



## **A very warm welcome to the third Newsletter for the Friends of The North East of Scotland Music School.**

Our new NESMS Manager Colin Brockie is now happily settled in his position at the School, ably supported by his two Assistant Managers, Sophie Lewis (Timetable & Events) and Reg Pringle (Finance and IT). Reg is our long time IT wizard, able to do so many brilliant things, even making these newsletters look remarkable professional – thanks so much Reg!

### ***FRIENDS' OUTING TO HADDO HOUSE***



Joanna, the present Lady Aberdeen, our recently elected President of the Friends, issued a generous invitation to the Friends to make a special visit to Haddo House on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> May. Haddo of course has had a long and close association with NESMS ever since its foundation over 40 years ago, the result of an inspirational idea from June, Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair and Dorothy Hatley, our very first NESMS Manager.

The events of the Saturday outing began at 2pm with a visit to the attractive 'Arts and Crafts' Chapel where the Friends enjoyed an introductory talk, followed by a short recital on the 'Father' Willis organ, the last instrument to have been designed by Willis. The talk and recital were generously provided by Dr Roger B. Williams, our current Convenor of the Friends Committee.

Built into the arches on the right-hand side of the Chapel, this organ has not been altered since it was first installed at Haddo in 1881. It was transported from London by rail at a recorded cost of £39. 16s 11d. To us today, that seems like a trivial amount, but remember that in those days, the yearly wage of a labourer was around £6. Even a relatively highly paid court official got only around £20 per annum.

The compact Haddo organ looks particularly attractive in its setting in the Chapel. It sounds even better. The fact that unlike the many other Willis organs in the North East (St Machar's Cathedral and Queen's Cross Church in Aberdeen to name two well known instruments) the Haddo instrument retains the true unaltered Willis sound and is therefore a genuine musical treasure.

After the short recital by Dr Williams, the Friends were given a warm welcome to the Library at Haddo where Joanna, Lady Aberdeen, gave an extended talk, delighting her attentive audience by showing her genuine interest in and deep respect for the work of NESMS.

Then, it was onward to a tour of the spectacular Haddo House Gardens, looking at their very best under the early Summer sunshine. Adjoining the House, the gardens are almost like at its most attractive, 'The Secret Garden' in the story by Frances Hodgson Burnett and as in that story, the Haddo gardens equally powerful in their restorative influence.

### *THE ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIP CONCERT IN JUNE 2019*

Owing to the change in time of this year's Scholarship Auditions designed to correspond with the Academic Year, this year's event was unique in that the four performers were winners from previous years, all now pursuing successful musical careers. This special concert on Friday, 21<sup>st</sup> June in Craigiebuckler Church was well attended. It was introduced by our friendly NESMS Manager, Colin Brockie. He made us all feel so welcome as he prepared us for some very fine musical treats served up in grand style by our four previous scholarship winners. The performers were clarinettist **Emma Barnett**, pianist **Isabella Cook**, flautist **Kirsty Campbell** and baritone **David Ferguson**

In the first half of the concert Emma opened a very attractive programme, rich in melodic appeal with the '*Prelude*' from '*Five Bagatelles*' by Gerald Finzi. Emma captured Finzi's lovely melodic writing with smooth flowing delivery. She followed this with the luscious second movement of Ludwig Spohr's '*Concerto in Eb*'. Ace accompanist Harry Williamson (he really is brilliant) moved to the organ to accompany this piece, suggesting the full colour and richness of an orchestral backing.



*Isabella Cook, Kirsty Campbell, David Ferguson, Emma Barnett and Harry Williamson*

With Harry moving back to the piano, Emma concluded her first half offering with *'Two Majorcan Pieces'* by Joseph Horowitz. This was delightfully happy music. The first piece with its jaunty rhythm and folksy Spanish flavour was followed by more brisk, needle-like playing from both clarinet and piano.

In the second half of the concert, Emma gave us two movements *'Prelude'* and *'Summer'* from a real clarinet favourite which has long outlived the TV programme for which it was the background music, Paul Reade's *'The Victorian Kitchen Garden'*. To follow, Emma and Harry launched into a helter-skelter performance of Malcolm Arnold's delightfully gleeful *'Scherzetto'*.

The second performer, pianist Isabella Cook, opened her part of the programme with J. S. Bach's *'Tocatta in G Major BWV 916'*. It has three highly contrasting sections. The first, *'Allegro'* has rapidly descending scales sounding like chiming bells and then a carillon of chords. The *'Adagio'* had fine counterpoint and within that, a decidedly attractive melody. The *'Finale'* offered an exciting contrapuntal gigue. Isabella's playing lived up well to the performances of Bach on piano that were a special attraction on late night BBC2 some years ago. She brought out so many expressive details in her playing, making the music sound so fresh and exciting. In Schumann's *'Arabesque op.18'*, Isabella took us through the composer's contrasting series of moods with remarkable fluency and a sense of freedom in her Interpretation.

In the second part of the concert, Isabella played three extracts from Prokofiev's *'Romeo and Juliet op. 75'*. She delivered the full range of contrasting colour and emotional punch in this piano version of the orchestral ballet score.

Kirsty's performance was notable for expressive phrasing and her close attention to rhythmic detail. Two pieces were to follow, '*Im Silberkranze*' (*In the Silver Wreath*) by Carl Reinecke and '*Fantasia*' by Gabriel Fauré. In the first of these, the flute floated over Harry's fine piano accompaniment. Then, with elegance and even a fairyland lightness, both flute and piano excelled in their interpretation of this music. Kirsty had been chosen to round off the performance in the second half with '*Cantabile et Presto*' by George Enescu. This was a challenging piece and in many ways it was Kirsty's star performance. It brought the concert to a magnificent conclusion.

David Ferguson opened his set of pieces with '*Silent Noon*' by Vaughan Williams a glorious vocal classic setting words from the poem by Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Welsh mezzo Angharad Lyddon had sung this very piece in the Song Section of Cardiff Singer of the World on television, the night before this concert. I could not really follow her words, so vital in this song, but well done David, you got every word across to me in your performance. The same was true in David's performance of the set of five songs from Finzi's '*Let us Garlands Bring*', settings of texts from plays by Shakespeare. I particularly enjoyed his performance of '*Fear no more the heat o' the sun*'.

David opened his second half offering with Schubert's '*An die Musik*' so well suited to his vocal range. His final two performances were from opera, two dark and very dramatic arias from Verdi, one from '*Simon Boccanegra*' the other, Banquo's aria from '*Macbeth*'. Perhaps David could have added a comic bass aria at the end just to lift our spirits? Next time perhaps!

## *TWO SPECIAL SUMMER CONCERTS IN THE BIG SKY STUDIO*

For those who have not heard of the Big Sky Studio in the Music Hall, allow me to explain. If you proceed down the main corridor in the Music Hall, heading for the main ground floor entrance to the Main Hall, you will pass two large doors on your left hand side. The second of these doors is the entrance to the Big Sky Studio. It is almost exactly opposite the wide entrance to the café and bar at the other side of the corridor. When you get inside, look up at the ceiling and you will see a very large and fancy glass dome. This could be why it is called the Big Sky. Performers from NESMS staged two concerts there during the Summer.

The first was on Saturday, 13<sup>th</sup> July when there were four musicians from NESMS. They were **Alex Riddell** who played both piano and clarinet. **Laura Smith** also played clarinet and **Kara Taylor** played cello. We must not forget the very fine piano accompanist for that concert, **Colin Sinclair**.



Alex Riddell, Colin Sinclair, Laura Smith and Kara Taylor

This first Big Sky concert was entitled the 'NESMS Grand Tour Concert' since its programme took us on a musical trip through Germany, Hungary, The Czech Republic and France led by composers Weber and Mendelssohn, Bartók, Dvořák, Debussy and Ravel.

The first work in the concert was '*Grand Duo Concertante in Eb Op. 48*' by Carl Maria von Weber. The performers were Laura Smith, clarinet, with on piano Colin Sinclair. Laura's clarinet playing in the opening Allegro con fuoco was full of lively leaps and runs which she played boldly. Remember though that this whole piece is a virtuoso work for both instruments and that was precisely what we got. Weber himself is believed to have played the piano at the first performance and Colin Sinclair's performance did the composer proud. In the Andante con moto, Laura held the long notes with admirable steadiness while conveying the slightly sad mood of the music. The final Rondo allegro was driven strongly forward with easy fluency from both players right into an electrifying coda.

Alex Riddell is also a gifted clarinet player as we were to hear later on, but in the second work in the concert, it was as a pianist that she performed. She played Béla Bartók's '*Romanian Folk Dances*' of which there are six short pieces. They have splendid dance inspired titles like '*Dance with Sticks*' or '*On the Spot*', described as 'a stamping dance'. Her performance of the fourth '*Hornpipe Dance*' was particularly impressive, taking us, in a sense into the Hungarian countryside.

Kara Taylor with her cello then took us into the Czech Republic as it is today, with Dvořák's '*Rondo in g minor Op. 94 for cello and piano*' very much a challenging showpiece for the cellist. Kara and Colin followed this with Debussy's '*Beau Soir*', originally an Art Song but arranged for the instrumental duo by Gretchaninoff. Could we argue that with this piece NESMS had made a brief excursion into Russia? Anyway we were definitely firmly in France with Kara's warm-toned and spirited rhythmically intense performance of Ravel's '*Pièce en forme de habanera*'. Habanera? All right just a quick hop over the border into Spain.

I said that as well as being a pianist, Alex also plays the clarinet and she joined with Laura in a performance of Mendelssohn's 'Two Concert Pieces'. The first piece has in itself two movements. It sounded like a vocal duet for the two clarinets supported by Colin on piano. As Colin said in his introductory words, the second movement was a lively chase with all three instruments joining in the fun. The second of Mendelssohn's 'Two Concert Pieces' had three movements. The first with very emphatic rhythmic writing, followed by slow romantic passages for the two clarinets with minimal piano and finally, the music took fire in splendid dance-like fashion.

If the first of these Big Sky concerts had taken us across Europe, the second took us in a sense to Fairyland with 'A Programme of Fantasy and Fairytale Inspired Music', on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> August.

**Laura Smith** clarinet, **Kara Taylor** cello and **Colin Sinclair** piano were back in the Studio when they performed as the **NESMS Clarinet Trio**.

The concert began with a 'Clarinet Trio' by Italian Composer Nino Rota (1911 – 1979). He is possibly best known as a film composer. Many of his best work in that area is less well known to a British audience since that music was for the Italian cinema, however, you may know his music from 'The Godfather' and the love theme from the 1968 film of 'Romeo and Juliet'. Some of his non film 'more serious' music is quite exceptional. It includes the 'Clarinet Trio' played by Laura, Kara and Colin. In this performance, Colin was fairly setting the piano alight. The Trio is in three movements. The first, wonderfully spicy music played with invigorating verve and precision by all three performers. Clarinet and cello rejoiced together in the luscious romanticism of the central slow movement and as the programme note stated, the finale had a decidedly 'circus' feel to it in both rhythm and melody.

The next composer in the programme was even more *recherché* than Rota. Carl Frühling (1868 – 1937) is usually regarded as being an Austrian composer but he was born in part of what today is the Ukraine. His music is very much late romantic but with the rise of figures like Schoenberg, Webern and Berg it fell out of fashion. It did not help that in Vienna in the 1930s, he was known to be Jewish. He died in poverty in Vienna. Only now, when traditional melody and harmony is being allowed back into concert halls, Frühling's music is experiencing a return to favour.

The NESMS Clarinet Trio is to be congratulated for being in the vanguard of those bringing this music back to prominence. Frühling's 'Clarinet Trio' is in four movements. The first has many delicious passages of late romantic effusiveness. All three performers were at their finest in projecting this to the audience. The second movement marked *Anmutig bewegt* (with graceful movement) is precisely what we got from all three players. They gave this movement its required lightsome elegance.

The third movement was delightfully pensive while the finale fairly buzzed with excitement. Here once again Colin Sinclair's piano playing was white hot.

The rest of the programme was given over to music by Schumann. His three 'Fantasy Pieces' were shared by cello and clarinet. Kara, on top form on cello played the first and third pieces while Laura on clarinet played the slower central movement beautifully.

After the Frühling 'Clarinet Trio', the audience gave the NESMS Trio a massive ovation to which they responded with Schumann's 'Märchenerzählungen Op. 132 No. 3' the long and complex German word of its title means simply Fairytale. Originally scored for piano, clarinet and viola, Saturday's version using cello went down particularly well and after the concert, the full house audience were in no hurry to leave, they were keen to chat to the performers after such a splendid concert!

## NEW NESMS VOICE TUTOR GILLIAN JACK



NESMS are particularly delighted to welcome Gillian Jack as the latest addition to their list of exceptionally well qualified voice tutors. Gillian joined NESMS as a voice tutor in September 2019.

Gillian Jack (nee Taylor) was born in Aberdeen and educated at Aberdeen Grammar School. She gained the Mary D. Adams scholarship to study at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama gaining BA (MusEd) and dip RSAMD. After graduation, Gillian studied with Patricia MacMahon and she has always been indebted to her for her guidance and knowledge. Gillian's singing career spanned 25 years in Scottish Opera and English National Opera full time chorus-es, performing and understudying many roles. In addition an extensive career in recital and oratorio has taken Gillian across the UK.

Gillian has always had a strong love of teaching and was the founder Head of Vocal Studies of the National Youth Choir of Scotland and has recently returned to NYCOS as a vocal tutor.

She now lives back home in Bonnie Scotland since returning from ENO and teaches at Aberdeen City Music School at Dyce and the University of Aberdeen.

*WELCOMING ANOTHER NEW TUTOR TO NESMS  
AND EXPANDING OUR OFFERINGS OF TUITION:*



**CATHERINE EVISON**

**NEW NESMS SAXOPHONE TUTOR**

NESMS are delighted to welcome a new member to our distinguished list of tutors at the School. She is **Catherine Evison** who will be the specialist saxophone tutor at the school. Catherine studied classical saxophone at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama with John Harle and Christian Forshaw, graduating with a first class honours degree in 2007 and a master's degree with distinction in 2014.

As a solo saxophonist, Catherine has reached the semi-final of the Royal Overseas League Music Competition and was runner up in the Needlemaker's Prize. She is a composer, favouring saxophone and electronics and has premiered her works at both the Forge and Milton Court. As a chamber musician with saxophone quartet 'Quadrophonia' Catherine won the CASS Quartet Competition, the Tunnell Trust Scheme and the semi-finals of the Overseas League Chamber Music Competition. Catherine was Principal Alto Saxophone with the National Saxophone Choir of Great Britain for four years, in which time she performed several concerti with the group at venues such as the Beijing Concert Hall, the CBSO Centre and Mahidol University in Bangkok.

Catherine has a diverse range of experience as an educator. She has lectured on music education at the Guildhall School and Trinity Laban; teaching the saxophone at City University and Junior Guildhall and was Education Director for the 2012 World Saxophone Congress.

She is the Founder and Director of Mosaic Music Education Ltd., winners of the Deutsche Bank Award for Creative Enterprise, the Amati Global Investors Award and Guildhall School Creative Entrepreneurship Award, where she creates music education resources for young instrumentalists and supports new teachers in their delivery.



She is currently Director of Music at St Aubyn's School in London where she works with children aged 3 -13 delivering curriculum music lessons based on the Kodaly method. Catherine is planning to move to Scotland in 2020, and has recently began teaching the saxophone at the University of Aberdeen.

Catherine is already getting going in a big way at NESMS with a free Saxophone Masterclass at the School from 4pm to 7pm on Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> November.

## SOME PAST AND FUTURE EVENTS CONNECTED WITH NESMS

Many of you will by now be aware of the reopening of two important venues in Aberdeen. One of them, the Cowdray Hall, is intimately involved in musical events, but Aberdeen Art Gallery often opens its doors to performing musicians as well. Some of you may have been present recently in the Art Gallery at one singularly important event. These were the first performances of an amazing new work by the first ever female Master of the Queen's Music, Judith Weir CBE. Entitled '*The Big Picture*' it was certainly well named.

It was big, it was spectacular, and with its exploration of the relationship between music and colour, it was the ideal choice for the reopening of a prestigious Art Gallery. It featured a large children's choir arrayed across the whole of the first level gallery in the main Atrium. On the left side, was the University's head of percussion, Dr Lisa Nicol. On the same level, was ace clarinettist Jo Nicholson, while at floor level, was Con Anima Chamber Choir and Dr Jeremy Coleman on keyboard. Who was the principal conductor? It was none other than our own Chairman of the Friends, Dr Roger B. Williams MBE. Over the weekend there was one private and two public performances. Despite some of the audiences not being able to keep quiet during the performances, everyone who was there told me that the music and the performances were a resounding success.

I will certainly treasure them in memory.

I am frequently asked when the very popular and successful series of Lunchbreak Concerts are due to start again. I am delighted to report that they will recommence back in the newly refurbished Cowdray Hall at 12.45 pm on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> November. The Host and Director of these concerts is our own Dr Roger Williams. The opening concert will be given by our popular NESMS piano tutor Joseph Long. He always gets a packed house for his performances and since he will be playing Mussorgsky's '*Pictures at an Exhibition*', itself a very popular work, you would be well advised to get along early to the Cowdray Hall in order to be sure of getting a seat at this special opening concert.

I should mention the Coffee Morning which on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> November attracted a good number of loyal Friends, current pupils and some guests. I was happy to hear members who are currently Friends warmly encouraging guests to join up. New Friends are always very welcome and there is now a new initiative, Young Friends, designed not only to widen support for the Friends but especially to retain the interest and involvement of past students as they move into the musical profession. Our intention is to grow a stronger group of Alumni. If you know any such people please tell them that a warm welcome awaits them even if they are not able to be in Aberdeen often any more.

There is another very special Friends of NESMS event at the School in Huntly Street in the offing. You will remember that we had a special Birthday celebration for Mozart at NESMS. This year marks the Bicentennial of the birth of Clara Schumann on the 13<sup>th</sup> September, 1819. We will celebrate this with a special event on the afternoon of Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> November. Written by Colin Sinclair, it will be delivered by Alan Fenwick with performers Colin Sinclair, piano, and Katherine and Roger Williams, voice and piano. Another event not to be missed.

*The Friends of NESMS present*

*An afternoon celebrating  
the life and works of  
Clara Schumann*



**Sunday 24th November 2019, 3pm**

To mark the Bi-centennial anniversary of Clara Schumann's birth, the Friends of NESMS present an illustrated talk with performances from soprano Katherine Williams and pianists Colin Sinclair and Dr. Roger Williams.

*Friends entry is free but donations are welcome from anyone else.*

*Refreshments afterwards*

Dorothy Hatley Music Centre, 21 Huntly Street, Aberdeen, AB10 1TJ



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