

# The Nash

Newsletter of "The Friends of the National Youth Orchestra of Wales" December 2010  
Registered Charity No. 1,053,788

## A Record Number of Siblings at This Year's Course



This year there were 11 pairs of siblings on the course. They are pictured here with one standing directly behind the other. They are Osian & Elidir Dafydd, Andrew & Luke Millard, Angharad & Lowri Thomas, Helen & Claire Roberts, Ffion & Nia Bevan, Rhoslyn & Harriet Lawton, Richard & Rebecca Cartlidge, Simon & Matt Brown, Holly & Tom Blomfield, Gareth & Bethan Almand and Thomas & William McMahon.

## NYOW Course 2010

Matthew Jones, Youth Music Manager

This year's summer course represented the end of an era as Owain Arwel Hughes conducted his final concerts, after eight years as Music Director of 'The Nash'. With some fantastic repertoire and exciting concerts, as well as a number of senior members 'retiring' after the course; it had all the makings for a wonderful send off for our popular MD.

The 113 members arrived in Lampeter in jubilant spirits and after the usual enthusiastic greetings they quickly got down to work with their sectional tutors. As ever they were expertly guided through the first few days of rehearsals, and yet again I was encouraged by the already high standard of the first tutti rehearsal on that opening day.

It was a particular pleasure to invite a former NYOW Leader to conduct some rehearsals. Jonathan Mann, currently studying conducting at the Royal Academy of Music, was a hit with the members; his energy and passionate musicality infectious. I'm sure we will see more of Jonathan in the years to come.

The repertoire had proved a worthy challenge for the Orchestra with the strings especially finding the many, many notes in the hour long Rachmaninov particularly taxing, and the styles of both the Debussy and the

new commission by Brian Hughes different to much of the repertoire they had performed at county or national level before. However, by the time Owain arrived, much of the ground work had been done and Owain was able to work with the orchestra in bringing the pieces up to the standard for which the NYOW has come to expect.

The concert tour started with a performance to close the Fishguard Festival and so it was essential that the Orchestra hit the ground running. It did not disappoint. The capacity audience (including a number of Arts Council members) gave the orchestra a deserved standing ovation. The concert in Aberystwyth was of an equal standard in an unforgiving acoustic, and led nicely to a rousing conclusion at St David's Hall, where WJEC Chief Executive Gareth Pierce led a deserving tribute to Owain. A clearly emotional conductor pulled it together to lead the orchestra in their best performance of the Rachmaninov so far.

The goodbyes at the end of the concert were short lived, as six short weeks later the Orchestra reconvened at St Asaph Cathedral to prepare for the opening concert of the North Wales International Music Festival. The break hadn't affected the members as they quickly got back into their stride and,

buoyed by another sell-out audience, gave another stirring performance. A guest and patron of the Festival, Terry Waite CBE was extremely complimentary of the orchestra's performance and led another standing ovation alongside Chairman of the NYOW advisory panel, Sir Norman Lloyd Edwards. The final concert of the season was held at the RNCM Concert Hall in Manchester and at the end of the rehearsal I had an opportunity to thank Owain, on behalf of all involved with the NYOW, for his excellent work with the Orchestra. He was presented with a specially commissioned wooden sculpture and a personalised photo book of his time with 'The Nash', which included notes of thanks and appreciation from students. It was a memorable ending to a memorable course.

I would like to thank all of the Friends of NYOW and especially the committee for their hard work and support. The Friends provide valuable bursaries to those students who may not without their help be able to attend the annual course. I can see, in a more austere future, your help and support becoming even more important. Thank you very much!

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# NYOW in Manchester

A review from Wyn Davies

I had expected the Nash to be good. That they were at times excellent took me, I'm ashamed to say, a little by surprise. It wasn't so much that individual players excelled, although one or two did; it was the overall controlled commitment. The Venezuelan Youth Orchestra it was not – the body language was firmly British, and the sound was warm, not brilliant. It was in short, professional. And that's intended to be high praise.

The audience in Manchester was a hall of two halves – relatives, and musicians. And of course the two sometimes overlapped. The mellow concert hall at RNCM wasn't full, but we were most appreciative and proud.

Amongst the musicians in the audience was Brian Hughes, who had come over from Wrexham to hear the orchestra play his own specially commissioned work, "Troad" ("Turning"). The piece makes use of old Welsh tunes associated with the turning of the year, but it also "turns" the songs into a vigorous poem for orchestra so that they are transformed into something that's very far removed from their original state. The Nash didn't so much play it as rip into it. This ambitious piece is angular, many layered and at times rhythmically complicated; in other words not an easy starter. Balance between the

sections wasn't perfect in Manchester, and the rhythms could perhaps have been keener, but the orchestra seemed perfectly at ease with the idiom and was easily equal to the challenge.

I've always thought of La Mer as an elusive and difficult piece. The young players paid no heed to its difficulty - they were especially good in the fast swirling music. But in the slower, shimmering mood music the sounds they made were a little too matter-of-fact, too un-nuanced to do complete justice to the poetry of Debussy. It was in Rachmaninov's Second Symphony that the strengths of conductor and orchestra really came together. The Celtic Tiger in these young players was evident from the start but it was properly contained by the conductor's benign command of the ebb and flow of the music. The jubilant second movement combined excitement with control and the achingly lovely slow movement had the players willing the audience to submit to its emotion. And then, in the finale, Owain Arwel Hughes turned on the passion and the orchestra raised the roof. It wasn't a Youth Orchestra, just an orchestra, communicating urgently to its audience.

That really brightened up a dull Sunday afternoon in Manchester.



**Wyn Davies, who now lives near Manchester, is a former member of the orchestra and will be known to many as a conductor and from his appearances as a choral adjudicator on S4C.**

**At present he is conducting a hugely successful production of *The Merry Widow* for Opera North, and continues to be Director of Music at New Zealand Opera.**

## In Brief

At the concert given by NYOW at the Sage, Gateshead last year a relative of Alan Thomas, a double bass player from 1954, spotted him in a photograph that was on display. As a result of this chance encounter he contacted our chairperson with a generous donation and has become a member of the Friends. After graduating from Manchester University he worked in schools in England before moving to Canada in 1974, where he has taught and worked as an organist and choirmaster.

Anyone wishing to contact him can do so at the following email address.  
[alan.thomas@sympatico.ca](mailto:alan.thomas@sympatico.ca)



The above picture shows two members of the choir *Only Men Aloud*, who are former members of NYOW. On the left is David Mahoney who played the cello and is from Cardiff and on the right Dan Phillips a trumpeter, also from Cardiff. In fact Dan's father Ceri is also a former member of the Nash, a cellist from Neath

## The BBCNOW Collaboration

Gwenllian Haf Richards, a recent member of NYOW, now a 1st violinist with BBCNOW

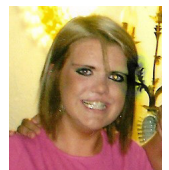
Having been a member of the National Youth Orchestra of Wales from the age of 12 to 21, 'the Nash', as it's known, became the focal point of my summer and undoubtedly one of the highlights of the year. Another annual highlight for me was the collaboration between BBC National Orchestra of Wales and the National Youth Orchestra of Wales. It was through this that I gained my first insight into the life of a professional orchestral musician, through sitting alongside the players. The project gave me the opportunity to develop both musically and socially,

and I feel it was a major catalyst in nurturing my ambition to become an orchestral musician. I remember sitting in my first collaboration rehearsal of *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* under the baton of Grant Llewellyn wondering why anyone would ever want to do anything else but orchestral playing for a living!

Undoubtedly, these collaborations expanded my musical learning and encouraged me to develop my musicianship further as a student at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama and a member of the Euro-

pean Union Youth Orchestra.

In July last year I was appointed sub leader of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales and in October had the privilege of performing alongside the NYOW members. As bizarre as it felt to sit on the "other side" as it were, I felt an enormous sense of achievement. Without these special BBC NOW and NYOW collaborations I would not have gained the experience or most importantly, developed the passion and drive needed to succeed as a professional orchestral musician.



# Memories of the NASH

Wil Jones.

Seeing the pictures sent in by Justin Smith brought back many memories. I recognised most of the faces of old friends. (I'm not sure why I wasn't in the woodwind section photo.) I joined the Nash in 1959 held at the Bangor Normal College, at the tender age of 14 as a member of the 'B' orchestra as it was called then. Our conductor was Rhoslyn Davies who sadly died a few years later, a fabulous musician and a very great loss to the musical life of Wales.

We played the same programme as the 'A' orchestra but left for home after the rehearsal fortnight before the concert tour. One piece that year, Sibelius 2<sup>nd</sup> Symphony made a great impression on me and every time I hear it now I feel a great affinity with this great work. If I remember rightly we also played Mars and Jupiter from the Planet Suite and Strauss' 1<sup>st</sup> Horn Concerto with soloist, former NYOW member Tony Randall joining us in the rehearsals.

In 1961 I progressed to the 'A' orchestra at Llandrindod Wells where Justin Smith was the principal clarinet. Justin was a very good player and I learnt a lot sitting next to him 'doubling' the 1<sup>st</sup> clarinet part. I can remember him now playing the solo from 'The entry of the Black Queen' from Bliss' Checkmate Suite. I have never met him since, this was his last year and then from 1962 to 1965 and for the Easter tour of Germany in 1966 I was lucky enough to be principal clarinet. Even in 1966 I still could not think of leaving and came back as transport assistant the following summer with my friend Gwynn Cadvan Jones who had been a member of the 'cello section from 1958 to 1964.

Every year I waited with eager anticipation for the envelope from the WJEC with information about the summer course. It was a wonderful social experience, meeting up with friends, making music together and visiting different parts of Wales over the years. We stayed in hostels at Llandrindod, Swansea, Cardiff, Caerleon, Bangor and Wrexham; played in the National Eisteddfod every year as well as another five or six concerts in various halls throughout Wales including the Newtown Pavilion, the huge Sofia Gardens Pavilion Cardiff and our favourite (acoustically speaking) – the Brangwyn Hall Swansea. The atmosphere on the courses was relaxed and friendly thanks to a great staff, domestic and musical, and there were some great characters amongst the students.

I remember the thrill of arriving at the first full rehearsal in Llandrindod in 1961 and launching into the wonderful world of Borodin's Second Symphony. Every year

there was a new musical experience. And what a musical experience we had! World class tutors such as Gwynne Edwards, Ambrose Gauntlett, Stephen Waters, Harold Nash and many others, all leading players in the top symphony orchestras. Leading this team was the conductor Dr Clarence Raybould and his assistant Arthur Davison who replaced the late Roslyn Davies and who eventually took over as conductor in 1965. Raybould was a little distant and could sometimes be cruel with his comments but he was a great musician and orchestral trainer, I shall always treasure the musical experiences I gained under his baton. He had been the assistant to Beecham and although his career as a conductor had not really blossomed he was greatly admired in the musical world. There's a story, I think, told by Raybould himself about a rehearsal where Beecham was trying to sort out a point in the score with one of the players. Beecham called out '-send for a musician!', where upon Raybould appeared and saved the day. His programming was interesting and I suppose quite eccentric compared to today where large scale romantic symphonies seem to dominate. The policy at the time was to include a work by a Welsh composer every year and to have a young Welsh soloist, usually a singer. For example looking at my programme from 1962 we played:-

Borodin's Prince Igor Overture,  
'Suite of Four Shakespeare Dances' by Ian Parrott,  
Arias by Puccini and Wagner with David Palmer as soloist,  
'With the Wild Geese' by Hamilton Harty,  
'Fêtes' from the Debussy Nocturnes,  
'Two Welsh Nursery Tunes' by Alun



Hoddinott and then Sibelius' 5<sup>th</sup> Symphony.

Clarence Raybould certainly gave us a varied musical experience. He loved the romantic repertoire, Russian music, and Dvořák particularly and championed the music of Sibelius which at the time was not as fashionable as it is now. When he conducted Sibelius you felt that he went under the skin of the music, he had met Sibelius and was a great admirer. After all, Sibelius had died only a few years earlier in 1957. Apart from the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> symphonies we played 'En Saga' in 1964 and again on the 1965 tour to Germany. This piece left a lasting impression on me partly because of the long and melancholy clarinet solo which ends the piece. Yes, playing Sibelius under Raybould was an unforgettable experience, through him we felt in touch with the composer himself. Just reading through the old programmes brings back so many memories and makes me feel so grateful to the Nash for those wonderful years. Best wishes for a bright future for the NYOW and thanks to the 'Friends' for their great work. The concerts I have attended over the past years have been brilliant. I'm glad to say that the present orchestra is really keeping up the standard of the past!



NYOW in 1964. See if you can spot Wil Jones

# Kathryn Webber with more from the Archives

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**B**y the 1960's youth orchestras were becoming more common and NYOW was no longer held in quite such awe as it had been. Newspaper reports of concerts tend to become a little more critical than they were in the previous two decades.

1962

The South Wales Evening Post comments "It (NYOW) is a marvel which perhaps we now take for granted"

1964

From the Western Mail

"The untidiest playing of the evening was heard in Sibelius's tone poem, En Saga. There were occasions when Clarence Raybould's conducting was not as clear as it might have been.

"Assistant Conductor, Arthur Davison took to the rostrum for Dvorak's Rhapsody in A flat. There emerged a performance of precision and feeling".

Also in 1964

The South Wales Argus felt that soloist David Chappell's viola "would have benefited from a little more tuning" but the South Wales Evening Post felt his "warm tone in this infrequently

heard work (Benjamin Dale's Romance for Viola and Orchestra) was a delight."

It was a wonder that the concert tour took place at all as under the headline "Stricken Musicians Recover" the Western Mail reported that "A number of instrumentalists were taken ill at the National Eisteddfod with severe stomach ache and sickness. A suggestion of food poisoning was denied yesterday ... "It was not serious and they are all back in harness" said a spokesman".

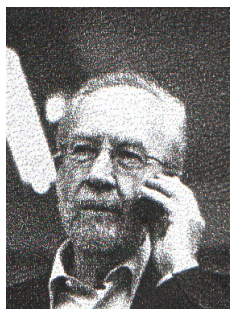
1966 was a busy year when NYOW celebrated its 21<sup>st</sup> birthday and Clarence Raybould his 80<sup>th</sup> and also his retirement as conductor of the orchestra. Alun Hoddinott was commissioned to write a piece in honour of the occasion.

The Times Special Correspondent said that "The Concerto Grosso No2 was a frank but also enjoyable *piece d'occasion* designed to show off each section of the orchestra. The players accepted the opportunities eagerly, bringing a youthful pride of possession and vitality to the performance."

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## Mansel Bebb

**I**n the last Newsletter we reported the death of Mansel Bebb, the Philharmonia Orchestra's Personnel Manager from 1979 to 2009. As a result of this we have been sent an obituary from the programme of a concert dedicated to his memory in which it was made clear how very highly thought of he was. To illustrate this here are three extracts from letters sent to him just before he died.



"I never forget the first time I met you back in 1983 when I came to conduct the Philharmonia. I thought this distinguished and warm gentleman must be the director or president (or whatever the term would be) of the entire organisation. Of course I was intuitively right about that, if not technically. You really are the very heart and soul of the Philharmonia, and I have never met anybody else like you

anywhere else in almost 30 years of conducting around the world"

**Esa-Pekka Salonen**

"You have become a legend in the British orchestral scene, a model of calm, unflappable gentleness and politeness with a specialist's knowledge of players of every instrument, an expert planner; in fact, every attribute necessary for the proper handling of those difficult characters who make up the orchestral world, players, conductors and soloists.

**Sir Charles Mackerras**

"During all these years, I know what you gave to me. Deeper understanding of something we would call strong spirit, personality, common sense and a sense of humour; and being helpful, professional and full of love for those who needed your help and support. I am very grateful we became friends a long time ago."

**Christoph von Dohnanyi**



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