

BRANCH REPORTS – Spring 2013

GLASGOW

At Christmas the Glasgow branch decided to perform a full concert in Broomhill Community church, a new venture for us as we usually perform in museums or art galleries to a passing audience. We were very pleased that we managed to raise a full house, even running short of seats! The atmosphere was very warm and festive despite the freezing weather.

Our MD Pamela Flanagan had chosen an appealing mixture of music ranging from Anthony Holborne's *The Honie-suckle* and *The Choise*, tricky pieces but good for the lower instruments, to that perennial favourite, Paul Clark's *Twelve Days of Christmas*. We duly produced a pile of gold rings and a host of pipers piping. The programme continued with Handel's *Pastoral Symphony* from *Messiah* and then Brian Bonsor's beautiful *Afton Water*. To finish off we had a rousing performance of his *17th's Farewell to Alva*. Interspaced with the set pieces we played a few simple but effective carols and Pamela encouraged the audience to join in with some community singing that many stated afterwards they enjoyed, as it really felt like a celebration of Christmas.

After the performance we enticed our audience to stay and join us in some refreshments and they appeared to be most willing, staying to chat and express interest in the instruments, always a good advertisement for the recorder, not just one of those 'squeaky things'.

We must thank all the people who came to help and served quantities of food and drinks as well as manning/womaning the door.

A small group of members also took part in the church's candlelight service playing some early French carols including *Allons Allons Gay Bergeres* and *The King's Birthday*. We were joined in these by Jane Mallinson, a soprano from Cathures choir. The combination was most successful and worth repeating.

HILLFOOTS

Our Hillfoots branch meets on Mondays in Alva. We have a small and enthusiastic regular membership, led by our founder, Margaret Simpson, and under the musical direction of Lynn Hope. Our repertoire is a mix of classical, renaissance and contemporary works, and has provided much inspiration and a deal of 'stretching' material.

We owe a debt of gratitude to the late Brian Bonsor, who provided us with much support in the early days, and whose work still manages to provide us with challenges! Playing in ensemble is always entertaining, and to be faced with new music, switching instruments and swapping parts, it certainly exercises the brain and fingers! But it is ALWAYS a great deal of FUN!

Recorder music is still alive and well in the Hillfoots of Clackmannanshire

IRELAND

Following a successful concert in 2011 the SRP Ireland Branch (SRPI) presented two concerts last November, first in Dublin and then in Drogheda. Musical Director Pamela Flanagan designed a programme to demonstrate the variety and breadth of music available to recorder ensembles for audiences who might only be familiar with recorder playing in the confines of the classroom. In each concert the eighteen-strong SRPI ensemble was joined by Piped Music, a small consort of Dublin-based SRPI members (Daphne and Howard Duncan, Genevieve Mullins, Nuala O'Neill and Frances Tuffery), and in Dublin by The Gallery Singers (Director Phyllis McCarthy) and Drogheda by The Tredagh Singers (Director Geraldine Doggett). Both choir directors also play with SRPI.

The Adelaide Road Presbyterian Church in Dublin provided an intimate, acoustically dry performance space in which the audience virtually surrounded the performers in a wide shallow arc. Pamela Flanagan introduced the audience to the range of recorders which they would hear, and the full ensemble's rendition of Holborne's *The Honie-suckle* and *Galliard* played at 8' pitch (tenor - contrabass) revealed the recorders' melodic qualities. The Gallery Choir followed with three contrasting pieces; Mozart's *Ave Verum*, *The Cloud's Veil* by the contemporary Irish composer-arranger Liam Lawton and Richard Farrant's sixteenth-century *O Sacrum Convivium*. SRPI then demonstrated that classical music composed for one instrument could be performed by recorder ensembles with a spirited performance of the *Rondo* from Mozart's *Divertimento in C* for piano. In a total change of scale, Piped Music showed the immediacy of one-to-a-part playing in Turlough O Carolan's *Four Irish Melodies* (arranged by Sheila Richards). To conclude the first part of the concert, SRPI played Charles Gounod's *Funeral March of a Marionette* for which Pamela Flanagan's introduction to the composer's life and the history of the writing of this piece both amazed and amused the audience.

In a complete change of mood the second half of the concert began with Paul Richards' very energetic arrangement of the spiritual *Joshua* played by SRPI. Piped Music continued in the same mood with Lance Eccles' *Amazing Blue Grace* and *King Cotton* by J.P. Sousa. Pamela Flanagan indicated to the audience that contemporary music had also been written specifically for recorders and SRPI demonstrated this by playing *Two Avocations* by Paul Clark. The Gallery Choir's second set included the contemporary French Taize chant *Oculi nostri*, the traditional songs *A Mhuire Mathair/Poharekare* and Hugh Robertson's early twentieth-century *All in the April Evening*. For the final piece SRPI paid tribute to the late Brian Bonsor by playing *The 17th's Farewell to Alva*.

The concert in Drogheda was far from merely a repeat of the above in that St. Peter's on the Hill is a classical eighteenth-century stone-built church with a resonant acoustic and considerable separation between the audience and performers. Thus differences in performance were required to optimise the sound ensemble in the new acoustic. The Tredagh Singers, a seventy-strong mixed voice choir with an extensive repertoire, sang the mediaeval *Gaudeamus Igitur*, John Dowland's *Now, Oh now, I needs must part* and *The Sounds of Simon & Garfunkel*. In the second half they juxtaposed old and new, first singing Josquin Desprez' *El Grillo* and John Rutter's *Banquet Fugue*. Their final set included Dowland's *Come again*, Richard Rogers' *Blue Moon* and finished with the Zulu folk song *Jabula Jesu*.

Both concerts were well attended and in the intervals audiences and choirs showed great interest in the recorders being played especially the larger instruments. Also in both concerts, audiences and choirs were very quick to join in with the *Auld Lang Syne* theme which Brian Bonsor alluded to within *The 17th's Farewell to Alva* to bring each concert to a rousing conclusion.

NUNEATON

We look forward to welcoming Graham Danbury to conduct our annual pastoral meeting at 2.30 pm on Saturday 18th May in the Community Room at Higham Lane School.

WALES

SRP Wales branch meets most months at Trecastle Village Hall, near Brecon. We enjoy full playing days, details of which are on our branch website, led by Chris Thomas and Delyth Holland, and we have some special events coming up this year. Our pastoral visit is scheduled for April 27th, when Alyson Lewin will be with us, and on June 15th the guest conductor will be Andrew Collis. The Summer School, held at Paradise Farmhouse, Presteigne, will take place on July 12th, 13th and 14th, and the tutor will be Margaret Westlake.

WEALD OF KENT

Weald of Kent branch is pleased to mark 20 years since its formation by Carol Dawson in 1992-93. In December we were delighted to welcome Carol from her new home in Mallorca for festive playing conducted by our Musical Director, Peter Bowman. A highlight was *A Little Night Music*, composed by branch member Sue Mullaley to celebrate the anniversary. As Sue explains, "it is intended as a bit of fun and incorporates extended techniques - glissandi, vibrato produced by covering the labium, and spread chords". There are 3 movements depicting visitations in the night by *The Phantom*, creeping stealthily around his new haunt, becoming bolder as he discovers his new skills until *The Moon*, rising lazily, is seen fragmented by the branches of a tree and wisps of cloud until she breaks free into the clear sky and *The Cat*, on the prowl, jumps from one rooftop (or recorder part) to another. Sue has kindly made the music available to anyone who would like to try it. You can download it as a PDF file from our branch page on the SRP website, where you can also find details of our regular meetings in Paddock Wood and our special Playing Day with Christopher Burgess in Tonbridge on Saturday 6th July.



Weald of Kent branch celebrates its 20th anniversary

WARWICKSHIRE BRANCHES PLAYING DAY

It was heartening to see such a good attendance when Moira Usher made a welcome return to conduct the annual Warwickshire Branches Playing Day on Saturday 6th October at Bulkington

Village Centre. After beginning with *Deus, Deus Meus, Qui Respice in Me* by Gabrieli, there was a change of period with Matthias Maute's *Tanto-Quanto*, and the morning session closed with another relatively modern work, the delightful *L'Embarquement Pour Cythere* by Poulenc. After lunch, which fortunately could be eaten outside since the weather was fine and sunny as in previous years, Moira presented her own arrangements of two English madrigals – *Adieu Sweet Amaryllis* and *Weep You No More, Sad Fountains* by John Wilbye and John Dowland respectively. These were followed by the wonderfully rich sound of Corelli's Concerto Grosso No. 3. Following the tea break, during which Helen very kindly provided a delicious cake to celebrate Dorothy's birthday, playing recommenced with the lively *Chattanooga Choo Choo* arranged by Howard Gannaway. There was then another complete contrast with *Giga* by the 18th century Bath composer Thomas Chilcot, and in recognition of the Diamond Jubilee, the final piece was the *Youth of Britain March (Princess Elizabeth)* from Eric Coates's *The Three Elizabeths Suite*.

SCOTTISH RECORDER ORCHESTRA

In celebration of the Scottish Recorder Orchestra's 10th Anniversary, the SRO along with the Dortmund Consort gave a concert on Sunday 7th October at the Reid Concert Hall in Edinburgh. This was a major affair with both Eileen Silcocks and Dietrich Schnabel conducting some of their own compositions.

The concert started off at a lively pace with *The Garbsen Jig* by Eileen Silcocks, a piece written for a recorder ensemble that meets in Garbsen, near Hanover. This was followed by Steve Marshall's *The Long Path Home*. This work is in the minimalist style, and was inspired by a poem by Judy Kendall, *Treading the Cotswold Way*. It was very descriptive of that last few miles of trudging along to reach warmth and home.

Das G'laut zu Speyer by Ludwig Senfl gave a very different impression. This 16th century piece is a beautiful illustration of church bells, chiming through the town of Speyer, in Germany.

Next came the *Brington Crystal* by Lyndon Hilling. This work was specially commissioned for this concert and simply to ask one of the top recorder orchestra composers to write something new. The composer came to our rehearsal and at the performance he gave a brief introduction to his work. This was inspired by the tomb of Margaret Viscountess Althorp, who married Charles Robert, 6th Earl Spencer in 1889, and died at a tragically young age. Her grieving husband placed a crystal on top of a Celtic cross, which caught the sunlight. It is a most expressive piece that reflected both happy memories and intense grief.

To follow, *Tristis est anima mea* by Orlando di Lasso, brought a thoughtful calm to the programme. The text upon which this music is based is St. Matthew's Gospel, just before Jesus is betrayed. The music is suitably sombre and Lasso depicts the drama of the situation perfectly, with empty moments, frequent dissonances, and beautiful expression of the text in the musical structures.

Symphonic Dances by Dietrich Schnabel was the final offering - a set of five dances, hot off the press, composed for recorder orchestra. The suite is a mixture of the more sedate and the positively aerobic: Polonaise; Paso Doble; Waltzes; Funeral March and Sabredance.

The orchestra gave an encore to a most unusual concert with a 'guess the melody' composition by Philip Buttall, arranged for recorders by Steve Marshall. The title was *The Lone Ar-ranger* (with apologies to Rossini!) and rounded off a most enjoyable experience for both players and an appreciative audience.



Lyndon Hilling, Eileen Silcocks and Dietrich Schnabel