



Nonsuch Dulcimer Club



NONSUCH DULCIMER CLUB

Mat Fox Bursary

The Nonsuch Dulcimer Club is the only UK organisation devoted to two uncommon instruments, the hammered and mountain dulcimer.

We want to provide a lasting and practical memorial to one of our best loved tutors, Mat Foxⁱ, who died suddenly in early 2014 at the age of 57. Mat was an excellent player of the hammered dulcimer, but above all an inspiring educator of young people. Our aim is to provide an annual bursary in Mat's name to encourage young people to learn and enjoy either form of dulcimer.

The English name "dulcimer" derives from the Latin *dulcis* (sweet) and the Greek *melos* (song), but refers to two very different instruments.

The Appalachian or Mountain Dulcimer looks like an elongated fiddle but has frets like a guitar – and is played horizontally across the knees. It was developed in the poor hill farming communities of the southern US to accompany singing and dancing, shaped from



Scenic Roots: Erin and Amber Rogers

folk memories of the instruments their ancestors played back in Europe – the quaintly named zithers, hummels, scheitholts and langleiks. Early dulcimers were made with local lumber, fittings from the local hardware store, fence staples and leftover paint from the barn, using only a sharp penknife, a hammer and a saw.

The popularity of dulcimers rocketed with the growing interest in folk and folk-rock music during the 1960s and early 70s. Famous players included Jean Ritchie, Richard Farina, Joni Mitchell and Cyndi Lauper in the US; and over here, Steeleye Span, Fairport Convention, Pentangle, Plainsong – even the Rolling Stones!

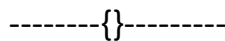
And now we're coming full circle with a new acoustic scene, the dulcimer is once again booming in popularity as a low cost, attractive instrument which is easy for first timers to play. Modern players include indie singer-songwriter Laura Marling and multi-instrumentalist Jim Moray.



Stephen Humphries

The **Hammered Dulcimer** has strings stretched across a trapezoid shaped frame and is usually played with small hammers. Its origins are lost in history but it probably came from the Far East, before spreading across most parts of the world. In each country, it has a different name: in Hungary a cimbalom, in Germany a hackbrett, in Greece a psalterion, in the Middle East and India the santur, and in China the yang ch'ing.

As a loud, versatile melody instrument, it was found in orchestras and village bands, palaces and pubs – and was used particularly for dancing, where its percussive sound drove the rhythm. It was very popular in the UK before the advent of affordable pianos and factories produced them by the thousand. In the modern era, the hammered dulcimer still had a foothold in the pubs of East Anglia, Northern Ireland and Glasgow, but was re-discovered for a wider audience in the folk revival era. Players such as Sue Harris and Chris Coe featured the hammered dulcimer in folk-rock supergroups such as the Albion Band and the New Victory Band. Film composers continue to value its particular colouring in scores for films such as Lord of the Rings and Sherlock Holmes. And now a new generation of players is being introduced to the instrument.



The Club will support one young person each year, aged between 16 and 25, to buy or loan a dulcimer and get good quality tuition on it (normal maximum £250).

Applications should be made via a form (available on the Club website) by 31st December for funding in the following year 1st April to 31st March. A repeat application by a previously successful bursary holder will be considered on its merits.

Further details are available from nonsuch.dulcimer.club@gmail.com or on the Club website www.dulcimer.org.uk

ⁱ Mat was an excellent player of the hammered dulcimer, but above all an inspiring educator of young people. As musician, teacher, bandleader and friend to countless young people, he was an inspiration and he made things happen for them. Through his music – and in particular his work as musical director of the Kinetika Bloco street band - he built bridges between young and old, and between people from widely different communities.