



Full Biography (393)

A “thrilling young ensemble at the start of what is sure to be a major international career” (Great Birmingham Brass Fest), Connaught Brass are quickly making a name for themselves as a fresh talent in the chamber music world. Having already made their debut at the Lucerne Festival and London’s Wigmore Hall, the ensemble’s ability to manipulate and unify sound earned them 1st Prize in the Inaugural Philip Jones International Brass Ensemble Competition (2019) and the Royal Overseas League Mixed Ensemble Competition (2022). Vibrant, spirited and bold, Connaught Brass place emphasis on their friendship with one another to showcase their individual musical personalities within a unique collective sound.

Prior to their Philip Jones Competition win, the group won the Worshipful Company of Musicians Brass Ensemble Prize in 2018, and travelled to France shortly after to participate in the music festival Ferrandou Musique. They returned to the same festival in 2019 and 2021. More recently, the quintet have become Artists of the Tillett Trust, City Music Foundation and Kirckman Concert Society, and attended the prestigious Britten Pears Chamber Music Residency in March 2022.

Recent notable engagements include a tour of Switzerland in 2021, recitals at Società Filarmonica Trento (Italy), St Martin-in-the-Fields, St George’s Bristol, The Great Birmingham Brass Fest, where they performed a new commission alongside Onyx Brass, St James’ Piccadilly, Investec International Music Festival and Lake District Summer Music Festival, as well as performing live on BBC Radio 3’s *In Tune* programme. Their ever-growing repertoire spans 500 years, from renaissance to contemporary works, across a large range of genres. The ensemble also take great pride in undertaking and building their outreach work, including that supported by the Worshipful Company of Musicians and Cavatina Trust.

Having been principal players in the European Union Youth Orchestra and National Youth Orchestras of Great Britain, Scotland, and Wales, members are now appearing on the professional circuit. This includes freelancing with the London Symphony, Philharmonia, BBC Symphony, BBC Philharmonic, Royal Philharmonic, London Sinfonietta, English National Opera, Opera North, Welsh National Opera and Ulster Orchestras, as well as recording with and supporting artists such as Bruno Mars, Stormzy, Jamie Cullum, Rag’n’Bone Man, Hazel Iris and Gregory Porter.

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Aaron Akugbo (299)



Born in 1998 and of Nigerian-Scottish descent, Aaron Akugbo hails from Edinburgh and is poised as a future leading exponent of his instrument. He brings a wide-ranging musical taste to his artistry and despite being classically trained, cites Louis Armstrong as his biggest musical inspiration. He is a charismatic performer with an abundance of natural humour which translates into an effortless engagement with people and audiences.

A graduate of the Royal Academy of Music and an ex-principal of the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain, Aaron can often be seen freelancing in the principal chairs of some of the most prestigious orchestras in the UK including the Philharmonia, BBC Philharmonic, BBC Symphony and Royal Philharmonic Orchestras.

In 2020, as part of the Southbank Centre's 'Behind Closed Doors' concerts series, Aaron made his London debut at the Royal Festival Hall playing the Haydn Trumpet Concerto with Chineke!, Europe's first Black and Minority Ethnic orchestra. His performance received glowing reviews, with the Arts Desk describing him as *"a refined soloist... His sound was sweet, often lyrical... with perfect clarity and intonation"*. Within the orchestra, Aaron has played in the UK's top concert halls including Chineke's BBC Proms debut. Aaron made his Wigmore debut playing Saint-Saëns Septet Op. 65 for trumpet, piano and strings with members of Chineke! as well as participating in the orchestra's tour of Europe playing in halls such as the Royal Concertgebouw Amsterdam and Kölner Philharmonie.

In early 2019, Aaron was a finalist in the "Girolamo Fantini" International Trumpet Competition whilst also being awarded the special prize for best performance of "Vulcano Club" by Piergiorgio Ratti. Aaron was subsequently invited by competition panellist and trumpet soloist, Tine Thing Helseth, to the Risør Kammermusikfest in Norway where he received masterclasses from Tine herself whilst also performing as a soloist.

Harry Plant (236)

Harry, born in Eastbourne, East Sussex began his musical studies at a young age attending many of the local music service ensembles and several local brass bands. He trained at the Guildhall School of Music and



Drama between 2016 and 2020, graduating with a first-class honours degree.

Whilst being classically trained, Harry also has a vast amount of experience in pop/ folk and jazz genre as a session musician. His professional credits have already seen him perform with a range of world-famous artists including Bruno Mars, Stormzy, Gregory Porter and Jamie Cullum. Alongside live performances, he's also played for a wealth of studio and film session work at Abbey Road, Sarm West and the Rockfield Studios.

Alongside music, Harry currently works as the Guildhall Student Union President, a role in which he took over in September 2020. The job's responsibility is to ensure that the union is fully functional in its many parts throughout the school such as: representing the student body in a range of board meetings, organising events, managing the financial side of the union, raising awareness of student welfare issues and managing the SU team.

Harry enjoys supporting his beloved football team, Liverpool FC, and playing 5 a side football with fellow musicians. He also enjoys charity work, from performing/ organising concerts to charity rides. In the summer of 2018, he cycled the London to Brighton British Heart Foundation Ride.

Robyn Blair (156)

Robyn Blair is a French Horn player from Edinburgh, Scotland. She has recently collaborated as a soloist with Zoe Martlew for the London Sinfonietta, and John Kenny for the commission of Luna, a new



multidisciplinary solo horn work. She loves to use poetry, art and movement to surround the music she plays, as she loves to see life through the lens of creativity.

As a freelancing musician she has done session work within RAK, Henry Wood Hall, and Castlesound Studios. Robyn is a founding member of the award-winning brass quintet Connaught Brass. Her orchestral and commercial work within the UK and internationally includes The Evolution orchestra, the Luminaire Orchestra, Orchestra for the Earth, Emergence Ensemble, Camerata del Titano, and the Bombay Chamber Orchestra. She is an ongoing Benedetti Foundation Ambassador, and last year worked as a guest coach and workshop leader for both the National Youth French Horn Ensemble GB, and the Blues and Roots Ensemble.

Chris Brewster (184)

Chris is currently in his final year of study as a scholar at the Royal Academy of Music, studying trombone with Matt Gee, Peter Moore and Ian Bousfield, and euphonium/bass trumpet with James Maynard.



Chris enjoys a varied performing and teaching career. He can often be seen freelancing across the UK, most recently with the orchestras of Opera North and the Welsh National Opera. Having previously played as principal trombone with the European Union Youth Orchestra, he has toured across Europe and Oman between 2019 and 2021, performing works including Bruckner's 4th, Shostakovich's 10th and Sibelius's 2nd Symphonies. Other orchestral experience includes playing under the likes of Edward Gardner, John Wilson, Vasily Petrenko, and Sir Mark Elder. This includes playing in five televised BBC Proms and multiple live radio broadcasts. He also recorded Holst's *The Planets* and Strauss' *Also Sprach Zarathustra* under Edward Gardner for Chandos.

As well as being a versatile performer, Chris enjoys teaching across London and undertaking outreach work supported by the Worshipful Company of Musicians.

When he is not playing, Chris enjoys traveling, photography and drinking coffee with friends.

Aled Meredith-Barrett (242)

Aled, originally from Pembrokeshire, is a tuba player and a founding member of Connaught Brass, he is also an associate member of the London Philharmonic Orchestra's Foyle Future Firsts Scheme. He recently



graduated with MA (Dist) and a DipRAM from the Royal Academy of Music. Aled is also an awardee of the Cherubim Music Trust, using their 'Charles Steer' B&S F Tuba.

Aled started playing the tenor horn at the age of 7 and quickly joined the Goodwick Brass youth band. Aled progressed through the ranks and joined the senior band in 2009, winning the 1st section national title in 2015. Aled has also been a part of the Welsh national ensembles, joining the National Youth Brass Band of Wales in 2014 and the orchestra in 2018. Aled was also a member of the National Orchestra of Great Britain in 2016, as principal tuba of the orchestra, playing in venues such as the Royal Albert Hall and Symphony Hall, Birmingham.

During his time at the Academy, Aled studied with Patrick Harrild, Lee Tsarmaklis and Rex Martin, and was also a member of the Symphony Orchestra, Symphonic Brass and Manson Ensemble.

Aled is now starting to work as a freelance musician, having worked with the Orchestra of Opera North and the BBC Philharmonic.

Away from the tuba, Aled can be found working behind the bar at The George IV, Chiswick and also enjoys supporting the Llanelli Scarlets, watching football and drinking coffee.