

Oundle for Organists 2015

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This July, I was fortunate to attend the Oundle for Organists Summer School for a week based at the historic Oundle School near Peterborough.



There were over 30 young organists aged 13-24, some from abroad, and a host of brilliant tutors, all well-known organists, to inspire us. The week is part of the Oundle International Festival & we were able to attend numerous recitals & concerts during the week given by our tutors & guests.

An outstanding event was the recital given by Christian Wilson in the School Chapel, which involved the students forming a scratch choir to sing for the premiere of a piece by Nico Muhly.

However, we were mainly there to play in small tutor groups & immediately set to work moving around 9 organs in Oundle & surrounding villages. We had each prepared pieces to work on with the tutors & it was fascinating listening to other students play & take on board the tutors' comments. We had such a wide range of repertoire & skills amongst us that it was fascinating getting to know each other.

We spent a fantastic day in Cambridge playing organs in Trinity, Queen's, Trinity Hall & Jesus Colleges & later in the week went in smaller groups to play in Peterborough Cathedral, only days before the instrument was removed to be re-pitched.

One of the focuses for this year's course was on improvisation, and on the morning after attending a thrilling late night recital by the world renowned Parisian organist, Frédéric Blanc, we took part in an informative workshop on the French style of organ improvisation.

The course took another original turn when we were given an insight into the rather private process of learning a new piece, as Stephen Farr began work on a new piece by Judith Bingham (ahead of a recording) before our eyes, explaining his mental and physical processes as he went along.



Throughout the week, we prepared to play & sing for two events on the last day, Sunday. In the morning, a Festival Eucharist held in the historic Fotheringhay Church and a final recital in the school chapel in the afternoon, which I was invited to perform in. I played "Bluesday" by Iain Farrington, which provided a rather jazzy contrast in the programme! Martin & Mary came to join us for this.

It was an amazing & exhausting week both socially & musically; a brilliant time spent with organists my own age. I am in touch with many of them & hope to see them at future events. It has really inspired me to continue working hard on my technique & explore new areas of repertoire.

I played 15 organs of all styles but it is great to be home at All Saints.