

# Fèis YMI

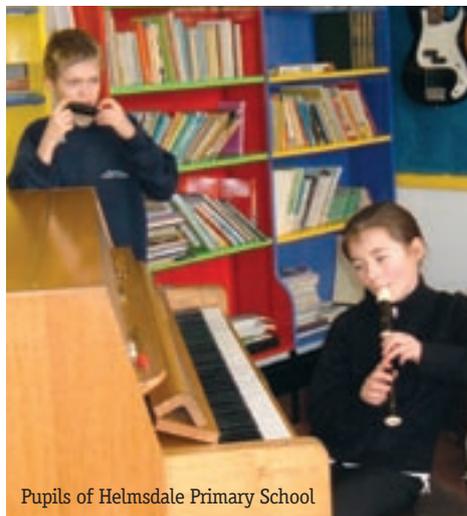
A special newsletter focusing on the Highland Council's YMI partnership with Fèisean nan Gàidheal

## Youth Music Initiative Reaches Every Primary School in Highland

**This year, delivery of the traditional music aspect of the Youth Music Initiative (YMI) in the Highlands, which gives children in all Highland primary schools experience of traditional music, has reached its set target. Not only has YMI reached every primary school in the Highland Council area, it has also led to the creation of employment for the many talented and professional traditional musicians.**

In 2004, the responsibility for delivering the traditional aspect of YMI was given to Fèisean nan Gàidheal by the Highland Council. This followed a pledge by the Scottish Executive which aimed to 'ensure that by 2006, every primary school pupil should have access to at least one year's free music tuition by the time they reach Primary 6'. Co-ordination of programming the initiative was then passed onto local fèisean in the Highland Council area, with every school from Eigg to Avoch and Wick to Glencoe experiencing traditional music from some of the most experienced and acknowledged artists in their profession, some of whom are graduates from the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama. Tuition has also been offered through the medium of Gaelic in Gaelic schools, using tutors fluent in the language.

After running for three years, the goal of delivering a high quality traditional musical experience through the initiative to all 184 primary schools in the Highland area has been achieved.



Pupils of Helmsdale Primary School

Music Development Officer for the Highland Council, Norman Bolton hopes that this initiative will help pupils further on in their learning, saying "It is hoped that through time all these skills will enable pupils to build a high level of musical understanding as they move into Secondary education'.

Working on behalf of Fèisean nan Gàidheal, Rae MacEachern is the YMI Co-ordinator. She added "It's thanks to the schools for taking this on and making this work into their own tight curriculum that has made the delivery of YMI such a success. Added to that, the quality of delivery through the outstanding tutors and local fèisean has been remarkable, and long may it continue".

**Contact details and more information can be found on page 4 of this publication**

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# Roi-ràdh

Chaidh fàilte a chur air an Tomairt Ciùil Òigridh (ICO) mar leasachaidh ann am foghlam òigridh ha h-Alba, agus tha Fèisean nan Gàidheal air a bhith glè thoilichte ag obair còmhla ri grunn chomhairlean ionadail airson clasaichean ann an ceòl traidiseanta a theagasg mar phàirt den obrach ICO aca.

Tha sinn mothachail air na h-uallaichean a bharrachd a tha an cois a bhith ag obair ann an sgoil, seach fèis neo fhoirmeil, agus tha sinn airson fiosrachadh a chumail ris na sgoiltean air na bhios sinne a' tairgse mar phàirt den ICO. Tha sinn an dòchas gum bi an litir-naidheachd seo feumail, agus gum bi e a' soillearachadh ar dreuchd-sa.

## Art MacCarraig

Stiùiriche

Fèisean nan Gàidheal

*Amazingly, all the pupils were really enthusiastic about the lessons and really enjoyed them. Hope to have the same again.*

Teacher, Brora Primary School

# Foreword

The Youth Music Initiative (YMI) is a welcome development in the education of young Scots, and Fèisean nan Gàidheal is particularly pleased to have had the opportunity to work with several local authorities in providing traditional music lessons as part of their YMI delivery.

We recognise that working in a school requires additional disciplines to a less formal Fèis, and we would like to keep all schools informed of what we offer as part of YMI delivery, and ensure that they know how to contact us if they have any concerns. We hope that this newsletter will be useful, and will help clarify our role.

## Arthur Cormack

Director

Fèisean nan Gàidheal

# About YMI

The traditional music programme of the Youth Music Initiative covers all primary schools in the Highland Council area. Each school is given a 12-week programme broken into three 4-week blocks and with their choices being taken from the menu of options. In order not to duplicate or

interfere with existing music provision in schools, the options offered are in four main areas; tin whistle, Gaelic song, children's song and group music. Musicians and artists involved in the initiative have included such talents as Rachel Walker, Deirdre Graham, Louise MacKenzie and Bob Massie.

## Tutor Focus: Darren MacLean, Tutor of Gaelic Song



**Traditional singer and tutor Darren MacLean hails from Roag, near Dunvegan on the Isle of Skye. Having participated in a number of fèisean and local mòds when he was younger, Darren went on to win the prestigious Gold Medal at the 2003 Royal National Mòd and was nominated as a finalist in the BBC Radio Scotland Young Traditional Musician of the Year Award 2007. Here, Darren tells us of his YMI experiences:**

Singing has always been in the family and I was always encouraged to sing, especially round the home. That's where I picked up many of the songs I know.

When I left school I went on to study music at the RSAMD in Glasgow. I knew I enjoyed performing and singing and like people to enjoy what I enjoy, so I suppose it was then that I decided to pursue a career in singing.

**I first heard of YMI through some friends on Skye who were tutoring in the schools and was immediately interested in getting involved. So, I got in touch with the local fèis and**

**told them of my interest and that I could be available to them. A while later, I was invited to go along and do Gaelic Song in the schools.**

From there, my name went onto the tutor list and tutoring through YMI became a more permanent part of my work. To do YMI makes it easier for musicians to make a living out of their art. It can often be flexible enough to fit in with other professional commitments.

The work has taken me all over the Highlands from Skye to Wick and Lochaber to Lochcarron. It's really great to see different parts of the Highlands and experience the differing styles of culture and language across this vast area.

The children are really enthusiastic, not only because they get away from Maths or English, but they want to tell you stories, similar to the ones that lie behind the songs. And that's the best thing about YMI. The children across the Highlands, and indeed Scotland, are getting a wee taste of our tradition and heritage. They remember what they have learnt and they want to learn more, so they go out to their own communities ready to learn.

*I liked it very much. I was not into this kind of music but I am now!*  
School Pupil

# In Focus: Delivering YMI in North Highland and The Small Isles

The universal delivery of YMI effectively covers a large geographical region, equivalent to the size of Belgium. Here, we focus on the approach of two different areas in delivering YMI to schools in their locality.

## North Highland

Covering both rural and urban areas, Fèis Rois co-ordinates the delivery of YMI in 104 schools in the Highlands. Since September 2006, over 3,700 children have received visits from their team of tutors.

The Education Officer at Fèis Rois has organised a system whereby the focus rotates between the areas of Inverness/Nairn and Ross-shire/Caithness. The children are given a carefully-planned, lively and informative tuition programme of traditional Scottish music through a range of subject choices.

Teaching staff and children have responded with wonderful enthusiasm and great progress is being made in the subjects offered. Particularly noteworthy is the all-inclusive nature of the scheme, which allows children of all abilities to benefit from the tuition.

The YMI programme has made a notable impact on the career paths of many graduates and Highland musicians. Three of our original YMI tutors have now gone on to

become Primary teachers, and others have been able to make a full-time professional commitment to music.

*I liked the songs and now I've got more confidence in myself and enjoy singing out loud.*

## School Pupil

## The Small Isles

Fèis Lochabair have been busy delivering their YMI programme to some of the remotest places in Scotland. The isles of Eigg, Muck, Rum and Canna all lie off the North West Coast of Scotland, where pupil numbers vary from one pupil on the Isle of Canna, to six children on the Isle of Muck. This may be rather low compared to some of the bigger schools found in the more populated areas of the Highlands, but that doesn't mean they get left out.

Delivery of YMI takes a different form in this area. Usually, the tutors will be based on the mainland in Mallaig and travel out to each of the Islands every day. Unlike the mainland schools, where tutors will come in for perhaps an hour every week for a set period, the small isles get just one visit per term, which normally lasts around three hours. By CalMac ferry or by Fastcraft Rib, tutors of the YMI traditional music programme make every effort to get to the schools in the islands to deliver YMI.

## Tutor Training: Meeting the Needs of the Tutors

The success of YMI has opened up further opportunities for tutors to gain training specific to working in schools. Units have included class management and teaching strategies, preparation of teaching plans, along with child protection, equal opportunities and inclusion. Basic Gaelic for classroom use is also an essential ongoing class.

Throughout the year, training days are centrally organised and regularly take place in different areas throughout the region. Outside agencies have also been included in delivering training aimed at tutors involved in bringing the arts to children.

These training events are complemented by tutor training sessions run by Fèisean nan Gàidheal. These two-level courses, covering all aspects of tutoring young people, have been well received by those who attended, including representatives from Edinburgh Youth Gaitherin' and Glasgow Fiddle Workshop, as well as aspiring fèis tutors.

If you would like more information regarding YMI training, contact your local fèis or Rae MacEachern, YMI Co-ordinator for Fèisean nan Gàidheal: [rae@feisean.org](mailto:rae@feisean.org)

## YMI and Highland 2007



In the year that Scotland celebrates Highland Culture, the Fèisean have been asked to offer their services to the many Cultural Co-ordinators in the Highland area. If you are running an event in association with one of the co-ordinators in the area and think that the project would benefit from one of YMI's many talented and experienced tutors, then do not hesitate to get in touch. Your local YMI representative's contact details can be found on page 4 of this leaflet.



# Fèis YMI: Feedback

Each school is provided with feedback forms for teachers, pupils and tutors to complete at the end of each block of YMI. This initiative has led to many positive comments and responses appearing from schools across the area. Below are typical examples of the comments the project has received:

*We really enjoy the input from YMI, and the pupils look forward to their visits. A number of our more musical pupils continue to play whistle from home and enjoy a new challenge.*

**Head Teacher, Elgol Primary School**

*Great class. Could do with more singing to boost confidence. Music good.*

**Tutor**

*The children gained so much from the four weeks. They thoroughly enjoyed the interaction and participation. It also gave me, as a teacher, an insight into a side of the children we don't normally see.*

*I thought it was extremely worthwhile and thoroughly rewarding for the school.*

**Teacher, Mulbuie Primary School**

*I really enjoyed tin whistle and I am going to try and get to the Fèis*

**School Pupil**

*I liked the songs so much that when I went home I was singing the songs all the time*

**School Pupil**

*This was a most worthwhile project. I likes the way the pupils' individual interests were included.*

**Teacher, Rogart Primary School**

*It was fun and it made me like Scottish music more*

**School Pupil**

*More of the same! As a Gaelic-medium teacher I particularly appreciate it when tutors use some Gaelic with the pupils.*

*I felt that the groupwork classes were very well organised. There was a good balance of work on developing knowledge about Scottish music and developing playing skills in an inclusive way that catered for all abilities. Having gained new ideas for teaching group music I will try to do more myself with the pupils. Thank you Louise and Barry!*

**Teacher, Ullapool Primary School**

## YMI Contacts

**For further information on the Youth Music Initiative contact:**

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