

Notes from NESMS

North East of Scotland Music School Newsletter

January 2025

Welcome to everyone in the NESMS family for this new year! As Colin indicates below, this is a very special year for us all at NESMS and we are very keen for everyone to join in our celebrations, which will run from autumn to spring next year. A fiftieth anniversary is something quite special, and we are keen to be in contact with as many past students as possible. Please do tell us about anyone you remember being involved. As well as the numerous highlights listed below, the regular tuition on a one-to-one basis is flourishing, with numbers now fully recovered from the Covid pandemic. With all best wishes for a successful and enjoyable 2025.

Dr Roger B Williams, MBE,
Chair of NESMS Council.

What's been going on at NESMS:

Piano Masterclass

In association with Haddo Arts Festival, we welcomed Joanna MacGregor CBE to give a piano masterclass to some of our students on the afternoon of Thursday 12th September. Four NESMS students were put through their paces on the Bach, Brahms, Mozart and Beethoven pieces they offered; receiving some expert advice with instant results on their playing. Joanna gave a recital at Haddo House Hall the following evening that the masterclass students also attended and with the recent appointment of Joanna as president of the Haddo Arts Festival, we hope that there will be another future masterclass opportunity in the future.

Jazz workshops return.

After a year away from the NESMS calendar, the Jazz workshops run by Joseph Long and Ian Milne returned on Sunday 10th November proving more popular than ever. This session focused on the art of arranging jazz standards and creating captivating intros and outros. The next session will be on Sunday 2nd March and will cover Blues and Walking Bass so be sure to book your place with the NESMS office.

Cowdray Hall Lunchbreak Concert

NESMS students, Marriette Pose, flute, Linden Stewart, clarinet and Zhaohong Chu, piano gave a fantastic concert at the Cowdray Hall Lunchbreak Concert on Thursday 14th November. The varied programme featured flute and clarinet pieces by Reinecke, Mouquet Finzi and Poulenc which were expertly accompanied by Ben Torrie.

Keynotes Lunch 2024

The annual Keynotes Lunch was held on Sunday 17th November in the Courtyard Room at the Marcliffe Hotel. Enjoying not only an excellent meal and service at the Marcliffe but we were also treated to some fantastic musical interludes to allow for a short pause between courses; The premiere performance of a trumpet fanfare for our upcoming 50th year written by Kevin Haggart and performed by Kevin and his brother Alan, NESMS bassoon tutor Lucy Webster performed pieces by Dutilleux and Ravel (in which we believe was the first appearance of the instrument to feature at a Keynotes Lunch) and current Bach Choir scholar, Eve Begg sang pieces by Mozart, Quilter and Head. Here's to next year's Lunch, during our special 50th anniversary, on Sunday 2nd November 2025.

Flute Choir Christmas Concerts

The NESMS Flute Choir had a mini festive tour in the lead up to Christmas with a concert at Fyvie Parish Church and two Aberdeen concerts at Great Western Community Centre and St Mary's Cathedral. The programme was a mix of much-loved Christmas Carols and modern festive favourites. The Flute Choir will feature in some of our plans to celebrate our 50th anniversary later in 2025.

Office update

Congratulations to our assistant manager, Shannon Stevenson, who has started a permanent position at Big Noise Torry at the start of January 2025. Sadly this does mean we've lost her from the NESMS office, but will still regularly see her in the building as she will continue to rent a studio for her own private violin teaching. Interviews for her replacement took place during January and we look forward to welcoming Ailsa Smith starting in February. Be sure to pop up to the office and say hello!

Coming soon to NESMS:

Cowdray Hall Lunchbreak Concert

Another Cowdray Hall Lunchbreak concert will be on 20th February 2025 featuring NESMS students Hannah Magil, oboe, Tyler Martin, violin, accompanied by Shirley Magill. This concert series is free to attend, 12:45pm – 1:30pm. Click [here](#) to see what's on at this and other Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museum venues.

Piano Four Hand workshop

Nigel Clayton and duet partner Imma Setiadi will be returning to give another Four Hand Piano workshop. Exact timings are yet to be confirmed, but we are planning for this event to happen over the weekend of the 8th/9th March. Further details will be advertised nearer the time. This will be taking place during the weekend after both Nigel and Imma's own Cowdray Hall Lunchbreak Concert on Thursday 6th March.

Murray McLachlan Masterclass & Recital

A piano day with Murray McLachlan will take place on Saturday 22nd March at Fountainhall at the Cross Church (formally Queens Cross Church) with a public Masterclass and a ticketed afternoon recital. Details of the recital ticket price will be circulated in the New Year. A limited number of 1-1 lessons may also be available with Murray at 21 Huntly Street on Friday 21st March (tbc).

Flute Choir Concert

An afternoon concert given by the NESMS Flute Choir and led by Catherine O'Rourke will be held in the music room in Fyvie Castle on Saturday 26th April. Programme to include pieces by Schoenberg, Newman, Piazzolla and by flute choir member Olwenn Stewart. Tickets £12/£8 concessions (free to NTS members) will become available on Eventbrite through the NTS website: <https://www.nts.org.uk/visit/places/fyvie-castle>

Scholarship Auditions 2025

We will be opening applications in mid-March with a deadline of Sunday 1st May. Dates of the audition days themselves are yet to be confirmed but will be announced when applications open. A reminder that auditions are open to anyone in full-time education, wishing to have lessons with any of our existing tutors during the next academic year, and our 50th anniversary, of 2025 – 2026. If any sponsors still wish to donate a scholarship for next year, please be in touch with the office before the May 1st deadline.

Scholarship Concert 2025

The annual NESMS Scholarship Concert will take place on Friday 20th June 2025 at Aberdeen Springfield Church (previously known as Craigiebuckler Church) and will feature full scholarship holders, Hannah Magill, oboe, Isla Rippiner, flute, Eve Begg, voice, Olwenn Stewart, piano and Zhaohong Chu, piano.

NESMS 50th Anniversary

Plans are rapidly taking shape for celebrating our 50th year in 2025 including a Gala Concert held at the Cowdray Hall on Saturday 11th October, 3pm – 4:30pm. This will feature performances by some current NESMS tutors and scholarship students and the world-premiere of a piece written for the NESMS Flute Choir by past student, and now head of composition at RCS, Oliver Searle. Other events are being planned to take place throughout the entire academic year. Masterclasses, concerts and other events are also being planned to take place throughout the entire 2025/2026 academic year and we hope to announce as many of these as possible before the Summer!

As ever these NESMS concerts and masterclasses 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

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 now needs updating, please let us know. Huge congratulations to those students who were doing the audition rounds for the various Music Conservatoires across the UK.

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 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 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. 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. You can still rent a studio over the school Easter holidays by emailing the office in advance, but please be sure to check the online calendar on our website first to see if the building will be closed or not on certain days.

Colin Brockie
Manager

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