

# St Mary's Church, Portsea

Thursday 2nd August 2018

7.30pm

## Organ Recital by Nigel Stark

in aid of The Organ Project  
[www.theorganproject.org](http://www.theorganproject.org)



## The Organ of St Mary's

"...a unique survival, certainly of very considerable national importance, and a treasure that will increasingly be prized as time goes by."

"...Tonally, I regard this organ as the final achievement of 19th century British organ building.. this organ at Portsea is without question exciting."

J.W. Walker and Sons began their association with the parish of Portsea in 1879, when they loaned a one manual organ for installation in the temporary iron church, "for a reasonable time gratuitously" on the understanding that they would be given the order for "the building of the New & permanent inst."

Discussions with Dr. (later Sir) George Martin, organist of St. Paul's Cathedral, began in 1888. It was the intention that the new organ, for one of the largest parish churches in the country, should have four manuals, making it truly of cathedral proportions and of a class that was normally exclusive to the very richest town churches.

A two manual portion of the instrument was available for use at the consecration of the new church on 10th October 1889. Stops were added to complete the scheme in its present three manual form and the organ itself was dedicated on 31st October 1892, with an opening recital by Dr. George Martin in November. It is unclear to what extent mechanical preparation was made for the proposed Solo Organ, but historic photographs show that the space for the redundant fourth row of keys was used by successive organists as a makeshift bookshelf.

The organ cost £2,573 in total. Blomfield's beautiful case, made by Thompson of Peterborough, was added in 1901 as a memorial to men killed in the Boer War, at a further cost of £1,000. Additional expenditure on blowing equipment, including a gas engine in the cellar of the church, brought the total cost to nearly £4,000. The appearance of the organ was as we see it today, standing on the north side of the broad chancel in its lofty purpose-built chamber.

Every 50 years or so, a pipe organ requires costly renovation and repair. A simple cleaning and overhaul was undertaken in 1939, and thus the instrument continued into the post-war period in its original state, again with no immediate prospect of full renovation, while Portsmouth and Southampton got back on their feet after the damage caused by war-time raids.

It was not until the 1960s that long-awaited renovation work could take place. At that time a Portsmouth parish could no longer consider replacement or restoration on quite the scale envisaged by the Victorians. If there had been unlimited funds, they would almost certainly have been spent on 'improvements' to the pipework that we would now find entirely regrettable. It is only a small mercy that no changes were made to the original 1892 stop list.

In 1981, cleaning of the organ was undertaken by a local company; George Martin and Co.

The organ as it stands today is an instrument of 2,600 speaking pipes, still of fundamentally Victorian structure and character, rebuilt with new key and stop action and console in 1965. Its general condition is as would be expected with any mechanical instrument that has been worked daily, without any significant maintenance for over 52 years. There are individual failings and over the next two years these will become more frequent and ultimately acute.

The Organ Project aims to deliver our vision to raise £460,000 to preserve this instrument for the local community and future generations. This important heritage is in a critical condition with only limited time remaining before its sound will be lost forever.

**All donations will be most gratefully received.**  
Please do follow our project progress at: [www.theorganproject.org](http://www.theorganproject.org).

## Organ Specification

Great Organ			Swell Organ		
1.	Double Open Diapason	16	19.	Double Diapason	16
2.	Open Diapason No.1	8	20.	Open Diapason	8
3.	Open Diapason No.2	8	21.	Stopped Diapason	8
4.	Open Diapason No.3	8	22.	Vox Angelica	8
5.	Wald Flute	8	23.	Dulciana	8
6.	Principal	4	24.	Echo Gamba	8
7.	Harmonic Flute	4	25.	Principal	4
8.	Twelfth	2 <sup>2/3</sup>	26.	Flute	4
9.	Fifteenth	2	27.	Mixture 15.19.22.26	IV
10.	Mixture 15.19.22	III	28.	Mixture 22.26.29	III
11.	Clarion Mixture 22.26.29	III	29.	Contra Fagotto	16
12.	Double Trumpet	16	30.	Horn	8
13.	Trumpet	8	31.	Oboe	8
<i>I Swell to Great II Choir to Great</i>			<i>I Swell Octave II Swell Sub Octave</i>		
<i>III Great and Pedal Combinations Coupled</i>			<i>III Swell Unison Off IV Tremulant</i>		

Pedal Organ		Choir Organ	
14. Sub Bass	32	32. Violin Diapason	8
15. Open Wood	16	33. Lieblich Gedeckt	8
16. Violone	16	34. Dulciana	8
17. Bourdon	16	35. Dulciana Principal	4
18. Trombone	16	36. Lieblich Flute	4
<i>I Choir to Pedal II Great to Pedal</i>		37. Harmonic Piccolo	2
<i>III Swell to Pedal IV Pedal Octave</i>		38. Clarinet	8
		<i>I Swell to Choir</i>	

# Programme

Prelude and Fugue in e  
*BMW 548*

*Johann Sebastian Bach*  
(1685-1750)

Chorale No. 2

*Cesar Franck*  
(1822-1890)

Variations sur 'Amazing Grace'

*Denis Bédard*  
(1950-)

Symphony No. 5  
*Op. 42 No. 1*

*Charles-Marie Widor*  
(1844-1937)

*Mvts. I Allegro Vivace, IV Adagio & V Toccata*

## Recitalist

Nigel comes originally from Chester where he studied piano and later organ with Roger Fisher at Chester Cathedral. He was formerly Director of Music at St. Michael's Church Bishop's Stortford, conductor of the Bishop's Stortford Choral Society, musical director of the Harlow Opera Company and founder and director of 'Serenata', a small professional vocal ensemble.

Before moving to the West Midlands in April 2002 to take up the post of Director of Music at St. Alphege Church, Solihull, Nigel was Director of Music at the Church of St. Mary Portsea and head of St. Mary's Music Foundation. Nigel was also accompanist and assistant conductor of the Portsmouth Festival Choir and Portsmouth Choral Union under Jonathan Willcocks and featured as a soloist in many of their concerts.

St. Alphege Parish Church has a long history of choral music with a choir of men and boys who perform a cathedral style repertoire and now separate girls' and ladies' choirs too. The choir has toured extensively, both here and abroad. Before leaving Solihull in the summer of 2012, Nigel directed the music at a service in Canterbury Cathedral in the presence of the Archbishop of Canterbury to mark the millennium of the martyrdom of St. Alphege.

As a pianist, Nigel has specialised in accompanying solo singers and instrumentalists and has appeared many times locally and nationally. He has given many solo organ recitals in London and major churches and cathedrals here and abroad. Nigel has been conductor of the Royal Leamington Spa Bach Choir [www.rlsbc.org](http://www.rlsbc.org) since 2005.

Appointed to the post of Director of Music at St. Martin's and St. Mary's Stamford in August 2012, Nigel is now resident in Oakham, Rutland. His company, Hauptwerk Systems UK, [www.hwsystemsuk.co.uk](http://www.hwsystemsuk.co.uk) supplies virtual pipe organs to churches, halls and homes. This allows one to play real instruments from around the world with breathtaking authenticity.

In addition to his work as a conductor, organist and pianist, Nigel plays trombone with the Rutland Big Band. An Associate of the Royal College of Organists and holder of the Diploma in Choral Directing, Nigel holds the degree of MA (distinction) in Organ Historiography from Reading University. He is a former council member of the British Institute of Organ Studies (BIOS) and an Inspector for the Historic Organs Certificate Scheme (HOCS).