

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN CONCERT SERIES 2017 – 2018
ELPHINSTONE FIDDLERS
EUAN REID: Accordion and Director
BURNS NIGHT CONCERT
KING'S COLLEGE CHAPEL
Thursday 25th January, 2018

At lunchtime today I was at the weekly Lunchbreak Concert in the Salvation Army Citadel given on the 25th January, the date of Burns Night, by Aberdeen Strathspey and Reel Society. Their programme consisted of music all of which had a direct connection with Robert Burns. Although the evening concert in King's College Chapel was listed as a Burns Night Concert, I think few if any of the items had any direct or even indirect connection with Robert Burns. However the full Scottish flavour was there in abundance and if the Bard had been able to be with us in the Chapel, I am sure he would have been tapping his feet and thoroughly enjoying the performance along with the rest of us.

Much of the music was from more up to date Scottish or more general Traditional sources and the band was tremendous. There were Pipe Tunes, Irish Jigs and Waltzes, items from Shetland and possibly farther afield but all hugely entertaining.

The full traditional band sound was marvellous – five fiddle players, low whistle, flute, accordion, bodhrán and piano as good as any professional ensemble and better than some. I was particularly impressed by the bodhrán player, Fraser Borland. His ability to change the pitch of his drum often following the basic melodic lines of the music or harmonic backing meant that he fulfilled the role of both drums and double bass. This came through to me particularly strongly in the sixth set of the concert, four lively jigs. Some of the pieces, the four reels of set four, two Irish and two Shetland reels had wonderful catchy off-centre rhythms which the band played with real, or should I say 'reel' style!

The performance opened with four tunes from bagpipe collections. Many of the tunes throughout the concert had mind-blowingly fascinating titles, like Emmet's Hedgehog, The Doon Hingin Tie or Sheepskins Beeswax which is also apparently known as Aunt Jemima's Plaster!

There were three special items interspersed between the full instrumental items in the concert, two solos and one trio.

Shannon Stevenson played a set of solo fiddle pieces by Scott Skinner, a March, Strathspey and Reel. I was impressed by her marvellous delivery of the rhythms in this music. The trio item was very unusual, bringing together a soprano saxophone played by Josie Fairley Keast along with Ellen Bielinski on fiddle and Fraser Borland on bodhrán. This music was the most modern moving from a fascinating slow movement to a sizzling fast and lively piece.

Accordian player Euan Reid's solo set was virtuosic with just a suggestion of jazzy influence in its rhythms.

The audience gave the performers a rousing ovation to which they responded with a fine encore, Pipe Major Willie Gray's Farewell to the Glasgow Police.

At the end of the concert, donations were invited in support of Aberdeen Cyrenians – a very worthy charity indeed.