

Tayside Organists' Society

Organ recital by David Smith, Ron Oliver & Hannah Gibson

St Mary's Episcopal Church, Newport on Tay 24th September 2022

Review by Kevin Veal and George Bell

For the first meeting of the Society's 2022-23 session, Tayside Organists' Society appreciated the warm welcome from the rector of St Mary's, Rev Kathy Barrable, and the Vestry and members of this lovely church. A varied musical programme was provided by two of our long-standing members, David Smith and Ron Oliver, with a special guest appearance by Hannah Gibson. Hannah is currently organist at the nearby Parish Church, and has a distinguished musical background.

The concert took place to assist the St Mary's Congregation's ongoing fund-raising efforts to secure the installation of disabled access to the church, and the members of Tayside Organists' Society were delighted to support this worthwhile venture.

A printed programme, with much information about the organ and the three recitalists, told us that the pipe organ, powered originally by a water engine, was built and installed by John R Miller, Organ Builder, Dundee, in 1903/1904. Prior to the last major refurbishment in 1999 by the late Sandy Edmonstone, it had been overhauled by Rothwell's of Harrow in 1947/1948, (when an electric blower had been installed), and by J A MacKenzie, Organ Builder, Glasgow, in 1967. The organ is now maintained by Paul Miller, Organ Builder, Bonnybridge.

All three players introduced their own recital contributions, and it was evident that much diligent research had been carried out beforehand. The programme was:

David Smith (Longest serving member of Tayside Organists' Society - over 60 years)

- 1) *Tuba Tune* – C S Lang (1891-1971)
- 2) *A Reverie by the River* (Calm and Cloud) – Sir Frederick Bridge (1844-1924)
- 3) *A Toi* (Love Song) – Percy Elliott (1870-1932)

David Smith is no stranger to the delightful pipe organ at St Mary's. This was clearly shown in his excellent choice of music from the composers C S Lang, Frederick Bridge, and Percy Elliot, with sympathetic registration. Lang's Tuba Tune was surprisingly successful, even although the organ does not actually possess a Tuba stop.

Ron Oliver (President of Tayside Organists' Society)

- 1) *Student Polka* – Johann Strauss (Son) (1825-1899)
- 2) *O God, Thou faithful God* – Flor Peeters (1903-1986)
- 3) Variations on *The Star-Spangled Banner* – Dudley Buck (1839-1909)

The contribution from Ron Oliver, our esteemed society President, further displayed the varied sounds of this organ, with compositions from Johann Strauss Jr, Flor Peeters, and Percy Elliot. The arrangement of the Strauss Student Polka evoked memories of trips to Vienna!

Hannah Gibson (Organist of Newport-on-Tay Parish Church)

- 1) Praeludium in D minor (BuxW 140) - Dietrich Buxtehude (1637-1707)
- 2) From 6 studies in canonischer form for pedalpiano -Robert Schumann (1810-1856)
 - (a) No 2 Mit innigen Ausdruck
 - (b) No 3 Andantino

Hannah impressed us greatly with her sensitive approach to these familiar (and not so familiar) pieces. Particularly enjoyable was the Buxtehude Praeludium in D minor (BuxWV140), which exercised most of the pipes. The two Schumann studies were very well suited to the "proper" pipe organ, which is not surprising as they were composed for his "pedal piano", an additional set of pedal keys and strings which would sit under the conventional piano.

The final encore pieces from each player were: -

David – *A Fancy* (arr. Harry Wall) by John Stanley (1712-1786);

Ron – *Sortie in E flat* by L J A Lefébure-Wély (1817-1869); and

Hannah – *Marche des Marseilliois et L’Air Ça-ira* for fortepiano – C Balbastre (1724-1799)

Hannah rounded off the evening by playing *Burmese Blues – Mandy and Dula* by William Lloyd Webber (1914-1982).

At the end of the concert Hannah's former piano teacher, Judith Wilkes, presented her with a bouquet, and a gift token was presented to each performer on behalf of the church.

Vice-President of Tayside Organists’ Society, George Bell, expressed eloquent thanks to the three soloists, and to the Rector of St Mary’s and the Vestry for their welcome (and heating of the church for this concert!). The evening concluded with generous hospitality of tea/coffee and “eats” (both savoury and sweet) provided by the Congregation of St Mary’s.