

**NESMS GALA CONCERT
CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF THE
NORTH EAST OF SCOTLAND MUSIC SCHOOL**

Musicians, In order of performance:

Kevin Haggart trumpet, with **Alan Haggart** trumpet

Ian Wilson clarinet, **Laura Smith** clarinet and **Harry Williamson** piano

Moira Docherty soprano with **Harry Williamson** piano

NESMS Flute Choir led by **Catherine O'Rourke**

Diya Dileep saxophone with **Kevin Haggart** piano

Joseph Long concert pianist

Judith Howarth soprano

With **The Hatley Trio**: **Moira Docherty** soprano, **Colin Brockie** bass-baritone
and **Tim Tricker** piano

Angus & Finlay Donohoe piano duettists

Piano Trio: **Guera Crockett** violin, **James Halsey** cello
and **Nigel Clayton** piano

PROGRAMME:

Haggart

Golden Trumpet Fanfare, 50, Not Out.

Franz Krommer (1759 – 1831)

Concerto for Two Clarinets

Victor Herbert (1859 – 1924)

Art is Calling for Me (I want to be a Prima Donna) from The Enchantress

Oliver Searle (b. 1977)

Colours of the City

Modest Mussorgsky (1839 – 1881)

The Old Castle from Pictures at an Exhibition

Béla Bartók (1881 – 1945)

Suite Op.14

Mozart (1756 – 1791)

Soave sia il vento from Così Fan Tutte

Puccini (1858 – 1924)

Scene & Vissi d'Arte from Tosca

Gabriel Fauré (1845 – 1924)

Berceuse from Dolly Suite Op. 56 No.1

Wilhelm Ganz (1833 – 1914)

Qui Vive! (Grand Galop de Concert)

Shostakovich (1906 – 1975)

Piano Trio in c minor Op. 8

REVIEW:

Saturday's radiant concert featuring students, scholarship holders and tutors of the North East of Scotland Music School in Aberdeen's Cowdray Hall on the 11th October 2025 was a joyous celebration of the School's 50 years of their championing of musical education for pupils of all ages in Aberdeen and the North East of Scotland. It opened with the jubilant sound of two trumpets offstage at either end of the platform in the Cowdray Hall. It was performed by Kevin and Alan Haggart whose names have become synonymous over the years with the region's most accomplished trumpet playing. Dr Roger B. Williams welcomed the audience warmly before turning over to tutor Ian Wilson, Professor of recorder at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and Head of Woodwind at Eton College who was to introduce all the astonishingly varied items in the programme. The first was the *Concerto for 2 clarinets* by Franz Krommer in which, along with his star pupil Laura Smith, and Harry Williamson on piano, Ian himself was to play first clarinet. From the first few bars of piano music, we were introduced to the most bright and breezy music. This was happy music with lively rhythm and attractive melody in which the two clarinets played their parts with perfect clarity, sometimes conversing musically and responding to one another or else intertwining together most beautifully. The two trumpets had already roused our spirits but now, the two clarinets and piano had us all responding with smiles of approval.

Soprano Eve Begg being unwell was unable to sing her two pieces but the intrepid Moira Docherty was able to fill the bill with the second of the two songs, the riotously cheerful *Art is Calling for Me* by the American show composer Victor Herbert. This song is subtitled *I want to be a Prima Donna*. Moira added her acting talents to powerful singing, putting the song across to the audience in the most stylish way.

The front of the platform was then filled by the members of the NESMS flute choir directed by Catherine O'Rourke in the World Premiere of a new piece composed specially for the occasion by Oliver Searle. He was a student at the school many years ago. I remember him giving a brilliant performance of piano music by Olivier Messiaen. Dr Searle is now head of composition at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in Glasgow. His new piece entitled *Colours of the City* was energised by surges of exciting rhythmic writing. From within coiling lines of harmony and clever counterpoints, there arose melodies that shone brightly out of the mixed flute textures. These suggested ideas of colour while the idea of the city itself was expressed by the complexity of flute lines across a wide harmonic range. It was indeed a marvellously colourful and painterly work! The following piece was quite different, equally expressive but following a steady melodic line played on saxophone by Diya Dileep with her wonderfully seductive saxophone tones accompanied on piano by Kevin Haggart. From Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, *The Old Castle* was brought to life in a most graphic way by this performance. It sat nicely alongside Oliver Searle's music. Here were two composers who could paint pictures with their music, but in startlingly different ways.

Pianist Joseph Long in his youngest days was a student at NESMS where he studied clarinet as well as piano. For piano, his tutor was David Parkhouse. Joseph himself is now a piano tutor at NESMS. As a concert pianist, he is possibly the most popular concert performer in Aberdeen and the North East. His concerts are almost always packed out, not just for his playing but also for his musical talks with the audience. Today, he had chosen to play Bartók's *Suite Op. 14*, one of the most testing and exciting pieces in the programme. It has four movements played continuously. The opening of the piece lived up to Bartók's own claim that in this piece he was exploring the percussive nature of the piano. Joseph drove the music hard capturing all its breathless energy. There are surprising off centre harmonic moments. Bartók uses exotic scale patterns including the whole tone scale and, I note from my CD version, there is even a twelve tone row in the second movement. 'My style here is all bone and muscle' wrote Bartók, and Joseph Long captured that so brilliantly with his stunningly powerful performance. Towards the end, the music slowed and became almost dreamy.

Here surely was proof that NESMS is not afraid of getting straight to the heart of the most challenging music.

From the sizzling excitement of Bartók, we were whisked from the concert hall to the opera house and Mozart's *Così fan tutte*. The trio aria *Soave sia il vento* (*The wind is gentle*) is one of Mozart's most beautiful vocal pieces with a delightful blending of voices captured magnificently by the two sopranos Judith Howarth and Moira Docherty with Colin Brockie at his smoothest baritone best. With Tim Tricker on piano, this was one of the real highlights of the performance.

We stayed in the opera house for the next piece, this time with glorious dramatic music by Puccini from *Tosca*. Colin Brockie opened with percussive sounds made by Moira Docherty. Then the magnificent Judith Howarth took command of the aria *Vissi d'Arte*, a despairing prayer sung by *Tosca*. Judith gave it her all with her most passionate outgoing singing. I felt myself quite transported by her performance.

The next piece of music was quite different. It was one of the first pieces of classical music which I heard and enjoyed regularly when I was very young, perhaps three or four years old. It was Fauré's *Berceuse* from the *Dolly Suite* which was played, at least in part, at the end of *Listen with Mother*, after my favourite story teller Daphne Oxenford had finished her story.

It was played in full on Saturday by two absolutely amazing young pianists, Angus and Finlay Donohoe. I was already familiar with them as organists, but now on piano they were quite astounding. The younger boy made the melody sing out so beautifully over his brother's swaying accompaniment. Their second piece went from the gentle music of the cradle song to explosive musical fireworks with *Qui Vive* by the German born composer, conductor, pianist and violinist Wilhelm Ganz who spent most of his working musical life in England. *Qui Vive* is also called a *Grand Galop de Concert*. The Donohoe brothers certainly lived up to that title. They changed places for this piece and their dazzlingly exciting playing brought an enthusiastic torrent of applause from the audience.

For the final piece in the concert, three of the tutors came together to deliver a fantastic performance of another really exciting piece, not by Bartók this time, but by Shostakovich: his *Piano Trio in c minor Op.8*. Here was Guera Crockett on violin with James Halsey on cello and Nigel Clayton on piano. Guera's violin tone was silkily delicious. Nigel Clayton made the piano sparkle and James Halsey's cello was treated so well by Shostakovich in that so often he had the delicious melody. And yes, he really made it sing forth! This was a first class piece with which to sum up the concert. It was so upbeat and cheerful, full of rhythmic sparkle.

After the concert there was the opportunity to move to Aberdeen Town House for a civic reception where we were welcomed by Councillor Ken McLeod. He enthusiastically expressed support for NESMS congratulating us on reaching our 50th anniversary. Dr Roger B. Williams replied on behalf of NESMS and ran through our history. There were photographs taken of the attendees and then a generous supply of splendid refreshments were served. Most importantly though, our young clarinettist Laura Smith with Harry Williamson on piano performed *Canzonetta* by Gabriel Pierné (1863 – 1937) another performance that fairly sparkled with freshness and youthful enthusiasm, yes you too Harry!

Alan Cooper