

The Reel Music School encompassing a coffeehouse bar, venue and shop is a well-established venue in Kirkwall, but the cafe door is actually a portal to a tardis type universe whirling with musical planets! The building is bursting with teaching rooms and teachers and has seen a staggering 800 budding musicians pass through its doors. The Wrigley family headed up by the internationally renowned duo, Jennifer and Hazel have now embarked on 'The Reel Life Foundation' a charity which will see the work of the Reel continued in perpetuity for the people of Orkney.

Friday night saw a fundraising extravaganza for the to raise money to support the Foundation's activities, which so far include the creation of an instrument bank enabling anyone to borrow an instrument for free, and the promotion and provision of learning opportunities for traditional music in remote and isolated communities.

The concert was kicked off with a familiar set of favourites by the Reel fiddlers who meet on Saturdays, populated by many beginners and musical returners all taking up the chance, irrespective of age, to learn tunes and play together. There are tutors at the Reel for all types of instrument and voice, and Jenny, Hazel, Heather Woodbridge, Erika Shearer, Iona Seater and Bruce Mainland took to the stage for their set. We were treated to the haunting voices and words of singer songwriters Tom Ashman and Freddie Pretorius and the operatic versatility of Kate Howe. There was the lively banjo and voice of Anthony Hodgson with Bev Clubley and Margaret Harris continuing the trad music vein. The genre changed gently to lovely classical solo flute and duetting from Sarah Wood and Bruce Mainland gently altering the musical mood. Whipping the mood up again were Orkney stalwarts Hullion providing songs and tunes in particular Orkney gold with Allie Windwick's "Isie's gaan tae brew". The members of the Orkney Strathspey and Reel society and Accordion and Fiddle club span a significant time zone in musical years and venues around Kirkwall and they presented a lively set of good gaan tunes. The talented Aim family who have been immersed in the Reel as pupils, cafe staff and tutor/helpers provided a set showing off what the success of this project means when young people of this ability graduate to play and offer their skills. Karen Tweed and Heather Woodbridge's mixed instrument group pulled together different instrumentalists into a Scandinavian sound. The foundation is establishing a self-sustaining teaching mechanism for young and old to pass on and between each other the joy of music and the instrument bank will ensure that not having an instrument should be no barrier. Kudos to all the older players who may have missed the chance as kids to take up an instrument, and who have built up their confidence and done the scary thing of performing in public. It is no mean feat.

The youngsters did themselves proud with ability and confidence shining through, Sinead MacLeod and Ingrid Tait, Ailsa Spence, Jamie Shearer, brothers Dean and Lee Findlay, Lianne Sinclair and Erin Dundas all took to the stage with aplomb. Refreshments of delicious cake, juice, Orkney ice-cream and Highland Park were provided courtesy of the sponsors, and a grand raffle completed the evening before the stage was packed with all the performers for and grand stramash of a finale when the favourites no one ever tires of were given a rousing playing, Stronsay Waltz, Dingieshowe Dancers and Flett fae Flotta and Gairsay.

All in all a great night out in aid of a superb cause and enjoyed by a full house at the King St. Halls.

*Fiona MacInnes*