

Review of HISS 2018

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It was through a friend at University that I first heard about HISS and after researching the course more and then applying for it, I was fortunate enough to receive a place as one of the bursary students for 2018.

Leading up to the course I was slightly apprehensive – as it was my first time on a course like this – but as soon as I arrived, I saw how welcoming everyone was and I was immediately put at ease. There was no divide between long-time HISS attendees and newcomers to the course, as can sometimes happen on music courses, but everyone gelled together and even after one day, it felt as though everyone had been making music together for a much longer time!

Having been introduced to the viol and curtal only a few months before the start of HISS, I arrived in Beverley hoping to leave with the knowledge of a few more notes than when I had arrived. Not only were my small goals reached, but so much more as well. Through the guidance of both tutors and fellow course members, I was given so much advice as well as tips and tricks of the trade in order to progress not only my range of playing on the instruments, but my knowledge about the instruments, the context surrounding the instruments and how different instruments work together.

While at HISS, I split my playing time by attending the viol progressive sessions in the morning and then the brass (with loud winds) in the afternoon sessions. Having had very little knowledge of the viol (or any string instrument) before HISS, I was slightly wary when I entered the progressive full of people that had been playing the viol for many years. I quickly realised, however, that despite only being able to play quite slowly and not even being able to tune my viol properly (I also learnt that clockwork pegs are the way to go!) everyone in the class was so supportive and with the help of the wonderful viol tutor Susanna Pell, by the last progressive session, I felt that I had definitely progressed and even felt confident in my abilities.

I was also the only person playing curtal in the sessions and being too loud to join in with the recorders, I was welcomed warmly by the brass group. Richard Thomas and George Bartle were the tutors for the brass and having two tutors working on the same music allowed me to see different perspectives, especially when George ran his session on “instruments as voices”, in order to make us think along with the words of a piece with text, rather than just the notes. Richard also ran a cornett taster session, which was open to all members and which was highly attended, although only a lucky few managed to produce a sound! This opportunity for example, shows how HISS encourages everyone to try out things and see what happens, without any pressure or judgement from anyone. This year HISS was able to support seven bursary students and it was such a joy to be part of a great bursary student team. We all got on so well and it was great to meet other young people that are just as enthusiastic about early music as I am! I have made so many new friends and contacts from being at HISS and I am so grateful to have had the opportunity of being a bursary student. In an area of music that often doesn't get as much interest from young people as other areas of music does, it's refreshing to have an organisation really push for new input and support the students that are interested.

Thank you HISS for your generosity, kindness and for solidifying my love for early music. See you next year!