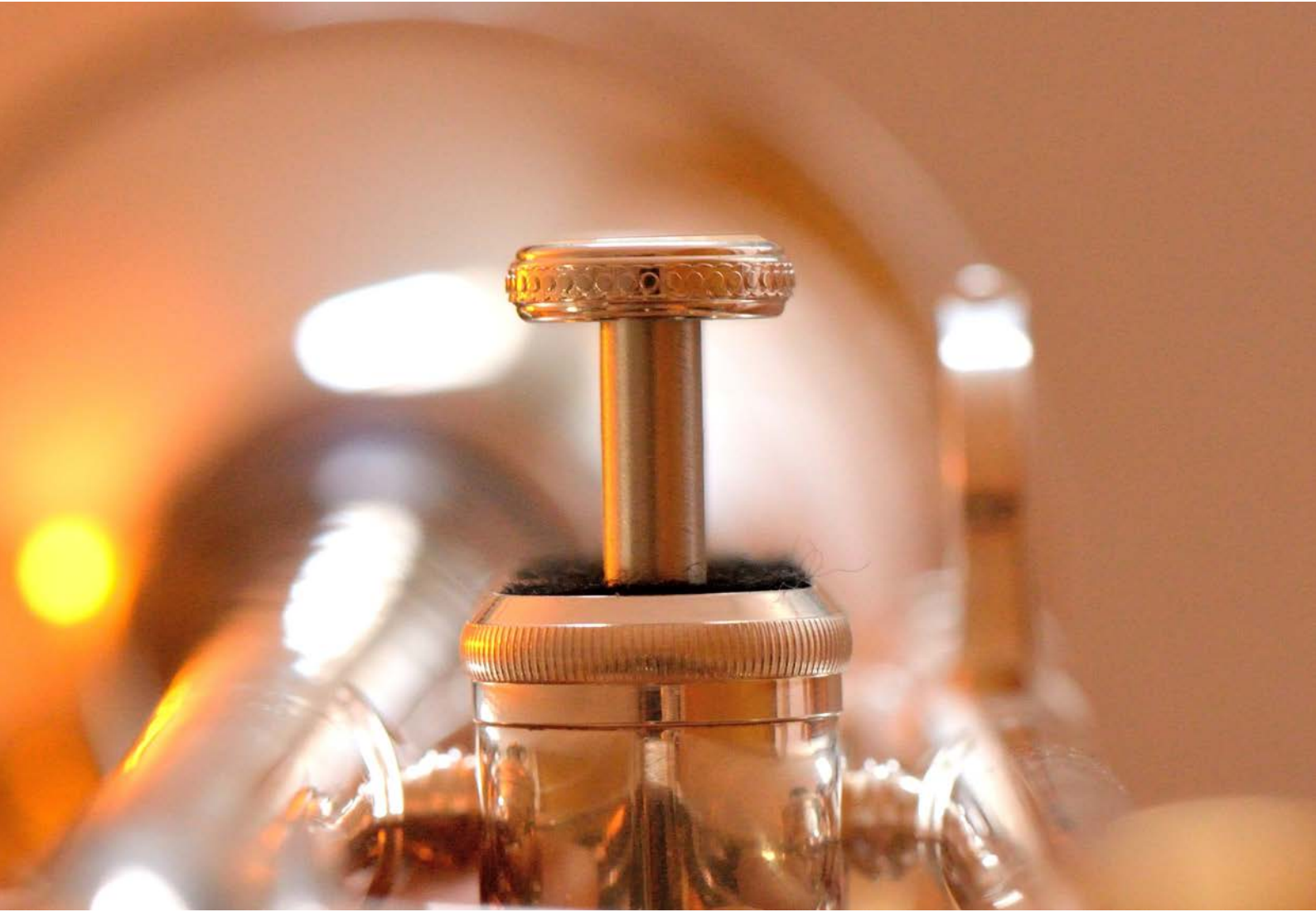


WINDS Magazine

Spring 2021



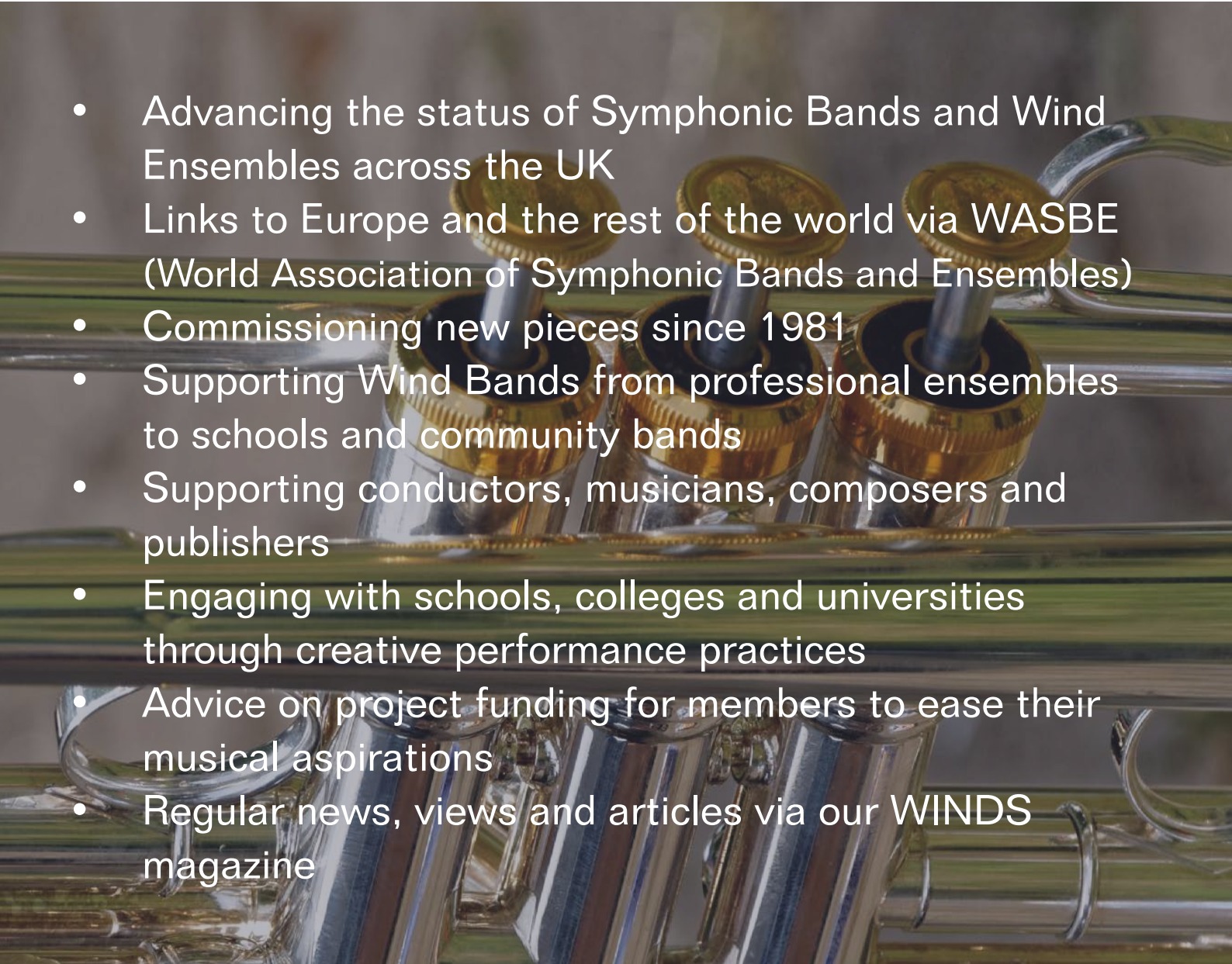
BASBWE

- British Association of Symphonic Bands
- & Wind ensembles



BASBWE

British Association of Symphonic
Bands and Wind Ensembles

- 
- A close-up photograph of the valves and pistons of a brass instrument, likely a tuba or euphonium. The valves are polished brass and are arranged in a row. The background is blurred, showing more of the instrument's body.
- Advancing the status of Symphonic Bands and Wind Ensembles across the UK
 - Links to Europe and the rest of the world via WASBE (World Association of Symphonic Bands and Ensembles)
 - Commissioning new pieces since 1981
 - Supporting Wind Bands from professional ensembles to schools and community bands
 - Supporting conductors, musicians, composers and publishers
 - Engaging with schools, colleges and universities through creative performance practices
 - Advice on project funding for members to ease their musical aspirations
 - Regular news, views and articles via our WINDS magazine

see our website

www.basbwe.net

come and join us for much more besides

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Editor; Bruce Hicks,
Archbishop Beck Catholic College,
Liverpool, England

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Thoughts from the Chair - Bill Connor

"The object of BASBWE shall be to advance the status of Symphonic Bands and Wind Ensembles in the United Kingdom, and the education of the general public".

Dear all, after a two year hiatus here's the new WINDS magazine for the end of this extraordinary year of 2020!

As Chairman I apologise profusely for the absence of the magazine that is part of our contract with you, our paid-up membership. Some of you who have received this magazine and are reading this might say; hold on I'm no longer subscribing so how come...? And that requires apology no.2, as chair, there's no getting away from it, in the chase for doing stuff I've taken my eye off a very important ball; membership, and consequentially income.

John Holland our membership secretary of many years resigned in 2018 to focus, quite rightly on life and composition and much else besides! Many thanks for the years you gave to BASBWE John and

all our best wishes for your continuing music making and composition. Finding a replacement has proved very difficult! So, HELP!...is there anyone out there willing to take on the role of Membership secretary?

Get in touch!

Despite the absence of WINDS, we have indeed been active, meeting, planning, commissioning, supporting concerts, week-ends, clinics, schools visits, interactions with various bands across the country, promotion of BASBWE internationally via ECWO (more of that later) and WASBE and NCBF at the RNCM, and continuing to engage with local communities across the country.

In this edition of WINDS, given the limbo in which we all find ourselves

artistically, professionally, personally, financially, we approached various musicians, composers, conductors, practitioners posing the question "What have you been up to in Lockdown, and how has it affected you personally and professionally?"

Many thanks to all who responded and as expected a huge range of creative responses were received in these strange, surreal, alarming, liberating, fearful, exciting, confusing times; (and many variations thereof we've all heard over the last 7 months). It's also a time that forces a re-addressing of things we might have taken for granted; the artistic way of life, not just for musicians but for any creative individual of whatever artistic persuasion as a result of the suspension of day to day life as we knew it!

www.basbwe.net



Spring 2021



Self-isolation and social distancing may well be a creative's job description but for the players, teachers, conductors, workshop leaders, those who interact with others this process has been and continues to be challenging on so many levels!

Personally, the important focus for me is in education / creative music making / social awareness and securing BASBWE as a support mechanism, an information interface focusing as much on the human aspects of banding and community music, players and their materials; as on encouraging bands to connect with their immediate communities plus the commissioning of new pieces for all levels of band proficiency including creative warm-ups.

Next year, 2021 is the 40th Anniversary of the inauguration of BASBWE instigated by Tim Reynish.

"...at the start we were missionaries for wind band and wind ensemble music, and the idea with the BASBWE Journal was to make it essential reading for anyone involved with wind music, as a conductor, composer, teacher, administrator or audience, so that the early copies had a mix of historical articles mainly of British composers but also American, European and Asian, articles on different aspects of repertoire, articles on conducting

approaches and reviews of music and CDs, ON COMMISSIONING ETC. We had a number of eminent musicians who lent expertise, especially with teaching tips, and they came to the conferences and held seminars and classes. It seemed to work, though of course it was easier in the 80's and 90's than now. Nigel Durno wrote that the three things that attracted him to be active were

1. COMMISSIONS
2. CONFERENCES
3. MAGAZINE."

These principals still apply but need the personnel and resources to meet the challenge of the continuation of this valuable resource. If you wish to contribute please get in touch. The question of virtual or actual is a constant one and comes up in conversation often balanced against costs and comfort, held in the hand or viewed through a screen, your views are sought on this question too.

Do you have any reminiscences of BASBWE in the 1980's you may wish to share? There will be a retrospective of BASBWE's 40 years in April edition of WINDS next year. Anyone who wishes to contribute please do.

Many best wishes
Bill Connor



Bill Connor

BASBWE Chairman

Bill Connor



chair@basbwe.net

Winds Magazine Editor

Bruce Hicks



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Membership Enquiries



membership@basbwe.net

Executive Committee

Bill Connor

Bruce Hicks

Anthony Houghton

Anne James

Phil Shotton

I would like to add a very special "thank you" to the Executive Committee for their continued hard work and commitment.

Big Christmas Wind Orchestra and Choir

The Big Christmas Wind Orchestra and Choir is a festive highlight for many musicians, forming annually in central London for an afternoon of Christmas music and fun. Over 300 musicians come together every year for a one day festival of Christmas music - from 6 tubas, 12 bassoons and even a bass saxophone, right up to 3 recorders and 6 piccolos, everyone is welcome and the resulting ensemble is an incredible sight and sound to behold!



We usually meet for 3 hours in the open air near Spitalfields Market and reach a high standard of performance despite a mixed ability group and no rehearsal. Our experienced professional musical director, Matthew Hardy, always carefully selects a wide range of Christmas music that is accessible to all performers, whatever their confidence or ability.



We base our programmes around the well known "New Christmas Praise" books of

carols - we probably maintain the largest collection of New Christmas Praise books outside the Salvation Army itself! On top of the traditional carols and songs we have a few concert band arrangements of pop medleys and Christmassy classical favourites.



Formed in 2012, the Big Christmas Wind Orchestra was started by a group of friends who were keen to use their musical talents in a public performance around Christmas time. The initial gathering was attended by around 40 performers, all from a range of London concert bands and wind orchestras. Over time, the event has grown to reach over 300 musicians, and from 2017 onwards, a choir has also been invited to sing along.



We know that while we perform we are an impressive spectacle for the gathered crowds, so we invite a charity partner to come and run a collection every year. With good weather and enthusiastic collectors, we have raised more than £1800 for a good

cause in a single afternoon, and nearly £8000 in total over all of our years of performance. Like most music-making in 2020, things will be a little different for us this year. It wouldn't be right for us to gather so many people close together to play, even if the current restrictions are lifted soon. We are therefore moving online, inviting people to submit videos of their own for us to compile into one enormous recording! Hopefully we will also host a live online playalong session later in December - to join in on our plans, just visit our website at

www.bigchristmaswindorchestra.org



As well as bringing festive joy to our performers and audience, we fill a gap in musical provision, for amateur performers to come together for a single one-off event, especially for those who do not regularly make music with a group. We received a grant from the Arts Council in 2017 which allowed us to purchase all of our own sheet music, based on our plans to use the event as a catalyst for community music making.





BIG CHRISTMAS WIND ORCHESTRA & CHOIR

We aimed to develop performers' skills through joining in with an enormous mixed ability group, and we successfully mixed players of different skill levels to sit through the orchestra and choir to learn from each other. 70% of participants thought the event enhanced their sight-reading ability, and 48% thought it gave them increased confidence in public performance. One participant commented "great to have the chance to play new music in a relaxed environment with little pressure", which shows our atmosphere was welcoming to all, just as we had aimed.

We hope our event is an inspiration for everyone to join a band or choir or the rest of the year; music is for life, not just for Christmas! Surveys after the event showed 22% of our performers do not make music regularly throughout the year, which is a surprisingly large proportion given that all performers had to be prepared to perform in public with a group of musicians they had not met before. Of these, 100% of the respondents to our follow-up survey were inspired to find other groups and make music throughout the year from now on, an excellent outcome for another key aim of our activity.

Additionally, 42% of participants were aged under 35, the key target group that we were trying to reach (identified by our partner Making Music as a difficult to reach and retain group in amateur music making). Through targeted promotion of resources, such as Making Music's online tool to find groups across the country, we also inspired our young performers to make more music throughout the year.

What's next for the Big Christmas Wind Orchestra and Choir? Surprisingly, a summer event! We had planned to launch a summer extravaganza in 2020, in another central London location and with more popular seasonal music, but as with many events this year, things have been put on hold. We're also hoping to grow our Christmas event to other cities around the UK, with Leeds or Manchester top of the

list - if you'd like to see a Big Christmas Wind Orchestra event in your city soon, let us know.

The Big Christmas Wind Orchestra and Choir is best summarised in the words of some of our participants: "My favourite gig of the whole year", "Great atmosphere, love the mix of abilities", "Made me feel all festive and happy" and "just so Christmassy!"

You can find out more about the Big Christmas Wind Orchestra and Choir at www.bigchristmaswindorchestra.org email info@bigchristmaswindorchestra.org, or find us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram - we're always keen to welcome new performers and collaborations.

Adam Funnell

Big Christmas Wind Orchestra and Choir Co-ordinator

Abingdon Concert Band



Abingdon Concert Band WindsDespite not being able to rehearse since March, Abingdon Concert Band have kept busy. We're aware that, for many of our members, the regular contact with a group of like-minded people is as important as the musical side of things. Since March we've maintained a medley of online quizzes and chats alongside the video collages, made with no small degree of skill and patience by our Musical Director, Neil Brownless.

Our members range from students from nearby Oxford, to stalwarts who've played with us for several decades, including one who was a founding member in 1977. We've even gained some new players during lockdown. It seems that as some people have had a bit more time on their hands, they've dusted off their instruments and are looking for a way to make music together as soon as it's possible. Having no band on Thursday evenings has left a big gap in our week!

Most of our members have attended one of our regular online video chats, which have enabled members old and new to keep in touch, and have actually given us more time to chat than we have at a regular rehearsal.

Several of us have hosted online quizzes. These have been great fun and provided a different way for members to get involved and keep in touch, without the difficulties of having lots of people on a video chat at the same time!

Recently, we even managed to have a small get-together and played some socially distanced quintets in a band member's garden. With a band numbering almost 60 it's a shame to only be able to play in small groups, but after this experiment we're considering trying to do more of this type of thing, if we can.



2019 was a really successful year for us musically, with highlights including a gold award at the National Concert Band Festival at the Royal Northern College of Music and outdoor concerts at Abingdon Airshow and Henley Mill Meadows bandstand. This year's plans included a trip to the seaside, for which we were hugely looking forward to playing on the newly refurbished bandstand in Swanage, Dorset.

We're hoping that our members will stick by us, and that we'll be able to get back to rehearsals and start rearranging those plans soon.

We've thought very hard about how to resume rehearsals. We conducted a survey of our members, which indicated that the vast majority are keen to rehearse as soon as we can demonstrate that we have a robust risk assessment in place. The guidance for members of Making Music has been invaluable in this respect, helping us to interpret the Government guidance, and providing templates for risk assessment etc.

For us, the main difficulties are around our size, but also the financial viability. Our regular rehearsal space can only accommodate around 15 people

observing social distancing guidelines, but once we're hiring the venue and paying our Musical Director, we require a minimum of 30 attendees at our current subscription rate to break even. It's sad that the finances have to come into it, but this is also part of the reality. We haven't been asking members to pay subscription fees as long as we're unable to rehearse, as we know the pandemic has presented a challenge to many people's finances. We have, however, been able to pay our Musical Director a 'retainer'.



www.makingmusic.org.uk/resource/can-group-get-back-in-person

We can't wait to get back to normal rehearsals, but in the meantime these videos are a great way to make sure we keep practising and making music together as best we can!

Neil Brownless, Musical Director
Lucy Wainwright, Committee Chairperson

Abingdon Concert Band

We're very aware of the impact of this on the income of those working in the arts and our committee was very keen to mitigate this for our MD.

On a much brighter note, alongside our chats and quizzes, we've been recording virtual performance videos which has been a learning curve for everyone! It's also meant that Neil has deserved his retainer! We started small with flexible ensemble arrangements of Do you Hear the People Sing? from Les Miserables and Prismatic Light by Alan Fernie which helped gauge interest before moving on to full band arrangements. Subsequently we've recorded full band arrangements of Sweet Child O' Mine by Guns N' Roses, Into the Unknown from Frozen 2 and You Can't Stop the Beat from Hairspray which have all been fun challenges. With some members unable to take part in all the videos, due to technical restrictions or work schedule, we've happily welcomed guests along to join in the fun. To that end we'd like to invite

everyone to join in with our sixth virtual performance, for which we'll be recording a brand new piece Keep the Rhythm Going written by the band's Musical Director, Neil Brownless.

Get Involved

If you'd like to get involved, please email us with your instrument and the name of the band you usually play in.

EMAIL
virtual@abingdonconcertband.org.uk

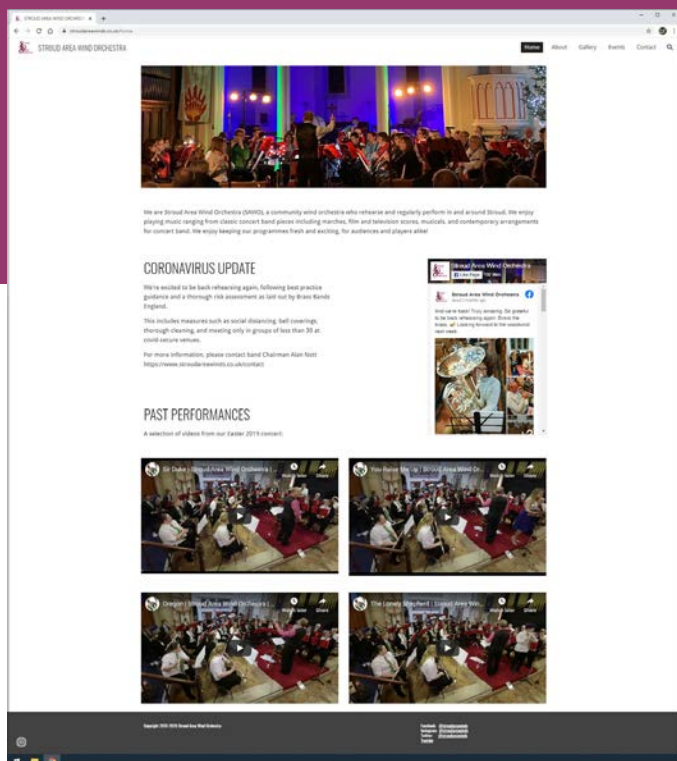
TWITTER
twitter.com/abingdonconcert

FACEBOOK
www.facebook.com/abingdonconcertband

STROUD AREA WIND ORCHESTRA

OVER 40 MEMBERS

Stroud Area Wind Orchestra is a community woodwind, brass and percussion band with over 40 members of all ages and mixed abilities. The band was formed in March 2016 as a continuation of Archway School Community Wind band. With just a few members in the beginning, it has seen a steady increase and has more than doubled in size and is still growing! It was announced by the original Musical Director of SAWO in September 2018 that he wanted to pursue his performing career and step down.



www.stroudareawinds.co.uk

PHILIP STORER

The committee therefore needed to find someone suitable for the role. The band had been introduced to Philip Storer on a few occasions as a performer, conductor and ensemble workshop host, and he was the perfect candidate for the role. With the approval of the band, Phil was approached with a view to taking on the role of Musical Director, and he became the conductor of the band in January 2019.

REHEARSALS

The band meets up for rehearsals every Tuesday and practices a wide variety of music, including movie classics, jazz, pop, folk arrangements, Selections from musicals and classical pieces. Some examples of these genres are Jurassic Park, Play That Funky Music, Save the Best for Last, Celtic Flutes, Selections from My Fair Lady and Carmen Suite. The band performs three concerts a year to the public at different venues across Gloucestershire - one each at Christmas, Easter and Summer. It also plays a fun programme of well-known tunes at Stroud bandstand every summer, bringing music to the great outdoors.

CHARITY

These concerts are a musical delight as well as being family fun nights. The band's lighting technician provides an atmospheric addition to the evening, and the performances are advertised across Gloucestershire through local radio, posters and the SAWO website as well as via word of mouth.



Every year the band members suggest and take a vote on which local charity they will collect for at their concerts.

This year it has been Sunflowers Suicide Support, who offer practical and professional help to families who have lost a loved one through suicide, and who raise awareness around mental health.



www.en-gb.facebook.com/stroudareawinds



Phil wanted to add something different to his first Spring concert as conductor, so he invited solo singer Becks Grant-Jones from Gloucestershire to perform a few songs with the orchestra accompanying her. The following Christmas concert he wanted the GALS, an up-and-coming saxophone quartet, to perform.

Phil likes to challenge the band musically with the pieces of music he

chooses and offers the opportunity for any band member to perform a solo or duet in the concerts. Band members who have performed solo pieces include Isabel Allard on oboe, Christopher Digby on trombone, Alan Nott on trumpet and Megan Digby on tuba. At the band's next concert, Martin Bland will perform a trombone solo, and Taneaka Sherwood and Jonathan Beilby will perform a flute duet.

In November 2019 Phil entered SAWO to perform at the National Concert Band Festival. This was an excellent way of receiving constructive advice on ensemble playing with an awarded performance, and SAWO earned a Gold award.

In an exciting look to the future, around Easter time in 2021 SAWO will be travelling to Bruges in Belgium, where they will be performing in their first overseas music tour!



BRUCE PETER HICKS

MA, M.Ed., BA, NPQH, AVCM

Bruce Hicks recently retired as Assistant Headteacher and Director of Music at Archbishop Beck Catholic College, in Liverpool. He directed the college's wind band programme as well as working in partner primary schools. During his tenure he was instrumental in commissioning works for the concert Band, one of the most memorable was "Maiden Voyage" by Peter Meechan, commissioned to coincide with the 100th Anniversary of the sinking of the Titanic.



Bruce has lived and worked in the UK for the past 33 years and prior to that was Director of Music at Christian Brothers High School, Lewisham, NSW, Australia.



Peter Meechan's "Maiden Voyage" received its premier at the Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool, performed by the college wind ensemble. The composer wrote at the time,

“Maiden Voyage (Hymn for a Ship of Sorrow) was commissioned by, and dedicated to, Bruce Hicks and The Archbishop Beck College Wind Band.”

Recently the college also commissioned "In Flanders Field" by John Holland, to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the ending of WW1. This was premiered at the Tyne Cot Cemetery in Belgium by the college wind ensemble.



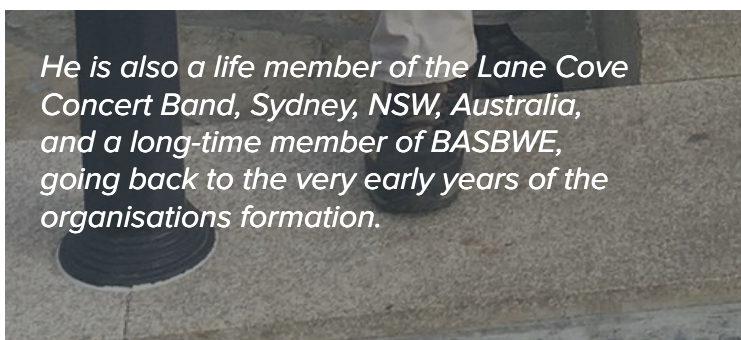
An avid attendee to music conferences, Bruce fondly remembers numerous visits to the Mid-West Band and Orchestral Clinic in Chicago USA, and visits to San Antonio (Texas) for the TMEA music conference and his time spent at the University of Calgary, Canada.



He has also served on a number of school governing bodies in the UK and is at present on the Board of two Merseyside Primary Schools.



He is also a life member of the Lane Cove Concert Band, Sydney, NSW, Australia, and a long-time member of BASBWE, going back to the very early years of the organisations formation.



Bruce was an Executive Member of the Band Association of NSW, Australia, for many years, where he was a member of the adjudicating panel for state and local contests.

An avid walker, especially enjoyed numerous "Camino Experiences" in northern Spain.



National Concert Band Festival

...the UK's largest wind band and big band festival

ncbf

Even in these tough times of COVID-19, when live music has effectively been silenced, it has accelerated the desire of NCBF to assist as many groups (concert bands and jazz bands) as possible develop various strategies for ensemble playing, whilst they may only have limited scope to meet as a full complement.

NCBF will be announcing a number of initiatives over the next few months under the banner of NCBF Extra to assist your bands development, the first of these NCBF Lite is FREE and available NOW – see details below.

- ⌘ NCBF had to cancel the 2020 Nationals in April and will not be staging the Regional Festivals this Autumn / Winter.
- ⌘ However, bands originally invited to perform at the NCBF 2020 Nationals will automatically be invited to participate in the planned NCBF 2021 Nationals @ Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester on Saturday 10 and Sunday 11 April.
- ⌘ Any bands not invited to the NCBF 2020 Nationals can still apply for consideration to perform at the planned NCBF 2021 Nationals by submitting a 15/20 minute non-edited video of a recent performance (together with pdf copies of scores / lead sheets) and completing an on-line entry. You will receive a written adjudication from NCBF experts, a completed NCBF Criteria Sheet plus an award (Platinum, Gold, Silver, Bronze) made and will be assessed for inclusion – submit anytime up to mid-February.
- ⌘ Submit a 15/20 minute non-edited video of your selected programme (together with pdf copies of scores / lead sheets) to:
www.ncbf.info/ncbflite
In return you will receive a written adjudication from NCBF experts, a completed NCBF Criteria Sheet and an Award Certificate (Platinum, Gold, Silver, Bronze) which will be sent to you – there is not any deadline for this FREE NCBF Lite submission
- ⌘ Your band's development is our aim at all times and NCBF are keen to support this – if you are able to rehearse as previously, that's fantastic – if you are having to adjust and adapt, we are here to help (look at www.ncbf.info for guidance on music content)
- ⌘ NCBF Lite is FREE and available NOW We know perfectly well that any rehearsals that could be scheduled at present are limited by so many factors, therefore in the meantime NCBF wish to support and encourage ensemble playing and invite you to take part in our FREE NCBF Lite initiative. Aimed at smaller ensembles from within bands, consider:
 - Flute; Clarinet; Saxophone; Double Reed Ensembles
 - Wind Trio; Quartet; Quintet; Sextet, etc.
 - Trumpet; Horn; Lower Brass Ensembles
 - Brass Trio; Quartet; Quintet; Sextet, etc.
 - Percussion Ensemble
 - Jazz Trio; Quartet; Quintet; Sextet, etc.
 - Little Big Band
 - Flexiband



Keith Allen
Director: NCBF

Maghull Wind Orchestra *in lockdown*

When lockdown began in March nobody knew just how long it would last for, but the committee at Maghull Wind Orchestra knew that something must be done to ensure that its members could keep making music together even if they couldn't physically play together. As a band they are lucky to have composers, arrangers and editors who have worked incredibly hard to put the musical arrangements, click tracks and videos together enabling the band to still play to audiences both near and far.



The virtual performances started with "You'll Never Walk Alone" in April with over 40 musicians taking part. This first performance was released in honour of the NHS workers who were working so hard and risking their lives for us. It was released to coincide with the Clap for Carers and received a huge amount of media attention with the piece even being featured on North West Tonight!

Following on from this, in May came the second virtual performance of "All You Need Is Love," this time over 50 band members took part. This piece was again performed in honour of the NHS and aimed to encourage viewers and listeners to "be kind." The song is another iconic Liverpool anthem celebrating the values which are most important in our current climate – love and support of each other and our communities.

The third piece released in June was composed by Karl Whelan, "Hymn to the Angels" was composed in support of NHS staff, care and key workers who were doing so much at this time. So how did Karl discover Maghull Wind Orchestra? He explained "I was scrolling through Facebook and saw that Maghull Wind Orchestra had created the video of "You'll Never Walk Alone," it was amazing – this was before "Hymn to the Angels" was even written!"

It was a few weeks later when MWO musical director Phil Shotton was recording some parts for the orchestral version that the collaboration came together. When asked how he would feel about MWO recording the piece Karl jumped at the chance, remembering how he felt about the previous video he had seen. Over 35 band members took part in the resultant exciting virtual performance.



Fourth, in July came "You've Got a Friend in Me." This piece was chosen by band members and dedicated to all of the children and young people who were struggling at this time with getting used to the "new normal" - facing disruption to their routines, friendships, education and other day to day activities. The band hoped that the fun video would put smiles on lots of faces and remind everyone of the importance of friendship, as well as reminding members of the friendships they have within the band.

Band member Emma Carrington said, "I love that the virtual performances bring the MWO family together. We have not physically seen each other for months but through these performances we are still able to make music together and to get that lovely feeling of playing our own small part in the wonderful whole."



The September release was the most complex yet, a collaboration between the band, nationally-known mezzo soprano Danielle Louise Thomas, the Alder Hey Children and Young People's Forum and Alder Hey Makaton Choir. With over 50 performers taking part this took quite some editing but the final video was wonderful. The orchestras main aim was to unite people through alternative communication methods and this is where the Alder Hey Makaton Choir and Forum became involved. Both groups are represented within the final video signing along to the piece. (For anyone unfamiliar with Makaton it is a communication method which uses signs and speech to express meaning.)

Overall, lockdown has enabled the orchestra to think outside the box, coming up with new and creative ways to keep the music playing even when the members can't physically be together.

Speaking of the success of the virtual performances musical director of Maghull Wind Orchestra, Phil Shotton added: "I think all of the virtual performances have been brilliant, from the band members who took part, composers, arrangers and our editor to the literally thousands of people who have viewed the videos on MWO's YouTube channel. We set off with the aim of keeping our musicians occupied and we ended up with unique pieces of music which have been enjoyed by so many.

It just shows that it takes more than a lockdown to silence Maghull Wind Orchestra!"

Don't worry if you haven't managed to watch the videos, they are all still available on YouTube by following the links below.

All You need Is Love

youtu.be/UrW1Oo_8qNM

You'll Never Walk Alone

www.youtube.com/watch?v=GJNRMgG8DmU

Hymn to the Angels

www.youtube.com/watch?v=FUUhVW0rwMM

You've Got a Friend in Me

youtu.be/o0XljAUSuV0

World in Union

youtu.be/2GHOHoU18Ds

The best news is Maghull Wind Orchestra aren't finished yet. There are more performances planned for the coming months so please follow their social media platforms so you don't miss out.

Facebook - [MaghullWindOrchestra](https://www.facebook.com/MaghullWindOrchestra)

Twitter - [@MaghullWindOrch](https://twitter.com/MaghullWindOrch)

Website - www.maghullwindorchestra.co.uk



EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP FOR WIND ORCHESTRAS

The European Championship for Wind Orchestras is an international non-profit association dedicated to the promotion and organisation of a bi-annual European Championship for Wind Orchestras. The association was discussed and established in a meeting in Utrecht, The Netherlands, on 25th of October 2014. The representatives being Berit Handegard Norway (NMF), Toon Peerboom Netherlands (KNMO), Jan Mathys Belgium (VLAMO), Ulrik Thomsen Denmark (DAO) and Bill Connor United Kingdom (BASBWE)

The main objective being the organisation of a European Championship for Wind Orchestras but integral to the running of a competition are the following aims, very much aligned to the aims and objectives of BASBWE without the competition element:

- # The promotion of wind music and the values connected with wind music.
- # The improvement and sustaining of high levels of musicianship within wind orchestras.
- # The stimulation and support of international contacts and networking.
- # The promotion and development of new repertoire for Wind orchestras.



Our current representatives are as follows:

- # Belgium, Vlaamse amateurmuziekorganisatie (VLAMO) : Jan Mathys
- # Denmark, Dansk Amatør-Orkesterforbund (DAO) : Lennart Blak Jensen
- # France, Confédération Musicale de France (CMF) : Ludovic Laurent-Testoris
- # Germany, Bundesvereinigung Deutscher Musikverbände e.V. (BDMV) : Anita Huhn
- # Norway, Norsk Musikkorps Forbund (NMF) : Karl Ole Midtbø
- # Sweden, Föreningen Svensk Blåsmusik (SBM) : Perry Göransson
- # Switzerland, Schweizer Blasmusikverband (SBV) : Valentin Bischof
- # The Netherlands, Koninklijke Nederlandse Muziek Organisatie (KNMO) : Bart van Meijl
- # British Association for Symphonic Brass and Wind Ensembles (BASBWE) : Bill Connor

Both the 2016 and the 2018 events have included a conference and round table discussion to address joint issues and challenges for the wind band family within the community at large and in educational processes across Europe.

Hopefully the players feel they are a part of a living, growing family of international wind band musicians who, through their presence at the competition, support and inspire each other to continue playing and sharing experiences and celebrating the true sense of the word amateur; those who love what they do and share the joy.

The first competition took place on the 21st of May 2016 in Tivoli Vredenburg concert hall, Utrecht, The Netherlands, organised by our Dutch associates KNMO. Our UK representatives were the EYNSFORD Concert Band with Mike Smith.

The second competition took place on the 26st of May 2018 in BOZAR Brussels, Belgium, organised by our Belgian associates VLAMO. Birmingham Symphonic Winds with Keith Allen represented the UK.

The third competition was planned for May 2020 but Covid-19 interrupted that plan. The 2020 competition will now take place in May 2022 in Mégacité, Amiens, France, and is organised by our French associates CMF (Confédération Musicale de France).



A large-scale system of control and exploitation



Shea Lolin

When I began my undergraduate studies 20 years ago, it felt vocational. Music engrossed me in a way no other subject did – something which continues to this day. But a good friend once told me that life will ‘knock the edges off’ and I began to understand that years on. But, on Monday 16th March 2020 at 5pm, the Prime Minister was making an announcement.

Through most of the lockdown my wife and I turned away from all forms of media. The news headlines didn’t seem to change much initially and there has been an ugliness on social media which I simply don’t understand.

Amongst all these messy feelings and experiences, we all try to work out what is right and what is important. Perhaps then we can think about what is so important about music – especially in the communities that support amateur music making. Perhaps even the community of people trying to promote and disseminate wind music - aka BASBWE!

Amateur musicians have time. A professional orchestra might have 45 minutes to rehearse a symphony or a concerto: an amateur orchestra or band might have a whole term.

**The
Guardian**

BASBWE

- British Association of Symphonic Bands
- & Wind ensembles

I had the radio turned up in anticipation and I began to feel anxious. The question running through my mind was: ‘will this knock more than the edges off?’.

The period of lockdown was for me filled with great joy and laughter because my wife and I have a two-year old daughter and now a son who was born in September. Our family has had to watch life come and go simultaneously. Being in such a situation paralleled with the austere living conditions makes you focus on what is important.

The average member of an amateur orchestra is paying for their musical experience and that creates a deep sense of discovery in all the ground that is covered and satisfaction at achieving goals. The act of meeting together, almost as a family, putting aside our differences to get on to work on some fantastic piece of music. There is a feeling that I can’t quite describe when a large group of people move, breathe and play together. There are no amount of zoom sessions or lockdown tracks that can replace that.

There is a dangerous cliff edge for those of us who make a living from playing professionally and receiving royalties for our work.

In 2013, The Guardian published an article with the arresting headline: “Thom Yorke calls Spotify ‘the last desperate fart of a dying corpse’”. It was a gripping article that starkly laid out the financial impact of streaming to artists. As of October last year, Spotify alone is worth \$21 billion (around £16 billion). The Guardian has published further articles on this subject including one in June this year which revealed the fact that Tasmin Little earned £12.34 for five million streams. Our pop-dominated, mass-produced culture industry and big business are fundamentally designed to make a large-scale system of control and exploitation. In comparison, the experience of classical music for most of us is very different.

So when the lockdown was announced, I was driving my car into the City of London to conduct the final rehearsal with the City Wind Orchestra before their concert just a few days later. A very strange feeling came over me – probably because at that moment I realised that these events might change something that felt so unchangeable.

For the first time I was being prohibited from doing what I’ve always done.

If we can't afford the basics in life, then we cannot go on supporting the industry. I am staggered with the lack of support from our own trade unions.

Music feels like it needs to be reborn. We need to get back to a place of discovery, a place of value for everyone. When I was 15, I had a job delivering medicine for the local chemist. I saved the money I earned and bought recordings of music. As I write this piece for Winds,

I have one of the first CDs I bought on my desk: Palestrina's Music for Maundy Thursday performed by Musica Contexta.

I can still relate to the feeling I had when I first heard it. I don't just value this music, I treasure it. And over 20 years on, I now understand that I supported the artists and everyone involved in the production of that album.

People haven't stopped consuming music, but they have stopped paying for it. The lockdown as a result of Covid-19 has damaged what was already fractured and unstable industry. I am not prophetic enough to know what the answers are to these problems but in the meantime, I just hope we can get back to some normality.

Maybe we can take a leaf out of the amateur musicians' book: not only do they support professional musicians, but they receive something back which can be treasured.

Shea Lolin
www.shealolin.co.uk



The new work for woodwind orchestra will be the thirteenth work to be commissioned by Shea Lolin as Music Director of the Bloomsbury Woodwind Ensemble. Shea Lolin writes: "Judith Bingham's compositional voice is unique and distinctive. Her harmonies are bold but not abstract. She writes phrases which are so naturally contoured and coloured with those daring and sumptuous harmonies. It will be a great privilege to work with a composer of such prominence on my lifelong fascination and dedication to the woodwind orchestra."

Born in Nottingham in 1952, Judith Bingham studied composing and singing at the Royal Academy of Music in London, where she was awarded the 1971 Principal's Prize.

Her commissions include works for King's College (Cambridge), Sarah Connolly and Tenebrae, the King's Singers, the Sacconi Quartet, the

BBC Philharmonic and many British cathedrals. In 1983, she joined the BBC Singers for whom she became Composer in Residence in 2004. She has written 15 pieces for them, and four works for the BBC Proms. Judith Bingham was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by Aberdeen University in 2017, has won four British Composer Awards and was appointed Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in the 2020 New Year Honours for services to music.

The Bloomsbury Woodwind Ensemble is an amateur woodwind orchestra comprising flutes, oboes, clarinets, saxophones and bassoons. The new work will be performed as part of their 2021 season of concerts. Further details can be found at www.bloomsburymusicgroup.org.uk



Shea Lolin has commissioned the British composer Judith Bingham OBE to write a new work for the Bloomsbury Woodwind Ensemble.



Keeping music (a)live...

Bassoonist Laurence Perkins reflects on his activities during this extraordinary period, and the opportunities it offers to us all.

The oft-quoted 'Keep music live' catch-phrase of the Musicians Union has never been more appropriate than in 2020. The year that saw so many personal tragedies and financial disasters with the coronavirus pandemic, has also been a catastrophic turning point for music and the arts throughout the world.



Photographer credit: Christos Bainpakis

Laurence Perkins

I've always enjoyed and really valued being a freelance player. This has given me a great deal of freedom and flexibility to pursue one of my life ambitions - to make the bassoon and its wonderful music better known and appreciated. When the profession hit the buffers following lockdown in late March this year, I was left with a diary just as empty as any other musician in the entire world. A cue to tidy the garden? Maybe put up my feet and watch daytime television? No fear - this was a great opportunity to create something new and relevant to the situation into which we've all been plunged.

To start with, on-line was of course the only option. It was clear that a great many people from all walks of life would be hugely under pressure and emotionally undermined by this situation - also, moods and circumstances would change on a day-by-day basis. Music is a fabulous mood-changer, and I knew that I could offer positive help towards this - so I quickly decided to set up an on-line series of short programmes that I could easily host on my own website.

These programmes - mainly audio, but including five videos - were typically about 10 minutes in length (with a few exceptions) which seemed right for a daily offering aimed at people who are likely to be hard pressed for time and might appreciate a brief diversion. They were intended for literally anyone - not at all just for bassoonists (as a few people assumed!) - and the content reflected that. They were free of charge, and very easy to access on a mobile, laptop, iPad or main computer - no log-in required.

There were a few pieces from the 'standard' solo bassoon repertoire, including a regular weekly programme devoted to some wonderful baroque music, but there was also a huge amount of music that would rarely if ever be heard on the instrument. This included a generous exploration into traditional folk melodies, many of which come from the 17th century Playford collection or similar sources. These wonderful old folk tunes (some of them miniature masterpieces in their own right) often work perfectly well in unaccompanied performance, enabling me to record in my 'home studio' - a very glamorous name for the dining room! There is also a specific link between Playford (and other similar-period secular tunes) and the bassoon - remember the instrument's ancestor (the dulcian or curtal) and its place in the City Waites ensembles of

that time? The next question was "for how long do I run this series?" This was important to ensure that it had some structure and was properly planned. I guessed - fairly accurately as it turned out - that the worst period when this series would be most needed was in April and May. I therefore launched the series on 1st April (no foolish wisecracks, please!) and I made the cut-off point the last day of May - a total of 61 daily programmes.

From that moment, it was a daily task to record new material which would then be combined with some of the archive recordings that I was able to use for this purpose. It was great fun doing it - a huge amount of work, but of course it kept me playing on a very regular basis. In the end the series gathered quite a following, with more than 7000 visits to the webpage. It also attracted the

attention of BBC Radio 3, who invited me onto the 'In Tune' programme twice - once (right at the beginning) to talk live to Katie Derham, and again about a month later with Sean Rafferty when they commissioned a special 'Home Session' recording from me. This was a wonderful chance for me to make the world première recording of an original work for solo bassoon - a delightful piece by Francis Chagrin, 'Souvenir Lointain' ('Memories of Long Ago'), written in the 1960s.



So far, so good - I was very happy to be playing and sharing music in this way, and much of the music from the series is now in a set of compilation programmes, still free of charge and on the same webpage www.laurenceperkins.com/inspiration. These programmes will remain there until the end of the year. This wasn't enough, though - what about all the amateur players, and all my professional colleagues with as little work as I have?

It's now well known that amateur music making has been one of my big involvements for the last twenty years through 'Wind Serenades' courses, which now has a big following. Amateur players have had a truly dreadful year, not helped by some highly inappropriate Government decisions which initially discriminated against amateur wind and brass players (as well as singers) - fortunately they eventually saw the errors of their ways, and the situation is now somewhat better. DCMS commissioned the much-vaulted Costello 'PERFORM' report, due for release in July, but this is still not generally available. This needs to be properly published, to ensure that we are dealing with real issues in a responsible way, rather than knee-jerk over-reactions based on inadequate information.

Happily, I managed to keep all of my live courses going. At a time when everything was cancelled, I managed to run two live courses in late summer, which conformed to Government health and safety requirements, and provided players with opportunities to do what meant so much to them and had been denied for several months. The social distancing (meticulously followed in all sessions) was not a musical problem - wind instruments can be clearly heard at a distance, and it's good practice for listening in an ensemble!

On one of the courses, at the end of the final run-through, one player was in tears - an overwhelming expression of joy, the live playing meant so much.

Each course took a huge amount of time and effort to organise - far longer than normal because of the significant health requirements and a possibility of last-minute changes - but it was more than worth it, because they were such special events for everyone.

The only fly in the ointment was an anonymous caller to a County Council Health and Safety Officer, reporting "a course that does not meet Government regulations".

This information was totally false. That person had no way of knowing the meticulous preparations and precautions that had been put in place - it was clearly a malicious act motivated by reasons other than health and safety. Within minutes, that H&S Officer received my Risk Assessment, which was instantly approved and the course was cleared to go ahead, which it did without further incident.

Details of the project are at laurenceperkins.com/blowthewindsoutherly

Such despicable mean-spirited acts have no place in a hugely difficult global situation where mutual support and cooperation is needed more than ever before.

At the time of writing, I have two more courses lined up for 2020 plus several in 2021, and it's very gratifying to see more courses starting up again around the U.K. - more joy for more players!

There is also the plight of school-age woodwind and brass players, many of whom have no opportunities to play together in groups at schools and in music centres, again largely because of confusing and inadequate information. It's vital that these players have the opportunities to take part in events - if they are left on their own, we will lose a whole generation of wind players. So, in response to this, I ran a special on-line project based on the traditional Northumbrian folk tune "Blow the Wind Southerly", where players could record themselves and contribute to a nationwide on-line ensemble performance. It was released on YouTube in December 2020.



Speaking live to Katie Derham, 31st March 2020 on BBC Radio 3 'In Tune'

As for my professional colleagues, it's a disastrous time. The latest report is that up to a third of freelance players have now taken different jobs just to survive - driving food delivery vans, stacking supermarket shelves, working in call centres, and so on. Some have been totally unable to get jobs of any kind. Personally, I have never earned so little in all my working life as this year! However, tricky though the financial situation is, the biggest loss for me is playing concerts - that wonderful sharing with a live audience which is so special to listeners and performers alike. So, knowing that the telephone is not going to be ringing with offers of gigs for some considerable while,

I have gone ahead and set up a series of my own concerts in venues around the U.K. To start with, these are solo concerts, as I could not ask a professional colleague to share the risk in what at the moment is a very unknown quantity. However, initial enquiries to key contacts around the country indicated a huge amount of enthusiasm for such events. Therefore, I'm going ahead initially with a handful of concerts, starting in central London on Monday 23rd November at St Pancras Old Church - two 1-hour performances (no interval) at 4.30pm and 6.30pm. This will then tour around the U.K. into early December, and - if the response is good - into the early months of 2021. Current health and safety regulations will of course be observed, with social distancing achieved via 2-seat 'bubble' booking. Tickets are sold on-line in advance, with prices set to be as affordable as possible, given that many people are confronting financial challenges at the moment. Drinks will be served - where allowed, audience members can bring their own!

You may now be wondering "hmm, solo bassoon - what would that offer for an hour in a live concert?" Well, thanks to the incredible versatility of the bassoon, plus the fact that I've done this sort of performance presentation before (the on-line series tapped into that experience), in a short time I had a new concert programme with a huge range of musical styles, moods and sound-worlds that I could perform entirely on my own.

The programme is called 'Beautiful World', and it is literally a one-hour musical journey around the world, starting in the British Isles and travelling to America, Mexico, South America, the Far East, Europe, and finishing out in the ocean. For this performance I use backings - some are musical exploring both traditional and new sounds using clever technology, and others are soundscapes featuring original recordings of natural sounds that I have made over the years, including birdsong, the sea, rivers and the sounds of the wind. It's quite an experience, and it will be available well into 2021 - it can be performed in any venue, large or small.

If you think this may be of interest in your local community, do contact me via my website contact form www.laurenceperkins.com/contact

The one place it will not be available is on-line - this is about LIVE performance, something that desperately needs to be re-started at the moment. If the overall response is sufficiently good,

'Beautiful World' is not a concert programme title I would normally use - it reflects where we are at the moment, in an extended period of global crisis when our inner resources are stretched to (and sometimes beyond) their limits. It's all about inspiration - a reminder that despite all that is happening around us, this world is still a beautiful place.

This is where music - and especially LIVE music - can be so incredibly powerful, partly in its healing qualities for our shattered emotions, but also for its motivating and energising aspects to help us all to move forward. In this ghastly situation, all musicians have a golden opportunity to bring all this into focus for everyone around us. Sadly, there are now huge numbers of people for whom music has become a free on-demand on-line commodity, and we are living in an age where authorities pay lip service (if that) to music education in schools, at the lowest possible price they can get away with. All this needs to change.

The music world will wither and die if professional players and music teachers cannot earn a living from what we do. It won't change on its own - and it's not "someone else's job" to make these changes. If you (as I do) value music as an essential and enriching life force, and live music-making as one of the most fulfilling experiences one can ever be involved in, then it's up to you, me, each and every one of us to go out at this time, share this incredible musical magic, and bring about changes in how music is perceived and valued.

Each one of our tiny individual contributions will collectively add up to a significant and influential movement. For the foreseeable future when orchestras and the bigger musical operations are largely out of action, 'small is beautiful' - and this is our cue! I'm doing what I can in the way I know I can do best - so now it's over to you to have a good think about what you can do to help put live music-making and real musical appreciation back on the map. It's an exciting challenge for us all!

I will be very excited to open this up to including ensemble concerts involving other players - an important way forward.

We asked President of ECWO, Berit Handegard: "How has lockdown been for you in Norway?"

Here's her response; thank you Berit!

When the message reached the public March 12th that the country was facing a shutdown, most of the bands stopped their activities. However, after a short while they started to play music again, in small groups of max 5 with social distance, or they organised digital rehearsals to play and stay in contact.



Berit Handegard

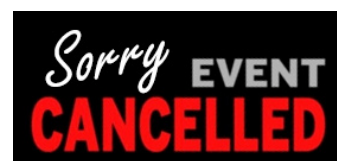
A main task for the Norwegian Band Federation (NMF) was to start the work together with other music organisations to make protocols for the bands who needed guidelines. The challenge was rehearsal rooms. The schools and cultural centres were all closed. Some managed to keep their activities going one way or another.

NMF started a channel for online workshops for conductors and band secretaries. 300 conductors joined in for inspiration, new knowledge, discuss music and how to organise rehearsals during corona times. The main task was to keep up the spirit and create activity.



The restrictions were fewer during the springtime and within summer time most of the bands could meet and play together in smaller or larger groups, depending on location available. The creativity was overwhelming when it came to streaming projects, a lot of films popped up on the internet.

17th of May is Norway's constitution day and the day when the bands are the main attraction in the celebration. In parades, concerts and local events. This year it was different, all public events and parades were cancelled, first time since 1945. But the bands got permission to parade and have smaller events in their local communities. As long as they did not announce this in public. The goal was to not gather an audience. Strange situation.



NMF have cancelled all events in 2020 and the spring 2021. No championships and the summer schools were replaced by day courses. No accommodations or joint meals were allowed. Social distancing was the main rule. It worked, a lot of young people met and played together. In August the conductors week in Stavanger went ahead, but on a smaller scale than previously.

NMF invited member bands to a video contest called VIVO! More than 100 bands produced all kind of entertaining films for the Internet. We could spot a good spirit. They also produced these films to attract new members.

By August 2020 most of the bands were back to normal as long as they have rehearsal facilities allowing social distancing. Also concerts are allowed with a limited audience of 200. Streaming is still a popular way of meeting the audience and some of the concerts reach many more people than the ever thought was possible.

NMF developed a pedagogic project called ImPulse to keep activities going. This can be used both online and in real life. Norway is not hit as hard as many other countries, but there are still outbreaks, keeping everyone on their toes.

JONATHAN PIPPEN - FREELANCE MUSICIANS PANDEMIC SURVIVAL PACK

COVID HITS HARD

Freelance musicians are used to a precarious life style. We are a hardy bunch usually, being used to the fluctuating, erratic and often unreliable nature of the music industry.

Most of us have chosen this life style for ourselves, leaving behind, declining offers of, or even just not ever applying for salaried positions. We prefer this freer lifestyle. It's a lifestyle choice. But no one could have planned for 2020.

The Covid-19 pandemic is uncharted territory, and from March 2020 until time of writing, it has really decimated the entire music industry's output, closing theatres, concert halls, arenas, recording studios, rehearsal facilities and of course promoter's wallets.

The government have helped many through the self-employed income support scheme (SEISS) but after the two payments that have been given, it seems third payment may be on its way, but set at just 20%, which seems disproportionately low compared to the previous 80% and 70% of earnings previously given.

However, these are the lucky ones. Those who averaged a penny over £50k net profit in the last 3 years, and those without 3 years of accounts to submit have been left out of the help scheme completely. I've not heard any decent justification for this yet. It seems very harsh.

Maybe there will be more news on this with the second wave of the virus bedding in and new lock down restrictions being introduced, but for now all that can be said is that for both these groups it has been hardest. Tragically I've already seen instrument sale adverts online from musicians who have had West End shows for more than a few years, and orchestral and session players who have no work and earned too much money over the last few years to qualify for the help. It's a strange feeling to be grateful for having not earned too much money!

It's a double whammy that those we have just mentioned who are suffering the most are the ones who have been lucky enough to enjoy careers where they generate income solely from performing, writing or producing. These are the people usually considered the luckiest and most successful, often members of show bands in the west end or on touring shows, busy session players or even members of the freelance but permanent orchestral outfits in London. Just recently I've heard from reliable sources of a top London session trumpet player applying to join the Central Band of the Royal Air Force and of a player with a principal chair in a Birmingham orchestra doing the same. Unheard of in my humble experience, and a pretty obvious reaction to the climate and the uncertainty of the future. Tragically many are deciding to leave the profession all together. This for me is the saddest outcome.

ADAPT AND OVERCOME!

As a rule most performing freelancers plan to be "quiet" in January and August, simply due to the general lack of concerts and events (other than the proms and other summer festivals) and either make suitable arrangements for these leaner times or, utilise other avenues of work available to them. But what happens when it's not just January?

Teaching is a natural side line of the jobbing freelance musician, and many use this as a way of stabilising what can be an erratic earning pattern at the best of times, but it's really accepted, although not often admitted, that many freelance musicians have other avenues of income to make ends meet, or at least add a little more comfort to their lives. Usually it's something they enjoy, something that has a supporting, but vital role in allowing them to continue to function as a musician without going bankrupt each time a lean patch arrives. This is given little if any time or thought on any conservatoire course I know of, but it's a vital part being able to keep playing professionally without the safety net of a salary. It's not the case of all of course but for many.



Amongst my freelance colleagues there are a Draftsman, Calor Gas Engineer, Golf Caddy, book dealer, mechanic and one of my peers on the west end production Half a Sixpence is an iron monger of some repute. Think the Iron Throne! It's these people, used to diversifying that are most able to survive in these uncertain times, most able to deal with what the pandemic is throwing at us, and, most likely to come out the other end ready for the phone to ring for a gig.

I think like never before diversification is the key to survival, which is harder to consider if you're not used to it, but I don't see any shame in it, or really any option if you want to be left standing instrument, baton or pencil in hand when this is all over.

But... this should absolutely not be confused with the recent Government tack of encouraging us to leave the profession all together. That is just wrong, on so many levels. I cannot be impartial on that!

*“When this is over, and it will at some stage be over,
it's those that have managed to adapt and overcome
that will have survived.”*

STAY MOTIVATED, STAY IN PRACTICE

Finding musical motivation when having no live concerts, recordings or productions to prepare for is something no-one is used to. For some professional players, gigs are the only thing that keeps them practising. I know this has led to genuine difficulties for some, the mental strain being no small part of the equation. Personally, practising is a two-edged sword. I'm lucky that I enjoy it, find it meditative, productive and I look forward to the private time it affords me to be in my own space and head. Perhaps like going for a run or playing a solitary round of golf or reading a book. Its positive time for me and isn't a chore. This is how I try to sell it to players I'm encouraging, professional or amateur. At the same time, I'm unlucky, as any period greater than a couple of days away from my instrument and my playing goes downhill faster than Compo in the bath. At least in my head it does. Which is perhaps even more dangerous. Maybe I'm an addict. But over the last 8 months it's been as blessing.

I've seen various efforts of colleagues and friends to stay in shape, motivated, positive and musically active. Basically, ways to keep playing. Some are inspiring, some less so, but all genuine and honest. Musicians need an audience and social media sort of provides this. Some made a lot of videos and uploaded them to platforms like Instagram and YouTube. The Acapella app went viral!

There have been many collaboration recordings and videos for organisations like the British trombone society, Cory Band and West End of Wales, and there have been online meetings, classes, masterclasses, seminars and lectures which ensembles, colleges, universities, music hubs and individuals have set up to try and keep members, students or even the public motivated.

Lots of new online teaching hubs have popped up, offering lessons and coaching remotely in an effort to take advantage of the lack of traditional face to face teaching, and many have set up home recording studios in an effort to carry on with the work they were doing before lock down, and also to develop new avenues. I've done a little bit of all of these things, and even have found myself writing and arranging music which has massively helped me to stay motivated and feel productive from home. Whatever people have done,

I think the key is that whether you do it quietly on your own, or by covering you tube in recordings of yourself, everyone has had to do something. And that's the key. Keep doing stuff, stay positive and find ways to enjoy playing you instrument.

WHAT'S NEXT

At the beginning of this period I saw some colleagues getting very upset because people had suggested they should consider diversifying into teaching or some other non-live performance aspect of music to earn. The people in the main were those who have been able to create a full income just playing and perhaps felt that the show they were on, Orchestra they were in or the freelance circuit in general was leaving them in the lurch by not providing the opportunities that had in the past been available. But 8 months later, it's clear this wasn't the case, and it was just the business reacting to the climate. The hard-cold reality is that if you are going to survive this, you have to find a way to protect your musical output and future by diversifying and developing your business. Even if that means doing something non-musical to ensure you survive pandemic.

Please don't misunderstand. This is not the same as the awful Rethink, Retrain, Reboot adverts which are so offensive to every freelance / self-employed artistic person in the country. We should not be giving up on the arts for a second, but there is no shame in making sure you survive to come back firing on all cylinders when the work comes back. Which eventually it will!

When this is over, and it will at some stage be over, it's those that have managed to adapt and overcome that will have survived.

Call me an optimist, but I believe that if you can be one of those who survive, you're going to be better off when the cogs of the music business start turning again.

Jonathan Pippen



A POSTCARD TO BASBWE

I write as we enter week 31 (according to the diary I am keeping) of our Covid-19 experience. This has affected all of us in varying degrees with sadly many paying the ultimate price for innocently encountering this assault upon our lives and working practices. One can only comment on this from a personal perspective with any real accuracy, but the eventual outcome will effect all of us and change quite radically our own and others situations.

Composers tend to live much of their existence in a self-imposed kind of isolation with time passing at seemingly variable rates depending on the task in hand, be it a commission or a mission to write music. It's more tolerable for us to face being 'locked-in' than a travelling salesman for example! Being in the category of 'semi-isolated' (due to a previous operation) I made the decision early in the crisis to remain positive in attitude and spirit and to write a few more pieces that I would rather of liked, should the opportunity have arisen and a continuous schedule of commissions wouldn't divert me from.

It has proven to be quite an education and I have taken on board a number of observations about my own working practices and general musical philosophy. Principally this involves why I am writing a certain music and not others and how this might be addressed better in the future.

Obviously one has to earn a living but one slight advantage in growing older is the benefit of a substantial catalogue of works a good number of which seem to receive regular performances. I am realistic enough to understand that a composition for a wind or brass band is more likely to enter their repertoires than anything written for a symphony orchestra. However, it is not that medium that I myself was seeking entry into.

Many years ago I wrote a Sonata for Clarinet and Piano (1984) and was of the mind to compose a series of such instrumental works over a career. That sonata was not commissioned but I was starting out then and a promise of a performance was a fine enough thing to achieve. And so, it was 2009, a gap of a quarter of a century, before a second sonata was written, again without a commission, driven by an inner impulse. Since then I have done a better job of maintaining regular entries into this side of my creative activity, an area I refer to as my 'Hindemith Project', which has delivered a total of 12 to date, with three written during the virus pandemic and further ones on the blocks, ready to press 'go'.



They have all been composed with a performer in mind and with a recording built into the thinking. Recordings are seriously held up at present and I feel this a particularly frustrating aspect of the current environment. Recordings can be rather quick events at the first stage but editing, programme note making and the rest are the time consuming factors. Some six albums are either recorded and awaiting editing finalisation or are projects planned but rendered static by not being able to meet up, rehearse, discuss and set down. Their time will arrive and I will be waiting!

I also made an earlier, quasi luxurious decision, to cut back on the number of wind and brass band commissions I accepted. The latter medium was less concerning as I had completed my cycle of concertos and either been commissioned or chosen for all the major competitions at one time or another. As for the wind band, it is harder to release: let's face it where does one get an orchestra of that size and with abundant percussion and additional players to boot?

Therefore that area is reduced but not relinquished – I have completed a US commission during recent months but when it will be premiered is now unknown. Another area that I have seriously revisited is my interest in the string orchestra and choral music. The former I tackled with an album recorded by the RNCM String Orchestra and released in 2017, but my new group of pieces, recorded by the RLPO late last year, is a victim of the virus as it is not possible to run a manageable final session to complete the project.

The choral project is complete in principle in that the material is all composed but again held in limbo by not being able to rehearse and record it all. One should not get too depressed, and I don't, as these things will happen in due course, for a composer can, at least, write music whatever the external situation is.

The 'hit' as far as composers are concerned will be the haunting of the virus: royalties come in after the event and there have been no live performances this year world-wide, plus music publishers have not been making any of their usual sales as musical bodies have not been meeting, rehearsing or performing. My July 2020 PRS statement was 98% US live performances, mainly university wind bands and ensembles. This will have a devastating effect on next year's July statement and also all other PRS distributions. Publishing royalties have already proved to be lesser and will take some time to recover. Nevertheless I shall not cry into my beer as it's worse for other members of the music community, principally for the most valued of my musical colleagues, performers, who might be able to practice but are denied playing in public, even meeting up and playing in small groups etc. Theirs is the bleeding heart and I weep for them. Neither can conductors conduct and across the wide horizons of the arts all sorts of previously familiar activities are curtailed, delayed or even cancelled.

The final outcome is awaited with trepidation and great concern. What was will not be the same again and we will all be facing new ways of working and collaborating in pursuit of our ambitions and destinies.



Martin Ellerby

One other source of solace, and indeed satisfaction, is being able to take on some of the many recordings I have acquired in the past and actually listen to them! What a delight to make an in-house project of the Prokofiev piano sonatas and the Shostakovich preludes and fugues, both accompanied with scores and analytical commentaries on the subjects in parallel.



Oh, and all those books I bought and the films and the documentaries that have looked at me with vacant eyes for years – they are being read and watched and I am benefitting from their contents. I battle on...

To all out there, know you are not alone – we will make music again together soon. We will dine out before concerts and go to bars afterwards for the post mortem! We'll travel freely on trains and planes and share each others company. We will find ourselves again and the experience will make us better together, more compassionate, more understanding and, with the exception of universal politicians, more human!

'God bless us, every one!'

©2020 Martin Ellerby, Altrincham, October

Peter Graham – Diary in Lockdown



Attending one of the final rehearsals of my Glasgow Wind Band commission, "Angels & Demons", due to premiere at the Scottish Wind Festival the following weekend. Sadly the festival becomes an early casualty of the COVID crisis and that rehearsal is the last live ensemble performance I'm going to hear for.....who knows how long?



Lockdown it is. A mercy dash to pick up a friend of my daughters who, given the choice of spending weeks in her flat on her own or at with the Grahams opts for the latter. An indication of her desperation I think.

Easter weekend: so far, so good. Settled into a lockdown uniform of T-shirt, hoodie and jeans (avoiding decision fatigue). The following days follow a routine of permitted exercise (discovering places in the locale we didn't know existed), playing hunt the toilet roll (though we have plenty already), quizzes and homemade dinners where we transform the dining room into a Taverna/US Diner/Italian Restaurant/McDonalds (I was outvoted...).



Amazingly the weather has been consistently fine. Time to sort out the garden. Finding fence wood stain becomes a challenge of Mission Impossible proportions. Not having "Cumings Chutzpah", I'm feeling very exposed driving to the one store open which might possibly have a supply. I'm eyed with suspicion by the door guard. I make a run for the Cuprinol - catastrophe - they only have red cedar left!!



Actually, red cedar doesn't look too bad.



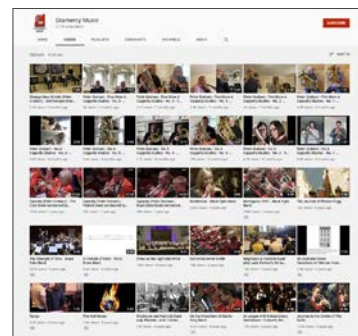
Another one bites the dust. Australian National Brass Band Championships are cancelled. The bands had been working on my piece "The Torchbearer", the set work this year. All those rehearsals without the prospect of a final performance. This is becoming the norm sadly.



I've been watching lots of brass players posting videos of themselves performing on social media. This gives me an idea. Since my large scale ensemble commissions are on hold at the moment, maybe I could put together a series of duet studies? Even better, could I persuade some player friends to produce demo videos using a cappella software? Amazingly all of the world class performers I asked have responded positively! If there is one good thing coming out of this pandemic it's to witness a generosity of spirit. Better do my part and make these free downloads.



Enjoyable Zoom meeting with Michael J. Garasi and his students in Florida. This becomes a regular occurrence with groups across the world and actually works really well.



The duet series launches with Thomas and James Fountain playing the first of my Six A Cappella Studies. Amazing playing, but don't take my word for it. Have a listen: www.youtube.com/user/GramercyMusic/videos



Another premiere missed, this time in Palanga Lithuania. So sorry for all who have put so much time, effort and finances into what would have been a spectacular European Brass Festival. My trip to Denmark to adjudicate at the Aalborg Music Festival later in the month also goes by the wayside, as does the Grand Shield competition.



A milestone. We clear out the loft. 20+ years of things we kept "in case they are useful someday". Guess what?



This is a bigger task than we thought. Why is there a dismantled greenhouse up there??



VE Day! Socially distanced street parties galore and still the weather holds. We have afternoon tea in the garden (suitably decorated) with echoes of Vera Lynn and Glen Miller coming from all directions.



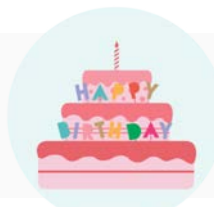
Panic!! The MD of the National Children's Brass Band of GB gets in touch. The course is going ahead after all - now online - can we have a programme note? The sketches I put aside in March will clearly not work in a virtual environment. Deep breathing doesn't help.



My mother's 90th birthday. All of the family get together online to have a virtual party. We already sent supplies/presents up to Scotland where she is in isolation with my father (who was 88 earlier in the month). Fortunately my father is quite tech savvy (with iPhone, iPad etc.) and is able to stream the event to his TV!



My wife's birthday, and after much online hunting an inflatable hot tub arrives just in time.



This will enhance the "staycation" no end. Shut your eyes imagine you are in Italy.



West of England BB Contest in Cornwall where the set piece is my "On Alderley Edge"....cancelled. Music is taking a back seat at present. Having found lots of lego sets in the loft we have all (except my wife) become obsessed with the stuff. I have my eye on the recently released Lego Grand Piano



Finally we can travel for a mini-break (though sadly not yet to our cottage in Scotland). Manage to get an airbnb in Aldeburgh and am at last able to realise a long held ambition. We visit the Red House! My knowledge of Britten is paltry but this sets me off on a learning curve. Death in Venice - a masterpiece! What a composer!

It appears the owner of our airbnb is a cultured individual. The bookshelf is full of Britten biographies and Aldeburgh Festival programmes. Flicking through the pages of one of the latter I find an autograph. Harrison Birtwistle! A different class of celebrity in Suffolk obviously.



Taking advantage of the lifting of restrictions and the (still) glorious weather we head for West Sussex. Arundel is absolutely beautiful and we bag a riverside cottage. I can see why the Downs have inspired so many composers.



My NCBB commission is streamed live. "Strange New Worlds" (!) is the title and the virtual band play brilliantly. I will start work on a wind version soon. A trip to adjudicate a music festival in Sydney Australia at the end of the month is cancelled, but good news, Scotland is open!



A few days at the cottage near the Borders and then on to the island of Arran. Finally the weather turns and for the first time in our lives we are stuck on an island! Ferries cancelled because of the storm. We manage to get on one next morning only to find it can't dock and has to return to port. A mad dash to the other side of the island and we squeeze onto the tiny Lochranza ferry (thanks mainly to my little "classic" sports car). Miles from Ayrshire but at least we are on the mainland - except that the famous road "rest and be thankful" is plagued with landslides. We get through just at the right time. A weekend socially distancing with family in Scotland.

And there ends an eventful six months since lockdown. Ensemble activity in the UK still on hold but there are signs of recovery in other parts of the world. A socially distanced concert is streamed live on social media by Eikanger Bjorsvik Band from Norway. Delighted that they programmed my "Dynasty" which bit the dust in Switzerland this month. Just wish I could have been there to hear it.

Peter Graham is staying busy working on a number of projects and still admiring his red cedar garden fence.

www.gramercymusic.com

Peter Graham



K E N H E S K E T H

W h a t l i e s a h e a d ?

When asked, most kindly, to contribute to an edition of Winds magazine on the topic of my activities since the Covid-19 lockdown, I had to pause and stop. It has become so necessary to normalise the ways of dealing with the bizarre and extreme times we have all been plunged into, to try and 'get through it' (for my son's sake more than anything else) that having to think about it cumulatively unnerved me.

Enumerating the ways that so many people's lives have changed since March of 2020, those thousand not-so-natural shocks of adjustments - of lost work, of time and isolation, the new rituals (from NHS clapping to Zoom teaching, performance watching, and anger management due to social media), the frustration at our leaders' procrastination and infuriating incompetence - brought back to me how unprepared we were for what erupted. The uncertainty was and still is bad enough, especially as the worry for the safety of family members, students and their careers, our artistic institutions, societies and organisations remains.



Musical postcard pieces online, multiple-overdubbing recordings and the occasional offbeat arrangement for 50 bassoons et al form a small snapshot of how musicians have sought to keep their spirits raised. Of late, of course, some live music has occurred (I write as the Last Night of the Proms is broadcast, Tête à Tête opera moves forward with its new season, the reduced Aldeburgh Festival season concluded and choirs and ensembles perform in a socially distanced manner) and this is a reason for hope, reminding us of our art's ability to give succour, provocation and context and, dare I say, some respite to a wider society through these bizarre times (if a reminder were needed of art's power and reason for being!).

I try to temper my bouts of pessimism for my own sanity as well as those I live with; but it has been revealing to me to see how many seemingly-informed people have expressed their opinions on covid-19 often revealing more about their beliefs on science, society, the rule of law and empathy than anything else. Not being able to un-know such details about people has led to anger and frustration, forcing me to take stock of what has been of fundamental worth and importance, not only of late but over the last few years.

As to how I've been 'keeping busy', adults often finds ways of being incredibly active without achieving much tangibly (an obvious truism you might say). Being busy in times of stress I find necessary and cathartic (something I picked up from my mother and grandmother no doubt), yet it can border on the manic at times.

So in keeping compositionally busy, I was able to complete an Oboe concerto for the phenomenal soloist Nicholas Daniel, reworked a solo bass clarinet piece for – and now recorded by - Heather Roche, a performer and interpreter of incredible musicality and ability, and, on and off, working towards a new piece for wind orchestra (which is as much as I can say for the moment!). I've lost performances of course and the chance of travelling to work with wonderful players, but then so too have many, many colleagues. These projects however, actually involving real people with the promises of future performances, have been of enormous help in keeping positive and maintaining resilience, and in this regard I feel lucky.

The other two professional aspects of my life, teaching and writing, have helped keep my intellect from atrophying, forcing me to take time to read more widely, to organise and coherently articulate my thoughts which, during the many distractions of our current dystopia, has been a means of maintaining a notion of normality. I'm currently writing a chapter for a Cambridge University Press book on composition, namely on writing for solo instruments, and the intensity of researching, of synthesising knowledge, the revelations of new work and of the necessary feats of concision in summing up my musical views (and biases!) has made me realise just how important the support is of a valued composer colleague and friend (who also happens to be my wife, Arlene Sierra), and that some things need long experience as well as knowledge to tackle.

As an educator, I was very lucky to have been a mentor once more on the Cohan Collective 2020 modern dance summer scheme for composers and choreographers, performers and dancers, with colleagues of incredible ability and experience on the team; in particular, mentoring composer Edmund Hunt, witnessing his new work come into being, the results of which – made in a blended Zoom and physical environment – were joyous. Seeing new art made through the blending of intellect and physicality was particularly special. No less uplifting has been the opportunity to teach a 12-year-old composer and performer, Jacky Zhang, a piano finalist in the recent BBC Young musician competition and already a composer whose constant development and unstoppable need to produce and challenge himself is a true joy. His future as a musician I feel sure will be assured, and being a part of his growth, as I have been for others at somewhat later stages of their careers – Hannah Kendall, Gavin Higgins, Barnaby Martin, Lara Poe being only four examples - helps me remain connected with my own humanity in passing on what I have learnt myself and sharing the trials and successes of emerging artists as my own teachers did for me. This connective tissue of musical experience and hope interlocking one generation to the next makes it all the more important given the current times we live in.



Ken Hesketh



My own young son's musical and personal development during this time of uncertainty has been the most touching, rewarding and profound experience of all, one that has taught me, as a parent, short notice supply teacher, accompanist (and Danger Mouse cartoon survivor), to seek to encourage him to view art and music, knowledge and curiosity – openness - as a foundation of a well-lived life whatever the time and place he may find himself in.

These turbulent times place strain on us all (and there's so much out there to contribute to it without C-19). Everyone has different stress thresholds and it manifests itself in what we do. Yet living art and the need to make it is irrepressible and reinventing how we do so a necessity. There's hope in that, humanity and empathy too.

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Andy Scott Reflects

When Bill Connor asked me ‘what have you been up to in lockdown?’ I gave it a lot of thought and the following words are about people and music. If you are interested in my creative output over the last year or two then please pay a visit to my website; www.andyscott.org.uk Rather than seem to be too negative at times, I’d ask that when you read the word ‘fine’ that it actually means ‘sh*t’.

Since the lockdown in March 2020 due to Covid-19 I have known three people that have died of the virus (including my father-in-law), plus a dozen other friends that have contracted it, and my brother now suffers from diabetes as an after-effect of this virus. The nurses in the care home looking after my father-in-law were amazing, many of them sleeping at the work place as they didn’t want to risk passing the virus onto family at home. My wife didn’t have an opportunity to say goodbye to her father and we had a socially-distanced funeral. Thousands of families worldwide have experienced the same, but we have to continue with life, yet under circumstances that are fine.

Throughout my 31 years as a professional musician I have had the privilege to know and work with some amazing people, and what personalities and characters we have in the wonderful world of music! Overnight though the music business was decimated as a result of Covid-19 and the resulting lockdown. 90+% of my work is spent performing, writing commissions and instigating and developing creative projects plus I teach one day a month at the Royal Northern College of Music where I am Tutor of Saxophone and Visiting Tutor of Composition. I am glad that as a self-employed musician that I could claim furlough payments on two occasions. This has given me a little breathing space financially while planning how to create some income.

I spoke with two lifelong friends, both West End musicians, who currently have no income and London mortgages, now that’s really fine. They’re living off savings and might start looking for a non-music related jobs.

The amazing singer Matt Ford is currently working for his local County Council, in the highways department. He’s quite taken with his high-vis orange jacket! He realised early on that to support his family he needed to find an alternative job (Matt works as a soloist with orchestras and big bands).

My wife is a brilliant harpist and composer, and with our daughter studying for a Masters at Manchester University and our son graduating in July from the RNCM, we were fortunate to find ourselves all sharing the family home since last Summer. We’re incredibly lucky to have a house that has enough space for all four of us to get on with what we all do. For our son this has meant that he has started to focus on music production (Logic & Ableton), playing bass on his tracks as well as recording bass guitar for others. From October he is co-running a new recording studio. In this respect he’s landed on his feet and I do really feel for recent graduates who were just about to embark on a freelance music career. Although it’s fine at the moment, we need to focus our ideas and work on a strategy that will hopefully see us through it. My priority during lockdown has been with family and friends, an awareness of mental health, stress and the need to have a change of environment, even if it’s just for a walk.

As the new academic year approaches for music conservatoires and universities I have to say that I am so impressed with the thought and attention to safety and detail that the RNCM has given to its students and staff. Two teaching rooms converted into one with a full perspex screen separating student and teacher, all with high-quality microphones and monitors, which were tested by staff during the summer break. Whilst the experience for the student can’t be the same as it would be under usual circumstances, it’s not far off. Imagine what it would have been like without zoom, skype etc. The implications actually don’t bear thinking about for education.

My strategy regarding music through lockdown has been to think of the longer game. Even though gigs, masterclasses & residencies in Australia, Hong Kong, Switzerland, Holland, Portugal and France were cancelled or postponed, I did have four projects that had been developing during the previous two years all of which had release dates between May and October, so I was able to see these over the finish line, three CDs and a film (info. as mentioned on my website). Whilst we haven't been able to rehearse with the Apollo Saxophone Quartet we have been able to make plans for 2021 and beyond in conjunction with our manager and funding application guru, and it's credit to all involved that the group remains creative and positive after 35 years!

Some unexpected lovely moments have happened though, which brings me back to 'people'. Bassist with the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra Dan Whibley created a beautiful arrangement of a traditional Irish tune, Casadh an tSugain, for Lauren & myself (harp & tenor saxophone). We had no idea that he was doing this for us and we were able to give it a premiere live on Scala Radio, in a broadcast from our front room! I received a phone call from a restaurant in Bristol (via a record label owner and Member of Parliament), which was closing because of the pandemic "We have a baby grand piano, it's yours if you can collect it on Monday as it goes to the tip on Tuesday...." This was Friday afternoon. They wanted it to go to a good home so I called our local music hub and after a few frantic phone calls it was collected in Bristol and delivered to Sandbach School, on the Monday!

It's been heart-warming to see how groups such as wind bands and brass bands throughout the country are being creative online. This is especially important with youth bands and keeping young musicians interested, inspired, part of the musical family, and giving hope that this isn't going to last forever. In Sandbach, Foden's Band, Lions Youth Brass Band, the Love Music Trust and incredible music (classroom and instrumental) teachers continue to be vital to the mental wellbeing of a lot of people.

And this is music that we're talking about, the wonderful world of music. Something that may transport us to a different place, that evokes emotional reactions, makes us think, makes us listen, that helps us communicate and which enables lifelong friendships. Hang in there folks, and here's to the day when we're all back on stage, everyone is safe, and boy will that feel good!

Andy Scott
September 2020

Andy Scott



What is ConductIT?

by Mark Heron

ConductIT is an Erasmus-funded research project which aims to develop innovative ways of teaching conducting using online resources.

How did it come about?

When you say “Erasmus” most people think of students doing an exchange, sometimes one semester or a whole year, in Universities or Colleges in other European countries. There are also staff exchanges, which tend to involve two teachers in different institutions swapping places for a shorter period. I might host a colleague from Weimar in Germany who comes and teaches my students for a week, and next term I’ll return the favour. The Erasmus scheme pays for the travel and accommodation, and we learn from each other’s approach to teaching.

I’d been doing this for a couple of years with the University of Stavanger in Norway, where in addition to the more usual full time degree for wannabe-professional-conductors, for the last 10 years or so they have been developing courses aimed at the many wind & brass band conductors working in the amateur and education sectors. Due to Norway’s expansive geography, they decided to do this using technology as well as more traditional forms of teaching. This (as many more of us have learned during the last six months) is what is known as ‘blended learning’. Over the course of a year, the students would have three practical blocks of work in Stavanger: a week just before the start of the academic year, and two further long weekends in winter and spring. In between they would have various online assignments to carry out, plus 1-1 lessons with their tutor using some fancy and expensive video conferencing software. Now we have Zoom for that! I had also been involved with the Open University in the production of a MOOC’ - Massive Open Online Course - which amongst other things dealt with the basics of what a conductor does.

Fast forward a couple of years and Morten Wensberg from Stavanger and Naomi Barker from the OU were at a conference about innovation in online music education and realised they both knew me. A few conversations later we decided to apply for funding from another strand of Erasmus, the catchily titled “Strategic Partnerships in the field of education, training and youth”.

The idea is that by combining the resources and specialisms of more than one institution, it is possible to do work that wouldn’t be possible independently. The minimum requirement is three separate institutions from three different Erasmus countries. After a near miss with our first attempt, in August 2018 we were awarded €400,000 for a 3-year project with the University of Aveiro in Portugal joining the RNCM, Stavanger and the OU.

What was the need we identified?

The starting point was a question of materials to support teaching and learning. There’s plenty of good stuff, in traditional form and online, that deals with the theoretical and analysis skills that conductors need. There are many insightful and entertaining biographies and documentaries dealing with famous conductors. The internet is full of videos of conductors in concert, and to a lesser extent in rehearsal. What doesn’t yet exist is something reasonably comprehensive and structured that moves on from the fact that a textbook about conducting technique is fundamentally unsatisfactory. All those diagrams of beat patterns with swooshy curvy lines going in all directions have just never really done it for me....



Mark Heron

In his recent book the conductor Mark Wigglesworth includes a somewhat tongue-in-cheek 'summary' of the skills needed by a conductor, formulated from the answers given to him by professional orchestral musicians when he asked them what a conductor should be able to do:

Conductors need good baton technique, rehearsal technique, musicianship, knowledge, interpretative conviction, an ability to communicate, to stretch and challenge people, to make the performance better than the rehearsals, to be an inspiration, have a good ear, clear thoughts, reliability, competence, rhythm, an expressive face, sense of structure, ability to accompany, style, suitability for the repertoire, originality, knowledge of string bowing, an ability to collaborate, analyse and solve difficulties, explain why things need to be repeated, empower people, train people, make people listen.



Mark Wigglesworth



Mark Wigglesworth
The Silent Musician
Faber & Faber
2018

They must not talk, over-rehearse, under-rehearse, or be musically detached.

They must have good manners, humour, respect, approachability, enthusiasm, encouragement, humility, positive spirit, patience, leadership, sincerity, audibility, creativity, an awareness of everyone, self-control, and strength of character.

They must be relaxed, self-confident, empathetic, punctual, motivating, polite, authoritative, realistic, interesting, charismatic, persevering, committed, well dressed, and even-tempered.

They must be popular with audiences, and show chastity, poverty and obedience to the score.

They must not be egocentric, intimidating, sarcastic, rude, boring, nervous, bullying, ugly, smelly, blinkered or over-familiar.

They must not change things for the sake of it, glare at mistakes, or hit the stand." We can see from that how important what might be termed "soft skills" are in conducting. Of course the musical and technical skills are vital, but there is much more to it than that. There is very little material available that deals with people skills, leadership, networking, career development, planning of concerts and rehearsals, and much more besides.

What is ConductIT?

by Mark Heron

Who is this aimed at?

Conducting pedagogy is still relatively young, at least compared with learning an instrument, and it has arguably been hampered by what could be described as self-serving statements made by various maestri (or their PR teams) and enthusiastically embraced by the media: “Conductors are born, not made!” as Leopold Stokowski proclaimed in 1943.

Things have moved on considerably in recent decades, and it is now commonplace to find decent degree courses in most specialist music colleges and universities. The problem is that these programmes tend to be aimed at those aspiring to a full-time career as a conductor.

If you think about it, the overwhelming majority of conducting is done by those for whom it is part of a wider career in music: music teachers who conduct youth bands, choirs & orchestras as part of their job; professional musicians taking a sectional with a student orchestra; the incredibly wide range of people who conduct amateur groups of all kinds.

The training and development of all these people is an area where there is still much to be done and if conducting is 10% or less of your job, a full-time course is probably not what you need or want. On the other hand, you most likely want some help to improve as you are probably a good enough musician to know what you don't know and, crucially, how that is hampering the development of the musicians you conduct. After all, the less expert and experienced the musicians are, the more they rely on the conductor.

At the RNCM we have a fantastic programme of external conducting courses aimed at a wide range of conductors across many genres. There probably isn't another music college in the world that reaches the number of people we do, but around 50-60 people per year is the best we can practically do.

The idea of ConductIT is that anybody anywhere can access the resources, completely free of charge, and take as much as they want from it.

We envisage that some people will just need to learn basic beat patterns and how to start & stop the ensemble. Others might plot their way through the material by themselves in a more structured way. People who have quite a lot of experience, but maybe not much formal training, might use the technique sections as a refresher. Institutions teaching beginner or intermediate conducting courses could use different elements of the material. Music Services could combine some of the material with CPD training sessions. Those seriously considering full-time study might focus on the career development advice. And of course, general music lovers with an interest in what conductors do will find much of interest.

So what actually is it?

The first part to be published will be a self-contained MOOC. There are fairly brief sections on technique; rehearsing; analysis & score preparation; and leadership. As well as being a taster for the main resource, this could for example be used as the basis of a beginning conducting module for 1st year undergraduate music students. All the material for this has been written, filmed and edited, and is currently being put together by our web development team. It should be available in January 2021 at the latest.

The full resource will have 4 main areas.

1 The Study Room

This is the practical nuts and bolts stuff. The Practical Conducting section of the Study Room deals with technique and rehearsing. The Academic section looks at score study, analysis, issues relating to different genre, etc.

The technique chapters are amongst the most innovative aspects of the project. We've taken an approach and some material that I have been using for face-to-face teaching for many years, expanded it dramatically, and tailored it for online use. It takes the form of a workbook comprising a series of short extracts which focus on specific aspects of technique.

For example, Workbook 1 is 16 bars of Tchaikovsky's Romeo & Juliet to practise beating 4/4 in a legato style. By the time we get to Workbook 13 it's a Bach chorale used a vehicle for demystifying fermatas. Workbook 22 is the waltz from Shostakovich's Jazz Suite for, well, waltzes. Grainger's Lord Melbourne does the honours for aleatoric music at No. 35.

Yesterday Sir Mark Elder was giving a masterclass on Brahms 1 at the RNCM which made me think of something from that we should cover. I think that'll be No. 46.

Each extract has been arranged into 4 parts. On screen there will be specially filmed video demonstrations from three different angles and text explanations of what to look out for. As well as viewing online, you will be able to download pdf files of the score, a piano reduction, and parts in all common transpositions. So, if what you have available to you is 4 colleagues or friends who play violin, alto sax, euphonium and bass guitar you will be able to practise!

It also turns out that gifs are really good for demonstrating beat patterns – you can stare at them for ever and copy until you can do it right!

2 The Careers Office

This is where we will deal with all of the “other stuff” that is part of the conductor's job. It will include practical things like advice on rehearsal planning, programming, and the way “the business” works - whether that be professional orchestras, amateur winds bands, choral societies or whatever.

There will be information about different study routes, where to find out about masterclasses and courses, competitions and auditions.

A central part of this is a series of interviews with conductors in the early stages of their career talking about where and when they studied; what they did before becoming a conductor; how they got their career started; challenges they faced; how they got an agent and much more. We also speak to eminent conductors in different fields, and those involved in the management of our business.

3 The Rehearsal Studio

We are creating a series of case studies which will take the form of short documentaries following the rehearsal process from beginning to end in a variety of genres: symphony orchestra, chamber orchestra, wind band, brass band, choir, contemporary music ensemble, and classical/ jazz crossover. Some of these are with professional ensembles, others are very deliberately with students and amateurs.

4 Library

A general dumping ground for everything else that might be of interest!

When will it be ready?

Towards the middle of 2021 is the target launch date. Needless to say, the events of the last 6 months have had a considerable impact on the project. Many of the case study recording projects were due to have been filmed between April and December this year, so some of these may not be ready by the launch date. On the flip side, most of the project team has had a bit more time on their hands what with all our rehearsals and concerts disappearing. I personally never thought I would get to know so much about the inner workings of Adobe Premiere Pro!

As an aside, back in March and April, we created a series of short videos from eminent conductors and teachers with tips on how to be productive during a lockdown. They are available to watch on the ConductIT YouTube, Facebook and Twitter channels and here's hoping they quickly fade into insignificant obscurity!

Online Event

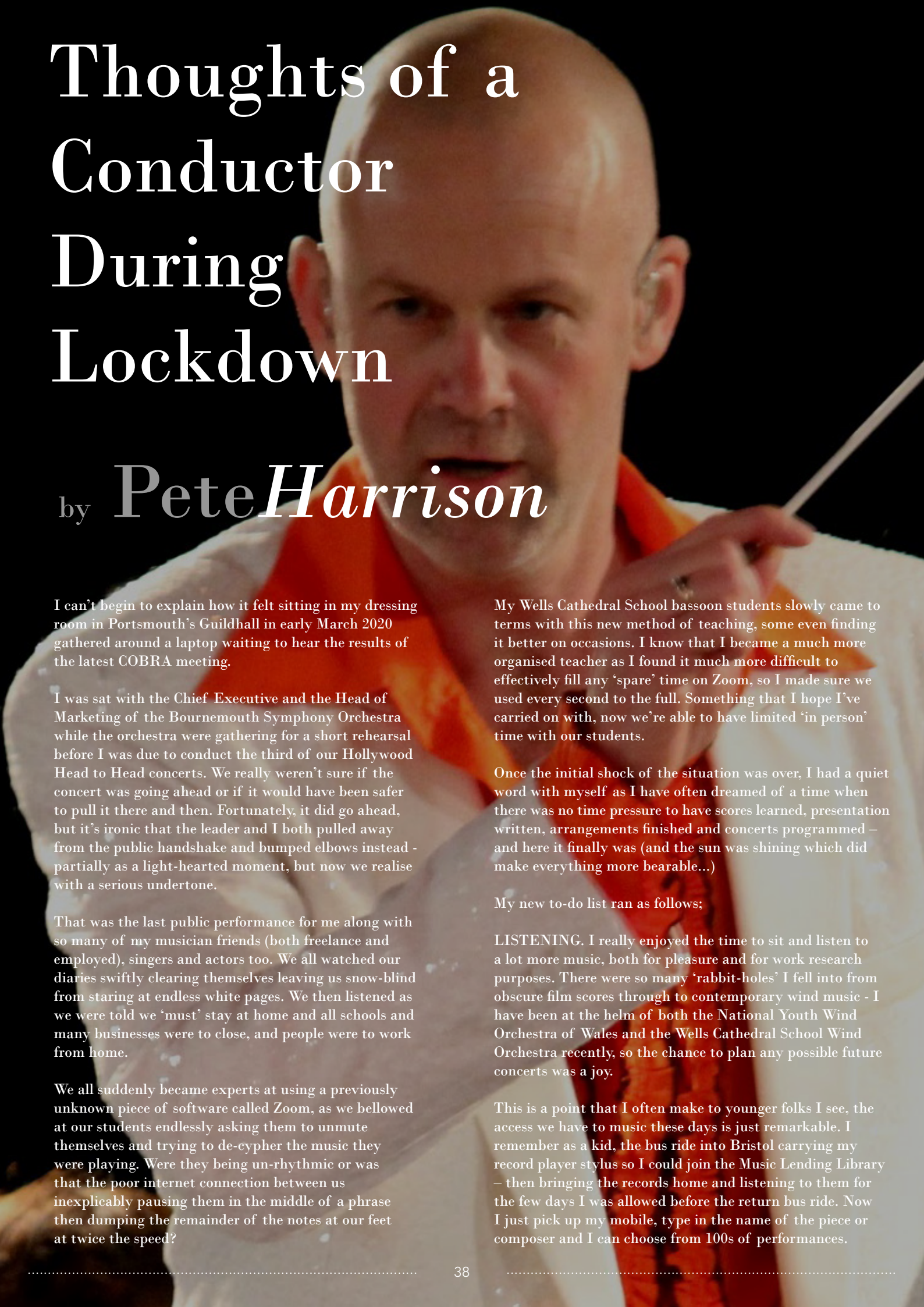
If you are reading this before 5th November look out for a free online seminar where we'll be talking about the project and other areas relating to teaching conducting online.



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Thoughts of a Conductor During Lockdown

by *Pete Harrison*

I can't begin to explain how it felt sitting in my dressing room in Portsmouth's Guildhall in early March 2020 gathered around a laptop waiting to hear the results of the latest COBRA meeting.

I was sat with the Chief Executive and the Head of Marketing of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra while the orchestra were gathering for a short rehearsal before I was due to conduct the third of our Hollywood Head to Head concerts. We really weren't sure if the concert was going ahead or if it would have been safer to pull it there and then. Fortunately, it did go ahead, but it's ironic that the leader and I both pulled away from the public handshake and bumped elbows instead - partially as a light-hearted moment, but now we realise with a serious undertone.

That was the last public performance for me along with so many of my musician friends (both freelance and employed), singers and actors too. We all watched our diaries swiftly clearing themselves leaving us snow-blind from staring at endless white pages. We then listened as we were told we 'must' stay at home and all schools and many businesses were to close, and people were to work from home.

We all suddenly became experts at using a previously unknown piece of software called Zoom, as we bellowed at our students endlessly asking them to unmute themselves and trying to de-cypher the music they were playing. Were they being un-rhythmic or was that the poor internet connection between us inexplicably pausing them in the middle of a phrase then dumping the remainder of the notes at our feet at twice the speed?

My Wells Cathedral School bassoon students slowly came to terms with this new method of teaching, some even finding it better on occasions. I know that I became a much more organised teacher as I found it much more difficult to effectively fill any 'spare' time on Zoom, so I made sure we used every second to the full. Something that I hope I've carried on with, now we're able to have limited 'in person' time with our students.

Once the initial shock of the situation was over, I had a quiet word with myself as I have often dreamed of a time when there was no time pressure to have scores learned, presentation written, arrangements finished and concerts programmed - and here it finally was (and the sun was shining which did make everything more bearable...)

My new to-do list ran as follows;

LISTENING. I really enjoyed the time to sit and listen to a lot more music, both for pleasure and for work research purposes. There were so many 'rabbit-holes' I fell into from obscure film scores through to contemporary wind music - I have been at the helm of both the National Youth Wind Orchestra of Wales and the Wells Cathedral School Wind Orchestra recently, so the chance to plan any possible future concerts was a joy.

This is a point that I often make to younger folks I see, the access we have to music these days is just remarkable. I remember as a kid, the bus ride into Bristol carrying my record player stylus so I could join the Music Lending Library - then bringing the records home and listening to them for the few days I was allowed before the return bus ride. Now I just pick up my mobile, type in the name of the piece or composer and I can choose from 100s of performances.

TECHNOLOGY. I have always enjoyed an element of technology. My Dad used to work for the BBC – it always amazed me to watch him plugging cables into patch bays to make things work. So many options – how did he know what went where?!

I have always been a competent user of Sibelius for my orchestrating work, but it was time to properly get to grips with some recording technology. As the Music Director of BSO Voices (a community choir partnered with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra) I found myself having to run online rehearsals, which I have to say were just a disaster! The differing delays between everyone in the Zoom meeting sounded like Charles Ives at closing time – not good! The end product we were aiming for was a virtual performance of a number from the concert we were 8 weeks into rehearsing when the lockdown happened – Somewhere Over the Rainbow, also used to say thank you to the NHS. Choir members had to record themselves singing their parts to click tracks that I had prepared. I then collected all the tracks in my Digital Audio Workstation (DAW) software and started the long process of editing them together. I know full well how they would sing if we were all in the room together, where the ‘s’ or ‘t’ goes at the end of a word and how to make the vowel sounds come alive – so much harder to achieve when singing into your phone.

I was delighted with the results though, especially when the final edit was put with the video (thanks to Alex from the BSO for that) and was taken up by Classic FM and put on their website. We have since done another song and are currently working on 3 for this term with ‘real’ accompaniment by the full BSO.

Mixing those orchestral sessions has added a whole new dimension to my experience with a DAW – my good old faithful computer sound card gave up the ghost halfway through too! Not a good time financially to replace computer components. But worth it in the end. Our videos can be seen on the BSO website. WATCHING. I conduct a lot of Film Music concerts with orchestras and have always been struck how effective it is to take a piece of music out of the film and onto the concert platform. Add a touch of context with a short presentation link and the audience are back there in the film but purely concentrating on the music. This could never happen the other way around – can you imagine the final scene from Bridge of Spies as Tom Hanks returns to his wife and collapses on the bed without Thomas Newman’s music? Wagner achieved this in Siegfried’s Funeral March by filling the stage with mist from the Rhine so the audience could just immerse themselves in the music without distraction.

More rabbit-holes for me following either the work of Directors or Composers, especially the great partnerships of Lean/Jarre or the lesser known works from Spielberg/Williams. If you haven’t seen The Adventures of Tintin yet then please do and let me know what you think!

This truly is a hideous time for so many of us and our children who are missing out on the musical experiences they would normally be experiencing in their schools, youth orchestras and bands. But I hope that we can all find some good use of this extra time to gently forward ourselves both professionally and personally so we come out in good shape by the time we are allowed to resume our business and passions. I really don’t think anything will be the same again after this, but I do hope that all the innovative things that the music and theatre worlds have come up with will help expand both opportunities to participate and the size of audiences alike.

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“ *As I always say at the end of my concerts,
there really is nothing like the sight and
sound of a real orchestra* and this must be
protected at all costs for all our sakes.*

*(band/ensemble!)

Capt TP Griffin RM | Director of Music Band of HM Royal Marines Scotland

As lockdown was announced, I was in my second term at the Royal Northern College of Music studying for a Masters in Conducting.

After the initial shock of forcibly becoming a hermit, the RNCM was quick to readjust and seminars continued online. It was difficult for us conducting students as we suddenly found ourselves having to create our own music to direct; our untrained voices! Our tutors winced often but eventually got accustomed to our dulcet tones and we continued to develop our conducting skills.

Zoom (a platform that has become the norm for so many musicians) lessons and presentations ensued and we were privileged to receive tuition from maestri who we wouldn't normally have the chance to work with often (because they'd be busy!) such as Sir Mark Elder, Edward Gardner and Marin Alsop, to name but a few. Another welcome opportunity came in August as the annual Wind Band Conducting course, normally held at the Sherborne Summer School of Music, went virtual.



Tom Griffin

The Summer School was founded in 1952 as the Canford Summer School of Music, a name it retained for the next 52 years before locating to the medieval market town of Sherborne, Dorset. It boasts a plethora of programs of which the best is arguably the Wind Band Conducting course overseen by Mark Heron of the RNCM (I may be biased but let's gloss over that). I can honestly say that if you're an aspiring conductor, at any level, this course is for you. Whilst you develop your skills amongst like-minded individuals, you're able to network with the other participants who are from a varied range of backgrounds; foreign domestic, civilian / military, professional / amateur.

Despite the pandemic restrictions, this year was to be just as informative and useful as ever. The course was presented via Zoom over 3 days in early August. The participants numbered 28 of which 12 were from foreign climes including the USA, Australia, Netherlands, Denmark, Portugal, Italy, Costa Rica and Malaysia; not uncommon for this course. Of the UK members, 10 were from the Armed Forces, of which I was one.

Joined by conducting tutors Bjørn Sagstad, Alberto Roque & Clark Rundell, Mark compiled a busy schedule for the few days including seminars on topics such as Basic Technique and the ConductIT Project, Score Study, Performing Jazz-Influenced Repertoire and Effective Rehearsal. As always, the most useful part of the course for self-development was time conducting in front of a tutor and receiving feedback. At the RNCM, we had discovered during lockdown that this was a proven way to continue developing your conducting skills via Zoom, even though it meant having to sing-along to the music!

We were split into smaller groups and, with a different tutor each time, received feedback and tuition for about 15-20mins each. The repertoire was varied; Holst's Suite in Eb, Grainger's Lincolnshire Posy, Stravinsky's Octet for Wind Instruments, Gorb's Yiddish Dances, Aagaard-Nilsen's Fraxinus Excelsior and a new arrangement by Malcolm Binney of Mussourgsky's Pictures at an Exhibition. Video performances from past years were played for all to enjoy (and comment on!) and we were also invited to provide our own media of rehearsals / performances that we had produced in the past for tutors to provide feedback on too.

The final official part of the schedule each day was "Wine-Time" where everyone was invited to grab a drink and sit and listen to external visitors. We were honoured to hear from world-renowned composers Adam Gorb and Torstein Aagaard-Nilsen as they discussed their work and creative processes. To conclude the day, we reconvened after dinner to socialise; resembling the usual gathering spent in a local pub in Sherborne, the Digby Tap. Although these were optional sessions, they were a great way to get to know each other and we even took part in a specially commissioned quiz!

www.royalnavy.mod.uk/rmbs



Although conceived and presented during the depths of lockdown the few days were very close to the experiences of years gone by. The only major difference was that there obviously wasn't a live ensemble to conduct and so you couldn't experiment with different gestures or ideas. My colleagues and I all agreed that, for a 3 day course in the virtual sphere, it was informative, fun and exceeded any expectations.

We also enjoyed meeting other members of the Armed Forces and hearing about their experiences.

Personally, the Sherborne Wind Conducting course has developed my skills astronomically over the years and without it I don't think I would have the broad knowledge and assured confidence for me to pursue a career in such a role. But, here I am, writing this article as the Director of Music of the Band of Her Majesty's Royal Marines Scotland and I have a lot to be thankful for.

Capt TP Griffin RM
Director of Music
Band of HM Royal Marines Scotland

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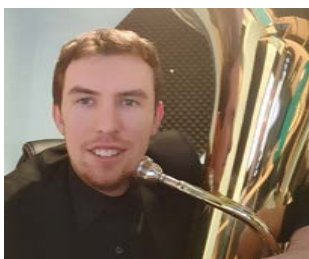
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Adam Roberts

Adam is a Composer and Brass Teacher based in Liverpool in the North West of England. Adam has composed music for many ensembles such as the RLPO, The Sixteen and various local community music groups. Currently he is working in Primary and Secondary schools as a Brass Tutor. He is also working on a Windband composition for a Secondary School. The objective of composing this work is to get the students involved in the process. This will guide the compositions development over the next six months and will hopefully produce a piece that represents the community and ethos of the school.



Anthony Houghton

Anthony was born in Warrington but spent his formative years in the Lincolnshire countryside near Grimsby. After playing Clarinet with the Local Youth Orchestra, he went on to study with Sydney Fell at the Royal Manchester College of Music (forerunner of the RNCM) finally settling in Manchester to work as a freelance Musician. A recitalist, orchestral and session player he was Principal Clarinet of the Northern Ballet Theatre and Manchester Camerata Orchestras for many years.

Anthony's playing career has been complemented by his work in education and he is Instrumental Tutor at the Manchester Grammar School and for thirty years also tutor and ensemble director at the Music Department of the University of Sheffield, where he founded and conducted the University Wind Orchestra and was wind tutor with the Trafford at Youth Orchestras founding and directing its Concert Band. As Conductor he has led concerts in the Bridgewater Hall and the Lowry Centre in Manchester, Westminster Abbey and the Actor's Church, Covent Garden in London and in France, Belgium, Holland, Malta, Spain, Germany and Latvia.

In addition to conducting the Sheffield University Wind Orchestra, Tony is conductor of the Macclesfield Symphony Orchestra (KEMS) and founded its Community Concert Band. He has premièred and commissioned many new works both for orchestra and symphonic wind band and is privileged to be active on the executive of the British Association of Symphonic Band and Wind Ensembles (BASBWE), determined to help the work of support and inspiration for the future of wind music-making in this Country. www.kems.org.uk



Bill Connor

Bill is Chairman of BASBWE, Chairman of the St Helens Music Services Merseyside, a trustee with the Stephen Dodgson Charitable Trust, committee member of ECWO (European Competition for Wind Orchestras), member of The Institute of Scurrilous Scribblers (NW branch 1986), 3rd percussionist with the St Helens Sinfonietta, a member of the Manchester Royal Exchange Theatre Elders group, runs creative arts workshops and writes music.



Jonathan Phippen

Jonathan is a freelance trombone player, conductor and teacher living in Buckinghamshire. His career has seen him hold principal chairs in the Remix Ensemble, RAF Central Band, Brighouse and Rastrick Band and in London's West End where he was also an assistant Musical Director. He has worked across Europe as soloist and was featured on the BBC Radio programme Listen to the Band in this role no less than 6 times. He has conducted at Abbey Road studios and Cadogan Hall and is currently Trombone Professor at London College of Music.

Dr Anne James

Anne studied the clarinet and piano at the Royal College of Music before becoming a music teacher in schools across the North West. Passionate about music education, she gained a Masters degree in Educational Leadership and Management, eventually achieving her Educational Doctorate, focusing her research on the training of primary non-specialists to teach music.

In her role as Head of Department and Head of Expressive Arts in secondary schools, Anne focused on developing young bands, enhancing classroom music learning through the vehicle of wind band performance. In 2008 Anne joined Liverpool Hope University as a lecturer in Music Education and is now Senior Lecturer in Teaching and Scholarship and Assistant Head of Music. She continued to develop her passion for wind bands by creating a university Concert Band. This band has grown to include current students, alumni and friends in the local music community in Liverpool.

Anne now divides her professional work between teaching PGCE secondary music students, music undergraduates and conducting the university Concert Band. She also performs with the Metropolitan Cathedral Orchestra on clarinet and supports the Hope University Swing Band, playing saxophone.



Phil Shotton

Phil regularly performs alongside many national and international jazz artists and has appeared at major jazz festivals, venues and music festivals throughout the country and abroad. Highly sought-after as both a performer and recording artist, Phil has released two albums under his own name and appeared on numerous recordings as a sideman. A talented bandleader and conductor, Phil can provide bespoke ensembles for any occasion, and compères events fluently, eloquently and with great humour! As a conductor, Phil has directed ensembles at many of the major UK concert halls and has premiered several new works for wind orchestra and wind orchestra and soloist. Phil is the principle conductor and musical director of the Maghull Wind Orchestra.

Phil has vast experience in music education at all levels as an instrumental teacher, lecturer, ensemble director, conductor and leader of various workshops and masterclasses. Phil has lectured in music performance at several UK universities and given workshops and masterclasses at conservatoires across the country.

www.philshottonmusic.co.uk

As a composer and arranger, Phil has written several educational works for young musicians and has had various commissions to arrange works for woodwind orchestra, saxophone choir and wind band.

Phil also contributes to various journals by writing articles and reviews based around performing, conducting and teaching. In addition to an extremely varied musical career, Phil is also a director of Vintage Saxophones

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