

David Hirst

Based near Paris since 2011, **David Hirst** was appointed *Organiste Titulaire* of *Notre-Dame* Collegiate Church in Mantes-la-Jolie in 2016. As such, he presides over the three organs of this magnificent gothic edifice: the 1897 Merklin, the 1988 Danion and the 2013 Cogez. He is also Artistic Director of the city's prestigious International Organ Festival and is responsible for organ music at the nearby Romanesque church of *Sainte-Anne de Gassicourt*.

Born in Haslemere, south of London, David was fascinated by the organ at the age of five and soon started his musical training with the piano, and later the organ, violin and trombone. From the age of eight he was a chorister at Chichester Cathedral under Dr John Birch where he sang eight services a week and performed in numerous concerts, tours, recordings and broadcasts.

At the age of 18, David won the organ scholarship to Emmanuel College, Cambridge where he played for the chapel services and concerts, directed the choirs and orchestra, and organised the weekly recital series and other musical events. He also led choir tours to France where he directed concerts and services at Chartres Cathedral and several Parisian churches, including *La Trinité*, *La Madeleine* and the *Sacré-Cœur* Basilica. During his three years at Cambridge he completed his academic studies gaining a master's degree in music. At the same time, he continued his studies of organ performance with Nicolas Kynaston.

David subsequently worked in international business. He lived in Japan for six years becoming fluent in Japanese, and studied for two years in Los Angeles where he gained an MBA from UCLA. He worked for companies including Fujitsu and McKinsey, and was later appointed Managing Director of Harrison & Harrison, the UK's largest organ-building company.

Returning to his music career, in 2002 David was appointed Assistant Organist of St Martin-in-the-Fields, the royal parish church in London. As well as the five weekly choral services, he played for royal and celebrity services, concerts, recordings, tours, and regular broadcasts for the BBC. He further refined his organ performance with Thomas Trotter, and later with Lionel Rogg at the Royal Academy of Music in London where he gained a postgraduate diploma in organ performance with distinction.

On moving to France, David became the *Organiste Titulaire* of *St Germain du Chesnay*, near Versailles, and expanded his musical activities accompanying choral concerts in the region and developing his recital engagements in France and abroad. He has appeared regularly as a recitalist at the annual organ festival in Mantes which has featured organists such as Olivier Latry, Philippe Lefebvre, Jean Guillou, Louis Robilliard, Daniel Roth and David Briggs.

David enjoys performing throughout the world and has played in a number of European countries as well as South Africa, Singapore and Japan. Recent recitals included Chartres, Bourges, Antwerp and Paderborn Cathedrals, St Lamberti in Münster and St Laurenskerk in Rotterdam, as well as venues in the UK and Switzerland.

His extensive repertoire stretches from the Renaissance through to contemporary music, and he has a particular appreciation for the works of J.S. Bach and composers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. His CD recordings include *The Spirit of St Martin's* (the choir and organ of St Martin-in-the-Fields) and *Welte Restored* (the organ of Salomons Theatre with the Royal Academy of Music). In 2021, David recorded the CD premiere of the *Requiem* by Hubert Haye, successor to Marie-Claire Alain, at St Germain-en-Laye church. He has released the first CDs ever recorded on the historic Merklin and the new Cogeze organs of Mantes-la-Jolie, the latest disc being issued to critical acclaim by the Priory label in 2022.

www.davidbirst.org

YouTube : https://youtu.be/DBkCgkxjq_0

