

SANGIS OF THE SCOTTIS REFORMATIOUN

A series of five concerts celebrating “Gude & Meike Jhone Angus” of Dunfermline, a major contributor to the Wode Psalter, sung by The Lindores Consort, dir. Andrew Macintosh, M.A., M.Phil, LRSM, ARCO, with readings in Scots by Dr Jamie Reid-Baxter

Admission £5 by programme at the door on the night.

Tuesday 16th March at 7.30, Holy Trinity, St Andrews (Thomas Wode’s own kirk) Readings from Andro and James Melville

Saturday 17th April at 4 p.m., Culross Abbey, Culross. With an introduction to and readings from Lady Culross including the launch of a new book of “Poems by Elizabeth Melville, Lady Culross”

Sunday 16th May at 7.30 p.m., St Salvadors, Dundee DD3 7EW (a gem-like, neo-mediaeval painted kirk) Readings from the *Gude and Godlie Ballatis* of John Wedderburn of Dundee

Saturday 23rd October at 3 p.m., Newburgh Parish Kirk (next door to Wode’s one-time home, the Abbey of Lindores) Readings from the protestant historian Robert Lindsay of Pitscottie, nr. Ceres

Sunday 21st November at 7.30 p.m., Dunfermline Abbey (John Angus’s one-time home) Readings from David Ferguson, the longlived first reformed minister of Dunfermline

John Angus was a major contributor to Thomas Wode’s original project, when the remit was still that laid down by Lord James Stewart, namely to ‘set thrie pairtis to the tenor’, and thus secure four-part harmonisations of all the tunes in the Psalter. Wode clearly saw the Psalter as including many of the canticles and hymns which featured in the English Whole Booke of Psalms of 1562. Since the dates 5 December 1566 and 8 January 1567 (i.e. 1568) appear at the end of two of the canticle settings made by Andro Kemp, Wode clearly clung to what was initially a forlorn hope, for the psalter as printed in the ‘Forme of Prayers’ issued by the Kirk in 1564-65 contains only the psalms. (Later, successive editions of the Psalter, however, gradually did add a number of the ‘canticle’ and hymn texts, until by 1635, there were fourteen of them.)

At Lord James Stewart’s command, the 105 proper tunes for the psalms were worked on by the reluctant David Peebles. Wode tells us that this fine musician “wes not earnest” in his task, and Wode turned to other composers to make settings of the eighteen ‘canticles’. The lion’s share of these texts fell to John Angus. Like Wode, he was a former Benedictine; he had been one of the conventual brethern at the wealthy Abbey of Dunfermline, where reformed thinking was rife amongst the monks before the Reformation of 1560. Angus was obviously a delightful man – Wode repeatedly calls him “gude” and “meike”, and on two occasions, “gude & meike” – who responded wholeheartedly to Wode’s request that he set some of the new Protestant metrical texts. Not psalms, but canticles and hymns – in the 1560s, Wode was clearly optimistic that there would be a place for this material in the new Kirk. Angus duly made at least 11 truly lovely, haunting settings for Wode’s collection: a Magnificat, two different texts of the Nunc dimittis, a Benedictus, a Benedicite, two different texts of the Ten Commandments, the troped Our Father known as Cox’s Lord’s Prayer, and the Athanasian and Apostles’ Creeds. Kenneth Elliot believes, on stylistic grounds, that Angus also set “Ane Prayar” for deliverance from both Turk and Pope, a translation of Martin Luther by Robert Wisdom. A further anonymous setting of John Marckant’s ‘Lamentation of a Sinner’ setting recorded by Wode may also be Angus’s handiwork.

After the Reformation, Angus secured various benefices, including that of 'Vicar of Inverkeithing', and was a member of the Chapel Royal. He died in 1596.

Each concert will have a slightly different programme, but each will include a range of John Angus's works, with the goal of including all his extant pieces on a CD to be recorded in Dunfermline on 21 November 2010. Also represented is Andro Kemp, in the shape of his polyphonic setting of a sonnet by Mrs Anne Locke, John Knox's friend. Wode tells us that this work was written "at the desyre of maister gudman, quha wes the first satlit minister in Sanctandrous", i.e. Knox's great comrade and fellow-pastor in Geneva, Christopher Goodman of Chester. The concerts will also feature four devotional songs by another woman poet, Elizabeth Melville, Lady Culross. She was a younger Fife contemporary of Thomas Wode and John Angus. With 4 300 lines of first-rate 'puritan' devotional poetry to her current credit, and probably more to be discovered, Melville is the outstanding early modern woman writer of Scotland, and probably of the British Isles as a whole. She wrote a number of 'contrafacta sacra' of secular love lyrics to popular tunes, including Marlowe's "Come live with me and be my love" and Alexander Montgomerie's irresistibly catchy "Lyk as the dum solsequium".

Full texts of the pieces being sung will be provided in the programme; all the texts will be sung using Scots pronunciation, as they would have been at the time. Each concert will also feature readings by Dr Jamie Reid-Baxter of Thomas Wode's marginalia and of 16th century Scottish texts appropriate to the venue. Each church being used, moreover, is of historic interest. For St Salvadors, Dundee, access is either via Carnegie St (off Alexander St.) or Glamis St (off Main St).

Jamie Reid-Baxter