

keynotes

The Newsletter

of the North East of Scotland Music School

Issue No 6 • September 2004

Pupils Star in China



Julia Maxwell

The String Ensemble of the National Children's Orchestra of Scotland during their visit to the Tianjin Children's Art and Culture Festival. NESMS pupils Naomi Watson, Jessica Coleman and Julia Maxwell were part of the Ensemble.

Three NESMS pupils, Naomi Watson, Jessica Coleman and Julia Maxwell, returned recently from a visit to China with the String Ensemble of the National Children's Orchestra of Scotland. The ensemble visited the capital, Beijing, and the nearby major port of Tianjin, where the ensemble was an important

part of the Children's Art and Culture Festival.

Naomi says that the trip was very memorable. "It was extremely hot," she recalls, "but the visit to the Forbidden Palace in Beijing was really amazing. The Festival itself was also memorable with lots of dancing as well as the music. There were over 2,000 young

people from all over the world – I can recall choirs from Korea, Mexico and Sweden – so it was a great atmosphere. In fact, it seemed like far more than 2,000 when you saw them all together! "But for me the most enduring memory will be the visit to the Great Wall, with amazing views over the mountains."

For her NESMS colleague, Julia Maxwell, the Great Wall visit was also notable – it took place on her 15th birthday! "That was pretty special," she says. "I also enjoyed playing traditional Chinese music arranged by a Scottish composer at the opening ceremony of the Festival. I also sampled parts of duck unavailable in British restaurants!"

"All in all the trip is something I will never forget and I will always feel lucky to have been part of it."



Julia Maxwell

NESMS pupil spent her 15th birthday exploring the Great Wall of China

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About the School

Providing the highest standards of advanced tuition for promising musicians

The School provides a centre where young people of outstanding musical promise can obtain tuition which is not available within their existing framework of study.

Any musically talented child, student, teacher or lay person living in Scotland may apply for an audition to the School.

TUITION

Internationally acclaimed professors and teachers are brought to Aberdeen on a regular basis from all over the British Isles and Europe.

COURSES

The School offers one-to-one teaching together with occasional workshops and masterclasses.

There is a close relationship with the University of Aberdeen, through the Director of Music, and also with Aberdeen City Music School in Dyce.

FINANCE

Finance is generously provided by trusts, commercial organisations and individuals. Continued support is essential in order to maintain the high quality of the teaching programme. The Administrator will be pleased to assist with all enquiries about donations, sponsorship or scholarships.

FEES & SCHOLARSHIPS

Students pay their own fees, although scholarships are available and are applied for annually. Any award is made on a balance of musical potential and financial need.

DOROTHY HATELY

Dorothy founded NESMS in 1975 with the support and encouragement of Lady Aberdeen.

Thanks to Dorothy's dogged determination over the years, the School has greatly increased its teaching disciplines, tutors and pupils. Sadly, Dorothy died in 1996, before she could see the School in its own premises in Huntly Street. However, we strive to maintain the high standards she set and intend to take the School from strength to strength.

NORTH EAST OF SCOTLAND MUSIC SCHOOL

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Double Distinction

Sixteen-year-old NESMS pupil, Kathryn Cheyne recently tackled both piano and flute grade eight exams of the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music on the same day – gaining two passes with distinction.



Kathryn Cheyne

Kathryn, who won a Young Musician of the Year competition run by the combined Rotary Clubs of Aboyne, Banchory and Stonehaven, says that the piano exam was the more nerve wracking and she was glad that she tackled that first.

"In the flute exam my Dad was my accompanist whereas in the piano exam you don't have an accompanist and since it was also an unfamiliar piano it seems harder," Kathryn says. Kathryn's father is principal music teacher at Mackie Academy in Stonehaven and her mother is a woodwind teacher. It's no surprise then that Kathryn started learning to play at an early age. "I can't really remember not playing the piano," she reports. "I think I started when I was about six-years-old and then took

up the flute as well when I was about ten."

She says that music takes up practically all her spare time; apart from formal lessons (she studies flute at NESMS's with David Nicholson and piano with Nigel Clayton and took part in Nigel's recent end-of-term concert) she plays in a number of school and Aberdeenshire groups and says that her ambition is to be a professional flautist in an orchestra.

"I don't know which orchestra. I just love playing orchestrally so I guess any good orchestra that would have me would do!" she says.

To further her musical career Kathryn will be auditioning in September for sixth form at St Mary's Music School in Edinburgh.

Honour for Jean

At the end-of-term concert given by pupils of Nigel Clayton, an honorary fellowship was 'sprung' on Jean Ward, who has been Nigel's host since he started teaching at the School in 1998. Jean had also been host to Nigel's predecessor, John Blakely.

However, useful though Jean's hosting duties are, it is by no means the end of her involvement with the School. She was for many years an accompanist for the pupils of Alison McDonald and also sits on the audition panel (along with Tom Johnston) for the School's Scholarship Awards.

"Her contribution to the life of the School has been considerable," says Joan Thomas, the School's administrator, "and awarding her the School's third honorary fellowship seemed appropriate – and it was a pleasure to be able to spring the surprise!"

NESMS Teaches a Teacher

The high standard of the tuition and coaching provided by the School is reflected by the fact that several local music teachers continue to come to the School for lessons.

Among these is 27-year-old Martin Couzins, an Aberdeen City Council music teacher who has been a pupil of cello tutor of James Halsey for some time. He started taking lessons at the School when he was a teenager with the cello tutor of the time, Eileen Croxford. Miss Croxford, incidentally, is James Halsey's aunt!

Martin left Ellon Academy to take sixth form studies at the renowned Chetham's School of Music in Manchester, before going to the Birmingham Conservatoire for two years. He then went to the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama for five years, taking a degree and a post-graduate diploma.

It was during his RSAMD period that he met a Glaswegian violinist, and a pianist from Leeds, and formed the Europa Piano Trio. They've performed several concerts in and around

Bradford and in Edinburgh although Martin does admit that rehearsing is a bit of a problem. "We're obviously geographically far apart so it isn't easy. But we enjoy playing together and even without too much rehearsal we can't be that bad as the University at Bradford has asked us back to give another concert!" he says.

Another favourite destination is the island of Mull. "I was asked by Rudi de Groot, the principal cellist of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra to go to the Mendelssohn on Mull Festival a couple of years ago," says Martin. "Rudi is the mentor to the Festival and chooses which musicians to ask along. I've been there twice now and it's very enjoyable; great music, a fabulous atmosphere and superb surroundings. And we don't just play Mendelssohn!"

Congratulations

Congratulations to Michael Beeston, our viola tutor, and Liz on their recent wedding.

Violin Tutor is Film Star!



NESMS violin tutor Gillian Findlay - star of stage and screen!

Violin pupils at NESMS are probably aware that their tutor, Gillian Findlay, has had an exciting career including ten years with the London Symphony Orchestra and as guest leader at home and abroad with several other leading orchestras. What they're probably unaware of is Gillian's role as a session musician on many blockbuster films, including two of the original Star Wars trilogy, Superman, Raiders of the Lost Ark, Tomb Raiders, Chicken Run, Shrek, and Lord of the Rings to name but a few.

"When you're a freelance musician you generally have to take what work is offered and I have to admit to having played on many pop sessions. Sadly, people seem to be more

impressed by the fact that I've worked with Robbie Williams, Paul McCartney and Madonna rather than the many truly wonderful musicians with whom I've had the privilege to work."

Playing film and pop music was far from Gillian's mind during a musical upbringing in Glasgow. As a 16-year-old she won a scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music, where she studied for four years with Trevor Williams, before winning further scholarships that took her to the Indiana University in the USA where she studied with Franco Gulli for a further four years. During her holidays she worked with the English Chamber Orchestra.

With a variety of prizes and

master classes behind her she joined the LSO in 1980 and a year later won the Sascha Lasserson Competition which led to recitals and concerto performances.

"I had a terrific decade there but I definitely needed a change," Gillian says. "Since leaving the LSO I've been fortunate to do all sorts of things. I've played with the Michael Nyman Orchestra, I've played with an actor on stage and a great highlight was visiting South Africa with the ECO, playing with Ladysmith Black Mambazo and patting lions!"

Gillian is a founder member of the Tzigane Piano trio and she also has a harp and violin duo called Cavatina. Both groups have had music specially written for them.

She teaches both privately and at Trinity College of Music in London and is an Honorary Associate of the Royal Academy of Music. She has been the violin tutor at NESMS for over a decade, having been recommended by the previous tutor, Hugh Bean. Indeed Hugh had been Gillian's tutor at one time. "It's a privilege to teach here," she says. "The School has some amazingly talented pupils. There's a lot of music going on which is positively encouraged and the results are very exciting."

Award for Colin

School pupil, baritone Colin Brockie, is this year's recipient of The Ellie Pirie Award, which is in the gift of the Aberdeen Bach Choir. The Choir makes the award to encourage young singers with the proviso that the recipient is expected to perform with the Choir. The Choir will be guests at the Brechin Arts Festival on Sunday 3rd October when Colin will be their soloist.

Colin has also been a member of the National Youth Choir of Scotland for the last four years and has also been selected for their prestigious Chamber Choir. The whole

Choir has just been to Chicago on tour and Colin said of the trip: "It was fantastic. We gave two performances of Walton's Belshazzar's Feast and two performances of The War Requiem by Benjamin Britten and all four performances were a sell out, with 11,000 people at each!"

"We performed in the newly built, Frank Gehry designed Jay W. Pritzker Pavilion and although it looks a bit like an exploded can, the acoustics were superb. Even though the front is open to the audience, with 4,000 seated and 7,000 on the grass behind, it sounded as though we were indoors.

The Grant Park Symphony Orchestra and Grant Park Chorus, a Chicago based professional orchestra and chorus, accompanied the choir.

"The city itself was also fantastic," enthuses Colin. "I really must go back as there was so much to see that we just didn't have time to fit it all in."

Colin has been a pupil of Ruth Black for the last four years and has also had lessons with Donald Maxwell and Alan Watt. He has sung locally on numerous occasions, and is involved with local Amateur Dramatics and the Gilbert and Sullivan Society.

Tutors at the School

as at January 2004

STRINGS

Violin Gillian Findlay
Viola Michael Beeston
Cello James Halsey
Double Bass David Inglis

WOODWIND

Flute David Nicholson
Flute Catherine O'Rourke
Oboe Anne Rankin
Clarinet Alison Waller
Bassoon Lesley Wilson

BRASS

Trumpet John Gracie
Horn Ifor James
Horn Lizzie Davis

PIANO

Nigel Clayton
Joseph Long

GUITAR

Gilbert Biberian

SINGING

Raimund Herincx
Alan Watt
Ruth Black
Alison McDonald
Jean Webster

STAGECRAFT & PERFORMANCE

Donald Maxwell

Forthcoming events

Friends Ferryhill Series

Thursday 2nd December
7.30pm

Christmas Concert,
with Vocal Liaisons,
(Jean and Peter Webster).

Other events

Saturday, 30th October
10am to noon
Friends Coffee Morning,
at the School. Usual stalls

Sunday, 3rd October
6.30 pm

Queens Cross Church
Pupils from NESMS give
an informal concert.
Tickets £5 at door.

Sunday, 7th November
Keynotes Auction Lunch
which this year will be at the
Marcliffe at Pittfodels Hotel.
Prizes include a pair of Malcolm
Appleby gold earrings, cufflinks
and a brooch from Jamieson and
Carry, a Turkish rug, a flight in a
private plane including lunch.
Peter Mitchell will be auctioneer.
Tickets are £15.00 and are
available from the School or from
event organizer, Nicky Bradford.

Recent events

Derek's Recital

In March Derek Buchan gave a splendid piano recital in the School, with funds raised going towards the purchase of our new luxury piano stool. Friends and fellow pupils were treated to a rich and varied evening of music, which was enhanced by Derek's helpful and interesting programme notes.

Song and Wind

This concert in the Friends' Ferryhill Series featured Christopher Lund on horn, and singers Moira Docherty and Colin Brockie. An appreciative audience heard Chris give a thrilling recital, and Moira and Colin captivated us with a wide range of songs.

Naomi and Colin

Towards the end of the summer term, two concerts were given to help Naomi Watson and Colin Brockie raise funds for their trips abroad this summer. Naomi (violin) has been to China with the String Ensemble of the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland (see cover story) and Colin has been singing with the National Youth Choir of Scotland in Chicago (see story page 3). Thanks to generous (and delighted) audiences, both students were able to raise a considerable amount towards the cost of their trips.

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Research Results

The first questionnaire to be drawn out of the hat from the readership survey we included in the last issue of Keynotes belonged to Susan Simpson, a local string instructor, winning her an autographed copy of the Joseph Long CD The Late Flowering Of The Romantic Piano Sonata.

Joan Thomas, the NESMS administrator, says that she was pleased by the response. "I think it was sufficiently large and the results generally so conclusive that it will help inform the future direction of Keynotes.

It provided us with some immensely useful information as well as some ideas for the sort of stories we might run in the future and, indeed, in this issue we are starting a regular 'golden oldie/pupil' profile in addition to the tutor profile.

This was one of the suggestions made that we felt we could add without any difficulty," she says.

"All of the respondents received their copies by post, whilst the majority also said they believed that Keynotes made a 'significant

contribution to the reputation of the School and that most of what they knew about the School also came from the newsletter.

Opinions were generally divided between whether they felt the design to be 'contemporary' or 'modern' although, with hindsight, we're not entirely sure we know what the difference is!

"We were really delighted that the vast majority of respondents said they read the newsletter from cover to cover."

New Admin Assistant

Reg Pringle was recently appointed to work part-time in the office (Wednesday and Friday afternoons), assisting with accounts and other administrative tasks.

He describes himself as a lifelong music enthusiast and has a background in higher and further education - he was university librarian at the

University of Aberdeen then switched careers to become, first, a community worker in Stonehaven then, later, lecturer in computing at Aberdeen College.

"What attracted me to the job was the combination of musical activity and the 'family' atmosphere of people having fun while achieving great

things," says Reg. "I felt I could use my computing skills to help keep the office side of things working smoothly even (hopefully) in a period of expansion, and Joan Thomas, the administrator, is the kind of person who encourages everyone to make their own individual contribution to the place."

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Welcome to a new tutor!

We are delighted that we will be joined in the autumn by **Lizzie Davis**, who will tutor horn, alongside Professor Ifor James. Lizzie is the head of the horn department and is also chamber music tutor at Chetham's School of Music in Manchester.

Many of her former pupils now hold positions in major orchestras, and past and present pupils have excelled in prestigious competitions.

Lizzie and Ifor will share horn tuition at NESMS, and we look forward to her first visit in September.