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BERWICKSHIRE NEWS

Obituaries

Jane Cowan

AS WE stood in the small churchyard in Edrom, the sun warmed our backs and a blackbird sang the sweetest notes — notes that reminded us of the Catalan "Song of the Birds", played, originally by Pablo Casals and generously bequeathed to the International Cello Centre, then in London. To Jane Cowan, that was an Anthem, in inspiration and a perfect implicit.

In 1974, the International Cello Centre came to Edrom house, near Duns.

As moths fly to a light, pupils from America, Europe and Britain were drawn by the sheer magnetism of the world's greatest Cello teacher and Educationalist.

The Centre did not exist in vacuum; it entered the life of local music and school music, and to the end, that addition of "Music of the Future" has been faithfully maintained.

To "sit in" on Jane's recitals was a privilege, a revelation, and an inspiration. She was the most gifted teacher I ever saw and heard. Such was her zeal and energy, that every facet of her subject flowed like a mountain embracing the minds, hearts and souls of her pupils. Jane's husband, Christopher, had retired from his post as "Master of Music" at Winchester, and became the catalyst for many performances.

Pupils like Steven Isserlis ensure Jane's influence lives

on, and, in his performances, he exhibits those elite gifts that only she could inspire.

Local talent was drawn into the Centre in the 1970's. Judith Linton is known over Scotland and America for her Scots' fiddling and Sandra Cowe, an amateur violinist, of superb ability makes a big contribution to the musical life of Oxford. Donald McDonald, a former pupil, now helps to run the Centre.

But, this labour of love cannot be ended without a mention of Jane's warmth of personality, her tremendous inner strength and her sense of fun. Every lesson was a rare mixture of these qualities. She was a gracious hostess to the outside world when we came to Edrom, to hear the offerings.

In 1979, I had the privilege of mounting a performance of the Fauré Requiem in Duns Parish Church. Christopher Cowan played organ, and Jane Cowan gave one of her rare, public performances, along with nine of her cello pupils. This generosity of spirit marks Jane Cowan out, as the finest teacher of music.

Christopher Cowan and Jane had three children Francis, Maeve and Lucy. The world of music continues to be enriched by the Cowan family.

With them, we remember Jane.

RVL.