

## Tayside Organists' Society

Annual Conference of Scottish Federation of Organists  
In St Mary's Episcopal Church, Hamilton on 13 and 14 May 2021

*Review by Kevin Veal*

Three members of Tayside Organists' Society attended the whole of the 2022 SFO Conference in Hamilton, with a fourth member attending in the afternoon of Saturday 14 May 2022. Although the number of delegates attending was not high, the host Society – Lanarkshire Society of Organists – must be congratulated in putting the whole Conference programme together, not only because it was the first such Conference after the pandemic which struck this country in March 2020, but also because the Lanarkshire Society had managed to keep the original Conference programme – originally scheduled for May 2020 – in place.

The Conference was held in St Mary's Episcopal Church, Auchingramont Road, Hamilton, where delegates were warmly welcomed at the start of the entire proceedings by incoming SFO President, Tom White, (a member of the Lanarkshire Society of Organists). Thereafter, Rev Kevin de Beer, the South African born Minister of Bellshill Central Parish and a long-standing friend of the host Society, offered prayers of petition for the success of the Conference.

St Mary's Church, completed in 1847, is a former military church (having been the home church of the legendary 90th Regiment, 2nd Battalion of the Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) – hence the upright seating in the church! The organ was installed in 1889 by Forster & Andrews, and was last overhauled by the respected Glasgow Organ Builder, James A Mackenzie in 5 separate stages between 1999 and 2012. It is an A-Listed instrument.

It was on that instrument that Dr John Kitchen MBE, the Honorary President of the Lanarkshire Society of Organists, and also the current President of the Incorporated Association of Organists, gave a recital on the first evening of the Conference, Friday 13 May 2022. Dr Kitchen, who is pre-eminent amongst today's Scottish Organists, gave a recital of the highest standard which was very much enjoyed by all present. His choice of programme demonstrated the entire range of colours available from the organ and, notably, included organ works by 3 women, Elizabeth Turner, an English woman who lived in the 18th century; Florence Price, an American lady with African

origins, and Cecilia McDowell, a modern contemporary Scottish composer. Dr Kitchen explained that works written by women have always been available yet seemed to have been seriously overlooked when programme selections were made. He hoped that this “defect” could be addressed – if not immediately remedied – by such selections becoming routine rather than exceptional. In a very personal choice, Dr Kitchen included a piece by the legendary Dr Francis Jackson, Organist Emeritus of York Minster, who died earlier this year at the age of 104 years.

Dr Kitchen’s programme was as follow: -

|   |                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| Voluntary in D minor Op 5, No 8<br>Allegro<br>Adagio<br>Allegro   | John Stanley (1712-1786)            |
| Andante in E flat major   | Samuel Sebastian Wesley (1810-1876) |
| Sonata no 2 in C minor/major Op 65<br>Grave-Adagio<br>Allegro maestoso e vivace<br>Allegro moderato (fugue) | Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)       |
| Lesson III in D (1756)<br>(Allegro)<br>Minuetto affettuoso<br>Giga<br>March                                 | Elizabeth Turner (1730-1756)        |
| Adoration   | Florence Price (1887-1953)          |
| Celebration   | Cecilia McDowell (born 1951)        |
| Three Chorale Preludes<br>St Cross<br>Melcombe<br>Dundee  | Hubert Parry (1848-1918)            |
| Praeludium in E   | Francis Jackson (1917-2022)         |

Toccata: Nu la oss takke Gud  
(Now thank we all our God)

Egil Hovcland (1924-2013)

Thanks were expressed to the Recitalist, Dr Kitchen, when he was reminded that, as a young boy of 7 years of age, he was seated at the console of the former Coatbridge Town Hall organ, when he was photographed!

Thereafter, a very welcome light buffet supper was provided for the delegates, who had opportunity to renew old friendships and, in addition, to make new musical connections.

The following morning, (Saturday 14 May 2022), delegates gathered for the day's proceedings. Welcoming back the delegates, SFO President-elect, Tom White, invited the President of the Glasgow Society of Organists, Tom Ferguson, to pay tribute to Dr Iain Galbraith, the Glasgow Society nominated President of the SFO, who had died during his tenure of office on 20 December 2021. Mr Ferguson detailed Dr Galbraith's long involvement with, and support for, organists in Scotland, and that we all benefited from his involvement on our behalf in so many different situations. Immediately thereafter, Tom White, the Lanarkshire Society nominated President of the SFO, formally took office, enabling him immediately to preside over the AGM.

The SFO Annual General Meeting followed, in the course of which reference was made to the death earlier this year of the Tayside-based Organ Builder, Mr Sandy Edmonstone, and his notable contribution to the work and preservation of pipe organs in Scotland.

At the conclusion of the AGM (and a short coffee/tea break), delegates gathered for a Workshop/Talk on "Improvisation" by Edinburgh-based John Riley, who is well-known for giving workshops on this topic throughout the United Kingdom and, most notably, to the organ scholars at Cambridge University, as part of their Masterclass programme. He has also participated as a Tutor at the RCO-SCOTS organ training day at Dunblane Cathedral. Mr Riley gave a sparkling and inspired talk on his subject, which kept the attention of his listeners throughout. His handout – to which he constantly referred during his presentation – was particularly helpful including, as far the writer is concerned, the availability of the "*Arabic*" scale mode. This talk was

directed to practical hints and helpful suggestions for all organists, who require to improvise at short notice and for unpredictable lengths of time.

A very welcome and healthy luncheon was served by the ladies of St Mary's in the St Mary's Centre. Food of the highest quality was gladly welcomed by all delegates, who also relished superb desserts, all home-made!

Following the lunch, delegates returned to the church, where a short recital of songs was given by Soprano, Maureen Todd and Tenor, Raymond Tulips, ably accompanied on the church's grand piano by The Lanarkshire Society's Treasurer, David Fisher. Songs from "Kismet" and other musicals, as well as other well-known melodies were sung, to the great enjoyment of those present.

The final organ recital was given by David Hamilton, the Director of Music at St Mary's Episcopal Church, Hamilton, who is University Organist of Strathclyde University. He also teaches at the Music School of Douglas Academy, and at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. Again, as at the previous evening's recital, he was able to let his listeners hear the full range of the organ, from *ppp* to *fff*. His varied programme, as set out below, included 3 short pieces composed by the late President of the SFO, Dr Iain Galbraith. The whole programme, played with consummate skill and great musical sensitivity, was much enjoyed by all present. The programme was: -

Praeludium et Fuga in G (BWV 541) J S Bach (1685-1750)

From Glasgow Orgelbuchein Iain B Galbraith (1943-2021)

No 3 Rosenlied

No 5 Trauermusik

No 7 Pastorale

From *24 Pieces en style libre* (Opus 31) Louis Vierne (1870-1937)

No 12 Canzona

From *Credo* Cor Kee (1900-1997)

Psalm 5 Suite

Prelude; Lines & Blocks; Fugue

From *3 Preludes et Fugues* (opus 99) Camille Saint-Saens (1835-1921)

No 2 in B

Following another (!) break for coffee/tea, delegates proceeded into St Mary's for the final time, to participate in the celebration of Choral Evensong, the celebrant being the Rector of St Mary's, the Reverend Matthew Little. The choir conductor was David Hamilton and the organist was Tiffany Vong. (Tiffany is no stranger to the Tayside Society, having previously participated in a fund raising Organathon for the Friends of the Caird Hall Organ. She is also returning to the Caird Hall, Dundee on 5 July 2022 to give one of the 2022 Summer Caird Hall Organ Recitals.) The settings for the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis were by Thomas Morley and the Anthem was Sir Edward Bairstow's setting of "Save us, O Lord". The concluding Voluntary played by Tiffany was the Praeludium and Fuga in C (BWV 545), at the end of which she was rightly and warmly applauded by the delegates.

Thanks must go to the Lanarkshire Society of Organists for their continuing enthusiasm and fervency in ensuring that this Conference – delayed from 2020 because of the Pandemic – did actually proceed, and with almost the original proposed programme. The meticulous attention to detail and preparation certainly bore rich dividends, as it ensured that the whole Conference went off without a hitch. The selection of St Mary's Episcopal Church as the venue proved to be an inspired choice, especially because of the superb catering and recreational facilities, where delegates had their coffee/tea breaks and meals, (all prepared and served by the ladies of St Mary's Church in the St Mary's Centre, part of the wider Church complex). Grateful thanks are due to all who helped to ensure the success of the Conference.