

# Notes & Notices

City of Belfast School of Music

Issue 1 : December 2003

## Greetings

Welcome to this first edition of *Notes & Notices* which marks the revival of a regular CBSM newsletter. There's nothing new in this and many may recall the excellent newsletters produced by Brian Agus in the past. We hope you find this new format interesting and informative as we believe regular communication is vitally important, especially given the numbers of students, staff and parents involved in our wide ranging activities.

### Pictures at an Exhibition

The images at the top of this page, including the stylised representation of the art deco façade of our listed building on Donegall Pass behind the banner title, and the new notelets which should be available before Christmas, are the handiwork of Marie O'Donoghue, BELB's Assistant Advisory Officer for Art and Design. We hope you like them as much as we do. Quite a few of our musicians are themselves very talented artists, so if you've a drawing, ideally based on a musical subject, which you would be prepared to donate to the School, we'd be delighted to find a space for it on one of our walls.

## New Kid on the Block

### Joe McKee looks back at his first year at CBSM.



Having long admired Leonard Pugh and Robin Hewitt, I was thrilled and honoured to be appointed to lead the School of Music from September 2002. In the course of my career I had come to appreciate something of the deservedly high reputation of CBSM and over the years I had worked with a number of what were to become my new colleagues in a variety of contexts, so although I found the prospect of the new job more than a little daunting, it felt as if I was somehow entering familiar territory. So what have I enjoyed most? The big concerts in the Ulster Hall are obviously impressive and I've enjoyed driving between venues on Saturday mornings, calling in to see how the various groups cope with new music and then watching as the weeks pass by and performances begin to take shape. I also enjoy my school visits, either to sit in on individual instrumental lessons or to watch the quiet professionalism of our curriculum staff as they cajole and empower primary kids and their teachers to take risks and to go places where they might not have dared the previous week. The weekly demonstration recitals on Monday afternoons are great fun and it's also wonderful to see the faces of new students (and their mums and dads) as they leave the building excitedly in the first weeks of the autumn term with their new instruments. As well as all that there's the feeling of genuine satisfaction in rehearsing with students before our regular recitals and I could go on ...

You'll find diary dates for concerts and recitals at the end of

this newsletter, so please make a note of these as you'll be made very welcome. Please also encourage your friends, especially those who may never have had any links with the School of Music, to come to our events. I've really enjoyed my first full year in post, finding the work both challenging and rewarding. We have in Belfast a music service that is second to none, with first class staff and excellent young people magnificently supported by enthusiastic and committed parents and friends. I am immensely grateful to all of you - teachers, students, parents, board officers, and others - who have helped ease me into my new shoes! In conclusion, I am always available to hear from anyone who may wish to share ideas on how we might further enhance the quality of experiences which we provide for our young musicians.

## New Prospectus

A new Prospectus has been published. This attractive document in full colour gives an outline of the level of commitment required for those who wish to avail of the School of Music "package" of practical, aural and theory tuition, the various group activities on offer, details of the library, and contact details for the two parental support groups; there is also a brief history of the School. The prospectus is accessible on the website - [www.cbsm.org.uk](http://www.cbsm.org.uk)

## Staff News

Two full-time members of staff are currently on leave looking after recently arrived babies. Mrs Ruth McCoy and Anna are doing well, as are Mrs Alison Kennedy and Max. Mr Malcolm Hamilton and his wife are also enjoying the company of their new daughter, Grace. Mrs Geraldine Gordon is proving to be a highly regarded stand-in for Ruth in her work in schools, while Ms Wendy Weatherup has responded splendidly as Acting Head of Aural and Theory. Mrs Helen Mackie has more than taken the job of Acting Head of Woodwind in her stride during Alison's absence and Ms Janine Close has joined the full-time woodwind staff, where she has proved to be very popular with colleagues and students. Mr Barry Cullen joined CBSM in the course of the last year and has already made an important contribution to our activities through his painstaking work in the instrument store. Mr Colin Harper, whose carefully researched biographical sketches of composers displayed in the front porch of the School have been much admired, has joined the library. Ms Denise Roden is on a career break and her teaching is in the very capable hands of Mrs Suzanne Kendell who, in a short time, has already become a much valued colleague. Ms Nancy Patton-Scott, a highly regarded member of the piano department, continues to make good progress after a very painful injury to her arm. Ms Claire Brennan left us at the beginning of December after a spell as an outstanding receptionist and telephonist. We wish them all well!

## Profile: Lisa Perry



**Lisa Perry**, leader of the City of Belfast Youth Orchestra and a 2<sup>nd</sup> year BMus student at Queen's, joined CBYO in 1999 and soon after enjoyed her first tour to Hungary, performing seven concerts. She

was appointed leader of the orchestra for 2002/2003 with a tour the same year to France, Germany and Poland. The repertoire incorporated the final movement of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade*, which proved tremendously rewarding and challenging for her as a soloist. Lisa was also chosen to represent CBYO in New York in May 2003, performing Elgar's *Enigma Variations* and Barber's *Violin Concerto* with the Inter-Schools Orchestra of New York in the Lincoln Centre. She has been a member of the Ulster Youth Orchestra since 2000 and during the 2001 concert series played with the first violins, which included nine days training under distinguished tutors from London. UYO gave performances in Londonderry, Belfast, Glasgow and London under the baton of the world-renowned conductor, Takuo Yuasa. While in London Lisa attended several workshops and masterclasses given by members of the LSO. In 2002 UYO worked with the Ulster Orchestra and their principal conductor, Thierry Fischer, in a performance of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*. Lisa can recount a long list of other achievements. "I have performed with the Queen's University Orchestra in the Sonorities Festival in 1999, playing Penderecki's *Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima* (in the presence of the composer) and having joined the university in 2002 I have been placed as co-leader of the orchestra. Studying music at degree level has allowed me the opportunity to perform as a soloist at various recitals on a regular basis, such as 'platform' classes, concerto competitions and as part of the 'Lunchtime Recital Series'. I am a member of the New Irish Orchestra, and one of their listed choral arrangers. At Easter 2001 the orchestra was invited to record a programme of music, praise and worship at RTÉ studios, Dublin. Leading the orchestra at this event I had a substantial number of solo parts and assisted in the organisation of the project. Recently I have written and recorded a number of string arrangements for contemporary gospel bands. As a member of my church's small orchestra and youth worship group I have gained a great deal of experience in improvisation and arranging. A string quintet has recently been established; the repertoire combines traditional church music with contemporary styles. Over the past three years I have built up work as a freelance musician and also undertake work as a session musician. In 2001 I was asked to record an improvised violin solo for a television advertisement that was network broadcast via ITV and Channel Four, while in 2003 I was invited to play on *The Kelly Show*. Last year I took part in a masterclass with the famous violinist Tasmin Little, performing the first movement of Brahms's *Violin Sonata in A major*. A further masterclass with this great musician is to take place in April 2004, for which I plan to perform Vaughan Williams' *The Lark Ascending*." From September 2003 Lisa was invited to join the part-time teaching staff at CBSM. Her long-term ambition is to pursue a career as a composer of incidental music for films and television.

## An Inspector Calls

Earlier this year the Education and Training Inspectorate published a report based on a survey of the music services provided by the five education and library boards in Northern Ireland. The BELB Music Service came out of the report in a very good light and the staff were given very positive feedback based on the high quality of their work, not only in their fundamental role as teachers but also in the way they organise and direct our various orchestras, bands and choirs. The survey gives evidence that the young people of Belfast are receiving an impressive range of musical experiences. There were also a number of recommendations urging all five boards to extend the work of their music services and to look at ways of providing new performance opportunities for young people with interests outside the "classical" tradition. Elsewhere in this publication you will find details of how we are addressing this issue.

## Yes Minister

Administering the School of Music involves unique challenges. In terms of the numbers of pupils we teach and in relation to the numbers of full-time staff we employ, the School of Music might seem a relatively modest organisation at first sight. But the work of the CBSM also involves 120 additional part-time teachers and some 20 performing groups spread across the city. There are also 5 specialist Class Music Support teachers who interact with hundreds of primary school pupils and their teachers each week of term. Keeping tabs on all of this falls to Mr Ted Cairns and his colleagues in administration. We would urge you to assist us by informing the office if you change your address or switch phone number, tell us when your children move school, and give any other family details which might relate to our activities.

## Assessments

Over the past year staff have been giving a great deal of time to looking at ways in which we might improve the quality of information going home to students and parents. In particular, we have been considering the best time to send out our annual CBSM reports and reviewing strategies of continuous assessment that might give a fuller picture of individual progress than that which we currently measure through a short end of year audition. New individual and group activity assessments are currently being piloted that enable teachers to record progress measured against a range of specific criteria. These assessments will then provide teachers with detailed information that can be used to identify agreed personal targets with their students and, in what we expect will be a very small number of cases, alert Heads of Department to students with particular areas for improvement which will be communicated to parents. The aim of this process is to provide regular formative assessments that will contribute to more effective teaching and create a better method of recording student progress.

## Schola Cantorum

Head of Music Service is hoping to form and direct a new mixed voice choir for those in the 15 to 18 age group. Those who have a fair degree of sight-reading ability and a half decent voice are asked to submit the appropriate application form. Tenors and basses are particularly sought!

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## Profile: Paul Wynn

### Instrument Technician



We welcome Paul Wynn as the CBSM's new instrument technician. Paul confesses that he always had the ambition to be a craftsman and has had a love of musical instruments since secondary school in Middlesbrough. He chose to combine these two elements by attending the City of Leeds College of Music, where he completed a two year full-time course

in Musical Instrument Technology, specialising in the repair and construction of guitar, stringed instruments and percussion. Paul has worked with musical instruments since then, both in business and as a hobby. As an engineer qualified to degree level, he worked for some years in the electronics manufacturing industry in product design, development and management roles. Currently spare time is spent preparing for the birth of a first child and beyond that Paul's main interest is the development of his workshop at home, where he enjoys making musical instruments, small pieces of furniture and general DIY projects. Paul feels privileged now to have the opportunity to work on a daily basis on the wide range of musical instruments in the BELB Music Service and is enjoying the new challenges of repairing and maintaining brass and woodwind instruments. We wish Paul every success in this important work and we hope we can hold on to him for a long time and that this is the start of a long and productive relationship for him with the music community in Belfast.

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## 40<sup>th</sup> / 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversaries

Leonard Pugh, within a year of his appointment as Music Adviser in Belfast, successfully convinced the predecessor of the BELB in 1965 of the need to create a School of Music. The basis of Mr Pugh's vision remains in place today. Prior to the inauguration of the CBSM, Mr Douglas Dawn, the city's first Music Adviser, had initiated a Belfast Youth Orchestra. One of his first players was a young flautist, James Galway, while another was the cellist David Strange, today Professor of Strings at the Royal Academy of Music in London. In later years Barry Douglas played clarinet in the orchestra, one of hundreds of very talented young musicians who were to have some of their most defining early musical experiences before moving on to third level education. In 2005 we plan to organise a number of special events and concerts and Sir James Galway has already offered to come home to play and to conduct the CBYO. Dr McKee hopes to establish an events committee early in 2004 to co-ordinate the activities for this anniversary year. We will also be appealing to past students to come forward with ideas, memorabilia, contact details et cetera. Already it sounds like a great excuse for a huge party!

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## Harps, Guitars & Whistles

After an absence of a decade, the School is about to re-establish harp lessons. Ms Edel Brady is the new harp tutor and the School has recently taken charge of 6 brand new Irish folk harps, while a further 3 harps will

shortly be re-conditioned and restored. Lessons will be scheduled at CBSM and those with an interest are asked to submit an application form immediately. In line with our policy of extending the range of musical activities, Mr Paul Foreman has been teaching rock guitar in a number of day schools in north and west Belfast. This has proved to be very popular, not least with post-primary boys who are now queuing up to practise during break and lunchtimes. At St Aidan's Primary School in west Belfast, Mrs Helena Grimes has had an overwhelming response to her tin whistle classes. With the support of St Aidan's principal, Mr Gerry Keelan and his staff, Helena has been teaching a number of whole class groups. A nice touch here is that many of the teachers are also picking up the whistle so that they can help their pupils with their practice. They've also found that it's great fun!

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## Examinations & Results

The annual cycle of examinations in December, March and June continues to provide a major focus for students and staff. The burden of scheduling the rehearsals and examinations falls to Mr Stanley Foreman, with administrative support from Ms June Windrim. The number of candidates at each session varies greatly, although the largest number usually tends to be at the end of the academic year in June. Parents and students are asked to bear in mind that we process hundreds of candidates at each session, so it is very difficult to offer alternative rehearsals or examination slots given constraints on accommodation and the examiners' rigid schedules. We would ask that requests for changes are made *in only the most exceptional circumstances*. Last minute changes (i.e. within 48 hours) are simply not possible in any circumstance and are unfair to others who might be affected by your request. We are again delighted to learn from the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music that the pass rate for CBSM students compares very favourably with the UK average and that we have far more than our share of students (and teachers!) securing passes with distinction. Well done to all concerned. CBSM publishes a short list of guidelines for dealing with exam preparation, coping with last-minute nerves and the like. Please ask your teacher for one. Finally, sixth form students should remember that the upper ABRSM grade exams can be counted as part of their overall UCAS points score for university admissions. Please discuss with your music teacher or consult Dr McKee.

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## Public Recitals

Parents and friends are welcome to attend two series of student recitals organised by the School, as detailed below. Refreshments, including a glass of something, are usually provided for the audience at the conclusion. The emphasis is on informality, so if you find that other

pressures mean that you can't arrive at the very start – or need to leave early – then please feel free to come and go as necessary. Equally, young children of all ages are also very welcome to attend. These recitals are varied and not excessively long. Please come along and support our young players, some of whom may be performing in public for the very first time.

**Student Recitals** Porter's Hall, Donegall Pass, Wednesdays at 7.30pm

(a wide range of age ranges and abilities, from early grades through to undergraduate)

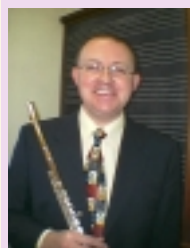
21 January, 18 February, 10 March, 12 May

**Rush Hour Recitals** Central Library, Royal Avenue, Thursdays at 5.00pm

(accomplished students, mostly in the upper age group)  
27 November, 29 January, 26 February, 25 March, 29 April

## Profile: Colin Irvine

### Conductor, City of Belfast Concert Band



Colin was born in Ballyclare in 1967 and studied music at the University of Ulster at Jordanstown, graduating with a BMus degree. He first began studying the flute with his father at the age of six before being accepted for tuition by the NEELB Music Service. Here he continued his studies, playing in the

Concert Band and Youth Orchestra as Principal Flute. Later he studied with Colin Fleming and participated in master classes with the late Geoffrey Gilbert, James Galway, Trevor Wye and Elena Duran. Colin also plays in a number of orchestras including the Ulster Orchestra and the Castleward Opera Orchestra with whom he has recently taken up the position of orchestral manager. He has always been associated with flute bands and was conductor of Ballyclare Victoria Flute band until 1998 when he began conducting the Concert Band at CBSM. Colin enjoys live performing, teaching the flute and giving television and radio broadcasts both locally and nationally. He also gives regular recitals both as a soloist and as a member of the Castleward Wind Quintet. In any spare time that he has, Colin enjoys all forms of motor sport and hopes one day to be able to take his son Ryan to the TT in the Isle of Man, or perhaps to the Grand Prix at Monaco! He would also like to take him down to visit Landsdowne Road to watch an international rugby match (preferably Ireland thrashing England). All this and he still makes time to practise!

## Sponsorship

As you will have read elsewhere in this issue, the School of Music is currently engaged in various new enterprises. Even modest sponsorship would provide us with additional resources to help us stay within our annual budget. If you think you could help, or might like to

adopt one of our performing groups, or possibly have your firm's name associated with one of our events, please contact Joe McKee at any time. We know from past experience that sponsors feel they get good value for their investment by becoming engaged in a partnership with CBSM. Please also give consideration, in the longer term, to sponsoring one of our major concerts in 2005.

## In Memoriam

Mr Leslie McCarrison, who wrote the *Rathcol* classical music reviews for the *Belfast Telegraph* for many years, died recently after a short illness. Mr McCarrison lived in his latter years quite close to Donegall Pass, just off the Dublin Road. As a performing musician he is remembered as a church organist and as a piano accompanist. He had a genuine interest in young players and was always generous, compassionate and encouraging in his reviews of student performances. He had an encyclopaedic memory for some of our most distinguished past students and regularly talked about such stars as Barry Douglas, whose photograph as a schoolboy organist Leslie carried in his wallet and showed with obvious pride. We are delighted that a family member, Mr Kenneth McNally, has presented CBSM with a significant number of LPs and CDs from Mr McCarrison's large personal collection. These have already been placed in the library and will soon be available for loan. We are extremely grateful for this generous donation from a friend for whom so many of us have such affectionate memories. JMCK

## Diary Dates

see also full diary at [www.cbsm.org.uk](http://www.cbsm.org.uk)

**Tuesday 9 December** Community Concert, Spectrum Centre, Tennent Street, 7.30pm  
Youth Chorale, Intermediate & Concert Bands, Symphonic Brass, Edenbrooke and Glenwood Primary Schools.

**Thursday 11 December** Junior Groups Family Concert  
St. Mary Magdalene Hall, 7.30pm

**Wednesday 17 December** CBSM Christmas Concert  
Ulster Hall, 7.30pm

**Friday 16 January** Guitar and Voices Recital  
St. Mary Magdalene Church, 7.30pm

**Thursday 5 & Friday 6 February** February Fanfare Concerts,  
Ulster Hall, 7.30pm

**Friday 19 March** Community Concert  
Clonard Monastery CBSM Choirs & Symphonic Brass

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