

The Nash

Newsletter of "The Friends of the National Youth Orchestra of Wales"
Registered Charity Number:1053788

February 2007

News in Brief

• Retirement of Beryl Jones

Beryl Jones, who has been NYOW administrator for the last 16 years, retired in December. The committee of the Friends marked this with a dinner at which a gift was presented and our chairman expressed our appreciation of her enormous contribution to the orchestra.

(An appreciation from Tony Moore appears later)

• The Friends' contribution in 2006.

We were able to contribute £1060 for bursaries to 12 students, £2190 for the hire of parts for the Elgar and Mahler symphonies, £250 for conference bags and £100 for the "Friends" prize.

• Tour to Ischia

NYOW has been asked to perform at Lady Walton's estate in Ischia at the end of August. It is hoped that further concerts in Italy can be arranged. Our help will be needed!

• A date for your diary

The seventh annual collaboration between NYOW and BBCNOW culminates in a concert at **St. David's Hall, Cardiff on Friday, 30th March**. The conductor will be Grant Llewellyn.

• AGM

The AGM of the Friends of NYOW takes place on **27th March 2007 at 7.00 p.m.** at the **Cayo Arms, Cathedral Road, Cardiff**.

• New Appointments

Beryl Jones's successor is Matthew Jones, currently the assistant orchestra manager BBCNOW. His new title is Youth Music Manager. He will be assisted by Katherine Sinker

NYOW at the House of Commons

John Watkins



Wayne David, Roger Lewis, Mr Speaker Martin and Owain Arwel Hughes

Last November members of the orchestra were invited to perform in the staterooms of the Speaker of the House of Commons. Wayne David, MP for Caerphilly and former member of the NYOW, had come up with the excellent idea of arranging for a small group of players to visit Westminster as part of the orchestra's sixtieth anniversary celebrations.

An invitation to the Speaker's rooms is of course a very special honour and we were all delighted to accept. Everyone was extremely impressed by the splendour of the rooms and the portraits of former Speakers gave us an increased awareness of the history of the place.

Many Welsh MPs and Lords were present at this occasion and it was gratifying to realize the extent to which they admire and support the NYOW. In his welcoming address, the Rt Hon Michael Martin, the present Speaker, acknowledged the achievements of the orchestra and recognized the importance of supporting young people in their musical activities. The visit was sponsored by ITV Wales and chief executive Roger Lewis took the opportunity to stress the importance of the NYOW in the cultural life of Wales. Wayne David also spoke of the benefits to young people

of being able to participate in music making at such a high level.

The Speaker, fresh from his parliamentary duties, found time to speak to all the members of the orchestra individually before they went on to perform works by Elgar and Mozart under their conductor Owain Arwel Hughes. The evening concluded with an impassioned plea from Owain to the assembled politicians for their continuing support for the National Youth Orchestra of Wales.

Following the visit, Wayne David submitted an Early Day Motion to the House, which congratulated the NYOW on its 60th anniversary and expressed good wishes for its future as a flagship of youth music in Wales in the 21st century. He also wrote a short article about the visit, which was published in the House of Commons magazine in November. Both the orchestra and the Friends are indebted to Wayne for all his efforts in making this event such a memorable occasion.

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A Memorial Plaque to Irwyn Walters, founder of NYOW

John Watkins, Chairman of the Friends of NYOW

At the end of the sixtieth anniversary year of the NYOW, members of the Friends met to celebrate the life of the founder of the orchestra, Irwyn Walters. What could have been more appropriate than the unveiling of a plaque in Irwyn's home town, Ammanford? Thanks to Arwyn Jones - former NYOW member and also a son of Ammanford - a splendid slate plaque designed and made by the Welsh artist Ieuan Rees had been commissioned as a permanent memorial in the Theatre.

I was very pleased to see that many former members of the NYOW were able to be present at the event, and indeed several founder members were among the guests. It proved to be a wonderful opportunity for people who had not met for many years to reminisce about old times.

As chairman of The Friends it was an honour and privilege for me to introduce the proceedings. I referred to the varied and noteworthy achievements of the orchestra during the past year which seem to me to be very tangible proof of the robust good health of Irwyn Walters's brainchild. I stressed how vitally important it is for The Friends to continue supporting the work he started.

Every effort must be made to ensure that today's and tomorrow's young people enjoy the same opportunities that have been offered over the past sixty years.

In the weeks before the event many people had contacted me with good wishes for the unveiling of the plaque. Here are some of their messages:-

I am sure this will be a fitting and well deserved memorial to a great person.

(Ieuan Owen - former HMI)

I think we can claim to be among the first youth orchestra couples ever, the fore-runners of thousands of others who



Arwyn Jones, Gareth Walters, the Mayor of Ammanford and Beryl James

have benefited musically and socially from being members of youth orchestras.

(Nancy & Patrick Strevens)

I would hope that the founder of the NYOW would have been proud of the celebrations and would have marvelled at the high standard which has been set and has been met by the members of the Orchestra. It was indeed a daunting task to establish the orchestra in the 1940s and it is to Irwyn Walters's credit that he managed to do so.

(Iolo Walters Director of Educational Resources and the Arts, WJEC)

I wish all those present a day of wonderful memories of Irwyn, a man held in such high regard by all who knew him personally.

(Francis Howard)

Truly, he should be remembered as 'Father of the orchestra'. His attributes are excellently recorded or implied in "The First in the World", which itself stands as a first class tribute to his achievement. However, it must be right for such a towering personality to be permanently com-

memorated in his home town as a deservedly famous "son of Ammanford". But the ultimate tribute must be the continuing success of his orchestra: long may it live as a permanent feature of the culture of Wales

(John R Jones)

Helena Braithwaite and Arwyn Jones - both former members of the NYOW - were invited to share their personal recollections of Irwyn and the plaque was then unveiled by Gareth Walters, Irwyn Walters's son.

Beryl James and Arwyn Jones must be thanked for all the work they had done behind the scenes to make the day possible, and also Beryl Jones, administrator of the orchestra, for her help and advice in arranging the event.

The Friends are indebted to Ammanford Town Council and The Miners' Theatre for their support - financial and otherwise.

Finally I wish to thank all those people who have so generously contributed towards the cost of the plaque.

The afternoon concluded with a buffet, during which a string quartet composed of the present section leaders of the NYOW performed.



Jonathan Mann, Gwenllian Haf Richards, Sara Roberts, Marged Jones

My Time in the NASH

Jonathan Mann, Leader 2006



I have greatly enjoyed my time in the National Youth Orchestra of Wales over the past five years. Each year has been special but all for different reasons.

My first course was in 2002, when I was appointed Principal 2nd violin. I can remember the mixture of nerves and excitement at the beginning of the first rehearsal of Dvorak Symphony no. 8, part of the programme for the NYOW's first Easter Course. I feel fortunate to have joined the orchestra in what was Christopher Adey's last year as Principal Conductor. His unbelievable knowledge of the instruments in an orchestra and how they combine to create different orchestral sounds is something that left a lasting impression on me.

Owain Arwel Hughes became Principal Conductor in 2003. His enthusiasm for the orchestra is incredible and we have gained confidence under his leadership. He has definitely put 'The Nash' on the map! Some of the best experiences in my life so far have been the summer 2004 concert tour culminating in the Berlin *Konzerthaus* and the September 2005 concerts, where I was honoured to lead the NYOW ensemble at Lady Walton's estate, *La Mortella* on the Italian island, *Ischia*.

It has been a particular honour for me to lead the orchestra in its 60th anniversary year. As I am studying to become a professional musician, having the platform to develop my leading and orchestral playing has been invaluable. It has meant performing at high profile events and places such as the Welsh Proms, The 3 Choirs Festi-

val, The Senedd Building and The Speaker's House at The Houses of Parliament. Learning, leading and recording large-scale symphonies such as Elgar Symphony no. 2 and Mahler Symphony no. 5 has greatly aided my musical development. Sitting in the 'hot-seat' has meant additional responsibilities such as making speeches, so I have definitely had to develop skills in other areas!!

The musical benefits are there for all to see, but the greatest pleasure comes from the friendships that I have made during my time in the orchestra. People I met in 2002, are now among my best friends. Many of them have moved on to universities around the UK but we still keep in touch. The experiences we have shared on courses and tours will never be forgotten. I hope that 'The Nash' will continue for many years to give people the opportunities it has given me and that it will continue to be a place where young people can meet other young people who love music.

Adieu, Beryl

Tony Moore - Course Manager



Thursday 14th December 2006 marked the retirement of Beryl Jones, NYOW Administrator after 16 years service. This is a landmark in the history of the orchestra, coinciding with the 60th anniversary year, the celebration of which she organised. As the orchestra moves into a new phase of administration, we can reflect on Beryl's input and effectiveness, which has played such an important part in the success and smooth running of the organisation. Beryl approached every new challenge and task

with great professionalism, always her hallmark. Systems were set up; procedures carefully thought out which always resulted in positive outcomes. Dealing each year with literally hundreds of students anxious and eager to be auditioned at venues in various parts of the Principality as well as further afield was never a problem to her but more of a challenge. Looking back I can recall many instances of her reassuring style when interacting with parents who were sometimes more of a problem than the students! There were also incidents where school caretakers or college security staff had to be placated when audition sessions sometimes ran over the agreed booking times. Very rarely did I ever witness anything but a cool, calm and rational response from Beryl when a matter needed urgent resolution.

Over the years members of the orchestra afforded her a great deal of respect and knew that they could always approach her for advice and guidance at any time (which they frequently did!).

In latter years the visits to Berlin (2004) and to Ischia (2005), although short but highly rewarding, were organised with meticulous precision, carefully planned with meticulous attention to detail. Berlin in particular, when one considers the transportation of over a hundred players plus instruments as well as a truck which made its way over land with the "big stuff".

Summer courses at Lampeter were a privilege to be part of. Lots of humour, lots of hard work for all concerned, not least from

Beryl. No member of the orchestra could fail to be aware of the daily programme, the social programme or any other event that had been planned, because the course handbook told everyone what they needed to know down to the last detail, bound, colour coded and prepared by Beryl many weeks prior to the course.

In retrospect, the orchestra's sixtieth anniversary and Beryl's retirement have come together somewhat fittingly. The year 2006 has been a 'high' for the orchestra and it can be considered likewise for Beryl. The various activities throughout the Anniversary year as well as the production of the Anniversary Brochure and CD were all generated by her great enthusiasm. The success of the year in all aspects is clear testimony of her diligence.

Over the years we have travelled the highways and byways of Wales at all times of the year and literally in all weathers, setting up audition venues, making site visits for possible concert venues, viewing accommodation for concert visits as well as having stayed in one or two rather odd hotels! I think that Beryl's motto has always been, in spite of any adversity "OK, we'll sort it out" and sort it she did!

I'm sure we all wish her a long healthy and enjoyable retirement. However, I suspect that Beryl will, in the not too distant future, feel the urge for new challenges!

I'm led to believe that her links with 'The Nash' will not be severed as I hear that the committee of The Friends will shortly welcome a new member. Guess who?

Memories of the NASH

Mary Denholm, violin



When I first began scratching away at the violin at the age of six, my cousin was a member of the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland and I distinctly remember wondering if there was such a thing for Wales. Ten years later, I found myself in Newcastle Emllyn, waiting anxiously for my first 'Nash' audition. Already knowing that I wanted to study Medicine at university a few people had asked why I was bothering to apply but, as I have discovered, the Nash and music in general are not exclusively for people who choose to take a musical career path.

I can still remember precisely how nervous I felt that day, a feeling exaggerated when I was asked during the audition if I *always* had my bow that tight? Glancing down I was ashamed to realise that it was arching dangerously outwards to provide a sight that would have made my violin teacher cringe! After squeakily stuttering that no, this was most definitely not usually the

case, I was very relieved to hear a chuckle and the words "No, thought not.....common thing to do when you're nervous though....just keep on tightening!!" Seems a lot funnier now somehow....

The blushes continued during my subsequent three years in the orchestra, particularly memorable incidents being 'twanging' my string during the recording session for the Christmas CD meaning we had to play it all *one more time*, leaving my glasses off stage in the Bristol Cathedral concert with Julian Lloyd Webber and having to scuttle off and fetch them before winding my way through the back of the orchestra to my seat, Mrs Phipps having hissed at me "You can't go round the front, they'll think you're the leader!" She wasn't too cross as I had remembered my popsocks and as for me, my pulse had just about returned to normal by the interval.

It was however all highly 'character-building' and any lingering red-cheeks were banished by the many laughs I shared with the brilliant friends I have found.

Friends are one thing I will always re-

member about the Nash, and just how many of them I made. There is a place for everyone on the Nash and that indescribable feeling of post-concert elation is enough to give anyone a sense of confidence, pride and self-worth.

Along with my other musical ventures the Nash has brought me a whole host of opportunities I would not otherwise have had. How else would I have had the chance to play in a beautiful Konzerthaus in Berlin, Sir William Walton's house on the island of Ischia, St David's Hall, the Welsh Assembly and the House of Commons? There are many other things I could say about the Nash but now in my second year studying Medicine at Oxford, I can safely say that although playing the second violin part of Mahler's Fifth Symphony to my patients probably won't cure many of them, the Nash has been an invaluable experience that has helped me to develop as a person. What's more I'm certain it will continue to be so for many others for years to come, in fact, almost as certain as I am that my bow will never again be too tight!

NYOW Courses 2006

Kathryn Webber, Pastoral Co-Coordinator

I think that 2006 has been probably the most exciting of the NYOW's sixty years so far.

January and February I was busy in my role as Archivist sifting through the scrapbooks and old recordings for material that could be used by the excellent team at the WJEC that put together the souvenir brochure. March was dominated by the launch of the 60th year at the newly opened Senedd, the Friends concert at WMC with Karl Jenkins and the collaboration with BBCNOW that resulted in a wonderful Gala concert at St David's Hall. All these events were covered in previous editions of "The Nash".

April saw us off to North Wales for an Easter course. We were resident on a University campus at Bangor and fortunately the weather was clement as the orchestra members had to walk to rehearsals on the other side of town. I didn't hear one of them complain however – in true Nash spirit they just got on with the job. I have to admit that when I heard the first full rehearsal of Elgar's 2nd Symphony I thought "Oh dear" or words to that effect, but Owain Arwel worked his magic and combined with a lot of hard work from students and tutors in just four days they were ready for the arrival of the sound engineers. The recording was made over two days and is now on sale having received good reviews. The Easter course was different from all others as we did not have a base to hold social events, but the usual friendships were formed and there was plenty of laughter. There were 9 pairs of siblings in the orchestra, nearly equalling the record set in 2002 when we had 8 pairs and a trio of brothers!

July saw the Nash reconvene for a day of rehearsals at St David's Hall in Cardiff. It was right in the middle of the heat wave and what bliss it was to be in the air conditioning. Not so the hostels at Tal-y-bont where the orchestra were staying – they had the heating turned on! The concert at Bristol Cathedral the next day with Julian Lloyd Webber was excellent, but as you can imagine we were all building up to the following day – the NYOW's first appearance at the Welsh Proms. The Hall was nearly full and

Elgar's 2nd Symphony received a standing ovation.

Five days later and we were off to Lampeter for the Summer course. It didn't take long to settle into our usual routine – the staff at the University and the people of the town love having the NYOW in residence and make a real fuss of the orchestra members. We have the use of the Students Union building and after a hard day of tutorials and rehearsals the students are ready to relax. All the social events are well supported – Twmpath and Syndicate Quiz are well established now. This year we had a New Members' party, which was also attended by section leaders. They presented NYOW badges to the new members in their sections.

Tutors Dinner was a resounding success made all the more special this year, as it was Beryl Jones, the NYOW Administrator's last course. Jonathan Mann, the Leader thanked Beryl for all she had done for NYOW and presented her with a cheque from all the tutors, pastoral staff and orchestra members. He also gave her a large card signed by all the members, many of whom wrote most appreciative messages to Beryl telling her how aware they were of all she had done for the orchestra. Jonathan Davies, the youngest member of the band presented her with a bouquet and Beryl was given a very well deserved standing ovation.

The Fancy Dress this year had a theme of sixty years and some wonderful outfits emerged. The Group prize was awarded to a giant birthday cake with boys dressed as candles and an Alien band complete with "alien" musical instruments took second place.

The last night of the course we held a Birthday Party at which members performed Cabaret items and some unofficial Awards were made. A birthday cake and a rousing "Happy birthday dear Nash" rounded off the night.

Concerts were well received at Lampeter, St David's and Bangor, but we were all aware of the importance of NYOW's first appearance at the Three Choirs Festival at Hereford Cathedral. We were to be the first National Youth Orchestra to appear there in the 250 years of the Festival's existence, but also the

first orchestra to perform Mahler's Fifth Symphony.

We did not have an auspicious start! The concert was scheduled for 11 am so we had to leave Cardiff at 7.45 latest. I was just congratulating myself that we were going to leave on time when we realised that one member was still fast asleep in his bed – 10 minute delay! Then the bus drivers decided to stop for petrol – 15-minute delay! And when we arrived at Hereford the three coaches drove into the pedestrian precinct and got stuck. Swift trek through the back streets of Hereford on foot and we got to the Cathedral just in time for a quick seating rehearsal. There wasn't time to go to the allotted dressing rooms so it was a quick



change in the restricted space behind the stage and in the WNO truck and they were on. I was so proud of them all – not one person complained - they acted like true professionals. The concert was superb – Daniel de Gruchy Lambert (trumpet) and Annette Cox (horn) were outstanding and the packed audience gave them, NYOW and Owain Arwel Hughes a rapturous reception. And then it was all over for another year, but what a year!

The Latest Generation



These are all members of NYOW on last summer's courses who are the offspring of former members.

Steffan and Marged Jones (Hywel Jones, *violin*, 1976); Jeremy and Lucy Richardson (Denise Phillips, *violin*, 1973); Carys Bromby (Sharan Rees, *violin*, 1970); Thomas Graff (Martin Graff, *percussion*, 1978); Elen Hydref Thomas (Olwen Jones, *violin*, 1966);

Helen Rees (Mari Ffion Williams, *violin soloist*); Katherine Evans (Helen Jones, *violin*, 1977); Jonathan Davies (John Davies, *trombone*, 1978); Angharad and Rhodri Thomas (Yvonne Tuckett, *double bass*, 1976); Daniel Phillips (Ceri Phillips, *cello*, 1973); Philip Hughes (Dave and Eleanor Hughes, *horn and double bass*, 1963 and 1964).

Hannah Key's grandmother, Patricia Gadd (*cello*) was in the Nash in the early fifties. We think that she is the first grandchild of a former member to be in the orchestra.

Back Philip Hughes, Jeremy Richardson.

Middle Rhodri Thomas, Steffan Jones, Lucy Richardson, Hannah Key, Marged Jones, Carys Bromby, Katherine Evans, Elen Hydref Thomas. **Front** Thomas Graff, Daniel Phillips, Helen Rees, Angharad Thomas, Jonathan Davies