

Review of HISS 2014

Jo Wherry

After participating at HISS last year as a student helper I was wondering how it could possibly be improved, HISS 2014 certainly rose to the challenge.

It's hard to describe quite how much energy and thought goes into this course, everyone involved; the organisers, tutors or participants gave their all. From the home grown ceilidh, the mesmerising tutor concert, the musical banquet full of mischievous musical delights and finally the 'sharing session' which rounded the week off perfectly.

There really was something for everyone, and every session could be enjoyed by many instrument types, this year's theme was certainly one of inclusion.

Laura Cannell was a fantastic addition to the tutor's team, bridging the gap between folk and early music and encouraging people to edge a little further out of their comfort zones than they might normally be used to. The result; a fun and exhilarating improvisation performance at the end of course 'sharing'.

As a string player I spent much of the week with Amélie and Anne Marie discovering the subtle nuances of the French Baroque. They were a great team; assisting us with Baroque technique, providing historical context and helping us play well as an ensemble. I would recommend their sessions to all, not just to string players.

Stewart Hardy was in fine form this year, his sessions the 'Auld Alliance' featured tunes from when fashion demanded 'Scottish' and 'French' music. His style of tuition is great fun, and I can't count the amount of times he used the phrase 'The next bit is hauntingly familiar...' always good to hear when learning a tune by ear!

Beginners viol; not as vile as you might think. A great introduction to the instrument, I tried the Tenor and although I'd played the Treble before, really benefitted from Susanna's expertise. It's always tough learning a new instrument, but in the group session we were all in it together and almost managed to make it through a piece!

With such a busy week, it was great to have Susanna and Jake to help us out with our little aches and pains, an introduction to the Alexander technique provided just this. To those wanting to think more about posture and balance when playing this was a great session which I'd recommend to all.

As a bursary student I feel so honoured to have been a part of HISS for a second time, the bursary enabled me to gain so much experience and tuition that I simply would not be able to afford otherwise. The tunes and music gathered will no doubt make their way into my degree course at University and I hope to pass on some of the music I have learnt to other musicians along the way.

HISS 2014 was brilliant. Fantastic organisation; many thanks to Graham and Chris for all do to make HISS a success. The Tutors were brilliant and I learnt so much, thanks also to the other participants for making me and everyone else feel so welcome.

Looking forward to next year already!