

Dubai Airport's CEO Paul Griffiths sets new challenge to
perform in Westminster Abbey on
13th August at 5.45pm



Paul Griffiths
CEO, Dubai Airports

Organist Paul Griffiths' day job is running the world's busiest international airport but this summer he has set himself a different challenge for the holidays: to perform a programme which includes one of the most technically demanding organ works, Maurice Duruflé's Suite Opus 5 – which includes his fearsome *Toccata* - at **Westminster Abbey on 13th August at 5.45pm.**

Inspired by Alan Rusbridger's book *Play it again*, Griffiths has spent 18 months preparing for the task, with help from organ mentors Stephen Farr and Clive Driskill-Smith. He starts his Duruflé marathon with a recital at Temple Church on Wednesday 5 July at 1:15pm, at which he will also play Duruflé's *Fugue sur le theme du Carillon des Heures de la Cathédrale de Soissons, Op. 12*, before returning to climb to the organ loft at Westminster Abbey.

Paul, who is also a Vice President and Fellow of the Royal College of Organists, takes every opportunity to pursue his joint passions for music and aviation. At Dubai Airports, he introduced a concert platform Dubai International Airport (DXB) called MusicDXB – which enables visiting artists from all over the world the opportunity to play to the thousands of people who travel through the world's largest international aviation hub every day. Artists have included Australian sensation Grace and Britain's Got Talent finalises Jack Pack, as well as up-and-coming local artists. He has also commissioned the building of a significant pipe

organ from the French organ builder Bernard Aubertin in his home in East Sussex, which when complete will create a mini concert hall, rehearsal and teaching venue for the education and development of musical talent in future years. He regularly is invited to conferences to talk about the similarities between music and business.

The double life of Paul Griffiths provides an unusual snapshot of today's business leaders' often unconventional career paths. Griffiths advocates the value of music training – in particular the parallels between the discipline needed to master an instrument to the highest level and the skills required to run a complex and diverse organisation.

As Paul explains,

"On any given day in the airport, there are a very wide range of challenges that require the ability to think and act on many different levels. My musical training has been very useful in enabling me to manage multiple layers of complexity and has made me very aware of the sensitivity required to organise a diverse workforce from 60 different cultures working in a country that is not my native land. It is not just drawing together a complex organisation by coordinating multiple strands not dissimilar to an orchestral or organ score, but having the creative flexibility to adapt, accommodate and interpret. Studying music alongside computer science enabled me to pursue an unusual career path which has allowed me to explore a dual passion in transportation and music, both of which derive from momentum."

Paul Griffiths began playing the organ at the age of ten and won first prize in the London Musical Competition Festival at the age of 13. Whilst studying with renowned organist and conductor Malcolm Hicks, he gained the ARCO, ARCM and LRAM within a six-month period and the FRCO two years later. In 1981, he was placed second in the Trianon Organ Competition.

Having been Organist and Choirmaster at St Mary's Welwyn from 1980, he moved to Hong Kong in 1986, where he became Assistant Organist at St John's Cathedral and Head of Organ at the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts. He also featured in broadcasts with the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra and has also given recitals at the English Cathedrals of Ely, Peterborough, Wells, St Paul's and at Westminster Abbey. Paul also features regularly as an organist and continuo player in concerts and recordings in the UK and overseas and in May

2002, made a guest appearance at Birmingham Symphony Hall with Dame Gillian Weir. He has also given recitals at St Mary Redcliffe, Bristol, St John's Smith Square and London's Temple Church. In 2003, Paul was appointed organist to the voluntary choir at Guildford Cathedral, where he studied the organ with Stephen Farr. In October 2004, Paul returned to Birmingham Symphony Hall to appear as the soloist in Poulenc's Organ Concerto with the Birmingham Conservatoire Orchestra, conducted by Lionel Friend.

Outside of musical life, following 14 years as an Executive Director of Virgin Atlantic and the Virgin Rail Group, in January 2005 he was appointed Managing Director of London Gatwick Airport and, in 2007, moved to Dubai to become the first Chief Executive Officer of Dubai Airports, the owner and operator of the world's largest international airport. He is regularly requested for interviews on the BBC to contribute towards aviation-related issues, including the debate on Heathrow's 3rd runway.

Paul was appointed as a Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George in the Queen's Birthday Honour List in 2015, for services to British prosperity overseas and to music.

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