

Spring term 2010



Registered Charity no.
283789

Friends of Southampton Youth Orchestras Newsletter

PYRAMID TIME AGAIN



Before we start...

Those pyramid pictures are now becoming something of an annual event. Can you hazard a guess at the age and location of this one? The answer is on the back page.

Once a year, the four string ensembles and three full orchestras that together make up the Southampton Youth Orchestras assemble under one roof. The **Joint Ensembles 'Pyramid' Concert** is an occasion where we can be justifiably proud, both for our own sons and daughters, and for Southampton Music Services that have continued to support them so well.

For some of the younger musicians, it will be the first time they have performed anywhere larger than a school hall. More importantly, it is a great opportunity to see and hear the more advanced ensembles where they themselves could be playing in a few years' time. (Some of our players like Alison Hughes on the right have gone on to be professional musicians.)

This year's Pyramid Concert is being held on **Saturday 13 March 2010**, at the usual venue of Central Hall, St Mary's Street, Southampton SO14 1NF, starting at 7pm. It will be compered by Jane Higgins, with Alita Mills, director of Southampton Music Services, also saying a few words. Special guests will include John Denham MP and the Sherriff of Southampton Councillor Carol Cunio.

To cut down on queues on the night we are asking families to buy their **tickets in advance** at rehearsals. If this is not practicable, you can download an order form from the website. All advance sales are at discounted prices. We can take payments either by cheque, made out to *Friends of Southampton Youth Orchestras*, or in cash.

A letter from your ensemble's musical director should give details about final rehearsals and other key points. You can also catch up with some of the key points on the all-new **Pyramid FAQs** page on our website, www.fsy.org.uk.

WE NEED THAT EXTRA VOICE

Our Annual General Meeting on 7 November 2009 included the election of three new members, replacing three who have stepped down. For the first time in several years, the Committee now has a very good representation from SYS.

However, we currently lack any members who are parents or carers of children in the junior string ensembles, or indeed in

the relatively new "First Steps" groups. While they aren't so big in numbers, these ensembles are **nurturing** many of the **young musicians** who will eventually be part of the senior orchestras, which in turn may (and often do) represent Southampton in performances and competitions nationally.

The Friends of Southampton Youth Orchestras is committed to represent all seven ensembles. We already enjoy strength in numbers, and can share each other's knowledge, skills and experiences. So the first of our shouts is this: if you have a or children in one or more of the **junior ensembles**, please consider **adding your voice to ours**. We can co-opt new Committee members mid-year (and occasionally have done), and you won't be lumbered with lots of extra jobs!

The second shout is this: if you are involved with a small business, you'll know how important advertising can be. Our concert audiences are overwhelmingly local families, ready and willing to support local enterprises. Rates for concert programmes are as low as £25 for a half-page. We would really value a volunteer who could **keep in touch** with existing advertisers and be a **point of contact** with new ones for all our future concert programmes. In either case, please contact our Chairman, Sally Boxall: sally.boxall@hotmail.com. Many thanks!

FROM HILL LANE TO MEXICO

If you were lucky enough to have been in the audience at the Turner Sims Concert Hall in January, you will undoubtedly recognise the face on the right. **Alison Hughes** was the clarinet soloist on the night in Debussy's *Premier Rhapsodie*. We were honoured, as she is now usually playing anywhere from Malta to Mexico. Alison told us about the start of her story in Southampton:

"I started to learn the clarinet with Jane Denley at the age of 9, and soon discovered the joys of making music in an orchestra (and of course making new friends!). Initially I joined the Eastern Playing Together Orchestra followed by the Junior and Area Orchestras. Because of school sport matches on Saturday mornings, I didn't join the SYO until the final year of studying A Levels.



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Committee 2009–2010

POSITION	NAME	ENSEMBLE(S)
Chair	Sally Boxall <i>sallyboxall@hotmail.com</i>	SYO
Treasurer	Richard Boardman	SYO
Vice Chair	<i>vacancy</i>	
Secretary	Sue Wilkins <i>sue@wilkinsfamily.plus.com</i>	SYCS
Membership Secretary	Claire Thompson	SYO
SYO Transport	Peter Gosney	ex SYS
FSYO Website	Linnet Evans <i>info@fsyo.org.uk</i>	ex SYO
FSYO Music Library	Alan Hoblely <i>a.p.hoblely@hotmail.com.uk</i>	SYCS
Other committee members	Miyuke Archibald	SYCS
	Alison Niblo	SYS
	Marianne Plater	SYS
	Allison Thomas	SYS
	Fleurette Waldron	SYO
	Clare Wikeley	SYCS

Ensembles, Directors and Rehearsals 2009–2010

ENSEMBLE	DIRECTOR	VENUE	TIME
Purcell Strings	Bev Geen	Sholing Junior School	Wednesday, 4.00-5.00 pm
Finzi Strings	Vanessa Jarvis	Hollybrook Junior School	Monday, 4.15-5.15 pm
Holst String Orchestra	Zoe Hunting	Shirley Junior School	Monday, 4.00-5.00 pm
Elgar String Orchestra	Christa Porter	Sholing Junior School	Wednesday, 5:15 - 6:15 pm
Southampton Youth Sinfonietta (SYS)	Phil Batten	Cantell School	Saturday, 9:30 – 11:45 am
Southampton Youth Concert Sinfonia (SYCS)	Martin Felton (mgr. Joy Tricklebank)	Regent's Park School	Saturday, 9:30am -12 noon
Southampton Youth Orchestra (SYO)	Jane Higgins	Taunton's College	Saturday. 9:30 – 12:30 pm

Selections from the Events Diary

DATE	ORCHESTRA	VENUE
Saturday 13 March, 7pm	Joint Orchestras Pyramid Concert	Central Hall
Friday 19 March, 7.30pm	Southampton Youth Concert Sinfonia	Venue TBC
Saturday 24 April, 7.30pm	Southampton Youth Orchestra	Thornden School
June & July	All the orchestras and string ensembles will be having summer concerts and other events. For details visit www.fsyo.org.uk	

WIDER OPPORTUNITIES - IN2MUSIC IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Once upon a time—in the good old days of course—children lucky enough to attend certain primary schools had the opportunity to audition for music lessons in either Year 3 or Year 4. There were limited places in the classes with peripatetic teachers. For popular instruments such as flute and clarinet there weren't enough places to suit demand.

Group lesson costs were reasonable, although the condition of most of the loan instruments left much to be desired, assuming there were loan instruments available.

Children lucky enough to attend certain primary schools also had a school orchestra to aim for. Leo Sharpe ran the Portswood Primary School Orchestra during the years that my daughters were there. Definitely 'mixed ability', it was a nonetheless a very fine ensemble, and Leo coaxed the best out of every young player. Similar enterprises ran in some others—but by no means all—of the City's primary schools. And many schools that did not support an orchestra still had their own choirs or recorder ensembles, evidenced by annual events both at the Central Hall and the Guildhall.

By definition, school-based activities depended on the commitment of staff and the uptake of (possibly pushy) parents. So it was something of a postcode lottery. Youngsters with outstanding musical talent might remain 'undiscovered', while the wider benefits of instrumental playing—as set out later in this article—would never reach many others.

Roll the clock forward, and over the last few years, all children attending Southampton City Council primary schools have had the opportunity to learn an instrument in school for a year under the In2Music initiative. This has meant that the opportunity has been handed to virtually all of this generation to start an instrument used in Western classical music at the age of 8 or thereabouts.

Even for a City like ours with a long pedigree of music education, this sounded brilliant.

However, a number of parents—and professionals—have voiced concerns. Kids may have no choice in the instrument they are given, and teachers will not always be specialists. Some may not be ready at 8 or 9. Pushy parents with enough money would already have gone for private tuition. Rightly or wrongly, the emphasis is on rhythm and



powerful springboard for new talent too.

"The research to measure the impact of WO was undertaken on behalf of the Federation of Music Services (FMS) with support from Awards for Young Musicians and the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) which funds

the programme. There are over 6500 schools in WO and 1389 participated in the research study.

The key findings are as follows:

- *WO is overwhelmingly popular with children; 97% of the primary head teachers and staff surveyed said pupils looked forward to lessons and enjoyed playing and performing;*
- *92% of schools said the WO programme has had a very positive effect on children's confidence and self esteem;*
- *Learning an instrument with all your friends in class has been shown to be as effective as small group tuition for children of this age and ability (Mainly years 4 and 5);*
- *Strings, woodwind, brass, percussion and singing have been the most popular instruments and activities;*
- *WO works as a disciplined introduction to learning an instrument, identifying talent and as a joyful experience to benefit 'whole child' development;*
- *Primary school teachers with little or no experience of music tuition have welcomed the opportunity to develop their skills;*
- *WO music education for children with Special Educational Needs has been outstanding and is exemplary of best international practice.*

The survey also revealed that 3 out of 4 schools believe the benefits of WO are so great that they have chosen to invest their own funds, buying in extra programmes over and above those offered free by their local Music Service.

Schools cited many other benefits too including:

- *Cultural understanding and social development by pupils are positively affected by the programme*
- *A more positive attitude to learning and improved motivation in other subjects too*

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melody rather than in reading. Musical Directors of the various starter orchestras are sometimes finding it much harder now to get the ensemble working enthusiastically and confidently at the start of the year—with the children's lack of experience in reading music coming in for particular criticism.

These are of course anecdotal, and possibly isolated, concerns, and need to be seen as part of a bigger picture. We asked Southampton Music Services (SMS) for their own evaluation at this stage, and this was the reply:

*The Federation of Music Services has recently released a report on the **Wider Opportunities** in Music Programme (locally known in Southampton as **In2Music**). The report author is Professor Anne Bamford.*

*SMS is delighted with the impact this programme is making on children's music making in the City. During this current academic year, **2285 KS2** children are currently learning a musical instrument through this **funded** national initiative.*

Here is a summary of the findings of the report:

"Children who learn an instrument at primary school are more confident and have higher self-esteem, according to research into the Wider Opportunities (WO) initiative, where 8 and 9 year-olds learn to play an instrument together as a class for free. They look forward to music lessons and want to do well.

"Launched in 2006, this groundbreaking programme will introduce more than two million children to the magic and discipline of making music by 2011. Skilled tutors from local Music Services teach pupils the instrument every week for a year. The class teacher joins in and learns to play too.

"Key to the success of WO is broadening access to lessons, giving every child an opportunity to play an instrument, regardless of their parents' income or interest in music at home. The University of the Arts research released (29 January 2010) shows that as well as the added benefits of developing children academically and socially, it is a

ROGUES' GALLERY

With the 2010 Pyramid Concert coming up, we've rolled the clock back to Central Hall a mere 3 years ago.

The **Musical Directors** are, from left to right: **Karen Hatton** (now Middleton; assistant at the time to Joan Male, SYS), **Joan Male** herself, **Jane Higgins** (SYO), **Christa Porter** (Elgar), **Martin Felton** (SYCS), **Vanessa Jarvis** (Finzi Strings), **Helen Bullas** (Purcell Strings), **Bev Geen** (Purcell Strings, originally maternity leave cover) and—hidden behind a tall girl! - **Zoe Hunting** (Holst).



To our shame, some of the **leaders** have proved a little trickier to pinpoint—some of them have changed so much! But definitely on the far left is **Paul Fenner** (then SYO, now studying Fine Art at Newcastle University). Next to him is **Jorge May** (SYS, now in SYO), and after Jorge is **Karl Purkiss** (Elgar, now at Bitterne Park Secondary). The tall girl in the middle is **Anne Wilkins** (SYCS, now studying Dance and Sport at Manchester Metropolitan University). **Stacey Brumby** (Holst) is third from the right, and we think that it's **Jessica White** (Elgar) on the far right. From the programme, other leaders or co-leaders that night were **Alice Ormerod** - Finzi; **Sorcha Conduct** - Purcell; **Adam Chabane** - Holst, which still leaves one 'orphan' in the picture! If you have better memories than us, please let us know.

And the front page pyramid is... all of 18 years old! It is the core part of the Luxor Hotel complex in Las Vegas. When it opened in 1993, it was the tallest building on the Las Vegas Strip, having taken 2 years, 968 workers and \$375 million to build. To quote from Wikipedia: "When the resort opened, it featured a river that encircled the casino with a ferry that would carry guests to different parts of the pyramid. After guests complained that the ferry service took too long, it was turned into the Nile River Tour, a river ride that passed by many pieces of ancient artwork." Too kitsch even for Nevada, most of the fake trappings of ancient Egypt were stripped out just two years later. So it goes.

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- *Team working skills have improved and, in some cases, music provided a calming experience*
- *Pupils' concentration has improved*
- *Music had an empowering effect on some of the participating children*

Additional findings included:

- *Better progression pathways for music learning in pupils' later years, particularly when entering secondary school*
 - *Improved teacher development*
 - *More pupil instrument choice and appreciation of music opportunities*
- The need for continued financial and resource commitment to schools and Music Services to meet the rapid growth in demand for WO music provisions.*

FMS Chief Executive, John Witchell, says the research will help Music Services develop the WO programme to bring even more benefits to children and schools: "Wider Opportunities has been an extraordinary success! We are now looking at the best ways to support pupils so that they can build on their newly learned skills and progress easily. We also want to support and encourage more

class teachers to exploit the many benefits that learning and teaching with Wider Opportunities brings."

As a teacher, parent or young musician, what has been your experience of In2Music? Are these the gripes and moans of the few, or the well-substantiated concerns of the many? Does the majority of the report ring true? Were you surprised? Are the wider opportunities spreading the resources too thinly? Are we as a community making best use of the In2Music provision? Please let us know—anonymity guaranteed if preferred.

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Alison continues: "I studied music A Level with Jane Higgins at Taunton's. It was during this time that I started to realise that I wanted to pursue music more seriously – I had no idea where it might take me.

"My year with the SYO was the first time I had played in a symphony orchestra and I was introduced to two new fantastic things; the bass clarinet and going on tour! The bass clarinet is now my favourite instrument of the clarinet family, and 3 weeks on tour in Canada was a brilliant experience.

"The clarinet is perhaps after the flute, one of the most popular wind instruments, and therefore competition comes with it. I've

experienced my fair share of set backs and failed auditions but I also have so many unforgettable memories from making music, studying and learning at university and music college (and a couple of successful auditions too!). I suppose, like with so many things, although it feels like a slog it's so important to keep trying and to keep knocking on the doors. It was really important for me to make music in as many ways and with as many people as possible – so I set up lots of things myself.

"The SYO gave me a taste of something that I wanted much more of. Orchestral work is an experience beyond words and I realise that I have been very fortunate to have lived abroad and had that experience professionally. Making music and getting paid for it! What more can I say...."

What more indeed? An inspiration to us all.

DA CAPO

Newshound writes: *I desperately need someone who can take me for walkies three times a year. Docile, obedient and house-trained. Woof!*

