

## Eddie McGuire and his composing for Organ

McGuire's association with the Organ goes back a long way - in the early 1960s he secretly crept into his local church, St Theresa's in Possilpark, Glasgow, to play the organ and become fascinated by its sound world - leading to him being commissioned to write a piece as a retirement presentation in 1980 for the long-serving friend of new music in Scotland, the late Frederick Rimmer, Professor of Music at Glasgow University. The commissioner, Michael Bonaventure, has recorded it on the Delphian Records CD '2000 Nails', issued in 2004. The piece, Prelude 4, forms part of McGuire's own project to write a short, idiomatic work for every instrument, learning from the performer collaborator in the process. This proved to be valuable experience when he was commissioned in 1999 by Glenfiddich Award winner Stuart Eydman (with SAC funding) to compose a work for Organ and Scottish folk group - for Bonaventure to perform with The Whistlebinkies. This was successfully toured around Scottish churches and cathedrals including Haddington, Dunkeld, Dunblane and St Andrew's and St George's in Edinburgh.

This piece has an unusual connection to the Delphian Records' "Organs of Edinburgh" project. Stuart Eydman had been inspired by an 18<sup>th</sup> century etching of the organ in question - in the very location it is still in today - being played accompanied by a folk ensemble very similar in line up to The Whistlebinkies. Plainly visible are bellows bagpipes, fiddles flute and double bass. McGuire discovered this and was thus thrilled to have the opportunity to write for the organ that led to the 1999 commission, a work titled The Kist O' Whistles - the old Scottish phrase describing the Organ. He was also keen to take up the idea of incorporating a Robert Burns connection. It is very likely that Burns would have heard this Organ and Eddie was fresh from his research on Burns' travels, and his commission from Inverness Music Society resulted in him composing The Poet Returns for harp and clarsach for Hannah Phillips. The outcome was Ae Fond Kist specially composed for the 18<sup>th</sup> century Snetzler organ in the Royal Order of Scotland Lodge opposite Canongate Kirk and recorded for Delphian's 4-CD book 'Organs of Edinburgh'.

McGuire has also arranged traditional pieces for Organ and Highland Bagpipes, and Robert Wallace (former Principal of The College of Piping in Glasgow) performed a full programme of these arrangements in Poland. Robert repeated this programme in a recital at Paisley Abbey in 2017 with George McPhee at the organ and in the Mariinsky Concert Hall in St Petersburg with the organist Kevin Bowyer.

Recognition of his skills in Organ composition came in 2004 when he was commissioned by the Edinburgh International Harp Festival to write a substantial work to be performed at the EIHG Gala concert in St Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh by the prominent clarsach soloist Catriona McKay and Simon Nieminski, then the Cathedral Organist. This work (Parallel Dimensions) was very well received and was recorded on the Harp Festival's CD of highlights that year 'Harp House'.