



New festival starts up in Germany

INTERCELTIC FOLK FESTIVAL, HOFHEIM



YOUNG MASTERS (from left): Celine Donahue on banjo with Stuart Glasgow on guitar; Goncalo Cruz with Pedro Aibeo on percussion; Seylan Baxter on cello and Cheyenne Brown on harp.

A NEW small festival with a strong Gaelic and piping core was launched this year in the small, picturesque town of Hofheim near Frankfurt, Germany, this year: Friday-Sunday, 3-5 August.

Organised by piper and piping teacher Thomas Zöller, a BA (Scottish Music — Piping) graduate who has established a Bagpipes Academy in the town, and supported by the local town council, the three-day event looks certain to be scheduled again in 2008.

“The idea of a festival originated from the success of concerts we have held during the last couple of years,” said Thomas Zöller. “They had all been well attended, so I talked with the city council and they agreed that we could try to hold a little festival — which turned out to be bigger than originally planned.”

Over the three days, the festival offered six concerts: two each evening, held at the same time at two different venues.

One was an open air venue, among castle

ruins, that accommodates 400 people; the other was in the city museum, where up to 70 people can be seated. “We also had a festival club in the City Hall after the concerts,” said Thomas Zöller.

Each night, following the evening concerts, a pipes-led, torches-lit procession led audiences from the outdoor concerts to the City Hall. “And the processions drew a lot of attention to the festival,” said Thomas Zöller.

“We had a session area, a stage and informal playing. It was a great atmosphere. A local whisky shop was involved and offered whisky tastings, and that was appreciated.”

The first open air concert was a *Gaelic Night* featuring Michael Klevenhaus, a Gaelic singer based in Bonn; Ann Heymann, a leading researcher into early metal-strung harp music and technique from the United States, with her husband, Charlie, who plays bouzouki and accordion and their two daughters, both dancers; Barnaby Brown playing triple pipes, flute

and smallpipes and performing canntaireachd; Allan MacDonald performing Gaelic song and playing Highland pipes and smallpipes; cellist Joachim Schiefer; German-based uilleann piper Tom Kannmacher, who has translated Gaelic poetry into German and attached it to tunes; and Thomas Zöller playing smallpipes and Border pipes.

At the museum, a concert called *Voice Meets Percussion* — “a jazzy, experimental world music type of programme” — featured percussionist Sascha Gotowtschikov and singer Alison Welles.

Saturday’s open air concert, *Young Masters of Old Traditions*, presented three duos from three countries: Celine Donahue on banjo with Stuart Glasgow on guitar; Cheyenne Brown on harp and Seylan Baxter on cello; and a piper from Portugal, Goncalo Cruz, with Pedro Aibeo on percussion... “and he brought some friends from Portugal who also played,” said Thomas Zöller. “This was a very well



ANN and Charlie Heymann.



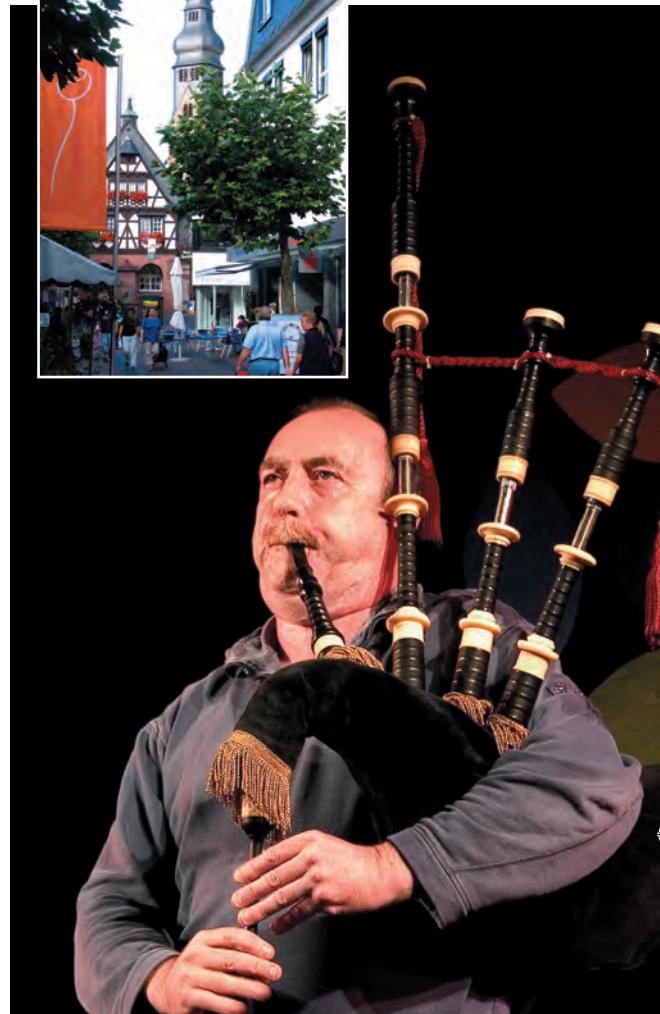
BARNABY Brown plays triple pipes.



Fabula Aestatis' "medieval" pipers.



GAEILIC NIGHT in Hofheim: Charlie Heymann, Barnaby Brown, Allan MacDonald, Joachim Schieffer, Tomas Zöller and Tom Kannmacher.



ALLAN MacDonald in performance at the inaugural Interceltic Folk Festival in Hofheim, Germany.

attended open air concert."

At the same time, in the City Museum, Ann Heymann and Barnaby Brown played and spoke about the history and mythology of the Celtic harp and the triple pipes.

The festival concluded on the Sunday with a *Medieval Concert* presented by a popular German medieval band, *Fabula Aetatis*, with two pipers and two drummers. Said Thomas Zöller: "The pipers play modern style 'medieval pipes' that are almost as loud as the Highland bagpipe, but with a deep, rough-sounding bass drone. One drummer plays the davul and the other drummer plays a drum kit with cymbals.

"The band was joined for a couple of sets by myself on tabla and Ann Heymann on harp to give it a different acoustic flavour, and that was well received — the music is very strong and driving. The audience ended up throwing the chairs to the side to start dancing.

"Again, we had 400 people there, and a

great atmosphere."

Cello player Joachim Schiefer featured at the City Museum, playing music by Johann Sebastian Bach — "basically classical music," said Thomas Zöller, "but it was connected with the festival's theme in that Bach's father and grandfather were both bagpipers in Germany, renowned pipers, and Joachim Schiefer pointed out some links to bagpipe music, playing a drone on the cello and demonstrating some motifs and so on.

"That was very interesting, and something that I'd like to go into more, maybe doing a follow-up concert next year with pipes and cello and music from Bach, to further explore that link."

Another aspect to the festival was a programme of workshops on the Saturday led by Ann Heymann on harp, Barnaby Brown for canntaireachd, Tom Kannmacher with uillean pipes and Michael Klavenhaus presenting Gaelic song. Allan MacDonald gave individual

tuition to Piping Academy students.

"We had rehearsals during the day and other unofficial activity," said Thomas Zöller. "Some of the musicians played in the street in the old part of the city, and we had a hot air balloon up on the Friday to promote the festival,

"We were very lucky with the weather.

"We'd had bad weather in Germany for most of the time before the festival and again afterwards but that weekend was all sunny. And over the three days we had about 1,500 visitors, and there were local people around as well, of course.

"I know some people who came from as far away as Paris and Nuremberg.

"It created a great atmosphere in the town. You could hear the concert music from the old castle through the old part of the town, and it was well-received.

"We had a lot of good reports and reviews in the newspapers, and we are looking towards doing it again next year." ●