

# WINDS Magazine

## Summer 2021



**BASBWE**

- British Association of Symphonic Bands
- & Wind ensembles



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

[hicksb@beck.uk.com](mailto:hicksb@beck.uk.com)

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# Welcome Letter from the Chairman

*Phil Shotton*



Dear all,

Welcome to a very special edition of Winds – Our 40th anniversary edition and my first as Chair of BASBWE. I am honoured and humbled to take on this prestigious role following in the footsteps of some truly iconic members of the Wind Band community. My most sincere thanks go to Bill Connor, our outgoing Chair, for a truly grand job of keeping BASBWE active over the last eight years. I am exceedingly grateful that Bill remains on the executive committee and of course, incredibly active in the world of composition.

Both BASBWE and myself have been in 'existence' for near enough the same amount of time, both heralding from the early eighties.

As my route to a professional musician commenced I became aware of the excellent work that BASBWE is involved in and was delighted to be invited to join the Executive Committee in 2016.

Although taking this new role at a time still filled with uncertainty for musicians and bands in general, I am in the enjoyable position of chairing an extremely dedicated, passionate and enthusiastic committee of wind band performers, conductors, teachers and composers. Together we are looking forward to shaping BASBWE into our shared future vision.

I believe that BASBWE has an extremely important role to play in the commissioning of new works for wind band, promotion of the idiom, promotion of bands and connecting bands together across the country.

Our connections with the World Association of Symphonic Bands and Wind Ensembles (WASBWE) and the European Championships for Wind Orchestras (ECWO) means we also have a significant role to play in connecting bands and like-minded musicians from across the world.

Personally, I see BASBWE as a 'connecting hub' for all things wind band related. Fundamentally making music is a social activity and I wish to focus on the human element of what we do, connecting composers, conductors, bands and audience together through our Winds Journal, the annual conference and creative workshops/play days.

The committee and I have many ideas moving forward but would also love to hear from you, our members. What can BASBWE do for you and what can you do for BASBWE?

I am keen to promote bands across the UK – get in touch with an article, tell us about your band, your recent composition, a review of your play day...

As musicians and in fact human beings, we are not insular - the recent enforced isolation shows us how much we carve working and playing together.

I am a keen collaborator; I firmly believe that projects are enriched when they are worked on together towards a common goal. This is something that BASBWE will be engaging with even more into the future, bringing bands together, celebrating and enhancing the wind band tradition in this country and beyond.

I look forward to meeting you all, at a concert, conference or rehearsal very soon!

Phil Shotton



# Adam Gorb

## Lockdown Thoughts

*In common with many people who need time and space to work alone, I cautiously welcomed the first lockdown imposed upon us in March 2020*



**A**lthough we all promptly went home, my day job at the Royal Northern College of Music continued 100%, through this novel online video communication programme called zoom – a word which took me back to my childhood conjuring up images of multi coloured ice lollies and loud rushing noises made by the engines of space rockets.

### TO LEAVE MY DESK

I welcomed the time saved not travelling in and out of work, the novelty of being able to leave my desk and walk straight out into

the garden, with a nice cup of tea into predominantly beautiful spring weather, and most of all I welcomed the vital extra time to be able to finish off a major project I had been working on – 24 preludes for the pianist Clare Hammond. I also wrote another piano piece for a specific lockdown project arranged by Duncan Honeybourne.

The rest of this article is now mainly devoted to the more challenging issues of lockdown although at the time of writing there is now a hopeful coda in sight.

### GROUNDHOG DAY

Of course, along with every other composer I have spoken with, I have had performances cancelled, premieres postponed, and commissions put on hold. Stravinsky said, 'When I know how long a piece is, it excites me.' I would add to that, when I know who I am writing for, when I can work with them and when and where the premiere is happening my excitement is redoubled. Nothing thrills me more than a deadline, and all that needs to happen up to that all important date, and then the excitement of real people, blowing, scraping,



Adam Gorb

bowing, banging, and singing the dots, lines, and squiggles that I have struggled to come up with, hopefully to a large and appreciative audience of living homo sapiens. This all stopped as world culture came to a halt. The 'Groundhog Day' world that we have been living in has not been a fertile source of inspiration in my case.

## ZOOM

The medium of zoom has allowed me to work with performers on these pieces, but it is a poor substitute for face-to-face contact. The sound quality is generally abysmal, and I know that I communicate with players far more naturally when in the same room as them.



**I HAVE ALWAYS VALUED PRACTICALITY AND ADAPTING TO A SITUATION, SO I HAVE BEEN FOCUSING ON SMALL SCALE WORKS, IN THIS CASE CENTRING ON THE SAXOPHONE, A DUO AND A SOLO. (TWO VOCAL PIECES AWAIT THE OPENING-UP OF CONCERT VENUES.)**



*The Royal Northern College of Music (RNCM) is one of the world's most forward-thinking conservatoires.*



Regarding wind ensemble works, I decided to adapt some of my more popular pieces for smaller groups of players. With the implications of the pandemic throwing up complex limitations on performing I decided to make reductions of several pieces – ‘Yiddish Dances’ and ‘Bohemian Revelry’ for 14 players and ‘A Little Tango Music’ and ‘Three Way Suite’ for flexible ensemble. I hope that these versions will have some use alongside rather than instead of the original versions.

Keeping up the motivation was very tough at times. I have felt acutely for students during this period, who have been denied over a year of normal contact and the bulk of any social and musical stimulation. A year’s life experience all but lost. I would have hated it!

## BUZZ AND EXCITEMENT

Recently, I have started going back into Manchester far more regularly, and it is a joy to be able to teach face to face and to hear RNCM student works workshopped and run through by real performers again. Meetings and most classes remain online at present.



**“MY MAIN JOB AT THE RNCM HAS BEEN A PARTICULAR CHALLENGE – THE SUMMER TERM IN 2020 AND THE SPRING TERM THIS YEAR WERE ENTIRELY CONDUCTED THROUGH A COMPUTER SCREEN.**

I am now counting the days when the RNCM recaptures the buzz and excitement that has kept the motivation and adrenaline flowing for me for more than 20 years working in this brilliant institution.

I am also now writing a double concerto for violin, viola, and wind ensemble to be premiered in the USA in 2022. Life is getting busier, and I thrive on being unfeasibly pressurised!

## THIS SIDE OF SANITY

Regarding day -to-day life I have kept myself just this side of sanity by walking a lot, (I am blessed with living a spectacularly beautiful part of East Cheshire), a touch of meditation, listening to some of my enormous quantity of vinyl LPs, making sure I have a decent book on the go, something approaching binge watching certain series available on Netflix, decent food, and wine, sorry, beer as well...

My wife has kept me busy in the garden - I probably recognise more birds and plants that I would have done a year ago.



## LOOKING FORWARD

What I am fervently looking forward to after my forthcoming second job, when (I refuse to countenance ‘if’) the world throws open its gates again, are freely seeing friends and family, live concerts, theatre, cinema, museums and art galleries, restaurants, pubs, holidays, travelling, big cities, not having to look like the Lone Ranger, spontaneity, surprise, uncertainty, a spot of danger ....in short, all of life’s glorious imperfections.

See you there!

**RNCM**  
ROYAL NORTHERN  
COLLEGE of MUSIC



**As for repertoire,  
the old cliché...**

*"if you can hum it,  
we can play it", I'm  
sure there are many  
musicians that can  
do that, personally  
I'm just glad we have  
an extensive music  
library.*

## Band of The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment Army Reserve Band

**H**ow many musicians  
know about Army  
Reserve Bands and  
what they have to offer?

I'm a Euphonium player in the  
Band of The Duke of Lancaster's  
Regiment and I genuinely cannot  
understand why musicians are  
not forming a socially distanced  
queue to join. Yes, it is the Army.

Yes, there's training involved, 8  
days. Musicians have a  
ceremonial role.

Yes, we get paid (similar pay to  
Regular Army Musicians).

Yes, you already must be a  
musician of Grade 6 ABRSM  
standard and play Brass,  
Woodwind or Percussion  
(you don't need to have the  
qualification).

The band has performed all over  
the world, in the last 3 years I have  
performed in Cyprus and Gibraltar  
as well as all over the UK.

With extra musical training given  
if needed, the opportunities to  
play with various ensembles:  
Wind ensemble, Brass Groups,  
Pop Group, Fanfare Teams,  
Concert Band, Marching Band.





# ARMY BE THE BEST

Our musicians come from many diverse backgrounds: Doctors, Opticians, Bus Drivers, etc, the one thing we all have in common is music.

The minimum yearly commitment for the Reserves is 27 days, most of which is spent performing or practising, there are usually a lot more than 27 days of rehearsals and gigs, however the 27 days is the minimum required to qualify for the tax free bounty we receive every year (up to £1899), did I mention we also get paid for our time.

We also appreciate that people have families, jobs and understand that not everyone can do every rehearsal or concert, we are (paid) volunteers, the days that you do are flexible and can easily fit around a civilian job and your personal life.

Most bands will let you go along to a rehearsal so you can see how they do things, they will all have a dedicated recruiter who will be more than happy to answer any questions that you may have.

If you want to get paid to play music and are:

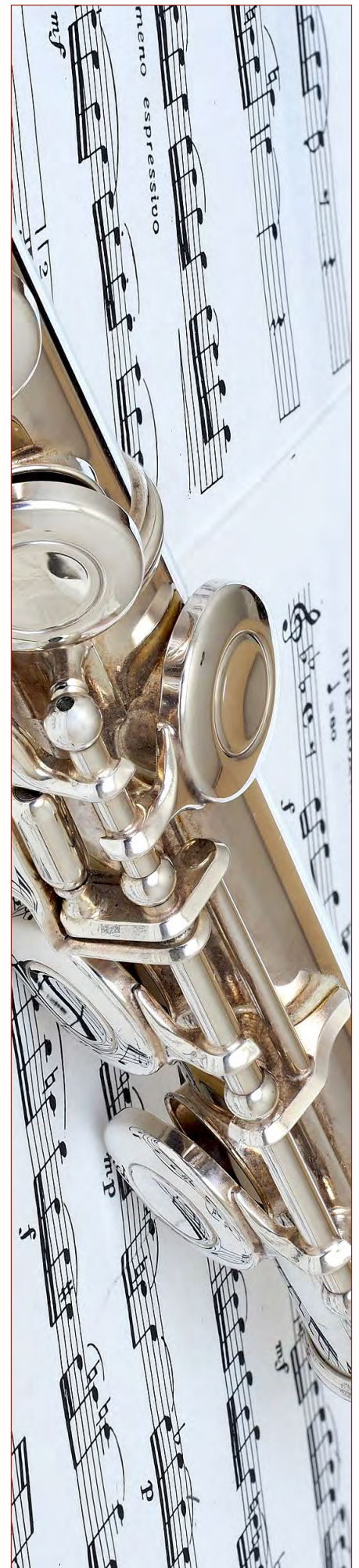
- Aged 18-50.
- Grade 6 standard on your primary instrument.
- Want to be part of a professional musical organisation.

If you live in the North West of England then please get in touch with me, and if you can answer the question, "why musicians are not forming a socially distanced queue to join?" please let me know!

[michael.dawson323@mod.gov.uk](mailto:michael.dawson323@mod.gov.uk)

“

*I'm guessing not many musicians are aware of all these benefits, there are Reserve Bands all over the country, simply Google, "Army Reserve Bands" and see where your closest Army Reserve Band is located, why not get in touch with them to see what they can offer you.*





David Lewiston Sharpe



# Winds of Faith

## David Lewiston Sharpe

*The rapid onset of the pandemic not far into 2020 was a shock to the system for all of us. There were of course health and practical issues of what to do straightaway, and then day to day (perhaps hour to hour too). But also, the question - how to react to it on the inside?*



**T**hose of us involved in 'culture', as creators, were perhaps set a very particular challenge. How to keep doing what we do during the 'lockdown' or as they became, lockdowns (plural), with an absence of the performance opportunities and common channels of communication for music that we maybe take for granted.



was meant to have been playing organ at my nephew's Christening in March 2020, of course cancelled, so I videoed the brief Lullaby I'd written for the service and posted it to YouTube. My channel has become – as for many – a way of getting music out there. So another question arose, how also to pace releasing on YouTube some of the few live recordings of my music I have available, for people to hear. Such as my Symphony for Wind Orchestra.

I only got round to putting a video together for the Symphony – including the pages of the score flicking by as the music plays – in 2021. Earlier on I'd posted the 3 movements of my Piano Concerto No.1 as separate videos, in the premiere performance from 2002 by Andrew Zolinsky, piano, with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra under Nicholas Cleobury. That, alongside some other videos—including my chamber ensemble piece A Salvador

Dali Suite and Hier stehe ich, the anthem Her Majesty's Chapel Royal commissioned from me in 2017 for the Reformation 500th, which they sang in Germany and at Hampton Court Palace.

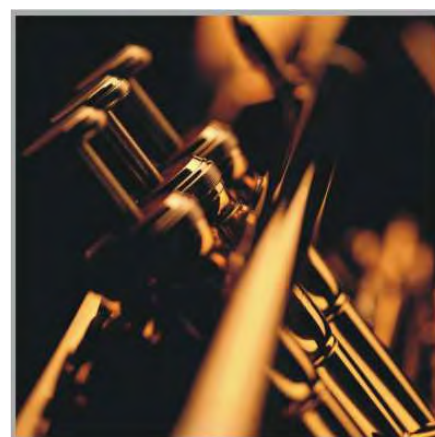
## COMMUNICATION

It meant, at least, that recordings I had until now sent individually for programming consideration were at least available for wider accessibility; perhaps one of the few positive opportunities afforded us as a channel of communication during the pandemic.

Although the Symphony for Wind Orchestra was written in 1999, for the University of Nottingham, there have been few performances of it. One took place in the USA, given by Chesapeake Bay Wind Ensemble, but another was given by Trinity College of Music Wind Orchestra – its London premiere, at St John's Waterloo – after a Call for

Scores by SPM (the Society for the Promotion of New Music).

It was their performance of which I had a recording that could be put on YouTube. One style of presentation for these kinds of video has to been to use limited visual elements (with live video unavailable); some with the score pages to follow – useful for keeping the ear tuned in, and for a music director who doesn't know the piece to peruse too. It has led to at least one enquiry, in Florida, about commissioning me.





In the first week of the (first) lockdown I had turned to choral music as a refuge for finding space for new ideas – and new writing.

Following a small number of past choral commissions, like the Chapel Royal, and St Paul's Pro-Cathedral in Valletta, Malta – for their 175th anniversary – it has become unexpectedly a welcome basis for collaborations.

## WORDS WITH MEANING

I started to read the Psalms, seeking words with meaning that might resonate with our current predicament.

On the Friday of 'week 1' I set a psalm allocated for that day by the Common Prayer psalter, Psalm 126 'When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion' – apposite for the 'captivity' of lockdown maybe. Reading the Psalms and making a dozen settings of them – for SATB, some for double choir, others just with solo voices – became a positive routine week by week: creative and psychological exercise, alongside physical exercise and online lessons with students, or Skyping friends and family.

Instinctively, and imperceptibly, the sequence of settings emerged as a kind of Evening Prayer service – and have become my Vespers for a Covenant. A votive offering for these unsettling times.

The day I finished the 'Beatus vir' psalm, 30th April, a rainbow appeared visible through my living room window – the symbol that has become emblematic for the extraordinary work of the NHS. I took a photo for the cover of my score.

## EARLY ONE MORNING

While I was typing up one of the other settings earlier that month, early one morning, an email dropped in to my inbox from violinist Hayley Bullock, one half of a string duo who gave the first performance of a violin and cello piece I wrote a few years ago. She had found a recording they had done during a live performance of the piece, where they are based in Germany. A heartening greeting from elsewhere, in a world somehow grown smaller (people closer, the global experience for a time now partly shrunk, even stifling); and in the arena of music something of a fillip currently.



It soon became another video, which it proved possible to make useful for the duo too, as a promotional gesture, while we included some great promotional photos along with the music of my duo – Memoria non est in mente ('Memory is not in the mind'). Touchingly, they then included the third movement of the piece (gratifyingly becoming a favourite of theirs) at the end of a performance they gave on a German arts channel – streamed live online. When so much music has been cancelled, postponed or however else in abeyance, to receive these performances was beyond words – excellent performances too.

So, on this basis we made a plan: to try and do an album, as soon as was feasible. Although it takes a great deal of work (the admin, if nothing else, when registering tracks with PPL for broadcast and streaming royalties; doing my own design work for cover and booklets; negotiating the distribution etc) we have now a complete album, released April 2021: two of my string duos, some sonatas for violin and cello with piano, and a piano trio piece.

## FOCUS THE MIND

Perhaps it is possible for a crisis to concentrate the mind? I don't know, but I certainly sensed a nervous urgency amid COVID-19, and still do (perhaps such an apprehension will never quite leave us).

Before the pandemic struck I had been toying with some piano music, not sure at first (nor for a while) what it was meant to become. That was in November 2019. I kept going back to it during the lockdown, when not buried in the technical challenges and frustrations of making YouTube videos on Microsoft Photos, or contemplating the Psalms.



**A**s we emerged from the first lockdown, I went back to the piano sketches – by then I had revisited my Piano Concerto No.1, when editing the presentation of it from the RPO performance for upload online. The piano sketches started to coalesce. A ‘divertimento’ for piano and chamber orchestra? I couldn’t at first get beyond what seemed about the opening third of an initial part of the piece. But I kept playing it and looking through the sketch.

By October-November the plans for the album were well under way, as Dima, the cellist, was able to provide some details of recording engineer contacts and in turn, some studios in Germany they could go to. That was booked, and the sessions set for the end of November after a couple of delays, and pushing it back towards the end of the year. COVID-19 was then, of course, once again appearing to surge across Europe.

I had been doing some face-to-face teaching when they had been permitted between the lockdowns, and was walking everywhere to avoid public transport (clocking up about 30 miles a week to my various students).

Thinking time. Rather, composing time – in my head, as I walked. It was during those couple of hours or so a day traipsing around the local area that the piano ‘divertimento’ ultimately became a 30-minute concerto – my Piano Concerto No.2, which I completed on 1 November.

## WINTER WINDS

So, as winter winds picked up there seemed, notwithstanding, a chance for spirits to be picking up too. Even though ‘Christmas was cancelled’, and added to the general worry of how everyone would fare health-wise over winter, there was – for me – a comparatively smaller worry over the delay with mixing and mastering the chamber music album, “Capriccio”.

I listened to the TCM performance of my Symphony for Wind Orchestra, and wind instruments blew some positive winds of faith into the task of doing a video for YouTube. I was grateful to Rev Canon Giles Goddard – current incumbent of St John’s Waterloo, where the performance took place – for a photo he had posted to the Church website, showing the building embraced by the curve of another rainbow.

In light of the one that appeared while I had been busy with psalm settings, putting Giles’s photo to frame the Symphony video seemed a fitting appeal for a covenant of hope, where music might just distil our collective yearning.

**David Lewiston Sharpe**

March 2021







# Reflections on forty years of BASBWE

## Edward Gregson

*As BASBWE celebrates its 40th anniversary (is it really that long ago?), it is perhaps time to reflect on the past as well as looking to the future. I remember its beginnings very well. Many of you will know the history of BASBWE, but for those who don't here is a brief resumé.*

I think it's true to say that the 'godfather' of British wind music is Timothy Reynish, and it was he who was the main motivator behind the foundation of BASBWE. However, the inspiration for it, as well as the concept for WASBE, came about as a result of a desire to form organizations that would support the wind band movements in both the UK (BASBWE), and the rest of the world (WASBE); such ideas crystallized during an international conference for conductors, composers and publishers held at the RNCM in Manchester in the Spring of 1981. Frank Battisti (Director of Bands, New England Conservatory, USA), the then president of the College Band Directors National Association (CBDNA), obtained seed money for the Manchester venture in an attempt to bring an international representation of wind band professionals together. The rest is history!

At that time (1981), I was a lecturer at Goldsmiths College, London University, but I attended that international conference when amongst many fine concerts, the Surrey Wind Orchestra under David Hamilton programmed a work of mine for large symphonic wind ensemble, *Metamorphoses*, which I had composed a few years earlier (incidentally the principal clarinet of the Surrey Winds at that time was a young, but highly talented, Michael Collins). I remember that performance being rather special, but I was also hugely impressed by listening to the other concerts, where a whole raft of new music was presented and played with real style and panache.

# *In my own case, as a composer, it was commissions for wind ensembles, and wind band commissions over the next fifteen years, as Festivo, Missa Brevis Pacem (for large symphonic wind ensemble), The Crown, The Kings go Forth, and the*

In addition, there have been wind band versions made of my Tuba Concerto, Horn Concerto, and Euphonium Concerto (soon to be premiered by David Childs and the Cincinnati Winds), plus my Variations on Laudate Dominum and Partita. The fact that so many of these works have become standard repertoire is a source of great pleasure for me.

However, to return to BASBWE and Timothy Reynish - it was Tim's belief, as the then Head of School of Wind and Percussion, that educationally there was no better way of training student wind players than to let them regularly rehearse and perform as a wind ensemble/orchestra through a wide variety of repertoire, all the way from the Mozart Serenades and 'Gran Partita', through the British military band 'classic' repertoire (eg Holst and Vaughan Williams), to contemporary music. Thus, the establishment of the RNCM Wind Orchestra from 1981 set a benchmark standard for other wind bands in the UK to follow, for here was a group of students who were not only highly talented

performers, but who also had a real interest in the contemporary repertoire. Since then of course, most of the other UK Conservatoires have followed suit and have regular performing wind ensembles.

The first BASBWE conference took place in 1982, after which BASBWE grew in importance and influence, with many memorable conferences highlighting increasingly fine wind playing, plus an interest from many





*t inspired me to want to write  
nds, and a steady flow of  
n years resulted in works such  
or boys choir, baritone solo, and  
, Celebration, The Sword and the  
he Concerto for piano and wind.*

groups in commissioning and promoting contemporary music for winds. I should also add that one of Tim's most notable achievements has been the commissioning of new works by major composers, many of whom had not written for the medium before. Goodness only knows how many composers he has persuaded, cajoled, but not quite threatened, to compose new works, but we can gauge something on this front by looking at the article he wrote for the Autumn 1997 edition of Winds Magazine entitled 'British Wind Music Renaissance 1982-1991', still available to view on the BASBWE website 'articles' section.

One has only to see some of the list of the distinguished names there (David Bedford, Richard Rodney Bennett, Derek Bourgeois, Joseph Horowitz, Philip Wilby, and Guy Woolfenden), to understand what a huge contribution to the wind repertoire was made during that fifteen-year period; and the commissioning kept coming (Thea Musgrave, Aulis Sallinen to name but two).

Tim also embarked on a further series of commissions in memory of his third son; again, the list is impressive and includes Michael Berkeley, Kenneth Hesketh, Edwin Roxburgh, and many others.



## **Edward GREGSON**

### **Instrumental Music**

**Three Matisse Impressions**  
**Serenata Notturna**  
**Cameos • Oboe Sonata**  
**Alarum • Love Goddess**  
**Divertimento • Tributes**

**Soloists from  
the Hallé and BBC  
Philharmonic  
orchestras**

**Paul Janes, Piano**



## Just as importantly...

Tim, together with Clark Rundell, commenced a series of recordings from the late '90s with the RNCM Wind Orchestra on the Chandos label of repertoire both old and new – predictably both Holst and Vaughan Williams, but much more: German, Russian, and Nordic Wind Band Classics, three discs of Percy Grainger's fantastic wind repertoire, as well as contemporary music by a variety of composers. These recordings still get regular airings on BBC Radio 3. Indeed, you can bet your bottom dollar that when Radio 3 features a wind ensemble on one of its morning programmes it's likely to be the RNCM Wind Orchestra playing Holst or Vaughan Williams. In my opinion, they have become a set of classic recordings to rival those of Frederick Fennell and the Eastman Wind Ensemble.

## One final memory of my association with Tim...

In 1995 I again came up to Manchester when Tim and I jointly conducted a recording of my wind music on the Doyen label with the RNCM Wind Orchestra and the Manchester Boys Choir. A year later I was appointed Principal of the RNCM and the rest, at least for me, is history.

I still regard it as one of the most satisfying recordings in my discography. The CD is still available and has been re-issued on the Mark Custom Recording label (MKCR 52579). It is a matter of some regret for me that I have not written for wind ensemble for quite a long time. This has not been a deliberate decision on my part, rather that the commissions that have come my way in the last twenty years or so have been for orchestral, chamber and instrumental forces; but if anyone out there is interested in commissioning new wind music from an ageing white, male composer, do get in touch!

At this stage I must mention one of the frequent problems often faced by composers: namely, how difficult it is to write for an ensemble of which the actual number of players remains something of a mystery. When Timothy Reynish used the term 'wind orchestra' for his RNCM group it was of course synonymous with the term 'symphonic wind ensemble' ie no doubling of parts, particularly of flutes, clarinets, and brass.

This is the instrumentation I prefer to write for as I have a clear picture in my mind of the actual number of players involved, so that matters of balance and texture can be solved at the outset.

I wrote for such forces for example in *Celebration*, a short work commissioned in 1991 by the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra for their 150th anniversary celebrations; and in my 1997 *Concerto for piano and wind*, which uses almost the exact

instrumentation as Stravinsky's *Concerto for piano and winds* of 1924.

'Wind Bands' on the other hand can vary considerably in terms of numbers of players, from around 45 to well over 100, and whilst the sonic experience from such a combination can be impressive, it poses a huge problem for composers in the orchestration process; thus, it requires an experienced and sensitive conductor to be able to reduce the size of the ensemble down to chamber proportions, when necessary, in order to respond to the demands of the score.

There is nothing worse than hearing say 100 wind, brass and percussion players belting it out for the whole duration of a score, whether it's supposed to be 'pp' or 'ff'.

Not that any BASBWE conductors would of course let such a thing happen!

It's not that I haven't written for large wind bands. One of my vivid memories was when I was commissioned by the RAF to write *The Sword and the Crown* for their British Tour in 1991. I was pleased to be asked to conduct it with the Massed Bands of the RAF (over 150 players) in two different concert venues (Rob Wiffin conducted at the other venues), culminating in a performance at the Royal Albert Hall – now that really was quite an experience! Or earlier, in 1985, when Nigel Taylor commissioned *Festivo* for the 10th anniversary of his Bolton Youth Concert Band, premiered at the WASBE conference that year in Belgium.





# Edward Gregson

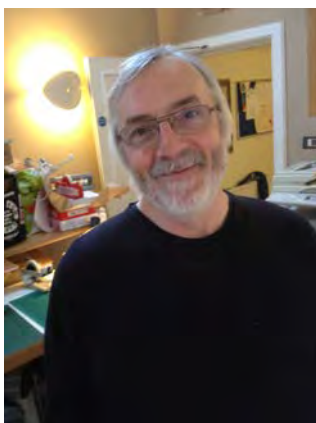
## Composer

In the hands of a good conductor problems of intonation, balance and texture, in such a large group can be solved, and so it would be churlish to refuse good amateur players from joining a band simply because of the size of the group.

Indeed, the life blood of many large wind bands is in drawing on local players from within their local communities, and the importance of that cannot be underestimated. Amateur musicians are a vital part of the musical life of the UK, and long may that prosper.

Finally, Bill Connor asked me to offer some reflections on my experience of Lockdown, and how it has affected my creative life. Well, to be truthful, I have hardly written anything new in the past twelve months.

Bill Connor (Past Immediate Chair)



I have found it very difficult to concentrate on writing music whilst so much around us all has been abnormal, and while so much harm has been inflicted on so many people.

For us in the music profession it has been a particularly difficult time, with many free-lance musicians facing financial hardship, and with live music-making being suspended indefinitely.

So, my year has been spent in various recording projects, despite the restrictions we have all had to face.

Fortunately, some have been for solo or duo forces, and thus it has been possible to undertake such recordings within social distancing and other restrictions.

Just before the first lockdown in March 2020, the Oboe Concerto (A Vision in a Dream) I wrote for Jennifer Galloway, principal oboe of the BBC Philharmonic, was premiered in Leeds, and we just managed to record a disc of my music for solo piano with Murray McLachlan on the Naxos label. In September 2020, we recorded a disc of my instrumental music with

soloists from the Hallé and BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, which was a joy.



That was released in April this year. On the downside my commission to write the test piece for the British Open brass band contest, had to be postponed; fortunately, that is now taking place this September at Symphony Hall, Birmingham, and rather fittingly the work is titled *The World Rejoicing*; hopefully it will be just one example of the end of the void that has existed in all our lives regarding the lack of live music performances.

In conclusion, I send my congratulations to BASBWE on reaching such a milestone, and I hope that the ensuing years will be full of new ideas, enthusiastic ventures, and successful and satisfying music-making.

**Edward Gregson**



# Sheet Music Publishing

Rob Rainford and Lynne Williams



*Forton Music is a sheet music publishing company specialising in wind and brass music based in the North West of England*

Formed in 2008 by Rob Rainford and myself (Lynne Williams), our main initial aim was to publish Rob's arrangements, which he had been doing since our University years at Durham.

We were both woodwind teachers at the time in various schools and colleges in the North of England, and felt it was time to start branching out, and spreading the music far and wide seemed like a nice idea. I enrolled in a night class on website building, we invested in an A3 printer and some paper and coloured card for the book covers, I converted my spare room into an office and our small venture was born. By the penultimate week of my night

class we had to start making our website. Much panic ensued for us, as we didn't have a company name, and our choices were being limited by which website domain names weren't already taken, and our inability to draw a suitable logo!

Art is definitely not our strongest suit! As I lived in Forton, this last-minute panic led to our name and logo, and we have stuck with it ever since.

In the last thirteen years there have been many changes to our business, with updated equipment and a more streamlined set up. Fortunately, we no longer use the website I designed, which was pretty basic.





# Actually, it was terrible!

As well as selling through our own (outsourced and much improved) website, we now sell to retailers throughout the world, and we are able to offer our sheet music as printed books or digital downloads. We publish both arrangements and original compositions, and work with a large number of composers.

Some of our publications are listed on exam syllabi, and Rob and I can often be found out and about at various residential courses and music events with our trade stand. We now have a catalogue of over 1000 titles ranging from solo instruments to full wind band and brass band through just about everything in between.



Our other careers have also moved on to accommodate the increasing time spent publishing. Neither of us are teaching in schools now - Rob is now an ABRSM examiner, and I have a thriving Woodwind repair business. We are both active performers, doing concerts on our own as well as playing in a number of orchestras and ensembles. We are especially looking forward to playing for Musicals once more - in fact, one has now appeared in the diary!

The impact of lockdown in 2020 started early for us, music sales dropped very sharply during late February and early March 2020.

For most of last year our sales were heavily biased towards UK sales of pieces for solo, or instrument and piano, and theory books aimed at online exams.

## The impact of lockdown in 2020 started early for us

Our ensemble music sales were pretty non-existent during that time. That has now started to change, and we are once again getting orders from around the world. We were able to keep working throughout the year, as we both work from home, and it wasn't long before all the musicians who had previously been busy earning a living were suddenly finding they had time on their hands to compose and arrange music. So whilst actual sales were quiet we were able to continue taking on new music for publication, and branch out into Music Theory books, and some String music too! As all of the

courses and music events which we were due to go to were cancelled, we had a very lonely year, and we are glad that many of these courses are hoping to be able to run this summer. We spent many a happy hour rehearsing and performing live-streamed concerts during the first lockdown period to showcase some of our publications, and we are very much looking forward to some live concerts in the coming months. We were also able to use our time to record more samples of our publications for the website and promotional purposes, and we can both honestly say our knowledge of technology has improved!

It has been a very difficult time for all publishers over the last 12 months, and we feel incredibly lucky to have weathered the storm. During a period where most musicians have had no money to buy music, and live events and ensemble events have been impossible, we have seen professional and amateur music making as we know it dwindle and all but disappear, which has affected so many people and businesses. Here's hoping that as lockdowns ease around the world and normality of some kind resumes, we can get the music back out there for everyone to enjoy once more!

# Gary Carpenter

## Reflections

*That we live in weird times is not exactly a revelation, but weird they truly are. For me as a composer, the change has related more to performances and commissions than to actual writing activity.*



I saw a lot of planned performances evaporate (like most composers I know) and commissions went on hold. The initial impact of Covid restrictions was clearly felt most keenly by instrumentalists whose livelihoods often just disappeared literally overnight, especially those who fell through the cracks of government support for the self-employed. We all knew, though, that the effect on composers would be felt in the longer term as those pieces that were commissioned will, with luck, receive their delayed performances, nudging putative commissions back a year at least.

### LESS TRAVEL

I am, however, quite lucky. I live in a rather lovely part of the world with the Irish Sea, beaches, hill and forest walks on my doorstep. My composition teaching at the RNCM and Royal Academy in London has continued via Zoom, so I didn't take a nasty financial knock. No longer having to travel 500 miles a week to London and Manchester was a relief, to me and, the environment.





“**WE’VE HAD FRIENDS COMING IN FROM MOSCOW, LOS ANGELES, DUBAI, COLOGNE, FRANCE, VIENNA AS WELL AS UK HOME BASES**”

So, what have I been doing? How’s the creativity thing going? What about the social life that is so much a part of our professional existence?

When I decided to be a composer I just used to write. There was no guaranteed performance, no commission (obviously!) and this was the way I was until I left college and commissions started to appear. My dear friend Simon Bainbridge who died this year (unrelated to Covid) and whom I met at the RCM in 1969 was the same. I guess we all started like that.

## REINVENTED MINDSET

So, in order to maintain some element of personal commitment, I need to reinvent the mindset whereby I could just write with no financial incentive.

The gateway project was **Solitaire**, a set of four lever harp pieces for my friend, Kathryn Hamilton-Hall, who is a single-mindedly dedicated late starter student. Out of the

blue, I then received a request for a song cycle for mezzo and organ from another friend, Graham Cox in Berlin to be performed in October 2020. This resulted in **Weltscherzo**, a collection of seven songs on texts by *Else Lasker-Schüler* which were duly performed in Treptow by Coline Dutilleul and Graham.

The next project, which is ongoing, is a song cycle/cabaret hybrid called (provisionally) **Masques: Muses and Songs** to texts by the brilliant American poet and my long-time collaborator, Eva Salzman. It will run about an hour and there are around 20 songs, inspired by Greek muses but subverted (often ribaldly) by Eva to focus on the female experience of the male as muse.

It’s scored for mezzo soprano and free-bass accordion and written specifically for Lore *Lixenberg* and *Bartosz Glowacki*. There are no planned performances as yet but we will record it.

## UNUSUAL REQUEST

Earlier this year, I received an unusual request from the saxophonist, *John Harle*. In the 1980s, I’d written a little suite for six players called **Berlinermusik** for his Berliner Band. John, in his role as *Director of the Guildhall Artist Masters course in Saxophone Performance* is curating a large-scale event centred around the Bauhaus and asked me to upscale **Berlinermusik** as **Bauhausmusik** for 16 players which turned out to be great fun to do – not least because writing for 16 players was wonderful!

The fifth project ties in with this: every Thursday since June 2020, a group of we composers, conductors and musicians have met via Zoom for virtual cocktails. Often as not it’s a riot and sometimes our livers pay the price (even within a virtual environment).

*Even so, seeing the spirit and determination of so many of my colleagues, in terms of their teaching, imagination, generosity and simple humanity fills me with hope and an unshakeable belief that we will ultimately survive in spite of the overwhelming difficulties. We will indeed prevail!*

# Gary Carpenter

## Reflections

## Reflections

**T**here's a core group of seven, but lots of people turn up. We've had friends coming in from Moscow, Los Angeles, Dubai, Cologne, France, Vienna as well as UK home bases. We realised that our friendships transcended geography in a way it never did (or would have even occurred to us) in the pre-Covid world and this is a real positive.

Anyway, I chose to memorialise 'Thursday cocktails' in the one paid commission I did receive, a piece for trumpet and piano written for *Oscar Whight*, the principal trumpet of the Cairo Symphony Orchestra which I've called **Stammtisch Donnerstags**

as I can't find an elegant or similarly concise English language equivalent!

Performances were lost, but some materialised. Two orchestral pieces did slide into BBC Radio 2 and 3 broadcast schedules.

**The Benefit Of Hindsight** for solo guitar was given a stellar performance by Bradley Johnson as part of the Royal Academy's *200 Pieces* project and a couple of works showed up in unusual locales.

Mywind octet, Ein **Musikalisches Snookerspiel** was streamed for a week from Flagstaff, Arizona and **Pantomime for 13 winds** likewise from Cape Town. My

RNCM colleague and friend, Rob Buckland produced a solo CD which included a soprano saxophone version of **Blue** (originally written for flute). I adjusted this piece – I thought – to make it more saxophonistic only to have Rob suggest returning it pretty well to what it was originally; which I thought impossible. It just goes to show what an amazing, brilliant musician can do that you would never expect and I urge you to listen to (or better yet, buy!) his CD **Just Because**.





Most recently in a green shoots sort of way, my *Fischietto è Morto* for trombone and strings, the first piece I had cancelled (scheduled for the day after March 2020 lockdown began) was rescheduled and performed by Katy Jones and Psappha conducted by Mark Heron in May this year.

As to the future, I know as a board member of the Ivors Academy that lobbying by them, the Music Publishers Association and other interested parties is dedicated, ongoing, passionate and focussed. My long-term fear is that Covid is providing cover for the disaster that Brexit is for all musicians and composers, the effects of which will become all the more apparent

in a post-lockdown world. Even so, seeing the spirit and determination of so many of my colleagues, in terms of their teaching, imagination, generosity and simple humanity fills me with hope and an unshakeable belief that we will ultimately survive in spite of the overwhelming difficulties. We will indeed prevail!



# Gavin Woods

## ...thoughts

*It has been an amazing year for our musicians and lockdown has taught us a lot, not least the power of digital technology and collaboration.*

The Outer Hebrides is a beautiful series of islands 42 miles off the West Coast of Scotland and is home to an enthusiastic award-winning concert band, 'The Lewis and Harris Youth Concert Band'. The band, which is supported by the Education department of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (Western Isles Council) and local secondary school, The Nicolson Institute, seeks to provide opportunities for young wind and brass players aged 8-25. Gavin Woods, Band Director who runs the band with assistant conductor Calum Watt, says he is incredibly proud of the huge amount of work his young musicians created during lock-down, both individually and as a band. Gavin said 'the sheer determination to participate in everything that came their way was simply an inspiration to their friends, family and local community. I cannot speak highly enough of these young musicians'.

It is interesting to note that wind and brass has a long history on the island. In fact Stornoway was home to the very first Regimental Brass Band in Scotland.

The Ross and Cromarty Mountain Battery Band formed in 1875 raised money, through their popular concerts to build the Church Street Drill Hall, which is still standing today. The band comprised many young pupils from the local secondary school a fact it holds in common with the current membership of LHYCB.

The link between the bands is commemorated in a March, 'Colin Scott Mackenzie of Stornoway', named after the principal trumpeter of RCMBB. The piece was written by local string teacher Neil Johnstone and commissioned to mark the visit to Stornoway of 'The band of the Royal Regiment of Scotland in 2019'.



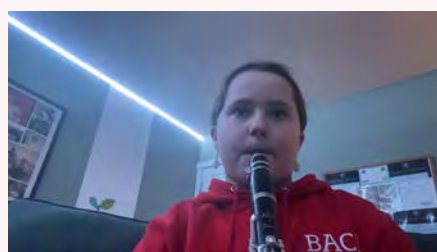




The LHYCB began their COVID year with bitter disappointment. A year's preparation for the Scottish Concert Band Festival had culminated in the final rehearsal for their trip to the finals in Perth. After the rehearsal and whilst packing their van the band received a call from organiser Nigel Durno to say the festival had been cancelled due to new COVID regulations. Undeterred the band recorded their programme a few days later with the Comhairle's Multimedia team. The resultant film was live streamed on the council's website and received over 6000 views. A link to the film is here:

<http://bit.ly/LHYCBSCBF2020>

Full lockdown hit during the Easter holidays but luckily for the young musicians of The Western Isles, a leading authority for online learning in Scotland, already had much experience of online teaching and learning. This meant that, from day one of the school lockdown, instrumental music lessons continued unabated for the musicians of the band and the wider school community.



**"IF POSSIBLE IT WOULD BE GREAT TO RETAIN THE E-CEILIDHS ON A REGULAR BASIS AS IT ENCOURAGES KIDS TO PRACTICE FOR A PURPOSE AND IT'S LOVELY TO HEAR ALL THE OTHER TALENTED PEOPLE ON OUR ISLANDS"**  
- ANON PARENT

A revelation to Gavin was the enthusiasm that the young band members had for Thursday night tributes. The performances were a weekly focus for practice and the learning of new repertoire, as well as to show appreciation for the keyworkers during the pandemic. The performances also became important to family, friends and neighbours with many looking forward to garden/street performances. Students recorded their performances on video with a race developing to see who could get their videos up on the band's social media first.

**"THESE LESSONS WERE A LIFELINE TO MY CHILD. SOME DAYS IT WAS THE ONLY REASON THEY GOT UP AND DRESSED"**  
- ANON PARENT

**"HAVING TUNES TO LEARN AND PLAYING ON THURSDAY NIGHTS.....HAS HELPED TO MAINTAIN FOCUS AND CONCENTRATION"**



Members of the band also took part, along with their contemporaries from other instrumental disciplines, in the council's E-Ceilidh. These live stream programmes, which took place throughout lockdown, were produced by the council's music service <https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/es/ceoleileansiar>, in collaboration with Multimedia department and served to provide an even wider audience for the young musicians of the Hebrides. that.

## **COLLABORATION**

Emboldened by their SCBF film, a chance encounter pre-lockdown led to a joint project between the Eccleshall Band in Shropshire, Director Martin Jones. The two bands worked on a virtual production of an arrangement of Camptown Races. The video collaboration was premiered in mid-May with over 300 guests in the virtual audience including guest of honour Director of Education, Bernard Chisholm. A link to the film is here:

[https://youtu.be/g\\_q\\_FCx4Xck](https://youtu.be/g_q_FCx4Xck)

Following this first collaboration The Lewis and Harris Youth Band members took part in videos produced by: Music Education Partnership Group

Symphony of a 1000 Hey Jude-ran over several weeks with participants coming together to perform and record a special arrangement of Hey Jude. This was broadcast globally as part of Make Music Day, held annually on 21st June. Hundreds of musicians, teachers and pupils across Scotland sent in recordings of themselves and hundreds more contributed on the day. A video of the performance, conducted by renowned Scottish composer Sir James MacMillan. The video is here <https://youtu.be/waDAPMalyy0>

Members of the band also took part in the ABRSM Mowana video

## **NATIONAL COMMEMORATIVE EVENTS**

To add to these projects band members also took part in national commemoration events including:

### **Poppy Scotland St Valery**

Musicians from the Lewis and Harris Youth Concert Band joined members of The Lewis and Harris Youth Pipe Band in this national project to raise awareness of the St Valery commemoration, 'The forgotten Dunkirk'. With events organised at The Nicolson Institute, Stornoway Drill Hall, Lewis War Memorial and Harris War memorial the young musicians were kept busy flying the flag for the Western Isles.

### **Army Cadet Video**

Band members joined pipers and string players in a national army cadet video. Staff helped prepare students by rehearsing their parts with them, these were then sent off and stitched into two videos.

St Valery Army cadet video can be viewed on the following link

[www.facebook.com/ACFScotlandMusic/videos/339562057023894](https://www.facebook.com/ACFScotlandMusic/videos/339562057023894)

### **Full Circle**

So it was that following a busy year for members, The Scottish Concert Band Festival 2021 came around and the band decided to enter the now virtual competition, with a piece they had originally intended to perform at the 2020 competition. In collaboration with local recording studio 'Wee Studio' and Western Isles Council's Multimedia department the band completed a new recording of the 'Colin Scott Mackenzie' March individually at home. The film, complete with drone footage showcasing the beauty of the Outer Hebrides achieved a 'Gold award'. Here is a link to the film:

<https://vimeo.com/529208424>

In conclusion Gavin says 'It has been an amazing year for our musicians and lockdown has taught us a lot, not least the power of digital technology and collaboration. None the less we are looking forward with eager anticipation to our first rehearsal, outdoors of course, since a year last March. Judging by the enthusiastic comments posted on the band's Facebook page the members are very keen to get back to face to face rehearsals too.

# Happy Fortieth Anniversary, BASBWE!



*Many congratulations to all the talented wind and percussion players, conductors, composers, teachers and audiences who have supported the British Association of Symphonic Bands and Wind Ensembles over many years.*



So much beautiful and exciting new music has been commissioned and performed by BASBWE under the indefatigable guidance of Timothy Reynish during the last forty years and these achievements deserve to be celebrated in great style.

I remember the first time I heard the oddly sounding acronym BASBWE. My late husband, Guy Woolfenden, had just had a phone call from his old friend, Timothy Reynish, asking him if he would compose a piece for wind, for a group from the Royal Northern College of Music to play at the BASBWE Conference in Manchester in September 1983. BASBWE was the brain child of David Kendall, Bob Peel and Tim Reynish and for the first conference in 1991, Derek Bourgeois was commissioned to write a symphony.

Now it was Guy's turn and the idea of composing a piece for Tim delighted him. He told me the title of the piece would be Gallimaufry – a good Shakespearean word meaning a confused medley or a jumble of things!

# Born in East Anglia in 1937, Guy's musical education was blessed by a variety of influences.

He came from a family passionate about music and in 1947 was awarded a scholarship to Westminster Abbey Choir School, where at the age of ten, under the kindly and inspirational direction of the organist and choir master Sir William McKie, Guy sang at the wedding of the Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh.



At Whitgift School he learned the French horn, graduating to lessons with the father of the world's greatest horn player, Dennis Brain, and joined the National Youth Orchestra, where he and Tim first met.

They arrived at Cambridge at the same time, both spending most of their student years playing the horn, although Guy began to conduct and write music for student productions at the ADC Theatre.

Postgraduate studies took Guy to the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London, where he joined Norman Del Mar's conducting class. Tim also headed to London to lead the horn section at Sadler's Wells Opera Company, the forerunner to English National Opera.

It seemed quite natural, as Guy and Tim had been playing the horn together through their years with the NYO and at university, that when a horn vacancy arose at Sadler's Wells, Guy should audition.

Unable to sustain life on student grants and scholarships for any longer he gratefully accepted the fourth horn position in this great company. There he had the opportunity to watch some fine conductors, among them the young Colin Davis, who, knowing that Guy was also keen to conduct, generously lent him full scores to follow during the operas (in his tacet numbers).

After a year, Guy left to freelance as a conductor, joining the RSC in 1961, in his words, "just for three months, to find out how to run a small theatre music ensemble". When he retired from the RSC thirty-seven years later, he had written the music for around one hundred and fifty RSC productions, including music for every Shakespeare play (some several times).

Guy's first two RSC scores were rather unpromising. His one-line unaccompanied song for John Blatchley's 1962 Measure for Measure: 'Take, O take those lips away...' was interrupted immediately by Mariana's line: "Break off thy song, and haste thee quick away", leaving the other five lines of Shakespeare's lyric cut from the show. According to the critics, Blatchley's 1963 production of Julius Caesar left a lot to be desired – including Guy's five rather jazzy music cues!



Peter Hall's invitation to write the music for the three history plays that made up The Wars of the Roses in 1963 was the game-changer for Guy. With only six weeks until opening night, Guy composed and copied the parts for hundreds of music cues, attended stage rehearsals, taught songs to any actors having to sing and rehearsed the musicians, who had to play on-stage, from memory and in costume. He also conducted the music for shows playing in the theatre every night.

Gone were the days of a composer writing a score for a play and posting it in: the theatre composer had become a full member of the collaborative team of director, designer, costumes and stage management and Guy loved every minute. And who would not have enjoyed the opportunity of working alongside such brilliantly imaginative theatre directors as Peter Hall, Peter Brook, Trevor Nunn and Terry Hands?



In 1961 the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre was the company's Stratford-upon-Avon home, with a winter season at the Aldwych Theatre, London. Under the artistic directors Hall, Nunn and Hands, the RSC grew to having three theatres in Stratford-upon-Avon: the RST, The Swan and The Other Place and by 1982 were ready to move into the long-awaited Barbican Theatre and The Pit at the Barbican Centre. In 1961 the RST band consisted of seven brass and percussion players which quickly enlarged to bands of fourteen contract musicians in Stratford and in London, with freelance musicians employed as needed. The standard band consisted of flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, trombone, 2 percussion, harp, keyboard and music director. All RSC musicians could double on their family instruments and also on a large number of early instruments. The poor brass players even had to play the set of five Roman buccinas, which Guy had persuaded Paxman's to make for him for the 1972 season of Shakespeare's Roman plays. Wind band conductors and players in the USA and Europe have often

remarked on Guy's fine wind scoring and I feel this may have been honed during the twenty years he was writing for wind at the RSC, before ever composing Gallimaufry and Illyrian Dances.

In 1965, during our early years in Stratford-upon-Avon, Tim moved to the horn section of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, so, to our joy, the young Reynish family were soon living quite nearby in Birmingham. I even remember an occasion when Tim arrived at the RST to deputise on the horn for a week (complaining that he had never worked so hard in his life!) and later Guy sent him to Paris for three weeks to be the MD of Peter Brook's amazing production of A Midsummer Night's Dream!

Forward to June 1982 when Guy composed scores for the RSC's acclaimed productions to open the company's new London home at the Barbican: Shakespeare's Henry IV, Parts 1 and 2, with Patrick Stewart as Henry IV and Joss Ackland as Falstaff. The director, Trevor Nunn, had even

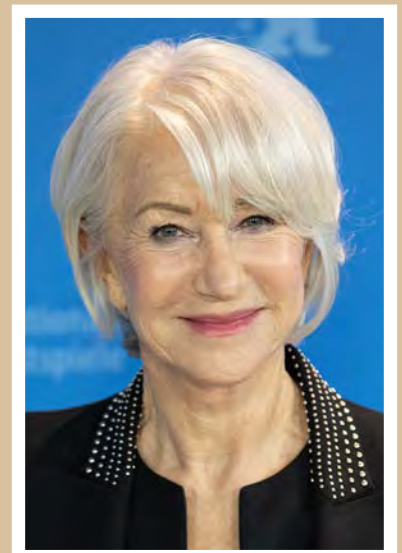
suggested, during the walk around the dressing rooms to thank all the actors for their fine performances on the first night, that Guy should take some time off and make his wonderful score into a concert suite.

Trevor's remarks must have been the catalyst for Guy to consider writing a more extended wind work and, in retrospect, I am, of course, glad that I failed to get him to resist Tim's potential BASBWE commission because of a lack of writing time. Since the Henry IV plays had opened, he had composed scores for The School for Scandal (starring Donald Sinden) at the Haymarket Theatre, a TV series called Playing Shakespeare and a film called Secrets; we had been to Bergen for the Ibsen Festival, where he had written music for Ibsen's Vikingene and during the rest of 1983 he would be writing the music at Stratford for The Roaring Girl (starring Helen Mirren), The Body, The Dillens, Volpone (starring Richard Griffiths) and Life's a Dream!

Recalling her time with the RSC, Dame Helen Mirren wrote:

“

Guy was such an important element in my days at Stratford, there with his humour, patience, brilliance in every production. He was especially kind to me - as tone-deaf and unmusical as you can imagine. For me it is in the loss of Guy that I realize how very dear and important he was to me and I will remember him forever.





Gallimaufry was finished in time (as were all the other scores for the RSC that year) and before long we were off to Manchester for the first performance. I vividly remember the excitement of arriving at the RNCM and hearing the piece rehearsed for the first time. There was a great buzz that evening from players and audience anticipating the premieres of the newly commissioned works: Guy's piece and Philip Wilby's exciting Firestar. Later, when Guy was chairman of BASBWE, the RNCM became a second home to us for concerts, conferences, workshops and meetings, and it remains a great pleasure for me to meet so many old friends there whenever I visit.

It is not quite such a merry world for me now without Guy by my side – how I miss that wicked dry wit! – although I am having a fascinating time sorting all his papers, music, letters, talks and broadcasts – the Woolfenden family keep and treasure absolutely everything! And I am excited and honoured that Dr Leah Broad, a junior research fellow in music from Christ Church,

Oxford is undertaking research into “The Shakespeare Music of Guy Woolfenden”, all of which is now part of the RSC archive at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust in Stratford-upon-Avon.

Aside from his theatre scores, Guy's work includes fourteen pieces for wind band and several wind chamber compositions; he arranged music for four full-length ballets, two of which were commissioned by Australian Ballet, and he relished opportunities to conduct them all over the world, including the Russian premiere of Anna Karenina with the Kirov Ballet in the Mariinsky Theatre, St Petersburg. He was Artistic Director of the annual Cambridge Festival from 1986-1991 and was a valued lecturer, broadcaster and teacher. As chairman of the Denne Gilkes Memorial Fund for nearly thirty years, he helped hundreds of young musicians and actors towards achieving their goals.

The last year has been a sad period for so many people at home and abroad and my heart goes out to those who are finding life so very difficult. Of course, I think of

freelance musicians and actors on a daily basis: it has been so hard for you to be deprived of the opportunity to rehearse and perform together, to be deprived of sharing your talents and expertise with your audiences and, worse still, for freelance actors and musicians to be deprived of their incomes. I want to thank you all for your enormous generosity in sharing your streamed performances online which have been so wonderful for those of us who seem to have been locked down for such a long while. And what a moving event we shared in the grounds of Windsor Castle at the Duke of Edinburgh's funeral: we were told that there would be thirty guests, as was permitted, and then watched as so many military musicians marched slowly into The Quadrangle and played exquisitely. I am sure every BASBWE member must have felt very proud of the fine playing and presentation on this very memorable occasion and are reminded of what can be achieved by our great British wind and percussion players! Thank you BASBWE and thank you Tim for all you have given over many years: happy fortieth anniversary!

# Judith Bingham

## What Lies Ahead?

*I love writing chamber music, and I'm sure I'll continue to tackle the challenges of church music. I hope people will continue to commission, and that I'll stay curious about life - there's always so much more to learn.*

III. Dawn chorus in a Viennese bird seller's shop. 27

The image shows a page of a musical score for a chamber ensemble. The title is 'III. Dawn chorus in a Viennese bird seller's shop.' and the page number is 27. The score is written for a large ensemble including Flute (Fl.), Piccolo (Picc.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bass Clarinet (B. Cl.), Contrabass Clarinet (Cb. Cl.), Alto Saxophone (Alto Sax.), Tenor Saxophone (Ten. Sax.), Baritone Saxophone (Bar. Sax.), Bassoon (Bsn.), and Cello (Cello). The music is in 2/4 time and features a variety of dynamics and articulations. Key markings include 'pp' (pianissimo), 'mp' (mezzo-piano), 'pp possible', and 'quasi pizz' (quasi pizzicato). The score is complex, with many notes and rests, and includes a '1st 2-10' marking at the beginning.

I was already in training for the first lockdown when it happened: the winter of 2019-20 was a tricky one for me – I have severe asthma and cold air is a no-no. I had been staying at home for some time and so just slid into lockdown without noticing much change. Even without illness and Covid 19, I spend a lot of time at home, writing, and preparing new pieces. A solitary life has its drawbacks, it's true, but I still like having a lot of time to myself, and nowadays it's easy to be in touch with other people without moving from the kitchen! Sometimes I think I would like to have been one of those eccentric 17th century writers like John Evelyn – wealthy, completely looked after by servants, and spending many hours in their own libraries researching esoteric subjects, or building huge collections of strange objects like Assyrian cylinder seals! Books have certainly dominated my life and my bank balance, so much so, that last year I decided to thin my books down by half, as they were threatening to take over my small flat.

Being a professional composer and working entirely to commission often means having work a long way ahead. Raising money to pay commission fees takes time and people often book in a commission for more than a year ahead. Sometimes a commission is for a special and unrepeatable occasion – it could be the enthronement of a bishop, or a wedding anniversary, but this often means putting something in the diary for 2 or 3 years ahead.



People who write large scale pieces like operas book even further ahead. I like to feel I've got a year's work at least or I start getting nervous – this sounds like I'm showing off, but it could mean 2 pieces or 8, depending on the length. The bigger the project at the commissioner's end, the more time is needed to pull it all together. I realised last year that for the first time in my career I felt lucky to be a composer, as I had work ahead of me, whereas all around my friends were losing all of theirs. Despite my worries about catching Covid, I've counted my blessings every day.

I started writing professionally at the beginning of the 70s, and my fee then was around £30! I remember once queueing for the opera and somebody commissioning a piece while we were waiting and paying me out of his wallet! Those were the days. But then, I went to Paris for a whole week for £30 at that time – I still have all the bills, so I can prove it, although I did live on the odd croissant, and walk everywhere. When you're young you tend to accept any commission you're offered, and I have found myself writing for instruments that have been really challenging – brass bands – 5 pieces, and guitars – 4 pieces I think, were the hardest. I learned the oboe at school, but was always a singer at heart. I wish I had learned a stringed instrument, but my mother stopped me playing the violin unfortunately! I have rarely turned down a commission, but I did turn down an accordion concerto, an instrument I can only really tolerate for about 5 minutes.

Last year I wrote my third piece for wind ensemble. It was commissioned by Shea Lolin for the Bloomsbury Wind Ensemble, and as soon as he asked me I remembered reading an article about Mozart's pet starling, which could whistle a melody from the G Major piano concerto. I started doing a bit of research and discovered that Mozart had an assortment of pets throughout his short life – a succession of fox terriers, all of whom were called Bimperl (that's Spotty to you), a grasshopper, a cat in London, and many song birds.

I thought that it would be interesting to write about Mozart's character, and undoubtedly mine as well, by writing about the pets. There is humour in the music but also poignancy. The piece is in 5 movements and is for 19 instruments. My first wind band piece, Three American Icons, is hard I know, but has had regular performances, recently by the National Youth Wind Ensemble with Phillip Scott. They were extraordinarily good, thrilling. It's a piece about Kennedy conspiracy theories, and Phillip showed the group the Oliver Stone film 'JFK' to get them in the mood. I very much like the wind band line up, though I'm not a huge fan of saxophones, especially the lower ones. The soprano sax blends beautifully with voices though, and I did a piece for choir and soprano sax for the Advent service at St. John's Cambridge, and the sax sounded quite wonderful in the acoustic, played by Ignacio Mañá-Mesa.





At the moment I'm just finishing a commission for a choir in Kalmar Cathedral, Sweden. The director of music wanted me to set some prayers by Jane Austen, which are very much about being grateful for our lot, and helping other people.

I thought I would find some other prayers to be a foil, and knowing Samuel Johnson was revered by Austen, and that he kept a spiritual diary, I used some of the prayers in there, which are more about personal failure. The finished piece is seven short prayers which can be done as one through composed piece, or seven separate ones.

I normally use a keyboard to write, but my keyboard was covered in books and papers, due to the de-cluttering effort, so I decided to write the piece without a keyboard, to stretch myself a bit, and it's been intriguing to see how different the harmonies have been from normal. I'm always trying to simplify my music, and it's been interesting, in this anniversary year, to listen to late Stravinsky.

I always loved doing Canticum Sacrum when I was in the BBC Singers, with its evocation of Baroque Venice, but I also like the austerity of Threni. Both had bad premieres and a review for Canticum Sacrum was titled Murder in the Cathedral.

*Having a chronic illness means not looking too far ahead . . .*

*Having a chronic illness means not looking too far ahead, so the ambitions I used to have for myself have all been ditched. You know that Jewish joke: How do you make God laugh? Tell him your plans! I really wish now that I had travelled more when I was young, but you can never imagine yourself deprived of vigour and energy in the future. Now I feel that I will stick to smaller scale pieces – I love writing chamber music, and I'm sure I'll continue to tackle the challenges of church music. I hope people will continue to commission, and that I'll stay curious about life - there's always so much more to learn.*

# Matthew Brown on Lockdown

*As well as teaching violin and viola, I'm also a composition student at RNCM, studying for my PhD which focuses on balancing idealism with pragmatism in wind band composition.*



## SCENES FROM BAGNI DI LUCCA

Before the first lockdown was introduced, I was in the middle of writing Scenes from Bagni di Lucca – an ambitious work for large wind ensemble inspired by the landscape and the bells of Chiesa di San Pietro Apostolo during my holiday in the beautiful Tuscan village of Bagni di Lucca in 2015. Bagni di Lucca is about 15 miles to the North of Lucca, Tuscany.

## RNCM

In December 2020, I was asked to write for a Conductor's Workshop at RNCM for a reduced and very specific wind ensemble. I started by developing this relatively sweet sparkling pattern:



It was a while before I considered the possibility of moving back and forth between the mysterious bassoon solo idea that had occurred to me in July and the sparkling pattern. As I thought back to my visit to Hythe Bay, the connection between the two things became infinitely stronger.

## THE DEGENERATE ERA

In November 2020, I completed The Degenerate Era - a single movement work for flute, clarinet, two bassoons, two trumpets and two trombones. This is the same instrumentation as that of Stravinsky's Octet (1923) and the work was written as a companion piece.

By this point, the second national lockdown had just been confirmed. Nevertheless, I decided that it was conceivable that within some large wind orchestras, the relevant players would be among them and might eventually be able to form an octet for the purpose.

My main challenge was to write a companion piece that could be programmed alongside Stravinsky's Octet by providing continuity and contrast at the same time.

In homage of the Finale from Stravinsky's Octet, there is a short passage in bars 212-216 in which the first bassoon is given the melody,



From March 2020, with considerably reduced teaching hours, I had more time at home to write. It was quite tempting to escape from the knowledge of what was happening around the world in the present, by reminiscing deeply over one of my favourite holidays from the past. I had expected this project to take much longer, but I completed the work less than two months later.

## THE ARRIVAL OF SPRING IN WOLDGATE, EAST YORKSHIRE IN 2011 (TWENTY ELEVEN)

Between 2009-2019, I played regularly with a community viola ensemble directed by the violist, Martin Outram. In 2018, in order to pursue viola ensemble writing and recording, I started using a multi-channel digital recorder to record my own playing which I would often build up into many layers. I began to write a series of individual movements for viola ensemble, each one corresponding

to one of David Hockney's collection of iPad drawings made from January to June 2011, entitled *The Arrival of Spring in Woldgate, East Yorkshire in 2011* (twenty eleven).

I wanted the first movement to represent the first day in January. To me, the opening few bars also summarise the entire cycle, moving from a bleak, cold wintery cluster that opens out into warm, luscious minor 7th chords. Much to my delight, for most of these movements, I saw the potential for adaptation to other instrumentations, including wind ensemble.

As the first lockdown began during the Spring season, like so many others I paid more attention than usual to the garden, landscape and nature. I had already started writing some of this cycle in previous Springs, but Spring 2020 was certainly my most productive. In the wind band and wind ensemble genres, I have completed four individual movements:

corresponding to the iPad drawings for 1 January, 3 January, 27 April and 6 May, though not strictly intending that they are listened to in that order.

## COAST

July 2020 saw the further easing of some restrictions. The stay-at-home order had been lifted two months before. On one relatively warm day I went to Hythe Bay. Without planning on this at all, it was there that I thought of opening line to the piece that eventually became *Coast*. I only really came up with the opening theme, a mysterious bassoon solo that led to a rather romantic choral section. At the time, I didn't decide on much of the details after that, but the memory of that day stayed with me. I now regard this as very fortunate.



accompanied by lower register clarinet and second bassoon in the bass.



## SPECTACULAR

During the middle of last summer, I had much time to listen to music and study scores. These include works for wind band and brass band. For some reason, I woke up early one morning with the sound of the following brass section in my mind. Months later, after freeing up some time, I developed this into my most recently completed work for wind band, *Spectacular*, which

opens exclusively with brass. What begins as a passacaglia-like opening, turns into a tango and then back again, with some surprising mood changes. Unusually, I gave the brass players the primary material throughout much of the work.



Since I completed the score in March 2021, it has proved to be my most popular score among wind band managers, directors and conductors.

In summary, I consider myself very fortunate, as I never experienced any loss of motivation as a composer during 2020. I should point out that some days were dominated by anxiety and even fear of loss. However, like so many others around me, I had good days and bad days. As a composer of wind band music, hoping for future realisation of each score that I wrote, I believe I had my most productive year so far.

# Mold Town Concert Band



*A Local Perspective of a Wind Band  
in North Wales*

The following is a response from Geoff Coward, music director of Mold Town Concert Band. I'm sure that his words strike a familiar chord and resonate with many of us over this time of enforced abstinence of Wind playing and performance.



Whilst some bands have been able to ride out the maelstrom of Coronavirus with virtual rehearsals and videos here is a band that has provided a valued outlet for music making but faces an uncertain future only made more difficult due to Covid 19:

[www.moldtownband.org.uk](http://www.moldtownband.org.uk)



Dear Steve,

*Delighted to receive your email! Yes, indeed, it has been .. and remains, extremely tough for all musicians, those involved in the arts, and many beyond. Whatever the 'new normal' transpires to be, it will undoubtedly come with considerable challenges, and any opportunities to be more closely in touch with likeminded promoters of music making would, hopefully, be mutually beneficial!*

*Over the years a relatively small number of school age instrumentalists have been welcomed into the band, on the premise that their first commitment should always be to school, area and county ensembles (having during my teaching career, emphasised just the same, from the 'other side'!)*

*Our raison d'être as a band is to afford the opportunity of, hopefully, enjoyable music making to those in the community who learned, either during schooldays or have taken on the challenge of playing an instrument in later life.*

*While arguably the music standard achieved is, perforce, conditioned by an 'open to all' policy i.e. accepting a relatively modest minimum standard 'attendance at rehearsals when you can' - in the awareness that all have lives and commitments beyond band – it has worked well, having attracted a wide range of expertise, a committed group of players of all ages.*

*Perhaps most rewarding are occasions when an individual admits joining the band to have been one of their best decisions!*

*Our last rehearsal was on 16th March 2020 since when activity has been confined to a weekly (non-musical) quiz session involving just a small group of enthusiasts!*

*Had I possessed rather more technical savvy, (plus the energy and enthusiasm of 20 years past!) I may have dipped a toe into the possibility of some online group musical activity... though, I do admit, the enforced break has been a welcome respite, since being i/c of MTCB since c 1997!!*

*It remains to be seen how & when we shall be able to reconvene. we do not envisage reconstituting before Autumn at the earliest, save perhaps for a possible 'one off' outdoor 'blow in (or out!)' during Summer, regulations and an appropriate space permitting, if feasible ..... and when playing can resume on a regular basis, it will be interesting to see how many remain!*

*All in all, the numerous precautions that will most probably need to be implemented, do somewhat dampen the enthusiasm one might have to get up and running! .... and, alas, wind players do appear to be considered a hazardous commodity with their propensity to produce potentially dangerous droplets and aerosols!!! Furthermore, until there is a return to 'normality'(as we knew it), our existing rehearsal venue - ie the Jubilee Room of Mold Town hall – will be insufficiently spacious to accommodate more than a handful of players, given social distancing regulations etc!*

*This relates to a further dilemma with which we are currently wrestling! From the band's inception the Town Council has been most*

*supportive, including provision of free rehearsal facilities, and – until 2019 - space for storage of equipment. However, at that time we received notice that the storage area was no longer available, prompting a search for either (i) discrete alternative storage in the vicinity, and with continuation of rehearsals in the Town Hall or (ii) an alternative rehearsal venue with storage on site. Our quest was seemingly resolved upon securing a small area for a minimum of equipment in another part of the Town Hall, so enabling rehearsals to continue therein, whilst the remainder of the band's property was – and remains- distributed into the safekeeping of members.... (not a little of which lives here with us - including a brand-new compact drum kit, residing in downstairs cloakroom for the past year - and for which we shall eventually require a musically literate drummer ... but not in cloakroom!!) However, during lockdown we have now received further notice to remove remaining equipment from the town hall once the building reopens ... so we find ourselves once more, currently in search of suitable storage and/or rehearsal facilities! made all the more difficult whilst Lockdown persists!*

*Although a possible solution may be to rehearse on another evening, Monday has always been Band night, and the consequence of any such move could adversely affect the availability of some members and perhaps even the viability of the band.*



# My Week of NYCB+

*I had a brilliant week at NYCB+! Over the past year I have greatly missed the sense of community that comes with being part of an in-person ensemble. All the tutors were so friendly, and everyone taking part was very enthusiastic, so I really felt this sense of community again, despite being on Zoom. My highlights were performing in the solos concert, watching the Jess Gillam masterclass, and ‘performing’ our pieces together at the end of the week.*



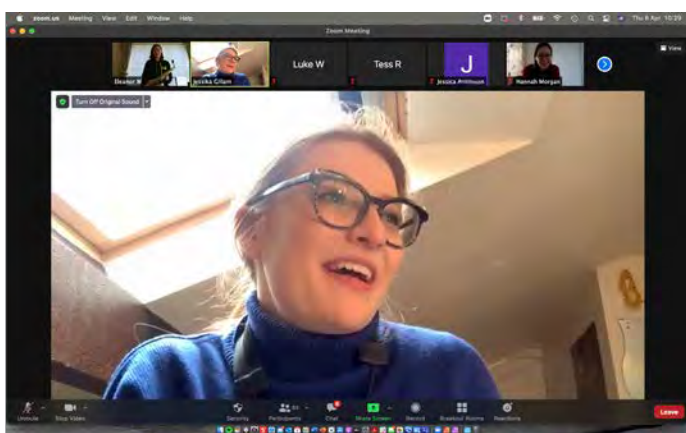
The week started with a full band playthrough of our piece. We did this by listening to a recording and watching Jonathan conduct on a pre-recorded video.

Later in the week, we discovered it was more enjoyable to see everyone playing together on our screen and watch Jonathan conduct live on Zoom.

Then Amos Miller gave us a workshop on wellbeing and how we speak to ourselves as musicians. This was an extremely thought-provoking talk which made me analyse how I spoke to myself in practice, and what I could do to improve.

Amos pointed out that we are often harsher on our own playing than we are on other people's, therefore when we think about our mistakes, we should consider whether we would say this to a student.

Something else that I stuck with me was when Amos explained why repeatedly saying negative things about your playing scientifically makes it more likely for you to play it wrong.





On Tuesday we had a very varied day of calls. We started with our first workshop with Anne Chmielewsky, who was commissioned to write a piece for our course in the summer. This session was on 'Composing for Media', in which Anne told us about how the nature of film music has changed throughout the years. She then set us a challenge to write some film music to a short clip of mundane film, and on Friday, Anne did a workshop on everyone's compositions and gave us feedback. I found it really inspiring, and I will definitely try composing like this again!

We also had a sectional rehearsal on Tuesday- I am a clarinetist, so it was great to meet the other clarinetists in my section before the summer course. To finish the day, Paul Harris gave a workshop on 'How to practise effectively'. I found his methods of practising fascinating, and I will definitely be using some of his techniques in my own practice. For example, setting yourself small 'personal best' tasks, like 'how cleanly can I play this phrase?' and mini-outcomes like 'can I improve the control here?', which help you feel rewarded in your practise, and allow you to evaluate without being too harsh on yourself.

On Wednesday the day started with masterclasses with Matthew Hardy for percussion, and Helen Vollam for brass. I watched the brass masterclasses, and it was really interesting for me to learn about how brass players approach their playing, as a woodwind player.

Everyone who played in the masterclasses got lots out of it, as well as everyone watching. We finished with a full band play through, which was really fun as everyone was very familiar with their parts by now.

We started Thursday with the masterclass I had most be looking forward to- Jess Gillam with the saxophones! Jess is one of my musical heroes, so it was incredible to see her approaches to practice through her feedback to the saxophonists. We then had sectionals and a full band play through, before the very exciting Zoom solo concert!

I performed the first movement of Horowitz's sonatina for clarinet, which was such a great experience, as I have had very limited opportunities for solo performance in the last year.



The week went so quickly, and I was sad to only have a few more sessions left when we got to Friday! Ryan Breen gave a webinar on ‘Freelancing in the music industry’, in which he talked about some of his freelancing experiences. I was particular captivated by his experiences with how music can help people with dementia; it inspired me to be involved in this area when I am exploring my own career as a musician.

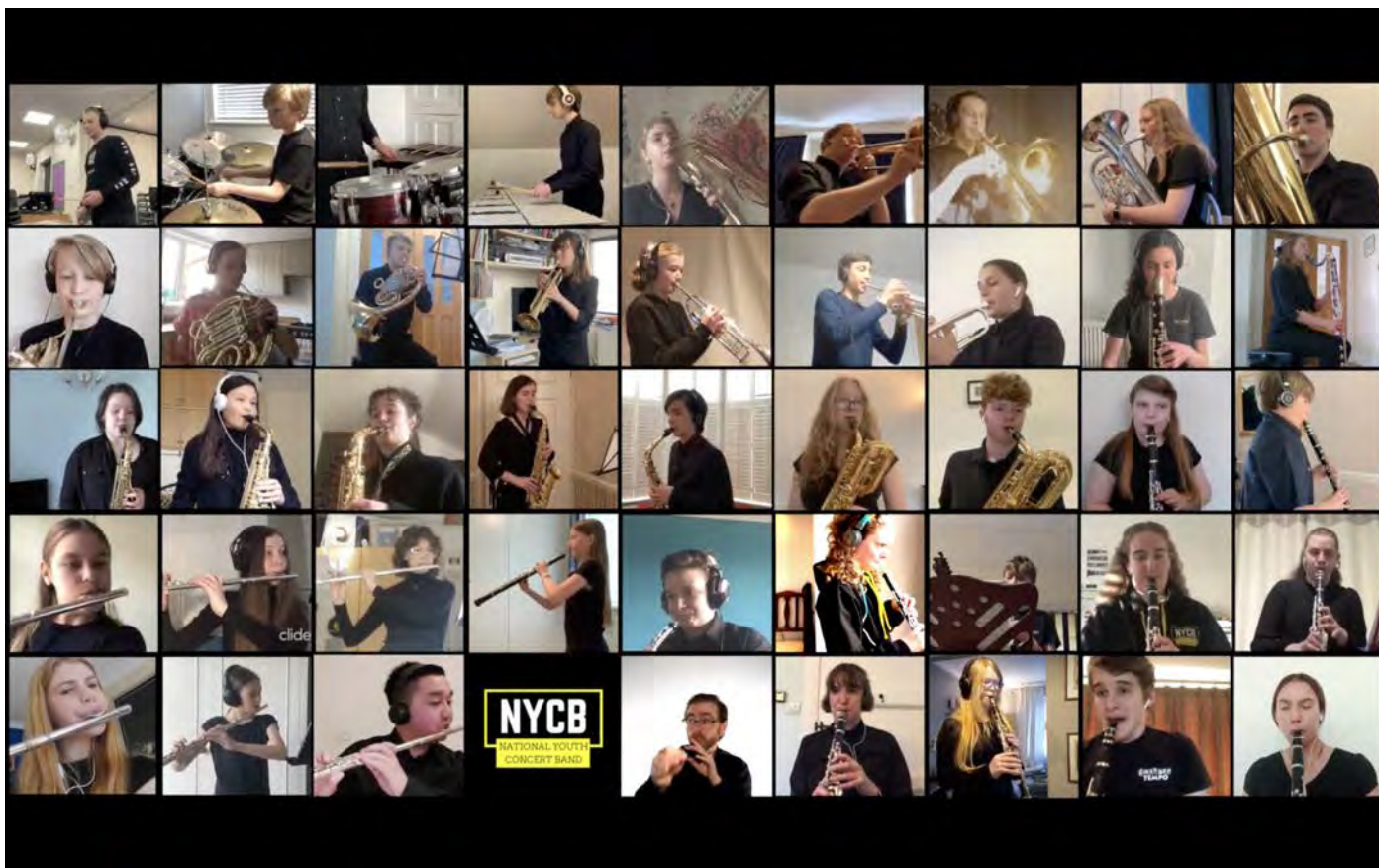
Ryan also talked about how music is relevant to every aspect of life, and at a time where the worth of the arts seems to have been particularly disregarded, this was an extremely powerful talk. He emphasised that music is not just about performing, it also improves the wellbeing of others, improves productivity, and provides a universal form of communication. To end the week, we ‘performed’ our pieces together live on Zoom, whilst recording a video of ourselves, which we sent off to be put together into a video performance.

Overall, I had a fantastic week at NYCB+. I took so much away from every session, and I can’t wait for the in-person course in July, where we can finally make music together!

**Anna Thirkettle, NYCB clarinettist**







In April, I took part in the National Youth Concert Band online course. I was unsure what to expect when I logged into the first zoom session of the week, but any anxieties I had about the week were instantly put at ease by the friendly and welcoming attitudes of everyone in the NYCB team.

Having already attended so many musical events online, with most of my sixth form experience as a pupil at Chetham's School of Music being held on teams, I really understood the difficulties that the team must have faced.

However, I can very happily say that the week was incredibly inspiring and engaging, and I enjoyed every moment of it. As a trombonist that was brought up playing in wind bands (rather than brass bands), it was amazing to be talking to and connecting with people that share the same love of wind bands as I do, and even on zoom, the feeling of community was already immense!

The variety and array in the programme of events was amazing. As well as having really fun big group sessions, we had sectionals with the great team of tutors, a soloist's concert, masterclasses, and talks from extraordinary musicians.

Some highlights include; a talk by Paul Harris – one of the most insightful and inspiring talks I'd ever attended, a masterclass taken by Helen Vollam – which I was absolutely honoured to have the opportunity to play in, a really fascinating talk by Amos Miller, and a talk from one of the low brass tutors, Ryan Breen.

Having had Ryan coach me before, he's one of the most inspiring musicians I have ever had the pleasure to meet - to have the opportunity to hear him talk about what he does in the industry was just amazing.

Thank you so much to everyone who made this week possible, I'm so grateful to have taken part. I'm very excited to meet everyone in the summer, and to all play together!

**Jessica Anderson**

# NYCB+

## (April 2021)

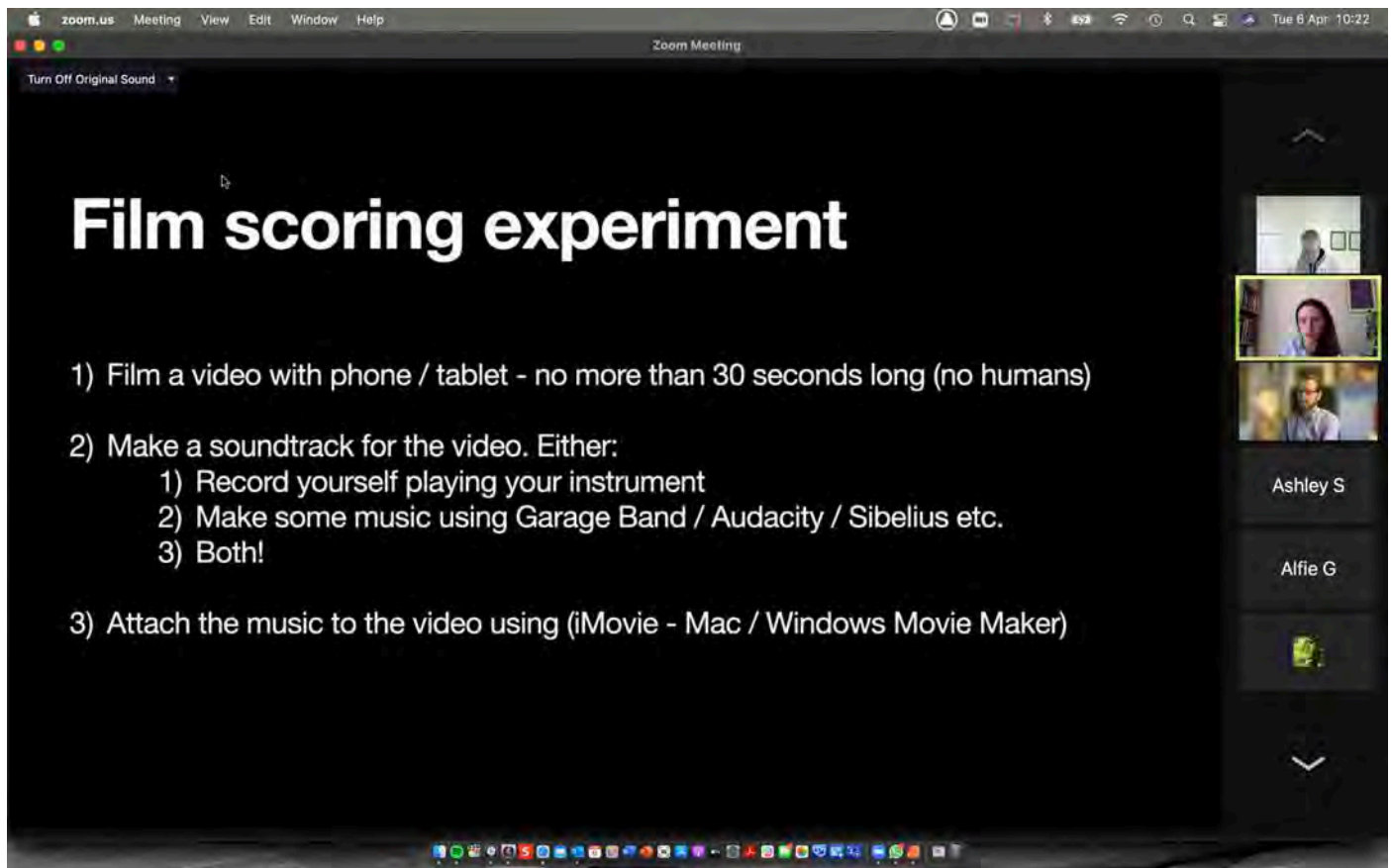
After the onset of Covid-19 early last year, we took the devastating decision to cancel our 2020 residential course. In its place, we asked our members to do a virtual performance of Pharrell Williams' "Happy" which was a great success but it was far from the experience we wished to give them. As it became clear that our residential in April 2021 would also fall casualty to the pandemic, we decided that we needed to provide something more significant for the young people who had been without huge chunks of their musical lives for such a long time.

With the kind support of BASBWE, we were able to plan a week-long online course in place of the postponed 2021 residential - NYCB+.

We were thrilled to welcome four inspirational speakers to talk to our young musicians: Amos Miller ("Well-being and how we speak to ourselves as musicians"), Paul Harris ("How to practise effectively"), Anne Chmielewsky ("Film composition") and Ryan Breen ("Working in the community") as well as Matt Hardy (Principal Timpanist, CBSO), Helen

Vollam (Principal Trombone, BBC SO) and Jess Gillam (saxophone soloist) to lead masterclasses. Music Director, Jonathan Parkes, led the combined forces of the National Youth and National Children's Concert Bands in play-alongs of Gustav Holst's First Suite in Eb and Ludwig Goransson's music from The Mandalorian and the team of NYCB tutors each spent time with their respective sections. On top of talks, masterclasses and rehearsals, members of NYCB and NCCB also took part in virtual chamber music projects, a brass ensemble recording Handel's





March from 'Scipio' and a mixed ensemble pieced together Alex Shapiro's aleatoric work, Passages, which was a completely new musical challenge for all involved. The week featured an evening solos concert as well and, in a year where performances have been so scarce, it was wonderful to see so many parents and grandparents tuning in to watch some stunning performances.

There were times during the planning of the NYCB+ event when we wondered if yet more online content would be too much for a group for whom most of their school year had been screen-based. We couldn't have been more wrong and so proud of how engaged in all the activities the NYCB and NCCB members were, whether playing in masterclasses, asking and answering questions

during talks or writing and attaching soundtracks to homemade films. We are now looking forward to the summer when we hope to be able to meet and make music in person. Judging by the quality of performances on NYCB+, we're in for a treat!

Our huge thanks to BASBWE for their support.

**Jonny Watkin**

**AFTER THE ONSET OF COVID-19 EARLY LAST YEAR, WE TOOK THE DEVASTATING DECISION TO CANCEL OUR 2020 RESIDENTIAL COURSE**





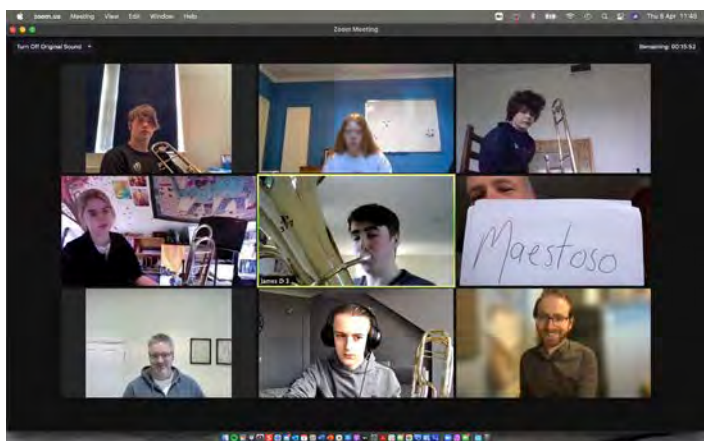
# National Youth Concert Band



*My name is Tess Ractliffe and I'm 16 years old. I was lucky enough to be join NYCB right at the start of its journey and it was instrumental (!) in changing my life. The fabulous leaders gave me confidence to believe in myself and I subsequently auditioned for, and gained a place at, The Purcell School for young musicians.*

Through NYBC I've met some inspirational teachers and industry leaders as well as making some really good friends. The Covid situation of 2020 lead to the cancellation of the course which was hugely disappointing, but the organisers were really quick to transfer everything to 2021 and keep everyone motivated. I can't wait to see everyone again this Summer.

The unexpected added bonus of belonging to such an amazing organisation was NYCB+ - definitely had me bouncing out of bed in the morning to log on and take part in all of the different zoom classes.



In addition to the whole band pieces Holst's 1st suite in Eb and Mandalorian and subsequent sectionals, I have taken huge inspiration from the workshops and webinar's run by Amos Miller, Anne Chmielewsky, Paul Harris and Ryan Breen.

For me, as a saxophonist, the greatest moment of the whole course has to be performing in the masterclass with Jess Gillam; her guidance on interpretation of some of the finer details of Pedro Itturalde's Pequena Czarda was quite insightful.



## With the backing of BASBWE...

**NYCB+ - DEFINITELY HAD ME BOUNCING OUT OF BED IN THE MORNING TO LOG ON AND TAKE PART IN ALL OF THE DIFFERENT ZOOM CLASSES**

With the backing of BASBWE, the whole course has been brilliantly run, with a perfect balance between playing and guidance on how to be the best musician you can, alongside a guide as to what it's like to work in some sectors of the music industry. Jon, Kathryn and Jonnie have yet again proved themselves to be supportive, inspirational and highly dedicated to the cause of developing young musicians and raising the profile of our much loved, and often underrated sector.

# National Youth Concert Band debuts exclusive digital offering for young musicians, supported by BASWBE

*Though 2021 has been a particularly challenging year for the music industry, new and emerging youth ensembles like the National Youth Concert Band of Great Britain (NYCB) give us hope when looking towards the tentative future of the arts sector.*

Founded in 2018, the National Youth Concert Band is a dynamic ensemble for young and talented woodwind, brass and percussion players from across the United Kingdom. The NYCB holds an annual residency at the Old Swinford Hospital School, with their first concert held in Easter 2019, performing wind band classics such as David Bedford's *Ronde for Isolde*, to Edward Gregson's *Festivo*. Following a successful first course, the ensemble was ready for another year of fantastic music-making, with a performance at Birmingham's Elgar Hall.

This would feature a world premiere of Anne Chmelewsky's *Now You Can Believe*, plus a performance of Grant Kirkhope's *KirkFeld* featuring the principal trombonist of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Helen Volla, alongside performances of other concert band classics.

Sadly, as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak and consequent lockdown restrictions, the ensemble's second annual residency was cancelled.

Despite this, the ensemble continued to make music, with a virtual performance of Pharrell Williams's *Happy*, plus a solo and chamber concert featuring both NYCB members and staff.

During the lockdown, NYCB instrumental tutors continued to share their top tips with the disheartened musicians with instruments-specific advice and information about general musicianship.

Now, with second and third waves looming, plus the uncertainty of greater restrictions, the NYCB's new virtual offering, NYCB+, was welcome news to all when the second residency had to be postponed to the summer.



The ensemble's first digital offering welcomed returning members from the NYCB, but also their new sister ensemble for younger musicians, the National Children's Concert Band (NCCB).

This not only included sectional rehearsals with instrumental tutors and full rehearsals led by Jonathan Parkes, but also a selection of workshops and masterclasses delivered by educationalist Paul Harris, film composer Anne Chmelewsky and award-winning saxophonist Jess Gillam, just to name a few.



# NYCB

## NATIONAL YOUTH MUSIC CENTRE ART BAND

In a year where performance opportunities have been limited, the course also provided an opportunity for musicians to showcase their solo performances in an informal evening recital.

Throughout the week, we worked on Holst's Suite in Eb minor, and Ludwig Göransson's The Mandalorian from Star Wars, culminating in a virtual concert play through of the two.

In the evening solo concert, I performed the first movement of the Martinů First Sonata for Flute and Piano, alongside performances from other NYCB members, repertoire including the Horowitz Sonatina for Clarinet and Piano to Furstenau's Valse de Schubert. Overall, on behalf of all of the musicians,

I would like to say a huge thanks to the course directors Jonathan Parkes, Kathryn Wood and Jonathan Watkins, the sectional tutors as well as the guest speakers for what

has been a terrific and most memorable week of music-making.

Reflecting on an enjoyable week, NYCB clarinettist and junior student at Guildhall School of Music and Drama, Anna Thirkettle commented: "I had a brilliant week – over the past year I have hugely missed the sense of community that comes with being part of an ensemble, so this week I really enjoyed being able to experience this again. I took so much away from every session, and I will be utilising many of the tips in my practise!"

I especially appreciated the opportunity to perform in a solo concert, in a time where opportunities are very limited. Overall, I had a fantastic week, and I can't wait for the summer course!"

**I HAD A BRILLIANT  
WEEK – OVER THE PAST  
YEAR I HAVE HUGELY  
MISSED THE SENSE  
OF COMMUNITY THAT  
COMES WITH BEING PART  
OF AN ENSEMBLE**



# Creating a Virtual Performance



## **In March 2020, the pandemic forced Maghull Wind Orchestra to stop for an indefinite amount of time**

As the year went on the band's Committee tweaked and improving our virtual presence as we found new methods of working and engaging with our members virtually; from quizzes held on our Facebook members group, to holding webinars and rehearsals over Zoom.

It was early on in the lockdown when the suggestion was made to create our own virtual performance. I have done video editing since studying it at University and have recorded concerts for MWO, and other bands, so I was more than happy to provide the technical skills to put together the virtual performance.

The prospect of editing a virtual performance was venturing into unknown territory for me. Now, one year and 16 virtual performance edits later (13 of them for MWO), I will share a few tips about how the process is achieved.

## **Christopher Horswood**

*Lead Trombonist and  
Band Secretary of  
Maghull Wind Orchestra*

### **STEP 1: CREATE A GUIDE TRACK**

After deciding on the piece of music, the first step is to create a guide track which all the musicians can use. It is basically just a recording of the music with a metronome/click marking the beats. This is the backbone of putting everything together as it ensures all musicians play at the same tempo.

I have done this in two ways dependant on the piece of music. If it was an arrangement written by MWO bass trombonist Adam Dutch or myself, then Sibelius can be used to play the arrangement with a click. If it was for music we already have in our pad (for when we recorded Moment for Morricone or Christmas Festival) then I would get the audio from a demo recording (e.g., a Hal Leonard YouTube video) and then manually add clicks on each beat.

The guide track is then sent out as a link to a YouTube video, which provides the bar numbers and rehearsal figures on screen, which will help with practicing before recording. An mp3 file is also provided as a few members prefer to just listen to the guide track.

### **STEP 2: RECORD AND SUBMIT VIDEOS**

Next up is recording the individual parts. It does not matter if you go low-tech with a five-year old smartphone, or high tech with a semi-professional digital audio workstation and 4K video camera. My view is that the video is supposed to have a 'homemade' feel to it and we do not want to deter players who may not have the latest technology.

Set up your camera with the primary light source behind it (natural light is usually the best). Use headphones, or ear buds, to listen to the guide track - ideally in only one ear so you can hear your instrument. Once you start recording, wait a few seconds before starting to play, and at the end wait a few seconds before stopping the recording. After recording the best way to transfer files is by an online transfer service like wetransfer.com, or share the files via GoogleDrive or DropBox.

### STEP 3: STANDARDISE FILES

My first task once a video has been sent to me is to standardise the file. This is because videos can be submitted in multiple different file formats (e.g. .mp4, .mov, .mkv, etc...) and in different aspect ratios.

I import the videos into my editing software and then export them as new mp4 files in 720p aspect. Standardising the videos makes the editing a little easier as all videos will be the same aspect so I can copy and paste the position and scale settings to create the video grid on the screen.

### STEP 4: AUDIO MIX

At the same time of standardising the video format, I export the audio from each file which is then used to create a separate audio mix. This provides a bit more flexibility to allow me to line up, trim and move the individual audio tracks. It also provides the opportunity to correct any inaccuracies within the recording (e.g., remove unwanted background noise, or fix issues with tuning).

When creating the audio mix; I line up all the audio files with the audio from the guide track. I then listen to each track separately, along with the guide track, to make sure it remains lined up and to also pick out any potential errors which might need to be fixed. I can then set the volume levels of each track and add pan and reverb.

While I don't necessarily get as detailed with the audio mix as a professional studio will, it does provide the opportunity to do some audio tweaks to make the audio sound as good as possible. Even a little can go a long way.

### STEP 5: VIDEO EDIT

Once the initial audio mix has been created, I then start on the video editing. I import all the videos into the editing software and line up with the audio mix. I have all the

videos on the timeline on deactivated tracks, and then I cut sections out from each recording up to live tracks at the top of the timeline. This means that I only need to line up the videos once instead of having to re-align each video when changing who is displayed on screen.

It is not unusual for virtual performances to go through several versions as I tweak and change the audio or the video before finalising the edit.

### STEP 6: PREMIERE THE FINAL VIDEO

Maghull Wind Orchestra has multiple social media accounts, which includes YouTube and Facebook. The final video is uploaded to both of these, which will help it to reach our audience and the wider internet community.

As the UK starts to ease restrictions, I am looking forward to getting back to live rehearsals and concerts, but I have not finished yet with the virtual. The (hopefully last) virtual performance will be of Hey Jude which we have opened the submission of videos to other musicians who are not members of the band. This will be another leap into the unknown as I do not know how many musicians will take part, so I could be in my own personal lockdown to complete edit.

You can watch all the virtual performances for Maghull Wind Orchestra on YouTube:

[www.youtube.com/MaghullWindOrchestra](https://www.youtube.com/MaghullWindOrchestra)







# Philip Wilby

## 2020:

### *'Year of the Trombone!'*

*For all of us, of course, 2020 will always be regarded as the year of lockdowns, cancellations, postponements, and pandemic nervousness.*

For all musicians, it caused pressures that could hardly be imagined twelve months earlier. In the popular imagination, composers are thought of as solitary, writing in their own bubble, and hence rather removed from the difficulties experienced by performers, and in some areas this has proved to be true. However, if any proof was needed, the last year has demonstrated in capital letters just how interdependent musicians are, and how much composers rely on interaction with performers, publishers, and audiences.

When lockdown started in March 2020, the Lake Wobegon Brass Band from Minnesota were in the final stages of planning a tour of the U.K., and their composer and conductor Michael Halstenson and I were enjoyably engaged in mapping out concerts and performances. Of course, when Covid 19

began to expand rapidly and all music making was suspended, we were faced with that confusing state of suspended animation common to all. Accordingly, at Mike's suggestion, we decided that should work in tandem with some trombonists, and I approached performers Brett Baker (Geneva Instruments and Black Dyke Band) and Charlotte Horsfield (final year RNCM), and publisher Kirklees Music. With everyone on board, we two composers decided to set each other a musical challenge, and publish a sequence of pieces for trombone suitable for professional soloists or advanced students to perform. The project would be reactive, whereby we would work as a 'tag team'; we would send each other scores and write responses, and gradually build up a body of literature which could be assembled for publication.

**Out of the ashes then, 2020 became our *'Year of the Trombone!'***

**Initially, I began my contribution with a short and breathless piece with piano, appropriately called 'Working from Home'.**

I sent this to Mike, who was snow bound in his home in the depths of a Minnesotan winter, and he responded with an unaccompanied piece called 'Windchill'. I then responded, at the height of the first wave of pandemic, with an elegiac memorial for the lost ones and their families; 'Isola' is scored for unaccompanied soloist with a music theatre element, played by candlelight.

Mike responded to my trombone and piano movement with three pieces in a group, and I added



two more pieces into a 'Partita'. Before we knew it, we had a short collection which Kirklees published in their much respected 'Essentials' Series. There were two unaccompanied pieces, and two three movement pieces with piano. Here is opening of Mike's 'Northern Portraits'.



## The World Had Moved On

By this time, the world had moved on and spring had arrived. After the initial shock to lives and livelihoods, musicians were starting to issue music on various virtual platforms. Bands were assembling items in small and large groups and beginning to kick back resiliently against the situation.

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For the first time in my life, I began to be whole heartedly grateful to virtual technology for keeping us going through the darker times, and it seemed that composers had a valued role to play in keeping up morale as we all embraced the wartime spirit.

Accordingly, and encouraged by the experience of our first collection, Mike and I embarked on an ensemble series for equal voices. Again published as an 'Essentials' volume, these duos, trios, and quartets could be played by any group of similar instruments who shared a common transposition, and we found that socially distanced musicians were keen to try and use our material.

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We saw quartets of flugel horn players on different continents playing together, or three clarinettists, or four trombones taking up the challenge, and sending us recordings.

This second volume of 'Essentials for Equal Voices' contained five items, including arrangements of music by Bach and Thomas Tomkins. Of course, important differences of notational traditions between America and Britain quickly became apparent as we proceeded with our work. Kirklees provided treble and bass clef alternatives for trombone solos, but our 'Equal Voices' collection used treble clef as its standard, adding a bass clef part for bass trombone when required. From my point of view, the 'Adolf Sax' notation, used by British brass bands and saxophone groups in treble clef has many advantages, not least in avoiding the extreme use of ledger lines.

From the American standpoint, bass clef readers have a natural affinity with orchestral players, and avoid that sad distinction between ‘band’ musicians and mainstream classical music. Each tradition has its own advocates, and the debate will continue for the foreseeable future.

In response to Mike’s combative duet ‘It takes two’, I provided a trio for any equal instruments called ‘And this our life’, taking an optimistic view of our ‘locked down’ lives with a quotation from Shakespeare’s ‘As you like it’.

*‘And this our life, exempt  
from public haunt,  
finds tongues in trees,  
books in running brooks,  
sermons in stones, and  
good in everything.  
I would not change it.*

It concludes with a quotation from Beethoven’s Piano Sonata Op 110, written exactly 200 years before, and when the composer had himself been isolated by deafness for many years. It became popular with soloists who multitracked themselves on three screens. Beethoven, who famously mocked the invention of the metronome, would have been amazed.



In a strange way, we felt that we were evolving in new and unexpected ways. Most importantly, it proved incontrovertibly that composing is not authorship but teamwork. Beethoven’s view of his own work was that he was a sole creator, and the message came directly from his pen. My own experience of the pandemic was different; I feel that we feed off each other, and that symbiotic relationships between musicians is of the essence of what we are about.

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The last stage in the story came from an unexpected source. Janina Harrison lives in Ripon in North Yorkshire, and was widowed in 2019. Her late husband Colin was the super energetic church warden of the city’s majestic cathedral, and when she approached me to compose something in his memory, I was delighted to be asked. Initially, I imagined music of sonorous breadth that would fill Ripon’s gothic arches. After all, this was a piece to memorialise ‘Dr Colin R Harrison CBE, eminent scientist, industrialist and inspirational leader and latterly Capitular Canon of Ripon Cathedral.’ What she had in mind was a more personal memory of Colin as husband, father, and enthusiastic dancer of more than usual energy. She asked for something for Trombone, since that was the instrument that both her children had chosen to play. As the earlier volumes were designed, it should be useful for advanced students and professionals, and have a number of movements.

There were to be some solemnities and some reflective moments, but also some light hearted and happy times. The music would combine celebration and memorial, and would centre on dancing as uniting symbol.

In consequence of this mixture of memories, I chose to write a piece that reuses the pattern of the popular Dance Suites of the late baroque era. As is well known, this involves a stately opening and complex inner movement typical of a French Overture, followed by a string of dances. These include Kemp’s Jig, a tribute to Shakespeare’s famous clown who danced from London to Norwich in Nine days, a solo Adage, a Duo Jive, and a Comedia dell’Arte Trio for the characters, the solemn Pantalone, the lovely Columbina, and the clown Pulcinella.

The planets had finally lined themselves up to produce one final work from this year of trombone solos, and this was to be the biggest of the lot. The title, taking a phrase from John Milton’s 1645 poem ‘L’Allegro’ was ‘Light Fantastic’.

As I have said above, composing in my experience is partly solitary, but most productively experienced as a team activity.

**ISOLATION AND  
LOCKDOWN HAD  
IMPACTED ON SO MANY  
DURING THE PANDEMIC**



As the work proceeded during the second British lockdown, I worked with the Harrison family as commissioners, Brett Baker and Charlotte Horsfield as trombonists, my long-suffering wife Wendy as principal critic and advisor, and Kirklees Music on producing this 20-minute Concerto from trombone. There are three versions of the accompaniment, for piano, brass band, or 11-piece ensemble. The premiere performance with piano was recorded and issued virtually from Ripon Cathedral. Brett recorded it with Black Dyke in an online concert in July 2021. The student premiere was given at the RNCM by Charlotte Horsfield in June of that year.

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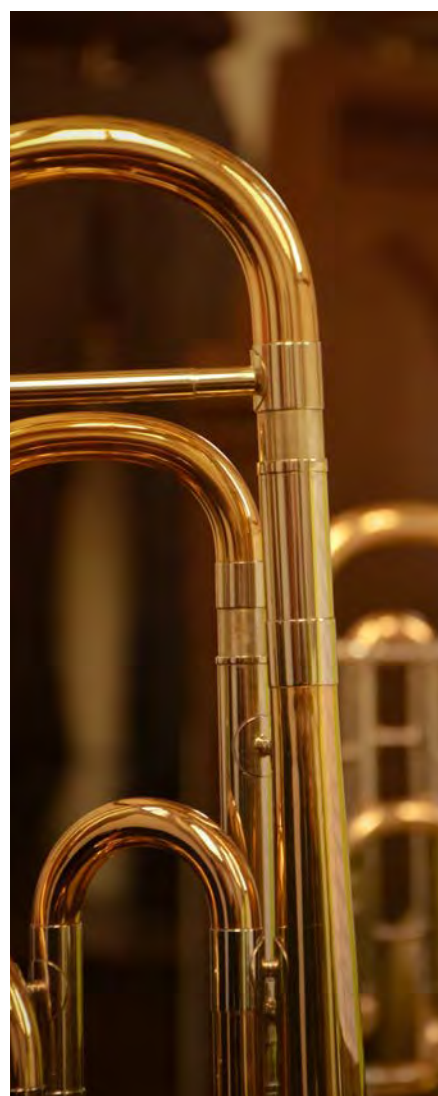
At the centre of the piece is a movement called 'The Harrison Hop, and aimed to reproduce one of Janina's abiding memories of Colin's dancing style.

*The Harrison Hop: We learnt the jive, but unfortunately Colin frequently got it wrong (he was left-handed and often confused left foot with right foot) and so he was forced to put in a little hop so as to correct himself and try to keep in time. Until he died, he was still, when dancing, trying to do the jive and included a hop and at the same time one arm would whirl round and round like a clock face. So, one of my last happy memories of him was at the end of September, not long before his diagnosis and it was of him dancing his strange but loveable dance, not one that would score any points in 'Strictly Come Dancing'!*

Here is the opening of the trombone part. The soloist plays here from two staves, the upper with a plunger mute, and the lower open, mimicking Colin's habit of being 'in and out of the zone.'



In my 'Composer's Preface' to the printed score, I reflected on the experience of this most unusual year of writing, and how important I had found the contribution of others had been.



**I REFLECTED ON THE EXPERIENCE OF THIS MOST UNUSUAL YEAR OF WRITING, AND HOW IMPORTANT I HAD FOUND THE CONTRIBUTION OF OTHERS HAD BEEN.**

Isolation and lockdown had impacted on so many during the pandemic. Nevertheless, we have proved ourselves to be able to use our creativity and invention to continue to embrace new and unexpected pieces of work that would not have existed without the events that have redrawn our collective roadmap. My preface begins thus.

With any piece of commissioned music, there was a time before it existed. Gradually, due to the input of a number of significant people, the work is built up and comes into being. Suddenly, to everyone's surprise, there it is, and it leaves us all. It is itself, and unlike any other. Composers never get used to the process. They think that they are in control, but suddenly the final score appears as if it created itself out of thin air. As Stravinsky wisely said, he was simply the vessel through which the music passed.

**Philip Wilby**  
Skelton Windmill  
May 2021

# Surrey Police Band

## *A Journey Through Lockdown by Graham Atterbury*



*Surrey Police Band on tour*



**P**re-lockdown the Surrey Police Band felt like it was riding the crest of the wave with sell-out concerts and raising significant funds for numerous charities. Not only that, but the band was having fun and covering a lot of repertoires. Then, rumours kept circulating of a virus sweeping the globe and the dark clouds of lockdown were looming. With only weeks to go until our next concert, and all tickets sold, the Prime Minister addressed the nation. A sense of pure numbness and shock dawned upon us. We've been hit with a new virus and we all need to do our bit to help stop the spread. This is much easier said than done though as for everyone it meant a

total and immediate life change. For the band, thinking, and hoping this could be a short-term issue we dutifully cancelled our concert. The issue now was, what to do with all of our other bookings as we don't plan one concert ahead, we plan a whole season, but we had no idea how long this pandemic was going to last.

**I** made the decision with my committee that we would officially keep all other concerts booked and cancel each one as we approach it if required. Needless to say, we cancelled a lot of concerts, and most upsetting, a planned tour for the band.

**W**e've only recently become a band that occasionally jumps on the bus for an outing so I planned a nice trip, jam packed with gigs and a little down time for the band to relax. This particular tour took some planning and for the band I had set them up with three days of back-to-back concerts and music making, and on top of that each concert was raising money for a different charity. For the band themselves, cancelling a trip just means not turning up. For myself as the musical director, I had fixed the band to ensure balance, collected all money into the band account, raised money to help fund the trip, booked hotels, a coach, and sorted all the music for distribution. All I could see was an admin headache and visions of the Fun Police knocking on my door saying "no more music for you sunshine."

**S**o that's the band, and to be honest, my own musical experience external to the band was similar as I was conducting and playing in a number of ensembles. Literally within a week I had gone through pages of my diary and crossed out gig after gig until in the end I just closed my diary and admitted defeat.

So, what happened next? Well, the tricky bit was, the Surrey Police Band has always remained positive because there has always been a belief that there's a gig on the horizon, and Thursday night is Band Night! Thursday is the two-hours of every week where everyone in the band there has the opportunity to do something different to the rest of their week and to be part of our club.

We know that rehearsal nights are an integral part of our musicians lives regardless of what they do for their main jobs. Now due to the pandemic we had lost this. Perhaps naively I tried to be optimistic, I thought "it's a virus, it'll blow over in a few weeks".

Like many other bands I hear about, we next tried online music making. We went for the apps where we could record musicians in their homes and splice something together. That worked for some bands, but not for us. It took weeks to get all the parts in, and not everyone wanted to play in such an exposed way either. I was constantly concerned that the band could drift off into their own individual worlds and I may lose them. I forced myself not to give up. I wrote practice guides for the band on things like articulation, how to tackle difficult passages in music and all kinds of things but I kept them chatty and light humoured too. These seemed to work for some people but I still didn't have the whole band.

My other concern was charity. Our concerts are known locally for their charity fundraising efforts. Something I have always really supported.

We raise money for a charity nominated by the Chief Constable of the Surrey Police as part of our connection with the force, and we also raise for a number of other charities each year. The news kept saying how much these charities were suffering during the pandemic and it was terrible to know that our band had its hands tied, we couldn't do our bit in the same way, all we could do is plan to get back on track in the future and hope.

*Surrey Police Band on tour*



Next came what we thought was the end of lockdown. Risk assessments, planning, endless checking of Government legislation and so on all took place. We found a bigger venue to rehearse in, then we finally started up again. The band came back! It was fantastic to know that Band Night was still a thing for the musicians, and from the moment we played the first note you could just feel that everyone's mental wellbeing improving. We had a couple of

months of rehearsals that felt a little like a return to normality, but of course, little did we know that once again the virus would go out of control with new variants ripping across the UK.

How could we possibly rehearse with our musicians spread across different counties that were all in their own tier system? Well, the tier system didn't last long anyway, the whole of the UK was put into lockdown again.

Once more into the abyss. Now it became even harder, the initial idea of online playing and recordings seemed doomed, we just had to sit this out and ride the storm.

So, on band night once a week we had a virtual catch up which provided some light relief for a handful of people, and I continued to send various practice guides and PDF copies of parts to look at.



*Behind the scenes, away from my weekly concerns for the band and its musicians I decided it was time to set up a concert series.*

I have to keep believing that there is a future for the band so we booked up dates for 2021 and now literally just keeping my fingers crossed that we won't have to exist through another year of cancelled events. We have planned our first rehearsal back, and a couple of months later a concert booked. All we can do is hope. 2020 marked my 10th year as musical director of the Surrey Police Band and I had plans to bring cake to a rehearsal.

Our band has a thing about cake, we have some expert cake makers in the band who always provide endless free homemade cakes at concerts. I was however touched that one of our flautists Kim, a PR expert, put together a fun video of the last 10 years which was made

up as a compilation of photos sent in by band members. I was also humbled as together with Rachel our band Chair I was awarded the Mayor's Award for Service to the Community. This was meant to be a presentation event where upon we meet the Mayor of Guildford for a presentation and reception, however it turned into a virtual event – but the gesture and meaning is still there.

It has been a turbulent time, without a doubt the band has missed its rehearsal nights, it has missed its concerts and music making, and above all it has missed each other's friendships.

Musicians are by our very nature resilient and creative with their adaptability to problems, and we do have to adapt and overcome, but I also believe that we have to keep believing that a return to the old normal will happen at some point and then live music can begin its recovery.

What has been a huge relief for me was when I individually contacted every band member about when we can return to rehearsals, I had confirmation that they still believed in our band and were patiently waiting in the wings to come back on stage.

*Surrey Police Band on tour*



# Marching to the beat of British Army Music

*A look into the life of a musician in the Household Division of the British Army  
by Gareth Trott, Solo Euphonium of the Band of the Irish Guards*



## THE FIRST MAJOR CEREMONIAL EVENT. WINDSOR, ENGLAND

I have been incredibly fortunate in my comparatively short time in the band to have enjoyed some phenomenal experiences. Upon arriving in the Band of the Irish Guards, I was instantly given the fantastic opportunity to play for the wedding of Prince Harry and Megan Markel.

I still remember the crowds light up in the sun as we appeared through the tunnel of the gate to Victoria barracks as we stepped off up the hill towards Windsor castle. The roaring crowds waiting in anticipation of the historic occasion, combined with the fact we knew that this would be aired on television to half of the world gave a rush of adrenalin that boosted my playing as I so very proudly marched up the hill next to my then Band Master Andrew Porter.

Being almost within reach of the royal carriage as Prince Harry and his newly wedded wife made me realise that I was now playing a small part in history and I felt no less than surreal.

I joined the British Army in June 2017 and since that very moment I have been treated to a rich tapestry of experience in the life we call 'British Army Music'. From tours to faraway lands, to performance in front of millions and aired to the world on television I can safely say the past four years have been nothing short of a completely thrilling musical adventure.

Firstly, to be in a British Army Band is to be a bit like a musical family and the Band of the Irish Guards paints that perfect picture. A range of ages from the 'old and bold' right down to the newest eighteen-year-olds who can learn so much from

them. We rehearse together, perform together, tour together, socialise and experience together and learn together. This very style of life brings about a unity to the band that is captured in what people see of us of the television on national and international ceremonial events. Within this article you will see a glimpse into my life within the band in a way not many people imagine. Enjoying everything from tours to Australia and America, Skiing in Val Thorens, to playing for the Queen's Birthday Parade, the first presidential visit of Donald Trump and a Royal Wedding, Gareth gives us an account of his thoughts on his experiences:

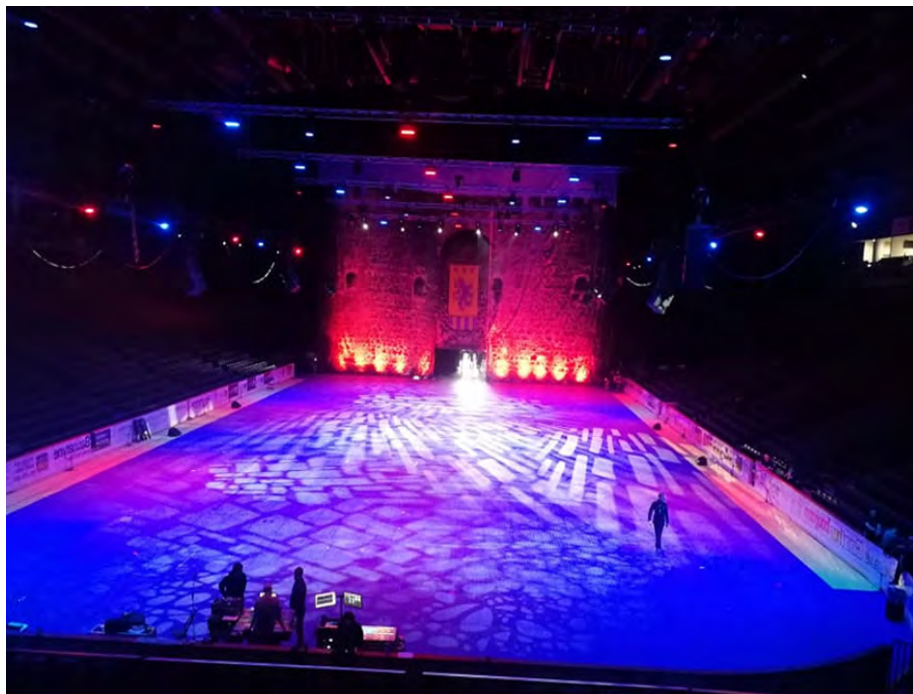


## Belfast, Ireland



Shortly after came my first tour to Belfast for the Belfast Tattoo. A great trip and my first experience of the Military Tattoo environment. Again, marching on to the roaring crowds as we performed our marching display was my first real experience of the displayed showmanship of our band.

I felt the hair on the back of my neck stand up the moment we played the first interval in one of our band's favourite marches 'Washington Grays'... but that may have been the rebound of the sound of our Sgt Lockwood's immensely prominent bass trombone playing coming back from the other side of the arena.



In a combination of cultures coming together for the finale, the tattoo was incredibly impressive to the audience and even more so to myself having completed my first tattoo to the sounds of 'You are the voice' and 'Toss the Feathers'.

A great experience with the band and even the chance to taste the difference of a pint of Guinness closer to the source!

## Val Thorens, France



Next in the calendar was an exciting adventure training tour to Val Thorens, France. I had never been skiing in my life. Coming from Pembrokeshire in Wales the nearest I had come to a pair of skis was watching on a fake slope in Llangranog as everyone fell off! This week was truly amazing and with the top class instructors the army provides I managed to get from not being able to stand up on skis to doing some black slopes (the harder slopes). And the scenery whilst we were there was breath-taking.



The experience and combination of getting the kart up to look over these beautiful views and then watching in admiration as Csgt Dickson bombed his way down the slopes at close to seventy miles per hour left me utterly stunned and in

awe. Not even a fall at speed and a bruised backside would deter him! All of this experience and it also became a way to become closer with the members of my band and really underpin the ethics of the cohesive unit we always strive to be.



# Gibraltar



Closely followed to this was the complete opposite extreme of climate as we boarded our plane and set off to Gibraltar to assist the Band of the Royal Regiment of Gibraltar.

An amazing week of experiencing the culture of Gibraltar and climbing the rock to see the apes, and then into the rock to see the historic World War Two bunkers. Completing the week we performed in St. Michael's cave, which has one of the nicest naturally formed acoustics I have ever experienced.



*We were accompanied on stage by none other than Wynne Evans, the "Go Compare" man, for a fantastic finale!*

# Sonderborg, Denmark



Just after my trip to Gibraltar, I was offered the chance to travel with the Honourable Artillery Company Band to Denmark for the Sonderborg Tattoo.

Not knowing anyone in the band beforehand didn't seem a problem as I got on the bus to the airport and was immediately adopted by the members.

An incredibly fun trip out and experiencing the life of a reserve band. Under the direction of



Bruce Miller we performed on the march and in concert and it was a pleasure to play amongst some great musicians and great players, many of them having previously served in full time bands. The tattoo was a success and a

particular highlight for me was getting to sing out the melody line for the theme from 'Gladiator' as we triumphantly slow marched towards the conductor's podium.

## Edinburgh, Scotland (August 2019)



Later that year I was then able to go on tour to Edinburgh for the renowned Royal Edinburgh Military tattoo. One of the oldest and most famous of the tattoos in the world brought with it a world of cultures and friends to be made. From every corner of the globe there was a band, or a dancer, or an act set out to entertain the audience of 10,000 people per night for a whole night! With over 1000 performers entertaining the audience in the space of 3 hours it was an absolute spectacle with the finale coordinated my Drum Major Fitzgerald so professionally



that it proved to be one of the most complex but exciting finales the tattoo had ever experienced. The culture of Edinburgh was amazing to have lived in for a month and an

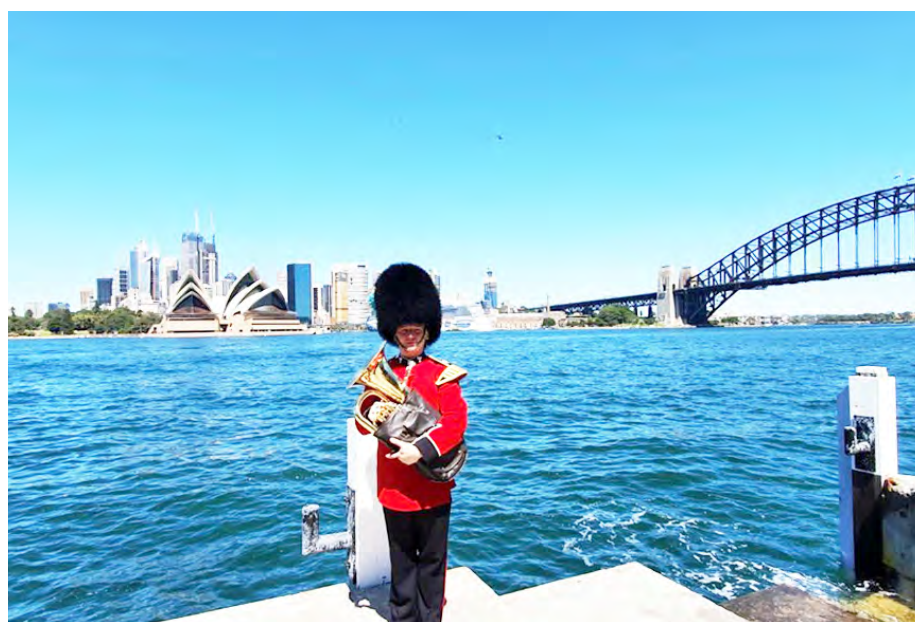
experience I will always regard as one of the best experiences of my life so far.

## Sydney, Australia



As if in a bid to top the Edinburgh Tattoo the end of the next month was met with a flight out to Australia to play in the military tattoo at the ANZ stadium.

Again, the chance to be flown out Australia to perform was something I had never even considered an eventuality in my life. And yet there I was, amongst performers yet again from around the world, forming bonds and friendships all in the name of music.



Whilst there I got to experience the Sydney opera house and Taronga Zoo as well as staying in the Olympic village.

Another memory that when I look back I still don't believe I've done it!



# United States of America



The start to 2020 I was accepted into the British Army Brass Band, a team of the best brass band performers the army has to offer. Excitingly our aim was to tour America visiting places such as New York, Washington D.C and Philadelphia. The standard of playing from this ensemble of excellence was nothing short of world class. Every player around the stands have earned the right to be in the band musically.

During the tour we were able to play in high class performances such as part of a festival held the



Pershing's own Band and at a UN skyscraper overlooking the whole of New York with an audience of some of the most important military political figures from all over the world.

Whilst in America I got to see landmarks such as the White house, the Empire state building and so much more. I got to sample the American culture, the food and enjoy catching up with all of my brass band friends.

# Recordings, Guards Chapel, Westminster



In the British Army, we have had the facilities and strength to keep the music going throughout the hardships of the last year and a half. And the musical standard has continued to strive. I have been part of the recordings for the Household division's 'Scarlet and Gold' Band's new album 'Great and Glorious' along with recordings of the Band of the Irish Guards that can be found on the Household Division's State ceremonial music page.

A real feeling of musical development and excellence throughout the work towards these objectives was evident and listening back there is a clear idea of why British Army Music is known worldwide.

To conclude, in my four years in the British Army I have had the best chances to see the world, experience a vast range of cultures, make friends, and perform at the highest standards of military music and develop as a professional and a human being. Who knows where the next British Army Music adventure will take me!





*Christmas at the Royal Albert Hall*

## London, England



My first big event back in London was the Cenotaph parade on Remembrance Day. A truly moving experience as we all reflected on the sacrifices made for peace. I remember the chill go down my spine as we played Elgars 'Nimrod', the chill of the last post solemnly performed, and the two minutes of unequated silence bringing forth the reality of what had been and had been done in the strive for peace.

Watching each regiments veterans pass us as they marched boldly off after the ceremony was immeasurably moving.

Christmas came and I found myself standing in front of the LPO, front of stage, at the Royal Albert Hall playing a fanfare trombone with the Irish Guards fanfare team! To be in front of these phenomenal musicians in their 'Christmas at the Albert Hall Concert' at this world-renowned venue was nothing short of a dream come true for me.

During the year 2020, it is no surprise that certain elements such as a pandemic were to change how the band worked. However, nothing was to put a stop to the celebration of the 75th anniversary of VE day. I was fortunate to be handpicked to play amongst an A band of some of the best musicians the household division bands have to offer. As part of the celebrations we had the privilege of performing socially distanced on live TV to people around the world in celebration of the anniversary of Victory in Europe.



Similarly, the Pandemic was not to put a stop to the Queen's Birthday Parade in which those selected top musicians made history performing the 'Trooping of the Colour' for the first time in over 125 years at the Queen's home, Windsor Castle. Again broadcasted to the world there was a feeling that in this act of maintaining order throughout a global pandemic we were adding light to a dark time for our public we serve and others further afield.

The music was spectacularly crafted and despite the social distancing it proved to be a real success in delivering that world class standard of marching band music that we always aim to give and have been historically renowned for.

My final postcard and arguably the most important comes from the boroughs of London as the Band engaged in mobile testing units to support the public in ensuring their safety as they went back to

work. Aiding the test of an average of about 250 tests a day, this was perhaps the most grounding and character building experience of all my experiences so far.

Within the space of our three months on this operational outing I learnt about what it was to be in the army, to be a force of stability and aid for the public. I can honestly say that I had never felt prouder to serve as a member of my band than being amongst them in times where we were not doing our normal music performances or marching down to Buckingham Palace.

The courage to face a pandemic as a team, the ethos and professionalism that my friends and peers gave to the cause of protecting the public was second to none. We conducted our duties to the highest standards possible and worked together with a positive mind-set in a situation where we had to adapt and overcome against an invisible enemy.

This became a truly humbling experience and a great one to contribute to and remember as we head back into performing as normal in future.





# MWONLINE...!



**Phil Shotton, musical director and principle conductor of the Maghull Wind Orchestra, reflects on transferring band activities to online during the pandemic. If there are things we can learn from working in this way and if we have developed techniques and opportunities to take forward into the future, enhancing and improving our own practice as musicians.**

**We also hear from MWO members, about how important the online activities have been and how beneficial it has been for them to be involved with MWO music making during the pandemic.**

“ *music is fundamentally a social activity, it should be played together for an audience listening and enjoying together* ”

[www.maghullwindorchestra.co.uk](http://www.maghullwindorchestra.co.uk)

I took over the musical directorship of MWO in 2000 having been involved with the band since 1988. Since then there has been very few rehearsals I have missed, and the nearly 100 strong wind orchestra has rehearsed each week for over forty years, only having two weeks off each year at Christmas. The thought of not rehearsing together for so long never entered our minds and when it happened, as for so many bands, was of great concern to me, our committee and our members.

MWO prides itself on its tremendous sense of community, beginners and non-professional musicians can sit alongside professional musicians and music educators to make music – no audition, no fee, any age, any ability. Due to this ethos, the band has large levels of engagement from both musicians and audience. It was a shock to suddenly be faced with a conundrum; how would the band keep our members and our audience active and engaged in music during Lockdown?

I feel very proud to be part of an extremely forward thinking and proactive committee that run the band, we quickly pulled together and developed a series of weekly events that would take place in lieu of actual face to face rehearsals.

These included:

- The monthly quiz - extremely popular and devised each week by our bass trombonist (with an excellent music section, I may add!)
- Various live social media events - including solo performances and chats from myself.
- A series of social media challenges for our members – helping our members get to know a little bit more about each other.
- A whole series of ‘Phil Shotton In Conversation...’ interviews with composers, performers, MWO section leaders, teachers, music therapists and more. All these interviews are available to be watched again at the MWO YouTube Channel:  
[www.youtube.com/MaghullWindOrchestra](https://www.youtube.com/MaghullWindOrchestra)
- Various online social activities, including; the virtual pub, ‘the big Christmas night in!’ and regular coffee afternoons.
- Online masterclasses for members of the band to play to each other and receive feedback from Phil and their MWO peers.
- Members vote for virtual performances.



All of these events helped to keep our members engaged and we received excellent feedback. As the conductor, I was keen to see our members still engaging in active group music making – something that was nearly impossible to achieve. I wanted music making with a clear focus and a definite outcome, just as we would usually run rehearsals. But how could we do that online from our own homes?

Thanks to the technical wizardry, knowledge and sheer passion, of our principal trombonist, Chris Horswood, MWO has been able to produce fourteen virtual performances. One of which was a world premiere wind band performance – ‘Hymn to the Angels’ by Karl Whelan, one a collaboration with Liverpool Mezzo-Soprano Danielle Louise Thomas and staff at Alder Hey Children’s Hospital, one of which was played on BBC North West Tonight, a couple were heard on BBC local radio and all went into the public domain through the band’s social media and YouTube Channel.



These recordings, with both video and audio, reached more audience than we have previously reached before and has promoted the band, encouraged our members to play regularly and brought joy to people who are missing seeing music live.

They have certainly kept all our members busy during lockdown. Feedback from the members was excellent, with many saying it gave them a reason to continue playing their instrument and helped motivate them to practice at home.

Participating in virtual performances gave the band a real focus and has allowed me, as musical director, to plan and direct online rehearsals. Rehearsals that are not just a chance to have a ‘play a long’ on your instrument and see your band mates on the screen, but have real direction, focus and a tangible end result.

Directing an online rehearsal is clearly extremely different to a face to face rehearsal. As the director, it can feel like you are talking to yourself! All the musicians are muted, so I cannot hear anything they play.

I play the backing track / guide recording via my computer, sharing the audio, and the band members play a long at home. I’ve no idea if what they are playing is correct or not! I cannot address issues in real time, or particularly rehearse as I would normally do. I have had to develop a new skill set and technique for online rehearsals.

I try to point out little ‘trap doors’ in the music – look out for this or that... I talk about balance and blend, intonation, rhythmic clarity and what I’d expect might happen in a real rehearsal. I also spend a fair bit of time talking to the band about my interpretation of the music, and giving performance direction.

It is amazing how much this affects members individual recordings which are then edited together for the virtual performances. It aids the feeling of style and phrasing giving the band much more of an ensemble feel as opposed to a collection of ‘solos’ that have then been ‘sewn’ together.



**Music in Education**  
Sarah Lofthouse

I have always endeavored to make my rehearsals as musical as possible fixing issues and explaining things with as little talk and as much music making as is feasible. I employed the same technique here and with a good backing track we could stop and start to rehearse sections as you would in the rehearsal room.

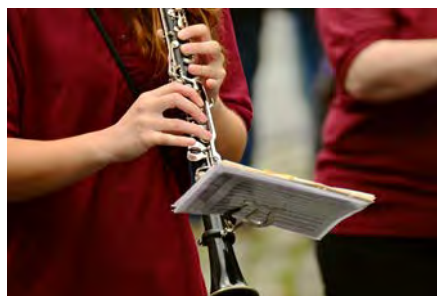
We kept the 'chat' function open to allow members to ask questions in real time, which they did and also it proved popular just to say 'hi' to their band colleagues. We had lots of on screen waving, thumbs up (or down if they found their part tricky) so I could gauge how people found the repertoire or section of rehearsal and even the odd handwritten sign! We even managed to play a few musical games and have collaborative warm ups! Even in these circumstances there was a tangible excitement and 'party atmosphere' to the rehearsals.

There was also an incredibly special feeling about us all coming together at the same time to collectively make music, just as if it was a usual rehearsal evening.

Due to the fact that the rehearsals were aimed at virtual performances, it felt like we were preparing for a concert which gave a real excitement and sense of purpose to the online rehearsals. Many members commented on how rehearsing in this way allowed them to produce their best possible individual recordings to be edited together for the final product.

So, what did some of our members have to say about going online and what has it meant to them that the band has remained so active during this difficult time? Let's find out...

## MILLY CASEY – CLARINET



I have been a member of MWO for something over 5 years now. When I retired I decided to learn to play the clarinet as my husband was a long time member. Phil invited me to come to rehearsal before I could hardly play a note - and I have loved every minute of it, being a small cog attempting to do my bit. The strap line of 'Any Age, Any Ability, No Audition' has certainly applied to me and I am constantly grateful to the many capable musicians who play in the band and allow me to make music well beyond my own abilities.

Of course with lockdown playing and rehearsing together stopped abruptly - but that hasn't stopped the orchestra. Our wonderful committee organised an eclectic list of activities - quiz nights, 'in conversation with' evenings, afternoon teas, lockdown competitions and the weekly virtual pub - all of which have helped us feel we are still a cohesive group whether or not you actually take part.

There have also been virtual rehearsals and quite a few virtual performances. Recording my part for a virtual performance was quite a daunting and scary prospect but definitely worth it to see and hear the finished thing - which thanks to our technical wizard Chris, always sounds the best it can be!

There were so many new things to master - zoom, backing click tracks,

recording audio and video. Also hearing myself play in isolation made me realise how often I don't play all the right notes in all the right places! Practicing my 3rd clarinet part is not something I normally do a lot as I often find it meaningless and unhelpful but having the backing track has transformed that - so much so that I plan to try recording our rehearsals once they restart.

So although I can't wait to be playing together again, the virtual music making of the Pandemic restrictions has definitely had some positives for me. I feel I have become more aware of the quality of the sound I'm producing and listen more critically to myself. I think I have also become a slightly more confident player.

## JEN ROBERTSON – FLUTE



I'm one of those people who always said 'I'd practice more if I had more time', then it turned out that given more time, via lockdown, I actually played less at first. With nothing to rehearse for, the impetus had gone. Without the lockdown recordings I don't know that that would have changed. They returned a sense of structure and purpose to my playing, that I think I needed. It can be frustrating in isolation when there's no one to make you laugh at your mistakes. In a group, 'parping' in exactly the wrong place is embarrassing, but also quite funny. It forces you to laugh at yourself. On your own, it's just irritating.

There have however been unexpected advantages to playing in isolation. You're forced to pay more attention to your own playing, there's no hiding within the broader texture of your section. I had an amusingly revealing moment recording one piece when I realised, I'd been playing a particular phrase wrong for years. Without this approach I'd likely have kept playing it wrong for many more!

The zoom rehearsals we've been having, despite the fact we can't hear each other, do feel like they capture something of the sense of community we're all missing. I have long found music to be a good way to maintain my mental health, particularly making music with other people, and the lockdown recordings have meant that through this really difficult period I haven't lost that source of support.

## SUE BOLAND – FLUTE



During the pandemic, my music making has changed drastically, being scaled down considerably in relation to both participation and observation. When not being able to meet in a group, there is little motivation to keep up the momentum to practice as much, as there doesn't seem to be a goal or purpose, and it is easy to get lost in the minutiae of life. Maghull Wind Orchestra (MWO) has been a bit of a life line in this regard due to their implementation of virtual rehearsals and performances. At first, the concept was challenging and slightly confronting as you feel totally exposed

as a performer. I am not a trained musician and usually find comfort in being in a section, where there is generally someone to fill in the gaps when you can't play it well enough. Sitting alone with just a backing track was rather challenging. However, seeing familiar faces and names on the screen, along with Phil's dulcet tones, helped with the feeling of isolation. At first, recording the part was quite intimidating, due to my lack of confidence, but when I finally realised that it doesn't have to be perfect and that difficult sections can be skipped, the terror subsided somewhat. I thankfully had my daughter to rely on, but feel sorry for her having to put up with my flute playing in her ear, but we have also had many laughs along the way.

The technology behind the scenes has helped make the process easier and was easy to use and very accessible. The aspect that I miss most about the band is the sense of community, you feel that you are a part of something special. Everyone is welcomed and accepted, mistakes not being criticised but encouragement and support given to help you improve. Except for playing in a rest, that is forbidden!

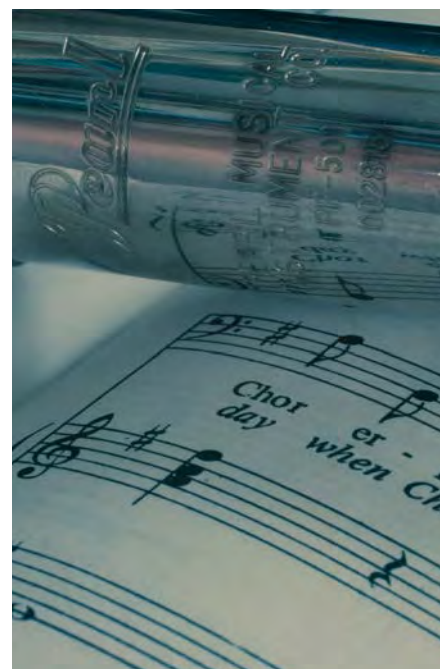
MWO have endeavoured to continue this community spirit by organising virtual social activities and events such as tea parties, virtual pub, and quiz night. Regular updates and communications are also on Facebook.

It will be great to get back to live music making again, as, although the virtual rehearsals have been fun and focus on what can be heard, I feel that being directed in person lends more feeling and personality to the music.

## NIAMH BOLAND – FLUTE



As with many other musicians, the pandemic has had an interesting effect on my music making (to say the least). It can often feel deflating not being able to socially meet up with other musicians and enjoy the fun of collaborative music making. However, being able to participate within online rehearsals and online performances with the MWO has given me a sense of normality back within my playing. Rehearsing and practicing for the online performances has made me much more aware of my playing and has allowed me to develop listening skills that will certainly be of use when face-to-face rehearsals return. I can't thank Phil, and the rest of MWO, enough for giving me the opportunity to enjoy music collaboratively again - albeit, very different from the typical Tuesday rehearsal!





## PAULINE GORDON – TENOR SAXOPHONE



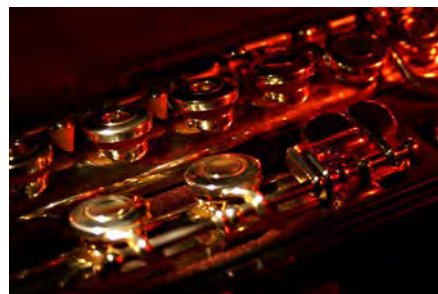
“Tough Times Don’t Last, Tough Teams Do” I am not a fan of motivational quotes but when I saw this one recently it summed up, for me, what the Maghull Wind Orchestra is striving for during these difficult times. As a retired music educator, I initially found being the ‘other side’ of the conductor’s podium a disconcerting experience. Coupled with the fact that I had only just started playing the saxophone it was an unnerving experience to attempt to play amongst a host of strangers - all of whom seemed to be proficient players who were well acquainted with each other. Fast forward eleven years and the MWO ‘family’ with well over a hundred players, has given me a large circle of friends, a vast range of performance opportunities, an enhanced musical education and provided a gateway to the many other ensembles in which I now play. So when lockdown first started it seemed that this diverse team of amateur musicians might lose their impetus.

Not so, as the Band’s committee soon started making copious plans for

online activities including quizzes, hobby sharing, photo competitions and the amazing virtual pub experience. Next came the virtual rehearsal which initially seemed such an unworkable idea - playing along to a backing track, seeing the other players but not hearing them, watching the conductor slightly time-lagged, sometimes coping with a poor internet connection, just you and the music. However the conductor, Phil Shotton, bizarrely makes this concept such a fun experience and it almost seems that we are at a live rehearsal.

Reaching out into our homes through Zoom the rehearsals start with scales and exercises, and move on to the pre-recorded pieces. Phil takes us through his performance ideas, emphasising dynamics, articulation and expression and pointing out important aspects of the score. The ability to type in live comments is encouraged just in case any players need clarification about performance details. There are no distractions and if you play a wrong note there is no one to hear! The Band has so successfully maintained the Team ethos that we will be well prepared when we eventually get to play together again. We may have even learned not to gossip whilst the conductor is talking!

## JUDITH FLENLEY – FLUTE



I sorely miss playing in our Orchestra, as it was my weekly evening of escape, my treat and only break from the demands at home.

Getting out of the house at a set time to play is much easier for me than making time and space at home, surrounded by a long to-do-list, interruptions etc.

Playing at home was restricted to Christmas when Benjamin and his wife were allowed to visit. I traded a Christmas dinner for the promise to play 3-part Carols. Three players was all we could muster and I had ordered the parts in joyful anticipation. There was some outdoor carolling in Formby for fun and Oxfam funds.

My highlight of the year must have been in June/July, when 6 of us, mostly MWO members, joined together to play on the band-stand in Southport, Victoria Park: for 4 hours, we played through all the music which Stuart Coldwell had brought for our group of 2 clarinets and 4 flutes. Passers-by and children stopped and enjoyed our outdoor rehearsal/ sight-reading fun. The Zumba class politely turned down their boom-box, so that we might peacefully co-exist!

Fiona also organises and hosts a recorder double quartet, well 12 of us when complete, with a very wide range of professional arrangements. We continued meeting in her garden, split into 2 groups of six, when the rules permitted.

In the past, we have had masterclasses, 2 day seminars for 24 participants with a very high standard, but this had to be cancelled in 2020 and went online.

Only the desperate or those at ease with technology or those with any spare capacity to learn the tricks have continued on that new road... There is just no replacement for the buzz, energy and enjoyment of live music-making with one another!

## MOVING FORWARD

As I type, the shift has turned now from working online, to how we can return back safely to face to face rehearsals. This is a long overdue and extremely welcome change. However, are there things we have now learnt from working in this way, that we may take back into the 'live' world with us? I certainly think so.

As musicians up and down the country, and indeed across the world, have been recording themselves at home for various projects. They have been finding out what a spotlight it shines on their personal performance; I can't help but smile and murmur to myself, 'I've been telling you to do that for years...!' I often suggest to bands and students; 'record yourself, it will help you to monitor and improve your own practice'. I wonder how many have taken that idea seriously, until now? I wonder how many will continue to use home recording as a way to inform their own practice?



I do hope that our members will use this technique to help improve their own playing. Especially for less experienced musicians, listening to exactly what they are doing whilst they are playing can be difficult, of course they think that they are playing it correctly, but then listening back whilst following their score can often highlight inaccuracies that they weren't aware of whilst in the act of performance. This can be frustrating, but it will help improve your playing overall and it's so easy to record now

– just a quick recording on your phone will do, it doesn't have to be studio quality for your own practice. Use it as a reference tool.

I shall also be encouraging our members to record parts of our rehearsal on their own devices. One of the large benefits that our MWO members have seen whilst working online is the opportunity to play their own part along with online recordings/ backing tracks. Making them feel like they are playing their part along with the rest of the band. Why not record the band playing in rehearsal and then practice your own part at home along with that recording?

I always include a 'full run through' of repertoire that we are working on during a rehearsal. This would give the perfect opportunity to capture something to work on at home. If you are feeling particularly astute you could record the whole rehearsal and listen back during the following week. You'd get to hear my jokes again if you did that...

As a conductor I shall be recording certain pieces, to enable me to listen back whilst studying the score before the next rehearsal. This is something that I have done before, but with the technology now being so easy to use, there's really no excuse not to do a lot more of it. I also find that if you tell the band, 'right, I'm going to record this now' it really does help focus the musicians mind. This is something everyone will have experienced with their recent home recordings – The 'Red Light Syndrome', plus it helps the band to practice their 'performance'.

Live streaming seems to have become quite a feature of the past year. During the slight easing of restrictions in August four members of MWO were

able to take part in an outdoor performance for 'healthy heart day' at Liverpool Heart & Chest Hospital, which was live streamed over social media.



Now, as we begin to return to live music making with such a large group, I imagine that we may well start with smaller numbers in rehearsal and 'live stream' the rehearsal to members who are not with us in the room, enabling them still to take part virtually in the rehearsal. We also have an outdoor concert planned (guidelines allowing) which will then be live-streamed into the wards of a local hospital.

For those who cannot attend live concerts, live streaming may well be a welcome opportunity to see the band perform. We may well also live stream small parts of future rehearsals on social media to promote what we are doing as a band as an engagement and recruitment tool.



A year ago, most of us had not taken part in activities on Zoom, Skype, Messenger or WhatsApp video, but now they are a significant part of our lives, and can be very useful. The MWO committee have been able to meet more regularly using Zoom and our AGMs have been online. I particularly enjoy that – as it doesn't eat into rehearsal time!

I imagine meetings like this will continue in the same way. In addition to the full band activities, some of our members have created various groups to keep in touch and discuss aspects of the band, our repertoire and rehearsal techniques. I do hope this continues.

I have recently suggested to four adult students that I teach (all of whom play in MWO) that they perform their exam pieces to each other via the video chat

group that they are all part of. This will help to give them performance experience and receive feedback from their peers, all without leaving their own music room. That can only be a good thing!

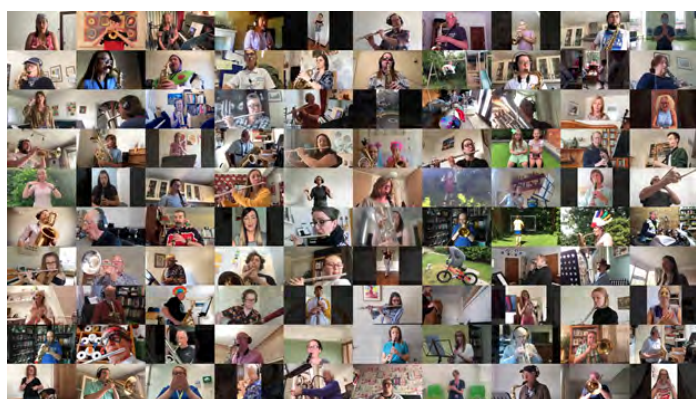
There are many very productive aspects of how we have had to work during lockdown that we can take forward into our own practice and rehearsals to enhance the musical things we will be taking part in live.

MWO has had an incredibly positive approach to making music in these extremely difficult times. This, I hope, has helped to keep our members playing, continue the sense of community and belonging that playing with the band brings and extremely importantly helped with our musician's and audience's mental health.

It certainly has helped me personally get through a very tough year as a professional musician. What a delight it has been to see my MWO mates and work with them on screen each week. It has not been the same as making music live together but as that returns, I feel very thankful that we have done all that we have done.

It hardly feels like we have been away!

That's not to say every fibre of my being cannot wait to be back on the podium in front of the Mighty MWO, doing what they do best. Community music making, together, live. After all, music is fundamentally a social activity, it should be played together for an audience listening and enjoying together. It will be good to be back!



**Phil Shotton**

[www.philshottonmusic.co.uk](http://www.philshottonmusic.co.uk)

**Maghull Wind Orchestra**

[www.maghullwindorchestra.co.uk](http://www.maghullwindorchestra.co.uk)

[www.youtube.com/MaghullWindOrchestra](https://www.youtube.com/MaghullWindOrchestra)



# Online Time...

## *A personal reflection on the musical move to all things online*

Like many musicians, I consider myself lucky to have an extremely varied career as a saxophone, clarinet and flute player. This includes anything from live performance and session recording, to conducting, lecturing, workshops and one to one instrumental teaching.

After coming off stage from a very enjoyable performance with the 1920's jazz band 'Café Society' on the 10th March, I remember the band members tentatively shaking hands and wondering if that was wise even if, at that moment, it was still allowed. Many of my University performance students were also understandably beginning to worry about the viability of their final year performances and ensemble members starting to share a growing concern for the situation that was beginning to emerge.

As Lockdown was introduced on the 23rd March, like all other musicians, I saw my entire diary literally over a matter of days. All live performances or rehearsals were all postponed. Lecturing commitments were swiftly moved online and I quickly moved my entire private teaching online too. Whilst essential, and surely only for a few weeks or maybe until the summer term, I could never have imagined how wrong I was... So, with little experience of online learning I embraced this new way of working alongside my students, determined not to let Lockdown stop us making music.

'At the beginning of lockdown, I was nervous about starting lessons online, as it was completely new to me. Phil has been absolutely amazing and understanding throughout all of our sessions online. He has found even more ways to make lessons fun and interesting and as well as this, I feel like I have gained so much valuable knowledge - which in turn, I have used to help improve my own private teaching for woodwind and piano. I couldn't have asked for a better teacher to have had online!' Niamh Boland, third year music student, flautist with Maghull Wind Orchestra

[www.maghullwindorchestra.co.uk](http://www.maghullwindorchestra.co.uk)



Any online lessons I had previously delivered had been more one-off occurrences and usually for students who were too far away to travel to my studio, some theory and some practical, but it certainly wasn't the norm. I wondered if my students would grasp this opportunity with the same enthusiasm as myself or even if I would be able to teach in the same way. I wondered how sustainable it would be and if I would actually be able to get my head around the technology!

The change began and I was pleasantly surprised to find that all but two of my students were extremely keen to 'go virtual' and take up online lessons. As word spread about my online teaching, I even took on new students.

With more of us seemingly now having a little more time on our hands, it seemed to have opened up new opportunities for lessons and consultations. This included students from across the UK and even on one occasion, rural France (I did feel a certain sense of achievement about now having gone international!) allowing me to work with musicians I would not normally have had the opportunity to work with without a great deal of travel.

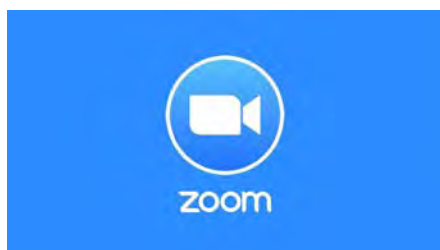
Teaching other professional musicians has increased during this time, with me looking at the skills involved with woodwind doubling and with advanced classical players exploring jazz improvisation lessons and even some online conducting seminars!

**"I FOUND ONLINE LESSONS WERE STILL VERY INTUITIVE AND HELPFUL DESPITE THE CIRCUMSTANCES, I FEEL I'D HIT A WALL WITH MY PLAYING AND MAY HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO PROGRESS FURTHER WITHOUT SAID LESSONS!"**

- JO COCKX  
MULTI-INSTRUMENTALIST,  
CARE HOME ENTERTAINER

One thing that became evident quite quickly was that there seems to be a minefield of technology to use for teaching online. Through my academic work with the third-year BA performance student's seminars I became familiar with Zoom, this was my first real introduction into the virtual world and proved to be an interesting experience, at least until everyone involved understood the etiquette of online group calls - students tend to be fairly relaxed anyway, but when they turn up to online lectures in a dressing gown, you know they are chilled!

So Zoom was an option but for me, at the time, not the most 'live music' or 'saxophone' friendly - although I believe there have now been significant upgrades to the audio since March 2020.



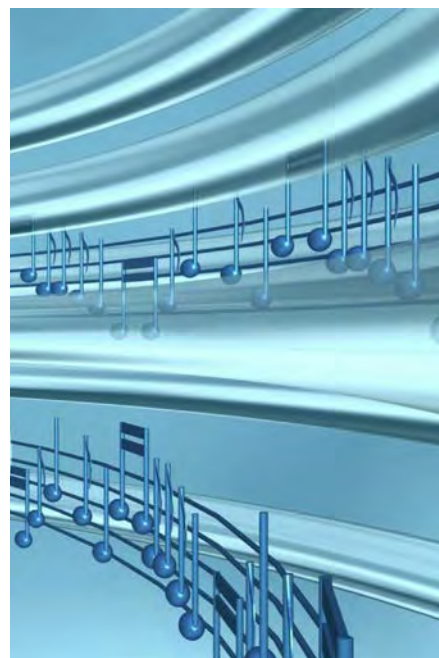
Friends and colleagues were rushing out to buy posh microphones and studio interfaces that turned their music rooms into something like the control deck of a Starfleet Spaceship. I however, had an iPad (other tablets are available) and I like it. It's easy to use, with a nice big screen for viewing the various calling platforms and the built-in speakers are pretty good. So, that was me sorted. Keep it simple. After all, it's only until the summer term, right? Actually, it works brilliantly, providing both my student and I have a strong internet connection. I have been teaching online using the trusty iPad (on a posh stand I use for reading charts from for gigs) with no problems at all. Using

the tablet allows me to give students the option of which platform to use for their lessons, which can range from Zoom to Skype, to Facetime to WhatsApp and even Facebook Messenger - pretty much anything you can do a one-to-one video call with. It works!

**"PHIL IS AN OUTSTANDING TEACHER AND PERFORMER AND HIS ONLINE LESSONS ARE INSPIRATIONAL. MY SOUND AND TECHNIQUE HAVE IMPROVED BY LEAPS AND BOUNDS WITH THE PRACTISE TECHNIQUES AND ADVICE PHIL PROVIDES. HIS NATURAL POSITIVE, ENTHUSIASTIC ATTITUDE HAS GIVEN ME THE CONFIDENCE TO WANT TO MASTER THE INSTRUMENT."**  
 - TYRRIAN DE VILLE  
 CLARINET & BASS CLARINET PLAYER

I have also been recording videos for my students and some of the bands I direct, covering various techniques and effective practice strategies to complement their lessons. All, again, recorded on the iPad and then uploaded to YouTube. I am not overly technologically minded, but between this, my phone and my Mac I can do everything I need to do to (hopefully) exceed the ever-changing expectations and demands of online lessons.

**"MY ONLINE LESSONS HAVE BEEN REALLY USEFUL TO ME. PHIL HAS GIVEN ME MANY INTERESTING IDEAS FOR SOLOING AND EMPHASISED THE VALUE OF USING TRIADS AND APPROACH NOTES IN IMPROVISING. THIS IS MY FIRST EXPERIENCE OF ONLINE MUSIC TUITION AND IT HAS WORKED WELL FOR ME."**  
 - IAN WARRINGTON, PIANIST  
[www.kaleidoscopebigband.com](http://www.kaleidoscopebigband.com)



So, I'm teaching away happy as Larry (well Phil) practicing as much as I can with the spare time that has been thrust upon me and then the call comes in for remote recording sessions. But wait... how do I do this without going to a studio and, more importantly, without somebody else (who knows what they are doing) dealing with all the techy stuff? I just usually concentrate on playing the right notes and that's enough for me!

I knew, I seemed to be being left behind with the whole 'remote recording' thing with friends and colleagues previously asking if I could home record for various projects for a while before lockdown actually started. I knew it was something I should be able to offer as part of the 'versatile musician' I endeavour to be and I had, in fact, probably two years earlier bought a studio quality mic and (not a Starship) audio interface for my computer. The time had finally arrived to open the box, set it up and do my recording sessions from home...

Box open and a modest amount of gear set up and 'hey presto!' even for me and my limited technological know-how I found that I could provide extremely good quality recordings. This then allowed the experts to do their mixing and engineering at the studio and, ultimately, has given me the opportunity to play on some truly great tracks! Whilst nothing beats working in a real studio with other musicians making music together at the same time in the same room, the experience of learning how to home record is definitely a positive to come out of an enforced (albeit, hopefully temporary completely) online career.

As lockdown restrictions eased, I took part in a COVID secure and socially distant recording session, in a venue, with real musicians, at the same time – Old School! It was altogether a very different and much welcomed experience than that of recording from home. I am glad that I can now offer both types of service though.



By this time, we are well into the summer term, the majority of this year's gigs are rescheduled to 2021 and just a handful of performance possibilities glimmering at the tail end of the year. The online teaching though is going strong. Students are engaged, practising more than ever (possibly due to the lack of ensemble opportunities for amateur musicians) and really progressing well.

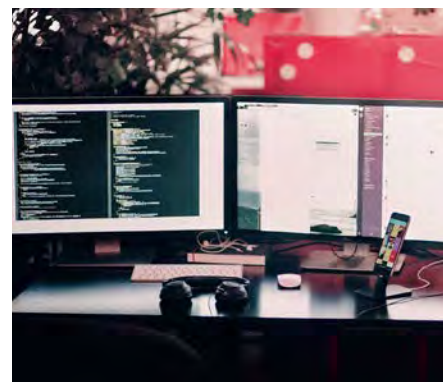
**"I'D BEEN HAVING SAX LESSONS WITH PHIL FOR SOME TIME BEFORE LOCKDOWN. HE IS AN INSPIRATIONAL TEACHER WHO LEAVES YOU FEELING GOOD AT THE END OF EVERY LESSON AND INSPIRES YOU TO PRACTICE BEFORE THE NEXT. SINCE LOCKDOWN, WHEN THE LESSONS HAVE BEEN ONLINE, NONE OF THIS HAS CHANGED. THE LESSONS HAVE KEPT ME PLAYING WHILST BANDS AND OTHER MUSIC ENSEMBLES HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO MEET."**  
 - JANET WATSON  
 ALTO PLAYER - WYCHCRAFT BIG BAND  
[www.wychcraft.org](http://www.wychcraft.org)

Teaching online is, without doubt, very different to face to face. In my experience I have found lessons are more intense and I am using this opportunity to really focus lessons on very specific things. All lessons are, of course, still bespoke to the individual student and focus on goals that we have agreed together. It has almost been a sort of 'Lockdown intensive course' to get ready for their diploma, pass that grade they've been putting off, learn the jazz harmony required for improvisation, improve their sight reading or even just to improve their doubling on other woodwind instruments...all very specific goals for each individual to achieve.



Some students have opted for a 45minute lesson rather than the usual hour to make it slightly less intensive and easier for concentration with this platform via screens. Some have increased their number of lessons. Every individual can choose what works for them and on what timescale.

**"DUE TO PHIL'S PATIENCE AND WELL-STRUCTURED LESSONS ON-LINE, I AM NOW ABLE TO ATTEMPT IMPROVISATION WHICH IS SOMETHING I WOULD NEVER HAVE THOUGHT POSSIBLE. THANK YOU, PHIL"**  
 - JANE SMITH  
 ALTO SAX KALEIDOSCOPE BIG BAND



As with anything, there are disadvantages to online lessons. The main one being that we cannot play duets together in real time. Essential to musical progression, as well as being a highlight of lessons, this allows students to match phrasing, time, tone, timbre and intonation (and they also seem to enjoy it as they think I'm not listening!). I can't stress enough how important it is to not only demonstrate to students but to play together, as it is fun and educational for both student and teacher! As online seems to be here to stay for a little longer than just up to the summer term, I have come up with a cunning (and not overly technical, nice and user-friendly for both me and my students) plan.



I have been recording duets via video and sending my students the video to play along with. They're easy to do and it's the next best things to duets right now! Most musicians have been involved with some sort of virtual performance by recording along to guide tracks etc so students can easily use the technology they've got to play a long with a video of me and I can use this as a guide their next online lesson. I've even found that usually the sound quality is good enough for students to use backing tracks through their own speakers and providing the live balance is ok, it comes through to me (without the Starship interface) fairly well.

Having said this, I am currently in the position where I tend to teach more advanced students and less beginners. From what experience I have of teaching, I think that this would be a different kettle of fish (or clarinettists) altogether and teaching beginners online is certainly worthy of its own article - who knows, someone else might be writing one as I speak (or type). I certainly think this way of teaching is more suited to advanced students.

The benefits to online teaching? It has to be a mixture of things including: more flexible lesson slots, no travel time/cost/pollution for either student or teacher, lessons in the comfort

of your own home (I've seen many varied and assorted practice spaces, some more suitable than others!) and online resources to compliment lessons. Some of my students have even reported to me that they forget that I'm on the other end of a screen and they find the whole experience extremely personable – possibly more personable and human than from behind a Perspex screen and donning a mask from two metres away...

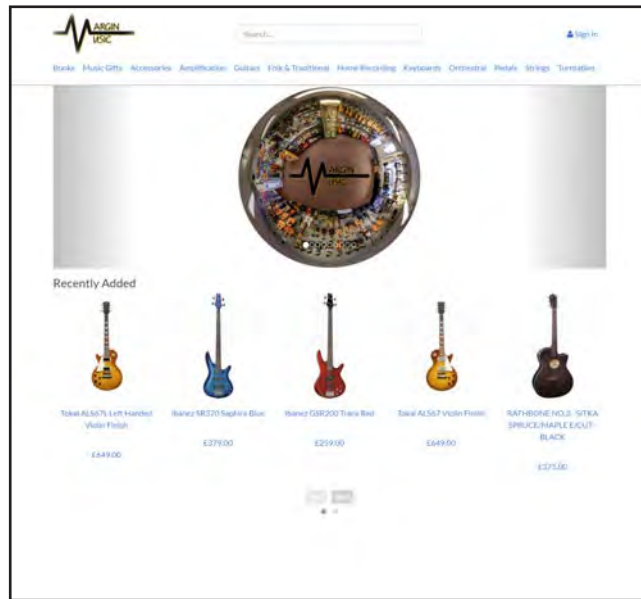
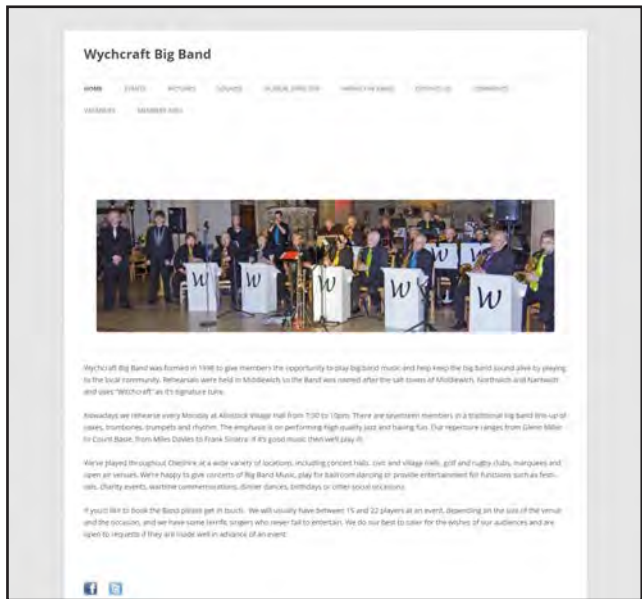
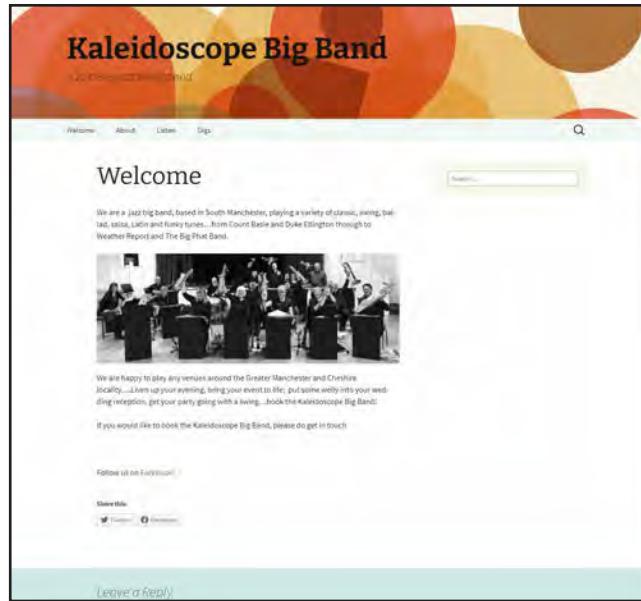
I am certainly enjoying teaching online and seeing great progress with my students. They seem to be enjoying the experience too and, crucially, the lessons are giving students a good reason and encouragement to practice during a time when performance opportunities for amateurs are nil and rehearsals of amateur groups are significantly impacted or just not possible.

**"ONLINE LESSONS HAVE BEEN THE ONLY THING THAT HAS KEPT ME PLAYING FOR THE PAST 6 MONTHS. PHIL IS AN INSPIRATIONAL TEACHER AND MANAGES TO MAKE ME WANT TO GO AWAY AND PRACTISE SOME MORE AFTER EVERY LESSON!"**  
 - MARY KIRKPATRICK  
 ALTO/TENOR SAX WYCHCRAFT  
 AND KALEIDOSCOPE BIG BANDS,  
 MACCLESFIELD SAX CHOIR AT  
 MARGIN MUSIC  
[www.marginmusic.com](http://www.marginmusic.com)

I am, with every fibre of my being, looking forward to returning to face-to-face teaching, directing ensembles and returning to performances in both my professional engagements and directing the amateur groups I am involved with. All in good time and when it is safe to do so, but I miss it terribly as we all do. However, I am appreciative of the fact that moving online has allowed some music making to continue and in fact, in some cases, thrive.

When normality returns, which I do hope it will – sooner rather than later, I know that just as office workers will most likely find themselves working more from home, I will find myself still taking part in some teaching online. Many of my students have suggested that in the future the occasional lesson face to face would suit to play duets and work together in this way however, the rest with an online stance, may actually help them out. It will allow them to fit their lesson into a busy schedule with greater ease, no travel time and more flexibility. If this helps us all, I think that's a good idea. A blended approach. A change to instrumental teaching with more flexibility, more opportunity and surely having online sessions on offer can only be a good thing to compliment face to face sessions.

Taking everything online has been the only way for my career to currently survive in any real context. At times, as for all musicians, it has not been easy but as always it has been rewarding. I am continually inspired by the students and musicians I work with to constantly improve my own practice, roll with the punches and make the best of any situation. Who knows, we may all come out of this having reflected on many aspects of life, education, and indeed music. I think we'll all appreciate playing together much more when we can once again – the old school way, together at the same time. My goodness what a rush those first rehearsals back again will be! Keep your eyes on the prize of live performance returning for both professionals and amateurs, I know that is certainly what is keeping me going!







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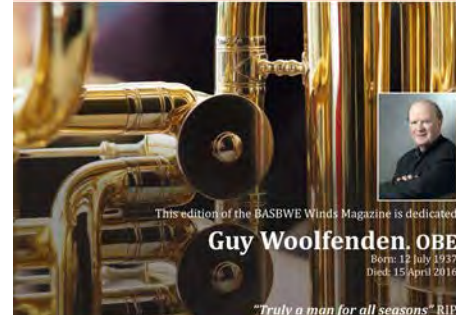
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