

The Nash

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

2010 AGM

At this year's Annual General Meeting of the Friends of NYOW we were saddened to receive the resignations of two committee members: Jeff Lloyd and Beryl Jones. Jeff was instrumental in setting up the Friends, serving as Chairman for many years and always as a committee member. Beryl was an ex officio committee member while she was the NYOW Administrator and after her retirement became Membership Secretary. They have contributed greatly and will be sorely missed. It was decided that the Treasurer would now look after membership issues and he will be contacting all the Friends with a reminder about payment dates for those who do not pay by standing order. The rest of the committee was re-elected as were the officers. We are pleased to be joined by Leighton Jones, principal horn of NYOW in the 60s, who works for a pharmaceutical company but still freelances with various chamber groups and orchestras around the country.

Membership Fees

It was agreed to increase membership Fees as follows:

Individual Membership	£20.00
Joint Membership	£35.00
Student Membership	£10.00

Additional benefits will be a Friends' Reception before the St David's Hall concert, a Manager's report and a free CD following each Summer course.

Printing

Our treasurer, Allan Grayson Jones, has been able to get our printing done by Pro-Copy, for which we are most grateful.

BBCNOW Collaboration 2010

This year's concert, conducted by Jac van Steen, is on **Friday, 22nd October at 7.00 p.m.** The programme consists of *Don Juan* by Richard Strauss, William Mathias's Piano Concerto (soloist Peter Donohue) and Brahms 1st Symphony.

Owain Arwel Hughes to Step Down After the 2010 Course

An appreciation from Matthew Jones, Youth Music Manager



In 2010 another chapter in the history of 'The Nash' will close as Owain Arwel Hughes' eight year tenure as Principal Conductor comes to an end.

From the outset in 2003, Owain set out his stall as a conductor who would not shy away from large scale, robust repertoire - Mahler, Shostakovich, Walton and Elgar have all been widely celebrated during his tenure - and who demanded from his young charges, the same work ethic and commitment as he would from any professional orchestra. He was never disappointed as, year after year, NYOW members would feed off his energy and passion for the music to produce some fantastic performances.

As well as providing the Orchestra with a varied programme of 'meaty' repertoire, there has been notable inclusion of Welsh repertoire over the eight years. In addition to

established repertoire from composers such as Alun Hoddinott, William Mathias, Grace Williams and Dan Jones, the NYOW has commissioned new work from Gareth Wood (2003) and from Brian Hughes in 2010.

Amongst the many highlights that have marked Owain's relationship with the NYOW, there are a few that stand apart from the others. In 2005, the NYOW travelled to Berlin to take part in the *Young Euro Classic Festival*, a tremendous showcase for our young musicians and an opportunity to perform at the impressive Konzerthaus am Gendarmenmarkt in the city; in 2006, in celebration of the Orchestra's 60th Anniversary year, a magnificent debut performance at the *Welsh Proms* with Julian Lloyd Webber as soloist followed by an equally exciting debut at the *Three Choirs Festival*; and in 2007, the Orchestra closed the summer season of concerts at 'La Mortella', on the Italian island of Ischia at the invitation of the late Lady William Walton.

More recently, performing alongside Hollywood actor Matthew Rhys, a return visit to the *Three Choirs Festival* and a first performance at the Sage Gateshead are all experiences that are indelibly printed in the minds of the Orchestra's members.

Collectively, the NYOW staff and players of the past eight years, extend their thanks and appreciation to Owain for his tremendous work with the Orchestra, resulting in an enhanced profile and programmes for the Orchestra that reflect his passion for music, young people and Wales.

Contact the Friends of NYOW:

By Post: 71 West Road, Bridgend CF31 4HQ.
Telephone: 01656 658762 E-mail: phippskathryn@hotmail.com

The Summer Course

Mathew Jones - Youth Music Manager, NYOW

The National Youth Orchestra of Wales is gearing itself up to give outgoing principal conductor, Owain Arwel Hughes a fitting send off with a fantastic programme of music and concerts this summer.

115 young musicians have been selected to represent Wales this summer and will rehearse at Lampeter University for a week before performing the closing concert of the Fishguard Festival at St. Davids Cathedral, a concert in Aberystwyth Arts Centre and a final concert in St. David's Hall, Cardiff.

The Orchestra has also been invited to open this year's North Wales International Music Festival in St. Asaph this September, reconvening specially for this concert and an afternoon per-

formance at the Royal Northern College of Music.

The Friends of the NYOW have joined forces with Ty Cerdd, and the North Wales and Fishguard International Festivals to commission a new work by Welsh composer Brian Hughes. Combine this with two of the Romantic period's most exciting pieces and this season's concerts promise a real treat.

All information for the concert tour can be found on the enclosed postcard and remember that Friends are able to claim a complimentary ticket for one of the NYOW promoted concerts, so please fill in the enclosed form and send it back to the NYOW office as soon as possible.

We look forward to seeing you in August.

Sad News of Former Members of NYOW

We are saddened by the recent announcements of the deaths of two former members of the Nash.

Mansel Bebb, who was a member of the violin section in 1956 and 1957, died in March this year. Many of our readers will remember him as the Personnel Manager of The Philharmonia Orchestra, for whom he worked for thirty years.

Peter Elias Jones, a violinist in the Nash between 1958 and 1963, died in May this year. He worked in television, starting out with TWW as a floor manager eventually becoming Assistant Controller Light Entertainment at HTV. He moved into independent television as a director at Antenna and Agenda. He continued playing the violin, becoming a member of the Cardiff Philharmonic Orchestra in 1995, whose concert on the 18th of June at Llandaff Cathedral will be dedicated to his memory.



Owain Arwel Hughes with the Pink Ladies Gwenllian Háf Richards, Lowri Preston, Annette Cox and Leah Evans, on the 2007 tour to Ischia.

News of Recent Members of NYOW

We would like to extend our congratulations to two recent members of the Nash.

Gwenllian Háf Richards has been appointed to the first violin section of BBC NOW

Gareth Sheppard has joined the double bass section of The Philharmonia.

Also well done to former member **Lucy Morgan** (leader of the viola section of NYOW) who recently completed the London Marathon, raising nearly £3000 for the charity Amser Justin Time.

Gwynne Edwards 1909–2000

String Tutor NYOW in the 1950s and 1960s

This article, written by his son Richard, was originally published in *The Daily Telegraph* on October 29, 2009.

As I laid flowers at his grave last month to mark his 100th birthday, I felt finally that I had truly found my father. Gwynne Edwards was 70 when I was born, and although he lived to within a month of my 21st birthday, I was too young to appreciate that he was one of the finest classical musicians of his era. It was only after his death, in 2000, that I realised I had failed to ask him so many questions about his extraordinarily rich and diverse life. Now, almost a decade on, I have done what perhaps every proud son should do - written the biography of my dad. It is a life that is deservedly being celebrated at a centenary concert on November 1, at Cadogan Hall.

I knew my father's CV: principal viola at the London Symphony Orchestra and Sinfonia of London, and co-principal of the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Royal Philharmonic; member of leading chamber ensembles and a fellow and professor at the Royal Academy of Music (RAM). But it was not until after his death, when my family received hundreds of tributes, that I realised the impact he had as a player and as a teacher. His teacher, Lionel Tertis, the forefather of British viola playing, wanted him to become a soloist; Sir Edward Elgar, much to Gwynne's pride, described him as a "colleague" when they met during a BBC concert series in 1932, and at Sir Thomas Beecham's Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the deep appreciation of musicianship he shared with the famous conductor formed an instant bond between them. The picture that emerged was that my father devoted his life to making beautiful music, and the brilliance of his viola playing still resonates in the memory of those who heard it. He produced a rich and vibrant tone on the instrument rarely heard before,

and was at the forefront of changing the viola's reputation as a poor relation to the violin.

In the course of my researches, I discovered a purple-inked letter and gold medal from 1926 when he received the highest ever marks for an Associated Board Grade 8 violin exam -149 out of 150. The examiner said he would have received the full quota, "but nobody's perfect".

The results took him to the RAM, where he converted to the viola and was recruited as a teenager by the founder of the Proms, Sir Henry Wood, to play in his Queen's Hall orchestra for the 1929 season. Over the next four decades, he met and worked with names which comprise a Who's Who of 20th-century classical music - Sir Adrian Boult, Arturo Toscanini, Igor Stravinsky, Sergei Rachmaninov, Arthur Rubinstein, Myra Hess, Pablo Casals, and when they were known as young prodigies, Jascha Heifetz and Yehudi Menuhin.

After service as a tank commander with the 22nd Dragoons, my father returned home - and played at the Coronation. A letter I discovered from William McKie, the director of music, urged Gwynne to do "everything in your power to make the orchestra worthy of so great an occasion, and representative of the nation's finest orchestral playing".

Despite his obvious pride, my father's memories of June 2, 1953, were rather less than epic. Westminster Abbey was so packed that each person had a maximum of 18 inches of seating, and the orchestra, in full evening dress, was crammed into a position high above the nave. The world was watching and listening as they played continuously for six hours, and the sense of occasion was mixed with the nagging thoughts: don't mess up, don't



drop a bow, and don't need the lava-tory

A decade or so later, in February 1967, my father made another kind of history when he played with the Beatles as one of the 40-strong orchestra to play on *A Day in the Life*, the last track of the *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* album. On YouTube, I found some shaky footage and, 52 seconds into the song's video, the camera pans in on Gwynne, frowning at the score in front of him and looking thoroughly bemused. He was paid the standard rate of 9 pounds per session. But it is not what he would have wanted to be remembered for, and when I want to remember him I simply put on his solo in his finest recording - Vaughan Williams's *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis*, conducted by Sir John Barbirolli - and think of the words of T S Eliot that were read at his funeral: "You are the music, while the music lasts".

BOOK OFFER

To mark the centenary of the birth of Gwynne Edwards, his son Richard, has written a book "**Gwynne Edwards: Musician, Teacher, Gentleman**" to celebrate his life

To order a copy for £10 please write a cheque to the 'Gwynne Edwards Memorial Fund' and post it with your details to:

Richard Edwards,
The Daily Telegraph,
111 Buckingham Palace Road,
London SW1W 0DT.

**** Proceeds go to the NYOW Gwynne Edwards viola prize.**

Kathryn Webber with more from the Archives

Continuing our series of excerpts from the NYOW Archives we look at articles from South Wales newspapers 1956-1960.

1956

"A long playing record of that actual performance (Edinburgh Festival, September 3rd 1955) is made available to the public by Qualiton. The record, QLP 1000 accommodates the whole symphony on two sides and is on sale at £1 19s 71/2d (including purchase tax)."

"Mr Irwyn Walters, director of NYOW photographed at Buckingham Palace with his wife and son when he attended to receive the OBE."

"His (Clarence Raybould's) fantastic energy, lively step and bright eyes belie the bald calendar entry that he has just celebrated his 70th birthday."

From "The Baker" – "The occasion was the 10th birthday celebration of NYOW at Guildhall, Swansea. Centre of attraction on the table was a 112lb cake. Some 9 ins high the cake was decorated with 10 daffodil scones each with its coloured candle, 2 iced harps and the orchestra badge. All the lettering was done in Welsh. 'Very tasty' was the verdict of Swansea mayor, Harry Libby."

"Somewhere in Britain an unsuspecting motorist can make music by simply open-

ing the boot of his car. That is where Julian Shelley and Terry Lewis put their fiddles by mistake (following a Brangwyn Hall concert). Police ask all owners of blue ten hp Standard cars to look in their luggage boots."

The following day the headline read "Lost chords found."

1957

"The most important day in the life of NYOW has just ended with a cheering audience in the Riviera Hall, Rotterdam. Speeches and flowers on the platform and the Dutch audience hand-shaking and back-slapping every Welshman they can find."

"As Alderman Llewellyn Heycock (WJEC) said in Leerdam 'the sacrifices of British young people 12 years ago enable another generation of young people to come to Holland, not with weapons of liberation, but with music.'"

But later in 1957 following the outstandingly successful tour of Holland the papers were gripped by the mystery of Irwyn Walters' disappearance from future plans for the orchestra released to the press by the WJEC which announced that Clarence Raybould would become conductor and music adviser to the orchestra. The furore continued for several days with Grace Williams entering the fray with "And, of course Irwyn Walters has been a brilliant

organiser. He has done wonderful work and it seems inhuman that he should be taken away from what he has created." A Swansea councillor demanded to know "the truth behind the affair" and a Carmarthenshire councillor declared "the people of Ammanford naturally want to see that he (I.W.) gets fair play." One article cited a clash of artistic personalities but the whole truth never did come out in the press. The WJEC stated "the new organisation is working smoothly and effectively and it is hoped that now this statement has been made there will be an end to criticisms which can only be harmful to the orchestra and disturbing to its members".

1959

"This year for the first time there have been two orchestras, one composed of the pick of 174 musicians who joined the course and the second consisting of less experienced players who are considered likely material for the orchestra of the future."

1960

"The orchestra's progress continues to give a healthy slap in the face to all those who criticise the younger generation of Wales."

"If we had to name the Seven Wonders of Wales NYOW would be as sure as Snowdon of a place among them."

Pictures from 1960 and 1961 from Justin Smith



Left: the Brass Section of 1960 giving their tutor Sidney Langstone (in the car behind) a spectacular send-off.

Below: the Woodwind of 1961 with their tutor Stephen Waters. See if you can spot our President, Karl Jenkins.



If anyone has any interesting stories and/or photographs of their time in the NASH which they would like to share with other Friends of NYOW please send them to us at the email address on the front of this Newsletter.



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