



MATTHEW POWER

▲ The rebuilt organ at St Gabriel's, Pimlico, with its new Nave case on the left

Passport to Pimlico

A Victorian church in central London at last has an organ to suit its needs. **Matthew Power** visits the recent rebuild and talks to Nicholson & Co. about their work

Emerging from the tube into a grid of spacious streets that forms the district of Pimlico, I pass by white stucco terraces designed to rival the district of Mayfair. Dating from the first half of the 19th century, the Belgravia Estate, designed by architect Thomas Cundy, was provided with parish churches still flourishing today: St Paul, Knightsbridge, St Michael, Chester Square and the Pimlico churches of St Gabriel, St Barnabas and St Saviour. As well as the grand residences here, there is a definite sense of a mixed urban neighbourhood: pubs, restaurants, cafés, a

primary school, and Tate Britain and Victoria Station within walking distance. This sense of a local community is equally present at St Gabriel's, where 200 people came to the inauguration of its rebuilt organ at the end of January.

The church is light and spacious, enlarged by north and south aisles in the nave and a high and wide chancel. It has pleasantly clear acoustics with about one second of reverberation which lessens, but doesn't disappear, when the nave is full. Its Anglo-Catholic liturgy is supported by either a

professional vocal ensemble of five singers, placed towards the front of the nave near the rebuilt movable organ console, or by a larger choir, singing from the choir stalls in the chancel with a conductor. For solo organ recitals the console can be positioned centre-stage. The organ is therefore required to accompany choral music in two kinds of setting and to support congregational singing. The previous J.J. Binns instrument underwent a 1970s rebuild by Walker with revoicing and additions, driven by a desire for lighter Classical sounds as was common then. With

age also came unreliability, and following the church's dedicated fund-raising, director of music David King was able to formulate a rebuild strategy. Nicholson & Co. needed an imaginative scheme to create a cohesive instrument within a limited budget.

James Atherton, head voicer, describes the thinking behind the project. 'How does one approach an organ that has several ranks of vintage pipework, a potpourri of mechanisms, doesn't fulfil its purpose in the building, and without the budget for a totally new instrument? This was the conundrum that faced us. We decided on a fresh start, using as much of the existing pipework (including work by Bevington, Binns and Walker) as was feasible, utilising some good pre-loved ranks from our stocks, making some new pipes to augment this and changing the layout to correct the tonal deficiencies and improve egress. The previous organ lacked warmth and blend, and much of the pipework was beyond improvement. The new specification has been developed in response to the deficiencies in the organ's role, the inspiration of this

beautiful Victorian building, and the clear brief set by David King.'

Nicholson's task was to integrate the re-usable disparate material, which had already been previously voiced by J.W. Walker & Sons in 1970. 'Once the existing pipes intended for re-use were restored, we set about ensuring good speech, and establishing

the principals or flutes. The Dulciana has come out particularly well, a gentle diapason, soft enough to accompany the Swell Oboe, but strong enough to colour the Lieblich Gedackt.'

The Swell flues are largely as Nicholson's found them. Atherton describes increasing the volume of the Piccolo 2 to make it effective in the chorus as there is no Fifteenth. 'The

The modest Nave division integrates smoothly to support singing and broaden the organ's presence

the chorus structures. The Great is founded on the old Principal 8, which had been pushed too hard and was harsh. Softening this rank produced a more musical unforced tone; if a pipe speaks properly and is attractive to listen to in the voicing room, it follows that it will work well in the space it is destined for. The new Seventeenth was scaled from the Fifteenth so that it fits with the other upperwork and colours the Mixture, recast with lower breaks. Both mutations have been "held back" so that a convincing cornet can be achieved with either

Mixture was recast 15.19.22, much lower than the Walker incarnation, and shines through the chorus reeds without dominating. The Swell Cornopean and Clarion are new, fitted with "bird-beak" shallots, and are fiery but not too loud; they combine well with the Bourdon 16 (actually a Double Diapason) for an effective full Swell.'

Nave divisions can often give the impression of a second, smaller organ not always in accord with its parent. But the modest specification here integrates with the rest of the pipework ▶

St Gabriel's Church, Pimlico, London SW1

JAMES JEPSON BINNS, LEEDS (1894); J.W. WALKER & SONS, RUISLIP (1970); NICHOLSON & CO., MALVERN (2022)

I. NAVE

C-g3	
Bourdon (from Gt)	16
Large Open Diapason ¹	8
(bass in new façade)	
Claribel Flute ²	8
Octave	4
Flûte Harmonique ¹	4
Tuba ¹	8
<i>Sub Octave, Unison Off, Octave, Gt to Nave, Sw to Nave</i>	

II. GREAT

C-g3	
Bourdon ³	16
Open Diapason	8
(bass pipes from Ped Principal)	
Lieblich Gedact	8
Dulciana (bass pipes from Gt Bourdon)	8
Principal	4
Flute	4
Twelfth	2 ^{2/3}
Fifteenth	2
Flageolet	2
Seventeenth ¹	1 ^{3/5}
Mixture ³ (19.22.26)	III
Trumpet	8

Clarinet	8
<i>Tremulant</i>	
<i>Sub Octave</i>	
Tuba (from Nave)	8
<i>Nave to Gt, Sw to Gt</i>	

III. SWELL (ENCLOSED)

C-g3	
Bourdon	16
Open Diapason	8
Stopped Diapason	8
Keraulophon	8
Voix Celeste	8
Principal	4
Piccolo	2
Mixture ³ (15.19.22)	III
Cornopean ¹	8
Oboe	8
Clarion ¹	4
<i>Tremulant</i>	
<i>Sub Octave, Unison Off, Octave</i>	

PEDAL

C-f1	
Acoustic Bass	32
Open Diapason	16
Sub Bass (from Gt Bourdon)	16

Bourdon (from Sw, enclosed)	16
Quint (from Gt Bourdon)	10 ^{2/3}
Octave Diapason ¹	8
(ext. from Ped Open Diapason)	
Principal (bass pipes in façade)	8
Bass Flute (from Gt Bourdon)	8
Fifteenth (ext. from Ped Principal)	4
Octave Flute (from Gt Bourdon)	4
Trombone ²	16
Trumpet ² (ext. from Ped Trombone)	
<i>Nave to Ped, Gt to Ped, Sw to Ped</i>	

Manual and pedal action: electro-pneumatic. Sliders: electric solenoid. Usual divisional and general pistons. 16 divisional piston memory levels, 999 general piston memory levels with stepper.

Key: 1 = new pipework; 2 = new from second-hand stock; 3 = part new

A more detailed specification documenting the origin of each rank is available here: tinyurl.com/2qpwtc24

NICHOLSON & CO.



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▲ Woodworking for the new north aisle case

◀ Luke Gallichan cleans the blocks of the Pedal Trombone 16

▶ Kelvin Kent fits new tuning slides to the Swell Piccolo 2

◁ smoothly while achieving its principal aim to support congregational singing and broaden the organ's presence in the room. It has a new case, with openings for egress, which faces down the north aisle, and attractive spotted-metal bass pipes of the Large Open Diapason in the façade. During the inaugural recital the solo-style flutes of the Nave division blended seamlessly into the Great pipework. Sitting in the centre of the nave, I wasn't aware of which ranks were speaking from where; there was a truly cohesive warmth and presence to the sound. Coming back to play the instrument in an empty building a few days later, and with the console positioned in the south aisle (so on the opposite side of the chancel to the organ cases), a separation between Nave Organ and the rest was apparent, but not unmusically so. Indeed, the restraint of Great and Swell combined *because* they speak into the chancel make for a more subtle accompanying instrument and a versatile liturgical one.

I ask David King whether this is the case in his recent experience of accompaniment. 'There is a much bigger palette of colours available. The quieter stops on the Great, which were moved from the previous Choir division and scaled down, now make it easier to accompany choirs singing from the chancel. Having the Swell 16ft Bourdon available on the Pedal works very well under the quieter Swell stops.' As you might imagine, sitting in

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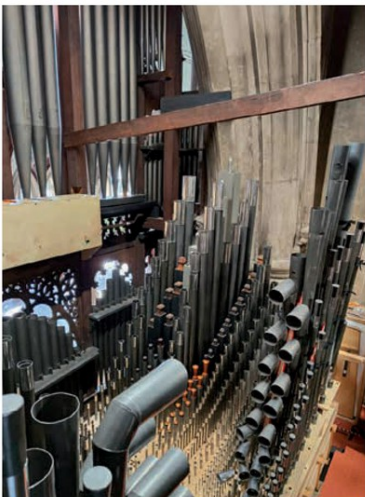
the north aisle in front of the Nave case doesn't give an ideal blend. 'Sitting on the [south] side gives a much better balance,' says King, 'and the best place I find to hear the organ is from the [west] gallery, where the sound really does come together.'

Atherton explains the design of the Nave division: 'With its new case, it occupies the space of the old Positive division. The new Large Open Diapason is exactly that, generously scaled and slotted throughout to aid harmonic development. The voicing style is a departure from the other ranks, with minimal nicking (none in the tenor and bass octaves) and low cut ups, but it blends effectively. It is partnered with the former Great Principal 4 [renamed Octave 4]. The Claribel Flute is an appropriate vintage stop from our stock, and adds warmth. When added to the Lieblich Gedackt and Dulciana from the Great it immediately fills out the presence of the organ in the nave, without drawing attention to itself. The new Flûte Harmonique is an unashamedly big solo colour, scaled and voiced very much with Cavallé-Coll in mind. The Tuba is to our standard pattern on 16½" wind, and is hooded, pointing directly into the nave.'

Inside the casework the layout is refreshingly clean with new materials and walkways between soundboards which make for sensible tuning and maintenance access. The Swell shutters open towards the chancel, ▶

▶ Original chancel casework, designed by Sir Arthur Blomfeld, after careful cleaning, repair and polishing

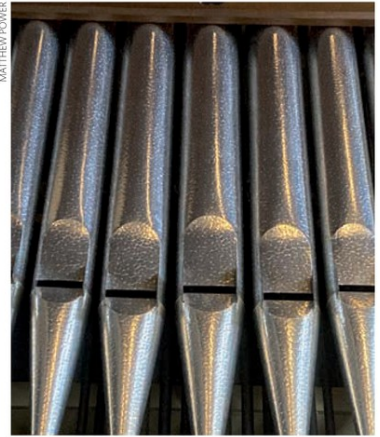
▼ Great division pipework



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▲ Bass pipes of the Large Open Diapason in spotted metal, without nicking

◀ The new Nave case in the south aisle

▶ Console controls are well thought out

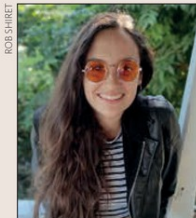
◁ Great pipework stands in front and below, Nave pipework speaks west straight down the north aisle through its new case, and the Pedal division stands on the other side of the swell box, also speaking into the chancel, except for its Bourdon 16, borrowed from the Swell, and therefore usefully under expression.

‘The old Pedal reeds were in extremely poor condition,’ says Atherton, ‘and were replaced with good stock material from the old Radley College organ, revoiced with thicker tongues. The old Binns Open Diapason no.1 had been removed to the Pedal by the Walker firm and loudened beyond comfortable speech; with some softening this is now a fine addition to the Pedal. With a few exceptions (the Open Wood, Bourdon and one or two ranks in the Swell) it would be hard to imagine that Binns had ever been involved at St Gabriel’s.’

I ask Nicholson’s managing director, Andrew Caskie, to comment on the overall project. ‘The way in which so many British organs have been “improved” to their detriment means that there is rightly an eyebrow raised at any scheme to rebuild an organ with many changes. The purity of historical restoration is something we love. However, there are still times when significant change is justified, and we would submit that this was one of them. With the exception of one restored wind-chest, all of the organ’s mechanism has been made brand-new to facilitate the tonal changes needed, and to give the instrument a more coalesced integrity. It

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Digital Digest

BY MARÍA CECILIA AYALDE ÁNGEL

Overwhelmed with today's plethora of social media platforms? Don't panic! This guide will help you to grow your business

As a musician you probably find yourself busy practising, performing, and studying other musicians to learn from them. However, there is a vital part of our careers that we sometimes leave behind: advertising it. Just as any other business, we want to reach out as much as possible and expand our audiences, which hopefully will result in getting more bookings, selling more copies of our latest musical release, or simply growing our fan base. Of course, artist managers and promoters can take care of this, but we can do a lot of the work by ourselves – for free.

Social media involves websites and applications designed to enable users to create/share content and participate in social networking. Social media has been evolving since the early 2000s, and we find new platforms every day. Each of these platforms has a different methodology, interface and audience, and it is very important to understand *how* they work and *who* they target to determine if they are the right fit for you. Let's begin, shall we?

Facebook – a website which allows users to share pictures, music, videos and articles, as well as their own thoughts and opinions with however many people they like.

Instagram – a free photo and video sharing app, where users can view comments and like posts shared by their friends.

Twitter – a free social networking site where users broadcast short posts known as tweets. In addition, users can elect to track specific topics by clicking on hashtags (e.g. #movies).

LinkedIn – the world's biggest professional social network, where you can find a person's job role, company, and job description.

TikTok – a popular social media app that allows users to create, watch and share 15-second videos shot on cellphones.

Patreon – a platform where your most passionate fans support your creative work via a monthly membership.

YouTube – a video-sharing service where users can watch, like, share, comment and upload their own videos.

To be able to select which platforms to invest your energy in, it is key that you know what your *goals* are. If you want to connect with your ideal audience and interact with your fanbase, then you might want to focus on Meta (Facebook and Instagram), LinkedIn, Twitter and/or TikTok. Analyse where your ideal audience might 'hang out' more (this might be dependent on age, location, and other external factors), and pick those platforms.

Alternatively, if your objective is to maximise engagement with your music via listening/watching platforms, your best bet is YouTube and other streaming services (such as Spotify, Apple Music, etc.). While the latter are not considered 'social media' *per se*, they are usually connected to the user's social media channels and can be shared easily via their own platforms. Finally, if your main goal is to make money from a dedicated audience, then I would recommend you steer your efforts into Patreon.

Top tips to maximise the use of social media

- ▶ Understand how each platform works and what audience it attracts.
- ▶ Define your goals.
- ▶ Match your goals with the social media platform that meets your needs best. ■

María Cecilia Ayalde Ángel is a Latin-American sound engineer and singer based in Brighton, UK.

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is for others to judge the outcome, but it has undoubtedly been our aim to give the church an instrument that is reliable, beautiful to the eye and the ear, and which serves its varied musical needs.'

Now that he has had time to get to know the organ's new character, what are King's observations with regard to repertoire and registration? 'The Nave division's solo stops (Claribel and Flûte Harmonique) are highly effective,' he says. 'The Tuba is now the crowning glory of the rebuilt organ. The Great Trumpet is a good chorus reed but less so as a solo voice. Moving the Clarinet from the old Choir onto the Great has made it a lot more useful as a solo colour stop. Having a Great to Nave coupler means French Romantic music is easier to play. 19th- and 20th-century English music works very well with the effective foundation stops and clear sounds. J.S. Bach and Mendelssohn also work very well.'

At his inaugural recital, Thomas Trotter picked a programme containing Whitlock, Stanford and Dupré, which all emphasised the warmth and colour that has been achieved in this skilful rebuild making the most of its available resources. David King, who is celebrating his 28th anniversary as director of music – and who admits to having longed for a rebuild that whole time – plans series of lunchtime and evening recitals after Easter. ■

Matthew Power read Music at the University of London and at Trinity College of Music. He works as a musician and writer and is a contributing editor at Choir & Organ.

▼ The movable console

