



October 2011

www.wso.org.uk

Chairman's Notes from Malcolm Rowson

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Guy Woolfenden

A rare event in Guy's programme of activity is that he has to miss conducting a WSO concert. Since 1972 he has conducted almost every one of over 160 concerts including those abroad in Brühl, Germany, and Sceaux and Villebon in France. Currently he is convalescing successfully after an operation. He intends to be back for the December concert and we extend to him our very best wishes. We are very grateful to Roger Coull for taking over as guest conductor and you will note that he is profiled on page two of this newsletter.

Nick Welch

For the October concert we are also without one of our longstanding players, Nick Welch, leader of the double basses. Nick unfortunately suffered a stroke some weeks ago and is currently in Victoria Ward at Warwick Hospital. I'm sure all our supporters as well as our players, join me in sending him our good wishes.

2011-12 Concerts

Next season's brochure of programmes is available. Anyone wishing to receive a copy by email please contact me at chairman@wso.org.uk. It's not too late to book for the 4 remaining subscription concerts and supporters can save £2 per concert by completing the enrolment form which is available from me or Di Billington, the ticket secretary.

WSO A.G.M.

The orchestra's AGM will be held at 9.00pm on Wed 9th November in the Lower School Hall at Myton School. Visitors interested to hear reports on the orchestra's activities over the past year are welcome. We are always looking for assistance in areas such as publicity and marketing. We also welcome any supporters who are prepared to advertise in our programme.

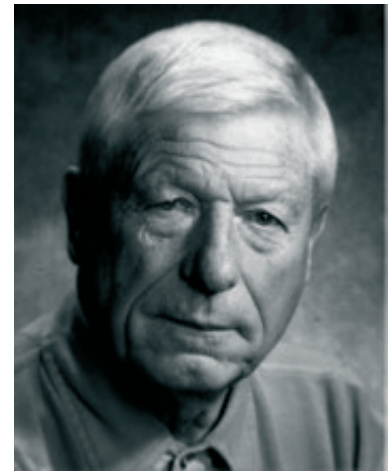
John Woodvine narrates Cinderella

The engaging title, *The Lost Slipper*, describes one of the themes of our ever popular Christmas Family concert at the Guy Nelson Hall, Warwick School on Sunday 11 December beginning at 3.00pm. The story of Cinderella features in two of the principal items, Prokofiev's enchanting ballet music and Paul Reade's beautiful composition for narrator and orchestra.

Last season the Birmingham Royal Ballet produced a stunning performance of Prokofiev's Cinderella and although the WSO will not have time to play a whole suite from the ballet we hope that a discreet selection will recreate some of the magic and revive vivid memories for those who were fortunate enough to attend the Birmingham performance.

As narrator for the story of Cinderella we welcome the return of the celebrated RSC and TV Actor and John Woodvine. This is his third visit to the WSO as narrator. He told the story of *Peter and the Wolf* in 2000 and *Cinderella* in 2007. John's acting career has been long and highly successful. With the RSC in acclaimed productions, he was Banquo in *Macbeth* opposite Ian McKellen and Judi Dench; and played Ralph Nickleby in *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby*. In television he has often been cast in police dramas, appearing in *Z Cars* and *Softly Softly*, starring as Inspector Kingdom in *New Scotland Yard* and as PC Stamp's father in *The Bill*. Like so many great actors he has appeared in *Coronation Street* – as a lorry driver way back in 1965 and as Alan Hoyle, Charlotte Hoyle's father in 2010. Added to this is much success both in films and on the London stage.

The second theme of this year's concert is emphatically that of Christmas, from Leroy Anderson's medley of carols at the beginning to carols for all at the end. *Men of Goodwill* by Benjamin Britten is a brief



set of variations on, *God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen*; Waldteufel's, *Les Patineurs*, the Ice Skaters' Waltz, is a seasonal piece; Polonaise by Rimsky-Korsakov is taken from his opera, *Christmas Eve*, and Cinderella is an all time Christmas favourite. Don't miss this attractive programme – book as soon as possible!

ORDER YOUR TICKETS NOW

contact the Ticket Secretary

**Mrs. Diana Billington,
on 01926 850385,
or by writing to her at
21, Fishponds Road,
Kenilworth. CV8 1EX,
or by e-mail at
boxoffice@wso.org.uk .**

Beyond the Stave!

Shostakovich: What do you think of Puccini?

Britten: I think his operas are dreadful.

Shostakovich: No, Ben, you are wrong. He wrote marvellous operas, but dreadful music.

[Quoted in Harewood, *The Tongs and the Bones* 1981]



More than a Cool Fiddler

is Roger Coull, guest conductor for the WSO October 2011 concert

The Coull Quartet has long been a household name for the internationally renowned group formed by Roger and his friends in 1974. It came about because of Roger's intense interest in chamber music while studying at the Royal Academy of Music in London. Encouragement came under the tutelage of Sydney Griller and further coaching by members of the Amadeus quartet leading to the position of Quartet in Residence at Warwick University in 1977 in succession to the Fitzwilliam Quartet.

One might be forgiven for assuming in these days of musical dynasties that Roger came from a musical background. This is not the case, his only relative who might be termed musical was a grandfather who played the bagpipes. It was to some extent a miracle that Roger ever studied music at all. At Selhurst Grammar School in South Norwood it was an annual tradition for the elderly music master to assemble the younger pupils and ask for volunteers to play orchestral instruments. At the age of 11 Roger was offered this opportunity and was just about to raise his hand to volunteer for the violin when his friend cautioned him saying, "Don't play that it's too difficult!" It wasn't until a year later when the opportunity occurred again that a more determined Roger decided he was going to have a try. The rest is still not history because the teaching turned out to be so frustrating that at 14 Roger nearly stopped playing. The situation was eventually saved by the arrival of a new violin teacher, Anthony Saltmarsh, a well known solo violinist who gave Wigmore Hall recitals and it was his inspiration and guidance which crucially pointed his pupil in the direction of a career in music.

Roger soon joined a number of local orchestras including the Croydon Youth Orchestra which had previously numbered in its ranks a good number of players who went on to great things including a horn player, Guy Woolfenden. Another youth orchestra that he joined at its inception was the Croydon Youth Philharmonic Orchestra in which the system of enrolment was a curious one as far as Roger was concerned. Some fifty violinists were assembled by the conductor, Arthur Davidson, and without audition organised into desks of firsts and seconds. Even more curiously the conductor pointed to Roger, a grade 4 violinist, and said, "You will lead!" The first piece they played was *Capriccio Espagnol* containing many demanding



solos and somehow after the most intense private practice, Roger succeeded in mastering the notes and has never looked back on leadership since then. Before entering the Royal Academy at 18, he led various local orchestras including the Croydon Schools Music Centre Orchestra.

It was in Roger's late teens that the seed of his ambition to play chamber music was sown during a visit to an orchestral course in Germany where he played for the first time, and was bowled over by, the famous Schubert String Quintet in C. In 1972 when he won a place at the Royal Academy of Music, he was determined not only to develop further his orchestral experience with fellow students who included the young Simon Rattle but also to explore the string quartet repertoire. With friends, Philip Gallaway [violin], David Curtis [viola] and Martin Thomas [cello], he founded his own quartet as a kind of extra mural activity.

As a professional musician Roger has not confined himself just to playing. Serendipitously he has also taken up the baton as a conductor. One such occasion was when leading the Guernsey Symphony Orchestra, the conductor, Owain Arwel Hughes was prevented from arriving owing to thick fog and Roger was asked to take over and discovered that he relished the

opportunity. Since then he has conducted the orchestra regularly. He also conducts the Warwick University String Orchestra, The Cleveland Youth Orchestra and is Associate Conductor with the Beauchamp Sinfonietta. He notes there is considerable similarity between leading and conducting in that the importance of gestures is paramount in both.

Musicians are sometimes completely absorbed by their art and have no time for other pursuits. With Roger this is not the case. At his farm house off the Banbury Road he helps his wife Jo to look after the 8 acre smallholding with the two horses, two dogs, three cats and ten chickens! He is a keen skier and regular visitor to the Val D'Isère in the French Alps, rides a 1200cc BMW motorcycle, has dismantled and reassembled cars and made various items of furniture. His way of keeping fit is by pedalling the 38 miles on his carbon fibre, road-race bike to Worcester on the occasional Sunday to join his wife for a pub meal and then be driven back home. In 2012 he completed the charity cycle ride from London to Paris in aid of MacMillan Nurses.

Looking to the future Roger highlights an event in the Coull Quartet diary for the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad. The quartet have gained a prestigious commission with composer Joe Cutler, entitled 'Ping!' Its premier is at Warwick University starting at 10.00am on Saturday 3 March and is an **all day** celebration of music & table tennis. It will explore the sounds and rhythms that table tennis players can make and there are more details on the Coull Quartet website www.coullquartet.com

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