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NEWSLETTER - EASTER TERM 2008

Dear Parents and Pupils,

The start of 2008 has already brought good news for a number of pupils in the form of some excellent ABRSM Exam results, with candidates obtaining 3 Passes, 5 Merits and 5 Distinctions between them. Birkdale School has proved, on two occasions now, to be a great success for the Exam visits, reflected in the examiners' positive comments about performers' confidence and musicianship.

Our programme of Workshops and Concerts also continues to produce pleasing results, with pupils gaining in experience and assurance each time they participate. We would like to encourage those who have not yet taken part in these events to do so – they are always friendly and relaxed and the satisfaction gained from overcoming nerves is well worth it!

Staff News

This term we welcome a new violin teacher, **Ilias Devetsoglou**. A PhD student in French violin performing practice (and a colleague of David's) at Leeds, Ilias is an excellent violinist with a strong desire to pass what he does on to the next generation.

Michelle Bentley, now in her 2nd term in a very demanding full-time music teaching post at All Saints RC High School, has taken the wise but difficult decision to cut back significantly her teaching with the Milsom School. We fully support her in this, as she works to enthuse and train teenagers of widely varied experience and ability.

As a result, though, we are delighted to welcome **Kay Nicholson** who has joined us primarily to teach flute. Kay, a native Sheffielder and former pupil of Chetham's School of Music, will also be offering singing tuition once she has established her initial base of flute students.

We are also thrilled that **Robert Webb** (Director of Music at St John's, Ranmoor) will be joining us to teach a new course in Music Theory & Appreciation for Adults (see below). Having known Robert both professionally and socially for some time, we have great respect for the unrelenting effort he puts into producing music of superb quality and building a vibrant, effective community of local musicians.

As you will no doubt see for yourselves in the coming months, Kay, Ilias and Robert all demonstrate the core values of the Milsom School and, as music enthusiasts, will further strengthen our efforts to broaden and deepen the musical experience of all our pupils.

David's research

(Performing style in 19th-century string music)

Following on from the success of his contributions at the Royal Musicological Association (RMA) conference in Egham last September, David is currently preparing a series of Lectures and Masterclasses to be delivered at the Estonian Academy of Music, Tallinn, in February. This is an exciting development in the work that David and his colleagues do in Leeds, as they seek to share with the wider musical community the findings of their research into nineteenth-century performing style.

A further invitation has been extended to David to give a Lecture-Recital at Stanford University, California, in January 2009 as part of an annual Symposium looking at using early recordings to inform contemporary performance.

David and his colleagues give regular concerts in Sheffield and Leeds, as part of his ongoing research programme. On **Sunday 4th May, 7.45pm** they will perform piano trios by Schumann and Gade in a short concert as part of the **St John's May Music Festival** (<http://stjohnsmusic.org.uk/festival>).

Making our voices heard!

The instinct to sing can be witnessed in virtually every culture of the world - how many times have you said, or heard someone say, "I wish I could sing like that"? And there are indeed opportunities to improve your own singing, no matter what stage you're at... In the spirit of practicing what we preach, we (Ruth & David) have joined the Ranmoor Chamber Choir, which involves a weekly practise and singing about once a month at a service at St John's, as well as the occasional concert. It's a steep learning curve, as most of the music is new to us and there are not many other altos and tenors to hide amongst! But the rewards are great - successfully holding your line whilst listening to and balancing with the other singers and (of course) following the conductor is very satisfying, and we get to experience a huge and diverse repertoire of music from the last 500 years.

One of the reasons for joining the Chamber Choir was to play our part in keeping alive one of the richest areas of our musical heritage. The English Choral Tradition embodies many of the same values as our School - promoting high standards in music; training, nurturing and educating the young; embracing the talents of amateurs; making music available to a wide audience. Climbing on soapboxes to complain about the lack of musical knowledge in today's society is all very well, but we know it doesn't change anything. Use it, or lose it!

Finally, thank you to all our pupils and families who help to make our jobs enjoyable and rewarding. Your efforts do not go un-noticed, and we look forward to another productive term.

Best wishes,

David & Ruth Milsom

EVENTS & DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

EASTER 'MINI CONCERT' - Saturday 5th April, 3.30pm, St John's, Ranmoor

First of all, an apology: we allowed our Christmas Concert to over-run by 45 minutes and we would like to reassure all of you who braved it out on the chilly pews that it was the first and only time that this will happen!

Since the Easter term is so very short, we have scheduled a 'mini concert' especially for pupils who have not performed at one of our events before, or who still feel inexperienced at playing in public.

We would particularly like to invite pupils who have lessons with George, Michelle, Vicky and Lindsay to come and play a short piece - we can't promise it won't be frightening, but we can guarantee that you'll be very proud of yourself after you've done it!

Booking forms for the concert will be sent out towards the end of term.

SINGING WORKSHOP - Saturday, 26th April, 2.00-4.30pm, St John's, Ranmoor

This new event in our programme, which we hope to run once a term, is designed to be beneficial to all our students, whatever their present ability and experience. The workshop will comprise a number of activities led by our colleague **Peter Taylor**, director of Hallam Choral Society (who recently gave a stunning performance of Handel's Messiah at Christ Church, Fulwood).

Peter will give clear and helpful advice to get you singing with more confidence and improve your vocal technique and listening skills. The music will be fun, varied and lively and the activities will sharpen up your listening and ensemble skills. This will also provide invaluable training for Aural Tests in exams and could also help improve sightreading.

We would love to see parents, siblings and friends taking part too - the more the merrier!

HARPSICHORD WORKSHOP (date to be announced)

An exciting new opportunity for pianists, this workshop will be led by another fine musician from our local area, **Derek Grover**. Derek is sub-organist at St John's and is also becoming much in demand as a harpsichordist. The session will include an introduction to and demonstration of the instrument, as well as some hands-on time for each participant to experience the kind of keyboard instrument Bach and his contemporaries would have known themselves.

Participation at this event is by invitation only, as places are very limited.

MUSIC THEORY & APPRECIATION FOR ADULTS

This new course, taught by **Robert Webb**, will guide you through the apparently impenetrable theory of music in a relaxed and convivial atmosphere. The course content will be tailored to individual requirements and is suitable for novices as well as those with some prior knowledge.

Topics covered will include:-

- Basics of music notation
- The essentials of sightreading
- An introduction to the piano keyboard
- An overview of music history
- How to listen to music

Two parallel courses will run during school terms, 10am-12pm, at the Ranmoor Parish Centre, Ranmoor Park Road – one on Saturdays and one on Wednesdays, commencing on Wednesday 9th April / Saturday 12th April.

Please contact us by email or telephone if you would like to sign up for this course, or if you would like more information.

Other Non-Milsom School Events This Term

COME AND PLAY THE ORGAN – Saturday 2nd February, 10am-1pm, St John's, Ranmoor

If you have always wanted to experience real power at your fingertips then this event is for you!

Simply turn up any time between 10am and 1pm (there will be an introduction to the instrument at 10am) and have a go on the 'King of Instruments'.

Please visit our website regularly for news of other events and concerts in Sheffield and Leeds.