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CLASSICS

THE ORGAN of BUCKINGHAM PALACE BALLROOM

JOSEPH NOLAN



BACH · VAUGHAN WILLIAMS
MENDELSSOHN · DUBOIS · RAWSTHORNE

THE ORGAN OF BUCKINGHAM PALACE BALLROOM

1.	Passacaglia in C Minor BWV 582	Johann Sebastian Bach	[13.47]
2.	Rhosymedre	Ralph Vaughan Williams	[4.32]
	Sonata No 3 in A	Felix Mendelssohn	
3.	Con moto maestoso		[7.07]
4.	Andante tranquillo		[2.18]
5.	Toccata	Théodore Dubois	[6.46]
	Dance Suite	Noel Rawsthorne	
6.	I. March - On Ilkley Moor		[1.57]
7.	II. Dancing Feet		[2.03]
8.	III. Waltz		[2.44]
9.	IV. Dance des Papillons		[2.35]
10.	V. Line Dance		[4.13]
	Total Timings		[48.24]

JOSEPH NOLAN ORGAN

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To 19th century middle-Europe Bach was the Parnassus, the 'pictorial musician-poet', of the age. Worshipped by Beethoven (1801) - 'first father of harmony'. Monumentalised by Weber (1821) - 'a Gothic cathedral dedicated to the arts'. Deified by Schumann (1840) - 'unapproachable, unfathomable'. The Bach Awakening was a peculiarly German/Anglo-Saxon affair. It elevated one man's genius. It gave the Baroque Romantic pertinence. It made History acceptable to programme. Sailing by the flag of German fugue, Mendelssohn the conductor, Liszt the pianist, led the way, promulgating Bachian aesthetic for the common good. Bach's keyboard output spanned his life. Music for private, public or pedagogical use, universally destined if at the outset confined to the locale of his appointments - for 'Bach and his fellow organists and cantors belonged to a closed society [not to the "larger world" of the "great centres of Europe"] His reputation as an organist was widespread, but it was a provincial fame, far removed from the European reputation that Handel enjoyed' (Max Graf, *Composer and Critic*, 1947). The organ works comprise chorale settings plus preludes, fugues, trio sonatas, *duetti*, fantasias, toccatas and arrangements -

mostly from the secular years pre Leipzig and duties at the Thomaskirche. The 292-bar Passacaglia in C minor towers among the most regal and visionary. If, as widely assumed, it was written in Arnstadt or Mühlhausen where Bach was organist (1703-08) - the period when he walked to Lübeck to hear Buxtehude play - then, astonishingly, it's the statement, the profundity, of a young man still in his late teens/early twenties. In the typical passacaglia style of the day, the music presents a set of continuous variations on a repeating *basso ostinato* (an eight-bar triple-time ground initially unaccompanied on pedals) and the harmonic logic implicit within its contour. Notated with a key-signature of two rather than three flats (following baroque convention), and without tempo indication (save the *adagio* of the last two bars), the ebb and flow is dictated by quickening or slowing note-values within a constant pulse. Re-aligning precedent and procedure to consolidate the model championed by Beethoven and Brahms, Bach significantly doesn't confine his *ostinato* to only the bass register; nor does he adhere routinely to its short-long iambic metre - modifying the rhythm as early as bar 40, using semiquaver couplets and rests to break-up the

legato phrasing. In 88/89ff he transfers the melody to the upper voice; similarly in 168/69ff where, marked *Thema fugatum*, it becomes the subject of a four-part fugue (ASBT exposition). Elsewhere he arpeggiates the chordal scheme, sketching a chaconne-style toccata progression on the manuals, 120/21ff. Transmoding, transposing or adapting the ground into other keys (fugue, 197/98ff) is also ventured. All devices, he would have claimed, designed to create 'a well-sounding harmony to the Glory of God' (courtesy of Friedrich Niedt).

Born to a clergyman in Brahmsian Gloucestershire, Vaughan Williams lived through times of marked cultural and aesthetic diversity, his output spanning two world wars and the history of England's sunset from Empire to Commonwealth. Liszt, Wagner and the New German School, Stockhausen, Boulez and the Darmstadt radicals, framed his life. The high ground between Elgar and Britten was his natural command. Music, he believed, was 'the only means of artistic expression which is natural to everybody. Music is above all things the art of the common man [...] the art of the humble [...] Music cannot be treated like cigars or wine, as a mere commodity. It has its spiritual value as well. It shares in preserving the identity of soul of the individual and of the nation'.

A predominantly four-part andantino in G major, contemporary with the *Pastoral Symphony*, *Rhosymedre* or *Lovely* ('Our Father, by whose name') was the second of *Three Preludes on Welsh Hymn Tunes* published in 1920 - to a melody by J E Edwards (1805-85).

In common with his German predecessors, contemporaries and successors - Beethoven, Spohr, Weber, Schumann, Brahms, Bruch, Reger - Mendelssohn, pianist and organist, master of the majestic and the modest, the supreme Bach revivalist of his generation, married Classicism and Romanticism. Weighing counterpoint and chorale, profundity and piety, the late A major Organ Sonata (completed in Bad Soden near Frankfurt am Main, 17 August 1844, a month before the Violin Concerto) was the third of a set of six, culminating a series of compositions for the instrument begun in Berlin in the 1820s. Central to its design is a four-part fugue in A minor (on a 4/4 subject led by a bold anacrusis head-motif [E-F-D-G#] announced in the bass followed by tenor, alto and soprano entries) offset against a pedal line on the 1524 Lutheran chorale *Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu Dir* (Psalm 130, 'Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord'). This fugue is flanked by matching prologue and interlude paragraphs in the major, *con moto maestoso*,

fortissimo, the second tonally milder. Tempo (*andante tranquillo*), metre (3/4) and atmosphere (*piano e dolce*) change for the final section, an epilogue/quasi-voluntary flowering from the upbeat. Witnessing Mendelssohn's life-long interest in the Beethoven idea of *continuous* 'sonata', the whole plays without a break.

Théodore Dubois studied at the Paris Conservatoire, winning the Prix de Rome in 1861 - one of the many long-forgotten names to grace that institution. In 1877 he succeeded Saint-Saëns as organist at the Madeleine, and in 1896 took over from his former composition teacher, Ambroise Thomas, as director of the Conservatoire. Believing himself to be a man of the stage, his successes came in other spheres: 'pure style' masses, motets, oratorios, symphonies, chamber music. Of the many organ pieces he left, nearly a hundred, the Toccata in G major is in the form of a bustling neo-classical *allegro*, with a central episode of slower notes in B major punctuated by curtailed references to the principal material. The sonorous codetta, *fortissimo-allargando*, draws on the middle section.

Noel Rawsthorne, Mersey-bred, Manchester-trained, was organist at Liverpool Anglican Cathedral from 1955 to 1980, at his disposal the

largest cathedral organ in the United Kingdom - 'the grandest Willis of them all' (Simon Lindley). His popular, populist *Dance Suite* was composed 'for Gordon Stewart to celebrate the completion of the restoration of the Father Willis Organ in Huddersfield Town Hall, October 1997'. Familiar tunes, allusions and patter crowd the pages: I *March - On Ilkley Moor* (C major); II *Dancing Feet (Jazzy - with a swing*, for pedals alone: E flat); III *Waltz (Poco rubato*: D minor); IV *Danse des Papillons* (C major); V *Line Dance* (C major). The third scena takes Valse triste to the picture-palace Wurlitzer; the fourth is a latter-day *Flight of the Bumblebee*. *Line Dance*, a twinkle-toe medley inspired by Michael Flatley's 1996 Irish dance spectacular *Lord of the Dance* transported to the Last Nights at the Proms, opens with the tune of that name, the Shaker hymn *Simple Gifts*, and, drawing events full circle, closes with *Ilkley Moor*.

Dating from 1818, the English three-manual Buckingham Palace Ballroom Organ was built originally by Henry Lincoln for the Royal Pavilion, Brighton. On Victoria relinquishing the Pavilion as a residence, the instrument was moved to London and installed at the Palace by Gray & Davison in 1855. Its modern renovation, by William Drake of Buckfastleigh, was completed in 2002. 'The grandest thing in the Palace, is perhaps the ball-

room,' pictured Arthur Henry Beavan in his *Imperial London*, published in 1901. 'It is nobly proportioned, lighted from above by electricity, and from the sides by handsome gilt-bronze candelabra. Its ceiling is richly decorated; the walls are panelled in crimson silk; and the floor is beautifully inlaid with oak. When a state concert is in progress, its appearance is striking in the extreme. On either side are three tiers of seats facing those on the floor-level, all occupied by most brilliantly-attired personages, for on these occasions the most beautiful dresses and jewels are worn. At the upper end of the room is the organ [...]; on one side of the platform is a right royal-looking harp, and on the other a fine [1856] Érard Grand [today in the White Drawing Room], ornamented with richly gilt scroll-work. When the late Queen was present, she sat in the front chair close to the platform; and a lady who had the honour of singing an ode before her on one of these grand occasions in the Jubilee year of 1887, told me that Her Majesty followed every note with the careful attention of a professed musician.'

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ORGAN STOP LIST

THE BALLROOM, BUCKINGHAM PALACE, LONDON
LINCOLN (1818), GRAY & DAVIDSON (1855), WILLIAM DRAKE (2002)

Great

GG/AA-f³
Double Diapason Bass
Double Diapason Treble
Open Diapason No. 1
Open Diapason No. 2
Stop Diapason*
Principal*
Twelfth*
Fifteenth*
Tierce*
Sesquialtra Bass*
Sesquialtra Treble
Mixture*
Trumpet
Clarion*

Swell

C-f³
Swell Bourdon
Swell Organ Diapason
Swell Stop Diapason
Swell Principal
Swell Mixture
Swell Cornopean
Swell Oboe

Pedal

CC-f¹
Grand Open Diapason

Choir

GG/AA-f³
Choir Dulciana
Choir Stop Diapason
Choir Principal
Choir Flute
Choir Fifteenth
Choir Bassoon

*Great Manual to Pedal***
Choir Manual to Pedal
Swell Manual to Pedal
Swell to Great Manual
Swell to Choir Manual

** Sub-octave coupler. Additional notes to complete the Great Stops (*) downward (to C) are placed on a separate soundboard and are operated via this coupler.

BIOGRAPHY

Hailed by Diapason Magazine, USA for his 'flawlessly performed debut recital in Pittsburgh and impeccable technique' Joseph Nolan is gaining recognition as an organist of considerable note.

Joseph was appointed to Her Majesty's Chapels Royal, St James's Palace in 2004 where he plays for the regular services. He has broadcast with the choir on Radio 3 and Classic FM and was organist for a new disc of Handel anthems to be released on the Naxos label. As part of his duties, Joseph also played at the Thanksgiving service for Princess Diana at The Guards Chapel in August 2007.

Joseph also plays regularly at the Wren church, St Bride's Fleet St, which features a professional choir of international repute. Joseph has performed on numerous occasions at Buckingham Palace, most notably giving the inaugural recital of the refurbished Ballroom organ in November 2005 to a distinguished invited audience. Joseph was the first ever Organist to record a commercial CD of this instrument in November 2006 for the Signum label.

A scholarship holder at The Royal College of Music, London, Joseph won major organ prizes and was awarded First Class Honours for his B Mus Final Recital at The Temple Church, London. Joseph then studied in Paris with Marie Claire Alain and in London with Dame Gillian Weir supported by scholarships from The Countess of Munster Trust, The Hattori Foundation and The Royal Philharmonic Society.

Joseph's career is being recognised internationally with his CD recordings on the ASV, Herald and Priory labels being lauded by International Record Review, BBC Music Magazine, Diapason (France), Klassik (Germany), Fanfare (USA), American Record Guide, Gramophone (UK), The Saturday Telegraph, Novita Gennaio (Italy), Luisata (Holland) and the Penguin Good CD Guide. They have also been broadcast in part on Radio France and Radio New Zealand.

Joseph has performed at many of the major UK venues including St Paul's Cathedral, Westminster Abbey, Buckingham Palace (for the Cathedral Organists Conference 2004) and St John's College



Cambridge. Festival invitations include Frankfurt, Cambridge, Thaxted and Oundle where he was a soloist and tutor. Joseph has returned on occasion to teach organ at the Junior Department of The Royal College of Music, London. He is also an Examiner for the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, for whom he tours here and in the Far East.

Joseph is also active as a choral conductor. He was Conductor of The University College London Chamber Choir and is Conductor of London choir 'Vivamus'. With both these choirs Joseph has conducted the London Mozart Players at St John's Smiths Square.

Vivamus made its debut at The Royal Festival Hall in December 2004 with the Philharmonia Chorus, London Festival Orchestra and Willard White in a

performance of Mendelssohn's 'Elijah'. Joseph made his debut solo tour to the USA in September 2005. Joseph returned to the USA in January 2007, having been invited to perform for the American Anglicans Conference at Christ Church, New Haven and to give a lecture-presentation on Widor at Yale University.

Joseph toured again to the USA in September 2007, to give the Celebrity recital on the newly rebuilt organ in The Church of The Epiphany, Pittsburgh, a masterclass at Duquesne University, Pittsburgh and additional recitals at St Andrew's Episcopal Church and Oakmont Presbyterian Church.

A CD of contemporary organ music from Coventry Cathedral for Herald has been recently released to rave reviews ("This is as exciting as it comes" - Organists Review November 2007) and discs from Buckingham Palace Ballroom and St Sulpice, Paris for Signum will be forthcoming in 2008.

Joseph was recently appointed Organist and Master of The Choristers at St George's Cathedral, Perth, Australia. He will take up the post in March 2008.

This recital was recorded in the Ballroom, Buckingham Palace, on Monday 27th November 2006,
by kind permission of Her Majesty The Queen

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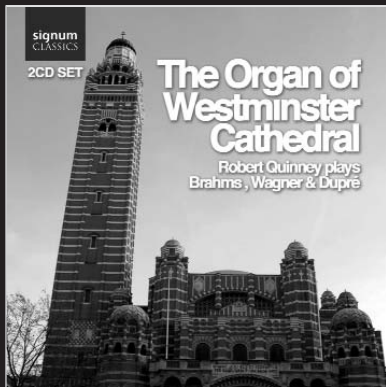
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