



# The Scottish Fiddle Orchestra

## Scotland's National Fiddle Orchestra

# NEWSLETTER

Patron: HRH The Princess Royal

Scottish Registered Charity No. SC010753

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### Another Year almost over

As we approach the end of another busy year for the SFO, we are looking forward to our final concert of 2017 - at the Usher Hall, Edinburgh, on 30 December.

There are still a few tickets available for that concert but, if you're not able to make it along, don't worry, we will soon be kicking off our 2018 programme and you can catch us at Perth Concert Hall on 24 February 2018. You can find full details of all our concert dates for 2018 on our website.

Apart from our annual February visit to the Fair City, 2017 has seen us perform in Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Gateshead and Belfast. We released a DVD of our 2016 concert in Belfast which was available in time for our return visit there on 07 October 2017. As well as the usual mixture of music and song, there is a "bonus" in the form of a documentary-style section giving a bit more of a flavour of the orchestra's experience of the weekend in Northern Ireland, including interviews with a variety of orchestra members.

We hope that we will see you at one of our concerts again before too long. We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy 2018.

### The SFO - Something for Everyone

In December 1995, David Martin, then Honorary Secretary of the SFO, announced the results of a questionnaire which had been sent out to all SFO members.

This covered a wide range of issues. He had 79 returns out of a total of 134 questionnaires sent out.

One of the questions asked each member to nominate their favourite piece of music (including songs) within the SFO's repertoire. David's results do not provide a "Top 10" but, in some ways, that might not have been very meaningful. His list of "favourites" comprises 54 different sets, tunes and songs.

If 79 responses came up with 54 different favourites, that's quite a wide range of opinions, on the face of it.

On the downside, it makes it hard to please everyone but, on the positive side, it reflects the diversity of tastes. Some people may come to an SFO concert for the songs and some for the tunes. It doesn't matter whether you are in the audience or "in the band".

Our hope is that the experience is broad enough that the SFO has something for everyone.

### Well worth a read

Vic MacKinlay recently got in touch about a very interesting article which appeared in The Herald entitled "First World War poets honoured with violins crafted from military hospital tree."

A very interesting report and well worth a read. For copyright reasons we cannot reprint the article here but we can direct you to it via your internet browser using the link <https://tinyurl.com/yalph9to>

Vic, along with his wife Iona, are part of the SFO Front of House team, their daughter Kirsty Livingstone is Principal Bass player in the orchestra.

**TICKETS ARE ON SALE NOW FOR: Edinburgh Usher Hall and Perth Concert Hall**

Concert Diary				
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	30 <sup>th</sup> December 2017	0131 228 1155	<a href="http://www.usherhall.co.uk">www.usherhall.co.uk</a>
Perth	Concert Hall	24 <sup>th</sup> February 2018	01738 621031	<a href="http://www.horsecross.co.uk">www.horsecross.co.uk</a>
Aberdeen	Beach Ballroom	17 <sup>th</sup> March 2018	01224 641122	<a href="http://www.aberdeenperformingarts.com">www.aberdeenperformingarts.com</a>
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	9 <sup>th</sup> June 2018	0131 228 1155	<a href="http://www.usherhall.co.uk">www.usherhall.co.uk</a>
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	15 <sup>th</sup> September 2018	0141 353 8000	<a href="http://www.glasgowconcerthalls.com">www.glasgowconcerthalls.com</a>

## Glasgow Concert

In September we returned to the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall. The concert was two weeks earlier this year due to other engagements at the concert hall. This made for a few administrative headaches and had us a little concerned that it might impact audience numbers adversely - but far from it! We had a great turn out, and a very appreciative audience which always helps to give the evening - and the orchestra - a real "buzz".

We were honoured to have Glasgow's new Lord Provost Eva Bolander and her guest in attendance, with the Lord Provost looking resplendent with her very heavy chain of office! The Lord Provost was greeted on arrival by our Glasgow concert Administrator Caroline Winn, along with Double Bass player Jamie Mason, better known as the youngest son of our much

missed Founder and Conductor, John M. Mason. Jamie and John have both been Deacons of our Charity partner for the evening, the Incorporation of Skinners and Glovers, who celebrated their 500th anniversary of Incorporation with the orchestra last year, and the SFO is delighted to have received a generous charitable donation recently from the Skinners & Glovers as a direct result of last year's concert. We're working on selecting some very worthwhile local charities who will put this donation to great use!



We were joined on stage by the Williamwood Pipe Band for their second performance with the orchestra, for an outstanding performance of The Old Man of Hoy, and the much loved Highland Cathedral.



Our regular compère Robert Lovie was unable to join us, so we were once again treated to the delights of Gary Innes as compère (host of BBC Radio Scotland's iconic music show "Take the Floor"). Gary is also an accomplished accordionist himself, performing in Scottish group Mànrán and has just released his second solo album Era. So both the orchestra and the audience were delighted when Gary picked up his accordion and joined us for a wee set of reels at the end of the show! The date change also caught a few orchestra members out with holiday & family commitments, including our regular Stage Managers Andy Paterson and Chris Gowans, so we were delighted (and greatly relieved) when Administrator Caroline's partner Martin Lawson came to our rescue, and ably assisted throughout the day! Martin has been the face behind our FaceBook "live" broadcasts during the actual concert performance for the last few shows, enabling us to share the concert with a much wider audience - and we're just loving your feedback and interactions with

these videos (and please do keep them coming!) Whilst we can't do live broadcasts at every concert, we plan to do this as often as possible, so if you haven't yet discovered the SFO on FaceBook, look us up, you can find us at [www.facebook.com/ScottishFiddleOrchestra](http://www.facebook.com/ScottishFiddleOrchestra).

We're delighted to report that next year's Glasgow concert will be back to its more usual mid September date (phew!) - so get the 15th September 2018 firmly marked in your diary and help us to make it another great night!

## **Belfast Concert**

In early October the Scottish Fiddle Orchestra played a Concert in the magnificent Waterfront hall in Belfast. This was a return visit, after having had a great success in October 2016. Again, the Irish audience gave the SFO a wonderful reception, and it was obvious that there are very strong bonds both in musical and in friendship terms between the two countries. Our Irish colleagues could not have been more helpful, accommodating and welcoming to the players who rose to the occasion and played one of their best ever concerts.

As in most important events, some things do go a wee bit 'agley'. Firstly, our male tenor, Dennis Haggerty had to pull out due to a clash of dates involving his position as Head of Music at Wellington School. Fortunately, our resident Master of Ceremonies, Robert Lovie, a brilliant entertainer and singer in his own right, agreed to stand in for Dennis. However, within 24 hours of the concert Robert turned seriously ill and was hospitalised in Aberdeen. At the last moment, parts of the programme were rejigged, and thanks to the tremendous talent within the orchestra, and an extra contribution by our wonderful Colette Ruddy, the concert went ahead.

The result was a superb effort by our conductor Blair Parham and every member of the orchestra. The audience enjoyed it all so much that the SFO were awarded a standing ovation at the end and it was obvious that they wanted more, more and yet more. We were joined on stage by our old friends, the Cleland Memorial Pipe Band, who played magnificently the Old Man of Hoy and the hauntingly moving Sunset Song, both compositions of the late John Mason. Martin Duncan, piper for the evening was in grand form and led the pipers faultlessly.



In preparing for last year's concert, Jim Brodlie, our administrator and accordionist, invited two young Irish dancers, Orla and Sinéad Savage from their Dancing School to join with our own Highland dancers Catriona and Marnie Clark to dance in a spirit of national cooperation. It was wildly successful. As a result the four young dancers performed again this year to wide acclaim and set the second half of the concert off to a rousing and fantastic start.



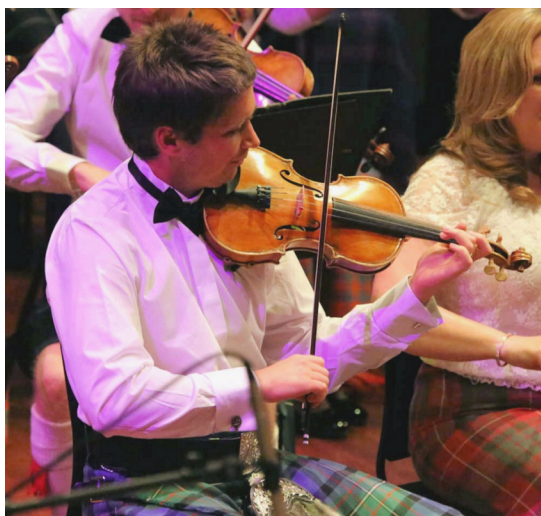
Our favourite mezzo-soprano Colette Ruddy was again in wonderful voice and was an inspiration to the rest of the players. Other demonstrations of magical musical expertise came from Thoren Ferguson, David Brodlie and the SFO Session who let rip with a variety of Scottish reels.

The Charity partner for the evening was the Cancer Fund for Children, and their volunteers were thrilled at the generosity of the audience after the exit bucket collection. An excellent cause and a fantastic sum of money was raised. Our sincere thanks are due to the staff of the Waterfront Belfast, the Hilton Hotel who provided accommodation of the highest order, Dodds of Troon for giving the players an opportunity to visit Belfast in a coach tour, the Ceilidh band, who without fail provide the winding down after the concert with even more excitement and pleasure in song and dance, and perhaps most of all to the people of Belfast who gave the SFO the most wonderful reception, before, during and after the concert. We will remember the occasion for many a day.

### **DVD - At the Belfast Waterfront**

A DVD recording of our trip to Belfast Waterfront in 2016 was released in time for our visit this year and is now available from the merchandise table at any of our concerts.

## Thoren Ferguson: Talent from a' the airts



Edinburgh-based Thoren Ferguson has a wide range of interests and talents, apart from playing in the Second Violin section of the SFO. You'll also have seen him, for example, on guitar, as part of the SFO Session. He's not afraid of a challenge.

At our recent Belfast concert, the programme had to be reorganised at the last minute due to unavoidable call-offs by some of our usual big names. With minimum preparation time, Thoren agreed to play a solo at the concert, which was very well received.

Outside the SFO, Thoren plays in a ceilidh band called The Jacobites. He's also a composer of tunes and he has showcased his talents through two melodies written to honour those who gave their lives in the First World War: "The Somme" and "The Lads of Quintinshill".

The latter air commemorates Britain's worst ever rail disaster, on 22 May 1915. The crash - at Quintinshill, near Gretna - involved a military train, mostly full of soldiers from Leith, and 4 other trains. 228 people died and hundreds more were injured.

Thoren has collaborated with violin maker, Steve Burnett, in a project highlighting the meeting of three celebrated First World War poets in and around Craiglockhart Hospital, Edinburgh.

Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon were receiving treatment at the hospital and it is believed that they met up with Robert Graves at Baberton Golf Club sometime in October 1917.

Mr Burnett used a branch from a sycamore tree at the hospital to fashion 3 violins. The first one - called the "Wilfred Owen Violin" - was completed in 2014 to mark the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War. Thoren has played this violin at several commemorative performances around the country and also on national radio and TV.

The third of the 3 violins was completed in time for all of them to be played together for the first time at an event at the golf club where Graves, Sassoon and Owen held their "Poetry and War" summit, perhaps 100 years on, to the day.

Thoren does not require the help of a musical instrument to allow him to perform. He has a separate and blossoming acting career.

In the coming months, you will be able to see him on the big screen in New Light Film's "Mother" - a horror film, set in Scotland. On the small screen, you'll find him playing the role of a music teacher (including at least one violin performance) in BBC's "Logan High". He also features in another BBC programme: Armchair Detectives.

Away from the screen, Thoren has just been cast in the lead role in a Scottish theatre tour in February and March 2018 - called "The Return".

With all that's coming up for Thoren in the next few months, we hope he will still find time to play his fiddle with the SFO!



### NEW RECORDINGS

Over the last year we have produced some new recordings which are now on sale at the merchandise table in the main foyer at all of our concerts. These titles are priced at £12 each and are only available from the SFO.

Also available by post from **Mrs. Wilma Brodlie 20 Lady Margaret Drive, Troon, Ayrshire KA10 7AL**  
(Please add £2.00 per item to cover p & p and make cheques payable to The Scottish Fiddle Orchestra)

DVD - At the Belfast Waterfront

CD - A Selection From The Caird and Usher Halls

CD - In The Fair City

DVD - In The Fair City

## Questions for the Edinburgh Concert Administrators



Susie and Catriona



- 1 ***How long have each of you been members of the SFO?***  
 Catriona joined at the start in Aberdeen March 1980  
 Susie joined at the Edinburgh concert in 1982
- 2 ***How did you end up becoming organisers of the Edinburgh concerts?***  
 Probably because we caused so much trouble in concerts, ceilidhs and sessions that someone (was it Blair???) thought that if we were given a job it might help to channel our energies in a more constructive direction.
- 3 ***How long have you been organising the SFO Concerts?***  
 We took over from Sara McDoka in September 2014. Apparently having twins was a reason to stop organising the concerts.
- 4 ***Having responsibility for two concerts a year Edinburgh seems a lot. How often do you meet to discuss the organisation of the concerts?***  
 We generally meet every week or fortnight on a Monday evening for 1 to 2 hours. If we're quick we sometimes have time for a session afterwards. The December concert is much easier to sell so we normally have a break over July and August.
- 5 ***What is the most time-consuming aspect of organising the concerts?***  
 Advertising - Douglas Smith creates our flyers and posters. These templates are used to advertise in newspapers, local directories, and city centre poster drums. We organise distribution of leaflets at local venues and in tourist locations before the concert. We have a list of previous audience members and we issue on-line mailing and snail mail postcards to pass on the message. Then there's Facebook ...  
 Overall, we have a list of about 100 different activities that we use to make sure we don't forget anything.
- 6 ***Before you took on the job, you possibly had some ideas about what the job might entail. What has surprised you most, in practice?***  
 There's always something that creeps up on you... will the pipe band show up well-rehearsed, is there a last minute reception required, etc.  
 We're both Analysts by profession so we couldn't resist organising and re-organising the activities until they seemed to be the most efficient. We still do a lot of chasing and nagging to get what we want done.  
 (Actually we're still re-organising and adding new tasks)
- 7 ***What is something about the SFO concerts at the Usher Hall which people may find surprising?***  
 There are 800 seats in the upper circle which is a mammoth task to fill.
- 8 ***What has been the most problematic problem you have experienced in your time organising the concerts (as in, a problem which you can disclose and which does not require to remain secret!)?***  
 One pipe band agreed to do the concert and then seemed to suspend communication - it got so stressful that Susie start learning the bagpipes and Catriona the drums. One for a ceilidh perhaps?
- 9 ***What's your funniest experience during the time you have been organising the Edinburgh concerts?***  
 Dinner in Gretna with Thoren en route to Nottingham ... nothing to do with Edinburgh concerts but it still brings a tear to the eye.
- 10 ***What is the most rewarding aspect of organising the concerts?***  
 Getting to know everyone in the Orchestra even better than before and feeling that we're giving something back after enjoying the benefits of hundreds of concerts.
- 11 ***Of the concerts you have organised, which has been your favourite and why?***  
 Every Hogmanay concert. Sales are less stressful and the atmosphere is always fantastic.

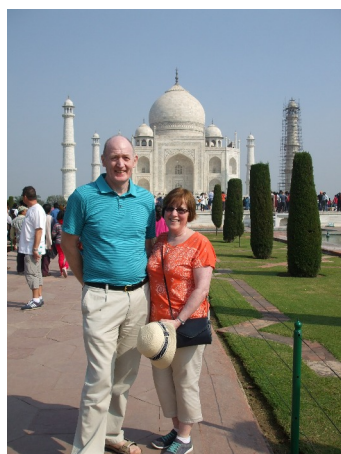
## **From FIFA to the SFO: the onerous responsibilities of leadership**

All organisations - from globe-spanning giants like football's FIFA to less controversial (?) nationally-located groups like the SFO - need leadership, usually in the form of an executive committee.

Disgraced former FIFA president, Sepp Blatter, over 5 terms of office, became infamous for his frequently outrageous comments and actions. There's little to beat having your own film as a means of self-flattery. The movie "United Passions" told the story of how FIFA came into existence. FIFA reportedly supported the project to the tune of \$8 million. Tim Roth starred as Blatter, Gerard Depardieu played World Cup creator Jules Rimet and Sam Neill took the role of Joao Havelange (another disgraced former FIFA president). The total budget for the film was reputed to be 27 million Euros. Unfortunately, it flopped. On its release in 2014, a reported 120 people bought tickets for the Swiss premiere. According to Wikipedia: "In the USA the film grossed just \$918 in its opening weekend and is now considered to be one of the worst films of all time." Globally, it lost \$26.8 million. FIFA's board displayed a characteristic lack of foresight in authorising such a vanity project to proceed. While you want your leaders to be creative and dynamic, it's also important for them show realism and prudence, when required. Who does the SFO have in position to rein in the sorts of excesses which have blighted (and continue to blight) the reputation of organisations like FIFA?

The SFO is a registered charity and it is incorporated as a company limited by guarantee. The constitution of the SFO requires it to have board of trustees or "directors". They are elected by the membership and, in general, the SFO is not allowed to have more than 15 board members. The current total of board members is 13. This includes the secretary, treasurer, president, musical director, marketing director, front of house manager, and various administrators for the different concerts we put on each year. There are specific administrators for the Edinburgh (2 each year), Glasgow, Perth and Aberdeen concerts. One administrator has the "interesting" task of organising all of our "South" concerts, which has generally encompassed venues in England such as Gateshead, Nottingham, Manchester, York, Harrogate and Birmingham.

Although the board members are, like all members of the orchestra, volunteers, they have the benefit of playing in the orchestra as well as their obligation to attend board meetings.



Having said that, there is one member of the board that no one would recognise as, rather oddly, he plays no instrument and does not appear on stage. This is our treasurer Jim Kerr. In Autumn 2014 the board advertised to see if anyone would take on this role on a voluntary basis. Jim was about to retire in March 2015 from his full-time job as a tax consultant with Grant Thornton and made contact with us. Jim has considerable experience of dealing with charities and non-profit making bodies in his career and is a chartered accountant as well as a chartered tax adviser. As well as helping us, he is also treasurer of Giffnock Tennis Squash & Hockey Club (with some 900 members). In what spare time he has, he plays golf, tennis, squash and 5-a-side football - as well as helping to child-mind his 2 young grandsons. Since his appointment he has been a great asset to the board looking after the accounts. He is pictured with his wife, Mary, outside the Taj Mahal earlier this year - which turned out to be a "reasonable" excuse for him missing a board meeting and the orchestra's AGM.

The rest of the board are, like the orchestra as a whole, a diverse bunch ranging from a retired violin teacher to consultant surgeon, even a bridge inspector. Much of the board's time is spent discussing practical issues which have come up in relation to recent or forthcoming concerts.

It should be noted that, to date, our long-suffering-serving, illustrious and esteemed president, Bill Cook, has resisted the temptation to promote the idea of a biopic tracing the origins and early years of the SFO - including suggestions for actors who could play his part. But the agenda for the next board meeting is not out yet.

And what would be the title of the film?

<b>Contacts</b>	
<b>Secretary</b>	SFO Secretary, Karen Egerton, 44 Roman Road, Almondbank, Perth PH1 3LQ
<b>Treasurer</b>	SFO Treasurer, Jim Kerr, 21 Forres Avenue, Giffnock, Glasgow G46 6LH
<b>Patrons / Friends</b>	SFO Patrons, Douglas Smith, 78 Dunkeld Road, Perth PH1 5AW
<b>Postal Sales</b>	SFO Postal Sales, Wilma Brodlie, 20 Lady Margaret Drive, Troon KA10 7AL