

The Journal

A large, ornate pipe organ with multiple tiers of golden pipes, set within a grand stone cathedral archway. The organ features intricate woodwork and a central console with a star emblem. The background shows the high, vaulted ceiling of a cathedral.

Autumn 2024

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Norfolk Organists' Association

Norfolk Organists' Association

The art of music as related to the organ

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Front Cover
West front of the Norwich Cathedral organ
(*Photo: Bill Smith/Norwich Cathedral*)

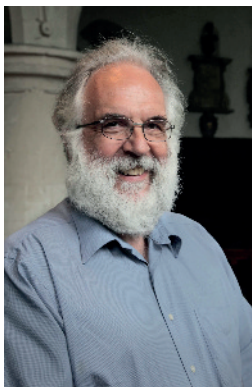
Back Cover
St George, Eisenach - J S Bach's 'home church' where the Great Toccata
(BWV 565) may have been heard for the first time
(*Photo: Krzysztof Golik/Wikimedia Creative Commons*)

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Notes from the Editor

One thread running through this Autumn issue of the *Journal* concerns young organists - or rather the lack of them. The report of the Young Organists Platform Concert at Aylsham celebrates three of our rising young stars but, as Harry Macey, points out, we need more to come forward. There are too many churches where longstanding organists have deservedly retired and where no-one is able to take over.

Anna Lapwood's recital in the *Organ Reborn* series to mark the rebuilding of the cathedral organ in Norwich (see p. 2) also included a timely reminder that playing the organ is open to all and that we need to encourage

girls and women to play (but, as the recent Paris Olympics showed with its 50:50 ratio of male to female participants, some positive discrimination might also be required to redress the ingrained imbalance). Perhaps each member could encourage or mentor a young organist so that we could build up the next generation of organists, and with the added spin-off that we could aspire to be at least self-sustaining as an Association.

By any standards, the Bach family of Eisenach was a remarkable dynasty of musicians with several generations of church organists and court musicians preceding the great man himself - Johann Sebastian. Of all the well-known and loved compositions by J S Bach the *Toccata and Fugue in D minor* (BWV 565) is one of the most instantly recognisable - and yet - it is not at all clear that he composed it. This paradox is explored in a recently released set of films and recordings made by Will Fraser in collaboration with Daniel Moulton which is reviewed in this issue (see p. 17).

ORGAN REBORN!

Norwich Cathedral Organ Festival

6th - 14th July 2024

The case for a festival to celebrate and showcase the rebuilding of the Norwich Cathedral organ was unarguable: the festival's eventual manifestation as a jam-packed week long series of concerts, recitals, associated services and events was a resounding triumph!

The programmed range of delights was truly remarkable. Competing commitments and a limit to my budget prevented me from attending all that was on offer but I still managed to avail myself of a significant number of the rich treats. One that I made a reluctant decision to forgo was Anne Page's Bach recital on the Monday evening (sorry, Anne!), but having heard her give a magnificent all Bach recital at St. Peter Mancroft just a week or so before (wonderfully fluid playing and a wealth of wholly appropriate registration choices on an organ more suitable for

Bach than the Cathedral instrument) I felt I could just about justify missing out on what I'm sure was a most pleasurable evening.

The Tuesday afternoon of Festival week saw me and a goodly crowd of others in the Cathedral Hostry's Weston Room for an entertaining talk given by the celebrated recitalist, David Briggs (Budge, the Cathedral cat, slept throughout!). Briggs could arguably lay claim to being the world's most devoted fan of the late, great Pierre Cochereau, titulaire organist at Notre Dame in Paris until his untimely death at the age of just fifty nine in 1984, burnt out, Briggs explained, by stress, high living, and cigarettes! This very day being the centenary of Cochereau's birth gave Briggs all the excuse he needed to devote his well illustrated talk to Cochereau's life and legacy. In addition we heard the fascinating, frequently witty, and often emotional tales of how Briggs himself became aware and enamoured of Cochereau's distinctive gifts (and the glories of Cavaillé-Coll organs too!).



The screen all set up for David Briggs' recital

Briggs' passion for Cochereau's extraordinary (infamous?!) improvisations has led him to dedicate untold hours painstakingly transcribing many of these improvisations from the extensive recorded archive of those made at Notre Dame. Apparently it takes him four hours to transcribe just one minute of music!

We heard one such transcription later in the evening when Briggs concluded his fabulous recital of

French organ works with Cochereau's set of ten improvised variations on *Alouette, gentille Alouette*. In his talk Briggs had promised us "lots of garlic" in his choice of registrations, seeking out less familiar combinations of colour to make the rebuilt organ sound as French as possible. Up to this point I had yet to fully make up my mind about the Harrison & Harrison rebuild. I'm pleased to report Briggs has most definitely convinced me and

sealed my approval of it! For me the most extraordinary performance of the evening was not the Cochereau transcription but that of Paul Dukas' *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*. The arguments for and against transcriptions of orchestral pieces for the organ will rage on and on but my life is most certainly all the richer now for having heard and witnessed this utterly convincing and quite astonishing tour de force of a performance!

In both his talk and his introduction to the recital Briggs described the Cathedral at Norwich as "matchless". Listening to Briggs under that soaring, multi-ribbed Gothic vault whose beauties are now even further enhanced by the shifting hues of the new LED lighting system one can only agree!

I was intrigued by the positioning of the familiar big screen directly under the organ rather than its more usual place just beyond the nave altar rail. This was also the case for the other recitals I attended and can only assume it

was to allow an unobstructed view of the organ case from all parts of the nave thereby giving proper emphasis to the true star of the Festival. Thankfully though an even bigger screen was well to the fore on the Wednesday evening for A Night at the Movies, a screening of the 1928 Buster Keaton film, *Steamboat Bill, Jr.* In his introduction, Donald Mackenzie (Organist at the Odeon, Leicester Square) explained this was the last of Keaton's multi-million dollar silent epics. Huge amounts of money were spent on the sets alone, many of which came to grief (intentionally!) in the extraordinary cyclone scenes - scenes that would surely have induced apoplexy in any modern day Health & Safety Inspector had they been present at the time! Somehow Keaton and his fellow actors would seem to have come through unscathed bequeathing us a film of quite breathtaking spectacle and no little opportunity to employ one's laughter muscles. The whole experience was enhanced no end by Mackenzie's quite astonishing prowess at the



console, his extended improvised accompaniment invariably conjuring exactly the right mood with exactly the right sounds at any given moment. The concentration, inspiration, and stamina (physical and mental) required for such a task is quite beyond my comprehension! What a tremendous evening's entertainment on every level. *Bravo!*

The Friday afternoon saw me back in the Weston Room for another, even better attended

talk: Organ Re-born! The Norwich Cathedral Organ Project. First up a typically erudite and informative outline of the history of the Cathedral's organs by Canon Nicholas Thistlethwaite (the independent advisor to the Dean and Chapter for the project) delivered with his characteristic and elegant aplomb. Andrew Scott (Managing Director of Harrison & Harrison) then delivered an illuminating and thoroughly engaging, often witty outline of

the whole ambitious organ rebuilding project: the whys and wherefores of the new internal layouts, the new pipework, etc, etc. The rebuilt organ has fewer pipes now than before, much redundant, duplicated, or just plain inadequate pipework being sacrificed for better newly made pipes that help bring greater tonal cohesion, as well as colour, to the whole. One stop that nearly didn't survive the cut was the 8ft Harmonic Claribel housed in the enclosed Solo Organ. Scott, in a moment of commendable candour, declared it to be one of the most horrible stops he'd ever heard. But released from its prison and now singing out revoiced as a Harmonic Clarabella in the Grand Organ division up in the triforium it's become one of his favourites. Judging by the number of times I've now heard it in recitals since then it would seem to be a favourite of many an organist too!

After the talk I had opportunity to ask Scott where he placed the rebuilt organ in his pantheon of British Cathedral organs. He replied that of the many such projects he's worked on it

certainly comes in the top four or five. He explained a key factor in that judgment was the highly agreeable working relationship he and his colleagues had with the Cathedral musicians and the Cathedral staff as a whole. "I've always felt Norwich Cathedral is a very happy Cathedral," I responded. "It is a very happy Cathedral," Scott replied... "a good deal happier than some I've worked in!"

Friday evening's recital was a 900 seat sell-out! Indeed, extra tickets and seats had to be laid on to help meet demand. The object of all this interest? Why, none other than Anna Lapwood, of course! In recent years Lapwood has become something of a Tik Tok video sensation, encouraged initially to make such videos by her female choristers at Pembroke College. "But I can't dance!", Lapwood apparently protested. "No, just do videos of you playing the organ," was the response. And so she did, many of them featuring her thoroughly enjoying her practice sessions on the Royal Albert Hall organ at two or three o'clock in the morning! A good deal of her popularity

springs from her passion for playing transcriptions of contemporary film scores, especially those of Hans Zimmer, as well as for her naturally exuberant, video-friendly upbeat personality.

I went to her recital uncertain as to whether I would really enjoy it or not. I can't say that Zimmer's

music really 'does it' for me. But the discovery as I waited in the queue that she would also be playing Duruflé's incomparable *Prélude et Fugue sur le nom d'Alain* -one of my all-time favourite organ works (and Lapwood's!)- made me more than glad to be there! The concert was recorded by BBC Radio 3 for later broadcast and so it was their presenter Ian Skelly who introduced us to

Lapwood. Speaking from the front of the organ loft Lapwood introduced us to each little section of pieces through the recital, immediately revealing as she did so her extraordinary ability to engage with her audience. She likes to build a background story, often of her own devising, for each piece as a



Getting to know Anna Lapwood

means of leading people into each one. It's a formula, along with her transcriptions of film music, that has helped convert so many now to the sound world of the organ. Such a shame that Radio 3 chose to expunge all but one of those all important introductions from their broadcast the following week.

As an evangelist for the organ today Lapwood is arguably without peer, certainly in this country. Her irrepressible enthusiasm for the instrument and its possibilities is irresistible and she's already done so much to help drag the organ out of the stuffy, rather closeted and male dominated world in which it has for too long resided in too many corners of this land. Her achievement in inspiring so many girls and young women to take up the instrument is worthy of particular commendation. It helps, of course, that she's no mean player! Of the pieces she played that Friday evening it was the Duruflé and Lapwood's own transcriptions of two of Benjamin Britten's *Sea Interludes* from *Peter Grimes* that moved me most. But then both Duruflé and

Britten are towering geniuses when it comes to musical composition!

Lapwood's recital was as relaxed, upbeat, and engaging as any I've attended thanks in no small part to the sheer effervescence and dynamism of her personality. She is a born communicator. Would we like an encore? Of course we would! Would the young girl in the audience called Rose and wearing the sparkly jacket like to come up into the organ loft while she played it? Of course she would, as did a number of other under-18s Lapwood said could join her if they wanted to; an experience they will no doubt treasure for years to come! As if that were not enough, Lapwood invited anyone who desired to come and chat with her in the south transept after the recital to do so. I eventually followed the crowds and joined the end of a dauntingly long and slow moving long queue. It was about twenty minutes before I finally got my turn with her but the energy and genuine enthusiasm with which she engaged with me was the same as if I'd been first in the queue. It was the same for



The stage is set for the final concert in the series

everybody. Truly remarkable!
What a joyous evening! Goodness knows when she sleeps!

The event on Saturday morning came free of charge: a reprise of the enormously popular *Battle of the Organs* that had preceded the stripping out of the organ by the Harrison & Harrison staff almost as soon as that original concert ended. George Inscoc having since moved on it was Robbie Carroll's turn to join Ashley Grote and David Dunnett at the

consoles of the main organ, the Cathedral's chamber organ, and an Allen digital touring organ brought in especially for the occasion. Sometimes in duet, sometimes utilising all three organs in the same piece, we were treated to the same immensely enjoyable programme that had so delighted a completely packed Cathedral in that first *Battle*. The sheer fun of the proceedings could not obscure the consummate skill

and musicianship of all three performers. Their ability to keep together with such precision when seated at three separate consoles so far apart whilst playing with such musicality truly was a thing of wonder. How blessed we are at Norwich to have such gifted, affable, and approachable musicians working in our service and giving us so much uplifting pleasure. Oh yes, no prizes for guessing which organ emerged the winner!

My final event of the festival was the concert on Saturday evening given by the Cathedral Choir and the Britten Sinfonia under Ashley Grote's direction. Following performances of Fauré's *Cantique de Jean Racine* and Poulenc's *Litanies à la Vierge Noire* the first half was brought to a resounding close by a magisterial rendition of Poulenc's *Concerto for Organ, Strings, and Timpani* -still the finest organ concerto there is by a country mile in my humble opinion! David Dunnett was in his element at the organ console and the Britten Sinfonia gave an object lesson to members of the French National Radio Orchestra



The final recital in the series

in the famous 1961 recording conducted by Georges Prêtre (with Maurice Duruflé at the organ) in how to play with perfect precision and timing. Their ensemble was immaculate, their playing rapturously expressive.

In the second half we were treated to a truly exquisite and moving performance of the Duruflé *Requiem*, a more profoundly beautiful and spiritual work than the Fauré

equivalent could ever be as far as I'm concerned. Duruflé made three arrangements of the *Requiem*, the last (in 1961) being for reduced forces of organ, strings, timpani, and trumpets. This was the version we heard. Referencing Gregorian chants the work is by turns lyrical, powerful, and ethereal... a magical work of intense beauty and profound sentiment. A true masterpiece by a true genius.

Mention must also be made of the two lunchtime Young Organists' Platform recitals played during the Festival week on the 1984 Collins organ at St. Peter Mancroft as part of the Festival programme. The first was given by Adam Chillingworth, a former pupil at Norwich School and Organ Scholar at Lincoln Cathedral. The second featured Nora Rechel. Formerly a chorister in the Norwich Cathedral Girls' Choir she has held organ scholarships at both St. Peter Mancroft and Portsmouth Cathedral. She is soon to take up the organ scholarship at Emmanuel College, Cambridge. Both players proved enviably adept, making

full use of the Collins organ's resources in entertainingly varied programmes suggesting the future of British organ playing looks bright in such capable hands.

I can't begin to imagine just how much work was involved in putting together such a rich and varied programme of Festival events, or how many headaches that work induced along the way! But I suspect I am not alone in hoping this will not remain as a one-off. An annual Organ Festival would be far too much to ask for but this Festival's undoubted success at pulling in the crowds from far and wide and showcasing the organ as an instrument capable of giving inordinate amounts of pleasure to people of all ages suggests similar Festivals at a regular interval of years would not be unwelcome. In the meantime, heartfelt thanks to all who put in so many hours of hard work (and practice!) to make this one such an outstanding achievement!

Martin J. Cottam

Photos: Martin J Cottam

YOUNG ORGANISTS' PLATFORM CONCERT

Saturday 3 August 2024

Aylsham Parish Church

We need organists for the future! Our Young Organists' Platform Concert is hosted by Aylsham Parish Church in partnership with the Norfolk Organists' Association. This annual event gives an opportunity for young organ students to show to the general public what they can do and how they are progressing; it also demonstrates to the players that their efforts are recognised and valued.

As a retired Grammar School Head of Music, I realise that most young students of stringed instruments, brass, woodwind, percussion, guitars, etc; may play in various ensembles but the organ is a study carried out largely in isolation. In general, unless school music teachers are organists themselves, it is unlikely that the class music syllabus will be able to flag up the wonders of the organ. During my career, I made numerous mini-

bus trips to organs to show children the wonders of the instrument and its music. (I still receive messages of appreciation years after!)

In these times of diminishing congregations and the incursion of other styles of 'worship music', we are learning that we must move away from the obvious association of the organ with the church. Thousands of fine organ recordings, video-clips etc; are available at one click; this avenue should be encouraged. When you see a family visit one of our glorious Norfolk churches, I urge you to summon the children to the organ console for a demo and to have a go. It is a joy to see their eyes light up as they witness the quietest Dulciana, the Tuba, the full Swell and the Full organ! (I take this opportunity to applaud Anna Lapwood for her terrific work in shouting the praises of the organ to young people through her concerts and across various social media platforms.)

On August 3rd, over seventy people gathered to support our three performers of 2024.



At the console (l. to r.); Jasper Pike, Eve Kelleway and Lara Osbaldeston

Regrettably, there was only modest support from NOA members. After some delicious coffee and cake, the concert began. The players were pupils of Julian Haggett, organist of St Peter Mancroft, and we thank Julian for his teaching, his encouragement and his splendid regional work for the RCO. It is inspiring to see the RCO supporting young people with its various courses; as an old-timer,

may I say, "Not a moment too soon."!

For the order of performance, names were drawn out of a hat.

Lara Osbaldeston (Norwich High School for Girls; organ scholar, St Peter Mancroft)

Prelude in E minor BWV 533
J.S.Bach

Canzonetta William Mathias

Grand Chœur
Théodore-César Salomé

Jasper Pike (Wisbech Grammar &
Diocesan organ scholar)

Prelude and Fugue in G minor
BWV 558 J.S.Bach

Berceuse (24 pièces en style libre)
Op.31 No. 19 Louis Vierne

Festive Trumpet Tune David
German

Eve Kelleway (Organ scholar, St.
Peter Mancroft)

Menuet gothique from "*Suite
Gothique*" Léon Boëllmann

Organ Sonata No. 2 in C minor
Op.65 No.2 Felix Mendelssohn

The whole concert was most
enjoyable. Aylsham's three-
manual Norman & Beard (1911)
with its wholly pneumatic action,
its very light playing action and



Time to applaud the young organists

its push-me-pull-you stop system, is far from typical or easy to manage but our performers overcame its whims and exploited the colours of the instrument, especially some of the lovely quiet voices. Their high level of musicianship bodes well for their futures. Aylsham's big screen for organ concerts enhances audience involvement and enjoyment.

After some rousing applause, our players took a bow and were presented with Amazon vouchers

as a token of our appreciation and our desire to wish them well as they move on in their studies.

Thanks are due to the many people who contributed in any way to the success of this event. The Young Organists' Platform Concert 2025 will be on Saturday August 2nd. If you know of other organ teachers with young students, please let me know.

Harry Macey

Photos: Harry Macey

PRESIDENT'S DAY

Saturday 29 June 2024

A good number of members made the journey to Gressenhall Lodge on what turned out to be a most lovely summer's day making time in the garden most welcome.

Members enjoyed relaxed and extended chance to chat over tea scones and cake (kindly provided by the president's wife and Alan and Sarah). Many

chatted to the alpacas (lots of selfies) and enjoyed listening to, or playing, the Hauptwerk installation.

I am most grateful to all of those who came along and made it such an enjoyable afternoon.

Adrian Richards

Photos: Adrian Richards

PRESIDENT'S DAY PHOTOS



REVIEW

Bach: The Great Toccata

Films by Will Fraser

Fugue State Films, FSFDVD017
(DVD and CD, playing times 102
and 59 mins respectively) £ 28.50
available from

<https://fuguestatefilms.co.uk/>

The first mordant of the Toccata and Fugue in D minor is possibly one of the most instantly recognisable openings of any piece of music. From that (literally) high point down to the bottom D in the pedal and then back via a diminished seventh chord to a tonic major cadence gets our attention. And so on, through all sorts of musical gymnastics to a fugal subject of startling simplicity followed by playful episodes to a conclusion of dramatic progressions. Surely one of the pinnacles of composition of that genius of the organ - Johann Sebastian Bach. Mendelssohn thought so as one of the key architects of the revival of Bach's organ music in the first half of the nineteenth century. For almost two centuries the Toccata and Fugue in D minor - BWV 565 -

has been a staple of organ recitals. All the great recitalists have recorded it from that great Bach scholar Albert Schweitzer onwards. However, in recent decades, the idea has emerged that the Bach might not have been the composer of the 'Great Toccata' - largely because BWV 565 lacks the overall gravitas of his other substantial organ works, but also because there is no original manuscript of the work in Bach's hand.

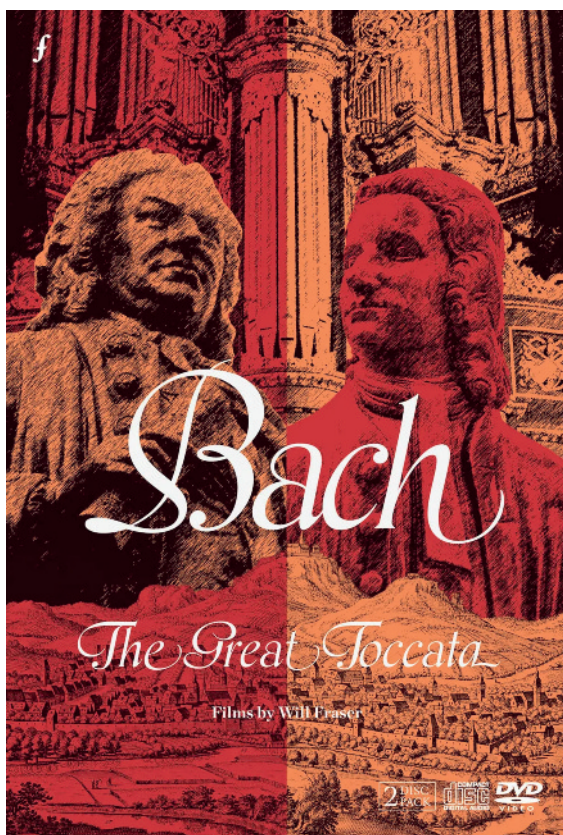
Many of the 'problems' of BWV 565 have been discussed in detail before - notably in a scholarly analysis of the arguments for and against by Rolf Claus (*Toccata and Fugue in D minor - a work by J S Bach?* [2018] ISBN 9780956710260). The problems arise because of perceived 'errors' in the compositional technique - such as, extended unisons and repetition, limited harmonic vocabulary, and an episodic, loose structure. One of the 'killer' criticisms is that the use of C# in the bass would have precluded its performance on the majority of central German organs in the first half of the eighteenth century - such organs

had short octaves (you save money by not having large bass pipes for notes that are only occasionally required).

In Will Fraser's film the irrepressible Daniel Moulton tackles all of these questions and many others by looking at both the music and the organs, as well as the wider context of music-making in early eighteenth-century Germany. The available evidence suggests that BWV 565 is likely to have been composed in the early part of Bach's life - a time when he was exploring all sorts of musical possibilities - including his famous long walk to Lubeck where he met Buxtehude and encountered the *stylus phantasticus* of the North German school. There is good evidence - but sadly no surviving examples in central Germany - of large organs with a full compass which would be entirely suitable for playing BWV 565 to full effect - particularly in Eisenach, Bach's home town, where

other member's of the Bach family were organists.

Domestic instruments, such as clavichords and harpsichords, were much more likely to be played than organs, as there was no need to employ someone else to fill the bellows. Such instruments were almost always of full compass and could be fitted with a pedal board. Daniel Moulton explores the idea that



BWV 565 might have been composed on such an instrument and that Bach was perfectly capable of imagining how his compositions would sound on the ideal organ. Manuscript books that Bach would have known, such as a collection put together by his elder brother, contain examples of Toccatas and Capriccios by composers such as Pachelbel that contain stylistic elements that occur in BWV 565.

Thus, the idea of a *spielfuge*, which translates approximately as ‘playful fugue’, is not something that would be unknown to the young Bach, even if he was supposed to frown on such things in his later life (but perhaps he didn’t anyway).

This suite of films takes Daniel Moulton on a wide-ranging tour of musical possibilities. The wonderful Schnitger organ in the

Martinikerk Groningen (well known to association members who have made the pilgrimage on various occasions) serves as the exemplar of North German organbuilding. But we also examine the world of the pedal clavichord and harpsichord with Terence Charlston and the violin hypothesis (that BWV 565 was possibly written for



Daniel Moulton at the console of the Martinikerk organ

solo violin) with violinist Fenella Humphrey.

The DVD is accompanied with a CD containing almost an hour of first-rate recordings of organ music that is explored in the film. In addition to the Martinikerk organ the smaller 1734 Hinsz organ in the Petruskerk at Leens also features.

Why is BWV 565 so popular when most of Bach's other 'proper' organ music is less so? The film suggests that the enduring popularity of the Great Toccata is because combines simplicity with power and uses a musical vocabulary that is not difficult to understand. So, if Bach did compose BWV 565 is there a time and place in Bach's life when it would 'fit'. The year 1707 might qualify - Johann Sebastian Bach was 22 years old and very sure of himself - getting into a fight with a bassoonist during his time in Arnstadt, for example, (where a statue shows a rather more carefree younger JSB rather than the more well-known one

showing a mature, serious, Bach in front of the Thomaskirche in Leipzig). The four-manual and pedal 58-stop organ that his relative and mentor Johann Christoph Bach had designed for St George's Eisenach had been completed in 1707. It would have been the perfect instrument for the Johann Sebastian to demonstrate his skill as an organist on a trip back home. Alas, there is no direct evidence for this conjecture and that, at the end of the day, is where much of the discussion about the authorship of the Great Toccata ends up. Unless a manuscript of the Great Toccata in Bach's hand is found the debate about the authorship of BWV 565 is destined to run and run. Overall, Will Fraser's films and Daniel Moulton's scholarship and playing provide an arresting insight into the structure and broader musical context of the 'Great Toccata' and Fugue in D minor by J S Bach (or not).

David Shuker



Events

Saturday 12th October 2024

Masterclass On 18th Century English Organ Music

Anne Page (International recitalist and Professor at the Royal Academy of Music)

2:00 p.m.

St George's Church, Colgate, Norwich, NR3 1DA

Monday 28th October to Friday 1st November 2024

Organ Tour Of The Basque Country, Northern Spain
(Applications now closed)

Thursday 21st November 2024

Choral Evensong at Norwich Cathedral

5.30pm

Once again there will be the opportunity for members to play the Cathedral organ after the service.

