

Tayside Organists' Society
Organ Recital by Geoff Bolton
St Ninian's Cathedral, Perth
Saturday 30th October 2021
Review by Ron Oliver

We're Bach Again

After the long Covid break without meeting, TOS resumed activities on Sat 30th Oct., with an all J S Bach recital given on the organ of St Ninian's Cathedral, Perth, by the incumbent Director of Music, and fellow member, Geoff Bolton.

As well as a programme of great variety, the music was also a nod in the direction of the forthcoming Festive Season. The pieces were introduced by Geoff and, along with informative programme notes provided, good background information complemented the musical enjoyment.

The concert opened with the Toccata in D Minor (Dorian) BWV 538, and Geoff's spirited playing revealed the great empathy he has with Bach's music.

Two Advent Chorale Preludes followed, including perhaps the best known of all the chorale preludes, 'Wachet auf ruft uns die Stimme', BWV 659. Here, familiarity does not breed contempt, and again Geoff's playing brought out the best in 'Wachet Auf'.

The central piece of the recital was the Fugue in E Flat BWV (552), known as the 'St Anne', although the name was not attached by Bach, but added some time later. The familiar opening section, featuring 'O God Our Help In Ages Past' was excellently played with the pedal entry being quite dominant. In the central section, played on manuals only, again the melody was well displayed among the cascading quavers, and this led to a thrilling finale.

Next was an early Christmas present in the form of two Chorale Preludes for Christmas and New Year. 'Der Tag, der ist so Freudenreich' BWV 605 for which Geoff chose a beautiful woodwind sound for the melody underlain by some delicate registration giving subtle support to the solo instrument.

In sharp contrast was 'In dir ist Freud' BWV 615, and indeed 'Freud' it was to hear the majesty of the organ at St Ninian's in all its glory.

The recital ended with the Prelude and Fugue in D Major, BWV 532, with its demanding pedal part. Although the organ had a major refurbishment some 10 years ago, this did not include the pedal organ, which according to Geoff, has a much heavier action, but his estimated playing accuracy target of 82% was easily surpassed, bringing the concert to an exciting conclusion, but not quite.....

The audience was treated to an encore, 'Nun Danket Alle Gott' by Bach, but as arranged by Virgil Fox. This provided an opportunity to hear the mighty Tuba stop used for the chorale. Normally used as a solo stop, Geoff played Tuba chords, to the consternation of those wearing hearing aids.