



The Scottish Fiddle Orchestra

Scotland's National Fiddle Orchestra

NEWSLETTER

Patron: HRH The Princess Royal

Scottish Registered Charity No. SC010753

September 2019 / No. 81

A North American Tour to Celebrate the SFO's 40th Anniversary

If you follow the Scottish Fiddle Orchestra on social media, you will know that our digital media manager, Alexander (Davidson), has been releasing snippets of information about the orchestra's proposed tour, since the end of June.

30 June: SFO TOUR 2020 – Throughout July we're going to let you know our tour plans – keep your eyes peeled for exciting tour related news. Our first announcement will be on Tuesday!

02 July: So it's official, we've booked our flights, and at the end of March 2020 we're crossing the pond. We'll be touring some of the North Eastern states and can barely contain our excitement! But that's not all, we've another location to announce, but all in good time. Let's all get excited first!

09 July: As well as touring some of the North Eastern states, we thought why not head over the border to Canada too! So, in April 2020 we'll be playing in the Maritime Provinces. We'll let you know specifics before the end of July. We know traditional music is popular over there and are looking forward to meeting some traditional inspired musicians.

12 July: In case you haven't heard... last week we announced our plans to tour the Canadian Maritime Provinces and the USA next Spring! More specifically, we're finalising plans to play in Massachusetts and Maine. If you're a fan and live in Massachusetts or Maine, or know someone who does and would enjoy a night of fiddle music, please share! [Here we are playing a Boston Two-Step to get you in the mood].

16 July: The last time the SFO visited Canada we played in Toronto... This time we're planning performances in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia! Here we are playing John Mason's 'One Hundred Thousand Welcomes' and a set of jigs in the Molson amphitheater, Toronto. Please share with anyone you know in Canada!

To celebrate the 40th anniversary of the SFO in 2020 we plan to tour eastern parts of the USA and Canada over 2 weeks in March and April. We will be taking 50 musicians, fiddles, cellos, basses, accordions, flutes, drummer, piper and singers. The tour itinerary has still to be finalised but will include the states/provinces of Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maine, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Quebec.

The map below comes with the disclaimer that it is probably: not geographically accurate; not to scale; showing places we will visit but which we will not necessarily perform in. What we know for sure is that we will fly into Boston and fly out of Montreal 2 weeks later with great memories of new audiences, new friends, new venues and that unique experience of the SFO on tour, promoting Scotland's traditional music wherever we go.



Sketch map of part of the North-Eastern seaboard of the USA and Canada showing places likely to feature in the SFO's 2020 Tour

We'll visit two great countries, each with strong links to Scotland and the UK – you only have to look at the place names to see that.

A social media post – on Twitter – gave one interesting “take” on a difference between the USA and Canada:

 [Redacted Name] 20h ago

 [Redacted Name] retweeted

Did you know that, in 1972, a CBC radio host held a contest to choose a Canadian national simile (à la “as American as apple pie”), and the winner they chose was “as Canadian as possible under the circumstances.”

I love that so much. I love Canada.

  1.81K  8.6K 

We're looking forward to preserving and furthering the musical and cultural links between Scotland and Canada / USA.

A Tour from the Archives...

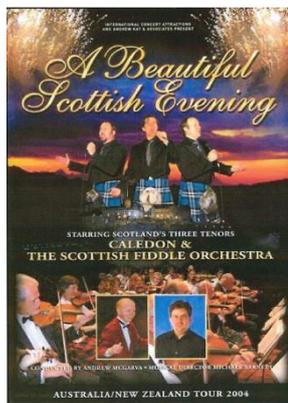
This is a good chance to dip into the SFO archives – from just about 15 years ago and SFO Newsletter No. 26: October 2004. At that time, the orchestra had just completed a tour of Australia and New Zealand. The reporting is by the inimitable and much-missed Robert Clark.

13 Concerts, 16 Flights, 27,760 Miles to Australia and New Zealand and back.

G'day All,

Eratosthenes (276 – 194BC) the Chief Librarian at the renowned library in Alexandria, Egypt, peered into a well here at noon and came up with the diameter and circumference of our planet! The summer solstice sun and a trip to Syene (Azwan) was all it took...

“What has this to do with our trip Down Under?” I can hear you ask. Well, we really did fly more than the earth’s circumference of 24,855 miles during the tour.



Scotland’s Three Tenors, Alan Beck, Jamie MacDougall and Ivan Sharpe, collectively called Caledon, and the Scottish Fiddle Orchestra have returned from a highly successful tour of Australia and New Zealand where we played to audiences in the major city concert venues including the world famous Sydney Opera House.

The concert was billed as “A Beautiful Scottish Evening” and has brought a contemporary flavour to age-old melodies and songs, foot-tapping jigs, reels and highland schottisches ringing across centuries, resonant with the joy of communal gatherings. It is now available as a CD, and you will also be able to enjoy this magnificent show which has been filmed for broadcasting and will be released in the near future as a DVD.

We instinctively knew as soon as we stepped onto the stage of the Perth Concert Hall that the audience, many wearing traditional Scottish garb were in a mood to party when they clapped before we had even taken our seats or played a single note. When David Low, our piper, played *Over the Sea to Skye* the sound of voices singing the words could be clearly heard over the skirl of his pipes.

The performance – with its blend of nostalgia, knees-up tunes, the instrumental and vocal extravaganza – was clearly an expatriate Scot’s dream.

Unforgettable moments came in the glorious setting of Loch Lomond, sung by Ivan Sharpe, which conveyed the full pathos of the captured Jacobite soldier awaiting execution. The string arrangement was exquisite with its recurring haunting melody which touched deeply many in the audience.

Another piece which was outstanding was the rendering by Jamie MacDougall of Burns’ immortal *My Love is Like a Red Red Rose*. This was accompanied on piano by Michael Barnett, Caledon’s Musical Director. Again, his skilful arrangement brought out the full passion of the piece, and Burns himself I think would have been quite overwhelmed with the emotions the piece conveyed to the audience.

The ensemble was conducted skilfully by Andrew McGarva, whose pleated kilt as he jigged and bounced, gave the many a thrill as it swung not quite full circle, almost a distraction. Will it, won’t it? Does he, doesn’t he?

The tour covered the cities and towns of Australia as follows: Perth, Mandurah, Brisbane, Toowoomba, Newcastle, Castle Hills, Melbourne, Canberra, Sydney. In New Zealand, the cities of Christchurch, Wellington and Auckland were visited.

Sydney Opera House was to be the culmination and climax of our tour. We flew in from Canberra and went straight to the opera house.

A photo shoot was held on the steps of the opera house, with Japanese tourists going wild with delight at seeing so many dressed in the tartan.

At the concert, the audience gave us a fantastic reception, and loved the music. At the end of the concert, they rose to their feet and screamed for more, cameras flashing in every direction.

Auld Lang Syne was finally played and the emotion felt by both the orchestra and audience was overpowering as the last note died away.



SFO members outside Sydney Opera House, 2004

We had come and conquered. The power of the music had united the generations. Bonds stretching thousands of miles – but yet holding us all together – in the culture that is uniquely ours.

New members of the Orchestra

We are delighted that, following recent auditions held in Stirling, 5 fiddlers have joined the SFO in the 2nd Violin section:

- Lesley Brown from Glenrothes, Fife.
- Rosemary Grady from Cowdenbeath, Fife.
- Gordon Lawrie from Peebles, in the Borders.
- Lauren Mair from Edinburgh.
- Ella Rose McMeechan from Prestwick, Ayrshire.

We welcome them all and look forward to take to the stage with them at our next concert in Glasgow on 7th September 2019, talking of which...

SFO Glasgow Concert – 7th September 2019

One major change to the format of this concert is the inclusion of a guest group – Assynt, who were winners of the “Up and Coming Artist of the Year” at the Scots Trad Music Awards, last December.

Our guest soloist will be Colette Ruddy, mezzo-soprano.

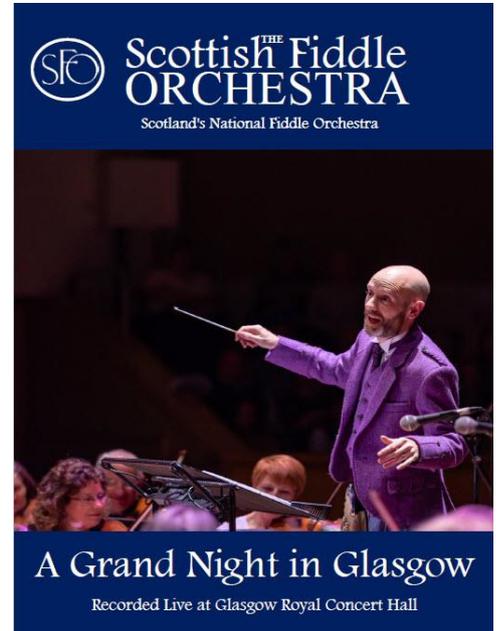
The Pipe Band is the Kilmarnock Schools Pipe Band and solo piper is Catriona Norman.

We are delighted to announce the release of our new DVD which will be on sale at the concert and subsequently via our website, filmed and recorded at Glasgow Royal Concert Hall when we played there last, in September 2018.

Members of the orchestra had warmed up with an impromptu “pop-up” concert on the steps of the concert hall, before their rehearsal that afternoon. This live recording captures some of the highlights from the SFO’s main evening concert.

You’ll find some well-known favourites alongside new compositions and arrangements. There’s the usual irresistible mix of reflective slow airs, driving reels, jigs and rousing pipe tunes. Featured with the orchestra are the ever-popular Mezzo Soprano, Colette Ruddy, fine tenor, Robert Lovie, and the Combined Pipe Bands of McLaren and Balfron Schools – as well as our own piper, Catriona Norman. Yla Steven BEM and Sarah Lynchehaun duet on a beautiful slow air and Lewis Kelly provides an enthralling fiddle solo.

This DVD has all the standard ingredients you have come to expect will form part of an SFO concert while still leaving room for a few innovations and surprises. You won’t be disappointed!



*The SFO's new DVD
"A Grand Night in Glasgow"*

Blair and Jamie on Celtic Music Radio

Blair Parham and Jamie Mason from the SFO were on the lunchtime show on Celtic Music Radio on 28 August 2019, partly promoting the Glasgow Concert but touching on other things too.

You can listen to (or download as MP3) their chat with host, Ian Oliphant, until about 28 September 2019. (<http://podcast.canstream.co.uk/celticmusic/index.php?id=30675> – from about 9 minutes in).

They played some SFO tracks, including Willie Kidd’s Welcome to Orkney and The Huntsman Jigs (all compositions of John Mason). Blair discussed some of his favourite tunes and Jamie provided an update on the Mason family’s project to produce a book of his Dad’s tune compositions.

As you probably know already, John wrote a lot of music for the SFO, Ayr & Prestwick Strathspey & Reel Society and the Strings of Scotland. It was thought originally that there might be perhaps 80 – 100 pieces of music that could be collected to form a compendium of John’s music.

The discovery process has now revealed an actual total of about 700 tunes, which Jamie is still editing – and preparing narratives for the tunes. He is hopeful of having a book in print in time to coincide with the SFO’s 40th anniversary. In addition, January 2020 would have been John’s 80th birthday, so they are aiming for that as a launch date. It has been a mammoth task, with Jamie and Rognvald Mason receiving great help from Yla Steven and Jen White, among others. The time taken has been extensive because the materials were spread across a number of different boxes in a number of different rooms. To create a book of tunes (with first and second fiddle parts) from, in some cases, original multi-part concert arrangements, has not been easy.

We in the SFO are very excited by the prospect of publication of John Mason’s tunes.

Signing off

One additional important bit of news from the SFO is the appointment of Robert Langlands as our new Treasurer. Robert takes over from Jim Kerr who has retired after 5 very productive years in charge of our finances. Jim was also an active and valued member of the SFO Board. Our thanks to Jim and welcome to Robert.

As ever, if you have any comments or suggestions in relation to the SFO Newsletter, we would be very pleased to hear from you.

We hope to see you at an SFO Concert sometime soon.

Concert Diary				
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	07 September 2019	0141 353 8000	www.whatsonglasgow.co.uk/event/010530-scottish-fiddle-orchestra/
Inverurie	Town Hall	28 September 2019		www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/the-scottish-fiddle-orchestra-tickets-62249382579?utm_term=eventurl_text
York	Barbican	26 October 2019	0844 854 2757	yorkbarbican.co.uk
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	30 December 2019	0131 228 1155	www.usherhall.co.uk
Perth	Concert Hall	22 February 2020	01738 621031	www.horsecross.co.uk/whats-on/scottish-fiddle-orchestra-91402

Contacts	
Secretary	SFO Secretary, Karen Egerton, 44 Roman Road, Almondbank, Perth PH1 3LQ
Treasurer	SFO Treasurer, Robert Langlands, 0/1 162 Hill Street, Glasgow G3 6US
Patrons / Friends	SFO Patrons, 24 Golf Crescent, Troon, Ayrshire KA10 6JZ
Postal Sales	SFO Postal Sales, 24 Golf Crescent, Troon, Ayrshire KA10 6JZ