The second organ recital this season was given by the Dutch concert organist Adriaan Hoek, a graduate of the Conservatory of Rotterdam. He is currently studying at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater in Hamburg.

His fascinating programme, mostly though not entirely, of Baroque music began with a piece by Georg Muffat (1653 – 1704). Muffat is said to be descended from a family of Scottish origin. He was born in the Duchy of Savoy, now a part of France. He studied music in Paris, possibly though not certainly, under Jean Baptiste Lully. He moved to Vienna where he also studied law. He died in Passau on the border between Austria and Germany. Musicians of his era got around Europe quite widely; they went wherever music beckoned them in fact.

Muffat’s Toccata Settima had a powerful opening. Its prelude on more or less full organ was flavoured with a strong undercurrent of reed stops. The music was in several sections moving first to flute stops, then to an even lighter and more transparent flute blend. Richer full organ returned again with an edge of reed sound in a march-like section which had a rather regal aura about it. Adriaan Hoek was obviously going to make the very best of what the King’s College Aubertin had on offer.

There were two preludes based on the Lord’s Prayer, Vater unser im Himmelreich, in this recital, the first by the German Baroque composer Georg Boehm (1661 – 1733). The music opened with a weighty tread played with admirable regularity by Adriaan Hoek. I was most impressed by the main melody which he gave to the organ’s voix humaine stop a rather beautiful and delightfully encompassing sound.

Despite his assumed French name, Jean Adam Guilain (1680 – 1739) was a German organist (real name Johann Adam Freinsburg). He worked mainly in Paris. His Suite du deuxième ton is definitely composed according to the French organ tradition. It began with a rich organ Prelude that like many such pieces had a noble processional quality about it. The tierce en taille with the melody in the tenor on the slightly edgy tierce stop was rather splendid. The Duo had finely defined counterpoint and the Basse de Trompette made great play of the trupeet stop’s lower register. The Trio des flutes gave us precisely what was promised while the following Dialogue had a refined fugal texture. The unusually named Petit plein jeu (first time I have seen it with “petit” in front) brought Guilain’s splendid piece to a jolly conclusion. I was reminded of the line in the Christmas carol the Holly and the Ivy – “The playing of the merry organ”.

These Baroque organ classics were followed by two modern pieces. Miroir by the Dutch organist Ad Wammes for which Adriaan Hoek had chosen clear high flute stops. It had a touch of minimalism to it running through the piece as an accompaniment with a repetitive melody singing above it. There was variety there too and the performance really sparkled.

The French organist Jehan Alain studied organ with Marcel Dupré and composition with Dukas and Roger-Ducasse. He was killed by the Germans in June 1940 but not before having killed sixteen of them – but then, how many of those sixteen might have been composers?
Anyway, his Deuxième Fantasie had interesting harmonies and a powerful melodic line for which Adriaan Hoek chose a stentorian sound blend.
The official programme ended with two pieces by someone who is still the greatest composer for organ of all time J. S. Bach. Hoek began with the recital’s second setting of Vater unser im Himmelreich, this time BWV 682. The playing was admirably steady with soft flute against edgy reed. The pouring out of a snappy rhythmic line including triplets was a real delight.
The second Bach piece just called Pièce d’orgue BWV 682 opened with filigree of fast flutes then opened up into an exciting passage where sheets of sound were layered one upon another and then a toccata like explosion completed the piece. Long lasting enthusiastic applause drew forth another Bach piece, a Gigue Fugue in G Major BWV 577. It was as if Adriaan Hoek was taking the Aubertin on a cross country gallop. Even some of the most serious looking students in the audience appeared to be dancing along with him in their seats.