

CLASP profile: Matthias Kühn

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For many years, each issue of Piping Today featured a profile of a member of the National Piping Centre's popular [Competition League for Amateur Solo Pipers. \(CLASP\)](#). With the magazine ceasing publication, we resume this series on Bagpipe.News.

Our first piper to feature is Matthias Kühn.

THE CLASP

COMPETITION LEAGUE
FOR AMATEUR SOLO PIPERS

Q. Where are you from and how did you get into piping?

I am originally from southwest Germany. I grew up in the city of Mannheim and studied in Heidelberg at the Teacher Training College. In 2000 I immigrated to Switzerland for work reasons. I now live in in Meggen in Canton Lucerne with my wife Irene and my seven-year-old daughter, Sarah Fiona.

I got into piping in 2001. I met a colleague from my job (at that time I was a primary school teacher in Hochdorf, Canton Lucerne). She used to play the pipes in a local pipe band. I literally 'fell in love at first sight' with the pipes and wanted to learn (side note: Before the pipes I played several instruments – amongst are the recorder flute starting aged six, then clarinet, alto saxophone and guitar). So, my piping 'career' started at that local pipe band where I received tuition from the then-Pipe Major. Later, he retired and I became Pipe Major for eight years. During that time, I got tuition from several teachers at the College of Piping and the National Piping Centre. Since 2018/ 2019 I have tuition from Donald Gannaway, a New Zealander via Skype.



Q. How has the pandemic affected your piping?

Unfortunately, band practice has been cancelled (side note: I changed band in 2019) and I miss the people in the band. However, I would like to sit a piping exam this year so I my piping has continued although I play mostly in my garage.

Q. What's your most memorable performance you've taken part in, either band or solo?

My most memorable performance with a band was to participate at the Worlds in 2009. We competed at that time with the College of Piping Training and Development Band – and came last! Nevertheless, it was a great experience.

My most memorable performance as a solo piper was a concert with the '21st Century Orchestra' of Lucerne. It took place in the Lucerne Concert Hall as part of a Pixar Movie Soundtrack Concert. The orchestra played the suites of several Pixar Movies and I played the bagpipe part of the movie, *Brave*. There was a great atmosphere. The most memorable thing, though, was that I only received the pipe score days before the concert! So, I practised hard on the pipes. We had only one rehearsal together.

Q. Who has been the biggest influence on your piping?

A difficult question. There are so many pipers who influenced (and still do) my piping, e.g. Willie McCallum, Thomas Schalla, Donald Gannaway, and many others.

Q. How do you relax and do you have other interests or hobbies?

I have many ways to relax, mostly by listening to music and walking in the forest near where I live or going on some light hiking in the mountains. I used to ski but I had two heavy accidents in 2015 and 2016 and I stopped.

I read also books, watch animated films with my daughter, meet up with friends and so on.

Q. What's your favourite destination, either for a holiday or on a piping trip?

Scotland, of course! Before the birth of my daughter, my wife and I visited Scotland almost ten times. The last time we travelled to the Outer Hebrides and I played the pipes at the standing stones [on Lewis].

Q. Favourite piece of music – any music?

I have a wide range of music I enjoy listening to, e.g. rock music, alternative music and progressive rock, but I also like Scottish and Irish folk music. During my studies I listened to medieval music.

Q. Was piping something you wanted to do from an early age?

No but I always wanted to learn an instrument from an early age. I picked up the recorder flute at the age of six. The 'love' to the pipes as mentioned above came at the age of 29.

Q. Do you recall the very first competition you competed in?

Yes, I can recall the very first competition. It took place in the western part of Switzerland in a small village called St. Ursen (Canton Fribourg) in 2005. There were not so many pipers participating. I got first in the March playing *Scotland the Brave*.

Q. Favourite piobaireachd?

My favourites include *The Little Spree*, *Lament for the Old Sword*, *Lament for the Children* and *Black Donald's March*.

Thank you, Matthias.