

ALL SAINTS' CHURCH, BOYNE HILL, MAIDENHEAD

ORGAN RECITAL

by

RELF CLARK

15 September 2024 at 2.30 p.m.

March from <i>Ode for St Cecilia's Day</i> , HWV 76	[2]	Handel (1685-1759)
<i>Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme</i> , BWV 645	[4]	J.S. Bach (1685-1750)
<i>Andante</i> , K.616	[7]	Mozart (1756-1791)
<i>Choral Song</i>	[3]	S.S. Wesley (1810-1876)
Prelude on <i>Rhosymedre</i>	[4]	Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)
from <i>La Nativité du Seigneur</i> (1935)	[3]	Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992)
<i>Desseins éternels</i>		
Fugue in E flat major ('St Anne'), BWV 552 (ii)	[6]	J.S. Bach

The organ at All Saints', Boyne Hill is among the finest in Berkshire. It was built in 1931 by Harrison & Harrison of Durham and thus belongs to the period that produced such famous examples of their work as the instruments at King's College, Cambridge (1934) and Westminster Abbey (1937). Although it contains material re-cycled from the organ that J.W. Walker built at All Saints' in 1879, it is an entirely characteristic example of the company's inter-war work. It was dedicated by the Bishop of Oxford, the Rt Revd Thomas Strong, on 28 June 1931, when the inaugural recital was given by Dr Henry G. Ley, the then Precentor of Eton College. The organ has three manuals and pedals, twenty-five speaking stops and the usual complement of couplers and aids to registration. In 2003 it was restored by Richard Bower, re-dedicated by the Bishop of Oxford, the Rt Revd Richard Harries, and re-opened with a recital given by the international virtuoso Thomas Trotter. The work of restoration involved the conversion of the mechanism from tubular-pneumatic to electro-pneumatic, but tonally the organ remains the instrument voiced by, or under the direction of, Arthur Harrison in 1931, and it retains such period features as the leathered Open Diapason on the Great, the powerful chorus reeds on the Swell, and the titanic open wood basses. Mark Venning, a former Chairman of Harrison & Harrison Ltd, summed it up when he wrote that the All Saints' organ 'shows all the subtlety and eloquence of this particular style [of organ-building] in its grandest maturity'.

Harrison & Harrison have been building organs since 1861 and doing so in Durham since 1872. They are the largest firm of organ-builders in the UK. Their recent projects included the organs at Canterbury Cathedral, Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral, Norwich Cathedral, Salisbury Cathedral and York Minster. Their current ones include the organ at Bristol Cathedral. Further information can be had from the company's website.

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Relf Clark has assisted at All Saints' since 1985 and is the author of the history of its organs and organists. After tuition with Dr Sidney Campbell at St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle he won an open exhibition to Oxford, where he studied with Robert Sherlaw Johnson and F.W. Sternfeld and assisted at the University Church. At the age of twenty, while still an undergraduate, he became a prize-winning Fellow of the Royal College of Organists, and he completed his musical education at London University, where he read musicology, and Reading University, where he studied with David Sanger and gained both a distinction in performance and the degree of PhD.

Dr Clark writes and lectures on music and has contributed to *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, and musical periodicals of various kinds. From 1990 to 2005 he was a member of the council of the British Institute of Organ Studies, and for seven of those years he was the BIOS publications officer. An honorary life member of the Elgar Society, he spoke on the Society's behalf at the unveiling of the Elgar blue plaque at Monkey Island; and he appears in the Durham University DVD about Elgar's Sonata for Organ, Op.28. He composes for the organ and has given recitals in many parts of the UK.

In 1982, after attending what is now the University of Law, Relf qualified as a solicitor, and in 1993, after a decade as an in-house lawyer with Costain Group plc, he returned to private practice. From 1998 until his retirement in 2017 he practised with a law firm in the City of London, where his clients included the Royal Society of Musicians of Great Britain, of which he is now an honorary life member.