

December Successes for County Performance Groups

The CPG line up of concerts for the end of 2007 started with a concert given by the County Youth Orchestra, Director Colin Touchin, at St. George's Church, Hillmorton, Rugby. The programme began with a lively and challenging work by Gustav Holst, The Ballet Music for The Perfect Fool, which acted as an impressive starter for the evening as the piece displays the full range of orchestral sound including full brass and a harp. This was followed by a performance of Haydn's trumpet concerto which was beautifully played by Ed Gallaway, the principal trumpeter in the orchestra. During the interval there was wind and brass chamber music performed in the gallery of the church which added to the atmosphere of the event, and the second half of the concert was taken up by Beethoven's 5th Symphony, a massive work to which the orchestra gave their all.

The next county Group to perform in the month of December was the County Youth Chorale who provided an excellent finale for the Choral Network Concert at Guy Nelson Hall in Warwick on Wednesday 5 December. December was a busy time of year for groups like the Chorale who had been busy with engagements like weddings and carol evenings, and it was a delight to hear them at their last event 'Christmas at the Guild Chapel' in Stratford-upon-Avon. This has become something of a tradition for the Chorale, and they produced some stunning results in such a lovely setting. For me this was the high point of the term for the group.

On Friday 7 December several parents were able to enjoy an evening of chamber music and entertainment at The CPG Christmas Cabaret which took place at Kenilworth School. The music was partly prepared (string orchestra Tangos, wind and brass Christmas pieces) and partly spontaneous (folk violin duo, and many other duets, both string and wind) and the audience were treated to a performance by the Central Area Viol Consort 'Gutted' who presented the programme that they had performed at the 'Folk in Cambridge' day on 17 November. Afterwards members of the orchestra had the chance to try out viols while the County Wind Band were setting up to give a preview of the music they were performing at the Warwick District Mayor's Charity concert at Leamington Town Hall the following evening.

On both occasions, the County Wind Band were very impressive, and it was great to have the opportunity of hearing them again after the band's short absence from the concert platform. On the Saturday evening at the Town Hall they were joined by Pannissimo, the County Steel Pan Orchestra, under the new directorship of Kali Mattu; in addition to mulled wine and mince pieces there were audience carol singing and performances given by singers from Trinity Catholic School.

Pannissimo had had a very busy first season, starting with a Pathways Concert at Coten End in November followed by performances at both the Kenilworth and Warwick Lights and participation in the Children, Young People and Families Directorate Multifaith Celebration at the Guy Nelson Hall right at the end of term. The group had obviously put in a lot of hard work during the term and they did themselves proud.

The Warwickshire Youth Jazz Orchestra have also developed a bit of a Christmas tradition with their annual Christmas show; this time it was at the Standard Triumph

Club in Coventry and a good evening was had by all, particularly the councillors who attended, with singing and playing of the highest standard laced with Christmas humour on the part of the Director Jon Watson.

Finally, those in the south of the County who were able to get to Bidford Church on Friday 14 December were treated to one of the best concerts the Youth Waits have ever performed. This was promoted by the Bidford and District History Society and the evening was particularly successful because, interspersed between the items of music, a speaker talked about Christmas traditions over the ages with particular reference to medieval and tudor times. Alison Kinder, Director of the Waits, had put together a programme of appropriate music, and she also told the audience a little bit about what groups like the Waits would have got up to, based on records that remain about the Coventry Waits. This is a programme that deserves to be repeated as the recorder and string playing was of the highest standard.

For more information about Warwickshire's County Performance Groups, including how to apply for membership, please contact Michael Williamson, CPG Manager for CMS. Details of future CPG events can be found on the Events Guide.