



Notes from NESMS

North East of Scotland Music School Newsletter

Winter 2025

I have great pleasure in wishing you all a merry Christmas and a happy New Year. Also, very special good wishes as we continue the celebrations of our golden jubilee year. A few of you have already been in touch with some memories and recollections of NESMS, and we would be very keen to hear more of these so that we can collect them into a book at the end of the year. Thank you for all your contributions thus far to our special year and we will be ready to welcome you at the other activities as we move towards the climax of our Scholarship concert in June. With all best wishes, Roger Williams, NESMS Chair

What's been going on at NESMS:

Pat MacMahon Masterclass

We were delighted to have renowned soprano Pat MacMahon here for a vocal Masterclass held at the Aberdeen Methodist Church on Saturday 27th September. There was a great variety of styles and genres of songs offered by the students who all gained fantastic advice and insights from Pat. Remember singers, *"your body is a trampoline"* and *"we carry our emotions on the vowels"*. It was also great to be back in the Methodist Church on Crown Terrace during our 50th year as they had sheltered NESMS before we moved into our current building. Pat is pictured (right) with treble, Aled Lynn.



50th Celebrations

On Saturday 11th October, in what could be described as the official NESMS 50th birthday with two anniversary events taking place on the same day, we enjoyed our Gala Concert and a Civic reception. The afternoon concert at the Cowdray Hall featured performances by some of the current NESMS tutors and scholarship students. It also featured the world-premiere of a piece specifically written for the event and for the NESMS Flute Choir by past student and now head of composition at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Oliver Searle. The audience are still raving about the performances they heard. Read the full review by Alan Cooper [here](#). Immediately after the concert, a Civic Reception at the Town House was laid on and in the absence of the Lord

Provost, Councillor (and NESMS stalwart) Ken McLeod acted as his deputy, sharing his memories of our founder, Dorothy Hatley and the early years of NESMS. All of the invited guests, made up of faces from NESMS past and present, had a thoroughly good catch-up with each other, all commenting on the family-like atmosphere that pervaded the day.

Keynotes Lunch 2025

The annual Keynotes Lunch at the Marcliffe hotel on Sunday 2nd November was a huge success. Guests enjoyed the great meal and service as expected from the Marcliffe but they also had the opportunity to hear the Golden Fanfare, once more performed by Kevin and Alan Haggart, NESMS piano students Angus and Finlay Donohoe who played some sparkling piano duets and hear a very inspiring talk from NESMS vice-President, Murray McLachlan as guest speaker. Well done to those who won, and a huge thank you to those who donated prizes in the silent auction held on the day. Prizes included a short stay at a Glen Tanar holiday cottage, a Jamieson & Carry pendant, a hand-crafted sculpture and a Luxury food hamper.

New NESMS President

During the Keynotes Lunch, NESMS Chair Roger Williams announced that Dr. Neil Mackie, had stepped down from the position of NESMS President earlier in the year to enjoy retirement, and announced that our new President is to be Isabelle, Marchioness of Aberdeen who was in attendance. This appointment reinforces our connection to Haddo House by echoing our other NESMS founder June, Lady Aberdeen, who along with Dorothy began NESMS 50 years ago.

Cowdray Hall Lunchbreak Concert

Despite the heavy snow and icy conditions on Thursday 20th November, NESMS students Michelle Tse, violin, Connie McLean, voice, Andrew Watson, piano with Colin Stuart, piano accompaniments, performed a great programme of music; Beethoven to Kreisler, Mozart to Britten and Schumann to Argento, there really was something for everyone.



Jazz@NESMS


The Jazz Workshop series run by Joseph Long and Ian Milne returned on Sunday 7th December. This session focused on ear training by recognising chords and their use in playing and composing. Keep an eye out on our website for when we announce the next Workshop and book your place with the NESMS office.

Flute Choir Recording


We're excited to have the NESMS flute choir record the Oliver Searle commission, *Colours of the City*, before the Christmas break. Due to take place at St Andrew's Cathedral, this will be a reference recording for our own Library and will be available to hear in due course. A short snippet of the recording will appear on the homepage of [our website](#).

Congratulations to NESMS students:

Well done to any students who sat music exams in November, or indeed who have submitted their exam online in 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. Huge congratulations to those students who were doing the audition rounds for various Music Conservatoires and orchestras across the UK.



Abigail Hunter, piano – Grade 8 Distinction
Emina Mody, piano, Grade 6 Merit
Niamh O'Donnell, piano, Grade 5 Distinction



Olwenn Stewart, flute – National Youth Orchestra of Scotland (NYOS) in 2026

Emma Cameron, fiddle – Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (starting September 2026)

Special mention to NESMS flute tutor Catherine O'Rourke who recently graduated from the University of Aberdeen with a Masters of Music

Coming soon to NESMS:

Cowdray Hall Lunchbreak Concerts

A further two Cowdray Hall Lunchtime concerts on Thursdays 12th February and 14th May. February's concert will feature current students while the May concert will welcome back previous students, both with programmes of wonderful music. This concert series is always free to attend, 12:45pm – 1:30pm. Click [here](#) to see what's on at this and other Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museum venues.

Vintage Afternoon Tea

On Friday 6th March we invite you to the Beach Ballroom to enjoy an afternoon tea of sandwiches, scones, traybakes and fancies with tea & coffee served on a vintage tea set. Why not upgrade your experience by buying a bottle of Prosecco separately at the bar. Also featuring Live music and a themed raffle. Tickets, available from the NESMS office, will be £30 per person or a discounted price of £270 when booking for a table of 10 people.

Music Sale Weekend

Another big music sale will take place over the weekend of 28th and 29th March, between 10am – 2pm each day. This sale is made up from various duplicates that have been pulled from our library collection and the ever-growing music sale pile on the landing outside the office! As you know our library exists through various donations over the years and as a result, duplication inevitably builds up. Please note that this will not be a coffee morning as previously advertised but will still feature a bake stall and tombola.

Come & Sing

Keep the date free for a Come & Sing with Sir John Rutter at Haddo House on Saturday 11th April. Further details to be announced later. This event is in association with Haddo House Operatic and Choral Society (who celebrate their 80th anniversary in 2026) and with Haddo Arts.

Four Hand Piano Workshop

Find a duet partner and get practising for the ever-popular Four Hand Piano Workshop with Nigel Clayton and Imma Setiadi, due to take place on Saturday 16th May. Further details of the day will be advertised nearer the time. Both Nigel and Imma will also be in concert as part of the Haddo Arts Festival at Haddo House the following day on Sunday 17th May.

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

Get involved with NESMS:

Calling all past NESMS students

Our ambitious plan to have a list of every student that has ever passed through our doors is still in process; the list must go into the thousands over 50 years! But we need your help to complete the list, particularly from those who had lessons before we moved into Huntly Street in 1998. Do you remember having lessons in the rooms of the Central Academy on Belmont Street, in the Methodist Church on Crown Street or indeed out of Dorothy Hately's own front room? If you would like to be involved in any way please get in touch, as some of our contact details may be out-dated with students moving away from the area. Any recollections or memories you have about NESMS lessons would also be greatly appreciated to feature in our 50th Anniversary Book. Click [here](#) to go to the 50th contact form.

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. Before contacting the office, please be sure to check the online calendar on our website first as the building may be closed on certain days.

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