

Beside the Tay in early May

Eastwood House, a large Edwardian-style mansion in Dunkeld, was an idyllic place to spend the first weekend in May on a flute retreat led by Andrea Kuypers of *Flûtes du Soleil* fame. With the River Tay in full spate, the Perthshire trees in fresh leaf and the wild cherries a haze of white, we were also blessed with fine weather. The twelve participants ranged in age from late teens to myself in my early eighties. Ability was also diverse with Andrea's assured and gifted Edinburgh Napier University students, teachers seeking more playing with others, keen adults, one of whom learnt during the weekend that she had passed her Grade 8 exam, to one or two like me who are less confident playing solos. For some it was the first experience of playing our flutes after Covid restrictions so we were careful, though not neurotic.

As some had travelled far, even from Yorkshire, after at least half a day's work, we spent the Friday evening enjoying the first of our delicious vegetarian meals cooked by Peter with Marion as his helper, and getting to know each other.

The next two days started with yoga before breakfast, followed by warm-ups and exercises on vibrato and colour and work on our larger ensemble pieces. I really enjoyed these, especially *Chanson de Matin* and *Tulips from Amsterdam*, and felt they would suit our expanding Syrnix Flutes in the Borders. There was time after lunch on the Saturday to walk along the Tay into Dunkeld which was busy with a Bikefest. After this Hugh Reid joined us as a patient and adaptable accompanist for our prepared pieces. We had not had a pre-performance rehearsal with Hugh so it was evident that some of us were more accustomed to playing with a pianist than others. We enjoyed lovely performances of Mozart and Rutter by Andrea's students. Some others had taken Andrea's advice to present a piece that was easily manageable and beautiful; one adult played a piece from her recent exam. I played *Forlane* by Germaine Tailleferre as I thought no one would know it; I was right! It was a relaxed gathering with encouraging brief comments from Andrea.



In the evening Andrea and Hugh gave us a delightful short recital. It is good to hear professional musicians choosing to perform pieces like *Sur l'eau* by Philippe Gaubert that one has tried to play.

Sunday was very busy with yoga, complicated warm-ups, practising our ensemble pieces and playing in smaller groups. Our final fluting was performing all these to the rest of the group. Some people had to leave afterwards for work next day. The last delicious and sociable meal stretched out.

We all felt that we would like to repeat the weekend, further enjoy the house and the area and each other's company, improve our breathing, learn more about conveying colour and mood and playing together. Two days were not long enough.

ELIZABETH RAITT

Andrea will be running another flute retreat in Dunkeld from 28 April–1 May 2023. For more information contact her direct—andrea@kuypers.co.uk