Ethnomusicology at the University of Aberdeen

Ethnomusicology is a growing area of research and teaching at the University of Aberdeen. Increasing numbers of courses are being offered within the BMus programme in the Department of Music, and there are opportunities for postgraduate study and research at The Elphinstone Institute and in the Department of Music. Ethnomusicology course options include Introduction to World Music, Scottish Musical Traditions, Soundscapes and Soundmapping, and Ethnomusicology Theory and Practice.

Relevant Modules and Programmes involving Ethnomusicological Material

BMus (Department of Music)

Level 2 (2nd year Undergraduate)
MU2901 - Introduction to Ethnomusicology

Level 3 (3rd year Undergraduate)
MU 3010 - Soundscapes and Soundmapping
MU 3013 - Introduction to World Music

Level 4 (4th year Undergraduate)
MU Scotland’s Musical Traditions

MLitt in Ethnology and Folklore in the Scottish context (The Elphinstone Institute)

EF 5001 History and Core Genre of Ethnology and Folklore
EF 5501 Oral Traditions
EF 5002 Intellectual Backgrounds and Methodologies
EF 5502 Scottish Contexts and Practical Fieldwork

MPhil/PhD Programmes (The Elphinstone Institute/Department of Music)

Student Numbers

The Department of Music: 260
The Elphinstone Institute: 23

Staff and Research Interests

Dr Frances Wilkins
Lecturer in Ethnomusicology

Professor Ian Russell
Director of The Elphinstone Institute

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Dr Thomas McKean  
Deputy-Director of The Elphinstone Institute  
Research Interests: Ballad singing, The Carpenter collection  
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Research Interests: Scotland’s fire festivals; creativity within traditional forms; the effects of field collection in the North-East; macaronic song traditions; the relationship of memory and song in west coast Gaelic communities. Dr McKean also works as part of the James Madison Carpenter Project team.

Financial Support

For information on financial support available for study, please contact the University of Aberdeen directly.

Performance Opportunities

The Department of Music has an active gamelan ensemble, fiddle ensemble, and gospel choir.

The Elphinstone Fiddlers (which includes other instruments such as accordion, flute, and piano) meet weekly during term time and regularly give performance in and around Aberdeen.

Individual performance opportunities are linked to the activities of the Elphinstone Institute.

Research Projects, Activities, Resources

‘The North’ Research theme is university-wide and links directly into the activities of the Elphinstone Institute and research into subjects such as northern temperament, timbre in Northern European traditional singing, transatlantic musical flow between Scotland and the Arctic and Sub-Arctic.

The North Atlantic Fiddle Convention (NAFCo) initiative (including the convention, academic conference, and publications), was started by Professor Ian Russell and is based at the Elphinstone Institute.

Other research projects/activities include:

Transcribing and publishing the James Madison Carpenter Collection  
The oral and cultural traditions of Scottish travellers  
Scots fiddle music performance  
Sacred singing in North-East Scotland  
James Bay fiddle music  
Scottish step-dance traditions
Scotland’s intangible cultural heritage
Tradition and culture promotion in Shetland
Lullabies: a study of form and function

Contacts and Further Information

For further information, please visit:
www.abdn.ac.uk/music
www.abdn.ac.uk/elphinstone

or contact:

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