



NLMS Newsletter

Autumn 2018



Downe House



Editorial

Ron Kelley

Hello! Welcome to your NLMS Newsletter. I am writing this on a Sunday morning in October and a few hours before I head off to Birmingham for a regular orchestra rehearsal. Recently your committee spent the day having its regular autumn meeting, the difference on this occasion being that it was at the site of the proposed venue for next summer's Summer School: Downe House in Berkshire. Other people will write more fully about various aspects of the intended move, but here are my thoughts and observations from my perspective.

I live in northern Shropshire near the Cheshire and Welsh borders. Travel to Queenswood typically took around 4 hours by car, usually with one stop. My trip yesterday was a similar distance, but it was if anything slightly quicker at 3.5 hours there and under 3 on the way back. Admittedly I didn't encounter any roadworks, incidents or other impedimenta. So, for people like me, it makes little difference.

So, I turned in the driveway past the tennis courts (yes, there's more of them) to a very

different campus. I would say that the campus is more compact in that facilities are nearer together – no-one will have as long a walk as to say the ABC building. Also, the campus and facilities are generally newer. OK important things: the accommodation that we will be using is much more modern, with much better facilities and with many rooms on the ground floor – this has got to be a boon to many (I can testify having lugged a cello up to the eaves in Clapham). Typically rooms are in groups of four.

The dining hall is much better – more spacious, a very pleasant space with round tables with comfortable chairs. There are multiple service points, so we should find that the logistics of meal times are much better i.e. it shouldn't take 40 minutes to get everyone served at lunch or dinner.

There will be a large lounge and kitchen space for the use of non-residents. And, no need to panic, there will be a lounge and bar space.



The various performance spaces will be better. We are still negotiating precise details, but there is a brand new (will be opening in about 3 weeks) multi-purpose arts centre, which will be a splendid facility and ideal for concerts. There is a performing arts centre which has a large auditorium. This is likely to be where the Symphony Orchestra rehearses. It has a

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hydraulic floor. It is spacious and well lit. It doesn't have the booming acoustic of the OPH. There is another hall, which is likely to be where the Sinfonietta rehearses. This is a proper hall and will be a vast improvement on the gym.

From my view as the person likely to be managing set-up and stage management, it should make lives much easier, not least no requirement to build a platform in OPH, which used to take a team of 6 about 2 to 3 hours to do on the Friday the day before you all arrived and it had to be dismantled at the end of the week.



There are plenty of small practice rooms with pianos, and other classrooms which will be set-up for sectionals etc. There is a very good space next to the car park which is where we will set-up reception. There will be the usual MD's office, music library, and Course Office. Site security and access is controlled through individual security passes, which we will all be issued with: no more need to remember various key codes.

OK so there are lots of good points, what are the downsides? To be honest for you as Summer School members, I don't think there are any significant ones other than finding your way around a new facility.

Most of the challenges are faced by the organisers. We have to re-think, re-plan, re-organise every aspect of the Summer School, and we have to hope we don't miss or forget anything.

We do need your help though. We need your help with recruiting people to attend the Summer School. In particular, we will need to build our base of non-resident attendees from scratch: please help by promoting and publicising it as much as you can to friends, people, organisations that may be interested. Also publicise it to anyone who may be interested in being a residential member – we don't have the limitations on accommodation that we have previously had.

Notes

Images used in this newsletter of Downe House are courtesy of the school.

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Articles and photographs may be submitted for consideration to the editor by e-mail at renaissance@uwclub.net.

Editorial control lies with the editor and the committee and trustees of NLMS.

Message From the Chair of the Committee

Philip Meaden

We are delighted that the 2019 NLMS Music Summer School will take place at Downe House – a girls' boarding school in a village called Cold Ash, near Newbury in Berkshire.

Detailed information with booking forms should be available from 1 December 2018 on the Summer School website (www.nlmsmusic-summerschool.co.uk) and brochures will be circulated at about the same time; meanwhile, answers to some of the immediate questions that you may have are provided below.

A huge amount of work has gone into negotiating and planning the change, and thanks are due to all of the Committee members for making this possible – and particularly to Suzanne Meaden (Administrator and Treasurer)

and Steve Walker (Hon. Secretary and Marketing Co-ordinator) for their unstinting efforts.

It also pleasing to note that the April string chamber music course in Leeds has almost sold out. At the time of writing, there is space for just one more group (string trio, quartet or quintet), so please move quickly if you are thinking of attending. Further details may be found at <http://www.nlmsmusic.co.uk>

Have a good break over Christmas and the New Year and we look forward to seeing you in 2019!

Philip Meaden

Chair

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NLMS Music Summer School at Downe House

3-10 August, 2019

Why has the week changed?

This is the only week in which Downe House can accommodate us and we will thereby be returning to the Summer School's traditional slot of the first full week in August.

How easy is it to get to Downe House?

The school is about 4 miles by road from Junction 13 of the M4 (Chieveley/A34). The nearest major railway station is Newbury and the best way to get to Downe House from there is by taxi, which should take about 15 minutes. Detailed information may be found here <https://www.downehouse.net/downloads/directions-to-downe-house.pdf>

What will I find there?

An overview of the school site and its facilities is given here <https://www.downehouse.net/our-location.asp> NLMS Committee members have made three visits so far, with a fourth scheduled for the Director to settle the final details of the music accommodation that we will be using. On each occasion we have been unfailingly impressed by the standard of the accommodation and by the friendliness and professionalism of the staff. We are unanimous in our view that this is an ideal place for the Summer School.

What is the residential accommodation like?

There is a plentiful supply of modern, purpose-built living accommodation, with a mixture of mainly single, and a few double rooms. Some of these are on the ground floor, and these will be allocated on the basis of need. We will be based in two sixth-form houses and all rooms have washbasins. There are typically four bedrooms per shower facility, and we are assured categorically that the plumbing works reliably!

What is the music accommodation like?

The school has numerous suitable spaces, including a modern Performing Arts Centre, a state-of-the-art new Learning Centre with a large performance space, a music block with rehearsal and practice rooms, a chapel, and a plentiful supply of large classrooms for sectional rehearsals.

What other facilities will be available to me?

In addition to the school's large and beautiful grounds, we will be able to use the swimming pool at specified times, squash courts, tennis courts and (for controlled use only) a very well-equipped sports hall. All the usual NLMS services will still be available, including those of your very own personal shopper and, of course, a bar!

What will it cost?

As you may have started to suspect, such high quality does not come cheaply, although the Committee has decided to subsidise the fees somewhat for the first year or so to help with the transition. The 2019 residential rate will be £825 and the non-residential rate will be £595. When comparing these rates with either last year, or with other those of summer schools, please bear the following in mind:

- The rates at Queenswood would also have been higher had we returned there this year
- We are simply passing on Downe House's higher charges
- The residential and music facilities, and the catering, at Downe House are of a very high standard
- All residential accommodation is of the same high standard, which we judge to be better than Queenswood's upgraded accommodation, and the school makes no differential in the charge for individuals sharing rooms
- The NLMS Summer School's tutor:member ratio is exceptionally high, with professional specialists coaching every section, instrument and voice
- NLMS Music Summer School runs over seven nights, unlike some others; our day-for-day charges still compare favourably with those of other summer schools and with, for example, a seven night full-board stay in a well-equipped hotel plus a full programme of daily activities.

In short, while the 2019 offer will cost more, the Committee is confident that it represents outstanding value-for-money. Bursaries will, as ever, be available for those who need financial help and to those who are willing to help with the Summer School's running; scholarships will also be available for young performers and those in shortage instruments/voices. We aim to ensure that no-one is prevented from attending by the cost alone.

Where can I find out more?

In addition to the various web-links given above and the brochure, the Society has a Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/nlmsmusic/>) and good points of contact are the Administrator, Suzanne Meaden (suzanne.meaden@gmail.com) and Hon. Secretary, Steve Walker (steve_walker@coxhill.co.uk). They will do their best to answer your questions, routing them appropriately if necessary.

How can I help?

A change of venue is always an exciting, if challenging, time. Please:

- Book early – we have to commit to going ahead at Downe House by 1 February, and need a clear idea by then of likely numbers; the contract requires us to have a minimum of 100 residents for the week
- Tell other people about the Summer School and encourage them to attend – there is a particular need to replace the non-resident members whom we are likely to lose through the move
- Like the Society's Facebook page and share posts with your contacts; if you use Twitter, follow us there (<https://twitter.com/nlmsmusic>) and retweet our tweets
- Distribute brochures for us, for example to your local music shops, orchestras, bands, choirs and libraries (contact Suzanne Meaden for supplies)
- Download the poster from the website and place it prominently wherever you think it will be helpful
- Stay in touch by whatever means suits you best – we always love to hear from you.

News from the Administrator

Suzanne Meaden

It seems like only yesterday that the 2018 Summer School finished. What a wonderful week it was! Thank you for so many lovely comments, some of which will appear anonymously in the 2019 advertising material.

Since then life has been very busy finishing off the 2018 course, and preparing for 2019. During the first few weeks I had to finish paying the bills and complete the preparation of the accounts for the end of our financial year on September 30th. The accounts reflected the increase in Summer School course numbers and my attempts to keep costs as low as possible. Both the String Quartet weekend in February 2018, and the Summer School in August made surpluses; the former very small, reflecting the reduced number of quartets who were able to make the earlier date; the latter a healthy one.

Having mentioned Downe House as our preferred new venue, as you will have already heard, I signed the contract with the school several weeks ago. The intervening period allowed us to hold our

post-Summer School committee meeting at the school at which time Steve Bingham, Charles, Jacob and Ron were able to look at the school and add their votes of approval to those of us who had already visited. The school catered for us royally on that day. During that meeting we were able to discuss your evaluations of the 2018 Summer School in more detail, and to pass on to those concerned your comments for action in 2019.

There is a great deal of excitement at Downe House about the NLMS move to its location. The Director of Marketing has offered a number of exciting opportunities for advertising our course in the Thatcham/Newbury area and we look forward to taking up those offers. All we now need is for you to apply and make the week of 3rd-10th August 2019 another fulfilling one for everybody. Every year for as long as I can remember, we have said that this has been the best week yet and it can't get any better. Somehow it just goes on getting better and better! I have just been able to send text to the printers for the production of the brochure, but full details will be on the NLMS website for you to apply from 1 December. There may be a slight delay in getting the paper copies to you as Downe House has offered their photographs for inclusion. They want to see what we are proposing to publish before it finally goes to print. This takes time. You can, however, still contact me by email or phone. (I have already had a phone call from a lady who, with a friend, will be new to the course, but who have heard what we had on offer in 2018 and are keen to join us in 2019).

I look forward to hearing from you and to seeing you on April 26th for the Easter String Quartet course (only one space now available) and August 3rd for the Summer School.

Wishing you all a peaceful Christmas and New Year.

Suzanne



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