

Music Director's Report – AGM November 2010

2009-2010 seems to have been yet another action-packed year. The American Extravaganza concert of last Autumn seems a distant memory. But the programme was as exciting a first concert as we've had for years. Gershwin's exhilarating Porgy and Bess Symphonic Picture was followed by Rhapsody in Blue. We welcomed back an old friend Clare Hammond to be the solo pianist. The concert celebrating the start of our 25th Anniversary season highlighted what talent has been through our hands in that time. Clare had been our principal oboe a few seasons ago.

How rare it must be for a programme containing Bernstein's West Side Story not to be perhaps the trickiest piece of the evening but Prelude Fugue and Riffs performed by NYJO under Phil Smith's expert guidance was a tour de force, brought off with considerable skill and panache. Saxophones were then swapped for bassoons and oboes in Bernstein's Candide and West Side Story which were played with great gusto.

It wasn't difficult coming up with a theme for our 25th Anniversary Concert. Ron Grainer's Dr Who theme appeared in various guises in the "Time Machine" concert speeding us along our adventure. There were orchestral blockbusters with the Pines of Rome and 1812 Overture, and we were joined once again by a chorus made up from local schools with enthusiastic adult support as ever who revelled in tunes from Les Miserables and Chicago. However despite the best of efforts to sell tickets, we were down on our normal support so we unfortunately made a bigger loss than before leading us to the unprecedented decision to cancel our concert in the Royal Centre next season. I'm sure we will be back.

For our third concert of the season, we welcomed back James Lowe as guest conductor for an ambitious programme including Rachmaninov's much-loved 2nd Piano Concerto with another old friend Tristan Melen as soloist and Prokofiev's much neglected 7th Symphony which the orchestra grew into and eventually thoroughly enjoyed playing.

The Tour this year was to the Cathedrals and churches of Normandy. Those present were much in awe of the extraordinary sound generated by the Organs of the Abbaye aux Hommes in Caen and Rouen Cathedral, two of the great organs of Europe, in Saint-Saens 3rd Symphony. Fergal Duggan was again our soloist this time playing the saxophone in Milhaud's Scaramouche. With other masterpieces by Debussy, Mahler and Richard Strauss, there was plenty of rich sonority to echo around the wonderful buildings that we played in.

There was splendid playing throughout the year from the Intermediate and Training Orchestras under the expert guidance of Stan and Dave and NYJO goes from strength to strength with ever increasing requests for them to appear in gigs throughout the area.

May I take the opportunity to thank the tutors and committee for all their hard work throughout the year as ever? I look forward to another 12 months with much anticipation.

