

# NIGEL OGDEN



## In Concert

Friday 4<sup>th</sup> December 2009, 7.30pm  
Hamilton Street Methodist Church, Hoole, Chester

Nigel Ogden came to Hamilton Street Methodist Church on Friday evening, 4<sup>th</sup> December 2009 to give his welcome annual organ concert there. BBC Radio 2's "The Organist Entertains" series has been run by him for many years, and his concerts are always splendidly entertaining, not only in his admirable arrangements of medleys of well-known tunes and his superb playing, but also in his cheerful and often humorous manner of introducing the music. As last year, Keith Hearnshaw (who is giving his own organ concert here on 31<sup>st</sup> July next year) controlled the Big Screen Presentation, enabling the audience to see Nigel's hands and feet. As he commented, on thanking Keith near the end, it proved that he (Nigel) wasn't miming to a CD!! – one of many remarks which had the audience in much laughter. Also, the Church was decorated by many small, wonderfully decorated Christmas Trees as well as the main full size Christmas Tree, forming the start of the annual Christmas Tree Festival, which added much to the great atmosphere of this concert.

The concert opened with Nigel's commemoration of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of the second World War, in a rousing performance of his combination (cleverly linked together) of Walford Davies' "RAF March Past" and Eric Coates' "Dambusters March", followed by pieces associated with the pianist Russ Conway, including Leroy Anderson's "Belle of the Ball". Then came a splendidly varied Cliff Richard medley, contrasting jaunty and lyrical tunes (including the famous "Mistletoe and Wine" with a wonderful range of organ registrations. His own composition "Mr Mozart Takes a Sleigh Ride" is a brilliant, humorous combination of excerpts from a few of Mozart's most famous tunes including

some from "Eine kleine Nachtmusik", "The 40<sup>th</sup> Symphony", "The Piano Sonata in C, K545" and the "Turkish Ronde" plus a hilarious surprise where there's a bit of Jingle Bells" in it!

One would expect his "Circus Medley" to be upbeat throughout, but he cleverly brought much variety in this, including Sondheim's "Send in the Clowns" (from "A Little Night Music"), with some lovely quiet registrations to contrast with the rousing "Entry of the Gladiators" by Fucik and the "Galop" from Kabalevsky's "The Comedians". Nigel brought Part One to a jubilant close with a medley of music selected from his CDs on sale at this concert, including Waldteufel's "Skaters Waltz", the last movement of Rachmaninoff's 2<sup>nd</sup> Piano Concerto, and the "Easter Hymn" from Mascagni's "Cavalleria Rusticana". Before playing this selection, he also referred to the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Hammond organ, and that it was brought from the USA to this country by Robin Richmond, a predecessor of Nigel's on "The Organist Entertains" radio series.

Two well-contrasted pieces opened Part Two – the bright, lively "Swinging Sleigh Bells" by Donald Phillips (including the small bells – Zymbelstern – organ stop), and variations on Howard Blake's "Walking in the Air" from "The Snowman", in which Nigel used a beautiful silvery-toned quiet organ stop for the melody after a very effective atmospheric introduction, all producing a magical, gentle effect. Especially for St Andrew's Day – only a few days earlier, on 30<sup>th</sup> November – he introduced Montague Ewing's "The Swing of the Kilt" in a brilliantly arranged medley of Scottish Tunes (with some striking bagpipe effects!) along with a Donegal cradle song for a gentle contrast in the middle! His James Bond medley comprised the main Bond theme, followed by "From Russia With Love", "You Only Live Twice" (some magical registrations in this!) and "Goldfinger", which contrasted well with his own classical medley; a cleverly arranged sequence comprising Purcell's "Trumpet Tune in D", Tchaikovsky's Waltz from his "Serenade for Strings", Chopin's "Prelude in C minor", Verdi's "Grand March" from "Aida", Massenet's "Meditation from Thais" (a specially moving performance), Thomas' "Entr'acte Gavotte" from "Mignon", Monti's "Czardas" and, finally, the "Can-Can" from Offenbach's "Orpheus in the Underworld", which brought the largest ovation of the evening, so far! It was then that Nigel thanked Keith for the Big Screen Presentation (as mentioned at the start of this account), and introduced his medley "Memories of Songs", including seasonal ones such as Adams' "O Holy Night" (really moving!), "Ding Dong Merrily On High", "Deck The Halls" (with a rousing additional fanfare), culminating in "O Come All Ye Faithful" resounding in majestic splendour on the full organ! In one of the more lively sections, he produced a hilarious interruption when an organ stop "dropped off"! - he called out to John Evans, but "got it sorted" himself, to much laughter, while he was playing! That splendid medley was the "official" closing item, and was received with so much applause that he played an encore – "Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas" (Martin & Blane, from the film "Meet Me In St Louis") in which he cleverly included Leroy Anderson's "Sleigh Ride" and used the small bells – Zymbelstern – organ stop most effectively!

The Church's organist and concert organiser, John Evans, gave a splendid vote of thanks to Nigel and Keith, bringing a memorable, joyful evening's entertainment to a close, warmly appreciated by the enthusiastic audience of just over 100.

The next concert in this series will be on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2010, when Hamilton Street Methodist Church welcomes Tone-Acity, a four-part, award-winning ladies' quartet, plus local guitarist Andy Martin.