

## NEW LAIGH ROOM EXHIBITION IS UNVEILED

Earlier this year the Macaulay Collection of Plucked String Instruments was transferred from the Reid Concert Hall Museum to a set of beautiful glass display cases in the Laigh Room at St Cecilia's Hall. The new exhibition was officially opened with a special champagne reception and guitar recital in St Cecilia's Hall on Tuesday 13 June. This area now becomes the third gallery in St Cecilia's Hall, and is the first to have instruments other than keyboards displayed in it.

The project started some 18 months previously with successful applications to the Scottish Museums Council and the Russell Trust for partial funding for new instrument displays in the Laigh Room to include four showcases to be placed around the perimeter. These funds supplemented a generous donation from George and Joy Sypert. Although there were many fears that the showcases might detract from the other uses of the room, these have proved to be unfounded.

The showcases have been divided to display various types of instruments, and special care has been taken to try and make the presentation interesting rather than comprehensive. To this end there are less instruments than were on show previously at the Reid Concert Hall Museum, but each is given a special prominence, partly due to the excellent showcases (by Click Netherfield) which have small fibre optic lights that can be positioned to shine on each instrument individually. The different showcases have guitars (from the seventeenth to late-twentieth centuries), gut-strung instruments (lutes etc), metal-strung instruments (citterns, English guitars, etc) and harps and dulcimers. Despite the obvious differences in playing styles, all of the instruments have common features with the keyboard instruments

in St Cecilia's Hall the instruments in the Laigh Room are all either plucked (like the harpsichords) or struck (like pianos and clavichords).

A feature which was fought for particularly hard was the inclusion of mirrored glass behind the instruments. The guitars and lutes in particular are often stunningly decorated on all parts and this decoration would be hidden if the viewer were only able to see them from one vantage point. Despite the considerable cost implication it has clearly been shown to be worthwhile, with entirely favourable comments from visitors. Another aspect of particular note is the simplicity of the design - the instruments are all on raised plinths, and the labels have minimal text (similar to the text provided with the keyboard instruments in the upstairs galleries), so as not to detract from the exhibits in any way. In common with the other galleries, carry-around booklets will be available with further information on the instruments for visitors to read as they wish.

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*Two views of the new showcases.  
[Photographs:  
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