

RECITAL ON THE RUTT ORGAN, GREAT HALL IN THE PEOPLE'S PALACE

IN MEMORY OF DONALD PREECE

Thursday 17th September, 2015 at 3.pm

Given by Alan Wilson (Former Director of Music at Queen Mary)

PROGRAMME

Academic Fanfare and Verse (based on 'Gaudeamus Igitur') - Donald Preece
A Trumpet Minuet - Alfred Hollins (Solo trumpet: Paul Edlin, Present Director of Music)

Nostalgic Interlude - Donald Preece
In Town Tonight (Final movement of 'The London Suite') - Eric Coates
Blaze Away - Abe Holzmann

Festal Prelude on 'The Maid of Islington' - Donald Preece
Pim's Toccata (from 'Music for an Occasion') - Alan Wilson

BACKGROUND NOTES

Donald adored the organ. His very extensive research of virtually all the organs in the East End of London is evident in the excellent book he produced for College. But his care and concern for this instrument during the restoration and involvement in the Inaugural Recital (he gave the opening talk), is a gift which the College will treasure for many years. I might even add that he was passionate – every time we bumped into each other in the corridor he would jump up with enormous enthusiasm about the latest organ he had just visited! 2011, during the first stages of the restoration, was a prolific year for Donald – not only was he starting to put his book together, but wrote several organ pieces, two of which will be performed this afternoon.

The structure of my recital is underpinned by three of Donald's compositions, which begin each section. Two are academic preludes/postludes and the middle one a quiet meditation on an original theme. Acknowledgment of Donald's organ research is also reflected in a piece by Hollins, the First Organist for the Lewis organ in the Original People's Palace. The remaining works are taken from graduation ceremonies I have been involved in here, plus pieces from the Inaugural Recital in February 2013.

The Recital begins with an exuberant flourish: Donald's **Academic Fanfare and Verse**, written for the University of Kent to be included in graduation ceremonies in Canterbury Cathedral. This makes full use of all the brassy colours and full textures, which must have sounded magnificent in Canterbury Cathedral but are equally brilliant on this instrument, with its fine reeds and choruses. One of Donald's 'traits' is his cunning way to shift through a multitude of keys, of which this piece is a fine example. It leads one through all sorts of unusual paths before finally settling in a firm resounding D major.

The **Trumpet Minuet** by Alfred Hollins is a most famous piece. Hollins clearly had a high pressured bright trumpet in mind. I remember Donald saying that he felt disappointed with the solo tuba on this organ (pipes hidden at the back of the Choir department), being not nearly as exciting as the Rutt organ at St Cyprian, Clarence Gate – so it is a real delight this afternoon to have Paul playing the trumpet part on a real instrument!

The second section begins with Donald's beautiful **Nostalgic Interlude**, which I included in the Inaugural Recital in 2013. Although in the more unusual off-beat time of 5/4, the phrasing and progression of his original theme are always smooth. Warm string sounds develop alongside rippling flutes, of which this organ has some fine examples. Then follow two other pieces that also featured in that Inaugural Recital. These were chosen to demonstrate the more secular side of the organ, remembering the many fine concerts put on in the heyday of the People's Palace.

Eric Coates was one of the most loved 'Light Music' composers during the middle of the last century. Many works, like **In Town Tonight**, were used as theme tunes to radio programmes. He always knew how to write a good tune. Another memorable 'whistly' tune is enjoyed in the concluding piece in this section, **Blaze Away**, which gives me the opportunity to demonstrate the more humorous side of the organ.

Donald's **Festal Prelude on 'The Maid of Islington'** kicks off the final section. Once again he takes us through several keys with fanfares in conversation with the main folk tune. The latter is given a 'Sibelius' treatment using fragments of the melody building up before settling into the folk tune proper. The two themes then unite and the piece draws to a warm close.

This piece has particular significance to me as I played it (with Donald present) at a graduation ceremony just a few weeks before he died, making it to me his swansong. My own composition **Pim's Toccata**, though originally written for another connection, has become firmly wedded to this organ and graduation ceremonies. Based on two Easter hymns, it is bravura in nature with lots of notes, lots of sound and an exuberant ending.

Alan Wilson.

The Organ is the original 1936 one from the rebuilt People's Palace, built by Robert Spurden-Rutt, untouched until the faithful restoration by the Village Workshop (organ-builder David Stalley) in 2012. It is a Grade II listed fine 3 manual concert instrument with a colourful and diverse stop specification.

Alan Wilson was Director of Music at Queen Mary from 1976 to 2013.