

The Nash



Newsletter of the Friends of the National Youth Orchestra of Wales

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www.friendsofthenash.co.uk

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Hywel Jones - our new chair



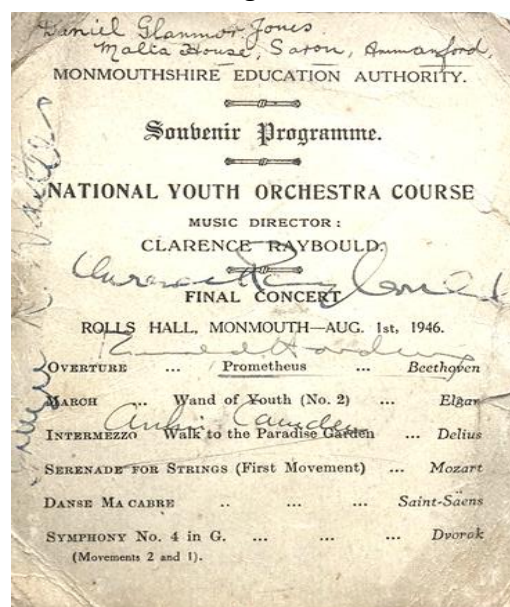
It is a great privilege and honour for me to accept the invitation to be the chairman of the Friends of the Nash. In doing so I thank the previous chairs for their work, and I hope that I can do justice to the post.

Who am I? Originally, I'm from Fishguard, Pembrokeshire. I went to university in Cardiff and after graduating in Welsh some forty years ago I stayed in the capital and have been here ever since. I was a member of the NYOW between 1976 and 1979, a faithful member of the second violin section. Being a member of the Nash was the pinnacle of my musical career! I remember the pride of representing my country after completing my apprenticeship in the school and youth orchestras of Pembrokeshire and the three counties of Dyfed.

I am one of three generations who have been members of the orchestra. My uncle, Glanmor Jones from Ammanford, was a trombonist in the very first orchestra in 1946. In the picture you can see him sitting between Harold Nash and Derek James in that orchestra, two trombonists who went on to enjoy brilliant careers in the professional music world. Glanmor died a young man, alas, and I didn't get to know him.



Glanmor Jones in the trombone section



Programme from the first course in 1946

My children, Steffan and Marged were members in the 2000s, Steff leading the second violin section and Marged leading the cello section. Like their father, they came through the music education services system, but in their case in Cardiff. One of the most memorable nights of my life was that concert in Berlin in 2004. Owain Arwel Hughes leading a thrilling performance of Elgar 1 followed by a lively party at the British Embassy!

The thanks for all this go to my father, Gethin Jones. He was a fine violinist, but he was a year or two too old to have been a member of that first orchestra in 1946 with his brother Glanmor. He studied at the Royal Academy of Music in London but pursued a career in education. He was a classroom and instrumental teacher in England and in Carmarthenshire before moving to Pembrokeshire as Music Adviser in the 60s and 70s of the last century. To some extent I had no choice but to learn to play the violin but thank goodness I did!



Hywel on a Nash course in Swansea in 1978

I myself have just retired after following a career in education and I don't need to be convinced of the importance of music education in the curriculum and in the extracurricular activities of our children and young people. I benefited greatly from the experiences I was lucky enough to receive. So too did my children and I am determined that my grandchildren will have the same opportunities. The NYOW is a national treasure, and it is our duty as a Welsh nation to support it and encourage its development and evolution over the coming years.

Hywel Jones

Annual Report from National Youth Arts Wales

In 2022, following two years of mainly digital activity due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it has been truly a pleasure to see National Youth Orchestra of Wales flourish once again as we return to live activity. The support of the Friends of NYOW has been invaluable to helping us return back to live activity. The Friends have funded nine bursaries for NYOW members in 2022, two prizes for string players during the residency, and for the first time funded the audition fees of 38 musicians who otherwise wouldn't have been able to afford to audition. We're incredibly grateful for this continued support from the Friends.

Our residencies in November and December 2021

We started live auditions for the first time since the pandemic, with audition centres in Llandudno, Carmarthen and Cardiff. We also provided a facility to submit an online audition, something we started during the pandemic, for those who weren't able to make it to one of our audition centres. We started our 2022 activity with a series of sectional rehearsals in Cardiff, followed by a short Easter residency in Carmarthen. We were very conscious that members might be nervous coming back to the high-level of performance after a gap of three years, and so we put in additional rehearsal time, including this Easter residency, to help build the confidence of members and to help achieve a high-standard of performance at the end of the residency. Then, we returned to Carmarthen for our summer residency in July – led by the Canadian conductor Kwamé Ryan, conducting NYOW for the first time, and with the wonderful violinist Jennifer Pike as guest soloist. The programme was an exciting and challenging one for the NYOW members to rehearse – with Dani Howard's *Argentum*, Korngold's beautiful Violin Concerto, and then concluding with RimskyKorsakov's *Scheherazade*. Reviews and audience feedback from all three concerts – at St Asaph Cathedral, at the Three Choirs Festival in Hereford, and at St David's Hall, Cardiff – were overwhelmingly positive. We were delighted to be invited to perform at the Three Choirs Festival this year, a sign of the high-esteem that NYOW is held in. We were also delighted to be able to welcome First Minister of Wales, Rt Hon Mark Drakeford MS, to give an opening address at our St David's Hall concert, outlining how important National Youth Arts Wales's work – and particularly NYOW - is to the Welsh Government's National Plan for Music Education.



Jennifer Pike in concert with NYOW

Feedback from Members

“Honoured to have the opportunity to play alongside other talented young musicians and work with amazing professionals like Kwamé and Jennifer. It feels amazing to be part of it, as I am representing Wales, and I feel so lucky to have the opportunity to have such a great experience”

“Working with Kwamé Ryan – he is an amazing individual and has reignited my passion for music. I’ve enjoyed every second...I would definitely recommend the Nash to other people. All the work is worth it.”

“Being able to be a member of a community like NYAW has allowed me to feel included. The professionalism is amazing and the friendships are one of a kind.”



NYOW in rehearsal



NYOW in rehearsal

Member bursaries and prizes

This year, NYOW gave bursaries worth more than £20,750 to members. 41% of members received some form of bursary, with 27% receiving a full bursary. Thanks to our public funding from Arts Council of Wales, we’re also able to subsidise each and every place, to help keep residency fees as low as possible. Once again, the support of the Friends of NYOW has been invaluable to making sure that every single member who receives a place is able to take part, regardless of their financial circumstances.

The Friends this year made a donation of £4000, helping eight members to take part in the residencies. In addition, the Friends gave a further £200 in the form of the John Roberts Bursary, helping a string player from Gwent to join the residency. The Friends of NYOW also gave £100 in the form of the Irwyn Walters (Friends of NYOW) Award, given to the two most promising string players on the course. This year’s recipients were Sharon Liang and Kit Cookson. Thank you to everyone who has made a donation towards these bursaries and prizes this year.

Our plans for 2023

We’re about to go on the road again with NYOW auditions, recruiting for new members for our 2023 residencies. Our concert dates for 2023 are:

- 2nd August – St Asaph Cathedral
- 3rd August – Chamber Concert, MusicFest, Aberystwyth
- 4th August – St David’s Cathedral, Fishguard & West Wales International Festival
- 5th August – St David’s Hall, Cardiff

These concert dates are provisional, and tickets will not be on sale until Spring 2023. We hope to see you at one of these concerts!

David Hopkins
Fundraising and Development Manager, NYAW

A change in benefits for Friends of NYOW

The Friends of NYOW have stated up to now that the benefits of being a member include receiving regular Newsletters and being entitled to discounted tickets for certain Nash concerts. NYAW has recently decided that we will no longer be permitted to offer discounted tickets to Friends and, therefore, we regret to announce that we are removing this benefit for our members with immediate effect. We are sorry for this change but we are confident that members appreciate that the primary reason for subscribing to the Friends is to support the National Youth Orchestra of Wales and that the financial donations generated from the Friends' subscriptions are very much welcomed both by NYAW and orchestral members.

Wyn Davies

“Talent alone isn't enough lad; you have to work at it.”



This invitation to write about myself has provided a stimulus to think about what I do, what I have done (especially since I wasn't doing it during lockdown) and how I learned how to do it. I am a freelance conductor, so unlike people with proper jobs I rely on individual invitations. The first thing you learn as a freelance is that no musician however talented is owed a living. But that is a thought that wouldn't have occurred to me when I was in my twenties and on the music staff of the comfortably subsidised WNO. Now the funding climate has changed and after the recent announcement of a huge reduction in WNO's Arts Council of England grant no one at WNO will be feeling comfortable.

The reality of freelancing can be brutal but I think my preparation for it started in my schooldays at Gowerton. When I showed a spark of ability at sports, the teacher Emlyn Evans barked at me that “talent alone isn't enough lad, you have to work at it.” Now, over 50 years later, I appreciate how right he was.

Thanks to my hyperactive music teacher D. Hugh Jones (known behind his back as Crumb) I grew up thinking it was natural for a school to be full of music. To us it didn't seem odd. At school assembly in Gowerton we regularly played movements from symphonies and short classical pieces. It was just what happened in assembly. There were several power players around me. At the time I didn't realise their status as players but a few years later John Anderson, Dai Thomas and Clive Dobbins became members of London orchestras and I saw we were continuing the Gowerton tradition of Karl Jenkins and others.

Thanks partly to my English teacher Gilbert Bennet I loved language, something which later fed into my intense interest in opera. It was also during my school years that I understood the value of music in the community. I played the piano for the 120 strong Pontarddulais Male Choir. And three times a week they'd be rehearsed by Noël Davies. He was a primary school head teacher with a professional attitude to music whose preoccupation was the quality of tone the choir produced. His models were the performances he travelled to hear every summer at the Edinburgh Festival and I never knew him make do with something ordinary.

The person who gave me a glimpse of a music world beyond the local was John Hugh Thomas. His expertise with and ambitions for the Swansea Bach Choir and his knowledge of the baroque repertoire in particular made him unusual. Happily he's still active and writing about music.

Throughout those school years I was a violinist. And I managed to fool some of the people some of the time. At “West Glam” on a Friday night in Neath and on “Glam” courses at Ogmere I learned the repertoire from very talented people . And that experience led to being a member of NYOW in Arthur Davison’s early period as conductor. Thanks to the Glam, the Nash and the Bont choir I knew early on how high quality and discipline went together. Arthur Davison used to say “nothing happens unless you make it happen.” But of course you have to have the discipline to put in the hours otherwise you don’t have the technique to make it happen.

I enjoyed accompanying when I was at university and used to go for lessons with Paul Hamburger, a genial chainsmoker who knew every song in the repertoire and was always on the wireless (the Third Programme in those days). During one of our two hour long sessions he said in his guttural Viennese accent, “ well that’s all very good but if you intend doing it seriously you’re going to have to practise.” That sounded like the equivalent of my sports teacher’s “talent alone isn’t enough lad” and unsurprisingly I never became a professional accompanist. But it was Paul who instilled in me that you must allow the singer (or soloist) to breathe.

I’ve spent most of my profession conducting opera, which some regard as a rarefied branch of entertainment, but which I find quite natural. Natural in the way Raymond Williams used the word in his book “Culture is Ordinary” when he said that to want learning and culture was a simple, natural desire and was the opposite of elitist. That really is what I learned at Gowerton, at the male voice choir, and what being “on the Nash” underlined - that music is for everyone and must be made available to all. Today playing and singing have become privileges given only to children whose parents can afford it. But that is the reason we are Friends of the Nash. Our charity exists to give talented young people the chance to play in a really good orchestra. So that they can decide for themselves whether their talent is enough to take it further.

Wyn Davies

Outgoing Chair’s Report



After so many Covid restrictions, 2022 was somewhat brighter as it saw the long-awaited return of live performances by the National Youth Orchestra of Wales with high quality concerts in St David’s Hall Cardiff, St. Asaph Cathedral and Hereford Cathedral. I’m delighted to say that Friends gave funds for 9 bursaries this year and also 2 prizes, plus for the first time funded the audition fees of 38 musicians who otherwise wouldn’t have been able to afford to audition.

2022 was also an opportunity for the committee to venture from its Zoom environment to enjoy together with friends and supporters an excellent evening of music and fundraising. The event, held in March just outside Cardiff at the Acapela Studios, Pentyrch, was a varied and entertaining programme which raised £300 for the Nash. The evening began with the Hiraeth Trio who are all recent ex-members of the Nash with Epsie Thompson - flute, Hannah Roberts - viola and Nia Evans - harp. This was followed by the beautiful soprano voice of Ellen Williams with the final set delivered by committee member Wyn Davies, who

brought the house down with his clever and amusing cabaret. Many thanks to all our wonderful artists for making the evening such a success.

The committee continues to work effectively online, and the new website is now almost ready for launch. Social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram will drive visitors to the site which will become a repository for old Nash programmes, articles and photos from every decade. Much of the initial material is being provided from Kathryn Webber's extensive collection and it is hoped that past members will be encouraged to contribute further. Therefore, the site will provide an important platform in which to share information about the Nash and highlight the Friends' objectives and activities while attracting new members and donations.

In fact, last year's chair report mentioned Kathryn Webber and referred to her booklet called "The First 75 Years: A Pictorial History of the National Youth Orchestra of Wales 1946 - 2021". This has proved very popular with ex-Nash members, and Kathryn has kindly donated the small profit from each book to the Friends. To date, this has amounted to more than £200 and the committee would like to thank Kathryn for her commitment and generosity to the cause.

As in 2021 the committee has spent much time discussing how to resolve the disparity between the terms within our constitution in which we provide funding for the orchestra and the orchestra alone, against the National Youth Arts Wales own funding policy which allocates funding equally between all its ensembles. There is no immediate or easy solution to this, but the committee has agreed to continue supporting the Nash and will continue to monitor the situation closely.

My temporary tenure as chair of the committee (since February 2021) has been thoroughly enjoyable, especially when facilitating such dedicated colleagues who have laboured so hard to support our young musicians. As a committee we are keen to encourage new members to join us – particularly young people. It was a recent pleasure to welcome new committee member Hannah Roberts, and we hope to encourage many more to follow her.

In conclusion, I would like to record my thanks to all members of the committee for their hard work and expertise, and to also thank the Friends for providing continuing financial support to the Nash.

Phil Aird