

Organ Recital

*Given by*

# Julian Gunn

at

***St John’s Church, Ranmoor, Sheffield***

On

Thursday 10 February 2022

8pm

**Retiring collection**

**‘An evening with the Masters’**

Organ recitals often comprise music of a rather 'specialist' nature; music composed by organists, for organists. In this recital, you will hear music composed by mainstream composers, all of whom you will have heard of, that is either composed for the organ, or arranged for the organ. In true tradition, I have arranged this recital in chronological order.

**Overture and Hornpipe (Water Music) HWV 348 George Frederick Handel**

 1685-1759

In Handel's day, the organ in England was vestigial - and that's being polite. You were lucky to have two manuals, there were no pedals, and the number of stops rarely exceeded ten. So Handel was confined to writing some voluntaries and concerti, with the organ as a sweet little solo instrument. Never mind all that. I have here a fantastic arrangement of two movements from *The Water Music*.

**Sonata V in C, 2nd movt BWV 529 Johann Sebastian Bach**

 1685-1750

The fact that Bach is included in this recital underlines his established place as one of the greatest composers in any genre. It's remarkable that he wasn't well known outside of his locality (Thuringia) as a composer, or for a century after his death anywhere. This is a movement from one of his six *Sonatas* for organ, all composed as trios. The original was modelled on the Italian type for violin, viola and cello. Instead, it is for my right hand, left hand, and feet! All doing different things!

**Minuet, Bagatelle, and Minuetto Giocoso Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**

 1756-91

OK, this is a cheat. Mozart wrote absolutely nothing for organ, even though he was pretty good at playing it. He was far too busy writing symphonies, concertos, chamber music, opera and choral music. Some *Fantasias* for organ were actually for mechanical clock, and have been adapted for organ. So I have taken some of his catchiest tunes, drawn from his general output, for your delectation and delight.

**Prelude through all the major keys Op 39 No. 2 Ludwig van Beethoven**

 1770-1827

It is a little known fact that Beethoven, in his early life, was an organist, assisting his teacher, Christian Gottlob Neefe, in Bonn. In 1789 he composed two *Preludes Circulaires*, which modulate through all 12 major keys. Like Mozart, he also indulged in pieces for musical automata. You can't help feeling this was all a bit of a joke. I wonder if he composed it for a bet?

**Andante (Variations on a theme) MWV W32 Felix Mendelssohn**

 1809-47

Mendelssohn was a brilliant pianist, but rather less of an organist. He was always very keen on it, though, and eventually persisted, to became a noted recitalist. He wrote three Preludes and Fugues and six Sonatas for organ; but for this recital I have selected one of his earliest, gentlest and most characteristic works, written in 1823, when he was 14! Somehow the theme seems familiar.

**Offertoire in Eb, No. 7 (from *L’organiste*, FWV 41) Cesar Franck**

 1822-90

Although an organist all his life (Ste Clotilde, Paris), Franck qualifies (just) as one of the 'greats', because of his output in many genres: you will be familiar with his *Third (Organ) Symphony*. He also reinstated the organ as a serious symphonic instrument after a period of a century of neglect. Right at the end of his life, Franck, whose bicentennial this is, wrote a series of pieces for the parish organist, suitable for organ or harmonium. They all have charm, quality and emotional intensity.

**Chorale Prelude *O Gott, du frommer Gott* Op 22 No. 7 Johannes Brahms**

 1833-97

Isn't it interesting how great composers revert to composing for the organ as their end approaches? I am thinking of Bach (his last piece was a chorale prelude for organ), Franck (as we have just heard), and now Brahms. His eleven chorale preludes were published posthumously, and reflect state-of-the-art Brahmsian 'fin de siecle' compositional style. The text is *O God, thou Faithful God,* a well known Lutheran chorale dating from the 1600s.

**Sonata II in Bb, Introduction and Coda Op 87a Edward Elgar**

 1857-1934

Here's another example of organist activity in a great composer. Elgar started his musical life as a violinist, but by the age of 18 he was organist of St George's RC church in Worcester, where his dad owned a music shop. The first *Sonata in G* for organ is a masterpiece, written for the organist of Worcester cathedral, Hugh Blair, who made a bit of a hash of it at the inaugural recital. The second Sonata is actually an arrangement of the *Severn Suite* for brass band - but what a wonderful organ piece it makes.

**Julian Gunn**

Julian is Professor of Interventional Cardiology in the Department of Infection, Immunity and Cardiovascular Disease in the Medical School of the University of Sheffield and Hon. Consultant Cardiologist at the Sheffield Teaching Hospitals. He is from Surrey, and trained as a doctor in Cambridge. Since then he has worked in York, Leeds, Nottingham and, since 1991, Sheffield. He played the piano from the age of 7 and the organ from 12 when his chubby legs could reach the pedals. He studied organ with Alfred Williams at St John’s Church, Caterham, Gary Cole at Emmanuel College, Cambridge and Richard Popplewell at HM Chapel Royal, St James’s Palace, London. In the 80s and 90s he was, successively, Organ Exhibitioner at Queens’ College, Cambridge, Assistant Organist at St Olave’s Church, York, St Mary’s Church, Nottingham and St Chad’s Church, Far Headingley, Leeds. In 1994, with Dr Tim Peters, he founded the Damian Singers. As their accompanist, he played the organ three or four times a year at all the major English cathedrals for the next 25 years. He holds the diplomas of ARCM and FLCM. He was appointed Assistant Organist at St John’s in September 2017, probably because the letter went to the wrong address. The week after his appointment, the church roof fell in. Then, when the mess was cleared up, and the pipe organ re-instated, the pandemic hit, and the church shut up shop. All were sheer coincidences, obviously.

**The organ**

The organ is a magnificent 3 manual and pedal instrument; the finest in Sheffield, and one of the best of any parish church in the UK. It was built originally in 1911 by the Sheffield firm of Brindley and Foster, rebuilt in 1963 by Nicholson of Malvern, and most recently in 1997 by David Wells of Liverpool. It has three manuals (Choir, Great and Swell) and pedals, with a total of 56 speaking stops, distributed as follows:

Choir 16,8,8,8,4,4,2 2/3,2,2,1 3/5,III,8,8,8,8 (the lowest manual)

Great 16,8,8,8,4,4,4,2 2/3,2,III,8,4 (the middle one)

Swell 8,8,8,8,4,4,2,II,III,16,8,8,8,4 (the top one)

Pedal 32,16,16,16,16,16,8,8,8,4,IV,32,16,16,8 (under the boots)

‘8’ indicates an 8 foot long pipe, sounding unison pitch, ‘4’ is the octave above, '2' two octaves above, '16' one octave below, and so on. The pipes are located in the chamber north of the Chancel. You can only see the front pipes, a total of 58, which represent a tiny proportion of the over 3000 pipes inside the organ chamber. The console, which is really the centre for ‘command and control’, is on the sunny south side, and is connected to the pneumatic action by electric cable.

In the 1980s, the Chancel pipes were painted a matt beige, at the request of the architect George Pace, who remodelled the whole Chancel, stripping the Victorian polished woodwork back to a limed oak finish. This was controversial, and the colour doesn’t do the organ’s appearance any favours. Julian is campaigning to return the pipes to their original 'organ metal' (natural) finish. This would give the Chancel front its original distinguished appearance – similar to the one that you see in the North Aisle, as portrayed in the picture on the front of this programme.

Feel free to applaud wildly after each item. If you don't, I will sit sullenly until you do.