

# Solway Sinfonia

Newsletter November 2014

## Geoff Pipes The Way Ahead



I've been asked to gaze into the crystal ball and to talk about future plans for the orchestra, but let me begin by talking about the present: That the good ship Solway Sinfonia's timbers are in such excellent condition is courtesy of the work of a dedicated and hard-working Committee which is also a group of good friends. And thanks to our 'Angels', our faithful band of Sponsors and Patrons, we are also in a less precarious financial state than in the past. Players inevitably come and go (at the moment



*Geoff Keating:*  
*Solway Sinfonia Director*

we are unable to find advanced horn players locally) but in general all sections are strong, and we continue to attract good new players. Our 'Music of Bohemia' programme for Easterbrook Hall on November 23rd is exciting, challenging (necessary qualities if we are to attract players from an 80 mile radius), and a bit of a leap into the unknown; none of us has played Smetana's 'Two Widows' overture, Janáček's 'Lachian Dances' or Dvořák's 'Noon Witch' symphonic poem before, and few the Dvořák Cello Concerto. We have a lot of work ahead of us in our five rehearsals! (I'll be talking about these pieces in five talks on Music of Bohemia at

the Selkirk Arms in Kirkcudbright - reception@selkirkarmshotel.co.uk or 01557 330402 - on November 9th to 11th.)

As for the future: our programme for the Gatehouse of Fleet Music Society on March 22nd combines the traditional - Beethoven's Coriolan Overture and Haydn's Symphony no. 104 - with two new works: an overture by the Orcadian Geraldine Mucha which will receive its first British performance, and a piece I have written for Peter Hutchison and his contrabassoon, with Speaker and strings. Nick Riley will also feature as soloist in the Chaminade Concertino for flute and orchestra.

'French Music' is our likely theme for next November, and though not entirely settled the programme is likely to include Bizet's 'L'Arlesienne' Suite no. 1, the Berlioz song-cycle 'Les nuits d'été' and Cesar Franck's Symphony in D minor.

It's thanks to the dedication and faithful rehearsal attendance of all our players that we are able to contemplate the performance of such difficult works; let's hope we are able to maintain our high standards throughout the year!

## Next Concert



Sunday 23rd November, 7:30pm

Easterbrook Hall, Dumfries

Music of Bohemia Works by  
Smetana, Janáček and Dvořák

Dvořák Cello Concerto, with

Kirsten Jenson, cello

Tickets available from the  
Midsteeple, Dumfries

## Dates for your Diary

**Easterbrook Hall, 23 Nov 2014 7.30**

**Tickets: 01387 261611 / at door**

**Smetana: Two Widows Overture**

**Janacek: Lachian Dances 2, 4, 6**

**Dvorak: Symphonic Poem 'The Noon Witch'**

**Dvorak Cello concerto: Soloist Kirsten Jenson (see Sinfonia website)**

**Gatehouse Parish Church**

**22 March 2015 7.30**

**Beethoven: Coriolan Overture**

**Chaminade: Flute Concerto: Soloist Nick Riley**

**Keating: Prufrock on the Beach for Contrabassoon (Peter Hutchison) Speaker (David Sumner) and strings**

**Delius: On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring**

**Haydn: London Symphony opus 104**

**Geraldine Mucha: The Tempest (Premier)**

## Message from the Editor

The theme of this year's Newsletter focusses upon hopes, dreams and aspirations of the Solway Sinfonia. This is in contrast to the Newsletter 2013, which you may recall was retrospective in character: Early Musical Influences.

[www.solwaysinfonia.org.uk](http://www.solwaysinfonia.org.uk)

Cathy Tyler: Editor Ken Smyth: Design & Printing

## The Clara Thomson Memorial Trophy

It is always very sad when we lose a colleague in the orchestra. Nearly two years ago cellist Clara Thomson, daughter of our timpanist Norrie, died of a brain tumour after a very short time at university. To honour her memory we decided to present a trophy to her school, St Joseph's College, Dumfries. This trophy would be awarded annually to the pupil attaining the highest standard of playing on an orchestral instrument. A cello scroll was very generously donated by Ralph Plumb of Hexham, to be used as the basis of the trophy. To complete the task it was decided to approach Ian Cameron-Smith, a wonderful furniture maker from Knockbrev, near Gatehouse of Fleet. Ian very generously charged us only for the materials as 'he felt honoured to be involved in the project'. In June the trophy was presented to the school by Nick, our Chairman, at their Awards Ceremony; an occasion which also marked Norrie's retirement from teaching.

It was particularly gratifying that the first recipient of the award was our own cellist Joanne Bertram, who had played with Clara so often, and who played a piece at the ceremony in her memory – a very emotional moment. Through the Solway Sinfonia Trophy in Memory of Clara Thomson we look forward to supporting orchestral playing in St Joseph's College for many years to come. *(Helen Keating)*



Artist Ian Cameron -Smith

## Patron's Profile

### Brenda Shapeero

Where would I like to see the Solway Sinfonia going over the next years? Now what I have to say is purely my personal opinion and probably will not be generally accepted by others - but here goes.

I am passionate about music from very early music to the present time. I do have to say though that the more modern the music the more I struggle with it. However, I tell myself that I must persevere remembering that some of our best loved music caused audiences to protest and even rioted, shouted and walked out of concerts. So, I must listen and appreciate and grow accustomed to the new music.

Any one who knows my history would think that I would hate music as, when my father returned from Egypt at the end of the second world war I was hauled, from the age of six to renditions in a local Chapel of Stainer's Crucifixion, Haydn's Creation and many other mind numbing pieces for a child. However, when I was taken to listen to a local choir singing Handel's Messiah everything changed. It made a strong and everlasting impression on me.

Now - after that snippet of history back to the Solway Sinfonia. Where would I like to see it in the future. Well, I would just love to hear hear some music taken back to its origins. Music played just as it was written and how the composers would have heard it. Using old authentic instruments would be lovely but not very practical, so I'm prepared to accept modern instruments.

This would mean some concerts put on for us with a smaller orchestra. This is not to say that we never hear pieces played as we are used to hearing them today - I think there is room for both.

I appreciate that Geoff already does 'Gentle Jazz' but in addition I would also like to hear a variety of works not involving the entire orchestra but chamber music, even trios playing music from all ages.

With sometimes smaller groups maybe we could hear more of the Solway Sinfonia over the year, rather than just one large orchestral deliciousness in a year. These are, as I said previously, just my thoughts,

I appreciate all the work that members of the orchestra put into entertaining us and would like to thank everyone involved for all their hard work.

*Hopes, dreams, aspirations of orchestra members: (Our Director may, of course, have PRACTICAL preferences!!)*

- Glazunov: The Seasons •
- Light music concert eg Warsaw Concerto, Eric Coates etc •
- Concert for young folk • A Scandinavian concert • Play in tune • Programme of music from around the UK
- Some really well polished undemanding music • Britten Simple Symphony • Elgar Serenade for Strings • Holst St Paul's Suite • Delius arranged Fenby: 2 Aquarelles • Vaughan Williams: Rhosymedre • Grieg Holberg Suite • Watch the Conductor • Sibelius Valse Triste • Shostokovich Festive Overture • Sibelius Finlandia •
- Hummel Trumpet Concerto
- Opera night eg Excerpts from Puccini • Movie soundtracks
- 6 months to learn demanding Easter programme (eg Beethoven 9, Shostokovich 5, Sibelius symphony) with lighter Autumn concert. •
- Concert to encourage brass section, eg Vaughan Williams, Arnold, Maxwell Davies, Adams • Concerto for electric cello • Keep at tempo • Hiring one or two string players to strengthen sound • Dances of Galanta • Rodrigo Guitar Concerto • Airs and Dances for Lute ( 3 Suites) Respighi •
- String coach joins us at strings only rehearsal

## Player's Profile

### Norrie Thomson:

**New coordinator of Patrons & Sponsors.** (*Many thanks to Robert Thurlow who initially developed this role.*)

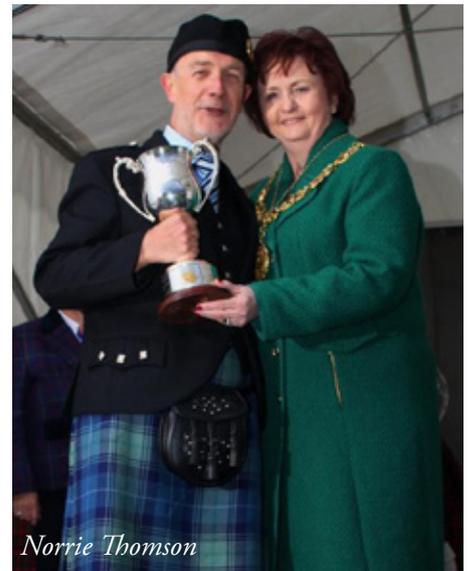
### Paradiddles, aspirations and visions: a percussionist's perspective

.....thumps and bangs, but in the appropriate place and with just the right weight to enhance the whole musical, dynamic experience. What could be easier? In theory, it's all very simple. Whether it's a crash of the cymbal, a ring from the triangle, the tonal rhythmical strokes on timpani, or the crisp patterns beat out on the snare drum, the percussion effect can be pretty impressive when properly synchronised.

Percussion, in one form or another, can be heard in almost all musical genres: classical, rock, jazz and most forms of "world music". The experience I bring to the Solway Sinfonia is from a pipe band, snare drumming background. For most of my playing career, I have led drum corps competing at the top end of the international grade one competition circuit as well as competing solo around the world. It presents me with a

very different challenge from playing orchestral percussion. Why? Pipe band snare drumming is technically very demanding and is acknowledged as such world wide. The very high tension on the drums makes dynamics difficult to achieve but nonetheless we manage. My task as leading drummer is to write, teach and play the drumming scores to the rest of the drum corps, to enhance and drive the music of the pipes. A piece usually begins with two three pace rolls, and then the drum corps plays from start to finish, using material that shows variety, innovation, technical difficulty and musicality. Therein, for me, lies the main difference between playing pipe band music and the very different requirements of classical music. In the orchestra, for much of the time I am not playing, but counting bars of rest, often with varying tempos and time signatures, in the hope of making the correct entrances with the right dynamics. The relatively simpler technical requirements are countered by the need for an awareness of the rest of the orchestra and the dynamics in a score to achieve the best musical performance. I enjoy very much trying to achieve this with "the Solway" - a task made much easier by Geoff's expert and interesting guidance.

Playing an orchestral score marrying the two styles mentioned above would offer me a challenge I have dreamt of for many years : a classical orchestral piece written with percussion, particularly snare drum, in mind - almost like a snare drum concerto. This could be written for solo snare or drum corps, allowing the percussionists to demonstrate the technical and musical skills they have worked very hard to develop over many years, and would hopefully put to bed the notion that anybody can play a drum. If there is anyone out there who would like to try this, please do not hesitate to give it a go. I'm up for it.



### DONALD MILLIGAN

We are sad to report that we have lost one of our stalwarts in the violin section of the Solway Sinfonia. Donald Milligan was a well loved, experienced musician who sadly died on 5 June 2014 as a result of pancreatic cancer.

He was brought up in Dalbeattie, following in his father's footsteps by learning to play the violin and by the time he moved to Kirkcudbright Academy, he was leader of the Stewartry Young People's Orchestra. He joined the Bank of Scotland and worked in various branches, taking an active part in the musical scene wherever he went. When playing with the Dumfries Municipal Orchestra he met his wife, Christine, who sat behind him playing second

violin. Other orchestras that benefited from his membership included the Berwickshire County Orchestra (which he led), all the Border Operatic Societies, Edinburgh Symphony Orchestra, Sottish Sinfonia, Haddington Fiddles, Auld Reekie Dance Band and the Gallovidians.

From a personal perspective, I have lost a wonderful fishing and golfing buddy as well as a musical companion. He played golf at Southernness where he was a member of the Bridies group which he captained. Loch or river fly fishing was always a very sociable event, lubricated by judicious amounts of wine or whisky! Somehow, however, he always caught more than his fair share of trout despite multitasking with a fund of jokes and stories; his

skill and experience and an element of "je ne sais quoi" worked a treat! We all have wonderful memories to treasure but he will be greatly missed by all members of the Solway Sinfonia. Our thoughts are with his wife, Christine and his two daughters, Fiona and Alison. (*Peter Hutchison*)



# Weir Trust Grant-aids The Orchestra

15 years ago a generous donation by a Solway Sinfonia sponsor enabled the orchestra to buy a number of music stands to replace the motley collection which had previously been used, allowing the orchestra to look smarter and more professional at concerts.

Over time the orchestra's music stands have suffered the inevitable wear and tear caused by being dropped, trodden on, fallen on and inadvertently abused. In addition some of the screws used to hold the stands upright had begun to fail. There

is nothing less useful than a floppy music stand! Something needed to be done to replace the stands, but they are expensive. After some research, an application was made to the Weir Charitable Trust ([weircharitabletrust.com](http://weircharitabletrust.com)). To our surprise this splendid body agreed to donate the very generous sum of £1600 to the orchestra to help purchase the new equipment it needed.

In short, this funding has enabled us to buy not only 50 new, more robust, music stands (with clip on pencil holders!), but

also protective carrying cases for them, 10 clip on music stand lights and a collapsible, transportable conductor's rostrum. Thank you Weir Trust! (*David Howdle*)



*A Stanza of Stands!*

## Solway Sinfonia: Pipe Dreams

**Jon Buchan (Leader, Violas)**

Sinfonia is an amateur orchestra that plays to a good standard. We owe that to the combination of experience and enthusiasm that Geoff brings to the task of conducting us. The fact that we can tackle big works and make a reasonable job of them is attractive to amateur players who hear about the orchestra and often travel big distances to come and play with us.

Wouldn't it be marvellous if we became so good that we could recruit from all over the UK and bring in all the good amateur players from everywhere? We could perform music to such

a high standard that the audience could applaud enthusiastically and we could feel that their enthusiasm was fully merited. We could stand there bowing and smiling and have not one moment's regret that, say, somewhere in the scherzo there was an awkward moment when we didn't negotiate a repeat quite smoothly, or we skipped to the wrong line and missed a bar or two.

The only problem with being so good is that we would be performing to a professional standard and those of us with musical qualifications would begin to feel that they deserved recompense for their time and effort. Quite right too but we would no longer be an amateur orchestra and us wholly amateur players could well face exclusion.

## Caption Competition



### THE WINNER.....

*"Pity they chopped down the drummer!" – Roger Windsor*

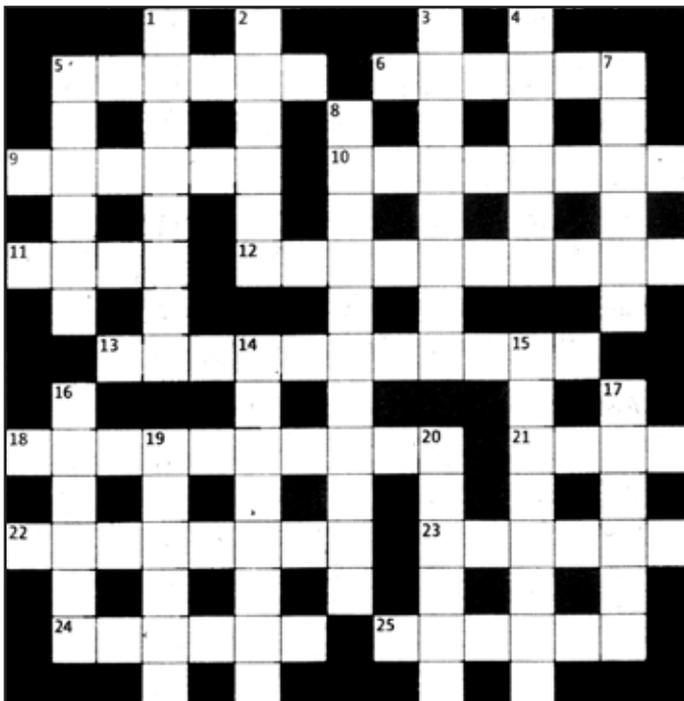
### THE RUNNER-UP.....

*"You two play the tune and I'll just strim along" – Alice Howdle*

### ..... AND HIGHLY APPRECIATED!

*"For goodness sake, stop clipping the quavers!" – David Howdle*

*Sward Dance – Ian McCandlish*



### ACROSS

- 5 French star?
- 6 He had a colourful coat...
- 9 Dealer in what Wagner is reputed to have stroked to get him in the mood ..!
- 10 C16th or C17th instrumental piece
- 11 Film conductor Matheson's name
- 12 C17th Italian works contrasting voices and instruments
- 13 Italian C16th
- 18 Swiss movement child's magic toy
- 21 A Blue one rarely comes!
- 22 This will lift you!
- 23 Overture by Wagner, 'The Last of the Tribunes'
- 24 Solowork
- 25 Modern version of Clarke's name

### DOWN

- 1 Several solo works with orchestra
- 2 The Red Priest?
- 3 Musique that's hard to take!
- 4 Cimarosa's Marriage?
- 5 'Dark' as this in VW's 'Serenade to Music'
- 7 Hamilton with a little extra? All hale.
- 8 Six with a Gate.
- 14 Foursomes
- 15 48 of them well?
- 16 Army trumpets
- 17 Sounds like a drunken music publisher!
- 19 Bach w-s able to do this in 2, 3 or 4 parts
- 20 Immortalised in Persia by Handel

*Answers on the website:  
[www.solwaysinfonia.org.uk](http://www.solwaysinfonia.org.uk)  
(Patrons & Sponsors Section)*