



Friends of Southampton Youth Orchestras

FSYO News

Spring 2011



Main Event for Ensembles

The Pyramid Concert is on 26th March 2011 and this really is the event of the year for FSYO and all ensemble members and directors. Central Hall will be packed with children and proud parents, friends and relatives.

The Concert starts at 7.00pm and it is cost effective to buy tickets early as they will be cheaper than on the night. Committee members will be visiting all groups to sell in advance.

We need lots of help at this event so please talk to people selling tickets to see what you can do.

MBE for Pearl Mace ARAM



Pearl has been awarded an MBE for teaching music in Hampshire for 40 years. Congratulations Pearl.

New Student Council

A new student council has been created by SMS, more details in the next issue.

Change of Chair and Treasurer at FSYO



Welcome to Sue Wilkins as the new Chair and Roger Bradley to the role of Treasurer. Roger is new to the committee and his blog is on the website. Sue Wilkins has contributed many years already so she has lots of experience and ideas. A piece by Sue follows.

40 YEARS of FSYO

As part of the handover of the role of Chair, Sally Boxall and I spent an evening sorting through old files. We uncovered notes of the inaugural meeting of the Friends: the first committee meeting was on 6 January 1971, so FSYO is 40 years old this year.

What struck me was the amount of time, energy and commitment that has been put in over the years from countless parents, the vast array of fundraising ventures and the sheer enthusiasm for youth music-making in Southampton.

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Over those 40 years, there have been times of plenty - years when substantial grants have been made by the Council for tours - and leaner times.

We are all aware that these are challenging and uncertain times but the needs now are much as they have been; money for new music, instruments and equipment, funding support for tours and practical help at rehearsals and concerts.

Underlying all this is a belief in the potential of our young people and the value of their participation in making music together both for their current development and the varied skills and friendships they take into their adult lives.

Some of those children who have benefitted over the years are now parents of our current players, giving something back of what they received; some have gone on to pursue successful careers in music; others contribute to the musical community in which they live by playing and singing in local groups and supporting musical events; for some it is lasting friendships and memories.

The support that we can all give as 'friends' of the orchestras is at least as important now as it was when the organisation was first set up - let's all, whatever our connection is with the orchestras, give what support we can to our current and future players.

Here's to the next 40 years!

Sue Wilkins, Chair

SYCS Christmas 2010



Success for December Concerts

All the concerts before Christmas were hugely successful in so many ways.

For the junior ensembles, it was an opportunity to show how much they had learnt and retiring collections raised funds for the groups for future use.

SYS & SYCS both had lovely evenings. Alison Niblo, Sue Edmonds, Sarah Ormerod and I would all like to say thank you to everyone who helped. I think it was the most help and the most fun we have had.

SYS raised £232 at their concert through the raffle, refreshments and retiring collection. SYCS raised just over £1000 with the raffle, refreshments and ticket sales. After expenses to the Clarinet Chorale and for hall hire they expect to net around £700.

These figures are wonderful so thank you to all who support the ensembles as every £1 spent really does add up.

Raffle Prizes Needed

Please remember to contribute a Raffle Prize for the Pyramid Concert, details from your ensemble.

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Feature Article on New Co-ordinator Roles by Christa Porter

Towards the end of the last academic year, Southampton Music Services (SMS) invited existing staff to apply to take on co-ordinator roles for the year 2010/11 in a number of areas to improve the standards and to extend the range of what SMS was offering.

As far as the Southampton Youth Orchestras Pyramid is concerned, there are now four co-ordinators with briefs that are likely to impinge on the pyramid. They are the woodwind co-ordinator, Tracey Clarke; the brass co-ordinator, John Hanchett; the co-ordinator for gifted and talented musicians, Claire Stocker; and the strings co-ordinator, Christa Porter. As string co-ordinator, I am paying particular attention to the Youth Orchestras Pyramid, as that is where string players gain their ensemble experience. I have been asked to look at the standard of string playing within the pyramid, and at progression through the pyramid. I have also been asked to try to come up with strategies that would boost the supply of string players.

Back in September, I went to a FSYO committee meeting to outline my role and was asked if I would write this article to explain my role to a wider audience. As a teacher of pupils playing at every level of the Pyramid, I had become aware that the clear progression through the orchestras in the pyramid, which is laid down on paper by SMS, needed to be monitored. Some pupils were being overlooked, particularly if they were having private lessons. It is important to move our players up the pyramid as soon as they have reached the appropriate standard for each orchestra. At that meeting, it became clear that the committee would benefit from greater clarification regarding the technical standard required for each orchestra. It was also felt that parents might find the information helpful.

The standard is obviously only a guide; confidence and orchestral competence have also to be taken into account.

For string players the progression is: Purcell and Finzi up to Grade 1, Elgar and Holst Grade 1-3, SYS Grade 3-5, SYCS Grade 5-6+, and SYO is by audition but string players need to be at a minimum Grade 6 standard.

For wind and brass the standards need to be higher because of their solo roles within the orchestra. The grade boundaries have been carefully considered.

By Grade 1, pupils are beginning to play with a range of finger patterns and a wider variety of keys. At Grade 3 pupils are beginning to move higher up the instruments. By Grade 5 they have been introduced to vibrato and by Grade 6, they are beginning to scale the heights of their instruments, able to cope with most keys and a wider range of chromatic possibilities. Grade 6 is the absolute minimum standard that enables a pupil to begin to meet the technical demands of the music played by SYO. In cases of doubt, the decision to move a pupil up needs to be a four way consultation between the pupil, their parent/guardian, their existing musical director and their instrumental teacher; and, in particular, the instrumental teacher and the pupil need to be in agreement and happy with the conclusion reached.

As far as the SYO is concerned, a decision has already been taken that, in future, the application for a place in the SYO must be counter-signed by the instrumental teacher to confirm that they feel that the pupil is ready, if selected, to take on the challenges of that orchestra.

My role is to have an overview of all the string players in the pyramid – and I am currently visiting the orchestras and giving out a questionnaire to the string players to allow me to gain this overview – to try to ensure that pupils do not slip through the cracks as has happened in the past; and to gain a better understanding of where our string players come from, in order to see if we can increase our numbers. I am also monitoring the standard of string playing within the pyramid and looking to see if I can make recommendations about how we could further support our young string players and our ensemble directors.

If any of you wish to contact me with ideas, suggestions or questions please feel free to email the SMS office marking the email for my attention, and it will be forwarded to me.

By Christa Porter, Director of Elgar Strings

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SYS went to Avon Tyrell

Joe Niblo, a cellist in SYS shares his thoughts on the weekend.

“I think that Avon Tyrell was great fun and had a great impact on all of the orchestra members who went. We got a chance to learn more about each other and make new friends in the orchestra as well as rehearsing during the day. Because of Avon Tyrell, I feel like a more valued member of the orchestra and I also think that all of us who went really made an improvement in our playing. On the whole, I think that Avon Tyrell was a great way for us to get to know each other better and to challenge and increase our musical abilities.”

The Website

Please add the website address to your favourites.

It is www.fsyo.org.uk. This is such a better way for us all to communicate. There is so much information and Linnet updates it regularly.

You can save money with the special offers and raise money for the friends by using <http://www.buy.at/fsyo>

Content for the Newsletter

This newsletter was put together by Allison Thomas, Anne Downer and Ruth Heine. If you would like to contribute to the next edition please contact;

Allison Thomas on tel: 8042 2864.

Join the Friends for £10

Sue mentioned uncertain and challenging times ahead.

I would urge all of you who have not joined to please pay £10 for membership.

We have 19 new members this year bringing the total to 76.

Remember any friend or family member can join. The overriding sense of achievement we can all share together makes it a must.

If you cannot commit to the time that the committee members put in on your behalf, then please join the Friends for £10. It is a great way to show your support. If another 50 of you can join that makes another £500.

Download the form from www.fsyo.org.uk and send it back or even better talk to me and join at the pyramid concert.

Allison Thomas

Committee Members

There is a full list on the website but the ones you will probably see are;

Sue Wilkins, Chair – SYO

Fleurette Waldron – SYO

Claire Wikeley – SYO

Claire Thompson – SYO

Allison Thomas – SYCS

Sarah Ormerod – SYCS/SYS

Alison Niblo – SYS

Roger Bradley, Treasurer - SYS