

# The Nash

Newsletter of "The Friends of the National Youth Orchestra of Wales" November 2005  
Registered Charity No. 1,053,788

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## Recollections and thoughts from Karl Jenkins, President of the Friends of NYOW

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Photo: Mitch Jenkins

**M**y time spent as an oboist in the NYOW had an impact on me that to a large extent dictated the direction my career would take.

I learnt the oboe at Gowerton Grammar [as it was then] School and trod the usual route; Glam junior course, Glam,

NYOW 'B' and then the NYOW itself. I never attended West Glam since it meant three buses to Neath from Penclawdd in those 'careless' days and I could never get home!

I remember the first rehearsal, which was a run through for main and 'B' orchestras in Llandrindod Wells, for two reasons. One was the massive sound that enveloped me and the second was the rapid promotion of Roy Gillard. Roy, who sadly passed away recently, went on to become one of the great violinists, leading the LPO & LSO as a young player. That night, and he couldn't have been much older than twelve, he was sitting somewhere near the back. Clarence Raybould was the conductor then and he decided to rehearse a tricky violin passage by going down the desks in turn, everyone playing solo with increasing uncertainty, as one would expect; until he got to Roy who played with such panache and brilliance. A cheer ensued and he was immediately promoted "up front".

In all I must have spent six years in the NYOW, rising from what must have been 6<sup>th</sup> oboe at one point, to principal. Although I was reasonable enough to gain entrance to the Royal Academy I had not

the temperament, or ability really, to be a good orchestral player.

I gained so much experience during those years and learned so much repertoire that broadened my knowledge of music, although I ended up writing it not playing it and it was a huge honour to have been asked by the Eisteddfod to write a piece for the NYOW a few years ago.

Memories are many and I recall jazz jam sessions in which pop musician John Cale [a viola player then] took part although he didn't improvise too much but used to play out of a Dave Brubeck song book!

I also recall another viola player leaving the stage in mid concert to go to the loo!

Making music together is of huge benefit and it is a pursuit that should be cherished and nurtured, regardless of whether one intends to take it up as a profession. Much like sport, it breeds loyalty and a sense of togetherness.

I have cherished the years I spent in the NYOW and valued friendships made.

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## A message from Owain Arwel Hughes, conductor of NYOW

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**I**t is a real pleasure to be a part of the success story of the NYOW. This year's course started where the last one finished - the euphoria of Berlin. The technical and musical challenge of the Shostakovich was met unflinchingly, and with the excellent morale of the orchestra, the performances grew in stature leading to the stunning finale in Cardiff.

I thoroughly enjoyed the recording sessions. The orchestra was so professional in dealing with the disciplines of recording, buoyed by a sense of humour which I believe is essential in those circumstances. The recording bosses were so impressed that we shall be recording a CD of Elgar's Symphony No. 2 at the end of the Easter course. This will also be the main work in

the NYOW 60th Anniversary Concert in the Welsh Proms in July.

The visit to Ischia also turned out to be a great success and again a different experience, albeit for a small number of players. As a result, there are plans afoot for the whole orchestra to perform in Ischia sometime in the future.

The relationship between William Walton and myself meant a great deal to both of us and he would have been proud, happy, tickled pink even to have had his music performed at his home in such a way.

I look forward to an amazing 60th anniversary year.



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## NYOW Summer Activities 2005

A report from Beryl Jones, Administrator NYOW

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The annual NYOW summer course took place once again at the University of Wales, Lampeter at the end of July 2005, followed by a concert tour around Wales, with concerts being held in Aberystwyth, Llandudno, Swansea and Cardiff. Then instead of going home from St David's Hall, the orchestra returned to Swansea for another three days to rehearse and record a variety of Christmas music for a CD that is due out at the end of November. This should reach the shops just in time for the forthcoming festive season, so .... if you are looking for a gift for friends or relatives, your Christmas shopping problem could be solved!

Once again the Friends of the National Youth Orchestra of Wales provided generous financial support for the orchestra's summer activities, amounting to £1750 in total. This was used to sponsor the performance of Shostakovich's *Symphony No. 5*; to purchase additional NYOW conference bags for this year's new members, to

fund the Friends' prize and to provide bursaries for 9 students.

The provision of bursaries for students in need of financial assistance has always been a very important element in the FNYOW's support of the orchestra. Such support is always greatly appreciated and the following are typical of comments received from the recipients and their parents:

*" .... the Friends' bursary has made all the difference – please thank them ...."*

*" Without the financial support from the Friends of NYOW, I could not have attended the course. I really enjoyed it and learnt a lot and made lots of new friends. Thank you so much."*

*" I have had several wonderful years in the Nash thanks to the Friends."*

*"Please thank the Friends for giving me the opportunity to be a part of the Nash .....it's fantastic."*

The FNYOW prize for the most promising string player went to Steffan Jones of Cardiff, who led the Second

Violin section this year. A former pupil at Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Glantaf, Steffan has now gone up to Oxford to read music at Worcester College.

Later in the summer, in response to an invitation from Lady Walton, widow of Sir William Walton, 21 members of the orchestra visited *La Mortella*, the Walton estate on Ischia, an island in the Bay of Naples. A new open-air amphitheatre had recently been completed on the estate, and the string players of the NYOW ensemble were given the honour of presenting the first concert. (*More on this below*)

Once again, on behalf of the National Youth Orchestra of Wales, I am delighted to be able to use of this issue of *The Nash* to express our thanks to the FNYOW for their continued support of the current generation of Wales' most talented young musicians.

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## The Nash in Ischia

A report from Kathryn Phipps (Pastoral Co-ordinator NYOW)

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On September 1<sup>st</sup> 2005 twenty-two members of the NYOW accompanied by Beryl Jones (Administrator), Tony Moore (Course Manager) and Kathryn Phipps (Pastoral Co-ordinator) set off for Ischia, an island in the Bay of Naples where Lady Walton, widow of Sir William Walton lives on her estate, La Mortella.

The Waltons bought land on Ischia in 1956 and over the following years they collected plants and trees from all over the world. Around their house they developed the most wonderful botanical garden, acclaimed recently as the finest on the Mediterranean. Since Sir William's death Lady Walton has made it her life's work to preserve his memory and promote his music and to encourage talented young musicians through the William Walton Foundation.

Owain Arwel Hughes, present conductor of the NYOW, has been a friend of Susana Walton's for many years and she invited him to bring members of the NYOW to spend a weekend at La Mortella and to give three concerts.

On the Saturday night Lady Walton had invited over 100 guests to the first performance to be given in the open-air amphitheatre that she has built on the estate. Prince Charles will carry out the official opening next spring, but it was string players from the NYOW who were given the honour of playing the first

concert there. They played superbly, a difficult programme that included Walton's Sonata for String Orchestra and Elgar's Serenade for Strings. The picture will stay long in my mind of Owain and the orchestra against the backdrop of a spectacular view down to the harbour with the sun setting over the sea.

On the Sunday afternoon the concert

the social side of the trip to the full. The swimming pool, high up on the estate and reached by a funicular was very popular as were the evenings that we spent down by the sea in an open-air restaurant where we were joined by Owain and his wife, Jean. Lady Walton gave the youngsters a reception in the Tea House following the Sunday performances and Jonathan Mann,



NYOW in the Recital Room or the Walton Museum, La Mortella, Ischia

was repeated in the Recital Room, which also doubles as the Walton museum, to a most appreciative audience. At 6pm wind and percussion with two cellos gave a lively performance of *Façade* with Helen Field and Jeremy Huw Williams as the narrators.

You would have been as proud of NYOW as we were. The members rose to a difficult challenge and gave performances of a very high standard, but they were also excellent ambassadors for Wales and in best Nash tradition enjoyed

the leader presented her with a lovespoon and a copy of the Nash history book and thanked her for her generosity and hospitality.

On the final day we enjoyed a guided tour of Ischia and Naples and then we had an unexpected bonus, our late night flight was delayed by 18 hours. British Airways put us up in a Holiday Inn and Nash members were delighted to spend an extra day in the swimming pool in yet more glorious sunshine. On the flight home some of them sent a note up to the captain on the flight deck thanking him for the flight

delay – only in the Nash!!

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## A personal view of the NYOW from last summer's principal cellist, Ciàran Jenkins of Merthyr Tydfil

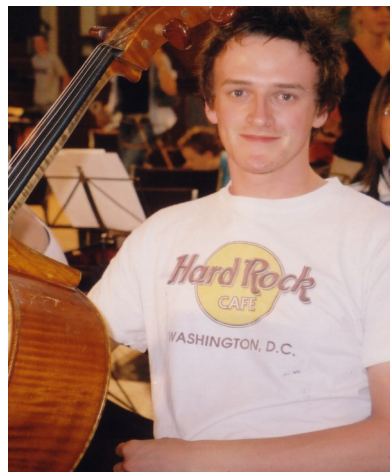
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**T**he course and concert tour of summer 2005 was my last with the National Youth Orchestra of Wales. I have played my final cadence as a Nash member.

For a young 'cellist in 1999 the Nash was a musical epiphany. I had never before experienced the refinement and passion that characterises the world's first and most proud youth orchestra. The symphony that year, Shostakovich's 'Leningrad', evolved with sometimes magnificent and sometimes grotesque beauty - as the finale swelled to its triumphant conclusion I swore that I was fated to spend my life as a cog in one such awesome symphonic machine.

A certain symmetry marks my Nash career, as it was with Shostakovich that I took my bow, this time the Fifth Symphony. I was honoured this year to lead the 'cello section, and despite an almost complete change in the orchestra's personnel including the conductor - many of the sensations were just the same as seven years previously. This is because Nash members care deeply about the music they make, their part in the history of a great institution, and the people who unite to make it an orchestra with what can only be described as a unique quality. In symphonic performance it is not always technical wizardry or precise execution that impresses upon an audience, but character, commitment and the ability to convey that each and every performance is imbued with a deep-rooted significance. This is music that matters, and these are qualities the Nash boasts in abundance.

In seven years I have seen the orchestra change significantly. Christopher Adey directed the band until 2002 and his absolute dedication to the intricacies of the symphonic palette earned him the unflinching respect of every orchestra member. However, the Nash played occasionally to small audiences during our concert tours. The orchestra's fighting spirit was no more in evidence than in a concert given in Plymouth in 2002: a gloriously intense and emotional delivery of Rachmaninov's Second Symphony was given to an audience that in fact numbered a fraction of the violin section. The contrast with 2004, when under the baton of Owain Arwel Hughes the orchestra played to a brimful Berlin Konzerthaus, could not be greater. However,



such projects pull the purse-strings and 2005 saw the Nash return to a provincial brief plagued by the inherent problems of giving five consecutive concerts within a relatively small geographical area. Venues were not always ideal, audiences often scarce.

It is difficult not to be convinced by the vision and dedication of the orchestra's conductor of three years, Owain Arwel Hughes. He has tapped into the Nash spirit and has the orchestra playing as if every note were a vindication of the existence of sound itself. And this is a sound that deserves to be heard, by all in Wales and many more beyond.

In recent years the orchestra's supportive network has been coloured to a much greater extent by the presence of ex-members in administrative, pastoral and tutorial capacities. If there is such a thing as an orchestra's essence it is certainly being propagated by these fantastically committed individuals. However, not everyone can contribute so directly to the evolution of the orchestra, and so it rests upon all who have known the complex distillation of fraternal and musical emotions aroused by being a member of the Nash to do what they can to ensure that these opportunities continue to be available for our nation's musical youth. Having been a beneficiary of the extraordinary generosity of ex-members for so long I now find myself in the peculiar position of saying, the orchestra needs our support. The profile and recognition the National Youth Orchestra deserves is within touching distance, but if this is to be achieved an injection of funds and

energy from those who hold it most dear will surely be required.

As a fourteen year-old 'cellist riding a wave of musical ecstasy, the combination of youthful idealism and a euphoric symphonic climax perhaps disguised my true ambitions. I have recently graduated from Cambridge, and I set off on an exchange scholarship with a Japanese university very shortly. New challenges lie ahead, and for me the Nash will probably represent my foremost memories of the symphonic experience. There are many more stories to tell, many more recollections about the people I met and the things we did that I will battle to retain, despite the mind's propensity for blurriness and nostalgia. I shall not forget the girls that took me under their wing in my early years, as I simultaneously gleaned the skills of orchestral discipline and sneaking out of the kids block; nor the annually changing faces of my fancy dress partners - an emblem of the transience of youth clad in ever more ridiculous attire. I shall endeavour also to maintain the precious friendships that I have enjoyed, with students and staff alike.

I am convinced that even this brief attempt at expressing what is felt by membership of the National Youth Orchestra of Wales resounds in many more hearts and minds, and I hope that I can support it as others have done. This summer, after seven consecutive years of life's most vivid social and musical experiences, I will feel a great sense of loss as the orchestra takes another step towards being allowed to blossom as it has itched to do for so long, minus one member of the 'cello section.

### The Friends of NYOW Committee

At this year's AGM of the "Friends" the following were elected to the Committee:

*John Watkins, Chairman; John Roberts, Vice Chairman;*  
*Noreen Harris, Secretary; Alan Grayson-Jones, Treasurer;*  
*Beryl James; Rose Marie de Lloyd; Helena Braithwaite; Vernon Bailey-Wood; Brian Buckley.*

We would like to express our warmest thanks to Vernon Bailey-Wood for all the work he has done producing the Newsletter for the last few years. He is unable to continue with this at present, so his rôle has been taken on by the Chairman and the Vice Chairman.

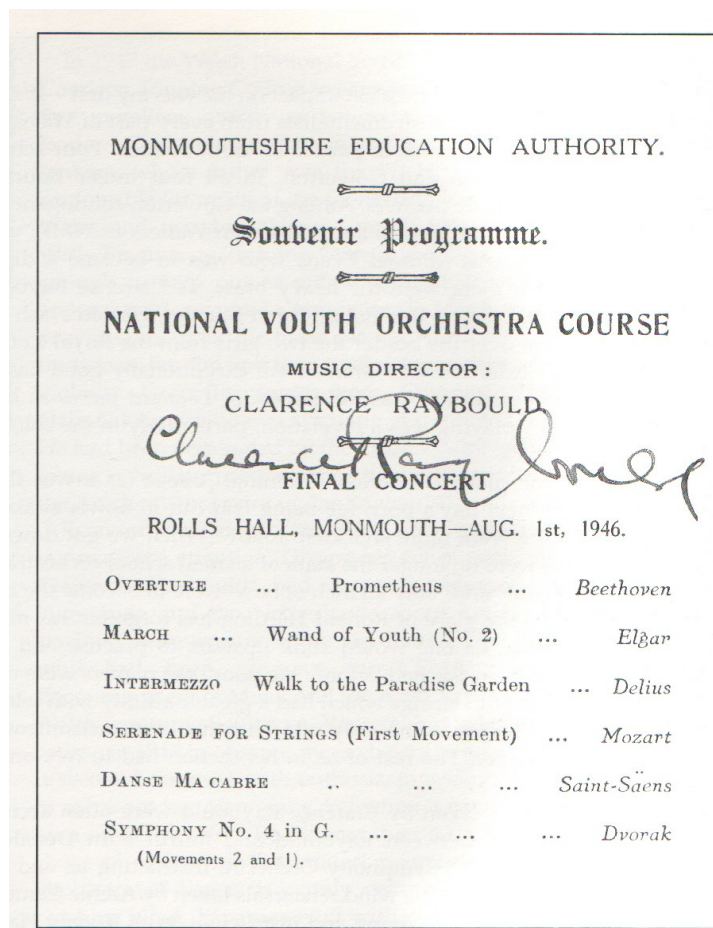
# The NYOW's Sixtieth Anniversary

## What NYOW is doing in 2006 Dates for your Diary

In 2006 the National Youth Orchestra of Wales, the first in the world, will have been in existence for 60 years. This wonderful achievement will be celebrated by a more varied pattern of courses and concerts. Some of the detail is yet to be confirmed but we can give you some idea of what to look out for throughout next year.

- *The annual collaboration between NYOW and BBCNOW takes place at the BBC in Cardiff culminating on the 24th of March in a concert at St David's Hall, Cardiff.*
- *There will be a six day course at Easter, some time between the 14th and 23rd of April, to be held in North Wales, which leads to the making of a recording of Elgar's Second Symphony*
- *A really exciting addition to the normal programme of events is the orchestra's appearance at the Welsh Proms. NYOW will rehearse in Cardiff between the 24th and 26th of July for the concert on the 26th at St David's Hall. The programme will include Elgar's Second Symphony.*
- *The Annual Summer Course will be held as usual in Lampeter between the 2nd and 12th of August. There will be the usual concert in Lampeter and two others whose dates and venues are yet to be fixed. Another truly exciting development for the orchestra is its appearance this summer at the Three Choirs Festival in Hereford Cathedral.*

*Details will be sent to you when they are available*



*The programme of the very first concert given by NYOW on the 1st of August 1946. The signature is that of Clarence Raybould, the orchestra's first conductor.*

## Friends of NYOW activities for 2006

The "Friends" are in the process of planning a major fundraising concert for the Autumn of 2006. Our President, Karl Jenkins, is very much involved and will take part. More of this at a later date.

Beryl Jones's article illustrates very clearly what the Friends of NYOW are about. The organisation exists so that it may fund bursaries for those who would otherwise be unable to afford to attend courses, sponsor the hire of scores, give an annual prize and provide money for foreign tours.

This year we were able to support nine students with bursaries and the comments from some of them and others whom we have helped in previous years show how much we are

appreciated. Without our funds last year's Berlin trip would not have happened, nor would the trip to Ischia. We are able to make a difference but we would like to make a bigger one

Our main source of income is from members' subscriptions and it doesn't take much to realise that the more members we have the healthier our funds. As part of our effort to get more members we enclose with this Newsletter an application form for membership and beg you to pass it on to someone who is interested in helping maintain this wonderful sixty year old.