



Notes from NESMS

North East of Scotland Music School Newsletter

Summer 2026

It has been a particularly busy term here at NESMS but great to have so much going on as we come to the end of the academic year and our golden jubilee year. Don't forget to be in touch with your memories and recollections of NESMS over the years via our website.

With all best wishes, Colin Brockie, NESMS manager

What's been going on at NESMS:



Cowdray Hall Lunchbreak Concerts

Two Cowdray Hall Lunchtime concerts took place on Thursdays 12th February and 14th May. February's concert featured Eve Begg and Poppy Strachan, accompanied by Harry Williamson, singing duets and solos from Handel's *Giulio Cesare* and Mozart's *La Clemenza Di Tito*. This was complimented by Jaiden Weideman on piano with Debussy's *La cathedrale engloutie* and Khachaturian Toccata, op11 in Eb minor.

The concert in May featured pianist Heather Poore performing her then upcoming FTCL performance diploma programme of Bach Partita no.6 in E minor and Beethoven

Sonata no.31 in Ab. Heather sat her diploma in mid-June during the Trinity Exams days hosted at 21 Huntly Street, but it may be a while before she gets her result.



Vintage Afternoon Tea

On a sunny Friday 6th March, we enjoyed a fantastic afternoon tea of sandwiches, scones, traybakes and fancies at the Beach Ballroom. Teas and coffees were served on vintage tea sets, which we are glad to report that no breakages occurred!

Live music was provided throughout the afternoon from Neil Birse at the piano, who added to the relaxed atmosphere of the day. NESMS manager Colin Brockie surprised the guests with a few songs before the vintage themed raffle took place.

An afternoon well worth repeating in the future.



Music Sale Weekends

Another successful big music sale took place over the weekend of 28th and 29th March, between 10am – 2pm each day. As ever, these sale days are made up from various duplicates that have been pulled from our own library collection and the ever-growing music sale on the landing outside the office. Our extensive library exists through various donations over the years and as a result duplication inevitably builds up but equally with any donations coming in, we have a chance to swap out some pieces in our library that may be in poorer condition.

Come & Sing

On Saturday 11th April, a Come & Sing with Sir John Rutter CBE took place at Haddo House. This event was in association with Haddo House Operatic and Choral Society (who celebrate their 80th anniversary in 2026) and with Haddo Arts. The sold-out day gave singers the opportunity to work with Sir John on pieces by Verdi, Bruckner, Mozart and Rachmaninov as well as some of his own works, including the Scottish premiere of three of his “Bird Songs”. Pictures of the day can be found on Haddo Arts own website and social media.



Four Hand Piano Workshop Day

The ever-popular Four Hand Piano Workshop with Nigel Clayton and Imma Setiadi, took place on Saturday 16th May. The piano duos, both established and newly paired, were all given 1-1 sessions from both Nigel and Imma, a group workshop focusing on playing as a duo and a short concert showcasing their pieces to each other.

Flute Choir Spring Concert

On the same day as the four-hand piano workshop, the NESMS flute choir performed a superb lunchtime concert across the road from the NESMS building in St Mary’s Cathedral led by Catherine O’Rourke. The varied programme featured pieces for the full choir but also included trios and quartets, giving an excellent

opportunity to highlight different members within the smaller ensembles.



Scholarship Concert

The annual Scholarship Concert took place on Friday 19th June at Springfield Church and featured full scholarship students Diya Dileep, saxophone, Andrew Watson, piano, Olwenn Stewart, piano and Linden Stewart, clarinet, with piano accompaniment provided by Ben Marsden. The programme included pieces by Chopin, Weber, Beethoven and Bozza, giving the audience a bounty of top-quality performances.

Congratulations to NESMS students:

Well done to any students who sat music exams in March, more recently in June, or indeed who have submitted their exam online during the year. We have a list of NESMS student exam, diploma and audition achievements listed on our website homepage. If your exam achievement is missing from the full list or it now needs updating, please let us know.

Named Scholarships

Angus Donohoe, piano - Dorothy Hately Award
Jaiden Weideman, piano - Tom and Cath Johnston Award
Olwenn Stewart, flute - Sandy MacDonald Award
Susannah Thomasson, voice - Aberdeen Bach Choir Award
Finlay Donohoe, piano - Gina Dallas Harper Award
Nina Stables, cello - Friends of NESMS Award

Gladys Sangster Awards

Nicole Amayo, Cello	Sophie Low, Piano
Zhaohong Chu, Piano	Basil Pretheesh, Piano
Diya Dileep, Saxophone	Shreya Pretheesh, Piano
Ariabella Gunarathne, Piano	Saba Riyazi, Piano
Elizabeth Martin, Voice	Tom Roche-Nishimori, Piano
Orla McPhail, Voice	Finn Schultz, Violin
Kayla Munro, Piano	Lennox Stewart, Piano
Ailsa Lipp, Oboe	

Scottish Young Musician of the year

Tom Roche-Nishimori, piano – Second place Scottish Young Musician of the year (Moray)
Jaiden Weideman, piano – Won Scottish Young Musician of the year (Aberdeen) and won the Vivienne Bailey Piano Prize at the final held at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland

Tutor Wedding bells

Congratulations to our Saxophone tutor Catherine Evison who married Andrew Penny on a sunny, albeit windy, beach ceremony on Thursday 28th May. Congratulations to the happy couple from all at NESMS.

Coming soon to NESMS:

The Piano

NESMS piano student Paul Murray, who has lessons with Nigel Clayton, will be appearing on Channel 4's 'The Piano' series this month. Tune in at 9pm on Sunday 19th of July to hear him performing and receive feedback from pop superstar MIKA and another surprise guest musician.

Big Sky Studio Flute Concert

Flautists, Isla Rippiner and Olwenn Stewart with pianists Colin Stuart and Ben Marsden and members of the NESMS Flute Choir will perform a varied programme of solos, duets and ensembles by Telemann, Debussy, Prokofiev and Doppler in the Big Sky Studio, within Aberdeen Music Hall on Saturday 25th July 2026, tickets (£12/£4.50) available at Aberdeen Performing Arts Box Office.

Keynotes Lunch 2026

The annual Keynotes Lunch will be on Sunday 15th November at the Marcliffe Hotel, Pitfodels. Fantastic live music, a delicious Sunday lunch and raffle prizes to be won, this is one highlight of the NESMS calendar that we are sure you will not wish to miss.

Music Sale

Another big music sale will take place over the weekend of 12th/13th September, between 10am – 2pm each day. Always worth a browse for some hidden gems that have been donated.

Cowdray Hall Lunchbreak Concerts

Make a note in your diary now for the two concerts NESMS will give as part of the Cowdray Hall Lunchbreak 2026/2027 season: November 24th 2026 and February 4th 2027. Remember this weekly concert series is free to attend so be sure to check the full listing of events via the Art Gallery website

NESMS Saxophone Ensemble

An exciting new NESMS ensemble has been formed to give the growing number of saxophone students the opportunity to play together. The monthly session takes place over the days that saxophone tutor Catherine Evison is here to teach. Keep an eye out over the next year for news of their debut performance.

As ever these NESMS concerts and workshops are only a few of the many events happening in Aberdeen and around the North East. Please be sure to keep your concert diary up-to-date by checking www.musicaberdeen.com/events

Hire a NESMS studio

Looking for a studio for a quick practise on your lunch hour, a private practise room away from busy homes, or a rehearsal venue for you and your accompanist to practise for exams or concerts? Why not hire a NESMS studio at only £8.50/hour. Please be sure to check the online calendar on our website first before contacting the office, as the building may be closed on certain days over the summer.

Lesson fee increase

To keep up with ever-increasing costs, we will be implementing a £2 fee increase to lesson fees, making them £50/hour. This will take effect from the 1st August 2026.

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