

# Organist thrills audience with “a right racket!”

Alton Organ Society has hosted organ concerts at St Lawrence church Alton for over 50 years inviting organists ranging from experienced international concert organists to those at the start of their musical careers in cathedrals. The diversity of the Society was epitomised in November when world renowned concert organist Thomas Trotter was in the audience listening to one his pupils – Sarah Baldock – give a masterclass recital that thrilled the audience.

Sarah (formerly of Winchester and Chichester cathedrals) opened her concert with Gigout’s popular Toccata from his *Dix Pieces* which was followed by JS Bach’s *Prelude and Fugue in D major*. This work opens with the scale of D major played with speed on the pedals. The fugue is especially lively and Sarah gave a clean, crisp and professional delivery that was thrilling.

Sarah explained that when she was practising her next piece, her mother (looking after the children in the church) said it was a right racket! Sarah asked the audience to come to their own judgement of Swiss organist & composer Frank Martin’s *Pas-sacaglia*. It was composed in 1944 when composers were experimenting with 12 tone scales and “mod-

ern” sounds. I cannot recall this piece being performed in Alton so this was probably a first. *Passacaglia* is a dance with the repeating theme played on the pedals. Its atonal chromatic theme gradually increased in tension as the piece progressed. The verdict? Surprisingly, the majority did appreciate the piece, and recognised Sarah’s complete mastery of her technique and organ colours. Nonetheless, a few agreed with her mum!

Mendelssohn’s *Sonata in B flat* was a complete contrast and, again, delivered with wonderful clarity by Sarah. Finally, she played two movements from Maurice Duruflé’s *Suite Op 5 – Sicilienne* and the stunning Toccata. The Toccata is a challenging piece to play with an aggressive theme heard in the pedals. It is a powerful sound with lots going on and guaranteed to lift the spirits. Duruflé was a perfectionist and discarded more music than was retained and he wasn’t fond of this Toccata. Fortunately, it was wasn’t thrown away and the audience left the concert fully uplifted by Sarah’s wonderful organ concert.

Further details can be found at [altonorgansociety.co.uk](http://altonorgansociety.co.uk) or by contacting Tony Willman at [tony.willman@mac.com](mailto:tony.willman@mac.com) or 07928 516052.

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