

# GLASGOW SENIOR CITIZENS ORCHESTRA

ESTABLISHED 1963

## THE GS CO AT 60



Celebrating the Sixtieth Anniversary of  
the Glasgow Senior Citizens Orchestra

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# THE GSCO AT 60

This booklet has been compiled for the sixtieth anniversary of the Glasgow Senior Citizens Orchestra. It was originally hoped to narrate a history of the orchestra. Detailed information about its first two or three decades proved, however, difficult to obtain. While some history is included, most of the contributions are more recent, and the publication is largely a celebration of the orchestra's unique character through the words of its members. Many of these were written during the Covid pandemic of 2020-21.

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Christmas Concert at GOPWA David Cargill Centre, 2015



GSCO rehearsing at the Couper Institute, 2015

# T H E   G S C O

Scotland is a musical nation, and the Scots are a musical people. Wherever you live you are not far from opportunities to sing in a choir or a group, to play in an amateur orchestra or, with friends, in a chamber ensemble.

There is, however, an orchestra in Glasgow which is unique, an orchestra designed exclusively for senior citizens. It has thrived and grown since its inception. We are the **Glasgow Senior Citizens Orchestra**, and we continue to meet weekly, between September and May, as we have done since 1963. After its original small beginnings, the orchestra has consistently had around 50 players.

We play a great variety of light music, including Johann Strauss waltzes, arrangements from musicals, music from BBC past programmes – “Calling All Workers” as an example, medleys from past pop music – Burt Bacharach, Abba, the Beatles and many, many more.

Over the years we have provided concerts for day care centres, church community groups and others by request. We do not charge for these concerts although donations are always greatly appreciated.

We give an annual concert in May to complete the season, held in the impressive Banqueting Suite of the Glasgow City Chambers and regularly attended by an audience of several hundred.

Some pieces are more challenging than others, but all the music is fun; our audiences are enthusiastic and always demand an encore!



GSCO performing at the Kelvin Hall in 1979 or 1980



Christmas Concert at the Knightswood Community Centre, 2022

## THE EARLY YEARS

Although there is very little documented about the origins of the orchestra, information from a one page document written by a William Webster reveals that a meeting in 1963 to discuss possibilities for retired people to meet socially brought together 15 people.

The principal intention was to meet each week and enjoy playing musical instruments. Numbers soon doubled and the orchestra became keen to play for others.

On April 9th 1964, the orchestra gave its first public concert in the Pearce Institute, Govan. From then on, a public concert was given every week at various venues from September to April for many years.

Much of the early inspiration and drive for regular concerts was provided by Professor Sir William Ferguson Anderson, a consultant geriatrician at Stobhill Hospital and an honorary vice president of Glasgow Old People's Welfare Association (GOPWA), an organisation under the auspices of Glasgow Corporation (now City Council). GOPWA has been rebadged as "Glasgow's Golden Generation". Professor Anderson's work with older people taught him that music was of great value for their mental and physical health. This is borne out by our current players who show a lively interest in socialising as well as music. The audiences we entertain also appear to benefit greatly.

The orchestra has maintained links with GOPWA/GGG for most of its existence and some information about the orchestra's early years was obtained from the charity's annual reports:

In 1979 and 1980 there was mention of an annual event, "The Senior Serenade Show", at the Kelvin Hall arena, broadcast and sponsored by Radio Clyde. Over two days, over 100 entertainers, including the GSCO, performed for invited old people. The conductor in 1980 was Mr William Ward.

The 50th Annual Report from GOPWA, in 1998, included a letter from Bill Young of GSCO; "On Thursday afternoon, 28th May 1998, the GSCO performed their annual celebration concert in the Banqueting Suite of the City Chambers (courtesy of the City Council). The audience consisted of 550 senior citizens and friends from their clubs and community centres. Working together for the benefit of our senior citizens, the Glasgow Old Peoples Welfare Association played a very important part in this year's concert by sponsoring this event and during the Civic reception after the concert, Mrs. Sheena Glass, Deputy Director of GOPWA presented a cheque for £500 to Bill Young, public relations officer to the orchestra".

A tribute to our orchestra in the Annual Report of 2013:

"We had a visit in January from the Glasgow Senior Citizens orchestra who wowed us with their fantastic performance. Friends travelled from all over the city to see them. It was a great success and a lovely afternoon for all".

A reminiscence from one of our current players (Sylvia Wight, oboe) gives a flavour of the enjoyment and enthusiasm of a past member:

"My late mother Jean Smith (Wee Jean) was born in 1918 and took up the violin when she was sixty. Her father was a church organist, and she played the piano from a very early age, but she always longed to play in an orchestra. After a few years of violin tuition, just before my father died, she joined the Senior Citizens Orchestra in the late 1980s.

"She simply loved the orchestra – the music, the friendship and the sense of purpose and belonging. She practised and practised and although she didn't match her piano skills on the violin, she did her best and took time to make up a tin of salmon sandwiches each week to share with the orchestra members in the rehearsal break.



Sylvia...



...and her mum, Jean

“She always talked so enthusiastically about the orchestra and the talent of the players and the conductor. Although occasionally she would hang her head and whisper: ‘the brass played too loudly today!’

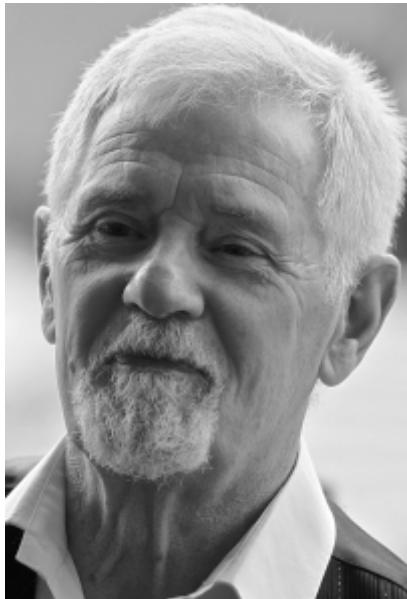
“Eventually my mother had difficulty hearing, seeing, and ‘walking and she and her family were forever grateful for all the help she received from the other orchestra members. She was driven to rehearsals and concerts and helped into her seat. The orchestra was such an important and lovely part of her life for so many years and she reluctantly retired in 2010 at the age of 92”.

The original meeting place for rehearsals was the Penilee Crafts and Hobbies Centre. Rehearsals were moved to the Washington Street Arts Centre until 1999 when the building was destined for demolition (it is, apparently, still in place, though derelict) and rehearsals moved to the Shettleston Town Hall until a devastating fire in 2008 destroyed the whole building including music scores and some musical instruments. Bob Nelson recounts below the move to the Couper Institute where we stayed until 2014, when we moved to the Knightswood Community Centre. The excellent hall with good acoustics, space to store music and instruments, helpful staff and (an added bonus) a café, make for a comfortable and welcoming experience.

In recent years, we have given fewer concerts as the number of community organisations supporting older people has declined. This process was sadly accelerated by the Covid epidemic of 2020-21. The orchestra has, however, continued to thrive, and now gives eight or nine concerts each year, including at least two in our new home of Knightswood Community Centre and the annual end of season concert in Glasgow’s City Chambers.



David Niel



Bob Nelson



John Smillie



Colin Suckling

# THE CONDUCTORS

There are no records of the conductors in the orchestra's early years, but Mr William Ward is listed as sometimes conducting concerts.

1963 - 1986      William Ward and unknown other(s)

1986 - 2007      David Niel

2007 - 2022      Bob Nelson

2022 - 2023      John Smillie

2023 - present    Colin Suckling

## **DAVID NIEL**

David Niel retired in 2007 after 21 years of service conducting the Glasgow Senior Citizens Orchestra.

David was born into a musical family in Chester-le-Street, County Durham. The trombone section of the local Salvation Army band consisted of David's father and his uncles. At the age of 8, he joined the junior band, playing, at first, the tenor horn but at the age of 12, as soon as his arms were long enough, he switched to the trombone.

David began his conducting career with the junior band of the Sunderland Monkwearmouth Salvation Army while also playing first trombone in the Easington Colliery band. In 1972, when his career took him to Wales, he played with the Lady Windsor Colliery band and the Welsh National Jazz orchestra.

In 1974 David moved to Scotland where he played with the Clydebank Borough band, the Bill Fanning orchestra, and many other groups.

## **BOB NELSON**

Bob was a professional violinist who played with national orchestras including the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, and the Glasgow Chamber Orchestra. Bob joined us in 2007 and guided us intelligently and thoughtfully for 14 years, building on what had gone before to create an orchestra that enjoyed his rehearsals and the concerts. He retired at the age of 87. We learned a great deal from his musical abilities and experience.

Bob's reminiscences:

### *Taking the reins*

"When David Niel phoned to ask if I would be interested in taking over from him, my feelings were mixed. Although I was a retired professional musician, directing an orchestra has its own responsibilities and there are many. My reply to David was that I needed a couple of days to think this over due to my very busy 'retirement' schedule. However, there was no denying the feeling of excitement at the thought of a new challenge and with a bit of encouragement from my wife, Christine, the interest grew. I phoned David back to say that I was interested, subject to attending a couple of rehearsals to see what was involved but to be truthful it was more to see how much out of my depth I might find myself.

"I didn't really know what to expect on that first visit to Shettleston Town Hall but as David had suggested, arriving once the rehearsal was well under way would be best. On entering the building, strains of music could be heard coming from the main hall and I remember thinking that for a group of senior citizens that sounded remarkably good. The remainder of the rehearsal allowed me to

watch, listen and weigh up the situation generally and it soon became apparent that this was a special, sprightly group of people (including a number of quick-witted individuals the wrong side of 80), all devoted to making music together and to entertaining others. I wanted to be part of it.

#### *From Bow to Baton*

"I began by going through the list of music available in the library which gave me an insight into items to make suitable programmes of music.

"I remember our first rehearsal together very clearly. Everyone made me feel welcome and we got off to a good start. As the rehearsal progressed, I noticed a rather serious violinist watching me very closely and listening carefully to every word I had to say, which gave me a bit of confidence. Some way into the rehearsal however, he suddenly stopped playing, unscrewed his bow, carefully put his violin in its case and slowly walked out of the rehearsal with it under his arm. No explanation until, at the interval, there he was happily making the tea for all of us. I felt so stupid. Obviously, this was the procedure every week. I spoke to him, and we had a laugh about it.

"He then proceeded to tell me of an event of some years ago. Apparently in the middle of a piece in rehearsal the conductor of the day suddenly collapsed on the podium without any warning. Most of the orchestra didn't appear to have noticed as they continued playing with great gusto. Jim decided that they must either have become so engrossed in the music that nothing would divert their attention, or that they were not watching the conductor at all – enough said!

"Over time I was to discover a good deal more about the players and their interesting lives. After a couple of rehearsals, I noticed that one member of the viola section appeared to be enjoying himself but only played the melody line. Eventually I ventured to ask one of his colleagues if his partner had reading problems. 'He certainly does' was the reply. 'He is actually blind but enjoys playing the tunes from memory'.

"There had always been a short break for the orchestra in concerts when a lady member from the violin section, Gwen Silver, with a gifted soprano voice, would give a short recital accompanied on the piano by Bridget Butter from the double

bass section. Gradually we began to introduce the voice and the orchestra together performing songs from many of the popular musical shows and the audience were always in good voice. That contribution by Gwen Silver was greatly missed when she had to give up both singing and playing.

#### *Moving home*

"For many years Shettleston Town Hall was home to rehearsals; a very comfortable venue, good acoustically and a happy atmosphere. Then disaster struck at the end of my very first season. During our summer break we heard the devastating news that there had been a fire and the building had been completely destroyed. The problems this presented seemed insurmountable: no hall, stored instruments destroyed, and the loss of a complete library of music.

"I will always be grateful to our then Chair, John Ritchie, and Secretary, Sandy Morton, for their efforts in getting us rehoused at the Couper Institute in Cathcart. This became our home, with a good atmosphere and lots of good rehearsing. It was from here that some of our best concerts were produced. We also had the use of a kitchen at intervals which made it homely. However, problems began to creep into our cosy situation. It was not always available to us because it was a very popular venue for other groups including professional organisations such as Scottish Opera, and other Chamber music groups.

"Happily, the Knightswood Community Centre were able to offer us a permanent home. The large main hall is on the ground floor, there are always at least two janitors on hand to help out, and, not least, a café which is popular with the community – and the orchestra. A quick cup of tea and a snack at the interval is now a thing of the past. It is not however, always easy to continue rehearsing after a three-course meal has been consumed. They love it!".

## **JOHN SMILLIE**

After Bob Nelson's retirement, John Smillie, a former trombone player with the orchestra, conducted the orchestra for a few months. He served as a sergeant for 12 years in the Royal Highland Fusiliers Territorial Army military band playing all the brass and percussion instruments and, for more than 30 years, taught percussion in Glasgow schools and played percussion in theatres in the evenings.

## COLIN SUCKLING

Colin joined us in 2023. He is a professor of Chemistry, as well as being a horn player with a deep love and understanding of music.

Some impressions from Colin:

"In early February this year I had no intention or expectation of picking up my old, partly-snapped, short, conductor's baton from my time as founder and musical director of the University of Strathclyde Concert Band, from which I stepped down as conductor in 2010 after 20 years. As far as live music goes, in February I was concentrating upon bringing my horn playing to a respectable performing standard. Then in to my email inbox came a very short message from bassoonist, Lorraine Sherry, who is a colleague in the Dunbartonshire Concert Band. She simply asked whether I would be prepared to consider taking on the role of conductor of the GSCO. Well, I've played in orchestras more than long enough to be a senior citizen and conducted them from time to time, in addition to the concert bands. So, I agreed to give it a try.

"Curiously, the GCSO turns out to be a bit of a hybrid of standard orchestra and concert band in the sense that its repertoire is predominantly light classical, film and show music, and that it promotes short concerts with many varied items. This mix is typical of what a concert band does too, which gave me a natural starting point at which I was comfortable.

"The GSCO has evolved, as the best organisations do, into something that believes in what is doing, and is both committed to it and comfortable with it. The members and management could not have been more welcoming and supportive. I've been able to prepare performances by picking up old repertoire, with the benefit of concert band experience, and by introducing some new, challenging repertoire appropriate for a Coronation Year. I'd like to thank the members for giving everything such a good try and succeeding.

"One of the things I've done for my concert bands is to provide new arrangements and compositions leading to several world premieres. I'm starting to supplement the commercial published repertoire with pieces orchestrated with the GSCO in mind. It's great to be able to mix this original repertoire with familiar light classics and film and show music.

"The most important thing for me, however, is that after a few short months, I'm very much enjoying the rehearsals and concerts, as I think the Orchestra is too, and have begun thinking about next year's repertoire. There'll be some new arrangements of mine too. I don't think I'll match the long service of some previous conductors, but I hope to be able to make a worthwhile contribution to the GSCO for the foreseeable future".



Bob Nelson and the orchestra at his last concert in the City Chambers, May 2022

## ORGANISATION AND MEMBERSHIP

The orchestra has a constitution, the latest iteration of which was adopted in 2022, and is managed by a committee comprising a chairperson, a secretary, and a treasurer plus six ordinary members, one of whom is the orchestra leader. The Musical Director attends meetings by invitation. Members pay an annual fee.

Our players come from all walks of life; some have played from childhood; some have returned to playing after retirement; some are retired professional players.

Our oldest member is Bridget Butter, aged 94, who plays the double bass. Bridget is a widely respected musician in local music circles and has played with the GSCO since 1988.

Cellist June Murray also joined in 1988, and continues to serve on the committee as she has done for many years.



Bridget Butter



June Murray



The committee are all members of the orchestra



Rehearsal at Knightswood Community Centre with Colin Suckling

# MEMBERS' STORIES

## **PETER McCABE** LEADER OF THE ORCHESTRA

Peter has been playing the violin for over seventy years.



He started lessons at the age of seven and continued the practical and academic study of music throughout primary and secondary school, joining Lanarkshire Youth Orchestra, the High School of Glasgow first orchestra and Glasgow Schools Orchestra.

Although Peter's career was as a chemist and lecturer at Glasgow University, he maintained an interest in a variety of musical genres – classical, modern, light/popular, traditional Scottish. He has played in and been leader of various adult amateur orchestras and bands and learned a great deal from working beside professional musicians.

He was leader of the Lanarkshire Cecilian Orchestra for 19 years. For much of that time he also led the second violins of the Glasgow Orchestral Society (GOS) and played in the University of Glasgow orchestra. More recently he was a member of the first violins in the St. James's Orchestra (now Paisley Sinfonia) and took part in the summer tours with the GOS and St. James's orchestras.

For 30 years, Peter tutored violin in the Lanarkshire Youth Orchestras and instructed many private pupils, some of whom are performing musicians.

Throughout his life he has performed as a soloist and in ensembles at school shows, churches, clubs, weddings, funerals and in ceilidh bands.

Over many years he has led orchestras to accompany amateur performances of Broadway musicals and Gilbert and Sullivan operettas. Peter plays in the Camus string quartet.

After retiring, Peter taught himself viola and played that instrument in the Glasgow Chamber Orchestra, Glasgow Sinfonia and Clydeside Strings. He joined the viola section of Glasgow Senior Citizens Orchestra and moved to the first violins shortly thereafter. He succeeded Bill Elliot as leader following Bill's retirement in 2017.

## **STEWART STEVENSON**

VIOLA

‘So now you have retired how are you going to fill all these blank spaces in your diary?’



“Well, having played in a variety of amateur music groups since leaving school I sought out the GSCO. I already knew of the existence of the orchestra due to several musical acquaintances who were members. If my memory is correct (never a good thing to rely on at our age), I think it was Bridget I asked. I was assured a viola would be very welcome.

“If I may, I shall digress into my musical past. There is a thread to this story. I started on the violin while at the John Neilson Institution in Paisley. It was, then, one of the first schools outwith the private sector to offer instrumental tuition. This would, I reckon, be 1950. In time an orchestra was formed and in need of a viola.

“An instrument was duly purchased and thrust into my hands with the instructions to learn the alto clef. I was helped by one of the staff who assisted with the orchestra and was also my Latin teacher.

“Many years later I turned up at the GSCO at Shettleston Town Hall, there to be confronted by the same Latin teacher Bob Curtis who by this time was almost totally blind. He was unable to read the part but had such a good ear that he somehow managed by improvising and playing the melody.

"At that time the other members of the viola section were John and Judith Dick and a rather tart old lady, Nancy McKay, who defended her position at the front desk.

"So began what is now a seventeen year adventure with the GSCO playing at a variety of venues including Kelvingrove Museum, Kelvingrove Band Stand, Partick Town Hall, Paisley Town Hall, Paisley Lagoon Leisure Centre, Weir Pumps Canteen (I kid you not) and a variety of old folks clubs throughout the city. As well as exploring the city I have thoroughly enjoyed playing a variety of music I would otherwise never have had the opportunity to play.

"Returning to my digression there are now four survivors of that school orchestra still playing with the GSCO: myself, June Murray and Sandy Morton (both cellists,) Sylvia Wight on oboe and two former players, Lorna McMillan (horn) and Betty Anderson (violin). Is this a record?

## **JACQUELINE FITZGIBBON**

OBOE AND OCCASIONAL PERCUSSIONIST

"As an oboist, I have a certain amount of responsibility – to give an A for tuning. I have done this regularly over the last 45 years, but never before have I had so much assistance. The gentlemen behind me seem to get a little worried if I hold the A too long. I had to be quite firm recently and tell them to shut up and let the strings hear the note.



"The men and women who make up this unique group are from all walks of life, with a fair proportion of retired professional musicians and a healthy balance of 'hobby' players. There is no audition. We play together because we love making music. So, if you are at a loose end on Thursdays, come and join us. Up to the attic and dust off that case, find some new strings or a couple of reeds for: 'if you can hold it, you're in!'"

**And fame!** A visit to the orchestra by Kate Molleson of BBC Radio 3 led to a feature broadcast on "Music Matters" on 26th November 2022.

Kate Molleson described GSCO as "irrepressible" and "utterly joyous!"

Some orchestra members were interviewed, as follows:

### **CHRIS LENNOX**

VIOLIN

Chris is 74 and has been with the orchestra 10 years.



"I learned the violin as a youngster and played a lot as a teenager in youth orchestras, to a reasonable standard. Then I didn't play at all for about forty-five years. Family, work, everything else got in the way. It was this orchestra that got me back into it ten years ago. I attended a concert they gave, and I thought, maybe I could give that a go and I did. It came back, my fingers came back. I discovered I could still do it and in fact it encouraged me to join two other orchestras as well. But it was this orchestra that reignited my love of playing."

### **LORRAINE SHERRY**

BASSOON

Lorraine is 72 and has been with the orchestra for about six years.



"I left school and went straight into the Academy of Music where I studied for four years and when I left, I was doing some class teaching and then I decided to do some peripatetic woodwind instruction, meaning that I go round various schools teaching woodwind, which I still do four days a week. Thursday is my day off! And I just love coming here. This gets me up in the morning, gets me out here, meeting friends and it's just great fun. The discipline we get from this is it keeps us focused. As you do get older, you forget things, I forget words, I forget basic things. Even although I am teaching, I still forget things, we all do but this keeps us focused. You can't take your eyes off anything for a moment and at this age that's good".

## **VAL BAIRD**

VIOLIN



Val has been with the orchestra for 14 years. At the age of nearly 84, she loves the music and the social part of it and has made very good friends.

“Fifteen people apparently got together in 1963 and said, look we’re retired, we have all played a musical instrument, let’s play together and so they did, coming to play every week, but just for fun and for the social aspects and for the fact they were old and they needed something to do. So, they then decided, we’re doing well enough, let’s think about some concerts and that’s how it started really, and they joined with what we now call The Golden Generation. It was then the Old Peoples Welfare Association under the auspices of Glasgow City Council, so they set up many of the concerts that we have done”.

## **IAIN GILCHRIST**

TRUMPET



Iain has been with orchestra about six years.

“As you get older there are increasing challenges. I’m visually impaired so I’ve got to use an iPad to see the music, to make it big enough to read. So, I’ve got a challenge, as do others. One player had a stroke a month or so ago, yet he’s back playing. It’s brilliant. And the orchestra gives you that drive. I probably wouldn’t have come along to the orchestra hadn’t I had the ability to say, well an iPad will help me, and I’ve got something to look forward to, let me try, let me push myself. The orchestra gives you that imperative.

“You know life probably would have been easier sitting putting my feet up in front of the television, but what’s the point. Making music is brilliant, it’s lovely. People saying that was good Iain, you played a good job there. It makes you feel good, you need that when you get older”.



## GLASGOW SENIOR CITIZENS ORCHESTRA

ESTABLISHED 1963

# 30TH ANNUAL CONCERT

MONDAY 20TH MAY 2019  
1PM

GLASGOW CITY CHAMBERS, BANQUETING SUITE  
GEORGE SQUARE, GLASGOW

PROGRAMME

## PROGRAMMES OVER THE YEARS



Glasgow  
Senior Citizens' Orchestra

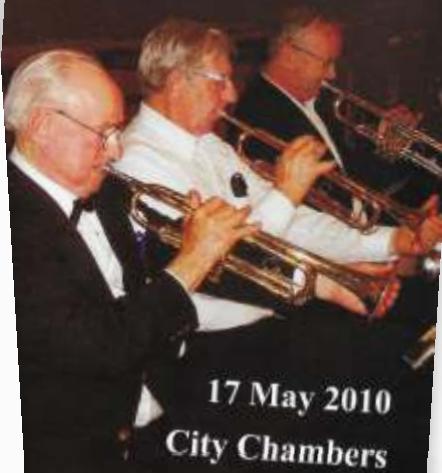


Conductor David Niel  
welcomes you to its

18th Annual Concert

in the  
Banqueting Hall, City Chambers, Glasgow  
on Monday, 21st May, 2007

Glasgow Senior Citizens' Orchestra  
21<sup>st</sup> Annual Concert



17 May 2010  
City Chambers

GLASGOW SENIOR  
CITIZENS ORCHESTRA

ESTABLISHED 1963



50TH  
ANNIVERSARY  
CONCERT

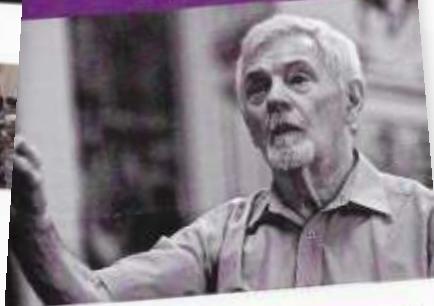
PROGRAMME

MONDAY 20<sup>th</sup> MAY 2013, 1PM

GLASGOW CITY CHAMBERS  
BANQUETING SUITE  
GEORGE SQUARE  
GLASGOW

GLASGOW SENIOR  
CITIZENS ORCHESTRA

ESTABLISHED 1963



ANNUAL CONCERT

MONDAY 23RD MAY 2012, 1PM

BANQUETING HALL, GLASGOW CITY CHAMBERS  
GEORGE SQUARE, GLASGOW

PROGRAMME

## GLASGOW SENIOR CITIZENS ORCHESTRA

ESTABLISHED 1983

### FIRST VIOLINS

Peter McColl (Leader)  
Stephen Caine  
Brenda Gilchrist  
Chris Loshaw  
Anne McEverett  
Margaret McIlroy  
John Murray  
James Ross

### SECOND VIOLINS

Phil Newhook  
Iain Reid  
Elsie Rossiter  
Bernard McCann  
Darry Miller  
Christine Morrison  
Doris White  
Robert Stephenson  
Julia Lissia  
Liz Oliver  
Linda Stevenson

### CELLOS

Steve McLean  
Arenice Miller  
Lily Parker  
Alwyn Parker  
Sandy Morrison  
Jane Murray  
Lorraine Spy

### DOUBLE BASSES

Brigitte Miller

### WOODWIND

Steve McLean  
Jane Parker  
Steve Smith  
Roger Smith  
Steven Milne

### FLUTES

Yvonne O'Hearn  
Ann Parkhill  
Jane Penhall  
Margaret Stewart

### OBOS

Janet Stevenson  
Jacqueline Thompson

### CLARINETS

Frank Thompson

James Hunter

Mike Wright

### HORN

John McLean

Lorraine Murray

### TROMBONES

David McLean

John O'Connell

Barbara McLean

### PERCUSSION

Ian Stewart

Jacqueline Thompson

## GLASGOW SENIOR CITIZENS ORCHESTRA

ESTABLISHED 1983



## 60TH ANNIVERSARY CONCERT

MONDAY 22ND MAY 2023 AT 1PM

BANQUETING HALL, GLASGOW CITY CHAMBERS,  
GEORGE SQUARE, GLASGOW

## PROGRAMME

### PROGRAMME

MUSIC FOR THE ROYAL FIREWORKS  
George Friderick Handel

FARINELLI ("LASCIA CH'IO PIANGA" FROM RINALDO)  
George Friderick Handel  
arr. John Linstead Murray

DANCE OF THE HOURS (FROM LA GIROCONDA)  
Antonino拂oncini  
arr. Richard and Linda Lee

THUNDER AND LIGHTNING POLKA  
Julien Slavicek, Jr  
arr. Clark McLean

THE PARADE OF THE TIN SOLDIERS  
Léon-Jessel

STOP TIME RAG  
Scott Joplin  
arr. Colin Sibley

BURT BACHARACH MEDLEY  
Burt Bacharach  
arr. Richard Ling

CROWN IMPERIAL (CORONATION MARCH)  
William Walton  
arr. David Stone

The programme cover,  
players, and music for  
the 60th Anniversary  
concert in 2023.



A GSCO concert at Glasgow's City Chambers Banqueting Hall



Getting ready for a concert at the City Chambers

# THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK OF 2020

During the period of the pandemic lockdown when we couldn't meet at all, various ways of keeping up with each other were devised thanks to Zoom, newsletters, texts, and, of course, old-fashioned phone calls.

This led to the sharing of many stories and memories of musical journeys, as well as no little poetic skill. Some of these contributions are set down here:

## **VAL BAIRD** VIOLIN

"My life changed forever when I was 62. My husband Dugald commissioned his brother, Neil Baird, a professional and much respected stringed instrument maker to make a violin for me for my birthday. Unhappily, Neil died prematurely in 2006



My violin is beautiful with a lovely tone, commented on by professional players who have tried it.

From the age of 11, I had violin lessons as part of a group at school; the peripatetic teacher came once a week for a 30 minute lesson and although I enjoyed them and began to really love music, once I left school I didn't play again for 50 years, so when the violin was presented to me it seemed to me that I was too old to start again. However, a very talented musician, Caitlin Hollinger, had just graduated with a music degree and was willing to take me on. I am still her pupil.

After about two years I learned about the Lanarkshire Cecilian Orchestra, joined it, and having never played with a group or an orchestra, I found the first rehearsal terrifying. I never thought I'd be able to keep up, play in tune, or fully understand what was going on.

Then I met Bob Nelson who invited me to join the Glasgow Senior Citizens Orchestra. Bob's understanding of precisely what music suits our audiences is impressive. I love the tunes which sometimes take me back to my childhood, the film music which makes me want to sing along, the Strauss waltzes, the music which requires Bob to play occasional solos, and much more. We are lucky to have him as our director.

But the heart of the orchestra is the players and I really miss everybody during this miserable year. The date which takes us back to rehearsals will be a wonderful one. I'm really looking forward to the vaccine being rolled out so that we can put this all behind us.

I am proud to be able to respond to a question asking me how I cope with retirement.

I reply: 'I'm a musician!'

## **GIB FITZGIBBON**

BASSOON

"My mother was a talented violinist, winning the Vandeleur Scholarship for violin at the Royal Irish Academy of Music in 1934. Later, on her way to a diploma exam, with a view to taking the violin up professionally, or as a teacher, she thought "Daddy will never let me become a professional musician", so she skipped the exam and went for a Turkish bath instead. She introduced me and my three sisters to the violin as soon as she could, and I got to "Drink to me only with thine eyes" by the age of 10, after which I was sent away to boarding school, and away from the torture to my collarbone, fingertips and wrists, and that dreary tune! I look enviously at folk fiddlers and wonder if I would still be playing if I'd been allowed to hold the instrument that way.



At my next school at the age of 13, at my mother's suggestion I joined the choir, and this not only made the next 4 years bearable, but introduced me to a tremendous range of music, sacred and secular, as well as The Mikado and Iolanthe. At one concert I was sitting behind the bassoon and was entranced by the instrument. At Christmas that year I found myself the proud owner of one.

The principal bassoon of the RTE Symphony orchestra was staying in Largs with his in-laws, whom I knew. I begged a free introductory lesson from him, learned how to hold it and clean it!

By sheer coincidence the BBCSSO then ran a "Play It Again" event in the Old Fruitmarket, aimed at late starters and people who had learned an instrument when young and not touched it for years. The punters were buddied with members of the BBC SSO, and played a Dvorak number with options of various levels of difficulty. This was where I met my teacher, Sarah Andrew, who took me through Grade 3, 5 and 6, with Grade 5 theory a necessary diversion. The BBC SSO then followed the event by setting up the Merchant Sinfonia, as an outreach project. The BBC provided the conductor, rehearsal premises and concert hall, music, and professional coaches for sectional rehearsals, and it was a wonderful opportunity. We played proper music, and our conductor, Louise Martin, was an inspiration who never puts anyone on the spot yet somehow gets the most amazing results. She is still with us. My worst moment was when Donald Runnicles, BBCSSO conductor, dropped in to one of rehearsals for a courtesy call just after new music had been handed out. Louise invited him to take the baton, and he selected the Firebird Berceuse for us, which I had never seen before. It starts with a bassoon solo very high in the tenor clef, in E flat minor (6 flats). I was the only bassoon, and he was a bit nonplussed when the opening was not what he was expecting! It is a tribute to Louise that she was prepared to risk letting me play it at the concert.

The BBC withdrew support after 5 years, but we have continued as an amateur orchestra. Then as other commitments diminished, I joined my sisters at the GSCO. Although I haven't continued regular lessons since Sarah moved away, I have continued to benefit tremendously from sitting next to Andy Hunter and Lorraine Sherry, and indeed the other really accomplished players we have, including of course Bob".

## **PAT WOODCOCK**

VIOLIN

"I started playing the violin because my mother arranged lessons for me with an acquaintance of hers. She was Elsa Ommer of Dixon Avenue, Glasgow. She was very strict and I was scared witless of her. However, she did force me to develop my technique with endless studies and exercises.



I played in the school orchestra at Notre Dame but can't remember a whole lot about it. Playing became really enjoyable when I went to the Glasgow Schools orchestra summer camps.

That is what made me want keep on playing - good music and surrounded by other players who were, on the whole, better than me.

I joined the Glasgow Unitarian Youth Orchestra as a student where I played alongside our illustrious GSCO secretary (he has the old programmes to prove it!).

Over my life (with a gap of about 20 years while bringing up my children) playing in an orchestra has been a great pleasure and mood lifting experience for me.

Long may I be able to continue playing in the GSCO"

## **MICHELE NEWELL**

OBOE

"Hello everyone and a belated Happy New Year. Let's hope that 2021 is a better one for all although if January is anything to go by, even as a wind player I wouldn't hold my breath!



Here is my little bit re how I started playing the oboe which led many years later to becoming a member of the GSCO.

From an early age I played the piano and then when I was about 11/12 it was suggested that I learn a 'second instrument'. My dad who was a music teacher asked me if I wanted to 'scrape or blow' to which I replied 'blow'. When asked if I'd a preference as to which instrument I wanted to blow into I replied 'trombone', the answer to which was 'no' as my mother informed me that was for boys! I then suggested either the flute or the clarinet and my dad said that 'since everyone played them' I should take up the oboe!

A few years later my oboe friend in the Lanarkshire Youth Orchestra took ill the afternoon of a concert and I had to step up to the plate and play first oboe. Unfortunately, I made rather a hash of it. Did I get sympathy from my dad? Did I heck as like. He said 'you chose to play the oboe. It's a solo instrument. If you don't like that get yourself a violin and sit at the back desk of the second fiddles'! It was years later before it dawned on me that it was he who had in fact decided I should play the oboe and that I had in actual fact had very little say in the decision making process!

I miss our weekly rehearsals. When I was first asked to come along and play with the GSCO it was to deputise for Jackie as she was going to be in sunny California. After two years of 'depping' I got the job and have enjoyed playing with the Pensioners' Band ever since.

I sincerely hope that we can get back to music making sooner rather than later and that the roll out of the vaccine programme will facilitate this. In the meantime, I am enjoying weekly Zoom lessons and trying to get as much practising done as possible albeit it is not the same as playing in an ensemble".

## **CHRISTINE MORRISON**

VIOLIN

"I was very fortunate to start violin lessons at primary school, at the age of about 10. I started piano lessons at about the same time. My parents were extremely supportive and encouraging, but not particularly knowledgeable about music. It was only many years later, when I took my mum to a Scottish Fiddle Orchestra concert, that she confided that she had always hoped I would play Scottish fiddle music.



I learned with Michael Ruddick, whom I'm sure some of you will have known, throughout my school days. Twice I attended the Glasgow Schools' Second Orchestra in the summer, but it wasn't a complete pleasure. The first time was my first time away from home, and I was very unhappy. I also realized that I wasn't quite as good a violinist as I had thought! The second time I was a bit older, and I was with my school friend, which made it a happier experience. I still felt I wasn't a good enough player.

Unfortunately, my teacher, Mr Ruddick, died at the same time as I left school to go to university, and in all the excitement of my new life, I more or less abandoned my music.

Fast forward a few years. I now had a husband and two children. My husband took a job in Papua New Guinea, and I thought this would be an opportunity to take up the violin again. But my fiddle didn't like the heat, so I had to send it home.

I have been taking lessons with Christine Nelson for a few years now, and she has encouraged me to do grade exams, which I never did before. I felt quite chuffed to get merit in grades 4,5 and 6. Grade 6 was very tough, though, and I think I may have reached my peak! Music has felt like a lifesaver during lockdown, and I have been playing more than ever – Strings Across the Ocean, the RSNO Community Orchestra, the Scottish Chamber Orchestra's Pictures project, the Benedetti Sessions and the Hands Up for Trad virtual Strathspey and Reel Society. And continuing with the Bearsden Fiddlers zoom sessions and the GFW cello class where I play my viola.

I am so grateful to Glasgow City Council, or Glasgow Corporation as it was then, for giving me the opportunity to learn an instrument. I hope that local authorities will feel able to give more children such opportunities in the future but I'm afraid music may be quite low down in their priorities.

When the Celtic Connections festivals started, I attended a few workshops and worked up enough confidence to join Glasgow Fiddle Workshop, an organization which still gives classes in traditional Scottish music. There I met someone who recommended Bearsden Fiddlers, and I joined them. One of the best moves of my life! I have made many friends, and have enjoyed playing in lots of concerts, and have attended Fiddlers' Rallies all over the country.

Two of the Bearsden Fiddlers, Cherry and Irene, were members of the Senior Citizens' Orchestra. When my husband died, they suggested I should join the orchestra, and here I am! That was nine years ago now, and at last I had begun to feel that I could make a contribution to the orchestra. I really miss it, and hope that we can get together again before too long.

I have gone on for long enough! I hope you are all keeping safe and well. Must go and do some more practice and hope that I will be a virtuoso by the time we get back together!"

### **JACQUELINE FITZGIBBON**

OBOE

"When I was about 2 and a half years old, I saw a young girl playing a concert harp on a street corner in Dublin. That was it... I was going to play the harp!

We moved to Belfast when I was 8, and Mama gave me a violin lesson... Total failure – I threw the bow at her.

Shortly thereafter, the family got a piano. I had my first lessons with Mama, then moved on to having lessons in school for a year, then continued with a private teacher who had a Siamese cat called Toccata.



My parents gave me a recorder for Easter, as well as an Easter egg, and I soon learnt the fingering as I tried to play all the sheet music in the house! When Mama asked me if I would like to learn an orchestral instrument, I said:

Please may I have a bassoon? So, a teacher was found and we turned up for the first lesson in his bedsit at the top of a grand house. To my delight, in the middle of the room was a concert harp! Derek Bell had just started learning the harp and went on to play with The Chieftains. He was a fantastic oboist, pianist and composer, enthusiastic about all genres of music, and very creative in swearing when the reeds didn't work! I learnt more than oboe playing with him.

Eventually I joined the Belfast Youth Orchestra on Saturday mornings, was allowed to attend rehearsals at Mama's orchestra, the Studio Symphony Orchestra, and played my first 'grown up' concert, Bach's St Matthew Passion... I

was allowed to play the chorales, at least. I applied for the Royal College of Music in London and was accepted. I then spent the next three years playing in College orchestras, contemporary music ensembles and various amateur orchestras around London.

In spite of failing my oboe teaching diploma three times, I started teaching at various public schools in London, eventually passing the dreaded exam at a different college. I spent a year living in Bristol doing a Teacher's Certificate in Education, and on my return to London, took on work for ILEA, teaching class music for a very short while. The public schools kept me on, and I played regularly in the concerts there and in all kinds of gigs... Generally a rather good time.

By this time, I was married to a pianist who was trying to break into the concert world. We moved to Aberystwyth where he was employed as executant/teacher with the resident string quartet. I played for choral societies, G&S, Messiahs, and gathered a rather large teaching practice, as well as producing two delightful daughters.

Sadly, the husband's job came to an end, and we returned to Wales to unemployment. So, off we went to Iceland (the country), where eventually we moved to the largest town in the north, Akureyri, which has a large municipal music school. We were both employed full time, and part of my job was to play in the Sinfóniuhljómsveit Norðurlands. There was a lot of gigging, theatre work, choral concerts to accompany and chamber music.

My last teaching post was in Campbeltown and, approaching retirement, I moved to Glasgow. Having broken a wrist, I had moved to double bass for a while, and joined the Glasgow Symphony Orchestra. Brigid Butter suggested I might like to bring the bass along to a rehearsal of the GSCO one February...

Well... I was smitten! As soon as I escaped from the daily grind of teaching and, after a great deal of oboe practice, I joined the GSCO in September 2009. I simply love being in this orchestra... It's like youth orchestra all over again, but without the terror!

Thursdays belong to Knightswood. I just can't wait to play with you all again!"

## **LILY GEDDES**

CELLO

"Up till 2017 I had played with GSO and loved it but after John my husband died in the September of that year, I completely lost confidence in playing my cello. Don't know why but any time anything physical or mental that is not good happens in my life, my cello gets the brunt of it!



Fortunately, my very dear friend Iain McGlashan persuaded and bullied me into joining GSCO and from the day I arrived I was made to feel welcome and secure. Bob and I were at college together- in those far off days it was known as RSAM and not the grandiose title it has now! So, I felt very much among friends. My cello and I became great friends again and during lockdown and endless restrictions I take Zoom lessons with my daughter in law who has a class teaching traditional music. As most of that is done by ear it has been a different experience for me and keeps my ageing brain working hard!

Miss you all and hoping to get together again before too long. Keep safe and well!"

## **ANGIE HOUSTON**

VIOLIN

A musical journey, as told to Chris Lennox and Gib Fitzgibbon.



(Many of you will remember Angie who played in the orchestra for a number of years. Separately she told both Gib and me of how practising the violin saved her life. It's a bit different from other musical journeys but a powerful story. We tell it here with her permission)

During the war, Angie lived on the outskirts of a small town in Belgium which was vulnerable to bombing as it was an important railway hub; planes were frequently passing over and the railway complex was bombed from time to

time. Nearby houses were vulnerable, and shelters were improvised, including the construction of a large haystack, hiding in the middle of which one could presumably be protected at least from the blast effects of a bomb.

March 28th, 1944 was a clear sunny day, which always made the town residents nervous about the prospects of bombing. By this stage there were regular bombing flights to Germany by the Allies. Angie (then aged 15) went to mass in the morning and the cinema with friends in the afternoon. They persuaded her to join them at 7.30 that evening at the local farm for a slice of farmer's bread and some social fun. At 6.45 she suddenly remembered she had a violin lesson the next day and needed to practise. She had been attending a local music school for a few years. She decided she could fit in a good practice and, although she had no watch, would know when it was 7.30 and time to go up to the farm.

She became engrossed in her playing - "in a trance" is how she described it - and went on and on playing. When she thought it was time to go up to the farm, she put her violin away and prepared to go. To her astonishment, she found it was 8.30, a bit too late to go, and there was an added anxiety as there was an unusually early sound of approaching planes. It transpired these were British planes looking to bomb the railway complex to stop German troop movements in the build up to D Day. Angie and her family sheltered in the cellar of their house and they and their house emerged unscathed from a raid during which errant bombs destroyed several houses in the area, including her grandmother's nearby. Her grandmother was unharmed.

The next morning, the extent of the devastation became clear, including a direct hit on the haystack in which nine of her friends had taken shelter. All were killed along with another adult.

A terrible tale but I suppose a story of the power of music to transport us somewhere else, though not often to save life in such a serendipitous way. Dedication to practice doesn't normally have quite such lifesaving consequences.

Gib adds: That's exactly as she told it to me. I find it a very impressive story, showing how indiscriminate and savage war is, with innocent children being

killed by their own side. The personal touches and domestic detail make it all the more striking. I also use it as a cautionary tale to encourage my grandchildren to practice, as it has been known to save someone's life!

I don't know if she told you the sequel, which was that a Scottish soldier was billeted with her family after the liberation of Holland and took a shine to her. She couldn't understand why he didn't choose her older sister who was much more attractive (she said), but they ended up getting married, which was what brought her to Glasgow.

### **LIZ GIBSON**

VIOLA

"My musical story began when as a child I listened to my father downstairs playing Chopin and Brahms on our Broadwood piano when I was supposed to be asleep, and thus began my lifelong love of the piano.



My first real lessons were with the man who had taught my parents when they were young: Gerald King, Director of Music at Dartmouth Royal Naval College.

At university I studied Chemistry and became a teacher, but my love for the piano stayed alive. After various teaching posts and 3 children I eventually fitted in studying for an LRAM and ARCM in piano teaching, and went on to teach piano for 30 years. I had lovely students of all ages from 5 to 75, and very much enjoyed the one-to-one experience. But I had always wanted to play in an orchestra and in chamber groups. So when my daughter had violin lessons at school I had a few lessons myself on the violin - but she didn't like me playing 'her' violin. Serendipity intervened and I met Fiona Flack of the RSNO who wanted to sell her student viola, and Heather Norman, a viola teacher newly out of the RSAMD who wanted to teach. Later I had lessons with Pat Field, and thanks to them both I completed another set of grades 5-8, with a merit and a distinction this time, believe it or not! In 1996 I joined St James' Orchestra, now the Paisley Sinfonia, where I was welcomed with open arms because at the time there was only one other viola player, Stewart Stevenson. Stewart and Linda nagged me to join GSCO and I held out for a while but eventually gave in,

persuaded by the fact that it met nearby in Cathcart (alas no longer) and also by stories about the wonderful teas that were provided at concerts. I haven't looked back and very much enjoy most of the music (not all viola parts are interesting!) and especially the lovely good-natured company.

My daughter's daughter Anna started cello lessons at the King's School in Ely. At that point I realised that really I had always wanted to play the cello, with its impressive size and its rich deep sound. So, I am now having cello lessons, and have passed grades 5-7, not with any great success but with much enjoyment. Grade 8 loomed but then lockdown struck. I potter along with my lessons on Zoom but it is not the same.

With music in my life the enforced isolation has never been dull or boring. There is always something to play or to listen to, and housework can be avoided indefinitely. I look forward to getting back together with everyone and being able to practise our art together again".

## **GWEN SILVER**

VIOLIN

"In my teens I did piano and singing at RSAM but longed to play a violin. Someone gave me an old wreck, so I got it "done up" and taught myself! When I won the top award for singing in Glasgow festival (all of £25), I put it towards a better instrument and got lessons for a year.



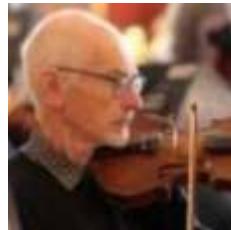
In 1964 I got married and had three boys. Rather busy for a while! At 40, I joined GOS and enjoyed that for eight years. Then mother with dementia came to live with us and I had to be at home.

Next orchestra was the GSO and that lasted till Eric Finlayson coaxed me to join GSCO – in 2004. The daytime rehearsals and concerts appealed to me so I gave in and here I am! Still here!

Hope we'll all be together some day and make lots more 'beautiful music".

## CHRIS LENNOX

VIOLIN



"I do not come from a musical family and my dislike of swimming led to me taking up the violin! The opportunity to have violin lessons came up at school when I was perhaps 11. When I realised that they would coincide with after school swimming sessions (which I hated), I jumped at it. It took a bit of negotiating with my mother who was a keen swimmer, but I prevailed. Despite being reasonably sporty, I have always disliked swimming but ended up loving the violin.

In my youth I played with the Glasgow Unitarian Youth Orchestra (sharing a first violin desk with Pat Woodcock, though neither of us remembers that!), Glasgow Schools Orchestra and Glasgow University Orchestra (mostly playing viola with the latter because of the perennial shortage of viola players).

Several years working abroad (Papua New Guinea – not a climate amenable to violins), too many children and too much work led to the virtual abandonment of any playing for over 40 years.

Soon after I retired, GSCO gave a concert in my church (St Margaret's Episcopal, Newlands) as part of the South Side Music Festival. The orchestra was good but, I thought, not frighteningly so; perhaps I should give it a go. I was also encouraged to observe that the conductor had hearing aids (like me); Bob was very encouraging when I spoke to him after the concert, both on the playing and the deafness front.

I started off in the second violins and progressed through the violas to first violin. I now also play with the string orchestra founded by Bob, the Glasgow Orchestral Society, and gate-crashed into a GSCO string quartet which is thus now a quintet. Great friendships have been created. None of this was part of my retirement plans, but what a joy it has been.

One little footnote. Last year I was contacted by Angie Houston who retired from GSCO not many years ago. She felt her playing days were behind her and

wanted to give her violin to the orchestra to either be played or sold to raise funds. It has achieved both. I was looking for a decent violin, so I bought it and passed the money to the orchestra. Angie acquired it from a one-time GSCO desk partner of hers so it has been played in the orchestra for many decades and will now continue to be so once we get back together again.

Let's hope that day is not too far off".

## **DIANA KNUDSEN**

VIOLIN



### ***The Orchestra would not be silenced – Diana's Ditty***

*The Cello was mellow  
The Double Bass knew its place  
The Violins, First and Second  
Said on silence they had not reckoned*

*The Viola section  
Called for an election.  
The Trombone started to moan  
The Horn said this could not be borne.  
The Flute raised itself in salute  
And let its friend the Piccolo blow.*

*Then grunted the Bassoon  
We cannot start again too soon*

*The Oboe and the Clarinet  
Said they were ready; do not fret.  
The Trumpet led the clarion call  
The Percussion sticks started to roll.*

*The Conductor raised his baton  
and counted.... two, three, four  
And, together, the Orchestra  
played again, once more.*

## PAT CARR

CLARINET



*'Twas a month before Christmas,  
And all through the town,  
People wore masks,  
That covered their frown.  
The frown had begun  
Way back in the Spring,  
When a global pandemic  
Changed everything.*

*They called it Corona,  
But unlike the beer,  
It didn't bring good times,  
It didn't bring cheer.  
Airplanes were grounded,  
Travel was banned.  
Borders were closed  
Across air, sea and land.*

*As the world entered lockdown  
To flatten the curve,  
The economy halted,  
And folks lost their nerve.  
From March to July  
We rode the first wave,  
People stayed home,  
They tried to behave.  
When summer emerged  
The lockdown was lifted.  
But away from caution,  
Many folks drifted.*

*Now it's November  
And cases are spiking,  
Wave two has arrived,  
Much to our disliking.*

*It's true that this year  
Has had sadness a plenty,  
We'll never forget  
The year 2020.  
And just 'round the corner -  
The holiday season,  
But why be merry?*

*Is there even one reason?  
To decorate the house  
And put up the tree,  
Who will see it? No one but me.  
But outside my window  
The snow gently falls,  
And I think to myself,  
Let's deck the halls!*

*So, I gather the ribbon,  
The garland and bows,  
As I play those old carols,  
My happiness grows.  
Christmas is not cancelled  
And neither is hope.  
If we lean on each other,  
I know we can cope.*

## **JUDITH DICK**

VIOLA

“I would like to thank you for keeping us all in touch with each other throughout this strange and lonely year. I have no poem nor profound messages except to say that when we do all meet for rehearsals, post vaccine, we will be so pleased to see each other again that I propose we have one group hug! Photographed of course”.



## **BRIDGET BUTTER**

DOUBLE BASS

From her son, Archie: “My Mum, Bridget Butter, has been playing the cello for a few weeks now in a Zoom meeting of the Paisley Sinfonia. She plays a symphony each week, she would admit to it being funny not to see the other players physically.



“Today it is Schumann Symphony Number 1, previous weeks have included music by Borodin, Elgar’s Enigma Variations, Beethoven 5 and 6, amongst other music”.

## **ARMOREL ALLEN**

CELLO

“I’ve been practising cello and guitar a lot, and yesterday my brother Gib (bassoon) and I had a bit of a duet session in his garden - it was fun until the wind fought back!



“I have been walking a lot around the great hills above Largs. For the first time in my life, I have appreciated golf - though only when the course was closed to golfers.

The views from the one behind my house are amazing. Such a lovely part of the world to live.

“I would love to meet up to play music, in small groups when allowed.

“Please, please, orchestra people, check in and let us know how you are. It’s not an easy time but hopefully we will safely meet again at some point”.

## **FIONA PURCHASE**

VIOLIN

“We are missing everyone so much, but given the obvious and serious risks,

I totally agree that we need to be very cautious indeed.  
It's just so awful that we are all in this position.



“I have had a bit of a play a few times each week and played a few tunes at the front door on Thursdays for the clapping - although we are a quiet street, but it kept me going. Our mandolin orchestra has started a zoom rehearsal now. Only two can be heard, with everyone else muted, but it's been a nice way to keep in touch a bit. It's not the same as hearing the whole thing though.

“Won't it be great when we're back to a bit more normality again! I just hope that everyone is safe and okay”



## THE FUTURE

We have continued to play every year since 1963 from September to May despite setbacks from difficulties with accommodation and during the pandemic lockdown in 2020.

In all these years numbers have held up and we have always managed to field a full orchestra.

Rehearsals are enjoyable, our playing improves as each year moves on and this encourages us to practise and feel proud of what we achieve. Our concerts are well received, audiences love the opportunity to hear live music and, not least, we enjoy the company of our fellow musicians.

Our main challenges in these hard times are financial. Grants and donations have stopped because of austerity, and we are completely dependent on the yearly fee paid by our members to pay expenses including hall rental charges, fees to our 'roadie' Greg who transports our instruments to each venue.

Here's to many more years of socialising and music making!



## A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

- Val Baird carried out background research and wrote the text, with editorial assistance from Chris Lennox.
- The photographer of older photographs is not known, but more recent ones were taken by Bill Kean, Caroline Morgan, Allen Lindsay and Anita Eley.
- Glasgow Old People's Welfare Association (now Glasgow's Golden Generation) provided much financial and moral support for many decades, as well as linking the orchestra with venues and clubs for concerts. Thanks also to GGG for allowing us access to information from their annual reports.
- Glasgow City Council provided financial support for many years and provide the venue for the orchestra's annual concert in Glasgow's City Chambers.
- Many day care centres, luncheon clubs and other organisations supporting senior citizens have provided a venue, hospitality, and donations at innumerable places throughout Glasgow and surrounding suburbs.
- The dedication of all members makes the orchestra the success that it is.

