

Holst String Orchestra 2010-11

Report for FSYO AGM

Monday 27 2011 June saw the last performance of the Holst String Orchestra as Holst! For our last concert we were joined by Finzi strings and some of Southampton's gifted and talented pupils from across the city.

Once again membership was smaller than in previous years but the children made up for their lack of numbers in their enthusiasm. As always the children had worked very hard throughout the year, performing with enthusiasm and enjoyment. In addition to the final concert Holst gave their own concert in the Autumn term and performed at the annual pyramid concert in the spring term. Throughout the year the children performed a mixture of classic, film tunes and more modern repertoire.

Over the last 21 years that I have been involved with the orchestra we have seen many changes. When I first started conducting the group it was known as the "Western Area Playing Together Orchestra" with a mixture of string, woodwind and brass players. However it was soon thought that we probably did rather more than just "playing together" so the name was changed to the "Western Junior Orchestra" and percussion players also joined. A few more years down the line and an ever increasing membership from junior, primary and secondary schools it was thought the word "junior" was no longer appropriate and the name changed to Holst. Whilst Holst was still initially for all orchestral instruments the decision was made to become a string orchestra from September 2004. This enabled the group to develop their string technique in addition to their ensemble skills. It also enabled the children to perform music that was in appropriate keys for string players which are very different to the keys that young woodwind and brass players prefer.

September 2011 saw another step in the history of this ensemble as we moved venue for the first time, from Shirley Junior to Hollybrook Junior and changed our name to "New Elgar Strings". The new group is a combination of the old Elgar and Holst ensembles and it would seem the merge has already had a positive effect with membership more than double what it was last year.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Bev Geen for her invaluable assistance with the group last year and the Friends for their constant support.

Zoe Hunting

October 2011