

# The Music Year

**I**n a year which has seen so much activity and, it has to be said, so much success it is not easy to review that year without fear of leaving something out! As I look through my file of the year it seems only a short time ago that I was rather rapidly teaching the Senior Choir the Marseillaise for the Memorial Service in honour of Captain Jean Maridor on the first Sunday of the year. They sang excellently, typical of the Benenden student mentality of delivering the goods when it matters. (Now if they can do it in rehearsals too !.....)

A new concert venue was tried out in September when staff and students gave a lunch time Prom concert in the Entrance Hall with items featuring the harpsichord. This proved to be a very popular venue and a further concert was held there just before Christmas. The level of music making in Prayers and School Services greatly increased throughout the year giving our performers invaluable exposure and an important input to these services.



The School Orchestra acknowledges applause, for the last time under the baton of Stephen Threlfall  
Speech Day 1995

## Autumn music...

In early October the School was host for the Voices for Hospices performance of the *Messiah*, part of a synchronised nationwide fundraising event. Many of our students took part in both the choir and orchestra in what was a happy and exhilarating event. This was closely followed by a concert given by our Music Scholars at Marlborough House School where they performed with great maturity and flair and enjoyed a marvellous supper as their reward. (Just ask Olivia Cotton about the amount of chocolate desserts!)

## Major event...

The major event of the Autumn Term was the first Benenden Music Festival. This incorporated the choral weekend as established in 1993 and represented a very successful blend of youth, adult, professional and amateur performers. This was epitomised by the performances of the Beethoven's *Concerto for Violin, Cello and Piano* given by the distinguished cellist Alexander Baillie and his two 16 year old daughters stunningly accompanied by the Hemsted Forest Youth Orchestra and Vaughan Williams *Serenade to Music*, per-

formed by Canzonetta, the 1992 Sainsbury Choir of the Year. A hectic weekend which also included concerts by Canzonetta alone and students from the Royal Academy of Music. This weekend, I feel, did much to make many aware of our School as part of the community and I know from many of the letters I was fortunate to receive that many had greatly appreciated our facilities and friendly hospitality. The powers of music!

## Highlights...

At this stage of my review I can sense the editor's pen, poised to say 'yes I can see that the Music Department's year was very full'. So in order to save further censure I will progress with a few highlights and award winners.

Following on from a Carol Service, which, from all accounts, seemed to have pleased everyone, we were fortunate to have recitals from many visiting teachers and performers which included a stimulating recital of 20th century songs given by the soprano Lesley Ann Dawes and husband Alistair; a stunning recital of Liszt transcriptions given by the vir-

tuoso pianist Leslie Howard; a stylistically interesting concert given by the Kazakstan-born Bekova Sisters Piano Trio and a concert given by our musicians in aid of Macmillan Nurses held at the School in February. This concert raised in excess of £700 and along with concerts for the RNLI in Rye, given by the HFYO in May and latterly at Smallhythe Church given by our scholars, musical performances raised in the region of £1800 this year.



*Competition success...*

Some of our musicians' successes included the performance of Jacob's *Concerto for Clarinet, Trumpet and Piano* played by Alexandra Roberts, Tabytha-Lee Hall and Lucinda Smallman which won the area round of the National Chamber Music Competition for Schools, wins at the Hastings Music Festival for Tabytha-Lee Hall and Lucinda Smallman, Advanced Certificate of the Associated Board status for Tabytha-Lee Hall (trumpet) and Barbara Leung (piano), participation in both the Audi National Young Musician contest and the Marlowe Young Musician of the Year by Yvonne Liao (selection for both of these contests is very hard), and Grade 8 passes for a number of students including a distinction for Hannah Harper in piano: this automatically makes her eligible for application for an Associated Board scholarship.

*And finally...*

The music department has seen a few changes this year which began when Peta Anderson, a very popular member of the team, decided to leave at the end of the Autumn Term in order to get married. She had done much to galvanize the Junior Choir as well as academic music, particularly in the Lower School. Happily not only did she hold her wedding reception at the School but she has since returned to lead the double bass section in our various concerts.

Also leaving this Summer are Nancy Strevens, one of our long standing flute teachers, who has given the School many years of service, Leslie Young who has left to head the piano faculty at Colchester College and Andrew Stowell, our bassoon teacher, who is second bassoon at English National Opera. Our Head of Academic Music, Paul Smith is also leaving, having secured the post of Head of Instrumental Studies at Alleyn's School in Dulwich. This position will combine both his academic talents along with his inexhaustible skills as an accompanist. We wish them all well.

Nearing the end of this brief (!)



**Tabytha-Lee Hall  
Advanced Certificate of  
Associated Board  
and  
Soloist in the  
Jean Maridor  
Memorial Dedication Service**



**Peta and Jo Andrews**

report I cannot help feeling some sadness as I shall be leaving also this summer as I have been very fortunate in becoming Director of Music at Chetham's School of Music in Manchester. As many of you will know, this is one of only four specialist music schools in the country. I hope that I have left Benenden in a happy, musical position and that the perception of its students as part of the community continues to grow, and the prime importance of music in the lives of everyone has been established. I look forward to returning next April when I shall give a concert with the Philharmonic Chamber Strings. I am sure that the future of music at Benenden is in secure hands and I take this opportunity in thanking everyone who has contributed their time and effort towards its success and sending my best wishes to my capable successor, Neil Vanburgh.

Stephen Threlfall  
Director of Music

**NEW VENUE!**

**On Friday, 23 September the Music Department inaugurated a new venue for lunchtime concerts: the Entrance Hall became the 'drawing room' after lunch, for a Prom concert.**

One almost felt inappropriately dressed in 20th century costume, such was the atmosphere of a bygone ease and elegance created in this setting by the music of Flackton, Moffat, Vanhal, Handel and Haydn. The strings, played variously and at times with virtuosity, by Sarah Johnson, Hannah Harper, Lucinda Smallman, Abigail Burton, Mr Threlfall and Mrs Lewis, were accompanied on the harpsichord either by Mrs Harmsworth, Mrs Lewis or Mr Smith, and the concert concluded with the grace and charm of Alexandra Roberts's treble recorder. Rare delights!

Chris Moat  
Head of Geography

# GCSE Music Compositions

Anneline Groves.

## Woodwind Trio

*adagio  
expressivo*

fl  
ob  
cl

Gemma Perkins

## CONTRASTS

In the style of Messiaen's  
"Quatuor pour la fin du temps".

*comme un oiseau. (♩=80)*

① *8ve*

Picc. *pp*

Triang. *p*

*Bien modéré, et pondroisement harmonieux*

*pp Legato (très enveloppé de pédale)*

*soft pedal molto ppp*

II

## Musical Magic and a Plea

First, the plea: there are now so many excellent musical events in the School that your dedicated correspondent cannot cover anything like all of them, even with the enthusiastic help of Miss Moat - so come on, girls - do some reviewing yourselves and submit your efforts, which need only be brief, to the Magazine's editor, who, although he is the correspondent mentioned above, is not simply trying to avoid work!

On to much happier things: the recital at the very start of the Autumn Term was especially pleasing because of the appearance of David Elwin, who injured his hand on the last occasion he and Dorothy Maxwell were to play for us. This time there was no such problem and the occasion was well worth waiting for, with works by Poulenc and Schubert exhibiting skilled teamwork as well as sensitivity and expressiveness of a high order. This was rounded off with a splendid Constant Lambert rarity. One of the delights of the Benenden recital season is the number of exciting but relatively little-known works which figure in programmes.

This was certainly the case in the winter recital given by Lesley Ann Dawes, accompanied by her husband Alistair. After her memorable concert of European songs the previous year, this impressed not only by the quality of the musicianship but also by the quality of the solely 20th century English works included, reminding us, if such a reminder were needed, that England is definitely NOT 'the land without music'. The songs by Bridge, Finzi, Britten and Berkeley were quite splendidly and expressively performed and this concert too had its unusual element: Alison Bauld's *Banquo's Buried*, a musical version of Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking scene. On me, this had a very powerful impact indeed and it was a pity that so few of those studying the play seemed to be in the Hall to hear it.

Hard on the heels of the song recital came a second piano duet

concert given by Paul Smith and his wife Carole Presland. Lucky Allyn's, one is tempted to say. The programme was divided between Barber's *Souvenirs*, which I did not know and Ravel's *La Valse*, which I knew only in the original orchestral version; this had been transcribed for four hands by L. Garban. I need not have worried; not only did my attention not wander at all but I was held throughout by the marvellously assured and musical playing of both pianists which never faltered in these very testing pieces.

Towards the end of the Summer Term I was lucky enough to hear



Arcata String Quartet

performed a work very familiar to me: Ravel's beautiful *String Quartet*. What was unfamiliar here was the explanation by the performers, the Arcata Quartet, of some of Ravel's methods, especially his use of *pizzicato*. Surprisingly, these explanations did not 'murder to dissect'; the music sounded just as fine as ever and just as mysterious but afterwards one could reflect on the composer's creative genius and wonder at the art which truly makes something from nothing. Much was the music that I had to miss, notably Liane Keegan and Leslie Howard in late June but Benenden provides innumerable opportunities to listen and enjoy - take them!

Alexander Stiller  
English Department

## Benenden Music Festival

**Benenden's weekend-long inaugural music festival, which took place in mid-November, involved an astonishing range of people.**

The age span of the listeners and those who joined us as participants, stretched across about seven decades. Professionals, students, parents, staff and members of the local community came together in various groupings for different activities. The adrenalin flowed freely and there was an exhilarated atmosphere throughout the weekend.

It all got off to a gentle start on the Friday evening with a chamber concert by four prize-winning students from the prestigious Royal Academy of Music. Julia Thornton (harp), Emma Ramsdale (harp), Rachel Brazier (flute) and Julia Graham (cello) fragrant in their coloured taffeta dresses entertained us with chamber music played on their rather unusual combination of instruments. I especially enjoyed Rossini's *Andante con Variazioni for flute and harp* because the two instruments blend so beautifully and yet, apart from in Mozart's famous concerto, they are rarely heard together.

*Hard work...*

Saturday morning was when the hard work started for amateurs like me. We had less than thirty six hours in which to prepare a performance of Beethoven's *Mass in C*. Although we'd been working on it for some weeks at senior choir practices, there was still a great deal of work to be done. Mr Threlfall took us through it all together first - and, with all respect to those valiant gentlemen Mr Baylis and Mr Moore who come along to rehearsals every week to sing the bass and tenor lines, the music immediately sounds and feels quite different when a sizable group of male singers joins in.

### Learning a lot...

Later we split up for the sectional rehearsals with which whole group sessions were interspersed. My group - altos - was very fortunate in being taught and helped, at different points in the weekend by two professionals: Kate Hardie and Jeffrey Wynn Davies. What a lot we learned and how satisfying it is when the music gradually emerges from the difficult notes on the page. Every note, cadence and rhythm gradually became clearer until it was almost second nature.

Even the meals and breaks were fun because there were so many different people to talk to. 'I think Stephen Threlfall's absolutely terrific,' one lady told me. She had come from Headcorn with a group of friends, having seen the weekend mentioned in the *Wealden Advertiser*. 'Can't you persuade him to start a regular community choir? We'd all come,' she went on. A number of girls had the pleasure of singing alongside their parents in the choir, or in some cases parents of orchestra members joined in as singers. Plenty of staff, their spouses and friends were in evidence too.

### Indefatigable accompanists...

While we were learning our choral parts, elsewhere in the building the Hemsted Forest Youth Orchestra was rehearsing, joined at one stage on Saturday by the Baillie family. During Saturday afternoon the sixteen members of Canzonetta arrived from Manchester to rehearse with the orchestra and in some cases with Mrs Lewis - she, like Mr Smith worked indefatigably playing accompaniments throughout the weekend. Saturday, thanks to Mr Threlfall's careful planning ran very smoothly - although co-ordinating all the things which had to be fitted in must have been extremely tricky to get right.

The highlight of Saturday, however, was the evening concert by Canzonetta. This newish group won the coveted BBC TV Sainsbury's Choir of the Year in 1992 and anyone who heard them at Benenden will understand why. Conducted by the

charismatic Jeffrey Wynn Davies, they sang crisply and with impeccable intonation, music from Morley to Messiaen. Their programme also included a delightful work comprising six short poem settings by the famous Thea Musgrave, composed especially for them. Four members of the group sang beautiful solos and the evening ended with unforgettable renderings of three folk songs. All in all it was a delightful concert which enraptured everyone present. If you missed it, take the first opportunity you get to hear Canzonetta sing - they've released their first CD since their visit to Kent.

Sunday morning found us tidying up the loose ends in our Beethoven Mass and, as always in the final rehearsals of a large choral work putting choir, orchestra and soloists together. Canzonetta provided the soloists for the Mass and how good they were! The remaining Canzonetta members had agreed to sing with the choir which, naturally, helped to boost the confidence of any timid amateur who was still feeling a bit nervous about the forthcoming performance.

### Final concert...

After lunch and one more brief rehearsal, it was time to rest for an hour and then change into our formal gear in readiness for the climax of the weekend - the final concert at 4pm. The hall was full and the atmosphere expectant when proceedings began with Canzonetta's rendering of the wistful *Serenade to Music, for sixteen solo voices*. It was beautifully accompanied by our own Hemsted Forest Youth Orchestra, ably led by Jamila Groves who had a considerable amount of solo work in

this piece, which she executed with poise, accuracy and aplomb.

### Beethoven for three...

For me, though, the most exciting performance of the entire weekend came next. Beethoven's triple concerto - for cello, violin and piano is breathtakingly lovely although, regrettably, it doesn't get performed very often because it needs three soloists. Our treat was to hear Alexander Baillie, internationally renowned cello virtuoso, play this gem of a concerto with his talented daughters: Helena (violin) and Martina (piano). It came off magically, in spite of their never having performed it in public before. The sense of vibes - musical and familial - passing between and amongst the three, was palpable. The orchestra played beautifully in support and I feel very privileged to have heard this concerto played in this place by these astonishing people.

Then, after the interval we sang and played our Beethoven Mass. Perhaps it isn't for me as a participant to pass any comment on how it sounded. Suffice it to say that I thoroughly enjoyed learning it and singing it - the audience clapped and clapped and lots of people said nice things afterwards.

It was a wonderful weekend. Thanks to Stephen Threlfall, staff in the music department and the many people who helped in a whole host of different ways to make it such a success.

Susan Elkin  
English Department



After the concert

## Senior Choir and Chamber

### *The Year Reviewed...*

The standards of performance of both the Senior Choir and the Chamber Choir have gone from strength to strength this year and, under the direction of Mr Threlfall, both groups have put in many appearances, both at Benenden and further afield.

The Senior Choir began by performing in the concert at the end of the second, annual Benenden Festival Chorus Weekend. They gave an accomplished and professional rendition of Beethoven's *Mass in C* together with the Hemsted Forest Youth Orchestra and the rest of the Benenden Festival Chorus, which consisted of staff, parents, friends and Canzonetta, who were the BBC's and Sainsbury's Choir of the Year in 1992.

The Choir also sang Faure's *Pavane* with the HFYO in March, which went very well, especially as the number of Choir members was significantly reduced, a large number being members of the Orchestra. However the full complement returned in the summer to perform in Canterbury Cathedral with the King's School and Simon Langton School. The works performed were by Elgar, Vaughan Williams and Borodin and the concert was valuable experience for all concerned, especially as there was very limited rehearsal time.

The Chamber Choir has improved greatly this year, tackling such repertoire as three of Rachmaninov's *Six Pieces for Female Chorus*. Especially taxing was the task of singing in Russian. We overcame that hurdle but were unconvinced about copying the facial expressions Mr Threlfall seemed to use every time he started to speak the language! We performed at both of the charity concerts in the Easter Term and the final concert of the year at Smallhythe Church, which was described by one local as 'magical' - a fitting tribute to all the hard work of students and staff.

I would like to extend a huge thank you to Mr Threlfall, Mrs Lewis and Mr Smith for their dedication this year and we shall also miss the membership of Sixth Form leavers Jamila Groves and Elizabeth Daniels, both of whom have conducted the Chamber Choir as part of their A Level Music. Their work has been much appreciated and we wish them all luck in the future.

Alexandra Roberts  
Head of Choir

## Associated Board

### PIANOFORTE

- Grade 1**  
Isabel Clement *Distinction*  
Victoria Pilkington-Miksa
- Grade 2**  
Julia Piechoczek *Merit*
- Grade 3**  
Emma Buzzard  
Serena Carter *Merit*  
Natasha Pobjoy  
Jay Stephenson-Clarke
- Grade 4**  
Katie Riesco  
Zanthe Walker  
Harriet Witheridge
- Grade 5**  
Elizabeth Daniels  
Sophie Hall
- Grade 6**  
Victoria Sham  
Anneline Groves *Merit*
- Grade 7**  
Minesha Wong
- Grade 8**  
Jamila Groves  
Hannah Harper *Distinction*

### VIOLA

- Grade 5**  
Zoe Bedford
- Grade 7**  
Sarah Johnson *Distinction*
- Grade 8**  
Jamila Groves

### VIOLONCELLO

- Grade 2**  
Clementine Shipp
- Grade 3**  
Siobhan Callaghan  
Supaporn Wattanakul *Merit*
- Grade 4**  
Minesha Wong *Merit*
- Grade 5**  
Emma Parfitt  
Alexandra Seddon

### FLUTE

- Grade 4**  
Gemma Perkins *Merit*  
Julia Wells
- Grade 7**  
Jessica Alford

### DESCANT RECORDER

- Grade 5**  
Sophie Johnstone

### CLARINET

- Grade 2**  
Victoria Glasson *Merit*
- Grade 5**  
Suzannah Gunn  
Lindsay Noton  
Alice Pulman
- Grade 7**  
Helena de Chair  
Holly Vernon-Smith
- Grade 8**  
Alexandra Roberts *Merit*

### OBOE

- Grade 1**  
Charlotte Hutley *Distinction*
- Grade 3**  
Harriet Witheridge

### TRUMPET

- Advanced Certificate**  
Tabytha-Lee Hall

### SAXOPHONE

- Grade 2**  
Elizabeth Heneage
- Grade 4**  
Sylvia Ng

### SINGING

- Grade 1**  
Amelia Calvert *Merit*  
Davinia Pearson  
Sophie Hall *Merit*
- Grade 2**  
Kate Buzzard *Merit*  
Anna Steel *Distinction*
- Grade 5**  
Ada Law
- THEORY**

- Grade 1**  
Emma Buzzard  
Alice Moss *Distinction*  
Natasha Pobjoy *Distinction*  
Lucy Gilbert *Distinction*  
Sarah Foley *Distinction*
- Grade 2**  
Victoria Dorich *Distinction*  
Emily Jones  
Catherine Langdon  
Katie Riesco *Distinction*  
Anna Riesco *Distinction*  
Lucinda Watts
- Grade 3**  
Nicola Robinson *Distinction*
- Grade 5**  
Alice Pulman  
Rommaneeya Tingsabadh