



NEWSLETTER

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Chairman's Notes
from Malcolm Rowson
(Tel: 01926-491785)
e-mail
rowson@donax.demon.co.uk

Helga Brownfield

At the beginning of June we heard the sad news of the death of Helga who had been both a much valued cellist in the orchestra and an active committee member. Helga had battled bravely with cancer and only recently been forced to end her playing activities. She joined the WSO in 2000, shortly after her move to Warwick from Somerset where she had taught English until her retirement. A former member of the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain, she was not only a fine cellist but also a helpful and strong supporter of the WSO as well as a singer with Warwick Collegium.

Callum Smart

It is wonderful news that Callum, whom audiences will remember as the brilliant 13 year old soloist in our October concert last year, has been successful in two important competitions. He was a prizewinner in the under sixteen section of the Yehudi Menuhin International Competition in Oslo in March, and one of the three finalists in this year's BBC Musician of the Year Competition in May. He performed the Mendelssohn *Violin Concerto* on BBC2 and will return on 18 June next year to play the *Dvořák Violin Concerto* with the Warwickshire Symphony Orchestra – a performance not to be missed

50 years with the WSO

I have just realised that it is 50 years since I joined the WSO. The time has passed amazingly quickly since my first concert which was in Leamington Town Hall and conducted by John Strickson, then also organist at Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon. The leader was the late Florence Astley and the main piece we played was Karl Goldmark's *Rustic Wedding Symphony*.

Chopin Concerto

The new season begins at the **Guy Nelson Hall Warwick on 16 October at 7.30pm** with one of Mendelssohn's most famous pieces, *Fingal's Cave*, otherwise known as the *Hebrides Overture*. The first version, composed in 1830, displeased Mendelssohn and his final version was first performed in London in 1832. Wagner described it as, "One of the most beautiful pieces we possess." This wonderfully descriptive overture was based on 24 bars of music which Mendelssohn wrote while walking in the Scottish Highlands and coming across the caverns of Staffa.

Next in the opening programme is *Piano Concerto No. 1 Opus 11 in E minor* by Frederick Chopin, written in 1829 in Poland when the composer was only 19. Although called the first of his two piano concertos it was in fact the second. Its first performance, in Warsaw with the composer at the keyboard, was most warmly received and was Chopin's last public appearance in his native country before he left to become a permanent resident in France. The composer later reflected, "I was not the slightest bit nervous and I played as I play when I'm alone. It went well and the bravos were deafening." The WSO is so fortunate to have as its soloist on this occasion one of the greatest pianists in the world, Peter Donohoe CBE and Patron of the WSO. His performances this year include concertos with the Warsaw Philharmonic, recitals in Moscow and St. Petersburg, and a chamber music tour of Ireland with the Radio Telefis Eireann Vanbrugh Quartet. Don't miss this opportunity in Warwick to hear one of the great romantic concertos, played on a specially hired Steinway piano and by a renowned soloist.

The concert ends with a lesser known work by a well known composer, Prokofiev's *Symphony No 7 Opus 131 in C# minor*. This Symphony was



Peter Donohoe

commissioned by the Children's Division of Moscow Radio who asked for 'a simple symphony for young listeners'. Written only five months prior to the composer's death, it was tumultuously received in communist Russia. The Soviet newspaper Pravda claimed that Prokofiev aimed in his symphony 'to create beautiful, delicate music to satisfy the aesthetic demands of artistic tastes of the Soviet people' and that the first movement spans the distance from a child's fairy tale and romantic dreams 'to the first aspirations of active youth'. The first performance in Moscow, October 1952 proved to be the last public concert which Prokofiev attended.

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From Kitchen to Conservatoire!

fff - Food, Fitness & the Flute

A profile of Celia Mills, principal flautist in the WSO and member of the woodwind staff of the Warwickshire County Music Service

Brought up in Cheshire, Celia after showing promise on the recorder at junior school, moved to the flute. Her grandfather, a music lover, found her an instrument, a Boosey & Hawkes Regency model whose end regularly fell off! She later changed to a Yamaha and now is the proud possessor of a solid silver, Osten-Brannen American flute. Her early experience of group playing was in a Military Band in Poynton but as her standard improved she was able to join Alderley Edge Orchestra, progressing to Wilmslow Symphony and the Stockport Festival Orchestras. She fondly remembers taking part as flute and principal piccolo in great works such as Berlioz *Grande Messe des Morts* and Britten's *War Requiem*.



This seemed to cause her boss to develop an antipathy against the flute, Celia's first encounter with a 'flute phobic'!

After leaving school Celia joined the family restaurant business but maintained her strong relationship with music, not only by performing but also by developing her teaching skills at a Saturday morning Music School. Her career in catering developed and she took her 'pastry expertise' to the ICI pharmaceutical site where she was the only girl in a kitchen of 8 chefs. She enjoyed the camaraderie which helped deal with the many stressful deadlines involved in feeding 3,000 employees but also recalls some of the less palatable events that took place. On one occasion an unpopular chef was thrown into a nearby pond, on another in protest against the failure to replace tattered oven cloths, several cloths were 'accidentally' ignited under a smoke alarm! As time went on Celia found it more and more difficult to reconcile her interest in flute playing with her shift pattern in catering. She tried hard to keep the two ongoing but did not find her supervisor at all sympathetic. In order to keep up her progress on the flute she found a spot near to his office where she could practise in her off duty time – often at 7.00am.

As time went on Celia knew that she needed to break away from the catering work and go for a career involving music. She embarked on what she calls her 'Educating Rita experience' and set about acquiring the necessary qualifications to fulfil the strict university requirements. Celia recalls, "It was tough working full-time and cramming the study into every spare minute." Eventually she gained a place at Bangor University where she achieved a first in music – the only one in her year. At this stage in her life another of her keen interests began to mature. She took up cross country running along the coast line of North Wales. Celia also did vacation work at a trekking centre where she had to run out across fields to collect the horses and then ride bareback to the centre and vice versa. After graduation she worked the long vacation as a seasonal assistant in South Wales at a Youth Hostel and it was here that her cross country activity turned to fell running.

After Bangor University, Celia was contemplating a teaching career. However, she also wanted to achieve a higher performance standard and did this by studying under Elena Duran as

a postgraduate student at Birmingham Conservatoire. In 1999 she moved to Warwick as member of the woodwind staff of the County Music-Service and subsequently, following the sad loss of Graham Smith, joined the WSO as principal flute. Celia continues to stay extremely fit, along with her partner Mike, a specialist heart vet - also a runner.

She is a member of the Calder Valley fell running team competing in the English fell championships.

One of her most memorable running achievements is completing the *Bob Graham Round*, a 64 mile mountain course comprising a total of 29,000 feet of ascent, in just over 24 hours. Celia's *Everest* achievements lend a whole new meaning to the WSO *fortississimo* [fff]!

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Beyond the Stave!

Edward Elgar, the figure-head of music in England, is a composer whose rank it is neither prudent nor indeed possible to determine. Either it is one so high that only time and posterity can confer it or else he is one of the Seven Humbugs of Christendom.



George Bernard Shaw,
Music and Letters (1920)