

PERSHORE ABBEY

C. Franck Birthday Recital

ANDRE MARCHAL
(Paris)

Sunday, December 10th at 3 p.m.

Programme 50p

**Recital organised by Pershore Organ Week Committee
in co-operation with Worcester College for the Blind.**

1884

1884

1884

E. FRANK

IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

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INFORMATION IN A FORM OF HUMAN FRANKS

WILLIAM ROSS IN THE NINETEENTH

1884

ANDRÉ MARCHAL

André Marchal, who was born on February 28, 1904, is a native of Paris. His earliest studies were at the National Institute of the Blind, where he later became a teacher, and was invited by Eugène Gigout to enter his organ class at the Paris Conservatoire. There, in special prize for counterpoint and figured bass won two years later. After winning Gigout as organist at Saint-Augustin, Marchal was appointed organist at Saint-Germain-des-Près in 1935, a post he relinquished thirty years later when, in 1965, he succeeded Joseph Roulet at Saint-Eustache, from which post he resigned two years ago.

Between the two wars, Marchal developed his career as a recitalist. He first visited the United States to give a series of recitals in The Cleveland Museum of Art, presenting nearly the entire organ music of Bach. Since then he has made numerous transatlantic American recital tours. For Marchal's first London recital, more than thirty years ago, four distinguished Secretary Members of the Organ Music Society, Albert Roussel, Jan Sibelius, Ernest Inghel and Vaughan Williams, submitted themes on which he improvised an organ symphony in four movements. Since then he has been, except for the war years, a frequent visitor to England. He took part in the concert given in the presence of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, inaugurating the organ in the Royal Festival Hall in London, and has been a regular recitalist there ever since. He broadcast frequently for the British Broadcasting Corporation, and in 1953 visited Australia at the invitation of the Australian Broadcasting Commission for a nine-week tour which included concerts as well as recital appearances. He is a frequent visitor to most of the important European musical centres; there can be few dressing-up organs of merit where he has not been heard.

Marchal's Bach playing stands alone. Rejecting the untraditional romantic approach as the chief part of the organ repertoire as well as the more recent but equally false aesthetic of metronomic intransigence and excessive staccato, he has arrived at an interpretative style which towers over that of all his contemporaries in this field. This penetrating insight into the organ music of Bach is at the root of his art as an interpreter.

While the imaginative poetry at the heart of Marchal's interpretation remains his private magic, it is possible to suggest the very sure basis on which it rests. Blind from birth, Marchal has his immense repertoire by heart. His memory is not merely aural or tactile—for he reads music from Braille—but unlike the unreliable kind that resides only in the ear or the fingers and feet, it is based on a profound study of the construction of each piece. The learning is arduous, but the rewarding result amounts to a true re-creation of the music. Faced with an unfamiliar organ, Marchal's procedure is unchanging: each stop is tried, the unsatisfactory timbres are rejected, the others are grouped on pistons according to the requirements of the pieces to be played, not in an unthinking crescendo from *pianissimo* to *fortissimo* bearing no relation to the particular programme. This is one of the secrets of Marchal's registration or colouring. So he is able to evoke, sometimes from unbelievably recalcitrant instruments, different appropriate ensemble for Couperin, Bach, Franck or Messiaen.

Where matters are concerned, Marchal's repertoire has a natural French bias, but unlike some players of his generation, it extends to his juniors, like Alain, Langlais and Messiaen. Composers of the immediately preceding generation have equal cause to be grateful to his art: Tournemire, Vierne inscribed works to him. Complementary to his unrivalled mastery of the Bach organ works is his wide knowledge of all Bach's contemporaries and successors, not only in Germany and France, but in other European countries. A quarter-century ago, when howlerized snippets of 18th century composers were the rage among English organists, Marchal was playing Bull, Blow, Purcell and Locke. This impeccable taste in music is reflected in the extraordinary sensitivity of Marchal's interpretations as well as in the improvisations which become a feature of his recitals as they were in the days of organists of the past, like Bach, Handel, Mozart, Franck and Bruckner.

Marchal has recorded the complete organ works of Franck at Saint-Eustache and of François Couperin at La Flèche, as well as Bach's major works. Entire volumes of Grigny, Céciliault and Tinelouze are other items in his repertoire, and most of his recordings have received the "Grand Prix du Disque" in France.

Not the least important aspect of Marchal's career is his work as a teacher. The Master Classes he has given, abroad in England, Australia, and the United States, as well as in his native France, have contributed greatly to the formation of a distinguished school of young organists who are now diffusing among their own pupils the precious principles they have learned from Marchal. Marchal's art will survive him in the work of his pupils and in his recordings, but it is still our privilege to hear this great organist in the flesh.

FEIKY APRAHAMIAN

Hon. Sec., The Organ Music Society