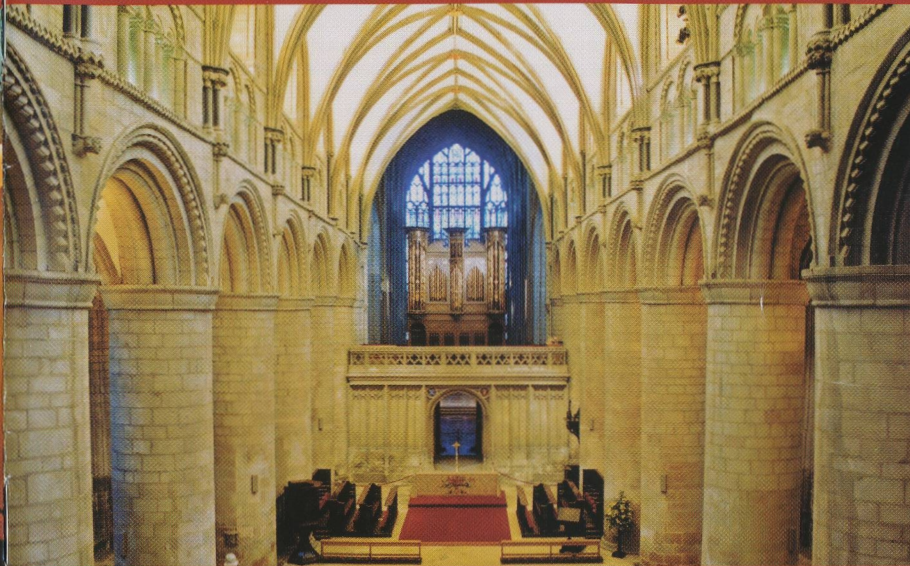


# MUSIC TO ROUSE THE SPIRIT

SAINT-SAENS, PEETERS, MESSIAEN, KARG-ELERT, IMPROVISATION



DAVID BRIGGS PLAYS THE ORGAN  
OF GLOUCESTER CATHEDRAL

Welcome to the gallic blaze of the Gloucester **tutti!** The third symphony is, alongside the 'Carnival of the Animals', undoubtedly Saint-Saens' most famous and best-loved composition. Originally scored for organ and full orchestra, I have made this transcription, which takes full advantage of all the possibilities for instantaneous registration changes afforded by the late twentieth-century instrument. Saint-Saens himself was a distinguished organist, playing at the Parisian church of La Madeleine as a young man and taking part in the grand re-opening of the Cavallé-Coll instrument in Notre-Dame de Paris in 1862. He composed six Preludes and Fugues (showing his admiration for Bach) and three highly romantic 'Fantaisies' for the instrument. I hope he would have approved of this version of the 'Final' - in its new guise! Saint-Saens, incidentally, was no stranger to Gloucester, having been present at the 1913 Three Choirs Festival for the premiere of his commission 'The Promised Land'. He was also the soloist in a Mozart Piano Concerto!

### Lied Symphony, Op. 66 Flor Peeters

In the immediate aftermath of British decimalisation in 1971 one of my first major purchases (well, major for a nine year-old!) was a 99p LP on the **Vista** label named 'The Organ of St George's Hall, Liverpool, played by Dr Caleb Jarvis'. I was duly chastised by my late father for becoming obsessed by it - he thought my headphones were actually surgically grafted onto my ears! Seventeen years later, I was to make my first CD on this remarkable instrument - how excited I would have been to know this, as a nine year old, having absorbed the whole specification by memory! The final two tracks on this LP were two movements by Flor Peeters, 'Lied to the Flowers' and 'Lied to the Sun'. To record the whole symphony now, therefore, gives an agreeable sense of continuity!

Flor Peeters (1903 - 1986) was, in many ways, the Belgium equivalent of the French organ virtuoso Marcel Dupré. He was a greatly respected recitalist (playing concerts all over the world) and was also a distinguished teacher and musicologist, as well as prolific composer. He wrote over three hundred pieces in greatly varying guises: piano and carillon pieces; chamber music; songs; choral music; cantatas; pieces for organ and voice and organ and brass, as well as over fifty pieces for solo organ. The 'Lied Symphony' is a vividly pictorial work and was inspired by the composer's American tour of 1947. In his own words, the Symphony is a "thanksgiving hymn for nature in God's creation". 'Lied to the Ocean' brings to mind huge expanses of sea and evokes the ebb and flow of its powerful, dark and sinister waves. By way of complete contrast, 'Lied to the Desert' gives an image of sun-scorched eternity. This is the music of vast, silent panoramas of nothing but sand as far as the eye can see. The sparse middle section of the work (on the Swell reeds) feels particularly Egyptian in its sense of modality. The next movement, 'Lied to the Flowers', has a character of restrained opulence. In it, Flor Peeters depicts the wealth of fauna of California. It is profoundly impressionistic and has all the freedom one associates with music inspired by Gregorian Chant. From the registrational point of view, I took the decision to use mainly the East Swell box - thereby giving the organ a more distant ambience (the microphones were placed in the nave). 'Lied to the Mountains', as one would

expect, is sturdy and colossal, and features the warm and resonant foundations of the Gloucester organ. The final movement of the Symphony, 'Lied to the Sun', is a virtuoso, French-style toccata movement in A B A form.

### Le Banquet Celeste, Olivier Messiaen

There can be no doubt that Olivier Messiaen held a position of unique importance and innovation in the history of twentieth-century French music. As well as his extraordinary gift for composition, he was at heart a liturgical Catholic organist and occupied the tribune at La Trinité in Paris with love and devotion from 1931 until 1991, where he experimented with many of his compositional procedures through the art of improvisation. 'Le banquet celeste', amazingly lasting only twenty-five bars, was written in 1928 and became the composer's first published organ piece. The music is a timeless representation of the text from St John's Gospel, "Whoever eats this bread and drinks this wine remains with me and I with him..." It is interesting to note that, in spite of the influence of his teachers Tournemire and Dukas, this music bears Messiaen's unique fingerprint from the very first chord. It is both ecstatic and transcendental.

### Passacaglia and Fugue on 'B-A-C-H', Op. 150, Sigfrid Karg-Elert

Karg-Elert was born in Oberndorf in 1877 and died in Leipzig in 1933. This colossal showpiece was his last work. It was written specifically for the composer's last concert tour of the USA in 1932 and is a huge fantasia based on the notes of Bach's name ('B' is the German for B flat and 'H' signifies B natural). The musical language is post-romantic and the harmonies are densely chromatic and highly charged. As a demonstration vehicle for both the power and colour of the instrument there can surely be few rivals! The different sections of the work are freely juxtaposed and the crowning glory of the piece is an extended fugue of magisterial development.

### Improvisation on 'Salve Regina', David Briggs

For a change, I have chosen to end this CD in an atmosphere of gentleness! This short improvisation is in the form of a free "fantaisie" on the ancient and inspiring plainsong 'Salve Regina'. The ethos is distinctly Parisian, with the Sunday morning air imbued with that wonderful mixture of garlic, red wine, gauloises, **haute couture** and brilliantly clear sunlight against buildings of matchless beauty and refinement... Musically the listener might detect hints of Debussy, via Langlais/Cochereau, and most of all, perhaps, Charles Tournemire - the famous composer/improviser-organist of Ste Clotilde who was so much inspired by the beauty and elasticity of Gregorian chant. Keen listeners will notice that even the Swell Voix **Humaine** is tuned to a unique Parisian temperament (3:00 + 3:11)!

As per the title of this CD, I hope your spirits will have been roused!



**GLOUCESTER CATHEDRAL ORGAN SPECIFICATION**

Thomas Harris 1666, Bishop and Son 1831, Henry Willis 1847/1889

Harrison and Harrison 1920, Hill, Norman and Beard 1971, Nicholson and Co. 1999

**PEDAL**

Flute 16  
Principal 16  
Sub Bass 16  
Quint 10 2/3  
Octave 8  
Stopped Flute 8  
Tierce 6 2/5  
Septième 4 4/7  
Choral Bass 4  
Open Flute 2  
Mixture 19, 22, 26, 29  
Bombarde 32  
Bombarde 16  
Trumpet 8  
Shawm 4

**GREAT**

Gedecktpommer 16  
Open Diapason (West) 8  
Open Diapason (East) 8  
Spitzflute (West) 8  
Bourdon (East) 8  
Prestant (West) 4  
Octave (East) 4  
Stopped Flute (East) 4  
Flageolet (East) 2  
Quartane (West) 12, 15  
Mixture (East) 19, 22, 26, 29  
Cornet (East, mounted) 8,12,15,17  
Posaune 16  
Trumpet 8  
Clarion 4  
West Great Flues Sub Octave

**SWELL**

Chimney Flute 8  
Salicional 8  
Céleste 8  
Principal 4  
Open Flute 4  
Nazard 2 2/3  
Gemshorn 2  
Tierce 1 3/5  
Mixture 22, 26, 29, 33  
Cimbel 38, 40, 43  
Fagotto 16  
Trumpet 8  
Hautboy 8  
Vox Humana 8  
Tremulant  
Swell Sub Octave

**CHOIR**

Stopped Diapason 8  
Principal 4  
Chimney Flute 4  
Fifteenth 2  
Nazard 1 1/3  
Sesquialtera 19,24/12,17  
Mixture 29, 33, 36  
Cremona 8  
Tremulant

**WEST POSITIVE**

Gedecktpommer 8  
Spitzflute 4  
Nazard 2 2/3  
Doublette 2  
Tierce 1 3/5  
Septième 1 1/7  
Cimbel 29, 36, 40  
Tremulant

**COUPLERS (\*reversible)**

\*Swell to Great  
\*Swell to Choir  
\*Swell to Pedal  
\*Choir to Great  
\*Choir to Pedal  
\*West Positive to Great  
\*West Positive to Choir  
\*West Positive to Pedal  
\*Great to Pedal  
Pedal Divide

**TRANSFERS**

Great reeds on Man IV  
West Great flues on Man IV

**COMBINATION COUPLERS**

Great and Pedal Combinations coupled  
Generals on Swell toe pistons

**DAVID BRIGGS**

Recently hailed by the American Guild of Organists as one of the top 100 organists of the twentieth century, David Briggs enjoys a world-wide reputation as an organ concert artist and is renowned especially for his skill as an improviser. After having won the Silver Medal of the Worshipful Company of Musicians and all the prizes at FRCO at the age of seventeen, he was appointed Organ Scholar of King's College, Cambridge and was awarded the John Stewart of Rannoch Scholarship in Sacred Music. In 1982 and 1983, David had the privilege of playing for the Christmas Eve Carol Services from King's, to a live audience of around 350 million. Subsequently he continued his studies in Paris with Jean Langlais, and in 1995 became the first British winner of the celebrated Tournemire Prize at the St Alban's International Improvisation Competition.

After having held the post of Assistant Organist of Hereford Cathedral for four years, David was appointed Organist and Master of the Choristers at Truro Cathedral in 1989, becoming the youngest Cathedral Organist in the country. In June 1994 he took up the position of Director of Music at Gloucester Cathedral, becoming only the fourth holder of the post during the twentieth century.

As well as fulfilling his busy schedule in Gloucester, he teaches improvisation at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester and, from September 2001, has been invited to take up the position of Visiting Professor of Improvisation at the Royal Academy of Music in London. In addition he gives some thirty freelance recitals every year: recent engagements have included concerts in the UK, France, Germany, Australia, New Zealand, Iceland, Canada and the USA, where he is represented by Phillip Truckenbrod Concert Artists. All of his concerts include a major improvisation.

Increasingly in demand as a composer, he is fascinated by the relationship between composition and improvisation, i.e. how to establish in the former the spark of spontaneity of the latter! He composed a Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis for the Hereford Three Choirs Festival in August 2000 and was commissioned to write a major millennium commission, Creation, for soloists, chorus and orchestra which was premiered in December 2000 by the Gloucester Choral Society, to ecstatic reviews in the national press. Future projects include a Symphony in Four Movements, which has been commissioned by the celebrated American organ duo Elisabeth and Raymond Chenault, and a Sonata for unaccompanied Violin.

He has made sixteen solo commercial recordings, including the highly acclaimed CD of his own transcription of Mahler's Symphony No.5.

He is fanatical about aviation.

Visit David Briggs on the worldwide web at [www.david-briggs.org.uk](http://www.david-briggs.org.uk)