

STONELEIGH YOUTH ORCHESTRA NEWSLETTER

May 2010

Dear Parents and Players,

As I have now completed six months as Chairman, I thought this would be an opportune time to provide an update to the Stoneleigh community about various developments with the orchestra.

Membership

I'm pleased to report that membership levels are very healthy, with 63 players in the MO and 37 in the TO. We have had a total of 29 new players join the SYO (13 in the MO and 16 in the TO) as a result of the auditions in the 2009/10 year, and only 6 leave during the course of the year. Recruitment remains a key priority for us and over the past year we have stepped up our efforts on this front significantly, with mail shots to music directors and peripatetic teachers at over 130 schools in our catchment area, as well as to music teachers who operate outside schools. We are also taking steps to raise the external profile of Stoneleigh through posters as well as through advertisements in relevant magazines and concert programmes.

Our best marketing tool, of course, remain the Stoneleigh parents and players, and I urge you all to encourage potentially interested friends to come and sit in on a rehearsal and, if they like what they see, to arrange to audition. Our next Taster Day is June 20th, so please feel free to bring a friend along for all or part of that rehearsal. We will be holding auditions on 4th and 5th September. As a reminder, we offer a discount off your subscription fees for one year (£50 for the MO and £30 for the TO) for each new member you introduce, and who stays for a year, as an incentive to bring in new members!

As always, there are some instruments that we find it challenging to recruit, so any help with these would be greatly appreciated. Percussion is a real priority for us, and we will be offering scholarships covering up to the whole of the cost of membership to suitable candidates in September. We are also keen to add people in the following instruments in the MO: trombone, horn, tuba, and viola. In the TO, we would like to find additional players across the wind and brass sections as well as on viola.

Tour

The Tour is fast approaching and preparations, spearheaded by Elizabeth Hutchinson, are well under way. As a reminder, we will be leaving from St Paul's Community Centre on the afternoon of Friday 23rd July, returning there on Saturday 31st July. The group will be based in Figueres in Catalonia, and will be performing three concerts:

Monday 26th July: Basilica de Castello D'Empuries in Castello D'Empuries at 18.30

Tuesday 27th July: Sant Pere Pescador at 22.00

Thursday 29th July: Girona Cathedral at 20.30

Parents and friends are all very welcome to attend any of these concerts and support the orchestra.

Orchestra Plans for 2010/11

On the music front, we have some exciting plans, which I hope will enhance the whole Stoneleigh experience going forward. These have been made possible by some generous sponsorship we have been fortunate to receive. Adrian, Lindsay and Dan are still formulating their ideas for next year, but the initiatives being planned include:

- **Performances at dedicated concert venues:** Many of you commented to me how exciting it was for the orchestras to perform at a venue like the Royal Academy of Music, and we are now in a position to do all three of our concerts at comparable venues next season. The **12th December 2010** concert will take place at the Royal College of Music's Amaryllis Fleming Hall, an equally impressive venue. We will be returning to the RAM for the **27th March 2011** concert, and our **10th July 2011** concert will be at the 450 Hall, the outstanding new performing arts facility at Hampton School. Please put these dates in your diaries.
- **Soloists:** We are now in a position to work with some high profile soloists for some of our concerts and we are delighted to announce that Oliver Coates, an outstanding young cellist, and former SYO member, has agreed to perform the Dvorak Cello Concerto with us in December. You can read more about Ollie at his website (www.olivercoates.com). He has also kindly agreed to do a master class with the MO and TO cellists.
- **Training Orchestra sectionals:** We experimented with sectionals for the TO last term, and will now incorporate these as a regular part of the rehearsal programme each term going forward, in the same way that we do for the MO.
- **Music:** The conductors will be able to select from a wider range of music going forward, including pieces that are still in copyright and are therefore more costly for us to use.

Besides making for a richer experience for all the existing players, we hope these developments will also help us in attracting new members.

Fund-raising

It is a fact of life for any orchestra that its ability to do everything it would like is inevitably limited by the funds it has available. We endeavour to keep membership subscriptions as low as possible, but need to raise additional sums each year to fund our plans for the orchestras. We will be focusing on this area more over the next year, and have begun by looking at re-launching our Friends organisation. However, there are various ways that parents can also help (some of which are costless!):

- **Easy fund-raising:** This website (www.easyfundraising.org.uk) allows you to nominate a charity, and each time you shop online at most UK retailers' websites (including sites such as Amazon), SYO will receive a percentage of what you spend if you access their website through the easyfundraising portal. There is no additional cost to you.
- **Nectar:** If anyone has Nectar points they would like to donate to SYO, please let us know and we will help you to arrange this.
- **Gift Aid:** All membership subscriptions are eligible for Gift Aid, so please make sure you select this option when you fill in your membership forms each year.

If anyone has any suggestions for other ways of raising money or attracting sponsorship, please let one of the Committee members know.

Volunteers

SYO is a parent-run organisation, and we are always in need of additional people who are able to help us out. We recognise that everyone leads very busy lives, but if anyone feels able to lend assistance with some aspect of the running of the orchestras, particularly if you have any expertise in a relevant area, please let me know.

Finally, some news from our Conductors.....

Adrian Brown

Those who of you who attended the AGM in November will be aware that Adrian has announced his decision to stand down as Musical Director of Stoneleigh in December 2012 when he marks the 40th anniversary of taking on the role. His departure will leave an enormous void which the Committee will have the challenge of filling and this will be our key priority during the course of 2011. Fortunately, there is plenty of time to celebrate Adrian's many accomplishments and achievements with SYO, and we are delighted that we will have two more full seasons to enjoy under his baton before he leaves us.

Lindsay Ryan

You will be delighted to hear that Lindsay is expecting her first child. The baby is due on December 10th, which may make for an interesting finale to our December concert if it decides to arrive slightly late! I'm sure everyone will join me in wishing her well for the rest of her pregnancy.

As always, please don't hesitate to get in touch with me if you have feedback (positive or negative!) about what we are doing or ideas about how we can improve. I attend most rehearsals for at least part of the time, and am readily contactable via email and telephone.

Julian Hardwick

Stoneleigh
Youth
Orchestra