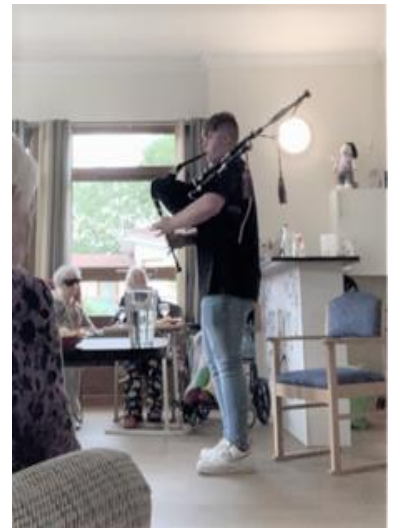


The past two years have been very challenging for organisations providing educational support for young musicians. And as a result, in the continued absence of in-person courses, there have been fewer youngsters travelling from rural Scotland and seeking our support. However, it is heartening that we have continued to hear from the older applicants from rural Scotland who are travelling to study in Higher Education Institutions or specialist music schools, in other parts of the country. So how has the experience been for them? What worked well for them and what did they miss?

**Rory Robson**, a bagpipe player from Invergordon has been studying at the National Piping Centre and is now attending the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. He acknowledges the challenges everyone has faced in receiving tuition online.

*“Your tutor can’t speak to you while you are playing so there is a lot of starting and stopping during the lessons. Also, it is impossible to play with someone else as there is a delay over the internet...Most of my HNC course was online. This worked well as it allowed me to move back home rather than pay to stay in a room in Glasgow”.*

At the same time, it has had its compensations for him! Now delighted to be playing in person again, here he is playing in an old folks’ home, giving some joy to others.



**Hattie McGregor**, a cello player from Rosemarkie has, over the past few years, been attending Yehudi Menuhin school, which remained open for much of the academic year, with periods of online tuition. Because of the challenges with online tuition, she found the use of recordings was often more helpful during lockdown.

*“..sharing recordings worked well as a method to hear a more accurate representation of my playing than over video call... And lessons were recorded on my laptop so I could rewatch them”.*



She is now happy to be studying at the Royal Academy of Music in London and will be back home on the Black Isle giving concerts with a friend next week! She has been exploring a baroque cello recently.





**Freya Campbell**, who is from the Isle of Arran and plays French horn is now in her last year at Douglas Academy School of Music, as well as RCS Juniors. In spite of considerable logistical challenges with accommodation during lockdown, she continued having music lessons online at home during weekends. She is very optimistic for the future and is busy recording audition pieces and attending interviews at various conservatoires.

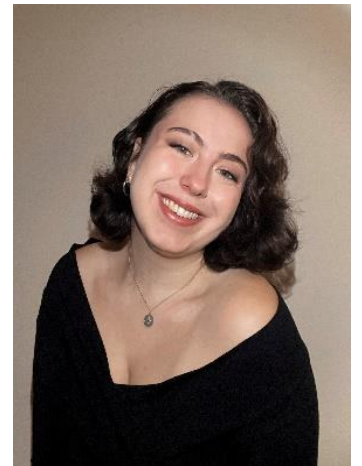
*“I participated in a few online projects organised by the WSSO, NYOS and NYO Inspire!, and although it wasn’t the same as playing with a live orchestra, they did help*

*hone certain skills such as accuracy in keeping time and playing to a click track. It was certainly a big decision, moving schools and leaving behind all my friends and family on Arran but this past year has shown me that attending a specialist music school really is giving me the boost I needed and is setting me firmly on the path towards studying music at conservatoire”.*

**Eve Maxwell**, a soprano from Ardrishaig who we have supported over the years to travel considerable distances for singing tuition, is now studying at Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. She comments on the lack of an authentic representation of sound during online tuition.

*“I missed being able to sing in a space designed for music making, in comparison to my student accommodation as well as singing with a live accompanist and not with a backing track over Zoom”.*

But in spite of these challenges, she finished her year top of the class and was awarded the Winnie Busfield Prize.



**Kara Taylor**, a cello player from Ballater who is now studying at Royal Northern College of Music has had the same problems with sound. But she was so happy finally to be able to play with others and attend live concerts again.



*“When the RNCM finally opened up and we could be in the same room as our tutors, almost everyone presented with the same difficulty – we had all lost our sound and projection. This was due to being stuck practising in our small bedrooms and the fact that Zoom condenses all dynamics to a mezzo forte. When I attended my first live concert again, I think it reignited the motivation and love for music that I felt I have been losing over the past year of isolation”.*



Perhaps one of the most successful of innovations over the last year has been in the use of online masterclasses. Gavin Johnson is very enthusiastic about this opportunity. He is a tuba player from Ford who we have supported over the years to travel to various brass ensembles and is now studying at Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

*“A thing that was really amazing was one of the tuba teachers set up a series of weekly masterclasses with some of the best brass musicians from around the world, where we got to sit and listen to their stories and ask them some questions too”.*

These students are ready to adapt and survive!

The pandemic has driven some exciting innovations in online tuition, some of which seem likely to persist beyond the pandemic. It has opened windows to contact with others around the world, to hear and see music of the highest quality, and to engage in collaboration. At the same time, we know that there will always be times when there is no substitute for in-person tuition, ensemble work and performance, it is what music making is all about.

This news is based on a report on online music tuition which can be accessed here:  
[https://www.agar-trust.org.uk/Files/Student\\_experiences\\_online\\_music\\_tuition.pdf](https://www.agar-trust.org.uk/Files/Student_experiences_online_music_tuition.pdf)

The Agar Trust supports young people (8-21) resident in rural Scotland who demonstrate exceptional musical ability and potential and wish to further their musical education beyond their local area. It was established in 2014, since then it has made 350 awards. We believe passionately in addressing the inequalities presented by Scotland’s extensive rural geography.

[www.agar-trust.org.uk](http://www.agar-trust.org.uk)

**December 2021**

