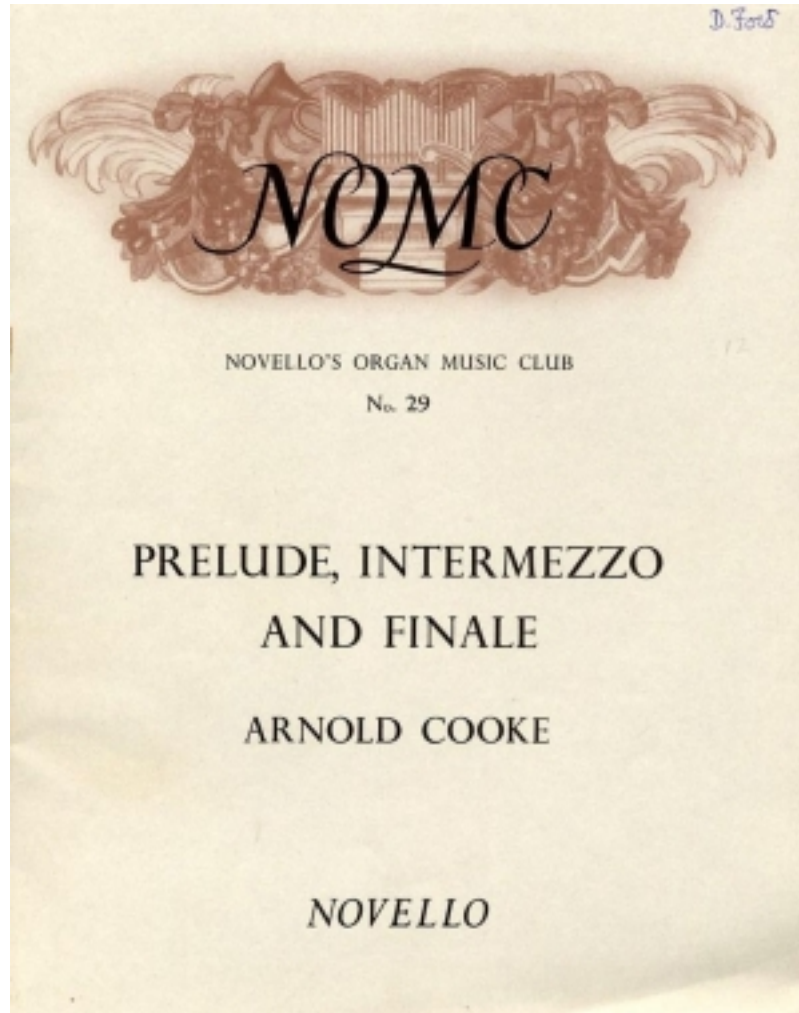


Novello Subscription series:

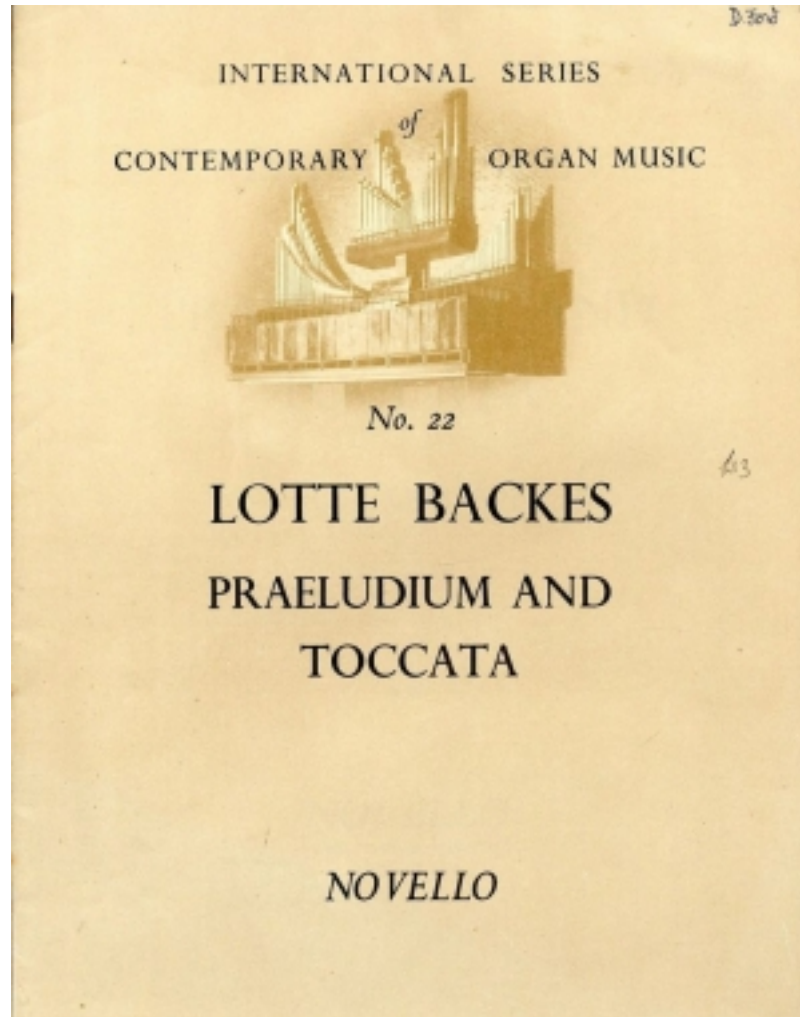
Novello's Organ Music Club:



<u>No.</u>	<u>Composer</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Pub. year</u>
1	Rowley, Alec (1892-1958)	Triptych	1955
2	Thiman, Eric (1900-75)	Three Pieces	1955
3	Dyson, George (1883-1964)	Prelude and Postlude	1956
4	Jackson, Francis (b. 1917)	Three Pieces	1956
5	Peeters, Flor (1903-86)	Preludium, Canzona e Ciacona	1956
6	Cook, John (1918-84)	Invocation and Allegro giojoso	1956
7	Willan, Healey (1880-1968)	Rondino, Elegy and Chaconne	1957

8	Statham, Heathcote (1889-1973)	Four Diversions	1957
9	Harris, William H. (1883-1973)	Miniature Suite	1957
10	Langlais, Jean (1907-91)	Three Characteristic Pieces	1957
11	Lloyd Webber, W (1914-82)	Chorale, Cantilena and Finale	1958
12	Coleman, Henry (1888-1965)	Two Pieces	1958
13	Jacob, Gordon (1895-1984)	Prelude, Meditation and Fanfare	1958
14	Van Hulse, Camil (1897-1988)	Biblical Sketches	1958
15	Hutchings, Charles (1910-64)	Ostinato, Elegy and Paeon	1959
16	Eldridge, Guy H. (1904-76)	Four Impressions	1959
17	Gilbert, Norman (1912-75)	Pieces for four seasons	1959
18	Griffiths, Vernon (1894-1985)	Short Suite	1959
19	Sumsion, Herbert (1899-1995)	Air, Berceuse and Procession	1960
20	Slater, Gordon (1896-1979)	Prelude, Intermezzo and Epilogue	1960
21	Milner, Arthur (1894-1972)	Prelude, Siciliano and Ricercare	1960
22	Ratcliffe, Desmond (1917-2001)	Preamble, Contrast and Hosanna	1960
23	Harker, Clifford (1912-99)	Pastoral Suite	1961
24	Campbell, Sidney (1909-74)	Canterbury Improvisations	1961
25	Pritchard, Arthur J. (1908-97)	Procession, Interlude and Sortie	1961
26	Wills, Arthur (b. 1926)	Eucharistic Suite	1961
27	Cranmer, Philip (1918-2006)	Prelude, Ground Bass and Finale	1962
28	Lang, C.S. (1891-1971)	Prelude, Pastorale and Fugue	1962
29	Cooke, Arnold (1906-2005)	Prelude, Intermezzo and Finale	1962
30	Ashfield, Robert (1911-2006)	Carillon, Plaint and Paeon	1962
31	Holman, Derek (b. 1931)	Prelude, Air and Fugue	1963
32	Hurford, Peter (b. 1930)	Two Dialogues	1963

International Series of Contemporary Organ Music:



1	Langlais, Jean (1907-91)	Triptyque <i>(This was originally commissioned for the Organ Music Club series, but the publishers felt that it was too difficult and so it appeared as the first in the Contemporary Music Series. Langlais subsequently wrote the Three Characteristic Pieces for the Organ Music Club.)</i>	1958
2	Milner, Anthony (1925-2002)	Rondo Saltato	1955
3	Tynsky, Richard (1909-74)	Phrygian Toccata	1960
4	Van Hulse, Camil (1897-1988)	Christmas Rhapsody	1958
5	Brockless, Brian (1926-95)	Prelude, Toccata and Chaconne	1959
6	Langstroth, Ivan (1887-1971)	Theme and Variations	1961

7	Jirák, Karel B. (1891-1972)	Five little preludes and fugues	1960
8	Van Hulse, Camil (1897-1988)	Seven preludes and fugues	1961
9	Wills, Arthur (b. 1926)	Introduction and Allegro	1961
10	Gardner, John (1917-2011)	Five hymn-tune preludes	1962
11	Crunden-White, P (b. 1937)	Theme and Variations	1962
12	Joubert, John (b.1927)	Passacaglia and Fugue	1961
13	Wills, Arthur (b.1926)	Five Pieces	1963
14	De Brabanter, Jos (1918-2006)	Sonata	1964
15	Dirksen, Richard (1921-2003)	Prelude on 'Urbs Beata'	1965
16	Healey, Derek (b.1936)	Introduzione, Aria e Passacaglia (Originally written in 1962 as 'Voluntary VI')	1965
17	Leighton, Kenneth (1929-88)	Prelude, Scherzo and Passacaglia	1964
18	Backes, Lotte (1901-90)	Improvisation on an original theme	1964?
19	Cundick, Robert (b.1926)	Divertimento	1964
20	Cundick, Robert (b.1926)	Sonatina	1964
21	Wills, Arthur (b.1926)	Prelude and Fugue	1963
22	Backes, Lotte (1901-90)	Praeludium and Toccata	1965
23	Milner, Arthur (1894-1972)	Diptych	1965
24	McCabe, John (1939-2015)	Sinfonia	1961
25	Williamson, Malcolm (1931-2003)	Fons Amoris	1965
26	McCabe, John (1939-2015)	Johannis-Partita	1964
27	Naylor, Peter (b.1933)	Movement	1967
28	Steel, Christopher (1938-91)	Fantasy on a theme of Purcell	1965
29	McCabe, John (1939-2015)	Elegy	1965
30*	Williamson, Malcolm (1931-2003)	Organ Symphony	1971
30	Wills, Arthur (b. 1926)	Variations on 'Amazing Grace' / Toccata	1979
31	Brockless, Brian (1926-95)	Introduction, Passacaglia and Coda	1966
32	Leighton, Kenneth (1929-88)	Et Resurrexit - theme, fantasy and fugue	1967
33	Wills, Arthur (b. 1926)	Variations on a carol	1967

* *The Williamson Organ Symphony actually appeared as No. 3 in the 'Novello Modern Organ Repertory'. It was written in 1960. The composer considered it one of his best works.*

The two series were clearly aimed at very different markets: The Novello Organ Music Club titles (NOMC) were produced with the parish organist in mind, offering a wide selection of music suitable as voluntaries, whereas the International Series of Contemporary Organ Music (ISCOM) was designed to supply 'cutting edge' material for the serious organ recitalist. There are familiar names in both series and a number of the NOMC composers were already well known for producing organ music for church use: Alec Rowley, Eric Thiman, Healey Willan, William Harris, William Lloyd Webber, Henry Coleman, Guy Eldridge, Norman Gilbert, Arthur Pritchard and C S Lang come into this category. Their work is characterised by fine craftsmanship and is generally not too demanding on either the player or the listener. Most were practising cathedral or church organists themselves and were probably more than capable of improvising the style of music presented in the NOMC in written-down form. Much of the music in the NOMC doesn't rise much above the workaday 'going-in' or 'going-out' voluntary but is none the worse for that. Some of the better-known composers were clearly writing to commission and their contribution to the series does not represent their best. On the other hand, there are movements which show genuine inspiration, humour, wit or pathos and, whilst this is bound to be a personal assessment, the best is very good indeed and worthy of anyone's attention.

For my money, and for what it's worth, the real treasures in the NOMC would seem to be:

1 Alec Rowley - Cradle Song, the middle movement of his Triptych. This is a hauntingly beautiful movement in the Dorian mode which contains just one accidental (an F# in the final chord). The outer movements are dull and formulaic with too many stops and starts.

2 Eric Thiman - All of his Three Pieces are beautifully written (as one would expect from this consummate craftsman) but the first, a Meditation on the Irish tune *Slane*, and the wistful Pavane which follows it, are definitely a cut above the normal pre-service fare.

3 George Dyson - Prelude. If you know his lovely setting in F of the Magnificat and Nunc dimittis you will immediately recognise that this yearning movement inhabits the same territory. The Postlude is spoilt for me by the simple fact that the main theme is note for note identical to 'I belong to Glasgow'!

4. Francis Jackson - Three Pieces. Cracking stuff from a first-rate composer but he really excels himself in the highly imaginative second movement - Arabesque. Supposedly composed as a study for the left hand (which is not easy), it's much more than that. Whimsical and full of harmonic surprises, it's a delight and sounds like no-one else.

8. Heathcote Statham - Hic Jacet (Lament for an Infant) is one of the simplest pieces in the whole series and yet bears a great sorrow. Heathcote Statham clearly knew that he had composed something rather special as he includes this movement on his Norwich Cathedral recording in the EMI 'Great Cathedral Organs' series of the 1960's.

10. Jean Langlais - Three Characteristic Pieces. Inscribed as 'Homage to John Stanley' this little suite is a delight from the simple Pastoral-Prelude, through the brooding Interlude to the final joyful carillon simply called 'Bells'. Langlais' genius lies in his use of modes and his juxtaposition of common chords in unexpected ways. There is a timeless quality about the first two movements and the third is easier to play than it sounds!

11. William Lloyd Webber - Chorale, Cantilena and Finale. Arguably the finest title in the series, Lloyd Webber produces a work of passion and melancholy. Never harmonically far from his heroes, Franck and Rachmaninov, and using the cyclic form beloved of Franck, this is a profound work which not only hangs together perfectly, but is also deeply moving.

16. Guy Eldridge - Pastorale and Impromptu from Four Impressions are both musically straightforward and break no new ground but they have character and personality.

19. Herbert Sumsion - Air, Berceuse and Procession. You would expect Sumsion to come up with something memorable and superbly written, and he does. The Berceuse is lovely but, as with the two outer movements, it is really a bit too long and outlives its welcome.

26. Arthur Wills - Eucharistic Suite. Goodness knows what the punters made of this! Along with the early set by Flor Peeters (NOMC 5) and Peter Hurford's Two Dialogues (NOMC 32), this has a degree of dissonance far in excess of most of the series and yet it works very well indeed. The Introit is a fine (if rather deafening) passacaglia, the Communion although it is built on a (then fashionable) note-series is very 'otherworldly' whilst the concluding Sortie, with its extensive use of the whole-tone scale, is decidedly Gallic in inspiration. The three movements are really a bit too disparate to sit together satisfactorily, but each on its own has something fresh to say. (Strangely, when Novellos reissued some of these pieces in their collection 'Six from the Sixties' they included the second and third movements of this suite, but not the splendid Introit.)

28. C S Lang - Prelude, Pastorale and Fugue. These three pieces make a splendid suite and actually feel as though they belong together. Technically they are straightforward enough but a very skilled mind has put them together in a deeply satisfying way. Again, no new ground is broken but the sheer quality of the ideas and the craft with which they are worked marks this out as one of the most worthwhile in the series and my personal favourite of them all.

29. Arnold Cooke - Prelude, Intermezzo and Finale. Arnold Cooke studied with Paul Hindemith in Berlin and his influence is obvious. There are lots of fourths and fifths and some unexpected harmonic progressions but, like Hindemith's three superb organ sonatas, Cooke has a clear grasp of the essentially contrapuntal nature of the best music for the organ. In a sense, his music is emotionally neutral but none the worse for that and the lines lie well under the fingers and feet, which help to make these three pieces deeply satisfying.

31. Derek Holman - Prelude, Air and Fugue. A Cornishman by birth, there are some stylistic similarities between these three pieces and NOMC No. 29: the music is linear and the composer enjoys the resulting clashes and unexpected harmonic sleights of hand. The two outer movements are difficult (the Fugue especially so) but the Air is lovely, not too demanding, and will work on any two-manual organ.

32. Peter Hurford - The first of the Two Dialogues is much the best. Cheeky and witty, the neo-classical idiom fits the emerging 'reform-movement' organ of the 'sixties like a glove. The second is not so attractive: maybe just a bit too acidic.

For the rest, there are some good, workmanlike movements (and one or two decidedly odd ones!) but nothing particularly memorable. The Flor Peeters, for instance, is not a patch on works like his 'Variations on an original theme', the Modal Suite or the glorious 'Toccata, Fugue and Hymn on Ave Maris Stella'. There is quite a bit of note-spinning and some evidence that craft and inspiration were a bit lacking when pen made contact with paper. Few composers write at white heat all the time and some don't have too much to say but manage to take a long time saying it (and never more so than when they are writing for the organ!). The Jean Langlais, Lloyd Webber and C S Lang works are outstanding not only because they work as suites but also because they are idiomatically consistent, memorable and amply repay the effort needed to learn them. The Eucharistic Suite is a relatively gentle introduction to the gritty style of Arthur Wills, a composer who has made an important contribution to the organ repertoire. (It has to be said, though, that the technique required is much greater than for most pieces in the NOMC series).

It's interesting to see how the series develops from its deeply conservative origins in 1955, through the odd piece with 'modernist tendencies' (such as NOMC Nos. 5, 10 and 14, to the gritty intensity of NOMC 26 and the brittle neo-classicism of NOMC Nos. 29, 31 and 32). There's something in this series for everyone.

The ISCOM is built of much sterner stuff: think of Gateshead car park or Trellick Tower. The illustration on the cover of each volume is of the 'brutalist' Walter Holtkamp organ in the chapel of Massachusetts Institute of Technology and it's hard to think of a more appropriate instrument on which many of the pieces in the series could be performed successfully. Spanning the period 1958 - 79, the series parallels precisely the worst architectural excesses of 'Local Authority Chic.'

The series includes two acknowledged masterpieces: No. 17 - Kenneth Leighton's Prelude, Scherzo and Passacaglia and what was to have been No. 30 - Malcolm Williamson's Organ Symphony (which actually appeared in 1971 as No. 3 in the 'Novello Modern Organ Repertory'). The Williamson is ferociously difficult, requires a four-manual organ of 61-note compass and is very much an acquired taste. Its often wayward composer considered it to be one of his finest works and was a sufficiently accomplished organist to play it himself. For the rest of us, I'm afraid that all we can do is to listen to the recording, either in Alan Wicks's stunning 1978 version at Coventry or the recent CD version by Tom Winpenny. Suffice to say that the Williamson Symphony is by far the longest and most demanding piece in the series.

The Leighton is much more approachable and despite the use of note-series, is basically tonal. Leighton has a clear understanding of the organ's contrapuntal nature and writes a 20-minute work of intensity, drama and even occasionally, humour. Just about everything in the music is structural: there is not a semiquaver out of place and even if the sounds may seem a bit harsh, the final impression is quite overwhelming. The music has not dated and the craftsmanship is breathtaking.

Leighton's other work in the series (No.32 - Et Resurrexit) is almost as convincing, although it traverses similar ground. If there is a weakness it lies in the rhetorical passages which are mostly absent from the earlier work. Prelude, Scherzo and Passacaglia forms a tightly-knit set, whereas Et Resurrexit seems to hang fire at times. Even so, these two large-scale works must rank as two of the pillars of the twentieth century British organ repertoire: up there with the Whitlock Sonata (but not the Elgar - a nineteenth century composition!) It's a huge challenge to write an organ work of twenty minutes' duration which maintains momentum and without relying on 'orchestral' effects. (The composer provides hardly any registration suggestions.) Leighton achieves this magnificently in both of these works.

The Williamson and the two Leighton contributions are the peaks of the series but there are shorter, slighter works which are a particular joy. Perhaps the most immediately enjoyable are the two by Robert Cundick (No. 19 - Divertimento and No. 20 - Sonatina). Cundick is well-known in the USA but these two works date from the period 1962-64 when he was organist at the Hyde Park Chapel of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in London. Stylistically they could not be farther away from the intense contrapuntal labyrinths of Kenneth Leighton or the strident dissonance of Malcolm Williamson. 'Neo-classical, with wit and humour' is probably a reasonable description.

The Passacaglia and Fugue by John Joubert (No. 12) is a fine work, but extremely difficult to play. If all you know of Joubert is his Christmas carol 'Torches' you are in for a shock. This is harmonically astringent, especially with a fugue subject constructed around rising 7ths and falling 5ths.

Arthur Wills appears no fewer than five times in the ISCOM: No.9 - Introduction and Allegro; No.13 - Five Pieces; No.21 - Prelude and Fugue; No.30 - Variations on 'Amazing Grace' and Toccata, and No.33 - Variations on a carol. The influence of the Parisian organ loft is never far away, especially in the Introduction and Allegro, but this remains as perhaps the most successful in the series with its driving rhythms and highly imaginative harmonies. The delightful Intermezzo (the third of the 'Five Pieces') recalls Vierne, whilst the restless repeated chords of the Finale anticipate the more brutal motor-rhythms of the Toccata (ISCOM no. 30). The Variations on a carol (ISCOM No. 33) pay homage to the French Classical School and detailed

registration indications are provided. With the exception of the rather unfortunate Variations on Amazing Grace (which cloak the beautiful melody with inappropriate harmonic complexities and a level of dissonance completely at odds with the simplicity of the original), all of Arthur Wills's organ music is worth exploring although it has to be admitted that it is not to everyone's taste.

The other pieces in the series have not worn well. There are flashes of brilliance such as John Gardner's featherweight prelude on Darwall's 148th (ISCOM No.10) ('Like clouds are they borne . . .') or the witty Final from Jean Langlais's Triptyque (ISCOM No.1) with its tongue-in-cheek quotations of the Westminster chimes but both are difficult to play. Camil van Hulse's Christmas Rhapsody (ISCOM No.4) takes 'Good King Wenceslas' to the cleaners with a vengeance and is very amusing, but it falls apart in the final pages which are completely over the top. There is much that now sounds bleak and unmemorable and one is left wishing that the composers had not tried quite so hard to avoid the obvious. Note-spinning and musical meandering in a diatonic style is tolerable, but doing the same with apparently random notes is simply distressing. It's very easy to write a fugue if you're not bothered whether the parts actually fit together and there are several instances of what one might call 'cod-counterpoint' which, if truth be told, is not especially clever. It just empties churches and concert venues!

The real problem with much music from this period is that it makes so many demands of the player, the instrument and the tolerance of the listener that most folk will deem it not worth the effort and spend their time learning music which is less self-indulgent, better written and, ultimately, a whole lot more rewarding. Placed beside the Leighton Prelude, Scherzo and Passacaglia or the Cundick Divertimento, there's an awful lot of dead wood in this series. Much better, perhaps, to seek out some of the jewels in the NOMC which are mostly a great deal easier to play and musically more satisfying.

PROGRAMME

Prelude, Pastorale and Fugue	C.S. Lang
Cradle Song	Alec Rowley
Dialogue No. 1	Peter Hurford
Prelude	George Dyson
Arabesque	Francis Jackson
Introit	Arthur Wills
Air	Derek Holman
Divertimento No. 1	Robert Cundick
Pavane	Eric Thiman
Finale	Arnold Cooke
Hic Jacet (Lament for an infant)	Heathcote Statham
Pastorale-Prelude	Jean Langlais
Chorale, Cantilena and Finale	William Lloyd Webber

SOME OF THE COMPOSERS

CRAIG SELLAR LANG was born in Hastings, New Zealand but studied at the Royal College of Music under Sir Walter Parratt and C V Stanford. Between 1929 and 1945 he was Director of Music at Christ's Hospital, Horsham. He devoted the remainder of his life to teaching and examining. His best-known piece is his Tuba Tune of 1929 and his Epiphany anthem 'Eastern Monarchs, sages three'.

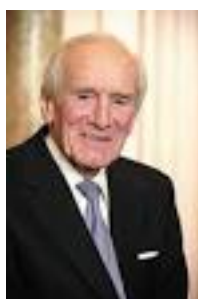
ALEC ROWLEY was professor of music at Trinity College, London and, until 1932 when the church took a dim view of his divorce, Organist of St. Alban's, Teddington. He frequently broadcast, often playing duets with Edgar Moy. A prolific composer he wrote two symphonies for the organ and dozens of shorter pieces, including a very beautiful Benedictus (1931) and a Second Benedictus (1942)



PETER HURFORD was born on St. Cecilia's day in Minehead and retains his lovely West-Country accent. There's hope for us all as he failed his Cambridge degree first time round, but subsequently graduated in both music and law. Despite being Organist of St. Alban's Cathedral for over twenty years he is probably best known for his superb recordings and broadcasts of the complete organ works of J S Bach, and for his anthem 'Litany to the Holy Spirit'.



GEORGE DYSON, born in Halifax, was later music master at Wellington College, Rugby and Winchester College before being appointed Director of the Royal College of Music in 1937. In 1915 he wrote a widely-used pamphlet on the use of grenades. His large scale choral work The Canterbury Pilgrims is still performed from time to time as are his two settings in D and F of the Magnificat and Nunc dimittis. He was knighted in 1941.



FRANCIS JACKSON was associated with the music of York Minster most of his life, succeeding Sir Edward Bairstow as Master of the Music in 1946 and remaining there until 1982. His Toccata, Chorale and Fugue (1954) is probably his best-known organ work, but he has written a large number of pieces for the instrument (not all difficult) during his long lifetime.



ARTHUR WILLS, born in Coventry, has been to Ely what Francis Jackson is to York and was Organist at the cathedral for 32 years as well as being a professor at the Royal Academy of Music. As well as a large amount of solo organ music he has also written an organ concerto and a Fenland Suite for organ and brass band.



DEREK HOLMAN was born in Redruth in Cornwall and studied at the Royal Academy of Music. After a period as assistant organist at St. Paul's Cathedral and Croydon Parish Church he moved to Canada in 1965 where he taught at Toronto University.



ROBERT CUNDICK was born in Salt Lake City and after study with Alexander Schreiner was Organist at the Mormon Tabernacle. From 1962-64 he lived in London and was organist of the Hyde Park Chapel of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.



ERIC THIMAN was organist of the City Temple, London for twenty years and also a teacher at London University and the Royal Academy of Music. He composed more than 120 mostly short pieces for organ, none of which is particularly difficult.



ARNOLD COOKE studied with Paul Hindemith in Berlin and taught at the Royal Northern College of Music before being appointed Professor of Composition at Trinity College, London. He is best remembered for a superb sonata for clarinet and piano but also composed two sonatas for the organ.

HEATHCOTE STATHAM, a pupil of Stanford, was Organist of Calcutta Cathedral, St. Michael's, Tenbury and St. Mary's, Southampton before taking up the post at Norwich Cathedral which he held for nearly forty years before retiring in 1966, His finest organ work is probably his Rhapsody on a Ground, published in 1944



JEAN LANGLAIS overcame his blindness to become one of the greatest organists of his day. His technique was phenomenal and his improvisatory skills legendary. Much of his huge output for his instrument is very demanding but there are some easier pieces and we are very fortunate that the Three Pieces in the NOMC series are more approachable than most of his compositions.



WILLIAM LLOYD WEBBER had humble origins but rose to become Director of the London College of Music. He was also a fine organist and held appointments at All Saints, Margaret Street and, ten years later, Methodist Central Hall, Westminster. His fine compositions, which were often dismissed as being old fashioned during his lifetime, have been reassessed in recent years, thanks particularly to the efforts of his two gifted sons Andrew and Julian.

Most of the pieces in both series (NOMC and ISCOM) are from composers who might be thought of as 'establishment' figures: there is no shortage of cathedral organists, directors of music colleges and university professors. Most of the pieces were written in response to a specific commission from the publishers, Novello and co. On the other hand, the volumes provide a fascinating overview of the world of the organ loft during the period from 1955 to 1971. Then, as now, there was clearly resistance in some quarters to anything straying too far from the organist's comfort zone and, to put this into some sort of context, here are some extracts from Novello's own publicity material at the time:

Over 2000 organists in this country and 1000 overseas have become members of our new Organ Music Club. The first issue (Alec Rowley) was very favourably received and we have pleasure in presenting the second issue of the series by a composer whose music must be familiar to most organists (Eric Thiman): ' . . . first-class examples of what one may call the simpler kind of cathedral voluntary . . . Dr. Thiman has surpassed himself'.

Although the first-year programme (Rowley, Thiman, Dyson and Jackson) was received very favourably, some members have been worried by what they term 'modern tendencies' in certain issues. These tendencies, surely, are hardly surprising when composers are commissioned to write voluntaries for use today.

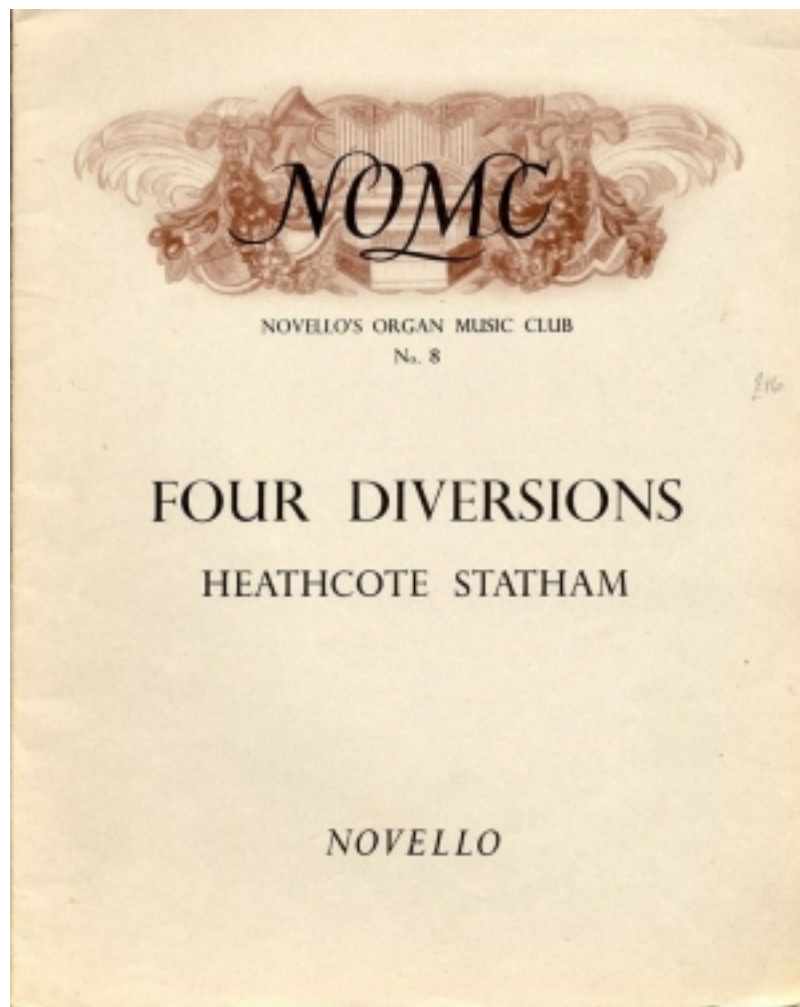
This issue (NOMC No.10 - Langlais) contains our second contribution from an overseas composer. The first, by Flor Peeters, was well received and encouraged us to continue our policy of publishing one foreign album each year.

In fact, there are four numbers by 'foreign' composers (Nos.5, 10, 14, 18) plus three by British-born composers who lived abroad, so it would seem as though these chill, overseas winds bringing their unfortunate modernist tendencies, did not go down well and the second half of the series is almost exclusively by British composers.



Cumbrian Society of Organists

Novello Subscription series:



A presentation at Cartmel Priory

Saturday January 23rd 2016