

## SYS REPORT 2010-11

We started as per usual in September with a largely new orchestra. All were to rise wonderfully to the challenge. Strings were as strong as ever, woodwind places were filled with the usual exception of bassoons, but it rapidly became apparent that the brass situation was going to be a problem. We were left with one trumpet and one french horn player, both of whom still made a valuable contribution to the overall sound nevertheless. We also had no percussionists. This called for drastic action and for the most part music had to be arranged specially for the group. I set to and produced as much new music as possible and the players rapidly matured into attentive and excellent musicians and rose to all challenges.

Summer term proved to be rather surprising in that whilst we all knew that a certain amount of reorganisation was inevitable due to the current financial situation, the full extent only gradually became apparent. It was clear that the recruitment problems in brass and percussion especially had rendered the continuing survival of SYS as an orchestra untenable. Subsequently I decided to leave my position so as to hand over the new ensemble to an established member of the SMS staff. This was sad for me as I had grown to really enjoy the challenge of extracting the maximum amount of music from an intermediate ensemble. However the personal events of the year had also shown me that working at such a pace was no longer such a good idea.

Our final concert was a memorable one not only for the superb standard of the players but also for the lovely presents and tributes received from the various different sides. I was delighted that my wife was also included as she had been a dedicated helper over the last two years. I was pleased to be able to thank the orchestra's tutors Kerry Walsh and Ruth Shelton-Jones, both of whom had proved absolutely invaluable to our success.

My little composition which parodied the idea of Haydn's Farewell Symphony proved to be rather more poignant than originally intended. I had meant it as a farewell and bon voyage before the next academic year began. I'm sure however that whatever happens next year the players will all continue to gain enjoyment from their music making. I hope they will all look back with as much fondness as I do on their time with SYS.

Phil Batton