

St. Mary's Hemel Hempstead

Lunchtime Concert

Tuesday 8th February 2011

Simon Pusey's stylish lunchtime recital provided us with contrasts on two levels. To begin with this versatile musician performed, at different points in the programme, on two instruments differing the one from the other as much in volume as in tone. The clavichord, boasting an ancient pedigree, produces a gentle sound as remote as its origins. This compelled Simon to bring his audience out of the pews and to form a close circle round him in front of the choir stalls as he played. For me this was an advantage. As a musical layman I was able to stare, fascinated, at the strange hieroglyphs on the open score in front of him, and to marvel at the facile skill with which he transformed these into delightful sound. In this mode we all revelled in the music of John Bull (*Walsingham*) and J. S. Bach (two items from *The Well-Tempered Clavier*).

After the clavichord Simon elevated (literally) to the organ, the commanding, sonorous tones of which were quite appropriate for Bach's *Prelude and Fugue in G major*. But even here the mood changed with Pietro Yon's *Humoresque L'Organo Primitivo* a fascinating piece which made the organ speak with rapid ethereal trills, eschewing the base pedals.

The second of the two levels of contrast involved the composers. Both John Bull and, especially, Bach, were prolific, so much so that, in Bach's case, it has been estimated that it would take a lifetime for an ordinary mortal just to copy out the master's published work. However the number of Yon's works published and/or performed could be counted on the fingers of one hand – an Italian, he was too busy being a much sought-after organist in the United States!

A final word – with this recital Simon Pusey proved yet again that he can make music as well as encourage it in others. This concert was a fine display of his outstanding keyboard skills.