

Anna Beresford HISS 2015 review

Having never been on the HISS course before, I was struck by the friendly and welcoming attitude of both tutors and participants alike. Meeting a group of people with a diverse range of backgrounds and experiences was, for me, a great introduction to playing folk and early music.

The initial confusion of choosing which sessions to attend was soon relaxed as each option was a valuable use of time. The informality, yet professionalism, of the tutors was relaxing and allowed for each participant to develop their skills or understanding of the topic at hand. I must thank the tutors for each bringing an incredible amount of expertise and enthusiasm to making the activities so interesting.

Personal highlights, as a cellist, would be putting figured-bass reading into practice (something that even music students get little opportunity to experiment with), experiencing playing with a baroque bow for the whole week, and learning the Alexander Technique. Starting the day with 'Semi-supine' position allowed young and older participants to stretch out and feel physically prepared to play and enjoy the day.

In terms of the venue, the Hull University campus in Scarborough was perfect. The accommodation clean and impressive, and having an en-suite room created a real sense of luxury: all only a short walk from the beach! The range and availability of the meals and refreshments was very impressive and the café bar was a huge asset to the week.

The range of abilities on the course resulted in some sessions being slightly simple for more experienced players but there was plenty of time over the week to play in informal music groups. I particularly enjoyed the Musical Banquet as the enthusiasm and good-natured attitude of the participants shone through. I had never appreciated the beauty and magic of such instruments as the lute and the viol until the astonishing Tutors' Concert – nor had I heard folk music played with such skill.

The HISS experience will be very useful to me as I apply to universities in autumn to study music. The expert tuition from the string tutors has developed my baroque playing technique and understanding so that I have a new, unique string to my bow(!). In all seriousness, what I have learned is not only interesting, but highly applicable to most other genres also.

My thanks go out to Graham for offering such a generous scheme for Bursary Students. He, Chris and the whole team should be proud of the HISS community and the opportunity it offers to such a range of people.

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