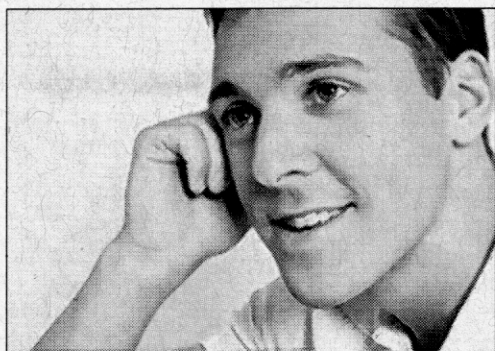


Organist from Oz entrances audience with new pieces



Remarkable: Travis Baker.

Alton Organ Society was treated to a remarkable organ concert given by Australian born London based Travis Baker (St Mary's Church, Putney).

It was one of the society's patrons, Dame Gillian Weir, who a few years ago recommended her pupil Travis as an outstandingly talented organist. He impressed first time round and this time he impressed even more with his hour long organ concert at St Lawrence Church Alton.

He opened his recital on April 3, with *Kyushu Island Suite* by P Drayton (b.1944) a piece in four movements modelled on Japanese folk songs. It was a challenging and somewhat daring piece to open his concert with discordancies but new and interesting sounds. Reaction was mixed but did not detract from Travis' undoubted playing skills.

The more conventional members of the audience heard a professional performance of Mozart's *Fantasia in F minor*, a favourite with budding organists because of its challenge and sheer variety in playing skills.

Travis was surprised that his next piece, *Trois Pièces* by G Pierné (1863-1937), was new to most of the audience especially as the society has existed for over 50 years. Continuing with the French theme Travis then played Henri Mulet's *Rosace* (from *Esquisses Byzantines*) with skill and panache. He then crossed the Atlantic to play

Scherzo (from *Sonata in E flat minor*) by American born H Parker. Again, another piece new to the audience and which was both unusual in form and fun.

To conclude his concert Travis played *Moto Ostinato* by Petr Eben - a piece from a collection called *Sunday Music*. Petr Eben was born in the (now called) Czech Republic. Travis changed his programme to include this hugely challenging piece. It builds up throughout, appearing to be a battle of the manuals. Technically it is demanding both in figuring and jumping between manuals. Nonetheless, to the listener it is a tour de force holding one's attention to the very end. At the end of the piece the player's hands jump between the three manuals at speed to give a huge contrast in tone and volume.

Travis received massive applause from an audience entranced at this young man's talent, technical skills but above all his musicality in the delivery of his demanding programme.

● Alton Organ Society looks forward to the first visit of David Saint (of St Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham) to Alton next week. The concert will be held at St Lawrence Church on Tuesday (May 1), starting at 8pm (refreshments available from 7.30pm). Details can be found at altonorgansociety.co.uk or by contacting Tony Willman at tony.willman@mac.com or 07928 516052.

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