



September, 2009

Dear Parents and Pupils,

We hope that you have all enjoyed a restful summer break. Please take note of the news and dates outlined here. As usual, there will be some excellent opportunities for all pupils to gain experience in various musical skills this term and we hope to see many of you at forthcoming workshops and concerts.

Staff News

Most of you will already know about our new 'headquarters' at 30 Victoria Road, a fine Victorian villa in which David, Ruth and Robert have set up home and which provides us with three teaching rooms and a potential venue for exams and small-scale workshops.

Pete Taylor was successful in recent interviews at Birkdale School and will be teaching singing there as well as with the Milsom School. Pete has a busy and exciting term ahead, with Hallam Choral Society's 40th anniversary performance of Mendelssohn's Elijah on November 21st, as well as some new opportunities for solo work.

David's AHRC-funded research fellowship at Leeds University came to a formal end on 31st August and he is currently preparing the written and recorded output from this three-year project for publication. David's association with Leeds University continues as he will now spend one day a week on another funded project studying 19th-century editions of printed music and their implications in performance. David and his colleagues have also won funding to put on historically-informed performances of chamber music around the country, which will raise awareness (and hopefully enjoyment!) of some of the results of their research in recent years.

Exam Results

Our last ABRSM Special Visit was once again held in the choir vestry at St John's Church, Ranmoor. Congratulations to all who took exams – some results were quite disappointing this time, especially for pianists, and we found that the examiner's comments were rather negative and discouraging. Whilst we agree wholeheartedly with the exam board's upholding of high standards (it shouldn't be easy to pass a music exam!), we were concerned about the impact of these harsh marks and comments upon some of our pupils.

We always do our best to prepare candidates well for exams; this includes dealing with performance nerves and how to tackle the 'unknown' elements of the exam – aural tests, sightreading and, for pianists, the challenge of playing on an unfamiliar

instrument. These things are difficult to fit into the normal weekly one-to-one lesson, so pupils and interested parents are strongly encouraged to attend our Aural, Singing and Performance workshops and termly concerts whether they have an imminent exam or not. These sessions are designed to help students overcome the effects of nervousness, present themselves and their music well and become proficient in the supporting skills required in the aural tests.

The next Special Visit is provisionally planned for Wednesday 16th December, with mocks on Saturday 28th November.

Performance Workshop: Presentation v. Nerves

Saturday 10th October, 2.30-4.30pm; venue to be confirmed (£10)

This event will take the form of a masterclass, with experienced tutors guiding pupils in how best to present themselves and their music on stage or in front of an examiner, even when nerves have taken hold! In an informal setting, participants will be asked to perform a piece (or part of a piece) that they have been working on and will learn both from comments made by the tutors, and from observing others doing the same.

Singing Workshop: Musical Theatre

Sunday 18th October, 2-5pm; Birkdale School Octagon (£15)

Our first Musical Theatre workshop last term delved into the various vocal techniques used in this genre as Pete Taylor explained the physiology of the voice and how to locate and control the muscles that produce different sounds. This term's workshop will explore the application of these techniques in singing some repertoire. Don't worry if you missed the first session – you will be able to catch up during the course of this one.

Our singing tutors, Peter Taylor and Robert Webb, are both specialists in Musical Theatre, a genre that ranges from Gilbert & Sullivan operettas, through Cole Porter and Rogers & Hammerstein, to more contemporary writers such as Sondheim and Schwartz. We hope that you will join us in this lighthearted workshop to explore some of the vocal techniques used in Musical Theatre and to have fun singing some of the repertoire.

This event is open to pupils, siblings and families – parents are especially welcome to come and join in!

Aural Workshop

Saturday 7th November, 2.30-4.30pm; 30 Victoria Road S10 2DL

Our Aural Workshops are proving helpful to pupils at all stages; if you have not yet attended one, please consider doing so. The atmosphere is relaxed and informal, aiming to build pupils' skills and confidence in what can otherwise be quite a daunting area. Working in groups and concentrating on each element for an extended period of time helps students to understand and develop the skills that they need to get good results in exams. These skills (listening, singing, musical memory, chord recognition, appreciation of style, etc) are, however, vital to all musicians, whether they take exams or not.

This event is also valuable for parents who wish to help their children practice their aural skills at home – do come along!

Lesson Payments

Many of you have now switched to paying half-termly in advance for lessons and are finding this a more helpful way of keeping track of dates and payments. Please discuss your preferred method of payment with your teacher.

Free Concert Tickets

Following a successful pilot scheme earlier this year, Sheffield Symphony Orchestra have extended a generous offer to pupils of the Milsom School of Music, offering a free child's ticket (usually £4.50) with the purchase of an adult ticket.

This offer applies to the first three concerts in their 2009-10 season; there are 10 free tickets available for each date. Please contact Ruth (ruth@milsom-music.co.uk) if you are interested.

Saturday 17th October 2009, St Mark's, Broomhill, 7.30pm

Mozart ~ Symphony No.39
Schubert ~ Symphony No.8 in C 'The Great'

Saturday 30th January 2010, St Mark's, Broomhill, 7.30pm

Debussy ~ La Mer
Poulenc ~ Concerto for Organ, Strings & Timpani
Bartók ~ Concerto for Orchestra

Saturday 24th April 2010, St Mark's, Broomhill, 7.30pm

Mendelssohn ~ Overture 'Ruy Blas'
Dvořák ~ Symphony No.7
Nielsen ~ Symphony No. 2 'The Four Temperaments'

Forthcoming Concerts

The Sterndale Singers directed by Robert Webb

With musicians from LUCHIP (Leeds University Centre for Historically Informed Performance)

Saturday 14th November – St John's Ranmoor, Sheffield

Vivaldi ~ The Four Seasons (soloist David Milsom)
Vivaldi ~ Magnificat
Zelenka ~ Miserere
Buxtehude ~ Magnificat
Monteverdi ~ Beatus Vir

Hallam Choral Society ~ 40th Anniversary Year

Director: Peter Taylor; Orchestra Leader: David Milsom

Saturday 21st November, St John's Ranmoor, 7.30pm

Mendelssohn ~ Elijah

The choir is currently recruiting Tenors and Basses.

Contact Peter Taylor (peter@petertaylor.biz) if you are interested in joining them, especially for this date.

Best wishes for an enjoyable and productive term.

David & Ruth Milsom