

The Parish Church of St. Mark, Mansfield

Organ Series 2024

'West Country Greats'

Mike Smith

Director of Music, The Parish Church of St. Mark, Mansfield

Saturday 29th June at 2:00pm

PROGRAMME

Cantique Op.3, No.1

Edward Elgar (1857-1934)

Siciliano for a High Ceremony

Herbert Howells (1892-1983)

Plymouth Suite

Percy Whitlock (1903-1945)

- 1) Allegro Risoluto
- 2) Lantana
- 3) Chanty

- 4) Salix
- 5) Toccata

Three Preludes on Welsh Hymn Tunes

R Vaughan-Williams (1872-1958)

1. Bryn Califaria
2. Rhosymedre
3. Hyfrydol

Intermezzo

Herbert Sumsion (1899-1995)

Ceremonial March

Herbert Sumsion (1899-1995)

Michael Smith (b. 1975) began his musical life whilst at school in Millom, Cumbria, taking organ lessons with Peter Acott and the late Professor David Sanger. The movement from boy chorister to organist seemed the natural progression and he took up his first post as organist at the age of fourteen at the ancient Parish Church of Holy Trinity, Millom.

Michael continued his musical training when he moved to Huddersfield to read music at the University. He studied organ with Keith Jarvis and harpsichord with Dr. Graham Cummings. Michael served as Assistant University Organist and was the first undergraduate organist ever to perform the music of William Byrd as part of his finals. After graduating with a Bachelor of Music (Honours) degree, he continued his studies at Huddersfield taking a Postgraduate Certificate in Education in Secondary Music.

On leaving Huddersfield, Michael took up the post of Head of Music at St. Bede's, Lanchester, Durham and continued further professional postgraduate studies in education at Durham University, where he served as an Associate Tutor on the PGCE course. Whilst living in Durham he was appointed Director of Music at Lanchester Parish Church, a part-time Tenor Lay Clerk at St. Nicholas' Cathedral, Newcastle, and Diocesan Representative for the Friends of Cathedral Music for Durham. Michael also became accompanist to the Fitzsimon's Singers at Newcastle Cathedral and St. Mary's Singers on Lindisfarne. Latterly whilst living in the North-East, Michael was appointed Curriculum Leader at All Saints College, Newcastle upon Tyne. During his time at All Saints College, he acted as Newcastle Diocesan Schools accompanist at the Cathedral.

Michael moved to Manchester to further his career where he served as Assistant Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, Associate Headteacher and Acting Headteacher at Lostock College in Trafford. He moved to Mansfield in 2012 to take up the post of Principal at Queen Elizabeth's Academy. Michael has also held posts as Consultant Headteacher in Doncaster and Interim Headteacher in Central Bedfordshire.

Michael also holds a Master of Education degree from Newcastle University, the National Professional Qualification for Headship and is a Fellow of the Guild of Musicians and Singers, and the Academy of St. Cecilia; he is also a member of the North and Midlands School of Music. Michael took up his current church post as Director of Music at the Parish Church of St. Mark's, Mansfield on Advent Sunday 2012, taking a break during 2017-2019 to have an interim move to Central Bedfordshire, only to return to St. Mark's in March 2019.

Michael is currently the Head of Prison Group Director's Office for North Midlands Prisons Group, within His Majesties Prison and Probation Service.

Michael's first CD recording, *Excelsior*, recorded at The Parish Church of All Saints, Stand, Manchester with Tim Noon (then Director of Music, Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral) and Concordia.

Elgar was never at the forefront of organ composers, even though he had been organist at St. George's Catholic Church in Worcester. His one major contribution to the repertoire had been the symphonic-style Sonata in G, which had been written for performance in Worcester Cathedral in 1895. **Cantique** was dedicated to Hugh Blair, organist of the Cathedral, who had given the first performance of the Sonata. It is an unpretentious piece, which had first appeared as a movement in an early Suite for Wind Band. Elgar arranged it for organ in 1912.

Herbert Howells had received his early training from the organist of Gloucester Cathedral and, although he never claimed to be a proficient executant, it is not surprising that, with his gifts of flexible, expressive writing, he should frequently turn to the organ in his compositions. **Siciliano for a High Ceremony**, written for a wedding in 1953, is typical of his distinctive style and feelings for dance forms of an earlier period.

Whitlock and his wife Edna had gone on a trip to Plymouth to attend a conference of 'The Incorporated Association of Organists'. The **Plymouth Suite** was the outcome of this visit. There are five movements. Each of them is dedicated to an organist who had attended the conference. The *Allegro Risoluto* has a pretension to sounding like a theme for a passacaglia. This theme is treated in an extremely competent manner with robust harmonies. The second theme has been influenced by a phrase from the first movement of Rachmaninov's Second Symphony. The two themes are worked quite extensively with the first re-appearing towards the end. The piece concludes with fanfares. The second movement is entitled *Lantana* - the dictionary definition of which is a 'tree-like shrub.' However, it is translated by Whitlock as the 'Wayfaring Tree.' The mood is peaceful and quite distant in its atmosphere. There is no doubt that there are echoes of Edward Elgar in the working out of the melody. The third movement is a *Chanty*, which is written for manuals only. The fourth movement, called *Salix* is an example of the pastoral style. It would be easy to see such a piece composed by the likes of Finzi or perhaps William Lloyd Webber. *Salix* means a willow tree - a weeping willow. The main theme is a gentle 'Sicilian' tune in 6/8 time. It is quite definitely one of the composer's finest miniatures. One wonders what it would sound like arranged for strings or small orchestra. The last movement is a robust toccata. Strangely, perhaps this is Whitlock's only essay in the form of Toccata. However, this piece is in the tradition of the great French Toccatas of Böellmann, Gigout and Mulet. This is a grand finale to a fine suite. There are two themes at work. A wonderful, slow-moving pedal theme is set against a semi-quaver accompaniment on the manuals. The solo reed emerges to lift this piece into the heavens. This uses a wider melodic range and shorter note values.

Like Elgar, Vaughan-Williams wrote little for the organ, a Prelude and Fugue and Three Preludes on Welsh Hymn Tunes being his only contribution to the repertoire. The angular **Bryn Calfaria** and the forthright **Hyfrydol** are interesting enough, but the gentle flowing **Rhosymedre** has been a favourite with organists since it was written in 1920.

Herbert Sumsion was organist of Gloucester Cathedral from 1928 until 1967 and conductor of the Three Choirs Festival during that time, in which he came into close contact with most of the composers on this evening's programme. His own music for the organ, of which there is a great deal, consists largely of miniatures – ideal before and after Services. **Intermezzo**, an early work, is a serene movement which has been arranged from its original form for string orchestra, while the triumphant **Ceremonial March**, dating from a much later period in his long and fruitful working life, makes a fitting end to a set of pieces from composers of the West Country, who have made such a notable contribution to the life and music of Britain, especially through their writings for the church.

The Organ – Brindley & Foster 1900

GREAT

Open Diapason	8	BF (1900)
Stopt Diapason	8	Rescaled from BF Gedact 16 by MOB (1974)
Principal	4	BF (1900)
Flute Couverte	4	BF (1900)
Nazard	2 $\frac{1}{2}$	Rescaled from BF Clarabella 8 by MOB (1974)
Fifteenth	2	Added by HW (1955); replaced BF Clarinet 8
Fourniture	22.26.29	Added by MOB (1974)
Trumpet	8	Added from Pedal Trumpet by AH (2005)

Swell to Great

SWELL

Geigen Diapason	8	BF (1900)
Viola da Gamba	8	BF (1900)
Voix Celeste	8	BF (1900)
Gemshorn	4	BF (1900)
Doublette	2	Divided from Mixture by MOB (1974)
Mixture	15.19.22	MOB 19.22 (1974)/Reinstated 3 ranks HG (2014)
Contra Oboe	16	Rescaled from BF Oboe 8 by HW (1955)
Trumpet	8	BF (1900)

Swell Octave

Swell Suboctave

Reinstated on request of MS by HG (2014)

PEDAL

Sub Bass	32	Harmonic from BF Pedal 16s* by HW (1955)
Major Bass	16*	BF (1900)
Bourdon	16*	BF (1900)
Bass Flute	8	BF (1900)
Octave Flute	4	Extension from BF Bass Flute 8 by HW (1955)
Trombone	16	Added AH (2005)
Trumpet	8	Added AH (1993)

Great to Pedal

Swell to Pedal

ORGAN BUILDERS: 1900-present

Brindley & Foster (BF) - organ built 1900 with mechanical action

Brindley & Foster (BF) - action converted to exhaust-pneumatic around 1939

Henry Willis & Sons Ltd (HW) - rebuilt 1955 (see above for notes)

Midland Organ Builders (MOB) - restoration and tonal changes 1974 (see above for notes)

Anthony Herrod (AH) - additions 1993 & 2005 (see above for notes)

Henry Groves & Sons (HG) - rebuild 2014 (see above for stop changes)

The firm rebuilt the whole organ: the main soundboards were converted to electro-pneumatic; the pedal organ and additional reed chest were converted to direct electric action; electric drawstop solenoids were fitted to the console and slider solenoids to the soundboards; new processor system, with provision of MIDI, was installed; the organ chamber was re-ordered to improve tonal egress and aesthetics; and a new winding system was installed.