

## SYCS REPORT to FSYO AGM - 2008-09

In September 2008 we found ourselves with an orchestra somewhat smaller than the 85+ ensemble we have become used to. Our December concert at Cantell with the Senior Clarinet Chorale as our guests was again well attended. The Friends and parents had a busy evening in support with some excellent seasonal refreshments served up by Sue Earley and her team.

Following the success of our Okehampton visit in 08 with its mix of music and vigorous activity we decided upon another YHA hostel offering a taste of the wild and during the February Half Term 09 spent four busy days in Edale's Youth Hostel and activity centre high in the Peak District and still surrounded by the last of the winter's snow. The food was fine and the building had common rooms big enough for sectionals and the organised chamber music that Anita had sorted. The activities provided were wide ranging and challenging including initiative tests, caving, rock climbing, weaselling, high ropes, abseiling and crate stacking (interesting to see two important soloists standing atop a pile of milk crates twenty high the day before a concert). The informal social activities after evening rehearsal or chamber sessions were pleasing as most of the company combined to entertain themselves with raw talent and an avant-garde sense of humour. Our full rehearsal was in our performance venue, the rather cosy and compact village hall in Edale. The concert was attended by an enthusiastic audience that included locals, keen parents and orchestra relatives from the area. Local dignitaries were effusive in their praise and happy to receive a significant contribution to the Village Hall replacement fund from our ticket sales. The musicians coped very well in cramped and hot conditions to give a very creditable performance. On our last day we hiked over the hills around the hostel. Many thanks are due to our loyal and experienced staff team who ensured the expedition ran smoothly, especially John and Tony who again looked after the instrument van.

We finished the Spring term with the pyramid event and a joint venture with Paul Hart's brass band in the Methodist Church in Chandlers Ford, a venue we had not used for a few years.

Our Summer Finale was at the Turner Sims Concert Hall and featured a challenging and varied programme including the finale of Tchaikovsky 2, "In a Monastery Garden", a joint item with our guests Consort! and a lively selection from the musical "Chicago". This concert demonstrated maturity and accomplishment, and we were delighted when the Mayor and her husband asked if they could come along.

Our thanks as ever to the Friends' Committee members and our own parents who have helped out with banking and at various events this year. We do rely on volunteers, not least the small team who are with us every week – Catherine L, John, Tony, Catherine N, Elizabeth and Peter, as well as Pearl and Mel.

This year the even smaller orchestra (only 62) begins again working towards our December concert at Cantell. (All welcome!) We are only now beginning to fill serious shortages in our ensemble and face our tour to Haworth with embarrassing gaps in the line up. We are already down sizing our proposed performance venue and seeking local sponsorship and support, and of course we will need to plan some fundraising to help keep costs to families down, especially as the overheads are greater with a smaller number.

Martin Felton  
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