

Keynotes

The Newsletter of
the North East of Scotland Music School
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Elisabeth goes National

Elisabeth Flett, who studies recorder at NESMS with Ian Wilson, was chosen this year as one of only two players from Scotland to be a member of the National Youth Recorder Orchestra of Great Britain.

Members of the orchestra audition for their places and have to be considered by the assessors to be Grade 8 standard or above.

But sixteen-year-old Elisabeth also participated in the Orchestra's BlockWork ten-strong one-to-a-part chamber orchestra that is the preserve only of the most advanced players.

The week-long course for both the NYRO and BlockWork was held at the Howell's School in Denbigh, North Wales. "We had individual practice, orchestral playing and the BlockWork coaching every day which was pretty intensive," says Elisabeth. "But I enjoyed it so much that I intend applying for the Easter course next year."

Elisabeth's journey down a musical road was perhaps almost guaranteed given her mother is a violin teacher and, whilst Elisabeth loves both baroque music and experimenting with electronic music, she also has an interest in drama and theatre and sees her future career developing in both. She spent the last year doing a Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) course in Theatre Arts at Dundee College and was musical director and composer for the course's end-of-year production, *Marionnette*.

She currently plays with the Dundee Symphony Orchestra, the St. Andrews Baroque Ensemble – a group formed mainly from students at St. Andrews University



Elisabeth was musical director and composer for the end-of-year production, *Marionnette*, on her Theatre Arts course at Dundee College

together with a number of players who live locally – and also enjoys playing traditional fiddle music. Her ambition is to study both the recorder and violin at the Guildhall School in London.



Elisabeth with colleagues from the National Youth Recorder Orchestra

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About the School

Providing the highest standards of advanced tuition for promising musicians

The School provides a centre where young people of outstanding musical promise can obtain tuition which is not available within their existing framework of study. Any musically talented child, student, teacher or lay person living in Scotland may apply for an audition to the School.

TUITION

Internationally acclaimed professors and teachers are brought to Aberdeen on a regular basis from all over the British Isles.

COURSES

The School offers one-to-one teaching together with occasional workshops and masterclasses. There is a close relationship with the University of Aberdeen, through the Director of Music, and also with Aberdeen City Music School in Dyce.

FINANCE

Finance is generously provided by trusts, commercial organisations and individuals. Continued support is essential in order to maintain the high quality of the teaching programme. The Administrator will be pleased to assist with all enquiries about donations, sponsorship or scholarships.

FEES & SCHOLARSHIPS

Students pay their own fees, although scholarships are available and are applied for annually. Any award is made on a balance of musical potential and financial need.

DOROTHY HATELY

Dorothy founded NESMS in 1975 with the support and encouragement of Lady Aberdeen. Thanks to Dorothy's dogged determination over the years, the School has greatly increased its teaching disciplines, tutors and pupils. Sadly, Dorothy died in 1996, before she could see the School in its own premises in Huntly Street. However, we strive to maintain the high standards she set and intend to take the School from strength to strength.

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Scholarship Concert Review

by Alan Cooper

Voice, piano, cello and flute were the diverse musical disciplines represented in this year's Annual Scholarship Concert hosted by the Friends of NESMS. It was held as usual in the friendly environs of Craigiebuckler Church. Barbara McFarlane welcomed the audience and the four scholarship winning performers to this eagerly anticipated event.

Soprano Brychan Cromwell was the first of the four gifted young performers to prove that standards of musicianship at NESMS are as aspirational as ever. Brychan's silvery clear fluent soprano singing was particularly well suited to the two Baroque arias – *Tu la mia stella sei* by Handel and Pergolesi's *Si tu m'ami, se sospiri*, with which she opened the concert, expertly supported as ever by Drew Tulloch on piano. In the second half of the concert Handel's *Where'er You Walk* was a much appreciated vocal classic and then Brychan proceeded to demonstrate her versatility in performance with a teasingly flirtatious *Habanera* from Bizet's *Carmen* followed by Puccini's *O Mio Babbino Caro* in which her tonal range blossomed into fuller bel canto operatic richness.

Bach's keyboard music is notoriously difficult to put across completely successfully on the piano and young Isabella Cook played the *Toccatto No. 5 in E Minor* entirely from memory, quite a feat for such a young musician. The opening movement from Mozart's *Sonata in Bb K570* certainly lived up to the composer's instruction – *Allegro*. It was tackled with considerable technical zest and vitality.

As the concert progressed, things just got better and better. Cellist Megan Rolf charmed the audience with her performance of the opening movement of Elgar's celebrated *Cello Concerto*. Rich gorgeously dark toned playing delivered with real virtuoso panache made this a performance to cherish.

What can I say about Kay Ritchie's performance of the five movements of Handel's *Sonata No. 5 in G Major*? Every note was

bathed in golden inspiration; this was a thoroughly professional performance. The same was true in the second half when she played three movements from Beethoven's *Serenade Op.25*. The central fast movement in particular was dazzlingly exciting.

All too soon the concert was nearing its conclusion. Megan Rolf gave us a virtuoso performance of David Popper's wonderful cello showpiece, his *Hungarian Rhapsody*. This was followed by the *Valse Op. 52* by César de Casella. My only quibble here would be that perhaps the pieces should have been programmed the other way round because it was Megan's performance of the Popper that caused some members of the audience to shout aloud in sheer admiration. It was, after all, the more exciting piece.



Megan Rolf

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Challenges for NESMS

With a reduction in our award from Aberdeen City Council and the withdrawal of funding from Aberdeenshire Council – amounting in total to nearly £10,000 – NESMS faces a serious funding challenge over the next few years, reports NESMS chairman, Barbara McFarlane.

“Obviously we’re very grateful to both local authorities for the support they’ve given us over the past few years,” Barbara says, “and we quite understand that in these straitened times they don’t have the money available quite as readily as they did.

“It does give us something of a challenge because, although the local authority funding wasn’t by any means our only funding source, it was a significant percentage and we will have to make up the shortfall in other ways. It gives our Fundraising and Development Committee, so ably led by Derek Buchan, much food for thought!”

Barbara goes on to say that we are very grateful to the trusts and generous individuals who support us. “However, we are aware that in the present climate, the income of those trusts and individuals is reducing and that trusts now have many more requests for

assistance than previously. The possibility of a reduction of income from these sources is worrying.

“However, there is no immediate threat to the way NESMS operates or the amount of tuition it provides. Thankfully we have significant reserves that we’ve carefully husbanded over the years and it may be necessary to dip into these in the short term. That is not something we welcome and certainly wouldn’t be sustainable but for a year or two it would be possible without reducing the amount or breadth of tuition we provide.”

Another longer term challenge is a possible reduction in student numbers. “We exist to provide high level tuition to talented students, most of them youngsters,” says Barbara. “The introduction of group tuition in some schools may mean that it is harder for students to reach the standard our tutors expect.

“Quite how we might address that is difficult to see at this stage; we’re not really geared to provide basic music tuition – that might well step on the toes of existing music teachers – but I think if we saw this potential challenge starting to develop then we’d have to give it some thought.

“On a brighter note, however, thanks to generous trusts, companies and individuals, we are able to offer scholarships. We are always looking for ways to increase the number of scholarships we provide to help our students in these difficult times.”

Barbara concludes by reporting that the Fundraising and Development Committee is working on some new plans that will make donating to NESMS more attractive for the private donor. “Watch for an announcement in the next issue of *Keynotes*,” says Barbara.

Tutors at the School

as at October 2012

STRINGS

Violin	Gillian Findlay
Viola	Michael Beeston
Cello	James Halsey
Double Bass	David Inglis

WOODWIND

Flute	Catherine O'Rourke
Oboe	Joe Houghton
Clarinet	Alison Waller
Bassoon	Lesley Wilson
Recorder	Ian Wilson

BRASS

Trumpet	John Gracie
Horn	Lizzie Davis

PIANO

Nigel Clayton	Joseph Long
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SCOTTISH FIDDLE

Paul Anderson

SINGING

Raimund Herincx	Alan Watt
Alison McDonald	Jean Webster
Peter Webster	

STAGECRAFT & PERFORMANCE

Donald Maxwell

ORGAN

Dr Roger B. Williams

Forthcoming events

FRIENDS' COFFEE MORNING

Saturday 27th October in NESMS, 10.00am - 12 noon

Come and enjoy your coffee, with buttery and shortbread! There will be musical entertainment, the usual stalls and a new NESMS Christmas Card.

Don't miss it!

KEYNOTES AUCTION LUNCH

Sunday 4th November, 12 noon for 12.30am

at The Marcliffe at Pitfodels

Your invitation is enclosed.

Come along and enjoy an excellent lunch with an auction conducted by our own Patron, Peter Mitchell!

Musical interlude this year will come from Baritone, David Ferguson, accompanied by Drew Tulloch.

CULTS PARISH CHURCH

Sunday 18th November at 2.00pm
at Cults Parish Church

The Ifor James Horn Ensemble will entertain along with singer, Alison Gormley. There is no charge for this concert, but donations are invited for local charities.

Cowdray Hall Lunchbreak Series

Thursday 10th January, at 12.30pm

Stick this in your diary now!

Young performers from NESMS will provide this concert in the ever popular Lunchbreak Series.

Our first all NESMS wedding!



Nick Scott, formerly a French horn student and now a composer, married Caroline Davidson, cellist and now a solicitor, on Friday 18th May in Edinburgh, where they now live.

Doctor Murray!



Murray with wife Kathryn after the ceremony

NESMS vice-president and international concert pianist, Murray McLachlan, has recently been awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Dundee.

Born in Dundee but brought up in Aberdeen, Murray has received outstanding critical acclaim for his intelligent and sensitive interpretations and superb technical ability.

He has had a prolific recording career, including the complete sonatas of Beethoven and Prokofiev, and has played concerts around the world. He has also had an eminent career as a music teacher, with many of his pupils going on to enjoy successful performance careers in their own right.

One major contributing factor in Murray's success may have been his early start: "I can truthfully state that I had my first piano lessons – on Grade 4 exam pieces – whilst still in my mother's womb as in the months prior to my birth, my mother re-commenced piano lessons!" he recalls.

"My parents played classical LPs in our Dundee flat from

the moment I was born. By the time I was three I had already wrecked the gramophone player by roughly and crudely trying to play LPs myself, rather than waiting for more experienced hands to turn on the machine!

"My mother was also quite a natural sight reader and enjoyed playing the piano for fun. I adored the way she would enliven comparatively easy arrangements by adding her own extra 'double octave' left hand notes, not to mention the liberal, generous doses of sustaining pedal. Much more interesting than the Spartan, economical notes on her printed copies!"

Although piano formed a major part of his musical education, it was as a clarinetist and guitarist that Murray was better known; he was a clarinetist with the Aberdeen Music Centre Senior Orchestra and won the instrumental challenge cup at the Aberdeen and North East of Scotland Music Festival as a guitarist in 1978 at the age of only 13. In 1979 he was accepted as a boarder at Chetham's School of Music in Manchester.

By 1981 his piano playing had developed to such an extent that he was chosen to perform Rachmaninov's *Rhapsody on a theme of Paganini* with the Grampian Region Schools' Orchestra in Aberdeen's Music Hall.

After Chetham's Murray studied at Cambridge before returning to Aberdeen where he established a busy career of performing and teaching, latterly at RSAMD in Glasgow. In 1997 he moved to Manchester to become head of keyboard at his alma mater, Chetham's. Murray lives nearby in Stockport with his wife Kathryn (also a pianist) and their four children and one step-daughter. Currently he also teaches at the Royal Northern College of Music. He is chair of the European Piano Teachers' Association, a prolific writer for Piano Magazine, and still performs all over the globe. His discography includes over 40 commercial recordings. Away from music he enjoys reading, walking, running and going to the theatre.

Donors

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