

## Fasten your Seatbelts, Fredrik's here!



Ideas and energy bubble out of Fredrik Holm in equal measure, belying the 48 years age on his birth certificate. He is impossibly youthful too, and looks much closer in age to the orchestra he is now conducting than someone with a daughter in her last year of school.

With Fredrik as Musical Director, the WYO's future is certain to be interesting. He has already made his mark in his first term with the innovative Quiz Night programme in which the audience isn't told what's to be played and has to identify the pieces.

While he takes over an orchestra in rude health, his restless imagination is hard at work with new projects. Residential weekends, tours to his native Sweden, joint performances with other orchestras, "flashmob" gigs in the street, apprentice conducting sessions, getting primary school children to come along and sing with the orchestra... the ideas tumble out.

"In the spring we will do music that is related to art," he says. "My idea is to write a piece of music and send to the art departments of some schools and get them to draw or paint what they hear, and then have an exhibition (at the concert) of what they hear."

For the summer, the theme will be folk music from different countries, such as Sweden and Russia, as well as home-grown music. "Not just arrangements in a classical style, but also to get the orchestra to learn folk playing."

His enthusiasm is infectious and it's clear he enjoys his new role. "I didn't realise this job was so labour-intensive," he says with a grin. "I love it, but I find myself incredibly busy."

Fredrik plays as a professional bassoonist, he teaches the bassoon, piano and singing, he composes, he puts on music workshops for both adults and children; and

he still finds time to conduct a 50-strong community choir in Lancaster, where he and his wife and daughter have made their home for the past 12 years.

He was born in Stockholm and lived in Malmo and just outside Gothenburg – Sweden's three largest cities – before making the leap to north-west England. They had visited friends here, already spoke good English and fell in love with the region. "It was a bit intuitive. The countryside around here is absolutely stunning, I mean Yorkshire and the Lakes... my mother-in-law had been watching *Emmerdale* for 30 years, I watched it a bit and I thought 'It can't be like that', but actually it is."

And the weather? "It's about the same as over there (Gothenburg), though the wind is a bit worse there, you've got rain and fog and it's about minus one."

Fredrik had played in the Stockholm Youth Orchestra and briefly conducted its counterpart in Gothenburg. So he seemed a natural choice to take over from Roland Fudge. "I find the orchestra very well run," he says. "What the orchestra does is very good, the history of it, it's got a lovely spirit and I think that changing that would be foolish."

He can't wait to try his first project, getting the players together for a whole weekend and staying overnight to make it more of an occasion. "What I was thinking of using the residential weekends for is actually trying to do things that are slightly outside the box, that the orchestra hasn't done, spending the weekend somewhere nice as a social event as well."

He has already been in touch with the Lancashire Youth Orchestra based in Preston to explore the possibility of some joint project.

As to the music, Fredrik has catholic tastes. "I like any music that works, I've played lots of contemporary music, and I've played lots of musicals," he says. "I would like to play music that I would like to listen to. It could be in any style really."

"I'm very happy to show the audience something that they haven't experienced before... That's my stance, it's the quality of the music. ... the players will come to appreciate it if it's good, no matter what the style is. So even if it's, say, Russian music from the 15th century, they will come to appreciate it, if it's good."

He started out on violin, dropped it, tried the saxophone, got bored, and didn't discover his chosen instrument until he was a teenager. "Someone suggested the bassoon, I'd never heard of it. It's a lovely instrument, it's fun what you get to do with it. You get to play a bit of the bass, a bit of the harmony and a bit of the melody. His passion was on display when he performed his own bassoon concerto with the WYO at our spring concert in 2014.

So where does he get his energy from? "I have an allotment," he beams. "I eat a lot of spinach."

## Life Choice



*Amy Thompson, a Musicians' Company Scholar studying at the Royal College of Music, describes how the WYO helped her choose her career path.*

One assumption people make about musicians is that we fell in love with our instruments immediately. This is simply not the case! I know so many people who started off being encouraged (or forced...) to practise by parents, or given an instrument by school, and not really getting into it until a couple of years later. Music can grow on you based on how you experience it, in and out of the practice room. When I started violin in year 3, the only bit I remotely enjoyed was playing in an orchestra; sitting in an ocean of instruments and making a huge noise was an incredible feeling, and has been ever since.

A number of years later, having given up on the violin, I was a pianist with average technique, but with a good collection of skills described as the 'things you can't teach'. Things like reading and responding to other musicians, sensing when to look up at the conductor, and being aware of different shades of emotion in the music. Things like being able to tell exactly when someone's note will start, what the tempo will be, and how loud they will play by listening to their breath. These feelings are difficult to teach, but can be learnt through many, many hours spent doing all sorts of playing. Accompanying choirs, reading figured bass, samba bands, folk groups, flute groups, string groups... I think that this is learnt 'by osmosis' from the musicians you play with, which is why it's a good idea to push yourself seriously out of your comfort zone when an opportunity presents itself. Another reason why orchestral playing is so important.

By the time I joined WYO in 2013 (as a percussionist of sorts), I knew I'd never be good enough to become a concert pianist and was looking for an alternative. In our November concert I sat behind the bassoon section doubling their part on piano, and was dazzled by all of the silver keywork. The bassoon is a good choice for late starters; Klaus Thunemann, one of the best players in existence, didn't touch it until he was 18, and it was after this concert that I decided to learn the instrument. I am now completely and utterly under its spell (but still annoyed at its minute dynamic range).

A young person considering music as a career (NB it has to be so much more than just a degree/day job), might be told that it is a waste of time "for someone clever like you", or not feasible or important in society. This couldn't be further from the truth. If you need an example, research Shostakovich's 7th Symphony and the Siege of Leningrad. Quite simply put, musicians love to play with people who are as deeply passionate as they are, so I believe there will always be room for someone who is genuinely motivated. Finally, music cannot be a waste of brain power; it has been proven scientifically that music uses more of the brain than any other subject. So there!

After years of thought, music college was absolutely the right decision for me, although I really miss WYO.

**Alistair goes National** Congratulations to WYO Leader Alistair Burton, who has won a place in the highly prestigious National Youth Orchestra (NYO). There are residencies in January, April and August next year and concerts in Birmingham, Nottingham, Manchester, and London. Smaller groups of players also visit schools as part of their outreach programme. The Bridgewater Hall concert in Manchester, conducted by Sir Mark Elder, is on Friday 5 January with tickets for under 25s only £7.00. For tips on the gruelling audition and application process, ask Alistair.

**Top Violinist joins WYO** Talking of the NYO, we are fortunate to have a former deputy leader of that orchestra as our new Upper Strings Tutor in the shape of Pam Redman. She is a well-known local soloist and Leader of the Westmorland Orchestra. The post had been left vacant when violin veteran Roland Fudge moved from there to Music Director in 2011 as it was felt he could effectively look after the first violins from the conductor's podium. *(more on Pam in the spring)*

**Committee Chair** For reasons lost in the mists of time, the top job on the 12-strong management committee which runs the WYO has for years been the Deputy Chair, with the top post left vacant. Now, with the resignation of Caroline Holden after a year due to commitments elsewhere, that anomaly is ending. The new head, Chris Kelly, will take the post of Chair. Happily, Caroline will remain on the committee while two new volunteers, Dorthie Pratt and Brian Greaves, are joining.

**Drumming for Ayckbourn** Louis Singleton has been playing drums in the successful autumn revival of the musical *By Jeeves* by Alan Ayckbourn and Andrew Lloyd-Webber, at the Old Laundry in Bowness.

**Calling all young Oboists** Not to mention trombonists, cellists, double bassists and tuba-players. Your Orchestra Needs You. If you know of anyone suitable in or around the old county, let us know. And, of course, our 51 registered Westmerians will always make room for new violinists and viola-players.

**Facebook** Allyson Fiddler (aka mother of Alistair B) has agreed to curate the public WYO Facebook page. So sign up (or get your parents to if you are under age) and post your news and views.

**NB** No bagpacking this year. But if any musicians fancy some carol busking to raise funds...

**Hug a Hoodie** There's apparently demand for WYO Hoodies, perhaps even colour-coded by sections.... Watch this space.

### 2018 CONCERTS & EVENTS

17 March Queen Elizabeth School, Kirkby Lonsdale

30 June Kendal Parish Church

24 March Players' Away Day in Grange

