

From Amanda Mitchell—Chair of FSYO

This is our first newsletter since I took the role over from Tim Edmonds and I would like to thank Tim for all his hard work first as Treasurer and then as Chairman, he will be a hard act to follow.

Now is a good time to sit down and relax while you read all about the exciting events that have been taking place; Strings Day, SYS residential, SYCS Tour, Pyramid Concert, SYO Tour as well as the usual seasonal concerts. It is a great reminder if one is needed about what a lot of music making we are all involved in.

We would also like to welcome Christopher Braime as the new Music Director of SYO and if you have attended any of the SYO Concerts you will have seen how well he has settled in.

We are always happy for people to volunteer to help at rehearsals and concerts. If you can help in any way, please get in touch. If you are a parent or carer of a player in SYO, volunteers are needed to join the refreshment rota for rehearsals or to volunteer at concerts. If you can help, please send a message either through the website or message us through our Facebook Page.

You can also help out in many other ways. By joining the Friends of Southampton Youth Orchestras and by paying £10 a year you will be helping to support the pyramids activities and you get to vote at our AGM at Richard Taunton's College in November. Donate any music books that you don't need any more so that we can sell them at the SMS Music Fayre. We would also welcome your used printer cartridges. You can hand them in at rehearsals and concerts or you can go online to www.recycle4charity.co.uk, register and choose FSYO. Our sponsors, Becketts Music Ltd in Southampton are kindly donating a % of all sales through their special website link www.beckettsmusic.co.uk/FSYO.

Thank you for your continued support.

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Acorn Chris Nicholls

Elgar Zoe Hunting

SYS Christa Porter

SYCS Anna Robinson
and Kevin Withell

SYO Chris Braime
and Kevin Withell



ACORN AND ELGAR STRINGS

Acorn and Elgar strings came together for their annual joint music making day on Saturday 14 January. This year's theme was folk music with the Music Services own Chris Nichols leading the children through the aural tradition of folk music and working on a folk music inspired piece by Jeff Moore - Fiddler's Hill. Here the children were joined by musicians from Southampton University who performed the "professional" parts whilst the children played along with accompaniment parts. The children's music required them to quickly develop new skills, for example counting multiple bars rests, turning pages, counting numerous long notes. Chris Nichols, Rosie McNiff and Zoe Hunting were all amazed at the quality of concentration from all the youngsters who finished the day with a brilliant performance of Fiddler's Hill.

PYRAMID CONCERT

Saturday 11th March

Saturday Evening saw members of Acorn Strings, Elgar Strings, SYS, SYCS, and SYO (with special guests Southampton Youth Brass Band) amassed in the Central Hall in Southampton for the 2017 Pyramid Concert.

These concerts are always very special and a real showcase of young talent in Southampton at all stages of their musical journey. We started with those who were taking their first steps, Acorn Strings, as parents/guardians and older students watched on, these young students performed wonderfully. Next, Elgar strings gave us an incredibly diverse programme from Rossini to the Beatles. SYS then completed the performances from the string ensembles with a magical theme to their programme, with excerpts from a Midsummer Night's Dream before bringing us right up to date with an extremely challenging selection from "Wicked", all players handled themselves superbly throughout!

Then it was the turn of our guest performers for the night, the Southampton Youth Brass Band, as always giving a fantastic performance. They not only proved they were capable of taking the roof off the Central Hall, but also showed us their incredible subtlety in "Abide with Me". After the break SYCS took us on an adventure with We're Going on a Bear Hunt. children aged 5 to 105 were asked to join in with a whole host of daring activities. When we finally found the bear, the scream let up from the young people in the audience was almost enough to compete with the Brass Band! Finally SYO ended the evening with an orchestral climax that perfectly summed up the incredible talent and dedication we have within Southampton, not only of students, but staff alike.

This was an evening for everyone involved to be very proud of!

SYS Fairthorne Manor Trip

This year we were joined by my woodwind colleague, Steph Watkins and her ensemble 'Airplay'. Sue Edmonds is a flute player so she and Steph planned to look after the 20 members of Airplay while Chris and I would work with SYS, and so we all set off to Fairthorne Manor for our residential trip on the first week-end in February.

I was keen to foster some chamber music skills which we don't have time to do in normal rehearsals and I also wanted to do a bit of playing without music so I asked Chris to teach us a folk dance in the traditional way. This is a very challenging process for some musicians who are not used to relying on their ear and feel very lost without some music to refer to.

We worked on a range of 6 simple quartet movements with different orchestra members leading each movement and taking responsibility for the piece. The joint piece was a delightful medley of snatches of popular classics and was very challenging in terms of its changes of tempi and mood.

The weather was kind to us this year, still a bit cold but not freezing and though the ground was sodden it didn't actually rain on us while we were outside tackling climbing, archery and crate challenge.

Our week-end ended with our usual short concert to parents. We started off with a grand performance of the Helston Furry Dance from memory. Airplay then played a short selection of pieces which we followed with a couple of the quartet movements which put Saya and Lucy in the spotlight as leaders and we all ended with a grand joint performance of the popular classics medley. The audience were then asked to identify all the pieces in the medley – and got most of them!

As always, I'd like to thank my colleagues who gave up their week-end to come and support our pupils on a very well worth while trip.



SYCS Tour

20th-23rd February

February marked the beginning of what is considered one of the highlights of the orchestra's year, the SYCS tour. This year saw the orchestra visit the Cotswolds. SYCS first travelled Uplands Special Needs school in Swindon, performing a range of music from *Swan Lake* to *A Tribute to the King (Elvis)* medley.

After the concert, we travelled on to the old stables at Grittleton House near Chippenham. We had a warm reception from the hostel staff and was followed by a short rehearsal before an evening of bowling.

Tuesday saw the orchestra take to rehearsals in the morning. When rehearsing *We're Going on Bear Hunt* we were joined by Apple Class from St Nicholas Special Needs School. An email had been sent to us prior to our visit saying how it was the classes' favourite story but unfortunately they could not make our concert on the Wednesday so would it be possible to hear it on a separate occasion. Of course, we had to make this happen.

For our second concert in Fairford, we joined forces with local ladies choir *A Splash of Red* and local youth musical theatre group *MJ-UK*. The concert was a huge success and sold out! The orchestra performed *Phantom of the Opera* which we were joined by the *MJ-UK* singers, *Splash of Red* sang a selection of uplifting songs including *Higher and Higher* and *MJ-UK* performed a range of solos including a very memorable performance of *Betrayed* from *The Producers*. The concert highlights were a medley from *Sister Act* and the finale a medley of *Les Miserables*. It was a truly spectacular evening for audience and musicians alike.

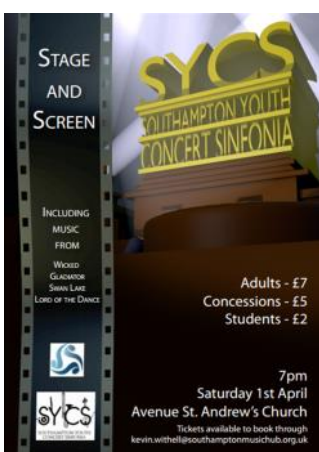
Wednesday saw us travel to the Neeld Arts Centre in Chippenham for our final family concert featuring *We're Going on a Bear Hunt*. We took the audience on a musical journey to different places including the Wild West (*The Big Country*) and Space (*Star Wars*). The audience thoroughly enjoyed our playing, prompting an unplanned encore of *Lord of the Dance*.

On the final day of tour, we packed up our suitcases and headed towards Bristol to the S.S Great Britain where the orchestra members could relax and explore the ship. After a very cold lunch in the outside picnic area, we headed to Cabot Circus for some retail therapy before heading back to Southampton.

We had a fantastic time on tour and the quality of playing and the maturity shown from SYCS whilst representing both themselves and the hub on tour was outstanding and should be something every one of them should be proud of.



SYCS Concert- Stage and Screen: 1st April



The finale of what is always a busy term for SYCS was our Spring concert. This year we had a theme of Stage and Screen in which the orchestra explored a wide range of repertoire. The orchestra dressed up 'Oscars Style' allowing the orchestra to wear smart dinner jackets and posh dresses for the occasion.

The first half opened with the *20th Century Fox theme*, truly setting the tone for the evening. Other highlights of the first half included a beautiful performance of the 2nd movement of *Mozart's Clarinet Concerto* performed by principal clarinet Lily Thorne and a wonderful performance of *Infernal Dance and Finale* from Stravinsky's *Firebird*. At the beginning of the second half, the tone was again set by opening with the *Universal theme*. We were treated to a mesmerising performance of *Skyfall* with Charlotte McKenzie singing the solo. The concert finale was an energetic performance of music from *Lord of the Dance*. SYCS performed the programme with a great energy which could not help but be transferred to the on looking audience.

SYO

SYO Concert 21st January

On 21st January, Southampton Youth Orchestra played not just their first concert of the season, but their first concert under the baton of new musical director Christopher Braime. A 200-strong audience at Chandler's Ford Methodist Church was stirred by the angry resistance and delicate patriotism of 1890s Finland in Sibelius' ever-popular *Finlandia*. The concert closed with Brahms' *Symphony No.1* - both technically and musically demanding, the orchestra performed this 45-minute work with a mastery and maturity beyond anything that should be expected of musicians of this age. However, the highlight of the concert came at the end of the 1st half. Multi-award-winning cellist Jamal Aliyev joined the orchestra for a memorable performance of Dvorak's *Cello Concerto*, giving the orchestra an energy and musicality that they, and the audience, will always remember.

SYO and Southampton Wind Band Tour, 7th-9th April

SYO and Southampton Wind Band took part in the first ever joint event between Southampton and Isle of Wight music hubs. The two ensembles left straight after school on the Friday afternoon to take a ferry to the Isle of Wight and arrived at the UK Sailing Association in Cowes, where we met our Isle of Wight counterparts and set up for the first of many intensive, challenging but ultimately enjoyable rehearsals. The students managed fantastically well all weekend - ever-changing rehearsal rooms, unexpectedly hot sun, remembering bed-time, not falling into the sea...

A full day of rehearsals on the Saturday didn't seem to faze the students at all, as most of them then took enthusiastically to the sea for some team building activities planned by the hostel staff. After a full morning of rehearsals on the Sunday, we squeezed onto a bus for a short trip down the estuary to Newport, where we set up the Medina Theatre for the concert.

A delighted audience received a full, varied and challenging programme of music, culminating in joint performances of Handel's Firework Music and a medley of Andrew Lloyd Webber's music, played by over 90 musicians from across the four ensembles. And finally the students could look forward to their well-deserved 2 weeks of no school, no hard work, no early mornings...



SYO Concert, 6th May

The penultimate concert of Southampton Youth Orchestra's season saw another exceptional soloist. French Horn player Ed Lockwood, of Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, was welcomed enthusiastically to Thornden Hall for a superb performance of Richard Strauss' 1st Horn Concerto. A real inspiration to the orchestra's brass section, and to young horn players in the audience, Ed's virtuosic playing was expertly and confidently accompanied by the orchestra.



The concert opened with a powerful performance of Borodin's *Polovstian Dances*. Depicting the traditional dances of medieval Polovstian tribes, solo clarinet and cor anglais really stood out in an all-round impressive opening. The second half of the concert consisted of Tchaikovsky's ever-popular *Symphony No.5*. The highlight of the performance was the 2nd movement, so gently and musically performed. A superb string section, playing with a depth and warmth to be jealous of, would have stolen the show, if it were not for Southampton Youth Orchestra's principal horn.