



Shrine Church of Ss Peter & Paul and St Philomena

Organ Music Shaped Our Heritage

Recital Series 2021/22

Welcome to the Shrine Church of SS Peter & Paul and St Philomena, New Brighton. This magnificent church, built to the vision of Fr Mullins, the first parish priest, in 1935, sits proudly upon the highest part of Wirral.

After being closed to public worship in 2008, the Bishop of Shrewsbury, the Rt Rev. Mark Davies, re-established the church in 2011 as a shrine, under the care of the Institute of Christ the King, Sovereign Priest.

The Institute of Christ the King, Sovereign Priest

A Society of Apostolic Life of Pontifical Right, the Institute, under its principal patroness, Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, to whom the Institute is consecrated, is dedicated to the spreading of the reign of Christ in all spheres of human life by drawing from the millennial treasury of the Roman Catholic Church, particularly her liturgical tradition, the unbroken line of spiritual thought and practice of her saints, and her cultural patrimony in music, art and architecture.

Recognising the importance of a deep harmony between faith, liturgy, life, and the power of beauty in attracting the human senses to the things above, an integral part of the Institute's charism is the use of the traditional Latin Liturgy of 1962 for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the other sacraments. Great care for a solemn liturgy, complete fidelity to the doctrine of the Church and the Holy Father, and awareness of the central role of Grace, especially Charity — these are essential elements of the Institute's spirituality, which is drawn from its three co-patrons, St Benedict, St Thomas Aquinas, and St Francis de Sales. Its motto, taken from St. Paul, is "Live the truth in charity."

Music is at the heart of the daily liturgies of the Church, both of the Holy Mass and of the Office, and the use of both Gregorian chant and of the organ is central to these, as the Church has throughout the centuries reaffirmed.

"The Church acknowledges Gregorian chant as specially suited to the Roman liturgy: therefore, other things being equal, it should be given pride of place in liturgical services." — Sacrosanctum Concilium §116

"In the Latin Church the pipe organ is to be held in high esteem, for it is the traditional musical instrument which adds a wonderful splendour to the Church's ceremonies and powerfully lifts up man's mind to God and to higher things." — Sacrosanctum Concilium §120

Heritage Events

The Institute is now close to completing a £2 million and eight-year programme of restoration of this great church. Through divine providence, the support of the National Lottery Heritage Fund, and the generosity of many benefactors, this building stands renewed to continue to serve God and the people of New Brighton and Wirral for the future. As part of its mission, the Institute has embarked on a series of events to strengthen the connection between this building and the local communities that it serves, and to educate and inform visitors of the wealth of history, tradition and heritage both of the building and of the faith that sustains it.

As part of this work, the Institute is pleased to present a series of organ recitals/lectures over the coming year that demonstrate the importance of the role of the organ in the development of church music here at the Shrine and particularly of the liturgical practices of the baroque period across Europe. The series will demonstrate the works of French, German and Italian composers who strove for the highest form of art in the liturgy of the church. We hope that you will find it interesting and informative.

This series will take place monthly on Sunday afternoons from 16:00-16:50, followed by refreshments and preceding Vespers (17:30), Rosary & Benediction (approx. 18:00) and Compline (approx. 18:30), to which you are all, of course, most welcome.

The Lecture/Recital Series

- I. 19 September 2021: The French Organ Mass (F. Couperin Messe pour les paroisses)
- II. 17 October 2021: The Italian Organ Mass (Frescobaldi Fiori musicali)
- III. 14 November 2021: The Lutheran Organ Mass (J. S. Bach Clavier-Übung III)
- IV. 12 December 2021: Bach and Daquin for Advent and Christmas
- V. 23 January 2022: Gregorian Chant in Lutheran Liturgy and Organ Works
- VI. 27 February 2022: Music for Lent and Passiontide
- VII. 27 March 2022: Magnificat: Music for Vespers and Our Lady
- VIII. 24 April 2022: Music for Easter
- IX. 22 May 2022: Lutheran Hymnody in Organ Music
- X. 19 June 2022: Veni, Sancte Spiritus: melodies of Pentecost

The organ has played a central part in Christian liturgical tradition for many centuries, though with continuous evolution over time. Even as the Church saw the effects of the Reformation and counter-Reformation on the Roman Church, many of those Protestant churches saw a continued, if different role for the instrument in their respective religious practices.

Under the Protestant Lutheran reforms of the 16th century, the organ in Northern Europe and Germany in particular developed a lively role in supporting and accompanying congregational singing but also gained a voice in promoting the new metrical hymnody and revised catechism of Martin Luther. Its place was to help to embed the new liturgical practices and belief of the Protestant churches firmly in their congregations, but it also retained its older role of meditative interpretations of its melodies, including many of those based on Roman Gregorian plainchant, lifting the souls of the faithful to higher things. Composers such as Buxtehude, Krebs, Pachelbel and Walther were important in this, though the greatest legacy is most clearly owed to Johann Sebastian Bach who successfully fused high art with a deep faith.

In France the organ had over many centuries come to play a particular role, not only providing music for within and around the Mass and the Offices and for the accompaniment of voices, but directly substituting for them in many places. This led to the development of the Organ Mass, with numerous versets for the organ providing in music the words of the services itself. Though this tradition spread to various parts of Europe, including Italy, it is in France that this method reached its height, and, even though there have been a number of reforms to the Roman liturgy since then, its practice has continued and evolved and is regularly heard in the churches of France and, in particular Paris, to this day. Romantic composers from Cesar Franck, through Maurice Durufle, Charles Tournemire, Charles-Marie Widor and beyond to current organists such as Daniel Roth (St-Sulpice, Paris) and Olivier Latry (Notre-Dame, Paris) maintain the spirit of these organ masses in their plainchant-based improvisations within the sacred liturgy today.

This series will primarily focus on the use of the organ liturgically in Baroque France and Germany, highlighting the importance and centrality of the organ to the Latin liturgy of Catholic France and the different role that the organ performed in the Lutheran Church of northern Germany after the Reformation. It will also describe the importance of Gregorian chant melodies not only in the organ works in Catholic Europe, but also highlighting how many of the new metrical hymn melodies of Martin Luther's post-Reformation practices continued to be heavily influenced by the centuries-old tradition of plainchant of the Roman Church.

Specification of the Organ

The instrument here at the Shrine is a versatile one, with well developed tonal choruses and is capable of displaying well the repertoire of the major continental baroque schools. Built in 1991 by Ahlborn and speaking with a distinctive French accent, the electronic instrument fills the church from its audio speakers placed high in the west gallery.

For your interest, the specification of the organ is given here. The programme notes for each individual recital will show the stops used for each piece by reference to their stop numbers listed below. For those not acquainted with organ specifications, the number to the right of each stop determines its pitch. Stops of 8' (eight feet) in length sound at the same pitch as if they were played on a piano. Stops

of 4' sound one octave higher, 2' sounds one octave higher than 4'. Stops of 16' sound one octave below that if it were played on a piano and 32' stops sound two octaves below. Mutation stops (those with lengths of fractions of a foot) sound in between the octaves: a $2\frac{2}{3}'$ stop sounds one octave and a half above written pitch (a twelfth), a $1\frac{3}{5}'$ sounds two octaves and a third (a seventeenth) and a $1\frac{1}{3}'$ sounds two and a half octaves (a nineteenth) above piano pitch. Those with Roman numerals to their right sound more than one pitch at once, the numeral indicating the number of pitches. It is the combination of these stops of different pitches which gives the organ both its complex harmonic structure but also highly individual and characteristic sounds through the use of different pitches in combination. Individual programme notes for each recital will explore these in more detail.



Grand Orgue (II) (61 notes, CC-c⁴)

1. Principal 16'
2. Montre 8'
3. Flûte 8'
4. Prestant 4'
5. Flûte à Cheminée 4'
6. Quinte $2\frac{2}{3}'$
7. Doublette 2'
8. Plein-Jeu IV
9. Cymbale III
10. Trompette 8'
11. Clarion 4'
12. Positif-Grand Orgue
13. Recit-Grand Orgue

Pédale (32 notes, CCC-G, straight and concave)

14. Contre-Basse 16'
15. Soubasse 16'
16. Basse 8'
17. Bourdon 8'
18. Octave 4'
19. Flûte Ouverte 4'
20. Flûte 2'
21. Fourniture IV
22. Bombarde 32'
23. Basson 16'
24. Trompette 8'
25. Régale 4'
26. Positif-Pédale
27. Grand Orgue-Pédale
28. Récit-Pédale

Récit (III) (61 notes, CC-c⁴)

29. Bourdon 8'
30. Gambe 8'
31. Cor de Nuit 4'
32. Nasard $2\frac{2}{3}'$
33. Principal 2'
34. Flûte 2'
35. Tierce $1\frac{3}{5}'$
36. Cymbale III
37. Voix Céleste 6'
38. Basson 16'
39. Hautbois 8'
40. Trémolo

Positif (I) (61 notes, CC-c⁴)

41. Cor de Chamois 8'
42. Flûte à Cheminée 8'
43. Principal 4'
44. Flûte Conique 4'
45. Octave 2'
46. Quinte $1\frac{1}{3}'$
47. Plein-Jeu III
48. Sesquialtera II
49. Régale 16'
50. Cromorne 8'
51. Trémolo
52. Récit-Positif

Organist

Christian Spence was born in Wigan in 1976, receiving much of his early musical education within the churches of that area. He received tuition under Ian Wells and Prof Ian Tracey at Liverpool Cathedral before completing his music degree in organ and choral conducting at the University of Huddersfield under Keith Jarvis, winning the organ scholarship at Leeds RC Cathedral in 1999, studying under Stuart Thompson. He served as Director of Music at the large musical church of St Margaret, Ilkley, West Yorkshire for eight years alongside many recitals and concerts, and holding the conductorship of a number of choirs across the north of England.



He left music professionally in 2008 to pursue a career in economics and economic policy and after a number of positions in local government and the private sector now works as reader in economics at Manchester Metropolitan University. His discovery of, and connection to, the older forms of the Roman liturgy began in the late 2000s, and he has served as organist for the Institute here at New Brighton since shortly after the church reopened under their care. His musical repertoire and continued studies and research are increasingly focused on baroque liturgical organ practice across Europe and the use of these and of the use and accompaniment of plainchant to support the liturgies of the Institute and to promote the continued practice of these ancient traditions.

“The organ is in truth the grandest, the most daring, the most magnificent of all instruments invented by human genius. It is a whole orchestra in itself. It can express anything in response to a skilled touch. Surely it is, in some sort, a pedestal on which the soul poises for a flight forth into space, essaying on her course to draw picture after picture in an endless series, to paint human life, to cross the Infinite that separates Heaven from Earth! And the longer a dreamer listens to those giant harmonies, the better he realises that nothing save this hundred-voiced choir on earth can fill all the space between kneeling men and a God hidden by the blinding light of sanctuary. The music is the one interpreter strong enough to bear up the prayers of humanity to Heaven, prayer in its omnipotent moods, prayer tinged by the melancholy of many different natures, coloured by meditative ecstasy, upspringing with the impulse of repentance, blended with the myriad fancies of every creed. Yes. In those long, vaulted aisles, melodies inspired by the sense of things Divine are invested with a grandeur unknown before, are decked with new glory and might. Out of the dim daylight, out of the dim silence broken by the chanting of a choir in response to the thunder of the organ, a veil is woven for God, and the brightness of His attributes shines through it.”

Honoré de Balzac

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