

JULY 2024

REPORT AND PICTURES

ORGAN & CHOIR TOUR TO BERLIN

**KINDLY SUPPORTED BY
THE CATHEDRAL MUSIC TRUST
THE PILLING TRUST
AND MANY GENEROUS SUPPORTERS**





**SAUL STEPHEN ANDREW GEORGE
GEORGE PETER CONNOR PETER JOHN
NAOMI STEWART SACHA KATIE SARAH SARAH
ABCAROL ALEX SU HELENE ELISE**

**“SUCH OPPORTUNITIES TO TAKE A PIECE OF OUR
COMMUNITY OUT INTO THE WORLD ARE EXTREMELY
IMPORTANT, ...” ELISE**



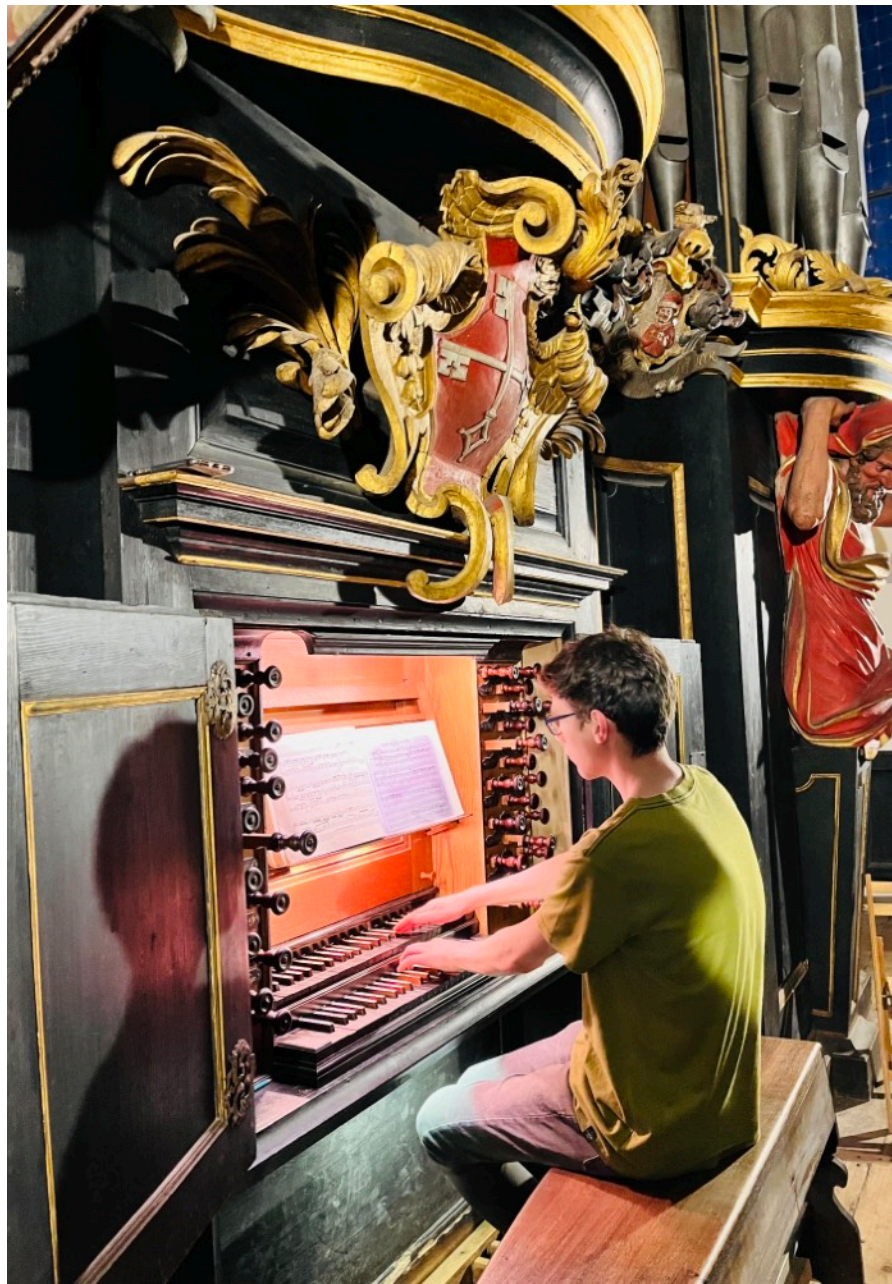
TRAVELING ABROAD, TO MAKE MUSIC



Our tour started on Tuesday the 24th of July, when Organ Scholars George Moloney, Stephen Aldridge, former Organ Scholar Saul Knights and DoM Alexander Rebetge set off to visit and play historic and renowned organs around the German capital. We were kindly accompanied by Helen and John Lacy, Nena Adrienne, and Elise Morton. After arriving and dropping our luggage at the hotel we immediately set off to visit Brandenburg Cathedral with its 301 year old instrument, built by Joachim Wagner.

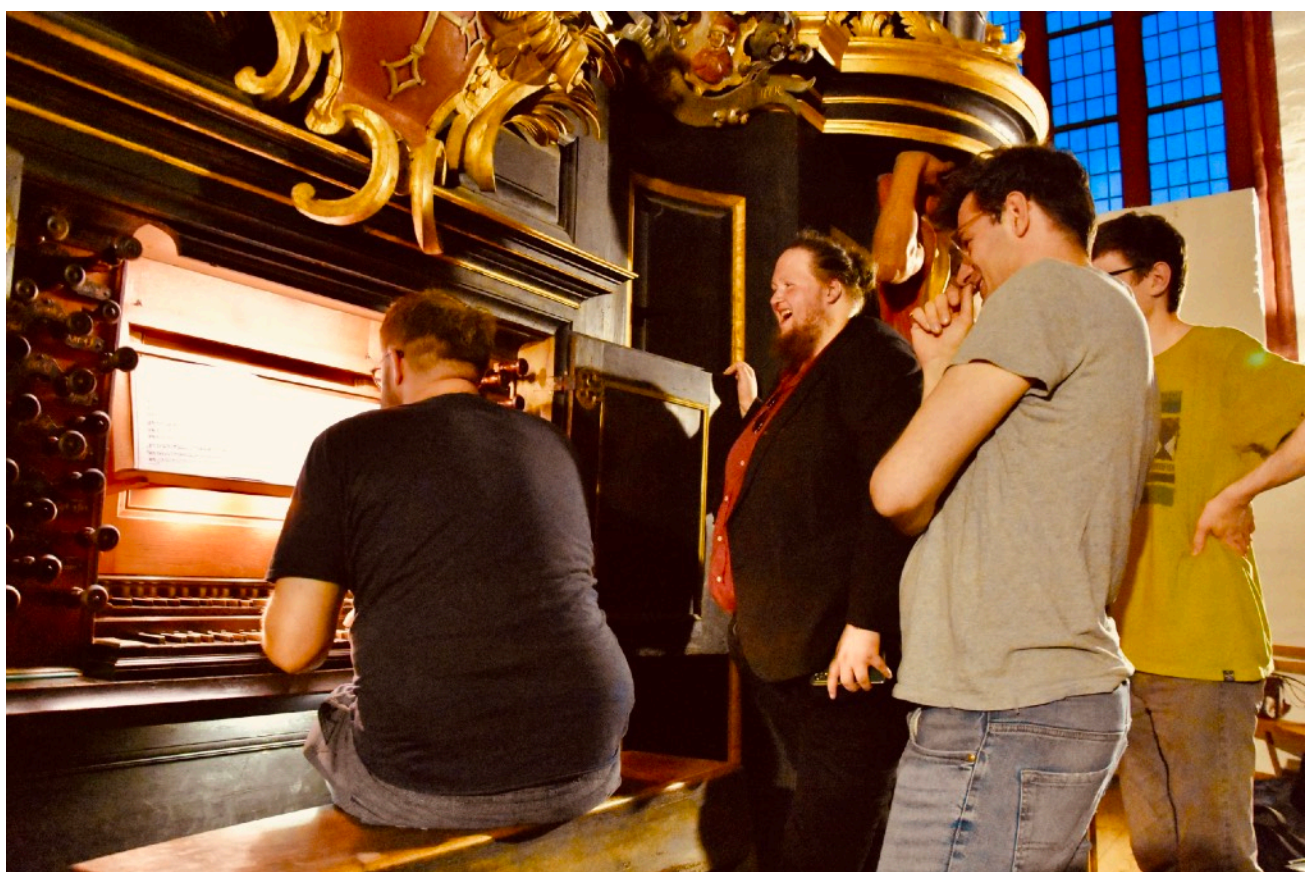
PLAYING ON RENOWNED HISTORIC INSTRUMENTS

Being able to play and hear these special instruments is a unique experience and provides insight into the visions of sound quality of the Baroque era. Each stop has a distinct character, that unifies to a colourful organ sound.





During 300 years of organ building, the architecture of the “queen of instruments”, as Mozart called the organ, has changed dramatically. This comes with its own challenges: straight pedalboards with missing notes, heavier touch to the keys, manuals and pedal not lining up, and many more; very much to our amusement.



The second day, Wednesday took us first to the church where we were going to perform on Sunday evening. Here we had the opportunity set up the registrations ahead of the rehearsals on Saturday. Afterwards we had time for some sightseeing, before meeting at the evangelische Kirche Zur frohen Botschaft in Berlin Karlshorst. This small church on the outskirts of Berlin is home to yet another Wagner Organ, which has an important and special history.



“IT WAS A GENUINELY MOVING EXPERIENCE TO HEAR, TOUCH AND FEEL SUCH HISTORICAL INSTRUMENTS [...] AND ONE WHICH GAVE ME A GREATER PERSPECTIVE ON THE TECHNICALITIES OF THE MUSIC I LOVE PLAYING.” SAUL



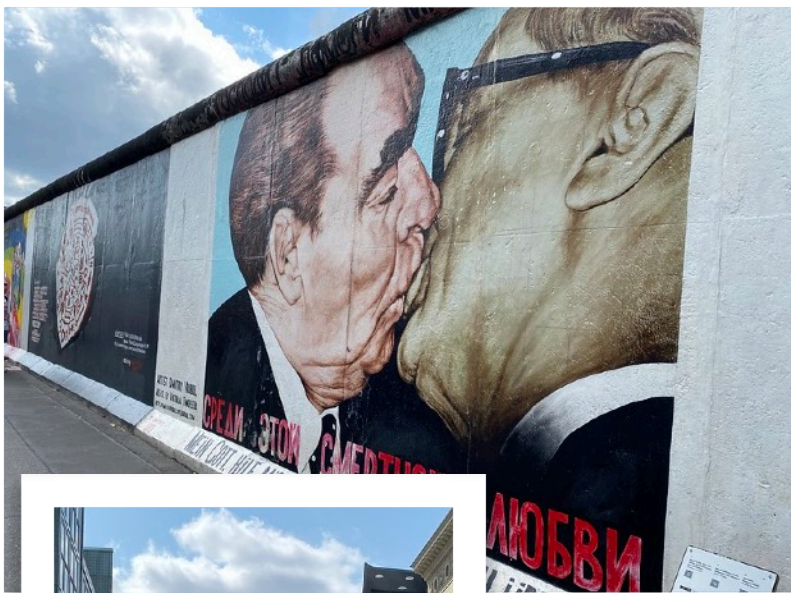
Build as his second Opus, the instrument was commissioned by Princess Anna Amalie, daughter of King Friedrich Wilhelm I of Prussia of the house of Hohenzollern. Anna Amalie was an important figure in the musical life of Berlin in the 18th century, being taught by Johann Kirnberger. In addition to “her organ” she also commissioned several pieces for said instrument with the Master of the King’s Music, Carl Phillip Emanuel Bach, Johann Sebastian’s son, and brother to Master of Music to Queen Charlotte of Great Britain, Johann Christian Bach.

We would like to thank KMD Beate Kruppke for showing us the instrument and taking us through its astonishing history.



TIME TO EXPLORE BERLIN AND RELAX

Thursday was a more relaxed day, as we knew that the weekend ahead of us was going to be intense. We visited the St. Marienkirche for a public guided tour of the organ. In the meantime Helen, John, Nena, and Sarah Nicolson, who joins us that day, decided to go on a bike tour exploring the city; the perfect opportunity for spotting some important sights. Some of the important places to visit in Berlin are:



The Berlin Wall (Berliner Mauer) with the famous kiss of brotherhood. This depicts Erich Honecker and Leonid Breschnev with the the following words underneath: "My God, help me to survive this lethal love".



Checkpoint Charlie, a former east-west border checkpoint



Holocaust Memorial and many more. In the afternoon, the heat had gotten the better of us and we felt to make use of the sunshine by going for a swim in the Schalchtensee to cool off.



CHOIR COMING IN...

The next morning we had, once more, the opportunity to play on a special instrument; an American organ built in the 1870s and shipped to Berlin once it was made redundant in the 1990s. It was then rebuilt in the Heilig-Kreuz Kirche in Berlin Kreuzberg. Our Organ Scholars clearly enjoyed playing more “modern” repertoire on this instrument. This clearly left some good impressions with the resident organist.



At the same time, the choir had gathered at Manchester Airport, had flown to Berlin and were fast approaching Berlin Central Station (or Hauptbahnhof in German).





After settling in and dropping their luggage the choir was free to have lunch and do some exploring and sightseeing before gathering to rehearse at St. Georges Anglican Church, a space with quite a tricky dry acoustic. This is when we also welcomed Stewart, who lives in Berlin and sung with us several times before, and Andrew, who travelled on his own by train.



After our rehearsal it was time to celebrate, not only that we had successfully found each other and got to Berlin safely. It was also Sacha's birthday and we didn't shy away from singing a merry Happy Birthday to her in numerous surprising locations: Church, restaurant, bus, street. Happy Birthday Sacha!



A WEEKEND OF CULTURAL EXCHANGE



Saturday marked the beginning of an exciting, inspiring but also exhausting weekend of singing. We started off with a rehearsal at, what was going to be our final venue, the Lutheran Trinitatiskirche in Berlin Charlottenburg. Though this lovely church had an amazingly big acoustic it wasn't easy to perform in. Particularly, since the choir and the organ were a distance apart.

After our rehearsal there was some free time before we agreed to meet at the third church for this weekend, the kath. Heilig-Kreuz Kirche in Berlin-Wilmersdorf. Some singers decided to take the opportunity and play German mini golf.



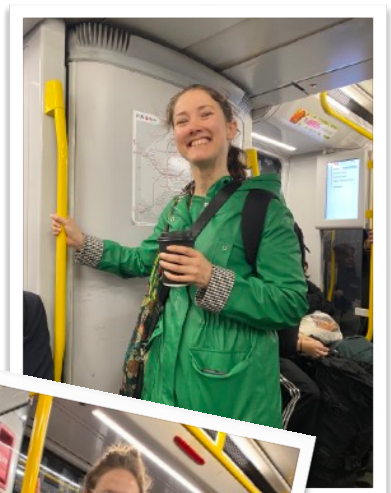
In the afternoon the choir gathered again to rehearse for Evening Mass at the catholic Kreuzkirche. The church is integrated in the row of house facades in that street. This style of church architecture is quite common for the late 19th century Berlin, when buildings such as the well known Kaiser-Wilhelm Gedächtniskirche (now a modern building, with a tower ruin) or even the Great Berlin Synagogue. We were warmly welcomed by the organist Prof. Dirk Elsemann, a former improvisation teacher of Alex's. After the pre-service rehearsal we led Holy Mass, held entirely in German.

**“JUST AT THE EVENING EUCHARIST IN HEILIG KREUZ: BAPTISM, CONFIRMATION, FIRST COMMUNION AND ON TOP OF THAT: ST ANN'S CHOIR FROM MANCHESTER CONDUCTED BY MY FORMER STUDENT ALEXANDER REBETGE. IT WAS A CELEBRATION.”
PROF. DIRK ELSEMANN ON FACEBOOK**

Saturday night on Choir tour is not for the fainthearted but we rose magnificently to the challenge with an evening of Salsa dancing under the expert tuition of Naomi, although there was definitely more enthusiasm than skill demonstrated by her pupils.



Sadly Sunday, our final day in Berlin had arrived. However, we were all excited for the services coming up and the gorgeous music we were going to sing. Our first service was at St Georges Anglican Church, where we met for a warm up early in the morning. Uncomfortable not only for those who danced well into the night, but also for everyone else, as we had to immediately check out. The pre-service rehearsal was followed by a much more familiar and comprehensible Eucharist offering Byrd 4-part Mass, Tallis O Sacrum convivium and Stanford Justorum animae. The congregation invited us to have lunch at the local Italian restaurant "Tutti Gusti" run by two Coptic Christians.





After a filling lunch we went for our final rehearsal to the lutheran Trinitatiskirche in Berlin-Charlottenburg. Here we were prepared to sing Howells Magnificat and Nunc dimmitis in the Setting of St Paul's, Sumsion Responses as well as Stanford "O for a closer walk with God" and Howells " Like as the Hart" for an evensong in both German and English.

After the service we were approached by the church treasurer and the priest with an envelope "to open later". The envelope contained the collection taken during the very well attended service - amounting to 490 euros.



After evensong, it was a dash for the airport to head back to Manchester at the end of exhilarating few days. We were all happy and exhausted.



All in all, it was a lovely tour with an opportunity to share some of the best English choral music with very appreciative congregations and we are extremely grateful for all the efforts of

fundraisers and the generous support of the congregations of St. Ann's and Sacred Trinity, Salford in enabling us to sponsor several of our students on this venture.

Many thanks to George our amazing organ scholar who excelled despite the wide variety of instruments and technical issues presented to him;

to Stewart Emerson, our local agent on the ground in Berlin; to the choir librarians for keeping the show on the road; to Nena, our on the spot fixer-upper and to anyone who helped lug the 21 cassocks, surplices and music around the various locations but most of all the whole choir's grateful thanks to Alex for the initial vision and belief that we could do this, his work in liaising with the Berlin churches, his translation skills and for keeping us all together in every way.





“IT WAS A PLEASURE TO SHARE THE EXPERIENCE WITH THE TRULY WONDERFUL, SUPPORTIVE AND FUN PEOPLE WHO MAKE THE MUSIC AT ST ANN’S HAPPEN” PETE

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

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