

Southampton Youth Orchestra

Southampton Youth Orchestra was founded in May 1965 by the City Music Adviser, Peter Davies, who was its conductor until 1978. Since 1979 it has been under the direction of Keith Smith.

The members of the orchestra are aged between 12 and 20, and attend schools and colleges in the Southampton area. They are selected by audition and many graduate from the two younger training orchestras.

Tours abroad have included visits to the Netherlands in 1972 and 1985, West Berlin in 1973, Hamburg in 1974, Bavaria and Salzburg in 1982 and Sweden in 1984.

In 1980, 1981 and 1983, the orchestra played with other leading youth orchestras in the Festival of British Youth Orchestras held during the Edinburgh International Festival.

The orchestra also performed in the National Festival of Music for Youth at the Royal Festival Hall, London, in 1983, 1984 and 1985. After their performance in 1985, they were chosen to take part in the School's Prom at the Royal Albert Hall in November.

The 21st Birthday celebrations in 1986 came in the middle of a particularly important and busy year for the orchestra. As well as giving several major concerts locally, the orchestra appeared on Independent Television and was broadcast on BBC Radio 3. Again they played both at the Royal Festival and Royal Albert Halls, and performed in Edinburgh for a fourth time. Other highlights included concerts in the presence of H.R.H. Prince Edward and the Princess Royal.

In 1987, four varied concerts were given in Southampton Guildhall, ranging from a light-music event to a wonderful performance of Elgar's "Dream of Gerontius" with the chorus of the Leicester Philharmonic Society.

A summer tour of the Nuremburg area of Germany took place in July, where major concerts were given in Bayreuth, Selb and Nuremburg's Cathedral Church, St. Sebaldus, to enthusiastic audiences.

On July 9th the Southampton Youth Orchestra again played in the Royal Festival Hall, London. They concluded the final summer prom concert of the Festival of Music for Youth. At the end of July they toured Normandy.



Keith Smith

Keith Smith began to study music at the age of six. He was a particularly successful boy-soprano, and also studied the piano and violin, becoming a member of the National Youth Orchestra. Following study at the University of Leeds he went to the Royal College of Music to specialise in choral and orchestral conducting; where he also gained first prize in a national competition for an instrumental work.

After teaching posts in Leicestershire and Oxfordshire he was appointed Conductor of Southampton Youth Orchestra in 1979. Keith Smith has conducted concerts with several major orchestras, including the Royal Philharmonic, and he is the permanent conductor of Leicester Symphony Orchestra in addition to his position as chorus-master of the Leicester Philharmonic Society.