

# keynotes

The Newsletter

of the North East of Scotland Music School

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## NYCoS solo role for Colin

After nearly a decade singing in the National Youth Choir of Scotland (NYCoS), NESMS baritone student, Colin Brockie, has this year landed one of the four solo roles in the choir's performances.



Colin Brockie

on television as one of the digital red button choices. On this occasion the choir will be singing with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Robert Ziegler.

In October the choir will be performing at the Edinburgh Festival Theatre as part of the Rambert Dance Company's Eternal Light Tour 2008 and then, in November, the choir will sing in Glasgow Concert Hall in a performance of Karl Jenkin's *The Armed Man*, conducted by the composer.

*"Singing with the choir is a great experience and I am hopeful I will be selected for NYCoS again next year. That would give me a place for two years,"* says Colin.

"Every two or three years the choir does an overseas tour and I've been fortunate enough to go with them to Sweden, Chicago and, last year, Hungary. So, another

two years with the choir means I could go on their next overseas tour in 2010, although we don't know where that will be at this stage. It would make me not only the oldest 'youth' in the choir but the only member of the choir ever to have been on all four of their overseas tours."

As well as his NYCoS commitments, Colin will once again be the featured entertainment at this year's *Keynotes* Auction Lunch, along with cellist Alice Allen.

Colin explains that this is his ninth year singing with the choir, which brings together talented young singers from all over Scotland to perform at a series of concerts throughout the country.

"This is the first year I've landed a solo role. The piece we are all doing as soloists is the Five Mystical Songs by Vaughan Williams. Each of us performs one of the songs with piano and choir accompaniment, while the fifth song is choir only.

"We aren't performing the piece at all the concerts we are giving but we've already done it in Edinburgh and at our concert at St. Andrews' Younger Hall."

On 13<sup>th</sup> September the choir will form a vital part of the line-up for the BBC Proms in the Park event on Glasgow Green, to be broadcast live on BBC Radio Scotland and



*The Great Reformed Church in Debrecen, Hungary, which was one of the countries visited by Colin Brockie with NYCoS.*

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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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**President:** Dr Neil Mackie

**Administrator:** Joan Thomas

**Assistant Administrators:**  
Reg Pringe  
Colin Brockie

# 'Crackling' day out is top auction lot

One of the lots for this year's *Keynotes* Auction Lunch is definitely not in poor taste! It's learning how to make charcuterie.

The lot – and the tutor for the day – is the idea of Nicky Bradford, chair of NESMS's Finance and Development Committee. Nicky will be helping the winner of the lot to process the meat from one of the home-grown pigs that Nicky and her husband breed at their home at Kincardine O'Neil.

"We'll be showing how you can make all sorts of things including sausages, salami,

parma ham and chorizo. We'll even include black pudding although that's not to everyone's taste. And in good butcher's tradition, we use everything but the grunt. Lunch and a goody bag are included and it should be a 'crackling' day out!" Nicky says.

"The auction includes other unusual lots that haven't appeared before," continues Nicky. "These include a picnic horse ride for four people at Glen Tanar Equestrian Centre and a guided walk by Gilly Davie, one of our committee members. Gilly is an experienced hillwalker and is suggesting a walk up Lochnagar on the longest day

of the year or the Lairig Gru. But she will make the walk as easy or as strenuous as the lot winner would like.

"We are also planning a silent auction for the first time. One of the items for this that we so far have confirmed is personalised printed Christmas photo cards, as many as you need."

The lunch will take place on its regular first Sunday in November spot, so this year it's the 2<sup>nd</sup> November, as usual at the Marcliffe Hotel and Spa, Aberdeen. Entertainment will be by Colin Brockie, with cellist Alice Allen from Banchory. Peter Mitchell will be the auctioneer.

## THE SCHOLARSHIP CONCERT Friday, 20<sup>th</sup> June 2008 Craigiebuckler Church

By Alan Cooper

Breathtaking technical prowess and the ability to convey emotional depths, paint pictures and create atmosphere, or perhaps just to tickle the fancy of your audience with a bit of fun are some of the features that can lift a performance out of the ordinary and into the realm of the truly memorable. They were all of them somewhere to be found in the latest Scholarship Concert presented by the Friends of the North East of Scotland Music School at Craigiebuckler Church on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> June.

Of the three performers at this year's concert, baritone Colin Brockie, the recipient of the Bach Choir Scholarship, was making his appearance at this event for the second year running. Flautist Kay Ritchie holds the Dorothy Hately Scholarship while pianist Chris Baxter is the current holder of the Tom Johnston Scholarship. Colin Brockie's singing continues to mature, achieving rich warmth over an ever widening vocal range. The recitative and aria from

Handel's *Messiah* which opened Colin's contribution to the Scholarship Concert exploited the developing richness in the lower register of his voice and to this was added warmth and emotional depth in Colline's aria bidding farewell to his beloved coat from the final act of *La Bohème*. For me though, the highlight of Colin's performance came in the second half with a masterful delivery of three songs by Vaughan Williams in which the beautifully controlled upper register of his voice was more in evidence. *Silent Noon* in particular was a perfect example of scene painting in words and music.

An equally powerful sense of atmosphere pervaded Kay Ritchie's performance of Poulenc's Sonata for flute and piano in which Kay's flute playing was sensitively complemented by Harry Williamson at the piano. The opening movement sounded fresh and wonderfully agile while the central cantilena was played with a seductive transparency of tone before Kay brought a sharper edge to her flute sound, ideal for the lively finale. For Bach's Partita for solo flute, Kay maintained a consistent strength of tone that allowed all the complexities of Bach's music to come shining through, and then she found special reserves of warmth in her flute for an entrancing

performance of Woodall's gentle serenade.

Debussy's piano music is a byword for the pictorial and the atmospheric and Christopher Baxter charmed us with the oriental bells and wind chimes in *Pagodes*, the tantalising flashes of fiery colour in *Soirée dans Grenade* and finally *Jardins sous la pluie* which he played with truly dazzling technical brilliance. In the second half of the concert, *Nobody knows the Troubles I've Seen*, by Stephen Montague, used avant-garde piano tricks to create an atmospheric weave of sound as a musical landscape for a well-known negro spiritual. This was a fascinating marriage of the adventurous and the traditional.

Another famous spiritual, *Deep River*, brought all three performers together in an overwhelming emotional climax to the whole concert. All that was needed then was the element of fun and our three prize performers hit us right between the eyes with the surprises they had in store in their specially arranged version of *I Bought Me a Cat*. This traditional American folksong is a take on *Old Macdonald Had a Farm*. It has been used by Aaron Copland among others, but even he did not quite manage to get as much out of it as our marvellous trio did.

# Tutor profile – Catherine O'Rourke

## Poet, Red Indian and flute tutor!

Many NESMS tutors are, not surprisingly, career musicians, often starting on their musical paths from an early age. But for Catherine O'Rourke, one of NESMS's flute tutors, music was a career she came to somewhat later than most, having initially trained and worked as an English teacher, been published as a poet and spent a year living on a North American Indian (or, more properly now referred to as First Nation) reservation.

This latter slightly bizarre experience came about as a result of accompanying her ex-husband – a GP – on a posting to Canada. "We lived with the Cree Indians on their reservation at Garden Hill, about 300 miles north of Winnipeg," Catherine recalls. "I have many happy memories but also recall that I hardly touched my flute for the whole year."

But Catherine's musical story began in her middle teens when she started to learn the piano. It wasn't until she went to the University of Aberdeen to study for an English degree at that she realised just how much music meant to her.

"I moved into a small flat in the city and it took all of half a week without the piano before I was tearing my hair out," she says. "So I headed down to Bruce Millers and asked them to sell me a musical instrument. Anything would have done but it had to be portable!"

In the event they sold Catherine a flute and she started to take lessons as and when she could afford them. It wasn't long before she took her Grade 3 and then, eventually her Grade 5. By that time she had moved to Edinburgh to take a post-graduate teaching diploma in English and history.

Then followed her marriage, a move to Inverness, children and a post teaching English. "During this time I was only playing for enjoyment and it wasn't until I returned from Canada that I met David

Continues on page 4 ...



Catherine O'Rourke

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## 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 Hawkworth

## Forthcoming events

### An Afternoon of Piano Music Sunday 28th September at 3 pm in the School

Christopher Baxter will give a recital featuring pieces by Liszt, Schubert and Brahms. Tickets are £5 each, available from the school office. Space is limited, so booking is essential.

### The Telephone by Menotti Cowdray Hall, Wednesday 8th October 12.45 pm - 1.30 pm

Moira Docherty, Colin Brockie and Donald Hawkworth will perform Menotti's short opera The Telephone.

### A late summer concert Blairs College Chapel, Thursday 9th Oct at 7.30 pm

NESMS students will perform as part of a larger concert. Contact Mandy at Blairs Museum on 01224-863767 for tickets.

### Friends' Coffee Morning Saturday 25th October, 10 - 12 noon at the School

Usual stalls, musical entertainment and refreshments!

### Ancient and Modern - contrasting styles of keyboard music Sunday 30th November, 3.00 pm at NESMS

Donald Hawkworth will entertain as part of the sound festival. Booking is essential, so call the school office.

### Christmas Concert Sunday 7th December, 3.00 pm at Blairs College Chapel

Elizabeth Marr, Colin Brockie and Donald Hawkworth will represent the school in this Christmas event. Contact Mandy on 01224-863767 for further details.

## Donors

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# Auction chair in marathon effort

The chair of the NESMS *Keynotes* Auction Lunch committee, Gordon Mitchell, will be running in the Dublin Marathon at the end of October to raise funds for both NESMS and the British Heart Foundation.

Gordon is combining his first ever run at the marathon distance of 26.2 miles with both his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday and his retirement. "I've been running for about eight years, ever since I suffered a heart attack, and decided that at the age of 60, if I didn't tackle the marathon distance now, I never would," he told *Keynotes* recently.

Gordon is being joined in the marathon by his wife, Lynette, but neither is a stranger to distance running, regularly competing in shorter events up to half marathon. Both are deeply involved in the Stonehaven branch of jogscotland, a national recreational running initiative that encourages and supports people into running as part of a healthy lifestyle.

"Lynette actually started the Stonehaven group in 2002," says Gordon. "I look after the website – I'd be in serious trouble if I didn't! But leading groups at least three nights a week and again on Saturday mornings does compromise your own serious training. I'm becoming increasingly aware of just how far 26.2 miles actually is."

## Continued from page 3

Nicholson at some musical jamboree or other – the details are very hazy," says Catherine. As David offered to teach Catherine it must be assumed that he saw some talent!

Gradually Catherine devoted more and more time to the flute, took teaching and performance diplomas and became a full-time peripatetic music teacher with the Highlands and Islands Education Authority.

"My poetry had already been published a couple of times by then and I had every intention of pursuing a literary career," Catherine continues. "There's no doubt that it was David who took me off course and encouraged me and for this I



Gordon Mitchell and his tartan lycra on a training run near Stonehaven as he prepares for the Dublin Marathon.

Gordon cheerfully admits that his musical tastes are eclectic. "But I was drawn into my role on the auction lunch committee by Nicky Bradford and I certainly believe that the school has a vital role to play in the musical education scene of Aberdeen and the surrounding area."

A sponsorship form is enclosed with this issue of *Keynotes* which enables you to sponsor Gordon in the Dublin Marathon. Please give generously and make Gordon's suffering worthwhile!

am most grateful. Writing can happen anytime. In fact, music acts as a powerful source of inspiration for me to pick up the pen."

She also became involved as a coach with the Highland Regional Youth Orchestra and Highland Schools Wind Band and joined the Merlewood Ensemble and the Highland Chamber Orchestra for whom she is principal flute.

It was David Nicholson who suggested that Catherine should become a tutor for NESMS and she has now been at the School for nearly ten years, as well as teaching at the University of Aberdeen and Aberdeen City Music School.

In September she will also be joining the teaching staff of the Waldorf School in Aberdeen.

"I've recently resigned my post in Inverness and have effectively moved to Aberdeen full time," Catherine reports. "The drive up and down the A96 was becoming very tedious."

And with a more settled existence in a single city Catherine has high hopes of being able to write more poetry. "It's an aspect of my life that I enjoy but it does take time, even though I often write verses in my head. But one thing I don't think I'll be doing again is living on a First Nation reservation. One year in a tepee is enough for anyone!"