

# The Nash

Newsletter of "The Friends of the National Youth Orchestra of Wales"  
Registered Charity No. 1,053,788

[www.friendsofthenash.org](http://www.friendsofthenash.org)

## Summer 2014

### This Year's Conductor

#### Jac van Steen



This year the National Youth Orchestra of Wales will be conducted by Jac van Steen who is originally from Eindhoven in the Netherlands.

He studied conducting at the Brabant Conservatory of music in Tilburg. His conducting career began in the mid-1980s with guest appearances with the BBC Philharmonia and between 1986 and 1990 was music director of the Bach Choir in Nijmegen. In the 1990s he held positions as music director of the National Ballet Amsterdam, conductor of the Nuremberg Symphony Orchestra and music director of the New Berlin Chamber Orchestra. In 2002 he was appointed Music Director of the Deutsches National Theater, Weimar and in 2007 he became the General Music Director of the Dortmund Philharmonic Orchestra and Opera. He has been Principal Guest conductor of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales and is due to take up post as Principal Guest conductor of the Ulster Orchestra for the 2014/2015 season. He has shown a great interest in promoting the work of young musicians and has worked with the Royal Northern

College of Music in Manchester, the Bundesjugend Orchestra Berlin and the Festival of Young Musicians in Bayreuth.

He has also worked with the European Community Youth Orchestra in 2011. We all look forward to hearing the National Youth Orchestra of Wales under Jac van Steen's direction this summer and hope the young musicians of the orchestra benefit from his considerable experience.

### The 2014 concert schedule is as follows:

**Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> July, 7.00 p.m. in Lampeter (pre-tour concert)**

**Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> July at 7.30 p.m. in St. David's Cathedral, Pembrokeshire (part of Fishguard festival)**

**Friday 1<sup>st</sup> August, 7.30 p.m. in the Sage, Gateshead**

**Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> August, 7.30 p.m. in St. Asaph Cathedral**

**Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> August, 7.00 p.m. in St. David's Hall, Cardiff**

The concert in Lampeter will be held in the hall of the University campus and is free. The ticket prices for the other venues and the details of how to obtain them are:

St. David's Cathedral: tickets £12 to £22 from [www.fishguardmusicfestival.co.uk](http://www.fishguardmusicfestival.co.uk) or phone 0844 8700 887.

The Sage, Gateshead: tickets £10 or £5 for under 25s. See [www.sagegateshead.com](http://www.sagegateshead.com) or phone 0191 443 4661.

St. Asaph Cathedral: tickets cost £14, £12 (concessions) or £5 (under 25s). Phone BBC on 03700 101 051.

St. David's Hall: tickets cost £14, £12 (concessions) or £5 (under 25s). Phone 029 2087 8444.

Contact The Friends of the National Youth Orchestra of Wales: [www.friendsofthenash.org](http://www.friendsofthenash.org)

# BUGLES SANG

*Chris Painter writes about his new work commissioned by the National Youth Orchestra of Wales for their Summer 2014 tour.*



*Born at Port Talbot, South Wales in 1962 he studied music at University College, Cardiff. His composition studies were initially with Timothy Taylor and Richard Elfyn Jones and in 1984 he began to study with Alun Hoddinott.*

To be asked to write for a performer or performers that one respects is a great honour and a privilege to be treasured. So, for me to receive a second commission to write for the National Youth Orchestra of Wales is not only a great honour but also something very special in my career.

My first commission for the NYOW, *Invisible Cities*, was premiered in 1999 under the inspirational conductor Christopher Adey who has since become a close friend. Composition for me is not just about writing the piece in isolation but also about getting to know the performers and setting out to tailor the new work not only to their strengths but also, in some way, to their personalities.

In both 1998 and 1999, I had a fantastic two weeks with the orchestra which were informative, motivating and, above all, fun. Being Composer-in-Residence in 1999 allowed me to not only attend all rehearsals but to discuss my work with the players, work with them in sectionals, receive useful feedback from the course tutors, take part in some composition sessions with young composers and have long discussions, often into the early hours, with both the tutors and Chris Adey.

To be asked, fifteen years later, to write another work for NYOW is very stimulating, if a little daunting, and the opportunity to work with Jac van Steen, for whom I have a great deal of respect, is fantastic. Jac and I have worked together at the BBC National Orchestra of Wales and he has been a great support and inspiration to me. *Bugles Sang* is dedicated to him in recognition of this.

My original thoughts for title and subject matter ranged from Welsh folklore to Dylan Thomas to Shakespeare with initial working titles including *Captain Cat's Dream*, *Twm Sion Cati* and *The School for Witches*. I finally settled for *On Llareggub Hill*, a description of a day in a provincial Welsh seaside town. I was less than 30 seconds into the piece before I became aware that there

were several other pieces being written on the Under Milk Wood theme and that mine wasn't going to offer anything new.

So, back to the drawing board and more time thinking before committing any notes to paper (actually to screen) as I do not sketch and work straight into full score on the computer – I'm too lazy to make more than one copy of the score! During all this time, I had been making a conscious effort to stay away from my other passion, poetry. Finally I relented and, returning to my teenage years, started re-reading the war poetry of Rupert Brooke, Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon. This proved to be the solution to my problem with several poems suggesting a theme and a structure for the new piece. After a while, the ideas started to emerge from the mental mists and I settled upon the title of *Bugles Sang*.

Although the work is in one continuous movement, I conceived it as being in four sections. The first and third sections are a depiction of warfare and its horrors with scurrying semiquavers and explosive chords whilst the second section, an uneasy nocturne, forms the core of the work.

This nocturne is a tableau of the battlefield at night, an eerily quiet landscape that has been torn asunder by the ravages of warfare, calmly waiting for the horrors of the next day. My ideas when approaching this movement centred around two main themes - the stories of the thousands of men who marched through the Menin gate on their way to the carnage of the Battle of Ypres and how, with the exception of the years of German occupation in the Second World War, the Last Post is sounded there at every sunset.

The second idea came from the story that the Welsh soldiers, whilst in the trenches the evening before going into battle, sang the Welsh hymn *Cwm Rhondda* and how the sound drifted across the silent battlefield. I have quoted the hymn in full, using the well-known Arwel Hughes harmonisation, but fragmented and at half speed in an attempt to give it a sense of other-worldliness, total weariness and foreboding.

The conclusion to the work presented another problem – to end it on a sombre note to reflect what we now know about the Great War and its horrors or to concentrate on what must have been the prevailing emotions of the time. After much thought I decided to go with the latter as, without knowing of the horrors to come two decades later, the carnage of the Great War would have been seen as justifiable and the conclusion of “the war to end all wars” would have been a triumph.

I am looking forward immensely to the performances of *Bugles Sang* and can't wait to hear what the talented players of the National Youth Orchestra of Wales and Jac van Steen make out of my scribbling.

# What can you say about the Nash?



I had the pleasure...no make that the honour, of being a member of the National Youth Orchestra of Wales for 5 years between 2009 - 2013. Those five summers were quite simply the best of my life, hands down.

It starts with the players themselves. You realise on day one of the course that you're in for something special. As a string player especially, that first sectional is mind blowing. I'd never rehearsed with so many bassists before; 8 of you thundering out the same part. And everyone around you is just so fantastic. As a newbie it just takes your breath away. And that's not it, on your first day you've also got a full rehearsal in the evening to get through.

All 120+ of you have crammed into the arts hall in Lampeter; a space that was quite clearly never designed for such colossal forces. How Chris Flavin our Operations guy manages it every year I'll never know. The first few minutes there's usually a lot of seat shuffling as everyone tries to get comfortable in the tight space. Then the A sounds out from the heart of the woodwind. An age later once every section has finished, and each of the 120 are satisfied, you're ready to start.

Under the watchful eye of Adrian Dunn, it begins. The strings take their first shot at those tricky passages that will catch them out all week. The woodwind tentatively start to develop that crucial telepathy they'll need to breathe together as one. The brass figure out quite how far they can push that fortissimo crescendo before Adrian gives them that knowing look. And the percussion run around frantically at the back trying to establish how exactly they're going to switch from bass drum to cymbal roll to triangle in the space of 2 bars. It's the first

rehearsal, there'll usually be a few car crash tempo changes not to mention a few false starts and the odd early or missed entry, but there's a nervous energy in the room that is just exhilarating. And when you're the newbie sat towards the back of the section you can't help but think 'This is the best orchestra I've ever played with!' There's only one word for that feeling: EPIC!

I've sat between two enormous pillars in Hereford Cathedral tearing up the finale of Mahler's First Symphony with a timpanist absolutely going for it two feet behind me. I listened to the final chord of Prokofiev's Fifth Symphony ring out in the acoustic heaven that is The Sage, Gateshead. I thundered through the Trio of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony in the hottest sunshine at Swansea's Brangwyn Hall. I flew the musical flag for Wales at the highest level, on the stage of the Konzerthaus in Berlin's Young Euro Classics Festival; AND, I made my debut at the Royal Albert Hall sitting side-by-side with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales in a stunning performance of Bernstein's Mass.

In my brief time with the Nash I had the pleasure of playing in some of the finest concert venues the UK has to offer. I dug my teeth into some astonishingly good repertoire from Mahler and Beethoven, to the 20<sup>th</sup> century music of Prokofiev, Debussy and Joseph Davies. I had the privilege to make music with conductors whose understanding, knowledge and connection to the music was almost cosmic. I've never known someone who could communicate so much with just his eyes as Carlo Rizzi.

And for all that excellence, that's not even the best part of the course. The best thing about being a member of the National Youth Orchestra of Wales is the Nash family. Sharing all those incredible experiences with the nicest and most talented people you could hope to meet. Being part of something that extraordinary with your friends is just an unforgettable experience. You know this when you arrive on the first day and you're queuing up for a cup of tea with someone who's from a completely different corner of Wales to you; it's been an entire year since you last saw each other on the previous course but you immediately start from where you left off. That's real friendship, and that's what being in the Nash is all about.

I cannot even begin to imagine what my life would have been like without the Nash. It shapes you as a person, and the memories stay with you forever. You can see the twinkle in the eye when you ask a former Nash member about their playing days. The Nash is simply breathtaking.

*Daniel Aguirre Evans, Principal Bass 2011-2013*

## More from the Archive

### *The Orchestra in 1980*

The programme that year was:-

Festival overture - Shostakovich,  
Violin Concerto in G minor - Vivaldi (Soloist,  
Carl Darby),  
Welsh Dances - Hoddinott  
Symphony No. 2 Sibelius.



Members of the Mid Glam Youth Orchestra 1980 who were also members of the NYOW in that same year:

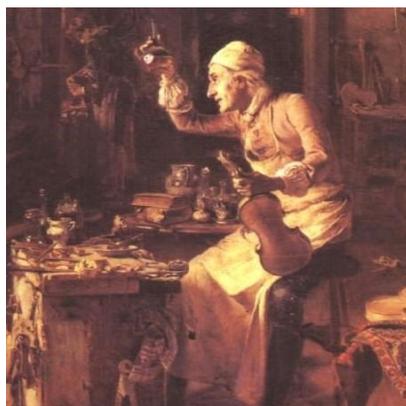
Front row: Frances Richards, Nigel Beddoe, Gareth Tudor - now Chairman of "The Friends of the Nash".

Back row: Gillian Edwards, Janet Cooke, Brian Jenkins

Trombone: Huw Thomas

A fundraising talk on the ancient craft of violin making by John Watkins, Maker of Violins, Violas and Cellos

### **“The Secrets of Stradivari”**



**Tuesday, 23<sup>rd</sup> September 7.15 pm, Llandaff Parish Hall**