



PHI CD 202: ORGANISTS OF THE 1950s VOLUME THREE

Geraint Jones - organ

EMI Recordings of Schnitger's Organ in St. Martin & St. Nicolauskirche Church Steinkirchen Germany

Recorded 1950 - 1952

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

[1]-[2] Prelude & Fugue in D BWV 532 Issued as H.M.V. C. 7898/9. *2EA 16242-44* [11.48]

Chorale Preludes: [3]* Dae Alte Jahr BWV 614 *2EA 16343-1A* [2.58]

[4]* Herzlich thut mich verlangen BWV 727 *2EA 16332-1A* [2.40]

[5]-[6] Prelude & Fugue in B minor BWV 544 Issued as H.M.V. C. 7858/9. *2EA 15839-42* [13.35]

Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck (1562-1621)

[7]* Variations on Mein Junges leben hat ein end *2EA 16344-5* [8.15]

Johann Sebastian Bach

[8]-[9]* Prelude & Fugue in A minor BWV 543 *2EA 16332-4* [10.58]

Johann Pachelbel (1653-1706)

[10] Durch Adam's Fall ist ganz verderbt Issued as H.M.V. *HMS 61 - History of Music Series 2EA 15507-1A* [1.45]

Johann Sebastian Bach

[11]-[13]* Toccata, Adagio & Fugue in C BWV 564 *2EA 16328-31* [16.26]

*** Previously unissued recording**

Geraint Jones - organ. Recorded by E.M.I. between 1950 & 1952 on the Schnitger organ in St.Martin & St. Nicolauskirche Church, Steinkirchen.

E.M.I. tape matrix & 78 r.p.m. record numbers are given in *italics*.
Digitally restored from the master tapes by Martin Monkman, Amphion Recordings.

Total Playing Time: 69.11

Released



Producers Notes

Many of the tracks on this CD have never been issued before, which I find remarkable, given the quality of the organ and the outstanding performances by Geraint Jones. These were some of E.M.I.'s earliest recordings on magnetic tape which travelled at 30 inches per second. Why E.M.I. didn't release these recordings one can only speculate.

Perhaps, as they were made at the time when the transition from 78 r.p.m. disc to 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ r.p.m. vinyl L.P. record was beginning, E.M.I. may have considered these recordings too specialist, making them financially risky for the new L.P. format. Or maybe because a few years later Fernando Germani started to record the complete works of Bach for E.M.I., this project was never completed. Some of Geraint Jones's recordings from Steinkirchen were issued on 78 r.p.m. records by E.M.I. and for many in the U.K. this was the first time they had heard a Baroque organ, these issued recordings made a big impression.

The late Magnus Black, for many years Organist of Doncaster Parish Church, commented: *'When I was an Oxford undergraduate, reading music and doing battle at the R.C.O. our talk was usually about where to add stops, change manuals and use of the swell pedal. Some considered it bad to mix flutes and diapasons or use the 'open wood' too much, but of style we were blissfully innocent. Bach and Parry received the same treatment. Into this, my accepted world came talk of some Bach recordings by Geraint Jones at Steinkirchen. So I bought his Passacaglia & Fugue in C minor (Bach) the only record I then possessed, and played it whenever possible. Geraint Jones allowed space for the pipe-work to be heard - and what pipe-work!'*

Martin Monkman, Amphion Recordings, November 2004

A note on the origin of these recordings by Geraint Jones - writing in 1997

In September 1949 I was dispatched to Germany by the British Council on a recital tour, one of many similar events designed to begin the process of restoring normal relations after the war. The first week of concerts ended in Hamburg, and Kenneth Bartlett, who was the British Council officer accompanying my trip, asked me what I would like to do over the weekend, there was a car available, etc.....

Thus began my acquaintance with the celebrated north German organ builder Arp Schnitger, as we explored the Altes Land, that part of Germany bordering the Elbe between Hamburg and Cuxhaven, home to beautiful half timbered small towns and villages with organs in profusion, many by the great Schnitger himself. Of all the instruments I played during that weekend the one at Steinkirchen, which had just been restored by Rudolph von Beckerath, was my favourite, and during the last

days of the same year, and the first days of 1950, I was back there making recordings for the B.B.C._ the first of many such journeys I was to make all over Europe during the next thirty years. Bach's Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor, [see page 6], was recorded at this time by the B.B.C., and was heard by Walter Legge, then at the peak of his career, was acquired and released by E.M.I. The Steinkirchen recordings heard here were made in between January 1950 and February 1952, with no play back facilities nor possibility of editing; I have in fact never heard the bulk of these recordings until recently, an event which came as a severe shock_ it seemed inconceivable that my ideas on the music could have changed so much over the years !

Not that I think this is a matter for concern. In masterclasses in America I frequently encountered students who had been exposed to European visitors of the type that maintains there is only one correct way to play anything, a philosophy which is the basis of the authenticity craze currently bedevilling the performance of music written more than a hundred years ago. The exercise of a modicum of imagination usually reveals several possible interpretations of a piece of music which would not violate the canons of seventeenth and eighteenth century manuals of performance practice.

My devotion to these old organs has nothing to do with authenticity. It is due simply to the fact that for the first time I was able to hear what was written on the page. Listen on this disc to the inner parts in the fugues _ the lightly blown pipes sing and the textures are transparent. Moreover the over-fast non legato playing which was just about the only way to achieve any sensation of movement in a Bach allegro on a typical English organ was rendered unnecessary. The prompt speech of the un-nicked pipes of the old organs combined with mechanical key action provided control of nuances of phrasing and articulation which no amount of cajoling could conjure from the organs with which I had grown up.

The organ at Steinkirchen offered even greater hazards to the security of one's technique, especially for a player reared on the comfort of radiating and concave pedalboards. Its very wide, straight and seemingly convex pedalboard was bad enough, but worse, by far, the position of the unadjustable bench, which left me forever struggling not to fall forward and bang my head on the music desk.

Moreover the recordings were made at the beginning of the year, and we were on the point of abandoning the project in the unheated church when the commanding officer of the occupying British army somehow procured some coal, and not only saved the day for us, but gave the village congregation their first warm service for a very long time.

Winifred Roberts, Geraint Jones's wife remembers their trips to Steinkirchen

My husband, Geraint Jones was invited to go to Germany after the 1939-45 war to see some of their great baroque organs. This had been a very exciting expedition for him and the quality of their sound affected him and influenced him for the rest of his life, particularly in his interpretation of Bach.

I was very much looking forward to going to Steinkirchen in North Germany in

December 1949, the first of a number of trips, where Geraint was going to record on the Baroque organ there. It was just before Christmas and the village was celebrating with a concert of Christmas music in the village church, performed by the villagers, which was excellent. Little lights decorated Christmas trees and wreaths of evergreen and red berried holly were hung on front doors.

The first day of recording was almost a disaster. Geraint's legs were long, and when he sat at the low console on a low bench, his knees came up to his chin! Eventually he was able to overcome this and his legs started to run up and down the pedalboard. I was then able to hear this magnificent instrument. Now a days people can easily hear Baroque type organs, but I had never heard such a sound before, the brilliance and strength and also the beguiling tenderness with everything else in between. I could then understand Geraint's love affair with Steinkirchen, and other baroque instruments that subsequently I got to know. He used to say that he would like to be the village organist there so he could play it every day. He also had much pleasure in playing other great Baroque organs, some that are known to have been played by Bach himself. Geraint enjoyed many other Southern German organs, including Ottobeuran which was another great favourite.

When Geraint was very ill in the last few years of his life some very dear friends of many years, drove him to the great Baroque organs he had played in Germany, Spain, Portugal, Holland etc. and of course Steinkirchen and I think this one gave him the greatest pleasure of all.

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Geraint Jones 1917-1998 by Catherine Ennis

This CD will illustrate the artistry of Geraint Jones better than any explanatory note, but here are set down a few facts about his life and career.

Born 16th May 1917, the son of a Welsh Minister, Geraint Jones was sent as a young student to the Royal Academy of Music. There he studied with G.D. Cunningham, one of the legendary virtuosos of his day. Subsequently, he played in the wartime National Gallery concert series, and fell under the spell of the repertoire he heard in the concerts - the "core" classics composed for piano, voice or chamber ensemble. From that point his career diversified into recording, conducting and chamber music, as ways of becoming closely involved with repertoire which, sadly, music of his own instrument could rarely equal in stature. As a producer in the recording industry, Geraint Jones was adopted by the well-established E.M.I. machine, with Walter Legge particularly fulsome in support; this relationship led to some notable conducting work, both in concert and on record. Geraint Jones was asked to prepare a new performing edition for a production of Purcell's "Dido and Aeneas" at Bernard Miles's Mermaid Theatre with Kirsten Flagstad and Thomas Hemsley in the title roles. This was recorded by E.M.I. and sold more than any other classical record of its time, and earned Geraint international conducting engagements galore, in addition to the many recitals abroad which had followed his performances of Bach's complete organ works in London during 1945-6. At home too, he was regularly to be heard conducting

choral and orchestral works for the B.B.C. Third Programme, mostly of work from the Baroque period, and as a harpsichordist was regularly giving concerts with his wife, the violinist Winifred Roberts.

Along with the fame which followed, there came requests to direct Music Festivals; this he did with dedication and great gusto, in such lovely venues as the Lake District and Salisbury. Latterly his skills as organist and Festival Director were combined in his fronting of the Manchester International Organ Festival and Competition, an ambitious project at which Geraint worked tirelessly despite an adverse economic and difficult political situation. It is a tribute to his powers of diplomacy that the Festival spanned most of the decade of the 1980s.

Geraint found himself in demand too as an organ consultant: organs at the Royal Northern College of Music, at St. Marylebone / Royal Academy of Music, London, in Hong Kong and elsewhere have been objects of his quiet diplomacy and passionate enthusiasm.

As a conductor or virtuoso keyboardist, whether on harpsichord or organ, Geraint Jones travelled the world repeatedly throughout his career. It is possible however that his most influential organ tour was the one near to home, undertaken at the British Government's request after the Second World War. As a result of that concert tour to Germany, English audiences heard German Classical organs for the first time. For us now to imagine the impact of these recordings is difficult; when you consider that the national press discussed them as a news item, gives some idea of their importance. It wasn't just the organs which caused the stir, but also the sensitive registrations, brilliant performances, and the choice of programme which combined to cause the sensation. To hear Liszt played on an instrument other than one of the English Cathedral tradition; to hear Bach played on a more or less contemporary instrument; these were revolutionary experiences to scholars and music-lovers alike, and did much to enlighten the nascent Early Music movement and in the organ-building world, the "Orgelbewegung".

A serious car crash in 1960 restricted the organ-playing side of Geraint's career quite considerably. It is interesting to speculate on how it might have developed, as he never lost his love for the instrument and his knowledge of how to make it speak; but possibly the fashion of the time was against those of such musical common sense as he, and it is only now, as these recordings are re-released, that we can again appreciate his highly personal style as being, above all, musical, by which I mean, being true to the spirit and heart of the music.

Throughout his career, Geraint Jones poured much of his considerable energy into helping young artists. Whether as a Professor at the Royal Academy of Music, as Director of the Kirckman Concert Society or as the most generous and energetic teacher, his influence and kindness assisted many now established artists. He served on numerous Arts Council panels to audition young musicians for various awards; as Chairman of the Eric Thompson Trust, he presided over one of the only Charities solely dedicated to helping young organists.

Even into his eighty-first year, these activities continued apace up to his death on 3rd May 1998. As the CD will show, the English music scene was fortunate to have

such a wise and able artist with such a wealth of experience which he shared so readily with the rest of us.

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