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Conductor's Podium

For those of you unfamiliar with our mission statement (including me prior to writing this article), it includes the short but significant sentence: 'We offer the opportunity for school players to stretch their playing ability'. It's a side to the orchestra's community offering that possibly doesn't get the publicity it deserves. So here goes...

Over the years, we have found a few different ways of involving school players in our plucky attempts at making music. I can't say for sure we have always stretched their playing ability, but we have managed to expose many of them (and their parents) to bits of music they might not otherwise have heard or attempted to play and I like to think we have left a lasting and hopefully positive impression.

Our programme of informal concerts for primary schools started a few years ago at Wootey Juniors. We then moved on to Chawton and then to St Lawrence, both concerts very well attended and with plenty of contributions from the school players themselves. And then in October this year we went back to Wootey's with more or less the same programme but performing to a fresh new audience. The intention has always been to demystify the orchestra,

Articles or feedback can be submitted to the Editor by email: helenandpeteharvey@btinternet.com or find me, Helen Harvey, in the cello section at rehearsals.



insofar as that is achievable in the time available. So we introduce the different sections of the orchestra and invite some mingling during the interval. At Wootey's in October, this generated a lot of interest in the percussion instruments and, I am happy to note, the trombones. Audience participation is a must, of course, and it's always a treat to hear the youngsters perform their own music. Even better this year when Chris persuaded just about all the children to have a go at conducting (and prove it really is child's play).

On a slightly grander scale, we have also joined forces on a few occasions with young players from local secondary schools. I will not forget in a hurry our trip to Mill Chase in Bordon, some really gutsy performances from the students and the standing ovation for our rendition of *Mission Impossible*. The best thing for me about these concerts has been the sight and sound of a large, augmented, mixed-aged orchestra. And thanks to our combined concert with Amery School a few years ago, I can now tick the 'I have played in the Anvil' box, next to the empty 'I have conducted in the Anvil' box that I have every confidence will remain unticked. Who knows, perhaps the experience of playing in a big orchestra has given one or two of the younger players the confidence to go for one of the county ensembles and enjoy all that that entails.

We can say with some certainty that the joint concerts (plus a bit of cajoling) have led to the direct benefit of a few young players actually joining our orchestra. As a parent of one of them, I know how mutually beneficial this has been. The pity is they grow up and take flight all too soon, but it's great having them on board, even for a comparatively fleeting moment.

We now look forward to our spring event in April when we will join forces with about 60 local secondary school players for a day of music-making under the baton of Graham Wili, principal conductor of the English Philharmonia Orchestra. It will be a great day and we have some challenging and fun pieces to play. Thanks to Waitrose, we have a grant and can offer this experience free of charge – to everyone! I'm sure it will be a highlight of the year and a really special day for all involved.

David Budd

Concert at Wootey Junior School – 14th October 2015

Several years ago, the orchestra performed a number of concerts to local primary schools which were a great success and a chance for us to fulfil part of our mission to serve the local community. We decided that it would be a good idea to reprise this idea and offer Wootey Junior School the opportunity to have a concert at school to thank them for letting us use their hall for our rehearsals. The plan was to involve the school in the concert if possible, and to bring them a broad selection from our repertoire, tying in some of the pieces from the recent *BBC 10 Pieces* initiative.

On the evening, the hall filled quickly with a good number of appreciative family and friends of pupils at the school. Wootey's had assembled members of their choir to sing two pieces and coped admirably when disaster struck at the last minute and their music teacher was too ill to come and conduct them on the night!

The evening got off to a good start with the orchestra playing a piece from *Carmen*. David introduced the first pieces and gave a quick guide to the various sections and instruments in the orchestra. For the majority of the children who were there, this was probably their first opportunity to experience a live orchestra. They certainly made the most of the invitation to come and 'have a go' or hold/listen to instruments during the interval: the chance to play timps was especially popular and noisy!



We played a carefully chosen programme of pieces which the children might recognise, including *Dambuster March*, *Pomp & Circumstance March No. 4*, *In the Hall of the Mountain King* (one of the 10 pieces) and finishing with the *Pink Panther*. Pupils were given the chance to 'have a go' at conducting with Chris during the Elgar – this was very entertaining and the brave individuals who stepped up did very well! The string and woodwind sections had their own chance to shine with the *Holberg Suite* and *Intermezzo* respectively. The Wootey's choir coped admirably with their first song, *Harvest Moon*; initial nerves soon passed and they relaxed into their piece. In the second half they performed *Hey Mr Miller*, a more challenging round in three parts. Now having got into their stride, their performance was impressive given that they had no-one to lead them.

All in all we had a very enjoyable evening making music and bringing that music to a very appreciative audience in our Community. I hope we can repeat this again soon.

Alison Stickland

BBC Ten Pieces for Primary

John Adams: Short Ride in a Fast Machine

Beethoven: Symphony No. 5 (1st movement)

Britten: 'Storm' Interlude from 'Peter Grimes'

Grieg: In the Hall of the Mountain King from 'Peer Gynt'

Handel: Zadok the Priest

A change of direction!

Having been a secondary school music teacher for a number of years, nearly 18 months ago I took a career change. Most of you will remember playing at Mill Chase, the concert where ACO had their first standing ovation, and I was there for around 6 years as Head of Music. Now seeking to make more music and deal with less government interfering (I could write an entire dissertation on that alone!), I was successful in applying for the position of Head of Piano and Keyboard for Berkshire Maestros which is the equivalent of Hampshire Music Service in Berkshire. A bit of a daunting task, as I'm responsible for the quality and development of piano and keyboard teaching across the whole of Berkshire and our area stretches from Newbury to Windsor to part of Slough. So I'm now very familiar with the M4, and many of the country lanes to avoid said M4, as well as pretty much every Costa from Newbury to Windsor!

So these days my life is very different and no day is the same. The biggest difference is that I no longer have my life dictated to by bells and I don't have to be in school every day (nor have to worry about Ofsted). I now teach 5 year olds up to adults and have a wide range of abilities from fantastic grade 7/8 players to complete beginners. I teach piano at a primary school, a secondary school as well as music centre (Wednesday evenings unfortunately so no imminent return to ACO – sorry!).

Holst: 'Mars' from 'The Planets'
Anna Meredith: Connect It
Mozart: Horn Concerto No. 4 (3rd movement)
Mussorgsky: A Night on the Bare Mountain
Stravinsky: The Firebird – suite (1911) (Finale)

My job involves everything from leading workshops, to planning activities for gifted and talented young pianists (we have an amazing Academy programme for gifted players who are grade 4 and above), going to concerts and masterclasses, recruiting, hopefully going on my first tour with some of our County groups (China – this summer!) and managing a rather large and ever increasing team of piano teachers. That sounds incredibly exhausting but actually I get paid for doing things I love doing. (And I even have some time now to practise and spend some more time with the family; it does now help being part time.)

I'm still keeping up my cello skills, from playing with my cello buddies last year, to being asked to play in the staff orchestra (we cellists are in short supply when it comes to staff, so a couple of us who are second study cello get asked to help out). Although it did feel little bit intimidating playing alongside a couple of really amazing cellists!

So although I may grumble about having to work a few weekends, dealing with parents who want to know why their child isn't grade 8 after two terms (I exaggerate a little, but you get the idea) and schools who don't tell you that the whole school is watching a production as you come into teach, I am so lucky to now have a job where music comes first and foremost.

Anna Lang



LNOTP 2015 in pictures...



Seasonal Merriment

Q. What do you call an elf who sings?

A. A wrapper.

Q. What's the difference between the Christmas alphabet and the ordinary alphabet?

A. The Christmas alphabet has Noel.

Q. What do you call a kid who doesn't believe in Santa?

A. A rebel without a Claus.

Q. What do you call Santa's helpers?

A. Subordinate Clauses.

Q. What song do you sing at a snowman's party?

A. Freeze a jolly good fellow.

Q. What do you get if you eat Christmas decorations?

A. Tinsilitis.



Mission Statement

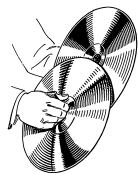
The Orchestra exists to serve the local community and to provide a forum for all musicians who enjoy playing in an ensemble. We have a policy of welcoming anyone without the requirement of an audition and we maintain no restrictions on section size within the orchestra. However at the discretion of the Musical Director, we may occasionally have to operate a waiting list for certain oversubscribed instruments.

The music we typically play will require someone of at least Grade 5 standard but exams are not expected. The age range of players encompasses year 9 school musicians to retired members. We offer the opportunity for school players to stretch their playing ability. Our music repertoire is wide and varied to suit all tastes and ranges from classical symphonies to show music incorporating big band and swing. The string section plays together and we are developing the wind section into a separate ensemble. Whatever your musical taste it should be well provided for.

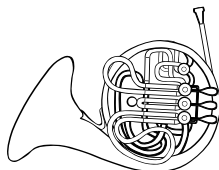
The Orchestra is run by a chairman and committee, and the involvement of members in organisation is encouraged and welcomed. We have social evenings from time to time and produce concerts three to four times a year. Members pay a termly fee to cover music cost etc. We pride ourselves on our friendly, hardworking approach to our music making.

Come and see for yourself!

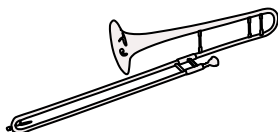
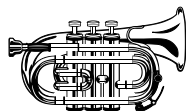
We welcome opportunities to perform locally in aid of community causes.



Alton Concert Orchestra



Concert Season 2015–16



Concert at Wootey Juniors

Wednesday 14 October
Wootey Junior School, 7:30pm



Wonder of Christmas

Saturday 19 December
Alton Maltings Centre, 7:30pm



Young Musician's Concert

Saturday 23 April
Eggar's School, 5:00pm
Daytime rehearsals for orchestra members

Last Night of the Proms

Saturday 9 July
Alton Public Gardens, 7:30pm
Rehearsal Sunday 3 July, Alton Maltings, 2pm



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