

SRP National Festival Ipswich 2022

What a delight to come together to play after a gap of three years! This year's festival in Ipswich did not disappoint with its varied and enjoyable programme. Following the SRP's annual conference and AGM, the weekend began with supper and a concert given by Parandus. This young ensemble, consisting of Daniel Swani, Grace Shih and Thomas Pickering, entertained their audience with a varied programme from Dunstable to contemporary music with recorders, flute, hand drum and spinet. It included individual solos as well as the ensemble pieces, through which the young performers conveyed their commitment to and enjoyment of playing recorders.



Photo: Helen Hooker

As has become the tradition, Saturday morning opened with a warm welcome and massed playing of Stephen Watkins's *Septet*, commissioned for the festival and conducted by Moira Usher. This was followed by five playing sessions, each lasting an hour, with a choice of seven groups and conductors for each session (except four at lunchtime). A wide variety of periods, styles and levels of playing was available, including two choir music, which proved very popular. After dinner and time to spend money in the music and instrument shops, came a unique performance, in which all participated, of *The Masque of Oberon* masterminded by Moira Usher, who brought together readers, singers, actors and players.



Photo: Helen Hooker

Sunday commenced with three playing session, again offering a variety of music. Following an excellent roast Sunday lunch, came the conference report and the final massed playing session concluding the weekend with Robert Parsons's *De La Court* and a spirited performance of Holzman's classic march, *Blaze Away* conducted by Moira.



Photo: Helen Hooker

Thanks must go to Moira Usher, the Suffolk SRP and the staff of Chantry Academy for a wonderful weekend: also to the 16 other conductors who gave their services free and to the music shops for bringing their music and instruments, often from some distance. A real hit was the barista van providing excellent coffee on both days.

Edinburgh SRP is looking forward to welcoming everyone to the 2023 SRP Festival to be held over the weekend of April 1st – 2nd, with the SRP Conference on March 31st, at George Watson's College, EH10 5EG, on the south side of the city. The programme is almost finalised; there will be the usual variety of playing sessions, conductors and shops, two new works including one by Marg Hall, a celebration of the 400th anniversary of the death of William Byrd and a concert by Da Camera including the recorder player Emma Murphy performing Baroque and Celtic music.

A wide range of accommodation is available in Edinburgh, but parking can be difficult in the city centre. For those coming by car, the Braids Hotel (EH10 6JD) is the closest to George Watson's College (but as of May 2022 had not opened booking for next spring) and the Edinburgh Holiday Inn (EH12 6UA by the Zoo) has car parking and is not too far away. For those travelling by train, if your journey can be by LNER, tickets booked in advance can be

considerably cheaper and a new company Lumo is now running cheap services between London and Edinburgh. Bus services run from the city centre to within walking distance of the school.

We wait to hear where the SRP Festival will be held in 2024. The success of any festival is firstly down to its location. Once suitable premises have been found, the rest usually falls into place. If your branch has not ever run a festival, don't be daunted – there is plenty of help and advice around by those who have done it before. Think about taking up the challenge!

Anne Martin, Edinburgh SRP