

# **Tayside Organists' Society**

## **Recital on new digital organ at St Mary's Parish Church Dundee**

**by Graeme Stevenson**

**Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> May 2019**

*Review by Sally Carus*

Following the Annual General Meeting of Tayside Organists' Society, members were invited to attend this performance by Graeme Stevenson, organist of the church, to hear a demonstration of this newly installed organ. It is a custom built 4 manual instrument by Makin. It has 64 stops including three thirty-two foot pedal stops, a full set of couplers, 8 pistons, an extensive solo selection and a stepper.

Graeme gave us a very varied selection of pieces which amply displayed the wide range of sounds this instrument can produce. He started with the Grand Dialogue by Louis Marchand, a French baroque composer. This illustrated the French sounds available and contrasted well with the German pieces which followed. JS Bach's 'Nun komm der Heiden Heiland' and 'Freu dich sehr' by JS Bach showed us the intricacy of Bach's writing which came over very clearly and the latter made a very interesting comparison with the same chorale set by Krebs.

We then moved to Ireland and England for a 'Prelude on an Old Irish Air' (St Columba) by CV Stanford and a 'Preamble' by Percy Whitlock. These pieces gave us a lovely light sound from the organ but our contemplation of the second verse of psalm 23 (He leads me in green pastures and beside still waters) and the pastoral atmosphere created in the Preamble was rudely interrupted by the next piece – the March from the 1936 film 'Things to Come' written by Arthur Bliss. The original score for this sci-fi film has been arranged for organ by Robert Gower and Graeme found the right stops to represent a bizarre, futuristic march.

We returned to France for the last two pieces. The Andantino from Boellmann displayed some of the more mystical and mysterious sounds that are also heard in the better known Suite Gothique by this composer. The grand finale of this recital was 'L'Ange à la trompette' by Jacques Charpentier (1933-2017 and no relation to Marc-Antoine !). We could hear the angel flying, albeit in a somewhat agitated manner, and the trumpet even in the pedal passages but there was also a beautiful bell-like sound of the angel. At least, that is how I interpreted it. The piece finished with a repeated figure increasing in volume to a long held discord. The programme note said this ending was to show off the full organ and the thirty-two foot stops certainly had the floor vibrating beneath us.

This was an interesting and entertaining programme well chosen to show off the range of the organ stops and performed with Graeme's usual dexterity and expertise. I hope the congregation will enjoy hearing more of it in their Sunday worship.