



WILLIS PIPE ORGAN RESTORATION CELEBRATION

PRESS RELEASE

From Joe Laredo, Music for All Publicity Team publicity@musicforallsmg.org

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Stony Stratford's restored Willis pipe organ – a ten-week celebration

After ten years of fundraising and eighteen months of restoration work, the 'Father' Willis pipe organ in Stony Stratford's St Mary & St Giles Church is finally ready to reveal its glories!

A ten-week Restoration Celebration programme this spring will show off all aspects of the newly restored and enhanced pipe organ at St Mary & St Giles Church, Stony Stratford.

With several additional pipes and stops, including the distinctive 'Waldhorn', and beautiful new solid wood casework, the organ will look and sound as never before.

What's more, it will play at concert pitch for the first time, allowing choirs, orchestras and other instrumental groups to perform works involving the organ.

The 'Father' Willis organ illustrates 50 years of technical and tonal development by three generations of the famous organ-building Willis family. Originally built by Henry Willis I for St George's in Edinburgh, the organ was enlarged and improved there, and then purchased for Stony Stratford in 1967 after a fire destroyed the parish organ. Ten years of dedicated community fundraising, complemented by a major grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, have enabled the full restoration of the organ, the replacement of missing pipes, the addition of new pipes to fulfil the vision of Henry Willis III for the tonal range of the organ, and new casework. The work has been undertaken by F H Browne & Sons Ltd and has taken eighteen months to complete.

Events in the Restoration Celebration programme are organised by Music for All @ SMSG and will be held at:

St Mary & St Giles Church, High St, Stony Stratford, MK11 1BD

Full details and online booking available on the Music for All @ SMSG website www.musicforallsmg.org

Details of three inaugural concerts and other events are given below:

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www.musicforallsmg.org/restoration_celebration

Music for All @ SMSG, St Mary & St Giles Church, High Street, Stony Stratford, MK11 1BD





WILLIS PIPE ORGAN RESTORATION CELEBRATION

CELEBRATING RESTORATION!

Inaugural choral concert with the Willis Pipe Organ by The Open University Choir

Saturday 23 April 2016 7:30pm

Bill Strang - Director, Paul Daggett - Organist

Tickets £12 for adults and £2 for children (aged 16 and under)

The OU Choir's conductor, Bill Strang, has put together a distinctive programme which, along with organ music by Widor and motets by Bruckner, includes music by several composers associated with St George's Church in Edinburgh, for which the organ was originally built: Andrew Mitchell Thomson, its first minister; Alexander Mackenzie, the ninth choirmaster, who subsequently became Principal of the Royal Academy of Music in London; and William Bowie, the last organist, who also taught at the ancient Royal High School – where Bill Strang was one of his pupils.

The programme also includes music linked with the Open University – a choral prelude by Bill Strang based on the mediaeval Scottish Hymn to Saint Magnus; a new arrangement for brass and percussion of 'Antiphony' by Liz Lane, a composer currently tutoring OU students; and John Rutter's vibrant 'Gloria', written in the 1970s when he was on the staff of the OU Music Department.

ORGAN SPECTACULAR!

Inaugural organ concert by Jonathan Kingston

Saturday 30 April 2016 7:30pm

Jonathan Kingston - Organist

Tickets £10 adults, free entry for accompanied children (aged 16 and under)

Jonathan Kingston brings his wealth of experience to this wide-ranging programme of popular organ showpieces, which will show off the delicacy and subtlety of the Stony Stratford Willis as well as its mighty power! Programme to include music by Widor, Bach and Handel – expect highlights from the 'Fireworks' suite and much more!

Pre-concert screening of the Willis Organ History and Restoration video

Parish Hall (adjoining the church) 6:30pm

This 25-minute video, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, covers the Willis organ restoration work as well as the organ's history and how it works. Free entry but limited spaces; registration in advance required.

BLESSING & RE-DEDICATION

Sunday 1 May 2016 at the 9:30am Parish Mass

Blessing and re-dedication of the Willis organ by the Bishop of Ebbsfleet, the Right Reverend Jonathan Goodall

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LOTTERY FUNDED



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ORGAN RESTORATION CELEBRATION!

Inaugural orchestral concert with the Willis pipe organ by MK Sinfonia

Saturday 2 July 2016 7:30pm

David Knight - Director, William Thallon - Organist

Tickets £10 (accompanied under 16s £1)

The programme includes:

- Canteloube - Songs of the Auvergne
- Poulenc - Organ Concerto
- Saint Saëns - Symphony No 3 in C, 'Organ Symphony', Op 78

OTHER EVENTS IN THE RESTORATION CELEBRATION PROGRAMME

Other events will include:

Thursday 19 May – a free 'drop-in' lunchtime concert (12:30–1:15) involving The Orphean Singers

Sunday 29 May – a short family organ recital

Wednesday 8 June – a first performance of organ with handbells as part of StonyLive!

Sunday 12 June – a Happy 90th Birthday concert for the Queen with band and organ

Thursday 16 June – a free 'drop-in' lunchtime concert (12:30–1:15) involving local schools

ANNUAL WILLIS PIPE ORGAN FESTIVAL 9-11 SEPTEMBER 2016

Celebrations will continue later in the year with the annual Willis Pipe Organ Festival on 9-11 September as part of Heritage Open Days weekend. There will be three full days of events. See

www.musicforallsmg.org/festival for details.

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Notes on performers for Editors

The Open University Choir

In 2010 the Open University Choir gave a concert in St Mary & St Giles Church in Stony Stratford to raise funds for the restoration of the 'Father' Willis pipe organ. The choir is making a welcome return visit to give the inaugural choral concert celebrating the completion of the restoration.

The Open University Choir, directed by Bill Strang, has approximately 80 members, drawn largely from Open University staff and students but also including singers from the local community. The choir rehearses and performs at lunchtimes at the Open University Campus, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, presenting three main concerts each year. The choir has gained a reputation for its varied repertoire, which works unearthed by members of the Music Department and new works commissioned by the choir.

Organist Paul Daggett trained at the Royal Academy of Music and Liverpool University, where he was Organ Scholar at the Anglican Cathedral; he is currently Head of the Music School at Walton High in Milton Keynes and organist at Hockliffe Street Baptist Church in Leighton Buzzard.

Jonathan Kingston

Jonathan studied the organ with Ian Tracey of Liverpool's Anglican Cathedral (which features one of the largest Willis instruments ever built) before being appointed Sub Organist to Bradford Cathedral at the age of 18. Assistant Director and Director of Music positions followed at Stowe and Bromsgrove Schools.

Jonathan is a recording artist with both the Naxos and Priory labels and tours this country and abroad as an examiner for the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM). He has appeared with many professional orchestras, including the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, London Symphony Orchestra and English Symphony Orchestra, as well as on BBC radio, World Service and television broadcasts.

The summer of 2015 saw Jonathan performing as soloist in Poulenc's Concerto for Organ, Strings and Timpani in Birmingham, and his 2016 engagements include performances at Durham Cathedral, Salisbury Cathedral and Blenheim Palace.

Alongside his freelance performing career Jonathan is Director of Music at the King's School in Ely and deputy organist at Ely Cathedral and undertakes business development for a London-based entertainment company.

MK Sinfonia

In 1971, when the new city of Milton Keynes was in its infancy, an amateur symphony orchestra was formed with the aim of performing to a high standard works from the full range of the orchestral repertoire. MK Sinfonia is very much a community orchestra and has become an important part of the cultural and musical life of the city and the surrounding area.

David Knight has conducted MK Sinfonia since 1992. He has been largely responsible for building it to its current size and consistently challenges members with his bold programming. He is also Principal Cellist with the Bedford Sinfonia, with whom he has appeared as a soloist and conductor, and a member of other leading local orchestras, including the Orchestra of Stowe Opera and the Cornerstone Chamber Orchestra.

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