

Music at Services at the Cathedral of St.Machar in May 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 might be interested in joining the choir please contact the Music Director (rogerbevanwilliams@g.mail.com)

In this Easter season we continue to sing a wide variety of music, ranging from Mozart's short but cheerful *Jubilate Deo*, through Mendelssohn's ever-green *O For the Wings of a Dove*, to Fauré's *Cantique de Jean Racine*. During the month there will be opportunities to hear some of our Choral Scholars sing some solo items, ranging from Mendelssohn to Diana Burrell.

May 5th.	Anthem: O For the wings of a Dove: Offertory: Jubilate Deo:	F.B.Mendelssohn W.A.Mozart
May 12 th	Anthem: Faire is the Heaven: Offertory: Lord God of Abraham(Elijah):	W.H.Harris F.B.Mendelssohn
May 19 th .	Anthem: Magnificat (Collegium Regale): Offertory: Gaelic Blessing: Diana Burrell	H.Howells
May 26 th .	Anthem: Cantique de Jean Racine: Offertory: Lead me, Lord: Communion: Tantum Ergo:	G. Fauré S.S.Wesley R.B.Williams

The Organ

The present organ is not the first in the Cathedral. Because of the lack of direct evidence it is difficult to be certain what sort of instrument there might have been before the Reformation. However, according to the distinguished historian Leslie Macfarlane, we learn of two organ books in the Inventory of 1436. 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 George C. Dawson (1893-1916), 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 the month of May organ voluntaries will be taken from a wide historical swathe of repertoire, ranging from the fifteenth century composer John Dunstable, to the nineteenth century French composer Lefébure-Wély, and the New Zealand-born C.S.Lang. Some of the vast number of Chorale Preludes by Bach will be played, as will a Partita by Bach’s fellow Leipzig colleague and cousin, J.G.Walther. For traditionalists the month of May is particularly associated with Mary, the Mother of Christ, and this will be marked with Bach’s celebrated Fugue on the Magnificat.

Voluntaries for May

May 5th.

Before the Service:	Chorale Preludes: Herr Jesu Christ, BWV 709 & 726:	J.S.Bach
After the Service:	‘Little’ g minor fugue, BWV 578	J. S. Bach

May 12th.

Before the Service:	Chorale Prelude: Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr, BWV 711	J.S.Bach
After the Service:	Tuba Tune:	C.S.Lang

May 19th.

Before the Service: Sancta Maria,
non est tibi similis: J.Dunstable

After the Service: Meine Seele erhebt den Herren
(Magnificat), BWV 733: J.S.Bach

May 26th.

Before the Service: Partita: Liebster Jesu, wir sind hier J.G.Walter

After the Service: Sortie in E Flat: Lefébure-Wély

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