

Downing Street debut for Iain

Thirteen-year-old Iain Hall, a NESMS cello scholarship student, recently visited 10 Downing Street as part of the launch of a new collection of Robert Burns coins and stamps, where he met the Prime Minister, Gordon Brown.

Iain has been playing the cello for about six years receiving lessons from James Halsey and Hilary Cromar.

In 2008 he achieved the highest Associated Board Grade VI mark awarded in the United Kingdom during that year.

At the same time, Iain passed Grade VIII on recorder with Distinction, which instrument he studies with Rosalind Coleman. He also studies piano at the school with Joseph Long.

Iain regularly enters the Burns Federation Schools competition, and in 2007 won the national final, becoming the overall Young Burnsian of the Year.

When the Royal Mint and Mail were about to launch a new series of coins and stamps celebrating the work of the man who is arguably Scotland's national poet, Jim Murphy, the Secretary of State for Scotland, decided to mark the event with a drinks party at Dover House. It was to The Robert Burns World Federation – who run the competition – that he turned to provide the entertainment for his guests.



Pictured left to right at 10, Downing Street are: Iain Hall, NESMS and Robert Gordon's College, Aberdeen; Pat McFadden from The Royal Mail; Cait Lennox, Gordon Schools, Huntly; Craig Paton, Aberdeen City Music School; Freya Hall, St Margaret's School for Girls, Aberdeen; Jim Murphy, Secretary of State for Scotland; Calum Ian Brown, Culter Primary; Prime Minister Gordon Brown; Holly Little, Dumfries High School; Alison Jones, Glasgow University and Chancellor of the Exchequer, Alistair Darling.

Iain's duties at the Downing Street launch, along with six other finalists, were to welcome the guests by playing the cello in the foyer. During the concert, he performed in a string trio with his sister Freya on violin and Craig Paton, accordionist from Aberdeen City Music School. Iain and Freya, who is also a Burns National Finalist, played recorder duets together. Iain's final contribution was a solo on the recorder.

Iain says that he is uncertain at the moment about where his musical talent will take him although he does admit that: "It might be teaching. I have been inspired by my teachers, particularly Rosalind Coleman, who has helped me to reach such a high standard." Iain also says that he is grateful for the encouragement of Helena Anderson-Wright, the local organiser for the Young Burnsian competition.

"I have been inspired by my teachers, particularly Rosalind Coleman, who has helped me to reach such a high standard."
says Iain

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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.

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LUNCH BREAK CONCERT THE TELEPHONE OR L'AMOUR À TROIS

This was the second in the latest series of Cowdray Hall Lunch Break Concerts and this fully staged performance of Gian Carlo Menotti's delightful short comic opera *The Telephone* was presented by NESMS.

Two of the School's senior pupils, Moira Docherty and Colin Brockie, took the roles of Lucy and Ben while Donald Hawksworth stood in for the orchestra with a masterful performance of the difficult piano reduction of the full score.

This was the third performance of this tuneful short work that I have heard in the last couple of years, but the first performance in Aberdeen took place in the 1950s and both of the original cast members were in the audience to hear Thursday's production. Locke Nicholson sang the part of Ben while Jean Murray

Smith (Jean Downie) was Lucy. That early performance was done with full orchestra conducted by none other than Donald Hawksworth who was the pianist for Thursday's performance.

Both singers from the original cast agreed with me about the splendid quality of the singing. Moira Docherty's beautifully clear and agile soprano was complemented by Colin Brockie's light transparent baritone and crucially in a work such as this where the comedy relies on a perfectly clear and clear delivery of the text, I found that not a single word was lost.

There is of course a third character in the work described by Donald Hawksworth in his introductory remarks as the villain of the piece and that is the telephone itself whose ringing was operated exactly on cue by Kay Ritchie.

COWDRAY HALL

Thursday 9th October 2008

Alan Cooper

The intimate surroundings of the Cowdray Hall were ideal for this piece allowing us to see the facial expressions of the protagonists which also contributed more than a little to the light innocent comedy of the piece.

It is a work from an era less sophisticated and certainly less jaded than our own but it has stood the test of time and today's nicely judged performance proved a splendid tonic to lift the spirits on a wet and dismal autumn afternoon.

It is with great sadness that we must report the recent death of Locke Nicholson. Locke was very well known in musical circles in Aberdeen, and his passing will leave us the poorer.

Our Bayreuth Visit

Ian McLennan leads the Newhills Piano Trio as a relaxation from his work as a lawyer. He is a pupil both of James Halsey and Michael Beeston and, last summer, fulfilled a long-standing ambition to visit Bayreuth to see a complete Ring Cycle. He describes his experience here.

Last summer, my wife and I visited Bayreuth in south-west Germany to see a performance of Richard Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, more commonly known to opera-goers as simply *The Ring Cycle*. Going to such a small German town to see this work is the musical equivalent of going to see football's World Cup final. Wagner selected Bayreuth as the location for his own opera house in which his operas could be produced as he intended. The theatre is only open for two months in the summer and tickets are famously hard to obtain – the normal wait is 15 years! There

are few modern concessions made to the audience such as surtitles or air conditioning and tradition is very important.

Like the World Cup final, the occasion does actually live up to the hype, but there is always a possibility the 'match' might be a dull affair. We had no idea what to expect as we settled for the first time into our (hard) seats.

The Ring comprises four operas played over four days. *Rheingold*, *Die Walküre*, *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung* tell the story of a golden ring of power which makes the wearer more powerful than the gods themselves. It is a story of heroism, greed, power and decline set to the most amazing music. It is also very long! The entire score of The Ring lasts approximately 15 hours, so it can be viewed as an endurance test. The music is extremely hard to sing and play. Many great singers, including Pavarotti, never attempt Wagnerian roles and the orchestra for

Bayreuth is hand picked from the great German orchestras.

But, when a production 'works' the effect can be stupendous. Achieving a successful production is often the high point of a producer's or director's career. The risks are considerable and the audience at Bayreuth are quick to tell the company if they disapprove of a production.

We were lucky though. We saw a successful production and along with the rest of the audience were pleased with what we saw. We felt privileged to experience something so special, which many opera lovers never see in their lifetime and we would both go back in a moment. We've booked for 2021!

Dressed to kill.
Ian McLennan at Bayreuth

Tutor profile – Michael Beeston



Michael Beeston pictured by Marc Marnie

Michael Beeston considers himself extraordinarily lucky in that he has made a career from playing his beloved chamber music.

It was perhaps almost inevitable that Michael would become a professional musician. His great-grandfather was an organist in Blackpool, as was his grandfather whilst his mother was an excellent pianist.

It was Michael's grandfather who taught him the viola and the family connection with the instrument continues with Michael's daughter, Jessica, who plays in Salzburg, London and Scotland and particularly with the Camerata Salzburg. She is but one of four of Michael's five children who are involved in music, the youngest, Freddie, Michael suggests, being at five months old just a little young as yet!

From his Blackpool beginnings, Michael moved to the Royal Northern College of Music at Manchester to continue his studies and then spent a year with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra before joining the Edinburgh Quartet, Scotland's only full-time chamber ensemble, in 1971.

"It has been a privilege to have a whole career playing chamber music," says Michael. For nearly half of that career span Michael has taught at NESMS, a connection originally made through Tom Johnston and Dorothy Hately. In 1993, Michael became the school's first viola teacher, and at roughly the same time he

spent four years as the music director of the Shell Expro Music School, which was an integral part of the Aberdeen International Youth Festival.

"I have always been impressed with the way that Aberdeen has been able to develop good musicians, particularly good string players, and I think it is as a result of the good teachers that are available up here. I thoroughly enjoy being in the thick of it," he says.

During his career with the Edinburgh Quartet Michael has performed many new works and the quartet – with Michael's daughter, Jessica, joining them for the first time – will be premiering a new viola quintet by the Scottish composer, Edward McGuire, in June this year with concerts in Arran, Glasserton, Glasgow and at the Paxton Festival, near Berwick-upon-Tweed.

Tutors at the School

as at September 2008

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

ORGAN

Dr Roger B. Williams
Donald Hawksworth

Forthcoming events

Cowdray Hall Lunchtime Concert

Thursday 26th March,
12.45 p.m. – 1.30 p.m.

Elizabeth Marr, flute, Alice Allen, cello and Joe Boyd, horn will perform a varied programme. Drew Tulloch will accompany. This is sure to be a popular event, so be there early!

The Friends' Scholarship Concert

Friday 19th June, at 7.30 p.m.
at Craigiebuckler Church

This is your chance to hear the three top scholars: Mairi Finlay, singing, Alice Allen, cello and Christopher Baxter, piano.

Tickets will be available at the door on the night or from the school beforehand, and refreshments will be served at the interval. Do come along and support the scholars.

A Midsummer Concert at Glen Tanar

Friday 26th June,
7.30 p.m. for 8.00 p.m.
at Glen Tanar Ballroom

Colin Brockie, baritone, Richard Bailey, piano and Joe Boyd, horn will perform a varied programme. So come and enjoy a summer evening in the beautiful Deeside setting of Glen Tanar. This event will be ticket only, so be sure to return your ticket request form in good time!



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Best lot ever?

The Keynotes auction lunch, scheduled for 1st November 2009 and again to take place at the Marcliffe Hotel and Spa in Aberdeen, will have what Gordon Mitchell, chair of the auction lunch committee, suggests is perhaps one of the best lots to have appeared at any of the previous auctions.



The lot is a full day's exclusive use of the Balmoral Estate golf course. The nine-hole course is part of the Queen's Balmoral Estate and is only rarely available for corporate events.

Gordon says: "This is a fantastic offer from the estate because whoever wins the lot can take 24 of their friends or clients to the course and have exclusive use of it from 8.30 am to 6.00 pm.

"The suggestion is that the guests arrive in the morning for bacon rolls and coffee, following which they play a nine-hole round with a shotgun start, followed by lunch, followed by a further 18 holes in the afternoon, also with a shotgun start."

Gordon goes on to explain for non-golfing people that a shotgun start is where players are distributed around the golf course on all the available tees and start playing literally at the sound of a shotgun being fired.

"Given the available date – 9th July 2010 – we are reasonably confident that there will be no other shooting going on to confuse the issue!" Gordon quips.

One of the other lots already donated is a boxed set of 19 CDs recorded by Jamie MacDougall, one of the country's most versatile singers and performers and a founder member of Caledon, Scotland's three tenors. All 427 of Haydn's Folk-Song arrangements are featured and will be released to commemorate the composer's 200th anniversary. "We may enter this lot into the silent auction which was something we introduced last year and which proved to be both popular and successful," says Gordon. Further innovations for 2009 that are being explored are both telephone and internet bidding.

Gordon is confident that with the golfing lot, 2009 will be a bumper year although he's pleased with what was achieved in 2008. "We raised over £8,500 in total," he reports, although failing to point out that £2,500 came from his own efforts, where NESMS and the British Heart Foundation shared the £4,500 he raised by running his first full marathon at the age of 60! "I would like to offer my sincere thanks to all those who sponsored me so generously," Gordon says.

"This is a very serious opportunity that is hardly ever available and we will be marketing it very hard to the Aberdeen business community, as it has the potential to make the 2009 auction lunch one of the best in terms of the amount of money raised for the school."

Gordon concludes by exhorting people to think long, hard and 'out of the box' about donating unusual and aspirational auction lots to make this year's auction even more special. "The best ones are those, like the golf, that normally money can't buy," he suggests.



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