

BATH

The monthly meetings continue to attract around two dozen people, who enjoy a wide range of music from Renaissance to modern. Younger new members contribute to the health of the branch. As well as the standard monthly meetings there are three special events. In mid December the full playing day focuses on Christmas music. The June meeting is conducted by volunteers from the membership, and this year we had four conductors. These sessions always go well and encourage individuals to develop their skills.

The third annual event has been the day at St John's church in Batheaston each June for instrumentalists and singers. Our Musical Director, Ann Lyall, has conducted 16 of these days with the last being held in 2012 when she included a performance of Tallis's *Spem in Alium*. That was to be her last but her desire to complete the set with Striggio's *Ecce Beatem Lucem* in 40 parts proved too much, so the 17th such event took place this June with 76 players and singers. This number of performers produced a powerful sound with tutti entries being most impressive. We also played several other pieces in 4 and 5 parts by Byrd, Lassus and Palestrina; this gave us some respite from the demands of the Striggio and allowed recorder players to change and rest their instruments. Not only was the day a great success but the sun shone and lunch was taken outside (as has always happened).

GLASGOW

Our Pastoral visitor in May was Colin Touchin who spent a wonderful day with us. The music was exciting and although we were pushed in one or two places we enjoyed the experience. Colin is a consummate conductor who guided us through a varied programme.

We started with Bach's motet *Lobet den Herren* which is very familiar, and continued with a piece that was new to us, *Kleine Suite* by Werdin. The rest of the programme included Colin Hand's Fanfare for a Festival, some Scarlatti and a fun piece, *Hot Toddy*, arranged by Helen Hooker. All of the music included sections that stretched the players but this is good for everyone as under Colin's positive guidance it spurred us on to better things.

We were pleased to welcome visitors to Glasgow and over lunch were able to take time to chat and make new friends. It was a delightful day and thanks to Colin a rewarding one.

In May some of the branch members played a short concert at The Erskine Homes. Our deputy conductor, Neil Eckford, had worked hard and we had a good reception. We played great foot tapping pieces that our audience seemed to enjoy. This included Sousa's *Liberty Bell*, *The Playford Suite* by Eileen Silcocks and a really sexy *Kalymbo* from the *Latin American Suite* by David Thompson. Neil's Bishopton Recorder Group, who performed *Irish Lullaby* by John Pitts and *Ode To Joy* by Beethoven, joined us. Eleven-year-old Jenny played *The Pink Panther*. The whole was a fun performance that was enjoyed by everyone and good experience for young players.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Steve Marshall is known for spreading the Gospel of the 8ft Choir, so the workshop was a wonderful opportunity to take part in music arranged for lower recorders. It was a good way for bass players to improve their skills and experience how the great bass and contrabass add depth to their own instrument. It also gave us a chance to play the melody on the bass which is not usually given. Steve gave us hints on technique with scientific explanations, ranging from careful use of staccato on the bigger instruments to phrasing and breath control, bearing in mind the enormous volume of air being moved especially in a contrabass!

We played a large range of music from the avant-garde, *Leaning* by Jean Hasse which seemed very daunting but turned out to be quite a fun way of exploring how sounds could be made on our instruments creatively without the constraint of formal notation and rhythm, to the lovely arrangement of Byrd fantasias by Steve himself and a total contrast of mood in a terrific swing *Bluebottle Boogie* by Alan Davis.

My only regret was that we didn't see and hear a subcontrabass. I finished the morning determined to continue improving my bass skills and playing but seeing the exhaustion of those on the bigger instruments not sure I will go any lower – YET!

After lunch the tenors, trebles and descants arrived and Steve conducted this year's pastoral visit. The basses were strongly encouraged to put their new skills to use. Steve enthusiastically led the branch in a variety of music arranged by Ann Marshall including a suite of Welsh melodies and music from *The Gartenlieder*. Our rhythm skills were tested (and sometimes found wanting) as we discovered the difficulties of co-ordinating clapping, foot stamping and recorder playing in selected pieces from *Music That Counts*. We concluded the day with *The Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy*, though Steve had regretfully forgotten to bring his tutu!

At the end of May we gave a concert in St. Peter and St Paul's Church, Oxton. We joined forces with the Oxton Singers and the Oxton Handbell Ringers and contributed a wide variety of music from Gibbons' *Silver Swan* and Morley's *Month of Maying* to an arrangement of *Postman Pat*. Some of our branch members also made individual contributions with a small group playing music by Nick Wynne, a wonderful trio arrangement of music by Handel, a surprise saxophone duet and a song about the trials faced by recorder players, appropriately titled *The Recorder Player's Blues*. The concert was a great success, enjoyed by the audience and the performers.

We have recently upgraded our website so please take a look: www.srp.org.uk/notts

NUNEATON

Adam Dopadlik made a return visit as guest conductor for the May pastoral meeting, and brought an interesting selection of music. The first work was a motet by the late 16th/early 17th century composer Tomas Luis de Victoria, after which members played Alex Ayre's arrangement of Fantasia à 5 No. 2 *La Rondinella* by John Ward, a composer from roughly the same era. There was then a complete change of period to more modern times, as Adam conducted James Carey's *At The Fair* suite, commencing with *The Ghost Train*. The spooky atmosphere was dispelled with *The Ferris Wheel*, followed by romance in *The Tunnel of Love*, and the afternoon ended with the energetic rhythms of *The Dodgems (Bumper Cars)*.

PETERBOROUGH

The late spring and early summer was a busy and focussed period, as we worked up a repertoire for a couple of forthcoming performances. The first was a welcome return to the Garden Trail in the pretty village of Elton. We clustered under a gazebo hoping the rain would hold off, which thankfully it did for a couple of hours. Our programme was deliberately ancient to modern, *Sweet Afton* to *Singing in the Rain!* A considerable number of visitors paused for a while to listen as they toured the village gardens. We look forward to welcoming a few who showed an interest. The second? Well that will be for the next report, but will be an exciting new venture for us.