



Temple Music

NEWS RELEASE:

World-famous Temple Church Organ to undergo first major refurbishment for over 50 years

Installed in the Temple Church in 1953, the famous Harrison & Harrison organ has given excellent service due to the commitment of the Inner Temple and the Middle Temple to regular maintenance and tuning by the builder.

However, every organ needs a major – and expensive – overhaul every forty to sixty years when the whole instrument is taken out, transferred to the organ builder's workshop, thoroughly cleaned, repaired, re-voiced and re-installed. This is a task of immense proportions which will take place over a period of eighteen months and be ready by Easter 2013. A temporary instrument will be installed in the interim.

For most visitors to the church, the organ is merely a collection of the twenty or so pipes that are visible from the chancel. In reality, it is a mammoth instrument containing around 3,500 wooden and metal pipes ranging from 32-ft in length to just a few inches, which sit on complex wooden soundboards and actions. Over time, wood shrinks, leather and electrical wiring deteriorates, metal buckles, dirt falls into pipes, and thousands of small and intricate parts, often not accessible on a regular visit, have to be checked and repaired or renewed.

In July 2011, scaffolding will appear in front of the organ chamber and the month-long process of dismantling the organ will take place. Almost all of the organ, including its complicated innards, will be taken to Harrison's workshop in Durham where, for the next year, a specialist team of organ builders will begin the refurbishment.

In the summer of 2012, the re-installation of the organ will take place over three months. The expertly specialised process of 'voicing and regulating' every single pipe will start in January 2013, aiming to be ready for Easter Day.

During the restoration, the opportunity will be taken to undertake some tonal work. In some places some of the pipe-work will revert back to its original 1924 sound, and four new ranks of pipes will be added to the Great Organ. These stops, all voiced in the 1924 Harrison style, will offer a new dimension to the organ's voice both as a solo instrument and in accompanying the choir.

The sum which is needed for this significant and crucial work is £750,000. We hope that through the generosity of those who have attended and loved the Temple Church and its music, as well as those who may come to recognize the value and history of this significant Church, future generations will benefit from and enjoy this remarkable instrument.

Further information from Penny Jonas penny@templechurch.com (07778 799842)
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Celebrity Organ Recital: Dame Gillian Weir

Wednesday 25 November 6.45pm-7.45pm

Temple Church

Dame Gillian Weir

Programme includes:

Bach: Prelude and Fugue in C major

Mendelssohn: Sonata VI in D minor

Vierne: Final from Symphonie I

Tickets: £20, £15, £10 (includes post-concert reception)

To launch the **Temple Church Organ Fund Appeal** for the refurbishment of the legendary Harrison and Harrison instrument, international celebrity organist, **Dame Gillian Weir**, presents a concert on **25th November** of music reflecting the strengths of this great Romantic instrument including Bach's Prelude and Fugue in C major, Mendelssohn's Sonata VI in D minor and the Final from Symphonie I by Louis Vierne.

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The Temple Church Organ: background

On 10th May 1941, the Temple Church was badly damaged in an air raid and the organ was completely destroyed. Fortunately, many of the oldest parts of the building survived and were incorporated into the newly restored church which was rebuilt to its original design. At this time, a specially designed organ chamber on the north side of the church was added, but it was not until 1953 that the present organ was fully commissioned.

It was built by Harrison & Harrison of Durham, the organ builder responsible for the immense and significant instruments in King's College Chapel, Cambridge, Westminster Abbey and the Royal Festival Hall. Surprisingly, it was not built for the Temple Church, or indeed any other church, but was actually commissioned by **Lord Glentanar of Glen Tanar Castle** in Scotland, for his private use. The inaugural recital was given there by the great French organist **Marcel Dupré** in 1927.

The organ's original setting was the ballroom at Glen Tanar, which was 60ft long and 30ft wide. There was an orchestra pit and stage at one end, at the back of which was an enormous chamber in which the organ was housed. The pipes of the large 32-ft Open Wood though lay horizontally beneath the stage. The Ballroom's ceiling was ornate with thousands of antlers, and a thick carpet on the floor absorbed much of the organ's power. This is reflected in a letter from his Lordship to the organ builder:

I have been thinking a lot about the specification of my Organ recently. As you know, the one thing I want to be sure about is, above all things, a grand and majestic ensemble, and when you are considering the scale of the pipes, if you are ever in doubt as to whether it should be a little smaller or a little larger in scale, please choose the latter, for the Ballroom is not really very resonant. I know I can thoroughly rely on your long experience of suiting the organ exactly to the building ...

During the 1930s, George Thalben-Ball who was to be Organist of the Temple Church for almost 60 years, travelled to Glen Tanar to give organ recitals and he was immediately drawn to the instrument's wonderful blend of sounds. After the end of the second World War, Thalben-Ball had a chance encounter with Lord Glentanar in Cambridge and enquired of His Lordship, 'How's your beautiful organ?' who responded that he was thinking of giving it away because it was deteriorating through lack of use.

So it was on 5 February 1950 that Cuthbert Harrison at *Harrison & Harrison* received a letter from Thalben-Ball informing him that the Glen Tanar organ would be moved to the Temple Church on condition that Harrison's would be responsible for the installation. The organ, in addition, should not be altered without his permission. GTB wrote "This offer has filled me with delight. I have already asked that the new Temple



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organ chamber should be at least double the size of the old one". The new chamber (33ft wide, 18ft deep and 40ft high) proved to be a far more advantageous home for the instrument, even with the restrictions of the lancet openings in the north wall.

On 6 July 1953, the instrument arrived by rail from Scotland and installation began in the church. Thalben-Ball wrote, "I should like this organ to be a real answer to all organ critics - a magnificent 'chamber' organ, the full power of which may be used fearlessly without annoying noise but with a 'Tuba' of sufficient power to satisfy and 'cap' the full tone of Swell and Great".

In the Temple's acoustic, the organ did sound very different and a few ranks of pipes had to be re-voiced more quietly. However, Thalben-Ball still believed that the organ maintained its wonderful blend, allowing almost any combination of stops to be used successfully.

The organ case, based on the Temple's Father Smith case of 1684, was installed in 1966. Minor changes have occurred to the Choir organ upperwork, and the shutters were removed from the Pedal reeds and Tuba to give the sound more freedom.

In 1976, Harrison's modernised some actions and the organ was cleaned, although much of the instrument was still in good repair and did not require attention. In 1989 the Great reeds were removed from the Solo swell-box at the top of the organ, re-voiced on lower pressure, and placed at the front of the left-hand chamber to give them greater immediacy; at the same time, the Great and Swell Mixtures were altered. Most recently, in 2000 the console was fully renovated and a modern piston system installed.

The magnificent Harrison organ maintains an integrity which many of the organs of this period have lost; the fashions of organ-builders and organists have changed over the decades and many large 'romantic' instruments have often been susceptible to changes which are far from their original tonal design.

We are fortunate that the Temple organ has not been forced to wear ill-fitting clothes. Despite some sympathetic tonal changes, it is still a romantic 'Rolls Royce' at heart. Over the last 55 years, the instrument has played an important role in the life of the church: at Royal occasions, memorials, weddings, as the perfect accompanying instrument for the church's choir, and as a concert instrument. From the majestic *tutti* to the whispering *célestes*, the organ is recognisable as representing the 'Temple Sound'.

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