

DON'T LOSE THE THREAD

No 44

The Newsletter of The Cobweb Orchestra

Summer 2009

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Terrible Twos

Those of us who have brought up children will have experienced to some degree or other this assertion of independence. Tantrums, difficult behaviour etc., oh what joys!

I'm glad to report that none of these appear to apply to our achievement of independence for the Cobweb Orchestra. We have learnt fast and I think can now confidently stand on our own feet. The books balance – just. We seem to have achieved a comfortable balance of activities which now includes fund raisers which are usually good fun as well as raising much needed funds.

Our six regular groups go from strength to strength and anyone living in the Northern Region should be able to access one of them.

The last year has seen an amazing variety of study days and concert events - Andy and Liz never cease to amaze us all with their versatile abilities. What wonderful opportunities to play symphonies by Mahler, Vaughan Williams and Berlioz to name but a few.

We now have a viable instrument bank so if you ever fancied taking up a second or third instrument now could be a good time to take up the challenge.

Nothing stands still and elsewhere in this newsletter you will find details of future plans and events. Remember we welcome your feedback and are always open to new ideas so be sure to let us know your thoughts.

Thank you to everyone who has taken part as without you we couldn't make such music. Keep coming and encourage your friends to join us. Hopefully by doing so we can sustain our development and continue to grow into a stable, well rounded organisation.

Howard Rocke (Chair of Trustees)

What's next?

Every Cobweb Orchestra event is a collaboration: At the very least we have to collaborate with venues and their managers because we don't have any of our own, and we also often need to work in partnership with arts officers, professional musicians, local community leaders, education establishments, cultural institutions, the press, music publishers and libraries, other orchestras and choirs, funders and other supporters..... I'm getting stressed just by listing them.

Not that I ever become stressed by the endless negotiations (sometimes known as chats over cups of coffee), which may or may not lead to interesting developments for the orchestra. I'm aware that most Cobweb players only get to know about such developments if they lead to an event which appears in the diary, so, in the spirit of openness following the expenses scandal (I never did claim for all those coffees), here are a few outcomes of some recent discussions.

- 1) **University of Durham, Queen's campus at Stockton.** This has quickly grown into a very exciting partnership in which the University's Endeavour Orchestra will work closely with our Middlesbrough group. Also, we have moved our ever-expanding library into a room on campus, (so much more convenient than the undersized cupboard in a Bishop Auckland Community Centre where it has been for the last year) and are planning a Cobweb Big Meeting at the University next Summer. If all the Cobweb players from all the weekly groups (and none) descended on Teesside at the same time, would we make it into the Guinness book of records?
- 2) **Sage, Gateshead.** The quarterly events held in **Northern Rock Hall** over the last year have been very successful and will continue. We've agreed dates through to 2011. In addition, in September, we start a 10 week residency to see if we can establish a daytime rehearsal group on Tyneside. For years, people have been lobbying for two things; a weekly group in Newcastle/Gateshead and a chance to play during daylight hours Monday to Friday. These two requests have magically come together in the **Residency**, so I hope lots of you will turn up and tell all your friends to come too. As it's to be a new group, less experienced players will be made especially welcome. There will not be pre-enrolment for these sessions, but please see the diary entry below and e-mail Liz to say if you intend coming.
- 3) **The Leaders Group.** Thoughtful discussion has resulted in the group deciding to not use up all **Guinea Pig Orchestra** meetings for their own baton practice, but to open up **conducting opportunities** to everybody, as we used to. So, if you want to try your hand conducting a wonderfully co-operative bunch of players, put aside Sunday 18th October and sign up quickly when the enrolment form comes out.
- 4) **Trip to Cambridge.** Some negotiations take longer than expected and the proposed visit for this Autumn has had to be postponed until next Spring.
- 5) **Choir collaborations.** Joining forces with singers has become a bit of a feature recently (Mahler 2, Serenade to Music), and this Autumn, we've got even more. In October, my latest choral work "Heaven Beneath our Feet" is being performed in Elvet Methodist Church, Durham as a fundraiser for Voices for Hospices. Then in November, there's a chance to workshop Carl Orff's Carmina Burana at The Sage or Mozart's Requiem at Ridley Hall. This will be part of our traditional Winter residential weekend, which this year will be open to singers as well as players.
- 6) **Hallgarth School, Middlesbrough.** This is quite a departure for us; a Summer School aimed at 11-16 year olds. Hopefully, they'll become the next generation of Cobweb players, and the current generation is invited to help them put on an informal concert on the afternoon of Friday 14th August, (see the diary for details)
- 7) **Berlioz.** "Symphonie Fantastique" has been just that, so we're following up with "Harold in Italy" in November. Martin Wilkinson (viola) will start as Harold.
- 8) **Ensembles weekend.** The last one in May attracted over 100 players to 7 separate events; enough of a success to

try the idea again.

Many Cobweb activities originate when someone says “have you ever thought of trying.....?” So if you’ve got any ideas you’d like to discuss, just invite me for a drink and a chat.

Andy Jackson (Creative Director)

Money matters

Given a brief of ‘short and snappy’ text what can I say to make you sit up and take notice?

Well, CONGRATULATIONS will do for a start!

At the end of our second full year of trading, the orchestra’s financial affairs are sound and give us a good basis for moving forward and we’ve all had great fun whilst raising that money.

How many organisations can say that their AGM was a financial success (we raised about £250) and was a great day out – we played good music, were well entertained and had a lot of fun doing the quiz – I can say that as I was on the winning team!

Well done to anyone who had a hand in fund raising this year, whether by playing in ceilidhs or personally organised events, selling raffle tickets and finding prizes or by getting funding from outside sources to support events, to name but a few.

I remain in awe at the commitment and enthusiasm of all of our groups and leaders so much so that we are able to pay our way without outside support and continue in the ethos that is the Cobweb Orchestra. Well done – keep it up and enjoy yourselves into the bargain!

Jean Ord (Treasurer)

Becoming a member

With a huge network of members and non-members across the whole region, The Cobweb Orchestra is growing every year. When pondering whether to become an actual member, you may want to ask yourself the following questions:

- **How much is it?** Currently membership rates stand at £35 for taxpayers and £20 for non-taxpayers.
- **What do I get for my money?** Reduced rates at weekly rehearsals, reduced rates for study days and events, professional tuition, and the knowledge that you can boast to friends and family that you are part of a phenomenon!
- **How do I join?** You can see your membership secretary at weekly rehearsals or download the forms from the website.
- **Why should I join?** Because you’re worth it!

Gift Aid

If you are a taxpayer (member or non-member) and you haven’t signed a Gift Aid form, it is in your interest to hunt a form down (very easy really – see your Membership Secretary or download from the website). We can claim back the tax you have paid on subs, membership and some fees from the Taxman and all this goes towards keeping Cobwebs going. Last year we claimed just under £6,000. Every penny counts so make sure yours do!

Lesley Wearmouth (Secretary)



Please!

Andy said "Liz, you can write about the admin.." but what on earth do you say about admin.? If you notice it, something's probably gone wrong, so instead, here are Liz's pleas.

Please READ what I write.

Please fill your forms in straightaway.

Please send your forms back quickly.

Please pay by cheque.

AND

Please, we need floor managers, ticket sellers, a welcomer at the door for concerts and some events. Job descriptions and person specifications are as follows:-

- Floor manager:** **Job description;** put out chairs for Orchestra, liaise with venue staff re lighting, heating etc
Qualities: patient, organised, bossy, polite, strong, observant
- Ticket seller:** **Job description;** sell tickets in advance **and/or** on the door
Qualities: patient, organised, bossy, polite, good at numbers and keeping records
- Meeter and Greeter:** **Job description;** meet and talk to people coming to our concerts, make them feel at home
Qualities: cheerful, chatty, friendly

If you know of someone who might like to do any of the jobs, please let me know. It might be a friend or family member who would like to be more involved with The Orchestra or a way for players to have a part in running Cobwebs.

Training will be given.

Useful contacts

Trustees

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