

keynotes

The Newsletter

of the North East of Scotland Music School

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Pulling out the stops for organists in Aberdeen

The North East of Scotland Music School introduced a new discipline to its roster of subjects with an Introduction to the Organ Day at King's College Chapel at the University of Aberdeen on Saturday, 2nd February.

Leading the day was Professor George McPhee, Director of Music at Paisley Abbey and one of Scotland's best known international organists. The day started with a presentation by Professor McPhee on the workings of the organ and what is involved in being an organist. This was followed by an open workshop where participants were able to play a piece of music of their own choice on the Chapel's new Aubertin organ with tuition and assistance from Professor McPhee.

After lunch, the Professor and Dr. Roger Williams, the Master of Ceremonial Music and

Organist to Aberdeen University, gave a recital of music by Thomas Tomkins and John Stanley. This was followed by an open forum.

Joan Thomas, NESMS's administrator, reports that the day was very well attended, with ten participants who ranged from experienced organists wishing to improve their standard and have an opportunity to play the Aubertin organ to pianists who wished to broaden their skill base.

"There is a shortage of organists not just in the Aberdeen area but country wide and we saw an opportunity to do something about that, at least locally," says Joan.



Organ maker, Bernerd Aubertin (left), pictured with the University of Aberdeen's Professor Roger Williams at the inauguration of the new organ in 2003.

"Given the success of this introductory day we will be looking for opportunities to continue providing tuition and experience for prospective organists although, given the size of the instrument, it is obviously not something that we can put on at the school!"

Professor McPhee said that the standard of the participants was excellent and that it was a pleasure to be able to teach them on what he considered to be one of the finest organs in Scotland. "The King's College organ is relatively new, having only been installed about four years ago. It was commissioned from Bernard Aubertin in 2001. Aubertin is one of the world's leading organ builders but this was the first Aubertin organ to be built in Scotland or, indeed, anywhere in the UK," explains the Professor.



Alastair Chambers tries his hand at organ playing during the Introduction day.

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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.

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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Opera oboist is new NESMS tutor

The principal oboist with Scottish Opera Orchestra, Joe Houghton, has joined NESMS to replace Anne Rankin who has taken a full-time teaching post in Glasgow and was therefore unable to continue as a tutor for the school.

Joe was born and brought up in Preston, Lancashire, before going to Westminster Cathedral choir school at the age of 10. He then continued his education at Ampleforth College, York and King's College, Cambridge, where he was a choral scholar.

He also played oboe from an early age and went on to the Royal Academy of Music to study the instrument with Celia Nicklin, before gaining the Premier Prix de Virtuosit  at the Conservatoire de Musique in Geneva with Maurice Bourgue.

"I've been very fortunate to have enjoyed an extremely varied career," says Joe. "I've been able to combine teaching at St Mary's Music School and George Watsons College, Edinburgh with orchestral, chamber and solo performances. Since



1998 I've had the pleasure of being the principal oboist with Scottish Opera and prior to that I was principal oboe with the Manchester Camerata, Scottish Ballet and Northern Ballet." Joe has also worked as principal oboe with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Northern Sinfonia and Opera North.

He currently lives in Lanark with his wife Zo  and their 3½ year old son, Ben who, claims Joe, appears to be musical on the basis that he spends a lot of time banging things!

In his spare time Joe likes to keep fit and has run the occasional half marathon and he is also treasurer of an investment club that has a membership of players in the various Glasgow-based orchestras.

"Although we dabble in stocks and shares, sadly I haven't yet made enough money for me to retire!" says Joe. "Until that happens I'm still going to have to play and teach but, happily, I cannot claim that that is a real hardship."

LUNCH BREAK CONCERT MUSICIANS FROM NESMS

COWDRAY HALL THURSDAY, 4TH OCTOBER, 2007

The second in the current season of weekly Lunch Break Concerts drew a capacity audience to the Cowdray Hall on Thursday 4th October. Three musicians from NESMS represented the broad range of age and experience accepted by the Music School.

From the fourteen year-old schoolgirl violinist Jessica Coleman or baritone Colin Brockie who is busy launching himself into studies for a BMus degree at Aberdeen University to pianist Colin Sinclair, a recently retired Aberdeen GP, Thursday's line-up of performers reminded us that the doors of NESMS are open to dedicated musicians regardless of age.

Beethoven's popular Romance in F was Jessica Coleman's choice for her first piece and it was this which opened the concert. In a confident and relaxed performance with neat control of phrasing, Jessica showed that she already has an

instinct for where the music needs to be leaned on and where it is better to let go a little. With more experience, this is something that she can afford to push even further in her performances. Jessica both opened and closed the concert and her second choice was the Theme from Schindler's List by the Hollywood composer John Williams. Its naturally flowing melody seemed an easy choice but it is in fact a Grade 7 piece on the Associated Board Examination List. It is a real mark of Jessica's ability that she made it sound so simple. Is that not what the great artists aim at in their performances too?

Colin Brockie opened his programme with a testing aria from La Juive by Hal vy, Si la rigueur et la vengeance. It forces the vocalist to give the lowest ranges of his voice a good workout, but on Thursday, Colin sounded a lot happier pushing towards his beautifully clear top notes. A fine example was his reprise of Vi Ravviso

from Bellini's La Sonnambula which we heard him sing so well at the last NESMS recital in Craigiebuckler Church in June, another, his joyfully extrovert performance of Quand la flamme de l'amour from Bizet's The Fair Maid of Perth.

Age has little compensation, but experience does count for quite a bit and this was proved with Colin Sinclair's inspiring performance of El Amor y la Muerte from Goyescas by Granados. Dr Sinclair had clearly given much thoughtful consideration to the emotional and dramatic import of the music which is what came across most crucially in his playing. The colours, dark as well as light and all the dramatic contrasts built into the music came alive and drew me totally into his performance.

Congratulations to all three musicians whose performances were such a fine advertisement for the achievements of NESMS today.

Tutor profile – Lesley Wilson

Lesley Wilson's future career as a bassoon player was perhaps formed by two childhood experiences. During her upbringing in Croydon, Sunday night was music night in the Wilson household; her mother played the piano, her father was a good amateur violinist and her uncles sang. "Sunday nights were quite Victorian in a way," remembers Lesley. "We entertained ourselves – or, to be more precise, the adults did – and I sat at the top of the stairs listening."

The second experience she recalls is being taken to an orchestral rehearsal where she sat behind the bassoons. "I didn't immediately think, 'Oh I'd love to play that,'" Lesley says. "In fact I started playing the piano and it wasn't until I was 13-years-old and doing pretty well that it was suggested that I start playing a second instrument as this would give me a better chance of taking up music professionally. It was also suggested that a woodwind instrument would be the best choice.

I chose the bassoon when three of my classmates took up the flute, oboe, and clarinet, and I knew there was another instrument that made up the set. I can recall that the school, Croydon High School for Girls, organised a garden fete to pay for it, that they bought a Heckel – which is the Rolls Royce of bassoons – and that I shared it with another girl."

It turned out to be an inspired choice. The bassoon tutor for the school was the famed Archie Camden. Lesley went on to play in the National Youth Orchestra and, at 16, a musical career was becoming her preferred option. "That was on the grounds that I didn't appear to be much good at anything else and I thoroughly enjoyed music anyway!" she says.

Another influential teacher was Gwydion Brooke who was just starting to teach at the Royal Academy of Music when Lesley started as a student. "Gwydion's reputation in the bassoon world was enormously high," says Lesley. "He had recorded Weber's bassoon concerto with the Liverpool Philharmonic in 1948 where his virtuoso playing, especially of the very fast last movement, was such that they had managed to get it all on one side of a



Lesley Wilson busy making reeds for her bassoons.

78rpm record – and without making it sound rushed!"

After only two years at the Royal Academy, Lesley was offered a job with one of the northern orchestras but, after consulting with Gwydion and her other teachers, turned it down. But only a term later the job of principal bassoonist at the Scottish National Orchestra came up. Lesley applied and won the post – and there she stayed for the next 27 years.

"They were very happy years and it was a great orchestra to be part of," Lesley says. "I also met my husband, the horn player Derek Walker, there." In addition, Lesley took up the baroque oboe, and, later, the baroque bassoon. "I went on courses in Oxford, Cambridge and Belgium and

was hooked in two ways. I now have a property in Belgium as well as a family of baroque instruments!"

After leaving the SNO, Lesley took a teaching job with Aberdeen City Council and she now continues to teach in city schools, as well as the University, Aberdeen City Music School, NCOS, the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama and, not least, NESMS.

"I started here in the 1970's," says Lesley. "Like most of the tutors at that time, it was Dorothy Hatley who persuaded us. But I do like coming here as it's beautifully organised and the payment is always reliable!"

One of Lesley's star pupils at NESMS was Hilary Milne, who went on to a professional career with the Philharmonia.

Tutors at the School

as at January 2005

STRINGS

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

WOODWIND

Flute	David Nicholson
Flute	Catherine O'Rourke
Oboe	Joe Houghton
Clarinet	Alison Waller
Bassoon	Lesley Wilson

BRASS

Trumpet	John Gracie
Horn	Lizzie Davis

PIANO

Nigel Clayton
Joseph Long

SCOTTISH FIDDLE

Paul Anderson

SINGING

Raimund Herincx
Alan Watt
Ruth Black
Alison McDonald
Jean Webster

STAGECRAFT & PERFORMANCE

Donald Maxwell

Forthcoming events

The Aberdeen Bach Choir

Invites us to join them to hear Colin Brockie, the Bach Choir Scholar

Saturday 22nd March, 7.30 p.m.

At Ferryhill Church

There is no charge for this event, but a donation to the choir would be welcome.

PLAY-A-THON

Yes, it's back again!

Saturday 3rd May at NESMS
We aim to have students performing all day so start preparing your party piece now! Sponsor forms and full details will be sent to you nearer the time.

Scholarship Concert

Friday 20th June, 7.30 p.m.
at Craigiebuckler Church

Come and hear our current whole year scholarship students Chris Baxter, piano, Kay Ritchie, flute and Colin Brockie, baritone, who will provide a varied programme for an exciting summer concert.

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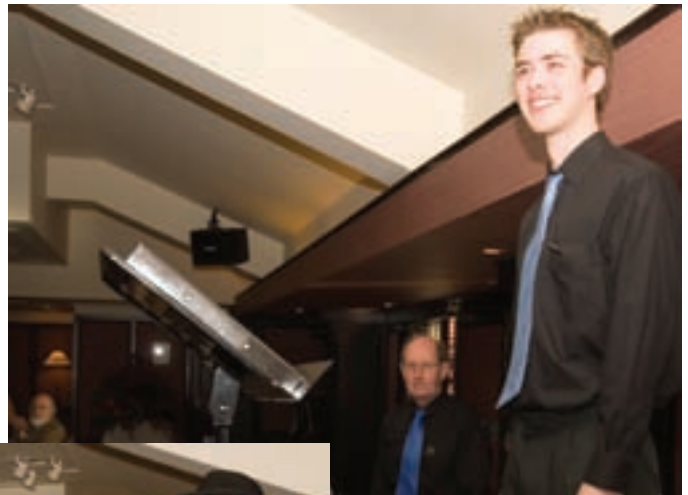
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Vocal star makes a lot!

Colin Brockie with his accompanist, Bob Howie.



NESMS patron and auctioneer in full flow.

By common consensus, the star of the auction lunch held at the Marcliffe Hotel & Spa last November was Colin Brockie, who not only sang a varied repertoire with something that suited most of the guests, but then took part in the auction itself - as one of the lots!

“Colin sang with poise and assurance,” reports Nicky Bradford, chair of NESMS’s Finance and Development Committee. “He was then one of the lots in the auction. I’m not sure where the idea came from to auction him, but the deal was that the winner of the lot would be able to use him at a function as a guest singer.

“In the event, two bidders were in hot competition and Colin very sportingly offered both of them the opportunity and by so doing raised £2000.” Colin reports that he has now had the dates for his two guest appearances; the first being a fund raising event on 16 May for Children 1st and the second, a corporate event, in September.

In total, the 2007 auction raised nearly £10,000 for the school, beating the total raised in 2006. As usual, the auctioneer was NESMS patron, Peter Mitchell, who was as exceptionally funny as always.

“Thanks are due to all who took part either by donating lots or just by being there on the day,” says Nicky. “This year’s lunch will be on 2 November and, as is becoming something of a tradition, will again be at the Marcliffe Hotel & Spa.

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