improve themselves by testing their talents against their peers from around the world; the standing and reputation of the IOF within the music world in general and the organ fraternity in particular has been upheld over time; and the energy and commitment of those who today strive to promote the message so proudly announced back in 1963 shows no sign of weakening.

The legacy established by Peter Hurford and nourished by his successors lives on. The IOF still bears witness to that early dream, and there is no reason to suppose that, given the imagination and the finances, this dream cannot endure for many more years to come.

April 2003