

Christ's Chapel, Dulwich
Sunday 9 February at 19.45

Alan John Phillips
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Voluntaries no.3-6 - John Christmas Beckwith (1750-1809)

Beckwith, born on Christmas Day, hence his middle name, was an articled pupil of Drs. William and Philip Hayes at Oxford. He was successively organist of St Peter Mancroft, Norwich, 1794 – 1808, and Norwich Cathedral 1808 – 1809. His 'Six Voluntaries for the Organ, Harpsichord, etc', were published privately in London in 1780. The list of subscribers includes a large number of names from both Norfolk and Oxford.

The four voluntaries chosen for tonight's recital cover the entire palette of colours available to the Georgian organist: diapasons (open and stopped together), trumpet (with echo), flute (at 4ft pitch), bassoon (vox humana in the lower registers), cornet (with echo), and full organ.

A Voluntary for the Organ - Esther Elizabeth Fleet (1809-c.1870)

Esther Elizabeth Fleet was organist of St. Botolph's Church, Bishopsgate, where she presided over a three-manual Byfield organ of a similar specification to the Dulwich and Rotherhithe organs. Her Voluntary for the Organ in C major, an introduction, slow movement and fugue, was published in 1826, and was one of two published works by her. It is remarkable for its early use of metronome markings, the metronome only having been invented by Johann Nepomuk Maelzel in Germany ten years previously.

Lesson III for the harpsichord ([Allegro] – Minuetto Affettuoso – Giga – March) - Elizabeth Turner (d.1756)

One of the foremost sopranos of her day, working frequently for Handel, Elizabeth Turner was one of the first Englishwomen to publish any substantial compositions. Although intended as harpsichord music, this four-movement Lesson works well on an eighteenth-century organ.

Sarabande and Two Rigadouns - Elizabeth Jacquet de la Guerre (ca.1664-1729)

Born in Paris into a family of professional musicians (both her father and brother were organists), Elizabeth was a child prodigy, composing at an early age. Most of her life before her marriage (to another organist!) was spent at the French royal court. Soon after her marriage in 1687, she began to publish, and the Sarabande and Two Rigadouns come from her Pièces de Clavecin of 1707. In addition to music for the keyboard, Elizabeth wrote for the ballet, string music and cantatas.

Prelude and Fugue in C minor (Op.81) - Marie Josephine Claire Prestat (1862-1933)

A favorite student of César Franck, Prestat was the first woman to win four first prizes at the Paris Conservatoire. These were for Harmony (1885), Accompaniment (1886), Counterpoint and Fugue (1889) and Organ (1890). She was Professor of Piano and Organ at the Schola Cantorum from 1901 until 1922. The treatment of the subject of the fugue suggests the influence of Bach's Great A minor Fugue (BWV 543).

Alan, who was born in Dulwich, studied piano and theory with his father, Jack Phillips, and the organ at Exeter Cathedral, Exeter School, the Royal School of Church Music (summer course) and the University of Bristol, where he gained a BA in Music.

Since the launch of his solo career at Peterborough Cathedral, he has appeared at various London venues and in churches and cathedrals throughout England and Wales, and on a concert tour of Estonia, including two concerts in the capital, Tallinn. After a number of years in Norway as organist in both Lutheran and Roman Catholic churches, including the Franciscan friary in Oslo, he was appointed organist of St. Mary Rotherhithe, London, where he has played the historic 1764 John Byfield instrument for the visits of both the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Dean of Westminster.

As a result of his work with the Rotherhithe Byfield organ, he has become a specialist in the English 18th century repertoire 1715-1837, the 'Gorgeous Georgians', and has performed representative works of 28 composers of the period over a six-month series.