

Music making in Alton



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Partnership with Eggar's



Eggar's school has always been a major player in the life of Alton, and it was at the suggestion of the Head Teacher, Mrs. Felicity Martin, that the Alton Concert Orchestra was offered a permanent home there for its rehearsals. Leaving its original base in Alton College, the orchestra had used Four Marks village hall for a while, but as befits our title, we always wanted to return to the heart of the town. The thinking behind the school's generous offer was to forge a community partnership for music making, by uniting the strong musical tradition of the school with the local orchestra. So how is it working out a year on?

The younger instrumentalists who began learning at Eggar's can continue to improve their skills by playing with adults, and they have an assured place in the orchestra when they reach college age and beyond, which is often the stage at which instruments are packed away in their cases. At present there are half a dozen such youngsters in our orchestra, and the offer is always there to any others who wish to make the step up. And the two music staff at Eggar's – Matthew Farris and Mair Cross – enjoy an occasional “busman's holiday”

playing with us! From the orchestra's viewpoint, partnership with the school has integrated us more into the wider community and the handy central venue has proved crucial in our efforts to recruit more players – nine have joined as a consequence of publicity and a ‘open evening’ held at the school. The improvement in our finances has also allowed us to plan our programme of concerts with more confidence and to make purchases of new music to enhance our repertoire.

As well as the benefits to the pupils and ex-pupils, the school itself can take the credit for its partnership initiative, which the orchestra acknowledges gratefully and mentions in its programmes and press releases. The orchestra is also on tap to take part in concerts at the school, as it did last June and hopes to do so again this summer.

It seems that Felicity Martin's original idea is bearing fruit. This is a genuine partnership that is working well for both parties, and the wider community is enriched as a result. We look forward to developing it further together in the future.

Chris Leggett



Thoughts of a Newcomer

As a single girl, living in London, Wednesday nights were reserved – no boyfriend interruptions on Wednesdays! I played the flute in an orchestra.



Marriage and children have intervened in the last twenty years and I now have a daughter who also,

like me, plays the flute. Both my children play the piano and my son also plays the oboe and bagpipes – commissions accepted, he says!

My flute (and piano) playing was confined to accompanying my daughter for many years until my thoroughly non-musical husband spotted a piece in the Alton Herald about the ACO. Spurred on by him, Wednesday nights have resumed their nature of 20 plus years ago – except it's my husband who has to cook his own supper.

I have discovered old acquaintances and have been warmly welcomed. I only hope that my somewhat rusty playing is acceptable to the conductor!? Wednesdays are again reserved – and I wouldn't have it any other way.

Cynthia Buchanan



What is the definition of a minor second?

Two flutes playing in unison

What is the definition of a gentleman?

Someone who knows how to play the trombone but who refrains from doing so



Orchestra Make Their Mark

The Alton Concert Orchestra got out of town for their pre-Christmas concert last year, and played to a large audience in the Church of the Good Shepherd, Four Marks on December 5th – obviously an auspicious date, since it was the Chairman’s birthday!

The Rev. Howard Wright and the Churchwardens had kindly made the church available for us, and I hope they did not object to the gentle stage-shifting that had to be done to accommodate the 45 musicians who turned up, complete with a harp!

We were made to feel very welcome by their enthusiastic youth group ‘Friends of God’ who organised the refreshments for the evening. An impassioned appeal from them for funds for charities supporting children in Afghanistan and Nepal raised over £300 in the retiring collection from the audience, who had obviously been left in a generous mood by the orchestra’s playing.

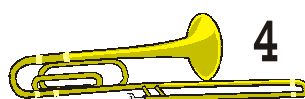
Graham Cross, our conductor, confessed afterwards to having been slightly nervous of giving a concert in his own village, but he needed to have no worries! Aably led by Mac Newton, the orchestra got off to a

good start with William Walton’s Coronation March “Crown Imperial”, with crisp playing from the brass section and percussionist. Schubert’s “Unfinished” Symphony provided a calm contrast, with some sensitive playing from strings and woodwind, despite the difficulties of the score for us amateurs in places. A selection from George Gershwin’s “Porgy and Bess” ended the first half in upbeat style.

Suitably refreshed, the second half began with “Soirees Musicales” based upon music by Rossini and subtly orchestrated by Benjamin Britten. This 5-piece suite captured every mood: a none-too-serious March; a romantic Canzonetta; a yodelling Tyrolese; a sultry Bolero and an exciting (and fast!) Tarantella. To finish the evening, Andrew Lloyd Webber fans were treated to a selection from “Phantom of the Opera”, which the orchestra always plays brilliantly.

It was a well-chosen programme, which both audience and orchestra obviously enjoyed, and we hope for a return invitation to Four Marks this December.

Chris Leggett



The Two Storeys

Brenda Storey and Lawrence Storey are not related and yet have many things in common. Both are retired teachers, both live life to the full and both play their instruments at ACO because they enjoy it! (They are also more senior than most at ACO!)

But that's where the similarities end. Brenda taught herself to read music and play the flute using "Tune a Day" nearly ten years ago and joined the 2nd flutes in the Orchestra in September 1998. Although she finds the music "frighteningly high grade", she is looking forward to the new music, which will redress the balance! Brenda has not stopped since she retired from her job teaching Chemistry. She has a full social agenda of clubs, activities and hobbies, including tap-dancing, short-mat bowls, two WI's, swimming, astronomy, U3A (University of the 3rd Age)... I could go on!

It seems life starts at 60!



This is confirmed by Lawrence, who seems to have done more since he retired, than ever before. After taking early retirement, he ran a Folk Band (you may have heard of "The Villagers" of Four Marks), for 32 years. This came to an end three years ago "because we all got too old", but Lawrence couldn't leave folk bands for long and two years ago the "Folk Workshop Band" was started!

So Lawrence has gone from playing in the "Orchestra in Khaki" during the last war, to the theatre orchestra for "Lilac Domino" at *His Majesty's* Theatre in the West End, to teaching. Now, Lawrence fits us in without fail on Wednesday evenings...perhaps because he's the Committee member with the Player's Register...and the Treasurer!!

Lawrence has great support from his wife, who turns up to listen to all our concerts, although we've yet to have his children, grandchildren and great-grandchild in the audience! After hearing what inspirational things the two Storey's have done, I'm looking forward to my retirement, and planning what hobbies I'll be filling my time with ... although I have a few more working years ahead of me yet!!

Sarah Main



Conductor's Spot

Since my last report we have again seen new people coming to share with us in the Orchestra. This is very encouraging and I hope they will soon settle in and enjoy their playing. We still have room for more string players, oboe and low woodwinds. We would also like a regular percussionist. If you have been trying to pluck up courage to come along, see the article by one of our new members - you will be made very welcome. It is really

great to hear the sonorous contribution of our cello section with new members there really making themselves felt in the Orchestra. We continue to rehearse for our next Concert and have recently purchased some exciting new music. Now is a good time to join whilst this is new to us all. My thanks to all the regular members who work so hard - keep up the good work.

Graham Cross



New Music

Continuing our policy of playing a varied and wide repertoire we have just bought 'Overture to The Magic Flute', 'The Force of Destiny', 'Leonore No 2', 'Salute to the Big Bands', 'King and I' and the 'Theme from Star Wars' amongst others and will be rehearsing these in the next

few months. There is something for everyone and nothing too difficult whilst, from time to time, providing the challenge we all need to make musical progress.

Graham Cross

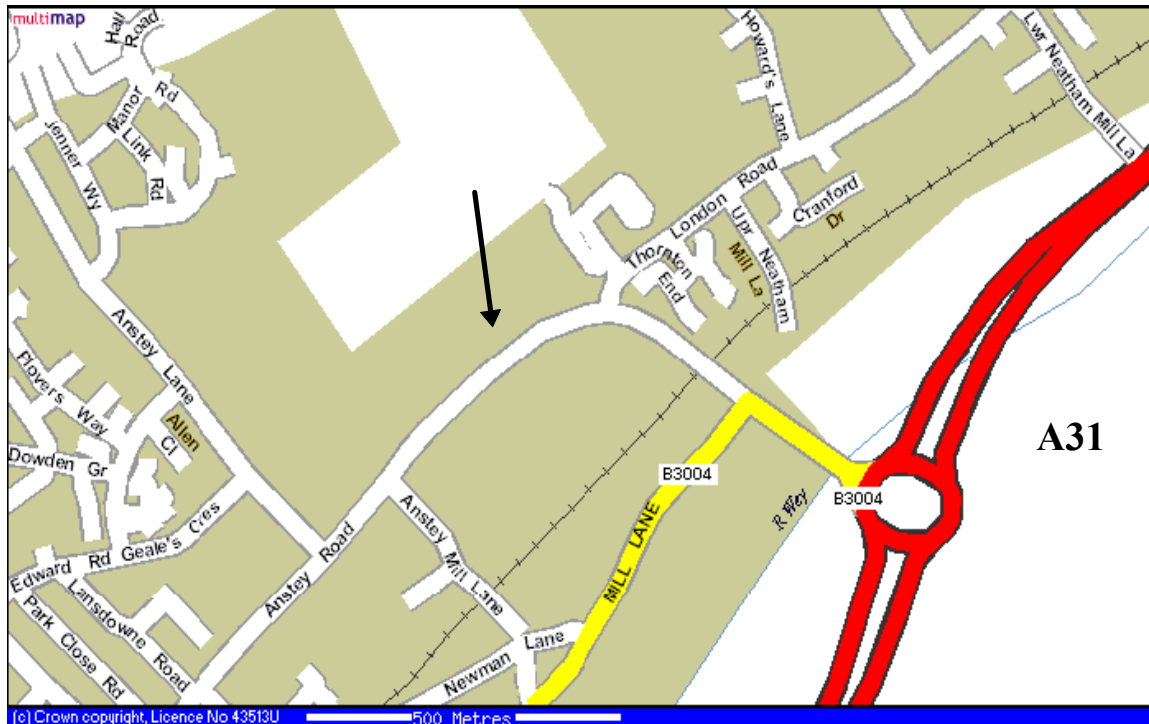
What do you get when you throw a conductor off a tall building?

Applause



Thinking of Joining Us?

**We meet at Eggar's school every Wednesday
(except in school holidays)
from 7:15 to 9:00**



The cost of joining is, at the moment, £5 for students and £10 for adults. 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 |
|---------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| Graham Cross | (01420) 562234 | Conductor |
| Chris Leggett | (01730) 893032 | Chairman |
| Mac Newton | (01962) 773130 | Secretary |

Produced by Rob Wyatt in the Ian Karten Centre at Treloar College, Alton (01420 87640)





Alton Concert Orchestra



With Treloar School Choir

Spring Concert

Newton Davis Hall
Upper Froyle, Treloar School

Wednesday 1st May
Concert starts at 7.30pm

Free Admission

Collection in aid of Treloar Trust

**For more information visit our Website:
www.altonconcertorchestra.org.uk Or contact:**

Chris Leggett
Mac Newton
Graham Cross

(01703) 893032
(01962) 773130
(01420) 562234

Chairman
Secretary
Conductor