MUSIC IN THE UNIVERSITY CONCERT SERIES 2016 – 2017  
THE UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN PIANO SOCIETY  
THOMAS MICHIE, DANIEL CLUNAS, SAMM ANGA, BRYCE HOPE,  
ELISE BINNIE, IMOGENE NEWLAND.  
KING’S COLLEGE CHAPEL  
Saturday 25th March, 2017

The six young members of the University of Aberdeen Piano Society represented a wide variety of styles and of abilities but their sense of commitment and dedication to the instrument and to its music came across in spades. They made me feel that it is time I got my own piano tuned again and went back to playing. That was especially true of the final piece in the concert, Imogene Newland’s fine performance of Oscar Peterson’s transcription of Hoagy Carmichael’s Georgia on My Mind. I think however I will stick to Carmichael’s own original publication of the song. It’s much easier. Perhaps I will also have a go at the pieces by Eric Satie that were played by Bryce Hope in the first part of his performance.

The performance opened with Thomas Michie playing the Prelude and Fugue No. 12 in f minor by J. S. Bach. Thomas gave us a nice clear and steady performance despite a couple of minor hesitations but he kept going in an unperturbed manner and I thought he had understood exactly what was required in this music.

Later on in the programme he played Debussy’s Sarabande from Pour le Piano and this was decidedly a better performance. Thomas captured the required variations in touch and put them across splendidly giving us exactly the range of piano colours that Debussy wanted.

Daniel Clunas gave us two different pieces from the central classical repertoire, Mozart’s Fantasia in C major K 394 followed by the opening movement of Beethoven’s Pathétique Sonata No. 8 in c minor Op. 13.

Daniel gave Mozart’s piece a fairly dramatic performance with strong powerful chords. His programme note mentioned the “breaking away from the ‘lightness’ of the classical period” and this performance certainly did that. Did he take it too far? That is purely a matter of taste and is open to argument on both sides. Nevertheless, it was a splendid technical performance.

The Pathétique Sonata sets slow music against fast stormy music. Once again we got technical perfection from Daniel but I felt maybe that the difference in speeds was taken a little too far. However, once again that is a matter of taste and I am sure Daniel will be able to argue his position with conviction.

Samm Anga’s performance of Liszt’s Consolation No. 3 provided a moment of gentle relaxation after the fireworks of Mozart and Beethoven and I felt that Samm captured the spirit of Liszt’s music rather nicely.

Bryce Hope introduced himself as “the nutter” of the group and in a way that was what Eric Satie was too. At least he was certainly an eccentric. His music is basically quite simple and yet it is able to convey a vast amount with very few notes. Perhaps that is what true genius is and I enjoyed Bryce Hope’s performance of La Balançoire (The Swing) and Le Yachting which speaks for itself. These pieces were both graphic and well coloured.

In his programme note Bryce Hope writes, “Bryce Hope describes himself as a creator of ‘sound worlds’, experimenting with electroacoustic-inspired music using acoustic means, particularly the inside of the piano. “tEn” is a series of ten short fragments testing the piano in terms of resonance and timbre”. There could not have been a better description of what we were about to hear. Bryce shouted the numbers of the fragments into the piano with the sustain pedal down then proceeded to do exactly what he had said on the tin. He managed to draw out some amazing effects very much creating electroacoustic style effects from the piano. This is the sort of music which is as important to watch as to hear. It was hugely entertaining.

Elise Binnie gave us a quite short piece by Ludovico Einaudi, Stella del mattino (Morning star). It was fresh sounding and well played too – a real delight.
A high point of the concert was the two pieces played by Imogene Newland. She began with Étude No. 4 (Fanfares) from Six Études by György Ligeti. This was a virtuoso piece and was played splendidly by Imogene. As I have already said, she played Oscar Peterson’s transcription of Hoagy Carmichael’s Georgia on my Mind very well and I felt inspired. There is another even more splendid Hoagy Carmichael standard, Stardust. Perhaps Imogene could give us that next time? In any case her performance provided a fine conclusion to a most enjoyable concert.