
The Sheldonian Theatre
Gala Organ Concert
May 29th 1999
The Yves Guihannec Foundation

Yves Guihannec 1946 - 1992

YVES GUIHANNEC

Jean-François Revel, in the oration he delivered at Yves' funeral, spoke of the public man; of his rare elegance, the striking originality of his intellect, the liveliness and charm of his conversation. He emphasised, rightly, the originality of his thoughts and the courage he had to express them; his independence of spirit, his utter professionalism and the integrity that implied.

Yves Guihannec was a Normalien of the Rue d'Ulm and Agrégé en Lettres Classiques. He came to Worcester College in 1969 to study with Dr Keith Gore. If England did not create his qualities of independence, courage and a healthy disrespect for authority, it very much nurtured them. Our scepticism of dogma, our natural distrust of those in power, our insistence on tenacious cross-examination of public figures and our unwillingness to be fobbed off with elegant but meaningless phrases struck a sympathetic cord with him. In these qualities, France is still an underdeveloped country. For that reason, whether in his elegantly written column in *Le Point* or in his TV interviews, Yves created even more fear and consternation in public figures accustomed to journalistic deference and ineptitude, public figures whom he set upon with all the force of his redoubtable intellect and all his authority as a Normalien and a man who knew "tout Paris" on equal terms.

He had a great love of music, of architecture and of Oxford. He would have been delighted that his Foundation had been given the opportunity to donate the Bradford organ to the Sheldonian.

THE YVES GUIHANNEC FOUNDATION

The Foundation was established in 1992 in memory of the late Yves Guihannec. It is an English registered charity with unlimited charitable objects. The Foundation is a "money box" charity. It receives donations, largely from the friends of Yves, which enable grants to be made to active charities of which Yves would have approved. Apart from the tax reliefs available to all charities, it does not enjoy the benefit of any public funding.

The Foundation does not have any employees or premises of its own and has negligible overheads. While it does not engage in fundraising on its own account, it sometimes organises at its own cost fundraisers for other charities. On this occasion, funded by a grant by Key Haven Publications PLC, the Foundation is sponsoring the entire cost of the Gala, so that 100% of all donations will be divided between CRUSAID, the national AIDS fundraiser, and the University Orchestra.

Of the £450,000 which the Foundation has raised to date, the major beneficiaries have been Oxford University and CRUSAID. Grants have also been made to a number of other charities, largely medical and educational. As the Foundation has only limited funds available, which are ear-marked for specific projects, it regrets that it is not able to consider unsolicited requests for grants.

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The Yves Guihannec Foundation

Programme Notes

The programme I have chosen to play for this recital is made up of a number of links and connections, some across the centuries, others more immediate; wheels within wheels if you like.

It is **Bach** that is the beginning, the point of departure for this programme. When you think of preludes and fugues, you think of Johan Sebastian Bach as the greatest composer of Preludes and Fugues (particularly Fugues) that the world has ever seen, and the organ as the most satisfying instrument to hear them played on. And so, as we approach the year 2000 and with it the 250th anniversary of Bach's death, I have chosen the *Prelude and Fugue in G* BWV 541. Bach in G major is usually at his most exhilarating (eg the 3rd Brandenburg Concerto) and this is no exception. From the opening violin-like measures of the Prelude, the music drives forward with scarcely any let-up to the end of the fugue, the prelude being somewhat reminiscent of the kind of concerto-like Sinfonias that Bach often preferred his Cantatas with (eg Cantata 29 - itself a solo violin arrangement), and the Fugue bearing more than a passing similarity to the opening chorus of Cantata 21.

The Voluntary for Double Organ in D Minor is one of only six surviving organ solos of **Purcell.**

Although I knew that **Beethoven** was a more than competent organist (his practice instrument is still preserved), I did not become acquainted with the organ music until I was asked to record the Complete Works - in the end, not such a demanding task: Five Short Pieces, 2 Preludes which go through all the keys, a March and a short Fugue. However the *Adagio* (the first composed of the Five Short Pieces) is outstandingly beautiful and I have no hesitation in including it here.

Both **Felix Mendelssohn** (1809-1847) and Charles-Marie Widor (1845-1937) played a significant role in rescuing Bach's music from semi-oblivion: Mendelssohn in particular was tireless in his championing of Bach's St. Matthew Passion in performances all over Europe. But in England it was also his performances of Bach's organ works that proved revelatory, especially his performance of the Prelude and Fugue in A minor in St. Paul's Cathedral. It was not only the music itself, which was largely unknown in England at that time, but Mendelssohn's style of organ-playing too that influenced English organists and organ music throughout the nineteenth century. The *Allegro, Chorale & Fugue* is part of the Op. 65, written in 1844 and Mendelssohn died before he could revise it, but while it is thoroughly Mendelssohnian in style, the composer's admiration for Bach's music is present in every measure.

Charles-Marie Widor on the other hand was a composer whose own music finds no echo whatsoever in that of Bach, but, by being co-editor with Albert Schweitzer of the French edition of Bach's organ works, Widor played a considerable part in the prominence attached to Bach's music by French organists to this day. Widor composed a wide range of music, several stageworks, including a successful opera *Les Pecheurs de Saint-Jean,* symphonies, a piano concerto and a violin concerto, but he is now primarily remembered for his organ symphonies. The Toccata at the end of the 5th Symphony is known the world over, but the first movement is possibly the finest of Widor's symphonic movements, with a great variety of texture and contrasting moods contained in one structure. It consists of a set of variations, beginning gently at first, but, as with many French organ works, gradually gaining momentum to a final powerful coda on the full organ.

Joseph Jongen (1873 - 1953) lived during the war in the town where I grew up: Bournemouth. Like Widor, he composed a wide variety of music, yet destroyed all but 137 of his pieces. What remains include a symphony, several concertos, chamber music, songs and choral pieces and 28 organ works, of which two are deservedly popular: the spectacular *Sinfonie Concertante* for organ and orchestra and the slight but charming *Chant de Mai.*

Selected Recordings:

Symphony No 5: Widor - Carillon de Westminster: Vierne
Simone Preston at the organ of Westminster Abbey 1984 Deutsche Gramophon: CD 413 438-2

Simon Preston

Programme

Orchestra

George Frideric Handel 1685 - 1759

Music for the Royal Fireworks

Organ Solo - The Willis Specification

Johann Sebastian Bach 1685 - 1750

Prelude & Fugue in G major BWV 541

Organ Solo - The Father Smith Specification

Henry Purcell 1659 - 1695

Voluntary for Double Organ in D Minor Z 719

Organ Solo - The Willis Specification

Ludwig van Beethoven 1770 - 1827

Adagio in F WoO 33/1

Felix Mendelssohn 1809 - 1847

Allegro, Chorale & Fugue Op 65

INTERVAL (20 minutes)

Organ Solo - The Cavaillé-Col Specification

Charles-Marie Widor 1844 - 1937

Allegro Vivace from Symphony No 5 in F minor, Op 42 No 1

Organ - The Cavaillé-Col Specification and Orchestra

Joseph Jongen 1873 - 1953

Sinfonie Concertante for Organ & Orchestra Op 81

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Organist Simon Preston

The Oxford University Orchestra

Conductor Sir Roger Norrington

The Yves Guihannec Foundation

The Organs of the Sheldonian Theatre

Although there are to be found amongst Sir Christopher Wren's drawings at All Souls designs for organ cases, the Theatre was built organ-less. Wren's views on the English organs of his day are well known: "a box of whistles". In 1671 Bernard Smith built a one-manual five-stop organ. When this organ was in 1725 offered to St Peter in the East (now the library of Saint Edmund Hall) it was at first refused on the grounds that "to place an old cupboard there would be a disgrace to their church. " From 1726 to 1877 the Theatre had a Harris organ of one manual without pedals. The opinion of Henry Willis, the great Victorian organ builder was that it was "worthless" .

In 1877, Willis installed a three-manual High Victorian, romantic organ. Its best feature was the organ case, designed by T.G. Jackson, which remains to this day, minus the two side wings which Jackson provided under protest. One huge advantage of the installation of the Bradford digital organ is that the case has been preserved without alteration, which would scarcely have been possible if a new pipe organ had been constructed. Willis' organ was rebuilt in 1928 as a "Diapason Organ". Lacking any reed stop, such as the oboe, clarinet, trumpet or tuba, and decidedly thin on the thrilling upper-work, it must have been boring beyond measure and would have appealed only to those of a low-church tendency who liked a "mellow" sound. In 1963, when the baroque influence was already being felt in Oxford, the Willis Organ was once again rebuilt, by Harrison and Harrison Ltd of Durham. While it remained basically a romantic organ, with a very English Swell division, several baroque stops were added, especially to the Choir division. The result was much better than one might have expected from this mesalliance.

For some time after the war, virtually all of the organs of Oxford were of the Romantic school and irredeemably English. They produced a bland, unison "pious" sound by the use of unrelieved ranks of foundation flue stops, predominantly of unison pitch. There was very little upper work, especially the so-called "mutation" stops which add tone colour and can provide an exhilarating effect as they clash with the natural harmonics of the foundation stops. Colourful reeds were thin on the ground, especially true chorus reeds.

By contrast, the North European baroque organ was, by 1700 when J.S. Bach was composing, aeons ahead of the English organs of the mid-twentieth century. It was ideal for performing contrapuntal music and was also much better at more mundane tasks. Although by the mid-nineteenth century, Mendelssohn had managed to secure that more English organs were built with an adequate compass for playing Bach, it was not until the second half of this century that the English became better educated about organs. Baroque organs were introduced into Queen's and Merton in the 1960's. Nowadays, there are very many baroque organs in Oxford. Perhaps too many.

A magnificent and highly original proposal which emanated from certain Oxford musicians escaped the trap of recommending for the Sheldonian yet another baroque organ. The proposal was to build an organ of a late seventeenth century English type such as might have been included in the Theatre around the time of its completion. This organ would have had the advantage of authenticity. Listeners could imagine that they were back in the seventeenth century - a sort of musical Disney World. Such an instrument would necessarily have had its drawbacks. It would not have been capable of reproducing the new-fangled music of the era, such as the works of J.S. Bach. In fact, it would have been capable of reproducing very little beyond Anglican chants and voluntaries for manuals only. The expense would have been very considerable. And therein lay a major problem. The Philistine world would have considered it madness to spend so much on producing a monument to English backwardness in organ building and musical taste. Alas, we live in a Philistine world. People who have money do not generally part with it unless they consider they have good reason. Although the occasional exception might exist, given that such persons and their money are soon parted and given the sheer number of projects competing for their funds, the chance of finding a suitable private benefactor was remote indeed.

An alternative was to look to University funds. The University was in a difficulty. It had launched an appeal for donations to sustain its basic teaching and research. While there could be no better use to which its funds could be put than the seventeenth century organ, that might not be understood by potential donors, those very same Philistines. For it is a sad fact of life that it is precisely those who are so careful to ensure that they obtain value for money who finish up with large quantities of it and who tend to apply the same strict criteria in spending it as they did in making it.

The only remaining possibility was public funds, in effect, the involuntary contributions of the working men and women of this country. There was a marvellous precedent in the Royal Opera House, so generously supported by the Arts Council. Alas, public money no longer came so easily as it had in the 1980's.

The next suggestion was, predictably, to install a baroque organ, which would at least have been capable of playing a reasonable part of the repertoire. Whether we needed yet another such organ in Oxford was perhaps doubtful. Difficulties would have arisen with the Jackson case, which was considered unsuitable. The problem of funding remained unsolved.

At this point, the attention of Jeffrey Hackney, the Chairman of the Curators, was drawn to the Bradford organ, which, in terms of both cost and space, seemed the ideal solution. After some difficult years, we now have installed an example, which is already three organs in one. It has a Willis specification, producing the traditional English cathedral organ sound, a bigger and better version of the Sheldonian Willis. It has an eighteenth century Father Smith specification, tuned in an uneven temperament and at a low pitch, giving an authentic pre-industrial revolution sound. It has a large French romantic specification modelled on that of Aristide Cavaillé-Coll, the like of which is not to be found in Oxford and the thrilling effect of which will be heard in the second part of the programme. The fourth specification, now in preparation, is based on a baroque organ by Silbermann, such as Bach would have played. A fifth planned specification is a heavy German romantic organ, completely unrepresented in Oxford. Understandably.

NO THANKS ARE DUE TO

Her Majesty's Commissioners of Customs and Excise

UK fiscal laws are in general geared to promoting charity. The income tax, corporation tax, capital gains tax, inheritance tax and stamp duty codes contain express exemptions from tax for *bona fide* charities. Recent Tory governments extended the tax advantages and New Labour has shown no inclination to abolish them. They make perfect sense in a world where it is realised that the State cannot be a universal provider and that private initiative, channelled through registered charities, must supplement the fruits of public expenditure and can often do so more efficiently. VAT is a glaring exception. The VAT inspector demands of The Yves Guihannec Foundation an additional 17.5 % of the cost of constructing the Sheldonian organ and further requires that irrecoverable value added tax be paid on the vatable costs of this Gala. What an incentive to charitable donation!

Why this glaring discrepancy of treatment? The answer is that VAT is not a home-grown English tax but an alien tax, foisted on us by the European Community as a condition of joining the common market. In England, there has since the Reformation been a long and noble tradition of charitable giving by individuals, which tradition is nurtured and fostered by our tax laws. While that tradition has thrived in the more anglicised of our former possessions, particularly the USA, the Continental experience is very different. Especially in those countries which have long since been "cleansed" of the Protestant ethic, the prevailing ethos is one of niggardliness to strangers. In these states, civil and fiscal laws alike deter or positively prohibit the gifting of assets outside the immediate family. For example, a French resident who wishes to make a donation of any size to charity will find, assuming it is not prohibited as a fraud on his heirs, that he not only obtains no tax relief but has to pay a 60% gift tax! The cost to an individual of commissioning for charity goods costing £100,000 net of VAT is £70,500 in England and £300,000 in France.

Given that it is a European tax, it is thus not surprising that the VAT code contains but a few exiguous exemptions and reliefs for charities on a piece-meal basis. It is law made for countries of Europe whose values have little in common with our own, yet which we in the United Kingdom are expected to adopt. Of course, were the Commissioners the taxing authority of some state characterised by cant and corruption, they would simply turn a blind eye, particularly where the national heritage was concerned. We in England regard rules as there to be obeyed and are thus penalised for our honesty and integrity.

It is no accident that The Yves Guihannec Foundation is established under the laws of England, is resident only in the United Kingdom and has no fiscal presence in the rest of Europe.

From The Organ Builder

The new organ in the Sheldonian Theatre has no pipes. It is installed alongside the previous organ (by Willis), a conventional pipe organ but one with a spotted history and one that had always been considered as being 'an instrument never likely to head a list of instruments to be preserved at all cost'. Suggestions had been made to replace the instrument with an all new mechanical organ, but the University authorities balked at the cost. They were persuaded by the fact that a private donor, a past Fellow of an Oxford College and himself the owner of a large 4-manual organ by the same manufacturer, could give an organ to the University which would serve the multi-faceted role in the Sheldonian Theatre better than any pipe organ.

The internationally acclaimed recitalist, Simon Preston, was appointed as Adviser, and, again, with the knowledge of the variety of uses the instrument would be put to within the Sheldonian, elected that the instrument replicate not one but several historic organs, covering several genres of organ building in a single instrument. He was particularly anxious that this instrument should not simply be 'yet another pipeless organ', perhaps bigger or better than previous ones, but that it should exploit to the full those features that were undeniably possible with a digital organ and which were impossible with a pipe organ. Nor should it simply be a conventional pipe organ look-alike. He was particularly anxious that the opportunity should be seized to create an instrument which exploited modern technology to the full. He set a very taxing brief.

Because of the differing generic requirements of organs across different cultures, it was necessary to develop an entirely new form of stop control, which in itself has required a vast amount of research and development, in part funded by a DTI grant. The result is a form of stop control which is both convenient to use, organist friendly, and yet is capable of adapting itself to the awe inspiring requirement that the instrument replicates different historical organs with different specifications with different individual sounds stop by stop, differing temperaments and pitches, registrational aids and coupling etc. Even the acoustic ambience associated with the host building is replicated and changes from specification to specification.

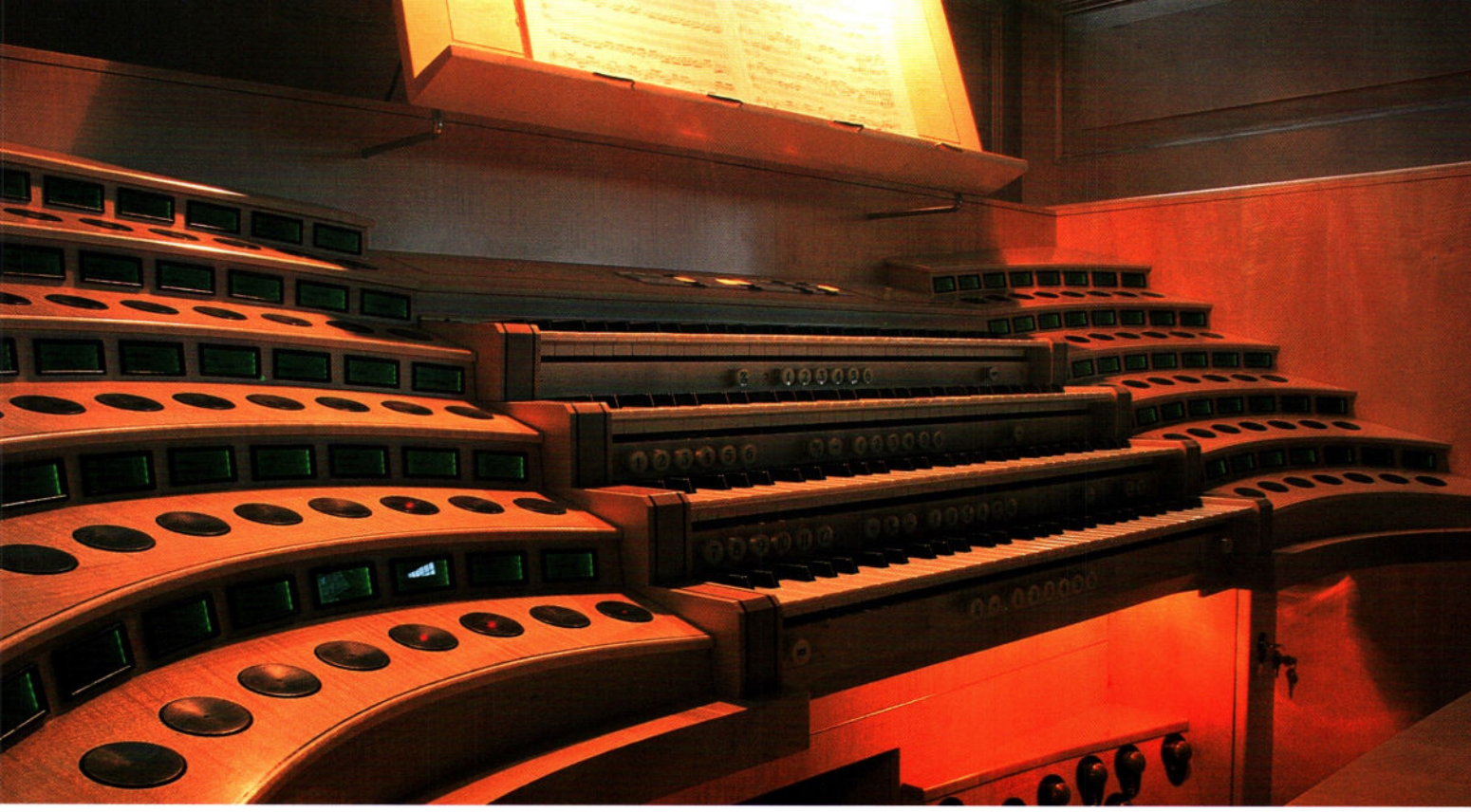
The organ is to be 'loaded' with four specifications initially, but has the capacity of encompassing more at some later stage.

The new organ in the Sheldonian Theatre employs the Bradford system, a generic expression used to describe digital organs which use as their basis for sound generation a system devised by the University of Bradford, and which was first licensed by the British Technology Group. Over the years the system has had incorporated into its architecture many new developments and the current generation of the Bradford system uses a technology which has become a world leader in that it uses the best features of both sampled sound technology (used by a great many other systems), and additive synthesised sound, which was previously a unique feature of earlier Bradford systems. The technology remains unique amongst other systems in that it recreates pure new wave forms uncluttered with spurious sound picked up as part of a recording process. Coupled with this, the system enables the use of a huge number of generators to be employed at any one time, which in turn are addressed across a greater than usual number of tone forming channels covering the entire spectrum of the characteristically rich sound of a pipe organ.

The organ initialises with the specifications of the Willis organ in Salisbury Cathedral, chosen because it is a fine example of an instrument where the original pipe work has been preserved in its original condition. The second is the instrument in Pembroke College, Cambridge, which contains a high proportion of original Father Smith pipe work. The third is the organ in Ste. Clotilde, a Cavaillé-Coll specification.

Richard Wood

J Wood & Sons Ltd



The organ console

Reproduced by courtesy of Graham Topping 01865 778874

From the University of Bradford Microcomputer Music Research Unit

Dr. Peter Comerford and his colleagues in the Microcomputer Music Research Unit (MMRU), in the School and Computing and Mathematics at the University of Bradford, designed and developed the Bradford system of sound synthesis, with funding from the University, the British Technology Group and the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council.

The system is unique in the way in which it uses additive synthesis to build up sound from basic sonic elements called sinewaves. This gives it flexibility in changing complex sounds to suit different acoustic environments and to accommodate requirements of individual users. The Sheldonian instrument uses the most recent generation of the system, known as Bradford Enhanced Synthesis Technology (BEST), which allows every sinewave component in every waveform to have independent, separately controllable amplitude and frequency profiles during its start period. What happens during the start period of a musical sound has a profound effect upon the perception of the sound as a whole.

The system is modular, so it is possible to create a large degree of ensemble with many independent sources sounding together.

The MMRU, who were commissioned to set up and voice the sound data for the Sheldonian instrument, have visited the three historic organs replicated so far, for study and recording sessions, and are grateful to have been afforded every facility by the authorities in these locations. The aim has been not to copy these organs but to interpret their varied characters through a different medium in a different acoustic. After off-site structuring of the data, a number of voicing sessions took place on site at the Sheldonian Theatre, often at night to avoid the noise from surrounding construction work. These sessions were made possible by the willing co-operation of the Sheldonian staff.

The Sheldonian instrument was installed by J. Wood and Sons Ltd of Bradford, who commissioned the unique console (from John Barratt) and stop controls (from Richard Watts Associates) to take account of the 4 specifications. The instrument uses loudspeakers designed for use with BEST by Magnum Acoustics; there are 22 manual cabinets, each with 2 drivers and 4 multi-directional tweeters, and 4 sub cabinets for handling very low frequencies. BEST system hardware was engineered for production by Wyvern Classical Organs of Bideford.

Peter Comerford

University of Bradford

Specification II

Based on Father Smith Organ, Pembroke College, Cambridge

Pedal

Bourdon 16'
Principal 8'
Fifteenth 4'
Mixture IV
Bass Schawm 16'
Trumpet 8'

Great

Open Diapason 8'
Stopped Diapason 8'
Principal 4'
Tierce 1 3/5'
Twelfth 2 2/3'
Recorder 2'
Furniture IV
Cornet V
Trumpet 8'

Chaire

Stopped Diapason 8'
Principal 4'
Nason 4'
Fifteenth 2'
Cymbal III
Vox Humana 8'
Tremulant

Couplers

Chaire to Pedal
Chaire to Great
Great to Pedal
Great & Pedal Pistons

A = 415

Specification III

Based on Cavaillé-Coll at Sainte Clotilde, Paris 7ème

Pédale

Soubasse 32'
Contrebasse 16'
Soubasse 16'
Flûte 8'
Basse 8'
Prestant 4'
Flûte 4'
Doublette 2'
Basson 16'
Bombarde 16'
Trompette 8'
Clarion 4'

Positif

Bourdon 16'
Montre 8'
Flûte Harmonique 8'
Bourdon 8'
Salicional 8'
Flûte 4'
Quinte 2' 2/3
Doublette 2'
Tierce 1' 3/5
Larigot 1' 1/3
Picolo 1'
Plein Jeu III-VI
Trompette 8'
Clarion 4'
Clarinette 8'

Grand Orgue

Montre 16'
Bourdon 16'
Montre 8'
Flûte Harmonique 8'
Bourdon 8'
Viole de Gambe 8'
Prestant 4'
Flûte 4'
Quinte 2' 2/3
Doublette 2'
Plein Jeu VII
Bombarde 16'
Trompette 8'
Clarion 4'
Cornet V

Récit Expressif

Quintaton 16'
Flûte Harmonique 8'
Bourdon 8'
Viole de Gambe 8'
Voix Céleste 8'
Principal Italien 4'
Flûte 4'
Nasard 2' 2/3
Octavin 2'
Plein Jeu IV
Voix Humaine 8'
Basson-Hautbois 8'
Bombarde 16'
Trompette 8'
Clarion 4'
Trémolo Récit

Couplers

Récit Expressif to G.O
Positif to Grand Orgue
Pédale to Grand Orgue
Récit Expressif to Positif
Positif to Pédale
Récit Expressif Sub
Récit Expressif Super
Récit Expressive to Pédale
G.O & Pedal Pistons

A = 444

The Bradford Sheldonian Organ

Specification I

Based on the Willis Organ in Salisbury Cathedral

Pedal

Double Open Diapason 32'
Open Bass 16'
Open Diapason I 16'
Open Diapason II 16'
Violone 16'
Boardon 16'
Lieblich Gedackt 16'
Octave 8'
Viola 8'
Flute 8'
Octave Viola 4'
Octave Flute 4'
Mixture IV
Contra Posaune 32'
Ophideide 16'
Clarion 8'

Solo

Violin Cello 8'
Cello Celestes 8'
Flute Harmonique 8'
Flute harmonique 4'
Cor Anglais 16'
Clarinet 8'
Orchestral Oboe 8'
Tremulant
Tuba 8'
Tuba Clarion 4'

Swell

Contra Gamba 16'
Open Diapason 8'
Lieblich Gedackt 8'
Viola de Gamba 8'
Vox Angelica 8'
Octave 4'
Flute Harmonique 4'
Super Octave 2'
Mixture III
Vox Humana 8'
Hautboy 8'
Contra Fagotto 16'
Trompette 8'
Clarion 4'
Tremulant

Great

Double Open Diapason 16'
Open Diapason I 8'
Open Diapason II 8'
Claribel Flute 8'
Stopped Diapason 8'
Principal I 4'
Principal II 4'
Flute Couverte 4'
Twelfth 2 2/3'
Fifteenth 2'
Mixture IV
Trombone 16'
Trumpet 8'
Clarion 4'

Choir

Lieblich Gedackt 16'
Open Diapason 8'
Flute Harmonique 8'
Lieblich Gedackt 8'
Salicional 8'
Gemshorn 4'
Flute Harmonique 4'
Lieblich Gedackt 4'
Nazard 2 2/3'
Flageolet 2'
Tierce 1 3/5'
Trumpet 8'
Tremulant

Couplers

Solo to Choir
Swell to Choir
Choir to Pedal
Solo to Great
Swell to Great
Choir to Great
Great to Pedal
Swell Sub Octave 16'
Swell Super Octave 4'
Solo to Swell
Swell to Pedal
Great to Solo
Solo to Pedal
Great & Pedal Pistons

A = 442