

Title: **Loan instruments for schools and young musicians**  
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*Providing our new generation of organists ample time to play the instrument is at the heart of a major community-driven project that Viscount Classical Organs supports. The outreach work has reached young musicians in London, Leeds, Liverpool, Oxford and many more are planned.*

It is perhaps six years since I got a call from Tom Dagget, **OBE Organ Outreach Fellow** at St Paul's Cathedral, for a request to meet up and hear his ideas for the London Organ Outreach Project. Soon after in our Bicester office I met with Tom (D) and Tom Bell (Artistic Director of the London Organ Day) who were the energy behind the project.

Their idea was to introduce the organ into schools in London which would not naturally offer organ playing on their curriculum.

Our contribution was to provide the instruments and the two Toms would sort out the tuition. I recall that meeting well and remember clearly the phrase I gave in reply: "Tom and Tom, you are pushing on an open door".

### **My love of the church organ**

The organ has been a passion or addiction in my life since the age of 5. It takes you on a wonderful musical adventure that covers venue, repertoire, instrument and composer - unlike any other instrument. I am also passionate about helping, where I can, to offer opportunities for others to gain easy access to the instrument too.

### **Outreach project extends past London**

Once we started the project in London, this soon led to other requests further afield and the next great success has been managed by David Pipe, the Director of the Diocese of Leeds Organ School and Organist of Leeds Cathedral.

David now has, I believe, 50 youngsters under his wing through this outreach project. Our Viscount instrument at Leeds Cathedral allows almost round the clock use (which is not possible on the instrument in the main building itself – as with many cathedrals).

More recently we have provided instruments for St Edward College (Liverpool), Cherwell School (Oxford) and with Tom Bell relocating to the North of England - he is working on a similar scheme in Blackburn.

### **Digital church organs are the ideal practice instrument**

While digital church organs for some are still not their "ideal" organ instrument - they do come into their own for providing a practice platform.

They provide a cost-effective solution that fits into smaller spaces and can also be used with headphones, so as not to disturb others.

### Students practise during lockdown

Lockdown during the pandemic has been heart breaking in many ways and far too many musicians are deprived of use of their cherished church practice instruments.

Working with the Young Organ Scholar's Trust (YOST) we have managed to provide an instrument for Christopher Too, an Organ Scholar at Kings College Cambridge, stuck at home in Bridlington. Not too far away in Yorkshire, Willam Fox is marooned away from his lovely instrument at St Paul's Cathedral. We managed to get a loan instrument to him from our dealer in Huddersfield before lock down got really tough.

We also managed to get two instruments from our Manchester dealer into the homes of the two York Minster assistant organists. The numbers of musicians asking for a home practice option at the moment has understandably greatly increased.

### Hiring digital church organs is on the rise

Digital organ hire, especially covering church pipe organ rebuilds, has been a growing part of our business for the last few years. We are now seeing a significant need to find a sustainable way to meet a growing demand especially from younger musicians to provide home practice options.

The major initial cost is the delivery and set up which makes very short-term hires expensive. We are however working on a plan to create a workable scheme that can fill the musical void that is opening up and seems likely to be around for months to come.

If you think you could benefit from a home practice instrument give us a call and we will explore how we and our dealer network might be able to help.

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