

## A Passion for Playing Together

Pam Redman wants her violinists to lose their fear.

"I don't think it matters too much if you get it wrong now and then, you just need to do your best and go for it and play really big and confidently and have fun," she says. "Playing in an orchestra is above all about teamwork ... it's about being enthusiastic and making the music together and understanding that none of us is perfect and we can all contribute."

"I'd much rather go to a concert where I was 'pulled in' – grabbed by the music – and hearing a few mistakes," she says. "I'd still enjoy that, it would make me feel all warm inside, it would be uplifting, rather than going to a concert where something was perfect, but mechanical."

Our new Upper Strings tutor has always been passionate about orchestras and as former deputy leader of the National Youth Orchestra and current leader of the Westmorland she has pedigree.

For string players, the skills you develop are legion. "It's not just about being able to play the violin well. It's respect for your peers, listening, communication, timing, coordination; working together with your desk partner, your Section and the rest of the orchestra to create a whole greater than the sum of the parts."

Under the WYO's former director Roland Fudge there was no Upper Strings Tutor, a function he had previously carried out for many years and continued to do from the podium. Pam joined at the same time as our new Musical Director Fredrik Holm last year and was immediately in tune with his approach. "There's a host of new ideas, ideas about different ways of doing things."

She has to cope, as always, with a wide range of abilities, as well as the perennial need to bring in more players. "We could do with lots more," she says. "There are young violinists out there; how to get them in?– I wish I knew the answer. For some it's the travel distance, or parental time to ferry them back and forwards, school exams, and other, higher, priorities, issues in their lives... How can we encourage folk to want to put music higher up their priority list?!"

"One of the things I'd like to leave as my legacy to the Orchestra would be a big string sound. I would like everybody to be able to make a full, warm string sound and feel free and open and happy..."

Pam started the violin at the age of eight and was soon playing with the Edinburgh Youth Orchestra and later the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland, where she became leader and soloist. After a 23-year interlude as a GP – a useful person to have around if anyone gets a nosebleed – she returned to her first love. She is leader and soloist with the Westmorland Orchestra as well as playing regularly with the Lakeland Sinfonia and a host of chamber groups and orchestras around the region.

Her passion shines through.

"Almost every time I play in an orchestra I think afterwards – Wow! this is one of the pinnacles of human endeavour, that all these 50 people can come together and play together, do an activity together with such fine detail, such expertise, and produce this wonderful creation together! To be part of that is a real honour, whatever level you are at."



**Changing Places** Audiences may be noticing a certain amount of shuffling around between pieces, players swapping places. So what's going on? Where you sit in an orchestra matters; you have to be able to watch the conductor, the section leader and your music, play in tight coordination with people in front, beside and behind you, and listen to every section of the orchestra. It's not always easy, and it feels different from different places on the stage.

Fredrik and the tutors have decided to shake things up a bit and make sure everyone gets to experience different positions. For the strings, which have groups of people all playing the same notes, there's an added complexity. On the whole it's easier the nearer to the front you sit, and the perversity of the traditional system is that the better player you are, the further forward you move. Those with least experience have to sit in the hardest places. While the front desks may only change between one concert and another, allowing them to develop their leadership skills, the other players will be swapping positions between pieces. "The challenges of sitting in different seats are different," says Upper Strings Tutor Pam Redman. "We want to help everyone develop these different skills." Call it Musical Chairs.

**Writing it Themselves** Music Director Fredrik Holm is not only encouraging his players to take up the conductor's baton; he's getting them to compose their own music. A competition for pieces of at least three instruments attracted 10 entries from all over South Lakes. The two that won were both for full orchestra, by clarinettist Jenny Hucknall and our Leader Alistair Burton, and are being played at the summer concert. Alistair is conducting his own work and Jenny's is under the baton of Solomon Russell-Cohen.

**Spring Success** The spring concert was a roaring success, despite a late blizzard. The programme ranged effortlessly over almost four centuries, from 17th century France to Japanese computer game music, via British rock and American Jazz-inspired Gershwin. One of the highlights was Holm's own Premiere Rhapsody accompanied by a rolling projection of art from Cartmel, Milnthorpe and Moorside primary schools; pupils had listened to the work and painted what it suggested to them – stars, pollarded trees or just abstract shapes. Other highlights were Zamira Young-Andrade's singing on Viva la Vida and Laura Braithwaite's assured playing in a movement from a Mozart flute concerto.



**The Revolution Rolls on** Where last November's concert was in the form of a "Quiz Night" and the March performance, "Linking Music and Art" saw pictures from local primary school children projected onto a screen behind the orchestra, our Summer concert focuses on folk tunes from different countries. But Fredrik shows no sign of slowing down. This year's Autumn concert on 24 November will have dance music as its theme, and next spring we look at music in films. Then in Summer 2019 we shall be sharing the stage with children from schools all over Westmorland and beyond. Whatever next!

**Your Orchestra Needs You** We are still in urgent need of an oboist or two. So if you know of a likely candidate, invite them to contact our administrator Laura Howorth, or any tutor or committee member. In fact we are interested in players of any orchestral instrument between the ages of 8 and 18. Our tryout nights are on 7th and 21st September. So bring them along to the Castle Street Centre in Kendal, ready to play from 7.00 pm, and see if they like us. The tryout is free and there's absolutely no commitment.

**Goodbye and Good Luck!** As always at this time of year we bid farewell to some of our best players as sixth-formers move on to college, apprenticeships or other destinations. This year the list is: Bethan Slater (Violin), Amy Robinson (Violin), Elizabeth Cleobury-Tyler (Violin), Thomas Thorne (horn), Bela Jones (double bass), Laura Braithwaite (flute), Augusta Tamlin (Flute), Ellie Moore (Clarinet), Emma Ward

(clarinet), Louis Singleton (percussion), Hannah Galpin (cello), Hannah Dowthwaite (cello), Rosa Matarewicz (cello) and Lauren Tranter (trumpet). We wish them all every success in their future careers and lots and lots of music!

**New Blood Needed** The Westmorland Youth Orchestra has been astoundingly successful in surviving and thriving in difficult times. But it doesn't run itself. A management Committee of parents supports Fredrik, Laura and the tutors, organises schedules, plans the future, handles the finance and, of course, makes sure the children are kept safe. It's necessary work, but when shared between a dozen willing individuals, the burden is not huge. But we do need new blood. So any parent who wants to keep the WYO successful, please consider putting yourself forward. No special skills are required, we won't force any duty on you and 100 percent attendance is not obligatory. And we have fun. In addition, just one Committee member is a non-parent, staying on for more than a decade to provide continuity. We could use a couple more of such people. So if you know of anyone with a passion for music – perhaps someone recently retired with time on their hands and plenty of energy – put them in touch.

**People** WYO Leader Alistair Burton is giving a piano recital on 4th July in preparation for his diploma with the Royal Schools of Music exam board. It's at Queen Elizabeth School, Kirkby Lonsdale, at 6 pm. Then in September, Alistair will be Young Musician in Residence at the Kendal Poetry Festival, performing on September 7th and 9th.

Tiegan Lowthian has been scooping up awards on both violin and piano, winning classes at the Carlisle Music and Drama Festival and the South Cumbria Music Festival.



In July, former WYO cellist Joe Davies conducts opera in Penrith, for the third year running – this time it's Handel's Acis and Galatea – before starting a masters degree in Conducting at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire.



Percussionist brother Paddy Davies has also been on stage, winning the European Summer School Award at the South Cumbria Music Festival for a xylophone performance. Paddy and Louis Singleton have also been performing with the Westmorland Orchestra.

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