



A warm welcome to the fourth Newsletter for the Friends of The North East of Scotland Music School

Edited by Alan Cooper

It's been a year since our last newsletter. Not an easy year either, at least for the previous nine months. The Covid Pandemic has highlighted some of the worst, as well as some of the best aspects of humanity. The worst? Well, dare I say politicians! But let's not waste words on them. Let us concentrate instead on the best. Up top I would put IT experts and yes, musicians, especially when these two groups have been working in tandem to achieve astonishing things.



When I was a young boy, we had a large wind-up gramophone in a room upstairs. It was actually a huge piece of furniture with lion's feet legs. You had to use steel needles that had to be changed every time you were going to listen to one of those old thick hard and sometimes brittle plastic records, even the best of which sounded very scratchy. Back then, I would never have believed what is possible today. I pick up my iPad and with a couple of pokes on the screen I can get a musical performance, not just with perfect sound (especially if I plug in my earphones) but visuals too.

Last night I enjoyed a performance of Bruckner's Symphony No. 8 with the Vienna Philharmonic conducted by Herbert von Karajan in the Cathedral of St. Florian in Austria. My iPad was offering me at least another half dozen performances. More than that though, I have enjoyed dozens of other live performances from the Wigmore Hall as well as the excellent Maxwell String Quartet playing in Guardswell Farm in Perthshire.



Our own **Dr Roger Williams** has hosted six performances online for the Friends of St. Machar's Cathedral. I have also chaired several committee meetings on Zoom and attended several others, and I was in attendance virtually at a couple of family birthday parties, also on Zoom.

Colin Brockie, Manager of NESMS tells me that this is how the Music School has been able to keep flourishing and NESMS has certainly done that. Much of that astounding success has been due to the hard work and imaginative brilliance of Colin himself. As Dr Roger Williams said to me, "for months Colin has been going way beyond the call of duty."

Although face to face teaching is not currently possible, especially for singing and wind instruments (flute is the most risky) most of the NESMS tutors have been able to keep on teaching using the NESMS **Zoom Room** option. Colin says,

"Negotiating online lessons was a steep learning curve for everyone at the beginning and one which has continued ultimately to provide the best continuity of musical tuition in these challenging times".



The **Summer Singing School** was to have taken place with Linda Ormiston and returning vocal tutors Graeme Lauren and Gillian Jack, but has had to be postponed for the foreseeable future. However, students were able to sign up for one-on-one online lessons with Gillian or Graeme around the end of July.

NESMS flute tutor **Catherine O'Rourke** has offered students the opportunity at the start of the new term to learn how to compile and write programme notes for use in recitals, diplomas and exams. These bespoke one-to-one tutorials are currently being held online and are free for students to sign up to. I think this is a great idea.

A new jazz project, The **NESMS Jazz Ensemble** had been due to start with Neil Birse as leader but has had to be delayed. However this is an exciting new possibility to look forward to in 2021.

SCHOLARSHIP AUDITIONS

This year's NESMS Scholarship Auditions could not take place in the usual way in the Autumn but they still did go forward entirely online by video submission.

The judging panel were very impressed with, to quote Dr Williams, "the exceptionally high standard of the musical and video quality achieved under this year's extraordinary circumstances".

Here are the names of the students who received full scholarships. Many congratulations to:

Chenghong Zhu, Piano
Eve Begg, Voice
Ruaraidh Williams, Cello
Louis Kowal, Organ

TOM AND CATH JOHNSTON AWARD
ELLIE PIRIE BACH CHOIR AWARD
JOAN DICKSON AWARD
DOROTHY HATELY AWARD

NEW AWARD

Thanks to a substantial donation made this year, a new award has been made available to specifically benefit those students showing musical promise at **Local Authority Schools**. The following successful students will receive a mixture of lessons, travel costs and instrumental hire to help them increase their musical potential at NESMS. Congratulations to:

Bethany Clarke – Cello

Hannah Glendell – Flute

Lachlan McClarence – Horn

Olwenn Stewart - Piano

Congratulations are also due to **Aaron Magill** who has gained distinction in Grade 8 Piano in his ABRSM exam as well as to the other students who have gained passes in Trinity and ABRSM exams. These passes are continually updated on the NESMS Website.

KEYNOTES LUNCH POSTPONED

Unfortunately this year's Keynotes Lunch had to be postponed to 2021. This was one of our biggest annual fundraising events. It would be great if Friends could make a **donation in lieu** of this year's event (DETAILS FROM COLIN).

Another possibility to help NESMS and to keep yourself and others safe is with either or both of the face masks available from NESMS "Swirl of Music" at £10 each or "String Trio" at £13 each. Yes, it has been a difficult year but as you will see above, NESMS is still going strong, still teaching and with students still achieving great things.



LOOKING FORWARD

Looking forward into a hopefully happier New Year, the **next AGM** will take place virtually on **Saturday 16th January at 10 am**. Watch out on the internet for instructions on how to join and how to propose and vote. As a special attraction, **Joseph Long** will give a special piano recital after the AGM with Mozart as his choice of composer.

Let me conclude by wishing all the Friends of NESMS and their families as Merry a Christmas as possible and a Happy New Year. Good wishes and congratulations in particular to Colin Brockie, to all the NESMS tutors and the students who have been working so hard to keep their music moving forward.

Are they not like those monks who during the Dark Ages kept the spark of civilisation burning allowing it to flame up anew in the Renaissance? When we get back to the possibilities of one-to-one teaching and to concerts where audiences can freely attend, the work that has still been going on steadily for music at NESMS will surely spark our own special Renaissance with raging fires of ever growing talent and musical achievement.

Best wishes to you all,
From ALAN COOPER