

Notes from NESMS

North East of Scotland Music School Newsletter

Winter 2021



Another term creeps to a close here at NESMS but as we look ahead to 2022, it is important to realise how different this term had been to the previous; latterly a sense of pre-pandemic activity and buzz had returned to the building. As the lockdown restrictions gradually lifted during the summer, NESMS was able to once again offer students the main studio as a place to have their online lessons from. Although the online lesson flexibility is, and will be, a required necessity from now on, by having more and more tutors restarting socially-distanced in-person lessons and grade exam rehearsals and exams taking place here, the building rapidly became a hive of musical activity.

What's been going on at NESMS:

NESMS Office email address

Several months since its introduction, everyone should now be aware that we have a new NESMS office email address, office@nesms.org.uk. This was out of necessity and prompted the switching of our broadband provider. Though this was far from ideal to happen mid-term, we can now boast faster wifi speeds for those students and tutors wishing to have or give an online lesson from Huntly Street. Unfortunately, 8 months on since its introduction, this email address is still going into some spam/junk folders so we ask that you regularly check and move any of our emails to your inbox, thus marking us as a trusted and safe email contact.

Alison McDonald retires as NESMS tutor

After almost 30 dedicated years of teaching for NESMS and an even longer association to the school when she started as a student herself, Alison McDonald gave her final day of vocal teaching at the end of October. A few weeks later on a warmer than-usual November day, a small, safely ventilated and distanced group of students and friends gathered in the main studio at Huntly Street to raise a glass, swap stories and wish Alison well in retirement. NESMS Chairman Barbara McFarlane was on hand to bestow a much deserved NESMS Fellowship to mark Alison's long commitment to NESMS.





Friends of NESMS

The Friends of NESMS committee continued to regularly meet online this term, but with many planned events still affected by Covid restrictions, the committee's focus was organising the year's Christmas card and annual Coffee morning. The design for the Christmas card this year was by Aboyne artist and previous NESMS cello student Myrtle Watt and was on sale from the NESMS office, at Keynotes Lunch and at the Coffee Morning, which this year became a joint venture between the Friends of NESMS and NESPA, taking place up at Rubislaw Church in late November.

Keynotes Lunch 2021

Having to sadly cancel the Keynotes Lunch in 2020, we were delighted to return to the Marcliffe Hotel for this year's successful Lunch, raising just over £3000 for NESMS. Guests were treated to Live music between courses from Will Chambers, saxophone, and Charlotte Hay, cello, both accompanied by Harry Williamson. A further musical video performance by Scott Malcolm, clarinet, was shown on the projector screen and preceded the pared down, but enjoyable raffle draw. Guests were sat at large tables in the Grand Ballroom to provide some extra safety through distancing. Everyone praised the exceptional service and delicious meal we've all come to expect from the Marcliffe Hotel with a few guests already booking their place for next year, Sunday 20th November 2022.

Lucky NESMS Gnomes

An unexpected hit of the Keynote Lunch raffle this year were the newly introduced lucky NESMS Gnomes. The handmade Gnomes (G'Norman, G'Nelson, G'Nigel, G'Norbert) were raffled off and we hope are bringing luck to the different families who won them.



Remember a Gnome isn't just for Christmas and will bring luck all-year round! G'Norm, the original NESMS Gnome, lives in the NESMS building and is swiftly becoming an internet sensation across our social media platforms with his antics during advent!

AGM – New Chair of NESMS

The Annual General Meeting of NESMS Council of Management took place at the end of November and after 15 years in the role in succession to Tom Johnston, Barbara McFarlane resigned as Chair. Barbara was one of original members of the School when it was formed in 1975 and has served since that time as Council Member, seeing the School through many stages of its development. Through this time, she has been assiduous in her attention and has ensured that the founding principles have been maintained and developed, to reflect the growing needs of the musical community in Aberdeen and the North East. NESMS is indebted to Barbara's careful guardianship and look forward to continuing to benefit from her advice as she remains on various committees. The role of the Chair of Council will be taken by Dr Roger B. Williams, MBE.

Congratulations to NESMS students in:

Trinity and ABRSM exams

Well done to anyone who has continued with their grade exams either in-person exams submitted online performances. It really is a huge achievement to gain a grade during such a difficult year of online learning. A full list of NESMS student's exam and diploma achievements are listed [here](#) and are continually updated on our website. If your achievement is missing from the list or needs updating please let us know.

Performances featuring NESMS students

Here we mention just a few of the fantastic performances NESMS students have been involved with, both on and off line, throughout the autumn term.

Violinist Jenna Stewart, accompanied by Ben Marsden, provided a wonderful online recital for the Haddo Arts Festival. Their programme of Mozart Concerto No.3 in G major and the Grieg Violin Sonata in C minor was pre-recorded in the historic Haddo House library and shown on the Festival's Youtube channel during the Festival's week of online and offline events in October. For those that missed the recital during the Festival there is another chance to watch by clicking [here](#)



The Hatley Trio had their debut concert at the beginning of November for the Aberdeen Chamber Music Series. The trio, named in memory of NESMS founder Dorothy Hatley, soprano Moira Docherty, bass-baritone Colin Brockie and pianist Tim Tricker each have more than two decades of NESMS association as students and accompanist. For social distancing requirements, the concert was held twice on the same afternoon at Queens Cross Church, at 3pm and 6pm with good audiences in attendance for each.

The Rotary of St Machar, a regular NESMS scholarship sponsor, celebrated their 60th year this year. In November they enjoyed a live performance at their birthday dinner at the Northern Hotel from one of their current scholars, soprano Stephanie Walker. Accompanied by Harry Williamson, Stephanie gave a short programme of musical theatre and opera classics, intersected with a specially recorded video performance by NESMS clarinettist Scott Malcolm.

Unfortunately the Christmas concert due at Fyvie Castle which the NESMS Flute Choir was to perform at was cancelled. However the Castle hopes to welcome the choir back with a performance taking place in the spring. Each fortnight on Tuesday nights since October, NESMS was used solely by the choir and was full of Christmas music as rehearsals took place. Due to the restrictions in social distancing and the need for increased ventilation during group rehearsals, only 5 of the dozen flautists were able to rehearse in the main studio with tutor Catherine O'Rourke. Other duos and trios rehearsed their parts in the other studios throughout the building before switching every 20 minutes to ensure everyone had a chance in the main studio.

Coming soon to NESMS:

Most of our tutors have been offering in-person lessons since the start of the new term thus making 21 Huntly Street feel almost as busy as it used to be, but online teaching is here to stay as a flexible alternative when last minute travel plans, weather conditions, awaiting a negative Covid test result or if Government restrictions prevent tutor or student attending an in-person lesson. Fingers crossed that lessons continue in-person in the New Year but we will be following Government advice and the ISM guidance regarding 1-1 music lessons.

Any of the NESMS studios can be made available to rent as private practice rooms away from busy homes for £7.50/hour. Anyone wishing to hire a studio or those students who would like to use a studio for their online lesson should book via the NESMS office.

A full NESMS Library

Our library at NESMS holds an eclectic mix of music, some rare and out-of-print editions alongside multiple copies of standard pieces of repertoire. The library has grown by donations made to NESMS over the years and we are now unfortunately rapidly running out of shelf space. Each of the almost 3000 different items are currently listed on our website [here](#), but we will soon be starting to whittle down the multiple copies in an attempt to make more room. These duplicate copies will be put into the ever-changing music sale, located on the first floor landing outside the office, so please remember to have a look next time you're in. We're sure you can appreciate that we cannot accept any further music donations (sheet music, scores or reference books) at this moment.

NESMS Scholarship Auditions 2022

Believe it or not, we are already starting to prepare for the next academic year! Scholarship applications will be open to anyone who will be in full-time education during the next academic year, August 2022 – June 2023. Further information about the application and audition process will circulate in January so please keep an eye out for an email and announcements on our social media pages.

Social Media and Donations

A reminder to regularly keep checking your email spam folder as the office email address we introduced back in April is still going into some people's folders! We also updated our Easyfundraising and Paypal accounts then, so it's never been easier to donate to NESMS every time you shop online through our Easyfundraising [link](#). You can keep up-to-date with all the latest NESMS news and weekly competitions with our [website](#), Facebook page and Instagram account (NESMS_abdn).

Merry Christmas from everyone at NESMS, and have a safe Happy New Year

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