

Keynotes N

The Newsletter of
the North East of Scotland Music School
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New Pianos for Old



Four new pianos were recently installed at NESMS to replace the two grand and two upright instruments that had provided sterling service for many years.

"Not surprisingly this purchase required a substantial financial commitment," explains Derek Buchan, NESMS council member and chair of the School's Fundraising and Development Committee.

"Altogether, after obtaining a very good deal from Steinway which took into account the substantial costs of the rather tricky delivery and defraying some of the costs by selling our old instruments, we still needed an investment of close to £50,000.

"Fortunately, we had moneys available in our instrument fund, a fund that we have built up over many years from any small surpluses we made in our general operation. We knew that at some stage we would require to replace some if not all of our pianos. We are enormously

grateful to every one of our donors who have contributed to NESMS over the years to make this significant investment possible.

"Derek continues by saying: "Despite the difficulties we, like all charities, have experienced in recent years, it is a measure of our confidence in the future and our need to provide instruments of the right quality for the very highly talented students we teach, that we took the decision to buy the new instruments."

The decision to explore piano replacement was taken earlier this year. To that end, a committee comprising Derek, Joseph Long and Roger Williams was set up to research the market and to come up with recommendations for Council. At that stage, the intention was to

replace only the Bluthner but NESMS tutor Nigel Clayton felt that replacing all four instruments in one go would be the right thing to do.

Joseph and Derek then travelled to London in early May to visit Steinway and another maker after which the committee made its recommendation to Council comprising two Boston grands along with two Essex uprights.

"Our choice was validated by concert pianist and NESMS tutor, Nigel Clayton, together with fellow concert pianist and colleague from the Royal College of Music, Gordon Fergus-Thompson.

Joseph Long takes up the story: "Our choice was driven by many factors; size, tonality, brightness, sonority and so on and we're confident we have made the right choice for the specific requirements and

conditions we have at the School. These four instruments will serve the School well for a long time."

The pianos were delivered and installed at the beginning of August. One of the first floor windows had to be removed to allow two of the instruments to be craned in!

A Piano Open Day will be held on **Sunday 28th September** from

2.00 p.m. until 5.00 p.m. Any qualified musician will be able to try out the new pianos. There will be a discussion forum (with the piano committee fielding questions) plus a short recital from Joseph. Refreshments will be available.

The North East of Scotland Music School is sponsored by



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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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Scottish Charity No. SC 000197

NESMS Celebrity Piano Recital: Murray McLachlan



The Sanctuary, Queen's Cross Church, Aberdeen –
Friday, 13 June 2014

As well as being head of keyboard at Chetham's School of Music and senior tutor at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester, Murray McLachlan has also since 2009 been vice president of NESMS. He has been a wonderful supporter of NESMS during this period as is evidenced by his agreement to give a recital in support of the school, writes *Alan Cooper*.

I was particularly delighted to discover how far Murray has developed and grown in pianistic artistry over the past eight years. This was evident as I listened to the emotional depth and understanding which his performance of Beethoven's Sonata in E Major op. 109 managed to draw from the score.

The first half of Murray's recital was a tribute to a programme given many years ago by the late John Ogden. It began with J. S. Bach's Prelude and Fugue in c sharp minor from Book I Das Wohltemperirte Klavier. Like Ogden, Murray McLachlan chose to imbue Bach's music with a feeling of quite romantic expressiveness.

A real eye-opener however was the Beethoven Sonata. In his introductory words before the performance, Murray said that this was very much a transcendental work and that is exactly what we got from much of the playing. Even though there were moments of forcefulness and excitement in the opening movement the overall effect was of marvellous serenity coming from the shaping of melody and harmony that Murray achieved in his playing. This was a wonderfully luminous performance.

The third piece in the first half was one of the most exciting and dazzling works in the

entire repertoire: Liszt's Dante Symphony. Murray took us on a whirlwind journey down into Dante's Hell and back again. I cannot remember a more amazing demonstration of pianistic brilliance.

During the interval we were royally entertained by the nine members of the Aberdeen Youth String Ensemble. They reminded me of the Scottish Ensemble as soon as they started to play the Prelude from Grieg's Holberg Suite. Of Glorious Plumage, a glossy piece by the contemporary Californian composer Richard Meyer featured luscious string tones.

This was followed by a humorous recasting of Mozart's Eine Kleine Nachtmusik entitled McMozart's Eine Kleine Bricht Nicht Musik in which a succession of well known Scottish melodies found their way into Mozart's original. The piece was the work of Edward Bor (1921–2013) writing under the name of Prof Teddy Bor. Murray McLachlan opened the second half of his recital with a wonderfully light and delicate performance of Chopin's Berceuse op. 57. It was as if the right hand painted a musical picture of thistledown floating weightlessly on a warm and gentle summer breeze.

Ronald Stevenson's Eight Scottish Songs after poems by Robert Burns, Hugh MacDiarmid and Francis George Scott deserve to be much better known. These are fine virtuoso piano pieces each with its own richly developed character. The audience gave Murray a splendid ovation and he responded with an amazing encore for just the left hand: Scriabin's Nocturne for left hand alone – worth coming to the concert just to both see and hear that being played so beautifully!

Review of NESMS

As NESMS approaches the 40th anniversary of its foundation, Council decided that the time was ripe for a review of what the School does, to see whether its founding principles were still relevant and whether the time had come to make changes to the way it operates. A small Working Party was set up to consider all aspects of the School. Soundings are being taken from a wide variety of people – students, parents, tutors, Friends and others.

The Working Party has now met several times and has concluded that, despite the

very changed musical landscape of Aberdeen over the last 40 years, NESMS' original intentions are still as relevant to the needs of promising, outstanding musicians today. Although the gathering of views is far from complete, some interim thoughts have been reported to Council. These include:

- A continued push on wider recognition and knowledge of what we do, both in the musical and the wider community in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire.
- More information to be given to schools and colleges about

the work that we do, so that more potential students are aware of our presence.

- An on-going, five-year plan for development will be created so that the direction of travel of NESMS is guided.
- Tuition by Distance Learning was discussed but not pursued for the immediate future.
- Presence of NESMS on social media, such as Facebook, was considered to be an important factor for future development.
- Greater support from the School when students perform at concerts. Some

Classical Music and All That Jazz!



Although NESMS prides itself on being able to attract tutors from the finest musicians in the country - and beyond - some of those 'finest musicians' are distinctly home grown.

One such is Joseph Long, classical concert pianist, NESMS (and University of Aberdeen) tutor in classical piano, enthusiastic teacher of theory, aural and sight-reading - and latterly, jazz musician.

Aberdeen born and bred, Joseph is a NESMS alumnus, and in fact appeared in the very first issue of *Keynotes* in 2002 in a story publicising the issue of his first CD, a collection of early 20th Century romantic piano sonatas.

Now undoubtedly one of Scotland's finest concert pianists, he is a familiar face on the concert circuit in the UK and abroad. He has broadcast and recorded widely, and his performances and recordings of lesser-known works alongside more mainstream

repertoire bring the former to a wider audience than is often the case.

With recitals, lecture-recitals and masterclasses in venues as diverse as the Edinburgh Society of Musicians, St. Martin's-in-the-Fields in London, the Grand Hall of the Moscow Conservatoire, the Calcutta School of Music and the University of Almeria in Spain, Joseph has gained fans around the world.

But his interest in jazz is more recent and local, triggered by a desire in one of his University of Aberdeen students to pursue jazz as a study for his degree course, rather than the classical repertoire usually submitted by students.

Joseph takes up the story himself: "This was about three or four years ago and once

I started to delve into the subject I found it fascinating. I quickly developed an intense curiosity about how jazz musicians improvise, the very different theory they use, and what goes on in their minds when they play.

"I soon found that my new interest was not just of relevance to learning how to play jazz, but also to the addition of embellishments to traditional baroque and classical repertoire."

Joseph continues by pointing out that his particular situation (he is partially sighted and is forced to play from memory in concert) means that he has been especially drawn towards adapting his style to playing jazz.

"Playing in a traditional chamber group takes a fair bit more effort for me than for others. The expectation is that you will go along to a rehearsal and try things out with the group by reading from sheet music, and decide on repertoire that way. In order for me even to get to that stage, I have to do lots of preliminary work to memorise the pieces. In contrast, jazz musicians rarely use sheet music - indeed to some of them sheet music is anathema - preferring just to turn up, agree what melodies and chords are the order of the night, and then just play!"

Joseph now gives regular jazz workshops at NESMS in collaboration with the eminent Aberdeen jazz performer Ian Milne, see forthcoming events.

Hidden treasure on the Web by Reg Pringle

Next time you go online, don't just check our 'What's On' page to see who is coming to NESMS this month (or next), but have a browse in our all-singing, all-dancing library catalogue.

If you haven't tried it before, it couldn't be easier. Look up your favourite composer by name, or search by title for that piece you can hear in your head - but just who wrote it you can't quite remember. Or if you play the harp (or the cor anglais, or the trombone),

click on the link that takes you to works specifically for those instruments.

As well as over 7000 scores we hold quite a substantial collection of books about music - again, browsable online.

Remember: all of these books and scores can be borrowed free of charge, by tutors, pupils and Friends. But first you have to find them - so go online now!

Tutors at the School

as at September 2014

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

WOODWIND	
Flute	Catherine O'Rourke
Oboe	Joe Houghton
Clarinet	Alison Waller
Bassoon	Lesley Wilson
Recorder	Ian Wilson

BRASS	
Trumpet	John Gracie Brian McGinley
Horn	Lizzie Davis

PIANO	
Nigel Clayton	Joseph Long

SINGING	
Alan Watt	Raimond Herincx
Alison McDonald	Jean Webster
Peter Webster	

STAGECRAFT & PERFORMANCE	
Donald Maxwell	

ORGAN	
Dr Roger B. Williams	

Forthcoming events

WINE DEMONSTRATION AND TASTING EVENING with quiz and musical performances organised by the Friends of NESMS. **Tuesday, 9th September, 7.30pm,** Aberdeenshire Cricket Club, Mannofield.

JOSEPH LONG PIANO RECITAL Sunday, 14th September, 7pm. Woodend Barn, Banchory.

DEREK BUCHAN PIANO RECITAL Sunday, 21st September, 3pm. Fyvie Castle.

JAZZ WORKSHOP: "INTO THE GROOVE." Led by Joseph Long and Ian Milne. **Saturday, 27th September, 10am.** NESMS.

NEW PIANOS OPEN DAY including recital by Joseph Long. **Sunday, 28th September, 2pm.** NESMS.

ACCOMPANISTS' COURSE LED BY RICHARD BAILEY. Sunday, 5th October, 1.30pm. NESMS.

DEREK BUCHAN PIANO RECITAL. Sunday, 5th October, 6.30pm. Queens Cross Church. £5/£3 (under 18s).

ALFRED EMSLIE'S "DINNER AT HADDO HOUSE, 1884." Illustrated talk by Simon Welfare and chamber music concert featuring the NESMS Quartet. **Tuesday, 7th October, 7.30pm.** Haddo House. £10/£5 (under 26s)

JOSEPH LONG PIANO RECITAL Thursday, 9th October, 12.45pm. Cowdray Hall.

KEYNOTES AUCTION LUNCH. Major fundraising event featuring NESMS musicians. **Sunday, 2nd November, 12.30pm.** Marcliffe Hotel and Spa. £30.

CAITHNESS, ORKNEY AND SHETLAND ASSOCIATION CHRISTMAS RECITAL featuring NESMS musicians. **Friday, 5th December, 7.30pm.** Midstocket Halls, 35 Midstocket Rd, Aberdeen.

COWDRAY HALL LUNCH BREAK CONCERT. Thursday, 11th December, 12.45pm featuring NESMS musicians.

assistance will be in place for this very soon.

- Although the majority of tuition in the School has been on a one-to-one basis and this should remain, there is a need for continued development of open sessions such as Workshops and Master-classes.

The Working Group is keen to hear views from anyone connected with NESMS and if there is anything you wish to add to the debate please do get in contact through Gráinne as soon as you can.

Roger B. Williams
(August 2014)

Putting on the Ritz

Joan Thomas reports on her retirement present

Thanks to all the generous people who contributed to my retirement collection last year. I was presented with a sum of 'fun' money with the instruction that it was to be used for joyful things!

One suggestion was a trip to London for Afternoon Tea at The Ritz, and so on a Saturday in November my daughters, Julia and Louise, and I set off from Julia's home in Sevenoaks for our special day.

Our first port of call was to Fortnum and Mason for a leisurely look around their Christmas Shop. We were dazzled with baubles of every shape and colour, but none compared to the magnificent decorations at The Ritz. From the classy Christmas trees at the main door to the gigantic tree in the reception area, we knew we could expect the complete seasonal experience.

Once seated in the spectacular dining area we were served with a glass of champagne – all part of the special Christmas Afternoon Tea, and yes, it was delicious and we raised a toast to NESMS! The serious part of the event then followed, with dainty sandwiches, scones with jam and clotted cream, mince pies, lemon drizzle cake and finally the special cakes and pastries. I am delighted to say that we did this feast full justice and managed to sample almost everything, all accompanied by our choice of tea.

During the afternoon, we were entertained by a harpist who played light classical pieces, then by a small group of singers who sang Christmas songs and carols, and we all joined in the singing of Happy Birthday to five of our fellow diners. For two hours we were transported to a world of charm and graceful elegance to which I would love to become accustomed!

As we headed home with so many memories we had time to reflect on our outing. Was it everything we had expected? Was it really so special? Was it worth the trip? The answer is a resounding yes, and again I thank you all for making it possible.



First Accompanists' Course for Piano and Voice.

NESMS, in association with the University of Aberdeen, is to inaugurate a course for piano accompanists. The course will be led by Richard Bailey, a graduate of the University of Aberdeen and Birmingham Conservatoire. The first session will take place from 1.30pm on Sunday October 5th, at 21 Huntly Street. Price £15. Further details and how to sign up available from the administrator.

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Join the Friends!

- Are you a Friend of NESMS?
- If not, why not?

Join the Friends to support the school and to keep abreast of special school events.

Membership costs only £10 a year and an application form is enclosed.

Further information is available from

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