



Issue 20 – January 2013

Readers are encouraged to pass this Newsletter on to any interested non-members and they are in turn encouraged to join any affiliated society as detailed below.

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President's Letter

Nicola MacRae

At the cusp of 2013, I take this opportunity to wish all readers of SFO News a splendid and prosperous New Year.

We do not need to be reminded that 2012 has been a year of sport; it is a great shame that the arts and music in particular does not get the same level of funding that is given to sport. I agree that it is important for young people to gain the health and social benefits of exercise, however being involved in music making also has social and health benefits. Singing is a prime example of this, by adding to one's well being and social life. As a child I was keen on sport alongside music. I was delighted at the age of 10 to be picked for the girls' football team, after completing competitive trials. My career as a footballer however did not take off. Matches were to be played on a Sunday, of which my mother did not approve; she promptly wrote to the school (much to my embarrassment) expressing her disapproval. I was forced to leave the team and I attended church with some resentment. After a short while, I discovered I could apply my musical interest and lead the worship by playing the piano, the church did not have a pipe organ. The rest, they say, is history! I am now glad that I went to church rather than run around a cold muddy playing field as attending church and being involved in the music making has had a greater and more lasting impact on my life.

As Society's (and sometimes our churches') leaders do not seem to share our enthusiasm for the arts, music, organs etc. we need to do our bit and be ambassadors. We all need to tell people about the fabulous untouched organs that can lie behind the most unlikely of doors, and spread our own enthusiasm!

No doubt many of you will be thinking ahead to what 2013 has in store and possibly to the plans of your local society. I intend during the remainder of my term of office to visit all individual societies in our federation; so I hope that I can personally experience all the good things that we all aim to achieve. The variety of events that that I have seen to date has been impressive, and I can assure you that the SFO and the ESO are getting new ideas! I look forward to meeting you at your local society meetings over the coming months and finally welcoming you to Edinburgh in May.

On a final note, I am sure that you join me when I say that I am shocked and appalled at the recent, unprovoked murder of Sheffield Organist Alan Greaves and share with my condolences for his family, church and wider community. Let it be a reminder to us all to be vigilant and to take care when either going to or leaving a church late at night.

Queen's Cross Church, Aberdeen CD

Geoffrey Atkinson

Our fine Father Willis organ is in need of a new computerised transmission system. The present wiring, dating from 1956, is understandably wearing out and we have to raise £70,000 to replace this, and to also undertake other necessary refurbishments. So we have now recorded a CD which is being sold in aid of the appeal.

It is entitled 'Airs and Graces: Music at Queen's Cross Church Aberdeen', and features the best soprano in the north east of Scotland, Moira Docherty, and two professional local instrumentalists, Bryan Dargie (violin) and Alison McDonald (cello), with myself at the organ or piano.

Over the years many concerts and recitals have been given in the Church, and we have often explored unusual and wide-ranging repertoire. Thus this disc includes many of these items performed by the local artists involved in their presentation. To provide a more general appeal we have included a selection of Scottish folk song arrangements.

Recording, editing and presentation have all been done professionally, and the disc comes in a cellophane-wrapped jewel case with a 12 page insert booklet. The CD has been extremely well received - one comment being that 'if the organ sounds as good as that, you will have trouble convincing people it needs money to be spent on it!' However, half of our initial print-run of 500 have been sold already.

The track-listing is as follows: *[Organ unless otherwise stated]*

- 1 Kenneth Leighton: Fanfare
- 2 George Thalben: Ball Elegy
- 3 Josef Rheinberger (violin and organ): Praeludium
- 4 Abendlied
- 5 Sigfrid Karg-Elert (soprano violin and organ); Völlige Hingabe
- 6 William Lloyd Webber (violin and organ): Benedictus
- 7 Michel Estellet-Brun: Stabat Mater (soprano and organ)
- 8 Francis Jackson: Prelude on a Folk Hymn: 'Lonesome Valley'
- 9 Paul Edwards: Partita on 'Iste Confessor'
- 10 GA: Jamie come try me (violin and organ)
- 11 JR: O whistle and I'll come to you (soprano and piano)
- 12 JR: My love is like a red, red rose (soprano and piano)
- 13 JR: The de'il's awa' wi' th'exciseman (soprano and piano)
- 14 GA: Dream Angus (soprano and organ)
- 15 GA: John Anderson, my Jo (soprano, violin and piano)
- 16 GA: Ae fond kiss (soprano and piano)
- 17 GA: Hebridean Elegy: Aignish (soprano, violin, cello and piano)

Total Time: 73'03"

The cost is £10.00 + 1.00 postage (UK and EEC, others at cost). Please order via e-mail to g.atkinson@fagus-music.com

Attracting Young Organists

David Jones

Nicola MacRae commented in her President's Letter (SFO News, Issue 19) about the difficulty of finding people who had any idea what a pipe organ looked and sounded like. Her comment caught my attention and set me thinking. Quite rightly, she links this with the increasingly secular world we live in. If people have any idea at all about organs, they associate them with the church, indeed will often refer to them as 'church' organs. As a Lay Reader in the Church of England I am as keen as anybody to attract people to church and to faith, but as an organist and a lover of organ music *per se* I am equally anxious to attract people to the organ and its music.

As a music teacher, I remember one student who showed some interest in the organ, but was put off by the thought that he would be pressurised into playing in a church and all the commitment that that entails. If we are to attract people to the organ without the 'church' strings attached, we must find ways of separating the two in people's minds. The irony is of course that in Handel's day, the organ was the instrument of the theatre (well known as the home of the devil!) and it was only during the 19th century in England, and later in Scotland, that the organ became the norm in churches. One effect of the rush to build organs at that time was that there were too many built of inferior quality. There is therefore a danger that musical people, competent on other instruments, imagine that the instrument they hear in their local church, if they go there at all, is all that the organ has to offer. It is up to us as organ enthusiasts to take any opportunity to point people to the better instruments in the neighbourhood.

So how can we attract people in this secular world? I can only offer my experience, and I don't claim to have produced many organists, though I hope I have generated a little interest. One entrée that most music teachers have is the List A piece in any piano grade exam. This is nearly always Baroque or Renaissance music which was written for harpsichord, virginals or organ; or a Classical piece written for the early piano. My experience is that once people can get their fingers round the notes, they are fascinated to play the piece on another instrument. Over a period of nearly 40 years' teaching I have been able to acquire various instruments, and I don't expect all teachers suddenly to come up with harpsichords and chamber organs, but I do think that with a modest amount of effort teachers could get access to suitable instruments. I find that once a youngster has played his Bach or his Handel on another instrument, and has got the feel of that instrument, he instinctively plays quite differently on a

piano. [It ought to go without saying that a digital 'harpsichord' or 'organ' will not feel right even if the sound gets anywhere near the original.] It is worth observing that some people might be a little 'precious' about their instruments, and fear that they might be damaged. My experience is that the owners or curators of the best instruments are the ones most willing for them to be used!

Another way in is to get youngsters interested in the workings of instruments, including the piano. I find that comparing the hammer-and-escapement action of the piano with the plucking action of the harpsichord family generates a lot of interest; and those who have seen an organ probably imagine that all the sound comes from the couple of dozen large pipes on the front of the case. Show them inside! Show them hundreds of little 'recorders' - most children can relate to these. 'May I play on it?' 'Yes'. 'It doesn't work!' 'What does a recorder need?' 'Air', they usually say. So we turn on the blower and away they go.

I am not claiming to be in any way original in these thoughts. Many organist friends play in secular buildings and take part in campaigns to raise money to maintain the instruments there and see them used. Obviously for many people an electronic instrument is a useful thing for note-practice, and you might well feel that this is the ideal thing to have at home or in the studio. I can only say that it is 30 years now since I pondered over spending some money either on a 3-stop chamber organ or on something with more stops but less quality. I have never regretted going for the chamber organ. It has appealed to many a youngster and it has been out in all sorts of buildings, sacred and secular, playing continuo parts and always attracting interest.

I would encourage readers to take any opportunity that presents itself to catch the interest of musical youngsters – and their parents.

Biarritz Concours 2013

Prix André Marchal for Interpretation and Improvisation held at **11th International Organ Competition, Biarritz, France** in memory of Jacqueline Englert-Marchal.

Jury: Gilles Cantagrel (France – President), Yasuko Uyama-Bouvard (Japan), François Delor (Switzerland), Françoise Levechin-Gangloff (France), Christophe Mantoux (France).

First prizes of 3,000 € in each of the disciplines will be awarded. Other Special Prizes and Audience Prizes may be awarded.

Application dates: after 15th April and before 6th July 2013.

Details at www.academieandremarchal.org The competition will be held in the Churches of Saint-Martin, Saint-Charles and Sainte-Eugénie in Biarritz on 22 - 26 October 2013.

Tayside Organists; Society

Sally Carus

Here are the events that Tayside Organists' Society have planned for 2013

Tuesday 12 February 2013 at 7.30pm Restoring an Organ Builder a talk by David Wyld Managing Director of Henry Willis and Sons Ltd. To be held in Newport-on-Tay Church of Scotland which boasts a Willis organ.

Saturday 9th March 2013 a visit to organs in Edinburgh selected from Usher Hall, Reid Hall, McEwen Hall, St Cuthbert's and St Mary's Metropolitan. Further details will be posted on our website.

Tuesday 23rd April 2013 at 7.30pm President's Night at Meadowside St Paul's Church, Dundee

Saturday 4th May 2013 at 12.30pm Recital by Kevin Bowyer at St John's Kirk, Perth

Guests are welcome at all these events and further information will be on our website www.taysideorganists.org.uk

Our AGM will be held on Tuesday 28th May at 7.30pm in St Andrew's Parish Church, Dundee

We are sad to report the death of Elizabeth Atkinson, a member of the society and secretary for some years. She was playing at her church in Scone until only two weeks before she died.

Lanarkshire Society of Organists

Margaret H Filshie

The Lanarkshire Society of Organists is celebrating its 50th Season in 2012 - 2013, and we have already enjoyed three special meetings.

The first event of our year, on a sunny day in September, was a Cornet and Organ Recital in historic Bothwell Parish Church, the *Cathedral of Lanarkshire*, presented by the young cornet player Rebecca Wilson, a 5th year pupil at Ayr Academy, with Bothwell's organist, Philip Hotham. The wonderful acoustic in Bothwell enhanced the sound of the cornet, especially in Handel's 'Let the Bright Seraphim' and the traditional 'Carnival of Venice'.

In October, the 50th Anniversary Recital was presented by Dr John Kitchen, playing the Father Willis organ, of 1870, in New St Andrew's Parish Church, Coatbridge. It was a return to Coatbridge for John, who had grown up there, attending Coatbridge High School. There was a good audience to enjoy a well-chosen programme - as well as music to inspire wonder, there were even pieces some of us might play in our own churches. Special thanks to John for a great afternoon!

In November, as guests of the Stirlingshire Society of Organists, we visited Stenhouse and Carron Parish Church, a beautiful kirk completely new to us, for a Concert with The East Fife Male Voice Choir, accompanied by Robin Bell on the newly refurbished Binns pipe organ, gifted to the church in 1902. These meetings continue a valued link between our two societies, and offer a chance to renew old friendships.

In the new year, on Saturday 19th January, at 2.30 p.m., we look forward to a 'Come and Sing' afternoon, led by Ian McCrorie, chorus master of the Scottish Philharmonic Singers. All are welcome at The Old Parish Church of Hamilton, where Ian will lead us in new and accessible music for choirs.

In February, the LSO is pleased to present an Organist Training Day in Our Lady of Good Aid Cathedral, Motherwell, with special emphasis on the new liturgy and hymn accompaniment, voluntaries and basic music skills, as well as easy choral pieces. John Pitcathley will be our leading tutor. We are hoping that this will be supported by organists of all abilities, and/or leaders of praise, and also, in a catholic venue, by catholic organists. Further information about this event, on Saturday 16th February, will be available on the LSO website.

On Saturday, 16th March, at 2.30 p.m., the Spring Organ Concert will be presented by Peter Howard, organist at Greenbank Parish Church, playing the Father Willis organ in Cambusnethan Parish Church, Wishaw. This is our final meeting before the AGM in April, and the outing by train to Newcastle with the Glasgow Society in June.

Visitors are always welcome at any of our meetings - if you are interested in the organ and its music, we would be very pleased to see you.

Edinburgh Society of Organists

Nicola MacRae

The ESO has had another successful start to their syllabus of events. As I write this, we are fast approaching our centenary year but before I make mention of what we have planned, I will report on recent past events.

We started off in September with a Come and Play session with short recital at St Stephen's Centre. The Father Willis is well known to ESO members and it was a joy to be back visiting the instrument again. Morley Whitehead began proceedings with a short informative talk, before we were entertained by an excellent recital given by two very talented young musicians who are well known to the ESO, Calum Robertson, organ, and Tom Poulson, trumpet. The recital included their own delightful arrangement of "Elegy" by the late ESO member, Graham Morrison, which highlighted the organ's strengths as an accompanying instrument. Morley also played a solo slot, which included selections from Hayden's Musical Clock Pieces. I was surprised that the event was not better attended but it meant that those who wished to play the organ had ample opportunity. It was encouraging to see non-players attend the event. Thanks go to St Stephen's Centre, Calum, Tom and Morley.

In October we went to St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral for a piano recital by ESO member John Bryden on the Cathedral's fine Steinway. John was responsible for selecting the piano and helped raise funds for it along with ESO Past President Lindsay Sinclair. This was not just any old piano recital! John gave a magnificent performance of organ pieces by JS Bach which were transcribed for piano by Busoni, Liszt, Kempff, Howells and Walton. It must be pointed out that these were true transcriptions, not arrangements and were fiendishly difficult to play in such a stylish manner. The setting was very atmospheric with appropriate lighting which, together with the Cathedral's natural beauty, added greatly to the effect of the music. The audience was naturally much closer to the performer than would be the case for an organ recital, giving a heightened sense of intimacy. It was encouraging to see a good turn out from members - keep it up! Thanks go to John and St Mary's Cathedral.

In November Jeremy Cull presented organ music suitable for Advent and Christmas at St Cuthbert's Parish Church. This event took the form of a recital of very thoughtfully chosen seasonal pieces. Works included "Variations sur *In dulci jubilo*" by Denis Bédard, "Choral improvisation on *Wachet auf*" by Paul Manz and "Bon Joseph écoute moy" by Michel Corrette. This last piece reminded me of just how versatile and characterful this organ is! Jeremy played extremely well and made full use of the organ's tonal possibilities. We all came away with new ideas for the coming seasons, so there was no excuse to play the same music as last year! Thanks go to Jeremy and St Cuthbert's.

Looking ahead to our Centenary Year, events are to include; a Civic Reception, Black-Tie Dinner and a series of organ recitals throughout the year. There is also a certain conference in May of which I very much look forward to sending you further details in due course.

Stirling & District Society of Organists

Ailsa Simpson

As ever, admission to our events is free to anyone and everyone whom is interested and any guests are assured of a warm welcome.

Saturday 20th April 2013 at 2.30 p.m. - Annual Outings to Kirk of Calder, Midcalder and St Mary's Episcopal Church, Dalmahoy.

Saturday 25th May 2013 at 2.30 p.m. - AGM in Carriden Parish Church, Bo'ness.
