
Langtree NEWS

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Tidings of joy and comfort

Tidings of joy!

The audience at our November concert was bigger than expected, so thanks to everyone for making an extra effort to sell tickets. A special vote of thanks should go to Sally's husband, Brian, who valiantly paraded round Wallingford town centre with sandwich board and leaflets to advertise the evening performance. That's what I call supportive.

Thank you also for being so prompt in signing up for the workshop on March 2nd. I'm told it's the day of the Reading half marathon so I hope none of you have entered for that. I think Adrian is the only one with stamina enough to attempt it, and surely even he isn't considering it for the second time (or is it third or fourth time?)

Tidings of comfort!

Reassuring news for those of us who occasionally put in a less than perfect performance. At a recent BBC Prom the soprano soloist froze and missed her entry. Her fellow soloist (Bryn Terfel, no less) stepped in and sang her part until she recovered. I presume he didn't sing it at soprano pitch or it could have turned into a comic opera!

Hope everyone had a good Christmas and I look forward to seeing you all at the first rehearsal of 2014.

Chris Winch



FROM POETRY TO NEUROSCIENCE, YOUR NEWSLETTER NEEDS YOU!
Please send your articles, poems, reviews, photographs to janita.clamp@btinternet.com



'Yorkshire Late Starters Strings Orchestra seeks composer'

This was a competition for a piece for YLSS, described as '30 - 35 players ranging from grade 2 to grade 8'. The four short listed composers were invited to Leeds, the orchestra would work on their pieces for an hour each then choose one they wanted to develop. The winner would get £500 and expenses for two weekends in Leeds to work with them.

My 'Three Piece Suite' (Romance, Intermezzo and Strango) was shortlisted so I went to Leeds on Remembrance Sunday. I was up first and they played my

pieces through then worked on a few tricky corners. It seemed to go pretty well and I played in the other three. They phoned me that evening to say they had enjoyed my music very much but I hadn't won, the main reason being that they felt my piece had gone too well and they didn't think there would be enough to develop. (This may have meant they found it dull!) The piece that did win was in five movements, one of which was for the players to extemporise sounds against lines, shapes and spoken syllables on graph

paper. There was a time scale across the top so the conductor just had to indicate every 10 seconds. Although I was disappointed not to win, a consolation is I don't have to spend two more weekends in Leeds!

I've arranged the last movement, String Tango (or Strango), for Langtree and could do the other two if there is interest.

Tim Cook

Who'd have guessed it? Experts prove that practice really does make perfect

Research suggests that regularly playing an instrument changes the shape and power of the brain and may be used in therapy to improve cognitive skills.

Experts said there is growing evidence that musicians have structurally and functionally different brains compared with non-musicians - in particular, the areas of the brain used in processing and playing music.

These parts of the brain that control motor skills,

hearing, storing audio information and memory become larger and more active when a person learns how to play an instrument and can apparently improve day to day actions such as being alert, planning and emotional perception.

Lutz Jäncke, a psychologist at the University of Zurich, said: 'Learning to play a musical instrument has definite benefits and can increase IQ by seven points, in both children and adults.

'We found that even in people over the age of 65 after four or five months of playing a instrument for an hour a week there were strong changes in the brain.

'The parts of the brain that control hearing, memory, and the part that controls the hands among others, all become more active. Essentially the architecture of the brain changes.'

(Extract from Daily Telegraph. A more recent article claims that this theory has been disproved!)



A Christmas competition

Adrian King

Our Christmas competition seeks
To make you scratch your head for weeks.
The answers that you generate
We hope will serve to venerate
The shy chap in the frame today
And raise his profile straight away.
(There now – I’ve told you: it’s a bloke,
Not one of Langtree’s female folk.)

To criticise this Langtree person
Might make his contribution worsen;
We wouldn’t want to cause distress
Then we might hear him even less!
But truth to tell, despite cocked ear
His contribution’s hard to hear;
For during our twice-yearly dates
It’s hard to hear a sound he makes.

But when he’s solo, at the front
The tone he makes is excellent.
We’d like the chance to hear him more
When low strings feature in the score.
He plays with such facility,
So why, with his ability
And notwithstanding all his charms
Do we just see him wave his arms?

When you think you know his name,
For that’s the contest’s only aim,
To enter costs just £1.50
(Not two quid, we know you’re thrifty!)
But think of what your fee will do
To help poor Langtree’s assets to
Enlarge and thus improve our health,
Increasing our declining wealth.
What’s that – you need another clue?
Let’s see – what can we say that’s true?
In June – it’s trainers shorts and socks;
His surname shares two thirds with ‘fox’.

Now, write his first name on a slip
Then, pick the paper up and flip...
...On t’other side write YOUR first name
Inviting, thus, your chance for fame.
Place your slip into the hat:
The winner will be drawn from that.
Don’t answer on a postcard please
(No silly answers – please don’t tease).
When EVERYONE has had a go
We’ll make the draw. And apropos
The prize? A chance to make you merry,
A Christmas bottle – full of sherry!

Congratulations to winners Nick Kiff and Tim Cook whose names were first and second out of the hat.



Do you make other players say, 'Wow' (or 'Ow')?

This thought-provoking questionnaire is from the website of the St Giles Orchestra (<http://www.stgilesorchestra.org.uk/goodplayer.htm>). Anyone can complete it and calculate whether they have the characteristics of an 'excellent amateur orchestral player.'

Question 22 particularly apposite.

1 - Note quality

- 1 Has accurate intonation on every note
- 2 Studies (and idolises) the sound and styles of those who have gone before
- 3 Has a minds-eye view of the desired sound
- 4 Produces a good tone quality throughout instrument range at all dynamics
- 5 Phrases passages sensitively
- 6 Shapes the volume and tone quality of each note
- 7 Attends to quality of start and end of notes
- 8 Uses vibrato appropriately
- 9 Plays staccato short without loss of tone quality

2 - Dynamics

- 10 Varies dynamics appropriately
- 11 Is able to play a genuine pianissimo while maintaining tone quality

3 - Instrumental mastery

- 12 Good at sightreading
- 13 Able to transpose at sight as normally required for the instrument
- 14 Able to play in all the clefs commonly used for the instrument
- 15 Able to fill in missing parts (including transposition or different clefs)
- 16 Committed to learning from teachers or more experienced players
- 17 Committed to private practice
- 18 Overpractices difficult passages to be in the 'safety zone' in case of unexpected tempi etc

4 - Timing

- 19 Keeps an internal time clock ticking throughout all playing
- 20 Plays rhythms accurately (eg triplets, duplets, dotted notes)
- 21 Senses how fast a piece should go (thus not relying totally on the conductor)
- 22 When too difficult, knows what to leave out
- 23 Adapts bow length (strings) and keeps fingers near keyholes (woodwind) in faster music to avoid slowing down
- 24 Always counts rests and doesn't rely on the conductor for entries
- 25 Knows in advance the geography of repeats

5 - Concert / rehearsal etiquette

- 26 Photocopies music without prompting to cover awkward page turns
- 27 Arrives before rehearsal start time in order to tune
- 28 Is ready to tune when A is given
- 29 Does not talk or play when other sections are tuning or being rehearsed
- 30 Memorises passages to allow full attention to conductor during awkward corners
- 31 Brings pencil and eraser to rehearsal, and uses them
- 32 Has mute ready at hand at all times
- 33 Notes conductor's guidance and acts upon it at next rehearsal without reminding
- 34 Briefs guests and absentees on issues previously discussed (eg which repeats to do)

6 - Watching and listening

- 35 Listens to what is going on around the orchestra, and adapts playing accordingly
- 36 Looks up at conductor at beginning and end of phrases
- 37 Establishes appropriate eye contact with the conductor for guidance on interpretation
- 38 Thinks of own part as contributing to a whole performance
- 39 Hands over phrases to the next soloist
- 40 Accompanies orchestral players and soloists at an appropriate dynamic
- 41 Asks fellow players and/or conductor for feedback
- 42 Other players say 'wow' when they first year you play



CONCERT

Songs by Mozart, Rossini, Grainger, Debussy, Schumann



CLAIRE BOOTH (SOPRANO)

Christopher Glynn (piano)

6pm

Saturday, 15 February 2014

St Agatha's Church, Brightwell-cum-Sotwell

February promises a rare treat for music lovers: the chance to hear British soprano, Claire Booth.

Claire will sing opera arias by Mozart and Rossini, selected folk songs by Percy Grainger as well as music by Claude Debussy and Robert Schumann. She will

be accompanied on piano by Christopher Glynn, a Professor at the Royal College of Music.

Claire Booth is internationally renowned both for her breadth of repertoire and for her vitality and musicianship. Having appeared with Scottish, Welsh and English National Operas, the next twelve months will see Claire perform at the Royal Opera House as well as debuts with

the Boston Symphony and Los Angeles Philharmonic orchestras.

Claire has generously agreed that proceeds from this concert will go towards St Agatha's Church.

Tickets cost £15 and are available from The Village Stores or via Janita Clamp.

Ode to Tim

I should have written this last year
Before the days of Christmas cheer
When strains of Cook resounded new,
Still fresh in mind and bright of hue.
Tim added to our repertoire
Extending last term's final hour
With clever feats of concentration
Leading to his orchestration
Focusing on wind and strings
With violins and flutes and things.

A tambourine needs exercise.
This one was used to emphasise
Tim's music's usual upbeat zeal
And give it an authentic feel.
Surprisingly no need to dangle,
(Brandished, though, at rakish angle)
His instrument was subtly played
To give the Strango light and shade.
With double skill, Tim showed us all
How juggling works – without a ball!

May I say, for all of us
How much we liked, with lack of fuss
His lovely music and we hope
There's more to come. We know there's scope
For flute concertos, symphonies
(Provided no deficiencies
In Langtree's playing come to light
To halt Tim's flow, and block outright
Creative juice or new incentive).
Three cheers for Tim! Please stay inventive!

Adrian King

Please pay to play

If you do not pay your sub by direct debit we would much appreciate it if you could pay subscriptions at the first rehearsal of term or the following week if you are not able to attend on the 8th. £108 per year or £54 now and £54 in June.

The orchestra now has charitable status so there will be gift aid forms for people to fill in – this means that we will be able to claim the tax back on any monies paid to Langtree and should also be able to back date this (hopefully). As you may have noticed, funds are very low!

Many thanks.

Jane

Words wanted

Surely the orchestra's writing talent extends beyond second violins and viola. If you don't like writing then how about photos, recipes, jokes ... I was thinking of a feature on Langtree players' pets.

Please send all contributions or suggestions to the editor at:

janita.clamp@btinternet.com

but bear in mind that the newsletter can be viewed by anyone who visits our website.

Janita