

# The Nash

Newsletter of "The Friends of the National Youth Orchestra of Wales"

[www.friendsofthenash.co.uk](http://www.friendsofthenash.co.uk)

Registered Charity No. 1053788

## May 2019

### Chairman's Report to the AGM 15 November 2018

Overall, it has been a successful year for the Friends of the Nash. The key fund raising activity of the year was the Magical Music 2018, a comparative financial success. A word of congratulations is due to the members of the committee who worked tirelessly to make the event a success. A word of sincere thanks of course to David Hughes, the mastermind behind this series of concerts, who decided that the 'Friends' were worthy of support.

A number of substantial donations were made by individuals and organisations. Thanks are due to those and also the members of the committee who have been key in promoting the 'Friends' to those donors. The accounts statement is positive for 2018, given that in 2017 two substantial legacy payments were received. During the course of the year, there have been significant changes in the operation of NYAW. A note of personal thanks to Matthew for retaining the direct relationship between both organisations.

There has been a key change in the policy of the 'Friends' in making donations to NYAW, instead of an annual decision regarding the payment, the committee has approved a rolling cycle of payments that enable better planning for both our organisation and the NYAW.

The NYOW are to be applauded on the standard of their performances in the Summer.

However, it is somewhat concerning that certain sections had to import players or struggled to get

viable numbers. It is a sad reflection of the state of music services in Wales. Hopefully the Welsh Government are starting to recognize the problems and put a system in place that is fit for purpose and provides opportunities for all young people in Wales. I believe it is a positive move that the 'Friends' have representation at these concerts. Finally, I would like to sincerely thank every member of their committee for their time, commitment and energy in contributing to the work of the 'Friends'. A particular word of personal thanks perhaps to the Secretary and the Treasurer, who have had to put up with a Chair who is 'in absentia'! Ymlaen i 2019!

### National Youth Orchestra of Wales Residency and Concert Tour 2018

*A Report by Matthew Jones, Senior  
Producer*

*Celfyddydau Cenedlaethol Ieuencid  
Cymru | National Youth Arts Wales*

The 2018 NYOW residency was the first to be held following the establishment of National Youth Arts Wales Ltd., the new organisation responsible for the management of all six national ensembles (Brass Band, Choir, Dance, Orchestra, Theatre and Wind Orchestra). It provided an early opportunity for us to act on our

ambition to cross-collaborate more between the national ensembles as we ran a joint residency with the National Youth Choir of Wales. Having established a fruitful relationship with Carlo Rizzi over a number of years, he seemed the obvious choice to conduct again this year with the combined ensemble performing Bernstein's Chichester Psalms alongside Mahler's 5<sup>th</sup> Symphony.

As ever we had a fantastic team of tutors preparing the Orchestra, and the members themselves worked hard to ensure that the orchestra's high standards were maintained in such a demanding programme of music. The Orchestra performed 3 concerts in total; at St David's Cathedral as part of the Fishguard Festival, at Hereford Cathedral as part of the Three Choirs Festival and at St David's Hall, Cardiff. We were really pleased to perform to fantastic audiences at each of the venues, with both the Festival performances sell-outs. Feedback from audiences across the board was extremely positive.



NYOW at Hereford Three Choirs Festival Concert

The Nash continues to provide an environment that enables young people to perform at the highest level and we take pride in offering first class training and exposure to conductors of Carlo's calibre. It's not all hard work and the residencies are renowned for their friendly and inclusive nature which enables young musicians between 13-22 to engage with each other in a safe environment. We are extremely lucky to work with a brilliant team of welfare staff, the majority of whom are former members, who believe in the Nash and work hard during the

week to ensure all members enjoy their time with the Orchestra.



John Anderson (former member) conducting a full wind rehearsal

I would like to thank the Friends of the Orchestra and especially the committee in their continuing support both financially and otherwise and in particular for their continued fundraising. There were a number of excellent candidates for last year's Irwyn Walters prize for the most promising string player (donated by the Friends), but the very deserving recipient was Jess Martin who took on the Principal Double Bass duties for the first time and excelled in the role.



Carlo Rizzi presenting Jess with the Friends Prize

I hope to see lots of Friends at the Orchestra's concerts this summer, it's going to be another fantastic year!

# National Youth Orchestra of Wales 2019



This summer we are really pleased to welcome the American Conductor Andrew Litton to conduct the Nash for the first time. Andrew is internationally renowned and is currently Music Director of the New York City Ballet Orchestra, Principal Guest Conductor of the Singapore Symphony Orchestra and Conductor Laureate of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra (BSO). He is a Grammy Award winning recording artist and is an acknowledged expert on the music of George Gershwin. However, it's a programme of Grace Williams, Copland and Shostakovich which he'll be conducting this summer and we can't wait!

With concerts in Bangor, St David's and Cardiff, we hope to see lots of NYOW Friends on our travels. Please do come over and say hello if you're able to make it.

## Repertoire:

*Grace Williams: Fantasia on Welsh Nursery Tunes*

*Copland: Tenderland Suite*  
*Shostakovich: Symphony No.10*

## Concert Dates

*31/07/2019 – Prichard Jones Hall, Bangor*

*02/08/2019 – St David's Cathedral, Fishguard International Music Festival*

*03/08/2019 – St David's Hall, Cardiff*

## "Magical Music" 2018

***A report by Kevin Adams – Vice Chair of Friends of the Nash***

On Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2018, the Friends staged a fund-raising event in the Grand Pavilion, Porthcawl. Entitled *Magical Music*, this took the form of a concert presented by the Dave Hughes Orchestra and the Mike Plowman Singers, with Mark Llewelyn Evans as compère and soloist. It was the latest in a series of annual charity events organised and directed by ex-NYOW horn player David Hughes.

The orchestra and choir for the evening consisted of professional, semi-professional and experienced amateur musicians from across South Wales, all willingly giving their services in support of the NYOW (of which many were past or current members). They performed a programme featuring music from films and stage musicals - ranging from *Gone With The Wind* and *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) to *La La Land* (2016). The orchestra acknowledged the centenary of the Royal Air Force with a rousing performance of Walford Davies's *RAF March Past* and, as an encore, the entire company marked 100 years since the end of World War 1 with a moving rendition of Ivor Novello's *Keep The Home Fires*

*Burning.* The warm, enthusiastic response of the 300-strong audience reflected their obvious enjoyment of the concert as a whole.

Sales of tickets and programmes for this event, together with income from advertisements and a raffle, generated a profit of more than £1600 which has been gratefully received by the Friends.

A large-scale event like this obviously cannot take place without a considerable amount of planning and preparation. In this respect, particular thanks should be recorded to Dave Hughes who engaged the musicians and provided all the music, including a number of his own arrangements. Thanks are also due to Mike Plowman, to all the performers, to the staff of the Grand Pavilion, and to the many others who contributed to the success of this venture.

## Muriel Lewis

We are sorry to announce the death of Muriel Lewis, a recent Chairwoman of the Friends of the National Youth Orchestra of Wales. Muriel, like many of the committee, had been a member in her youth. She was born and brought up in Ferndale in the Rhondda Valley, the daughter of a local grocer. She attended Ferndale Grammar School where, wonderful to relate, the Head was setting up the beginnings of an orchestra. Muriel played the cello and became prominent in this process, along with another cellist, one David Harris. They became soul mates; older Friends may remember the inseparable pair in the Glamorgan Youth Orchestra and the NYOW. After marriage, they were tragically parted when David was killed in a car crash. At that time she was in her twenties. Muriel threw herself into what was to become a distinguished teaching career, first for a short time in America and then in various junior schools in Cardiff culminating in a headship. She found happiness once again in a long and happy marriage to Doug Lewis a fellow teacher and Headmaster. Muriel was a model chairman of the Friends' committee, calm and authoritative. She steered the ship through some

troubled waters and we are all very grateful to her. A most impressive lady who bore her last illness with grace and fortitude. She made a bequest of a prize to the NYOW cellists named in memory of her beloved David.

## Helena Braithwaite MBE



We also report with great sadness the death of a long-standing Friend of the Nash and former committee member whose contribution to the work of the Friends cannot be overestimated.

Born in Pontarddulais Helena attended Gowerton Grammar School. As a teenager she became a member of the Glamorgan Youth Orchestra and also joined the National Youth Orchestra of Wales as principal cellist. She later went on to study for a BA and MA in 20<sup>th</sup> century music at Cardiff University.

Helena took on the post of head of music at Cowbridge and Cardiff High School before moving on to lead the post-graduate certificate of education and post-graduate music education research at University College Cardiff. She will be remembered for her "enormous energy" as a teacher who inspired a generation of musicians. Her passion and enthusiasm for teaching was

widely acknowledged as was her readiness to help others.

In 1979, the mother-of-two's appointment as music adviser to the South Glamorgan Local Education Authority marked the beginning of a golden era in the county. During her time in the role she founded three choirs, string chamber ensembles, a steel-pan band based at Fitzalan school, as well as introducing jazz to South Glamorgan education.

With her guidance and leadership, Helena also helped the South Glamorgan Youth Choir become one of the best in the UK during her 14 years as director.

Thanks to Helena's hard work, the county won four major awards and two merit awards for its outstanding music provision.

After sitting on the panel that steered the change from O-levels to GCSEs, she also went on to chair the Welsh advisers who drafted the requirements of the national curriculum.

As well as her work within education, Helena directed the internationally renowned Cardiff Ardwyn Singers for 36 years from 1969 to 2005.

For five years Helena also held the post of education and community officer at the BBC National Orchestra of Wales helping bring their work to schools and communities.

Other highlights in her long and successful career include Helena becoming a board member of the Wales Millennium Centre and a fellow of the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama.

In 1998, Helena was awarded an MBE in the Queen's New Year's Honours List for her services to Welsh music.

The 80-year-old will be sorely missed by her children Gareth and Vivienne, and grandchildren Huw, Menna, Alys and Dylan.

Her funeral was held at Llandaff Cathedral on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2018.