

The Pipers Gathering 2022

Scholarship recipient's reflections

by Sarah Wade, August 2022

I am the grateful recipient of the Van Jackman Memorial Scholarship and attended my first Pipers Gathering at Wisdom House, Connecticut, in 2022.

I've been playing Scottish smallpipes for 15 years. As an avid fan of early music and highland pipes repertoire, the smallpipes offer a perfect nexus for me. My passion is exploring pipes in ensembles, right alongside other instruments, making lush harmonies and fascinating arrangements.

I believe in the value of community. And in this context, that is a supportive and interested group of people who share a passion for bagpipes. I feel that, as pipers, we are conduits between humans of the past, present, and future as we carry and create music that is forever ancient, contemporary, earthy and resonate. It was a joy and a delight to connect with these elements, and those who bear the piping traditions, at The Pipers Gathering in 2022.

My personal highlights of the three-day event were the special topic workshops. Dick Hensold presented an illuminating lecture on the emotional affect of each note on the bagpipe chanter and its application to aural learning, composition and improvisational skills. More about this is available on Dick's webpage, [Secret of Melody](#). Rosalind Buda sensitively addressed the elephant in the room, that being the mental game of approaching music, including the practice of practise, and preparation for performance. And Chris Gray generously opened up his DAW to have a chat about the unique business of multi-track recording of the bagpipes.

The concert performances gave the rare opportunity to experience bellows-pipes in recital. My favourite moment was hearing Northumbrian smallpipes and bassoon perform an air and strathspey duet. Congratulations to all the artists on such fine performances.

I am Australian and am currently living in the United States for 12 months. Back in 2013, I co-founded a community network for bellows-pipers in Australia & New Zealand, [Celtic Piping Club Inc.](#) We hold annual residential weekends, distribute regular newsletters, run a loan-pipes scheme, give performances, and facilitate workshops. For me, it has been invaluable to connect with a piping scene abroad and to learn and jam tunes from the Northumbrian, Scottish and Irish piping repertoires.

My thanks go out to the hard-working members and helpers of the board, the people who manage the Van Jackman Memorial Fund, the talented and generous faculty and vendors, the staff at Wisdom House and all the musicians with whom tunes, chats and laughs were shared at The Pipers Gathering 2022.