



Music for
Organ
Volume 7

The music of
Percy Fletcher

*Ronald
Frost*

*The organ of
St. Ann's
Manchester*



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Organ music of Percy Eastman Fletcher (1879-1932)

played by Ronald Frost, B.Mus., FRCO., FRMCM., FRSCM., FGCM., FNMSM., FRSA

(Recorded in St. Ann's Church, St. Ann Street, Manchester in March 2006)

1	Festal Offertorium (1926)	5:15
	Prelude, Interlude and Postlude, Op.27 (1910)	
2	No. 1: Prelude	3:00
3	No. 2: Interlude	3:16
4	No. 3: Postlude	3:59
5	Grand Choeur Triomphale (1910)	4:05
6	Andante con moto (1927?)	1:45
7	Festival Toccata (1915)	7:27

Total duration : 28:50



Programme notes

Percy Eastman Fletcher was born in Derby on 12 December 1879 and was barely 52 when he died on 10 December 1932. In a not overlong life he managed to accomplish a great amount of musical activity in many different directions, not least in his portfolio of compositions. Maybe, given the predilection of many of us to pigeonhole people, it is this remarkable variety that has worked against his reputation in the seventy-odd years since he died.

He studied violin (especially), piano and organ and, as was the case with several of his light music contemporaries, he made much of his living as a musical director in London's theatres, successively at the Prince of Wales, Savoy, Daly's, Drury Lane and His Majesty's. The latter theatre occupied him from 1915 until his death; during that time he largely orchestrated and then conducted Frederick Norton's very long-running musical *Chu Chin Chow* and later himself composed a musical *Mecca* (later entitled *Cairo*), which enjoyed reasonable success.

In the world of brass banding Fletcher was a pioneer. Before 1913, major competition test pieces were invariably operatic selections but in that year the test piece for the National Championships at the Crystal Palace - won by the Irwell Springs Band - was Fletcher's tone poem *Labour and Love*, the first of a long line of specially commissioned works including classics of the genre by Hoist, Elgar, Ireland, Bliss, Vaughan Williams, Simpson and others. Fletcher himself obliged again with *An Epic Symphony* for the National Championships of 1926; this three-movement, rather Elgarian piece has been revived many times since and may be Fletcher's most substantial composition in any medium.

For the rest, he composed solo songs, many of them balladlike, plenty of short choral songs for female, mixed or male voices, pieces for military band and string quartet and some piano music, mostly arranged from his large output of orchestral work. He probably



composed more light orchestral suites than Eric Coates, whose compositional career was considerably longer, and also a host of single movements - intermezzi, "morceaux caracteristiques", "lyrical melodies" and marches. Of the latter *The Crown of Chivalry* and *Spirit of Pageantry* have an Elgarian ambience, even if they display more pomp than circumstance. Little of this orchestral repertoire is played today, though the exuberant waltz *Bal Masque* and perhaps the finely written *Folk Tune and Fiddle Dance* for strings may sometimes be encountered. Like several of his light music contemporaries Fletcher had a gift for writing pastiche early music. He made orchestral arrangements of music by others including Coleridge-Taylor's *Hiawatha* and *Minnehaha* suites left incomplete on his death in 1912, Amy Woodforde-Finden's popular *Indian Love Lyrics* and a choral and orchestral fantasia, popular in its day, on themes from Wagner's *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg*.

Coming to the music on this disc, we have seen that Fletcher learned to play the organ in his youth and indeed he composed for it for much of his life. The seven movements here represent the largest selection hitherto gathered together on record. He published a considerable number of short and generally simple, though attractive, preludes, often on well known hymn tunes. *The Andante con moto* is an example of this. The early (1910) *Prelude, Interlude and Postlude, Opus 27* could be performed as a short suite in a recital, or, separately, in a church service. The remaining pieces are more ambitious. The rousing *Grand Choeur Triomphale*, published by Kelly, is one of the few Fletcher organ works not with the Novello imprint, which did the honours for the *Festal Offertorium*, published in 1926, and the *Festival Toccata*, issued in 1915 as part of *A Wedding Bouquet*. The latter is probably Fletcher's most popular organ composition and it has previously been recorded at least three times in the CD era. It is a triumphant movement dedicated to the celebrated concert organist and composer Edwin Lemare (1865-1934), sometime Organist of Sheffield Parish Church (now the Cathedral) and known particularly for *Moonlight and Roses*, a vocal setting of the Andantino in D flat, though he composed much more ambitiously for the instrument of which he was such a virtuoso exponent.



Ronald Frost

Ronald Frost, B.Mus., FRCO., FRMCM., FRSCM., FGCM., FNMSM., FRSA., was born in Bury, Lancashire and educated in the town's Grammar School. He won the Kirtland Organ Scholarship to the Royal Manchester College of Music in 1951 and studied there with Harold M. Dawber, FRMCM, FRCO. During his studies he was awarded a Lancashire County Major Scholarship and the Meadowcroft Exhibition for Organ Playing.

Ronald Frost is a double "Limpus" prize winner of the Royal College of Organists (for ARCO in 1953 and FRCO in 1955). In 1954 he graduated ARMCM (Performer's Diploma with distinction), was awarded the coveted Royal Manchester Institution Medal for Organ Playing with the Percy Heywood Certificate, and graduated BMus (in composition) of Durham University.

In 1955, at the conclusion of his studies, Ronald Frost was appointed to the staff of the Royal Manchester (now Northern) College of Music and was Director of Studies from 1968 to 1971. From 1971 until he retired in 2001, he was Principal Lecturer in Organ, Keyboard Musicianship and Harmony & Counterpoint at the Royal Northern College. On November 14th, 2001 a celebration of his long association with the Royal Northern College of Music - and one of its founding institutions, the Royal Manchester College of Music - entitled "A Tribute to Ronald Frost" - was held in the Brown Shipley Concert Hall at the RNCM. Former students Simon Wright, Graham Eccles, Jeffrey Makinson and Darius Battiwalla gave a composite organ recital which concluded with Ronald Frost and Simon Wright playing a duet, Samuel Wesley's *Fuga alla capella*. At the reception afterwards, Professor Edward Gregson paid a warm verbal tribute to Ronald and to his wife, Barbara, who had supported his work with students tremendously. Ronald Frost was honoured by being elected FRMCM in 1971 and Hon. RSCM in 1973 for distinguished services to secular and church music. In November, 2003 he was presented with an Honorary Fellowship of the Guild of Church Musicians by His Eminence the Cardinal



Archbishop of Westminster. He was elected FRSCM at a ceremony in York Minster in June, 2005.

Other appointments include those of Organist & Choirmaster at Stretford Parish Church (1958 to 1969), Accompanist to the Halle Choir (1956 to 1972) and Chorus Master of that Choir (1972 to 1992), Principal Organist to the Halle Orchestra (1974 to 1996) and Organist & Choirmaster of St. Ann's Church, Manchester (from 1978) where he has given, to date (2006), nearly 900 lunchtime recitals.

Ronald Frost is much in demand as a recitalist. He has also published compositions for organ, voices and chamber groups, in addition to his work for radio and television.



The organ

The organ was built and installed in 1730 by the Salford firm of Glyn and Parker and was situated in the West Gallery, where it remained until the major re-ordering and refurbishment of the church in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. During the first 150 years of its life, maintenance and improvements were carried out by the well-known firm of Samuel Renn, among others.

In 1887 it was moved, with the original mahogany casing, to the North-east Gallery by Alexander Young, and extra depth created by adding matching panels at the rear of the case to accommodate the enlarged pedal department.

During the first half of the twentieth century the organ was maintained by Jardine and Co., of Old Trafford, who carried out a major rebuild in 1955. The new detached console, between the nave and chancel on the south side of the church is in an ideal position and enhances the symmetry of the church. The restored organ was dedicated to members of the church killed on active service and to those killed in air raids on the city during the Second World War of 1939 to 1945.

A Positive department - played from the Choir manual - was added in 1970 as a memorial to William Hardwick, FRCO, ARCM, LRAM, Organist of St. Ann's from 1936 to 1969. In 1980, some "patchwork" renovation was effected by George Sixsmith and Son, who added the handsome modern case (beautifully integrated with the 1730 Glyn and Parker original) to cover much unsightly pipework which had been gradually added on the east side of the instrument. This remedial work, together with a number of emergency repairs, maintained the organ in a playable condition until, in 1995, it became apparent that the actions and windchests were worn out and a major rebuild was the only way forward. Tenders were invited from three firms of high standing, and the work was entrusted to George Sixsmith and Son of Mossley, by the unanimous decision of the Parochial Church Council.



The main problems were:

- * The instrument had grown to such an extent that many parts of it were inaccessible for repair or tuning.
- * The main soundboards were now nearly 200 years old and beyond repair.
- * The pedal department was weak and lacked any definition.
- * The "Positif" organ was unsatisfactory - although the department was useful for "solo" effects.
- * The organ had three manuals, so the Positif and Choir departments were controlled by the same keyboard, which meant that they could not be used independently.
- * The pitch of the organ was very low (A = 437 rather than A = 440) which made it impossible to use the organ with other instruments.
- * The building frame was warped and unsafe.

The solutions adopted were:

- * The whole interior of the organ has been re-designed, and access to all parts of the instrument is now very easy.
- * The Great and Swell main soundboards have been replaced by new, and a slider chest provided for the new "Positive" organ.
- * Only the 4-foot Principal and Ophicleide 16 remain of the old Pedal Organ. A new metal Principal 16 with an extended 8 foot has been installed - the Large Open Diapason from the Great was removed and the pipes used to complete the pedal rank. The Open Wood 16 and its 8 foot derivation are new to this organ, as is the Bourdon 16, playable also at 8- and 4-foot pitches. The 3 rank Mixture is new, and the Acoustic Bass 32 is produced by "quinting" from the Open Wood. The Swell reeds 16, 8 and 4 are now also available independently on the Pedal Organ.
- * The Positive organ is almost entirely new; only the 8-foot Gedeckt, 4-foot Principal and Tierce 1 3/5 remain. This is now a logical and comprehensive department, providing a sparkling secondary chorus as well as a host of colourful combinations.
- * A fourth manual has been added - the lovely old choir organ which incorporated the 1730 Flutes is now played from the top manual as a Solo/Choir Organ.
- * The pitch has been brought up to A = 440.
- * The building frame is new.



All that was best in the old organ has been retained in the rebuild. The Great Organ has been improved by the addition of a new Twelfth 2 2/3 and the Echo Bourdon 16 from the old Pedal department has replaced the unsatisfactory Contra Gamba 16 as the foundation of this department.

The Swell Vox Humana has been placed on the main soundboard and a comprehensive system of couplers, together with a 4-channel, 64 general piston system – since expanded to 12 channels and 192 pistons - has been installed. This work was undertaken in 1996 - the re-design of the organ as a four-manual instrument was the work of Ronald Frost in consultation with the builders.

A special St. Ann's Appeal, launched in June 1995 to enable the rebuilding of the organ and the decoration of the Church, was highly successful. The decoration scheme took ten weeks and was completed in April, 1996. The explosion on June 15th delayed the return of the organ and required that much of the decorating be repeated.

The present fine organ bears testimony to the quality of materials and workmanship employed throughout, and for which the Rector, Wardens and Organist wish to express their gratitude.

The work of the Appeal Committee raised more than £235,000. A grant of £95,000 was received from the Arts Council (National Lottery) and another of £45,000 was received from the National Heritage Memorial Fund (National Lottery). There were donations from the Zochonis Trust, the Royal Bank of Scotland and more than 200 private and corporate donations. There were many events of fund raising, both large and small, which helped to raise so much money in such a short time.

As far as the organ is concerned, special mention must be made of Ian Casewell who kept the instrument "going" for so many years prior to the rebuild. Without doubt, the organ at St. Ann's must rank as one of the most exciting instruments in this part of the world (the North West), and is a credit to the firm of George Sixsmith & Son Ltd.

© Michael Arundel (Rector) and Ronald Frost (Organist), November 1996*.

*Slightly amended, January, 2001 & July 2005.



Great Organ

- 1 Bourdon 16
- 2 Large Open Diapason 8
- 3 Small Open Diapason 8
- 4 Clarabella 8
- 5 Octave 4
- 6 Principal 4
- 7 Harmonic Flute 4
- 8 Twelfth 2 2/3
- 9 Fifteenth 2
- 10 Mixture 3 ranks
- 11 Tromba 8
- 12 Tuba 8 (from Solo)

Couplers

- 1 Swell to Great
- 2 Positive to Great
- 3 Solo to Great
- 4 Great and Pedal combinations

Solo Organ (enclosed)

- 1 Stopped Diapason 8
- 2 Gamba 8
- 3 Wald Flute 4
- 4 Flageolet 2
- 5 Clarinet 8
- 6 Tuba 8

Tremulant

Couplers

- t Swell to Solo
- 2 Positive to Solo
- 3 Solo Superoctave
- 4 Solo Suboctave
- 5 Solo Unison off

Swell Organ

- 1 Open Diapason 8
- 2 Stopped Diapason 8
- 3 Echo Gamba 8
- 4 Voix Celestes 8
- 5 Gemshorn 4
- 6 Rohr Flute 4
- 7 Fifteenth 2
- 8 Mixture 4 ranks
- 9 Vox Humana 8
- 10 Oboe 8
- 11 Double Trumpet 16
- 12 Cornopean 8
- 13 Clarion 4

Tremulant

Couplers

- 1 Swell Superoctave
- 2 Swell Suboctave
- 3 Swell Unison off
- 4 Positive to Swell

Pedal Organ

- 1 Acoustic Bass 32
- 2 Open Wood 16
- 3 Open Metal 16
- 4 Bourdon 16
- 5 Octave 8
- 6 Principal 8
- 7 Bass Flute 8

Couplers

- 1 Great to Pedal
- 2 Swell to Pedal
- 3 Solo to Pedal

Positive Organ

- 1 Gedeckt 8
- 2 Block Flute 4
- 3 Principal 4
- 4 Nazard 2 2/3
- 5 Octavin 2
- 6 Tierce 1 3/5
- 7 Larigot 1 1/3
- 8 Cymbal 3 ranks
- 9 Krummhorn 8
- 10 Tremulant

Couplers

- 1 Solo to Positive
- 2 Swell to Positive

Pedal Organ (contd.)

- 8 Principal 4
- 9 Octave Flute 4
- 10 Mixture 3 ranks
- 11 Ophicleide 16
- 12 Double Trumpet (Sw.)
- 13 Cornopean 8 (Sw.)
- 14 Clarion 4 (Sw.)

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Pedal Compass CCC-F [30 notes).

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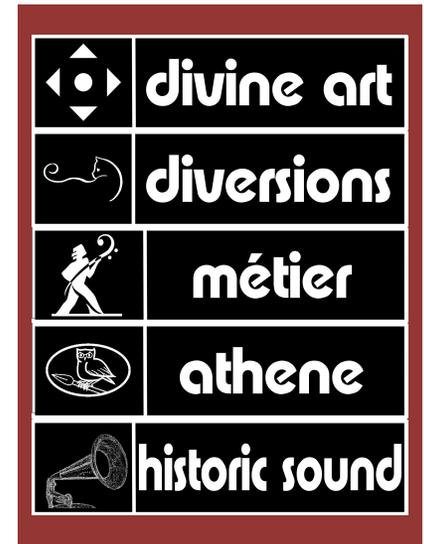
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Front cover:
The altar of St. Ann's Church,
Manchester,
dressed for Lent,
with Burse and Veil

Opposite:
Ronald Frost at the console
of St. Ann's,
Manchester



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