

Music making in Alton



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Listen Up!

Music in The Maltings

Saturday 7th October 2006

It has been an interesting progression for the orchestra over the past couple of years. We successfully applied for Charitable status, which as well as helping us with our funds, opened the doors to recognition by other organisations. Thus we became members of 'Making Music', the umbrella organisation for amateur orchestras and by virtue of being on its mailing list, we were approached early this year by a young cello soloist, Katherine Denton, offering to perform with us.



Were we up to it? Would Katherine want to play with us, essentially a community orchestra with several key instruments missing and an abundance in some other sections? She did, and so began the planning of the ACO's first concert with a professional soloist.



What about a venue? The places we had played in previously did not seem quite suitable for a concert of this magnitude and status, which would probably be also a first for Alton town itself.

We also planned to take part, as we had done two years previously, in the national music-making initiative, Listen Up!, which was

sponsored by 'Making Music', BBC Radio 3 and the Association of British Orchestra (the Professionals!). This year the theme was to be British and Contemporary Music.

Happily everything came together in February when the Alton Maltings Centre offered to host us as part of their Open Day celebrating one year on from their opening last October, and so 'Music in The Maltings' was born.

One thing still troubled us – cost! We did not know the size of the potential audience for such a concert, but we did know that as well as the soloist we would need to augment our orchestral forces with a few paid professionals. There would also be the costs of publicity and, for the first time, a proper programme for the audience to peruse.

So in March we started the process of applying for a Lottery Grant, promising to carry on the spirit of The Alton Prom and involve local children in the concert, and with the main objective of discovering whether there was a potential audience for good quality orchestral concerts in Alton without bankrupting the orchestra. We were eventually successful and we gratefully acknowledge a grant of £1,000 from 'Awards for All'.



So, now it is all over, did we succeed in meeting our challenges and objectives? Emphatically, yes! We felt very much at home playing in The Maltings Centre, where their very helpful and thoughtful staff made us feel most welcome.

Lots of pre-concert publicity brought in an enthusiastic audience of over 200 people, many children among them, and judging by their lively interest afterwards, the future of music-making in Alton is secure.



Listen Up!

Music in The Maltings (Continued)

Importantly, the design of the Maltings ensured that those with disabilities were not denied access.



The choice of music certainly stretched the orchestra, though not quite to breaking point. The opening piece – Mendelssohn’s “Italian Symphony” was an exhilarating combination of fast-moving orchestral fireworks and gentle lyricism. We played the first three movements beautifully, and made a good assault on the final movement, a Salterello, marked *presto*, that presents a challenge even to the professionals.



Katherine Denton

Katherine held the audience spellbound in a performance of Hans Werner Henze’s “Serenade”, a sequence of nine short pieces that showed the virtuoso qualities of both soloist and instrument. After the interval, another Serenade, but of a different nature. David Budd conducted the woodwind and brass sections in a quirky piece by Derek Bourgeois, which he had written as a Wedding

March for his own nuptials. But try marching in 11/8 time, interspersed with bars of 7/8 and 13/8! The orchestra managed that all right, although the more conventional 12/8 bars at the end unaccountably caused the odd problem.

Katherine came back on stage for the Elgar Cello Concerto, which we had all been rehearsing hard for over the summer. We had heard Katherine in rehearsal and had been captivated by her eloquence and power, and in a piece like this where the soloist is so dominant the orchestra is largely acting a supportive accompanying role. This we did more than adequately, showing our string sections to very good effect in the opening movement and in the beautifully phrased third movement. The *tutti* passages appeared at the right moments throughout, with superb brass effects and the woodwind rattled through the more difficult aspects of the fast second movement without any apparent bother. There was a slight problem in the final movement, which must have given both Graham and Katherine nightmares, but we all recovered to bring the piece to an artistically pleasing conclusion.



There were several bonuses from the occasion – the Lottery Grant from ‘Awards for All’ not only helped the orchestra, but also a young and talented soloist at the start of her career and might have established a new tradition of orchestral concerts in the centre of the town. Most fittingly, it provided a superb platform for Graham Cross to say ‘goodbye’ to being our regular conductor. We owe him a huge debt of gratitude for all he has done musically to lift us from being a small and slightly struggling group of musicians to the polished performers we saw on Saturday.

Chris Leggett



Conductor's Spot

This will be my last contribution to this spot since, after the concert in October, mentioned elsewhere in this magazine, I shall be relinquishing my full time conductorship of the Orchestra. For more than the last twelve years, from very small beginnings, I have been delighted to see the orchestra grow and develop to its present high standard. Much hard work has been undertaken by the members and I thank them all for their loyal support. Especial mention must be made of the help of the committee members headed by our diligent chairman, Chris Leggett.

Three years ago after our Christmas concert in Four Marks one of the Choral Society members decided to join the orchestra on trumpet and soon after responded to my regular appeal for an assistant conductor. David Budd has really made his mark on the orchestra and is gaining respect from the members for his positive and sympathetic direction. Never afraid to admit when he is not certain how to direct a phrase or tempo change he has carried the orchestra with him and I feel very confident of the orchestra's future in handing over the baton to him.

My wife having retired from school teaching this year and our house in France being very nearly ready for occupation the time has come for me to enjoy retirement and spend more time there. My boat is already sitting in the marina waiting for us.

I shall not be severing all connection with the orchestra and will remain a member, contributing when I can and, in my new role as Conductor Laureate, wielding the baton occasionally. My thanks to everyone who has made this orchestra the success it is and my best wishes to you all for the future.

Graham Cross.



Graham handing over the baton to David

Open Evening

Dust off those instrument cases and join us for an evening rehearsal.

**Wednesday 18th October
730pm-930pm**

Drama Studio, Amery Hill School

Tim Barnett 1982-2006

The Orchestra was saddened to hear of the death of Tim Barnett in July this year. Tim was an accomplished timpanist and percussionist who played with us at the majority of our concerts. We always enjoyed his playing and his company. He remained friendly, cheerful and dedicated to his art despite adversity, but sadly died of leukaemia while still only in his mid-twenties. We shall miss Tim very much. Our thoughts have been with his parents during this sad time. The Orchestra will be making a collection in his memory at our Christmas Concert in Four Marks on 9th December, which will be sent to the Elizabeth Hall Cancer Care Trust (The Basing Unit) at Basingstoke Hospital.



Postcard From The Falklands

In a fit of panic today I realised two things – firstly that I had been here 6 weeks now and sent very few mails, and secondly that it was the deadline for articles for “CODA”. The first I can do very little about, but the second I had promised myself that I would try to achieve!

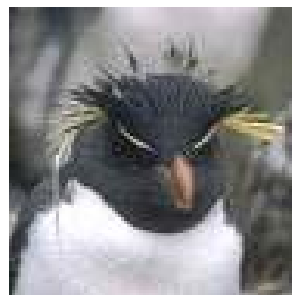
So, here I am, 8000 miles away from the weekly ACO rehearsal, living in one of the very remotest of United Kingdom Overseas Territories – the Falkland Islands. Clearly I miss my weekly couple of hours of musical fun and high jinx – there is no Orchestra here (more of that later).

First things first though – what are the Falkland Islands all about? 24 and a bit years ago no-one had heard of them; and those that had, had very little idea where they were. Over a brief and well-publicised 100 days all of that changed, and the UK armed forces have been here ever since. The mission is very simple – we are here to defend the Falkland Islander’s right to self-determination about their future – and that means deterring Argentina from having another go. Do we think they would? Yes, almost certainly, given half a chance. There is oil here, and lucrative fishing grounds – enough to drive any economically minded but essentially broke country to keep making noises! So I am here with the very Joint (Army, Navy and Air Force) team down here with a clear aim of minding the status quo.

Boring stuff – much more interesting is the fact that this is one of the wildlife paradises of the world! I am living in a live David Attenborough film! On a daily basis and often on the doorstep, we can see penguins, seals, sea lions, whales, albatross, to name but a few.

What does it look like? If you can picture the bleak majesty of the Outer Hebrides you will be pretty close: lots of peat, scrub grass, stone and mountains, tarns and streams. And sheep. No trees though; the most abundant commodity any day of the year is wind, and the poor old trees never have a chance to get much taller than about 3 foot 6! The whole Island complex fits into a box about 150 miles wide by 60 miles high – there are almost no tarmac roads, no traffic jams, no commuters, no railways – and almost no shops.

Suddenly on-line shopping takes on a whole new level of importance – the two flights a week, which are our lifeline to the outside world, take on a whole new importance (especially if they are bringing mail!).



What about music then – which is, after all, why you read CODA. There is, as I have already alluded to, no orchestra that I have yet managed to track down. Musicians are a curiously magnetic bunch though; within a couple weeks here we had managed to put together a small ensemble of 3 clarinets, a sax, a trumpet, a euphonium, a trombone and a French horn. Granted that apart from yours truly they were all under 16 and have now returned to school in various corners of the globe, but it was fun whilst it lasted. They’ll all be back at Christmas though, so a Christmas special has a lot of potential.

In the meantime there are a few singers, several piano players and another clarinet, so we are planning some duet action, but it’s a little early for public performances. The way people turn around down here there is every chance that within the month we could be running a Quintet!

Good luck to ACO for the forthcoming performance of the Elgar Cello Concerto. I’m sorry I won’t be there with you, but I know it will go well. I am looking forward to the concert report!

That’s all from the Falklands for this edition of CODA, have a great musical Autumn – more news from down south in the next issue.

Bill Dawson



Did You Know?

- ❖ The fastest yodel was 22 tones (15 falsetto) in one second on 9th February 1992 by Thomas Scholl of Munich.
- ❖ The Greek national anthem, 'Innos Pros Tin Eleftherian' (The Hymn to Liberty) is officially the longest in the world. It has 158 verses.
- ❖ The only palindromic hit song by a palindromic artist - SOS by ABBA
- ❖ Mozart once composed a piano piece that required the player to use both hands and his nose in order to hit all the right notes.
- ❖ Melophobia is the fear of music
- ❖ "Pay no attention to what the critics say; no statue has ever been put up to a critic"
Jean Sibelius
- ❖ Conductors "never let the horns and woodwinds out of your sight. If you can hear them at all they are still too strong"
Richard Strauss
- ❖ Ramon Barrero player of the world's tiniest harmonica choked on his tiny instrument and died in 1994
- ❖ Duck's quacks don't echo
- ❖ Most Toilets flush in E^b

Submitted by Graham Cross

Diary

Open Evening – Join us for a rehearsal!	7:30pm	18 th October
No rehearsal – half term		25 th February
Christmas Concert in Four Marks In aid of Elizabeth Hall Cancer Care Trust (The Basing Unit) at Basingstoke Hospital.	7:30 pm	9 th December
Last Rehearsal before Christmas break	7:30 pm	13 th December
Christmas Concert at The Maltings In aid of HomeStart & Harvest Church Youth Group	6.00 pm	17 th December
First Rehearsal after Christmas Break	7:30pm	10 th January TBC
No rehearsal – half term		14 th February



Thinking of Joining Us?

**We meet in the Drama Studio at Amery Hill School every Wednesday
(except in school holidays)
from 7.30 to 9.30 pm**

The cost of joining is, £5 for students and £10 for adults, per term. We always welcome new players to the orchestra – there is no audition required to join and we do not insist on you attending every rehearsal. If you are thinking of joining then please contact one of the following:

Name	Telephone Number	Position
Chris Leggett	(01730) 893032	Chairman
Mac Newton	(01962) 773130	Leader

Or visit our website: www.altonconcertorchestra.org.uk

Mission Statement

The Orchestra exists to serve the local community and to provide a forum for all musicians who enjoy playing in an ensemble. We have a policy of welcoming anyone without the requirement of an audition and we maintain no restrictions on section size within the orchestra. The music we typically play will require someone of at least Grade 3 standard but exams are not expected. The age range of players encompasses year 9 school musicians to retired members. We offer the opportunity for school players to stretch their playing ability.

Our music repertoire is wide and varied to suit all tastes and ranges from classical symphonies to show music incorporating big band and swing. The string section plays together and we are developing the wind section into a separate ensemble. Whatever your musical taste it should be well provided for.

The Orchestra is run by a chairman and committee and the involvement of members in organisation is encouraged and welcomed. We have social evenings from time to time and produce concerts 3 to 4 times a year. Members pay a termly fee to cover music cost etc. We pride ourselves on our friendly, hardworking approach to our music making.

We are fortunate in enjoying a close community relationship with Amery Hill School and are very appreciative of their support with rehearsal accommodation.

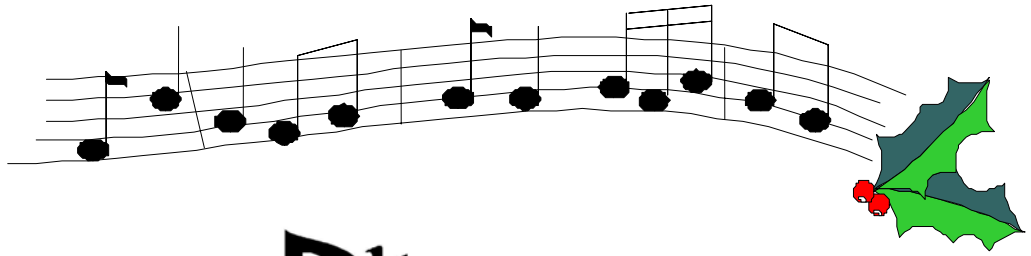
Come and see for yourself.

We welcome opportunities to perform locally in aid of community causes.

Alton Concert Orchestra: Registered Charity No: 1107683

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Alton Concert Orchestra

Presents TWO Christmas Concerts
with the Alton Choral Society
And
Yourselves
Admission free; retiring collection

A Festival of Christmas Music

Saturday 9th December
7:30pm
Church of the Good Shepherd
Four Marks

Christmas Concert

Saturday 16th December
7:30pm
Saxon Room, The Maltings Centre
Alton

For more information visit our website
www.altonconcertorchestra.org.uk
Or contact Chris Leggett (01730) 893032

