



The Scottish Fiddle Orchestra

Scotland's National Fiddle Orchestra

NEWSLETTER

Patron: HRH The Princess Royal

Scottish Registered Charity No. SC010753

June 2018 / No. 76

Doing our best to go with the flow...

Yet again, we must apologise for the delay between newsletters. In some ways, this a bit of an interim newsletter, in any case. Our overall editor for the last few years, Douglas Smith, passed away very suddenly towards the end of May 2018. At the moment, we don't have access to Douglas's styles and publishing software and so this edition is rather cobbled together, certainly from an editing point of view.

In this edition, we pay tribute to Douglas and also to his predecessor, Robert Clark. We also look forward to the Orchestra's forthcoming Northern Nights tour, which will take us to Moray, Orkney and Shetland. Our conductor, Blair Parham, is a World Peace Tartan ambassador and he explains what that entails. We also highlight a Nelson Mandela-related tune which Blair has arranged for the SFO to play. To begin, orchestra member, David Nicholson, gives us a summary of an important event he was involved in, together with some other SFO folk, back in February 2018.

The SFO's David Nicholson presents "Loud and Clear" Event

On Tuesday 20 February 2018, SFO first violin member, David Nicholson, organised - alongside Drake Music Scotland and Robert MacBean from the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists - an event at the Scottish Parliament called "Loud and Clear: Let Disabled People's Music Be Heard".

The event was sponsored by Rachael Hamilton, MSP and Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Culture and Tourism. Gaelic musician and broadcaster, Mary Ann Kennedy, chaired proceedings. The event showcased some of the rich talent that disabled people have and discussed how we can get more disabled musicians actively participating in the musical community in Scotland.

The evening was a huge success with some excellent musical performances and discussions.

David looks forward to working with others in the coming months to ensure that the music world in Scotland is as disability-friendly as possible. As a musician with Asperger's Syndrome, David feels passionately about doing what he can to make the musical community a place where disabled musicians can feel included and at home.

A big thanks to Rachael Hamilton MSP, Mary Ann Kennedy, Drake Music Scotland and Robert MacBean for helping make the event the resounding success that it was. A big thanks also to representatives from the SFO for coming along to support the event.

Blair Parham: World Peace Tartan Ambassador

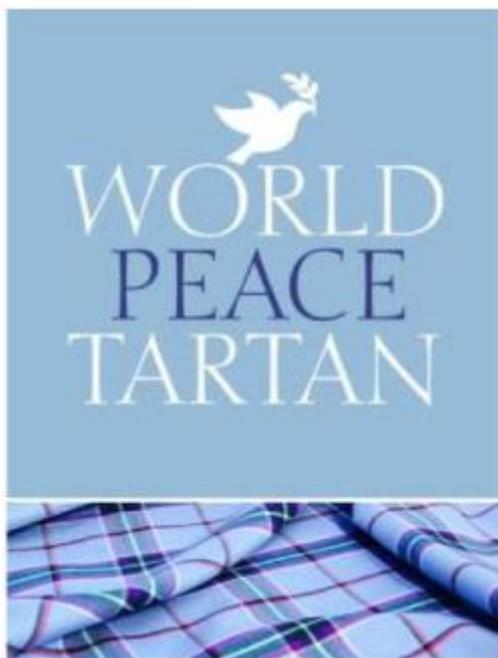
Our dynamic Conductor, Blair Parham, is renowned for his swinging kilt during concerts.

The SFO is proud that Blair is also a World Peace Tartan Ambassador. It's a tartan he often wears when on stage with the SFO.

We asked Blair to explain how he came to be involved in the project and what it hopes to achieve. This is what he told us:

A little over a year ago I was contacted by Victor Spence, Founder of the World Peace Tartan Initiative asking if we could perhaps meet to discuss the initiative and how I could become part of it.

I met with Victor and listened to the history of the initiative and its aims and objectives, before giving him the history of the SFO and my involvement with it. Victor had clearly done his homework as he knew most of what I had to say! The culmination of the meeting was when Victor asked if I would become a World Peace Tartan Ambassador – something I was honoured to be asked to do.



The World Peace Tartan Initiative was created in 2011 as a message of peace while generating funds to aid charitable work through the licensing of its brand, design and products. As it grows, the World Peace Tartan Foundation invests in education initiatives intended to build a culture of peace and address child poverty.

Although the Tartan itself was created in 2011, Victor told me the story began much earlier in 1998 when he dreamt of meeting the Dalai Lama. This dream stuck with Victor, and he made it his mission to meet the Tibetan Monk and bring him to Scotland. Victor met the Dalai Lama in South Africa in the late 90s where the Dalai Lama presented Victor with a white silk Tibetan scarf called a khata. At the same time Victor presented the Dalai Lama with a Tartan Scarf.

Victor met with the Lama in 2003, again presenting him a tartan scarf, although this time he wrapped it around his neck himself. It was at this moment, Victor realised that the presenting of a scarf in itself is symbolic.

Victor was successful in bringing the Dalai Lama to Scotland in 2004 and he has returned several times since. In 2010, Victor decided a specific tartan should be used when presenting the scarves to religious leaders and Nobel Prize

Laureates as he had been doing since meeting the Dalai Lama initially. In 2011 Victor created the design as we know it today.

The tartan was launched on June 22, 2012 when the first ever World Peace Tartan scarf was presented to the Dalai Lama during a visit to Edinburgh. Since then, other global leaders and Nobel Peace Prize winners including Pope Francis I, Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu and Arun Ghandi, grandson of Mahatma Ghandi, and have been presented with a World Peace Tartan scarf.

I was very humbled to be asked to become an Ambassador to represent the initiative. I was kindly gifted a World Peace Tartan Kilt by the initiative in April 2017 and wear it proudly at SFO concerts. The striking light blue in the design is representative of the presence, hope and potential of the United Nations. Scotland at the heart of this enterprise is represented through the purple and green of the thistle, its national flower. The red and black running through the pattern represents the realities of war and violence with the white running through the pattern providing a counterbalance in being symbolic of peace and light.



Douglas Smith

Douglas – “The Demented Librarian”

This is the name of a jig which Douglas’s great friend, Campbell Smith, composed for him – a reflection of one of Douglas’s many skills: organising.

In that case, it was the music of Dunkeld & District Strathspey & Reel Society, which Douglas had organised and digitised – a process which nearly drove him to distraction.

Douglas only joined the SFO in 2015 but he was quickly co-opted onto the Board.

He was soon heavily committed, revamping the orchestra’s website, managing the SFO’s list of Patrons, and designing and preparing marketing materials, from programmes to flyers and posters. And, of course, he was responsible for editing this Newsletter from editions 72 to 75, extending the content considerably from the previous format.

A large group of friends and relatives gathered at Perth Crematorium on 11 June to pay tribute to Douglas.

We heard solo piping from Ross Ainslie, solo fiddle from Yla Steven and several selections of tunes from members of the Dunkeld Society (including “The Demented Librarian”).

Douglas had many and varied interests. On the musical front, his talents extended (at least) to fiddle, piano, flute, clarinet and oboe.

We still can't really believe that Douglas has gone. It is going to require more than one person to take over the multitude of tasks he performed for the SFO.

Satisfaction guaranteed at the SFO's Edinburgh June concert

A famous group of ageing musicians played yet another concert in Scotland's capital on 9th June, but enough about the SFO.

Okay, while the Rolling Stones entertained the masses at Murrayfield Stadium, the SFO held its annual June concert in the more intimate surroundings of the Usher Hall.

Compere, Jamie MacDougall, commented wryly that, perhaps for the first time, the average age of the audience at an SFO concert was probably younger than that at a Stones' concert. Certainly, the average age of the performers was lower at the Usher Hall.

We were proud to support charities Moonwalk Scotland and Cancer Research UK. Colette Ruddy shared singing duties with Jamie, our pipe band was the excellent James Gillespie's High School Pipe Band and it was a bittersweet evening as our dancers, Catriona and Marnie Clark, took part for the last time – as they both go on to concentrate on their studies. Our deepest thanks and appreciation go to them for their loyalty and athleticism over many years. Thanks also to piper, Jamie Westhead, for coming out of "retirement" to provide accompaniment for the dancers and the crucial introductions to each half of the programme.

Robert Clark – An appreciation

Robert is the "act" we have had follow in terms of continued production of the SFO Newsletter. He was the writer and editor of Newsletters 1 to 71. He retired from the Newsletter with effect from December 2015.

Ill-health prevented him from continuing as an active member of the SFO and he sadly passed away, aged 69, after a brave fight against cancer, on 9th January 2018.

Robert was born in Glasgow, a first son to his parents Annie and Robert Clark. He grew up in Oban and attended Rockfield Primary School then Oban High.

Music interested him from a young age managing to teach himself the basics of fiddle playing followed by lessons from George MacHardy in Oban and later travelling weekly to Glasgow to take lessons from a Miss Warden.

On leaving school his first job was in administration, working in the offices of Caledonian MacBrayne in Oban, some of the time



acting as Purser on their ships. He moved on to work with the NHS, still based in Oban, followed by a spell in their finance department based in Lochgilphead.

He was, and remained throughout his life, an active church member and during his younger days was part of their "Campaigners" group, enjoying continental trips with them.

Fiddle music became a huge part of his life, he joined the Oban and Lorne Strathspey & Reel Society and many weekends were filled with journeys all over Scotland. Wherever there was a concert a group from Oban would go and Robert would be with them.

In 1976 he moved to Skye as Local Administrator for Skye and Lochalsh District of the Highland Health Board, leading to him meeting Moira, later to become his wife, when she became Nursing Officer in Broadford Hospital. They married in 1978.

His next move was to Dunbartonshire when Robert became Administrator for Dumbarton Hospitals and then for the Vale of Leven Hospital in Alexandria, their two sons, Andrew and Kenneth, were born there. Robert was very much the proud family man.



Robert Clark

All this time Robert had continued with his music and had joined Bearsden Fiddlers followed by Glasgow Caledonian Strathspey & Reel Society attending concerts in and around the Glasgow area.

In 1998, he joined the SFO 1st violins, taking part in many tours over the years including to England, Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and China.

Robert was a member of the SFO board for a number of years, taking on the roles of Front of House Manager and Assistant Secretary. He produced the newsletter for most of his time on the board beginning as ghost writer for the then President Dr. Gerry Crean. He set up the SFO Patrons' organisation, still running successfully today.

Robert's final performance with the Orchestra was in December 2015 at the STV Children's Appeal, a television programme presented live from the Royal Bank of Scotland HQ in Edinburgh.

He is greatly missed.

Nelson Mandela's Welcome to Glasgow

Nelson Mandela was born on 18 July 1918 and died on 05 December 2013.

This year would have been his 100th birthday.

2018 also marks the 25th anniversary of a visit he made to Glasgow.

In my country, we go to prison first and then become President.

-Nelson Mandela

Mandela is now such an iconic figure that it is easy to forget that, throughout much of the time after his imprisonment in South Africa in 1962, it was not fashionable to be associated with him. He was widely regarded as a terrorist.

In 1981, Glasgow Council took the bold and controversial step of awarding Nelson Mandela the Freedom of the City. Many other towns, cities and regions in the UK were to follow but Glasgow led the way in recognising the legitimacy of his challenge to the system of racial segregation in South Africa.

He was finally released from prison in February 1990 at the age of 71.

In his speech at Glasgow City Chambers in October 1993, he said:

"While we were physically denied our freedom in the country of our birth, a city 6,000 miles away – and as renowned as Glasgow – refused to accept the legitimacy of the apartheid system and declared us to be free."

As a tribute to these 2 important anniversaries, the SFO's 2018 programme includes Blair Douglas's appropriately-named jig: "Nelson Mandela's Welcome to Glasgow". The arrangement, by SFO conductor, Blair Parham, features an extended percussion section and bagpipes in order to capture the driving, celebratory mood of the piece.

SFO Northern Nights Tour

We're excited to be going on tour again. This July's 6-day tour sees us performing in Elgin, Kirkwall and Lerwick.

About 60 players will make the trip and we will be joined by singers, Colette Ruddy (mezzo soprano) and Dennis Haggerty (tenor).

We hope to fit in a few extra mini-concerts along the way, as our tour bus wends its way from Moray to the Scrabster ferry, and onwards to Orkney and Shetland.

We don't expect to fit in much sleep – our tour slogan is to be *"Go with the (Scapa) Flow and have a mighty Muckle Flugga"*. The 11.45pm ferry from Kirkwall to Lerwick on 24 July is one we can't afford to miss and we'll

be delighted if we all make it to Shetland's mainland, let alone the top end of Unst. (Muckle Flugga is the northernmost island in the British Isles, we think).



At Elgin, we will be joined by Elgin and District Pipe Band and by Frontline and Friends (young fiddlers from Fochabers and Lossiemouth). In Kirkwall, we welcome young players from Orkney Traditional Music Project, West Mainland Strathspey and Reel Society and pipers from Kirkwall City Pipe Band. To the Lerwick Concert, we welcome compere, Alan Gifford, Lerwick Legion Pipe Band and young fiddlers from Anderson High School, under the expert leadership of their teacher, Kirsten Hendry.

We had a preliminary tour meeting before our June Usher Hall concert and it's fair to say that we are buzzing with excitement about the tour. It's not too late to plan your Summer holidays to catch one or more of these concerts, which should be a lot of fun.

We hope to see you at some point along the way.

Elgin concert – 21 July 2018 at 7.30pm – Elgin Town Hall

Tickets from Sound and Vision, South Street, Elgin and Grigor & Young LLP, 1 North Street, Elgin.
(Enquiries to Peter Brash: 07967 720079)

Kirkwall concerts – 23 July 2018 at 7.30pm – Pickaquooy Centre

-24 July 2018 at 7.30pm – St Magnus Cathedral

Tickets from the Pickaquooy Centre, The Reel (both Kirkwall) and WHB Sutherland Pharmacy (Stromness)

Lerwick Concert – 25 July 2018 at 7.30pm – Clickimin Complex

Tickets from High Level Music, Lerwick.

Ticket prices for all concerts:

£20; £15 concessions; £5 under-16s.



Concert Diary				
Elgin	Town Hall	21st July 2018	07967 720079	Also: Sound & Vision, South St., Elgin
Kirkwall	Pickaquooy Centre	23rd July 2018		Pickaquooy Centre and The Reel, Kirwall...
Kirkwall	St Magnus Cathedral	24th July 2018		...and WHB Sutherland Pharmacy, Stromness
Lerwick	Clickimin Complex	25th July 2018		High Level Music, Lerwick
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	15 th September 2018	0141 353 8000	www.glasgowconcerthalls.com

Contacts	
Secretary	SFO Secretary, Karen Egerton, 44 Roman Road, Almondbank, Perth PH1 3LQ
Treasurer	SFO Treasurer, Jim Kerr, 21 Forres Avenue, Giffnock, Glasgow G46 6LH
Patrons / Friends	SFO Patrons, Peter Brash, 4 Union Street, Lossiemouth IV31 6BA (Temporary)
Postal Sales	SFO Postal Sales, Wilma Brodlie, 20 Lady Margaret Drive, Troon KA10 7AL