

CONCERT ORGAN MASTERPIECES

THOMAS HEYWOOD
St John's Church, Toorak

move



Thomas Heywood

“unashamedly Romantic...a particularly satisfying experience”

Organists' Review, UK

Born into a Melbourne musical family in 1974, Thomas Heywood is an honours graduate of the University of Melbourne. Since 1994 he has held the coveted position of Organist and Choirmaster of St John's Anglican Church, Toorak, where he presides over the famous Hill organ, directs the Choir, and plays for over 300 services each year.

He is one of Australia's most sought-after concert organists, holding an enviable reputation as one of the leading interpreters of the large-scale romantic and transcription repertoire. He maintains a demanding schedule of performances, with around 80 solo recitals each year as part of the *Victoria State Organ Concerts* – an annual concert series which he founded with his wife Simone.

He has performed at concert halls, town halls, cathedrals and churches throughout Australia and New Zealand including an acclaimed recital at the Sydney Opera House at the age of 17. He has inaugurated many new and restored organs around Melbourne and Sydney, and has performed in several concerts with the Melbourne Symphony. In 1994, the City of Melbourne presented Thomas in a year-long series of Grand Organ Concerts at the Melbourne Town Hall – the first time such a series had been presented for 50 years.

Internationally, he has played organs throughout the USA including a performance on the world's largest playable organ in Philadelphia. He has also performed in Austria, Denmark, Germany, Ireland and Italy,

in cities including Berlin, Munich and Vienna – where he received a standing ovation at St Stephen's Cathedral.

His commitment to the promotion and preservation of Australia's unique heritage of historic organs led to his election as a Councillor of the Organ Historical Trust of Australia; he also serves on the committee of the Pipe Organ division of the National Trust of Australia.

He has made several highly-acclaimed recordings, and his playing has been broadcast nationally on ABC-FM. As a performer he is regularly heard on 3MBS-FM and other FM stations on the east coast of Australia.

In 1997, Thomas founded a popular series of annual Grand Organ Concerts at St John's, Toorak, in which he performs programmes compiled exclusively from the masterpieces of the concert organ repertoire. The works heard on this recording were performed at St John's during the 1997 concert series and were received with great enthusiasm.

“Heywood's playing is versatile and vigorous...powerful yet subtle, sonorous yet never overwhelming”

The Melburnian

The Organ in St John's Church

The organ was built by the distinguished English organbuilding firm of William Hill & Son in 1913. Designed by Dr William George Price (1865-1952), Organist of St John's Church (1912-1916) and Melbourne City Organist (1906-1930), it remains the largest 20th century Hill organ in Australia. The organ was given to St John's by the Connibere family in memory of their father George Connibere, who had died in 1911.



At the time of its installation in 1914 it was a three-manual and pedal instrument with tubular-pneumatic action, 34 speaking stops, 35 ranks and 2047 pipes spread over four divisions. It was built under the personal superintendence of Dr Arthur George Hill, a famous scholar who managed the Hill firm from 1893 until 1916. The organ is notable for its excellent oak case designed by Dr Arthur Hill and modelled on the organ in Zaragoza Cathedral, Spain.

The St John's organ was the last of 38 organs exported to Australia between 1858 and 1913 by the Hill firm, and was constructed in Hill's York Road Organ Works in North London shortly before the firm amalgamated with Norman & Beard Ltd. Following the organ's completion in the factory Sir Frederick

Bridge, Organist of Westminster Abbey (1882-1918), performed upon the instrument and pronounced it to be “of superior quality.” Installed in St John’s in a massive chamber to the north of the choir, it is the largest surviving Hill organ in Victoria.

In accordance with contemporary taste, the instrument was extensively rebuilt by the now-defunct Melbourne firm of Hill, Norman & Beard between May 1960 and August 1961. At this time the original tubular-pneumatic action was converted to electro-pneumatic, a new detached console was installed on the south side of the chancel and far-reaching tonal alterations were carried out, including the addition of an inappropriate neo-baroque ‘positiv’ division. The removal of the original console led to the defacing of the magnificent oak case. As a result of the 1961 rebuild, both the appearance and the sound of the instrument were almost completely changed; the instrument became a travesty of Hill & Son’s original intentions.

The object of the restoration by the noted Sydney firm of Peter D.G. Jewkes Pty Ltd was to return the instrument to Dr Hill’s concept of 1913. Examination of comparable Hill instruments suggested that an authentic restoration would promise outstanding tonal results. The work began in October 1994 and took over 14 months to complete. As part of the restoration a new console was constructed following surviving Hill examples, the pipework and internal layout was returned to its original configuration, the organ case was restored and the façade pipes were stencilled and gilt by the acclaimed Melbourne artist Marc Nobel. All of the restoration work was undertaken in accordance with the *Australian Pipe Organ Preservation Standards* of the Organ Historical Trust of Australia.

The restored instrument, ideally suited to the music of the Romantic era, is one of the finest organs in the country. As the largest Edwardian church organ in Melbourne, the St John’s organ is a magnificent vehicle for recitals as well as an invaluable musical resource to both the Parish and the wider community.

The grand opening concert on the restored organ was given to a capacity audience by John Scott, the Organist of St Paul’s Cathedral, London, on Friday 2 February 1996.

The Music

This program is compiled exclusively from the masterpieces of the concert organ repertoire. Romantic organ works as well as virtuosic transcriptions of compositions originally written for other instruments are featured on this recording, ensuring complete listener enjoyment.

The organ is second only to the orchestra as the ultimate experience in musical expression, and has the largest repertoire of any instrument. The works performed on this recording have been carefully chosen to display the full capabilities of the organ as a versatile and exciting musical instrument.

The concert organ tradition developed from the middle of the 19th century as technical and musical advances made possible the playing of large romantic arrangements, or transcriptions, of orchestral works; original organ compositions were also designed to show the full capabilities of the new romantic organs. Town halls, cathedrals and churches throughout the world have installed these grand instruments, designed to perform an approachable repertoire to be enjoyed by all.

Since the 1840s, organists have remained

the musical monarchs of the cities in which they work, attracting thousands of people to recitals performing the finest original and transcribed repertoire. Concert organists such as W.T. Best and Edwin H. Lemare were among the greatest musicians of their day, universally admired for their musical and technical ability. Both Best and Lemare travelled to Australia; Best performed at the Melbourne Town Hall in 1890, and Lemare in 1906.

In Australia we have a unique collection of romantic organs. Victoria alone has over 550 instruments ideally suited to the performance of concert organ masterpieces, and one of the most famous of these is the organ featured on this recording.

Dr Arthur Hill, the builder of the St John’s organ, would have taken great delight in the first work on this program, as he maintained a close friendship with the arranger, W.T. Best. This transcription of the Overture to Mozart’s famous opera *The Magic Flute* was completed by Best in 1846 at the age of 20, and was his first published arrangement. Mozart had composed the work only 55 years earlier in 1791, the year of his tragically premature death. Best’s transcription features a full complement of orchestral colour, from the quiet flute, oboe and clarinet stops on the organ to the grandeur of the powerful trumpet, horn and trombone stops representing the orchestral brass. The musical success of this arrangement contributed in no small way to Best’s reputation as the greatest concert organist of the 19th century, not to mention his acclaimed position as the ‘father of the organ transcription’.

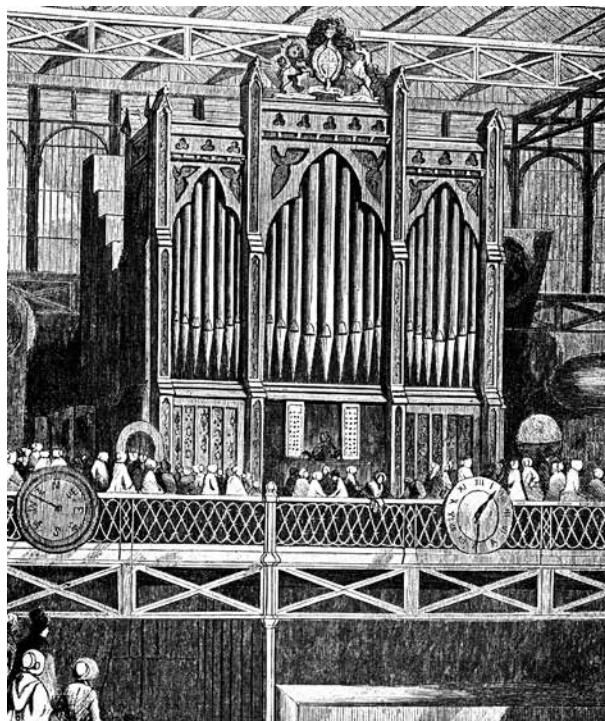
It was Best who named Johann Sebastian Bach ‘the father of all arrangers’, and Bach is indeed worthy of that honour – he transcribed

numerous works for several instruments. Bach would have thoroughly approved of this transcription of the first movement from his Double Violin Concerto, as he himself arranged some of Vivaldi's violin concertos for the organ. Thomas Heywood completed this arrangement in August 1992, at the age of 18, and it has achieved widespread acclaim. The two solo violins are represented on the 'open diapason', or foundational, stops of the organ; the stops of this timbre on the St John's organ are of great beauty and versatility as this work amply demonstrates.

To give some idea of the technical demands placed on the performer in the first two transcriptions on this recording, there are several occasions where Heywood is playing on three keyboards at once, not to mention his two feet actively controlling both the pedalboard and expression pedals!

In total contrast, *Clair de lune* is an evocative display of the organ's softest colours. One of the best known piano works of the renowned French impressionist composer Claude Debussy, it is equally, if not more, effective on the organ. The several flute and string stops on the St John's organ are simply sublime, and lend themselves easily to conjuring up this image of a magical moonlit evening. The arranger, Alexandre Cellier, was one of the finest performers in early 20th century France, a fact attested to by the celebrated French organist Louis Vierne, who stated that Cellier was a man "with the most sensitive musical nature...he has a place among the great artists". His arrangement shows complete mastery of the organ's expressive capabilities.

Although W.T. Best is most remembered for his exceptional talent as a performer and transcriber, he was also a distinguished



The Willis organ which Best played in the 1851 London Exhibition

composer. His Organ Sonata in D minor is a splendid symphonic showpiece, showing off the full range of orchestral colours available on romantic organs such as St John's. The work is dedicated to Fräulein Hesse; this friendship presumably began in 1851 at Hyde Park in London when both Best and Adolf Friedrich Hesse (1809-1863), the German organist and composer, were performing on the organs at the Crystal Palace for the Great Exhibition.

The 1851 London Exhibition was an event of great significance not only to Best but also to Henry 'Father' Willis (1821-1901), Best's organ building colleague, as Best was demonstrating Willis's large three-manual instrument sited in the western gallery of the

Exhibition. It was an instrument which helped set the standard for modern concert organs, and the success of Best's demonstration on this instrument was such that it led to Willis gaining the contract to build the massive instrument in St George's Hall, Liverpool. It also gave the Liverpool Organ Committee, including the Mayor and Town Clerk, an opportunity to hear Best in his element on what was "presumed by the builder to be the first successful large organ yet constructed in England." It is no coincidence that Best was appointed Organist of St George's Hall, Liverpool in 1855 – a position which he held for nearly 40 years until 1894.

The first movement of the Sonata is tightly constructed with two main subjects. After a grand introduction evoking the massive sound of orchestral brass – Best himself suggests 'Tromboni' in the score, the first theme appears 'risoluto' on full organ before a brief fugato passage introduces the second subject, a gentle singing theme with a delicate detached accompaniment. A brief development follows after which the two themes return before the conclusion of the movement – a majestic 'Hymnus Triumphalis' which displays the grandeur of the fine Trumpet stop on the St John's organ.

The dainty Romanza is in a simple three-part form. The first and last sections display the wealth of softer stops on the Swell and Choir divisions of the organ, while the central section shows the beauty of the Clarinet and Orchestral Oboe stops on the Choir division.

The fiery Finale begins with an abrupt statement of the main theme of the Romanza before launching into a vigorous 'Allegro' in which melodies played alternately on the pedals and manuals compete with each other until joining forces for a robust 'Giocoso'.

A brief reflective passage follows before a trumpet fanfare heralds the arrival of the 'Hymnus Popularis' – a bold statement of the popular hymn tune 'Duke Street' which, appropriately, is also the name of a street in central Liverpool only 500 yards from St George's Hall. Presumably the reason for the martial treatment of the tune is that it was commonly used with the well-known hymn "Fight the good fight with all thy might". Above the mighty tune, Best cleverly incorporates themes from the earlier parts of the movement. The previous sections are then restated before the 'Hymnus Popularis' returns and the work concludes with a series of dramatic flourishes.

The famous Largo from Dvorák's 'New World' Symphony has remained a part of the standard orchestral repertoire since its composition in the early months of 1893. This masterful transcription by Frederick George Shinn, a former Honorary Secretary of the Royal College of Organists in London, was published in 1894, only one year after the work was composed. The arrangement shows the organ's ability to display a vast array of orchestral sounds including, for the main theme, the fine Orchestral Oboe stop on the Choir division.

The massive Melbourne Exhibition Building, opened in October 1880, is internationally acclaimed as the finest 19th century exhibition hall to survive anywhere in the world. When the task came to build a grand organ for the building, the contract was awarded to the distinguished Melbourne organbuilder George 'Grandfather' Fincham, although other builders such as the famous Henry 'Father' Willis had tendered for the work. In 1890, when W.T. Best performed in Melbourne after his concerts at the Sydney

Town Hall, he visited the Exhibition Building and inspected the organ. Best was no stranger to exhibition halls, as for about twenty years from 1871 he appeared, with orchestra, as the soloist in Handel's organ concertos at the Crystal Palace in London.

The fourth Handel Festival, held at the Crystal Palace in June 1871, was the first occasion when an organ concerto had been included in the Festival Program. Best's performance as soloist also marked "probably the first occasion in living memory when any of these works was played as was intended by the composer." Performing Handel's first organ concerto on the Selection Day, Best was subsequently invited to perform at the spectacular Handel Festivals whenever an organ concerto appeared in the Festival Program.

However, Best's transcription for organ alone of Handel's Organ Concerto No. 2 in B-flat major makes any orchestra superfluous, especially the 'historically-informed' orchestras which we hear so often today! In this splendid arrangement it is an easy task to identify the 'organ solo' passages in the concerto as opposed to the orchestral sections, while the massive cadenza at the end of the first movement is a romantic showpiece which fully explores Handel's original themes in ways which Handel himself would never have thought possible!

Apart from his work as a gifted recitalist, William Faulkes was a prolific composer with around 500 published compositions to his credit, not to mention another 300 left in manuscript form. He spent his life in and around Liverpool and was Organist of St Margaret's Church, Anfield – now in suburban Liverpool; he was also an acquaintance of W.T. Best, and attended

many of Best's recitals at St George's Hall. A characteristic example of Faulkes' talent for tuneful melody is found in *Autumn Song*. Published in 1912, this charming little piece demonstrates the Oboe and Vox Humana stops on the Swell division accompanied by lush harmonies typical of Faulkes' romantic compositional style.

Joseph Haydn, the celebrated classical composer, boasts 108 symphonies as part of his prolific output. One of the most famous of these is the 'London' Symphony No. 104 in D, first performed in London on 4 May 1795. It is entirely appropriate that this transcription of the first movement is by Sir John Stainer, an integral part of the London musical establishment for many years, especially during his time as Organist of St Paul's Cathedral between 1872 and 1888. Although Stainer is most remembered for his work as a cathedral organist, composer and musicologist he was also an accomplished concert performer, giving recitals in major venues including the Royal Albert Hall. His arrangement, although of great technical bravura, succeeds in capturing the refined elegance of the original orchestral score – the whole undertaking made all the more impressive by the fact that Stainer lost the sight of his left eye as a result of an accident when he was only five years old.

Between 1899 and 1900 the Russian composer Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov wrote 'The Flight of the Bumble-Bee' as part of his opera *The Legend of Tsar Saltan*. Only 28 years later, the American organist Gordon Balch Nevin transcribed the work for organ solo; the piece has since been arranged for many other instruments including glockenspiel and tuba! Although the work has become the trademark of many virtuoso instrumentalists,

this transcription is especially effective in portraying the frantic buzzing of the crazed bee – perhaps even more realistic than the orchestral version!

Edwin H. Lemare, the most famous international recitalist of the early 20th century, composed his second *Concertstück* for his friend Bernard Johnson (1889-1935), the renowned Organist of the Albert Hall in Nottingham, England. Although Lemare's brilliant concert career made him the most highly paid organist of his time, he was also a distinguished composer and arranger, with around 180 original compositions and 700 transcriptions to his credit.

Lemare's second *concert piece* is in the form of a 'tarantella', a musical form which originated centuries ago as a folkdance in southern Italy; for many years the dance was even thought to be a cure for the poisonous bite of the Tarantula! Over the last 200 years the dance has been adapted by several composers into a breathtaking showpiece and Lemare's 'Alla Tarantella' is no exception, literally bursting with delirious excitement. Using the full resources of the St John's organ, from the tender flute and clarinet stops to the splendour of full organ, the *Concertstück* brings this mighty program to a glorious close.

Notes © 1998 Thomas Heywood



The reconstructed organ console built in 1995 and based on the original console which was destroyed in 1961

Digital recording: 18, 25 May, 1 June 1998
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Digital editing: Vaughan McAlley
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CONCERT ORGAN MASTERPIECES

THOMAS HEYWOOD
St John's Church, Toorak

W.A. Mozart, transcribed by W.T. Best

1 The Overture to The Magic Flute

Johann Sebastian Bach, trans. Thomas Heywood

2 Concerto for Two Violins in D minor (1st mvt)

Claude Debussy, trans. Alexandre Cellier

3 Clair de lune from Suite Bergamasque

William Thomas Best

Organ Sonata in D minor

4 [Adagio, Allegro and Maestoso]

5 Romanza

6 Finale

Antonín Dvorák, trans. Frederick George Shinn

7 Largo from Symphony No. 9 in E minor
("From the New World")

George Frideric Handel, trans. W.T. Best

Organ Concerto No. 2 in B-flat major

8 *Andante maestoso* and *Allegro*

9 *Adagio*

10 *Allegro, ma non presto*

William Faulkes

11 Autumn Song

Franz Joseph Haydn, trans. Sir John Stainer

12 "London" Symphony in D, No. 104 (1st mvt)

Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov, trans. G.B. Nevin

13 "The Flight of the Bumble-Bee"

Edwin H. Lemare

14 Concertstück (In the form of a Tarantella)



The St John's organ façade with the pipe decoration commissioned from Marc Nobel. The façade decoration was given to St John's as a thank-offering for the lives of Gwendoline and Percy Thomas Shewan by their daughter Joan and grandson Thomas Heywood.

Other CDs by Thomas Heywood include "MELBOURNE SOUNDS GRAND" (Melbourne Town Hall organ) and "JUST MARRIED" (St Mary's Star-of-the-Sea Church, West Melbourne)

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