

# culture

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CONNECTIONS Amélie Addison, seated, with Anne Marie Christensen who form Due Corde

## Amélie finds a musical link to the Georgians

**W**HEN Amélie Addison was a girl she noticed a memorial at her local church to a composer who came from her home town of Swalwell in Gateshead.

The church was St Mary's in Whickham where Amélie was a chorister and the monument in the churchyard was to William Shield, a bright young thing in the 18th Century who went on to find fame and fortune in London.

His music - largely light operas - might have been unknown to her then but an odd coincidence was to bring him to her attention again 10 years on when she was a postgraduate student living in London.

Having settled on a career as a cellist (first discovering a flair for the cello at school when it was the only instrument available to play) Amélie, now 28, explains how she'd moved to the capital to study and specialise in baroque music and was visiting a professor when she spotted a printed portrait of William Shield on his wall.

"At that point I didn't know anything about what sort of music he wrote," she says.

But inspired by the professor's enthusiasm for a composer who has fallen into relative obscurity despite being celebrated in his day and buried at Westminster Abbey, it was to prove the start of an interest in Shield's work which now results in a series of concerts back on their shared home turf.

They begin tonight in, fittingly, St Mary's Church where Shield was also baptised, with Amélie playing his music, having tracked down original copies at the British Library.

"I do think it's quite amazing," she says of the links she uncovered with Shield and their birthplace and connections to the 18th Century musicians whose work she'd already been performing with the baroque string duo, Due Corde, she co-founded in 2008.

Bringing home his work, alongside that of Due Corde - accompanied by violinist Anne Marie Christensen - seemed the natural next step.

They promise a lively programme based upon Shield's compositions and musical influences from his years growing up and training - his work and writings on music display the influence of local folk tunes including the Keel Row, says Amélie - among them local folk music and sonatas by Italian masters and colleagues such as Arcangelo Corelli and Felice Giardini, who first invited Shield to London in 1772 to join his Italian Opera orchestra.

**BARBARA HODGSON** hears about a joint musical homecoming this weekend for a 28-year-old cellist and an 18th Century composer

Following tonight's performance will be two tomorrow, at Gibside Chapel near Rowlands Gill, the estate frequented by Shield's teacher, composer Charles Avison, and Moot Hall in Hexham.

Then, ahead of a final concert on Wednesday at St John's Church in Newcastle (where Avison was organist), comes a visit on Tuesday to Amélie's old primary school in Swalwell where she'll also give a talk about her and Shield's story.

Hers began with learning cello from the age of seven through Gateshead Music Service and includes regular appearances in festivals at Ryton and Hexham and local youth orchestras before she studied cello in Glasgow and won a scholarship to Trinity College of Music in London.

While still living in the capital, Amélie says her roots remain in the region. Her parents are due to move away but she hopes this mini-tour - her first of its kind - will lead to more local dates so she can maintain ties with the area.

Last year she played in a concert at The Sage Gateshead and also recently formed part of the Rinaldo Consort tour starring Harry Enfield as Handel. Besides performing 17th and 18th Century music with chamber groups and small orchestras, the freelance musician teaches cello three days a week.

"I'm not quite as successful as Shield," she laughs, explaining how he ended his career as Master of the King's Music: "George IV was an amateur cellist and enjoyed playing chamber music and having the best musicians of the day around him."

Shield, who composed songs, ballad operas and some string chamber music, would be commissioned to write music for royal occasions. It's rumoured that he even provided the music for the king's coronation.

Amélie adds: "The older generation are aware of Shield as a local hero but others are not so aware."

Her first regional concert tour - and her first public airing of Shield's music - is set to put that right.

● Due Corde North East Tour - Homecoming with William Shield runs from tonight until Wednesday. Tickets: St Mary's, 7pm tonight, (£10/£8 including wine) on the door or from 0191 488 1553; Gibside Chapel, 11am tomorrow, (no charge other than National Trust entry fee) 01207) 541820; Moot Hall, Hexham Market Place, 3.30pm tomorrow, (£6; children £1) from Hexham Old Gaol or call 01434 606293; St John's, 7.30pm Wednesday (£10/£8 including wine, on door or from 0191 232 0483).



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