

Music at Services at the Cathedral of St.Machar.

Choral Music

The thriving choir which includes Choral Scholars and sings at the Sunday morning Service at 11 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 (rm)

During the months of July and until the final Sunday in August, the Cathedral Choir is on vacation. However there may still be a small choir singing at the Services during this period, but the music will not be published in advance.

The Organ

The present organ is not the first that there has been in the Cathedral. Unfortunately, because of the lack of evidence, or the survival of sixteenth century organs elsewhere, it is difficult to state, with accuracy, exactly what might have been in the Cathedral, prior to the arrival of our present organ at the end of the 19th.century. Before the Reformation, however, in the early sixteenth century, given that Bishop Elphinstone had come to Aberdeen after living in both Paris and Louvain, it seems likely that the main organ would have been as splendid as his foundation of Vicars Choral. The type of organ would most probably have been built on medieval Blockwerk principles, producing sounds which were loud and magnificent – particularly on Sundays and major feast days.

The organ in use today is a splendid example of ‘Father’ Willis, and has three manuals and pedals. Originally built in 1891, the third manual was 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. This most recent work has restored some of the quieter sounds that the original organ 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.

Director of Music and Organist - Dr. Roger B.Williams, M.B.E. (July 2018)