

There are new Marshalls in town

The Marshall Foundation supports outstanding American students wanting to study at graduate level in the UK. This year, they include Rachel Kincaid and Christina Thatcher, a composer and a writer respectively, who will be studying at Cardiff.

Winning a Marshall Scholarship is not easy. Offering funding for study at a UK University of the students' choice, the Scholarships draw competition from the most talented and committed undergraduates across the USA. Only around 40 are selected each year.

Two young women have made it through the selection process to start a year's study at Cardiff this autumn. Rachel Kincaid, from Ohio, will be taking an MA in Ethnomusicology at the School of Music. Christina Thatcher, from Pennsylvania, be taking the Creative Writing MA run by the School of English, Communication and Philosophy.

While their subjects are different, the two scholars share an interest in the transforming social effects of the creative arts.

Rachel Kincaid cannot remember a time when she was not interested in music. She sang in the church choir at a young age, took up the trumpet at 10 and wrote her first compositions at 16.

Rachel's music has now been played at venues in the US, the UK and Germany. Her piece *Forever Changed* was inspired by the book *A Long Way Gone*, about a boy soldier's experiences in Sierra Leone. Rachel was able to introduce the piece when it was performed at the Severance Hall, Cleveland, aiming to raise awareness of the thousands of child soldiers around the world.

A graduate of the University of Rochester, New York, Rachel has already spent one year in the UK, studying trumpet performance and composition at the Royal Northern College of Music.

She was drawn to the Ethnomusicology course at Cardiff, as it seemed a good fit with her drive to connect music with a wider audience. The MA will provide insights into how people experience music, and also the importance of music in non-western cultures.

Rachel said: "This will be an invaluable experience for someone trying to



Rachel Kincaid (left) and Christina Thatcher

understand how to bring music back to the general public in the US."

Christina Thatcher is a strong believer in the inspirational powers of writing. Having herself known hardship while growing up in Pennsylvania, she started keeping a daily journal while in the first grade.

She later branched out into poetry, short stories, and prose, benefiting from the encouragement of her middle and high school teachers.

Christina said: "Although I cannot confidently pinpoint the exact moment I decided to become a teacher, I know their collective encouragement led me to simply 'know' that teaching was what I wanted to do."

Inspired by her teachers' example, Christina gave up time while studying English and Secondary Education at Temple University to teach in some of the most impoverished areas of Philadelphia.

This interest has now brought her to Cardiff and the MA in Teaching and Practising Creative Writing. Christina wants to research the benefits of creative writing teaching in UK secondary schools, so she can argue the case for the US doing likewise.

The Marshall Foundation

Marshall Foundation Scholarships were founded in 1953 and named in honour of former US Secretary of State George C Marshall.

Each year, up to 40 US students are awarded scholarships for a two-year programme in any field at the UK institution of their choice.

Students are expected to have a grade point average of at least 3.7. The Foundation states: "As future leaders, with a lasting understanding of British society, Marshall Scholars strengthen the enduring relationship between the British and American peoples, their governments and their institutions. Marshall Scholars are talented, independent and wide-ranging, and their time as Scholars enhances their intellectual and personal growth."

She will follow up her year at Cardiff studying equity issues in education at York. Her ultimate goal is to establish summer creative arts foundations in high poverty urban areas like Philadelphia, where students can be encouraged to write creatively and therapeutically.

Both are excited by the opportunities the Scholarship offers them. Rachel said: "It is truly an honour to have been selected to receive a Marshall Scholarship. The other Marshall Scholars are an incredibly varied and gifted group of people and I feel extremely lucky that I have had the chance to know them."

Christina agreed, and added of Cardiff: "The University is beautiful and easily accessible. I have found Cardiff an incredibly welcoming, accommodating and very lively place to be."

Sandra Elliott, Director of the University's Communications and International Relations Division, said: "It is a great tribute for the University to host two Marshall Scholars in one year. It is particularly thrilling that they are two such committed and dynamic individuals as Rachel and Christina."