

## St. Albans International Organ Festival

### Meet the Recitalist: Joseph Beech and Jake Brown



**Joseph Beech**



**Jake Brown**

### *Please tell us a little about your concert programme.*

Other than Arvo Pärt's *Fratres*, we are playing a programme of original contemporary compositions for the combination

of organ and percussion. It's all too easy for the organ to be typecast into playing solo recitals and for church; by exploring the work of contemporary composers we hope to bring the combination to a wider audience and push the boundaries of organ performance.

### *What first attracted you to your instruments and how old were you when you started playing?*

**Jake:** I began playing percussion around the age of eleven, having played drum kit before that. I was attracted mostly to the theatrical nature of the instruments and how much drama and excitement they could add to a performance in many different contexts.

**Joseph:** As with many organists, I first played the piano as a child and was awed by the sound of the organ whilst a chorister. I had my first lessons at fourteen and was playing publically six months later!

### *Who (or what) has had the greatest influence on you as players?*

**Jake:** Attending many different concerts of many genres and styles has influenced me over the years, from the London Symphony Orchestra at the Barbican to the Manic Street Preachers at Sheffield 02 Academy and everything in-between!

**Joseph:** Aside from the obvious effects of commencing a full-time programme of organ study in 2013, I think the hard-wired musical atmosphere of the Academy has been the defining impetus for change in my playing. The place and everyone in it live and breathe music – it's impossible not to be affected by that.

### ***What would be a typical day in your life?***

**Joseph:** Despite both being third year students at the Academy on the same course, our daily routines vary significantly. We both have our regular lessons and academic classes in the Academy, but I spend a considerable amount of time at the London Oratory (where I am the Organ Scholar), practising and playing for the regular round of choral services.

**Jake:** My life is centred more around the Academy: a couple of hours work before lunch and then continue into the early evening. Obviously this routine changes day to day with classes, projects, rehearsals and performances.

### ***What have been the highlights of your recent schedules?***

**Jake:** Playing as part of the St Albans International Organ Festival was a recent highlight for me; it was a real joy to perform with so many world-class performers in both improvisation and interpretation competitions.

**Joseph:** I also played in the IOF back in July, giving a Bach Corner recital in the Cathedral on what also happened to be my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday – a memorable day on all counts! Another highlight was playing Saint-Saens' 3<sup>rd</sup> Symphony (the 'Organ Symphony') with the Academy Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Yan Pascal Tortelier.

### ***Which piece of music most recently made a big impression on you?***

**Jake:** I recently attended a BBC Symphony Orchestra performance of Mahler's 3<sup>rd</sup> symphony, which is my favourite of his works. The transition from the sonorous and beautiful brass chorale into the earth-shattering conclusion of the final movement is simply devastating.

**Joseph:** Without a doubt the most transfixing performance I have heard this year was the English National Opera's production of *Die Meistersinger von Nurnberg*, conducted by Edward Gardner. I was on the edge of my seat for the full five hours and not even on account of the underwhelming legroom...

### ***Which book would you recommend all musicians and music lovers to read and why?***

**Joseph:** Recently, I have been reading John Eliot Gardiner's beautiful book on Johann Sebastian Bach, "Music in the Castle of Heaven". Rather than a strictly academic study, Gardiner offers a wonderfully personal insight into the man behind the music – truly a 'must read' book.