

Music at Services at the Cathedral of St. Machar in February 2019

Choral Music

The thriving choir, which includes Choral Scholars, sings at the Sunday morning Service and has an extensive repertoire, ranging from medieval plainchant to pieces which have been written in the twenty first century. The Choir usually makes two contributions to the Service - an Anthem and a Motet during the Offertory collection. Three items are included at the monthly Communion Service on the last Sunday of the month.

If you are an experienced singer who would be interested in joining the choir please contact the Music Director (rogerbevanwilliams@g.mail.com)

Music sung by the Choir this month will include the usual wide range of repertoire, running from the sixteenth century Italian composer Ludovico Viadana (Exsultate Justi) through standard cathedral repertoire by Attwood, Stanford, Clucas and Ives.. We shall, however, add two new works to our repertoire – *Love Bade me Welcome* by the Master of the Queen's music Judith Weir.

In addition to the morning Services, there will be a special evening Service at 6 p.m.sung by our Choral Scholars. This will be preceded by a concert by the Scholars from 4.30 – 5.15 , followed by a cup of tea.

3.2.19	The Presentation of Christ at the Temple. Anthem: When to the Temple Mary went: J.Eccard Offertory: Nunc Dimittis (Service in C) C.V.Stanford
10.2.19	Anthem: Love bade me welcome Judith Weir Offertory: Jubilate (Service in B flat) C.V.Stanford
17.2.19	Anthem: The Beatitudes Arvo Pärt Offertory: I will lift up mine eyes Humphrey Clucas
17.2.19	Special Evening Service led by the Choral Scholars at 6 p.m. Anthem: Through the Day Philip Moore Offertory: Tantum Ergo Louis Vierne NB This Service will be preceded by a concert at 4.30
24.2.19	Communion Anthem: Exsultate Justi L.Viadana Offertory: Listen, sweet Dove G.Ives Communion: O Sacrum Convivium R.B.Williams

The Organ

The present organ is not the first that there has been in the Cathedral. Because of the lack of direct evidence it is difficult to be certain what sort of instrument there might have been in the Cathedral before the Reformation. But we do learn of two books of organ music which were recorded as having been at the Cathedral in 1436 – a very early date for an organ book. At the turn of the sixteenth century, during the time when William Elphinstone was Bishop, it seems likely that there would have been a large organ sited in the building, possibly in the Choir or in one of the Transepts. Given that Bishop Elphinstone had come to Aberdeen after living in both Paris and Louvain, it seems very probable that the instrument would have been as splendid as the Bishop's enlarged foundation of Vicars Choral. This organ would most probably have been built on medieval *Blockwerk* principles, with loud and magnificent sounds, and would have been played on Sundays and major feast days.

The organ in use today is a splendid example of a romantic instrument built by 'Father' Willis. It has three manuals and pedals and was originally built in 1891 with a third manual added in 1898. The organ was at first sited in front of the east window, but was moved to its present position in 1928, at which time some tonal additions were made. In 1973 there was a rebuild, with some further tonal modifications, carried out by the firm of Noel Mander of London. The three ranks of Willis pipes that were at that time taken off and kept in storage, were brought back onto the Choir organ in July 2018 with assistance from the Bach Choir. This most recent work has restored some of the quieter sounds that the organ originally possessed. The organ has a rich resonance and a variety of tonal sound that was characteristic of this most celebrated of Victorian organ builders.

In recent times, since the first organist Sydney Townsend was appointed in 1891, there have been only nine Organists, including some very eminent figures. These include Marshall Gilchrist (1920-38), John B. Dalby (1938-54), David Murray (1954-81), and James Lobban (1954-81), after which Mike Thomson held the post until 2016.

During February the organ voluntaries will mainly focus on two areas of repertoire. Louise Vierne (1870-1937) was a blind French Organist and composer. After studying with Franck and Widor at the Paris Conservatoire, he became the Organist at Notre Dame in Paris. His *24 Pièces en style libre* were published in 1914 and each one lasts around 3 minutes. Voluntaries at the end of the Service will be of more recent repertoire with the exception of 10th. February, when the 'classic' Postlude of Vierne will be heard. These recessional pieces reinforce the interest that has been shown by recent composers in writing for the pipe organ.

Voluntaries for February

3.2.19:	Canon	L.Vierne
	Wild Mossy Mountains	Judith Weir

10.2.19:	Reverie Postlude	L.Vierne L.Vierne
17.2.19	Pieces 1 and 3 (Trivium) Piece 2 (Trivium)	A.Pärt: A.Pärt
24.2.19`	Madrigal Paean	L.Vierne Jonathan Stephens.

Director of Music and Organist - Dr. Roger B.Williams, M.B.E. (February 2019)