

Pull Out All the Stops 5

Posted on [June 8, 2016](#)

Royal Festival Hall, London 6 June 2016



Margaret Phillips closed the 2015/16 season of the RFH organ series with a magnificent programme spanning 250 years, beginning with Nicolas de Grigny's Suite on *Veni Creator* where reeds were often to the fore. *Fantasia in G (Pièce d'Orgue)* is a lovely example of JS Bach's ability to surprise – the contrasts between the light and playful opening and the relentless driving passage which longs to be resolved at the end were given full effect in this performance.

The remaining pieces were all from three giants of the 20th Century organ repertoire. The first half was closed with effective symmetry as Duruflé's *Prélude, Adagio et Choral varié sur le thème du Veni Creator* took us back to the source material of the opening work.

In a description of the evening's concert we were promised an "exploration of the organ's nethermost regions"! This was certainly the case throughout the concert with a wide range of registration from the quietest strings, and burbling flutes through to fiery reeds and full chorus. It was particularly noticeable in the hugely entertaining *18 Variations* by Jean Guillou. As an introduction to an exciting world of timbre, texture and rhythm this piece is highly recommended. The horizontal layout of the pipework in the hall also added an extra spatial dimension to this music.

Although Dupré's *Prelude & Fugue in G minor* is in some ways written in more conventional fashion it is nevertheless an interesting and technically demanding work.

Throughout the evening Margaret's ease with, and thorough knowledge of this particular instrument and repertoire was evident. This was again demonstrated with a beautifully understated performance of a gently rhythmic and spacious encore, *Shalom*, by Toon Hagen (organist in Zwolle) – a lovely contrast to the dramatic ending of the Fugue to send us on our way

Over five concerts an impressive variety of music has been presented in wonderful performances by some fine musicians on this most remarkable organ. The 2016/17 series of “Pull out all the stops” begins on 3rd October with Jane Parker-Smith.

Stephen Page

<http://www.larkreviews.co.uk>