

# Early birds

If you have a craving for shawms, viols and lutes, head straight for a specialist early music summer school. *Kevin Stephens* picks out four of the best

Summer schools in early music are rather few and far between. Perhaps this is because the technical demands made on performers are higher. There are more courses available than there were, asserts Selene Mills, administrator of Cambridge Early Music, and they are more demanding in some respects. Perhaps this is because they focus on the style, and gaining some understanding of how the music works so you can apply the style to it, rather than learning the instrument.

So it is good to discover the **Norvis** early music summer school which is held annually in Durham, covers all aspects of early music and is suitable for beginners through to advanced and solo players. The artistic director is Ralph Woodward, a young Durham-born musician who now has a career spanning Europe.

'The school was founded in 1971, the year I was born, by Layton and Christine Ring,' he says. 'I started attending about 20 years ago as a teenager. We have technique classes for viols, recorders, singing, harpsichord, lute and baroque strings, and there is plenty of consort playing, concerts, lectures, trio sonatas, renaissance band, choir, baroque orchestra and early dancing.'

The 2009 school runs from 1 to 8 August and the wide range of tutors include Alan Davis, Elizabeth Dodd, Duncan Druce, Martin Eastwell, Andrew Fowler, Terry Gill, Clare Griffel, Manfred Harras, Laura Hird, Alison Kinder, Stewart McCoy, David Pinto, Jacqui Robertson-Wade, Jane Rumney, Mary Tyers and Woodward himself.

Accommodation is in single study bedrooms (a few doubles are available) in the College of St Hild and St Bede, part of the University of Durham and within easy reach of the historic city centre with its castle and spectacular Norman cathedral.

Course pitch is A415 for string instruments and A440 for recorders. Students who wish to bring their own instruments, though a limited number of viols are available for hire at a charge of £20. Baroque violins, bows and lutes can also be made available by prior arrangement.

Overlapping with the Durham school is the long-established **Dolmetsch Recorder Course** which runs from 2 to 8 August 2009 under the auspices of the XIIth Musical Summer at Moreton Hall in

handles the master/advanced class. Grade 8 and above.

There is a set list of music available from the web site which should be thoroughly prepared beforehand. 'We assume you can play the notes accurately at a reasonable speed both on the descant/soprano and on the treble/alto,' says Bellugi. 'These classes are to develop your musicality and knowledge of the art of performance as much as to improve your basic technique.'

Technical work



Shropshire. Students have two choices, either advanced technique classes over two weeks on a one-to-one basis with Professor David Bellugi; or the Dolmetsch Course for one week.

Certain minimum standards are required to take part and the technique classes for the recorder course begin at middle intermediate class, Grade 4 to 6, with Marguerite Dolmetsch as tutor. The higher intermediate class, Grades 6 to 7, is taken by Rachel Gregory while David Bellugi

will form part of each day's teaching but only in so far as this helps students to realise what the work requires were they to perform it for others to listen to. 'Music is essentially an aural/oral tradition,' says Bellugi. 'We learn most from listening to professional performers playing music, whatever their instrument, and for this reason all our tutors are seasoned professional performers as well as being highly experienced and skilled teachers on their instruments.'

A choir and orchestra is organised daily as part

of the Musical Summer at Moreton Hall and there are also recorder ensemble classes directed by Dr Brian Blood. Language lessons are also available.

In another historic university city, **Cambridge Early Music** offers short study courses in Baroque and Renaissance music designed for amateur, semi-professional and professional musicians and accommodated in Sidney Sussex College. 'Participants need to be able to sight read and ideally hold a part on their own,' says Selene Mills. The baroque programme (26 July - 2 August, pitch A415) is directed by Peter Holman, Judy Tarling and Mark Caudle of the Parley of Instruments with guest tutors Gail Hennessy and Philip Thorby. It covers music by Handel and his English contemporaries.

Participants have technique workshops, choral and orchestral sessions for large-scale works and one-to-a-part chamber music exploring unusual repertoire in various combinations of voices and instruments. Singers and players of violin, viola, cello, bass violin (baroque or modern instruments, gut-strung, with baroque bows), bass viol, violone, recorder, flute, oboe, bassoon, the lute family, harp and harpsichord playing continuo from figured bass are welcome to apply. Those who feel they may be weaker players or singers are asked to prepare a piece of chamber music in advance and bring the parts, so that they can be fitted into the coaching schedule.

The Renaissance course (2 to 9 August, pitch A440) is based on the music performed at the February 1568 wedding of Duke Wilhelm of Bavaria to Princess Renée of Lorraine in Munich where Kapellmeister Orlando Lassus directed the music, both at the wedding itself, and during two weeks of lavish celebrations. There were motets, madrigals, chansons and dances, everything from intimate four-part songs to the great 40-voice motet *Ecce beatam lucem* by Alessandro Striggio.

The course is suitable for voices, viols, lutes, citterns, shawms, sackbuts, curtals, windcap reeds (cornamuses), rackets, renaissance flutes, cornetts (including mute cornetts), virginals and organ. Philip Thorby, director of Musica Antiqua of London and a senior fellow of Trinity College of Music, leads a team including David Hatcher on viola da gamba, lutenist Jacob Heringman and Keith McGowan on shawm, cornett, sackbut, renaissance flute and curtal.

A series of concerts given by participating tutors and students runs alongside the summer school using local Cambridge venues such as Emmanuel United Reformed Church, Little St Mary's Church, and Trinity College Chapel. This includes such delights as *Stile Antico* Early Music Vocal Ensemble singing settings of the Song of Solomon and the Parley of Instruments with music by Blow and Purcell.

The **Lacock Summer School** in Wiltshire was once a regular feature on the calendar but director Andrew van der Beek has replaced it with a series of specialist courses for singers. They include two courses for one-to-a-part singing with Robert Hollingworth and Jan Joost van Elburg in Corsburn near Lacock (12-17 April); two choral weeks in Italy with David Allinson in Florence (11-15 May) and Robert Hollingworth in Montecenero (14-19 June); and two choral evensong weekends in Holland, one in Amsterdam (6-7 June) with David Allinson and the other in Dordrecht with Paul Spicer.

The venue in Florence will be Casa Santo Nome di Gesù, a religious foundation in central Florence with its own accommodation and the main work studied will be the *Missa sopra l'aria della monica* by Girolamo Frescobaldi. In Montecenero the main focus is on the six-part *Lamentations* of Robert White and the venue is the Hotel Montecenero which has a Romanesque church at its centre. In Amsterdam the Oude Kerk will echo to the music of Byrd, Tomkins and Tallis while in Dordrecht the featured composers are Gibbons, Howells and Bainton.

Most of these courses have some kind of hardship fund or scholarship arrangement which can provide help for those who cannot afford the full fees.

[www.norvis.org.uk](http://www.norvis.org.uk)  
[www.dolmetsch.com/Dss](http://www.dolmetsch.com/Dss)  
[www.cambridgeearlymusic.org](http://www.cambridgeearlymusic.org)  
[www.lacock.org](http://www.lacock.org)

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