



St Margaret's Church, Queen's Road, Ilkley

Organ Recital

by Christopher Rathbone

Friday, August 6th

Programme

Meanwood Suite op 83 (2000 – 2001)

Grands Chœurs Scherzetto Plaint Trumpet tune on 'Nicæa'

Christopher **RATHBONE** b.1947

Andantino (op 51 no 2) Intermezzo (op 51 no 4) from Pièces de Fantaisie

Louis **VIERNE** 1870 – 1937

Pastoral-Sonata, no 3 in G op 88, 1875

Con Moto Intermezzo (Andante con moto)

Fugue (Non troppo allegro)

Josef **RHEINBERGER** 1839 - 1901

Programme Notes

The **Meanwood Suite** was composed to celebrate the opening in 2001 of the enlarged and re-sited organ of Holy Trinity Church, Meanwood, where Christopher was organist and Director of Music from 1996 to 2007. A largish two manual organ was converted to three manuals, and a refurbished console (originally in the Great Hall of Leeds University) provided on a new gallery (opposite the pipes) in the North Transept, above a new Choir Vestry. The contractors were the organ builders, John Jackson and Son, who also enlarged the St Margaret's organ in the 1980s. The Suite is dedicated to Dr Simon Lindley of Leeds Parish Church (now Leeds Minster) who gave the first performance at the opening recital of the enlarged organ on October 24th 2001. The second performance was given by the composer the following week at the MacEwen Hall at the University of Edinburgh.)

There are four movements. The first is a complex piece called **Grands chœurs**, with a dramatic introduction (marked *Maestoso e libero* – Majestic, free) leading to faster music, showing off the four 'choruses' of the great Organ, the newly made and installed Choir organ, the Swell reed chorus and the very grand Major Trumpet previously installed by Jacksons, and very similar to the Jackson Major Trumpet at St Margaret's! The introductory music returns and leads to an overwhelming coda.

The **Scherzetto** is in 7/8 time, charming but relentless in its constant quaver movement, until the final few lines where a more thoughtful *meno mosso* marking suggests a tinge of sadness. The **Plaint** boasts an expressive melody over a gentle syncopated accompaniment. Finally we have a jaggedly cheerful **Trumpet tune**, which alternates with scurrying semiquavers in 3rds over the notes (on the pedals) of J B Dykes's great Trinity hymn-tune, *Nicæa*, conjuring the opening words of the Reginald Heber's hymn 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty... God in three persons, Holy Trinity.' Once more the Major Trumpet is heard in its element.

Vierne wrote his four books of *Pièces de Fantaisie* in 1926 and 1927 – 24 splendid concert pieces in all – and the **Andantino** comes in the first book of six, published as his opus 51. It is a doleful melody typical of Vierne's ruminative or wistful moods, though the initial key of A minor yields at last to the major. Although the piece is entitled *Andantino*, the tempo marking is *Adagio*! The **Intermezzo**, also from opus 51, is a high-spirited scherzo scattering 'whole-tone' chords around the organ, contrasted with a comparatively plain contrasting theme

Rheinberger is a national figure in his native Lichtenstein (there have stamps issued in his honour), and he had a busy academic career as Professor of organ at the conservatoire in Munich. His first few sonatas were so popular, especially the present no 3, that he formulated a scheme to complete a set of 24, one in each possible key. He died in 1901 just four sonatas short of the target (no 20 in F, op 196, dates from 1900). He called no 3 'Pastoral-Sonata', for no clear reason, except perhaps the preponderance of triple and compound time signatures. It was one of the most often performed works in UK town hall recitals in the 19th and early 20th century period. The first movement starts with a plainsong melody under the tumultuous figurations – and the same 'Gregorian' theme comes back a couple of times in the finale. In between is a gentle **Intermezzo**. The final **Fugue** is a cracker! Both player and listener are grateful for the less manic moments where the Gregorian tune returns over somewhat less hectic music.

Thank you for supporting our organ recital series, which resumed in mid-June. From now on we shall normally meet on the first Friday of each month. If you enjoyed hearing our superb Hill organ (largely from 1901) in full cry, please make a donation (ideally in a Gift Aid envelope) and leave it in the bowl provided. All money collected will go to the church Music Fund, which helps to support the Choral Scholar scheme – we are currently keen to recruit new young singers (preferably with good sight-reading skills), and hopefully an organ scholar, to join the scheme.

The next recital will be on Friday, September 3rd at 12.30pm

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