

St. Albans International Organ Festival



Meet the Recitalist: Robert Woolley



Please tell us a little about your concert programme?

My programme at St. Albans consists of pieces by JP Sweelinck, his pupil Samuel Scheidt, and the early version of the Piece d'Orgue by JS Bach. Sweelinck, known as 'The Orpheus of Amsterdam' was city organist and harpsichordist of Amsterdam. He also taught a number of German organists, including Heinrich Scheidemann, Samuel Scheidt and Johann and Jakob Praetorius, who in turn founded the North German organ school. The early version of Bach's Piece d'Orgue is from a manuscript by JG Walther. The tempo markings are reversed from the more familiar later version, and the pedals only enter at the end of the middle section, which resembles a C18 French Grand Plein Jeu. The presence of low B (a note which doesn't exist on any organ Bach played), together with repeated notes in the pedal part of the last section, suggest the piece may have originated in an even earlier version for pedal harpsichord.

What first attracted you to the organ as an instrument and how old were you when you started playing?

I was attracted to playing the organ at school. A revelation was listening to a recording of the Neihoff/Dropa organ at Luneburg, and I then played as many historical organs as I could find!

Who (or what) has had the greatest influence on you as a player?

Playing and listening to 17th and 18th century music on the type of instrument and tuning system on which it might originally have been played, and exploring the context and the influences on the music.

What is a typical day in the life of Robert Woolley like?

My favourite day would include playing the organ, harpsichord or clavichord, teaching my students, reading (and enjoying cycling or the garden when weather and time permits)!

What are the highlights of your forthcoming schedule?

I am looking forward to playing and teaching at Oundle, and to giving a recital on the 1634 Bonifazi organ at Trevi nel Lazio, south of Rome.

Listen to the Recitalist

[Sweelinck Organ Works](#)

[Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck \(1562-1621\)](#)

[The First Georgians: Art & Monarchy 1714-1760 - Harpsichord music](#)