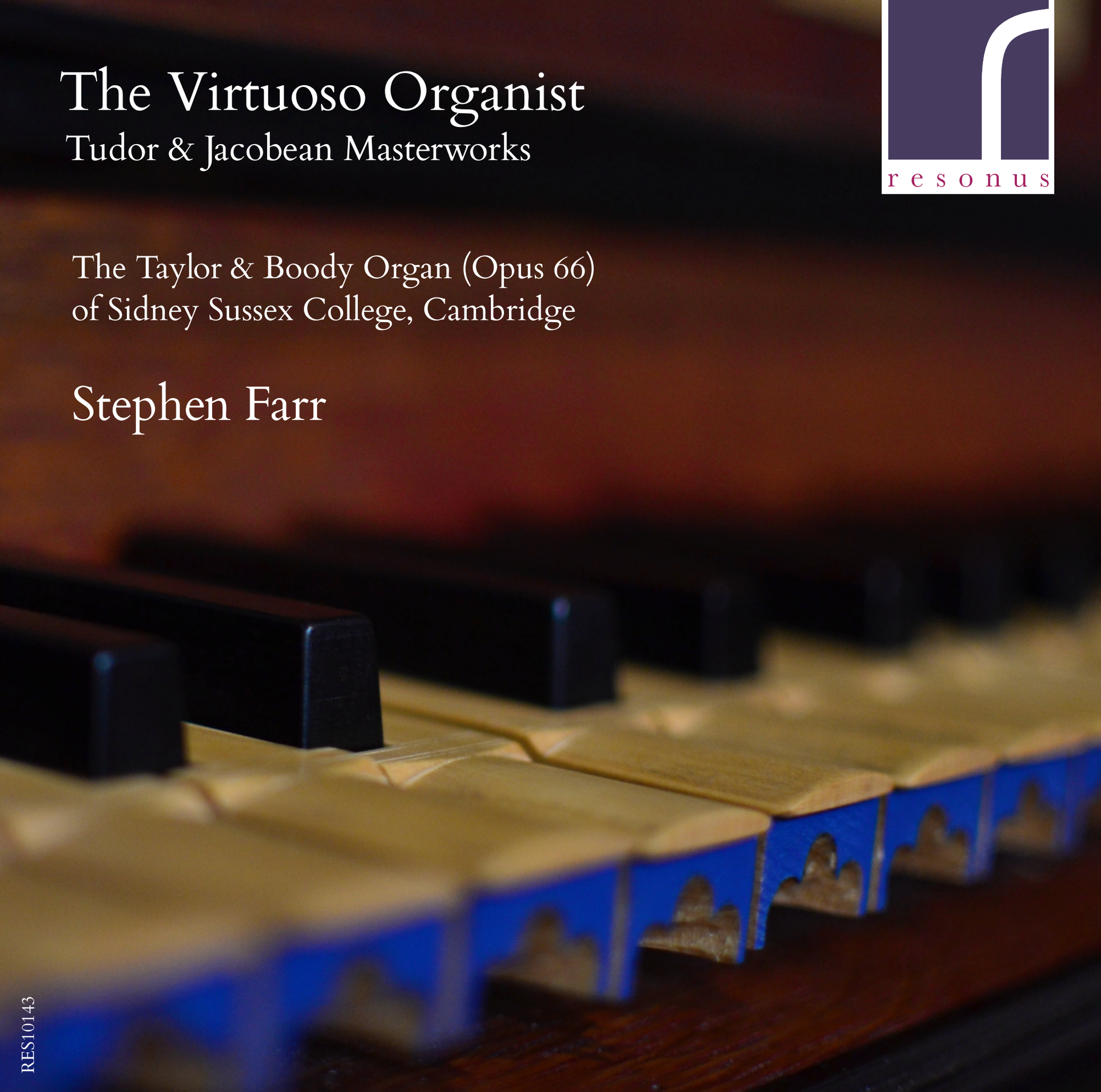
The Virtuoso Organist

Tudor & Jacobean Masterworks

The Taylor & Boody Organ (Opus 66)
of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge

Stephen Farr



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The Virtuoso Organist

Tudor & Jacobean Masterworks

Stephen Farr *organ*

The Taylor & Boody Organ (Opus 66)
of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge

with
The Gentlemen of the Choir of Sidney Sussex College
directed by David Skinner

About Stephen Farr:
'Farr rises to the occasion, turning in performances that are as varied and vital as the music demands, intricate details inked with telling clarity'
Choir and Organ

'[...] one can simply enjoy Farr's rock steady rhythmic playing, crisp articulation and commanding overview. His approach is refreshingly unfussy and quirk free'
Gramophone

William Byrd (c. 1540-1623)	
1. **A Voluntarie for my ladye nevell**	[5:05]
John Bull (1562/3-1628)	
2. **Galliard**	[1:59]
Anonymous	
3. **Bina caelestis II**	[8:19]
John Bull	
4. **In nomine [II]**	[4:34]
Thomas Tallis (1505-1585)	
5. **Ecce tempus idoneum**	[3:49]
Thomas Tomkins (1572-1656)	
6. **Offertory**	[17:30]
John Blitheman (1525-1591)	
7. **Gloria tibi Trinitas [I]**	[2:15]
8. **Gloria tibi Trinitas [IV]**	[2:15]
John Bull	
9. **Coranto Joyeuse**	[1:08]
Anonymous	
10. **Magnificat**	[10:21]
Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625)	
11. **Fantasia**	[6:04]
William Byrd	
12. **A Fancie**	[5:08]
Total playing time	[68:35]

The Virtuoso Organist:
Tudor and Jacobean Masterworks

We begin and end in 1591 when the composer William Byrd collaborated with one of the most gifted Elizabethan music copyists, John Baldwin, to produce 'My Ladye Nevells Booke' – the finest surviving manuscript of Tudor keyboard music.[1] Acquired from the Abergavenny family by the British Library in 2006, this manuscript contains forty-two pieces, all by Byrd himself, copied in Baldwin's most formal hand. The large-format notation is pin-sharp, with easy-to-read, diamond-headed notes and elegantly turned quaver beams; each piece begins wherever possible on the topmost stave of the folio (and preferably the left-hand side or verso), minimizing the incidence of inopportune page-turns; occasional fingerings help the player to avoid embarrassment while the correcting hand of another musician, probably Byrd himself, intervenes on those rare occasions where Baldwin's precision is less than absolute. To help the player find each piece, an index at the back of the volume lists each piece (or 'songe') and the leaf where it can be found. At the end of this index Baldwin recorded, perhaps with some relief, the completion of this exacting commission on 11 September 1591.

The 'Lady Nevell' was Elizabeth, wife of Sir Henry Nevell of Billingbear in Berkshire, which was located near to Byrd's home in Harlington and also to Baldwin's workplace as a tenor lay clerk at St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle.[2] Although no evidence survives of Lady Nevell's interest in keyboard music, or skill as a virginalist, the inviting legibility of her eponymous manuscript begs for it to be opened, perused and played. Perhaps it was a fiftieth birthday present: Lady Nevell had been born in 1541, not long after William Byrd himself. The first part of the book comprises sociable music for the virginals: 'my ladye nevells grownde', 'the battell' (a naïve narrative suite), and numerous pavans and galliards. The second half of the book is more varied in its contents, some of which could be played on either virginals or organ. The penultimate item in the book, **A fancie** (track 12), is also found in a near-contemporary manuscript copied by the church musician and madrigalist, Thomas Weelkes (British Library, Add. 30485). This is a classic exposition of Byrd's mature fantasia style, in which strict counterpoint alternates with episodes of dazzling fingerwork, particularly during the inexorable progression towards the final cadence.

The latter part of 'My Ladye Nevells Booke' begins with **A voluntarie for my ladye nevell** (or 'the voluntarie lesson': track 1): unique to this manuscript, it was probably a bespoke composition for Lady Nevell. The terms 'voluntary' and 'lesson', first found in the 1560s in keyboard manuscripts such as the Mulliner Book (British Library, Add. 30513), perhaps recall an uneasy phase of transition when the organ, a mainstay of Catholic worship, had struggled to establish a permanent role within the reformed liturgy. A reprimand suffered by Byrd for over-elaborate organ-playing may have contributed to his decision to leave Lincoln Cathedral in 1572 for the security and professional fulfilment of the Chapel Royal. Although less showy than some of his keyboard fantasias, 'A voluntarie for my ladye nevell' brings the mature composer's easy, vocal-style declamation to bear upon this early-Elizabethan genre. In his restraint Byrd shows himself the true master of the keyboard: fast fingerwork makes its appearance here only in the final bars by way of cadential flourish.

The keyboard pieces of William Byrd and other Elizabethan virginalists witness the emergence of a distinctive English keyboard tradition, but one which stemmed from (and was in some ways haunted by) the pre-Reformation tradition. As part of his musical education, perhaps as a chorister at St Paul's Cathedral, Byrd would have learnt the craft of counterpoint partly through the medium of organ playing. Apparently copied at St Paul's around 1560, the Mulliner Book anthologizes the kinds of idioms learnt by young musicians by the middle of the sixteenth century: cantus firmus pieces, free-composed 'voluntaries', dances, arrangements of part songs and anthems, and snippets from large-scale compositions selected as compositional exemplars. Among these contents are two versets by Thomas Tallis for the Lenten hymn **Ecce tempus idoneum** (Track 5). Composed either in the early 1540s or mid-1550s, Tallis's setting demonstrates the craft of 'breaking' or masking of the plainsong: the hymn tune is played by the left hand (in the tenor voice) but, lightly paraphrased, it provides imitative material for the other voices, which weave *fuga* around it.

Byrd and Tallis were to serve together in Elizabeth I's Chapel Royal from the early 1570s until Tallis died in 1585, and collaborated in the publication of a collection of Latin sacred music, *Cantiones Sacrae*, in 1575. One of the last generation of musicians to spend their formative years exclusively in the service of the Latin liturgy, Tallis provided Byrd with first-hand witness

to the old traditions which Byrd, in turn, handed down to the next generation (breaking of the plainsong is one of the traditional contrapuntal methods described by Thomas Morley, also of the Chapel Royal, in his *Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke* of 1597). Another link to the recent pre-Reformation past was provided by John Blitheman of the Chapel Royal, whose five settings of the antiphon **Gloria tibi Trinitas** recall Oxford during the golden 1520s when John Taverner of Cardinal College wrote his influential Mass based on the same Trinitarian melody. The settings performed here (tracks 7-8) showed the budding organist how to play in three parts, with plainsong in either bass or tenor, using repeating melodic cells and melodic dialogue between the added voices.

John Bull, the younger Elizabethan keyboard virtuoso, was taught by Blitheman as a child of the Chapel Royal before receiving tuition from Byrd himself. Blitheman's impact can clearly be seen in Bull's second **In nomine** (track 4), which also quotes from John Taverner's Mass *Gloria tibi Trinitas* and uses melodic cells like Blitheman's Gloria tibi Trinitas V, which breaks into triple time in its latter stages. Pavan-Galliard pairs were one of William Byrd's favourite keyboard genres, and so it is perhaps no surprise to find his pupil writing a **Galliard** and **Coranto** (tracks 2 and 9). The *Corante* or 'Courante Joijeuse van Jan Bull Doctor' is preserved in a manuscript copied in 1628 in the Low Countries where Bull had fled in 1613 to escape an adultery scandal (British Library, Add. 23623); the Galliard 'to the Pavin in D sol re' is found in five sources, among them Benjamin Cosyn's Virginal Book of 1620 (British Library, Royal MS 23.L.4). This latter manuscript was copied by Cosyn shortly before he became organist of St Lawrence, Ludlow (he ended his career as organist of the Charterhouse, London, until he was discharged on the abolition of Anglicanism in 1643); Cosyn's book also includes Fancy in Gam ut flatt (**Fantasia –** track 11), an extended and mature essay in imitative fantasia by Orlando Gibbons, gentleman of James I's Chapel Royal.

Thomas Tomkins's **Offertory** (track 6) is the most enigmatic piece presented here. It is the latest composition, and yet profoundly retrospective. Its title alludes to the lost tradition of keyboard settings of plainsong offertories, but it is built out of a seven-note ostinato ACBCDBA which recalls the melodic incipit of the old Lady Mass offertory, Felix namque (which was used by Tallis in a pair of extended settings which Tomkins probably knew). Offertories had been the

most long-winded genre within the pre-Reformation repertory so, perhaps appropriately, Tomkins's essay is very long: his ostinato is stated 55 times, after an opening *fuga* built out of ten statements of the same melody, 65 in all. Tomkins was in the habit of dating his compositions, and he attributed this one to 1637, in which year fell his 65th birthday.

If Tomkins represents an autumnal flowering of the English keyboard tradition, he may also have been responsible for preserving by far the most important witness to the formative years of this tradition, British Library Add. 26669. Originally copied in the 1540s and 1550s, this book transmits most of the surviving Tudor organ music for Catholic worship: settings of hymns, antiphons and canticles for the Office, as well as movements for the Mass, particularly Offertories. To an even greater extent than other post-Reformation musicians, Tomkins devoured this repertory, appraising and imitating the best exemplars, whose turns of phrase periodically made their way into his own pieces. Annotations in his hand appear throughout the manuscript: 'a good olde indeade very good', 'a dainty fine verse', or, in the case of the first verse of **Bina caelestis** (track 3), the more laconic 'a good 2 parts'. In this latter case, Tomkins was ruminating upon the once normative genre of two-part bicinium which had been used by early-Tudor composers for the first verses of organ hymns. The composer of this setting is unknown but was probably Thomas Preston, the leading English organist between the death of John Redford in 1547 and the maturity of William Byrd in the 1570s.

Bina caelestis is based upon the faburden, a counter-melody to the proper hymn tune which was commonly used by singers and organists as the basis for quasi-improvised polyphonic renderings of alternate verses. Performed during the octave of (i.e., the week following) the feast of St John the Evangelist which fell on 27 December, this is one of several hymns set to organ or vocal polyphony during the twelve days of Christmas. The eighth-tone **Magnificat** (track 10), also anonymous and also attributable to Thomas Preston, would have been of use throughout the liturgical year. A series of six texturally distinct versets, some of them subdivided at their mid-point, is built upon the faburden of the proper chant, even more broadly paraphrased than in *Bina caelestis*. Some decades after this Magnificat had become liturgically obsolete, Thomas Tomkins

Stephen Farr

sought compositional inspiration from it; attracted by its running figuration in triple time, he apparently liked the third verset ('a good verse'), part of which he tried unsuccessfully to re-write.

Newcastle University / Centre d'Études Supérieures de la Renaissance, Tours

Notes:

1. British Library, MS Mus. 1591, available online at http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/virtualbooks/nevells/index.html and in facsimile: Oliver Neighbour (ed.), *My Ladye Nevells Booke*, Documenta Musicologica, Zweite Reihe: Handschriften-Faksimiles, 44 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2012).

2. John Harley, '"My Ladye Nevell" revealed', *Music & Letters*, 86 (2005), pp. 1-13.

Taylor & Boody Organ Builders, Opus 66

It was with high hopes that I first visited Sidney Sussex on All Hallows' Eve, 2008. David Titterington, the College's organ consultant, had invited our firm to propose a new mechanical action organ for the Chapel. The instrument was to have sufficient tonal resources to meet the variety of musical requirements one would expect in such a setting. I had been warned, however, that its placement in the acoustically ideal gallery above the entrance would be difficult, if not impossible. This concerned me because the siting of an organ is critical to its success. On inspection it was immediately apparent that the rear gallery was entirely inadequate to house any organ without considerable compromise to the Chapel's architectural integrity. Indeed, it seems that in 1911 when T.H. Lyon designed the interior with great attention to detail, little or no thought was given to how an organ might fit into the plan. Consequently, when the College purchased Sir Arthur Hill's residence organ in 1922 it was relegated to the tower chamber above the antechapel, and so was forced to speak into the nave at great disadvantage through a small curtained doorway. Many years later its condition was improved when it was moved to the gallery above the Lady Chapel, a location which subsequently housed the electro-pneumatic organ built in 1967 by Harrison and Harrison. When that instrument failed mechanically, the consensus once more was that the same side gallery would be the only viable location for a new organ.

Organ builders thrive on challenges, of which the Lady Chapel gallery poses more than its share. The side location is acoustically problematic for such a long, narrow hall. In addition the site presents severe spatial limitations and technical obstacles to the designer. These could no doubt eventually be solved, but the longer I studied the situation the more skeptical I became of taking on such a demanding project so far from home. After exploring the options I had to admit with sincere regrets that we would not be wise to accept the College's invitation to make a proposal. It was at that point that Dr Titterington, hoping to save the day, asked if we might consider building a chamber organ instead. He explained that under the direction of Dr David Skinner, the College choir had gained a wide reputation for its performance of music of the English Renaissance and now needed a small organ for accompaniment. Suddenly, with his suggestion we found a key which opened our minds to a trove of

alternatives that had not occurred to us before. Would it be possible to place a slender, free-standing organ on the main floor near the choir stalls? It could be a simple, traditional instrument with a single manual and no pedals. If it were designed with a specific historical focus, it would not be required to meet the eclectic demands placed on a larger instrument. All the signs were encouraging. When we looked around for where such an organ might stand, we noted that the architect had left a curiously open, unfurnished space to the left of the aisle next to the chancel steps. What was its purpose? Was it perhaps intended for a piano? Whatever the case, it was clearly an ideal spot for a small organ. Thinking further, we then realized that if the organ were built on a moveable platform it could be stationed on occasion in the centre aisle for the optimum projection of its sound into the nave. And so it happened, that by the end of the afternoon the vision for the new organ had taken form. From that point forward design evolved slowly, as its musical, architectural and technical elements were woven together in a harmonious whole.

The history of chamber or positive organs built in Europe over the past four hundred years reveals a remarkable consistency in their fundamental design and in the stops chosen for them. This common bond bridged not only distinct national styles, but also widely separated artistic periods, ranging from late-medieval times through the Romantic era. Knowing this we felt secure in turning for our primary inspiration in this project to the 17th century Dutch and North German organ building schools, which have been central to the work of our company from the beginning. We have been fortunate to be able to study a number of these old organs over the years, several of them intimately, when we were engaged for their restoration. One could not ask for better teachers. However, it is important to say that while we wanted the Sidney Sussex organ to have close ties to the antiques visually and tonally, we had no intention of making it as a copy. Rather, the instrument would be built from new designs drawing on principles used by early builders.

The process began with the choice of stops. Following common practice, we selected two ranks of flue pipes, one open, the other stopped, to serve as the organ's tonal foundation at unison pitch. The first is the metal Principal 8' (or Open Diapason). Its pipes produce the warm sound unique to organs, with a characteristic timbre rich

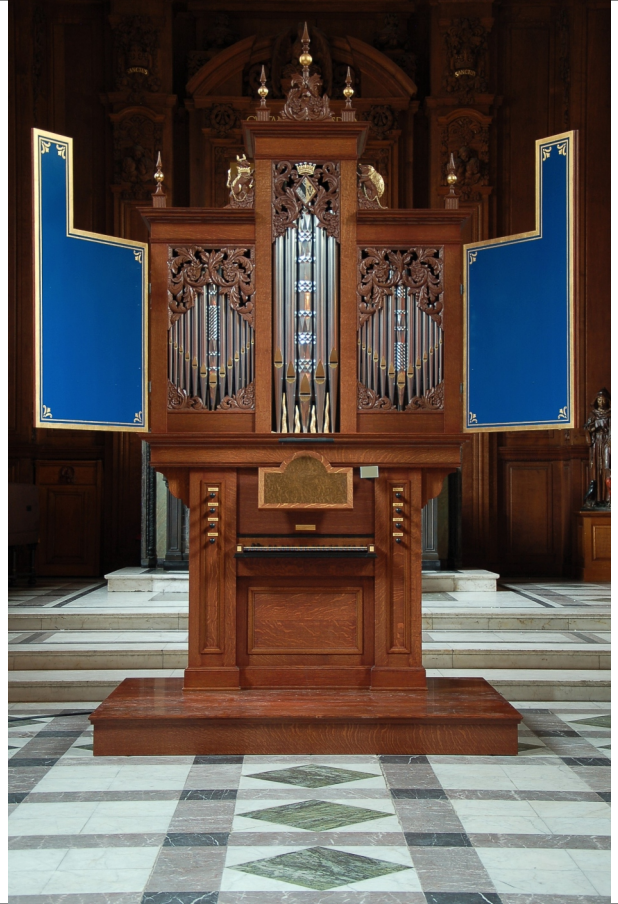
in overtones, which make them closely resemble the human voice. Two other stops in the same family, the Præstant 4' and the Octave 2' were included at higher pitches. When played together these three comprise the small principal chorus (or plenum) of the instrument. The second foundation stop, the Gedackt 8' (or Stopped Diapason), has pipes made of Cherry. It can be identified by its gentle flute tone and is especially useful in choral accompaniments. There are also two higher pitched stops of flute timbre, namely the Flauta 4' with tapered metal pipes and the Nasat 3', which plays at an octave and a fifth above the Gedackt. Finally there is the Vox Virginia 8' (or Regal), a small but feisty reed stop of a sort much prized in early organs. This stop has short, partially covered resonators and open-throated brass shallots that give it a somewhat wild tone associated with medieval consorts. There are in all only three hundred and eleven pipes in the organ. Despite their modest number, they can be combined in a surprising variety of ways to accompany the choir, other instrumental ensembles, and the singing of the people. To this end the pipes have been voiced with open toes and high cut-up mouths which emphasize their vocal qualities.

Once the stops were selected the question of pitch was addressed. This would determine the length of the pipes and by extension the size of the case. Three options were considered, the first being today's standard orchestral pitch of A=440Hz. That would have been appropriate had the organ been intended primarily for use with modern instruments, but this was not the case. The second option was to set the pitch a ½ tone lower, making A=415Hz (Kammerton), the largely accepted standard today for ensembles performing with Baroque instruments. The third possibility was to set the pitch ½ tone higher than normal at A=465Hz (Chorton), thereby placing it a whole step above Kammerton. The choice came down to one of the latter two, both of which were common in antique instruments. In the end we settled on Chorton because it works especially well for accompaniment of Renaissance choral literature. It also allows the organ to be small. The organist can transpose down a whole tone when required to play with contemporary Baroque instruments.

The beauty of the Chapel's interior set a high standard for the instrument's appearance. The neo-Wren appointments of the space required a case with classical moldings and rich ornamentation. Both the casework and its carvings would be made of quarter-sawn White Oak, fumed and stained to match the

Chapel paneling. Traditional joinery would be used throughout. Where possible, simple geometric proportions were employed to determine the relative size, shape and placement of the case's elements. The form of the upper case was derived in the manner of the old builders from the arrangement of the tin façade pipes of the Præstant 4'. Its five longest bass pipes were grouped in the middle field with the 4' long bottom C standing in the centre. These were flanked by the shorter, higher-pitched trebles placed symmetrically in the two fields on either side. This age-old arrangement allows the trebles to stand next to their major thirds, which promotes tuning stability and in turn produces the most logical and efficient layout of the pipes on the soundboard (or windchest) inside. Also, the position of the three embossed pipes was determined by their relation to the width of the case through the use of the golden section proportion. By this means, the visual rhythms and harmony of the case were directly tied to and generated by the proportions of the pipes. In a similar fashion the dimensions of the lower case were driven by the requirements of its playing action, stop controls, and bellows and wind system. Where possible they echo the proportions used in the upper case.

The plan from the outset was to make the instrument no larger than it needed to be to meet its musical goals. We agreed that in keeping with 17th century tradition we would build a keyboard of limited compass, using what is known as a short octave bass. Before 1700 in the Netherlands and Germany it was common practice to omit C#, D#, F# and G# in the bottom octave since those notes were rarely needed for the music of the period. This decision had important implications for our design. Since bass pipes are the largest in the organ, without those pipes the case could reflect the elegance of the antiques. Once the arrangement of the façade pipes was fixed, a proposal drawing was made, followed by the interior layout of the soundboard, the playing action, and so on. All proceeded smoothly until it was brought to our attention that while bass C# and D# were rarely needed for early English music, F# and G# were frequently required. This posed a problem, since so much work had already gone into the case design and scaling of the pipes that to abandon them and start over was out of the question. Still, we knew it was important somehow to include the desired pipes, and so the challenge of fitting them onto the soundboard design had to be tackled. With minor adjustments to pipe scaling here and there the job proved to be just possible.



Although the resulting design is more crowded than originally intended, it works surprisingly well. Adding extra keys to 17th and 18th century keyboard instruments was common practice in the 19th century; in our case the revision had to be made while the organ was still being built. Musicians assure us that it was worth the effort. In spite of the addition of the two extra bass notes we chose to retain the short octave keyboard as a teaching aid to assist in the performance of music written with this configuration in mind. Thus, what appear to be E, F# and G# actually play C, D and E respectively. The latecomers (F# and G#) were inserted as short little sharps above and behind D & E.

The keyboard dimensions are based on those found in antique continental organs and harpsichords; both the naturals and the sharps are shorter than their modern counterparts. This has a positive influence on the performance of early music, making it easier for the player to articulate musical lines as they would have been conceived by their composers. The tops of the natural keys have been rounded over to help the fingers find the center of the keys when using early fingering techniques. Like the antiques, this organ has suspended tracker action. The keys are hinged at their tails so that their weight hangs directly on the trackers and pallets (or valves) in the soundboard. This makes for the most sensitive touch and allows for the best response of attack and release.

The wind system of the organ consists of a single wedge-shaped bellows with an electric blower and a wooden conductor to bring the wind from the bellows to the soundboard. We would have preferred to build two bellows so that the organ could also be pumped by hand as it would have been in the past. However, because floor space was at a premium and a moveable platform was desirable, we had to abandon the wish for multiple bellows.

Nowadays it is rare to find an organ case with doors. This is unfortunate because they play a prominent role in the organ's architectural and tonal history. At Sidney the organ fairly begged for doors to complement its form, amplify (or restrain) its sound and occasionally shield it from prying hands. There was a brief temptation to paint the doors with biblical motifs as can be seen in the beautiful Sutton organ at Jesus College. In the end we settled instead on a plain vibrant blue with a minimum of gold trim to complement the Chapel's fine altar painting. During construction we received a request to include elements from the College's crest in the ornamentation. The bull and porcupine quickly found their place as brackets beside the center tower. Shield and crown were incorporated in the carving above the center pipes. Only later did we learn that whenever the crown is present it must be accompanied by a lozenge rather than a shield, and so a second carving was made to satisfy the finer points of heraldry.

Perhaps the most significant factor determining the singular character of the Sidney organ was the choice of its tuning system, or temperament. Early keyboard instruments were customarily tuned in unequal temperaments. This meant that certain tonalities, largely those played on the natural keys, were allotted well-tuned, consonant triads at the expense of the more distant tonalities, which were seldom used. It was a hierarchical system inherently tied to the music and philosophy of its day, one which persisted in English organs well into the 19th century. Later, when egalitarian theories prevailed, all intervals were made the same size, hence leaving no pure tuning relationships in any triads. In 17th century organs by far most popular temperament was meantone, prized for its pure thirds and gently undulating fifths. This was our first choice for the Sidney organ. However, all temperaments require compromises. In the case of strict meantone, strong dissonances are generated in the most remote keys (i.e. those with the most sharps or flats in their key signatures). Furthermore, in meantone there is one completely unplayable 'wolf' interval, usually between Eb and G#. Had we been willing to accept these problems then the choice for the Sidney organ would have been settled. However, after much deliberation we decided to look for a more flexible temperament than pure meantone, one which would have lovely (if slightly less than pure) triads in the home keys, but which would still be playable throughout the range of keys. The search by instrument builders and theoreticians for an ideal compromise or alternative to meantone has been underway for centuries. This meant there were many fascinating options to consider. Over the years we have used some seven different temperaments in our organs, each with its own advantages and shortcomings. Most of these were historically based, many being modifications of meantone. The recent advent of electronic tuning standards has made it possible to tune organs with greater accuracy than ever before. As a result we are able to tune certain temperaments with subtle intervals, which up to now have been nearly impossible to lay exactly by ear.

This has led organ builders to explore new paths in solving old problems. One of the most successful experiments along this line was first used in 1985 by Jürgen Ahrend for his restoration of the late 17th century Arp Schnitger organ at the St. Ludgerikirche in Norden, Ostfriesland, Germany. There he developed a temperament in which neither the thirds nor the fifths are absolutely pure in the historically important keys, but by a seemingly magical coincidence both undulate and lock together at almost exactly the same restful rate, more slowly than the fifths in meantone (for technical details see Specification sheet below.) The harmonious triads of the Norden temperament proved so convincing musically that there was little question in our minds that this would be the right choice for the Sidney instrument.

It has been an honor for us to build this organ for Sidney Sussex. Rarely do we have the opportunity to work in such a lovely, welcoming setting. The long and proud history of the chapel inspired our shop to offer its best skills in making an instrument that would enrich the musical life of the college and likewise complement the diverse organ culture of Cambridge. We are grateful to the many who have made the project possible, especially to David Titterington for his clear vision and encouragement. Likewise, the support and patience of David Skinner while we wrestled with many issues were essential to the organ's success. As with many experiments, the benefits of our choices could only become fully apparent as the organ is played. The enclosed recording by Stephen Farr provides a beautiful example of this unfolding process. It is our hope that the new organ will be able to bring fresh interpretation to exquisite early keyboard masterpieces, many of which have languished too long in obscurity. May this recording be the first of many inspiring musical revelations to come.

The Taylor and Boody Organ of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge (Opus 66)

8' Principal (co – d''', bass common with Gedackt)
8' Gedackt
4' Præstant
4' Flauta
3' Nasat (c'- d''')
2' Octave
8' Vox Virginia
Tremulant

Compass: C, D, E – d''', 49 notes
Gedackt pipes of Black Cherry
Præstant pipes of 85% tin, hand planed
Other metal pipes of 28% tin, hammered
Soundboard of solid Yellow Poplar, Western Red Cedar, White Oak and White Pine
Case of solid White Oak, fumed in ammonia and stained
Keyboards of White Pine, Turkish Boxwood, Gabon Ebony
Single wedge bellows and blower in base of the organ
Wind pressure: 65mm
Pitch: A=465Hz
Temperament: "Norden" is based on a series of seven fifths narrowed by 1/5th Pythagorean Comma

Stephen Farr

Stephen Farr is Director of Music at St Paul's Church Knightsbridge, a post which he combines with a busy career as soloist, continuo player, accompanist, and conductor. He was Organ Scholar of Clare College, Cambridge, graduating with a double first in Music and an MPhil in Musicology. He subsequently held appointments at Christ Church, Oxford and at Winchester and Guildford Cathedrals.

A former student of David Sanger and a prizewinning performer at international level, he has an established reputation as one of the leading recitalists of his generation, with a wide-ranging discography to his credit; recent discs for Resonus Classics of music by J.S. Bach, Judith Bingham, and Kenneth Leighton have received unanimous critical acclaim. He has appeared in the UK in venues including the Royal Albert Hall (where he gave the premiere of Judith Bingham's The Everlasting Crown in the BBC Proms 2011); Bridgewater Hall; Symphony Hall, Birmingham; Westminster Cathedral; King's College, Cambridge, St Paul's Celebrity Series and Westminster Abbey: he also appears frequently on BBC Radio 3 as both performer and presenter. He has a particular commitment to contemporary music, having just completed a PhD in this field, and has been involved in premieres of works by composers including Patrick Gowers, Judith Bingham, Francis Pott, Thomas Hyde, and Jonathan Harvey; he also collaborated with Thomas Adès in a recording of Under Hamelin Hill.

His concerto and ensemble work has included engagements with the Berlin Philharmonic (with whom he appeared in the world premiere of Jonathan Harvey's Weltethos under Sir Simon Rattle), the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, the Ulster Orchestra, the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the Philharmonia, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and the London Mozart Players; he made his debut in the Amsterdam Concertgebouw in 2005.

He has also worked with many other leading ensembles including Florilegium, the Bach Choir, the Holst Singers, the BBC Singers, Polyphony, The English Concert, London Baroque Soloists, City of London Sinfonia, Wallace Collection, Academy of Ancient Music, Britten Sinfonia, Dunedin Consort and Players and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment.

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'[...] Farr's playing needs no musicological justification; it sparkles and seduces in equal measure'
Classical Ear

Recorded in Sidney Sussex College Chapel, Cambridge on 16-17 March 2014
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Producer, Engineer and Editor: Adam Binks
Recorded at 24-bit / 96kHz resolution
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