



**ST. MARGARET'S  
ILKLEY**

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

## **Organ Recital**

**by Christopher Rathbone**

*Promoted by the Ilkley Arts Festival*

**Friday, November 5<sup>th</sup> 2021  
at 12.30pm**

### **Programme**

#### **English Music of the 1950s**

**Quiet Prelude (from Three Lyrical Pieces, publ. 1958)**

Ernest TOMLINSON 1924 – 2015

**Fantasia op 136 (publ. 1952)**

York BOWEN 1884 – 1961

**Fantasy prelude (publ. 1983)**

William HARRIS 1883 – 1973

**Retrospection (1955, publ. 1983)**

Harold DARKE 1888 – 1976

**Pæan (Three Lyrical Pieces, publ. 1958)**

Ernest TOMLINSON

## Programme Notes

The music written and published in the mid-20th century by British organ composers (mostly practising organists themselves) has been rather neglected; the finest composer of my selection today was a consummate pianist, and composer of brilliant piano music, York Bowen, though Sir William Harris (organist at St George's Windsor) and Harold Darke (St Michael's Cornhill), both wrote organ music of distinction as well as the choral music for which they are best known.

**Ernest Tomlinson** is perhaps the odd man out: born in Rawtenstall, he sang in Manchester Cathedral as a chorister and studied at Manchester University and the Royal Manchester College of Music. He was a successful composer of orchestral music (known for his irresistible Elizabethan Serenade for strings) and a notable conductor who led his own 'Ernest Tomlinson Light Orchestra', and later formed the Northern Concert Orchestra. He was, however, a highly experienced organist, a Fellow of the RCO and organist of the Third Church of Christ Scientist in Mayfair for ten years. The two pieces from the Three Lyrical pieces are both beautifully written for the instrument: the **Quiet Prelude** is short, but very eventful in its four pages; the **Pæan** is a brilliant showpiece exploiting the resources of a large organ, complete with Solo Tuba.

**York Bowen** wrote his Fantasia for the Festival of Britain in 1951. He was much better known, though, as a brilliant pianist, especially in the years before the First World War, and as composer of glorious piano music which is being revived by some fine concert pianists in our own time, such as Danny Driver. For many years he lived a quiet life teaching at the Royal Academy of Music in London, his glorious music all but forgotten.

The **Fantasia** opens with a vigorous Allegro energico, which dies away into a lyrical interlude, though more animated music soon bursts in. Another slower melody appears, as a left hand solo, before the final Allegro, glittering with filigree figurations, leads to a reprise of the opening G minor idea.

**W.H.Harris** as he was always known, before he was knighted in 1954 (KCVO), was a Londoner who was Organist at St George's Windsor from 1933 till he retired in 1961. Before that he served at St Augustine's Edgbaston, Lichfield Cathedral (Assistant Organist), New College and then Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford. He composed prolifically all his life, including orchestral music, choral works for the Three Choirs Festival, and much splendid music for church choirs. His organ music was 'occasional', in the best sense (his 'Flourish for an occasion' is typical). The Fantasy Prelude was unpublished till the year of his centenary in 1983, the date of composition unknown.

**Harold Darke**, a pupil of Parratt and Stanford at the Royal College of Music, was Organist at St Michael's Cornhill from 1916 – 1966, and established a famous series of lunchtime concerts for music lovers in the city, which still continues. He didn't quite serve the full 50 years at St Michael's, as he was acting organist at King's College Cambridge during the war, from 1941 – 45. He is best known for the carol 'In the bleak midwinter' often sung at carol services - not the hymn tune, which is by Holst - and for his splendidly useful Communion Services in F and in E.

'**Retrospection**' is dedicated to the memory of Healey Willan, the British organist who made a home for himself in Toronto, and died in 1968. Its first performance was given by the winner of the Harold Darke Prize in 1983.

Thank you for joining us for this latest recital in our recently resumed First Friday series, which has run since 2010 with interruption only from the Covid 19 pandemic. Please contribute as generously as you can to the collection, which helps to support our programme of liturgical music at St Margaret's, including small bursaries to encourage our young Choral Scholars. A Gift Aid envelope (if applicable) boosts the value of your donation.

*The next recital, also part of the Ilkley Arts Festival, is on Friday, December 3rd at 12.30 pm and will include Liszt's BACH prelude and fugue and some more of the Hymn-tune Preludes written by Christopher Rathbone during the lockdowns!*