



## Organ Voluntaries in Lockdown

'It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single organist in possession of a virtual organ, must be in want of an online service to accompany,' as Jane Austen never got round to saying. I have a 3-manual Dutch house organ (*left*) with Hauptwerk software. Hauptwerk (an English invention) describes itself as 'state-of-the-art virtual instrument software ... bringing the world's best pipe organs within reach of musicians everywhere'. It's not lying. Just as you can nowadays get convincing recordings on your computer, so also you can interact with every note of every pipe on gorgeous historic (and modern) organs from all over the world, thanks to this software, and play them at home as if you were there in the flesh with them in Germany or France or Holland or wherever .... I'm sure you can imagine the joy this affords the humble organist.

So in these times of trouble, when we're all avoiding other people (something organists do a lot anyway, tucked away in organ lofts as they usually are) the fact that Hauptwerk organs have a built-in recording facility has the capacity to turn the organist into a Key Worker! You can record what you're playing on to the organ's own computer, and then you transfer it to a USB stick, get your husband (optional extra) to compress the file into something that won't blow up Stephen or Jeff's computers, and send it out to the waiting world .....

How do I choose my voluntaries, you may ask? Well, I've been an organist for an awfully long time, during which I have amassed an enormous repertoire of Suitable Music for Every Sunday in the Year. Trinity? Messiaen's *'Le Mystère de la Sainte-Trinité'* speaks for itself; and Bach's *'St Ann'* Fugue is in three parts, each representing a person of the Trinity. Pentecost? *'Come Holy Ghost, our souls inspire'* is an old plainsong hymn on which every composer worth his salt has written a chorale prelude (i.e. a piece based on every line of the hymn and illustrating its words). Spring in the air? I chose Jongen's *'Chant de Mai'*. Easter? Poppelwell wrote a nifty number on *'Jesus Christ is risen today'*. And so it goes on. Now we're in the green, pleasant and less structured land of the Sundays after Trinity, I can give other favourite pieces an outing – and stand by for a touch of harpsichord, because I also have a splendid German 2-manual Baroque instrument on Mr Organ, and Bach's Italian Concerto is coming up.

What I cannot claim credit for, however, are the superb and witty videos and pictures that Stephen Bartlet-Jones, our master editor, has found for each voluntary. Every week I wonder how he'll have interpreted my pieces. Football-playing lambs on Easter Day? Coral reefs with *'Chant de Mai'*? Polar bear cubs with a Bach fugue? His brilliant 'finds' take the music to a quite different level – and, I'm sure, make ours unique among the virtual services being produced during lockdown!

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