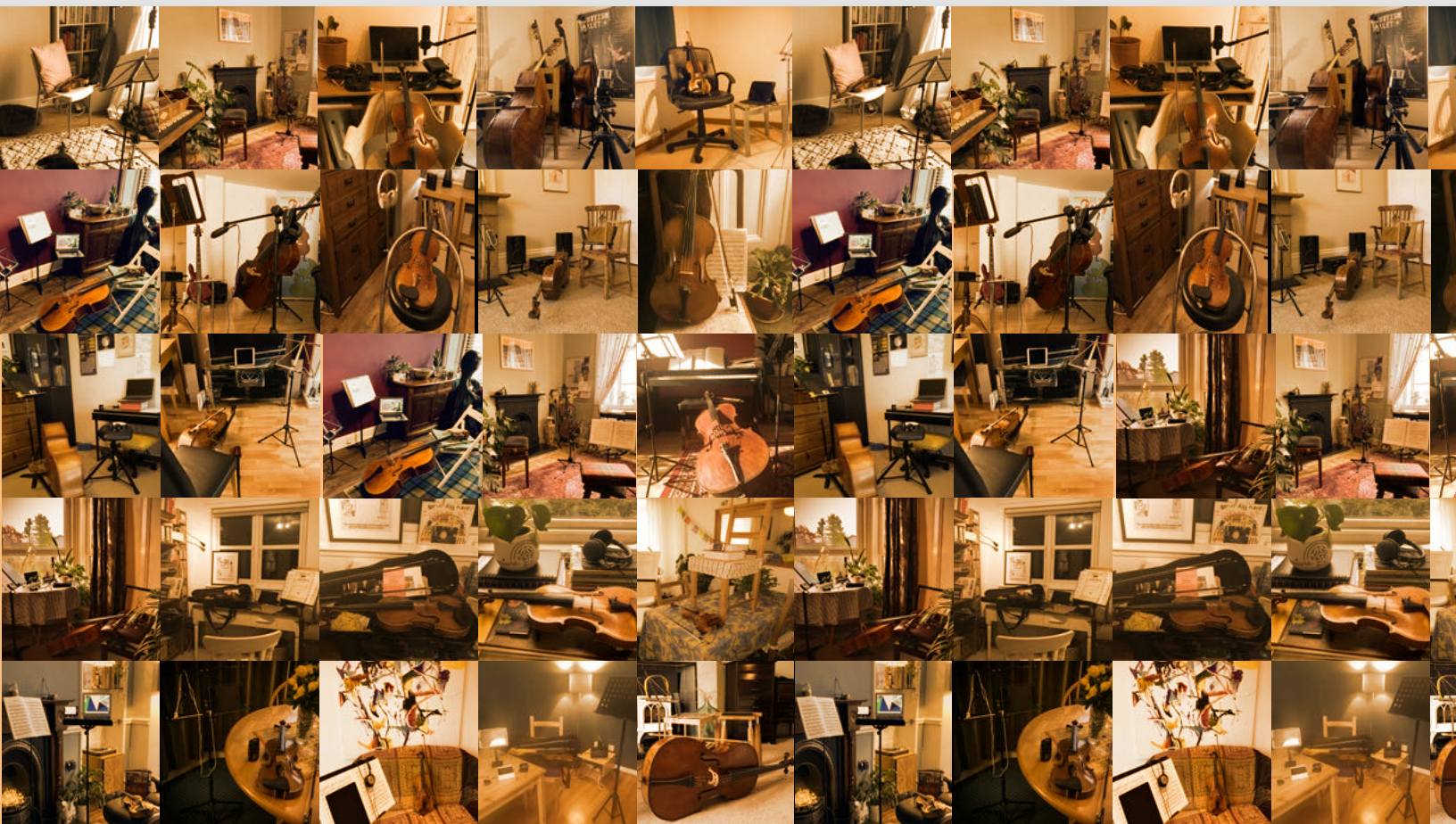


SCOTTISH FREELANCERS ENSEMBLE



OCTOBER
2020

THE NEW ERA OF CLASSICAL MUSIC



PICTURE ABOVE:

Scottish Freelancers Ensemble:
photos from our home 'studios'



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to our SFE October newsletter!

With the turning back of the clocks and the nights continuing to draw ever closer, the last few weeks have certainly flown by. As the length of time between our own last live performances and the present grows larger, the silence is palpable. We are reminded that since March, the pandemic has drastically affected our lives and livelihoods as freelance musicians. Whilst we watch many Orchestras begin to function effectively again under COVID guidelines (with social distancing between players and no live audience), sadly for freelancers in the art sector, the end is still not in sight.

Our short youtube video 'We Are Viable', stands in solidarity with our freelance colleagues protesting for more support from the government earlier this month. This was our first silent video, and gives a glimpse of the spaces in which SFE musicians have been recording and working during this pandemic. Our living rooms, bedrooms and attic spaces have been turned into makeshift recording studios. It is a stark change from the concert halls and venues we were used to working in. However, we continue to look forward to the day where we can meet again on stage to do what we do best; perform and make music together.

This month in our newsletter, you'll find we are expanding our team - we are delighted to introduce you to Feargus Egan and Liam Brolly! For our SFE Focus, we are joined by the wonderful double bassist, Lynette Eaton. We're sure you will enjoy reading about her professional career as a female double bassist, as well as her love of sailing and brownies! Thanks to your generous donations, SFE are delighted to be able to commission another special research article, written by our very own Dr Aaron McGregor. This month we will be telling you about the life and works of composer Charles Ignatius Sancho.

We have some very exciting things in the pipeline, including the announcement of our next virtual concert! Read on to find out more...

Thank you so much for your continuous support and we hope you will enjoy reading our newsletter as much as we have enjoyed creating it! We continue to be grateful for each and every one of your contributions to aid us in creating more digital content for you to enjoy from the comfort and safety of your homes.

Scottish Freelancers Ensemble

"We hope that by raising awareness of our current circumstances, this project will help to amplify our voices as a freelance community so that ultimately, we can begin to share music again."

SFE co-founder and violinist Katrina Lee

OUR STUDIO



MEET OUR LATEST TEAM MEMBERS

FEARGUS EGAN DIGITAL/SOCIAL MEDIA OFFICER



Feargus is a freelance cellist and teacher, and before lockdown he enjoyed a varied career performing with several ensembles around Scotland, including the BBCSSO and RSNO orchestras. While he is very much looking forward to live performance again, he is very grateful to have the chance to continue to make music with the SFE, and still maintains his busy teaching schedule online.

A graduate of the RSAMD, Feargus was a Bliss Scholar at the RCM in London. Whilst there he was part of the award-winning Arbellio string quartet, with whom he attended the 7th Trondheim International Chamber Music Academy. A dedicated Chamber musician, Feargus has performed with the Chillingirian Quartet, Quator Ebene, Maxwell Quartet, and has enjoyed performances at festivals in Cougain, France and Zeist, the Netherlands.

LIAM BROLLY

SFE SPOTLIGHT EDITOR



Glaswegian Violist, Liam Brolly, is sought after internationally as an orchestral and chamber musician. Liam has appeared as Guest Principal Violist with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Malta Philharmonic Orchestra, and Orchestra Victoria in Melbourne. Other orchestral performances have included the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Royal Northern Sinfonia, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. In 2019, Liam made his debut as a guest artist with both Dilijan and Salastina Chamber societies as well as the highly acclaimed Monday Evening Concert Series. Chamber music partners have included members of the Tokyo, St. Lawrence, and Edinburgh Quartets, Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Caroline Shaw, and 1st Concert Master of the Berlin Philharmonic, Noah Bendix-Balgley.

Liam holds an Artist Diploma from the Colburn School in Los Angeles, where he studied with renowned Scottish Violist, Paul Coletti.

SFE FOCUS

CHARLES IGNATIUS SANCHO



Photo above: Attribute_
Thomas Gainsborough -

Researcher and SFE violinist Aaron McGregor explores the life and work of writer, composer, and abolitionist Charles Ignatius Sancho.

If you happened to open Google on October 1st this year, you will have glimpsed an image of the subject of this month's Focus article: writer, composer, and abolitionist Charles Ignatius Sancho (1729-1780). This beautifully designed 'Google Doodle' (by artist Kingsley Nebechi) marked the beginning of Black History Month and incorporates a portrait from c. 1760 by Scottish artist Allan Ramsay (1713-1784). Sancho was a great choice by Google: he was an exceptionally gifted 'Renaissance man', whose talents ranged across theatre, music, writing, and politics. He was the first black voter in Britain, the first black writer of prose to have their work published, and the first individual of African origin to publish music in Britain.

Despite their absence from official histories of music in Britain, black musicians have been working here for centuries. As early as the 16th century, the trumpeter John Blanke had a prized position at the court of Henry VIII, and in there were several anonymous 'moor' trumpeters and taborers (drummers) at the Scottish court of James IV. Despite prejudice and the difficulties of breaking into a somewhat closed profession, black musicians continued to make their way into musical professions in Georgian England, including instrumentalists in dance ensembles and regimental bands. A few individuals became celebrated virtuosi. London and other English cities featured on the touring circuit for virtuosi such as violinist-composer Joseph Boulogne (whose String Quartet in C Major was featured in the first SFE virtual concert), and the Black Anglo-Polish violin prodigy George Bridgetower (1778-1860). Joseph Antonio Emidy (1775-1835) was born in Guinea and escaped slavery in Portugal to work at the Lisbon Opera, before becoming a ship's fiddler in the Royal Navy during the Napoleonic wars, and finally settling in Truro, Cornwall, leading an orchestra and composing (now lost) concertos and a symphony.

As has been the case with the other musicians featured by SFE, Sancho's career was made possible by a series of exceptional circumstances, but his success was also down to an impressive intellect and range of talents. Most of what we know about Sancho's early life is from a biography by Joseph Jekyll published in 1782 – though this work is sometimes at odds with what Sancho wrote about himself in his letters. In Sancho's own words, we know that the first part of his life “was rather unlucky”. He was born in Guinea in 1729, and in infancy he was transported on a slave ship to the Spanish West Indies (South America). After being orphaned at the age of two, he was brought to England, and placed in the service of three unmarried women from an upper-class family in Greenwich. Whilst this slave-owning family made efforts to repress Sancho's intellect (they “judged ignorance the best and only security for obedience”), he found encouragement from near neighbours the Dukes of Montagu, who led Sancho's formal education and encouraged his cultural pursuits, eventually becoming lifelong patrons. John Montagu, 2nd Duke of Montagu had previously been somewhat implicit in the slave trade, as an ex-governor of Jamaica. He is supposed to have developed a fascination in the exploration of “African genius”, for example sponsoring a young Jamaican, Francis Williams (d. 1774), to study at the University of Cambridge.

After the death of the 2nd Duke in 1749, Sancho negotiated his release from bondage to become butler to the Duchess of Montagu until 1751, later returning to the family as valet to George Brudenell, son-in-law to John Montagu, who had inherited the lands and title of Duke of Montagu in 1749. In 1758, Sancho married Anne Osborne, a woman from the West Indies with whom he would have seven children. In 1773, they opened a grocery store in London. As a landowner with financial independence, Sancho gained the right to vote, and was able to concentrate on his many cultural pursuits, which had variously included acting in plays in the 1750s (including playing the title role in *Othello*), as well as publishing two plays and a theory of music. Sancho was an avid letter writer, keeping in regular correspondence with a literary circle including the abolitionist Laurence Sterne. Some 160 letters were published posthumously in 1782, and variously contain insightful commentary on London life, explorations of culture and literature, impassioned and reasoned arguments for the abolition of slavery, and a great sense of humour (a personal favourite is an opening of a letter where Sancho calls his friend “confounded'st—dunderhead—sapscull—looby—clodpate—nincompoop—ninnyhammer—booby-chick—farcical—loungebuss—blunderbuss”).

Music was an amateur pursuit for Sancho, though judging by his orchestrations, songs, and his having published a theory of music, the composer was fairly accomplished technically. Apart from the theory of music, there are five published collections, four made up of instrumental music, along with a single collection of songs. The latter features settings of words by Shakespeare and the actor David Garrick, set for solo voice and figured bass in a light, early-classical style, comfortably sitting somewhere between art music and popular song.

The other four collections consist of settings of dance music, presumably all written by, and certainly arranged by Sancho. Anyone raised on a musical diet of Mozart and Beethoven might find such music lightweight, but this wasn't intended as intellectual music purely for listening: it was written as music for dancing. Two of the collections include dance instructions alongside the tunes, the dances possibly also the work of the ever-versatile Sancho.

One of the things I love about 18th-century dance collections is that they don't fit with our concepts of the separation of art and traditional music. Dance musicians (and dancers) performed styles from across the spectrum, including Europe-wide court dances such as the minuet, alongside more vernacular types such as country dances, reels, and hornpipes – tune types still played by fiddlers today.

Sancho includes this full spectrum of dance tune types, with the addition of a gavotte and some French cotillions. Some of the minuets are tastefully arranged for a small orchestra of two violins, two horns, and basso continuo, but otherwise the tunes are presented in the standard format of melody line plus bass, which could either be played by a solo cello, or realised on a continuo instrument such as the harpsichord. Writing good dance tunes is certainly a different skill to writing symphonies, but it takes a particular gift for melodic writing to keep tunes interesting within the constraints of composing in 4 bar phrases and simple triadic harmony. Sancho certainly had a talent for memorable, tuneful writing – unlike many other dance collections from the period, it's hard to find a dud tune anywhere in Sancho's four collections. The tunes are also a lot of fun to play – I don't think there's any record of Sancho playing the violin, but his melodies certainly fit under the fingers well.

A personal favourite is the jig ‘Mungo's Delight’ from Sancho's 1779 collection, with its move from a dark G minor to a lighter B flat major, its athletic jumps across strings, and subtle contrary motion between bass and tune. It's one of those tunes you're happy to keep playing many times in a row – which is actually what would have happened at the time, with the tune played again and again for a particular country dance (sets of different tunes for dances came in a bit later). The ‘Mungo’ in the title might be a coded reference to Sancho himself, Mungo being a black character in a play by Isaac Bickerstaffe, believed to have been performed by Sancho.

It's difficult to know exactly where Sancho's music was heard. It's very likely to have played for or by the family and extended circle of the Dukes of Montagu, and the various other aristocratic families to whom collections and tunes are named. The success of printing some five collections points to the ability to sell many copies, and the inclusion of dance instructions also hints at a relationship with a professional dancing master. As Josephine Wright has pointed out, there may well also have been a black audience for Sancho's music: the 18th-century English diarist John Baker described the existence of fashionable clubs in London with all black membership, where the audience was entertained by dancing and music by ‘violins, French horns, and other instruments’, performed entirely by a band made up of black musicians.

Aaron McGregor, October 2020

SFE SPOTLIGHT INTERVIEWS

'MISS OCTOBER'

LYNETTE EATON



For this edition of SFE Spotlight Interviews, Violist Liam Brolly catches up with one of our lovely Double Bass players and Scottish freelancing veteran, Lynette Eaton.

A successful freelancer is someone whose colleagues are always happy to see them walk into the room or see their name on a personnel list. Lynette fits that description perfectly. You would be hard-pressed to find someone with whom Lynette cannot get along. Bringing warmth, kindness, a great sense of humour, and a wealth of expertise and experience to every rehearsal, she is a must have for many of the orchestras and ensembles in Scotland. For instance, in this interview Lynette insisted on being referred to as 'Miss October'. Liam was more than happy to oblige.

Miss October's Lockdown List;**Favourite Lockdown Food** – Chocolate Brownies**Most Consumed Beverage** – Tea & Coffee or B52s**Guilty TV show** – Pottery videos on YouTube**So, 'Miss October'.. It's obvious from your accent that you're not from here originally - what brought you to Scotland?**

My husband! He got a job at the RCS as their recording engineer, so we moved. I had toured and worked in Scotland a lot before moving so I already knew I loved it up here!

I understand you're an avid sailor, do you listen to music when you're sailing?

Well, I'm on a boat but I don't know how to sail, just do what I'm told; First Mate, not the Captain.. But yes, we do listen to music while we sail. We listen to Louis Jordan – Five Guys Named Moe. It's all jolly stuff and when you're motoring along there's a bit too much noise so it's great to have on in the background. We're fortunate enough to sail past Fingal's cave, so we become a bit cliché and put on Mendelssohn – how can you not?!

What is your ideal sailing destination?

Well, my eldest daughter, Molly is out in Melbourne right now and we've not seen her for a year. So, I'd have to say Australia for that reason.

This is a music newsletter, so we should probably get on with it.. Could you tell us how you got into playing the Double Bass? Fewer notes...

Well, I started off on piano and violin at a young age then, when I was about 15, the music teacher came into my classroom and said 'Right, we've got a space for Double-Bass lessons, does anyone want to have a go?' and my hand shot up. I found out later in life that I had originally wanted to play the Bass when I was really teeny, but my parents decided on the violin because it was much smaller... But I got my wish in the end!

Plus, having something to lean on when you're playing is always a bonus – you can't do that on the Violin!

What has been your worst experience travelling with your bass? I once had to pick up my bass in its enormous flight case from customs and wheel it over to be picked up ready for the next leg of the journey – that was hideous.

But I think the worst has to be going on the London Underground. Not only are you travelling with an enormous instrument in a tiny space, but you also have to deal with comments like 'bet you wish you'd picked the flute?' sod off!

What has been your favourite touring destination and why?

Japan. It's one of those places that you have on the list and you see other people touring there and think 'when's it going to be my turn?'. Well, I got my chance and I absolutely loved it. Everything from the food & drink (I love saké!) to the architecture and the cherry blossoms – it is an amazing place!

I think musicians and non-musicians alike will want an answer to this one... do you always take your own instrument on tour or do you sometimes borrow one?

When I first moved to Scotland I was still working a lot down south so I thought 'I'll just borrow one whenever I go down' but it's such a long way to go and using someone else's instrument is never ideal because we all love our own instruments and have a personal connection with them, so eventually I stopped doing that so much. My worst experience of borrowing an instrument happened when I went to Barbados. The strings were raised so far above the finger board that I couldn't even press them down, so I had to cut a 2 inch groove in the bridge so that I could play it. I think I pretty much wrecked that bass...

Playing an instrument that is predominantly played by men, have there been any challenges you've had to overcome?

Obviously, I've been in the business a 'little while' now and personally I've never really found it to be an issue. I love the banter of a bass section, and I've never taken anything personally. Being a freelancer, you must be able to get along with everyone and have a bit of a laugh. There was one occasion where an older male colleague turned to me and another female colleague and said 'Come on, Girls! Get on with your knitting!' which of course was massively sexist, but I've always just got on with it and tried to enjoy myself.

And finally, what would you say to young women thinking of having a career as a Double-Bassist?

Just go for it; work hard, be yourself and have a laugh!

Wonderful advice. Thank you, Lynette!

CHRISTMAS WITH SFE AND FRIENDS!

SFE

GRAB SOME MULLED WINE AND COME JOIN US!

We are absolutely delighted to announce our next virtual concert, due to premiere on our Scottish Freelancers Ensemble Youtube channel at 7:30pm on Friday 4th of December. We really hope you can join us and some of our VERY special guests. More to be revealed over the coming weeks... Grab your mulled wine, nibbles and get ready to cosy up for an evening of warming, festive music! Stay tuned for our full programme and line-up announcement and we hope you can join us!



SPECIAL THANKS

We would like to extend a special thanks to our current sponsor through both Gofundme and Patreon accounts.

Scottish Freelancers Ensemble

£4,289 raised of £7,500 target

FUNDRAISER STATS:

120 DONORS

285 SHARES

120 FOLLOWERS

The logo consists of the letters 'SFE' in a bold, sans-serif font. The 'S' and 'E' are white, while the 'F' is orange. The logo is centered within a black square, which is itself centered on a larger orange background.

SFE