

**SIR JOHN STAINER**  
(1840 – 1901)



John Stainer was a chorister at St Paul's Cathedral when he first met Ouseley. A few years later in 1856 he was deputising on the organ there when both John Goss and his assistant, Stainer's organ teacher George Cooper, were away. Ouseley had come to ask if either of them could recommend a young organist. He came up to the organ loft to find Stainer *"getting on very comfortably"*. Ouseley wrote the same evening inviting him to play at the newly founded St Michael's.

John Stainer was 16 when he was appointed to the post of organist at St Michael's in 1857. His predecessor J.C. Hanbury had only been in post for a few months, following the opening of the college in the previous year, when he was appointed Chaplain of Wadham College Oxford.

During his three years at St Michael's Stainer played for the services, trained the choir, gave piano lessons and studied, practised and composed. He also enjoyed cricket and tennis with the boys and the masters.

In 1859 he matriculated at Christ Church Oxford and took the degree of Mus.B., after which he left St Michael's for Magdalen College Oxford to work for his B.A. and then his Mus.D.. Shortly afterwards in 1865 Ouseley officiated at Stainer's marriage to Elizabeth Randall in Oxford.

In the following year Ouseley and Stainer examined Parry for the first part of his B.Mus degree while he was at Eton. Parry was the youngest candidate since Stainer seven years earlier, when Stainer had been the youngest. Stainer conducted the Musical Society at Exeter College Oxford and Parry, an undergraduate member of its committee, worked closely with him.

In 1872 Stainer succeeded Goss at St Paul's Cathedral, but retained his links with Ouseley. Visiting St Michael's at Michaelmas 1875 he temporarily lost the sight of his good eye at tennis.



He was organist at St Paul's for 16 years but suffered recurrent eye problems. As well as examining for musical degrees at Oxford, Cambridge and London, he was President of the Royal College of Organists, Principal of the National Training School for Music and HM Inspector of Music in Schools and Training Colleges.

In 1888 he was knighted and returned to Oxford, succeeding Ouseley as Professor of Music. He died in 1901 at the age of 60. His eldest son, who had been a boy at St Michael's, presented a brass mural plate to the Chapel in his memory.

Sir John Stainer's prolific output included 5 oratorios and cantatas, 44 anthems, 70 carols, 173 hymns, 37 canticles and items for services, numerous editions and settings, 40 secular songs, 23 papers, instrumental music and 7 books.

In 2010 his descendants deposited an extensive collection of family papers with Durham University Library. The Stainer Archive (1762-2010) includes autograph manuscript scores and corrected proofs of his works as well as correspondence and photographs. The library mounted an exhibition of these in the Spring of 2011.

