

# **Tayside Organists' Society**

## **Recital by Pupils of The High School of Dundee In Dundee West Church**

**Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> January 2020**

*Review by Sally Carus*

Members of Tayside Organists' Society, parents and church members gathered at Dundee West Church to enjoy a wonderful evening of music provided by senior pupils of The High School of Dundee accompanied by four members of staff. The wide range of music was performed to a very high standard with great confidence and apparent enjoyment. Each item was introduced in an entertaining and informative way by the head of department, Dr Lionel Steuart-Fotheringham who also accompanied many of the performers on the piano.

First off was Fraser Houston who sang 'On the Street where you live' from My Fair Lady. He sang clearly and expressively. This was followed by an equally expressive performance of Saint-Saëns 'The Swan' by Kirstin Petrie on cello.

Then we had something completely different – 'Steam Train to Mallaig' in a duet for bagpipes. By Mary-Ann MacKinnon, this is an atmospheric piece well portrayed by Liam Brown and Cameron Jones. Sir Thomas Beecham once said 'brass bands are all very well in their place – outdoors and several miles away' and some people might think that of bagpipes too but if that had been the case this evening we should not have seen the concentration and cooperation on the players' faces, the effort involved in keeping the air flowing and the dexterity of the fingers. The latter was even more apparent in Liam's solo medley later in the programme.

Next came Catriona Paterson with her performance of 'Vilja' from the Merry Widow, an operetta by Franz Lehár. Catriona has a very mature sounding voice and brought a great variety of tone to this song about a young man who falls for a forest maiden.

The trombone is the loudest instrument in the orchestra but this evening it was played gently in a Swedish piece called Sang till Lotta by Jan Sandstrom. Fraser Smith produced a range of tone and colour in this simple song melody. Another simple, but not easy, melody was sung by Emily Reid in Maria Wiegenlied by Reger, better known to choral singers at Christmas as the Virgin Slumber Song. Emily has a very pure sounding voice which suited the song well. We were told that she has amassed quite a collection of silverware from her participation in the Arbroath Festival and deservedly so.

The pupils were allowed to relax for a short time while we listened to a performance on the organ by Dr Steuart-Fotheringham. He played 'Little Canonic Variations on Jesus bids us shine' and 'Ite missa est' from the Dublin Festival Mass both by Kenneth Leighton and written around 1980. The first of these showed off the soft stops of the organ while the second was based on a piece of plainchant which gradually became more and more complex, building to an exciting climax and ending with many flourishes and crashing discords.

That may have sounded like a nightmare to some of the audience but we were brought back to the peace of a sweet dream in Toluwani Idowu's performance of Après un Rêve by Fauré, a setting of words

by Romain Bussine. She sang in French which is always a challenge but her range of dynamics and relaxed manner making it all seem so easy, were perfect for this song.

The choice of music became lighter after the dream starting with Liam Brown's virtuosic bagpipe medley of Scottish tunes and followed by 'Misty' performed on voice *and* trumpet by Catriona Taylor. The short trumpet interlude was preceded by some scat singing so we had an all round performance of this jazz piece by Errol Garner.

The jazz theme continued with Jason Pan's rendition on alto saxophone of 'Summertime' by George Gershwin. How we all longed for summertime as we sat in a slightly chilly church.

The last but by no means least soloist was Megan Cant singing 'Tonight' from West Side Story. Megan, too, has a collection of silverware which she has rightly won in various competitions.

The grand finale was provided by the wind ensemble (Malachy McCrimmon and Rose Ryan on flutes, Laura Connolly, Ruby McIntee and Emily Reid on clarinets, Eilidh Acford, Fraser Houston and Jason Pan on alto saxophones) led by Mrs Susan Sneddon who also played clarinet. 'Live and Let Die' was written by Paul and Linda McCartney for the James Bond film. It was played with great energy and enthusiasm by the ensemble and brought the evening to a rousing conclusion.

After a vote of thanks to the pupils, their teachers and the church we adjourned to the hall for tea, coffee and a spread of delicious cakes which rounded off a wonderful evening. The musical performances had been most impressive due to hard work and in no small part to the dedication of their teachers. We wish all these young performers many years of great music making whether they make it their profession or keep it as a very rewarding pastime.

And if anyone reading this would like to hear more from the musicians of the High School they will be putting on a concert in the Caird Hall on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> March.