

A new look at Scottish music

In recent years New Zealand's Summer Schools have included a Music Class aimed at giving NZ musicians a chance to play jigs, reels and strathspeys for Scottish Country Dancing. These have been very well attended and have given our emerging musicians valuable experience in playing as part of a SCD Band, learning to play with a "Scottish accent", and exposure to new tunes and techniques via the overseas tutors.

This year was very different. Rather than practising jigs, reels and strathspeys, the Music Course at the recent Nelson Summer School consisted of four separate workshops, each one looking at a *different* style of Scottish music.

Sharlene Penman started the series in style, elegantly dressed for a look at minuets. After an overview of the historical place of minuets and how they found their way into Scottish music, we explored the appropriate ways of playing them – speed, articulation, beat, dynamics – and developed an arrangement of one which showed off the diversity of our group of instruments: fiddles, violas, harpsichord (keyboard), oboe, flute and recorder.

Anne-Marie Forsyth's workshop on Piobaireachd (pibroch) challenged us all. We learned about the formal structure of this form of music (which is not confined to bagpipes!), wrote a short melody, and then applied the rules for creating some of the variations that form the pibroch.

The session on airs was led by Iain Matcham. Having explored the characteristics of the "slow air", Iain proceeded to distribute well-known SCD strathspeys and challenged us to turn them into slow airs. The wind players and Sharlene came up with a splendid arrangement.

Hornpipes were explored with Lynne Scott. We looked at the "Jacky Tar" style of hornpipe which is commonly danced to, then expanded into the swung 12/8 style and finished with the grand Concert Hornpipe.

The variety in Scottish music beyond jigs, reels and strathspeys demonstrates the versatility of the composers that we dance to - they were first class musicians by anyone's standards. The musicians in the Nelson workshops greatly enjoyed their excursion into the wider field of Scottish music, and we all enjoyed sharing some of our tunes at the Ceilidh.

Lynne Scott

NZ Branch Music Adviser