

The Nash

Newsletter of "The Friends of the National Youth Orchestra of Wales" December 2007

Registered Charity No. 1,053,788

Membership

By now all members of the Friends will have received a letter from Beryl Jones, our efficient and conscientious Membership Secretary, asking everyone to return a completed application form. This is needed so that our membership records can be updated.

Many who joined when the Friends was formed would not have been asked for their e-mail addresses. Being able to contact all members by e-mail would make communication very much easier when it comes to informing people about future events and such like. Also the opportunity to use Gift Aid would not have been available at that time.

We should be most grateful if you could find time to fill in the form return and return it to us.

Having everyone do this will enable us to reorganise our database more easily.

Website

At the last committee meeting when discussing recruitment, it was suggested that the Friends should have its own website. Is there anyone out there who could help or advise us on this?

Future Event

Wyn Davies, a member of NYOW in the late 60s, has had a distinguished career in the operatic world culminating in his appointment as music director of New Zealand Opera. As well known as he is as a conductor many know him as an outstanding cabaret performer, something we will be able to experience soon as he has agreed to do a fundraising show for us. As soon as a date and venue are fixed we shall let you know about it. It will be a show not to be missed!



NYOW in Ischia

Vernon Bailey-Wood

A tribute from Jeff Lloyd

In July, 2007, the Friends of the Nash lost one of its most dedicated and committed members, with the sad death of Vernon Bailey-Wood.

Vernon was born in the mining community of Trealaw and educated at the celebrated Porth County Boy's Grammar School which nurtured many a gifted pupil and regularly sent a number of boys to Oxbridge.

I first encountered Vernon on my first ever Glamorgan Youth Orchestra course at Ogmere School Camp in 1954. He was already an established and talented member of the first violins, and the imposing double barreled name of Bailey-Wood deeply impressed me. With a name like that, I pondered, he must surely be a member of the Celtic aristocracy! My original impression was dispelled once I got to know this delightful, quietly spoken gentleman. Vernon, far from being "posh" was, in fact, a true son of Rhondda, who proudly espoused his working class, mining community's fervent socialist values and ideals.

Our friendship continued apace during our halcyon days in the Nash; but inevitably lost touch when our jobs took us to different parts of the country. Then, quite a few decades later, whilst auditioning a young oboist and

youthful violinist new to the area for my South Glamorgan Youth Orchestra, that same distinctive "posh" name reared itself in the form of his violinist daughter, Rhiannon and her talented oboist brother, Martyn. Happily reunited, and over a few pints of Brains Bitter, Vernon and I indulged in that one remaining non-taxable pursuit for the over fifties – nostalgia! Within a very short time he had joined the committee of the Friends of the Nash and soon became pivotal in his role as editor of this very same Newsletter. His passion for an improved deal for this country's youth allied to an almost messianic belief in the importance of music as a cohesive force for good in a troubled world was truly inspiring. Vernon adored playing chamber music with his many friends, with a Haydn or Mozart quartet suitably complemented with a glass (or two!) of fine claret. Though a non-believer in the religious sense, Vernon's lifestyle and attitudes bore all the precepts associated with true Christianity. He genuinely cared for others and enriched the lives of all who knew him by his mere presence. Indeed, on a personal note, I count it an immense privilege to have known Vernon Bailey-Wood, but especially so as a longstanding friend.

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Steffan Morris's first course

The National Youth Orchestra of Wales has been a really great experience for me. As a pupil of the Yehudi Menuhin School where there are only stringed instruments, it was an amazing privilege to be in a full symphony orchestra.

It was great to meet like-minded students of my age from all over Wales and I thoroughly enjoyed their company. I found the social aspect of the orchestra a huge bonus and a fantastic side to the courses. I've made lots of new friends whom I now stay in touch with.

To have the opportunity to play such great music under the leadership of Owain Arwel Hughes and have so much fun in and out of rehearsals is definitely something special. The work is sometimes hard but all the hard work pays off



Steffan Morris, this year's recipient of The Friends Prize

when you leave the concert venues "on a high."

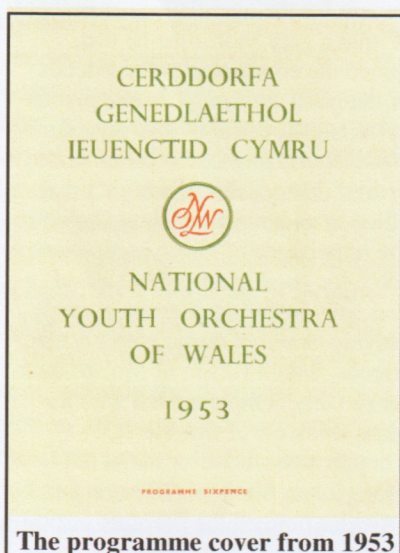
I would recommend the courses to anyone; it's a wonderful experience and one which I will

treasure. I just hope I'll get on the course again this year!

Thank you very much to the "Nash" for holding such fantastic courses!

Then and Now

John Watkins



The programme cover from 1953

Comparing this year's NYOW programme with that of a previous generation it struck me that many changes, and not only in the cover design, have occurred. To my surprise the 1953 orchestra boasted a total of 124 members compared

with 114 in 2007. Wherever did they find stages to fit them all in? The change in the ratio of girls to boys is however quite startling. In 1953 there were 80 boys and 44 girls, but by this year the girls were truly in the ascendancy, numbering 68 against a much reduced contingency of 46 boys. The sections that have seen the biggest swing to girl power are the first and second violins. In this year's violin sections there were 28 girls and 6 boys compared with 24 boys and 17 girls in 1953.

The only section to register no change was the trumpet section which, in the two years in question, remained a resolutely male bastion.

In 1953 seven concerts were given in Wrexham, Newtown, Eisteddfod in Rhyl, Port Talbot, Cardiff, Swansea and Llanely.

In 2007 there were four concerts - in Bangor, Aberystwyth, Cardiff and Ischia.

This year's programme consisted of works by Karl Jenkins, Elgar and Walton.

The 1953 programme offered works by Humperdinck, Mozart, Dvorak, Daniel Jones, Weber and Bizet.



The programme cover from 2007

NYOW Summer Course 2007

Matthew Jones, Youth Music Manager

The National Youth Orchestra of Wales returned to Lampeter this August for its annual Summer Course. For me and Kathryn Sinker it was an exciting and yet nerve wracking time when we would see whether the hard work we'd put in during the months beforehand would make for a successful course and therefore continue in the rich tradition everyone has become accustomed to. With a few new faces in both the Tutorial and Welfare teams, Kathryn and I weren't the only new kids on the block, however everyone was welcomed warmly into the NYOW fold and the support given to me by Tony Moore, Kathryn Webber and all the other established members of staff was invaluable.

As we have come to expect, the members of NYOW 2007 tackled a tricky programme with enthusiasm and a good degree of professionalism. The first four days of the course consisted of a mixture of sectional rehearsals and tutti rehearsals led by Adrian Dunn. This left the orchestra in an excellent state for Owain to take over and bring them up to performance standard.

Our concert tour started with a free lunchtime concert in Lampeter, attended by members of the local community, staff from the University and a number of parents. It was a great concert and a nice way to say thank you to everyone who makes us feel so welcome year after year. As the orchestra truck made its way up to Bangor ready for the next day's concert, the students turned their hands to performance of a slightly different kind with the annual Cabaret night. It was a fantastic evening's entertainment and not only showed how hugely talented these young people are, but showed the camaraderie and



Rehearsal at Lampeter

friendship that embodies the 'Nash'.

The official concert tour started in Bangor before returning to Aberystwyth and finishing in Cardiff on 10th August. All concerts were well attended and feedback from the public was very positive. The orchestra grew from strength to strength with each performance and the Cardiff concert, being the last of the tour was especially good and although emotional for a number of the members who would be leaving the 'Nash' family - it was a fantastic occasion.

The summer's activities weren't quite over though and within a few weeks we were greeting each other again as we met up on buses heading to Gatwick, and from there on to the Italian island of Ischia. The orchestra had been asked by Lady Susannah Walton to perform the final concert of her summer series at La Mortella and to give the first performance of Walton's 1st Symphony on the island. This was a great honour for the orchestra and the fact that it coincided with her 80th birthday made it doubly special. We were the largest group to have set-up on stage at La Mortella and it wasn't without its difficulties. Our stage management crew,

a group of gardeners from La Mortella and I spent 4 hours transferring instruments from the Artic Truck (which could only get to just within a mile of the venue) in small Italian trucks and through the tropical gardens by foot in 30 degree heat. However it was all worth it as the orchestra performed out of their skins in a difficult outdoor acoustic and gave a truly memorable performance against a stunning backdrop. The audience which included a number of traveling parents, were very impressed with the sound, quality and professionalism shown by the orchestra.

Susannah Walton's public address at the end of the concert puts it into context - *'Owain, the orchestra is amazing, now William has truly made it.'*

I would like to thank the Friends for all their support over the year and for the very generous cheque which covered a donation towards Ischia, hire of the music for this year's course, a number of bursaries for students and the usual music bags for new members. In addition, this year's Friends prize was received by Steffan Morris, a very promising cellist from Neath. The work of the Friends is invaluable and we greatly appreciate your support.

Brahms, Sir Colin Davis and NYOW

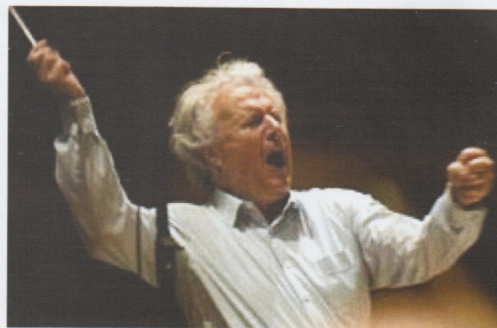
Gethin Williams

It will be evident to readers of *The Nash* that past members from across the generations have found the time spent on NYOW courses memorable and formative. This was certainly true of my five years as viola player from 1952-56, with a further year as Librarian in 1957. Vivid recollections of times spent with the Orchestra can be triggered by a variety of prompts, both predictable and unexpected. In my case the most predictable is the performance of works prepared for performance on the courses attended. Such is the case with the Brahms Symphony No 1 in C minor, which for the present purpose, is coupled with the current celebrations of the 80th birthday of Sir Colin Davis (the main trigger for this reminiscence). The link between the two is the course held in 1956 (the Orchestra's 10th birthday), which began in Llandrindod Wells. Among the tutorial staff was Colin Davis, a clarinettist and aspiring young conductor, who was coaching the woodwind section for the second successive year. For the 1956 course, however, his stay was cut short by an engagement for a trial period as conductor with the BBC Scottish Orchestra. Before he left he was given a short session by Clarence Raybould with the full orchestra in a rehearsal of Brahms 1. The energy and intensity which he brought to the opening movement, notably the dramatic introduction *un poco sostenuto* and transition to the *allegro*, was immediate, electrifying and unforgettable. Each time I hear the opening of the Symphony I'm reminded of the excitement and astonished response he generated in the short time he spent on the rostrum before us.

James Whitehead the distinguished cellist, who served as Strings and Principal Tutor, brought a similar passion and intensity to his music

making, though in a less flamboyant way. Again it is his preparation of the first movement of Brahms 1 that I remember most vividly as he demonstrated on the cello how he wanted the strings to achieve the full dramatic impact of the introduction and the double basses to sustain a relentless pedal note C when supporting the insistent blows of the timpani. To these memories can be added the pleasures given, as we rehearsed, by the performances of Julian Shelley (leader) and Mansel Squire (principal oboe) in the slow movement, and Frank Kelleher (principal clarinet) in the third, not forgetting the contributions of the horns and trombones in the last movement.

The contemporary work commissioned by the WJEC to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the NYOW was the Overture *Ieuentid* by Daniel Jones, described in a programme note by the composer as 'a short tone poem depicting the spirit and varying moods of Youth', which the orchestra exuberantly achieved. Of the contemporary Welsh composers commissioned to write new works for the Orchestra during my time, Grace Williams was the one to make the strongest impression. Her *Penillion for Orchestra*, specially written for the NYOW's appearance at the 1955 Edinburgh Festival was a great success and became one of her best known orchestral works. It was a fascinating piece to prepare, with the composer often present at rehearsals. Uncompromising in her expectations she won an instinctive, committed response from the players to her writing and witnessed some outstanding playing, notably from Ivor Bosanko (principal trumpet). It was as a string player that I had first encountered the music of Grace Wil-



Sir Colin Davis at 80

liams, again with the NYOW. The piece was *Sea Sketches*, included in the programme recorded in 1953 for the World Service of the BBC as part of the coronation celebrations that year. A special course was held during Easter at Coleg Y Fro, Rhoose, within sight of the coastline which had inspired the evocative and dramatic sea sketches.

In due course I became actively involved for a number of years with the performance of contemporary music in Wales as Secretary of the Guild for the Promotion of Welsh Music. Grace Williams became a friend, as did other composers whose works were performed by the Orchestra.

The course of 1956 has one other major significance for me. It was the first attended by the violinist who was to become my wife in 1961. My last attendance being in 1957, our paths did not cross again until 1960 when Eileen was studying at the Royal Academy of Music and I was teaching in London. Writing this brief reminiscence is a reminder (not that one is needed) of the importance to our lives of the violin and viola and past membership of the NYOW. We continue to play with the Gwent Chamber Orchestra, many of whose members have links with the Nash, with John Watkins and John Roberts prominently involved in the work of 'the Friends'.