



WESTMORLAND YOUTH ORCHESTRA

Summer Newsletter 2019

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Music under Threat in School

Catherine Scott is worried. Not at the state of the WYO, but at what is happening to music in our schools. "It's been diminished, it's not valued as it used to be," she says. "There are so many pressures from exams. Also, music – the performing arts – are not 'core subjects', and that's a real loss."

"We underestimate, culturally, how important these things are to us," she says.

Catherine has been our Wind Tutor for nearly 20 years, presiding over a consistently excellent woodwind section of young bassoonists, clarinetists, oboists and flautists. Now she and other music teachers in the county are finding it increasingly difficult to persuade players to continue their instruments in secondary school.

It's not just about producing full-time musicians, but playing music can help everyone. "We need our scientists to be musicians too, to be performers or to enjoy the arts too, they need to enjoy the creative element that you can put into maths, science and computing," Catherine says. "Where are we going to get our inventors from? It really crosses over, we need people who can think about colour in a numerical way, or think about movement, form and dynamics, they feed so directly, it's so important."

Catherine moved to the South Lakes from her native Kent nearly 40 years ago after studying at the Royal Academy of Music in London and the Dartington College of Arts in Devon. She taught at secondary schools and has worked as a woodwind teacher with the Cumbria Music Service since 1987.

She lives in Troutbeck, under the shadow of Ill Bell. "We do get cut off in the winter sometimes, when the snow's bad, but that's all part of the fun."

Bassoon is her main instrument, but she plays and teaches all woodwind instruments. This makes her an ideal Wind Tutor. "I find each one adds to the others," she says. "You get a different perspective from where you sit in the orchestra, knowing how each one works, how composers use the different timbres, balance the tonal qualities and different roles they have, even within the woodwind section."

"If they ask what are the different fingerings for such and such a note, I know what the problems are, the breathing issues, the phrasing... I don't know all the answers but at least they can ask me and I can sort it."

She does not teach saxophone but acknowledges the powerful effect of Ulverston superstar Jess Gillam. "She's an inspiration for all of our players. It's not just the fact that she can play amazingly, it's also her performing persona, it's her zest for excitement and enjoyment of playing, a real enthusiast."

100 years of Movie Magic

The Westmorland Youth Orchestra's spring concert in March had many, many highlights, *writes reviewer Marie Robson*. From the unusual, and brave opening of Scott Joplin's ragtime classic *The Entertainer*, played by harpists Charlotte Salisbury and Evie Tomlinson, to the witty melodic crescendo of *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl*, these talented young musicians treated us to a selection of both well-known movie themes and lesser-known delights.

A standout moment was the beautiful and melancholy 'Prelude' from *49th Parallel* conducted by clarinetist Emma Ward. An inspired choice, Vaughan Williams' music for this 1941 British wartime propaganda film was lovingly rendered.

Another highlight was *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, Korngold's score embodied its romance and swashbuckle, the players capturing the joyous melodies and atmosphere exactly.

An almost faultless medley from John Williams' *The Empire Strikes Back* was followed by the quirky, popular 'Cantina Band' from *Star Wars*, a virtuoso performance by Eddy Davies on saxophone, Edward Cooke on piano and Josh Lucas on bass. A suite from Bernstein's *West Side Story* evoked the changing emotions of the songs from this tragic story. Mancini's *Pink Panther* had the audience clicking their fingers and the theme from *Mission Impossible* swept all along. These are not easy pieces and among the most challenging was the *Symphonic Suite* from *Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* conducted by Jenny Hucknall, but they pulled it off.

Reminding us that film makers regularly plunder classical music, Robert Hucknall treated us to a confident and polished movement from Mozart's third Horn Concerto. Robert introduced it himself and paid a touching tribute to the skill of French Horn players of Mozart's time.

What shone through this evening was the passion and joy these young people find in this music ably led and encouraged by their conductor, Fredrik Holm, and the section tutors.

Only 180 Days to Christmas

Strangely, the WYO does not do Christmas-themed concerts. Until now, that is. Our autumn concert will be on 23 November but for the first time we will be bringing you sleigh bells and other seasonal cheer. Our Director of Music, Fredrik Holm, says harp, viola and voice will be prominent.



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Leavers

As always at this time of year, we say goodbye to some valued players and friends. So the very best of luck (and plenty of music) to Heather Ball (cello), Alice Coker (violin), Hayley Coward (percussion), Eddy Davies (clarinet/saxophone), Robert Hucknall (horn), Ruth McKenny (violin), Joseph Pickles (trumpet) and Solomon Russell-Cohen (trumpet). Also four who "left" last year, but couldn't bear to stay away and so played with us again in 2018/19: Hannah Galpin (cello), Ellie Moore (clarinet), Tom Thorne (horn) and Emma Ward (clarinet).



Hail to the Chief



Alistair Burton deserves a special mention among the leavers. Not only has he been in the WYO for over seven years, but he's been its Leader for the past two. He has conducted several times, and wrote Caprice in D for last summer's concert. He has been our soloist, playing Vivaldi, Sibelius and Svendsen, among others. Only the very best get into the National Youth Orchestra, and Alistair is in his second year. This means appearing in the Albert Hall for two Proms this summer – on July 27th and September 10th. He has been recruited to play in local choir concerts and earlier this year with the Lakeland Sinfonia. Alistair plans to study music, hopefully at Cambridge University, in the autumn and we wish him the very best of luck.

New Order

We will have two leaders next year – Imogen Banfield and Maciej Rzepczyk will take turns at filling Alistair's shoes.

Playing with Singers

Unusually, we are doing two summer concerts this year, both involving collaboration with singers. The traditional performance in Kendal Parish Church on June 29th brings in the celebrated Amabile girls choir and the Bellevue Youth Choir from Washington State. Then just six days later, on July 5th, we move to the Kendal Leisure Centre with up to 400 young singers from 11 Westmorland primary schools. The programme there will be Benjamin Britten's Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra and One Small Bird, a song cycle about the annual migration of one of Britain's rarest birds, the Red-Necked Phalarope, by Cumbrian composer Jilly Jarman. It's quite a challenge for the orchestra to master two programmes in one term.

In the Doldrums?

Time was when WYO was turning away competent flautists in droves. We sat four, but the most portable orchestral instrument was so popular, there was a queue to get in. Not any more. The clarinet, another popular choice, is in a similar state. And we've been without a single oboe for a couple of years. "Even with these common instruments, we've got problems," says Wind Tutor Catherine Scott. "These things go in waves, but we've never had it so hard." It's not just filling the current slots, but the absence of promising younger players coming through. "We're going to lose two of the clarinets this year and another flute next year." The bassoon situation is more healthy, which Catherine attributes in part to the fact the WYO has three fagoneellos – smaller versions for beginners – available to lend out. But the rest of the section needs more wind in its sails.



Something about Cellos

The cello may lack portability, but it more than makes up for that in gravitas. And demand – where there are musicians playing together, there is usually at least one playing this most sonorous of instruments. Which makes it something of a mystery as to why there aren't more cellists around. We could use a couple more in the orchestra right now. But Rachel Moore, who tutors this section, is also on the hunt for more cellists for her WYO Training Strings (WYOTS) – a feeder group for future orchestra players. So anyone who's reached Grade 2 (or, if you're really keen, Grade 1): come along on Friday evenings at 6.00. Actually WYOTS is open to all string players, so violinists and viola players at this standard are welcome too.

On Stage

Heather Ball, leader of the cello section, is the soloist with the Furness Music Centre Community Orchestra on July 6th. She will be playing Adagio by the 19th century German composer Woldemar Bargiel (Schumann's brother-in-law) in Victoria Hall, Grange.

Take a Bow

Violin bows are made of wood. Or rather, they used to be. Nowadays they are as likely to be made of some form of carbon or carbon fibre. Tiegian Lowthian is the proud possessor of one such bow, a Diamond NX made by CodaBow. The prestigious American bowmaker donated 25 bows to 25 children to mark its 25th anniversary and Tiegian is one of the lucky recipients. "It makes a great sound and has really helped my playing," she wrote in an article for the European String Teachers Association junior summer magazine. It even has her name engraved on it, next to the "frog" (the bit you hold). Tiegian, 12, has made a flying start to her musical career and hopes to take her Grade 8 this year.



Festival Success

Congratulations to Amelia Greaves, Tiegian Lowthian, Alistair Burton, Maciej Rzepczyk, Heather Ball, Nuala Sankey and Solomon Russell-Cohen who all won classes at the Mary Wakefield Festival this year.

On the Bigger Stage

The WYO delegation to the Junior Royal Northern College of Music is growing. Following in Alistair Burton's footsteps and joining Paddy Davies (Percussion) will be Martin Greaves (Violin), Jen Hucknall (Viola and Keyboard), and Daniel Pearson (Double Bass). It means a full day of tuition and rehearsals in Manchester every Saturday. Congratulations to all – it's tough to get in and a real stepping-stone for anyone contemplating a career in music.