

Maureen (Molly) Shucksmith's Musical Influence on family

Patricia Ann (daughter): achieved grade 7 merit ABRSM

Maureen (daughter):

- Grade 8 piano distinction
- LRAM Teaching Diploma
- ATCL Performance Diploma
- Awarded the Albenesi medal and the Cuthbert Whitmore prize for solo piano performance whilst at the Royal Academy of Music

Kate (daughter):

- Molly taught Kathryn from about three years old. Scales were most important for Molly; monotonous to Kate!
- Took some grades, cannot recall how many.
- Was sent to Miss Rushton's in Grimsby. Kate did not enjoy the experience but passed grade 6 with distinction at age 11.
- Molly taught Kate and Rachael duets.
- Entered Louth Musician of the Year competition.
- Molly's Sunday School Anniversaries were compulsory.
- Kate was never a keen pupil and regrets not trying to carry on.

Rebekkah (granddaughter):

- Started lessons with Molly age 3. Spent a lot of time at Molly's as she loved to teach. Rebekkah took grades 1-3 piano, passing two with merit and one with distinction.
- Rebekkah started grade 4 but never completed it, much to her regret.
- Molly also entered Rebekkah into the Young Musician of the Year three years in a row between the ages of 6-8. She won three trophies; one bronze, one silver, one gold. Moon river was memorably the winning song for gold.
- Rebekkah remembers each piano lesson; Molly tapping away, counting, and the many times she would get a tap on her lower back when she slouched; "Sit up tall, Rebekkah!"

Stephanie (granddaughter):

- Grade 8 piano distinction
- dipABRSM performance diploma in piano
- Attended Chetham's School of Music
- Performed Mozart's piano concerto No. 6, K238 at the Bridgewater Hall, Manchester, broadcast on Radio 3
- Accompanied the Trowbridge Philharmonic Choral Society
- Was accepted onto the masters in accompaniment course at the Royal College of Music
- Has fond memories of spending hours at the piano with her grandmother, Molly, who was her first piano teacher

A note on Trisha and Maureen's other childhood teachers

Miss Rushton was not qualified as a teacher, possibly because of her disability. However, she enjoyed immense success with her pupils; Trisha and Maureen caught the bus outside White Barn Farm aged 4 and 6 to go to Miss Rushton for lessons. A distant relative met them and escorted them to her house. Trisha stopped lessons with Miss Rushton at age 16, having achieved grade 7. After that, Maureen had double lessons. From the age of 13, Maureen had extra lessons with Mildred Litherland and left Miss Rushton at age 15. Mildred was a professor at the Royal Academy of Music, which Maureen eventually attended.

Memories of Molly by Amy Baker, a long-standing pupil

I started piano lessons with Molly aged 11 and little did I know then the impact that she would have on my life.

As a teacher she was strict, but only because she knew exactly what needed to be done and how. I have fond memories of her sitting at my right side as I played to her and being amazed when she could point out exactly which notes I had played wrong. She would also often put on a cassette or CD of a recording to show how the piece 'should be played'. I remember that she once, obviously knowing what was best for me(!), had arranged for me to start singing lessons with another local teacher. Being a very shy child, I remember being very upset that I'd have to sing in front of a stranger and felt slightly betrayed that she had arranged this without my knowledge. Of course, I soon settled into my singing lessons and now love singing... and I eventually forgave Molly for it!

Another memory is of doing my grade 8 exam at her house, knowing that she was by the other side of the door listening to every scale and piece that I played and every answer I gave. Of course, Molly had prepared me well and fortunately, everything went well, but I think I was relieved for her sake as much as my own, as I hadn't wanted to let her down. Once I left school, I enjoyed visiting her and Philip in my university holidays to have a catch up in the front room and play the piano to Molly.

Looking back, I can see that my life has many parallels to hers. I am now working as Head of Music in a high school in Northumberland, I teach piano privately and I direct a local community choir. I'll often hear her in my ear as I am giving advice to a piano student and she came to mind again at my choir concert a couple of weeks ago. I am hoping that she would be pleased that I am following in her footsteps and I'll be forever grateful that she was able to nurture my musical ability and that she helped to put me on the path that I am now on.