

BGO

BORDERS GUILD OF ORGANISTS AND  
CHURCH MUSICIANS  
SPECIAL CONFERENCE EDITION

NEWSLETTER NO 40  
SUMMER 2017





## **LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT**

Over many years I have developed an interest in organ music and the playing of the organ mostly in support of my wife, Eileen, who has played in St Mungo's Parish Church, in Penicuik, for a few decades. Attending numerous meetings of the Edinburgh Society of Organists showed the wide variety of emotion that is part of the music and that is brought to the human senses through performance on organs large and small.

After being introduced to the activities of the Borders Guild of Organists (BGO) a new dimension of the place of the organ appeared. The place in the small hamlet, village or town which is quite unlike its place in the 'big city'. One is forced to the simple conclusion that there is music, instruments and players that come together in special ways for each and every community to help to express their love of God through that special combination of people and sound. The numerous Societies of Organists around any country, but especially around Scotland, should nurture and develop these special relationships.

At the AGM on 24 June 2017 I agreed to the proposal that I should be the President of the Guild for 2017 – 2018. I am happy to accept the challenge and I hope that our collective efforts in the coming year will contribute to the development of the Guild. Part of the efforts of the Guild may include the encouragement of young people to gain an interest in church music as well as giving opportunities for those who are interested to develop their playing skills with such a complex, varied and versatile instrument – the organ.

For my part as the BGO President for the coming year (2017 – 2018) but not being an organist I am likely to find the next year particularly challenging. I need to claim membership of the BGO as a 'church musician' as I have sung in our church choir for a long time.

The last year will be a difficult one to follow because of the success of the Annual Conference of the Scottish Federation of Organists that was hosted by the BGO. However, that massive challenge was met and overcome and the BGO have received many plaudits. Whatever we achieve in the coming year I hope will help to widen the appeal of the church organ and generate greater interest in all of the special combinations.



Dr Eric W. Marchant

Dear All

Thinking back to the first weekend in May, when the Borders Guild of Organists hosted the SFO Conference in the Borders, I can say that I feel very grateful, pleased and also glad that we have managed to make this event happen so successfully. So many ideas and plans were made, discarded and then put together again.

Over a period of about two years our committee has worked hard and very efficiently as a team. It has been a pleasure and very much a learning process to head our preparations.

My heartfelt **thank you** goes to all involved with the conference. The kind and thought-provoking feedback which we received is a credit to all and a lovely reward.

Brigitte Harris  
President BGO 2016-2017

## **FELIX MENDELSSOHN AND THE ROMANTIC SPIRIT**

**Cantica Alba - Vocal Ensemble**

**Directed by Michael Harris - Speaker Brigitte Harris**

In the beautiful historic setting of Abbotsford House Library, the first presentation of the Conference was skillfully led by Brigitte Harris and vocal ensemble Cantica Alba, directed by Michael Harris.

In Brigitte's talk we learned of Mendelssohn's personal and historical background and his development as an eminent composer of the Romantic period. He travelled extensively in England and Scotland absorbing the culture and natural beauty which inspired his music.

The Mendelssohn family took a great interest in Sir Walter Scott's historical romances which were highly regarded in Germany. Mendelssohn and his friend and companion Klingemann wanted to discover the romance of Scotland as described by Scott in his Waverley novels.

Throughout the lecture Romantic Part Songs by Mendelssohn and his contemporaries were performed by Cantica Alba - a rich vocal tapestry of beautiful colour, emotion and craftsmanship, a true reflection of what Mendelssohn encapsulates in his compositional style.

Mairi and Robin Leach



## CONFERENCE WELCOME IN WORDS AND MUSIC



On Friday 5th May, prior to dinner in the Ochiltree Restaurant Mairi and Robin Leach offered a short presentation in words and music to welcome the delegates to the conference. Robin gave a brief talk on the historical and religious background to the development of choral and organ music in Scotland. This occurred at Greyfriars Kirk, Edinburgh under the ministry of Rev Dr Robert Lee in the mid 19th century. We learned of the introduction of the harmonium to church services to accompany the voices of the choir. There was much resistance at the time to this change from traditionalists who strongly disapproved of instruments being used in public worship and regarded them as being man made and therefore non spiritual.

Robin then led us to the subject of a Skye Terrier, Bobby who was living in Greyfriars Churchyard around the same time and making history by softening the hearts of all who met him. Robin told us about his master John Gray and their strong companionship from around 1856 to 1858. Sadly John Gray died of tuberculosis in 1858 and Bobby watched over his grave until his own death in 1872.

Robin's thoughts turned to Maida, one of Sir Walter Scott's dogs, earlier in the 18th century. There is a statue of lovely Maida the Scottish Deer hound in front of the main house as well as in a much larger form with his devoted master on Princes Street. In 1815, Scott gave a fictional name from his novel Guy Mannering to a breed of terrier now known as the Dandie Dinmont. It is thought that the Dandie Dinmont is partly originated from the Skye Terrier.

Mairi was inspired by the subject of both dogs to compose two welcome pieces. The first is a Slow Air "Maida and Bobby Remembered", the second a Jig "The Dance of the Dandie Dinmont." These pieces are also a tribute to our church musical heritage fostered by Rev Dr Robert Lee and others over the past 150 years.

Mairi and Robin Leach



Dinner at Ochiltree Restaurant, Abbotsford

## HAPPY MEMORIES

At the end of a lovely day in Abbotsford, we tramped upstairs to the Ochiltrees Restaurant with its fabulous views over the trees to Sir Walter's House, and, after an excellent talk from Rob, followed by some delightful, original music from Mairi, we wine and dined on soup, chicken and panna-cotta with fruit.

Comfortably replete, we settled back, coffees in hands, to listen to our guest speaker for the evening, the Reverend Ian Gilmour, minister of St Andrew's and St George's West, Edinburgh.

Ian obviously wanted us to finish the day on a high note and he started this by getting us all to laugh, as loudly and uproariously as possible, table by table. He then judged which table had performed the best in his opinion, and I believe it was the one I was sitting at!

This set the tone for Ian's speech and he spent the next forty minutes or so reminiscing about funny stories he had heard, old jokes re-surfaced, including the collection of "Elephant" jokes we all remember from days gone by. He mentioned that his favourite comedian was Chic Murray, a Scot with a rather droll sense of humour. I remember laughing at Chic Murray on television many years ago, but my most recent memory of him was as the somewhat weird, piano-playing headmaster in the film "Gregory's Girl" which I saw for the first time in 1983, in a Services cinema at RAF Akrotiri when we were posted to nearby Episkopi with the Argylls – a very happy time, as you can imagine.

More stories followed, more jokes were forthcoming and we ended the evening with much laughter and fun, which, I'm sure, is just what our speaker intended! We dispersed to our various abodes in good fettle, already looking forward to what Saturday would bring.

Mary Shields

PORTRAIT GALLERY  
PICTURES OF A CONFERENCE





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get in touch with [maggystead@btinternet.com](mailto:maggystead@btinternet.com)

## VOICE WORKSHOP WITH FRANCES COOPER

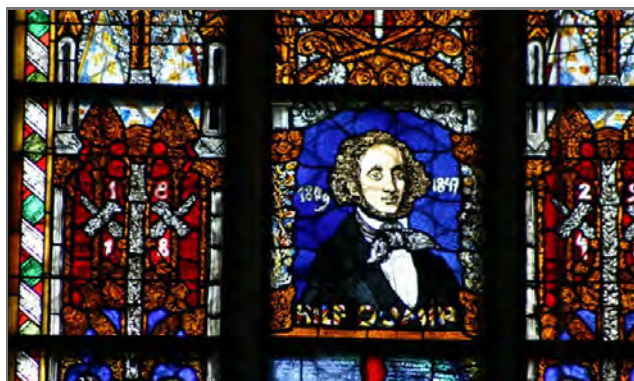
In the morning of our second conference day delegates found themselves at a singing workshop with Frances Cooper, possibly a first for an SFO conference, which was described by one of our delegates as 'serious fun'.

Organists are often asked to lead choral singing, and it was one of the aims of this workshop to provide helpful tools and develop confidence in this.

Here everyone was encouraged by way of a series of exercises to experience their own vocal capabilities. Relaxation, breathing techniques, tuning skills and voice blending were part of Frances's toolkit for us. This culminated in the joint rendition of a Kyrie, sung in parts and delivered with joy and confidence.

Brigitte Harris





*Mendelssohn stained glass window St Thomas Church Leipzig*

## **MENDELSSOHN AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES**

### **Michael Harris**

The day continued with a highly detailed and fascinating lecture on Mendelssohn and his contemporaries by Michael Harris.

We heard of Mendelssohn's time spent travelling throughout Europe and Scotland. In 1841 Mendelssohn was approached to apply for the post as Reid Professor of Music at Edinburgh University. He politely declined. He founded the Leipzig Conservatoire where he taught solo singing, instrumental performance and composition. Among his students was Robert Schumann to whom he taught composition and piano.

Michael concluded his illuminating and informative lecture by telling us of Mendelssohn's difficulties arising from his Jewish background during his own lifetime. In Nazi Germany during the 1930's he was not regarded as a major composer.

Mendelssohn was instrumental in bringing J.S. Bach's St Matthew Passion back into the public light, when he organized a performance in Leipzig just before his first journey to England and Scotland.

Exhaustion undoubtedly contributed to his early death in 1847.

Mairi and Robin Leach

## ORGAN RECITAL BY PAUL STUBBINGS

This recital took place during the afternoon of Saturday 6 May. After the stimulating talks about Mendelssohn and his connections with the Scottish Borders and his relationships with 19<sup>th</sup> century composers of his own era it was good to sit quietly and listen to a programme of pieces for organ written by six composers all of whom wrote a wide range of music for the organ. These pieces ranged from the quiet and contemplative to the vibrant and positive sounds that filled the large space of Melrose Parish Church. With his programme Paul Stubbings brought together themes of the Conference. During the recital, the music flowed from piece to piece showing the skill of the player, and the sound and the space of the church came together in a powerful combination.

Members of the BGO were delighted to know that our Honorary President had joined us during the afternoon including the Recital and the Service and the presentations that followed at the end of the Conference.

Eric W Marchant

### RECITAL PROGRAMME

Prelude and Fugue in e minor op.35 n° 1	Felix Mendelssohn 1809-1847
Scherzo & Passacaglia (from Sonata 8 in e minor)	Josef Rheinberger 1839-1901
Maytime Gavotte	Alfred Hollins 1865-1942
Romanza	William Wolstenholme 1865-1931
Trois pièces	Gabriel Pierné 1863-1937
Fantaisie in Eb	Camille Saint-Saëns 1835-1921

## CONFERENCE ANTHEM

### Out of the Everywhere into the Here

Music by Andrew Carvel to a poem by George Macdonald (1824-1905)  
Commissioned by the Borders Guild of Organists  
for the Scottish Federation of Organists Conference 2017

*I wrote this new anthem with flexibility in mind.*

*Not all choirs can rely on having all voices parts and as such, this setting can be performed in a number of ways.*

*The main body of the anthem uses the text from George Macdonald's poem 'Baby' and this is sung by the upper voices. At the same time the lower voices sing the tune French (Dundee) and the words of Psalm 121. Depending on the number of voices available the Psalm tune can be sung by a soloist, played by an instrumentalist or omitted completely.*

*Andrew Carvel*



Singing of the Conference Anthem

Andrew is currently studying Composition with Peter Nelson on the MMus programme at the University of Edinburgh and is enjoying incorporating new musical ideas into his work.

## **DIARY OF EVENTS 2017-2018**

### **Saturday 30 September 2017**

Seminar on Repertoire & Resources  
The Steading, Blainslie TD1 2PR 2- 4pm

### **Saturday 25 November 2017**

BGO Members' Recital  
St Mary of Wedale, Stow 2pm

### **Saturday 3 February 2018**

Vocal Workshop with Frances Cooper  
Lauder Kirk 11am – 1pm  
Bring packed lunch

### **Saturday 3 March 2018**

Annual Social Lunch  
Cardrona Hotel Peebles 12.30 For 1.00pm  
Guest speaker Alistair McGregor

### **Saturday 26 May 2018**

AGM – Carfraemill 12 noon  
Guest Speaker David McElderry (Organ Builder)  
*Organs in their Spaces*

### **Saturday 16 June 2018**

Summer outing to Ayton Church 2pm

For bookings or further information contact  
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### **STEPHEN RIDE 1965 -2017**

*Visiting our website recently, you will have noticed that it had not been updated. Stephen Ride, who created the website, and kept it updated, died all of a sudden on Easter Monday.*

*He was a great friend. He was funny, warm and generous – he did all the work for us free of charge, in memory of his mother who passed away when he was a teenager, and who was an organist in Liverpool.*

*Cover: The Eildons - drawing by Maggy Stead*

**A few comments from our delegates:**

...from the selection of Abbotsford House for the events (and the feeding of the five thousand!) on Friday, right through to the celebrity recital on Saturday afternoon and final act of worship as well as the very welcome cup of tea to see us safely on our journey back home, nothing went wrong. You have certainly set the bar at a very high level for future conferences.

....the venues were splendid - enhanced no end by the wonderful weather! - and there were so many excellent and varied activities to enjoy.....

*....I have been attending SFO Congresses (on and off!) for years, and this really was one of the best. A real highlight, with excellent, quality musical input.*

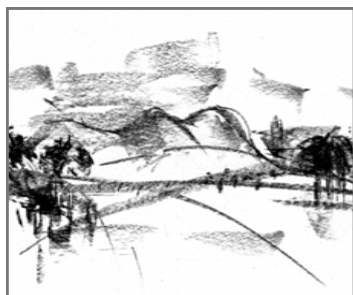
*....The theme and the organisation of each day was well thought out and everything, from the venues, the catering, the speakers, leaders of workshops and of course the organist, Paul Stubbings and the Conference Anthem by Andrew Carvel were truly superb and most enjoyable.*

*...the weekend was wonderful - an excellent choice to start in Abbotsford with its amazing site and house - I thought the library concert was wonderful. The events on Saturday were equally good - varied and interesting. A splendid recital by a talented player! The singing part of the conference (from the Dawn chorus to the rehearsal and singing of the anthem) was a change from the usual fare!*

*I enjoyed the event enormously - everything seemed so affirming and positive!*

**PUBLICATIONS  
FOR SALE**

[mharris@waitrose.com](mailto:mharris@waitrose.com)  
[www.andrewcarvel.com](http://www.andrewcarvel.com)

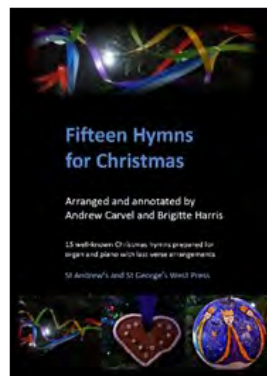


**Out Of the Everywhere  
into the Here**

Conference Anthem  
Andrew Carvel  
Music sheet **£2.00** + P&P

**Songs of Longing**

Compositions by G.P. da Palestrina,  
A Carvel, S M Mitchell  
Choir of St Andrew's & St George's  
West Directed by B Harris  
**CD £6.00** + P&P



**Hymn books**  
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